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11th Hour

Turkey plans to open embassy in Jerusalem

Istanbul

Turkey intends to open an embassy in East Jerusalem, President Tayyip Erdogan said yesterday, days after leading calls at a summit of Muslim leaders for the world to recognise it as the capital of Palestine.

It was not clear how he would carry out the move, as Israel controls all of Jerusalem. Palestinians want the capital of a future state they seek to be in East Jerusalem, which Israel took in a 1967 war and later annexed in a move not recognised internationally. (Reuters)

His Majesty King pays homage to fallen servicemen



His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa during a ceremony held to pay homage to fallen soldiers at Sakhir Palace yesterday. (Report on Page 4)



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Pentagon admits running secret UFO investigation



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Bitcoin futures are about to get another big boost



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Republicans confident tax bill will pass

Jerusalem: UN move to annul US decision

United Nations

The United Nations Security Council is considering a draft resolution that would insist any decisions on the status of Jerusalem have no legal effect and must be rescinded after U.S. President Donald Trump recognised the city as Israel's capital.

The one-page Egyptian-drafted text, which was circulated to the 15-member council on Saturday and seen by Reuters, does not specifically mention the United States or Mr Trump. Diplomats say it has broad support but will likely be vetoed by Washington.

The council could vote early next week, diplomats said. A resolution needs nine votes in favour and no vetoes by the United States,

France, Britain, Russia or China to pass.

Trump abruptly reversed decades of U.S. policy this month when he recognised Jerusalem as Israel's capital, generating outrage from Palestinians. Trump also plans to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv.

After the decision, Arab foreign ministers agreed to seek a U.N. Security Council resolution. While the draft is unlikely to be adopted, it would further isolate Trump over the Jerusalem issue. The U.S. mission to the United Nations declined to comment on the draft. U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley has praised Trump's decision as "the just and right thing to do." The draft

U.N. resolution "affirms that any decisions and actions which purport to have altered, the character, status or demographic composition of the Holy City of Jerusalem have no legal effect, are null and void and must be rescinded in compliance with relevant resolutions of the Security Council."

It calls upon all countries to refrain establishing diplomatic missions in Jerusalem. Israel considers the city its eternal and indivisible capital and wants all embassies based there. "No vote or debate will change the clear reality that Jerusalem" is the capital of Israel, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Danny Danon, said in a statement. -Reuters



calendar.bh



Events Calendar of the Kingdom of Bahrain

9 killed, 56 wounded in Pakistan church attack

Quetta

Two suicide bombers stormed a packed Christian church in southwestern Pakistan yesterday, killing at least nine people and wounding up to 56, officials said, in the latest attack claimed by Islamic State in the country.

Police guards stationed at the church entrance and on its roof killed one of the bombers but the second attacker detonated his explosives-filled vest outside its prayer hall just after Sunday services began in Quetta, capital of Baluchistan province, said Sarfraz Bugti, the provincial home minister.

Baluchistan police chief Moazzam Jah said there were nearly 400 worshippers in the church for the pre-Christmas service. The death toll could have been much higher if the gunmen had forced their way into the sanctuary, he said.

Jah said the venue - Bethel Memorial Methodist Church - was on high alert as Christian places of worship are often targeted by Islamist extremists over the Christmas season.

"We killed one of them, and the other one exploded himself after police wounded him," he said. Islamic State claimed the attack, the group's Amaq news agency said in an online statement, without providing



A family fleeing the scene after the suicide attack in a church at Quetta; (Right) the main hall of the church after the bombing



any evidence for its claim.

Another police official, Abdur Razaq Cheema, said two other attackers escaped.

Broken wooden benches, shards of glass and musical instruments were scattered around a Christmas tree inside the prayer hall that was splashed with blood stains.

Kal Alaxander, 52, was at the church with his wife and two children when the attack happened.

"We were in services when we heard a big bang," he told Reuters. "Then there was shooting. The prayer hall's wooden door broke and fell on

us ... We hid the women and children under desks."

Maryam George, 20, cried at a hospital where her younger sister Alizeh was fighting for life with two broken legs and multiple other wounds. Reuters Pakistani Christians, who number around 2 million in a nation of more than 200 million people, have been the target of a series of attacks in recent years.

Strategic region

Baluchistan, a strategically important region bordering Iran as well as Afghanistan, is plagued by violence by Sunni

Islamist sectarian groups linked to the Taliban, al Qaeda and Islamic State. It also has an indigenous ethnic Baloch insurgency fighting against the central government.

Middle East-based Islamic State has created an active branch in Pakistan and Afghanistan in recent years mostly by recruiting among established militants, and its followers have claimed some of Pakistan's most deadly attacks in recent years.

A suicide bomber killed 52 people and wounded over 100 at a Baluchistan Sufi shrine in November last year, in

an attack claimed by Islamic State. In February, Islamic State attacked a Sufi shrine in Pakistan's southern Sindh province, killing 83 people.

Violence in Baluchistan has fueled concern about security for projects in the \$57 billion China Pakistan Economic Corridor, a transport and energy link planned to run from western China to Pakistan's southern deep-water port of Gwadar.

The church attack came a day after the third anniversary of a Pakistani Taliban attack on an army-run school that killed 134 children, one of the

single deadliest attacks in the country's history.

Pakistan's army chief, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, condemned the attack.

"Quetta church attack targeting our brotherly Christian Pakistanis is an attempt to cloud Christmas celebrations," he said. "We stay united and steadfast to respond against such heinous attempts." Last year's Easter Day attack in a public park that killed more than 70 people in the eastern city of Lahore was claimed by a Taliban splinter group previously associated with Islamic State. - Reuters

Billionaire Al Masri released

Amman

Sabih Al Masri, a Palestinian billionaire and Jordan's most influential businessman, was released after several days of detention in Saudi Arabia, who he said gave him "all respect".

Masri, the chairman of Amman-based Arab Bank, was detained last Tuesday hours before he was planning to leave after chairing meetings of companies he owns, sources said.

The authorities have not commented on his detention. His confidants had warned him not to travel to the Saudi capital after the mass arrests in early November, the sources said.

The detention sent shockwaves through business circles in Jordan and the Palestinian

Al Masri, the chairman of Amman-based Arab Bank, was detained last Tuesday, hours before he was planning to leave after chairing meetings of companies he owns, sources said.

territories. Masri's multi-billion-dollar investments in hotels and banking in Jordan are a cornerstone of the economy of the Kingdom and he is by far the biggest investor in Palestinian territories.

Masri said on Sunday that he would be returning to Jordan after finishing business meetings this week.

"All is well and am happy (to be released) and I was given all respect by everyone here," a Saudi citizen of Palestinian origin, told Reuters from his

home in Riyadh.

A member of a prominent merchant family from Nablus in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, Masri amassed a fortune by partnering with influential Saudis in a catering business to supply troops during the U.S.-led military operation to retake Kuwait from Iraq in the 1991 Gulf War.

He is the founder of Saudi Astra Group, which has wide interests in diversified industries ranging from agro-industry

to telecommunications, construction and mining across the region.

Arab Bank shares, which account for almost a quarter of the \$24 billion market capitalisation of the Amman exchange, ended just 1.44% lower at start of weekly trade as investor fears ebbed with news of his release.

Officials and businessmen had warned of the reverberations of the crisis on an aid-strapped Jordanian economy already plagued by



Sabih Al Masri

high debts. Saudi Arabia is a major donor.

Masri has since taken the helm at Arab Bank in 2012 helped boost confidence in one of the Arab world's largest private financial institutions.

The bank, which was first established in Jerusalem in 1930, has a balance sheet of over \$45 billion and has earned a reputation of resilience in the face of regional political turmoil. -Reuters

Speaker pays homage to martyrs

DT News Network
Manama

Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Ahmed bin Ibrahim Al-Mulla yesterday paid tributes fallen servicemen.

Extending sincere thanks and gratitude to His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa for issuing a royal order to mark the Commemoration Day on December 17, to

coincide with the Kingdom's celebrations of the National and Accession Days, he said that the Commemoration Day is an opportunity to pay tribute to the people of "sacrifice".

Al-Mulla voiced pride in the sacrifices of the late servicemen who lost their lives while assuming their patriotic duties, stressing that

Bahrain will never forget the families and relatives of fallen servicemen.

"The leadership and people of Bahrain will not forget the sacrifices of its brave servicemen who fell in the line of duty while defending the security and stability of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, and safeguarding the dignity and rights of the

Arab Nation against foreign interference and terrorist acts," he added.

The speaker renewed the Council of Representatives' support for the Bahrain Defence Force, led by Commander-in-Chief Field Marshal Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, the security establishment, led by Interior Minister, Lieutenant-General

Shaikh Rashid bin Abdulla AL Khalifa, the National Guard, led by its Commander Lieutenant-General Shaikh Mohammed bin Isa Al Khalifa, and all the affiliates of the military and security establishments in the kingdom.

Al-Mulla prayed to Allah the Almighty to rest the souls of fallen servicemen in eternal peace.



A Mullah

Leadership congratulated



Ahmed
Abdulaziz Al
Khayat

DT News Network
Manama

President of Bahrain Self-Defence Federation (BSDF), Ahmed Abdulaziz Al-Khayat has extended greetings to His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa on the occasion of the Kingdom's celebrations of the 18th Anniversary of HM the King's Accession to the Throne and the glorious National Day.

Al-Khayat extended congratulations to His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Premier, on the national occasions. Everyone is keen on celebrating the Accession and National Days, noting that festivities prevailing throughout Bahrain re-affirm love and

allegiance to the leadership which spares no effort to enhance Bahrain's progress and put in place the requirements of decent living for the citizens, he said. He added that the constant care enjoyed by the Bahraini sport from HM the King is reflected in the government's pioneering plans in this regard. Al Khayat pointed out the great support of HH Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, HM the King's Personal Representative for Charity Work and Youth Affairs, Supreme Council for Youth and Sport Chairman, and Bahrain Olympic Committee President, and HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the SCYS First Deputy President, and the Bahrain Athletics Federation President, for the youth and sport movement reflect their keenness on translating the leadership's visions into the ground.

Two held for car robbery

DT News Network
Manama

Director-General of Capital Police yesterday announced the arrest of two suspected of stealing a vehicle from a car agency in Sitra in less than 24 hours of the reporting of the case. He said

that investigation led to the identification and arrest of the main suspect and another one who hid the vehicle as they planned to traffic it outside the country. He said that legal procedures are being taken to refer the case to the Public Prosecution.



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DT News Network Manama

The Kingdom yesterday observed the Martyrs Day as His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa paid homage to the fallen servicemen in recognition of their sacrifices for the nation at a ceremony held at Sakhir Palace.

HM the King, the Supreme Commander; Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa; Bahrain Defence Force Commander-in-Chief Field Marshal Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa; National Guard Commander, Lieutenant-General Shaikh Mohammed bin Isa Al Khalifa; Interior Minister Lieutenant General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa; and Royal Guard Commander Brigadier Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa attended the ceremony held at Sakhir Palace.

HM the King delivered a speech, valuing the sacrifice of Bahrain's soldiers in the different military units, National Guard and Interior Ministry.

In the keynote speech to mark the occasion, HM the King paid homage to the loyal and brave Bahrainis who sacrificed their lives and fell in the line of duty, in defence of their homeland and nation.

"On this glorious day, we have the pleasure to celebrate together the third anniversary of the Commemoration Day, a national and solemn occasion that commemorates and pays tribute to our brave and loyal Bahrainis who have sacrificed their lives for the sake of their

homeland on the fields of honour and heroism while performing their honourable and noble duty since the establishment of the state in the era of the first founder up today," HM the King said.

Those heroes, HM the King added, "have embodied the loftiest values of bravery and sacrifice and have been a source of pride to all Bahrainis and a shining beacon of light for future generations in patriotism."

"The December 17 will remain an auspicious occasion in our looking-forward progress filled with pride about the sons of Bahrain who have fallen heroically at home and abroad to protect and promote peace and justice and provide relief and humanitarian guided by the principles of our religion and our values. They have, with their blood, inked the highest standards of nobility and sacrifice, inspired by their fathers and grandfathers on whose exploits we have built our triumphant civilisational march and from whom we have inherited the values of nobility and sacrifice," HM King said.

"Every single one of our brave fallen servicemen is a source of pride to us and to their families, relatives and brothers-in-arms. They have sacrificed their lives in order to keep the banner of Bahrain soaring high among the nations and drafted a glorious history of heroism that have immortalized their names and the names of their families, making them the source of pride to the nation and to their families," His Majesty King said.

"Every fallen Bahraini is the son of all Bahraini families in our united

and mutually supportive nation. The families and relatives of the fallen servicemen are no less heroic than their children as they have given the finest examples of steadfastness and high patriotism. We laud the honorable patriotic stances of the dear citizens which reflects their unity and solidarity in all circumstances."

"We pray God Almighty to have mercy on the brave fallen heroes of Bahrain and sisterly countries and rest their souls in vast paradise and to reward their families and their loved ones and protect our dear homeland and grant it further strength, security and prosperity," HM said.

His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Premier, then, headed to the National Charter Monument where he met senior officers marking the 3rd Commemoration Day which is observed on December 17.

