

Muharraq, Hala draw first blood

Muharraq and Al Hala drew first blood last night in their respective best-of-three play-off series for a spot in the Golden Square semi-finals of the 2019/2020 Zain Bahrain Basketball League.

P16

Iran is a crucial test case on US engagement in Mideast and beyond

THE DAILY tribune

Gigi Hadid, Zayn Malik confirm their reunion

Queen, Prince Harry, senior royals set for crisis meeting

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Saudi-Japan ties at new high  
Riyadh

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe had a meeting with Saudi King Salman to exchange views on the regional situation yesterday during his Middle East tour.

Abe is visiting the region in hopes of easing tensions between the United States and Iran.

Ceasefire in Libya  
Tripoli

Fighting around the Libyan capital of Tripoli has been halted after the Libyan Government of National Accord agreed to follow suit as the rival Libyan National Army announced a cessation of hostilities.

The move comes after days of efforts by Moscow and Ankara to pause the battle for the Libyan capital, launched in April by Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar in a bid to end the rule of rag-tag militias that back the administration in the west.



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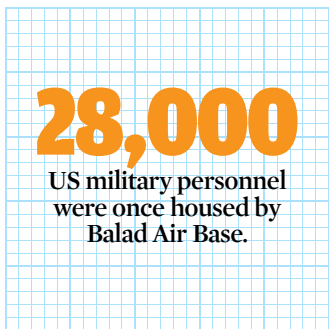
Four Iraqi soldiers injured in rocket attack on air base

Baghdad

Four members of Iraq's military were wounded yesterday in a rocket attack targeting an air base just north of Baghdad where American trainers are present, Iraqi security officials said.

The attack by at least six rockets came just days after Iran fired ballistic missiles at two bases in Iraq that house US forces, causing no casualties.

Recent heightened tensions between the US and Iran were sparked last month when a rocket attack killed an American contractor at a base in Iraq. The US has blamed that attack and others on Iran-



backed militias.

Sunday's attack wounded an Iraqi air force officer and three enlisted men, Iraqi security officials said. They spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

No group claimed responsibility for the attack.

Condolences offered



His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa has offered his heartfelt condolences to the Sultan of Oman, HM Haitham bin Tariq Al Said, on the demise of HM Sultan Qaboos bin Said. HM King Hamad extended his condolences to the senior members of the Ruling Family at Alam Palace in the Omani capital Muscat. HM the King praised the late Sultan's qualities, role and efforts in building the modern Sultanate of Oman and its development in all fields and serving his people and the Arab and Islamic nation. HM King Hamad lauded Sultan Qaboos' contributions, along with their majesties and highnesses, in establishing the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and consolidating its foundations. Sultan Haitham expressed his thanks and appreciation to HM the King for his noble and compassionate sentiments that reflected the depth of the strong bonds between Oman and Bahrain and their people.

Furore in Tehran

Protests surge in Iran after admitting Ukrainian passenger plane shootdown

● Expressions of condolence over the incident from supreme leader and President Hassan Rouhani failed to calm angry Iranians.

● An Iranian military statement carried by state media said the Ukrainian plane, headed for Kiev, was mistaken for a 'hostile target'.

Dubai

Iran deployed riot police in the capital yesterday to crack down on protesters after its Revolutionary Guard admitted to accidentally shooting down a passenger plane at a time of soaring tensions with the United States.

Riot police and plainclothes officers could be seen massing



Iranians students demonstrate following a tribute for the victims of Ukraine International Airlines Boeing 737 in front of the Amirkabir University in the capital Tehran.

in Vali-e Asr Square in Tehran as calls circulated for protests later in the day. A large black banner unveiled in the square bore the names of those killed in the plane crash.

Iran's statement on Saturday that a Ukrainian passenger plane was downed by a missile



It is a national tragedy. The way it was handled and it was announced by the authorities was even more tragic.

AN IRANIAN CLERIC

fired unintentionally followed growing pressure from abroad but also at home, and for some Iranians, the authorities' expressions of condolence were not enough.

For days, Iran had denied Western accusations it was responsible for Wednesday's crash soon after takeoff from Tehran. Authorities said on Saturday that air defences had been fired in error while on high alert following Iranian missile strikes on US targets in Iraq.

Expressions of condolence over the incident from supreme leader and President Hassan Rouhani failed to calm angry Iranians, who used social media to express their outrage against the establishment for concealing the truth.

"It is a national tragedy. The way it was handled and it was announced by the authorities was even more tragic," said Ali Ansari, a moderate cleric, according to Iran's semi-official ILNA news agency.

Many Iranians asked why authorities did not close down Tehran's airport and the country's airspace at a time when they would have been on alert for retaliation after the missile strikes.

There were no fatalities in those strikes, launched to avenge the Jan 3 US killing of top Iranian commander Qassem Soleimani in a drone strike in Baghdad.

"They were so careful not to kill any American in their revenge for Soleimani. But they did not close the airport? This shows how much this regime cares for Iranians," said Mira Sedaghati in Tehran by telephone.

An Iranian military statement carried by state media said the Ukrainian plane, which was headed for Kiev, was mistaken for a "hostile target" after it turned toward a sensitive military base of the elite Revolutionary Guards near Tehran, adding that it was a "human error and unintentional."

UK envoy arrested  
Tehran

The British ambassador to Iran was arrested yesterday amid protests demanding Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei step down after Tehran said its military had mistakenly shot down a Ukrainian plane, killing 176 people. Robert Macaire was present during demonstrations in front of Tehran's Amir Kabir University and was arrested after allegedly "inciting" a crowd, Iran's Tasnim news agency reported. The 53-year-old was released after several hours. Britain's Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said the arrest was without grounds or explanation and a "flagrant violation of international law."





The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, received a letter from His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, delivered by Bahrain's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Shaikh Hmood bin Abdullah bin Hamad Al Khalifa. The ambassador conveyed the greetings of HM the King to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, wishing him abundant health and Saudi Arabia continued success. The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques requested the ambassador to convey his greetings to HM the King, affirming Saudi Arabia's keenness to further enhance its historic brotherly relations with Bahrain in all fields, wishing the Kingdom further progress and prosperity.

# Condolences offered over demise of Sultan Qaboos

Manama

Commander-in-Chief of the Bahrain Defence Force (BDF), Field Marshal Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, yesterday paid a visit to the Embassy of Oman here, where he was welcomed by the Deputy Chief of Mission, Dr Mohammed Al Balushi, and Embassy's officials. The commander-in-chief offered condolences over the demise of HM Sultan Qaboos bin Said of Oman, praying to Allah the Almighty to rest his soul in eternal peace, and to bless the Royal family and the brotherly Omani people with patience and fortitude. He recalled the key role played by the bereaved in enhancing his country's renaissance, praising his wise honourable supportive stances towards the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)'s march, as well as those of the Arab and Islamic



Field Marshal Shaikh Khalifa writes his condolences message at the Oman Embassy.

nations. The BDF Commander-in-Chief was accompanied by Defence Affairs Minister, Lieutenant-General Abdulla bin Hassan Al Nuaimi, Defence Ministry's Undersecretary, Rear Admiral Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Khalifa, BDF General Command Court Director, Major-General Hassan Mohammed Saad, Assistant Chief of Staff for Supply and Catering, Rear Admiral Yussef Ahmed Malallah, and senior BDF officers.

# Speaker praises solid Bahraini-Chinese relations

Manama

Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Fawzia Zainal, has stressed Bahrain's keenness to strengthen its deep-rooted friendship relations with China across various fields, praising the steady growth of joint co-operation, especially regarding bilateral trade. She asserted that Bahrain appreciates China, being the largest gateway for economy and investment in Asia, noting that its political stances are always balanced and it plays a key regional and international role that deserves every respect. She said that the Council of

Representatives values highly China's continuous solidarity with Bahrain, citing its support for Bahrain's security and stability, as well as rejection of foreign interference in its domestic affairs. She highlighted Bahrain's principled stances in solidarity with friendly China, and in support for ensuring its security and stability, as well as rejection of external interference in its internal affairs. She also highlighted the two friendly countries' unified stances in rejection of terrorism and terrorist groups, in addition to their call for the need to respect countries' sovereignty.

The speaker made the statements while receiving here recently the Chinese Ambassador to Bahrain, Anwaer Habibullah, with whom she discussed the two countries' parliamentary cooperation and co-ordination at the regional and international gatherings. She asserted that the Representatives Council endorses Bahrain's official stance regarding the Xinjiang issue, and backs China's efforts to develop the Xinjiang province, noting that the kingdom was among the 50 countries that had signed a joint message to the President of the UN Human Rights Council in support of China at the UN.



Ms Zainal receives Mr Anwaer.

# UniGlobal ties up with S P Jain School of Global Management, Jain University

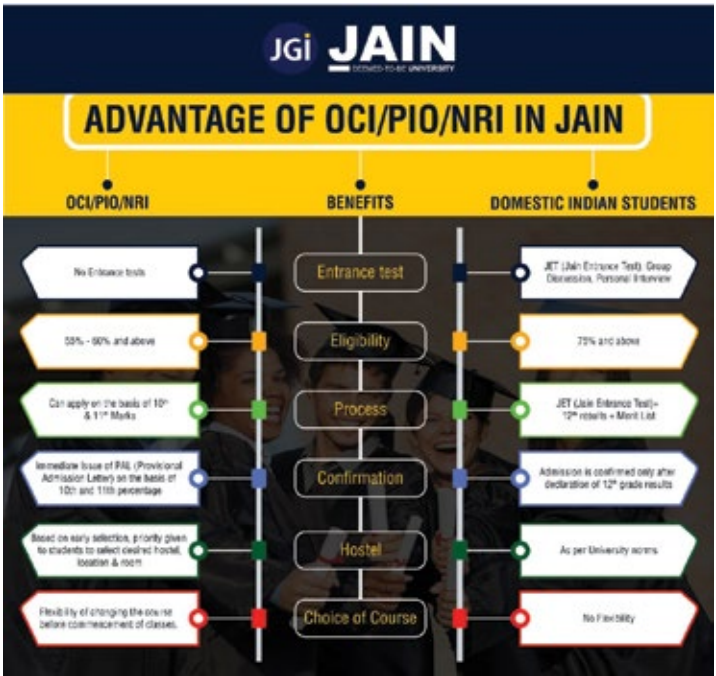
TDT | Manama

UniGlobal Education Centre, a private educational services centre that assists Bahrain residents in getting admissions at reputed institutions abroad to pursue their higher education, has teamed up with Jain (Deemed-to-be University), Bangalore and S P Jain School of Global Management. Both these Universities are well known for the quality education they provide through their courses for young aspirants seeking higher education. UniGlobal, which had a humble beginning in 2016 has spread its wings in the last three years. As of today, it is functioning from Segaya and has another centre named Coral Education Centre in Umm Al Hassam. S P Jain School of Global Management is a Higher Education provider in Singapore, Australia, Dubai and India. Their undergraduate programmes provide higher studies to obtain Bachelor's Degree for a fast-paced career in



Dr Chenraj Roychand

business. SPJ has campuses in Dubai, Mumbai, Singapore and Sydney. Students will be able to complete their studies in all the campuses during the course of their study. During the course, a student can avail the opportunity to study from one or more of these campuses before completing the programmes. Jain (Deemed-to-be University), Bangalore, India has undergraduate programmes to obtain Bachelor's Degree, Postgraduate Programmes to



obtain Master's Degree and Research Programmes to obtain MPhil and Doctorates. The University provides scholarships and financial aid to deserving students. Quality education is provided for the holistic development of the personalities by giving attention to scholas-

tic as well as non-scholastic activities. The University also provides residential facilities. Dr Chenraj Roychand, the Founder President and Chairman of JGI Group, is visiting Bahrain on 7th February, 2020 to address a seminar and to interact with the ambitious

By joining hands with quite a few globally recognised institutions, UniGlobal Education Centre is picking pace in actively involving its youth to get placements in their desired institutions in their desired country.

MR J P MENON

youngsters of Bahrain, wishing to pursue higher education in Jain (Deemed-to-be University). He will explain the facilities and courses offered, the admission process etc. and will also clear their doubts during the interactive session. Dr Sridhara Murthy, Director of Jain (Deemed-to-be University) and Ex ISRO scientist and Planning Commission of India along with Mr C G Krishna Das, Chancellor of Jain University and Ex-CEO of HAL also will

attend the seminar and answer the questions of parents and students. The highlights of Jain (Deemed-to-be University) are the latest trending courses, like information technology, Data Analytics, Big Data mobile application, Cyber security, IOT, Artificial Intelligence, Robotics Process automation, Machine learning, Forensic science as a carrier and B.Com with ACCA. Chairman of UniGlobal Education Centre, Mr J P Menon said: "By joining hands with quite a few globally recognised institutions, UniGlobal Education Centre is picking pace in actively involving in the development of Bahrain by helping its youth to get placements in their desired institutions in their desired country." Mr Rajkumar Jain, university representative will be available at Uniglobal till 16th February 2020, for Career Counselling and Spot Admissions. Parents of ambitious students should not miss the opportunity to interact with him. Contact 17344971/2 or 32332708/09 to book your timings.



● The terms of the MoU included an agreement to facilitate the procedures related to financing the fees for recovering the cost of licensing infrastructure issued through the Building Permits System.

● The emphasis on construction sector is consistent with the Kingdom's Vision 2030 economic development strategy.

Manama

Works, Municipal Affairs and Urban Planning Minister Essam Khalaf has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the banks participating in financing the infrastructure fees.

The participating banks are the National Bank of Bahrain (NBB), the Bank of Bahrain and Kuwait (BBK), Al Salam Bank and the Bahrain Islamic Bank (BisB).

The MoU is part of the implementation of the Cabinet's decision based on the recommendation of the Executive Committee chaired by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister, to reduce infrastructure fees from BD12 to BD10, if they are paid in full in one payment when issuing a building permit.

The move aims to encourage investments and enhance the business environment in Bahrain. The terms of the MoU included an agreement to facilitate the procedures related to financing the fees for recovering the cost of licensing infrastructure issued through the Building Permits System (Benayat) and co-operate in developing the system so that the procedures are online and fast.

The Kingdom's construction industry is projected to expand considerably in the coming years.

# Ministry in agreement with banks to finance infra fees

The move aims to encourage investments and enhance the business environment in Bahrain



Mr Khalaf with heads of participating banks after signing the agreement.



**The government is currently implementing the National Development Strategy 2015-2018 to ensure economically and ecologically sustainable growth.**

A key driver of this growth is a \$32 billion infrastructure investment pipeline comprised \$10bn in government funding, \$7.5 billion from the GCC Development Fund, and \$15 billion from the private sector.

