Americans ‘not leaving Iraq’ Baghdad

The United States has no plans to pull American troops out of Iraq, Defense Secretary Mark Esper said on Monday, following reports by Reuters and other media of a US military letter informing Iraqis about the possibility of troops in preparation to leave the country.

The developments come in the aftermath of an American drone strike ordered by US President Donald Trump that killed Iran’s military commander Qassem Soleimani, widely seen as Iran’s second most powerful figure behind Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

“There’s been no decision whatsoever to leave Iraq,” Esper told Pentagon reporters when asked about the letter.

Trump said the letter was issued to prepare to leave Iraq. "We are not leaving Iraq,” he said.

Saudi Arabia’s foreign minister said yesterday the kingdom does not want to see further escalation of tensions in the region at a “very dangerous moment,” following the US killing of a top Iranian general.

“The positive economic results come as a direct result of various initiatives deployed to promote economic diversification within the framework of Bahrain’s Economic Vision 2030. The Cabinet noted that the Kingdom’s positive economic trajectory and diversification efforts have contributed to providing quality opportunities for citizens, by creating various initiatives and programmes.

“Those include the National Employment Programme (NEP), which aims to increase employment opportunities and meet the requirements of the labour market. The NEP initiative has contributed to the employment of over 9,000 job seekers, increasing the daily employment rate by 30 per cent, or an average of 103 jobs have been created by the National Employment Programme until now.”

Jordan’s national team remotely received the 82nd Airborne Division's flag Tuesday in Manama, Bahrain.

“Yesterday, the Kingdom did not want to see further escalation of tensions in the region at a ‘very dangerous moment,’ following the US killing of a top Iranian general,” said Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Khalifa bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister, yesterday, called for de-escalation and an intensification of efforts to foster greater regional stability and security.

In this regard, the Cabinet underlined the region’s central importance in global affairs and emphasised the importance of collective international action to maintain regional security and stability.

The Cabinet condemned Turkey’s decision to send military forces into the State of Libya, stating it a violation of global norms.

Lebanon beat Bahrain to clinch West Asian girls’ title

Lebanon were yesterday crowned champions as Bahrain missed out on the coveted title in the second West Asian Football Federation (WAFF) U18 Girls’ Championship.

The Lebanese clinched the winners’ trophy after beating the host Bahrain 3-0 in last night’s final held at Khalifa Sports City in Isa Town.

Striker Layla Iskandar scored twice for the victors while midfielder Farahal Tayar assisted the other.

Iskandar opened Lebanon’s account just moments before the half-time whistle with a header over Bahrain goalkeeper Zahra Nezar.

Tayar then added to their advantage in the 36th minute after some porous Bahraini defending gave her enough space to fire home from close range.

Iskandar then applied the nail in the coffin three minutes from full time. She fired in a brilliantly hit shot from several yards outside the box, sending the ball into the net over the outstretched arm of Bahrain’s Nezar.

Last night’s title-deciding match was followed by the awarding ceremony, where the top two teams were presented trophies and medals by Bahrain Football Association (BFA) Women’s Committee Head Shaida Hussain Hadi Al Khalifa, BFA’s President for Administrative and Financial Affairs Ali Al Buainain, BFA’s First Vice-President Hamad Al Buainain, and WAFF officials.

Jordan were also awarded after finishing the tournament as the bronze-medallists.
UAE Exchange inaugurates new branch in Bahrain

By Varghese P Mathew & Akash Nainwal

As part of diversifying its services, UAE Exchange-Bahrain, the region's leading branchless payments solutions brand, has recently opened its new branch in Sitra.

The new branch was inaugurated by Akash Nainwal, Executive Director and Country Head, UAE Exchange-Bahrain, in the presence of Mr. Mathew, Regional Head of Cyberzone, and Akash Nainwal, Executive Director and Country Head.

Speaking at the inauguration, Akash Nainwal, Executive Director and Country Head, UAE Exchange-Bahrain, said, "As a customer-centric brand, we aim to facilitate the financial aspirations and offer personalised solutions for all our customers.

"The launch of our new branch is in line with our strategic vision to provide greater accessibility, convenience and added value to them. Sitra has been a prominent customer base for us, and with this branch, customers can experience a more convenient and easier access to our host of remittance services."

UAE Exchange is part of Finablr, a global platform for Payments and Foreign Exchange solutions. With deep in-depth regulatory know-how, technology expertise and industry-leading partnerships, Finablr companies provide a broad array of tailored and trusted financial solutions for consumers and businesses. With a global reach spanning 170+ countries, Finablr companies processed over 150 million transactions in 2018, receiving nearly USD 115 billion for customers.

Customers queued up to remit money at the newly inaugurated branch yesterday.

Mr. Mathew and Mr. Nainwal with other UAE Exchange staff.

Customers queue up to remit money at the newly inaugurated branch yesterday.

Mr. Mathew inaugurates the branch in the presence of Mr. Nainwal, UAE Exchange staff and dignitaries.
**Kenya attack condemned**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has condemned the terrorist attack that took place in the Southern Governorate, Republic of Kenya. The Ministry said:

A terrorist attack that took place in the town of Mombasa, Republic of Kenya, targeting a military base used by American and Kenyan troops, was confirmed.

The Ministry has expressed sincere condolences to the families of the victims and wished the injured a speedy recovery: “The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterates the Kingdom of Bahrain’s firm rejection of all forms of terrorism, calling for concerted international efforts to end terrorism and its financing.”

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**Lawmaker in call to implement key legislation on reserve force**

MP highlights regional tensions citing the ‘top national necessity’ for reserve force

At the same time he pointed out that a number of fellow GCC countries have moved in this direction by reorganising their reserve forces.

