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VOLVO

Arab world slams Zionist entity over ethnic cleansing, violence

Ghanem calls for urgent AIPU meet • Zionist entity continues Jerusalem attacks

Zain Group generates revenue of \$1.3bn in Q1

KUWAIT: Zain Group, a leading mobile innovator with operations in seven markets across the Middle East and Africa, yesterday announced its consolidated financial results for the first quarter (Q1) ended March 31, 2021. Zain served 48.5 million customers at the end of the period.

Zain Group generated consolidated revenue of KD 382 million (\$1.3 billion) for the first quarter of 2021, down 6 percent year-on-year (Y-o-Y). EBITDA for

the quarter reached KD 158 million (\$523 million), down 7 percent Y-o-Y, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 41 percent.

Net income for the quarter reached KD 45 million (\$147 million), down 5 percent Y-o-Y reflecting an earnings per share of 10 fils (\$0.03). Significantly, Zain Group net income grew operationally by 4 percent Y-o-Y for Q1, 2021, when excluding the one-time gain from the sale and lease back of towers in Kuwait during Q1 2020. (See Page 9)



Zain Group Chairman
Ahmed Al-Tahous



Zain Vice-Chairman and
Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi

KUWAIT/JERUSALEM: Kuwait and other Arab countries, including four that last year agreed to normalize relations with Zionist entity, have condemned a weekend of violence after occupation forces attacked hundreds of Palestinian worshippers around east Jerusalem's revered Al-Aqsa mosque compound and the Old City. The violence is the latest outbreak in a years-long attempt by Jewish settlers to steal Palestinian homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood.

Criticism of the Zionist entity has poured in from Sudan, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain—all nations that last year agreed to nor-

malize, or normalized, relations with the Jewish state.

Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem yesterday called for holding an emergency meeting for the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union (AIPU) to discuss the Zionist attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in Jerusalem. In his letter to the Union, Ghanem called for holding the meeting as soon as possible to discuss developments in Jerusalem and to take a decisive and clear position on them.

Occupying forces have been regularly raiding Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third

Continued on Page 2

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Local

Amir receives Crown Prince, Premier, acting speaker



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets National Assembly's Acting Speaker Ahmad Al-Shuhoumi.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-

Sabah at Bayan Palace yesterday. His Highness the Amir also received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and

National Assembly's Acting Speaker Ahmad Al-Shuhoumi. His Highness the Amir then received Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh

Hamad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, and Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Integrity Promotion Abdullah Al-Roumi. — KUNA

Kuwait, Mauritania share big potentials to promote ties: FM

NOUAKCHOTT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah has said there were great potentials to further cementing relations and cooperation with Mauritania. Kuwait and Mauritania established diplomatic relations 44 years ago and "there are wide spaces of cooperation between the two countries in different domains, which would be activated in the coming days" through bilateral agreements and a meeting of a joint committee due end of this year, he said.

Sheikh Dr Ahmad, also Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, made remarks at a news briefing at end of his official visit to Nouakchott late Saturday. Sheikh Dr Ahmad noted that he delivered a letter from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Mauritania President Mohammad Ould Ghazouani deal-

ing with bilateral relations and ways to enhance them at all possible levels. He said he and Ghazouani discussed collective efforts to strengthen immunity in the face of the coronavirus pandemic. "This cannot happen individually but within a systematic collective manner," he added. They also discussed boosting food security between the two countries, he said. Sheikh Dr Ahmad said points of view of Kuwait and Mauritania regarding regional and international issues were eye-to-eye on basis of dialogue, good neighborliness and non-interference in internal affairs of other countries.

During his visit, Sheikh Dr Ahmad also held talks with Mauritania Foreign Minister Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmad, which highlighted bilateral relations. The two ministers also delved into ways of boosting cooperation and development in various fields, including discussion on the latest developments in the region and international arena. Furthermore, Sheikh Dr Ahmad held talks with Mauritania's Prime Minister Mohamed Ould Bilal, focusing on bilateral relations and aiming to bolster ties across numerous fields. The Kuwaiti foreign minister's official visit to the West African nation came as part of a comprehensive tour of the region. — KUNA



NOUAKCHOTT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah speaks during a press conference in Nouakchott late Saturday. — KUNA

Mexican ambassador sends Eid greetings

KUWAIT: Ambassador of Mexico Miguel Angel Isidro has the honor to extend his sincere congratulations and best wishes to His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait, His Highness the Prime Minister, the government and the people of the State of Kuwait, on the occasion of the advent of "Eid-al-Fitr", wishing the friendly people of Kuwait further prosperity and stability.

Ambassador Isidro added, "In recent years, Kuwait and Mexico have built a strategic partnership, continuously deepened mutual trust and

achieved fruitful results in cooperation in various fields. I attach great importance to the development of Mexico-Kuwait relations, and am willing to work closely with the government of the State of Kuwait to take the opportunity to carry forward the traditional friendship and deepen cooperation in various fields, so as to bring benefits to the two countries and peoples. I look forward to strengthening the strategic partnership between Mexico and the State of Kuwait."



Mexican Ambassador Miguel Angel Isidro

Arab world slams Israel...

Continued from Page 1

most sacred mosque for Muslims, during the holy month of Ramadan leading to clashes with worshippers that left hundreds of Palestinian civilians wounded.

Zionist settlers meanwhile are stormed the Al-Aqsa compound today (Monday) under the protection of occupation forces despite worldwide condemnation. Occupation authorities are also trying to steal homes from Palestinian families in Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah suburb.

Kuwait Foreign Ministry denounced the Zionist occupation and ethnic cleansing of the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood residents in East Jerusalem. In a statement Friday, the ministry condemned the Zionist settlement expansion process, saying that these measures violate the international law principles and disrupt global efforts aimed at reaching a final solution

to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East and threaten the region's stability.

The ministry welcomed the statement issued by Britain, Germany, France, Italy, and Spain, in which it called on the Zionist entity to suspend its decision to proceed with the expansion of the settlements and to stop the ethnic cleansing measures in East Jerusalem, especially in Sheikh Jarrah.

Sudan labeled Zionist measures in Jerusalem against Palestinians as "repression", and "coercive action" in a foreign ministry statement late Saturday. The UAE and Bahrain condemned Friday's storming of Al-Aqsa mosque by occupation forces, and the ensuing crackdown on worshippers seeking to access the site. Abu Dhabi urged Zionist authorities to "take responsibility for de-escalation" of violence at the holy site, while Manama called on the occupying government "to stop these rejected provocations against the people of Jerusalem."

Morocco expressed "deep concern" over the violence saying King Mohammed VI "considers these violations... (are) likely to fuel tensions." Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry said it "rejected" plans to evacuate Palestinian households from Jerusalem, and called for the reinstatement of the pre-1967 borders. — AFP

Ooredoo launches 'Safer Internet for Kids' campaign

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Telecom, the first to introduce innovative digital services in Kuwait, in association with the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) has launched a new campaign entitled 'Safer Internet for Kids', the first of its kind. The campaign tackles YouTube Kids application, comes under the umbrella of Ooredoo Kuwait's social responsibility program, and aims to raise public awareness, encourage parents to take positive role in offering their children with a safer online experience through YouTube Kids' parental control options.

YouTube Kids is a filtered version of YouTube, designed only for children to explore their talents and interests in a contained, age-appropriate experience. Yet, not all content is manually reviewed by YouTube, thus, there might be inappropriate content that may impact the child's behavior. Children by nature are recipients of information, they accept everything they hear and translate them into actions.

We are all responsible for our children, and through YouTube Kids, parents have the authority to approve or decline what their kids can watch. Childhood is a precious time in which children should live free from fear, safe from violence and protected from mishandling and exploitation.

YouTube Kids has a full suite of parental controls in the app so parents can customize their children's online

experience. Parents can create individual profiles for each of their children, decide what content to make available for them, set a timer to limit screen time, see recent videos their kids have been watching, and so much more. Hence, YouTube Kids is specially designed for children under the age of thirteen.

In this context, Mijbil Alayoub, Senior Director, Corporate Communications, Ooredoo Kuwait, said: "Through this campaign, we aim to nurture public awareness and shed light on the importance of raising children in a safe environment including a safe online experience free from any disturbing scenes. Children, as users of technology, may be at risk through their contact with others or being exposed to inappropriate content."

"We are fully aware of how hard parenting children in the age of social media and screens could be, and what kind of real dangers children can face and deal with if applications were not monitored by parents. Child's online experience must be safe, fun and educating. Ooredoo is committed to supporting the community, raising public awareness and educating both: parents and youth on the risks and responsibilities they may encounter when using YouTube Kids and the internet," Alayoub added. The multimedia campaign aims to reaching out to millions of parents, through TV, and social media posts under the slogan #Safer_Internet_for_Kids, as well as printed press, and outdoor advertising.



Mijbil Alayoub

Iceland volcano's lava geysers thrill visitors

REYKJAVIK: Iceland's Fagradalskraun volcano lies quiet for a spell before suddenly spewing red molten lava geysers high into the air, visible from the capital Reykjavik in an awe-inspiring display. The volcano, which sprang into life in mid-March in the Geldingadalir valley near Mount Fagradalsfjall, has drawn visitors from around the world, many venturing as close as possible to the safety perimeter set up to protect against sprays of red-hot rock.

"It's incredible to see," said Henrike Wappler, a German woman who lives in Iceland, standing with her daughter at the edge of the volcano. Marvelling at "the power of the earth," she told AFP Saturday on her fourth visit to the site: "I feel small so near to this power — but I'm not scared."

Up until a week ago, the volcanic activity was continuous and low key, but now it is alternating between quiet spells and furious outbursts. One geyser was measured at more than 460 meters (1,500 feet) at dawn last Wednesday, according to the national meteorological office. The powerful bursts throw up rock fragments called tephra, some still hot, that land several hundred meters from the crater, which is located in an uninhabited area on the Reykjanes peninsula in southwestern Iceland. A low roar precedes the next explosion, a noise that "kind of reminds me of an airplane," said Freyja Wappler-Fridrikssdottir.

She was among more than 2,500 people at the site on Saturday, kept back some 500 meters (yards) from the crater — a safety radius that varies from 400 to 650 meters depending on the wind speed. "It's not every day



The skyline of the Icelandic capital Reykjavik with the glow from the lava coming out of a fissure near the Fagradalsfjall on the Reykjanes Peninsula behind. — AFP

we can go to look at a volcano so close. It's just really amazing and so beautiful," she said. Bjarki Brynjarsson, 25, was enthralled by the alternation of slumber and fury. "I'm just waiting for the bomb to pop," he joked.

Despite outward appearances, the volcano's activity is continuous, volcanologist Magnus Tumi Gudmundsson said. "All the time the magma is flowing," Gudmundsson told AFP. "This is not uncommon and this is a normal behavior. It is, if anything, less common to have a very continuous flow with no pulsations."

The eruption, which began on March 19, is the first on the Reykjanes peninsula in more than eight centuries, and it has been nearly 6,000 years since the last activity at the precise site. Since the original eruption in the Geldingadalir (Eunuchs in English) valley, several new vents opened up. Volcanologists have predicted that the activity will continue for several months — if not decades. But they are certain that the eruption is far from superficial, coming from the Earth's crust. "This is the most primitive lava that we have seen since the last Ice Age" some 10,000 years ago, said Edward Marshall of the Institute of Earth Sciences. — AFP



JERUSALEM: Palestinian devotees pray on Laylat Al-Qadr (Night of Destiny) outside the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque compound during the holy month of Ramadan Saturday. — AFP

Local

Kuwait civil aviation says PCR test mandatory for arrivals

Health Ministry launches second phase of mall staff vaccination drive

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation yesterday denied reports that it has exempted some people from taking the PCR coronavirus test while arriving in the country. The agency said on its Twitter account that every person arriving in Kuwait through the international airport must undertake the PCR test to prove they are free of the coronavirus disease. The Center for Government Communication also released a statement in which it said social media rumors about certain people being excluded from having to hand in a COVID-19 test report upon arrival in Kuwait were untrue. These tests are "mandatory, according to health requirements, for all nationalities and groups coming to the State of Kuwait," it said.

A decision by the council of ministers to ban Kuwaiti citizens who have not been vaccinated from leaving the country was yesterday published in the Kuwait Al-Yaum official gazette despite strong criticism and a court case challenging the legality of the decision. The publication means that the decision has become official but it will take effect starting May 22 as per the decision.

The health ministry said yesterday that

it will resume giving the second dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine from Tuesday after shipments have arrived in the country. Last week, the ministry extended the second dose from three months to four months citing unavailability of the vaccine from the manufacturers.

The Ministry of Health launched yesterday the second phase of COVID-19 vaccine field units, as it includes providing vaccines to workers in malls and commercial centers around the country. Ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said in a statement that this service is part of the ministry's efforts to combat the spread of the pandemic. The units are provided with the various necessary equipment in order to ensure smooth functioning of the vaccination procedures and application of all precautionary measures, Dr Sanad said.

The campaign operated yesterday at the Avenues Mall in two periods, and it was expected to provide the first dose of vaccination to around 10,000 people working in the mall, he added. More than 34,758 employees who have direct contact with the public received vaccinations through this service in its first stage, he said. Dr Sanad praised efforts of those in charge of the campaign and the medical staff participating in the various vaccination centers



A health worker administers a COVID-19 vaccine shot to a mall employee.



KUWAIT: Mall workers wait to receive their COVID-19 vaccine shot at the Avenues Mall yesterday. — KUNA photos

who continue to perform their duties according to the best quality standards.

The Ministry of Health had on Saturday reported seven new COVID-19 deaths and 1,095 infections registered in the previous 24 hours. Dr Sanad said that the total fatalities increased to 1,635, and the case-load to 284,076 as of Saturday. He added

that the total recoveries have reached 268,316 after 1,399 patients recovered from coronavirus over the same period, making the recovery rate 94.45 percent out of the conducted tests.

Moreover, 14,125 patients in total were receiving health care as of Saturday, including 210 at intensive care units, he

said. Meanwhile, 7,747 tests were conducted over the same period, with infection rate 14.13 percent, making the total conducted tests 2,396,532, he added. Dr Sanad renewed his call on the public to maintain social distancing and to abide with all health regulations that would help in limiting the virus' spread.

Palestinians proved Jerusalem a red line: Ambassador

KUWAIT: The Palestinians, once again, proved that Jerusalem is a red line that will not be crossed in any way, Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub said in a statement yesterday. The uprising of the holy city is witnessing during these blessed days is a clear message for all those concerned that Jerusalem with its Muslim and Christian sanctities will remain Arab, Muslim and Christian, he added. The Palestinian people, led by Jerusalemites, will defend their city and sanctities with their bare chests on behalf of the Arab and Muslim nations, and Palestinians will remain the guards of Al-Aqsa Mosque, Dome of the Rock and the Church of Resurrection, he professed.

"The Israeli actions in Jerusalem are a continuation of miserable attempts to impose the status quo and Judaization of the holy city through falsifying facts and the story about Jerusalem, as well as the rabid campaign to replace the original city inhabitants with settlers," the ambassador said. "The battle of Sheikh Jarrah is another witness that this occupation did not and will not seek anything other than removing the landowners, but this will not materialize and the Palestinian people will

remain steadfast defending the soil of Jerusalem regardless of the cost."

Helping Jerusalem and its sanctities is a national, religious and moral duty of every Arab, Muslim and Christian, as well as every peace lover in this world, as peace starts in Jerusalem and ends in it, the Ambassador declared. "I stand with respect over the stands of the State of Kuwait towards Jerusalem and its sanctities, which issued two statements in one day in support of Jerusalem," he said. "This constant and continued stand by the State of Kuwait is the result of the conviction of this country with its wise leadership headed by HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, that the Palestinian cause will remain the central cause of Kuwait and the Arab nation, and that Jerusalem will remain in Kuwait's heart forever."

"I will not forget to express all respect and appreciation to all the people of Kuwait, who since the moment of the battle of Sheikh Jarrah, Damascus Gate and Al-Aqsa Mosque, moved to help their brothers in Jerusalem and flooded social media with their support for their brothers in Palestine," the ambassador indicated. "Thanks also to the Kuwait media, which became the spokesperson for Jerusalem and the Arab Palestinian people there. We promise our nation that Jerusalem will remain free and Arab, and the eternal capital of the State of Palestine with the support of the Arab nation, and we will remain the first line of defense for our beloved nation."



Palestinian Ambassador Rami Tahboub

Indian embassy makes virtual address on COVID-19 situation

KUWAIT: The Embassy of India in Kuwait recently organized a virtual address to the Indian community in Kuwait by the Ambassador of India to Kuwait on "COVID-19 Situation in India and Assistance to India from Abroad".

During his address, Ambassador of India to Kuwait Sibi George briefed the community on the current COVID-19 situation in India and the efforts undertaken by the government to control the spread of the deadly pandemic. He highlighted the assistance in the form of emergency medical supplies received by India from abroad, including the friendly State of Kuwait.

Ambassador George stated that India and Kuwait have always stood with each other in times of difficulties and emphasized that Kuwait was one of the countries which came forward and offered support to India. The ambassador also acknowledged the efforts of the Indian community, spearheaded by the Indian Community Support Group (ICSG) in mobilizing support and medical relief. The ambassador also elucidated in great detail the COVID-19 response management infrastructure set-up by the government of India to coordinate the global efforts in dealing with the cur-

rent situation in India.

Ambassador George announced that a crisis management group of officers in the Embassy has been set-up to monitor the situation real time. This group will be available 24x7 for any clarification and assistance. On requests from various State Governments and Union Territories, the ambassador mentioned that each such request is being responded to by the embassy team.

Ambassador George emphasized that it is important to ensure that all contributions and donations are made after due verification and that standard operating procedure is followed which envisages that all supplies of COVID-19 related equipment that is offered to be sent to India is to be routed through Indian Red Cross Society, which will receive it on behalf of government of India. Ambassador George concluded by thanking His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and the government and the people of the friendly State of Kuwait for their support in this hour of need for India.



KUWAIT: Ambassador of India to Kuwait Sibi George delivers the address.

Al-Rashed Group ensures smooth movement of oxygen to India

KUWAIT: The government of Kuwait has initiated measures to send emergency medical supplies and equipment to India, which is facing a shortage in medical supplies due to the recent surge in COVID-19 infections. The government level assistance efforts are being coordinated by the Public Authority of Industries, which has already sent over 313MT of aid cargo to India.

