

HH Shaikh Nasser honours top-achieving athletes

HH Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa presents medals to athletes for achievements which contributed to raising the kingdom's flags at various sports gatherings | P12



Ariana Grande deletes Twitter account, remains active on Instagram 10 CELEBS

BUSINESS 5 Saudi Hajj, Umrah Ministry grants OTA status to India-based Akbar Travels

Shura condemns Houthi attacks in Saudi Arabia

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 The Shura Council strongly condemned the Houthi terrorist attacks against the cities of Najran and Jazan in Saudi Arabia, causing the death of two civilians and injuring others in Jazan.

The council condemned the continuous terrorist attacks to undermine the security and stability of Saudi Arabia, and stressed that it is a deliberate violation of international humanitarian law.

It also called on the international community to take strict decisions to stop these heinous terrorist attacks.

The Shura Council affirmed Bahrain's solidarity with Saudi Arabia and support for all the measures it takes to maintain its security, stability and territorial integrity.

'No government jobs for expats' bills rejected
TDT | Manama

The Shura Council yesterday rejected two bills that sought to amend the Civil Service Law in order to reserve all jobs under the public sector, including contract jobs, for Bahrainis.

The council voted by a majority, with one member abstaining, to reject the two bills following the recommendations of the Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee.

It observed that foreigners need to be hired for jobs in case of not finding a suitable Bahraini candidate who meets the qualifications to occupy the required position.

Royal support to charity, humanitarian work hailed

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Representative of His Majesty the King for Humanitarian Work and Youth Affairs, His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, has commended the royal support to charity and humanitarian work.

HH Shaikh Nasser thanked His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the Honorary President of the Royal Humanitarian Foundation (RHF), and His Roy-



HM the King



HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister

al Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister.

HH Shaikh Nasser expressed appreciation to the executive directorate and all employees of RHF for their distinguished role in serving the orphans, widows and the needy.

He was speaking on the occasion of RHF's winning the second edition of the Prince Mohamed bin Fahad Prize for Best Charity Performance in Arab

Countries (2019-2020), which was organised by the Arab League's Organisation for Administrative Development under the theme "Towards a Better Future for Institutional Charity Work in the Arab World".

HH Shaikh Nasser described the achievement as a reflection of the royal support to charity work and humanitarian efforts by Bahrain to provide aid to people suffering from conflicts, wars and natural disasters.

West Bank tensions rise

Israeli forces, Palestinians clash near settlement outpost amid increase in violence elsewhere

Scores injured by live fire and rubber bullets

Tel Aviv

Israeli forces clashed with Palestinians in the West Bank in an area that has seen a recent uptick in friction, the Israeli military and Palestinian medics said.

The clashes late Saturday were part of days of tension in the area surrounding a West Bank settlement outpost and a spike in violence elsewhere in the West Bank and east Jerusalem.

During the clashes, the military said, hundreds of Palestinians threw rocks and burned tyres and shots were fired in the area. The military said forces responded with live fire and "riot dispersal means," typically tear gas and stun grenades.

The military also said shots were fired from a passing vehicle toward a military post near

the West Bank city of Nablus, which is south of Homesh. It was not clear if the shooting was related to the clashes.

The Palestinian Red Crescent said 10 people were wounded by live fire. The Palestinian Health Ministry said one of them, a 17-year-old, was seriously wounded. Dozens of others were wounded by rubber bullets.

A soldier was lightly wounded, the military said.

Homesh, in the northern West Bank, was dismantled as part of Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005. But in recent years, Israeli settlers have returned to pray and established an unauthorised outpost at the site.

Last week, at least one Palestinian gunman opened fire on a car filled with Jewish seminary students next to the outpost. Yehuda Dimentman, 25, was killed and two others were wounded near Homesh, which is considered illegal by the Israeli government.

Jewish settler march stopped!

Amman

Protests by Palestinians in several villages north of Nablus appear to have succeeded in stopping a planned Jewish settler march, after the settlers demanded the return of land in the area as revenge for the killing of one of their own near Ramallah.

The demonstrations took place in the villages of Burqa, Sabastia, Silt Al Thahriah and Bazaria.

The Israel Defense Force responded with a mix of live bullets, rubber-covered metal bullets, and tear gas, with the Palestinian Red Crescent reporting a total of 247 injuries, at least nine of them from live bullets. One Palestinian remains in a critical condition.

The main protests took place in the village of Burqa, but people from other villages said that



Palestinian demonstrators in the Burqa village

they too suffered attacks by Jewish settlers.

Ghassan Douglas, a Palestinian from Burqa, and who is also the deputy head of the national

committee against settlers in the north, said that the 30,000 Palestinians living in the area would not accept settlers on their land.

Russian ultimatum

Putin threatens 'military action' against Ukraine

Moscow

President Vladimir Putin said yesterday that if NATO does not provide binding guarantees to curtail military deployments in Eastern Europe and to bar Ukraine from membership in the alliance, he will be forced to consider a variety of options, including a military response.

Putin's demands are contained in a pair of draft treaties Russia submitted to NATO earlier this month.

Putin, whose remarks were aired on Russian state TV yesterday, expressed concerns about the possibility of missiles being deployed in Ukraine if the for-



Putin is sending stern warning to NATO and Ukraine

mer Soviet satellite joins NATO. "We have nowhere to retreat," Putin said. "They have pushed us to a line that we can't cross. They have taken it to the point where we simply must tell them; 'Stop!'"

When asked about the exact nature of the response he was proposing, Putin said it would "depend on what proposals our military experts submit to me."

NATO is unlikely to agree to Putin's terms. "NATO member countries decide who is a member of NATO, not Russia," White House press secretary Jen Psaki told reporters, according to The Washington Post.

More than 10,000 Russian troops had returned to their bases after a month of drilling on the Ukrainian border. Despite this reduction, Russia still has tens of thousands of troops stationed on the Ukrainian border, and intelligence analysts continue to warn that an invasion could be imminent.

President Biden has threatened increased sanctions if Russia invades Ukraine.

BAHRAIN COVID-19

TOTAL TESTED

7918187

ACTIVE CASES

1548

DEATHS

1394

DISCHARGED

276863

NEW CASES

287

210 fils (includes VAT)



Health minister inaugurates Sitra Special Health Care Center



Health Minister Faeqa bint Said Al Saleh inaugurated Sitra Special Health Care Center. The Undersecretary Dr Waleed Al Manea was present. The inauguration reflects the ministry's keenness to develop and operate the center with the best capabilities and equipment to enhance the long-term health care system. The opening of the center came in line with the ministry's approach to complete vital projects in the fields of healthcare and rehabilitation to serve all governorates of the Kingdom, which contributes in raising the quality of life of individuals and meeting their health needs through modern specialised centers. The minister expressed her pride in the building's advanced structure level and equipment to complement the center's health services, and she appreciated the unlimited support that people with various disabilities enjoy in Bahrain through the government's care and follow-up to ensure high-quality health services to citizens and residents.

BDF Chief of Staff attends graduation ceremony



Bahrain Defence Force Chief of Staff, Lieutenant-General Dhiyab bin Saqr Al Nuaimi, yesterday attended the graduation ceremony of a specialised training session at a BDF unit. Al Nuaimi presented the graduates with certificates, and congratulated them on the distinguished level they had shown throughout the session. He also expressed thanks and appreciation to trainers and graduates for the tremendous efforts they had exerted to ensure the success of the course. Assistant Chief of Staff for Human Resources, Major-General Shaikh Ali bin Rashid Al Khalifa, Royal Tanks Commander, Major-General Rashid bin Abdulla Al Nuaimi, Military Training Director, Major-General Salah Rashdi Al Saad, and a number of senior BDF officers attended the ceremony.

Bahraini-Indian relations and progress praised



Advisor to His Majesty the King for Diplomatic Affairs Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Khalifa received Indian Ambassador to Bahrain Piyush Srivastava. The Advisor praised the distinguished Bahraini-Indian relations and the progress witnessed by both countries at all levels. The meeting reviewed bilateral relations and ways to enhance cooperation. It also discussed the latest regional and international developments and issues of common interest.

HM King's Advisor for Diplomatic Affairs receives Iraqi Charge d'Affaires



Advisor to His Majesty the King for Diplomatic Affairs Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Khalifa received Iraqi Charge d'Affaires Muayyad Omar Abdulrahman. The Advisor praised the historical Bahraini-Iraqi relations and their development at various levels for their peoples' interest. He wished the Charge d'Affaires success in his diplomatic duties.

Support for projects to improve educational output



Higher Education Council Secretary General and Board of Trustees Deputy Chairperson, Dr Shaikha Rana bint Isa bin Duaj Al Khalifa, yesterday received the Board of Directors of the Arab Academy for Research and Studies (Ahlia University), Farouk Yousif Khalil Al Moayyed, and Ahlia University's Board of Trustees Chairman, Dr Abdulla Yousif Al Hawaj. Dr Shaikha Rana expressed appreciation for the Ahlia University for its efforts to improve the performance and outputs of higher education in Bahrain, stressing the kingdom's keenness to provide an environment that attracts investments in education, implement projects aimed at enhancing the higher education sector and ensure the graduation of generations with all the skills required by the labour market.

BACA head, Sri Lankan Ambassador boost cultural cooperation



Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities (BACA) President Shaikha Mai bint Mohammed Al Khalifa received yesterday Sri Lankan Ambassador to Bahrain Pradeepa Saram. They discussed means of boosting bilateral cooperation, mainly in the cultural field.