This emphasis on construction

is consistent with the Kingdom's Vision 2030 economic development strategy.

The strategy seeks to improve infrastructure, industry, housing and connectivity and that calls for a more diverse economic base, with broader privatisation, industrialisation, training, and education of the Bahraini workforce.

The government has approved a number of major projects, including: \$3.5 billion sixth production line at Aluminum Bahrain (Alba) and associated \$800 million power station project, a \$1.1bn airport modernisation programme, a new \$355 million gas plant, major housing projects valuing \$2.2bn, electricity and water projects valuing \$1.1bn, roads and sewerage projects valuing \$900m, gulf rail line development as well as the construction of infrastructure for three planned cities.

A number of other projects underway focus on education, health, social development, youth, sports and industry, many of which will be funded by grants received from Bahrain's wealthier neighbours via the GCC Development Fund.

The government is currently implementing the National Development Strategy 2015-2018 to

ensure economically and ecologically sustainable growth and to better respond to the needs of the citizenry and the economy.

The demand for small housing units for medium-income families has increased dramatically in recent years.

The government is pursuing an ambitious programme of developing 40,000 housing units within a

decade. Close to 15,000 units are under construction.

The major housing projects are East Hidd City, Diyyar Al Muharraq, Tubli Gardens, Argan, and the Naseej project in Northern City.

The Ministry of Housing has also launched a social housing financing programme to support home purchases by nationals.

## Runaway employees will have to pay for tickets to fly home

TDI | Manama

A new legislation passed by the lawmakers means runaway expat employees will have to pay for their air tickets to fly home.

The decision was made during the Shura Council's session, which was held yesterday.

After a long back and forth discussions between the Parliament and Shura Council, Shura finally approved the proposal, which aims to force runaway employees to pay for air tickets to fly home.

The move came despite reservation from the part of Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA).

The Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) had previously expressed its support for the proposal.

"It is unreasonable for the employer to have to bear the cost of sending worker in these cases, where the worker violated the contract without a legitimate reason," the chamber said in a statement issued.

The BCCI had previously stat-



The council in session.



**It is unreasonable for the employer to have to bear the cost of sending worker in these cases, where the worker violated the contract without a legitimate reason.**

BCCI

ed this demand in its letter to the parliament.

The MPs argued that employers should not have to pay the

amount when the employee violates the contract.

The House passed the proposal in this regard, adding a para-graph to Article (27) of Law No (19) of 2006 on the regulation of the labour market.

Speaking at the Parliament, MP Ahmed Al Ansari said: "The worker is responsible for his actions from the moment he decides to violate the contract and run away. In this situation the employers' rights must be taken into account.

"The employer must not suffer the consequences of the workers' actions."

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# ‘Eat’ on expansion mode

Bahraini start-up ‘Eat’ aims to offer its clients local market knowledge, on-the-ground support and engineering presence

TDI | Manama

Bahraini startup ‘Eat’ is on an expansion mode as the food economy in the Middle East and North Africa region shows no signs of a slowdown, according to media reports.

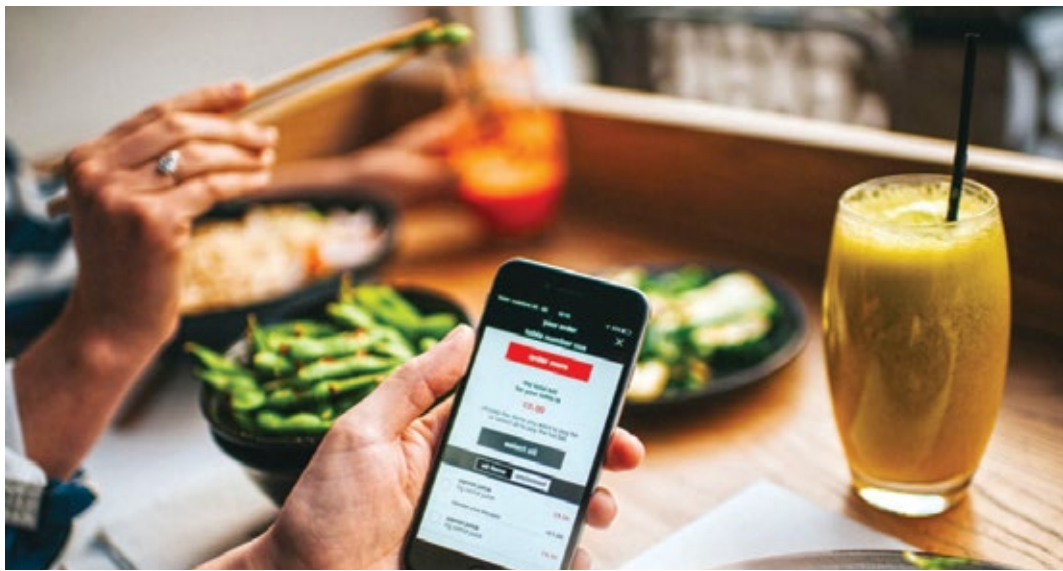
By 2020, GCC countries will see 5,500 new restaurants and eating spaces enter an already overcrowded market, which makes innovation essential for maintaining profitability.

“The food and beverage sector is very exciting across the whole region right now,” said Nezar Kadhem, founder of the Bahraini startup Eat, which is pursuing a regional expansion with a particular focus in Saudi Arabia, told Arab News.

“In Dubai, we’re looking at Expo as an exciting driver of innovation in the restaurant space. But I think the big story in the coming months and years will be Saudi Arabia.”

Mr Nezar’s company has developed an electronic system for table and reservation management.

“We are now in a time where tech solutions for the restaurant industry are becoming more robust and can actually help restaurateurs solve some of their biggest challenges,” said Sebastian Van de Rijt in an interview



Tech solutions for the restaurant industry are becoming more robust.

with QSR magazine.

The entrepreneur operated 10 Japanese cuisine restaurants in Belgium before moving to California to launch an innovative Asian food franchise called Bamboo Asia.

Kadhem and his co-founder, David Feuillard, were both 25-years-old when they launched Eat in February 2015.

The service is available to both customers and restaurant owners via two separate solutions. Diners get a smartphone app to browse local restaurants, read reviews, view menus and

make reservations.

Restaurants are offered a platform handling online reservations, table management and restaurant analytics, as well as a dedicated customer relationship management and marketing system.

“Implementation is incredibly important. All great businesses start with an idea, but ultimately, it’s sustained execution over the years that really drives success for startups,” said Kadhem.

His venture capitalises on the fact that it operates a locally

headquartered solution.

Eat aims to offer its clients local market knowledge, on-the-ground support and engineering presence to deal with technical emergencies, plus strategic partnerships with Google, TripAdvisor, Zomato and other local partners to give restaurants access to potential customers.

However, the regional market remains extremely competitive and challenging to navigate even for a business that does not sell food.

Kadhem describes a sensitive

balance that startups need to maintain so they can move forward. He emphasises funding, a great team and initial traction for the product.

“This is the hard part: How do you get traction without a team, or how do you get a team without funding?” he asked.

Eat started with pre-seed capital of \$100,000 from Tenmou. It has now successfully raised a total of \$4.2 million from multiple investors and has over 2,000 restaurants across 20 countries as clients, serving more than 10 million diners along the way.



**All great businesses start with an idea, but ultimately, it’s sustained execution over the years that really drives success for startups.**

MR NEZAR

## Renowned comedy star passes away



Mr Al Ghurair

TDI | Manama

Renowned Bahraini comedy star Ali Al Ghurair passed away after suffering a cardiac arrest. He was 51.

The deceased starred in many locally-produced series, notably Tafash as well as two movies.

Mr Al Ghurair is considered one of the most prominent artists in Bahrain and the Arabian Gulf.

Mr Al Ghurair started his artistic career in 1990 through the series “the Trip of Wonders”.

He took part in more than 50 series and 13 theatrical works. He also participated in many films shown at cinemas in Bahrain and the GCC countries.

Many Arabic-language media publications on social media platforms mourned Mr Al Ghurair, whose funny character had drawn smiles and spread happiness in Bahrain and beyond the Kingdom.

## Realty expo set

TDI | Manama

The Real Estate sector in Bahrain is excited for the launch of the third edition of Bahrain Real Estate Investment Exhibition 2020 (#BREIX19) on February 13 to 15 at the Bahrain City Centre Mall, following the successful two previous exhibitions that were held early 2018 and 2019.

The exhibition will be organised under the patronage of Shaikh Salman bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, Chairman of Real Estate Regulatory Authority President of Survey and Land Registration Bureau, and In strategic partnership with Tamkeen.

The innovative concept of #BREIX19 focuses on the housing and property investment opportunities offered at the Bahraini local market.

The exhibition also emphasises the offerings of licensed properties all at the convenience of the busiest shopping mall, which guarantees for visitors easy access to a wide array of quality projects in one place.

## Bahrain-UAE renewable energy ties stressed

Abu Dhabi

President of the Sustainable Energy Authority (SEA), Dr Abdulhussain Ali Mirza, yesterday paid a visit to the “Masdar City” for renewable energy, on the sidelines of his participation in the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week, currently held here.

He was welcomed by Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company’s officials, who briefed him about “Masdar City”’s facilities, as well as its role in diversifying the local economy and enhancing Abu Dhabi’s leadership in the sector of sustainable energy.

Dr Mirza said that Masdar and its research centre represent a perfect local and international platform for the renewable energy sector, as well as for developing clean technology and innovation.

He stressed the importance of co-operation to enhance sus-



Dr Mirza during his visit to ‘Masdar City’ in Abu Dhabi.

tainable development through adopting renewable energy and energy efficiency solutions, adding that Masdar City is a realistic model for the application of clean energy.

He stressed that his visit aims to shed light on the leading role played by the UAE and Bahrain regarding their commitment to their international pledges in achieving sustainable development goals, encouraging the use of clean energy, preserving natural resources and taking measures to address the repercussions of climate change.

He pointed out that Bahrain’s Sustainable Development Authority will continue its cooperation with Abu Dhabi Masdar City to take advantage of its experience in developing renewable energy and energy efficiency to make the region’s countries a distinguished centre for perfect use of sustainable energy.

## Middle East movement of assets to slow down in the upcoming years

Riyadh

According to an EY global survey, 23 per cent of wealth management clients in the Middle East are planning to move assets in the next three years, with 50pc of clients having already moved their assets in the past three years.

The EY global survey results showed that in comparison to clients in the Middle East, 32pc of global clients moved their assets in the past three years, while another 32pc plan to do so over the next three years.

While the global sentiment has remained consistent, investors in the Middle East have shown a reduced appetite to move assets compared with just three years ago.

Sarah Sanders, MENA Wealth and Asset Management Leader, EY, said: “The wealth asset management research conducted by EY does indicate that the movement of assets in the Middle East will slow down in the upcoming years, but there is still a strong opportunity for wealth management firms to attract assets among the Middle East client base. Clients are willing to pay for financial advice, but what

they value is evolving rapidly.”

“Wealth management firms need to better understand when their clients would consider moving their assets, the reasons for doing so, and the qualities they are weighing up when selecting a new provider.”

Major life events prompt clients to reevaluate assets. Wealth management clients are more likely to reevaluate and move their assets during major life events. In the Middle East, 75pc of clients move their money when starting a new business, 73pc make the shift when buying a house, and 60pc

of clients reconsider their asset management when inheriting or receiving money.

Clients in the Middle East are equally likely to switch wealth asset management providers for any one of six reasons: Quality and reputation, products, advisory capabilities, personal attention, pricing, or technology.

While clients may switch providers for reasons related to service capabilities, they are also looking for wealth managers that share similar values. In the region, 53pc of clients are placing more importance on digital savviness, 48pc

are looking for advisors that are proactive and attentive, and 45pc are selecting advisors who demonstrate sound judgment.

As clients move away from more traditional wealth management providers such as private banks and fund managers, brokerage firms and independent advisors are likely to benefit and see an increased interest in their services. Based on the results of the EY global survey, it is expected that up to 48pc of Middle East clients will move to brokerage firms, while 40pc are likely to favour independent advisers.



# Mission Maradu

Two more complexes razed to ground



The dramatic demolition of Jain Coral Cove, the largest of the four illegal lakeside apartments in Kochi's Maradu, Southern India

- Jain Coral Cove with nearly 100 flats was brought down at 11 am
- Golden Kayaloram - was demolished at around 2 pm
- On Saturday, two of the four high-rises - 19-floor H2O Holy Faith complex of 90 flats and Alfa Serene complex with 73 flats - were reduced to rubble

NDTV | Kochi

In the final round of controlled demolition of four illegal water-front structures in the South Indian state Kerala's Kochi, two more apartment complexes were razed to the ground yesterday.

The demolition of over 350 flats in four buildings in Maradu- one of the largest demolition drives in India involving residential complexes - began on Saturday; four months after the Supreme Court ruled that the high-rises will be brought down for violating environmental rules.

The dramatic demolition of Jain Coral Cove, the largest of the four illegal lakeside apartments in Kochi's Maradu, was



The 55-meter high 'Golden Kayaloram', the smallest among the four buildings constructed violating the Coastal Regulation Zone norms, was demolished at around 2.30 pm (Courtesy of Indian Express, The Hindu)

caught on camera this morning. As the explosives set off soon after the last warning siren around 11 am, the building - surrounded by backwaters at all sides - came crashing down in three parts separated by fraction of seconds, and debris falling largely within the boundary lines.

The posh apartment complex with nearly 100 flats was brought down with minimal damage, officials said, adding that the area was relatively less populated than the localities where the exercise was conducted yesterday.

The fourth apartment com-

plex - Golden Kayaloram - was demolished at around 2 pm.

On Saturday, two of the four high-rises - 19-floor H2O Holy Faith complex of 90 flats and Alfa Serene complex with 73 flats - were reduced to rubble in controlled implosions within minutes. Hundreds had gathered on nearby terraces and roads to watch the unprecedented exercise even as sirens went off, warning them to remain at safe distance. An area of around 200 metre radius around the apartments was cordoned off as a part of safety measures.

In videos that captured Sat-

urday's demolition, a thick grey cloud of dust and debris cascaded down after explosives were detonated. "No harm to any human life or animal life has taken place and no perceptible damage to any property has taken place," Kochi city police commissioner Vijay Sakhare said after visiting the sites along with Ernakulam District Collector S Suhas.

Massive arrangements were made ahead of the two-day demolition drive. More than 2,000 residents in the nearby areas have been evacuated and large gatherings are banned in

the evacuation zone of all the water front apartment complexes. All traffic - air-borne, water-borne and on land - was prohibited in the evacuation zone.