HRH the Crown Prince stressed the honour accorded by HM the King to the fallen servicemen and their families on the Commemoration Day which coincides with Bahrain national days as a token to commemorate their dedicated patriotic work and sacrifice.

The senior officers congratulated the wise leadership and the people of Bahrain on the national days on December 16 and 17 marking the anniversary of the establishment of the modern state of Bahrain as an Arab and Muslim country in 1783 by its founder Ahmed Al-Fateh, the 46th Anniversary of its accession to the UN as a full member and the 18th Anniversary of HM the King's Accession to the Throne.



HM pays homage to fallen servicemen



His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa during the ceremony held at Sakhir Palace to pay homage to martyrs

THINKING MATTERS

With Soman Baby



Bahrain: A Story of Growth and Coexistence

“Bahrain is at the forefront of the global development race according to performance indicators in all fields of work,” said His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa at a celebration, in Sakhir Palace on 16 December.

This came from the event commemorating the 46th National Day, and the 18th Anniversary of His Majesty the King's Accession to the Throne.

It is a statement which rings true and strong, when we consider the recent advances this country has been making on many fronts.

It is a statement which announces loud and clear that the records of growth and achievements, which this nation has been witnessing lately, are indeed admirable.

The king's speech prompts me to add my two fils worth to the modern developmental story of Bahrain.

Having been a resident of this beautiful Bahrain for 39 years, and having witnessed the rapid growth of the country from a vantage point, as a long term journalist in this country, how can I contain myself without expressing my feelings?

But, before I give my feelings, first let me give some facts; hard facts from a global perspective.

In the UN Human Development Report 2016, Bahrain is listed among countries with 'Very High Human Development', on the HDI (Human Development Index).

Compare the overall 1990-2015 average annual HDI growth of Bahrain(0.40), as per the report, with the top three countries in the world, and we will understand Bahrain's resilience. Norway (0.45), Australia (0.32) and Switzerland (0.39) are at the top of the table.

According to World Bank's "Ease of Doing Business Report 2017" released recently, only UAE, ranked 21, is better placed than Bahrain in the Arab region.

Bahrain is at 66. Followed by Oman at 71, Qatar at 83, Saudi Arabia at 92 and Kuwait at 96. And when you consider that this ranking is out of 190 countries, Bahrain's ranking is no small achievement.

Bahrain was also ranked No.1, among expat destinations, by Expat Insider 2017 Survey. 9 out of 10 expats said they are happy with Bahrain as a place to work, as a place to raise a family and as a place that makes foreigners feel welcome.

More than 12,500 respondents representing 166 nationalities and living in 188 countries or territories have given us this report's findings. So, what more can we say about the way Bahrain is able to meet the needs of its people?

As an expat myself, one of the best features of Bahrain, I have found, is its spirit of peaceful coexistence and its spirit of tolerance towards people of different nations, cultures, languages and traditions.

I had written earlier too, in this column, that the leadership of this country is very open unlike that of some other countries in the region.

The fact that, along with mosques, we can see churches, temples, gurudwaras and even a synagogue here, tell us the beauty of Bahrain, when it comes to embracing diversity.

Bahrain's respect for other cultures and communities is evident in the fact that scores of social organizations are registered for expat groups, with the government's Labour and Social Development Ministry.

On education, health, housing, commerce, banking, telecommunications and several other sectors, Bahrain is marching forward boldly into the future; A future which the country is preparing to meet with its Economic Vision 2030.

Referring to the national day celebrations, the king had said that there is "no better occasion than this to affirm our commitment to our national principles based on unity, depth of belonging and tolerance of coexistence, which protect Bahrain against the forces of destruction and division."

And that should be the nation's aim. To promote unity and coexistence. And to fight against the forces of destruction and division.

Edifice maintenance: Phase 2 completed

DT News Network
Manama

Phase 2 of the maintenance works taking place at the National Charter Edifice in Sakhir has been completed, according to Assistant Undersecretary of Corporate Municipal Services and the Building and Maintenance Acting Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Works, Municipalities Affairs and Urban Planning Raed Al Salah.

The works comprised of maintaining the fountain and the exhibition hall at the building. Al Salah was accompanied by Building Maintenance Director Huda Abbas and a number of engineers from the Ministry.



The Ministry has put in place a plan to maintain the edifice over phases to preserve it for future generations

The BD196,765 maintenance works were awarded to Al Moayyed Contracting. According to Al Salah, the maintenance works included providing new water insulators

for the VIP Halls 1 & 2 roof sinks, the upper and lower sinks and water channel, new flooring for the VIP Halls 1 & 2 sinks, the lower and upper sinks and water channel, inspecting the central water system electromechanical extensions and implementing new pumping system, filters and under-water lighting.

By maintaining the edifice, the Ministry seeks to prolong its life span and ensure sustainability. Due to the importance of the National Charter Edifice, the Ministry has put in place a plan to maintain the edifice over phases to preserve it for future generations and draw local and international attention in line with HM the King's vision.

Ex-Bahrain resident is dead



Varghese Oommen

DT News Network
Manama

Former Bahrain resident Varghese Oommen (Joy) passed away in his hometown in the Indian state of Kerala. He was 82. He is survived by his wife Daisy and children Dr Anoop and Asha. He was a former employee at Awal Press in Bahrain. He was staying at Sana building and was active in Bahrain Keraleeya Samajam, the Indian club and Mar Thoma church Bahrain. Funeral service will take place on Tuesday 10.30am at Peroorkada Ebenezer Mar Thoma church cemetery.

SCW attends workshop

Manama

The Supreme Council for Women took part in a two-day regional workshop in Amman. Arab League organized the event in cooperation with Jordan's National Committee for Women's Affairs and the UN for Women.

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Presentation Skills

Time and time we see this occurs to all of us. Let's say you're presenting insightful work that you've spent hours crafting or you're in the midst of an everyday collaboration with co-workers when someone poses a difficult question. A few seconds pass as you frantically search your wealth of knowledge for a response. Yet, for whatever reasons, you cannot answer it. In short: you're stumped.

It's a common experience in the business world and it can occur in a variety of situations, such as important presentations or job interviews. Though your mind might run into dead ends and your palms become a touch sweaty, it's important to stay calm and not feel overwhelmed.

Well, it's time to think ahead and mentally prepare for the next occasion. Here are several steps you can take to help you handle tough questions – before, during and after the imposing situation.

Preparation

- Know your audience: Whether you're presenting to business clients and co-workers, or attending a job interview, make sure you know the topics and specialties in which your audience excels. You may grasp your own area of expertise, but don't forget about that of your audience.

- Think ahead: After rehearsing your material, consider any questions or topics of discussion that may arise. Write them down and take the time to think of responses. Better yet, present your material to a friend or colleague and have them ask a wide range of questions to test your readiness.

- Practice, practice, practice: If it's a presentation, how well do you know your own material? It's important to fully understand your own ideas before tackling questions from others. If it's a job interview, how well do you know the company and the job position? With today's extensive access to information via the internet, make sure you're up-to-date on the latest company and industry news.

During: React

- Think it through: When you're posed a difficult question, think through the answer, especially if it's on the tip of your tongue. Ask the person to elaborate on their query, which provides you with more information and more time. Overall, this tactic often relies more on acting as a problem-solver or detective, rather than simply providing an exact answer.

- Emphasise what you know: Point out the information that you do know by saying, "From my research and experience, I've learned that..." This helps you stay in control of the situation. But also acknowledge the information you don't know by simply stating, "I don't have the latest information on that." However, let your audience know that you'll research the question and get back to them.

- Be confident: This may be the most important step in confronting a difficult question. Whether you know the answer or not, be confident in yourself and the knowledge that you have. And along with confidence, honesty is also important – so don't try to fool or trick your audience.

Reflection

- Research the question: Whether you were able to provide a suitable answer or not, research the question after the situation. Not only will this prepare you for similar questions in the future, it will also broaden your knowledge.

- Integrate: As you prepare for your next presentation or job interview, integrate the question and its response into your repertoire. This can add a new layer of insight into a business meeting, or can pleasantly surprise a potential employer during an interview.

- Follow up: Whether you knew the answer or not, contact the question asker and provide additional information. By doing this, you're showing initiative as well as an appreciation for the question. This can be especially helpful with a business client or potential employer.

The truth is there isn't one answer to finding the correct response to a difficult question. But, as mentioned above, you can take many steps to handle the situation.

It's also important to remember that when you're asked a puzzling question, it's a sign that your audience is interested in what you have to say. Imagine if a room full of peers didn't ask any questions during your presentation's Q&A session? Or if a prospective employer didn't ask anything compelling? What would that say about you?

In the short term, difficult questions can be a displeasing challenge. In the long term, however, they're a vital step in helping us grow as professionals.

(The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policy or position of this newspaper.)



Highlights of the event

National Day celebrated



DT News Network Manama

The Bahraini-Pakistani Friendship Society celebrated the 46th National Day of the Kingdom of Bahrain and the 18th Anniversary of His Majesty the King's Accession to Throne at its headquarters in Riffa.

The ceremony was attended by Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the Kingdom of Bahrain Javed Malik and a number of notable figures of the Bahraini society and Pakistani community in Bahrain.

During the ceremony,

Bahraini-Pakistani Friendship Society Chairman Abdulla Binhowail welcomed the attendees and congratulated them on the occasion of the national occasions.

Binhowail highlighted some of the main achievements and developments attained during the rule of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa in his speech.

He also noted to the remarkable and historic Bahrain-Pakistani ties, reflecting the strong bonds and relations between the people and leaders of both countries.



Pentagon admits running secret UFO investigation

The Pentagon

Washington

The truth is finally out there, after the Pentagon admitted it ran a secret UFO investigation programme for five years until 2012.

The Department of Defense's own "X-Files" operation, known by the less catchy title of the Advanced Aviation Threat Identification Program, was closed after a change in funding priorities, it said.

But the remarkable revelation has raised more questions than answers, including whether the programme has been completely shut down, or just covered up further.

While the Pentagon claims it ended five years ago, it said

it continued to take seriously "all threats and potential threats to our people".

The military intelligence official Luis Elizondo, who ran the programme on the fifth floor of the Pentagon's C Ring, according to the New York Times, which broke the story, told the paper it was only the government funding that had dried up. He said activities continued under the direction of his successor, whom he declined to name.

Either way the revelation is likely to provide some satisfaction to UFO enthusiasts, often dismissed as conspiracy theorists.

Nick Pope, who used to run the British government's UFO project, said: "The take-

home message here is that there's probably something out there, but we don't know what it is. It's an extraordinary revelation, not least because it directly contradicts the many specific denials that the US government has issued previously when asked about this subject, and their involvement in it.

"It precisely reflects my own experience of this intriguing but frustrating subject with the British government. Like our US colleagues, we too denied - even to parliament - that we were undertaking secret studies into the UFO phenomenon and consistently downplayed the true extent of our interest and activity at the Ministry of Defence."

The New York Times said the project, parts of which remain classified, received \$22m (£18.7m) each year, hidden away in US Department of Defense (DoD) budgets worth hundreds of billions of dollars.

It said its initial funding came largely at the request of the former Senate leader Harry Reid, the Nevada Democrat long known for his enthusiasm for space phenomena. He was quoted as saying: "I'm not embarrassed or ashamed or sorry I got this thing going. I think it's one of the good things I did in my congressional service. I've done something that no one has done before." (*The Guardian*)



U.S. President Donald Trump shakes hands with Russian President Vladimir Putin during their bilateral meeting at the G20 summit in Hamburg

CIA 'helped stop Russia terror attack'

Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin telephoned U.S. President Donald Trump yesterday to thank him for a tip-off that helped prevent a terrorist bomb attack on a cathedral in the Russia city of St Petersburg, the Kremlin said.

Information provided by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) allowed Russian law-enforcement agencies to arrest the would-be attackers before they could carry out their plan, the Kremlin said in a statement posted on its Internet site.

A senior Trump administration official confirmed Trump and Putin had spoken yesterday. However, there was no immediate confirmation from U.S. authorities that they had shared the intelligence with Russian officials.

The foiled attack was to have been carried out on Kazansky Cathedral, in Russia's second city of St Petersburg, and on other locations in the city where large numbers of people gather, the Kremlin statement

said. The cathedral is a popular tourist site.

Russian media reported last week that the Federal Security Service had detained followers of the Islamic State group who had been planning a suicide bomb attack on Kazansky Cathedral on Dec. 16.

"The Russian President thanked his American colleague for the information passed on by the Central Intelligence Agency, which helped detain a group of terrorists preparing explosions in St Petersburg's Kazansky Cathedral and other busy sites in the city," the Kremlin said.

The Kremlin did not give any details of the identity of the people detained.

In their phone call, Putin asked Trump to pass on his thanks to the CIA officers who had gathered the intelligence, according to the Kremlin statement.

Putin said Russia would alert U.S. authorities if it received information about any attack being planned on the United States, the Kremlin said. (*Reuters*)

Row over Trump team email trove

Washington

A lawyer for Donald Trump's transition team has alleged special counsel Robert Mueller unlawfully received tens of thousands of emails, in the latest attack on the credibility of the probe into Russian meddling in the US election.

