Second innings

In a race against terminal illness, former Obama staffer with ALS and his wife find new hope a year later. P4-5

Bollywood

Horror is a tricky and technical genre: Vicky.

Page 14

Hollywood

Simpsons writer freaks out the Internet over age of characters.

Page 15
Gretel & Hansel
CAST: Sophia Lillis, Alice Krige, Jessica De Gouw
DIRECTION: Oz Perkins
SYNOPSIS: A long time ago in a distant fairy tale countryside, a young girl leads her little brother into a dark wood in desperate search of food and work, only to stumble upon a nexus of terrifying evil.
THEATRES: Royal Plaza, Landmark, The Mall

Bad Boys for Life
DIRECTION: Adil El Arbi, Bilall Fallah
CAST: Will Smith, Vanessa Hudgens, Alexander Ludwig
SYNOPSIS: Old-school cops Mike Lowery and Marcus Burnett team up to take down the vicious leader of a Miami drug cartel. Newly created elite team AMMO of the Miami police department along with Mike and Marcus go up against the ruthless Armando Armas.
THEATRES: The Mall
Halal Qatar Festival
WHERE: Katara – the Cultural Village
WHEN: Ongoing till February 9
TIME: 8am onwards
The Halal Qatar Festival seeks to strengthen the Qatari and Gulf heritage with all its rich resources in an entertaining atmosphere. The theme of the festival centres on a distinct feature of Qatari heritage, one that is drawn from deep within the deserts of Qatar – sheep and goat breeding.

Artistic Gymnastic Classes
WHERE: Qatar Academy Msheireb
WHEN: Ongoing
TIME: 3:15pm – 4:15pm
The Olympic sport using horizontal bar, rings and floor exercises on mats for the children from age 4 till 16.

Metro Street Food
WHERE: DECC Metro Station
WHEN: Ongoing

Keto Diet at Elite Medical Centre
WHERE: Elite Medical Center
WHEN: February 8
TIME: 11am
To register for the seminar WhatsApp on 30771895 with your name and telephone number. It is a free seminar.

Qatar Food Fest
WHERE: Sheraton Hotel Park
WHEN: Ongoing till April 30
TIME: 4pm – 1am
The festival is currently happening at Sheraton Hotel Park. Qatar Food Fest features 77 stalls, food trucks, and trolleys, bringing culinary and cultural experiences from all corners of the globe to visitors and residents in Qatar.

Public Speaking Classes for Adults
WHERE: Sharq Capital, C-Ring Road
WHEN: Ongoing till July 1
TIME: 6:30pm – 9pm
Get trained by experts to be a good speaker. Smedley Toastmasters is conducting a six-month speech-craft programme that teaches new members to speak confidently and develop leadership skills. For more information, 66053485, 33232490 or visit www.SmedleyToastmasters.org

Ballet Lessons
WHERE: Music and Arts Atelier
WHEN: Ongoing
TIME: 4pm – 8pm
For more info e-mail at registration@atelierqatar.com or call on 33030839.

Honey Exhibition
WHERE: Souq Waqif
WHEN: Ongoing till February 8
TIME: 10am onwards
The third edition of Souq Waqif Honey Exhibition is ongoing. The exhibition is organised by the Private Engineering Office (PEO) in co-operation with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and with the participation of the Ministry of Municipality and Environment.

Compiled by Nausheen Shaikh. E-mail: gtlisting@gmail.com, Events and timings subject to change
Back from the d(r)ead

Diagnosed with ALS, a terminal disease with no cure, doctors told him in 2017 that he might have six months to live. Today, he’s focused on being there for his daughter’s future firsts: kindergarten drop-off, middle school dance, wedding day, writes Alison Bowen

Brian Wallach wasn’t supposed to live to see his younger daughter’s first birthday.

Diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), a terminal disease with no cure, doctors told him in 2017 that he might have six months to live.

Today, he’s focused on being there for his daughter’s future firsts: kindergarten drop-off, middle school dance, wedding day.

More than two years after his diagnosis, he has been lucky, he said, to experience relatively limited progression of his disease. After some balance issues, the Kenilworth resident now uses a cane — or, as he is careful to specify, a “cool walking stick” — to get around.

When Wallach was diagnosed, neither he nor his wife, Sandra Abrevaya, knew much about ALS, a neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and the spinal cord, eventually paralysing even the body’s ability to breathe.

In response to Wallach’s diagnosis, the couple, both 39, launched I AM ALS in 2019. Former staffers in the Obama White House, they marshalled lessons learned while campaigning — gathering information, forming consensus, considering the impossible possible — to build a force to mobilise hope and change for those facing a disease they say can and should be cured.

Rays of hope are beginning to emerge through an innovative trial that received FDA approval last week to test several drugs at the same time, a bipartisan congressional caucus, doubled federal funding, and support from groups like the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, which gave the couple’s organisation a $453,000 grant in September.

“Last year we made hope a word that was OK to use,” Wallach said. “This year we have to make hope real.”

Audaciousness is the only option, the couple says, in their race against the clock.

Wallach logged 120,000 miles in the air last year, including travelling to Washington, DC, in April, where he testified before Congress and asked legislators to amp up funding.