In September last year, the Supreme Court had ordered the demolition of the four buildings in Maradu for violating the Coastal Regulation Zone rules. The top court gave 138 days for the demolition, a timeline set by the Kerala government.

The court also had ordered payment of a compensation of Rs 25 lakh each to those who lost their homes.

Situated in a comparatively less populated area, unlike the other two demolitions witnessed yesterday, officials say, the damage was minimal, and debris fallen off the boundary and within will be collected by an agency hired.

Jain Coral Cove is the largest residential complex of the four set to be demolished, but is located in a comparatively less densely populated area. The fourth building to go down, later today at 2pm, is located in a densely populated area, like the Alfa complex seen during demolitions on Saturday.

## Thousands evacuate as Philippine volcano rumbles

- A kilometer-high column of ash was visible
- Several volcanic tremors were felt
- Taal's last eruption was in 1977
- local disaster office said it had evacuated over 2,000

Manila

A volcano near the Philippine capital Manila spewed a massive cloud of ash into the sky



Government seismologists recorded magma moving towards the crater of Taal, one of the Philippines' most active volcanoes

on Sunday, forcing the precautionary evacuation of thousands of residents, authorities said.

Government seismologists recorded magma moving towards the crater of Taal, one of the country's most active volcanoes located 65 kilometres (40 miles) south of Manila.

That increases the chances of an eruption that could happen "within days to within weeks" if such activity continues, Renato Solidum, chief of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology, said.

A kilometer-high column of ash was visible and several volcanic tremors were felt within the vicinity of the volcano, which is popular among tourists for its scenic view.

The local disaster office said it had evacuated over 2,000 residents living on the volcanic island, which lies inside a bigger lake formed by previous volcanic activity.

Solidum said officials will also order the evacuation of people living on another island nearby if the situation worsens.

Earthquakes and volcanic activity are not uncommon in the Philippines due to its position on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", where tectonic plates collide deep below the Earth's surface.

In January 2018, Mount Mayon displaced tens of thousands of people after spewing millions of tonnes of ash, rocks, and lava in the central Bicol region.



## At least 11 dead as storms sweep through US south



The National Weather Service has issued flood and tornado warnings for several states

Washington

Severe storms sweeping the southern US killed at least 11 people, authorities said, as tornadoes and high winds upturned cars, destroyed homes and left tens of thousands without power. The storms hit parts of the south on Friday and were expected to move east and north on Sunday, according to the National Weather Service, which issued flood and tornado warnings for several states.

Among the dead were a policeman and firefighter who were hit by a vehicle in Texas after being called out to respond to traffic accidents in icy conditions, local authorities said.

In Louisiana the bodies of a couple were found on Saturday near their destroyed mobile home after it was hit by storms the night before, said Bill Davis of the county sheriff's office.

"It's totally rolled over. It looked like a couple hundred feet into the back yard. Debris is all over. It's just a sad situation," said Davis, according to local television channel KTBS 3.

The National Weather Service said three people were confirmed dead on Saturday in Alabama, where local channel WHNT News 19 showed buildings reduced to rubble.

Other structures had parts of their roofs ripped off and downed power lines were strewn across roads.

The storms left more than 200,000 people without electricity early Sunday, the poweroutage.us website said, with North Carolina and Alabama among the worst affected areas.

## Peru to plant one million trees around Machu Picchu

Lima

Peruvian President Martin Vizcarra launched a campaign to reforest the Machu Picchu archeological site in order to protect it from mud slides and forest fires.

Vizcarra has pledged to plant one million trees in the 35,000-hectare protected archeological complex that features the stunning Inca citadel.

"We're here to begin the planting of a million trees in the protected zone around the Machu Picchu," said Vizcarra.



Around 1.5 million tourists a year visit the old Inca sanctuary of Machu Picchu in the Andes, the most iconic site in Peru

# Queen, Prince Harry, senior royals set for crisis meeting

● Issues up for debate include how much money the couple will still receive from Charles's estate, their royal titles and what commercial deals they can strike

AFP | London

Queen Elizabeth II will host a showdown meeting with Prince Harry on Monday in an attempt to solve the crisis triggered by his bombshell announcement that he and wife Meghan were stepping back from the royal front-

line.

Other senior royals including Harry's father Prince Charles and brother Prince William, with whom he has strained relations, will join the monarch at her private Sandringham estate in eastern England, according to British media.

Meghan will join the meeting via conference call from Canada as they attempt to work out the "next steps" towards a compromise and nip the growing crisis in the bud.

Issues up for debate include how much money the couple will still receive from Charles's estate, their royal titles and what commercial deals they can strike, according to the Sunday Times.

The newspaper reported that William believes he and Harry are now "separate entities", breaking the bonds forged following their mother's tragic death.

"I've put my arm around my brother all our lives and I can't do that any more; we're separate entities," the Times reported he told a friend.

Harry, Meghan and son Archie spent

Christmas in Canada, with the American former actress returning there this week.

The Queen on Thursday demanded that staff work with the couple to find urgently a "workable solution" that would take into account their demands for more freedom.

Several Canadian media reported Meghan had returned to Vancouver island off the country's Pacific coast, where the family spent the year-end holidays and where baby Archie had remained with his nanny.

Senior royals were caught off guard by Wednesday's announcement that the Duke and Duchess of Sussex wanted to seek a "progressive new role" and divide their time between Britain and North America.

### 'Toxic mix'

The Queen's office issued a terse statement the same



The British public currently appears to be siding with the family, with a Daily Mail poll showing that a majority believe Harry should give up his right to the throne and be stripped of cash support from the royals or tax-payer



The Queen has summoned Princes Charles, William and Harry to her Sandringham Estate (pictured) today for unprecedented crisis talks to resolve the Sussex situation (Courtesy of Daily Mail)

## Gold bar found in Mexico was Aztec treasure: study

● Mexico's National Institute of Anthropology (INAH) says it has now confirmed that a 1.93-kilogram gold bar was part of looted Aztec treasure

Mexico City

A gold bar found in a Mexico City park in 1981 was part of the Aztec treasure looted by Hernan Cortes and the Spanish conquistadors 500 years ago, a new study says.

The 1.93-kilogram bar was found by a construction worker during excavations for a new building along the Alameda, a picturesque park in the heart of



The 1.93-kilogram bar was found by a construction worker during excavations for a new building along the Alameda

the Mexican capital. For 39 years, its origins remained a mystery. But thanks to specialised X-rays, Mexico's National Insti-

tute of Anthropology and History (INAH) says it has now confirmed where the bar came from: the Spaniards' hasty, though temporary, retreat during the

so-called "Noche Triste," or "Sad Night."

That night -- June 30, 1520 -- the Aztecs, furious over the slaughter of their nobles and

priests, drove the Spanish invaders from their capital, Tenochtitlan.

The conquistadors escaped with as much looted Aztec treasure as they could carry, including, apparently, the gold bar in question.

"The so-called 'Noche Triste' is among the episodes of the conquest that will be remembered this year, and there is only one piece of material evidence from it: a gold bar that sank 500 years ago in the canals of Tenochtitlan, and which recent analysis confirms came from the (Spaniards') flight," INAH said in a statement.

Cortes and his men received a wary welcome from Aztec emperor Moctezuma when they arrived in 1519, but soon became unwanted guests at the palace as they appropriated his treasure and turned him into a virtual hostage.

In June 1520, Cortes -- who had launched his expedition in Mexico without official authorization -- learned that the Spanish governor in Cuba had sent a party of soldiers to arrest him.

He left his lieutenant Pedro de Alvarado in charge at Tenochtitlan and went with part of his army to fight the arriving soldiers, ultimately defeating them.

While he was gone, however, Alvarado began to fear the Aztecs would attack him, and had their nobles and priests killed.

The Aztecs revolted, and the Spaniards retreated -- apparently losing the gold bar along the way.

The study found the bar's composition matched that of other Aztec pieces from the period.

"This bar is a key piece in the puzzle of this historical event," INAH said.



# The ‘supercells’ that cured an infant’s grave genetic illness

AFP | McLean, United States

When a person’s immune system is impaired by a genetic disease, a bone-marrow transplant can be a powerful therapeutic tool, but with a major downside: during the first few months the recipient’s defenses against viruses are severely weakened. The slightest infection can lead to a hospital trip.

A still-experimental type of treatment known as T-cell therapy aims to assist during this vulnerable period -- the months during which the body is rebuilding its natural defenses. After two decades of clinical trials, the technology has been refined, and is being used to treat more and more patients, many of them children.

A boy named Johan is one of them.

Today he is a mischievous, smiling toddler with a thick shock of light-brown hair, who never tires, playfully tormenting the family’s puppy, Henry.

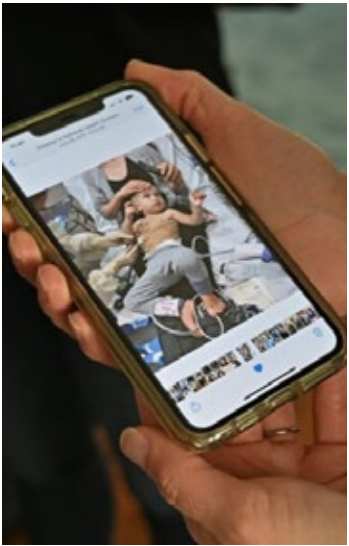
There is no sign of the three-year-long medical and emotional roller-coaster ride he and his family, who live in an affluent Washington suburb, have been on.

The first traumatic surprise came with the results of a pregnancy test: Johan was not planned.

“That was a huge shock. I cried,” said his mother, 39-year-old Maren Chamorro.



Michael Keller, an immunologist at Children’s National Hospital in Washington, used an incubator to grow white blood cells to be implanted in Johan, quickly boosting his immune system



A cell-phone photo of the day Johan was injected with T-cells from his brother

### Risky procedure

She had known since childhood that she carried a gene that

can be fatal in a child’s first 10 years, chronic granulomatous disease (CGD).

Her brother died of it at the age of seven. The inexorable laws of genetics meant that Maren had a one in four chance of transmitting it to her child.

For their first children, she and her husband Ricardo had chosen in-vitro fertilization, allowing the embryos to be genetically tested before implantation.

Their twins Thomas and Joanna were born -- both disease-free -- seven and a half years ago.

But in Johan’s case, a post-birth genetic test quickly confirmed the worst: he had CGD.

After conferring with experts at Children’s National Hospital in Washington, the couple took one of the most important decisions of their lives: Johan would receive a bone-marrow transplant, a risky procedure but one that would give him a chance of a cure.

“Obviously, the fact that Maren had lost a sibling at a young age from the disease played a big role,” Ricardo confided.

Bone marrow, the spongy tissue inside bones, serves as the body’s “factory” for the production of blood cells -- both red and white.

### His brother’s immune system

Johan’s white blood cells were incapable of fighting off bacteria and fungal infections. A simple bacterial infection, of negligible concern in a healthy child, could spread out of control in

his young body.

Luckily, Johan’s brother Thomas, six years old at the time, was a perfect match. In April 2018, doctors first “cleansed” Johan’s marrow using chemotherapy. They then took a small amount of marrow from Thomas’s hip bones using a long, thin needle.

From that sample they extracted “supercells,” as Thomas calls them -- stem cells, which they reinserted into Johan’s veins. Those cells would eventually settle in his bone marrow -- and begin producing normal white blood cells.

The second step was preventive cell therapy, under an experimental program led by immunologist Michael Keller at Children’s National Hospital.

The part of the immune system that protects against bacteria can be rebuilt in only a matter of weeks; but for viruses, the natural process takes at least three months.

### Hurdles remain

From Thomas’s blood, doctors extracted specialized white blood cells -- T-cells -- that had already encountered six viruses.

Keller grew them for 10 days in an incubator, creating an army of hundreds of millions of those specialized T-cells. The result: a fluffy white substance contained in a small glass vial.

Those T-cells were then injected into Johan’s veins,

immediately conferring protection against the six viruses.

“He has his brother’s immune system,” said Keller, an assistant professor at Children’s National.

Johan’s mother confirmed as much: today, when Thomas and Johan catch a cold, they have the same symptoms, and for nearly the same amount of time.

“I think it’s pretty cool to have immunity from your big brother,” Maren Chamorro said.

This therapeutic approach -- boosting the body’s immune system using cells from a donor or one’s own genetically modified cells -- is known as immunotherapy.

Its main use so far has been against cancer, but Keller hopes it will soon become available

Johan Chamorro and his sister Joanna at their home in McLean, Virginia. 18 months after bone-



against viruses for patients, like Johan, who suffer from depressed immune systems.

The chief obstacles to that happening are the complexity of the process and the costs, which can run to many thousands of dollars. These factors currently restrict the procedure to some 30 medical centers in the United States. For Johan, a year and a half after his bone marrow transplant, everything points to a complete success.

“It’s neat to see him processing things, and especially play outside in the mud,” his mother said.

“You know, what a gift!”

Her only concern now is the same as any mother would have -- that when her son does fall ill, others in the family might catch the same bug.

# Spirit world: Voodoo makes a comeback in its Benin home

AFP | Porto-Novo, Benin

In his long life, voodoo priest Kpohinto Medji has seen his religion flourish and then go into decline, banned for years by the authorities and pressured by other faiths.

Today, the ageing priest with mischievous eyes is somewhat happier.

Benin is gearing for its annual voodoo festival -- an event that lures an influx of visitors to the capital Porto-Novo and underscores voodoo’s comeback in the country of its birth.

Houngou Hounto Square is among a number of squares, once owned by voodoo-worshipping families, that are being renovated.

Painters have been putting the finishing touches to its ochre walls ahead of the January 10 festival, and fetishes and tokens of the old religion are proudly on display.

“Before, it was a run-down, abandoned square,” the old priest said, speaking in the local language of Goun. “Today, it’s lovely.”

Voodoo, more often called “vodun” in West Africa, has a hierarchy of deities and tribal spirits of nature and sees revered ancestors living alongside the living.

It uses fetishes, magical practises and healing remedies, which followers consider to be divine.

But its rituals have often been distorted by Hollywood, which tends to stereotype the religion as a source of black magic.

### Years of decline

In Benin itself, voodoo was battered by French colonisation, when it was demonised by Catholic missionaries.

A dozen years after Benin



Sacred: Priestesses in Porto-Novo give offerings to a voodoo idol



King Te Houeyi Migan XIV

gained independence, voodoo was banned by Mathieu Kerekou, a Marxist-Leninist who came to power in a military coup.

