

**Exhausted Pogacar effectively seals Tour title**

Tadej Pogacar set to retain Tour de France title after stage 20 time trial | P10

WORLD **6** German floods kill at least 170, search for survivors continues

# THE DAILY tribune



Actor Ashton Kutcher backed out of Virgin Galactic space flight **9** CELEBS

BUSINESS **5** GAA, Atyaf sign deal for 'AVR' training solutions

Public Awareness Campaign to Combat Coronavirus (COVID-19)

## Getting vaccinated, booster shots and vaccines for 12-17 year olds protects everyone

Register now

[healthalert.gov.bh](http://healthalert.gov.bh)

**AUB** p5  
 named best bank in Bahrain by Euromoney

**Pacquiao** p8  
 ousted as president of ruling party after row

## Swimming sensations

Abdulla Isa, 18, and Noor Yusuf Taha, 15, are already making waves as teenagers, and they continue Bahrain's tradition of sending the Kingdom's most talented young swimmers to the Olympic Games

p11

Public Awareness Campaign to Combat Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Last update - 9:00 pm  
17 July 2021

## Individuals vaccinated

(First dose)

1095036

(Second dose)

1030588

(Booster dose)

109552

**Batelco** p5  
 enters Fintech world

**BAHRAIN COVID-19**

TOTAL TEST

5257729

ACTIVE CASES

895

DEATHS

1380

DISCHARGED

265521

NEW CASES

69

CRITICAL

19

**Lebanon's army chief says situation worsening**

Reuters | Beirut

Lebanon's army chief General Joseph Aoun said on Friday the situation in the country was worsening and would further escalate as a financial crisis stokes political and social tensions.

"Our responsibility is large in this period and we need to preserve the security of the nation and its stability and prevent chaos," General Aoun said in a speech to army personnel posted on the army's official Twitter account.

General Aoun was speaking one day after veteran Sunni politician Saad al-Hariri abandoned efforts to form a government, plunging Lebanon deeper into crisis.

# Pilgrims arrive in Mecca

- Eight were fined for attempting to do the pilgrimage without permits
  - Robots are stationed around courtyards of Kaaba to spray sanitisers
- TDT | agencies



Hundreds of pilgrims yesterday arrived in Mecca, heralding the start of the Hajj pilgrimage, which this year will allow only a select 60,000 people.

Hundreds of Muslims arrived at the al-Zaidi station in Mecca, where 1,770 buses took them to the Kaaba's courtyards after checking their permits.

After being loaded on buses and brought to Mecca's Grand Mosque, pilgrims began performing the "tawaf", the circumambulation of the Kaaba.

Many carried umbrellas to protect themselves from the scorching summer heat.

"Every three hours, 6,000 people enter to perform the tawaf of arrival," hajj ministry spokesman Hisham al-Saeed said. "After each group leaves, a

sterilisation process is carried out at the sanctuary."

Ahead of their pilgrimage, the pilgrims downloaded the Shaaer Smart Card mobile app, which allows them to rate Hajj services, access transportations, and smart gates, among others.

Saudi authorities said they hope to repeat the success of last year's Hajj, which allowed only 10,000 people, residing in Saudi Arabia.

Social distancing is enforced

at all times to ensure the pilgrims do not contract the coronavirus. Robots are stationed around the courtyards of the Kaaba to spray sanitiser throughout the day.

Robots are also serving holy Zamzam water to pilgrims and workers. Saudi Security officials said they fined nine people \$2,666 for attempting to perform the holy pilgrimage without a permit.

The offenders were found

in the Mina district of Mecca, otherwise known as the 'tent city,' which houses pilgrims each year.

Sami al-Shuwairekh, the Hajj security spokesperson, in a statement carried by SPA, warned against attempting to reach holy sites without valid permits.



**Chosen from more than 558,000 applicants through an online vetting system, the event is confined to those who have been fully vaccinated and are aged 18-65 with no chronic illnesses, according to the Hajj ministry.**

### CCTV footage traps a man stealing from food carts



TDT | Manama

CCTV footage of a man accused of stealing air-conditioners and generators batteries from mobile food carts emerged yesterday.

The *Tribune* had reported the suspect's arrest by the Southern Governorate police after cops there identified him following multiple complaints.

Several owners of mobile food carts parked near the Al Istiklal Street walkway had filed reports of thefts in the past two weeks at the station there.

Investigators finding similarities in the thefts also intensified their search for the culprit.

Based on evidence collected, including CCTV footage, the cops soon managed to identify the suspect and took him into custody.

The Public Prosecution took statements from the suspect, who also confessed to his crimes during interrogation.

Police officers had questioned him with evidence, including video footage of his crimes.

The man will now face trial in a competent court.

## EWA opens 66kV Muharraq power transmission station

TDT | Manama

Electricity and Water Authority yesterday inaugurated a 66 kV transmission station in Muharraq to meet the growing needs of the citizens there.

Wael bin Nasser Al Mubarak, the Minister of Electricity and Water Affairs, inaugurated the station. Shaikh Nawaf bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa, the CEO of the Electricity and Water Authority, was present.

Shaikh Nawaf said that the first transmission station in the Muharraq was a 33-kilovolt station, opened 54 years ago in 1967.

The current station, he said, will serve the needs of the Muharraq market.

"The new large-capacity station will help the governorate keep pace with the developments in the region."



CEO said the power demand is rising in the governorate, citing the upcoming housing, industrial and commercial projects.

"There are a total of 46 stations in the governorate with capacity ranging from 66 to 220 and 400 kV."

The CEO further pointed out that leading international

companies, including General Electric, Hyundai, Saudi Cable Company, took part in the project.

Bahraini companies Mohammed Jalal Construction and Comed Company handled the civil works. ESBI, an Irish Company, managed the advisory role.



### 58,000 heads of livestock, 5,600 tons of frozen meat ready for Eid demand

TDT | Manama

Works Ministry has announced taking all measures to meet the increased demand during Eid Al-Adha season by issuing import licenses for live stocks, fresh and frozen meat.

Dr Khaled Ahmed Hassan, the Ministry of Works, Municipalities Affairs and Urban Planning Undersecretary for Animal Resources, said, "preparations commenced in June with the import of 58,000 heads of livestock, 3,600 tons of poultry meat and 2,000 tons of chilled and frozen red meat."

Meat stock, he said, is good enough to satisfy the increased demand during the Eid Al-Adha period.

He also cautioned to stay away from random slaughtering places for the immense danger it poses to public health.

The whole world is going through an unprecedented crisis caused by the coronavirus outbreak, which calls for everyone to cooperate with the authorities by adhering to the instructions and guidelines set by the medical team.

# Eid Mubarak

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Hamad Town : 17 412 563 • Salmiya : 17 252 624 • Galali : 17 32 00 25  
Segayya (Al Hayat Shopping Centre) : 17 00 30 61 • MegaMart Express : 17 382 511  
Lagoon, Amwaj Island : 16 030 106 • Budaiya : 17 00 10 24 • Al Esteglal hwy : 33 00 47 95 • Busaitten

ماكرو مارت  
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West Riffa Mall : 17 650 075  
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**ONE DAY OFFERS - 18<sup>th</sup> July** | عروض ليوم واحد - 18 يوليو

\*LENTILS & NUTS OFFER ARE NOT AVAILABLE AT AMWAJ / ABRAJ / BFH / BUDAIYA / SAAR.

**0.650**  
د.ب. BD  
0.875 ق.ب. WAS

**LUX D/WASH LIQUID LEMON 750 ML**

**2.450**  
د.ب. BD  
4.000 ق.ب. WAS

**BANNO BASMATI RICE 5 KG**

**5.500**  
د.ب. BD  
8.750 ق.ب. WAS

**OLIVE BASMATI RICE 10 KG**

**2.050**  
د.ب. BD  
2.300 ق.ب. WAS

**PAKISTAN BEEF WITH BONE PER KG**

**0.750**  
د.ب. BD  
0.900 ق.ب. WAS

**TOOR DAL PER KG**

**4.095**  
د.ب. BD  
4.900 ق.ب. WAS

**CASHEW PLAIN PER KG**

**0.195**  
د.ب. BD  
0.395 ق.ب. WAS

**TOMATO / KG**

**0.595**  
د.ب. BD  
0.790 ق.ب. WAS

**TENDER COCONUT SRI LANKA / EACH**

# 1,382 apartments, BD122 million

Housing Ministry begins the constructions of apartments in Salman City

● The BD122,679,387 project expects completion by the second quarter of 2023

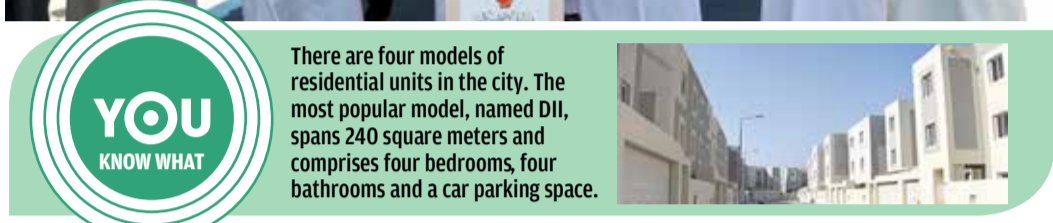
TDI | Manama

**H**ousing Ministry announced starting the construction of 1,382 apartments on Island No 12 in Salman City.

Basim Al Hamer, the Ministry of Housing, said the BD122,679,387 project expects completion by the second quarter of 2023.

The housing minister said that the Salman City project contributes to the government's commitment to providing 25,000 housing units.

Undersecretary of the Ministry, Shaikh Khalid bin Hamoud Al Khalifa, the Assistant Undersecretary for Housing Policies and Services Dr Khaled Al-Haidan, Assistant Under-



**YOU KNOW WHAT**

There are four models of residential units in the city. The most popular model, named DII, spans 240 square meters and comprises four bedrooms, four bathrooms and a car parking space.

secretary for Housing Projects Reda Al-Adraj, officials and development company officials were present.