Explaining further, Mr Al Kooheji stated that the support of the private sector of the reserve forces wages represents nationalism, community partnership and “a beautiful example of national responsibility that institutions in the private sector should have.”

He added: “The formation of the reserve force by the Bahrain Defence Force constitutes a requirement of national and popular consensus, especially in this critical and difficult stage. The setting of the reserve force is the region is going through and which needs an exceptional stand to maintain national security.”

Iran has promised severe retribution to the kill of Qassem Soleimani, the country’s powerful military commander. Across the Middle East, these threats of confrontation have put on high alert the bases, ports and other installations where US troops are based or pass through.

On Friday, the Pentagon announced that it was sending an additional 3,500 troops to the region, while troops in Italy were put on standby, according to defence officials. The troop escalation came just days after President Donald Trump ordered an additional 750 to soldiers to the Middle East and 3,000 more to be on alert for future deployment after pro-Iranian forces stormed the US Embassy in Baghdad as part of a worsening cycle of violence.

The US has tens of thousands of military personnel at bases and abroad ships across the Middle East, as well as arrangements with various countries to move soldiers and military equipment through airstrips and ports.

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**HRH Crown Prince’s support for Executive, Legislation ties hailed**

**Manama**

The Housing Minister expressed the aspirations of His Majesty the King to enhance legislative work, and developing the government's performance in various sectors. This came as HRH the Crown Prince, in his address to the members of the Legislative Branch and Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI).

Mr. Al Saleh said that the Shura Council is looking forward to cooperation between the government to achieve national interests, strengthen coordination, overcome challenges into opportunities to develop joint constructive action, as well as build on the kingdom's landmarks achievements in various fields and optimise them.

The Shura Council pointed out that the continuity of meetings between the Legislative and Executive branches will contribute to formulating ideas and visions that support the comprehensive development march in the kingdom, noting that every achievement will be attained through solidarity and joint cooperation.

Mr. Al Saleh stated that the national duty requires everyone to assume their national responsibilities, especially amid the current circumstances and multiple challenges that the region is going through, in order to strengthen national cohesion and social fabric, as well as the Bahraini people's inherent values of tolerance, peace, co-existence and loyalty to the homeland and to HM the King.

**Bahraini medical team performs three successful MVR surgeries**

**Manama**

Three patients have undergone successful Mitral valve repair (MVR) surgeries at the Mohammed Bin Al Khalifa Cardiac Centre. A Bahraini medical team performed the surgeries within two days using the MitralClip catheter technique for the first time in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The medical team which performed the MVR included Dr. Siham Al-Balushi, Dr. Abdulwahab Al Khalifa and Mr. Arjun Kakkadath, the MitralClip catheter technique was performed by a medical team to perform the surgery.

The Bahrain Defence Force (BDF) military judiciary has hosted a ceremony to launch the ninth judicial foundation course on the tasks of the military judiciary. The ceremony held under the patronage of Major General Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohamed Al Khalifa, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense, was attended by BDF directors and officers. The inductees thanked the military judiciary for organizing the military judicial course for several years and praised the directives of Field Marshal Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, Commander-in-Chief of the BDF, to facilitate all human and material capabilities to assist the participants. The inductees also wished success to the participants in the course.

Mr. Al Hamer added that the Housing Ministry has been keen on providing all success requirements for the initiative, which is expected to yield positive results that would contribute to ensuring sustainable housing services.

He pointed out that the Housing Ministry has launched the first tender of the programme to build housing units on state-owned lands by private real estate developers. The tender includes the building of 112 housing units on a government-owned land in Al Rawas, in addition to the necessary infrastructure works accompanying the project. He indicated that the first unit project is the pilot phase of the ambitious project, which was inaugurated by the Housing Ministry in co-operation with the Eksan Bank in October last year, noting that it will provide the ministry with an opportunity to make the necessary improvements on the programme before its official adoption.

Under the scheme, private real estate development companies develop housing projects on state-owned land, and then the units will be sold to the citizens who are on the waiting list, through receiving one of the Housing Ministry’s financing programmes.

Mr. Al Hamer said that real estate development companies had been requested to submit their bids for the 153-unit project before March 4 so that construction works begin in May. He added that if the project proves its success, a string of similar housing projects will be implemented across the kingdom’s governorates to build 100,000 state-owned lands over a period of ten years.

**Training young talents towards chess glory**

I n implementation of an order by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Premier, to distribute 5,000 housing units, in line with the royal directives, Housing Minister Bassim Al Hamer said the ministry has embarked on determining the projects and the beneficiaries in preparation for a distribution schedule very soon.

The Housing Minister said all housing projects to be included in the distribution schedule are part of the projects being carried out in line with the directives of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

Mr. Al Saleh asserted that the Housing Ministry has been keen on developing the government’s performance in various sectors, given the role that the government’s Legislature plays in formulating ideas and projects to enhance legislative work, and developing the government’s performance in various sectors. This came as HRH the Crown Prince, in his address to the members of the Legislative Branch and Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI).

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Trump says doesn’t need Congress’s OK for even ‘disproportionate’ strike

**Plans resolution to prevent Trump from unilaterally leading the United States into a war against Iran**

President Donald Trump thumbed his nose Sunday at critics angered at being kept in the dark over the US killing of a top Iranian general, saying he didn’t need Congressional approval — even for a “disproportionate” strike.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has been leading the backlash against Trump’s decision to authorize a drone strike against Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad, an operation that Trump only officially informed Congress about on Saturday — nearly 48 hours after the event.

Two Democratic lawmakers announced on Sunday that they would introduce a new resolution before the House of Representatives that they said would prevent Trump from unilaterally leading the United States into a war against Iran.

But a defiant Trump made light of the calls for him to get Congressional approval in any future military action, saying such notice was “not required” — and then saying his tweet would serve as prior notification if he did decide to strike against Iran again.

