

5 North Korea tests new guided weapons system



6 Human trafficking raises alarm in divided Cyprus



15 Liverpool book Cup final, end Man City's treble bid



Ramadan Timings	
Fajr	03:56
Shurooq	05:19
Dhuhr	11:47
Asr	15:22
Maghrib	18:16
Isha	19:37

VOLVO

Pope calls for free access to holy sites in Jerusalem

Pontiff urges peace for Ukraine in this 'Easter of war'



VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis delivers the Easter 'Urbi et Orbi' blessing from the balcony of St Peter's Basilica square in The Vatican. — AFP

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis on Sunday called for free access to the holy sites in Jerusalem as he delivered his annual Easter address amid simmering violence between Zionists and Palestinians in the Holy City. "May there be peace for the Middle East, racked by years of conflict and division. On this glorious day, let us ask for peace upon Jerusalem and peace upon all those who love her, Christians, Jews and Muslims alike."

May Zionists, Palestinians and all who dwell in the Holy City, together with the pilgrims, experience the beauty of peace, dwell in fraternity and enjoy free access to the Holy Places in mutual respect for the rights of each," he said. Clashes between Palestinian demonstrators and Zionist police wounded more than 20 protesters on Sunday morning in and around Jerusalem's flashpoint Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, the site of major clashes two days earlier, police said.

The latest tensions in Jerusalem come as all three Abrahamic faiths mark major festivals: Jewish Passover, Christian Easter and the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan. Weeks of mounting tensions saw two deadly attacks by Palestinians in or near Zionist coastal city of Tel Aviv in late March and early April, alongside mass arrests by Zionist forces

in the occupied West Bank.

More than 20 Zionists and Palestinians were wounded in several incidents in and around Jerusalem's flashpoint Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, two days after major violence at the site. The latest clashes take the number of wounded since Friday to more than 170, at a tense time when the Jewish Passover festival coincides with Ramadan. They also follow deadly violence in Zionist entity and the occupied West Bank in late March and early this month that has killed 36 people.

Early on Sunday morning, "hundreds" of Palestinian demonstrators inside the mosque compound started gathering piles of stones, shortly before the arrival of Jewish visitors, police said. Jews are allowed to visit but not to pray at the site, also known as Temple Mount, the holiest place in Judaism and third-holiest in Islam. The police said its forces had entered the compound in order to "remove" the demonstrators and "re-establish order".

The Palestinian Red Crescent said 19 Palestinians were wounded, including at least five who were hospitalized. It said some had been wounded with rubber-coated steel bullets. An AFP team near the entrance to the compound early Sunday morning

Continued on Page 6

Top court has no 'jurisdiction' over citizenship issues

KUWAIT: A top Kuwaiti court on Sunday, ruled that matters dealing with citizenship and naturalization lie outside of its "jurisdiction," saying that these issues are mainly related to national sovereignty and justice. The Court of Cassation has no say on cases dealing with citizenship, Kuwait's highest court said in a statement. Court of Cassation is the higher judicial body with power to try cases contested by the Court of Appeals. It supervises the interpretation of laws and its proper enforcement. At this court, litigants may appeal only on points of law alone, such as violation of law or on erroneous application or interpretation. — KUNA

Weavers turn rags into rugs

NEFTA: Najet unravels an old pair of jeans, raw material for a designer carpet: traditional, eco-friendly crafts are being adapted for new markets thanks to a project born in the Tunisian desert. "I learned to weave at a young age, from my mother," said the 52-year-old from the oasis town of Nefta, 500 kilometers south of Tunis.

Now, she is making a living from it. She is selling her Turkish-style kilim rugs via Shanti, a social enterprise that helps artisans from across the North African country reach buyers and bring vital revenue into some of its most marginalized communities. Shanti is the brainchild of Najet's Franco-Tunisian nephew Mehdi Baccouche. "Unstitching old jumpers,

tearing up old cotton garments, making rugs out of them, it's a folk art found in all Tunisian homes," he told AFP.

While the skill "has been around forever", reaching buyers is a challenge, he added. Back in 2014, he had asked his aunt to weave carpets for his friends, soon moving to selling them via Facebook. Seeing the potential, two years later he created Shanti, which buys carpets and takes charge of getting them to consumers. It also employs designers who work with artisans to improve their design skills and make their products more marketable. "These are my creations, they come out of my imagination and Shanti approved them," Najet said. — AFP (See Page 11)



NEFTA: Fatima Alhamal, the local coordinator for Shanti, a social enterprise that helps artisans from across the North African country, is pictured at the rug weaving workshop in the southwestern Tunisian oasis of Nefta. — AFP

Lessons of Ramadan: Gratitude

By Teresa Leshner

By the end of the day, when I finally sit down to a glass of cool water and a few dates, I am overcome with a sense of gratitude. I realize what a blessing food and water are. I realize that many people do not have access to clean water or nutritious food. I realize that many people never feel the satisfaction I do at the end of a balanced and delicious meal. I become aware of how blessed I am, and as I take those first sips and savor the first tastes, I am filled with gratitude.

Not only for the food and drink, but for the opportunity to express my devotion to God through fasting in daylight hours, just as He has asked me to do. I feel fortunate that I have been guided to an annual ritual that, despite the feelings of weakness I experience, strengthens me in every way - physically, mentally and spiritually.

Maryam, mother of Jesus, is a fine example of someone grateful for God's many blessings. The Quran says that when Zachariah found food with her when he visited her, he asked where she got it from. Her response is quite interesting.

Continued on Page 6

Ukrainians vow to fight to the end

WASHINGTON: Ukraine's prime minister said Sunday that the strategic port city of Mariupol "has not fallen" and that the encircled forces defending the city from Russian attack will "fight to the end." Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal was speaking to ABC's "This Week" hours after a Russian ultimatum for the surrender of those fighters, holed up in a fortress-like steelworks, had expired. "The city still has not fallen," he said. "There's still our military forces,

our soldiers. So they will fight to the end." In a sign of the desperate situation facing the surrounded forces, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Saturday that if they were killed, peace talks with Moscow would be scrapped.

Russian President Vladimir Putin had already said the talks were at a "dead end." Shmyhal said on Sunday that Ukraine wanted a diplomatic solution "if possible," but added: "If the Russians wouldn't like negotiations, we'll fight to the end, absolutely. We will not surrender. We won't leave our country, our families, our land. We will fight to the end."

Asked about reports that Putin believes Russia is winning the war, Shmyhal pushed back.

Continued on Page 6

47 killed in Afghanistan

KABUL: The death toll from Pakistani military air strikes in the eastern Afghanistan provinces of Khost and Kunar has jumped to at least 47, officials said Sunday, as Islamabad urged Kabul to act against militants launching attacks from Afghan soil. Border tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan have risen since the Taliban seized power last year,

with Islamabad claiming militant groups are carrying out regular attacks from Afghan soil.

The Taliban deny harboring Pakistani militants, but are also infuriated by a fence Islamabad is erecting along their 2,700-kilometre border. Tension between the two neighbors further deepened after Saturday's pre-dawn air assault which Afghan officials now claim was carried out by Pakistani military helicopters. The air strikes hit residential houses in Khost and Kunar along the border, Afghan officials said. Earlier officials had said Pakistani forces had fired rockets.

"Forty-one civilians, mainly women and children,

were killed and 22 others were wounded in air strikes by Pakistani forces near the Durand line in Khost province," Shabir Ahmad Osmani, director of information and culture in Khost told AFP. Najibullah, an official with the Ministry for Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in Khost said the death toll in the province was 48. "Twenty-four people were killed from one family itself," he told AFP.

Jamshid, a tribal leader from Khost, also confirmed that the death toll was more than 40. "I went yesterday with several people to donate blood for treating the wounded in Khost strike," Jamshid said. — AFP

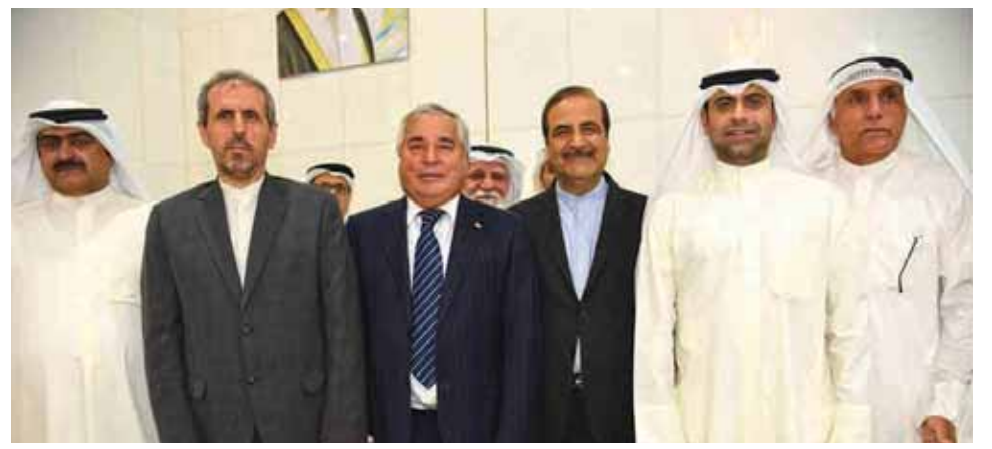


KHARKIV: Firefighters try to extinguish a fire in a residential building following bombardment in central Kharkiv on April 17, 2022, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

Local



Information Minister hosts Ramadan ghabqa



KUWAIT: Minister of Information Dr Hamad Rouh El-Din hosted a ghabqa on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



KUWAIT: Al-Khashti and Al-Hashmi with Zain and Civil Aviation staff.

Zain hosts Ramadan Iftar banquet for Kuwait Airport personnel

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, hosted a Ramadan Iftar banquet for Kuwait International Airport personnel in recognition of the great efforts exerted by Civil Aviation and Ministry of Interior staff during the Holy Month.

The banquet was attended by Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti and Operations Department Manager at the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) Mansour Al Hashmi. The initiative came as part of Zain's annual social cam-

paign for Ramadan "Zain Al Shuhoor", through which the company shares the blessings of the Holy Month with the entire community by partnering with many institutions to reflect the spirit of giving during the Month of Giving.

Zain's team visited the headquarters of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) at Kuwait International Airport, sharing the blessings of the Holy Month of Ramadan with the staff of Civil Aviation and Ministry of Interior who operate at the airport and keep the nation and community safe. Zain hosted the Iftar banquet

as a gesture of gratitude and appreciation to those who dedicate their time and effort to Kuwait's safety.

Zain has always been keen on organizing interactive social initiatives during Ramadan to recognize and support the various segments of the Kuwaiti community, reflecting Islamic values and humanitarian principles to enrich the art of giving and strengthen bonding between community members.

Zain's Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility campaign during the Holy Month of Ramadan includes an extensive array of programs that cover different areas. The initiatives and programs include humanitarian, voluntary, cultural, religious, sports, and recreational programs.

KFH provides hospitality service to worshipers in mosques in Kuwait

KUWAIT: As part of its busy program during the holy month of Ramadan "Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan", Kuwait Finance House (KFH) is providing a hospitality service in many mosques in different areas in Kuwait during Taraweeh prayers. This initiative, which stems from KFH's leadership in social institutional work, reflects the bank's keenness to interact with the community on various occasions.

The initiative, which the bank has been carrying out annually, has been well received by mosque worshipers, security and Ministry of Interior employees, and those in charge of organizing the Taraweeh prayers in several mosques.

KFH continues its presence in several mosques in Kuwait and provides hospitality service. This comes under the social responsibility of the bank and its keenness to support voluntary efforts on important occasions, to include various entities and activities that reflect KFH's keenness to

strengthen ties with all segments of society and institutions in the country.

KFH's "Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan" program includes various humanitarian and social activities and contributions, awareness initiatives and daily communication with the public, Quranic competitions as well as sporting youth events in collaboration with V-Thru. This emphasizes KFH leadership in all aspects of social responsibility and the continued efforts to enhance initiatives which better serve society.

It is worth mentioning that KFH social efforts are compatible with its strategy to achieve sustainable growth and reflects its keenness to perform its social role as a leading financial institution at the private sector level while observing the significance of continuing the social voluntary teamwork and intensifying efforts during the month of Ramadan to better serve all society segments.



Local

Souq Mubarakiya fire's aftermath



KUWAIT: People walk past burnt-down shops in Souq Mubarakiya on April 16, 2022, two weeks after a fire that broke out at Kuwait City's landmark historic market. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Plastic recycling competition aims to protect environment

KUWAIT: The Environment Public Authority (EPA) said Sunday that the plastic collection and recycling competition recently launched aimed to protect the environment from harmful waste and raise community awareness of environmental affairs. EPA director of public relations and media Sheikha Al-Ibrahim said that the competition would be an annual event held in different areas of the country. Within the

framework of this competition, the authority organized events in the Mishref area in which more than 150 participants participated, as about 650 kilograms of plastic was collected for recycling, she said. The first three winners were awarded with KD 500, 200 and 100, she added. Pointing that the plastic waste will be transported to recycling plants as soon as possible to be disposed of in safe ways. The focus was on plastic, as it is one of the pollutants most affecting the environment, and in the coming years, the focus will be on other wastes such as oils, paper waste and other waste that have a negative impact on the environment, Ibrahim said. The recycling will be done in Al-Salmi area, and there is a step to convert waste into energy, she said, stressing Kuwait continues support to waste recycling. —KUNA

Several options to confront price increases

KUWAIT: Acting Commerce and Industry Undersecretary Mohammad Al-Enezi said the ministry is contemplating several options to confront any rises in the prices of essential goods so that they do not burden middle- and low-income people, bearing in mind that the problem is a perpetual one. Enezi said among the options is reducing government fees, storage costs, local costs and the repay-

ment period for business owners to reduce the severity of inflation.

He said Kuwait's strategic reserves of some basic products are enough for more than a year, adding the Russian war against Ukraine did not affect the availability of goods in Kuwait, but only their prices. Enezi said Kuwait has extensive flexibility in dealing with crises and does not rely on one market to source any product, adding that imports are open for alternatives of a product if its price increases, and there is no monopoly over any product.

Enezi said the state guarantees availability of products to consumers, both citizens and residents. He said Kuwait has the experience and ability to get a product cheaply and in large quantities.

Women promote tourism in Kuwait



KUWAIT: Members of the Union of Specialized Arab Women took a tour around some Kuwaiti landmark in a trip themed "encouraging domestic tourism". The tour included visits to Kuwait beaches to encourage domestic tourism during good weather just before the arrival of summer. Union members are planning a tourism and enter-

tainment schedule to attract tourists as Kuwait is distinguished with its many cafes and restaurants. The plan also includes visits to several Kuwaiti islands. The delegation included Union President Dr Kulthoum Awadh, Head of Media Wafaa Al-Shatti and Head of Tourism Department Ilham Maarafi.

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News in brief

Third GCC Games
opens May 22

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Kuwait Olympic Committee Sheikh Fahad Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah announced that the third Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Games would be hosted by Kuwait with the participation of all GCC countries, with May 22 as the date for the opening ceremony while the official closing will be on May 31. Sheikh Fahad Nasser, who is the deputy head of the organizing committee, said in a press statement Sunday that the tournament will include the establishment of 16 different sports, which are handball, volleyball, basketball, futsal, swimming, athletics, karate, judo, fencing, archery, tennis, bicycling, ice hockey, table tennis, padel and e-sports. The tournament competitions will start from next May 13 with group games matches as it takes more time to set up than individual games, he stated, considering that this is an opportunity to highlight Gulf talents in these games. The tournament will witness for the first time the participation of the females in games of futsal, bicycling, athletics, table tennis, basketball and electronic games, he added. He expressed happiness for the establishment of this tournament gathering on the soil of Kuwait. —KUNA

Kuwait host Arab scouting event

KUWAIT: Kuwait will host the broadest Arab scouting event themed "youth empowerment" during May 7-12, said the Arab Scout Parliamentary Union on Saturday. The union secretary general, Faisal Al-Enezi, said in a statement that the major gathering would be held in coordination with the Arab Planning Institute, the Arab Scout Organization and the Kuwaiti Scout Association. National Assembly Speaker and the union honorary chairman, Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem, will sponsor the scouting event. Arab states will be represented at the event by 170 officials and figures.

Arab journalists condemn attack

CAIRO: The Federation of Arab Journalists on Saturday denounced the Zionist forces' attack on Al-Aqsa Mosque, wounding and arresting scores of Palestinians who were performing the dawn prayers. The federation said in a statement the Zionist forces, in the attack that happened around 48 hours ago, injured 200 Palestinian and detained 450 others. The Zionist troops attacked the worshippers inside the mosque for six hours, hurling at the devotees concussion bombs, assaulting them with clubs and spraying them with volleys of rubber-coated bullets. It urged international, human organizations and media associations to decry this "barbaric" offensive on the Palestinians who were at prayers at the mosque. Zionist forces have stepped up attacks on the Palestinians in the occupied territories since days ago, drawing denunciations from various quarters across the globe.

'Stop violations against
Palestinian prisoners'

CAIRO: Arab Parliament affirmed on Sunday the necessity of immediate and urgent intervention to stop Zionist occupation violations against Palestinian prisoners. On the occasion of Palestinian prisoner day, the parliament called on the international community, and regional and international humanitarian organizations in a statement, to hold an international conference for Palestinian prisoners. It stressed that occupation forces should be held responsible for the lives of the prisoners, as they should respect and adhere to international laws and provide ample protection for the prisoners as stipulated in Geneva's fourth agreement. This year's Palestinian prisoner's day coincides with the dangerous escalation practiced by occupation forces, irrespective of international agreements and laws, amidst silence of the international community that should be standing in the face of such violent acts, the statement indicated. The Arab parliament renewed call to the United Nations to form a truth-seeking committee and investigate the Zionist entity's prisons and the violations committed against Palestinian prisoners. Furthermore, it called international humanitarian organizations to pressurize the Zionist entity into releasing the innocent prisoners, and expressed appreciation for all their sacrifices and heroic resilience.

Kuwait Heritage



KUWAIT: A scene from an old market full of activity. (Source: Photo album of the KOC in 1970s. Prepared by Mahmoud Zakaria Abu Alella, heritage researcher at the Ministry of Information)

Gulf Bank takes part in KRCS humanitarian campaign

KUWAIT: As part of its commitment towards social sustainability and in order to support the efforts of local civil society organizations, Gulf Bank announced its participation in the humanitarian campaign led by the Kuwait Red Crescent Society to distribute electrical appliances to local families in need.

