



Abdulrahman: Losing reputation and morals cannot be recovered



Lakers and LeBron on the brink after Denver rout







# Germany, France, Lithuania expel Russian diplomats

# US, Britain seek Russia's suspension from UN Rights Council



**BERLIN:** Germany on Monday expelled a "significant number" of Russian diplomats in what Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock called a response to the "unbelievable brutality" the Kremlin had unleashed in Ukraine. The move, AFP has learned, involves 40 envoys and follows similar moves by European partners in recent days as a reaction to Russia's war on its neighbor.

"The images from Bucha speak to unbelievable brutality by the Russian leadership and by those who follow its propaganda with a boundless will to exterminate," Baerbock said, referring to the town near Kyiv where dozens of bodies were found in mass graves or littering the streets. The Kremlin has rejected Western accusations that Russian forces were responsible.

However, Baerbock said "similar images" were to be feared "in other places that Russian troops have occupied". She said it was essential to "stand up for our freedom, against the cohesion of our society, as persona non grata," she said.

Baerbock described the diplomats' presence "as a threat" to the more than 300,000 Ukrainians "who have sought protection here" since the invasion began. "We will no longer tolerate that-we communicated that to the Russian ambassador this afternoon," she said. Baerbock said Germany would take further steps "with our partners" including "imposing harsher sanctions on Russia, decisively expanding support for Ukraine's fighting forces and bolstering NATO's eastern flank".

In another development, France on Monday said it would expel 35 Russian diplomats as part of a joint European action after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. "France decided this evening to expel a number of Russian personnel with diplomatic status stationed in France whose activities are against our security interests," the foreign ministry said in a statement. A ministry source, who asked not to be named, said 35 Russian diplomats would be expelled. "This action is part of a European approach," the foreign ministry **Continued on Page 6** 

KRAMATORSK: A young girl cries before the train leaves the eastern city of Kramatorsk, in the Donbas region. - AFP

our freedom and be prepared to defend it". "That is why the German government has decided to declare a significant number of staff of the Russian embassy, who have worked every day here in Germany against

### Ramadan Kareem What do you know about Ramadan?

By Karima Badr Kandil, translated by Arwa Aladl

Did you know that if you want to acquire a habit or give up another, you must commit to it for around 27 to 36 continuous days? Welcome to the best training program ever, at Islam Academy. It's Ramadan! Ramadan is a month that Muslims sanctify and feel its importance. It's also a month wherein the Muslims follow some acts of worship and righteous deeds that they have saved throughout the year, in order to perform them in this blessed month.

I had some personal experiences with this topic that I would like to share with you: When I asked some random non-Muslim people what they would like to know about Ramadan, their questions were about how I could endure hunger and thirst for all these periods of time, especially since most Muslims live in very hot climates! I always answer, "Yes, my friend, you are right, it sounds really terrifying when you think about it, but this feeling of hunger is only there for the first few days. Yet, those who suffer, at first, are, usually, the ones who have neglected fasting during the whole year."

Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) advised us to fast on Mondays and Thursdays of every week, or to, at least, fast three days in the middle of each lunar month. Those who don't practice fasting will probably feel a severe lack of water, sugar, sleep, and food (and smoke for smokers) for the first days. Fortunately, it will gradually decrease during the first three days when the body gets used to fasting and food and drink will not occupy the mind.

Rather, a Muslim faster's mind will be free to enjoy peace and their heart will be tranquil. Ramadan is about body & soul, while we may thirst, we also use this time to recharge the emptiness in our soul through acts of worship, kinship ties, giving alms to the poor, and voluntary works that help the needy.

tary works that help the needy. People also ask, "Why Ramadan? Why not any other month?" It's a great question: The sanctity here does not revolve around Ramadan itself, rather, it is in the great event that occurred in it that makes this month special.

Continued on Page 6

# 4 bedoon activists on hunger strike

#### By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** Four bedoon activists are on hunger strike for the past seven days to highlight the struggles of the country's stateless people, who are deprived of citizenship, travel and other rights. The living conditions and rights of this group are among the thorniest human rights issues in Kuwait, according to reports by human rights organizations.

Speaking to Kuwait Times, Mohammed Al-Barghash, a human rights activist, said the bedoon problem has been dragging for over 70

### Sweet smell of Ramadan tempts as Muslims fast

**DHAKA:** Mosques and market streets teem with evening crowds tempted by the scent of syrupy sweets and hefty rice plates, as more than half a billion Muslims across southern Asia break the day's Ramadan fast. The Islamic holy month began over the weekend and during that time believers abstain from eating, drinking, smoking, and sexual relations

# 99% of people breathing polluted air

**GENEVA:** A full 99 percent of people on earth breathe air containing too many pollutants, the World Health Organization said Monday, blaming poor air quality for millions of deaths each year. Fresh data from the UN health agency showed that every corner of the globe is dealing with air years, but the Kuwaiti government has not offered a proper solution. "The government has complicated this issue instead of resolving it. We protested a lot in various areas over the years and still haven't got our rights," he said.

Barghash said the protest site in front of Sulaibiya police station is to deliver the message that ignoring the issue of stateless people is not acceptable, pointing out that the suffering and struggle of bedoons have led to an increase in the number of child suicides in the country, amid poor living conditions.

"The issue of bedoons must be resolved immediately, where the government must decide if we have rights or not. The Kuwaiti government is saying we have other nationalities and are not originally Kuwaitis. Then why don't they work to prove this, contact **Continued on Page 6** 

between sunrise and sunset. The fast is conceived as a spiritual struggle against the seduction of earthly pleasures-but for the nightly "iftar" meal, festive meals traditionally bring families together and there is intense social activity. The centuries-old Chawkbazar market in Bangladesh is a traditional centre for evening meet-ups during Ramadan, with hundreds of makeshift food stalls selling traditional grilled meats and delicacies.

Huge crowds returned to the neighborhood on Sunday for the first time since the coronavirus pandemic put a pin in large public gatherings. — AFP (See Page 11)

pollution, although the problem is much worse in poorer countries.

"Almost the entire global population (99 percent) breathes air that exceeds WHO air quality limits, and threatens their health," the agency said in a statement. In its previous report four years ago, WHO had already found that over 90 percent of the global population was affected, but it has since tightened its limits, it said.

"The evidence base for the harm caused by air pollution has been growing rapidly and points to significant harm caused by even low levels of many air pollutants,"

**Continued on Page 6** 



KUWAIT: Bedoon activists rest as they continued their hunger strike to shed light on the struggles of the country's stateless people in Kuwait.



DHAKA: Photo shows a plate with traditional food for Muslim devotees to break their fast during the holy fasting month of Ramadan in Dhaka. — AFP



VOSMAN SOUTH AFRICA: A general view of Vosman North Extension in front of the Schonland coal mine, in Mpumalanga. The air in that region is the most polluted in the world with record levels of nitrogen dioxide, according to global environmental charity Greenpeace. — AFP





# Kuwait Amir congratulates Saudi King on Ramadan

# Amir receives greetings from Iraqi, Egyptian presidents

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah congratulated in a phone call the Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud on the holy month of Ramadan. During the phone conversation, His Highness the Amir prayed to Allah Almighty to bestow everlasting wellbeing on the Saudi King, and wished further progress and prosperity to both countries and their peoples, as well as both Arab and Muslim worlds. Meanwhile, the Saudi King thanked the Amir for the good fraternal feelings, praying to Allah the Almighty to bestow permanent good health on His Highness.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Sunday received a phone call from the President of Iraq Dr Barham Saleh, sharing congratulations on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan. In the phone conversation, the Iraqi president wished goodness and blessings for both sisterly countries and their people, as well as both Arab and Muslim worlds, while praying to Allah 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 Iraqi president 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 Iraq under his wise leadership.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad



Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also received a phone call from the President of Egypt Abdelfattah Al-Sisi, sharing congratulations on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan. In the phone call, the Egyptian president wished blessings for both sisterly countries

and their people, as well as the Arab and Muslim nations. He also prayed to Allah 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 Egyptian president for this good gesture that reflected historical and distinguished relations between both countries and their people, wishing him well and prosperity for Egypt under his wise leadership.

In the meantime, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Sunday a phone call from Prince Turki bin Mohammad bin Fahad Al Saud, minister of state of the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. During the conversation, His Highness the Crown Prince Mishal and Prince Turki exchanged Ramadan greetings, and expressed best wishes for their two countries and all Arab and Muslim nations. His Highness the Crown Prince Mishal thanked Prince Turki for his sincere and brotherly feelings. He praved for Almighty Allah to grant Prince Turki over-lasting wellbeing, and the government and people of sisterly Saudi Arabia more progress, prosperity and welfare. ---KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

# **KPI wins RoSPA** gold award for 11th straight year

KUWAIT: Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI), on Monday, has been named the winner of the 2022 Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) for the Chemical Sector Award, in addition to winner of the Occupational Health and Safety Gold Award for the eleventh consecutive year. The Gold award recognizes an organization's overall health and safety performance, policies, and procedures.

Specifically, the industry sector awards are competitive awards given to organizations that show surpass their competitors in leadership commitment to health and safety. The acting CEO Waleed Al-Bin Ali said that KPI's submissions for the awards were assessed by independent, experienced and well-qualified health and safety professionals engaged by RoSPA, liaising with other panel members. It has campaigned on several safety issues in the UK, including matters specific to occupational health and safety. Organizations receiving a RoSPA Award are recognized as industry leaders in health and safety practice. Every year, nearly 2,000 entrants vie to achieve the highest possible accolade in what is the UK's longest-running health and safety industry awards. KPI is the international downstream subsidiary of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, ranked as one of the world's largest national oil companies. Established in 1983, KPI operates over 4,700 service stations across Europe under its brands, Q8, Q8Easy and Tango, and provides over 70 airlines with jet fuel in major airport hubs. It also runs two state-of-the-art lubricant blending plants in Belgium and Italy, and participates in two joint venture refineries in Italy and Vietnam. --KUNA

# Kuwaiti physician restores Palestinian child's eyesight

KUWAIT: In a humanitarian gesture, Kuwaiti ophthalmologist Dr Khaled Al-Sabti succeeded in restoring the eyesight of an 11-year-old Palestinian girl living in refugee camps in Jordan after an emergency surgery done in Kuwait. Dr Khaled Al-Sabti who is representing Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) and Kuwait Embassy in Jordan told KUNA the surgery was done on Roa'a Ahed, in the left eye, where she underwent through another operation in her right eye last Wednesday at Kuwait Specialized Eye Center. During their trip last February to the Syrian refugee camps as part of KRCS delegation, they were told that the Palestinian child Roa'a lost sight for almost a year, he said. KRCS has undertaken procedures for hosting the child with the help of the Kuwaiti embassy in Jordan, where she arrived in Kuwait last week with her father, he added.

Meanwhile, KRCS Secretary-General Maha Al-Barjas stressed the KRCS' keenness to implement various humanitarian and relief works throughout the year in various countries in cooperation with its partners. "We at the Red Crescent are a humanitarian relief organization that works within International Red Cross and Red Crescent



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti ophthalmologist Dr Khaled Al-Sabti performs the surgery. ---KUNA photos

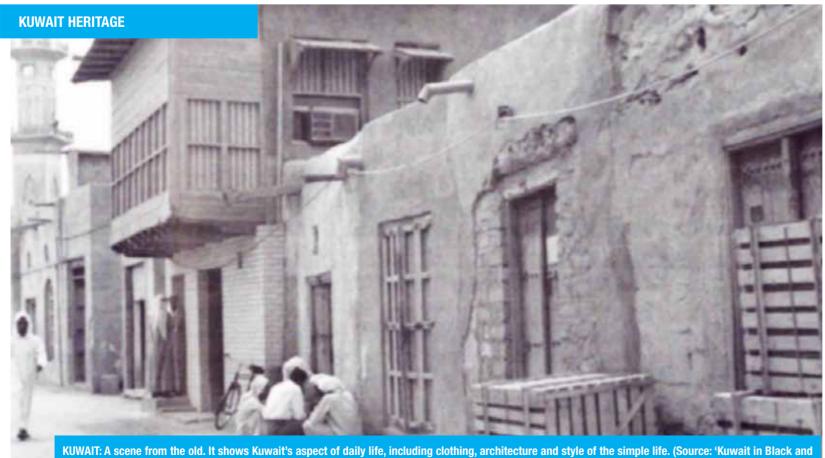
of helping people internally and externally," she said. The child's case required hosting her in Kuwait, and we hope for the success of the surgery so Roa'a

Movement, what we do is part of our work and part can return to her normal life and study, she added. As for Roa'a Ahed, and her father, Ahed Abdullah, they expressed sincere thanks to State of Kuwait for its humanitarian work. -KUNA





Roa'a Ahed's eye during surgery.



White' by Basem Al-Loughani. Prepared by Mahmoud Zakaria Abu Alella, heritage researcher at the Ministry of Information)

# Yemeni consultations continue under **GCC** auspices

RIYADH: The Yemeni consultations, held under the auspices of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC), continued on Sunday in closed meetings, discussing, exploring and defining the challenges facing each of the six planned axes. For his the part, GCC Ambassador Sarhan Al-Munikher said on the

sidelines of the meetings



**GCC Ambassador** Sarhan Al-Munikher

that today's meeting was devoted to exploring the challenges facing the current situation in all fields in Yemen, to reach the proper solutions for these challenges. He also indicated that the meetings were in parallel, as there was a political group, an economic and development group, a humanitarian, social and security group, the fight against terrorism, and a group specializing in the media aspect. The Yemeni-Yemeni discussions started on Wednesday, under the sponsorship of the GCC, with broad Yemeni participation. The talks are scheduled to proceed until April 7. -KUNA



# Local

# Ghabqas make cautious return after two-year absence in Kuwait

Kuwait's favorite Ramadan nighttime social activity



KUWAIT: Workers prepare sweets for customers at a shop in Kuwait on the second day of the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan on April 3, 2022. Various types of Arabic sweets including Qatayef and Kunafa are usually presented to guests during ghabqas. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayya

#### By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: After almost two years of disrupted social activities due to the coronavirus pandemic that included two Ramadans, Kuwait is back to normal, and this year is the first Ramadan

when gatherings are permitted again. The ghabqa, which is a Kuwaiti tradition where people gather for a meal that is after iftar and before the suhour, is one of the activities that was abandoned or very limited due to the pandemic for the past two years.

Now that people can gather again in large numbers, ghabqas are

**Faten Omar** 

back on people's schedule. Unfortunately, most companies suffered losses due to the pandemic, which has affected their budget to organize social events. So there are fewer ghabqas at restaurants, hotels and ballrooms, or limited to smaller number of guests.

joins Kuwait Times

#### affected ghabqas, as the virus hasn't disappeared completely. So even people who used to organize ghabqas for their family and relatives in big numbers, now prefer to keep it simple and limited to a few people. Conversely, a sales manager at a five-star hotel in Kuwait said even

Health

precautions

companies'

present at

ghabqas

though Ramadan has just started, they already have most of their ballrooms booked.

A beauty salon that used to hold ghabqas for their employees told Kuwait Times this year they won't organize a ghabqa. "We suffered a great loss during the pandemic, as we were closed for many months and many of our staff

left the company. We can't afford additional expenses. Hopefully, next year we will organize it again," Fatma, the owner, told Kuwait Times.

Tharwat, marketing manager at a popular perfume company, said their company is excited to hold the ghabqa gathering again after two People's fear of getting infected has also years. "We will hold the ghabqa this year for our



employees as an appreciation for their hard work during the entire year. It will also be with the same numbers - the only difference will be respecting health conditions and precautions required by the hotel where the ghabqa will take place," he explained.

Um Hamad complained that before the pandemic, she used to receive three or four invitations for ghabqas by her friends, but this year she hasn't received even one. "We miss the old gatherings, but it seems people are still affected by the fear of the coronavirus. Ramadan is still in the early stages, and I hope this will change, she said.





### at Araa an online newspaper, translator for Kuwaiti blogs, edi-



Faten Omar

# On the occasion of the



KUWAIT: Faten Omar has recently joined the editorial staff of Kuwait Times as a reporter. Omar has been working in the field of Journalism for more than 11 years. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in journalism and a master's degree in media from Jordan and began her career as a journalist in local and international news outlets.

Previously she was a reporter at Kuwaitbased daily English newspaper Kuwait Times, reporter and video journalist at the daily Arabic newspaper Al-Kuwaityah, senior editor at Al-Mustagbal newspaper, local news editor

news, an online newspaper based in Jordan, a reporter at the Jordanian-based daily newspaper Al-Ghad, and a public relations manager at Al-Hajes company.

Faten was also a freelance contributor with Xinhua - a

Chinese news agency, Raseef22 in Lebanon, Rai Al-Youm in the UK, and translator for New York Times.

## A day in the life of a household cook

#### By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Ramadan is a busy month for domestic workers in Kuwait, including housemaids, drivers and cooks. Kuwait Times spoke to Ameck Solangon, a Filipino cook for a Kuwaiti family in Dasman. She knew the entire month of Ramadan will be as busy, so she made sure she got her day off last Friday. "I met some of my Facebook friends whom I got to know through Pinoy Arabia ME, an online radio station," she said. Solangon cooks for a family of retired

government employees. "My employers are both retired Kuwaiti government workers. The husband was a former police general and his wife was a teacher. They are kind-hearted people and pay our salaries on time," she said. Solangon joined the household in 2014.

