

Bahrain thump New Zealand 45-16 in Asian Men's Handball Championship | P12

**Japan confirms first case of infection with new China coronavirus**

Reuters | Tokyo

Japan confirmed the first case of infection from the new China coronavirus that has killed one person and prompted a travel alert from the US State Department.

A man in his 30s from Kanagawa prefecture, next to Tokyo, tested positive, Japan's health ministry said in a statement yesterday. The man had been to the Chinese city of Wuhan, where there has been an outbreak of pneumonia believed to be caused by the new coronavirus strain, it said.

The State Department issued a health alert update on Wednesday about travel to the Wuhan region.

**Lebanon close to forming new govt**



Lebanese caretaker finance minister Ali Hassan Khalil

Reuters

Lebanon is on the brink of forming a new government, the country's caretaker finance minister Ali Hassan Khalil said yesterday.

The new cabinet would comprise 18 specialist ministers, Khalil added.

Lebanon has been without a government since Saad al-Hariri resigned as prime minister on Oct. 29 in the face of sweeping protests.



03 Bahrain shines in gender equality

04 Man gets 10 years in jail for bribery

08 RAMEZ Group opens new hypermarket

210 fils (includes VAT)



**US resumes joint military operations in Iraq: NYT**

Washington

The United States on Wednesday resumed joint military operations with Iraq that had been put on pause after the US drone strike that killed a top Iranian general in Baghdad, the *New York Times* reported.

Two US military officials quoted by the paper said the Pentagon wanted to resume these operations in order to pick up the fight against the Islamic State group.



A US soldier advises Iraqi forces in the city of Mosul in June 2017

**” Iraqi leaders have told privately they support the US troop presence, despite public appeals for them to leave**

SECRETARY OF STATE MIKE POMPEO

Washington began the pause on January 5 two days after the

strike that killed Iranian general Qasem Soleimani at the Baghdad airport.

The same day of the suspension furious Iraqi lawmakers voted to expel the more than 5,000 US troops that are in Iraq.

It was not immediately clear if anyone in the Iraqi government had approved the resumption of the joint military operations, the *Times* reported.

The Pentagon said it had no information to provide concerning a resumption when contact-

**Haftar ready to join Libya talks**

- Backs Libya ceasefire
- Haftar had walked away from Moscow talks

Berlin

Libyan strongman Khalifa Haftar has agreed to abide by a ceasefire and said he was ready to participate in an international conference in Berlin on Sunday, Germany's foreign minister said.

Libya's UN-recognised government in Tripoli has been under attack since April from Haftar's forces, with clashes killing more than 280 civilians and 2,000 fighters and displacing tens of thousands.

The leaders of the North African state's warring factions were in Moscow early this week at talks aimed at finalising a ceasefire orchestrated by Russia and Turkey.

"During my visit to Libya today, General Haftar made clear: He wants to contribute to the success of the Libyan conference in Berlin and is in principle ready to participate in it. He has agreed to abide by the ongoing ceasefire," German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas



German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas and Libya strongman Khalifa Haftar

tweeted after talks in Benghazi.

After the Moscow talks, Haftar had walked away without signing the permanent truce, sparking fears about the shaky ceasefire.

Maas had travelled to meet Haftar in the eastern Libyan city of Benghazi -- one of the general's strongholds -- in a bid to persuade him to join in the peace initiative.

**Battle for Tripoli**

The trip came days after Maas spoke with Haftar's rival Fayeze al-Sarraj, who serves as head of the UN-recognised government in Tripoli.

Separately in Tripoli, Sarraj announced he would attend the Berlin talks held under the auspices of the United Nations.

The battle over Tripoli is the latest unrest to wrack Libya since a 2011 NATO-backed uprising killed dictator Moamer Kadhafi. Since then, Libya has been caught up in fighting between rival armed factions, including Islamist militants.

In his report to the UN Security Council late on Wednesday, UN chief Antonio Guterres urged all warring parties to stop fighting and "engage constructively towards that end, including within the Berlin process".

The Berlin conference will aim to agree six points including a permanent ceasefire, implementation of the arms embargo and a return to the political process for peace, Guterres said.

**Dozens killed as Damascus presses Idlib offensive**



Intense air strikes by Syrian government forces, which have shown no sign of abating despite Russia's announcement of a truce, have reduced swathes of Idlib's towns to rubble

Beirut

Dozens of fighters and civilians were killed in Syria's Idlib province as the government pressed a deadly offensive yesterday towards a key town in the country's last rebel bastion.

The latest violence, which followed air strikes that killed 19 civilians on Wednesday, buried a ceasefire deal announced by Russia and rebel backer Turkey that never really took hold.

"Clashes broke out around midnight on Wednesday south of the city of Maaret al-Numan, together with heavy bombardment despite the Russian-Turkish truce," Rami Abdel Rahman, head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said.

According to the Britain-based war monitor, the fighting raged in areas south of Maaret al-Numan, the key target of the Syrian government's latest military offensive.

At least 26 anti-government fighters were killed, most of them members of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, a group that includes fighters from the former Al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria. The Observatory said 29 government troops and allied militia were also killed in the fighting.

The Syrian state news agency SANA later reported that at least four civilians were killed by rocket fire on the city of Aleppo.

Jihadist and rebel groups are present west of northern city, on which they routinely launch rocket attacks.

**Record-baking effort**

**Sweet! Indian bakers make world's longest cake**

Thrissur, India

It was a record-baking effort. Hundreds of bakers and chefs in southern India came together Wednesday to create what they said is the world's longest cake -- about 6.5 kilometres (four miles).

They spread chocolate ganache on the serpentine desert stretched out on thousands

of tables and desks at a festival ground and adjoining roads in the coastal state of Kerala's Thrissur city.

The vanilla cake, four inches (10 centimetres) wide and thick, weighed in at about 27,000 kilograms (59,500 pounds).

About 1,500 bakers and chefs, wearing traditional whites and toque blanche caps, spent nearly four hours to put it together



The cake measures about 6.5 kilometres

using 12,000 kilograms of sugar and flour.

Large crowds watched the event organised by Bakers Association Kerala (BAKE).

The group's secretary general, Naushad, said Guinness World Records had assessed the cake as being 6,500 metres but their confirmation of the exact length was pending.



Representative of His Majesty the King for Charity Work and Youth Affairs, National Security Advisor and Chairman of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sport (SCYS) His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa during a visit to Beacon Private School where he was welcomed by the Board Chairman, members of the Executive Committee as well as the educational and administrative staff, students and citizens. HH Shaikh Nasser listened to a briefing on the educational curriculum as well as the opportunities and options provided by the school. The school's educational and administrative staff thanked Shaikh Nasser for the visit and interest in the educational curricula which aim to develop the youth's capabilities.

## BDF fully prepared to protect Kingdom: Commander-in-Chief



BDF Commander-in-Chief Field Marshal Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa during a visit to one of the BDF units, yesterday

### Manama

Bahrain Defence force (BDF) is fully prepared to face any challenges that may arise to protect the Kingdom and help it people achieve prosperity, said BDF Command-

er-in-Chief Field Marshal Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa. "The great role of the BDF in protecting the achievements of Bahrain is based on the wisdom and efforts of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the

Supreme Commander," Shaikh Khalifa said as he inspected several military units. The Commander-in-Chief was briefed on the various phases of development of the units. He expressed satisfaction at the high levels of preparedness

that boost combat and administrative readiness of the force. Shaikh Khalifa also lauded the dedication and efficiency of the staff in implementing modernisation plans and carrying out their services in various military action locations.



A ceremony to honour the armed forces of Saudi Arabia and the armed forces of the United Arab Emirates, attached to the advance command of the Peninsula Shield Force was held at the BDF. Major General Shaikh Ali bin Rashid Al Khalifa, Assistant Chief of Staff for Human Resources was present. Officers from the Saudi and Emirati forces were granted first-class field service badges and non-commissioned officers and individuals were awarded second-class field service badges. The honours were in recognition of their dedicated efforts within the Peninsula Shield Force that consolidate the strong bonds between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Major General Shaikh Ali conveyed the greetings and congratulations of BDF Commander-in-Chief Field Marshal Shaikha Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa to the Saudi and UAE officers.



Chief of Staff of the Bahrain Defence Force (BDF), Lieutenant-General Dheyab bin Saqr Al-Nuaimi, chairing a meeting of the National Defence and Security Committee, at the BDF's General Command yesterday. The committee discussed ways to develop cooperation and strengthen coordination among military and security bodies in the kingdom, as well as consolidate joint military capabilities. Public Security Chief, Lieutenant-General Tariq Hassan Al-Hassan, National Guard Staff Director, Major-General Abdulaziz bin Saud Al Khalifa, Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations, Major-General Ghanim Ibrahim Al-Fadhala, Royal Bahrain Naval Force (RBNF) Commander, Commodore, Mohammed Yousif Al-Asam, and several senior BDF officers were present

## Seychelles president hails Bahrain visit as promising, historic



Seychelles President visits Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance (BIBF)

### Manama

Seychelles President, Danny Faure, yesterday expressed his delight in visiting Bahrain which he said shares many "commonalities" with Seychelles being an Island nation. "This is a very good visit, a historic one and we are happy to be here," Faure told Bahrain News Agency. He was visiting the Bahrain Institute of Banking & Finance (BIBF).

Describing Bahrain and Seychelles as "two Island nations", he said, "the future of relations and cooperation between

development as countries, we will continue to develop."

Faure and his delegation attended a banquet hosted in their honour by His Royal Highness Prime Minister's Advisor HH Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa.

HH Shaikh Salman stressed the importance of exchanging visits between senior officials to expand the prospects of cooperation and achieve common interests.

Separately, Faure, accompanied by Foreign Affairs Minister, Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, visited the



Seychelles President visits national museum, theatre



Seychelles President during a visit to national museum

Bahrain and Seychelles look promising."

On Wednesday, His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and Faure reviewed bilateral relations and cooperation mainly in the economic, trade and tourism fields.

Agreements were signed for exempting visa requirements for holders of diplomatic, private and official passports as well as enhancing general cooperation.