“Last year, every time someone said, ‘Do you want to speak to us,’ I said, ‘yes!’ Every time someone said, ‘There’s a meeting,’ I said, ‘I’m going,’” he said. “Every time there was anything, I said, ‘Great, I’m on the plane!’”

Until October, when Wallach fell while exiting a Lyft in Boston after
swinging a heavy backpack onto his back. Thirty staples in his head later, and after terrifying Abrevaya with a phone call, the two agreed he wouldn’t travel alone anymore. He’s maintaining momentum for the cause with more hours in his home office and fewer in airports.

In December, I AM ALS debuted billboards around Times Square as part of its #CuresForAll campaign aimed at informing the public about the impact a cure or better treatment for a neurodegenerative disease can have on other diseases such as multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s. ALS patients and their families from states including Michigan, Maine and Colorado were in New York for the launch.

The billboards noted the number of people lost to ALS each day — 10 — with photographs of those who died in 2019. Days earlier, Pete Frates, a founder of the viral fundraiser the Ice Bucket Challenge, which raised $115 million, had died. He was 34.

The campaign was also shared on social media. The posts expressed the suffering and loss nationwide: a mother wrote about her son who was diagnosed at 20 and died at 28; a son posted in honour of his dad; Colorado Representative Jason Crow posted a message honouring his cousin.

It’s time, the couple said, to switch ALS conversations from a diagnosis rooted in darkness to the faces of people bravely moving forward. They want to speed development of potential cures and give patients more access to experimental treatments.

That’s not an unreasonable goal, said Sabrina Paganoni, a faculty member at The Sean M Healey & AMG Center for ALS at Mass General in Boston, which plans to test at least five different medications for ALS at the same time, a first for the disease and something she said could be a huge turning point.

Last Wednesday, the Healey Center announced it received FDA approval to move forward with testing the first three drugs: Zilucoplan, Verdiperstat and CNM-Au8. Similar to how cancer drugs are already tested, this gives patients access to more treatments and allows researchers to quickly collect data and accelerate the pace toward a cure.

“This is a very exciting time in the history of ALS,” Paganoni said. “I think this is going to be the decade when ALS is changed from a rapidly fatal disease to a more chronic disease that we can manage.”

For years, Steve Perrin, the chief executive officer at the ALS Therapy Development Institute, has monitored clinical trials for ALS. So far, he said, those drugs approved by the FDA, Riluzole and Rilutek, are “a very marginal slowing of disease.”

This year, he said the quality of drugs going into trials seems improved. He is excited about several trials, including one studying stem cells and another testing a drug to potentially slow progression in some patients.

“As a patient you want to see something measurable, and I don’t mean measurable in days,” he said. “If I’m a patient, I want to see something, and I want hope for myself and my family. I want something that is going to slow the disease down so I can watch my kids growing up, I can watch them graduate from college, I can watch them marry.”

But that takes resources.

“We get in these rooms where we can reasonably say that there’s going to be new treatments available,” Paganoni said. “But we need more funding and support, so all of this can happen, and happen soon.”

Nearly every moment feels like a push — pull for Wallach and Abrevaya.

“So they spend more precious minutes with their two daughters, ages 4 and 2, or do they spend the day away, among strangers — on a plane, in a researcher’s office, walking the halls of Congress — with the hope that those minutes will, someday, result in time banked to create more family memories.

“The hardest balance, if I’m honest, is, I love every minute I have with them,” Wallach said about his daughters, “but I also feel this pressing sense of, I need to be working towards a goal of actually finding a cure.”

“We’re doing that so we have a shot at a real future together,” Abrevaya said about their time spent travelling and advocating.

At home, when the family heads for the door, the toddlers reach for their father’s shoes, and they get his walking stick.

“While that both fills your heart with joy and appreciation, it’s also painful that your toddlers are being put in this position,” Abrevaya said. The parents guard normally.

They take their daughters to swim at the neighbourhood pool and on vacation with friends. Wallach wishes he could lift them above his head to touch the ceiling, like their uncle can. But he can lie on the floor and play with them as they listen to them belt out songs on their purple karaoke machine.

The couple aims to lighten a heavy subject. On New Year’s Eve, the two danced in a video on the foundation’s Instagram, singing into a microphone. Wallach promised to get an “ALS: You Gone” tattoo if 20,000 people donated $10 to a Healey Center research fundraiser. It raised $40,000 in 24 hours, Wallach said. No matter the outcome, he plans to get the tattoo.

The couple, who both work full-time, — Abrevaya is the president of nonprofit Thrive, Wallach works at law firm Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom – want more research, to create a patient navigation system, and to gather signatures for a letter asking new FDA commissioner Stephen Hahn to speed ALS patients’ access to possible treatments.

And they keep looking for light.

But it takes work.

Changing life with ALS for Wallach, and for other patients and their families, requires bold action from people with the power to make change: politicians, researchers, philanthropists.

As they meet others with ALS, they welcome new friends and face the pain of losing some.

“It does make you uniquely urgent in what you do,” Wallach said. “You push because you have to. You push because you know that the time that we have is precious, and that you want to see 20 years from now. And know that you can make that happen.”

Wallach often shares moments about his ALS journey on Twitter with his 40,000 followers.

Recently, he shared something he wasn’t sure he should. It was a time when the family was unable to find light.

On a recent night, he woke up to pain he’d had for the past few months, radiating from his right hip to his right call.