"Gulf Bank is proud to participate in the generous initiatives led by the Kuwait Red Crescent Society; the initiatives aim to help local families in need, and bring joy to families during the month of Ramadan - especially now that summer is upon us," said Lujain Al-Qenaei, the manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank.

Qenaei added that this initiative comes as part of a larger set of social sustainability programs that Gulf Bank regularly organizes and participates in, especially during the holy month of Ramadan, noting that a number of Bank employees volunteered to support the Red Crescent's latest effort to distribute electrical appliances.

"For more than 60 years, Gulf Bank has been an integral part of Kuwait's economic and social history. Gulf Bank has always been keen to participate in community events, seizing every opportunity to support disadvantaged groups in society," she added.

Qenaei affirmed Gulf Bank's keenness to promote and implement various sustainability initiatives at the environmental, societal and economic levels, in keeping with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the national development plan (Kuwait Vision 2035), and Gulf Bank's 2025 Strategy.

"As a financial institution, Gulf Bank is committed to supporting active civil society institutions, particularly the Kuwait Red Crescent



Society, because of its exceptional social and humanitarian role. We believe that the private sector has an important role in raising awareness about these major causes, and we look forward to continuing to support the KRCS in future projects," concluded Qenaei.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of

branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience.

Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining a robust sustainability program at the community, economic, and environmental levels through sustainability initiatives that are strategically selected to benefit both the country and the Bank. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.

KRCS aids Yemenis



KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) has distributed food to relocated Yemenis in provinces of Maarib, Aden, Abyan and Lahj during the current fasting month of Ramadan.

KRCS Director General Abdulrahman Al-Aoun said Sunday that the society distributed 7,500 cartons packed with dates to the Yemenis in these regions.



The society has been providing various forms of assistance for the Yemenis to help them cope with the difficult conditions in their country. —KUNA



S African deluge easing but flood emergency lingers

Young conservatives target 'wokeism' on US campuses

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This undated picture released from North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on April 17, 2022 shows the test-fire of a new-type tactical guided weapon in North Korea. —AFP

North Korea tests new weapons system

Latest in unprecedented blitz of sanctions-busting weapons-tests

SEOUL: Kim Jong Un supervised the test-firing of a new guided weapons system to improve North Korea's "tactical nukes", state media said Sunday, capping days of celebrations surrounding the birthday of the country's founding leader. The launch was the latest in an unprecedented blitz of sanctions-busting weapons-tests this year, which included firing an intercontinental ballistic missile at full range for the first time since 2017. It also came just ahead of US-South Korea military training exercises-which have always infuriated Pyongyang-that were due to begin on Monday.

The "new-type tactical guided weapon... is of great significance in drastically improving the firepower of the frontline long-range artillery units and enhancing the efficiency in the operation of tactical nukes," the North's official KCNA news agency reported. It said the test was successful, but did not specify when or where it took place. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said it detected two projectiles fired late on Saturday, which flew 110 kilometers (68 miles) at an altitude of 25 kilometers, travelling at speeds of around Mach 4.

The United States was "aware of the North Korean statement that they conducted a test of a long range artillery system", a Pentagon spokesperson said, adding it was monitoring. Analysts had

widely expected Pyongyang could conduct a nuclear test as part of events to celebrate Friday's anniversary of the 110th birthday of North Korea's founding leader-and Kim's grandfather-Kim Il Sung.

Expectations were heightened because of indications that Pyongyang had restarted work at one of its known nuclear testing sites. Analysts said the weapon tested over the weekend appeared to be a new short-range ballistic missile-but no less significant. "This is North Korea's first tactical nuclear weapon delivery system, it would seem," said Ankit Panda, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "You don't have to be particularly imaginative to put this two and two together."

Short-range but significant

Photos carried by the Rodong Sinmun newspaper showed a grinning Kim-surrounded by uniformed officials-applauding as he watched what it said was the test-firing of the weapon. Kim gave a

military research team "important instructions on the defense capabilities and nuclear combat forces," according to the KCNA report. Kim had also overseen in Pyongyang a series of events to celebrate Friday's anniversary, including a huge civilian parade, mass dance parties, and fireworks-but no military parade to show off the regime's new weapons.

At a key party congress in January 2021, Kim outlined a five-year defense development plan, calling for the development of higher nuclear technology and to make smaller and lighter nuclear weapons for "more tactical uses." The remarks signaled a return to nuclear testing and Kim's rare attendance at a launch of a short-range missile-the first in more than two years-suggested "particular significance", according to Panda.

North Korea had paused long-range and nuclear tests while Kim met then-US president Donald Trump for a bout of doomed diplomacy, which collapsed in 2019. North Korea has tested nuclear

weapons six times since 2006 and touted the success of its last and most powerful one in 2017 - a hydrogen bomb with an estimated yield of 250 kilotons. Officials and analysts had widely predicted that North Korea may carry out its seventh nuclear test in the coming weeks.

Satellite imagery has shown signs of new activity at a tunnel at the Punggye-ri nuclear testing site, which North Korea said was demolished in 2018 ahead of the first Trump-Kim summit. "This test of a tactical nuclear delivery system comes as indicators grow of significant reconstitutive work at North Korea's Punggye-ri nuclear test site," said Panda. With a new nuclear test, experts say Pyongyang will seek to miniaturize nuclear warheads to mount on its ICBMs.

South Korean officials have said Pyongyang could still stage a military parade or carry out a weapons test on or around April 25, the anniversary of the founding of the Korean People's Army. South Korea and the United States regularly stage military exercises, but Pyongyang has long protested the drills as a rehearsal for war. "This training is a defensive command post training using computer simulation, and there is no real military maneuver training," Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said Sunday. — AFP



Pyongyang try to improve 'tactical nukes'

Yemen's new leaders focus on peace path

RIYADH: Yemen's new leaders are "ready for war" should the latest push for peace with Houthi rebels fail, but a senior official told AFP they genuinely want the years-long conflict to end soon. "Our first option is peace, but we are ready for war," Abdullah Al-Alimi said late Saturday in his first interview since being named to an eight-member leadership council tasked with running the country after President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi stepped down earlier this month.

"We believe the council is in a position, with the coalition support, to score a decisive military victory," Alimi told AFP in the Saudi capital. Hadi's internationally recognized government had been locked in conflict for seven years against the Iran-backed Houthis, who control the capital Sanaa and most of the north despite a Saudi-led coalition's military intervention launched in 2015.

The war has killed hundreds of thousands directly or indirectly, and triggered what the United Nations calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with millions on the brink of famine. Hadi's April 7 announcement handing power to the council came at the end of talks in the Saudi capital Riyadh that brought together anti-Houthi factions but were boycotted by the Houthis themselves.

The developments followed the start of a renewable two-month truce that has brought a rare respite from violence and spurred cautious hopes the war could finally end. Hadi said the council would be tasked with "negotiating with the Houthis for a permanent ceasefire". "We hope the dire situation in Yemen will make people have a desire to leave personal and partisan interests behind in pursuit of peace," said Alimi, formerly Hadi's chief of staff.

He said council leaders are due to meet in the coming days with UN special envoy to Yemen Hans Grundberg, who last week visited Sanaa for the first



SANAA: Yemenis break their fast at a group iftar, offered by a charity, during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in the Yemeni capital Sanaa. — AFP

time during his mandate and held talks with Houthi leaders. After meeting Grundberg, the council will travel to Yemen to be sworn in, though Alimi refused to specify exactly where. The new council has not yet decided how long it will give the Houthis to join talks, Alimi said.

Rebel resistance

The Houthis refused to participate in the negotiations in Riyadh, which they consider enemy territory, but Alimi said future talks could take place in a more neutral location such as Oman. So far, however, the Houthis have been dismissive, denouncing the new council as "a desperate attempt to rearrange the ranks of the mercenaries' fighting in Yemen."

Analysts note the Houthis have said peace will

only come once foreign forces leave and some believe they are only really interested in talks with the Saudis. "The Houthis don't see themselves in a conflict with Yemenis. The Houthis see themselves in a conflict with Saudi Arabia," said Fatima Abo Alasar of the Middle East Institute in Washington.

If the push for peace goes nowhere, the newly-aligned anti-Houthi forces are positioned to pursue "a concerted multifront campaign" against the rebels, provided the council's diverse membership can hold together, said Peter Salisbury, senior Yemen analyst for the International Crisis Group. "They (the leadership council) have the potential to more aggressively pursue peace and more aggressively pursue war, and the most likely outcome is they do a little bit of one and a little bit of the other," he said. — AFP

Nigeria airstrikes kill 70 'terrorists'

ABUJA: Nigeria's airforce said that it had killed more than 70 Islamic State affiliated fighters in the north of the country, at the border with Niger. The statement said aircraft from both Nigeria and Niger had taken part in the operation. The Lake Chad area where Nigeria said it launched the airstrikes is known for hosting fighters of the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), a jihadist group active since 2016. With older rivals Boko Haram, the two factions have killed more than 40,000 people in the past decade and over two million people are still displaced from their homes due to ongoing violence.

"Missions over the suspected locations... conducted on 13 April 2022 specifically sighted large number of terrorists, a likely logistics camp," Nigeria's airforce spokesman Edward Gabkwet said. As a result, they carried out airstrikes on April 14 at Tumbun Rego and a nearby training camp, using aircraft from both Nigeria and Niger, he added in a statement. "Over 70 ISWAP terrorists were either eliminated or severely injured," he said. Nigeria often scales up its offensive at this time of the year, before the rainy season starts.

Soldiers have been battling the jihadist insurgency for more 12 years. Since last year, ISWAP has mostly taken over from its rival Boko Haram, after its leader Abubakar Shekau died during inter-factional clashes. Shekau had gained international notoriety after kidnapping nearly 300 schoolgirls in Chibok in 2014. Government troops are also battling heavily armed gangs in the northwest and separatist tensions in the southeast.—AFP

International

Human trafficking raises alarm in divided Cyprus

Breakaway north considered as bad as Afghanistan

NICOSIA: Cyprus's frozen conflict is providing fertile ground for human traffickers with cases at "alarming" levels in the EU member state, and the breakaway north considered as bad as Afghanistan. "I love her, but at the same time she reminds me about my past," said one Cameroonian trafficking survivor, referring to her young daughter. "There was so much abuse during those months," added the woman in her 20s, who said she was rescued by a client from her ordeal.

"I didn't die ... and God saved me, so I know that He has a plan for my life," she told an NGO working with survivors which requested anonymity to protect her identity. Last year the US State Department downgraded Cyprus in its annual Trafficking in Persons Report from Tier 1, the highest ranking, to Tier 2, citing problems including protracted court proceedings and a lack of convictions.

While the report does not formally rank the breakaway Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, only recognized by Ankara, it says the territory would be in Tier 3 with the worst offenders including Afghanistan and North Korea if it did. Cyprus has been split since 1974, after Turkey invaded in response to a Greek-sponsored coup.

And the lack of progress in resolving the conflict shifts attention and resources away from issues like human trafficking, said Nasia Hadjigeorgiou, assistant professor in transitional justice and human rights from the University of Central Lancashire Cyprus. The stalemate also means there is no collaboration between law enforcement on the two sides, Hadjigeorgiou said. So human trafficking

across the island as a whole is "literally not being dealt with," she said.

'Red alarm'

In the north, traffickers are abusing student visa regulations, said Fezile Osum from the north's Human Rights Platform, calling the situation a "red alarm". The organization manages an anti-trafficking hotline that has identified 12 victims—all of sex trafficking—since late last year.

In some cases, young women from African countries are brought in as students but when they arrive



Traffickers abusing student visa regulations

"they are locked in private apartments and forced into (commercial) sex", Osum said. That's on top of trafficking cases from nightclubs, where women on "barmaid" and "hostess" visas must get regular STD checks despite organized prostitution being illegal in the territory, she added. One survivor said clubs sometimes used blackmail and drugs to control trafficked women, Osum said.



NICOSIA: Awareness posters about human trafficking are seen during an interview at the Cyprus police's anti-trafficking unit in the capital Nicosia, on February 16, 2022. — AFP

The north criminalized human trafficking for the first time in 2020, but Osum said no convictions had yet been recorded. She knew of one victim who had reported her ordeal to police in the south, only to be told, "this happened in the north... how can we collect evidence that you were

actually trafficked?" Turkish Cypriot politician Dogus Derya said the territory's unrecognized status meant it was unable to cooperate with international bodies to fight organized crime. The north "can be seen as an area of 'impunity' for human traffickers", she said. — AFP

Hundreds rally against threat to close Turkish women's rights group

ANKARA: Hundreds of people demonstrated on Saturday in several Turkish cities including Istanbul and Ankara against a move to close one of the country's most respected women's rights groups. "It is not possible to stop our fight. We are not going to allow the closure of our association," the secretary-general of We Will Stop Femicide, Fidan Ataselim, told AFP.

An Istanbul prosecutor on Wednesday filed a lawsuit aimed at shutting down the association for "activity against law and morals". We Will Stop Femicide publicises the murder and abuse of women in the mostly Muslim but officially secular state. According to Ataselim, the lawsuit accuses the group of conducting activities that violate Turkey's "laws and morals".

The association was a vocal critic of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's decision last year to pull Turkey out of the Istanbul Convention, which requires countries to set up laws aimed at preventing and prosecuting violence against women. We Will Stop Femicide says 280 women were killed in Turkey last year, many of the murders committed by family members. Another 217 women died in suspicious circumstances, including those officially registered as suicide, the group says.

Ataselim said the lawsuit was filed based on a complaint registered by a group of Turks through a website set up by the presidency to field citizens'



ANKARA: Women hold up banners and shout slogans as they protest against the closure case filed against 'We Will Stop Femicide Platform Association' in Ankara on April 16, 2022. — AFP

requests. The complaint accused the group of "destroying the family based on the pretext of defending women's rights", Ataselim said. The language is similar to that used by Erdogan in his decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention, which Turkey signed in 2011.

Social conservatives in Turkey claim the convention promotes homosexuality and threatens traditional family values. "Don't prosecute women, but murderers!" Hundreds of demonstrators gathered in Istanbul shouted. Representatives of opposition parties as well as relatives of domestic abuse victims took part in the demonstration. "These women are fighters... I wanted to be there to support them," said Nihat Palandoken, the father of a young girl killed in 2017. — AFP

escalated into an 11-day war between Zionists and Palestinian militants in Gaza. Despite the tensions, a few streets away from the Al-Aqsa compound hundreds of Christians staged a noisy parade through the alleys of Jerusalem's Old City to mark Easter at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre where they believe Jesus was crucified. Marching bands led the processions with drumming and bagpipes, before worshippers gathered in the cavernous church for mass.

In another development, Pope Francis on Sunday called for peace in Ukraine during this "Easter of war" as he delivered the traditional Easter Sunday Urbi et Orbi address on St Peter's Square at the Vatican. "May there be peace for war-torn Ukraine, so sorely tried by the violence and destruction of the cruel and senseless war into which it was dragged," the pontiff said. "Our eyes, too, are incredulous on this Easter of war," he said. "May the leaders of nations hear people's plea for peace." "Let there be a decision for peace. May there be an end to the flexing of muscles while people are suffering."

"Our hearts, too, have been filled with fear and anguish, as so many of our brothers and sisters have had to lock themselves away in order to be safe from bombing," Francis said. The pontiff pointed that two years of the coronavirus pandemic had taken "a heavy toll." "It was time to come out of the tunnel together, hand in hand, pooling our strengths and resources. Instead, we are showing that we still have within us the spirit of Cain, who saw Abel not as a brother, but as a rival, and thought about how to eliminate him."

Pope said he held "in my heart all the many Ukrainian victims, the millions of refugees and internally displaced persons, the divided families, the elderly left to themselves, the lives broken and the cities razed to the ground. I see the faces of the orphaned children fleeing from the war." And he continued: "May the conflict in Europe also make us more concerned about other situations of conflict, suffering and sorrow, situations that affect all too many areas of our world, situations that we cannot overlook and do not want to forget." — AFP

S African deluge easing but flood emergency lingers

DURBAN: Rains were expected to let up in South Africa's flood-ravaged east Sunday after one of the deadliest storms in living memory killed nearly 400 and left tens of thousands homeless. Floodwaters engulfed parts of the southeastern coastal city of Durban and surrounding areas this week ripping apart roads, destroying hospitals and sweeping away homes and those trapped inside.

The city of 3.5 million was overcast but national forecaster with the South African Weather Service, Puseletso Mofokeng, said "rainfall is actually clearing". "The rainfall is going to clear all completely as we move to Wednesday," he told AFP. But recovery operations and humanitarian relief continued in the coastal city of 3.5 million whose beaches and warm Indian Ocean waters would normally have been teeming with Easter holidaymakers.

The number of flood-related emergency calls had decreased compared to early last week. "Emergency services are still currently on high alert on Sunday morning," Robert McKenzie of the provincial KwaZulu-Natal emergency services told AFP. It rained on Saturday and overnight, "however now, it has stopped," said McKenzie. Even so, emergency services were busy attending to a scene in the district of Pinetown where a house collapsed overnight.

"Fortunately now the flood waters have receded and (some) roads cleared. It's a lot easier to access

the community," he said. Christians congregated at churches across the city to pray for those affected by the floods as they celebrated Easter Sunday. Government and charities were marshalling relief aid for the more than 40,000 people left homeless by the raging floodwaters. The government has announced an immediate one billion rand (\$68 million) in emergency relief funding.

Hospitals, schools destroyed

Deputy Social Development minister Hendrietta Bogopane-Zulu, said some 340 social workers had been deployed to offer support to traumatised survivors with many still missing children and other relatives. The death toll rose Saturday to 398 while 27 people were reported still missing, the government said in a Saturday statement. Most casualties were in Durban, a port city and a major economic hub.

Parts of the city have been without water and electricity since Monday after floods ripped away infrastructure. Desperate residents have been seen carrying buckets of water using shopping trolleys. Scores of hospitals and hundreds of schools have been destroyed. The intensity of the floods took South Africa, the most economically advanced African country, by surprise. It has previously watched similar tragedies hit neighboring countries such as cyclone-prone Mozambique.

