

4 Kuwaiti foods still on Ramadan iftar tables



16 Leclerc claims second GP win of the season



Ramadan Timings	
Fajr	04:05
Shurooq	05:27
Dhuhr	11:49
Asr	15:23
Maghrib	18:12
Isha	19:31



VOLVO

Sharif set to become next Pakistan's prime minister

Bowled out: Pakistan's cricketer-turned-PM Khan loses office



ISLAMABAD: In this file photo, Pakistan's cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (Movement for Justice) speaks to the media during the general election in Islamabad. — AFP

ISLAMABAD: Imran Khan was dismissed Sunday as Pakistan's prime minister after losing a no-confidence vote, paving the way for an unlikely opposition alliance that faces the same issues that bedeviled the cricket star-turned-politician. A new premier will be chosen Monday, with centrist Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) chief Shehbaz Sharif already anointed to lead the nuclear-armed nation of 220 million people.

His first task will be to form a cabinet that will also draw heavily from the centre-left Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), as well as find space for the smaller conservative Jamiatul Ulama-e-Islam-F (JU-I-F) group. The PPP and PML-N are dynastic parties that have dominated Pakistani politics for decades - usually as bitter rivals - and their relations are sure to fray in the lead-up to the next election, which must be held by October 2023. Shehbaz Sharif is the

brother of disgraced three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif, while PPP leader Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is the son of former president Asif Ali Zardari and assassinated ex-premier Benazir Bhutto.

Khan's exit was met with a mixture of glee and sympathy. "Back to the pavilion," screamed the influential Express Tribune newspaper, using a cricket metaphor headline writers have found difficult to resist during Khan's tenure. No prime minister has ever served a full term in Pakistan, but Khan is the first to lose office via a vote of no-confidence.

"Sad day for Pakistan... a good man sent home," his former information minister Fawad Chaudhry said on Twitter. There had been high hopes for Khan when he was elected in 2018 on a promise of sweeping away decades of entrenched corruption and cronyism, but he struggled to maintain support with soaring inflation,

a feeble rupee and crippling debt.

Militancy is also on the rise, with Pakistan's Taliban emboldened by the return to power last year of the hardline Islamist group in neighboring Afghanistan. Khan had vowed to fight "until the last ball", and he certainly took his exit to the wire Sunday. He tried everything to stay in power after losing his majority in parliament-including dissolving the assembly and calling a fresh election.

But the Supreme Court deemed all his actions illegal and ordered them to reconvene and vote. Still, there was drama right until the midnight deadline ordered by the court, with the speaker of the assembly - a Khan loyalist - resigning at the last minute. The session restarted after midnight with a replacement, and the vote was finally held. Khan's Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) lawmakers stormed out, but the no-confidence motion

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Ramadan Kareem

Loving Almighty Allah (1)

By Hassan Twaha Bwambale

The most pleasing human emotion is love and the most beautiful form of love is to love the Almighty and Majestic Creator, Allah. We worship God, perform good deeds, and draw closer to Him because we love Him and hope for His bounties and blessings, the most important being to see Him in Paradise. The love of a worshiper for his Creator is very satisfying and fills his heart, especially when he knows that Almighty Allah loves him.

Among the names and attributes of Allah is Al-Wadoud, meaning "The Most Loving and Affectionate, The Beloved, The Kind and Loving God." According to scholars of Islamic Jurisprudence, there are ten ways in which to prove our love for the Almighty Allah. In today's article, I will share only two among those ten ways, and will share the others in subsequent articles.

(1) Reading the Noble Quran with understanding and reflection. The Noble Quran is a Book of guidance and Allah's words. So, we must not only read its verses, but we should also comprehend what we read, contemplate on its meanings, interact with it, and implement what we read. When reading the Noble Quran, it is highly recommended to try reading the meanings, or watch videos of respectable and reputable scholars who explain the meanings of the verses, etc.

Our Most Beneficent Lord says what can be translated as: "Do they (the hypocrites and polytheists), then, not reflect upon the Quran? Or are there locks on their hearts?" (Muhammad 47: 24) Exegetes of the Noble Quran remark that "Either those people do not ponder over the Noble Quran at all, or if they try to ponder over it, its teachings and meaning do not enter their hearts, because they have put locks on them." (Refer to www.quran7m.com)

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was deeply responsive to the Quran. Whenever He recited the Noble Quran and reached verses that spoke about punishment or the horrible events that will unfold on Judgment Day, he would cry.

And whenever he read about Paradise his face would beam with joy. Abdullah bin Ash-Shikhkheer (ra) said what can be translated as: "I approached the Prophet (PBUH) while he was praying, and his chest sounded like a boiling pot

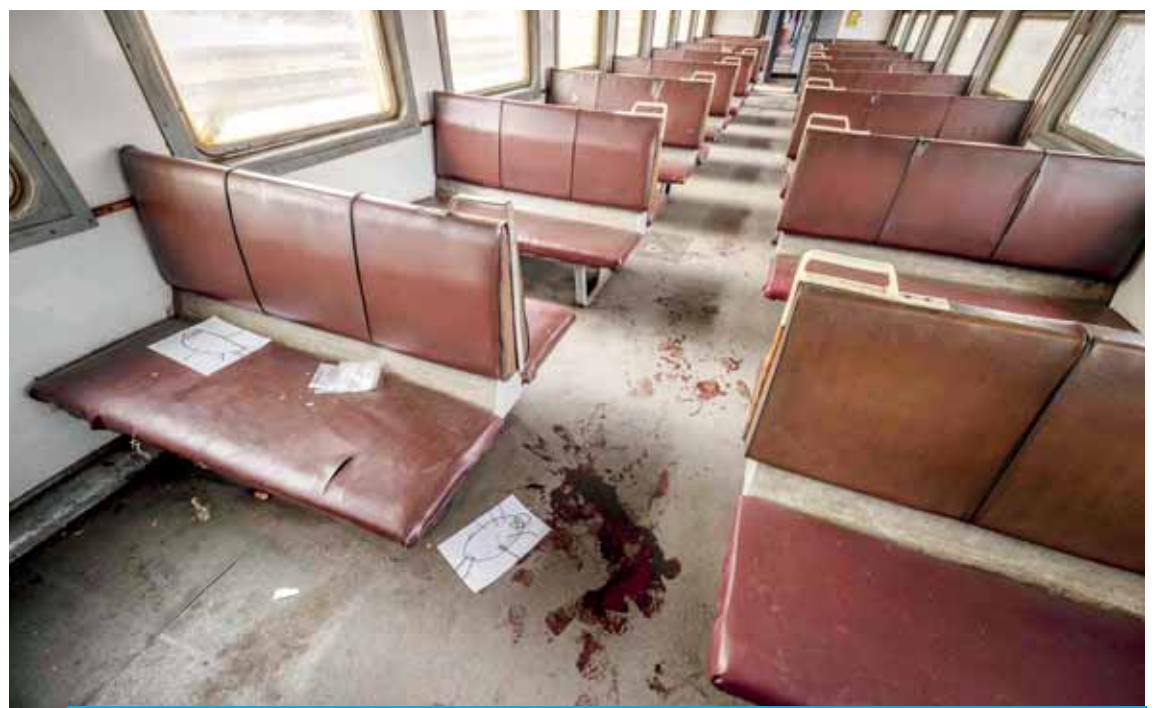
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Civilians flee as Ukraine readies for 'big battles'

KRAMATORSK: Ukraine is preparing for "big battles" against Moscow's forces in the east of the country, officials in Kyiv said, as Pope Francis on Sunday called for an Easter truce to end the war. Evacuations resumed on Saturday from Kramatorsk, in eastern Ukraine, where a missile strike killed 52 people at a railway station a day earlier, as British Prime Minister Boris Johnson became the latest Western leader to visit Kyiv.

Hailing the country's response to the Russian invasion, Johnson offered Ukraine armoured vehicles and anti-ship missiles, crucial to halting the Russian naval siege of Black Sea ports, to help ensure that the country will "never be invaded again". His offer came after President Volodymyr Zelensky said Kyiv was readying for a Russian onslaught. "Sadly, in parallel we see the preparations for important battles, some people say

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KRAMATORSK: Photo shows a train car after a rocket attack at a train station in Kramatorsk, eastern Ukraine, that was being used for civilian evacuations. — AFP

Yemenis fear the impact of Ukraine war

SANAA: The wheat fields of northern Yemen stretch into the distance but they aren't enough to nourish a country where millions go hungry. Already teetering on the edge of famine, war-ravaged Yemen fears a shortage of the staple food ingredient because of a different war - in Ukraine, which is one of the world's major suppliers of the grain.

In a bustling Sanaa bakery, Mohammed Al-Jalal and his staff sell small loaves of bread to customers

carrying them away in red plastic bags. "Flour is available on the market but we worry about shortages because of the war between Russia and Ukraine," Jalal told AFP. In Al-Jawf province, which borders Saudi Arabia, farmers are hard at work to harvest their crops before grinding the wheat and shipping it mainly to the capital, rebel-held Sanaa.

Most of Yemen's roughly 30 million people will not be tasting this home-grown product, because the country depends almost entirely on food imports, with nearly a third of wheat supplies coming from Ukraine, according to the United Nations. Across the Middle East and North Africa, people are struggling to secure even the most basic staples in

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LAHJ: Poor Yemeni families receive flour rations and other basic food supplies like rice, oil and sugar, from charities in the province of Lahj, in southern Yemen. — AFP

Zionists launch West Bank raids

JENIN: Zionist forces carried out fresh raids Sunday in the flashpoint West Bank region of Jenin, a bastion of Palestinian militant groups and the home of gunmen who launched two recent deadly attacks. Heavy gun battles rocked the northern region of the occupied ter-

ritory as Zionist forces launched raids for a second day running, with 10 people wounded in clashes across the West Bank, according to the Palestinian health ministry.

"Zionist entity has gone on the offence," Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said after a cabinet meeting, vowing to "settle accounts with everyone who was linked, either directly or indirectly, to the attacks". Troops on Sunday detained 20 Palestinians, a military source said.

The operation came after a gunman from Jenin went on a shooting rampage in a Tel Aviv nightlife area

Thursday, killing three Zionists and wounding more than a dozen others - the latest of a spate of bloody attacks in Zionist entity. Hamas and Islamic Jihad welcomed the Tel Aviv attack, which was condemned by Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas.

Elsewhere in the West Bank, near the southern city of Bethlehem, Zionist troops on Sunday shot dead a Palestinian woman who had approached them and failed to stop after they had fired warning shots, the military said.

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Local



KUWAIT: Philippines Ambassador Mohammad Noordin Pendorina Lomondot speaks to voters.



From the voting process.— Photos by Ben Garcia



Voters are seen at the embassy premises.

Filipino community in Kuwait starts 30-day overseas absentee vote; to last till May 9

Ambassador calls Filipinos to exercise right of suffrage

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: A 30-day period given to Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) to cast their votes for president, vice president, senators and a party list representative under the Philippines' Overseas Absentee Voting law kicked off yesterday at the Philippine Embassy in Kuwait. Filipinos all over the world have the right to elect their national leaders by casting their ballots at their embassies or consular offices abroad.

Frontrunner Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr, son of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos, is heading pre-election surveys back home and also in Kuwait, based on exit polls conducted by Kuwait Times on the first day of voting. His closest rival, the current Vice President Leni Robredo, is lagging far behind Marcos in surveys.

Filipinos thronged the embassy as early as 7:00 am. The election process started exactly at 8:00 am, with Ambassador



Ten candidates running for president

Mohammad Noordin Pendorina Lomondot as the first voter. "I vote first not because I am your ambassador, but also to set as example for all Filipinos in Kuwait. I call upon Filipinos in Kuwait to come forward and exercise their rights of suffrage and vote according to their conscience," he said. Filipinos can vote provided they are registered as overseas voters through the registration conducted by the Commission on Elections (Comelec), which is in charge of all election proceedings.

Overseas voting will continue until May

9, 2022 - Election Day in the Philippines. There are 10 candidates for president - Robredo, Marcos Jr, Isko Moreno Domagoso, Manny Pacquiao, Leody de Guzman, Norberto Gonzalez, Jose Montemayor, Faisal Mangondato, Ping Lacson and Ernesto Abella. There are seven candidates for vice president - Sara Duterte-Carpio, daughter of President Rodrigo Duterte, Willy Ong, Lito Atienza, Kiko Pangilinan, Walden Bello, Carlos Serapio and Tito Sotto. Overseas voters can also vote for 12 senators and at least

one party list representative.

Big change

One of the early voters interviewed by the Kuwait Times said she voted for a candidate who will continue the projects of the current president. "We have witnessed a big change during the leadership of President Duterte. Filipinos are thankful for his leadership. There are more projects underway under this current administration than ever before. If the president who succeeds him is not supportive of him, those projects will be put on the backburner and progress will be hampered," said Zenaida Taberna, the second Filipino who voted after the ambassador.

Third in line Meliza Salas said she wanted to cast her vote on the first day since she is heading for vacation to the Philippines on Friday. "I want a president who is almost like Duterte. Even if he (Bongbong) is not endorsed by Duterte, he

is running on a ticket with Duterte's daughter. I also voted for him because he said he will not turn over President Duterte to the ICC for allegedly committing crimes against humanity. I even want him to stay as president for life," Salas said.

There are millions of Filipinos abroad and based on Comelec records, as of Oct 2021, there are 1.7 million registered as Overseas Absentee Voters (OAVs). In Kuwait, there are more than 230,000 Filipinos; however, only half of the number were able to register and only around 82,000 were approved by the election body, as per Ambassador Lomondot.

The Overseas Absentee Voting Act is a law in the Philippines passed on Feb 13, 2003, which provides for a system for citizens of the Philippines residing or working outside the Philippines to vote in an election. The process is implemented by Comelec with the help of the Department of Foreign Affairs.



Iftar meals distributed to people in need in Kuwait

KUWAIT: People line up to receive iftar meals in Mahboula on Sunday. Food distribution campaigns, a common feature during the holy month of Ramadan in Kuwait, returned in full force this year after a two-year disruption due to COVID-19. - Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Adan Hospital hosts ghabqa for ICU patients

KUWAIT: The anesthesia and intensive care department at Adan Hospital organized a ghabqa for survivors of the extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) service in the ICU. Health Minister Dr Khalid Al-Saeed and Undersecretary Dr Mustafa Redha attended the event that was held at Dar Hamad with more than 40 persons who recovered from severe pulmonary and heart complications, as most of them were COVID-19 patients. Their cases were

very critical and had to be put on the ECMO system until they recovered and left the hospital.

The ghabqa gathered patients and more than 150 ECMO team members who supervised their treatment. Head of the Anesthesia and Intensive Care Department Dr Huda Al-Foudari said the ECMO service started at Adan Hospital in 2017, with full support from health ministry officials. She said the service began with Amiri Hospital, then with the coronavirus sweeping the world, the health ministry decided to present the service in most public hospitals including Jaber, Jahra, Farwaniya and Mubarak Hospitals, as treatment with this technology is considered among the most modern treatment for severe breathing failure in the ICU due to COVID-19 for certain patients.



KUWAIT: Ambassador of Spain to Kuwait Miguel Jose Moro Aguilar hosted a ghabqa for media personnel on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh



Local

Kuwait donates \$2 million at pledging conference for Ukraine

‘Stand Up for Ukraine’ raises 9.1 billion euros



BORODIANKA: Antonina Kaletnyk waits for the body of her son in front of a collapsed building in the town of Borodianka, northwest of Kyiv, on April 8, 2022. —AFP



(From left) Presenter British journalist Isha Sesay, Polish President Andrzej Duda, Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission and CEO of Global Citizen Hugh Evans attend the event “Stand up for Ukraine” joined by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky (left) and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (right) via video link in Warsaw, Poland on April 9, 2022.

BRUSSELS: Upon direct instructions from His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Ambassador of Kuwait to Belgium and Head of Missions to the European Union and NATO Jassem Al-Budaiwi announced the allocation of \$2 million at a pledging conference for Ukraine that took place in Poland. Speaking remotely on Saturday, he noted that the donation will be distributed to the following UN agencies: \$500,000 for United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, \$500,000 for World Food Programme, \$250,000 for the International Organization for Migration, \$250,000 for World Health Organization, \$250,000 for United Nations Children’s Fund and \$250,000 for the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Budaiwi conveyed to organizers of the event and to the friendly Ukrainian people the greetings of the political leadership of the State of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Amir of the State of Kuwait, His Highness

Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Crown Prince, and the people of Kuwait. “Today, as we are sensing the seriousness of the situation, the State of Kuwait affirms its firm position and absolute belief in the commitment to international law and the Charter of the United Nations that govern relations between states and assures respect for the sovereignty of states, while affirming Kuwait’s support for international efforts aimed at calm and restraint,” he underlined. Kuwait also reaffirmed the need for all concerned parties to abide by the Minsk agreements and the mechanisms established to follow up on its implementation, including achieving a comprehensive ceasefire, as approved

by the UN Security Council Resolution 2202 of 2015, he said. “Finally, let me assure you, that our principles and values make it imperative for us to stand together in support of the Ukrainian people,” added the Kuwaiti ambassador.

Kuwait committed to supporting Ukrainian people



9.1 billion euros

The “Stand Up for Ukraine” global pledging event held in Poland Saturday raised 9.1 billion euros (\$9.8 billion) for people fleeing the Russian invasion inside Ukraine and abroad, the European Commission has announced. The sum includes one billion euro (\$1.1 billion) from the European Commission, and an additional one billion euro (\$1.1 billion) from the European Bank for Reconstruction and

Development (EBRD), it said in a press release. President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen said: The “Stand Up For Ukraine” campaign has raised 9.1 billion euros for people fleeing bombs, inside and outside Ukraine, with an additional billion pledged by EBRD. Out of these 10.1 billion euro (\$10.9 billion) in pledges and EBRD funding, 1.8 billion euro (\$1.9 billion) are for internally displaced persons and 8.3 billion euro (\$9 billion) for refugees in frontline EU Member States and non-EU countries like Moldova, she noted. “We will continue providing support. And once the bombs have stopped falling, we will help the people of Ukraine rebuild their country,” von der Leyen said.

Von der Leyen convened the pledging event together with Justin Trudeau, Canadian Prime Minister (remotely), and with the participation of Andrzej Duda, President of Poland. President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky also remotely addressed the event. —KUNA



BEIRUT: Officials cut the cake during a ceremony to celebrate the inauguration of the building affiliated to the Children Cancer Center. —KUNA photos

Kuwaiti Ambassador affirms keenness on supporting Lebanese

BEIRUT: The Kuwaiti Ambassador to Lebanon Abdul Aljinaee on Saturday affirmed Kuwait’s unwavering keenness on supporting “the brothers in Lebanon particularly at the humanitarian level.” The Kuwaiti people, namely the families, have always hurried to offer help “for their brothers and that is a trait of the people of Kuwait,” the ambassador said during inauguration of a building affiliated to the Children Cancer Center in Lebanon. Dr Hilal Al-Sayer, Chairman of Kuwait Red Crescent Society, who was also present at the event, expressed gratitude to the Kuwaiti Abdullah Al-Hamad Al-Sagr Company for its generous contribution for renovating the building. In the aftermath of the August 2020 blast of Beirut port, the KRCS repaired and equipped five hospitals and contributed to renovating the external clinics building of the Children Cancer Center.

Dr Sizar Bassim, the chief trustee at the center, said in remarks to the press that Kuwait, since onset of the center 20 years ago, has been

the main supporter. Dr Bassim added that the inaugurated building would house staff tasked with providing psychological, social and health aid for the patients. Moreover, divisions would be tasked with medicines’ distribution, receiving aid and donations and rehabilitation of communication capacities for the children. The center hosted last year 564 children. They were treated at the center and hospitals with which it has work contracts.

Meanwhile, Imad Jassem Al-Sagr, board member of the contributing company, said that following the port blast, the company coordinated with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society for overhauling the center. Dr Hosam Al-Sharqawi, the regional director of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, lauded the continuing Kuwaiti aid that constituted a glimmer of hope for the Lebanese amid the current hard living conditions.

George Kattanah, the secretary general of the Lebanese Red Cross, affirmed in the meantime the significance of opening the new medical facility at a time the country suffered shortage of medicines and treatment facilities. After conclusion of the ceremony, the attendees toured wards of the building and shields of appreciation were decorated upon the Kuwaiti ambassador, Dr Sayer, the head of the KRCS mission in Lebanon Dr Musaed Al-Enezy and Al-Sagr company. —KUNA



Dr Hilal Al-Sayer, Chairman of Kuwait Red Crescent Society, is honored during the ceremony.