His elected successor,



Voodoo’s comeback has lured tourists to Porto-Novo, providing work for tourist guide Messie Boko

Nicephore Soglo, lifted the ban, but the religion came under pressure once more with the spread of evangelism in West Africa, whose preachers often compare native religions with sorcery.

According to the latest available official figures, which date from 2013, practitioners of voodoo, who are called vodounsi,

account for just 11 percent of Benin’s population, against nearly 30 percent Muslim and 25 percent Christian.

“There are so many religions which have arrived in Benin, they have turned our brothers away from our faith,” said Raymond Zannou, a printer.

He ancestors built Houngbo Hounto Square. Today, “a minor-

ity of people take care of maintaining the squares, and often they are elderly,” he said.

### City of squares

Porto-Novo, a city of about a quarter of a million people, originally developed as a port for



Mito Akplogan Guin, voodoo’s supreme leader in Porto-Novo

slave trade under the Portuguese empire in the 17th century.

Its squares -- 44, according to Gerard Bassale, head of a local cultural association called Ouadada -- are one of its most distinctive features.

Many of them belong to local families, who built their homes there and established temples and housed their divinities as protection.

But many of them fell into sad disrepair, becoming a symbol itself of voodoo’s marginalisation. Many blamed squabbles within families about sharing out the cost of renovation.

“They are the identity of our town. They create links between people, they are where impor-

tant ceremonies take place,” said Bassale, whose organisation is refurbishing the squares.

“If they disappeared, part of the town’s history would go with them.”

Restoring each square costs the equivalent of around \$66,000 (60,000 euros). The funding comes from Cergy-Pontoise, a town in the greater Paris region that has twinning links.

Porto-Novo’s authorities are paying for solar-powered lighting for the the squares and for cleaning them, but does not maintain the voodoo shrines there, which it considers to be private areas.

### Sacred tree

King Te Houeyi Migan XIV, the descendant of a long line of local chiefs, is delighted at the rebirth of the squares.

French colonisers used a forest that was sacred to his forebears to build Porto-Novo’s cathedral and governor’s palace.

The chief, clad in a magnificent purple gown, pointed to an ancient kapok tree towering over one of three renovated squares near the old palace.

“It is a sacred tree. Spirits live there,” said the king. “Every five years, we hold a great party and make sacrifices there.”

Paul Nouatin, treasurer of an association that maintains two of the squares, said there had been an upturn in interest in voodoo -- around 20 young people had been initiated into the religion in December alone, he said.

Mito Akplogan Guin, the supreme head of voodoo in Porto-Novo, said he was optimistic.

“Catholics, Protestants, Muslims.. all their ancestors (in Benin) were followers of voodoo. Our religion can’t disappear in a flash.”



# Iran is a crucial test case on US engagement in Mideast and beyond

*Donald Trump, as well as both the country's major political parties, seem torn between internationalism and isolationism*

HUSSEIN IBISH

Iran might not have decided yet whether to escalate or de-escalate tensions with the US following the targeted killing of Quds Force commander Qassem Suleimani, as Raghida Dergham reports in these pages. But question marks also hover over both the Donald Trump administration's long-term approach to Tehran and even over the broader trajectory of the US international role in coming decades.

Iran will be a crucial test case for American engagement.

Underneath the extraordinary outcry on both the left and the right in response to the killing of Suleimani lies a huge rift between internationalists, whether hawks or doves, who want to sustain the kind of global engagement Washington maintained during the Cold War era versus neo-isolationists, who reject a robust American international profile except, perhaps, regarding trade.

The Republican Party can normally be expected to rally around Mr Trump under any and all circumstances. And one would particularly expect a degree of robust unanimity when it comes to kinetic military actions overseas, particularly in response to the killing of an American military contractor and the besieging of the US embassy in Baghdad by cadres of the pro-Iranian Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah.

The Democratic Party can be expected to always critique the president's performance. Its leaders focused on the lack of customary briefings of senior congressional leaders in advance of the action, or satisfactory ones after.

Others went further. Many Democrats decried the "recklessness" of the killing and claimed that Mr Trump was dragging the US into a new Middle Eastern war for political purposes. Democratic leaders, essentially products of Cold War multilateralism who prize alliances and international institutions, sounded very different from those who reject the legacy of US global leadership as wasteful, corrupt, immoral or imperialistic.

This division is strikingly mirrored among Republicans. Internationalists such as senator Lindsey Graham – who are generally more hawkish and unilateralist than their Democratic counterparts – applauded the strike. But libertarian and isolationist senators, led by Rand Paul who has been one of Mr Trump's key allies, did not disguise their doubts and dismay.

Numerous American reactions to the drone strike reflected ideological and political orientations, frequently having nothing to do with the event itself, viewed either strategically or tactically. Many seem either cynical or neurotic, or both.

The problem has been exacerbated by typically poor messaging from this White House, which failed to clearly explain that beginning in late October, Kataib Hezbollah and other Iraqi militias operating under the supervision of Suleimani had launched rocket attacks on US-related military targets in Iraq on an almost weekly basis, eventually leading to the death of a contractor. Demanding, as both left and right isolationists did, specific intelligence about an imminent threat therefore seems silly.



US President Donald Trump appears to be deeply conflicted between internationalist and neo-isolationist tendencies.

**The country needs a robust, thoroughgoing national conversation about international relations. Foreign policy professionals and others who favour international engagement have simply failed to make the case to ordinary Americans that global leadership is in their interests.**



ten does, failed to make a sound policy case, preferring to indulge

in undignified chest thumping.

This mistake invited facile neo-isolationist arguments, with their own preposterous buzzwords such as "endless wars" – which Mr Trump himself has unwisely used to criticise his predecessors – to try to insinuate that the US-Iranian confrontation was effectively manufactured, exaggerated or is somehow pointless.

A good case could be made that the nuclear deal Iran signed with the world's powers had secured the international community a valuable breathing space on the country's nuclear programme, and withdrawing from it was rash and imprudent. However, there is really no question that

if the US wishes to be a major global power it has no choice but to confront Iran's expanding hegemony in the still strategically vital Middle East.

Yet many Americans on both the right and the left do not wish the country to remain a major global power at all. The isolationist streak runs deep. A majority demanded it between the first and second World Wars, leaving the country dreadfully weakened at a time of growing peril.

It was only the consensus about an existential threat posed by the erstwhile Soviet Union during the Cold War that established internationalism as hegemonic and mainstream po-

## CIVILIAN'S TRIBUNE

## Death of Sultan Qaboos marks end of an era

The death of Sultan Qaboos, the longest-serving ruler in the Middle East, marks the end of an era. He was father figure to Oman's more than four million residents and an elderly statesman who many leaders across the region looked up to. Sultan Qaboos held the reins for almost half a century, during which time he brought immeasurable progress to his country while playing a vital role in maintaining much-needed stability in this part of the world.

Indeed, it is important to remember Sultan Qaboos as the great moderniser of Oman and an important mediator between feuding neighbours, both in times of war and peace. He was the last of the

founding members of the Gulf Co-operation Council, formed in 1981, during a period of great uncertainty brought about by the onset of the Iran-Iraq War.

His departure is a great loss to his country, the region and the wider world. But even as this is a time of mourning, it is important to celebrate his life and honour his legacy as one of the Arab world's great leaders.

Not long after succeeding his father at the age of 29 in July 1970, Sultan Qaboos ushered in a period of development in Oman. It is worth noting that up until this point, the country was mostly underdeveloped; it reportedly had just 12 hospital beds, 10 kilometres of surfaced roads and

three primary schools – all of them for boys.

Within a short period, however, he invested the revenue generated from the country's oil industry into building critical infrastructure, educational institutions, hospitals, banks, and air and seaports. During this period, Sultan Qaboos also united the country and championed a tolerant society that was home to not just Arabs but also descendants from the Indian subcontinent and East Africa. Another example of his progressive vision was his bold move to admit women to the orchestra more than three decades ago.

Ahmed Khan



Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said



1935

A plebiscite in Saarland shows that **90.3%** of those voting wish to join Nazi Germany.

1939

**The Black Friday** bushfires burn 20,000 square kilometers of land in Australia, claiming the lives of 71 people.

1942

**Henry Ford** patents a plastic automobile, which is 30% lighter than a regular car.



1950

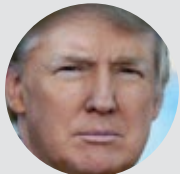
British submarine **HMS Truculent** collides with an oil tanker in the Thames Estuary, killing 64 men.

nd



TOP  
4  
TWEETS

01



To the leaders of Iran - DO NOT KILL YOUR PROTESTERS. Thousands have already been killed or imprisoned by you, and the World is watching. More importantly, the USA is watching. Turn your internet back on and let reporters roam free! Stop the killing of your great Iranian people!

@realDonaldTrump

02



I heartily congratulate LHM Sayyid Haitham bin Tariq al Said on taking over as Sultan of Oman. I am confident that under his leadership, Oman will continue to progress and prosper and contribute to global peace.

@narendramodi

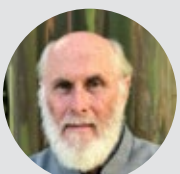
03



“Fight for India’s democracy”? What exactly does it mean when the largest free and fair election in human history occurred last year with Modi once again winning a thumping mandate. Are we saying it wasn’t democratic?

@rupasubramanya

04



In honor of Swami Vivekananda the universal principles of Yoga and Vedanta should be taught in all of India’s schools. Vivekananda chairs should be established along with his emphasis on Sanskrit. Who is willing to support such initiatives?

@davidfrawleyved

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

# Iran must now heed calls for swift access to the crash site

*If the lessons of past tragedies tell us anything it is that the quest for answers will last as long as impediments to investigation exist*



Friends and faculty members gather at The University of Windsor, Ontario for a memorial service for the five University of Windsor students who died in the Ukraine International Airlines flight crash in Iran.

DAMIEN MCELROY

Airlines are proud to claim that travel on modern fleets is statistically safer than road journeys. In 2017 there were no commercial airliner crashes.

Yet with horrifying regularity passenger jets come down during moments of heightened international tensions. As happened on Wednesday when the Ukraine International Airlines flight PS752 was shot out of the sky above Tehran with all 176 perishing on board.

Such was the global anxiety over the Iran-US confrontation, the news took a long time to sink in.

The loss of the flight was at first presented as a technical issue. The news was subservient to questions over the continuing cycle of retaliation between Tehran and Washington.

Tehran has only days later admitted that its armed forces shot down the aircraft due to “human error”, after insisting that engine failure caused the incident. The country’s ambassador to the UK apologised yesterday for a belligerent press briefing in which he insisted there was no human error involved.

The statement of responsibility came after the true horror of the loss of life was at last sinking in. The tragedy ranks alongside the 1988 incident in which the USS Vincennes mistakenly shot down Iranian Airlines 655 during a period of tension between Washington and Tehran.

There will hopefully now be a clear prioritising of the humanitarian considerations. A pause

in the exchange of insults in the aftermath of mass death should now ensue.

Justin Trudeau, the Canadian prime minister, has tried to focus minds on the need to recover the bodies and gain consular access for grieving relatives. With 138 of those on the flight bound for Canada, his country has suffered an immense blow. A total of 57 passengers were Canadian, even as reports earlier stated 63.

Access to the black boxes will remain a huge issue. Fears stirred by the Iranian regime’s orders to bulldoze over the sites of the crash linger despite yesterday’s announcement.

The personal stories of those who died only came to light as the week ended. The young couple aged 25 and 26 who had only married seven days earlier. The man who lived because his ticket was ruled invalid but lost his wife on board the plane. The children that perished with their parents.

In a microcosm of the tragedy, the Canadian province of Alberta has suffered a disproportionate loss, particularly its academic life.

There is still a danger of a bitter fight to control the narrative. The downing of Malaysian Airline MH17 over the Russian offensive in Ukraine has left a toxic legacy. There the perpetrators claimed fake news surrounding allegations of responsibility. Ugly misrepresentations successfully muddled the waters in the wake of an attack.

The toxic history of the Iranian relationship with the US informs the situation.

**Having admitted responsibility, Iran should heed the calls for swift access to the site of the crash. Ambiguities over the integrity of the black boxes can only be resolved by outside and independent inspectors. Allowing for the highest standards of investigation is the way forward.**

Earlier in the week US President Donald Trump invoked the 52 US embassy hostages and warned Tehran against retaliation for the drone strike that killed the Iranian general Qassem Soleimani.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani’s barbed retort to the White House tweet now casts a long shadow. Mr Rouhani angrily replied that the touchstone for Iran was 290, the number of passengers killed after the Vincennes incident in the Arabian Gulf.

Having admitted responsibility, Iran should heed the calls for swift access to the site of the crash. Ambiguities over the integrity of the black boxes can only be resolved by outside and independent inspectors. Allowing for the highest standards of investigation is the way forward.

The mourning relatives are already in a grieving process. If the lessons of past tragedies tell us anything it is that the quest for answers will last as long as

impediments to investigation exist.

Iran already faces lawsuits around the world over its state-sponsorship of terror and policies of hostage taking. Courts in the US and elsewhere have found the Iranian government culpable for needless loss of life.

Officials in Tehran must act swiftly to ease concerns over a cover-up since Wednesday morning.

Jim Swire, a Scottish doctor was the father of Flora who was killed along with 268 others in the 1988 Pan Am 103 Lockerbie bombing that was laid at the door of Col Muammar Qaddafi’s regime in Libya. Writing a quarter of a century after the disaster, Mr Swire described his daughter, who was flying to America to meet her boyfriend, as “a seeker after truth”. It was an idealised image that shaped his own life as he tirelessly campaigned to established how the bombing was carried out.

Mr Swire pointed to other devastating incidents that had taken place in Britain to highlight the indefatigability of those left behind to find out why their relatives died. “If you look at terrible UK disasters – Northern Ireland and the Irish Republican Army trials, the Hillsborough disaster and also Lockerbie, it is the denial of truth to the victims that is the common thread,” he wrote. “So, indeed, there is a thread and that thread is truth.”

A new raft of families must not face the same ordeal over what happened in Tehran on the night of January 8.



# business

## Solidarity Bahrain gets ISO 27001 certification

TDI | Manama

Solidarity Bahrain, one of the largest insurance companies in Bahrain and a subsidiary of Solidarity Group Holding, announced receiving the International Standard Organisation (ISO) 27001 certification from the British Standards Institution (BSI).

Achieving the ISO 27001 standard, Solidarity Bahrain said that this certifies that it's

executing an ideal information security and protection controls framework, by acquiring the necessary and enhanced information security tools to manage and protect the sensitive data of the company and the customers.