He clutched a stuffed llama his daughter gave him. And he began to cry.

“I cried because of the pain. I cried because I couldn’t be the father to my girls I dreamed of being,” he wrote. “I cried because I couldn’t be the husband to my wife I dream of being. Because I saw the future looming ahead, and for a brief moment I wondered if I would be a part of it.”

His wife heard him crying that night. She asked what was wrong. And he said maybe they would be better off if he left, living instead in an assisted living facility. She looked at him in the dark. “You are my light,” she said.

“You are their light. The only way you are leaving us is if you die in my arms, and we aren’t going to let that happen for a long, long time.”
NBA elects new office bearers

Nepali Business Association — Qatar (NBA) recently elected its new working committee led by Mahendra Chamalagi. Kumar Pant, President of Non-Resident Nepalese Association International Co-ordination Committee (NRNA ICC), was the chief guest on the occasion. The meeting was chaired by Mahindra Chamalagi, Chairman of NBA. Dr Dev Kaki Danigol, Founder Vice President of NRNA ICC, along with Dev Kaki Danigol, Adviser of Nepali Engineer Association Qatar, Arjun Prasad Bhatterai, and Rajendra Kumar Sharma, Secretary of NRNA ICC, were the guests of honour. Narendra Bhat welcomed the gathering and called for the unity among Nepali businessmen and entrepreneurs in order to exchange skills, expertise and knowledge.

Speaking on the occasion, Kumar said that he was more than happy to see Nepali entrepreneurs united under a single umbrella. He said, “The executive arm of NRNA is ICC which includes patrons, advisers and executive officers headed by the president. ICC is programmatically and voluntarily connected with National Co-ordination Committees (NCC) across the globe. NCCs are mostly registered as non-profit entities in their respective countries and are subjected to the laws of the host countries. We are planning to join our hands with young Nepali entrepreneurs to promote entrepreneurship in the country. We have created a forum for them so that they can exchange experiences with their foreign counterparts.” He also urged everyone to promote Visit Nepal 2020, an ambitious project launched by Nepal Government to attract two million tourists in the country for the year 2020.

Chamlagai said that NBA promotes business relations between Qatar and Nepal with a networking platform to exchange their views and organise business events, seminars, symposia, discussions as well as social events in order to enhance mutual communication and co-operation. He added that NBA is planning to promote joint ventures of Qatar and Nepali businesspersons by focusing on new insights and expertise, better use of resources, by building a good relationship and network and by involving both the governments. He added that NBA is also creating a proper environment for the investment in Nepal in various field including hydropower, agriculture health, and education among others.

Dev Kaji Danigol expressed his happiness for the formation of Nepali Business Association. Arjun Prasad Bhatterai talked about the condition of Nepali professionals and entrepreneurs in Qatar. He added that many of Nepali engineers do their own businesses in Qatar which is a matter of pride for all the Nepali engineers as they are demonstrating professionalism and competence in an international market.

NBA felicitated Shiba Raj Gautam for his long contributions to the Nepali community in Qatar on the occasion. NBA also presented certificates to the founder members of NBA Qatar, including Prakash Koirala, Ramesh Bhatta Raj Regmi and others.

The new office bearers of NBA, includes Rajendra Kumar Sharma, Narendra Bhat, Raj Regmi, Sagar Nepal and Prakash Koirala, Vice-Chairman; Ramesh Bhatta, General Secretary; Purna Pokhara and Sunil Kumar Ghimire, Secretaries; Chudamani Karki, Treasurer; and Abdul Basid, Assistant Treasurer. The members, include Pitamber Chapagai, Ram Kumar Shrestha, Bal Krishna Sharma, Yubaraj Sharma, Dhan Bhadur, Ramu Regmi, Suraj Budathoki and Nabin Satyeeel.

– Text and photo by Usha Wagle Gautam

PISQ mourns the demise of its founder

The students and staff of Pakistan International School Qatar (PISQ) recently organised an assembly to mourn the death of Lt Gen (R) Muhammad Jahan Zeb Arbab, founder of PISQ. Jahan Zeb breathed his last on January 29. He was the former ambassador of Pakistan to Qatar from 1980-1986. He catalysed the process of acquiring land for the school in 1980 and played a key role in its establishment in 1985.

Speaking on the occasion, Nargis Raza Otho, Principal of PISQ, said, “Today, we are all deeply saddened and heart broken by the news of the death of Jahanzeb Arbab. His name shall forever live via this school; he will live eternally through the success and services of the students passing out from this prestigious institution. We all stand in complete harmony with the bereaved family and sincerely pray for the exalted station of the deceased in Jannah in the Hereafter.” Afsan Shahid, Vice Principal Senior Girls’ Wing, paid a befitting homage to the services of Late Jahanzeb Arbab by recounting vast array of his noteworthy feats for Pakistani community in Qatar. She highlighted the challenges and obstacles late Jahanzeb Arbab had to confront in the establishing of the institution.
Allende’s towering saga of war

In *A Long Petal of the Sea*, Allende imbues the experience of displaced people trying to find a new home with dignity and idealism, writes Marion Winik

**WELL CONSTRUCTED:** *A Long Petal of the Sea* is full of the magic of storytelling. Sharply drawn, vibrant characters; a long-simmering, unlikely love story; ruthless plot twists, and a long waited, last-minute development.

