

Al Balooshi powers Bahrain1 to victory

Bahrain1 Racing were amongst the victorious teams over the weekend as Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) hosted an exciting third round in the 2019/2020 Bahrain Drag Racing Championship in Sakhir. **P16**

OP-ED 8 Syria's invisible hand in Lebanon confronts Iran's allies

THE DAILY **tribune**



Kim Kardashian shrugs off critics, reveals law school progress **14 CELEBS**

WORLD 5 Putin says 'transition' crucial

LIC (INTERNATIONAL) IN BAHRAIN FOR 30 YEARS AT YOUR SERVICE
 39936618
 bah.lic@licinternational.com
 www.licinternational.com

Protesters hit Beirut streets
 Beirut

Lebanese protesters took to the streets again on Sunday after unprecedented overnight violence in Beirut in which nearly 400 people were injured.

Security forces fired water cannon at young men hurling stones outside parliament. Protesters chanting "Revolution" tried to climb over barbed wire and fencing to storm the building.

Security forces urged people to remain calm, or they would be forced back. "We're not scared. This is all for our future and our children," said protester Bassam Taleb.

Cyprus blasts 'pirate state'

Cyprus yesterday denounced Turkey as a "pirate state" that flouts international law as Turkey's bid to drill for natural gas in waters where Cyprus has economic rights rekindled tensions over energy reserves in the eastern Mediterranean.



02 Monitoring system launched to tackle municipal violations

03 Women constitute '40 per cent' of nation's private sector workforce

04 Social workers help expatriate 'tortured by employer' fly home

210 fils (includes VAT)



'Stay out of Libya'

Libya Berlin summit ends in pledge to enforce weapons embargo



World leaders at the high-level summit in Berlin.

● A high-level summit in Berlin aimed at ending Libya's bitter civil war has concluded with a pledge to end the flow of weapons into the North African nation.

Berlin

World leaders were ready yesterday to pledge an end to all foreign involvement in the conflict in Libya after a UN-sponsored peace summit in Berlin.

The UN wants foreign powers who wield influence in the region to stop supplying weapons, troops or finance — either to the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli or the

France has acute concerns over the arrival of Syrian and foreign fighters in the city of Tripoli.

MACRON

rival Libya National Army (LNA) led by eastern military strongman Khalifa Haftar.

All sides will be asked to sign up to a plan to refrain from interference, and commit to a truce that leads to a lasting end to hostilities.

A draft communique from the summit also urges all parties to re-commit to a widely ignored UN arms embargo and raises the prospect of Libyan political talks in Geneva at the end of the month.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip

Erdogan has sent military trainers and advisers to help the beleaguered forces of GNA leader Fayez Al Sarraj, and has also redeployed up to 2,000 Turkish-backed mercenary fighters from the conflict in Syria.

French President Emmanuel Macron said he had "acute concerns over the arrival of Syrian and foreign fighters in the city of Tripoli," and added: "That must end."

Clashes since April have killed more than 280 civilians and 2,000 fighters and displaced tens of thousands, until a fragile ceasefire backed by Russia and Turkey was put in place on Jan. 12.

Nevertheless, GNA forces accused Haftar's militia of opening fire on them in southern Tripoli on Sunday, and Al Sarraj asked for international "protection troops" if Haftar kept up his offensive.

Liquidity Support Fund: 176 applications received

● The application window for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) with an annual income below BD three million, remains open until 19 March 2020.

51
 per cent Bahraini ownership should be maintained for SMEs to qualify for the scheme.

TDT | Manama

As many as 176 applications have been submitted by larger enterprises within the Kingdom to benefit from credit facilities provided by the Liquidity Support Fund.

The applications will be reviewed and processed to ensure all eligibility conditions and credit evaluations are fully met before each application proceeds further.

The banks associated with the Liquidity Support Fund will also analyse each companies need for these credit facilities in order to pay off short term obligations and ensure its financial stability.

Credit application requests for larger enterprises are capped at BD one million and BD 250,000 for SMEs, with a loan period of 2.5 per cent interest rate for up to three years.

In order to qualify, the applicant Large Enterprises are required to have an annual income of BD three million or above, hold an active commercial registration and have been actively operating within the Kingdom for the past five years.

Additionally, applicants must have majority Bahraini ownership and be able to retain audited financial statements for the previous four fiscal years, including the fiscal year 2018, possess positive solvency resolution and a pos-

itive gross profit margin for any three years within the five year period.

If these criteria are met, a bank cooperating with the Fund will financially support the rewarded company. The banks co-operating with the Liquidity Support Fund are: National Bank of Bahrain, Bank of Bahrain and Kuwait and Bahrain Islamic Bank.

The application window for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) with an annual income below BD three million, remains open until 19 March 2020.

Applications for SMEs can be submitted to the Bahrain Development Bank (BDB) at the following branches: Sitra Mall, Riyadat Center, Diplomatic Area and Hidd Industrial area. Applicants do not need to have an account with the BDB bank in order to apply or qualify.

For SMEs to qualify, they must meet certain application criteria, including: holding an active commercial registration; maintaining a minimum of 51 per cent 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.

NEW LOCATION

Efforts to move iconic pottery monument begin

TDT | Manama

First steps to move the iconic pottery monument erected on a roundabout on Shaikh Zayed Highway in Aali were taken yesterday.

The move comes as part of the expansion and enhancement works that are currently ongoing on the highway, which witnesses high traffic movement during rush hours on a daily basis.

This is because of the vital establishments in its vicinity, such as the General Directorate of Traffic, driving school, shopping malls, schools, commercial outlets and more, in addition to the fact that it connects main highways such as Shaikh Khalid Bin Salman Highway and Shaikh Salman Highway.



The 14-metre tall monument was erected on the roundabout back in the year 2007. A traffic signal will replace the monument.

Northern Municipal Council Member and Municipal Representative of the Northern Gov-

ernorate Sixth Constituency (Aali) Hussain Al Aali previously revealed that the iconic

monument, which represents the ancient pottery craft Aali is known for, will be moved and

placed on a roundabout inside Aali.

Mr Al Aali clarified that the move comes as the "Pottery Roundabout", along with other roundabouts on Shaikh Zayed Highway, will be removed and replaced by traffic signals as a solution to the heavy traffic jams witnessed by the area.

According to the Municipal Council Member, the average waiting time during rush hours on the highway ranges from half an hour to 40 minutes.

The 14-metre tall monument was erected on the roundabout back in the year 2007, with a total cost of BD200,000.

Since then, it has been a symbol to Aali; one of the largest towns in Bahrain and the house of the historical burial mounds and pottery factories.

Monitoring system launched to tackle municipal violations

System provides an integrated database about violations and checks the status of the existing ones



Shaikh Khalid being briefed on the monitoring system.



Shaikh Khalid with senior government officials and dignitaries.

Manama
 Shaikh Khalid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the Ministerial Committee for Development and Infrastructure Projects, yesterday launched an internal system to monitor and follow-up all types of municipal violations.

The system provides an integrated database about violations and checks the status of the existing ones where the inspectors are through an electronic portal and smart devices.

The launch comes amidst the Ministerial Committee approving the "mobile monitoring system" and its application across all municipalities after it was confined to the capital during the trial phase.

During the inauguration at Gudaibiya Palace, Shaikh Khalid expressed thanks to all the people involved in designing the

Thanks to modern technologies and innovations, the tasks of inspection and monitoring are more accurate and achieve the highest degree of compliance with laws and regulations.

SHAIKH KHALID

system that will provide several unprecedented services and enhance municipal work.

He directed that the system be made available to all ministries and government entities that include inspection.

"The government, headed by His Royal Highness the Prime Minister, and supported by His Royal Highness the Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Premier has a special interest in raising the efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector through reviewing and updating the engineering and government services and their integration between the authorities, and strengthening oversight accountability and transparency, in compliance with the provisions of

the government's Action Programme (2019-2022)," Shaikh Khalid said.

"Among these operations are municipal inspection systems that alert about violations before they happen, which reduces the occurrence of violations as much as possible. They also ensure the proper implementation of the law in case they do happen," he said at the inauguration ceremony.

These systems used to be traditionally managed, and required entering data and details after monitoring violations in different locations, he added.

"Thanks to modern technologies and innovations, the tasks of inspection and monitoring are more accurate and achieve the highest degree of compliance with laws and regulations," Shaikh Khalid added.

Kuwait's GCC role lauded

Manama

Kuwaiti Foreign Minister, Dr. Shaikh Ahmed Nasser Al Mohammed Al-Sabah, yesterday received the outgoing Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Dr Abdullahifbin Rashid Al Zayani.

Dr Shaikh Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammed praised the tremendous efforts exerted by Dr Al Zayani throughout his tenure as GCC Secretary-General, recalling with pride his unwavering and commendable efforts to develop the GCC Secretariat-General at all levels so as to enable the GCC to achieve the goals of its noble mission of enhancing its joint action, as well as to meet the aspirations of GCC people for strengthening the pillars of security and peace across the region.

Dr Al Zayani valued highly the remarkable role played by the State of Kuwait to consolidate security in the region, in addition to its support for strengthening GCC action to be able to confront challenges faced by the region and its peoples.

He lauded Kuwait's leading role at various international gatherings, as well as the prestigious status it enjoys at the global level.

Dr Abdullahif Al Zayani, who has been appointed the country's new foreign minister, has had successful careers as a technocrat, academician and a diplomat.

Dr Al-Zayani became Secretary-General of the GCC on April 1, 2011. Prior to his appointment, he was advisor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the rank of Minister, chairman of the Joint Steering Committee between Bahrain and the United Kingdom and chairman of the ministry's Development and Regulation committee.

ACCA EXAM PREPARATIONS...

Solving past paper's Tips to crack ACCA Exam..

Call us/WhatsApp for more details :32332708/17344971/2



Bahrain Olympic Committee (BOC) Deputy President His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa visited Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Khalifa, who is undergoing medical treatment at a hospital in Germany and got reassured about his health. HH Shaikh Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa wished Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Khalifa quick recovery so as to return to Bahrain in good health. Present were Khalid Jama'an and Mohammed bin Daina were also present.



Council of Representatives Speaker Fawzia Zainal stressed strong bilateral relations binding Bahrain and India, led by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and Indian President Ram Nath Kovind. The Speaker made the statement as she received yesterday Indian Ambassador Alok Kumar Sinha, hailing India's deep-rooted history and civilisation and longstanding democracy, cultural diversity and keenness on respecting the rights of all citizens and consolidating the values and co-existence. She stressed the two countries' keenness on strengthening bilateral relations and supporting joint cooperation, hailing the role of the Indian expatriate community in the Kingdom of Bahrain. She hailed India's solidarity with the Bahrain, reiterating the Kingdom's support to Indian and joint stances against terrorism and interference in other countries' internal affairs.

Villa 855 Road 3315 Block 333
 P.O Box 15073, Um Al Hassam, Kingdom of Bahrain
 Tel. +973 17344971 / 2
 www.coralbahrain.com

Speaker lauds deep-rooted, strategic Bahraini-Egyptian relations

Manama

Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Fawzia Zainal, has lauded the deep-rooted strategic relations between Bahrain and Egypt, strengthened thanks to the directives of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, and President Abdel Fattah El Sisi, of Egypt.

While receiving here the newly-appointed Egyptian Ambassador to Bahrain, Yasser Mohamed Shaaban, the Speaker said that co-operation across various fields and vital sectors enjoy the interest of the two brotherly countries, stressing that Egypt's security and stability are integral to those of Bahrain and the region.



Ms Zainal receives Mr Shaaban and other officials.

She highlighted the existing co-operation, co-ordination and complementarity between Bah-

rain's Council of Representatives and Egypt's House of Representatives at various regional and inter-

national parliamentary gatherings. She also highlighted the existing partnership between the legislative

institutions at the level of the secretariat-general.

She wished the envoy every suc-

cess in carrying out his diplomatic duties to strengthen partnership between two countries.

Women constitute '40 per cent' of nation's private sector workforce

Women's number in the private sector workforce rose by 15pc in the past three years

● **Bahrainis make up 40 per cent of the national workforce and even reach 80pc in education and health services.**

● **The Labour Ministry stated that concentrated efforts were placed to empower women and to ensure their employment.**

TDT | Manama

The participation of women in the private sector workforce has risen from 25 per cent to 40pc in the past three years.

Women's involvement in the private sector has seen a major upswing in just three years, according to official statistics.

The participation of women in the private sector has grown by 15pc in the past three years, according to figures from the Ministry of Labour and Social Development.

The ministry stated that concentrated efforts were placed to empower women and to ensure their employment.

"Female employment in government sector is even higher, it has crossed 50 per cent," a ministry official said.

Bahrainis also make up 40 per cent of the national workforce and even reach 80pc in education and health services.

The ministry has also surveyed more than 5,000 Bahraini women who opted to work as part-timers, ever since the streamlined scheme was launched in the year 2015.

According to the ministry's statistics, Bahraini women also make 50pc of the overall newcomers who are employed for the first



Women's involvement in the private sector has seen a major upswing in just three years.

time in the private sector.

They also account for 70pc of work opportunities, which are provided by the ministry to female job-seekers through employment vacancy bank.

The ministry has also trained over 6,000 job-seekers from Sep-

tember 2017 to September 2019 — of whom 78pc of job-seekers are females.

A tribute was paid to Bahraini women in recognition to their achievements and dedication in serving the nation and building its bright future, on December 1,

6,000

job-seekers were trained by the Labour Ministry in the past two years.

last year, marking Bahraini Women's Day.

