



**6** War-torn Yemen holds breath as breakthrough truce begins



**8** Al-Safat Investment is open for merger, Al-Terkait says



**16** Australia beat England to win Women's WCup



Ramadan Timings	
Fajr	04:12
Shurooq	05:36
Dhuhr	11:51
Asr	15:23
Maghrib	18:07
Isha	19:26



# Social life returns to Kuwait; experts give Ramadan tips

'Follow healthy lifestyle during Ramadan to reduce weight'



KUWAIT: A vendor waits for customers at a market during the holy month of Ramadan in downtown Kuwait City. For Muslims across the world, the beginning of the ninth month in the Muslim lunar calendar which marks the start of Ramadan is a time for spiritual reflection, prayers and fasting. During Ramadan practicing Muslims do not eat, drink, smoke or have sex between sunrise and sunset. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT: Social and economic life returned to normal in Ramadan this year following two years of lockdowns and curfews because of the coronavirus pandemic, with people keen on resuming gatherings and normal shopping. "Psychologically, most people feel positive during this year's Ramadan following the lifting of the coronavirus restrictions, which encouraged them to return to their normal Ramadan practices," Dr Saud Al-Ghanem, Sociology professor at Kuwait University (KU), said.

Speaking to KUNA, Al-Ghanem said people would notice roads' congestions, more visits and an increase in shopping activities. Economy will flourish during Ramadan as well, he added, because people tend to increase purchases of accessories, food and clothes - usually associated with the holy month. Dr Khodhr Al-Baroun, a professor of psychology at KU, said family gatherings would

increase this year with extended families having Iftar (breakfast) meals, making "this blessed month quite different than rest of the months of the year."

"Anxiety over the pandemic during the last two years vanished and this will increase gatherings among family members and friends," he said. Dr Ahmad Al-Shatti, Director of Ahmadi medical area, urged people to follow healthy lifestyle during Ramadan so as to reduce weight and improve their physical and psychological well-being.

He urged families to keep their children out of the kitchen in order to prevent accidents. Al-Shatti also urged worshippers to wear masks while in mosques, and people in general to avoid crowds. He said 85 percent of people have been vaccinated in Kuwait but people still have to be careful by following health guidelines. — KUNA

## Ramadan Kareem

### Ramadan: My greatest teacher

By Teresa Leshner

If Ramadan was a person, she would be the toughest teacher you ever had - the one who had strict rules, gave lots of homework, and drilled you until she was sure you understood the lessons she was trying to teach. Or Ramadan would be your coach who made you train hard, demanding more of you than you thought you could handle, challenging you every day until you mastered the moves or continually beat your previous times.

These are the people who not only believed in the value of what they taught, but even more so, they believed in your capacity for achievement and growth. They worked you hard because they wanted you to succeed. They didn't just want you to pass their test or win the race, they wanted to change you forever - to transform you into a confident, disciplined and ambitious person. They wanted you to win.

These are the people we feared, obeyed, respected, and eventually loved. These are the people who impacted our lives in untold ways, making us our best selves. We vaguely remember the grueling work and pain of their ways, but we will never forget what we learned about ourselves and how they made us feel.

Similar in every way, Ramadan has been my greatest teacher and coach. Ramadan has returned every year to remind me what I need to do to succeed, and to prove to me that I can do it. In the early years, it was about submitting my will to my Creator's will. I fasted because the Quran said, "Those of you who see the month shall fast." (2:185). It was hard, very hard. But I did it. Year after year, I fulfilled the requirements. But Ramadan wasn't satisfied with mere compliance. There was much more to learn.

I could have cheated. Nobody could have known for sure if I was really fasting. But I didn't, and that's when fasting honed my sincerity and integrity. If I were fasting for the people, to fit in or meet social or cultural expectations, I would have cheated all those times when I missed suhoor and started my fast on an empty stomach. It was those days when my sincerity was tested.

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### Pakistan's PM Khan outfoxes opposition

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan foiled an attempt to boot him from office Sunday by getting the president to dissolve the national assembly, meaning fresh elections must be held within three months. On a day of high drama, the assembly deputy speaker refused to accept a motion of no confidence in the government, as Khan simultaneously appeared on TV to say there had been "foreign interference" in Pakistan's democratic institutions.

"I have sent advice to the president to dissolve the assemblies. We will go to the public and hold elections, and let the nation decide," he said. The presidency - a largely ceremonial office - acceded hours later. No Pakistan prime minister has ever completed a full term, and Khan was facing the biggest challenge to his rule since being elected in 2018, with opponents accusing him of economic mismanagement and bungling foreign policy.

On Sunday parliament was due to debate a no-confidence motion that looked certain to succeed, but the deputy speaker - a Khan loyalist - refused to accept it, causing uproar in the chamber. But there was calm on the streets on the first day of the fasting month of Ramadan, with a huge

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### Russia accused of war crimes

ODESSA: Ukraine on Sunday accused Russian troops of war crimes after the discovery of mass graves and civilians apparently "executed" in the streets of Bucha, near the capital Kyiv. The claims came as explosions rocked the Black Sea port city of Odessa, which has largely been spared in the conflict, with air strikes apparently targeting key infrastructure.

In Bucha, AFP reporters saw at least 20 bodies, all in civilian clothing, strewn across a single street. One had his hands tied behind his back with a white cloth, and his Ukrainian passport

left open beside his body. "All these people were shot," Bucha's mayor Anatoly Fedoruk said, adding that 280 other bodies had been buried in mass graves elsewhere in Bucha.

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba called it a "deliberate massacre" and urged G7 countries to impose "devastating" sanctions immediately. "It looks exactly like war crimes," President Volodymyr Zelensky's spokesman told BBC television. "We found mass graves. We found people with their hands and with their legs tied up... and with shots, bullet holes, in the back of their head." "They were clearly civilians and they were executed."

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### Lebanese flee crisis seeking jobs in Iraq

BAGHDAD: Iraq, once synonymous with conflict and chaos, is becoming a land of opportunity for Lebanese job-seekers fleeing a deep economic crisis back home. Akram Johari is one of thousands who fled Lebanon's tumbling currency and skyrocketing poverty rates. Last year, he packed his bags and boarded a plane from Beirut to Baghdad,

using social media to search for opportunities.

"I didn't have enough time to look for a job in the Gulf," the 42-year-old said, explaining why he eschewed the more traditional path for those seeking economic opportunities in the region. With its relative proximity and visas on arrival for Lebanese, the Iraqi capital seemed a good option. "I had to take quick action, and so I came to Baghdad and began searching for work on Instagram," Johari said, speaking in a restaurant he has run for about a month.

Lebanon is grappling with an unprecedented financial crisis that the World Bank says is of a scale

usually associated with war. Beirut's crisis, driven by years of endemic corruption, has seen Lebanon's currency lose more than 90 percent of its value against the dollar. Lebanon's 675,000-pound monthly minimum wage now fetches around \$30 on the black market, and about 80 percent of the population now lives in poverty, according to the UN. When he left Beirut, Johari was earning the equivalent of about \$100 per month. In Iraq, he earns enough to support his family back home, he said.

More than 20,000 Lebanese citizens arrived in Iraq between June 2021

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ISLAMABAD: Supporters of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party of Prime Minister Imran Khan shout slogans outside the Parliament House building in Islamabad on April 3, 2022. — AFP



ODESSA: A Ukrainian security officer keeps the press away as smoke rises after an attack by Russian army in Odessa on April 3, 2022. — AFP

# Kuwait's Amir receives call from Qatar's Amir on Ramadan

## Sheikh Tamim congratulates Kuwait's Crown Prince on Ramadan

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Saturday received a phone call from Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, sharing congratulations on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan. In the phone conversation, the Qatari Amir wished goodness and blessings for both sisterly countries and their people, as well as both Arab and Muslim worlds, while praying to Allah

the Almighty to bestow good health and wellness on His Highness the Amir and more progress and prosperity for the State of Kuwait under his wise leadership. His Highness the Amir thanked the Amir of Qatar for this fraternal contact and good gesture that reflected historical and distinguished relations between both countries and their people, wishing him well and prosperity for Qatar under his wise leadership.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Saturday received a telephone call from Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani regarding congratulations on the holy month of Ramadan. During the phone conversation, the Qatari Amir prayed to Allah the Almighty to bestow everlasting wellbeing on His Highness the Crown Prince, and wished further progress and prosperity to both

sisterly countries and their peoples, as well as both Arab and Muslim worlds. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince thanked the Amir of Qatar for the good fraternal feelings, praying to Allah Almighty to bestow permanent good health on the Qatari Amir. His Highness the Crown Prince also wished further advancement and blessings to Qatar, as well as stability, security and safety to both Arab and Muslim nations. — KUNA

## Iftar canon, long-standing tradition marking Ramadan



**KUWAIT:** At sunset during the holy month of Ramadan, people, especially children, throng Qasr Naif in Kuwait City to watch the firing of Iftar canon to signal the time for fast-breaking, a tradition that has been passed down from generation to generation. Kuwait has been maintaining this long-lasting tradition since the country's seventh ruler, Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah. —UNA

## Kuwait enjoys joyful, colorful spring

**KUWAIT:** The public and private gardens in Kuwait are embracing a colorful variety of flowers and plants during this time of the year. It is spring of Kuwait, during which people enjoy the fair weather, bringing happiness and joy throughout the day. The large groups of lively varicolored flowers welcome butterflies and bees, adding further beauty to the green lands. — KUNA



Local

# Kuwait's streets suffocate on first business day of Ramadan



**KUWAIT:** Traffic seen on the first official business day of Ramadan. Solving the traffic problem takes more than developing public transportation alone. The problem will most likely persist as long as the population growth remains high while the country's infrastructure remains unchanged since the 1980s. There is general consensus in Kuwait that the only way to resolve the issue is by building new and expanded roads and urban infrastructures. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Colon Cancer Awareness Day at Jaber Hospital

**KUWAIT:** The surgery department in Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah Hospital, led by the colorectal surgery team, have conducted an awareness day on

Sunday. The objective was colon and rectal cancer awareness campaign to raise the knowledge of colon and rectal cancer in Kuwait and raise the awareness of the national screening colonoscopy (camera inside the colon to check and potentially treat problems) program. It is important to note that colon cancer is the second highest cancer in Kuwait in terms of numbers and new cases every year. Yet, colon cancer is one of the more treatable and curable diseases if caught early in time, which is the aim of a screening colonoscopy, in this national campaign.



## Doctor warns of bad eating habits in Ramadan

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Internist consultant, gastrointestinal and liver specialist Dr Wafaa Al-Hashash said some people in Ramadan, particularly those with digestive system and colon problems, have some bad habits which lead to many health problems, causing discomfort. She said digestive system complaints increase in Ramadan, "bearing in mind that the same advice we give each year goes unheeded and patients come back only to ask the same questions, and receive the same old answer".

She said the most common problems of the digestive system in Ramadan include heartburn, GERD and indigestion. She said these conditions occur due to suddenly overeating after long hours



Dr Wafaa Al-Hashash

of fasting, in addition to eating large amounts of fatty foods and hot spices.

Dr Hashash advised those fasting to avoid these problems by drinking more water, as it keeps the body hydrated and helps prevent other problems related to fasting long hours, such as constipation, headache or backache; avoid fizzy drinks because they contain too much sugar, while the gases from sugar fermentation may cause bloating; avoid overeating because a big sudden meal causes stomach cramps and severe GERD.

"Avoid foods rich in fats because they take longer to digest and may cause nausea. Eat more fiber. Do not sleep on a full stomach. Adding to the above advice for those with colon problems: Avoid chili and hot spices, fried food, oil, ghee, rich foods, garlic and legumes," she added.

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## Local

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welcomes the holy  
month of Ramadan

**KUWAIT:** This year, the prominent Sheraton Kuwait Ramadan tent returns to the Coral Ballroom. The theme has been inspired by Kuwaiti heritage known for its genuine hospitality. Our exceptional team of culinary chefs has prepared a delicious arrangement of menu options for Iftar, Ghabga, and Sohour - with a buffet that will simulate the senses. From a splendid selection of soups, western and eastern salads, and traditional mezzas, to the most exquisite hot dishes including the traditional Qouzi. The Live cooking stations and live music will surely create a beautiful memory with luxurious flavors.

Riccardo, the iconic Italian restaurant, welcomes all luminaries to a bespoke fine-dining experience. For those

looking for international delicacies, Al-Hambra International Restaurant offers a selection of choices for Iftar and Sohour. The incomparable takeaway options from the Le Tarbouche Lebanese restaurant, Bukhara Indian Restaurant, Shahrayer Persian Restaurant, and the English Tea Lounge



Fahed Abushaar

will create a delightful gathering with loved ones at home. The unparalleled outside catering service will cater for all special gatherings offering a variety of buffet options featuring authentic Kuwaiti cuisine.

During this holy month, The Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait will welcome guests to the La Mamma Pizzeria, for a contemporary Iftar and Sohour experience that will include an enjoyable selection of rich appetizers, antipasti, delicious homemade pasta, and pizza baked in the classic wood-fired oven.

Fahed Abushaar, multi-property General Manager of the St Regis Kuwait and Sheraton Kuwait, with all the associates extend their warmest greetings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and to the people of Kuwait for a blessed month of Ramadan.

## News in brief

Ultra fuel  
price up

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) announced on Sunday raising the fuel of vehicles (Ultra Octane-98) to 235 fils instead of 200 as of April first for three months. The move was taken upon a decision of the Ministry of Finance's subsidies committee, the company wrote on its Twitter account, noting that the price of other kinds of fuel is unchanged.

KAC resumes  
flights to Salalah

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) announced on Saturday the resumption of two commercial flights a week to the Omani city of Salalah, starting from June 7, 2022. In a statement, Maan Rzuqi, KAC the Executive Director said those two trips will be on Saturdays and Tuesdays on a weekly basis, adding that passengers during the summer usually increase their travel to such beautiful destination.

Arab liaison group  
mulls over Ukraine

**CAIRO:** The Arab Liaison Group, tasked with following up on the Ukrainian crisis, held a virtual coordinative meeting on Ukraine on Saturday, according to the Arab League. The meeting is mainly meant to prepare for a planned visit by the group to the Russian capital, Moscow, on Monday to meet with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, the league said in a statement. The group will then travel on to Poland on the following day to hold talks with its Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, according to the statement.

## Photo of the Heritage



**KUWAIT:** A vendor takes an afternoon break and eats lunch inside his shop. This picture taken during the 1970s shows the simplicity of life at the time. (Source: 'Faces of Kuwait' by Jack Wozniak. Prepared by Mahmoud Zakaria Abu Alella, heritage researcher at the Ministry of Information)

Al-Ojairi Scientific Center  
tracks Sun's movement

**KUWAIT:** In a documentary scientific study, led by Al-Ojairi Scientific Center, a site was located with the goal of following the movement of the Sun over a period of six months and photographing it in order to monitor and document the highest and lowest points the Sun reaches over the seasons of the year.

The highest point of the Sun's path in the image represents the summer (summer solstice) where the Sun reaches its maximum altitude in Kuwait at an almost vertical angle of 84.17 degrees, while the lowest point of the Sun represents the winter season (the winter solstice) where the Sun reaches its lowest elevation in Kuwait with an oblique angle of 37.17 degrees.

Marina Hotel  
Kuwait celebrates  
the holy month of  
Ramadan

**KUWAIT:** During the holy month of Ramadan, Marina Hotel will be celebrating the traditions of the occasion by inviting guests to partake in enjoying the Iftar, and Ghabga feasts with their families and friends in stunning venues.

Looking out over picturesque views of the Arabian Sea, the Atlantis Restaurant offers Iftar in a perfect ambiance. Guests may gather with their friends and families to feast on buffet entrees that encompass both Arabic and international cuisine while the sun sets over glittering water. The perfect place to break your fast, the Atlantis will serve Iftar till 08:30 pm.

The Ramadan celebrations at Marina Hotel continue past Iftar. Within the Qamar Al-Marina tent,

ICSK celebrates  
Blessing Ceremony  
of Class XII

**KUWAIT:** The Indian Community School, Kuwait celebrated AASHIRVAAD - 2022. The Blessing Ceremony of Class XII, on Thursday amidst great splendor, mirth and zest. Sibi George, Ambassador of India to Kuwait, was the Hon'ble Chief Guest on the occasion. The atrium was festooned with dazzling lights and was decorated with colorful balloons and vibrant colored bunting.

The Chief Guest Sibi George was received by Shaik Abdul Rahiman (Chairman of the Board of Trustees), Azharuddin Amer Mohammed (Secretary of the Board of Trustees), Vinukumar Nair (Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees) and Dr V Binumon (Principal and Senior Administrator, ICSK). The Chief Guest was reverently escorted to the school auditorium by the prefectorial body as the school band played the welcome note.

The ceremony commenced with Islamic Prayer by Master. Syed Muhammed Junaid. This was followed by the melodious rendition of the song of devotion, "Teri Panah Me Hame Rakhna", by the

The lines represented in the image indicate the movement of the Sun throughout the day. Sunny days leave a solid line, and the Sun gets lower in the sky with each passing day. Partly sunny days have a broken line, and no line appears on overcast days.

Dr Abrar Ahmed Al-Ali, a professional researcher in the field of solar physics and the project supervisor, noted that the Sun is the planet's primary source of heat and energy, as well as one of the most significant sources of clean and renewable energy.

Thus, one must have a better understanding of the Sun and its impact on the Earth. This led to the notion of monitoring and documenting the Sun's movement in the sky as an initial step towards gain-

ing a better knowledge of it.

The path of the Sun is a key concept when developing a solar power system and trying to comprehend its performance. The Sun's path refers to the seasonal and hourly changes of the Sun as the Earth spins and orbits the Sun. This is related to the solar energy system in various ways. For instance, the influence of the length of the shadow and the tilt angle of the Sun on the system's performance.

The image was produced using a pinhole camera built by photographer and Solargrafia project creator Diego Lopez Calvin, which used recycled cans designed for long exposures and photosensitive materials that leave an imprint as the Sun moves.

outfitted warmly with Arabic decorations that reflect the tradition of Ramadan, Marina Hotel chefs have prepared a special Ghabga buffet for groups and private events, which includes exceptional oriental desserts as well as seasonal beverages, a selection of tea flavors, and Arabic coffee. The tent is located inside the Six Palms and can accommodate groups up to 200 guests for Ghabga and Iftar.