BACA Director General receives Saudi artist



Culture and Arts at Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities (BACA) Director General Shaikha Hala bint Mohammed Al Khalifa received yesterday Saudi artist and musician Abdulrab Idris. She praised his long artistic march and creativity which influenced the Saudi as well as the Gulf and Arab song.

RAP concludes training programmes



The Officers Training College of the Royal Academy of Police (RAP) has concluded specialised training programmes organised in cooperation with the British Durham Police. It targeted 75 Interior Ministry affiliates. The courses were part of the annual training plan to enhance the skills and professionalism of affiliates in different fields. The programmes will resume next year in cooperation with the Durham Police.

Bahrain tolerance, coexistence and brotherhood lauded



The Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, Fouad Sadiq Al Baharna, met the Head of the Basilique Notre Dame d'Afrique, Father Youssef Kantal. The Ambassador congratulated the Church on the holidays, highlighting the religious and cultural coexistence in the Kingdom of Bahrain under the directives of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa. Father Kantal hailed the prominent efforts made by Bahrain to promote the principles of tolerance, coexistence and brotherhood, wishing Bahrain further progress and prosperity.

Health Minister sponsors ceremony honouring Bahraini women



Health Minister Faeqa bint Saeed Al Saleh has sponsored a ceremony honouring Bahraini women on Sunday. It was on the occasion of the Kingdom of Bahrain's celebration of the Bahraini Women's Day, which is observed every first day of December each year. This year's event - under the slogan "Bahraini Women in National Development ... A Journey of Advancement in a Giving Country" - was organised by the Equal Opportunities Committee at the ministry, in the presence of senior officials and Shaikha Dina bint Rashid Al Khalifa, Assistant Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Women. It is an important national occasion that receives remarkable attention from all institutions of the Bahraini society.

HM King 'unwavering support' for youth and sports highlighted



Representative of HM the King for Humanitarian Work and Youth Affairs, His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, has affirmed His Majesty's unwavering support for the youth and sports movement in the kingdom, noting that the outstanding sports achievements are the outcome of the royal care. This came as HH Shaikh Nasser, on behalf of His Majesty King Hamad, yesterday honoured a number of top-achieving athletes. Present in the occasion were the First Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, Chairman of the General Sports Authority and President of the Bahrain Olympic Committee, HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa. HH Shaikh Nasser presented medals to the athletes for their achievements which contributed to raising the kingdom's flags at various sports gatherings. The honoured athletes extended heartfelt thanks, appreciation and gratitude to HM the King for granting them medals, HH Shaikh Nasser and HH Shaikh Khalid for their great support. (Full report on Page 12)

HRH Prince Salman issues edict on RERA
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His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, yesterday issued Edict (68) of 2021, designating the Minister of Works, Municipalities Affairs and Urban Planning, as the Minister responsible for the Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) before the Legislative Authority. The minister and the relevant authorities, each in their own capacity, shall implement the provisions of this edict, which takes immediate effect, and will be published in the Official Gazette.

Bahrain-India health cooperation in full swing

● Exchange visits by doctors and consultants pushed

● Sharing experiences in terms of training and research

● Existing cooperation against COVID-19 benefits both countries

TDT | Manama



Dr Shaikh Mohamed bin Abdulla and Ambassador Srivastava hold discussion

Bahrain and India are committed to bolstering growing bilateral cooperation, especially in the health field.

Supreme Council for Health President, Lieutenant-General Dr Shaikh Mohamed bin Abdulla Al Khalifa yesterday received Indian Ambassador to Bahrain Piyush Srivastava in the pres-

ence of SCH Secretary General Ibrahim Ali Al Nawakhda.

Dr Shaikh Mohamed bin Abdulla stressed the depth of the distinguished cooperation between Bahrain and India, praising the steady progress of the friendly bilateral relations at all levels, and affirming Bahrain's keenness to bolster its cooperation with India, especially in the health field.

Ambassador Srivastava also hailed the distinguished level of the friendly Bahraini-Indian relations.

He also praised the key role played by SCH to develop the healthcare sector in Bahrain, confront the pandemic and provide health coverage for all, affirming India's readiness to enhance its health cooperation with the kingdom.



The meeting also focused on ways to develop bilateral cooperation regarding overseas treatment, taking advantage of the distinguished medical and treatment services and capabilities in the Kingdom.

Dr Shaikh Mohamed bin Abdulla briefed Ambassador Srivastava about the role of the SCH in developing and following up on the implementation of the national health plans, particularly the National Health Insurance Programme, as well as in enhancing the healthcare sector in the kingdom. The SCH discussed with the envoy the prospects for health cooperation between the two countries, especially regarding the organisation of visits by doctors and consultants, exchanging experiences in terms of training and research, benefiting from India's experi-

ence in the health sector, particularly medical subspecialties, and attracting Indian investments in health sector projects, especially in pharmaceutical factories, and the continuation of the existing cooperation in confronting the coronavirus pandemic for the benefit of both countries.

The meeting also focused on ways to develop bilateral cooperation regarding overseas treatment, taking advantage of the distinguished medical and treatment services and capabilities in India, and in coordination with all health entities in the Kingdom.

560 citizens employed and 347 trained
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A total of 560 Bahrain job-seekers holding various qualifications had been employed in 342 private companies and institutions on December 19-25. The Labour and Social Development Ministry also revealed that 347 had benefited from various training programmes during the same period.

The ministry indicated that 25,702 national job-seekers have been employed so far in 6,702 institutions, out of the 25,000 targeted in the second edition of the National Employment Program in 2021 and the number of those who have received training has reached 12,488 to date, exceeding the 10,000 target for this year.

Seven urgent infrastructure projects are in the pipeline

TDT | Manama

Works, Municipalities Affairs and Urban Planning Minister, Eng. Essam Khalaf, has announced a plan to implement seven urgent projects for roads and bridges in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

They will be financed through the Gulf support provided to the

Kingdom.

These projects are the Busaiten Bridge Project, the third phase of the project to develop the street leading to Bahrain International Airport, which is represented in the development of Al Saqr Intersection; the Sports City Outlets Development Project; the expansion of Khaleej Street to four lanes

in each direction with the development of intersections on it; in addition to the Janabiya Street Expansion Project; and the Budaiya Street Expansion Project.

The minister made the announcement following a parliamentary question by Shura Council member Fouad Hajji about the strategic structural plan for the Kingdom.



Relief for stranded expatriate woman

Staff Reporter

TDT | Manama

A 48-year-old expatriate woman, who has been stranded in the Kingdom for the past 16 years, is all set to fly home - thanks to the efforts of three expat social workers.

Indian national Uma Marimuthu came to the Kingdom in 2006 with great hopes of working as a housemaid and supporting her children and relatives back home. But, those hopes did not take off as she failed to find consistent income. According to social workers, the manpower agency, which brought Uma to the Kingdom, did not obtain her the residency permit.

"They would make her work for different employers and most often, without payment."

Eventually, Uma broke off ties with the manpower agency and began working as a housemaid. Her stay in the Kingdom



Uma ... on way home

was not legalised as the manpower agency did not release her passport and other legal documents.

Two years ago, after suffering from diabetic retinopathy, she started losing her eyesight.

Sudheer Thirunilath, World NRI Council Humanitarian Director for the Middle East, told The Daily Tribune that Uma was partially blind when he met her a few months ago.

"We took her to an eye hospital, where she is receiving treatment. Her expenses are now being taken care of by some good minded people," Sudheer said.

A group of social workers led

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by Sudheer, Mr Senthil of Annai Thamiz Mantram and Azhkar Poozhithala of Hope Bahrain came to her rescue. They took up their case with the Indian Embassy, which issued her an outpass.

Uma hails from Thanjavoor district in the South Indian State of Tamil Nadu. She has three children and six sisters, all dependent on her.

Four restaurants shut down for violating COVID-19 protocols



The Health Ministry has announced the closure of four restaurants in the capital for violating the precautionary measures against the coronavirus (COVID-19). This came following inspection visits carried out by Health Ministry personnel in cooperation and coordination with the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism, and the Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTEA). It was part of the intensification of inspection visits, which aims to ensure that the facilities adhere to the health requirements and procedures listed within the Yellow Alert Level. More than 128 restaurants and cafes were visited, and 22 of them were found to have violated health and safety protocols. Necessary measures were also taken to refer 11 men's salons and two women's salons to the legal authorities for various violations.

4,598 Bahrainis land jobs in government since pandemic outbreak



Zayed

TDT | Manama

Around 4,598 Bahrainis have been employed in the government from June 2019 to November 14, 2021, and more than 1,815 foreign contracts terminated during this two-and-a-half-year period.

This was confirmed by head of the Civil Service Bureau, Ahmed Zayed, during his intervention in the Shura Council yesterday.

He stressed that the employment of 25,000 Bahrainis in 6,300 different institutions, and the training of 12,100 citizens confirm the Kingdom's efforts to empower the local workforce.

Currently, there are 7,200 foreign workers in the government, including 3,800 in the education sector, for several reasons, the most prominent of which is the lack of qualified Bahrainis to fill these jobs.

Plethora of cultural expressions

Bahrain's state-of-the-art pavilion at Dubai Expo 2020 shows new symbiotic physical space and innovation relationship



The magnificent and splendid appearance of the Bahrain pavilion



● **Once inside, visitors are marveled by how columns are spread out in all directions**

● **After the event, the pavilion will be fully dismantled and rebuilt permanently in Bahrain**

Dubai

In the midst of the sprawling huge Dubai Expo 2020, the pavilion of Bahrain is mirroring the plethora of cultural expressions in the Kingdom and reflecting the symbiotic relationship between physical space and innovation stands out.