On the occasion of the



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News in brief

No diplomats' rotations

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry categorically denied on Sunday reports about purported rotation of heads of diplomatic missions. The ministry said in a statement that such false reports circulated in violation of the relevant rules and protocols "constitute an embarrassment for the State of Kuwait vis-a-vis the states," names of which were included in the alleged list of rotated diplomats. The ministry, while affirming necessity of accuracy and seeking information from official sources, reserves its legal right regarding dissemination of false information.

Kuwait, Iraq discuss developments

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Naser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah received a phone call Saturday evening from his Iraqi counterpart Fuad Hussein. During their conversation, the ministers reviewed the strong relations between the two sisterly countries and the latest regional and international developments of common concern.

KFH: Over 10 million users of Quran application



KUWAIT: Holy Quran application launched by Kuwait Finance House "KFH" on iOS, and Android devices made a record number of users crossing 10 million users. The application is a distinguished mark among similar applications as it scored the highest download ratio. The application provides several facilities including recitation, memorization, interpretation and several other exclusive advantages. KFH is the world's first bank to place this application at the disposal of the users of smart devices including mobiles and iPads.

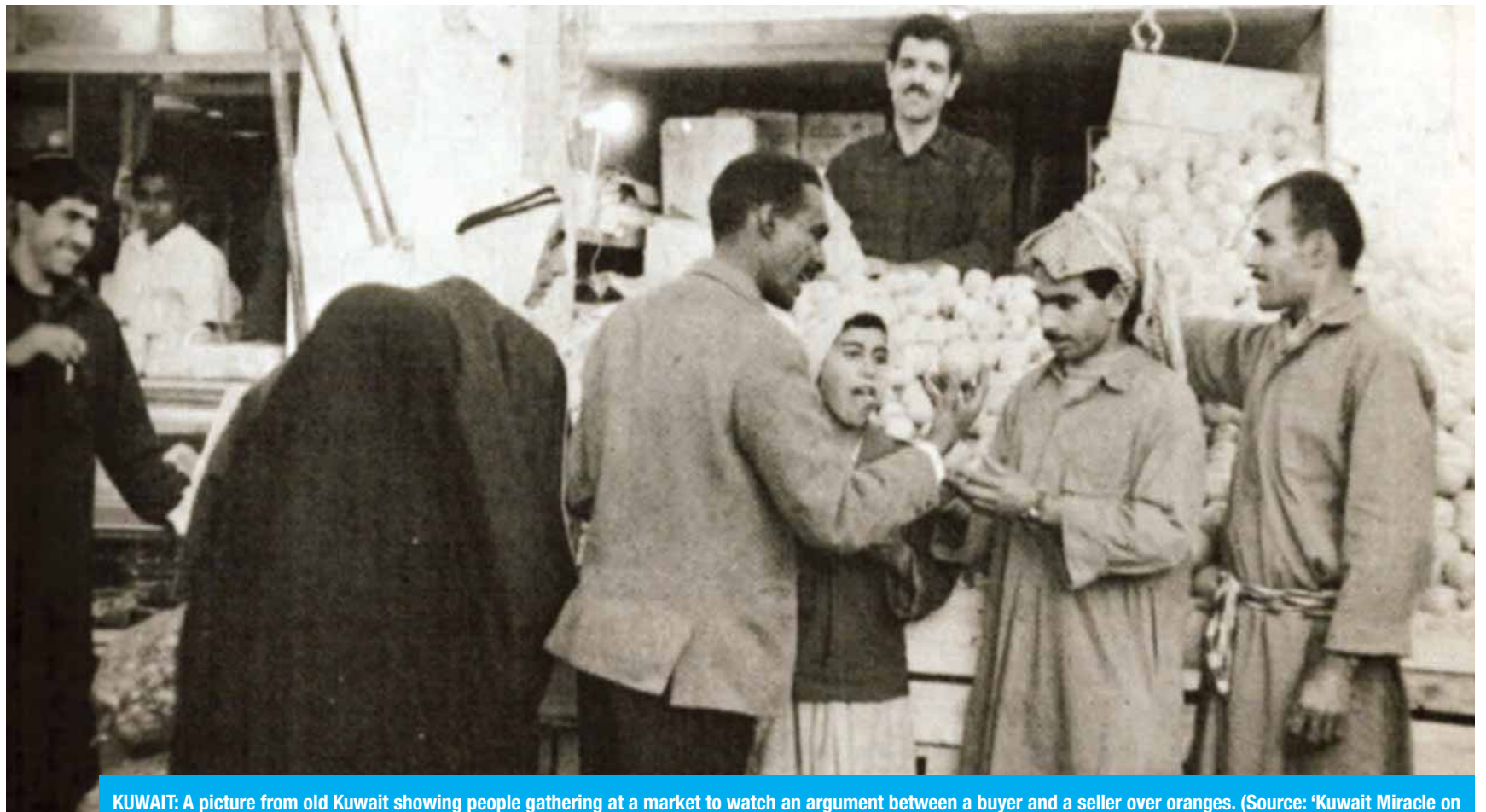
The Holy Quran application is an added value that strengthens KFH identity as an Islamic financial institution and contributes to the spread of the Book of Allah. Also, it helps in the memorization, recitation, identification of terminology meanings and elaborations. The application is witnessing continuous updates to cope with users' requirements. The recent update launched witnessed the inclusion of several features e.g., adding the old version of (Madina Quran) which is preferred by several elderly readers who are used to this version of the Holy Quran for decades. Also, this version is highly demanded by many memorizers who got used to read this version. Also, the update includes the facility to change the color of the Holy Book (app background) to facilitate the identification of the type of Quran printing for users.

The recent update provides a facility that suits parents to track their children recitation and memorization of Quran through the facility (Multiple Quran) which enables the main user to monitor the recitation and memorization of all users regardless of their device type in an easy and facilitated manner.

KFH Quran application contains several advantages that made it highly distinguished. The application supports the multiple color facility that permits the reader to perform several complete recitations of the holy Quran. Also, it provides the facility to refer to any interpretation or translation of any verse instantly. The application provides the advantage of night reading and serial of the read pages and the time consumed in reading. Also, it provides the text search facility in the Quran verses in addition to several other advantages that facilitate reading for users.

The application comprises several facilities and advantages including the addition of vocal recitation by many famous reciters in the Arab world, verse interpretation facility (Jalalain), number search facility, highlighting words in different colors for easy and fast search of page, Surat, verse volume or section, better display of pages to suit all various screens of Android devices, high navigation speed among verses, continued functioning of application upon transfer to another application on Android, color selection option as per new technology and report issuance facility for read parts.

Kuwait Heritage



KUWAIT: A picture from old Kuwait showing people gathering at a market to watch an argument between a buyer and a seller over oranges. (Source: 'Kuwait Miracle on the Desert' by David Cooke, New York, 1970. Prepared by: Mahmoud Zakaria Abu Alella, researcher in heritage, Ministry of Information)

Traditional Kuwaiti food items still present in Ramadan meals



Majboos dajaj (rice with chicken).



Majboos laham (rice cooked with mutton).



Murabiyen (rice with shrimp).



Mutabbak Zbaidi (rice with silver pomfret fish).

KUWAIT: Traditional Kuwaiti foods are still present on the Ramadan iftar tables although Kuwaitis have enriched their meals with diverse foods brought from other communities, amid menus' globalization in the digitally connected world. Chef Munira Al-Hay said in an interview that the Ramadan menu continues to include traditional foods eaten since many years ago. Old cuisines made from wheat and ground wheat such as "herees and jereesh" and the rice-chicken dish "majboos" have remained largely favored by many Kuwaiti people particularly during the fasting month. However, the Kuwaitis since the 1960s, have been open to enrich and diversify their meals, adding a variety of food such as salads, fried pastries, soups, jelly food and sweet drinks.

Kuwaiti chef Al-Hay has said the Ramadan meal is

still decorated with traditional sweet food such as "lugaimat and sab al-gafshah," deep-fried shaped pieces of dough, soaked in liquid sugar. Chef Sami Al-Sherida said that the Kuwaitis, in the 1960s, used to abstain from eating sea food during Ramadan because they were available at affordable prices throughout the year. He has added that the iftar meals, nowadays, have been different in terms of ingredients as compared to the ones taken for "sohour," the pre-dawn meal. Moreover, people favor some kinds of food for hot and cold weather.

Chief chef at Kasco food company Sheikh Al-Mohammad said the Kuwaiti iftar meal, in the old times, was simple including dates, soups, "tashreeb" (cooked meat and vegetables soaked in tomato sauce) and rice. Also in the past, the common soup

dish was solely made of lentil. "Tashreeb" used to be a main dish during Ramadan in the past, but now it has become a side one, Al-Mohammad said adding that many families now favor pastries cooked in air fryers rather than in deep oil.

Chef Al-Mohammad has also observed that rice dish that used to dominate the Ramadan meal in the old times is no longer present on the table at the dusk fast break, also noting that many young Kuwaitis in the present times favor steaks and hamburgers instead of the traditional dishes, such as "majboos laham" (rice cooked with mutton or beef), or "majboos dajaj" (rice with chicken). She has advised adherents to fasting to eat fried food, pastries and desserts in moderation for health reasons. —KUNA

Mar Thoma Metropolitan given a rousing reception

KUWAIT: Mar Thoma XXII of the Mar Thoma church, Dr Theodosius Mar Thoma Metropolitan, was given a rousing reception jointly by the seven Mar Thoma parishes in Kuwait on his first visit to Kuwait. The reception was held at the National Evangelical Church Kuwait (NECK), Kuwait City on Thursday.

Theodosius Mar Thoma XXII Metropolitan is the current metropolitan of the church and the primate of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church headquartered in Kerala, India. He presently occupies the apostolic throne of St Thomas as the first Mar Thoma metropolitan to be born in post-independence India.

In his message, Dr Theodosius Metropolitan thanked God Almighty and expressed his gratitude to Kuwait leadership for supporting the Mar Thoma community and allowing the church to function for the last 60 plus years in the country. He emphasized that the Mar Thoma parishes in Kuwait would continue to support the community.



KUWAIT: Dr Theodosius Metropolitan delivers his message during the reception.

In his felicitation speech, Indian Ambassador Sibi George conveyed greetings to Dr Theodosius Metropolitan on behalf of nearly one million Indians living in Kuwait. The ambassador lauded the humanitarian services rendered by the Mar Thoma

churches in Kuwait. Fr John Jacob (KECF president), Ajosh Mathew (NECK), Manoj Mathew (Church council), and representatives from all seven Mar Thoma parishes in Kuwait felicitated the metropolitan.



Former hostages unmask Islamic State 'Beetle' at trial

MONDAY, APRIL 11, 2022

Australian prime minister Morrison calls May 21 federal election

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Macron seeks new term in tight election

French overseas territories voted to take account of the time difference

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron faced a tough test Sunday seeking re-election in a vote projected to produce a tight run-off with far-right leader Marine Le Pen. Polls opened in mainland France at 0600 GMT after an unusual campaign overshadowed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine that analysts warned could lead to unpredictable outcomes with turnout a major factor.

French overseas territories already voted Saturday to take account of the time difference, starting with the tiny island of Saint Pierre and Miquelon off the coast of Canada and then territories in the Caribbean followed by French Pacific islands. "It's important to vote, that's when you choose between the good and the bad. After all, the president will run your life," said Annette Tehariki, a 57-year-old voting in French Polynesia.

Polls predict that Macron will lead Le Pen by a handful of percentage points in round one, with the top two going through to a second-round vote on April 24. Far-left candidate Jean-Luc Melenchon is snapping at their heels in third place and still fancies his chances of reaching the second round at the expense of Le Pen or even-in what would be an extraordinary upset-President Macron himself.

Although her opponents accuse her of being an extremist bent on dividing society, Le Pen has with some success during the campaign sought to show a more moderate image and concern with voters' daily worries such as rising prices. Macron by contrast has campaigned relatively little, by his own admission entering the election campaign later than he would have wished due to the war in Ukraine. French television channels will broadcast projections of the final results, which are generally highly accurate, as soon as polls close at 1800 GMT Sunday.

'Hate them all'

If Macron and Le Pen as forecast reach the second round, analysts predict that their clash will be far tighter than in 2017 when the current president thrashed his rival with 66 percent of the vote. "There is uncertainty," said French political scientist



LE TOUQUET, France: France's President and LREM party presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron smiles to residents after voting for the first round of France's presidential election at a polling station in Le Touquet, northern France on April 10, 2022. —AFP

Pascal Perrineau, pointing to unprecedentedly high numbers of voters who were still undecided or who changed their minds during the campaign as well as absentee voters.

Analysts fear that the 2002 record of the number of French voters boycotting a first round of 28.4 percent risks being beaten. Early voting patterns seemed to confirm such forecasts, with voter turnout by midday at 25.48 percent, three points below the level recorded at the same time in the 2017 election, the interior ministry said.

"It's a duty and a right to vote, we decide who gets elected," said Mohammed Idriss, a 68-year-old retired soldier voting at the French consulate in Pondicherry, India. "If you don't vote you're not a good citizen." But in the Paris suburb of Pantin,

Blandine Lehout, a 32-year-old actress, said none of the candidates deserved her vote.

"For the first time in my life I'm not going to vote," she said. "I'll vote in the (June) parliamentary election, but in this election, I hate them all. We're at a stage where they frighten me." Some 48.7 million voters are registered across France to vote in this election.

The stakes are high for Macron, who came to power aged 39 as France's youngest president with a pledge to shake up the country. He would be the first French president since Jacques Chirac in 2002 to win a second term. If he does, he would have a five-year mandate to impose his vision of reform which would include a crack at raising the pension age in defiance of union anger. — AFP

Finland gears up for historic NATO decision

HELSINKI, Finland: Finland is preparing for a potentially historic decision "before midsummer" on whether to apply to join NATO as a deterrent against Russian aggression. The Nordic nation of 5.5 million has traditionally been militarily non-aligned, in part to avoid provoking its eastern neighbour, with which it shares a 1,300 kilometre (830 mile) border.

But Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24 saw public support for joining NATO double from 30 to 60 percent, according to a series of polls. "Never underestimate the capacity of Finns to take rapid decisions when the world changes," former Finnish prime minister Alexander Stubb told AFP.

Himself a long-time NATO advocate, Stubb now believes Finland making a membership application is "a foregone conclusion" as Finns re-evaluate their relationship with their neighbour. Next week a government-commissioned national security review will be delivered to parliament, the Eduskunta, to help Finnish MPs make up their own minds, before it is put to a vote.

"We will have very careful discussions but not taking any more time than we have to," Prime Minister Sanna Marin told a news conference on Friday. "I think we will end the discussion before midsummer," she added. "My guess is that the application will be filed sometime during the month of May" in time for the June NATO summit in Madrid, Stubb said. — AFP






Ramadan 2022

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International

Former hostages unmask Islamic State 'Beatle' at trial

Brutal beatings at the hands of all three 'Beatles'

ALEXANDRIA, United States: Former hostages taking the witness stand at the trial of their alleged Islamic State group captor have described their brutal treatment in chilling detail. Eight former IS hostages have testified so far at the trial of El Shafee Elsheikh, accused of being a member of the notorious kidnap-and-murder cell known as the "Beatles."

But in a quirk of the case—none of the former IS captives has been asked so far to formally identify their alleged captor in court. That's because the 33-year-old Elsheikh and the other alleged "Beatles"—so-called because of their British accents—took pains to conceal their identities.

The former hostages said they were frequently blindfolded and their captors wore balaclavas at all times with only a slit for the eyes. "They always tried to protect themselves," said Edouard Elias, a French photographer held prisoner by IS from June 2013 to April 2014.

"With other guards I could get some information, but not with them," Elias said. "I just saw that one had a darker skin, that's all." The kidnapers also had a "rule" whenever they entered the cells where the prisoners were held.

"We had to kneel down with our face toward the wall and never look them in the face," said Federico Motka, an Italian aid worker who was held for 14 months, longer than any other hostage. "We had to

cover our face," said Frida Saide, a former Doctors Without Borders (MSF) worker who was held for three months.

Nicolas Henin, a French journalist, told the court the hostage-takers apparently believed that "as long as they were masked they were protected from prosecution." "This was maybe a stupid idea," Henin said.

Use own words against him

Despite the precautions taken, prosecutors are confident they can prove to the jury beyond a reasonable doubt that Elsheikh, a former British citizen,

was one of the "Beatles." Elsheikh and another alleged "Beatle," Alexandra Amon Kotey, were captured in January 2018 by a Kurdish militia in Syria while attempting to flee to Turkey.

They were turned over to US forces in Iraq and flown to the United States to face charges of hostage-taking, conspiracy to murder US citizens and supporting a foreign terrorist organization. Elsheikh is charged with the murders of American freelance journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff and aid workers Kayla Mueller and Peter Kassig and suspected of the kidnapping of nearly 20 other Westerners. Kotey pleaded guilty in September 2021 and is facing life in prison.



"They always tried to protect themselves"



ALEXANDRIA, United States: Edouard Elias (L), a French photographer who was kidnapped in Syria, arrives to testify at the Albert V. Bryan Federal Courthouse during the trial of IS member El Shafee Elsheikh, the "Beatle", in Alexandria, Virginia. —AFP

Elsheikh, who pleaded not guilty, is not expected to testify at his trial but prosecutors have been using his own words against him. After his capture, Elsheikh gave interviews to several media outlets and prosecutors have played excerpts from those interviews for the jury. In the interviews, Elsheikh acknowledged interacting with the hostages but claimed he did no more than ask them for information—email addresses, for example—so the kidnapers could open ransom negotiations with their families. Elsheikh also sought to deflect responsi-

bility on another member of the "Beatles," Mohamed Emwazi, the IS executioner known as "Jihadi John" who was killed by a US drone in Syria in November 2015.

The former hostages tell a far different story—brutal beatings at the hands of all three "Beatles," waterboarding, electric shocks and other forms of torture. "George was into boxing. John kicked a lot. Ringo talked a lot about how he liked wrestling, putting people in headlocks," Motka said. "It was like a team," Elias said. —AFP

Iceland chilled by violence worthy of its noir novels

REYKJAVIK, Iceland: Long considered the "most peaceful country in the world", Iceland's tranquillity has been shattered by a spate of shootings and stabbings involving criminal gangs. The country of only 375,000 people is more accustomed to reading about murders in its famed Icelandic noir novels than in its morning newspapers.

"A gun for Icelanders symbolises sports" or hunting, said sociologist Helgi Gunnlaugsson. "It's very alien to the Icelandic mind that you would use a weapon to protect yourself or to point at people," he told AFP. Iceland has topped the Global Peace Index ranking since 2008 thanks to its low crime, strong education and welfare systems, fair pay and an absence of tension between social classes.

Only four people have been shot dead in more than two decades. But four shootings have now taken place in a little over a year, one of which was fatal. In February 2021, a man was gunned down in a hail of bullets outside his home in a neighbourhood of the capital Reykjavik, a murder that



REYKJAVIK, Iceland: Police officers take part in a training at a training site in Reykjavik, Iceland on March 22, 2022. Long considered the "most peaceful country in the world", Iceland's customary tranquillity has recently been shattered by a spate of shootings and stabbings attributed to increasing violence between criminal gangs. —AFP

shocked the nation.

The killing was linked to organised crime, police said. "Criminal groups in Iceland are becoming more organised," said criminologist Margret Valdimarsdottir. "They have more ties to international groups than what we've seen before, which may be a challenge for our police force." —AFP

Mexicans vote whether president should stay or go

MEXICO CITY, Mexico: Mexicans will vote Sunday in a divisive national referendum championed by President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador on whether he should step down or complete his six-year term. While recall elections in other countries tend to be initiated by political opponents, Mexico's vote is the brainchild of Lopez Obrador, who enjoys an approval rating of nearly 60 percent.

The 68-year-old president, who was elected in 2018, and other supporters of the referendum—the first of its kind in Mexico—say it is a way of increasing democratic accountability. "Now we have the chance to change what's not right. There have been presidents who, after being elected by the people, ended up serving other interests," Benigno Gasca, a 57-year-old mathematician and musician, told AFP.