Besides, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Central Bank of Bahrain and the Central Bank of Seychelles, and another on cooperation in tourism.

During the BIBF visit, Faure was briefed on Bahrain's expertise in the economic and the financial and banking sectors.

On environmental issues, Faure stressed that Bahrain and Seychelles face common challenges. "We will work together, and in terms of our

Bahrain National Museum and the Bahrain National Theatre.

Upon arrival, he was welcomed by the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities (BACA) President, Shaikha Mai bint Mohammed Al Khalifa, and senior officials.

The delegates were informed about the Bahrain National Museum's role in hosting artistic and cultural events, wide-ranging sections, artefacts, collectables and history of Bahrain since the Dilmun Civilisation.

The Seychelles President also paid a visit to the 46th Bahrain Annual Fine Art Exhibition, opened yesterday under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, at the Bahrain National Museum and the Bahrain National Theatre.

He also visited the Bahrain National Theatre and was informed about its cultural achievements.



# Bahrain shines in gender equality

Bahrain among top improvers in World Bank Group's "Women, Business and the Law 2020" report

TDI | Manama

**B**ahrain is among the economies that improved most globally in gender equality, according to a new World Bank report, thanks to laws improving the protection of women at workplace and introducing criminal penalties for sexual harassment.

The report "Women, Business and the Law 2020" which tracks legal equality between men and women in 190 economies also hails the Kingdom for introducing reforms allowing women to be head of households.

The 10 economies that improved the most were Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Nepal, South Sudan, São Tomé and Príncipe, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Jordan and Tunisia. Each of the top improvers saw a score increase in at least two Women, Business and the Law indicators.

The World Bank project tracks how the law affects women at various stages in their lives and

*Women, Business and the Law 2020 tracks how the law affects women at various stages in their lives, from the basics of transportation to the challenges of starting a job and getting a pension. This year's study shows that progress is being made, with all regions improving their average scores.*

explores the relationship between women's empowerment and economic outcomes. The indicators chosen are Mobility, Workplace, Pay, Marriage, Parenthood, Entrepreneurship, Assets, and Pension.

Eight economies—Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Latvia, Luxembourg, and Sweden—scored 100, meaning that women are on equal legal standing with men across all eight indicators.

### Women mobility

Bahrain recorded an 8.8 point progress since 2017 to reach a score of 46.3 points out of 100 points in improving gender equality.

In mobility, Bahrain, which falls in the high-income group, recorded a score of 50 mainly for allowing women to apply for passport and travel outside the country in the same way as a man.

Also bettering Bahrain's score was provisions on sexual harassment in employment and criminal penalties for perpetrators.

The reforms, World Bank says, have brought positive changes to the Kingdom as research shows clearly that reforms and policies that empower women boost economic growth. "When women can move more freely, work outside the home and manage assets, they're more likely to join the workforce and strengthen the economy."

### Zero restrictions

The report points out that women here are allowed to work in the same fields as men

in several industries including Agriculture, water and transportation. There are also zero restrictions in the Kingdom for women in jobs deemed arduous.

Further, Labour laws which allow a maternity leave of 60 to 75 days for women along with paid leave for fathers also prohibits the dismissal of pregnant workers.

### Head of households

The report highlights the Kingdom's reforms allowing women to be "head of household" or "head of the family" in the same way as men as a positive change.

Bahraini Supreme Council for Women formed in 2001 recently adopted a second National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini Women for 2013-2022, which focuses not only on supporting women's entrepreneurship, career opportunities, and financial independence, but also on enhancing their physical and psychological well-being and protection from domestic violence.

The council earlier commissioned a study on violence against women in Bahraini society that included data on workplace sexual harassment.

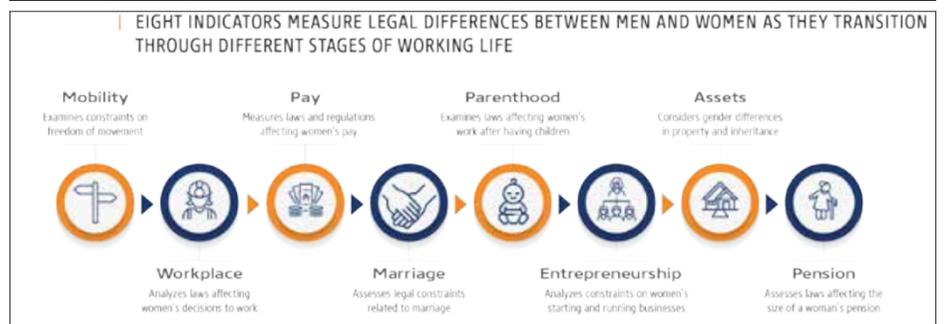
### Bans sexual harassment

As Bahrain's labour minister explains, the Kingdom introduced amendments to the labour law banning sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace to bring national legislation in line with international standards.

Bahrain's move enacting leg-

TABLE 1.4 ECONOMIES THAT HAVE EXHIBITED THE MOST PROGRESS TOWARD GENDER EQUALITY SINCE 2017

Economy	WBL 2020 score	Change in score	Mobility	Workplace	Pay	Marriage	Parenthood	Entrepreneurship	Assets	Pension
Saudi Arabia	70.6	38.8		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
United Arab Emirates	56.3	29.4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Nepal	73.8	18.1		✓	✓		✓			✓
South Sudan	70.0	18.1		✓	✓		✓			
Bahrain	46.3	8.8		✓		✓				
Jordan	40.6	8.8			✓		✓			
Tunisia	70.0	8.8		✓		✓				



Indicators capture legal differences between men and women in the following areas:

Economy	MOBILITY	WORKPLACE	PAY	MARRIAGE	PARENTHOOD	ENTREPRENEURSHIP	ASSETS	PENSION	WBL 2020 SCORE
Bahrain	50	75	0	40	40	75	40	50	46.3
Saudi Arabia	100	100	25	60	40	100	40	100	70.6
Oman	0	100	25	20	0	75	40	50	38.8
United Arab Emirates	25	75	75	40	20	75	40	100	56.3
Kuwait	50	0	0	20	0	75	40	75	32.5

islation on domestic violence protecting women from violence was introduced in 2015.

The report also highlights several reforms in Bahrain's entrepreneurship sector where women are allowed to sign a contract, register a business and open a bank account in the same

way as a man.

### Equal ownership rights

Among other reforms identified by the report, Bahrain allows men and women equal ownership rights to immovable property and grants spouses equal administrative authority

over assets during the marriage.

The report also finds that the mandatory retirement age for men and women are equal in the Kingdom, whereas women can also retire at the age of 55 with full pension benefits and at the age of 45 with partial pension benefits.

## Saudi biggest improver

**S**audi Arabia made the biggest improvement in the index since 2017 by recording a dramatic 38.8 point jump to a score of 70.6 points on the WBL 2020 gender equality table.

Saudi ranks high thanks to improvements in workplace, marriage, parenthood, entrepreneurship and pension schemes for women. Reforms were enacted in six out of the eight indicators over the two-year period covered by the index.

Saudi Arabian women no longer need permission from a male guardian to travel abroad or to obtain a passport. Saudi also amended the Civil Status Law to allow a woman to choose where to live in the same way as a man by removing a provision that made the husband's home the default residence. Besides,

a husband can no longer sue his wife for leaving the marital home. This has implications for the Marriage indicator because the law that required a woman to obey her husband was repealed.

In 2018, Saudi Arabia further criminalised sexual harassment in public and private sector employment. Groundbreaking reforms to allow women greater economic opportunity were also enacted in 2019. Finally, Saudi Arabia also encouraged women's entrepreneurship by prohibiting gender-based discrimination in accessing financial services.

### UAE reformed in 5 indicators

The United Arab Emirates also reformed in five indicators producing a 29.4 points jump to

reach a score of 56.3 points out of 100 through changes in mobility, workplace, pay, marriage and parenthood conditions.

Also in the region, Jordan eliminated legal restrictions on women's ability to work at night and introduced the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value.

Djibouti, Morocco, and Tunisia enacted legislation specifically addressing domestic violence, reflecting a movement toward protecting women from violence.

South Asian economies—India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka—have enacted reforms as well. The Indian state of Maharashtra eliminated restrictions on women's ability to work in jobs deemed dangerous. Pakistan and Sri Lanka both increased

### Max score 90 in ME

Of the 40 economies with scores higher than 90, 27 are Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) high-income economies and nine are in Europe and Central Asia. The remaining four are in Latin America and the Caribbean, East Asia and the Pacific, and Sub-Saharan Africa. No economy in the Middle East and North Africa or South Asia scores higher than 90.

When classified by income level, high-income economies score the highest, with an average score of 84.9. Upper-middle-income economies are not far behind, scoring 74.9 on average. Lower-middle- and low-income economies have similar average scores of 68.8 and 67.2, respectively. However, one noteworthy finding is that low-income economies outperform both middle-income groups on the Workplace and Pension indicators.

The data also indicate that retirement ages are more equal between women and men in lower-income economies.

The report, however, warns that "much work remains." "We shouldn't be satisfied until every young girl can move through her life without facing legal barriers to her success."

the period of paid maternity leave to exceed 14 weeks.

Altogether, the report finds, that parenthood indicator has

been the most popular area of reform, with 16 economies on the indicator.

# Civil Defence employee gets 10 years imprisonment for bribery

TDI | Manama

The Fourth High Criminal Court yesterday sentenced an employee in the Interior Ministry's General Directorate of Civil Defence to 10 years in prison and fined BD2,000 for accepting a bribe.

The public prosecution has charged the suspect with requesting and accepting a BD2,000 bribe from a private company to provide a service.

"The department was tipped off that the suspect asked for money from a company for a certain service, in which the investigation led to his arrest while taking the money," an Interior Ministry statement said earlier.



Representative picture

Announcing the court order, Chief Prosecutor Mohammed Jamal Sultan said the court considered witness testimonies and investigation reports in its judgement.

The defendant, arrested redhanded while receiving the bribe, was remanded in detention since October 31 last year,

which was confirmed by the Interior ministry.

The prosecution completed the investigation into the case in December last year.

