

Friday Times

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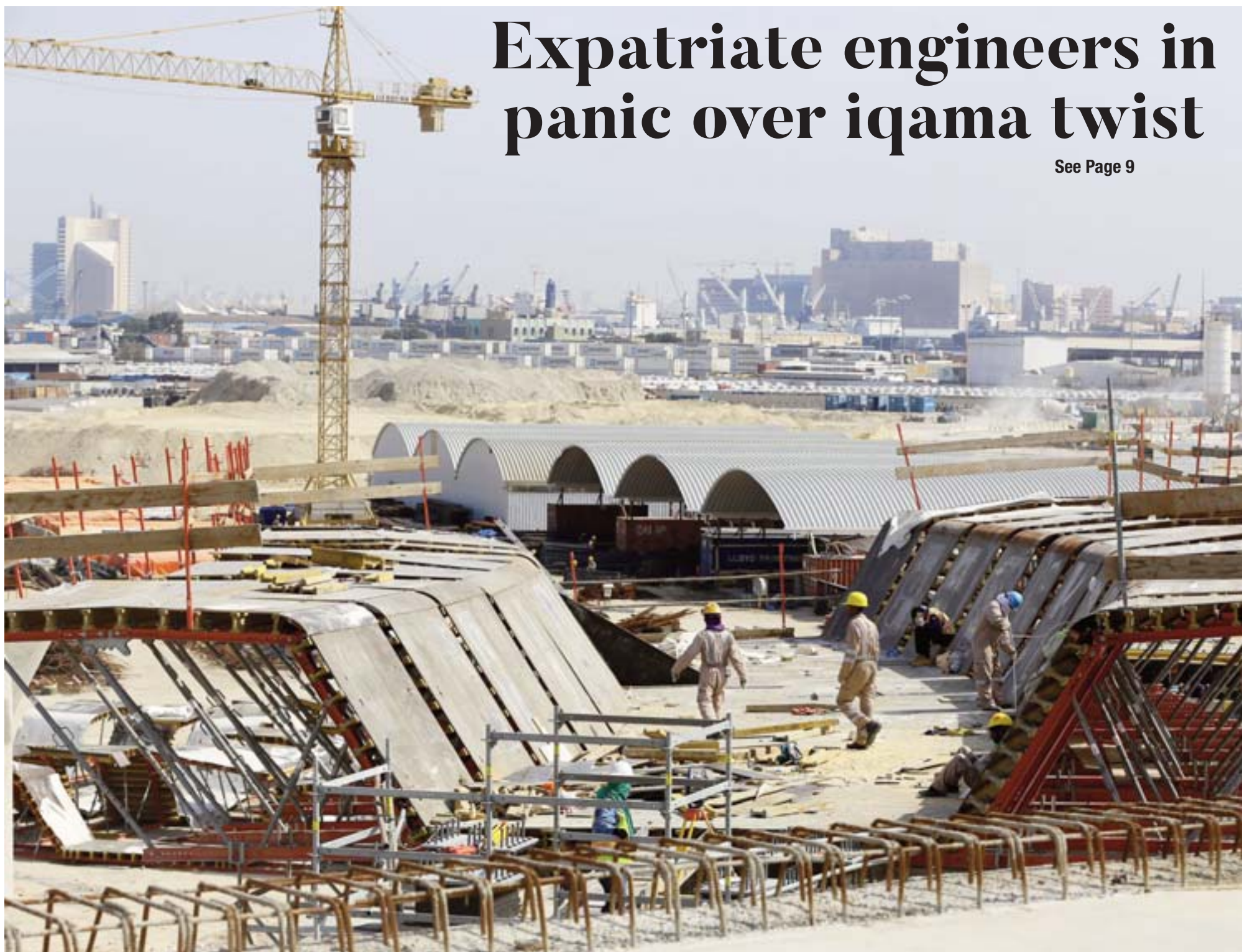


44 Durant shines as Warriors halt Lakers; Wizards stun Celtics



Expatriate engineers in panic over iqama twist

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Local

Expat hospitals



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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This week, the Health Assurance Hospitals Company (Dhaman) celebrated the start of construction of the company's second hospital in Jahra governorate in a ceremony held under the patronage of Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah and other officials. In 2017, Dhaman began work on its first hospital in Ahmadi governorate, and the two hospitals are expected to be ready in 2020.

There is no doubt that the Dhaman project will ease the pressure on health ministry facilities and reduce the congestion and long waiting periods that we all experience, whether citizens or expats. The overcrowding and distant appointments have a negative impact on everyone without doubt, although waiting for two more years is yet another delay. But it's better than nothing.

The groundbreaking ceremony of Dhaman's second hospital in Jahra coincides with the preparatory works of Dhaman's primary healthcare centers in Farwaniya, Hawally and Dajeej, which are expected to start welcoming patients soon. This includes the implementation and transfer of expats from the current health ministry facilities to Dhaman.

According to reports, the Dhaman Hospital in Jahra will offer secondary healthcare services with a capacity of 300 beds and 11 operating rooms, in addition to trauma and rehab centers, diagnostic centers, delivery rooms and accident and emergency services.

Dr Ahmad Mohammed Al-Saleh, Dhaman CEO and Board Member, said: "We are set to provide beneficiaries with smart healthcare services, and have also formed strategic partnerships in the medical field to ensure meeting world-class health standards." This is indeed a good vision and it's about time, because people have suffered enough.

Last year, some rumors circulated among expats in Kuwait about a possible increase in health insurance fees to KD 130 from early next year, but Dr Ahmed denied the rumors and said it is impossible to increase the insurance fees before inaugurating the Dhaman hospitals in 2020.

Estimates about the ideal insurance fees for individuals are still modest because they revolve around numbers and not the actual needs of individuals. I know the government is now reviewing a new contract for the "Afia" insurance scheme for retired citizens. It should be renewed by April and improved and revised thoroughly.

I hope the expatriates' new healthcare system through Dhaman will take into consideration their needs and the diseases they suffer from, as well as the health problems they face. Their companies must also pay the health insurance fees on their behalf. There should be strictness in following up this matter so that the fees are not taken from expatriate employees. I think it's a good step by the MoH to finally decide to put an end to the long suffering of people.

PHOTOS OF THE DAY



KUWAIT: Residents celebrate a variety of holidays that aren't 'official' in Kuwait but nonetheless significant to segments of the population. In early March, residents in Salmiya marked the 'Festival of Colors' also known as Holi which marks the end of winter and the start of spring at a local park. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

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Despite low local production, *truffle* remains a favorite delicacy in Kuwait



White or beige, but never black, the “desert truffle” is a rare delicacy with a dedicated marketplace in Kuwait, where remnants of the Iraqi invasion and changing weather patterns have decimated local production.

Less prestigious and less expensive than its darker cousin, the Middle Eastern truffle is a prized ingredient for bedouins, who integrate it into their traditional rice and meat dishes or in sauces, boiled with onions.

On the outskirts of Kuwait City, in the Rai industrial district, connoisseurs begin perusing the truffle souk at 9:00 am, surveying the various weights and colors and using their noses to select the best fungus by smell.

Some barter while others go straight for the top shelf, with the ‘Zebidi’ variety especially prized for its use in traditional recipes. Demand is so high in the Gulf state’s market that each year hundreds of merchants compete for limited stall space during the cooler winter months.

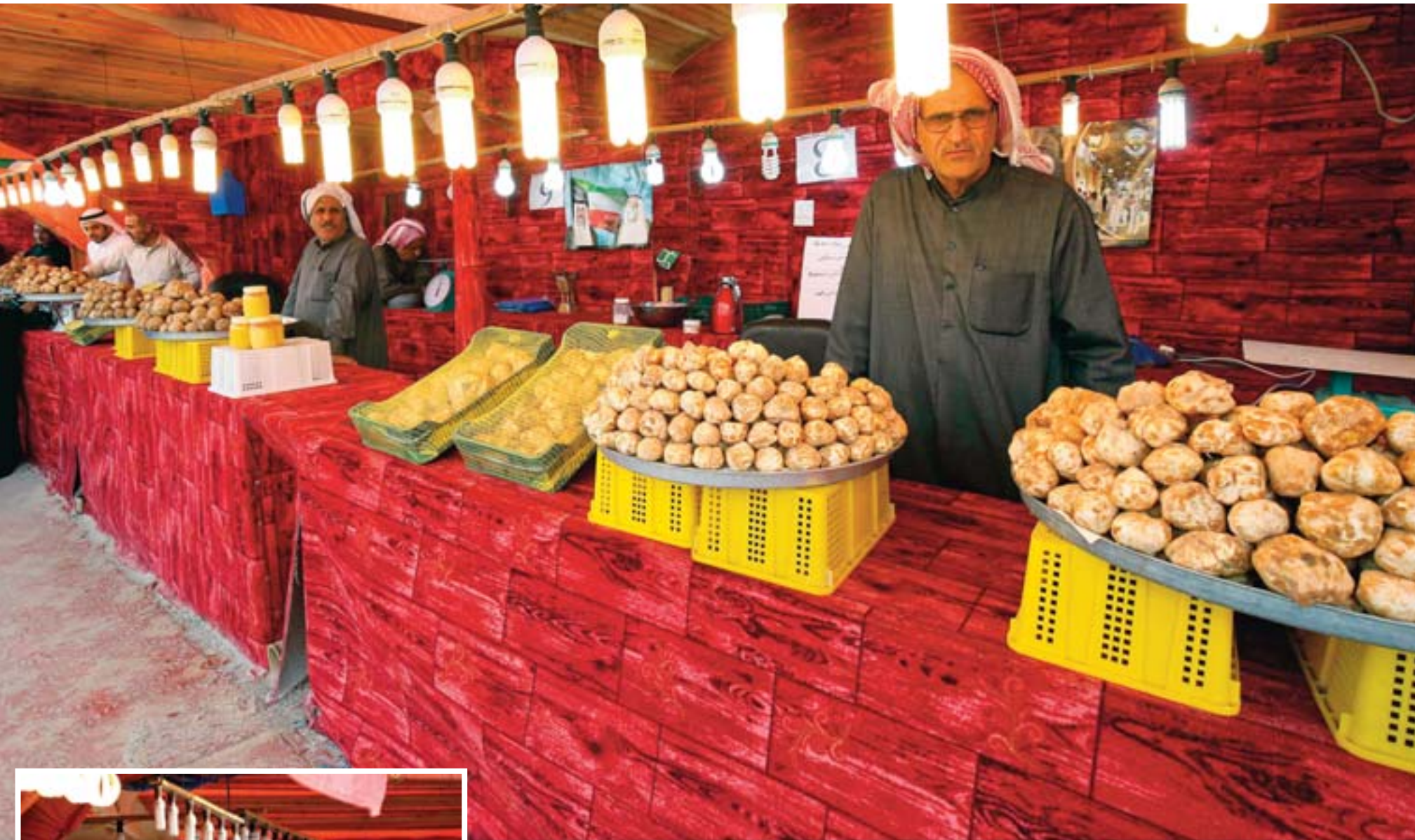
The market was devised by the municipality of Al-Rai, an industrial zone just northwest of Kuwait City, which oversees quality control and guarantees the traceability of the fungus. “We decided to build this market in 2006 to organize sales of this

product, which you used to find in all sorts of corners in Kuwait,” said Faisal Al-Jomaa, vice-governor of Kuwait City.

This year, he said, 520 merchants applied for one of the nine-square-meter (97-square-foot) stalls. Just 123 vendors secured space. One of them was Iranian Abdel Ali Said, who has bought and sold truffles since the 1960s. “They come from Iran, Saudi



Local



On a \$10k budget

To drive home just how popular truffles are among Kuwaitis, Shammari pointed out that “three to four tons are imported daily, and sold fresh.” But for all its love of truffles, Kuwait’s own commercial cultivation and harvesting of the fungus has plummeted to zero since Iraq invaded the state in 1990.

The risk of coming across an unexploded landmine left behind by the Iraqi army keeps Kuwaitis from scouting the desert for wild truffles. The only remaining production is purely for personal consumption.

Kuwait’s truffle crops have also been hit by a changing environment. Unlike European truffles, which grow under tree roots, desert truffles spring up after rain, which means that volume and quality vary according to the amount of precipitation and the general weather.

“Irregular rainfall, rapid urbanization and encroachment on the desert are all factors in the disappearance of (local) truffles,” explained vice-governor Jomaa. That has only increased desire for the delicacy, especially for making Kabsa, a spiced rice specialty common throughout the Gulf and the most popular dish in Kuwait.

The main ingredients are long grain rice, red meat and truffles, used to flavor the broth while cooking. “Kuwaitis are addicted to truffles because they are rare and have such a distinct taste,” said Yousef Mohammed Al-Khaled, a young truffle aficionado, who claims he can distinguish between various sub-varieties.

Khaled said he spends up to 3,000 Kuwaiti dinars (nearly \$10,000) each year on white truffles, which he incorporates into his diet twice a week, including family lunches on Thursdays, the last day of the work week.

Fresh truffles are only available from November to April in Kuwait, but some vendors sell a dried variation of the delicacy during the region’s scorching summer months in a bid to meet their customers’ cravings all year round. — AFP



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti vendors sell truffles at a market in Al-Rai, an industrial zone northwest of Kuwait City on March 1, 2018. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Why are Kuwaitis learning Turkish?



Students learn Turkish at a local educational institute in Kuwait. — Photos by Abdulla Al-Sherif

By Jeri Al-Jeri

In Kuwait one of the most popular languages for locals to learn, after English, is Turkish. Travel to Turkey, which is within a few hours' flight and relatively affordable has become popular among locals and residents in recent years. Kuwaitis who visit Turkey often want to learn the language - or at least its basics - before traveling as neither Arabic nor English is widely spoken there.

Many locals including young and old, male and female, take up the language after a visit to Turkey has sparked their interest in the language. Most chose to learn it for the love and interest, not for a certificate or qualification or future job prospects.

This is unusual for Kuwaitis. We have never with such fervor adopted the study of another Middle Eastern language before, and certainly not one outside our heritage. So Kuwait Times decided to ask some young Kuwaitis why they choose to study Turkish. Here are their answers:

Each student was asked:

- 1. Why did you want to learn Turkish?
- 2. Did you feel your interaction with the Turkish people change?
- 3. Do you perceive it to be easy?

A student from GSI, who became a new father, (A E) answered:

- 1. "I love Turkey from a long time ago, and I like to acquire languages, so I choose Turkish."
- 2. "YES! They [the Turkish people] are very

English	Turkish	Pronunciation
Hello	Merhaba	mehr-hah-bah
Good morning	Günaydın	gew-naye-dun
Good evening	İyi akşamlar	ee ahk-shahm-lahr
Goodbye	Hoşça kalın	hosh-cha kaluhn
How are you?	Nasılsınız?	nah-suhl-suhn -uz
I am fine	İyiyim	ee-yeem
Thank you	teşekkür ederim	teh-she-kewr eh-deh-rehm



“

Many locals including young and old, male and female, take up the language after a visit to Turkey has sparked their interest in the language.

”

supportive of anyone who tries to learn their language.”
3. “It gets easier”.

A female student, AK, had this to say:

- 1. “The first time I stepped in Turkey’s airport I heard the announcement saying “Lutfen dikkat” [which are all words in Arabic], I started to gravitate towards learning more Turkish words that had Arabic roots.”
- 2. With a smile she said “Many Turkish people are surprised at how well I speak Turkish, this leads them to ask more questions, that allows us to communicate more.”
- 3. “ It depends on how much love there is for the language.”

LA had more direct answers:

- 1. “I loved learning it because of my love for Turkey and due to the lack of knowledge in English.”
- 2. “I felt a lot of difference by how supportive Turkish people are.”
- 3. “It is easy because it has a lot on Arabic and English in it.”

Mr. Mohamed Al-Abraham responded:

- 1. “Not only that I love Turkey but I own a property over there and they seem to not know a lot of English nor Arabic.”
- 2. “I felt them to be more closer to me when they knew I understood a Turkish word, here and there.”
- 3. “I feel it gets easier, when I followed a lot of people in the social media teaching it!”

Their answers seemed to carry passion and enthusiasm. Speaking with a Turkish language teacher, Imrah Orhan bey from GSI, however I forgot to mention that I myself am a Kuwaiti who took Turkish courses as well.

KT: Are there a lot of Kuwaitis trying to learn Turkish?

Imrah bey: “99% of my students are Kuwaitis, mostly females. Kuwaitis have a lot of companies and properties in Turkey, and they keep on traveling to Turkey, that its people are not very familiar with English.”

KT: Are they learning Turkish quickly?

Imrah bey: “It depends on the students themselves, he or she might empower themselves by other means.”

There are lots of ways to learn Turkish nowadays including free apps for your smartphone like Duolingo, websites and videos on YouTube as well as courses taught at local educational institutes.

Japanese Emperor lauds significant ties with Kuwait

Japan's concerns over Gulf crisis dispelled: Ghanem

KUWAIT: Japanese Emperor Akihito lauded yesterday the significant and historic ties linking Kuwait and Japan, adding that he greatly admires and respects the leader of Kuwait His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for his regional and global reputation.

Emperor Akihito's praise came during his reception of visiting Kuwaiti Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem. The Emperor thanked Kuwait and its people for their contributions to the relief aid efforts after the Tsunami, which hit Japan in 2011.

Emperor Akihito also praised Kuwait's role in the Middle East region and the world, affirming that His Highness the Amir was an example of a great and wise global leader.



All energy sources for Japan are safe

Meanwhile, Ghanem conveyed greetings from His Highness the Amir to Emperor Akihito, saying that both nations were eager to develop ties furthermore. Ghanem expressed Kuwait's gratitude towards the unwavering Japanese stance during the Iraqi invasion of 1990 and the liberation of Kuwait in 1991, affirming that relations continue to become stronger as both countries are looking into new means to boost bilateral ties. Kuwaiti Ambassador to Japan Abdulrahman Al-Otaibi was present at the reception.

Ghanem arrived in Tokyo on Monday. He met Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, House of Representatives Speaker Tadamori Oshima and House of Councillors President Chuichi Date. He also held talks with Chairman of Japan Business Federation's Middle East and North Africa Committee Yasushi Kimura. The Kuwaiti delegation includes MPs Nayef Al-Merdas, Osama Al-Shahin, Khaled Al-Shatti, Khaled Al-Otaibi, Majed Al-Mutairi, Mubarak Al-Harees, Mohammad Al-Dallal, Abdulwahab Al-Babtin and Nasser Al-Dousseri.

Gulf crisis

Ghanem said on Wednesday that the Japanese side voiced repeatedly great concerns over the Gulf crisis, but the Kuwaiti side dispelled these fears. This came in Ghanem's speech during a reception held by Kuwaiti Ambassador to Japan that was attended by a host of Japanese MPs, media people and politicians as well as a number of Arab ambassadors accredited in Tokyo and Kuwaiti students.

Ghanem added that Japan's fears came as the GCC states are the largest source of oil, which constitutes a main pillar of Japanese economy. Ghanem said he told the Japanese side, during a meeting, that the crisis would be resolved by GCC brothers, thanks to the collective will of GCC states and exceptional efforts by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. "Energy sources for Japanese industries exist in our region and we hope that Japan would continue depending on the region's crude oil and petroleum products," Ghanem told the attendees.

"I would like to reassure Japanese people that the Gulf region is one nation whatever differences are. And the crisis will be resolved in a short period of time." He pointed out that he received many inquiries and questions by the Japanese side



TOKYO: Japanese Emperor Akihito meets with the visiting Speaker of the Kuwaiti National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem. — KUNA

during the meeting, affirming that he dismissed such concerns. He expressed his confidence in wisdom and mediation efforts by His Highness the Amir aiming to resolve the crisis, indicating that these efforts are supported by the Gulf, regional and international parties.

He reassured the Japanese side that all energy sources for them are safe, and that the Gulf crisis would not affect interests of others. He, meanwhile, stressed that the real danger in the Middle East region is the Israeli occupation of the Arab land in Palestine, calling for resolving the Palestinian cause peacefully in line with the UN resolutions.

He stressed the necessity of settling the Palestinian cause, noting that the presence of all terrorist organizations in the region is temporary. As soon as the cause is resolved, the sources of terrorism are drained, he reiterated. Such organizations use Islam as their slogan; however Islam is a religion of peace that prohibits the murder of any human being regardless of age, sex, religion, race, Ghanem made clear.

More than 95 percent of victims by terrorist organizations are Muslims, he said, referring that terrorism was made abroad in order to distort the image of Islam and Muslims. He urged all Muslims to highlight the true image of Islam. On the visit to Japan, he said the Kuwaiti-Japanese relations trace back to 1958 when the first agreement between the two sides was signed. "We came to a friendly country to build new and deep friendships. We know that Japanese people like work and respect time and quality of products. And they are tolerant," he concluded.

Historic visit

Japanese leading parliamentarians voiced their expectations that Ghanem's visit to Japan becomes a big impetus for further development of the two countries' friendly relations. "I am determined to persevere in my best efforts to further

strengthen Kuwaiti-Japanese ties through increased exchanges among parliament members, with a view to a stable mutually beneficial relationship between the two countries," Chairman of the Japan-Kuwait Parliamentary Friendship League Eisuke Mori said during the reception.

The veteran legislator also lauded Ghanem's lofty aspiration and serious efforts for the peace in the Middle East, as well as the world, offering Japan's involvement in his work in the same spirit. Describing Kuwait as "a very important country for Japan," Mori showed appreciation for Kuwait's stable supply of crude oil to resource-poor Japan. In addition, he conveyed gratitude to the kind assistance Kuwait provided in the aftermath of the 2011 earthquake-tsunami disaster, which gave "the courage and the strength" to the people in the affected areas. Mori also extolled the role played by Ambassador Otaibi as a "bridge," taking both countries' relations to stronger levels.

Meanwhile, the head of the junior party in Japan's ruling coalition asserted significance of the visit by Ghanem and his accompanying MPs. "With their visit, I am delighted to see inter-parliamentary ties between the two countries will further deepen," Komeito Party President Natsuo Yamaguchi said. The leading politician also expressed pleasure with his long-standing relation with the Kuwaiti people as he made a visit to Kuwait in March 1991, soon after the liberation of Kuwait from Iraqi occupation to meet the late Father Amir Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and high-ranking officials. "While in Kuwait, we were told what assistance Kuwait needs from Japan.

"After returning home, I urged parliament to implement Japan's assistance required by the government and the people of Kuwait as soon as possible, which resulted in support for such as medical, environmental and mine-clearing issues," said Yamaguchi. — KUNA

Local

Spy poisoning first chemical attack against European country since WWII: UK envoy

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The British Embassy in Kuwait held a press conference yesterday to comment on news about the expelling of 23 Russian diplomats from the United Kingdom on Wednesday over the poisoning of a former Russian spy on British soil.

UK Ambassador Michael Davenport has condemned the attack on his country by using poisonous substance, which he said is internationally prohibited. A Russian agent and his daughter were found unresponsive on a park bench in the cathedral city of Salisbury on March 4. Davenport indicated that the experts who investigated the incident found that the chemical that was used in the incident is a nerve gas which entered UK through Russia. He added that based on these conclusions, this incident can be described as either one of two things: a direct attack on Britain, or that the Russian government has lost control of its stockpile of nerve gas.

Davenport said that the UK asked Russia to clarify the situation and uncover the circum-

stances of the incident, but the Russians treated this request lightly, explaining that it is the first time a chemical agent was used in an attack in a European country since the end of World War II.

He pointed out that internationally prohibited materials are not allowed to be used even in wars according to the international law, revealing that his country has filed a formal complaint to the International Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, an intergovernmental organization based in The Hague in Netherlands.

Meanwhile, Davenport stressed that the UK Prime Minister Theresa May said that the incident raised tensions between the two countries to a level not seen since the heights of the Cold War. Her statement to Parliament came after Moscow rejected a British deadline for Russia to explain itself over this month's attack on the former spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter.

He affirmed that his government believes that there should be a strong response to this attack, expressing his gratitude to the countries that supported the UK at the UN Security



KUWAIT: UK Ambassador to Kuwait Michael Davenport speaks during a press conference held at the British embassy yesterday. —Photo by Joseph Shagra

Council. He pointed out that the British government announced a new package of measures against Russia including the expulsion of 24 Russian diplomats from an embassy in

London. He pointed out that the fears of the use of chemical weapons is a global concern, citing what he called Russia's failure in monitoring the use of chemical weapons in Syria, stressing what Prime Minister May said that the response to this incident is strong in accordance with the requirements of international law.

"There are many Russians living in Britain, and those who abide by the laws of the country, safety and security are welcome," Davenport said, pointing out that his country does not want to cut dialogue with Russia, but after this attack, they cannot return the relationship between the two countries as it was.

Asked about his assessment of Kuwait's support for Britain in the UN Security Council, he said that they are pleased with the support of Kuwait. Regarding the threats to Muslim residents in Britain on April 3, he said such threats were unacceptable and illegal, expressing confidence that the British authorities would spare no effort in investigating and following up the issue and arresting their promoters.

Foreign minister meets ambassadors

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received yesterday the outgoing Swiss Ambassador to Kuwait Aldo de Luca. Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, during the meeting, praised the envoy for his efforts aimed at boosting mutual cooperation between the State of Kuwait and his country.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled also met with the outgoing Ambassador of Malaysia to Kuwait Dato Ahmad Rozian Abd Ghani. The minister, during the meeting, lauded the diplomat's

efforts during his tenure, and his contributions to boosting the bilateral ties between the two countries. The meetings were also attended by Assistant Foreign Minister for the deputy prime minister and foreign minister's office Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah, and senior officials at the Foreign Ministry.

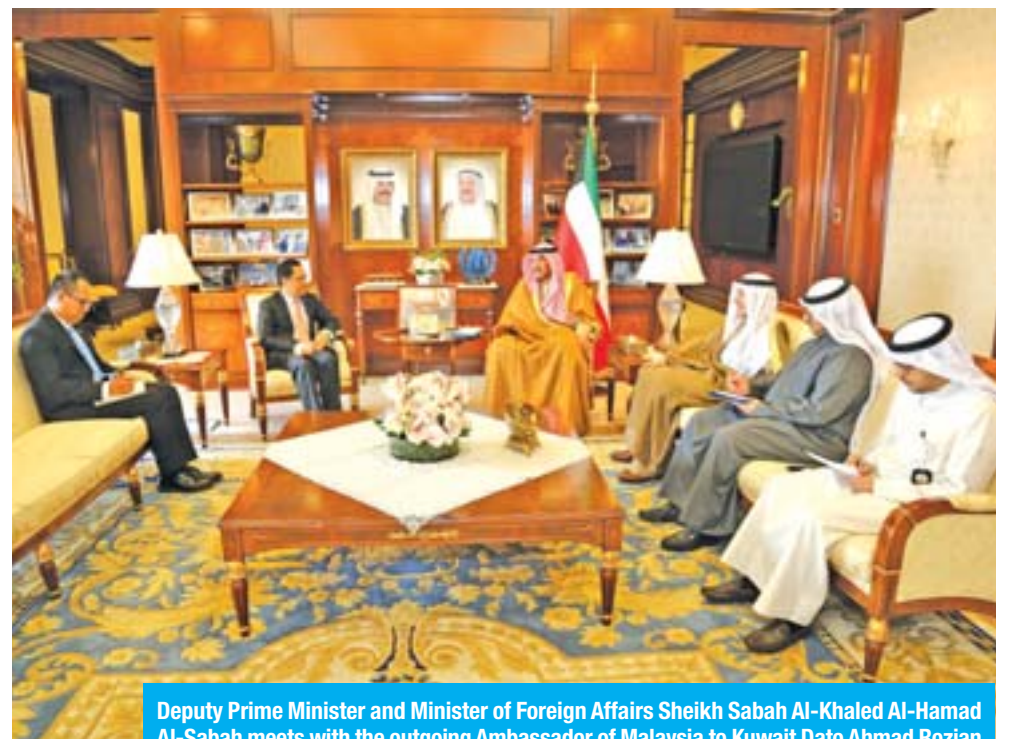
Meanwhile, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled received the credentials of Nicaragua's new Ambassador to Kuwait. During the reception, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled wished the Nicaraguan diplomat best of luck in his duty and more developed and distinguished relations between both friendly nations, the Foreign Ministry said in a press release. The meeting was attended by Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad, the Assistant Foreign Minister for the deputy prime minister and foreign minister's bureau affairs, Ambassador Dhari Al-Ajran and senior officials at the Foreign Ministry. —KUNA



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah receives the Nicaraguan envoy's credentials.



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with the outgoing Swiss Ambassador to Kuwait Aldo de Luca. —KUNA



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with the outgoing Ambassador of Malaysia to Kuwait Dato Ahmad Rozian Abd Ghani.

Local

Hundreds of expat engineers unable to renew iqama due to regulation change

‘KES certificate, accreditation now required for renewal of work visa’

By Aakash Bakaya

KUWAIT: Hundreds of expatriate engineers in the process of renewing their work visas were in disarray yesterday when a new regulation applied by the Public Authority for Manpower was suddenly enforced.

The regulation which was circulated to all labor departments earlier this week stated that expatriate engineers will not be able to renew their work visas unless they obtain a no-objection certificate (NOC) from the Kuwait Society of Engineers (KSE). To obtain the NOC, the engineers must have graduated from a university that is accredited and is on the list of accredited universities and courses on the KES master list.

Since Tuesday, hundreds of expatriate engineers have flocked to the KES premises in Bnaid El Gar to seek help in obtaining the NOC. Nawaf Aboobacker, a mechanical engineer whose work visa expires soon provided Kuwait Times with a first-hand account of the situation at the center. “I was worried when they said that the procedure for new applications was only open in the evening and as expected the lines were massive with more than 350 people all clamoring for more information,” he said.

“I stood in the line for over an hour and when I finally reached the end, there was only one lone staff member doing the application process. I had provided all my college information and even though my college was accredited, my course (Mechanical Engineering) was not. When I asked what I am supposed to do now - I was told to go back to my college in India and check with them.”