With the ex-FBI director's investigation making inroads into the president's inner circle in recent weeks, Republicans have cast doubt on its impartiality and pressed for a new independent prosecutor to investigate anti-Trump bias.

This in turn has led to speculation that the administration could be

laying the groundwork for firing Mueller.

In a letter to congressional committees, Trump campaign lawyer Kory Langhofer alleged the General Services Administration (GSA) "unlawfully produced" private materials, including privileged communications which Mueller then used as part of his Russia probe.

GSA is the government agency which supports presidential transitions -- the interim period after a new president is elected but before he takes office.

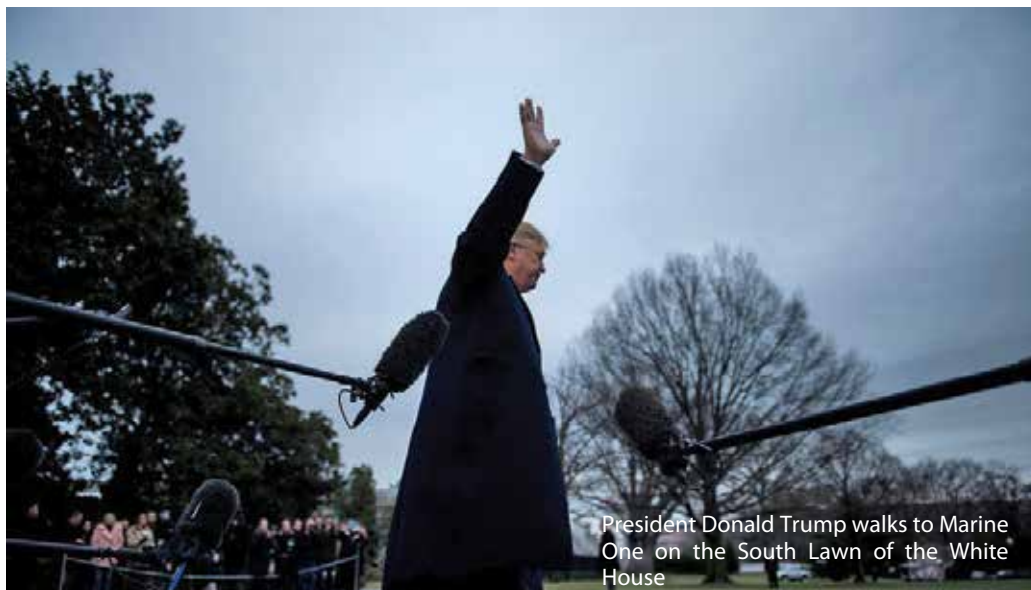
Langhofer wrote that Mueller's office "received from the GSA tens of thousands of emails,

including a very significant volume of privileged material," according to a copy of the letter published by Politico.

The letter added that a warrant should have been obtained for such materials, and said it violated the Presidential Transition Act.

A spokesman for Mueller, Peter Carr, responded on Sunday to the accusations to CNN.

"When we have obtained emails in the course of our ongoing criminal investigation, we have secured either the account owner's consent or appropriate criminal process," CNN quoted him as saying. (*AFP*)



President Donald Trump walks to Marine One on the South Lawn of the White House

Bitcoin futures are about to get another big boost

A man walks past an electric board showing exchange rates of various cryptocurrencies including Bitcoin

New York

Bitcoin investors expect futures volumes to perk up when CME Group Inc, the world's largest derivatives exchange operator, launches its own contract to wager on the cryptocurrency yesterday.

The second U.S. bitcoin futures launch is seen as another step towards big institutional investors warming up to a volatile asset that had until recently been accessible only via largely unregulated markets.

Like the futures contract launched last week by rival Cboe Global Markets, CME's will be cash settled. But it will be priced off an index of data from several cryptocurrency exchanges, instead of just one.

"The CME contract is based on a broader array of exchanges," said Matt Osborne, chief investment

officer of Altegris, a \$2.5 billion alternative investments provider based in San Diego, California. "So there is a possibility that the CME contract may generate more interest and more volume."

The January CME contract will trade on.

Bitcoin has drawn attention for its eye-popping price gains, but it is also notoriously volatile. Bitcoin exchanges and digital currency wallets meanwhile have struggled with issues like outages, denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks and hacks.

Bitcoin hit another record high on Friday near \$18,000 on the Luxembourg-based BitStamp platform, and has soared roughly 1,700 per cent so far this year.

Chicago-based Cboe's bitcoin futures surged nearly 20pc in their debut on

Monday, and more than 4,000 contracts changed hands by the end of the 4:15 p.m. EDT settlement.

But the trading volume in the one-month contract, which expires in January, fell to just around 1,500 contracts the next day. By Friday, volume had stabilized at roughly more than 1,000 contracts.

In contrast, trading volume in the Cboe volatility index futures typically runs in the tens of thousands to more than 100,000 contracts, market participants said.

The decline in bitcoin futures volume had been expected, analysts said, given concerns about the cryptocurrency's underlying volatility.

And discount brokerage TD Ameritrade said on Friday it would allow certain clients

to trade Cboe bitcoin futures from Dec. 18, pointing to a potential pickup.

The futures contract price has declined more than 5pc since its launch on Dec. 10.

Some investors believe the CME bitcoin futures could attract more institutional demand because the final settlement price is culled from multiple exchanges.

The Cboe futures contract is based on a closing auction price of bitcoin from the Gemini exchange, which is owned and operated by virtual currency entrepreneurs and brothers Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss.

To be sure, the general sentiment in the market remains one of caution and this has been reflected in margin requirements for the contracts. (Reuters)

Bitcoins not money: UBS boss

Geneva

The chairman of Swiss banking giant UBS said in an interview published yesterday that he does not consider the soaring cryptocurrency bitcoin as money and called for regulators to intervene.

Bitcoin prices have surged this year from less than \$1,000 in January to \$17,000 last week, after trading in the digital currency began on the Chicago Board Options Exchange -- the first time it has appeared on a traditional platform.

But in an interview with the NZZ am Sonntag weekly, UBS boss Axel Weber warned investors against jumping on the bandwagon, saying the bubble would inevitably burst.

"In my opinion, bitcoins are not money," he said, adding that the virtual currency had significant "design flaws".

Money is meant to fulfil three main functions and bitcoins fail at all of them, he said.

The currency is not an effective means of payment since it is not universally accepted, it is not a good measure of value since prices are not written in bitcoins, and it is not an effective way to store value, since it is inherently unstable, he said.

The main problem, he said, is that with no central bank and no issuer controlling the supply, the value is determined solely by demand, which leads to "huge price fluctuations in both directions". (AFP)

Castro, Russian oil exec meet in Havana

Havana

Cuban President Raul Castro and the head of Russian oil company Rosneft met in Havana on Saturday, the latest sign the two countries are readying a major energy agreement.

State-controlled media on Sunday ran a photograph of Castro and Igor Sechin sitting with notebooks at a table with Economy Minister Ricardo Cabrisas, after the latter two had held what was termed in a brief caption "a working meeting".

Castro usually appears with visitors only in protocol photographs. There was no

further information.

Castro and Sechin have known each other for decades.

Cuba struggled with blackouts and fuel shortages after the fall of its benefactor, the Soviet Union. The rise of Hugo Chavez, Venezuela's late president, ended that crisis at the turn of the century, and Cuba came to rely on Venezuela for about 70 percent of its fuel needs.

But socialist Venezuela's subsidized shipments have fallen by at least 40 percent since 2014. Cuba is looking for new suppliers to help mitigate electricity and fuel rationing to state companies. (Reuters)

FOUR SEASONS ALL SET TO CELEBRATE NEW YEAR

Four Seasons Hotel Bahrain Baby is all set to celebrate the New Year with loads of festivities and extraordinary culinary experiences



New Year's Eve Dinner

Celebrate like a Hollywood celebrity at CUT this New Year's Eve with an optional four course menu while enjoying striking panorama of the city of Manama.

Party atmosphere

Enjoy the signature cocktails and mocktails, while listening to the celebratory tunes mixed by our resident DJ, all for a Hollywood-inspired party atmosphere.

New Year's Eve Buffet

Tantalize your taste buds with the signature sea food offerings of Canadian lobster, Alaskan king crab, salt encrusted sea bass and Hokkaido scallops, as well as smoked BBQ wagyu short ribs, live Asian cooking station, specialties from the tandoori oven, and all your Arabic favourites.

New Year's Day Brunch

Explore international specialties, including fresh oysters, porcini truffle risotto, and a selection of more than twenty international fine cheeses accompanied by Four Seasons signature homemade jams and preserves.

Discounts on skin care

Experience ultimate pampering and pure relaxation in the comfort of your home. Pick your favourite Ila, Sodashi, Aloe Up, MCCM or Coola products and take advantage of best discounts.

Four Seasons gift card

Giving the gift of luxury has never been easier. Simplify your shopping this holiday with a Four Seasons gift card and make the holidays shine brighter with Four Seasons Hotel Bahrain Bay.

Cool Trends

For reservations contact: 00973 1711 5046.

'Brexit will not be derailed'

London

Prime Minister Theresa May said on Sunday she would not be derailed from leaving the European Union, laying the groundwork for difficult meetings this week in which she will try to unite a divided cabinet behind her vision for post-Brexit Britain.

May was applauded by European Union leaders in Brussels on Friday after securing an agreement to move previously-deadlocked talks forward onto the topic of interim and long-term trading arrangements.

The progress has gone some way to easing concerns of businesses and

investors who fear Britain could crash out of the bloc without an exit deal, or that May's fragile government could collapse under the pressure of delivering Brexit.

"Amid all the noise, we are getting on with the job," May wrote in the Sunday Telegraph. "My message today is very clear: we will

not be derailed from this fundamental duty to deliver the democratic will of the British people."

But May can expect some difficult exchanges this week when she and senior ministers discuss the so-called "end state" of the Brexit negotiations for the first time since Britain voted to leave the EU in a

referendum in June 2016.

The type of long-term relationship the country should have with the EU is a vexed question at every level in Britain, including within May's cabinet where some want to keep close ties with the EU and others want a more radical divorce from Brussels. (Reuters)



Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May



Huawei Consumer Business Group (CBG) has unveiled the world's most powerful Artificial Intelligence (AI) flagship smartphone - the Huawei Mate 10 Pro - across the Middle East and Africa region.



Huawei Mate 10 Pro in high demand

Truly intelligent

The Mate 10 Pro marks the beginning of a new era of smartphone development that brings the future to life with the first ever truly intelligent device. Featuring Kirin 970, the world's first smartphone chipset with a dedicated Neural Network Processing Unit, the Huawei Mate 10 Pro provides a faster, stronger, seamless and more personalized user experience.

"The use of AI in the Huawei Mate 10 Pro is a big draw for users who want to live an intelligent experience every day and entrust their smartphones to deliver seamless solutions."

- Gene Jiao

President of Huawei CBG, Middle East & Africa

Dubai Font

Huawei CBG has partnered with The Executive Council of Dubai to be one of the first smartphone companies to introduce Dubai Font to their users. The Mate 10 Pro has Dubai Font embedded into it. Dubai Font has been designed for more than 180 countries and in 23 languages integrating Arabic and Latin typefaces.

Intelligent Speed

Powered by the Kirin 970, Huawei's new Mate 10 Pro smartphone System-on-a-Chip (SoC) combines an 8-core CPU, a new generation 12-core GPU, and a dedicated Neural Processing Unit (NPU), to power AI computing, offering a significantly faster intelligent experience for consumers. The device is also the world's first smartphone with Dual 4G SIM support enabling each SIM to make calls and browse simultaneously.

Intelligent Camera

In partnership with renowned camera maker Leica, the HUAWEI Mate 10 Pro features a new Leica Dual camera with SUMMILUX-H lenses, with the world's largest smartphone aperture of f/1.6 aperture to capture more light in low-light conditions. The sophisticated hardware is accompanied by intelligent software, making the Mate 10 Pro the first intelligent photography smartphone in the world

Intelligent Power

The Huawei Mate 10 Pro is the world's first smartphone with an AI-powered Power Management system. Building on the Mate Series' commitment to long battery life and low power Consumption, the advanced AI-powered Battery Management technology used in the Mate 10 Pro allows for full day use with the 4000mAh battery.

Futuristic design

The Huawei Mate 10 Pro merges futuristic features and futuristic design with a 3D Glass Body, made of glass front and back, beautifully curved on all four edges, creating an ultra-premium feel with a thin, sleek and comfortable grip. It is also IP67 Water and Dust Resistant for everyday use.



U.S. Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R-TX) speaks to reporters on his way to the Senate floor during debate over the Republican tax reform plan in Washington

Republicans confident tax bill will pass

Washington

Top U.S. Republicans said they expected Congress to pass a tax code overhaul this week, with a Senate vote as early as Tuesday and President Donald Trump aiming to sign the bill by week's end.

John Cornyn, the No. 2 U.S. Senate Republican, said in an interview on ABC's "This Week" yesterday that he was "confident" the Senate would pass the legislation, "probably on Tuesday."

Republican Representative Kevin Brady said he believed his party had the votes to pass the bill.

"I think we are headed - the American people are headed - for a big win on Tuesday," Brady, the House of Representatives' top tax writer, said on Fox News' "Sunday Morning Futures" with Maria Bartiromo.