Court files say the arrest was made following a complaint filed by the General Directorate of Anti-corruption and Economic and Electronic Security

at the General Directorate of Civil Defence against the civilian employee for requesting bribe.



The department was tipped off that the suspect asked for money from a company for a certain service, in which the investigation led to his arrest while taking the money

INTERIOR MINISTRY

## Customs duty evasion: Two get jail, BD14,250 fine



Representative picture

TDI | Manama

The Fourth High Criminal Court yesterday awarded a five-year jail term to an official in the Interior Ministry's Customs Affairs and another in connection with BD14,250 customs duty evasion.

The court also ordered them to pay a fine of BD14,250 each.

One of the defendant, a customs official, was charged with illegally exempting the second defendant from

paying a BD14,250 duty towards shipping vape juice (e-Cigarette juice) into the Kingdom.

Explaining the judgment, Chief Prosecutor Mohammed Jamal Sultan said the Public Prosecution was notified about the incident by the Customs Affairs.

Public Prosecution immediately heard witnesses' testimonies and interrogated the defendants, before referring them to court for trial.

## Liquidity fund: Application period ends for large cos

● The application window for Small and Medium Enterprises will remain open until 19 March 2020

TDI | Manama

The Liquidity Support Fund yesterday closed applications for Large Enterprises with an annual income above BHD 3 million.

The BD 100m Liquidity Support Fund, launched following the instructions of His Royal Highness the Crown Prince during the 2019 Government Forum, supports private sector companies by offering credit facilities at a 2.5 per cent interest rate.

The fund will review all applicants against specified

eligibility. Credit application requests for large companies are capped at BD 1m, and BD 250,000 for SMEs, with a loan period of up to three years.

SMEs with an annual income below BD 3m may continue to apply at the Bahrain Development Bank's Sitra, Riyadat, Diplomatic Area, and the Hidd Industrial branches.

### For SMEs

To qualify, SME's must meet certain application criteria including holding an active commercial registration, maintaining a minimum of 51pc Bahraini ownership, commercial activities operating in Bahrain, no requests for reorganisation or liquidation according to the Kingdom's bankruptcy law, financial statements available for the fiscal year 2018 and a positive gross profit margin for one of the past three years.



Enhancing Bahrain-Brazil ties

Chairman of the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) Sameer Nass with the President of the Arab Brazilian Chamber of Commerce Rubens Hannun accompanied by the Secretary-General Tamer Fawzy Mansour at his office in Bait Al Tijjar. The Brazilian side gave a brief about the revamped Arab Brazilian Chamber, and extended an invitation to the Bahraini business community to take part in the forthcoming Economic Forum titled "Brazil and Arab Countries: The Future is Now" scheduled 14th April 2020 in São Paulo. They also extended an invitation to take part in the First Arab International Fair (FIA), which will be held following the economic forum between 15th and 17th April 2020. BCCI's vice-treasurer Waleed Kanoo, executive bureau member Basim Al Saie, Chief Executive Officer Shaker Al Shater, Deputy Chief Executive Officer Dr Bader Al Sada, alongside members from the administration were present at the meeting.

## ISB celebrates Punjabi Divas 2020 with pomp, gaiety



In pictures, celebrations on the occasion of Punjabi Divas 2020

TDI | Manama

Indian School Bahrain (ISB) celebrated Punjabi Divas 2020 in vibrant colours on Tuesday at the school's Jashanmal Auditorium.

Jhujhar Singh Minhas, Managing Director, Dashmesh Groups of Companies, was the chief guest.

Jhujhar Singh Minhas highlighted the contribution of Punjab state and Punjabi language, an Indo-Aryan language with more than 125 million native speakers in the Indian subcontinent and around the world.

He appreciated the efforts of the students and teachers to make the Punjabi Day a big success.

ISB Asst. Secretary Premalatha NS, Principal VR Palaniswamy, staff representative Johnson K Devassy, Vice-Principals Anand Nair, Satheesh G, Vinod S, Academic Coordinator MS Pillai, Head Teachers Jose Thomas, Parvathi Devdasan, Priya Laji, Head Teachers (Activity) Sreekanth S and Junith CM were present.

Trophies and certificates were awarded to all winners of different competitions by the chief guest. The programme,



organised by the ISB Punjabi Language Department, was a week-long celebration wherein many competitions were organ-



ised for Punjabi students. The main competitions were in handwriting, picture identification and poem recitation.



Apart from competitions, there were a variety of programmes such as Punjabi 'Gid-dha dance, Bhangra Dance, Pun-

jabi poems and songs. A slide presentation about the state of Punjab was presented by students of classes VI to X.

# WORLD

## China detects new case of H5N6 bird flu in Xinjiang region

Reuters | Beijing

China's agriculture ministry said yesterday it had found a new case of highly pathogenic H5N6 avian flu in a flock of about 150 wild swans in the

western Xinjiang region.

One had died and another was sick, it said in a statement on its website.

The ministry reported a case of the same strain of bird flu in swans in the region last week.

## Taliban show 'willingness' to reduce Afghan violence



The US-Taliban talks were aimed at allowing Washington to begin withdrawing troops in return for various security guarantees

Islamabad

Pakistan's foreign minister yesterday said the Taliban has shown "a willingness" to reduce violence in war-torn Afghanistan after more than 18 years fighting the US, sparking speculation that a potential breakthrough in talks with the Americans may be near.

Negotiations between the Taliban and the US have repeatedly stalled, with Washington calling on the insurgent group to reduce violence before they can resume.

"Today, positive progress has been made, the Taliban have shown their willingness to reduce the violence, which was a demand... it's a step towards the peace agreement," said Pakistani foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi in a video statement.

He gave no further details. Zabihullah Mujahid, the official Taliban spokesman, told AFP the Taliban was looking into the comments.

The Taliban and the US were on the brink of announcing a withdrawal deal in September last year when President Donald Trump abruptly declared the process "dead", citing Taliban violence.

Talks were later restarted between the two sides in December in Qatar, but were paused following an attack near the Bagram military base in Afghanistan.

Islamabad has helped facilitate the talks between the militants and Washington in Qatar over the past year, seeking an agreement that would pave the way for a US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan in return for various security promises from the insurgents.

# Putin's new PM promises 'real changes' for Russians

Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin's new prime minister promised "real changes" on Thursday as he was approved by lawmakers after the Kremlin announced sweeping reform plans.

Putin tapped Mikhail Mishustin for the role as part of a series of bombshell announcements on Wednesday, which sparked speculation that Russia's long-time leader could be preparing his own political future.

The lower house State Duma voted overwhelmingly to approve Mishustin as premier, less than 24 hours after Russia's political order was shaken by Putin's announcement of constitutional reforms and the resignation of the government.

No MPs voted against his candidacy, although Communist lawmakers abstained.

Speaking before his approval, Mishustin called on parliament to work with him to urgently enact Putin's programme.

"People should already now be feeling real changes for the better," Mishustin said.

Longtime prime minister Dmitry Medvedev resigned along with the cabinet following the constitutional reform announcement.

Putin's current term as president ends in 2024 and observers say the 67-year-old could be laying the groundwork to assume a new position or remain in a powerful behind-the-scenes role.

Mishustin said his priority would be to "increase citizens' real incomes" but also said the government must "restore trust" with the business community and drive innovation,



Putin proposed significant changes to the country's constitution



Mikhail Mishustin has led Russia's Federal Tax Service since 2010

echoing the state-of-the-nation speech when Putin announced the reforms.

He assured lawmakers that Russia can afford salary hikes and social payouts announced by Putin, estimating they will cost about four trillion rubles (\$65 billion) over the next four years.

His appointment was finalised with a Putin decree. A second decree appointed Medvedev as deputy head of Russia's Security Council -- an advisory body -- a post that was created for him.

### 'Stay number one'

In his state of the nation speech, Putin said he wanted more authority transferred to parliament from the president.

He also called for the power of the State Council to be expanded and enshrined in the

constitution -- adding to conjecture that Putin could take it over after 2024 to preserve power.

Outlining the proposals, which would be the first significant changes to the country's constitution since it was adopted in 1993, Putin said there was a "demand for change" among Russians.

While his nominee Mishustin was speaking in parliament, Putin met his newly formed working group for amending the constitution.

Putin said the amendments "would have no effect on the foundations of the constitution" but would make authorities "more effective" and ensure Russia's development.

He said Russia would remain a presidential republic following the reforms, but it would be parliament not the president who would be picking the gov-

**“**  
We decided to unanimously support the candidature suggested by our national leader for the post of the head of government

THE HEAD OF UNITED RUSSIA'S PARLIAMENTARY FACTION, SERGEI NEVEROV

ernment.

Opposition leader Alexei Navalny said on Twitter that Putin's only goal was to "remain the sole leader for life".

Medvedev, prime minister since 2012, posted a parting message on his VK social networking page yesterday, saying Putin's plans "demand a new approach" and thanking cabinet ministers for their work.

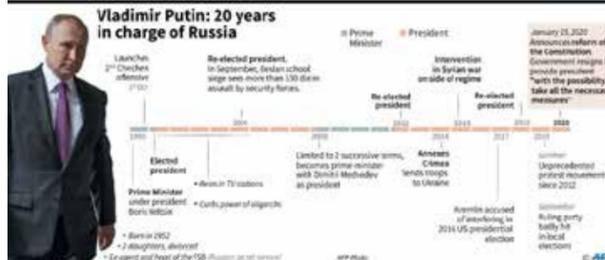
### Hockey and pop music

Mishustin will have a week to propose a new government and ministers.

The former head of an investment group who trained as an engineer, Mishustin has a PhD in economics and has led Russia's Federal Tax Service since 2010.

He shares Putin's love for hockey and has played in matches with security services officials. Passionate about the digital economy, he has also composed music for pop songs, newspaper Vedomosti reported.

Navalny, who has alleged wide-scale corruption among Russia's top politicians, yesterday said Mishustin possesses a fortune inconsistent with his public service career and called on insiders to share information about his secrets.