The Indian Embassy in Kuwait, along with Al-Rashed International Shipping Company, the embassy's logistics-partner in shipping emergency medical aid to India, have been working round-the-clock to ensure the smooth flow of assistance being shipped to India. Kuwait stands alongside the rest of

the world in lending support to India in its time of need and in ensuring the flow of emergency medical supplies in a timely manner.

Kuwait with its centuries of social and trade ties and decades of diplomatic relations with India, is extending full support to India in its fight against the pandemic. The medical aid from Kuwait so far includes liquid medical oxygen, oxygen cylinders and high-flow oxygen concentrators. The initial cargo was loaded from Shuaiba Port and headed to Nhava Sheva Port in Mumbai, India on May 5, aboard the Indian commercial vessel MV Capt Kettleman.

Meanwhile, another cargo of medical supplies was loaded from Shuwaikh Port onboard Indian Naval vessels INS Kolkata, INS Kochi and INS Tabar, which are in the Middle East to procure equipment from oxygen manufacturers. INS Kolkata sailed out of Shuwaikh Port on May 5 while the latter two frigates were loaded and dispatched the following day. Public Authority for Industries, along with support provided by the Kuwait Port Authority, Kuwait Customs, and various other government entities, have joined to ensure the smooth flow of the noble endeavor of Kuwait.



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Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Muslim men pray at Fatmah Mosque in the Kuwait City just before daybreak early yesterday, during the night of the 27th day of the holy month of Ramadan, widely presumed as Laylat Al-Qadr. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Aluminum plant on fire

KUWAIT: Firemen put out a blaze reported in an aluminum manufacturing plant in Subhan yesterday. Five fire stations responded to the emergency call, and the fire teams were able to put out the fire in a 500 square meter area out of the total area of 2,500 square meters. No injuries were reported, and an investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the blaze.

Ramadan Diwaniya

Thirty percent office capacity poses challenges for law firms

Family issues increased during pandemic: Attorney Otaibi

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti professionals are interviewed by Kuwait Times to learn more about the nature of their jobs, and changes and challenges they have faced during the pandemic. The following are excerpts from Kuwait Times' interview with Attorney Abdullah Al-Otaibi:

Kuwait Times: How is the law firm business in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Abdullah Al-Otaibi: While some law offices decided to close down due to slow business, other law offices continue to operate and are doing great. From March 12, 2020 till the end of August 2020, we were all closed. But we tried to carry on, since I have people working for me. I paid them salaries because I know they have families to feed.

We thought things will be okay when we reopened in September, but everything has been in disarray due to the recent curfews and lockdowns. Business is very slow and people are tired and broke. We needed to restart and pick up the pieces of what is left and continue. Our law office must continue to help others and those who are in need of our services, so we started receiving clients again. I would say business has increased, but the problem now is the fact that many offices in the court are operating at 30 percent capacity.

Even the shuoon (litigation department) for labor-related issues only receives 30 percent of transactions, so our cases are piling up and snowballing every day. We cannot do anything about it, as the delay is not from us but from government agencies. The courts too operate at 30 percent capacity. So even if you want to finish the case the soonest, the problem is we cannot set the time on our own.

I went to a court the other day, but it announced it has to close because COVID positive people were allegedly found there, so automatically they closed. Some areas in the justice building will operate, while other sections will be closed. This continues to date. We cannot blame the people in the ministry building because their reasons are all valid, to protect everyone against the virus.

Nonetheless, we are surviving. My lawyers and staff are paid regularly, thanks to clients who are still trusting us to act on their cases on their behalf. Thank God we have been winning cases too. It is our desire to help people win their cases and ultimately get their rights correctly and equitably.

Labor and family cases

Kuwait Times: Most of your cases are labor and family related. Why is it so?

Otaibi: Yes, but we also accept all other cases such as civil and criminal cases, corporate or company cases, and family or domestic cases. During the pandemic I noticed an increase in family issues, maybe because of the curfews and lockdowns. We receive several cases that need our expertise - husband and wife issues, inheritance issues, even divorce. There are issues of domestic violence too. All these are now piling up in our office and we need to do something about it.

We have received several labor-related cases of unpaid salaries, indemnities and some abandoned workers because their company has closed down. Our citizens have many issues of companies closing down, rental issues, release issues, etc. These are all connected because of this pandemic. Some are no longer repaying loans to the banks. The government wants to help our people, but I think the problem for decision makers nowadays is the fact that they have no idea when to give the money or until when they are going to give money so people can survive.

The government is doing its job to help our people in many ways. Some Kuwaitis are receiving salaries without work, but there are Kuwaitis who work for private companies who are not receiving their salaries completely. There are plans by the

government to enact a law to help and support small and medium enterprises, but until now it remains a proposal. The problem is they want to wait until the pandemic ends, but of course we do not know when this will happen.

Hotels and restaurants have been badly affected; many decided to close down. I went to the biggest shopping mall in Kuwait and found many shops have shut down. I went to the oldest shopping malls in Kuwait City and only a few shops are open. Businesses need help. If the government needs workers, if they need business, they must do something for the people who are doing their best to create vibrancy in business.

Kuwait Times: Where did you graduate from and what was your first job?

Otaibi: I completed my law degree from Kuwait University in 2005. Then I studied sharia law in Saudi Arabia. When I came back to Kuwait, I joined the roster of new lawyers at the ministry of justice assigned to the Hawally and Ahmadi court at the judgment enforcement department. I worked there for eight years. The job was to enforce the law after the final verdict.

Then I moved to a family court, juggling my time at various family courts all over Kuwait to settle issues of families, divorce, marriage, certificate for Islamic marriages and inheritance issues. There, I stayed for over three years. These are the kind of jobs I readily accepted to hone my judicial skills and knowledge and practical experience.

Then I created this law office to help people six years ago. At that time, we started with just two lawyers, but now we are five. One is stranded in Egypt during the pandemic - inshallah he will come back soon. We have two mandoubs and two secretaries to help me with my work. Even though I have people with me, I prefer to attend to every call. Every day I receive 100 plus calls. Some calls I cannot attend, but I schedule meetings with my clients because I want to know about every single step being taken to ensure their rights are observed.

Sometimes I arrange meetings online via WhatsApp. Sometimes you have to remind clients to be patient because this pandemic is biting us all. The work at the ministry of justice and shuoon is very tricky now. We cannot easily get the barcode needed to be called by the judge. Every hour only 50 people with barcodes are allowed to enter.

I wanted to become a lawyer since I was little because I wanted to see myself in court. We have no lawyer in the family. I feel it is a very good profession. I want to be active - I don't want to just sit and wait for my salary. I want to practice and help many people in their legal battles.

I am not a chai guy. I remember I had a client for whom I wasn't able to do enough. He paid, but I returned his money because I wasn't happy about the result as he lost his case. I didn't deserve the money given to me because I didn't focus much on his case.

Kuwait Times: Are you planning to set up more offices in Kuwait or GCC countries in the future?

Otaibi: That time will come, inshallah. Who doesn't want to grow and get a bigger and better operation or network? It's part of our vision to upgrade, but we have to survive this pandemic first.

Kuwait Times: What does this Ramadan look like and how is it different?

Otaibi: Till 2019, we worked two shifts in Ramadan, from 9 am until noon, then 7 pm till 10 pm. This timing couldn't be applied last year, and this year too because of the partial curfew. But we try to work 4 to 5 hours.



Attorney Abdullah Al-Otaibi

RAMADAN
QUIZ 2021

Kuwait Times annual Ramadan competition will publish every day throughout the holy month of Ramadan. All thirty coupons containing the correct answer must be sent to the newspaper to become eligible for the raffle draw. All coupons must be received on or before Monday 17 of May 2021. Winners will be announced in Kuwait Times.

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Kuwait Times Ramadan Quiz

28- Dates aren't an example of a food
Muslims can eat during Ramadan.

- A. True
 B. False

Kuwait Times Ramadan Quiz

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Afghans bury dead from bloody school blasts as toll rises to 50

MONDAY, MAY 10, 2021

A month after crossing river into US, immigrants face harsh reality

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Scotland vote may fuel independence clash

UK election setback sparks Labour infighting

LONDON: The Scottish National Party yesterday said its landslide victory in Edinburgh's devolved parliament was grounds for a fresh independence referendum, despite opposition from London. While the SNP campaigned on promises to hold a new vote, the UK government—which would need to give formal legal permission—is opposed, raising fears of a protracted political and legal battle.

Now the nationalists say their slightly increased share of seats, one short of an overall majority of 65, gives them a mandate for "indyref2", so called after the "no" vote in Scotland's first independence vote in 2014.

Scottish media stressed the SNP's strong showing, with The Herald on Sunday headlining its front page simply with the word "Landslide". But UK-wide newspapers had a different take, as The Sunday Telegraph declared "Sturgeon falls short of majority". SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon said in her victory speech that Westminster now has "no democratic justification" to deny a second independence referendum.

"I hope to lead Scotland to independence," she told the BBC yesterday. She said that it would be "absurd and completely outrageous" for the referendum to lead to a legal wrangle in the Supreme Court, as could happen if Westminster blocked it and the Scottish parliament passed its own legislation. Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said the 2014 referendum where 55 percent voted "no" should be a once in a generation event.

'Wouldn't play well'

Johnson said Saturday that the SNP's aim of a second referendum was "irresponsible and reckless" while he wrote a public letter to Sturgeon asking her to "work together" in "Team UK." Sturgeon told the BBC that she thought the UK government ultimately would not stand against the referendum because this would come across as disrespectful of Scots' democratic rights.

"It would mean that the Conservative government had refused to respect the democratic wishes

of the Scottish people," she said. "I think it is an understatement to say that that wouldn't play well."

Yesterday, senior UK minister Michael Gove sought to downplay the brewing conflict. He insisted in comments to the BBC that for all UK leaders including Sturgeon the priority is recovery from the coronavirus pandemic and claimed the country did not have time now for a "protracted conversation about the Constitution". Gove also argued that the fact that the SNP do not have an outright majority in the devolved parliament—as they did before the first referendum in 2014 — made a "significant difference".

Meanwhile, Britain's main opposition Labour Party was split over future strategy and embroiled in political infighting on Sunday after suffering huge losses in local polls. Keir Starmer, Labour's leader since 2020, sacked the chair of the party Angela Rayner on Saturday evening after saying he was "bitterly disappointed" by the results. Starmer was reportedly set to launch a reshuffle of his shadow cabinet, while speculation mounted over his own future as leader.

The Times wrote that Starmer's reshuffle "could begin as early as Monday". Supporters of previous leader Jeremy Corbyn led criticism of Starmer, with Corbyn's close ally, Labour MP Diane Abbott, telling Sky News it was "in many ways a disappointing result". "I think sacking Angela Rayner was not a forward-thinking thing to do," she added.

John McDonnell, former Shadow Chancellor under Corbyn, in a BBC interview accused Starmer of failing to create attractive policies. "You can't send candidates into the field like that naked, without any policy," he said. Under hard-left Corbyn, Labour was damaged by accusations of anti-semitism and had a disastrous general election showing in 2019.

Starmer, formerly a human rights lawyer and public director of prosecutions, was elected leader in April 2020, promising to "re-connect" with voters. "On last week's showing, he has spectacularly failed", The Times said. However Ian Stewart, Shadow Secretary for Scotland, told Sky News that



EDINBURGH: Scotland's First Minister and leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP), Nicola Sturgeon gives a thumbs-up on the steps of her official residence Bute House in Edinburgh yesterday following the party's landslide victory in the Scottish parliament elections. — AFP

Starmer "needs time" to turn the situation around.

"We've got to have a positive policy platform and that's what Keir Starmer is determined to do," he said. Labour performed poorly in Thursday's council elections in England and lost to the Tories in a key by-election in Hartlepool in northeastern England, a Labour heartland since the 1970s.

In Scotland, Labour dropped two seats in the devolved parliament under new leader Anas Sarwar, who took over in February. It counted successes in Wales, holding onto power in the devolved parlia-

ment and in several mayoral races including London, where Sadiq Khan won a second term.

Andy Burnham, who easily won re-election as a popular mayor of Greater Manchester in northern England appeared to issue a veiled challenge to Starmer's leadership, telling Sky News: "If the party were ever to feel they needed me, I'm here". The results in England appeared to be a vote of confidence in Johnson's leadership post-Brexit and the UK's successful vaccine rollout, despite the country's death toll remaining the highest in Europe. — AFP

Khan: London's feisty mayor wins second term

LONDON: London Mayor Sadiq Khan, who won re-election Saturday, has risen from humble roots to spar with prime ministers and presidents since taking charge of the British capital five years ago. The 50-year-old politician from the main opposition Labour party, a former human rights lawyer brought up on a London public housing complex, won a second stint at City Hall with victory over Conservative rival Shaun Bailey. This continues a remarkable journey for the Pakistani immigrant bus driver's son, who became the first Muslim mayor of a Western capital when initially elected in 2016.

He has made a name for himself as a vocal critic of Brexit and successive Conservative prime ministers, including his mayoral predecessor Boris Johnson, as well as for a feud with former US president Donald Trump. The pair became embroiled in an extraordinary war of words, after Khan criticised Trump's controversial travel ban on people from certain Muslim countries.

In a series of bizarre attacks, Trump accused Khan of doing a "very bad job on terrorism" and called him a "stone cold loser" and a "national disgrace". The mayor in turn allowed an infamous blimp of Trump dressed as a baby in a nappy to fly above protests in Parliament Square during his 2018 visit to Britain. "He once called me a stone cold loser. Only one of us is a loser, and it's not me," a typically combative Khan told AFP as he campaigned ahead of Thursday's poll.

Street fighter

Born in London in 1970 to parents who had



LONDON: Sadiq Khan gives his acceptance speech after being declared the winner of the London Mayoral election at City Hall in London Saturday winning his second term as London mayor. — AFP

recently arrived from Pakistan, Khan was the fifth child out of seven brothers and one sister. He grew up in public housing in Tooting, an ethnically mixed residential area in south London, and slept in a bunkbed until he was 24.

His modest background plays well in a city that is proud of its diversity and loves a self-made success story. In his victory speech on Saturday, Khan described himself as "a Londoner through and through".

"I grew up on a council estate, a working class boy, a child of immigrants, but I'm now the Mayor of London," he said. Khan still regularly recalls how his father drove one of London's famous red buses, and his mother was a seamstress. One of his brothers is a motor mechanic.

He is a handy boxer, having learnt the sport to defend himself in the streets against those who hurled racist abuse at him, and two of his brothers

are boxing coaches. He also ran the London Marathon in 2014. At school, he wanted to study science and become a dentist. But a teacher spotted his gift for verbal sparring and directed him towards law. He gained a law degree from the University of North London and started out as a trainee lawyer in 1994 at the Christian Fisher legal firm, where he was eventually made a partner. He specialized in human rights, and spent three years chairing the civil liberties campaign group Liberty.

Muslim PM?

Khan joined Labour aged 15 when Conservative prime minister Margaret Thatcher was in her pomp. He became a local councillor for Tooting in the Conservative-dominated Wandsworth local borough in 1994, and its member of parliament in 2005. He still lives in the area with his lawyer wife Saadiya and their two teenage daughters. Then prime minister Gordon Brown made him the communities minister in 2008 and he later served as transport minister, becoming the first Muslim minister to attend Cabinet meetings. In parliament, he voted for gay marriage—which earned him death threats.

As mayor, he vowed to focus on providing affordable homes for Londoners and freezing transport fares, but—like many in power around the world—saw his agenda engulfed by the pandemic.

Khan has said his priority for a second term will be "jobs, jobs, jobs" as he bids to keep London on its perch as a top world city while tackling the crisis and the fallout from Brexit, which could threaten the capital's vital financial sector. He is London's third mayor after Labour's Ken Livingstone (2000-2008) and Johnson (2008-2016), with widespread speculation he could try to follow in his predecessor's footsteps to Downing Street. Khan predicts Britain will have a Muslim prime minister "in the not-too-distant future" but insists it will not be him. "As long as Londoners continue to trust me to be their mayor, I'm currently in this job," he said. — AFP

Congo president visits Sudan for talks on Nile dam

KHARTOUM: The new chair of the African Union arrived in Sudan on Saturday for talks over Ethiopia's controversial Nile dam, state media reported. The one-day visit by Felix Tshisekedi, president of the Democratic Republic of Congo, came as Sudan and Egypt push Ethiopia for a binding deal over the filling and operation of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance dam.

Ethiopia says the electricity the structure will generate is important to its development, but downstream Egypt and Sudan fear for their own dams and vital water supplies. Last month, the DRC hosted negotiations between the three countries but the talks ended without a deal.

Tshisekedi met Saturday with Sudan's head of state Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, prime minister Abdalla Hamdok, and foreign minister Mariam al-Mahdi, according to SUNA news agency. "Talks mainly focused on differences between upstream

and downstream countries over the Renaissance dam," the agency reported. During the talks, Mahdi voiced "strong rejection of unilateral steps" by Ethiopia, which began filling the dam's reservoir last year.

Addis Ababa has said it will proceed with further filling this year regardless of whether a deal is reached. Cairo views the dam as an existential threat, while Khartoum fears its own dams could be harmed without a deal.

Also on Saturday, US Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Jeffrey Feltman held talks with top Sudanese officials over the GERD as well as Sudan-Ethiopia border tensions. Feltman underscored "the importance of leading the negotiations under the umbrella of the African Union with the involvement of the international community," Sudan's foreign ministry said in a statement.

Relations between the two countries have soured in recent months over Al-Fashaqa, a fertile border region where Ethiopian farmers have long cultivated land claimed by Sudan. The two sides have traded accusations of violence and territorial violations in the area. Tshisekedi took up the rotating presidency of the AU in February after a one-year stint by South Africa's Cyril Ramaphosa. —AFP

South Sudan president dissolves parliament

JUBA, South Sudan: South Sudan's President Salva Kiir has dissolved parliament, opening the way for lawmakers from opposing sides of the country's civil war to be appointed under a 2018 peace accord. Kiir's decision was announced on public television Saturday evening but no date was given as to when the new parliament will begin working.