"I was hired directly from the Philippines to be their family cook. When I joined, there were four children in the household. One by one, the children got married and had families of their own. Only the retired couple remain, and once a week their children visit, so now I have a very less work compared to five years back. I now help my colleagues in household chores. I also clean the bathrooms, iron clothes and wash dishes," Solangon said.

Ramadan, however, is different. "Ramadan is very busy in the kitchen. I also do the shopping most of the time. I know what they like to eat and have a monthly budget. But the budget rises up to fivefold during Ramadan. They also hand out food in charity, so I have to cook extra food," she said.

Since Solangon sleeps late in Ramadan, she also wakes up late in the morning. "On regular days, I wake up at 7 am. In Ramadan



however, I wake up at 9 am or 10 am. But I always make sure all dishes will be ready by 6 pm before iftar," she said. Her next day off will be on Eid. "A day off is not a problem when it comes to my boss. I just need to ask permission, and they allow me to go out and meet my friends. But the best day for me is Eid Al-Fitr, because it means getting gifts in cash and kind," she concluded.



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# Local

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KUWAIT: Hussein Abdulrahman (center) with Kuwait Times Deputy Editor-in-Chief Abdullah Boftain (left) and Kuwait Times Managing Editor Mustafa Qamhiya. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

# **Hussein Abdulrahman: Losing reputation** and morals cannot be recovered

#### By Mustafa Qamhiya

KUWAIT: Hussein Abdulrahman is a seasoned journalist with long years of experience in this field. Abdulrahman worked with Kuwait Times, one of the many media houses where he left his mark. He has seen the ups and downs of journalism in Kuwait, and has been a part of many of these journeys. He spoke to Kuwait Times in an exclusive interview. Some excerpts:

#### Kuwait Times: How did you start with journalism?

Hussein Abdulrahman: When I was young, in the late 60s early 70s, Chinese ships used to come to Kuwait. The Chinese had a philosophy of spreading Mao's principles and used to bring little booklets written in immaculate Arabic. I was influenced by Mao's philosophy, and from here my Arabic developed as I read those booklets.

I was also good in composition at Al-Mubarakiya School. Once when my teacher read what I had written, he beat me, demanding to know who wrote the piece for me. I told him my mother and father are illiterate, so he asked me how I had learnt the language. I told him about the books, so he told me not to go deep into the Chinese booklets as there are better books available, promising to bring them to me

- 'Reading Chinese booklets in immaculate Arabic improved my Arabic'
- 'I decided to be different and have my own style'
- 'My first salary with Al-Rai Al-Aam was KD 50'
- 'If you lose your reputation and morals, you cannot recover them'
- 'I owe my wife a lot as she carried a lot of burdens with me'
- Journalism nowadays is different from that in the '60s and '70s

him, he said he had read my work, praising that I had interviewed Egypt's army chief of staff and other dignitaries when I was still a university student. He told me to work with him, but said he cannot set my salary. He then took me to Editor-in-Chief Jassem Al-Nisf, who decided to give me a salary of KD 120.

So, I started in 1976 with Al-Qabas. I decided to be different and not imitate anyone, and have my own style. For example, every year high school results are announced, and the usual thing to do is to interview the top students. But I asked my colleagues to interview the bottom 10 students to find out why they had failed, because the number of failed students was

expected or ordinary. When Dr Al-Adwani became health minister, I went to meet him two hours after he took the oath of office. My question to him was: 'If you do not achieve your goals, will you resign?' His answer was yes. In journalism, you should be different and look at things from a different angle.

#### KT: If you can go back in time, will you take up journalism again?

Abdulrahman: No! The title of the book I am writing is 'Then I regret it'. It is true that I made a name for myself, but I worked hard for it. I made friendships and contacts inside and outside Kuwait. I was not looking for a position; rather I sought to have a good reputation. Any journalist who wants to have a good reputation must realize that this will cost him a lot. I tried to be different without taking anything away from my colleagues.

was away. For example, I covered the hijacked Ål-Jabriya aircraft in Algeria and remained away for 16 days, but I was reassured because my late wife took good care of the children. If it was not for her, I would not be able to achieve what I did. I also covered the coup that took place in Sharjah. No other paper was present on both these incidents.

I am proud of my wife, and when she died on Friday, Aug 28, 2020 at dawn, I screamed, saving 'my back is broken now'. I thank God that she raised three children whom I am proud of and who have a good reputation.

KT: Did you speak to the liberated hostages?

realized that the majority joined to collect a certificate.

There is no paper in the world that has two pages of columnists except in Kuwait. They write about the housing problem for instance, but there will be no numbers or statistics.

I was with the Managing Editor at Al-Qabas Raouf Shahrouri when a young man came to meet him. The man told him he wanted to write columns. Shahrouri told him 'Welcome!'. The young man asked, 'Can I write now?', so he replied 'Sure!'

The young man spent around 20 minutes away and returned. He gave Shahrouri a column, telling him this is for today, then another for tomorrow and a third one for later. Raouf became very angry and trashed the three columns. The young man demanded why he had discarded his work and ideas. He told him these are not ideas. He said if you want to write one column, go to the archives and read for hours, then sit and write. If you want to write about an issue, go and read about it. Nowadays, everyone wants to be a columnist, but does not want to work hard or develop themselves. Another thing is that I do not like the word expatriates. We are a country that depends on residents in all aspects of life. Nowadays I am building a house, and since the start from the foundation all the way up, I did not meet a Kuwaiti. Even at companies that I visit to get offers and prices, I haven't met a Kuwaiti. They are serving the country, so why are we giving them a hard time! If you have a business project, you should have a media project next to it to succeed.



Hussein Abdulrahman speaks with the late Prince Talal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.

Also, whenever I got a page of Al-Rai Al-Aam newspaper, I used to fold it and put it in my desk. During composition class, when the teacher was speaking, I used to read the stories on the page, and from there was my start towards journalism.

In 1975, when I was studying in Cairo, I received a call from Mohammad Al-Barjes. He told me to become a student reporter with a weekly page of news about students, which I accepted. When I came to Kuwait a week later, I met him and we went to the paper. My first picture was published in Al-Rai Al-Aam, and I remained with them for nearly a year. My first salary there was KD 50, but I was embarrassed to go to the cashier to collect KD 50, so I waited for three months and collected KD 150.

At the start of 1976, our late colleague Olfat Fareed told me Al-Qabas' editor-inchief wanted to see me and gave me his number. When I didn't call him, she insisted I should do so and see what he wanted, so I called his secretary, who informed me to come at any time. When I went and met large, and this indicated that there was a problem. We had a page with the headline The failed dedicate their failure to the education minister" and demanded his resignation.

I published the pictures of the failed students with their statements and certificates with the failing marks. I then received a call from Mohammad Al-Sager, who questioned me about what I had published. I told him the results show many students have failed and we must correct the problem, so he told me from now on he must see any material I write beforehand. An hour later, he called and told me that it was a good story, wondering how it came to my mind. I asked him 'Why were you angry earlier?' He said 'Minister Al-Rubei came to the paper and complained against you.'

When I used to submit any story, I used to go to the proofreaders after they finished to find the mistakes and learn from them. I developed myself in journalism and this gave me a personality in front of people. I did not want to ask questions that are

#### KT: Did you want your children to become journalists?

Abdulrahman: My son Ali is a broadcaster, and many people are talking about him. We instill etiquette in our children, as manners are priceless. Money comes and goes, but if you lose your reputation and morals, you cannot recover them, and no one can mend your credibility in front of people. We are a family that discusses politics and elections around the table.

#### KT: What was the role of your wife?

Abdulrahman: I owe her a lot, as she carried a lot of burdens with me. She worked at a bank, then worked at the university with Dr Modhi Al-Humoud. When she used to bring exam papers to correct, she always turned the papers over so we couldn't see the grades. Dr Al-Humoud told me that may wife once refused a reward, saving she did not deserve it because she did not do extra work.

I worked at the university as an associate professor, but I was later let go because I wrote a series about many people who had forged degrees in 1985. There were those who claimed to have studied in the US, but could not speak English. I did my master's in the US and started a PhD, but did not finish it because I got preoccupied with journalism. Although I did not really need it, I later discovered I had made a strategic mistake.

Journalism is not a stable job, and one stays out a long time, but my wife coped and took care of our three children while I

Abdulrahman: Yes. I remained with them all the way from Algeria to Kuwait on the nine-hour flight. I have pictures with the hostages and another with Sheikh Abdulaziz Al-Qasimi, who assumed power in Sharjah following the coup. I asked to go and cover the coup and my request was approved.

When I arrived at a hotel in Dubai, I called the Sharjah governor's palace and requested an interview, which was granted. I took pictures of the governor as well as the troops around him, then sent the films by Kuwait Airways personnel to Mohammad Al-Sager in Kuwait to be developed.

#### KT: Do you regret doing something in your journalistic career?

Abdulrahman: I haven't done anything that I regret, because I have certain values and principles. There is no way I will do something that will hurt a human being. An example: An MP submitted a parliamentary question about a secretary at a public company. He also sent the question to newspapers, but I thought it is not right for an MP to present a question to embarrass someone, so I called my colleagues and told them not to print the MP's question, because it is not a parliamentary question but made in revenge, and it was not published.

#### KT: Do you have anything to say to budding journalists?

Abdulrahman: Journalism nowadays is different from that in the '60s and '70s. Some journalists do not want to learn or take courses. Journalism has now become the profession of those who do not have a job. I organized some courses at KJA, and

#### KT: Do you read?

Abdulrahman: I read every day. When I wake up, I check the news on TV, then start reading. When I hear about a ruling, I read about its details, because it shows the way it's written and its vocabulary, and it educates you legally.

#### KT: A final word?

Abdulrahman: I thank you for this opportunity. I spend time with my grandchildren on Saturdays and buy things of benefit for them. I am very comfortable when I spend time with my family. When my wife passed away, I went through hardship and was advised to preoccupy myself with certain activities. I am now involved in some projects with Al-Qabas and am building a house.



in Abdulrahman speaks with then Algerian foreign minister Al-Hadi Khudhairi over the Kuwait Airways Flight 422 (Al-Jabriya) hijacking,



Hussein Abdulrahman with Sarif Ali bin Al-Hussein, an Iraqi politician who led a campaign to restore monarchy in Iraq.



Hussein Abdulrahman participates in a seminar with late MP Hamad Al-Jouan.





Hong Kong's leader to leave office, ending a divisive term

# Pakistan sewage workers hope for better future



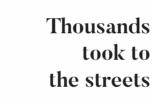
COLOMBO: Protestors hold banners and placards during a demonstration against the surge in prices and shortage of fuel and other essential commodities in Colombo on April 3, 2022. Armed troops in Sri Lanka had a tense confrontation with a crowd protesting a worsening economic crisis on April 3, after a social media blackout failed to halt another day of anti-government demonstrations. —AFP

# **S** Lanka leader offers to share power

# Other cabinet vacancies will be filled after talks with opposition

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lanka's embattled president offered to share power with the opposition on Monday as protests demanding his resignation grew over the worsening shortages of food, fuel and medicines. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's invitation to legislators came as heavily armed security forces looked to quell more demonstrations over what the government itself has acknowledged as the worst shortages of essentials since independence from Britain in 1948.

"The president invites all political parties in parliament to accept cabinet posts and join the effort to seek solutions to the national crisis," Rajapaksa's office said in a statement. It stressed that solutions to the deepening crisis should be found "within a democratic framework", as thousands joined spontaneous demonstrations in cities, towns and villages. The invitation came after 26 cabinet membersevery minister except Rajapaksa and his elder brother Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa-submitted letters of resignation at a late-night meeting on Sunday. The country's central bank governor Ajith Cabraal-who has long opposed an International Monetary Fund bailout for the country-also stepped down on Monday.



ing ministers, three of them to their old jobs, while he replaced his brother Basil as finance minister with the previous justice chief.

Other cabinet vacancies will be filled after talks with the opposition, the president said. But there was no immediate response from the opposition, which would not join any Rajapaksa-led government, according to comments Sunday by its main leader Sajith Premadasa.

Political analysts said the offer of a unity government did not go far enough to address the economic crisis or restore confidence in the Rajapaksa administration. "This is like re-arranging the deck chairs on the Titanic," Bhavani Fonseka, political analyst and human rights lawyer, told AFP. "This is a joke."

but address issues of governance," Ivan told AFP.

#### Power base protest

The South Asian island nation is in the grip of unprecedented food and fuel shortages along with record inflation and crippling power cuts, with no sign of an end to the economic woes. Trading was halted on the country's stock exchange seconds after it opened Monday as shares fell by more than the five percent threshold needed to trigger an automatic stop.

The government has announced it will seek a bailout from the International Monetary Fund, but talks are yet to begin. Troops and police were

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# Pakistan's top court meets as crisis rages

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan's Supreme Court was hearing arguments Monday around Prime Minister Imran Khan's shock decision to call an early election, sidestepping a no-confidence vote that would have seen him booted from office.

The opposition had expected to take power on Sunday after mustering enough votes to oust the cricketer-turned-politician, but the national assembly deputy speaker refused to allow the motion to proceed because of "foreign interference". Simultaneously, Khan asked the presidency-a largely ceremonial office held by a loyalist-to dissolve the assembly, meaning an election must be held within 90 days.

On paper, and pending any court decision, Khan will remain in charge until an interim government is formed to oversee elections. A notice Monday from President Arif Alvi to Khan and opposition leader Shehbaz Sharif said they should agree on a new interim prime minister, but Sharif declined to cooperate.

"How can we respond to a letter written by a person who has abrogated the constitution?" he



The departures cleared the way for the country's ruling political clan to seek to shore up its weakening position. The first nominations to the new cabinet saw the president re-appoint four of the outgo-

told a press conference Monday. According to the constitution, the prime minister cannot ask for the assembly to be dissolved while he is facing a no-confidence vote.

"Khan's 'surprise' triggers constitutional crisis," thundered The Nation newspaper Monday, while its rival Dawn called it "A travesty of democracy" above a front-page editorial. An alliance of usually feuding dynastic parties had plotted for weeks to unravel the tenuous coalition that made Khan premier in 2018, but he claimed they went too far by colluding with the United States for "regime change".

#### Washington denial

Khan insists he has evidence-which he has declined to disclose publicly-of Washington's involvement, although local media have reported it was merely a letter from Pakistan's ambassador following a briefing with a senior US official. Western powers want him removed because he won't stand with them on global issues against Russia and China, Khan said. Washington has denied involvement. Pakistan's Supreme Court has now received a slew of suits and petitions from the government and opposition regarding the crisis, but has also taken up the case "suo moto"-on its own merit. "This is an urgent matter," chief justice Umar Atta Bandial said late Sunday.

The current court is ostensibly independent, but rights activists say previous benches have been

Trail of destruction in Ukraine villages

**ZELENY GAI:** Devastated by intensive Russian bombardment, the village of Zeleny Gai near the frontline in southern Ukraine looks empty-except for a group of local men gathering to await an aid delivery. The expected delivery "is the only reason why there are so many people out. Normally, this would be a ghost village," said Yury Seka, 33, a farmer like many in this fertile agricultural region. Another villager, Alexander Zlydar, 38, said: "I can't remember the last time I slept in my own bed".

Previously caught up in the midst of the fighting, the village has had some respite since the frontline moved a little further to the southeast closer to the Russian-occupied city of Kherson. But Grad rockets continue to fall intermittently as Russia focuses its war effort on the south and east of the country after retreating from the northern cities of Kyiv and Chernigiv.

During a particularly heavy bombardment on March 13, a 250-kilogram bomb dropped by parachute landed on the roof of Andriy Koshmak's house. He pointed out the device, as well as the black streaks left by recent rocket attacks. The 29year-old said the bomb had likely drifted from its intended target because of strong winds. Further along the road, the local school was turned into a pile of rubble by the bombing that day.

Lego pieces and textbooks could be seen in the ruins along with a parachute-likely one of the ones used to drop the bombs on Zeleny Gai. Women and children had already been evacuated from the village, but the head of the local council was killed at the school and the headmaster suffered serious injuries to his legs. "Many people had come to seek shelter inside the school," Koshmak said. "The Russians thought that some soldiers were hiding there, but it was only civilians". Political columnist Victor Ivan added that a cabinet reshuffle in the guise of a national government would not be acceptable to people demanding the Rajapaksas' departure. "What is needed is a serious reform programme, not just to revive the economy



ISLAMABAD: A resident stands beside a picture of Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan as he looks at the morning newspapers displayed for sale at a roadside stall in Islamabad on April 4, 2022, a day after Khan foiled an attempt to boot him from office. — AFP

used by civilian and military administrations to do their bidding throughout Pakistan's history. It is unclear when the court may rule on the issue-or if Khan would even accept its decision-but there is precedent.

In 1988 Muhammad Khan Junejo appealed to the Supreme Court after the assembly was dissolved by President General Zia-ul-Haq, who had taken power in a military coup years earlier. The court agreed his government had been dissolved unconstitutionally, but ruled that since elections had been announced anyway it was best to move on. — AFP

#### 'There was no pity'

Further along the road, a mobile anti-aircraft battery lay destroyed. "It's terrible. There was no pity for anyone," Koshmak said as he looked at what remained of the school which he attended for nine years. The nearby city of Mykolaiv hosts around 1,000 inhabitants of surrounding villages, the mayor, Oleksandr Senkevych said last week.