# Sheep rescued from capsized ship await adoption in Romania

## ● The Palau-flagged Queen Hind cargo vessel overturned with 14,600 sheep aboard in the Black Sea in late November

Peris | Romania

The 180 sheep rescued from a cargo ship that capsized carrying 14,600 animals are staying in a shelter in Romania as they wait to be moved to sanctuaries or adopted, an activist group said Wednesday.

The sheep will spend the winter in a modern barn at a refuge in Peris, a rural town some 30 kilometres (19 miles) from the capital Bucharest.

"They were born a second time," Kuki Barbuceanu, head of Animal Rescue and Care (ARCA), the group which led the rescue operations, said.



One of the 180 sheep saved from a capsized ship who will be able to live out their days after an outpouring of sympathy from the Romanian public

The Palau-flagged Queen Hind cargo vessel overturned with 14,600 sheep aboard in the Black Sea in late November for as yet unknown reasons shortly after leaving the port of Midia in southeast Romania.

The 21 crew members were all rescued, but only 180 sheep could be saved from the Saudi

Arabia-bound vessel. Barbuceanu said the sheep trapped inside the ship that didn't drown or were crushed to death died of thirst during the days when rescuers couldn't reach them.

Those that survived are largely healthy though some of them cough and others have suffered



The rescued sheep are sheltered for the winter in a modern barn, waiting to be moved to a sanctuary or be adopted

sprains.

"They will not be sacrificed and can take it easy until the end of their life, 12 to 15 years, because they deserve it," Barbuceanu said.

In spring, the sheep will be able to graze in the field surrounding the refuge that hosts them, together with five horses,

two donkeys and several dogs and cats.

As soon as the issue of ownership is resolved, some will be transferred to sanctuaries or given up for adoption.

Many Romanians, moved by the fate of the sheep, have donated money, including for their current upkeep, which amounts

to 5,000 euros (\$5,600) per month, including the rent for the refuge.

Nearly three months after the sinking, the freighter still lies on its side, a few hundred metres from the quay, while the carcasses have still not been removed.

But the authorities announced Wednesday that the port administration has awarded a tender launched in December to recover the vessel and burn the corpses.

Barbuceanu hopes that the disaster will have a long-term impact and convince Brussels to ban the transport of livestock.

Romania is the third-biggest producer of sheep in the European Union and has exported millions in the past two years, in particular to Jordan and Libya.

Animal rights groups have already criticised the conditions under which such shipments take place, especially during hot summer months.

PIECE OF ART



A model pose with a hand bag printed with a painting of Celia

*Youssef El-Hadi, the founder of Celia Creations, is the grandson of the Lebanese painter Celia El-Hadi*



A model pose with a hand bag printed with a painting of Celia  
Arab News | Beirut

## Lebanese designer honours grandmother with accessories brand

When Beirut-based fashion designer Youssef El-Hadi decided to launch a brand that affectionately honours his grandmother, the Lebanese painter Celia El-Hadi, he died in 2009.

Founded in 2018, Celia Creations is a small but meaningful accessories brand — from concept to production — that ingeniously incorporates a collection of Celia’s vibrant and whimsical small clutches and handbags, meticulously crafted by local manufacturers.

“People in Lebanon love these brands,” Youssef says. “Don’t forget the jewels that belong to this country.”

During his adolescence, Youssef was influenced by his grandmother’s towering presence. She encouraged him to exhibitions, museums, and to draw and paint, instilling in him a love for art, design, and culture. “My grandmother was the first one in my family to drive for art,” he says.



A model walks on the ramp with a dress designed by Hussein Bazaza

*The designer’s love for haute-couture fashion inspired him to create mash ups of glamorous red-carpet styles and more effortless looks*

## Lebanon’s Hussein Bazaza

Arab News | Beirut

Lebanese fashion designer Hussein Bazaza is known for his edgy, whimsical take on fashion who sent a clutch of models down the runway at Arab Fashion Week in Dubai in October 2019.

The designer graduated from ESMOD Beirut in 2011 and kickstarted his career by interning with iconic Lebanese fashion house Maison Rabih Kayrouz in Paris, before he joined Elie Saab as a junior designer.

Bazaza was also selected to be part of the Starch Foundation in Beirut, a non-profit organization founded by designers Kayrouz and Tala Hajjar that helps launch emerging Lebanese designers. “(It) opened a big door for me. I started selling my pieces to actual customers in the Starch Boutique,” Bazaza said.

At the tender age of 23, Bazaza opened his first showroom and atelier in Beirut. “In 2014, I created my professional

brand and I was part of Fashion Forward Dubai, where I started showing my collections. The Arab World started to know more about my brand and (about) me as a

**In 2014, I created my professional brand and I was part of Fashion Forward Dubai, where I started showing my collections. The Arab World started to know more about my brand and (about) me as a designer**

YOUSSEF EL-HADI

1773

Captain James Cook becomes 1st to cross Antarctic Circle (66° 33' S)



1912

Captain Robert Scott's expedition arrives at the South Pole, one month after Roald Amundsen

1946

United Nations Security Council holds its 1st meeting

1991

Operation Desert Storm begins, with US-led coalition forces bombing Iraq, during the Gulf War



A hand bag printed with a painting of Celia

Highly productive during the 1970s and 1980s, Celia El-Hadi created around 4,000 works of art. She tried her hand with the classical themes of portraiture, still-life and landscape painting, often portraying people and places that meant the most to her



Celia El-Hadi

seums and government buildings across the world. After her passing, Celia's home in Bzebdine was turned into a museum, inviting visitors into Celia's private world.

What makes Celia Creations unique is the thoughtfulness of the overall design of each and every crafted handbag. Elements of Celia's life and spirit permeate through the smallest of details. For instance, a vintage handbag that Celia formerly owned inspired the shape of the current handbag design. In addition, some of the brand's bags are embellished with beading stitched by an artisan in Bzebdine who was Celia's friend.

Most significantly, the clutch's copper clasp is beautifully engraved with Celia's own signature, adding

a personal touch: "A lot of people told me to do another logo. But I told them that there's nothing that can top her own signature — it's as if she actually touched each bag," Youssef said. Ethics lie at the heart of the brand — all of the handbags are vegan, meaning leather, fur, and animal skin are not used — something Youssef feels is crucial.

Although Celia Creations is in its infancy, there is significant potential for growth. Youssef plans to expand the brand, but said he is wary of it becoming too commercial. "Anyone who wants to buy our bag needs to know the value of the painting," he explained. "You're not buying a handbag, you're buying a piece of art and you're buying the spirit and ideology of Celia, a woman who was fearless and always took risks."

ut-based architect-student Youssef was 20, he de-passion project honours his late little-known Lebanese El-Hadi, who

woman like Celia — someone so giving and thoughtful — should have the recognition that she didn't get when she was alive. That's why I started the brand."

A bold beauty with bouffant hair and arching eyebrows, Celia led a fascinating, cosmopolitan life: born in Mexico (where her family es-

established soap factories), she was educated in Egypt, and travelled to Europe — all of which were quite unheard of for a woman whose family came from the Lebanese village of Bzebdine. As an artist, Celia was mentored by respected Lebanese artists Aref El-Rayess and Rafic Sharaf, and became a dedicated art instructor

herself, teaching at Beirut's Russian Cultural Center and the Soeurs des Saints Coeurs schools in Hadath and Ghazir.

Highly productive during the 1970s and 1980s, Celia created around 4,000 works of art. She tried her hand with the classical themes of portraiture, still-life and landscape painting, often portraying people and places that meant the most to her. She once said that she preferred to paint in oil, "because it obeys me more and makes me feel more comfortable."

Aside from producing charming imagery, Celia also pushed boundaries in terms of style, according to her grandson. "She was one of the first artists in her era to draw nudes and to paint with live models, which was very shocking — a taboo," said Youssef.

Today, her paintings are found in the family's residences, a few mu-



Anyone who wants to buy our bag needs to know the value of the painting. You're not buying a handbag, you're buying a piece of art and you're buying the spirit and ideology of Celia, a woman who was fearless and always took risks

YOUSSEF EL-HADI



A woman holds a bag designed by Celia Creations



A hand bag with a painting of Celia

# Bazaza fuses storytelling, fashion design



Model walks on the ramp with a dress designed by Hussein Bazaza

designer," Bazaza said.

Bazaza's label has a unique take on fashion, he believes. "I have a special way in mixing colors, mixing fabrics and textures together. I love to combine between haute-couture and ready-to-wear."

The designer's love for haute-couture fashion inspired him to create mash ups of glamorous red-carpet styles and more effortless looks. "I did not know people would love this combination. People started referring to this style as Hussein Bazaza's style so that was something I am proud of," he said of his sporty chic aesthetic.

Before studying fashion design, Bazaza wanted to major in film making and it is why the designer loves creating stories with his pieces. "My main inspiration is not fashion, it's the story I create, the character I create to dress up in this collection that I'm making every season," he explained.

This desire to tell a story first came to the fore in his Fall/Winter 2018 collection, "Lilly."



Hussein Bazaza sits beside a dress he designed

"Lilly" was like a big story and people were so involved with this story. We live in a... digital world with social media and everything and I wanted to show people that we still have feelings, emotions and I wanted to create a story about this."

Before studying fashion design, Hussein Bazaza wanted to major in film making and it is why the designer loves creating stories with his pieces, This desire to tell a story first came to the fore in his Fall/Winter 2018 collection, "Lilly"

# business

## RAMEZ Group opens new hypermarket in Muharraq



In pictures, the inauguration of the seventh outlet of Ramez Group in the Kingdom at Halat Bu Maher, Muharraq

TDT | Manama

RAMEZ Group, a retail major in the GCC and Asia, has expanded its presence in Bahrain by opening its latest hypermarket in Juffair, yesterday.

The new hypermarket, also RAMEZ Group's seventh in the Kingdom and 42nd in the region, was officially inaugurated in the presence of Ramez Al Awadi

Chairman of RAMEZ Group, ministers, ambassadors, businessmen and other dignitaries.

Located in Halat Bu Maher at the heart of the historic city of Muharraq, the sprawling 5,000 sq. ft. new hypermarket consists of two floors with a 250 sq. ft. car parking space for more than 220 vehicles.