"We've worked hard to make sure that those strange

Senate rules don't hang this up in any way," Brady added. "I am confident that's the case."

If passed, the bill would be the biggest U.S. tax rewrite since 1986 and would provide Republican lawmakers and Trump with their first major legislative victory since they took control of the White House in January, in addition to Congress.

Democrats have been unified against the measure, calling it a giveaway to corporations and the rich that would drive up the federal deficit.

The tax bill is expected to add at least \$1 trillion to the \$20 trillion U.S. national debt over 10 years, even after accounting for the economic growth it might spur, according to independent government analyses.

The bill would cut the corporate income tax rate


to 21 per cent from 35pc and create a 20pc income tax deduction for owners of "pass-through" businesses, such as partnerships and sole proprietorships.

It would offer a mixed bag for individuals, including roughly doubling a standard deduction that does not require itemization, but eliminating or scaling back other popular itemized deductions and exemptions.

The bill would maintain seven individual and family income tax brackets but cut rates. Highest-earning Americans would pay 37pc, down from 39.6pc.

Most individual provisions, including the lower tax rates, are temporary and would expire, while the corporate rate cut and other business provisions would be permanent.. (Reuters)

Did You Know?



According to NBC news, many pro-Brexit voters are regretting their decision after seeing it's economic and political consequences. Mainly, the resignation of Prime Minister David Cameron. There is even a hashtag devoted to this sentiment: #WhatHaveWeDone.



Region edges up, building-related shares boost Saudi



BFC
CURRENCIES
EXCHANGE RATE

COUNTRY/CURRENCIES	BUY	SELL
AUSTRALIA	0.2920	0.2896
BANGLADESH	0.00483	0.00458
CANADA	0.3018	0.2985
DENMARK	0.0627	
EGYPT	0.0241	0.0218
EURO	0.4501	0.4476
HONGKONG	0.04970	0.04930
INDIA	0.00582	0.00585
INDONESIA	0.00003017	0.00002855
IRAN TUMAN	0.00010964	
IRAQI DINAR	0.000300	
JAPAN	0.00352	0.003450
JORDAN	0.5362	0.5354
KOREA	0.00039646	
KUWAIT	1.254	1.254
MALAYSIA	0.0938	0.0936
NEW ZEALAND	0.2616	0.2616
NORWAY	0.0481	
NEPAL	0.00395	0.00365
OMAN	0.98220	0.98340
PAKISTAN	0.00366	0.00358
PHILIPPINES	0.00758	0.00747
QATAR	0.10386	0.10381
SAUDI ARABIA	0.10065	0.10071
SINGAPORE	0.2834	0.2814
SOUTH AFRICA	0.02850	0.02840
SRI LANKA	0.00283	0.00246
SWEDISH	0.0479	
SWITZERLAND	0.3891	0.3861
SYRIA	0.001740	0.0018
TAIWAN	0.013100	
THAILAND	0.011730	0.011710
TURKEY	0.1024	
UNITED KINGDOM	0.5076	0.5047
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	0.102850	0.102870
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	0.37790	0.37800
YUAN	0.056800	0.056800

Rates are for indication purpose only. For firm rates or for currencies not listed above please call Bahrain Financing Company. Telephone: 17228888, Website: www.bfc.com.bh

GULF INTERBANK RATES

COUNTRY	1 US DLR	1 UK STG	1 SFR	100 YEN
BAHRAIN	0.3770	0.5738	0.3799	0.3354
KUWAIT	0.2855	32.0873	0.2877	0.2540
OMAN	0.3849	0.3820	0.3878	0.3425
QATAR	3.6420	3.6143	3.6699	3.2405
UAE	3.6730	3.6451	3.7011	3.2681
SAUDI	3.7500	3.7215	3.7787	3.3366

Dubai
Middle Eastern stock markets edged up in quiet trade yesterday, with construction and building materials stocks boosting Saudi Arabia ahead of the release of its 2018 state budget this week.

Saudi Arabia's index added 0.3 per cent as builder Khodari surged 7.6pc in its heaviest trade since January. Najran Cement gained 4.5pc and in addition to Khodari, the 10 best-performing stocks featured six cement producers.

The state budget, to be announced on Tuesday, is expected to be modestly expansionary and include a rise in infrastructure spending after two years of austerity.

Real estate firm Dar Al Arkan, the most heavily

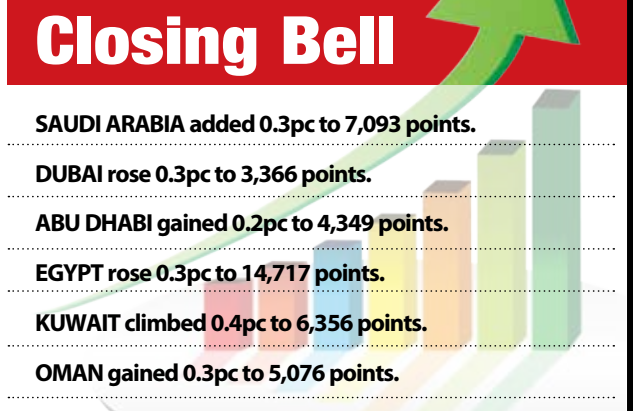
traded stock, fell back 3.6pc after soaring in the last several weeks.

The Dubai index edged up 0.3pc as construction firm Drake & Scull, which operates in Saudi Arabia, was the most heavily traded stock, rising 1.4pc.

The Kuwait stock index added 0.4pc after surging 1.5pc on Thursday. Kuwait Finance House climbed 0.7pc.

Other Gulf Arab central banks, whose currencies are pegged to the U.S. dollar, raised interest rates in the wake of the U.S. Federal Reserve's hike last Wednesday. But Kuwait, citing a desire to boost economic growth, did not tighten monetary policy; it manages its dinar against a dollar-dominated basket, which gives it more flexibility in policy.

Closing Bell



- SAUDI ARABIA added 0.3pc to 7,093 points.
- DUBAI rose 0.3pc to 3,366 points.
- ABU DHABI gained 0.2pc to 4,349 points.
- EGYPT rose 0.3pc to 14,717 points.
- KUWAIT climbed 0.4pc to 6,356 points.
- OMAN gained 0.3pc to 5,076 points.

In Egypt, the index climbed 0.3pc as Egypt Gas Co, which handles natural gas engineering and maintenance work, soared 10pc.

The company is expected to benefit from work related to Egypt's giant Zohr gas field, where pilot production of gas started this month.

At the end of last week Egypt Gas forecast 2018 revenues of 2.61 billion Egyptian pounds (\$146 million) and net profit of 24.6m pounds, compared to revenue of 1.10bn pounds and a net loss of 57m pounds in the first nine months of this year.

Markets in Qatar and Bahrain were closed for national holidays. (Reuters)

More than half of Britons now want to stay in EU - poll

Edinburgh
A poll has found that 51 per cent of Britons would now keep European Union membership while 41pc want to leave the bloc, a near reversal of last year's referendum result.

The BMG poll of 1,400 people for The Independent published on the newspaper's website on Saturday came as Britain moves into a second phase of negotiations on exiting the EU, which will focus on trade.

The Independent said the lead for "remain" over "leave" was the biggest in any poll



People hold banners during a 'March for Europe' demonstration against Britain's decision to leave the European Union so far since the vote in June 2016.

But the head of polling at BMG, quoted in the Independent, said that the reason for the change was a shift in opinion among those who did not vote in last year's

referendum, while around nine in 10 "leave" and "remain" voters were unchanged in their views. The survey was carried out from December 5 to 8.

In the referendum last year, 52pc of Britons voted to leave the EU and 48pc voted to remain.

Mike Smithson, an election analyst who runs the www.politicalbetting.com website who is also a former Liberal Democrat politician, said on Twitter it was "the biggest lead for Remain since (the EU referendum)." (Reuters)

Your positive action combined with positive thinking results in success.
-Shiv Kherra



CAMPUS

Campus@dt.bh

Monday, December 18, 2017

11

Six AMAIUB students qualifies HUAWEI ICT Skill Competition



AMAIUB students, with Dr. Safeullah Soomro, Dean of College of Computer Studies and Dr. Mahdi H. Miraz, participating training workshop at Huawei Lab, Seef District, Bahrain.

Six AMAIUB students, namely Hajar Adel Abdulla Abdulrahim Ismaeel, Muddassar Laif A. Latif S. Asrwani, Faizan Mohammad Mustafa, Ali Ebrahim Salman, Munther Ebrahim Abdulla Mohamed Salmeen and Mohamad Fathallah El Mufti, topped the local level competition and qualify for the national level for the first ever HUAWEI ICT Skill Competition Middle East 2017.

Amongst themselves four students are from the College of Computer Studies whereas the remaining two are from the College of Engineering.

Under the leadership of Dr. Safeullah Soomro, Dean of College of Computer Studies, Dr. Mahdi H. Miraz and Dr. MarryAnne Taquiqui supervised the students for the local level competition held online at AMAIUB, proctored by Huawei members of staff.

HUAWEI ICT Skill Competition Middle East 2017, being first time conducted in the Middle East, focuses mainly on the knowledge domains of Routing, Switching, Network Security and Cloud Computing.

AMAIUB students were invited to participate in a three days long intensive workshop at the state-of-the-art Huawei Lab (Huawei HQ Bahrain) conducted by Huawei trainer

coming all the way from Dubai. The workshop was conducted from November 16 to 18.

Dr. Mahdi H. Miraz has also participated the workshop as a mentor for AMAIUB students. AMAIUB students will compete at the national level in December 2017. Winners of the national level will be sponsored to participate in the international level to be held in China.

Sehnsucht [intense longing]

Felt out of reach and now that I'm here
It's much more comforting than I imagined it, the separation- I fear
A curve is twitching to appear
Father speeds up a little- gets into a rhythm jogging up to the cashier
Mother's eyes looks shinier than ever before



I see the eyes hold so many emotions, who knew there didn't have to be tears
The heart clenches thinking of leaving- but it's meant to be?
My nose scrunches up- responsive to grandmother's magic a mile away; it felt like I've been away for years
Had taken it for granted- a life so monotonous; could it be missed this much?
The distance takes a toll but rolls you into a smarter and responsible being
Sometimes it gets a little tough, I understand, sometimes you just pray for your loved one's touch
Keeping the chin up, the life of one starts to form, a sense of strength sears in
'People come and go', 'People change', don't cower from it
Change is growth- people grow out of each other, grow together or grow apart
Growing apart, you learn about the togetherness that forms from the lacking, and grow out of being protected
Cherish the moments- embrace the warmth, family is always taken for granted
Truth is, no one has treated me better
Fights and criticism boxed into four walls of a powerful place called home
Cheerleaders of the unimaginable kind outside the box-fights off every hater
Have you seen a better kind of unconditional love?

Srivani Nair



RCSI Bahrain National Day celebrations



Highlights of the event

The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland - Medical University of Bahrain (RCSI Bahrain) celebrated Bahrain's 46th National Day and the anniversary of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa's ascension to the throne with a gathering of students and staff at the Busaiteen campus.

During the event, a photo archive of Bahrain from the past to the present was screened and attendees were introduced to aspects of Bahrain's traditions through a traditional breakfast in a

specially-designed setting.

Speaking on the occasion, RCSI Bahrain President, Professor Sameer Otoom, extended his congratulations on behalf of the university to His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, His Royal Highness the Prime Minister, Prince Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister and to the people of Bahrain on the Kingdom's National Day.

St Christopher's School to be an Eco School

St Christopher's School children are being encouraged to 'Be the change they want to see', and act as 'Ambassadors of the Earth'.

December marked the first official step in the School's mission to be recognised as an Eco School. Children and staff at the Primary School campus in Saar held lessons about the environment, and the children were encouraged to turn their classroom lights off for one hour.

As part of this initiative, pupils in Reception designed environmentally friendly cars; Year 3 wrote letters to local restaurants asking them to stop using plastic straws; Year 4 wrote quizzes about the safe use of water; and Year 6 wrote letters requesting a countrywide ban on plastic bags. Pupils also entered a



"Congratulations to Yaseen and Sophia for designing the winning St Chris Green Bags for Life". Peter Jennings, Year 1 Class Teacher and Environmental Leader, Wendy Bataineh, Head of Junior School, Nick Wilson, Head of Senior School, Ed Goodwin, St Christopher's School Principal, Ian Fellows, Head of Infant School, Dr Simon Watson (appointed as St Christopher's School Principal starting August 2018).

competition to design an official St Chris 'Bag for Life'. Congratulations to Yaseen and Sophia. The St Chris 'Green Bags' hope to raise awareness of the importance of environmental conservation

by encouraging the community to stop using plastic shopping bags. All proceeds from the sale of these bags will go towards rebuilding local marine ecosystems, by supporting the creation of an artificial reef in

the shores of Bahrain.

If you would like to support the School's eco-project, the green bags are priced at BD3 - and available from the Saar Campus. Please call 17605000 for more information.



Defence Affairs Minister, Lt-General Yusuf Al-Jalahma, bid farewell to the Malaysian Defence Minister, Hishammuddin Hussein, at the Bahrain International Airport. The Malaysian defence minister was on a visit to the kingdom.



The Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (GPIC) organised a celebration to mark the formation of the Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company Union, along with a number of employees, were present on the occasion.



Bahrain Airport Company (BAC), the operator and managing body of Bahrain International Airport (BIA), received a visit from Bahrain Polytechnic's Logistics major students at the airport's premises. This visit was a part of an Economic Development Board (EDB) awareness campaign aimed at providing students with the opportunity to explore the cargo and logistics sector in the Kingdom of Bahrain



The Bahrain Keraleeya Samajam (BKS) Celebrated Bahrain National Day with a performance. Shaikh Hisham bin Abdulrahman Al Khalifa



The six Lulu Hypermarkets in Bahrain celebrated National Day with shoppers by arranging a grand cake-cutting ceremony at each store. The flagship store of the Lulu Group is also marking a decade of service in Bahrain and now has six stores - in Dana Mall, Riffa, A'ali (Ramli Mall), Hidd, Juffair and Galleria Mall



The K Hotel celebrated National Day with various programmes including a Cake-cutting ceremony.



mark Bahrain's National Day and the 18th anniversary of His Majesty the King's Accession Day. Several members of the Company's Executive Management and the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Labour



various programs to express the love and affection to the leadership and the people of Bahrain. The event was held under the patronage of Capital Governor



the Cutting Ceremony.

CELEBS

Niall Horan @NiallOfficial
 If @Higginbotham05 says "when I was at Stoke"
 once more , I'm going to cry. Give the rams a
 mention Danny . @talkSPORT



TARAJI P. HENSON 'HAPPY' DATING HAYDEN

Los Angeles
Actress Taraji P. Henson says she is "very very happy" to be in a romantic relationship with Kelvin Hayden.
 In a special episode of ESSENCE's podcast "Yes, Girl!", the 47-year-old actress gushes about her love life, now that she's been dating the former National Football League star, reports *aceshowbiz.com*.

"I'm very happy. Everything is coming together," she said.
 The actress added: "I'm happy in my personal life. Finally it has happened to me!"
 While she has confirmed her relationship status, Henson didn't reveal more about her personal life.
 "It was all over 'The Shade Room' anyway," Henson said. (IANS)

Harris, SZA collaborate on 'The Weekend' remix

Los Angeles
Singer-songwriter SZA and record producer Calvin Harris have joined hands for a funky remix of the former's hit song "The Weekend".
 The music video for the original and the remix are yet to be released, reports *billboard.com*.
 The remix was released on Friday. The nearly-three-minute track has Harris transforming the slow jam into a house jam, adding some bouncy sounds to the track.
 The funky remix received a positive response from fans of both the artistes.
 One fan commented on *YouTube*: "As good as the original! This is so rare to happen." Another fan added: "The beat boos and goes with the vocals! YaaaasSZAAA."
 (IANS)



Getting dressed shouldn't feel like torture



Los Angeles
Singer Cyndi Lauper says that the inspiration behind her clothing range was to encourage women to feel "graceful and a little funky" and enjoy styling themselves.
 "I designed clothes for the woman who wants to wear couture. Women could have the opportunity to feel tall, graceful and a little funky. Getting dressed shouldn't feel

like torture. Women should be able to feel elegant and funky no matter their size," Lauper told *usmagazine.com*.
 The singer's line includes black wide leg trousers, a red midi dress with fluted sleeves, as well as a black gothic blouse, and she thinks the "elongation of the lines" in her collection and the silhouette shapes will be "very flattering" for the wearer. (IANS)



STARRY
 Birthday
 Brad Pitt

December 18, 1963

Hollywood star who played lead roles in the films *Moneyball*, *Fight Club*, *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, *World War Z*, and *Inglourious Basterds*. He won a Golden Globe Award for Best Supporting Actor .

Fashion tip of the week

Jason punched Harvey Weinstein



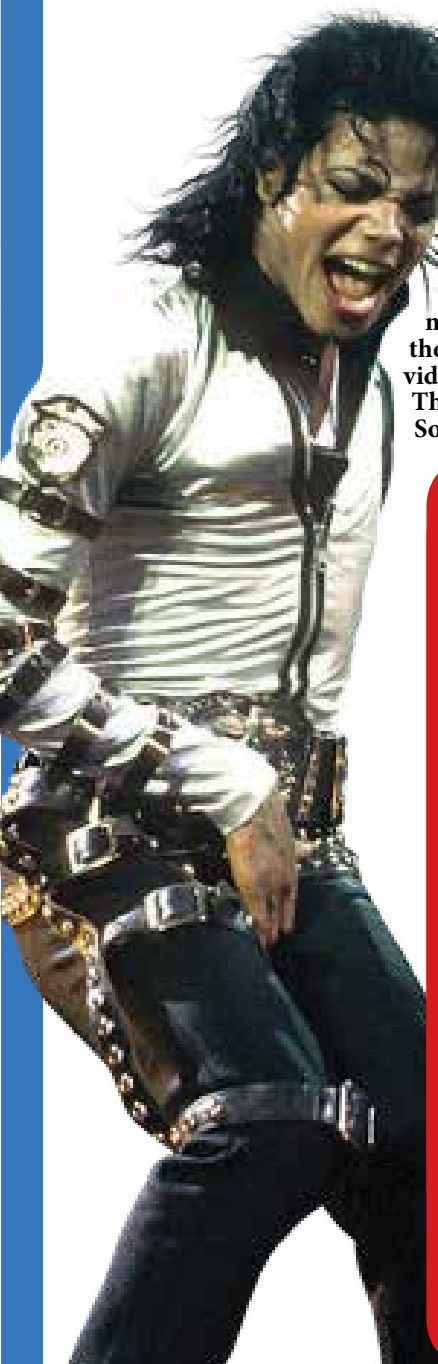
Los Angeles Actor **Jason Priestley** says he punched disgraced producer Harvey Weinstein on the face during a Golden Globes party in 1995. The “Beverly Hills” actor recounted the incident

on Twitter, reports *dailymail.co.uk*.

He wrote: “Harvey told me I had to leave... I was leaving when he grabbed me by the arm and said ‘What are you doing?’ I said ‘You told me leave, I’m leaving’. Then he said ‘I didn’t say you had to leave’ and I replied that he ‘just told me to leave...right over there’.

“He then grabbed me tighter and said ‘Why don’t we go outside and talk about this’. That was all I needed to hear. (IANS)

JACKSON’S ‘BLOOD ON THE DANCE FLOOR’ REVAMPED



Los Angeles **Late King** of Pop Michael Jackson’s classic music video of the track “Blood on the Dance Floor” has been revamped.

The new version of the music video features footage from the late legend’s original music video which was released in 1997. There is also footage of Cirque du Soleil, the cast of “Michael Jackson

ONE”, performing the track, reports *rollingstone.com*.

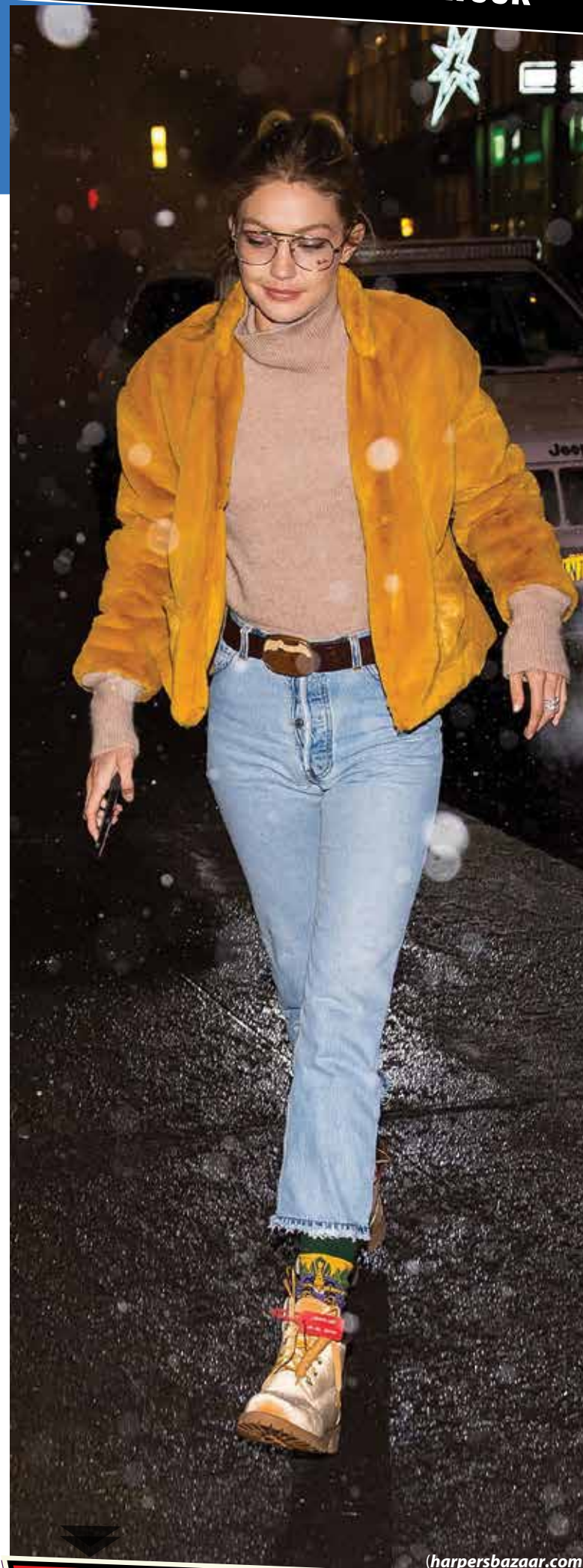
A representative for Jackson’s estate said the decision to create a new version of the music video was made after people from the estate watched the cast deliver a one-time-only performance of “Blood on the Dance Floor” during their annual celebration of Jackson’s birthday.

The estate was inspired by their performance, the representative added. (IANS)



Celeb Facts

American singer Becky G was one of the opening acts for Katy Perry on her Prismatic World Tour. (thefactsite)



(harpersbazaar.com)

American model Gigi Hadid in a tan top, yellow coat, and jeans while out in New York City.

OUT & ABOUT

HOW TO REACH US

"Out & About", a ready reckoner for the events taking place on the island, is published from Friday to Tuesday. To be included, please send the matter to the following email ID : news@dt.bh

RITZ-CARLTON WINTER WONDERLAND HOLIDAY VILLAGE

Date: December 15 & 16, 22 & 23, 3:00 pm - 6:00 pm
Venue: Al Khayma (Tent)

Revel in the joys of the holiday season with a special Christmas village. Enjoy a variety of festive offerings including a sweet and savory Christmas buffet, holiday movie classics, Ritz-Kids activities and much more. Santa Claus will also be there for a special warm and jolly welcome all the way from the North Pole.

RITZ GOURMET TAKEAWAYS

Date: December 1-31,
Venue: The Ritz Gourmet Lounge, The Ritz-Carlton

The Ritz Gourmet Lounge offers a selection of gourmet desserts and festive hampers filled with heavenly delights like minced pies, specialty cookies, chocolates and much more. Roasted turkey to-go family dinners can also be ordered beginning December 2. Orders must be placed at least 72 hours in advance.

RITZ FESTIVE AFTERNOON TEA

Date: December 2 - 26, 3:00 pm - 7:00 pm
Venue: The Lobby Lounge, The Ritz-Carlton

Tea time at The Ritz-Carlton is always grand and the festive season makes it more special. Enjoy traditional scones and pastries with your favorite tea variety complemented by a selection of festive treats – an excellent opportunity to spend picture perfect #RCMemories with family and friends.

RITZ BUBBLY CHRISTMAS AFTERNOON TEA

Date: December 2 - 30, 3:00 pm - 6:00 pm
Venue: The Ritz Gourmet Lounge, The Ritz-Carlton

Take pleasure in all the sweet treats of a traditional afternoon tea with a twist. A selection of freshly made scones and carefully baked gourmet cakes will be served alongside your favorite cup of tea or glass of bubbly.

RITZ GRAND CHRISTMAS BRUNCH

Date: Monday, December 25, 12:30 pm-4:30 pm
Venue: Grand Foyer, The Ritz-Carlton

Indulge in a festive celebration of culinary delights highlighted by our chefs'

splendid creations - from live cooking and carving stations, a large seafood and prime rib corner to a delectable spread of heavenly desserts. The grand occasion elevates with live musical entertainment, festive activities, and a special visit from Santa Claus.

RITZ NEW YEAR'S EVE CELEBRATION: STUDIO 54

Date: Sunday, December 31, 8:00 pm-2:00 am
Venue: Al Noor Ballroom, The Ritz-Carlton

Countdown to 2018 and celebrate with a throwback to the 1970s era of glamour, fashion and indulgence. Join us as we transform our 9,000 square-foot Al Noor Ballroom into the famous Studio 54 complete with disco lights, party favors, an indulgent buffet, live entertainment and performances. Dress is black tie or festive party dress.

BAHRAINI FARMERS MARKET



Date: 2nd December 2017 to 31st March 2018
Venue: BUDAIYA BOTANICAL GARDENS

Bahrain Farmers Market targets promoting Bahrain's agricultural products and highlighting the development taking place in Bahrain's agricultural sector. It also aims to contribute to improving the Bahraini farmers' income through a marketing system prepared by the Agriculture and Marine Resources to assist in meeting the farmers' aspirations.