Al Hamar said that the ministry relies on sustainable energy principles of using renewable and recyclable materials, reducing energy consumption

and waste when building new structures.

The project, the minister said, would help meet the increasing demand for ownership apartments in the Northern Governorate. Salman City follows the construction model for the sixth generation of residential buildings, with most of the units in

the city overlooking green areas like parks, gardens, pedestrian and bike paths on a 40-kilometre waterfront.

Situated off the coast of the Northern Governorate, Salman Town sprawls across ten islands, which span a total of 740 hectares of land divided among six planned districts.

## New BJA board meet



TDI | Manama

**T**he newly-elected Board of Directors of the Bahrain Journalists Association held its first meeting, chaired by Isa A-Shaiji, yesterday.

The meeting elected Abdulrahman Al-Medfaa unopposed as Deputy President and elected members to other posts.

Other members are Rashid Al-Hamar, the Secretary-General and International Relations Director, Mohammed Bahar, the Treasurer and Chairman of the Membership

Committee, Ahmed Kareem, the Chairman of the Sports Committee, Sara Najeeb, the Chairperson of the Media Committee, Yahya Al-Omari, the Chairman of the Professional Development Committee, Jassim Al-Yousif, the Chairman of the Events Committee, and Mohammed Al-Sae, the Chairman of the Freedoms Committee.

Up for discussion in the upcoming meeting are an amendment to the BJA statute, dropping the financial arrears on journalists' subscriptions or paying them in instalments.



Training Department yesterday held a graduation ceremony for 16 officers from various departments of the Ministry of Interior who took part in the "Management of Training Programmes in Combating Terrorism" course held from 4-15 July in coordination with the Joint Center for Combating Terrorism and the US Embassy. The ceremony under the patronage of Brigadier General Fawaz Al Hassan, the Commander of the Royal Police Academy, was attended by the Security Attaché - Acting Regional Security Officer at the Embassy of the United States.



Dr Mustafa Al-Sayed, the Secretary-General of Royal Humanitarian Foundation, yesterday put the spotlight on RHF's achievements during a lecture held for the officials of the Azhar Al-Sharif and the employees of the Egyptian Al-Zakat and Charity House. During the talk, held at the invitation of the Azhar Al-Sharif Grand Imam, Dr Ahmed Al-Tayyeb, and in the presence of the Secretary-General of the Egyptian Al-Zakat and Charity House, Amr Lotfi, Al-Sayed highlighted the modern administrative methods adopted by the RHF in its work.

## Tubli expansion: Ministry completes tunnel excavation

TDI | Manama

**W**orks Ministry yesterday announced completing the construction of the sewage conveying line of the Tubli sewage plant using a 'special' tunnelling technology.

The new line connects the assembly room of the main lines and the pumping station.

The works are part of the fourth expansion project of the Tubli sewage plant, said Ahmed Abdulaziz Al-Khayat, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Works, Municipalities Affairs and Urban Planning for Works Affairs.

"The length of the conveying line is approximately 400 meters, with a diameter of 2.8 meters," he said, adding that this conveying line connects a group of 12 sewage lines with



The new line connects the assembly room of the main lines and pumping station

diameters ranging from 350 to 1100 mm coming from various pumping stations.

The ministry, he said, completed 3 million work hours without any loss-time injuries, reflecting the strict procedures employed to ensure worksite safety. Al-Khayat said the pro-

ject would improve the environmental situation and wildlife in the region and enhance the production of treated water use for irrigation and agriculture.

The project will raise the capacity of the current station from 200 thousand cubic meters to reach 400 thousand cubic

meters per day.

Al Khayat said the project included the construction of a new treatment plant next to the existing plant, a collection room for sewage flows at a depth of 21 meters, a pumping station at a depth of 25.1 metres to receive sewage from the collection room, and the establishment of primary treatment units.

The pumping station, Al Khayat said, is one of the most crucial components of the expansion project, where sewage reaches from various regions of the Kingdom. At a depth of 26 meters, the plant has a reinforced concrete base with a thickness of 2.6 meters.

"The concrete used at the base of the pumping station was 2,080 m3, and the time taken for completing the work was 13 hours."

## Mock drill for aviation fuel depot fire conducted

TDI | Manama

**T**he Bahrain Airport Company and the Bahrain Aviation Fueling Company conducted an emergency mock drill simulating a fire at the aviation fuel depots complex at Bahrain International Airport.

The drill was part of the final safety assessment of the aviation fuel storage complex.

Bahrain Airport Company, the Bahrain Aviation Fueling



Company, the Ministry of Interior represented by the Airport Police, National Ambulance and Civil Defense, and the National

Guard took part in the carefully coordinated drill.

The drill simulated scenarios of two fire outbreaks in the new

facility leading to an emergency alert.

Mohammed Yusef Al-Binfalah, the CEO of the Bahrain Airport Company and the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Bahrain Airport Company for Jet Fuel, thanked all the participants for overcoming the challenges.

"It was an excellent opportunity to test the airport's fire-fighting systems and before the opening of the aviation fuel storage complex," he said.

**MIRCHI**  
104.2 FM  
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BEFORE THE 20TH OF JULY!

CAPTAINS CORNER

Building a better world in the sports grounds



CAPT. MAHMOOD AL MAHMOODI

With the Olympics set to begin later this week and with Bahrain unexpectedly gaining a second stage win in the prestigious Tour de France cycling event, it would be correct to say that we are in the thick of the 'Sporting Season' now.

Today, sportsmen and women have millions of dollars invested in them. They are not just playing for personal and national glory but are often brand ambassadors and moving billboards for the corporate world and expected to project a wholesome image.

Considering that football is a multi-million dollar industry and that most of the revenue comes from TV rights which is such a visual medium, what kind of image are British football fans projecting about their society's values?

The recent hooliganism in the streets of London after England lost the Euro 2020 football cup to Italy was a stark reminder of why British football fans are considered among the worst visitors to have in countries where matches are played.

Considering that football is a multi-million dollar industry and that most of the revenue comes from TV rights which is such a visual medium, what kind of image are British football fans projecting about their society's values?

We all turn to sports to showcase the values of a nation: our determination, our physical and mental abilities and our spirit to succeed.

Unless sports stars, top coaches and club management address the issue and sow the seeds of change in their younger fans today, we shall not see change in the world tomorrow.

(Captain Mahmood Al Mahmoodi is the Editor-in-Chief of The Daily Tribune and the President of the Arab-African Unity Organisation for Relief, Human Rights and Counterterrorism)

Only 50 out of 600 Nepali undocumented workers signed up for jobs, says Embassy

Embassy urges workers to come forward, register for jobs on embassy's website

There are around 600 undocumented Nepali workers in the Kingdom

Only 50 undocumented workers registered to receive vaccines

Around 95% of 35,000 documented Nepali workers in Bahrain received the jobs

TDI | Manama

The Nepali mission in the Kingdom has renewed its call for undocumented Nepali workers to shed their fears of arrest and come forward to get their COVID-19 jobs offered for free.

The attempt is genuinely for vaccinating and not a trap to detain them, the embassy said, assuring that they will take "no actions against workers."

Padam Sundas, Nepali ambassador to Bahrain, told Tribune that even after publishing multiple notices, migrants turnout is depressingly low.

"Till now, we managed to register only 50 illegal immigrants and workers for jobs," Sundas revealed. He points out that there are around 600 undocumented Nepali workers in the Kingdom.

It is not an impossible number, but the embassy says they do not want to leave any stones unturned.

The concern is only about the 600 undocumented workers, as nearly 95% of around 35,000 documented Nepali workers in Bahrain have received the jobs.



Padam Sundas, the Nepali Ambassador to Bahrain, holding talks with P. Unnikrishnan, the Chairman and Managing Director of The Daily Tribune and Abdul Jaleel, the Chief Executive Officer



The concern is only about the 600 undocumented workers, as nearly 95% of around 35,000 documented Nepali workers in Bahrain have received the jobs. We can ensure that no actions will be taken against them

PADAM SUNDAS, NEPALI AMBASSADOR TO BAHRAIN



Registration form is available on the link: https://bh.nepalembassy.gov.np/covid-19-vaccine/

BD94406.452 in compensation processed

TDI | Manama

Bahrain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has processed BD63090.57 in compensation for Nepali workers in claims regarding accidents, untimely deaths and other causes, said the Embassy of Nepal in a statement.

The claims are in cases filed since the establishment of the embassy in 2013.

The compensation is for 11 of the 13 cases decided in favour of Nepali workers, the embassy's Facebook statement



added. (https://bit.ly/3wNSFXA)

In total, the embassy had 23 cases recorded since 2017.

Authorities had rejected two for lack of sufficient evidence, while decisions are pending in eight.

The two cases resolved in 2021 received compensations of BD905,902 and BD22,263,980. The final settlement in one of the cases is yet to decide.

Total compensation received in all of the 13 cases amounts to BD94406.452 or 2,98,06005 in Nepali Rupees.

Repeating his appeal to undocumented workers to register for vaccination, Sundas warns that

will not help them stay safe. "The Bahraini government has all the details of the undocumented Nepali workers and knows

who are they and where they have been living," Sundas added.

"The government knows how many of them had renewed their visas and how many had returned to Nepal. The name of each person, passport number, CPR details are all there in the government records," a notice posted on the embassy's Facebook account clarifies.

The ambassador said it is not wise to turn away from vaccines for fear of getting arrested, as the government, if wanted, could do that at any moment, with them having the records of all Nepalis who had arrived in Bahrain.

"So, don't lose this opportunity." To register, use this link: https://bh.nepalembassy.gov.np/covid-19-vaccine/

The ambassador told Tribune that they will organise a vaccination camp for undocumented Nepalis as the registration improves.

According to an earlier report, a total of 15 Nepalis have died of Covid-19 in Bahrain. Of them, 13 died during the ongoing second wave of the pandemic.