Commenting, Mohammed Awachi, AGM – Corporate Support, Solidarity Bahrain, stated: "This achievement will grant our customers the confidence

that we are operating within the highest levels of security and in accordance with the international information security standards".

He added: "The ISO 27001 certification will be a key factor to enhance our customer experience by delivering our innovative services with a high level of security".

The ISO 27001 standard specifies the requirements for estab-



**The ISO 27001 certification will be a key factor to enhance our customer experience by delivering our innovative services with a high level of security**

MOHAMMED AWACHI, AGM - CORPORATE SUPPORT



lishing, implementing, maintaining, and continually improving an information security management system (ISMS) within the organisation.

By implementing and following the necessary steps to comply with this standard, organizations can identify, control, and eliminate security risks, ultimately certifying the security practices adopted within their organisation.

## Standardise financial results, CBB tells cos

CBB issues instructions for Press Releases concerning financial results for public shareholding companies

TDI | Manama

Public listed shareholding companies should standardise their annual and quarterly financial statements to help shareholders evaluate financial performance accurately and comprehensively, a new CBB mandate has said.

The instructions available on CBB's website (cbb.gov.bh) is to aid "shareholders and investors in making sound investment decisions grounded on accurate and sufficient financial information of the public shareholding companies."

The directives are "necessary to enhance the disclosure standards followed in the Bahraini capital market, and to keep abreast of the current developments in the regional capital markets," said Abeer Al Sheikh Ebrahim Al Saad, Director of the Capital Markets Supervision

**The development of such directives is necessary to enhance the disclosure standards followed in the Bahraini capital market, and to keep abreast of the current developments in the regional capital markets, as the CBB strives to consistently adopt international best practices**

ABEER AL SHEIKH EBRAHIM AL SAAD, DIRECTOR OF THE CAPITAL MARKETS SUPERVISION DIRECTORATE AT THE CBB



Directorate at the CBB.

Al Saad also pointed out that these instructions are a further "positive step in enhancing in-

vestor confidence and maintaining the integrity of the capital market in Bahrain."

All public shareholding com-

panies listed on Bahrain Bourse must fully comply with the requirements set out thereof while preparing press releases concerning their financial results.

### Ruling in 2011

Earlier in 2011, the CBB has issued a similar ruling requiring board and directors of banks to implement controls which ensure that all "financial statements published in newspapers are easily readable and clear."

Back then, CBB observed that a "number of banks have been publishing their financial statements in newspapers in fonts which are too small to be easily read."

"Such practice is totally unacceptable as it is not in compliance with the spirit of the CBB's directives in respect of transparency and market discipline."

## BoE's Woods warns financial sector of crackdown



Woods, who was initially in the frame to replace Mark Carney as the British central bank governor, said he will have an eye on the job "next time around."

Reuters

Bank of England Deputy Governor Sam Woods yesterday said that Britain's financial sector could face a crackdown by regulators seeking to enforce their rules more tightly.

"I think it's possible that as we come out of the reform phase, and enter a phase where we're defending the reforms that have been put in place, that you may see more enforcement activity," Woods told the Telegraph newspaper.

Woods, who is the head of the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA), the BoE's banking supervisory arm, also said the regulator wouldn't necessarily be hostile to consoli-

dation in the banking sector, according to The Telegraph report. "We approach these things with caution, we'd have to be sure it made sense for the resulting entity," he said.

"It's been quite striking to me that really we've only had that one consolidation [in banking] – Virgin Money and Clydesdale. The possibility of others seems to me quite relevant and would not be problematic in principle."

Woods, who was initially in the frame to replace Mark Carney as the British central bank governor, said he will have an eye on the job "next time around." Andrew Bailey, chief executive of the Financial Conduct Authority, will succeed Mark Carney as the BoE's governor on March 16.

## BCCI in deal with 'The Business Year' to boost local businesses

**The deal will allow BCCI members international exposure**

TDI | Manama

The Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) has signed a cooperation agreement with 'The Business Year' to promote Bahrain as a favourable business and investment destination and empower local businesses.

From the Chamber's side, Chief Executive Officer Shaker Al Shater signed the agreement with Country Manager Yohana Bolivar Rojas on behalf of 'The Business Year'.

The signing ceremony was held at the Bahrain Chamber's



BCCI Chief Executive Officer Shaker Al Shater and 'The Business Year' Country Manager Yohana Bolivar Rojas signed the deal in the presence of Deputy Chief Executive Officer Dr Abdulla Al Sada at the Bahrain Chamber's premises.

premises in the presence of Deputy Chief Executive Officer Dr Abdulla Al Sada.

Commenting on the deal, Al Shater said that this is one of many initiatives the chamber is

taking to promote the Kingdom of Bahrain and empower local businesses.

"We are intensifying our efforts in line with the country's ambitious economic vision and

keenness on enhancing the contribution of the private sector to the national economy and diversifying sources of income," Al Shater added.

He said that the deal will allow BCCI members international exposure, while "raising awareness of the advanced ecosystem of Bahrain, highlight partnership and investment opportunities, and underline Bahrain's fertile investment environment."

Al Shater added: "We strongly believe in the potentials of local businesses and will spare no effort to streamline their expansion and contribute to their success."

'The Business Year' has partnerships with economic TV channels such as FACTSHEET; Dow Jones FACTIVA; EIKON; and Bloomberg Terminal.



# Equatorial Guinea to add 20,000 bpd of oil production this year



Representative picture

Reuters | Abu Dhabi

Equatorial Guinea will add 20,000 barrels per day (bpd) of oil production by October, the country's oil minister said yesterday.

"We expect an increase this year of around 20,000 bpd additional because of the new discoveries," Gabriel Obiang Lima told reporters on the sidelines of an energy event.

Asked about the need to extend the OPEC+ production cuts agreement beyond March, the minister said the deal should be maintained if the oil price range remains between \$60 and \$70 a barrel.

"As an OPEC member, if the price is between \$60 to \$70 then we are happy, we are achieving. If we do evaluation and that price continues then we should maintain the deal and continue forward," he said.

In the country's budget for 2020, the oil prices is forecast at \$51 a barrel, he said.

Obiang Lima also said agreements and memorandums of understanding for two new oil refineries would be announced in April.

Plans for new energy projects worth \$1 billion, including the two refineries, were announced in November.

Construction of the two refineries, which are expected to process up to 40,000 bpd of crude oil, is expected to start by the end of the year, Lima said.

Equatorial Guinea will also



**Equatorial Guinea, a member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), currently produces 120,000 bpd.**

probably announce a new bidding round for several exploration blocks in April, the minister said.

"In April we are probably going to announce new blocks that will be put for licensing... it will be direct negotiations.. they are about four to five blocks," he said.

US oil major Exxon Mobil plans to shed its operations in the country along with \$25 billion worth of other assets worldwide as it seeks to free up cash to focus on a handful of mega-projects.

On Sunday, Obiang Lima said an announcement would be made in June on who would invest in the Zafiro oilfield after Exxon exits.

"For the development of Zafiro we are talking to companies from Russia, the UK and Equatorial Guinea itself," he said, adding that in the south of the field there is a discovery he believes is the same size as the field itself.

# Aramco ups IPO to record \$29.4bn

● A greenshoe option, or over-allotment, allows companies to issue more shares in an IPO when there is greater demand

● Thursday's closing price valued Aramco at \$1.87 trillion

Reuters | Dubai

State-owned oil company Saudi Aramco said yesterday it had exercised its "greenshoe option" to sell an additional 450 million shares, raising the size of its initial public offering (IPO) to a record \$29.4 billion.

Aramco initially raised a



Aramco initially raised a \$25.6bn, which was itself a record level

\$25.6bn, which was itself a record level, in its December IPO by selling 3bn shares at 32 riyals (\$8.53) a share. But it had indicated it could sell additional shares through the over-allotment of shares.

Aramco shares were flat at 35 riyals shortly after the market opened, according to Refinitiv data.

A greenshoe option, or over-allotment, allows companies to issue more shares in

an IPO when there is greater demand from participants in the initial offer. Investors were allocated the additional shares during book-building, Aramco said.

"No additional shares are being offered into the market today and the stabilising manager will not hold any shares in the company as a result of exercise of the over-allotment option," Aramco said.

Aramco shares have been volatile amid heightened tensions between the United States and Iran, which lies across the Gulf from Saudi Arabia.

Aramco shares fell to 34 riyals on Jan. 8, its lowest since trading began on Dec. 11, but closed at 35 riyals on Thursday.

Thursday's closing price valued Aramco at \$1.87 trillion, above the IPO price.

# 'I'm spending all my money to get rid of Trump': Michael Bloomberg

● Bloomberg has flooded US airwaves and social media feeds with messages that he stands the best chance to beat Trump

Reuters | San Antonio, Texas

US presidential candidate Michael Bloomberg said he is ready to spend much of his vast fortune to oust Republican President Donald Trump from the White House in 2020, rejecting criticism from rivals for the Democratic nomination that the billionaire is trying to buy the US election.

Ranked by Forbes as the eighth-richest American, Bloomberg has flooded US airwaves and social media feeds with messages that he stands the best chance to beat Trump, spending more on campaign ads since he launched his campaign in November than his main Democratic rivals have over the last year.

"Number one priority is to get rid of Donald Trump. I'm spending all my money to get rid of Trump," Bloomberg said aboard his campaign bus on Saturday, during a nearly 300-mile (483-km) drive across Texas,



Democratic U.S. presidential candidate Michael Bloomberg

one of the 14 states that will vote on Super Tuesday on March 3.

"Do you want me to spend more or less? End of story."

US Senator Elizabeth Warren, one of the leading Democratic presidential contenders who has vowed to get money out of politics, blasted Bloomberg when he launched his campaign with a \$37-million TV advertising blitz, accusing the former New York City mayor of trying to buy American democracy.

"These are just political things they say, hoping they catch on and they don't like me doing it, because it competes with them, not because it's bad

policy," Bloomberg said.

After entering the race late and missing the first six Democratic debates, Bloomberg generally sits fifth in national public opinion polls behind Joe Biden, Bernie Sanders, Warren and Pete Buttigieg.

But not just the two liberal standard-bearers of Warren and Sanders, all of the four are too liberal to beat Trump, Bloomberg said.

"One of the reasons I'm reasonably confident I could beat Trump is I would be acceptable to the moderate Republicans you have to have," said Bloomberg, a former Republican who

made his fortune selling financial information to Wall Street firms.

"Whether you like it or not, you can't win the election unless you get moderate Republicans to cross the line. The others are much too liberal for them and they would certainly vote for Donald Trump."

After a late entry into the race, he is skipping the first four Democratic nomination contests in Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada and South Carolina all due to take place in February.

Instead, Bloomberg is waging a nationwide campaign to capture delegates in later contests such as Texas, which will be the second largest prize among the 14 Super Tuesday states.

At campaign events in San Antonio, Austin and Dallas in Texas on Saturday, Bloomberg said his bipartisan nature made it more likely he could deliver on his pledges to expand health insurance coverage, fight climate change and reduce gun violence.

While his speeches drew modest crowds of no more than a few hundred in Austin and fewer still in San Antonio, many who attended said they were independents or former Trump supporters who had learned about Bloomberg through his massive advertising campaign.

# Abu Dhabi-based agency calls for clean energy investments to double

Abu Dhabi

An international agency promoting clean energy called yesterday for investments in renewable energy projects to be more than doubled, redirecting funds from fossil fuels.

The Abu Dhabi-based International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) also said that electricity output from renewable sources would more than double over the next decade.

"The agency's data shows that annual renewable energy investment needs to double from around \$330 billion today to close to \$750 billion to deploy renewable energy at the speed required," it said in a report.

"Much of the needed invest-



Over the past 10 years, wind turbine prices have halved, says the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)



IRENA director general Francesco La Camera

ment can be met by redirecting planned fossil fuel investment," IRENA said.

It estimated as much as \$10 trillion worth of investments are planned in non-renewables-related energy projects by 2030, risking failure to meet the goals

of fighting global warming.

Some \$2.6 trillion has been invested in renewable energy projects by end 2019, according to the United Nations Environment Programme.

IRENA director general Francesco La Camera told reporters on the sidelines of its annual assembly in Abu Dhabi that renewable energy programmes must be accelerated.

If we want to deal "with the consequences of climate change, we have to accelerate our path. It means we have to go and double our investments in renewables", he said.

IRENA's report said additional investment in renewables can achieve substantial savings, including minimising losses

caused by climate change as a result of inaction.

"Savings could amount to between \$1.6 trillion and \$3.7 trillion annually by 2030, three to seven times higher than investment costs for the energy transformation," the report said.

Electricity from renewable sources, mainly solar and wind, will supply 57 percent of global power by the end of the current decade, up from just 26 percent currently, IRENA said.

The falling costs of renewable energy has greatly enhanced its contribution.

Over the past 10 years, solar costs have dived by 90 percent and wind turbine prices have halved in the same period, IRENA said.



# Gulf markets gain after no escalation in tensions

- **Advanced Petrochemical FY profit rises**
- **Aramco closes down at 34.8 riyals**
- **Amanat Holdings gains on acquisition plan**

Reuters

Middle East stocks closed higher yesterday amid relief at no further escalation in tensions between Iran and the United States, but shares of Saudi Aramco retreated.

Last week, US President Donald Trump backed away from days of angry rhetoric against Iran as the two countries tried to defuse a crisis over the US killing of Iranian military commander



Saudi stock market (Courtesy of Emerging Market views)

Qassem Soleimani. Saudi Arabia's index rose 0.3 per cent, led by a 5.6pc jump in telecom operator Etihad Etisalat. Advanced Petrochemical added 2.2pc after reporting a 5.9pc increase in its estimated annual profit to 759 million riyals (\$202 million).

### Closing Bell

SAUDI	▲ 0.3pc to 8,371 pts
ABU DHABI	▲ 0.2 pc to 5,084 pts
DUBAI	▲ 0.1 pc to 2,752 pts
QATAR	▲ 0.6pc to 10,509 pts
EGYPT	▲ 0.5pc to 13,803 pts
BAHRAIN	▲ 0.2 pc to 1,600 pts

Gains, however, were capped by losses in financial and energy shares. Samba Financial Group dropped 2.8pc, while Saudi Aramco fell 0.6pc to 34.8 riyals.

Yesterday, Aramco said it had exercised its “greenshoe option” to sell an additional 450 million shares, raising the size of its initial public offering (IPO) to \$29.4 billion. Aramco initially raised

a then-record \$25.6 billion in its IPO in December by selling 3 billion shares at 32 riyals.