"I would like to express my sincere thanks and deep appreciation to every Bahraini woman who spares not efforts to serve her country, community and family," said Her Royal Highness Princess Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, Wife of His Majesty the King and President of the Supreme Council for Women (SCW).

She stressed the importance of this national occasion, which was launched by His Majesty the King

11 years ago, thus becoming an official celebration among other national days.

The annual anniversary is being celebrated in tribute to Bahraini women in all walks of life — as mothers, educators, partners in national development and achievers in all productive sectors, dedicated more than ever to serving the nation and contributing to its progress and prosperity.

She commended all state institutions for activating programmes in the field of higher education and future sciences, praising women's academic achievements which entitled them to hold leading positions, obtain high degrees and gain membership in international centres.

She lauded Bahraini women's growing interest in the fields of future sciences and contribution to supporting Bahrain's digital transformation and knowledge-based economy.

Legislation for runaway expat employees retracted

TDT | Manama

A new legislation passed by lawmakers last week making runaway expat employees pay for their air tickets to fly back home, was retracted yesterday.

Shura Council has voted to take back the proposal it passed with the intention of studying it further.

Last week, after a long back and forth discussions between the Parliament and Shura Council, the council had finally approved the proposal, which aims to force runaway expat employees to pay for air tickets to fly back home. It had come despite reservations from the part of Labor Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA).

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

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



The council aims to further study the proposal.

”

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

CHAMBER

reason," the BCCI had previously stated this demand in its letter to the parliament.

The MPs argued that employers should not have to pay the

amount when the employee violates the contract.

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

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

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

Bahrain ranked 42 globally on Global Opportunities 2020 Index

TDT | Manama

The Milken Institute has ranked Bahrain third in the Gulf, and 42nd globally in the Global Opportunities Index 2020.

The United Arab Emirates has been ranked first in the Gulf and 26 globally, followed by Qatar (38th in the world), then Bahrain, the Sultanate of Oman (53 globally), Kuwait (58), and finally Saudi Arabia, which scored 66th on the international level.

The institute said that there are defects in the policies that guarantee the protection of foreign investors in the Gulf countries in general, explaining that although the GCC countries are intensifying their efforts to attract investments to diversify their economies, they are still retreating in many areas that hinder their progress significantly.

The Global Opportunities In-

” **Although GCC countries are intensifying their efforts to attract investments to diversify their economies, they are still retreating in many areas that hinder their progress significantly.**

INSTITUTE

stitute, published annually, examines the economic and financial factors that affect foreign investment activities, as well as the commercial, legal and regulatory policies that Gulf governments use to drive investment.

The institute's report pointed out that this year's Global Opportunities Index is pivotal for the Gulf countries, with Saudi Arabia assuming the presidency of the Group of Twenty, and

Dubai hosting the Expo 2020, which indicates highlighting the growing economic development in the region.

The index indicated that a foreign investor can own up to 49 per cent only in some Gulf markets from consumer, retail, health care, services, communications and technology companies, and up to only 5pc of financial services companies.

It pointed out: "For example, non-citizens of the Gulf Co-operation Council are not entitled to own lands in Kuwait, and non-citizens may not own more than 5pc of the bank interest without the approval of the central bank."

It added: "The areas that do not qualify for the foreign investor include the fields of oil and gas extraction, fertiliser industry, fuel distribution, and real estate activities, except for special building development projects."

Social workers help expatriate 'tortured by employer' fly home

Employer returns victim's passport after being warned of legal consequences

TDT | Manama

A group of social workers successfully rescued an expatriate worker, who was allegedly held captive and subjected to forced labour by his employer.

The victim, Nisanth, hails from Kollam District in the Indian state of Kerala. He said he was recruited by an agent to work with a private firm in the Kingdom for a monthly salary of BDI20.

"Upon arrival in the Kingdom, I was offered a different job as a worker in a restaurant. I took it up as my financial circumstances back home were not great."

Nisanth said his ordeal began on the very first day he joined the restaurant. "The employer began harassing me from the first day of work.

"I would work non-stop, day and night, sometimes fifteen hours in one stretch as the hotel had only two staff."

The situation became worse as the employer refused to pay him wages. "I was not given wages and my health began deteriorating. I lost weight after working non-stop for longer hours.

"I would begin my work at 11



Mr Subair hands over air ticket to Mr Nisanth.



Nisanth's swollen under foot after being allegedly made to work for days and nights without rest.

am and continued until 3 am or 4 am. My under feet was swollen and still my employer did not show any mercy," Nisanth said.

Respite only came after Nisanth managed to speak to social workers including K T Salim and Anwar Sooranad, who instantly rushed to help him along with some members of the media. Pravasi Commission Member Subair Kannur also offered help to the victim.

Though the employer was initially reluctant to release

Nisanth's passport, he yielded after being warned by social workers of legal consequences.

Nisanth said it was nothing but a rebirth for him. "I thought of committing suicide many a time but did not dare to do after thinking of my mother, wife and other family members."

Nisanth flew home yesterday. He was also handed over a 'Gulf Kit' by a group of social workers representing the organisation 'Hope' apart from the air ticket.

Shura endorses Reserve Force Decree-Law

TDT | Manama

Members of Shura Council, the second branch of Bahrain's Legislative Authority, yesterday voted for a decree-law that stipulates the formation of a reserve force of Bahrain Defence Force (BDF) and regulates wages and allowances for members of the BDF, volunteers, and civilians.

The approval came around two weeks after the majority of members of the Council of Representatives approved the decree law and referred it to the Shura Council.

Council members yesterday voted for the decree law during their regular weekly meeting, headed by Shura Council Chairman Ali Saleh Al Saleh.

In their statements during the session, the members expressed full support to the decree law, as they reaffirmed that it represents a key factor to support the security and stability of the Kingdom and its people.

As reported earlier, the legislation obliges private sector establishments of paying 30 per cent of wages of individuals conscripted in the military reserve force, while it mandates the public sector of paying the salary of the reserve force member

30
per cent of wages of the proposed Reserve Force will be paid by the private sector.

who is called to serve in the force in case of emergency, war, or general mobilisation measures.

The decree-law also stipulates that private sector establishments shall contribute to paying the wages of the members of the force for one year, while BDF will bear the disbursement of salaries if the soldiers continue serving in the force for more than one year.

A military reserve force is a military organisation composed of citizen-soldiers of a country who combine a military role or career with a civilian career. These individuals consist of retired military personnel, as well as civilian volunteers.

They are not always kept under arms and their main role is to be available to join the army and fight when their military requires additional manpower in cases of war or emergencies.

BTEA to open 'Saturday Market' at Bab Al Bahrain

TDT | Manama

In line with its efforts to develop the local tourism sector and increase its contribution to the national GDP, Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTEA) is set to host the second edition of its 'Saturday Market', which will be held every Saturday from 9 am to 12:30 pm and from 2:00 pm to 7:00 pm starting from the 25th of January until the 22nd of March 2020, in Bab Al Bahrain at the heart of the Manama Souq.

During the Formula 1 Bahrain Grand Prix 2020, the Saturday Market will be open to visitors for four consecutive days.

With its main focus centred on hosting a market where craftsmen can showcase and sell their handicrafts products, the 'Saturday Market' is held at Bab Al Bahrain every winter with an aim of developing the handicrafts sector in the Kingdom.

This year, the event will feature 40 craftsmen specialised in 25 crafts including basket weaving, traditional chests, wooden works, pottery, hand embroidery, henna design, dolls, carpets, cage-making, and crochet among others.

In addition, the event will feature live traditional performances, traditional Bahraini food vendors, and activities and play areas for children.

In addition to showcasing the work of local craftsman, the Saturday Market aims to encourage Bahraini youth to engage in craft projects in order to preserve the local handicrafts as a trade which is unique to the Kingdom of Bahrain, BTEA said in a statement issued.

In order to give all participants the opportunity to gain maximum exposure while driving the development of the tourism industry, the participating craftsmen will be alternated regularly throughout the duration of the event, the statement added.

Hosting the Saturday Market comes in line with BTEA's long-term strategy which focuses on developing unique tourism products and further developing the Kingdom's tourism sector and strengthening its position on regional and international levels under the slogan of 'Ours, Yours', which contributes towards the Kingdom's economy and the 2030 Economic Vision.

30 years of success



More than 200 guests including keynote speakers and toastmasters from across the Kingdom attended the 30th anniversary celebrations of 'The Indian Club Toastmasters section' at the Indian Club. Chief Guest Dr Mariam Ebrahim Al Hajeri hailed the efforts and contributions of ICT and Indian Club towards community welfare. Indian doctor Dr A K Sandhu was felicitated for her lifetime service in the field of Gynaecology and Obstetrics in Bahrain for the past 36 years. Indian Club President Stalin Joseph attended.

Soccer event



Bahrain Chapter of ICAI organised a football event for its members and family at Soccer Avenue, Saar. Solidarity, Tally, Al Areen Palace and Spa, Asma Capital, UAE Exchange and ICICI Bank were the team sponsors. Trafco, Al Jazira and Middle East Hospital were the support sponsors. UAE Exchange Team were crowned the Champions.

Renewable energy projects discussed at meeting

Manama

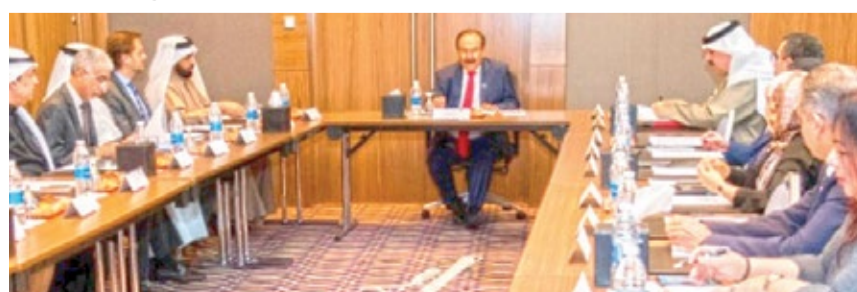
A committee in charge of following up the plan of the national committee for renewable energy and power efficiency held its fifteenth meeting.

Sustainable Energy Authority (SEA) President Dr Abdulhussein Mirza chaired the session, which was also attended by senior officials represent-

ing ministries and government departments. The UN Resident Co-ordinator in the Kingdom of Bahrain was also present.

Dr Mirza hailed efforts being exerted by different government departments, which play a key role in the achievements in the fields of renewable energy and power efficiency.

The meeting focused on a number of global financing mechanisms that can



Dr Mirza chairs the meeting.

be used to support renewable energy and power efficiency projects in Bahrain, including the mechanisms to take advantage of the Green Fund to address climate change.

The representative of the National Oil and Gas Authority (NOGA) delivered a visual presentation highlighting the possibility of establishing national investment portfolios for promoting sustainable energy.

world

Putin says 'transition' crucial

● Putin has been in power for two decades

● He is due to step down in 2024

AFP | Moscow

President Vladimir Putin has said he does not want Russia to return to the Soviet-era practice of rulers dying in office without a succession plan, as speculation swirls over his future after he unleashed a political upheaval this week.

The 67-year-old Russian leader said a transition plan for the country was crucial, in comments several days after his shock proposal of sweeping changes to the constitution saw the government resign and a new prime minister appointed.

Putin, who has been in power for two decades, was asked if he could consider removing presidential term limits from the constitution during a meeting with World War II veterans in his hometown of Saint Petersburg on Saturday.

But he appeared to reject the idea.

"In my view, it would be very worrying to return to the situation of the mid-1980s when heads of state one by one remained in power until the end of their days, (and) left office without having secured necessary conditions for a transition of power," Putin said.

"So, thank you very much, but I think it's better not to return to the situation of the mid-1980s."

Soviet rulers Leonid Brezhnev, Yury Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko all died in



Vladimir Putin at the Piskaryovskoye cemetery in Saint Petersburg, Russia. Courtesy of Bloomberg

”
In my view, it would be very worrying to return to the situation of the mid-1980s when heads of state one by one remained in power until the end of their days, (and) left office without having secured necessary conditions for a transition of power,

VLADIMIR PUTIN

office.

Chernenko's successor Mikhail Gorbachev introduced perestroika and glasnost reforms to transform the Soviet system and presided over the eventual collapse of the USSR.

Putin, who is due to step down in 2024 after his fourth Kremlin term ends, said he understood what he called people's concerns about the continuity of power.

"For many of our people this is linked to worries about stability in society, stability in the state -- both foreign and internal stability -- I perfectly understand this," he said.

Many observers have said Putin's proposals are designed to ensure his grip on power after he leaves the Kremlin and

his critics have accused him of orchestrating a "constitutional coup".

On Wednesday, Putin stunned Russians with his constitutional proposals, including transferring more authority to parliament and enshrining the role of the State Council, an advisory body, in the constitution.

They would be the first significant changes to the country's basic law since it was adopted under Boris Yeltsin in 1993.

The announcement triggered the resignation of the government, led by Putin's loyal lieutenant Dmitry Medvedev.

A previously little known tax official, Mikhail Mishustin, was tapped by Putin to take over as premier and he was officially appointed on Thursday.

Britain's Johnson warns Putin over Skripal poisoning



British police issued European arrest warrants for these two men caught on CCTV in Salisbury around the time of the attack, who they said were Russian GRU agents

London

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Sunday used his first official meeting with Vladimir Putin to warn the Russian leader not to repeat the 2018 chemical attack that almost killed former spy Sergei Skripal.