Located on Sunset Avenue in the Opportunity District and

with a large serrated white and red flag firmly planted in front of it, the pavilion awes with its splendour, appeals with its aluminum-made exterior facade representing one of Bahrain's main exports, and charms with its unique 24m-high rectangular shape.

It explores the theme of density as an enabler of opportunities through an immersive visitor experience.

Visitors enter it through a ramp that "is meant to be a point of transition between the outside world of the Expo and the inside world."

The pavilion with its open exhibition space of 900m² is conceived as a physical and spatial experience of density and the future possibilities of building in an increasingly dense world, the introduction to the pavilion says.

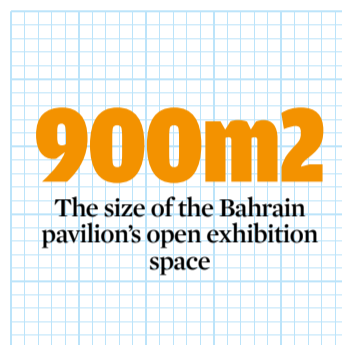
"Designed by Christian Kerez Zurich AG, it is imagined as an open plan space, submerged in the site and accessed through a ramp that creates a transition between the outer and inner worlds of the pavilion."

Once inside, visitors used to columns and beams articulating architectural space horizontally and vertically closely following the boundaries, are marveled by how the columns here are spread out in all directions.

"The structure of this central space is made of 126 columns of 11cm in diameter and 24m in height that join one another at several points throughout the height of the space.

"The columns support one another and support the roof, providing a poetic structure that demonstrates principles of connection and density in an exploration of the three-dimensional possibilities inspired by geometric gypsum ornaments of traditional Bahraini architecture.

"The visitor experiences the space as one would be walking through a dense forest where the exhibition and programme of the pavilion cohabit openly with the architecture of the



space. The columns are made of steel, whereas the outer facade is composed of aluminum, showcasing one of Bahrain's largest exports. At the end of the six months, the pavilion will be fully dismantled and rebuilt permanently in Bahrain."

"This central space houses the main exhibition space, the gift shop and the cafe that are loosely nestled between the columns of the building, shaping the physical experience of density in the pavilion.

The pavilion, one of the 192 countries participating in the Dubai Expo 2020, regularly welcomes visitors from around the world who are driven by a strong sense of excitement and enthusiasm as they live a unique experience of "Connecting Minds, Creating the Future."

The Bahrain pavilion awes with its splendour, appeals with its aluminum-made exterior facade representing one of Bahrain's main exports, and charms with its unique 24m-high rectangular shape.

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Gulf forum highlights volunteers' efforts

TDI | Manama

The second Gulf Forum of Red Crescent Bodies and Societies has recommended shedding more light on the qualitative efforts of volunteers in the Arab Gulf countries in the field of relief and humanitarian work, particularly during this time of pandemic.

The recommendation was aimed at showing the distinctive experience in this field of the Bahrain Red Crescent Soci-

ety, which hosted the two-day forum recently.

It also recommended unifying plans and strategies to attract young people as volunteers in the Gulf Red Crescent bodies and societies.

Likewise, it recommended strengthening the role of volunteer work in the countries of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf as one of the tributaries of community development by communicating with groups of society

and identifying their needs and helping governments to meet these needs.

At the conclusion of their work, the participants stressed the importance of strengthening ties between workers in this field at the Gulf level, in a way that contributes to directing the energies of the Gulf youth to serve their societies, in addition to instilling a love of volunteer work by deepening the bonds of communication between the owners of voluntary finger-

prints of various generations.

They stressed the importance of holding more forums, courses, and workshops aimed at providing volunteers with field and administrative experiences in charitable and organizational work and directing human energies for the benefit of society through team building and self-development in multiple aspects that are beneficial to him and his community.

The forum was held under the title "Human Giving".

Cold weather is here, expatriates can heave 'sigh of relief' again



The arrival of winter reduces the financial pressure on expats

TDI | Manama

Cool temperature is now on our doorstep as a relatively mild winter is finally coming in Bahrain.

Weathermen have forecast unsettled weather this week with scattered rains in some parts of the Kingdom.

In fact, mornings are getting chillier by the day, and people are struggling to fight off the cold weather.

What does that mean for expatriates?

Expatriates, who make up 52.6% of the population and play a key role in the development of the national economy, can now heave a collective sigh of relief – although only temporarily!

Power bills have already gone down last month and will continue until March or April next year.

Every hot summer months – from May to October – expatriates all have the same issue and concern: extremely high electricity and water bills!

This year is no exception. The issue has caused an uproar among the expat population as it comes at a time when many have lost their jobs due to the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19).

Utility bills are a significant part of every household's monthly budget. And as always, utility bills are the highest during the summer months due to the increased use of air conditioners and water, making it a struggle for many expatriates.

Since 2016, expats are charged 29 fils per unit for electricity and 750 fils per unit for water.

Bahrainis pay 3 fils per unit for electricity under 3,000 units, increasing to 9 fils for

anything above this. This means expats pay a massive 866 per cent more than Bahrainis.

The abnormally high utility bills are causing sizeable burden to low-income expats.

Absurdly high utility bills are weighing down on them as many are unable to cope with the rising costs. Many of them struggle to pay bills and they leave Bahrain for good as their entire salary is just going towards expenses.

For other expatriates, especially those with families, it is unreasonable to pay utility costs that almost amount to the rent, so they are forced to send their families home.

Expenses are soaring but salaries remain the same – there is no increase, in fact – and in some sectors salaries are not paid on time by many employers.

This is making the situation worse for expatriates who send money to their families back home.

Many are forced to move into shared accommodation because they are struggling to meet rising expenses, foremost of which is the soaring electricity and water bill.

Tenants, bachelors, couples and large families, who live in apartment buildings that share electricity and water bills also complain about what they describe as an unfair system.

In some cases, expats are paying utility bills that are even higher than their monthly rent.

Indeed, the pleasant cold weather is here again so expatriates can make the most of the coming months until April when utility bills are still "affordable".

iGA recipients of Prince Salman bin Hamad Medal for Medical Merit hailed



Information & eGovernment Authority (iGA) Chief Executive Mohammed Ali Al Qaed met with a number of iGA team members who received the Prince Salman bin Hamad Medal for Medical Merit. Al Qaed expressed his gratitude to His Majesty the King, highlighting the important role that the iGA has played throughout the pandemic, with its team members working tirelessly towards supporting Bahrain's recovery. He said that HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister is committed to the deployment of advanced technologies in enhancing the government's work and introducing further online services. iGA has consistently contributed to efforts to combat the pandemic since its onset, thanks to its team members' patriotism and sense of responsibility towards their community.

Four arsonists to stand trial

TDI | Manama

The High Criminal Court will be hearing tomorrow the case of four men accused of setting an ATM on fire in Al Dair area.

The defendants are said to have torched the device by using tyres and petrol.

They ran away from the scene, but after police investigations, the culprits were identified.

They were arrested, and it was discovered that they were in connection with the fugitive terrorists who funded their operations.

One of the suspects is said to have suffered after his body caught fire.

The defendants have been charged of setting a private property on fire and putting lives at risk.

Saudi Hajj, Umrah Ministry grants OTA status to India-based Akbar Travels

● The special status makes Akbar Travels one among the 28 exclusive travel platforms recognized by the government of Saudi Arabia

TDT | Manama

Saudi Arabia's Hajj and Umrah Ministry has granted Online Travel Agency (OTA) status to leading Indian travel agency Akbar Travels.

The special status makes Akbar Travels one among the 28 exclusive travel platforms recognized by the government of Saudi Arabia.

Akbar Travels offers special-



From left, Mr Qureshi, Mr Pillai, Ms Benazir, Ms Ashiya and Mr Qasim at the Press Conference.

ly-dedicated Umrah services through its portal UmrahTrip.com. Speaking to members of the media at The Domain Hotel

in The Diplomatic Area, Manama, Akbar Holidays Chief Executive Officer Benazir Nazar, said: "This recognition could be

attributed to the best Umrah and Hajj services offered by Akbar Travels. We are grateful to the Saudi Hajj and Umrah Ministry."

Pilgrims from across the world can access the portal to receive Umrah related services from Akbar Travels. The servic-

es encompass air tickets, hotel bookings and ground services. Upon completion, all pilgrims will receive a Booking Reference Number (BRN) with which they can apply for Umrah visa on the official Umrah website.

Ms Benazir said Akbar Travels aims to offer the best Umrah services with this initiative to the pilgrims. "This would speed up the Umrah booking process, proving highly beneficial to the pilgrims. The booking can also be done using WhatsApp," she pointed out. Apart from Ms Benazir, Akbar Travels Middle East Managing Director Ashiya Nazar, Saudi Arabia General Manager Azher Qureshi, Akbar Online GCC Operation Head Ahmed Qasim and Bahrain Country Head Raju Pillai attended the press conference.

Pre-VAT savings at Malabar Gold & Diamonds

● Free 1 gm gold coin on purchase of diamond and precious gem jewellery worth BHD 400

● Free half gram gold coin on purchase of diamond and precious gem jewellery worth BHD 250.

● Zero Deduction on 22K (GCC) Gold exchange

● Offer valid until 31st December

TDT | Manama



Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one among the largest jewellery retailers globally with a strong retail network of over 260 outlets spread across 10 countries, has announced exclusive Pre-VAT Hike Savings for customers before the implementation of increased VAT in the country and VAT is expected to increase from 5% to 10% from 01st January 2022.