In Qatar, Doha Bank and United Development rose by 6.2pc and 3.3pc respectively, pushing the index up by 0.6pc.

Dubai's index edged up 0.1pc as its biggest lender Emirates NBD increased 1.2pc, while Amanat Holdings closed up 1.7pc after saying it was assessing a possible acquisition of a stake in the Middle East operations of VPS Healthcare Group.

Abu Dhabi's index was up 0.2pc, with market heavyweight First Abu Dhabi Bank gaining 0.3pc.

Outside the Gulf, Egypt's blue-chip index gained 0.5pc with Commercial International Bank Egypt adding 0.4pc.

Stock markets in Kuwait and Oman were closed following the death of Oman's Sultan Qaboos bin Said and will resume trading on Tuesday and Wednesday respectively.

## China's US trade deal commitments not changed in translation: Mnuchin

Reuters | Washinton

China's commitments in the Phase 1 trade deal with the United States were not changed during a lengthy translation process and will be released this week as the document is signed in Washington, US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said yesterday.

Mnuchin told Fox News Channel that the deal reached on Dec. 13 still calls for China to buy \$40 billion to \$50 bn worth of US agricultural products annually and a total of \$200 bn of US goods over two years.

“It wasn't changed in translation. I don't know where that rumor started,” Mnuchin said on the “Sunday Morning Futures with Maria Bartiromo” show.

“We have been going through a translation process that I think we said was really a technical issue,” Mnuchin said. “And the language will be released this week. So I think it is — the day of the signing, we will be releasing the English version.”

“And people can see. This is a very, very extensive agreement,” he added.

White House officials had said as late as Friday that the final Chinese text was not yet completed, even as invitations went out to more than 200 people for a Jan. 15 signing event at the White House.

Asked if he still expected Chi-



Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin

na to purchase \$40bn to \$50bn in US farm products under the deal, Mnuchin said: “I do. Let me just say, it is \$200 bn of additional products across the board over the next two years, and, specifically in agriculture, \$40bn to \$50bn.”

Thus far, Beijing has not confirmed those purchase commitments, and recent government actions in the agriculture industry have raised questions over the \$40 bn to \$50 bn target cited repeatedly by Trump administration officials.

Chinese officials have been careful not to publicly discuss details of the Phase 1 deal, because Washington has changed its position multiple times during negotiations, three Chi-

nese officials with knowledge of the situation told Reuters last week.

Signing of the trade deal on Wednesday eases Trump's 18-month trade war aimed at altering China's trade and economic practices, but will leave in place tariffs on about \$370 bn worth of Chinese imports per year.

Those are expected to be addressed in Phase 2 negotiations, which the Trump administration wants to launch this year, covering thornier issues untouched by the Phase 1 trade deal, including Beijing's heavy subsidies to Chinese state-owned enterprises and restrictions digital trade and cybersecurity issues.

## Lebanon central bank seeks extra powers, wants controls standardized

Reuters | Beirut

Lebanon's central bank is seeking extra powers to regulate and standardise controls which commercial banks are imposing on depositors, the governor said yesterday, saying his intention was to ensure “fair relationships” between banks and customers.

Seeking to prevent capital flight, commercial banks have been tightly controlling access to deposits and blocking most transfers abroad since October, when anti-government protests brought a long-brewing Lebanese economic crisis to a head.

The Lebanese authorities have not, however, introduced formal capital controls regulating these measures.

Central bank governor Riad Salameh, in a text message to Reuters, confirmed sending a letter to Lebanon's finance minister on Jan. 9 seeking “exceptional powers necessary to issue regulations pertaining” to conditions in the sector.

He said no new measures were planned.

The letter, reported by Lebanese media late on Saturday, said the measures imposed by commercial banks needed to be regulated and unified “with the aim of implementing them fairly and equally on all depositors and clients”.



Lebanon's Central Bank Governor Riad Salameh

Lebanon's caretaker government has not issued any statement on Salameh's request, which was set out in a letter to caretaker Finance Minister Ali Hassan Khalil.

In the letter, Salameh said implementation of the controls by commercial banks had “on several occasions led to prejudicing the rights of some clients, particularly with respect to the unequal approach with other clients”.

He urged Khalil to work with the government “to take appropriate legal measures ... to entrust (the central bank)” with the necessary extra powers.

In justifying this, he cited the need to “secure the public good, to protect banking and monetary stability ... and to protect the legitimate interests of depositors and clients”.

## Thyssenkrupp steps up efforts to sell Industrial Solutions unit: FT



Reuters

German conglomerate Thyssenkrupp AG has stepped up efforts to sell its Industrial Solutions unit, which builds plants and industrial sites, the *Financial Times* newspaper reported yesterday.

China's state-owned companies are expected to be among the parties interested in buying the unit, the newspaper reported, citing people familiar with the matter.

The FT said bankers had sounded out potential buyers over the past few weeks.

The report comes a couple of days after Der Spiegel magazine reported Thyssenkrupp was considering reviving plans for a steel merger with smaller German peer Salzgitter.

Thyssenkrupp was not immediately available for a comment on Sunday.

## Japanese billionaire Maezawa seeks girlfriend for SpaceX voyage

Reuters | Tokyo

Japanese billionaire Yusaku Maezawa's search for a girlfriend to join him on a voyage around the moon will be the subject of a new documentary program, in the latest attention-grabbing stunt by the entrepreneur.

44-year-old Maezawa, who sold his online fashion retailer Zozo Inc to SoftBank Group Corp, is seeking single females aged over 20 for the show, which will be shown on streaming ser-

“I want to find a ‘life partner’. With that future partner of mine, I want to shout our love and world peace from outer space

JAPANESE BILLIONAIRE YUSAKU MAEZAWA, FOUNDER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF ONLINE FASHION RETAILER ZOZO



vice AbemaTV.

“As feelings of loneliness and emptiness slowly begin to surge upon me, there's one thing that I think about: continuing to love one woman,” wrote Maezawa on a website for applicants.

“I want to find a ‘life partner’. With that future partner of mine, I want to shout our love and world peace from outer space,” continued Maezawa, who is due to fly around the moon in 2023 as the first private passenger with Elon Musk's SpaceX.

Maezawa, who recently split up from actress girlfriend Ayame Goriki, 27, has said he plans to take artists on the flight to inspire works based on the experience, in a project he dubbed Dear Moon.

The documentary, titled “Full Moon Lovers”, will stream on AbemaTV, which is backed by online ad agency CyberAgent and broadcaster TV Asahi and targets a younger audience that is turning away from traditional TV. Applicants must “be inter-

ested in going into space and able to participate in the preparation for it” and “be someone who wishes for world peace”, the website states.

Applications close on Jan. 17 and Maezawa will select his partner by the end of March.

The documentary is the latest high-profile move by the billionaire, who is also giving away \$9 million to his Twitter followers to try and spark debate in Japan about the merits of the idea of basic income.



show



**UNDERWATER (PG-15)(THRILLER/HORROR)**

OASIS JUFFAIR : 2.00 + 6.45 + 11.30 PM  
OASIS JUFFAIR (VIP): 11.45 AM + 4.30 + 9.15 PM  
CITY CENTRE: 10.30 AM + 12.45 + 3.00 + 5.15 + 7.30 + 9.45 + 12.00 MN + (12.45 MN THURS/FRI)  
CITY CENTRE (VIP I) : 12.00 + 2.15 + 4.30 + 6.45 + 9.00 + 11.15 PM  
SEEF (II): 10.30 AM + 12.30 + 2.45 + 5.00 + 7.15 + 9.30 + 11.45 PM + (12.45 MN THURS/FRI)  
WADI AL SAIL: 12.15 + 2.30 + 4.45 + 7.00 + 9.15 + 11.30 PM

KRISTEN STEWART, T.J. MILLER, JESSICA HENWICK

**1917 (PG-15)(WAR/ACTION/DRAMA)**

OASIS JUFFAIR : 11.30 AM + 4.15 + 9.00 PM  
OASIS JUFFAIR (VIP): 2.00 + 6.45 + 11.30 PM  
CITY CENTRE: 11.30 AM + 2.00 + 4.30 + 7.00 + 9.30 + 12.00 MN  
CITY CENTRE (IMAX 2D) : 10.30 AM + 1.00 + 3.30 + 6.00 + 8.30 + 11.00 PM  
SEEF (II): 11.00 AM + 1.30 + 4.00 + 6.30 + 9.00 + 11.30 PM + (12.30 MN THURS/FRI)  
WADI AL SAIL: 6.45 + 9.15 + 11.45 PM

GEORGE MACKAY, DEAN-CHARLES CHAPMAN, MARK STRONG

**LIKE A BOSS (18+)(COMEDY)**

OASIS JUFFAIR : 2.15 + 7.00 + 11.45 PM  
CITY CENTRE: 11.00 AM + 1.00 + 3.00 + 5.00 + 7.00 + 9.00 + 11.00 PM + ( 1.00 AM THURS/FRI)  
CITY CENTRE (VIP II) : 12.00 + 2.00 + 4.00 + 6.00 + 8.00 + 10.00 + 12.00 MN  
SEEF (II): 12.00 + 2.00 + 4.00 + 6.00 + 8.00 + 10.00 + 12.00 MN  
WADI AL SAIL: 2.15 + 7.00 + 11.45 PM

TIFFANY HADDISH, ROSE BYRNE, SALMA HAYEK

**RICHARD JEWELL (PG-15)(DRAMA/THRILLER)**

OASIS JUFFAIR : 11.30 AM + 4.15 + 9.00 PM  
CITY CENTRE: 2.30 + 8.15 PM  
SEEF (II): 11.30 AM + 5.15 + 11.00 PM  
WADI AL SAIL: 10.30 AM + 3.30 + 8.45 PM

SAM ROCKWELL, KATHY BATES, JON HAMM

**DARBAR (PG-15)(ACTION)**

OASIS JUFFAIR : (TAMIL): 11.15 AM + 2.15 + 5.15 + 8.15 + 11.15 PM  
OASIS JUFFAIR (HINDI) : 11.30 AM + 5.30 + 11.30 PM  
OASIS JUFFAIR : (TELUGU) : 2.30 + 8.30 PM  
CITY CENTRE : (TAMIL) : 11.45 AM + 2.45 + 5.45 + 8.45 + 11.45 PM  
SEEF (I)-(TAMIL) : 11.30 AM + 2.30 + 5.30 + 8.30 + 11.30 + ( 12.30 MN THURS/ FRI)  
SEEF (I):(HINDI) : 12.00 + 3.00 + 6.00 + 9.00 + 12.00 MN  
SEEF (I):(TELUGU) : 12.30 + 3.30 + 6.30 + 9.30 PM  
WADI AL SAIL:(TAMIL): 11.00 AM + 2.00 + 5.00 + 8.00 + 11.00 PM  
ALHAMRA:(TAMIL): 12.00 + 3.00 + 6.00 + 9.00 + ( 12.00 MN THURS/FRI)

RAJINIKANTH, SUNIL SHETTY, NAYANTHARA

**TANHAJI:THE UNSUNG WARRIOR (PG-15)**

OASIS JUFFAIR : 12.15 + 3.00 + 5.45 + 8.30 + 11.15 PM  
CITY CENTRE: 10.30 AM + 3.30 + 8.45 PM  
SEEF (I): 12.30 + 3.15 + 6.00 + 8.45 + 11.30 PM  
WADI AL SAIL: 11.30 AM + 4.15 + 9.00 PM

AJAY DEVGN, SAIF ALI KHAN, KAJOL

**CHHAPAAK (PG-15)(HINDI/DRAMA)**

OASIS JUFFAIR : 10.45 AM + 1.15 + 3.45 + 6.15 + 8.45 + 11.15 PM  
CITY CENTRE: 1.00 + 6.15 + 11.30 PM  
SEEF (II): 11.15 AM + 1.45 + 4.15 + 6.45 + 9.15 + 11.45 PM  
WADI AL SAIL: 1.00 + 6.15 + 11.30 PM

DEEPIKA PADUKONE, VIKRANT MASSEY, MADHURJEET SARGHI

**RED SHOES AND THE 7 DWARFS (G)**

OASIS JUFFAIR (KIDS CINEMA): 10.30 AM + 2.30 + 4.30 + 8.45 PM  
CITY CENTRE: 12.00 + 4.30 PM  
CITY CENTRE: (3D) : 2.15 + 6.45 PM  
SEEF (II): 10.30 AM + 12.30 + 2.30 + 4.30 + 6.30 PM

CHLO, GRACE MORETZ, SAM CLAFLIN, GINA GERSHON



**MASAMEER: THE MOVIE (PG)(ANIMATION/COMEDY)**

CITY CENTRE: 10.30 AM + 1.00 + 3.30 + 6.00 + 8.30 + 11.00 PM  
SEEF (II): 10.45 AM + 1.15 + 3.45 + 6.15 PM

ABDULAZIZ AL-MUZAINI, ABDULAZIZ AL-SHEHRI, MAZROA AL-MAZROA

**DAUGHTER OF THE WOLF (PG-15)(ACTION/THRILLER)**

SEEF (II): 11.30 AM + 3.30 + 7.30 + 11.30 PM

GINA CARANO, RICHARD DREYFUSS, BRENDAN FEHR

**BALLOON (PG-13)(DRAMA/THRILLER)**

SEEF (II): 8.30 + 11.00 PM

FRIEDRICH MÜCKE, KAROLINE SCHUCH, ALICIA VON RITTBERG

**MISSION UNSTAPABOL (PG-13)(FILIPINO/COMEDY)**

SEEF (II): 8.45 + 11.00 PM

VIC SOTTO, MAINE MENDOZA, JAKE CUENCA

**JUMANJI THE NEXT LEVEL (PG-15)**

CITY CENTRE: 10.30 AM + 1.00 + 3.45 + 6.30 + 9.15 + 12.00 MN + (12.30 MN THURS/FRI)  
CITY CENTRE (ATMOS) : 10.30 AM + 1.00 + 3.45 + 6.30 + 9.15 + 12.00 MN  
SEEF (I): 12.45 + 3.30 + 6.15 + 9.00 + 11.45 PM  
WADI AL SAIL: 1.00 + 6.15 + 11.30 PM

DWAYNE JOHNSON, JACK BLACK, KEVIN HART

**AL FELOUS (THE MONEY) (PG-15)(ARABIC/COMEDY/CRIME)**

CITY CENTRE: 11.15 AM + 1.45 + 4.15 + 6.45 + 9.15 + 11.45 PM + (12.45 MN THURS/FRI)  
SEEF (I): 10.45 AM + 1.15 + 3.45 + 6.15 + 8.45 + 11.15 PM  
WADI AL SAIL: 10.30 AM + 3.45 + 9.00 PM