While the situation in Mykolaiv remains precarious, with several air raid alerts per day, the situation in the villages around "is worse," he said. Further south, on the road to Kherson, the village of Shevchenkove lies almost abandoned. The police said the mayor of Shevchenkove is officially missing after being arrested by the Russian army during a humanitarian aid delivery. Ivan Bolyakov, a 25-year-old with a ginger beard and a black hat, said he was the only one of 25 residents on his street who stayed behind. "We arrested two looters in recent days. I have to watch out for what is happening in my village," said Bolyakov, as the wind shook the ruins of a nearby home that had recently been hit by a strike. — AFP placed on high alert as a 36-hour curfew ended at dawn despite intelligence reports warning of more unrest, a top security official told AFP. Thousands took to the streets in the Rajapaksa bastion of Tangalle in the island's deep south demanding the resignation of the family, police said. Anti-Rajapaksa rallies would have been unthinkable in the region in recent years. — AFP

## Indonesian teacher sentenced to death for raping students

JAKARTA: An Indonesian teacher found guilty of raping 13 students at an Islamic boarding school, and who impregnated at least eight of the victims, was sentenced to death on Monday. Herry Wirawan, 36, had been sentenced to life in prison in February, in a case that drew national attention to sexual abuse in the country's religious schools.

But prosecutors, who had requested the death penalty and chemical castration, filed an appeal. "We accept the appeal of the prosecutors," read the judge's statement, published Monday on the website of the High Court in Bandung, West Java province.

"We hereby punish the defendant to a death sentence." Wirawan was not in court for the appeal, a spokesperson told AFP. Indonesia has held off conducting executions for several years and the last known executions took place in 2016. Wirawan's pattern of abuse at the school, also in Bandung, came to light when the family of a female student reported him to police for raping and impregnating their teenage daughter last year.

During his previous trial, it was revealed Wirawan had raped the female students-many from poor families and attending the school on scholarships-over a period of five years. He also impregnated at least eight of them.

Before the lower court, the defendant asked the judge for leniency, saying he wanted to be around to raise his children. A relative of one of the victims told AFP that Monday's sentence brought justice for the victims.

"We initially wanted punishments of life in prison and chemical castration so that he would feel the pain from his crime," said Hidmat Dijaya, uncle of one of the victims. "But, we still feel the death sentence represents justice."

The case drew national outrage and increased pressure on parliament to approve a long-delayed bill on the "elimination of sexual violence", that seeks to combat sex crimes and provide justice to victims, including in cases of marital rape. — AFP



International

# Serbia leader claims landslide victory in general elections

of the end of Aleksandar Vucic... we will not waste this," said Ponos. In the capital

Belgrade, the elections were briefly marred by scuffles between parliamen-

tary candidate Pavle Grbovic and sup-

porters of Vucic's SNS, along with scat-

tered reports of small skirmishes and

dismissed any allegations of foul play.

The country's election commission pre-

During his victory speech later, Vucic

dicted voter turnout would likely hover around 60 percent, nearly a

10-point jump from the last general

province of Kosovo also participated

in the contest and boarded around

40 buses headed north to vote, after

authorities in Pristina refused to

Decade in power

Only a few months before the

allow polling stations on its soil.

polls, the opposition seemed to have

gained momentum. In January, Vucic

axed a controversial lithium mine project

following mass protests that saw tens of

thousands take to the streets. The move

was a rare defeat for Vucic, who has

rotated through a range of positions,

Serbs from the former breakaway

voter intimidation.

elections in 2020.

# Vucic extends his decade-long rule in the Balkan nation

BELGRADE, Serbia: Serbia's leader Aleksandar Vucic claimed a landslide victory in general elections Sunday paving the way for another term as president and extending his decade-long rule in the Balkan nation. Official results were set to be announced late Monday but Vucic appeared confident in his commanding performance just hours after the polls closed, saying a run-off would not be needed.

"I am pleased that a huge number of people voted and showed the democratic nature of Serbian society," Vucic announced during a televised victory speech, saying he secured roughly 60 percent of the vote. "There was no suspense at any time," he added. The country of around seven million took to the polls to elect the president and members of the 250seat parliament and cast votes in several municipal contests.

Surveys ahead of the polls predicted Vucic's centre-right Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) would maintain its control over the parliament, while the president would secure a second term. "Personally, I see stable progress and I voted in accordance with this opinion," Milovan Krstic, a 52-year-old government employee, told AFP after casting his vote in Belgrade.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine cast a long shadow over the contest that observers had earlier predicted would focus on environmental issues, corruption and rights. Vucic deftly used the return of war in Europe along with the coronavirus pandemic to his advantage, promising voters continued stability amid uncertain headwinds.

> Voter turnout hover around 60 percent

"The influence of the Ukrainian crisis on the election results was huge," the president said in his victory speech. Following Vucic's speech, Serbia's leading opposition candidate Zdravko Ponos remained defiant.

"These elections are (the) beginning

**Hungary PM tightens** hold on power after poll victory

BUDAPEST, Hungary: Prime Minister Viktor Orban's fourth-term victory threatens to erode democracy further in Hungary, but he needs to tread a careful path with Brussels to secure muchneeded EU funds, analysts said Monday.

His ruling Fidesz party extended its parliamentary majority by two seats in Sunday's general election with turnout at near record levels, trouncing a united opposition in an election overshadowed by

Germany, France, Lithuania...

Russia's war in neighbouring Ukraine. This success, on top of 12 consecutive years in power, will make Orban "extremely confident", said analyst Patrik Szicherle of Political Capital. "This victory shows Fidesz that they need not change course, he can continue constructing his illiberal political system,"

he told AFP. Russian President Vladimir Putin, increasingly isolated over the war in Ukraine, congratulated Orban on Monday and said he hoped to develop further Moscow's ties with Budapest. The Hungarian nationalist has been a rare Putin ally in Europe and in NATO, even if diplomatically he has fallen broadly into line with EU support for Kyiv over the war.

Orban, 58, has ruled the EU nation in central Europe with a tight grip since 2010, taking control of the judiciary and other institutions and cracking

town of Bucha near the capital where dozens of bodies were found in mass graves or littering the streets near Kviv over the weekend. The Kremlin has rejected Western accusations that Russian forces were respondown on civil liberties, raising alarm in Brussels. 'We have won a great victory-a victory so great you can perhaps see it from the moon and certainly from Brussels," Orban told jubilant supporters in a victory speech late Sunday that needled the European Union. "Conservative politics has won, this is not the past, this is the Europe of the future."

Orban has presided over repeated confrontations with the European Union, including over the neutering of the press and judiciary, and measures targeting the LGBTQ community. With almost all the votes counted, Fidesz won 53 percent of the vote compared to 35 percent for the opposition coalition, according to the national election office.

As a result, Fidesz and its Christian democratic partner KDNP retains its two-thirds majority in parliament with 135 seats-two more than in the out-

every principle we hold dear to continue to participate" in the council, she said. "Given strong evidence of war crimes, including reports of mass graves and heinous butchery in Bucha, Russia cannot remain a going legislature. "I'm still savouring this victory,"

hoped a high turnout could force a run-

off. Analysts, however, said the opposi-

tion had little chance of dethroning Vucic

Tuesday, April 5, 2022

The far-right Mi Hazank party also surpassed expectations and will now enter parliament for the first time, after crossing the five-percent minimum threshold.International observers, who monitored the election, are set to address the media later Monday.

Marta Pardavi of rights group Hungary Helsinki Committee said the results were "a disaster for Hungarian democracy". "We see from other countries how autocrats do not go into reverse mode on their own," she told AFP.

Analysts say Orban is likely to remain a thorn in the side of Brussels but seek a compromise to unlock billions of euros of pandemic post recovery funds. — AFP

Venediktova said 410 civilian bodies had been recovered so far. The UN's human rights chief Michelle Bachelet said the images from Bucha point to "possible war crimes."



BELGRADE, Serbia: Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic addresses the public after the first unofficial results of the general elections were known, in Belgrade. —AFP

including prime minister, president and deputy premier along with a stint as the defence chief during a decade in power.

surveys predicted Vucic would win again on Sunday even as the opposition had

> Fidesz MEP Balazs Hidveghi told AFP. "We didn't expect such a big win," he conceded.

During the run-up to the elections, or eating away at his commanding parliamentary coalition, which holds a lion's share of the seats. — AFP

#### **Continued from Page 1**

statement added. "Our first responsibility is always to ensure the safety of French people and Europeans," it said.

Lithuania on Monday said it was expelling Russia's ambassador over Russian aggression in Ukraine. There has been outrage across Europe over killings in the

### What do you know about...

#### **Continued from Page 1**

This event is the descent of the Noble Quran. God Revealed the first words of the Noble Quran to the final Messenger Mohammad (PBUH) in Ramadan. The Noble Ouran is the last Book of God (Allah), which carries the answers to all questions, and in which there is no error or any human intervention at all.

Among questions I have received is my German friend's question, which was very funny. He said, "My sweetheart, why do you torture yourselves with fasting? Why does your God Command you to be hungry and thirsty to worship Him?" It was funny because he perceived fasting as torture. Fasting was never a method of torture, but rather the opposite. It is the best and healthiest way to cleanse the body and rebuild cells. Fasting is considered the best way to get rid of excess fat in the body, activate the memory and clear the mind. It's unfortunate that, only recently, have these facts finally been discovered by modern science & implemented by people world-wide.

Fasting is an act of worship that was present in all previous Abrahamic religions, and Islam is a tree from which those religions branched off. If we searched deeply, we would find that fasting is the greatest way to discipline the soul and train it to control its desires.

Do you think that I do not understand?! Well, do you remember the Battle of Stalingrad? During this battle, the Russian soldiers endured hunger and thirst while their enemies, who could not bear the harsh conditions, collapsed. We later learned that their leaders were training them to fast from food and drink for long periods of time before the battle so that their will would not collapse if they were exposed to similar situations.

It was a genius and completely successful method that led to steadfastness, patience, and victory in the end. (We are not surprised. It is just that others have finally recognized a method that Muslims have known & followed for more than 1, 443 years). Fasting, for Muslims, is a real test of self-control against disobedience, verbal and physical abuse, looking/listening to forbidden things, and having the heart preoccupied with anything other than good deeds.

So, are there other benefits? What about people with illnesses? Well, Islam exempts the sick from fasting. It also makes exemptions for only, menstruating or

sible.

Meanwhile, United States and Britain announced plans Monday to seek Russia's suspension from the UN Human Rights Council following allegations that Russian troops systematically executed civilians in Bucha, Ukraine. "The images out of Bucha and devastation across Ukraine require us to now match our words with action," US ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield said in a tweet Monday.

"We cannot let a member state that is subverting

postpartum women, children, the simple-minded, and the elderly who may be negatively affected by fasting. It even gives a choice to those who are traveling long distances

My friends may ask, 'I thought that you were starving yourselves in solidarity with poor people?' To which I say, 'Yes, but this is also part of the wisdom of fasting.' Our Creator Knows that among His servants exist some for which it is not easy to truly feel the suffering of others unless they suffer similarly, but it is not the original or even most important reason. There are poor people who fast throughout the year because of famine. What would be the wisdom behind that be?

Can I tell you a secret about Ramadan that only Muslims know? Prophet (PBUH) told us that the devils are chained up in this month. Aha! Why is that important? Because, here, God shows us the truth about ourselves without any falsehood. You see, what we do of evils and sins in this month, cannot be blamed on temptations from the devil, as we are likely to do.

We tend to place the blame away from ourselves, but since the devils are chained, we can clearly see what sins are purely our own. We can see what sins we commit that spring from our own free will which Satan has no part in. Ramadan is a time for us to notice our intentions, control our emotions, and bear the consequences of our own actions. Finally, we have the most important issue, in my opinion, which is that fasting teaches us to be conscientious of God and know that He watches us all the time. During Ramadan, we may be fasting in front of people and eating at a time no one sees us, but we know that God is watching us. If we leave Ramadan with this concept in our heart, we won't be able to disobey Our Creator at any time.

Knowing that Our Lord is watching is integral to this act. Thirty days: The month of Ramadan is a training ground where we learn to control our tongue, mouth, hand, and eye, and in which we learn that God sees us all the time. Knowing this means we don't have to wait for surveillance cameras or human laws to make us good people. Good deeds and good habits will become a way of life for us, not just during exceptional occasions.

Courtesy of the TIES Center: As one of the projects funded and managed by Kuwaiti Society for Cultural Dialogue, TIES aims at empowering Kuwait's expats through social and educational services that promote a positive and productive role in society, and to facilitate opportunities for intra- and interfaith interactions that promote social solidarity. For more information, please call 25231015/6 or email: info@tiescenter.net.

member of the UN Human Rights Council. Russia must be suspended," said British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss.

Journalists over the weekend found corpses in civilian clothes, some with their hands bound, in the town of Bucha outside Ukraine's capital after Kyiv's forces retook it from Russia's army. Bucha Mayor Anatoly Fedoruk said many "were shot, killed, in the back of the head." The scale of the killings is still being pieced together, but Ukrainian prosecutor general Iryna

### 4 bedoon activists on...

#### **Continued from Page 1**

our embassies and deport us? Or if we are Kuwaitis, why are they not recognizing our work and the sacrifices of bedoon martyrs who died during the Iraqi invasion. Our demand is for a final resolution, whether we have rights or not," he said.

Bu Yousef, one of the protesters, demanded the bedoons' case must be referred to the courts for a just and final judgment. "We demand to refer our case to the court to get our rights, or the government can just bury us in Sulaibikhat cemetery!" he exclaimed. "The final decision rests with the judiciary. We have announced a hunger strike until our issues end forever. We will suffer in this holy month but will not move until there become no more stateless people and we have

### 99% of people breathing...

#### **Continued from Page 1**

WHO said. While UN data last year indicated that pandemic lockdowns and travel restrictions caused short-lived improvements in air quality, WHO said air pollution remains a towering problem.

"After surviving a pandemic, it is unacceptable to still have seven million preventable deaths and countless preventable lost years of good health due to air pollution," Maria Neira, the head of the WHO's department of public health and environment, said in a statement. WHO's study provides air quality data from more than 6,000 cities and towns across 117 countries. The findings were alarming, the organization said, and highlighted the importance of rapidly curbing fossil fuel use.

'Healthier energy systems'

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus stressed that worries over soaring energy prices, due in part to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, should help propel change. "Current energy concerns highlight the importance of speeding up the transition to cleaner, healthier energy systems," he said in a statement.

The Kremlin denied Russian forces killed civilians, and alleged that the images of dead bodies in Bucha are "fakes." Suspending Russia from the council would require a vote in favor by two-thirds of the UN General Assembly. Such an action has been taken in the past against Libya. "Russia should not have a position of authority in that body, nor should we allow Russia to use its seat on the Council as a tool of propaganda to suggest they have a legitimate concern about human rights," said Thomas-Greenfield.— AFP

our basic rights, including the right of citizenship," he added.

Fadel Al-Shammeri, a bedoon father of three, tried to set himself ablaze last year, "I got my nickname "Abu Turki" after I poured gasoline on myself because I could not obtain a birth certificate for my little girl, although by law, I deserve to get a birth certificate for my children," he said.

He raised the issue of "fake" nationalities written on the civil IDs of many bedoons. "The nationality changes every time we get a new civil ID. A different nationality is written in the nationality space every time. When we try to contact the embassy (of the country written on the IDs), they do not recognize us and issue a circular not to recognize the nationality written on our identification cards," Shammeri said.

He appealed to the interior minister, who has said he will not accept any injustice. "We hope to meet him so he can listen to our demands and give us our rights," he added. Meanwhile, a number of hunger strikers are in danger after their health deteriorated, which necessitated their transfer to hospitals.

"High fossil fuel prices, energy security, and the urgency of addressing the twin health challenges of air pollution and climate change, underscore the pressing need to move faster towards a world that is much less dependent on fossil fuels." The report provides data on concentrations of dangerous particulate matter with a diameter of between 2.5 and 10 micrometers (PM10), and particles with a diameter of less than 2.5 micrometers (PM2.5).

PM2.5 includes toxins like sulfate and black carbon, which pose the greatest health risks since they can penetrate deep into the lungs or cardiovascular system. And for the first time, the report also provides ground measurements of annual mean concentrations of nitrogen dioxide (NO2), a common urban pollutant, which is associated with respiratory diseases, particularly asthma. The report found problems related to particulate pollution were far worse in poorer countries, but that most cities had trouble with nitrogen dioxide.

While the air in 17 percent of cities in high-income countries fell below WHO's air quality guidelines for PM2.5 or PM10, less than one percent of cities in low and middle-income countries complied with the recommended thresholds, the report said. Out of the around 4,000 cities across 74 countries that collected NO2 data, measurements meanwhile showed only 23 percent of people breathed annual average concentrations of the gas that met levels in WHO's recently updated guidelines. - AFP



International

# Hong Kong's leader to leave office, ending a divisive term

# Hong Kong leaders suffering from 'chronic legitimacy crisis'

**HONG KONG:** Hong Kong's leader Carrie Lam announced Monday that she will step down in June, ending a divisive term that saw democracy protests squashed and strict pandemic curbs plunge the business hub into international isolation. Ending months of speculation, Lam confirmed she would not seek a second term when a committee made up of the city's political elite chooses a new leader next month.



