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Greta Thunberg named Time Person of the Year



CNN | New York

Time magazine has chosen Greta Thunberg, a Swedish climate crisis activist, as person of the year. Thunberg, 16, is the youngest individual to be recognized. She gained international attention for excoriating world leaders for their inaction in the climate crisis in a viral speech she made at the UN Climate Action Summit in September.

National football team get over BD4 million worth gifts

Manama

Bahrain's national football team has been awarded more than BD-4million so far for winning the title in the 24th Arabian Gulf Cup earlier this week. (full story on page 3)



03 Gulf nations rap Qatari inaction

04 Busy cruise season ahead

210 fils (includes VAT)



HM Kings lauds strengthening bilateral ties with Russia

TDT | Manama

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa yesterday lauded the efforts of Russian President Vladimir Putin in strengthening the long-standing bilateral ties with the Kingdom.

His Majesty stressed the depth of relations between Bahrain and Russia, hailing the advanced level reached by bilateral cooperation at all levels.

HM the King was receiving the Grand Mufti and Chairman



HM the King, HRH CP with Grand Mufti

of the Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Russia, Talgat Tajuddin, alongside his

son. His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa,

the Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister was present at the meeting held at the Al-Sakhir Palace.

Talgat Tajuddin conveyed to HM the King greetings and appreciation from Russian President, Vladimir Putin, as well as his wishes of further progress and prosperity to Bahrain and its people.

HM King Hamad valued highly the efforts exerted by Grand Mufti, Talgat Tajuddin, to promote co-existence, dialogue and moderation, as well as dis-

seminate the authentic Islamic concepts.

His Majesty praised the ongoing cooperation between Bahrain's Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs and Islamic institutions in Russia for the best interests of the two sides.

The Grand Mufti presented His Majesty the King with a book issued by the Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Russia, in addition to a historical sword dating back to the ancient civilisation in Russia.

Team Bahrain does it

BD 100 million Liquidity Support Fund launched



The launch event held yesterday

● Interest rate fixed at 2.5pc

● Minister signs four agreements following the launch

● Deals signed with NBB, BBK, BIB and BDB

TDT | Manama

The Ministry of Finance and National Economy yesterday launched a BD 100 million Liquidity Support Fund in line with the directives of His Royal Highness the Crown Prince during the 2019 Government Forum.

The Fund was launched in cooperation with the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism, Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Bahrain Labour Fund (Tamkeen) and national banks.

During the launch, Shaikh

Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa signed four agreements with the Chairman of the National Bank of Bahrain, Farouk Yousuf Khalil Almoayyed, the Chairman of the Bank of Bahrain and Kuwait, Murad Ali Murad, the Chairman of the Bahrain Islamic Bank, Dr Essam Abdulla Yousif Fakhro, and the Chairman of the Bahrain Development Bank, Khalid Al Rumaihi.

The Minister said the swift cross-sector collaboration that has delivered the Fund's launch within two months of HRH the Crown Prince's directives is a testament to the remarkable potential of Team Bahrain.

Chairman of the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) Sameer Abdulla Nass voiced pride in the fund worth BD 100 million. Nass expressed confidence in the outcomes of the fund in empowering local businesses and invigorating the national economy.

"NBB is proud to be a strategic partner of Bahrain in this ambitious initiative spearheaded by His Royal Highness. We

The Fund's role is to support working capital requirements of viable companies that are in display of genuine short term liquidity pressures

SHAIKH SALMAN BIN KHALIFA AL KHALIFA
 MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND NATIONAL ECONOMY

commit our on-going support to the Fund's mandate and will continue to take a proactive role to ensure the successful implementation of this scheme," said Farouk Yousuf Khalil Almoayyed, Chairman of the National Bank of Bahrain.

Murad Ali Murad, Chairman of BBK, said the scheme will be

To receive bids starting Wednesday

TDT | Manama

The newly-established BD 100 million Liquidity Support Fund will begin receiving bids from 18 December 2019, it was announced yesterday.

Credit facilities will be offered at an interest rate of 2.5 per cent to pay short term obligations, particularly related to paying suppliers and wages.

Applications for large companies with an annual income above BD 3 million will be received at the National Bank of Bahrain's main branch, Seef Mall branch, Atrium Complex branch and the Istiqlal Highway branch.

Applications for SMEs with an annual income below BD 3 million will be received at Bahrain Development Bank's Sitra branch, Riyadat branch, Diplomatic Area branch, and the Hidd Industrial branch.

All applications will be reviewed against specified eligibility and credit evaluation of the company.

Credit application requests

for large companies are capped at BD 1 million and BD 250,000 for SMEs, with a loan period of up to three years.

Criteria

The application criteria to be met by large companies includes: holding an active commercial registration; carrying out commercial activities in Bahrain for five consecutive years; a minimum of 51pc Bahraini ownership; financial statements for the last four financial years, including for the fiscal year 2018, in addition to positive financial solvency; and a positive gross profit margin for three of the past five years.

SMEs includes: holding an active commercial registration; a minimum of 51pc Bahraini ownership; commercial activities operated in Bahrain; no requests for reorganisation or liquidation according to the Kingdom's bankruptcy law; financial statements for the fiscal year 2018; and a positive gross profit margin for one of the past three years.

of great support to the growth of Bahrain and its economy.

Dr Essam Abdulla Yousif Fakhro, Chairman of the Bahrain Islamic Bank, expressed his delighted in playing an active role in this national initiative which will provide vital support to SMEs and Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030.

Bahrain Development Bank Group's Chairman, Khalid Al

Rumaihi, hailed the Liquidity Support Fund's launch, as a unique concept to support companies and SMEs in particular.

"SMEs are the backbone of the economy, generating employment opportunities and spurring overall demand. This focused approach to support SMEs is a model, which I expect to be emulated elsewhere," Al Rumaihi said.



BDF Commander-in-Chief Field Marshal Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa with the newly appointed Egyptian Ambassador to Bahrain Yasser Mohamed Ahmed Shaban. The commander-in-chief wished the ambassador successes in his diplomatic mission, affirming the strong brotherly relations between the two countries.



BDF Commander-in-Chief Field Marshal Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa with Chairman of Foreign Affairs and National Defence Committee of the Brazilian National Congress' Chamber of Deputies Eduardo Bolsonaro. Defence Affairs Minister Lt. General Abdullah bin Hassan Al Nuaimi and Chief-of-Staff Lieutenant General Dhiyab bin Saqer Al Nuaim attended the meeting. The commander-in-chief lauded the strong relations between Bahrain and Brazil, discussing common concerns.



Deputy Prime Minister, HH Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa with Shaikh Mubarak Al-Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, who is currently on a visit to the kingdom, at the Gudaibiya Palace



BDF Commander-in-Chief Field Marshal Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa with Dr Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, the Chairman of the Supreme Council of Health (SCH). The commander-in-chief praised the good efforts exerted by SCH to develop and improve the quality of health services in Bahrain.



The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed bin Mohammad Al Khalifa with the Chairman of the Foreign Relations and National Defence Committee of the House of Representatives of the Federal Republic of Brazil, Deputy Eduardo Bolsonaro. Discussions focused on mulling ways to intensify mutual coordination on issues of common concern in international forums

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Moscow	857	242
Maldives	732	244
London	1155	261

All prices are in BHD
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Shura Council Chairman, Ali bin Saleh Al-Saleh with the newly-appointed French Ambassador to Bahrain, Jerome Cauchard. The chairman expressed pride in the advanced level reached by the Bahraini-French relations across various fields.

Minimal Access Gynecology and Urogynecology expert at RBH

Manama

Staying in the forefront of women's health, Royal Bahrain Hospital has further strengthened its Obstetrics & Gynecology Team and is now offering expert services of Dr Harnek Rai, Consultant - Minimal Access Gynecology and Urogynecology.

Dr Harnek has been practising as a Consultant - Gynecologist and Urogynecologist in the United Kingdom for the past 16 years before joining Royal Bahrain Hospital with over 25 years of experience in the field of Obstetrics & gynaecology.

He has qualified from Ninewells Hospital and Medical School in Dundee, UK. He obtained his minimal access experience and undertook a Fellowship in Sydney, Australia. Dr Harnek was also awarded the Fellowship of the



Dr Harnek Rai

Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecology, London in 2009.

Dr Harnek specialized in managing and treating various Gynecology and Urogynecology conditions which include all-female urinary

incontinence (Bladder Neck Injections, Intravesical Botox, Colposuspension, Cystoscopy with Urethral dilation), Female Vaginal Prolapse (Vaginal Wall Repairs, Vaginal Hysterectomy, Sacrospinous Fixation and Sacrocolpopexy) and Minimal Access Surgery of various gynaecology symptoms such as Endometriosis, Hysterectomy, Prolapse Surgery, Ovarian Cysts and Ectopic Pregnancy. He also specializes in Menstrual disturbances investigations and management which include Hysteroscopy and Endometrial Ablation, removal of Uterine Polyps and post-Menopausal bleeding.

To book appointment call 17246800, WhatsApp 32181810 or book online through www.royalbahrainhospital.com. Also book appointments and more through the RBH Mobile Applications on ios and Android.

Gulf nations rap Qatari inaction at summit

TDT, agencies | Manama

The Gulf nations yesterday rapped Qatar for displaying a lackadaisical attitude at the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit which, experts said, earlier signalled a possible thaw in the regional dispute.

However, dampening hopes of reconciliation was Qatari Emir's decision to skip the summit and instead send a delegation which the Quartet found as not having "any authority or directive that could contribute to resolving its crisis."

Prime Minister Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani was also the most senior Qatari official to attend the gathering of Gulf leaders since the emir attended a 2017 summit held in Kuwait.

"Qatar adopted once more a terribly negative approach by sending a representative of the Emir," accused Bahrain's Foreign Minister Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa after the summit.

This attitude, Shaikh Khalid said, reflects Qatar's lack of seriousness to put an end to the crisis which began in June 2017. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and non-GCC member Egypt imposed a political and economic boycott of Qatar in June 2017 over allegations that Doha backs terrorism



Foreign Minister deplores Qatar's lack of seriousness to end its crisis with Arab quartet



UAE State Minister for International Affairs, Dr Anwar Gargash



Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Adel Al Jubeir

Qatar adopted once more a terribly negative approach by sending a representative of the Emir

SHAIKH KHALID BIN AHMED AL KHALIFA

Shaikh Khalid further rejected Qatari foreign minister's statement that the "talks with Saudi had gone beyond the demands and are now looking into a perspective for the future" as not reflecting the summit views.

Reports earlier said that Riyadh has softened its stance on a list of 13 demands to lift the embargo, including that Doha cut links to the Muslim Brotherhood, close Al Jazeera TV, shutter a Turkish military base and reduce ties with Iran, with whom Qatar shares a giant gas field.

Rejecting claims, Shaikh Khalid said, "Our four countries are fully committed to their firm positions and legitimate demands based on the six principles adopted by the Cairo meeting on July 5, 2017"

The foreign Minister said these principles call for a "commitment to combating extremism and terrorism, an end to all acts of incitement and discouraging inciting to hatred or violence

and full adherence to the 2013 Riyadh Agreement and its supplementary agreement of 2014."

He added: "The principles also call for commitment to all the outcomes of the May 2017 Arab-Islamic American Summit in Riyadh, non-interference in the internal affairs of countries, not supporting outlawed entities and the affirmation of the responsibility of all countries in confronting all forms of extremism and terrorism as a threat to international peace and security."

Misjudgment: Dr Gargash

In Abu Dhabi, the UAE State Minister for International Affairs, Dr Anwar Gargash, echoed Bahrain's view on the issue saying, "the Qatari crisis continues"

Dr Gargash described Emir's absence as "a misjudgment of the situation by his advisors."

On the possibilities of resolving the 2-1/2 year boycott, he said, "the onus lies with the one that caused the crisis, to reconsider erroneous policies that led to its isolation."

Settling the dispute should be "based on the primacy of the interest of the Council," he later wrote on his twitter handle.

"The responsibility begins with the one who triggered the crisis and who should review the wrong policies that led to his isolation. Commitment to covenants, restoring credibility and ending support to extremism and interference are the start of that treatment."

Not enough: Al Jubeir

Earlier, Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Adel Al Jubeir said that resolving the crisis depends on Qatar taking the steps needed for a change in the situation.

"The Qataris know what these steps are," he said in a speech at the Mediterranean Dialogues in Rome.

Al Jubeir stressed that the Qatari regime has adopted some changes in legal aspects related to supporting terrorism.

However, these steps are not enough to solve the crisis, and there is a lot to be done, he said. Meanwhile, Secretary-Gen-

eral Abdullah bin Rashid al-Zayani after the 40th Summit held in Riyadh said that the Council will treat "any aggression against any country in the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council as an attack against the whole council."

His comments came after a closed-door meeting which stressed the need to boost military and security cooperation and pledged to create a financial and monetary bloc by 2025.

After the communique was read out, Kuwait's ruling emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah, who has long pressed to resolve the Qatar dispute, commended the call for unity.

Addressing King Salman, he said: "God willing, the coming meetings will be better than past meetings."

Unite against Iran: Saudi King

Saudi King Salman, who earlier afforded the Qatari prime minister a traditional welcome, called for regional unity to confront Iran and secure energy supplies and maritime channels.

During his opening speech, the Saudi King stressed that the Gulf countries must unite against the Iranian regime's aggression in the region.

"The Iranian regime has continued its aggressive policies in the region that undermine the stability of neighbouring countries," King Salman said.

Bahrain national football team get gifts worth more than BD4 million



Bahrain national team celebrate after the presentation ceremony of the 24th Arabian Gulf Cup earlier this week.

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's national football team has been awarded more than BD 4 million so far for winning the title in the 24th Arabian Gulf Cup earlier this week.

This is according to a high-ranking official in Bahrain football who is closely linked to the national team.

The official said that following their historic victory, which has been celebrated by the entire Kingdom of Bahrain, the national team has been receiving all kinds of financial rewards as well as valuable gifts, such as cars, diamond rings, and others. These awards come either from companies, groups or individuals.

He added that there is no official

total for the amount awarded to the national team, but if it were all put together, it would come up to more than BD 4 million to date.

Bahrain received US\$3 million alone, around BD1.13 million, from the Gulf Cup's organising committee - US\$ 2 million was the grand prize for winning the tournament while the other US\$ 1 million was for participating.

This US \$1 million amount was given to all the national teams that competed.

Meanwhile, the Bahrain national team were also awarded more than BD1.6 million last night on a live telecast on Bahrain TV.

His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First

Deputy Prime Minister, awarded the team with BD200,000.

An additional BD100,000 each was also awarded by Supreme Council for Environment President HH Shaikh Abdulla bin Hamad Al Khalifa, His Majesty the King's Representative for Charity Works and Youth Affairs, National Security Advisor and Supreme Council for Youth and Sports Chairman HH Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, and Supreme Council of Youth and Sports First Deputy Chairman Bahrain Olympic Committee President HH Shaikh

Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

The national team were also awarded BD150,000 each from Aluminium Bahrain and Bahrain Petroleum Company; BD100,000 each from National Bank of Bahrain and Bank of Bahrain and Kuwait; BD50,000 each from Gulf Air, Batelco, Zain, Kuwait Finance House and Khalid Abdulrahman companies; and various other corporations and businesses.