Through the PRE-VAT Hike Savings, Customers can get a free 1 gm gold coin on Diamond and Precious Gem Jewellery purchase worth BHD 400 and free 1/2 gm gold coin on Diamond and Precious Gem Jewellery purchase worth BHD 250. Additionally, the brand is also offering Zero Deduction on 22K (GCC) Gold Jewellery exchange, customers can exchange their jewellery for this stylish array of new

designs, without any loss in gold rate. Customers can visit any store of Malabar Gold & Diamonds on or before 31st December to avail this offer before the implementation of increased VAT, thus ensuring maximum savings.

"Considering the current favorability of gold, it is the best time now for consumers to invest in the metal and ensure savings. We are doing everything possible to ensure our customers benefit during this Pre-VAT hike period, with several collections displayed in our stores across gold, diamond and precious gem jewellery," said Rafeeq K, Branch Head - Bahrain, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

This offer is available across all stores of Malabar Gold & Diamonds in Bahrain until 31st December.

KFH – Bahrain concludes National Day event “Breakfast on Us”

● Exclusive design for cards issued in celebration of National Day

● Customers can obtain the card by applying through the KFH JAZEEL Banking app or by visiting any branch

TDT | Manama



Abdulrahman AlKhan, Hamed Mashal

Kuwait Finance House – Bahrain (KFH – Bahrain) announced the conclusion of its National Day event “Breakfast on Us”, which treated all KFH’s cardholders to a complimentary breakfast at one of three local restaurants: Basta 23, Haji and Lumee.

The 3-day event was held from the 16th to 18th of December 2021.

In celebration of this day, KFH – Bahrain also announced its introduction of an exclusive design for its ATM cards, innovatively designed with the emblem of Bahrain, for all current and new customers. Customers can obtain the card by applying through the KFH JAZEEL Banking app or by visit-

ing any branch of the Bank in the Kingdom.

Commenting on the occasion, Hamed Mashal, Head of Retail Banking at KFH-Bahrain, said: “It is with great pleasure that we announce the conclusion of our special event in conjunction with the Kingdom’s National Day and His Majesty’s Accession Day. We would also like to express our gratitude and thanks to all the restaurants that participated in the event and wish them continued success.”

“We look forward to hosting more events for our customers to express our appreciation of their loyalty

towards the Bank. We encourage everyone to join the KFH – Bahrain family and benefit from the exceptional offers presented by the Bank.”

Abdulrahman AlKhan, Head of Cards & E-Channels at Kuwait Finance House-Bahrain commented: “We are delighted to be introducing this exceptional, exclusive card design on such a special occasion such as the National Day.”

“Furthermore, we remain committed to fulfilling the needs of our customers, while tailoring our offerings in order to share with them those special moments and continue fostering meaningful connections.”

Nespresso and Johanna Ortiz capture the essence of forest this festive season

● The coffee brand showcases its devotion to nature with the launch of the Gifts of the Forest limited-edition collection

TDT | Manama

This Holiday season, Nespresso is collaborating with Colombian fashion designer Johanna Ortiz, to enchant coffee lovers with the launch of its annual Festive collection, inspired this year by the forest.

Inspired by the beauty and depth of Nature’s forests, Nespresso’s ‘Gifts of the Forest’ collection encapsulates the brand’s devotion to the precious environment coffee is grown in. The collection features a range of limited-edition coffees for both the Original and Vertuo systems, along with Festive infused ac-



cessories, making for delightful and inspiring gifts for family and friends. Coffee lovers can also gift this Festive season knowing Nespresso is giving back to the forest, as the brand goes beyond its agroforestry commitments, by helping to protect 10 million trees in the Amazon.

Johanna Ortiz says: “For me,

design and nature go hand in hand which is why this collaboration resonated personally. Colombian coffee also has a truly special place in my heart and as an active supporter in the fight against climate change, knowing that Nespresso is going beyond its agroforestry commitments by supporting the protection of

10 million trees in the Amazon, it was another huge reason why this collaboration made perfect sense. When designing the collection, I took the idea of capturing the beauty of the forest throughout every piece, by incorporating rich forest canopies and dark earthy tones within my designs. It’s been an amazing

process and partnership which I have deeply enjoyed.”

Explore and wander through Nespresso’s Forest Variations coffees

From forest fruits to luscious canopies of trees, this year’s Festive coffee range includes two flavoured coffees and one black coffee.

For Original

Uncover the hidden flavours of Forest Black

A canopy of trees shelters Forest Black’s coffees to protect the flavour hidden in each bean. Discover this blend of shade-grown coffees from Colombia and beyond.

A spicy espresso, its exotic woody notes will transport tastebuds to the depths of the forest.

Taste the berries of the Forest with Forest Fruit Flavour

Like gems that light up the forest floor, forest fruits are the gifts trees give us. Juicy berry aromas run through this season’s flavoured espresso as the South American Arabicas’ lingering cereal character takes on a festive sweet pastry note.

Delight in the treasures of the trees with Forest Almond Flavour

Forest Almond Flavour is the forager’s delight of the season. With the sweet, nutty flavour tucked into this espresso’s South American Arabicas, get ready to uncover almond notes marked by vanilla and a light fruitiness in this coffees’ smooth cereal character.

The limited-edition Gifts of the Forest collection will be available on www.buynespresso.com and in selected Nespresso boutiques at Bahrain city centre, Seefmall, The Avenues & Seefmall Muharraq.

News in brief

◆ **China has replaced Chen Quanguo, who as Communist Party chief in the Xinjiang region oversaw a security crackdown targeting ethnic Uyghurs and other Muslims** in the name of fighting religious extremism. Chen, in his post since 2016, will move to another role and Ma Xingrui, governor of the coastal economic powerhouse Guangdong province since 2017, has replaced him, the official Xinhua News Agency said on Saturday. It gave no other details. Chen, 66, is a member of China's politburo and is widely considered to be the senior official responsible for the security crackdown in Xinjiang. He was sanctioned last year by the United States.



China replaces Xinjiang Communist Party chief Chen

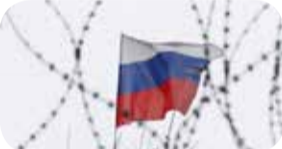
◆ **Israel's government set a goal yesterday of doubling the number of Jewish settlers** in the Golan Heights within five years, a move that could tighten its hold on the territory it occupied in fighting with Syria in 1967. Prime Minister Naftali Bennett cited then-U.S. President



Israel sets goal of doubling number of Jewish settlers

Donald Trump's recognition in 2019 of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan and no sign that his successor, Joe Biden, intends to reverse the decision, as factors behind a multimillion-dollar housing and infrastructure plan for the area. Under a blueprint approved by the cabinet, which held its weekly session on the Golan, some 7,300 housing units will be built in Katzrin, Israel's main settlement in the area, and in smaller Jewish communities.

Moscow considering NATO proposal to hold talks on Jan. 12



◆ **Russia has received a NATO proposal to commence talks on Moscow's security concerns on Jan. 12 and is considering it,** TASS news agency quoted the Foreign Ministry as saying yesterday.

Russia, which has unnerved the West with a troop buildup near Ukraine, last week unveiled a wish list of security proposals it wants to negotiate, including a promise NATO would give up any military activity in Eastern Europe and Ukraine. "We have already received this (NATO) offer, and we are considering it," TASS quoted the foreign ministry as saying.

Bodies of drowned migrants wash up on Libyan shore

◆ **The bodies of more than a dozen migrants** who drowned trying to cross the Mediterranean to Europe washed up on Libya's coastline late on Saturday, its interior ministry and the local Red Crescent said. Libya is a major transit point for migrants, many from African countries, who are seeking better opportunities in Europe.

Bennett self-isolates after daughter tests positive for COVID-19

◆ **Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett** went into isolation at home yesterday and will await the results of a COVID-19 PCR test after his 14-year-old daughter tested positive for the coronavirus, his office said. Bennett left the weekly meeting of his cabinet and headed home after learning of his daughter's positive test, which came amid fast-spreading infections in Israel caused by the Omicron variant.

COVID-19 Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths
1 USA	53,033,604	837,779
2 India	34,786,802	479,682
3 Brazil	22,234,626	618,457
4 UK	11,891,292	147,857
5 Russia	10,392,020	304,218
6 Turkey	9,307,124	81,576
7 France	9,088,371	122,546
8 Germany	7,009,073	111,076
9 Iran	6,184,762	131,400
10 Spain	5,718,007	89,019
11 Italy	5,647,313	136,611
12 Argentina	5,452,419	117,020
13 Colombia	5,121,668	129,729
14 Indonesia	4,261,759	144,055

Global tally

Deaths

5,415,714

Recovered:

New cases

+203,810

New deaths

+2,449

Figures as of closing

Middle East

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	380,520		21,571		316,656	42,293
Saudi Arabia	552,795	+389	8,871	+1	540,868	3,056
UAE	751,333	+1,803	2,158	+2	741,325	7,850
Kuwait	414,911		2,468		411,299	1,144
Oman	305,105	+47	4,114	+1	300,291	700
Qatar	248,092	+296	615	+1	244,748	2,729

Nobel Prize-winning anti-apartheid hero Desmond Tutu dies

● **Tutu won Nobel for non-violent opposition to apartheid**

● **Tutu considered nation's conscience by both Black and white**

● **Anti-apartheid hero fought for "Rainbow Nation"**

● **State gives no details on the cause of death**

● **Tutu diagnosed with cancer in 1990s**

Reuters | Johannesburg

minority rule, died yesterday at the age of 90.