Downing Street said Johnson told the Kremlin chief on the sidelines of a summit on the Libya crisis in Berlin that ties between Moscow and London would not return to normal until Russia ended its "destabilising" activities.

Johnson "was clear there had been no change in the UK's position on Salisbury, which was a reckless use of chemical weapons and a brazen attempt to murder innocent people on UK soil," Downing Street said in a statement.

"He said that such an attack must not be repeated," Johnson's office said.

made clear that this dialogue did not mean London's relations with the Kremlin were back on track.

"The prime minister said there will be no normalisation of our bilateral relationship until Russia ends the destabilising activity that threatens the UK and our allies and undermines the safety of our citizens and our collective security," his office said.

Russian suspects identified

London and Washington identify the GRU as Russia's main security threat to Western interests abroad.

Both also accuse the agency of attempting to hack the world's chemical weapons watchdog in The Hague in 2018 in order to spy on its investigation into the use of nerve agents in Syria.

British officials have identified the two Russians suspected of delivering the nerve agent to Salisbury as GRU

Online campaign to save malnourished lions at Sudan park

Khartoum

Online calls grew yesterday to help save five "malnourished and sick" African lions held at a park in Sudan's capital, with some demanding the creatures be shifted to a better habitat.

The five lions are held in cages at Khartoum's Al-Qureshi Park in an upscale district of the capital, but for weeks now they have been suffering from shortages of food and medicine.

"I was shaken when I saw these lions at the park... their bones are protruding from the skin," wrote Osman Salih on Facebook as he launched an online campaign under the slogan #Sudananimalrescue.

"I urge interested people and institutions to help them."

Park officials and medics said the lions' conditions deteriorated over the past few weeks, with some losing almost two-thirds of their body weight.

"Food is not always available, so often we buy it from our own money to feed them," Essameld-



For weeks now, five lions held at Khartoum's Al-Qureshi Park in an upscale district of the capital have been suffering from shortages of food and medicine

dine Hajjar, a manager at Al-Qureshi park said.

The park is managed by Khartoum municipality but also funded in part by private

donors.

Sudan is in the midst of a worsening economic crisis, led by soaring food prices and foreign currency shortage.

On Sunday, crowds of citizens, volunteers and journalists flocked to the park to see the lions after their photographs went viral on social media networks.

One of the five cats was tied with a rope and was fed fluids through a drip as it recovered from dehydration, an AFP correspondent who toured the park reported.

Chunks of rotten meat covered in flies lay scattered near the cages.

The overall condition of the park itself was also affecting the animals' health, another official at the park said.

"They are suffering from severe illnesses. They are sick and appear to be malnourished," said Moataz Mahmoud, one of the caretakers at the park.

African lions are classified as a "vulnerable" species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Their population dropped 43 percent between 1993 and 2014, with only around 20,000 alive today.



Investigators sealed off their house in Salisbury, southern England after Russian ex-spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter were poisoned in 2018

Russia has repeatedly rejected accusations that officers from its GRU military intelligence agency used a powerful nerve agent to poison Skripal in retribution for his work with British and other Western spy services.

Skripal and his daughter both spent days in a coma but survived and have since gone into hiding.

The incident further undermined London's already difficult relations with Moscow.

Downing Street said Johnson had told Putin "they both had a responsibility to address issues of international security including Libya, Syria, Iraq and Iran".

But the British leader also

agents Alexander Mishkin and Anatoly Chepiga.

Both men entered Britain using false passports and were captured on CCTV footage walking around the southern English town shortly before Skripal and his daughter Yulia were found slumped on a park bench.

Mishkin and Chepiga later told Russian television that they were tourists who went to Salisbury to look at the local cathedral.

The open-source investigations website Bellingcat argued last June that a GRU officer coordinated the attack from a London hideout using his phone and a few messaging apps.

India, Sri Lanka seek closer military ties to counter China



India's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval met Saturday with recently elected Sri Lanka President Gotabaya Rajapaksa

Colombo

Sri Lanka and India vowed to strengthen military ties and widen maritime links with neighbouring countries after security talks, the president's office said yesterday.

India's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval met Saturday with recently elected Sri Lanka President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and discussed setting up a maritime coordination centre, Rajapaksa's office said in a statement.

It did not give details of the proposed centre, but said other nations in the region should be included as observers.

It said the two countries also discussed closer military and coastguard cooperation.

The meeting followed Rajapaksa's visit to New Delhi in late November for talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who offered \$450 million in aid to Sri Lanka after his landslide victory in the presidential election.

China's foreign minister Wang Yi also held talks with President Rajapaksa on Tuesday during a brief transit stop in Colombo.

"As Sri Lanka's strategic partner, China will continue to stand by Sri Lanka's interests," Rajapaksa's office quoted Wang as saying.

SpaceX successfully tests Crew Dragon abort system



This NASA TV video frame grab shows a SpaceX rocket as it launches to perform an in-flight abort test of its Crew Dragon spacecraft, which was unmanned for the apparently successful test

Washington

SpaceX successfully tested its emergency abort system on an unmanned spacecraft moments after launch Sunday, according to a live broadcast of the event, the last major test before it plans to send NASA astronauts to the International Space Station.

The test launch began at 1030 am (1530 GMT) at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida with the launch of a Falcon 9 rocket topped by SpaceX's new Crew Dragon spacecraft. The rocket was programmed to perform as if it were launching the capsule into orbit.

One minute and 24 seconds after launch, at an altitude of 19 kilometers (12 miles) over the Atlantic and as the rocket was traveling at a speed of more than 1,500 kilometers per hour, an emergency escape sequence was set in motion.

The spacecraft ignited its powerful SuperDraco thrusters, propelling it away from the rocket.

Shortly after the separation, the rocket disintegrated in a ball of fire, as planned.

An Atlantic splashdown

On a manned mission, the maneuver is designed to rescue the astronauts in the event the rocket has a problem on ascent or veers off course.

Crew Dragon continued its upward trajectory alone reaching an altitude of about 40 kilometers before beginning its natural descent toward the Atlantic.

Four large parachutes opened to brake its descent and splashdown in the Atlantic, where recovery teams were pre-positioned. Nine minutes after launch, Crew Dragon was in the water, apparently without suffering damage.

Analysis of the spacecraft and flight data will confirm whether the test came off without a hitch, and whether the spacecraft is ready for manned missions.

But NASA administrator Jim Bridenstine and SpaceX founder Elon Musk said in a press conference that the test appeared to be a complete success.

Manned flight ahead

The favorable outcome of the peril-filled test is good news for SpaceX and for NASA, which urgently needs to certify a vehicle to transport astronauts to the International Space Station (ISS) this year.

Since 2011, the United States has had to rely on Russia's Soyuz rockets, the only ones capable of carrying astronauts to the space station once the US retired its space shuttle fleet.

A royal goodbye

Britain's Prince Harry and Meghan to give up royal titles

AFP | London

Britain's Prince Harry and his wife Meghan have agreed to give up their royal titles and public funding as part of a settlement with the Queen that lets them spend more private time in Canada.

The historic announcement from Buckingham Palace on Saturday follows more than a week of intense private talks aimed at managing the fallout of the globetrotting couple's shock resignation from front-line royal duties.

It means Queen Elizabeth II's grandson Harry and his American TV actress wife Meghan will stop using the titles "royal highness" -- the same fate that befell his late mother Princess Diana after her divorce from Prince Charles in 1996.

"Following many months of conversations and more recent discussions, I am pleased that together we have found a constructive and supportive way forward for my grandson and his family," the 93-year-old monarch said in a statement.

"I recognise the challenges they have experienced as a result of intense scrutiny over the last two years and support their wish for a more independent life."

'Hardest Megxit possible'

Her comments referred to battles with the media that prompted Harry and Meghan -- known until now as the Duke and Duchess of Sussex -- to sue several newspapers in October over intrusions into their private lives.

The Queen said she was "particularly proud of how Meghan has so quickly become one of the family" and wished the couple "a happy and peaceful new life".

A separate statement attributed to Buckingham Palace said "the Sussexes will not use their HRH titles as they are no longer working members of the Royal Family".

HRH stands for His or Her Royal Highness.

"As agreed in this new arrangement, they understand that they are required to step back from royal duties, including official military appointments. They will no longer receive public funds for royal duties," the statement said.

The settlement added that the



The royal crisis has been dubbed Megxit in honour of Britain's painful battle over Brexit



Britain's Prince Harry and his wife Meghan will give up their official titles

two will also repay £2.4 million (\$3.1 million) of taxpayer's money spent on renovating their Frogmore Cottage home near Windsor Castle.

Much of the British media interpreted the ruling as the Queen's punishment for Harry and Meghan's wayward ways.

The Queen "brought down the iron fist", Sky News' royal commentator Alastair Bruce



Much of the British media interpreted the ruling as the Queen's punishment for Harry and Meghan's wayward ways

said.

"Make no mistake, Saturday night's statement represents the hardest Megxit possible," The Daily Telegraph newspaper said,

'Progressive new role'

The Palace would not comment on who ends up paying for Harry and Meghan's security detail in Canada -- an issue of intense public debate.

It also failed to mention whether the couple would be allowed to benefit financially from future royalties and franchise fees.

The couple are seeking to register the "Sussex Royal" brand as a global trademark for their future enterprises.

They two are dedicated to environmental causes and are looking to develop their charitable foundation as part of a "progressive new role".

The queen's announcement is her second on the royal crisis since Harry and Meghan's effective resignation on March 8.

"We have chosen to make a transition this year in starting to carve out a progressive new role within this institution," the couple said at the time.

"We now plan to balance our time between the United Kingdom and North America."

Meghan then jetted back to Canada and is now their with their son Archie.

Their announcement caught the royal family by surprise and created a media sensation in both Britain and the wider

world.

Their treatment by London's hard-hitting tabloid press and their personal future -- as well as questions about longstanding royal traditions -- have turned into daily front-page news.

Media reports said Harry would probably join Meghan and Archie on the west coast of Canada this coming week.

'Abdication'

The Queen's final ruling on her grandson's future drew immediate comparisons to King Edward VIII's abdication in 1936.

Edward married the American socialite Wallis Simpson the following year and spent much his remaining life abroad.

"Harry is not King (he is sixth in line) but tonight this feels like his and Meghan's own abdication," ITV television's royal editor Chris Ship wrote on Twitter.

"This isn't 1936. But it's still pretty big."

The BBC's royal correspondent Nicholas Witchell said Meghan must decide whether she intends to return and spend time in Britain in order to gain her UK citizenship.

The couple's future tax status also remains unclear.

"I think they are feeling their way into this as much as anyone else," Witchell said.

The couple will now formally be known as "Harry, The Duke of Sussex" and "Meghan, The Duchess of Sussex".

The Palace statement said the new arrangement "will take effect in the Spring of 2020".

China reports 17 new cases of mystery virus

Beijing

China reported 17 new cases of the mysterious SARS-like virus on Sunday, including three in a severe condition, heightening fears ahead of China's Lunar New Year holiday when hundreds of millions of people move around the country.

The virus -- a new strain of coronavirus that humans can contract -- has caused alarm because of its connection to SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), which killed nearly 650 people across mainland China and Hong Kong in 2002-2003.

Of the 17 new cases in the cen-



No human-to-human transmission has been confirmed so far, but Wuhan's health commission has previously said the possibility 'cannot be excluded'

tral city of Wuhan -- believed to be the epicentre of the outbreak -- three are described as "severe".

The virus has now infected 62 people in Wuhan, city authorities said, with eight in a severe condition, 19 cured and discharged from hospital, and the rest remaining in isolation receiving treatment.

Two people have died so far from the virus, including a 69-year-old man who died on Wednesday, with the disease causing pulmonary tuberculosis and damage to multiple organ functions.

Mexican troops block US bound caravan travellers

● Some 800 migrants agreed to regularise their status and seek employment in Mexico

● Earlier Saturday, troops had blocked the caravan

Ciudad Hidalgo | Mexico

Mexican troops urged some 1,500 Central American migrants to maintain "order and respect" yesterday after the group attempted to force entry into the country from Guatemala in the hopes of trekking onward to the United States.

Standing on the wall above the Rodolfo Robles International Bridge that connects Mexico with its southern neighbor, National Guard General Vincente Hernandez told migrants they would be allowed to cross the border in a "controlled" manner.

"With order and respect, all will be served. There are opportunities for everyone," said Hernandez, who also coordinates the National Guard operations along the Suchiate River, the natural border between Mexico and Guatemala.

"We understand the situation, you are our brothers from Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala," Hernandez told the car-



Honduran migrants cross the border into Mexico in Ciudad Hidalgo, Mexico

avan. His speech was met with applause.

Some 800 migrants agreed to regularise their status and seek employment in Mexico, an official from the National Institute of Migration (INM) said.

Earlier Saturday, troops had blocked the caravan, scuffling with the migrants as they attempted to cross the border.

One National Guard soldier standing guard at the bridge and speaking over a bullhorn told the travelers they could not enter without a visa or migration document, and that sneaking in was dangerous.

"Do not expose yourself to people traffickers. Your life is in danger," said the agent, who also told them the idea that the United States will grant them asylum is false.



Mexico has come under pressure from US President Donald Trump to slow a surge of undocumented migrants who arrived at the US-Mexican border last year. Trump threatened in May to impose tariffs on Mexico if the government did not do more to stop them.

Most of the migrants left last Tuesday from Honduras and

had arrived Saturday morning at the bridge over the Suchiate River, which forms the border between Guatemala and Mexico to the north.