But critics see it as an expensive propaganda exercise and an unnecessary distraction from the many challenges facing the country, including drug-related violence, poverty and the rising cost of living. "It's a useless exercise—money thrown away," said Laura Gonzalez, a 62-year-old retired teacher.

Experts say turnout is likely to be well below the 40-percent level needed for the vote to be legally binding. Opposition parties have urged Mexicans to abstain from voting in what they call a "populist exercise."

Some 93 million voters will be able to participate in the midterm referendum, which was incorporated into Mexico's constitution in 2019 at Lopez Obrador's initiative. Most of the signatures that were collected in order for the vote to happen came from his supporters.

Given the popularity of the anti-corruption austerity advocate, his presidency is not at risk "at all," said political analyst Martha Anaya. On the contrary, the referendum could give impetus to his policy agenda, such as controversial energy reforms, she said.

The president also has his eye on the 2024 elections and the prospects for his party and possible successors, including Mexico City Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum. The Mexican constitution limits presidents to one term, and Lopez Obrador has vowed to retire in 2024, following accusations by opponents that the referendum is a step towards trying to stay in power.

Lopez Obrador enjoyed an approval rating of 58 percent in March, although that was far below a peak of 81 percent seen in February 2019, according to a poll of polls by the Oraculus firm. The president accuses the National Electoral Institute of sabotaging the referendum in collusion with his political opponents. The body, which unsuccessfully sought a larger budget, will set up around 57,500 polling stations, compared with 161,000 in a normal national election. —AFP

Loving Almighty...

Continued from Page 1

due to his weeping." (Takhreej Al-Musnad # 16,326) In another version he said what can be translated as: "I saw the Prophet (PBUH) pray and a sound came from his chest like that of a rumbling mill because of weeping." (See Mish'kaat Al-Masa'bee # 1,000)

(2) Performing obligatory and voluntary prayers. The Salah (Muslim Ritual Prayer) no doubt strengthens our connection with the Almighty Allah, and more so the voluntary prayers because we stand for those prayers purely for the sake of Allah (the Omnipotent), even though they are not obligatory. It is a two-way love because the Almighty, Allah, returns this love for the one who performs the voluntary prayers.

Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said what can be translated as: "Verily Allah said, 'Whosoever shows enmity to a sincere (protected) friend of Mine, then I have declared war against him. And My

servant does not draw near to Me with anything more beloved to Me than the religious duties I have required of him.

And My servant continues to draw near to me with optional deeds until I love him. When I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask (anything) of Me, I would surely give it to him; and were he to seek refuge with Me, I would surely grant him refuge... " (Al-Bukhari # 6, 502) To summarize these two important ways to increase our love for the All-Merciful, Allah, and in return be loved by Him, we should sincerely, wholeheartedly and regularly study the Noble Quran and observe the ritual and supererogatory prayers.

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 e-mail: info@tiescenter.net.

part of northern Yemen are fighting Yemen's internationally recognized government which, since 2015, has been aided by a Saudi-led military coalition.

Accusing Iran of smuggling weapons to the Houthis - a charge Tehran denies-the coalition has enforced an air and sea blockade of rebel-held territory since 2016. According to the Yemen Data Project, an independent tracker, the coalition has also carried out more than 25,000 air raids on Yemen since it intervened. "Because of the enemy blockade but also the war in Ukraine, we should ensure food security from within the country," Ali Al-Khaled, spokesman for the rebel-controlled agency in charge of cereal production.

The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization reported last year that total cereal production in 2020 was estimated at 365,000 tons, a figure which takes account of "conflict-related constraints" and which is almost 25 percent below the five-year average. On April 2, a two-month UN-brokered ceasefire took hold, the war's first nationwide truce since 2016.

As part of that agreement, the coalition agreed to ease its blockade to allow two weekly commercial flights into Sanaa. Fuel and more food shipments will also flow into the lifeline aid port of Hodeida, which is also rebel-held. After more than 150,000 people were estimated to have died in the fighting, violence has dropped after the truce, which began on the first day of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. But the battle to survive goes on as Yemenis struggle to feed themselves. —AFP

Sharif set to become next...

Continued from Page 1

passed with 174 votes in the 342-seat assembly. New Pakistan governments frequently have a reckoning with those they replace, but Sharif said there would be no vendettas. "We will put a balm on the wounds of this nation," he said immediately after the result was announced. Khan insists he has been the victim of a "regime change" conspiracy involving Washington, and he is certain to tap into anti-US sentiment from the opposition benches.

Civilians flee as Ukraine readies

Continued from Page 1

decisive ones, in the east," he said Saturday at a press conference with visiting Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer. "We are ready to fight and to look in parallel to end this war through diplomacy." Pope Francis meanwhile called for an Easter ceasefire in Ukraine to pave the way for peace through "real negotiation." "Let the Easter truce begin. But not to provide more weapons and pick up the combat again—no! — a truce that will lead to peace, through real negotiation," he told a public mass at Saint Peter's Square.

The pontiff denounced a war where "defenseless civilians" suffered "heinous massacres and atrocious cruelty." "What victory is there in planting a flag on a pile of rubble?" he asked. Zelensky's adviser Mykhaylo Podolyak

Zionists launch West....

Continued from Page 1

The woman, named by the Palestinian news agency Wafa as Ghada Ibrahim Sabatien, a widowed mother of six in her 40s, died after suffering massive blood loss from a torn artery, the Palestinian health ministry said.

But the centre of the heightened tensions was the Jenin area, where, the military source told AFP, Palestinian militants shot from passing vehicles at

"Khan's politics don't stop here, his support base is intact," said Zahid Hussain, a political analyst and author. "His narrative of last few months, that he has been removed through a foreign conspiracy, has earned him some support." His party has called for mass protests to start after the Ramadan fast is broken Sunday evening, while Khan has vowed in his first tweet since being ousted that he would not give up.

"Pakistan became an independent state in 1947; but the freedom struggle begins again today against a foreign conspiracy of regime change," he said. Political analyst Talat Masood said Khan appears to want to "create problems" for the next government. "From what he has been saying, he seems to want to... pursue a kind of a policy of trying to sort of rebel rather (than) make things better for the country and society," Masood, a former general, told AFP. —AFP

said Ukraine must beat back Russia in the eastern Donbas region, where Moscow controls two separatist territories, before a meeting can take place between the Ukrainian leader and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"Ukraine is ready for big battles. Ukraine must win them, including in the Donbas. And once that happens, Ukraine will have a more powerful negotiating position," he said on national television, as quoted by the Interfax news agency. "After that the presidents will meet. It could take two weeks, three." A video released by Zelensky's office showed him and the British prime minister walking through largely empty city streets to Kyiv's historic Maidan Square, as snipers kept watch.

Johnson said the discovery of scores of civilian corpses in Ukrainian towns had "permanently polluted" Putin's reputation. At least two bodies were discovered inside a manhole at a petrol station on a motorway outside Kyiv on Sunday, an AFP reporter saw. The bodies appeared to be wearing a mix of civilian and military clothing. A distraught woman appeared at the manhole and peered inside, before breaking down and clawing the earth. She wailed "my son, my son". —FP

Zionist soldiers - who responded with live fire. A total of 20 "wanted individuals" suspected of involvement in "terrorist activities" were apprehended, the source said, while the Palestinian Prisoners Club announced 24 arrests across the West Bank, which Zionists have occupied since the 1967 Six Day War.

The Zionist military source said the forces had located stolen army ammunition and uniforms in the residence of one of the suspects, and an explosive device in another home. No Zionist forces were reported injured, while the Palestinian health ministry said at least 10 Palestinians were wounded in clashes in Jenin, as well as in Jericho and Tulkarem. Protests in support of Jenin were scheduled for later in the day in Ramallah. —AFP

International

Australian prime minister Morrison calls May 21 federal election

‘Labor has the policies and plans to shape that future’

SYDNEY: Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison called federal elections for May 21 on Sunday, launching a come-from-behind battle to stay in power after three years rocked by floods, bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Morrison's conservative government is struggling to woo Australia's 17 million voters, lagging behind the opposition Labor party in a string of opinion polls despite presiding over a rebounding economy with a 13-year-low jobless rate of four percent.

"It's a choice between a strong future and an uncertain one. It's a choice between a government you know and a Labor opposition that you don't," Morrison told a news conference in Canberra.

Polls show much of the electorate distrusts the 53-year-old leader, who fashions himself as a typical Australian family man and is unafraid of advertising his Pentecostal Christian faith.

Aiming to end nine years of Liberal-National Party rule is 59-year-old Labor Party leader Anthony Albanese. The opposition leader started the six-week race to the poll pushing a message of optimism before highlighting bruising attacks on Morrison's character emanating from his own government.

"He's running in an election campaign, whereby his deputy prime minister has said he's a hypocrite and a liar," Albanese told media in Sydney.

"We can and we must do better. The pandemic has given us the opportunity to imagine a better future and Labor has the policies and plans to shape that future."

A recent Newspan survey showed Labor leading

the coalition 54 percent to 46 percent on a two-party basis. Morrison and Albanese were in a statistical tie as preferred prime minister for the next three-year term. Multiple surveys show the cost of living, with gasoline prices notably soaring since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, is a key concern ahead of the election, in which voting is compulsory.

In a pre-election spree, the government announced an array of giveaways, including a fuel tax cut and a tax rebate for about half of the adult population. But extreme weather events blamed on an overheating planet, and the government's response, have also unnerved many Australians.

High stakes

Morrison is a strident supporter of Australia's vast fossil fuel industry. He has vowed to mine and export coal for as long as there are buyers, touted a "gas-fired recovery" from the pandemic, and resisted global calls to cut carbon emissions faster by 2030.

As treasurer in 2017, he famously took a chunk of coal into parliament and told Labor: "This is coal, don't be afraid."

Morrison has been panned, too, over his handling of climate-related disasters in Australia. During the 2019-2020 Black Summer bushfires, which killed more than 30 people, Morrison took his family on a Christmas holiday to Hawaii.

After cutting his break short, Morrison memorably told reporters he was sure people understood that: "I don't hold a hose, mate, and I don't sit in a control room." "Morrison's position was virtually untenable as a result of the Hawaii holiday," said Mark Kenny, pro-



MELBOURNE, Australia: Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison (2nd L-yellow vest) tours the William Adams CAT facility in Melbourne. Morrison called for election May 21, seeking to capitalize on a recent budget stocked with sweeteners. —AFP

fessor at the Australian National University in Canberra. But the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic "changed everything," he said, turning people's minds to a new, global crisis. Morrison rightly injected "vast amounts of money" into the economy, but the vaccine rollout was painfully slow and he "messed up" the distribution of self-administered rapid antigen tests, Kenny said. More recently, a deadly two-week east coast flooding disaster in late February and early March left residents seething at a perceived lack of government preparation and emergency help.

Morrison has also struggled to win over women voters after his handling of rape allegations made by a

female political staffer in government, as well as young voters repelled by his pro-coal stance.

Backed by a climate-change activist fund, more than a dozen women are gaining support as independent, centrist candidates — many in traditionally conservative seats in the cities. But few people are ruling out a Morrison win.

"Things can happen that change the dynamic incredibly quickly," said Michele Levine, chief executive of Roy Morgan pollsters. Morrison has defied the odds before, winning what he described as a "miracle" election in May 2019 despite trailing in most polls. —AFP



13-year-low jobless rate



SHANGHAI, China: Health workers wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) are seen while waiting for residents for a test of COVID-19 in a compound during a COVID-19 lockdown in the Jing'an district in Shanghai. —AFP

China slams US virus 'accusations'

SHANGHAI, China: China blasted the United States for making "groundless accusations" about its COVID-19 policy, after surging cases in Shanghai prompted the American consulate to let some staff leave the locked-down megacity.

Beijing's zero-COVID strategy has come under strain since March as over 100,000 cases in Shanghai have seen its 25 million inhabitants locked down in phases, inciting complaints of food shortages and clashes with health workers. The US embassy said Saturday it would permit non-essential employees to leave its consulate in Shanghai due to the case surge, warning citizens in China they may face "arbitrary enforcement" of virus curbs.

In response, Beijing expressed "strong dissatisfaction and firm opposition to the US side's groundless accusations about China's epidemic control policy", according to a statement issued Saturday on the for-

eign ministry's website. "This is the US's own decision. However, it must be pointed out that China's epidemic control policy is scientific and effective," ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said, adding that Beijing had lodged "solemn representations" with American counterparts. "We have full confidence that Shanghai and other places will overcome this round of the epidemic."

China is sticking fast to a policy of snap lockdowns, mass testing and travel restrictions to staunch the spread of the virus even as Shanghai's daily case numbers have spiralled under an Omicron-fuelled wave.

The business hub reported a record 24,943 new infections on Sunday—mostly asymptomatic, accounting for over 90 percent of the national total. Authorities have readied tens of thousands of new beds in over 100 makeshift hospitals as part of a policy of isolating every person who tests positive for the virus—whether or not they show any symptoms.

Locals have begun to chafe at lockdown restrictions with many talking to social media to vent anger at food shortages and heavy-handed controls—including the recent killing of a pet corgi by a health worker. —AFP

N Korea slams 'feeble' Biden

SEOUL: North Korea has described Joe Biden as an "old man in his senility", in a characteristically colourful personal attack on the US president after he accused the Russian leader of war crimes in Ukraine. The diatribe came after Biden called Russian President Vladimir Putin "a war criminal" and called for him to be put on trial over alleged atrocities against civilians in Ukraine's Bucha.

"The latest story is the US chief executive who spoke ill of the Russian president with groundless data," said a commentary carried by the official KCNA news agency on Saturday. "Such reckless remarks can be made only by the descendants of Yankees, master hand at aggression and plot-breeding," it added.

It repeated Biden as a "president known for his repeated slip of tongue", but stopped short of referring to him by name. "The conclusion could be that there is a problem in his

intellectual faculty and that his reckless remarks are just a show of imprudence of an old man in his senility," said the commentary, which was issued on Saturday evening.

"Gloomy, it seems, is the future of the US with such a feeble man in power." Along with Beijing, Russia is one of the North's few international friends and has previously come to the regime's aid. Moscow has long held the line against increasing pressure on nuclear-armed North Korea, even asking for relief from international sanctions for humanitarian reasons.

Pyongyang has also sided with Moscow in its war with Ukraine, accusing the United States of being the "root cause" of the crisis. North Korea's state media has a long history of colourful personal attacks against foreign leaders.

Before Biden was nominated as candidate, it called him "a rabid dog" that "must be beaten to death with a stick". It referred to former US president Donald Trump as a "mentally deranged US dotard" and his predecessors Barack Obama and George W. Bush a "monkey" and "half-baked man". —AFP

FAIPS(DPS) EMBRACES FUTURISTIC TECHNOLOGY WITH ROBOTICS & AI



FAIPS DPS has always been a trendsetter in pioneering educational methods in its pursuit of excellence. Under the banner of Al Rayan Holding Group, the reputed institution added another feather to its pedagogical cap with the launch of a state-of-the-art Robotics Lab in collaboration with Sirena Technologies. Sirena has been delivering online sessions to FAIPS students of grades 1 to 9. The first ever on-premise robotics class, catering to the middle school students, is designed to make the process of learning effective, yet fun. The eclectic program is not just to impart technical education but also create an ecosystem in schools that fosters curiosity and creativity which in turn harbours innovation and talent. The main idea is to instil an environment that prepares FAIPS(DPS) students to adapt well in the forthcoming era of Robotics & Artificial Intelligence.

The Principal, Mr. Ravi Ayanoli welcomed His Excellency, Ambassador of India to Kuwait Mr. Sibi George and other dignitaries which included Mr. Vinod Gaikwad, First Secretary (Press, Information, Culture, Consular, Education), Indian Embassy, Ms. Lana Othman Al Ayyar, CEO of Al Rayan Holding Co., and Mr. Arun Choudhary,

CFO & Head - Strategy, Al Rayan Holding Co. The inaugural function held on Tuesday, 5th April 2022 in which His Excellency, Mr. Sibi George, formally inaugurated the new Robotics Lab. Inside the lab, the guests were welcomed by Nino, a humanoid created by Sirena Technologies. Honourable Ambassador, in his address, focussed on the ever-changing landscape of the world and the role of technology, especially Artificial Intelligence, as the latest. He expressed his appreciation at the school's effort to impart modern technical education. He also applauded the students on their wonderful projects.

Ms. Lana Othman Al Ayyar, emphasised FAIPS's vision to scale new heights and to provide their students with the best possible facilities to prepare them for the modern world. While complementing the Principal on the initiatives and interest taken to make the school one of the best in the region, Mr. Arun Choudhary said that Robotics and AI curriculum is a necessity for 21st century schools to prepare leaders of upcoming decades. He also wished the students to become pioneers in Machine learning and Coding in order to take the world to the next level. In his address, the

Principal highlighted the rapid expansion of technology and the necessity of introducing the latest developments to the young brains. He also said that the world is on the cusp of revolutionizing many sectors through Artificial Intelligence.

The students were invited to share their experiences of being members of the robotics club and to explain their projects to the Ambassador. The Head of the Robotics Club displayed the different projects and innovative ideas presented by the students. Some of the projects which were on display were 'Tilt Sensor' by Shubhang of class 8D, 'Temperature sensing' by Daksh Bithariya of class 8D, 'Buzzer with ultrasonic sensor' by Riddhima Bora of class 8J, 'ATV (All terrain Vehicle)' prepared jointly by Rutvik Krishnasai Kancharla of class 6L and Aadil Yaheya Ansar of class 6A, 'LDR sensor' by Sadhna of class 6C, 'RGB LED' by Amogh of class 6C and 'LED Distance Indicator' by Chiraag of class 6D. It was amazing to watch the students engage in high-tech learning.

The event ended with the Vice Principal, Ms. Vineeta Munshi proposing the vote of thanks.



Business

MONDAY, APRIL 11, 2022

Iraqis clean up river as first green projects take root

'Cleanup Ambassadors' float environmental project to clean up Tigris

BAGHDAD: Garbage clogs the banks of Iraq's Tigris River in Baghdad but an army of young volunteers is cleaning it, a rare environmental project in the war-battered country. With boots and gloves, they pick up soggy trash, water bottles, aluminum cans and muddy styrofoam boxes, part of a green activist campaign called the Cleanup Ambassadors.

"This is the first time this area has been cleaned since 2003," shouts a passer-by about the years of conflict since a US-led invasion toppled dictator Saddam Hussein. The war is over but Iraq faces another huge threat: a host of interrelated environmental problems from climate change and rampant pollution to dust storms and water scarcity.

The 200 volunteers at work in Baghdad want to be part of the solution, removing garbage from a stretch of one of the mighty rivers that gave birth to the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia. "It breaks my heart to see the banks of the Tigris in this state," said one 19-year-old volunteer, who gave only her first name, Rassel, working under Baghdad's Imams Bridge.

"We want to change this reality. I want to make my city more beautiful." The task is Herculean in a country where it remains common for people to drop their trash on the ground.

The green banks of the Tigris, popular for picnics by families and groups of friends, are usually littered with waste, from single-use plastic bags to the disposable tips of hookah pipes, especially after public holidays.

Rubbish chokes wildlife

"There is a lot of plastic, nylon bags and corks," said Ali, also 19 and an organizer of the cleanup event. The group then handed their collected waste to the Baghdad City Council which took it away, bound for a landfill. More often the garbage ends up directly in the Tigris. It is one of Iraq's two major waterways, along

with the Euphrates, that face a host of environmental pressures.

The rivers or their tributaries are dammed upstream in Turkey and Iran, over-used along the way, and polluted with domestic, industrial and agricultural waste. The trash that flows downriver clogs riverbanks and wetlands and poses a threat to wildlife, both terrestrial and aquatic.