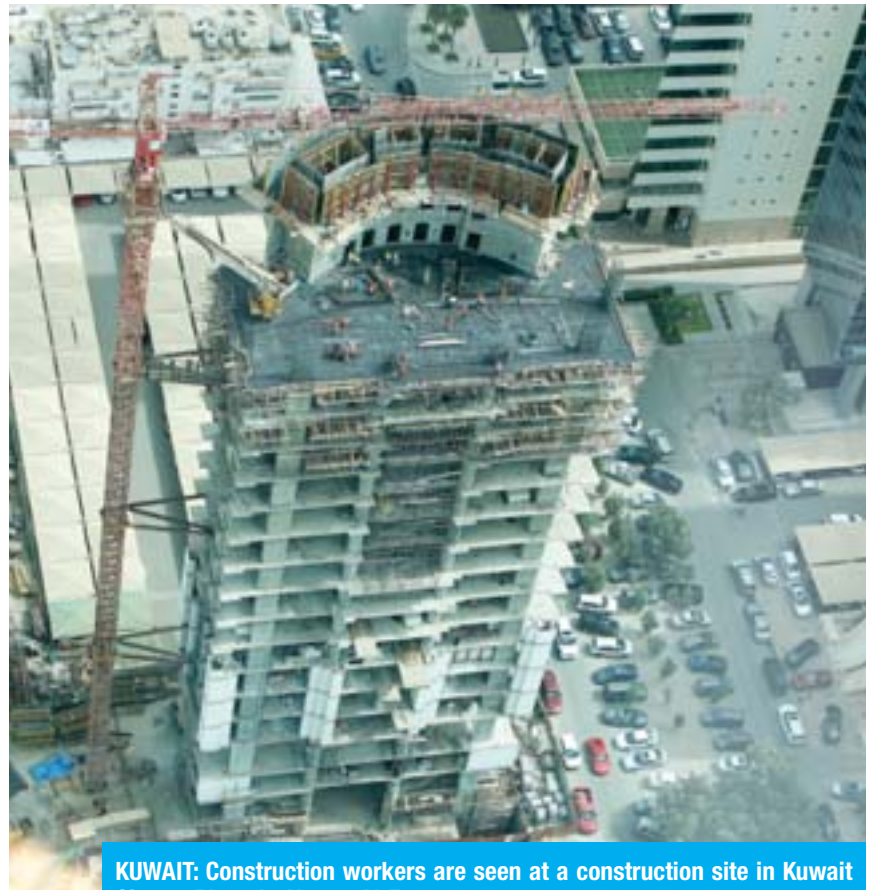
Kuwait Times also spoke with the Kuwait Engineering Forum (KEF), an engineering society made up of over 1,400 engineers from India. They verified that

they were facing similar issues with the new regulation as not a lot of colleges in India are accredited under the NBA accreditation system currently being used by the KSE. One KEF member stated that this issue will affect nearly 60 percent of the Indian engineers working in Kuwait.

Moreover, even if someone has an engineering degree from an accredited college, they must still prepare for and write an exam in the KSE itself before acquiring the no-objection certificate. Already members of the Jordanian engineering society are making plans to take the exam as a group. Both the exam and the preparation classes for the exam must be paid by the individual, though it is possible some employers will cover the cost.

The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) did not provide any further information about the issue when contacted by Kuwait Times yesterday and stated that an official announcement will be made sometime next week. The official who spoke with Kuwait Times confirmed the new regulation and noted that it mainly applies to expat engineers working in the private sector. The PAM official also mentioned that this circular is a kind of cooperation between it and local NGOs and that it may be a first step in applying similar rules for other professions in the future. Kuwait Times also contacted the Kuwait Society of Engineers but was unable to reach anyone.

Frustration has been growing among the expatriate community in Kuwait in the wake of a series of governmental decisions made in recent weeks, which they believe falls under a policy to reduce the number of foreigners in the country. Many engineers have expressed fear of facing a situation where they might be forced to leave the country if further complications arise from the latest regulation.



KUWAIT: Construction workers are seen at a construction site in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Health fees increase to stay

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health prepared a report that includes a comprehensive evaluation of the decision to increase health fees on expatriates, and the extent of its pros and cons. The ministry will make its decision based on this evaluation on whether to continue with the increases that were enforced in October 2017 or not, said sources familiar with the issue.

The report has shown that the decision to increase fees contributed to enhancing services for both citizen and expat, and gave doctors better time to attend to their patients, while the number of patients dropped by at least 30 percent per day, particularly at polyclinics.

Based on these results, the ministry is not likely to revert the fees to the previous rates, unless a future study suggests that it has negatively affected its efforts to provide proper medical services. Health Minister Dr Basel Al-Sabah had stated earlier that the decision to increase the fees is under review, and if any harm is found, it will be either revoked or adjusted.

Sheep's head in student's bag

KUWAIT: A high school student found the head of a slaughtered sheep in her bag, with a piece of paper left in its mouth reading “it is a sheep's head today, but it will be yours tomorrow.” Girls inside the classroom located in a Mubarak Al-Kabeer school became terrified when the student removed the blood-stained head from her bag, and some of them even fainted, according to sources. The school principal was notified, and she instructed that the head be placed in garbage bag and thrown outside the school's fence, according to the sources.

Director of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Zone Mansour Al-Daihani visited the school and instructed that the principal be sent to the legal affairs department for investigations due to lack of supervision, and for her responsibility for the lack of operating cameras on campus. The student's father was about to inform police about the incident out of fear for his daughter, but officials at the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Educational Zone convinced him to wait for the internal investigation's results and promised to punish the culprit.

Prostitutes arrested

Police arrested two women who came to Kuwaiti to practice

prostitution inside an apartment they rented in Jabriya. Detectives had launched an investigation after a video clip appeared on social media showing two women who said that they were Czech and came to Kuwait to offer sexual services in exchange of KD 400 per night. An undercover agent was sent to them, and after he gave a signal to detectives, they stormed the place and arrested the prostitutes.

Drug addict

A drug addict claimed that he used drugs because he felt depressed after receiving some bad news from his home country. The Egyptian man was pulled over after police noticed him driving erratically, and they discovered that he was driving under the influence of drugs. Police found drugs and paraphernalia with him. He was sent to Drugs Control General Department.

Fake detective

Criminal detectives are looking for a man who impersonated a police detective and tried to sneak out of his responsibility over a traffic accident. The accident took place in Hawally when a sports utility vehicle (SUV) collided with a sedan. The SUV's driver came out and headed to the other vehicle's driver, identified himself as a police detective and asked for his ID and that of his companion on grounds that he had obstructed traffic. The two men grew suspicious and decided to call police, which prompted the suspect to escape. — Translated by Kuwait Times from the Arabic press



Philippine poor pay the price for 'divorce ban'

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Rape 'used as weapon of war' in Syria

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BEKAA VALLEY: Aziza, a Syrian refugee and former child bride, poses for a photo with her baby in Bekaa Valley, Lebanon. —Reuters

Poverty drives refugee girls to wed

'I have nothing,' cries Syrian child bride

BEKAA VALLEY: As 17-year-old Aziza sat in her dark tent in a refugee camp, she rocked her baby while her tiny hands adjusted his pacifier, looking down at all she had left from two broken marriages. Aziza's parents arranged for her to marry her cousin when she was 14. Her mother, Rashida, said it was normal for girls her age to become brides in their Syrian tribe as it protected them from harassment and reduced pressure on the family budget.

"I regret that I got married," Aziza, who declined to give her full name, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation as her eyes welled up with tears. "The girls that are my age are now studying. They have ambition. I have nothing. I am totally destroyed." A growing number of girls among the 1.5 million Syrian refugees who have fled to Lebanon since 2011 are becoming wives amid rising poverty, aid groups said on the eighth anniversary of the conflict.

Around one in five Syrian girls aged between 15 and 19 in Lebanon is married, according to the United Nations children's agency (UNICEF), which fears more young girls will be married off by families that cannot afford food, rent and medicines. More than three quarters of the refugees in Lebanon are living below the poverty line and struggling to survive on less than \$4 per day, UNICEF said. Kafa, a

local rights group, is calling on Lebanon to pass a law to make 18 the minimum age for marriage.

There is no minimum age of marriage in Lebanon. Religious communities' personal status laws can allow girls younger than 15 to marry, according to Human Rights Watch. The rights group said Lebanon is behind many other countries in the region that have set 18 as the minimum marriage age, including Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates. "It is escalating ... because they are living in a very closed community," said Salwa Al Homsy, a spokeswoman for Kafa. "The parents, they cannot afford to support their children."

Gossip

Aziza lives with her mother, father and five siblings in a small tent covered in plastic sheets in eastern Lebanon's fertile Bekaa Valley - home to more than 300,000 refugees, the most densely populated area of refugees in Lebanon. They escaped their

hometown of Aleppo five years ago. "My life in Syria was beautiful," said Aziza, whose small-frame and adolescent features make her look younger than her years - a striking image of a child holding a child.

"I used to go to school ... and wanted to be a doctor," said Aziza whose favorite subject was Arabic. Her father and two of her sisters earn about 6,000 Lebanese Pounds (\$4) a day, picking grapes and potatoes seasonally. "I have four daughters, I can't give them everything they need," said Rashida, adding that poverty was one reason they decided that Aziza should marry her 17-year-old cousin.

Aziza said she did not oppose the marriage at first, but she divorced after one year because of troubles with her mother-in-law and moved back into her parents' tent. When other refugees in her community started to "gossip" about her because she was divorced, she said the shame drove her into a second marriage, aged 16, to a 30-year-old Syrian man. "I didn't like him. I only married him because people were talking,"

she said from inside her family's tent. Aziza said she left the man after about a year because he physically abused her.

"The younger a girl gets married, the more at risk she is of domestic violence," said Jihane Latrous, a UNICEF child protection specialist. "It is an extremely worrying factor because they aren't able to deal with such situations." Nearly 35 percent of women aged 20 to 24 in Western Bekaa surveyed in 2016 were married before reaching 18, according to the UN Population Fund (UNFPA). Beyond setting a minimum age for marriage, education of girls is key to break the cycle of poverty, said Latrous. "The less this young generation is educated, the less they are able, themselves, to bring up their children in a way that will empower their children," she said.

As the oldest girl in her family, Aziza was adamant that her sisters learn from how she "suffered" and do not marry until they are 20 or older. "Don't get married and finish school," is her message to fellow Syrian refugee girls. As Aziza looked down at her five-month-old son, she imagined a better life for him. "When he gets older, I want him to be educated and not be like me, not knowing how to read and write. I want him to know Arabic and English," she said with a smile. —Reuters



Girl marries cousin at 14

US sees better Iranian behaviour in the Gulf

No 'unsafe or unprofessional' interactions at sea

MANAMA: The Iranian military's behaviour in the Gulf has changed "across the board" in recent months, the US Navy said yesterday, after years of tensions in the busy waterway. Commander Bill Urban, spokesman for the Navy's Bahrain-based Fifth Fleet, said there had been no "unsafe or unprofessional" interactions with the Iranians at sea since August 14, 2017 when an Iranian drone with no lights on flew close to US aircraft operating in the Gulf.

It "is a substantial period time since then, and something that we think is great," Urban told reporters. Last year and in 2016, the US Navy complained repeatedly about the behaviour of Iranian Revolutionary Guard vessels, which would often shadow and steer towards US ships. In at least one incident, US sailors had to fire flares and warning shots before the Iranians turned away.

Urban said that since then, the Iranians have stopped approaching so closely. "We have seen an across-the-board change in behaviour," Urban said. "I don't nec-

essarily have a reason for that but it's pretty clear that it's something they are consciously doing." The change comes amid increased rhetoric from Washington about Iran's "malign influence" in the region and US President Donald Trump's persistent railing against the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. The Fifth Fleet and its associated task forces patrol the Gulf continuously and inspect some of the ships passing through.

In 2016, navy personnel seized weapons, including machine guns and rocket launchers, they suspected were headed from Iran to Yemen. Urban said task forces this year have seized record amounts of heroin, some of which may have been from the Taliban, Afghanistan's biggest militant group. The Iranian Revolutionary Guards is a paramilitary force that answers directly to the Islamic republic's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. In January 2016, the Iranians briefly captured the crew of two small US patrol boats that strayed into Iranian waters. The 10 US sailors were released 24 hours later.—AFP



AT SEA: Sailors lower a jet engine in the jet shop of the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71), as Theodore Roosevelt and its carrier strike group are deployed to the US 5th Fleet area of operations in support of maritime security operations to reassure allies and partners and preserve the freedom of navigation and the free flow of commerce in the Gulf. —AFP

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International

Foreign powers obstruct more Assad gains in Syria

US, Turkey deepen influence in north, east

BEIRUT: Syria's war is reaching a point where President Bashar Al-Assad will not be able to win back much more territory without risking conflicts with foreign powers that have sent military forces to the country. The expected conquest of eastern Ghouta will be another milestone in Assad's effort to crush the rebellion as the war enters its eighth year with Russia and Iran still firmly behind him. Assad's foreign enemies have condemned the assault but failed to stop it, as was seen in Homs, Aleppo and other areas where pro-government forces crushed outgunned rebels.

But the map of the conflict suggests difficulties ahead for Assad in his quest to recover "every inch" of a country fractured by a war that has killed half a million people and driven 5.4 million abroad. The US military is in much of the east and northeast, which is controlled by Kurdish groups that want autonomy from Damascus. It has used force to defend the territory from pro-Assad forces. Turkey has sent forces into the northwest to counter those same Kurdish groups, carving out a buffer zone where anti-Assad rebels have regrouped. In the southwest, where rebels hold territory at the Israeli and Jordanian border, Assad faces the risk of conflict with Israel, which wants his Iranian-backed allies kept well away from the frontier and has mounted air strikes in Syria.

Some believe a divided Syria may stabilise for some time - perhaps years - with Assad

forced to accept a de facto partition and no prospect of a negotiated peace. Others fear further escalation involving Turkey, the United States, Israel, Iran and Russia. "I don't think victory is as near as the Syrian government perceives it to be," said David Lesch, an expert on Syria, noting that Assad was now facing "a diplomatic quagmire". Assad believes he can "wait out" foreign powers, notably Turkey and the United States, but it is going to be a very long time, if ever, before he can extend real control over the rest of the country, Lesch said.

Confidence in Damascus

The conflict grew out of popular protests against Assad and evolved into a violent insurgency and civil war after the government responded with force. It has laid waste to swathes of Syria, helped the rise of Islamic State, fed sectarianism, and seen the deadliest use of chemical weapons since the 1980s. Backed by Iran and Russia, Assad has recovered ground from rebels whose supporters - the United States, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey - never gave them the weapons to defeat him.

Reflecting confidence in Damascus, first lady Asma Al-Assad, has stepped back into public life. She has visited special needs children and accompanied Assad to meet the wounded. Assad has appeared on the currency for the first time. Any serious discussion about Assad's future has been off the table for some time: West-



HAZEH: A general view shows smoke billowing in Haze, in the rebel enclave of Eastern Ghouta on the outskirts of Damascus yesterday during reported shelling by Syrian government forces. —AFP

territory all the way to the Iraqi border from Islamic State's crumbling "caliphate". Assad now holds 58 percent of Syria, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, including the main cities, the coast, and an expanse of desert west of the Euphrates. The government is now trying to finish off the rebellion in western Syria. The defeat of eastern Ghouta may hasten the demise of remaining rebel pockets near Dam-

mander said, speaking on condition of anonymity. Assad's aims include reopening the crossing to Jordan, a vital trade route. The rebels in southern Syria are backed by Jordan, the United States and - according to Syrian officials - Israel. The shooting down of an Israeli F-16 as it returned from a bombing run in Syria last month highlighted the risks of conflict between Iran and Israel in Syria. —Reuters

Rape used as weapon of war in Syria

GENEVA: Syrian government forces and allied militias have raped and sexually assaulted women, girls and men in a campaign to punish opposition communities - acts that constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, UN investigators said yesterday. In a major report, they found that opposition groups in Syria's protracted civil war had also committed crimes of sexual violence and torture although these were "considerably less common".

The report also said Islamic State (IS) and other armed extremist groups have executed women, men and children on charges of adultery, forced girls into marriage and persecuted homosexuals. The 29-page report by the UN Commission of Inquiry, issued as Syria enters its eighth year of war, is based on 454 interviews with survivors, relatives, eyewitnesses, defectors, lawyers and medical staff. Government forces raped civilians of both sexes during house searches and ground operations in the early stages of the conflict, and later at checkpoints and detention facilities, it said. The youngest known victim was a nine-year-old girl.

"Rape of women and girls was documented in 20 government political and military intelligence branches, and rape of men and boys was documented in 15 branches," the report by the U.N. war crimes investigators said. The independent experts led by Paulo Pinheiro - who have compiled confidential lists of suspects since 2011 - did not name individual perpetrators but said they had documented "numerous" cases of rapes by high-level officers. —Reuters

Syria regime's blitz of Eastern Ghouta

BEIRUT: The Syrian government launched a ferocious assault on a rebel enclave outside Damascus on February 18, saying it wanted to crush Islamist and jihadist groups. The onslaught has since retaken nearly 60 percent of Eastern Ghouta and killed more than 1,220 civilians—a fifth of them children, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Here is a summary of events:

New round of rockets, raids

Government forces open a Russian-backed campaign against Eastern Ghouta with more than 260 rockets and intense air raids. The strikes continue on February 19, when 127 civilians are killed in the highest single day death toll in Eastern Ghouta since 2013, when it was first besieged by the army. On February 20, Russian air strikes reportedly target Eastern Ghouta for the first time in three months, hitting the key regional hospital in Arbin.

'Hell on Earth'

On February 21, raids target several areas and aircraft drop barrel bombs crude, improvised munitions that cause indiscriminate damage. The Kremlin denies carrying out air strikes. UN chief Antonio Guterres calls for an immediate ceasefire, saying the region's 400,000 residents are living in "hell on Earth".

'Another Aleppo'

On February 22, Russia presses at the United Nations for a negotiated withdrawal of rebel fighters and their families, like the one that saw the government retake full control of Aleppo

in December 2016. Syria's UN representative Bashar Al-Jaafari confirms the comparison, saying: "Yes, Eastern Ghouta will become another Aleppo." On February 24, the UN Security Council unanimously adopts a resolution demanding a 30-day ceasefire to allow for aid deliveries and medical evacuations. But new air strikes and shelling batter the enclave for the following two days.

Daily 'pause' ordered

On February 26, Moscow announces President Vladimir Putin has ordered a daily five-hour "humanitarian pause" from February 27 and the opening of protected corridors to allow people to leave. Hours after the measure is meant to take effect, the United Nations says fighting has continued, making relief operations impossible.

Noose tightens

A first attempt at delivering aid to the enclave is made on March 5 but it is cut short due to heavy shelling. Intense air strikes by the regime and its Russian ally kill 91 civilians on March 7, the Observatory says, reporting at least 60 people suffering from breathing difficulties following strikes on the towns of Sakba and Hammuriyeh. The Doctors Without Borders (MSF) charity speaks of an acute emergency in the enclave and says 15 of the 20 medical facilities it supports have been hit by air strikes or shelling.

Despite the bombardment, on March 9 food aid is distributed in Douma, the largest town in Eastern Ghouta. The following day the regime cuts off Douma from the rest of the enclave, managing to split the region into three: Douma and its surroundings in the north, Harasta in the west, and Sakba and Hammuriyeh in the south. On March 11, it captures the town of Medeira, which lies between the three zones. —AFP

International

Egypt's tourism rebounds ahead of presidential poll

Sisi vows to wipe out jihadists

HURGHADA: Egypt is seeing a promising rebound in tourism following devastating jihadist attacks, in welcome news to the government of President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi as he seeks re-election this month. In the eastern Red Sea city of Hurghada, tourists lounge on sunbeds on the beach or play volleyball as boats carrying divers pass by. Among them is Bent Skovboe from Denmark, a 77-year-old who says he has visited Egypt more than 75 times. "If there was only Red Sea for snorkelling, I will come, but they also have pyramids in Cairo, temples in Luxor, the Nile and Aswan, and the people are very friendly," says Skovboe, decked in a swimsuit with a cold drink in hand.

Already in decline after the toppling of longtime ruler Hosni Mubarak in 2011, Egypt's tourism industry was dealt a devastating blow in 2015 when jihadists bombed a Russian airliner carrying holidaymakers from the Red Sea resort of Sharm El-Sheikh, killing all 224 on board. The Islamic State group, which has killed hundreds of policemen and soldiers in an insurgency based mainly in North Sinai, claimed responsibility for the airline attack.

Sisi, who is running virtually unopposed in the March 26-28 election, has pledged to wipe out the jihadists, saying such attacks pose an existential threat to the state. Talking about attacks on tourism

earlier this year, Sisi said: "When I say the goal is to bring down the state, you have to know how that is done. When a certain sector is targeted, he (an attacker) knows what he's doing." IS, now encircled in its Sinai strongholds, has pledged to redouble efforts to attack tourists and the industry is a barometer of the stability Sisi has promised to restore.

'Demand very robust'

The year after the attack on the Russian airliner was "one of the worst years for tourism," says Hisham El Demery, the chairman of the Egyptian Tourism Promotion Board. That year, Egypt received 5.4 million tourists, down from 14.7 million in 2010. Tourism revenue, a primary source of foreign income, fell to \$3.8 billion in the fiscal year ending June 2016, down from \$11.6 billion in the year ending June 2010, according to the central bank.

Tourism revenue, a primary source of foreign income

Last year, the number of visitors was up to 8.3 million people, according to official figures. Travel agencies, hotel managers, and diving centers told AFP that reservations are rising, especially in Red Sea destinations such as Hurghada and Marsa Alam. "There's a very large increase in reservations this year and the demand for Egypt is very robust, especially in the German market," says Ali Okda, CEO of Travco Travel Company of Egypt, a leading local agency.

Mohamed Aboustate, general manager of Mah-



HURGHADA, Egypt: Tourists spend time at the beach in Egypt's Red Sea resort of Hurghada. Egypt is seeing a promising rebound in tourism following devastating jihadist attacks, in welcome news to the government of the president as he seeks re-election this month. —AFP

mya, one of Hurghada's top attractions, said this rebound took place mainly after "tourism companies and hotels made a big effort... spending a lot on compelling advertising campaigns." Mahmya is a 10,000-square-metre day-resort project on Giftun island. Visitors take a boat to the island, spend the day on its beach, snorkel along its coast or scuba dive, and head back to mainland Hurghada by night. Increasing stability has been a factor in the rebound, says Marc Zafra, head of destination management at Luxair Tours, the tour operator of Luxembourg's

national carrier. As demand rises, Luxair Tours plans to double flights to Hurghada—currently one per week—by the end of March, while they already "have an increase of 250 percent compared to last year" in bookings, says Zafra. More than 70 percent of Egypt's tourists arrive on charter flights, run by operators such as Luxair Tours, according to Demery. "Tourism's revival will probably continue as long as there are no large-scale terrorist incidents," says Mostafa Kamel al-Sayed, a political science professor at Cairo University. —AFP

Israel hits Hamas posts in response to bombs

GAZA: Israel's military hit Hamas posts in the Gaza Strip yesterday after Palestinians set off two bombs near the border fence, the military said, with no casualties reported. Israel's military also said it suspected based on surveillance video there was "an attempt" to fire rocket-propelled grenades toward its forces, but nothing was hit. If confirmed, it would be the first time such weapons were used by Gaza militants against Israeli forces since a 2014 war, army spokesman Jonathan Conricus said.

A security source from Hamas, the Islamist movement which runs the Gaza Strip, said that one Israeli round hit an observation post near the border, causing damage but no casualties. He said that earlier, shortly after sunrise, there were explosions near the border. Israel said two improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were detonated some 100 metres away from the fence on the Gaza side.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the blasts and Israel said it could not say who was behind it, though it held Hamas responsible as the de facto power in the Palestinian enclave. Israel said the IEDs were detonated "toward" soldiers in a vehicle on the Israeli side

of the fence near the northeastern Gaza Strip at around 6:00 am. "It appears that there was also an attempt to fire RPG rockets toward the force," Conricus said. "We don't have the final confirmation of that yet, but that is currently our working assumption."

Israel's army then hit what it said were four military positions in the strip belonging to Hamas and Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad with tank fire and another with air power, Conricus said. Israel also warned Hamas not to use civilian protests that occur near the border fence as cover to carry out attacks against its forces. Beginning on March 30, Gazans are planning to erect hundreds of tents near the Israeli border for a six-week show of support for Palestinian refugees. On February 17, four Israeli soldiers were wounded by an improvised explosive device on the border, sparking intense military retaliation.

Israel warplanes attacked 18 "terror targets belonging to Hamas" in Gaza in response to the blast, which severely wounded two of the soldiers, and a subsequent Palestinian rocket attack on southern Israel. The following day, troops shot dead two Palestinian teenagers near the border, Gaza medical sources said. The Israeli army said at the time that soldiers fired "warning shots" at a number of Palestinians approaching the border fence "in a suspicious manner" but could not confirm Palestinian casualties. Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza have fought three wars since 2008. The strip has been under an Israeli blockade for around a decade. —AFP

After turmoil at home, Egypt struggles to revive power abroad

CAIRO: When Saudi Arabia's Mohammed bin Salman chose Egypt for his first official trip abroad since becoming crown prince, Cairo draped its streets with banners declaring the two countries to be "the beating heart" of the Middle East. The prince paid tribute to Cairo's importance, saying "when Egypt rises, so can the whole region". "I prayed to God that Egypt would not collapse," he told editors in Cairo, referring to the upheaval which followed Egypt's 2011 popular uprising. "What I saw today confirmed to me that God answered my prayer." But the remarks by the powerful Saudi heir this month also showed how Egypt, once the leader of the Arab world, has yet to reclaim its position while power and influence shift east to wealthy and assertive Gulf oil exporters.

Gulf Arab states such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are increasingly engaged in foreign forays, deploying money and arms to intervene in regional conflicts and to shore up struggling allies such as Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, whose forces are fighting an Islamic State insurgency in the Sinai peninsula. After stagnating in the last years of former president Hosni Mubarak, Egypt saw

its regional standing erode further after Mubarak's 2011 overthrow and the political turbulence, economic crisis and Islamist attacks which followed.

Supporters of Sisi, who seeks re-election this month, say the former general could bring security and revive Egypt's pivotal role in mediating Middle East peace talks. Diplomats say, however, that as long as Egypt faces internal security problems and the region is volatile, Cairo will focus on issues close to home such as militants in Gaza and Libya, and an Ethiopian dam that threatens its water supply. Thorny topics such as Palestinian-Israeli peace will take a back seat. "In certain periods of time there is no question that we determined war and peace in the Middle East," said diplomat Nabil Fahmy, who was a young official when Egypt became the first Arab state to make peace with Israel in 1978. Egypt's upheaval has meant that recent years have been challenging for Cairo's diplomacy, said Fahmy, was foreign minister for a year after Sisi took power in 2013 and also served as Egypt's ambassador to Washington under Mubarak. "When you have ... been through a process of transition ... people look at you and say 'Well, you know, you're busy', therefore you can't really have that kind of influence," he said. Sisi overthrew Mohamed Mursi, Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood president, in 2013 after widespread protests and is all but guaranteed to win the March 26-28 vote against an opponent who has praised, not challenged, him. —Reuters

International

Russia to expel UK diplomats as row over spy attack escalates

US, France offer support to Britain

MOSCOW: Russia will soon expel British diplomats in retaliation for Britain's decision to kick out 23 Russian envoys over a chemical attack on a former Russian double agent, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said yesterday. In London, Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson ratcheted up the rhetoric against Russia, accusing it of glorying in the attack on Sergei Skripal, which he described as a way of scaring anyone who stood up to President Vladimir Putin.

Britain says Russia is responsible for the poisoning with a Soviet-era 'Novichok' nerve agent of Skripal, 66, and his daughter Yulia, 33. They were found unconscious on March 4 in the city of Salisbury in southern England and remain critically ill in hospital.

Moscow denies any involvement. The Kremlin said the British position was irresponsible and not backed up by evidence. It said Britain would not have to wait long for Russia's response. Lavrov was quoted by the official news agency RIA as saying the accusations were unacceptable and that British diplomats would be expelled.

But in a series of British media interviews yesterday, Johnson said the evidence of Russian guilt was "overwhelming" because only Moscow had access to the poison used and a motive for harming Sergei Skripal. "There is something in the kind of smug, sar-

castic response that we've heard from the Russians that to me betokens their fundamental guilt," he told the BBC. "They want to simultaneously deny it and yet at the same time to glory in it." Johnson said the attack was a way for Putin to send a message to anyone considering taking a stand against it that 'You do that, you are going to die'.

Targeting Russian money

A former agent of the GRU, Russia's military intelligence agency, Skripal betrayed dozens of Russian agents to Britain before being arrested in Moscow and jailed in 2006. He was freed as part of a spy swap deal in 2010 and took refuge in Britain. At home, the British government has been under pressure from lawmakers

**Britain says
Russia is
responsible for
the poisoning**

and media to show it is getting tough on Russia, with some experts saying that despite the rhetoric the response did not go far enough to bother Putin. Johnson defended the measures announced on Wednesday and suggested that there could be further consequences for wealthy Russians with assets in Britain.

"We will go after the money and actually we are going after the money," he said, adding that the National Crime Agency and Economic Crimes Unit were investigating a wide range of individuals. He declined to give details, citing legal reasons. "What



SALISBURY: Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May (right) talks with Wiltshire Police's Chief Constable Kier Pritchard in Salisbury, southern England yesterday, as she is shown the area where former Russian double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia were discovered on March 4, following an apparent nerve agent attack. —AFP

people want to see is some of the very rich people ... whose wealth can be attributed to their relationship with Vladimir Putin, it may be that the law agencies, that the police will be able to put unexplained wealth orders on them, to bring them to justice for their acts

of gross corruption," he said. Johnson also said he had been heartened by strong expressions of support from the United States and other allies—although it remains unclear whether there will be a coordinated international response to the Novichok attack. —Reuters

US state plans to use nitrogen gas for executions

CHICAGO: The US state of Oklahoma plans to become the first in the country to use nitrogen gas to execute condemned prisoners, law enforcement officials announced Wednesday. The state intends to adopt the new execution method as prison officials are unable to acquire the necessary drugs for lethal injections—the method currently employed by all American states that carry out the death penalty. States have struggled to obtain lethal injection drugs as manufacturers and suppliers increasingly have shunned them under pressure from death penalty opponents. The plan would see Oklahoma resume executions for the first time in three years, after they were halted following a series of mishaps.

A grand jury investigating those errors, including the administering of the wrong drug during a 2015 lethal injection, recommended the use of nitrogen gas as an alternative, according to The Oklahoman newspaper. State lawmakers then passed a law approving the gas's use. "Using an inert gas will be effective, simple to administer, easy to obtain and requires no complex medical procedures," Oklahoma Attorney General Mike Hunter said. —AFP

'#ENOUGH': US students stage walkout against gun violence

WASHINGTON: From Washington to Los Angeles, students walked out of US classrooms Wednesday in the largest grassroots protest against gun violence seen in years, demanding action one month to the day after a deadly shooting rampage at a Florida high school. Hundreds of teenagers from Washington area schools gathered outside the White House, holding up signs reading "Books Not Bullets" and "Protect People Not Guns" before marching on the US Capitol.