Allende’s 24th novel is rooted firmly in historical fact. Though Isabel Allende earned her original fame in the 1980s with the magical realist bestsellers *The House of the Spirits* and *Eva Luna*, her 24th novel is rooted firmly in historical fact. The author’s versatility is no surprise at this point; highlights of her backlist include *Isabel Allende: The House of the Spirits*, *Eva Luna*, *La House of the Spirits*, *Eva Luna*, *Belle du Seigneur*, and *In the Midst of Winter*. Despite the lack of magical realist elements – unless you count that DIY cardiac surgery in the first scene – it is full of the magic of storytelling. Sharply drawn, vibrant characters; a long-simmering, unlikely love story; ruthless plot twists, and a long waited, last-minute development – Allende deals the cards with a practised hand and a narrative poker face. The specifics are rooted in events of the last century, but the theme could not be more timeless – and timely. This is a book about people tossed by fate into a country where they are not welcome, with their circumstances reduced and their gifts unappreciated, yet they replant themselves with open hearts, tenacity and optimism. In the 25 years that had elapsed since the arrival of the Winnepeg, Roser had become more Chilean than anyone born in the country.

Roser is the wife of Victor Dalmau’s brother, Guillen, and the mother of a child whom he never meets as he is among the 30,000 killed at the Battle of Ebro. Roser is never convinced of his death, despite the charred wallet Victor shows her when the two are reunited after internment at Argeles-sur-Mer. Roser has arranged for an old cargo ship, the SS Winnepeg, to take 2,000 Spanish refugees to Chile. The Dalmau group will soon cross paths with the Del Solar family, members of the Chilean ruling class. Their daughter, Ofelia, will be Victor’s first love. Unfortunately, he is already married to Roser and sworn to make sure that she and baby Marcel, his nephew, are always taken care of. Soon another baby will arrive on the scene.

Allende has explained that she based the fictional Victor on a real Victor, a Spaniard who made his home in Chile after the Civil War. Like his real-life model, the fictional one plays chess with Salvador Allende, the last president of Chile before the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. The author is the goddaughter of Salvador Allende; her father was his first cousin, and has lived all her life as a foreigner and immigrant in various countries. In *A Long Petal of the Sea*, Allende imbues the experience of displaced people trying to find a new home with the dignity, idealism and even romance it has been stripped of in our cruel times.

- Newsday/TNS
ANCIENT AND MODERN: Maxwell Malden, art conservator, cleaning an initial test panel by Samara Scott.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the work of Hans Thompson and Maxwell Malden, who operate a studio, Orbis Conservation, in 2013. The pair founded their studio, Orbis who specialises in conservation skills. Among the range of traditional and technical conservation skills. Kirsty Walsh, a conservator at Orbs who specialises in paint and decorative surfaces, recalls the arrival of one of the first figureheads, Defiance, a bearded, classical warrior that was commissioned in 1859. "When he first came in, I think that was the closest I’ve come to thinking, this is just not possible. Every little bit of him was crumbling away. He was falling apart in our hands."

Another, Topaze – a regal female bust commissioned in 1856 – was so badly damaged that water simply poured from the fibreglass shell she had been encased in, in a misguided effort to preserve her in the 1960s. The studio used a technique called sonic tomography to assess the internal water damage of the solid, wooden figureheads.

"We positioned nails around the circumference of each statue at regular intervals and sent sound waves between the nails. The speed at which the sound waves travel dictates the density of the wood, which suggests the degree of rot that has set in," says Malden.

Having established the stability of each structure, consolidants were injected into the pine for up to five months. While the wood was being stabilised, Walsh was conducting microscopic studies of paint samples in her first-floor lab, which overlooks the workshop below.

"The lab is where Walsh undertakes finer conservation work. On the day I visit, it contains an incongruous gathering of projects. Alongside a conceptual sculpture from the 1980s and a 17th-century saint are pieces from the Parliamentary Art Collection. Walsh taps on a wooden freight crate. "We’ve got David Steel in here. I’m going to start working on him tomorrow. Charles Kennedy’s head is over there." They are, of course, latex Splitting Image puppets that have started to degrade."

Walsh used microscopy to conduct paint analysis of the figureheads. Under the microscope, she shows me a cross-section of a fragment of paint taken from King Billy (a figurehead of William IV from 1833). She describes how she set the flake in resin before polishing it and placing it under the lens. The results show an undulating stratum of paints: modern blues and reds, interrupted by layers of filler and dirt, with layers of historic lead white paint at the bottom. With the use of a scanning electron microscope, Walsh is able to read the shapes of the cellular particles in the paint, which enables her to date the historic layers more precisely. Walsh’s findings raised the question of how far back in the object’s history the restoration process should go. "As far as we could see, it was a fact that these objects were repeatedly painted in layers of lead white paint," says Malden. "But today, figureheads are recognised as colourful objects – we might have had a bit of explaining to do if the whole collection was painted white..."

Walsh devised the colour scheme for the restored wooden sculptures by referring to a set of 1912 cigarette cards depicting navy figureheads. "I remember us all being quite disappointed when we were told they were all going to be colourful," Malden admits. "But they were working objects," he reasons. "They would have been painted by the sailors or ship builders themselves with fairly heavy-duty household or industrial paints that would have had an element of gloss to them, so they did have these slightly blunt colour schemes."