President Cyril Ramaphosa has postponed a working visit to Saudi Arabia that was scheduled to begin Tuesday. "The loss of nearly 400 lives and thousands of homes, as well as the economic impact and the destruction of infrastructure, calls for all hands on deck," said Ramaphosa. The country is still struggling to recover from the COVID pandemic and deadly riots last year that killed more than 350 people, mostly in the now flood-struck southeastern region. — AFP

Pope calls for free access to...

Continued from Page 1

saw barefoot Jewish worshippers leaving the site, protected by heavily armed police. Outside the Old City, in Zionist-annexed East Jerusalem, Palestinian youths threw rocks at passing buses, resulting in seven people being treated for light wounds at Shaare Zedek hospital, the medical facility said.

Senior Palestinian official Hussein Al Sheikh said Sunday that "Zionist dangerous escalation in the Al-Aqsa compound ... is a blatant attack on our holy places", and called on the international community to intervene. The chief of the Hamas Islamist movement which controls the Palestinian enclave of Gaza meanwhile warned Zionists that "Al-Aqsa is ours and ours alone". "Our people have the right to access it and pray in it, and we will not bow down to repression and terror," Ismail Haniyeh said in a statement.

Later Sunday morning, mosques in Palestinian neighborhoods of annexed east Jerusalem broadcast calls for people to head towards the Al-Aqsa compound. Weeks of mounting tensions saw two deadly attacks by Palestinians in or near the coastal city of Tel Aviv in late March and early April, alongside mass arrests by Zionist forces in the occupied West Bank.

A total of 14 people have been killed in attacks against Zionists since March 22, including a shooting spree in Bnei Brak, an Orthodox Jewish city in greater Tel Aviv. Twenty-two Palestinians have been killed over the same period, including assailants who targeted Zionists, according to an AFP tally. On Friday morning, police clashed with Palestinians in the Al-Aqsa compound, including inside the Al-Aqsa mosque, drawing strong condemnation from Muslim countries. Those clashes wounded some 150 people.

The United Nations has called for calm, a year after clashes in and around the mosque compound

Lessons of Ramadan...

Continued from Page 1

Most people probably would have said, "The neighbor sent it to me" or "A caravan has just arrived from Yemen" or "I bought it this morning from the farmers' market." Although any answer would satisfy the most curious person, it didn't satisfy her.

She was so devout and so wise that she could see beyond the obvious and the circumstantial - she could see the Truth. So she answered, "This is from Allah. Verily, Allah provides sustenance to whom He wills, without limit." (3:37) We should respond as wisely as Maryam when asked about our blessings. The Quran says, "Whatever good has come to you, it is from God" (4:79). So if someone asks you, I love your clothes! Where did you get them? you should realize that they are from God.

Or if someone remarks that you are so strong, you should acknowledge the source of all strength: "It's from God!" Or if your kids ask, what's for dinner, the best response is "rice and chicken from God."

Ukrainians vow to fight...

Continued from Page 1

While several cities are under siege, he said, not one—with the exception of Kherson in the south—had fallen. He said more than 900 towns and cities had been liberated. The capture of Mariupol, however, would represent a severe blow to Ukraine, both strategically and symbolically, as it would help Moscow open a land route to the Russian-occupied Crimean peninsula.

Shmyhal again implored Western countries to send more ammunition and weapons to bolster out-manned Ukrainian forces, while also pleading for

That's the outlook that Maryam had: appreciative, humble, insightful. Look around and start counting your blessings - from the food you expect to eat tonight, to the soft pillow on your bed, to the eyes that are reading these words. If it's good, it's from God.

Gratitude is one of the lessons of Ramadan. The Quran says, "[God desires] that you complete the number [of days required to fast], and that you extol God for His having guided you aright, and that you render your thanks [unto Him]." (285) Since gratitude is one of the goals of fasting, this Ramadan and always, follow the example of Maryam, mother of Jesus, by acknowledging the source of all your blessings. So great is our Lord, that he appreciates our appreciation, saying, "If you give thanks, I will surely give you more..." (14:7)

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.

more financial help. The country, he said, is seeing a "huge humanitarian catastrophe," and needs further help "to save our economy for future recovery." "Now, only half of our economy is working" and Ukraine faces a huge monthly budget deficit of \$5 billion, Shmyhal said. He said Ukrainian officials would be in Washington in the coming week to press the country's needs at the spring meeting of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

Meanwhile, a Russian ultimatum for the last remaining Ukrainian forces in Mariupol to surrender expired on Sunday, with Moscow poised for a major strategic victory in the southeastern port city. In Kyiv, renewed Russian air strikes hit an armaments factory, despite Moscow shifting its military focus to gaining control of the eastern Donbas region and forging a land corridor to already-annexed Crimea. — AFP

International

Russians flee Putin regime to join Ukraine refugees in Zionist entity

Nearly 24,000 Ukrainians have fled to Zionist entity

REHOVOT: The moment Russian tanks rolled into Ukraine, Russian filmmakers Anna Shishova-Bogolyubova and Dmitry Bogolyubov knew they had to leave Moscow. "We were the next on the list," the couple told AFP in their borrowed flat in Rehovot, a quiet Zionist city 20 kilometers south of Tel Aviv. Once you're on the list of alleged "foreign agents", you face a life of "self-censorship or, sooner or later, prison", said Bogolyubov, who directed the German-financed 2019 documentary "Town of Glory".

The film portrays President Vladimir Putin's use of references related to the fight against Nazi Germany to establish his authority in Russian villages. As its international isolation has deepened, Moscow has come to view all movies made with foreign financing with suspicion, including documentaries, and the couple said theirs was no exception.

"Over the past few years, we felt threatened. In the past few months in particular, people were spying on us and taking photographs on our film sets," Shishova-Bogolyubova said. The couple decided to continue working in Russia but, taking advantage of their Jewish ancestry, they obtained Zionist entity's citizenship just in case. Zionist Law of Return gives the right of citizenship to anyone with at least one Jewish grandparent, a criterion that tens of thousands in both Russia and Ukraine meet.



Law of Return gives the right of citizenship

some but not all taking advantage of the law, according to immigration ministry figures. They have been joined by around 10,000 Russians, a Zionist immigration official told AFP. "Most of those are young graduates, from the urban middle class," the official said, asking not to be identified. Like the Bogolyubovs, Moscow-born linguist Olga Romanova had prepared for the day when she no longer felt safe in Russia. She applied for a Zionist entity's passport after Putin's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014.

"I always thought that one day I would join my children in Zionist entity, but it was then that I realized that things were going wrong in Russia," the 69-year-old told AFP in her son's house outside Jerusalem surrounded by photographs of her grandchildren. When the invasion started on the morning of February 24, "it was proof that I needed to leave as quickly as possible. "The war in Ukraine is incompatible with my way of thinking and my moral values. It makes me sick," she said, fighting back the tears.

New home or stopover?

The wave of immigration from Ukraine and Russia over the past seven weeks is the largest Zionists have seen since the early 1990s when the collapse of the Soviet Union prompted hundreds of thousands to seek a new life on the shores of the Mediterranean. "Here, we feel safe and we can sleep peacefully once more," said Shishova-Bogolyubova.

"My four-year-old daughter, who is diabetic, is completely taken care of. "But we don't know if we



DNIPRO: People displaced by the war in Ukraine eat lunch at a former maternity hospital turned shelter for internally displaced people in Dnipro. —AFP

will stay—that depends on our work. Right now, we just want to live for the moment and recover from our emotions. Afterwards, we will see." Sergey, a violinist who asked to be referred to by a pseudonym for fear of retribution, left Moscow for Zionist entity with his pianist wife and three young children but expects to move on. "I don't know if we'll stay here. We'll probably go somewhere else," he said.

Even for those who qualify for citizenship, Zionist

entity can be a terra incognita for new arrivals and nostalgia for Russia is never far below the surface. Romanova, the linguist, found space in her 20 kilograms of luggage for just two books, one an academic work, the other a novel by famed Russian novelist Mikhail Bulgakov which always accompanies her on her travels. "I lost my country. It was stolen from me. It was taken by Putin and those KGB thugs," she said wistfully. —AFP

Young conservatives target 'wokeism' on US campuses

CHARLOTTESVILLE: Back in high school, Jack used to be picked on for his politics. Now, as a college student, he is banding together with like-minded conservatives to fight back against what they see as the tyranny of "wokeism." "They called me names, called me bigoted, like backwards and whatnot," the first-year student, who asked not to use his last name, told AFP recently on the sprawling campus of the University of Virginia, a few hours south of the US capital.

"I got excluded from groups due to my political views," said the young man, who describes himself as "moderately conservative." In a trend mirrored across the United States, Jack has been a part of student pushback against a "woke" ideology they see as dominating the traditionally left-leaning culture of college campuses.

Once a rallying cry for Americans to be alert to systemic racism and injustice, "wokeness" or "wokeism" have become the political terms of the hour, widely co-opted to denigrate "political correctness" and leftist orthodoxy. Like Jack, more and more people on the right-prominent public figures but also everyday people—are coming together to

accuse progressives of seeking to muzzle ideas they don't agree with.

Ronald Reagan pins

On the University of Virginia campus in Charlottesville—a storybook setting where carefree students play Frisbee on the lawns—Jack started attending events of the Young Americas Foundation, a student association that invites commentators, politicians and radio hosts to speak about "how to save America from the woke left." On one mild evening this spring, the association was hosting a distinguished guest: Donald Trump's former vice president, Mike Pence.

A message proudly trumpeting Pence's arrival was written in chalk on the tarmac, among the elegant red brick buildings that helped make the campus a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Abby Hinton, a freshman, came to learn how to "defend" herself against those who "try to push their politics" in a university environment where left-wing ideas predominate. Once inside the auditorium where Pence was to speak, the students were offered miniature copies of the US Constitution, Ronald Reagan badges and stickers proclaiming: "I support free speech not political correctness."

'Culture war'

In front of a full house, Pence launched into a tirade against the "political indoctrination" which, he said, has replaced the "patriotic education" that Americans used to enjoy. One student asked him

Protecting civilians

He proudly shows a video on his mobile phone that shows him with his comrades deployed for combat in the snow, Kalashnikov in his hand. But his mission also includes protecting and helping the local civilians. "The civilians have learned what war is," he said. "They stay in the basements and it's all they can do to stay alive. "Any time we can, we bring them food and water. There are a lot of elderly people there who have no place to go."

There are still a good number left in the village of Svyatogirsk, which had a population of 5,000 before the war, and was then best known for its Orthodox monastery. Behind the counter of his little cafe Andriy is kept busy. Local people mix with soldiers and reservists as they line up for a hot dog, a hamburger or a hot drink. "Some people have left and others have stayed," he said. "The people are here. Everybody is walking around, shopping—one way or another they have to eat."

Dressed in fatigues with a Kalashnikov slung over his shoulder, reservist Andriy, 35, is among the customers. For him, the territorial defense force is unique. "We have people of all ages and from different backgrounds who all came together because they had only one goal. Teachers, engineers, workers, artists, it's extremely important," said the young man, a civil servant before the war.

sent in his Easter Day address.

While "the details are for politics and politicians," Welby suggested that sending asylum seekers overseas posed "serious ethical questions. "The principle must stand the judgment of God and it cannot," Welby said. A country like Britain informed by Christian values cannot "sub-contract out our responsibilities, even to a country that seeks to do well like Rwanda," the church leader continued.

It "is the opposite of the nature of God." When unveiling the policy last week, Prime Minister Boris Johnson had already suggested there could be legal challenges to the plans. But the interior ministry, or Home Office, which is in charge of implementing the policy, argued that Britain's current system was "bro-



CHARLOTTESVILLE: Students return to the University of Virginia for the fall semester in Charlottesville, Virginia. —AFP

about the case of a female swimmer from the university who came second in a freestyle race against Lia Thomas, a transgender athlete whose participation in women's college championships has ignited major controversy.

"Our tradition of excellence has been affected by the woke left," lamented the young man, arguing that Thomas should not have been allowed to participate. Pence took the bait, telling the crowd that runner-up "Emma Weyant won that race."

"Many on the left have spent years agitating for a culture war," said the former vice president. "Looks like they got it and looks like they're losing," he added, to loud applause. —AFP



SEVERODONETSK: A girl stands by the door of a bunker in Severodonetsk, in eastern Ukraine's Donbas region as Russian troops intensified a campaign to take the strategic port city of Mariupol, part of an anticipated massive onslaught across eastern Ukraine. —AFP

"We will hold on until the last breath," he said. Many bridges in the region have been destroyed by the Ukrainians to slow down any advance by the Russians as Moscow turns the focus of its offensive towards the Donbas region. The one in Svyatogirsk is still standing, even though mines are ready to blow it up. Previously guarded by the territorial force, regular soldiers now keep watch over it. —AFP

ken" and pointed to unprecedented global migratory pressures.

Johnson has pledged to do "whatever it takes" to ensure the plans work—but the UN refugee agency UNHCR condemned the scheme as an "egregious breach of international law." According to an exchange of letters published by the Home Office, the ministry's top civil servant, Matthew Rycroft, stressed on the eve of the announcement his doubts about both the expected "deterrent effect" of the scheme and its cost. But Home Secretary Priti Patel said it would be "imprudent" to delay a measure that "we believe will reduce illegal migration, save lives, and ultimately break the business model of the smuggling gangs". —AFP

Behind the frontlines, Ukrainians find world of ways to help

LVIV: Inside a packed warehouse in war-torn Ukraine, 35-year-old volunteer Roman Kolobochok said his friend on the frontline needed a sniper scope and he was going to find him one. His friend had messaged him a website link for the telescopic lens he needed, and he was in the middle of ordering one from the United States. In times of war, everybody should contribute with their best skill, said the veteran scout in the western region of Lviv.

"If you're a good hustler, you should do it," he said. Standing between shelves stuffed high with donations from across the world, the improvised logistician is just one of a flurry of volunteers across Ukraine applying a range of talents to help. Before the war, Kolobochok headed the souvenir department of a restaurant chain, but also travelled to the US through his job as a medical courier for a Ukraine-based surrogacy company, he said.

After Russia invaded on February 24, he asked his bosses at the restaurant business to borrow a corner of their warehouse. Today, a team of fellow scouts receive requests for aid from across the country on a messaging app, then carefully match them up with available supplies on a multicoloured spread sheet. The storehouse shelves are stacked with everything from sleeping bags and tents, to flour, coffee drinks, medical gloves and soap. In a medicine section, insulin sits in the fridge.

Boots and chainsaws

In recent days, the scouts have dispatched humanitarian and medical aid to the capital Kyiv, to the eastern city of Kharkiv and Mykolaiv near the Black Sea, Kolobochok says. But with around 50 fellow scouts now fighting the Russians, his team are also actively looking for night-vision goggles, GPS systems, and army food ration packs.

The response has been overwhelming, he says. Strangers are making donations and the Spanish scouts have sent in truckloads of aid. One American even took time off from work in Texas to fly to Philadelphia, where he picked up 100 trauma first aid kits he had bought and then drove them to a New York airport. In just days, they managed to raise enough funds to buy a drone. "The world is supporting us," Kolobochok said.

At a different storage point in the city of Lviv, fellow scout Anastasiia Sokhatska stood amid piles of home-made camouflage nets, packs of mineral water, tactical boots, flags and a couple of boxed chainsaws for combatants to build hideouts. When the army needs something, she says, she and fellow volunteers fundraise on social media, collect the supplies, and then make sure they are delivered. "I need to help. This is my country," she said, as beside her two young men packed up bags.

Earlier the same day, she had learned that a close friend due to celebrate his wedding this summer had been deployed very close to the Russian frontier. "I just don't have the possibility to do nothing," said the 26-year-old, who used to work in the IT sector. Being a woman has also been an asset. Ukrainian men of fighting age are not allowed to leave Ukraine, but women can drive back and forth across the nearby Polish border, ferrying in donated goods and equipment. "I go there because I'm a woman, and I can just go abroad," she said. —AFP

Reservists: Ukraine's last line of defense

SVYATOGIRSK: Manning checkpoints and patrolling towns and cities: the reservists of Ukraine's territorial defense force are the last line standing between ordinary civilians and Russian troops. Standing 2.07 meters and dressed in camouflage fatigues that reveal only his eyes under a hood, "Buffalo" quit his job in construction and signed up for the force when the Russians invaded.

A cheerful young man in his 20s, he is one of the hundreds of thousands to answer President Volodymyr Zelensky's call for reservists. He was posted to Svyatogirsk, a village about 30 kilometers (20 miles) north of Kramatorsk, the capital of the Donbas region in the east of the country.

The front lines are just 10 kilometers to the north and northwest, where fighting rages and the sound of intense bombardments can be heard daily. Fighting is particularly fierce around the town of Izyum. Victory there for the Russian troops would open the way towards Kramatorsk. "I'm sure you can hear the artillery," Buffalo told AFP. "And how our villages are disappearing from the face of the Earth."

UK archbishop slams plan to send migrants to Rwanda

LONDON: The leader of the Church of England, Justin Welby, on Sunday criticized the British government's plans to send asylum seekers to Rwanda to process their claims. The scheme has sparked outrage and widespread criticism from human rights organizations and even the UN. And Welby, who as the Archbishop of Canterbury is the Church of England's highest cleric, added his voice to the dis-

MONDAY, APRIL 18, 2022

Business



KEY WEST, US: Tourists wait at the Southernmost Point Buoy in Key West, Florida. — AFP photos



KEY WEST: Tourists sit on a bench near the Carnival Dream cruise ship at Port B in Key West, Florida.

Cruise ships at center of dispute in Florida's idyllic Key West

Restriction on cruises deals a blow to businesses in island-city

KEY WEST: The island-city of Key West off the southern tip of Florida invites visitors to stroll slowly, enjoy turquoise waters and take in the sunset. But according to some residents, that idyllic peace is endangered-by lumbering, tourist-filled cruise ships.

The huge vessels bring thousands of visitors every day to the small city of 26,000 inhabitants, whose quaint, often pastel-colored Victorian homes line leafy, walkable streets. Following a drawn-out local battle, the cruise tourist numbers are now down, but many residents say more still needs to be done. While many businesses depend on the tourist throngs, residents such as Arlo Haskell find the ships to be a nuisance and believe they cause environmental harm. As a result, he founded the Safer Cleaner Ships non-profit. "These cruise ships are an extraction industry that is profiting off of the beauty in Key West while harming that beauty and degrading the experience for everyone else," Haskell said.