Some of the migrants insisted on getting in but others in groups of around 20 turned around and headed back to migration holding facilities on the Guatemalan side of the frontier.

Security beefed up

Mexico had beefed up its forces at the border crossing as it anticipated the arrival of a caravan of some 3,000 people mainly from Honduras and El Salvador.

On Friday, Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador offered 4,000 jobs to members of the caravan in an attempt to dissuade them from traveling on to the United States.

Maduro says still in control, open to talks with US: report

Washington

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said he was still comfortably in charge and open to direct negotiations with the US, in an interview published Saturday by *The Washington Post*.

The interview was Maduro's first with a major US outlet since February of last year, when he abruptly ejected all Univision journalists from Venezuela.

"If there's respect between governments, no matter how big the United States is, and if there's a dialogue, an exchange of truthful information, then be sure we can create a new type of relationship," Maduro told the *Post*.

The socialist leader said he was ready to hold talks with the US to negotiate an end to sanctions imposed by President Donald Trump intended to throttle the South American country's oil industry and force Maduro from power.

Maduro indicated that, if Trump were to lift sanctions, US oil companies could benefit immensely from Venezuela's oil.

"A relationship of respect and dialogue brings a win-win situation. A confrontational relationship brings a lose-lose situation. That's the formula," Maduro said.

The US, along with more than 50 other countries, recognizes Maduro's opposition rival Juan Guaido as the country's legitimate interim president.

Guaido has called for a new presidential election to be held, on the grounds that Ma-



Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro

duro is an "illegitimate" president because his 2018 re-election was tainted by fraud.

Oil-rich Venezuela's economy is crumbling under Maduro's rule, and millions have fled the country.

But despite the humanitarian catastrophe and biting US sanctions, Maduro maintains power with the support of the military as well as Russia, China and Cuba.

While speaking to the *Post*, Maduro also expressed willingness to talk with Guaido, but appeared to dismiss his opponent's main demand that he step down.

Norway has mediated talks between Maduro's and Guaido's representatives, but the meetings broke down in August.

The US in early January threw its support behind negotiations in Venezuela, saying talks could establish a transitional government, lead to fresh elections and bring an end to the country's long-running political crisis.

Solar-powered barge a key 'interceptor' for plastic waste

Klang | Malaysia

Scoping waste from a Malaysian river to stop it reaching the sea, a solar-powered barge named the "Interceptor" is the latest weapon in a global battle to rid the world's waters of plastic.

Trash is being dumped into seas and rivers in enormous quantities, polluting vital habitats, endangering a kaleidoscope of marine life and sully once pristine tourist spots.

Some eight million tons of plastics enter the world's oceans every year, from straws tossed into gutters to mismanaged waste from rapidly growing economies, according to US-based group Ocean Conservancy.

But as governments and environmental protection groups struggle in the face of the growing tide, a Dutch non-profit group -- The Ocean Cleanup -- has come up with a novel solution in the form of the Interceptor.

The 24-metre-long (78 feet) vessel resembles a large houseboat and uses a curved barrier to catch waste floating downstream.

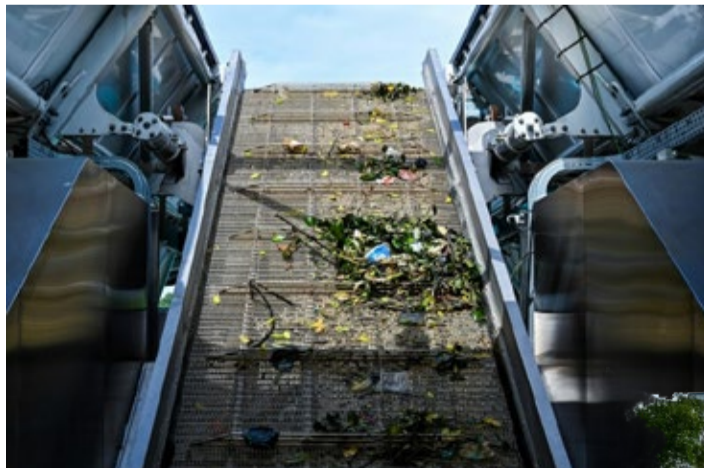
The trash, much of it plastic, is directed to the "mouth" of the barge -- which operates autonomously and silently -- from where it rolls up a conveyor belt and is dropped into dumpsters.

The barge can collect up to 50 tons of waste a day.

In October an Interceptor was stationed on the Klang river, a heavily polluted, major Malaysian waterway which flows



The Interceptor barge can collect up to 50 tons of waste a day



Trash collected by the Interceptor barge rolls up a conveyor belt before being dropped into dumpsters

through the capital Kuala Lumpur and its surrounding areas.

Ocean Cleanup is working with local government company Landasan Lumayan, which started cleaning the river in 2016, and says efforts are bearing fruit.

"The Klang river was like a

floating landfill," said Syaiful Azmen Nordin, managing director of the Malaysian firm.

"Boats could not pass through, and there was a lot of

plastic. Now you can see the river is generally free from floating debris."

Tyres and teddies

Ocean Cleanup hopes their project will have a major impact in fighting the waste crisis globally, as rivers are one of the greatest sources of plastic flowing into the seas.

Some 80 percent of plastic waste that ends up in the sea floats down just 1,000 rivers worldwide, according to the group, which hopes to one day station trash-collecting barges in all these waterways.

The Klang river alone sends more than 15,000 tons annually into the sea, a map on their website shows, making it one of the 50 most-polluting rivers across the globe.

"We know the goal of 1,000 rivers is ambitious, but it is a necessary one," said group spokesman Joost Dubois, adding they aimed to have dealt with the problem within five years.

But the group has some way to go to turn the tide -- they have so far built four Interceptor boats at a cost of 700,000 euros (\$775,000) each, although they expect the price will come down as more are produced.

As well as the barge in Malaysia, one has been stationed in Jakarta, the overcrowded capital of neighbouring Indonesia, while two others will be sent to Vietnam and the Dominican Republic.

Thailand has signed up to put one near Bangkok and an agreement is being negotiated to station a vessel in Los Angeles.

The barge on the 120-kilometre (75-mile) Klang river complements seven existing log barri-

ers placed along the waterway to catch trash.

Rubbish taken out of the river is currently sent to a landfill, although efforts have begun to retrieve recyclables.

Some 50,000 tons of garbage have been hauled from the water since clean-up work started four years ago, according to Syaiful.

"We have (collected) tyres, teddy bears, even dead animals... but generally it is plastic," he said.

While the barges may help, they will only succeed if people do their part and act responsibly by refraining from thoughtlessly tossing plastic away, Syaiful added.

"Some people don't see the impact of throwing rubbish. They throw the plastic on the streets and eventually the plastic will flow into the river," he said.

"If we change our behaviour, we can help our rivers (become) clean."

The Interceptor has been deployed on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur to collect trash in the Klang river



The US might finally unveil deal of the century, in the

More than any of his recent predecessors, Mr Trump has shown a repeated willingness to meddle in

JONATHAN COOK

Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu needs all the help he can muster before voters head to the ballot box on March 2 – for the third time in a year. Once again, it seems as though US President Donald Trump intends to ride to his rescue.

Despite Mr Trump's best efforts, Israel's two elections last year ended in stalemate. Each time, Mr Netanyahu's Likud party and its religious, pro-settler coalition partners tied with the secular, yet hawkish right led by Blue and White leader Benny Gantz.

The pressure on Mr Netanyahu to win this time has intensified. His opponents in the Israeli parliament advanced plans last week to set up a committee to weigh whether or not he should be immune from prosecution in three corruption cases.

If he is denied immunity, as seems likely, the path will be clear for a trial that might make it impossible for him to head the next government whatever the outcome.

This was the background to intimations last week that it may finally publish its long-anticipated peace plan.

The White House reportedly

delayed the plan's release over the course of last year as it waited for Mr Netanyahu to secure a majority government to put it into effect.

Leaks suggest the document will bolster Israel's maximalist demands, scuppering any hopes of establishing a viable Palestinian state. The Palestinian leadership severed ties with Washington a while back in protest.

More than any of his recent predecessors, Mr Trump has shown a repeated willingness to meddle in Israeli elections to the benefit of Mr Netanyahu.

Shortly before last April's vote, Mr Trump declared that the US would formally recognise Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights from Syria. The seizure of the 1,800-square-kilometre territory in 1967 remains illegal under international law. And days before the most recent ballot in September, Mr Trump publicly alluded to the possibility of a US-Israeli defence pact.

Now US officials, including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, have hinted that the US peace plan could be published in the run-up to the March election.

Israeli officials have been saying much the same to local media since an unexpected visit this month by Avi Berkowitz, Mr Trump's new aide



Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu attends the weekly Cabinet meeting in Jerusalem.

overseeing the peace plan.

This prompted Mr Gantz, the prime minister's main challenger, to condemn any such move as "blatant interference" in the election.

In fact, until recently, Mr Netanyahu had been reluctant for the so-called "deal of the century" to be published because it would be

unlikely to satisfy the settlers' most extreme demands. He had feared that disappointment might drive some Likud voters further to the right, towards smaller, even more hardline parties.

But Mr Netanyahu is now in such precarious political and legal straits that he appears ready to gamble.

Publication of the peace plan could attract some more uncompromising Blue and White voters to his side. They may prefer a seasoned player like Mr Netanyahu to manage White House expectations, rather than a politically inexperienced former army general like Mr Gantz.

Furthermore, the settler parties

Syria's invisible hand in Lebanon confronts

Prime Minister designate Hassan Diab appears to be standing up to Hizbullah who nominated him, to the advantage of other pro-Syrian factions

BASEM SHABB

Since October 17, a nationwide storm, forcing then prime minister Saad Hariri and his cabinet to step down. In December, Iran-backed Hizbollah and its ally, the Christian Free Patriotic Movement, or FPM, were duped into naming Dr Hassan Diab, a Sunni academic, as prime minister designate. It is the prime minister designate's duty by law to form the cabinet but acting foreign minister and head of the FPM, Gebran Bassil mistakenly thought he could impose his preferred nominees on a relatively unknown prime minister and divide the spoils with Hizbollah.

Much to the dismay of Mr Bassil, Mr Diab appears bent on forming a government of unaffiliated experts, in compliance with the demands of protesters. Mr Diab has challenged Mr Bassil as well as his father-in-law Lebanese President Michel Aoun, with active support from pro-Syrian politicians, most notably member of parliament Jamil Al Sayyed. Other pro-Syrian factions voiced their demands to be represented in the new government, effectively competing with the FPM for the next cabinet's 18 ministries.

It seems that Mr Diab, far from

being weak and isolated, has considerable support from Pro-Syrian factions opposed to the resigned prime minister Saad Hariri. Grand Mufti Abdul Latif Darian and other Sunni dignitaries have refrained from criticising Mr Diab, avoiding the thorny issue of his legitimacy within the community.

More importantly, the Saudi leadership has yet to take a position on Mr Diab, which may indicate that they are ready to give him a chance. Syrian President Bashar Al Assad has yet to comment on the situation but Druze politician Wiam Wahhab, one of Syria's closest allies in Lebanon, has indicated he was the one to suggest Mr Diab for the position of prime minister. The Russians first endorsed Mr Hariri but after Mr Diab was officially nominated, they have assumed a neutral stance. Western powers are closely watching as Lebanese politicians bicker while the economy is in free fall.

Ordinary Lebanese are struggling to cope with the deep recession yet Hizbollah is only concerned with consolidating its power in government while the FPM is preoccupied with the issue of presidential succession. Other players such as parliamentary speaker Nabih Berri, and Mr Jumblatt are worried about the return of Syrian influence in Leba-



Poster of Hizbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and Syrian President Bashar Al Assad in South Lebanon.

non. Mr Diab's intransigence poses a threat to traditional politicians. So much so that Mr Bassil now sees common cause with Mr Berri.

Since the end of the Syrian occupation in 2005, Damascus' influence in Lebanon has been steadily growing. During

1989

George H. W. Bush is inaugurated the 41st President of the United States of America.



1990

Protests in Azerbaijan, part of the Dissolution of the Soviet Union.

1991

Sudan's government imposes Islamic law nationwide, worsening the civil war between the country's Muslim north and Christian south.

1992

Air Inter Flight 148, an Airbus A320-111, crashes into a mountain near Strasbourg, France killing 87 of the 96 people on board.

The run-up to Israel's election

Israeli elections to the benefit of Mr Netanyahu

... suggest the ... will bolster ... maximalist ... scuppering any ... of establishing a ... Palestinian state. ... leadership ... ties with ... a while back in ... protest.

Bank's vast agricultural basin – presumably with Mr Trump's blessing.

Mr Pompeo offered his apparent backing in November by claiming that Israeli settlements in the West Bank were not necessarily “inconsistent with international law”.

With that as a cue, Mr Netanyahu's government convened a panel this month to draft an official proposal to annex the Jordan Valley.

Naftali Bennett, the defence minister and a settler leader, revealed last week that Israel was creating seven new “nature reserves” on Palestinian land. Another 12 existing Israeli-seized sites are to be expanded.

Israel would annex Area C “within a short time”, Mr Bennett added.

On Saturday, he also ordered the army to bar from the West Bank prominent Israeli left-wing activists who demonstrate alongside Palestinians against land thefts by the settlers and the army. He equated these non-violent protesters with extremist settler groups that have assaulted Palestinians and torched their olive groves and homes.

Referring to the International Criminal Court in the Hague, the Palestinian foreign ministry warned that establishment of the nature reserves would “speed up (Mr Bennett's) appearance before the ICC as a war criminal.”