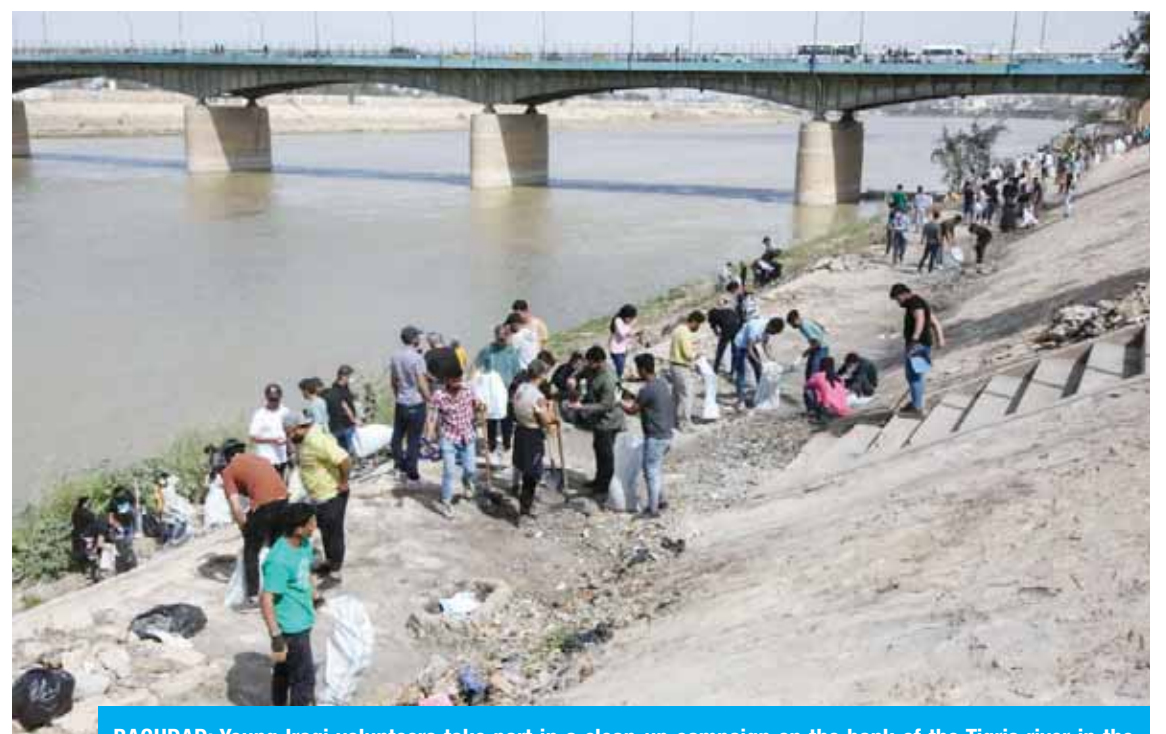
When the water empties into the Gulf, plastic bags are often ingested by turtles and dolphins and block the airways and stomachs of many other species, says a United Nations paper.

In Iraq—which has suffered four decades of conflict and years of political and economic turmoil—separating and recycling waste has yet to become a priority for most people. The country also lacks proper infrastructure for waste collection and disposal, said Azzam Alwash, head of the non-governmental group Nature Iraq. "There are no environmentally friendly landfills and plastic recycling is not economically viable," he said.

Plumes of smoke

Most garbage ends up in open dumps where it is burned, sending plumes of acrid smoke into the air. This happens in Iraq's southern Mesopotamian Marshes, one of the world's largest inland deltas, which Saddam once had largely drained. They were named a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2016, both for their biodiversity and ancient history. Today a round-the-clock fire outside the town of Souq Al-Shuyukh, which is the gateway to the marshes, burns thousands of tons of garbage under the open sky, sending white smoke drifting many kilometers away.

"Open burning of waste is a source of air pollution, and the real cost is the shortening of Iraqi lives," said Alwash. "But the state has no money to build recycling facilities." Even worse is the air pollution caused by



BAGHDAD: Young Iraqi volunteers take part in a clean-up campaign on the bank of the Tigris river in the Adhamiyah district of the capital Baghdad. —AFP

flaring-burning off the gas that escapes during oil extraction.

This toxic cocktail has contributed to a rise in respiratory illnesses and greenhouse gas emissions, a phenomenon the UN's climate experts have voiced alarm about. Environment Minister Jassem Al-Falahi admitted in comments to the official news agency INA that waste incineration's "toxic gases affect people's lives and health".

But so far there have been few government initiatives to tackle Iraq's environmental woes, and so projects like the Tigris cleanup are leading the way for now.

Ali, the volunteer, hopes that their effort will have a more long-term effect by helping to change attitudes. "Some people have stopped throwing their waste on the street," he said, "and some have even joined us." —AFP

Crypto-curious corporations struggle to find right recipe

PARIS: Four years ago, fried-chicken chain KFC tweeted from its Canadian account that it would accept bitcoin as payment for its "buckets".

The company told AFP its tongue-in-cheek campaign— "digital tender for chicken tenders"—sold out in an hour and the chain has not taken crypto payments since, but online articles regularly recycle the claim that KFC "accepts" bitcoin. Many other companies have tried to harness crypto payments before abandoning their efforts, Tesla and Dell among them.

Bitcoin will almost certainly never be practical for everyday purchases because its value fluctuates wildly, and each transaction is expensive, energy-hungry and takes at least half an hour.

"No one's going to walk into a KFC to buy a chicken burger and then have to wait 30 minutes for a payment," South African developer and crypto expert Andre Cronje told AFP.

But there are now thousands of smaller cryptocurrencies with faster processing times and more stable prices. Analysts say the total market value of cryptocurrencies has now topped \$2 trillion, roughly half of which is bitcoin.

Companies are gagging to get in on the act and developers like Cronje are building the infrastructure to enable the virtual coins to be used to pay for everyday items.

But public buy-in is crucial, and corporations seem to be struggling to find the perfect formula.

'Watch the jockeying'

Microsoft typifies the emerging pattern of big companies dabbling in crypto. The first rule: keep it at arm's length from the core business. The tech giant has stressed that shareholders will not be exposed to the ups and downs of crypto prices. PayPal and Apple, two other crypto-curious corporations, have made similar pledges to their shareholders.

To keep crypto off its balance sheet, Microsoft partnered with a firm called Bakkt that allows clients to convert crypto assets into products like gift cards for Xbox, or charge their Starbucks payment card.

Bakkt, which has received investments from Microsoft's venture capital fund M12, went public last year and a flurry of big partnership announcements with the likes of Mastercard sent its share price soaring. But then came the nose-dive as it reported widening losses and its business came under scrutiny. The firm had said it expected to have nine million customers by the end of 2021, yet its executives gave a figure of 1.7 million transacting accounts late last year.

PayPal, meanwhile, garnered a lot of publicity for a "checkout with crypto" feature launched in



the US and UK last year.

PayPal's system converts users' cryptoassets into money before passing on payment to the vendors.

But it is unclear how popular any of these services are—none of these companies responded to AFP requests for details of the uptake. Market watchers say it is too early to tell how these forays into crypto will play out. "My view is to not get too excited yet but just watch the jockeying," said analyst John Freeman of CFRA research, accepting the hot air made it difficult to predict what would happen next.

'When, not if'

The barriers to widespread adoption of direct crypto payments for everyday items are considerable—perhaps even insurmountable. Developer Cronje said he functioned largely without the need for regular cash or banks by using services like BitPay and BitRefill, which allow crypto to be spent anywhere from Amazon to Uber.

But he accepted his less tech-savvy friends "would be broke very quickly" if they tried to rely on the blockchain, the technology that underpins cryptocurrencies.

Instead, he envisages a future where people will continue to use credit cards and banks but back-end tasks will be largely automated on the blockchain. "This is a technology that conservatively is going to save them between 20 percent and 25 percent of their overheads and their costs," he said. "So it's not a matter of if, it's a matter of when."

Meanwhile, non-financial businesses will continue to throw themselves into the crypto space, often to emerge slightly wiser but no richer. The Pavilions hotel chain, for example, partnered with a payments firm last year to allow customers to use crypto but found it made little difference to its business.

"It turns out no one likes to spend their bitcoins, even on holidays!" Pavilions spokesman Tim Sargeant told AFP in an email. "It has shown us that bitcoin is more an investment tool than something people wish to part with for payment." —AFP

Global ambitions drive Algerian tech start-up Yassir

ALGIERS: It's the Algerian start-up that made good: despite the country's notoriously complex business climate, taxi and home-delivery firm Yassir has millions of users and is expanding across Africa.

"We made it our mission to create a model of success that was genuinely, 100-percent Algerian, to develop local talent and show that it's possible to create added value in Algeria," said co-founder Nouredine Tayebi.

Patience has been key as they navigate the country's archaic bureaucracy, the bugbear of investors and one that creates particularly tough terrain for new entrants. "Bureaucracy is one obstacle that we have to overcome. I can't say it's easy, but you have to deal with it and move forward," Tayebi told AFP.

It's a sign of changing times in Algeria, which in 2020 passed a law on start-ups and created a ministry to promote them. Since he launched Yassir five years ago with fellow engineer Mehdi Yettou, the company has rolled out across the Maghreb region and beyond. Late last year they raised some \$30 million from American investors, cash they plan to pump into an ambitious expansion plan.

The firm has indirectly created more than 40,000 driver and delivery jobs and its revenue is skyrocketing at up to 40 percent a month.

Tayebi studied in Algiers before earning his doctorate in electronic engineering at the United States' prestigious Stanford University. That led to a job with chip manufacturer Intel—but after eight years in Silicon Valley, he decided to return home and set up Yassir along with Yettou.

Expanding in Africa

The name is a play on the words for "easy" and "drive" in Algerian Arabic. The pair launched their taxi app in 2017 in Algiers, a capital with a population of four million and desperately lacking public transport. The firm has since branched out into deliveries of fast food and groceries, with sister app Yassir Express.

Today Yassir has some four million subscribers in 25 cities across Algeria, neighbouring Morocco and Tunisia, as well as Canada and France. Tayebi says he now has his sights set on West Africa—the app already works in Senegal and other major markets on the continent such as South Africa, Nigeria and Egypt. While its growth has been explosive, the business faces tough competition from Uber, Heetch and others.

To succeed, it will need to hire hundreds of highly skilled technicians. It is already the biggest tech employer in the Maghreb region with some 600 engineers, a figure it wants to triple or even quadruple. In Algiers, 30 or so young call centre operators are on hand to deal



ALGIERS, Algeria: Developers work at the headquarters of the Algerian delivery company Yassir, in the capital Algiers. —AFP Photos



ALGIERS: Nouredine Tayebi, the co-founder of the Algerian delivery company Yassir, is pictured on the terrace of a hotel in the capital Algiers.

with around 6,000 orders a day. "The average delivery time for meals is 30 minutes," said Wisssem, who runs the call centre.

Big ambitions

Tayebi also wants to provide an online payment system—a rarity in Algeria, where customers pay cash on delivery. "Most of the population in Algeria and across Africa don't have bank accounts—not because there's no banking system, but because people don't trust it," Tayebi said. He hopes to change that by capitalizing on the trust the company has among its growing customer base. "That's the strength of our model and what sets us apart, particularly from Uber," he said.

It also means the firm needs to keep a squeaky-clean image. One Yassir taxi driver told AFP he had been given training in communication before being hired. Tayebi said there was "a rigorous process for selecting drivers". "We verify their police records, training and education. There's even a psychological interview."

It's all part of a business for which he has set ambitious targets. "The goal is to create the biggest tech company not just in Africa but in the world," Tayebi said. "To get there, you need to be in lots of markets." —AFP

Business

Al-Shall Weekly Economic Report

Kuwait budget for 2021/22 could record a deficit of KD 2.189 billion

Individual traders still form the largest trading group on Boursa Kuwait

KUWAIT: The current fiscal year 2021/2022 ended. As a reminder, expenditure allocations in the budget were estimated at KD 23.048 billion and total revenues estimates were at KD 10.929 billion with KD 9.127 billion as oil and gas revenues constituted 83.5 percent of total revenues. Oil revenues were estimated based on the following assumptions: crude oil production quota of 2.425 million barrels per day, estimated price of \$45 per barrel, approved exchange rate of 304 fils

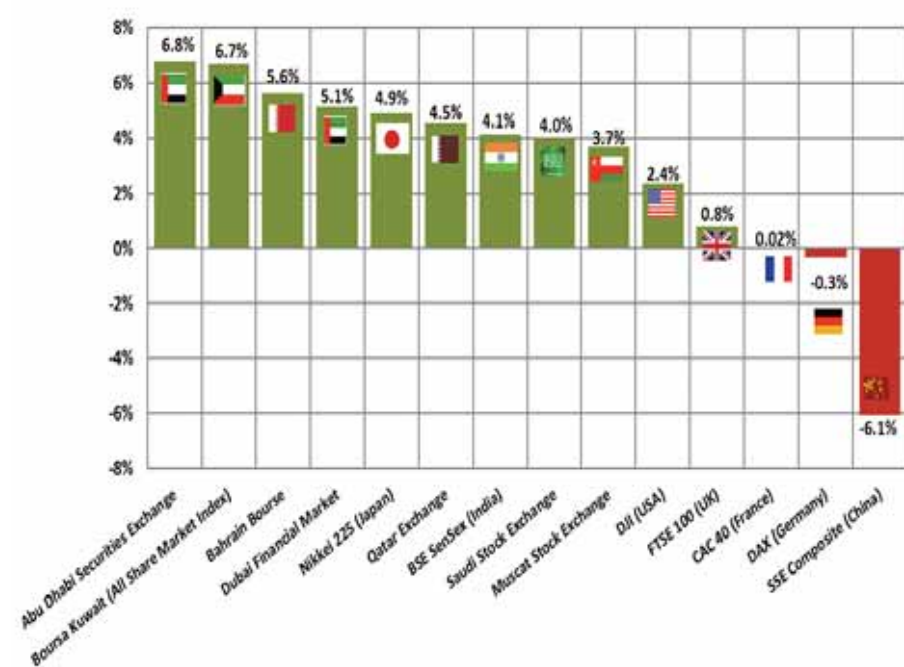
to the future generations reserve. However, what matters is the actual figure of the final account.

The monthly average price of Kuwaiti oil during March stood at \$113.5 per barrel, while the average price of Kuwaiti oil for the fiscal year 2021/2022 (April 2021 to March 2022) scored \$79.9 per barrel, which is 77.5 percent or \$34.9 higher than the hypothetical budget price of \$45 per barrel. The average oil price for the fiscal year of 2020/2021 was recorded at \$43.5

2021/2022 about KD 16.753 billion, which is higher by 83.5 percent than value of estimated budget revenues at KD 9.127 billion. Adding KD 1.802 billion in non-oil revenues, anticipated total revenues will score KD 18.555 billion for the entire fiscal year.

If the Cabinet's goal to reduce current budget expenditures by at least 10 percent is achieved (i.e. decreasing expenditures from KD 23.048 billion to approximately KD 20.743 billion), then it is likely that the general budget for the fiscal year 2021/2022 would record a deficit of KD 2.189 billion.

Performance of Selected Stock Markets End of March 2022



per US\$, and gas revenues of KD 185.4 million less production costs of KD 3.167 billion. With non-oil revenues estimated at KD 1.802 billion, therefore, the hypothetical deficit anticipated for the budget reached KD 12.129 billion without deducting 10 percent of total revenues attributa-

per barrel. This means that the average price for the Kuwaiti oil in the fiscal year 2021/2022 is higher by 83.5 percent than the average price for the fiscal year 2020/2021.

Kuwait is supposed to have achieved actual oil revenues for fiscal year

Trading features at Boursa Kuwait

Kuwait Clearing Company issued its report regarding "Trading Volume according to Nationality and Category" for the period 01/01/2022 to 31/03/2022, published on the official website of Boursa Kuwait. The report indicated that individual traders still form the largest trading group and their contribution increased. They acquired 44.4 percent of total value of sold shares (42.9 percent for Q1 2021) and 43.2 percent of total value of purchased shares (42.7 percent for Q1 2021). Individual investors sold shares in the amount of KD 1.900 billion and purchased shares in the amount of KD 1.852 billion, a net sale of KD 48.191 million.

The second largest contributor to market liquidity is the institutions and companies sector, with an increasing contribution in terms of purchasing and a decreasing share in terms of selling. The sector acquired 28.9 percent of the total value of purchased shares (28.5 percent for the same period in 2021) and 25.9 percent of the total value of sold shares (29.5 percent for the same period in 2021). The sector purchased shares worth KD 1.236 billion and sold shares worth KD 1.107 billion, becoming the only sector with net purchase of KD 128.514 million.

The third contributor is the clients'

*There are some minor differences in the percentage change resulting from the conversion from the local currency to the US\$

GCC Stock Markets	Liquidity & Indices Movement of GCC's Stock Markets						
	Value in US\$ (thousands)		% Change		% out of Total		Stock Indices
	Q1 2021	Q1 2022	Value (US\$ '000)	%	2021	2022	
Muscat	388,218	887,826	499,608	128.7%	0.2%	0.4%	1.8%
Abu Dhabi	14,672,015	27,504,775	12,832,760	87.5%	6.6%	13.4%	17.2%
Qatar	7,210,115	12,220,591	5,010,476	69.5%	3.3%	5.9%	16.4%
Kuwait (ASM Index)	8,579,226	13,689,936	5,110,710	59.6%	3.9%	6.7%	15.7%
Dubai	4,204,709	6,219,232	2,014,523	47.9%	1.9%	3.0%	10.3%
Bahrain	160,545	142,159	-18,386	-11.5%	0.1%	0.1%	15.4%
Saudi Arabia	185,934,938	144,750,288	-41,184,650	-22.2%	84.1%	70.5%	16.0%
Total	221,149,765	205,414,807	-15,734,958	-7.1%			

accounts (portfolios), with a rising contribution. This sector captured 25 percent of the total value of sold shares (23.5 percent for the same period in 2021) and 24.4 percent of the total value of purchased shares (24.3 percent for the same period in 2021). This sector sold shares worth KD 1.068 billion and purchased shares worth KD 1.043 billion, a net sale of KD 25.272 million.

The last contributor to liquidity is the investment funds sector, whose contribution increased in terms of selling yet declined in terms of purchasing, it acquired 4.8 percent of total sold shares (4.1 percent for the same period in 2021) and 3.5 percent of total purchased shares (4.5 percent for the same period in 2021). This sector sold shares worth KD 206.104 million and purchased shares worth KD 151.053 million, the highest net sale of KD 55.051 million.

Boursa Kuwait continues to be a local

market, with Kuwaiti traders forming the largest trading group. They sold shares worth KD 3.764 billion capturing 87.9 percent of total sold shares (80.8 percent for the same period in 2021), and purchased shares worth KD 3.560 billion acquiring 83.1 percent of total value of purchased shares (82.2 percent for the same period in 2021). Therefore, their net position was the most-selling sector with KD 204.396 million sold shares.

The share of other foreign investors out of the total value of purchased shares is 13.9 percent (15.5 percent same period of 2021). Foreign investors purchased shares worth KD 595.173 million and sold shares worth KD 356.534 million, 8.3 percent of total sold shares (15.3 percent same period of 2021); thus becoming the only investors with a net purchase of KD 238.639 million.



VILLAR DE LOS NAVARROS, Spain: This photograph shows wind turbines in a wind farm in Villar de los Navarros, Zaragoza province in Spain. — AFP

Favorable breezes boost Spain's wind power sector

VILLAR DE LOS NAVARROS, Spain: Buoyed by a surge in investment and new projects, wind power has become Spain's main source of electricity generation just as Europe seeks to curb its energy imports from Russia. "We are on suitable ground here," said Joaquin Garcia Latorre, project director at Enel Green Power Espana, pointing to gigantic masts erected on the heights of the tiny northeastern village of Villar de los Navarros.

The Spanish-Italian firm picked this spot, which is well exposed to the wind, to set up a 180-megawatt wind farm, one of the country's biggest.

Dubbed Tico Wind, its 43 wind turbines started producing power in November, said Latorre while workers around him tended to the turbines, which are over 100 metres (328 feet) high.

"There are between 2,500 and 3,000 hours of wind here per year," he added. The wind farm will be able to produce 471 gigawatt hours per year-enough to meet the demands of 148,000 households-after it becomes fully operational in a month. These types of projects have popped up across Spain in recent years, making it Europe's second-biggest wind power producer after Germany for installed capacity and the world's fifth biggest. Wind power became the main source of electricity production in Spain last year, accounting for 23 percent, ahead of nuclear (21 percent) and gas (17 percent), according to national grid operator REE.

The sector "benefits from a favorable situation" although "brakes" remain on its development, such as a dependency on government auctions, said Francisco Valverde Sanchez, renewables specialist at electricity consultants Menta Energia.