In 2020, his association put forth three local referendums: one to limit the size of cruise ships, another to allow no more than 1,500 people a day to disembark and a third to be able to prohibit boats that do the most dam-

age to the environment. The three proposals, each approved by between 60 to 80 percent of voters, were ratified by the city council. It was a victory for Haskell—or so he thought.

Then in June 2021, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed a law suspending the measures, arguing that voters could not meddle in matters of maritime trade. Local businesses, including ones also owned by the owner of Pier B—a huge beneficiary of the cruise ships as one of the city's main docking locations—had donated almost \$1 million to a political campaign committee supporting the governor, according to the Miami Herald.

Public docks closed

Relying on a bit of unexpected economic data, Safer Cleaner Ships returned to battle following DeSantis' move. The info showed that cruise ship suspensions during the pandemic did not sink local finances. To the contrary, in 2021, the city collected 25 percent more sales taxes than in 2019, before COVID.

Hotels and restaurants seem to have taken advantage of the fact that Florida promoted its open businesses in

the middle of the pandemic while other states imposed rules and closings. The city administration last month decided that since Key West cannot limit the number of cruise ships, it would close its two public docks.

Now cruises can only park at private Pier B, which welcomes only one cruise ship per day. The era of two to three ships arriving daily is over. The move has been a blow to some businesses. Although cruise tourists spend only a few hours in the city and usually eat before disembarking—generating little income for restaurants and hotels—they do buy souvenirs and snacks.

The visitors support the likes of tchotchke shops, ice cream parlors and tourist destinations, such as the Ernest Hemingway Home and Museum where the US writer lived between 1931 and 1939, according to Mayor Teri Johnston.

Finding balance

One morning this week, the streets of Key West were nearly deserted. Vanessa Wilder manned her downtown bike rental stand, waiting for the first passengers to disembark from a newly arrived cruise. "The main shops and

the bars down here, we thrive off of these cruise ships," she said. "If we didn't have them, a lot of businesses around here would have to shut." Despite his victories, Haskell maintains that things should move one step further, with cruise ships at the private dock not allowed to exceed a size specified by residents.

The boats, according to Haskell "do tremendous damage to our ecosystem" by clouding the water, which endangers the survival of corals. But Scott Atwell, spokesman for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in Key West, said the evidence wasn't so clear. "We do not have specific studies on whether the cruise ship turbidity is any different than natural turbidity and whether turbidity from the ships' channel reaches our coral reefs in a detrimental way," he said. In the meantime, Key West's city council has decided to monitor water quality and also support coral restoration under an initiative that charges a fee to Pier B for disembarking passengers.

"We don't want to get rid of the cruise ships but bring them into a moderate level so that we have good economic conditions and we also have good quality of life for our residents," Johnston, the mayor, said. — AFP

Climate activists disrupt traffic in London, Paris

PARIS: Several hundred activists from the Extinction Rebellion activist group on Saturday blocked major roads in central Paris and London, disrupting traffic to protest "inaction" on climate change from world leaders. Around 300 meters (980 feet) of a main thoroughfare in central Paris was taken over by activists over the Easter weekend, with some of them moving in hay bales and cement-filled containers to block traffic.

Extinction Rebellion tweeted "thousands" of protesters were "occupying" London's Marble Arch roundabout during a sit-in close to Hyde Park, demanding an end to the fossil fuel economy. Demonstrators also glued themselves to a limousine in central London. The Metropolitan Police said in a tweet that the protest caused "significant traffic disruption" and that the protesters "locked onto a stationary vehicle in the middle of the road... believed to be their own".

Activists from the group had glued themselves to a tanker earlier on Saturday, blocking the vehicle on a road near Hyde Park. Three activists including 2012 Olympic canoe slalom champion Etienne Stott climbed onto the tanker belonging to British energy giant Shell, unfurling a banner saying, "End fossil filth", Extinction Rebellion said. I am aware that my actions will cause anger to many people and I am prepared to be held accountable," Stott said. "But our government should also be held to account for its decisions which are

destroying our planet's ability to support human civilization."

Six people were arrested, the Metropolitan Police said. In Paris, activists hung out a large red banner that read: "This world is dying. Let's build the next one." The protest is scheduled to continue until Monday. "Rebelling is our duty," had been daubed in graffiti on a wall nearby. "This is the only way of ensuring that everyone talks a bit about climate change," Antoine, a young activist who declined to give his surname, told AFP. A line of French riot police stood opposite the protesters, but officers did not intervene.

Anger over official policies

Extinction Rebellion has carried out a series of protests in Britain in the past week, including shutting down four of London's busiest bridges on Friday. A scientist from the group, Emma Smart, was freed on Saturday after starting a hunger strike following her arrest earlier in the week during a protest targeting the British energy ministry, Extinction Rebellion said.

After several oil depots were targeted by the campaign group Just Stop Oil in recent days, many companies including ExxonMobil successfully took out injunctions to stop such actions, the government in London said. The British government last week presented a new energy security strategy after the war in Ukraine and soaring inflation, with a greater focus on nuclear power and renewable energy, but also oil from the North Sea.

The strategy has angered many activists who believe the government is not doing enough to move away from fossil fuels. Many French environmentalists have been left despondent after the first round of presidential elections last weekend in which Greens candidate Yannick Jadot and hard-left ecologist Jean-Luc Melenchon were eliminated.—AFP



China Eastern resumes Boeing 737-800 flights

BEIJING: China Eastern Airlines resumed flying Boeing 737-800 aircraft on Sunday, flight tracking data showed, just weeks after it grounded 223 planes over a crash that killed 132 people. Flight MU5843, operating the 800 variant of the 737, departed the southwestern city of Kunming at 9:58 am local time (0158 GMT) and landed in Chengdu at 11:03 am, according to FlightRadar.com.

The three-year-old jet later returned to Kunming from Chengdu, with further flights scheduled for Tuesday. Flight MU5735 — a 737-800 — was en route from Kunming to Guangzhou on March 21 when it nosedived into a mountainside, disintegrating on impact. The jet dropped 20,000 feet (6,096 meters) in just over a minute. The velocity of the impact left twisted metal and passengers' belongings scattered across a vast swathe of forest. The cause of the disaster, China's deadliest plane crash in more than 30 years, is not yet known.

The accident caused China Eastern to ground all of its 737-800s for safety checks as aviation authorities vowed an extensive two-week inspection of China's vast passenger fleet. Authorities have retrieved both black boxes from the downed jet, which are currently being analyzed at an American lab with the help of investigators from the United States government. A preliminary investigation report would be completed within 30 days of the crash, the government previously said.

China Eastern's resumption of 737-800 flights on Sunday came as Boeing awaits approval to resume operation of the 737's MAX variant in China, the last major market yet to give the green light. The 737 MAX was temporarily grounded worldwide following two crashes in Indonesia and Ethiopia that killed a combined 346 people in 2018 and 2019. — AFP

US to host ASEAN leaders in mid-May

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden will meet in mid-May with the leaders of Southeast Asian nations, with a likely focus on the rising power of China, the host country announced Saturday.

The summit, originally scheduled for March, "will demonstrate the United States' enduring commitment to ASEAN," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said in a statement, referring to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. "It is a top priority for the Biden-Harris Administration to serve as a strong, reliable partner in Southeast Asia," the statement said.

The summit, originally set for March 28 and 29 before being delayed without a new date, will now take place on May 12 and 13. The meeting was postponed amid reports that the leaders of some ASEAN members had scheduling conflicts, and as the Ukraine crisis continued to deepen.

The United States has long said that strengthening ties to Asia was a foreign policy priority. On March 29, Biden met at the White House with a key ASEAN member, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore, and said he wanted to ensure that the region remains "free and open"—a reference to what the US sees as attempts by rising power China to dominate international trade routes.

Biden had participated in a virtual summit with ASEAN leaders in October. In that summit, Psaki noted in her statement, Biden announced initiatives to expand US engagement with ASEAN on COVID-19, climate change, economic growth and more. A tense competition with China has become one of the greatest foreign policy challenges for the United States, though other issues—the chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan and the war in Ukraine—have demanded more urgent attention.

ASEAN members include Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Several of them have experienced growing friction with Beijing.—AFP



BANGKOK: In this file photo taken on November 04, 2019, the national flags of the various countries attending the 35th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit are displayed in Bangkok. — AFP



PARIS: Activists of the climate change action group Extinction Rebellion block the Paris Grand Boulevard during a demonstration in Paris, on Saturday. — AFP

Business

KAMCO GCC Corporate Earnings Report

GCC net profits soar to record high in 2021 on energy, banks

Kuwaiti-listed companies register \$7.8bn increase in FY-21 net profits

KUWAIT: The recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the relaxation of the restrictions globally significantly impacted economies in the GCC region supporting the robust performance in earnings for FY-2021. Earnings reported by GCC-listed companies jumped to a record high of \$196.5 billion in 2021 as compared to \$93.1 billion during 2020. The 103.5 billion growth came mainly on the back of jump in profits for Aramco (by \$56.1 billion or 113.8 percent y-o-y) followed by Banking, Materials and Utilities companies. The four sectors accounted for 85 percent of the total full-year net profit in 2021. Most of the sectors showed solid increase in net profits during the year, especially, the Utilities and Transportation Sector witnessed remarkable jump in net profits 2021 after suffering subpar performance during the pandemic.

Out of the 21 sectors, 4 sectors witnessed y-o-y decline in profits whereas the rest reported growth. At the exchange level, Oman was the only market which reported a decline in aggregate net profits for listed companies during FY-2021 with a fall of 3.7 percent. In terms of sectors, profitability for the GCC banking sector reached one of the highest yearly levels during 2021, increasing by 52.9 percent to reach \$35.4 billion. Banking sector profits reached the highest mark since 2018. The y-o-y increase in 2021 was broad-based across the GCC with profits for Kuwaiti banks almost doubled to \$2.9 billion.

Saudi and UAE-listed banks also reported healthy profit growth of 59.5 percent and 67.2 percent during the year. Higher profits also pushed the aggregate return on equity for the sector to a 7-quarter high level of 10.4 percent at the end of 2021 as compared to 9.6 percent in Q3-2021 and 8.1 percent at the end of 2020. The banking sector represented 18 percent of the total aggregate profits during 2021. In terms of quarterly performance, net profits during Q4-2021 increased by 102.5 percent y-o-y to \$50.6 billion as compared to \$25 billion during Q4-2020. In terms of sequential performance, profits were down by 9 percent as compared to Q3-2021.

Earnings performance when compared to last year was broadly positive with an increase of 102.5 percent in Q4-2021 with steep growth is some of the key large-cap sectors on the GCC exchanges. Saudi Arabian companies reported the biggest absolute increase in earnings that rose by \$19.9 billion or 102.9 percent y-o-y to reach \$39.1 billion during Q4-2021. Excluding the quarterly net profit of Saudi Aramco that increased by 125.5 percent y-o-y, aggregate profits for Saudi Arabia

declined at a much smaller pace of 46.3 percent y-o-y.

Kuwaiti-listed companies reported the second largest yearly absolute net profit increases after Saudi Arabian companies registering \$7.8 billion increase in FY-21 net profits followed by Abu Dhabi which reported \$7.6 billion growth in absolute net profits during the same period. The Energy sector reported the biggest absolute profits in the GCC that reached \$31.6 billion, more than double y-o-y and 125.4 percent q-o-q. Profits for Saudi Aramco was up 125.5 percent y-o-y during Q4-2021 at \$31.1 billion, whereas the rest of the companies in the sector reported profits of \$539.2 million in Q4-2021 as compared to a loss of \$246.9 million in Q4-2020. Profits for Aramco was supported by higher crude oil prices led by recovery in oil demand globally coupled uncertainty caused by the Russia-Ukraine conflict. In terms of segments, results also got a boost from improved refining and chemicals margins during the quarter. Sectors peers like Dana Gas and Al-Rabigh Refining disclosed soaring profits which reached \$38 million and \$119.7 million respectively during the quarter.

The banking sector also reported higher profits during Q4-2021 that reached \$8.7 billion, an increase of 76.6 percent y-o-y but witnessed a decline of 10.1 percent q-o-q. The y-o-y growth in profits was seen across the region after a steep decline in profits reported last year. Dubai-listed banks reported aggregate profits during Q4-21 after recording a total loss of \$135.4 million during Q4-2.

Kuwait and Saudi listed banks reported y-o-y profits increases of 181.9 percent and 39.8 percent during Q4-21. Saudi-listed banks accounted for 38 percent of the sector profits during the quarter.

Kuwait corporate earnings

Corporate earnings for companies listed on Boursa Kuwait increased from \$1.9 billion in FY-20 to reach \$9.7 billion in FY2021. The biggest impact on higher aggregate stock exchange profits came from the Banking sector which showed 96 percent jump in profits that reached \$2.9 billion in FY-21 from \$1.5 billion in FY-20. Among the banks, NBK reported a net profit of \$1.2 billion for FY-21 up by 49.5 percent compared to a net profit of \$803.02 million in FY-2020. KFH reported a net profit of \$806.7 million for FY-2021 up 66.8 percent compared to \$483.8 million from the previous year primarily due to the decrease in the provisions and impairment.



The Transportation sector recorded the biggest absolute growth in profits during the year that reached \$3.3 billion compared to a loss of \$7.9 million in the same period in 2020. This was mainly driven by AGILITY which reported a net profit of \$3.24 billion in FY-21 vs \$135.5 million in FY-20. The increase in the profits in 2021 is mainly due to an exceptional gain came from the sale of Global Integrated Logistics unit to DSV in exchange for shares in DSV. As a result of which Agility reported a one-time gain of almost KD 1 billion. Net profits for the telecom sector increased by 14.9 percent y-o-y to reach \$824.8 million for FY-2021 compared to \$717.8 million for FY-2020.

Zain recorded a net profit of \$615.6 million in FY-2021 compared to \$603.6 million in FY-2020 an increase of 2 percent. Zain Group generated consolidated revenue of \$1.3 billion, down 11 percent y-o-y, attributable mainly due to currency devaluations in Sudan, South Sudan and Iraq. Ooredoo Kuwait recorded a net profit of \$63.8 million in FY-2021 vs \$11.1 million in FY-2020, up by 477.3 percent. The increase in the rollout of Ooredoo Kuwait's 5G services supported the growth in revenue during FY-2021. STC Kuwait also reported robust growth in profits during the year that reached \$148.7 million in FY-2021 as compared to \$104.6 million during the previous fiscal year. Profits for the Insurance sector increased by 119.8 percent y-o-y to \$280.4 million in FY-2021 compared to \$127.6 million in FY2020 after a majority of the companies in the sector posted

higher profits during the quarter. Gulf Insurance Group reported the biggest increase in profits in the sector for FY-2021 of \$166.5 million compared to \$53.3 million mainly due to the increase in net investment income in addition to the profits acquired from the acquisition of AXA operations in GCC. Al-Ahleiah Insurance Co posted a net profit of \$46.3 million for FY-2021 against \$39.7 million up by 16.5 percent supported by the increase in operating revenues. In the Real estate sector, Mabaneer posted a net profit of \$183.6 million for FY-2021 against a profit of \$71.4 million led by lower discounts offered to the investors of the units of the Avenues. Tamdeen Real Estate Co also reported an increase in y-o-y net profits that reached \$37.8 million against a net loss of \$40.1 million mainly led by an increase in net operating revenue. Similarly, Salhia Real Estate Co. recorded a net profit of \$31.0 million for FY-2021 compared to a net profit of \$69.5 million in FY-2020 down by 55.4 percent led by decrease in the profit from the sale of the subsidiary. Meanwhile, National Real Estate Co. net profit for FY-2021 soars to \$661.6 million mainly due to increase in share of results from the associate company. The company's operating revenue came in at \$106.45 million for the year 2021, an increase of 93 percent compared to 2020. Saudi Arabia aggregate net profits for companies listed in Saudi Arabia witnessed a y-o-y increase of more than 120 percent in FY-2021 to reach \$143.0 billion against \$64.8 billion in FY-2020.