Nonetheless, the settler right is growing ever bolder on the annexation issue – as evidenced by Israel's increasingly fraught ties with neighbouring Jordan.

King Abdullah II recently declared relations with Israel at an “all-time low”. Meanwhile, Ephraim Halevy, a former head of Israel's Mossad spy agency, blamed Israel for showing “contempt towards Jordan” and creating a crisis that jeopardised the two countries' 1994 peace treaty, a legacy of the Oslo peace process.

If Israel annexes large swaths of the West Bank, stymying Palestinian statehood, that could unleash waves of unrest among the Kingdom's majority population – Palestinians made refugees by Israel during the 1948 and 1967 wars.

It could also provoke a mass exodus of West Bank Palestinians into Jordan. Senior Jordanian officials recently told a former Israeli journalist, Ori Nir, that they viewed annexation as an “existential threat” to their country.

All Israeli rightwingers need is a nod of approval from the White House. With Mr Netanyahu desperate to pull a rabbit out of his hat, and with an obliging patron installed in Washington, there is reason enough for them to believe that the stars may finally be aligned.

...nts Iran's allies

...ollah and their allies, ...figures



Ordinary Lebanese are struggling to cope with the deep recession yet Hizbollah is only concerned with consolidating its power in government while the FPM is preoccupied with the issue of presidential succession.

elections, it was mainly channelled through its support of Hizbollah. In the years leading up to the occupation, the FPM was dismissive of Syria and Mr Bassil did not bother with diplomatic niceties, often citing collaboration with congressman Eliot Engle to pass the Syria act in Congress in 2004. Why bother when Hizbollah was calling all the shots?

But times have changed. In October last year, Mr Bassil said he was willing to meet Mr Al Assad in Damascus. Since 2006, the FPM has struck a heinous alliance with Hizbollah. And while a few years ago, the Syrian regime seems doomed to collapsed, it is now bolstered by Rus-

sia and controls most of the nation's territory. Several Arab countries are vying for better ties with Mr Al Assad, after having lost hope in the capacity of Lebanon's anti-Iranian block to curb Tehran's influence.

A month ago, it seemed unlikely that a Sunni academic with little Sunni support could stand up to Mr Aoun and his son in law Mr Bassil, in favour of pro-Syrian groups. Yet this is exactly what Mr Diab has done. For once the “axis of resistance” cannot blame the US or scapegoat Syrian refugees for the current impasse. Bickering among different factions within the alliance, who oppose Mr Diab, has stalled government formation.

Russia has so far stood on the sidelines in Lebanon, but if pressured, Moscow is more likely to side with Damascus rather than with a non-state actor such as Hezbollah.

The US may also face a dilemma as it disengages from the region. Hezbollah is starting to face increasing limitations to its political ascendancy in Lebanon, not only due to a months-long popular uprising and American sanctions. It also has to contend with the return of Syrian influence and rivalries between its allies. Syria may not be able to call the shots just yet, but its presence can no longer be ignored.



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



Let us pause at #GospelofToday (John 1,29-34), perhaps even contemplating an icon of Christ, Son of God made lamb, to free us from evil. Yes, we are still poor sinners but not slaves, no, but children, children of God!

@Pontifex

02



It was a pleasure meeting in Berlin with EU High Representative @JosepBorrellF today to discuss our shared challenges, including ways we can work together toward greater peace and security in the Middle East and North Africa.

@SecPompeo

03



In the run up to 'Pariksha Pe Charcha 2020', lakhs of students, parents and teachers shared their inputs and suggestions. These are extremely valuable, giving insights into the pressing issues when it comes to exam preparation, the exam itself and the time after examinations.

@narendramodi

04



Schiff on the Trump argument that he can't be impeached for abuse of power: “That's the argument I suppose you have to make if the facts are so dead-set against you ... You had to go so far out of the mainstream to find someone to make that argument.” Via ABC

@kylegriffin1

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

Premier's global role, vision praised



YENUS S

The United Nations (UN) expects to observe its 75th anniversary on September 21, 2020. The theme selected for the occasion is “The Future we want, the UN we need: Reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism”.

The world establishment has achieved most of its aims ranging from reducing poverty to addressing climate changes and proposing means of containing it to diffusing tension in war torn areas. It proved to be instrumental in bringing world order, peace and stability.

However, there exist some serious downfalls, observed in its more than seven decades of operation. Lately, the issue that concerns the deployment of peacekeeping troops in man-made conflicts (war) or natural disaster areas where the blue helmeted soldiers have raped the very victims they are supposed to protect leaving wives without husbands and babies without fathers remained a shame and blemish on the global organization.

The UN's General Secretary letter shows that the world community is counting on the Premier's vision and advice. I believe that HRH Premier's contribution will prove to be the key to solving the encounters the world is now witnessing and possible conflicts that may happen in the future.



During this year's celebrations, the UN is aiming to reach to a wide range of people with various experiences and backgrounds. Engage them in a dialogue and hopes to come up with constructive suggestions that benefit the UN and the global community.

On this vein, the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, recently sent a written message to His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, hailing his global role in promoting peace, human rights and sustainable development.

In his message, the UN head said, “It is encouraging to realize that the UN can count on the support of Your Royal Highness at times when we face many challenges and dangers”. He appreciated Bahrain's strong relations with UN body and its agencies.

The Premier's name is not new at the UN. A host of awards conferred on him speaks volumes of his contribution to the world body. This includes the 2006 Special Citation of the Habitat Scroll of Honour Award for his “impressive efforts in lifting the living standards of all Bahrainis through an active focus on poverty alleviation and modernization while preserving the cultural heritage of his country. (UN reports).

The approval of the UN General Assembly of the Premier's suggestion to fix April 05 as a Day of Conscience has received appreciation not only at the UN but also among the world leaders.

The Premier has become the first Arab leader to suggest such a proposal that can potentially deter confrontation and urge people to use their God-given conscience to settle conflicts and avoid unnecessary wars that can bring about destruction and impede development.

Thus, from this year onward, April 05, will not be an ordinary day in the world. It will be celebrated locally and globally for the first time ever as Day of Conscience and the fact that it is initiated of our Premier makes us very proud and reflects his wise leadership. The Premier has fixed his name at the UN for generations to come.

The UN needs to fine-tune some of its projects to serve the world community better. The only way forward is to involve as many people as possible with various backgrounds in brainstorming programmes and come up with constructive and workable ideas and recommendations.

The UN's General Secretary letter shows that the world community is counting on the Premier's vision and advice. I believe that HRH Premier's contribution will prove to be the key to solving the encounters the world is now witnessing and possible conflicts that may happen in the future.

This year's theme rightly addresses the need to participate the masses and if properly implemented, we will have a new-look UN that serves the challenges the world community faces.

business

Gulf Air opens 70th anniversary museum

The museum will remain open to the public for a limited period



In pictures, the inauguration of the temporary museum of Gulf Air at the Bahrain City Centre shopping mall marking the start of 70th-anniversary celebrations

The museum celebrates 70 years of aviation in the Kingdom

TDT | Manama

Gulf Air, the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain, yesterday celebrated the official opening of its temporary museum at the Bahrain City Centre shopping mall which marks the start of a series of 70th-anniversary celebrations in 2020.

The ceremony was held under the patronage of Gulf Air's Chairman of Board of Directors Zayed R. Alzayani who cut the ribbon and launched the project in presence of the airline's board



members, executive management and members of the Bahraini media.

The museum celebrates 70 years of aviation in the Kingdom and showcases the airline's rich history since its take-off in 1950. It features exclusive and rare photographs and memorabilia

items from different decades of the airline's journey. Moreover, various aircraft models and Gulf Air's uniforms from different eras will be on display to highlight the evolution of the brand over the years.

Other than celebrating the history, the museum will also

display the latest Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner Falcon Gold seat to highlight the future of Gulf Air.

The museum will be open for the public for a limited period and will exclusively attract the local and regional footfall of the Bahrain City Centre shopping mall. Gulf Air's Chairman

of Board of Directors Zayed R. Alzayani said: "The exhibited items represent various decades of our history and showcase the evolution of the brand and the business. I invite everyone to come and visit the museum and go back in time on a journey from 1950 until today".

Gulf Air said will continue its fleet modernization programme in 2020 and will receive the final three Boeing 787-9 Dreamliners of the 10-aircraft order and will take deliveries of the brand new Airbus 321neo aircraft which will be dominantly deployed on the European long-haul routes.

BCCI announces meeting for car showrooms, exhibitions owners

TDT | Manama

The commercial markets committee of Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry announced holding an open meeting for owners of car showrooms and exhibitions.

Abdulhakeem Al Shemeri, who heads the committee, said the meeting will be held on

Wednesday at 8:30 am in Al Majlis Hall of Bait Al Tijjar Building.

The meeting, in the Arabic language, will deliberate about the challenges and opportunities of car showrooms and exhibitions in Bahrain and will mull means of streamlining and invigorating their operations. BCCI extended an invitation to all concerned members.



SICO, a regional asset manager, broker, market maker and investment bank sponsored a specialised trading simulation course "Bank Management Simulation", by the Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance (BIBF). Twelve Banking & Finance students from the University of Bahrain and Bahrain Polytechnic participated in the five-day simulation programme. The course covered topics such as equity and fixed income valuations, including how to analyse the stock market, equity and bond portfolios and capital allocation based on invested assets to maximize returns, along with the impact of the provision of loan losses on bank investment decisions.

Batelco names 'Duel Game' Grand Prize winner

TDT | Manama

Batelco has concluded the 'Duel Game' competition which formed part of its 'Fact of the Day Service' campaign.

Ghassan AbdulQader was named the winner of the Grand Prize of approximately BD5,000 for having accumulated more points than the rest of the competitors.

AbdulQader was received by Shaikh Badar bin Rashid Al Khalifa, General Manager of Corporate Communications and CSR at Batelco and Chief Marketing Officer Bilal Adham, who congratulated him on the win and encouraged him to participate in the Company's upcoming competitions.

Launched in May 2019 and continuing for 6 months, prizes ranged from daily to weekly and even monthly prizes, with the total value amounting to BD31,000.

The competition created a fun-filled atmosphere where competitors were able

to interact on the competition's website to increase the number of points in their account, for the chance to win the grand cash prize.

The winners of the monthly prizes for September, October and November, in addition to the Grand Prize winner were hosted at Batelco's Headquarters in Hamala.

Commenting on the occasion, GM Consumer Division Maha Abdulrahman said, "We are thrilled with the success of this competition, as well as the interaction that exceeded our expectations, where customers were able to enjoy a fun activity and have an educational experience at the same time."

The names of the daily, weekly and monthly winners have been added to the 'Duel Game' website. Over 180 customers won daily, weekly and monthly prizes, in addition to the Grand Prize winner.



Ghassan AbdulQader was named the winner of the Grand Prize of approximately BD5,000



Maha Abdulrahman

Founder of S. Korean retail giant Lotte dies at 97



Shin Kyuk-ho founded Lotte Group as a chewing gum manufacturer and built it up into one of South Korea's biggest conglomerates

Seoul

The founder of South Korea's sprawling retail conglomerate Lotte Group has died at the age of 97, company officials said Sunday.

Shin Kyuk-ho's reputation was tarnished in his final years when the wheelchair-bound tycoon was convicted of professional malpractice and embezzling from the firm to benefit his relatives in late 2017.

He was sentenced to four years in prison but was allowed to stay out of jail on health grounds.

Born in the southern city of Ulsan, Shin stowed away on a ship to Japan at the age of 18 to seek his fortune and established Lotte to manufacture chewing gum in Tokyo soon after World War II.

The business later grew to include dozens of subsidiaries in the food, retail and hotel industries.

Lotte is one of the biggest of the South Korean family-run "chaebol" conglomerates that powered the country's decades of runaway economic growth -- but which are sometimes accused of

murky business practices and overly-close ties with politicians.

Shin's two sons made headlines in 2015 with a bitter public fight for control of the group, each accusing the other of mismanagement, personality flaws, and of manipulating their frail and aged father.

His younger son Dong-bin eventually took over the reins as chairman but both he and Shin were accused of causing \$72 million in damages to the group by renting out Lotte Cinema concessions at discounted rates to the founder's eldest daughter and mistress.

The daughter was jailed for two years, while the mistress -- a former model and actress 39 years Shin's junior, who came to his attention after winning a beauty pageant -- was given a suspended sentence.

Shin was also found to have disposed of company assets in violation of his responsibilities as chairman by the presiding judge in his 2017 trial.

He had been suffering from dementia and other diseases of old age before his death, according to South Korea's Yonhap news agency.

Shin Kyuk-ho's reputation was tarnished in his final years when the wheelchair-bound tycoon was convicted of professional malpractice and embezzling from the firm

M3 money supply rises 9pc

● Credit card and debit card transactions across POS terminals rose

● Total outstanding balance of public debt instruments stood at BD 12,045.4m

TDT | Manama

Growth of money supply in the Kingdom quickened in November 2019, according to a new Central Bank of Bahrain data.

The M3 measure of money supply increased 9 per cent in November 2019 to BD 13,634.1 million from BD 12,504.3m in the same period-end a year ago, Bahrain's top bank said in a statement. M3 comprises mainly of currency in public circulation, bank deposits and money invested in other saving plans.

The total outstanding balance of public debt instruments stood at BD 12,045.4 million at the end of November 2019, an increase of 5.1pc compared to BD 11,457.0m in November 2018. These include Development Bonds, Treasury Bills, Islamic Leasing securities and Al Salam Islamic securities.