“These Media Posts will serve as notification to the United States Congress that should Iran strike any US person or target, the United States will quickly & fully strike back, & perhaps in a disproportionate manner,” Trump wrote.

“Such legal notice is not required, but is given nevertheless!”

While previous administrations have tried to garner bipartisan support for significant military operations by briefing opponents beforehand, neither Pelosi nor the top Democrat in the Senate, Chuck Schumer, were told in advance about the targeting of Soleimani.

A furious Pelosi said that what she called “this initiation of hostilities” was taken “without the consultation of the Congress and without the articulation of a clear and legitimate strategy to either the Congress or the public.”

“As Speaker of the House, I reiterate my call on the Administration for an immediate comprehensive briefing of the full Congress on military engagement related to Iran and next steps under consideration,” she said in a statement.

Speaking on NBC television, Schumer said he was worried that the president would drag the US into “what he (Trump) calls another endless war in the Middle East.”

“I am really worried, and that is why Congress must assert its constitutional authority to go to war in Iraq without Congressional approval, he added.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the administration had begun to brief Congressional leaders about the justification for the strike and promised to “keep them fully apprised.”

A Bangladeshi woman arranges plastic bags to dry and recycle in Dhaka

**Bangladesh court orders govt to ban single-use plastics**

Bangladesh’s high court ordered the government yesterday to introduce steps by next year broadly banning single-use plastics following a landmark case brought by environmental groups.

Poaching is responsible for almost 80 percent of Sumatran tiger deaths, according to TRAFFIC, with fewer than 400 believed to remain in the wild.
GHOSN ‘fled by bullet train’

Ghosn boarded a “shinkansen” bullet train from Tokyo’s Shinagawa station on December 29. He got off at a station in western Osaka, arriving around 7:30pm and taking a taxi to a hotel near Kansai Airport, NTTD said. He is thought to have taken a private jet the same day from the airport near Kansai Airport from Tokyo’s Shinagawa.

Former Nissan boss Carlos Ghosn escaped while awaiting trial in Japan on multiple counts of financial misconduct.

AP/TP/ Tokyo

NEW reports emerged Monday on how fugitive former Nissan boss Carlos Ghosn traveled to Lebanon as the country’s justice minister said border controls would be bolstered after the escape.

The 65-year-old executive skipped bail nearly a week before Christmas, drawing widespread criticism from Japan’s transport ministry. By Christmas Eve, it was still investigating how he got away.

Nissan and Ghosn have long denied allegations of financial misconduct, which under Japanese law can carry a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and a fine of up to ¥1 billion ($9 million). Ghosn maintains he has already answered questions about the allegations.

Justice Minister Masako Mori said at a press conference on Monday that Ghosn boarded a “shinkansen” bullet train from Tokyo’s Shinagawa station on December 29. He got off at a station in western Osaka, arriving around 7:30pm and taking a taxi to a hotel near Kansai Airport, NTTD said. He is thought to have taken a private jet the same day from the airport near Kansai Airport from Tokyo’s Shinagawa.

The Wall Street Journal has reported that Ghosn was loaded into the flight from Osaka in a large car for audio equipment, which was later found at the back of the cabin. The newspaper cited unamed sources close to the investigation in Turkey as saying that holes had been drilled into the bottom of the container to ensure the businessman could breathe.

Japan’s transport ministry said that luggage checks are not mandatory for private jets. “Operators of private jets decide if luggage checks are necessary or not while airline operators are obliged to conduct security checks under Japan’s aviation law,” a ministry official said.

“The security checks are carried out to prevent danger such as bombs, and to prevent hijackings,” he said, adding such risks are considered less likely for private jets.

Ghosn, who has French, Brazilian and Lebanese nationalities, was able to enter Lebanon on a French passport, according to airport documents. A source told the Wall Street Journal that Ghosn had allowed himself to be secured with a second French passport as he needed one to travel inside Japan, a source close to the matter has told AFP.

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Fire-hit Australia gets $1.4bn recovery fund

Firefighters joined by fresh teams from the US and Canada were taking advantage of rainy and cooler conditions to tackle out-of-control blazes.

Twenty-four people have lost their lives so far, with over 1,800 homes damaged.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison, whose government has been warning the disaster still has weeks or more to run, pledged Aus$2 billion over two years to help recover from the devastating months-long crisis.

Catastrophic bushfires have turned swathes of land into smouldering, blackened hellscapes and destroyed an area the size of the island of Ireland, according to official figures, with authorities warning the disaster still has weeks or more to run.

Reserve troops fanned out across fire-ravaged regions in three Australian states yesterday after a horror weekend, when the government pledged $1.4 billion over two years to help recover from the devastating months-long crisis.

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**2020s global leadership: The future is young and female**

Lebanon, Iraq, Hong Kong and South America are in turmoil because increasingly well educated and broadminded young people fundamentally reject the corrupt, discredited status quo, and are determined to contribute to building something better.

**BABA ALAMUDDIN**

Our transition into a new decade is an apt moment to reflect on our grandchildren and wondering where the world is going. It is a risky direction toward political and social crises and trends that are fundamentally at odds with the status quo, notably in Latin America, Hong Kong, Algeria, Sudan, Iran and Iraq. Closest to my heart, I am immensely proud to see Lebanese women frequently outshining men in both academic and professional forums. We have seen a new era of self-confidence and ambition outshining the world’s stereotype of Lebanon as a femme fatale nation, where men are the driving force behind all commerce.

We Lebanese who lived through the civil war are seeing those young women self-identified as feminists confidently articulating their demands, and posing a fundamental challenge to a corrupt, sectarian, and yes, patriarchal status quo.