The official added that there could be even more rewards coming to the national team in the coming days.

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Launch preparations in full swing: BAC CEO

● **Trials on going at new facility**

● **Advanced trials will see public volunteers playing the role of passengers**

● **On track for first quarter 2020 launch**

TDT | Manama

All airlines operating out of Bahrain International Airport (BIA) are expected to be fully prepared and ready for the launch of the new Passenger Terminal Building in



Officials during the meeting of senior airline representatives

the first quarter of 2020, said Mohamed Yousif Al Binfalah BAC CEO. new facility are part of the national Operations Readiness and

Airport Transfer (ORAT) programme.

"These are designed to progressively test the new facility's functions, systems, and procedures to ensure they are ready for the transition phase."

The Bahrain Airport Company (BAC) Chief Executive Officer was holding a meeting of senior airline representatives.

Al Binfalah highlighted the importance of the trials, saying: "The new Passenger Terminal Building's advanced systems, equipment and communications technologies require considerable training and familiarity to operate."

"All stakeholders must have an in-depth understanding of how these systems work in an inte-

grated operational environment. "The trials will assist all the participating stakeholders to be adequately trained and ensure that BIA continues to operate in line with global aviation standards."

He also called on to greater effort as there are just a few months to until the inauguration of the new terminal.

The ORAT process is split into three phases, pre-trials, basic trials, and advanced trials. The advanced trials will see public volunteers playing the role of passengers to put the new terminal's advanced systems, processes, and procedures put to the test and helping to identify any areas for improvement ahead of its inauguration.

Busy cruise season ahead

Bahrain expects to receive 100,000 cruise ship visitors this season

TDT | Manama

Bahrain is expecting this cruise season to be extremely busy with the authority here anticipating around 100,000 cruise ship visitors.

Nader Khalil Al Moayyed, Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTEA) Chief Executive Officer, said this as the Kingdom yesterday received more than 7,000 passengers who arrived on board MSC Bellissima and AIDAprima.

Representatives of the BTEA welcomed travellers with sweets and Arabic coffee, giving them a glimpse into the rich history of Bahrain and the hospitality of its people.

Visitors also had the opportunity to take photos with a falcon or have their hands decorated with traditional henna designs.

BTEA said it is working closely with a group of governmental entities and tour operators to enhance the visitor experience and ensure a smooth journey to the Kingdom.

During their stay, visitors were introduced to famous tourist destinations in the Kingdom,



More than 7,000 passengers arrived in Bahrain on board MSC Bellissima and AIDAprima

including the Royal Camel Farm, Manama Souq, Al Fateh Grand Mosque, Bahrain International Circuit, Bahrain Fort, Bahrain National Museum, Bu Maher Fort, Shaikh Ebrahim Center and the Old Houses of Muharraq.

"The BTEA's strategy focuses on four main pillars including Awareness, Attraction, Access and Accommodation, in addition to developing the Kingdom's ports and marine facilities to attract more incoming tourist ships in the region and increase

the number visitors coming into the Kingdom," Al Moayyed said.

He said the authority is aiming to double the contribution of the tourism sector in the national economy in line with the Economic Vision 2030 that seeks to increase the Gross Domestic

Product (GDP) of the non-oil sectors.

"Thanks to the ongoing growth of Bahrain as a destination for cruise ships, we look forward to receiving more in the coming months within the tourist season that continues during October and April.

"We expect that the number of trips this season will amount to 61 trips that include approximately 100,000 visitors," added Al Moayyed.



The MSC Bellissima, a 170,000-tonne ship, owned by Swiss cruise line MSC Cruises, is a 316 metres long vessel. It is one of the largest cruise ships in the world with its current home-port being UAE.



AIDA Prima, which can carry 4,250 passengers and crew, is a German cruise liner. AIDAprima has 18 passenger decks, 15 dining options, indoor and outdoor pools, as well as shops, cafes, and bars.



Thanks to the ongoing growth of Bahrain as a destination for cruise ships, we look forward to receiving more in the coming months within the tourist season that continues during October and April

NADER KHALIL AL MOAYYED, BTEA CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

ICB Talent Fest 2019 concludes today



Namita Pramod, Boban Samuel

TDT | Manama

The Indian Club Bahrain has announced the completion of its children's cultural festival, the ICB Talent Fest 2019, with the participation of 1288 children in six categories.

The Fest will draw to a close with the Grand Finale at 7 pm today at the Indian Club premises.

Competition in literature, Music, Dance, Art, Other events and Group were open to all members of the Indian community aged between 5 and 18 years.

Chief Guest for the event is cine artist Namitha Pramod, and the evening will see all participants receive trophies and certificates. The Guest of Honour is Indian moviemaker, Boban Samuel.

Shauryaa Sreejit emerged as the ICB Talent Prince and Sneha Muralidharan as ICB Talent Princess. The Group Champions for Groups I through V are Hima Ajithkumar, Shreya Muralidharan, Shreya Gopakumar, Ascharya K. Ramesh and Anagha S. Lal, respectively.

Anagha S. Lal won the title of ICB Dancing Jewel and Athulkrishna Gopakumar won the title of ICB Musical Gem.

Shilpa Santhosh was declared as the ICB Artistic Pearl and Sreehamsini Balamurugan as the Literary Diamond for 2019.

The Artistic Special Award went to Mia Mariam Alex. Rithvika Sreenath received the Group Three Special Award, and Advait Anilkumar received the ICB Talent Fest Special Award.

Secretary of the Indian Club, Job Joseph and convener of the Fest, Jose Francis, thanked all the participants for their performances.

Gulf Air achieves 100pc Bahrainisation for second officer pilots

TDT | Manama

Gulf Air, yesterday announced it has achieved 100 per cent Bahrainisation for its second officer pilots as it continues to employ Bahrainis as cadet pilots to gradually grow in their career development. Recently, the airline welcomed a new batch of six pilots and congratulated them on their career start with Gulf Air.

The chief executive officer of the airline Kresimir Kucko and deputy chief executive of-



ficer Captain Waleed Al Alawi, as well as members of the executive management, celebrated the new pilots during an event that took place at the airline's headquarter in Muharraq.

Gulf Air has achieved total Bahrainisation for its second officers as well as male cabin crew. Moreover, 96 per cent of the airline's first officers are Bahrainis to achieve 100pc Bahrainisation for all its captains by 2030.

officials during a photocall. Recently, the airline welcomed a new batch of six pilots



ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE SHAREHOLDERS OF BAHRAIN ISLAMIC BANK B.S.C.

Bahrain Islamic Bank B.S.C. ("BisB") shareholders are hereby notified that the Offeree Board Circular issued by the Board of BisB, the Offer Document issued by NBB and the Acceptance and Transfer Form ("Offer Documents") relating to the formal Voluntary Conditional offer by National Bank of Bahrain B.S.C. ("NBB") to acquire up to 100% of the issued and paid up ordinary shares of BisB subject to a minimum acquisition of 40.94% of the issued share capital of BisB, bringing NBB's total stake in BisB to a minimum of 70% for either cash or shares exchange at the option of each BisB shareholder ("NBB Offer") have been posted on the websites of BisB and Bahrain Bourse on 12 December 2019 (the "Posting Date").

The Offeree Board Circular contains the following:

- The letter to the BisB shareholders from the Board;
- The letter to the BisB shareholders from the Independent Committee containing the Recommendation of the Independent Committee;
- The fairness opinion of the Professional Independent Adviser containing the advice and recommendation of the Professional Independent Adviser to the Independent Committee; and
- The Shari'a Supervisory Board Fatwa issued in relation to the NBB Offer.

Terms not defined herein are defined in the Offer Documents.

DISCLAIMER STATEMENT

THE OFFER DOCUMENTS HAVE BEEN FILED WITH THE CENTRAL BANK OF BAHRAIN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE CENTRAL BANK OF BAHRAIN RULEBOOK VOLUME 6, TAKEOVERS, MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS MODULE.

THE CENTRAL BANK OF BAHRAIN, THE BAHRAIN BOURSE AND THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY, COMMERCE AND TOURISM, IN THE KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN, ASSUME NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ACCURACY AND COMPLETENESS OF THE STATEMENTS AND INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS ANNOUNCEMENT AND EXPRESSLY DISCLAIM ANY LIABILITY WHATSOEVER FOR ANY LOSS HOWEVER ARISING FROM THE RELIANCE UPON THE WHOLE OR ANY PART OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS ANNOUNCEMENT.

DIRECTORS' DECLARATION

THE DIRECTORS OF BISB, ISSUING THIS ANNOUNCEMENT JOINTLY AND SEVERALLY, ACCEPT FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ACCURACY OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS ANNOUNCEMENT.

TO THE BEST OF THE KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF OF THE DIRECTORS, WHO HAVE TAKEN ALL REASONABLE CARE TO ENSURE THAT SUCH IS THE CASE, THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS ANNOUNCEMENT ACCORD WITH THE TERMS OF THE OFFER RECEIVED FROM NBB AND CONTAINS NO MATERIAL OMISSIONS LIKELY TO AFFECT THE IMPORTANCE AND COMPLETENESS OF THIS ANNOUNCEMENT.

Shareholders should not rely on only this announcement but should refer to the contents of the Offer Document and the Offeree Board Circular. If you are in any doubt about the contents of this announcement and the aspects of the offer, you should consult a licensed securities dealer or licensed institution in securities, a bank manager, solicitor, professional accountant or other professional advisors.

DISPATCH OF OFFER DOCUMENTS TO SHAREHOLDERS

The Offer Documents will be dispatched by mail to all BisB shareholders whose names appeared in the BisB share register at their addresses as registered in the share register pursuant to the Central Bank of Bahrain Rulebook Volume 6, Takeovers, Mergers and Acquisitions Module.

The abovementioned documents are also available at the receiving desk of SICO B.S.C.(c) at Bahrain Bourse, at 5 branches of BisB in the Kingdom of Bahrain, namely the Head Office in Al Salam Tower, the Budaiya Financial Mall branch, the Hamad Town Financial Mall branch, the Arad Financial Mall branch and the Riffa Financial Mall branch and at 5 branches of NBB in the Kingdom of Bahrain, namely the Main Branch in Manama, the Tubli Branch, the Seef Mall Branch, the Atrium Mall Branch and the Al Istiqlal Highway Branch. Alternatively, any BisB shareholder who wishes to receive electronic copies of the Offer Documents may email Ms. Nada Ishaq Abdul Karim, Board Secretary, at nada.ishaq@bisb.com.

DETAILS OF THE OFFER

Securities for which the Offer will be made
The NBB Offer is to acquire up to 100% of the issued and paid up ordinary shares of BisB subject to a minimum acquisition of 40.94% of the total issued share capital of BisB, bringing NBB's total stake in BisB to a minimum of 70% for either cash or shares exchange at the option of each shareholder of BisB.

BisB is registered with the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism ("MOICT") under Commercial Registration number 9900 as a Public Bahraini Shareholding Company whose ordinary shares are listed on Bahrain Bourse ("BHB").

THE OFFEROR

NBB is registered with the MOICT under commercial registration number 269 as a Public Bahraini Shareholding Company whose ordinary shares are listed on BHB.

SHAREHOLDING IN BAHRAIN ISLAMIC BANK B.S.C.

NBB has not purchased or sold BisB shares during the 12-month period prior to the date of this announcement and holds 309,206,266 BisB shares representing 29.06% of the issued share capital of BisB as of the date of this announcement. Some of the directors of NBB hold BisB shares as highlighted in section 8 of the offer document.

CONSIDERATION OF THE OFFER

The consideration for the cash offer is BHD 0.117 per BisB share provided that the NBB Offer becomes unconditional after the fulfilment, or waiver by NBB, of the Conditions Precedent detailed in section 3.6 of the NBB Offer Document. Assuming that all BisB shareholders avail of the cash offer, the total value of the NBB Offer would be BHD 88,317,721.557.

The consideration for the share exchange offer provided as an alternative to the cash offer at the option and discretion of each BisB shareholder is the issue of new NBB shares at a share exchange ratio of 0.167 new NBB shares per BisB share provided that the NBB Offer becomes unconditional after the fulfilment, or waiver by NBB, of the Conditions Precedent detailed in section 3.6 of the NBB Offer Document.

BisB shareholders are notified that NBB is a conventional retail financial institution and as such the new NBB shares offered as an alternative to the cash offer are not a Shari'a compliant investment.

The cash consideration payable by NBB for acceptances of the cash offer will be financed through internal accruals. The shares to be issued by NBB for acceptances of the share exchange offer provided as an alternative to the cash offer at the option and discretion of each BisB shareholder will be financed through an issue of up to 145,000,000 new NBB shares approved pursuant to the NBB EGM held on 24 November 2019.

SHAREHOLDERS ELIGIBLE FOR THE OFFER

BisB shareholders whose names appear in the BisB Share register two (2) Business Days after the Last Trading Date, i.e. one (1) Business Day after the Suspension of Trading Date for BisB Shares, are eligible to receive the NBB Offer

CONDITIONS PRECEDENT TO THE OFFER

The implementation of the NBB Offer will be subject to the fulfilment, or waiver by NBB where applicable, of the following conditions precedent:

- Acceptances are received in respect of at least 435,634,745 BisB shares representing 40.94% of the entire issued share capital of BisB, which would result in total ownership by NBB of at least 70% of the total issued share capital of BisB;
- Receipt of all regulatory and statutory approvals in connection with the NBB Offer;
- The shareholders of NBB approving the increase in issued and paid up capital of NBB and waiving their statutory rights of pre-emption in respect of those shares in favour of BisB shareholders provided that the NBB Offer becomes unconditional after the fulfilment, or waiver by NBB, of the Conditions Precedent;
- BisB does not undertake any of the following from the date of NBB's Firm Intention to make the NBB Offer until the expiration of the Offer Period:
 - issue any shares and /or distribute cash dividends;
 - create, issue or grant, or permit the creation, issue or grant of, any convertible securities, options or warrants in respect of shares of the BisB;
 - other than in the normal course of business, sell, dispose of or acquire assets;
 - enter into contracts, including service contracts, otherwise than in the ordinary course of business, including contracts or actions which may give rise to any contingent liability;
 - cause BisB or any subsidiary or associate of BisB to purchase or redeem any shares in BisB or provide financial assistance for any such purchase;
 - acquire any company, partnership, other business organization or division thereof, or enter into any joint venture, or strategic alliance;
 - enter into any commitment, agreement or arrangement for assumption of third-party financing or bank debt or any other loan or debt, nor obtain or procure any such financing for BisB;
 - make any changes in the memorandum and articles of association or nature of bank licence or registered address of BisB;
 - amend, waive, modify or consent to the termination of any contract or the BisB's rights thereunder other than in the ordinary course of business consistent with past practice;
 - enter into any contract which is not in the ordinary course of business with any related party;
 - enter into any formal or informal agreement, or otherwise make a commitment to do any of the foregoing; or
 - carry out any actions prohibited by the Central Bank of Bahrain Rulebook Volume 6, Takeovers, Mergers and Acquisitions Module.