"We want to show Congress and politicians we are not standing by, we are not silent anymore," said 17-year-old Brenna Levitan, who was at the protest with her mother. "Parkland is going to be the last school shooting." Students in dozens of other cities in all 50 states staged similar demonstrations and observed a moment of silence to honor the 14 students and three adult staff killed a month ago at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

In Washington, several hours after the protests broke up, US lawmakers took their first significant step to address school gun violence since the Parkland shooting. The House of Representatives voted 407-10 to fund violence prevention measures at schools including boosting security, mental health screening and creating anonymous reporting systems so students can report threats. But Congress has yet to tackle the more controversial

aspects of gun control demanded in the wake of the Parkland shooting. These include expanded background checks for gun sales, a ban on assault weapons and raising the minimum age for some firearms purchases.

'We want change'

Dressed in the school's maroon colors, students at Stoneman Douglas visited memorials to their slain classmates and hugged and cried. At a high school in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, students marched to the football field and assembled in a heart formation to pay tribute to the victims. In Los Angeles and other cities, teenagers spelled out the protest slogan "#ENOUGH" by lying down on the ground on sports fields.

In Washington, students were joined by Democratic members of Congress at the Capitol. Speakers denounced the National Rifle Association (NRA), the powerful US gun lobby, and demanded that Congress enact tougher laws on gun ownership. "You, the young people of this country, are leading the nation," Senator Bernie Sanders told the crowd. "People are sick and tired of gun violence and the time is now for all of us, together, to stand up to the NRA."

In New York, students—many of whom wore orange, the color of gun control—walked out from more than 50 schools. "We want change," and "Am I next?" they chanted. Press secretary for New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, Eric Phillips, said "just over 100,000" students took part from the city's schools. The "National School Walkout" was intended to last for 17 minutes, one for each victim. But tens of thousands of students around the country decided to skip school entirely and protest instead.

At the White House, 17-year-old Farah Parmah, who goes to Thomas Wootton High School in Rockville, Maryland, said President Donald Trump's controversial proposal to arm and train teachers "is just a bad, bad idea." "Gun violence has taken way too many lives this year," said Parmah, who is 17. —AFP

Putin rides 'Russia First' wave towards victory

Russia holds presidential election on Sunday

MOSCOW: Russian voters are set to propel Vladimir Putin to another term as president in an election on Sunday, giving him credit for standing up for Russia against Western governments that view him as a dangerous autocrat. Opinion polls show Putin, 65, with a commanding election lead, all but guaranteeing him another term that will take him to nearly a quarter century in power—a longevity among Kremlin leaders second only to Josef Stalin.

The only thing that could dampen Putin's poll triumph is if voter apathy at a predictable contest leads to a low turnout, or if the minority of Russians who vocally oppose him take to the streets to protest against what they see as an undemocratic farce. In an election campaign where Putin has benefited from glowing coverage on mainstream television, he has cast himself as the only person who can defend Russia's national interests in a hostile world.

"We will withstand this onslaught," Svetlana Andrus, a ribbon round her neck in the colours of the Russian flag, said during a rally in Moscow in support of Putin. "We will support our country and Vladimir Vladimirovich (Putin)." Putin's supporters point to Russia's military intervention

in Syria and its annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region in 2014 as proof of his patriotic credentials. They say US and European sanctions imposed over the Ukraine crisis are a price worth paying. A row with Britain over allegations the Kremlin used a nerve agent to poison a Russian double agent in a sleepy English town—denied by Moscow—has not dented his standing.

Boycott campaign

A March 9 survey by state-run pollster VTsIOM gave Putin, who was first elected president in 2000, support of 69 percent. His nearest rival Pavel Grudinin, the Communist Party's candidate, is on just 7 percent. Another candidate, Ksenia Sobchak, a TV presenter and family

Western countries see Russia leader as dangerous autocrat



friend of Putin, has upended expectations by robustly criticising the Kremlin, but she has only 2 percent support, the same survey showed. Kremlin officials acknowledge that Putin's dominance could turn people off voting. A low turnout would dent his legitimacy within the ruling elite, founded in part on his ability to command popular support.

In Yekaterinburg, an industrial city in the Ural mountains, unemployed 38-year-old Sergei



SEVASTOPOL: Supporters of Russian President Vladimir Putin gather for a rally to celebrate the fourth anniversary of Russia's annexation of Crimea at Sevastopolis Nakhimov Square. Russia will vote for President on March 18, 2018. — AFP

Khaziev described the election as a "circus performance which for some reason is described as elections... I won't turn out this time." The first politician in years to challenge the Kremlin's grip on power, Alexei Navalny, is not on the ballot. He was barred because of a corruption conviction he says was fabricated by the Kremlin. Navalny, who uses social media to whip up anger among

his mainly young followers over official corruption, is pushing an election boycott. "Our boycott campaign is working," he said this week. As evidence, Navalny pointed to a drive by officials to encourage people to turn out to vote by offering discounted food at polling stations. He also said state officials were applying pressure on civil servants and students to vote. — Reuters

Italy remembers Moro as the Cold War-style tensions rise in Britain

ROME: While Great Britain reels from the nerve agent attack on former spy Sergei Skripal that echoes the espionage brinkmanship of the Cold War, yesterday Italy remembers its highest-profile victim of the ideological battle between East and West. On March 16, 1978, two-time former prime minister Aldo Moro was ambushed in Rome by far-left Red Brigades terrorists while on his way to the Italian parliament to participate in a confidence vote on a new government led by fellow former centre-right Christian Democrat (DC) premier Giulio Andreotti.

The Red Brigades killed Moro's five police bodyguards and fled with the DC leader, taking him to a hideout where he would be tried by a "people's court" composed of his kidnappers. Found guilty of being the architect of the "historic compromise" that led to the Italian Communist Party (PCI) lending support to Andreotti's government, and failing to get imprisoned terrorists released, the Red Brigades murdered Moro. On May 9, after 55 days of captivity his body was found, riddled with bullets, in the boot of a car parked equidistantly between the headquarters of the DC and PCI in the centre of Rome.

Italy's 9/11

"It was Italy's 11th of September," wrote Ezio Mauro, editor of daily La Repubblica, on Wednesday. "These are places that still seem to speak about what happened ... Every day, I

pass by the area and I can not help but think about the spring of 1978 and an Italy that was exhausted by a terrible decade." Moro's kidnap and murder was the apogee of the "years of lead", a period from the end of the 1960s to the start of the 1980s that was characterised by a surge in political violence.

Between the Piazza Fontana bombing in 1969 that killed 17 and the Bologna massacre, a bomb outside the city's train station in 1980 that killed 85, hundreds of attacks and murders were carried out, and the Red Brigades were one of the deadliest groups. "Since 1975, the Red Brigades had opted for a strategy of front-on struggle against the Italian state," says historian Philippe Foro, author of "The Moro Affair." However, the murky details surrounding Moro's murder have never been fully cleared up, and within Italy a whole host of theories have sprung up as to why he was targeted.

Cold War mystery

Moro wrote a raft of letters to his family, Andreotti and Pope Paul VI, which urged the release of Red Brigade allies in prison. One, to his wife, read: "my blood will fall on them." Foro added: "He had also made many opponents among those who condemned his policy of historic compromise with the PCI: within NATO, the Italian secret service, in politics..."

There are many among those who have chronicled the period who believe that not everything was done to find Aldo Moro and release him. And that the Italian state made the choice to "sacrifice" him for the sake of Cold War stability and to keep certain state secrets under wraps. "For the United States, the power of the Communist Party in the Mediterranean's most important country was unacceptable and the Soviets also saw a threat in the historic compromise," said Ferdinando Imposimato, the judge who presided over the subsequent trial. — AFP

Man suspected of making bombs for kindergarten attack

ROME: Italian police said yesterday they had arrested a man on a tip from the FBI suspected of preparing pipe bombs and a judge's order said he had been considering an attack on a kindergarten. The man, an Italian citizen of Latvian origin, had used social media to praise Sayfullo Saipov, the suspect charged with killing eight people with a speeding truck in New York City last year and perpetrators of other attacks in the United States, according to a police statement and a judge's order.

The FBI told Italian police about the social media activity, the statement said. A police search of the 24-year-old's apartment in the city of Viterbo, north of Rome, found material used to assemble pipe bombs. According to a judge's detention order seen by Reuters, the man, identified as Denis Illarionovs and born in the Latvian capital, Riga, had written on social media phrases including one that read "it's time to kill the children in the kindergarten".

He praised Saipov as "another fallen angel to the Kuffar" (infidel) and also used social media to hail those who had carried out gun attacks that left 15 people dead in Colorado in 1999 and five in Dallas in 2016. The judge's warrant said police had found material such as cylinders, solid explosive material, many small coins, metal plates, a digital scale, a digital thermometer, fuses, and an electrical resistor. — Reuters

Philippine poor pay the price for 'divorce ban'

Impoverished women trapped in toxic marriages

MANILA: For well-off people like politician Pantaleon Alvarez, getting out of a bad marriage in the Philippines is pricey but feasible—but for the nation's poorest and most vulnerable citizens it is nearly impossible. That's because heavily Catholic Philippines and the Vatican are the last two places on Earth where divorce is outlawed. For the nation's 100 million people, the only exit from a union gone wrong is an embarrassing-and labyrinthine-process that often amounts to a luxury.

But lawmakers, including Alvarez, have launched a new legislative effort to legalize divorce which activists believe could transform the lives of impoverished women trapped in toxic marriages. The bill has been propelled forward by Alvarez, who is speaker in the lower House of Representatives and an ally of President Rodrigo Duterte. In an interview with AFP, he said ending his first marriage cost him a million pesos (\$19,200), which is more than triple what an average family in the Philippines makes in a year.

Like thousands of Filipinos, he did it through

a civil procedure called annulment, whereby a judge declares a marriage invalid, generally because the spouses had a "psychological incapacity". It requires applicants to undergo a mental exam, testify in court and sometimes even claim they or their spouse entered the union with a disorder like narcissism. The process can take anywhere from one to 10 years to wind through the creakingly slow and overburdened Philippine court system, costing at least \$4,800. Since 1999 lawmakers have regularly filed a bill to legalize divorce, only

to see it languish in committee limbo-until now.

For the first time ever, House of Representatives lawmakers are poised to approve the bill after backing it in preliminary votes. It would then head to the Senate where it faces opposition from conservative members. However, the bill enjoys rare bipartisan support, a sign Alvarez says of the urgency of addressing broken marriages. "It's a badge of stupidity because we are the only nation that does not see the problem," Alvarez, 60, said. The legislation would allow divorce and exempt poor people from legal fees,

MPs launch a new legislative effort to legalize divorce



MANILA: Photo shows a couple at Manila Bay. For well-off people like politician Pantaleon Alvarez, getting out of a bad marriage in the Philippines is pricey but feasible—but for the nation's poorest and most vulnerable citizens it is nearly impossible. — AFP

listing domestic violence, attempts to engage a spouse in prostitution and irreconcilable differences among the grounds for splitting up.

'Not the will of God'

Not surprisingly, the country's powerful Catholic Church, which counts about 80 percent

of Filipinos as followers, has fiercely opposed the bill. "It is not according to the scriptures, to the will of God and it does not help," Manila bishop Broderick Pabillo said. The church fought a pitched but ultimately unsuccessful battle in 2012 to halt a law providing free contraceptives to poor couples and teaching sex education in schools. — AFP

Israel closes migrant detention centre in mass expulsion plan

JERUSALEM: Israel has closed a desert detention centre for migrants as part of a controversial plan for the mass expulsion of thousands of Eritreans and Sudanese who entered the country illegally, officials said yesterday. Immigration authority spokeswoman Sabine Haddad told AFP that the Holot facility closed the previous afternoon, ahead of a midnight deadline. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in January announced implementation of the program to remove migrants, giving them a choice between leaving voluntarily or facing indefinite imprisonment with eventual forced expulsion.

Since then some Holot inmates have been transferred to the nearby Saharonim prison. Others who had submitted asylum requests before January 1 were released pending a decision, Haaretz newspaper reported. Haddad said that 300 had been freed after agreeing to leave the Jewish state. Those set free were barred from living or working in

seven cities with high migrant populations, including Tel Aviv—where most are concentrated—Jerusalem and the Red Sea resort of Eilat, she said.

According to interior ministry figures, there are currently some 42,000 African migrants in Israel, half of them children, women or men with families, who are not facing immediate deportation. Holot, an open facility where inmates were free to leave during the day but had to return at night, was opened in 2013 with the aim of siphoning migrants away from the cities, the immigration authority says. As the migrants could face danger or imprisonment if returned to their homelands, Israel is offering to relocate them to an unnamed African country, which deportees and aid workers say is Rwanda or Uganda.

Migrants began entering Israel through what was then a porous Egyptian border in 2007. The border has since been strengthened, all but ending illegal crossings. Israel's deportation or imprisonment plan has drawn criticism from the United Nations refugee agency as well as from some Israelis and rights activists. Israeli officials say that no one they classify as a refugee or asylum seeker will be deported, though the process of granting asylum has been criticized as extremely slow and biased against claims. Only a handful of asylum claims have been approved in recent years. — AFP

Foes band together to challenge Modi

NEW DELHI: Small Indian parties are banding together against Prime Minister Narendra Modi for next year's general election, energized by an unlikely win in an election for a handful of parliamentary seats in the Hindi heartland on Wednesday. Opposition strategists say the only way Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) juggernaut can be stopped is to join forces and turn 2019 into a "Modi versus the rest" election. That strategy seemed to have paid off when two bickering caste-based factions worked together in the country's most politically important state, Uttar Pradesh in the north, to defeat Modi's party in two seats this week.

Mamata Banerjee, the chief of an opposition party in eastern India, called the Uttar Pradesh results, and victory for a regional party in another seat in neighboring Bihar state, the "beginning of the end" for Modi's party. The Nehru-Gandhi dynasty's Congress party, which ruled India for most of the seven decades after independence before being thumped by Modi in the last general election 2014, also seized on the latest setbacks for the BJP. "The results from the by-polls make it clear that voters are very angry at the BJP and that they will vote for that non-BJP candidate who has the best chance of winning," said Congress chief Rahul Gandhi.

Congress has started stitching together alliances and hosted a dinner for opposition parties this week. Congress spokesman Randeep Singh Surjewala said it was ready to lead any alliance of regional groups and could discuss such plans in a party conference this weekend. BJP leaders said they were caught off-guard by the alliance of the two regional parties, known as the BSP and SP in Uttar Pradesh. "We will prepare for a situation in future when BSP, SP and Congress can come together, and also make our strategy for winning 2019 the election," said the BJP's deputy chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, Keshav Prasad Maurya.

'Selling dreams'

There is nobody close to Modi in personal approval ratings. Nearly nine out of 10 Indians hold a favorable opinion of him, according to a research report published in November, and opposition victories in a handful of seats cannot be seen as an indication the mood is swinging away from Modi and the BJP nationally, analysts warn.

When Modi won office in 2014 with the most resounding victory in three decades, his party or its partners ruled only seven of India's 29 states. Today, it is in power in 21 of them and has replaced Congress as the party with strongest nationwide presence. But in by-elections in 10 parliamentary seats since last year, the BJP has lost all of them. That may be an indication an anti-incumbency factor will play a part in 2019. Ghanshyam Tiwari, spokesman for the Samajwadi Party (SP) whose two candidates won this week's Uttar Pradesh by-elections, said the BJP had been winning new states by "selling dreams" to voters through glitzy advertisements. — Reuters

International

Hong Kong's judges voice fears over China influence in judiciary

Judge appointments still independent despite risk

HONG KONG: As Hong Kong's judges and senior lawyers paraded in ceremonial wigs and gowns on Jan 8 to mark the start of the legal year, anxieties over China's growing reach into the city's vaunted legal system swirled with the wintry winds. At a private cocktail reception with leading judges before the event, one of the topics of discussion was concerns over Beijing's influence in the judiciary, according to one participant who requested anonymity.

Hong Kong's judges are increasingly expressing such fears in private, concerned that interpretations and amendments from China's parliament could soon force them to curb the city's freedoms, according to interviews with four veteran judges, as well as with sources close to several others. The judges interviewed said that while they believe the independence and integrity of the judiciary remains intact, such interpretations could effectively mean Beijing is telling them what to do, limiting their authority on key political and security issues.

"We know Beijing has their own fears" over Hong Kong, said one judge, a veteran of Hong

Kong under both British and Chinese rule. "But if they interpret too frequently, the risk is they will leave us nothing left on which to rule." Such remarks are highly rare from Hong Kong judges, who tend to be cautious and are prevented by convention from publicly raising political issues. Hong Kong's rule of law is widely seen as a cornerstone of the former British colony's interna-

tional reputation as a business hub, key to protecting its autonomy from a Communist Party leadership wanting greater control. Any erosion of that reputation could undermine Hong Kong's relative attractiveness as a business center for investors

**The climate of
unease among
my peers: Judge**

compared to mainland Chinese cities like Shanghai or Shenzhen, or regional rival Singapore.

Macau too has been facing such pressures. China's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, which is overseen by China's cabinet, the State Council, did not immediately respond to questions from Reuters.

Hong Kong's legal and social freedoms are far greater than those that exist across mainland China. And, like Hong Kong's separate legal traditions that are based on common law, they are



BEIJING: China's President Xi Jinping (center) attends the closing session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing yesterday. — AFP

detailed in a mini-constitution known as the Basic Law under a "one country, two systems" formula. While Beijing's leaders publicly say they respect Hong Kong's rule of law as part of its high degree of autonomy, some judges and lawyers remain skeptical.

"There is a marked climate of unease among my peers" that "wasn't there a few years ago," said a second judge. With the prospect of Pres-

ident Xi Jinping ruling China indefinitely following the scrapping of term limits this month, anxieties have resurfaced over his stance towards Hong Kong. In a landmark speech in the city last June, Xi warned that Beijing would brook no challenge to its authority. In previous speeches he has suggested a blurring of the separation of powers between the government and judiciary in Hong Kong. — Reuters

Lost and found: New skills help offenders tread straight path

LONDON: Edward Trainer was 17 when he got caught with "quite a bit of weed" and charged with possession with intent to supply. A different kind of grass keeps the 18-year-old occupied these days: with three other young offenders he mows lawns for the people of Liverpool. Trainer, whose name has been changed to protect his identity, works for the Skill Mill, a social enterprise that provides environmental services for Liverpool city council in northwest England.

He is convinced it will help him tread a straight path from now on. "It's brought us opportunities that we couldn't get before. We all got nicked (caught by the police); now we've all got a job out of it, so it helps us," he said. Trainer was dealing cannabis - which is categorized as a Class B drug by Britain's independent Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) - to fund his habit and make money. He said his three workmates were caught with Class A drugs, which are regarded more seriously under the law. "If they hadn't been given this job, they would still be doing what they were doing, which was a lot worse than what I got nicked for," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Social enterprise

Recidivism - the term for convicted criminals reoffending - is expensive: the government estimates it costs taxpayers up to 13 billion pounds (\$18.2 billion) a year.

But there is a good chance Trainer will not fall foul of the law again: although the recidivism rate for young people in England and Wales is 42 percent, the British government said in 2018, only 6 percent of the Skill Mill's alumni reoffend. The Skill Mill works in five cities across Britain. It also has a European operation in Estonia after Tallinn city officials saw it had won a best practice award from Eurocities, a network of local governments in major European cities that share ideas about urban issues.

By charging clients, which include city councils and Britain's Environment Agency, for watercourse and horticultural services, it pays young offenders a wage while they learn new skills and get qualifications. As well as cutting reoffending rates, and consequently contributing to the safety of communities, much of its work benefits the environment - keeping watercourses clear combats flood risks, for example. That could become increasingly important: the Environment Agency warned in February that climate change would make severe flooding more frequent, and said nine of Britain's 17 years of record-breaking rainfall in a century had happened since 2000.

Davie Parks, who works at the youth offending team run by Newcastle city council and who started the Skill Mill, said the social enterprise's reputation meant it would expand to the Netherlands later this year. That follows its relationship with Dutch engineering firm Royal HaskoningDHV, which has an office in Newcastle and which, as part of its corporate social responsibility remit, funds the vehicles that transport the Skill Mill's workers. Parks set up the Skill Mill in 2013 after being asked whether young people serving community sentences - where they are convicted but not imprisoned - could clear rivers. Since then it has worked with 80 young offenders in Britain. — Reuters

China and Russia welcome Korea peace efforts

SEOUL: China's President Xi Jinping offered encouragement for South Korea's initiative to nurture peaceful engagement with North Korea, and Russia also expressed support, the South Korean official leading diplomatic efforts said yesterday. During the past week, National Security Office head Chung Eui-yong briefed officials in Beijing and Moscow following his dramatic success in arranging summits between the North Korean, South Korean and US leaders.

"Xi Jinping offered a Chinese phrase that says 'once hard ice melts, spring comes and flowers bloom' to describe the situation on the Korean peninsula and expressed his willingness to support the current situation," Chung told reporters on his return to Incheon International Airport. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un told the South Korean delegation led by Chung that he was open to addressing denuclearising with the United States, an offer that led to US President Trump agreeing to meet Kim for a summit expected to happen sometime in May. South Korean President Moon Jae-in is set to hold a summit with the North's Kim by the end of April.

The flurry of diplomatic activity comes after a year-long verbal spat between Kim Jong Un and Trump, with tensions exacerbated by multiple missile and nuclear tests by the North which has said it will forge on with its nuclear programme to protect its regime. "China and Russia agreed to continue cooperation to uphold the peace that has been created, as well as the momentum for stability through close communication," Chung said. North Korea has friendly ties with both Beijing and Moscow, and China is by far its biggest trading partner. Chung said China's top diplomat Yang Jiechi will visit Seoul early next week for talks with security officials here. Pyongyang has remained silent over its agreement for the summits since Chung returned from the North, although officials in Seoul have said they expect to continue working talks soon to work out details for the inter-Korean summit. — Reuters

Maverick Thailand tycoon woos youth with a new political party

Auto heir promises to heal political rift

BANGKOK: A scion of Thailand's biggest autoparts group launched a political party in Bangkok yesterday as an alternative to established parties, promising to bridge a festering political divide. Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit, 39, executive vice president and director of the Thai Summit Group launched the Future Forward Party in a part of Bangkok's old Chinatown being revived with hip shops, restaurants and galleries. Thanathorn said he hoped to appeal to younger voters and disenfranchised citizens.

"Give democracy a chance," the graduate of New York University Stern School of Business said in English at the launch. "We don't need governance through guns," he added in Thai, referring to the ruling military, which took power in 2014. The launch comes two weeks after Thailand's Election Commission opened registration for new parties, one of the first signs of a tentative return to democracy. Thailand has been under military rule since a 2014 coup toppled an

elected government. Since the coup, the generals have banned political activity. They have also repeatedly delayed a general election with the latest date February 2019.

The country has been largely divided since a 2006 coup against then Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, a businessman turned politician who gained a loyal following among rural voters but made enemies among the military-royalist elite.

The military's intervention in 2014 was to topple a civilian government led by Thaksin's sister, Yingluck Shinawatra.

Thanathorn's uncle, Suriya Juangroongruangkit, held various senior positions in an earlier incarnation of Thaksin's political machine, the

Thai Rak Thai Party, and the youthful Thanathorn has been described by some as the "next Thaksin". But on Thursday he dismissed any suggestion of links to the self-exiled former telecommunications tycoon, saying he did not side with any existing group. "We have our own stance," he said.



Thailand plans to hold general election in 2019



Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit

New generation

A member of the Thaksin-backed Puea Thai party welcomed Thanathorn's party as an alternative to old military-aligned parties for voters "sick and tired" of dictatorship. "These voters may not want to vote Puea Thai but vote for this new party instead, which would be useful because they would be taking votes away from those that support dictatorship," Watana Muangsook, a Puea Thai Party member, told Reuters. Yuttaporn Issarachai, a political science

lecturer at the Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University said the new party might attract a respectable number of voters from a new generation. "It could be a mid-size party appealing to voters aged 18 to 25," Yuttaporn said. Critics of the junta say it has failed to deliver on its promises and that political divisions endure, while impatience with the stalled return to democracy grows. Activists have defied a ban on gatherings to organise small protests while Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, 63, who as army chief led the 2014 coup, appears to be embarking on his own campaign to stay on as prime minister.

Thanathorn, whose family also has a major stake in the newspaper publisher Matchon Pcl, resigned from the board of that company on Wednesday but remains on the board of privately held Thai Summit. Thanathorn did not list any party policies because formal political campaigning is still banned. Among party co-founders he introduced were a film-maker and several gay rights and environmental activists. Thanathorn said he hoped to win the support of "ordinary people". "People who are not famous ... but who want to shape our country's future together," he said. —Reuters

Indonesia makes criticising national politicians a crime

JAKARTA: Indonesians could be jailed for criticising national politicians under a new law which came into force yesterday, in what critics slammed as a major step back for the world's third-biggest democracy. The vaguely worded bill passed the 560-member house last month but has just become official, over the objections of President Joko Widodo who refused to sign off on the controversial legislation. Widodo does not have veto power over the bill, although it can be challenged at the Constitutional Court.

The so-called MD3 law opens to the door to pressing charges against anyone who "disrespects parliament or its members" but does not set out possible minimum or maximum jail terms. Indonesia is the third biggest democracy globally behind India and the United States. Protesters across the Southeast Asian archipelago who blasted the bill could potentially see themselves jailed for such demonstrations in the future, critics said. "How does the law define disrespect?" said Sebastian Salang from the monitoring group Indonesian Parliament Watchdog. "It is not clearly explained and could be loosely interpreted as long as it fits the lawmakers' interest to silence critics."

Hundreds of protesters staged a rally outside the Constitutional Court in Jakarta Thursday, calling on it to revoke the legislation. A spokesman for the court said it had already received three petitions challenging the law, but it could take months before it renders a decision. Any investigation of a parliamentarian would have to be approved by the House Ethics Council under the new law, which could block probes by Indonesia's powerful Corruption Eradication Commission. Some observers say the new law would criminalise criticism of the endemic corruption and poor performance among some members of Indonesia's political system. At least eight lawmakers have been arrested for corruption in recent years, including former house speaker Setya Novanto who is on trial in one of the country's biggest-ever graft scandals. There have been growing concerns about freedom of speech and human rights during Widodo's tenure. —AFP

Indonesia battles wave of fake news as elections loom

JAKARTA: Indonesia is battling a wave of fake news and online hate speech ahead of presidential elections in 2019, as a string of arrests underscore fears it could crack open social and religious fault lines in the world's largest Muslim-majority country. The pluralist nation's reputation as a bastion of tolerance has been tested in recent months, as conservative groups exploit social media to spread lies and target minorities. Police have cracked down, rounding up members of the Muslim Cyber Army (MCA), a cluster of loosely connected groups accused of using Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to attack the government and stoke religious extremism.

Two of the group's most high-profile falsehoods were claims that dozens of Islamic clerics had been assaulted by leftists and that Indonesia's outlawed communist party was on the rise, according to police. Communism—and its hallmark atheist beliefs—remains a taboo subject in Indonesia, where bloody purges under the Suharto dictatorship in the mid-1960s killed half a million suspected leftists. Gatot Eddy Pramono, the National Police's head of social affairs, has said the group wants to destabilise government and "create social conflict".

Although the Southeast Asian nation has seen Internet hoaxes before—including smear campaigns against President Joko Widodo during the 2014 presidential elections—the recent clampdown reflects authorities' mounting unease about their possible impact on election campaigning. Indonesia will hold simultaneous regional elections in June, ahead of a presidential ballot in 2019.

Last month, the communications ministry announced it was deploying new software to identify fake news websites, while Widodo—who has battled false Internet claims that he is a communist—inaugurated a new cyber security agency in January.

Cyber hoaxes

Indonesia's problem with internet hoaxes and misinformation campaigns reached fever pitch in the lead up to elections in Jakarta in late 2016 and early 2017, with incumbent governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, nicknamed Ahok, bearing the brunt of it. Ahok — the city's first Christian and ethnically Chinese leader — was lambasted by Islamic hardliners after an edited video appeared to show him insulting the Quran.

The allegations drew hundreds of thousands of conservative Muslims onto the streets of Jakarta in major protests, and led to the once-popular Ahok — an ally of Widodo-being jailed for blasphemy after losing the election to a Muslim challenger. The Muslim Cyber Army played a pivotal role in disseminating content attacking Ahok and non-Muslims. "MCA was organising and agitating with this case," said Savic Ali, director of the media department at Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Indonesia's largest moderate Muslim organisation.

"There was a clear sentiment about religion in many of its accounts." The group has at least four ideologically driven clusters that spread inflammatory material with the help of bots—software programmes that run repetitive tasks—or by hacking into opponents' online accounts, said Damar Juniarto, Indonesia coordinator for digital rights group SAFENET. One cluster pushed radical Islam and the establishment of a caliphate, while others supported conservative political and military figures opposed to Widodo. "They pose a threat to the national election in 2019," Juniarto said. "What they want to do now, in 2018, is copy what happened in Jakarta in other parts of the country." Police have pledged to be on high alert for hoaxes, but they have their work cut out. —AFP

Lifestyle

Friday Times

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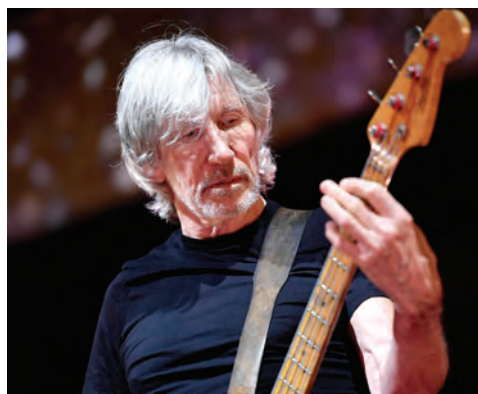
In this file photo musician Roger Waters performs during his Us + Them Tour at Staples Center in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

Roger Waters teams up with Palestinian band in Trump protest

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Roger Waters teams up with Palestinian band in Trump protest

Rock icon Roger Waters has joined Palestinian artists for a new song billed as a response to the US recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. To the sound of the oud lutes of Le Trio Joubran, one of the most prominent groups performing Palestinian traditional music, Waters recites verse from Mahmoud Darwish, considered the poet laureate of the Palestinians.



In this file photo musician Roger Waters performs during his Us + Them Tour at Staples Center in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

reate of the Palestinians. Darwish's poem, "The Red Indian's Penultimate Speech to the White Man," on the surface comes from the voice of a Native American mourning settlements that will permanently alter the land but clearly draws a parallel to the Palestinians and Israel. "Where, oh white master, are you taking my people-and yours?" the British rocker recites in the English translation over the lutes and an ambient backdrop.

Waters, best known as a former member of Pink Floyd who conceived the rock opera "The Wall," has long been a passionate supporter of the Palestinian cause and has angered Israelis by leading calls for a cultural boycott. Le Trio Joubran wrote on Facebook that the collaborative song, entitled "Supremacy," was meant as a response to Trump. They called Jerusalem the "#CapitalOfPalestine." Trump has broken international precedent by recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital and ordering the US embassy's move from Tel Aviv to the holy city.