But can we really believe that our young people, who are increasingly sophisticated in seeing the real world for what it is, are not able to desire a mature system of governance that doesn’t just set standards for us according to what sect we were born into? In Saudi Arabia, the rate of change is mind-boggling. Women drive everywhere. I recently drove into Tehran with a female colleague who had previously driven only in her car, but who now had been given the privilege of driving on the same roads as men. She told me that she was excited by the prospect of being able to travel around the country without fear of being denied access to public transportation, or being attacked by men on the street. These changes are not limited to women. Young men are also increasingly demanding greater representation in political decision-making and an end to corruption and mismanagement.

Across the region, the pace of political and social change is accelerating. The Arab Spring of 2011 is now a memory, but its legacy is still felt. Young people are demanding greater accountability and transparency from their leaders, and are increasingly taking to the streets to demand change. The rise of social media has provided a platform for these demands to be heard and amplified.

As a result, the political landscape is shifting. In many countries, traditional political parties and leaders are facing increasing challenges from new movements that are demanding greater representation and accountability. Young people are driving this change, as they have in previous revolutions.

In the year ahead, the growth outlook for oil exporters, excluding Iran and conflict countries, is projected to improve.

**JHIAZ AHZOUH**

In 2019, global growth was at its lowest level in a financial crisis. A synchronous slowdown affected most countries, with a relatively limited impact on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) economies. Going forward, growth is projected to pick-up modestly in 2020 and beyond. However, global headwinds are blending with longstanding regional strains to keep growth in MENA below the level that could help address the high level of youth unemployment plaguing the region.

Looking ahead, the main priority for MENA policymakers will be to deliver more equitable and inclusive growth. This will help the region face the relatively modest global pickup, geopolitical uncertainties and mounting domestic vulnerabilities in some countries. Indeed, low growth and dwindling job opportunities have led to a rise in social unrest in some countries, which has become more widespread in recent years.

The global uncertainties expose two key challenges to the outlook in the MENA region in 2020. First, lower and more volatile oil prices. Ongoing supply and demand factors – such as rising US shale oil production and weaker global growth – mean that oil prices may not recover much from current levels. This points to weaker growth prospects in oil exporters and fewer positive spillovers to other countries in the region. Routes of oil price volatility resulting from global trade tensions and geopolitical risks may add to these challenges in both oil exporters and oil importers as economic management becomes more complicated.

Second, trade tensions represent a direct risk to the region, mainly through reduced demand in key trading partners. This is not the case, for example, in oil exporters where strong trade ties with China expose these countries to spillovers from a slowdown there, but also in oil importers as they rely heavily on demand conditions both within the region and beyond, including Europe.

In the year ahead, the growth outlook for oil exporters, excluding Iran and conflict countries, is projected to improve.

**As of 2019, OPEC Plus agreement in March 2020 and improving non-oil sector activity in some countries, in addition to ongoing major energy projects. Yet, oil exporters will continue to face the prospect of lower global growth and oil prices, exposing some countries to rising fiscal vulnerabilities. Across the region, the pace of fiscal consolidation has unfortu- nately slowed or reversed in recent years. Yet the effects of additional spending on growth have proven more modest than in the past, reflecting a less productive composition of spending, including on large public sector wages bills and energy subsidies. In the OPEC oil exporters, aver- age gross domestic product growth is set to improve to 4.4 per cent in 2020 from 3.9 per cent, compared to respective average growth rates of 3.4 and 3.5 per cent in other emerging and low-income economies. How- ever, oil exporters will have to address acute fiscal challenges, with public debt levels rising to 85 per cent of GDP in average and thus limiting space for growth-enhancing fiscal measures and much-needed social spending. While debt levels have declined in recent years in some countries, in others, this ratio has risen to very high levels. This run-up in debt stems from many factors, including the combination of sustained decline in oil prices and rising fiscal vulnerabilities.**

Vladimir Putin is far noisier in his efforts to soften the old Eurocentric order, with Russia muscling its way into becoming a major Middle Eastern powerbroker in just a few years. But with a dysfunctional economy smaller than that of Italy, Moscow may prove to be merely the opening act for an era of Asian global leadership.
tury power, if its past increasingly as an increased reliance model doesn’t imply. Discreet Chi-
ese influence is visible everywhere throughout Central Asia and Africa. Some observers
have even gone so far as to say that Chinese influence is a problem.

Benito Mussolini and French Foreign minister Pierre Laval reached a Franco-Italian Agree-
ment.

The Mena region holds significant economic potential and can meet the aspirations of the young populations through higher and more inclusive growth. Achieving this outcome, however, requires bold reforms and supportive economic con-
ditions. Fortunately, much of the region has embarked on reform agendas with inclusive
growth and job creation taking center stage. Recent progress has been slow and recent growth outcomes have failed to satisfy the needs and aspirations of ordi-
nary citizens. Going forward, policymakers in the Mena region need to deliver the measures and reforms necessary to strengthen economic resilience in the near-
term and generate jobs over time to meet the needs of our people. This means tackling two common
challenges.

First, take measures to help lift medium-term growth by creating an enabling environment for vibrant private sector activity that will spur innovation, at-
traction investment, and generate new jobs. Improving the investment climate and infra-
structure, increasing access to finance, and implementing regulatory reforms to enhance law-
ful and regulatory frameworks, further the business climate, and improve the rule of state-
men that help raise economies’ potential and attractiveness to all.

Second, address rising fiscal deficits, which this requires fiscal consolidations to reduce exces-
sive debt obligations and rebuild buffers, though reducing unpro-
ductive expenditure and mobili-
zing additional revenue in ways that the fiscal framework is well-targeted to those most in need, while guarding
against longer-term budget impacts that can be difficult to re-
verse. Addressing the fiscal balance in this way will generate space for growth-enhancing and produc-
tive investment spending. To ensure that near-term fiscal gains are sustainable, governments across the region should strengthen their fiscal frameworks, both to help
bolster the evolution of spend-
ing from volatile oil revenues in an environment where export quality, efficiency and transpar-
ency of public spending.