OFFER PERIOD AND ACCEPTANCE PROCEDURES

The NBB Offer will be open for acceptance from 18 December 2019 (the "Offer Opening Date") to the Initial Offer Closing Date, which is the fifteenth day from the date of announcement of the offer having been revised or become unconditional, whichever is later, subject to extension and subject to the Final Closing Date, which is the Initial Offer Closing Date, or fifteen calendar days from the date the Offer is revised or announced as unconditional, whichever is later (the "Offer Period").

Please refer to section 4 'Procedures for accepting the Offer' of the NBB Offer Document for further details.
An announcement will be made by BisB upon the fulfilment of the conditions precedent to the NBB Offer.

In the event that the conditions precedent to the NBB Offer are not fulfilled, then the rejection of the NBB Offer will be communicated to the BisB shareholders.

All announcements will be made in local newspapers in the Kingdom of Bahrain, and through the BHB and will be available on the website of BisB.

In the event that the NBB Offer is declared unconditional, the offer will remain open for acceptance by shareholders of BisB for a further 15 calendar days from the date of such declaration.

SUSPENSION OF TRADING

Trading in BisB shares will be suspended on the BHB one (1) business day before the Offer Opening Date, and will remain suspended until one (1) Business Day after the Offer Settlement Date.

BisB shareholders willing to accept the NBB Offer may potentially be holding the BisB shares in one of the following forms:

- shares in dematerialised form held in a brokerage account with a registered broker in the BHB;
- shares in dematerialized form held in the CSD of Bahrain Clear; or
- shares in physical form with an original share certificate only.

SETTLEMENT

For those BisB shareholders accepting the cash offer, the settlement shall be effected on the Settlement Date by wire transfer in BHD from an account held with NBB to the account of the BisB shareholder indicated on the Acceptance and Transfer Form unless:

- the BisB shareholder has not provided sufficient account details to process such transfer (such as an absence of an IBAN or account number for an account in the name of the BisB Shareholder); or
- has elected in the Acceptance and Transfer Form to collect a manager's cheque as an alternative to the wire transfer.

Where the BisB shareholder has not provided sufficient account details to process such transfer (such as an absence of an IBAN number for an account in the name of the BisB shareholder) or has elected in the Acceptance and Transfer Form to collect a manager's cheque as an alternative to the wire transfer, a manager's cheque will be made available for collection by the relevant BisB Shareholder from NBB's Main Branch at Building 120, Government Road, Block 316 Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain during its opening hours from the Settlement Date to the date falling six months after the Settlement Date.

No other modes of payment shall be effected and all settlement shall be net of any bank or related charges.

All charges such as wire transfer charges, processing fees, collection charges, foreign currency conversion charges, managers cheque charges, special clearing charges shall be borne by the BisB shareholder.

For those BisB shareholders accepting the share exchange offer provided as an alternative to the cash offer at the option and discretion of each BisB shareholder, settlement will be made by exchanging the new NBB shares in electronic form, for BisB shares as per the prescribed share exchange ratio. Such exchange shall be effected on the Settlement Date.

BisB shareholders who have accepted the share exchange offer provided as an alternative to the cash offer at the option and discretion of each BisB shareholder will be notified of their allotment by an allotment notice, upon which the BisB shares held by them will be transferred to NBB and new NBB shares credited to their account with the BHB (provided that the NBB Offer becomes unconditional after the fulfilment, or waiver by NBB, of the Conditions Precedent).

Further details are included in the Offer Documents that have been sent to the shareholders of BisB pursuant to the Central Bank of Bahrain Rulebook Volume 6, Takeovers, Mergers and Acquisitions Module.

*These dates are subject to changes and depend on the date of declaration of the NBB Offer having been revised or become unconditional, whichever is later. Announcements will be made in accordance with the CBB regulations to BisB Shareholders, as applicable.

KEY DATES

Offer Documents Posting Date	12 December 2019
Last Trading Date	12 December 2019
Suspension of Trading Date for BisB shares	15 December 2019
Offer Opening Date	18 December 2019
Initial Offer Closing Date*	2 January 2020
Final Offer Closing Date*	To be announced
Offer Acceptance / Rejection Announcement Date*	To be announced
Settlement Date*	To be announced
Resumption of Trading Date for BisB shares*	To be announced

KEY PARTIES

The Offeree Bahrain Islamic Bank B.S.C. P.O. Box 5240, Al Salam Tower Diplomatic Area, Manama Kingdom of Bahrain Tel: (973) 17515151 Fax: (973) 17535808	The Offeror National Bank of Bahrain B.S.C. P.O. Box 106, NBB Tower Government Avenue, Manama Kingdom of Bahrain Tel: (973) 17228800 Fax: (973) 17228998
Share Registrar Bahrain Clear B.S.C. 4th Floor, Harbour Gate, Bahrain Financial Harbour, Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain Tel: (973) 17108781	Legal Advisor to the Offeree Zu'bi & Partners Attorneys & Legal Consultants GBCORP Tower, 16th Floor Building 1411, Road 4626, Block 346, Bahrain Financial Harbour District, P.O. Box 2397 Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain Tel: (973) 17538600 Fax: (973) 17532342
Receiving Agent SICO B.S.C. 1st Floor, BMB Centre, Diplomatic Area, P.O. Box 1331, Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain Tel: (973) 17515000 Fax: (973) 17514000	Professional Independent Advisor to the Offeree Gulf International Bank B.S.C. Al-Dowali Building 3 Palace Avenue P.O. Box 1017 Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain Tel: (973) 17 534000

WORLD
world

Six dead in hours-long New York shootout

- Five of the dead were found inside a store

- NBC television reported that hundreds of rounds were fired

- Detective Joseph Seals, was the first victim

Jersey City | United States

Six people including a police officer and two suspects were killed during an hours-long shootout across a New York suburb not far from the Statue of Liberty, local officials said.

"Our officers were under fire for hours," Jersey City Police Chief Michael Kelly told reporters after the latest high-profile US shooting.

In addition to the officer and the suspects, three civilians were killed in the incident that began around midday at a cemetery and ended in a store, Kelly said.

Bomb squad officers were examining a stolen U-Haul vehicle "that may contain an incendiary device," he added.

No clear reason for the shooting has been given.

Five of the dead were found inside a store, said Kelly.

"We believe that two of them are bad guys," while the other three are civilians, he said,



Hundreds of police from New Jersey and New York, including tactical officers, were deployed during the hours-long shooting in Jersey City, New Jersey

"I heard fighting outside, then 'Boom! Boom! Boom!'" the New York Daily News quoted a food store worker two blocks from the shooting as saying.

describing the crime scene as "very extensive, three locations at least."

Two other officers were

wounded, Kelly told reporters. "I heard fighting outside, then 'Boom! Boom! Boom!'" the New York Daily News quoted a food store worker two blocks from the shooting as saying.

"I saw people running outside -- men, women, children in the street. These people were scared."

Kelly said the suspects' "movement was rapid and continuous for four hours" during the drama which saw the deployment of hundreds of police from New Jersey and New York, includ-

ing tactical officers armed with rifles and wearing olive-green fatigues and helmets.

NBC television reported that hundreds of rounds were fired.

Media reports said the shooting began when an officer investigating a homicide approached the suspects in the cemetery.

Identified by media as Detective Joseph Seals, he was the first victim.

Asked to confirm whether the officer was indeed probing a murder, Kelly said it is "being looked into."



NBC television reported that hundreds of rounds were fired



A firefighter responds to the emergency, which police said involved at least three locations

The suspects then took refuge in a grocery store where firing continued and the five bodies were later found. US residents have become accustomed to shootings -- everywhere from churches to schools and cinemas -- and firearms were linked to nearly 40,000 deaths of various kinds in 2017, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Taliban attacks Afghan US base



Afghan security forces take position at the site of an attack in a U.S. military air base in Bagram, north of Kabul

Kabul

Taliban suicide bombers targeted a key US military base in Afghanistan yesterday in a major attack that killed two civilians and wounded more than 70 others, officials said, amid renewed peace talks between the United States and the militants.

The early morning assault began when a suicide bomber detonated his explosive-packed vehicle outside a hospital building near Bagram military base in Parwan province, north of the capital Kabul, according to local officials.

Seven more gunmen, some wearing suicide vests are believed to have then entered the

building -- which was under construction and not operational -- in order to use it as a launching pad for attacks against the nearby US base, local officials said.

An Afghan interior ministry spokesman, Nasrat Rahimi, said on Twitter that all the attackers inside the hospital compound were killed fighting Afghan and foreign forces.

At least two Afghan civilians, including one woman, were killed while 73 others were wounded in the explosion that damaged houses up to 300 metres (yards) away, Rahimi said.

A Taliban spokesman later claimed responsibility for the attack, claiming that "tens" of US and Afghan soldiers had been killed or wounded.

Date palm enters UNESCO list

AFP | Dubai

The date palm, which was recognised by UNESCO yesterday, has for centuries played an important role in the establishment and growth of civilisations in the hot and dry regions of the Arab world.

Now date palm-related knowledge, traditions and practices have been inscribed on UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The tree, whose roots penetrate deep into the soil, allowing it to grow in arid climates, has not only been a source of food but also of economic gain.

"Date palms gather in oases of different densities within desert areas indicating the presence of water levels suitable for irrigation," according to a nomination put forward by 14 countries -- Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian Territories, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

"As a result, this aided mankind in settling down despite harsh conditions," said the document.

Until this day, platters of dates adorn tables in homes and businesses across the Arab world, where the symbol of the date palm tree has historically presented prosperity.

The offering of the sweet fruit, coupled with a cup of cof-



A Palestinian farmer picks dates from a palm tree during harvest in Deir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip in September

fee, is a sign of good old-fashioned Arab hospitality.

According to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, the date palm is probably the most ancient cultivated tree.

It was grown as early as 4,000 BC and used for the construction of the moon god temple near Ur

in southern Iraq -- the ancient region of Mesopotamia.

"The population of the submitting states has been associated with the date palm tree for centuries as it aided them in the construction of civilisation," they said in the nomination.

"Historical research and vari-

ous antiquities excavations have resulted in the plant's significant cultural and economic status in numerous regions such as Mesopotamia, ancient Egypt and the Arab Gulf."

The ancient crop also faces some modern challenges. Gulf countries have fought hard to eradicate the red palm weevil, which originally came from Asia and was first detected in the region in the 1980s.

The beetle, which is barely a few centimetres (around an inch) long, produces larvae that feed off palm trunks, killing the trees.

"In Gulf countries and the Middle East, \$8 million is lost each year through removal of severely infested trees alone," according to the FAO.

All parts of the date palm were and are still used in some parts of the region for shelter or to produce a range of products, including handicrafts, mats, rope and furniture.

To celebrate and promote their date palm heritage and palm products, some of the submitting countries hold annual date festivals, most notably the annual Liwa Date Festival in the UAE and the Dates Festival in Al-Qassim in Saudi Arabia.

Both Gulf countries are among the top date exporters, according to the Geneva-based International Trade Centre.

Heartbreak and disbelief as volcano victims named

● Seismologists have predicted there is a 50 percent chance of another eruption on New Zealand's White Island

Sydney

The families and friends of Australian victims of the White Island volcano tragedy paid tribute to "wonderful" lost loved ones Wednesday and expressed doubt they were made aware of the risks of visiting the island.

Seven of the nine people so far identified and named as missing by New Zealand police are from Australia.

An eighth Australian victim who died in hospital was named by authorities there late Wednesday.

That number is expected to rise.

Many more of the victims are expected to have been day-trippers from a cruise ship that left from Sydney.

As the human toll from Monday's eruption came into sharper focus, the families of four of those Australian victims -- who are presumed dead -- spoke out.

"Gavin was a wonderful son and brother," father Brian Dallow told media, saying it would have a "big impact" on the family, especially at Christmastime. "We're really going to miss him."

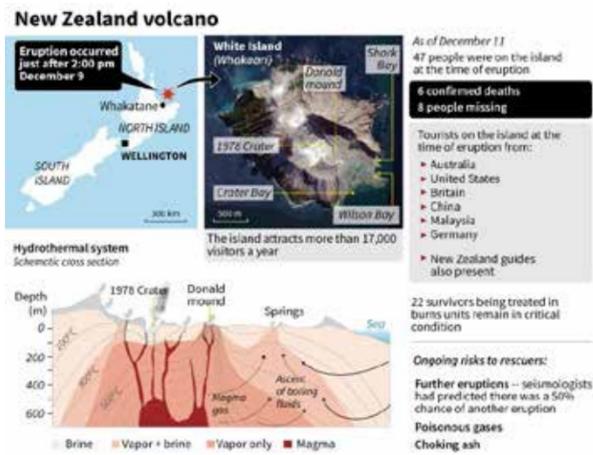
"We'll miss him at the cricket -- I will, at least, and we'll miss him at the football."

"He was a generous man, always helping his family and his community."

Gavin Dallow was believed killed along with his 15-year-old stepdaughter Zoe Hosking.



The smoldering White Island volcano off the coast of New Zealand's North Island



"Our hearts break at the loss of Zoe at such a young age. We know her loss will also devastate her school community and the local Girl Guides of which she was an active member," her step grandfather said.

Her mother, Lisa Hosking, is among those being treated for severe burns.

Brian Dallow said he did not believe his son would have visited the island if he was aware of the risk.

"I think if he knew there was a

danger, he would haven't gone on it. So I'm pretty sure they weren't fully informed of the dangers, otherwise he would haven't gone. I'm quite sure of that. That's the only thing I can be really positive about."

Brisbane woman Julie Richards and her 20-year-old daughter Jessica were also presumed dead.

Family friend John Mickel said news of their deaths was "devastating".

"New Zealand police earlier

this morning confirmed that both Julie and Jess are amongst the deceased in this tragic incident in New Zealand," he told reporters in Brisbane.

Mickel described the pair as "adventurous" and lovers of outdoor sports, saying Jessica was a university student and promising Australian Rules player.

"The family, of course, are united in grief."

Six friends who had been travelling with three other Australians who died -- Jason Griffiths, and couple Karla Mathews and Richard Elzer -- released a joint statement via the country's foreign affairs department late Wednesday.

The group said they had spent five "wonderful" days together on a cruise before they were "devastated" by the news the trio had been on the island when it erupted and Mathews and Elzer had not made it off.

"We then located our third friend, Jason Griffiths, in a hospital in the early hours of the next morning," they said.

"From that moment until the moment of his passing, Jason was surrounded by friends and family members.

"We are incredibly saddened to have lost three of our closest friends."

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said his government had "activated a repatriation plan to bring a number of Australians injured in the White Island volcano tragedy from New Zealand to Australia for specialist medical care."

Up to 10 injured patients will be transferred, beginning in the next 24 hours.

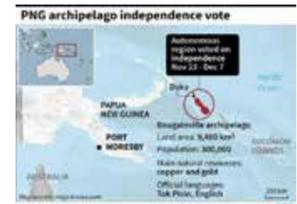
"Three Royal Australian Air Force aircraft have been deployed to New Zealand as part of the repatriation effort."