Investor interest

Following a boom in the 2000s thanks to generous public financial aid, the sector suffered a sudden halt when subsidies were slashed in 2013 during Spain's

economic crisis. It has since charged ahead. Spain, which has a total of 1,265 wind farms, had an installed wind power capacity of 28.1 gigawatts in 2021, up from 23.4 gigawatts in 2018, according to industry group AEE.

With large swathes of sparsely populated land, a favorable legal framework and cutting edge wind turbine makers, Spain is one of the most "interesting" markets for wind power investors, said AEE director general Juan Virgilio Marquez. Spain is home to several sector heavyweights such as Iberdrola and Naturgy, making it a top exporter of wind power equipment. "This explains the dynamism of the sector," said Marquez. Investor interest has even come from outside of the energy sector. In November Spain's Amancio Ortega, the founder of fast fashion giant Zara and one of the world's richest men, injected 245 million euros (\$268 million) in a wind farm in the northeastern region of Aragon.

Energy 'breadbasket'

Spain in 2020 pledged to generate 74 percent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030, up from 47 percent. To meet this target, Spain is counting on the development of offshore wind power, a sector that is in its infancy. But since Spain has thousands of kilometers of coastline, offshore wind has lots of room to grow. "This is an ambitious goal," said Valverde Sanchez, arguing that government bureaucracy around wind farm projects must be reduced for it to be met. Nearly 600 wind power projects are currently under study by the government, according to AEE.

As part of its plan to respond to the economic fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Spain has pledged to speed up the approval of wind power projects of less than 75 megawatts.

"Our country had enough natural resources to become Europe's leading producer and exporter of renewable energy," Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said Wednesday, adding this could be key to help the European Union meet its goal of "energy independence". Since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, Brussels has declared a mission to cut the EU's Russian gas imports by two thirds this year and to end the use of Russian gas by 2027. Spain "could become the energy 'breadbasket' of Europe," said Virgilio Marquez. — AFP

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Business

GIG leads top M&A transactions by Kuwaiti buyers in 2021: Markaz

Kuwaiti acquirers sealed a total of 33 transactions in 2021, a growth of 38% y-o-y

KUWAIT: Gulf Insurance Group (GIG) led top M&A transactions by Kuwaiti buyers during 2021 as per a report recently issued by the Investment Banking Department at Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz". The report highlights the multi-million dollar transaction whereby GIG acquired 100 percent of AXA S.A.'s operations throughout the GCC for a total consideration of \$474.8 million. As a part of this transaction, GIG will acquire 100 percent of AXA Gulf, a 50 percent stake in AXA Cooperative Insurance Company and a 28 percent stake in AXA Green Crescent Insurance Company, from AXA S.A. and Yusuf Bin Ahmed Kanoo Group.

Al-Futtouh Holding Company led the second largest closed by a Kuwaiti buyer as it acquired a 45 percent stake in Al-Ansar United Real Estate Company for a total consideration of \$161.4 million. It is worth noting that the target is a subsidiary of Kuwait Projects Holding Company (the seller), who intends to divest an additional 10 percent stake in the company however it has yet to finalize the transaction. Moreover, Al-Janah Holding Company acquired a 10 percent stake in Qurain Petrochemical Industries Company from Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC) for \$154.0 million. PIC divested all 110.0 million of its shares in the company through an auction that closed at \$1.4 per share.

The report also highlights the largest transactions taken on by Kuwaiti buyers throughout 2019 and 2020, starting with Boursa Kuwait Securities Company (Boursa Kuwait), who took on the largest transaction for 2020. Boursa Kuwait successfully acquired a 13 percent stake in Kuwait Clearing Company for a total consideration of \$39.2 million. Alghanim Trading Company reigned the top transactions for 2019 by a landslide when it sealed a deal for a 16 percent stake in Gulf Bank for a total consideration of \$501.0 million, at \$1.0 per share. Note, Alghanim Trading Company acquired the shares from Kuwait Investment Authority, and in doing so, raised its total stake in Gulf Bank to 33 percent.

M&A growth by Kuwaiti buyers

According to Markaz's report, Kuwaiti acquirers sealed a total of 33 transactions throughout 2021, which demonstrates a 38 percent growth year over year and a 13 percent decline in activity between 2019 and 2021. Kuwaiti acquirers primarily acquired local companies and acquired companies based in other parts of the GCC as well as countries cross-border, to a lesser extent. This is evident as 78 percent of the transactions that Kuwaiti buyers closed throughout 2019-2021 involved Kuwaiti companies,

followed by GCC and cross-border targets, at 15 percent and 7 percent, respectively.

GCC M&A deals (Kuwaiti buyers)

Throughout 2019-2021, Kuwaiti acquirers sealed a total of 81 transactions involving GCC targets, demonstrating a 40 percent growth year over year between 2020 and 2021 and a 15 percent decline between 2019 and 2021. Investor confidence slowly grew as the uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic eased, as the total number of cases decreased, and as restrictions were uplifted. Although the market has not returned to historical M&A levels, it is evident a recovery is paving its way. Moreover, Kuwaiti acquirers primarily acquired local companies which is evident as 91 percent of the transactions closed involved Kuwaiti targets, whereas the remaining 9 percent involved companies in other GCC countries. With the exception of Qatar, Kuwaiti buyers closed at least one transaction involving companies based in the GCC.

Overall, Kuwaiti acquirers primarily targeted companies within the financials, real estate and industrials sectors. Collectively, these transactions accounted for 66 percent of the total transactions closed by Kuwaiti buyers within the GCC. The sectors that attracted the least level of activity were the insurance, energy and materials sectors, each of whom accounted for less than 2 percent of the total activity (closed) throughout 2019-2021.

Cross-border M&A deals (Kuwaiti buyers)

Between 2019-2021, Kuwaiti acquirers sealed a total of 14 cross-border transactions. Kuwaiti acquirers demonstrated a specific interest in Egypt and the United Kingdom, in which they closed a total of four and three transactions, respectively. Aside from Egypt and the United Kingdom, Kuwaiti acquirers closed a total of one transaction each within various countries including but not limited to Belgium, India, Kenya, Spain among others.

Petrochemical Industries Company reigned the largest transaction taken on by Kuwaiti acquirers throughout the past three years at \$476.2 million, with its acquisition of a 49 percent stake in SKC Company Limited, a South Korean manufacturer and marketer of chemicals and films products. This was followed by Wafra Inc who acquired a minority stake in Digital Colony Management L.L.C., the digital investment management division of global investment firm Colony Capital, for \$400.0 million. Moreover, Boubyan Bank successfully acquired a 43 percent stake, or 73.0 million shares, of Bank of London and

Top 5 GCC M&A Deals by Reported Value – Kuwaiti Buyers (2021)*

Target Company	Buyer	Target Country	Percent Sought	Deal Value (USDmn)	Status
AXA S.A. – Gulf Insurance Operations	Gulf Insurance Group	Multiple	100	475	Closed
Al-Ansar United Real Estate Company	Al Futtouh Holding Company	Kuwait	45	161	Closed
Qurain Petrochemical Industries Company	Al Janah Holding Company	Kuwait	10	154	Closed
National Investments Company	Multiple	Kuwait	26	148	Closed
Heavy Engineering Industries & Shipbuilding Company	Gulf Cable & Electrical Industries Company	Kuwait	26	89	Closed

Source: S&P Capital IQ, GCC Stock Exchanges, Local Newspapers, Markaz Analysis

*Top deals were chosen based on transactions, for which all the necessary information was available.

the Middle East Holdings (BLME) for a total consideration of \$158.0 million. As such, Boubyan Bank raised its stake in BLME to +71 percent.

Moreover, Kuwaiti acquirers primarily targeted companies within the Financials and Real Estate sectors. Collectively, these transactions accounted for 51 percent of the total transactions closed by Kuwaiti buyers that involved foreign companies. The sectors that attracted the least level of activity were the Industrials, Information Technology and Logistics sectors, which each accounted for 7 percent of the total activity (closed) throughout 2019-2021.

M&A Deals (Kuwaiti targets)

Furthermore, there was a total of 104 closed transactions involving Kuwaiti targets. Kuwaiti and other buyers accounted for a majority of these transactions at 59 percent and 26 percent, followed by foreign and GCC buyers who made up 10 percent and 5 percent, respectively. 2021 witnessed the highest number of closed transactions at 39, while 23 and 37 transactions were recorded during 2020 and 2019, respectively. Between 2020 and 2021, Kuwaiti acquirers saw a year over year growth of 21 percent in comparison to a 28 percent decline in activity

between 2019 and 2021. It is evident COVID significantly impacted the level of M&A activity, demonstrated by the significant drop in the year 2020.

It is worth noting that 34 percent of the transactions that closed between 2019-2021 involved transactions in the financial sector. The real estate, industrials, and consumer discretionary sectors accounted for 15 percent, 12 percent, and 9 percent of all closed transactions involving Kuwaiti targets, respectively, whereas the insurance, materials, logistics, and construction sectors accounted for the least number of closed transactions at 1 percent each.

Deals in the pipeline

By the end of 2021, there were a total of 13 announced transactions in the pipeline. The majority of these transactions involved Kuwaiti targets, at 85 percent, whereas the remaining transactions equally involved Bahraini and UAE targets. The largest of these transactions was taken on by Kuwait Telecom Company who penned a binding agreement to acquire 100 percent of E-Portal Holding Company and its local subsidiaries for a total consideration of \$75.7 million. Closing is subject to obtaining necessary regulatory approvals.

NBK Money Markets Report

More sanctions against Russia: Inflation spikes

KUWAIT: The United States, United Kingdom and European Union imposed a fifth round of sanctions after discoveries of war atrocities in the Ukrainian city of Bucha. In addition to further penalties on Russian financial institutions and wealthy individuals, the UK went ahead to stop all coal and oil imports by the end of this year. The EU followed with a ban on coal imports only and extended a ban on Russian trucks and ships entering the EU. The United Nations General Assembly also voted to suspend Russia from the Human Rights Council.

In the meantime, Ukraine continued to plead for assistance as Russian troops prepare for their new offensive in the eastern region of Ukraine. The sharp spike in global food and fuel prices has been heavily provoked by supply chain disruptions caused by the war, challenging central bankers across the globe in their battle against soaring and potentially entrenching inflation and complicating the economic outlook.

Hot Inflation and tight Labor in US

The US economy appears to have had a decent first quarter of 2022 even as inflationary pressures and expectation of higher interest rates weigh on the outlook. With inflation at its hottest in four decades, the week ended with unemployment claims at 166K, the lowest since 1968, in comparison to a 201K expectation and 171K from the previous week, signaling a tightening labor market. The ISM Services Index in March rose to 58.3 from 56.6 a month earlier, thanks to moves in higher employment and new orders. Like the manufacturing sector, input prices also moved higher as inflation entrenches across the US economy. Focus is on next week's release of fresh economic monthly data. CPI and core CPI released on Tuesday, PPI is out on Wednesday, and retail sales is out on Thursday.

The hawk is triggered

The latest data stoked aggressiveness in the Fed's tightening policy with the plan to tame inflation on top priority. The FOMC minutes from March's meeting laid out the plan to run down assets at a pace of \$95 billion per month, nearly twice as fast as the peak level of \$50 billion used in the previous tightening period from 2017 to 2019. Specifically, the proposed shrinking would translate into \$60 billion in Treasuries and \$35 billion in mortgage-backed securities. Additionally, it made space for a 50bp rate hike upon disclosure that many officials favored that size of a hike last meeting, which was deferred mainly in light of the Russian war. James Bullard, President of the St. Louis Fed, said he prefers boosting the policy rate to 3-3.25 percent in the second half of this year. Charles Evans, President of the Chicago Fed, and Raphael Bostic, President of the Atlanta Fed, said they favor raising rates to neutral while monitoring the economy's performance.

Market reaction

Despite dismissal of recessionary concerns and reassurance from Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell that the US is able to withstand interest rate hikes, financial markets are on edge as they consider the implications of the tightening campaign on economic growth. The FOMC minutes fueled the

Treasury rout, sending the 10-year yield shooting to 2.70 percent and the 2-year yield to 2.51 percent. Equities' recovery from an initial fright of the Fed minutes was short-lived and major benchmarks ended mainly in the red, with the exception of the Dow Jones.

Dollar intact

The dollar aimed high underpinned by the jump in Treasury yields and the aggressing Fed. The US dollar hit 100 for the first time in two years until it later lost momentum and closed the week at 99.796. European currencies have been hurt the most, lost their grip under the weight of their sanctions on Russia translating into their economies. The euro failed to capitalize on its hawkish ECB meeting minutes and remained disheartened, closing the week at 1.0880. The sterling was also demoralized, closing the week down to 1.3031. The Australian dollar tumbled back to 0.7457 after the its own hawkish call from the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) was quickly muted by the US. The Japanese yen was pinned down by a widening divergence between the Bank of Japan's (BoJ) and the Fed, ending the week above 124.

Europe: Punctured growth

European countries are dealing with repercussions of their sanctions imposed on Russia in their own economies. Inflation sizzled to 7.5 percent in March, much higher than the ECB's projected 5.1 percent peak, amid persistence of food and energy inflation and global manufacturing bottlenecks. Considering the region's high dependence on Russian energy, the war and sanctions were punishing to the recent growth trend and is beginning to damage confidence. Germany saw its factory output decline in February for the first time in four months by 2.2 percent, offsetting the previous month's 2.3 percent gain. EU retail sales in February also disappointed expectations gaining 0.3 percent as opposed to the 0.6 percent expectation, but performed better than January's 0.2 percent gain. The ZEW Economic Sentiment from Germany and the EU area will be released on Tuesday this week.

A series of COVID travails in China

China continued to grapple with virus flare-ups and clung to a stringent zero COVID policy, putting a strain on its economy. Virus curbs have held back traditional growth engines of consumption, restricted mobility, and weighed on client demand. China's service sector took a massive blow in March with the Caixin Services PMI shrinking to 42 from 50.2 a month earlier, its fastest pace in two years and indicating economic contraction. According to the PMI, new business activity was at its lowest since March 2020 and new exports were also at 2020 lows. More economic data released on Monday include annual CPI and PPI data.

Commodities

While oil juggles Russian oil bans and lower Chinese demand, supply fears were cooled slightly after the International Energy Agency decided to join the US and deploy 60 million barrels from emergency stockpiles. US crude inventories also came in higher than expected at 2.4M barrels. WTI closed the week at \$98.26 a barrel while Brent closed the week at \$102.78 a barrel. OPEC is set to meet this week after it chose to maintain course and refused to deviate from its long-term plan for gradual output in the face of supply threats.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar
USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30470.



Capture your favorite Ramadan moments with Huawei nova 9 SE

KUWAIT: Spending time with loved ones is always fun, but even more so in Ramadan. In fact, everything is a lot more exciting in Ramadan with all the delicious iftars, evening hangouts, and late-night chit-chats. That's also why this month is filled with a lot of opportunities for all kinds of pictures and videos to make these memories last forever. Selfies with friends and family, close-ups of delicious iftar tables, etc. But if you want to shoot great snaps and videos, not just okay ones, it takes some creativity and a good camera. Well, if you have the newly launched Huawei nova 9 SE, you already have a fantastic tool. Balancing both form and function, the Huawei nova 9 SE boasts a High-Res AI Quad Camera system, 66W fast charging, and a FullView Display in a sleek and slim design. Here are some tips that you can use to snap some incredible pictures of iftars and suhours with this brilliant smartphone.

Huawei nova 9 SE

Those lovely iftar gatherings, humorous chatter with our family and loved ones, and children making paper lanterns. All these are amazing moments that you want to keep forever. Nobody can freeze time, but you can still hold on to those moments with pictures. You can capture all your precious Ramadan moments in crystal clear detail with the 108MP AI Quad Camera on the Huawei nova 9 SE. The high resolution can help you crop in and reframe your pictures without losing quality.

Most of the photo-worthy events in Ramadan happen after nightfall, which in turn means less light. Luckily, the Huawei nova 9 SE is equipped with a 1/1.52-inch large sensor with excellent resolution and

light sensitivity. This results in exquisite picture quality and better low-light performance. Besides the wide-angle camera, there are also the ultra-wide-angle and macro cameras if you want to change up the feel of your pictures. Ultra-wide-angle is what you need to fit all the guests in one frame. Try the macro camera if you want to take pictures of the sweets and dishes in more interesting ways. It can be real fun!

Never run out of power

You will have more time to play games, watch your favorite series and so on during Ramadan. All of these require a lot of power. But you don't have to worry about running out of battery when you have the power of 66W Huawei SuperCharge. It will only take you 15 minutes to charge the phone up to 66 percent and just 36 minutes to fill up the battery completely. That's enough power for several hours of entertainment in a short charging session.



Business



For generations villagers living near the Sabaki estuary had relied on its natural bounty for lumber and firewood, fresh water, seafood, farming land, and plants for traditional medicine.



One tree at a time, local villagers are bringing the estuary back to life.

Kenyans heal devastated land with the power of mangroves

Local communities working to restore critical ecosystem to health

MALINDI, Kenya: Along a riverbank scarred by logging, Joseph Mwandenge Mangi points out a solitary mangrove tree, a species once abundant in the forest where the mighty Sabaki River meets the sea. "This is the last one. There are no more left," said the 42-year-old Kenyan, who grew up on the estuary and possesses a seemingly encyclopedic knowledge of its flora and fauna.

The surviving tree is a somber reminder for local communities working to restore this critical ecosystem to health, and make amends for the plunder of the past.

For generations villagers living near the Sabaki estuary had relied on its natural bounty for lumber and firewood, fresh water, seafood, farming land, and plants for traditional medicine.

Sustainably nurtured, the coastal wetland is also a resilient ally in the face of a changing climate—storing carbon, filtering water pollution, and protecting against extreme weather and rising sea levels.

But years of unchecked exploitation inflicted terrible damage on the mangroves,

mudflats, freshwater pools and sandy dunes at the mouth of Kenya's second-longest river. Mangrove wood-harvested sustainably for centuries to build traditional Swahili homes—was chopped down to feed construction in fast-growing coastal towns like nearby Malindi, a popular tourism hub. Locals overfished the river, using mosquito nets that trapped even the smallest of sea life.

Fertile soils were uprooted and washed downstream into the Indian Ocean, further reducing fish in the Sabaki and killing coral reefs offshore. "The landscape has changed. Back in the day, we used to have a huge forest with elephants and monkeys," said Francis Nyale, a 68-year-old village elder, standing among a clearing of gnarled mangrove stumps.

Climate ally

But one tree at a time, local villagers are bringing the estuary back to life. Further down the Sabaki, where its brown waters meet the blue ocean, and swarms of migratory birds flock overhead, a team of volun-

teers plant mangrove saplings along the riverbank.

They've planted tens of thousands in recent years, reclaiming cleared land and aiding significant forest regrowth, said Francis Kagema, coast regional coordinator from conservation group Nature Kenya.

There are early signs that their efforts are paying off. Crouched in a grove of older trees, Kagema spotted clusters of tiny green shoots bursting out of the dark soil—evidence of natural regeneration, an ecosystem on the mend.

"The world is changing, a lot. But for the mangroves, their ability to bounce back... and colonize the areas they used to be in the past, is quite encouraging," he said. These remarkable trees also deliver for the planet many times over—mangroves can absorb five times more carbon than forests on land, and act as a barrier against storm surges and coastal erosion.

Protecting mangroves is 1,000 times cheaper per kilometre than building seawalls against ocean rises, according to the

UN Environment Programme (UNEP), which sponsors the Sabaki restoration project.

"Healthy wetlands—critical for climate mitigation, adaptation, biodiversity, and human health and prosperity—punch above their weight in terms of benefits," said Leticia Carvalho, UNEP's principal coordinator for marine and freshwater.

'Our trees, our heritage'

For local communities, there are economic benefits in rehabilitating nature. UNEP estimates that a single hectare of mangrove forest can deliver anywhere between \$33,000 and \$57,000 per year economically. In Sabaki, local guides are supplementing their income by leading visitors and school groups to see the hippos and birdlife that call the estuary home.

Work is under way to improve tourist facilities, expand traditional beekeeping in the forest, and open a nursery for plant saplings. Convincing the Sabaki's four villages that there is value in conservation requires careful diplomacy and a local

touch, said Mangi, who leads a community group restoring the estuary. They are working with fishermen to abandon unsustainable practices, and volunteer rangers who catch loggers in the estuary handle offences in-house to keep everyone on side.