Enjoy Ghabqa by the Beach with a magnificent view of the city skyline lights twinkling on the horizon at night while tucking into a candle lit Kashta. Indulge in the fine selection of lavish live cooking stations. The Ghabqa is available for individual and small group reservations from 21:00 till 1:00 am.

For private functions and corporate events, the Salwa Sabah Al-Ahmad Theatre and Hall is the perfect venue. This exquisite hall can accommodate up to 500 guests at a time, and the staff are highly trained to provide personalized attention to all details. A selection of different menus for Iftar and Sohour are available at exclusive prices, and the hall is fully equipped to cater for groups and organizations.

Apart from the amazing Iftar, Ghabga and

Sohour offerings, guests are invited to avail of a special room rate throughout the month. An offer for two, you and your partner are welcome to relax in a spacious, luxuriously-outfitted room. Choose to spend your time gazing at the sea from your balcony, swimming in its waters or in the pool, working off a rich meal at Marina's state of the art fitness center, or simply lounging on your heavenly mattress.

Nabil Hammoud, General Manager, said: "We eagerly await the beautiful month of Ramadan to break our fast with family and friends and to enjoy Ramadan-inspired dishes. Everyone at Marina Hotel will be ready to provide an exceptional experience to our guests. We would like to wish you all a Ramadan Mubarak."

Marina Hotel is located right in the heart of one of the most prominent places in Kuwait. Guests can visit Marina Mall, which is among the best shopping malls in Kuwait and is only walking distance from the hotel. They can also go to Marina Crescent which houses a variety of international restaurants and coffee shops. Make this Ramadan a truly memorable one by sharing special moments with family and friends at The Marina Hotel Kuwait.

School Choir, Swarnjali. The gathering rose and honored the National Anthems of Kuwait and India.

Dr V Binumon, Principal and Senior Administrator of ICSK, who has always generously imparted his wisdom to his pupils and guided them towards the right path, delivered the welcome address. He expressed his joy of hosting the first offline program in the school after two years. In his address he had some valuable advice for the students. Firstly he stressed on the importance of the power of decision making as a good decision maker implements his decisions in life. He urged the students not to have fear of failure while taking important decisions. He highlighted the significance of cultivating good habits in life. He stressed on the need to be self-disciplined, to have daily planning and to prioritize the works to be done. Finally he appealed to the students to have unconditional love towards their parents. He said that he had strong faith in their abilities. While welcoming the chief guest, Sibi George, he appreciated the efforts taken by him to familiarize students with the functioning of the Indian Embassy in Kuwait. He concluded his speech by welcoming all the dignitaries, parents, staff and students to Aashirvaad 2022. The honorable chief guest Sibi George inaugurated Aashirvaad 2022 by lighting the lamp. Mini Shaji Joseph, Dy Vice Principal of ICSK, introduced the chief guest to the gathering. In her speech she

detailed his excellent career, achievements and the awards that he has received.

Sibi George addressed the gathering. In his speech he remembered the hard times the students and teachers had to go through during the two years of pandemic. He said that we need to congratulate each other for managing the difficult period of two years of Covid 19 pandemic with extra ordinary resilience and understanding. He opined that the future generations would remember us not as victims but as people with extra ordinary courage and determination. He also noted the contributions made by world leaders, the doctors, nurses and the scientists, who invented vaccines in record time. He appreciated India, a pharmacy of the world, in supplying vaccines for more than hundred countries in the world. He also highlighted the efforts taken by the schools and teachers in inventing ways and means to keep the education going and how students managed to adjust with the new ways. He recalled the efforts taken by the schools and the embassy in conducting the CBSE Board Examinations and the competitive exams like NEET, JEE and NATA in Kuwait. He appealed to the parents to have complete faith in their children and also urged the students not to give up and not to get frustrated. As concluding words he was quoted saying that "keep trying and you will never regret it."



Families of Cuban protesters left devastated

## Inferno destroys market in breakaway Somali region

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BUCHA, Ukraine: Workers gather bodies of people killed by Russian shelling in this town not far from the Ukrainian capital Kyiv on April 3, 2022. —AFP

# Bodies litter Ukraine town's street of death

## Around 280 people have been buried in mass graves in Bucha

**BUCHA:** The bodies are strewn across the quiet tree-lined street in the town of Bucha as far as the eye can see. All 20 are in civilian clothing, and all have their different poses in death. Some lie with sightless eyes staring at Ukraine's overcast sky, some lie face down on the tarmac. Three of them are tangled up in bicycles after taking their final ride, while others, with waxy skin, have fallen next to bullet-ridden and crushed cars.

One has his hands tied behind his back with a white cloth, and his Ukrainian passport left open beside his corpse, said AFP journalists who accessed the town. Another lies next to a yellow hoarding spraypainted with happy and sad emojis and the words "Live Fast".

Russia's hasty retreat from its occupation of the region around Kyiv is revealing fresh devastation by the day. "All these people were shot, killed, in the back of the head," mayor Anatoly Fedoruk told AFP. Another 280 people have been buried in mass graves in Bucha while the bodies of whole families still lie in shot-up cars, he said.

Surrounded by the pine forests that stretch up to Belarus, Bucha was a picture of sleepy suburbia northwest of the Ukrainian capital until the Russian invasion. A month of fierce battles in towns like Bucha and nearby Irpin prevented Moscow's forces from encircling Kyiv some 25 kilometres (14 miles) away.

### 'Russian occupation'

The cost was utter devastation. Gaping holes from shell explosions can be seen in building after building, while crushed cars litter the streets, said the AFP team who reached Bucha after it had been closed off from the world for nearly a month.

Supermarkets, cafes and houses are burned or destroyed, a church roof damaged. Only a McDonalds has seemingly escaped untouched. Bodies lie randomly around the town:

Outside a railway station, by the side of a road. But the violence that came to this one street appears to be more systematic. The victims, all of whom appeared to be men, are scattered over several hundred metres of debris-strewn tarmac. Sixteen of the 20 corpses were lying either on the pavement or by the verge. Three were sprawled in the middle of the road, and another lay on his side in the courtyard of a destroyed house. Some lie in groups, like the two men lying face up in a puddle next to each other, one in a green parka and the other in a black jacket.

Others died alone. The cyclist with orange gloves and a black balaclava lying on his side with his bike on top of him,



Violence is everywhere

as if he has fallen and cannot get back up. All were wearing civilian clothes—winter coats, jackets or tracksuit tops, jeans or jogging bottoms, and trainers or boots.

Violence is everywhere: A silver car is covered with bullet holes, another is partly crushed, while a burned out van lies near one group of bodies. "These are the consequences of Russian occupation," says the mayor. Yet the horrors of war have become so routine in Bucha that the remaining residents walk down the street past

the bodies, barely casting a glance.

### 'They are running'

Ukrainian forces have only just secured Bucha and started their first aid deliveries on Saturday, so the dead must lie unburied for a while longer. Soldiers hand out food and medicine to desperate survivors from the back of a green military truck. Another body lies under a sheet about 100 metres away.

It is the first such delivery in more than a month, after Ukraine said Saturday that Russian forces were making a "rapid retreat" from Kyiv. "They are running," says Yuriy Biriukov, a senior member of Ukraine's volunteer territorial defence squad overseeing the aid operation.

Bucha's residents were "still very afraid, still shocked", he added. "Regular civilians cannot even imagine the conditions in which they lived during this one month, with artillery, without supply of food and water, without any possibility to get out."

One resident showed AFP what he said was a grave, topped with a green wooden cross, in the back garden of a neighbouring house where four people including a child were buried. The people who have stayed in Bucha are mostly elderly.

At an outdoor soup kitchen, a group of elderly people stir pots of borscht and stew over a makeshift stove next to a yellow Lada car with flat tyres. Russian soldiers broke into flats on the top floor of their Soviet-era block, stole items and asked one elderly woman if she had any weapons, they say.

Then, on Tuesday, they counted more than 70 Russian armoured vehicles rumbling out of town, in the opposite direction to Kyiv. The shelling stopped on Thursday. "If there will be peace, everything will be wonderful," says 82-year-old Nadia Protopopova. —AFP

## Torrential rains kill 14 in Brazil

**RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil:** Torrential downpours triggered flash floods and landslides across Brazil's Rio de Janeiro state, killing at least 14 people including eight children, and leaving five missing, authorities said Saturday. Two days of heavy rain have battered a broad swathe of the southeastern state's Atlantic coast, the latest in a series of deadly storms in Brazil that experts say are being aggravated by climate change.

More rain is forecast for the region in the coming days. The victims included a mother and six of her children, who were buried when a landslide swept away their home, officials said. President Jair Bolsonaro said on Facebook the federal government had sent military aircraft to help the rescue effort and dispatched national disaster response secretary Alexandre Lucas to the state of 17.5 million people.

The new incidents come six weeks after flash floods and landslides killed 233 people in the scenic city of Petropolis, the Brazilian empire's 19th-century summer capital, also in Rio state. This time, the areas hit hardest included the tourist town of Paraty, a seaside colonial city known for its picturesque cobblestone streets and colorful houses.

Officials there said a landslide in the Ponta Negra neighborhood had killed a mother and six of her children, ages two, five, eight, 10, 15 and 17. A seventh child was rescued alive and taken to the hospital, where he was in stable condition, they said. Another four people were injured.

Six more victims, including at least two children, were killed in the city of Angra dos Reis, where officials declared a "maximum alert" and state of emergency after landslides devastated the Monsuaba neighborhood.

Several people were rescued alive, while another five remain missing, they said. Mayor Fernando Jordao said emergency workers were installing floodlights to contin-



PARATY, Brazil: Rescue workers are seen at the site of a landslide in which a mother and six of her children were killed, in Paraty, Rio de Janeiro state, on April 2, 2022. —AFP

ue the search-and-rescue operation through the night if necessary. "Residents have been working side-by-side with us on the search," he told a press conference. "We'll continue working hard." In Mesquita, 40 kilometers (25 miles) northwest of Rio de Janeiro city, a 38-year-old man was electrocuted trying to help another person escape the flooding, officials and media reports said.

### Record rains

The storms turned streets into rivers Friday night in several cities including Rio, the state capital, sweeping up cars and triggering landslides—a frequent tragedy in the rainy season, especially in poor hillside communities. TV channel Globo News carried images of a family

evacuating two young children through the floodwaters in a styrofoam cooler in the Rio suburb of Belford Roxo, while residents posted videos on social media of small alligators swimming through flooded streets.

A hospital in the suburb of Nova Iguaçu was badly flooded, turning the corridors of its intensive care unit into streams. Officials in Angra said the city had received up to 800 millimeters (31 inches) of rain in 48 hours in some areas, "levels never before registered in the municipality."

Experts say rainy season downpours in Brazil are being augmented by La Niña—the cyclical cooling of the Pacific Ocean—and by climate change. Because a hotter atmosphere holds more water, global warming increases the risk and intensity of flooding from extreme rainfall. —AFP

## Singaporeans protest the death penalty

**SINGAPORE:** Hundreds of protesters in tightly controlled Singapore staged a rare demonstration against the death penalty Sunday as fears grow the city-state is set to carry out a wave of hangings. Authorities last week conducted the country's first execution since 2019 when they hanged a drug trafficker. Several other death row convicts recently had appeals rejected.

Organisers said about 400 people joined the demonstration at "Speakers' Corner" in a downtown park, the only place in the city-state where protests are allowed without prior police approval. They held signs reading "Capital punishment does not make us safer", and "Don't kill in our names", and chanted slogans against the death penalty.

"Capital Punishment is a brutal system that makes brutes of us all," Kirsten Han, a prominent local activist, said in an address to the crowd. "Instead of pushing us to address inequalities and exploitative and oppressive systems that leave people marginalised and unsupported, it makes us the worst version of ourselves."

Protests are unusual in Singapore, which frequently faces criticism for curbing civil liberties. Aside from in "Speakers' Corner", it is illegal for even one person to stage a demonstration without a police permit. Abdul Kahar Othman, a 68-year-old Singaporean drug trafficker, was hanged Wednesday despite appeals for clemency from the United Nations and rights groups.

Next in line to be executed could be Nagaenthran K. Dharmalingam, a mentally disabled Malaysian convicted of heroin trafficking who lost his final appeal last week. His case has attracted a storm of criticism, including from the European Union and British billionaire Richard Branson.

Three other men sentenced to death for drugs offences had their appeals rejected earlier in March. Prosperous but socially conservative Singapore has some of the world's toughest drugs laws, and has faced mounting calls from rights groups to abandon the death penalty.

Authorities insist that capital punishment remains an effective deterrent against drug trafficking and has helped to keep the city-state one of the safest places in Asia. —AFP

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## International

# Sri Lanka protesters defy curfew after social media shutdown

## Sri Lanka facing severe shortages of food, fuel and other essentials

COLOMBO: Armed troops in Sri Lanka blocked a Sunday opposition march that defied a weekend curfew to protest the island nation's worsening economic crisis, after authorities imposed a social media blackout to contain public dissent.

The South Asian nation is facing severe shortages of food, fuel and other essentials, along with record inflation and crippling power cuts, in its most painful downturn since independence from Britain in 1948. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa imposed a state of emergency on Friday, the day after a crowd attempted to storm his home in the capital Colombo, and a nationwide curfew is in effect until Monday morning.



"We can't allow a military takeover"

The Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB), Sri Lanka's main opposition alliance, denounced a social media blackout aimed at quelling intensifying public demonstrations, and said it was time for the government to resign. Troops armed with automatic assault rifles moved to stop a protest by opposition lawmakers and hundreds of their supporters attempting to march to the capital's Independence Square.

The road was barricaded a few hundred metres from the home of opposition leader Sajith Premadasa and the crowd engaged in a tense stand-off with security forces for nearly two hours before dispersing peacefully. "President Rajapaksa better realise that the

tide has already turned on his autocratic rule," SJB lawmaker Harsha de Silva told AFP at the rally.

Fellow SJB legislator Eran Wickramaratne condemned the state of emergency declaration and the presence of troops on city streets. "We can't allow a military takeover," he said. "They should know we are still a democracy."

Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp were among the platforms shut down Sunday on the orders of defence authorities, internet service providers told their subscribers. Private media outlets reported that the chief of Sri Lanka's internet regulator resigned after the order went into effect. The streets of the capital stayed largely empty on Sunday, apart from the opposition protest and long lines of vehicles queued for fuel at service stations.

Mass protests had been called on social media before the ban went into effect, and organisers have since postponed the rallies until after the curfew is lifted on Monday. Small crowds defied the curfew on Saturday night to hold peaceful demonstrations in various neighbourhoods around Colombo which broke up without incident.

### 'Completely useless'

Cracks in the government have emerged, with the president's nephew Namal Rajapaksa announcing he had urged the government to reconsider the partial internet blackout. "I will never condone the blocking of social media," said Namal, also the country's sports minister. "The availability of VPN, just like I'm using now, makes such bans completely useless." The anti-government hashtags "#GoHomeRajapaksa" and "#GotaGoHome" have been trending locally for days on Twitter and Facebook. A social media activist was arrested Friday for posting material that could allegedly cause public unrest. He has since been bailed.

Hundreds of lawyers have volunteered to repre-



COLOMBO: Protesters hold banners and placards during a demonstration against the surge in prices and shortage of fuel and other essential commodities in Colombo on April 2, 2022. — AFP

sent anti-government protesters arrested by the authorities. Sri Lanka's influential Bar Association has also urged the government to rescind the state of emergency. Western diplomats in Colombo expressed concern over the use of emergency laws to stifle democratic dissent and said they were closely monitoring developments.

Solidarity protests were staged elsewhere in the world over the weekend including in the Australian city of Melbourne, home to a large Sri Lankan diaspora.

A critical lack of foreign currency has left Sri Lanka struggling to service its ballooning \$51 billion foreign

debt, with the pandemic torpedoing vital revenue from tourism and remittances. The crisis has also left the import-dependent country unable to pay even for essentials. Diesel shortages have sparked outrage across Sri Lanka in recent days, causing protests at empty pumps, and electricity utilities have imposed 13-hour blackouts to conserve fuel.

Many economists also say the crisis has been exacerbated by government mismanagement, years of accumulated borrowing, and ill-advised tax cuts. Sri Lanka is negotiating with the International Monetary Fund for a bailout. — AFP



KABUL: Taliban Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani (R) and Deputy Prime Minister of the Taliban Abdul Salam Hanafi participate in a conference during the reading of the official decree of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's (IEA) supreme leader on the ban of poppy cultivation and all kind of narcotics, in Kabul on April 3, 2022. — AFP

## Taliban chief orders ban on poppy cultivation

KABUL: The Taliban's supreme leader on Sunday ordered a ban on poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, warning that the hardline Islamist government would crack down on farmers planting the crop. Afghanistan is the world's biggest producer of poppies, the source of sap that is refined into heroin, and in recent years its production and exports have only boomed.

"All Afghans are informed that from now on cultivation of poppy has been strictly prohibited across the country," said a decree issued by Supreme Leader Hibatullah Akhundzada. The decree was read out by government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid at a gathering of reporters, foreign diplomats and Taliban officials.

"If anyone violates the decree the crop will be destroyed immediately and the violator will be treated according to the sharia law," it added. It is not the first time the fundamentalist group has vowed to outlaw the trade. Production was banned in 2000, just before the group was overthrown by US-led forces in the wake of the September 11 attacks.

During their 20-year insurgency against foreign forces, the Taliban heavily taxed farmers cultivating the crop in areas under their control. It became a key resource for the group to generate funds. The United States and NATO forces tried to curb poppy cultivation during their two decades in Afghanistan by paying farmers to grow alternative crops such as wheat or saffron.

But their attempts were thwarted by the Taliban who controlled the main poppy-growing regions and derived hundreds of millions of dollars from the trade, experts say. Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Salam Hanafi rejected claims the Taliban helped fuel poppy cultivation during their insurgency.

"How come it was exported all over the world when they (US-led forces) had full control over Afghanistan," Hanafi said Sunday. Afghan media reports say production has increased in two southern provinces, Kandahar and Helmand, since the Taliban seized power in August, although data is not available.