Bougainville voters back independence by landslide



Young Upe men cast their votes in the Bougainville Referendum at the men's only polling station in Teau Bougainville, Papua New Guinea.

● Chairman of the Bougainville Referendum Commission has declared some 98 per cent of voters on the Melanesian archipelago backed independence



Buka | Papua New Guinea

Voters backing Bougainville's independence from Papua New Guinea have won a landslide referendum victory, according to results released yesterday -- a major step toward the troubled isles becoming the world's newest nation.

Chairman of the Bougainville Referendum Commission Bertie Ahern declared 176,928 people -- around 98 percent of voters -- had backed independence with just 3,043 supporting the option of remaining part of Papua New Guinea with more autonomy.

The announcement prompted loud cheers, applause and tears as dignitaries soon burst

into song, with strains of the islands' anthem "My Bougainville" ringing out.

"Happy is an understatement" nursing graduate Alexia Baria told AFP, "you see my tears, this is the moment we have been waiting for."

The historic vote caps a decades-long peace process and a long recovery from a brutal civil war between Bougainville rebels, Papua New Guinea security forces and foreign mercenaries that ended in 1998 and left up to 20,000 people dead -- 10 percent of the population.

"Now, at least psychologically, we feel liberated," said John Momis, the priest-turned-leader of the autonomous region's government.

But independence will not be immediate, a long political process lies ahead and leaders face formidable financial and administrative challenges to turn a cluster of poor Pacific islands into a fully-fledged nation.

The result must first be ratified by Papua New Guinea's parliament -- where there is opposition to the move for fear it may spark other independence movements in a nation defined by disparate linguistic and tribal groups. But the scale of the victory for the pro-independence side will heap pressure on Port Moresby to endorse the outcome.

First commercial electric plane takes flight in Canada

Vancouver

The world's first fully electric commercial aircraft took its inaugural test flight on Tuesday, taking off from the Canadian city of Vancouver and offering hope that airlines may one day end their polluting emissions.

"This proves that commercial aviation in all-electric form can work," said Roei Ganzarski, chief executive of Seattle-based engineering firm magniX.

The company designed the plane's motor and worked in partnership with Harbour Air, which ferries half a million passengers a year between Vancouver, Whistler ski resort and nearby islands and coastal communities.

Ganzarski said the technology would mean significant cost savings for airlines -- not to mention zero emissions.

"This signifies the start of the electric aviation age," he told reporters.

Civil aviation is one of the fastest growing sources of carbon emissions as people increasingly take to the skies and new technologies have been slow to get off the ground.

The e-plane -- a 62-year-old,



Harbour Air Pilot and CEO Greg McDougall flies the world's first all-electric, zero-emission commercial aircraft during a test flight in a de Havilland DHC-2 Beaver from Vancouver International Airport's South Terminal

six-passenger DHC-2 de Havilland Beaver seaplane retrofitted with an electric motor -- was piloted by Greg McDougall,

founder and chief executive of Harbour Air.

"For me that flight was just like flying a Beaver, but it was a

Beaver on electric steroids. I actually had to back off on the power," he said.



McDougall took the plane on a short loop along the Fraser River near Vancouver International Airport in front of around 100 onlookers soon after sunrise.

Environmentally-friendly flying

The flight lasted less than 15 minutes, according to an AFP journalist on the scene.

"Our goal is to actually electrify the entire fleet. There's no reason not to," said McDougall.

On top of fuel efficiency, the company would save millions in maintenance costs, as electric motors require "drastically" less upkeep, McDougall said.

However, Harbour Air will have to wait at least two years before it can begin electrifying its fleet of more than 40 seaplanes.

The e-plane has to be tested further to confirm it is reliable and safe. In addition, the electric

motor must be approved and certified by regulators.

In Ottawa, Transport Minister Marc Garneau told reporters ahead of the maiden flight that he had his "fingers crossed that the electric plane will work well."

If it does, he said, "it could set a trend for more environmentally friendly flying."

Battery power is also a challenge. An aircraft like the one flown on Tuesday could only fly about 100 miles (160 kilometers) on lithium battery power, said Ganzarski.

While that's not far, it's sufficient for the majority of short-haul flights run by Harbour Air.

"The range now is not where we'd love it to be, but it's enough to start the revolution," said Ganzarski, who predicts batteries and electric motors will eventually be developed to power longer flights.

While the world waits, he said cheaper short-haul flights powered by electricity could transform the way people connect and where they work.

"If people are willing to drive an hour to work, why not fly 15 minutes to work?" he said.



At 285 grammes of CO2 emitted per kilometre (mile) travelled by each passenger, airline industry emissions far exceed those from all other modes of transport, according to the European Environment Agency. The emissions contribute to global warming and climate change, which scientists say will unleash harsher droughts, superstorms, and sea-level rise.

US must recognise China's place in the world – as a responsible nation



Both Donald Trump and US Congress should act with care, with the first step being to end the ongoing trade war sooner than later



SHOLTO BYRNES

China has been responsible nation on the geopolitical front, not having gone to war since 1979

Hardly a day seems to go by without some new story appearing about rising antagonism between China and the West. Beijing ordering government and public offices to remove all foreign computer appliances within the next three years – doubtless a tit for tat against America's freezing out of Huawei – is just the latest. There are always plenty to choose from, right down to a debate about whether TikTok is a "harmless App" or an "insidious Chinese threat to America", as the National Interest website put it earlier this week.

Everyone is aware of the bigger issues. There is a trade war between the US and China, initiated by American president Donald Trump. The US Congress has now passed the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, which allows sanctions to be applied to individuals who undermine "fundamental freedoms and autonomy in Hong Kong", and the House of Representatives has passed the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act, which would require the Trump administration to condemn and take action against Beijing's re-education policy which is viewed as targeting the Muslim Uighur population in the western region of Xinjiang.

Take these issues, combined with the US's ongoing commitment to a vigorous naval presence in the South China Sea – most of which China claims, against the protestations of several countries in the region – and at one level there appears to be a strange disconnect. Perhaps because Trump still refers to Xi as "a friend of mine" and "an incredible guy", there is a sense in which these clashes – both actual and potential – can be managed and kept separate. Somehow we are reassured that they do not all add up to

something far bigger.

Look at it from another perspective, however, and they certainly do. It would be hard for the Chinese government not to see a wave of unrelenting hostility bearing down on them and, in terms of American public opinion, they would be absolutely right. According to the latest Pew Research Centre poll, 60 per cent of Americans now have an unfavourable view of China, the highest figure since the question was first asked in 2005.

Niall Ferguson, the US-based historian, recently wrote that there is indeed a new Cold War, and it is with China, not Russia. Ferguson dates the start of this conflict to 2019 because it was then, he believes, that "Trump's hostility went from foreign policy idiosyncrasy to conventional wisdom", with even the Democratic presidential contender Elizabeth Warren calling for a tougher line on Beijing.

Ferguson's rather chilling view is that if what he calls "Cold War II" is confined to economic and technological competition – which is a suspiciously big "if" – "its benefits could very well outweigh its costs". He points to the research and development spurred by the original standoff between the US and the Soviet Union and the possibly unifying effect on a polarised America if its citizens realised that they once again had a common enemy.

There are those who would welcome a Cold War II on the grounds that they are so ideologically opposed to what is officially termed "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" that they relish a confrontation (which they hope America would win, of course).

The rest of us who shudder at the thought need to make sure that we do not drift any further towards such a cataclysm by default. Urging the US to put an end to a trade war that has cost American farmers dearly, rather than irresponsibly suggesting that a deal could be put off until after the next US presidential election, as Trump recently did, would be a start.



Chinese President Xi Jinping (R) and US President Donald Trump attend their bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Osaka

Donald Trump's reference to Xi Jinping as 'a friend' gives people a sense that clashes between the US and China can be managed

Another would be to ask, as the broadcaster and analyst Fareed Zakaria did in a recent essay in *Foreign Affairs* magazine: "What would be an acceptable level of influence for China to have, given its economic weight in the world?" In the essay, Zakaria raises the usual criticisms of China but he also asserts that "today's China is a remarkably responsible nation on the geopolitical front. It has not gone to war since 1979. It has not used lethal force abroad since 1988. Nor has it funded or supported proxies or armed insurgents anywhere in the world since the early 1980s. That record of non-intervention is unique among the world's great powers."

He also mentions that China is now the second-largest financial contributor to the United Nations and its peacekeeping

programme. It has put forward an ambitious trade programme – the Belt and Road Initiative – that "could be a boon for the developing world if pursued in an open and transparent manner, even in cooperation with western countries wherever possible". Also, while Beijing certainly seeks to extend its influence abroad (what country doesn't?), it has not tried to meddle in foreign elections. For its efforts, China has remained shut out of the leadership of US and Europe-dominated institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF.

Zakaria is right to argue that "a wiser US policy, geared toward turning China into a 'responsible stakeholder', is still achievable".

This does not mean any country capitulating to Beijing. It does, however, mean insisting on engaging. It also means recognising that any kind of war, whether of words or trade, let alone arms, is to be avoided at all costs.

Congress should act with care. So should Trump. And we should react to those who talk excitedly of a new Cold War that America could win with the horror that dangerously naive framing deserves.

627 Battle at Nineveh: Byzantine Emperor Heraclius beats Sassanid forces during Byzantine-Sassanid War

1901 Guglielmo Marconi sends the first transatlantic radio signal, from Poldhu in Cornwall to Newfoundland, Canada



1925 Last Qajar Shah of Iran deposed; Reza Shah Pahlavi takes over

2015 COP21 climate change summit in Paris reaches a deal between 195 countries



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



SIR JOHN JENKINS

15 former Labour MPs including @IanAustin1965 @GiselaStuart have signed an open letter saying people should not vote Labour. Its running as a full-page advert today in local and regional papers across the north of England. bad timing for @jere-mycorbyn

@toryboypierce

02



Honored to join the defence ministers of Bulgaria Croatia Hungary and Slovenia for the official opening of the NATO Multinational Special Aviation Programme in Zadar. A major initiative strengthening NATO and its special forces.

@camille_grand

03



I don't know about you, but I couldn't care less what some millionaire Hollywood luvvie, with no idea what it's like for ordinary people out there, thinks about this election. Why does the Labour Party keep wheeling them out?

@darrengrimes_

04



We needed this election to break the deadlock, but I am referring to the tone of the election, the vile personal attacks, no longer are we allowed to have different views. We need Boris in and, let's deliver on our promise to the British people, and onwards for our great country.

@andreajenkyns

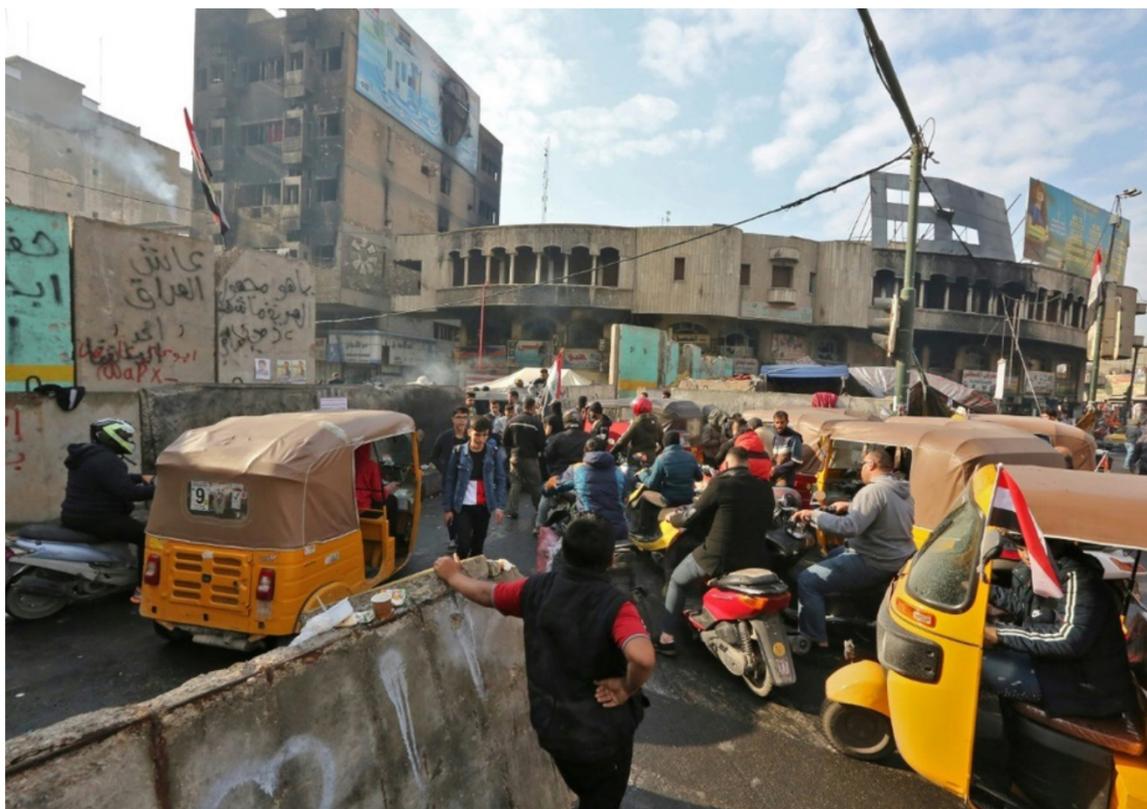
Time to hit Iraqi elite where it hurts

The protesters want a truly national politics that gives every Iraqi pride in being an active citizen of a functioning state

Iraq is currently the most important country in the Arab Middle East. It has always been contested territory – in antiquity the site of a shifting border between Rome and Persia – and a place where important things happen. The 7th century battles of Al-Qadisiyyah and Karbala changed history. A hundred years later, the Abbasids with their black flags swept West on their way to destroying the Umayyads in Damascus. In the 9th century, the marshes of the south were the epicenter of the great Zanj Rebellion. During the First World War, the grinding Mesopotamian campaign and its aftermath cemented the northeastern borders of the modern Arab world.

More recently, Iraq has become a place where dreams die. With the benefit of hindsight, the bloody revolution of 1958 was perhaps the last real triumph of Nasserism. And the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s, the Gulf War of 1990-91 and the agonies that followed the 2003 invasion all now seem a protracted prelude to what we see not just in Iraq but across the region as a whole: The testing to destruction of a range of political ideologies, from Arab nationalism, Ba'athism and Islamism to the forced imposition of democracy.

So the scenes now being played out on the streets of Baghdad, Basra, Nasiriyah, Hilla, Najaf and Karbala represent, at the same time, the end of illusion and a popular struggle for something else – better, more durable, more authentic – to fill the void. The protesters want an end to a corrupt sectarian system (made in Washington and perfected in Tehran) held in place by greedy and violent elites, and a new political dispensation that represents, listens and better meets their own material needs – those of the vast majority of the population of Iraq. They want this as Iraqis, not as Sunnis or Shiites or Christians or Yazidis or Kurds or Arabs. This is not to say that these identities are not important; they are. But people are tired of these identities being exploited by sectarian entrepreneurs for their own ends. They instead want a truly national politics that gives every



Iraqi anti-government protesters gather in the capital's Tahrir Square

Iraqi pride in being an active citizen of a functioning state.