Israel occupied mainly Palestinian east Jerusalem in the 1967 Six-Day War and later annexed it in a move never recognized by the international community. It sees the entire city as its capital. The Palestinians view east Jerusalem as the capital of their future state. — AP



In this file photo Palestinian oud band "Le Trio Joubran" perform on stage during a Guinness World Record attempt at the Ramallah Cultural Centre in the West Bank city of Ramallah. — AFP

Film maker George Lucas breaks ground on LA narrative museum



(from left) Actors Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill, director George Lucas and R2-D2 attend the ceremony honoring Mark Hamill with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on March 8, 2018, in Hollywood, California. — AFP

Star Wars film maker George Lucas broke ground on his new \$1 billion story-telling museum on Wednesday, saying it will embrace art of all kinds. The museum, near the University of Southern California in south Los Angeles where Lucas studied film, will feature some of the director's collection of paintings, illustrations and digital art from the "Star Wars" movie franchise he started in 1977. The self-funded Lucas Museum of Narrative Art will be a non-profit enterprise and is expected to take about four years to build.

It will showcase traditional and popular art, including animation, digital and comic art and will also house dining space, theaters, lecture halls, classrooms and a public research library. "I believe in all kinds of art. And I believe all kinds of art have a right to exist. I think it's important to have a museum that I used to jokingly say, supports all the orphan arts that nobody else wants to see, but everybody loves. So that's my dream for this," Lucas said at the groundbreaking ceremony. "Popular art is an insight into a society and what they aspire to,

what they really want, what they really are, because it's telling that narrative of their story, their history, their belief system," he added. Lucas has donated several items from his personal art collection, which includes paintings and film memorabilia. Luke Skywalker's first light saber, Darth Vader's helmet, and pieces from "Casablanca," "The Ten Commandments" and "The Wizard of Oz" are set for display at the museum, Variety reported. Lucas sold his "Star Wars" franchise to Walt Disney Co. in 2012 for \$4 billion. — Reuters

He kissed a girl and didn't really like it

For many young men inexperienced in romance, having one's first kiss with none other than Katy Perry would presumably be a welcome prospect. Not so for Benjamin Glaze—a 20-year-old from Oklahoma who showed visible discomfort when kissed by the pop superstar as she served in her new role as a judge on talent show "American Idol." Glaze explained on an episode broadcast this week that he had never kissed anyone before and had wanted to save the experience for a relationship.

His remark came after country star Luke Bryan, a fellow judge on the show, phrased as a question one of Perry's most famous lyrics: "Have you kissed a girl and liked it?" Perry beckoned over Glaze and invited him for a kiss, which he delivered on her cheek. She followed up by quickly smacking him right on the lips. Glaze voiced shock and stumbled through his song before being dismissed by the judges. Perry's forwardness, while in line with the playful behavior of television personalities, triggered a flurry of commentary on social media—with some accusing her of sexual harassment amid the newfound focus on consent in the #MeToo movement. — AFP





In this picture Balinese people prepare to pray during the Melasti ceremony prayer at Petitenget beach near Denpasar on Indonesia's resort island of Bali.



A Balinese man in a trance holds daggers to his cheeks during a Melasti ceremony prayer.

Bali going quiet for the 'Day of Silence'

Indonesia's bustling tourist island Bali is set to go quiet with Internet service and flights temporarily halted for a "Day of Silence", while young people get ready to pucker up. Residents of the Hindu-dominated island stop regular daily activities for a day of meditation, fasting and introspection, an annual rite that includes elaborate beachside ceremonies and demon-like effigies. Known locally as Nyepi, Hindus on the island are expected to stop all work and play and remain indoors Saturday, while unmarried people kiss each other as residents pour buckets of water over them in a ceremony called Omed-omedan.

Shops and tourist attractions will be closed for the day although public services including hospitals are to remain open. On Friday, effigies known as Ogoh-Ogoh, which represent demons, will be paraded through the streets before they're burned to symbolise renewal and purification. In the days leading up to the festival, observers dressed in white perform the Melasti ritual that includes a procession to the beach where they perform ceremonies involving tradi-



In this picture Balinese men walk along the shore during a Melasti ceremony prayer at Petitenget beach near Denpasar on Indonesia's resort island of Bali. — AFP photos



A Balinese man in a trance holds daggers to his chest during a Melasti ceremony prayer at Petitenget beach near Denpasar on Indonesia's resort island of Bali.

Cars and motorcycles are not allowed on the road except in the case of an emergency, while lights inside homes and street lights are switched off. Mobile internet providers have been asked to shut down service, except for essential public services. Ngurah Rai international airport will be shuttered for 24 hours starting from 6:00 am local time Saturday (2300 GMT Friday), affecting about 480 flights, including nearly 240 international flights. "Many tourists actually came specifically to experience the quietness and the serenity of Nyepi," airport spokesman Yanus Suprayogi said. Indonesia is a Muslim-majority country but more than 80 percent of Bali's population identify as Hindu who practice a local version of the religion. — AFP



A Balinese man in a trance holds a dagger to his chest during a Melasti ceremony prayer.



A Balinese woman poses for a photograph during a Melasti ceremony prayer.

Donatella Versace says label will stop using fur in products



In this file photo British model Erin O'Connor presents a fur coat over a decollete shirt and straight pants by Donatella Versace for the Versace Haute-Couture Fall Winter 2000-2001 collection in Paris. —AFP

Donatella Versace has said her family's luxury fashion label will no longer use real furs in its products, according to an interview with a British magazine. The Italian fashion queen and Versace's creative director told The Economist's 1843 magazine that it would stop the practice, without providing further details on the change. "Fur? I am out of that," Versace said. "I don't want to kill animals to make fashion. 'It doesn't feel right.'"

Versace's headquarters in Milan, Italy, could not be reached for comment on Wednesday night. 1843 noted the announcement was such a "volte-face" that at the time of the magazine writing its article, which was published online Wednesday, Versace's website was still urging customers to buy "fur-embellished coats that turn heads".

Versace had previously resisted pressure to join a host of other fashion brands, including Armani, Calvin Klein, Hugo Boss and Ralph Lauren which had all already ditched furs from their collections. The luxury label has historically included lots of furs across its ranges, from a variety of species including mink and raccoon dog, according to the Humane Society International (HSI), which campaigns globally for an end to the fur trade. It noted Versace's autumn / winter 2017 collection included laser cut mink and fox coats. "Versace is a massively influential luxury brand that symbolizes excess and glamour,



In this file photo taken activists wearing fox masks take part in an anti-fur protest outside the venue of the Hong Kong International Fur and Fashion Fair in Hong Kong. — AFP photos

and so its decision to stop using fur shows that compassionate fashion has never been more on trend," said Claire Bass, executive director of HSI's UK arm. However, the International Fur Federation said it was "disappointed" by the decision. "The majority of top designers will con-

tinue to work with fur as they know it is a natural product that is produced responsibly," said its CEO Mark Oaten. "With growing concern about the environment and plastics in fashion, I truly believe fur is the natural and responsible choice for designers and consumers." — AFP



AMAZON INDIA FASHION WEEK



Models present creations by Indian designer Ashish N Soni, Gauri & Nainika Karan during the Amazon India Fashion.



Bollywood actress Vaani Kapoor (third left) presents a creation by Indian designer Ashish N Soni (left) as she poses with Gauri Karan (second left) and Nainika Karan (right) from the fashion house Gaudi & Nainika Karan during the Amazon India Fashion Week Autumn Winter 2018 in New Delhi on March 14, 2018. — AFP photos



Strategic Partner



Kuwait Times

celebrates **15** Years years of

KUWAIT BEAUTIFUL & GREEN

THE MIDDLE EAST'S LARGEST STUDENTS' ART COMPETITION

March 11th Till April 15th, 2018

Sponsored by



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With the aim of boosting environmental public awareness, developing an aesthetic sense and caring for environmental issues in Kuwait, Kuwait Times' 15th students' art competition seeks to invest in the success so far achieved since the contest's inception in 1994. In 2017, over 15,000 students aged 6 to 18 from over 135 public, private, Arab and foreign schools in Kuwait participated. We hope participants in 2018 will exceed 20,000. Kuwait Times has been organizing the 'Kuwait Beautiful & Green' students' art competition in collaboration with Zain as a strategic partner to unleash student's creativity. The competition is co-sponsored by the reputable Hardee's restaurants and the conclusion ceremony will be held at the Symphony Style Hotel on April 24, 2018. The competition aims at promoting students' environmental awareness and encouraging them to effectively take part in various environment-oriented activities with an ultimate aim of acquiring more knowledge and skills, sense of



responsibility as well as positive attitudes. It also aims at boosting the principles of moderation and tolerance among students and encourages them to be ambitious, protect public resources and take part in sustainability-related initiatives that will help protect the environment.

Environmental protection is not just a motto or meaningless words. It is in fact an integral part of our history and heritage. It is a way of life because we have been and will always be committed to peaceful co-existence between man and nature. All students aged 6 to 18 in various stages are invited to participate in the competition with drawings and paintings expounding their environmental passions, as the environment

is base of sustainable development, in the form of planting rather than desertification, cleanliness rather than negligence and public safety rather than lethal pollution. This is how we want our Kuwait to be - a green, beautiful oasis that reflects the beauty and high taste within our souls.



*you can send "subscribe" by what's app to +96567004268 to receive competition's news updates



Red Bull BC One, a global celebration of Hip Hop, will celebrate its world final in Zurich, Switzerland. With a magnificent view of the snow-capped Alps on the horizon, sixteen of the world's best breakers will go head-to-head to take the belt at the Hallenstadion in the Swiss city. — Reuters photos



This photograph shows the city skyline in Singapore. — AFP photos



The Merlion statue lit up in front of the city skyline in Singapore.



A general view of private and public housing in Singapore.

CAR COSTS MAKE SINGAPORE WORLD'S PRICIEST CITY. AGAIN.



A pedestrian waits at a crossing as cars drive along a street in Singapore.



A woman looks for waste to recycle from a bin at Raffles Place financial business district in Singapore.

The eye-watering cost of owning a car in space-starved Singapore means the city state is the world's most expensive place to live, for the fifth year in a row, a survey said yesterday. The Asian financial hub—where owning a no-frills sedan can set you back US\$76,000 — beat global capitals to the dubious title, despite stiff competition from resurgent European cities. Pricey perennials Tokyo and New York did not even make the top 10 in the annual list by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), beaten out by Paris, Zurich (joint second) Hong Kong (fourth) and Oslo (fifth).

Seoul and Geneva shared sixth place, while Copenhagen, Tel Aviv and Sydney rounded out the rankings. Despite some perks to domestic life in Singapore—home help is cheap—the former British colony “remains the most expensive place in the world to buy and run a car,” EIU said. Singapore has avoided Asia's mas-

sive traffic jams by controlling vehicle ownership through a quota system under which a buyer must pay for a Certificate of Entitlement—currently nearly Sg\$40,000 (\$30,500) — on top of the vehicle's actual price.

That means a basic sedan comes with a Sg\$100,000 price tag. Asian cities tend to be most expensive for grocery shopping, while Europe comes out tops in household, personal care, recreation and entertainment, the survey said. Currency fluctuations remain a major cause for the changes in the rankings, with the weaker US dollar keeping American cities out of the top 10. War-racked Damascus, the troubled Venezuelan capital Caracas, Lagos in Nigeria and the Pakistani city of Karachi are among the world's cheapest cities, the survey showed. “Put simply, cheaper cities also tend to be less liveable,” it said. — AFP



Cable cars cross over private condominium housing in Singapore.

Russia travel guide

and things to do: Highlights of the FIFA World Cup host



Russia will soon have a rare opportunity to present itself to the world as an alluring travel destination where, beyond the stereotypical endless queues, bowls of borscht and athletic mischief, you may find yourself wandering into a millennial-old place of worship, be awed by a grandiose imperial palace or stroll along city streets towered over by golden minarets.

Given the sheer scale of the country, Russia is also the perfect place to undertake an epic journey, whether you ride the rails or cruise one of its mighty rivers. And then there is its diversity of cities from Moscow and St Petersburg to lesser-known centers such as Nizhny Novgorod and Saransk. But, as Russia races to

finalize preparations for its hosting of the FIFA World Cup - the 21st edition of what is probably now the world's biggest sporting event - those cities, all of which will host matches, are just the start of Russia's manifold attractions which include soaring mountains and forest-filled taiga.

When the first ball of the FIFA World Cup is kicked off on June 14, the global spotlight will shift from the recent highly politicized Winter Olympics in Korea and fall on Russia. Even if you're not attending the World Cup, Russia's hosting of the event is an opportunity to consider a visit to this controversial though captivating land. But do be warned: narrowing down your options can be a challenge, as our special guide shows.

The Natural Wonder: Lake Baikal

In southern Siberia, Lake Baikal is not just the deepest lake in the world - plunging to depths of 700 meters - but is estimated to hold 20 per cent of the unfrozen fresh water on the surface of the planet.

WHY GO

Covering an area of almost 32,000 square kilometres, Lake Baikal is its own eco-system, with two-thirds of its flora and fauna found nowhere else in the world. It has 27 islands, shoreline walking tracks, pretty villages and hot springs. Surprisingly, it is also the centre of Buddhism in Russia, home to the Ivolginsky Datsan monastic centre.

Lifestyle | Travel

Friday, March 16, 2018

DON'T MISS

Baikal's largest island, the 72-kilometre-long Olkhon, is a place of grassy meadows, sandy beaches and dramatic cliffs. Hire a kayak to explore its coastline, or climb into a Soviet army jeep to visit key sights such as the Shaman Rock, a sacred place for Siberia's indigenous Buryat people, and Cape Khoboy, the very northern tip of the island, where seals can sometimes be seen basking on the rocks.

With pretty wooden houses surrounded by immaculate gardens, the village of Listyanka on the lake's southwestern shore is one of Baikal's most popular destinations. As well as sunning yourself on the pebbly beach (be aware that the lake's water is cold even in midsummer), you can sample smoked omul fish, a local delicacy, at the waterfront market, or follow the Great Baikal Trail through the pine forest to the village of Bolshiye Koty.

The Country Retreat: Karelia

Four hundred kilometers north of St Petersburg, bordered on one side by Finland and on the other by the Arctic Circle, lies Karelia, one of Russia's loveliest wildernesses. Its 700 kilometers are covered with dense forests studded with no fewer than 60,000 lakes.

WHY GO

Karelia is a magical destination no matter which season you choose. Head here in summer and you will be able to enjoy the famous White Nights, when the midnight sun sits high in the sky and the forests are full of wild blueberries and cloudberries. Come in winter and you can enjoy the thrill of dog sledding and snowmobiling.

DON'T MISS

During summer, the Solovki archipelago near the Arctic Circle is a popular destination, particularly the World Heritage-listed Solovetsky Monastery. Now one of the richest monasteries in all of Russia, the 500-year-old monastery filled a very different function during Soviet times, when it was part of the infamous Gulag prison system. In winter, take a snowmobile trip across the frozen Lake Onega to Kizhi Island, home to the magnificent Cathedral of the Transfiguration, crowned with 22 onion domes. This is also a wonderful place to see the shimmering glow of the northern lights, and perhaps try your hand at ice-fishing.

The Longest River: The Volga

Europe's longest river flows through Central Russia all the way to the Caspian Sea, but most cruise companies concentrate on the stretch between Moscow and St Petersburg. Known as the Golden Ring, this is home to a string of medieval towns that includes some of Russia's most-loved tourist destinations.

WHY GO

This is the Russia that launched a million postcards: wooden houses, riotously colored churches and monasteries, flower-studded meadows and endless onion domes shining in the sunlight.

**DON'T MISS**

Each of the stops on the Golden Ring has its own charms, but Yaroslavl is a special place. The biggest and oldest town of the towns, this 1000-year-old city has a lovely neoclassical city centre, while the Volga Embankment is a perfect spot for strolling. Other popular stops along the route include Kostroma, the hometown of the Romanov dynasty, and Rostov-Veliky. If you prefer a more adventurous itinerary, head further downstream to Kazan, where east meets west. The capital of the republic of Tatarstan, Kazan is a city of minarets as well as onion domes, a place where the street signs are in Tatar as well as Russian. The city's magnificent Kremlin is its most famous attraction, but other architectural standouts include the over-the-top Ministry of Agriculture building.

The Classic Journey: Trans-Siberian Railway

Known as one of the world's greatest train journeys, there are three separate routes that collectively comprise the Trans-Siberian Railway. The longest, from Moscow to Vladivostok, covers an astonishing 9258 kilometers and takes seven days non-stop - longer, if you choose to alight along the way.

WHY GO

Railways fans will tell you there is no better way to see a country than riding the rails, and the Trans-Siberian Railway offers some astonishing panoramas, from the endless forests of larch, birch, silver fir and pine trees to the 180-kilometre section that skirts the edge of Lake Baikal. For some travelers, it is the slightly surreal experience of the train trip itself - complete with stops in the middle of the night and long afternoons spent in the dining car - that is the main attraction.

DON'T MISS

You could stay on the train and do the journey all in one hit, but why would you? A number of tour operators offer itineraries that include stops along the way. Popular places to explore include the Siberian town of Irkutsk, with its lovely 19th-century buildings, and Lake Baikal.

The Ultimate Adventure: The Ring of Fire

Right at the edge of Russia's eastern boundary is the Kamchatka Peninsula, a 1250-kilometre-long tongue of land stretching into the Pacific Ocean. Part of the geologically active zone known as the Ring of Fire, the wonderfully wild Kamchatka is Russia's equivalent of Alaska.

WHY GO

How is it that so few people know about Kamchatka's stunning beauty? Think snow-capped volcanoes, white-water rivers filled with salmon and steaming hot springs. Part of it is down to its remoteness, but part of it is also down to history. This was where the Soviet Union stationed its Pacific Fleet, making this area off limits to just about everyone. It is only recently that expedition cruises have started exploring its magnificent landscapes.

DON'T MISS

Get set to enjoy some magnificent wildlife sightings: anything from arctic fox to sea otters to brown bears. Archipelagos such as the Commander Islands are home to huge colonies of seabirds, including sea eagles, puffins and auks. The waters teem with whales, fur seals and porpoises. The deserted beaches of Cape Navarin are the places to keep an eye out for basking walrus, while the nearby Keyngypilgyn Lagoon is known for its rich population of geese, swans and eiders.

The Cosmopolitan Capital: Moscow

Moscow lies about 700 kilometers south-east of St Petersburg. Big, bold and bustling, Moscow is a city filled with confidence - and rightly so. There is the spectacular Red Square, the lively Old Arbat and the ever-impressive Metro, where the stations double as works of art.

DON'T MISS

Sooner or later, every visitor ends up at Red Square. The question is, what to check out first? There is Lenin's tomb, the candy-cane domes of St Basil's Cathedral, and even the city's elegant shopping mall, GUM, where the architecture is as gorgeous as the window displays. Right next door sits the mighty Kremlin, the city's ancient power centre. There is plenty to see in this complex of palaces and cathedrals. Don't miss The Armoury, which displays priceless treasures including royal costumes, sumptuous imperial carriages and priceless Faberge eggs, including the Grand Siberian Railway egg, with gold train, platinum locomotive and ruby headlamp. Art lovers should head for the Moscow Museum of Modern Art, displaying works by Kandinsky, Chagall and Malevich among others. (www.stuff.co.nz).



FOR BRUNCH, BAKE YOUR EGGS IN A PASTRY NEST

By Sara Moulton

With spring upon us, I offer a dish guaranteed to spruce up a seasonal brunch. It may look complicated, but it really couldn't be simpler. The only hump to get over is fear of phyllo (also spelled filo), a pastry dough that originated in Turkey and that's popular today in Turkey and Greece. That fear is based on phyllo's singular thinness and delicacy, which can lead to cracking. But if you follow these tips, you should have no problem. And, hey, it certainly beats making pastry from scratch.

You'll likely find phyllo dough in the frozen food section of your supermarket. Before working with it, you should let it defrost overnight in the refrigerator, not on the counter. After taking the stack of phyllo sheets out of the package, cover the top layer with a piece of plastic wrap, then cover the plastic wrap with a damp towel. You'll work with just one sheet of phyllo at a time, keeping the rest under wraps.

In order to keep the phyllo moist and help it brown properly, you have to lightly brush both sides of each sheet with oil. Then you simply shape the dough into a "nest" by scrunching in the dough on the edges. When you're done, the floor of the nest should be about 3 inches in diameter, the edges about 1 1/2-inches high. The formula for how to shape it? There is none. All scrunching is good.

So - phew! - that was the only hard part of the recipe. Now just line the floor of the nest with a slice of prosciutto, sprinkle in some grated cheese and a spoonful of pesto, and top it with a raw egg. The prosciutto, cheese and pesto combine to prevent the egg from leaking through the bottom of the pastry. (Try to find a refrigerated pesto, which tends to be greener and fresher than the ones from the shelf.) Done! In about 30 minutes flat, you've prepared a very elegant and delicious entree. Your guests will be delighted.



BAKED EGGS IN PHYLLO NEST

Ingredients

- Servings: 4
- Start to finish: 30 minutes
- 2 1/2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 sheets phyllo pastry
- 4 thin slices prosciutto (about 3 ounces total)
- 1/2 cup coarsely grated unsalted mozzarella cheese
- 1/4 cup pesto
- 4 large eggs

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 400 F. Lightly brush the work surface with

some of the oil. Arrange one sheet of phyllo on the counter with the long edge facing you; cover the remainder with plastic wrap and a damp towel to prevent drying out. Brush the sheet all over with some of the oil. Gather the edges in to form a 4-inch wide nest, keeping the center flat. Using a large metal spatula transfer the nest to a parchment paper-lined rimmed baking sheet. Repeat with remaining phyllo and oil to make 3 more nests.

Ease a slice of prosciutto into the center of each nest, folding it over to fit into the space and letting the edges curve up a bit to form more of a nest. Sprinkle 2 tablespoons of the cheese on top, spreading the cheese out to form an indentation in the middle. Spoon the pesto over the cheese and crack 1 egg into center of

each nest. Bake on a shelf in the lower third of the oven until the whites are set but the yolks are still runny and the phyllo is golden and crisp, about 8 minutes. Remove from the oven and let stand 3 minutes before serving.

Nutrition information per serving

364 calories; 240 calories from fat; 27 g fat (7 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 241 mg cholesterol; 870 mg sodium; 14 g carbohydrate; 0 g fiber; 1 g sugar; 18 g protein.

A fresh spin on Caesar salad with Brussels sprouts, sardines

By Melissa D'arabian

For all the grief the Caesar salad gets in the culinary world, I proudly admit to adoring the classic flavor combination - garlicky-lemon dressing mixed with anchovy-umami undertone that can only come from salty fish, topped off with nutty, pungent parmesan. If I could eat only one salad for the rest of my life, it would be some form of Caesar.

Today's recipe for Brussels Sprouts Caesar with Sardine Croutons is a pivot on the standard version. The dressing is my quick weeknight version, using a tiny bit of mayo for creaminess instead of raw egg. Instead of romaine, I use shaved raw Brussels sprouts, which significantly boost the protein over other lettuces and greens. And, the bright lemony dressing completely covers any lingering cruciferous notes from the raw Brussels that may bother some palates.

I leave off the bread croutons, a move originated in honor of my daughter's intolerance of gluten, but one that works out well for those watching carbs. Instead, I lightly saute up sardines and cut them into cubes to stand-in as croutons, boosting protein, omega-3s and salty flavor. I skip the anchovy paste, no longer necessary, in the dressing.

If the sardines scare you, I'd like to encourage you to give them a try, in this recipe or in another. A can of sardines will only set you back a buck or two, and are handy to have in the pantry. If you are a canned sardine newbie, I'd suggest looking for the words "boneless and skinless" on the label. The bones are actually barely detectable, and the skin is tasteless, but the skin is hard to remove, and its silvery color is a bit of a turn-off for my kiddos. So maybe start slow.

When you open the can, gently remove the sardines (don't worry if they break a little; they are delicate). Blot them in a paper towel to remove excess oil - and fishy flavor - thoroughly. Final tip: Serve sardines with plenty of citrus to appreciate a marriage of flavors that just works. If I can't convince you, though, I've made this Caesar recipe with canned tuna instead - just drain the tuna and spoon right on top of the salad.

BRUSSELS SPROUTS CAESAR WITH SARDINE CROUTONS

Ingredients

Servings: 6
Start to finish: 20 minutes

1 pound Brussels sprouts, sliced or shredded (about 4 cups total)
1 small can (3.75 ounces) skinless, boneless sardines, drained and blotted dry with a paper towel
1 tablespoon flour
Olive oil in a mister
Dressing:
1 tablespoon mayonnaise
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1 teaspoon extra virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon grated Parmesan cheese
1/2 teaspoon finely minced fresh garlic
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1 ounce of Parmesan cheese (for shards)
Extra lemon and black pepper for serving, optional

Preparation

Place shredded Brussels sprouts in a large salad bowl and set aside. Heat a small nonstick saute pan over medium-high heat. Gently dredge the sardines in the flour, lightly coating the sardines with the flour on both sides. (You may skip this step entirely, and just saute the patted sardines. Spray the pan with a light coating of olive oil and cook the sardines until lightly crusty and golden, about 3 minutes per side. Remove from heat and set aside. Meanwhile, make the dressing: whisk all the dressing ingredients together in a small bowl. Spoon the dressing onto the shredded sprouts and toss to coat well. Top with sardines (serve whole or cut into cubes), a few shards of parmesan cheese and additional black pepper and serve with extra lemon wedges, if desired.



COOKING ON DEADLINE:

CITRUS
MARINATED
SALMON

By Katie Workman

Salmon is my No 1 favorite fish in the ocean, and I am not alone. The rich and sometimes slightly sweet flavor, the velvety texture, the appealing color, and the fact that it takes so well to all kinds of preparations and seasonings make it a go-to fish for many of us. The bright flavors of lemon and orange are a nice complement to salmon's richness, and they appear in both the marinade and the citrusy sauce that accompanies the fish in this recipe. It couldn't be simpler, and if you don't have the time to marinate the fish, it will still be delicious, although the flavors won't penetrate so deeply.

You can choose skinless fillets or use pieces of fish with the skin still on. In the latter case, place the fillets skin side down on the oiled baking sheet when you cook them under the broiler. When you remove the cooked fish to a plate, slide a spatula between the fish and the skin to separate it, leaving the skin on the baking sheet. If you love a crisp piece of skin with your fish, you might place the fish skin side up when you broil it. Watch carefully to make sure the skin doesn't brown too much as the fish cooks, and if it starts to get too dark before the fish is cooked to your liking, change the oven from broil to 450 degrees F for the last few minutes of cooking.

Serve this dish with rice or potatoes, and some Brussels sprouts or green beans for a colorful and healthful meal. Another nice way to change up a vegetable side is to mix a green salad with some roasted vegetables, and maybe toss in some chickpeas (which also benefit from 15 minutes of roasting along with the vegetables of your choice.)

Ingredients

Start to finish: 20 minutes, plus 1 hour of marinating time
Serves 4
1 lemon
1 orange
3 tablespoons olive oil
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
4 (6- to 8-ounce) salmon fillets
1/4 cup mayonnaise

Preparation

Zest and juice both the lemon and the orange. Mix together the two zests, then remove 1 teaspoon of the combined zest and set aside. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil and the citrus juices with the remaining zest. Season the marinade with salt and pepper. Place the salmon fillets in a baking pan and pour the marinade over the fish, turning to coat evenly. Marinate in the refrigerator for 1 hour.

Meanwhile, combine the mayonnaise and the reserved teaspoon of zest, and season with salt and pepper. Set aside. Pre-heat the broiler. Transfer the salmon to an oiled, rimmed baking sheet, separating the pieces. Discard the marinade. Broil the salmon for 8 to 10 minutes until it is just cooked through and remove from the oven (the fish will continue to cook a bit after it is removed from the oven, so take it out just before it's done to your liking). Transfer to individual plates, and top each piece with a spoonful of the sauce.

Citrus Marinated
Salmon With
Tangy Sauce



Comic

WORD SEARCH

Real Estate 1

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 22 letters spell a common Real Estate phrase.

N E L A S R O F M E C N A R U S N I
U E T I S O P E D L W O L A G N U B
T R I P L E X S K Y S C R A P E R V
D U P L E X T E R I O R L S E L L A
I L T I B U I L D I N G P O A A S C
N N O I T A Z I T R O M A R S Q L A
T O F F E R H E L R L R E S U E I N
E E I S T T O L P A O T E A E O R C
R U T T C A U T W F A T R A T X T Y
I L I D A I S Y I L L E C V L N A L
O A M E R I E S L D F I A E P T A T
R V E N T R C O E O E L P R P S O B
E T S M N T C E O S U R O P I S U R
D E H E O N D T R A S P C A I Y N Z
N K A D C E A L T P E M R O I N O I
E R R N N G O I O R E P E N N N G G
L A E O E A O S T S P D G N E D E R
V M I C N N L Y P A Y M E N T C O E

- AGENT
AMORTIZATION
APPRAISAL
ASSESSMENT
ASSET
BUILDING
BUNGALOW
BUYING
CLOSER
COLLATERAL
CONDEMNED
CONDO
- CONTRACT
CREDITOR
DEED
DEPOSIT
DEPRECIATION
DUPLEX
EXTERIOR
FLIPPING
FOR SALE
HOUSE
INSPECTOR
INSURANCE
- INTERIOR
LAND
LAWYER
LENDER
LIEN
LOAN
LOFT
MARKET VALUE
OFFER
PAYMENT
PLOT
PROPERTY
- REALTOR
SELL
SKYSCRAPER
SOLD
SQUARE FOOTAGE
TAXES
TIMESHARE
TOUR
TRIPLEX
VACANCY
VALUATION
ZONE

Yesterday's Solution

Radiohead Songs

P R A T S U A F T H E T O U R I S T
Y I M A E R D E C I N L E T D O W N
K P S U E C I L O P A M R A K B T E
C C O I O R D N A D I O N A R A P E
U O P R O V E Y O U R S E L F R E R
L R R G A X E A A B R N H E E G S T
O D H A N D E L L E M I N I R N R S
R P H U U I R L C L G I P U M O E U
A M T I N N B R K E H I P L O O S H J
T Y R I A T O E A T A N R N I D C V
S I E O M N I N E H T N E R I I T I
K R E L E I O N R N I E P E T M A D
C O F R B O S E O N O R N U D A N E
A N I S R A T T O G B U I O A D R S O
L L N Y U T T B I S E W T I L Y Y T
B U G M I L E E O C O A K C E P D A
S N E F I L K N O L C C R E E P O P E
K G R A L T H E B E N D S S I L B E
I E S E N O B K N T V E S O U T E N

- AIRBAG
ALL I NEED
BLACK STAR
BLOW OUT
BOOYSNATCHERS
BONES
CREEP
ELECTIONEERING
FAUST ARP
FITTER HAPPIER
- HIGH AND DRY
HUNTING BEARS
IN LIMBO
JUST
KARMA POLICE
KID A
KNIVES OUT
LET DOWN
LUCKY
LURGEE
- MORNING BELL
MY IRON LUNG
NICE DREAM
NO SURPRISES
NUDE
OPTIMISTIC
PARANOID ANDROID
PLANET TEXEL
PROVE YOURSELF
- PYRAMID SONG
RECKONER
REPCORD
SULK
THE BENDS
THE TOURIST
TREEFINGERS
VEGETABLE
VIDEOTAPE

The hidden song is: SUBTERRANEAN HOMESICK ALIEN

CROSSWORD 1859



ACROSS

1. An udder or breast or teat.
4. Diminished in strength, quality, or utility.
12. Having undesirable or negative qualities.
15. (Sumerian) Sun god.
16. The lowermost sail on the mainmast.
17. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
18. A metric unit of volume or capacity equal to 10 liters.
19. An armed adversary (especially a member of an opposing military force).
20. Characteristic of the fields or country.
22. United States humorist who wrote about rural life (1818-1885).
24. Any of numerous low-growing cushion-forming plants of the genus *Draba* having rosette-forming leaves and terminal racemes of small flowers with scapose or leafy stems.
26. Exhibiting or restored to vigorous good health.
27. Anything that provides inspiration for later work.
30. South American wood sorrel cultivated for its edible tubers.
32. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
34. (in sports) A period of play during which one team is on the offensive.
36. The father of your father or mother.
40. A public promotion of some product or service.
41. A wind from the north.
44. Jordan's port.
45. Former measure of the US economy.
47. In a forward direction.