Hong Kong being cut off internationally

"I will complete my five-year term as chief executive on June 30, and officially conclude my 42-year career in government," Lam told reporters. Lam said China's leaders "understood and respected" her choice not to seek another term and that she wanted to spend more time with her family.

The 64-year-old had dodged questions for months over her future and during Monday's announcement she revealed that she had informed Beijing of her plans to quit more than a year ago. A career bureaucrat, Lam became Hong Kong's first woman leader in 2017 but she is on track to leave office with record-low approval ratings. Kenneth Chan, a political scientist at Baptist University, said Hong Kong leaders have always suffered from a "chronic legitimacy crisis" because they are not popularly elected.

But Lam had lost support across the political spectrum. "Not merely among the pro-democracy citizens but also increasingly among the pro-Beijing camp as she has done such a terrible job with the pandemic," he told AFP.

Security tsar next leader? Hong Kongers and businesses based in the finance

# At least 20 dead in Ecuador prison riot

CUENCA, Ecuador: At least 20 people died in a prison riot early Sunday in southern Ecuador, the president's office said, the latest outburst of deadly violence in the South American country's detention facilities. "There are 20 reported dead who have been transferred to the Forensic Center of Cuenca," said President Guillermo Lasso's press office. Five of the inmates were "mutilated" in the clash in the El Turi prison in Cuenca, Interior Minister Patricio Carrillo said. Ecuador has struggled in recent years to contain prison violence — usually gang-related — with 320 inmates killed in riots in 2021. Carrillo told reporters the riot had been brought "under control" following the deployment of 800 police and 200 members of the armed forces. "The clashes have ceased but inside there are armed inmates," added Carrillo. He said each bloc was being evacuated one by one so that weapons could be confiscated. Trouble broke out at 1:30 am (0630 GMT) in the prison's maximum security section. At midday, it was visibly still not under control, with inmates and police officers seen on rooftops. Carrillo said the violence was gang-related. "There is an organization that wants to take absolute control inside the center (but) some cells rebelled," he said. Earlier in the day, Carrillo wrote on Twitter that Ecuador needs legal reforms to punish prison rioters. "We need strong provisions for those that carry out this violence. They are identified and must lose all kinds of prison benefits," he said. Family members congregated outside the prison waiting for news. "They didn't know how to control the situation inside," a man who requested anonymity told AFP. "I think they should have acted in a way to ensure there were fewer deaths," added the man, who was hoping for news about his brothers and a nephew. Ecuador has 65 prisons with a capacity of 30,000 but they are overpopulated by 30 percent. The El Turi prison is not overcrowded, though it is holding 1,600 prisoners in a facility with a 2,500 capacity. Last year, there were several bloody prison uprisings.-AFP

hub currently have little clarity on who will be the next leader at a time when Beijing is increasingly calling the shots directly. The chief executive position is not popularly elected, something that years of democracy protests failed to change. Instead, the position is selected by a 1,500-strong pro-Beijing committee, the equivalent of 0.02 percent of the city's 7.4 million population.

The next chief executive will be chosen on May 8 but so far no one with a realistic prospect has publicly thrown their hat into the ring. Hong Kong's numbertwo official, John Lee, who has a background in the security services, has been tipped by local press as the most likely contender.

Another potential front runner is finance chief Paul Chan. Lam's successor will take office on July 1, the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's handover by Britain to China. Supporters saw Lam as a staunch Beijing loyalist who steered the city through huge democracy protests and a debilitating pandemic.

Starry Lee, who leads Hong Kong's largest pro-Beijing party the DAB, described Lam on Monday as a "hard-working" official. "Her merit... should be left to history to judge," she said. Critics, including many Western powers, viewed Lam as someone who oversaw the collapse of Hong Kong's political freedoms and its reputation as a stable regional business hub.

#### Protests and pandemic

After huge and sometimes violent protests swept Hong Kong in 2019 Beijing responded with a crackdown that has remoulded the once-outspoken city into a mirror of the authoritarian mainland. Lam became the first Hong Kong leader to be sanctioned by the United States, because of her support for the crackdown, which has seen most of the city's prominent democracy supporters arrested, jailed or flee overseas.

Her administration also hewed to China's zero-COVID model, implementing some of the world's toughest anti-coronavirus measures and exasperating international businesses. The largely closed borders and strict quarantine rules kept infections at bay for some two years at the expense of Hong Kong being cut off internationally.



HONG KONG, China: File photo taken on March 26, 2017 shows Hong Kong's Chief Executive Carrie Lam waving after she won the Hong Kong chief executive election. Lam announced on April 4, 2022 that she will not seek another term in office as a pro-Beijing committee prepares to select a new leader next month. — AFP

But the strategy collapsed when the highly transmissible Omicron variant broke through earlier this year leaving Hong Kong with one of the developed world's highest fatality rates. Hong Kongers have been leaving the city over the last two years at a rate not seen since the period before the handover.

Thousands of foreign residents have also departed, especially in the first quarter of this year when the Omicron outbreak raged and it became clear the city would remain cut off. Hong Kong's stock exchange was trading up two percent following Lam's announcement.

While the return of protests are unlikely in the current draconian political climate, Lam's successor will need to reboot business confidence and tackle perennial Hong Kong problems such as a dismal shortage of housing. But Lam predicted on Monday that whoever replaces her will have an easier ride. "Compared to this term of government, the next government will be seeing a more stable political environment," she told reporters. — AFP



#### **News in brief**

#### Journalist denounces trial

MOSCOW: A prominent Russian journalist set to go on trial for treason on Monday insisted he was innocent and denounced the case that could see him jailed for up to 20 years. Ivan Safronov, who stands accused of "state treason in the form of espionage," worked for years for business newspapers Kommersant and Vedomosti and was one of Russia's most respected journalists covering defence. Russian media have been under increasing pressure in recent years and several independent outlets have shut down since the beginning of Russia's military action in Ukraine. Safronov, now 31, was arrested in July 2020, after leaving journalism to serve as an adviser to the head of the state space agency. "For a year and nine months I have been forced to say that I am guilty of high treason," he said in a statement released ahead of the trial set to begin in Moscow later Monday. "But I repeat and will repeat - I am not guilty." - AFP

Tuesday, April 5, 2022

#### Train derails

**LUBUMBASHI:** At least seven people died when a goods train derailed in the southeast Democratic Republic of Congo, the second accident in the area in a fortnight, a local official said Monday. The accident occurred in the village of Buyofwe, Lualaba province Saturday. In mid-March, a train came off the tracks in the same village, killing at least 75 people and injuring 125, according to the official toll. "Seven people died and 14 were seriously injured" in the latest accident, Lualaba interior minister Deoda Kapenda told AFP Monday. — AFP

#### Two teens face trial

PONTOISE: A trial began in France Monday for two teenagers accused of having bullied and beaten a former school friend before dumping her unconscious body into a river where she drowned. The 14-year-old victim from the Paris suburb of Argenteuil, named only as Alisha, was found in the Seine river in March 2021. Prosecutors say the two suspected killers, a boy and a girl aged 15 at the time who cannot be named as they are underage, were her former friends who had been expelled from school for bullying her online and in person. After Alisha met the girl near a motorway bridge over the river, they were joined by the boy who "hit her by surprise in the face, yanked her hair and slapped her so hard she fell to the ground," the investigators found. — AFP



CUENCA, Ecuador: Inmates are seen on the roof of the CRS Turi prison after a riot in Cuenca, Ecuador, on April 3, 2022. At least 12 people died in a prison riot early Sunday in southern Ecuador, the president's office said, the latest outburst of deadly violence in the South American country's detention facilities. — AFP

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica: Costa Rican Presidential candidate Rodrigo Chaves of the Social Democratic Progress party and his wife Signe Zeicate celebrate at his campaign headquarters after the polls closed in San Jose, Costa Rica, April 3, 2022. Right-wing former finance minister Chaves is set to be Costa Rica's new president after his opponent Jose Maria Figueres conceded defeat on Sunday. — AFP

# Chaves wins Costa Rica presidency as Figueres concedes

**SAN JOSE, Costa Rica:** Right-wing former finance minister Rodrigo Chaves will take over as Costa Rica's new president on May 8 after winning Sunday's election, poised to oversee the challenge of reinvigorating the country's battered economy. With 96 percent of the votes counted, Chaves held a close to six percentage point lead in provisional results over Figueres, the centrist former president, according to the Supreme Electoral Court (TSE). "I receive with the deepest humility this sacred decision of the Costa Rican people... This result for me is not a medal or a trophy, but an enormous responsibility," the 60-year-old economist said to a crowd of supporters in the capital San Jose.

Figueres congratulated Chaves and wished him well in his concession speech. "Costa Rica has voted and the people have spoken. Since we are democrats we respect that decision," the 67-year-old said. Unemployment and an economic crisis dominated the campaign between two scandal-tainted candidates relieved not to have their past indiscretions take center stage.

Chaves was once demoted for sexual harassment, while Figueres was previously investigated for corruption. But with 23 percent of the population living in poverty and unemployment soaring to 14 percent alongside a series of corruption scandals, Costa Ricans seemed more focused on the economy as they elected the successor to President Carlos Alvarado.

Voting was carried out "in peace and tranquility," said TSE spokesman Gustavo Ramon. Chaves will take over from the unpopular Alvarado next month, faced with the major challenge of reigniting an economy in crisis. Costa Rica has been described as the "happiest" country in Latin America and praised for its political stability, 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. "Costa Rican society was not poor, they made it poor. Costa Rican society was not unequal, they made it unequal," said Chaves, who voted in mid-morning at a school in the capital's city center.

#### 'There is no work here'

Voters were very clear about what concerned them the most: the economy and employment. "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 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. Chaves was a surprise qualifier for Sunday's run-off, having polled fourth ahead of February's first round.

Representing the newly formed right-wing Social Democratic Progress Party, Chaves had led the most recent opinion polls with more than 41 percent support, compared to 38 percent for Figueres. "We have spoken about progression and rejecting regression," he said in a press conference. Figueres was previously president from 1994 to 1998. His father Jose abolished the army in 1948 when he was president. "We have options to generate employment, which is what is most lacking, and to grow the economy," he said. Figueres 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 \$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. Chaves's four-year term will begin on May 8. - AFP

## More than 150 still missing after Nigeria train attack

**LAGOS:** One week after gunmen attacked a train with explosives in northwestern Nigeria, the whereabouts of 168 passengers are still unknown, the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) has said. At least eight people were killed and others missing on March 28 when gunmen detonated a bomb on the track and opened fire on the train linking the capital Abuja with the northwestern city of Kaduna.

President Muhammadu Buhari had said some passengers had been kidnapped and survivors said gunmen had snatched a number of passengers, but it is not clear how many. It was the latest deadly assault blamed on heavily armed criminal gangs known locally as bandits in the region.

In a statement late Sunday, the NRC said of the 362 passengers on board the train when it was attacked, 186 had been confirmed safe. "Of the 362 validated passengers on board the attacked AK9 train service on March 28, 186 persons on the manifest are confirmed to be safe and at their various homes," it said.

The NRC said of the remaining 176 passengers, eight have been confirmed dead, leaving the whereabouts of 168 still unknown. It said efforts were still underway to rescue the missing passengers.

The corporation said damaged track and coaches were being repaired while services on the Abuja-Kaduna route had been "temporarily suspended". Two days earlier, gunmen killed a perimeter security guard in an attack at Kaduna airport before armed forces intervened.

Gunmen also attacked the same railway line with explosives in October. Bandit gangs in the northwest and central Nigerian states have long terrorised communities, conducting mass kidnappings for ransom, raiding villages and stealing cattle.

But their violence has intensified. Gunmen often arrive in their scores by motorbike, sometimes striking several villages, killing and abducting residents. Gunmen have also targeted highways for kidnappings between the capital and cities such as Kaduna and the northwestern commercial hub Kano.

Nigeria's military has been carrying out operations and air strikes to clear bandits out of their camps hidden in forests across several states in the northwest. But the violence has continued. Security forces are also battling Nigeria's 12-year jihadist insurgency in the northeast that has killed 40,000 people and displaced more than two million more. — AFP



TUESDAY, APRIL 5, 2022

# BUSINESS Zain Global Connect to link Jeddah to Marseille through J2M undersea cable

# The investment marks ZGC's first subsea cable ownership

- Ready for service in Q1 2023, ZGC collaborates with PCCW Global in PEACE 15,000 km state-of-the-art cable between the Middle East and Europe
- Zain Saudi Arabia to be the Cable Landing Party in the Kingdom
- Investment by ZGC in latest fiber optic technology to improve regional connectivity and foster digital transformation to Zain markets and beyond

KUWAIT/HONG KONG: Zain Group, a leading telecom innovator in seven markets across the Middle East and Africa, announced that Zain Global Connect (ZGC), its wholly owned subsidiary in charge of consolidating Group's initiatives into the Wholesale Carrier domain, is connecting the Middle East with Europe through the J2M (Jeddah, Saudi Arabia to Marseille, France) submarine cable system.

The investment marks ZGC's first subsea cable ownership, in a portion of the state-of-the-art Pakistan and East Africa Connecting Europe (PEACE) cable system, that will offer Zain full operational independence, a genuine critical factor capable to foster digital transformation initiatives in the region, particularly for cloud and IoT services.

Through the investment in J2M, that will be ready for service in early 2023 with Zain Saudi Arabia as the cable landing party, Zain achieves a higher degree of diversity when it comes to its international infrastructure while making available to global carriers and enterprises a brand-new entry point in Saudi Arabia for their connectivity requirements in the Kingdom and beyond.

Eng Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Al-Deghaither, CEO of Zain Saudi Arabia, said, "This historic achievement marks another milestone in the journey of Zain KSA. By investing in the J2M submarine cable, Zain reconfirms its commitment to the Kingdom's digital-savvy consumer and business community by making available a robust, fault-tolerant international connectivity platform that will support the ambitious digital transformation objectives of Saudi Vision 2030, while contributing to position the Kingdom as a global ICT and digital services hub."

Kamil Hilali, CEO, ZGC, said, "J2M represents a major breakthrough for Zain and ZGC as we look to develop our wholesale capabilities further while ensuring an even better quality of service to all Zain operations offering international connectivity services. We are excited indeed to be a relevant partner of such a successful project and believe its positive economic impact will be greatly appreciated by communities and enterprises across the region."

ZGC was created by Zain Group as a wholesale division for the purpose of executing the Group's strategic plan to enter the wholesale data and voice services space. With an eye on the present as well as the future, ZGC proactively looks for and implements state-of-the-art equipment functionalities significantly supporting the growing needs of Zain operating markets and other global carriers for highquality international connectivity.

**Turkish inflation** hits fresh record at 61.1%



Frederick Chui, Chief Commercial Officer, PCCW Global, said, "The collaboration with Zain Global Connect has been strategic and is transformative for the region. The undersea cable is set to contribute to greater capacity availability in the Middle East. In an era when low-latency data access is a key differentiator, we believe this is the right time to be expanding investment in undersea infrastructure.'

The PEACE cable system is a 15,000 km-long, privately owned cable system that provides open,

"The fallout of the Russia-Ukraine military conflict, including rising food and energy prices, will further weaken Turkey's already tenuous balance of payments and exacerbate inflation," it said.

The biggest price increases in March were in transportation and food prices, according to the

flexible and carrier-neutral services for its customers. It is designed with the latest 200G transmission and WSS ROADM BU technologies, which provide the capability to transmit over 16Tbps per fiber pair servicing growing regional capacity needs.

The PEACE cable system substantially reduces network latency by adopting shortest direct route connectivity, providing cost-effective capacity in an economically growing region and enhancing route diversity between Asia, Africa and Europe.

# VPN use spikes in Sri Lanka after social media ban

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's attempt to contain spiraling protests by blocking popular social media platforms led to an extraordinary spike in the use of censorship-dodging virtual private networks, a tracking firm said Monday. Demand for VPNs went up by a staggering 17,000 percent on Sunday when the ban came into effect, Top10VPN.com said after tracking downloads by Sri Lankan users.

"There were 27,815 searches for VPN compared to a daily average of 321 over the previous 28 days," Simon Migliano, the firm's head of research, told AFP in an email.

"This is a huge increase in interest in what's essentially a very niche tool for most people." Sunday's ban blocked access to WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube and a host of other popular platforms but it was lifted after 15 hours, following a ruling by the country's Human Rights Council deeming the blackout illegal.

The head of the country's internet regulator resigned after the ban order went into effect and technology minister Namal Rajapaksa, the nephew of Sri Lanka's president, also publicly criticised the policy. "The availability of VPN, just like I'm using now, makes such bans completely useless," Rajapaksa said on Twitter.

"I urge the authorities to think more progressively and reconsider this decision." He resigned that evening, along with all other ministers in Sri Lanka's 28-member cabinet, excluding his uncle president and father, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa. Sri Lanka is in the grips of what the government concedes is the island nation's worst economic crisis since independence from Britain in 1948.

anti-government hashtags The "#GoHomeRajapaksas" and "#GotaGoHome" have been trending locally for days on social media after severe shortages of essentials, sharp price rises and crippling power cuts. —AFP

# Stocks up, oil steady on easing inflation fears

LONDON: Stock markets climbed and oil prices steadied Monday on easing concerns over tight crude supplies and decades-high inflation, traders said. Turkey's lira was stable against the dollar and euro after official data showed the country's inflation had soared to a fresh record high.