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 14 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	37,902	9,174.19	0.1%	1.2%	20.1%	446,310,486	222,693,326	33,322	37.3	2.9	77.5%
Main Market	10,998	6,558.73	2.5%	4.9%	11.4%	541,798,308	95,768,619	27,998	26.0	1.6	22.5%
All Share	48,900	8,312.59	0.6%	2.0%	18.0%	988,108,794	318,461,944	61,320	34.5	2.6	100%

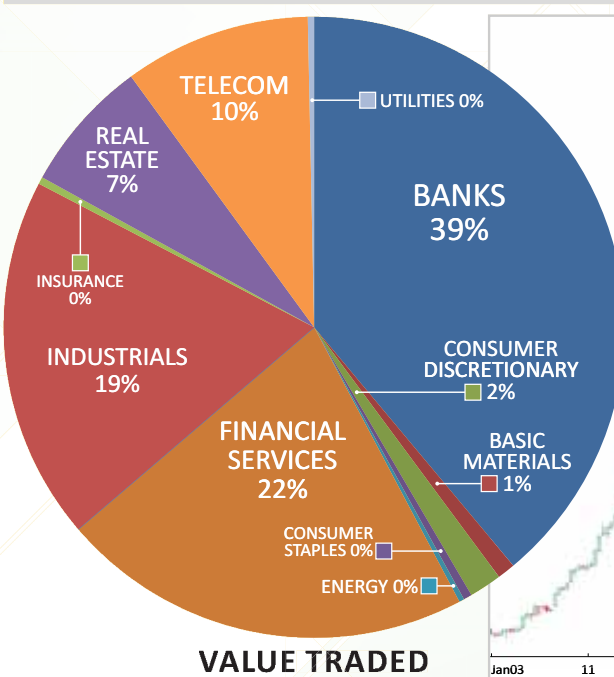
Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
BANKS	28,956	1,951.34	-0.3%	1.1%	20.2%	240,490,060	123,951,825	15,002	33.4	2.8	58.60%
BASIC MATERIALS	1,033	1,158.54	1.0%	-0.3%	13.1%	4,391,153	2,966,605	750	27.6	1.7	2.09%
CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY	803	1,571.43	2.0%	1.8%	17.6%	14,041,809	5,392,402	1,623	34.7	7.2	1.63%
CONSUMER STAPLES	214	703.50	-0.6%	-1.2%	-3.8%	2,540,725	1,392,064	245	17.5	1.5	0.43%
ENERGY	271	1,301.68	1.3%	0.2%	-8.9%	12,558,567	851,397	749	11.6	1.3	0.55%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	4,695	1,623.84	-1.0%	-2.2%	14.1%	423,862,218	68,400,038	15,600	13.6	2.1	9.50%
HEALTH CARE	242	488.98	-4.3%	-1.2%	-38.6%	601	332	2	15.6	2.6	0.49%
INDUSTRIALS	4,952	1,389.02	4.0%	7.3%	21.7%	96,543,634	60,258,744	12,757	7.5	1.4	10.02%
INSURANCE	644	1,541.75	-2.2%	-4.9%	0.5%	3,817,295	1,174,610	258	7.8	1.2	1.30%
REAL ESTATE	3,012	1,399.27	-0.4%	0.3%	5.5%	157,873,877	22,110,022	7,361	15.9	1.7	6.10%
TECHNOLOGY	9	684.58	-0.6%	1.2%	0.1%	46,352	4,388	8	-	0.8	0.02%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	4,337	1,414.31	6.4%	12.1%	29.8%	27,284,133	30,919,293	6,620	19.3	2.6	8.78%
UTILITIES	245	586.84	-0.4%	0.0%	-2.2%	4,658,370	1,040,226	345	18.9	4.0	0.50%

Stock	Last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
OOREDOO	1,165	42.25	2,565,146	2,644,754	850
RKWC	158	39.82	1,476,745	226,358	62
THUFAAYA	131	24.76	1,505,298	189,335	28
SHIP	748	22.02	9,450,769	6,554,466	1,370
AGHC	342	14.00	7,909,399	2,695,428	1,035

Stock	Last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
SALBOOKH	19.7	-41.19	11,938,562	285,830	591
KSHC	43	-12.78	1,544,738	68,338	110
KUWAITRE	285	-11.49	5,225	1,495	5
AUB	319	-10.39	93,549,733	30,585,240	2,102
KINS	392	-8.41	2,431,016	1,021,686	111

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
AUB	319	-10.39	93,549,733	30,585,240	2,102
GFH	101	-2.88	88,235,368	9,026,268	1,575
ALOLA	86.8	6.11	55,714,526	4,693,253	1,276
AAYAN	188	-1.05	49,781,731	9,512,139	1,257
KRE	171	3.01	46,736,968	7,900,173	1,614

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	995	-1.19	45,808,850	45,384,883	6,135
AGLTY	1,227	4.16	25,898,192	31,498,237	4,815
AUB	319	-10.39	93,549,733	30,585,240	2,102
NBK	1,051	-0.38	21,347,271	22,538,455	2,343
STC	2,005	1.83	8,882,107	18,420,516	4,044



Market Summary:

- Premier market volume and value decreased by 3% and 8%, respectively. Main market volume and value decreased 16% and 3%, respectively.
- Premier and Main indices both registered a new peak despite the reduction in trading.
- Technically, All Share index registered a new all-time high level closing at 8312, support levels at 8261, 8177, 8151, and 8121, while resistance at 8314. Premier index registered a new all-time high level closing at 9174, support levels at 9130, 9083, 9061, 9021, and 8990, while resistance at 9180. Main index registered a new all-time high level closing at 6558, support levels at 6463, 6437, 6411 and 6383, while resistance at 6562.

Business

Automaker rebound boosts US industrial production in March

Amid inflation, consumers opt to buy more services than goods

DETROIT: US industrial production climbed in March as automakers shifted into gear despite the ongoing semiconductor shortage, the Federal Reserve said.

Industrial production climbed 0.9 percent last month, the Fed said, more than expected and pushing the metric of industry output to an annualized rate of 8.1 percent for the first quarter. Motor vehicles and parts production jumped 7.8 percent and fueled a 0.9 percent gain in overall manufacturing, while other factories saw production rise 0.4 percent, the data said.

American automakers have struggled to keep production going as the supply of the computer chips vital to today's motor vehicles runs short. Mining output gained 1.7 percent, mostly due to increased oil and gas production, while utilities rose 0.4 percent as electricity usage increased but natural gas demand fell.

Consumers are generally shifting to buy more services than goods, Oren Klachkin of Oxford Economics said, but "there are still plenty of goods orders that need to be fulfilled" and industrial production will likely see gains in the months to come. "However, nagging supply chain issues, rising interest rates, and hot inflation readings will continue to pose some constraints," he said in an analysis. Biden touts US manufacturing know-how on trip to battleground state.

President Joe Biden had hailed US innovation on a visit to the south to promote his efforts to combat inflation, jumpstart high-tech manufacturing and return the United States to pole position in the global economy.

"Science and technology is moving so incredi-

bly rapidly. It's all part of a broader vision that Vice President (Kamala) Harris and I ran on-to build back a better America than even before the pandemic."

The visit came with the Bureau of Labor Statistics reporting inflation at a 40-year high of 8.5 percent—mainly due, it said, to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, rent hikes and gas prices.

Biden met faculty and students reading robotics and cybersecurity to discuss how his Bipartisan Innovation Act could boost the economy by improving manufacturing.

Deputy press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters aboard Air Force One that Greensboro was an example of the kind of "regional manufacturing ecosystem" that Biden envisions building across America, to create an industry that can counter China's growing influence.

One of the administration's top priorities, the legislation would offer funding to the city of 300,000 and places like it, to promote job creation and business growth.

Biden's trip—which came with Washington's political elite bracing for November's midterm elections—was the political equivalent of a fixture on neutral ground. North Carolinians have voted for the Republican candidate in every presidential election since the Reagan era except 2008, when the state went for Barack Obama over John McCain.

But five out of its seven governors over the same period have been Democrats, and statistical analytics website FiveThirtyEight described North Carolina in 2020 as a "perennial" swing state.

Biden is deep underwater in recent polling, however, with inflation seen as the Democrats' biggest



DETROIT: In this file photo, a GMC Hummer EV on an assembly line at the General Motors Factory ZERO electric vehicle assembly plant in Detroit, Michigan. —AFP

challenge if they are to pull off the unlikely feat of holding on to Congress. A poll released last week by High Point University gave the president a job approval rating of 35 percent in North Carolina, while 53 percent said they disapprove.

His lowest marks were for his handling of inflation (19 percent), including rising gas prices (18 percent), and his stewardship of the economy in gener-

al (26 percent). Nationally, a new Quinnipiac University poll has the president at just 33 percent approval, while 54 percent disapprove of his job performance. Democrats and Republicans in the House and Senate have been discussing the contours for launching formal negotiations on Biden's legislation as early as April, with a floor vote expected in May or June. —AFP

NBK Money Markets Report

US inflationary pressures send dollar higher

KUWAIT: In the United States, consumer prices rose 8.5 percent in March, marking the highest level seen since the Reagan administration in 1981. Excluding food and energy, the core CPI figure increased less than expected at 6.5 percent y/y and 0.3 percent m/m, providing some hope that overall inflation is likely easing. The usual culprits were responsible for the increase, with food prices up 8.8 percent and energy prices up 32 percent over the year. Gasoline prices alone surged 18.3 percent for the month, boosted by the war in Ukraine and subsequent pressure on supply.

In the US, the latest CPI figures were followed by headline PPI and core figures well exceeding estimates, wiping out any opportunity for leniency from the Fed. Producer prices in March jumped 1.4 percent from the previous month and 11.2 percent from a year ago, the most on record. Core PPI, which excludes food and energy, increased 1 percent in March from a month earlier and was up 9.2 percent from a year ago. It contrasted the latest core CPI figure, which showed a softening pace in core inflation.

Federal Reserve Governor Lael Brainard said the slowing increase in core CPI illustrates a "welcome" development in bringing down inflation, adding that she will be looking "to see whether we continue to see moderation in the months ahead." Nevertheless, alongside the surge in inflation worker wages have not kept up with the cost of living. Real average hourly earnings posted a 0.8 percent decline for the month, and the inability to keep up with costs could add to inflationary pressures. Markets reacted positively to the inflation data with stocks rising and government bond yields declining.

After the strong inflation data, markets have priced in two rate hikes worth 50 basis points in the upcoming Fed meeting with a probability of 98 percent. The mounting pressure on commodities and geopolitical uncertainties have increased inflation expectations and hence more aggressive rate hike expectations. The market is also pricing in two rate

Rates - 17th April, 2022

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.0933	1.0756	1.0950	1.0806	1.0630	1.0925	1.0851
GBP	1.3039	1.2970	1.3147	1.3058	1.2850	1.3150	1.3058
JPY	124.05	123.99	126.68	126.35	125.30	128.20	125.95
CHF	0.9302	0.9284	0.9445	0.9425	0.9235	0.9640	0.9381

hikes in the June 15th meeting. If those expectations were to happen, it would mean that benchmark interest rates in the US have increased by 1.25 percent in 6 months.

Market movement

On the forex front, the dollar remained on top of the currencies hill and gained much ground on the Japanese yen after the inflation report. The USD/JPY reached a new high of 126.66 on Friday as the greenback's momentum continued.

ECB's vague forward guidance

As widely expected, the ECB did not announce any policy changes on 14 April and left all interest rates unchanged, with the deposit rate still standing at -0.50 percent. No major changes were announced to the forward guidance or the pace of winding down QE purchases. Net purchases under the APP have been confirmed at EUR40bn in April, EUR30bn in May and EUR20bn in June. There was a small tweak, however, to the language regarding the pace of purchases after June. The statement now says that "at today's meeting the Governing Council judged that the incoming data since its last meeting reinforce its expectation that net asset purchases under the APP should be concluded in the third quarter" while before it said that "if the incoming data support the expectation that the medium-term inflation outlook will not weaken even after the end of its net asset purchases, the Governing Council will conclude net purchases under the APP in the third quarter". The ECB also reaffirmed that the first rate rise will take place "some time" after the end of asset purchases, with Ms Lagarde reiterating that "could be anywhere between a week or several months".

Consequently, the markets were less optimistic on

the euro and hence a selloff was evident in the single currency sending the currency to a low of 1.0756 before reversing the move toward 1.08. The market is currently pricing in 6 hikes of 10 basis points starting in July till year end by the ECB. If materialized, the benchmark rate would be 0.10 percent in out of negative territory.

Inflation pressure in the UK

The Fed is not alone grappling faster inflation. CPI in the UK rose by 1.1 percent in March alone, the fastest monthly increase on record, and surged by 7 percent annually, a 30-year high. Prices are set to surge further this month when a 54 percent increase in energy costs hits household bills. The pressure is piling on the Bank of England (BoE) to act when they meet next month, the market has priced in a rate hike in the upcoming May policy meeting.

China's inflation

China's inflation figures surprised on the high side, with annual CPI rising to 1.5 percent and annual PPI gaining 8.3 percent. The figures are unlikely to prevent the People's Bank of China (PBOC) from easing monetary policy to cushion the economy from the economic struggles of the recent lockdown.

Demand on energy

Signs of deteriorating diplomacy around Russia's war in Ukraine and China's demand forecasts reviving as it looks to ease some of the more stringent lockdown conditions gave way for oil prices to reestablish above \$100 a barrel.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar

USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30480.



Michael Barr

Biden to name Michael Barr for key Fed role

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden announced his intention to nominate Michael Barr for the key position of vice chair for supervision of the Federal Reserve, one month after his first pick dropped out.

Barr's nomination will have to be confirmed by the Senate. "Michael brings the expertise and experience necessary for this important position at a critical time for our economy and families across the country," Biden said in a statement. Currently serving as dean of the University of Michigan's public policy school, Barr also worked at the Treasury Department during the Bill Clinton and Barack Obama administrations.

He was one of the main architects of the Dodd-Frank Act, passed after the 2008 global financial crisis, which was aimed at better regulating the activities of large US financial institutions.

He also helped create the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and the position for which Biden nominated him. If confirmed, Barr will oversee supervision and regulation of banking giants such as JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America and Citigroup.

"He understands that this job is not a partisan one, but one that plays a critical role in regulating our nation's financial institutions to ensure Americans are treated fairly and to protect the stability of our economy," the president said. Biden's original nominee for the position, Sarah Bloom Raskin, withdrew from the race in mid-March when her nomination appeared to be in jeopardy due to a lack of support in the Senate.

Republican senators, as well as Democratic Senator Joe Manchin, said that they would not give her their votes. In addition to Barr, the Senate must confirm four other nominations to the Fed's board of directors, including those of its current chairman Jerome Powell and of Lael Brainard as vice chair.

The US central bank can bring inflation down by raising interest rates without jeopardizing growth in the world's largest economy, although it will be a challenge, a top Federal Reserve official had said.

"I think we can achieve a soft landing," New York Fed President John Williams said in an interview with Bloomberg. A wave of price increases caused by high demand and supply chain challenges was made worse by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which hit food and fuel prices, sending US inflation to its highest level in four decades.

But Williams said Fed interest rate hikes are "really well suited" for addressing the imbalances between supply and demand in the US economy without causing a downturn. The Fed can "just take the froth... out of the economy" to put it on sustainable footing. But he acknowledged that "it's not going to be easy," given the "unique set of circumstances" facing the economy due to the ongoing challenges of the pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. —AFP



LuLu Hypermarket felicitates winners of voucher promotion

KUWAIT: LuLu Hypermarket, the retail leader in the region, held a prize distribution ceremony at its Al-Rai outlet on 16 February to felicitate winners of the voucher promotion held as part of the Hala February celebrations.

Prizes worth a total of KD 15,000 were distrib-

uted to 131 lucky winners by top LuLu Hypermarket management in Kuwait, in the presence of a large gathering of shoppers and well-wishers of the hypermarket. The voucher promotion, which ran from 3 February to 19 March, culminated with an electronic prize draw that was held on 28 March at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and in the presence of ministry officials and LuLu management.

The promotion, which was available at all LuLu Hypermarket branches in Kuwait, provided customers with the opportunity to win attractive gift vouchers on every KD 5 they spent at the hypermarket during the promotion period. The first prize

of KD 1,000 worth of gift vouchers was awarded to three winners; the second prize of KD 500 worth of gift vouchers went to the next six winners; KD 100 worth of gift vouchers were presented to the next 61 winners; and finally, KD 50 worth of gift vouchers went to the next 61 winners of the promotion. The voucher promotion was a highlight of the annual month-long Hala February festival held in Kuwait, and also part of celebrations marking the National and Liberation Days of Kuwait. Overwhelming response to the promotion once again underlines the enormous rapport that LuLu Hypermarket and its various interactive initiatives enjoys with shoppers in Kuwait.





A shopkeeper arranges rugs woven by women in the southwestern Tunisian oasis of Nefta, at a shop run by Shanti, a social enterprise that helps artisans from across the North African country, in the capital Tunis. — AFP photos

TUNISIAN WEAVERS TURN RAGS INTO ECO-FRIENDLY RUGS

Najet unravels an old pair of jeans, raw material for a designer carpet: traditional, eco-friendly crafts are being adapted for new markets thanks to a project born in the Tunisian desert. "I learned to weave at a young age, from my mother," said the 52-year-old from the oasis town of Nefta, 500 kilometers (310 miles) south of Tunis. Now, she is making a living from it. She is selling her Turkish-style kilim rugs via Shanti, a social enterprise that helps artisans from across the North African country reach buyers and bring vital revenue into some of its most marginalized communities.

Shanti is the brainchild of Najet's Franco-Tunisian nephew Mehdi Baccouche. "Unstitching old jumpers, tearing up old cotton garments, making rugs out of them, it's a folk art found in all Tunisian homes," he told AFP. While the skill "has been around forever", reaching buyers is a challenge, he added. Back in 2014, he had asked his aunt to weave carpets for his friends, soon moving to selling them via Facebook. Seeing the potential, two years later he created Shanti, which buys carpets and takes charge of getting them to consumers. It also employs designers who work with artisans to improve their design skills and make their products more marketable. "These are my creations, they come out of my imagination and Shanti approved them," Najet said.

'Recycle clothes'

Najet uses an eclectic array of old



A Tunisian craftswoman weaves a rug in the southwestern Tunisian oasis of Nefta.

pullovers, socks and assorted pass-me-downs from the local flea market, giving them a new life as rugs. She has little fear of running out of raw materials. Despite a lean patch, the Tunisian clothes industry still keeps 1,600 firms in business, providing 100 times that many jobs. In Nefta, a town of some 22,000 people, Shanti has also set up a haberdashery where weavers have free access to balls of wool recycled from second-hand clothes.

The association's local coordinator Fatima Alhamal, Najet's daughter, says the store makes "a huge difference". Previously, "craftswomen had to go and find materials, which they had to pay for, then earned 12-15 euros for a kilim". Now Shanti pays them 40 euros (\$43) apiece, up to a maximum of four a month each to avoid pressuring them into overwork. It then sells them in Tunisia and abroad.

The association also helps the workers improve their work spaces, for example with air conditioning—a necessity in southern Tunisia's blistering summer heat. The work has changed the social standing of the women involved. "People see them completely differently now," Fatma said. Najet says she is happy to be making a living from home. "I don't have to go out for anything, I can cook and eat here, I can work comfortably."

Eco-friendly

Baccouche said at first people teased him for getting involved in "an old ladies' craft". But the project fills a valuable niche in an area where women are disproportionately underemployed, and which has faced an ever-worsening economic crisis since before the revolt that sparked the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011. "It was



A Tunisian craftswoman works in the southwestern Tunisian oasis of Nefta.

important to show that you can be an old woman who never went to school and doesn't know how to use the internet, but you can still do something and earn a living from it," he said. Yet the association also tries to avoid creating conflicts within families.

It pays the women not in cash but in post office accounts where their husbands can't see how much they are making or use it to pay household bills. Using its system of ordering in advance, Shanti runs a boutique in the capital Tunis. "L'Artisanerie" also acts as a space for coordinators who train artisans from other rural areas, making bamboo furniture, poetry and embroidery. In four years, more than 200 producers have been able to find a market for their work. Sixty work every day for L'Artisanerie.