FOUR SEASONS HOTEL FESTIVITIES

Date: Till December 31, 2017
Venue: Four Seasons

Turkey To Go: Bring the sophisticated flavours from the celebrated Four Seasons restaurant home with this memorable feast, and spend more time out of the kitchen with your loved ones this Thanksgiving. Available for home delivery or pick up.

Roast Turkey: With chestnut stuffing, turkey sauce, cranberry chutney, mash potato, Brussels sprouts and carrots. - BD 80++ for 8 people.

Honey Baked Spiral Ham: With mashed potato, roasted vegetables and apple sauce - BD 45++ for 8 to 10 people.

Roast Beef: With mashed potato, roasted vegetables and rosemary sauce - Starting from BD 20++ per kg (per kg serves 4 to 5 people).

For orders: +973 17115500

FESTIVE SEASON AT THE GULF HOTEL

Date: Ongoing
Venue: The Gulf Hotel Bahrain Convention & Spa

Our festivities began with the lighting of the Christmas tree in the hotel lobby. This marks the beginning of the Christmas and New Year celebrations and everyone is invited to witness the ceremonial lighting! Get mesmerized as this year our team has merged both the festive traditions and the unique Arabic culture presenting the ultimate season bliss. From a traditional Arabic gingerbread house to the fusion of the festive Arabic village!

The festivities is about giving and sharing, this season we are collecting festive wishes for the charity program called "Smile of Bahrain", we hope to collect as much wishes for the organization and we look forward to your kindness to help those children with cancer make their dreams come true.

An uplifting slew of flavors to celebrate the spirit of the season have been crafted by the culinary team for the Christmas Eve dinner and the Christmas day brunch.

On 24th December we are offering 3 yuletide options for your Christmas Eve dinner. From the traditions of the Vigilia di Natale in Italy at our La Pergola Italian restaurant, to the panoramic view of the Juffair Skyline at Fusions restaurant to the lavish buffet in Al Waha, all featuring the finest delicacies from sumptuous starters of the hamachi sashimi, zucchini carpaccio and to the main course of the well-loved stuffed turkey roulade that will get the guests in the festive mood.

Our Christmas day brunch promises to be filled with all the traditional Christmas trimmings and a treat for all ages at The Gulf Convention Center for only BD 32 net. The Christmas day brunch presents the festive spread of our 10 award winning outlets, featuring exotic festive menus from rock lobster and the red snapper to start with, and followed by a tableau of flavours.

Tickets is a must.

If you're planning to party at home this Christmas, leave the cooking with us! Christmas plum puddings, mulled wine and turkey are available for order!

Ring in the New Year at The Gulf Hotel Bahrain, as we present to you for the first time live at The Gulf Convention Center, Beauty and the Beats! Featuring an all-female group internationally renowned for a great & diverse night with music beats from the 70's, 80's, 90's, top 100 hits, deep house, house and pop. BD 55 net per person, inclusive of a lavish buffet spread of delectable dessert with apple and cranberry lattice tart, chocolate hazelnut, cream

cheese puffs, ricotta tart with chocolate and kumquats and almond macaroon galette for the finishing.

Featuring jazz saxophone player Miss S, to the throbbing beats of Percussionist Ms. Dee and the soulful voice of Ms. Lady S.! This in addition to the vibrant and gorgeous DJ (DJANE - NC), who will be spinning her groove mix-compilations till the wee hours of the party!

In addition you can also choose your celebration from Al Waha restaurant for a guaranteed New Year's gourmet that that will keep your stomach delighted till 2018! To the special New Year ala carte menus from Royal Thai, China Garden, Sato and Takth Jamsheed.

You can also choose to delight your loved one to a New Year's Eve romantic moment at Fusions, Raosi By Vineet, La Pergola and our all exclusive balcony at Royal Thai.

For a more pub style new year's welcome, dance your heart out at the dance floor with our DJ's famous tracks at Sherlock Holmes and Typhoon.

For further information or bookings please call: +973 17 713000

1KG BURGER CHALLENGE



Date: Till 31st December 2017
Venue: Sherlock Holmes, Gulf Hotel

Bahrain Convention & Spa
BIG just got BIGGER! Are you up for the Sherlock Holmes BIG BURGER CHALLENGE Finish our Home made 1kg burger and take home an exclusive Sherlock Holmes T-Shirt and get Your Name and Date immortalized on our Wall of Fame! Available for Launches Only BD 19++ inclusive of a drink and fries! For more information 17713000

SUNDAY-LADIES NIGHT



Date: Till 24th December 2017
Venue: Z lounge club

Getting through the work week can be a real struggle. For those who crave a much deserve break and a little end of the week fun. Come Sunday, have no fear, ladies night to the rescue. Complimentary bubbly for ladies till midnight guaranteed to quench your thirst.

Free Entry for Ladies and Couples and Complimentary Bubbly for Ladies till Midnight.

TYPHOON HOSPITALITY EVENING

Date: Till 30th December 2017
Venue: Typhoon Bar, Gulf Hotel Bahrain Convention & Spa

Don't worry that you missed your weekend. We at Typhoon have created our own hospitality weekend for the industry people. So if you are working in a hotel or restaurant, join us and enjoy your self-created weekend. Every Saturday and Sunday only Valid ID is required.

SASTRA PRATIBHA AWARDS DISTRIBUTION

Date: December 22
Venue: Cultural Hall

The top grade achievers of Sastra Pratibha contest will be honoured during the award ceremony organized by Science India Forum (SIF) Bahrain on December 22 at the Cultural Hall Auditorium, in Marina. Dr. V.N.Rajasekharan Pillai, the former Chairman of University Grants Commission-UGC, presently the President of Mewar University, Rajasthan will be the guest of honor of the ceremony. Indian Embassy Second Secretary Anand Prakash will inaugurate the award ceremony function. Vijnana Bharati Secretary General A. Jayakumar, Science India Forum Middle East Co-ordinator T.M.Nandakumar, SIF Bahrain Advisory Board chairman Dr. Ravi Warrier will deliver their felicitation speech. SIF President Rajeeesh Kumar will preside over the function. The "Sastra Pratibha" title achievers among the students will receive their trophies and Certificates from Dr. V.N.Rajasekharan Pillai and Anand Prakash. Certificates for the "A+" grade achievers will also be given away during the function. The Bahrain Science Innovation Congress-2017 contest winners also will receive the award at the ceremony.

An Interaction session, "Meet the Scientist" is scheduled to conduct on December 22 morning at Ramada hotel at 10:00 am and 11:30am. The students who achieved the "Sastra Pratibha" titles in the Sastra Pratibha Contest 2017 will have the opportunity to attend the same. Also the "Sastra Pratibhas 2017" will have the opportunity to visit any of the Indian Science and Technology Organizations organized by Science India Forum Bahrain free of cost in January 2018.

Classifieds

Reaching the right audience

Monday, December 18, 2017

17

News of Bahrain



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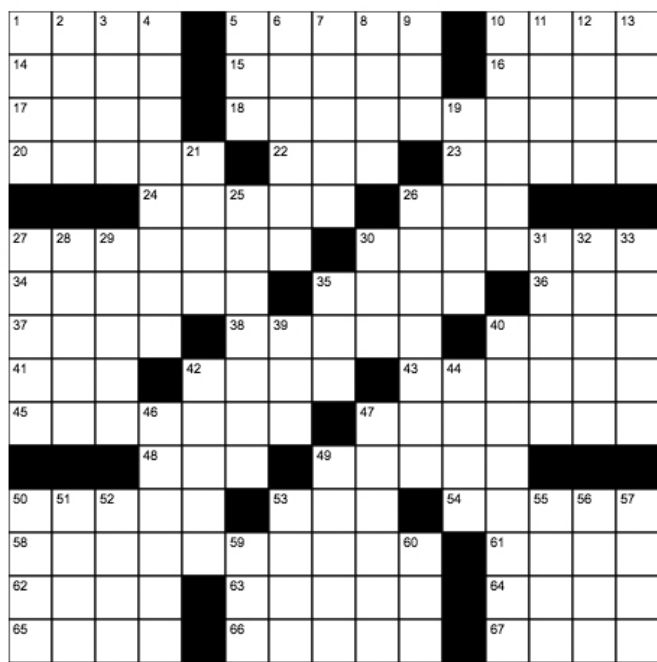
DEADLINE

Lineage 11am
Display 9am
Cancellation 12pm

WORKING HOURS

Saturday to Thursday
8 am - 6 pm

CROSSWORD



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



Across

1- Pulitzer-winning biographer Leon; 5- Sports area; 10- Energy units; 14- "Whip It" band; 15- Loathes; 16- Metal fastener; 17- Three Lives; 18- Charming; 20- Art supporter; 22- Chinese "way"; 23- Struck out; 24- Leaves port; 26- Bruins legend; 27- State of decline; 30- Covered with frost; 34- Tell; 35- Disfigure; 36- Thurman of "Pulp Fiction"; 37- Banned apple spray; 38- Litmus reddeners; 40- Aroma; 41- Oh yeah? ___ who?; 42- Dressed; 43- Important; 45- Green berry; 47- Scoffed; 48- Dreyer's partner in ice cream; 49- Quizzes, trials; 50- Abbreviated time off; 53- Monitor, for short; 54- Went public with; 58- Not enough; 61- Glum; 62- Spillane's ___ Jury; 63- Unexpected victory; 64- French 101 infinitive; 65- Actor Penn; 66- Milo of "Barbarella"; 67- Arab sailing vessel;

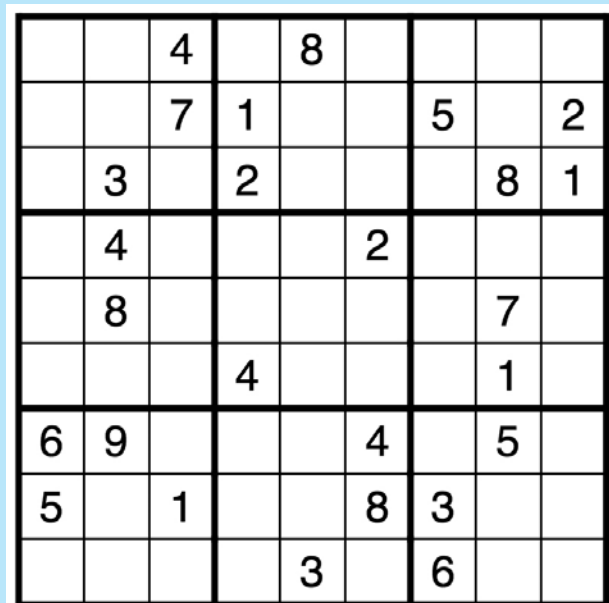
Down

1- "What I Am" singer Brickell; 2- Boxer Oscar ___ Hoya; 3- Nights before; 4- Polaris, e.g.; 5- Caught ya!; 6- Child's toy; 7- Kett and James; 8- Adopted son of Claudius; 9- Simile center; 10- Goes in; 11- Racetrack boundary; 12- Bestow; 13- Dog-powered snow vehicle; 19- Software medium; 21- Café au ___; 25- Perfectly; 26- Prayers; 27- Efface; 28- Brazilian port; 29- Burn brightly; 30- Craze; 31- Henry VIII's house; 32- Chew the scenery; 33- Ventured; 35- Central; 39- Structural engineer's software; 40- Unequal; 42- Training group; 44- Greek salad ingredient; 46- Blush; 47- Small sofa; 49- Rubbish; 50- Journalist Jacob; 51- Start the pot; 52- Okinawa port; 53- Drinking vessels; 55- Portnoy's creator; 56- Monetary unit of Germany; 57- A Barrymore; 59- Status ___; 60- JFK listing;

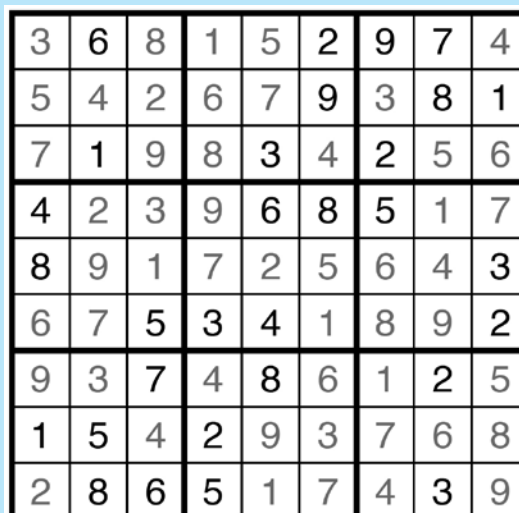
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YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



How to play:

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

Your star today

(Mar 21st - Apr 20th)



Try to keep your emotions in check today. It's possible that you could become extremely angry and do some damage to yourself and others around you. It's important to maintain certain modesty and humility at all times. You'll build good character that earns the respect of others, including your superiors.

(Apr 21st - May 21st)



You may feel like someone is trying to rain on your parade. It's important not to forget who you are now. Don't be surprised if you feel a negative pull from someone or something. If so, step away from the situation. It's not your responsibility to make everyone happy. Don't bring yourself down.