Thirst Quenchers reach Tubli, distributes water bottles and fruits to 200 workers

TDI | Manama

The Indian Community Relief Fund (ICRF) yesterday distributed bottled waters and fruits to more than 200 workers in Tubli as part of its annual summer programme "Thirst Quenchers".

The programme, supported by Bohra Community in Bahrain, is now in its second week.

ICRF Thirst-Quenchers will continue its activities for the next 8 to 10 weeks in various worksites.

ICRF volunteers had also distributed flyers explaining the measures to stay safe amid the COVID-19 pandemic.



This week's event in Tubli, organised following Bahrain's COVID-19 protocol, was attended by ICRF Thirst Quenchers' convener

Sudheer Thirunilath, ICRF Volunteers Nisha Rangarajan, Aarti Rangarajan, Raman Preet and Muralikrishnan.



## AUB named best bank in Bahrain by Euromoney

TDT | Manama

Ahli United Bank has been recognised as the Best Bank in Bahrain 2021 by the leading international finance magazine Euromoney.

AUB was awarded as the Best Bank by Euromoney based on its achievements, innovations and performance over the last 12-month period.

AUB's ability to demonstrate resilience and adaptability in a very difficult and evolving Covid-19 pandemic impacted the operating environment, its relative outperformance compared with peers and its continued ability to meet client needs seamlessly and securely was the other key contributing factors for the accolade.

"In 2020 the bank posted higher profits and a lower non-performing loan ratio than any other local lender. It continues to invest in digital unveiling an upgraded mobile banking platform, introducing WhatsApp banking and bolt-



ing on new services to Al-Tajer, its digital platform for small and medium-sized firms," said Euromoney's Editor Louise Bowman.

"AUB's well-managed business model, supported by its continued focus on its core earnings streams, robust risk management system and an intelligent spend strategy has paid off through the delivery of resilient performance as it traversed the challenging market conditions in a balanced and structured manner," said Meshal Al Othman, AUB Chairman.

## Mirchi launches its first talent hunt in Bahrain – Mirchi Mic Ka Jackson

Mirchi launches an RJ cum content creator talent hunt for the locals of Bahrain to get a chance to join the Mirchi family

TDT | Manama

Mirchi, India's no. 1 city-centric music and entertainment company, launches one of its kind talent hunt – 'Mirchi Mic Ka Jackson' – in Bahrain.

Mirchi kickstarted this activity on 13th July, aiming to provide a platform for Bahrain's youth to channel their inner talent and get a chance to become a Mirchi RJ or start a new-age career with Mirchi's content team. This activity is sponsored by R&B—a leading fashion brand present in Seef Mall and City Center Bahrain and is powered by Megamart, Bahrain's leading retail brand.

'R&B Mirchi Mic Ka Jackson' participants can send in their entries through a fun one-minute video on Mirchi's WhatsApp number – 17001042 – by 20th July'21. This contest is open to audiences with CPR holders across Bahrain. Seven lucky participants will get the chance to interact with Mirchi's renowned RJS- RJ Mandy & RJ Karnika. Moreover, they will also have their entry videos posted on Mirchi's social media handles for audiences to view and vote. The top five contestants will then battle it out through three unique rounds at the grand finale on 31st July, at Wyndham Garden Hotel Juffair. The winner of the 'R&B Mirchi Mic Ka Jackson' will get to be Mirchi's illustrious RJ.

Commenting on this initiative, Prashant Panday, MD & CEO of Mirchi, said, "We launched in Bahrain just short of two months ago and today, with our first-ever talent hunt, we are looking forward to tapping potential local



young talents. Through this engagement, we are not only looking at giving some of the best local talents the desired limelight but also fortifying our relationship with our new audiences. We look forward to seeing a great response to our first initiative and hoping to get some best content creators & RJs under our wing."

Having associated as the title sponsor, Bahrain Apparel Trading and R&B Fashion W.L.L Country Head, Dheeraj Kalwani said, "Mirchi Bahrain's Initiative to facilitate a platform to tap & nurture budding local talent resonates with our strategy to reach & inspire youth to follow their path. Therefore, we are pleased to associate R&B with this format as the brand's ethos also promotes individuality & self-identity through its tagline – LOVE IT. WEAR IT."

Supporting the initiative, Megamart's General Manager, Anil Nawani said, "Megamart is proud to associate with Mirchi Bahrain who is giving a platform for local youth to showcase their talents and Megamart as a brand always believes in supporting such activities."

## GAA, Atyaf sign deal for 'AVR' training solutions

TDT | Manama

Gulf Aviation Academy, a leading Bahrain-based aviation and logistics training institution, has announced a partnership with Atyaf eSolutions, one of the regional leaders in information technology solutions and services, to offer Augmented and Virtual Reality (AVR) training solutions.

Signed on 22 June 2021, the partnership aims to establish Bahrain as a leading AVR training hub in the region, by creating highly immersive solutions with maximum realism for the aviation sector, as well as other sectors.

The partnership will offer custom AVR solutions to several sectors and establish an online marketplace to offer a bouquet



Officials during the deal signing

of general AVR courses.

GAA CEO Captain, Dhaffer Al Abbasi, said: "We aim, through this partnership, to provide training in a safe and affordable manner using the latest tech-

nologies. This will certainly contribute to the expansion of the premium training services offered by the Academy and cement its leading global position in the aviation and logistics

fields."

Atyaf eSolutions Chairman, Ubaydli Ubaydli, said: "The state-of-the-art training solutions and courses offered by GAA generates a valuable addition to institutions operating across several sectors aspiring to upgrade its staff's performance utilising top-notch training programmes that employ the latest technologies."

Ubaydli added: "This partnership aims to strengthen Bahrain's position as an advanced training centre in this region."

GAA supplies world-class training programmes tailored to meet the needs of personnel working within all aspects of the aviation industry from pilots and cabin crew to air traffic controllers and engineers, as well as other sectors.

## Batelco enters Fintech world

'Batelco Financial Services', the first subsidiary of a telecom company in the GCC to receive an open banking licence

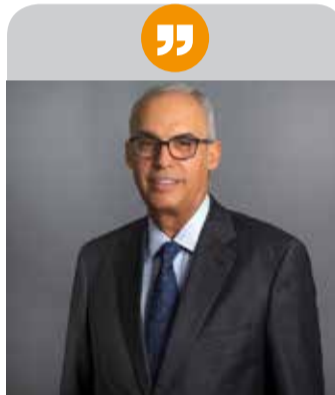
TDT | Manama

Batelco has stepped into the world of fintech by establishing a newly licensed company, Batelco Financial Services, also making it the first telecom company in the GCC to receive licences for Open Banking.

The company obtained the necessary licences from the Central Bank of Bahrain to provide both consumers and SMEs with services such as digital wallet creation, cards issuance services, bank accounts aggregation and bank account payments initiation on behalf of clients and third parties.

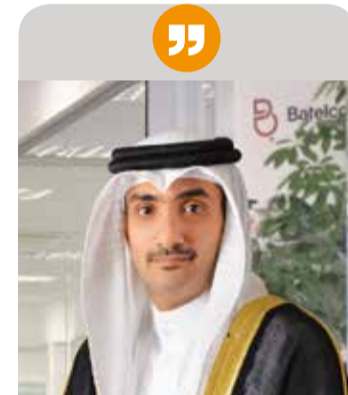
Rasheed Mohammed Al-Maraj, the Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB) Governor, said: "We would like to congratulate Batelco on obtaining their Open Banking services licence and entering the field of fintech. This step is part of Bahrain's ongoing growth in sectors that directly benefits customers and is in line with the Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB) strategy to support a local environment that encourages innovation in financial services as per global banking industry trends."

"We are pleased to witness such cooperation between two vital fields in Bahrain, the financial services sector and the telecommunications sector, which plays a role towards achieving the Kingdom's Economic Vision



This step is part of Bahrain's ongoing growth in sectors that directly benefits customers and is in line with the Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB) strategy to support a local environment that encourages innovation in financial services as per global banking industry trends

RASHEED MOHAMMED AL-MARAJ, THE CENTRAL BANK OF BAHRAIN (CBB) GOVERNOR



We are proud that our plans are turning into a reality, and by obtaining the required licences and establishing Batelco Financial Services, we are achieving a key milestone in our integrated strategy to diversify Batelco's investments, resulting in positive returns to our shareholders

BATELCO CHAIRMAN, SHAIKH ABDULLA BIN KHALIFA AL KHALIFA

intelligence and fintech, and by diversifying our offerings in line with global trends, we aim to realise our vision of becoming the leading provider of innovative digital services and communication solutions to consumers and the enterprise sector."

"We are proud that our plans are turning into a reality, and by obtaining the required licences and establishing Batelco Financial Services, we are achieving a key milestone in our integrated strategy to diversify Batelco's investments, resulting in positive returns to our shareholders," he added.

Shaikh Abdulla Al Khalifa continued: "We are confident that we have the right team in place that will provide our customers with innovative services and enable us to reach our ambitious goals. The team has partnered with many international players, bringing high reliability and scalability to our proposition."

Batelco Financial Services Company is located at Batelco's headquarters in Hamala and comprises a team of national and international expertise in fintech. The newly established company will offer a range of solutions and services for consumers and SMEs, to provide an integrated and seamless banking experience under one platform.

## KFH-Bahrain hosts first Libshara mega prize draw of \$500,000

● Fatima Abdulla Mohammed wins half a million US dollars

● 151 winners for June

● 70 winners of Libshara Eidiya cash prizes

TDT | Manama

Kuwait Finance House – Bahrain announced Fatima Abdulla Mohammed as the first Libshara mega prize

winner of US\$500,000 for 2021, as part of the Libshara investments savings scheme.

For the second time this year, 70 winners were announced as part of 'Our Children' special segment with exclusive Eidiya cash prizes worth \$500 each, in addition to the 80 prize winners of the Libshara savings account.

The Libshara draw held virtually on July 8 selected a total of 151 random winners, the largest number of winners to date for a monthly prize draw.