Libyans need to learn from history and save our young generation.

Peaceful political settlements are the only way for-
ward, with Libya the only solution that can stay for genera-
tions.

Debts and people in power should not be made to pay for lost opportuni-
ties, and court cases must be
resolved in a more expeditious manner. We need to learn from the past and focus on
the future. We must work together to create a better future for Libya. We must put the interests of
the people above all else.

We often bring attention to causes and ways you can donate. It’s our job to bring awareness to
situations so we all can help as a human race. We frequently post, speak about organizations, web-
sites where we can all help save our planet.

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by citizens are personal and need not necessarily reflect our
organization’s views.)
Al Salam Bank-Bahrain opens new Riffa branch

- New branch replaces Mashtan branch
- Offers 24-hour eBanking services and a drive-through ATM
- Bahrain National Football Team awarded the first 24 Danat Savings Accounts

The Bahrain National Football Team received a drive-through ATM and eBanking services for its members at Mashtan branch, the new larger branch, located in Al Raya Mall, Riffa, to commemorate their Arabian Gulf Cup victory.

Crude oil prices top $70

Al Salam Bank-Bahrain officially opened its new branch at Al Raya Mall in Manama in the presence of the Executive Director of Banking, Supervision at the Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB) Khalid Hamad Alshdhab, Group CEO Rafik Nayed, Deputy CEO Anwar Mundad and other key members of the Executive Management.

The Bahrain National Football Team players were among the guests and were each awarded BHD 1,000 which went towards Danat Savings Scheme accounts to commemorate their Arabian Gulf Cup victory.

The awards also entitle each team player to enter the US $1.5 million Al Dana draw. Al Salam Bank also awarded Sayed Mohammed Jaffar, Team Captain, a luxury car for receiving the highest number of votes in a Bank social media competition, held during the Cup final.

Replacing the previous Mashtan branch, the new larger branch, located in Al Raya Mall, Riffa, offers a full range of Shari’a-compliant banking services. The branch is fitted with an ATM and a drive-through through ATM providing convenient access to banking products and services around the clock, seven days a week.

The branch is pleased to inaugurate their latest full-fledged branch in Al Raya Mall, Riffa. Al Salam Bank Head of Retail Banking, Mohammed Sabti, said: “Our new branch, which complements our strong network of 10 branches and 24 ATMs, reaffirms our commitment to being more accessible to our customers.”

Riffa branch opens from Sunday to Thursday.

OPEC December oil output slips as Nigeria, Iraq comply more

OPEC, Russia and other allies, known as OPEC+, had an agreement to reduce supply by 1.2 million bpd in 2019. OPEC’s share of the cut was about 800,000 bpd, to be made by 13 members, with exemptions for Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

At meetings in December, OPEC+ agreed to make an additional cut of 500,000 bpd as of Jan. 1, 2020.

Ritz-Carlton unveils new ‘Wellness 360’ experiences at the Royal Beach Club

The Ritz-Carlton, Bahrain embarks on a new adventure of well-being travel, it reveals the final stages of the Royal Beach Club renovations this season.

Re-opening officially today, guests can fully immerse themselves in a total ‘Wellness 360’ experience with the completion of the new indoor heated pool and locker facilities, along with a new, modern juice bar aptly named “La Vie.” The final phase comes after the 2019 enhancements of the Mixed Gym and Fitness Studio, which offer the latest in cardiovascular equipment and Group Life Fitness as well as floor-to-ceiling windows with endless views of the Arabian Gulf.

“Each year, more than 14,000 people travel internationaly. Within this figure, wellness tourism alone has seen a 53% increase since 2015. Travellers are spending their newfound wealth on wellness travel and seeking out unchartered destinations to have this experience,” says Bernard de Villiére, General Manager of The Ritz-Carlton, Bahrain.

“Through this ongoing support of our ownership, International Hotel Establishment, we are fortunate to be able to offer the best state-of-the-art wellness experience for members and travelling guests into the Kingdom of Bahrain, all coupled with award-winning dining and spa experiences that are truly first class. Nowhere else can you find this in the region and we are proud of this achievement to mark our 25th anniversary year.”

Featuring a modern design and sleek wooden interiors, the newly enhanced indoor heated pool will offer a year-round aquatic experience with daily classes for both children and adults. The Club’s changing rooms, as well, will see a 360 makeover with key-pad locker facilities, shower areas, private changing rooms, towel-service and Aspen bath products. Guests and members will also be able to enjoy at the resort’s new juice bar, La Vie. The new “on-the-go” healthy dining concept reveals a modern menu of detox and energy smoothies, juices, coconut water, Nai-tees, and more.

“Looking ahead, geopolitically risks will remain front and center of investor concerns,” said Stephen Brennock of oil research firm RBC Capital Markets.

Crude oil prices rallied to a high of $70.74 a barrel and Brent crude futures soared to $64.72, the highest since April. Elsewhere, bad weather shut all four oil export terminals in eastern Libya on last three days.

Crude prices have rallied to above $70 a barrel in 2020, extending a 23 per cent gain in 2019, supported by ongoing OPEC-led curbs and increased Middle East tensions after the killing of a top Iranian general.

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At meetings in December, OPEC+ agreed to make an additional cut of 500,000 bpd as of Jan. 1, 2020.
Superfast 5G on the slow road at gadget gala

Latest Consumer
Expect to see a lot of talk about 5G but only a small number of products using the superfast wireless technology

Video game and television streaming fans are expected to be among the first to reap the bounty of 5G, accessing seamless rich virtual worlds or ultra-high definition films

The Road to 5G
remains agonizingly slow at the massive Consumer Electronics Show open

The annual Las Vegas gathering opens today with more than 4,500 exhibitors bringing in about 175,000 attendees searching for innovations of the future.