CBB data also indicated a rise in the total balance sheet of the banking system from USD 192.1 billion at the end of November 2018 to USD 205.6bn at the end of November 2019, an increase of USD 13.5bn, or 7.0pc, in the 12 months.

Loans and credit rise

The total value of outstanding loans and credit facilities provided by retail banks amounted to BD 9,782.8m at end of November 2019 compared to BD 9,440.0m at the end of Novem-



The Central Bank of Bahrain. (Courtesy of the National)

ber 2018, an increase of 3.6pc. This amount includes loans and facilities provided to the business sector amounting to BD 5,166.9m at the end of November 2019 compared to BD 5,052.1m at the end of the same period last year, an increase of 2.3pc.

Card transactions up 12.5pc

Credit card and debit card transactions across Point of Sales (POS) terminals amounted to BD 217.4m in November 2019 compared to BD 193.2m in November 2018; marking an increase of BD 24.2m or 12.5pc.

The balance sheet of retail banks increased by BD 3.0bn, or 9.3pc, reaching a total of BD 35.4bn at the end of November 2019 compared to BD 32.4bn as at end of November 2018.

Non-bank deposits rise 9.2pc

The data also shows an increase in local non-bank deposits which amounted to BD 13.1bn at the end of November 2019 compared to BD 12.0bn at the end of November 2018, an increase of 9.2pc.

What is M3?



M3 is a measure of the money supply that includes M2 as well as large time deposits, institutional money market funds, short-term repurchase agreements and larger liquid assets. The M3 measurement includes assets that are less liquid than other components of the money supply and are referred to as "near, near money," which are more closely related to the finances of larger financial institutions and corporations than to those of small businesses and individuals.

M2

M2 is a measure of the money supply that includes cash, checking deposits, and easily convertible near money.

M2 is a broader measure of the money supply than M1, which just include cash and checking deposits.

M3 has largely been replaced by M2M as a measure of money supply.

M3 is still published as a source of economic data, but mostly for ease of historical comparisons.

Since 2006, M3 is no longer tracked by the U.S. central bank, the Federal Reserve (Fed).

UK looks to offshore wind for green energy transition

London

Britain, a global leader in offshore wind energy, plans to make the sector one of the pillars of its transition to carbon neutrality in the coming decades.

The country aims to quadruple its offshore electricity production capacity by 2030 by utilising the windswept North Sea and a favourable policy environment.

"It's more conducive to build offshore in the UK than anywhere else in Europe," said James Brabben, of Cornwall Insight energy consultancy.

"There's quite a consensus of support around offshore wind from the public and politics," he told AFP.

Prime Minister Boris John-

son's government, returned to power with a thumping majority last month, pledged in its election manifesto to increase power from offshore wind from 10 to 40 gigawatts this decade.

It wants Britain to be carbon neutral by 2050, with onshore wind, solar, hydro and biomass also set to contribute to its energy mix.

The country already produces almost 40 percent of its electricity from renewable sources, according to figures published last week for the third quarter of 2019.

Planned expansions

Britain plans to favour the development of colossal offshore wind farms given the country's

relatively small land mass.

There were 38 operational sites comprising around 2,000 turbines at the end of 2018, according to the last available figures from the Crown Estate, the hereditary land and property portfolio of the royal family which owns most of Britain's seabed.

Nearly 1,000 more turbines are already in the planning stages.

Two of the biggest projects are Walney Extension, in north Wales, and London Array, at the mouth of the River Thames.

The two sites are home to the highest concentration of British offshore farms, thanks to the windy weather conditions created by their geog-

raphy.

Several other projects are also under way, including at Hornsea and Dogger Bank off the coast of Yorkshire, which will compete for the title of largest offshore wind turbine field in the world.

Johnson has also touted rolling out floating wind farms, which utilise cutting-edge technology still being developed, to tap into windy marine areas with deeper seabeds.

Maritime wind farms have not proved universally popular among residents when visible from the shore, while some NGOs have concerns over the impact on marine mammals and migratory birds.

'Sustainable technology' The

sector is also trying to account for the so-called "global cost" of building and running a wind turbine on the planet.

Danish manufacturer Vestas has estimated it takes between five and 12 months of use to offset the energy cost of a turbine, the difference depending on the model and wind conditions.

"As turbines repay their entire carbon footprint in such a short space of time, they are excellent examples of sustainable technology in action," Robert Norris, of industry trade association RenewableUK, told AFP.

Alastair Dutton, who heads a task force at the Global Wind Energy Council (GWEC) industry group, believes bigger investment in technological innovation is needed

"to further increase their sustainability".

He expects that will allow turbine producers to "move away from carbon intensive raw earth materials and implement the highest level possible of recycling to insert wind within the circular economy".

Offshore wind power had a record year in 2019, with the completion of projects off the coasts of China, Taiwan, Britain and the Netherlands, among others.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) has highlighted the almost "unlimited potential" of offshore wind power, as production costs fall and technological progress increases turbines' power and efficiency.



Warehouses host glitzy Dubai's 'hipster' scene

If Dubai has a hipster centre, it is Alserkal Avenue, an industrial area full of warehouses large and small that in 2008 became a hub for art galleries, start-up businesses, and quirky retail outlets

AFP | Dubai

In the glitzy city of Dubai, known for its mega-projects, futuristic skyscrapers and ostentatious malls, Dana Alhammedi sat in a cosy cafe learning how to make natural beauty products.

The "environmentally conscious" workshop at the KAVE cafe is part of an emerging cultural scene in a city which after years of breakneck development is exploring its alternative side.

If Dubai has a hipster centre, it is Alserkal Avenue, an industrial area full of warehouses large and small that in 2008 became a hub for art galleries, start-up businesses, and quirky retail outlets.

"It's really nice to know how to get something natural and to stop using a lot of chemicals," Alhammedi, dressed in a traditional full-length abaya, told AFP.

She was mixing bicarbonate of soda with coconut oil to make a back-to-basics deodorant, jazz legend Nina Simone audible in the background.

"I'm happy that they started such activities and workshops here in the United Arab Emirates," Alhammedi said.

Home to more than nine million expatriates from well over 100 countries, making up 90 percent of the population, the UAE



A visitor walks through an art installation on Alserkal Avenue, the heart of Dubai's alternative scene



Works by Zimbabwean sculptor Dominic Benhura at an exhibition entitled 'Between Me and the Stone' at a gallery on Dubai's Alserkal Avenue

prides itself on being a melting pot.

Like other Gulf countries, it uses culture, media and sports events to win global recognition and push its soft power.

It has spent billions of dollars on high-profile museums and mega events, such as the Louvre Abu Dhabi and the Dubai Expo 2020 trade fair.

The oil-rich country also hosts a range of cultural events, ranging from jazz and film festivals to fashion week.

'A culture economy'

With the discovery of oil in the mid-20th century, the UAE transformed from a tiny econo-

my dependent on the pearl and fishing industries to a regional powerhouse and hub for trade and tourism.

Many tourists are drawn by the headline attractions: malls packed with high-end brands, luxury resorts, man-made islands and an indoor ski slope.

But Dubai's ultra-rapid rise resulted in what some see as a lack of cultural authenticity that in other capitals develops organically over time.

Alserkal, which hosts about 500 events a year, generally free of charge, is intended to create that cultural texture.

The project's director Vilma Jurkute said the community

supports 70 projects by young men and women from different nationalities, attracting half a million visitors each year.

"It's essentially a community of thought leaders in literature, films, theatre, and community development that formed a key pillar of a culture economy for the city of Dubai (and) for the region," the Lithuanian expatriate said.

Located in a light industrial district and embracing warehouse buildings that range from the sleek to the shabby, Alserkal represents an alternative to what Dubai is best known for, Jurkute added.

"We really are part of the city and we have been for the past decade," she said.

One of Alserkal's most prominent attractions is its Cinema



It's essentially a community of thought leaders in literature, films, theatre, and community development that formed a key pillar of a culture economy for the city of Dubai (and) for the region

VILMA JURKUTE
ALSERKAL DIRECTOR



Cinema Akil, the first and only art cinema in the Gulf, offers an alternative to standard blockbuster multiplexes



Visitors gather at The Kave cafe, another popular hipster hangout on Dubai's Alserkal Avenue

Akil, the first and only art cinema in the Gulf, offering audiences a different film experience, according to the theatre's deputy director Luz Villamil.

Every night independent films are played in the cinema, whose red armchairs and sofas, posters of old Arab classics and a cosy cafe help it to stand out from Dubai's usual blockbuster multiplexes.

Recent screenings have included "Papicha" by Algeria's Mounia Meddour and "Capername" by Lebanese director Nadine Labaki.

Next month, Akil will show "You Will Die At Twenty" by Sudanese filmmaker Amjad Abu Alala.

Sometimes, the screenings are followed by debates in the small theatre.

Before it opened there was almost no choice for audiences interested in something other than Hollywood or Bollywood blockbusters, Villamil told AFP.

"The most important thing for

us is to show films that highlight voices that perhaps we feel... don't get represented very much, including Arab cinema and women-focused films."

'Human interaction'

This more inclusive and lesser-known side of Dubai is what drew French-Tunisian Arabic calligraphy artist "eL Seed" to set up shop in Alserkal Avenue.

"I decided to have my space here to allow visitors the same experience as they would have on the streets... to just push the door and come in," he said.

His calligraphy is an art form Arabs can enjoy amid the overwhelming dominance of English as the UAE's most commonly spoken and written language.

"Calligraphy linked to graffiti is a language that speaks to many people and allows them to reconcile with their Arab identity," said eL Seed, who lives between Paris, Tunis and Dubai.

"What interests me is human interaction," he said.

Law on compulsory receipts sets Germans grumbling

AFP | Frankfurt am Main

In January it became law in Germany that retailers must print a receipt for every last transaction in a bid to fight tax evasion, but shopkeepers, customers and industry groups are already bucking against the scheme.

"Small shops' cash registers already have electronic chips that tax officials can read any time. Why should we go back to the old system?" asked Christian Koch, owner of Hammett, a specialist crime novel shop in Berlin.

"It's a pain, of the 50 tickets I print each day I'll throw 49 straight in the bin," he added.

Even bakers selling rolls for a few dozen euro cents each must now print a receipt for every transaction -- even when their customer doesn't want one.

With their high numbers of



Even the German government is divided about the requirement as many receipts are printed on thermal paper that cannot be recycled

small sales each day now generating reams of unwanted documentation, bakeries and snack stands are especially outraged

by the change in the law.

"I've already emptied this once," said a worker at Frankfurt sausage stand "Best Worscht in

Town", pointing to a bin overflowing with discarded slips of paper during the busy lunch hour trade.

"It's a really stupid idea for the environment."

Tax evasion

Obligatory receipts were voted through in 2016, but the law slipped under the public radar until shortly before it came into effect on January 1.

Economy Minister Peter Altmaier asked Finance Minister Olaf Scholz to give up on the plans, especially because receipts printed on thermal paper cannot be recycled.

Since then, retailers' federation HDE has also written to Scholz, asking him to exempt businesses that issue more than 500 receipts per day on average.

"That's one receipt per minute

for a shop open nine hours a day," the group said in the document, seen.

Until now Scholz has resisted all such calls, saying the fight against tax evasion -- estimated at around 10 billion euros by tax officials -- must include preventing shops and restaurants from failing to record transactions properly.

"I don't think small shops are really trying to get out of paying their taxes," said Sarah, a shopper at Hammett.

"They should worry more about people like Amazon, make them pay their taxes in Germany," she added.

Costly transition

German authorities hope to tighten their grip on money flows through businesses where a large proportion of payments happen in cash, making them

more open to tax fraud.

In Berlin, retailers are legally required to install tamper-proof cash registers by October, and many have yet to make the switch.

"It costs close to 1,000 euros (\$1,110) per device, and a lot more if you have to buy a new one," trades association ZHD said.

That represents a "prohibitive" cost for retailers, especially those like a chain of bakeries with 30 or 40 branches, for example, it added.

The finance ministry retorts that Austria, Italy, Portugal and other European countries get along just fine with obligatory receipts.

But the HDE notes that France plans to gradually phase out the requirement -- except in cases where customers explicitly request a paper record.

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: 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 BICHR, 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 NEEKVARU (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



ENTHA MANCHIVAADAVURAA (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

Parasite: the lower depths rise with a vengeance

A destitute family occupies a wealthy household in an elaborate scheme that goes comically – then horribly – wrong

● 'Parasite' is one of the best movies of the year thanks to its riveting directing, a great ensemble cast, and the thrillingly unpredictable plot

Parasite opens with a stark reminder that the obsession with smartphones and handheld Internet-enabled devices is a worldwide phenomenon. It moves from a relatively sedate perspective of a family scrambling to stay afloat in a society of high unemployment and income inequality to a clever con game to something darker and shocking. The film surprises with its narrative twists and turns, making the overall trajectory unexpected and the endpoint different from anything one might have expected at the beginning.

Considering the filmography of director Bong Joon Ho (which includes The Host and Okja, both creature features of



A scene from 'Parasite'

a sort, as well as Snowpiercer), it may come as a surprise that something with the title of Parasite isn't about monsters (at least of the non-human variety). It's about the class struggle between the haves and the have-nots and, although there are times when the social commentary – visceral as it is – becomes heavy-handed, the movie never loses its mo-

mentum, with each act ratcheting up the stakes as it moves inexorably toward a violent, grotesque climax.