Hamed Mashal, Head of Retail Banking, commented: "We would like to extend our congratulations to all the winners of the Libshara investment ac-



Hamed Mashal

count for June, including Fatima Abdulla Mohammed who won the mega prize of half a million US dollars. Moreover, we are proud to congratulate our one hundred and fifty winners for the June draw alone, which included the exclusive additional

category of Eidiya cash prizes for 'Our Children' special segment winners."

On behalf of his daughter, Abdulla Mohammed expressed his excitement in winning the first mega prize in the Libshara investment account for the year 2021, and commented: "I never expected that she would win the mega prize, and I am glad that the investments into the Libshara scheme have paid off. I had opened a Libshara account for her through the KFJ Jazeel Banking App and started depositing her savings into the account, and I'm extremely thankful that she has won this mega prize."

News in brief

◆ **The United States imposed sanctions on Friday on seven Chinese officials over Beijing's crackdown on democracy in Hong Kong.**

The sanctions, posted by the US Treasury Department, target individuals from China's Hong Kong liaison office, used by Beijing to orchestrate its policies in the Chinese territory. The seven people added to Treasury's "specially designated nationals" list were Chen Dong, He Jing, Lu Xinning, Qiu Hong, Tan Tienui, Yang Jianping, and Yin Zonghua, all deputy directors at the liaison office, according to online bios. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that Chinese officials over the past year had "systematically undermined" Hong Kong's democratic institutions, delayed elections, disqualified elected lawmakers from office, and arrested thousands for disagreeing with government policies.



**US sanctions Chinese officials over Hong Kong democracy crackdown**

◆ **Youth killed in Iran water crisis protests**

Iran is facing its worst drought in 50 years, with protests breaking out in several cities and towns in the oil-rich Khuzestan province over the water crisis, which has affected households, devastated agriculture and livestock farming and led to power blackouts. "During the rally, rioters shot in the air to provoke the people, but unfortunately one of the bullets hit a person present at the scene and killed him," Omid Sabripour, the head of the governorate in the town of Shadegan, told IRNA.

◆ **A young man was shot dead during a second night of protests over water shortages in southwest Iran, a local official said on Saturday, blaming armed protesters for the shooting.**

The state news agency IRNA reported. Iran is facing its worst drought in 50 years, with protests breaking out in several cities and towns in the oil-rich Khuzestan province over the water crisis, which has affected households, devastated agriculture and livestock farming and led to power blackouts. "During the rally, rioters shot in the air to provoke the people, but unfortunately one of the bullets hit a person present at the scene and killed him," Omid Sabripour, the head of the governorate in the town of Shadegan, told IRNA.

◆ **Russian investigators said yesterday engine failure had caused a small passenger plane to make a forced landing in Siberia a day earlier, flipping the aircraft upside down but causing no serious injuries among the 18 people on board.**

Fears had swirled over the fate of the Russian Antonov An-28 plane after it went missing on a flight from the town of Kedrovoy to the city of Tomsk. Rescuers were dispatched and found the survivors in a wooded area near the damaged aircraft. "About 10 minutes into the flight, both engines stopped working," Russia's Investigative Committee said on Saturday, adding that the plane had flipped upside down when it made the hard landing at a site some 70 km (43 miles) from Kedrovoy.

**Engine failure forced Russian plane to make hard landing**

◆ **The United Arab Emirates' Abu Dhabi Emergency, Crisis and Disasters Committee announced on Thursday a partial lockdown and new entry requirements in the emirate starting July 19, from midnight until 5 a.m., as part of efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 variants.**

The media office reported in a tweet. The Committee said: "National Sterilisation Programme in the Emirate has been launched ... the movement of traffic and the public will be restricted and there will be no transportation services and the public must stay at home except for emergencies and getting essential supplies".



**UAE's Abu Dhabi announces partial lockdown effective July 19 -tweet**

# German floods kill at least 170, search for survivors continues



A worker clears broken trees and rubbish on a road following heavy rainfalls in Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler, Germany

Reuters | Frankfurt

Rescue workers searched flood-ravaged parts of Germany and Belgium for survivors on Saturday after burst rivers and flash floods this week collapsed houses and claimed at least 168 lives.

"We mourn with those that have lost friends, acquaintances, family members," German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier said during a visit to Erfstadt in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, where the disaster killed at least 43 people. "Their fate is ripping our

hearts apart." Some 133 people have died in the flooding in western Germany, the country's worst natural disaster in more than half a century. That included about 90 in the Ahrweiler district south of Cologne, according to police. Hundreds of people are still missing.

Around 700 residents were evacuated late on Friday after a dam broke in the town of Wassenberg near Cologne, authorities said.

"Water levels have been stabilising since last night, one can say the situation is stable," Wassenberg mayor Marcel Maurer

said. "It's too early to give the all-clear but we are cautiously optimistic." The Steinbachtal dam in western Germany, however, remained at risk of breaching, authorities said after some 4,500 people were evacuated from homes downstream.

In Belgium, the death toll rose to 24, according to the national crisis centre, which is coordinating the rescue effort.

"Unfortunately, we have to assume that this figure will continue to rise in the coming hours and days," the centre said in a statement. About 20 people are still missing.

# World le

● The APEC leaders met virtually to discuss collective actions to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic

● Putin told the group that global barriers to vaccine production and deliveries needed to be removed

● White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki said China's Xi delivered pre-recorded video remarks at the meeting and was not in attendance

● Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga expressed his determination to hold a safe and secure Olympics

Reuters | Wellington

Leaders of the Asia-Pacific trade group APEC, including U.S. President Joe Bid-

# India order vaccine de



Angurbala Kamila, 45, a villager, receives a coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccine on a boat during "Vaccination on boat" program of West Bengal, India

Reuters

The Indian government has ordered 660 million vaccine doses for August-December, its largest procurement, local news reports said on Friday.

The federal government aims to inoculate all of the country's estimated 944 million adults by December, a target health experts have said is ambitious, as only 8% of that number is currently vaccinated with the mandatory two doses.

The government has now ordered 375 million more doses of AstraZeneca's locally produced Covishield and 285 million doses of Bharat Biotech's homegrown Covaxin, the Economic Times newspaper reported, citing sources.

The health ministry did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

The Serum Institute of India, which manufactures Covishield,

## COVID-19 Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths	Global tally
1 USA	34,930,095	624,612	190,565,973
2 India	31,085,080	413,305	
3 Brazil	19,308,109	540,500	Deaths
4 Russia	5,933,115	147,655	4,095,485
5 France	5,844,249	111,451	Recovered:
6 Turkey	5,514,373	50,450	173,659,622
7 UK	5,386,340	128,683	New cases
8 Argentina	4,737,213	101,158	+295,816
9 Colombia	4,601,335	115,333	New deaths
10 Italy	4,284,332	127,864	+3,996
11 Spain	4,100,222	81,096	
12 Germany	3,750,295	91,882	
13 Iran	3,501,079	86,966	
14 Poland	2,881,355	75,212	

Figures as of closing

## Middle East

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	283,567		16,431		222,315	44,821
Saudi Arabia	508,521	+1,098	8,063	+15	489,553	10,905
UAE	659,449	+1,565	1,896	+4	637,267	20,286
Kuwait	383,347		2,193		363,992	17,162
Oman	289,042		3,498		263,752	21,792
Qatar	224,044		599		221,913	1,532

# Delta COVID variant now dominant strain worldwide, US deaths surge

● US cases of COVID-19 are up 70% over the previous week and deaths are up 26%

● The seven-day-average number of daily cases is now more than 26,000

Reuters

The Delta variant of COVID-19 is now the dominant strain worldwide, accompanied by a surge of deaths around the United States almost entirely among unvaccinated people, US officials said on Friday.

US cases of COVID-19 are up 70% over the previous week and deaths are up 26%, with outbreaks occurring in parts of the country with low vaccination rates, US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention Director Rochelle Walensky said during a press briefing.

The seven-day-average number of daily cases is now more than 26,000, more than twice

its June low of around 11,000 cases, according to CDC data.

The starkest uptick in cases has occurred in Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Missouri and Nevada, said White House COVID-19 response coordinator Jeff Zients. All those states have below-average vaccination rates.

"This is becoming a pandemic of the unvaccinated," Walensky said, adding that 97% of people entering hospitals in the United States with COVID-19 are unvaccinated.

She said an increasing number of counties around the United States now exhibit a high risk of COVID-19 transmission, reversing significant declines in transmission risk in recent months. Around 1 in five new cases have occurred in Florida, Zients said.

The Delta variant, which is significantly more contagious than the original variant of COVID-19, has been detected around 100 countries globally and is now the dominant variant worldwide, top US infectious disease expert Anthony Fauci said.

"We are dealing with a for-

midable variant" of COVID-19, Fauci said during the call.

Walensky urged unvaccinated Americans to get COVID-19 shots, and said Pfizer Inc's and Moderna Inc's vaccines have proven to be especially effective against the Delta variant.

She said people should get the second dose of vaccine even if they have passed the recommended window of time for receiving it.

Around 5 million people have been vaccinated in the United States in the past 10 days, Zients said, including many in states that so far have had lower vaccination rates.

"In the past week, the five states with the highest case rates - Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Missouri and Nevada - had a higher rate of people getting newly vaccinated," he said.

Delta outbreaks may be boosting demand for vaccinations in harder-hit states, Michael Newshel, a healthcare analyst at Evercore ISI, said in a note to clients. He added that residents of Utah and California are also seeking shots at an accelerated pace.

Great Fire of Rome begins under the Emperor Nero

Adolf Hitler publishes Mein Kampf (original title was the catchy "Four and a Half Years (of Struggle) Against Lies, Stupidity and Cowardice")

Kim Jong-un is officially appointed Supreme Leader of North Korea and given the rank of Marshal in the Korean People's Army



Detroit, Michigan, files for bankruptcy, becoming the largest US municipal bankruptcy ever at \$18.5 billion

# Leaders pledge to redouble pandemic fight



Leaders attend the retreat session of the APEC Summit in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea November 18, 2018.

en, Russia's Vladimir Putin, and China's Xi Jinping, pledged on Friday to work to expand sharing and manufacturing of COVID-19 vaccines to fight the global pandemic.