I
X
Expect to see a lot of talk about 5G but only a small number of products using the superfast wireless technology.
Malaysian financier denies masterminding 1MDB graft scandal

The fugitive Malaysian financier at the centre of a multi-billion-dollar corruption scandal insisted he had not led the plundering of the 1MDB fund in Dubai, Kuala Lumpur and elsewhere.

Traders on the floor of Bursa Malaysia File

The 39-year-old, who is reported to have won up on trial in a US court, said he was "not the mastermind of 1MDB" and "not the mastermind of the fraud and he was ignorant of what was happening."

Most regional markets stabilise

Egypt at three month low
Aramco hits new low since IPO
Dubai’s main share index ended 0.3pc up
Financials strong in Dubai

Opening Bell

SABAH: +0.2pc to 8,206 pts
ABU DHABI: +0.4pc to 5,008 pts
DUBAI: +0.1pc to 4,295 pts
QATAR: +1.2pc to 10,408 pts
EGYPT: +0.5pc to 13,233 pts
Bahrain: +0.5pc to 1,584 pts
OMAN: +1.0pc to 10,392 pts
KUWAIT: +0.4pc to 6,731 pts

Around the world, car markets have been battered by the effects of the American trade conflict with China.

Companies are pumping cash into high-tech projects like automated driving, and switching focus to hybrid vehicles.

SUVs are overtaking compact cars as the most popular class of models on the domestic market

The IMDB scandal contributed to the downfall of Najib Razak’s government in 2018

Carriers built just 4.7 million cars in Germany in 2019, industry data showed Monday, squeezing production to its lowest level since 1979 as U.S.-China trade tensions sapped vital foreign markets.

The powerful VDA carmakers’ club said output had tumbled nine percent year-on-year, blaming “weaker international demand” for the fall.

The lower appetite from abroad comes on top of demanding technological change and tighter emissions restrictions complicating life for carmakers – long a pillar of Europe’s largest economy. ""The car industry faces a massive transformation,"" in 2020, industry expert Stefan Bratzel of the Center for Automotive management said.

"The car industry faces a massive transformation,"" in 2020, industry expert Stefan Bratzel of the Center for Automotive management said.

The German auto machine is spluttering""The fall in car production even fell even more sharply than production, tumbling 13 percent to 3.5 million. "The fall in car production means Germany continues to lose significance in the global auto industry,"" said Ferdinand Dudenhoeffer of the Center Automotive Research.

Around the world, car markets have been battered by the effects of the American trade conflict with China.

"Last year saw carmakers complain that falling global demand was eating into their business just as massive investments are needed in research and development."

"Hefty fines" Companies are pumping cash into high-tech projects like automated driving, and switching focus to hybrid vehicles from internal combustion engines as they race to meet new emissions limits.

From next year, carmakers must achieve average carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions of 95 grammes per kilometre across newly-sold vehicles in the European Union, on pain of hefty fines.

"The atmosphere is comparable to when cash was switched over from Deutsche Marks to euros on January 1, 2002,"" Der Spiegel magazine wrote citing industry insiders.

"The EU’s CO2 legislation is the most important reason" for the big changes set to sweep the car industry, analyst Bratzel said.

Jobs under threat

"CO2 limits and other structural factors threaten the auto firms’ pride of place in the German economy."

Where in 1998 close to 12 percent of all cars sold worldwide were produced in Europe’s powerhouse, the share has shrunk to below six percent in 2019, Dudenhoeffer said.

Meanwhile electric motors require less manpower to assemble than their hydrocarbon-burning predecessors, threatening some of the roughly 800,000 car industry jobs in Germany. Also yesterday, figures from the DBA transport authority showed SUVs overtaking compact cars as the most popular class of models on the domestic market.

Many SUVs are built not in Germany but in factories operated by the country’s multinational carmakers overseas.

That in turn makes the companies more vulnerable to ups and downs in international trade. In a study published in December, Dudenhoeffer forecast that German car production would begin growing again in 2022 after bottoming out this year, "a fall in sales of three to five percent looks likely" in 2020, consultancy EY judged in a study published simultaneously. But "manufacturers have a strong interest in powerfully boosting sales of electric and plug-in hybrid cars from now on... that should be reflected in the statistics at the latest by the middle of the year," EY added.
The Grudge: even showers are no longer safe

Nicolas Pesce’s new horror movie remake has its chilling moments but ultimately remains cursed by a fatally hokey concept

The Grudge is a 2020 American supernatural horror film written and directed by Nicolas Pesce, and produced by Sam Raimi, Rob Tapert, and Tata Schon. At first announced as the reboot of the 2004 American remake of the Japanese horror film Ju-On: The Grudge, the film ended up being a sequel that takes place during and after the events of the 2004 film and its sequels, and is the fourth installment in The Grudge film series. The film stars Andrea Riseborough, Demian Bichir, and Jacki Weaver, and follows a police officer who investigates several murders that are seemingly connected to a single house.

The review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes has an approval rating of 17 percent based on 58 reviews, with an average rating of 4/10. The website’s critical consensus reads, “Dull and derivative, the rebooted Grudge wastes a talented cast and filmmaker on watered-down scares that may leave viewers nursing grievances of their own.”

On Metacritic, the film has a weighted average score of 37 out of 100 based on 21 critics, indicating “generally unfavourable reviews.”

Audiences polled by CinemaScore gave the film a rare average grade of “F” on an A+ to F scale, while those PostTrak gave it an average 4.5 out of 5 stars.