Early scenes of Parasite echo the beginning of Hirokazu Kore-eda's Shoplifters (which was my #1 film for 2018) by focusing on a family eking out an existence just above poverty-level by resorting to scams and dead-

end odd-jobs (like folding hundreds of pizza delivery boxes). The Kim family don't present a portrait of fastidiousness. The father, Ki-taek (Kang-ho Song), and mother, Chung-sook (Hyae Jin Chang), are unemployed and seemingly happy to be in that state. The son, Ki-woo (Woo-sik Choi), has college aspirations, but isn't as cynical or forward

as his older sister, Ki-jung (Sodam Park). Relief comes when Ki-woo is presented with an opportunity to work as an English tutor for the Park family. His charge, a young woman named Da-hye (Jung Ziso), is the daughter of a wealthy couple, Yeon-kyo (Yeo-jeong Jo) and Dong-ik (Sun-kyun Lee), who have more money than good sense. The Kims are able to pull off a complicated con, installing Ki-jung as an art teacher for the couple's rambunctious young son, Ki-taek as the family chauffeur,

and Chung-sook as the housekeeper – all without revealing to the affluent couple that all their new hires are related. Thus it is that the Kims become the "parasite" of the title, leeching off the Parks. The scam seems to be working until a hidden secret in the basement threatens to unmask the Kims as frauds and imposters, thereby destroying the symbiotic relationship. Although Bong has a message to convey about the unsustainability of the class schism in Korean society (a problem not confined to the Asian peninsula), he blends it into a thriller of uncommon intelligence and building tension. The story's twists are unpredictable without being outlandish, creating a narrative that grips and holds the viewer. The characters exist in a gray zone – neither good nor evil and all the more human as a result – that makes them seem real (as opposed to being a screenwriter's inventions). Bong also displays an offbeat sense of humor that occasionally emerges in the most unexpected of circumstances.



Bong Joon-ho's bizarre black comedy about a poor one in a modern-day Downton Abbey situation gets its tendrils in you

as his older sister, Ki-jung (Sodam Park).

Relief comes when Ki-woo is presented with an opportunity to work as an English tutor for the Park family. His charge, a young woman named Da-hye (Jung Ziso), is the daughter of a wealthy couple, Yeon-kyo (Yeo-jeong Jo) and Dong-ik (Sun-kyun Lee), who have more money than good sense. The Kims are able to pull off a complicated con, installing Ki-jung as an art teacher for the couple's rambunctious young son, Ki-taek as the family chauffeur,



Paris Hilton

Paris Hilton has been 'playing a character'

Los Angeles

Socialite Paris Hilton feels like she's been "playing a character" all her life. "I've never done anything like this in my life. In this film I discuss things I've never discussed before. I hope that people are going to see who I truly am," Hilton told Deadline, reports femalefirst.co.uk. "It follows me in my real life, everything I've done before was me playing a character. I was talking about things that are very hard to talk about. It was an amazing experience but it was very scary. I was freaking out," she added. She had just revealed she rejected a chance to reboot "The Simple Life" as she felt it was too "timeless and iconic" to be remade even though she had the "best time" working on the show. She said: "They've already approached me about it. My schedule is so insane. I think that show is so, the first of its kind, so timeless, so iconic and so ... I don't know if it could ever be remade."



Jennifer Garner, Sophie Turner

Jennifer Garner, Sophie Turner to join list of presenters for 2020 SAG Awards

Los Angeles

Sophie Turner, Pedro Pascal, Jennifer Garner, and Steve Buscemi are the additional names joining a star-studded lineup of presenters for this year's 26th annual Screen Actors Guild awards.

Scarlett Johansson, who got a nod to the nomination list for both 'Marriage Story' and 'Jojo Rabbit' also figures in the list of presenters.

Actors nominated for 'Bombshell' - Nicole Kidman, Margot Robbie, and Charlize Theron are the other names in the list of presenters, reported People magazine.

The lineup will also feature nominees Tom Hanks (A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood), Sterling K. Brown (This Is Us), Taron Egerton (Rocketman), Phoebe Waller-Briggs (Fleabag).

Additionally, Leonardo DiCaprio is up for a special honour of presenting Robert DeNiro with the SAG Life Achievement Award.

The awards will be presented on January 19 at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles, California.

Zoe Kravitz shares why she agreed to play 'Catwoman'

Los Angeles

Zoe Kravitz

Actress Zoe Kravitz said yes to the role of Catwoman because of the character's "really strong femininity."

It was revealed in 2019 that Kravitz would be starring opposite Robert Pattinson's Caped Crusader in "The Batman", set for a 2021 debut.

Speaking during the Winter Television Critics Association Press Tour, Kravitz spoke about what attracted her to the role, which has previously been portrayed by stars like Michelle Pfeiffer, Halle Berry, and Anne Hathaway, reports aceshowbiz.com.

"I think Catwoman, Selina Kyle represents really strong femininity, and I'm excited to dive into that. I think femininity represents power, and I think it's a different kind of power than masculine power. That's something that's really interesting about Batman and Catwoman," Kravitz said, reported Variety.

She added: "I think Batman represents a very kind of masculine power, and Catwoman represents very feminine power - slightly more complicated, and softer, too. I like the idea that you can be soft, you can be gentle and still be very powerful and still be very dangerous."



CLASSIFIEDS

ATTENTION Students of **CBSE VII to XII**

Looking for IIT-JEE | SAT(Subject) | School Exams | Boards | Competitive Exams

FIITJEE starting Evening / Weekend batches for CBSE Students

- Training by Experienced JEE / SAT Trainers
- Complimentary JEE & Board Archives
- Exhaustive Study Material
- Foundation Courses for Class VII to X
- Access to Online myPAT Test Series
- Feedback through Regular PTIs

ADMISSION TEST DATE : 31st January, 2020

Also offering two weeks **FREE revision** classes for **school/board exams** for **VII to XII**

FIITJEE For Enquiries
Please Call / WhatsApp: +973 38862215, 33784481, 33911860
E-mail: bahrain.classes@fiitjee.com | Log on: www.fiitjeebahrain.com

Los Angeles

Kim Kardashian shrugs off critics, reveals law school progress

Reality TV star Kim Kardashian West said on Saturday she had successfully completed her first year of law studies while preparing to release a documentary about her advocacy work for criminal justice reform. "Kim Kardashian West: The Justice Project" will debut on the Oxygen cable network on April 5. The two-hour film will show West visiting prisons and working alongside legal experts on four cases of people they believe have been unfairly sentenced.

West is best known for developing beauty and fashion products and chronicling her life with her sisters on TV's "Keeping Up with the Kardashians." She became interested in criminal justice reform after helping to win the release two women from prison.

At a discussion about her new documentary, West was asked how she would respond to people who may think she had attached herself to the cause in order to burnish her well-known brand. "I'm very used to criticism, so nothing really fazes me," West said at the event organized by the Television Critics Association.



Kim Kardashian

Justin Bieber 'asked to leave' exclusive gym



Justin Bieber

Los Angeles

Pop singer Justin Bieber was reportedly asked to leave an exclusive gym because singer Taylor Swift wanted to train alone.

Bieber and Swift have had beef in the past. The "Blank Space" hitmaker hit out at Bieber's manager, Scooter Braun, who's the official owner of all of Swift's masters of every album she's made bar one, reports mirror.co.uk.

Swift accused Braun of "bullying", with Bieber wading into the fray by sharing a photograph of him on FaceTime call with Braun and rapper Kanye West, captioning it: "Taylor swift what up?"

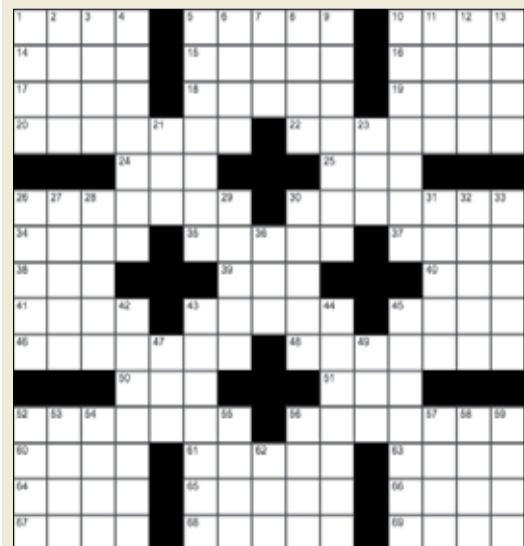
Now it's reported that Bieber, along with the others at gym were told they needed to leave as Swift had made an appointment.

TMZ.com reported that Bieber's entourage insisted he stay and finish his workout - with it said Bieber was none the wiser that it was Swift who had booked it up.

A source told MailOnline that the "Baby" hitmaker had arrived at the gym without an appointment, and that he was asked to leave the gym "because they had other appointments."

The source added: "It is a private gym so everyone has their own time slots."

CROSSWORD



Yesterday's solution



Across
1- Dog-powered snow vehicle; 5- Mends a shoe; 10- Not new; 14- Like the White Rabbit; 15- Turn aside; 16- "A Doll's House" heroine; 17- Model married to David Bowie; 18- "Lovergirl" singer; 19- Actor Kristofferson; 20- Communications satellite; 22- Strain; 24- Electrically charged atom; 25- Cartesian conclusion; 26- Republic in central Europe; 30- Garnish; 34- Inwardly; 35- Headgear of a monarch; 37- Dixie Chicks, e.g.; 38- Nipper's co.; 39- Month after avril; 40- the land of the free...; 41- Puts away; 43- False; 45- Suffix with exist; 46- Apparition; 48- Braided; 50- Louis XIV, e.g.; 51- Summer Games org.; 52- Go along with; 56- Punishment; 60- Feline line; 61- Driver's invitation; 63- Prepare to be shot; 64- Famous last words; 65- Perform or portray; 66- Airline to Tel Aviv; 67- Coarse file,

angry tone of voice; 68- Prepares for billiards; 69- 1994 Costner role;
Down
1- Split; 2- Gammy; 3- Bibliography abbr.; 4- Compactness; 5- Diabolical; 6- In excess of; 7- Shelter; 8- Sea eagles; 9- Stopping place; 10- Disheveled; 11- Rifle (through); 12- Actor Stoltz; 13- Morse element; 21- Rocky peak; 23- Dr. Dre's genre; 26- Buenos Aires; 27- Remove a covering; 28- Roofing stone; 29- Defense covering; 30- Intertwine; 31- Golf clubs; 32- One who cries "uncle"; 33- Percipience with horns; 36- Bran source; 42- Foul-up; 43- Nor's partner; 44- Sets straight; 45- One on the run; 47- Water tester; 49- Great length of time; 52- From the U.S.; 53- "grip!"; 54- Goes bad; 55- The last Mrs. Chaplin; 56- Select; 57- "Damn Yankees" role; 58- Boris Godunov, for one; 59- Quick sharp bark; 62- Lobbying org;

SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution



How to play

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

SPORTS

India outplay Australia

Rohit Sharma made 119 to help India to victory against Australia in the third ODI and a series win

AFP | Bangalore, India

A sparkling century by Rohit Sharma and some inspired bowling helped India to a series-clinching seven-wicket win over Australia in the third one-day international yesterday.

Sharma made 119 and put on a key 137-run second-wicket stand with skipper Virat Kohli, who made 89, as India chased down their target of 287 in 47.3 overs in Bangalore.

The hosts fought back in the series after a 10-wicket drubbing in the opening game to go past the Aaron Finch-led tourists 2-1.

"We lost the last three in the last series (in 2019), and coming back and winning the last two games after losing the first one, is very satisfying," said Kohli, whose side lost to Australia 2-3 at home last year.

"2020 has been wonderful, and we just want to go onwards and upwards. Great for the team."

Paceman Mohammed Shami



India's Rohit Sharma (L) and Virat Kohli run between wickets

Scorecard

India 289 for 3 (Sharma 119, Kohli 89) beat **Australia** 286 for 9 (Smith 131, Labuschagne 54, Shami 4-63, Jadeja 2-44, Bumrah 0-38) by 7 wickets

claimed four wickets to lead the bowling charge with the hosts restricting Australia to 286 for nine on a good batting pitch despite Steve Smith's 131.

Sharma took the attack to the opposition with a steady flow of boundaries -- eight fours and six sixes in his 128-ball knock -- and completed his eighth century against the Aussies.

He finally fell to Adam Zampa's leg spin as the senior batsman attempted a big hit but the ball top-edged off his bat to be caught by Mitchell Starc at long-

on.

Kohli kept the chase on track with an attacking Shreyas Iyer, unbeaten on 44, as the pair put on 68 runs before the captain was bowled by Josh Hazlewood. Indian opener Shikhar Dha-

wan did not bat after injuring his shoulder while fielding in the fifth over Australian innings. He went for an X-ray later and TV pictures showed the batsman's arm in a sling.

India though did not feel his absence as Sharma and wicket-keeper-batsman KL Rahul put on 69 runs to set up the chase.

Rahul was given not out by the on-field umpire after being trapped lbw off Ashton Agar for 19 but Australia successfully reviewed the decision in their favour.



Paceman Mohammed Shami claimed four wickets to lead the bowling charge

Smith century and 'great learning'

Earlier Smith followed up his 98 in the second match with his ninth ODI hundred and his first since January 2017 -- a period during which he served a one-year ban between March 2018 and 2019.

Smith put on 127 runs for the third wicket with Marnus Labuschagne to lay the foundation for Australia's total after they elected to bat.