"We don't take them to the police. We talk to them. We want them to understand that please, there is something good in these trees (rather than cutting)," said Mangi. Jared Bosire, from the Nairobi Convention, a regional environmental partnership for the Western Indian Ocean, said the Sabaki community was demonstrating how local approaches to conservation could prove mutually advantageous.

"The hope is there will be lessons learned that could be replicated in other areas," said Bosire, the Convention's project manager. More than 80 percent of mangroves have already been lost along western parts of the Indian Ocean.

For Mangi, there would be no community without them: "If we don't have these trees, we lose our heritage." — AFP



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AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 7 APRIL 2022

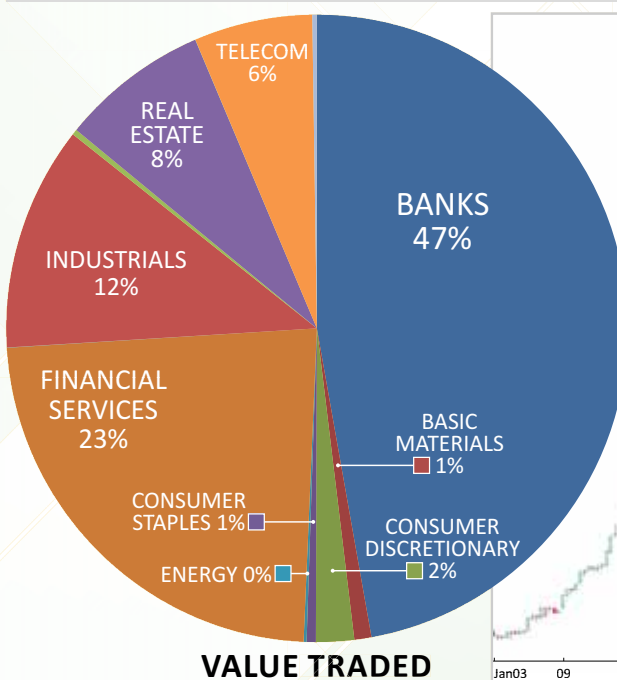
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Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	37,875	9,166.38	1.2%	1.2%	20.0%	462,167,689	241,708,352	33,068	29.1	2.9	77.9%
Main Market	10,728	6,397.02	2.3%	2.3%	8.7%	647,595,220	98,583,184	25,480	16.8	1.5	22.1%
All Share	48,603	8,261.01	1.4%	1.4%	17.3%	1,109,762,909	340,291,536	58,548	26.2	2.5	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
BANKS	29,051	1,956.87	1.4%	1.4%	20.6%	283,214,861	160,572,377	17,561	33.5	2.9	59.14%
BASIC MATERIALS	1,023	1,147.47	-1.2%	-1.2%	12.0%	4,574,217	3,017,754	775	27.4	1.6	2.08%
CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY	788	1,540.10	-0.2%	-0.2%	15.2%	22,685,715	6,731,483	2,291	33.4	6.9	1.60%
CONSUMER STAPLES	216	707.59	-0.6%	-0.6%	-3.2%	2,892,523	1,621,876	252	17.7	1.5	0.44%
ENERGY	267	1,284.39	-1.1%	-1.1%	-10.1%	9,654,193	524,842	563	12.5	1.3	0.54%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	4,737	1,640.26	-1.2%	-1.2%	15.2%	485,503,369	79,392,130	16,481	13.8	2.1	9.64%
HEALTH CARE	253	511.16	3.3%	3.3%	-35.9%	78,041	50,415	2	16.9	2.6	0.52%
INDUSTRIALS	4,772	1,335.98	3.2%	3.2%	17.0%	59,248,941	39,434,802	8,124	7.5	1.4	9.71%
INSURANCE	659	1,576.01	-2.8%	-2.8%	2.8%	4,300,453	960,658	269	8.1	1.2	1.34%
REAL ESTATE	3,023	1,404.54	0.7%	0.7%	5.9%	212,850,738	26,185,099	7,750	15.4	1.3	6.15%
TECHNOLOGY	9	688.94	1.8%	1.8%	0.7%	267,227	26,642	12	-	0.8	0.02%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	4,076	1,329.28	5.3%	5.3%	22.0%	20,879,651	20,966,870	4,098	21.4	3.1	8.30%
UTILITIES	246	589.47	0.4%	0.4%	-1.8%	3,612,980	806,588	370	19.0	4.0	0.50%

Top Gainers						Top Losers					
Stock	Last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades	Stock	Last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
STC	1,969	35.33	7,246,842	12,473,652	2,307	MARAKEZ	48.1	-23.65	1,688,398	88,495	170
AAYAN	190	13.77	70,700,022	12,767,403	1,487	TAAMEER	28.2	-22.31	6,809,208	204,686	284
OSOUL	114	11.77	5,164,857	563,383	282	SULTAN	176	-21.78	13,518,697	2,556,020	970
OSOS	145	7.41	1,778,505	251,587	111	KUWAITRE	322	-15.26	740	256	6
AUB	356	7.23	117,624,245	41,125,212	3,374	MASAKEN	36.7	-13.85	3,476,375	127,386	224

Top Volume						Top Value					
Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades	Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
GFH	104	0.00	164,333,441	17,223,405	2,268	KFH	1,007	-5.98	56,900,651	58,613,660	6,062
AUB	356	7.23	117,624,245	41,125,212	3,374	AUB	356	7.23	117,624,245	41,125,212	3,374
AAYAN	190	13.77	70,700,022	12,767,403	1,487	NBK	1,055	-4.00	33,271,079	35,417,302	3,625
KFH	1,007	-5.98	56,900,651	58,613,660	6,062	AGLTY	1,178	6.61	20,697,713	23,351,889	3,291
NRE	235	1.73	42,360,293	9,834,566	1,129	GFH	104	0.00	164,333,441	17,223,405	2,268



Market Summary:

- Premier market volume and value decreased by 11% and 3%, respectively. Main market volume and value decreased by 9% and 1%, respectively.
- Premier and Main indices both registered a new peak despite the reduction in trading.
- Technically, the All-Share index registered a new all-time high-level closing at 8261, support levels at 8261, 8177, 8151, and 8121, while resistance at 8314. Premier index registered a new all-time high-level closing at 9166, support levels at 9083, 9061, 9021, and 8990, while resistance at 9255. The Main index registered a new all-time high-level closing at 6397, support levels at 6383, 6357, 6321, and 6267, while resistance at 6411.



Khloe Kardashian slams parenting critics

Khloe Kardashian has hit back at those who criticize her for holding her daughter. The 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians' star showed up to the premiere of the family's latest Hulu show with her daughter True Thompson - who she has with her ex-partner Tristan Thompson - and for all the snaps the family had on the red carpet, she held onto her little girl, who is about to turn four-years-old. Now Khloe has hit back at social media trolls, who criticized her for still holding her child. Writing on Twitter, she said: "For the people who comment that I hold True too much ... number 1 I'm gonna hold my baby until I can't hold

her anymore. Number 2 when there's tons of cameras around, flashing lights, paps yelling things ... "I want my baby to feel safe. Worry about your own children. We good over here." Khloe's daughter is very tall for her age - but she refuses to let people call True 'big' and always corrects them. Speaking recently, she said: "She's very tall. People will always say, 'She's so big.' And I'll say, 'Oh, she's so tall.' I try to make them be more descriptive. I know what an adult means when they say that, but I don't want her to misinterpret that. It wasn't from one person, I guess just from society or how people critiqued my body." She also revealed

True is a "very tough" little girl, but she's teaching her that it's OK if she needs to cry too. Explaining how she deals with her daughter's strength, she said: "If that's who she is, I'm not trying to make her not be that way. But sometimes, I'll notice she may bump into something. I'll say, 'Are you OK, Tu-Tu?' And she'll say, 'Yes,' and kind of brush it off. I do try to always tell her that it's OK if she cries or if something is wrong."

Stewart had to feel emotionally connected to Princess Diana to emulate her in Spencer

Kristen Stewart needed to feel "emotionally connected" to Princess Diana in order to portray her in 'Spencer'. The 31-year-old actress revealed that in order to best approach her role as the late Princess of Wales - who passed away in 1997 at the age of 36 - in director Pablo Larrain's historical fiction film she had to create a connection between herself and Diana. Speaking on 'The Jess Cagle Podcast with Julia Cunningham', she explained: "My whole thing in getting ready for this was growing close to her, getting to a point where I could feel protective and emotionally connected. And I understand that my job was definitely not to retell her story, but to give voice to a feeling. "I don't know exactly how she felt, but when you look at pictures of her, you do know how she feels. She is, herself, such an empath that as a human you're like, 'I understand this person.' In an inarticulate way, she's so communicative." The 'Twilight' star added that she heavily considered public perception of Princess Di - the mother or Prince William and Prince Harry - when



approaching the role as well. She said: "I think the first thing you think of when you imagine her or when you're shown an example, like a picture of her, or something she's said, a trace she left behind, is that she's really, really cool. She's a very good person. She's very quintessentially sainted. "We made a movie that's poetic and strange and doesn't have a lot to say but it's also screaming, and I feel that way when I

look at her." Kristen also confessed that the scene that she felt the most pressure to film was when Diana speaks her first lines, despite the fact that this was not the first scene that was shot for the film. She revealed: "The first time that she speaks in the movie had a hugely pressurized feeling, more so than some of the other dialogue-heavy scenes. It wasn't like that was the first scene that we shot, but because that's the first time you hear her speak, oh man, I really wanted to get that right ... I was scared that day. I hated that day." However, despite her worries, she added that the script for the movie was "perfect" and praised filmmaker Larrain's choices. She said: "[Pablo] wanted so badly to delve into an inner life. The exterior life is so fascinating to people and he was like: 'No. None of that. Inside.' And I just think that's the nicest gesture ... I was so down to take that ride with him. Also, the script is like perfect."



Paris Hilton wants twins with Carter Reum

Paris Hilton can't wait to have kids with Carter Reum - and they want twins. The 41-year-old socialite feels "so safe" with her husband and cannot wait for the time that the pair become parents and start their own family together, as she opened up about being married to Carter. She said: "I love being married. I just feel like I finally found my perfect match and I just feel so safe. "I finally have my home and I just can't wait to start a family and have kids. We've been talking about kids since the beginning - since the first couple, like, months of dating and we would love to have twins." Paris says she'd like a twin boy and girl or two girls. Speaking on The Bellas Podcast, she added: "I think that would be amazing. I would like a twin boy and girl just to, like, get both, but whatever happens happens," Hilton revealed "But I would love that or twin girls because I love girls." The socialite and her husband have been using IVF to try and conceive. She said recently: "We have been doing IVF, so I can pick twins if I like. I've already undergone the egg extraction procedure. It was tough, but I knew it would be worth it. I did it a couple of times. Just doing it together and having a partner that is just so supportive and always makes me feel just like a princess all the time ... that it wasn't that bad."

Mark Wahlberg: Gaining 30 pounds for 'Father Stu' 'really took a toll on me'

Mark Wahlberg says gaining weight "took a toll" on him. The Hollywood actor had to pile on the pounds for his role in 'Father Stu' and he admits having to gain 30 pounds was very difficult for him, and he ate 11,000 calories a day to ensure he could put the weight on. He said: "I put on 30 pounds and went from being a guy who was in fighting shape to a guy who was wheelchair-bound, suffering from a rare muscular degenerative disease. I was just turning 50 by the time we finished the movie, and I was eating 11,000 calories a day. That drastic weight gain really took a toll on me over the course of the last seven, eight months." Mark tried his best to do it the "healthy way" and decided to eat bacon, eggs and steak amongst oth-

ers. He told EW: "I tried to do it in a healthy way. It was a dozen eggs and a dozen pieces of bacon, two baked potatoes, a Porterhouse steak, two bowls of white rice, and a glass of olive oil. The first two weeks were high proteins. The second two weeks were a lot of carbs. The last two weeks starches and then sodium, just to kind of get as bloated as possible." Mark previously opened up about his tough exercise regime. He explained: "I start out with steel oats, blueberries and peanut butter for breakfast. Then I have a protein shake, three turkey burgers, five pieces of sweet potato at about 5:30 in the morning. At 8 o'clock, I have about 10 turkey meatballs. At 10:30am, I have a grilled chicken salad with two hard-boiled eggs, olives, avocado, cucumber, tomato, lettuce. "Then at 1 o'clock I have a New York steak with green peppers. At 3.30pm, I have grilled chicken with bok choy. At 5.30/6 o'clock, I have a beautiful piece of halibut or cod or a seabass, with some vegetables, maybe some sautee potatoes and bok choy. And I have a lot of Aquahydrate during the day. That's it."



Lindsay Lohan says moving to Dubai taught her to say 'no'

The 'Mean Girls' star says living in a country where paparazzi is illegal has been life-changing for the formerly troubled star, as she is free to lead a "private life" away from the cameras, and she has also become pickier when it comes to the work she takes on to lead a more balanced life. Taking part in Vogue's 'Life in Looks' video series, she said: "It just really happened, how I moved to Dubai. I got there, and I felt a certain sense of calm.

"I think it's because paparazzi is illegal there. I really found that I had a private life, and I could just take time for myself. I decided to stay there because I really learned to appreciate what it is to go, do my work, and then leave and live a normal life. It took me moving there to really appreciate the time that I take for myself, instead of just going, going, going and learning to say 'no.' And really putting myself first, and choosing the things that I want to do, wisely, for me first." Lindsay - who is engaged to financier Bader Shamma - moved to Dubai in 2014 and travels between the Middle East and her family home in New York, but hasn't been back to her old home in Los Angeles for a decade after the paparazzi scared her off. She said previously: "I live here [Dubai], yep, I have been here for about six years. But I go to New York a lot to see my family ... and I was in London before this. I haven't been to LA in over 10 years. "The paparazzi definitely scared me a

Larson is joining the cast of the 'Fast and Furious 10'

The 'Captain Marvel' star has signed up to take part in the tenth lap around the track, according to one of the franchise's biggest stars Vin Diesel, who wanted to "welcome" the Academy Award winner to the "family". The 54-year-old actor confirmed the news, writing on Instagram: "Yeah yeah yeah... you see this angel over my shoulder cracking me up, you say to yourself 'that's captain Marvel'. Clearly there is love and laughter in this image." "What you don't see however, is the character you will be introduced to in Fast10. You have no idea how



timeless and amazing she will be in our mythology. Beyond her beauty, her intellect... her Oscar, haha is this profound soul who will add something you might not have expected but yearned for. Welcome to the FAMILY Brie." The news that the 'Room' star was cast in the series that first debuted in 2001 comes after Jason Momoa was tipped to co-star in January. It was reported that the 42-year-old actor was "in negotiations" to appear in the film - which is due out in April 2023 - directed by Justin Lin. Vin - who has starred in all nine other movies - teased that fans will "have to wait and see" what the conclusion will be in the two-installment finale, with the second part due out a year later. He wrote: "Every story deserves its own ending". What will that ending be? We'll have to wait and see."



Vikander admits Vep is her strangest role yet

Alicia Vikander's part in 'Irma Vep' is her strangest role yet. The 33-year-old actress plays Mira, an American film star who travels to Paris to star in a remake of 'Les Vampires,' a French movie about a criminal gang in which she stars as femme fatale Irma Vep. The name 'Irma Vep' is also an anagram for vampire and Mira starts to struggle to distinguish between what is reality and what is fantasy. Speaking to Britain's Harper's Bazaar magazine, Alicia described the HBO show as being "so meta, it's eating itself," and she cannot put it in a genre. The 'Tomb Raider' star explained: "I think, while I was making it, I played five roles ... It's like Chinese boxes. There's always something else going on. I think that's the beauty of the project." The series has been directed by French filmmaker Olivier Assayas, who said he has "always wanted to work" with Alicia. Olivier explained: "[I] always wanted to work with [Alicia]; it was just a matter of finding the right role. And I thought about her at once for 'Irma Vep.' She has all the depth, the complexity and the humor I needed." Speaking about the director, Alicia added: "He's the most timid and kind person and everybody loves him. When you go on set, it's all the same people he's worked with for years - it's a joy to be with him and his friends, and it's all happy and sweet. And then he wrote this in a few months, with its darkness, and you say, 'This was actually in your mind?' He's an extreme observer." The 'Ex Machina' star added: "I love the communal feeling independent films give you."



'Falling for Christmas'. Christina Rogers, Netflix's Director of Independent Film said: "We're so happy with our collaboration with Lindsay to date, and we're thrilled to continue our partnership with her. We look forward to bringing more of her films to our members around the world." Lindsay is set to star opposite former 'Glee' actor Chord Overstreet in 'Falling For Christmas', where she plays a spoiled hotel heiress who "gets into a skiing accident, suffers from total amnesia, and finds herself in the care of a handsome, blue-collar lodge owner and his precocious daughter in the days leading up to Christmas." Lindsay had largely stepped away from acting. In recent years, the actress has been seen alongside former 'Harry Potter' star Rupert Grint in comedy series 'Sick Note' back in 2018 and also made an appearance in 'Scary Movie V', both of which are streaming on Netflix.

Lifestyle | Features



This file photo shows US musician Sonny Rollins performing during the Juan-les-pins Jazz Festival, southern France. — AFP

After COVID blues, French saxophone maker hits the right note

After the financial blues of the COVID pandemic, the French saxophone maker favored by American jazz greats celebrates its 100th birthday looking to expand further in Asia and the United States. Selmer experienced two difficult years after the pandemic began in 2020, the company's executive chairman Thierry Oriez tells AFP. "The COVID crisis affected us together with our customers" because "the world of music stopped", whether that meant shows or conservatory classes. But now Oriez looks to the future, with sales brimming once more. "(I'm) convinced we could do more in the United States."

Around 90 percent of sales are international, with China accounting for one-fifth of them ahead of Japan, South Korea and the United States. The company did not

provide any sales figures. While order books are full, Selmer, like many other companies, faces recruitment difficulties while Covid-19 continues to pose absenteeism problems. The company was founded by clarinet player Henri Selmer in 1885 but produced its first saxophone in 1922. Selmer's instruments have been played by jazz legends including John Coltrane, Stan Getz and Sonny Rollins.

'Musical evolution'

The family business was sold in 2018 by its heirs to European private equity group Argos Soditec. A delivery subsidiary for Asia was established in 2020. Oriez took over the business in July from Jerome Selmer, a great-grandson of Henri Selmer. The instruments are made at a factory in Mantes-La-Ville, just west of Paris. The company also owns a laborator-

ry that works with musicians to develop new models.

Finishing touches and assembly of Selmer's Axos series, a new collection less expensive than the company's other instruments, are completed in China. An alto saxophone costs 3,150 euros (\$3,430) while a tenor is worth 4,150 euros (\$4,500). Oriez says the new collection "allows us to be more aggressive in the Chinese market".

While the Mantes-La-Ville factory has motorized precision machinery to craft some of the 700 pieces that make up each instrument, a large part of the work is still carried out by hand. Artisans cut sheets of brass, use blowtorches to bend them into shape, mount the keys on the tube, polish the instrument and engrave Selmer's logo on it. Engraver Morgane Duhamel spots an imperfection and adds by hand "a small

engraving that will be personalized and will offer the customer a unique instrument".

Eric Bruel, who makes the saxophones' horns by turning the brass tubes on a mandrel, said the search for new tones "has an influence on the treatment of the metal: the reheating temperature with the blowtorch, it will be more or less strong, more or less long".

"Selmer has always walked the line between modernity regarding tools and the other slightly Amish side: we still do the forging, the welding and polishing by hand," Bruel said. "In almost 30 years at the company, I've seen many changes in tools, the families of instruments, the musical evolution with young saxophone players who do not necessarily have the same sounds as their elders," he said. — AFP

Avril Lavigne is engaged to Mod Sun

The 'Complicated' hitmaker said yes to the 35-year-old pop punk rocker underneath the Eiffel Tower after getting treated to "the most perfect, romantic proposal" after a year of dating. The 37-year-old pop star told PEOPLE magazine: "It was the most perfect, romantic proposal I could ever ask for. We were in Paris on a boat in the Seine River. We had a violin player, champagne and roses. It felt like time stood still, and it was just the two of us in the moment." Avril described how Mod engraved the "the first words he ever said to" her, along with "Mod + Avril". She said: "It has the words 'Hi Icon' engraved in it, which were the first words he ever said to me. And it has Mod + Avril on the inside. He knew from the very beginning I wanted a heart shaped diamond because on the day we met, we had matching heart shaped paved rings on. We've worn them every day since, so it's only fitting to have a heart-shaped engagement ring. I love it so much."