The mate, muted scheme developed by Walsh is anything but blunt: should the studio have replicated this glossy, gaudy aesthetic? "Hmm," Malden muses,
The world of conservation artists

“...earlier [for not painting them white], then that means we should have painted them in gloss. But we didn’t...”

It’s a lively argument that Malden and Thompson embrace head-on in their progressive practice, which is increasingly looking at the role of conservation in contemporary art. “We’ve always worked with living artists, and we’re interested in where contemporary art is going, and how conservation is going to fit into that,” says Malden.

Currently in the lab is a piece by the contemporary artist Samara Scott who makes sculptures from everyday materials – plastic bags, bleach, glitter and toothpaste. “Over time, her pieces start to morph,” explains Malden. These material choices can pose problems for galleries and collectors.

To ensure the longevity of Scott’s work, Orbis is drawing up a database of the objects she uses, making it easier for her to be more selective with her material choices. Malden is quick to point out that the intention is never to “stifle” the artist’s choices – it’s more a case of working out at what point in the creative process conservation become a consideration.

The studio are now keen to forge links with upcoming artists and have recently announced a residency programme for spring 2020. Orbis is offering studio space to an artist who is grappling with a particular engineering or material challenge. The idea is to explore how conservators can fit “harmoniously” within the artistic process. The intention is to keep art alive for longer.

– The Guardian
**Orange Nutrition Facts**

- Oranges are rich in vitamin C
- Fiber in oranges may help lower cholesterol levels
- Vitamin C in oranges can help keep skin looking beautiful
- Oranges help lower blood pressure and protect against stroke
- Oranges are a low-fat, nutrient-rich food
- Consuming oranges and orange juice in the first two years of life may reduce the risk of childhood leukemia
- Eating too many oranges can contribute to heartburn
- Oranges are vitamin A rich which can help prevent vision problems
- Orange peel has more fiber than the fruit inside
- Oranges are a superfood for people with diabetes
Melodic alarms can improve alertness levels: Study

Finding hard to get out of bed? Melodic alarms can help you. A new study shows that melodic alarms could improve alertness levels, with harsh alarm tones linked to increased levels of morning grogginess or sleep inertia.

The study, published in PLOS One journal, involved 50 participants, using a specially designed online survey that enables them to remotely contribute to the study from the comfort of their own home.

Each person logged what type of sound they used to wake up, and then rated their grogginess and alertness levels against standardised sleep inertia criteria.

"Morning grogginess was a serious problem in our 24-hour world. If you don’t wake properly, your work performance can be degraded for periods up to four hours, and that has been linked to major accidents," said the study’s lead author Stuart McFarlane, doctoral researcher at RMIT University in the US.

According to the researchers, the finding could have important implications for anyone who needs to perform at their peak soon after waking, such as shift workers and emergency first responders.

"Although more research is needed to better understand the precise combination of melody and rhythm that might work best, considering that most people use alarms to wake up, the sound you choose may have important ramifications," McFarlane said.

"This is particularly important for people who might work in dangerous situations shortly after waking, like firefighters or pilots, but also for anyone who has to be rapidly alert, such as someone driving to hospital in an emergency," McFarlane added.

The research could help contribute to the design of more efficient interventions for people to use on their own devices to wake up properly.

"This study is important, as even NASA astronauts report that sleep inertia affects their performance on the International Space Station," said study’s co-author Adrian Dyer, Associate Professor at the varsity.

"We think that a harsh ‘beep beep beep’ might work to disrupt or confuse our brain activity when waking, while a more melodic sound like the Beach Boys Good Vibrations or The Cure’s Close to Me may help us transition to a waking state in a more effective way," Dyer added.

"If we can continue to improve our understanding of the connection between sounds and waking state, there could be potential for applications in many fields, particularly with recent advancements in sleep technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI)," Dyer concluded. – IANS

**COMMUNITY/LIFESTYLE/HOROSCOPE**

**ARIES**
March 21 — April 19

If your lifestyle is considerably different than that of others, resist feeling self-conscious about it today, Aries. Try to remember that you chose the life you have for specific reasons. Even if you’ve come to a point where you’re considering a change, there’s no need to feel badly about where you are now. Everyone has to make his or her own way. If this conforms to the norm, that’s fine.

**TAURUS**
April 20 — May 20

An enhanced feeling of determination could motivate you today, Taurus. Finish the things that aren’t complete and make some plans for this evening. Don’t hesitate to take on something that feels complicated or big. Chances are you’ll be able to handle most anything and it will feel great when it’s finished. Enjoy your day by making the most of opportunity.

**CANCER**
June 21 — July 22

Consider making some plans for a vacation or short getaway, Cancer. Looking forward to something fun can make even the toughest of days far easier to handle. You’ll be amazed at how much you can manage when there’s an end in plain sight. Your entire attitude can lighten. So take the bull by the horns and create an incentive for yourself. Do something special to reward the hard work you do day after day.

**LEO**
July 23 — August 22

Don’t judge someone if he or she has a different lifestyle than what you consider to be OK, Leo. You probably lean toward the traditional, yet not everyone feels this way about relationships, working, or lifestyle. While it may seem impossible to understand and even frighten you, try not to be too harsh on those you deem odd. You’d be better off using that energy to keep your own life on track.