(May 22nd - Jun 21st)



Today is a terrific day for you. You're able to accomplish a lot during the day, leaving the night open for excitement with others. Once you take care of the necessary things, feel free to grab a big helping of fun. You've earned the right to break loose and party. There's confidence in your step, so strut your stuff.

(June 22nd - July 23rd)



Promote balance and harmony today by letting off a bit of steam before you try to engage with others and their dramas. Secure yourself in a stable environment where you can vent your concerns, punch pillows, or jog around the block. Once you get that out, you'll have a fresh, new attitude with which to participate in the adventures of the day.

(July 24th - Aug 23rd)



There's aggressiveness to you today, but this feeling can be useful to you and what you have going on. There's a practical force helping you stay grounded and realistic about certain issues. Don't make promises that you know you can't keep. Don't be the salesman who promises the world and then fails to deliver anything.

(Aug 24th - Sep 23rd)



There's increased emotional tension today. You may be at the forefront of the action as you take things higher and farther. Have a map handy or you could wind up alone in the middle of nowhere. Other people will be looking for something practical in your approach so they have something solid to lean on during this time.

(Sep 24th - Oct 23rd)



Don't hold back today. You're the right person for the job in about every situation you encounter. You'll have the instincts required to move on a project, see what needs to be done, gather the resources, and get the ball rolling. There's an aggressiveness to you that's urging you to make a grand conquest, paving the way for a huge celebration of feast and fun.

(Oct 24th - Nov 22nd)



You should try to hold your tongue today. Although you think you have all the answers, you might not have taken all the pieces of the puzzle into account. There is an emotional aggression to the day that may have a strong effect on everyone, especially you. Consider being more of a listener than a talker.

(Nov 23rd - Dec 21st)



Don't be surprised if you feel like you're being poked with a stick today, as something urges you to get moving. There's an aggressive energy moving about and making demands on everyone. You should think about how your skills and perceptive nature can be best used to help do things efficiently and effectively.

(Dec 22nd - Jan 20th)



Pull yourself together, and figure out what it is your heart desires. There's an aggressive force tugging at your heartstrings today. Unless you have it firmly in your mind what it is you want and feel, you'll be easily pulled off track. Stay grounded and you should be OK.

(Jan 21st - Feb 19th)



Point your aggressiveness in the right direction today. That shouldn't be too hard since you know and understand the meaning of a job well done and what's required to get things accomplished. You're anxious to get the ball rolling on certain projects. You've done the organization and planning. Trust that you know exactly how to proceed.

(Feb 20th - Mar 20th)



Today isn't a day to lounge around. There's a very important practical matter that must be dealt with before you can engage in any lighthearted activities. The night's events will be fun and rewarding as long as you complete the duties of the day, leaving your mind free of obligations.

Winds fuel California wildfire

Flames from the Thomas fire burn in the hills after a week of devastating wildfires

Los Angeles

Strong winds that have powered the third-largest wildfire in California's history were expected yesterday to further fuel a blaze that has burned 267,500 acres.

Nearly 8,500 firefighters are battling the so-called Thomas Fire in Southern California, which began Dec. 4 and has destroyed more than 1,000 structures and threatened 18,000 more, including homes in the wealthy town of Montecito just outside the coastal city of Santa Barbara.

While the winds were expected to ease yesterday near Santa Barbara, northeast wind gusts up to 55 mph were forecast through yesterday for parts of Ventura and Los Angeles counties, National Weather Service forecasters said.

The blaze, centred less than 100 miles (160 km) northwest of downtown Los Angeles,

has forced evacuations that turned neighbourhoods into ghost towns and filled the air with smoke.

The fire is now 40 per cent contained despite hot Santa Ana winds that have powered its expansion, at times sending embers far ahead of its main flank.

Firefighters were employing more than 970 fire engines and 34 helicopters to battle the blaze.

"It is a beast," Santa Barbara County Fire Department Division Chief Martin Johnson told a news conference on Saturday. "But we will kill it."

Five of 20 most destructive fires in recorded history ravaged the state in 2017, according to Cal Fire.

The Thomas fire, the seventh-most destructive in state history, forced many schools to close for days, shut roads and drove hundreds of thousands from their homes.

It was also responsible for poor air quality throughout Southern California.

On Saturday, evacuation orders were issued for parts of Santa Barbara County as high winds whipped the fire through bone-dry terrain.

In Montecito on Saturday, smoke billowing from nearby canyons and pushed by the high winds choked the air, hindering aircraft from dropping flame retardant, the Governor's Office of Emergency Services said. An evacuation order for the city of Ventura was lifted on Saturday morning.

Cal Fire engineer Cory Iverson, 32, died on Thursday while battling the flames near the Ventura County community of Fillmore. The blaze's first fatality, he died of smoke inhalation and burns, the Ventura County Medical Examiner's office said. (Reuters)

Cake for 'joyful' pope on his 81st birthday

Vatican City

Pope Francis celebrated his 81st birthday yesterday with a hero cake and a message urging the world -- and children in particular -- to join in the holiday mood and be joyful.

The Argentine pontiff thanked the crowds gathered in Saint Peter's Square for the Angelus prayer as they sang happy birthday, and was expected to slice into his birthday cake after lunch.

It sports a picture of the pope carrying the world on his



Pope Francis' birthday cake

shoulders, designed by Italian graffiti artist MauPal.

The artist -- whose real name is Mauro Pallotta -- famously depicted Francis as Superman in 2014 and has since begun

supporting Vatican charitable projects by selling T-shirts bearing the flying pope.

The pear and cinnamon delight shows Francis in his white cassock, holding up with one hand the world, which is divided in two but stitched back together -- a symbol of the pope's unifying force, Rome pastry maker Hedera said.

Francis's birthday this year falls on Gaudete Sunday, which the church marks as a moment of particular joy as celebrations for the birth of Jesus Christ approach. (AFP)

#PollToday



Do you think UN Security Council draft resolution would render Donald Trump's Jerusalem recognition 'null and void'?

Yes No Cant Say



"I said I am for (same) sex marriage if that is the trend of the modern times. If that will add to your happiness, I am for it."

Rodrigo Duterte
Philippine President

Rest in sight

Eleven police killed in attacks in Afghanistan



At least 11 Afghan policemen were killed when Taliban fighters attacked two checkpoints in the volatile southern province of Helmand.

Australia charges 'North Korean agent'

Australian police had arrested a man accused of working on the black market to sell missile components and coal on behalf of North Korea, the first charges ever brought in Australia over the sale of weapons of mass destruction.

Chile votes in tight presidential run-off

Chileans voted in a presidential run-off election but the outcome of ex-President Sebastian Pinera's comeback bid is far from certain after an unexpected surge from the left.

Clashes sparked as India army kills driver

Hundreds of Kashmiris clashed with Indian police in the northern part of Indian-occupied Kashmir after Indian soldiers killed a civilian driver who was mistaken for a "rebel".

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Two rookie astronauts, cosmonaut blast off to ISS



The launch of Soyuz MS-07

Baikonur

A three-man space crew featuring American and Japanese rookie astronauts as well as an experienced Russian cosmonaut blasted off on Sunday for a six-month mission at the International Space Station.

Scott Tingle of NASA, Anton Shkaplerov of Roscosmos and Norishige Kanai of the Japan Aerospace

Exploration Agency powered into the sky in a Soyuz MS-07 spacecraft from the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan at 1:21 pm (0721 GMT), according to footage aired by the Russian space agency.

While most flights to the ISS now take around six hours, the trio are taking the more circuitous two-day route due to the lab's position at the time of launch. (AFP)

Slow-moving storm kills over 30 Philippines

Manila

Officials say more than 30 people have been killed mostly due to landslides set off by a slow-moving storm in the central Philippines.

Sofronio Dacillo Jr., a disaster-response officer, told The Associated Press yesterday that 26 villagers died in landslides in different areas in the island province of Biliran, where the weather has improved after Tropical Storm Kai-Tak passed.

Officials and police say at

least seven other people died in landslides and floods in four central areas due to Kai-tak, which has weakened into a tropical depression while still drenching provinces.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council says it's still trying to confirm the reported deaths caused by the storm, which forced more than 89,000 people to flee to emergency shelters and stranded thousands of holiday travellers. (AP)

World's steepest funicular rail opens in Switzerland



The Schwyz-Stoos funicular in the Alpine resort of Stoos.

Zurich

The world's steepest funicular railway has opened to the public in Switzerland.

Specially constructed cylindrical carriages have been used to ensure that passengers can stay upright.

The floors tilt, adjusting to the slope as the funicular

climbs 110m (360ft) over a distance of 100m at the steepest point.

The railway runs from the town of Schwyz up to the car-free Alpine village of Stoos.

The Stoos Bahn took 14 years to build - two years longer than scheduled - at a cost of 52m Swiss francs (£40m; \$53m). (BBC)

Where did foreign IS fighters go?

Syrian Democratic Forces fighters stand guard in Raqqa on 20 October after retaking the city from Isis militants.



Washington

An estimated 40,000 people travelled from around the world to take up arms for the Islamic State group as it occupied territory in Syria and Iraq and declared a caliphate in 2014.

A few hundred are believed to still be fighting as IS struggles to survive, having lost most of its territory to campaigns by Western-backed Syrian and Iraqi coalition armies.

But what happened to the rest?

Many thousands were certainly killed in the intense fighting, but US experts believe many have survived, posing a formidable threat going ahead.

“The issue is: how many have died? How many are still there and willing to fight? How many have gone elsewhere to fight?” said Seth Jones, director of the International Security and Defense Policy Center at the Rand Corporation.

“How many have given up? I don’t think we have a good answer.”

International counterterrorism groups are putting huge efforts into answering those questions, working hard to

name, count and track IS foreign fighters.

In France, officials say, around 1,700 people went to Iraq and Syria since 2013 to join IS. Of those, 400 to 450 have been killed, and 250 returned to France.

Foreign Affairs Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said on December 8 that about 500

are still in the Iraq-Syria theatre, and for them it is now very hard to return to France.

But that leaves another 500 whose whereabouts are unknown, many of them with the skills of war, wielding weapons and making bombs.

‘One-way ticket’

Terrorism specialist Bruce

Hoffman of Georgetown University estimated during a conference Wednesday that “thousands” have escaped the war zone.

“Today, some of them are most likely in the Balkans, lying low for the time being, waiting for the opportunity to infiltrate themselves to the rest of Europe,” he said.

Some have travelled to other jihadist fronts, according to Thomas Sanderson, of the Center for Strategic and International Studies’ Transnational Threats Project.

For example, he said, at least 80 IS fighters from Morocco, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Yemen have

joined since May the IS-allied Abu Sayyaf insurgents battling government forces in the southern Philippines.

Local people in the northern Afghanistan province of Jowzjan have told *AFP* that French-speaking IS veterans -- from France or northern African countries -- have recently set up camp there.

And they also have the option of other conflict zones in northern Africa, like Libya, Somalia, Yemen and elsewhere where jihadist groups akin to IS are conducting violent insurgencies.

The defeat of IS on the battlefield in Syria in Iraq did not close off escape routes. IS fighters were able to blend in with civilian refugees or bribe their way to sneak into Turkey.

Many don’t have much choice but to continue to fight: they never had a plan to return to their home countries, where they face imprisonment in most cases, according to Jones.

“For many, it was a one-way trip. They wanted to live in the caliphate, permanently. So we don’t see a major move back.” (*AFP*)



Fighters of Islamic State carry their weapons during a parade

India win ODI series

India's Shikhar Dhawan plays a shot

Visakhapatnam, India

Shikhar Dhawan struck a sublime hundred in the nick of time as India delivered yet again in a series decider to beat Sri Lanka by eight wickets in the third ODI and record their eighth successive win in a bilateral contest.

India raced to the 216-run target in 32.1 overs with Dhawan (100 n.o. off 85) completing his 12th ODI ton in what turned out to be the penultimate over of the match.

Shreyas Iyer made a significant 65 off 63 balls, his second successive half century, but missed on the opportunity of scoring a hundred in a winning cause.

Dinesh Karthik remained unbeaten on 26 alongside Dhawan and hit the winning runs.

The quick run chase came after a Sri Lankan collapse that saw them getting all out for 215 from a promising 160 for two.

The visitors failed to apply themselves on a pitch that offered decent turn as Indian spinners Yuzvendra Chahal and Kuldeep Yadav picked up three wickets apiece.

With the professional performance yesterday, India won their sixth ODI series of the year and eighth in a row since July 2016.

Sri Lanka, on the other hand, were consigned to yet

another defeat in a rather miserable year in which they have won only five matches.

The hundred was there for the taking and Dhawan grabbed the opportunity with both hands.

During the course of his match-winning knock, Dhawan crossed the 4,000-run barrier in his 96th ODI. He hit 13 boundaries and two sixes overall as he toyed with the Sri Lankan attack.

Iyer reached his second ODI fifty in 44 balls before throwing his wicket away by attempting a big shot off Thisara Perera only to sky a catch to Suranga Lakmal at mid-on.