The 'Love Sux' hitmaker claims that Mod - real name Dylan Smith - popping the question "was a total surprise" but that she always knew he was the one for her after they met making her new album. Avril said: "I knew we had a very strong unstoppable connection from the first week of writing and working together in the studio. Immediately. He made every day better. It was like I had known him forever. As time went on, things kept getting better, and it felt incredibly natural." Avril - who has been married previously to Sum 41 frontman Deryck Whibley and Nickelback frontman Chad Kroeger - also gushed about how anticipating "having fun, working together, touring together, growing together" with her husband-to-be. "I look forward to having fun, creating, working together, touring together, growing together. It feels good to have someone who can help celebrate the good times, hold you through the tough ones, and be there for all the moments in between." — Bang Showbiz

Nirvana frontman Kurt Cobain is inspiring a new London opera

The fictionalized final days of the 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' singer - who took his own life in April 1994 aged 27 - were the inspiration for Gus Van Sant's 2005 film 'Last Days' and now the Royal Opera House is creating a stage show based on the movie. The film's plot centered on a musician named Blake, who was based on Cobain, and his descent into a downward spiral of depression and substance abuse before his tragically premature demise. The opera will be composed by 31-year-old Oliver Leith, the



The Blue Origin NS-19 crew stand next to the New Shepard rocket after their successful launch on December 11, 2021.

Space tourism: The arguments in favor

To its many detractors, space tourism amounts to nothing more than joyrides for the global super rich that will worsen the planet's climate crisis. But the nascent sector also has supporters, who, while not rejecting the criticism outright, argue the industry can bring humanity benefits too.

More research opportunities

The first argument is that private spaceflights, in addition to their customers, can send to space scientific experiments that require microgravity environments. In the past, national agencies "it used to take quite a long time to work within government grant channels, get approval, get the funding, get picked to be among the very select few that could go," Ariel Ekblaw, of the MIT Space Exploration Initiative told AFP.

By contrast, it took Ekblaw just six months from signing a contract to sending her research project to the International Space Station on board the private Ax-1 mission, which blasted off Friday thanks to the private entrepreneurs paying for the trip. Her experiment, called TESSERA, involves smart tiles that form a floating robotic swarm that can self-assemble into space architecture-which might be how future space stations are built.

An earlier prototype was flown to space for a few minutes aboard a Blue Origin suborbital spaceflight, paving the way for the new test. "The proliferation of these commercial launch providers does allow us to do riskier, faster and more innovative projects," said Ekblaw. Virgin Galactic, for its part, has announced plans to take scientists on future flights.

Better space technology

Space tourism, and the private space sector overall, also acts as an innovation driver for getting better at doing all things related to space. Government agencies, which operate with taxpayers' money, move cautiously and are deeply-averse to failure-while companies like Elon Musk's SpaceX don't mind blowing up prototype rockets until they get them right, speeding up development cycles.

Where NASA focuses on grand exploration goals, private companies seek to improve the rate, profitability and sustain-

ability of launches, with reusable vessels-and in the case of Blue Origin, rockets that emit only water vapor.

For now, spaceflight remains a risky and expensive endeavor. "The more we go to space, the better we become at space, the more an industry base arises to support space technology," said Mason Peck, an aeronautics professor at Cornell University who previously served as NASA's chief technologist. A parallel can be drawn with the early era of aviation, when flying was limited to the privileged few.

"We started out with lots of accidents, and lots of different companies with different kinds of ideas for how to build airplanes," explained George Nield, former associate administrator for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) office of commercial space transportation. "But gradually, we learned what works, what doesn't work." Today, commercial air travel is statistically the safest mode of transport. But what will safer, more efficient spaceflight actually achieve?

According to experts, it is currently difficult to imagine the future impact space will have on transport. "Just in the next 10 years, I'm pretty confident that we're going to see companies that have systems that can have people take off from one point on the Earth, and travel to the other side of the Earth, in like an hour," said Nield, who was on BlueOrigin's last flight. Such point-to-point travel would probably eventually happen anyway, but space tourism is speeding up its advent, he added.

The last argument, paradoxically, has to do with the climate. Many of those who have observed Earth from outer space have reported feeling deeply moved by how fragile the planet appears, and overwhelmed by a desire to protect it. The phenomenon was dubbed the "overview effect" by space philosopher Frank White. "It gives you a sense of urgency about needing to be part of the solution," stressed Jane Poynter, co-founder of Space Perspective. Her company plans to start flying tourists on a giant high-altitude balloon to observe the Earth's curvature from a capsule with panoramic views. — AFP



ROH's composer-in-residence, and directed by Copson and Anna Morrissey. Its due to reach the stage this October and will be performed at the Linbury Theatre.

A description for 'Last Days' on the Royal Opera House's website reads: "Based on the film 'Last Days', this haunting world premiere brings a modern tale of self-destruction to the opera stage." Leith is a huge Nirvana fan and he believes an operatic version of Cobain's story will add something important to it. Speaking to The Guardian, he said: "The music soundtracked my teens. It's some of the first music I learned to play on the guitar. I owe a lot of how I now make music to the sound of grunge from that time - I had never really thought about where my experimental mess and repetitions had come from. — BangShowbiz

The Crown to get five prequels with a budget of £500m

'The Crown' is reportedly getting five prequels - with a whopping budget of £500 million. While the main series of the historical Netflix hit based on the British royal family will end after series six, it has been claimed writer Peter Morgan is already hard at work on several spin-off series. According to the Daily Mail newspaper, the prequel will start with the death of Victoria in 1901, and include the scandal of Edward VIII falling for Wallis Simpson. A young Sir Winston Churchill - the late former British Prime Minister - is also expected to appear.

A source said: "This is a bit like 'Star Wars' where the opportunity is to extend the franchise by dipping into history. It is going to start with the death of Queen Victoria and will run up to around about where 'The Crown' began, which was with the wedding of the Queen in 1947. "Netflix are really keen to make more of The Crown and Peter Morgan is excited by the possibilities of the era." At the moment Peter covers about ten years per series, so on that basis there will be five new series of 'The Crown'. "Peter has started

writing outlines and plans are being made for filming." The prequels will likely span five decades and the reigns of Edward VII and VIII and George V and VI.

Each episode will have £100 million to work with. Series six is due to start filming later this year. The prequel news comes after it was revealed this week that the show is casting someone to play Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge. The drama's bosses put out a casting call to find a lookalike for the minor role. The sixth season is set between 1997 and the early 2000s, and the 40-year-old royal met future husband Prince William, 39, at St Andrews University in 2001.

An insider told The Sun newspaper: "Having the Duchess of Cambridge starring in an easy win for 'The Crown', as the creators know it will get more people watching. "Particularly as it will show her relationship with William just as their romance starts to blossom when they were both students. "But since she's not necessarily a crucial part of the storyline, Kate's presence is essentially a bonus, they'll only cast someone if they can find the right candidate." The latest casting call comes after the roles of William and his brother, Prince Harry, 37, were advertised. The show is looking for young actors aged between 16 and 20 to take on the parts of the siblings. And they won't need to have any acting experience. — Bang Showbiz



Erskine replaces Waller-Bridge in Amazon's 'Mr & Mrs Smith'

Maya Erskine is replacing Phoebe Waller-Bridge in the Amazon's 'Mr & Mrs Smith'. The 'PEN15' star will appear opposite Donald Glover - who also co-created the television series, which is a remake of the 2005 movie starring Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie - as a husband and wife assassin duo who are tasked with killing each other, replacing the 'Fleabag' star. Donald told Interview magazine about the 34-year-old actress: "She's dope. It's exciting. I really love the show. I'm writing the finale now." The show - which was optioned in February last year by Amazon Studios as a part of a bigger deal with the streaming service - will still feature the 36-year-old showrunner as a co-creator and executive producer and despite leaving over "creative differences with the 'Atlanta' star, they are believed to "like" each other and are on good terms. Donald told the outlet about Phoebe: "I still like her. I assume she still likes me." Of what happened between the 'Solo' co-stars, the 38-year actor added: "Classic creative differences."

In the original press release about the show - which is also co-created by Francesca Sloane - the streamer said: "Talk about the dream team! Donald and

Phoebe are two of the most talented creators and performers in the world. It's truly a dream for us, as it will be for our global audience, to have these two forces of nature collaborating as a powerhouse creative team." Executives from production house New Regency added: "Having had the pleasure of successful collaborations with the incredibly talented Donald Glover, most recently on Guava Island, we all started talking about other projects to do together and when he suggested the idea of a new take and iteration on the New Regency film, Mr & Mrs Smith, we jumped at the chance to get going right away. Adding Phoebe and her company Wells Street Films as a collaborator and co-star takes everything up another level and makes the project worthy of a reimagining for both new audiences and past fans of the original film. We are so excited to be working with Donald, Phoebe, Francesca and the entire team at Amazon Studios." — BangShowbiz



Sports

Scheffler in command after Woods' challenge fades

AUGUSTA, Georgia: Tiger Woods' hopes of a victorious return from career-threatening injuries evaporated on Augusta National's greens on Saturday while Scottie Scheffler seized a three-stroke Masters lead. Woods, 14 months removed from a car crash that left him with injuries so severe he feared he might lose his right leg, saw his hopes of a stunning comeback for a sixth green jacket come undone with his worst-ever Masters round, a six-over par 78.

The fact that the 46-year-old was even able to tee it up - and make a 22nd consecutive Masters cut - was astonishing. But at nine off Scheffler's lead to start the day, Woods knew he needed something sensational to give himself a chance come Sunday, and instead he posted a round worse than the third-round 77 he shot in his 1996 debut as an amateur.

"It's just like I hit a thousand putts out there on the greens today," said Woods, whose prior mastery of the unforgiving, undulating greens of Augusta helped him to five Masters titles. "I felt like I didn't really hit it that bad, but I had four three-putts and a four-putt," Woods said. "I just could not get a feel."

Woods's seven-over par total of 223 put him 16 strokes behind Scheffler, who survived drama at the 18th to card a one-under par 71 for a nine-under total of 207. The 25-year-old Texan takes a three-shot lead over Australian Cameron Smith into the final round. On a cold,

windy day where scores soared, Smith carded the only round in the 60s with a four-under par 68 for 210.

Smith was two strokes in front of third-place South Korean Im Sung-jae, who shot a one-under 71. But, once again, it was Woods who drew the spotlight. A three-putt at the opening hole proved a harbinger, a birdie at the second - where his shot out of a greenside bunker barely missed finding the cup for eagle - proving only a short respite.

From the fairway at the fifth, Woods left himself 65 feet, and he could only watch in disbelief as his three-foot bogey effort circled the cup and stayed up. Bogeys at the ninth and 11th followed before he drained a 14-foot birdie at the 12th and two-putted from 27 feet for birdie at the par-five 13th. The thousands following Woods' every move tried to will him on, cheering and shouting encouragement at every hole, but he closed his round with bogeys at 16 and 17 and another double-bogey at the last.

While Woods acknowledged on Thursday that just making through his first competitive round in 17 months was a victory of sorts, he made it clear he would be looking for better things on Sunday, like getting himself back to even par. Woods was hardly the only one struggling in the cold, blustery conditions, where the scoring average was 74.5 shots and only seven players were under par for the tournament after 54

holes. Ireland's 2019 British Open champion Shane Lowry and 2011 Masters winner Charl Schwartzel both carded one-over par 73s to share fourth place on two-under 214.

Scheffler shrub drama

Scheffler was 10-under through 17 holes when his tee shot at 18 clipped a tree branch and ended up in dense undergrowth left of the fairway. It took a concerted search to find his ball and after wading into the bushes to see the situation he took an unplayable lie, belted a shot up to the green and limited the damage to a bogey. "We saw the guy who always finds the balls kind of panicking. I thought, 'Oh crap,'" Scheffler said. "Just getting it out of the bush and trying to make my five was key," added Scheffler who said his heart rate "went up when they couldn't find the ball but it went back down when they found it."

It was a dramatic end to a round that featured half a dozen birdies and five bogeys. Scheffler maintaining his air of methodical calm throughout. "You hate bogeying the last hole, but the way I bogeyed it, it for sure felt like a par," Scheffler said. "Definitely a good finish to the day." Smith finished tied for second behind Dustin Johnson in 2020, when he became the only player to shoot four rounds in the 60s at the Masters. The Aussie said playing within himself in the challenging conditions was the key to his round.



AUGUSTA: Scottie Scheffler follows his shot on the 14th hole during the third round of the Masters at Augusta National Golf Club on April 9, 2022. —AFP

"I didn't try to smash any drivers off the tee. I just tried to give myself opportunities," said Smith, who added the toughest part of the day for him was "keeping my hands warm". "It was brutal. I think off the tee with this west wind

there's not many holes you get straight downwind or straight into the wind. You get lots of crosswinds and can get quite tricky into the greens and hitting different shapes and trying to judge the wind as well." — AFP



Hayat and Al MUSAIBEEH with a number of winners.



Hayat recognizes Al MUSAIBEEH for Zain's support.

Zain recognized for supporting KEF Showjumping Tour

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, concluded its gold sponsorship of the Kuwait Equestrian Federation's Showjumping Tour. The competition was held for the first time throughout four months and across eight rounds and featured over 300 showjumpers from across the nation's equestrian clubs. The sponsors award ceremony was held after the conclusion of the final round at Kuwait Riding Center (KRC) in Subhan, attended by Kuwait Equestrian Federation Chairman Masoud Johar Hayat, Public Relations

Department Manager at Zain Kuwait Hamad Al-Musaibeeh, in addition to Zain and KEF officials, and huge crowds of equestrian enthusiasts.

Zain is proud to sponsor this unique local sporting event in collaboration with the Kuwait Equestrian Federation. The company's support sprung from its corporate sustainability strategy towards supporting Kuwaiti sports and youth. Zain is a strong believer in the talents and capabilities of the nation's young athletes, especially those who are passionate about equestrian sports, which are deep rooted in Kuwaiti, Arab, and Islamic identities.

The Kuwait Equestrian Federation's Showjumping Tour (2021-2022 season) was held throughout four months, from January to April, with the participation of over 300 showjumpers who represented public and private equestrian clubs from across the nation. The tour featured 8 rounds

held across three clubs: Hunting and Equestrian Club, Kuwait Riding Center, and Messilah Equestrian Club, and witnessed exceptional preparations with the participation of international track designers.

Zain is always keen on supporting the various sports programs and official competitions hosted in Kuwait with the aim of elevating the Kuwaiti sports scene. The company strongly believes in the vital role played by the private sector in progressing sports and youth initiatives, and it makes this belief a reality by shouldering similar events.

As a leading private sector company in Kuwait, Zain is constantly looking to identify and support excellence across the sports sector. The company will continue to put Kuwaiti sports and athletes at the forefront of its priorities and pledges to continue motivating them to achieve all the recognition and support they deserve.

IPL giants Chennai and Mumbai slump again

PUNE: IPL big guns Mumbai Indians and Chennai Super Kings fell to their fourth loss of the season on Saturday to raise fears of an early exit from the Twenty20 tournament. Holders Chennai and Mumbai have nine IPL title between them but reputation took a beating when they were outplayed by Sunrisers Hyderabad and Royal Challengers Bangalore respectively.

Suryakumar Yadav lifted Mumbai from 79-6 to 151-6 but the total barely tested Faf du Plessis' Bangalore who achieved their target with nine balls and seven wickets to spare in Pune. Up and coming Indian talent Anuj Rawat hit 66 and put on 80 runs with Virat Kohli (48) to guide the team, who hunt for their maiden Indian Premier League title, to their third win in four games.

Five-time champions Mumbai remain winless so far along with Chennai and skipper Rohit Sharma said it's high time the team stands up. Mumbai's director of cricket Zaheer Khan said, "It's a long season, so we have to keep things tight, keep things together. Mumbai started strongly with an opening stand of 50 between Rohit and Ishan Kishan - both scored 26 - before pace bowler Harshal Patel and Sri Lankan spinner Wanindu Hasaranga rattled the batting.

But Suryakumar, who hit five fours and six sixes in his 37-ball knock, kept up the fight till the finish as he raised his 50 in a 23-run 19th over from Mohammed Siraj. Harshal ended with figures of 2-23 and Hasaranga also took two wickets including the big-hitting Kieron Pollard, for nought, with his leg spin. — AFP

Baloucoune scores hat-trick as Ulster down Toulouse

PARIS: Robert Baloucoune bagged a hat-trick of tries to help Ulster notch up a memorable 26-20 victory over defending champions Toulouse in the first leg of the last-16 European Champions Cup round of matches on Saturday. The Ireland winger shone not only in attack but also as part of a strong defensive showing by the Irish province against a star-studded Toulouse side boasting 10 of France's Grand Slam-winning squad, but down to 14 for 70 minutes of an entertaining match after a red card for Argentina winger Juan Cruz Mallia.

Dupont was to the fore in early exchanges in Toulouse, Emmanuel Meafou eventually crashing through three tackles for the home side's opening try, Thomas Ramos hitting the conversion. Then came the hammer blow, English referee Wayne Barnes left with no option but to brandish red for Mallia after the winger inexplicably took out opposite number Ben Moxham in the air.

Ulster made their numerical advantage pay immediately, Baloucoune played in at the corner after Matthijs Lebel was sucked off his wing. Ramos hit a penalty on the buzzer to leave Toulouse at 13-7 at half-time. But Ulster would not sit down, Baloucoune grabbing his second try in the fifth minute of the second period after a strong break and offload by Stuart McCloskey.

Ulster then proceeded to dominate possession and territory, replacement prop Andrew Warwick dotting down for the Irish province's third try from close range, John Cooney hitting his second conversion. Toulouse hit back, Pita Ahki at the heart of their attack. But there was one too many forced passes, Baloucoune pouncing on a Dupont pass to sprint 70 m for his hat-trick, Cooney bagging the extras to make it 26-13 with 15 minutes to play. Romain Ntamack scored a consolation try, converted by Ramos.



TOULOUSE: Ulster's Irish wing Ben Moxham and Toulouse's Argentinian wing Juan Cruz Mallia fight for the ball during their European Champions Cup rugby union match on April 9, 2022. — AFP

La Rochelle trump UBB

Earlier Saturday, La Rochelle coach Ronan O'Gara ensured more woe for Christophe Urios as his side, who lost to Toulouse in last season's European and Top 14 finals, sauntered to a 31-13 victory over Bordeaux-Begles. O'Gara was involved in a bad-tempered touchline spat with Urios last weekend when La Rochelle ran out 16-15 victors in the Top 14.

Urios aimed a slap at the ex-Ireland international, later dubbing him an "insufferable" troublemaker. The pair are to appear before a disciplinary committee next week over the incident. There was no chance for a secondary confrontation on Saturday, however, as O'Gara is currently serving a two-week touchline ban for having previously criticized refereeing standards in another La Rochelle league match. But his side did not disappoint, Kiwi fly-half Ihaia West hitting four penalties and a conversion as Raymond Rhule and Jonathan Danty, along with a penalty try, made the difference. France lock Cameron Woki and Italian Federico Mori crossed for Bordeaux-Begles, who only managed only one Maxime Lucu penalty in a toothless first half. Elsewhere, Gael Fickou scored the only try of the game as Racing 92 beat cross-city rivals Stade Francais 22-9, a feat mirrored by Fiji's Semi Radradra in Bristol's 10-9 victory over fellow English Premiership club Sale. — AFP

Health program launched for special athletes

By Abdellatif Sharara

KUWAIT: Kuwait Special Olympics and Tumooh Sports Club launched a health awareness sports program themed "Your Health is in your Step" during the holy month of Ramadan, with the participation of 86 members of both genders representing three groups - boys, girls and their parents. The program's aim is to count the total number of steps the participant takes,

by wearing a special bracelet. Muscle and fat mass, weight and height of each participant are also taken before the start of the program. Valuable prizes will be given to the top three winners.

Head of the Special Olympics Hanaa Al-Zawawi said she was happy with the turnout by players and their parents to participate in the second edition of the program, which aims at encouraging participants to walk and exercise, as they have a positive effect on the body, as well as physical and mental fitness, while emphasizing the importance of healthy nutrition.