Afghanistan has a near monopoly on opium and heroin, accounting for 80 to 90 percent of global output, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The amount of land planted with poppies hit a record high in 2017 and has averaged around 250,000 hectares in recent years, roughly four times the level of the mid-1990s, UN figures show. — AFP

## Families of Cuban protesters left devastated

HAVANA: Luis Frometa Compte, 59, had been back in the land of his birth for just 40 days when unprecedented anti-government protests broke out all over the country in July 2021. The forestry technician had been living for 37 years in Germany when he decided to visit his homeland, staying with his sister Virgen Frometa.

He had gone out to buy rum when he joined a protest and started filming it on his mobile phone. Less than a week later, plain clothed police officers arrested him at his sister's house, and he has since been sentenced to 25 years in prison for "sedition."

"I am asking for my brother's immediate release," said 56-year-old homemaker Virgen Frometa. "And for all the prisoners" arrested following the protests. "There is a revolutionary suffering inside of me," she told AFP, wiping back the tears in her eyes. The government response to the protests left one person dead, dozens injured and almost 1,400 detained. According to the Miami-based Cubalex NGO, more than 700 of them remain in detention. "No-one starts a revolution without weapons by talking, nor by protesting, nor by saying four things that no-one liked, nor by filming," said Frometa, raising her voice.

### 'They didn't kill anyone'

Five doors down in the poor neighborhood of Guinera, on the outskirts of Havana, laborer Emilio Roman, 51, is also suffering. His three children have been convicted of sedition. Yosney Emilio, 25 and his sister Mackyani Yosney, 23, have been sentenced to 12 years each while Emy Yoslan, 18, was given seven years. On July 12, 2021, the Roman family was celebrating a birthday. Mackyani went out to buy cigarettes



HAVANA: Emilio Roman, father of two young men and a daughter who are in prison on charges of participating in recent anti-government protests, poses with Virgen Frometa, sister of Germany-based Cuban national Luis Frometa, sentenced to 25 years in prison, at his home in the La Guinera neighbourhood of Havana, on March 29, 2022. — AFP

## Afghans mark first Ramadan since Taliban seized power

KABUL: Afghans across the country broke their dawn-to-dusk Ramadan fast on Saturday as Afghanistan marked the Muslim holy month—the first since the Taliban seized power last year. About 300 men, dressed in traditional Afghan shalwar kameez, gathered before sunset at the Wazir Akbar Khan mosque in the capital to offer evening prayers on the first day of Ramadan.

"This Ramadan is different than under the previous regime," worshipper Khairullah, who goes by one name as many Afghans do, told AFP. "Now we are per-

forming our Islamic duty together... in an Islamic land under an Islamic regime."

The Wazir Akbar Khan mosque is one of Kabul's famous places of worship, and was targeted by a bomb attack in June 2020 that killed its imam and some worshippers. The mosque is situated in central Kabul at the main entrance to the former diplomatic hub known as the Green Zone that housed several foreign embassies including Washington's mission.

After breaking their fast, the men sat in rows in the mosque's compound where volunteers served them food. In the southern province of Kandahar, the de facto power centre of the Taliban, several of the fundamentalist movement's fighters broke their fast at checkpoints and mosques.

Afghans are marking Ramadan at a time when the country is plunged into a deep humanitarian crisis. The United Nations says more than half of the country's 38 million people are facing hunger as the winter drags on. The crisis deepened after donors cut

back aid when the Taliban seized power last August. The international community has so far not recognised the Taliban government. "The people expected good times under the Islamic emirate but unfortunately that did not happen," said Shahbuddin, a resident of Kabul, referring to the Taliban regime. "The world must recognise the Taliban government, otherwise we will see a humanitarian catastrophe." Other nations insist the hardline Islamists respect women's rights to education and work in order to receive aid.

The Taliban have cracked down on women's freedoms, including banning them from many government jobs and shutting secondary girls schools. Meanwhile for Shahbuddin, the rising costs for food have become unbearable. "For the first time I'm seeing that food prices have risen so much in Ramadan," he said. "People were expecting that in an Islamic country prices would drop during Ramadan, but that has not happened." — AFP

## North Korea accuses South of 'reckless' remarks

SEOUL: North Korea blasted the South Korean defence minister on Sunday for "reckless" remarks about Seoul's ability to strike Pyongyang, warning of retaliation after conducting a record number of weapons tests this year. South Korean defence minister Suh Wook had said Friday that his army had missiles with "the ability to accurately and quickly hit any target in North Korea".

The comments drew condemnation from Kim Yo Jong, the sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and a key policy adviser. "His reckless and intemperate rhetoric about the 'preemptive strike' has further worsened the inter-Korean relations and the military tension on the Korean Peninsula," she said according to official North Korean news agency KCNA.

"South Korea may face a serious threat owing to the reckless remarks made by its Defence Minister... South Korea should discipline itself if it wants to stave off disaster," Kim added. In a separate statement on Sunday, Pak Jong Chon, secretary of North Korea's ruling party central committee, also warned the South off any military action against Pyongyang.

"Our army will mercilessly direct all its military force into destroying major targets in Seoul," he said. Pak did not specify which targets. North Korea has resumed its sanctions-breaking weapons tests with an unprecedented blitz this year, last month firing its first intercontinental ballistic missile at full range since 2017.

Long-range and nuclear tests were paused when Kim and then US president Donald Trump engaged in a high-profile bout of diplomacy that subsequently collapsed in 2019. Talks have since stalled. North Korea will this month mark the 110th anniversary of the birth of founder Kim Il Sung—the grandfather of current leader Kim, who likes to mark key domestic anniversaries with military parades or launches.

Tensions between both sides are also set to ramp up as South Korea's president-elect Yoon Suk-yeol takes office next month. During Yoon's campaign period, he had threatened a pre-emptive strike on the North "if necessary", and vowed to "teach some manners" to Kim. — AFP

# Business

MONDAY, APRIL 4, 2022

## Al-Safat Investment is open for merger, Al-Terkait says

### Assembly elects new board of directors

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Board of Safat Investment Company Abdullah Hamad Al-Terkait said the company is open for merger with other local companies. This, he said, will be an added value to shareholders of various groups. The process requires extensive technical studies according to the standards and legal rules. The concept will be presented to the concerned regulatory authorities when a final deal is reached.

Al-Terkait was speaking on the sidelines of the general assembly which elected its board of directors last week for a new term. The new board of directors include; Abdullah Hamad Al-Terkait (Chairman); Fahad Abdulrahman Al-Mukhaizeem (Deputy Chairman); Abdulrazaq Zaid Al-Dhubayan; Nasser Bader Al-Sharhan; Anwar Ali Al-Taqi; Mishal Ahmad Al-Jarki and Abdulmohsen Suleiman Al-Mashaan.

Al-Terkait stated that the company achieved a total (operating and investment) revenues of KD 7 million - of which the operating revenues amounted to KD 3.3 million, compared to what was achieved in the previous year, where the group achieved an operating income of KD 3 million - an increase of 11% compared to the previous year.

In line with the company's prudent policy of hedging and proactive recognition of defaults on some investments, Al-Terkait explained that Al-Safat Investment Company achieved a net profit of KD 1.4 million for the year 2021, equivalent to earnings per share of 5.34 fils, compared to about KD 7 million for the net profit achieved in the year 2020.

He noted that Safat has solid assets that amount to KD 40 million at the end of 2021, pointing to an increase in total



Chairman of the Board of Safat Investment Company Abdullah Hamad Al-Terkait



KUWAIT: Chairman of the Board of Safat Investment Company Abdullah Hamad Al-Terkait is pictured with other top officials during the general assembly meeting.



Al-Terkait said that the Al-Safat Group has developed flexible strategies that were adopted in 2019 and will end in the year 2023.

shareholders' equity to KD 23 million by the end of December 2021 (an increase of 4% compared to the same period in 2020). "The annual increase is relatively small compared to previous years, but we consider it a clear evidence of the Group's resilience in the face of unusual market conditions," he pointed out, adding that the total debt and liabilities of the group decreased by 6% to reach KD 11 million in 2021 compared to KD 12 million the previous year.

Al-Terkait said that the Al-Safat Group has developed flexible strategies that were adopted in 2019 and will end

in the year 2023. Al-Safat seeks to carry out an effective exit from non-generating assets and work to replace it with assets with high potentials that are carefully selected to be able to achieve a good and sustainable income.

He expressed his confidence in the company's business model which is characterized by strength and flexibility - confirming the team's ability and ambitions. He said the company enjoys a good status that allows it to adjust to the changes in the financial services market and the economic environment in general.

He said that Al-Safat is looking forward to future listings as it seeks to prepare its entities in line with standard conditions. The company has succeeded in adding a new sustained source of revenue with the conclusion of Al-Ahmadi project at the end of 2021. The project is expected to have a sustainable financial effect with the current company's real-estate projects that is in Hawally - (BOT project).

The chairman indicated that there are future efforts to make Safat eligible for listing in the premier market, through the market value of the company in the range of KD 78 million. "We are happy with our ability to meet our commitments to achieve our strategic goals and strengthen the market's confidence," he noted. "We are moving towards diversifying investments. The company will

support and finance small and medium projects so as to promote Kuwaiti young entrepreneurs," he said.

"Corporate social responsibility is the voluntary contribution of our company to the community as we contribute in the economic, social, environmental and other developmental projects and programs in the country", he said, adding that Safat pays great attention to social responsibility and desires to play an active role in giving back to the society and to the state - "based on our firm belief that the role of companies should not stop at profitability only." Al-Terkait called for the importance of extending the social responsibility to spreading environmental and health awareness, which will focus on the upliftment and renaissance of societies, in addition to charitable works.

## US defense contractors see longer term benefits from war in Ukraine

NEW YORK: US arms manufacturers are not cashing in directly from the thousands of missiles, drones and other weapons being sent to Ukraine, but they do stand to profit big-time over the long run by supplying countries eager to boost their defenses against Russia. Like other Western countries, the United States has turned to its own stocks to furnish Ukraine with shoulder-fired Stinger and Javelin missiles, for instance. These weapons from Lockheed-Martin and Raytheon Technologies were paid for some time ago.

So these companies' first quarter results, due to be released in coming weeks, should not be especially fatter because of the rush to arm Ukraine as it fights off the Russian invasion. But those US military weapons stockpiles being tapped for Kyiv will need to be replenished.

The Pentagon plans to use \$3.5 billion earmarked for this purpose in a spending bill approved in mid-March, a Defense Department spokesman told AFP. The Javelin anti-tank missile is made by a joint venture between Lockheed and Raytheon. The latter's Stinger anti-aircraft missile had ceased to be produced until the

Pentagon ordered \$340 million of them last summer.

"We are exploring options to more quickly replenish US inventories and backfill depleted stocks of allies and partners," the spokesman said.

"It will take time to revive the industrial base-at the prime and at sub-tier suppliers-to enable production to resume," he added. The profits that the companies make from these missiles, known for being simple to use, will not exactly be staggering, defense industry experts told AFP.

"If 1,000 Stingers and 1,000 Javelins get shipped to Eastern Europe each month for the next year, which is not unlikely given the current pace, in our view, we think it would equate to \$1 billion to \$2 billion in revenue for both program manufacturers, which is material," said Colin Scarola of CFRA, an investment research firm. Raytheon's and Lockheed's revenue figures last year dwarf that amount, however: \$64 billion and \$67 billion, respectively.

"Raytheon probably made more money off selling a Patriot missile system to Saudi Arabia than they will from making Stinger missiles," said Jordan Cohen, an arms sales specialist at the



This file photo shows a Lockheed Martin F-35 aircraft at the ILA Air Show in Berlin, Germany.

Cato Institute.

"They're only going to put so much effort into producing those weapons that are not that valuable," Cohen told AFP. Lockheed, Raytheon and another arms manufacturer, Northrop Grumman, did not respond to AFP requests for comment.

General Dynamics said it has not raised its financial outlook since January, while Boeing just said it is up to governments to decide how to spend money earmarked for defense.

Some weapons manufacturing executives hinted when they last released quarterly results in late January that the

situation around the world would benefit them.

Greg Hayes, Raytheon's CEO, said that rising tensions in Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe would lead to higher international sales-not right away but later in 2022 and beyond.

His counterpart at Lockheed-Martin, James Taiclet, said he observed "renewed great power competition" that could trigger higher US military spending. "The war in Ukraine reshuffles the geopolitical order, in a way that hasn't really been seen in the past 30 years," said Burkett Huey of Morningstar, a financial services company. —AFP

## Tesla delivers over 1 million electric cars over past year

NEW YORK: US electric car manufacturer Tesla shipped a record number of more than one million cars over the past year, according to figures published Saturday. The company delivered 1.06 million cars from April 2021 to March 2022, including more than 310,000 cars in the first quarter of this year alone, which is 67 percent higher than over the same period last year.

Still, the figure fell short of analysts' expectations of 317,000 cars, according to data compiled by FactSet. Deliveries are considered similar to sales figures published by other manufacturers.

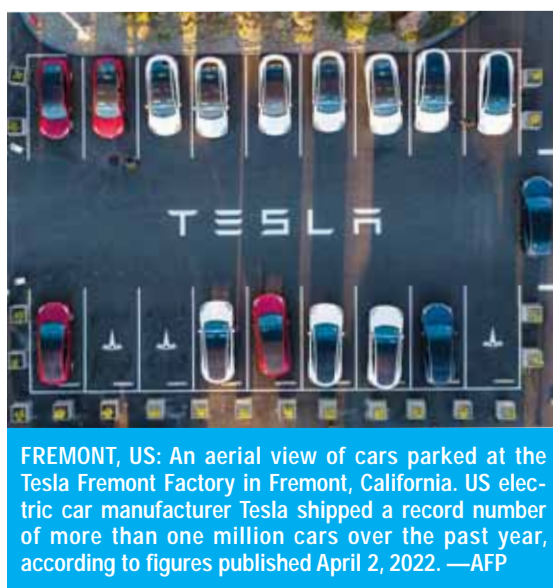
Growth, however, slowed sharply in recent

months for the Austin, Texas-based company, with deliveries rising a minuscule 0.4 percent since the fourth quarter of last year.

The number of vehicles produced is also slightly down against the previous quarter (-0.1 percent). "This was an exceptionally difficult quarter due to supply chain interruptions & China zero COVID policy," Tesla CEO Elon Musk said on Twitter, referring to China's strict health restrictions. "Outstanding work by Tesla team & key suppliers saved the day."

However, Tesla is still faring better than its competitors, with the entire automobile industry affected by supply chains snarls. Toyota saw its sales in North America fall 23.5 percent in volume in the first quarter of 2022, compared to the same period last year, and 26.3 percent in value.

General Motors earned a profit of \$1.7 billion for the quarter ending December 31, down 38.7 percent from the final three months of 2020 as revenues dropped 10.5 percent to \$33.6 billion. —AFP



FREMONT, US: An aerial view of cars parked at the Tesla Fremont Factory in Fremont, California. US electric car manufacturer Tesla shipped a record number of more than one million cars over the past year, according to figures published April 2, 2022. —AFP

## Ukraine eyes Romanian port for key farm exports

KYIV: Faced with a Russian blockade of its own ports, Ukraine is seeking to export the farm goods that many countries depend on via the Romanian Black Sea port of Constanta. The solution is crucial both to Ukraine's economy and to entire populations that rely heavily on its wheat and sunflower oil.

Bucharest has confirmed that discussions are underway with Kyiv, pointing out that Constanta already handles some imports to Ukraine and exports from it. Before the war, Ukraine accounted for 12 percent of global wheat exports, 15 percent of maize and 50 percent of world sunflower oil.

"We and our partners are looking for alternative logistical routes to export our goods via European ports, including Constanta," Ukrainian Agriculture Minister Mykola Solsky said recently.

### Ukraine ports blocked

The presence of Russian battleships and mines in Ukrainian waters renders commercial shipping there nearly impossible. Since the start of the war, Russian forces have been blocking access to the southeastern Ukrainian ports of Berdiansk and Mariupol on the Sea of Azov, which opens into the Black Sea. In the southwest, the crucial Black Sea port of Odessa lies perilously close to the frontline at Mykolaiv.

Odessa handles 90 million tons of shipments a year — 60 percent of the country's total port traffic—and is in the Kremlin's sights.

The Marine Traffic website, which tracks the position of all seagoing vessels, clearly shows the de facto blockade of these waters. Commercial ships have been absent from the zone since missile attacks on vessels sent their insurance premiums rocketing.

According to the agriculture ministry, Ukraine is currently losing \$1.5 billion (1.4 billion euros) a month because of the stranglehold on port exports. Meanwhile countries that depend on Ukrainian farm exports, particularly on the southern coasts of the Mediterranean, are seeing a food crisis start to develop. Kyiv says it has sufficient stocks to meet Ukraine's own food needs for the next two years. But it is equally keen to ensure exports continue as normal.

"Ukraine wants to show it is defending its export markets as well as its territory and is conscious of its importance as a supplier of both foodstuffs and industrial goods," said Paul Tourret, head of France's Isemar Institute, which specializes in the maritime economy. —AFP



Business

KAMCO Markets Report

# GCC index sees biggest quarterly gains since global financial crisis

## Boursa Kuwait remains bullish for the third consecutive month

KUWAIT: A broad-based rally in GCC markets coupled with elevated oil prices pushed the MSCI GCC aggregate benchmark up 17.7 percent during Q1-2022, the biggest gains since Q2-2009. Gains were supported by four consecutive months of gains in the index. All markets were in the green during quarter with Abu Dhabi reported the biggest gain of 17.2 percent followed by Qatar and Saudi Arabia with gains of 16.4 percent and 16.0 percent, respectively. In terms of monthly performance, the MSCI GCC index was up 5.2 percent during the month backed by positive performance in all GCC markets during March-2022.

On the sectoral front, the GCC Capital Goods, Materials and Banks sectors topped during Q1-2022 with gains of almost 20 percent. Energy and Healthcare followed with growth of 18.2 percent and 15.1 percent, respectively. Consumer Durable & Apparels and Pharma were the only sectors that declined this quarter by 10.0 percent and 5.1 percent, respectively. Monthly performance also saw Materials at the top with a gain of 9.7 percent followed by Healthcare and Cap Goods indices. Moreover, despite recent weakness, the disruption caused on the supply front pushed crude oil prices to a 7-quarter high growth of almost 40 percent during Q1-2022. The volatility in oil prices saw prices reaching a 14-year intraday high of \$139.1/b during the first week of March 2022 but closed the month at \$107.9/b. Global equity markets also had a positive month with the MSCI World index gaining 2.5 percent backed by peace talks between Russia and Ukraine. However, a resurgence of COVID-19 cases in China that resulted in lockdowns in several large cities pushed the Chinese gauge down 6.1 percent during the month while also lowering the MSCI Emerging Market index by 2.5 percent. The US market was up 3.6 percent while the



European benchmark showed marginal growth of 0.6 percent during the month.