"We're trying to show that you can

make something 100 percent Tunisian, with Tunisian materials and skills, but with a design that fits current tastes," Baccouche said. Some products, joint creations by artisans and Shanti designers, are sold to design-conscious Tunisians. Others are exported or sold to bigger firms—such as Indigo, a manufacturer for Zara, or Mango, which recently bought 164 rugs made from recycled jeans. For now, the system still relies on some support from non-profits such as Oxfam or on Danish development aid. But Baccouche has big ambitions, with Shanti expanding into sustainable agriculture and ecotourism. "We're trying to set up an entire, eco-friendly production and logistics chain," he said. — AFP



Festival goers enjoy a performance at the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in Indio, California. — AFP photos

Coachella's return brings big business to California desert

"We've waited years for this!" exclaims Jesus Medina as he dishes out burritos to the hungry masses at Coachella, the music festival that's back on in the California desert after three years. After a COVID-induced hiatus, Coachella Valley businesses are flourishing with the return of one of music's most-touted events, a boon for the region that counts festivals as key to its economic engine. With just a little over 90,000 residents, Indio's motto is "The City of Festivals," events that make it at least \$3 million in direct revenue alone, according to municipal figures, which includes ticket-sharing dollars and transient occupancy taxes from campers.

The benefit to businesses from food stores to hotels to gas stations took that figure soaring even higher—until the pandemic stymied live performance and put Coachella on indefinite hiatus. "We had everything ready in 2020, but the pandemic canceled everything," Medina told AFP in Spanish. His business "Cena Vegana" sold more than a thousand burritos on Friday, during Coachella's opening day. "It doesn't stop, the lines are endless—this is a great opportunity for us."

Coachella draws in more than 125,000 people daily over the course of two three-day weekends. Thousands of people occu-

py hotels in neighboring areas including Palm Springs, the resort area bordered by the San Jacinto mountains and known for its palm trees, golf courses and spas. Business has been "quiet for years, a couple years, but we're full and it's busy," said Char Pershind, manager of the Zoso Hotel. Nearly all of the 162 rooms at Zoso are booked by people attending and working at the festival, and virtually everything is sold out for the event's second weekend.

In 2019, the last time Coachella attendees descended on the valley, Pershind worked at a different hotel, and says this year many more people are in town for the shows. "People have been cooped up for so long... they want to get out and enjoy the air," she said. "I know they come for the music but they come for a lot more."

'Reminder I was here'

For Mitchell Car, who works at a bustling vintage clothing and accessories shop, Coachella is a golden opportunity to expand sales. "Lots of times people come and they don't have their outfits," Car told AFP. This year, the festival's giving 1970s vibes with bell-bottom silhouettes of yore, along with bursts of neon and glitter adding sheen to the Empire Polo Club grounds where the stages spring up each year. "They're always

searching: what's hip? What's unique?" said Car, whose primary clientele come from New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles. "I had the photographer for Harry Styles in the store the other day."

Food choices abound on the festival grounds, where Santiago Restrepo is dishing up traditional Venezuelan arepas to hungry concert-goers. "At first it was a bit difficult for us, because it's the first time we've used this sales model," he told AFP. "But when people started arriving in the middle of the afternoon we were ready." "After 4:00 pm, we didn't stop for a second until 1:00 am." A few feet away, Coachella partiers are lined up to snag souvenirs celebrating the festival's return. In the official store, it took people an hour-and-a-half to reach the front of the line where some 20 people doled out merch, the most expensive item ringing up at \$150 for a 2022 sweatshirt. "Some people spent thousands of dollars," said one vendor who wished to remain anonymous. Charlie Dawson, who flew in from New York, told AFP he just wants "something, whatever—a reminder I was here." It's his seventh Coachella: "I was looking forward to coming back." — AFP

L'Imperatrice brings French pop back to Coachella

Two years after the pandemic stymied their debut at the famed Coachella stage, French disco pop band L'Imperatrice is having their California moment. "It's a cherry on top," said vocalist Flore Benguigui, speaking in English to AFP. "I think it's magic." The six-person funk-inflected pop and nu-disco group formed in Paris in 2012 — has finally made their way to the Coachella stage as part of a tour promoting their second album, "Taku Tsubo."

"The world is different from, like 20 years ago... I think people are more open to different languages. People are maybe a bit more curious," said keyboardist Charles de Boisseguin. "French-maybe it's also a bit mysterious," he added. The band—whose additional members include Hagni Gwon (keyboards), David Gaugue (bass), Achille Trocellier (electric guitar) and Tom Daveau (drums) — has several EPs under its belt but had only released one full-length album

when the pandemic struck. The shutdown gave L'Imperatrice peace and quiet to put together their second major record. "We worked quite efficiently," said Benguigui, explaining how they built their own studio, preparing for their reemergence and eventual tour.

'Tears of joy'

Sporting a neon pink bob and a purple-fuchsia ensemble from designer Pierre Cardin, Benguigui said the return to performance post-coronavirus restrictions has been electric. "We could really feel the energy; some people actually cried tears of joy... They were really welcoming, and relieved to finally see live music," she said. "Every concert is different, and we were so happy to be here at Coachella," Benguigui said.

On the Gobi stage, one of seven at the festival in the Empire Polo Club in the desert city of Indio, hundreds of people turned out for the French act. Decked out in red and mustard yellow outfits emblazoned with hearts, L'Imperatrice had their audience dancing nonstop throughout their 40-minute set. The group will play Coachella's second string of dates next week, as they continue on their tour of the United States. — AFP



French band L'Imperatrice performs onstage at the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in Indio, California. — AFP photos



(From left) Members of French pop band L'Imperatrice Hagni Gwon, Charles de Boisseguin, Flore Benguigui, Tom Daveau, Achille Trocellier and David Gaugue pose for AFP at the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in Indio, California.



A picture shows a view of the exterior of dwellings carved into Libya's arid Nafusa mountains, in Gharyan town. — AFP photos



A resident shows a bedroom in a "damous".

LIBYA'S UNDERGROUND HOMES WAIT FOR TOURISM REVIVAL

Gharyan's unique underground houses were hewn into the mountainside centuries ago, and many lie abandoned, but residents of the Libyan town are hoping tourism can help restore their heritage. "My great-great-great-great-grandfather dug this yard 355 years ago," said Al-Arbi Belhaj, who owns one of the oldest houses in the mixed Berber-Arab town south of Tripoli.

His ancestor would have used a "tajouk" pickaxe to chip away at the ground before loading the rubble into a woven date-palm "gouffa" basket to carry it away, he said. Dug deep into the arid Nafusa mountains at around 700 meters (2,300 feet) above sea level, the home would have been protected against the scorching summers that bring temperatures up to 45 degrees Celsius (113 Fahrenheit). It would have also stayed warm throughout the often snowy winters.

The region's bedrock has a consistency that allowed the underground dwelling-known as a damous-to last for centuries without collapsing. Some of the buildings are over 2,300 years old, and ancient Greek historians mentioned their existence, according to historian Youssef Al-Khattali. The area also has burial sites dating back to Phoenician times, he added.

Today, Belhaj says he is the owner of the oldest underground home in Gharyan, a town where many residents have family records and property deeds



These pictures show views of an external yard of a "damous".

dating back centuries. The warren of rooms dug into the rock around the courtyard once housed as many as eight large families, he said. He was the last person to be born there, in 1967. In 1990, like many people seeking more comfortable dwellings with running water and electricity, the family moved out of the home, but they kept ownership of it. Now, Belhaj has renovated it and turned it into a tourist attraction.

'Designed to be versatile'

While late dictator Moamer Kadhafi allowed tourists to visit the country on

organized trips, visitors have been thin on the ground since his fall in a 2011 revolt, which sparked a decade of chaos. But the region's Berber villages have continued to attract domestic tourists, and Belhaj is hoping that a return to relative stability could open the door to more visitors from Europe and elsewhere. He charges an entry fee equivalent to a dollar for Libyans, or two for foreigners.

While some come for a cup of tea and to explore the building, others stay for lunch or spend the entire day there. Damous structures were once common across a stretch of western Libya and



eastern Tunisia-the other side of a border only drawn up in 1886. "The same tribes extend from Nalut to Gabes," said historian Khattali, referring to towns on the Libyan and Tunisian sides. Their sites were carefully chosen and the buildings painstakingly excavated by hand to avoid them collapsing in the process.

In 1936, they attracted the attention of colonial power Italy, featuring in a tourist guide. And they were not just used as homes. "First of all, there were underground dwellings for humans and their animals, then buildings intended as places of worship," Khattali said, referring

to synagogues and churches that were mostly later converted to mosques. Some were also used as defenses, he said. "You can still make out the traces of fortifications in certain parts of the mountain, including the remains of watchtowers." The buildings "were designed to be versatile, and they've stood the test of time," Khattali said. "That's why they're so important in the history of Libyan architecture."—AFP



A picture shows a view of an external yard of a "damous".



These pictures show views of the interior of a "damous".



Egyptians see red over Zionist-run dance festivals in Sinai

Zionist-organized twin dance festivals in the Sinai have sparked outrage in Egypt as they come just days before the anniversary of the end of the Jewish state's occupation of the peninsula. The Nabia and Grounded festivals, which coincide with the Jewish Passover holiday, also come as Muslims observe a daytime fast during the holy month of Ramadan.

The festivals follow events in which more than 150 Palestinian worshippers were injured on Friday in clashes with Zionist security forces in the Al-Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem. The Egyptian branch of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, which opposes Zionist's occupation of Palestinian territories, has called for a boycott of the festival's venues.

"As we do every year, we were preparing to celebrate... the stories of the heroic resistance but we discovered that the Zionist occupation was returning to the Sinai," the branch said in a statement Wednesday. The Nabia festival is due to run from April 17 to 20; the Grounded fes-

tival from April 20 to 23. Both offer all-night dancing with an international lineup of artists.

April 25 is the anniversary of Zionist's withdrawal from most of the Sinai in 1982 under a landmark 1979 peace agreement, ending an occupation which began during the Six-Day War of 1967. Egyptian Facebook user Farah Mourad complained that the festivals are taking place ahead of "Sinai Liberation Day... and during the holy month of Ramadan".

She also pointed to the recent clashes at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound, saying Zionist forces had attacked Palestinian civilians. The music scene has become a major draw for Zionist tourists visiting the south coast of the Sinai Peninsula, along with its beaches, dive sites and low costs compared to Zionist entity.

In 2019, before the coronavirus pandemic hit international travel, more than 700,000 Zionists visited Egypt, according to the embassy in Cairo, the great majority of them heading to the relative security of southern Sinai. Direct flights between Tel Aviv and the Sinai resort of Sharm El-Sheikh are to start on Sunday, making the region's resorts even more attractive to Zionists.

The flights were one of the fruits of a September visit to Egypt by Zionist Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, the first by a Zionist premier in a decade. "This agreement will bring Zionist entity and Egypt closer together," Bennett said last month. — AFP



Muslims gather along a street-long table for break their Ramadan fast together in a mass "iftar" meal on the 15th day of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in the Matariya suburb in the northeast of Egypt's capital Cairo on April 16, 2022. — AFP

The male model testing gender norms in a changing Saudi Arabia

With his hot pink hair extensions and leopard print pantsuit, model Ziad Al-Mesfer was bound to turn heads during his recent public photo shoot in deeply conservative Saudi Arabia. Passers-by began sneaking pictures on their mobiles merely minutes after Mesfer emerged from his white luxury car onto the cobbled sidewalks of a high-end cafe district in Riyadh, his stylist and photographer in tow. Such appearances have helped Mesfer, 25, build a massive social media following while blazing a trail for the handful of Saudi male models brave enough to don garments widely seen as appropriate for women only—thereby pushing the boundaries of their country's famously rigid gender norms.

In the process he has endeared himself to expensive brands keen to profit from a spectacle that would have been unthinkable before Saudi Arabia embarked on a whirlwind series of social reforms ushered in by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Yet Mesfer's approach carries considerable risks. Along with ardent fans—mostly bubbly teenage girls who follow him on Snapchat—the crowd gawking at the recent Riyadh shoot included one irate middle-aged man who got out of his car to



Saudi model Ziad Al-Mesfer's stylist fixes his hair before posing for his private photographer.

denounce Mesfer as "gay", a potential capital offence in Saudi Arabia.

The desert monarchy also traditionally forbids men who "imitate women" or wear women's clothing, and vice versa. Mesfer does not identify as gay—he intends to marry a woman one day—and explains he is simply following global brands' embrace of androgynous fashion. And despite occasional harassment in-person and online, he told AFP he has no plan to leave Saudi Arabia or modify his look. "It is better for me to stay in my country and wear these

clothes," he said, "not wait for a trip abroad to go outside in a bold outfit."

Fashionable following

Born into a Riyadh-based family, the eldest of six children, Mesfer started to develop his sense of style from a young age. "I used to dress my mom, my aunts and my relatives. I used to love styling them," he said. "My mom used to consult me regarding these things, so I became more interested in women's fashion."

He only dreamed of going public with his talents after Prince Mohammed began

trying to soften the kingdom's image, including by expanding entertainment options and easing rules that required women to wear the abaya, an all-covering robe, and hijab headscarf.

Around two years ago, Mesfer started modeling outfits online using the relatively safe medium of Snapchat, which automatically deletes posts once they are viewed. Today he boasts more than two million Snapchat followers and another 200,000 on Instagram—the kind of clout that has captured the attention of brands including Prada and Dior. When Gucci opened a new boutique in Riyadh last month, staff made sure to invite Mesfer to view the inventory, said senior saleswoman Louwa Mohammed. "It's very important to invite him, because when we invite him and take a video or picture of him wearing any item, it sells directly," Mohammed said. "All Saudis—old women, young girls—all of them, they are watching him."

'A kind of artist'

Even as other male models and would-be influencers follow his lead, Mesfer remains in a class by himself. "He is number one," said a sales associate at Prada who, like others interviewed for this story, declined to be named

because of the topic's sensitivity. Yet several fashion professionals said Saudi's limited acceptance of Mesfer should not be misconstrued as a blanket endorsement of his behavior. Instead they said Mesfer, who earns money partly through online ads, enjoys protection because he works with luxury brands and mingles with local celebrities who invite him to their events.

"We see him as a model, as a kind of artist, so we can't judge him," Gucci's Mohammed said. But she added: "Sometimes the reaction is negative. Saudi is a Muslim country. I wouldn't want to see my brother doing the same thing." This conflicted perception of Mesfer is on vivid display in the comments on his Instagram page.

In response to a February post in which Mesfer paired a bright red coat with a skin-tight purple turtleneck, one user wrote "may God forgive us" while another wrote "I am deleting Instagram after seeing this." Another user, though, was encouraging: "Ziad, keep going, I love you, take care of yourself for the people who love you and do what you love, and do not care about any words."—AFP

'Fantastic Beasts' tops N American box office

"Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets of Dumbledore" had a slightly less than fantastic North American opening this weekend, at least by Wizarding World standards, taking in an estimated \$43 million, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported Sunday. Ticket sales for the Warner Bros. fantasy film, the third in the "Fantastic Beasts" series, were the lowest of any of the 11 films in the Wizarding World franchise, even while topping the weekend box office, industry outlet Variety said.

"Fantastic Beasts was never going to maintain Harry Potter's success," said David A. Gross of Franchise Entertainment Research. "That was a once-in-a-generation phenomenon." Some of the early Potter gloss has been lost as author J.K. Rowling faces criticism over statements on sex and gender identity. But Gross said the series remains strong overseas—as it will need to do, with Covid-inflated production costs of some \$200 million.

In second place, down sharply from last weekend's \$71 million opening, was Paramount's family friendly "Sonic the Hedgehog 2," at \$30 million. The hybrid film features Jim Carrey in a live-action role, while Ben Schwartz, Idris Elba and Colleen O'Shaughnessey voice animated characters. The original Harry Potter, likable British actor Daniel Radcliffe, has embraced the dark side as a villain in Paramount's "The Lost City," which took in \$6.5 million to place third for the Friday-through-Sunday period. Sandra Bullock and Channing Tatum also star.

Sci-fi comedy film "Everything Everywhere All at Once" from indie production company A24 came in fourth, at \$6.2 million. The movie has enjoyed strong reviews—with a 97 percent rating on the Rotten Tomatoes site—with critics lauding its originality. Its unlikely plot has Michelle Yeoh playing a woman being audited by tax authorities who learns that she must jump between versions of herself in different



multiverses to save them all.

And in the fifth spot was new Sony/Columbia Pictures release "Father Stu," at \$5.7 million. Based on a true-life story, Mark Wahlberg plays a boxer who gains religion and becomes a priest after suffering a muscular disease. The film has drawn mixed

reviews but strong audience ratings. Mel Gibson also stars. Rounding out the top 10 were: "Morbius" (\$4.7 million); "Ambulance" (\$4 million); "The Batman" (\$3.8 million); "KFG Chapter 2" (\$2.9 million); "Uncharted" (\$1.2 million).—AFP



Children watch the performance of puppeteers Anton Andriushchenko (left) and Olesandra Shlykova (right) at the metro stations of Kharkiv, eastern Ukraine.



Ukrainian poet Serhiy Zhadan, 47 years old, performs in a bomb shelter in Kharkiv. — AFP photos

Puppets and poetry go underground in besieged city of Kharkiv

In a subterranean metro station serving as a bomb shelter in eastern Ukraine, two flamboyant puppeteers act out a tabletop fairytale for a gaggle of spell-bound children. With a cast of caricature dolls including a mustachioed king and a herd of pigs, Olesandra Shlykova and Anton Andriushchenko tell the story of how "Princesses are different", entrancing the kids and their parents.

They are also distracting them from the near constant bombardments raining down on the city of Kharkiv above them, as Russia escalates its offensive in eastern Ukraine. Using a mobile phone sound system the pair elicit giggles and gasps from their audience perched on steps lined with cardboard—an auditorium improvised

to prevent the cold and damp seeping into their bones.

"A live performance is always an emotion that is here and now," said 47-year-old Shlykova after concluding the show with a flourished bow and inviting the children to play with the puppets. "We exchange emotions and it lifts our spirits. It's hard to describe it, you have to feel it."

Underground hideout

Deep underground, the metro stations of Kharkiv are now home to residents of the eastern metropolis fearful of the battle raging above. Since pulling back from its northern offensive to capture the capital of Kyiv, the Kremlin has scaled up attacks on Ukraine's eastern flank, including Kharkiv

just 21 kilometers (13 miles) from the Russian border.

On Friday, shelling of residential areas of the city killed 10 people. On Saturday, a strike claimed two more lives. The walkways of the metro stations are now lined with bedding and mounds of belongings. The stationary carriages have been divided into makeshift homes. Toiletries line the train windows and inhabitants pry open the sliding doors to access their spaces. The main walkway smells of the soup being ladled out to those living here.

