



3 Kuwait caricaturists pledge solidarity with Palestinians



5 UK's PM in India for hard sell on anti-Russia action



15 Man City back on top as Arsenal rekindle dreams



Ramadan Timings	
Fajr	03:51
Shurooq	05:15
Dhuhr	11:47
Asr	15:22
Maghrib	18:18
Isha	19:40

VOLVO

Putin claims 'liberation' of flattened city of Mariupol

Russia bans US Vice President, Zuckerberg, 27 prominent Americans

Zain Group's net profit grows 6% to hit \$156 m

KUWAIT: Zain Group, a leading telecom innovator with operations in seven markets across the Middle East and Africa, announces its consolidated financial results for the first quarter (Q1) ended March 31, 2022. Across its footprint, Zain increased its active customer base by 2.3 million to serve 50.9 million. Zain Group generated consolidated revenue of KD 408 million (\$1.3 billion) for the Q1 2022, up 7% year-on-year (Y-o-Y).

EBITDA for the quarter reached KD 154 million (\$507 million), down 3% Y-o-Y, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 38%. Net income for the quarter reached KD 47 million (\$156 million), up 6% Y-o-Y reflecting an Earnings Per Share of 11 fils (\$0.04). For Q1 2022, foreign currency translation was impacted mainly due to the currency devaluation in Sudan from an average of 271 (SDG/USD) during Q1 2021 to an average



Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO

of 483 (SDG/USD) during Q1 2022, cost the Group \$120 million in revenue and \$80 million in EBITDA. — (See Page 8)

ZAPORIZHZHIA: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday claimed the "liberation" of the flattened city of Mariupol after nearly two months of fighting, demanding its trapped Ukrainian defenders be sealed up in their underground last stand. The fate of the besieged port has become totemic as Russia battles to complete a land bridge covering territories of Ukraine already under its control, including Crimea - which would deprive the country of its industrial heartland and most of its coastline.

President Joe Biden, however, said Putin was doomed to failure in Ukraine, as he announced \$800 million in extra US military aid including howitzers and tactical drones. "Our unity at home with our allies and partners, and our unity with the Ukrainian people, is sending an unmistakable message to Putin - he will never succeed in dominating and occupying all of Ukraine," he said.

Ukraine appealed for an immediate humanitarian corridor to allow civilians and wounded fighters to be evacuated from Mariupol's sprawling Azovstal steel plant. "They have almost no food, water, essential medicine," Ukraine's foreign ministry said. Three school buses filled with Mariupol evacuees

including women and children arrived in the city of Zaporizhzhia after crossing through territory held by Russian forces.

Exhausted evacuee Valentina, 73, told AFP she urgently needed medication for her back as she clutched onto an electricity pole with dirt-covered hands to stop herself from falling over. "My apartment has been destroyed just like the house of my son," she said, still wearing her slippers along with a torn black coat. "From day one we were in a basement. It was cold. We were praying to God. I was asking him to protect us."

The flow of Western military aid has helped force Russia to deflect its offensive to eastern Ukraine and accentuated the devastating pressure on places like Mariupol on the shores of the Sea of Azov. "Mariupol has been liberated," Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu told Putin during a televised meeting. "The remaining nationalist formations took refuge in the industrial zone of the Azovstal plant."

Shoigu said around 2,000 Ukrainian soldiers remained inside the site, where the last pocket of resistance has been sheltering in a network of tunnels. **Continued on Page 6**

Ramadan Kareem

Ramadan: Ancient practice, modern therapy

By Teresa Leshner

Modern life, which is characterized by computerization, communication, and globalization, has made work easier and given us more leisure options, but has also contributed to mental and social problems. "Modern man" is often characterized by lack of purpose, distraction, low stamina, isolation, loss of community involvement, decreased empathy, and general depression.

Given the busy schedules that we often feel we have little control over, it's hard to make major lifestyle changes. But our Creator has prescribed a treatment for whatever social, emotional or personal challenge we face in life - it is called Ramadan. Feeling a lack of purpose in your life? Fast the month of Ramadan. Nobody would undertake such a long and difficult commitment without a reason, whether or religious conviction, health benefits, personal challenge, or solidarity with Muslims.

The Quran says, "Fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you so that you may learn God-consciousness" (2:183). If you sincerely fast, observing the restrictions on food, drink and sexual intimacy in daylight hours, you will develop a strong sense of purpose - which for most is to obey and worship Almighty God. You will also become a more sincere person, since fasting cannot really be observed by another person - only you and God. Ramadan is the perfect time to ask, "What is the purpose of my existence?"

Most people nowadays are distracted due to busy schedules, incessant phone messages and emails, and the demands of media for our attention. We lack focus and can hardly finish one task from start to finish without distractions. Some people cannot even eat a meal without their phones nearby so they can check WhatsApp messages.

If this describes you, I recommend fasting the month of Ramadan, which will eliminate one major distraction in our lives - eating - during daylight hours, which increases productivity and

Continued on Page 6

UK Queen turns 96

LONDON: Queen Elizabeth II turned 96 on Thursday, receiving a rousing "Happy Birthday" from a military band and ceremonial gun salutes, after a troubled year hit by health concerns. The Band of the Coldstream Guards, in red tunics and bearskin hats, played the tribute to crowds of onlookers outside her Windsor Castle home west of London.