The setting up of a new legislative body was part of an accord signed in September 2018 between Kiir and Vice President Riek Machar, for years on opposition sides during the five-year civil war that left 380,000 people dead and four million displaced. Activists and civil society groups welcomed the dissolution of parliament, saying it was long overdue but also expressing distrust.

"It is a welcome development and we hope that the dissolution (will not) also open the way to a lengthy process towards reconstituting the parliament," Jame David Kolock, chairman of the South

Sudan Civil Society Forum. "The civil society is getting frustrated and no longer believes that even if the parliament is reconstituted it will be a very viable parliament."

In accordance with the 2018 accord, the new assembly will number 550 lawmakers, the majority — 332 — from Kiir's governing SPLM party. The parliamentarians will not be elected but nominated by the different parties. The dissolution of parliament came on the eve of a visit to the capital Juba by US special envoy to South Sudan Donald Booth.

"Of particular concern to the United States is the slow implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, ongoing violence, and deteriorating economic and humanitarian conditions," the US State Department said in a statement.

Kiir and Machar formed a coalition government on February 22, 2020 after nearly a year of delays. However few provisions of the truce have been honored, and analysts have warned of a return to war. The oil-rich country remains severely underdeveloped and poorly managed. Despite the peace deal, brutal communal conflicts—often over cattle raiding—continue, with more than 1,000 killed in violence between rival communities in the last six months of 2020. — AFP

International

A month after crossing river into US, immigrants face harsh reality

Central American immigrants face challenges of finding work, threats of deportation

HARTFORD, US: They crossed the Rio Grande into the United States without papers and clutching their young children. Now, thousands of Central American immigrants face myriad challenges including finding work and threats of deportation, all without speaking any English.

A month after meeting three undocumented families in Texas, AFP caught up with them as they adjust to their new lives near New York. They all said life in the United States is harder than they imagined but that it is much worse in Honduras or Guatemala. Valeriano, a Guatemalan, quickly found work cleaning yards in Hartford, Connecticut. He must save to pay moneylenders and family members the \$10,000 he was charged by smugglers, a fortune for this 34-year-old farmer.

He and his family first fled from Guatemala to Belize after they were chased by a drug cartel that killed his brother and threatened Valeriano with death. After the traffickers followed him there, he decided to seek asylum in America with one of his four children, seven-year-old Arnold. He can't talk about his family left behind in Belize without crying, knowing that he may never see them again.

"I start thinking, why did I come? And then I remember that if I hadn't they would have killed me, the kids would be alone, and then it's more difficult for them," he says with tears in his eyes.

Valeriano earns \$14.50 an hour and thinks it will take him a year to pay off his debts. He must also send money to his family and pay for the small basement where he lives with his son, sister, brother-in-law and niece. The five sleep in two beds separated by a sheet. Family separations - "It's hard here, but it's harder in my home country," he says.

Valeriano and his son were deported from the US back in February by President Joe Biden's government under Title 42, a policy of former president Donald Trump's that allowed for the immediate expulsion of immigrants to prevent the spread of coronavirus. Despite criticism from activists, Biden has maintained Title 42, although it does not

apply to minors who arrive alone. In the Rio Grande Valley in Texas, families who arrive with children under the age of seven are also exempt.

It was through this area that Valeriano and his son managed to enter the United States for a second time, following five weeks crammed in a warehouse in Mexico with other migrants. Jhowell, an 11-year-old Honduran, entered the United States without papers in March with his parents and two siblings aged one and four. They were detained and deported after walking for hours through the New Mexico desert, where Jhowell broke his foot, said his mother Ivania.

They decided to cross again through the Mexican city of Reynosa, which borders McAllen, Texas, after hearing they could enter there with small children. But since Jhowell is older than seven the family decided to separate and leave him in Mexico to cross alone.

Jhowell was detained in a government shelter after smugglers got him into Texas. He was traumatized by the separation from his family, said his mother, who now lives with a sister in Brooklyn.

After a month, the US government paid for Jhowell to fly to New York. Jhowell and Ivania hugged and burst into tears when he arrived at LaGuardia Airport. "I wanted to be with her for such a long time," he said.

Ivania, 29, doesn't have a job yet but her husband finds occasional work carrying boxes. Fatima, a 29-year-old single mother who lost her job at a Honduran tortilla factory during the pandemic, crossed the Rio Grande in late March with her five-month-old baby only the clothes she was wearing. "I come to work for my children. Without work you have nothing," she told AFP at the river. But a month later in Plainfield, New Jersey, where she lives crammed into a small room with her sister and other immigrants, Fatima still doesn't have a job.

"I have absolutely nothing, nothing, nothing. I have my other two children in Honduras. I need to find work soon because they depend



Fatima, 29, sits with her 5-month-old baby, Diego, in the headlights of a US Border Patrol vehicle after arriving in the US illegally across the Rio Grande river in Roma, Texas.—AFP

on me," she says desperately.

Restrictive asylum laws

Fatima thought she could receive a work permit, but during her first appointment with the ICE immigration police, officers confiscated her Honduran identity card and began her deportation process. "We feel anxious every day because we do not know what is going to happen tomorrow," she said. Fatima will eventually get a hearing with an immigration judge but she may not receive asylum as they are reserved only for those who can

prove they are victims of persecution. Unless she moves and goes into hiding, she might be deported. Anne Pilsbury, a lawyer for Central American Legal Assurances (CALA), which helps undocumented immigrants, describes America's asylum laws as very "narrow."

"Hunger and poverty don't count, extortion almost doesn't count," she said. "They'll have some time here to catch their breath but eventually they'll have a removal order. That's unfortunately hard for people to understand. But that's the sad truth." —AFP

News in brief

400 migrants land on Lampedusa

ROME: More than 400 migrants arrived on the Italian island of Lampedusa yesterday, Italian media reported, as authorities in Sicily again blocked a rescue boat from leaving port. A 20-metre boat carrying 325 people was intercepted about eight miles (13 kilometers) off the coast of Lampedusa, and another was found slightly closer with 90 people aboard, news agencies reported. Meanwhile judicial authorities in Sicily reinstated a detention order against the Sea-Watch 4 vessel, run by Germany's Sea-Watch organization, which had kept it in Palermo for six months until March, media reports said. —AFP

Sicilian judge takes step to sainthood

ROME: An Italian judge murdered by the mafia in Sicily takes a step towards sainthood Sunday, almost three decades after being declared a martyr by pope John Paul II. The beatification of Rosario Livatino will take place in the cathedral in Agrigento, the Sicilian town near where he was gunned down aged 38 on September 21, 1990. In a preface to a new book about the judge, Pope Francis hailed him as a "righteous man who knew he did not deserve that unjust death". Livatino, who prayed in church every day before going to court, had been involved in a mass trial against mafioso and was about to launch a new case when he died. —AFP

NY Times Square shooting injures 3

NEW YORK: A shooting in New York's bustling Times Square on Saturday injured a four-year-old girl and two women, in the latest incident of gun violence in the city, police said. The shooting took place just before 5 pm local time (9 pm GMT), at the intersection of 7th Avenue and 44th Street, a NYPD spokesperson told AFP. The three victims were a four-year-old child in a stroller, who was hit in the leg while her family was buying toys, a 46-year-old woman hit in the foot, and a 23-year-old tourist from Rhode Island hit in the leg. They were hospitalized in Manhattan, and their lives were not in danger, said New York police commissioner Dermot Shea, at a press briefing. —AFP

Guatemala protests over vaccine

GUATEMALA CITY, Guatemala: Dozens of Guatemalans protested Saturday in the capital to demand the resignation of President Alejandro Giammattei, holding him responsible for a lack of COVID-19 vaccines. "We are protesting for him [Giammattei] to resign and to tell us where the money for the vaccines is," Karla Perez, a 48-year-old woman who held up a banner at the demonstration, told AFP. "Vaccines go in the arm, not in the pockets," said the banner, displayed during the protest held in front of the National Palace, the former seat of government, which was guarded by a large contingent of police. —AFP

S Africa reports cases of India variant

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa's health ministry on Saturday said four cases of a coronavirus variant fuelling a devastating surge of COVID-19 in India had been recorded in the country. "The four cases of B.1.1.7 have been detected in (the provinces of) Gauteng (2) and KwaZulu-Natal (2) and all have a history of recent arrival from India," Health Minister Zweli Mkhize said in a statement late Saturday. Eleven cases of another variant first detected in the United Kingdom and known as B.1.1.7 have also been found, the statement added, noting that community transmission of that variant had "already set in". —AFP

'Silence is not an option' in east Jerusalem

JERUSALEM: Adnan, a Palestinian from east Jerusalem, vowed rubber bullets fired by Israeli police would not deter him: "Silence is not an option" in defense of Arabs in the Holy City, he said. East Jerusalem, the majority Palestinian part of the city annexed by Israel in 1967, has been hit by some of its worst unrest in years.

Hundreds of Palestinians have been wounded and dozens arrested in confrontations with police who have been hit with stones and other projectiles hurled by mainly young and male Palestinian protesters, who have also torched cars and dumpsters.

Friday night saw violent clashes following evening Ramadan prayers at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound, Islam's third holiest site, a flashpoint area also sacred to Jews—who call it the Temple Mount—where tensions trigger swift global alarm.

For 20 year-old-Adnan, who like many Palestinians in east Jerusalem refused to give his name for fear of Israeli police retribution, protesters are responding to what he said was as a persistent effort by Jewish settlers to expel them from the city. "We are here, in the street, to say that we are not going leave," he said. "For years, settlers have attacked us and taken our land but silence is no longer an option."

'Don't want us to live here'

Several events have triggered the flare up in east Jerusalem, which Palestinians claim as the capital of their future state. Mohammed, who also refused to give his last name, argued each incident is linked to

Obamas' dog Bo, a star of White House, dies

WASHINGTON: Barack Obama's family dog Bo, who became a popular resident of the White House, died on Saturday from cancer, the former president said, remembering him as "a constant, gentle presence in our lives." Obama had promised his young daughters Malia and Sasha that they could get a dog after the 2008 election, and Bo joined the family soon after they moved into the president's official residence.

"Today our family lost a true friend and loyal companion," Obama said on Twitter, sharing photographs of him and Bo running down a White House corridor and Bo being petted by children.

"For more than a decade, Bo was a constant, gentle presence in our lives—happy to see us on our good days, our bad days, and everyday in between," Obama wrote. "He tolerated all the fuss that came with being in the White House, had a big bark but no bite, loved to jump in the pool in the summer, was unflappable with children, lived for scraps around the dinner table, and had great hair."

Bo, a black-and-white Portuguese water dog, was a gift to the Obamas from senator Edward Kennedy, and was chosen due to the breed's hypoallergenic coat. He appeared regularly at White House events, particularly the annual Easter Egg Roll, met the Pope, visited children in hospital and flew on Air Force One.



JERUSALEM: Israeli forces fire stun grenades at Palestinians outside the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem's Old City Saturday.—AFP

an unavoidable reality facing Palestinians in the city.

"The Israelis want us to work for them, but they don't want us to live here," he said. Earlier this year, an Israeli court ruled in favor of Jewish settlers seeking to evict Palestinian families from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, just north of the Old City.

The court said the Jewish families had proven a decades-old claim to the land, infuriating Palestinians and triggering months of protests that have intensified in recent nights. Other incidents have fanned the

flames. Last month, Israeli police closed the staired plaza outside the Old City's Damascus Gate, a traditional gathering spot for Palestinians following evening Ramadan evening prayers.

The closure triggered violent clashes with police who removed the barricades after several nights of unrest. Next came the clashes at the Al-Aqsa plaza following Ramadan's final Friday prayers, which wounded more than 200 people. Police said they were responding to projectiles hurled by "thousands" of rioters. —AFP

Iraqi activist's killing sparks protests

KARBALA: A leading Iraqi anti-government activist was killed early yesterday, security sources and activists said, sending supporters of a protest movement onto the streets to demand an end to bloodshed. Ihab Al-Wazni, a coordinator of protests in the Shiite shrine city of Karbala, was a vocal opponent of corruption, the stranglehold of Tehran-linked armed groups and Iran's influence in Iraq.

He was shot overnight outside his home by men on motorbikes, in an ambush caught on surveillance cameras. His death was confirmed by security forces and activists. Wazni narrowly escaped death in December 2019, when men on motorbikes used silenced weapons to kill fellow activist Fahem Al-Tai as he was dropping him home in Karbala, where pro-Tehran armed groups are legion. Both were key figures in a national protest movement that erupted against government corruption and incompetence in Iraq in October 2019. Around 600 people were killed as a result of their association with that movement — many on the streets during rallies, others targeted on their doorsteps away from the rallies.

Protests broke out in Karbala, Nassiriya and Diwaniya in southern Iraq in reaction to Wazni's killing, as people called for an end to the bloodshed and to rampant corruption. In a video recording in the morgue where his body was initially held, a fellow activist made it clear who he and colleagues blamed for the killing. —AFP



WASHINGTON: In this file photo, former US President Barack Obama pets his dog Bo outside the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, DC.—AFP

"As a family, we will miss Bo dearly," former first lady Michelle Obama wrote on Instagram. "But we are thankful that he lived such a joyful life full of snuggles, games of fetch, and evenings spent lying on the couch." —AFP

International

Afghans bury dead from bloody school blasts as toll rises to 50

Government blames Taliban, US continues pullout

KABUL: Dozens of young girls were buried yesterday at a desolate hilltop cemetery in Kabul, a day after a secondary school was targeted in the bloodiest attack in Afghanistan in over a year.

A series of blasts outside the school during a peak holiday shopping period killed more than 50 people, mostly female students, and wounded more than 100 in Dasht-e-Barchi, a west Kabul suburb populated mostly by Hazaras. The government blamed the Taliban for the carnage, but the insurgents denied responsibility and issued a statement saying the nation needed to "safeguard and look after educational centers and institutions".

Saturday's blasts came as the United States military continues to pull out its last 2,500 troops from the violence-racked country despite faltering peace efforts between the Taliban and Afghan government to end a decades-long war. Interior Ministry spokesman Tareq Arian told reporters that a car bomb detonated in front of the Sayed Al-Shuhada girls school on Saturday, and when the students rushed out in panic, two more devices exploded.

Residents were shopping ahead of this week's Eid Al-Fitr holiday—which marks the end of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan—when the blasts occurred. Yesterday, relatives buried the dead at a hilltop site known as "Martyrs Cemetery", where victims of attacks against the Hazara community are laid to rest. Hazaras are Shiite Muslims and considered heretics by extremist Sunnis. Sunni Muslims make up the majority of the Afghan population.

"Bodies on top of each other"
Bodies in wooden coffins were lowered into graves one by one by mourners still in a state of shock and fear, an AFP photographer said. "I rushed to the scene (after the blasts) and found myself in the middle of bodies, their hands and heads cut off

and bones smashed," said Mohammad Taqi, a resident of Dasht-e-Barchi, whose two daughters were students at the school but had escaped the attack.

"All of them were girls. Their bodies piled on top of each other." Last week the school's students had protested about a lack of teachers and study materials, said Mirza Hussain, a university student from the area. "But what they got (in return) was a massacre." Books and school bags belonging to the victims still lay scattered at the site of the attack. Afghan officials including President Ashraf Ghani blamed the Taliban. "This savage group does not have the power to confront security forces on the battlefield, and instead targets with brutality and barbarism public facilities and the girls' school," Ghani said in a statement after the blasts. The Taliban denied involvement, and insist they have not carried out attacks in Kabul since February last year, when they signed a deal with Washington that paved the way for peace talks and withdrawal of the remaining US troops.

But the group has clashed daily with Afghan forces in the rugged countryside even as the US military reduces its presence.

Taliban chief warns US

The United States was supposed to have pulled all forces out by May 1 as agreed with the Taliban last year, but Washington pushed back the date to September 11 — a move that angered the insurgents. The leader of the Taliban, Hibatullah Akhundzada, reiterated in a message released ahead of Eid that any delay in withdrawing the troops was a "violation" of that deal. "If America again fails to live up to its commitments then the world must bear witness and hold America accountable for all the consequences," Akhundzada warned in yesterday's message. He also said that the coun-



KABUL: Mourners and relatives dig graves for girls, who died in Saturday's multiple blasts outside a girls' school, during the burial at a desolate hilltop cemetery in Dasht-e-Barchi on the outskirts of Kabul yesterday. —AFP

try should "safeguard and look after educational centers and institutions".

UN agency UNICEF condemned the attack on the school. "Violence in and around schools is never acceptable... Children must never be the target of violence," it said, urging the country's warring sides to protect human rights. The Dasht-e-Barchi neighborhood has been a regular target of attacks from

Sunni Islamist militants. In May last year, a group of gunmen launched a brazen daylight raid on a hospital in the area that left 25 people dead, including 16 mothers of newborn babies.

On October 24, a suicide bomber blew himself up at a tuition center in the same district, killing 18 people in an attack claimed by the Islamic State group. —AFP

Large Chinese rocket segment crumbles over Indian Ocean

BEIJING: A large segment of a Chinese rocket re-entered the Earth's atmosphere and disintegrated over the Indian Ocean yesterday, the Chinese space agency said, following fevered speculation over where the 18-tonne object would come down. Officials in Beijing had said there was little risk from the freefalling segment of the Long March-5B rocket, which had launched the first module of China's new space station into Earth orbit on April 29.

But the US space agency NASA and some experts said China had behaved irresponsibly, as an uncontrolled re-entry of such a large object risked damage and casualties. "After monitoring and analysis, at 10:24 (0224 GMT) on May 9, 2021, the last-stage wreckage of the Long March 5B Yao-2 launch vehicle has re-entered the atmosphere," the China Manned Space Engineering Office said in a statement, providing coordinates for a point in the Indian Ocean near the Maldives.

It added that most of the segment disintegrated and was destroyed during descent. The US military's Space Command said the rocket "re-entered

over the Arabian Peninsula at approximately 10:15 pm EDT on May 8 (0215 GMT Sunday)". "It is unknown if the debris impacted land or water."