### Boursa Kuwait

Kuwaiti equity market was up for the third consecutive month during March-2022 registering the second-best monthly performance. However, unlike the previous month when the positive performance was mainly led by mid-cap and small-cap stocks, the performance during March-2022 was solely driven by large-cap stocks partially offset by a decline in main market stocks. This was reflected in the 8.9 percent gain in the Premier market index while the Main 50 Index and the Main Market index dropped by 0.2 percent and 0.6 percent, respectively. The monthly gain in the Premier Market index was the best since January-2017. The net impact was a gain of 6.7 percent on the All-Share index. The performance in Q1-2022 also reflected relatively better performance of Premier market stocks with a gain of 18.6 percent while the Main Market and Main 50 index showed smaller gains of 6.3 percent and 7.8 percent, respectively. The broader All-Share index witnessed a gain of 15.7 percent during Q1-2022, one of the best in the GCC.

GCC Equity Markets	Index Closing	MTD Chg%	YTD Chg%	M-Cap (USD Bn)	Monthly Val Traded (USD Mn)	P/E (x) TTM	P/B (x) TTM	Div. Yield
Kuwait - Premier Market Index	9,061.4	8.9%	18.6%	159.3	5,161.2	24.5	1.8	1.7%
Kuwait - Main 50 Index	6,583.0	(0.2%)	7.8%					
Kuwait - Main Market Index	6,254.8	(0.6%)	6.3%					
Kuwait - All Share Index	8,146.7	6.7%	15.7%					
Saudi Arabia	13,090.4	4.0%	16.0%	3,190.5	62,574.4	22.0	2.4	2.6%
Abu Dhabi	9,948.8	6.8%	17.2%	493.2	10,949.6	25.4	2.5	2.0%
Dubai	3,526.6	5.1%	10.3%	117.8	2,867.4	16.8	1.2	2.6%
Qatar	13,533.2	4.5%	16.4%	209.0	6,684.5	17.4	1.9	3.3%
Bahrain	2,073.5	5.6%	15.4%	35.7	84.8	8.7	1.0	4.6%
Oman	4,205.2	3.7%	1.8%	19.4	437.5	12.1	0.8	4.3%
<b>Total GCC</b>				<b>4,224.9</b>	<b>88,759.4</b>	<b>21.6</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>2.5%</b>

The monthly sector performance chart was topped by the Banking index that recorded a gain of 9.9 percent mainly reflecting solid full year results for FY-2021 as well as dividend announcements. Shares of 8 out of 10 listed Kuwaiti banks witnessed gains during the month with Boubayan Bank topping with a double digit gain of 13.7 percent followed by KFH and KIB with gains of 13.4 percent and 9.6 percent, respectively. The Financial Services index was next with a gain of 5.3 percent followed by Telecom and Real Estate benchmarks with gains of 3.7 percent and 3.6 percent, respectively. On the decliner's side, the Healthcare index topped with a steep decline of 39.1 percent followed by Oil & Gas and Technology indices with declines of 5.3 percent and 2.1 percent, respectively. The decline in the healthcare index mainly reflected the 50.4 percent decline in shares of Al-Midan Dental, although liquidity in the stock remained scanty. In terms of monthly stock performance, Kuwait Hotels topped with a gain of 52.2 percent followed by Al-Safat Investment and Al-Tamdeen Investment with gains of 34.6 percent and 26.7 percent, respectively. On the decliner's side, Al-Midan Dental Clinic topped with a decline of 50.4 percent followed by Jiyad Holding and Gulf Franchising Holding with declines of 41.8 percent and 31.2 percent, respectively.

Aggregate trading activity inched up during the month with volumes traded up 9.1 percent to reach 5.7 billion traded shares during March-2022 as compared to 5.2 billion shares traded during February-2022. Monthly volume traded showed a stronger growth of 20.0 percent to reach KD 1.6 billion in March-2022 vs KD 1.3 billion in February-2022. The monthly volume traded chart was topped by GFH Financial Group with 711.8 million traded shares followed by AUB-Bahrain and KIPCO with volumes of 681.7 million and 451.8 million traded shares, respectively.

On the monthly value traded chart, AUB-Bahrain topped with KD 210.8 million traded shares followed by KFH and NBK at KD 208.0 million and KD 163.4 million worth of traded shares, respectively. The Saudi Stock Exchange continued to see new multi-year highs during March-2022 with continued strong primary market activity since the start of the year. The benchmark TASI index closed the month at the highest level in almost 17 years at 13,090.4 points registering a monthly gain of 4.0 percent, the second-lowest in the GCC during the month.

## Baltic states stop Russian gas imports

RIGA, Latvia: The head of Latvia's natural gas storage operator said Saturday the Baltic states were no longer importing Russian natural gas. "If there were still any doubts about whether there may be any trust in deliveries from Russia, current events clearly show us that there is no more trust," said Uldis Bariss, CEO of Conexus Baltic Grid.

"Since April 1st Russian natural gas is no longer flowing to Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania," he told Latvian radio. He added that the Baltic market was currently being served by gas reserves stored underground in Latvia.

The move comes as Russian President Vladimir Putin has sought to leverage Russia's status as an energy power. With his economy crippled by unprecedented international sanctions, Putin warned EU members that they would need to set up ruble accounts to pay for Russian gas. He said Thursday that existing contracts would be halted if the payments were not made.

While the United States banned the import of Russian oil and gas, the European Union—which received around 40 percent of its gas supplies from Russia in 2021 — has retained deliveries from Moscow. Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda called on the rest of the EU to follow the Baltic example. "From this month on - no more Russian gas in Lithuania," he said on Twitter.

"Years ago my country made decisions that today allow us with no pain to break energy ties with the aggressor," he added. "If we can do it, the rest of Europe can do it too!" —AFP



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار  
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

## KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 31 MARCH 2022

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Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	37,427	9,061.41	1.5%	8.9%	18.6%	520,947,966	248,917,707	32,473	35.8	2.8	78.0%
Main Market	10,542	8,146.69	30.9%	29.5%	38.4%	711,316,234	99,420,029	29,761	15.2	1.3	22.0%
All Share	47,968	6,254.76	-22.2%	-18.1%	-11.2%	1,232,264,200	348,337,735	62,234	31.0	2.5	100%

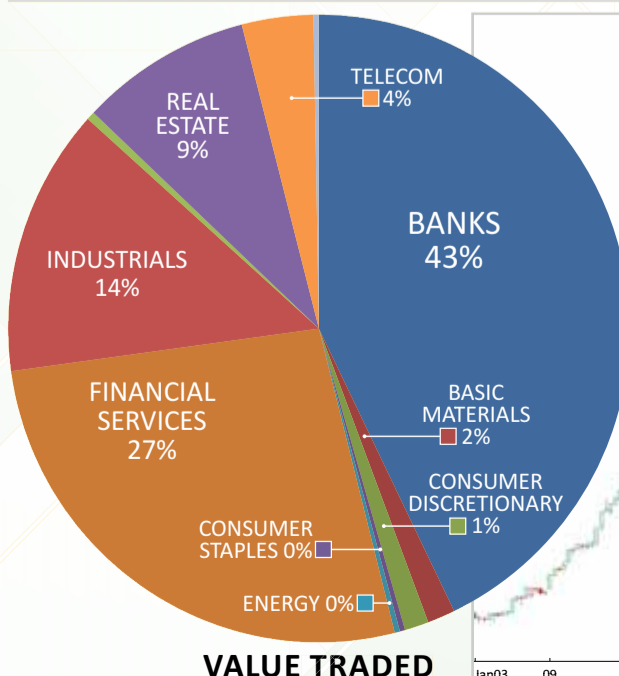
Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
BANKS	28,731	1,930.19	2.0%	9.9%	18.9%	292,240,254	149,199,643	14,615	32.9	2.8	59.21%
BASIC MATERIALS	1,037	1,161.74	0.1%	2.7%	13.4%	7,650,116	5,020,336	1,089	27.7	1.7	2.14%
CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY	790	1,542.97	0.6%	-0.1%	15.4%	25,531,659	4,370,058	2,354	31.8	6.6	1.63%
CONSUMER STAPLES	217	711.75	-0.5%	-1.4%	-2.6%	1,813,363	940,272	292	17.7	1.5	0.45%
ENERGY	271	1,298.79	-5.7%	-5.3%	-9.1%	22,920,586	958,377	996	12.7	1.3	0.56%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	4,808	1,660.80	1.8%	5.3%	16.7%	572,567,925	93,202,983	19,202	12.1	2.1	9.91%
HEALTH CARE	246	495.03	-3.2%	-39.1%	-37.9%	10,034	5,073	18	15.3	2.4	0.51%
INDUSTRIALS	4,612	1,294.96	0.3%	2.2%	13.4%	72,167,815	48,124,183	10,296	60.8	1.4	9.50%
INSURANCE	679	1,621.22	0.2%	0.5%	5.7%	9,168,511	1,487,969	581	8.5	1.2	1.40%
REAL ESTATE	3,006	1,395.24	0.1%	3.6%	5.2%	206,190,574	31,103,062	9,214	15.9	1.3	6.19%
TECHNOLOGY	9	676.58	-7.0%	-2.1%	-1.1%	107,625	10,213	16	-	0.8	0.02%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	3,874	1,262.17	-0.3%	3.7%	15.9%	17,552,233	12,941,240	3,242	17.5	2.2	7.98%
UTILITIES	246	586.84	-1.3%	0.9%	-2.2%	4,343,505	974,326	319	18.9	4.0	0.51%

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
ALSAFAT	250	19.62	27,822,133	6,510,224	1,262
NINV	444	15.33	34,322,299	14,292,485	1,916
TAMINV	498	13.18	507,009	235,022	50
SULTAN	225	9.76	6,273,755	1,351,754	475
SOKOUK	29.8	9.16	8,784,990	249,831	247

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
LAND	72.7	-12.93	3,520,982	268,397	414
JIYAD	46.8	-12.85	11,172,200	548,862	755
IPG	511	-11.90	24,176	13,640	16
HUMANSOFT	3,229	-11.02	2,113,564	7,462,848	1,633
FTI	47.9	-9.62	5,250	264	4

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
GFH	104	2.97	156,925,991	16,050,314	2,196
AUB	332	6.07	150,044,059	49,150,157	3,146
KPROJ	201	1.00	81,503,266	16,404,046	1,824
NRE	231	2.21	74,774,020	17,243,694	1,759
AAYAN	167	7.05	53,696,567	8,892,303	1,336

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	1,071	4.39	50,778,932	53,823,370	4,480
AUB	332	6.07	150,044,059	49,150,157	3,146
AGLTY	1,105	1.94	23,616,652	25,957,167	3,703
NBK	1,099	-4.43	21,855,220	24,553,051	2,648
NRE	231	2.21	74,774,020	17,243,694	1,759



**Market Summary:**

- Premier market volume and value decreased by 11% and 2%, respectively. Main market volume and value increased 17% and 34%, respectively.
- The Premier index registered a new peak despite the reduction in trading. The Main index's high trading is providing strength and momentum which might help in breaking resistance.
- Technically, the All-Share index registered a new all-time high-level closing at 8146, support levels at 8121, 8081, 8065, and 8042, while resistance at 8151. Premier index registered a new all-time high-level closing at 9061, support levels at 9021, 8990, 8953, and 8926, while resistance at 9068. The Main index closed at 6254, with support levels at 6235, 6216, 6182, and 6153, while resistance was at 6267, 6293, and 6321.

## Business

## AL-SHALL Weekly Market Report

# Banking sector remains most liquid among all sectors on Boursa Kuwait

## Foreign investments in banking sector increased to KD 3.049bn until March 2022

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwaiti banking sector (excluding Ahli United Bank -Bahrain) is considered the primary and most liquid amongst the sectors on Boursa Kuwait. It captured 27.8 percent of the total liquidity from the beginning of the year 2022 until the end of March. During this period, the banking sector index rose by 18.8 percent and so did the foreigners' holdings that are concentrated in this sector.

The latest information available up to March 30th 2022 indicates that foreign investments in the sector increased to KD 3.049 billion compared to KD 2.518 billion at the end of 2021, equivalent to 12.23 percent of the sector's capital compared to 11.80 percent at the end of 2021. Foreign investments were concentrated into four banks: the highest investment of KD 1.726 billion in National Bank of Kuwait, KD 962.9 million in Kuwait Finance House and KD 163.8 million in Boubyan Bank and KD 125.1 million in the Gulf Bank. About 97.7 percent of foreign investments are concentrated in the mentioned four banks, leaving 2.3 percent of the investments to the remaining banks.

The highest share of foreign ownership in the banking sector is that of the National Bank of Kuwait, corresponding to 21.89 percent of its capital as of March 30th 2022. This means that foreign ownership in the NBK is the highest in absolute and percentage terms. The second highest foreign ownership corresponds to The Gulf Bank with a 12.79 percent share yet the fourth in terms of absolute ownership. Kuwait Finance House comes third in relative ownership with a 10.67 percent share, and comes second in the value of that ownership. The highest relative increase in ownership during the period was that of Kuwait International Bank by 53.8 percent: from 4.48 percent at the end of last year to 6.89 percent of its capital. The largest relative decrease during the mentioned period was that of Warba Bank, whereby foreign ownership decreased by -12.9 percent, from 4.57 percent of its value to 3.98 percent of its value.

### Performance of Boursa Kuwait

The performance during the month of March varied compared to that of February, with a decrease in the average daily traded value coupled with a relatively mixed performance for the indices. The Premier Market index increased by 8.9 percent while the Main Market and the BK Main 50 indices dropped slightly by -0.6 percent and -0.2 percent, respectively. As a result, the All-Share Market index (reflective of the previously mentioned indices) rose by 6.7 percent.

Boursa Kuwait's total liquidity increased during March, reaching KD 1.559 billion compared to KD 1.299 billion in February. The average daily traded value in March was KD 70.9 million, decreasing by -1.8 percent below February's average of KD 72.2 million. Traded value during Q1 of 2022 (61 working days) totaled KD 4.148 billion, an average daily trading value of KD 68 million. This represents a 57.6 percent increase from the daily average of KD 43.1 million for the same period in 2021, and a 22.4 percent increase from the KD 55.6 million average for the entire year of 2021.

Liquidity trends since the beginning of the year indicate that half of the listed companies represent only 2 percent of total liquidity, of which 50 companies contribute to 0.5 percent of that liquidity and 7 companies without any trading. As for the small liquid companies, 12 companies whose market value equals 5 percent of all listed companies' value, captured about 18.4 percent of total market liquidity.

This means that major liquidity activity is still deprived in almost half of the listed companies and on the contrary, liquidity favors small-cap companies even if the trend is decreasing. The liquidity distribution between the two markets during March 2022 was as follows:

### Premier Market (26 companies)

The Premier market contributed to KD 1.171 billion or 75.1 percent of Boursa's liquidity, with half of its companies capturing 84.7 percent of its liquidity and 63.7 percent of total Boursa's liquidity while the other half representing only 15.3 percent of its liquidity. Liquidity concentration rate in the Premier Market reached a high level, as 6 companies made up 68.5 percent of the liquidity. During Q1 of the current year, the Premier Market captured 67.2 percent of total Boursa's liquidity, an indication of the recurrence of the liquidity shift and concentration in the market when compared to 2021, a phenomenon that we believe is unhealthy.

### Main Market (139 companies)

The Main Market contributed to KD 387.5 million or 24.9 percent of Boursa's liquidity; of which 20 percent of its companies captured 81.5 percent of its liquidity while the remaining 80 percent captured 18.5 percent. The Main Market contributed to 32.8 percent of total Boursa's liquidity during Q1 of the current year, indicating that it lost its momentum of high liquidity. While the distribution of the liquidity among the participant companies is still unbalanced and focused on certain companies, it remains

Table of relative ownership of foreigners in the Kuwaiti banking sector and the market value at the end of March 30 th 2022 versus December 29 th 2021

	December 29 <sup>th</sup> 2021		March 30 <sup>th</sup> 2022		Change in ownership percentage
	Holdings	Value	Holdings	Value	
KIB	4.48%	11,113,742	6.89%	19,589,851	53.8%
ABK	0.38%	1,634,500	0.48%	2,333,931	26.3%
NBK	20.76%	1,490,216,959	21.89%	1,725,630,971	5.4%
Boubyan	5.23%	132,207,057	5.44%	163,807,846	4.0%
KFH	10.34%	727,962,296	10.67%	962,862,829	3.2%
GULF	12.46%	105,583,493	12.79%	125,143,634	2.6%
CBK	0.06%	598,812	0.06%	598,812	0.0%
Burgan	2.68%	20,895,458	2.55%	23,474,981	-4.9%
AUB (Kuwait)	0.41%	3,028,100	0.36%	2,787,472	-12.2%
Warba	4.57%	25,135,000	3.98%	22,367,600	-12.9%
Banking Sec.	11.80%	2,518,375,416	12.23%	3,048,597,927	

souder than its distribution in 2020.

When comparing the distribution of liquidity between the Premier and Main markets for Q1 2022, we note that the distribution is more comparable to that of 2021, where the Premier market contributed to 59.4 percent and the Main Market to 40.6 percent of total liquidity, in contrast to 83.6 percent and 16.4 percent for the two markets respectively in 2020.

### Banking sectors' aggregated performance 2021

The banking sector (including 10 Kuwaiti banks) achieved a significant growth in its net profits during 2021, as net profits (after deduction of taxes and minority rights) amounted to KD 881.6 million, an increase of KD 424.3 million or by 92.8 percent compared to KD 457.3 million in 2020. Profits in Q4 2021 amounting to KD 257.1 million increased by 179.9 percent versus KD 91.8 million of profits in Q4 of 2020 and increased by 7.6 percent versus Q3 2021 profits, by 28.9 percent and by 38.2 percent versus Q2 2021 and Q1 2021 profits, respectively.