49. The universal time coordinated time when a transmission is sent from Earth to a spacecraft or other celestial body.
50. Lacking or deprive of the sense of hearing wholly or in part.
52. A metrical unit with unstressed-stressed syllables.
54. European herb resembling vetch.
55. The animal order including amoebas.
57. A collection of facts from which conclusions may be drawn.
58. (used of count nouns) Every one considered individually.
60. A worker who attaches something by nailing it.
61. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
64. A rare heavy polyvalent metallic element that resembles manganese chemically and is used in some alloys.
65. Large dark-striped tropical food and game fish related to remoras.
71. A island in the Netherlands Antilles that is the top of an extinct volcano.
75. According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
79. A member of a Mayan people of southwestern Guatemala.
80. The basic unit of money in Iran.
81. An amine containing the double bond linkage -C=C-N-.
82. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
83. A share of money or food or clothing that has been charitably given.
84. Prior to a specified or implied time.
85. The residue that remains when something is burned.

DOWN

1. Informal terms for clothing.
2. A state in the western United States.
3. A Russian prison camp for political prisoners.
4. A United Nations agency to promote trade by increasing the exchange stability of the major currencies.
5. An enzyme that catalyzes the oxidation of many body compounds (e.g., epinephrine and norepinephrine and serotonin).
6. Having sections or patches colored differently and usually brightly.
7. An associate degree in nursing.
8. (Old Testament) The second patriarch.
9. A motley assortment of things.
10. A genus of Mustelidae.
11. A chronic skin disease occurring primarily in women between the ages of 20 and 40.
12. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
13. A blue dye obtained from plants or made synthetically.
14. Small European freshwater fish with a slender bluish-green body.
21. A cut of meat (beef or veal or mutton or lamb) from the upper part of the leg.
23. English writer and a central member of the Fabian Society (1858-1943).
25. An artificial language for international use that rejects rejects all existing words and is based instead on an abstract analysis of ideas.
28. A protective covering that covers or forms the top of a building.
29. Essential equal to suborder Myomorpha with the Dipodidae excluded.
31. A flat-bottomed volcanic crater that was formed by an explosion.
33. An accessory or adjoining anatomical parts or appendages (especially of the embryo).

35. A three-tone Chadic language.
37. An analgesic for mild pain.
38. Wear away.
39. Any of various hard resins from trees of the family Dipterocarpaceae and of the genus *Agathis*.
42. A human limb.
43. A region of Malaysia in northeastern Borneo.
46. Earlier than the present time.
48. Very dark black.
51. Capable of being done with means at hand and circumstances as they are.
53. True firs.
56. The sense organ for hearing and equilibrium.
59. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
62. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
63. A sheet or band of fibrous connective tissue separating or binding together muscles and organs etc.
66. A midwestern state in north central United States in the Great Lakes region.
67. Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
68. The sixth month of the civil year.
69. Ice crystals forming a white deposit (especially on objects outside).
70. An unofficial association of people or groups.
72. Type genus of the Amidae.
73. South African term for 'boss'.
74. A woman hired to suckle a child of someone else.
76. Seed of a pea plant.
77. An inflammatory complication of leprosy that results in painful skin lesions on the arms and legs and face.
78. (formerly) A title of respect for a man in Turkey or Egypt.

Yesterday's Solution

S P A T M A I L B A G M S H
P A L E I N D I A N A A P E
A V E R S N E E R D P H I L
C A U C A S U S G A R A V A
E N T E R A L C E I B A
T A L A O E N A N T H E
L A P B R E F T K E E N
I B E R I A F R I A L T
L I N E A L D E A F U R E A
A D A D C C A N A A N N I
C E L E B E S A D M I R A L
Y E A H S A B A
F A C E D I B I S O T T A R
A L I L A V A T O R Y A G A
H A T A L A B A M A N E H F
D R Y M A H A R A J A L A T

Daily SuDoku

	4		7	2	3			
		6	9					
2		1			6			7
3	9	2				6		
				6				
			5			2	3	4
8			1			5		6
					2	7		
		3		8	7		2	

Yesterday's Solution

3	8	1	2	9	4	7	6	5
5	4	9	7	1	6	8	3	2
7	2	6	5	8	3	9	4	1
4	9	7	3	6	1	2	5	8
8	6	3	9	5	2	1	7	4
2	1	5	4	7	8	3	9	6
9	5	4	8	2	7	6	1	3
1	7	2	6	3	5	4	8	9
6	3	8	1	4	9	5	2	7

TV Listings

Friday, March 16, 2018



01:15 Batman v Superman: Dawn Of Justice
03:50 Independence Day: Resurgence
05:55 The Huntsman: Winter's War
07:50 Rumble
09:25 Batman v Superman: Dawn Of Justice
12:00 Street Fighter
13:45 The Huntsman: Winter's War
15:40 A Kind Of Murder
17:20 A Good Day To Die Hard
19:00 The Darkest Hour
20:35 Star Trek Beyond
22:40 Death Race 2050



00:50 Untamed & Uncut
01:45 The Jeff Corwin Experience
02:40 Biggest And Baddest
03:35 Night
04:00 Night
04:25 Whale Wars
05:15 North Woods Law
06:02 Wildest Middle East
06:49 Untamed & Uncut
07:36 Escape To Chimp Eden
08:00 Escape To Chimp Eden
08:25 Night
08:50 Night
09:15 The Jeff Corwin Experience
10:10 Biggest And Baddest
11:05 Wildest Middle East
12:00 Night
12:28 Night
12:55 Whale Wars
13:50 North Woods Law
14:45 Biggest And Baddest
15:40 Wildest Middle East
16:35 Untamed & Uncut
17:30 The Jeff Corwin Experience
18:25 The Bronx Zoo
19:20 Missouri Mountain Family
20:15 Biggest And Baddest
21:10 Night
21:38 Night
22:05 The Bronx Zoo
23:00 Missouri Mountain Family
23:55 Wildest Middle East



00:00 Hold The Sunset
00:30 Mum
01:00 Death In Paradise
02:00 Holby City
03:00 Born To Kill
04:40 EastEnders
05:10 Doctor Who
06:00 Doctors
06:30 EastEnders
07:00 Casualty
07:55 Holby City
08:55 Doctor Who
09:45 Doctors
10:20 Death In Paradise
11:20 Casualty
12:15 Holby City
13:15 Doctor Who
14:05 EastEnders
14:35 EastEnders
15:05 Casualty
16:00 Doctors
18:30 Friday Night Dinner
19:00 Death In Paradise
20:00 The Last Post
21:00 Father Brown
21:55 Poldark
22:50 Doctors
23:20 Friday Night Dinner
23:45 Death In Paradise



00:00 The First 48
01:00 The First 48
02:00 The Eleven
03:00 Homicide Hunter
04:00 The First 48
05:00 The First 48
06:00 The Eleven

07:00 Cold Case Files
08:00 The First 48
09:00 It Takes A Killer
09:30 It Takes A Killer
10:00 The Killing Of Jonbenet: Her Father Speaks
12:00 Holloway: Women Behind Bars
13:00 The First 48
14:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill
15:00 Homicide Hunter
16:00 Homicide Hunter
17:00 Cold Case Files
18:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill
19:00 It Takes A Killer
19:30 It Takes A Killer
20:00 I Didn't Do It
21:00 I Didn't Do It
22:00 I Didn't Do It
23:00 Crazy Love



00:30 Destroyed In Seconds
00:55 Destroyed In Seconds
01:20 Strip The Cosmos
02:10 Man v The Universe
03:00 Nextworld
03:50 Ultimate Survival
04:40 Tanked
05:30 How It's Made
05:55 How It's Made
06:20 Destroyed In Seconds
06:40 Destroyed In Seconds
07:00 Ultimate Survival
07:50 How It's Made
08:15 How It's Made
08:40 Destroyed In Seconds
09:05 Destroyed In Seconds
09:30 Tanked
10:20 Nextworld
11:10 Guinness World Records
Smashed New Zealand
11:35 Guinness World Records
Smashed New Zealand
12:00 Dynamo: Magician Impossible
12:50 How It's Made
13:15 How It's Made
13:40 Destroyed In Seconds
14:05 Destroyed In Seconds
14:30 Tanked
15:20 Ultimate Survival
16:10 Nextworld
17:00 Guinness World Records
Smashed New Zealand
17:25 Guinness World Records
Smashed New Zealand
17:50 Dynamo: Magician Impossible
18:40 Destroyed In Seconds
19:05 Destroyed In Seconds
19:30 How It's Made
19:55 How It's Made
20:20 Tanked
21:10 Guinness World Records
Smashed New Zealand
21:35 Guinness World Records
Smashed New Zealand
22:00 Dynamo: Magician Impossible
22:50 Nextworld
23:40 Ultimate Survival



00:50 My Father, The Serial Killer: People Magazine...
01:45 Hostage: Deadly Demands
02:40 The Perfect Suspect
03:35 Reasonable Doubt
04:30 My Father, The Serial Killer: People Magazine...
05:25 Swamp Murders
06:20 I Almost Got Away With It
07:10 The Perfect Murder
08:00 California Investigator
08:25 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
09:15 Swamp Murders
10:10 The Perfect Murder
11:05 Suspicion
12:00 Married With Secrets
12:55 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
14:45 The Perfect Murder
15:40 Suspicion
16:35 I Am Homicide
17:30 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall

18:25 Swamp Murders
19:20 I Almost Got Away With It
20:15 The Perfect Murder
21:10 The Perfect Murder
22:05 A Crime To Remember
23:00 The 1980s: The Deadliest Decade
23:55 Horror In The Woods: People Magazine Investigates



00:10 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
00:35 Binny And The Ghost
01:00 Hank Zipzer
01:25 Alex & Co.
01:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
01:50 Evermoor Chronicles
02:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
03:05 Binny And The Ghost
03:55 Hank Zipzer
04:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
04:20 Hank Zipzer
04:45 Alex & Co.
05:10 Alex & Co.
05:35 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
06:25 Binny And The Ghost
06:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
06:50 Rolling With The Ronks
07:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
07:25 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
07:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
07:55 Tangled: The Series
08:20 Elena Of Avalor
08:45 Bunk'd
09:10 Stuck In The Middle
09:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
10:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
10:25 Lolirock
10:50 Lolirock
11:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
12:05 Hank Zipzer
12:30 Alex & Co.
12:55 Alex & Co.
13:20 Lolirock
14:10 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
14:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
15:00 The Zhuzhus
15:15 Bunk'd
15:40 K.C. Undercover
16:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
16:10 Elena Of Avalor
16:35 Bizaardvark
17:00 Tangled: The Series
17:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
17:50 Raven's Home
18:15 Stuck In The Middle
18:40 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
19:05 K.C. Undercover
19:30 Bunk'd
19:55 Descendants Wicked World
20:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
20:25 Liv And Maddie
20:50 Jessie
21:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:20 Tangled: The Series
21:45 Bizaardvark
22:10 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
22:35 Bunk'd
23:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
23:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
23:50 Lolirock



00:00 Mission Force One
00:30 PJ Masks
01:00 PJ Masks
01:30 Art Attack
01:55 Henry Hugglemonster
02:05 Loopdidoo
02:20 Henry Hugglemonster

02:35 Calimero
02:50 Henry Hugglemonster
03:05 Art Attack
03:30 The Hive
03:40 Loopdidoo
03:55 Henry Hugglemonster
04:10 Art Attack
04:35 Loopdidoo
04:50 Calimero
05:05 Art Attack
05:30 Henry Hugglemonster
05:45 Henry Hugglemonster
06:00 Art Attack
06:30 Henry Hugglemonster
06:45 Loopdidoo
07:00 Henry Hugglemonster
07:15 Calimero
07:30 PJ Masks
08:00 Trulli Tales
08:30 Jungle Junction
08:50 Handy Manny
09:10 PJ Masks
09:30 Vampirina
10:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
10:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
11:00 Puppy Dog Pals
11:30 Puppy Dog Pals
12:00 The Lion Guard
12:30 The Lion Guard
13:00 Sofia The First
13:30 Sofia The First
14:00 PJ Masks
14:30 PJ Masks
15:00 P-King Duckling
15:30 Tangled
16:00 Elena Of Avalor: Realm Of The Jacquins
16:45 Minnie's Bow-Toons
17:00 PJ Masks
17:30 Mission Force One
18:00 The Lion Guard
18:30 Puppy Dog Pals
19:00 Trulli Tales
19:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
20:00 Sofia The First
20:30 The Lion Guard
21:00 Vampirina
21:30 PJ Masks
22:00 Trulli Tales
22:30 Tangled
23:00 Elena Of Avalor: Realm Of The Jacquins
23:45 Minnie's Bow-Toons



00:15 Alaskan Bush People
01:05 Killing Fields: Murder Isle
01:50 Bear Grylls: Breaking Point
02:35 Man v Expert
03:20 Extreme Engineering
04:05 Flying Wild Alaska
04:50 Dirty Jobs
05:35 How Do They Do It?
06:00 The Caravan Show
06:23 Chaos Caught On Camera
06:45 How Do They Do It?
07:35 Flying Wild Alaska
08:20 The Caravan Show
08:45 Chaos Caught On Camera
09:10 Dirty Jobs
09:55 Flying Wild Alaska
10:45 Dirty Jobs
11:30 Alaskan Bush People
12:20 The Caravan Show
12:43 Chaos Caught On Camera
13:05 How Do They Do It?
13:55 Dirty Jobs
14:40 Alaskan Bush People
15:30 How Do They Do It?
15:53 How Do They Do It?
16:15 Bear Grylls: Breaking Point
17:05 Man v Expert
17:50 Impossible Engineering
18:40 Fire In The Hole
19:25 Alaskan Bush People
20:15 Extreme Engineering
21:00 Street Justice: The Bronx
21:50 Gear Dogs
22:40 Jesse James Outlaw Garage
23:30 Gold Rush



06:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
06:25 Milo Murphy's Law
06:50 Right Now Kapow
07:15 Mech-X4

07:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
07:45 Walk The Prank
08:35 Right Now Kapow
09:00 Right Now Kapow
09:25 Mighty Med
09:50 Mighty Med
10:20 Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures
11:10 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
12:00 Kid vs. Kat
12:25 Two More Eggs S2
12:30 Kid vs. Kat
12:55 Kirby Buckets
13:20 Kirby Buckets
13:45 Supa Strikas
14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
14:15 Supa Strikas
14:40 Right Now Kapow
15:05 Right Now Kapow
15:30 Milo Murphy's Law
15:55 Two More Eggs S2
16:00 The Suite Life Of Zack & Cody
16:25 Lab Rats
16:50 Walk The Prank
17:15 Mech-X4
17:40 Marvel's Spider-Man
18:05 Kickin' It
18:30 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
18:45 Kickin' It
19:10 Mini Ninjas
19:25 Walk The Prank
19:50 Marvel's Rocket And Groot
19:55 Mech-X4
20:20 Penn Zero: Part Time Hero
20:45 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
21:10 Kid vs. Kat
21:35 Marvel's Rocket And Groot
21:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:45 Lab Rats
22:10 Lab Rats
22:35 Phineas And Ferb
23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am



00:10 WAGs Atlanta
01:00 WAGs Atlanta
01:50 E! News
02:50 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
03:40 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
04:35 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
05:30 Celebrity Style Story
06:00 Mariah's World
06:55 E! News Middle East
07:10 Mariah's World
08:10 E! News: Daily Pop
09:10 WAGs Miami
10:10 WAGs Miami
11:05 WAGs Miami
12:00 E! News Middle East
12:15 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
13:10 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
14:05 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
15:00 E! News Middle East
15:15 E! News: Daily Pop
16:15 WAGs Atlanta
17:10 WAGs Atlanta
18:05 WAGs Atlanta
19:00 E! News
20:00 Botched
21:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
22:00 Botched
23:00 E! News Middle East
23:15 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry



00:10 Who's Doing The Dishes?
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 Couples Come Dine With Me
03:25 It's Not Rocket Science
04:20 The Jonathan Ross Show
05:15 Don't Tell The Bride
06:15 Who's Doing The Dishes?
07:10 Couples Come Dine With Me
08:05 Cannonball
09:00 The Jonathan Ross Show
09:55 Don't Tell The Bride
11:00 Who's Doing The Dishes?

11:50 Couples Come Dine With Me
12:45 Emmerdale
13:15 Emmerdale
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 Who's Doing The Dishes?
15:10 Couples Come Dine With Me
16:00 Dancing On Ice
17:50 Don't Tell The Bride
18:50 Emmerdale
19:15 Emmerdale
19:45 Coronation Street
20:10 Couples Come Dine With Me
21:00 Dancing On Ice
22:50 Emmerdale
23:15 Emmerdale
23:40 Coronation Street



00:00 WWII: Lost Films
01:00 Cities Of The Underworld
02:00 Brad Meltzer's Lost History
03:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
03:50 Ancient Aliens
04:40 Ancient Impossible
05:30 WWII: Lost Films
06:20 Smartest Guy In The Room
06:45 Smartest Guy In The Room
07:10 The Universe
08:00 Cities Of The Underworld
09:00 Brad Meltzer's Lost History
10:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
11:00 Ancient Aliens
12:00 Ancient Impossible
13:00 WWII: Lost Films
14:00 Cities Of The Underworld
15:00 Brad Meltzer's Lost History
16:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
17:00 Ancient Aliens
18:00 Ancient Impossible
19:00 Cities Of The Underworld
20:00 Brad Meltzer's Lost History
21:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
22:00 Ancient Aliens
23:00 What Really Happened



00:15 Chasing The Sun
00:45 Andy And Ben Eat Australia
01:10 Miguel's Tropical Kitchen
01:40 Chasing Time
02:05 Chasing The Sun
02:35 Confucius Was A Foodie
03:30 What's For Sale?
03:55 What's For Sale?
04:25 Dog Whisperer
05:20 Dog Whisperer
06:15 Food School
06:40 Food School
07:10 Chasing Time
07:35 Chasing The Sun
08:05 Confucius Was A Foodie
09:00 What's For Sale?
09:25 What's For Sale?
09:55 Dog Whisperer
10:50 Dog Whisperer
11:45 Food School
12:10 Food School
12:40 Chasing Time
13:05 Chasing The Sun
13:35 Confucius Was A Foodie
14:30 What's For Sale?
14:55 What's For Sale?
15:25 Dog Whisperer
16:20 Dog Whisperer
17:15 Food School
17:40 Food School
18:10 Eat Street
18:35 Chasing The Sun
19:05 Confucius Was A Foodie
20:00 What's For Sale?
20:30 What's For Sale?
21:00 Dog Whisperer
22:00 Dog Whisperer
22:55 Food School
23:20 Food School
23:50 Eat Street



00:10 Hitler's Death Squad
01:00 Apocalypse: The Second World War
02:00 Chain Of Command
03:00 Science Of Stupid Compilations

TV Listings

03:30 Science Of Stupid Compila-
tions
04:00 Hitler's Death Squad
05:00 Going Deep With David
Rees
05:30 Going Deep With David
Rees
06:00 He Named Me Malala
08:00 Reinventing Seoul
09:00 Going Deep With David
Rees
09:30 Going Deep With David
Rees
10:00 Locked Up Abroad
11:00 X-Ray Earth (2 Hour)
13:00 Mega Factories
14:00 Sea Of Hope: America's Un-
derwater Treasures
15:00 A Brave Heart: The Lizzie Ve-
lasquez Story
16:00 Locked Up Abroad
17:00 Chain Of Command
18:00 Hitler's Death Squad
19:00 Apocalypse: The Second
World War
20:00 Locked Up Abroad
20:50 Chain Of Command
21:40 Hitler's Death Squad
22:30 Apocalypse: The Second
World War
23:20 Engineering Connections



00:20 When Crows Ate Dinosaurs
01:10 Monster Croc Wrangler
01:35 Monster Croc Wrangler
02:00 Tiger Queen
02:50 Predator Fails
03:45 Wild 24
04:40 The Invaders
05:35 Tiger Queen
06:30 Predator Fails
07:25 Wild 24
08:20 The Invaders
09:15 Snakes In The City
10:10 Wild Little Cats
11:05 Operation Sumatran Rhino
12:00 When Sharks Attack
12:55 Wildebeeste: Born To Run
13:50 Predator Fails
14:45 Wild 24
15:40 The Invaders
16:35 Snakes In The City
17:30 Where Oceans Collide
18:25 Saving Paradise Islands
19:20 Wild 24
20:10 The Invaders
21:00 Snakes In The City
21:50 Where Oceans Collide
22:40 Saving Paradise Islands
23:30 When Sharks Attack



00:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
00:36 Rabbids Invasion
01:00 Rabbids Invasion
01:24 Sanjay And Craig
01:48 Sanjay And Craig
02:12 Winx Club
02:36 Winx Club
03:00 Harvey Beaks
03:24 Harvey Beaks
03:48 The Loud House
04:12 The Loud House
04:36 Breadwinners
05:00 Breadwinners
05:24 Get Blake
05:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
06:12 SpongeBob SquarePants
06:36 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
07:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Tur-
tles
07:24 Rabbids Invasion
07:48 Get Blake
08:12 Harvey Beaks
08:36 Sanjay And Craig
09:00 SpongeBob SquarePants
09:24 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
09:48 Henry Danger
10:12 Game Shakers
10:36 Regal Academy
11:00 Winx Club
11:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
11:48 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
12:12 The Loud House
12:36 Rabbids Invasion
13:00 Breadwinners
13:24 Massive Monster Mayhem

13:48 I Am Frankie
14:12 The Thundermans
14:36 Sanjay And Craig
15:00 Escape From Mr. Lemon-
cello's Library
16:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
16:36 The Loud House
17:00 Massive Monster Mayhem
17:24 I Am Frankie
17:48 Hunter Street
18:12 Henry Danger
18:36 Henry Danger
19:00 Henry Danger
19:24 Henry Danger
19:48 Henry Danger
20:12 Harvey Beaks
20:36 SpongeBob SquarePants
21:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
21:24 Sanjay And Craig
21:48 Rabbids Invasion
22:12 Breadwinners
22:36 Harvey Beaks
23:00 SpongeBob SquarePants
23:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
23:48 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles



00:17 Kid-E-Cats
00:22 Shimmer And Shine
00:45 Sunny Day
01:07 Max & Ruby
01:29 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
01:40 Kiva Can Do!
01:51 The Day Henry Met
01:57 Blaze And The Monster Ma-
chines
02:19 Blaze And The Monster Ma-
chines
02:41 Paw Patrol
02:53 Kid-E-Cats
02:58 Kid-E-Cats
03:03 Shimmer And Shine
03:25 Nella The Princess Knight
03:37 Paw Patrol
04:00 The Day Henry Met
04:06 Max & Ruby
04:28 Dora The Explorer
04:51 Sunny Day
05:13 Nella The Princess Knight
05:36 Shimmer And Shine
05:59 Wallykazam!
06:22 Zack & Quack
06:33 The Day Henry Met
06:38 Blaze And The Monster Ma-
chines
07:00 Rusty Rivets
07:12 Paw Patrol
07:37 Dora The Explorer
08:00 Nella The Princess Knight
08:22 Kiva Can Do!
08:33 Kiva Can Do!
08:43 Blaze And The Monster Ma-
chines
09:06 Paw Patrol
09:30 Shimmer And Shine
09:52 Nella The Princess Knight
10:15 The Day Henry Met
10:21 Paw Patrol
10:44 Rusty Rivets
11:08 Wallykazam!
11:31 Bubble Guppies
11:54 Team Umizoomi
12:17 Kid-E-Cats
12:22 Shimmer And Shine
12:45 Sunny Day
13:07 Max & Ruby
13:29 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
13:40 Kiva Can Do!
13:51 The Day Henry Met
13:57 Blaze And The Monster Ma-
chines
14:19 Blaze And The Monster Ma-
chines
14:41 Paw Patrol
14:53 Kid-E-Cats
14:58 Kid-E-Cats
15:03 Shimmer And Shine
15:25 Nella The Princess Knight
15:37 Paw Patrol
16:00 The Day Henry Met
16:05 Max & Ruby
16:28 Dora The Explorer
16:51 Sunny Day
17:13 Nella The Princess Knight
17:36 Shimmer And Shine
17:59 Wallykazam!
18:22 Zack & Quack
18:32 The Day Henry Met
18:38 Blaze And The Monster Ma-
chines
19:00 Rusty Rivets

19:13 Paw Patrol
19:37 Dora The Explorer
20:00 Nella The Princess Knight
20:22 Kiva Can Do!
20:33 Kiva Can Do!
20:43 Blaze And The Monster Ma-
chines
21:06 Paw Patrol
21:29 Shimmer And Shine
21:52 Nella The Princess Knight
22:14 The Day Henry Met
22:20 Paw Patrol
22:44 Rusty Rivets
23:08 Wallykazam!
23:32 Bubble Guppies
23:55 Team Umizoomi



01:45 Pete's Dragon
03:45 Oz The Great And Powerful
06:15 The Little Mermaid: Ariel's
Beginning
08:00 Planes
10:00 Pete's Dragon
12:00 Oz The Great And Powerful
14:30 Finding Dory
16:30 Tarzan II
18:15 The Muppets
20:15 Race To Witch Mountain
22:15 Finding Dory



00:00 Outlander
01:00 Criminal Minds: Beyond Bor-
ders
01:50 Girlfriends' Guide To Divorce
02:40 Lethal Weapon
03:30 S.W.A.T.
04:20 Outlander
05:20 The Unit
06:10 Emerald City
07:00 Good Morning America
09:00 The View
10:00 S.W.A.T.
11:00 The Unit
12:00 Emerald City
13:00 Criminal Minds: Beyond Bor-
ders
14:00 Lethal Weapon
15:00 The View
16:00 Live Good Morning America
18:00 Emerald City
19:00 The Unit
20:00 Criminal Minds: Beyond Bor-
ders
21:00 Survivor: Ghost Island
22:00 Once Upon A Time
23:00 WWE Experience



01:35 What An Idiot
03:25 Double Take
05:00 Are We Done Yet?
06:40 SuperBob
08:10 Mr. Wrong
10:00 Double Take
11:35 Are We Done Yet?
13:15 SuperBob
14:50 Wayne's World 2
16:35 Tyler Perry's Boo: A Madea
Halloween
18:30 Men At Work
20:15 Jeff, Who Lives At Home
22:00 Your Friends & Neighbors
23:45 The Overnight



00:25 Crisscross
02:10 An Inconvenient Truth
03:55 Newsies: The Broadway Mu-
sical
06:15 The Last King
08:00 Once Upon A Crime
09:50 The Field
11:40 The Last King
13:30 Little Man Tate
15:15 Noble
17:00 Worlds Apart
19:00 Yosemite
20:30 The Inevitable Defeat Of
Mister & Pete
22:20 Once Upon A Time In Amer-
ica



01:20 Felix The Toy Rabbit And The
Time Machine
02:55 Bunny Tales
04:15 Song Of The Sea
06:00 Moomins And The Comet
Chase
07:25 The Fairy Tales Tree
08:50 The Happy Cricket
10:20 Elias And The Royal Yacht
11:45 Papelucho & The Martian
13:10 Bunny Tales
14:30 Song Of The Sea
16:15 Ploddy Police Car
17:35 Elias And The Royal Yacht
19:00 Scooby-Doo! And WWE:
Curse Of Speed Demon
20:30 Amila's Secret
21:45 Ploddy Police Car
23:05 The Happy Cricket



00:05 Boyz In The Hood
02:00 Calendar Girls
04:00 13 Going On 30
05:50 Dirty Dancing
08:15 Calendar Girls
10:05 Balkid Begins
11:35 13 Going On 30
13:15 Kung Fu Panda
14:50 Ghostbusters
16:45 Teenage Mutant Ninja Tur-
tles: Out Of The Shadows
18:40 Birdman
20:40 Dirty Dancing
22:25 Pushing Tin



Star Gold
01:35 Tubelight
03:00 Tubelight
03:55 Koffee With Karan
05:00 Kunwara
07:35 Pyaar To Hona Hi Tha
10:30 Sanjog
13:15 Namak Haraam
15:40 Running Shaadi
17:45 Singham Returns
20:00 Bodyguard
22:20 Prague



01:30 When Love Came To Town
03:15 Wedding Daze
04:45 Reclaim
06:20 Grace Of Monaco
08:00 Code 46
09:30 Venom
10:55 Chicago
12:45 Melancholia
15:00 When Love Came To Town
16:45 The Moment
18:15 Sleepwalking
20:00 Valkyrie
22:00 The Hundred-Foot Journey



00:00 Mistresses
01:00 Mistresses
02:00 Grey's Anatomy
03:00 Married At First Sight
04:00 Three
05:00 House Of DVF
06:00 Mistresses
07:00 Mistresses
08:00 Grey's Anatomy
09:00 Married At First Sight
10:00 Three
11:00 House Of DVF
12:00 Mistresses
13:00 Mistresses
14:00 Grey's Anatomy
15:00 Married At First Sight
16:00 Three
17:00 Mistresses
18:00 Devious Maids
19:00 Devious Maids
20:00 Project Runway All Stars