Monitoring service Space-Track, which uses US military data, said that the location in Saudi Arabia was where American systems last recorded it. "Operators confirm that the rocket actually went into the Indian Ocean north of the Maldives," it tweeted. The segment's descent matched expert predictions that any debris would have splashed down into the ocean, given that 70 percent of the planet is covered by water. Because it was an uncontrolled descent, there was widespread public interest and speculation about where the debris would land. American and European space authorities were among those tracking the rocket and trying to predict its re-entry.

Accusations of negligence

Objects generate immense amounts of heat and friction when they enter the atmosphere, which can cause them to burn up and disintegrate. But larger ones such as the Long March-5B may not be destroyed entirely. Their wreckage can land on the surface of the planet and may cause damage and casualties, though that risk is low.

Last year, debris from another Chinese Long March rocket fell on villages in the Ivory Coast, causing structural damage but no injuries or deaths. That, and the one that came down Sunday, are tied

man were arrested on Saturday.

The bomb detonated as Nasheed walked to his car. Family members tweeted that the 53-year-old ex-president, now the parliament's speaker, remained in the intensive care unit of a hospital. But he was able to speak to close relatives on Saturday after no longer needing life support, they added. There was no immediate update on his condition from the hospital. Nasheed underwent 16 hours of surgery to remove shrapnel from his body and doctors said one shard narrowly missed his heart.

There has been no claim of responsibility for the attack, but officials from Nasheed's Maldivian Democratic Party (MDDP) have alleged that religious extremists and political interests could be involved.

The Indian Ocean archipelago of 340,000 people is Muslim majority and in October 2019 police arrested a suspected Islamic State recruiter accused of sending dozens of Maldivians to Syria. The same man was accused of setting off a homemade bomb that wounded 12 Chinese tourists in Male in September 2007. Nasheed ended decades of one-party rule in the Maldives and became its first democratically-elected president in 2008, only to be toppled in a military-backed coup in 2012.

healthcare system, and many experts suspect the official death and case numbers are a gross underestimate. Swaminathan, an Indian pediatrician and clinical scientist, said the B.1.617 variant of Covid-19, which was first detected in India last October, was clearly a contributing factor to the catastrophe unfolding in her homeland. "There have been many accelerators that are fed into this," the 62-year-old said, stressing that "a more rapidly spreading virus is one of them". The WHO recently listed B.1.617 — which counts several sub-lineages with slightly different mutations and characteristics—as a "variant of interest".

Resistant to antibodies?

But so far it has stopped short of adding it to its short list of "variants of concern"—a label indicating it is more dangerous than the original version of the virus by being more transmissible, deadly or able to get past vaccine protections. Several national health authorities, including in the United States and Britain, have meanwhile said they consider B.1.617 a variant of concern, and Swaminathan said she expected the WHO to soon

for the fourth-biggest objects in history to undergo an uncontrolled re-entry, according to data from Harvard-based astronomer Jonathan McDowell.

The uncertainty and risks of such a re-entry sparked accusations that Beijing had behaved irresponsibly. US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin suggested last week that China had been negligent, and NASA Administrator Bill Nelson echoed that after the re-entry on Sunday. "Spacefaring nations must minimize the risks to people and property on Earth of re-entries of space objects and maximize transparency regarding those operations," Nelson said in a statement. "It is clear that China is failing to meet responsible standards regarding their space debris."

China's space ambitions

To avoid such scenarios, some experts have recommended a redesign of the Long March-5B rocket—which is not equipped for a controlled descent. "An ocean reentry was always statistically the most likely," McDowell tweeted. "It appears China won its gamble (unless we get news of debris in the Maldives). But it was still reckless."

Chinese authorities had downplayed the risk, however. "The probability of causing harm to aviation activities or (on people and activities) on the ground is extremely low," foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said Friday. —AFP



MALE: Maldives National Defense Force (MNDF) personnel stand guard in the capital Male yesterday following the May 6 attempted assassination of Maldives' former president Mohamed Nasheed who is recovering in hospital. —AFP

He is known internationally as a champion in the fight against climate change and rising sea levels that he says threaten to submerge the nation of 1,192 coral islands. —AFP



GENEVA: World Health Organization's chief scientist Soumya Swaminathan checks her smartphone during an interview with AFP in Geneva Saturday. —AFP

follow suit. "B.1.617 is likely to be a variant of concern because it has some mutations which increase transmission, and which also potentially could make (it) resistant to antibodies that are generated by vaccination or by natural infection," she said. —AFP

News in brief

Lebanon stops 51 from crossing

BEIRUT: Lebanese police said Saturday they had thwarted an attempt to smuggle 51 Syrians to neighboring Cyprus, weeks after the army foiled a similar operation. "On May 4th 2021, the Internal Security Force's information branch stopped 51 Syrian nationals, including 39 men, five women and seven minors, who were heading to Cyprus by sea," said a police statement. It said they were stopped while waiting along Lebanon's northern coast after paying a smuggler \$2,500 each for the trip. Lebanon, home to more than six million people, is just 160 kilometers (100 miles) from Cyprus. —AFP

Germany's Greens exclude mayor

BERLIN: Germany's Greens on Saturday voted to exclude from the party the mayor of the southwestern town of Tuebingen over racist remarks he made on social media about a black soccer player. Members of the party in Baden-Wuerttemberg overwhelmingly voted to remove Boris Palmer, who has often been criticized over his comments about immigrants and minorities. In a posting Thursday on Facebook, Palmer called former German player Dennis Aogo a "bad racist" and used a racial slur. His comments were met with outrage by members of his party, which is leading in the polls ahead of the September elections. —AFP

Guards ex-official for Iran president

TEHRAN: A former official of Iran's Revolutionary Guards who has thrown his hat into the ring for Iran's June 18 presidential election pledged Saturday to initiate change and build a "powerful" government. Saeed Mohammad, 53, headed the Guards' construction and engineering arm for over two years before announcing his resignation in early March to run in the poll. Registration at the interior ministry to contest the poll runs from Tuesday to Saturday, with names to be handed to the conservative-dominated Guardian Council for vetting before being allowed to run. —AFP

Guinea to put 60 people on trial

CONAKRY, Guinea: Some 60 people, including opposition figures detained for months, will stand trial in Guinea over deadly protests surrounding last year's presidential election, according to the government. Alpha Conde's bid for a third term in office was met with months of demonstrations by political opposition and civil society groups, which security forces countered with sometimes brutal force, and dozens of people died after the protests began in October 2019. In March 2020, at the same time as legislative elections, Guinea held a referendum to change the constitution and allow the president to serve more than two terms. Despite mass opposition and claims of an "electoral coup d'etat", Conde, 83, was re-elected in the first round in October 2020. —AFP

Spain ends COVID emergency

MADRID: Spain has lifted a state of emergency in place since October to fight the pandemic, allowing Spaniards to travel between regions for the first time in months. "It's like New Year's," said 28-year-old Oriol Corbella in Barcelona, where the lifting of the curfew was met with shouts, applause and music. "We're getting a bit of normality back, of freedom, but we have to keep in mind that the virus is still around," he added. "I was fed up with not being able to get out of Madrid," jewellery designer Blaca Valls told AFP on Saturday, echoing the relief of many in the country over the easing of restrictions. "I felt frustrated, locked down, with no freedom," added the 46-year-old who plans to go to Galicia, in northwest Spain, next weekend to celebrate a birthday. —AFP

Third arrest after bomb attack in Maldives

MALE, Maldives: A third man has been arrested following the attempted assassination of Maldives' former president Mohamed Nasheed, police said yesterday, as they renewed an appeal for more information about another suspect. The democracy pioneer and climate activist was seriously hurt after a bomb attack in the capital Male on Thursday night that also injured a British national and two others, which police have blamed on "religious extremists".

"We can confirm that a third individual has been arrested in connection with the May 6 attack early today," police said in a statement. No further details about the man were released. Police also appealed for more information about another man seen in the area where a motorcycle that the bomb had been rigged to was parked.

The owner of the motorcycle as well as another

Variant among accelerators of India virus surge: WHO scientist

GENEVA: A COVID-19 variant spreading in India is more contagious and it is feared it could be dodging some vaccine protections, contributing to the country's explosive outbreak, the World Health Organization's chief scientist said Saturday. In an interview with AFP, Soumya Swaminathan warned that "the epidemiological features that we see in India today do indicate that it's an extremely rapidly spreading variant".

India on Saturday for the first time registered more than 4,000 Covid-19 deaths in just 24 hours, and more than 400,000 new infections. New Delhi has struggled to contain the outbreak, which has overwhelmed its

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Business

Zain Group generates revenue of \$1.3bn, net profit of \$147m for first three months of 2021

KUWAIT: Zain Group, a leading mobile innovator with operations in seven markets across the Middle East and Africa, announced its consolidated financial results for the first quarter (Q1) ended March 31, 2021. Zain served 48.5 million customers at the end of the period.

Zain Group generated consolidated revenue of KD 382 million (\$1.3 billion) for the first quarter of 2021, down 6 percent year-on-year (Y-o-Y). EBITDA for the quarter reached KD 158 million (\$523 million), down 7 percent Y-o-Y, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 41 percent. Net income for the quarter reached KD 45 million (\$147 million), down 5 percent Y-o-Y reflecting an Earnings Per Share of 10 fils (\$0.03). Significantly, Zain Group net income grew operationally by 4 percent Y-o-Y for Q1, 2021, when excluding the one-time gain from the sale and lease back of towers in Kuwait during Q1 2020.

For Q1 2021, foreign currency translation was impacted mainly due to the currency devaluation in Sudan from 55 to 375 (SDG/USD) during end of February, and a 19 percent currency devaluation in Iraq from 1,190 to 1,470 (IQD/USD), cost the Group \$177 million in revenue and \$66 million in EBITDA.

Zain Group's resilient results for Q1 2021 were achieved despite the widespread disruption in economic and social activity caused by COVID-19, further compounded by the recent and significant currency devaluations in Iraq and Sudan. It should be noted that the impact of the pandemic on the business was minimal during Q1 2020, given its early stage of spread at the time, however in Q1 2021 the impact was more profound.

Key operational notes for Q1 2021

1. Zain Group consolidated data revenue reached \$530 million, representing 42 percent of the Group's overall revenue
2. Zain KSA completely settled the Group Shareholder Loan with an upstream of \$553 million during Q1 2021
3. Throughout the quarter, Zain Group invested \$415 million in CAPEX (tangible and intangible) reflecting 33 percent of total revenue, predominantly in expansion of Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) infrastructure: spectrum fees; 4G upgrades and new network sites across its markets, as well as ongoing 5G rollouts in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain
4. Kuwait witnessed impressive growth in 5G consumer and B2B customers, with Zain Saudi Arabia expanding its 5G network to over 50 cities covering all regions in the



Zain Group Chairman Ahmed Al-Tahous

Chairman Ahmed Al-Tahous: "Board working closely with management in mitigating the unavoidable currency devaluations and impact of COVID-19 on the business"



Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi

Vice-Chairman & Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi: "We continue to maintain healthy cash flows and focus on digital transformation in serving communities, enterprises and governments"

Kingdom

5. Zain KSA enters MoU with Mobily to unify telecom towers aiming to maximize efficiency and improve coverage throughout the Kingdom

6. Saudi Central Bank (SAMA) grants Zain KSA fintech subsidiary, 'Tamam', first consumer micro-financing license in the region

7. Zain Iraq and Zain South Sudan launch high-speed 4G commercial services boosting connectivity and socio-economic activity

8. Zain eSports successful rollout as one of the fastest growing eSports brands across Middle East attracting over 15,000 registered players and 25 million views across various social media channels

9. The Zain Group Application Program Interface (API) platform continues to grow with 12 digital partnerships offering 21 attractive services, resulting in substantial revenue with 5 million monthly transactions and totaling over 80 million transactions since its launch

10. Zain was the highest ranked MEA operator in CDP global index with respect to its efforts to address climate change

11. Zain Group publishes 10th annual sustainability report, titled 'The Ten-Year Journey' as well as an insightful report on 'Women in Technology- Bridging the Gender Gap in STEM Fields'

Commenting on the Q1 2021 results, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Zain Group, Ahmed Al-Tahous said: "The Board and Executive Management have been focused on minimizing the ongoing impact of COVID-19 and significant currency devaluations in Iraq and Sudan on the business. We are dedicated to ensuring our mobile networks are operating at optimal levels and providing meaningful connectivity to the communities we serve. I would like to

thank all the government entities and regulatory authorities across our markets for their proactivity and cooperation with the telecom sector at large, in supporting operators, mobile consumers and societies during these times."

Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO commented: "The Group's resilient performance for the quarter reflects the reality of the unavoidable combination of both COVID-19's ongoing disruption on socio-economic activity and the impact of currency devaluations on the business. Nevertheless, our culture of innovation has been invaluable at this time of rapid change, and our business continuity strategy has been executed impressively to counter these factors. Management has proactively undertaken numerous decisive digital transformation and cost optimization initiatives while maintaining healthy cash flows, and both Zain Iraq and Zain Sudan have recently taken measures in dealing with currency devaluations by revamping prices and offering new attractive data monetization packages."

Al-Kharafi continued, "Given the limitations on mobility, locally and travel abroad, we have continued to play a key role in keeping people socially distanced while remaining connected and productive during the current learning and working from home environment. All Zain operations' response to these modified circumstances has been nothing but exemplary. We implemented additional digitalization initiatives to better serve businesses, governments, and communities, granting them increased digital access to everyday life and essential medical and commercial services, aiming to lessen the impact of the pandemic on the societies we serve."

"Our operational focus has been cen-

tered on expanding and monetizing our 4G, FTTH and 5G networks creating vast and lucrative opportunities particularly related to Enterprise (B2B) services to government and businesses of all sizes. At the same time, we continue to make significant progress in raising the company to new heights and maximizing value for shareholders through our '4Sight' strategy. We are evolving the company's core telecom business and building on its many strengths to selectively invest in growth verticals beyond standard mobile services."

Financial KPIs of key markets for Q1

Kuwait: Maintaining its market leadership, Zain Group's flagship operation saw its customer base serve 2.5 million. It remains the Group's most profitable operation with revenue for Q1 2021 reaching KD 79.4 million (\$263 million), EBITDA reaching KD 28 million (\$93 million), representing an EBITDA margin of 35 percent. Net income reached KD 17 million (\$56 million) for Q1 2021, with data revenue growing by 2 percent and accounting for 39 percent of total revenue.

During the quarter, the operator witnessed impressive growth in both 5G mobile and broadband customers and resulting revenue capturing the largest 5G market share in the country. Continual innovation and digital transformation saw the launch of a new and dynamic customer app offering many new features, as well as enhancement of its web and zBot chat service. From a B2B perspective, Zain Kuwait partnered with the Ministry of Interior to revamp the Kuwait TV app to live stream 9 local video and 11 radio channels. Also, the operator entered deals with Kuwait International Bank and Boubyan Bank for data related services.

Saudi Arabia: For Q1 2021, Zain KSA generated revenue of SAR 1.9 billion (\$517 million), EBITDA for the period reached SAR 735 million (\$196 million), reflecting an EBITDA margin of 38 percent. Net income for the three months reached SAR 41 million (\$11 million). Having the Kingdom's largest 5G network covering 50 cities, the operator's data revenue represents 51 percent of total revenue and customers served stood at 7.2 million.

Iraq: Zain Iraq's Q1 2021 revenue reached \$184 million and EBITDA amounted to \$75 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 41 percent. The operation reported a net profit of \$12 million for Q1 2021. The operator served 16.2 million customers maintaining its market leading position.

Sudan: For Q1 2021, Zain Sudan generated revenue of \$92 million, with EBITDA amounting to \$42 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 46 percent. Net income for the period reached \$18 million. Data revenue grew by 32 percent representing 29 percent of total revenue, while the operator's customer base reached a record 17.2 million, maintaining its market leadership.

Jordan: For Q1 2021, Zain Jordan revenue reached \$124 million, EBITDA reached \$56 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 45 percent, with net income reaching \$20 million. Zain Jordan served 3.6 million customers maintaining its market leading position.

Bahrain: Zain Bahrain generated revenue of \$44 million for Q1 2021. EBITDA for the period amounted to \$14 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 33 percent. Net income amounted to \$4 million, with Data revenue growing 4 percent to represent 45 percent of total revenue.



Net Income

45

Million KD



Customers



Revenue



EBITDA



EPS

Q1 2021 results

zain.com

A Wonderful World

Business

KIB reports KD 6.9 million operating profit for Q1 2021

13% growth in operating income • 27% growth in operating profit • 4% growth in total assets

KUWAIT: Despite the current economic situation and the lingering repercussions of the COVID-19 crisis, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) achieved KD 6.9 million of operating profit before provision during the first three months of 2021, compared to KD 5.4 million recorded at the end of the same period last year, an increase of KD 1.5 million and a growth of 27 percent. During the first three months of the year, KIB reported a net profit of KD 1 million compared to KD 2.7 million in the first three months of 2020. The lower net profit could be attributed to the prudent buildup of provisions.

Commenting on the Bank's financial results, the Bank's Chairman, Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al Sabah, noted that KIB's financial statements have shown that the Bank's assets grew by 4 percent to reach KD 2.81 billion, comparable to KD 2.7 billion at the end of March 2020. This growth was the result of an increase in the size of the financing portfolio by KD 73 million to reach nearly KD 2 billion, compared to KD 1.92 billion at 31 March 2020, achieving a growth of 4 percent. In addition, KIB's investment securities portfolio grew (mainly high quality Sukuk) by about KD 22 million. Depositors' accounts grew by KD 165 million, a growth of 11 percent to reach KD 1.73 billion compared to KD 1.56 billion at the end of March last year, while the shareholders' equity reach to KD 260 million.

In his statement, Al-Jarrah pointed out that KIB always seeks to maintain growth across his key financial indicators whilst preserving the stability of its financial returns, as well as strengthening its financial position as a key player in the regional debt capital markets. He added: "KIB continues to

be committed to developing and expanding its financing footprint on the local, regional and international level.

Al-Jarrah noted that KIB acted as a Joint Lead Manager and Bookrunner in the Additional Tier 1 (AT1) perpetual NC6Y Sukuk issuance by Boubyan Bank, for USD 500 million. Additionally, KIB participated as Co-Manager in the first-of-its-kind issuance of 'Sustainability Sukuk' by the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) in 2021. The Bank has raised US \$2.5 billion via the Sustainability Sukuk, and the proceeds were allocated to funding/refunding sustainable development (10 percent) and social impact projects (90 percent).