The same is probably true of Lebanon and indeed Iran (or Algeria, where demonstrators have even built walls around polling stations to represent their contempt for the electoral gerrymandering of the ruling military elite). The slogans of the protesters in different countries rhyme: "All of you means all of you," "We want a country," "We are Lebanese/Iraqi not Iranian," "We want you to focus on this country not foreign adventures." A new revolutionary newspaper in Beirut quotes Umm Kulthum: "We are the people: Nothing is impossible for us." A remarkable video clip on YouTube shows a traditional religious reciter in front of the Shrine of the Imam Husayn in Karbala declaiming verses appealing to heaven to support the protesters; saying there is not a single man of honor in Iraqi politics and those in power "are all thieves". Although the protests are national, aimed at national governments

and those – particularly but not only Iran – whom they accuse of interfering illegitimately in the affairs of other countries, their sympathies are broader, with Iraqi, Lebanese and Iranian protesters all supporting each other against structures of oppression.

Iraq is where this struggle will be decided. It matters more to the Islamic Republic than anywhere else. Iraq is where the severest external challenge to Ruhollah Khomeini emerged in the 1980s. Najaf threatens the aspirations of Ali Khamenei to establish the unchallenged doctrinal and spiritual authority of Qom. And, in a curious replay of events in the early 1920s, Iran has invested far too much in the recruitment, co-optation and intimidation of Shiite and other leaders in Iraq to let it go to waste.

And it's getting very nasty. From the beginning of the protests over two months ago, dark forces – almost certainly affiliated to Al-Hashd Al-Shaabi and the Badr-controlled Ministry of the Interior – have been targeting demonstrators with lethal force. In the last week, as demonstrators returned en masse to Baghdad's Tahrir Square and other key locations, counter-demonstrations have been used as cover for kidnappings, assaults and more killings – this time by stabbing as well as shooting. On Sunday, a prominent activist was assassinated by two men on a motorbike on his way home

to Karbala from Baghdad (the CCTV footage is graphic). On the same day, an entire busload of protestors from Karbala went missing. On Monday, four rockets hit a joint US-Iraqi base near Baghdad – the ninth such attack on US facilities in the country in the last five weeks. And there was a mysterious drone attack on Muqtada Al-Sadr's house in Najaf.

Meanwhile, the political class caucus with Qassem Soleimani and Hezbollah's Abu Zainab Al-Kawthrani in order to identify a new prime minister who might be acceptable to the usual powerbrokers. They talk about constitutional and other amendments but don't really mean it. And they offer up the occasional sacrificial lamb in the cause of fighting corruption in the hope the pressure will ease.

But it shouldn't. Because they are not serious enough. The risk is now of complete political breakdown and a return to civil conflict. The international community has plentiful tools at its disposal to concentrate minds and help find a way through this minefield. The UN is very active on the ground, but it needs support. In a positive move, the US authorities have just sanctioned four individuals in Iraq – including the murderous Al-Khazali brothers – whom they believe to have been instrumental in enabling the bloody crackdown that Iran has demanded. But much more is needed. After all, there is no shortage of suitable targets.

It is true that sanctions can be overdone. But, as Michael Knights of the Washington Institute has recently pointed out, given that many in the Iraqi elite have squirreled away so much ill-gotten cash outside the country – often in the UK – properly enforced financial sanctions will hit them where it hurts. When I was British ambassador in Baghdad a decade ago, I tried repeatedly to get people interested in the issue of corruption. I failed. But now, as the dark forces of repression continue to crack heads, it is beyond time for us to get cracking on their freedom of movement, their friends and their loot.



Iraqi police fire teargas at protesters during a demonstration against state corruption, failing public services and unemployment in Tayaran square, Baghdad

From the beginning of the protests over two months ago, dark forces – almost certainly affiliated to Al-Hashd Al-Shaabi and the Badr-controlled Ministry of the Interior – have been targeting demonstrators with lethal force

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stances)

business

BCCI holding symposium on E-payment

TDI | Manama

The Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) represented by its Technology Committee and in cooperation with the BENEFIT Company is holding a symposium on electronic payment today at 10:00 am in Al Majlis Hall of Bait Al Tijjar.

The forum will shed light on the services offered by BENEFIT Company including the

payment gateway and Fawateer; in addition to the services of Bahrain Credit Reference Bureau.

The symposium will also unveil the prospective trajectory of the company.

BCCI urged all its members to attend and learn about the advantages of embracing the latest technologies and the implications of electronic payment and e-commerce in their businesses.

737 MAX won't be cleared to resume flying in 2019

Reuters | Washington

US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) chief Steve Dickson confirmed yesterday the agency will not allow Boeing Co's grounded 737 MAX, involved in two fatal crashes in five months, to resume flying before the end of 2019.

Dickson told CNBC in an interview ahead of his testimony before the US House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee that there are nearly a dozen milestones that must be completed before the plane can return to service.

Federal officials said earlier this week the FAA is not expected to authorise the plane to fly until January at the earliest, citing significant work still to be done. Some US officials think it may not be until at least February that Dickson gives the green light.

Boeing shares fell 2% after Dickson's comments. Boeing did not say if it had abandoned its prior goal to resume deliv-



Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Administrator Stephen Dickson

eries by the end of 2019 but said it was working "closely with the FAA and global regulators towards certification."

Dickson is testifying alongside Earl Lawrence, the FAA's aircraft certification chief.

Boeing says the feeding of erroneous data to a computer system called MCAS that pushed the two planes lower was a common link in two wider chains of events leading to the crashes

Trump pays \$2 mn in damages to charities after court ruling

Washington

Donald Trump on Tuesday paid \$2 million in damages as part of a settlement over use of his former charity to further his political and business interests -- the latest item on the US president's list of legal woes.

Trump had been accused of using foundation funds to settle lawsuits, promote his Trump-branded hotels, and for personal spending, including the purchase of a portrait of himself to display at one of his golf clubs.

The \$2 million was paid equally to eight different charities, including the Children's Aid Society, the United Negro College Fund and the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, according to a statement from New York Attorney General Letitia James, a Democrat.

"Charities are not a means to an end, which is why these damages speak to the president's abuse of power and represent a victory for not-for-profits that follow the law," she said in the statement.

The payments were made the same day that Democrats



Donald Trump

in Congress unveiled two articles of impeachment against Trump, a momentous step asserting that he abused his office and deserved to be removed.

James filed the lawsuit against the Trump Foundation in June last year, accusing it of "persistently illegal conduct" that included improper coordination between the charity and his campaign team during his 2016 White House bid.

Trump agreed to shut down his personal charity in 2018, but the suit moved ahead regardless, as prosecutors sought millions of dollars in restitution and penalties.

RERA committed to enhancing efficiency, says Chief Executive

Shaikh Mohammed meets with leading global experts on Owners Associations

TDI | Manama

Atop Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) official yesterday said the authority is committed to implementing international best practice in all aspects of its operations.

Shaikh Mohammed bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, Chief Executive Officer of the Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA), was holding a meeting with leading experts in the field of Owners Associations.

Tom Skiba, CEO of Community Associations Institute, USA, Pepe Gutierrez, CEO MegaFincas, community association management, Spain and Jeevan D'Mello, Owners Association expert and Chief Transformation Officer, Zenesis Corporation, United Arab Emirates, took part.

Shaikh Mohammed expressed his happiness in welcoming experts from all over the globe to Bahrain.

He said that sharing international "experiences and knowledge with our local real estate practitioners is an im-



Participants during a photocall

portant step in building expertise in the Kingdom of Bahrain."

Moving on, he said Rifa Views has held an Owners General Assembly on 7 December and appointed an Owners Association Board of Directors, which is a milestone moment.

Tom Skiba, CEO of Community Associations Institute, USA, which has over 43,000 members involved in the Owners Association field, welcomed the opportunity to collaborate with RERA Bahrain and the local real estate practitioners.

The Owners Associations experts took part in a panel

discussion on 'Owners' Associations - getting it right for all stakeholders".

The event was part of the RERA seminar series held in conjunction with the BIPEX international property exhibition event from 7th to 9th December at the International Exhibition Centre.

OPEC sees small 2020 oil deficit even before latest supply cut

Reuters | London

OPEC yesterday pointed to a small deficit in the oil market next year due to restraint by Saudi Arabia even before the latest supply pact with other producers takes effect, suggesting a tighter market than previously thought.

In a monthly report, OPEC said demand for its crude will average 29.58 million barrels per day (bpd) next year. OPEC pumped less oil in November than the average 2020 requirement, having in previous months supplied more.

The report retreats further from OPEC's initial projection of a 2020 supply glut as output from rival producers such as US shale has grown more slowly than expected. This will give a tailwind to efforts by OPEC and partners led by Russia to support the market next year.

OPEC kept its 2020 economic and oil demand growth forecasts steady and was more upbeat about the outlook.

"On the positive side, the global trade slowdown has likely bottomed out, and now the negative trend in industrial production seen in 2019 is expected to reverse in 2020," the report said. Oil prices LCOc1 were steady after the report's release, trading near \$64 a barrel, below the level some OPEC officials have said they favour.

The Organisation of the Pe-



Representative picture (Courtesy of CNBC)

roleum Exporting Countries, Russia and other producers, a group known as OPEC+, have since Jan. 1 implemented a deal to cut output by 1.2 million bpd to support the market.

Lower output

The report showed OPEC production falling even before the new deal takes effect.

In November, OPEC output fell by 193,000 bpd to 29.55 million bpd, according to figures the group collects from secondary sources, as Saudi Arabia cut supply.

Saudi Arabia told OPEC it made an even bigger cut in

supply of over 400,000 bpd last month. The kingdom had boosted production in October after attacks on its oil facilities in September briefly more than halved output.

The November production rate suggests there would be a 2020 deficit of 30,000 bpd if OPEC kept pumping the same amount and other factors remained equal, less than the 70,000 bpd surplus implied in November's report and an excess of over 500,000 bpd seen in July.

OPEC and its partners have been limiting supply since 2017, helping to revive prices by clear-

ing a glut that built up in 2014 to 2016. But higher prices have also boosted US shale and other rival supplies.

In the report, OPEC said non-OPEC supply will grow by 2.17 million bpd in 2020, unchanged from the previous forecast but 270,000 less than initially thought in July as shale has not grown as quickly as first thought.

"In 2020, non-OPEC supply is expected to see a continued slowdown in growth on the back of decreased investment and lower drilling activities in U.S. tight oil," OPEC said, using another term for shale.

Aramco rocket on debut after record IPO

- Aramco shares rose 10 per cent to 35.2 riyals just seconds after trading began
- Saudi bourse now the ninth biggest in the world
- The IPO process had put the energy giant's value at \$1.7 trillion

Riyadh

Taudi Aramco's shares soared on their debut on the domestic stock exchange yesterday, becoming the world's biggest listed company worth \$1.88 trillion after a record-breaking IPO.

Other major Gulf markets also rose.

Shares of Saudi Arabian Oil Co (Aramco) soared to 35.2 riyals (\$9.39), up from the initial public offering (IPO) price of 32 riyals. The increase helped the company close in on the \$2 trillion valuation long sought by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

If Aramco shares gain 10pc today as well, it will exceed the \$2 trillion valuation coveted by Prince Mohammed. The company is expected to be included in the MSCI emerging markets index on Dec. 17.

Aramco raised \$25.6 billion on Dec. 5 through the IPO. It plans to exercise the 15pc greenshoe option in whole or part during the first 30 days of its trading period. If the option is exercised in full, the oil giant could raise

الاسهم	الحد	الأساسي							
15.00	166	1	15.42	1,286	15.30	15.30	0.00	0.00	0.00
8.30	16	4,000	8.74	1,959	8.72	8.72	0.00	0.00	0.00
13.36	528	2,919	13.96	1	13.86	13.86	0.00	0.00	0.00
22.10	5	321	25.15	606	25.05	25.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
9.51	3,741	136	9.98	467	9.80	9.80	-1.01	0.00	0.00
13.14	280	1,720	14.70	136	14.62	14.70	0.00	0.00	0.00
13.00	1,350	2,882	13.96	1,000	13.90	13.96	0.00	0.00	0.00
14.06	205	1,32	14.32	629	14.26	14.32	0.00	0.00	0.00
					10.10	10.14	0.00	0.00	0.00
					0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Aramco's launch saw the Saudi oil behemoth's value soar to \$1.88 trillion, far ahead of other firms in the trillion-dollar club

Closing Bell

SAUDI	▲ 0.8pc to 8,134 pts
ABU DHABI	▲ 0.4pc to 5,040 pts
DUBAI	▲ 1pc to 2,714 pts
QATAR	▲ 0.2pc to 10,339 pts
EGYPT	▼ 0.6pc to 13,427 pts
BAHRAIN	▲ 0.4pc to 1,555 pts
OMAN	▼ 0.1pc to 4,014 pts
KUWAIT	■ at 6,750 pts

\$29.4 billion in IPO. Aramco also dangled sweeten-

ers for local investors, including promises of higher dividends and the possibility of bonus shares if they hold on to the stock.

The Saudi benchmark index added 0.8pc with Riyadh Bank and Al Rajhi Banking & Investment Corp gaining 4.5pc and 0.6pc, respectively.

The IPO process had put the energy giant's value at \$1.7 trillion, far ahead of other firms in the trillion-dollar club including Apple and Microsoft.

The listing of Aramco, with its huge capital value, boosts

the Saudi bourse -- known as Tadawul -- to the ranks of the world's top ten.

The IPO process had put the energy giant's value at \$1.7 trillion, far ahead of other firms in the trillion-dollar club including Apple and Microsoft.

The listing of Aramco, with its huge capital value, boosts the Saudi bourse -- known as Tadawul -- to the ranks of the world's top ten.

Elsewhere, Prince Alwaleed bin Talal's firm Kingdom Holding Coleapt 9.9pc, to become the top gainer on the index.



Today is a day of immense pride for Aramco. Today we make history as Saudi Aramco marks the beginning of an important new chapter in our company's journey of prosperity

AMIN NASSER ARAMCO CHIEF EXECUTIVE



saying in a Twitter posting by the Dubai Media Office.

The Abu Dhabi index ADI closed up 0.4pc, driven by a 0.9pc rise in telecoms firm Etisalat ETISALAT.AD and a 1.1pc gain in First Abu Dhabi Bank.

The Qatari index ended 0.2pc up, with market heavyweight Industries Qatar rising 2.2pc and Commercial Bank was up 1.1pc.

However, Egypt's blue-chip index fell 0.6pc with 23 of its 30 stocks ending in the red, including Sidi Kerir Petrochemical which plunged 9.6pc and Juhayna Food, which lost 5.5pc.

Aramco: from 'Prosperity Well' to energy giant

Dubai

From its beginnings in 1938 when it first struck oil with the aptly named "Prosperity Well", Saudi Arabia's energy giant Aramco has delivered unimaginable riches to the kingdom.