TAMER HOSNY, ZEINA, KHALID EL-SAWI

**THE GRUDGE (15+)(HORROR/THRILLER/DRAMA)**

CITY CENTRE: 10.30 AM + 12.30 + 2.45 + 5.00 + 7.15 + 9.30 + 11.45 PM

ANDREA RISEBOROUGH, DEMIAN BICHR, JOHN CHO

**SPIES IN DISGUISE (PG)**

OASIS JUFFAIR (KIDS CINEMA): 6.30 + 10.45 PM  
CITY CENTRE: 11.00 AM + 1.15 + 3.30 + 5.45 + 8.00 + 10.15 PM  
SEEF (II): 11.15 AM + 1.30 + 3.45 + 6.00 + 8.15 + 10.30 PM  
WADI AL SAIL: 12.00 + 2.15 + 4.30 PM

WILL SMITH, TOM HOLLAND, KAREN GILLAN

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

CITY CENTRE: 11.15 AM + 1.30 + 3.45 + 6.00 + 8.15 + 10.30 PM  
SEEF (II): 11.00 AM + 1.15 + 3.30 + 5.45 + 8.00 + 10.15 PM

KRISTEN BELL, IDINA MENZEL, JOSH GAD

**NORM OF THE NORTH 3: KING SIZED ADVENTURE (G)**

OASIS JUFFAIR (KIDS CINEMA): 12.30 NOON

JENNIFER CAMERON, BRIAN DOBSON, MICHAEL DOBSON

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

CITY CENTRE: 12.15 + 2.30 + 4.45 + 7.00 + 9.15 + 11.30 PM

CHADWICK BOSEMAN, SIENNA MILLER, STEPHAN JAMES

**STAR WARS: THE RISE OF SKYWALKER (PG-13)**

CITY CENTRE: 11.30 AM + 5.15 + 11.00 PM

DAISY RIDLEY, MARK HAMILL, ADAM DRIVER

**GOOD NEWWZ (15+)(HINDI/COMEDY/DRAMA)**

OASIS JUFFAIR: 2.45 + 8.30 PM  
SEEF (II): 2.15 + 8.00 PM

AKSHAY KUMAR, KAREENA KAPOOR, DILIJT DOSANJH

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

CITY CENTRE: 12.15 + 2.45 + 5.15 + 7.45 + 10.15 PM

ANGELINA JOLIE, TERESA MAHONEY, MICHELLE PFEIFFER

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

CITY CENTRE: 9.00 PM + 11.45 PM

DANIEL CRAIG, CHRIS EVANS, ANA DE ARMAS



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

CITY CENTRE: 12.00 + 5.45 + 11.30 PM

JOAQUIN PHOENIX, ZAZIE BEETZ, ROBERT DE NIRO

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

CITY CENTRE: 2.45 + 8.30 PM

MATT DAMON, CHRISTIAN BALE, JON BERNTHAL

**TRAUMA CENTRE (PG-15)(THRILLER)**

SEEF (II): 1.30 + 5.30 + 9.30 PM

BRUCE WILLIS, NICKY WHELAN, STEVE GUTTENBERG

**DRIVING LICENCE (PG-15)(MALAYALAM)**

OASIS JUFFAIR: 12.00 + 5.45 + 11.30 PM

PRITHVIRAJ SUKUMARAN, SURAJ VENJARANMOODU

**SARILERU NEEKEVVARU ()(TELUGU)**

From Saturday 11th  
OASIS JUFFAIR: 10.30 AM + 1.45 + 5.00 + 8.15 + 11.30 PM

MAHESH BABU, VIJAYASHANTI, RASHMIKA MANDANA, PRAKASH RAJ

MOVIE REVIEW

Darbar: Rajinikanth is thoroughly entertaining in a stale cop film

● **Rajinikanth’s charisma is intact and on full display in virtually every frame of the film**

Dirty Harry seeps into Rajinikanth in A.R. Murugadoss’ Darbar, a messy, massy, mediocre movie masquerading as a megastar vehicle. The 69-year-old superstar takes on the role of a 40-something super cop who is not averse to bending the rules in his pursuit of criminals. The make-up, the outfits and the lighting by seasoned cinematographer Santosh Sivan do a sterling job of persuading us that Rajinikanth is ageless. But no matter what, no movie that features the superstar these days can sidestep the issue of age. Darbar doesn’t. But more on that latter.

Rajinikanth’s charisma is intact and on full display in virtually every frame of the film. Sadly, there is little else in this potboiler that stirs up a broth completely dependent on the lead actor to provide the heft that could compensate for its glaring lack of substance. Dar-



Rajinikanth in a still from the film

bar is targeted fair and square at Rajinikanth fans, but it does nothing to give masala cinema a fresh shot of energy. Rajinikanth is cast as Aditya Arunachalam, a dreaded cop who is appointed the Mumbai police chief and tasked with a very specific mission: elimination of the city’s drug mafia. Even before the hero’s introduction scene, which is a huge let-

down, the audience is treated to news footage about an encounter specialist who shoots before he talks. The first 15 minutes of Darbar puts on the table much of what it has to offer by way of entertainment. For Rajini fans, that is a pretty good deal. The film leaves no room for confusion in their minds. They know exactly what to expect from Darbar and the superstar they can never

have enough of.

Arunachalam’s advent in Mumbai sends shivers down the spine of the gangsters active in the megapolis, but the cinematic payload that the swaggering protagonist delivers is way below the mark. There is no adrenaline rush nor any emotional tug that can hold the thin narrative together. Darbar lacks the bite that one expects from a

**Despite A.R. Murugadoss offering very little substance for him to work with, the superstar just about manages to carry this film on his aging shoulders**

Rajinikanth film. This despite the fact that the actor, needless to say, does not spare any effort to make the character work. Arunachalam’s record of extra-judicial killings riles the human rights commission. When the members protest too much, he not only gives them a piece of his mind, he manhandles them and gets away with it. The film suggests that Arunachalam is a psychologically disturbed man and hence given to ways that might be difficult to comprehend if one went by the rulebook. That is a rather problematic position whether you see it from the standpoint

of acceptable policing methods or through the prism of mental health. Arunachalam quickly figures out that Ajay Malhotra (Prateik Babbar), the son of a wealthy industrialist Vijay Malhotra (Nawab Shah), is the key figure in the drug peddling ring that he has to bust. He brings the culprit to book. But Ajay gets a proxy to serve time in jail. The police commissioner is livid at the subterfuge and takes no time to make Ajay pay for his transgression. Hari Chopra (Suniel Shetty), the drug network mastermind, returns to India 27 years after a daring action of his left the Mumbai Police red-faced. He is out to settle scores with Arunachalam and his daughter Valli (Nivetha Thomas). The rest of the film is devoted to the hero’s daring deeds aimed at smashing Chopra’s crime empire. The father-daughter relationship, which could have been a principal component of the storyline, remains only a cursory concern, which robs the film of emotive depth. That apart, the hero’s romantic interest, played by Nayanthara, is given a short shrift by the script.



# celebs

## Dwayne Johnson to star in comedy about his life



Dwayne Johnson  
Los Angeles

Wrestler-turned-actor Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson will star in a single-camera comedy series inspired by his life called “Young Rock”.

Though the show will focus on Johnson’s “formative years”, the star will appear in every episode, reports [etonline.com](#).

Announced on Saturday at the winter Television Critics Association press tour, NBC has ordered 11 episodes of “Young Rock”.

The pilot is co-written by “Fresh Off the Boat” show’s Nahnatchka Khan and Jeff Chiang.

Johnson, who also hosts “Titan Games”, will be the executive producer along with longtime partners Dany Garcia and Hiram Garcia.

## Gigi Hadid, Zayn Malik confirm their reunion

New York

Model Gigi Hadid and singer Zayn Malik looked happy while celebrating the latter’s birthday.

They last went their separate ways in November 2018. Now Gigi and Zayn seem overjoyed to be back together again, reports [dailymail.co.uk](#).

The couple were seen on Saturday night in New York as they went out to celebrate Zayn’s birthday at a Mediterranean-Italian spot with Gigi’s sister Bella Hadid, their mother Yolanda Hadid and singer Dua Lipa.

Gigi and Zayn were first linked in November 2015 when they were seen holding hands. Back then, the pop star had ended a relationship with Perrie Edwards, while Gigi had split from Joe Jonas.

The couple confirmed their first break-up in March 2018, but they were back together again by the following month.

By November they seemed to have moved apart, though it wasn’t until January 2019 that they confirmed their break-up again.

Zayn Malik  
and Gigi Hadid



## Selena Gomez was happier off social media

Los Angeles

Singer-actress Selena Gomez says she was “so much happier” when she was off social media.

In an interview on “New Music Daily” on Apple Music’s Beats 1, the singer opened up about her decision to ditch the virtual world, reports [femalefirst.co.uk](#).

In 2018, the “Lose you to love me” hitmaker decided to take a two-year break from Instagram and Twitter.

“I didn’t have social media for two years. You’ve just got to do it. I was driving myself crazy. First off, there was a million things that I didn’t want to see. I would see them over and over and over again. Then I’m comparing. Then I’m looking at these people, and I’m like, “How do they” ... It’s all the things that people say, right? It’s nothing new. It’s that you usually sometimes feel like shit. You have FOMO (fear of missing out). Everyone’s life looks amazing, and that happens to me, too. I’m like, “Well, what am I? I’m missing the plot here. Right? How come it’s so fun for everyone else?” she said.



Selena Gomez

## Anderson says living with her partner would ruin relationship

Los Angeles

Actress Gillian Anderson says it “would be the end” of her relationship with her partner and screenwriter Peter Morgan if they ever moved in together.

The 51-year-old told The Times she liked that “there is nothing locking us in” by living separately, adding that they don’t have to fear how they would manage the logistics should they ever split in the future, reports [dailymail.co.uk](#).

On her relationship with Morgan, “The X-Files” star

said: “If we did, that would be the end of us. It works so well as it is, it feels so special when we do come together. And when I am with my kids, I can be completely there for them. It’s exciting.

“We choose when to be together. There is nothing locking us in, nothing that brings up that fear of ‘Oh gosh, I can’t leave because what will happen to the house, how will we separate?’”



Gillian Anderson

## Ariana Grande to perform at Grammys 2020

Los Angeles

Ariana Grande will be performing at the Grammys 2020, the singer herself announced on Saturday (local time).

In an Instagram post, the ‘Bloodline’ singer revealed that she will perform at the awards ceremony later this month, along with a picture of herself writing ‘Grammy Performer.’

According to E!News, last year, Grande took to social media to air out her frustrations with the 2019 Grammy Awards. At that time, Variety reported the ‘God Is a Woman’ singer pulled

out of attending and performing “due to a disagreement with Grammy producers over which songs she would perform.”



Ariana Grande

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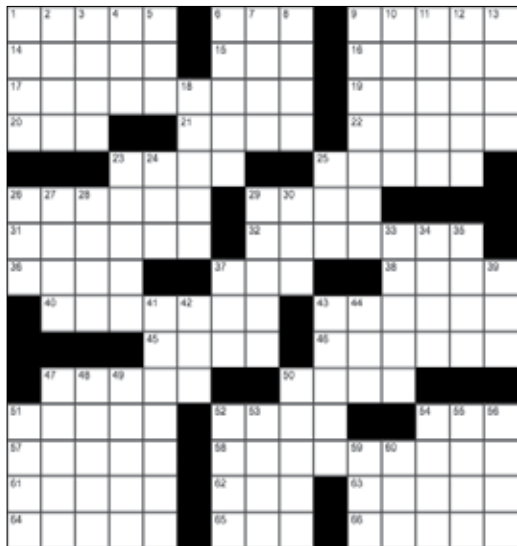
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### CROSSWORD



Yesterday's solution



#### ACROSS

1- Hollowed pumpkin; 6- Albanian coin; 9- Chairs; 14- Different; 15- Bump off; 16- Radii neighbors; 17- Written history of a person's life; 19- Rapture; 20- The Racer's Edge; 21- Wall St. debuts; 22- Reposes; 23- Member of the Conservative Party; 25- Bee stuff; 26- Assent; 29- Gorillas, chimpanzees and orangutans; 31- Inclined; 32- Extraordinary occurrence; 36- Yorkshire river; 37- Lose firmness; 38- Bern's river; 40- Kitchen gadgets; 43- To meet the expense of; 45- How sweet \_; 46- Stylish; 47- Puccini classic; 50- Tolstoy and Gorcey; 51- Jeweler's glass; 52- Use scissors; 54- Genetic letters; 57- Composer Bruckner; 58- Canis Minor; 61- Company emblems; 62- Rhine whine; 63- Emulate Cicero; 64- Preceding, poetically; 65- Itsy-bitsy; 66- Check recipient;

#### DOWN

1- Tasks; 2- Busy; 3- Hew; 4- Small cask; 5- Bobby of hockey; 6- Impudent (slang); 7- Bounce back; 8- Lock openers; 9- Secretly; 10- Actress Barkin; 11- Licorice-like flavor; 12- Delicious; 13- Cong, meeting; 18- Ventilated; 23- Native American tent; 24- Lyric poem; 25- The Beatles' "And I Love \_"; 26- Simile center; 27- A good one gets you there in a hurry; 28- Heart; 29- Collect; 30- Hog; 33- Sidewalk eateries; 34- Neighbor of Cambodia; 35- Slips up; 37- Hindu title; 39- Dreyer's partner in ice cream; 41- Official permit; 42- Basque separatist organisation; 43- Masterful; 44- Not to; 47- Like a \_ bricks; 48- Money spent; 49- Trail of a wild animal; 50- Supple; 51- In \_ land; 52- Deli side; 53- Pleasing; 54- WWII turning point; 55- Brief letter, paper money; 56- "A Death in the Family" author James; 59- Chop off; 60- Bullpen stat;

### SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

#### How to play

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



SPORTS

sports

# Shaikh Salman tops 2,000cc challenge



Cars in action at BIC

● **Shaikh Salman dominates wet fourth round of BIC 2,000cc Challenge under the lights**

TDT | Manama

Shaikh Salman bin Isa bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa dominated the fourth round of the 2019/2020 BIC 2,000cc Challenge, held as part of a wet National Race Day last weekend at Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) in Sakhir. Shaikh Salman topped the Practice timesheet, captured pole position in Qualifying, and then steered his Honda Civic to the chequered flag in both of the meeting' 12-lap races. It was a brilliant performance under the bright floodlights of BIC, with the field of competitors needing to overcome the tricky slippery conditions around the circuit's 2.55-kilometre Inner Track. National Race Day was also scheduled to feature action in the Bahrain Motorcycle Racing

600, but stewards deemed it to be too dangerous for the riders in the championship due to the wet circuit. In the 2,000cc Challenge, Shaikh Salman wasted no time in making his presence felt after setting the fastest lap in Practice of one minute 25.032 seconds. He maintained his hot pace in Qualifying where he won pole for the round's first race with a best lap of 1:23.473, beating out rival Mohammed Faqihi, who was also driving a Civic, by just 0.282s. In the opening sprint, Shaikh Salman won from pole in a total time of 19:34.677. Raed Raffii in a Honda S2000 was the runner-up 1.607s, behind while Faqihi was third 3.841s back. Taking fourth through sixth place, respectively, on the final classification were Shaikh Hamad bin Isa bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa (Honda Civic), Tareq Al Tajer (Ford Focus) and Ahmed Bin Khanen (Honda Civic EG4). Each of the leading finishers were competing in the series' Pro class. Hussain Alghanim (Honda Civic) won the Novice class ahead of Ali Albahrani (Honda

Civic). Raffii managed to clock the race's fastest lap of 1:22.959. In race two, Shaikh Salman started from fifth position following the reverse grid rule, but that didn't stop him from powering to the front, although not without a late battle with pole-sitter Al Tajer. Shaikh Salman eventually claimed the chequered flag in 16:42.637. Al Tajer was a close second just 1.044s adrift, while Shaikh Hamad took the other podium step after finishing 3.645s behind. Raffii, Majed Himmo (Honda Civic) and bin Khanen completed the top six. Alghanim, Albahrani and lady driver Farah Jaber (BMW E30) were the top three in the Novice class. Shaikh Salman capped off his stellar round by posting the race's fastest lap of 1:21.324. Following all the action, the winners were presented their respective trophies by officials from BIC, the Circuit Racing Club and the Bahrain Motor Federation. The BIC 2,000cc Challenge returns to the tarmac with the season's fifth of seven rounds on January 24.