Moreover, Al-Jarrah emphasized that KIB's drive to continuously participate in successful financial deals demonstrates a high level of confidence and expertise, which contributes greatly towards fortifying the Bank's position in the local, regional and international investment market. He further mentioned that, Fitch Ratings, vide report issued on 29 April 2021 has affirmed KIB's Long-term Issuer Default Rating (IDR) at 'A+' and viability rating (VR) at 'bb-', with a negative outlook.

On his part, Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer at KIB, Raed Jawad Bukhamseen, said: "KIB achieved growth in its financial position during the first quarter of 2021, with total assets rising by 4 percent compared to March 2020, reaching KD 2.81 billion at the end of the first quarter of this year. Operating income for the first quarter of 2021 also increased by 13 percent compared to the same period last year. Furthermore, distribution ratios on depositors' accounts recorded good annual returns by the end of the first quarter of

this year reflecting the Bank's success in achieving its profitability and diversification objectives. Profits were credited to depositors' accounts upon announcement of the financial results."

He further added: "By pushing ahead with its strategy for continuous growth and development, KIB strives to maintain its position as a key player in the banking sector by providing services and products with exclusive features tailored to fit customers' unique requirements, including the launch of the new KIB Black segment in the first quarter of 2021, which offers exclusive lifestyle benefits to KIB customers. The launch of this campaign came as part of the Bank's commitment to providing its customers with exclusive privileges that fit right into customers' contemporary lifestyle and meet their expectations."

Bukhamseen also stressed that KIB was able to support its growth strategy in order to maintain its financial position in the regional debt capital markets. That being said, the Bank successfully concluded a series of successful financial transactions last year, including the issuance \$300 million Tier 2 Basel III compliant 10-Year non-call 5-year Sukuk. These first-of-its-kind instruments were at a profit rate of 2.375 percent per annum, with a total participation reaching approximately US\$2.7 billion, which is about 9 times the volume of Sukuk issuances. The Tier 2 Capital Sukuk are the highest rated T2 in Kuwait and the GCC, in addition to being the first USD T2 Sukuk from Kuwait to be listed on London Stock Exchange (LSE).

This issuance enhanced the bank long term funding base and increased KIB's capital ratios in accordance with Basel III; this was reflected on the Bank's capital adequacy ratio, which reached



Sheikh Mohammed Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah

Raed Bukhamseen

22.19 percent as of December 31, 2020, thus exceeding the minimum required levels of the Centra: Bank of Kuwait's (CBK) regulatory bodies. During 2020, the Bank made significant progress in terms of enhancing its capital, as highlighted by Fitch assigning KIB's AT1 Sukuk 'A-' rating and a final A+/F1 long- and short-term ratings respectively to the Bank's Sukuk program.

Concluding his statement, Bukhamseen lauded the sincere efforts of KIB's employees and praised their great performance in dealing with customers professionally while delivering the best-in-class banking services, stressing that these efforts contributed to maintaining the confidence of shareholders and customers in the Bank's ability to achieve excellent financial results and perform its role effectively, adding: "Our vision is to achieve further growth in shareholder returns and expand our customer base by continuing to follow prudent risk management policies."

Kamco Invest reports net profit of KD1.5m for first quarter of 2021

KUWAIT: Kamco Invest, a regional non-banking financial powerhouse with one of the largest AUMs in the region, announced its financial results for the first quarter ended 31 March 2021. The Company reported a net profit of KD 1.5 million (EPS: 4.52 fils) compared to a net loss of KD 4.6 million during the same period in 2020 (EPS: -13.50 fils). Total revenue for the period reached KD 5.2 million (Q1 2020: KD 0.4mn), with fee & commission income amounted to KD 3.4 million, representing 65 percent of total revenue.



Faisal M Sharkhou

As at end of March 2021, assets under management stood at KD 4.02 billion (USD 13.3 billion). Kamco Invest's equity funds and managed portfolios continued to outperform their respective benchmarks and income generating properties were acquired in the UK amounting to GBP 72.3 million. The Special Situations Asset Management team continued exit negotiations with several parties on behalf of clients. The Asset Management team also worked to launch several investment offerings including leveraged fixed income in addition to venture capital.

The Investment Banking team successfully played the role of Fiscal and Principal Paying Agent for the redemption of Burgan Bank's KD 100 million subordinated T2 Capital Securities. The team also acted as issuance advisor and subscription agent to the rights issue of a listed company on Boursa Kuwait and was the exclusive buy-side advisor to an insurance group to acquire 66 percent of a non-listed insurance company. First Securities Brokerage Company, Kamco Invest's brokerage arm, continued to provide its services to clients without interruption while increasing market share and attracting new clients through the online trading platform. The company successfully completed the MD3 test for netting, which is a new line of revenue stream for the company.

Furthermore, Kamco Invest managed to rationalize its cost base where general and administrative expenses dropped by 31.6 percent in Q1 2021 to reach KD 2.95 million. The Company also reduced its total liabilities by KD 0.9 million, a reduction of 1.3 percent, to reach KD 64 million at the end of March 2021. The Company enjoys a strong financial position with KD 52.7 million in shareholders' equity as of 31 March 2021 (an increase of 5.3 percent in comparison to end of December 2020) and a "BBB" long-term credit rating and "A3" short-term rating with stable outlook by Capital Intelligence in their latest review in June 2020.

Faisal Mansour Sarkhou, Chief Executive Officer, said: "The pandemic still casts a shadow over the operational certainty in most sectors. Despite these unprecedented times, we had a profitable quarter and managed to benefit from positive market performance while strengthening our financial position. This allowed us to further enhance our liquid assets and reduce our total liabilities. We also rationalized our cost base and most importantly remained focused on the recurring fee-based income."

Trend Micro blocked more than 12m threats in Kuwait during 2020

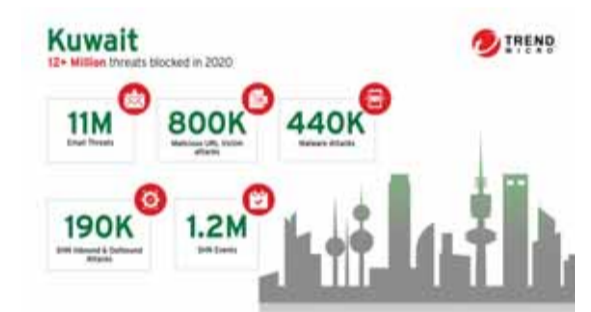
KUWAIT: Trend Micro Incorporated, a global leader in cybersecurity solutions, yesterday released its 2020 Annual Cybersecurity report: A Constant State of Flux. The report shares insights from last year's threat landscape and provides strategic guidance for leaders to protect and navigate their organizations better in the new normal. The global insights reveal that Trend Micro blocked 62.6 billion threats last year, 91 percent of which were email-borne. The findings also cited an average of 119,000 cyber threats detected per minute in 2020 as home workers and infrastructure came under new pressure from attacks.

Across Kuwait, Trend Micro solutions detected and blocked over 11 million (11,138,903) email threats, prevented over 800,000 (878,853) malicious URL victim attacks, and over 5,000 (5,303)

URL hosts. In addition, over 440,000 malware attacks were identified and stopped, while more than 100 online related banking malware threats were blocked.

The report also shows that home networks in Kuwait were a major draw for cybercriminals looking to pivot to corporate systems, devices, and networks. Across the country, Trend Micro's Smart Home Network (SHN) solutions blocked over 190,000 inbound and outbound attacks combined, preventing over 1.2 million (1,284,047) such SHN events for hackers to target or control home devices from executing malware, obtaining sensitive information, intercepting communications, or launching external attacks.

"In the past year, organizations have re-defined their growth strategy due to the forced digital transformation attributed to the global pandemic," said Assad Arabi, Managing Director, Trend Micro Gulf Cluster. "To complement their success story in the new digital economy, enterprises in Kuwait need a robust cybersecurity framework, that safeguards their assets and customer data from being compromised to evolving modern-day attacks. The findings from our annual security report will act as



a guidance for IT decision-makers in the country to direct their organization better in this new economy.

In its efforts to ensure secured digital transformation journeys of organizations in Kuwait, Trend Micro has been working closely with public and private sectors to create awareness and bridge the gaps. Earlier this year, the company launched its Trend Micro Vision One platform to empower security teams in adopting a new approach that goes beyond - to provide enhanced visibility, threat intelligence, with extended detection and response at every layer of their IT environments.

African nations gear up to polish image at Expo

DUBAI: African nations are attending this year's Dubai Expo 2020 in force, hoping to project an image of a modern and ambitious continent and shed stereotypes of conflict and underdevelopment. The six-month mega-event, delayed by the COVID pandemic, is a milestone for the wealthy Gulf emirate. It has spent some \$8.2 billion transforming a barren stretch on the outskirts of the city into an eye-popping site bristling with high-tech pavilions.

As the huge project nears completion ahead of the scheduled October 2021 opening, African delegates touted their ambitions to generate trade and investment at a high-level meeting this week. With nearly all African states represented for the first time, Expo provides a stage to advertise a "continent that is ready to move forward" and "a secure place to do business," Levi Uche Madueke from the 55-member African Union told AFP.

"The time has come for us to actually reach out to the world, and for the world to understand us, and also see how they can collaborate with us," said Madueke, the AU's head of strategic partnerships. Since the first

World Expo was held in London in 1851, global fairs have been used to showcase innovations and as a branding exercise for participating countries. And in its quest to gain influence on the international scene, the United Arab Emirates has increased its political and economic presence in Africa in recent years, particularly in the eastern Horn.

'That's in the past'

Africa witnessed 25 years of growth before falling into a COVID-induced recession in 2020. It continues to dominate the bottom half of the global Human Development Index. Aside from exceptions such as Rwanda, Morocco and Kenya, African states also fare poorly on indices that measure the ease of doing business.

But Madueke said that despite the need to develop infrastructure and the existing barriers to international trade, Africa has "a lot to offer" thanks to its rich natural resources and youthful population. The Democratic Republic of Congo, long seen as a country marred by conflict, corruption and human rights abuses, is looking to attract investment from around the world.

"Often when we talk about Africa, about Congo, people will say - there is war in the east, there are rebels... No!" said Eugene Manga Manga, DR Congo's general commissioner for Expo 2020. "We have everything we need. If you go out at night in Kinshasa, life is good." Known for its rich mineral resources, DR Congo will showcase its culture and landscape in promotional videos in a bid to attract tourists, from its pavilion that that will

Better alternatives

Chris Forde, co-director of the Centre for Employment Relations, Innovation and Change at the University of Leeds, said recruitment freezes, voluntary redundancies and furlough offer better alternatives to the "last resort" of fire and rehire. The practice could "chip away further at the quite lightly regulated labor market in the UK", where zero-hour contracts and flexibility clauses are more prevalent than elsewhere, he told AFP.

Fire and rehire is banned in neighboring Ireland, while other European countries require sector-level consultation with unions and social partners when employers seek to terminate contracts.

"I cannot see any circumstances in which this is a right way to go," said Forde. "It is a basic assault on workers' rights and there are alternative means through which they (employers) might achieve the same outcomes."

Fire and rehire is virtually unknown in Germany thanks to legislation protecting workers on permanent contracts.

Employers can resort to a similar practice with workers on fixed-term contracts only in a limited set of circumstances. In Canada, fire and rehire is legal and particularly affects non-unionized workers, who are powerless against employers resorting to it, according to labor law specialist Dalia Gesualdi-Fecteau, at the University of Quebec in Montreal.

Workers governed by the labor laws of Quebec, Nova Scotia and the Canada Labour Code - just 10 percent of the country's workforce - enjoy some protection. But employers can circumvent it by proving they are firing for economic rather than personal reasons, she told AFP. There is little debate about the issue in the United States, where labor regulations are more lax. —AFP

Fire and rehire: UK's new labor battleground?

LONDON: As coronavirus wreaks severe economic damage, some British employers stand accused of taking a highly controversial measure to stay afloat: Fire and rehire. The practice, which involves dismissing employees and re-engaging them on inferior terms, flared up in April, when British Gas dismissed almost 500 engineers after they refused to accept new contracts.

Last year, British Airways staff battled with the national airline's management over proposed fire-and-rehire schemes, while supermarket giant Asda faced a similar stand-off in 2019. Bus drivers in Manchester, coffee workers at

Jacobs Douwe Egberts and distribution center employees for Tesco are now locked in disputes over new contracts which unions have denounced as fire-and-rehire tactics.

Fire and rehire is allowed in Britain but Prime Minister Boris Johnson has called it "unacceptable", and trade unions and the main opposition Labour party are demanding a ban. Unite, the UK and Ireland's largest union, claimed fire and rehire is "ripping through workplaces like a disease".

A survey of 2,231 workers by the Trades Union Congress umbrella group found almost one in 10 were told to reapply for their jobs on worse terms or face dismissal, with young and ethnic-minority workers disproportionately affected. Public industrial relations body the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) submitted a report on the practice in February but the government has yet to publish its findings.

Business

NBK Money Markets Report

US dollar dips amidst economic recovery concerns and sluggish labor market data

KUWAIT: Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen retracted her comments about the interest rates need to rise, stating last Tuesday that she neither predicts nor recommends a rise in interest rates. As earning season illustrates the highest levels of revenue and profits, nonetheless the debate persists on whether quantitative easing will create a surge of unwelcomed inflation. Although the Federal Reserve and other central banks have assured that interest rates will remain, however it has been evident that the actions taken by these institutions are reactive. Therefore, the hike in interest rates or the implementing of tapering will happen suddenly rather than periodically.

Following the remarks we noticed that LIBOR rates continued to drop, 3-month LIBOR opened the week at 0.175 percent and continued to drop to reach 0.159 percent on Friday prior to the release of non-farm payroll data. The release of the labor market data by the Bureau of Labor Statistics caught market participants by surprise. Economists were expecting non-farm payroll to add 1 million jobs in April. The data released showed 266,000 jobs were added only compared to the 1 million forecasted and the 916,000 jobs added in March. Moreover, the private payrolls added in April were 724,000 which magnified the surprise when non-farm payroll data surfaced. Employment rate nudged up to 6.1 percent while economists forecasted 5.8 percent to the world largest economy.

Gulf Bank continues Diraya campaign efforts

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank is continuing to spearhead various efforts in support of the Diraya campaign, an awareness campaign initiated by the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Banking Association. Gulf Bank's efforts are in keeping with the Bank's commitment to educating customers about their banking rights and raising awareness about cybersecurity.

The Diraya campaign spans several topics, including the borrowing process, bank cards, cybersecurity, security tips, and services for customers with special needs. The campaign also aims to clarify the mechanisms for raising official complaints in an effort to protect customers' rights, and also aims to highlight the banking sector's tasks and roles in stimulating and developing the economy.

The Assistant Manager of Corporate Communications, Hamza Al-Tailji, commented, "At Gulf Bank, we remain keen to promote financial literacy and a culture of savings and investment in an effort to educate customers about the various banking services available to them, and their benefits. We appreciate the latest initiative by the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Banking Association to educate the general public about financial and banking matters, and we affirm Gulf Bank's commitment to providing support from our various departments in service of this campaign and its objectives."

Borrowing and Financing

The Central Bank of Kuwait has set clear and specific policies to direct borrowing and financing operations for banks. With this in mind, the Central Bank of Kuwait has issued clear and specific instructions to banks and financing companies to provide their customers with loan details, including: the value and number of installments, payment dates, the ratio of the installment to the net salary, and the consequences of non-payment.

Al-Tijari announces winners of Al Najma, salary campaign

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait conducted the weekly draws on Al Najma Account and Salary Transfer Campaign yesterday. The draws were conducted in the presence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative Ahmad Al-Basman.

The results of the draws were as follows:

1- Al Najma weekly account - the prize of 5,000/- Kuwaiti Dinars went to the winner Amira Abdulkareem Arabi Al-Shaar
2- Salary account campaign - the prize of up to 1,000/- Kuwaiti Dinars - went to the winner Mohammad Hasan Abdalhussain Ali

The Bank stated that the salary campaign is aimed at customers who transfer their salaries of

Burgan Bank announces daily lucky winners of Yawmi account draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday the names of the daily draw winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a cash-prize of KD 5,000.

Manufacturing in the US

The ISM manufacturing index fell 4 points to 60.7 in April (consensus 65.0), the biggest downside surprise since January 2014 even though the level of the index was still in the top 2 percent of monthly readings over the past 30 years. Many manufacturers continue to cite robust demand alongside widespread supply chain challenges.

Europe & UK BOE Policy Meeting

The UK's MPC voted unanimously to maintain Bank Rate at 0.1 percent, as expected. But it voted 8-1 to keep the target for the stock of government bond purchases at GBP875 billion as Chief Economist, Andy Haldane, preferred a reduction from GBP875 billion to GBP825 billion. The MPC was unanimous in keeping the stock of corporate bond purchases at GBP20 billion, so the total target stock of asset purchases remains at GBP895 billion. The BoE also announced a slower purchase pace of GBP1.147 billion per auction (ie. GBP3.4 billion a week, down from GBP4.4 billion). After a 1.5 percent q-o-q contraction in 2021 Q1, the BoE expects GDP to rise sharply in Q2.

Although activity in Q2 is expected to be around 5 percent below its level in 2019 Q4, the MPC projects GDP to recover strongly to pre-COVID-19 levels over the remainder of this year.

Clients are also entitled to a period of at least two days to review the contract comprehensively before signing it. Upon signing the contract, clients can also obtain a draft of the contract, which includes details such as: the type of loan, the repayment period, the amount of the installment, and the loan return.

The instructions from the Central Bank of Kuwait necessitate that banking and financing establishments provide financial advice to the customer before and during financing. As per the instructions, financial institutions are obligated to clarify the risks of increasing financial obligations to the client, especially in the event of a change in the client's financial conditions, whether due to a change in work, retirement or even a change in the absolute interest rate.

Loan Types

There are two types of personal loans available to clients: consumer and housing loans. It is important for clients to be aware of the differences between the loans, and the instructions related to each of them, in order to be able to assess their financial requirements in the best possible way.