"When you watch this performance you remember the stories and you alter the way you see the world," said 37-year-old Oksana, who brought her two daughters to the show. They are living in an underground shelter nearby, and came over to this one to escape the grim tale unfolding above. "Truth and humor gives you a boost and makes you happy," said Oksana, who declined to give a surname.

Across town a poetry performance takes place in a white brickwork bunker down some narrow stairs past a ramshackle workshop. The shelter is also packed with improvised beds. Serhiy Zhadan reads out verse overlaid with melodic music in a purple neon-lit sound-proofed chamber. A small crowd follows the reading, in which Zhadan holds forth a surreal lyrical monologue detailing an assortment of animals. Zhadan describes the poem as a "brutal lullaby" based on a satire of a children's book. —AFP



Children watch puppeteer Olesandra Shlykova (left) as she performs at the metro stations of Kharkiv.

'Location, location, location': Dubrovnik cat eviction sparks storm

Thousands of people have signed a petition against the eviction of a 17-year-old stray cat from its home outside a historic palace in Croatia's tourist hotspot, Dubrovnik. Anastasia spends her days in front of the 14th-century Rector's Palace in the Old City and is a favorite with locals and tourists. Despite attempts to find her a home, she always returns to the palace so volunteers put a cardboard box for her in the palace porch.

That failed to impress the city's museum authority, which is based in the building. So an animal lover made her a mini wooden home in the style of the palace—a mix of Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque architecture—complete with a plaque bearing Anastasia's name.

That dwelling also got a snippy response and the cultural guardians ordered it removed. No-one, the museum authority argued, is allowed to alter Dubrovnik's "unique cultural and historic whole, especially by building shelters or dwellings". The ousting of Anastasia trig-



gered a social media storm and as of Saturday 12,000 people had signed a petition demanding her reinstatement.

"It's her home," Srdjan Kera, the architect of Anastasia's abode, said regretfully. "We're only talking about one cat, not 70 of them." Dubrovnik Mayor Mato Frankovic has backed the museum, stressing, apparently without irony, that the Pearl of the Adriatic only has fat cats and "no skinny ones". —AFP



Pictures show the stray cat Anastasia in front of the 14th century Rector's Palace in Dubrovnik. — AFP photos

Sports

Zniti saves penalty to boost Raja hopes of dethroning Ahly

Brazilian Azulao stars as Angolan club Petro upset Sundowns

JOHANNESBURG: Raja Casablanca goalkeeper Anas Zniti saved a penalty in Egypt to boost the chances of the Moroccan club dethroning CAF Champions League holders Al Ahly, despite a 2-1 loss in their quarterfinal first leg. Reduced to 10 men in Cairo before the spot-kick after Marouane Hadhoudi was sent off for handling to prevent a certain goal, Raja were in danger of falling two goals behind on the hour mark.

Amr el Soulia had put Ahly ahead from a 13th-minute penalty that evaded the outstretched right hand of Zniti and landed in the corner of the net. The Egyptian decided to aim for the same corner from the second spot-kick, but this time Zniti pushed the ball away. As Ahly intensified pressure in the final 30 minutes, but a combination of saves by Zniti, brave defending and wild shooting foiled the hosts.

Hussein El-Shahat was the other Ahly scorer, finishing off a superb low cross from South African Percy Tau on 23 minutes at a 40,000-seat Al Salam Stadium that was half full due to coronavirus protocols. Dominant Ahly, who should have been more than two goals ahead as half-time loomed, were stung in first-half added time when Mohamed Zrida halved the deficit with a low shot off a cut-back.

It leaves the pick of the quarterfinals in the marquee African club competition delicately balanced ahead of the return match in Casablanca, which will kick off late on Friday. Footballers are permitted to break the dawn-to-dusk fast during the ongoing Muslim holy month of Ramadan, but most prefer not to.

Elusive title treble

Instead, they eat and drink after dusk and the Confederation of African Football (CAF) has agreed to extend the 1900 GMT kick-off deadline, with some matches beginning close to midnight local time. Record 10-time African champions Ahly hope to become the first club to win the competition three consecutive times - a feat that has eluded them and three other sides.

Ahly (2007 and 2014) and Tout Puissant Mazembe (1969 and 2011) from the Democratic Republic of Congo failed twice. Nigerian side Enyimba (2005) and Esperance (2020) of Tunisia were other back-to-back winners of the Champions League who could not complete a treble. The winners between Ahly and Raja will book a two-leg semifinal against Esperance or Entente Setif of Algeria, who were held 0-0 at home in a first leg where the visitors created more chances.

Chabab Belouizdad, the other Algerian contenders for a \$2.5 million first prize, fared even worse than Setif, losing 1-0 at home to two-time champions Wydad Casablanca in Algiers. The Moroccans had to play 83 minutes a man short after VAR changed a yellow card given to Jalal Daoudi for a foul to a red one. But a headed goal by Congo Brazzaville international Guy Mbenza, sporting a pink hair style, 19 seconds into the second half decided a match controlled by Belouizdad without creating many clear-cut chances. Needing a draw in Casablanca next weekend to qualify, Wydad appear set to reach the last-four stage for the sixth time in

seven seasons, and face Petro Luanda of Angola or Mamelodi Sundowns of South Africa.

Captain Tiago Azulao scored and created another goal as Angolan club Petro Luanda upset South African visitors Mamelodi Sundowns 2-1 on Saturday in the CAF Champions League. The quarterfinal first leg result at the national stadium in Luanda leaves the tie wide open with the return match scheduled for Johannesburg next Saturday.

Lyle Lakay put Sundowns ahead after only five minutes, Azulao levelled on 16 minutes and Yano Duarte scored what proved the match-winner in first-half added time. Victory for Petro in their first Champions League knockout-stage appearance since losing a 2001 semi-final to Sundowns marked a dramatic turnaround.

In their final group match two weeks ago, Petro suffered a 5-1 drubbing from table-toppers Wydad Casablanca in Morocco. Having scored 21 goals in four domestic league and cup matches, 2016 African champions Sundowns travelled to Angola hopeful of winning with Namibia forward Peter Shalulile in top form. But after Lakay netted off a deflected free-kick, Petro took charge and equalised when Brazilian Azulao slammed a cross past veteran Sundowns goalkeeper Denis Onyango.

The home side deservedly took the lead on the stroke of half-time when an Azulao flick off a cross was parried by Onyango into the path of Yano, who made no mistake. Sundowns pushed hard for an equaliser early in the second half with Shalulile, who has notched 27 domestic and CAF goals this

season, twice going close to scoring.

Penalty appeals rejected

Petro had two penalty appeals rejected by the Zambian referee before Azulao had the ball in the net again only to be correctly ruled offside. Silence enveloped the Estadio 11 de Novembro in added time when Neo Maema appeared to have equalized for Sundowns, but the goal was disallowed after VAR spotted a foul in the build-up. There was still time for Petro to launch another attack and Onyango reacted quickly to turn a shot away at the expense of a corner.

Unlike Europe, where UEFA have scrapped the away-goal rule in club competitions, it still applies in Africa, so a 1-0 second-leg win for Sundowns will suffice to take them to the semifinals. In another first leg, four-time champions Esperance of Tunisia drew 0-0 away to Algerians Entente Setif to confirm they are favored to win the north African showdown.

However, Esperance will lack home support in Rades near Tunis on Friday as the second leg is being staged behind closed doors as punishment for recent unruly behavior by fans of the Tunisian club. The best chances fell during the first half in Algiers with Setif goalkeeper Sofiane Khedairia foiling Mohamed Ali Ben Romdhane and Nigerian Kingsley Edowo in one-on-one situations. Ghaylene Chaalali then rattled the Setif crossbar with a free-kick while Esperance captain and goalkeeper Moez Ben Cherifia foiled Riad Benayad with a point-blank save at the other end. — AFP

'Bigger goals' as Karthik targets India return

MUMBAI: Dinesh Karthik said he is eyeing an India comeback after his unbeaten 66 off 34 balls powered Royal Challengers Bangalore to a 16-run win over Delhi Capitals on Saturday. The in-form Karthik steered Bangalore to 189 for five after Glenn Maxwell's breezy 55 in the second match of the day in Mumbai. Delhi, who are still searching for their maiden Indian Premier League title, could only muster 173-7 despite a 38-ball 66 from David Warner.

Karthik, a wicketkeeper-batter who has amassed 197 runs while batting mostly at seven, stood out as he put on an unbeaten stand of 97 for the sixth wicket with Shahbaz Ahmed, who hit 32, as Bangalore plundered 69 runs from the last four overs. "I have bigger goals. I've been working really hard. My aim is to do something special for the country," man of the match Karthik, who last played for India in the 2019 50-over World Cup, said. "This is part of my journey. I am doing everything I can to be part of the India team."

The 36-year-old made full use of a dropped catch on five to tear into the opposition attack in the final 18 balls and smashed Mustafizur Rahman for four fours and two sixes in a 28-run 18th over. Bangalore lost their big guns including skipper Faf du Plessis for eight and Virat Kohli run out on 12 before Maxwell unleashed his power to lay the foundation for the total.

The Australia batter, nicknamed 'Big Show' for his extravagant strokeplay, took on left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav in one over to hit 23 runs before he fell to same bowler. In reply, Delhi faltered after Warner's departure and Australian fast bowler Josh Hazlewood struck twice in one over including the big-hitting Rovman Powell for nought as wheels came off the chase.

Skipper Rishabh Pant attempted to hit back with his 17-ball 34 but became pace bowler Mohammed Siraj's second wicket as Virat Kohli leapt to take a stunning one-handed catch at cover. Bangalore jumped to third in the 10-team table led by newcomers Gujarat Titans.

'Life's not ended'

In the first match of the day, Lucknow Super Giants skipper KL Rahul smashed an unbeaten 103 as they handed five-time IPL winners Mumbai Indians their sixth straight loss this season. Rahul, playing his 100th Indian Premier League match, steered Lucknow to 199 for four after being put into bat first at Mumbai's Brabourne Stadium.

Mumbai Indians, led by Rohit Sharma, could only manage 181-9 to lose by 18 runs and remain winless in the Twenty20 tournament this edition, further denting their hopes of making the playoffs. But pace bowler Jasprit Bumrah said the team, who won titles in 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019 and 2020, will bounce back soon. "Life has not ended. Sun is going to rise again tomorrow. This is a game of cricket, somebody has to win, somebody has to lose," a smiling Bumrah told reporters.

"Nobody is as disappointed as we are, nobody from the outside can see the hard work that we have put in. In the rest of the games we will again give our best shot and try to come on the better side." One of the most fancied IPL teams, Mumbai, owned by Nita Ambani, wife of India's richest man Reliance Industries billionaire Mukesh Ambani, stay bottom of the table. — AFP

Thompson-Herah posts fastest 100m of 2022

LOS ANGELES: Jamaica's two-time Olympic gold medallist Elaine Thompson-Herah clocked the fastest 100m in the world this year at 10.89sec at the Golden Games at Walnut, California. Thompson-Herah, running her first outdoor 100m of the season, won her semifinal heat in the meeting east of Los Angeles with a favorable wind of 1.6 meters per second.

She opted out of the final, which was won by American Twanisha Terry in a wind-aided 10.77sec. Americans Aleia Hobbs and Gabby Thomas were second and third in the final, run in a favorable wind of 3.3 m/sec. Thomas, the Olympic

200m bronze medalist, notched the fastest time of the season in her preferred distance, winning in 22.02sec ahead of 2019 World silver medalist Brittany Brown.

Fred Kerley, silver medalist in the 100m at the Tokyo Games, won the men's 200m in 19.80sec ahead of fellow American Michael Norman (19.83). World 100m champion Christian Coleman, who is making his return to competition this season after an 18-month suspension for failing to comply with his anti-doping obligations, was announced at the start of the 200m but did not run it.

American Micah Williams won the men's 100m in a wind-aided 9.83sec. Tonia Marshall (12.46) beat Olympic silver medalist Keni Harrison (12.56) in the 100m hurdles. Only Puerto Rican Jasmine Camacho-Quinn, the defending Olympic champion, has run faster this year. Michael Cherry, who won Olympic 4x400m relay gold in Tokyo, ran the fastest 400m of the year in 44.28sec. — AFP



WALNUT, California: Elaine Thompson-Herah of Jamaica crosses the finish line of the women's 100m dash semifinals during the Mt SAC Relays Elite Division & USATF Golden Games at Hiller Lodge Stadium on April 16, 2022. — AFP

Harry hails Ukraine team's 'bravery' at Invictus Games

THE HAGUE: Britain's Prince Harry on Saturday praised the courage of the Ukraine team at an opening ceremony for the Invictus Games in The Netherlands, where the Ukrainian competitors also received a standing ovation. "Your bravery and choosing to come and of being here tonight cannot be overstated," the Duke of Sussex told the audience at the ceremony in the Dutch city of The Hague.

"Glory to Ukraine," his wife Meghan added in Ukrainian, addressing the team who had travelled to the games despite the invasion of their country ordered by Moscow on Feb 24. Harry said the team had told him of their wish to attend "despite all odds... not simply to show your strength, but to tell your truth. The truth of what is happening in your country. You know we stand with you. The world is united with you and still you deserve more."

The Duke and Duchess of Sussex arrived in The Netherlands on Friday, making their first joint public appearance in Europe since quitting royal life and

moving to North America more than two years ago. A day earlier they had paid a secret visit to Harry's grandmother Queen Elizabeth II at Windsor Castle, where they also reportedly met his father Prince Charles, following tensions caused by their interview with chat show queen Oprah Winfrey in which they accused an unnamed member of the royal family of racism.

'We are all behind you'

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte told the ceremony that some members of the Ukrainian team could not be at the games as they were "fighting on the frontline". "Of course, we are thinking of those Ukrainians in the Invictus community who have paid the ultimate price for their fighting in the war... we are all behind you," he said.

According to the Ukraine team at least four members of the Invictus community there have died in fighting in Ukraine since 2014. Harry, who served with the British army in Afghanistan, founded the Invictus Games for disabled military veterans. More than 500 participants from 20 countries are taking part in the Invictus Games, which have been postponed twice because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Just before the prince's arrival on Friday, the Ukrainian team made their own arrival to great applause. The team of 19 people were present in the Netherlands to take part but said they regretted the



THE HAGUE: The Duke and Duchess of Sussex, Prince Harry and his wife Meghan Markle, visit the sitting volleyball section of the fifth edition of the Invictus Games on April 17, 2022. — AFP

Dupont steers Toulouse past Ulster into quarters

PARIS: France captain Antoine Dupont scored a last-gasp try, converted by international teammate Thomas Ramos, to seal a one-point aggregate win for Toulouse over Ulster and bag a European Champions Cup quarterfinal Saturday. Dupont crossed for the decisive try just four minutes from time in Belfast, Ulster having won the first leg on French soil.

Ramos' conversion made the difference, a simple kick in front of the posts nailing a 30-23 second-leg victory for a nail-biting 50-49 aggregate win. Holders Toulouse will now face Munster, who overcame a 13-8 first-leg deficit to Exeter to run out 26-10 victors in Limerick. "We got the strategy wrong," said a relieved Toulouse coach Ugo Mola. "We wanted to score very quickly. Too many easy points were given away but we're in the quarter-finals. This team does not give up."

Kiwi playmaker Ihaia West notched up 16 points as last season's losing finalists La Rochelle beat Bordeaux-Begles to line up a quarterfinal against Montpellier, like Toulouse one-point victors over English champions Harlequins. West, along with compatriot Tawera Kerr-Barlow, was instrumental in La Rochelle's 31-23 win over Bordeaux for a 62-36 aggregate score.

Bordeaux's chances crumbled when they were



LA ROCHELLE, France: La Rochelle's Gregory Alldritt runs with the ball during the European Champions Cup rugby union match between La Rochelle and Union Bordeaux-Begles at The Marcel Deflandre Stadium on April 16, 2022. — AFP

reduced to 14 men after 26 minutes as referee Wayne Barnes was left with no choice but to red card Ma'ama Vaipulu for a dangerous off-the-ball shoulder barge. The visitors had no answer as West, France No 8 Gregory Alldritt, Kerr-Barlow and Fiji centre Levani Botia all crossed for tries.

La Rochelle will play Montpellier, who lost the second leg 33-20 but scraped past Harlequins 60-59 on aggregate after England fly-half Marcus Smith missed a conversion in the dying stages. "We're pleased to be able to host them and above all play a quarter-final in front of our fans," Alldritt said. — AFP

Sports

Quadruple-chasing Liverpool reach FA Cup final, ending Man City's treble bid

LONDON: Jurgen Klopp hailed one of Liverpool's "best ever" performances as the quadruple chasers reached the FA Cup final with a "special" 3-2 win against Manchester City on Saturday. Klopp's side kept alive their bid to win all four major trophies in a single season thanks to Ibrahima Konate's opener and Sadio Mane's double at Wembley.

Liverpool were three goals up by half-time as they tore City apart with a scintillating display that Klopp rated among the very finest of his reign. City hit back with second half goals from Jack Grealish and Bernardo Silva, but it wasn't enough to stop the Reds reaching their first FA Cup final since 2012. "Absolutely proud, incredible. The first half was one of the best we ever played. We did all the right stuff, we scored in the right moments. We were outstanding. I loved each second of it," Klopp said.

"The second half started with the goal for Man City and then it opens up. The quality of City is insane. We respect City so much and it's so difficult to win against them. But because we have these boys in our dressing room we have a chance." Liverpool are embroiled in a fierce title fight with City, who are one point clear of Klopp's men at the top of the Premier League with seven games left.

They shared a pulsating 2-2 draw in Manchester in the league last weekend, and could still meet in the Champions League final. Asked if their FA Cup semifinal success could be the springboard to pip City in both the Premier League and Champions League, Klopp said: "It's not a statement, we are just in the final. I think City knew beforehand that it could be difficult against us, that's how it has been between us most of the time." While Liverpool are a step closer to football immortality,

Klopp insists the fixture congestion caused by their progress to another final will make the quadruple harder to achieve.