The leaders, struggling to tame outbreaks exacerbated by the Delta variant of coronavirus, said they would encourage the voluntary transfer of vaccine production technologies "on mutually agreed terms" as the region prepared for future health shocks.

"The pandemic continues to have a devastating impact on our region's people and economies," the leaders said in a joint statement issued after a virtual meet-

**“We will only overcome this health emergency by accelerating equitable access to safe, effective, quality-assured, and affordable COVID-19 vaccines**

LEADERS SAID IN A JOINT STATEMENT

ing chaired by New Zealand. "We will only overcome this health emergency by accelerating

equitable access to safe, effective, quality-assured, and affordable COVID-19 vaccines," they said.

The APEC leaders met virtually to discuss collective actions to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic impacts.

New Zealand, the revolving Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation host, said this week it would chair the extraordinary meeting ahead of a formal gathering in November, the first time such an additional meeting has been held.

"Our discussions moved us beyond vaccine nationalism. Now we are focusing on all aspects of contributing to the global vaccination effort — making vaccines, sharing vaccines and using vaccines," New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said after the meeting. She said the leaders agreed this will not be the world's last pandemic and that preparedness was critical.

The meeting highlights growing concerns around COVID-19, which is raging in the region as countries including Indonesia, Thailand and Australia face new waves of infections.

The White House said Biden emphasized the importance of multilateral cooperation and his commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific.

"President Biden also discussed the importance of investing in better global health security and preparedness so that we are ready the next time we face a pandemic," it said in a statement.

Putin told the group that global barriers to vaccine production and deliveries needed to be removed, and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga expressed his determination to hold a safe and secure Olympics.

Despite their show of resolve,

there are tensions among APEC members, most notably between the West and China - over issues ranging from the origins of the coronavirus to trade, Xinjiang, Hong Kong and the South China Sea.

White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki said China's Xi delivered pre-recorded video remarks at the meeting and was not in attendance. The Chinese embassy in Washington did not respond to a request for comment.

The APEC grouping includes the world's three largest economies and impoverished nations such as Papua New Guinea, as well as members at vastly different points in the COVID-19 cycle, providing further challenges for building consensus.

That consensus model of APEC has been tested in recent years, with the group unable to agree on a communique at their 2018 meeting in Papua New Guinea, driven by differences between China and the then US president, Donald Trump.

The 2019 APEC meeting in Chile was cancelled due to protests while the one in Malaysia last year was side-tracked as officials hastily organised a virtual meeting as the pandemic locked down the world.

**BETTER YOU KNOW**

In June, APEC trade ministers agreed to review trade barriers and expedite the cross-border transit of COVID-19 vaccines and related goods, but stopped short of a broad commitment to remove tariffs which New Zealand was pushing for. There have been over 50 million cases of COVID-19 within APEC's borders, with over 1 million deaths. APEC-wide GDP contracted by 1.9% in 2020.

## ers 660m doses



dose of COVISHIELD vaccine, a manufactured by Serum Institute of India, on Gossa Island in the eastern state

has raised monthly production to about 100 million doses.

The government says Bharat Biotech's monthly output will jump to as much as 70 million doses in July/August, from about 10 million doses in April. Production could rise further to nearly 100 million by September, it says.

Bharat Biotech, which has been struggling to raise output of its vaccine, did not respond to a request for an update on its production plans.

"I expect the vaccine shortage to continue and as per the planned vaccine supply, it appears that the daily average for the whole of July will stay below 4 million," said Rijo John, health economist and a professor at the Rajagiri College of Social Sciences in the southern city of Kochi.

After a record 9.1 million doses were administered on June 21, fewer than 4 million doses per day have since been given on an average this month.

## Biden to host Iraq's prime minister at White House on July 26

Reuters | Washington

US President Joe Biden will host Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi at the White House on July 26, the White House said on Friday.

The visit will highlight the strategic partnership between the two countries and advance bilateral cooperation under a 2008 agreement that governed the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said.

Psaki listed areas of shared interest such as energy and health and said Biden looked



Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi

forward to strengthening cooperation with Iraq on "security issues to include joint efforts to ensure the enduring defeat"

of the Islamic State militant group.

Psaki made no reference to Iran, which exercises influence in neighboring Iraq through its close relations with the Baghdad government and by backing Shi'ite militia forces that mount attacks on military facilities hosting US forces.

A senior Iranian Revolutionary Guard commander urged Iraqi Shi'ite militias to step up attacks on US targets during a meeting in Baghdad last week, three militia sources and two Iraqi security sources familiar with the gathering said.

## Biden says social media misinformation on Covid 'killing people'



AFP

President Joe Biden said Friday that social media misinformation about Covid-19 and vaccinations is "killing people" and the White House said Facebook needs to clean up its act.

"They're killing people. The only pandemic we have is among the unvaccinated. And they're killing people," Biden told reporters at the White House, as he left for a weekend at the presidential retreat in Camp David.

The White House is turning up the pressure on social media companies to weed out what officials say is widely spread misinformation on coronavirus vaccinations.

According to US health officials, a current spike in Covid-19 deaths and illnesses around the country is almost exclusively hitting people who remain unvaccinated. "There is a clear message that is coming through: this is becoming a pandemic of the unvaccinated," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention director Rochelle Walensky told reporters on Friday.

## Taliban, Kabul officials hold talks in Qatar

AFP News

Representatives of the Afghan government and the Taliban met in Doha for talks yesterday, an AFP correspondent said, as violence rages in the country with foreign forces almost entirely withdrawn.

The two sides have been meeting on and off for months in the Qatari capital, but the talks have lost momentum as the insurgents have made battlefield gains.

Several high-ranking officials, including former Afghan former chief executive Abdullah Abdullah, gathered in a luxury hotel on Saturday after morning prayers.

They were joined by negotiators from the Taliban's political office in Doha.

Former president Hamid Karzai had also been due to travel to Doha but remained in



Afghanistan's former chief executive Abdullah Abdullah (centre) speaks at a previous round of peace talks with the Taliban in Doha on September 12, 2020

Kabul, according to a source. "The high level delegation is here to talk to both sides, guide them and support the (government) negotiating team in terms of speeding up the talks and have progress," said Najia Anwari, the spokeswoman for the Afghan government negotiating team in Doha.

"We expect that it (will) speed the talks and... in a short time, both sides will reach a result and we will witness a durable and dignified peace in Afghanistan," she said. The Taliban have capitalised on the last stages of the withdrawal of US and other foreign troops from Afghanistan to launch a series of lightning-offensives across the country.



TOP  
4  
TWEETS

01



Reviewed the COVID-19 situation with Chief Ministers. Emphasised on testing, tracking and treating to overcome the pandemic. Also highlighted the need to strengthen COVID related infrastructure in the rural areas.

@narendramodi

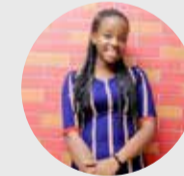
02



Young people drive solutions and must have a seat at the table, including in policy-making at the local, national, & global levels. We must address the longstanding disparities & challenges they face to build a truly inclusive, fair & sustainable future for all.

@antonioguterres

03



Greenland suspends oil exploration because of climate change. Greenland has decided to suspend all oil exploration off the world's largest island, calling it is "a natural step" because the Arctic government "takes the climate crisis seriously."

@NamugerwaLeah

04



After a year of hard-fought progress on COVID-19, we can't get complacent now. Let's finish the job together.

@JoeBiden

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

# Classifieds

THE DAILY **tribune**

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## Daughter of Afghan envoy to Pakistan briefly kidnapped

Reuters | Kabul

The daughter of Afghanistan's ambassador to Pakistan was briefly kidnapped and mistreated by unknown assailants, the Afghan government said on Saturday.

Silsila Alikhil was on her way home when she was seized for several hours and "severely tortured", the Afghan foreign ministry said in a statement, without giving more details of Friday's abduction in Islamabad.

"After being released from the kidnappers' captivity, Ms Alikhil is under medical care at the hospital," the statement added, urging an investigation

and protection for Afghan diplomats.

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that the Afghan embassy had informed it Alikhil was assaulted while riding in a rented vehicle. Police were investigating the "disturbing incident" and security had been tightened for the ambassador and his family, it said.

Neighbours Pakistan and Afghanistan have long had frosty ties. Kabul accuses Pakistan of allowing safe havens for Taliban insurgents, while Islamabad accuses Kabul of allowing militants to use their territory to carry out attacks in Pakistan.

Both deny the charges.

## 'Hollywood Ripper' sentenced to death in US

AFP News

A man known as the "Hollywood Ripper" was sentenced to death Friday for the gruesome killings of two women in their homes in the early 2000s.

Michael Gargiulo, 45, was convicted in 2019 of two counts of first-degree murder and one count of attempted murder.

Among his victims was 22-year-old Ashley Ellerin, who was found in her Hollywood home with 47 stab wounds in February 2001. On the night of her murder, Ellerin had been due to go on a date with actor Ashton Kutcher, who testified at the trial.

The second murder victim was Maria Bruno, a 32-year-old mother of four and neighbor of Gargiulo who was attacked in her sleep in December 2005 and "quite literally butchered," prosecutors said.

"In this case, everywhere that Mr. Gargiulo went, death and destruction followed," Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Larry Paul Fidler said Friday



The so-called "Hollywood Ripper," Michael Gargiulo

as he announced the sentence.

Prosecutor Dan Akemon said Gargiulo targeted women who lived near him and waited for the perfect opportunity to attack them at night in or near their homes in "totally planned killings."

He was arrested in 2008 following an attack on a woman in her apartment in Santa Monica, near Los Angeles. She survived and testified at the trial.