Over the decades, the firm has grown into the world's largest and most profitable energy concern, generating some 10 per cent of global crude supplies and trillions of dollars in income.

Aramco shares hit the domestic bourse yesterday after the world's largest initial public offering in which 1.5pc of its shares were sold to raise \$25.6 billion.

After hitting its upper limit on the stock market debut, the company is now valued at a massive \$1.88 trillion and is expected to rise further to challenge the \$2 trillion mark that Saudi rulers had initially sought.

However, it is not yet clear if the authorities will proceed with the planned second phase of the IPO, and sell more equity on an international stock exchange.

The listing came despite Aramco being hit by a string of attacks on its facilities, the latest and most serious on September 14 when drone and missile strikes halted the flow of 5.7 million barrels of oil per day -- more than half of its output.

The attack had threatened to undermine the IPO plans but the company quickly said it had restored production and output capacity to pre-strike levels.



The founder of Saudi Arabia King Abdel Aziz speaks to the general manager of Aramco N. Devins during the opening ceremony of the Riyadh-Dammam train link in October 1951

Over the decades, the firm has grown into the world's largest and most profitable energy concern, generating some 10 per cent of global crude supplies and trillions of dollars in income.

Striking gold

Aramco has its origins in a 1933 concession agreement signed by the Saudi government with the Standard Oil Company of California. Drilling began in 1935 and the first oil began flowing three years later.

It gained its current name from the subsidiary created to manage the agreement that was called the Arabia American Oil

Company in the late 1940s.

In 1949, oil production hit a milestone 500,000 barrels per day and the following year Aramco built the 1,212-kilometre (753-mile) Trans-Arabian Pipeline to export Saudi oil to Europe across the Mediterranean.

Production rose rapidly after the discovery of large offshore and onshore oilfields including Ghawar, the world's largest with some 60 billion barrels of oil, and Safaniya, the biggest offshore field with 35 billion barrels.

In 1973, with prices spiking at the peak of the Arab oil embargo -- imposed against the US over its support for Israel -- the Saudi government acquired 25 percent of Aramco to increase its stake to 60 percent and become a majority stakeholder.

Seven years later, it was nationalised, and in 1988 it became the Saudi Arabian Oil Company,

or Saudi Aramco.

From the 1990s, Aramco invested hundreds of billions of dollars in massive expansion projects, raising its oil output capacity to more than 12 million bpd, alongside making bold international acquisitions and pursuing joint ventures.

In mid-September, Aramco maintained some 260 billion barrels in proven oil reserves, the second largest in the world after Venezuela, in addition to 300 trillion cubic feet of gas.

Based in Dhahran in the country's east, the firm has key oil operations in the United States, China, India, South Korea and several European and Asian nations.

Aramco has also built a network of pipelines and refineries inside and outside the kingdom and expanded its presence in the petrochemicals industry.



Saudi Aramco now boasts ultramodern facilities like this research and development centre in Dhahran

Final push in Britain's Brexit election

● Today's snap general election was called in a bid to break the Brexit deadlock

● The pollsters' seat projection put the Conservatives on course for a relatively slender 28-seat majority in parliament's 650-member lower House of Commons

London

Britain's political leaders were criss-crossing the country on the final day of general election campaigning yesterday as a key poll showed the outcome could be hanging in the balance.

Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Labour main opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn were set for whistlestop tours of key battleground seats in a frantic last push for votes.

Today's snap general election was called in a bid to break the Brexit deadlock that has gripped Britain ever since the seismic 2016 referendum vote to leave the EU.

After struggling to lead a minority administration, Johnson is hoping to secure a majority government that will enable him to take Britain out of the European Union on January 31.

His centre-right Conservatives have been consistently ahead in the opinion polls but YouGov's final survey of the campaign predicted they were set only for a narrow majority -- with the race tightening.

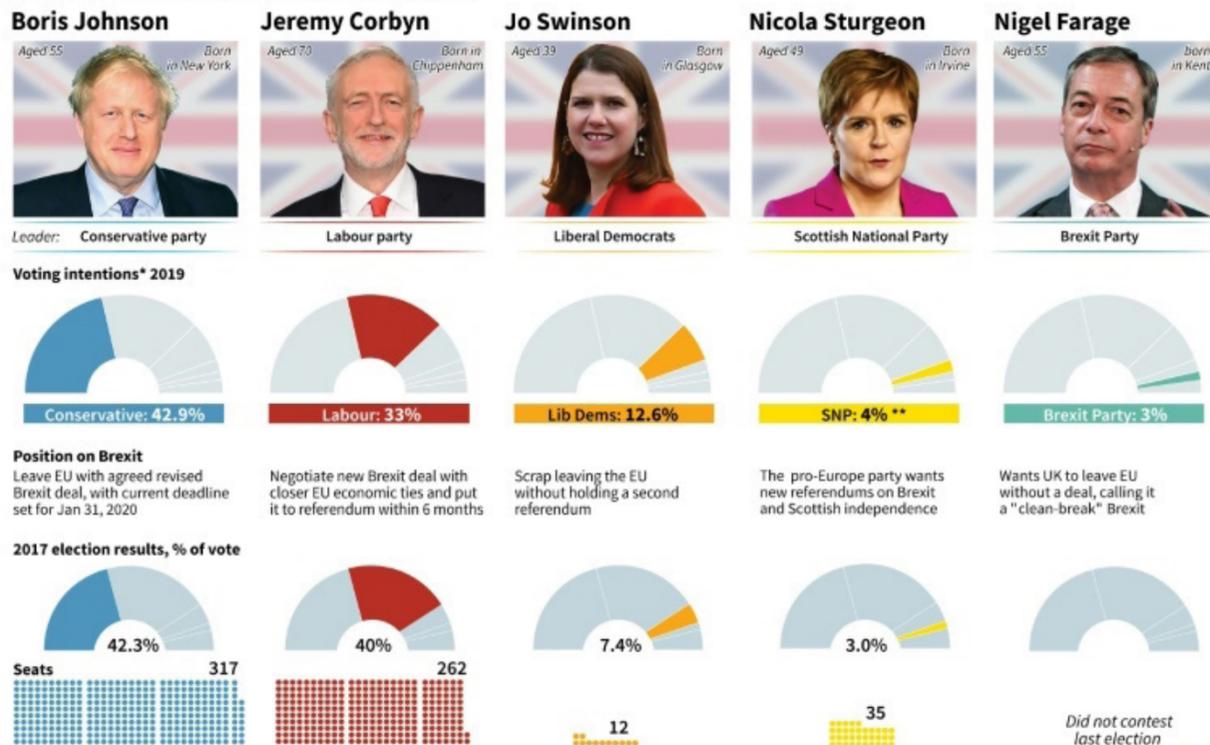
The pollsters' seat projection put the Conservatives on course for a relatively slender 28-seat majority in parliament's 650-member lower House of Commons -- down from a comfortable 68 forecast by YouGov on November 27.

The new poll forecast that the Conservatives would take 339 seats (up 22 on the last general election in 2017), with the left-wing Labour main opposition on 231 (down 31).

The Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) was on course for 41

British election: the major parties

Current polls, position on Brexit and performance at the last election



Prime Minister Boris Johnson is hoping to secure a majority government



Main opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn has called the vote 'the most important election in a generation'

seats, up six, while the Liberal Democrats are set for 15 seats, up three.

YouGov warned that the final number of Conservative seats could be between 311 -- hung parliament territory -- and 367.

"The margins are extremely tight and small swings in a small number of seats, perhaps from tactical voting and a continuation of Labour's recent upward trend, means we can't currently rule out a hung parliament," said Chris Curtis, YouGov's political

research manager.

The pollsters interviewed approximately 100,000 panellists over the past seven days.

Milk and 'quicksand'

Johnson, 55, was to start the day delivering milk in Yorkshire, northern England, and end it canvassing in Essex, northeast of London.

"Unless we get out of this quicksand of a Brexit argument, our future as a country remains uncertain... a lost decade of di-

vision, delay and deadlock," he said.

"Let's get Brexit done and get on with spreading opportunity and hope across the whole UK and let's unleash the potential of this country."

In a bid to ram home his core message, Johnson ploughed a British flag-themed digger, marked "Get Brexit done", through a styrofoam wall with "gridlock" written on it.

Corbyn, 70, was to speak at a rally in Middlesbrough, north-

east England, calling Thursday "the most important election in a generation".

"My message to all those voters who are still undecided is that you can vote for hope," he was to say.

"We will put money in your pocket because you deserve it. The richest and big business will pay for it."

The veteran socialist is planning a vast programme of public service spending and nationalisation, plus another referendum

”

The margins are extremely tight and small swings in a small number of seats, perhaps from tactical voting and a continuation of Labour's recent upward trend, means we can't currently rule out a hung parliament

CHRIS CURTIS, YOUNGOV'S POLITICAL RESEARCH MANAGER.

on Brexit, pitting a softer version than Johnson's against staying in the EU.

The Britain Elects poll aggregator puts the Conservatives on 43 percent, Labour on 33 percent, the Liberal Democrats on 13 percent, and the Greens and the Brexit Party on three percent each.

SNP, Libs target Johnson

Jo Swinson, leader of the anti-Brexit Lib Dems, was to visit Conservative-held seats on the leafy southwest fringes of London, including Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab's constituency -- tipped by YouGov to be on a knife-edge.

"To stop Brexit, we must stop Boris Johnson. We have one more day left to do it," she said.

SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland's first minister, branded Johnson the "greatest danger to Scotland of any Tory prime minister in modern times", in an open letter.

She is seeking a second Scottish independence referendum as the price of supporting Labour in a hung parliament.

Meanwhile in Northern Ireland, which returns 18 seats, the province's five major parties clashed over Brexit in a televised debate late Tuesday.

Brexit arrangements for the Irish border proved the stickiest part of the EU divorce negotiations.

Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionists played a key role in the last parliament, propping up the minority Conservatives.

Global airlines cut 2019 profit forecast over trade tensions

Reuters | Geneva

Airline profits are on course to fall faster than expected in 2019 as trade wars hit global commerce and broader confidence, the industry's main global body said yesterday, while predicting a modest recovery next year.

Cutting its full-year net profit forecast to \$25.9 billion, a 5.1 per cent decline from 2018, the International Air Transport Association said an improvement in 2020 was contingent on a "truce" in global trade disputes. In June it had forecast \$28 billion in profit this year.

"Trade wars produce no winners," IATA Director General Alexandre de Juniac told an annual media briefing.

De Juniac also cited slower growth, Brexit and social unrest among factors that "all came together to create a tougher than



A 737 Max jet (Courtesy of Business Insider)

anticipated business environment for airlines" in 2019.

IATA slashed its full-year global revenue forecast to \$838 billion from the \$899 billion

predicted in June and said it expected an improvement to \$872 billion for 2020.

"We've downgraded our forecasts for 2019 pretty much

across the board," chief economist Brian Pearce said. "This has been driven mostly by the impact of trade wars."

Reflecting downward pressure on fares, net profit per passenger fell to \$5.70 this year from \$6.22, with the industry's net profit margin expected to decline to 3.1pc this year from 3.4pc in 2018.

But the sharpest deterioration is being felt in airlines' cargo businesses, where a 3.3pc drop in freight demand marked the steepest decline since the 2009 financial crisis, with revenue down 8pc year-on-year.

Growth in world trade has all but evaporated to an expected 0.9pc this year, sharply down from the 2.5pc forecast in June and the 4.1pc expansion predicted a year ago, IATA said.

Underpinning the partial recovery predicted next year,

IATA forecast more robust trade growth of 3.3pc as "election-year pressures in the U.S. contribute to reduced trade tensions".

Capacity pressure

While a return to service of Boeing's grounded 737 MAX would relieve airline customers, it could also lead to a glut in short-term capacity, putting further pressure on fares, analysts have warned.

Outstripping a 4.1pc traffic increase next year, airline capacity is expected to rise 4.7pc with the arrival of hundreds of MAX jets that the market may find "hard to swallow" even when offset by retirement of older planes, Pearce said.

The MAX safety crisis is coming to an end, IATA's safety chief said on Wednesday, while warning that disagreements among regulators could yet complicate

the jet's return.

With most of the industry's global profit is currently generated by a handful of mainly U.S.-based carriers, the past year has seen a slew of airline failures mainly in Europe.

"There's clearly scope for more consolidation though, given that long tail of airlines that haven't improved," Pearce predicted, despite regulatory barriers to cross-border mergers.

A number of European states are imposing new taxes pending an EU-wide deal, with environmental and "flight-shaming" activists inspired by teen activist Greta Thunberg also demanding an end to airlines' fuel-tax exemption.

"We need to make sure that CORSIA is successful and not compromised by a patchwork of competing taxes and charges," De Juniac said.

SHOW



JUMANJI THE NEXT LEVEL (PG-15)(ADVENTURE/ACTION)

OASIS JUFFAIR: 12.30 + 3.15 + 6.00 + 8.45 + 11.30 PM
 OASIS JUFFAIR (VIP): 12.00 + 2.45 + 5.30 + 8.15 + 11.00 PM
 OASIS JUFFAIR (3D): 11.30 AM + 2.15 + 5.00 + 7.45 + 10.30 PM
 CITY CENTRE: 11.15 AM + 2.00 + 4.45 + 7.30 + 10.15 PM + (1.00 AM THURS/FRI)
 CITY CENTRE (ATMOS): 10.30 AM + 1.00 + 3.45 + 6.30 + 9.15 + 12.00 MN
 CITY CENTRE (IMAX 2D): 12.00 + 2.45 + 5.30 + 8.15 + 11.00 PM
 CITY CENTRE (3D): 12.30 + 3.15 + 6.00 + 8.45 + 11.30 PM
 CITY CENTRE (VIP I): 11.45 AM + 2.30 + 5.15 + 8.00 + 10.45 PM
 CITY CENTRE (VIP II): 12.45 + 3.30 + 6.15 + 9.00 + 11.45 PM
 SEEF (I): 10.30 AM + 1.00 + 3.45 + 6.30 + 9.15 + 12.00 MN
 SEEF (II): 12.00 + 2.45 + 5.30 + 8.15 + 11.00 PM + (12.30 MN THURS/FRI)
 SEEF (III): (3D): 12.30 + 3.15 + 6.00 + 8.45 + 11.30 PM
 WADI AL SAIL: 11.45 AM + 12.45 + 2.30 + 3.30 + 5.15 + 6.15 + 8.00 + 9.00 + 10.45 PM + 11.45 PM

DWAYNE JOHNSON, JACK BLACK, KEVIN HART

BLACK CHRISTMAS (15+)(HORROR/THRILLER)

OASIS JUFFAIR: 2.00 + 6.45 + 11.30 PM
 CITY CENTRE: 12.00 + 2.00 + 4.00 + 6.00 + 8.00 + 10.00 + 12.00 MN + (1.00 AM THURS/FRI)
 SEEF (I): 11.45 AM + 1.45 + 3.45 + 5.45 + 7.45 + 9.45 + 11.45 PM
 WADI AL SAIL: 12.00 + 2.00 + 4.00 + 6.00 + 8.00 + 10.00 + 12.00 MN