21:00 Project Runway
22:00 Project Runway
23:00 Grey's Anatomy



00:20 Say Yes To The Dress
01:05 90 Days To Wed
01:50 90 Days To Wed: Before The
90 Days
02:35 Oprah's Master Class
03:20 Hodges Half Dozen
04:05 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
04:50 Sweet 15: Quincea?era
05:35 Say Yes To The Dress
06:00 Sister Wives
06:45 Sister Wives
07:30 Sister Wives
08:15 Say Yes To The Dress
09:00 Cake Boss
09:25 Say Yes To The Dress UK
09:47 Say Yes To The Dress UK
10:10 Say Yes To The Dress UK
10:32 Say Yes To The Dress UK
10:55 Say Yes To The Dress UK
11:17 Say Yes To The Dress UK
11:40 Say Yes To The Dress UK
12:02 Say Yes To The Dress UK
12:25 Say Yes To The Dress UK
12:47 Say Yes To The Dress UK
13:10 Oprah: Where Are They
Now?
13:55 Oprah's Master Class
14:40 Cake Boss
15:02 Cake Boss
15:25 Cake Boss
15:47 Cake Boss
16:10 Cake Boss
16:35 Cake Boss
17:00 This Is Life With Carissa Cu-
pido
17:50 Diva Brides
18:50 Kate Plus 8
19:40 Cake Boss
20:10 Say Yes To The Dress
20:35 Say Yes To The Dress
21:00 Kate Plus 8
21:50 Little People, Big World
23:30 Return To Amish



00:05 Another Period
00:30 Chris Ramsey Stand Up Cen-
tral
00:55 Tosh.0
01:20 Tosh.0
01:45 Tosh.0
02:10 The Opposition With Jordan
Klepper
02:35 Real Husbands Of Hollywood

03:00 The Daily Show With Trevor
Noah
03:25 Comedy Central Presents
Comedy 3alwagef
03:50 The Opposition With Jordan
Klepper

04:15 Ridiculousness Arabia
04:40 Workaholics
05:05 Workaholics
05:30 Workaholics
05:55 Workaholics
06:20 Workaholics
06:50 I Live With Models
07:15 I Live With Models
07:40 I Live With Models
08:05 I Live With Models
08:30 I Live With Models
08:55 Friends
09:20 Friends
09:45 Friends
10:10 Detroiters
10:35 Detroiters
11:00 Friendszone
11:25 Friendszone
11:50 Friendszone
12:15 Friendszone
12:40 Friendszone
13:05 Lip Sync Battle
13:30 Lip Sync Battle
13:55 Key And Peele
14:20 Key And Peele
14:45 Key And Peele
15:10 Key And Peele
15:35 Key And Peele
16:00 Detroiters
16:30 Detroiters
16:55 Detroiters


17:20 Friends
17:45 Friends
18:10 Friends
18:35 Friends
19:00 Friends
19:25 Nathan For You
19:48 Workaholics
20:10 Comedy Central Presents
Comedy 3alwagef
20:35 Ridiculousness Arabia
21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor
Noah
21:30 The Opposition With Jordan
Klepper
22:00 DI Hughley: The Endangered
List
22:50 This Is Not Happening
23:15 Ridiculousness Arabia
23:40 The Daily Show With Trevor
Noah



00:12 Alvinnn!!! And The Chip-
munks
00:23 Alvinnn!!! And The Chip-
munks
00:36 The Fairly OddParents
00:58 SpongeBob SquarePants
01:20 Toon Marty
01:30 Toon Marty
01:41 Bunsen Is A Beast
02:03 Pig Goat Banana Cricket
02:25 Welcome To The Wayne
02:46 Sanjay & Craig
03:08 Rabbids: Invasion
03:16 The Penguins Of Madagas-
car
03:39 The Penguins Of Madagas-
car
04:01 Teenage Mutant Ninja Tur-
tles
04:24 Teenage Mutant Ninja Tur-
tles
04:46 Mysticons
05:09 Alvinnn!!! And The Chip-
munks
05:20 Alvinnn!!! And The Chip-
munks
05:31 Toon Marty
05:42 Toon Marty
05:53 Harvey Beaks
06:15 The Fairly OddParents
06:37 SpongeBob SquarePants
06:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
07:00 Back At The Barnyard
07:22 Back At The Barnyard
07:46 Harvey Beaks
07:58 Alvinnn!!! And The Chip-
munks
08:10 The Adventures Of Jimmy
Neutron, Boy Genius
08:32 Hey Arnold!
08:56 Kung Fu Panda: Legends Of
Awesomeness
09:18 The Penguins Of Madagas-
car
09:30 The Penguins Of Madagas-
car
09:50 The Fairly OddParents
10:14 T.U.F.F. Puppy
10:36 Get Blake
11:00 Hey Arnold!
11:26 Back At The Barnyard
11:51 Rabbids: Invasion
12:00 The Adventures Of Jimmy
Neutron, Boy Genius
12:22 The Adventures Of Jimmy
Neutron, Boy Genius
12:45 Alvinnn!!! And The Chip-
munks
12:57 SpongeBob SquarePants
13:19 SpongeBob SquarePants
13:32 Teenage Mutant Ninja Tur-
tles
13:55 Teenage Mutant Ninja Tur-
tles
14:17 Kung Fu Panda: Legends Of
Awesomeness
14:40 Kung Fu Panda: Legends Of
Awesomeness
15:01 The Penguins Of Madagas-
car
15:24 Alvinnn!!! And The Chip-
munks
15:35 Alvinnn!!! And The Chip-
munks
15:47 Rabbids: Invasion
15:55 The Fairly OddParents
16:17 Bunsen Is A Beast
16:39 T.U.F.F. Puppy
17:00 Hey Arnold!
17:23 Get Blake


Stars

Friday, March 16, 2018




Aries (March 21-April 19)

Aries, dreams and intuition are a hallmark of the phase you have entered. Deep emotions are stirred when you come to understand the suffering someone you know is going through. Forgiveness and compassion are strongly indicated here; you may find yourself making plans to approach someone and apologize. You try to understand how you can know things about someone that no one's told you! Undergoing change can be rejuvenating! Attending an event, you realize that everyone's basically in the same boat on this planet; this affects the way you look at people and emotions. Sensitivity to spiritual matters is strong, almost overwhelming. You learn that your skills and intellect are appreciated as a coworker slips about a secret plan to reward you, Aries.




Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Taurus, you find that your interests are changing; politics, religion, the law something controversial and opinion ate is very strongly indicated. You focus on increasing what you know and experience; your mind s primed and ready to take this step. You have an opportunity to take part in some meaningless drama playing out in a friend s life; if you truly dislike drama now s the time to make this clear! Someone who hurt you deeply shows up and wants back in; think carefully so you can make the best choice for you. A perfect time to remodel or redecorate has arrived; your energy is right-on for this type of endeavor. If you re getting a negative vibe from an unknown source, take a look at yourself. Believe in your opinions and behavior, Taurus.




Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Gemini, your life seems almost too good to be true regarding spiritual understanding; believe it, it s true! Dreams and intuition become a more important part of your life; starting a dream journal could be extremely helpful. You could be blocked from something you want to do; this passes soon. You have no problem figuring out exactly how to get what you want without interfering with, or upsetting, anyone. When someone pushes you for an answer, you're not afraid to tell them it can wait. Courage is a highlight of the phase you have just entered. Being understanding is easy just now as you commit to broadening your views; your abilities to get along with others is admired. You have a strong sense of what others want and need and how they can get it, Gemini.




Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Cancer, you could find yourself generally irritated by those around you, especially someone acting shady and cool. People could think you re unrealistic regarding your spiritual journey but you re strong enough now to realize you're on the right track. A younger person who s used to being the golden one is having difficulty dealing with you being respected for something you do; this person is more jealous than you know. If you feel out of place in your surroundings, change this by doing what you know is right. A new project has your name written all over it. Success in ridding yourself of a toxic circumstance is imminent. Being with those you love brings interesting conversation regarding the well-being of one in the group in ill health, Cancer.




Leo (July 23-August 22)

Leo, priorities change when someone you're close to needs your help; making yourself available could prove challenging as you have a full schedule. Partnerships offer security and strength as you enter into an agreement. Wanting more than you have provides good motivation to work toward having multiple incomes. Your independent streak is admired by many as are the results you're able to create. Having to admit you're wrong is difficult but you manage to come to terms with apologizing. Understanding and right action take you to new places. You learn spiritual lessons from a surprising person. An old hobby could turn into a new career. You make someone happy later. You're on your best behavior as you join others for dinner tonight, Leo.




Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Virgo, being grateful for all that you've got is strongly indicated during this particular phase; finding satisfaction in material security is dominant now. Becoming aware of the needs of someone else causes you to act. You spend some time trying to figure out a dream you had that you know should make sense. Letting someone negative take priority in your life could cause problems for some time to come. Something or someone from the past join to somehow affect the present; this strengthens your awareness of far-reaching consequences decisions can create. Knowing someone's secret causes you to be uncomfortable; this is a burden you didn't volunteer for. A puzzling situation seems to be unraveling no matter what anyone does to help, Virgo.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Libra, you could come across as being opinionated and stubborn willed; you have actually been getting better with this so relax and let this show. You have difficulty working with people that can t seem to understand even the simplest concepts; some people live in the past and can t seem to move forward. Making some new plans in secret is more fun the closer the event gets. Your emotions are running high, positive and negative; this provides a good exercise in being balanced. Look before you leap regarding a new relationship; this doesn't necessarily indicate a romance. It seems that you don t know what you're doing, but in truth you're aware of every single thing you do and why. Your welcoming spirit creates a warm environment for family and friends, Libra.



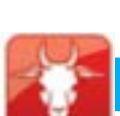
Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Scorpio, you walk within the boundaries of spiritual, mystical energy that gives encouragement and support in earthly affairs. Being a better person is more important to you than at any other time in your life. You have no patience with someone who insists on silly, petty observations and disturbance. You join with others to make your community or group more profitable. Your very best qualities are to the fore and you're on your best behavior when you attend a small social gathering. Your heart s in the right place, scorpion, and this feels much better. You make a good decision to anonymously help someone you have offended; you re determined to fix wrongs you have done in the past. Finding balance seems to be something you can do with success now, Scorpio.




Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Sagittarius, a spring in your step is noticed by many today; being in a good place in life causes a confident outlook. You gladly savor all of the optimism you feel for the present and the future. When you separate yourself from negative influences you win. You extend a helping hand to someone in need; your generous nature creates purely positive karma. Being your very best no longer seems like a hard thing to do. Some person is secretly envious but you'd never know from their words and deeds; this person is used to being the favored one and has trouble not holding that spot. A bonus causes you to smile all the way to the bank! You know when you have found a good thing and do whatever it takes to acquire it. Happiness with others is indicated, Sagittarius.




Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Capricorn, you could find it hard to resist temptation today; you can do this, so don t give up! Red tape could seem to meet you at every turn but you're getting better at being patient. You may have a sense of being in a mystic bubble, as though you re watching the world go by from a safe distance. Being pleasant when others aren't sets you apart from the crowd. You push doubt away in favor of confidence! A new opportunity unfolds that causes you to wonder; taking time with this one reveals what should be done at the right time. Someone needs your advice on a troubling situation you know nothing about; use your best judgment here. You step into a very pleasant situation when you show up somewhere unexpectedly later this evening, Capricorn.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Aquarius, working with an older associate creates an atmosphere of progress and the unraveling something unusual. Being on time is a challenge, yet you spend time with someone who s a stickler for punctuality; if this were the only problem you had, you wouldn't have one! Lighten up and let yourself enjoy the routine things in life. You make a plea to someone for a bit of help regarding something possibly of a legal nature. There could be some problems with impulsive behavior; stop, think, breathe before you act. Your thoughts could run away from you causing a careless injury. Finally, you figure out how a certain area of your home should be arranged for the best energy; you think perhaps there just could be something to feng shui after all, Aquarius.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Pisces, your talents and abilities are in high view as you tend to a difficult task; using a new method you developed meets with success. Someone you love encourages a certain attitude you have taken about a personal issue. Pursuing something new is highly likely at this time. An unexpected event spurs you to reorganize your schedule; this could lead to meeting a new person who could become important. Your personal style is highly complimented. You happily step back and let someone else take credit for a joint effort, this does more good than you know now. Surrounded by your home environment causes you to become grateful for the life you live. Working with plants or animals brings joy. Interesting people come for a nice visit, Pisces.

COUNTRY CODES			
Afghanistan	0093	Jordan	00962
Albania	00355	Kazakhstan	007
Algeria	00213	Kenya	00254
Andorra	00376	Kiribati	00686
Angola	00244	Kuwait	00965
Anguilla	001264	Kyrgyzstan	00996
Antiga	001268	Laos	00856
Argentina	0054	Latvia	00371
Armenia	00374	Lebanon	00961
Australia	0061	Liberia	00231
Austria	0043	Libya	00218
Bahamas	001242	Lithuania	00370
Bahrain	00973	Luxembourg	00352
Bangladesh	00880	Macau	00853
Barbados	001246	Macedonia	00389
Belarus	00375	Madagascar	00261
Belgium	0032	Majorca	0034
Belize	00501	Malawi	00265
Benin	00229	Malaysia	0060
Bermuda	001441	Maldives	00960
Bhutan	00975	Mali	00223
Bolivia	00591	Malta	00356
Bosnia	00387	Marshall Islands	00692
Botswana	00267	Martinique	00596
Brazil	0055	Mauritania	00222
Brunei	00673	Mauritius	00230
Bulgaria	00359	Mayotte	00269
Burkina	00226	Mexico	0052
Burundi	00257	Micronesia	00691
Cambodia	00855	Moldova	00373
Cameroon	00237	Monaco	00377
Canada	001	Mongolia	00976
Cape Verde	00238	Montserrat	001664
Cayman Islands	001345	Morocco	00212
Central African Republic	00236	Mozambique	00258
Chad	00235	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Chile	0056	Namibia	00264
China	0086	Nepal	00977
Colombia	0057	Netherlands (Holland)	0031
Comoros	00269	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Congo	00242	New Caledonia	00687
Cook Islands	00682	New Zealand	0064
Costa Rica	00506	Nicaragua	00505
Croatia	00385	Nigar	00227
Cuba	0053	Nigeria	00234
Cyprus	00357	Niue	00683
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Norfolk Island	00672
Czech Republic	00420	Northern Ireland (UK)	0044
Denmark	0045	North Korea	00850
Diego Garcia	00246	Norway	0047
Djibouti	00253	Oman	00968
Dominica	001767	Pakistan	0092
Dominican Republic	001809	Palau	00680
Ecuador	00593	Panama	00507
Egypt	0020	Papua New Guinea	00675
El Salvador	00503	Paraguay	00595
England (UK)	0044	Peru	0051
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Philippines	0063
Eritrea	00291	Poland	0048
Estonia	00372	Portugal	00351
Ethiopia	00251	Puerto Rico	001787
Falkland Islands	00500	Qatar	00974
Faroe Islands	00298	Romania	0040
Fiji	00679	Russian Federation	007
Finland	00358	Rwanda	00250
France	0033	Saint Helena	00290
French Guiana	00594	Saint Kitts	001869
French Polynesia	00689	Saint Lucia	001758
Gabon	00241	Saint Pierre	00508
Gambia	00220	Saint Vincent	001784
Georgia	00995	Samoa US	00684
Germany	0049	Samoa West	00685
Ghana	00233	San Marino	00378
Gibraltar	00350	Sao Tome	00239
Greece	0030	Saudi Arabia	00966
Greenland	00299	Scotland (UK)	0044
Grenada	001473	Senegal	00221
Guadeloupe	00590	Seychelles	00284
Guam	001671	Sierra Leone	00232
Guatemala	00502	Singapore	0065
Guinea	00224	Slovakia	00421
Guyana	00592	Slovenia	00386
Haiti	00509	Solomon Islands	00677
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Somalia	00252
Honduras	00504	South Africa	0027
Hong Kong	00852	South Korea	0082
Hungary	0036	Spain	0034
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Sri Lanka	0094
Iceland	00354	Sudan	00249
India	0091	Suriname	00597
Indian Ocean	00873	Swaziland	00268
Indonesia	0062	Sweden	0046
Iran	0098	Switzerland	0041
Iraq	00964	Syria	00963
Ireland	00353	Taiwan	00886
Italy	0039	Tanzania	00255
Ivory Coast	00225	Thailand	0066
Jamaica	001876	Toga	00228
Japan	0081	Tonga	00676

ALS: The disease that Hawking defied

LONDON: British physicist Stephen Hawking was one of the most famous sufferers of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), the fatal neurological disease that paralyzed his body but did nothing to curb his contribution to science. The rare condition normally claims the lives of those who have it within two to three years of diagnosis, making Hawking's five-decade fight to overcome the disease an extraordinary exception. The neurodegenerative

condition attacks the motor nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord, hampering their ability to communicate with muscles and control voluntary movements, leading to eventual paralysis. Early symptoms of stiffness and muscle weakness worsen over time as victims gradually lose the ability to walk, speak and breathe.

The deadly condition is very rare, occurring on average among two new cases per 100,000 people

every year, most typically among individuals aged between 55 and 65. It became something of a household name in 2014 after the viral "Ice Bucket Challenge", which saw people upload videos of themselves pouring cold water over their heads in a bid to raise awareness about the disease.

There is currently no cure or treatment that halts or reverses ALS, though there are some op-

tions to can help manage symptoms. The disease takes two main forms, according to the US-based ALS Association. The vast majority of people suffer from a "sporadic" version that can affect anyone while up to ten percent of cases in the US are inherited. Military veterans are up to twice as likely to be diagnosed as the general public, for unknown reasons. —AFP

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

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Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Friday 2/3/2018				Departure Flights on Friday 2/3/2018			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
MSC	501	Alexandria	00:01	AXB	890	Mangalore	12:10
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:05	KAC	1075	Doha	12:30
JZR	607	Kochi	00:10	WAN	835	Sarajevo	12:35
KAC	504	Beirut	00:30	MEA	405	Beirut	12:55
PIA	205	Lahore	00:40	RBG	554	Alexandria	13:00
KAC	102	London	00:50	SAW	702	Damascus	13:30
JZR	539	Cairo	00:50	JZR	176	Dubai	13:40
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	MSC	404	Asyut	14:00
THY	772	Istanbul	00:55	MSR	611	Cairo	14:00
RJA	642	Amman	01:05	JZR	124	Bahrain	14:30
DLH	625	Bahrain	01:45	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	KAC	691	Muscat	15:20
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	KAC	785	Jeddah	15:25
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
JZR	555	Alexandria	02:15	QTR	1079	Doha	15:30
QTR	1086	Doha	02:20	KAC	283	Dhaka	15:50
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:50
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	743	Dammam	16:05
JZR	185	Dubai	02:40	KAC	619	Doha	16:10
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	KAC	563	Amman	16:10
KKK	1268	Istanbul	02:55	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:05	KAC	513	Tehran	16:30
KAC	414	Bangkok	03:05	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:40
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:40
QTR	1076	Doha	03:50	KAC	675	Dubai	17:00
FEG	931	Alexandria	04:00	JZR	240	Amman	17:15
THY	6536	Istanbul	04:15	QTR	1073	Doha	17:15
KAC	382	Delhi	04:15	JZR	266	Beirut	17:15
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	FDB	052	Dubai	17:40
KAC	1544	Cairo	04:25	KAC	361	Colombo	17:45
UAE	873	Dubai	04:25	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:35	RJA	641	Amman	17:55
KAC	284	Dhaka	04:50	JZR	538	Cairo	18:15
FDB	069	Dubai	04:55	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
JZR	609	Hyderabad	05:10	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
JZR	267	Beirut	05:15	JZR	184	Dubai	18:30
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:20	JZR	608	Hyderabad	18:40
JZR	143	Doha	05:25	WAN	115	Bahrain	18:50
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	KAC	381	Delhi	18:50
GEL	700	Baku	05:30	FDB	064	Dubai	19:10
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	JZR	554	Alexandria	19:20
KAC	344	Chennai	05:50	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:10	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
KAC	678	Dubai	06:25	QTR	1081	Doha	20:00
WAN	338	Alexandria	06:40	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:50	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
BAW	157	London	07:10	FDB	058	Dubai	20:35
KAC	204	Lahore	07:10	KAC	345	Ahmedabad	20:40
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35	KAC	301	Mumbai	20:50
FDB	053	Dubai	07:35	KAC	357	Kochi	21:00
KAC	358	Kochi	07:40	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	KAC	1543	Cairo	21:20
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	ICV	675	Hong Kong	21:30
JZR	605	Ahmedabad	08:45	DLH	624	Bahrain	21:30
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	SVA	501	Jeddah	21:55
QTR	1070	Doha	09:10	QTR	1089	Doha	22:00
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	KAC	411	Bangkok	22:05
IRA	675	Lar	10:00	KAC	205	Islamabad	22:05
WAN	342	Sohag	10:15	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:10
MSC	415	Sohag	10:15	KAC	203	Lahore	22:10
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
WAN	114	Bahrain	11:00	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
AXB	890	Mangalore/Bahrain	11:10	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
QTR	1074	Doha	11:20	KAC	783	Jeddah	22:35
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30	KAC	383	Delhi	22:40
WAN	134	Doha	11:55	KLM	445	Bahrain	22:50
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	UAE	860	Dubai	23:00
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:10	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
RBG	553	Alexandria	12:15	QTR	1083	Doha	23:20
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	SVA	515	Riyadh	23:30
KAC	286	Dhaka	12:35	WAN	337	Alexandria	23:45
JZR	561	Sohag	12:45				
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00				

Business

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ROTTERDAM: In this file photo taken on June 5, 2015 shows the logo of Unilever at the headquarters. —AFP

Unilever drops London for Dutch HQ

Blow to efforts to keep multinational companies onside

THE HAGUE: Anglo-Dutch consumer giant Unilever yesterday chose The Netherlands over London to host its headquarters, dealing a blow to Britain's efforts to keep multinational companies onside following Brexit. Unilever, whose famous brands include yeast extract Marmite, PG Tips tea and Persil washing powder, announced in a statement that it "intends to simplify from two legal entities, N.V. and PLC, into a single legal entity incorporated in the Netherlands".

'No Brexit connection'

The news represents a blow to British Prime Minister Theresa May, analysts say, as her Conservative administration battles to secure a Brexit trade deal with Brussels. Unilever's decision comes after a swathe of big-hitting financial institutions, including British bank HSBC, Swiss peer UBS and US giants JPMorgan and Morgan Stanley, have already confirmed plans to move some London activities to Paris and elsewhere. Many large international companies insist however that they will retain their London presence as a platform for post-Brexit growth in Europe.

Unilever was founded in 1930 after the Dutch

margarine producer Margarine Unie merged with British soapmaker Lever Brothers. Until now, it has maintained a dual-headed structure, with listings on the London, Amsterdam and New York stock exchanges. Unilever said yesterday that the headquarters of its beauty and home care divisions would be located in London, while its food and refreshment division will remain in Rotterdam.

The move will have no impact on its 7,300 employees in Britain and 3,100 in the Netherlands, the company said. While analysts saw the decision as a consequence of Britain's plans to leave the EU in March 2019, the government said Brexit had nothing to do with it. "Unilever has today shown its long-term commitment to the UK by choosing to locate its two fastest-growing global business divisions in this country, safeguarding 7,300 jobs and £1 billion (1.1 billion euros, \$1.4 billion) a year of investment," a government spokesman said. "As the company itself has made clear, its decision to transfer a small number of jobs to a corporate HQ in the Netherlands is part of a long-term restructuring of the company and is not connected to the UK's departure from the EU."

'Better in Europe'

However Jos Versteeg, an analyst at the Amsterdam-based InsingerGilissen private bank said he believed Unilever's choice indeed had to do with Brexit. "I think they chose in favour of a Dutch entity because of Brexit and that it's better to be in Europe," he told AFP. "It's a hard blow for Britain to see Unilever's headquarters disappear... but then it's more symbolic and eventually it will have little effect on jobs," Versteeg added. "Unilever will still have a London listing and two of the divisions will be based here, but making the main headquarters in Rotterdam will hurt Theresa May at a key point in Brexit negotiations with the EU," added Lee Wild, analyst at British-based Interactive Investor.

Carmen Stoian, international business lecturer at the University of Kent said Unilever's step to the Netherlands made business sense, but Brexit may have struck too. Unilever, which employs some 169,000 people around the world, owns more than 400 household brands that also include Dove soaps, Knorr soups, Lipton tea and Magnum ice cream. Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte hailed the shift,

saying it was of "enormous significance" to have Unilever's headquarters in The Netherlands "because this is where the decisions are made." "It's also good for the Dutch image to have some of the world's largest companies here, Shell, Philips, Unilever and Akzo(Nobel)," the pro-business Rutte told NOS public broadcaster.

The move comes in the wake of a failed hostile bid by its US rival Kraft Heinz last year and analysts say it also played a key role in Unilever's decision. The Netherlands has stronger takeover protection rules than Britain and has a unique set of laws that makes it very difficult, but not impossible, for outside companies to conclude hostile takeovers.

This includes the so-called "Dutch poison pill", a measure invoked during a takeover bid which transfers control of the company from public stockholders to a controlled foundation. Unilever chairman Marijn Dekkers said the decision, which followed a company review, would improve its future options regarding potential takeovers and demergers. Unilever's shares shed 1.9 percent in London trading while the FTSE 100 index was essentially flat. —AFP

Business

China says ready for trade war as Trump tariffs loom

‘Choosing a trade war is surely the wrong prescription’

BEIJING: China warned the United States yesterday that everyone will be harmed if President Donald Trump launches a trade war, as official figures showed the Asian power maintained a robust trade surplus with the US. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi issued the stern message as the Trump administration geared up to formally introduce steel and aluminum tariffs despite global concerns.

“Choosing a trade war is surely the wrong prescription, in the end you will only hurt others and yourself,” Foreign Minister Wang Yi said. “China will certainly make an appropriate and necessary response,” Wang said at a press conference on the sidelines of the Communist Party’s annual parliamentary session.

On Wednesday, at the World Trade Organization, China led a group of 18 members urging Trump to scrap the planned tariffs, with its representative saying the levies would pose a systemic threat to the rules-based global trading system. US imports from China of steel and aluminum make up a small proportion of its total imports from the world’s second largest economy. But the tariffs may be the first foray in the brewing American trade war with Beijing.

In coming weeks, the Trump administration plans to issue a report on China’s intellectual property practices expected to hammer China and possibly bring about further tariffs on a wider range of Chinese imports. “The US is acting swiftly on Intellectual Property theft. We cannot allow this to happen as it has for many years!” Trump tweeted hours before Wang took the stage in Beijing.

Trump also took to Twitter to say the US had asked China to “develop a plan for the year of a One Billion Dollar reduction

in their massive Trade Deficit with the United States.” “We look forward to seeing what ideas they come back with. We must act soon!” Trump said. The amount is a drop in the bucket when compared with the record \$375.2 billion trade deficit the US racked up with China last year.

Averting a trade war

Trump’s tweets follow China’s moves to resolve the simmering trade tensions. While Beijing has launched warning shots-like trade investigations into US goods such as sorghum, and hinted it could even take on soybeans, its largest US import-officials have worked to find a peaceful resolution. President Xi Jinping sent his top economic aide, Liu He, to Washington to discuss trade issues last week on the heels of a similar visit by state councillor Yang Jiechi last month.

But Washington has shown little interest in negotiating, with Liu’s visit resulting in few major breakthroughs beyond a commitment to further talks on trade issues. Tuesday’s resignation of Trump’s top economic adviser Gary Cohn—who had held talks with Liu during his visit-also throws cold water on the negotiations.

His departure leaves “nationalist” advisors like arch China skeptic Peter Navarro, author of “Death by China”, and Commerce boss Wilbur Ross with the president’s ear. Last week, Trump said “trade wars are good, and easy to win” when the US is losing billions on trade. In Beijing, officials continue to search for a way out. “The lessons of history show engaging in a trade war is never the right way to resolve problems,” said foreign minister Wang.

“neutral” impact on profits as the firm had to take costly emergency measures to boost capacity, he added.

Revenues at the group grew 12.4 percent to reach 35.6 billion euros, for an operating profit adjusted for special items up 70 percent compared with 2016, at almost 3.0 billion euros. Lufthansa was blocked from taking over all 80 of the former Air Berlin planes it originally wanted, giving up plans to buy Austrian Air Berlin subsidiary Niki. Most of the new aircraft it secured in the deal will be operated by its low-cost division Eurowings, generating further costs over 2018 but with “a positive effect” on the bottom line next year, Spohr said.

More mergers in sight

The chief executive reiterated his long-held view that more airline mergers are needed in Europe, adding that Lufthansa would play an “active role” in consolidation of the sector. It is one of the only competitors interested in taking on part of troubled Italian carrier Alitalia’s business. Lufthansa said it will offer shareholders a dividend of 0.80 euros per share for 2017, some 60 percent higher than the previous year’s.

Looking ahead to 2018, Lufthansa aims for an adjusted operating profit “slightly below” last year’s level despite more stable ticket prices and lower costs. It pointed especially to a forecast increase in fuel costs of around 700 million euros that would sap the result. And the group must spend heavily to increase capacity at Eurowings to 210 aircraft by 2019, as it faces challenges from low-cost competitors like Easyjet and Ryanair.

Shares in Lufthansa gained 1.7 percent to trade at 26.6 euros by 1325 GMT, outperforming the DAX index of leading German shares. — AFP



ZOUPING: A worker stands in a steel workshop in Zouping, in China’s eastern Shandong province. — AFP

Ballooning trade surplus

Trade data released by China’s customs administration on Thursday shows its massive trade surplus with the US—the root of Trump’s ire—from finding a more even level. The surplus with the US stood at \$21 billion in February, China’s official data showed, more than double the \$10.4 billion surplus registered in February of last year.

“The bigger picture is that while China’s trade surplus with most of the world has declined during the past year...its surplus with the US has continued to expand” said Julian Evans-Pritchard, China Economist at Capital Economics in a note. February’s surplus did edge downwards from the \$21.9 billion recorded in January and \$25.6 billion from December. — AFP

Lufthansa soars to record profits in 2017

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: German airline giant Lufthansa reported record profits for 2017 Yesterday, celebrating a year that saw it bury a smouldering dispute with pilots and gobble up parts of defunct rival Air Berlin. Net profits at the group—which includes Lufthansa, Eurowings, Swiss, Brussels Airlines and Austrian Airlines—rose 33.1 percent to hit 2.36 billion euros (\$2.92 billion), higher than the 2.28 billion predicted by analysts.