Elsewhere, trading was halted on Sri Lanka's stock exchange seconds after opening Monday as the island nation's president offered to share power with the opposition.

Protests demanding the resignation of Gotabaya Rajapaksa grew over unprecedented food and fuel shortages along with record inflation and crippling power cuts in the South Asian country. —AFP

ISTANBUL: Turkey's inflation has soared to a new record, official data showed Monday, as analysts see an impact from Russia's invasion of Ukraine and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's unorthodox interest rate policy. Exacerbating a cost of living crisis, consumer prices accelerated to 61.14 percent at an annual rate, up from 54.4 percent in February, according to the statistics agency.

The weakening lira and runaway inflation have become major sources of public discontent in Turkey as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan faces an election next year. Turkey has recorded double digit inflation since early 2017 but the latest figure is the highest since the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in 2002.

The currency was stable following the latest inflation data, trading at 14.7 lira against the dollar and 16.2 lira against euro. The war in Turkey's Black Sea neighborhood has had a major impact on the country as Russia is a key supplier of energy while Ukraine ships wheat. Turkish tourism industry also mainly relies on Russian tourists. On Friday, S&P global rating agency kept a negative outlook on Turkey and cut its credit rating.

#### statistics agency.

#### 'Be patient'

While countries around the world are facing rising inflation as energy prices have soared while economies emerge COVID restrictions, Turkey's problems have also been affected by Erdogan's unorthodox economic approach. The Turkish leader rejects the idea that inflation should be fought by hiking the main interest rate, which he believes causes prices to grow even higher-the exact opposite of conventional economic thinking.

Turkish central bank "policies are just not working in countering inflation," said Timothy Ash, emerging markets strategist at BlueBay Asset Management. "Indeed, I think the overwhelming consensus is that the unorthodox policy settings of the CBRT (central bank) are a major cause of inflation," he said in a note to clients. "The war in Ukraine is just making things that much worse."

On Saturday, Erdogan said increase in food and energy prices triggered by the war in Ukraine "is affecting us too." "We are fighting against those who are charging unreasonably high prices," he said.

"There are problems we need to address ... I ask



ISTANBUL: Turkey's inflation has soared to a new record on Monday, exacerbating a cost of living crisis according to the statistics agency.

you to be patient and trust us," in reference to people squeezed by the biting inflation. In January, Erdogan changed the head of the state statistics agency.

Turkish media reported that he was unhappy with the inflation figures it published while the opposition believes that the official figures grossly underestimate the reality.

Jason Tuvey, senior emerging markets economist at the London-based Capital Economics, said inflation was likely to rise further over the coming months and stay close to the current high rates for much of this year. "But there is still little sign that the central bank and, crucially, President Erdogan are about to shift tack and hike interest rates," he said. —AFP

# Drivers queue for hours as Kenya reels from fuel shortage

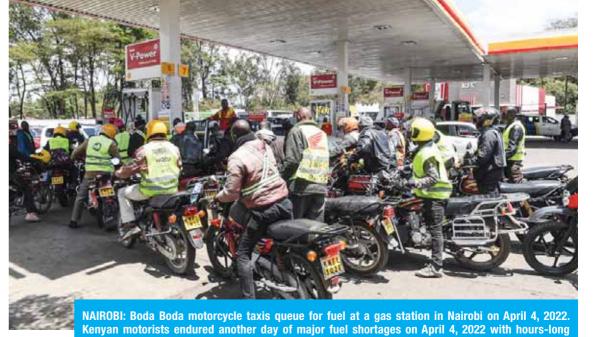
NAIROBI: Kenyan motorists endured another day of major fuel shortages on Monday, with hours-long queues and strict rationing at petrol stations as pumps across the country ran dry.

The government blamed hoarding and panic buying for the snaking lines at bowsers that worsened over the weekend, but oil dealers said they were owed outstanding subsidy payments from the state.

"If you know any gas station in your area that has fuel, comment with name, location, available fuel," the Motorist Association of Kenya said on Twitter in a public appeal to ease congestion at pumps.

"Help spread this message, help a stuck motorist." At many locations in Nairobi and elsewhere, motorists able to find petrol after many hours in line with cars, motorcycles and minibuses were limited to a rationed amount. The crunch began last week in Kenya's west following a row between oil marketing companies and the government over subsidy payments, sources said. The government pays oil providers to subsidize costs at the pump for motorists, but these companies said they were waiting on four months of outstanding payments.

The Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority (EPRA) said at the weekend that the government was working to settle all arrears owed to dealers. But the government blamed hoarders for the shortfall and insisted it had sufficient reserves to supply the East African nation of nearly 50 million.



Kenyan motorists endured another day of major fuel shortages on April 4, 2022 with hours-long queues and strict rationing at petrol stations as pumps across the country ran dry. —AFP

State depots were in possession of more than 69 million liters of petrol and 94 million liters of diesel as of Saturday, the Kenya Pipeline Company said. Kenya consumes nearly 400 million liters of petrol and diesel every month, according to government data. "Our global stock holding is adequate to serve the region, with more ships queued in Mombasa for discharge," the state-run company said in a statement.

EPRA said the shortage was also exacerbated by

"changing supply dynamics" on international markets worsened by the invasion of Ukraine. Under an agreement with the government, retailers capped the price for petrol this month at 135 Kenyan shillings (\$1.17, 1 euro) per liter. Blackmarket operators, however, have reportedly been selling at 160 shillings as the shortage bites. There are fears the fuel crunch could see public service providers jack the cost of fares and add to cost of living pressures. —AFP



### Business

# KFH receives 'World's Best Islamic Financial Institution 2022' award

Global Finance also honors KFH with the Best Islamic Takaful award

### Al-Rushood: The award represents world's recognition of KFH's pioneering position in Islamic finance industry and its excellence in providing innovative services

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Finance House (KFH) received the "World's Best Islamic Financial Institution 2022" award from Global Finance Group within its fifteenth annual awards ceremony for the World's Best Islamic Financial Institutions. The award came in appreciation of KFH contributions in the growth of Islamic Finance, fulfilling customers' needs of Sharia-compliant innovative products through highly effective and advanced service channels, and distinction in achieving sustainability and continued growth.

Global Finance has also awarded KFH the award of the "Best Islamic Financial Institution in the Middle East" and the Best Islamic Takaful award.

On this occasion, KFH Group Acting CEO, AbdulWahab Essa Al-Rushood expressed his pride and happiness to win these awards from the reputable Global Finance magazine. He indicated that these awards represent world's recognition of KFH's leading position in the Islamic finance industry and affirm the bank's performance efficiency in providing highly advanced innovative services while moving forward in the digitalization strategy and continuing the methodology in adopting technology and innovation in advance and focusing on the enhancement of customer's experience. Al-Rushood indicated that KFH has always been an icon in Islamic banking. It has a long record of innovation of banking and financial products and services, development of several financial products and finance alternatives applied currently in international markets which fulfill the aspirations of all segments of customers (retail and corporate).

Al-Rushood said that KFH is focusing on supporting the financial inclusion which is considered one of the basic elements for sustainable growth. He emphasized that KFH was established as the first Islamic bank in the State of Kuwait, indicating the bank enjoys a large market share in the local market and enjoys a wide geographical spread in several regions worldwide through 526 branches, 1,750 ATMs and more than 13 thousand employees.

Global Finance makes its rating of Islamic Financial Institutions based on extensive consultations with bankers, analysts, and specialized financial experts from all over the world. Performance rating is conducted based on certain criteria and professional methodologies including growth in assets, profitability, geographic reach, strategic relationships, new business development, innovation in products, ability to fulfill the needs of customers in



AbdulWahab Al-Rushood

various sectors, usage of technology in providing qualitative products and services, customer satisfaction, reputation, compliance with ethical standards and strategic relations. Global Finance Magazine was founded in 1987 and takes New York as its chosen domicile. Global Finance is a trusted and reliable source of financial information in more than 190 countries worldwide. The magazine enjoys more than 35 years of experience in the global financial markets. Winners will be honored at an awards ceremony to be held during the IMF/World Bank Annual Meetings in Washington, DC at the National Press Club on the morning of October 15, 2022.



'KFH has always been an icon in Islamic banking with a long record of innovation'





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Tuesday, April 5, 2022

# Ukraine war sows more turmoil for UK farms amid COVID, Brexit

# Fertilizer prices skyrocket after Russian invasion of Ukraine

ITCHINGFIELD, United Kingdom: Hungry cows fertilizer prices hurtling even higher. Wheat hit at Westons Farm jostle for position at the feeding trough, blissfully unaware that Ukraine's war has sowed more turmoil for UK farms ploughing through COVID and Brexit fallout.

Westons-based in the picturesque village of Itchingfield in southern England-uses excrement from the farm's cattle, chickens, pigs and sheep to fertilize arable crops like carrots, pumpkins, spinach and wheat. The agriculture sector, like large swathes of the UK economy, is grappling with sky-high energy prices following pandemic lockdowns and labor shortages in the wake of Britain's exit from the European Union.

Now, Moscow's invasion of Ukraine has fuelled rocketing prices for fertilizer because Russia is a major producer. Farms like Westons have therefore become more and more reliant on animal slurry to grow crops and cut costs.

"The thing that's really concerning us as farmers are the multiple issues that are coming our way all at once," the farm's owner David Exwood told AFP as he fed the cattle. There is the "high fertilizer price, we have a high fuel price, we've got a shortage of labour, and we've got regulatory change", said Exwood, who is also vice-president of the National Farmers' Union (NFU).

Fertiliser prices in the UK have soared almost fourfold over the past year, sector data show.

The nutrient-rich material was already in short supply after surging gas prices forced leading UK manufacturer, CF Fertilizers, to pause production in September. Six months later, the Ukraine war sent

#### recent record peaks because sanctions-hit Russia is a key producer alongside Ukraine.

#### **Staff shortages**

Meanwhile, worsening labor shortages, sparked by Brexit and exacerbated by COVID, are particularly acute in Britain's agricultural sector. The industry had 500,000 job vacancies in September, according to NFU data. Visa issues and COVID restrictions have caused many farm workers to return abroad, notably including many European lorry drivers. Britain's departure from the European Union at the start of last year formalized Brexit.

"The lack of labor has meant that crops... have gone unpicked and are rotting away in fields," said Jack Ward, chief executive of the British Growers' Association. The British Meat Packing Association has expressed similar troubles. "Our main concerns are the lack of staff able to process (carcasses) in the UK," it noted. Thousands of pigs have been culled because of a chronic lack of butchers in abattoirs.

"UK pigs are being killed, incinerated and not entering the food chain," said farmer Andrew Ward, who grows wheat in Leadenham in central England.

"We have pig farmers going out of business, but imports of pig meat have gone up 20 percent in the last six months (to meet demand) and the government is standing by and letting it happen."

Birds, bees and trees At the same time, the rollout of its Environmental



ITCHINGFIELD, UK: National Farmers' Union of England and Wales Vice President and owner of Westons Farm Dave Exwood, walks among his cows in their feeding area at the Westons Farm, in Itchingfield, south England, on March 28, 2022. — AFP

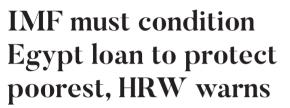
Land Management Scheme (ELMS) will replace the UK's participation in the EU Common Agricultural Policy. The proposed scheme places greater emphasis on the environment and is expected to ramp up costs for farmers.

"All they are interested in is birds, bees and trees... we can't go green if our bank balance is in the red," said farmer Ward. Following Brexit, the government of Prime Minister Boris Johnson has agreed a number of new trade deals, including for

Australian beef and lamb.

Britain's livestock farmers are concerned they will be undercut, complaining that overseas meat may not be held to the same quality or environmental standards as domestic producers.

Back on the farm in Itchingfield, the turmoil is palpable. "Farmers are uncertain, they're scared, and I've never known them so afraid of the future (and) not sure what it means to them," said Exwood. — AFP



CAIRO: Rights groups on Monday said an Egyptian request for a loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) must require Cairo to expand social protection, tackle corruption and ensure judicial independence.

Seven rights groups, including Human Rights Watch (HRW), also demanded the Washingtonbased crisis lender tie cash to ensure transparency on the military's powerful grip on the economy. "The IMF and Egyptian authorities should not agree to any loan program that further raises the cost of living without dramatically increasing investment in universal social protection programs," the statement read.

Since 2016, the IMF has approved three loans to

# Mazda vehicles earn top award for third consecutive year

KUWAIT: The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) announced the winners of its highest award in safety, the 2022 Top Safety Pick+. Every tested Mazda vehicle made a list for the third consecutive year. These vehicles include the Mazda3 Sedan, Mazda3 Hatchback, CX-30, CX-5, and CX-9.

To qualify for the 2022 Top Safety Pick+ award, Mazda vehicles earned good ratings in each of the Institute's six crashworthiness evaluations:

- Moderate overlap front
- Driver-side small overlap front
- Passenger-side small overlap front
- Side

Mazda's CX-5 was the first vehicle to earn a to providing advanced safety technologies that our Good rating in IIHS's new, stricter side impact test, owners expect, our wide range of safety technolowhich will be added to the award criteria in 2023. gies are designed to support, not replace the driver,

Cairo totaling \$20 billion, with Egyptians strugging amid soaring inflation, devaluation of the Egyptian pound by half, and tough austerity measures slashing subsidies on essential food.

Last month, after Russia's invasion of Ukraine caused inflation to surge, Cairo said it would apply for another loan. Egypt is heavily reliant on wheat imports from Russia and Ukraine, and its inflation rate hit 10 percent in February amid a wider spike in global commodity prices caused by the war.

A third of Egypt's 103 million people live in poverty, and nearly the same number are vulnerable to falling into poverty amid soaring prices of basic food, according to the World Bank. Last week, Qatar and Saudi Arabia pledged a combined \$15 billion in investments, with Riyadh directly depositing another \$5 billion in central bank. Despite pressure following previous IMF loans, the rights groups warned that "progress on badly needed reforms remains elusive," adding that "millions of Egyptians have been left increasingly vulnerable." — AFP



# **EasyJet cancels** flights as COVID hits staff in Europe

LONDON: EasyJet on Monday said it was cancelling flights to and from the UK after high COVID rates in Europe left the British airline with a lack of staff. "As a result of the current high rates of COVID infections across Europe, like all businesses EasyJet is experiencing higher than usual levels of employee sickness," the carrier said.

After cancelling more than 200 flights over the weekend, EasyJet said it had preemptively cancelled 60 for Monday. The airline noted that it was a "small proportion" of the more than 1,645 flights planned for the day. "We have taken action to mitigate this through the rostering of additional standby crew, however, with the current levels of sickness we have also decided to make some cancellations in advance," EasyJet said in a statement.

In the UK, rates of COVID infection have hit a record high, according to official data Friday. Some 4.9 million people in the UK are estimated to have had COVID-19 in the week ending March 26, or 600,000 more than the previous week, the Office for National Statistics said. — AFP

 Roof strength • Head restraint tests

Mazda vehicles earned advanced or superior ratings for front crash prevention in vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-pedestrian evaluations and good or acceptable headlight ratings.

# **India's HDFC Bank** to absorb parent, making behemoth

MUMBAI: India's largest private bank will merge with its largest mortgage lender to form a \$237 billion financial giant, both companies said Monday, as low interest rates send demand for home loans soaring. HDFC Bank will absorb its parent company, the Housing Development Finance Corporation (HDFC), in what will be one of the country's biggest-ever merger deals.

The twin firms together manage assets worth 25.61 trillion rupees (\$339 billion) and had a combined balance sheet of 17.87 trillion rupees at the end of last year. "As the son grows older, he acquires his father's business. That's all (that is) happening here," HDFC Chairman Deepak Parekh told a media briefing.

He said the merger would help low- and middleincome homebuyers outside India's cities access 'affordable" housing loans.

India is enjoying a post-pandemic economic rebound and is growing faster than any other major

Mazda was proud to add that top achievement to our list of accolades from IIHS and commends the Institute for continuously raising the bar in safety.

Ashish Tandon, General Manager of (Al-Shaya & Al-Sagar) stated, "Achieving the IIHS TOP Safety Pick + Award is a reflection of Mazda's commitment

which results in a more confident and enjoyable driving experience." Waleed Alqahtani, Mazda Brand Manager, stated, "It makes us proud to be associated with a brand that places safety as a priority. We are certain our customers appreciate this award as much as we do."



MUMBAI: (Left-right) Housing Development Finance Corporation (HDFC) MD and CEO Sasidharan Jagdishan, HDFC chairman Deepak Parekh, HDFC Bank chairman Atanu Chakraborty and HDFC vice chairman and CEO, Keki Mistry pose for pictures during a media briefing in Mumbai on April 4, 2022. — AFP

economy. Sustained low interest rates have led to a boom in home-loan demand among the country's 1.4 billion people.

Shareholders will receive 42 shares of HDFC Bank for every 25 shares held in HDFC following the merger, which is pending shareholder and regulatory approval. HDFC Bank is currently India's largest private bank, with 68 million customers and 6,342 branches. Shares in HDFC and its namesake banking subsidiary jumped 16.5 and 12.5 percent respectively on the Bombay exchange after the merger announcement. — AFP

# German exports rise but Ukraine clouds gather

FRANKFURT: German exports bounded higher in February, the official statistics agency said Monday, cautioning that the Ukraine conflict and sanctions against Russia were likely to cloud the picture in the months ahead

Exports rose by a higher-than-expected 6.4 percent on the previous month to reach a value of 124.7 billion euros (\$137.5 billion), Destatis said, powered by strong demand from European Union countries. Analysts surveyed by FactSet had predicted a twopercent increase.