In 1984 Tutu won the Nobel Peace Prize for his non-violent opposition to apartheid. A decade later, he witnessed the end of that

regime and chaired a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, set up to unearth atrocities committed during those dark days.

The outspoken Tutu was considered the nation's conscience by both Black and white, an enduring testament to his faith and spirit of reconciliation in a divided nation.

He was diagnosed with prostate cancer in the late 1990s and in recent years was hospitalised on several occasions to treat infections associated with his cancer treatment.

"The passing of Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu is another chapter of bereavement in our nation's farewell to a generation of outstanding South Africans who have bequeathed us a liberated South Africa," President Cyril Ramaphosa said.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu was a guiding light for countless people globally. His emphasis on human dignity and equality will be forever remembered. I am deeply saddened by his demise, and extend my heartfelt condolences to all his admirers. May his soul rest in peace.

Former US President Barack Obama said Tutu was a "mentor, a friend, and a moral compass" who "never lost his impish sense of humor and willingness to find humanity in his adversaries".

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and veteran of South Africa's struggle against white



U.S. President Barack Obama (L) is pictured alongside Desmond Tutu

Archbishop Desmond Tutu shares a joke with the Dalai Lama during a visit, the first by the Buddhist leader

First Omicron case detected in Gaza, Palestinians say

Reuters | Gaza

The Palestinian health ministry said yesterday it had identified the first case of the Omicron coronavirus variant in the Gaza Strip.

The carrier is a Gaza resident who was infected within the coastal territory, ministry official Majdi Dhair told a news conference.

Dhair said this meant the variant, first identified in southern Africa and Hong Kong last month, existed in Gaza and was now spreading among the population. The discovery poses a new challenge to the enclave's under-developed health system.

"We are ahead of difficult days. It is expected that the Omicron variant will spread fast," he told reporters.

'Back to me in a coffin' - bodies of migrants drowned in Channel reach Iraq



People pray next to bodies of Iraqi Kurdish migrants

Reuters | Sulaimaniya, Iraq

At least 16 bodies of Iraqi Kurdish migrants who drowned in November when their dinghy deflated while they tried to cross the English Channel were returned on Sunday to Iraqi Kurdistan.

The Nov. 24 disaster, in which 27 migrants died, was the worst on record involving migrants trying to cross the Channel to Britain from France. read more

The plane carrying the bodies landed on early Sunday at the airport of Erbil, capital of Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region. Ambulances then took

the coffins to the home towns of those who died.

"The last time I heard my son's voice was when he got on board the boat. He said 'Don't worry Mum, I will reach England shortly.' Now he's back to me in a coffin," said Shukriya Bakir, whose son was one of those who drowned.

In the past decade, hundreds of thousands of people have slipped into the wealthy economies of Western Europe with the help of smugglers, fleeing conflict, persecution and poverty on epic journeys from Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, Sudan and elsewhere. Few are welcomed.

"Desmond Tutu was a patriot without equal."

The presidency gave no details on the cause of death.

Tutu preached against the tyranny of the white minority but his fight for a fairer South Africa never ended, calling the Black political elite to account with as much feistiness as he had the white Afrikaners.

In his final years, he regretted that his dream of a "Rainbow Nation" had yet to come true.

"Ultimately, at the age of 90, he died peacefully at the Oasis Frail Care Centre in Cape Town this morning," Dr

Ramphela Mampheleane, acting chairperson

La Palma volcano after three months

● **Seismic activity ended 12 days ago**

● **3,000 properties destroyed, many displaced**

● **Huge cleanup operation underway**

Reuters | Madrid

Scientists declared the eruption on Spain's La Palma officially over on Saturday, allowing islanders to breathe a sigh of relief nearly 100 days after the Cumbre Vieja volcano began to spew out lava, rock and ash and upended the lives of thousands.

After bursting into action on Sept. 19, the volcano suddenly went quiet on Monday Dec. 13 but the authorities, wary of raising false hope, held off until Christmas Day to give the all-clear.

"What I want to say today can be said with just four words: The eruption is over," Canary Islands regional security chief Julio Perez told a news conference on Sat-

1939

Between 20,000 and 40,000 die in magnitude 8 earthquake in Erzincan, Turkey

1945

International Monetary Fund formally established by 29 member countries based on ideas of Harry Dexter White and John Maynard Keynes



Queen Juliana of the Netherlands grants independence to Indonesia

1949

1979

After invading Afghanistan two days earlier Soviet forces pull off a coup in Kabul, killing President Hafizullah Amin

Anti-apartheid Tutu aged 90

son of the Archbishop Desmond Tutu IP Trust and Co-ordinator of the Office of the Archbishop, said in a statement on behalf of the Tutu family.

A frail-looking Tutu was seen in October being wheeled into his former parish at St George's Cathedral in Cape Town, which used to be a safe haven for anti-apartheid activists, for a service marking his 90th birthday.

Dubbed "the moral compass of the nation", his courage in defending social justice, even at great cost to himself, always shone through. He often fell out with his erstwhile allies at the ruling African National Congress party over their failures to address the poverty and inequalities that they promised to eradicate.

Tutu, just five feet five inches (1.68 metres) tall and with an infectious giggle, travelled tirelessly throughout the 1980s, becoming the face of the anti-apartheid movement abroad while many of the leaders of the rebel ANC such

BETTER YOU KNOW

Having officially retired from public life on his 79th birthday, Tutu continued to speak out on a range of moral issues, including accusing the West in 2008 of complicity in Palestinian suffering by remaining silent.

as Nelson Mandela were behind bars. Although he was born near Johannesburg, he spent most of his later life in Cape Town and led numerous marches and campaigns to end apartheid from St George's front steps, which became known as the "People's Cathedral" and a powerful symbol of democracy. Known for punchy quotes, Tutu once said: "I wish I could shut up, but I can't, and I won't".



Lama after their meeting, August 21. The Dalai Lama is in the country on a short

Volcano eruption declared over months of destruction



urday. During the eruption, lava had poured down the mountainside, swallowing up houses, churches and many of the banana plantations that account for nearly half the island's economy. Although property was destroyed, no one was killed.

Maria Jose Blanco, director of the National Geographic Institute on the Canaries, said all indicators suggested the eruption had run out of energy but she did not rule out a future reactivation.

Some 3,000 properties were destroyed by lava that now covers 1,219 hectares - equivalent to roughly 1,500 soccer pitches - according to the final tally by the

emergency services.

Of the 7,000 people evacuated, most have returned home but many houses that remain standing are uninhabitable due to ash damage. With many roads blocked, some plantations are now only accessible by sea.

3000

Some 3,000 properties were destroyed by lava that now covers 1,219 hectares - equivalent to roughly 1,500 soccer pitches

Online racist abuse offenders to be banned from soccer games: UK Home Secretary

Reuters

People found guilty of on-line racist abuse against footballers will be banned from attending games for up to 10 years under new laws, Britain's Home Secretary Priti Patel said.

Football Banning Orders, imposed to prevent violence or disorder at regulated matches, bar individuals from attending games for a minimum of three and a maximum of 10 years.

The existing legislation will be extended to cover online hate offences after Prime Minister Boris Johnson vowed to toughen measures in July in the wake of racist abuse aimed at England's Black players following defeat in the Euro 2020 final.

"This summer we saw the beautiful game marred by disgraceful racism from on-line trolls, who hid behind their keyboards and abused our footballers," Patel was quoted as saying by British media.

"Those responsible for appalling racist abuse on-line must be punished. The changes to the law I am announcing will make sure they are banned from attending football matches."

The new law will be brought forward early in the new year.

1359

Statistics say, there were 1,359 football banning orders in force across England and Wales as of Aug. 1.

Houthis have fired 430 missiles, 851 drones at Saudi Arabia since 2015 - Saudi-led coalition

Reuters | Riyadh

The Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen said yesterday the Iran-aligned Houthi group had fired 430 ballistic missiles and 851 armed drones at Saudi Arabia since the war started in 2015, killing 59 Saudi civilians.

The spokesman of the Saudi alliance, General Turki al-Malki, said the Iran-aligned movement had been using Sanaa airport as a base to launch attacks on the kingdom.

Malki shared videos with reporters which he said showed military advisers from the Iran-Backed Lebanese group Hezbollah, helping the Houthis in Yemen.

Malki denied there was a blockade on Yemen, adding that Sanaa airport remains open for UN and humanitarian organisations' flights.

Former Greek president Karolos Papoulias dies at 92



Outgoing Greek President Karolos Papoulias (R) shakes hands with newly elected President Prokopis Pavlopoulos during a handover ceremony at the Presidential Palace in Athens March 13, 2015

Reuters | Athens

Former Greek President Karolos Papoulias, who served two terms between 2005 and 2015, died on Sunday at the age of 92, the presidency said.

Papoulias, who was also foreign minister in 1985-89 and 1993-96, was a high-ranking member of socialist PASOK party and a close associate of its late leader and former prime minister Andreas Papandreou.

President Katerina Sakellaropoulou paid tribute to Papoulias for his role in the resistance against Nazi occupation during World War Two and against Greece's 1967-74 military junta.

"His participation in the national resistance and the anti-dictatorship struggle...reflected his continuous devotion to the ideals of freedom and justice, which he defended throughout his life," Sakellaropoulou said in a statement.

Russian gas flows via Yamal-Europe pipeline reversed for 6th day



A worker checks pipes at a gas compressor station on the Yamal-Europe pipeline near Nesvizh, some 130 km (81 miles) southwest of Minsk

Reuters | Frankfurt/Prague

The Yamal-Europe pipeline that usually delivers Russian gas to Western Europe was sending the fuel back to Poland for a sixth straight day on Sunday, according to data from German network operator Gascade.