The Mumbai batsman

BRIEF SCORE

India 219 for 2 (Dhawan 100*, Iyer 65) **beat Sri Lanka 215** (Tharanga 95, Kuldeep 3-42, Chahal 3-46) **by eight wickets**

survived two dropped chances, when on 25 and 38. In the first instance, Angelo Matthews grassed a catch at slip off Sachith Pathirana's first delivery and the second life came when Akila Dhananjaya couldn't hold on to a tough chance at the deep third-man.

India skipper Rohit Sharma was not able to reproduce his Mohali magic here as he fell in a big six off Akila Dhananjaya. (PTI)

Justin Rose

Rose cruises to Indonesian Masters title

Jakarta

England's Justin Rose carded a 10-under-par 62 in the final round of the Indonesian Masters on Sunday to record a dominant eight-stroke victory at the Asian Tour event.

Play was delayed on Friday and Saturday due to multiple weather interruptions, forcing world number six Rose to complete his third round on Sunday morning and the 37-year-old carded 66.

Rose returned to hit nine birdies and one eagle in the last round and record the largest winning margin on the Asian Tour this year at the Royal Jakarta Golf Club.

"It is my last event of the season, to finish the year on a good note and still have a couple of weeks to enjoy this win over Christmas and New Year is really nice too," Rose said.

"It is the lowest ever winning score (-29) and to win by eight shots, all of that are huge positives.

"The largest winning margin for me in a tournament, to come here with my game in good shape, have the deal with bad weather and jet-lag and stay focused on all four rounds, is something that I am really pleased about..." (Reuters)

Australia sniff Ashes win

Rain cut day four short in Perth with Australia needing just six more wickets to wrap up the Ashes series

Perth

Australia moved within seven wickets of reclaiming the Ashes yesterday after England's top order crumbled to be 71 for three when rain brought tea five minutes early on day four of the third Test.

Paceman Josh Hazlewood removed both England's openers, with Alastair Cook falling for 14 in his 150th Test, and spinner Nathan Lyon dismissing England captain Joe Root for 14.

England number three James Vince was 36 not out with first innings centurion Dawid Malan on four, the pair tasked with mounting an improbable rescue mission with their side still 188 runs short of making the hosts bat again.

Clouds that had hovered impotently for most of the day finally opened late in the session, prompting joyous cheers from British fans at the WACA.

Australia captain Steve Smith declared after lunch at 662 for nine, the biggest Ashes innings total at home, taking a lead of 259 runs. The innings total was also their third highest at home in all Tests.

England's chase began disastrously with opener Mark Stoneman caught behind for three in the second over, seemingly hypnotised into a lead-footed push away from the body in the space of five metronomic balls by seamer Josh Hazlewood.

Six overs later, Cook was sent

packing by the same bowler, the former captain's dreadful run of form this series continuing in his 150th Test.

Having pulled a short ball to the fence, Cook spooned a leading edge low and straight back to the paceman who took a brilliant reflex catch to dismiss him. Cook's previous scores this series are seven, 16, 37, seven and two. (Reuters)

BRIEF SCORE

England 403 and 4 for 132 (Malan 28*, Bairstow 14*) trail **Australia 9 for 662 dec** (Smith 239, M Marsh 181, Khawaja 50, Anderson 4-116) **by 127 runs**



Steve Smith celebrates with his Australia team mates after taking a catch to dismiss Joe Root, the England captain (Picture courtesy: theguardian)

Atletico Madrid's Fernando Torres celebrates

Torres lifts Atletico Madrid

London

Fernando Torres' first goal in La Liga this season gave Atletico Madrid a hard-fought 1-0 win over Alaves on Saturday and lifted the club into second place behind Barcelona.

Torres broke the deadlock five minutes after coming on in the 69th minute with Atletico's attack stifled by Alaves' well-positioned defence.

Torres made his run forward in sync with Sime Vrsaljko's cross from the right flank before sliding to redirect the ball home with his left foot.

At 33 years old, Torres has had to settle for a role as a reserve player behind regular starters Antoine Griezmann and Kevin Gameiro. His goal was his first in any competition this campaign other than the brace he scored against Elche in the Copa del Rey.

Torres' goal comes just before the arrival of even more competition in Atletico's attack. Diego Costa and Vitolo will join the club in January when their transfer ban expires.

Diego Simeone's team took advantage of Valencia's 2-1 loss at Eibar as Atletico moved two points ahead of their title rivals. Barcelona are three points ahead of Atletico before hosting Deportivo La Coruna on Sunday.

Despite their failure to reach the knockout rounds of the Champions League, Atletico are as sound as ever in the domestic competition, where they are unbeaten through 16 rounds and have won four in a row.

Atletico's unbeaten streak in La Liga stretches back 20 matches to last season since their loss at Villarreal on April 25. (AP)

Pulisic celebrates with teammates

Pulisic's 89th-minute winner lifts Dortmund

Dortmund

Christian Pulisic scored in the 89th minute to give Borussia Dortmund a 2-1 win over Hoffenheim on Saturday.

The young United States star ran onto a through ball from Shinji Kagawa, took a superb touch to flick it around goalkeeper Oliver Baumann and tapped it in as Dortmund prevailed in their second straight game under new coach Peter Stoger.

"Shinji played the ball through and I was slightly too close to the goalkeeper,

so I had to take a touch to carry it past him," Pulisic told Dortmund's website. "The rest was easy. It's a great feeling."

Pulisic's strike was the latest-ever goal by a U.S. international to provide a lead in the Bundesliga. The 19-year-old, who hadn't scored for Dortmund since Sept. 20, became the sixth American to reach eight career Bundesliga goals.

Mark Uth had put the visitors in front in the 21st minute, punishing Dortmund's lacklustre defending, but Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang equalised with a 63rd-minute penalty. (espn.in)

Mark Noble (file pic)

Noble pleased at his 300th appearance

London

West Ham United captain Mark Noble was proud to mark his 300th Premier League appearance with a goal in the London outfit's 3-0 win at Stoke City on Saturday.

After a win over champions Chelsea and a draw with Arsenal, West Ham continued their revival under manager David Moyes by beating Stoke City to record their third consecutive clean sheet and climb to 15th in the table.

Midfielder Noble, who progressed through West Ham's ranks and made his league debut in 2005, scored the first of the three goals against Stoke from the spot after Manuel Lanzini was fouled by Erik Pieters in the first half.

"It was a good performance, all in all, and we've kept three clean sheets in a week, which is some achievement, especially with the opposition we've played against," Noble told the club's website. (Reuters)

Kvitova looking forward to a stronger 2018

London

Returning to playing tennis again was all Petra Kvitova could have hoped for after being stabbed in the hand last December and the twice Wimbledon champion is glad that a tough and emotional year is coming to an end.

The Czech required four hours of surgery on her left hand last December after being attacked by a man wielding a knife who had gained access to her apartment by posing as a utility worker.

Kvitova returned to action, after months of rehabilitation, during the

French Open in May and went on to win the Aegon Classic in June.

She last played at the Tianjin Open in October and was preparing to open her 2018 season at the Brisbane International in January.

"This year has been a rollercoaster. The beginning wasn't very nice, so I'm really glad that it's over. Now I can look at everything positively again," Kvitova added.

"It was a pretty tough year and I had a lot of emotions during my comeback... I can see that I can play tennis - and I can play it well, and

for me this is the best outcome I could have hoped for.

"I have started to live with my new hand. I've started to try to like it, to love it and that's how I am going to take it. It's my hand and I am just happy that I have all of my fingers."

The former world number two had a successful run throughout the grasscourt season followed by progression to the quarter-finals of the U.S. Open and the semi-finals of the China Open.

But the 27-year-old was yet to regain full fitness. (Reuters)



Petra Kvitova (file pic)

Brave to diversify talent pool in FY 2018



Ahmed Amir punch

Manama

The Bahrain based Mixed martial Arts promotion will be extending the talent pool in FY2018 due to the unprecedented growth achieved and due to the rising market requirements.

President of Brave Combat

Federation, Mohammed Shahid made a formal announcement addressing the global partners in operation.

Also to support the same, Brave Combat Federation will intensify its efforts in operations, content

distribution and digital enablement. This makes the organisation among one to the organisations to achieve highest growth rate in the region alongside the organisation with the highest growth rate in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Brave

has enabled operations in Middle East, Brazil, India and European Union which will set to expand in the coming months.

The proceedings about the diversification process is set to be revealed in the coming weeks.



Peter Sagan shows off his new bike computer

Sagan to race with Wahoo Elemnt Bolt

London

Next season, world road champion Peter Sagan and his Bora-hansgrohe teammates will be racing with Wahoo Elemnt Bolt computers on their handlebars.

The sponsorship is a major breakthrough for Wahoo, the US company best known for its Kickr smart trainers.

While Wahoo Kickrs are no stranger to the ranks of elite road professionals, the Wahoo Elemnt Bolt GPS computer has not yet been used in the WorldTour peloton, where Garmin Edge and SRM PC8

head units are the norm.

Although, we did spot an Elemnt Bolt recently on Marcel Kittel's 2018 Katusha-Alpecin Canyon Aeroad.

Bora-hansgrohe will also use Wahoo's Tickr heart-rate straps, which work on both ANT+ and Bluetooth.

The Bolt is the slimmed-down version of the original Elemnt GPS computer, which is configured via a rider's smartphone.

Wahoo designed the Bolt and its mount with aerodynamics in mind - a first for bike computers. (*cyclingnews*)

Ex-250cc rider Debon will rider coach Lorenzo

Paris

Former 250cc racer Alex Debon has joined the coaching team of Ducati MotoGP rider Jorge Lorenzo for 2018. Triple MotoGP champion Lorenzo endured a difficult first season with Ducati in 2017, finishing a lowly seventh in the championship and scoring just three podium finishes as team-mate Andrea Dovizioso narrowly lost out in a close title battle with Honda's Marc Marquez.

Debon has already started working with Lorenzo, joining

the Spaniard's entourage for last month's Valencia and Jerez post-season tests.

Debon will be present at every MotoGP race in 2018 and will work alongside Pirro.

Debon (below) made 152 starts in the 250cc/Moto2 category between 1998 and 2010. Ducati test rider Michele Pirro was assigned to Lorenzo as a coach this year, but the Italian's wildcard races and CIV Superbike commitments prevented him performing his duties at some events. (*autosport*)

Max Verstappen was tough in rough patch

London

Red Bull boss Christian Horner says Max Verstappen's capacity to cope with difficult moments was the most impressive aspect of the Dutch driver's 2017 Formula 1 season.

Verstappen endured a run of poor reliability that cost him several potential podium finishes and allowed Red Bull F1 team-mate Daniel Ricciardo to finish well clear of him in the championship.

After an engine failure in August's Belgian Grand Prix, Verstappen admitted he was starting to lose faith in Red Bull and Renault ever being able to get on top of their problems.

But Red Bull's form improved dramatically in the second half of the season, allowing Verstappen to win two races and convincing him to sign a contract extension with

the team.

Horner said Verstappen refused to let negative emotions get the better of him and continued to work as hard as ever during the difficult moments, which impressed the team.

"I think Max has had the benefit of experience and he has just grown in experience of racing in general," said Horner. "It is easy to forget it is only his fourth year of car racing."

"What has really impressed me this year is the way that he has dealt with some of the difficult moments."

"There have been quite a few of those, particularly in the summer months, but he has kept working hard at it, he has kept the hours up on the simulator every week and his application is first class, and obviously his ability is unquestionable." (*autosport*)



Max Verstappen drives his car (file pic)

Man United hold on to victory

Jesse Lingard celebrates after scoring United's second goal (Picture courtesy: theguardian)

Manchester

Manchester United held on for a 2-1 win at West Bromwich Albion to cut neighbours Manchester City's lead at the top of the Premier League back to 11 points.

United made a positive start, but West Brom were first to engineer a promising move as Salomon Rondon fed James McClean, whose cross evaded Oliver Burke.

As the quarter of an hour mark approached, the visitors created danger when Ashley Young's threatening cross was headed away from Romelu Lukaku by Kieran Gibbs.

There was a lack of tempo to proceedings, with both sides guilty of giving the ball away cheaply and neither able to capitalise.

But the deadlock was broken after 27 minutes when Romelu Lukaku, a former West Brom loanee, powered home a header to put United in front after Juan Mata and Marcus Rashford had combined to set him up.

The goal came from the first effort on target of a forgettable half and sparked West Brom into life as Burke surged forward but was tackled before he could find Rondon.

Minutes later, the stretching Rondon just failed to get a near-post touch to a dangerous low cross as Alan Pardew's side began to threaten.

But with 10 minutes remaining until the

break West Brom found themselves two down as Jesse Lingard's shot deflected in off Ahmed Hegazi after neat build-up from Lukaku and Mata.

Two minutes before the break, David De Gea held Jake Livermore's strike from outside the area as United reached the halfway mark with a comfortable advantage.

Pardew brought on Gareth Barry for Claudio Yacob as the hosts made a half-time change, and they showed their intent to find an early goal when Gibbs fired in a low shot that fizzed wide.

Soon afterwards, an angry confrontation between Hegazi and Rashford saw the United man booked for his reaction, and 10 minutes into the half Barry's low effort was too close to De Gea. In an encouraging spell for home fans, Burke's dangerous cross seemed to be heading for Rondon before Antonio Valencia did well to get it away. (espn.in)