# Al Rowae lifts HH Shaikh Khalid Cup in endurance horserace



Shaikh Khalid, left, with the race winners and officials Shaikh Khalid, left, with the race winners and officials

TDT | Manama

Al Khaldiya Stables captain A rider Rashid Al Rowae won the cup of Supreme Council for Youth and Sports (SCYS) First Deputy Chairman and Bahrain Olympic Committee (BOC) President HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa. HH Shaikh Khalid presented the trophy to the champion, who outclassed his competitors and won the 120km-long international endurance race. His Majesty the King's Representative for Charity Works and Youth Affairs, National Security Advisor and SCYS Chairman HH Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa attended the awarding ceremony, which was held at Bahrain International Endurance Village. HH Shaikh Khalid also honoured rider Emad Isa, from Muharraq Equestrian School, who won the private stables race. Supreme Council for the Environment (SCE) Deputy President HH Shaikh Faisal bin Rashid Al Khalifa and Bahrain Royal Equestrian and Endurance Federation (BREEF) Chairman HH Shaikh Isa bin Abdulla Al Khalifa were others present at the ceremony. HH Shaikh Nasser commended HH Shaikh Khalid's keenness on patronising the endurance race, hailing the success of

the event. He commended the efforts exerted by HH Shaikh Isa and congratulated the riders who emerged as winners of the race, praising the dedicated efforts of all the committees in charge of organising the event and ensuring its success. He said that the success of the event would be a catalyst ahead of the endurance race for the cup of His Majesty the King. He expressed his optimism regarding the promising future of endurance in the upcoming races, in light of the success of HH Shaikh Khalid's Cup. HH Shaikh Khalid praised

HH Shaikh Nasser for his keen interest and follow-up, hailing the organisational and technical success of the championship and the riders' performance. Al Khaldiya Stables captain and Al Zaim Team rider Al Rowae won the race in a time of four hours 46 minutes and 30 seconds. He was followed by Shahd Walid Al Ahmed (Al Zaim Team) clocking 4:46:32 and Thaman Al Awadhi (Victorious Team) with 5:02:40. Isa triumphed in the private stables race followed by Abdurahman (Al Fateh Stables) and Abdulrahman Al Zayed (Al Maghirat Stables).



Al Rowae as he crosses the finish line

# Bahrain Tennis Academy resume classes

TDT | Manama

Bahrain Tennis Academy (BTA), based at the Dilmun Club in Saar, has resumed classes for 2020 with programs for students of all ages and levels from 3 years and up, all taught by internationally certified teaching pros. In the junior program, children will be assessed

and entered into the class most suitable for their age and level. All classes make use of specialised equipment specifically designed for each stage of development. For adults there are regular Beginner Group Lessons, Drill and Play sessions for established players and Cardio Tennis sessions. Cardio Tennis is a

tennis-based fitness class where participants burn more calories than a regular workout, with little-to-no experience required. New participants are welcome to a free trial. BTA director Dan Barrie said, "Now that the cooler weather is upon us it's a great time to get outside and take care of your mind and body!"

# Lankan Warriors top Carrefour League

TDT | Manama

Lankan Warriors Blue defeated Star XI by 43 runs in the Carrefour Corporate League organized by Cricket Bahrain Association. Batting first Lankan Warriors Blue posted 213 runs thanks to a brilliant knock of 105 runs by Chaminda Benny Soori which included 5 sixes. In

reply Star Xi could only manage 170 runs. Basil Soori claimed 3 wickets for Lankan Warriors Blue. Lankan Warriors Maroon defeated Collage by 7 runs in another fixture. Batting first Lankan Warriors Maroon posted 141 runs. Mohd Ihtesham Osman top scored with 57 runs. In

reply Collage could only manage 134 runs. Star XI defeated Panthers by 48 runs in another fixture. Batting first Star XI posted 180 runs. Mohd Lateef top scored with 65 runs for Star XI. Khizar Ali claimed 2 wickets for Panthers. In reply Panthers could only manage 132 runs.



Officials and participants of Bahrain Tennis Club's (BTC) Ebrahim K Kanoo Juniors Open Tennis Tournament. BTC published yesterday the draws and Order of Play for the eighth Ebrahim K Kanoo Juniors Open Tennis Tournament, set to be held at BTC from today. The draw and Order of Play are available for participants and supporters on the BTC website bahraintennisclub.com. The tournament is being held under the patronage of Ebrahim K Kanoo Vice-Chairman Fuad Ebrahim Kanoo. The opening ceremony is scheduled for tomorrow at 4pm. There are eight categories in all in the tournament, including the Under-12 Boys Singles, Under-14 Boys Singles, Under-16 Boys Singles, Under-12 Boys Doubles, Under-12 Girls Singles, Under-16 Girls Singles, Open 6 and 8, and Open 9 and 10. Above, some of the participants in the tournament.



# Muharraq, Hala draw first blood

● Muharraq faced Al Hala in play-offs for Golden Square

TDI | Manama

Muharraq and Al Hala drew first blood last night in their respective best-of-three play-off series for a spot in the Golden Square semi-finals of the 2019/2020 Zain Bahrain Basketball League.

Muharraq battled past Al Najma 114-104 while Hala pipped Riffa 78-77, both at the Khalifa Sports City arena in Isa Town.

Muharraq did well to keep their opponents at bay in the latter stages of their game while a Hussain Jan basket with 18 seconds remaining helped Hala claim their win.

Both victors will now look to secure their seats in the Golden Square when they take to the court in their second games on Wednesday. Muharraq and Hala are hoping to join Al Ahli and Manama in the final four, but victories for Najma or Riffa would send their respective series to a decisive third game, scheduled for Saturday.

In Muharraq's triumph last night, the league's defending champions were able to come up with some crucial plays in the fourth quarter when Najma were threatening to rally.

The victors led by as many



Hala's Ahmed Salman drives past Riffa's Isa during their game

as 14 points late in the period after Najma were able to come as close as four. Point guard Ahmed Hassan Aldurazi, American professional Kevin Murphy and Bahraini forward Sayed Kadhemed Majed all buried key baskets that helped Muharraq stay in front before finally pulling away.

Aldurazi scored a team-

high 30 points, including six three-pointers, to go with six assists for Muharraq, while Murphy finished with 28 points and 13 rebounds while playing all 40 minutes. Majed and Bader Abdulla Malabes each contributed 16 markers and Mohammed Juma'a added 11.

US import CJ Giles led all scor-



Muharraq's Malabes looks to make a play as he is closely guarded by his Najma defender

ers with 39 points and 18 rebounds, while Fadalallah Abbas had 29 markers for Najma in the loss.

Meanwhile, Hala were able to eke past their heavily favoured opponents through Jan's end-game heroics.

American import Joseph Jones had earlier put Riffa in front by a single point after converting two free-throws with just over a minute left. But after a Hala timeout with 26 seconds

remaining, Jan was able to make a quick drive to the basket for the game-winning lay-up.

There was still plenty of time remaining on the game clock for Riffa to draw up a play and steal the game, but Jones missed his shot attempt, sealing the win for Hala.

The game was closely contested throughout, as neither team led by more than eight points. Hala also spoiled the return to

the court of Riffa star Mohammed Kuwayed, who played limited minutes.

Hala professional Mansour Kasse from Senegal had 24 points to lead his team in the low-scoring affair. Jan finished with 13 off the bench, while ageless veteran Ahmed Al Mutawa added 11.

Subah Hussain topped Riffa's scoresheet with 22 points. Jones finished with 19 and 11 rebounds, while Bader Isa had 14.

## Sainz takes stage seven for Bahrain JCW X-Raid Team in Dakar Rally



Sainz and Cruz in action yesterday in the seventh stage

TDI | Manama

Carlos Sainz and co-driver Lucas Cruz continued their impressive run of Bahrain JCW X-Raid Team in the 2020 Dakar Rally in Saudi Arabia yesterday, winning the seventh stage.

The victorious pair led the field of cars competitors from Riyadh to Wadi Al Dawasir along a course of 741km in total, with a tough 546km of special stages.

They completed the leg in four hours, 16 minutes and 11 seconds, just a little over two minutes ahead of their closest challengers Nasser Al Attiyah and Matthieu Baumel of Toyota Gazoo Racing.

It was the fifth stage in a row

that Bahrain JCW X-Raid team topped the timesheet, and also the third stage win for Sainz and Cruz.

Teammates Stephane Peterhansel and Paulo Fiuza finished in third place, just two minutes and 53 seconds behind.

Following yesterday's results, Sainz and Cruz extended their lead on the general ranking even further in front of Al Attiyah and Baumel. The top-ranked pair have a total time of 27:49:14 after seven stages, a full 10 minutes ahead of Al Attiyah and Baumel. Peterhansel and Fiuza remained third, 19:13 from their sister car.

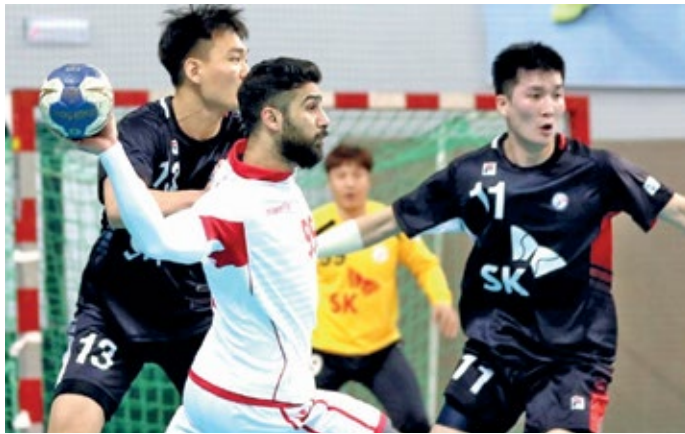
Sainz commented after winning the stage: "It was quite a fast. We spent a lot of time

going flat out, crossing some dunes. I caught Stephane, but it was very dusty and I couldn't get close, so I decided to stay behind."

Peterhansel added: "It was really fast. I reckon it took us less than four hours to cover 550 km, not counting the neutralisation. We had to stay focused and constantly on the look-out, but the navigation was easy. At any rate, I think this was the fastest stage of a similar length that I've ever done."

In today's eighth stage, competitors will spend the whole day in Wadi Al Dawasir. They will be competing for time across 474km of special stages and traveling a tough 713km in total.

## Bahrain edge past Korea in handball friendly, play again today



Action from Saturday's friendly match

TDI | Manama

Bahrain defeated South Korea 30-29 on Saturday night in an international friendly match played at the Bahrain Handball Association arena in Um Al Hassam.

Both men's national teams are preparing for the upcoming 2020 Asian Men's Handball Championship, which will be held in Kuwait starting Thursday. Saturday's friendly was the first of two between the two sides. The second will be held

today at 1pm at the same venue. All are welcome to attend. Entrance is free of charge.

The Koreans, coached by Kang Il Koo, have travelled to Bahrain with 16 players, including goalkeepers Lee Changwoo and Pyun Ui Beom; left-wingmen Byun Youngjun, Ryu Jin-san and Kim Gimin; left-backs Kim Tae Gyu, Park Young Jun and Kang Tan; centre-back Jeong Kwanjung; right-backs Ha Min Ho and Ha Tae Hyun; right-wingmen Park Ji Seop and Kim Jinyoung; and pivots

Choi Beom-Mun, Park Seung and Kim Dongmyung.

Bahrain's squad, coached by Aron Kristjánsson from Iceland, features 20 players. They are Hussein Al Sayyad (Al Wehda, Saudi Arabia), Ali Mirza (Sharjah, UAE), Mohammed Habib Madan (Ahli Shabab Dubai, UAE), Jassim Al Salatna (Al Khaleej, Saudi), Ali Eid (Al Nasr, UAE); Mohammed Abdul Hussein, Hassan Shehab, Mahdi Saad, Mohammed Mirza, Bilal Basham and Mohammed Habib (Al Najma Club); Hassan Al Samaheji, Mohammed Abdul Redha and Mahmoud Hussein (Al Ahli); Ahmed Al Maqabai and Isa Khalaf (Barbar Club); Ahmed Jalal and Abdulla Zaimour (Al Shabab); Hussein Mahfoudh (Tubli); and Abdulla Ali (Al Ettihad).

The Asian championship also acts as the continental qualifying tournament for the 2021 World Men's Handball Championship. Each of the competition's four semi-finalists will book their tickets to the worlds, set to take place in Egypt in January of 2021.



The South Korean national team