"We are highly grateful to HH Shaikh Khalid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, the Deputy PM of Bahrain, for opening our 7th RAMEZ

hypermarket in the Kingdom, which reflects the wise vision of Bahrain's leadership and the permanent support of the government for the national investments and Bahraini projects," Al Awadi added.

### All Bahraini staff

"We are committed to train and deploy more young talented Bahrainis in all our branches and outlets, and we are proud to announce that RAMEZ Halat

**We are committed to train and deploy more young talented Bahrainis in all our branches and outlets, and we are proud to announce that RAMEZ Halat Bu Maher branch employees are all Bahrainis**

RAMEZ AL AWADI CHAIRMAN OF RAMEZ GROUP

Bu Maher branch employees are all Bahrainis," Al Awadi pointed out.

Al Awadi asserted his steady

confidence in the bright future of Bahrain and said he is looking forward to enhancing their local presence with its upcoming

Janabiya branch.

Commenting, Mohammed Ramez Al Awadi, CEO of RAMEZ Group, said: "RAMEZ Group is working hard to be the leading player in retail markets, providing high-quality products and commodities with reasonable prices that suit all consumers. We are also committed to proping up the national economy, via pumping up more investments, and creating more high profile jobs for Bahrainis."

## US, China sign 'momentous' trade deal

● Largely leaves massive tariffs in place

● Tariffs will be removed only after a phase two deal

● "Phase two" negotiations include China's massive subsidies for state industry

AFP | Washington

The United States and China signed a truce in their trade war on Wednesday after nearly two years of tensions, bringing relief to markets but largely leaving massive tariffs in place.

The "phase one" deal is also a boon for Donald Trump as he faces an impeachment trial and a tough re-election fight this year, with the US president hailing the agreement as "momentous".

However, with tariffs still in place on two-thirds of more than



Chinese Vice Premier Liu He said the agreement he signed with Donald Trump 'considerably addressed the concerns of both sides'

\$500 billion in imports from China, US consumers and businesses will be left to foot the bill.

The agreement includes pledges from China to beef up purchases of US agricultural goods and other exports for two years, provides some protections for US technology, and new enforcement mechanisms that allow Washington to quickly impose penalties that Beijing cannot respond to.

"Today, we take a momentous step, one that has never been taken before with China", which will ensure "fair and reciprocal trade", Trump said at the White House signing ceremony.

"Together, we are righting the wrongs of the past".

But as Trump ambled through a lengthy commentary on the deal, major networks switched away from the White House to Congress where articles of im-

peachment were to be presented to the Senate as the first step towards a trial.

The easing of trade frictions has boosted stock markets worldwide in recent weeks, as it takes the threat of new tariffs off the table for now. On Wall Street, the Dow and S&P 500 ended at new record highs after the signing, while Asian markets were mostly up in the afternoon.

Trump signed the deal with China's Vice Premier Liu He, who has led Beijing's negotiations with US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin.

### 'Incredible breakthrough'

The US president thanked Chinese leader Xi Jinping and said he would visit Beijing in "the not-too-distant future."

"Negotiations were tough on us," Trump said, but they led "to this really incredible breakthrough."

But he said he will only remove the remaining tariffs "if we're able to do phase two."

In a letter to Trump read by

Liu, the Chinese president said the deal is "good for China, for the US and for the whole world."

"It also shows that our two countries have the ability to act on the basis of equality and mutual respect", Xi said in the letter to his US counterpart, adding that he would "stay in close touch with you personally".

At a later news briefing with Chinese media in Washington, Liu said the pact "considerably addressed the concerns of both sides," according to the official Xinhua news agency.

The agreement "bears both economic and political significance," he said.

The most difficult issues remain to be dealt with in "phase two" negotiations, including China's massive subsidies for state industry.

And elements of the deal the administration has touted as achievements effectively take the relationship between the two powers back to where it was before Trump took office.

"A huge amount of this is a reset," said Chad Bown, a trade ex-

**Today, we take a momentous step, one that has never been taken before with China, which will ensure fair and reciprocal trade. Together, we are righting the wrongs of the past**

DONALD TRUMP

**It also shows that our two countries have the ability to act on the basis of equality and mutual respect**

XI JINPING

pert with the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

"A lot of these elements are locking in things that were already there, or already in train before."

# SHOW



**BAD BOYS FOR LIFE (PG-15)**

OASIS JUFFAIR: 12.30 + 3.15 + 6.00 + 8.45 + 11.30 PM  
 OASIS JUFFAIR (VIP): 1.30 + 6.15 + 11.00 PM  
 CITY CENTRE (IMAX 2D): 12.45 + 5.45 + 10.45 PM  
 CITY CENTRE: 11.15 AM + 2.00 + 4.45 + 7.30 + 10.15 PM + (1.00 AM THURS/FRI)  
 CITY CENTRE (ATMOS): 10.30 AM + 1.00 + 3.45 + 6.30 + 9.15 + 12.00 MN  
 CITY CENTRE (VIP I): 12.30 + 3.15 + 6.00 + 8.45 + 11.30 PM  
 SEEF (I): 10.45 AM + 12.30 + 1.30 + 3.15 + 4.15 + 6.00 + 7.00 + 8.45 + 9.45 + 11.30 PM + (12.30 MN THURS/FRI)  
 WADI AL SAIL: 12.45 + 3.30 + 6.15 + 9.00 + 11.45 PM  
 WILL SMITH, MARTIN LAWRENCE, VANESSA HUDGENS

**DOLITTLE (PG)(ADVENTURE/COMEDY/FAMILY)**

OASIS JUFFAIR (KIDS CINEMA): 10.30 AM + 12.45 + 5.00 + 7.15 + 11.30 PM  
 OASIS JUFFAIR (VIP): 11.15 AM + 4.00 + 8.45 PM  
 CITY CENTRE (IMAX 2D): 10.30 AM + 3.30 + 8.30 PM  
 CITY CENTRE: 11.00 AM + 12.30 + 1.15 + 2.45 + 3.30 + 5.00 + 5.45 + 7.15 + 8.00 + 9.30 + 10.15 + 11.45 PM + (12.30 MN THURS/FRI)  
 CITY CENTRE (VIP II): 12.00 + 2.15 + 4.30 + 6.45 + 9.00 + 11.15 PM  
 SEEF (II): 12.15 + 2.30 + 4.45 + 7.00 + 9.15 + 11.30 PM + (12.30 MN THURS/FRI)  
 WADI AL SAIL: 12.15 + 2.30 + 4.45 + 7.00 + 9.15 + 11.30 PM  
 ROBERT DOWNEY JR., ANTONIO BANDERAS, MICHAEL SHEEN

**JAI MUMMY DI (15+)(HINDI/COMEDY/ROMANTIC)**

OASIS JUFFAIR: 11.15 AM + 4.15 + 9.15 PM  
 SEEF (II): 10.30 AM + 3.00 + 7.30 + 12.00 MN  
 SUNNY SINGH NIJJAR, SONNALLI SEYGALL, SUPRIYA PATHAK

**YOM WLEILA (15+)(ARABIC/DRAMA)**

CITY CENTRE: 12.00 + 2.15 + 4.30 + 6.45 + 9.00 + 11.15 PM  
 SEEF (II): 2.00 + 6.45 + 11.30 PM  
 YIHYA FAKHRI, KHALID AL-NABAWI, AHMAD AL-FESHAWI

**PARASITE (15+)(KOREAN)**

SEEF (II): 11.30 AM + 4.15 + 9.00 PM  
 WADI AL SAIL: 1.30 + 6.30 + 11.30 PM  
 SONG KANG HO, LEE SUN KYUN, CHO YEO JEONG  
 A HIDDEN LIFE (PG-13)(DRAMA)  
 SEEF (II): 7.30 PM + 10.45 PM  
 AUGUST DIEHL, VALERIE PACHNER, MARIA SIMON

**FOODIVERSE (G)(ANIMATION)**

SEEF (II): 11.30 AM + 1.30 + 3.30 + 5.30 PM  
 SITONG LIU, BO SUN, XU WU  
 JUMANJI THE NEXT LEVEL (PG-15)  
 CITY CENTRE: 12.45 + 3.30 + 6.15 + 9.00 + 11.45 PM + (12.45 MN THURS/FRI)  
 SEEF (II): 12.15 + 3.00 + 5.45 + 8.30 + 11.15 PM  
 WADI AL SAIL: 12.45 + 6.00 + 11.15 PM  
 DWAYNE JOHNSON, JACK BLACK, KEVIN HART

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

OASIS JUFFAIR: 3.00 + 8.45 PM  
 CITY CENTRE: 11.30 AM + 2.00 + 4.30 + 7.00 + 9.30 + 12.00 MN + (1.00 AM THURS/FRI)  
 SEEF (I): 10.30 AM + 1.00 + 3.30 + 6.00 + 8.30 + 11.00 PM  
 WADI AL SAIL: 10.45 AM + 1.15 + 3.45 + 6.15 + 8.45 + 11.15 PM  
 GEORGE MACKAY, DEAN-CHARLES CHAPMAN, MARK STRONG

**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 (II): 10.45 AM + 1.15 + 3.45 + 6.15 + 8.45 + 11.15 PM  
 WADI AL SAIL: 10.30 AM + 3.30 + 8.45 PM  
 TAMER HOSNY, ZEINA, KHALID EL-SAWI



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

CITY CENTRE: 10.30 AM + 12.45 + 3.00 + 5.15 + 7.30 + 9.45 + 12.00 MN  
 SEEF (II): 12.00 + 2.15 + 4.30 + 6.45 + 9.00 + 11.15 PM  
 KRISTEN STEWART, T.J. MILLER, JESSICA HENWICK

**SPIES IN DISGUISE (PG)(ANIMATION/ACTION/)**

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  
 WILL SMITH, TOM HOLLAND, KAREN GILLAN



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

CITY CENTRE: 11.30 AM + 1.45 + 4.00 + 6.15 + 8.30 + 10.45 PM  
 SEEF (II): 12.45 + 5.15 + 9.45 PM  
 KRISTEN BELL, IDINA MENZEL, JOSH GAD