The banks continued to hold provisions against non-performing loans. Total provisions reached KD 617.6 million by the end of 2021 versus KD 1.058

billion in 2020, a decrease by KD 440.5 million or by 41.6 percent. Provisions in the Kuwaiti banking sector are mostly precautionary provisions to face the worst scenario, used as quality buffers as economic conditions worsen or reflected as profits as conditions improve.

The profits of the five conventional banks reached KD 531.6 million (60.3 percent of total banking sector profits) increased by 122.3 percent versus 2020. The profits of the Islamic banks increased by 60.4 percent from its 2020 level to reach KD 350 million (39.7 percent of total banks' profits). In contrary to the historical higher growth rates of profits of the Islamic sector, conventional banks displayed a faster recovery from the pandemic illustrated by a double growth of profits.

The (P/E) multiplier for the ten banks sector stood at 24.2 times compared to 36.0 times for 2020. The profitability ratios of the banking sector improved compared to 2020, whereby the return on assets (ROA) rose to 0.9 percent versus 0.5 percent and the return on equity (ROE) rose to 7.4 percent versus 4.2 percent. Total cash dividends of the ten banks reached KD 432.1 million, compared with KD 241.2 million, increasing by 79.2 percent.

## No longer a last resort: Pulling CO2 from the air

**PARIS:** To save the world from the worst ravages of climate change, slashing carbon pollution is no longer enough-CO2 will also need to be sucked out of the atmosphere and buried, a landmark UN report is expected to say on Monday.

If humanity had started to curb greenhouse gas emissions 20 years ago, an annual decrease of two percent out to 2030 would have put us on the right path. Challenging, but doable.

Instead, the emissions climbed another 20 percent to more than 40 billion tons of CO2 in 2021. This means an abrupt drop in emissions of six or seven percent a year is needed to avoid breaching the Paris climate treaty's goal of capping global warming at "well below" two degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels.

Staying under the safer aspirational threshold of 1.5C would mean an even steeper decline. To put that in perspective, the painful 2020 shutdown of the global economy due to COVID saw "only" a 5.6 percent decrease in CO2 emissions.

Hence the need for carbon dioxide removal (CDR), or "negative emissions", likely to figure prominently in the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report. Even under the most aggressive carbon-cutting scenarios, several billion tons of CO2 will need to be extracted each year from the atmosphere by 2050, and an accumulated total of hundreds of billions of tons by 2100.

As of today, however, CO2 removal is nowhere near these levels. The largest direct air capture facility in the world removes in a year what humanity emits in three or four seconds. There are at least a dozen CDR techniques on the table, with different potentials and costs.

### Using bio-energy

Most of the hundreds of models laying out a game plan for a liveable future reserve an important role for a negative emissions solution called BECCS, or bio-energy with carbon capture and storage.

In a nutshell, this is the recipe: grow trees, burn them for energy, and bury the CO2 underground, in an abandoned mineshaft, for example. But what works on paper (or in so-called integrated assessment models), has not materialized in reality.

One of the few commercial-scale BECCS facilities in the world, in Britain, was dropped last year from the S&P Clean Energy Index because it failed to meet sustainability criteria. "I don't see a BECCS boom," said Oliver Geden, a senior fellow at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs and an expert on CDR.

### Planting trees

Restoring forests and planting trees that absorb and stock CO2 as they grow also figure prominently

in development scenarios achieving net-zero emissions, whether in 2050 or later. Many businesses, including fossil fuel companies, rely heavily on carbon offset schemes based on afforestation to compensate for continuing carbon pollution.

But the amount of land needed to put a serious dent in CO2 levels through tree planting-up to twice the size of India-could clash with other priorities, such as growing food and biofuel crops.

Biodiversity could suffer as well, especially in savannahs converted to monoculture tree farms. Newly planted forests could also fall victim to wildfires made more frequent and intense by rising temperatures, resulting in the release of all their stored CO2.

### 'DACCS'

One of the youngest CDR technologies is also one of the hottest: direct air carbon capture and storage. With variations, DACCS is a chemical process that extracts carbon dioxide directly from the atmosphere, converting it into solid form or locking it away underground.

Because CO2 in the air is so sparse-a few hun-



dred parts per million-it is a very energy-intensive and expensive process. DACCS has benefited from a wave of corporate backing.

Last year, Tesla CEO Elon Musk launched the \$100-million X-Prize for an innovative CO2 removal technology, and Breakthrough Energy founder Bill Gates unveiled a corporate partnership to turbocharge its development. How quickly it can scale up, and at what cost, remain open questions.

### Enhanced weathering

Enhanced weathering involves mining and crushing rocks rich in minerals that naturally absorb CO2, and then spreading them over land or sea. It aims to vastly accelerate a process that normally unfolds on geological timescales of tens of thousands of years.

Silicate rocks with minerals rich in calcium and magnesium but lacking metal ions such as nickel and chromium are the best raw material for the job. But, again, it's unclear if enhanced weathering can be scaled up enough, and at what cost. — AFP



SAN JOSE, Costa Rica: Costa Rican presidential candidate Jose Maria Figueres (left), of the Social National Liberation Party, speaks as a woman records him with a mobile phone, after a press conference in San Jose, on April 02, 2022. —AFP

## Costa Rica presidential candidates vow to tackle unemployment

**SAN JOSE:** Costa Ricans headed to the polls on Sunday to elect one of two scandal-tainted presidential candidates in a country grappling with sky-high poverty and unemployment.

Former president Jose Maria Figueres was once investigated for corruption while ex-finance minister Rodrigo Chaves was previously demoted for sexual harassment. But with 23 percent of the population living in poverty and unemployment soaring to 14 percent alongside a series of corruption scandals, Costa Ricans seem more focused on the economy as they elect a successor to Carlos Alvarado.

Costa Rica has been described as the "happiest" country in Latin America and praised for its environmental policies and eco-tourism, but the vital tourism industry was hard hit by the coronavirus pandemic. Alongside Peru, it suffered the largest fall in employment figures in the region between 2019 and 2020.

### 'We're very poor'

"The next president has to change everything because we're very poor. There is no work here, there is nothing," said Ana Briceno, 64, a travel agent in the capital San Jose. "In the last years with Carlos Alvarado the situation has been very difficult ... so I think the future president must focus on the economy," said Cristina Aguilar, 32. Given their previous troubles, the two candidates have sought to keep the debate swirling around the economy.

"The urgent themes to address are the ones causing discomfort and suffering to the people," said Chaves, 60, a surprise qualifier for Sunday's run-off, having polled fourth ahead of February's first round.

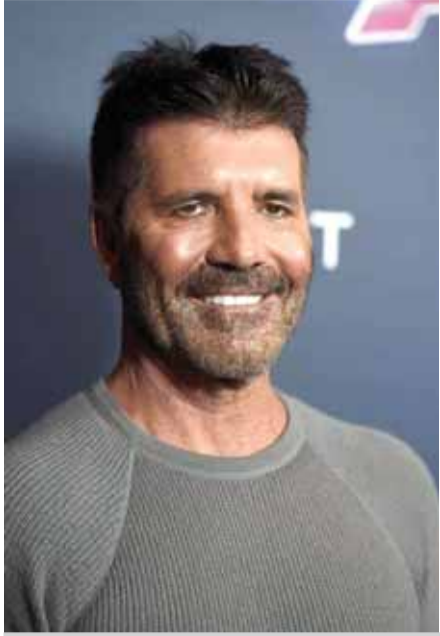
"The first is the lack of jobs. Secondly, the cost of living," Chaves, from the newly formed right-wing Social Democratic Progress Party, led the most recent opinion polls, with more than 41 percent support, compared to 38 percent for Figueres. Figueres, 67, who was president from 1994-98, is equally focused on the economy.

"In the economic agenda, unemployment is the most important, the creation of employment opportunities is the priority," he said. Figueres, whose father Jose abolished the army in 1948 when he was president, topped the first round of voting among a crowded field of 25 contenders with 27.3 percent ahead of Chaves who had 16.8 percent. But they were a long way from the 40 percent needed to win outright.

### 'Misinterpreted jokes'

Both men have reached this final stage of the election despite the specter of past scandals. Chaves, who spent six months as finance minister in the outgoing government, was investigated over sexual harassment complaints brought by multiple women while he was a senior official at the World Bank, where he worked for 30 years. He was demoted, though not fired, and has dismissed his behavior as jokes that were "misinterpreted due to cultural differences." Figueres, who represents the centrist National Liberation Party (PLN), was investigated for allegedly taking some \$900,000 from French engineering firm Alcatel, which has admitted to bribing officials.

The ex-president, who worked abroad at the time as executive director of the World Economic Forum (WEF), refused to give evidence in the case in 2004 and returned to Costa Rica only in 2011 when the investigation expired. Polls opened at 6 am (1200 GMT) and close 12 hours later. "Right now, I don't know who I will vote for ... because Chaves contradicts himself in everything and given what Figueres did last time, it leaves us undecided," said Jairo Montero, 37. — AFP



## Simon Cowell still wearing wrist brace 2 months after e-bike crash

**S**imon Cowell is still wearing a wrist brace two months after breaking his arm in a serious e-bike accident. The 62-year-old music mogul was seen wearing the support outside of the 'America's Got Talent' studios in Los Angeles on Saturday. The talent show judge is said to have narrowly avoided serious injury after flying over his handlebars in the "horror" crash,

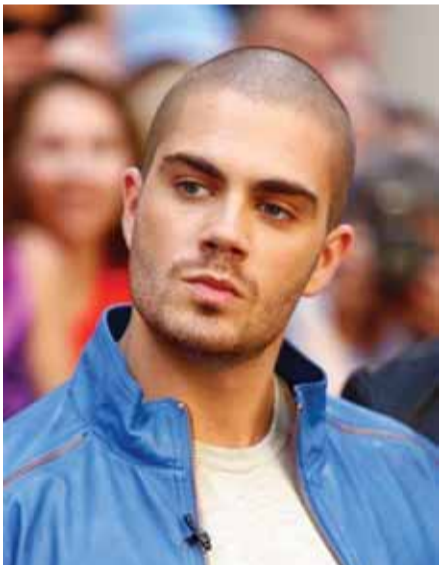
which came 18 months after he broke his back following a similar fall. Simon had a metal rod being inserted into his back after the first accident. He said at the time: "It could have been a lot worse. When I saw the X-ray, I really nearly could have smashed my spine to pieces, so I literally wouldn't have been able to walk." Simon recently admitted he had been a "bit of a nutter" following his sec-

ond e-bike accident after he narrowly avoided serious injury because he wasn't wearing a helmet. He said: "I'm OK. I'm feeling much better thank you... 'I'm a bit of a nutter. I'll definitely wear a helmet next time.'" The 'X Factor' boss was taken to hospital after the incident with suspected concussion, cuts on his face and a broken arm after slipping on a "wet patch" in the road. Meanwhile,

Simon also tested positive for COVID-19 in February. The TV personality was forced to miss filming for the 'Britain's Got Talent' auditions in London after coming down with coronavirus. A spokesperson for Simon said: "Simon was unable to attend filming today as he was isolating at home after testing positive for COVID-19."

## George left 'heartbroken' by Parker's death

**M**ax George has been left feeling "heartbroken" by Tom Parker's death. The Wanted star died on Wednesday, aged 33, after battling a brain tumor, and Max has now taken to social media to pay a heartfelt tribute to his former bandmate. He wrote on Instagram: "Tom, my brother, my boy, my band mate, my best bud. You lit up so many lives all over the world but I can only speak on behalf of mine. "From the minute I met you, I knew this was gonna be a special chapter in my life. I was right. We did everything together, some amazing things, some outrageous things. I'm so proud of what we achieved as band mates and as brothers. (sic)" Max recalled the night that Tom met his wife Kelsey. He also praised his former bandmate for battling his tumor in such a courageous and dignified manner. His post continued: "I'm also proud that I was there the night you met Kels. I remember saying to you, 'you like her don't you?'. to which you replied, 'bro, like you wouldn't believe'. You two really are like peas and carrots. "Thank you for choosing me as your friend. It was



an honor from day one. I'm so grateful I was with you until the very end. The courage and dignity I have witnessed over the last few months surpassed the lion I already knew you were. "The huge hole now left in my life will forever be there, but I know your spirit will live on through your two beautiful babies, your wonderful wife, our music, your fans and in my heart. "I'm heartbroken beyond words right now and I cannot even begin to imagine what the future holds without you, but whatever I do going forward, even on my darkest days, I can always smile and say, 'I shared the stage with Tom Parker'. "I am going to miss you so much. I love you mate. Always. George. (sic)".



## Denzel defends Will: 'Who are we to condemn?'

**D**enzel Washington won't "condemn" Will Smith for his behavior at the Oscars. The 67-year-old actor tried to defuse the situation after Will smacked comedian Chris Rock, but Denzel doesn't know the "ins and outs of the situation" and he's reluctant to judge him. Speaking during an International Leadership Summit at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles, Denzel said: "There's a saying: When the devil ignores you, then you know you're doing something wrong. The devil goes, 'Oh, no, leave him alone. He's my favorite'. "Conversely, when the devil comes at you, maybe it's because you're trying to do something right. And for whatever reason, the devil got ahold of that circumstance that night." Denzel

didn't discuss the specific reasons behind the confrontation. But he also refused to condemn Will for how he reacted to a joke about his wife. He said: "There but for the grace of God, go any of us. Who are we to condemn? I don't know all the ins and outs of the situation, but I know the only solution was prayer." Denzel spoke to Will, 53, in the time between his confrontation with Chris and the moment he collected his Best Actor gong. The veteran star felt the need to calm the situation down. He said: "I couldn't have sat in my seat. No way I could have sat in my seat. That's just not who I am." Meanwhile, Chris has been inundated with big-money offers since the Oscars. The stand-up comedian could see a financial benefit from the dramatic moment. A source explained: "Chris has handled the situation with Will with such grace and poise - and it is paying dividends. Hollywood just can't get enough of him and while people are turning away from Will in droves, they're queuing up to see Chris."

## Minaj joins Corden for Carpool Karaoke comeback

**N**icki Minaj is set to star in the first 'Carpool Karaoke' in two years. The 39-year-old rapper will join James Corden - the host of 'The Late Late Show' - on April 6, after the easing of social distancing rules allowed the TV star to revive the popular segment. In a clip shared on Twitter from the upcoming episode, James tells the 'Anaconda' hitmaker: "Thank you so much for helping me get to work. I really, really appreciate it." The video clip sees James and Nicki perform some of her best known hits, while there's also a brief look forward to Camila Cabello's appearance on April 18. James launched 'Carpool Karaoke' on 'The Late Late Show' in 2015 and he's performed alongside some of the biggest names in the music industry over the years, including Mariah Carey, Ariana Grande, Justin Bieber, Adele, Sir Paul McCartney, Cardi B, Britney Spears, and Lady Gaga. However, the segment actually started out as a sketch for Comic Relief with George Michael in 2011. James, 43, helped to raise money for the charity by starring in the sketch alongside the late pop star, and he subsequently thanked George - who died on Christmas Day in 2016 - for inspiring the idea. He said: "We had come up with this idea to

have me and George Michael sitting in a car, and it was the first time I had ever sung in a car with anybody. It's become quite a big part of my life now and he really inspired it." James later took the idea to Mariah Carey and she was happy to commit to the first-ever 'Carpool Karaoke' on 'The Late Late Show'. James recalled: "Her words were, 'if it's good enough for George, it's good enough for me.'"



## Driver recalls being told

**M**innie Driver felt devastated after being told she was "barren". The 52-year-old actress was told by a doctor when she 18 that it was unlikely she could conceive, and Minnie was left feeling heartbroken at the time. She shared: "I was told I couldn't have children when I was 18. This awful doctor just came into the room and he literally compared my uterus to the u-bend in a toilet and was like, 'Nothing's going through there. You won't be having children'. "So I believed him and I believed him through my whole life." Minnie still remembers being told she was "barren", and believes it's a "crazy" description of a woman who is unable to have children. She told 'The Healthy Baby Show' podcast: "What a ridiculous thing to tell them that they are empty, if that's what barren means, it means dead. A barren landscape, without fertility. It's crazy." But in spite of her doctor's comments, Minnie did eventually manage to have her own "miracle" baby when she was least expecting it. The Hollywood star - who has Henry, 13, with producer Timothy J. Lea - shared: "When I was 37, I woke up on January the 1st with the flu and I was so bummed. I was like, 'I've got the flu. I had just recently broken up with someone who was nice but wasn't my partner. I didn't have kids. I didn't have a job. I don't know. And then I found out I was pregnant." Minnie also described motherhood as a "great late stage adventure". She added: "It's only us that apply all of our strictures and dogma to what it should look like. And my mother said you should bury the word 'should' in the backyard."



## Craig has tested positive for COVID-19

**T**he 54-year-old actor has been starring in 'Macbeth' on Broadway, but his positive test result has already led to two performances being cancelled. The production's Twitter account said: "Today's matinee and evening performance of MACBETH are cancelled due to Daniel Craig just testing positive for COVID this afternoon. "We apologize for the inconvenience this causes ticket holders, but the safety of our audiences, the cast and crew remains our top priority. All tickets for the cancelled performance will be refunded at the original point of purchase. Please check MacbethBroadway.com or @MacbethBway for updated info (sic)" The play - which also stars Ruth Negga - was originally only due to run for 15 weeks, until July 10. The production marks Daniel's first performance since he walked away from the role of James Bond. The actor quit the franchise after appearing in 'No Time to Die', having previously hinted at walking away after starring in 2015's 'Spectre'. He shared: "I needed a break, I'll freely admit it, I just needed to get my head away from it for a while. "Once I had, and we started talking about storylines and things we could do and where we could take it, I was like, 'I'm in, let's do one more and try to finish the story.'" Despite this, Daniel admitted he'll miss lots of things about starring in the Bond movies. He said: "I'll miss everything, I think. I'll miss the collaboration. I mean, hopefully I'll keep working and I'll have lots of other lovely jobs, but it's very, very, very rare air. Apart from Marvel movies, there aren't movies that are as big as this."