Consumer Loans

A consumer loan is a medium-term personal loan with a loan period not exceeding five years. The maximum amount that can be granted under a consumer loan is KD 25,000 and is provided to clients for the purpose of financing personal needs, such as the purchase of a car, furniture, or obtaining various educational and health services.

Housing Loans

A housing loan is a long-term personal loan meant to be repaid over a period not exceeding 15 years. The maximum amount that can be granted under a housing loan/financing facility per customer is KD 70,000, and is provided to clients for the purpose of buying, building or renovating a private residence.

As part of the regulatory process of granting personal loans, and in an effort to enable customers to benefit while averting the risk of difficulties in re-payment, and in an effort to avoid burdening clients with financial obligations, the Central Bank of Kuwait has allocated a clear set

KD 500 or more to the Bank, especially Kuwaiti employees and residents working in the government, oil sectors and companies listed with the Bank as well as retirees, and take advantage of the benefits of this campaign and get an instant cash gift from KD 250 to KD 500 Kuwaiti Dinars or an interest-free loan of 5 times the salary and a maximum of KD 10,000/- , Kuwaiti pensioner, along with expatriate customers who transfer their debt amounting to KD 10,000/- or above to the Bank will receive an instant cash gift of 1% from their transferred debt.

The Bank stated that Al Najma Account prizes are distinguished by the highest cash prize and diversity of prizes throughout the year clarifying that the account offers weekly prize of KD 5,000/-, monthly prize of KD 20,000/- and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 in addition to the largest prize - linked bank account payout of KD 1,500,000.

Al-Najma Account can be opened by depositing KD 100, and customer should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 to be eligible to enter

The lucky winners are:

1. NOUF HABES ALOTAIBI
2. DALAL YASEN SHAHADA
3. JASSIM MOHAMMAD ALMUDHAF
4. ADEL MAHMOD BIN NEKHI
5. MUBARAK FAISAL ALSABAH

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a Quarterly Draw with more chances to win higher rewards, offering the chance to one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers Daily and Quarterly Draws, wherein the Quarterly Draw

In the BoE's central projection, inflation rises temporarily above 2 percent towards the end of 2021, owing mainly to developments in energy prices. But conditioned on the market path for interest rates (which includes about 50bps of tightening over the next three years), inflation returns to around 2 percent in the medium term. The MPC saw downside risks to its growth forecast in the near term (due largely to COVID-19 and the risk of mutations). Further ahead, the risks were seen as more broadly balanced. But there were also upside risks if households' caution dissipated more quickly than anticipated in coming quarters.

Lagarde's Speech

European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde delivered a speech about the global economy at The State of the Union 2021, in Florence last Friday. She iterated that the ECB's monetary policy has helped lessen inequality during the pandemic. Policy makers' efforts to lift inflation in the 19-nation euro area through large-scale asset purchases, long-term loans and record-low interest rates has supported the economy and underpinned the labor market, she said on Friday. And "contributing to more jobs has a direct impact on reducing inequality. Lagarde also said the coronavirus crisis "will create inequality," especially for low-income work-

ers and young people, "and we have to look at it very carefully."

Market Movements FX Movements

The US dollar had a volatile week reacting to major developments. The dollar index opened the week at 91.25 and continued to trade in a range until after nonfarm payrolls were released on Friday sending the index to a 3 month low of 90.349. Hence, we saw the single currency climb to break the 1.21 level and reach a 1 week high of 1.2171. The greenback also reversed its gains on the Swiss franc and sent the pair a 3 month low of 0.9011

Commodities

The prices are significantly high and continuing to increase, which is raising the debate as to whether there will be a halt to the economic growth worldwide. The price of gold has increased about 3.82 percent at the value of \$1,836.60 an ounce on weekly basis. For oil, the West Texas Intermediate crude rose and closed the week at the value of \$64.90 a barrel while Brent closed the week at \$68.28 per barrel.

Kuwait Kuwaiti Dinar

USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30140.

of controls for banks to adhere to when financing clients.

The set of controls apply to all clients, both employees and retirees, and take into account the various financial conditions of each of these two categories, mandating the provision of financial advice and all the necessary details of the financing contract, including the clarification of the various features of the financing process, including: The interest rate to the amount of financing, the ratio of the monthly installment to the net monthly salary, the number of installments that the customer must pay, the components of each installment, and other related information.

Details regarding the financing process must be provided before the contract is signed, with the loan institutions factoring in a two-day period for their clients to review the contracts and read their terms and conditions carefully, in an effort to guarantee that every client is fully aware of their rights and obligations under the contract before signing.

It is worth noting that Gulf Bank is keen on spearheading numerous awareness campaigns and initiatives as part of its ongoing commitment to economic sustainability, and regularly highlights similar awareness initiatives on social media. Last year, Gulf Bank launched "Let's Talk Business," a series of interviews with local entrepreneurs designed to stimulate an entrepreneurial culture in Kuwait, and discuss how to overcome business challenges during an economic crisis such as the pandemic.

As part of the series, business leaders and entrepreneurs discuss the keys to success for small businesses, how to conduct business during times of crisis, how to successfully diversify and expand your business, and more. Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining a robust sustainability program at the community, economic, and environmental levels through sustainability initiatives that are strategically selected to benefit both the country and the Bank.



Hamza Al-Tailji

KFH: Activating employees to raise awareness of Diraya campaign

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) stressed the great importance it attaches to the role of its employees in contributing to the "Diraya" campaign launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait in collaboration with the Kuwait Banking Association aiming at spreading financial awareness of the best ways of benefiting from the banks' financial services and shedding light on customers' rights as well as their responsibilities and obligations.

KFH is intensifying its campaign messages to the employees with the aim of benefiting from their direct interaction with customers in achieving maximum effective awareness and the campaign goals.

Coinciding with its continuous efforts to raise customers' awareness, and through successive messages to employees, KFH aims to achieve the maximum possible objectives of the campaign which continues until the end of the year at the highest level of effectiveness as it relies on direct interaction between employees and customers to convey messages that enhance credit, financial and banking culture of customers and the society as a whole.

This approach reflects the great importance KFH attaches to its employees and their major role in achieving its objectives, consolidating its position in the banking industry and its confidence in their potential and performance as a key asset in the bank. It also stresses the necessity of a high level of coordination of the employee's performance and their interaction with customers to realize the common interest, enhance banking business in general and contribute to financial stability and sustainable development in society.



all draws on Al-Najma Account prizes.

As for the chances of winning, the more balance a customer maintains in Al Najma Account, the more chances the account holder will get to win, the account also offers additional benefits like the ATM card, a credit card against cus-

requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date.

Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws. Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances of becoming a winner. The higher the level of the deposit, the higher the likelihood to win.



omer's account and all CBK banking services that customer can enjoy.

The Bank revealed that Al Najma account is available to everyone, and anyone can open Al Najma account through CBK mobile application in simple steps from anywhere and at any time.



'DRACULA'S CASTLE' OFFERS TOURISTS COVID SHOTS



A banner reading in Romanian "Who's afraid of vaccine" and depicting syringes as vampire fangs advertises the vaccination marathon organized at the "Bran Castle" (in background) in Bran village. —AFP photos



People arrive at a vaccination center during the vaccination marathon organized at the "Bran Castle" in Bran village.

Visitors to Romania's forbidding Bran Castle, widely known as the inspiration for the lair of Dracula, are being jabbed with needles rather than vampiric fangs this weekend in a coronavirus vaccination drive. "I came to visit the castle with my family and when I saw the poster I gathered up my courage and agreed to get the injection," said 39-year-old engineer Liviu Necula.

Those who take the jab are handed a certificate hailing their "boldness and responsibility" promising they will be welcome at the castle "for the coming 100 years" - as well as offered a free tour of the "torture chamber". Nestled in a misty valley in the Carpathian mountains, Bran Castle is associated with the 15th-century Romanian prince Vlad Tepes, known as "the Impaler", although he never stayed there.

Dracula author Bram Stoker is believed to have been inspired by Vlad and descriptions of Bran Castle when writing his 1897 novel that helped found the modern vampire genre. Romania's government has turned to local vaccination drives and 24-hour "marathons" at major venues like the National Library in Bucharest to get as many citizens as possible immunized. "These centers are for everyone who wants to get vaccinated but doesn't feel like making an appointment online," Marius Nasta hospital director Beatrice Mahler told AFP.

But she added that it would still be difficult to reach people living in the many areas without local doctors. Almost 3.6 million Romanians of the country's 19 million people have received at least one vaccine dose, with authorities aiming for five million by June. —AFP



People inside a tent use mobile phones' light to fill-in forms prior being vaccinated during the vaccination marathon organized at the "Bran Castle" in Bran village.



Medical staff vaccinate resident during the vaccination marathon organized at the "Bran Castle" in Bran village.

Jolie says her mother taught her to be 'warm and gentle' with her children



Angelina Jolie is always "warm and gentle" with her children after her own childhood experience. The Hollywood star recalled how her late mother Marcheline Bertrand would always treat her with love and kindness and she aims to do the same with her brood. Angelina - who shares Maddox, 19, Pax, 17, Zahara, 16, Shiloh, 14, and twins Knox and Vivienne, 12, with ex-husband Brad Pitt - told the Australia's Sydney Morning Herald newspaper: "My mother was very gentle. "I can be many things in my work and in my life, but I am very warm and gentle with my children. That kindness and warmth is a foundation that's unbelievably important. "She gave me many other things and taught me many lessons. But if you don't have that base, to feel valued and safe, then it's hard for any of the other messages or lessons to land." The actress continued: "I hope that I've been able to be that (for my own children), that I'm that warm, safe place. Because - and it's maybe a funny thing to say - but considering what my different jobs are, or what people think they know of you, or what you feel you have to be in the world, in truth none of those things are what you really are. Who you are to your children is everything." Angelina stars as a firefighter Hannah Faber in her new film "Those Who Wish Me Dead" and suggests there is "a lot to discover" in terms of females playing flawed heroes on screen. She explained: "There's a lot to discover, there's a lot that's yet to be represented, and there's a space being created right now that is not yet there. "There's a lot of trauma behind the strong women in a lot of these roles, and it will be nice to get to a place where we're also in our femininity, in our femininity, strong and intelligent and not fighting to survive."

Scarlett Johansson: Take a step back from the HFPA

Scarlett Johansson has urged Hollywood to take a step back from the Hollywood Foreign Press Association as she slammed the "sexist questions and remarks" she's received from members. The "Black Widow" star has called on her fellow actors and actresses to take a "step back" from the organization - which presents the Golden Globes - as she claims she has received "remarks by certain HFPA members that bordered on sexual harassment". In a statement, she told Variety: "As an actor promoting a film, one is expected to participate in awards season by attending press conferences as well as awards shows. In the past, this has often meant facing sexist questions and remarks by certain HFPA members that bordered on sexual harassment. It is the exact reason why I, for many years, refused to participate in their conference. "The



HFPA is an organization that was legitimized by the likes of Harvey Weinstein to amass momentum for Academy recognition and the industry followed suit. Unless there is necessary fundamental reform within the organization, I believe it is time that we take a step back from the HFPA and focus on the importance and strength of unity within our unions and the industry as a whole." It comes after the Hollywood Foreign Press Association vowed to have at least 13 Black members by the next Golden Globes after it was revealed they do not have one Black member in their current line-up. They wrote: "The

Hollywood Foreign Press Association reiterates that we are committed to making necessary changes within our organization and in our industry as a whole. We also acknowledge that we should have done more, and sooner. As a demonstration of our commitment, the board has unanimously approved a plan to increase membership to a minimum of 100 members this year, with a requirement that at least 13 percent of the membership be Black journalists."

Biel's eldest son Silas aware of his famous parents

Jessica Biel's eldest son recognizes that he has famous parents. The 39-year-old star shares sons Silas, six and Phineas, 11 months, with husband Justin Timberlake and explained that Silas is aware of his father's music and acting but she is unable to persuade him to watch her children's show 'Pete the Cat'. She revealed that Silas knows about his father's stardom as a result of his voice role as Branch in the 'Trolls' film series and can recognize his tunes. Asked if her children understood what their parents do, Jessica told 'The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon': "Silas does definitely with Justin because of Branch.



"And also his music - whenever he hears daddy's song he'll go 'Oh yeah, that's dad. No big deal, whatever.'" Jessica confessed about how Silas loves her to do impersonations from 'Pete the Cat' even though he doesn't even watch the series. She said: "But the funny thing about 'Pete the Cat' is I tried to get him to watch the show, he will not watch. And yet he says 'Hey mom, hey mom, do one of those voices from the show' and I'm like, 'But you've never seen the show you don't even know.' "He's just like 'Just do it mom', so I'll do one of the voices and he'll be like, 'Cool, mum, cool.'" Justin previously compared the process of looking both Silas and Phineas to adopting NFL tactics. The 'Mirrors' hitmaker said: "It's a lot of fun but I guess the saying goes, 'Go from a zone defense to a man-to-man very quickly. "You go get that one, I'll get this one.' But it's great and Silas is super excited. Right now, he's very much liking it but, you know, Phin can't walk yet or chase him down, so, I don't know, we'll see what happens."

Naomi Watts loves being woken up by her dog

The 52-year-old actress - who has two children, Kai, 12, and Sasha, 13, with ex-husband Liev Schreiber - says her ideal day starts with being woken up by her rescue pooch, Izzy, before getting ready for the day. Describing her perfect day, she said: "Being woken up by my dog, Izzy, although she likes a lie in just as much as I do. Smaller bladder though. And then I love getting breakfast on the table, which is usually followed by a predictable nagging yell to get the kids either off their devices or out of bed, what can I say, teens will be teens." However, before she puts breakfast on the table, Naomi aims to complete a fitness routine before her children wake up to ensure she has a nice start to the day. In an interview with Hamptons.com, she continued: "I do like a slow start, but if I don't get some exercise in it sits on me all day, so if I get that in before the kids wake up all the better." What's more, the 'Gypsy' star loves being surrounded by her friends and family and take a dip in the ocean under the warm sun. She added: "I like a busy house, kids' friends over, mums over, sometimes my brother will pop by, snag some breakfast. Unstructured, gentle chaos is comfort to me - but somehow the best days always follow the same rhythm. And hopefully end with salty hair and not too much of a sunburn." It comes after Naomi revealed she had her second coronavirus jab last month and she is ready to get "back to biz". Alongside a selfie of herself masked up after getting the vaccine, she wrote: "Love the shot, the science and the shirt. "Got that second dose! Thank you!! Here's to getting back to biz! (sic)". —Bang Showbiz

COLDPLAY BEAM NEW SONG INTO SPACE IN CHAT WITH FRENCH ASTRONAUT



Members of Coldplay watch the view from the window of International Space Station during an interview with French ESA astronaut Thomas Pesquet (not pictured), in this still image from an undated handout video obtained by REUTERS.

—Reuters photos



French ESA astronaut Thomas Pesquet gestures during an interview with members of Coldplay.

Coldplay gave new meaning to the idea of a single launch, playing new song "Higher Power" for the first time during a video link-up with French astronaut Thomas Pesquet. Pesquet spoke with the British group from the International Space Station. "We sent you some music, because right now we aren't able to play for anyone on Earth, so we thought we would just play for you," singer Chris Martin said before playing the song late Thursday. "This is the premiere for the whole... galaxy," he added, saying the song was about "trying to find the astronaut in all of us, the person who can do amazing things." The band took the opportunity to quiz Pesquet about his time on the station, including how he unwinds. "In the evenings when everyone goes to bed... I put on my headset and play some music and just float... it's really cool, you feel completely free," Pesquet said. Asked by guitarist and sci-fi fan Guy Berryman what movies get wrong about being on a space station, Pesquet said the biggest mistake was

how long it took to don a space suit and go outside. "In the movies, it just happens... space suit on, boom you're outside," he said. "In reality... it takes hours to prepare."

Coldplay, who have quit touring over environmental concerns, found common ground with Pesquet as he described his perspective from space. "It's amazing how small and finite and fragile the Earth is," he said. "It's a ball, it's self-contained. Everything we have is here, there's nothing else. You have to use your resources wisely." Pesquet then donned some sunglasses, adding they were necessary in the viewing pod. "Now you look more like a rock star than we ever did!" Martin said, laughing. Has he seen any strange lifeforms out there, the singer asked with a grin. "Not yet, but I keep an eye for them... I keep looking."

Coldplay also had an imaginative launch for the last album, 2019's "Everyday Life", for which they placed ads in the classified sections of newspapers around the world, including in the local newspapers of their home towns in Britain. —AFP

IRAQ'S HERITAGE BATTERED BY DESERT SUN, RAIN AND STATE APATHY



Pictures show views of the Al-Aqiser archeological site in Ain Tamr near Karbala in Iraq, which includes what has been described as one of the oldest eastern Christian churches. —AFP photos

One of the world's oldest churches is crumbling deep in Iraq's desert, another victim of years of conflict, government negligence and climate change in a country with a rich heritage. After Pope Francis made a historic visit to Iraq in March, many Iraqis hoped that busloads of tourists would flock to Al Aqiser church southwest of the capital Baghdad. But in a country that has been battered by consecutive conflicts and economic crises, the church-like Iraq's numerous Christian, Islamic and Mesopotamian relics has been left to weather away.

All that remains of Al Aqiser, which has stood in Ain Tamr for more than 1,500 years, are crumbling brick and red earthen walls. Archaeologist Zahd Muhammad blamed this on "climate conditions, the fact that under Saddam Hussein the area was transformed into a military firing range and the lack of regular conservation". Ain Tamr mayor Raed Fadhel said upkeep is a question of budget. "Such maintenance requires an enormous amount of money, but we only get meagre funds" from the federal government, he said.

Some 60 kilometers (38 miles) further east, Shiite shrines in Karbala attract millions of pilgrims each year. But these potential visitors fail to stop by Iraq's numerous ancient churches, its Mesopotamian cities

and the fabled "ziggurat" pyramid-like structures of Babylon, a UNESCO World Heritage site, residents and officials say.

Missed opportunities

Abdullah Al-Jihawi, who lives in Diwaniya province bordering Karbala, told AFP he believes that "foreigners care more about our heritage than we do". "Until the 1980s, an American university led excavations here, there were plenty of job opportunities," he said. "Our parents and grandparents worked on those sites, but all that stopped in the 1990s" with the international embargo against Saddam's regime.