It was the “best result in the history of our company,” chief executive Carsten Spohr told a Frankfurt press conference, adding that he would press on with cutting costs and modernizing the carrier. The 51-year-old recently agreed a five-year extension of his contract at the head of the firm, to the end of 2023. Settling a pay and pensions battle that had sparked multiple walkouts by the firm’s 5,400 pilots bestowed a 582-million-euro one-off windfall on the 2017 accounts.

Meanwhile, profits were further boosted by the full integration of Brussels Airlines into Lufthansa’s business after a final takeover in late 2016, the addition of aircraft belonging to now-bankrupt Air Berlin to the carrier’s fleets, higher ticket prices and a surge in the cargo business. With Lufthansa carrying some 130 million passengers in 2017, “our planes have never been fuller” than during the period when Air Berlin’s aircraft were grounded, CEO Spohr said. But there had been a

Russia tensions pressure stocks

LONDON: Emerging stocks struggled higher and currencies were mixed yesterday amid mounting concerns over trade tensions and a worsening diplomatic row between Britain and Russia. MSCI’s broader emerging market index climbed 0.1 percent higher, but the gains masked diverging performances across major bourses with Asian equities across export-oriented economies such as Taiwan and Malaysia suffering.

Concerns over possible trade wars came to the fore again after the administration of US President Donald Trump pressed China to cut its trade surplus with the world’s largest economy by \$100 billion. Solid global trade in recent years has been a driver for sustained and broad-based economic growth, lifting many markets to record highs and with emerging markets have been some of the best performing assets in recent months.

“The main risk that could undermine this positive outlook for emerging markets is the potential for full-scale trade wars,” said Rabobank strategist Piotr Matys. “That would definitely undermine prospects for the emerging markets. Another risk factor is the faster pace of tightening of the Fed.” — Reuters

Business

Brazilian border town struggles with Venezuela's economic refugees

Focal point for the exodus from economic collapse

PACARAIMA: The remote Brazilian town of Pacaraima is used to outsiders—tourists curious about spectacular nearby mountains—but a sea of Venezuelan refugees is pushing locals' hospitality to breaking point. Before, Pacaraima's main attraction was its location near Monte Roraima in Venezuela, believed to have inspired Arthur Conan Doyle's "Lost World" fantasy adventure. But now the town has become a focal point for the exodus from economic collapse and political violence just across the border.

Every day, between 500 and 1,200 impoverished Venezuelans come over the frontier into Pacaraima, swamping the sleepy community. The arrivals—designated refugees by the United Nations—sleep in the streets, cram into inadequate shelters, and are blamed by some for problems like increased prostitution. "It's out of control," said Catholic priest Father Jesus Lopez, who runs a soup kitchen for the Venezuelans in Pacaraima.

Bad for business

Refugees are estimated to have swelled Pacaraima's population of 12,000 by a third. But despite the increased traffic, the local

economy is suffering. "There's a lot of movement and little money. My sales have fallen because there are fewer tourists and they were the ones who brought in money," said Zilma Rocha, who has a kitchen serving breakfasts.

About the only people seeing an uptick in trade are the currency dealers, who sell the Brazilian real to their neighbors. Some supermarkets are also seeing new business, with Venezuelans crossing the border just to buy food they can't afford or find back home. "Everything is cheaper here. Over there, 80 reais (\$25) won't buy you anything, but with that amount here you can get rice, sugar, flour, butter, soap, biscuits, juice and hygiene products," said Jonathan do Santos, who frequently makes the trip. "The lack of food in Venezuela has created opportunities here and our businesses are taking advantage of that," said Ruan Silva, whose supermarket in Pacaraima is one of the few accepting the nearly worthless Venezuelan currency, the bolivar.

End of the road

Lopez, the priest, said Brazil's government has not done enough to help communities like this prepare for the influx. But he said he un-

derstood the desperation driving the fugitives. "These people are running from hunger, from death," he said. Most Venezuelans arriving in Pacaraima try to move straight on to the nearest sizeable city in Brazil's Roraima state, Boa Vista, where much of the refugee aid is centered.



PACARAIMA, Brazil: Venezuelan indigenous refugees rest inside a temporary shelter. —AFP

derstood the desperation driving the fugitives. "These people are running from hunger, from death," he said. Most Venezuelans arriving in Pacaraima try to move straight on to the nearest sizeable city in Brazil's Roraima state, Boa Vista, where much of the refugee aid is centered.

But for some, that 134 mile (215 km) trip—and the \$16 taxi ride—is a step too far. "We had planned to go to Boa Vista but things sound terrible there," said Jose Pena, 22, who had

traveled more than 930 miles (1,500 km) with his family from Carabobo in Venezuela. "We prefer to stay here," he said, while tending a cooking fire. "At least here we can eat."

Abilio Mendez, 46, who traveled all the way from Puerto La Cruz on Venezuela's Caribbean coast, simply couldn't afford to go any further than Pacaraima. "It's everything left in my life," he said, pointing to his two suitcases. His solution for getting to Boa Vista? To set off under the punishing sun and try to walk. —AFP

Venezuela could tip oil market into deficit

PARIS: A dramatic decline in oil production in crisis-hit Venezuela could tip the global crude market into deficit, the International Energy Agency said Thursday, helping wipe away a glut that has depressed prices for years. Oil is the lifeblood of OPEC member Venezuela's economy, but a major wave of political unrest that shows no sign of abating has slashed output.

"With supply from Venezuela clearly vulnerable to an accelerated decline, without any compensatory change from other producers it is possible that the Latin American country could be the final element that tips the market decisively into deficit," the IEA said a report. Global oil prices have swung wildly in recent years as producers struggled to meet demand only to flood the market with supplies as they tried to squeeze rivals out of business.

After collapsing to under \$30 a barrel at the beginning of 2016, prices have gradually risen to above \$60 as the OPEC cartel and Russia have restrained production to try to eliminate the glut in output. Booming US production, primarily thanks to low-cost shale output, has helped cushion markets. But the crisis in Venezuela's government-led economy has decimated its oil sector. The state's cash-strapped

Good news for competitors

Making matters worse for Venezuela, the United States—the Latin American country's biggest oil customer—has threatened to impose an embargo on its crude exports. But for other oil exporters around the world, including fellow members of OPEC, the crisis in Venezuela's oil sector might be good news as they could produce more without leading to a drop in prices.

Overall, the global oil "market re-balancing is clearly moving ahead with key indicators ... pointing in that direction" said the IEA, noting a closer alignment of supply and demand and stocks in industrialised nations falling close to average levels. The agency made minor adjustments its annual forecasts, under which rising US output is expected to helping meet increased demand while OPEC and its partners restrain production.

It raised its forecast for growth in demand for oil this year to 1.5 million barrels per day (mbd), an increase of 0.1 mbd from its previous forecast, to a total of 99.3 mbd. Meanwhile, the IEA left untouched its forecast of total non-OPEC supply rising by 1.8 mbd this year to 59.9 mbd. It raised its forecast for the market's call on OPEC supplies and stocks by 0.1 mbd to 32.4 mbd, which still represents a modest decline from last year. —AFP

HSBC has 59 pct gender pay gap

LONDON: HSBC will reveal a gender pay gap of 59 percent at its main UK banking operation, the biggest yet disclosed by a British bank, according to a copy of the lender's report on the subject seen by Reuters yesterday ahead of its publication. The bank will also disclose a mean gender bonus gap of 86 percent at HSBC Bank Plc, which is the biggest of the lender's seven entities in Britain and employs 23,507 people. A spokeswoman for the bank confirmed the contents of the report. The gender pay gap is the biggest yet reported by a British financial firm, according to government data, with some firms yet to provide figures ahead of an April deadline set by Prime Minister Theresa May last year.

Almost 50 years since the passage of Britain's equal pay act, the continued gulf in earnings between men and women has attracted significant public attention over the past year or so. In common with other banks, HSBC said its pay gap was largely accounted for by the bank having fewer women in senior roles.

The gender pay gap measures the difference between the average salary of men and women, calculated on an hourly basis. HSBC said women held only 23 percent of senior leadership positions in its workforce in Britain, despite accounting for more than half of total staff. The bank said it was taking a number of steps to reduce the pay gap, including committing to an aspirational target of women holding 30 percent of senior roles by 2020.

Last month, Asia-focused Standard Chartered reported a gap of 30 percent in Britain, while Virgin Money — the only major UK lender run by a woman — said its female staff earned on average 32.5 percent less per hour than its male workforce. Lloyds Banking Group and Royal Bank of Scotland reported gender pay gaps of 32.8 percent and 37 percent respectively.

Barclays said last month it paid women in its international division, which houses its investment bank, on average 48 percent of what men earned in fixed pay. The pay gaps have drawn criticism from lawmakers and are likely to spur questions from investors in the upcoming season for shareholder meetings, with stock prices and future earnings potential strongly linked to banks' efforts to revive their reputations in the wake of the global financial crisis. —Reuters

Business

EU watchdog calls for new ethics case against Goldman's Barroso

Failed to keep his pledge not to lobby

BRUSSELS: An EU watchdog yesterday urged the European Commission to reopen an ethics case against Jose Manuel Barroso, its former chief turned Goldman Sachs executive, raising fresh questions about transparency in Brussels corridors of power. European Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly issued the call, just days after receiving complaints in a separate case about the rapid promotion of Martin Selmayr, the right-hand man of current Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker. The European Commission, the 28-nation EU executive, should "refer the case of the former Commission president (Barroso) back for an opinion by the ethics committee," O'Reilly said.

In 2016, the panel cleared Barroso of breaking bloc rules by taking the Goldman job but O'Reilly said it must now look into revelations that Barroso met with a Commission vice president, Jyrki Katainen, in a Brussels hotel last year. She stressed the importance of maintaining citizen trust in EU institutions, following growing discontent with EU institutions that led to Brexit and strong election results for euro-skeptic parties across the bloc.

Peppered with questions about Barroso at the daily news briefing, Juncker's spokesman Margaritis Schinas said: "We take note of the ombudsman's announcement and we will reply within the deadline she sets for June 6." In a tweet, Barroso denied that he had lobbied the EU, echoing previous denials that the October 25 meeting with Katainen was only to catch up with an old friend.

"I have not and will not lobby EU officials," the former Portuguese premier wrote. Barroso's hiring

in 2016 by the US investment bank, after 10 years at the head of the Commission from 2004 to 2014, sparked a huge media firestorm with then French president Francois Hollande saying it was "unacceptable". Goldman was widely blamed in Brussels for its role in the 2008 global crash and eurozone debt crisis.

After a probe, the EU ethics committee cleared Barroso, who had waited the compulsory 18 months since leaving office before taking the Goldman job, of breaching ethics rules but it nevertheless criticized his "judgment". Barroso had insisted in a letter to Juncker that "I have not been hired to lobby for Goldman Sachs and I do not intend to do so".

I will not lobby EU officials

'Duty of discretion'

O'Reilly's office said the ethics panel's initial assessment reflected a pledge from Barroso that he would

not lobby the Commission, but added "this has now been put in doubt by a meeting" with Katainen. It said the meeting appeared to be for the "purposes of lobbying" as it was registered as one with Goldman Sachs, even though the two participants described it later as a private and personal encounter.

"Ex-Commissioners have a right to post-office employment but as former public servants they must also ensure that their actions do not undermine citizens' trust in the EU," O'Reilly said. "Mr Barroso's new post generated serious public disquiet, this should, at the very least, have raised concerns within the Commission about whether it complied with the duty of discretion," she said.

Alter-EU, a coalition of anti-corruption NGOs, wrote to the Commission last month charging that



BRUSSELS: In this file photograph taken on August 30, 2014, then EU Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso gives a press conference with EU Council President Herman Van Rompuy during a European Union summit at the EU Headquarters. —AFP

Barroso had failed to keep his pledge not to lobby. Questioned at the end of February, Juncker said the Barroso-Katainen meeting was completely within the rules, especially because it had been made public. The former Luxembourg premier said the Commission "never" said Barroso could not meet commissioners, adding the former chief is not a gangster.

For the meeting with Katainen, Goldman Sachs is written in the transparency register, but Barroso's

name does not appear, AFP observed. The Commission has not responded to AFP queries on the matter. O'Reilly tweeted in recent days that she received two complaints about the sudden promotion last month of Juncker's right-hand man, Martin Selmayr, to the post of secretary general of the Commission. Schinas has defended the promotion as one where the commission "religiously" followed the rules before a flurry of questions about the speed and apparent lack of transparency around it. —AFP

Toys 'R' Us to liquidate all US stores

NEW YORK: Toys 'R' Us said late Wednesday it will liquidate all of its US stores, heralding the end of what had been an iconic player in the American toy industry. "This is a profoundly sad day for us as well as the millions of kids and families who we have served for the past 70 years," CEO Dave Brandon said in a statement. "I am very disappointed with the result, but we no longer have the financial support to continue the company's US operations," he added.

The statement made no mention of jobs, but news reports said the closure could hit 33,000 of them. The debt-plagued retailer first filed for bankruptcy protection in September. "We're putting a for sale sign on everything," Brandon said

earlier on a conference call with staff, according to the Wall Street Journal. Started in 1948 amid the postwar US economic boom, Toys 'R' Us has 881 stores in US territories and nearly 65,000 employees globally, according to the company's most recent press release last month.

The New Jersey-based company was saddled with debt following a leveraged buyout in 2005 by a consortium that included the KKR Group and Bain Capital. Much like other retailers, Toys 'R' Us has been battered by competition from Amazon and other online retailers. A weak holiday shopping season weighed on the company's efforts to reorganize, analysts said. Neil Saunders, managing director of GlobalData Retail, blamed the company's woes on poor leadership. "As the competitive dynamics of the toy market intensified, management failed to respond and evolve. As such, the brand lost relevance, customers and ultimately sales," Saunders said in a note Wednesday. "The main tragedy of liquidation will be the extensive loss of jobs. In our view, those on the shop-floor have been badly let down by management and those doing financial deals." —AFP

US job market tightening

WASHINGTON: The number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits fell last week, pointing to sustained labor strength even as economic growth appears to have slowed early in the first quarter. Other data yesterday showed a rise in the prices of imported goods in February amid US dollar weakness, bolstering expectations that inflation will pick up this year. Labor market strength and a steady increase in price pressures could allow the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates next week.

Initial claims for state unemployment benefits dropped 4,000 to a seasonally adjusted 226,000 for the week ended March 10, the Labor Department said yesterday. Claims decreased to 210,000 during the week ended Feb. 24, which was the lowest level since December 1969. Last week's drop in claims was in line with economists' expectations. It was the 158th straight week that claims remained below the 300,000 threshold, which is asso-

ciated with a strong labor market. That is the longest such stretch since 1970, when the labor market was much smaller.

Fed officials consider the labor market to be near or a little beyond full employment. The unemployment rate is at a 17-year low of 4.1 percent. The economy created 313,000 jobs in February. Economists are optimistic that tightening labor market conditions will boost wage growth in the second half of this year. That should help to underpin consumer spending, which slowed at the start of the year. Data on Wednesday showed retail sales fell in February for a third straight month.

Gross domestic product growth estimates for the first quarter are as low as a 1.7 percent annualized rate. Reports on home sales and industrial production in January have also been weak. The economy grew at a 2.5 percent pace in the fourth quarter. The US dollar gained against a basket of currencies after yesterday's data while US stock index futures moved higher. Prices of US Treasuries were trading mostly lower. Diminishing labor market slack is also expected to help boost inflation toward the U.S. central bank's 2 percent target. —Reuters

Business

Tough balancing act: Chip giant Qualcomm caught between Washington and Beijing

The upper hand in the next generation of mobile communications

SHANGHAI: US chipmaker Qualcomm Inc blocked this week from a takeover bid amid national security fears, was already walking a Pacific tightrope: it has government and defense contracts in America, but two-thirds of its revenue comes from China. US President Donald Trump on Monday halted microchip maker Broadcom Ltd's \$117 billion takeover of Qualcomm over concerns it would give China the upper hand in the next generation of mobile communications, forcing the Singapore-based firm to drop its bid.

The move illustrated the awkward position of Qualcomm, which is based in San Diego. In the United States, it has government and defense contracts and is seen as a "trusted" supplier. In China, it has its most lucrative market, thanks to patent licensing fees it receives there from smartphone vendors including Apple Inc, Samsung and Xiaomi.

On top of that, China, the United States and Europe are racing to develop the next generation of wireless data network, called 5G, for mobile phones and increasingly connected devices. Whoever controls the technology will gain a potential strategic advantage, and the US government does not want to have to rely on Chinese-made gear. The result is a delicate balancing act to navigate trade disputes and political tensions between Beijing and Washington that could irk policymakers and regulators on both sides, hurting business and deals.

"We see ourselves as part of the China semiconductor system," Cristiano Amon, Qualcomm President told Reuters at a Beijing event in January. "It's very clear that 5G is important to the United States of America. It's important for China." Qualcomm is still waiting for Chinese approval of its proposed \$44 billion acquisition of NXP Semiconductors NV and trying to mend its relationship with Chinese customers after paying a fine of nearly \$1 billion for anti-competitive practices in 2015. The company is helping Chinese firms ZTE and China Mobile develop 5G technology and is involved in China's 5G standard development trials. It has similar partnerships in the US and Europe.

Gaining an advantage

The Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS), which vets acquisitions of U.S. corporations by foreign companies, said the Broadcom takeover risked weakening Qualcomm, which would boost China in the 5G race. A Broadcom takeover could see the company cut research and development spending by Qualcomm or sell strategically important parts of the company to other buyers, including those in China, officials and analysts said. As such concerns emerged, Broadcom immediately jumped into action, pledging to invest in Qual-

comm's 5G technology and accelerate its move to the United States. But the plan didn't go down well with CFIUS.

The clash marked a sharp fall from grace for Broadcom, whose chief executive, Hock Tan, Trump welcomed to the White House last year to announce a plan to move its headquarters to the United States. At the time, Trump called it "one of the really great, great companies." Led by Tan, a Harvard-educated Malaysian entrepreneur, Broadcom grew largely through acquisitions. Tan is an aggressive dealmaker and built the \$100 billion chip giant up from a business worth just \$3.5 billion in 2009. Until the Qualcomm bid, its biggest deal had been the \$37 billion acquisition of Irvine, California-based Broadcom, where the company, called Avago Technologies at the time, got its current name.

Complex relationship

Qualcomm executives acknowledge the tricky relationship the firm has in China, especially with local companies like Huawei, which is spearheading China's 5G push. "Our relationship with Huawei is complex;

Hurting business and deals

I don't know if there's a good word for it," Amon said in Beijing in January, adding that the company was a big supplier to Huawei while also being a competitor with Huawei's semiconductor business.

Although Huawei is in a strong position to supply 5G network equipment to carriers in many large markets - with the notable exception of the United States - it still has to license some technologies from Qualcomm, which owns more 5G patents than any other company in the world. Keeping Chinese relationships on track is key for Qualcomm as domestic smartphone makers like Oppo, Vivo and Xiaomi gain prominence and as broader US-China trade tensions rise.

Trump is seeking to impose tariffs on up to \$60 billion of Chinese imports and will target the technology and telecommunications sectors, two people who had discussed the issue with the Trump administration told Reuters. "I would imagine relationships that we have in China, and probably the symbiosis of that relationship, it will play a very strong role with the (Chinese) regulators' view of the future of Qualcomm," Amon said in January.

And the Broadcom takeover case highlights a growing risk for US companies in China. "It's an unenviable position because they are pretty dependent on China," said Andrew Gilholm, director of analysis for China and North Asia at risk consultancy Control Risks, referring to Qualcomm. "They are an extreme case but as more and more sectors become effectively considered 'strategic' from a comprehensive national security perspective, more and more companies are facing this kind of squeeze between the US and China." —Reuters



Amazon's internal numbers on Prime Video, revealed

SAN FRANCISCO: Amazon.com Inc's top television shows drew more than 5 million people worldwide to its Prime shopping club by early 2017, according to company documents, revealing for the first time how the retailer's bet on original video is paying off. The documents also show that Amazon's US audience for all video programming on Prime, including films and TV shows it licenses from other companies, was about 26 million customers. Amazon has never released figures for its total audience.

The internal documents compare metrics that have never been reported for 19 shows exclusive to Amazon: their cost, their viewership and the number of people they helped lure to Prime. Known as Prime Originals, the shows account for as much as a quarter of what analysts estimate to be total Prime sign-ups from late 2014 to early 2017, the period covered by the documents.

Core to Amazon's strategy is the use of video to convert viewers into shoppers. Fans access Amazon's lineup by joining Prime, a club that includes two-day package delivery and other perks, for an annual fee. The company declined to comment on the documents seen by Reuters. But Chief Executive Jeff Bezos has been upfront about the company's use of entertainment to drive merchandise sales. The world's biggest online retailer launched Amazon Studios in 2010 to develop original programs that have since grabbed awards and Hollywood buzz.

"When we win a Golden Globe, it helps us sell more shoes," Bezos said at a 2016 technology con-

ference near Los Angeles. He said film and TV customers renew their subscriptions "at higher rates, and they convert from free trials at higher rates" than members who do not stream videos on Prime. Video has grown to be one of Amazon's biggest expenditures at \$5 billion per year for original and licensed content, two people familiar with the matter said. The company has never disclosed how many subscribers it won as a result, making it hard for investors to evaluate its programming decisions.

The internal documents show what Amazon considers to be the financial logic of its strategy, and why the company is now making more commercial projects in addition to high-brow shows aimed at winning awards, the people said. For example, the first season of the popular drama "The Man in the High Castle," an alternate history depicting Germany as the victor of World War Two, had 8 million U.S. viewers as of early 2017, according to the documents. The program cost \$72 million in production and marketing and attracted 1.15 million new subscribers worldwide based on Amazon's accounting, the documents showed.

Amazon calculated that the show drew new Prime members at an average cost of \$63 per subscriber. That is far less than the \$99 that subscribers pay in the United States for Prime; the company charges similar fees abroad. Prime members also buy more goods from Amazon than non-members, Bezos has said, further boosting profit.

Amazon's secret math

Precisely how Amazon determines a customer's motivation for joining its Prime club is not clear from the documents viewed by Reuters. But a person familiar with its strategy said the company credits a specific show for luring someone to start or extend a Prime subscription if that program is the first one a customer streams after signing up. That metric, referenced throughout the documents, is known as a "first stream." —Reuters

Sports

‘Crazy journey’: From double shark attack to Paralympic snowboarder

‘It took me six months before I could put socks on again’

PYEONGCHANG: Sean Pollard was surfing in Australia in 2014 when he was attacked by two great white sharks, losing his left arm and right hand and only just escaping alive. But far from wallowing in his misfortune, he threw himself into snowboarding-and just three years after taking up the sport, he made his Paralympic debut in Pyeongchang this week.

“It’s been a crazy journey,” said the 26-year-old. “I am just really happy to get on the big stage, and try and show what I am capable of still doing now.” Pollard made it through the early heats in the snowboard cross, narrowly missing out on the quarter-finals.

Even in a Winter Paralympics filled with hundreds of inspiring tales, from war veterans who lost limbs on the front line to cancer survivors, the Australian’s story stands out as remarkable. “It’s been a fairly tough kind of ride the last few years,” he said.

“It took me six months before I could put socks on again.” But he picked himself up and got his first taste of para-snowboarding during a visit to a ski resort town in the Australian state of Victoria. During a subsequent trip to Canada, he happened to meet the country’s Paralympic coach, which further fired his interest in the sport.

On his return home he contacted the Australian Paralympic Committee-and began in

earnest the journey that would eventually bring him to Pyeongchang. Since November he has been travelling widely on the para-snowboarding circuit in preparation for the Games, competing in the Netherlands, Finland, Canada and the United States.

As well as snowboard cross-which pits competitors in a series of heats and head-to-head races-Pollard is also competing in slalom.

‘YOU’VE GOT TO KEEP TRYING’

There are numerous different categories in para-sports depending on athletes’ disability, and Pollard competes in the category for people with upper limb impairments.

With both hands missing, he is at a disadvantage even to other para-snowboarders. Snowboarders typically begin their runs by pushing off the top with a hand but Pollard has to place his board side-

ways and jump out, giving him a slower start than his rivals.

“It puts me to the back of the pack straight away, but that is the sport and I would not whinge about it at all,” he said. He is not the first Paralympian to have suffered a shark attack. South African swimmer Achmat Hassiem lost part of his right leg when he was mauled by one of the creatures in 2006.

“Attack gave him the chance to travel the world”



PYEONGCHANG: Sean Pollard of Australia rests after his men's snowboard Cross SB-UL qualification run at the Jeongseon Alpine Centre in Pyeongchang. —AFP

He earned the nickname “Shark Boy”, and competed in three Summer Paralympics, winning a bronze medal in London 2012. But Hassiem does not hold a grudge against sharks. He says he feels grateful to them as the attack gave him the chance to travel the world taking part in sports events-and he ended up becoming a marine conservationist focused on shark protection.

Another Paralympian to have lost a limb in

an animal attack is Ukraine’s Vasyl Kovalchuk, whose right arm was torn off by a bear during a visit to a zoo when he was 11. He won gold medals in air rifle shooting at the 2012 and 2016 Summer Paralympics. Pollard has a message for anyone who finds themselves struggling to overcome such a trauma: just keep trying. “I think the biggest thing for me was I was not afraid to fail,” he said. “You’ve got to keep trying.” —AFP

Tough competition in Kuwait Tennis Open 2018

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Ninth Tennis Open will come to a conclusion Sunday evening under the patronage of the President of Arab and Kuwait Shooting Federations, Honorary President of Asian Federation Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The tournament witnessed strong competition all along, and the results of Wednesday are as follows:

In the Under 11 category

- Abdelrahman Abdellatif def. Khalid Al-Mutairi 9-1
- Hassan Jamal def. Abdallah Dehrab 9-4
- Yousuf Al-Linqawi def. Omar Mahjoub 9-4
- Mohammad Al-Awadhi def. Khalid Bafkair 9-5

In the Under 13 category

- Yacoub Mohammad def. Mohammad Buabbas 9-3
- Abdelrazaq Abdallah def. Abdelwahab Al-Abdallah 6-5
- Hussein Al-Shatti def. Mahdi Qasim 9-5

In the Under 17 category

- Essa Qabazard def. Fahad Al-Dousary 6-0, 6-2
- Ahmad Khameesh def. Mohammad Al-Shatti 6-0, 6-0
- Yousuf Al-Majdaly def. Suleiman Al-Duwaisan 6-4, 6-3

In the Girl's Under 18

Ritaj Hussein reached the finals by defeating Munira Al-Duaij 2-0.

In the Men's Individuals

Abdelhameed Jumaa def. Hadi Jamal 6-0, 6-0.

In the Men's Doubles

- Mohammad Abdal and Abdelhameed Al-Shatti def. Ahmad Hussein and Omar Othman 6-3, 6-1.
- Hassan Al-Mousa and Abdallah Al-Mukaimi def. Ghazi Al-Kazimi and Mohammad Al-Quzuq 6-1, 6-1.
- Ahmad and Hussein Dashti def. Mohammad



Abdelrahman Abdellatif

Mahmoudhi and Tareq Al-Qaderi 2-0.

- Ahmad Khamis and Dawood Hashim def. Hussein Al-Sarraf and Ghulam Rasool 2-0.

In the Men's over 55

Subhi Al-Gharabbaly def. Renato Dation 2-1.



Hassan Al-Mousa

Sports

Toronto Maple Leafs rally to a 6-5 victory over Dallas Stars

Riemsdyk notch his third career hat trick

TORONTO: Tyler Bozak and Mitch Marner both scored in the shootout and James van Riemsdyk notched his third career hat trick as the Toronto Maple Leafs rallied for a 6-5 victory over the Dallas Stars on Wednesday night at the Air Canada Centre in Toronto.

Patrick Marleau and Nazem Kadri also scored for Toronto and Curtis McElhinney came off the bench for 13 saves and stopped both shootout attempts he faced, as the Maple Leafs extended their franchise record home win streak to 11 games.

Frederik Andersen finished with 17 saves before leaving midway through the second period with an upper-body injury apparently suffered when Dallas forward Alexander Radulov fell on his head during a goal-mouth scramble midway through the first period.

Brett Ritchie, Tyler Seguin, Jamie Benn, Remi Elie and Radek Faksa scored for Dallas, which lost its third straight game and for the fifth time in six contests. Kari Lehtonen finished with 27 saves but was beaten by Bozak in the first round of the shootout and Marner to start the third round. The Stars, playing the second half of a back-to-back that started with a 4-2 loss at Montreal on Tuesday night, fell behind 2-0 in the first five minutes with Kadri and van Riemsdyk both scoring their 27th goals of the season.

Kadri, racing in from the left side, flicked the puck into the net after Lehtonen lost control while trying to clear it in front of his own crease, and van Riemsdyk followed 25 seconds later with a rebound from the slot.

But Dallas rallied to tie it later in the period when Benn, left alone in the slot, slapped in a pass from the corner from Seguin for his 25th goal of the season, and Faksa followed with his 14th 1:32 later when Greg Pateryn's slap shot ricocheted off his skate and over Andersen's shoulder.

Seguin then notched his 37th goal of the season at the 4:30 mark of the second period, putting in his own rebound on a shot from the high slot that bounced off Andersen's pads and right back to him to give the Stars a 3-2 lead. After McElhinney replaced Andersen at the first TV timeout, Elie gave Dallas a two-goal lead when he one-timed a pass from Devin Shore from the right side of the net.

But Toronto tied it, 4-4, with a pair of van Riemsdyk goals to start the third period, the first when he flipped in a rebound on his third attempt over a sprawling Lehtonen and the second when he redirected a shot by Marner for a power-play goal.

Ritchie put the Stars back up, 5-4, when he one-timed a Seguin crossing pass past McElhinney's blocker side, but Toronto, which pulled



TORONTO: File photo shows Mitchell Marner #16 of the Toronto Maple Leafs celebrates his goal during an NHL game at the Air Canada Centre in Toronto. —AFP

McElhinney with two minutes to go, forced shot through Lehtonen's pads with 15.3 seconds left for his 22nd goal of the season. —Reuters

Wales ring changes for France with eye on second spot

CARDIFF: Wales coach Warren Gatland has recalled captain Alun Wyn Jones in one of seven changes to the team to play France in their final Six Nations outing of the season tomorrow. The Welsh team are set on the Six Nations runners-up spot, knowing a bonus-point victory against France will guarantee them second place behind champions Ireland.

"Saturday is a huge opportunity for us to finish the campaign well, at home in front of our fans," Gatland said, predicting a French team in fine spirits after their 22-16 win over England. "France will be coming to Cardiff in good spirits after their victory over England last weekend so it is set to be a huge encounter." Lock Jones returns to captain the Welsh team, having been rested for last week's Italy match that Wales won 38-14. Jones, who will be partnered by Cory Hill with Bradley Davies on the bench, comes back into the pack along with Scarlets front rowers Rob Evans and Ken Owens and flanker Josh Navidi.