Imports jumped 4.5 percent month-on-month, totaling 113.1 billion euros. But trade with Russia was "markedly down", Destatis said, with exports falling by 6.3 percent and imports by 7.3 percent, revealing the first impact of sweeping Western sanctions imposed on Russia after its February 24 invasion of Ukraine. "It is expected that, as of reference month March, foreign trade figures will show in detail in how far the sanctions, further measures



FRANFURT: German exports rose by a higher-than-expected 6.4 percent on the previous month to reach a value of 124.7 billion euros (\$137.5 billion). — AFP

to restrict exports and unsanctioned behavior of market participants will further impact German trade with the Russian Federation," said Destatis.

The German economy, Europe's biggest, is bracing for a downturn as a result of the Ukraine war, which has added further strain to global supply chains and sent energy prices surging higher. German auto giants Volkswagen, BMW and Mercedes-Benz have already been forced to curtail production at some plants in the wait for key car parts from Ukrainian factories.

Several major German companies have also suspended business activities in Russia or halted exports to the country. ---AFP



# Lifestyle Features





Vendors sell bread to customers at a market on the first day of the holy fasting month of Ramadan in Kabul.



A man arranges vermicelli to sell at a market on the first day of the holy fasting month of Ramadan in the old quarters of Delhi.



A shopkeeper selling a sweet dish waits for customers at a market on the first day of the holy fasting month of Ramadan in the old guarters of Delhi.

#### This combination of photographs shows plates with traditional food for Muslim devotees to break their fast during the holy fasting month of Ramadan in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. — AFP photos

# SWEET SMELL OF RAMADAN TEMPTS AS SOUTH ASIA'S MUSLIMS FAST

osques and market streets teem with evening crowds tempted by the scent of syrupy sweets and hefty rice plates, as more than half a billion Muslims across southern Asia break the day's Ramadan fast. The Islamic holy month began over the weekend and during that time believers abstain from eating, drinking, smoking, and sexual relations between sunrise and sunset. The fast is conceived as a spiritual struggle against the seduction of earthly pleasures-but for the nightly "iftar" meal, festive meals traditionally bring families together and there is intense social activity.

The centuries-old Chawkbazar market in Bangladesh is a traditional centre for evening meet-ups during Ramadan, with hundreds of makeshift food stalls selling traditional grilled meats and delicacies. Huge crowds returned to the neighborhood on Sunday for the first time since the coronavirus pandemic put a pin in large public gatherings. "I am so happy to see people here," said Ramzan Ali, who has sold barbequed quail at the market for around four decades. "The last two years were painful." Traditional dishes of pakoras and lentil soup were on offer



A Vendor selling snacks at a market on the first day of the holy fasting month of Ramadan in Karachi.

the ever-popular fried goat brain served to accompany roast meats and vegetables. "It felt so good to come here again," said businessman Mohammad Ashrafuddin. "Without Chawkabazar's iftar items, I feel like my Ramadan isn't complete."

Pakistan's Muslims are also basking in the opportunity to again break fast in company and out from under a COVID crowd, with the government lifting restric-



Food plates are placed for Muslim devotees to break their fast at the Jama Masjid mosque on the first day of the holy fasting month of Ramadan in the old quarters of Delhi.

tions on public gatherings weeks earlier. Mosques have been lit up with lanterns and nearby markets are bustling as crowds stop for fried sweet pastries and stock up on meals to distribute to the poor. In India, crowds flock to stalls which line a street in the shadow of New Delhi's resplendent Jama Masjid, one of the

sweet buns baked with infusions of coconut or cherries.

#### Subdued celebrations

More subdued evening gatherings are underway in Afghanistan, where people are still reckoning with an acute humanitarian crisis in the wake of last year's US

local dish is Kabuli pulao-rice sprinkled with saffron and mixed with dry fruits, especially black raisins. Special spicy pickles and jalebis-a calorific sphere of deep-fried batter soaked in sugary syrupare also relished by families during their evening meals after breaking the dawnto-dusk fast.

But many have been forced to keep their purchases to a bare minimum this year on account of the country's food shortage. "For the first time I'm seeing that food prices have risen so much in Ramadan," Kabul resident Shahbuddin told AFP on the weekend. "People were expecting that in an Islamic country prices would drop during Ramadan, but that has not happened."

Islam is the second-largest religion in South Asia after Hinduism, and the region is home to around a third of the faith's adherents. Ramadan is sacred to Muslims because tradition says the Koran was revealed to the Prophet Mohammed during that month. The global observance draws to a close with the Eid al-Fitr festival, a celebration marked with prayers and feasts. - AFP

alongside more esoteric fare, like kebabs made from the meat of bull genitalia and

country's largest houses of worship, snacking on wrinkled dates and seasonal withdrawal and the Taliban's return to power. The most popular fast-breaking

# Libyan artisans restore old **Qurans for** Ramadan

ith the arrival of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in warscarred Libya, a group of volunteers work around the clock to restore old or damaged copies of the Quran. Khaled Al-Drebi, one of Libya's bestknown restorers of Islam's holy book, is among the artisans who arrive at a Tripoli workshop daily to meet the needs of the influx of customers during Ramadan. For Muslims, Ramadan is a month of spirituality, where a daily dawn-to-dusk fast is accompanied with prayer and acts of charity-often translating into a surge in sales of Qurans.

"The purchase of new Qurans traditionally increases before the month of Ramadan, but this has recently changed in Libya," Drebi told AFP. For many, tradition has been interrupted by an increase in the cost of Qurans, especially "since the state stopped printing" them in Libya,



A woman binds with glue a hardcover for a volume of the Holy Quran.

he added. The North African nation has endured more than a decade of conflict, leaving many of its institutions in disarray and dealing a major blow to the oil-rich country's economy. "The cost of buying (Qurans) has increased, and so the turnout for restoring old Qurans has gained unprecedented popularity," Drebi said. Compared to the cost of a new Quran-at more than \$20 depending on the binding-Drebi's workshop charges just a few dollars to restore one.

#### 'Indescribable joy'

But cost is not the only factor-for many, the older copies also have a sentimental value. "There is a spiritual connection for some customers," Drebi

said, adding that many choose to preserve Qurans passed on from relatives. "Some say this Quran has the smell of my grandfather or parents." At the back of the room, Abdel Razzag Al-Aroussi works on sorting through thousands of Qurans based on their level of deterioration.

"The restoration of Qurans with limited damage takes no more than an hour, but for those that are very damaged, they could require two or more hours," Aroussi said. They "must be undone, restored and then bound", he said-a meticulous process that requires a great deal of "time and concentration". Mabrouk Al-Amin, a supervisor at the workshop, said the restoration process "requires a good



A woman places glue with a brush on the hardcover binding for a volume of the Holy Quran.

number of artisans". "Working with the book of God is very enjoyable and we don't get bored... there is an indescrib-able joy in this work," he said. Restorers sav they have repaired a staggering half a million Qurans since the workshop opened in 2008, and more than 1,500 trainees have graduated from 150 restoration workshops.

#### Women restorers

In recent years, more and more women have been joining the ranks of the volunteer restorers. "A large number of women were trained on restoring the holy Quran and today they have their own workshops," Drebi said. One female restorer, Khadija Mahmoud, has even held training sessions for blind women.

"We would not have been able to think of doing this... were it not for this capable woman," Drebi added. For Mahmoud, who trains women at a workshop in Zawiya, 45 kilometers (28 miles) west of Tripoli, restoring Qurans in a women's workshop allows them to work comfortably and at a faster pace. She added that the restoration work has given many women a meaningful way to fill their "spare time". "A large segment of trainees and restorers are retirees," she said. "For them, there is nothing better than spending their spare time in the service of the Quran." - AFP



A member of staff stands before volumes that require restoration during a workshop on the restoration of copies of the Holy Quran, Islam's holy book, in Libya's capital Tripoli. — AFP photos



Libvan restorer of the Holy Quran Khaled Al-Drebi (right), assembles pages together to be glued into a volume during a workshop on the restoration of copies of Islam's holy book.





# Lifestyle Grammys

Tuesday, April 5, 2022



US singer Jon Batiste poses in the press room with his Grammys during the 64th Annual Grammy Awards at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas. - AFP photos

US singer Olivia Rodrigo poses with her awards for Best New Artist, Best Pop Solo Performance and Pop Vocal Album in the press room.

US rapper Doja Cat poses with the award for Best Pop Duo/Group Performance "Kiss Me More" featuring SZA in the press room.

# **JON BATISTE CROWNED KING WITH** FIVE WINS INCLUDING BEST ALBUM

ndustry watchers had tipped pop superstars as the likely big winners at Sunday's Grammys-but jazzman Jon Batiste instead was crowned king, taking home five awards including the prestigious Album of the Year prize. At the star-studded gala, held for the first time in Las Vegas, Silk Sonic-the 70s revival project of Bruno Mars and Anderson .Paak-won all four of their potential prizes, including both Record and Song of The Year for their single "Leave The Door Open."

Olivia Rodrigo didn't win as many awards as predicted-but the Filipino-American pop phenom did scoop the coveted prize for Best New Artist, and two trophies in the pop category. That meant the winners of all four top Grammys were people of color-a milestone for the Recording Academy, which for years has faced criticism that it disproportionately honored white men. "I just put my head down and work on the craft every day," Batiste, born into a prominent New Orleans musical dynasty, told the audience as he accepted the night's final prize.

"It's more than entertainment for meit's a spiritual practice." The night was Volodymyr Zelensky delivered a pretaped plea for support. Zelensky's message led into a performance by John Legend of the song "Free," with the help of Ukrainian singer Mika Newton, musician Siuzanna Iglidan and poet Lyuba Yakimchuk. "On our land, we are fighting Russia, which brings horrible silence with its bombs. The dead silence," Zelensky said. "Fill the silence with your music, fill it today to tell our story."

#### Bieber, Eilish, Lil Nas X shut out

Despite being among the night's most nominated artists, pop juggernauts Billie Eilish, Justin Bieber and Lil Nas X were shut out completely. But they all staged impressive performances: Eilish belted out "Happier Than Ever" in a lightning-backed downpour, Bieber delivered a crooned-up version of "Peaches," and Lil Nas X hosted an unabashed celebration of sexuality and queerness set to a medley of his songs including "MONTERO (Call Me By Your Name)." Rodrigo also gave a searing rendition of her viral teen breakup hit "drivers license," showcasing her impressive vocals against a set mimick-

ing a gloomy night in suburbia.



US singer-songwriter Chris Stapleton (second left) poses with the award of Best Country Album for "Starting Over".

Artist. Lady Gaga performed a few zippy standards from "Love for Sale," her hit duet album with Tony Bennett, who number. The night's leading nominee

starting at the piano for a classical piece before transitioning to a rhythmic dance looked shocked when presenter Lenny Kravitz declared him the night's big hit. "I really don't do it for the awards," the

heavy on performances but also held a number of somber moments-most true," the 19-year-old said as she Big winner Batiste also performed, scooped four ahead of his big sleeper stage. "Music is something that's so notably when Ukrainian President

accepted the gramophone for Best New

This is my biggest dream come introduced her in a brief video message. with 11 nods, Batiste had already 35-year-old Batiste told journalists backshowcasing his elasticity as an artist by win for the year's best album. But he

subjective."







US singer-songwriter Lady Gaga performs onstage during the 64th Annual Grammy Awards at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas.



Bruno Mars of Silk Sonic performs onstage.



US singer-songwriter Chris Stapleton poses with his 3 awards for Best Country Solo Performance, Best Country Album, Best Country Song "You Should Probably Leave".



Angelique Kidjo poses in the winners photo room.



# Lifestyle Grammys



(From left) Bruno Mars, Dernst Emile II, and Anderson. Paak of Silk Sonic accept Song Of The Year for 'Leave The Door Open' onstage.

#### **Diverse field**

The timing of the Grammys just one week after Will Smith stunned the world by slapping Chris Rock on stage at the Oscars added an extra layer of unpredictability to what is already usually one of the edgier nights on the showbiz awards circuit. That fiasco prompted some gentle zings over the course of the night Sunday, but antics were virtually non-existent at what ultimately proved to be a heavily scripted show. Music's chaos agent Kanye West stayed home even as he won two Grammys, one of which he shared with Jay Z.

Among the diverse crop of winners was Doja Cat, who took home her first ever Grammy in the pop categorywhich she had to sprint back to accept

after dipping out of the gala for a bathroom break. The Brooklyn-based Pakistani vocalist Arooj Aftab, who won her first Grammy for Best Global Music Performance for "Mohabbat," and had also been in the running for Best New Artist, told journalists the win left her "beyond thrilled." And it was a special night for folk icon Joni Mitchell, who won the prize for Best Historical Album days after being honored at a moving tribute gala Friday. She made a rare public appearance onstage, looking fly in a red leather beret, sunglasses and floral pants, her long blonde hair in pigtails. - AFP



Baby Keem accepts the Best Rap Performance award for 'Family Ties' onstage.



In this file photo Justin Vernon of Bon Iver poses with the Best Alternative Music Album "Bon Iver" award and the Best New Artist award.

# Key winners at the **2022 Grammy Awards**

ere is a list of winners in the major categories for the 64th annual Grammy Awards, which were handed out on Sunday in Las Vegas. Jazzman and bandleader Jon Batiste led the night with five awards including Album of the Year. Retro act Silk Sonic-the group project of Bruno Mars and Anderson .Paak-won four awards including Record and Song of the Year. Pop sensation Olivia Rodrigo was named Best New Artist.

Album of the Year: Jon Batiste, "We Are"

**Record of the Year (overall song performance):** Silk Sonic, "Leave The Door Open"

**Song of the Year (best songwriting):** "Leave The Door Open" -Brandon Anderson, Christopher Brody Brown, Dernst Emile II and Bruno Mars, songwriters (Silk Sonic)

Best New Artist: Olivia Rodrigo

Best Music Video: Jon Batiste, "Freedom"

**Best Rap Album:** Tyler, The Creator, "Call Me If You Get Lost" - **Best Rap Performance:** Baby Keem featuring Kendrick Lamar, "Family Ties"

Best Rock Album: Foo Fighters, "Medicine At Midnight"

Best Pop Vocal Album: Olivia Rodrigo, "Sour"

Best Pop Solo Performance: Olivia Rodrigo, "drivers license" Best Pop Duo/Group Performance: Doja Cat featuring SZA, "Kiss Me More"

**Best Traditional Pop Vocal Album:** Tony Bennett and Lady Gaga, "Love for Sale"

Best Country Album: Chris Stapleton, "Starting Over" Best Global Music Album: Angelique Kidjo, "Mother Nature" Best Music Video: Jon Batiste, "Freedom"—AFP

# MUSIC'S TOP STARS BURN UP THE GRAMMYS RED CARPET

Music's biggest night is the awards season event with the boldest looks, and moving the Grammys to Sin City certainly amped up the edginess-the industry's top names sizzled Sunday on the red carpet, showing lots of skin. Some of the most iconic fashion looks ever have emerged at the Grammy Awards, like Jennifer Lopez's dramatic plunging green Versace gown in 2000 or Cardi B's vintage Thierry Mugler "Venus" gown in 2019.

On Sunday, there was more Versace-and even Donatella herself on stage at the MGM Grand. The naked dress trend that emerged a week earlier at the Oscars was in full effect, and funky gowns in basic black had their place. For the men, the memo obviously called for brash statements and loads of bright colors. Here are some of the top looks from the Grammys red carpet:



Laverne Cox went for a goth lingerie look, in a filmy black gown from John Galliano with smoky plum makeup and bright purple hair.

And reality star socialite Paris Hilton was in eye-popping silver with strategically placed sequins and a gauzy flowing cape. On the red carpet, Megan Thee Stallion did not go for a seethrough dress, but her slinky leopard print one-shoulder gown with a high leg slit certainly bared some skin.

#### Make it colorful

Rapper Saweetie, who was up for two awards, knows how to work a pop of color. She paid tribute to Madapao's



#### (Not so) basic black

Olivia Rodrigo made her Grammys debut, and her arrival was memorable. The 19-year-old, who won three awards including Best New Artist, went for a body-conscious 90s look in a figure-hugging black Vivienne Westwood gown with pink accents and a choker, finished off with long gloves. Grammys darling Billie Eilish, who gave a stunning performance of her hit "Happier Than Ever," but didn't win a trophy, rocked a deconstructed black suit jacket fashioned into a cape to match her hair and square sunglasses.

On stage, she opted for baggy trousers-which are easier to jump around in-and wore a black tee-shirt bearing the likeness of late Foo Fighters drummer Taylor Hawkins. And then there were the matching dresses: Dua Lipa and Megan Thee Stallion came out to present an award, seemingly in the same black dress... until designer Donatella Versace stepped up

# US singer/songwriter Billie Eilish arrives for the 64th Annual Grammy Awards at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas. — AFP photos

on stage to make a few changes. Bingo: two outfits.