**GEMINI**
May 21 — June 20

Feeling the effects of today’s energies, Gemini? Take heart if this is the case, because the end of the tunnel isn’t as far away as it seems. Do your best to take things one step at a time and see about making some plans for a little fun this evening. Get together with friends or take in a movie. Help yourself feel better by staying busy and focused and follow up with some recreation.

**LIBRA**
September 23 — October 22

Getting through today shouldn’t pose too big a problem for you, Libra. You may feel a huge second wind that can give you the drive to work and determination to see your chores and projects through. Make some plans for this evening, such as getting together with friends or taking in an event that really intrigues you. Until then, go about your tasks bit by bit. You’ll get things finished before you know it.

**SCORPIO**
October 23 — November 21

Working within boundaries and restrictions could really get to you today, Scorpio. Yours is an independent spirit and your best achievements are often born of doing things your own way. Yet like it or not, we all have to follow guidelines and rules. Do your best to follow suit and finish what needs to be done. Afterward, you may find more freedom to act independently without consequences.

**VIRGO**
August 23 — September 22

Friends seeking advice or a shoulder to cry on could be plentiful today, Virgo. You’re one of best people to give them the support and care they need. Just be sure that you don’t give so much to others that you don’t have anything left for yourself. True friendship is about sharing and the exchange of problems and help. Running yourself down will leave you in a place where you aren’t going to be much help to anyone.

**SAGITTARIUS**
November 22 — December 21

Chances are that you’ll feel upbeat and positive today, Sagittarius. Consider sharing this energy with those around you who are feeling less than content. Your attitude can have a profound effect on friends, partners, spouses, and children. Even neighbours and extended family can pick up on your spirit without you even realising it. Share your optimism with everyone you can today.

**CAPRICORN**
December 22 — January 19

Don’t discount your ability to be extremely resourceful if you need to be, Capricorn. If you don’t have everything you need or all of the required information, take time to think. Who can you ask? What places can you access? Who might know where you can find what you need? Rather than panic because the pieces aren’t all there, instead make a list of contacts and go for it. Trust in yourself.

**AQUARIUS**
January 20 — February 18

Try not to let today’s blues get you down, Aquarius. While it’s true that some days can seem to drag on, the busier you are the faster time will pass. Get down to finishing any work still before you and then make plans for tonight. If there’s a light at the end of the tunnel, not only will things seem to speed up but you’ll feel better knowing its coming.

**PISCES**
February 19 — March 20

Dare to be different, Pisces. It can be so easy to fall into a drill. Sleeping at the same time, eating at the same time, wearing the same style, and going about work the same way day after day. Before you know it, you feel like you’re in a rut. The only way to get away from this is to make a decision to break free by doing something unique. Try a new haircut. Wear colours that are unusual for you. Pursue expansion.
Codeword

Every letter of the alphabet is used at least once. Squares with the same number in have the same letter in. Work out which number represents which letter.

BELLOW LOWDOWN YELLOW
FLOWER TALLOW PALLOW
SHALLOW CALLOW PILLOW
BELOW MELLOW FELLOW
HOLLOW WILLOW SALLOW
SWALLOW CROWN OVERFLOW

Wordsearch

Every letter of the alphabet is used at least once. Squares with the same number in have the same letter in. Work out which number represents which letter.

Sudoku

Bound And Gagged

Garfield

Codeword

Every letter of the alphabet is used at least once. Squares with the same number in have the same letter in. Work out which number represents which letter.

BELLOW LOWDOWN YELLOW
FLOWER TALLOW PALLOW
SHALLOW CALLOW PILLOW
BELOW MELLOW FELLOW
HOLLOW WILLOW SALLOW
SWALLOW CROWN OVERFLOW

Wordsearch

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Super Cryptic Clues

Across
1 Irregular form of PC's radio (8)
6 Use a needle, so we hear (3)
9 Not late, but almost not beginning (5)
10 Any number with illness that's catching (7)
11 Strident noise made by loose stones in front of church (7)
12 Social worker is behind those in opposition (5)
13 Doctor gets Conservative backing to reveal decay (3,3)
15 One with dry ground over there (6)
19 Pest given assistance outside public house (5)
21 Seen as plain cake? (7)
23 Country backing an American state (7)
24 Bach provided notes for this publication (5)
25 Fuel required for heating a stove (3)
26 Bird gazing round lake (8)

Down
2 Picture seaside town with fish (7)
3 Bound sound? (5)
4 Hammerhead in gloomy boat (6)
5 Attorney General, initially in elegant old US city (7)
6 Speedy old satirist (5)
7 Funny fellows holding note for payment (5)
8 Let lad see out (6)
14 Sea Lord involved in trials (7)
16 Go and dance madly in a tensided figure (7)
17 Going on horseback in part of Yorkshire (6)
18 Capital in the bank a raffle provides (6)
19 Getting old silver in front of gold (5)
20 Sunglasses not first in the underworld (5)
22 Folktale monster making Tom's head go round (5)

Solution

Answers

Wordsearch

Codeword
Horror is a tricky and technical genre: Vicky

Actor Vicky Kaushal will soon be seen in the horror flick Bhoot Part One: The Haunted Ship. Working in the genre for the first time, Vicky says he realised how horror is a tricky and technical deal.