Data showed that flows at the Mallnow metering point on the German-Polish border were going east into Poland at an hourly volume of nearly 1.2 million kilowatt hours (kWh/h) on Sunday.

Auction results showed Russian gas exporter Gazprom had not booked gas transit capacity for exports via the Yamal-Europe pipeline for Monday.

Gascade, which gets Russian gas and transports it within Germany, is owned by WIGA, a joint venture of Gazprom and oil and gas company Wintershall DEA (WINT.UL). Wintershall DEA is co-owned by German chemicals group BASF (BASFN.DE) and Russia's LetterOne.

Russia said this week the flow reversal was not a political move, though it coincides with rising tensions between Moscow and the West over Ukraine and has pushed gas prices to record highs. read more

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Thursday Germany was reselling Russian gas to Poland and Ukraine rather than relieving an overheated market, putting blame for the reversal, and rocketing prices, on German gas importers.

The German Economy Ministry has declined comment on Putin's allegation. Gas importers have not responded to Reuters' requests for comment.

Data from Slovak pipeline operator Eustream showed capacity nominations for Sunday's Russian gas flows from Ukraine to Slovakia via the Velke Kapusany border point were at 739,826 megawatt hours (MWh), slightly down from Saturday's 747,031 MWh and below levels in recent weeks.

The recent drop was being balanced by higher nominations for flows from the Czech Republic to Slovakia, meaning that nominations for flows from Slovakia to Austrian hub Baumgarten were roughly stable compared with levels in past days and weeks.



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



I am deeply saddened by the passing of Archbishop Desmond Tutu - a towering global figure for peace & justice, voice of the voiceless & inspiration to people everywhere. We will continue to draw strength from his humanity, passion & resolve to fight for a better world for all.

@antoniogeterres

02



My condolences go to the many people in Flag of South Africa & worldwide whose lives have been touched by the late #DesmondTutu. Archbishop Tutu was a peacemaker, a champion of justice & health equity & a man whose great wisdom was matched only by his love devotion to helping others. Rest In Peace

@DrTedros

03



I am deeply saddened to hear of the death of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. He was a critical figure in the fight against apartheid and in the struggle to create a new South Africa - and will be remembered for his spiritual leadership and irrepressible good humour

@BorisJohnson

04



Sending warm wishes to all who are celebrating Kwanzaa this week. We hope these days of reflection on the seven principles bring light, happiness, and peace in the coming year.

@JoeBiden

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

celebs

Ariana Grande deletes Twitter account, remains active on Instagram

ANI | Washington

Pop star Ariana Grande deactivated her Twitter account ahead of Christmas on Friday.

Grande didn't announce a reason for the departure, but that didn't stop fans from taking quick notice of her absence.

According to People Magazine, Grande's name began trending on the social media platform on Friday afternoon when her followers realized her account "doesn't exist," according to Twitter.

Fans questioned what the reason for Grande's sudden dismissal was. Some wondered if cyberbullying could be the culprit, or whether Grande wants a fresh social media feed to announce a new project. Whatever the reason, it appears she won't be sending out any updates via Twitter anytime soon.

'The Voice' coach's social media presence isn't entirely gone, though. Grande has been active on

her Instagram account. She shared promotional posts for the Netflix film 'Don't Look Up'.

In addition, Grande posted a Christmas Eve wish to her followers. "Merry :)" she wrote on a video of the sky, which featured no sound.

"Be safe I love you" she ended the note.

Grande had a busy 2021. She appeared for her first season as a judge on 'The Voice', which aired its season 26 finale on December 14. Grande also tied the knot with Los Angeles luxury realtor Dalton Gomez in May. She has also launched a beauty line.

Grande had a busy 2021. She appeared for her first season as a judge on 'The Voice', which aired its season 26 finale on December 14



Ariana Grande

Gwen Stefani takes children to Disneyland every Christmas

Cover News | Los Angeles

Gwen Stefani and her children get into the Christmas spirit by taking their traditional trip to Disneyland every year.

The Hollaback Girl grew up near Anaheim, California with Disneyland in her "backyard" and her parents would take her and her siblings on a trip every holiday season, a tradition she now continues with her own family.

"My parents used to pick us up from school and would be driving down Harvard Boulevard going, 'Oops, we made the wrong turn. I guess we have to go to Disneyland today.' It's just one of those things that we do every year," she told Entertainment To-

night while filming The Wonderful World of Disney: Magical Holiday Celebration special at the resort. "We didn't get to go last year. I bring the kids every single year at Christmas time, so I know that they would be freaked out to know that I am actually here right now. They are going to be like, 'Why didn't you bring us?'"

The former No Doubt star, who shares sons Kingston, 15, Zuma, 13, and Apollo, seven, with her ex-husband Gavin Rossdale, was then asked what she wants her husband Blake Shelton to get her for Christmas.

"I just honestly, I just want everyone to be happy and have that moment, you know what I'm saying?" she replied. "It feels like there's a lot of stress in the air, and I just want my kids to have just the most great memories that we could ever make together this Christmas, and I know that we'll be able to do that."



Gwen Stefani

Iggy Azalea: Turning 30 is something to look forward to Bang

Showbiz | Los Angeles

Iggy Azalea thinks turning 30 is "something to look forward to".

The chart-topping rap star - who has Onyx, 19 months, with her ex-boyfriend Playboi Carti - has admitted via Twitter that she's loved life since turning 30, and that she now feels positive about getting older.

Iggy - who celebrated her 30th birthday in June 2020 - wrote on the micro-blogging platform: "30s is honestly something to look forward to! 'I wish I'd known then, so I didn't spend 27 - 30 acting like I was about to turn to dust. (sic)"

The blonde beauty has also provided an update on her son, revealing that he's learning new things all the time.

She wrote on Twitter: "I was tucking my son into bed and when I gave him a kiss and said 'I love you'"

"He put his finger to his lips and said 'Shhhhh' (sic)"

In response, one of Iggy's followers tweeted: "Has it been a long day?"

And the rap star replied: "Nah, he recently learned that 'Shhhh' means speak softly/be quiet and so he thinks it's hilarious to do it all the time in the middle of me talking so that I change my tone of voice. (sic)"



Iggy Azalea

Alec Baldwin is 'trying to get through a tough time' this Christmas

IANs | Los Angeles

Hollywood veteran star Alec Baldwin has shared that he's going "through a tough time" and wants to focus on his family this Christmas.

Baldwin said: "I wanted to take a moment to say thank you to all the people who sent me such kind words and best wishes and strength and prayers, thoughts and lots of encouragement."

"I got hundreds, hundreds of e-mails from friends, family and colleagues and people I haven't heard from in quite a while to send me strength and good wishes and so forth.

I got hundreds, hundreds of e-mails from friends, family and colleagues and people I haven't heard from in quite a while to send me strength and good wishes and so forth. I'm really grateful to them

ALEC BALDWIN

I'm really grateful to them." The actor added that he is "looking forward to some aspects of this being behind me", and shared the tragedy will "never be behind us" for anyone involved, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

He added: "I never lose sight of that, not a day goes by I don't think about that."

Now, he is focused on his family and getting through a "really tough time" as best he can.

He continued: "It's true, I only care about my wife and my kids and moving forward with my life and trying to get through a tough time, a really tough time. I want to say thank you to all the people who sent me good wishes who sent me support. I'm really grateful for that, I feel very awkward going through this, it's been very difficult."

"Whatever holiday you're celebrating, happy holidays to everybody. I hope that you're as lucky as I am in one department, that you're home with your family; I'm home with my family."

Baldwin, who was reportedly spending a "quiet" Christmas in the Hamptons with his wife Hilaria and their six children - again thanked his fans, and urged people to "be safe" during the pandemic.



Alec Baldwin

SUDOKU

8	5			7	6	9		
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	2						1	
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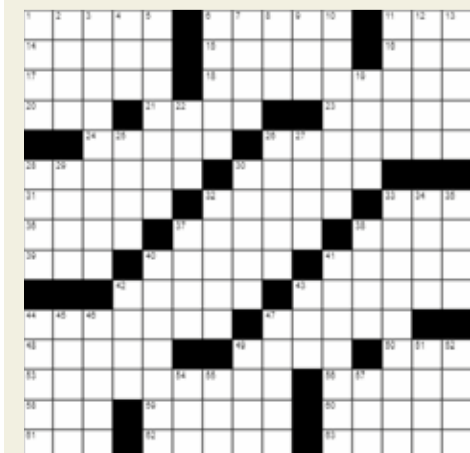
Yesterday's solution

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

How to play

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

CROSSWORD



Across

1- Steeple; 6- Imitative; 11- de deux (ballet dance); 14- MetLife competitor; 15- Sudden forward thrust; 16- Director Jean- Godard; 17- Sanctify; 18- Appreciation; 20- Always; 21- Ski lift; 23- Street urchin; 24- Like a ballerina; 26- Jock; 28- Powerful; 30- Class of Indian society; 31- Sharp pain; 32- Tapestry; 33- anglais (English horn); 36- Smoke deposit; 37- Elevator stop; 38- Single; 39- Sawbuck; 40- Shrimp; 41- Tourist draw; 42- Pick up; 43- Dared; 44- Layer of material; 47- Duck with soft down; 48- Loathe; 49- High-ranking NCO; 50- Wildcatter's find; 53- Toxic; 56- Overjoy; 58- Roadhouse; 59- Utah's Mountains; 60- Puerto; 61- gratias (thanks to God); 62- Story gray; 63- Conductor Zubin;