Gargiulo also faces murder charges in Illinois stemming from an attack in 1993.

But Gargiulo will not be executed, at least not for now. California is famously liberal and Democratic and Governor Gavin Newsom declared a moratorium on executions in 2019.

## Assad starts new term

- Assad took the oath of office for a fourth term

- Sworn in on the constitution and the Quran in the presence of more than 600 guests

AFP News

President Bashar al-Assad was sworn in yesterday for seven more years after a controversial May election dismissed by Europe and the US as "neither free nor fair". His new term extends the Assad family's rule to almost six decades; Assad's father Hafez al-Assad led Syria for some 30 years.

President Bashar al-Assad took the oath of office for a fourth term in war-ravaged Syria Saturday, after taking 95 percent of the vote in a controversial election dismissed abroad.

Assad was sworn in on the constitution and the Quran in



Bashar al-Assad delivers a televised speech after securing a fourth term in office in a contested election

the presence of more than 600 guests, including ministers, businessmen, academics and journalists, organisers said.

The elections "have proven the strength of popular legitimacy that the people have conferred to the state," 55-year-old Assad said, in his inauguration speech.

They "have discredited the declarations of Western officials on the legitimacy of the state, the constitution and the homeland," he added.

The vote extending Assad's grip on power was the second

since the start of a decade-long civil war that has killed more than half a million people, displaced millions and battered the country's infrastructure.

On the eve of the May 26 election, the United States, Britain, France, Germany and Italy said the poll was "neither free nor fair", and Syria's fragmented opposition has called it a "farce".

With his campaign slogan, "Hope through work", Assad cast himself as the sole architect of a reconstruction phase for the troubled country.

## Iraqi TV shows suspect confess to murdering prominent advisor

Reuters | Baghdad

Iraqi state television aired a video on Friday in which a police officer said he led a group that gunned down well-known analyst and government advisor Hisham al-Hashemi a year ago outside his home in Baghdad.

Hashemi, who had advised the authorities on defeating Sunni Muslim Islamic State militants and curbing the influence of the pro-Iran Shi'ite militias, was shot dead on July 6, 2020, in a rare high-profile killing in the Iraqi capital.

In the video broadcast by Iraqi state television a man in a brown jail jumpsuit identifies himself as Ahmed al-Kinani, 36, a police first lieutenant working with the interior ministry.

In brief comments, Kinani described how he led a group of four other suspects, who are still at large, to track down and kill Hashemi.

## Philippines' Pacquiao ousted as president of ruling party after row

Reuters | Manila

Philippine senator and boxing star Emmanuel "Manny" Pacquiao was voted out as leader of the country's ruling party yesterday, weeks after challenging President Rodrigo Duterte over his position on China and record on fighting corruption.

Pacquiao, 42, who is seen as a possible contender to succeed Duterte in next year's presidential election, had long been among the president's strongest supporters, backing his bloody war on drugs and bid to reintroduce the death penalty.

But ties between them soured last month after Pacquiao railed at what he called Duterte's soft



Pacquiao

stance on Beijing's aggressiveness in the South China Sea, and said he was probing graft in the government.

A faction of the ruling democratic party led by Energy Sec-

retary Alfonso Cusi, a close ally of Duterte, called the vote at a National Assembly meeting on Saturday. Cusi was elected party president.

The vote was carried out because existing officials were already past their two-year term limit, Melvin Matibag, the party's deputy secretary general, told reporters.

Duterte, who remains chairman, said in a speech to the assembly that the party was as "strong as ever and ... united in further consolidating our ranks until the end of my term and beyond".

Duterte said he could run as vice president many times

over to avail of immunity from lawsuits by political opponents. Political vendettas are common in the Philippines and former leaders, minus their immunity of office, have been prosecuted and even jailed after changes in power.

Pacquiao said in a statement that the party should focus on preventing the spread of the more contagious Delta coronavirus variant.

The eight-division champion is in the United States to train for a welterweight title match and has yet to announce his presidential bid. He took oath as the party's president in December.

# CELEBS

## Actor Ashton Kutcher backed out of Virgin Galactic space flight

Reuters | Los Angeles

Ten years ago actor Ashton Kutcher was planning to be among the first people to ride on Virgin Galactic's private spaceship, but he changed his mind after having children with Mila Kunis.

The former "Two and a Half Men" star said he was supposed to be on the next Virgin Galactic flight but pulled out years ago, "When I got married and had kids, my wife basically encouraged (me) that it was not a smart family decision to be heading into space when we have young children. So I ended up selling my ticket back

to Virgin Galactic," Kutcher, 43, told financial news streaming site Cheddar News in an interview on Thursday.

"I was supposed to be on the next flight, but I will not be on the next flight," he added.

British entrepreneur Richard Branson and five other Virgin Galactic employees on Sunday took the first fully crewed test flight to space.

In 2012, Kutcher became the 500th person to buy a \$200,000 ticket for Branson's space tourism venture, according to Branson's blog at the time.

Kutcher began dating "Friends with Benefits" actress Kunis that year, they married in 2015, and they now have two children.

Kutcher said he hasn't given up plans to get to space.

"At some point, I'm going to space," he said.



Ashton Kutcher

## Dilip Kumar aka Mohammed Yusuf Khan



Razak Mohammed Sheikh

An Institution of "Method acting" in India called DILIP Kumar, predating such acting by Hollywood actors like Robert De Niro, closed its gates forever on July 7th.

A legend, philanthropist and a cultural Role Model for the generations of 1940s to 1960s, was born in 1922 in a Peshawari Pathan family.

He made Tryst with his Destiny when Devika Rani, of Bombay Talkies, launched him as an actor called Dilip Kumar in Hindi film JWAR BHATA in 1944.

He worked in 63 films, including films like Devdas, Naya Daur, Madhumati and Ganga Jamuna etc. But Mughal e Azam made him the heartbeat of millions.

In 1950s 9 out of 30 highest grossing films belonged to him. Mughal e Azam is the highest grossing film @ IRS 1000 crores till date, if adjusted for inflation (2011 base).

Recipient of Padm Vibhushan, Dada Saheb Falke Award, National Award for film Ganga Jumna and 8 Filmfare Awards as Best Actor and Life time Achievement Award and holder of Guinness World record for highest no of awards by any Indian actor.

He also received Nishan e Imtiaz, highest civilian award from the Government of Pakistan.

He was MP (Upper house) from 2000 to 2006.

During 2001-2002, as his corporate- friendly ADVISOR, I enjoyed my golden period.

I recollect once in his drawing room, I sat in front of him on the velvet carpet, Dilip Sahab got off the sofa and told me either I too sit next to him on sofa or he would sit next to me on the carpet. Incredibly humble, and cultured gentle man.

Though I was 30 years younger, Sahab gave me mutual respect and freedom of expression.

Interestingly once, during our professional conversation, Ex- CM of a large state called him over phone, Sahab told his secretary to ask that VIP to call later as he was engaged with me. What a calibre of protocol and dignified response to his guest.

Sahab always treated people on equal footings.

One early morning, I received his phone call and heard him narrating about the birds, lake, flora and fauna and valley in amazingly soft and silky voice. Those moments, I felt I was listening to some heavenly whispers. Sahab had great command over English and Urdu languages.

That morning he was in Lonawala, in a farm house and asked me to join him there. I went with Sultan bhai, his late brother-in-law and spent entire day in his gifted and gregarious company.

Sahab shared his exclusive experience and relationships with his colleagues from Bollywood and personalities from other professions. Those hours enriched my professional life by 30 years more.

On one occasion, their Maulana did not show up at his Bandra residence for evening Namaz. Sahab asked me to lead the prayers as Imaam. He and his other family members along with domestic workers joined Namaz.

Such a noble soul, no Ego or prejudices. He gave me such a rare opportunity to lead Namaz in his own home. Alhmdolillah.

During a chit chat, he told me dislike for Red colour as it reminded him of the tragic days of India's partition. He was God fearing who believed in co- existence for all faiths.

He was a true cultural Bridge between India and its neighbouring countries.

He was the One and Only Dilip Kumar.

He is survived by wife, Saira Banu ji, a celebrity actor in her own right.

May Allah bless his soul with high place in Jannat.



## Britney Spears slams people 'who never showed up for' her

There's nothing worse than when the people closest to you who never showed up for you post things in regard to your situation whatever it may be and speak righteously for support

BRITNEY SPEARS



Fox | Los Angeles

Britney Spears is speaking out again. Since dropping attorney Sam Ingham - who she claimed encouraged her to remain silent - Spears hasn't held back when it comes to sharing her thoughts on social media. Just days ago, when her new attorney Mathew Rosengart was approved by the court, the "Toxic" singer, 39, didn't hesitate to join the chorus of supporters using the

"#FreeBritney" hashtag, calling for an end to her conservatorship.

On Friday evening, she again took to Instagram to share her thoughts alongside an image of text that read: "Never forget who ignored you when you needed them and who helped you before you even had to ask."

"There's nothing worse than when the people closest to you who never showed up for you post things in regard to your situation whatever it may be and speak righteously for support," she wrote in the caption. "There's nothing worse than that!!!!"

The star continued: "How dare the people you love the most say

anything at all ... did they even put a hand out to even lift me up at the TIME !!!!!? How dare you make it public that NOW you CARE ... did you put your hand out when I was drowning????"

The "Crossroads" actress did not specify who exactly she was referring to, but noted that the subjects know who they are.

"... and you actually have the nerve to say anything about my situation just to save face for yourself publicly !!!" Spears continued. "If you're gonna post something .... Please stop with the righteous approach when you're so far from righteous it's not even funny ...."

## Emily Blunt opens up about what her daughters think of her acting projects

ANI | Washington

Hollywood actor Emily Blunt recently shared how her two daughters react when it comes to watching their mom on the big screen, admitting that they are 'usually disinterested'.