## MENDES AND CABELLO REMAIN 'SUPPORTIVE' OF EACH OTHER

**S**hawn Mendes and Camila Cabello have a "really honest relationship". The 23-year-old pop star and Camila, 25, announced their break-up in November, but they've subsequently remained good friends and Shawn even gave his ex-girlfriend a preview of his new single, 'When You're Gone', months before its release. He told 'Daily Pop': "Camila heard this song months ago, so we have a really honest relationship. I would never really put a song out about her before she would hear it." Shawn and Camila both accept that heartbreak is a big inspiration for musicians. And the former Fifth Harmony star is supportive of Shawn being open and honest with his fans through his music. He said: "She knows me and I know her, and ultimately, we both are writers and we both know what it is to make music and what the bigger picture

of making art is. We're supportive of that, always." Shawn also explained that he's been forced to learn "how to cope" without the brunette beauty by his side. He shared: "You've got to give yourself a lot of grace to kind of be a little bit of a mess, and that's okay. And then, you have to look around at the people who are there and not the people who aren't." In March, Camila revealed she's focused on "friendships" after splitting from Shawn. The 'Havana' hitmaker suggested she's not looking for another romance for the time being. Camila explained: "This is my first time being single in my 20s. "That's not even what I'm looking forward to right now, I think right now it's about girlfriends ... I feel like my focus is on my friendships right now and just growing as a person."



## Rock 'weighs up big-money offers after Oscars controversy'

**C**hris Rock has been inundated with big-money offers since the Oscars. The 57-year-old comedian was struck by Will Smith during last weekend's Academy Awards - but the controversial moment actually seems set to boost his bank balance. A source explained: "Chris has handled the situation with Will with such grace and poise - and it is paying dividends. Hollywood just can't get enough of him and while people are turning away from Will in droves, they're queuing up to see Chris." The dramatic incident at the Oscars has boosted ticket sales for his stand-up tour, and two of the biggest names in television are also eager to secure the first sit-down interview with Chris. The insider told The Sun newspaper: "His comedy tour is now sold out for months in advance and he has added more dates on thanks to the increase in demand. "Chris has chosen to hold his tongue for

now and it's not surprising, as there are big money negotiations going on behind the scenes for his first chat. "Oprah [Winfrey] and Ellen [DeGeneres] have both shown interest in securing the first



sit-down interview with Chris about the slap and the aftermath." Despite this, Chris is determined to take his time before committing himself to anything. The source said: "Chris is in no rush and wants to make sure he is in the right place before he agrees to anything." Meanwhile, Will recently resigned from the Oscars Academy after smacking Chris. The 53-year-old actor acknowledged his actions were "shocking, painful, and inexcusable". He added: "The list of those I have hurt is long and includes Chris, his family, many of my dear friends and loved ones, all those in attendance, and global audiences at home. "I betrayed the trust of the Academy. I deprived other nominees and winners of their opportunity to celebrate and be celebrated for their extraordinary work. I am heartbroken."

—Bang Showbiz



Lynx pelts hang at the Fur Harvesters Auction in North Bay, Ontario, Canada. — AFP photos



Buyer Gordon Gray examines wolf pelts at the Fur Harvesters Auction in North Bay, Ontario, Canada.



Buyer Howard Trager examines Lynx pelts at the Fur Harvesters Auction in North Bay, Ontario.



Alicja Turner browses the fur goods at Herman Sellers Gough Furs storefront in the Yorkville neighborhood in Toronto.



Beaver pelts hang at the Fur Harvesters Auction.

## CANADIAN TRAPPERS WRESTLE WITH LOSS OF RUSSIA, UKRAINE FUR MARKETS

Trying to maintain his balance on a dam, Canadian trapper Ray Gall advances cautiously as he tries to retrieve a large black beaver snared in one of his traps. Few people in the country still manage to make a living solely in the business, which dates back 400 years to the first Indigenous trades of pelts to European explorers. But thousands of Canadians, including Indigenous people, are still active in the now heavily-regulated industry. "It's the oldest profession" in Canada, says Gall, 47, a municipal water worker who traps, foxes, wolves and coyotes in his spare time in forests about a three-hour drive north of Toronto. "There's always gonna be a need for trappers whether the market is there or not," he comments before untangling the beaver carcass and stuffing it in a pack that he throws over his shoulder.

With human encroachment reducing animal habitats, shorter winters caused by climate change, and plunging fur prices, "trapping is getting more and more difficult," says 70-year-old Indigenous trapper Tom Borg. "It's part of our heritage and it's part of us. So that's tough, it's like taking a piece of you away," he comments, misty-eyed. The market has been struggling under pressure from luxury brands' boycotts, the absence of Chinese buyers since the start of the pandemic, and now the loss of two key markets in Russia and Ukraine since Moscow's invasion. But Robin Horwath, head of the Fur Institute of Canada and general manager of the Ontario Fur Managers Federation, is optimistic for a turnaround. The situation now "is stable," he said, after it got "about as low in the cycle as it can go."

### Pelts tied in bundles for auction

Canada is the largest producer of wild furs in the world, with some 415,000 pelts sold in the 2019-2020 season for a total of Can\$13.8 million (US\$11.0 million). Inside North America's last major fur auction in North Bay, about 350 kilometers north of Toronto, brokers are busy checking out the offerings ahead of the big event, which is being held online for a third year in a row due to the pandemic.

In a vast warehouse, tens of thousands of animal pelts-including lynxes, foxes, wolves and black bears-are tied in bundles hanging from racks, sorted by size, color and quality. Catalogue and pencil in hand, broker Michel Roberge acts as the eyes and hands of foreign buyers for whom he meticulously inspects each fur. "Since it's a luxury

market, naturally we are affected first" in the event of a crisis," says the Montreal merchant.

### Coyote fur trim

Growing pressure from animal rights activists in Europe and North America led several major luxury brands, such as Dolce & Gabbana, Burberry and Chanel, to stop using fur. "The fur industry's been around, it's our oldest, and it's risen and crashed many, many times during the last 400 years," said Mark Downey of the Fur Harvesters Auction in North Bay. "Canada Goose's exiting the fur trade... was definitely a black mark for the industry." But he is sure other manufacturers will fill the "void" left by the Canadian company, which announced last year it would soon stop using coyote fur trim on

its parka hoods-a feature that for five decades had helped keep Arctic explorers' faces warm.

The industry will also have to cope with the lack of access to markets in Ukraine and Russia-the latter being the world's second-largest for fur, but targeted by Canadian and allied economic sanctions. "The war between Ukraine and Russia is a huge handicap because our (other) big buyers from Greece, Italy and Turkey... their manufactured (fur) products are sold into Russia and Ukraine," Downey explained, and subject to the sanctions. "But (the industry) will come back again," he said. "The demand is huge," especially in Asia. — AFP

## Ramadan photos



A Muslim man listen as a child reads the Quran, Islam's holy book, at the Grand Mosque of Yemen's capital Sanaa on the first day of the holy month of Ramadan. — AFP photos



A Muslim man uses prayer beads as he reads the holy Quran at the Al-Habir Mosque in the old city of Yemen's capital Sanaa, on the first day of the holy month of Ramadan.



Hundreds of Muslim students sit reading copies of the Quran at the Ar-Raudhatul Hasanah Islamic boarding school in Medan yesterday, as Muslims worldwide start the holy month of Ramadan.

## In Senegal, a rare Pablo Picasso exhibition

An unprecedented Picasso exhibition opened this week in Senegal's capital Dakar, where about a dozen of the Spanish master's works are displayed alongside African art, from which he drew inspiration. A pioneering modern artist who died in France in 1973, Picasso left behind a vast and influential body of work including paintings, sculptures and ceramics. He was one of the founders of the Cubist movement, and was heavily inspired by African art, with the influence notable in seminal paintings such as "Les Femmes d'Alger" and "Les Femmes d'Oran".

However, Picasso's interest in Africa remains relatively unknown in Senegal. El Hadji Malick Ndiaye, an art historian and one of the curators of the Dakar exhibition, said that every African should be proud of how the continent's art had inspired Picasso. Visitors should leave with "a sense of pride in what the continent's artists have given, and in the diversity of styles that have generated new forms and nourished modern art," he said.

The exhibition sees about 15 of Picasso's works hosted in Dakar's Museum of Black Civilizations, on loan from Paris. Alongside them are displayed works of African art, such as otherworldly traditional masks, which so fascinated the influential artist.

### Whistling mask

According to the exhibition curators, Picasso's interest in African art began with a 1907 visit to the Trocadero Ethnological Museum in Paris, which has since closed. The same year, he painted "Les Femmes d'Alger"-which fea-

tures five female nudes, two of whom are depicted with faces that bear striking similarities to traditional African masks. A study of the painting is on display in Dakar, paired with an African mask appearing to depict a whistling face.

Cecile Debray, the president of the Picasso Museum in Paris, described Picasso as having a "very relaxed relationship to his sources," mixing Romanesque, Iberian and African influences. The Spanish artist, drawn by the novelty of non-Western artistic traditions, is known to have collected masks and statues from both Africa and Oceania for his studio.

Recent historiography has also highlighted his interest in the spiritual or magical dimensions of such art. Despite Picasso's interest in Africa, he seldom travelled and never set foot on the continent, according to Debray. She added that his interest was not solely artistic, however, and that Picasso was a committed opponent of colonialism. The artist was a friend of Senegal's first president Leopold Sedar Senghor, who staged a Picasso exhibition in Dakar in 1972.

### Relative unknown

An artistic giant in the West, Picasso is a relative unknown in Senegal, a former French colony of 17 million people. The exhibition organizers are trying to drum up interest by reaching out to schools in Senegal, where about half of the population is younger than 20. Daouda Sarr, 24, a project management student, told AFP he had heard of Picasso, but thought of him as a French or European artist.

"I was surprised to see that Picasso had done all this around African culture without ever having set foot in Africa," he said during the exhibition's opening on Friday. Sarr said he preferred the whistling mask to the "Les Femmes d'Alger" painting, "because it is an African mask". Awa Dia, a 27-year-old who was also at the opening, said that links between Picasso and Africa came as a surprise to her too. "These are our artists here, they are our ancestors," she said. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



In this file photo beekeepers walk towards the Inzerki Apiary in the village of Inzerki, 82 km north of Agadir, in the Souss-Massa region. — AFP photos



In this file photo a beekeeper works at the Inzerki Apiary in the village of Inzerki, 82 km north of Agadir, in the Souss-Massa region.

# STUNG BY DROUGHT, MOROCCO'S BEES FACE DISASTER

Morocco's village of Inzerki is proud to claim it has the world's oldest and largest collective beehive, but instead of buzzing with springtime activity, the colonies have collapsed amid crippling drought. Beekeeper Brahim Chatoui says he has lost almost a third of his hives in just two months—and he is not alone. "At this time of year, this area would normally be buzzing with bees," said Chatoui, sweating

say these collapses are caused by the worst drought to hit the country in 40 years, which has decimated the plants on which bees rely for food.

**'Unprecedented' spike**

The crisis is so acute that the government released 130 million dirhams (\$13 million), to support beekeepers and investigate the cause of the bee deaths.

region, some 415 kilometers (260 miles) southwest of the capital Rabat. The complex is striking: A five-storeyed structure of wooden struts and dry mud stretch along a hillside, each compartment home to a cylindrical wicker hive, covered with a mix of earth and cow dung. Experts say it is the oldest traditional, collective beehive in the world, dating back to 1850, but today it is under threat amid a changing climate.

That desire is clearly visible in agriculture ministry figures. Honey output has risen by 69 percent in a decade, from 4.7 tons in 2009 to almost eight tons in 2019, generating revenues of over 100 million euros. But it is not only Inzerki's apiary that is in trouble. Mohamed Choudani, of the UAM beekeepers union, said the crisis was hitting bee populations across the country.

Last summer, Morocco's 36,000 beekeepers were managing some 910,000 hives, up by 60 percent since 2009, according to official figures. But Choudani said that since last August, 100,000 colonies had been lost in the central region of Beni Mellal-Khenifra alone. Bees and other pollinators are vital for the reproduction of more than three-quarters of food crops and flowering plants.

The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) say bees play an "essential role... in keeping people and the planet healthy", with the UN saying they "serve as sentinels for emergent environmental risks, signaling the health of local ecosystems".



Bees are pictured at the Inzerki Apiary in the village of Inzerki, at a hillside in the heart of the Arganeraie Biosphere Reserve.

neglect is due to several factors on top of climate change, including the arrival of modern agriculture and a general exodus from the countryside.

Around 80 families in the village once kept bees. Today there are less than 20. "It's urgent to keep this exceptional legacy alive," Benalayyat said. Chatoui and other villagers have set up an association to restore the structure, as well as planting herbs for the bees that are better able to tolerate hot and arid conditions. "The situation is critical, but that doesn't mean I'm giving up," Chatoui said. "The aim isn't to produce honey, but to protect the hives and make sure the bees survive until better days." —AFP



These images show a beekeeper works at the Inzerki Apiary in the village of Inzerki.

under a blazing springtime sun. "Today, they're dying at a terrifying rate." The North African kingdom has seen a dramatic spike in mass die-offs of the critical pollinators, a phenomenon called "colony collapse disorder".

Worldwide, experts say such sudden mass deaths of bees are often linked to the destruction of nature and the rampant use of pesticides. But authorities in Morocco

Morocco's National Food Safety Office, which carried out the investigation, ruled out disease as a reason. Instead, it blamed the "unprecedented" spike in hive collapses on an intense drought driven by climate change.

Inzerki's unique collective beehive sits on a sunny hillside in the heart of the Arganeraie Biosphere Reserve, a UNESCO-protected 2.5-million-hectare

"This year we hope for rain, because I have lost 40 hives so far," Chataoui said. Bee expert Antonin Adam, who has studied the insects in southwestern Morocco, also blamed the collapse on the drought. But he added the problem may have been exacerbated by "the bees' vulnerability to diseases, nomadic pastoral practices, intensive agriculture and the country's desire to increase its honey production".

**'Exceptional legacy'**

For the villagers of Inzerki, the collapse of hives is an ecological and economic disaster—but also a crisis for their unique heritage. Chatoui, the beekeeper, said many Inzerki residents can't afford to revive the hives they have lost. "Some families have decided just to give up on beekeeping completely," he said. The hives at Inzerki are in trouble. Parts of the structure, recently listed as a national heritage site, are sagging. Geographer Hassan Benalayyat says the

## Clock ticking on Swiss watches' raw materials from Russia

Diamonds shine brightly at this year's Geneva watch fair but the sanctions slapped on Russia could soon force the Swiss watch industry to produce more subdued designs. Russia is a major supplier of diamonds, gold and other precious metals to the luxury watchmakers exhibiting at Watches and Wonders, one of the world's top salons for the prestige industry. The Russian group Alrosa—the world's largest diamond mining company—was hit by US sanctions within hours of the Kremlin-ordered invasion of Ukraine on February 24.

According to US Treasury figures, it accounts for 90 percent of Russia's diamond mining capacity, and 28 percent globally. And while trade between Switzerland and Russia is modest, gold is the chief import, ahead of precious metals such as platinum followed by diamonds not mounted or set, according to the Swiss customs office. Compared to other sectors



A new watch model with enamel dial center is displayed at the booth of Swiss luxury watch and clock manufacturer Patek Philippe.

of the Swiss economy, "watchmaking was a branch that was less affected than others by supply problems in 2021", Jean-Daniel Pasche, president of the Federation of the Swiss Watch Industry, told AFP. But that may no longer be the case, he acknowledged, adding that it was hard to assess the repercussions for the watch industry at this stage. "There are obviously reserves. Afterwards, we will have to see, depending on how long the conflict lasts," Pasche said.

**Recycled gold and palladium**

The Swiss luxury giant Richemont owns the Cartier and Van Cleef & Arpels jewelry firms, plus eight prestigious watch brands, including Piaget and IWC. The group took the lead on Wednesday, saying all its brands have stopped sourcing diamonds

from Russia. The move will create a lot of work on the supply chain to find responsibly-sourced, quality diamonds from elsewhere, Richemont chief executive Jerome Lambert told a press conference.

Gold supply is of less concern. For a decade or so, Richemont has been sourcing recycled gold for watchmaking, bought from industry and the electronics sector. For palladium, used for instance for wedding and engagement rings, the group decided "ahead of the sanctions" to switch to suppliers specializing in recycled palladium, Lambert said.

**Draining the stocks**

At Patek Philippe, one of the most prestigious Swiss brands, the firm's president is counting on his stockpile to ride out the storm. "Luckily I produce in small quantities," said Thierry Stern, who represents the fourth generation of his family at the company helm. "So I don't feel any difference yet," he told AFP. For 2022, Patek Philippe plans to manufacture 66,000 timepieces. "And if I can't find certain stones, I can always do engraving," said the head of the brand, which relies on a wide range of disciplines including ceramics, marquetry and enamel.

H. Moser, a niche brand producing 2,000 watches a year for wealthy collectors, struck much the same tone. "Purchases are made in advance. For example, for the casings that I want to make in 2023, I have already bought all the



A woman walks past a watch displayed in a window of French luxury goods Cartier, owned by Richemont group.—AFP Photos

gold I need," said boss Edouard Meylan. "But maybe in six months' time some of our suppliers will call to push back the deadlines because they haven't received the materials," he admitted.

Concerns over raw materials "will drive up prices, of course", said Jon Cox, an industry analyst with the Kepler Cheuvreux financial services company. However, compared to other sectors, luxury firms have more leeway to pass on costs to customers, he added. At the Watches and

Wonders salon in Geneva, where 38 brands are exhibiting until Tuesday, the displays are brimming with diamonds, reflecting the "generally upbeat mood" of the industry this year after a prosperous 2021. However, given the war and its repercussions, "I imagine product development will move to more subdued luxury goods", Cox said. — AFP



A watch by French luxury jewelry, watch, and perfume company Van Cleef & Arpels is displayed.



A watch by Swiss luxury watches manufacturer Roger Dubuis, owned by Richemont group, is displayed.



A watch by French luxury jewelry, watch, and perfume company Van Cleef & Arpels is displayed.

## Sports

# Hawks hold off Nets despite 55 by Durant, Warriors in playoffs

**NEW YORK:** Trae Young scored 11 of his 36 points in the final two minutes Saturday as the Atlanta Hawks withstood a career-high 55 points from Brooklyn star Kevin Durant in a 122-115 NBA victory over the Nets. The Hawks grabbed their fifth straight win to move into eighth place in the Eastern Conference, a game ahead of the Nets and the Charlotte Hornets, who were routed 144-114 by the Philadelphia 76ers earlier in the day.