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

CITY CENTRE: 12.15 + 2.30 + 4.45 + 7.00 + 9.15 + 11.30 PM  
 CHADWICK BOSEMAN, SIENNA MILLER, STEPHAN JAMES

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

CITY CENTRE: 12.15 + 2.45 + 5.15 + 7.45 + 10.15 PM  
 ABDULAZIZ AL-MUZAINI, ABDULAZIZ AL-SHEHRI, MAZROA AL-MAZROA

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

OASIS JUFFAIR: 1.30 + 6.30 + 11.30 PM  
 AJAY DEVGN, SAIF ALI KHAN, KAJOL

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

OASIS JUFFAIR: 3.15 + 8.45 PM  
 SEEF (I): 12.15 + 5.45 + 11.15 PM  
 WADI AL SAIL: 11.00 AM + 4.00 + 9.00 PM  
 DEEPIKA PADUKONE, VIKRANT MASSEY, MADHURJEET SARGHI

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

CITY CENTRE: 1.45 + 6.45 + 11.45 PM  
 ANDREA RISEBOROUGH, DEMIAN BICHER, JOHN CHO

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

CITY CENTRE: 12.30 + 5.00 + 9.30 PM  
 ANGELINA JOLIE, TERESA MAHONEY, MICHELLE PFEIFFER

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

CITY CENTRE: 10.30 AM + 3.00 + 7.30 + 12.00 MN  
 TIFFANY HADDISH, ROSE BYRNE, SALMA HAYEK

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

CITY CENTRE: 11.00 AM + 4.00 + 9.00 PM  
 JOAQUIN PHOENIX, ZAZIE BEETZ, ROBERT DE NIRO

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

OASIS JUFFAIR (TAMIL): 12.15 + 5.45 + 11.15 PM  
 SEEF (I): (TAMIL): 11.00 AM + 2.00 + 5.00 + 8.00 + 11.00 PM  
 RAJINIKANTH, SUNIL SHETTY, NAYANTHARA

**SARILERU NEEKEVVARU (PG-15)(TELUGU)**

OASIS JUFFAIR: 11.45 AM + 5.30 + 11.15 PM  
 MAHESH BABU, VIJAYASHANTI, RASHMIKA MANDANA, PRAKASH RAJ

**BIG BROTHER (PG-15)(MALAYALAM)**

OASIS JUFFAIR: 11.00 AM + 2.00 + 5.00 + 8.00 + 11.00 PM  
 SEEF (II): 11.45 AM + 2.45 + 5.45 + 8.45 + 11.45 PM  
 WADI AL SAIL: 11.00 AM + 5.00 + 11.00 PM  
 AL HAMRA: 12.00 + 9.00 PM  
 MOHANLAL, ARBAAZ KHAN, ANOOP MENON, SARJANO KHALID, HONEY ROSE, SIDDIQUE



**ENTHAMANCHIVAVAVURAA (PG-15)**

OASIS JUFFAIR: 10.45 AM + 4.45 PM  
 SEEF (I): 2.45 + 8.15 PM  
 KALYAN RAM, MEHREEN PIRZADA, SUHASINI

**ALA VAIKUNTHAPURRAMLOO (PG-15)**

OASIS JUFFAIR: 1.45 + 7.45 + 10.45 PM  
 SEEF (II): 11.30 AM + 2.30 + 5.30 + 8.30 + 11.30 PM  
 AL HAMRA: 3.00 PM  
 ALLU ARAVIND, S. RADHA KRISHNA, ALLU ARJUN, POOJA HEGDE, TABU, NIVETHA PETHURAJ

**PATTAS (PG-13)(TAMIL)**

OASIS JUFFAIR: 12.15 + 3.00 + 5.45 + 8.30 + 11.15 PM  
 SEEF (I): 12.45 + 3.30 + 6.15 + 9.00 + 11.45 PM  
 WADI AL SAIL: 2.00 + 8.00 PM  
 AL HAMRA: 6.00 + (12.00 MN THURS/FRI)  
 DHANUSH, SNEHA, MEHREEN PIRZADA

MOVIE REVIEW

## Bad Boys for Life: odd-couple Miami cops back with a blast

After probably years of high-powered agent, studio and management negotiations, the boys are back

● Will Smith and Martin Lawrence reunite in high-spirited, action-packed movie

First, in last year's Gemini Man, his previous movie, he confronted a younger version of himself, a clone who outruns him, outguns him, outthinks him and generally reminds him just how many less miles than him he's got on the odometer.

Now, in this sequel to a sequel—for which Smith also serves as one of the producers—the specter of advancing years again comes into play.

The Fresh Prince, after all, is now 51 years old.

In Bad Boys for Life, which comes 25 years after the original Bad Boys (1995) and 17 years after its follow-up, Bad Boys II, Smith reteams with Martin Lawrence as an inseparable Miami buddy-cop duo whose glory days—as well as their teamwork—may finally be at an end.

Marcus Burnett (Lawrence) is a new grandfather, counting the days to his retirement with his family. Lone-wolf Mike Lowrey (Smith) has been reassigned to a new high-tech AMMO division, a “young guns” group of millennials with whom he has little in common.

Over drinks celebrating his imminent retirement, Burnett asks Lowrey why he doesn't think about settling down, falling in love and getting out of police work. “Mike, we've got more time behind us than in front,” Burnett says.

But settling down, falling in love and getting out of police work wouldn't make for much of a movie, would it?

What would make for a movie is a ruthless young Mexican cartel mob boss (Jacob Scipio) suddenly springing into action with a bloody revenge plan that leads back to something Lowrey did years ago. Frenetic car chases, a sniper who never seems to miss, a south-of-the-border sorceress, a long-ago secret, and enough ballistic, bombastic boom-boom to shake the salt off your pop-



Will Smith, left, and Martin Lawrence in 'Bad Boys for Life'

corn—now that makes a movie. Just let yourself go and let the bullets flow.

At least it makes this movie, a high-spirited, action-packed blowout reunion that plays to the comedic strengths of its two marquee stars while giving them plenty of room to roam, lots of things to blast or blow up and a flowing stream of bickering-buddy humor. Michael Bay, the big-budget, blockbuster director (Armageddon, the Transformers series) who steered the

first two Bad Boys flicks, did not return for this one, and Belgian filmmaking collaborators Adil El Arbi and Bilal Fallah try hard to please.

But their technique often feels all over the place; they love both super slo-mo and frenetic, high-speed time-lapses. The story unfolds in a herky-jerky mix of melodrama and mirth; it's a movie melding sitcom silliness, overwrought Spanish telenovela excess and prime-time TV-procedural connect-the-dots. And



The plot's dumb but there's plenty to enjoy as Will Smith and Martin Lawrence return after 17 years to trade jibes and blow stuff up

the way the camera never seems to stop moving, even in extreme closeups, made me feel like I was always free-floating through every scene, like a teeny observer in a miniature Bad Boys hot-air balloon.

Veteran actor Joe Pantoliano reprises his role from previous Bad Boys as harried Capt. Howard, and younger audiences will enjoy seeing a couple of familiar faces (Vanessa Hudgens, and Charles Melton, who stars as Reggie on TV's Riverdale) in the mix. Hulking Alexander Lud-

wing, from Vikings, seems to have fun, playing a decidedly non-Viking role as a mild-mannered hacker.

Let's be real, though. Nothing else really matters about this movie other than the comeback of its two stars—who, in their two previous Bad Boys pairings, helped push its franchise past the \$400-million mark. Smith, once one of Hollywood's top box-office draws, and Lawrence, a standup comedian who—like Smith—successfully made the leap to TV and then movies, have undeniable chemistry and for-real movie mojo. Their banter is loose, lively and juicy with quippy, R-rated digs, disses and jive that audiences will love.

Everything tends to loosen when they're apart, but it tightens and brightens whenever they're together, especially when they're roaring down streets, careening around curves or ripping up the asphalt in Lowrey's 992-Generation Porsche, a motorcycle and sidecar or any other vehicle that's handy. One particularly funny conversation happens in an airplane.

# CELEBS

## celebs

## Priyanka Chopra joins Amazon's spy series 'Citadel'

AP | Los Angeles

Priyanka Chopra Jonas will star opposite Richard Madden in the US edition of "Citadel," a drama series to be produced in conjunction with programs from several other countries.

"The idea is to create a truly global, action-packed spy series," Amazon Studios chief Jennifer Salke said. "It's a totally innovative, multifaceted international approach to storytelling, and we can't wait to tell you more as it comes together."

Local-language productions are being done in Italy and India, with another announced Tuesday in Mexico. Amazon called the US version the "mothership" of the project, with production set to begin this summer.

Film star Chopra Jonas was in the ABC TV series "Quantico." Madden starred in the award-winning BBC and Netflix series "Bodyguard."

The other "Citadel" productions will "enhance the experience of engaging with the show," Salke said. Further details and release dates were not announced.

Also announced by the streaming service during its presentation at a TV critics meeting:

— Meagan Good is among the stars of an upcoming Amazon comedy from "Girls Trip" creator Tracy Oliver.

The untitled, half-hour series revolves around four African American college friends in pursuit of their dreams, the streaming service said.

Good ("Star," "Think Like a Man")

plays the "stylish, sunny" Camille, who teaches an anthropology course on sex and love at Columbia University. Also starring are Grace Byers ("Empire"), Jerrie Johnson ("Good Trouble") and Shoniqua Shandai ("I Am the Night").

Byers plays trust-fund baby and fashion designer Quinn; Shandai portrays aspiring singer Angie and Johnson plays Tye, described as "an alpha fierce, queer successful app developer."

The series reunites Oliver with "Girls Trip" director Malcolm D. Lee, who will direct the first two episodes. Pharrell Williams is joining the show's executive producers, which include Oliver and Amy Poehler, — Amazon is touting the cast of a new "The Lord of the Rings" series as multi-generational actors "from around the globe," including British-Iranian actress Nazanin Boniadi and Australian actor-musician Tom Budge.

But the streaming service declined to say which characters — or the races — they or other cast members announced Tuesday will be playing. Other details of the production also are being kept under wraps but "everything is moving forward," Salke said.