Zawawi said the club will also organize a Ramadan bowling championship in Salmiya. She appreciated the efforts of Chairwoman Rehab Buresli and her keenness to provide all that is necessary to ensure the activities' success.



Sports

Rampaging Mbappe, Neymar score hat-tricks as PSG thump Clermont

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe and Neymar both scored hat-tricks as Paris Saint-Germain romped to a 6-1 thrashing of struggling Clermont on Saturday to move closer to winning Ligue 1. Mbappe, who has still not decided whether he will stay at PSG beyond this season, scored twice and had three assists in last weekend's 5-1 rout of Lorient. He added another assist and won a penalty in this game as he moved to the top of the Ligue 1 goalscoring charts with 20 goals this season.

Mauricio Pochettino's men are now 15 points clear of second-placed Rennes and appear certain to regain the title with only seven games remaining. Clermont remain in 17th spot, just one point ahead of Saint-Etienne who occupy the relegation playoff place. PSG only have Ligue 1 left to play for this season after being knocked out of the Champions League by Real Madrid, but put in a second straight impressive performance with Mbappe, Neymar and Lionel Messi in fine form.

"The Messi-Neymar-Mbappe combination? The problem is that a lot of people don't listen, since the start of the season we have been saying that it takes time to create an understanding between them, not only on the pitch but also in the dressing room," said Pochettino. PSG took the lead in the sixth minute as Mbappe caused havoc in the home defense with a driving run off the left wing.

The ball eventually found its way to Messi, whose clever pass found Neymar and the Brazilian drilled the ball into the far corner. The champions-elect doubled their advantage inside 20 minutes as Messi collected his 12th league assist of the season. The seven-time Ballon d'Or winner volleyed the ball through for Mbappe, who prodded it past onrushing goalkeeper Arthur Desmas.

But Clermont gave themselves hope of an unlikely come-

back shortly before half-time as Jodel Dossou bundled in at the back post to finish off a fine team move. The capital giants dominated possession after the restart but struggled to create many chances, and needed goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma to save Jason Berthomier's shot.

But the game was ended as a contest with 20 minutes to play, as Mbappe was brought down in the box by Akim Zedadka following a quick counterattack and Neymar sent Desmas the wrong way from the spot. Mbappe grabbed his second goal just a few minutes later, racing onto Neymar's brilliant pass to round Desmas and tap in.

PSG's fearsome front three combined for the fifth goal, as Neymar's back-flick found Messi, who played in Mbappe to curl a magnificent strike into the far corner. The away side made it four goals in the space of 12 minutes with seven minutes remaining, as Neymar completed his first hat-trick since Dec 2020. He was indebted again to Mbappe, who ran clean through but unselfishly squared to give his teammate the easiest of finishes.

Rennes move into second

Earlier on Saturday, Rennes moved above Marseille into second place as a 3-2 victory at Reims boosted their hopes of qualifying for the Champions League. Bruno Genesio's men are in front of Marseille, who host Montpellier on Sunday, on goal difference. The top two qualify automatically for next season's Champions League group stage, with the third-placed side heading into the qualifying rounds.

Rennes have won six of their last seven league games to surge into contention, as Nice have slipped from the top three to fifth place after a poor run of results. Benjamin



CLERMONT-FERRAND, France: Paris Saint-Germain's Brazilian forward Neymar celebrates with French forward Kylian Mbappe during the French L1 match against Clermont Foot 63 at the Gabriel-Montpied stadium on April 9, 2022. —AFP

Bourigeaud netted twice in four first-half minutes to give Rennes a two-goal half-time lead. Martin Terrier made it 3-0 before the hour mark. Rennes held on despite a late Reims

rally with goals from Maxime Busi and Jens-Lys Cajuste, who netted a penalty just three minutes after his team-mate Moussa Doumbia had missed one. —AFP

Inter see off Verona to stay hot on heels of leaders Milan

MILAN: Inter Milan confirmed that their Serie A title defense was alive and well with Saturday's straight-forward 2-0 win over Verona which took them to within a point of leaders AC Milan. First-half goals from Nicolo Barella and Edin Dzeko in front of around 60,000 fans at a sun-dappled San Siro made sure that the champions built on their morale-boosting win at Juventus last weekend by moving into second place.

Inter are level on 66 points with Napoli, who host Fiorentina on Sunday, but ahead of Luciano Spalletti's side in the table thanks to their superior head-to-head record. Milan meanwhile are at Torino in Sunday's late match with their two main title rivals breathing down their necks and seven rounds of fixtures to be completed in an enthralling race for the Scudetto.

The only worry for Inter coach Simone Inzaghi was a thigh problem for Stefan de Vrij which forced the Netherlands defender off at half-time on his return from a month out with a calf injury, although the coach said it shouldn't be anything serious. Verona have never won at the San Siro against either Inter or Milan and were suffocated in a first half which reminded Inter fans why their team were strong favorites for the title right up until early February, when they were four points clear having played one game fewer than their rivals. They still have that game in hand, at Bologna later this month, and will have been further boosted by the way they beat one of the league's most troublesome teams.

Juve bounce back

Italy midfielder Barella gave the hosts a deserved lead in the 22nd minute, nipping in at the back post to poke home a beautifully clipped cross from Ivan Perisic. Eight minutes later Croatia winger Perisic then laid on Dzeko's 13th Serie A goal for Inter by flicking Federico Dimarco's corner for the Bosnian to tap home from practically on the goal line.

Goalkeeper Samir Handanovic then made sure that Inter went in at the break two ahead by charging out to



MILAN: Inter Milan's Bosnian forward Edin Dzeko celebrates with Argentine forward Joaquin Correa after scoring during the Italian Serie A football match against Hellas Verona on April 9, 2022 at the San Siro stadium. —AFP

stop Giovanni Simeone from scoring his 17th league goal of the season. From there the home side shut up shop and left the stage for Napoli and Milan to have their say in another eventful weekend. —AFP

Modric, Kroos rested as Real sail past Getafe

MADRID: Real Madrid kept Chelsea in mind by resting Luka Modric and Toni Kroos but eased past Getafe 2-0 on Saturday to restore their advantage to 12 points at the top of La Liga. Casemiro's header and a smart finish by Lucas Vazquez sealed a comfortable victory for Madrid, who can turn their attention back to finishing the job against Chelsea and reaching the Champions League semi-finals.

Atletico Madrid will face Manchester City at the Wanda Metropolitano on Wednesday on the back of a limp defeat after they were beaten 1-0 at Mallorca. Atletico also lost 1-0 to City in the first leg in Manchester last week. Karim Benzema, the hat-trick hero of Real Madrid's 3-1 win over Chelsea, started against Getafe but came off in the 74th minute, departing to a standing ovation which felt like the Santiago Bernabeu crowd paying tribute to his performance at Stamford Bridge.

Gareth Bale came on to make only his second La Liga appearance since August and his first at the Bernabeu since Feb 2020. Madrid had gone 20 home games in between without the Welshman, who was whistled by a section of disgruntled supporters. Bale's latest misstep with the Real Madrid fans was to play, and score, for Wales at the end of last month, four days after pulling out of the Clasico defeat by Barcelona through injury.

Bale is likely to be back on the bench again for the visit of Chelsea on Tuesday and, despite another dynamic performance from Eduardo Camavinga, the rested Modric and Kroos will surely return to Ancelotti's midfield in midweek. Neither were even needed off the bench. Any hopes Barcelona had that the Clasico might send Madrid into a tailspin have fizzled, Ancelotti's side instead responding with two wins in a row. —AFP

Spurs tighten grip on top-four spot

LONDON: Tottenham thumped Aston Villa 4-0 on Saturday to tighten their grip on fourth spot in the Premier League after Manchester United and Arsenal both slipped up. Third-placed Chelsea ended a tough week by hammering Southampton 6-0 while Leeds climbed nine points above the relegation zone with a comfortable 3-0 win at Watford.

Six wins in seven league games for free-scoring Spurs have made them firm favorites to qualify for next season's Champions League along with Manchester City, Liverpool and Chelsea. Son Heung-min scored a hat-trick for Antonio Conte's men at Villa Park, with Dejan Kulusevski also chipping in as Spurs put their opponents to the sword.

The impressive Harry Kane provided two assists while Tottenham goalkeeper Hugo Lloris made seven saves in the opening 45 minutes to keep Villa at bay.

The win takes Spurs to 57 points - three clear of fifth-placed Arsenal and six ahead of West Ham and Manchester United.

In the early kick-off Frank Lampard's Everton beat misfiring United 1-0 to climb four points above the relegation zone while Arsenal slumped to a 2-1 defeat against Brighton - their third loss in four games. The decisive moment at Goodison Park came midway through the first half when Anthony Gordon hit a shot that took a huge deflection off England defender Harry Maguire and wrong-footed David de Gea in the United goal. Lampard said he was proud of his battling side, who are trying to maintain Everton's record of being ever-present in the English top flight since 1954.

Arsenal stumble

Arsenal are having a wobble at the wrong time after putting themselves in a strong position to qualify for the Champions League - they have not played in Europe's elite competition since the 2016/17 season. Brighton took the lead at the Emirates Stadium when Leandro Trossard



BIRMINGHAM: Tottenham Hotspur's South Korean striker Son Heung-min scores the team's third goal during their English Premier League match against Aston Villa at Villa Park on April 9, 2022. —AFP

turned home a low cross from Enock Mwepu and the Zambian midfielder himself added a second. Martin Odegaard scored a late consolation. —AFP

penalty spared hosts Bayern who struggled until a handball by Augsburg defender Reece Oxford resulted in the winning spot kick eight minutes from time. Bayern host Villarreal on Tuesday in their Champions League quarter-final second leg, having lost the first match 1-0 away last Wednesday. "The first half was not good from us," admitted Bayern midfielder Goretzka. "The intensity was missing. We will have to improve on Tuesday - and that's what we will do. The place will be on fire. Then we will deliver a performance that is Bayern-like."

Saturday's win edged Bayern closer to a 10th straight league title, extending their lead to nine points over second-placed Borussia Dortmund who beat Stuttgart 2-0 on Friday. Lewandowski has netted 32 league goals this season, leaving him poised to be the Bundesliga top-scorer for the fifth consecutive campaign. Thomas Mueller, meanwhile, reached the landmark of 300 Bundesliga wins, a record for a player at a single club. Yet the milestone statistics failed to disguise Bayern's poor display. In the wake of Wednesday's first-leg defeat at Villarreal, Bayern coach

Julian Nagelsmann said he had no more "tolerance for wobbles and slip-ups". Yet until Lewandowski's spot-kick, this was another disjointed, stuttering performance.

Bayern barely created a shot in the first half under pressure from Augsburg who stunned their Bavarian rivals when the clubs met last November. Teenager Jamal Musiala came on at half-time, before wingers Alphonso Davies and Kingsley Coman also came off the bench. The injection of pace paid off as Bayern looked far more dangerous. —AFP

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MELBOURNE: Ferrari's Monegasque driver Charles Leclerc drives during the 2022 Formula One Australian Grand Prix at the Albert Park Circuit on April 10, 2022. (Inset) Leclerc celebrates his victory on the podium. — AFP photos

Leclerc wins as Verstappen fails to finish

MELBOURNE: A flawless Charles Leclerc led from start to finish to steer his Ferrari to an action-packed win at the Australian Grand Prix on Sunday with world champion Max Verstappen failing to finish. The world championship leader from Monaco started from pole, held his position at the first turn and never looked back, scorching round the 58-lap Albert Park circuit to take the chequered flag by a massive 20.5 seconds.

Red Bull's Sergio Perez was second with George Russell an encouraging third for the struggling Mercedes and his seven-time world champion teammate Lewis Hamilton fourth. "It's amazing, the car was incredible today. What a race and what a pace today," said Leclerc after clocking a fourth career win and second of the season. "Honestly, what a car today. I did a good job all weekend but it's not possible without the car. I'm just so happy. Obviously we have only had three races so it's difficult to think of the championship but we have a very strong car and a reliable car. It's great to be back in this position," he added.

The McLarens of Lando Norris and Daniel Ricciardo were fifth and sixth. Alpine's Esteban Ocon came seventh ahead of Valtteri Bottas in an Alfa Romeo, with Pierre Gasly's AlphaTauri and Alex Albon's Williams rounding out the top 10. But there was disaster for Red Bull's Verstappen, the winner two weeks ago in Saudi Arabia, who pulled over on lap 39 when second, saying on the team radio: "I smell some weird fluid."

He jumped out with smoke coming from the engine, grabbing a fire extinguisher to help marshals put out the flames. It was his second retirement in three starts this season. "These kinds of things, if you want to fight for the title, are unacceptable," the Dutchman fumed. "We are so far behind (Ferrari)." In contrast, Russell was delighted with his podium place after Mercedes' early season struggles with porpoising-bouncing at high speed.

"We've got to be in it to win it and capitalise on others' misfortune and obviously we got a little bit lucky today twice, but we'll take it," he said, refer-

ring to two safety cars. Ferrari's Carlos Sainz and Aston Martin veteran Sebastian Vettel also failed to finish after spinning out. Victory consolidated Leclerc's championship lead after three rounds with the Ferrari ace, who also won the year's opening grand prix in Bahrain, earning the extra point for the fastest lap to add to 25 for the race victory. He now sits on 71 points ahead of Russell on 37. Verstappen is sixth with only 25.

Horror for Sainz

The Albert Park circuit was revamped this year for the first time since 1996, promising to be faster and with better overtaking opportunities and it delivered for the fans. Starting on medium tyres, Leclerc got a perfect getaway from his 11th pole in 83 grands prix starts and built a gap of 0.6 seconds on Verstappen after the opening lap. Hamilton, who started fifth, was a big mover off the grid, powering into third at the first turn ahead of Perez and Norris.

But Sainz had a horror day. After starting ninth,

he lost traction on lap two, and was lucky not to take out any rivals as he slid across the track and got stuck in the gravel forcing the first safety car. After the restart, Leclerc and Verstappen increased their advantage over Hamilton before Perez grabbed third place back from the Briton on lap nine. Leclerc stormed away to a 3.3-second lead over Verstappen by lap 12, lapping half a second faster than the Dutchman, who pitted on lap 19 and switched to hard tyres.

Leclerc waited until lap 22 for his tyre change, retaining the lead when he blasted back out 6.9 seconds in front of Verstappen. The safety car was needed again on lap 24 when Vettel spun and crashed into a wall, leaving debris on the track to cap a horror weekend for the four-time world champion. It enabled Russell to dive into the pits and emerge on fresh rubber ahead of Perez and Hamilton, who had already had their tyre stops. Perez reeled in Russell to regain third place and inherited second when his teammate Verstappen's race ended prematurely. — AFP

Embiid scores 41 points as Sixers rout Pacers

NEW YORK: Joel Embiid scored 41 points as the Philadelphia 76ers bagged their 50th win of the season with a crushing 133-120 victory over the Indiana Pacers on Saturday. The Sixers, who are jostling with the Boston Celtics for the third seeding in the Eastern Conference with one game of the regular season remaining, improved to 50-31 with the win. Philadelphia can seal third place on Sunday if they beat Detroit at home in their final game of the season and Boston lose their road game against the Memphis Grizzlies.

Embiid, meanwhile, produced another dominant performance that enhanced his claims to the NBA's Most Valuable Player award, finishing with 20 rebounds and four assists in addition to his 41-point haul. But Embiid played down his statistical contribution afterwards. "I've always said, I want to dominate, and dominating can show up in different ways," he said. "Sometimes it's in the numbers, and sometimes the numbers don't show it."

While Embiid said defensively the Sixers "have a long way to go," he believes the team's balanced offensive performance on Saturday augurs well for the postseason. James Harden added 22 points with



PHILADELPHIA: Joel Embiid #21 of the Philadelphia 76ers looks to pass the ball during the game against the Indiana Pacers on April 9, 2022 at the Wells Fargo Center. — AFP

14 assists, while Tyrese Maxey and Tobias Harris chipped in with 18 points apiece in a game that the Sixers led from early in the first quarter through to the final buzzer. "We're working on what we want to accomplish in the playoffs," Embiid said. "Making sure everyone is comfortable in the offense and today was an example of that. The ball just moved, found the right guys, everybody got a touch. And in the playoffs that's how we're going to have to play if we want to succeed."

Embiid meanwhile said he was uncertain if he

would play in Sunday's final game of the season. "I want to play but at the same time it's also a back-to-back and we have to get ready for the playoffs," Embiid said. "I'm going to see how I feel. But I want to play. I feel we still need to work on spacing and chemistry, so whatever we can get out of these last few games will be good." Elsewhere Saturday, Ja Morant impressed upon his return from a three-week injury absence as the Memphis Grizzlies thrashed the New Orleans Pelicans. — AFP

Golovkin eyeing Canelo trilogy after stopping Murata

SAITAMA, Japan: Gennady Golovkin said the prospect of a third fight against Saul 'Canelo' Alvarez was "interesting" after the Kazakh star homed in on a long-awaited trilogy by beating Japan's Ryota Murata on Saturday. "GGG" Golovkin, who turned 40 on Friday, stopped Murata in the ninth round to add the Japanese fighter's WBA middleweight world title to his own IBF belt in a unification bout in Saitama, north of Tokyo.

The win moved Golovkin a step closer to a third crack at pound-for-pound king Alvarez, having pushed the Mexican all the way in two previous epic encounters. The all-conquering Alvarez, having last year unified the four super-middleweight belts in just 11 months, will move up to light-heavyweight to challenge undefeated WBA champion Dmitry Bivol on May 7.



SAITAMA: Kazakhstan's Gennady Golovkin celebrates victory against Japan's Ryota Murata during their WBA IBF middleweight championship boxing bout at Saitama Super Arena on April 9, 2022. — AFP

A September trilogy fight between Alvarez and Golovkin could smash box office and pay-per-view records but the Kazakh refused to look too far ahead after winning his first fight in 16 months. "Of course, when an opportunity presents itself it's always interesting," said Golovkin, who ran into ear-

ly trouble against Murata before taking control and winning by technical knockout. "At the same time, Canelo's fight is taking place in May and that is not going to be an easy fight. So I suggest we should wait until we get the result of that fight."

Golovkin's first fight against Alvarez, in September 2017, saw the Kazakh give an inspired performance, with many believing he had won - only for the judges to declare the bout a split draw. The rematch eight months later was postponed after Alvarez tested positive for a banned substance. When it eventually took place in September 2018, Alvarez battled to victory by majority decision after a pulsating contest.

Golovkin needed to beat Murata to stand a chance of earning another bite at the cherry, but the Japanese fighter came out swinging and landed several big body shots in the opening rounds. Golovkin steadied the ship and gradually began turning the screw, sending Murata's mouthpiece flying with a ferocious punch early in the sixth round. Murata - a 2012 London Olympics gold medalist - eventually succumbed in the ninth round, with his corner throwing in the towel after Golovkin sent him to the canvas. — AFP

An clinches home-court win at Korea Open

SUNCHEON, South Korea: An Se-young clinched victory at the Korea Open Badminton Championships on Sunday, becoming the first home player to win the women's singles at the event in seven years. The 20-year-old defeated Thailand's unseeded Pornpawee Chochuwong 21-17, 21-18 in a tightly fought final in Suncheon. "After the tie, I could see Chochuwong had reached her physical limit," An said after the match, according to Yonhap news agency. "I sensed it was my chance and created situations so Chochuwong had to run a little more."

She said she had never lost against Chochuwong, but added: "I feel the pressure to beat her again, so she's not a comfortable opponent." "I analyze and study my opponent before going to bed the night before the game," An said. "I think it paid off this time." The last time a home player won the women's singles at the Korea Open was Sung Ji-hyun in 2015, though the annual event has been cancelled for the last two years because of the coronavirus pandemic.

In a rollercoaster men's final, Weng Hongyang of China beat Indonesia's third seed Jonatan Christie 12-21, 21-19, 21-15 to claim the title. Christie - ranked eighth in the world and 148 places above Weng-powered through the opener with his searing smashes. But Weng forced a third game and came out as the ultimate winner. — AFP



SUNCHEON: South Korea's An Se-young (right) celebrates her victory as she poses on the podium with runnerup Thailand's Pornpawee Chochuwong during the awards ceremony of the Korea Open Badminton Championships on April 10, 2022. — AFP