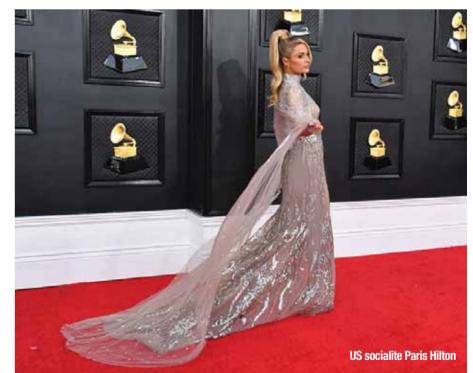
#### Baring it all (almost)

Singer-rapper Doja Cat, who won her first ever Grammy for best pop duo/group performance with SZA on "Kiss Me More," embraced the current naked dress trend: her sheer sea-foam green Versace gown with a plunging neckline stunned fashionistas. Actress "Material Girl" look in a bright fuchsia Valentino ensemble-a daring bikini top, full ball gown skirt and elbow-length gloves, accessorized with a huge diamond choker. But the men also brought some eye-popping color to their fashion game at the MGM Grand.

Jon Batiste-the big winner of the night with five awards-was a whirling catwalk show, changing outfits multiple times and bringing the swagger in Dolce & Gabbana. He wore a shiny suit with yellow checks at the pre-gala ceremony, a shimmering powder blue suit for his high-energy performance and a sweeping blinged-out cape to accept his awards.

Drummer Travis Barker, who performed with H.E.R. and Lenny Kravitz, arrived in a bright pink coat-the color of the night, for sure-over a black vest and trousers. Justin Bieber, one of the top nominees, arrived in a fuchsia knit hat that nearly matched Saweetie's dress. DJ Diplo and Colombian singer J Balvin both went for bright blue hair, while Australian rapper The Kid Laroi showed up with flowing pink locks.—AFP

US singer/songwriter Billie Eilish (right) and US singer-songwriter Finneas O'Connell perform onstage.











Dua Lipa attends the 64th Annual GRAMMY Awards at MGM Grand Garden Arena.







# Nadal inspires teen star to Miami Open crown

## Alcaraz becomes the youngest ever Miami Open champion

MIAMI: Carlos Alcaraz believes watching boyhood idol Rafael Nadal helped him become the youngest ever Miami Open champion on Sunday. Alcaraz, who turns 19 next month, showed why many believe he is currently the hottest young prospect in men's tennis with a 7-5, 6-4 victory over Norway's world number eight Casper Ruud to land a first ATP Masters crown.

Only two men have won titles at this level at a younger age - Michael Chang, who was 18 years and five months old when he won in Toronto in 1990, and Rafael Nadal, 18 years and 10 months when he was victorious in Monte Carlo in 2005. Alcaraz dropped just one set on the way to his Miami triumph and now will head off to compete on his preferred surface of clay buoyed by the biggest win of his career.

There's a long way to go before even getting close to replicating the legendary career of 21 Grand Slam-winning compatriot Nadal but Alcaraz says he plans to have fun trying. "I have always looked up to Rafa, I always watched his big moments and matches and learned a lot from that," Alcaraz, who received a congratulatory call from Spain's King Felipe VI, after a famous win which saw him collapse to the floor upon winning the final point, told AFP.

"When I fell to the floor, all the times I have dreamed of this came to me," added Alcaraz, beaten by Nadal in the semi-finals at Indian Wells last month. Nadal was among the first to congratulate Alcaraz upon his win on Sunday, hailing a "historical" triumph. "The first of many to come I'm sure," Nadal wrote on Twitter. Much is expected of Alcaraz whose passionate, all-energy displays in the latter stages of the Miami Open energized the Florida crowd. He insisted afterwards that his target now is to win a Grand Slam and this was certainly a good start.

It was the more understated Norwegian, 23, however, who looked more comfortable in the early stages of what was his 10th ATP final by breaking early and keeping the pressure firmly on his precocious opponent. Despite the majority of the crowd backing the Spanish player, he was unable to take a break opportunity at 3-1 with Ruud proving he possesses the kind of mental strength to thrive in such high pressure situations.

#### 'Huge' victory: Ferrero

Yet when another chance came to pierce the world number eight's service game, Alcaraz, who reached the last four in Indian Wells last month, grabbed it before holding his own serve to put a lively first set firmly back in the balance at 4-4.

A blistering forehand set up two more break points and although Ruud saved the first, he then hit wide to put Alacaraz in the driving seat to land the opening set. Two breaks at the start of the second set further cemented Alcaraz's dominance, the teenager racing into a 3-0 lead which was too tall a mountain for the combative yet ultimately outclassed Ruud. "I didn't expect to reach the final so I can't be too upset," said the Norwegian. "Carlos is very aggressive and a great mover. You think you've hit a winner but he is there to return it."

It was an emotion-charged afternoon for Alcaraz and his camp who were boosted before the match when coach Juan Carlos Ferrero, the former world number one, who has been absent from the tournament following the death of his father, turned up to surprise his protege. "I planned to come here two days ago and after the

semi-final win I wanted to surprise and give him

even more support," said Ferrero. "It's an unbelievably important victory, he's growing up as a player and a person. He has to remain focused, calm and surround himself with the right people. "This will be huge for his confidence." Alcaraz, who reached the last eight at the

03, 2022. —AFP

second MotoGP win after the 2021 Styrian Grand Prix, held off his compatriot for large parts of the 25-lap race. Espargaro twice nipped past, only to run wide. However, it turned out to be third time lucky when he made another daring overtake finally stick on the 18th lap, holding the lead comfortably to the flag.

#### Crash for 16-year-old

Defending world champion Fabio Ouartararo of France was only eighth on the factory Yamaha. Another Spaniard, Joan Mir was fourth on a Suzuki ahead of Italy's Francesco Bagnaia, the championship runner-up in 2021, riding a Ducati. Nine different riders have been on the podium at the opening three races of the season but it is Espargaro who leads the way with a seven-point advantage in the standings over South Africa's Brad Binder of КТМ. Former championship leader Enea Bastianini of Ducati-Gresini, who won the season opener in Qatar, is third overall, nine points off the pace. The Argentina Grand Prix had been cancelled in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. Six-time MotoGP world champion Marc Marquez, who won the race in 2019, missed Sunday's event after suffering double vision following his high-speed crash last time out in Indonesia. The fourth round of the championship takes place next weekend with the United States Grand Prix at Austin, Texas. Celestino Vietti won the Moto2 race for his second victory this season having also triumphed in Qatar. Vietti, who rides for Valentino Rossi's VR46 Racing Team, now has a 21-point lead in the stand-

US Open last year, is already being tipped to help fill the superstar void when the likes of Roger Federer, Nadal and Novak Djokovic finally depart the stage. "New blood is welcome," added Ferrero. "I have known about his potential for the last three years so I am not surprised. "But it has all happened very fast." —AFP



TERMAS DE RIO HONDO: Aprilia Racing Team Gresini Spanish rider Aleix Espargaro celebrates on the podium after winning the Argentina Grand Prix MotoGP at the

# **Kupcho seals first** major with Chevron **Championship win**

LOS ANGELES: Jennifer Kupcho held her nerve to clinch the first LPGA Tour victory of her career on Sunday, winning the Chevron Championship after firing a closing two-over-par 74 in the California desert. The 24-year-old from Colorado-who led by six shots after a blistering eight-under-par 64 in Saturday's third round-shrugged off a wobble on the back nine to complete a deserved victory in the opening major of the season. Kupcho finished on 14 under par for the tournament, two shots clear of Jessica Korda, who carded a closing 69 for a 12under-par aggregate of 276. Slovenian teenager Pia Babnik, just 18, finished third after a closing six-under-par 66 to finish on 11 under. Japan's Hinako Shibuno, France's Celine Boutier, US star Lexi Thompson and 2021 champion Patty Tavatanakit were tied for fourth on 10 under. Kupcho celebrated her triumph with the traditional winner's leap into "Poppie's Pond"the water hazard that surrounds the 18th green at Mission Hills Country Club. The former amateur world number onewho turned professional before the 2019 season-is the last winner of the Chevron Championship in its California home. The tournament is moving to Texas in 2023 after more than half a century in the desert community of Rancho Mirage. The win confirms Kupcho as one of the brightest talents in women's golf, and comes only three years after she won the Augusta National Women's Amateur title in 2019. Kupcho-who painted her fingernails green in honor of Augusta National for Sunday's final round-admitted she had not expected her first LPGA title would be a major. "I've been so close a couple of times, it's just really hard sometimes, but here I am," Kupcho said. "A major is crazy." Kupcho had built a formidable lead after her heroics on Saturday, which gave her ample breathing space at the top of the leaderboard. She looked poised to wrap up victory at a canter after making birdies on the second, fourth and fifth holes on Sunday, despite a bogey on the third. But her lead began to shrink after two more bogeys on the eighth and 10th holes. She steadied with a birdie on the 11th, but then two jittery back-to-back bogeys on the 13th and 14th saw her lead cut to just two shots with Jessica Korda suddenly looking menacing. Yet just when the spectre of a collapse was rearing its head, Korda gave Kupcho a release from the pressure. Korda's bogey on the 15th restored Kupcho's three-shot cushion with four holes remaining. Kupcho then drilled her second shot from the fairway to within a few feet for a simple birdie on the 15th to go four shots clear to all but guarantee victory. A par on the 16th left her four up with two to play, and despite a bogey on the 17th, Kupcho still had plenty of room to maneuver heading to the 18th. A final bogey on the 18th-her fifth of the back nine and seventh of the round-could not deny her victory. ---AFP

### **Tearful Espargaro** wins first MotoGP race in 200th attempt

TERMAS DE RIO HONDO, Argentina: Spain's Aleix Espargaro won his first MotoGP race at the 200th attempt in Argentina on Sunday and tearfully admitted: "It's really special". The 32-year-old also gave Aprilia a maiden triumph in the sport's premier class while he took over the lead of the world championship after three rounds. Jorge Martin, on a Ducati-Pramac, and Suzuki's Alex Rins made it an all-Spanish podium "I am really happy I have waited a very long time," said a tearful Esparago who joined Aprilia in 2017. "It's particularly special as it was my 200th race in MotoGP.' In all, Espargaro has taken part in 283 grand prix across the sport's three classes since his 2004 debut in the now defunct 125cc class. "Everything was in place, we were solid on the pace, but it was double pressure because everyone was telling me it was going to be easy, but it wasn't. "The last laps were my strongest. I thank everyone at Aprilia, I think we really deserve it, and the other incredible thing is that we are leading the championship. "Six years ago, nobody believed in Aprilia.'



defeating Casper Ruud in the Men's Singles final during the Miami Open at Hard Rock Stadium on April

Espargaro started from pole, his first since his Suzuki days seven years ago at the Catalunya Grand Prix in Barcelona, but Martin immediately roared past. The 24-year-old Martin, chasing his

#### WTA top 20

- Iga Swiatek (POL) 6,711 pts (+1) Barbora Krejcikova (CZE) 4,975 (+2) Paula Badosa (ESP) 4,970 (+3) Maria Sakkari (GRE) 4,705 (-1) Aryna Sabalenka (BLR) 4,657 Anett Kontaveit (EST) 4,511 (+1) Karolina Pliskova (CZE) 4,197 (+1) Danielle Collins (USA) 3,151 (+3) Garbine Muguruza (ESP) 3,070 Ons Jabeur (TUN) 2,975 Jelena Ostapenko (LAT) 2,805 (+1) Emma Raducanu (GBR) 2,706 (+1) Jessica Pegula (USA) 2,485 (+8) Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova (RUS) 2,473 Coco Gauff (USA) 2,345 (+2) Angelique Kerber (GER) 2,297 (-1) Victoria Azarenka (BLR) 2,281 (-1)
- 17. Elena Rybakina (KAZ) 2,261
- 18. 19. Leylah Fernandez (CAN) 2,156 (+3)
- 20. Simona Halep (ROM) 2,156 (-1)

his fitness to walk the hilly course last Tuesday with an 18-hole practice round at Augusta National alongside Charlie and friend Justin Thomas. Woods had given no timetable for his return to competition, but the move hinted he felt his game was ready to contend for a sixth green jacket, which would match the career record set by Jack Nicklaus.

Woods wouldn't commit to playing even as his confirmed Sunday he would practice more. "It will be a game-time decision on whether I compete," Woods tweeted. That possibility and the chance to see Woods helped draw a full crowd of spectators to Augusta National on Monday for the first time since Woods won the 2019 Masters, patrons having been barred in 2020 and allowed only in limited numbers last year due to COVID-19.

With storms in the forecast for Tuesday and Wednesday, Monday could mark the last opportunity for Woods and other players to test themselves over the 7,510-yard, par-72 layout. Woods played a back-nine practice round on Sunday afternoon, Termas de Rio Hondo circuit on April 3, 2022

ings. The Hondas of Somkiat Chantra, the winner in Indonesia last time out, and Ai Ogura completed the podium. Polesitter Fermin Aldeguer, bidding to become Moto2's youngest race winner at 16, crashed out after contact with Vietti.

It was desperate luck for Aldeguer after he had set a new lap record in the warm-up earlier Sunday. In Moto3, Sergio Garcia, who had started on pole position, claimed victory despite being down in third place at the start of the final lap. The Aspar team rider swept past Dennis Foggia and teammate Tatsuki Suzuki to claim his first win of the season and take the overall lead in the championship. Ayumu Sasaki rounded out the podium despite having to complete a long lap penalty. —AFP

#### Swiatek confirmed as 2. 3. new WTA number one 4. 5. PARIS: Poland's Iga Swiatek was confirmed as the 6. new WTA number one in the rankings released 7. 8.

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Monday, replacing the retired Ashleigh Barty. The 20-year-old celebrated her new status in style on Sunday, winning the Miami Open with a straight-sets victory over four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka

Swiatek's victory made her only the fourth women's player in history to win the Indian Wells and Miami tournaments back-to-back. The former French Open champion already holds a substantial lead over second-ranked Czech Barbora Krejcikova. Miami runner-up Osaka jumped up 42 places to move into 35th in the rankings. The Japanese star will be hoping to secure seedings for the remaining three majors of the year. —AFP

# **Tiger's fight to play** in Masters excites Augusta National

AUGUSTA, Georgia: Tiger Woods and the possibility of him making an incredible comeback heightened excitement at Augusta National on Monday as the first official practice rounds began for the 86th Masters. A quarter-century after Woods won his first major title by an astonishing 12 strokes at Augusta National and launched Tigermania", the 15-time major champion is again electrifying the atmosphere at the famed course. Woods suffered severe right leg injuries 14 months ago in a car crash, was hospitalized for weeks and unable to walk for months.

After using a cart while playing alongside son Charlie in an event last December, Woods tested

MIAMI GARDENS: In this image released on April 4, Iga Swiatek of Poland poses with the Chris Evert WTA World No 1 Trophy in Hollywood Beach, Florida. —AFP

with some highlights of the two-hour session being tweeted out by the Masters.

Woods greeted other players and some familiar club faces during the round, according to the Masters website. He played alongside Australian Cameron Davis over the last five holes. The 46year-old superstar has not played an official tournament since defending his title at the 2020 Masters, played in November due to COVID-19. "The competitive juices, they are never going to go away," Woods said last December.

Woods has already made an extraordinary comeback effort at the Masters, having won the 2019 crown for his first major triumph since 2008 after spinal fusion surgery. Following his Southern California automobile accident, Woods has said he is lucky to be alive and not to have had his right leg amputated. "When I had my back fusion, I didn't know if I could ever be out here again," Woods said in December. "This was a totally different deal. This was whether or not I would have a prosthetic or not, and I don't." —AFP



### Sports

# Rampant Spurs go fourth, West Ham leave Everton in relegation danger

**LONDON:** Tottenham powered into fourth place in the Premier League with a 5-1 rout of Newcastle, while West Ham's 2-1 victory pushed Everton deeper into relegation trouble on Sunday. Antonio Conte's side staged a stirring comeback to make it five wins from their last six league games. Newcastle struck first through Fabian Schar, but Ben Davies equalized before the break in north London.

Matt Doherty, Son Heung-min, Emerson Royal and Steven Bergwijn netted after half-time as Tottenham climbed above bitter rivals Arsenal on goal difference. Arsenal, who have two games in hand on Tottenham, can regain fourth place if they avoid defeat at Crystal Palace on Monday. Regardless of that result, Tottenham are firmly in the race to qualify for next season's Champions League, despite Conte's claim that it would be a miracle to finish in the top four.

"It's very difficult to be in the race for the Champions League. We want to stay there until the end. We have to continue to play this way with intensity," Conte said. "I'm very happy. I was happy before the international break. I said it was a pity we had to stop. I asked my players today to start in the same way we left. We know we have eight final games. Arsenal has a good advantage but to play against us in this moment is not easy."

Newcastle snatched the lead against the run of play in the 39th minute when Schar's free-kick from the edge of the area caught Hugo Lloris unsighted as it evaded the Tottenham keeper's weak attempted save. But Tottenham were level four minutes later as Son's teasing cross was glanced home by Davies from six yards for his first Premier League goal since 2017.

Harry Kane was the provider when Tottenham

moved ahead in the 48th minute, the England captain whipping over a fine cross that Doherty stooped to head in from close range. Needing another goal to overtake Arsenal, Conte's men struck again six minutes later as Kane's pass picked out Dejan Kulusevski and his cross was slotted in by Son for his 15th goal this season.