“This was something I was not prepared for as an actor. While doing comedy, drama or emotional scenes, you can leave it to the moment between co-actors. You can rehearse, and while acting you leave it to the moment. You surrender to the moment and create something. But horror is a genre where I had to know everything in advance. The scene was explained to me in advance, and I know what’s going to happen next and have to react to it. I cannot just leave it to the moment. So, it was very technical and detailed, and a very tricky space, which I wasn’t really enthusiastic about horror films is our director! Bhanu Pratap Singh enjoys horror films. He does watch them and so he made the film,” said Vicky.

Vicky added that with his coming line-up of releases, some of his dreams have come true. “I am really excited to bring alive that era in front of the audience,” added Vicky. Bhoot Part One: The Haunted Ship is directed by Bhanu Pratap Singh, and also features Bhumi Pednekar and Ashutosh Rana. The film is reportedly based on a true incident that happened in Mumbai. It tells the story of a couple on an abandoned ship lying static on a beach. The film releases on February 21.

Actor Vidya Balan, who has won many accolades in her successful film career, contradicts the popular notion that award ceremonies in India are rigged. At an event to promote the 2020 edition of a popular Bollywood awards function, she said that everything seems fair when an artiste wins an award.

“People often say many things about award ceremonies in India are rigged. At an event to promote the 2020 edition of a popular Bollywood awards function, she said that everything seems fair when an artiste wins an award.”

She further said: “It’s a special feeling to be an award-winner. Firstly, the status of Filmmaker Award in itself is so beautiful. It is a symbol of love and appreciation from the audience and the industry, so it is very special for me.

“I feel it’s every Indian actor or actress’ dream to win a Filmfare Award. It was my dream as well but I never prepared my acceptance speech, because the more you want to win an award, the more you feel anxious after winning it. It actually happened with me four years in a row. I won Best Actor (Female) award for three years and one year in between I won the Best Actor (Female) Critics’ award,” she added.

“For four consecutive years, I went on stage to receive an award and I asked myself, ‘how can this get any better?’ When I got Best Actress for the first time, I thought that I would become mad but when I went on to win it for four consecutive years, I didn’t believe it,” the actress said.

Vidya Balan has won Filmfare Awards for her performance in Paa (2010), Jhajhjhak (2011), The Dirty Picture (2012) and Kahaani (2013). “I also feel happy when I am nominated for a Filmfare Award because they honour the best of the year, so just to be there is a good feeling. If you win, then it’s icing on the cake, but if you don’t win, and if you are at least nominated, then you feel good about it by thinking that at least you are amongst the best in that particular year,” she said.

In 2012, when Vidya won for Kahaani, Priyanka Chopra was reportedly miffed for losing out for her performance in Barfi. Asked for her reaction on that controversy, Vidya said: “I was glad I won it that year,” she laughed, and asserted: “I am not that kind to think that she (Priyanka) should have got the award. I got it and I felt really good about it. As long as enough people felt that my work was worthy a Filmfare Award that year, I am happy. I think this has happened many times in the history of Filmmare Awards where two performances run neck-and-neck and then one person gets it.”

In 2019, Vidya garnered praise for her performance in Mission Mangal. Asked which actresses’ performances she liked the most in the year gone by, Vidya said: “Unfortunately, I have seen very few performances, but I think Alia (Bhatt) was lovely in Gully Boy. I believe Taapsee (Pannu) and Bhumi (Pednekar) are lovely in Saand Ki Aankh and that’s something I want to watch. Again, I believe Yami (Gautam) was lovely in Bolu.

The 65th Amazon Filmfare Awards 2020 will be held on February 15. Breaking away from a 64-year-old tradition, this year the awards will take place in Assam. – IANS
By Brian Niemietz

D’oh! The Simpsons writer Al Jean blew a lot of minds this week by tweeting that if the characters on his animated comedy aged, the bratty child character Bart would now be the age his father Homer is on the show.

“If Homer is 39 he was born in 1980 which is when we said Bart was born,” Jean, 50, tweeted last Monday.

Making matter worse, Bart’s birthday is Feb. 23, meaning that he would now be the same age his father Homer is on the show.

One astonished fan realised Homer is holding back the years, but he can not.

“How did I get to be older than Homer Simpson?” asked Tom Williams.

The official Twitter account belonging to The Simpsons pondered that question.

“How did my 18-year-old sister Felicite die from an accidental drug overdose. This was just over two years after losing their mother, Johannah Deakin, to leukaemia in December, 2016.

Tomlinson is the last member of One Direction to drop a solo album following the boy band’s hiatus in early 2016. However, the singer says he needed to take his time to find his own sound. reports aceshowbiz.com

He said: “It took me a second to get it right, really. I think I had to develop for a good 18 months really, and treading water and working out exactly what my sound was, but I feel like I’ve landed there now, and I’m really happy.”

Walls was released on January 31 and Tomlinson is overwhelmed by the huge wave of support he’s already received for the album.

Tomlinson added: “I’m blown away. It’s just another one of those examples where the fanbase show just how strong they are and how loyal and passionate (they are).” It’s been an emotional 12 hours for me, it’s been a long time coming.” – IANS

The Simpsons writer freaks out the Internet over age of characters

By Brian Niemietz

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One astonished fan realised Homer is holding back the years, but he can not.