MOGEN POOTS, ALEYSE SHANNON, LILY DONOGHUE

MARDAANI 2 (PG-15)(HINDI/CRIME/THRILLER DRAMA)

From Thursday at 7.00 pm onwards
 OASIS JUFFAIR: 11.45 AM + 2.00 + 4.15 + 6.30 + 8.45 + 11.00 PM
 CITY CENTRE: 12.15 + 2.30 + 4.45 + 7.00 + 9.15 + 11.30
 SEEF (I): 12.30 + 2.45 + 5.00 + 7.15 + 9.30 + 11.45 PM
 WADI AL SAIL: 1.45 + 6.30 + 11.15 PM

RANI MUKERJI, SHRUTI BAPNA, RAJESH SHARMA

THE PEANUT BUTTER FALCON (PG-13)(ADVENTURE)

SEEF (II): 10.30 AM + 12.30 + 2.30 + 4.30 + 6.30 + 8.30 + 10.30 PM
 SHIA LABEOUF, DAKOTA JOHNSON, ZACK GOTTSAGEN

JUDY (PG-13)(DRAMA/MUSICAL/BIOGRAPHY)

CITY CENTRE: 2.00 + 6.45 + 11.30 PM
 SEEF (II): 12.00 + 2.30 + 5.00 + 7.30 + 10.00 PM
 WADI AL SAIL: 11.15 AM + 4.00 + 8.45 PM

THE BODY (PG-15)(HINDI/THRILLER)

OASIS JUFFAIR: 2.30 + 7.00 + 11.30 PM
 SEEF (I): 12.00 + 2.00 + 4.00 + 6.00 + 8.00 + 10.00 + 12.00 MN
 EMRAAN HASHMI, RISHI KAPOOR, SOBHITA DHULIPALA

BERNIE THE DOLPHIN 2 (G)(ADVENTURE/FAMILY/COMEDY)

CITY CENTRE: 11.45 AM + 4.30 + 9.15 PM
 SEEF (II): 10.30 AM + 12.45 + 3.00 + 5.15 PM

PATRICK MULDOON, KEVIN SORBO, TOMMI ROSE

FROZEN 2 (PG)(ANIMATION/ADVENTURE/COMEDY)

OASIS JUFFAIR (KIDS CINEMA): 10.45 AM + 1.00 + 3.15 + 5.30 + 7.45 + 10.00 PM
 CITY CENTRE: 10.30 AM + 12.30 + 2.45 + 5.00 + 7.15 + 9.30 + 11.45 PM
 SEEF (I): 11.45 AM + 2.00 + 4.15 + 6.30 + 8.45 + 11.00 PM
 WADI AL SAIL: 11.45 AM + 2.00 + 4.15 + 6.30 + 8.45 + 11.00 PM
 KRISTEN BELL, IDINA MENZEL, JOSH GAD

21 BRIDGES (PG-15)(CRIME/ACTION/THRILLER)

CITY CENTRE: 10.30 AM + 12.45 + 3.00 + 5.15 + 7.30 + 9.45 + 12.00 MN + (12.45 MN THURS/FRI)
 SEEF (II): 12.15 + 2.30 + 4.45 + 7.00 + 9.15 + 11.30 PM
 CHADWICK BOSEMAN, SIENNA MILLER, STEPHAN JAMES

LE MANS '66 (PG-13)(DRAMA/SPORT/BIOGRAPHY)

CITY CENTRE: 3.00 + 8.30 PM
 SEEF (II): 1.00 + 6.15 + 11.30 PM

MATT DAMON, CHRISTIAN BALE, JON BERNTHAL

MALEFICENT 2: MISTRESS OF EVIL (PG)(ADVENTURE)

CITY CENTRE: 12.30 + 3.00 + 5.30 + 8.00 + 10.30 PM
 SEEF (II): 2.15 + 6.45 + 11.15 PM

ANGELINA JOLIE, TERESA MAHONEY, MICHELLE PFEIFFER

PATI PATNI AUR WO (PG-15)(HINDI/COMEDY/ROMANTIC)

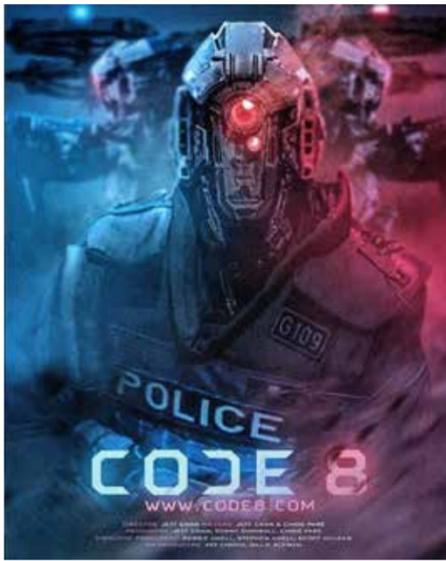
OASIS JUFFAIR: 12.00 + 4.30 + 9.00 PM

KARTIK AARYAN, BHUMI PEDNEKAR, ANANYA PANDAY



KNIVES OUT (PG-15)(CRIME/COMEDY/THRILLER)

CITY CENTRE: 12.45 + 3.30 + 6.15 + 9.00 + 11.45 PM
 DANIEL CRAIG, CHRIS EVANS, ANA DE ARMAS



CODE 8 (PG-15)(ACTION/THRILLER/DRAMA/SCI-FICTION)

SEEF (II): 10.45 AM + 4.00 + 9.15 PM

STEPHEN AMELL, ROBBIE AMELL, KARI MATCHETT

MIRACLE IN CELL NO. 7 (PG-15)(TURKISH/DRAMA)

CITY CENTRE: 10.30 AM + 3.30 + 8.45 PM

ARAS BULUT YNEML, N SA SOF YA AKSONGUR, LKER AKSUM

JOKER (15+)(THRILLER/CRIME/DRAMA)

CITY CENTRE: 12.15 + 3.00 + 5.45 + 8.30 + 11.15 PM

JOAQUIN PHOENIX, ZAZIE BEETZ, ROBERT DE NIRO

PLAYING WITH FIRE (PG)(ADVENTURE/COMEDY/FAMILY)

CITY CENTRE: 11.15 AM + 1.30 + 3.45 + 6.00 + 8.15 + 10.30 PM

JOHN CENA, KEEGAN-MICHAEL KEY, JOHN LEGUIZAMO

CHARLIE'S ANGELS (PG-15)(ACTION/ADVENTURE/COMEDY)

CITY CENTRE: 1.00 + 6.15 + 11.30 PM

KRISTEN STEWART, NAOMI SCOTT, ELLA BALINSKA

GEMINI MAN (PG-15)(ACTION/THRILLER/DRAMA)

CITY CENTRE: 12.30 + 6.00 + 11.30 PM

WILL SMITH, MARY ELIZABETH WINSTEAD, CLIVE OWEN

ARCTIC DOGS (PG)(ANIMATION/ADVENTURE/COMEDY)

SEEF (II): 12.15 + 4.45 + 9.15 PM

JEREMY RENNER, HEIDI KLUM, JAMES FRANCO

A SCORE TO SETTLE (15+)(ACTION/DRAMA)

SEEF (II): 7.30 + 9.45 + 12.00 MN

NICOLAS CAGE, NOAH LE GROS, KAROLINA WYDRA

UNBREAKABLE (PG-15)(FILIPINO/DRAMA)

SEEF (II): 10.30 AM + 3.30 + 8.45 PM

ANGELICA PANGANIBAN, BEA ALONZO, RICHARD GUTIERREZ

KETVOLANU ENTE MALAKHA (PG-15)(MALAYALAM)

OASIS JUFFAIR: 11.15 AM + 4.00 + 8.45 PM

SEEF (II): 12.45 + 6.00 + 11.15 PM

ASIF ALI, VEENA NANDAKUMAR

MAMANGAM (PG-13)(MALAYALAM)

From Thursday at 7.30 pm onwards

OASIS JUFFAIR: 11.15 AM + 2.15 + 5.15 + 8.15 + 11.15 PM

CITY CENTRE: 11.30 AM + 2.30 + 5.30 + 8.30 + 11.30 PM

SEEF (I): 11.00 AM + 2.00 + 5.00 + 8.00 + 11.00 PM

SEEF (II): (12.30 MN THURS/FRI)

WADI AL SAIL: 11.00 AM + 2.00 + 5.00 + 8.00 + 11.00 PM

AL HAMRA: 12.00 + 3.00 + 6.00 + 9.00 + (12.00 MN THURS./FRI)

MAMMOOTTY, UNNI MUKUNDAN, NEERAJ MADHAV, PRACHI TEHIAN



AMMA RAJYMLO KADAPA BIDDALU (PG-15)(TELUGU)

From Thursday at 7.30 pm onwards

SEEF (I): 10.30 AM + 3.00 + 7.30 + 12.00 MN

RAJSEKHAR ANINGI, AASHIKKA MEKA, DHEERAJ KV

JIMMY EE VEEDINTE AISWARYAM (PG-13)(MALAYALAM)

SEEF (I): 12.45 + 5.15 + 9.45 PM

MITHUN RAMESH, DIVYA PILLAI, SURAJ VENJARAMOODU

MOVIE REVIEW

'Code 8' is a gritty and realistic take on the superhero genre

In the futuristic movie, Jeff Chan brings a dystopian city to life with limited resources

Spawned from a short film of the same name and driven by a massive IndieGoGo campaign that was reportedly over 1000% funded, Jeff Chan's futuristic CODE 8 hits hard with the struggle of fringe dwellers with supernatural powers in a harsh society.

In Lincoln City, 4% of the population is born with special powers and even though these abilities are useful, they are treated as second class citizens. With law enforcement laying a heavy hand on them, the "powered" as they're called, must deal with a healthy dose of discrimination since automation rendered them useless over the years. Their spinal fluid, however, is used as a valuable street drug called Psyke, and drug dealers "farm" the ostracized population as their drug cash cow. Connor (Robbie Amell) is an electric, someone who can naturally control electricity, and his mother Mary (Kari Matchett) can control the cold. She becomes ill, and he can't keep a job due to society's harsh view of the power-enabled, so he turns to a life



Robbie Amell, left, and Stephen Amell in a scene from 'Code 8'

of crime to make money for her medical treatment. Garrett (Stephen Amell), along with his two cronies, are the cogs in a bigger network of Psyke dealers, and Connor joins their team. When a heist goes wrong, Garrett and Connor must come together to

evade the determined Agent Park (Sung Kang) and the wrath of their criminal bosses. With engaging leads Robbie and Stephen Amell (know for their extensive TV work on Arrow and The Flash), and great cinematography and production

value, CODE 8 has all the makings of a great franchise or TV series. Robbie Amell shows his emotional range playing Connor, with anger and sadness switching out on a dime, and his cousin Stephen is believable as the roughened Garrett, Connor's



Code 8 was released in 2016 as a short film, but after an online fundraising campaign that aimed to earn \$200,000 to cover the costs for a full-length feature instead scored upwards of \$2 million, the project was off to the races

conduit to his power and the dark world of crime.

Where the film needs some work is the clichéd criminals who are more caricatures than threats and a storyline that loses energy midway. While Greg Bryk (Bitten, The Handmaid's

Tale, Saw) plays a rather nasty figure as drug dealer Marcus, overall, the threat posed to the main protagonists seemed a tiny bit hollow.

The story does introduce some interesting aspects of discrimination, the hypocrisy of law enforcement, and loyalties within the well-built relationships between the characters. Here's hoping that if the film gets a sequel or extends into a TV series, we see continued use of the diversity shown in the film. The special effects were subtle and used economically, creating a realistic version of a superhero, one whose merits have been lost on the "normal" masses. Keep your eye out for the Guardian robot cops too. They're super effective and creepy in this dystopian police state.

For some hometown futuristic fare, you can't go wrong with the grittiness of the Toronto-shot CODE 8 and the solid Canadian cast. It's worth watching for the effects and the performances of the talented and dynamic Amell duo.

CELEBS

celebs

Sandler details how he battled stage fright

Fox | Los Angeles

Comedian, movie star and former "Saturday Night Live" cast member Adam Sandler opened up in a recent interview about the early days of his career when his dreams of stardom were almost shattered by stage fright and a lack of funds.

The 53-year-old comedian sat down for an interview with "60 Minutes" to discuss everything from his upcoming movie, "Uncut Gems," to his early days as an ambitious and broke stand-up comedian.

In the interview with Sharyn Alfonsi, Sandler revealed that going to NYU for college had the added benefit of allowing him to frequent New York City's many stand-up comedy venues to try out new material and sharpen his skills as a performer. However, it meant that he had to take on the classic mantle of a broke college student.

"Oh, money?" he said in the interview. "I think it was 10 bucks a

night, 10 bucks. That was good. Didn't care."

In addition to making very little money before getting his big break on "SNL," Sandler revealed that stage fright posed a problem for his performing career early on. Fortunately, he could rely on another talent of his to pull through — the guitar.

"I was so nervous every time. Then I'd get up there and I wouldn't remember what I was supposed to say and go blank," he explained. "And you have the guitar in your hands, and that way I was at least doing something."

He agreed with Alfonsi's assessment that putting comedy to music was his "security blanket."

The move worked and Sandler stacked up several fun comedy tracks throughout his career, such as "Lunch Lady Land," "The Hanukkah Song" and his most recent hit, a tribute to his late "SNL" cast member and friend Chris Farley.

Sandler said that he thought his path to success at the be-



Adam Sandler



I was so nervous every time. Then I'd get up there and I wouldn't remember what I was supposed to say and go blank. And you have the guitar in your hands, and that way I was at least doing something

ADAM SANDLER

ginning of his career was to do his best to emulate Eddie Murphy, which meant getting on the popular late-night sketch show first and foremost.

Brad Pitt clears up dating rumours

Fox | Los Angeles

Brad Pitt is putting a lid on speculation surrounding his dating life.

The "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood" star opened up to The New York Times for the outlet's "The Great Performers" issue and discussed everything from smoking marijuana in the 90s, overcoming the barriers life throws at you and those pesky dating rumours.

Since Pitt's ex-wife, actress Angelina Jolie, filed for divorce from him in September 2016, the public has seen many female companions reportedly linked to the bankable box office draw.

According to Entertainment Tonight, while still embattled in the former couple's divorce proceedings, Pitt, 55, saw himself fielding rumours he was seeing MIT professor Neri Oxman. In September, it was jewellery designer Sat Hari Khalsa, who was the subject of rumours. Most recently, Pitt was spotted with actress Alia Shawkat on multiple occasions, prompting

fans to speculate whether they were an item.

When the Times asked Pitt point-blank if he reads the stories printed about him, the "Mr. and Mrs. Smith" star said he doesn't necessarily try to avoid it, but: "I just don't seek it out."

Pitt insisted all of the rumours about him dating an exorbitant number of women are completely false.

"I don't know how many women they've said I've been dating the last two or three years," said the "Ad Astra" star. "And none of it's true."