All three are jockeying for position in the play-in tournament, in which the teams place seventh to 10th in each conference will battle for the final two berths in the playoffs proper. The Nets' second straight defeat ended the star-studded Brooklyn team's hopes of escaping the play-in and earning one of the top six seeds that will advance directly to the playoffs.

Kyrie Irving scored 31 points, but with Goran Dragic sidelined by Covid concerns, Bruce Brown out with flu and Seth Curry a late scratch with a left ankle injury, no other Nets player managed to score in double figures. "We didn't really play a good ball game," Nets coach Steve Nash said. "I can't sugarcoat it. We didn't play a great game and not enough guys played well."

Durant did all he could, but even after his 19 third-quarter points the Nets went into the final period trailing by seven. His eight three-pointers, on 10 attempts, were also a career high and he surpassed his previous career high of 54 points, set when he was with Oklahoma City in 2014. Atlanta, meanwhile, had four players score in double figures. In addition to Young, who added 10 rebounds, De'Andre Hunter and Lou Williams scored 15 points apiece and Timothe Luwawu-Cabarrot added 11 as the Hawks won their fifth straight game. Elsewhere in the East, the Miami

Heat tightened their hold on first place with a 127-109 victory over the Chicago Bulls.

## Embiid fires Sixers

Jimmy Butler scored 22 points and Kyle Lowry added 19 for the Heat, who have followed a four-game skid with a three-game winning streak. In Philadelphia, Joel Embiid scored 29 points as the 76ers halted their three-game losing streak with an emphatic 144-114 rout of the Charlotte Hornets. The Sixers had slumped to defeats against the Phoenix Suns, Milwaukee Bucks and lowly Detroit Pistons heading into Saturday's early home game at the Wells Fargo Center.

But Embiid and a balanced Sixers offense were in no mood to concede a fourth straight loss against a Charlotte team in 10th place in the Eastern Conference. The Sixers held a narrow 58-53 lead at half-time but pulled away with a 45-point third-quarter performance before pouring in 41 points in the fourth quarter to seal a crushing win. Embiid finished with 29 points, 14 rebounds and six assists while Tobias Harris had 23 points, five rebounds and four assists. "That was a great game for us, coming back off a disappointing loss in Detroit," the Sixers' Harris said afterwards. "Just being able to push the pace today and get going was big for us."

The Sixers can clinch a playoff place on Sunday with a win over the Cleveland Cavaliers, who defeated the already-eliminated New York Knicks 119-101. In the West, the Golden State Warriors clinched their first NBA playoff berth since 2019 with a dramatic 111-107 come-from-behind victory over the Utah Jazz. Trailing by as many as 21 points in the first quarter and by 16 early in the fourth quarter, the Warriors outscored the Jazz 24-4 over



ATLANTA: Kyrie Irving #11 of the Brooklyn Nets blocks a shot by De'Andre Hunter #12 of the Atlanta Hawks during the second half at State Farm Arena on April 2, 2022. —AFP

the final eight minutes.

Klay Thompson drained four three-pointers in an 18-0 run that put the Warriors ahead for good culminating in Jordan Poole's three-pointer with 3:33 remaining that gave them a 105-103 lead.

Thompson finished with 36 points and Poole added 31 for the Warriors, who reached the NBA Finals in five straight seasons up to 2019, winning three titles, before missing out on the playoffs in the 2020 and 2021. —AFP

## Reds end Brumbies win streak, Crusaders keep up pressure

**SYDNEY:** James O'Connor kicked 11 points as the Queensland Reds ended ACT Brumbies' unbeaten start to the Super Rugby Pacific season, while the Canterbury Crusaders kept up the pressure at the top with a narrow victory over the Otago Highlanders. The Reds' convincing 21-7 win in Brisbane drew them level with the Canberra-based Brumbies at the top of the 12-team table on 26 points.

The 12-time champion Crusaders are three adrift, but with a game in hand, after inflicting a sixth straight defeat on Aaron Smith's Highlanders in a nail-biting 17-14 triumph. Wallabies skipper Michael Hooper, made a successful return for the NSW Waratahs, scoring a try after coming on as a substitute in his first match for the team since suffering a foot injury against England at Twickenham last November.

The Reds defied a red card to Tuaina Tualima for a high hit on O'Connor to beat the Brumbies with Fraser McReight scoring a try during the 20 minutes they were down to 14 men. Winger Filipo Daguunu also banked five points with O'Connor's three penalties and a conversion ensuring the win. But there were also plenty of missed chances. "We left a lot of points out there," said Reds coach Brad Thorn.

His opposite number Dan McKellar was more blunt, calling Brumbies' performance "dreadful". "I don't think it was a very good game of footy ... I get really frustrated with people who bag the game but I think both teams will review that and understand we need to be a whole lot better," he said. In Christchurch, the Crusaders sneaked past the battling Highlanders with all the points coming in the first half. Both teams scored two tries with a penalty from All Blacks fly-half Richie Mo'unga in the 26th minute proving decisive.

### Hooper 'invaluable'

"It was a heck of a battle," said Crusaders captain Scott Barrett, whose team endured heavy pressure in the second half. "The conditions forced both teams into playing that pressure game and it was a real see-saw right to the final whistle." The Auckland Blues are fourth, a point behind the Crusaders, after two wins over Moana Pasifika in the space of five days. The Blues also have a game in hand on the Reds and Brumbies.

They toppled the Pacific island newcomers 32-19 in a rearranged midweek match after their original clash was postponed early in the season because of Covid, then turned the screws with a 46-16 hammering on Saturday. They ran in 12 tries over the two matches in Auckland, with hooker Kurt Eklund bagging a hat-trick on Saturday.

On Australia's Gold Coast, Hooper made a triumphant return for the NSW Waratahs, needing just 11 minutes after coming on as a second-half substitute to score one of their six tries in a bonus-point 38-14 thumping of Fijian Drua, who have won just one from seven. Stand-in captain Jed Holloway said having Hooper back was a huge boost for the team, who are fifth in the table. "His name speaks for itself and just having him around the crew is invaluable," Holloway said of the champion flanker.

The Waikato Chiefs hung on despite a late Wellington Hurricanes fightback to win a thriller 30-29 on Sunday. The teams shared seven tries - three of them coming in a frenetic opening eight minutes - but it was the three penalties kicked by the Chiefs' Josh Ioane that proved the difference. Western Force and Melbourne Rebels had a bye. —AFP

## 'Coach K' says goodbye as North Carolina down Duke

**LOS ANGELES:** North Carolina beat Duke University 81-77 on Saturday to reach the US collegiate basketball national championship game and bring the curtain down on Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski's storied career. The Final Four matchup at the Superdome in New Orleans between the fierce in-state rivals didn't disappoint.

University of North Carolina's Caleb Love scored the Tar Heels' last eight points in the final 24.8 seconds to end a game that featured 18 lead changes and 12 ties. North Carolina booked a championship clash with the University of Kansas on Monday. The Jayhawks dominated Villanova, leading wire to wire in an 81-65 victory in the other semi-final.

Kansas snapped Villanova's nine-game winning streak and avenged a brutal 95-79 loss to the same team in a 2018 Final Four matchup. They will play

## Four share lead at crowded Texas Open

**LOS ANGELES:** Brandt Snedeker and Beau Hossler shot five-under-par 67s to join a four-way tie at the top of the Texas Open third round leaderboard on Saturday. Snedeker and Hossler's matching scores left them on 10 under, alongside South Africa's Dylan Frittelli and journeyman J J Spaun in San Antonio. Spaun, who carded a three-under-par 69, missed a golden chance to take sole possession of the lead but was left ruing a bogey six on the par-five 18th.

Scott Stallings, who also carded a five-under-par 67, is one off the lead on nine under, one ahead of veteran Matt Kuchar on eight under. A cluster of nine players, including South Korea's Kim Si-woo and England's Aaron Rai, are tied for seventh on seven under. The crowded field sets the stage for a tense final round at TPC San Antonio on Sunday, where a place in next week's

## Disabled table tennis players return victorious

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait disabled table tennis team returned home Sunday with 15 medals of various hues after participating in the first Arab Clubs Tournament and Egypt's International Paralympic Table Tennis Championship. The team was received by Honorary Chairwoman of Irada Disabled Sports Club Sheikha Suhaila Al-Sabah and the athletes' parents.

Sheikha Suhaila was pleased with the achievements the athletes made in the singles, doubles and mixed doubles matches. "The large number of medals collected by the players show disabled table tennis has a bright future, especially since the competition was against well-established teams. We are happy to see Kuwait's flag hoisted high at two major tournaments," she said.

Sheikha Suhaila lauded the positive participation of Kuwaiti girls, particularly Ahad Al-Rashidi and Malak Al-Enezi, which is a big step forward for disabled table tennis. Chairman of Irada Club Duaij Al-Hajeri said the achievements were the result of hard work and efforts of the technical and administrative departments. He said we hope to always have an outstanding presence in future events.

for the national title for the first time since 2012, when they lost to Kentucky in the championship. The Jayhawks last won the title in 2008. North Carolina coach Hubert Davis could join Michigan's Steve Fisher in 1989 as the only first-year head coaches to win the national crown.

But the pre-game focus was on Krzyzewski, the 75-year-old veteran who had already announced this would be his last season and had hoped to lead the Blue Devils to the sixth NCAA title in his 42 years at the helm. "Coach K," who also guided the United States to Olympic gold medals in 2008, 2012 and 2016, was emotional toward the end of a 10-minute video tribute that played before the contest.

It featured a number of his former Duke players along with USA players including James Harden and Kevin Durant. Krzyzewski departs with a record 1,202 coaching victories. He led Duke to titles in 1991, 1992, 2001, 2010 and 2015, and the five championships trail only the 10 won by legendary UCLA coach John Wooden. His Blue Devils were up 74-73 with 1:24 to play after Wendell Moore's three-pointer.

But North Carolina's RJ Davis was fouled on the ensuing possession and hit both free throws to give



NEW ORLEANS: Theo John #12 of the Duke Blue Devils dunks the ball in the first half of the game against the North Carolina Tar Heels during the 2022 NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament Final Four semifinal at Caesars Superdome on April 2, 2022. —AFP

the Tar Heels a one-point lead. Love drained a three-pointer to put North Carolina up by four with 28 seconds left. "I wanted it bad," Love said after scoring 21 second-half points. "Playing Duke for the chance to get the national championship ... it's crazy that we're here right now." —AFP

## Casas clocks top 200m medley time of 2022

**LOS ANGELES:** American Shaine Casas won the men's 200m individual medley at the San Antonio Pro Swim on Saturday with a world-leading time and personal best of 1min 56.70sec. Thanks to his strong butterfly and backstroke legs, Casas led compatriot Michael Andrew by almost a second at the halfway stage, and he held on over the breaststroke and freestyle legs to beat Leon Marchand, whose runner-up time of 1:56.95 was a French national record.

Chase Kalisz, who won Olympic gold in the 400m medley in Tokyo last year, was third in 1:57.10. "I had a feeling that Leon was coming back," Casas said of the 19-year-old rising French star, who is training at Arizona State University under US great Michael Phelps's longtime mentor Bob Bowman. "Everybody was so close. I went out - I went for it, and that is kind of how I like to swim that race." —AFP



## Sports

# Man City maintain Premier League lead as Brentford thrash Chelsea

**LONDON:** Manchester City kept their cool under pressure on Saturday, cruising past Burnley 2-0 after Liverpool briefly replaced the long-time Premier League leaders at the top of the table. Elsewhere, Christian Eriksen scored as Brentford came from behind to beat Chelsea 4-1 - their first victory against their London rivals since 1939. Third-placed Chelsea remain on course for next season's Champions League, but Manchester United's hopes of a top-four finish are fading fast after a 1-1 draw at home to Leicester.

Liverpool, who trailed City by 14 points in January, took pole position as Diogo Jota's header and a late Fabinho penalty saw off lowly Watford 2-0 in the early kick-off. But Kevin De Bruyne eased any City nerves in the early minutes of their match against relegation-threatened Burnley and Ilkay Gundogan put them in cruise control. City and Liverpool are locked in a thrilling shootout at the top of the English top flight, with just eight matches remaining of the season.

Next week the two heavyweights clash at the Etihad in a mouthwatering fixture that could potentially decide the destination of the title. The two teams also meet in the FA Cup semi-finals later this month and both are involved in the Champions League quarter-finals in the coming week. Quadruple-chasing Liverpool did not have the easy afternoon coach Jurgen Klopp would have hoped for against Roy Hodgson's Watford, who are fighting for their lives.

The home side needed Brazilian goalkeeper Alisson Becker to be at his best to keep out Juraj Kucka before Jota nipped in ahead of Ben Foster to head in his 20th

goal of the season midway through the first half. But there was a nervousness around Anfield as the visitors refused to wilt and they even had a glorious chance to equalize in the second period.

Liverpool had to wait until a minute from time to get the two-goal cushion they desired when Kucka wrestled Jota to the ground from a corner. Fabinho took responsibility from the spot and smashed into the top corner. "The Premier League is the most important competition," said Klopp, whose side have already won the League Cup this season. "A big two months (ahead) hopefully. This week can decide a lot about how May will be. The boys created a top-class basis and now we have to use it."

## City slickers

If City felt the pressure they did not show it. Pep Guardiola's men, chasing their fourth league title in five years, were ahead in the fifth minute at Turf Moor through De Bruyne. City doubled their lead in the 25th minute when Raheem Sterling exchanged passes with De Bruyne before cutting the ball back for Gundogan to stroke home.

In the most eye-catching result of the day, Chelsea lost against Brentford after six straight wins in all competitions since owner Roman Abramovich announced his intention to sell the club. The European champions had taken the lead when Toni Rudiger lashed home from long-range at the start of the second half. But two goals from Vitaly Janelt and a first Premier League goal for Eriksen since his return to the English top-flight in a 10-minute spell turned the match on its head. Yoane Wissa scored late to complete the rout.



**LONDON:** Brentford's Danish midfielder Christian Eriksen celebrates after scoring a goal during the English Premier League football match between Chelsea and Brentford at Stamford Bridge on April 2, 2022. — AFP

"I felt when we have played a top four, top three team, we have had a chance to make an unbelievable result and finally today everything came together," said Brentford boss Thomas Frank. United are still three points adrift of fourth-placed Arsenal having played two games more after another disappointing display at Old Trafford.

Cristiano Ronaldo was missing for the Red Devils through illness and only a combination of VAR and

David de Gea prevented United falling to defeat. Kelechi Iheanacho's headed opener for the visitors was quickly cancelled out by Fred. De Gea then produced a stunning save to deny Wesley Fofana before James Maddison did put Leicester back in front only for the goal to be ruled out by a VAR review. Wolves beat local rivals Aston Villa 2-1 and Leeds were held to a 1-1 draw by Southampton while Brighton and bottom side Norwich drew 0-0. — AFP

## Bayern rout Freiburg but 12 men on pitch could prove costly

**BERLIN:** Leon Goretzka scored on his first appearance for four months as Bayern Munich romped to a controversial 4-1 win at Freiburg in a Bundesliga match overshadowed by a substitute mix-up on Saturday. Four days before their Champions League quarterfinal, first leg at Villarreal, Bayern put in a strong performance on the road.

However, there could be consequences for Bayern who briefly had 12 players on the pitch after a mistake following a late double substitution. "We drew the referee's attention to the fact that Bayern had eleven outfield players on the pitch," Freiburg director Jochen Saier told Sky. "That was bizarre, I haven't seen that before." Freiburg need to lodge a formal complaint for there to be repercussions for Bayern.

### 'Confused situation'

Referee Christian Dingert noted the incident - which he described as a "totally confused situation" - in his match report and the official told Sky: "Now the DFB (German Football Association) must decide." Under league rules, such a breach of the substitutes regulations could see the result being reversed with Freiburg awarded the three points.

When Niklas Sule and Marcel Sabitzer, who later scored, both came on in the 86th minute, only one player came off, leaving Bayern with 12 men on the pitch for 17 seconds. "There was the bizarre situation," admitted Bayern coach Julian Nagelsmann. "The fourth official showed the wrong number and Kingsley Coman didn't know he had to go off. Mistakes happen. From the point of fair sport there was nothing that



**FREIBURG, Germany:** Freiburg's Italian midfielder Vincenzo Grifo and Bayern Munich's German forward Thomas Mueller vie for the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match on April 2, 2022. — AFP

speaks against it having been a fair game."

There were then eight minutes of stoppage time after intense discussions between both benches and the referee. Germany star Goretzka, who missed Bayern's previous 13 league games with a hip injury, gave his team a second-half lead by heading in a free-kick. Freiburg equalised when ex-Bayern striker Nils Petersen, who signed a contract extension Friday, hit the net just 17 seconds after coming on. However Bayern pulled clear when Serge Gnabry, Kingsley Coman and Sabitzer fired in late goals.

Bayern are on course to win a 10th straight league title with a nine-point lead after second-placed Borussia Dortmund were later thumped 4-1 at home by RB Leipzig. Even with their star striker Erling Haaland in the starting lineup, Dortmund had no answers and were whistled by their own fans at Signal Iduna Park. For the first time since the Covid pandemic started, Dortmund played in front of a capacity home crowd, but defender Mats Hummels admitted the team let their fans down. — AFP

## Fulham, Cherries tighten grip at top of Championship

**LONDON:** Aleksandar Mitrovic scored twice as Fulham beat London rivals QPR 2-0 on Saturday to maintain their eight-point lead at the top of the Championship table. Second-placed Bournemouth came from a goal down to beat Bristol City 3-2 and also move closer to a Premier League return. Mitrovic's first-half opener put Fulham in control and the Serbia striker's 78th-minute penalty sealed the victory, taking his tally to 37 league goals this season.

Fulham, who look certain to be promoted back to the top flight at the first time of asking, went ahead after the 14th minute at the Kiyon Prince Foundation Stadium. Tom Cairney played the ball in to Fabio Carvalho, who pulled it back from the right-hand touchline for Mitrovic to score from close range. Referee Gavin Ward pointed to the spot 12 minutes from time after Neco Williams' right-wing cross struck Lee Wallace's arm.