Down

1- Kemo; 2- Soccer legend; 3- Repetition; 4- Hosp. workers; 5- Shifting toward the orient; 6- Aquarium buildup; 7- Run smoothly; 8- One-million link; 9- Pepper, e.g.; 10- Elevations; 11- Conspicuous feather; 12- Examine account books; 13- View; 19- Story, often rooted in folklore; 22- Sandwich initials; 25- Fellow; 26- Biblical brother; 27- Nicholas II was the last Russian one; 28- Hey, over here!; 29- Oklahoma Native; 30- Headgear of a monarch; 32- Warning; 33- Household pest; 34- A single time; 35- Went through, as the paper; 37- German Mrs.; 38- -majesté; 40- Stony; 41- Partway through period; 42- Neighbor of Cambodia; 43- Semi; 44- Palatable; 45- Steak order; 46- Thick-skinned charger; 47- Short literary composition; 49- Mongrel dog; 51- Let's just leave that; 52- Actress Olin; 54- Latin word meaning "nothing"; 55- roll; 57- Canard;

Yesterday's solution

P	S	H	A	W	A	S	S	E	S	A	S	A		
R	E	A	T	A	S	L	A	N	T	S	A	L		
O	T	T	E	R	O	A	T	E	R	T	I	L		
			Z	A	N	Y		T	I	R	E	N		
T	A	D	P	O	L	E		P	O	V	E	R	T	Y
S	L	O	A	N	E		O	A	R	E				
A	G	I	L	E		O	B	S	E	S	S	I	O	N
R	A	N		E	M	I	T	S		N	R	A		
S	E	G	R	E	G	A	T	E		A	S	S	A	I
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Hapless England's Ashes dreams in tatters as Australia pounce



Australia's Pat Cummins celebrates taking the wicket of England's Haseeb Hameed

AFP | Melbourne

England crashed to 185 all out on day one of the third Test yesterday, leaving their Ashes dreams on the brink of ruin in the face of a relentless Australian attack.

After heavy defeats in Brisbane and Adelaide, the visitors must win in Melbourne to keep the five-Test series alive, with Australia only needing a draw to retain the urn as holders.

But those hopes took a near-fatal blow as Australia ripped through England's flimsy batting, with only captain Joe Root (50) and Jonny Bairstow (35) showing resistance.

Australian skipper Pat Cummins, back after missing the second Adelaide Test because he was in Covid isolation, and spin king Nathan Lyon both took 3-36.

Australia then added to England's pain by negotiating 16 overs to be 61 for one at stumps, trailing by only 124 with Marcus Harris not-out 20 despite taking a nasty blow to the finger, and nightwatchman Lyon yet to score.

But on another bad day for England they did bag the big wicket of David Warner, who raced to 38 off 42 balls before sending a thick edge off Jimmy Anderson to Zak Crawley at gully.

"As a bowling group we know we are not going to give up any soft overs. You need to take 20 wickets to win the game and that's our motive," said Australia's Scott Boland, who made his debut and took the wicket of Mark Wood. "It's a great attack to be a part of."

After batting collapses and poor bowling in the first two Tests, Root read his players the riot act -- seemingly to lit-

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KNOW WHAT

A loose shot outside off stump by Root, a questionable cut by Ben Stokes, and a wild heave by Jos Buttler will attract heavy attention from England's press after another difficult day for the tourists, who trail two-nil in the five-match series

tle effect. They have failed to score more than 297 in five innings so far.

"Obviously the toss didn't go our way, we'd also have loved to bowl in that first session," said Bairstow.

"Yes, we're still looking for that big score. We've got to get stronger and tougher with our dismissals, we know that.

"But we've seen that the pitch offered plenty (for the bowlers) today and hopefully we turn up in the morning and put pressure on to get some early inroads."

Openers Haseeb Hameed (0) and Crawley (12) fell cheaply to Cummins after he won the toss and put England in to bat, with their hopes resting once more on Root in front of 57,100 fans at the MCG -- less than expected due to Covid concerns.

He brought up his 53rd Test half-century in his 112th match, but once more failed to convert it into a maiden ton in Australia after a poor shot on 50 to Mitchell Starc.

Six of the best for Man City as Arsenal, Spurs cruise

Manchester City's Laporte and Sterling end Leicester comeback in 6-3 thriller



Manchester City's Raheem Sterling scores his side's fourth goal

● Bukayo Saka's double leads Arsenal's 5-0 Boxing Day breeze past Norwich

● Lucas Moura carves apart Crystal Palace as Tottenham toast a festive triumph

AFP | London

Manchester City opened up a six-point lead at the top of the Premier League with a first half demolition of Leicester in a thrilling 6-3 win as Arsenal and Tottenham were also comfortable winners yesterday.

Three of the scheduled nine Boxing Day matches were postponed due to coronavirus outbreaks as Britain battles record numbers of cases caused by the Omicron strain of the virus.

Earlier this week, Premier League clubs rejected the option of temporarily halting the season to allow a circuit breaker for infections.

And a stop to the season may be the only way to slow City's charge towards a fourth title in five seasons as Pep Guardiola's men have now won nine league games in a row.

Leicester were blown away by four goals inside 25 minutes.

Kevin De Bruyne blasted home to open the floodgates before Riyad Mahrez netted against his former club from the penalty spot.

Ilkay Gundogan rounded off a brilliant City team move to make it 3-0 before Raheem Sterling won and converted the champions' second penalty.

Leicester are one of the sides to have been decimated by Covid infections and injuries in recent weeks, but they produced a stirring second half fightback thanks to James Maddison.

The midfielder pulled a goal back before leading a break finished off by Ademola Lookman.

Kelechi Iheanacho made it 4-3 when he bundled home from close range after Ederson could only turn Maddison's shot onto the bar.

But City quickly restored some order as Aymeric Laporte powered home from a corner and Sterling rounded off the scoring from close range.

Five-star Arsenal

Arsenal consolidated their position in fourth with a routine 5-0 win at rock bottom Norwich.

Goals from Bukayo Saka and Kieran Tierney put the result beyond much doubt before half-time.

Saka added a second before Alexandre Lacazette's penalty and substitute Emile Smith Rowe rounded off a fifth con-



Tottenham's Lucas Moura scores his side's second goal against Crystal Palace



secutive win for Mikel Arteta's men.

Spurs moved up to fifth, six points behind their north London rivals but with three games in hand, after easing past a depleted Crystal Palace.

Palace's request for the game to be postponed was dismissed by the Premier League despite a coronavirus outbreak that left them without manager Patrick Vieira.

The Eagles were still able to field a strong side that featured just one change from their previous outing.

However, a rejuvenated Spurs under Antonio Conte never looked back after scoring twice in two minutes just after the half hour.

Harry Kane swept home just his third Premier League goal of the season before Lucas Moura powered in a header.

Palace's task was made even tougher when Wilfried Zaha was stupidly sent-off for two bookable offences before half-

time.

Son Heung-min added a third 16 minutes from time.

West Ham's bid for the top four is falling apart fast as they were beaten 3-2 at home by Southampton.

The Saints led three times through Mohamed Elyounoussi, James Ward-Prowse and Jan Bednarek and held out to move nine points clear of the bottom three.

Chelsea badly need to end a poor run of one win in four league games when they visit Aston Villa, who will be without manager Steven Gerrard due to a positive Covid test.

The Blues are now nine points off City and just three clear of Arsenal.

Villa's next match against Leeds, scheduled for December 28, was also called off yesterday taking the total number of Premier League games postponed over the past two weeks to 14.

No restrictions have yet been put in place for the size of crowds at matches in England, although supporters do have to provide proof of vaccination or a negative test taken in the previous 48 hours.

Sport in Wales will be forced back behind closed doors from, while in Scotland a restriction of 500 outdoor public events has seen Scottish Premiership clubs bring forward their winter break by a week after yesterday's fixtures.

'Discipline' the key as Rahul gives India ideal start against South Africa

AFP | Centurion

Discipline was the key as opening batsman KL Rahul led a strong Indian batting performance on the first day of the first Test against South Africa at SuperSport Park in Centurion yesterday.

Rahul made 122 not out as India reached 272 for three at the close after Indian captain Virat Kohli won the toss and decided to bat on a green-tinged pitch.

"When you come abroad to a place like South Africa it's very important to be very disciplined with your game plans," said Mayank Agarwal, who made 60 in an opening partnership of 117 with Rahul.

"KL played very well today and he was part of some important partnerships," said Agarwal. "He understands where his off stump

is and he is very disciplined."

Agarwal's words were echoed by South African fast bowler Lungi Ngidi, who took all three wickets for the hosts to finish the day with three for 45.

"They showed good discipline," said Ngidi. "They batted well. Rahul left the ball well up front and put away the bad balls."

Agarwal said India had benefited from what he described as "great preparation" in middle practice at Centurion on pitches near the match strip.

"South Africa have a good bowling attack and they bowled good areas but credit to us," said Agarwal. "We're very well placed."

Ngidi said the pitch had not offered much help to the fast bowlers despite a good covering of grass on the surface. "The



India's KL Rahul, left, plays a side shot as teammate Mayank Agarwal watches

wicket did less than we thought it would," he said.

Ngidi ended the opening stand when South Africa successfully sought a review after an appeal for leg before wicket against Agarwal was turned down by

umpire Marais Erasmus.

The consensus of commentators was that the ball was probably going to miss down the leg side or go over the stumps but the ball tracking software showed it was hitting near the

South Africa have a good bowling attack and they bowled good areas but credit to us. We're very well placed

MAYANK AGARWAL

top of leg stump.