Priyanka Chopra Jonas

## Billie Eilish calls James Bond theme song 'huge honour'

Reuters | London

American teen pop sensation Billie Eilish said on Tuesday she was honoured to have been chosen to write and record the theme song from the upcoming James Bond film "No Time to Die."

Eilish, 18, who wrote the song with her brother Finneas O'Connell, will be the youngest artist in history to take on the task, following in the footsteps of musicians like Adele, Madonna, and Paul McCartney, producers said in a posting on the official @007 Twitter account.

"No Time to Die," the 25th film in the James Bond series, arrives in movie theatres in April with Daniel Craig resuming his role as the

British secret agent for a fifth and final time.

Alternative pop star Eilish had a break out year in 2019, with hits like "Bad Guy" and "All the Good Girls Go to Hell," and is nominated for six Grammy Awards later this month, including the top prizes: album of the year and best new artist.

"It feels crazy to be a part of this in every way. To be able to score the theme song to a film that is part of such a legendary series is a huge honour. James Bond is the coolest film franchise ever to exist. I'm still in shock," Eilish said in a statement.

Eilish wrote and recorded most of her debut studio album "When We Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?" with her brother Finneas, 22, in the small bedroom of their Los Angeles area home.

"Writing the theme song for a Bond film is something we've been dreaming about doing our entire lives," Finneas said in a statement.

**It feels crazy to be a part of this in every way. To be able to score the theme song to a film that is part of such a legendary series is a huge honour**

BILLIE EILISH



Billie Eilish

## Bernie Sanders endorses Cardi B for politics

ANI | Los Angeles

Cardi B recently got a big boost to her political ambitions as American Senator Bernie Sanders lauded the rapper for her concern towards the country and her humble beginnings.

He said that Cardi can bring her valuable experiences into politics which she gained while struggling from poverty, reported TMZ.

Sanders, a presidential hopeful told TMZ that, "Cardi B is deeply concerned about what's happening in the country. She knows what it's like to live in poverty and struggle, and it would be great for her to bring that experience to politics."

Cardi has been quite vocal about her political views and has even gotten into an online altercation on

Twitter with the American right-wing journalist Tomi Lahren due to her anti-Donald Trump stance.

The pop star has since long been a Bernie supporter and even interviewed Democrat politician in August last year.



Cardi B

## Coffee under the setting sun makes Anushka Sharma smile the most!



The image shared by Anushka Sharma on Instagram

ANI | Mumbai

Actor Anushka Sharma on Wednesday shared her pictures clicked by husband Virat Kohli where she can be seen sitting in her balcony enjoying a mesmerising evening with a cup of coffee.

The actor took to Instagram to share two pictures in which she is seen sitting in her balcony and enjoying a cup of hot brew while the Mumbai skyline set the perfect background for the picture.

"And just like that a coffee under the setting sun on the balcony of our home became a memory to hold," Sharma captioned the picture.

Indicating that the pictures were clicked by Kohli, the 31-year-old actor, further wrote, "Captured by my beloved."

Soon the post was flooded with scores of comments by her fans and Bollywood fraternity including fashion designer Manish Malhotra and actors Arjun Kapoor and Mouni Roy.

## Emily Ratajkowski, husband Sebastian match in trippy tees for the Lakers Game

ANI | Los Angeles

American model Emily Ratajkowski and her husband Sebastian Bear-McClard were seen wearing matching tie-dye t-shirts at the Lakers Game Night.

The couple went for Lakers vs. Cleveland Cavaliers basketball game in Los Angeles.

According to Page Six, Emily and Sebastian both chose shirts from Online Ceramics, a popular com-

pany that produces trippy items as well as merch for The Grateful Dead.

Emily even uploaded a series of pictures from the game night on her social media and captioned it, "Also! Last night was very fun. Let's go Lakers."

Sebastian wore a crewneck sweater that featured a warning about climate change: "The problem is we think we have time."

While Emily, on the other hand,

wore a t-shirt that said, "Your ego is not your amigo," paired up with blue jeans and knee-high white boots. However, she had cut off the tee to make into a crop top.

The model has always been an outspoken political advocate and recently she also endorsed Bernie Sanders for the Democratic nomination for president, reported Page Six.



Emily Ratajkowski

## Tom Hanks' family offered Greek passport

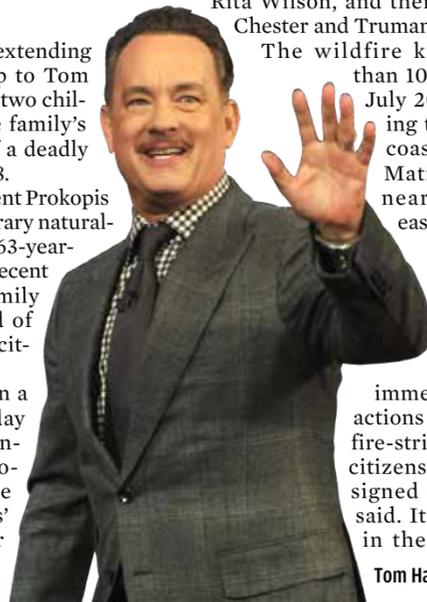
AP | Athens, Greece

Greece's government is extending its offer of citizenship to Tom Hanks to his wife and their two children, in recognition of the family's help in assisting victims of a deadly wildfire near Athens in 2018.

Last month, Greek President Prokopis Pavlopoulos signed an honorary naturalization order allowing the 63-year-old actor, who has spent his recent summer vacations at a family home on the Greek island of Antiparos, to claim Greek citizenship.

The decision published in a government gazette Tuesday and co-signed by Greek Interior Minister Takis Theodorikakos, revealed that the order also includes Hanks' wife, actress and producer

Rita Wilson, and their two sons, Chester and Truman.



Tom Hanks

The wildfire killed more than 100 people in July 2018, sweeping through the coastal town of Mati and other nearby resorts east of Athens.

"The Hanks family gave a signal all over the world for immediate relief actions to help our fire-stricken fellow citizens," the order signed on Dec. 27 said. It added that in their effort to

assist charity efforts they had provided "exceptional services to Greece."

Honorary naturalization, under Greek law, may be granted to people "who have provided exceptional services to the country or whose naturalization serves the public interest."

Hanks became an Orthodox Christian before his second marriage in 1988 to Rita Wilson, who is of Greek and Bulgarian descent.

Hanks, Wilson, and Hollywood producer Gary Goetzman co-produced the 2002 romantic comedy, My Big Fat Greek Wedding, which received an Academy Award nomination for best original screenplay.

In a post on Instagram last week, Hanks said: "Starting 2020 as an Honorary citizen of all of Greece! Kronia pola! (more or less, 'Many years to you!'). Hanx"

The post shows the shadow of Hanks holding up his left arm against an ancient Greek statue.

# SPORTS

## sports

# Al Salam Bank, REHC Cups up for grabs

REHC to witness seven races today

TDI | Manama

Seven races are set to be held today at Rashid Equestrian and Horseracing Club (REHC) in Riffa.

Four of the sprints will be for Al Salam Bank Bahrain Cups while another two will be for REHC Cups.

The seventh and final race of the day, for an Al Salam Bank Bahrain Cup, will be over 10 furlongs with a prize of BD4,000 to be shared between the top four, including BD2,400 going to the winner. A total of 13 imported horses rated zero to 95 are entered in the event.

Race six is also for an Al Salam Bank Bahrain Cup, and it will be over eight furlongs with a prize of BD3,000, with BD1,800 going to the winner. Fifteen imported horses rated zero to 80 are entered in the sprint.

In race five, which is for an REHC Cup, seven horses will be competing over eight furlongs for the right to claim the lion's share of the BD4,000 total prize, which is BD2,400 for the winner. This race for local breeds has three horses tipped with a chance to win, including Al Nimra owned by Abdulla Fawzi Nass, trained by Hesham Al Haddad and to be ridden by Paddy Mathers; Ramani owned by Al Afoo Racing Stable, trained by Mohammed Saeed and to be ridden by Lee



Action from a previous meeting at REHC (file photo)

Newman; and The Dark Knight owned by Victorious, trained by Alan Smith and to be ridden by Paul Hanagan.

Race number four also features a strong field of 15 horses for another Al Salam Bank Bahrain Cup. It will be contested by imported horses rated zero to 75 over a distance of six furlongs. The total prize is BD2,000, with BD1,200 going to the winner.

The third race for an Al Salam Bank Bahrain Cup will be over 12 furlongs with a prize of BD2,000, with the winner pocketing BD1,200. Six locally bred

horses are entered.

Race two for an REHC Cup will see a field of 12 competing over a seven-furlong course. The total prize purse is BD3,000, with BD1,800 going to the victor. Tipped to have a chance at the victory are Pulp Fiction, owned by Al Adiyat Racing, trained by Alan Smith and to be ridden by Paul Hanagan; Saraab, owned by Al Afoo Racing Stable, trained by Mohammed Saeed and to be ridden by Lee Newman; and Jazla, owned by HH Shaikh Isa bin Abdulla bin Isa Al Khalifa, trained by James Naylor and

to be ridden by Andrew Elliott.

Race one for the day will be over seven furlongs, with a total prize of BD1,500, and the winner taking home BD900. Six horses are entered, with three tipped to have a chance. They are Al Mlolesh 1748, owned by Victorious, trained by Yousif Tasher and to be ridden by Abdulla Faisal; Al Krush 1751, owned by Al Sakhir, trained by Jaffar Marzooq and to be ridden by Andrew Elliott; and Al Musannah 1724, who will be competing for Al Riffa Yousif Alboainain and Hasan Al Saffar.

# Peterhansel sneaks stage win as Sainz takes lead into Dakar finale



Overall car leader Sainz in action yesterday in the Dakar Rally's penultimate stage

TDI | Manama

The 2020 Dakar Rally car battle is set to go down to the wire after Stephane Peterhansel and co-driver Paulo Fiuza of Bahrain JCW X-Raid Team won the 11th and penultimate stage yesterday in Saudi Arabia.

Competitors battled it out in the event's last super-long leg, at 744km, which went from Shubaytah to Haradh with over 379km of it being special.