Navidi lines up alongside British and Irish Lions Justin Tipuric and Taulupe Faletau at six and eight respectively, meaning Aaron Shingler will have to do with a place on the replacements bench. Prop Tomas Francis is retained from the victory over Italy to start alongside Evans and hooker Owens.

Looking to lead Wales, unbeaten at home against France since 2010, around the park will be Dan Biggar, preferred at fly-half with Gareth Anscombe dropping to the bench. Gareth Davies, yellow carded for a deliberate knock-on against Italy, starts at half-back with Hadleigh



MARCOUSSIS: French rugby union team head coach Jacques Brunel addresses a press conference in Marcoussis yesterday. — AFP

Parkes and Scott Williams in the midfield. Liam Williams, George North and Leigh Halfpenny form an all Lions back-three. "There have been some tough selection calls, but that is exactly what we want, we want to be in a position where there are selections and decisions to be made and we have had to make some tough ones this weekend," said Gatland.

"We have picked a team and a squad we believe can deliver this weekend against France." Elliot Dee, Nicky Smith and Samson Lee are named as the front-row replacements with Davies and Shingler completing the forward contingent. Aled Davies, Anscombe and Steff Evans provide the backline cover.

Team (15-1)

Leigh Halfpenny; George North, Scott Williams, Hadleigh Parkes, Liam Williams; Dan Biggar, Gareth Davies; Taulupe Faletau, Josh Navidi, Justin Tipuric; Alun Wyn Jones (capt), Cory Hill; Tomas Francis, Ken Owens, Rob Evans Replacements: Elliot Dee, Nicky Smith, Samson Lee, Bradley Davies, Aaron Shingler, Aled Davies, Gareth Anscombe, Steff Evans Coach: Warren Gatland (NZL). —AFP

'Super sub' Our Duke set to strike gold for Harrington

LONDON: Jessica Harrington can capture the blue riband of National Hunt racing the Cheltenham Gold Cup for a second successive year today with her "super sub", Our Duke. The vibrant 71-year-old Irish trainer admitted to AFP even if her 2017 champion Sizing John had been fit to run she would have been hard pressed as to which one she would favour. Harrington's confidence in Our Duke—who completed a remarkable season for her last year by landing the Irish Grand National—is based on the testing conditions. They will favour her runner and not the long time favourite Might Bite, whose trainer Nicky Henderson she stays with for the Festival which should make for an interesting conversation. "God he is a pretty good super sub," Harrington said. "I think it is a pretty open race but if it gets softer it will be good for my runner and would inconvenience Might Bite."

"Our Duke is a smashing horse to have, in fact I would have been pushed to know which would have been the proper horse for the Cup," Henderson, who increased his record Champions Hurdle haul to seven on Tuesday with Buveur d'Air defending his title, admitted his chasing star, who was an impressive winner of the King George VI Chase in late December, could be troubled by the going. "The slight worry is going to be the ground," said Henderson. "He won't relish it as much as some of our others but the Cheltenham going can change very quickly. "He is in great form and I couldn't be happier with him," added the urbane 67-year-old Old Etonian.

Harrington believes the great danger to Our Duke—whose hopes were boosted by Presenting Percy winning the RSA Chase on Wednesday as he had beaten him last time out—among the other 16 runners will be last year's third Native River. "It (the testing going) would really benefit Native River, he will be a big danger," said Harrington. The runner-up from last year Minella Rocco returns to try and go one better for popular trainer Jonjo O'Neill whilst Willie Mullins tries to finally end years of frustration saddling four including two-time runner-up Djakadam, although his best chance may have come and gone and Killultagh Vic may be the 61-year-old's likeliest contender. — AFP

Sports

Friday, March 16, 2018

Durant shines as Warriors halt Lakers, Wizards stun Celtics

Orlando pulls off an upset against Bucks with 126-117 victory

LOS ANGELES: Kevin Durant scored 26 points as the Golden State Warriors shrugged off their injury crisis to overpower the resurgent Los Angeles Lakers on Wednesday. NBA Finals MVP Durant also contributed five rebounds and six assists as a Warriors side missing Stephen Curry, Klay Thompson and Draymond Green completed a 117-106 win in Oakland.

The Lakers had gone toe-to-toe with the Warriors during an entertaining first half, holding the NBA champions at 55-55 at the break. But a lapse in concentration midway through the third quarter saw the Warriors produce a 12-0 run, giving them a 70-59 lead which ultimately proved decisive.

The Warriors improved to 52-16 in the Western Conference, one win back from leaders Houston (53-14). The Lakers, who are outside of the playoff places, fell to 31-37. With Curry, Green and Thompson all missing, Durant shouldered the offensive burden for the Warriors, with support from Nick Young (18 points) and Zaza Pachulia, who had 10 points and 12 rebounds. The Lakers scoring was led by Julius Randle with 22 points, while Brook Lopez and Isaiah Thomas both had 20 apiece.

WIZARDS JOLT CELTICS

Elsewhere on Wednesday, the Washington

Wizards fought back from a 20-point deficit to jolt the injury-hit Boston Celtics with a 125-124 victory in double overtime. A Jodie Meeks three-pointer with two seconds remaining tied it for the Wizards at 106-106 to send the game into the first period of overtime after the Celtics appeared to have done enough for the win.

Boston rookie Jayson Tatum then blew a chance to win it for the Celtics in the first period of overtime, the 20-year-old levelling the score

at 115-115 with a two-point layup but then missing a free throw that would have sealed a win.

Instead, Washington pulled away to open a six-point lead in overtime that saw them improve to 39-30 in the Eastern Conference standings. The second-placed Celtics, who are

Celtics remain four games adrift of Raptors

battling through a slew of injuries that has deprived them of Kyrie Irving, Marcus Smart, Daniel Theis, Jaylen Brown and Al Horford, fell to 46-22 with the defeat.

The Celtics remain four games adrift of the first place Toronto Raptors, who are on course for the top seeding and home court advantage through the playoffs. Bradley Beal led the way for the Wizards at Boston's TD Garden on Wednesday, scoring 34 points with seven rebounds and nine assists.

Markieff Morris had 20 points while Otto Porter Jr. had 18 points. Ian Mahinmi added 14



OAKLAND: Lonzo Ball #2 of the Los Angeles Lakers handles the ball against the Golden State Warriors on Wednesday at ORACLE Arena in Oakland, California. —AFP

from the bench. Boston's scoring was led by Marcus Morris with 31 points, Terry Rozier adding 21 and Tatum 19.

In other games Wednesday, the Orlando Magic pulled off an upset against the playoff-chasing Milwaukee Bucks with a 126-117 victory. Orlando's Jonathon Simmons scored a career-high 35 points as the Magic improved to 21-48. The Bucks fell to 36-32 with the defeat.

Simmons was ably supported by point guard

D.J. Augustin, who had 32 points along with four assists and three rebounds. Montenegrin centre Nikola Vucevic also proved influential, scoring 22 points while finishing with nine assists and nine rebounds.

The Bucks meanwhile leaned heavily on the brilliance of Greek star Giannis Antetokounmpo, who led the scoring with 38 points. Antetokounmpo also led his team with rebounds (10) while adding seven assists. —AFP

Alonso ready to fight on two fronts

LONDON: Fernando Alonso faces the busiest year of any Formula One driver but the Spaniard has played down fears he could be spreading himself too thin by competing in two world championships at once.

The 36-year-old gets one campaign started next week when he lines up for McLaren at the Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne, the first of a record-equalling 21 F1 races around the world this season. The double F1 world champion, who competed in the Indianapolis 500 last year, will also race for Toyota at the Le Mans 24 Hours in June and in the full World Endurance championship. Alonso's road to Le Mans, as well as McLaren's new start in Formula One with Renault engines after three dismal years with Toyota's Japanese rivals Honda, will be among the top storylines of the motorsport year.

"The only concern is travelling," he told reporters during winter testing in Barcelona when asked about his ambitious programme. "Travelling is going to be energy-consuming and I need to be very efficient on that."

"Every delay on the flight or every connection that you miss is going to hurt this year. So hopefully everything runs smoothly." The target is to become only the second driver to achieve the so-called 'Triple Crown' of motorsport, a feat completed by the late Briton Graham Hill in 1972. It involves winning the Indy 500, Le



MONTMELLO: File photo shows McLaren's Spanish Formula 1 driver Fernando Alonso takes part in the tests for the new Formula One Grand Prix season at the Circuit de Catalunya in Montmelo. —AFP

Mans and Formula One championship, although it can also be the Monaco Grand Prix which Alonso has won twice. The Spaniard, who led at Indianapolis before his car broke down, competed in the Daytona 24 Hours in January to acclimatise himself and is up for the challenge.

"There are many things that I am now in the point of my career that I can deal with. Probably a couple of years ago maybe I didn't have the knowledge of all of the areas," he said. "So I thought now was the time to do it and I feel ready. I think in terms of mental approach it's going to be not an issue because every time you jump in the car you want to be competitive. —Reuters

No early lifting of Russia ban: Paralympics chief

PYEONGCHANG: The Olympic movement may have lifted its ban on drug-tainted Russia, but there is no prospect of the Paralympics following suit until strict criteria are met, the body's president told AFP yesterday.

Andrew Parsons, president of the International Paralympic Committee, said Russia, which was allowed to send 30 athletes to compete as neutrals at the Pyeongchang Winter Games, "had progressed a lot". But he said the IPC wouldn't budge on its stance with the Russian Paralympic Committee, which was banned in 2016 following revelations of a mass, allegedly state-sponsored, doping programme.

"The situation is very clear, because we have agreed reinstatement criteria with the Russian Paralympic Committee," Parsons told AFP in an interview in Pyeongchang. "We cannot right after these Games, for example, lift the suspension—they have to meet these criteria," he added. The International Olympic Committee banned Russia in December—more than a year after the Paralympic body—after its investigations established "systemic" doping by Russia. —AFP

Federer breezes into quarters at Indian Wells

Federer gunning for a record sixth Indian Wells title

INDIAN WELLS: World No. 1 Roger Federer's remarkable run continued as he booked his quarter-final berth in the ATP Indian Wells Masters with a 7-5, 6-4 win over Jeremy Chardy on Wednesday. The 36-year-old Federer, who won his 20th Grand Slam when he captured the Australian Open in January, is off to one of his strongest career starts and is now 15-0 in 2018.

It is his best beginning to the season since 2006 when he started 16-0 and won 33 of his first 34 matches. "It has been great. But it is a totally different year, and so many years after," he said. "For so many years I have felt good actually in Australia. 'I don't know if it's Australia per se or, taking the benefits from the hard work I put into the new season.'" Federer, who also won at Rotterdam in February, is gunning for a record sixth Indian Wells title.

"Yeah, and then also Rotterdam was great. I was very happy that I was able to win the tournament there, not just get to the semis and get world No. 1. 'And here now I'm relieved that I was able to win three matches already. Because in a big, tough draw like here at Indian Wells, you're never quite sure what to expect. 'So I'm just happy I'm on a good run.'"

The defending Indian Wells champion Federer put on a serving clinic against Chardy as he hit two aces and won 100 percent of his first serve points. He dropped just three serve points overall with those coming on his second serve. Federer advances to the quarter-finals where he

will face South Korea's Chung Hyeon who defeated 30th-seeded Pablo Cuevas 6-1, 6-3 earlier on Wednesday. Federer only needed to break Chardy once in each set to get the win in 82 minutes. The first break of serve came in the 11th game of the opening set to take a 6-5 lead. In the second set he broke Chardy in the ninth game to lead 5-4. Each time he got the break he then served for the set.

Federer clinched the victory on the first match point when Chardy pounded a forehand into the net. Chardy hit four aces but made 46

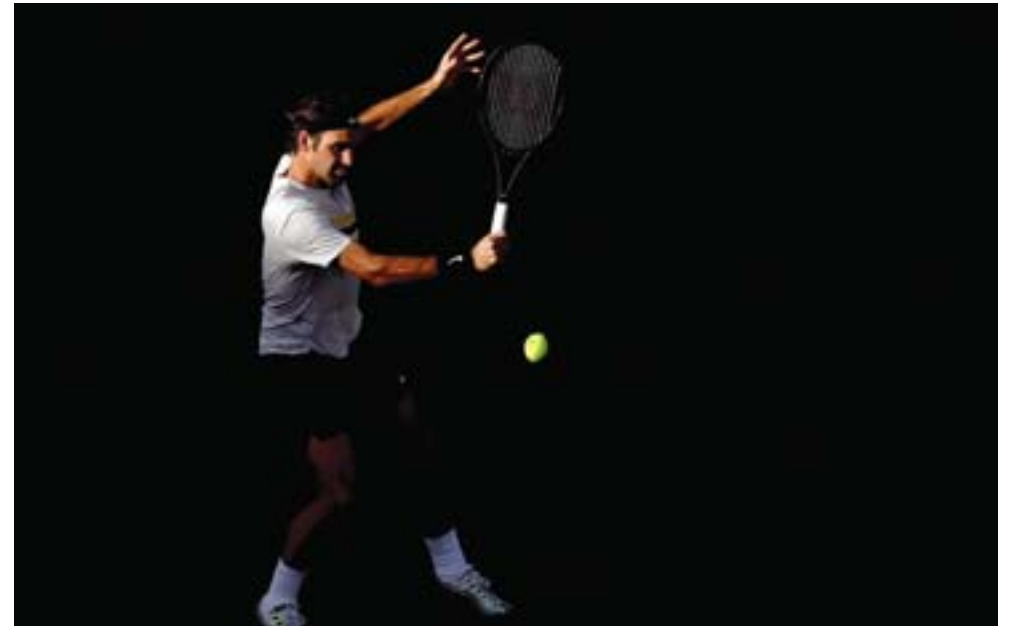
unforced errors compared to just 29 for Federer. Federer will face the 21-year-old Chung for the second time this year. Chung made a Grand Slam breakthrough

“ So I’m just happy I’m on a good run ”

when he reached the semi-finals of the Australian Open in January but had to retire in his match with Federer because of a foot blister. "It is highly explosive, it's highly impressive what he does and I think he is going to be a great player," Federer said. "How good will still remain to be seen. I have a lot of respect for him."

NINE MATCH POINTS

Chung survived a late rally from Uruguay's Cuevas, who fended off a total of nine match



INDIAN WELLS: Roger Federer returns a shot to Jeremy Chardy of France during the BNP Paribas Open at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden Wednesday in Indian Wells, California.—AFP

points before eventually losing in the first-ever meeting between the pair. Down a set and behind 5-0 in the second set, Cuevas miraculously saved seven match points to win the game.

He then served out the next game to cut Chung's lead to 5-2 and then broke the South Korean in the game after that. Cuevas saved two more

match points in the ninth game but his luck finally ran out. Elsewhere, Croatia's Borna Coric blasted nine aces as he outlasted American Taylor Fritz 6-2, 6-7 (6/8), 6-4. Unseeded Coric moves to the quarter-finals, where he will play red-hot South African Kevin Anderson who defeated Spaniard Pablo Carreno Busta 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (8/6). —AFP

Halep, Osaka reach Indian Wells s-finals

INDIAN WELLS: World No. 1 Simona Halep punched her ticket to the Indian Wells semi-finals with a 6-4, 6-7 (5/7), 6-3 win over Croatia's Petra Martic on Wednesday. The 26-year-old Halep improved to 18-1 on the season and is looking to win her second WTA Tour title of 2018.

Halep, of Romania, needed two hours and 23 minutes to put Martic away under taxing conditions as strong winds swirled around the main stadium court. "It was difficult conditions to play in today because of the wind," she said. "It was tough to play, because the ball was really moving. 'But I just tried everything. I tried also to push a little bit the ball and then to hit it. I tried to mix it up. Was not easy at all. For both of us it was difficult.'"

Halep moves on to the semi-finals where she will face Japan's Naomi Osaka who beat fifth-seeded Karolina Pliskova 6-2, 6-3. Halep is guaranteed to hold onto her No. 1 ranking at the end of this event after world number two Caroline Wozniacki was eliminated on Tuesday. Halep blasted two aces and broke Martic's serve four times. "I just fought and that's maybe why I won because I refuse to lose," Halep said.

Halep won the final five games of the third set after being broken once and falling behind 3-1 early. The turning point in the third set came for Halep after she won a challenge in the eighth game with Martic holding serve. On the very next point Martic hit a forehand wide as Halep took the game and a 5-3 set lead. Halep then served for the match, winning five of the final six points after the challenge. Halep said her early struggles in the



Naomi Osaka

final set were from nerves and frustration with the playing conditions. "I calmed myself down a little bit more, and I just was more focused on what I have to do, and not thinking that much about the wind and what is going on on court."

"I just fought till the end, and I think that's why I could win." Halep is seeking her second Indian Wells title after beating Jelena Jankovic in 2015. In the evening session, world No. 44 Osaka broke Pliskova's serve six times in her 78-minute upset on the main stadium court. "I returned the ball well," said Osaka. "She is one of the best servers on tour and I was able to break her quite a few times so I am really happy about that."

Pliskova, who reached the quarter-finals at the Australian Open in January, smashed five aces but made six double faults. Pliskova was trying to reach the semi-finals in this event for the third consecutive year.—AFP

Batsmen struggle in NZ-England pink-ball warmup

WELLINGTON: Early indications suggest that both sides in New Zealand's first ever home day-night test could find it difficult batting with the pink ball. The two-match series against England opens with a day-nighter in Auckland from March 22 and in order to get accustomed to conditions, the tourists are playing a New Zealand XI in a two-day game using a pink ball at Seddon Park in Hamilton.

England's test attack had the New Zealand side in trouble on Wednesday's first day with Jimmy Anderson, Stuart Broad and Mark Wood reducing the home team to 30 for five by the 17th over. Test openers Jeet Raval and Tom Latham were dismissed for seven and 10 respectively, while middle-order batsman Henry Nicholls scored 14 and all-rounder Colin de Grandhomme was out for four. All of the wickets fell during the first session, when the pink ball has typically not moved in the air as much as it does under lights. Wicketkeeper Tom Blundell, however, shook off the disappointment of being dropped for the fit-again BJ Watling to follow up his century on test debut against West Indies last December with a composed 131 not out as the ball softened. Canterbury pace bowler Kyle Jamieson, who averages 14 with a highest first-class score of 40, combined well with Blundell and scored 101 not out before he retired. —Reuters

Sports

United, Chelsea and Spurs seek FA Cup salvation

Leicester look prime 'dark horse' for first-ever FA Cup win

LONDON: With dreams of European glory in tatters, Manchester United, Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur turn their attention to the FA Cup quarter-finals this weekend clinging to their last chance of silverware this season.

The competition's lustre may have dulled in recent years as managers prioritise so-called bigger prizes, but Jose Mourinho, Antonio Conte and Mauricio Pochettino will have their eyes firmly fixed on a Wembley date on May 19.

Mourinho's United, still reeling from a meek Champions League exit against Sevilla on Tuesday, host Brighton and Hove Albion. Conte's Chelsea travel to Leicester City and Pochettino takes his Tottenham side to Swansea City.

Third-tier Wigan Athletic, the unlikely spanner in the spokes of Manchester City's bid for a quadruple, welcome top-flight strugglers Southampton who will have new manager Mark Hughes, hired to save them from relegation, in the dugout for the first time.

Mourinho's one and only FA Cup triumph was with Chelsea in 2006-07 and the Portuguese will be well aware that adding a record-equalling 13th

for United is now the bare minimum requirement from his second season at Old Trafford. Chris Hughton's Brighton side will be tricky opponents though, having made a good fist of their first season of Premier League football, sitting 11th in the table. They are in the last eight for the first time since 1986, three years after they lost to United in a final replay, having drawn 2-2 in the original fixture.

United striker Romelu Lukaku, who scored a consolation goal against Sevilla, knows United must respond. "We have to bounce back. We have one trophy to chase and that is the FA Cup," he said.

Managers prioritise so-called bigger prizes



GOOD OMEN

While United were lambasted for their defeat by Sevilla, Chelsea earned some credit despite a 3-0 loss to Barcelona on Wednesday. They have nonetheless lost five of their last nine matches in all competitions.

They are far from assured a top-four finish in the Premier League and Leicester, with Jamie Vardy and Riyad Mahrez in form, will be a tough proposition at the King Power on Sunday. With no relegation fears Leicester look prime 'dark horse'



BOURNEMOUTH: Tottenham's first team coach Miguel D'Agostino (L), Tottenham Hotspur's Argentinian head coach Mauricio Pochettino (C) and assistant manager Jesus Perez (R) watch from their seats during the English Premier League football match. — AFP

material for a first-ever FA Cup win.

A good omen for Chelsea perhaps is that the last time they won the trophy, in 2012, they beat Leicester 5-2 in the quarter-finals, albeit at Stamford Bridge. For Pochettino the FA Cup offers the chance finally to rubber-stamp his impressive

project at Tottenham with some silverware. Third and second place finishes in the Premier League and topping a Champions League group including Real Madrid have earned him compliments aplenty but his side are yet to taste the sweet smell of success. — Reuters

Newcomers Bengaluru one win away from fairytale ISL title

NEW DELHI: Bengaluru FC will chase a fairytale finish to their debut Indian Super League season when they face former champions Chennaiyin FC in tomorrow's final.

The newcomers have enjoyed a dream run since switching from the rival I-League, winning 13 of their 18 matches under the stewardship of former Barcelona defender Albert Roca.

The Spaniard, who joined the south Indian club as coach in 2016, has already steered Bengaluru to victory in the Federation Cup and a place in the continental AFC Cup final.

They will now attempt to lift the ISL trophy in front of their home crowd at Bangalore's Sree Kanteerava Stadium. "It is what we wanted, to play here in front of our fans," said Roca, former assistant coach to Frank Rijkaard at Barcelona FC. "I am very happy for that. On the other hand, there's also the pressure of playing at home. But this is the final and it is special. We have this chance, we will do everything to get the title."

Last week, skipper Sunil Chhetri netted a hat-trick on home turf in the second leg of the semi-finals as Bengaluru beat Pune 3-1 on aggregate. Bengaluru switched to the ISL, which is backed by one of Asia's richest men, Mukesh Ambani, after Asia's football governing body ruled that the title winners will contest the AFC Cup from 2018. — AFP

Russia cracks down on 800 World Cup ticket sites

MOSCOW: Russia has cracked down on more than 800 websites illegally offering World Cup tickets when their general sale resumed after a six week wait. The global football governing body FIFA is touting "overwhelming" demand from both Russia and abroad for admission to the football showpiece.

But organisers were forced to apologise after fans had to wait five hours on line once game passes became available again through FIFA on Tuesday. It appears that some people's patience snapped and they decided to explore the web's other options.

The Roskomnadzor communications regulator did the same. The agency on Thursday reported discovering 858 Russian web pages claiming to have tempting offers for the June 14 to July 15 tournament.

"Based on Roskomnadzor demands, the illegal information was removed from most (822) internet resources," the agency said in a statement. It said eight websites failed to remove their advertisement and were blocked. Another 28 still have time to respond to the notice.

OVERBOOKED

Organisers raised the alarm early about the possibility of Russians trying to circumnavigate the law. Prime Min-

ister Dmitry Medvedev promised ahead of the December 1 World Cup draw in the Kremlin to crack down hard on ticket cheats.

"It will not matter whether these are ordinary citizens or officials, individual entrepreneurs or organisations," said Medvedev. The authorities are imposing a fine of 1.5 million rubles (\$26,000) — nearly two average annual salaries — on anyone selling fake football merchandise.

Fans caught with a ticket purchased from someone other than a FIFA vendor will be kept out of the stadium. And even a legal one will not guarantee admission: supporters must also get a Fan ID card issued after a rigorous Russian security check. — AFP



Matches on TV (Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE
Tottenham Hotspur v Newcastle United 15:00

SPANISH LEAGUE
Levante v Eibar 23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 3

GERMAN BUNDESLIGA
Freiburg v Stuttgart 22:30
beIN SPORTS HD 5

FRENCH LEAGUE
Monaco v LOSC Lille 22:45
beIN SPORTS HD 6

Bayern out to wrap up first silverware of the season

Top four teams qualify automatically for CL group stage

BERLIN: Bayern Munich will know before they take to the pitch at RB Leipzig on Sunday if they will get the chance this weekend to seal their sixth successive Bundesliga title. The Bavarians, who are 20 points clear at the top with eight games remaining, will extend their record Bundesliga title run with victory at Leipzig, providing Schalke 04 and Borussia Dortmund fail to get three points from their own games.

Second-placed Schalke travel to VfL Wolfsburg a day earlier, while Dortmund, a further point behind in third, host Hannover 96 a few hours before Bayern's game. "That can obviously happen on Sunday (that we win the title)," Bayern defender Mats Hummels said. "But somehow I do not think that both Schalke and Dortmund will lose their games."

"But we have to win at Leipzig for that to happen, that is a must. We will see what happens on Sunday but I am not counting on it (winning the title this weekend)." Bayern will go into their game with their spirits high after advancing to the Champions League quarter-finals following

Wednesday's victory at Turkey's Besiktas that completed an 8-1 aggregate win.

The treble-chasing Bundesliga leaders, who are also through to the German Cup semi-final, rested Arjen Robben against Besiktas to ensure he was fit for Sunday. Yet coach Jupp Heynckes could be without injury-plagued midfielder Thiago Alcantara who was taken off with a foot injury in the first half after scoring against Besiktas.

The Spaniard, who will undergo further tests in Munich, only came back last month from a lengthy injury break. Leipzig, last season's surprise runners-up, are battling for a spot in the Champions League, having dropped down to sixth on 40

points.

The top four teams qualify automatically for the Champions League group stage. Leipzig need at least a point against Bayern to stay in touch with fifth-placed Eintracht Frankfurt on 42 and Bayer Leverkusen, who are in fourth on 44.

"We want to play well against Bayern and earn points and we want to deny them winning

“We want to play well against Bayern and earn points”



ISTANBUL: Bayern Munich's Brazilian defender Rafinha (C/L) fights for the ball with Besiktas forward Vagner Love (C/R) during the second leg of the last 16 UEFA Champions League football match between Besiktas and Bayern Munich. — AFP

the title in our stadium," said Leipzig's Jean-Kevin Augustin. Leipzig's bitter home defeat to Bayern in the penultimate match of last season is still fresh in their memories, having led twice

by two goals only to lose 5-4.

"Bayern are also internationally a big club but we are not afraid of them. It will be a great game," Augustin said. — Reuter

Batshuayi targets World Cup from Dortmund's 'fab 4'

BERLIN: Michy Batshuayi is in contention for a World Cup place with Belgium after joining Borussia Dortmund's goal-scoring 'fantastic four' while on loan from Chelsea.

The 24-year-old came off Dortmund's bench to score twice—including the 94th-minute winner—in a last-gasp 3-2 win at home to Eintracht Frankfurt last Sunday. Batshuayi has slotted seamlessly into Dortmund's attack alongside Germany trio Marco Reus, Mario Goetze and Andre Schuerle which has sparked his flurry of goals.

The German media has dubbed the quartet Dortmund's 'Fantastic Four' and Batshuayi is relishing the limelight. "I've seen some talk about that online and I find it funny," Batshuayi told Bundesliga.com.

"It's nice for all concerned, the Dortmund supporters are really pleased with us and we're happy too. "Things like this fire our motivation to continue playing well and scoring goals. "Long may it continue."

Batshuayi has hit seven goals in nine games since joining Dortmund in January to replace Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, who joined Arsenal. The Belgian wants more when third-placed Borussia host mid-table Hannover 96 on Sunday after scoring five times in his first three games.

He failed to hit the net in a frustrating off night

three weeks ago in a 1-1 draw at home to Augsburg—which led to a change of hairstyle. "The only downside was (the draw) against Augsburg, we're all very disappointed with how that turned out," said Batshuayi. "It was a very tough game both for footballing reasons, we should've played a lot better. "I already had blond highlights, which meant my hair echoed (Dortmund's) club colours, yellow and black. "However, since we had a bad match against Augsburg, I got rid of them completely, so now I'm back to just black hair."

Now his goal is a top four finish in the Bundesliga to see Dortmund qualify for the Champions League. Batshuayi's loan deal expires in May and German daily Bild speculate Borussia will need to pay Chelsea 60 million euros (\$74m) for him to stay.

However after frustrating months on Chelsea's bench as back-up to Alvaro Morata, Batshuayi's goals with Dortmund has put him on the radar of Belgium coach Roberto Martinez.

Batshuayi hopes to play for Belgium at the 2018 World Cup to add to his 13 appearances and five goals for 'Les Diables Rouges', who have drawn England in Group G.

"If he keeps scoring like he is, then it'll be tough for Martinez to leave him out," said ex-Belgium coach Marc Wilmots. "He's competing against Wolfsburg's Divock Origi (on loan from Liverpool) for a place.

"He has to remain free of injuries and in peak physical condition to play every three days. "He didn't play that much at Chelsea so he needs a better rhythm, but his smile of late has really struck me. "You can see he's taken on this challenge with great delight. "He's done really well at Dortmund with his goals because things looked rather gloomy at Borussia when he arrived." — AFP

Qatar's BeIN 'categorically rejects' Egypt court fine

DOHA: Qatar's BeIN media yesterday slammed an Egyptian court's decision to slap the sports broadcaster with another multimillion dollar fine, the second anti-trust case in a Cairo court this year.

"BeIN categorically rejects the local Egyptian court's judgement and will pursue all available legal means to challenge it," a spokesperson for the media group told AFP. "The judgement is based on unfounded allegations by the Egyptian Competition Authority that have no basis in fact or law." The court in Cairo ordered a fine of 400 million Egyptian pounds (\$22.7 million/18.3 million euros) to be paid by BeIN on charges of forcing its Egyptian customers to replace existing satellite dishes with new ones in order to catch the channel's signal.

Monday's verdict marked the second such case against BeIN in Egypt since January, when it was hit with another fine. BeIN has said it would fight the latest ruling, which comes at a politically charged time in relations between Qatar and Egypt.

Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates cut diplomatic and trade ties with Qatar in June, accusing Doha of supporting extremists and being too close to Iran. Qatar denies the allegations and accuses its rival of seeking regime change. In 2014, Egypt's anti-trust authority accused BeIN of violating rules by requiring viewers interested in football's World Cup to subscribe for at least a year and purchase a specific satellite receiver.

The Confederation of African Football (CAF) in July suspended and fined the coach of Cairo club Al-Ahly, Hossam El Badry, after he boycotted a news conference over the presence of BeIN Sports.

BeIN is headed by Paris Saint-Germain president Nasser al-Khelaifi, a Qatari tycoon who is also entangled in a FIFA corruption investigation of alleged corruption in the sale of World Cup television rights. — AFP

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