“How did I get to be older than Homer Simpson?” asked Tom Williams.

The official Twitter account belonging to The Simpsons pondered that question.

“How did you even get older?” I that verified account asked.

Chris Spendloved tried to nail down the chronology.

“(Homer) was 38 the whole time and Bart was 10 but Marge got pregnant right after high school,” he wrote.

Gabby Hayes tweeted “Can’t do the math, head going to explode.”

Tweeting at Jean and the show itself, Rocky Buckland offered a couple of theories on how the programme’s characters stay the same age.

“Ambient radiation from the Nuclear plant has rendered most of Springfield functionally immortal, or at least stunted ageing. Some residents die of accidents or tumours, or just move away,” he wrote. “That, or Homer is a deity and he’s preserving Springfield in a pocket of time forever.”

Simpsons fan Rachel Antolovic tweeted that she doesn’t mind growing old with the show.

“When The Simpsons started on Fox, I was the same age as Bart. I turned 39 a month and a half ago, so I’m Homers age. My fingers are crossed that the show lasts long enough for me to say that I’ll be the same age as Grandpa.”

Grandpa Abraham Simpson is 83, according to Simpsonsfandom.com. – New York Daily News/TNS
Four Qatari adventurers share their inspiring stories

By Mudassir Raja

If you have the right kind of attitude, you will reach the right altitude with gratitude. This was the crux of the extraordinarily stories shared by four exceptional Qatari adventurers during a recent gathering.

The adventurous stories of Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulla al-Thani, the first Qatari man to summit Mount Everest; Sheikh Asma al-Thani, the first Qatari to ski to the North Pole; Hamida Issa, the first Qatari woman in history to step foot on Antarctica; and Khalid al-Jaber, Qatari biker who has travelled around the world; inspired a gathering at Lusail.

The event was organised by BigB Meetup, a community activity group, at Altitude Elite in Lusail to listen to the inspiring and adventurous stories of the Qataris in their own words. The interactive session allowed the audience to ask questions from the adventurers and learn from the top Qatar achievements.

Opening the discussion, Bosco Menezes from BigB Meetup and the host of the event, said that it was the third discussion under the theme of ‘Sports and Wellness’ that is organised every February to coincide with the National Sport Day of Qatar.

“Under my community initiative #bigbmeetup, it is the sixth event in total. I run different programmes under four themes that are namely: ‘This Ability!’ championing people who are differently abled; Estedama, sustainability; Celebrating Artists, and Sports and Wellness. As far as sports and wellness programme goes, I invite people from different sports who have some achievements under their belts from the wellness areas in Qatar. This time we have invited four Qatari adventurers who shared their amazing stories and inspired the gathering,” said Bosco while talking to Community.

The discussion was aptly anchored by Ahmed al-Shahrani, a differently-abled Qatari and fitness enthusiast. There were two other speakers who spoke about their works in the areas of social work and wellness. The talk was however primarily focused on the adventures of the four Qatari nationals.

Al-Shahrani started the talk by asking Mohamed bin Abdulla what went through his mind standing on top of Mount Everest with Qatar’s flag in his hand, to which Mohamed laughingly said: “The first thing I thought about was that I had to go down [people laugh]. Going up was the half way only. Raising the Qatari flag after the long training for five years, was wonderful. I had to make lots of sacrifices and take on many challenges.”

He added: “We started climbing the last summit at 8 or 9pm. It was pitch dark and there was no oxygen. I kept climbing and thought that every step we take brings us closer to the summit. The fastest I walked was two steps every minute. Then I reached the summit and raised the flag. I started screaming. I cannot explain that feelings. We spent just 15 minutes at the peak. I made one phone call to my mother when I was at the summit.”

Speaking about her adventures, Hamida Issa said: “I met an environmentalist in London where I studied. He was looking for an Arab woman who can travel with him to Antarctica. I think it was written in my fate to go there. It takes longer to reach Antarctica than to reach moon. I felt the calling. I did it. It is the best thing that I have done in my life. It is the most untouched nature in the world. When I was there, I felt the insignificance and humility of existence. I felt very humble and grateful for being alive and experiencing such a beautiful place. The silence was what really struck me. It was a life changing experience. That is why I made the second trip.

“I think people fear the unknown. My family was obviously reluctant because it was something that no other woman in Qatar had done before.”

Sheikha Asma al-Thani, the first Qatari to ski to North Pole, said that at an early age she had made a list of things that she would do when she grew up. “I wanted to climb a mountain besides doing some other things. I loved outdoor activities. I love to challenge myself. Sheikha Asma al-Thani, the first Qatari to ski to North Pole, said that at an early age she had made a list of things that she would do when she grew up. “I wanted to climb a mountain besides doing some other things. I loved outdoor activities. I love to challenge myself. I felt the calling. I did it. It is the best thing that I have done in my life. It is the most untouched nature in the world. When I was there, I felt the insignificance and humility of existence. I felt very humble and grateful for being alive and experiencing such a beautiful place. The silence was what really struck me. It was a life changing experience. That is why I made the second trip.

“It took me and my team two years to train ourselves for the expedition. We learnt that every single person is a lifeline for the other person in the expedition. We depended on each other during the trip.”

The gathering also asked interesting and probing questions from the adventurers about their expeditions during the session.