Diwaniya's governor, Zuhair Al-Shaalan, boasts of the province's more than 2,000 historic sites and sees in each a potential economic windfall. But almost 20 years since the 2003 US-led invasion that toppled Saddam's dictatorship, promising democracy and prosperity, Iraqis are still waiting to for an economic upturn. Diwaniya is home to Nippur, the ancient Sumerian city and jewel of Iraq's glorious Mesopotamian past with its temples, libraries and palaces.

Seven thousand years ago Nippur, now in southern Iraq, was one of the main religious centers of the

Akkadians and later the Babylonians. Much of that site was looted after Saddam's fall from power by armed bandits and many others destroyed by jihadists who seized swathes of Iraq in 2014 until their defeat three years later. "Investing in these sites would create jobs in our province, which is poor and has few investment opportunities," Shaalan said.

But there is another problem beyond renovation and preservation, Jihawi said. If they came, "where would the tourists go?" he asked. "There's nothing for them—the roads haven't been paved since the 1980s, the electricity poles are from the 1970s," in a country with chronic shortages of electricity and water. Energy-rich Iraq suffered due to a decline in world oil prices and has been struggling with rising prices, high unemployment and poverty, which doubled last year to 40 percent amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Returned to dust

Historical sites in the central province of Kirkuk are also in a sad state of disrepair and "neither authorities nor private organizations are doing anything for heritage", said resident Muhammad Taha. He pointed to the 3,000-year-old citadel and the "qishla", an Ottoman-era garrison, where chunks of mosaics have

crumbled while sections of wall threaten to crash down. Like Nippur, the citadel's deterioration could mean it might not be promoted from UNESCO's Tentative List of heritage sites to the coveted World Heritage List.

Local authorities said frequent heavy rains that batter the mountainous region are to blame. Iraq is one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change, according to the United Nations. Galloping desertification in a country where desert already covers 50 percent of the territory is threatening human and animal life, and has sounded death knells for Mesopotamian sites as well as recent constructions. Abdullah Al-Jihawi from Diwaniya recalled that between the 1960s and the 1980s archeological ruins "were protected by the green belt".

But trees that had blocked the wind were burned, blasted apart by shelling during successive Iraqi wars or felled to make way for new towns. Scorching summer temperatures above 50 degrees (122 Fahrenheit), dust storms and heavy winter rains have also dealt blows to Iraqi heritage. And many fear that sites built with bricks made thousands of years ago by Mesopotamian laborers will one day soon turn back into dust. —AFP



Long-overlooked Black artists dominate New York spring sales

Black artists are represented like never before at New York's spring sales next week after years of being overlooked and underappreciated, with several expected to set new records for their works. American-born Jean-Michel Basquiat, of Haitian and Puerto Rican descent, becomes the first Black painter to headline both Christie's and Sotheby's main auctions, on Tuesday and Wednesday respectively.

up to \$12 million.

Works by Norman Lewis, Mark Bradford and Kerry James Marshall are all expected to top \$1 million. David Galperin, head of evening sales for contemporary art at Sotheby's in New York, said a "historical reevaluation" and growing visibility in galleries and museums is boosting the popularity of marginalized artists. "There's a sense of increased market appreciation and demand that correlates

lowing the police murder of George Floyd have contributed to a reassessment that was already underway, experts and artists say. Sherman Edmiston, president of New York's Essie Green Gallery, which has been promoting Black artists since 1979, says the breakthrough has happened in recent years, in part thanks to the emergence of prominent Black collectors.

Jay-Z, Kanye

Rapper and producer Swizz Beatz is considered a pioneer, while Sean Combs, Jay-Z, Pharrell Williams and Kanye West are also recognized as major collectors. "It's all about culture. Hip Hop was a cultural phenomenon and they were early adopters and tastemakers," he told AFP. Another contributing factor was the shift in the 1990s from art being a collectors' market to an investors' market.

As the supply of works by traditional artists, almost all white, dried up, investors turned to minority artists at attractive prices to boost their portfolios. "That's when Black art began to really take off," said Edmiston. Artists such as Basquiat, Marshall and Jacob Lawrence have, in their own way, opened a window into an element of American life that was missing from mainstream art—the experience of being Black in the United States.

"A lot of the art that we're seeing today could not have happened without a group of artists that kind of broke through and sort of changed the dialogue around art," said Ana Maria Celis, head of 21st century evening sales at Christie's. She considers 32-year-old Jordan Casteel as among the heirs of this movement, which is "challenging existing notions of what art should say or how it should be made." "The art that is being made today by these artists are reflective of the times. They want to push forward conversations that might have been uncomfortable," said Celis.

The push to buy works by Black artists, resulting in a steady stream of records over the past three years, has seen prices go way above their initial estimates, a rare phenomenon at top auctions. "There's a tendency along the lines of, 'If it's Black it's great,'" said Edmiston, adding that he favors a distinction between artists and the quality of their work. He even thinks the market might be overheating. "At the same time I realize I could be way off, and most likely, I am," he said, smiling. —AFP



Michael Jordan

MICHAEL JORDAN COLLEGE JERSEY FETCHES \$1.38M AT AUCTION

A Michael Jordan game-worn jersey from his 1982-83 season at the University of North Carolina has sold for \$1.38 million dollars at auction, Heritage Auctions said Saturday. "We're extremely proud to have shattered records for a Jordan game-worn jersey," Chris Ivy, Heritage's director of sports auctions, said in a statement. Adding to the value of the blue and white No. 23 Tar Heels jersey is the fact that it's the kit Jordan was wearing on the cover of the March 1983 Sporting News, which declared Jordan the NCAA player of the year.

The season was Jordan's second at UNC, and the season after a freshman Jordan helped take the Tar Heels to the 1982 national championship over a Georgetown team that featured Patrick Ewing. The same jersey had brought \$63,500 when it was auctioned in 1999, and Heritage had expected it to go for about \$1 million in its Spring Sports Catalog Auction. The previous high for a Jordan jersey was set in October when a Chicago uniform worn by the NBA icon—who won six championships with the Bulls—sold for \$480,000. That jersey and shorts kit was from the 1986-87 NBA season when Jordan was the league's leading scorer but the Bulls were swept by the Boston Celtics in the first round of the playoffs. —AFP



'George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware: Page from an American History Textbook' by Robert Colescott is on display during Sotheby's NY press preview of the upcoming Contemporary Art Evening Auction. —AFP

The 1983 "In This Case," part of his trilogy of "skull" paintings, and his 1982 work "Versus Medici" are expected to fetch around \$50 million each during the virtual auctions. The late Robert Colescott, renowned for expressionist paintings that dealt with Black identity and history, is expected to increase his record tenfold, with his 1975 "George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware: Page from an American History Textbook" estimated at

with prices that we are seeing at auction," he told AFP. For Sanford Biggers, a Black sculptor whose 25-foot-tall bronze "Oracle" statue has just been installed at the Rockefeller Center, the development is a long overdue "correction."

"For a long time the work was overlooked but the work has been actually fantastic for decades," he said. The massive Black Lives Matter protests that swept the United States and the world last year fol-

'Canelo' Alvarez stops Saunders to unify super middleweight titles

ARLINGTON: Saul "Canelo" Alvarez stopped Billy Joe Saunders in eight rounds on Saturday to unify three super middleweight titles in front of the largest US crowd in history to watch an indoor boxing event.

Four-weight world champion Alvarez retained his World Boxing Council and World Boxing Association titles and seized Saunders' World Boxing Organization belt when the previously undefeated Briton retired on his stool after taking a beating in the eighth round.

Alvarez won by technical knockout after Saunders' corner called a halt in front of 73,126 fans at AT&T Stadium, which was also the biggest to watch an American sports event since the coronavirus pandemic. Saunders didn't budge from his stool saying he couldn't see out of his right eye which was badly swollen from Alvarez's precision blows.

Alvarez could sense victory in the eighth as he chased the southpaw around the ring waving his arms in the air as if to let the pro-Mexican crowd know that the end was near. "I knew it," Alvarez said. "I think I broke his cheek. He didn't come out to fight because I broke his cheek."

Saunders headed from the ring to the hospital to get medical treatment on his injured eye. The previous largest indoor crowd for a boxing card in the United States had been 63,350 for Muhammad Ali's rematch against Leon Spinks in 1978. Alvarez, who improved to 56-1-2 with 38 knockouts, was ahead on all three judges' scorecards, 78-74, 78-74 and 77-75, when Saunders did not come out for the ninth round.

The 31-year-old Saunders, who dropped to 30-1 with 14 KOs, had during fight week argued, and won, his case to increase the size of the ring from

20 feet to 22 feet. But no amount of extra space was going to allow him to escape Alvarez's devastating punching power. The victory serves as another step in Alvarez's quest to dominate the 168-pound (76-kilogram) division.

The Mexican pound-for-pound king's only career loss to date came as a 23-year-old against the legendary Floyd Mayweather Jr in 2013. He has 13 wins and a draw since losing to Mayweather by majority decision. On Saturday night, the 30-year-old Alvarez bided his time until he could impose his will on Saunders, who had never faced an opponent of this magnitude.

'I am coming man'

Everything changed in the eighth and the end came suddenly for Saunders as the fight came down to Alvarez's power and speed and the boxing skills of Saunders. But to his credit Saunders proved to be a tough opponent for the Mexican to catch in the early rounds.

Alvarez had his way in the eighth as Saunders tried to duck and clinch his way through the round, but he was inflicting too much pain and the Briton's right eye was closing fast. Alvarez often brutally overpowers his opponents before knocking them out and even though that wasn't the case in Arlington, he followed the game plan set out by his trainers to perfection. "I said before the fight that it was going to develop by seventh and eighth round," Alvarez said. "I was winning round by round. I started to adjust really quick."

Alvarez has now beaten seven English challengers in his career. That streak began with a points decision against Matthew Hatton when Alvarez was 20 years old in 2011, continued through



ARLINGTON: In this handout photo provided by Matchroom Boxing, Mexican boxer Saul "Canelo" Alvarez (left) throws a jab at British boxer Billy Joe Saunders during their super middleweight title fight at the AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas on Saturday. — AFP

a victory over Liverpool's Callum Smith in December, and now includes former WBO middleweight champion Saunders.

The one remaining title for Alvarez to win in the super-middleweight division is the International Boxing Federation held by unbeaten American Caleb Plant, 21-0 with 12 knockouts. Alvarez was fighting for the third time in six months and now he

wants to fight Plant as soon as possible.

"I am coming man, I am coming my friend," said Alvarez, who is trying to become the first Mexican-born fighter to hold all four belts in one division. "That's the fight that has to happen for boxing — the undisputed championship at 168 pounds," said promoter Eddie Hearn. "It's the must-make fight next. What's Caleb Plant going to do?" — AFP

Westbrook milestone fuels Wizards, Curry pours in 49 in Warriors win

LOS ANGELES: Another historic night from Russell Westbrook helped the Washington Wizards to a 133-132 overtime victory over the Indiana Pacers on Saturday. Westbrook notched the 181st triple-double of his career on Saturday, tying Oscar Robertson for the most in NBA history.

He finished with 33 points, 19 rebounds and 15 assists, draining the go-ahead free-throws with one second left in overtime then blocking a potential game-winning shot from Indiana's Caris LeVert as time expired.

"That's Russell, he's an incredible player and person," said Wizards coach Scott Brooks, who said he thought the triple-double record established by Robertson during an NBA career from 1960-74 "would never be touched."

Bradley Beal scored 50 points for the Wizards but missed overtime with a hamstring strain. Beal's outburst wasn't the only impressive performance overshadowed by Westbrook. LeVert scored 35 for Indiana whose Domantas Sabonis also had a triple-double of 30 points, 13 rebounds and 13 assists.

But before Beal's departure — a worrisome development for the Wizards with the regular season winding down — Westbrook had secured his record-equaling triple-double with his 10th assist late in the third with an arching pass to Beal for a floater in the lane.

"Man, it's unbelievable," Westbrook said of matching Robertson. "I take a lot of pride in doing everything that impacts winning, as much as I can leave it on the floor. To be in a conversation with Oscar, one I just want to thank him, because he set the stage."

Focus on standings

Westbrook gets a first chance to overtake Robertson tonight when the Wizards play the Hawks



INDIANAPOLIS: Russell Westbrook #4 of the Washington Wizards reacts after blocking a shot to win the game against the Indiana Pacers on Saturday at Bankers Life Fieldhouse in Indianapolis, Indiana. — AFP

in Atlanta. But he and the rest of the Wizards are focused on the standings, where their narrow victory in a game that featured 33 lead changes saw them inch ahead of the Pacers into ninth place in the Eastern Conference standings.

The seventh through 10th-placed teams will compete in the play-in tournament for a berth in the playoffs proper. "We just want to keep playing good basketball moving into it," Brooks said. "If we keep moving up, that'd be great."

Among other teams fighting for play-in spots, the Golden State Warriors notched a 136-97 rout of Oklahoma City thanks to Stephen Curry's 49 points in three quarters. The win kept the Warriors ahead of the Memphis Grizzlies in eighth place in the Western Conference. Curry was on fire from the opening tip-off, draining five three-pointers on the way to 24 points in the first quarter and maintaining his lead over Beal in the NBA scoring race, despite the Washington star's big night.

Curry connected on 14 of 26 shots from the field, including 11 of 21 from three-point range. It was Curry's fourth game this season with at least 11 three-pointers, an NBA record. Warriors coach Steve

Kerr was running out of superlatives for his superstar. "I don't know how to describe it," Kerr said.

The Warriors led by as many as 41 points and were up by 39 after three quarters, after which Curry and fellow Golden State starters Andrew Wiggins and Draymond Green checked out, along with all of the Thunder starters.

The Grizzlies, fueled by a double-double of 18 points and 21 rebounds from Jonas Valanciunas, beat the Toronto Raptors 109-99 as the 10th-placed San Antonio Spurs fell 102-124 to the Portland Trail Blazers.

Despite the defeat, the Spurs remained two games ahead of the New Orleans Pelicans for the final play-in spot. The Utah Jazz improved their Western Conference-leading record to 50-18 with a 124-116 victory over the Houston Rockets — who are assured of finishing among the worst three teams.

The Eastern Conference-leading Philadelphia 76ers romped past already eliminated Detroit 118-104. But the Brooklyn Nets had to battle for a 125-119 victory over the Denver Nuggets that put them half a game ahead of the Milwaukee Bucks for second in the East. — AFP



MADRID: Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka poses with her trophy after beating Australia's Ashleigh Barty during their 2021 WTA Tour Madrid Open tennis tournament singles final match at the Caja Magica in Madrid on Saturday. — AFP

Sabalenka shocks Barty to win Madrid Open

MADRID: Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka stunned world number one Ashleigh Barty to win the Madrid Open for the first time on Saturday and put her success down to losing her fear of playing on clay. Sabalenka was beaten by Barty in the final in Stuttgart last month but exacted revenge at the Caja Magica, a storming 6-0, 3-6, 6-4 victory clinching the biggest title of her career.

The 23-year-old has never gone past the fourth round at a Grand Slam but on this evidence she will be among the contenders at the French Open, which starts in Paris later this month. "She takes the racket out of my hand when she serves the way she did in the first set," Barty said. "I guarantee it won't be the last time that it happens. I'll continue to fight and try to find a way back in each and every time."

This was Sabalenka's 10th career title but her first on clay and it will see her rise to number four in the world rankings on Monday. "Before I was too much thinking about clay, that this surface is not for me, that it's really tough to play, it's about long rallies," said Sabalenka. "Something changed in my mind this year. I'm not really scared of this surface anymore."

Barty was the heavy favorite heading into the final, especially after beating Sabalenka in Stuttgart last month, also on clay, in a match that also went to three sets. The Australian appeared to have recovered from a chastening opening set, after leveling up in the second and then leading 4-3, 30-15 on Sabalenka's serve in the decider.

But her opponent never gave in and produced a brilliant finish by winning the last 11 consecutive points to hand Barty her first defeat on red clay since 2019 in Rome. "To be honest after the final in Stuttgart, I was injured, I couldn't move and wanted to withdraw," Sabalenka said on court afterwards. "But the recovery was good, in four days I feel better and now I'm the champion. It's been an amazing week."

Barty will still be one of the favorites at Roland Garros, where the Australian won her first Grand Slam title in 2019. Her route to the final in Madrid included beating reigning French Open champion Iga Swiatek in the round of 16. After losing the second set 6-0 in Stuttgart, Sabalenka took some revenge by delivering the same punishment to Barty, in a whirlwind opening frame. —AFP

Kuwaiti boxer to launch professional career in Spain

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Spanish Ambassador to Kuwait Miquel Jose Moro Aguilar is pleased his country is the location where two Kuwaiti and Arab boxers are launching their professional boxing careers. The event is the international boxing championship to be hosted in La Coruna on July 17. The ambassador spoke during a meeting with WBC representative in Kuwait and the Gulf Mishal Al-Fajji at the embassy.

The ambassador said Kuwait and Spain's relations are highly advanced in all fields, and sports is

among the fields witnessing major cooperation between the two countries. Andres Carrasco is coaching the national football team and the Rafa Nadal Academy is in Kuwait, in addition to many Spanish sports specialists in various fields in Kuwait, which confirms the well-established sports relations between Kuwait and Spain.

Aguilar said that he met Information Minister and State Minister for Youth Affairs Abdelrahman Al-Mutairi last week to discuss means for more development of sports relations, as he is expected to visit Spain soon. He wished Arab boxers who will participate in the championship all success, adding "this is a start and they need to learn a lot from outstanding European boxers". Aguilar said it is nice to see Kuwaiti boxers representing their country in one of the most popular world sport and they are always welcome in Spain.

Fajji lauded the support of the Spanish ambassador and his interest in the success of Kuwaiti and

Disabled badminton team heads for Spain

KUWAIT: Kuwait's disabled badminton team left for Spain recently to participate in the Spanish International badminton championship currently held in Cartagena, Spain. The delegation is headed by Chairman of Warba Handicapped Club Jamal Al-Mishal, Mohammad Al-Shimmari and

Coach Abdullah Al-Rashid, along with players Khalid Majid, Nizar Ramadhan and Rashid Al-Qallaf. Mishal said this championship is important because it includes a large number of world champions, adding that it will help elevate the world ranking of Kuwait's players. Mishal thanked Captain Ali Jaber Al-Merri, Chairman of the Board of Kuwait Badminton Association, for supporting the club in this sport. He also thanked Kuwait Disabled Club and its Chairman Shafi Al-Hajiri for opening the club's facilities for the players.