Peterhansel and Fiuza triumphed in a time of four hours 14 minutes and 11 seconds, just 10 seconds ahead of Nasser Al Attiyah and Matthieu Baumel of Toyota Gazoo Racing.

With their classification, they cut down the gap to overall car leader Carlos Sainz, driving the other Bahrain JCW X-Raid car alongside Lucas Cruz.

Two-time winner Sainz had carved out a healthy lead of more than 18 minutes over Al

Attiyah and Peterhansel heading into yesterday's events, but his two main rivals who have 10 Dakar titles between them made sure the inaugural Saudi edition goes undecided until the very last stage.

Sainz and Cruz were third on stage 11, just a little over eight minutes behind the winners.

They now have just a 10-minute lead over their two rival cars on the general ranking.

Peterhansel, 54, admitted: "We pushed all day long and we gained some time, but not enough. Now, if Carlos can bring it home, it'll be great for the team."

Sainz, 57, added: "It's good to have put the marathon stage behind us. Just one day to go. I'll keep an eye on the gaps and stay focused for tomorrow."

The 12th and final stage will see the rally head from Haradh onto the home straight, with a relatively modest 447km, and 374km of special stages, to the finish in Qiddiya.

# Regulations, weights of 'GCC Strongest Man Championship' qualifiers approved

TDI | Manama

The organising committee of the GCC Strongest Man "Heavyweight" Championship, headed by the Director of HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa Media Office Ahmed Al Shaikh, yesterday announced that it has approved the cate-

gories, weights and regulations of the qualifying rounds for the participants from GCC countries in the first edition of the championship for heavyweights.

The final stages of the championship will be held from April 9, 2019, to April 11, 2019, under the patronage of Highness Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa,

First Deputy President of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, and President of Bahrain Olympic Committee, under the slogan #GCC\_Challenge at the open area near Bahrain International Circuit. The revenues generated from the championship, which comes within His Highness's initiatives to support the

humanitarian and sports fields. will be allocated to support cancer patients.

The qualifying rounds will witness three stages, which include "lifting the trunk", "the farmer's walk" and "lifting the car". Participants will be given a minute to finish each of the three stages.

The committee confirmed that it will begin its visits by the end of this month to the brotherly GCC countries, including Saudi Arabia, the first destination, followed by Kuwait, the UAE and Oman, respectively, in order to meet the youth who are interested in taking part in the championship.

The committee had previously announced that a website has been allocated for the registration for the championship on www.gccstrongestman.com, in addition to an official page for the championship on Instagram (@gccstrongestman), in which inquiries will be received through direct messages.

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# Stokes, Pope regain advantage for England in third Test

AFP | Port Elizabeth

World cricketer of the year Ben Stokes survived three reviews by South Africa as he and Ollie Pope regained the initiative for England on the first day of the third Test at St George's Park on Thursday.

England were 224 for four at the end of an attritional day during which South Africa had briefly claimed the advantage.

England were 148 for four when Stokes and Pope came together, in danger of failing to capitalise on batting first on a placid pitch on a hot,

sunny day.

But the pair added 76 without being parted and were able to lift a slow scoring rate after England were able to score only 117 for two in 58 overs before tea. Stokes was unbeaten on 38 at the close while Pope made 39 not out.

Stokes came into the match a day after being named player of the year by the International Cricket Council and on the back of a man-of-the-match performance when England levelled the four-match series by winning the second Test in Cape Town by 189 runs.

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Karters in action at BIKC

## Karters set for intense endurance test

● **12-hour Bahrain Karting Enduro Championship begins tonight at BIKC**

TDT | Manama

The competition intensifies this weekend in the 2019/2020 Bahrain Karting Enduro Championship (BKEC) with a gruelling 12-hour challenge at Bahrain International Karting Circuit (BIKC) in Sakhr.

The meeting marks the BKEC season's third and penultimate round and it will be held over two days.

The race is set to kick off at 11pm tonight, with the chequered flag scheduled to come down at 11am tomorrow morning. Prior to the main event, a 60-minute Qualifying Practice will be held from 9.30pm today.

All the action will take place along BIKC's 1.414-kilometre Commission Internationale de

Karting track.

A total of 14 teams are scheduled to compete. They include Racing BH, Racing BH Junior, Go Bahrain, Bahrain Airport Services (BAS) A, BAS B, BAS C and BAS F, Manama Drift, Redline Racing, 3MDG Racing Team, Cool Runnings-Bahrain and three teams from Bahrain Petroleum Company (Bapco). They will be battling it out in the Pro, Corporate and Nations classes. Each team will be behind the wheel of a 390cc RT8 kart.

Racing BH were the overall winners in the BKEC's first and second rounds and they will be looking to continue their winning run this weekend.

All are welcome to attend and enjoy the very best of local grassroots motorsport. Entrance to BIKC is free of charge.

Following this weekend's meeting, Round Four will be the championship-finale and the ultimate challenge of the season. This 24-hour race is scheduled for February 14 and 15.

## Basketball chief receives newly signed national team coach Vincent



From left, Kanoo, Vincent and Khudair during their meeting

TDT | Manama

Bahrain Basketball Association (BBA) president Talal Kanoo received yesterday Bahrain's newly signed national team head coach Sam Vincent, who arrived in the Kingdom to begin his tenure.

Also on hand was BBA national teams director Jalil Khudair.

Vincent fills in the role last held by Serbian coach Darko Russo, who briefly took charge of Bahrain's men's team as they participated in the Gulf Basketball Association Men's National Teams Championship 2019 last November and December.

Vincent, a 56-year-old for-

mer point guard, is not a newcomer to Bahrain basketball. In past years, he coached local clubs Manama and Al Ahli as well as most recently Riffa, whom he helped guide to the prestigious Khalifa bin Salman Cup for the first time last season.

Vincent's first task with the national team is to get them ready for their upcoming qualifiers for the 2021 Fiba Asia Cup. Those games are scheduled to begin next month and Bahrain are in Group D of the qualifiers along with India, Lebanon and Iraq.

Kanoo discussed the national team's preparations for the qualifiers with Vincent and said that he hopes Bahrain can fight for good results.

# Bahrain make easy work of New Zealand

Bahrain thump New Zealand 45-16 in Asian Men's Handball Championship

TDT | Manama

Bahrain made an emphatic start to their campaign in the 2020 Asian Men's Handball Championship yesterday with a 45-16 hammering of New Zealand at Shaikh Saad Al Abdullah Sports Hall Complex in Kuwait City.

Both teams are in Group A of the tournament's preliminary round along with Iran. The Bahrainis' fine start put them on top of the division table.

Bahrain were in control of the contest from the very start, and they enjoyed a commanding 21-8 advantage at the half. They kept their foot on the gas the rest of the way and never allowed their rivals into the fight en route to the lopsided 29-goal victory.

All but two of Bahrain's players made it onto the scoresheet. Ali Eid finished as Bahrain's top scorer with eight goals, while Mahdi Saad added seven. Ahmed Jalal had six and Bilal Basham Askanani chipped in with four goals.

Hassan Al Fardan had three while Abdulla Ali, Mohammed Mirza, Ahmed Almaqabi,



Bahrain's Almaqabi looks to shoot at the New Zealand goal

Mahmoud Hussain, Mohammed Habib and captain Hussain Al Sayyad all had two goals

apiece.

Mohammed Abdulredha and Jassim Al Salata rounded out Bahrain's scorers with a goal apiece.

Luke Ireland led New Zealand with four goals, while Paul Ireland had three.

Bahrain are gunning for their first-ever title in the Asian championship. They have finished as silver-medallists four times in the past, including the last three editions of the tournament.

The Bahrainis are scheduled to return to the playing court tomorrow when they take on Iran to complete their preliminary round campaign.

Thirteen teams are competing in the Asian championship in Kuwait City. They have been divided into four groups for the preliminaries. Group B features Qatar, Japan and China; Group C includes South Ko-

rea, Saudi Arabia and Australia; and Group D consists of the UAE, Hong Kong, Iraq and hosts Kuwait.

The top two teams from each group at the end of a single round-robin move on to the next phase. This ensuing main round will feature eight teams in all, to be divided into another two groups and another single round-robin. The top two then march on to the semi-finals, scheduled for January 25. The final match will then be held on January 27 along with the bronze medal game.

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.



Bahrain's Hussain on the attack against the Kiwis

## Barty advances in Adelaide after re-run of French Open

TDT | Manama

Ashleigh Barty won a rematch of last year's French Open final Thursday as the Australian reached the semi-finals of the ATP-WTA Adelaide International.

The top seed dominated Czech tournament number eight Marketa Vondrousova 6-3, 6-3, to thrill home fans at Memorial Drive in the inaugural edition of the event.

Vondrousova was playing her first tournament in six months after injuring her left wrist.

Barty advanced to a Friday semi against American Danielle Collins, a 6-3, 6-1 winner over Swiss fourth seed Belinda Bencic.

She won the opening set with just one break, but was made to work in the second, saving four



Ashleigh Barty of Australia hits a return against Marketa Vondrousova of the Czech Republic

break points to hold on for 5-3 before putting away the win.

"I feel my game is getting better and better," Barty said.

"I could have been a bit more clinical in my game, but it was good to generate opportunities for myself.

Barty, who also beat Collins

on the way to her Paris trophy is expecting a battle in the semi-final.

"Danielle is an exceptional ball-striker, she can take the match right out of your hands," she said.

"She plays extremely aggressive. I'll need to put on my run-

ning shoes tomorrow."

There was a quarter-final shock for two-time Grand Slam winner Simona Halep, who heads into the Australian Open with room for improvement after being upset 6-4, 6-2 by Aryna Sabalenka.

The reigning Wimbledon champion and former world number one dropped serve five times and was flattened in the second set by her opponent from Belarus.

The 71-minute rout leaves Halep standing 1-1 for the season with the first Grand Slam of the year starting on Monday in Melbourne.

Sabalenka will battle Dayana Yastremska on Friday for a place in the final after the Ukrainian 19-year-old beat a second top 20 opponent this week when she put out Croat Donna Vekic 6-4, 6-3.