Shami struck first to send David Warner trudging back to the pavilion for three after the left-handed opener edged to wicketkeeper KL Rahul.

Finch and Smith started to build, but their partnership was cut short by a big mix up between the two batsmen with the captain being run out for 19.

BCC top ETS league



Imran Butt

TDT | Manama

BCC defeated National Guards by 40 runs in the ETS Div A 40 over league organized by Cricket Bahrain Association. Batting first BCC posted 249 runs. Sohail Ahmed top scored with 108 runs. Asif Javed claimed 2 wickets for National Guards. In reply National Guards could only manage 209 runs.

AbuSaad Climax defeated BOC by 6 wickets in another match. Batting first BOC posted 235 runs. Mohd Shabbir top scored with 111 runs. Bilal Mansoor claimed 3 wickets for Climax CC. In reply AbuSaad Climax chased target for the loss of 4 wickets. Imran Butt top scored with 71 runs.

BCC A defeated Indian Lions by 103 runs. Batting first BCC A posted 283 runs. Shahbaz Badr top scored with 63 runs. Ranjith claimed 3 wickets for Indian Lions. In reply Indian Lions could only manage 180 runs. Mohsin claimed 3 wickets for BCC A

South Africa face humiliating England defeat

AFP | Port Elizabeth

South Africa coach Mark Boucher said yesterday he needed to take responsibility for what is heading to be a humiliating defeat in the third Test against England at St George's Park.

Alpha Fire won the toss and England captain Joe Root produced a Test-best bowling performance, taking four for 31 as South Africa ended the fourth day still 188 runs short of avoiding an innings defeat with only four wickets left.

They finished a day marked by a largely woeful batting performance on 102 for six after being forced to follow on.

England now seem assured of taking an unbeatable 2-1 series lead into the final Test starting in Johannesburg on Friday.

"It's very disappointing," said Boucher. "Ultimately I've got to take responsibility for the performance of the team -- how do I mentally and physically upskill these guys in a short period of time to make them better players?"

Responding to comments that South African cricket was at its lowest ebb since unity in 1991, Boucher responded: "That's a big call. Everyone's entitled to their opinions."

"I've been in teams where we've been pretty low as well. Yes, we're in a bad situation in this particular game but we're not out of the series yet. I have to find a way to get the guys



England fielder Ollie Pope dives to catch South Africa batsman Rassie van der Dussen off the bowling of Joe Root

Ultimately I've got to take responsibility for the performance of the team -- how do I mentally and physically upskill these guys in a short period of time to make them better players

MARK BOUCHER

ready for tomorrow and for the last Test match as well."

With speculation mounting about the future of captain Faf du Plessis, who has been out of form in recent months, Boucher tacitly admitted that the player was struggling.

"His state of mind is going to be a lot better when he scores

runs."

Du Plessis top-scored with 36 in the second innings.

"We all know he's under pressure from the media and from a confidence point of view so the positive for me today is that he actually got out there today and gave himself a chance," said Boucher.

"He looked like he had some rhythm in a really tough situation. I'm sure he'll take a lot of confidence from the fact that he faced quite a few balls and got to spend some time in the middle."

When Du Plessis was sixth out with the total on 73 South Africa were in danger of suffering their worst defeat against England but Vernon Philander and Keshav Maharaj survived until the close to reduce the margin below the record of an innings and 202 runs suffered in South Africa's first season of Test cricket in 1888/89.

World Cup Junior Men's Epee concludes in Bahrain

TDT | Manama

Under the patronage of HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, First Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports and President of Bahrain Olympic Committee, the World Cup Junior Men's Epee concluded in Bahrain, featuring 69 participants representing 20 countries.

On this occasion, HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa said, "We are very happy to host this event which confirms Bahrain's capabilities to host big events and this will contribute to bolstering the Kingdom's position as an ideal venue for major sport competitions."

He further added, "Hosting this competition for the third consecutive year reflects Bahrain's development and advancement in the area of hosting big sport contests thanks to the support and sponsorship of HM King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the King of the Kingdom of Bahrain. It also an indication of the successes we have achieved in the previous two editions."

Moreover, HH Shaikh Khalid praised the enormous efforts exerted by Bahrain Fencing Association under the chairmanship of Shaikh Ibrahim bin Salman Al Khalifa towards preparing for hosting this champi-



HH Shaikh Khalid's son awards a winner



Participants in action during the competition

onship. It's worth noting that Russia finished first and third in the event, while Italy came second.

The winners were crowned by HH Shaikh Khalid's children HH Shaikh Faisal and HH Shai-

kh Abdullah. "We take this opportunity to thank HH Shaikh Khalid for sponsoring the event. HH's support and backing is a source of pride and motivation for us to give more," Shaikh Ibrahim bin Salman said

Al Balooshi powers Bahrain1 to victory

● **Khalid Al Balooshi triumph in third round of Bahrain drag racing at BIC**

TDT | Manama

Bahrain1 Racing were amongst the victorious teams over the weekend as Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) hosted an exciting third round in the 2019/2020 Bahrain Drag Racing Championship in Sakhr.

Bahrain1's Khalid Al Balooshi triumphed in the ultra-competitive Pro Mod category to register his second successive win in the region's leading series.

Al Balooshi was part of a field of 132 participants from all over the world who competed in the meeting, organised by BIC in co-operation with the Bahrain Drag Racing Club, Bahrain Motorcycle Club and the Bahrain Motor Federation.

From the entrants, 97 were competing in cars while 35 were on bikes.

Al Balooshi won the Pro Mod class with a 3.772 seconds pass in the final at a speed of 325.20kph. He defeated Saad Al Muran, who had a mark of 3.986s at 305.02kph. Muslim Al Qallaf finished in third place.

In the other competition categories, four Bahrainis managed to claim the top spot on their respective podiums.



Khalid Al Balooshi with other winners on the podium

Zakariya Alkuwari won in the Outlaw FWD class with a time of 8.307s at 287.20kph. He beat Ahmed Alsaeei in the final, while Ahmed Zaman claimed third place.

Nawaf Almanni won the Outlaw 6-Cylinder category in 4.587s at 253.74kph. He beat Mohammed Haji, who had a red light in the final. Jassim Zaman came away with third.

Hussain Mohammed was another Bahraini to triumph. Contesting the Super Street V8 class, he won his final round with a



Four Bahrainis managed to claim the top spot on their respective podiums in the other competition categories

pass of 4.359s at 271.58kph, narrowly beating Abdulla Alshamsi who had a 4.376s finishing time at 273.69kph. Khalid Saif finished third.

Ali Rabee completed the quartet of local winners, taking first place amongst the Index 10.5 runners. He won the final with a pass of 10.683s at 190.53kph, beating the 10.861s at 191.58kph marks of Ali Abdulla. Abdulla Aldoseri finished in third.

Meanwhile, participants from Saudi Arabia also enjoyed a pos-

itive evening, taking victories in five classes.

Abdulwahab Al Mutaib won the Index 9.5 category with a 9.510s time at 217.37kph in his final round. Al Mutaib beat Fahed Hameed, who had to settle for being a close runner-up with a time of 9.587s at 217.91kph. Yousif Khamiri finished third.

Majed Alshwesh followed suit by winning the Index 8.5 division. He had a final pass of 9.130s at 264.34kph, defeating Sayed Hussain Al Hadad who had a red light. Ahmed Alkhan took the third podium step.

The three other wins for Saudi participants were in bikes classes. Fadi Abu Jamus won the Street Fight Bikes ahead of Theeb Alqahtani with Mohammed Al Taatoon finishing third. Khalid Aldoseri was first in the Index 8.5 Bikes class, finishing

ahead of Nawaf Al Dosary and Ali Bahram; while Mishari Al Turki triumphed in the Super Street Bikes ahead of Jehad Al Jamal and Bader Alawwad.

Elsewhere on the night, Kuwaitis Fawaz Ebrahiem Ali and Mohammed Alawwad won in the Competition 4.5 cars class and the Pro Bikes, respectively. Ali finished ahead of Obaid Al Blooshi and Abdulla Alhatem, while Alawwad won with Bader Alawwad in second and Ahmed Belal third.

Following all the action, the winners were awarded their respective trophies in the podium ceremony.

The championship is now headed to the last two rounds of the 2019/2020 season. The penultimate meeting will be from February 4 to 7, to be followed by the championship finale from February 25 to 28.



A car in action at BIC

Inter stall in Lecce as Rebic lifts AC Milan

AFP | London

Inter Milan's Serie A title push hit another stumbling block yesterday after a 1-1 draw at lowly Lecce as Ante Rebic fired city rivals AC Milan to a last gasp 3-2 win over Udinese.

Antonio Conte's Inter looked to be bringing home maximum points from his hometown team, where he started his footballing career in the 1980s, when Alessandro Bastoni headed the away side in front with 18 minutes remaining.

But Marco Mancosu grabbed a precious point for the southerners five minutes after going behind. Inter have won just two of their last six league games but are one point behind leaders Juventus, who can however open up a four-point advantage when they host Parma later yesterday.

Conte's side are now also under threat from Lazio who are just two points behind with a game in hand after hammering



Inter Milan's forward Martinez (C) challenges Lecce's Cristian Dell'Orco (L) and Jacopo Petriccione

Sampdoria 5-1 on Saturday.

Earlier Ante Rebic hit a brace, including the stoppage time winner, against Udinese that snatched a dramatic win that gave troubled AC Milan back-to-back league victories.

Star striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic got his first start at the San Siro after scoring last weekend

at Cagliari.

The 38-year-old Swede did not get to celebrate on front of the home crowd but he has provided a confidence-boost for the seven-time European champions, who have taken seven points in three matches since his return.

"We started a little tense," said

Milan coach Stefano Pioli.

"But I'm satisfied with our performance, we put our heart and soul into winning it.

"The arrival of Ibrahimovic has given us even more depth and conviction, which has helped us."

However, Pioli's side needed to fight back after Jens Stryger Larsen opened the scoring in the seventh minutes for the away side, who were coming off a run of three consecutive wins.

But the hosts upped the pace in the second half with former Eintracht Frankfurt player Rebic coming on after the break to equalise minutes later.

Theo Hernandez put Milan ahead with a powerful volley on 72 minutes, to take his tally to five league goals this season.

Kevin Lasagna got Udinese back level five minutes from time but Rebic had the final word deep into injury time to lift Milan to eighth, two points off the Europa League places.

Lewandowski strikes again as Bayern go second in Bundesliga

AFP | Berlin

Robert Lewandowski hit his 20th league goal this season as Bayern Munich climbed to second in the Bundesliga yesterday with a 4-0 romp at Hertha Berlin to trim RB Leipzig's lead to four points.

Having seen RB Leipzig go five points clear with a 3-1 win over Union Berlin on Saturday, Bayern climbed a place in the table with second-half goals by

Thomas Mueller, Lewandowski, Thiago Alcantara and Ivan Perisic.

"We eventually made Hertha tired, but we were too patient and not threatening enough in the first half," said Mueller who set up Perisic to claim his 12th league assist this season.

"We raised the tempo after the break and once we got the breakthrough, Hertha didn't fight back."

After Leipzig's Germany striker Timo Werner had edged

ahead of him as the league's top scorer with two goals against Union, Lewandowski drew level with his main rival's tally of 20 by converting a penalty.

Lewandowski and Werner are now the first players in Bundesliga history to have scored 20 goals after 18 games in their challenge to Gerd Mueller's record of 40 goals in a Bundesliga season, set in 1971/72.

After a groin injury last month, Lewandowski proved

his fitness with a lively display at Berlin's Olympic Stadium.

He now has 31 goals in 26 games in all competitions, including 10 in just five Champions League games.

There was good news before kick-off for Hertha coach Jurgen Klinsmann as the German Football Association (DFB) confirmed his coaching licence is valid after doubts emerged last week over whether the certificate earned in 2000 had expired.

BIC set for Drag and Drift Nights



A car in action at BIC

AFP | Madrid

Ebrahim K Kanoo Drag and Drift Nights returns to action today at Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) in Sakhr.

Those who take part will have a chance to drive their cars or ride their motorbikes down BIC's world-class drag strip or around the circuit's Vehicle Dynamics Area, or even both!

The double-header remains one of the most popular activities on offer at "The Home of Motorsport in the Middle East".

BIC's quarter-mile strip hosts the drag racing action. BIC is a member of the prestigious National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) Worldwide Network, and it is where some of the region's best, World record-breaking drag racers go head to head in the national championship. Meanwhile, the drifting will take place at the circuit's Vehicle Dynamics Area, which is a specially configured venue at BIC's car park that has been surrounded by safety barriers. It is the largest and open tarmac area in Bahrain.

Registration on Monday begins at 5pm and will be open until 9pm, while the action will be held from 6pm to 11pm.

Both the drag and the drifting can be enjoyed for a single fee of BD10,500. Participation in just the drag racing or just the drifting costs BD7,500. Registration can be done on site from 5pm, and the action will be held from 6pm to 11pm.

Those who would like to experience the drag or drift as a passenger can get into a participant's car for an additional BD4. Spectators can purchase tickets for BD2 apiece.

Also as part of the evening's drag racing programme, BIC is offering the immensely thrilling Dragster Experience. This is one of the circuit's most unique and ultimate-adrenaline activities, as it gives participants a taste of pure speed as they are taken from zero to 100kph in just one second while seated in a Top Dragster. The Dragster Experience costs BD42.

Safety standards of the highest level are followed at all times during the evening's events for both drivers and spectators alike.