KUWAIT: Kuwait's disabled badminton team and staff.



KUWAIT: Spanish Ambassador to Kuwait Miquel Jose Moro Aguilar (left) with WBC representative in Kuwait and the Gulf Mishal Al-Fajji.

Arab boxers as they start their careers. "We are coordinating with WBC and Northern Spain Professional Boxing Association in order to present the Arab Championship as best as can be," he said.

Sports

Bayern Munich eye decade of dominance after ninth straight Bundesliga title

DORTMUND: Bayern Munich already have their eyes on a decade of Bundesliga dominance after winning the league title for the ninth successive season on Saturday, celebrating their success with a 6-0 thrashing of Borussia Moenchengladbach.

Robert Lewandowski scored a hat-trick to leave him on 39 league goals this season — one short of Gerd Mueller's all-time Bundesliga record — as the champions swept Gladbach aside at the Allianz Arena. "We wanted to show on the pitch that we are German champions," said Lewandowski, who will "keep stepping on the gas" in chasing Mueller's record. "Today was a great game, we played really well and scored a lot of goals."

The emphatic victory leaves Bayern 10 points clear of second-placed RB Leipzig, whose 3-2 loss at Borussia Dortmund sealed Bayern the title, with two games left. The players learned they were champions again while still warming up following Dortmund's victory.

"It was a bizarre situation. We were just getting ready, when we realized that we were champions," said Bayern captain Manuel Neuer. Board member Oliver Kahn has already challenged Bayern to secure a 10th title in a row.

"We watched the Leipzig game together, the atmosphere was great," said Kahn. "You don't get used to it, it's an incredible achievement. Now we can do something next season that no team in the world has ever done: become champions 10 times in a row."

The only blot on a near-perfect night for Bayern was a red card for Tanguy Nianzou for a clumsy tackle 15 minutes from time. Bayern wasted no time in hitting their stride, Lewandowski finding the bottom corner of the net with just under two minutes gone.

Kingsley Coman struck the post before Jamal Musiala's pass picked out Thomas Mueller to slot in his 11th league goal of the season, then Lewandowski volleyed home his second on 34 minutes.

Kingsley Coman made it 4-0 before the break, then won a penalty which Lewandowski converted in the 66th minute to leave him one goal short of Gerd Mueller's historic mark, before Leroy Sane added a late sixth. Julian Nagelsmann, the 33-year-old coach who will leave Leipzig to replace Flick at Bayern next season, offered a terse "congratulations on a deserved title" to his future employers.

Sancho double

Earlier, England winger Jadon Sancho netted twice as Dortmund's win lifted them into the Champions League places. Even without injured striker Erling Braut Haaland, Dortmund were 2-0 up early in the second half thanks to goals from Marco Reus and Sancho.

Leipzig fought back through a Lukas Klostermann header and Dani Olmo's equaliser, only for Sancho to grab the winner. The two clubs meet again on Thursday in the German Cup final at Berlin's Olympic Stadium.

"We showed a lot of morale, the game had absolutely nothing to do with the final in Berlin, but of course we want to win on Thursday too," said Reus. Dortmund hope to have Haaland back from a thigh problem before the final, and even with their top-scorer watching from the stands, the hosts still raced into the lead after less than seven minutes.

Reus span out of Lukasz Piszczek's pass, sprinted behind the defence and took a beautiful back-heeled ball from Thorgan Hazard before sweeping his shot past Leipzig goalkeeper Peter Gulacsi.



MUNICH: (From left) Bayern Munich's Polish forward Robert Lewandowski, Bayern Munich's German forward Thomas Mueller and Bayern Munich's German goalkeeper Manuel Neuer celebrate after the German first division Bundesliga football match FC Bayern Munich v Borussia Moenchengladbach in Munich, southern Germany on Saturday. — AFP

Dortmund goalkeeper Marwin Hitz did not come out for the second half after being injured colliding with his centre-back Manuel Akanji just before the break and was replaced by Roman Buerki.

Dortmund doubled their lead just six minutes after the interval with a superb piece of skill from Sancho, who cut inside after a Raphael Guerreiro pass and fired in off the far post. The visitors pulled a goal back on 63 minutes when Emil Forsberg

floated in a corner and Klostermann steered his header past Buerki.

Leipzig drew level when South Korea striker Hwang Hee-chan broke clear of Dortmund defender Mats Hummels and squared for Olmo who tapped home from close range. However, Sancho snatched all three points when he flicked the ball to Guerreiro, took a return pass and slotted in to hand Bayern the title. — AFP

Five-goal Inter celebrate title with record 14th consecutive home win

MILAN: With thousands of fans celebrating outside the San Siro stadium and a guard of honor onto the pitch, Inter Milan celebrated their first Serie A title in over a decade with a 5-1 victory over Sampdoria giving Antonio Conte's side a record 14th successive home win.

Saturday's match took place behind closed doors because of coronavirus restrictions but thousands of 'Nerazzurri' supporters celebrated outside the San Siro. "The satisfaction is immense," said Conte. "It's natural that we and our fans are now so desperate to celebrate something that we'd been waiting for so long to do. We're happy to bring this joy to them."

Sampdoria players formed a guard of honor as the newly-crowned champions took to the pitch after sealing their 19th 'Scudetto' and first since 2010 last weekend. Claudio Ranieri's ninth-placed Sampdoria did not spoil the party with Keita Balde scoring the only goal for the visitors after 35 minutes. "Inter played on the wings of enthusiasm," said Ranieri. "They played a great match."

Ranieri, who led Leicester to the 2016 Premier League title, said his Genoa side had wanted to mark the occasion with a guard of honor. "I told the players it would be nice to celebrate as they do in England and they immediately agreed with me," he said.

Inter's top scorer Romelu Lukaku and other players who played a key role in the title success stayed on the bench with Conte opting to start with some players who had been less present during the season. Roberto Gagliardini opened the scoring after just

four minutes latching onto an Ashley Young cross.

Alexis Sanchez added two more in a 10-minute first half spell, either side of Balde sending scoring off a rebound. Substitute Andrea Pinamonti added another after the hour with Lautaro Martinez completing the rout from the penalty spot with 20 minutes to go to seal victory against a side Inter had lost against earlier this season, just one of two defeats.

Since losing against Sampdoria, Inter have gone 18 games without defeat and have now won 14 games in a row at home for the first time. The entire team celebrated under the 'Curva Nord' tribune usually occupied by Inter fans.

"We continue to do exceptional things, we have 85 points and haven't lost since the away game against Sampdoria," said Conte. "The boys continue to impress, and it's a real pleasure to watch them play. We've brought back credibility to this club."

Napoli move second

Napoli beat Spezia 4-1 to move second, 15 points behind Inter, and keep in the Champions League chase, but Lazio's hopes of elite European football took a knock with a 2-0 loss at Fiorentina. Napoli are one point ahead of three teams — Atalanta, Juventus and AC Milan — who are tied on 69 points before they play this weekend. Lazio are sixth, five points off the top-four having played a games less. Dusan Vlahovic scored twice for Fiorentina to bring his tally to 21 goals this campaign, and push the Tuscany side away from the relegation zone.

"There are a lot of regrets," said Lazio coach Simone Inzaghi. "In the changing rooms the faces were sad, now we have to gather strength and start again." Gennaro Gattuso's Napoli had lost 2-1 to Spezia at home in January, but hit back against the relegation-threatened side to extend their unbeaten run to 12 consecutive games.

Polish midfielder Piotr Zielinski finished off a Giovanni Di Lorenzo pull-back after 15 minutes and then provided the cross for Nigerian international



MILAN: Inter Milan supporters gather to celebrate prior to the Italian Serie A football match Inter Milan vs Sampdoria on Saturday at the San Siro stadium in Milan. — AFP

Victor Osimhen to score the second eight minutes later. Osimhen completed his first Serie A brace before the break off a Lorenzo Insigne free-kick to bring his tally to seven goals in as many games.

The 22-year-old has scored a total of 10 goals in 21 games played this campaign, having been sidelined with injury. Roberto Piccoli pulled a goal back for Spezia after an hour but Osimhen was on hand to roll the ball across for Hirving Lozano. The goal was confirmed after a VAR viewing. Napoli lost all-time record goalscorer Dries Mertens to an ankle injury in the second-half just seven minutes after the Belgian came off the bench. — AFP

Five-star Flick raises the bar for next Bayern coach Nagelsmann

DORTMUND: Hansi Flick landed a ninth consecutive Bundesliga title for Bayern Munich on Saturday, but his youthful replacement Julian Nagelsmann has already been warned what to expect as head coach of next season's new-look squad. Bayern secured the Bundesliga title before they even kicked a ball on Saturday.



Hansi Flick

Borussia Dortmund's 3-2 win over second-placed Leipzig sent the title back to Munich ahead of Bayern's evening home game against Borussia Moenchengladbach. Flick will sign off with the 56-year-old the hot favorite to succeed Joachim Loew as Germany's next head coach after this summer's Euro 2020 tournament. He won seven honors in his 18 months in charge, including two Bundesliga titles and the Champions League.

Flick also became the first Bayern coach to win all six available titles available from one season in 2019/20. Bayern have lost just eight matches under Flick in all competitions. His record raises the bar high for Nagelsmann, who at 33 has forged a reputation as one of Germany's best young coaches. It will cost Bayern 25 million euros (\$30 million) to buy Nagelsmann out of his contract at RB Leipzig, who he steered to last season's Champions League semi-finals. Nagelsmann stands to reportedly earn around eight million euros (\$9.7 million) for each year of his Bayern contract, which runs until 2026. However, his first task next season will be to win over stars like captain and goalkeeper Manuel Neuer, who is two years older than his new head coach.



Julian Nagelsmann

Beckenbauer warning

Even top scorer Robert Lewandowski is only a year younger than Nagelsmann, who has already received a blessing from a Bayern legend. "Bayern have made a good choice there. Definitely," said the club's honorary president Franz Beckenbauer. However, the 75-year-old warned, "It's clear that the team will test him. That's just the way it is. He knows that. He has to be prepared for that."

From next season, Bayern can wear a fifth star on their shirts having now won 30 titles since the Bundesliga started in 1963/64. The Bavarian giants have been German champions 31 times, but their first title win, in 1932, came in the pre-Bundesliga era. As well as a new star above their badge, there will be a new coach at the helm. At 1.90m (6ft 3ins), Nagelsmann makes his presence felt on the sidelines and will not be afraid of ruffling the egos of Bayern's stars. During matches played behind closed doors due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Nagelsmann's voice can often be heard barking instructions at his players or remonstrating with the referee. — AFP

Stalemate between Atletico, Barca hands advantage to Real Madrid

MADRID: Barcelona and Atletico Madrid knew victory could fire them towards the La Liga title but Saturday's 0-0 draw at Camp Nou handed Real Madrid the chance to go top. Four wins from their last four games will not be enough for Zinedine Zidane's side to retain their La Liga crown.

The first part of a blockbuster weekend in the Spanish title race pitched first against third but neither could take a decisive step forward, despite the best attempts of Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez, who faced each other for the first time since Suarez departed last summer.

A point each leaves Atletico three points clear of Real Madrid, who have a game in hand and also the superior head-to-head over both Atleti and Barcelona. Barca remain two points off the top but their chances took the biggest hit, given they now need both Atletico and Real Madrid to slip up in the final stretch.

Anything can still happen because of what we've seen so far," said Gerard Pique. "If Madrid wins their four games they will be champions, but it is difficult for the big teams to be consistent. If we win all our three games, I think we'll have a chance."

Atletico will be disappointed too, given they spurned a number of chances in during a dominant first half, before Ronald Koeman's side recovered in the second. Jan Oblak

had to deny Messi after a vintage run forward from the Argentine, who then had a well-placed free-kick in the last minute, only for Atletico to watch the ball spin inches wide. "We started better and they finished a little better," Oblak said. "Real Madrid has four games left but for sure they are going to be tough games. We have to keep going."

Diego Simeone said on Friday Suarez had been "vindicated" since being forced to leave Barcelona, his 19 goals making him top scorer for the team. Koeman admitted it would be "strange" for everyone, including Messi, who sent a heartfelt open letter to his former team-mate, neighbor and best friend last year.

'Always welcome'

The pair shared a few words in the center circle before kick-off after the Camp Nou stadium announcer had already beamed that Suarez "will always be welcome". But, in truth, the Uruguayan was not at his ruthless best as a handful of openings went unconverted in a contest full of chances but that lacked precision when it mattered most.

Messi was repeatedly knocked over in the opening few minutes before Gerard Pique went through the back of Suarez, both teams scrapping for control. Atletico slowly took charge, helped by the departure of Sergio Busquets, who was replaced



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi and Atletico Madrid's Uruguayan forward Luis Suarez leave the pitch during the Spanish league football match FC Barcelona against Club Atletico de Madrid at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on Saturday. — AFP

by Ilaix Moriba after a clash of heads that meant he had to be taken to hospital for tests. Without Busquets, Barcelona were rudderless for a while and the Atletico chances came thick and fast. Marc-Andre ter Stegen had to palm away Marcos Llorente's shot and then stick out a foot to deny Suarez from the angle.

Suarez then tried to nod in the rebound after a winding run from Yannick Carrasco before claiming a penalty after feeling a flick of Ter Stegen's hand across his head. Barcelona were rattled, the usually steady Ter Stegen booting one ball straight into the stands, only for Messi to give Atletico a reality check, his driving run past six chasers open-

ing the space for a shot, but Oblak tipped it wide.

Felipe fired over from a well-worked Atleti short corner before half-time but Barca were better after the break, with both Ilaix and Pique going close shortly after the hour. Both coaches made changes, hoping to inspire a winner.

Ousmane Dembele was one of them and he should have grabbed it with six minutes left but headed over from six yards in perhaps the best chance of the game. Messi could have won it at the end, standing over the ball with a free-kick placed centrally and 25 yards out. Atletico held their breath, the ball whistling just wide of Oblak's post. — AFP

Man City made to wait for Premier League title as Man Utd beat Villa

LONDON: Manchester City's Premier League title celebrations were put on hold again as Manchester United fought back to win 3-1 at Aston Villa yesterday. Pep Guardiola's side missed a chance to seal the title when they were beaten 2-1 by Chelsea on Saturday. City could have started the party if second-placed United lost at Villa Park, but their arch-rivals kept the leaders' champagne on ice as they came from behind thanks to goals from Bruno Fernandes, Mason Greenwood and Edinson Cavani.

Chelsea had on Saturday forced Manchester City to put their Premier League title party on hold, winning 2-1 to strengthen their grip on a top-four place as Liverpool kept their Champions League qualification hopes alive.

Victory for City in a rehearsal for the Champions League final would have confirmed them as English champions for the third time in four years but they must wait for their inevitable coronation. Hundreds of City fans had gathered outside the empty Etihad Stadium hoping to spur their team on to victory.

As supporters spilled into the road and blue flares were lit, the coaches carrying the players needed to slow down to get through the crowds as they made their way to the ground. Guardiola's men were on the right track when Raheem Sterling gave them the lead but Hakim Ziyech leveled in the second half and Marcos Alonso grabbed the winner in the dying seconds.

Sergio Aguero could have made his side's task much easier on the stroke of half-time but saw his casual Panenka spot-kick easily saved by Edouard Mendy, with Guardiola turning away in frustration. The win lifts the Londoners into third spot above Leicester and six points clear of fifth-placed West Ham with just three games left for Thomas Tuchel's side. Outgoing champions Liverpool beat Southampton 2-0 in the late kick-off to stay in the mix for the

top four but a 3-1 defeat at Leeds was a hammer blow for managerless Tottenham.

Guardiola was frustrated at the manner of his side's defeat — just their fifth loss of the season — but they have a huge 13-point lead over second-placed Manchester United. "We missed our chance in the last minute of the first half for the penalty, but we were in a good position," he told Sky Sports. "We conceded a goal, suffered for 15 minutes, then reacted well, but in the end they scored." On the missed spot-kick, Guardiola said: "I have always said to him (Aguero), take one decision and take it full convincing, so he decided to do it this way. I have nothing to add."

Chelsea threat

Tuchel's in-form team ended City's dreams of a historic quadruple by beating them in the FA Cup semi-final last month and they once again proved tricky opponents. Guardiola made nine changes from the side that saw off Paris Saint-Germain in midweek while Chelsea made five changes following their triumph over Real Madrid.

Sterling broke the deadlock shortly before half-time, tucking home after a poor touch from Aguero following a pass from Gabriel Jesus. City should have gone into the break two goals in front after Jesus won a spot-kick when he was bundled over by Billy Gilmour but Argentine striker Aguero squandered the chance.

As the second half wore on the visitors started to establish a foothold and they equalized just after the hour mark when Cesar Azpilicueta picked out Ziyech, who drilled home from the edge of the area. The finish was frantic. Chelsea substitute Callum Hudson-Odoi had a goal ruled out for a marginal offside before Sterling had a penalty appeal turned down.

Alonso slotted home the winner in stoppage time after Timo Werner pulled the ball back to complete the



BIRMINGHAM: Manchester United's Uruguayan striker Edinson Cavani celebrates scoring his team's third goal during the English Premier League football match between Aston Villa and Manchester United at Villa Park in Birmingham, central England yesterday. — AFP

turnaround. Tuchel admitted the match would have had a different complexion if Aguero had converted from the spot. "If they score the penalty maybe it is over before it starts — at 2-0 you have no chance to come back," the Chelsea boss said. "I was impressed by the reaction and the performance in the second half. If you want to steal all three points here after being down, you need a bit of luck, decisions from the referee."

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp was delighted to see his team back to winning ways following two costly draws, with Sadio Mane and Thiago Alcantara both finding the net at Anfield. Speaking about his side being in the race for the top four, he told the BBC: "We are, kind of. It's not impossible but it's difficult. We will give it a try and see where we get to." Earlier, Crystal Palace beat already relegated Sheffield United 2-0. — AFP



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