Mitrovic coolly converted, ending any real prospect of a QPR comeback. The defeat left QPR in ninth place in the table after a poor recent run. "We knew this would be a tough one - a derby against a tough side," said Fulham boss Marco Silva. "We wanted a reaction after the last defeat against West Brom and they were under the same pressure as they want to fight for a play-off position. We had a plan and from the first minute we controlled the match in every way."

Bournemouth super-sub Siriki Dembele slotted in from close range following a brilliant mazy run to claim what proved to be the winning goal to help the second-placed Cherries open up a six-point lead over their automatic promotion rivals. Dominic Solanke and Lewis Cook were also on target for the hosts, who had to come from behind and then see off a late City fightback. Luton benefited from a late own goal to draw 2-2 with Millwall while fellow play-off hopefuls Middlesbrough beat bottom side Peterborough 4-0 and Blackburn drew 2-2 at Coventry. — AFP

## Benzema, Felix shine before key matches

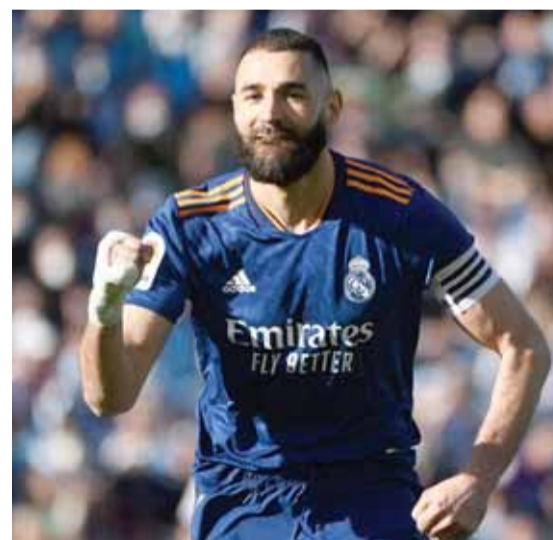
**MADRID:** Karim Benzema and Joao Felix ensured Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid claimed morale-boosting victories in La Liga on Saturday before facing the Premier League's heavyweights next week in the Champions League quarterfinals. Benzema missed one penalty but scored two as Real Madrid defeated Celta Vigo 2-1 to get back to winning ways ahead of Wednesday's crunch meeting with Chelsea.

And Atletico Madrid sailed past Alaves 4-1 before their trip to Pep Guardiola's Manchester City on Tuesday, the in-form Felix scoring twice, with Luis Suarez adding a brace of his own after coming on as a substitute. Felix now has seven goals in his last eight games for Atletico and the 22-year-old is likely to be key if Diego Simeone's men are to spring a surprise against City and reach the semifinals. "We go with confidence but with our feet on the ground as well because we know it will be very tough game," said Felix.

Madrid's victory at Balaidos will calm any nerves in La Liga's title race too, allowing the leaders to draw a line under their thrashing at the hands of a resurgent Barcelona before the international break. And, despite an imperfect performance, the win should restore confidence ahead of the first leg away at Chelsea, with Thomas Tuchel's side now recovering from a humiliation of their own, after they were earlier thumped 4-1 at home by Brentford.

Chelsea, who outplayed Real Madrid over two semi-final legs last year, will be a much sterner test than Celta and Carlo Ancelotti's side will almost certainly not have the benefit of being awarded three penalties at Stamford Bridge. "I don't know if we deserved to win, I had to make two big saves in the first half," said Real 'keeper Thibaut Courtois.

"But winning is important. Chelsea lost today at home so they will want to come back strong on Wednesday. We have to give more. We lacked a bit



**VIGO, Spain:** Real Madrid's French forward Karim Benzema celebrates scoring a penalty during the Spanish League football match between RC Celta de Vigo and Real Madrid CF at the Balaidos stadium on April 2, 2022. — AFP

of intensity today and we can't do that because that's one of Chelsea's strengths. We have to be aggressive."

Real Madrid's chances against Chelsea are improved immeasurably by the recovery of Benzema, and also Ferland Mendy, who offers so much more solidity at left back than either Nacho Fernandez or Marcelo. Benzema marked his return from injury with a brace that takes his goal tally for the season to 39. Any hopes Barcelona had of causing a collapse may already have been dashed, with Real Madrid now 12 points ahead of Sevilla and 15 in front of the Catalans, who have two games in hand, the first of them against Sevilla on Sunday.

Barca and Sevilla are most likely now fighting it out for second. Atletico climb to third. Ancelotti's positive test for COVID-19 last week meant he was unable to take his place on the sideline and it remains to be seen if the Italian is able to make the trip to London. Madrid found the breakthrough in the 19th minute when Eder Militao had his right foot taken away from him by Nolito. Benzema rolled it right. Matias Duro dived left. — AFP

## Lazio beat Sassuolo to keep up hunt for Europe

**MILAN:** Lazio bounced back from Rome derby defeat with a 2-1 win over Sassuolo on Saturday which got their push for European football back on track. Goals in each half from Manuel Lazzari and Sergej Milinkovic-Savic were enough to take Maurizio Sarri's side up to fifth, a point ahead of Atalanta and Roma, who hammered their capital city rivals 3-0 before the international break.

However they are some way off the Champions League places as they trail Juventus, who sit fourth ahead of Sunday's big match with champions Inter Milan, by seven points. "We showed from the first minute that this was not the same team we saw in the derby," Milinkovic-Savic told DAZN. "We want to finish in the top four. I know it will be difficult but we're going to try."

That defeat, and possibly the large hail stones which thumped down in Rome, led to a small crowd of less than 20,000 showing up for the first match at the Stadio Olimpico since grounds were allowed to fully open to the public for the first time in two years. Those that did show up were rewarded with an entertaining match which had been billed as a battle between rivals for the Italy striker's berth - the hosts' captain Ciro Immobile and the promising Gianluca Scamacca who started the Azzurri's 3-2 friendly win in Turkey on Tuesday.

On Friday Sarri said that Immobile had been made a "scapegoat" for Italy's failure to qualify for consecutive World Cups as he hasn't taken his phenomenal Lazio form, 21 goals in 26 league matches in all competitions, to the national team. However neither made a particular impression, with Scamacca fluffing a good early chance when Thomas Strakosha smothered an attempted chip finish. — AFP

## New York slump continues with loss to Toronto

**NEW YORK:** New York City FC's sluggish start to the MLS season continued on Saturday as the reigning Major League Soccer champions crashed to a 2-1 defeat in Toronto. A Jesus Jimenez strike and a headed own goal from Thiago Martins were enough to secure all three points for former USA coach Bob Bradley's Toronto FC side at BMO Field. The defending champions have only taken four points from a possible 15 since the start of the season and are languishing in 11th place in the Eastern Conference.

It was an inauspicious performance from New York, who take on the Seattle Sounders on Wednesday in the first leg of the CONCACAF Champions League semifinals. City started Saturday's game brightly but were rocked after Jimenez opened the scoring against the run of play on 31 minutes. Canadian international Jonathan Osorio's pass played in Spanish striker Jimenez, who stroked home his third goal of the season past City goalkeeper Sean Johnson.

Toronto doubled their lead just before halftime after Alejandro Pozuelo's free-kick was inadvertently glanced by Martins into his own net. Brazilian substitute Heber scored a consolation for New York deep into stoppage time to make it 2-1 but it was too little too late. The struggle continued for David Beckham's Inter Miami, who lost 3-1 at home to Houston Dynamo and dropped to last place in the East with just one point from a possible 15.

Colombian Darwin Quintero scored for Houston in the 49th minute and American Fafa Picault completed the win with a penalty in the 57th minute and a goal in injury time. Veteran Gonzalo Higuain converted a penalty for Inter in the 66th minute. Houston snapped a 26-game winless streak on the road that dated back to 2020. — AFP



CHRISTCHURCH: Australian team celebrate their victory with the trophy after the 2022 Women's Cricket World Cup final match between England and Australia at the Hagley Park Oval on April 3, 2022. —AFP

## Australia beat England to win World Cup

CHRISTCHURCH: Australia, led by a sublime 170 from Alyssa Healy, rewrote the record books to beat a valiant England by 71 runs in the Women's World Cup final in Christchurch on Sunday. Australia amassed a daunting 356 for five but the defending champions England, faced with a record target, kept up the run rate but ran out of wickets to be dismissed for 285 in the 44th over, with Nat Sciver unbeaten on 148.

"Unbelievable," player-of-the-match and player-of-the-tournament Healy said of her innings - the highest in any women's or men's World Cup. "Never in my wildest dreams I ever thought to do anything like that. Our team sets out to win events like this and you want to contribute to that, don't you? I just really enjoyed being out there." The victory continued Australia's dominance of the 50-over format with their seventh title from 12 World Cups and extended their one-day international record to 38 wins from 39 matches over the past four years. "To come out and

perform so well through the whole tournament, to be honest, is pretty amazing and I think we deserved the victory today," Australian captain Meg Lanning said, paying special tribute to Healy.

"It was incredible. To do it in a World Cup final. She's just able to come out and play so well and some of those shots she was playing were ridiculous." England captain Heather Knight called Healy's innings "one of the best" and said it was unfortunate her team could not build a big partnership around Sciver. "But I guess the runs on the board meant we had to take a few risks," she said.

### Healy on the rampage

Against England, Australia lost the toss but nothing else. Knight put Australia into bat, noting her side had bowled "outstandingly well" at Hagley Oval, but Australian openers Perry and Rachael Haynes were not listening. They showed patience, scoring a sedate 26 off the first eight overs before

Healy went on the rampage, paying the bowlers no respect as she pounded all points of the boundary with 26 fours.

Her 170, off just 138 deliveries, was the highest score in a women's or men's World Cup final, the highest score in this tournament and contributed to her tournament record of 509 runs, eclipsing the 497, set by Haynes earlier in the same innings. The Healy and Haynes 160-run opening stand was a record partnership for any wicket in a World Cup final.

England could have claimed both wickets in the 21st over, with Australia still in the 90s, when Healy and Haynes were dropped off the bowling of Kate Cross. It took Australia 22.2 overs to bring up their first 100, 13 more overs for the second hundred but just nine overs for the third, helped by England returning to the poor fielding which had plagued their start to the World Cup when they lost their first three games.

When Haynes went for 68, Beth Mooney joined Healy in a 156-run partnership before Healy's extraordinary innings ended in the 46th over, when she missed an Anya Shrubsole delivery outside off stump and was stumped. Mooney quickly followed for 62 as Australia lost four wickets in a push for runs over the last four overs, with Elysse Perry finishing not out 17 after coming in at number seven on her return from injury.

Shrubsole was the one England bowler to perform with credit with three for 46 off her 10 overs - the figures inflated by the final over which cost 15 runs. England made a determined effort to stay within reach of the required run rate, but were hampered by wickets falling at regular intervals. Sciver's 148 was the second-highest score in a Women's World Cup final, but the next best for England was 27 by opener Tammy Beaumont. For Australia, Jess Jonassen took three for 57 and Alana King finished with three for 64. —AFP

## Babar leads Pak to first series win over Australia in 20 yrs

LAHORE: Skipper Babar Azam hit a second successive century and Imam-ul-Haq an impressive half century Saturday to anchor Pakistan's first series win over Australia since 2002 with a nine-wicket victory in the third and final one-day international in Lahore. It was a dominant performance by the home team at Gaddafi Stadium as they dismissed Australia for a below-par 210 through their fast bowlers, who shared eight wickets, and then chased down the target in 37.5 overs losing just one wicket.

Azam, dropped by Travis Head off Jason Behrendorff on one, took full advantage of the reprieve, driving Marnus Labuschagne for two to complete his 16th ODI hundred off 110 balls. Azam, who scored 114 in the second game, hit 12 boundaries in his 115-ball 105 not out. Unbeaten Haq followed his own back-to-back hundreds with a polished 89 for his 11th ODI half century. He cracked six boundaries and a six, and finished the series with 298 runs.

Haq and Azam shared an unbroken 190-run stand for the second wicket after opener Fakhar Zaman fell to Nathan Ellis for 17 - Australia's only success in the innings. The elusive 2-1 win came after Pakistan lost six consecutive ODI series to Australia - and the preceding three-match Test series 1-0 last month. Australia won the first ODI by 88 runs while Pakistan clinched the second by six wickets, both also at the same venue.

"When you lose the first game then your players need confidence and once they were given that they came back strongly and did well," said Azam. "Credit to them for this series win." Australian skipper Aaron Finch rued the lack of runs. "We didn't get enough runs," said Finch. "When you go three down in the first few overs, it's always going to be hard to get a big total."

Earlier, fast bowlers Haris Rauf (3-39), Mohammad Wasim (3-40) and Shaheen Shah Afridi (2-40) kept the pressure from the start as Australia were bowled out in 41.5 overs. Alex Carey top-scored with a gritty 61-ball 56 and Sean Abbott hit a 40-ball 49 in an otherwise dismal batting show by the visitors. Sent in to bat for a third successive time by Azam, Australia lost in-form Head with the first ball of the match, from Shaheen.

Out-of-form Finch fell in the next over from Rauf,



LAHORE: Pakistan's captain Babar Azam poses with the trophy after winning the one-day international cricket match series against Australia at the Gaddafi Cricket Stadium on April 2, 2022. —AFP

trapped leg-before for a second time in a row, as Australia lost both openers without a run on the board. Rauf made it 3-6 when Marnus Labuschagne edged one to slip for Iftikhar Ahmed to take a simple catch. Ben McDermott (36) and Marcus Stoinis (19) took the score to 59 when the latter chipped spinner Zahid Mahmood to Haq, who took a good diving catch.

McDermott, who smashed a maiden ODI century in the second game, was trapped leg-before by Wasim for 36 as Australia lost half their side for just 67 by the 16th over. Carey and Cameron Green (34) added an invaluable 81 runs for the sixth wicket off 95 balls, but Wasim came for his second spell to bowl Green in the 32nd over. Carey's resistance finally ended when he holed out to spinner Iftikhar after hitting six boundaries and a six. Abbott, who also hit six boundaries and a six, made sure Australia got past 200 during a last-wicket stand of 44 before falling to Rauf. Australia will end the tour - their first to Pakistan in 24 years - with a single T20I on Tuesday, also in Lahore. —AFP

## Swiatek beats Osaka to win Miami Open

MIAMI: Iga Swiatek's dream season continued as the incoming world number one scooped her third successive WTA 1000 title to beat Naomi Osaka in the Miami Open final on Saturday. The Polish 20-year-old became only the fourth - and youngest - player to win the "Sunshine Double" of Indian Wells and Miami in the same year following Steffi Graf, Kim Clijsters and Victoria Azarenka with a 6-4, 6-0 win over Osaka.

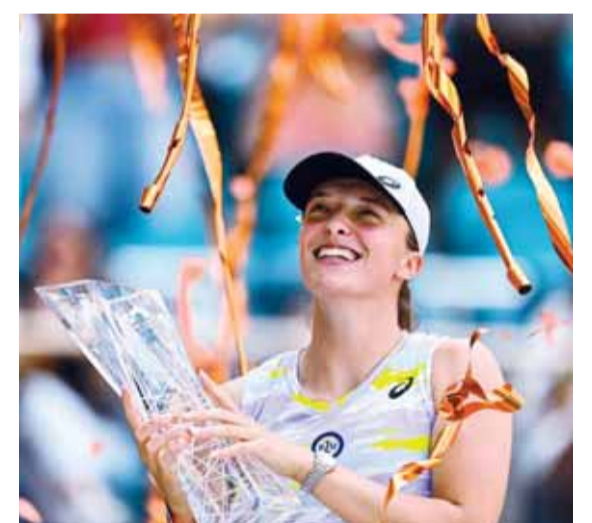
Swiatek, who will be formally confirmed as world number one when the new WTA rankings are announced on Monday, has now won 17 straight games, a winning streak that includes titles in Doha, Indian Wells and now Miami. Osaka, 24, enjoyed a welcome return to form in Florida even if the four-time Grand Slam champion's first final since the Australian Open in 2021 ended in a comprehensive defeat.

"I feel privileged to be among those players who have done this double before, I knew it would be tough playing these tournaments in a row but I took it step by step," said Swiatek, who won her maiden Grand Slam at the French Open in 2020 as a 19-year-old and will be the favorite to win another Roland Garros crown next month on her favored surface. "I was in the zone in the second set - that's the easiest way for me to be dominant. I was surprised I could handle all these matches. I am still the same person though. My idols were like that and I don't want the success to change me in a negative way. It gives me confidence."

Swiatek headed into a seventh career final on the back of 16 straight wins - the last player to win 16 or more in a row was Osaka, between Cincinnati in 2020 and last year's Miami Open. Osaka has been serving well this tournament but was broken by Swiatek to make it 3-2 in the first and began to look vulnerable. The former French Open champion is one of the finest returners in the women's game and even though Osaka was attempting to aggressively jump upon Swiatek's second serve, her opponent was far more consistent and clinical overall.

### 'Sad outcome, fun day'

The Polish player didn't face a single break point in a match that lasted just 80 minutes. A break of



MIAMI GARDENS, Florida: Poland's Iga Swiatek poses with her trophy after winning the 2022 Miami Open at Hard Rock Stadium on April 2, 2022. —AFP

the Osaka serve right at the start of the second saw any lingering hopes for the Japanese melt in the Miami sunshine and Swiatek easily moved through the gears to land her sixth career title amid joyous scenes at Hard Rock Stadium.

For former world number one Osaka, who left Indian Wells last month in tears after being heckled by a fan during a second round defeat, this run to the final in Miami has at least given her renewed hope of returning to the top after a spell out of tennis in 2021 to deal with mental health issues. "Iga is quite different from the other players I have played against, she is very explosive but I'm not as disappointed as I've been before after losses," said Osaka, who will head to Europe a week early to prepare for the clay swing of the season.

"It was a sad outcome but a fun day. Normally I would be crying in the locker room but I guess life experiences help. Only a couple days ago I was celebrating getting back into the top 50 but I don't take things like that for granted. I'm a bit more humble now about the opportunities I get. I can take a lot of positives from this."

Osaka revealed when she had dinner with Swiatek in Australia a couple of years ago, she was asked her opinion about what the future held for the up and coming Polish star. "She said she might go to college but I said don't do that," smiled Osaka. "I remember thinking she was so young and this good that she should commit to playing more tournaments first. It's been cool to watch her grow." —AFP