Writing for the San Francisco Chronicle, Mick LaSalle said the film was all prestige and no development and wrote: “I saw this movie in the middle of the day, having had a great night’s sleep, and I had to slap myself awake a few times.”

Variety’s Owen Gleiberman called the film “a reboot of a remake of a film that wasn’t all that scary to begin with,” writing “The Grudge plots on as if it were something more than formula gunk, cutting back and forth among the thinly written unfortunates who’ve been touched by the curse of that house.”

Nick Allen of RogerEbert.com gave the film 3 out of 4 stars, saying that it is “often as nasty as you want it to be, its cheesy jump-scares and generic packaging be damned.”

The Grudge, directed by Nicola Pecce, stars Andrea Riseborough, Demian Bichir and Taka Ichise.
Golden Globes 2020: ‘1917’, ‘Once Upon a Time ...in Hollywood’ win big

Tom Hanks honored with lifetime award at Golden Globes

Tom Hanks, regarded as one of the nicest men in show business, was honored with a lifetime achievement award at the Golden Globes on Sunday to mark his 30-year movie career. The boyish-looking Hanks, now 63, was presented with the Cecil B. DeMille award at a ceremony where he also was presented with the late, beloved U.S. children’s television presenter Mister Rogers in “A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood.”

Hanks began his acceptance speech by joking about his early career stint on the 1970s TV comedy “The Love Boat” and saying that he had a bad cold, adding a teenager who wakes up becoming a teen years after working with, “You’re a dope if you don’t steal from everybody you have every worked with,” Hanks said, naming Meryl Streep, Meg Ryan, Denzel Washington, and Charlize Theron, among others. Hanks made his movie breakthrough in “Big” in 1988, playing a teenager who wakes up becoming the body of an adult.

He went on to win back-to-back Oscars and Golden Globes in 1994 and 1995 for his roles in “Philadelphia” and comedy “Forrest Gump.”

Hanks was entirely shut out. “1972” also won best director for Mendes. The film was made in long takes, giving the impression of it unfurling in one lengthy shot. “Once Upon a Time ... in Hollywood” had easier path than “1917” were meant to be a cor-

The wins for ‘1917’ were a sur-
prise, besting such favourites as
Hollywood’ won best film, com-
edy or musical.

including the currently raging Australian wildfires, women’s rights, and even, the importance of being on time. Ricky Gervais, hosting the NBC-telecast ceremony for the fifth time, argued that Netflix had taken over Hollywood, giv-

ting the streaming service’s com-
manding 14 nominations, in film and TV, coming into the Globes.

But the awards were widely spread around among traditional Hollywood studios, indie labels like A24, cable heavyweights like HBO and relative newcomers like Hulu. As always at the Globes, there were surprises. Mendes’ best director “prize” hosted the likes of Martin Scorsese (“The Irish-
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Shaiikh Isa chairs meeting of the REHC High Committee

TDT | Manama

H.H. Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa yesterday chaired a meeting of the Royal Equestrian and Horse Racing Club (REHC) High Committee.

H.H. Shaikh Isa stressed the significance of implementing plans and initiatives that contribute to modernizing and further developing the Kingdom’s Equestrian and Horse Racing sector, which has continuously received the support of His Majesty King Hamad bin Ali Al Khalifa.

The Deputy Chairman of the REHC High Committee went on to praise the Royal Equestrian and Horse Racing Club, and its executive body, for their commitment to achieving the highest standards.

In this regard, H.H. Shaikh Isa stressed the importance of redoubling efforts to further advance the Kingdom’s regional and international position in Equestrian sports.

During the meeting, Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Executive Director of the Royal Equestrian Club, made a presentation on the programs of the club’s various programs and future plans.

Serena, Wozniacki team up to advance in Auckland

Reuters | Auckland

Caroline Wozniacki of Denmark plays a forehand while Serena Williams of USA waits for a return shot

As the unseeded pair advance to the quarter-finals, where they could face the top seeds Caroline Dolehide and Johanna Larsson, the Japanese duo struggled to deal with Williams’ powerful serve in opening stages before they got measure of the American veteran to break her once. But Williams and Wozniacki, who looked relaxed throughout the match and even found the time to joke with each other, continued to press in second set and wrapped up it in 71 minutes.

AbuSaad Climax edge National Guards

TDT | Manama


Ronaldo hat-trick lifts Juventus

Cristiano Ronaldo scored his first Serie A hat-trick to inspire Milan as the fallen giants were held to a 0-0 draw at home by Sampdoria, failing to score for the third league game in a row.

But Williams and Wozniacki, who got through his groove against the gutsy Argentinian, a close friend, hitting 35 winners to grind down to the world number 13 for 6-3, 7-6 (7-3) win.

Former NBA champion Sam Vincent will coach Bahrain national basketball team

TDT | Manama

Former NBA coach and 1986 NBA champion with the Boston Celtics, American national Sam Vincent, has signed on to take over as head coach of Bahrain’s senior men’s national basketball team.

Vincent was announced last night by the Bahrain Basketball Association (BABA).

Vincent fills in the role last held by Serbian-Vietnamese Dusko Simic, who recently took charge of Bahrain’s men’s team as they participated in the Gulf Basketball Association Men’s National Teams Championship 2019, held in November and December.

The 56-year-old former point guard is not a newcomer in Bahrain basketball, having coached local clubs Manama and Al Ahli in the past as well as Riffa, where he helped guide the prestigious Khalifa bin Salman Cup for the first time last season.

Vincent’s first task with the national team is to get them ready for their upcoming qualifiers for the 2021 Fiba Asia Cup.

The side from Bergamo were already three goals up before the break thanks to Alejandro Gomez, Rene Feuder and Robin Gosens, with Josip Ilicic adding a double in a nine minute second-half spell.