The father of six also dished on his approach to avoiding negative publicity as it pertains to his projects, revealing to the outlet that he "stopped reading all press" around 2004.



Brad Pitt

Elizabeth Hurley, Queen Elizabeth have the same stalker, actress claims

Fox | Los Angeles

The Queen of England and Elizabeth Hurley have more in common than just the same first name.

Hurley appeared on "Watch What Happens Live with Andy Cohen" on Monday, alongside actor Stephen Dorff, where the 54-year-old mod-

el, actress and swimsuit designer claimed that she and Queen Elizabeth II are being stalked by the same person.

"In the office in London, we have a file called 'nutters,'" Hurley explained when asked about her strangest fan encounter, "and every time, well, particular people send letters -- they still send, you know, mail -- they have to go into the nutter file."

"There's one nutter who -- I don't even know if I'm allowed to say this -- but he only stalks two people: I'm

one of them and the other is the Queen of England," she said.

Hurley even claimed that the Scotland Yard -- the headquarters of London's Metropolitan Police Service -- keeps her abreast of the movements of her and the Queen's alleged snooper.

Aware that she was probably divulging more than she needed, Hurley added, "I probably shouldn't be saying any of this on TV," before quipping: "Take it all back!"



Elizabeth Hurley

Kevin Hart reflects on 2019: 'My appreciation for life is the highest that it's ever been'

Fox | Los Angeles

Kevin Hart is reflecting on what has been a whirlwind 2019 for the beloved funnyman.

The "Jumanji: The Next Level" star was honored with a Hand and Footprint Ceremony at the famed TCL Chinese Theatre in Hollywood on Tuesday, and took to Instagram after the

fact to share the momentous occasion with the world.

"Words can't explain my emotion right now...2019 has been a hell of a year for me. I appreciate the Ups & the downs...to be honest I appreciate the downs so f--king much because they help build character," Hart, 40, began the lengthy caption.

He continued: "My appreciation for life is the highest that it's ever been....I am forever a work in progress...I'm always looking for ways to improve or better myself...the best way to receive anything is to be willing to listen & accept or learn....I am all of the above. I am also thankful....I'm thankful for my family/friends/CoWorkers/Fans....Without you guys none of this would be possible."



Kevin Hart

Kourtney Kardashian heats up Instagram: 'In case you forgot'

Fox | Los Angeles

Kourtney Kardashian is reminding the world who she is with some sultry new photos on Instagram.

On Monday, the eldest Kardashian sister took to Instagram to flaunt her curves in a set of photos on the popular social media site.

"In case you forgot..." Kourtney captioned the image, which shows her donning a form-fitting burgundy dress. Posing along a white wall, the 40-year-old Kardashian sister rocked a high ponytail and stared seductively into the camera while showing off plenty of skin.

The set of photos received an overwhelmingly positive recep-

tion from fans.

"So beautiful," one user wrote.

"My favorite Kardashian," another user wrote.

"The Real" host Adrienne Bailon even chimed in, saying, "Well damn..."

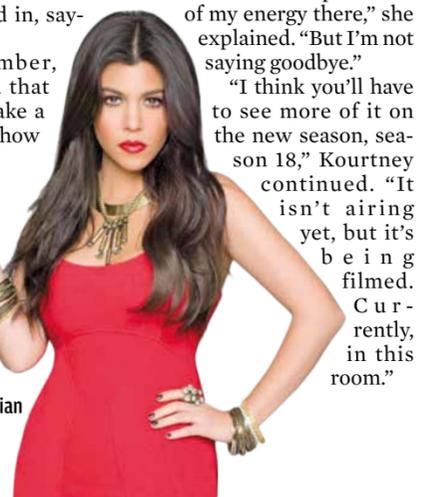
In early November, Kourtney revealed that she's planning to take a step back from the show

to focus more of her time on being a mother to her three children. Speaking to Entertainment Tonight, Kourt-

ney revealed that she'll have a more limited role in Season 18, but that it doesn't mean she's leaving the show for good.

"I just decided to spend more time as a mom and put more of my energy there," she explained. "But I'm not saying goodbye."

"I think you'll have to see more of it on the new season, season 18," Kourtney continued. "It isn't airing yet, but it's being filmed. Currently, in this room."



Kourtney Kardashian

NOTICE

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Jenna Jameson reveals she's 'back on track' on keto diet after gaining 20 pounds

Fox | Los Angeles

Jenna Jameson is saying goodbye to carbs once again.

The adult film star-turned-lifestyle and fitness maven revealed on Instagram on Monday that she was back on the keto diet after sharing last week that she ditched the diet, albeit briefly, and went carb-heavy.

"Eternal summer here in Hawaii!" Jameson, 45, captioned a photo of herself sitting poolside in a white swimsuit, her long blonde locks cascading down her back. "So excited to go back to the mainland for a week soon! Update on #keto... I'm back on track and I'm taking you on my journey!"

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SPORTS

sports

Pakistan dominate Sri Lanka in first home Test for ten years

AFP | Rawalpindi

Test cricket made its long-awaited return to Pakistan after a deadly attack in 2009, with the home team led by fast bowler Naseem Shah dominating Sri Lanka yesterday.

Naseem, who is just 16, grabbed 2-51 on the opening day of the first Test which marked a momentous occasion in Pakistan cricket at Rawalpindi stadium.

Sri Lanka won the toss and batted and closed the day at a precarious 202-5 after bad light stopped play 20.5

overs early.

At close Dhananjaya de Silva was unbeaten on 38 and Niroshan Dickwella not out 11 as Sri Lanka spoiled a good 96-run start given by skipper Dimuth Karunaratne (59) and Oshada Fernando (40).

Pakistan struggled for wickets in the first session as Sri Lanka reached 89-0 at lunch.

Shaheen Shah Afridi trapped Sri Lankan skipper Karunaratne leg-before soon after lunch to trigger a collapse which saw the visitors lose four wickets within just 31 runs in the post lunch session.



Shaheen Afridi rejoices after taking a wicket

Pasha clinches top spot

Team Bahrain follows up top ranking with the number one fighter in the world

TDT | Manama

Super-Heavyweight amateur world champion Pasha Khakhachaev is the new number one fighter in the world, pound-for-pound. The news was confirmed by IMMAF (International MMA Federation), as the Bahraini hero has surpassed former top-ranked Axel Sola, from France, after yet another flawless performance at last month's IMMAF World Championships.

Pasha has had a perfect year in 2019, winning every competition he entered. From the Asian Open in May, to the European Championships in June, and the World Championships in November, Khakhachaev has truly become the biggest star in amateur mixed martial arts, and one of the athletes responsible for Team Bahrain gaining and maintaining its status as the number one nation in the sport.

With a perfect amateur record of eight wins and no losses, Pasha had a singular 2019, winning three bouts by KO, but then

showing his versatility at home, during the World Championships. With a more measured approach, and looking to gain experience, Khakhachaev won twice by decision to become the two-time world champion at Super-Heavyweight.

The dominance of Team Bahrain over the competition can also be measured by how many athletes the country has produced through to the top-20. In addition to Pasha, other eight athletes have been placed in the first 20 places of the ranking, which determines the best fight-



Pasha Khakhachaev (L) with HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa

er in the world, regardless of weight classes.

Ramazan Gitinov (4th), Shamil Gaziev (5th), and Magomed Gadzhiasulov (6th) are the other names that represent Bahrain in the top-10, while Shamil Gimbatov (12th), Murtaza Talha Ali (13th), Mansur Magomedov (14th), Abdulmanap Magomedov (17th), and Magomed Idrisov (18th) are also included in the top-20.

Liverpool, Chelsea through to Champions League last 16

AFP | Paris

Holder Liverpool safely negotiated Tuesday's trip to Salzburg to take their place in the last 16 of this season's UEFA Champions League while Chelsea are also through, but Ajax suffered a shock group-stage exit.

Six clubs secured spots in the draw for the first knockout round in their final group games, with Ajax and Inter Milan the big names to miss out.

Jürgen Klopp's side just needed to draw in Austria to keep alive their bid to retain the European Cup, and they duly beat Salzburg 2-0 thanks to two goals in two second-half minutes, by Naby Keita and Mohamed Salah.

Keita headed in Sadio Mané's cross against his former club to put Liverpool ahead in the 57th minute, and Salah then rounded goalkeeper Cican Stankovic to score from an improbably tight angle.

The result allowed Liverpool to progress as Group E winners, with Napoli going through in second place, while Salzburg are out and drop into the Europa League instead.

"What a team," Klopp told BT Sport. "What an effort. It was a tough game."

"We scored two wonderful goals. We could have scored six or seven which is crazy. We won the group, we won the game, all good."

Anelotti sacked by Napoli

Napoli made sure of their



Liverpool's Egyptian midfielder Mohamed Salah scores a goal

"We scored two wonderful goals. We could have scored six or seven which is crazy. We won the group, we won the game, all good"

JURGEN KLOPP

progress by trouncing Genk 4-0 in Italy with Arkadiusz Milik scoring a first-half hat-trick, the third goal coming from the penalty spot.

Dries Mertens converted another spot-kick in the second half to seal the win, but the Italian side still sacked coach Carlo Ancelotti in the wake of the game.

There was high drama in Group H as Valencia beat Ajax 1-0 in Amsterdam, Rodrigo Moreno's strike taking the

Spaniards through to the last 16 at the expense of last season's semi-finalists, and leaving their hosts stunned.

Ajax had again been impressive this season but were left to rue their inability to win either of their two matches against Chelsea, as Frank Lampard's team progressed in second place, a point ahead of the Dutch giants, thanks to a 2-1 victory against Lille.

Tammy Abraham and Cesar Azpilicueta netted first-half goals for Chelsea, who held on after Loic Remy pulled one back for Lille.

Chelsea, the 2012 Champions League winners, finish level on points with Valencia but come second due to their inferior head-to-head record.

"The Champions League is where Chelsea belong. We knew it was a tough group. We had to fight and recover after losing against Valencia at home in our first game," Azpilicueta told BT Sport.



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BIC welcomes drivers for weekend races

More than 100 global drivers for WEC, MRF and Porsche races arrived in Bahrain

● **Several WEC standouts and ex-F1 drivers part of Bapco 8 Hours of Bahrain grid**

● **David Schumacher, nephew of Michael Schumacher, among MRF challengers**

● **WEC team continue to arrive in Bahrain ahead of race weekend**

● **Off-track entertainment all day long from Friday to Monday at BIC's vending area**

TDT | Manama

An impressive field of more than 100 drivers from all over the world will be suiting up to race as part of this weekend's events in the FIA WEC Bapco 8 Hours of Bahrain at Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) in Sakhir.

The endurance racing spectacle will be taking to the track along with a pair of supporting championships in the MRF Chal-

lenge and the Porsche Sprint Challenge Middle East.

From the field of over 100 drivers, more than 80 will be competing in the 8 Hours of Bahrain, while another 11 will be racing in the MRF Challenge and 13 in the Porsche Sprint Challenge.

Several high-profile names are in the fray, including ex-Formula 1 drivers and WEC standouts Sebastien Buemi, Kazuki Nakajima, Brendon Hartley, Kamui Kobayashi, Bruno Senna, Giedo Van Der Garde, Jean-Eric Vergne, Anthony Davidson and Giancarlo Fisichella, to name a few.

Meanwhile, David Schumacher, nephew of seven-time Formula 1 World champion Michael Schumacher and son of ex-Formula 1 driver Ralf Schumacher, will also be competing as a part of the roster of MRF challengers.

The weekend's motor racing action will be open to the public on Friday and Saturday, all as part of the BIC National Day Festival to be held for four straight days from Friday to Monday.

All are welcome to attend. Tickets are just BD1 per person per day. They can be purchased at the gate, online at BIC's official website www.bahraingp.com, by calling the BIC Hotline on +973-17450000, or at the BIC stand in City Centre Bahrain.



Mechanics work on a car at BIC

In the WEC, the field will be competing in four categories, including the LMP1, LMP2, LMGTE Pro and LMGTE Am classes. They are contesting the fourth round of their eight-meeting season.

There are five cars in the top-tier LMP1 category, nine in the LMP2, six in the LMGTE Pro and 11 in the LMGTE Am. Three drivers each are sharing the duties in each of the cars in the LMP1, LMP2 and LMGTE Am divisions; but there will only be two drivers in each car in the LMGTE Pro class.

Toyota Gazoo Racing and their pair of TS050 Hybrid cars are set to be favourites heading into the Bapco 8 Hours of Bahrain. They

have enjoyed plenty of success in past seasons at BIC, but they will face stiff competition from Rebellion Racing and Team LNT in the LMP1 class.

There will also be plenty of tight-knit racing in LMP2 with the field of Gibson-powered Oreca, Aurus, Alpine and Dallara challengers, while in both LMGTE categories, Ferrari, Porsche and Aston Martin will be battling it out for supremacy.

Schumacher among big-names

In the MRF Challenge, Michelangelo Amendola of Belgium will be one of the main names to look out for. He will be hoping to continue his success from the season-opening round last

month in Dubai, where he won three of the five races. Australian Dylan Young and Indian-American Yuven Sundaramoorthy clinched the other two sprints, and they will once again look to be fighting for victories.

The rest of field in this single-seater series is completed by Schumacher, Josh Mason of Great Britain, Reece Ushijima of Japan, Manaf Hijjawi of Jordan, Chetan Korada of India, Bent Viscaal of the Netherlands and Largim Ali and Valdemar Eriksen of Denmark.

Meanwhile, the Porsche Sprint Challenge Middle East will see 13 drivers aim to make a positive start to their 2019/2020 season.

They are coming from various countries and they will be competing in three categories.

The Pro class includes Berkay Beler of Turkey, Julian Hanses of Germany, JB Simmenauer of France, Saul Hack of South Africa and the German pair of Leon Koehler and Richard Wagner. The ProAm category features five drivers, namely Jesse Van Kuijk and Daan Va Kuijk from the Netherlands, Philipp Sager of Austria, Christoffer Bergstrom of Sweden and Bahrain's very own Shaikh Ali Al Khalifa. The Am class will be contested between Jean-Marc Cordier of Switzerland and Shaikh Jaber

Al Khalifa.

WEC teams continue arriving

Officials, team members and drivers participating in the FIA WEC 8 Hours of Bahrain weekend continued to arrive in Bahrain Wednesday.

The set-up work at BIC is virtually complete as the racing is scheduled to kick off Thursday behind closed doors.

The WEC will be holding a pair of 90-minute practice sessions, the first starting at 2pm and the next at 6.30pm.

MRF will also have two practices, while the Porsche Sprint Challenge will hold one practice and its first of two qualifying sessions.

Non-stop off track attractions

BIC announced today the timings of its off-track entertainment, held as part of the BIC National Day celebrations from Friday to Monday. All the attractions can be enjoyed at BIC's vending area, located behind the Main Grandstand.

The headlining nightly concerts featuring Balqees on Friday, Mohammed Al Salem on Saturday, Essa Al Marzooq on Sunday and Abdullah Al Rowaished on Monday will each begin at 8.30pm. They will be held on the main stage of the BIC's vending area.

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