'Special moment'

"The quadruple talk I can't believe it. Qualifying for this final makes the quadruple even more difficult," he said. "I don't think we have a full free week before the last matchday. But we beat the strongest team in the world and that's a pretty special moment." There is no rest for Liverpool in their trophy chase as they host Manchester United on Tuesday. "In three days we play against United, who are fighting for a Champions League place. Historically it is not a friendly game," he said. "Then we play Everton, with the situation they are in it will not be a friendly game. It (the quadruple) is just incredibly unlikely but let's go for it."

Pep Guardiola's decision to field a weakened team will be second-guessed, but City's manager is adamant he was right to leave Kevin De Bruyne on the bench after the Belgian needed stitches in a foot injury. With City's treble bid over, Guardiola has to revive his fatigued players quickly if they are to hold off Liverpool in the Premier League and beat Real Madrid in the Champions League semi-finals.

"I have a lot of confidence in my players and the selection. We had a terrible time in terms of fixtures and travel. That's why we need the fresh legs," he said. "The first half we were so passive. We were scared to support our team-mates. In the second half we showed incredible pride when you talk about being tired. We had chances for extra-time. We tried to put energy in the players, but some-



LONDON: Manchester City's Dutch defender Nathan Ake heads the ball next to Liverpool's Dutch defender Virgil van Dijk during their English FA Cup semifinal match at Wembley Stadium on April 16, 2022. —AFP

times it happens. It is Liverpool."

Guardiola refused to blame Zack Steffen for City's defeat as the American keeper's mistake led to Mane scoring Liverpool's second goal. "It was an accident. Ederson was close (to doing it) in the

other game. The way we use our keepers, the way we move them around, I would say the averages, it can happen," he said. "We have four days until the next game (against Brighton). We have to recover well for the two competitions we are in." —AFP

Ronaldo hat-trick saves Man Utd as Spurs, Arsenal lose

MANCHESTER: Cristiano Ronaldo scored a hat-trick as Manchester United claimed a 3-2 win over Norwich on Saturday to take advantage of defeats for Arsenal and Tottenham in the race for a place in next season's Champions League. Spurs' winning run was brought to an abrupt halt by a 1-0 home defeat by Brighton, while the Gunners were beaten 1-0 at Southampton to slump to a third consecutive loss.

Ronaldo's 50th club hat-trick tempered a revolt among the fanbase at Old Trafford as United move above Arsenal into fifth on goal difference, three points behind Tottenham. There was unrest among the United fans before the game even began as many did not come into the stadium until the 17th minute to protest against the 17 years of the Glazer family's ownership of the club.

Those late to take their seats missed Ronaldo's first goal of the afternoon as he swept home Anthony Elanga's cross. The 37-year-old then powered home Alex Telles' corner for his 20th goal of the season despite United's struggles. However, the Red Devils' defensive problems were laid bare by the bottom-of-the-table Canaries who had scored just 20 goals in their previous 31 league games.

Kieran Dowell halved the arrears in first-half stoppage time before Teemu Pukki levelled seven minutes into the second half. David de Gea then had to produce a brilliant save to deny Pukki completing the comeback. United players were then met with chants of "you're not fit to wear the



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's Portuguese striker Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates with teammates after scoring his third goal during the English Premier League football match against Norwich City at Old Trafford on April 16, 2022. —AFP

shirt", with Paul Pogba singled out for abuse when he was substituted.

But Ronaldo had the final say when his free-kick flew through the grasp of Tim Krul 14 minutes from time to set up a huge week for United. Ralf Rangnick's men face a daunting trip to Liverpool on Tuesday before facing Arsenal next weekend. "Ronaldo has scored three very important goals for us," said De Gea. "We know we aren't playing very well but we got three points.

"Earlier in the season we would have lost this match, so let's look at it as a glass that's half-full," said Juve coach Massimiliano Allegri, who didn't comment on the bizarre sequence of events on which the match turned. Adama Soumaoro was sent off six minutes from the end for his desperate attempt to stop Morata from equalising, which after a VAR check - and Juan Cuadrado hitting the post in front of an open goal - was ruled to have happened outside the area.

In the confusion, Gary Medel became so livid with referee Juan Luca Sacchi that he was booked twice within seconds and also off the field, while Juve were baffled at how the VAR officials could have ruled Soumaoro's challenge outside the area. Bologna thought they had held out in a bizarre end to a match but Vlahovic struck for fourth-placed Juve, who are now looking over their shoulders at contenders for the final Champions League spot.

Roma can close to within three points of Allegri's side with a win at title-chasing Napoli on Monday while Fiorentina are a point behind Jose Mourinho's team with a game in hand after beating Venezia 1-0. Lazio are level with Fiorentina in seventh after Ciro Immobile snatched a 1-1 draw against Torino in stoppage time with his 25th league goal of the campaign. "We need to be more clear-headed," added Allegri. "We were missing that after we equalized because even though there were only a few minutes

substituted in the second half, with a reported injury to his right hamstring.

The 30-year-old will undergo tests on Sunday to diagnose the extent of the problem. Villarreal have 10 days before they play the first leg against Liverpool at Anfield. Moreno has endured a difficult year with injuries, having already suffered problems in October and February, when he was out for just over a month each time. "We are going to see how serious it is, but it has been a bad year for him," said Villarreal coach Unai Emery after the game. "It's been frustrating for everyone, let's see how he is."

After knocking Bayern Munich out in the Champions League quarter-finals with a surprise 1-1 draw in Munich on Tuesday, Villarreal claimed victory against a Getafe side trying to secure survival in Spain's top flight. Despite their Champions League heroics, Emery's team are adrift of the European qualification places, with this win taking them six points behind Real Sociedad in sixth.

Villarreal took the lead in the seventh minute through Moreno after Manu Trigueros' long ball over the top found Paco Alcacer, who passed across for Moreno to send a deflected

We should control the game more against Norwich at home."

Brighton halted Tottenham's charge towards the Champions League as Leandro Trossard struck a 90th-minute winner. But Antonio Conte's men were bailed out by another defeat for Arsenal as they failed to close the gap against a Southampton side that had been thrashed 6-0 by Chelsea last weekend. Brighton were Arsenal's conquerors last time out to snap a seven-game winless run. —AFP



TURIN: Bologna's Chilean defender Gary Medel attempts to tackle Juventus' Spanish forward Alvaro Morata during their Italian Serie A match on April 16, 2022 at the Juventus stadium. —AFP

left there was still enough time to win the game."

Franck Ribery believes that Salernitana can perform a miracle escape from relegation after a 2-1 win at fellow strugglers Sampdoria kept alive their hopes of staying up. Goals from Federico Fazio and Ederson in the first six minutes in Genoa were enough to take Salernitana to 19 points and continue the southern team's bid for safety after an entire season at the bottom of the league. —AFP

finish in. Nine minutes later, the visitors doubled their advantage after this time Moreno slipped in Trigueros, who guided a smart finish into the far corner. Enes Unal pulled one back for Getafe shortly after the hour mark and Unal wanted a penalty late on after a clumsy challenge from Aissa Mandi. Villarreal, though, survived to leave Getafe 15th, four points above the bottom three. Valencia had earlier suffered their first defeat in eight games at home to Osasuna, whose 2-1 win at Mestalla sees them leapfrog their opponents into ninth. —AFP

Haaland hits double as Dortmund thrash Wolfsburg

DORTMUND: Erling Haaland netted twice to end his mini dry spell as Borussia Dortmund hammered Wolfsburg 6-1 on Saturday ahead of next weekend's Bundesliga showdown against leaders Bayern Munich. Haaland, 21, who is widely tipped to leave Dortmund at the end of the season, netted twice in emphatic style having drawn a blank in his previous five games.

Haaland's performance was all the more impressive as he is carrying a leg injury. "It's getting better. He still has pain, but he showed today that he tolerates it well," said Dortmund coach Marco Rose. "It was a good performance by him in a good team display." The thumping win over mid-table Wolfsburg leaves second-placed Dortmund six points behind Bayern. Bayern, who exited the Champions League on Tuesday, are chasing a 10th straight Bundesliga title.

In spring sunshine, and in front of 79,200 fans at Signal Iduna Park, Dortmund turned on the style with five goals in a devastating 14-minute spell in the first half. Tom Rothe, 17, marked a dream Bundesliga debut when the Germany Under-19 defender headed in Dortmund's opening goal from a corner after 24 minutes. The floodgates opened with four more goals in quick succession.

Axel Witsel fired under the feet of visiting goalkeeper Koen Casteels, Manuel Akanji tapped in a free-kick and Emre Can scored with a long-range shot. The Wolfsburg defense was shredded again when Marco Reus served up a tap-in for Haaland, who applauded his teammate after netting his first goal since late January. It was the first time Dortmund held a 5-0 half-time league in Germany's top flight since April 2013.

Reus, who claimed assists for Akanji and Haaland's first goal, went close when he fired just over the crossbar. Dortmund's captain then linked with Julian Brandt to release Haaland, who hammered in his second goal to make it 6-0 after just 54 minutes. Wolfsburg grabbed a late consolation when Ridle Baku fired in the rebound after Dortmund goalkeeper Gregor Kobel's stunning save had denied Lukas Nmecha.

Boateng shines for Hertha

Veteran midfielder Kevin Prince-Boateng put in a commanding display as Hertha Berlin earned a 1-0 win at Augsburg to climb out of the bottom three. Boateng, 35, bossed the midfield as Suat Serdar scored early in the second half to give Hertha only their second win in nine games. Hertha's win pushed VfB Stuttgart, who held Mainz to a goalless away draw, down into 16th, which carries a relegation play-off at the end of the season.

Hertha host Stuttgart next weekend at Berlin's Olympic Stadium. Freiburg stay in the fight for a Champions League place next season with a 3-0 home win over Bochum. Freiburg are fifth, but only remain outside the top four on goal difference. "It would be a dream (to play Champions League), we are very close and have to fight until the end," said Freiburg winger Roland Sallai, who scored twice.

Bochum had Greek defender Konstantinos Stafylidis sent off for a dangerous tackle. The visitors' coach Thomas Reis was also shown a red card soon after for his overzealous protest and banished to the stands. Cologne later won 3-1 at Borussia Moenchengladbach where veteran striker Anthony Modeste, 34, bagged his 75th goal on his 152 appearance for the visitors. —AFP

Moreno helps Villarreal to Getafe win

MADRID: Villarreal's star striker Gerard Moreno could miss the first leg of their Champions League semifinal against Liverpool after he scored and then went off injured in a 2-1 win over Getafe on Saturday. Moreno scored one goal and then made another against Getafe before being



SAN FRANCISCO: Otto Porter Jr #32 of the Golden State Warriors and Bones Hyland #3 of the Denver Nuggets go for a rebound during Game One of the Western Conference First Round NBA Playoffs at Chase Center on April 16, 2022. —AFP

Warriors win as Curry returns to action

SAN FRANCISCO: Golden State's Stephen Curry made a triumphant return from a left foot sprain on Saturday as the Warriors, led by Jordan Poole's 30 points, routed Denver 123-107 in an NBA playoff opener. All-Star guard Curry, sidelined since March 16 with the injury, had 16 points on 5-of-13 shooting from the floor (3-of-6 from 3-point range) with three rebounds, four assists and a steal over 22 minutes off the bench as the host Warriors took a 1-0 lead in the best-of-seven first-round series.

"Everything was smooth for the most part," Curry said. "It was nice to get back out there, to feel the playoff vibe again. It was nice to just be out there with my guys. It was a step in the right direction." Curry said he had no expectations about when he might start again. "I can hopefully provide a lot of energy off the bench," Curry said. "We have to keep things simple, be decisive, have confidence in each other. JP is a part of that now."

Poole hit 9-of-13 from the floor and 5-of-7 from 3-point range in his playoff debut. "It was good to get the first one under the belt," said Poole. "Just taking what they gave me, being patient and trying to be as aggressive as possible." Klay Thompson added 19 points and praised Poole, saying: "He's incredible, a star in the making. He's just going to keep getting better."

Other NBA playoff openers Saturday saw the Utah Jazz outlast Dallas 99-93, Philadelphia defeat

Toronto 131-111 and Minnesota upset Memphis 130-117. Curry started 0-for-5, got his first basket on a goaltending call off a drive to the hoop and played 12 minutes in the first half. "I like the way he approached the game," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. "He found his rhythm as the game went on. It was a really good first game back for him and will set the table for what's to come."

Having Curry back was a thrill for Thompson, who missed more than two full seasons with injuries before returning to Golden State in January. "He's still Steph Curry and he still made huge shots for us," Thompson said. "The threat of him being out there is the best. It makes us a championship team." The Warriors closed the first half on an 18-4 run for a 58-47 edge and pulled away in the third quarter. "The key stretch was the end of the second quarter," Nuggets coach Mike Malone said. "We can't beat ourselves and the Warriors in the same game."

Serbian big man Nikola Jokic, last year's NBA Most Valuable Player, led Denver with 25 points. Utah's Donovan Mitchell scored 30 of his 32 points in the second half and the visiting Jazz beat the Mavericks, who were without injured All-Star guard Luka Doncic due to a left calf strain. "We have a lot of confidence," Utah's Royce O'Neale said. "We have the guys we need to make a long run. It's about us staying locked in."

Bojan Bogdanovic added 26 points while Rudy

Gobert grabbed 17 rebounds. Dallas pulled within 92-91 before O'Neale made his only basket, a 3-pointer with 57 seconds remaining, and Mitchell added four free throws to secure the victory. "Our mental toughness was challenged and we responded," Jazz coach Quin Snyder said. "We kept our aggression." Mitchell began the game 0-for-6 and 1-for-9 from the floor but sparkled in the second half. "Just be in attack mode," Mitchell said of his halftime change. "I came out a little too passive in the first half." Jalen Brunson led Dallas with 24 points.

Sixers rip Raptors

Tyrese Maxey scored a playoff career-high 38 points and Tobias Harris added 26 to power the 76ers. "It's a testimony to the work," said Maxey. "The work you put in when nobody else is around, it shows when you perform before thousands." Cameroonian center Joel Embiid, the NBA scoring champion, added 19 points and 15 rebounds while James Harden contributed 22 points and a game-high 14 assists. Pascal Siakam led Toronto with 24 points. At Memphis, Minnesota's Anthony Edwards scored a game-high 36 points in his playoff debut and Karl-Anthony Towns added 29 points and 13 rebounds in a matchup of the NBA's two top-scoring clubs. Malik Beasley added 23 points off the bench for the T-Wolves. Ja Morant led Memphis with 32 points. —AFP



EWA BEACH, Hawaii: Hyo Joo Kim of The Republic of Korea poses with the Lotte Championship Trophy after winning the Lotte Championship at Hoakalei Country Club on April 16, 2022. —AFP

Kim Hyo-joo wins LPGA Lotte Championship

LOS ANGELES: South Korea's Kim Hyo-joo held off Hinako Shibuno to win the LPGA Lotte Championship by two strokes on Saturday. Kim teed off with a three-shot lead and was four up after birdies at the fifth and eighth holes at Hoakalei Country Club in Hawaii. But Japan's Shibuno, with birdies at the fourth and 11th, was within one stroke after Kim bogeyed the ninth and 17th.

Kim then missed the fairway at the par-five 18th, her second shot finding the rough. However, her wedge from the rough rolled within a foot of the cup to leave her a tap-in for birdie that all but sealed the win over Shibuno, who was in a greenside bunker. Kim signed for a one-under par 71 and an 11-under par total of 277. She notched her fifth LPGA title, a cache that includes her major victory at the Evian Championship in 2014, before she was a member of the LPGA Tour.

"There were a lot of expectations but also a lot of support coming from friends and family as well," said Kim, who had led by three shots after the second and third rounds. "There have been ups and downs and I think I am at the up part right now and I feel very proud, a little confident about the future and the outlook looks bright for me and I feel like I can do better moving forward." Shibuno, the 2019 Women's British Open winner, carded a two-under 70 for 279. South Korea's Choi Hye-jin was alone in third on 281 after a three-under par 69, with Ashleigh Buhai of South Africa fourth with a 70 for 282. —AFP

Spence stops Ugas to seize third welterweight belt

LOS ANGELES: Errol Spence punished Yordenis Ugas on the way to a 10th-round technical knockout on Saturday to add the Cuban's World Boxing Association title to his World Boxing Council and International Boxing Federation belts. Spence, fighting in front of home fans in the Dallas Cowboys' AT&T stadium in Texas, remained unbeaten, improving to 28-0 with 22 knockouts when referee Laurence Cole called a halt at 1:44 of the 10th on the advice of the ringside doctor.

By then, Ugas' right eye was swollen shut from the blows meted out by Spence, who rocked the Cuban in the seventh round and continued to pour in the punishment until it was over. Spence was fighting for the first time since an eye injury suffered in training forced him out of a planned bout with Manny Pacquiao last August. Ugas stepped in at the last minute and sent the Philippine legend into retirement with a unanimous decision victory.

But the 35-year-old Cuban had no answer for Spence's powerful combinations. He did rock the American in the sixth round, sending him reeling into the ropes after knocking Spence's mouthpiece out. Spence said he was distracted by the loss of his mouthpiece, and didn't defend himself adequately. "I thought the ref had said stop," Spence said. "That's my fault." It could have been ruled a knockdown, but Spence - who has never been sent to the canvas - insisted he was never out on his feet. He led on all three judges' scorecards when the fight was stopped as Ugas fell to 27-5 with 12 knockouts.



ARLINGTON, Texas: Errol Spence Jr celebrates after defeating Yordenis Ugas at AT&T Stadium on April 16, 2022. —AFP

'Kept on punching'

This would be Spence's second comeback from serious injury - the first when he was sidelined for months after a car crash in Oct 2019. The 32-year-old said during the in-ring interview post-bout he didn't have any doubts about his return after suffering a detached retina. "I believe in myself 100 percent. I train 100 percent. And I just knew I would be victorious," he said.

However, with his last fight being in December 2020 - a victory over Danny Garcia - Spence said he did feel his timing was a little off in the early rounds with Ugas. "But I knew I was going to catch

on later in the rounds. I just kept on working, kept on punching." With three belts in hand, Spence wasted no time in calling out unbeaten World Boxing Organization champion Terence Crawford. "That's the fight that I want, that's the fight everybody else wants," Spence said. "Terence, I'm coming for that belt."

Ugas, meanwhile, said he wished the fight had continued. "I couldn't see from the eye, but I wanted to keep going to the end," said the 35-year-old Cuban, whose eye was examined by the ringside doctor several times during the bout. "I feel sad because I trained really hard for this fight." —AFP