New Vincent’s coach Giuseppe Iachini had to settle for a 1-0 draw against Bologna in his first game after taking over from Vincenzo Montella.

The top two teams from each of the six qualification groups book their tickets to the Fiba Asia Cup, while the third-placed teams go on to another stage of qualification, where another four final spots will be up for grabs.

2-0 to Torino on Sunday, with another 5-0 rout, this time of seventh-placed Parma.

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Bahrain teams face tricky second stage in Dakar Rally

Carlos Sainz and co-driver Lucas Cruz were sixth in the cars class in their no. 305 challenge and, in reality, England on top.

South Africa fought hard after session, "said skipper Kane Williamson. "They were clinical in all areas and it's pretty special to be part of it, we have been impressive, done well and given us bowlers support the wiles of spin attack with Mitchell Starc taking three for 7,174.

They were clinical in all areas and after the first match they put us under pressure session after session," said skipper Kane Williamson, who missed the Test with a virus. New Zealand were reeling early at 27-4 and never recovered after Starc and Lyon took two wickets each in the middle session to put the skids under the tourists. Starc removed both openers, Tom Latham and Tom Blundell, in the first five overs.

Bahrain teams face tricky second stage in Dakar Rally

"We had trouble finding our way and we turn back two, three kilometres back and forwards. It was tricky, but at least there were no punctures today." said Sainz.

"The biggest mistake was just 10 kilometres before the end when we were leading with Carlos and we took a turn but we couldn't able to find the track. We spent maybe 10 minutes turning around." Following yesterday's second stage results, Sainz and Cruz were second overall in the general rankings amongst cars competitors, not far behind leaders Orlando Terranova and Bernardo Graue of X-Raid Mini JCW Team. Petersenhal and Fiuza on the other hand, dropped to eighth place overall.

Stage three today will see competitors start and finish the day in Neom, covering a challenging 489km in all, with 40km marked as special today. The Dakar Rally, an annual event which was first launched in 1979, ran from Europe to Senegal in 1986 and is now based in South America in 2009, where it remained until this year's event. South America is the only continent in the region to play host to the challenge, gaining the right to hold it for the next five years. A total of 530 drivers from 62 nations are exploring the vast and formidable desert terrains of the largest country in the region.

Lyons roars as Australia crush New Zealand to sweep series

"It was a massive bonus taking that late one (wick- et)," said England batsman Dom Sibley, whose 133 not out was his best form in the second calendar year and has lost his place in Gareth Southgate's England squad ahead of this year's European Championships. "It's been a great summer for us in the pressing, he's a great trigger for us and he's a lively, bubbly character."

"I don't think you see as much in the social media as you used to from Jesse," the Norwegian coach added. "He's got his head down and working hard. I've known him for a long time and he's getting back to the Jesse I knew."

United stunned City in an impressive 2-1 league victory at the Etihad, the Etihad, 150 th anniversary of the famous Manchester derby.

"Every game lives its own life and when you get high like that, I'm sure they will look back on it and say, 'That's the Man United we want to see.' But we can still improve on that." United will make a decision on the availability of those injured and involved players.

England on course for final-day victory

"It was a massive bonus taking that late one (wicket)," said England batsman Dom Sibley, whose 133 not out was his best form in the second calendar year and has lost his place in Gareth Southgate's England squad ahead of this year's European Championships. "It's been a great summer for us in the pressing, he's a great trigger for us and he's a lively, bubbly character."

"I don't think you see as much in the social media as you used to from Jesse," the Norwegian coach added. "He's got his head down and working hard. I've known him for a long time and he's getting back to the Jesse I knew."

United stunned City in an impressive 2-1 league victory at the Etihad, the Etihad, 150th anniversary of the famous Manchester derby.

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Lyons roars as Australia crush New Zealand to sweep series

Nathan Lyon captured five for 50 and 10 match wickets Australia crushed New Zealand by 276 runs yesterday, capping a dominant domestic summer after the three-Test series. The off-spinner led the powerful Australian bowling attack to dismiss the Kiwis for 116 and seal another big win over the Black Caps after similar victories in Perth and Melbourne.

"It's pretty special to be part of it, we have been impressive, clinically, the batters have done well and given us bowlers plenty of time," said Lyon.

"They were clinical in all areas and after the first match they put us under pressure session after session," said skipper Kane Williamson, who missed the Test with a virus. New Zealand were reeling early at 27-4 and never recovered after Starc and Lyon took two wickets each in the middle session to put the skids under the tourists. Starc removed both openers, Tom Latham and Tom Blundell, in the first five overs.

Blundell fell to a stumping catch by a diving Lyon at point for two and stand-in skipper Latham lost a review for leg be- fore wicket. Jeet Raval was out in a review to the finest of edges on ‘Sticky’ in Lyon’s first over for 54, Labuschagne, who was unbeaten when skipper Paine won the toss and elected to bat, brought up his fifty but went next ball hoicking to Joe Burns at deep mid-wicket for 52.

Todd Astle was out to a superb diving catch by James Pattinson in the outfield for 17. Starc ran Somerset-ville’s middle stump for seven and Watling was the last to fall, caught at backward square leg by Pat Cummins for 19. Earlier, Warner completed his 24th Test century and remained unbeaten when skipper Paine declared upon the dismissal of Marnus Labuschagne. "You know you’re capable of doing so," Warner said, when asked about how he bounced back from his daunting problems in the campaign against England last year. "I was a lot better and had the skipper backing me. To be able to play with freedom sometimes. It’s all paring off!”

Ross Taylor, who was dropped on four in a regulation innings, and bowled chance by leg-spinner Astle, was caught out long on off Matt Henry for 99 – his seventh century overall – in eight innings this domestic summer.