The 38-year-old actor joined

Thursday's episode of 'Live with Kelly and Ryan', where she discussed her upcoming film 'Jungle Cruise' coming out on July 30. There she revealed that it happens to be the first movie of hers that her kids have taken interest in.

Blunt, who shares daughters Violet and Hazel with husband John

Krasinski, said the girls are currently big fans of the 'Jungle Cruise' trailer.

She explained, "This interestingly has been the only trailer that they have watched multiple times. They are usually disinterested in seeing me on screen, but they're really into Jungle Cruise."

### SUDOKU

				9		8		
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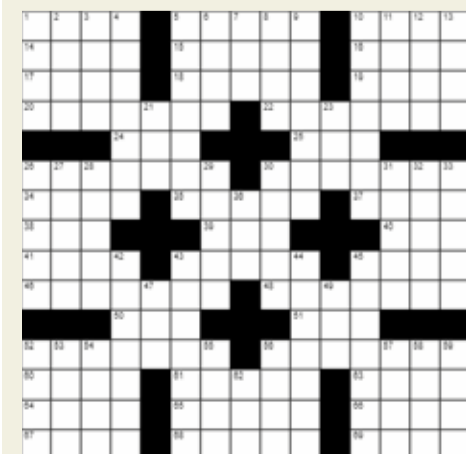
Yesterday's solution

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

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.

### CROSSWORD



Across

1- Course list; 5- Animal life; 10- A followers; 14- Long time; 15- Everglades bird; 16- Oboe, e.g.; 17- Token taker; 18- One-twelfth of a year; 19- Scored 100 on; 20- Jewish house of worship; 22- Bondage; 24- Russian space station; 25- Before, of yore; 26- Like the Dalai Lama; 30- Do repeatedly; 34- Among; 35- TV producer Michaels; 37- Age unit; 38- ... in Charlie; 39- McKellen or Holm; 40- Hot tub; 41- Aviation pioneer Sikorsky; 43- "Lou Grant" star; 45- Evil is as evil ...; 46- Easily argued; 48- Backslide; 50- ... out (relax); 51- Sea arm; 52- Tressed; 56- Cosmic explosion of matter; 60- Architect Saarinen; 61- Prickly plant; 63- ... about (roughly); 64- Hydroxyl compound; 65- Bowling alley button; 66- That's ... haven't heard; 67- Wife of a rajah; 68- Swimming (in); 69- Seaweed;

Down

1- Aggregate; 2- Hard to hold; 3- Midday; 4- Savage; 5- Pertaining to the thigh; 6- Wide-eyed; 7- Samovar; 8- Takes home; 9- Jock; 10- Courage; 11- Gospel singer Winans; 12- Antlered animal; 13- Swirl; 21- Obtain, slangily; 23- Just the Way You ...; 26- Unsaid; 27- Picture; 28- North American buffalo; 29- Racket; 30- Type of sanctum; 31- Author of fables; 32- Ribbons; 33- Clear the boards; 36- Managed; 42- Pasta; 43- Branch of mathematics; 44- Revival; 45- Diary; 47- Night spot; 49- Fall back; 52- Ale, e.g.; 53- Actress Sofer; 54- "East of Eden" brother; 55- Took a blood sample; 56- Apians; 57- Diarist Frank; 58- Christmas song; 59- Clench; 62- This ... stickup!

Yesterday's solution

V	O	L	E	A	L	A	R	A	R	A	V	I
E	L	A	N	C	O	R	N	U	R	A	N	I
T	A	N	G	H	U	M	A	N	S	I	T	E
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				A	R	T	E	N	E	M	Y	M
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				E	L	I	C	I	T	I	C	E
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# Exhausted Pogacar effectively seals Tour title

Tadej Pogacar set to retain Tour de France title after stage 20 time trial

● Leader safe in time trial and set for back-to-back Tour wins

● Belgium's Wout van Aert wins his second stage of 2021 Tour

AFP | London

Tadej Pogacar all but became champion of the 2021 Tour de France yesterday as the UAE rider protected his large overall lead in the stage 20 time-trial, ahead of the traditionally ceremonial final run to Paris.

Wout van Aert won the time trial, but defending champion Pogacar's solid ride means he need only cross the Champs-Elysees finish line with the peloton in Sunday's 21st, and final, stage to retain the fabled yellow jersey as winner of the world's greatest bike race.

Pogacar won three stages on his way to this dominant triumph in a manner reminiscent of former champions Alberto Contador and Chris Froome, strong in both the time-trials and the mountains.

He will also win the awards for best rider under-25 and the king of the mountains polka-dot jersey, a triple he also achieved on his debut last year.



Tadej Pogacar celebrates as he crosses the finish line

The Monaco resident, who earns five million euros (5.9 million dollars) a year, appeared overcome as he climbed the podium for his three jerseys, with Briton Mark Cavendish also wearing a huge grin as he picked up his green sprint jersey.

"I'm so happy its coming to an end," said Pogacar, admitting he was wiped out.

"What a demanding three weeks it has been.

"I wasn't so motivated last night, and had to get myself going," said Pogacar, who ended the day 5min 20sec ahead of the second place rider in the overall classification.

The top three in the standings remained the same after the 30km run on a sizzling holiday yesterday as rowdy fans packed the roadsides all the way to the

pretty Saint-Emilion vineyards. Jumbo's Jonas Vingegaard goes into the final day run in second, while Ineos' Richard Carapaz is in third.

## He's not unbeatable

A second place for Dutch team Jumbo is a triumph of sorts after their leader Primoz Roglic fell heavily early in the race.

Van Aert's victory yesterday also gave them three stages, even though only four of the eight-rider team have made it through to the final stage after a series of falls.

"I'm very proud of our performance, these three wins and a second place in the general is great," said van Aert, who also won stage 11 which climbed Mont Ventoux twice while American Sepp Kuss took stage

**YOU KNOW WHAT**

Tadej Pogacar will also win the awards for best rider under-25 and the king of the mountains polka-dot jersey, a triple he also achieved on his debut last year

15 in the Pyrenees.

"But if we want to win the Tour de France we need to stay on our bikes and finish the Tour with a full team.

"Tadej deserves his win, but I don't believe he is unbeatable," said Van Aert.

Van Aert also sent out a warning to Cavendish who is targeting an all time record of 35 wins on the Champs-Elysees sprint Sunday.

"I'll be challenging for sure. I won't miss out. The Camps-Elysees sprint is a huge thing in the career of any rider," said Van Aert.

A third place finish for British outfit Ineos, with no stage wins, bears a whiff of the end of their era after the 2020 failure was blamed on Egan Bernal's bad back.

## Verstappen wins Silverstone Sprint for British GP pole



Red Bull's Max Verstappen during sprint qualifying

AFP | London

Max Verstappen took pole position for the British Grand Prix and made Formula One history by winning the sport's first yesterday sprint race to stretch his lead over Lewis Hamilton to 33 points.

Seven times world champion Hamilton will start alongside his Dutch rival in Sunday's grand prix after finishing second for Mercedes in a 17-lap qualifying race that lasted just over half an hour.

The winner took three points, with two for the runner-up and one for third place.

Hamilton's team mate Valtteri Bottas finished third in a race aimed at providing more thrills over the three days of track action and potentially shaking up the starting grid.

"We had a good start and a good fight with Lewis on the first lap and then we tried to do our own pace. You could see we were pushing each other hard, because at the end of the race the tyres were blistering a lot," said Verstappen.

"In the end I'm happy of course to have got those three points -- it sounds a bit funny to then hear you scored a pole position. But anyway we'll take it. It should be a really exciting

**”**

In the end I'm happy of course to have got those three points -- it sounds a bit funny to then hear you scored a pole position. But anyway we'll take it. It should be a really exciting battle tomorrow

MAX VERSTAPPEN

battle tomorrow."

The top three were taken by truck for a parade lap around the circuit instead of the usual post-race podium celebrations, with no champagne spraying but the winner garlanded with an old-style laurel wreath.

The pole was a fourth in a row for Verstappen, who will be chasing his sixth win of the season and fourth in succession on Sunday.

Hamilton had qualified at the front of the grid on Friday, with Verstappen alongside, but lost out at the start and it was immediately game over.

The Red Bull, despite flames flickering from the front brakes, proved too quick for the Mercedes to catch with a 1.430 second gap at the finish.

## Irishman Declan Dalton returns after 3 years ready to make BRAVE CF 52 count

TDT | Manama

You know the saying: "If at first you don't succeed... try, try again". Northern Ireland's Declan Dalton knows this one by heart and takes it as his biggest motivation walking into the BRAVE CF Arena once again.

Back in 2018, BRAVE Combat Federation, today the biggest MMA promotion in Europe, was making its debut in the continent with an event at Dalton's home country of Northern Ireland.

Declan, a well-known name in the British MMA scene, took the opportunity and joined the card, taking on USA's Zach Zane at BRAVE CF 13 in Belfast.

Things didn't go his way on the occasion, and Dalton ended



up submitted late in the second round but the idea of competing on a global stage and under the fastest-growing MMA promotion in the world's banner never left his mind.

The Diamond, as he's also known as, made his way back to the local scene and won four of his next five fights, improving his professional record to 11 wins and only five losses.

Dalton then got the call he'd been waiting for so long and signed a multi-fight deal with BRAVE Combat Federation, with his return scheduled to BRAVE CF 52, in Italy.

On August 1st, Declan Dalton will take on BRAVE CF's very first world champion Elias "Smile" Boudegzame and The Diamond is ready to make up for the nearly three years of waiting, getting his much wanted win and writing a new victorious story in the organization.

## BRAVE CF confirms several top fighters for Kazakhstan return, including Katona, Grabinski

TDT | Manama

BRAVE Combat Federation's second trip to Kazakhstan had very interesting fighters confirmed for action. BRAVE CF 53, which takes place on August 21st, in Almaty, in association with Octagon League, will serve as the return place for the likes of Brad Katona, Marcel Grabinski, and Bair Shtepin. They will join the previously announced Tae Kyun Kim, Flavio Queiroz, and former champion Lucas "Mineiro".