Emerson bagged his first Tottenham goal with a close-range finish from Doherty's cross in the 63rd minute before Bergwijn came off the bench to drill home with seven minutes left. In turmoil when Conte arrived in November to replace the sacked Nuno Espirito Santo, Tottenham have renewed hope of an uplifting end to the season.

At the London Stadium, David Moyes' side moved up to sixth place thanks to Jarrod Bowen's secondhalf winner on the forward's return from a month out with a foot injury. Aaron Cresswell had put West Ham ahead with a superb 32nd minute free-kick before Mason Holgate equalized with a deflected effort soon after the interval.

#### **Everton angst**

Everton were effectively out of the contest when Michael Keane was sent off midway through the second half. Everton's fifth defeat in their last six league games leaves them languishing just three points above the relegation zone. Frank Lampard's team have two games in hand on third-bottom Watford, but their proud record of playing in the top-flight every season since 1954-55 remains under serious threat. Lampard publicly questioned his players' character after their FA Cup quarter-final thrashing at Crystal Palace.

They were more committed in their first outing



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's English striker Harry Kane has this shot blocked by Newcastle United's Swiss defender Fabian Schar during their English Premier League match at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium on April 3, 2022. — AFP

since then, but there was no improvement in the worst away record in England's four professional divisions this term. A trip to second-bottom Burnley on Wednesday looms as a vital clash in Everton's fight for survival. "The reality is that we are in that kind of moment where everything is going against us, decisions, moments in games, red cards," Lampard said. "I can't fault the players, their character. The per-

formance was really positive and we have 10 games to perform like that again." Beaten in two of their previous three league matches, West Ham are just three points behind Tottenham and Arsenal. — AFP

### Mbappe mum on PSG future after sparking Lorient rout

**PARIS:** Kylian Mbappe said he has still yet to make a decision on his future at Paris Saint-Germain after scoring twice in a sensational display in Sunday's 5-1 demolition of Lorient in Ligue 1. The France star was in unstoppable form, creating two goals for Neymar and another for Lionel Messi as the trio all scored in the same match for PSG for the first time.

However the post-match focus again quickly shifted to where Mbappe will be playing next season, with his PSG contract expiring in July. "I haven't made my choice. I haven't taken my decision, I'm thinking it over, there are new elements and there are loads of factors," Mbappe told Prime Video. "I don't want to be wrong," he added. "I know it's getting a bit late for people, we talk about it every day. "If I'd taken my decision, I would say it. I don't have to explain myself to anyone, it's a personal choice. If I'd made my decision I would come and announce it and stand by it."

After three defeats in four games before the international break and a traumatic Champions League exit, PSG began the end-of-season run-in with a crushing win at the Parc des Princes. They lead Marseille by 12 points and need just 13 more from their final eight games to be assured of a record-equaling 10th French title.

Messi and Mbappe combined to set up Neymar for the opening goal on 12 minutes as the Brazilian struck for just the sixth time in another injury-plagued campaign. Mbappe then doubled the advantage with a neat finish inside the near post, but Terem Moffi gave Lorient hope early in the second half after punishing a defensive mix-up. The Nigerian beat an uncertain Marquinhos to a loose pass from Achraf Hakimi, poking ond Gianluigi Donnarumm With Lorient threatening to get back into the game, Mbappe restored PSG's two-goal cushion by drilling home from 20 metres to take his league goals tally to 17, one behind Monaco's Wissam Ben Yedder. Mbappe teed up Messi to crash in a fourth via the underside of the cross-



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe is tackled by Lorient's French defender Houboulang Mendes during their French L1 football match at the Parc des Princes stadium on April 3, 2022. — AFP

bar on 73 minutes moments after sensational performance with a hat-

# Pedri masterclass sees off Sevilla and sends Barca second

**BARCELONA:** A wonder-goal from Pedri proved the difference for Barcelona on Sunday as a 1-0 win over Sevilla sent Xavi Hernandez's side up to second in La Liga for the first time this season. Barca missed a string of chances against a dogged Sevilla at Camp Nou before the 19-year-old Pedri settled the contest with a moment of magic, dancing his way into space on the edge of the area before firing into the corner.

Victory continues Barcelona's recent surge as they backed up their 4-0 thrashing of Real Madrid before the international break with a convincing win against the team who have been Madrid's chief title challengers all season. Madrid edged past Celta Vigo on Saturday to calm suggestions their Clasico nightmare could even prompt a late collapse and let Barca back into the race A 12-point advantage means that is surely impossible now but Barcelona are in the driving seat to finish second, which would be a remarkable achievement for a team that only a few months ago had serious concerns about missing out on the top four. When Xavi took over in November, they lay ninth. The last time the Catalans were second in La Liga after a complete round of fixtures was May 10 last year, three matches before the end of last season. 'We're second but nothing is done," Xavi said. "While it's mathematically possible to fight for La Liga, we will keep fighting." Ousmane Dembele delivered another excellent to display to enhance the growing the sense that the Frenchman might yet stay in the summer, even if the club remain pessimistic. Pedri, though, was the star of the show, a stunning performance in midfield rounded off with a masterful goal that will only further the reputation of one of the world's most exciting young talents. "I encourage him to shoot," said Xavi. "He always thinks to pass, he's a passer, it's something that happened to me as well. But today he scored a great goal. "When I say he's an elite player, it's because there is hardly anyone that understands our style as well as him.' Sevilla, meanwhile, continue to fizzle, have drawn seven out of their previous nine games before this defeat made it two wins from 10. Add the surprise exit in the Europa League at the hands of West Ham and Julen Lopetegui's side are in danger of enduring a miserable end to what looked a promising season. -AFP

Sergio Ramos came on for a first appearance since Jan 23.

Neymar and Messi were both whistled by supporters in PSG's last home game. This time it was Ramos who was jeered following a nightmare first season in Paris blighted by a calf problem. Mbappe nearly capped a

trick, his shot grazing the post after a scorching burst into the box. He instead turned provider in the final minute, exchanging passes with Neymar to send the Brazilian racing through to complete a 14th win in 15 home games for Mauricio Pochettino's side. — AFP

# Inter sneak past Juve to stay on heels of Milan

**MILAN:** Inter Milan kept their title defence alive with Sunday's 1-O win at Juventus thanks to a controversial retaken penalty which moved them three points behind leaders AC Milan and Napoli, 3-1 winners at Atalanta. The champions came away from the Allianz Stadium in Turin with a narrow win in a badtempered match decided by Hakan Calhanoglu's spot-kick which was scored at the second attempt five minutes into first-half stoppage time.

Inter stay third with a game in hand and extend to four points the gap between themselves and thirdplaced Juve, who will be 10 points off the pace with seven games remaining if Milan beat Bologna on Monday after their unbeaten league run ended at 16 matches. "It's a huge step for us. We know that we've dropped points lately, but we're going to try to recover them over the remaining eight games," said coach Simone Inzaghi.

A game which started after an Italian and Ukrainian singer belted out a rendition of John Lennon's 'Imagine' to promote peace in Ukraine turned ugly almost immediately after kick-off, with rough tackles and niggly play which was dominated by the wasteful home side. Events turned on the final few minutes of the opening period, with bedlam breaking out after Inter were awarded their spotkick for Alvaro Morata treading on Denzel Dumfries' foot. Calhanoglu's weak first effort was saved by Wojciech Szcz?sny and from there chaos ensued, with Inter's players celebrating after the ball was clumsily bundled in by Juve's defenders only for that goal to be ruled out for a foul. — AFP



TURIN: Juventus' Argentine forward Paulo Dybala and Inter Milan's Italian defender Matteo Darmian collide during the Italian Serie A football match on April 3, 2022 at the Juventus†stadium. —AFP

# Classifieds

### **Hospitals & Clinics**

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Rawda	22517733
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Adaliya	22517144
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Khaldiya	24848075
Mubarak Al-Kabir		Kaifan	24849807
Hospital	25312700	Shamiya	24848913
Chest Hospital	24849400	Shuwaikh	24814507
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Adan Hospital	23940620	Nuzha	22526804
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Qadsiya	22515088
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Dasmah	22532265
	2015-2017 CPM 112 1932	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Clinics		Shaab	22518752
Kaizen center	25716707	Qibla	22459381



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# Sport Vines

TUESDAY, APRIL 5, 2022



LOS ANGELES: Anthony Davis #3 of the Los Angeles Lakers splits the defense of Davon Reed #9 and Nikola Jokic #15 of the Denver Nuggets during the second half of a game at Crypto.com Arena on April 3, 2022. —AFP

# Lakers, LeBron on brink after Denver rout

**LOS ANGELES:** Nikola Jokic scored 38 points Sunday as the Denver Nuggets sent the Los Angeles Lakers spinning to a sixth straight defeat and closer to elimination from NBA postseason contention. With LeBron James looking on from the sidelines, a patched-up Lakers team was unable to contain Jokic down the stretch as the Nuggets powered to a 129-118 win at the Lakers' Crypto.com Arena.

The defeat leaves the Lakers needing a miracle to overtake the San Antonio Spurs for a place in the postseason play-in tournament. The Lakers are 11th in the Western Conference, with a 31-47 record. San Antonio occupy 10th place - and are on track for a spot in the play-in - with a 32-45 record. With just four games remaining, the Lakers have precious little margin for error - and dauntingly face a trip to the league-leading Phoenix Suns on Tuesday. Defeat in Arizona could see them eliminated from playoff contention depending on results elsewhere. If the Lakers fail to reach the postseason, it would mark only the fourth time since LeBron James entered the league in 2003 that he has not gone to the playoffs.

Lakers coach Frank Vogel could not hide his dejection after Sunday's damaging defeat. "What's it like? It sucks," Vogel responded to a reporter. "It sucks telling these guys every game 'Proud of you, good effort - we lost.' It's not fun but it could be worse, if things were untraveling. But our team has stayed together - they've put in fight, their attitude has been wonderful," Vogel said. "It's just disappointing to come in and keep saying we fell short. It sucks we can't get over the damn hump and put a 'W' on the board when we need it," he added. "But our guys' spirit is really pure. They're fighting a good fight but we just keep falling short." contain Jokic during a decisive fourth quarter. Jokic finished with 38 points, 18 rebounds and six assists. Will Barton added 25 points while Aaron Gordon had 24. "We didn't have enough answers for him down the stretch," Vogel said of Jokic. Anthony Davis, clearly struggling for full fitness, led the Lakers with 28 points, while Russell Westbrook finished with 27.

Elsewhere Sunday, Luka Doncic won his duel

points. Point guard Jalen Brunson added 15 points while Dorian Finney-Smith and Spencer Dinwiddie chipped in with 11 apiece for Dallas, who improved to 49-30 to remain fourth in the Western Conference standings. The Bucks fell to 48-30 after a defeat which followed their 153-119 mauling Friday by the Los Angeles Clippers.

The Bucks had led by 10 points early in the second quarter but were gradually reeled in by Miami, who pulled clear in the fourth after an 11-point burst from Doncic. Antetokounmpo led Bucks scorers with 28 points, with Jrue Holiday adding 20. In other NBA action Sunday, the Boston Celtics bullied the Washington Wizards en route to a 144-102 thrashing at the TD Garden. Jaylen Brown drained three of four three-point attempts to lead the Celtics scoring with 32 points while Jayson Tatum added 22 for Boston, who remain in second place in the Eastern Conference. — AFP

# Defining days ahead for Liverpool, Man City's history bids

**MANCHESTER:** Liverpool's quest for a quadruple and Manchester City's bid to match Manchester United's historic treble of 1999 are on a collision course over the next two weeks. Premier League leaders City will host a potential title decider against second placed Liverpool on Sunday before the fierce rivals clash again in the FA Cup semifinal at Wembley on April 16.

However, the impact of the Champions League quarterfinals could have a big impact on who claims the domestic trophies. Liverpool on paper have the better draw in the last eight as they take on Benfica, while City face a grueling two legs against Spanish champions Atletico Madrid. Reds boss Jurgen Klopp declared the Premier League as "the most important" prize up for grabs for his team, who have already lifted the League Cup this season.

But that cannot be the case for City as they aim to end the club's long wait for Champions League glory. Anything other than a convincing win when Atletico visit the Etihad on Tuesday will give

# Benfica target another scalp against Liverpool

**LISBON:** Benfica face a gargantuan task in the Champions League quarterfinals on Tuesday but after already knocking out Barcelona and Ajax, there is belief they can spring another surprise against Liverpool. Many circled Benfica as the kindest opponent available when the draw was made in Nyon last month, with this the furthest the Portuguese club have gone in the Champions League in six years.

The last time Benfica made the semis, they went on to reach the final, in 1990, when a team coached by Sven-Goran Eriksson lost 1-0 to AC Milan and missed out on lifting their third European Cup. That was the last time Benfica really belonged with Europe's elite and it would be the shock of the Doncic wins Giannis duel

Vogel admitted the Lakers had been unable to

Guardiola a difficult balancing act on his team selection for the title showdown against Liverpool.

"The next Premier League game we will play against Liverpool. We know they are going to win almost all the games - hopefully not the next one but we will try to do the same," Guardiola said after City beat Burnley on Saturday to reestablish their one-point lead over Liverpool. "When you arrive in May challenging to lift the title it means you have had an incredible season. Being here is because we work a lot and we have done that every single season."

#### 'Insane levels'

Liverpool are happy just to be in this position after finding themselves 14 points adrift of City at one point in January. A 10-game winning run has reeled in the English champions, setting up another titanic fight between the sides, reminiscent of their record-breaking battle in 2018/19. City emerged winners on that occasion by a single point despite Liverpool amassing 97 points, the fourth highest points tally in English top-flight history for a 38game season.

The other two were also registered during an era marked by the excellence of Guardiola and Klopp's sides. City hold the record for the 100 points they recorded in 2017/18, while Liverpool responded in 2019/20 to end their 30-year wait to win the league with 99 points. "In the last few years we've pushed

round if they were to upset Liverpool, who, along with Manchester City, are surely this year's tournament favorites.

Benfica's impressive run in the Champions League has belied a tumultuous season domestically for the club, who parted ways with Jorge Jesus as coach in December following a 3-0 defeat by Porto and just seven wins out from their first 15 matches. But their form has not been much better under interim coach Nelson Verissimo, who began with only two wins from his first seven while a 3-2 defeat by Braga on Friday has the team sitting third in the Primeira Liga, 12 points adrift of leaders Porto and six behind Sporting Lisbon. Third place in Portugal is only enough to make the Champions League qualifiers. "We know it's Liverpool, but we have to fight, we can play better," Verissimo said on Friday.

"We always have to work. The Champions League game is different. We can't forget our game today because Liverpool will see it. We have to correct it." Better performances in Europe have kept Benfica's season alive, with the 3-2 aggregate victory over Ajax in the last 16 as welcome as it was surwith Giannis Antetokounmpo as the Dallas Mavericks downed the Milwaukee Bucks. Mavs star Doncic finished with 32 points, 15 assists and eight rebounds as the Mavs highlighted their postseason credentials with a 118-112 road win over the NBA champions. Doncic spearheaded a balanced offensive performance by Dallas, who finished with six players in double figures.

Doncic was given scoring support from Dwight Powell with 22 points and Reggie Bullock with 16



each other on insane levels," added Klopp.

This year, history will be marked in the number of trophies won. United's feat of winning the Champions League, Premier League and FA Cup is the only time that particular treble has been won by an English side. "The next Premier League game obviously is a big one, we do not hide from that. It's all good," said Klopp. "We are not favorite in one of the competitions we are in, but who cares? We will give it a try." — AFP



Nelson Verissimo

prising. They were outplayed by Ajax for large spells in Lisbon but managed to claim a 2-2 draw, before snatching a 1-0 win in Amsterdam to go through. Darwin Nunez headed in the winner at the Johan Cruyff Arena and the Uruguayan will be wellknown to Liverpool given he reportedly has many admirers in the Premier League. —AFP

# Louis van Gaal diagnosed with prostate cancer

**THE HAGUE:** Netherlands coach Louis van Gaal has received messages of support from his former clubs Manchester United, Barcelona and Bayern Munich after revealing he has prostate cancer. Van Gaal, 70, said on Sunday he had been receiving treatment since being diagnosed in 2020, but still plans to lead his team at the World Cup in Qatar in seven months' time.

United, where he was in charge in 2014-2016, were among those wishing the Dutchman a speedy recovery. "Everybody at Manchester

United is fully behind our former manager, Louis van Gaal, in his battle against cancer. Sending you strength and courage, Louis," the English giants tweeted. Barcelona, where he was twice manager and twice won La Liga, said on Twitter: "Our thoughts and prayers go out to former Barca manager Louis van Gaal... Stay



Louis van Gaal

strong, Louis, and get well soon."

Another of his former clubs, Bayern Munich, which he managed between 2009 and 2011, said: "FC Bayern would like to wish former head coach Louis van Gaal all the best as he battles cancer. We all know how strong a person he is. Hoping for a full and speedy recovery!" Former England striker Gary Lineker, now a TV presenter in Britain, also tweeted a message of support. "Sending best wishes and hopes for a full recovery to Louis Van Gaal," he wrote.

Van Gaal told RTL television on Sunday that the players in the national squad "don't know" that he has cancer. He said he had undergone 25 bouts of radiotherapy, including during training camps with the national team. "In each period during my time as manager of the national team I had to leave in the night to go to the hospital without the players finding it out until now. While thinking I was in good health, but I'm not." — AFP