"I thought it was a good shout," said Ngidi. "That ball kept a bit low compared to other deliveries."

He said wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock had persuaded captain Dean Elgar to call for the review.

Agarwal said he could not comment on the decision.

Ngidi followed up by dismissing Cheteshwar Pujara first ball, caught at short leg.

It was only a temporary setback for the tourists, however

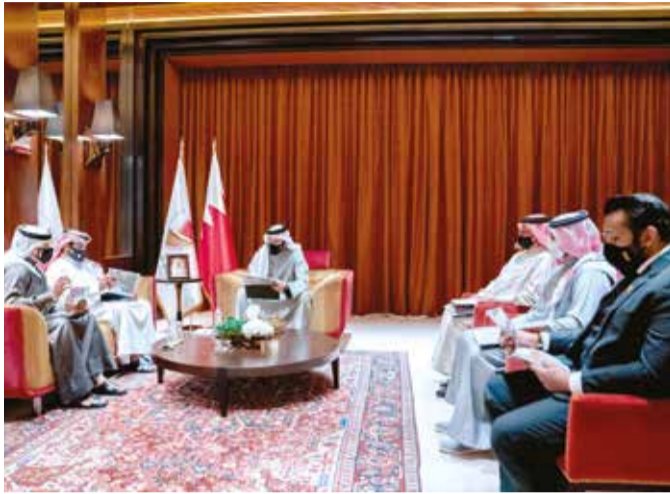
as Rahul shared a third wicket partnership of 82 with Kohli (35) before he and Ajinkya Rahane added an unbeaten 73 for the fourth wicket.

Rahul provided a masterpiece of concentration and shot selection, marred only by a difficult chance to long leg off Wiaan Mulder when he was on 60. He faced 248 balls and hit 17 fours and a six in making his seventh Test century.

Rahane, whose place in the team had been questioned after a run of poor form, struck the ball crisply in making an unbeaten 40 off 81 balls with eight fours.

Kohli said at the toss that India's win against South Africa in the third Test in Johannesburg on their previous tour in 2017/18 had given them the confidence of knowing they could win away from home.

HH Shaikh Khalid reviews preparations for International BRAVE Combat Week



HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa during the meeting

● **HH Shaikh Khalid receives HH Shaikh Salman**

TD | Manama

HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, First Deputy President of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, President of the General Sports Authority, President of Bahrain Olympic Committee has received HH Shaikh Salman bin Mohammed Al Khalifa, Vice President of the General Sports Authority and President of Bahrain Combat Sports Council to review preparations for the International BRAVE Combat Week which will include the 1st edition of MMA Super Cup as well as BRAVE Championship.

The event is scheduled to take place in the first quarter of 2022. The meeting was attended by Dr Abdulrahman Sadiq Askar, CEO of the General Sports Authority and Mohammed Shahid, Consultant of His Highness the President of Bahrain Olympic Committee and Mohammed Ali Qambar, President of Bahrain Mixed Martial Arts Federation.

At the beginning of the meeting, HH Shaikh Khalid hailed the efforts of Bahrain Combat Sports Council under the presidency of HH Shaikh Salman bin Mohammed Al Khalifa towards supporting the associations and federations operating under its umbrella.

Meanwhile, HH Shaikh Khalid was briefed on the steps that will be taken to prepare for the event which is among the major sports functions hosted by Bahrain. This includes creating working groups and committees. And HH Shaikh Khalid stressed the importance to double the efforts to make the event a huge success.

His Highness added that the

“The achievements accomplished by Bahrain’s combat sports, including the MMA sport which is leading the international ranking are the fruit of the backing and support of HM King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of the Kingdom of Bahrain to sports and sportspeople as well as the interest of HRH Prince Salman bin Isa Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister

HH SHAIKH KHALID BIN HAMAD AL KHALIFA

International BRAVE Combat Week plays a key factor in cementing Bahrain’s advanced position as a leading centre for hosting big international sports events, stating that this contributes to supporting the national economy and delivering Bahrain Economic Vision 2030.

“The achievements accomplished by Bahrain’s combat sports, including the MMA sport which is leading the international ranking are the fruit of the backing and support of HM King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of the Kingdom of Bahrain to sports and sportspeople as well as the interest of HRH Prince Salman bin Isa Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister,” HH Shaikh Khalid said.

Moreover, HH Shaikh Khalid highlighted the exceptional efforts being exerted by HH Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Representative of HM the King for Humanitarian Works and Youth Affairs which have positively impacted the strong Bahraini presence in key sports events at continental and international levels.

Thailand book place in AFF Suzuki Cup final

AFP | Tokyo

Thailand booked their place in the AFF Suzuki Cup final for a ninth time in 13 attempts after they held defending champions Vietnam to a goalless draw on Sunday in the second leg of the semi-finals to complete a 2-0 aggregate

victory.

The Vietnamese dominated possession at Singapore’s National Stadium but could not break down the resolute defence of the Thais, who have conceded only one goal in six matches on their run to the final.

HH Shaikh Nasser honours top-achieving athletes

HH Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa presents medals to athletes for achievements which contributed to raising the kingdom’s flags at various sports gatherings



HH Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa (R) honours Maryam Jamal (C) as HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa looks on



HH Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa and HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa with the athletes during the meeting

● **HH Shaikh Nasser affirms HM the King’s unwavering support for the youth and sports movement in kingdom**

TD | Manama

On behalf of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, Representative of HM the King for Humanitarian Work and Youth Affairs, HH Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, yesterday honoured a number of top-achieving athletes, in the presence of the First Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, Chairman of the General Sports Authority and President of the Bahrain Olympic Com-

mittee, HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

HH Shaikh Nasser presented medals to the athletes for their achievements which contributed to raising the kingdom’s flags at various sports gatherings.

HH Shaikh Nasser presented a medal to middle distance runner Maryam Jamal, the winner of a gold medal at the London 2012 Olympics. The Bahraini athlete had finished third in the women’s 1,500 metres at London 2012 but was promoted by to first place the International Olympic Committee and International Association of Athletics Federations when both the gold and silver medal winners were disqualified for doping-related offences.

HH Shaikh Nasser also presented medals to Second-Lieutenant Abdulla Al-Sayed Atiyya

for breaking the world record during the ADNOC Abu Dhabi Marathon, and entering the Guinness Book of World Records for running the entire marathon in full military uniform, as well as to Sergeant-Major Ebrahim Al Tamimi, who broke the GCC record at the Valencia Marathon, Seena Monfaradi for winning the gold medal of the World Masters Championship Jiu-Jitsu Championship, and Hisham Noor for winning a gold medal at the same championship.

On the occasion, HH Shaikh Nasser affirmed HM the King’s unwavering support for the youth and sports movement in kingdom, noting that the outstanding sports achievements are the outcome of the royal care.

HH asserted that HM the

King’s kind gesture to confer medals upon top-achieving athletes affirms the royal appreciation for champions who lifted the national banners at international gatherings.

HH Shaikh Nasser called upon the champions of Bahrain to exert more efforts in the future to earn the kingdom more accomplishments.

The honoured athletes extended heartfelt thanks, appreciation and gratitude to HM the King for granting them medals, noting that the royal kind gesture embodies HM King Hamad’s care for sports in Bahrain.

They also paid tribute to HH Shaikh Nasser and HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad for their great support to athletes in Bahrain, pledging to do their utmost to attain more achievements for the kingdom.

Canada’s Shapovalov tests positive for Covid in Sydney



Denis Shapovalov

AFP | Sydney

World number 14 Denis Shapovalov has tested positive for Covid-19 after arriving in Sydney, he said Sunday, highlighting the virus threat to the Australian Open.

The 22-year-old was among the first players to enter Australia ahead of the ATP Cup teams event from January 1, where he was supposed to be playing for Canada, and with the first Grand Slam of the year three weeks away.

He said on Twitter he was experiencing mild symptoms and isolating-- the latest player who competed at an Abu Dhabi exhibition this month to get coronavirus.

Riffa face Muharraq in crucial King’s Cup quarters clash

TD | Manama

Holdings Riffa will have a mammoth task in their quest to defend their title in His Majesty the King’s Cup football championship when they take on arch-rivals Muharraq tomorrow in the quarter-final stage.

The match is scheduled for an 8.30pm kick-off at the National Stadium in Riffa and it headlines the four high-intensity fixtures in the last eight.

Also tomorrow, Manama face off with East Riffa in another match of the round of eight, kicking off at 6.15pm.

On Wednesday, another two games will take place at the same venue. Al Najma face Al Ahli at 6.15pm, followed by Al Khaldiya taking on Hidd at 8.30pm.

The winners of the Riffa-Muharraq and Manama-East Riffa contests will face off in the semi-finals, while the victors of Ahli-Najma and Khaldiya-Hidd clash in the other final four



Action from Riffa’s Round of 16 victory over Al Hala (File photo)

game. The dates of those two fixtures, along with the final, have yet to be announced by the Bahrain Football Association.

Riffa reached the quarters after beating Al Hala 2-1 in the Round of 16, where Muharraq took care of Al Malkiya 3-1. Manama advanced following a 2-0 win over Galali, whereas East Riffa beat Bahrain Club 4-2 in penalty kicks after

things remained deadlocked at 1-1 at the end of regular time.

Last year’s losing finalists Ahli made it through with a 4-0 win over Al Ettifaq, while Najma outplayed Busaiteen 3-0. Khaldiya were 4-1 winners in a penalty shootout over Budaiya after it was 1-1 at the end of regulation, and Hidd beat Sitra 2-1 to march through.