Canadian top Bantamweight Brad Katona impressed in his promotional debut back at BRAVE CF 50 when he finished previously undefeated Borislav Nikolic with a guillotine choke. After asking for a title shot after the victory, Katona will have another opportunity to make his claim, this time at BRAVE CF 53.



Another top fighter in search of a second promotional win is Marcel Grabinski. As is the case with Katona, the German bulldozer impressed in his debut for BRAVE CF at BRAVE CF 50, and was scheduled to fight in the main event of BRAVE CF 51 against Lucas "Mineiro". However, he fell ill in the minutes leading up to the fight and was forced to pull out at the last minute.

BRAVE CF 53 will also witness the return of Bair Shtepin, a top Bantamweight, who had two major fights in the promotion, beating Gerson Pereira in his debut and losing a close decision to Alexander Keshtov.

BRAVE CF 53 will mark the return of the fastest-growing MMA organization in the world to Central Asia, a market with tremendous potential in mixed martial arts, as BRAVE Combat Federation continues to invest in the region.



A woman walks past Tokyo 2020 signage at the Main Press Center

## Coronavirus hits Olympic Village for first time

AFP | Tokyo

The chief of the Tokyo Olympics tried to reassure "worried" athletes yesterday as the Games Village was hit by its first coronavirus case, six days before the pandemic-delayed event opens.

As thousands of competitors pour into Japan for the Games, which will largely take place without spectators, the positive test for an unnamed person in the Village heightened worries over biosecurity.

About 11,000 athletes and tens of thousands of officials and media are flying in for the Games, which open on Friday in the face of widespread public concern over a possible surge in infections.

The capital remains under a coronavirus state of emergency and has in recent days recorded its highest case numbers since January.

No details were given about the positive test in the Village, one of 15 Games-related cases revealed yesterday -- the highest figure this month. Japanese media said the infected person came from abroad.

"That was the very first case in the Village that was reported during the screening test," Masa Takaya, spokesman for the Tokyo organising committee, told a press conference.

"Right now this person is confined to a hotel," Takaya said.

Games chief Seiko Hashimoto said she understood the concerns of athletes, who have to contend with coronavirus fears and a strict schedule of testing as well as the pressure of competing. "Athletes who are coming to Japan are probably very worried. I understand that," she said. "That is the reason why we need to make full disclosure."



Declan Dalton made his way back to the local scene and won four of his next five fights, improving his professional record to 11 wins and only five losses



Abdulla Isa

# Swimming sensations

Eighteen-year-old Abdulla Isa and 15-year-old Noor Yusuf Taha are already making waves as teenagers, as they are continuing Bahrain's tradition of sending the Kingdom's most talented young swimmers to the Olympic Games

TDT | Manama

Teenagers Abdulla Isa and Noor Yusuf Taha are continuing Bahrain's tradition of sending its most talented young swimmers to the Olympic Games.

Eighteen-year-old Abdulla and 15-year-old Noor were both selected by the Bahrain Swimming Association (BSA)

for Tokyo after Bahrain received an invitation from the International Swimming Federation (FINA), to send two top-ranked swimmers of each gender to compete in their respective individual events.

Abdulla and Noor are thrilled with the opportunity to represent the Kingdom in XXXII Olympiad, and are looking to make the most of the experience.

"Every time I hold my country's flag, and wear it behind my back, I feel very

proud," says Abdulla, who will be contesting the Men's 100m Butterfly. "It's a big honour to represent my country."

Noor, who will compete in the Women's 50m Freestyle, shares Abdulla's sentiments. "It's something unbelievable to compete at the Olympic Games, especially at this young age," she says. "It is a great honour to be representing my country. I am going to try all my best to achieve high records and make everyone proud."

## Abdulla: National record-holder in Butterfly

Abdulla got his start in swimming at the age of six with the help of his uncle, who was a coach at the time. "He was going to the pool every day and I thought it was fun, so I told him to one day take me with him and teach me how to swim."

"I started to join national competitions outside Bahrain. I wasn't very good at first; I wasn't even bringing third place. But year after year, I started to bring bronze medals, and then the year after silver medals, and now I can bring gold easily."

Abdulla is now the national record-holder in all distances for the Butterfly. His best in the 50m is 26.69 seconds, the 100m 58.44s and in the 200m is two minutes 12.69 seconds.

The Bahrain Polytechnic student said that he devel-

**"I saw the other older swimmers go to the Olympics and represent Bahrain; it was a dream for me. Now, it's coming true"**

ABDULLA ISA

oped his Olympic aspirations at a young age, and thanks to his fine showing at the 18th FINA World Championships 2019 in South Korea, he will soon be living his dream.

"I saw the other older swimmers go to the Olympics and represent Bahrain; it was a dream for me. Now, it's coming true," he smiles.



Noor Yusuf Taha

## Noor: Striving for greatness

Noor's journey in the sport began when she was just four years old, when her mother encouraged her to learn how to swim.

"Ever since then, I liked the sport and kept going, and my passion for swimming grew only stronger," Noor says. "My coach saw that I was training well and that I had a good chance to become a good swimmer, and he started to motivate me even more."

Noor's hard work began to pay off as she began to swim competitively and win medals. "Whenever I would compete, I would achieve my goals and break my records," says the Al Wisam School pupil.

"That kept me motivated and kept me going, especially whenever I won a medal. It just made me happy, and the feeling of being in the

**"It's something unbelievable to compete at the Olympic Games, especially at this young age. I am going to try all my best to achieve high records and make everyone proud"**

NOOR YUSUF TAHA

water is just amazing."

Noor earned her Olympic invitation following her impressive showing at the seventh FINA World Junior Swimming Championships 2019, held in Hungary.

She heads to the Olympics with a personal best time of 29.42s in the 50m Freestyle, and 1:06.92 in the 100m Freestyle.



Noor Yusuf Taha in action

## Bahrain's young swimmers at Olympics

This year's Games will mark the sixth straight Olympics where Bahraini swimmers are competing, and seventh overall.

At the previous Olympiad in Rio de Janeiro in 2016, the Kingdom was represented in the pool by Farhan Saleh, aged 19 at that time, and Fatema Almahmeed, who was aged 17.

In 2012 in London, Bahrainis Khalid Alibaba (15 at the time) and Sara Al Flajj (17) took part; in 2008 in Beijing, Bahrain was represented by Omar Jasim (17 at the time) and Sameera Al Bitar (18); in 2004 in Athens, Hesham Shehab (16 at the time)

and Sameera (14) participated; and in 2000 in Sydney, Dawood Jassim (15 at the time) and Fatema Hameed Gerashi (12) were the Kingdom's Olympians. Fatema was the youngest competitor of any event and any nationality at the Sydney Games.

Bahrain's first appearance in swimming was in 1984 in Los Angeles, when Hamad Bader and Esa Fadel competed. The Tokyo Games are scheduled to take place between July 23 and August 8. More than 200 nations are expected to take part, vying for medals in over 300 events across more than 30 sports.



Abdulla Isa in action

# Al Mubarak leads qualifiers for Esport GT championship

● **Two-time defending champion sets fastest time in Pre-Qualifying event to lead 14 drivers into five-round season**

● **Series to kick off with first round on Friday next week, to take place along virtual version of the Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya**

TDT | Manama

Defending champion Ebrahim Al Mubarak topped a group of 14 competitors who secured a place in the third season of the Bahrain Esport Gran Turismo Championship.

The competition is being run on the

Gran Turismo Sport video game on the Sony PlayStation 4 or 5 platforms, which is officially licenced by the International Automobile Federation (FIA).

Al Mubarak clocked a best time of one minute 33.419 seconds in the Pre-Qualifying event, held Friday over a virtual version of the Red Bull Ring in Austria.

Lewis Smith was the second-quickest qualifier with a time of 1:33.684, while Hussain Ali Hasan was third on the timesheet with a time of 1:33.686.

Hassan Khalil, Hamad Al Fardan, Abdulla Qamber, Asif Vorajee and Khalid Saeed Abdulrahman made up the top eight.

Rounding off the qualified group from ninth through 14th, respectively, were Salman Khamiri, Yusuf Al Askeri, Ahmed Amin, Ahmed Yusuf Ahmed, Yahya Kuzbar and Kairan Qurainees.

The season is scheduled to begin with



A screenshot of the action from Pre-Qualifying

the first of five rounds on Friday next week, to be held along a virtual Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya.

Round two is set for July 30, round three on August 6, round four on August 13, and the fifth and final round two weeks later on August 27.

Each event will be held over the virtual versions of international circuits.

Prize money will be presented to the top three of every meeting, with the winner getting BD50, the runner-up BD30 and third place taking home BD20.

Drivers will earn points from each round, which will go towards their championship classification. At the end of the season, the winner will get BD500 in prize money, while second place will take home BD300 and third place BD200.

Al Mubarak won the first two seasons of the series.

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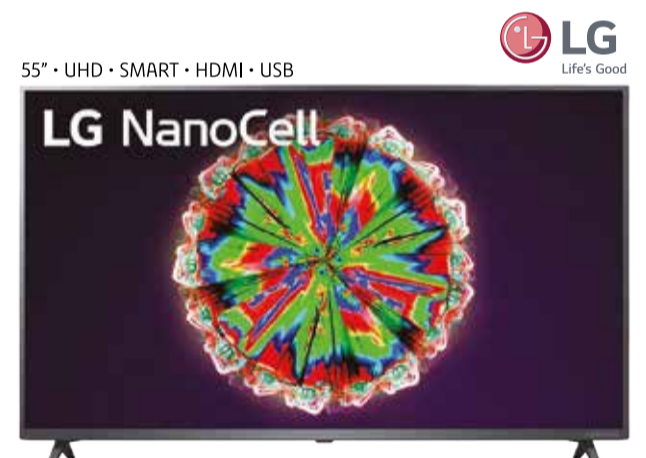
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