Ceremonial gun salutes resounded across the country, including at the Tower of London. But the queen - the oldest and longest-serving head of state in the world - marked the occasion with little fanfare, retreating to her Sandringham country estate in eastern England for a short break.

No official engagements have been planned, although royal officials released a photograph of the horse-loving head of state with two of her fell ponies. Her grandson Prince William and his wife Kate called her "an inspiration to so many across the UK, the Commonwealth and the world".

Continued on Page 6

Rockets, Zionist airstrikes stoke new clashes

JERUSALEM: Palestinian militants in Gaza and Zionist warplanes exchanged fire early Thursday in the biggest escalation in months, followed by fresh violence at Jerusalem's flashpoint Al-Aqsa mosque. Zionists carried out air strikes in central Gaza after midnight, hours after a rocket fired by militants hit the garden of a house in southern Zionist entity - the first such fire to hit the Jewish state since January. The military said it had hit an underground rocket factory, prompting another volley of at least four more rockets from the impoverished territory run by Islamist movement Hamas.

The exchanges come after nearly a month of deadly violence - focused on Jerusalem's super-sensitive Al-Aqsa mosque compound, known to Jews as the Temple Mount. Zionist police fired tear gas and multiple stun grenades inside the compound in annexed east Jerusalem again on Thursday, AFP journalists reported. The Palestinian Red Crescent said its medics were treating a person who was hit in the face with a rubber-coated steel bullet inside the Al-Aqsa.

Zionist police said dozens of "rioters" had thrown stones and petrol bombs from the mosque. "A violent splinter group is stopping Muslim worshippers from entering the mosque and causing damage to the site," the police alleged, adding that the wounded were refusing to be treated by Zionists. Seven Palestinians, all residents of east Jerusalem, were arrested in con-



LONDON: Members of the Honorable Artillery Company stand guard during the fire of the 62 Gun Royal Salute for the Queen's Birthday, from Tower Wharf on April 21, 2022. (Inset) In this file photo, Britain's Queen Elizabeth II cuts a cake to celebrate the start of the Platinum Jubilee.— AFP



JERUSALEM: A Palestinian man prays in the street in Jerusalem, on April 21, 2022, during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. — AFP

nection with "violent incidents" on Wednesday.

More than four weeks of deadly violence have sparked international concerns of a major escalation, a year after a similar set of circumstances degenerated into an 11-day war. Senior Palestinian official Hussein al-Sheikh said that US acting Assistant Secretary of State Yael Lempert and senior diplomat Hady Amr would be arriving in the Palestinian territories to discuss the escalation, specifically at the Al-Aqsa.

Tensions have been particularly high as the Jewish Passover festival coincides with the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Palestinians and Arabs in Zionist entity carried out four deadly attacks in late March and early April that claimed 14 lives, mostly civilians.

A total of 23 Palestinians have been killed since March 22, including assailants who targeted Zionists, according to an AFP tally. Palestinians have been outraged by repeated visits by Jews to the

Continued on Page 6

Iraq courts sentence 8 to death

BAGHDAD: Eight people have been sentenced to death in Iraq, half of them over a 2020 car bombing in the city of Ramadi, the judiciary said on Thursday. A criminal court in Anbar, a province in western Iraq, "sentenced four terrorists to death by hanging for setting off a car bomb in Ramadi", the Supreme Judicial Council said.

The men who carried out the September 2020 attack that wounded six people had been "working with the terrorist gangs" of the Islamic State group, it said in a statement. IS established a so-called caliphate across Iraq and Syria from 2014 and, although Iraq declared victory over the jihadists three years later, they still pose a threat and carry out attacks.

In a separate case, a criminal court in Najaf, south of Baghdad, handed the death sentence to four men over the killing of a policeman in January 2021. The Supreme Judicial Council said the officer had "wanted to buy a car" but "when he arrived, they shot him and stole his money". Amnesty International said in a report last year that Iraq was the world's fourth leading executioner. The London-based advocacy group said it recorded nearly 50 executions in the country in 2020, including of many people found to be IS jihadists.— AFP

Local

Arab ministerial committee decries Zionist actions on Al-Aqsa Mosque

Zionist entity asked to respect historical, legal status quo in Al-Aqsa Mosque



AMMAN: The Arab Ministerial Committee in charge of international action to confront illegal Zionist policies and measures in the occupied city of Jerusalem, holds an emergency meeting in the Jordanian capital, Amman on Thursday. —KUNA

AMMAN: The Arab Ministerial Committee in charge of international action to confront illegal Zionist policies and measures in the occupied city of Jerusalem condemned the Zionist violations against worshippers in Al-Aqsa Mosque, which escalated during the past few days and led to hundreds of injuries and arrests.

This came from a press release issued by the

emergency meeting in the Jordanian capital, Amman on Thursday to discuss the recent Zionist escalation in Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque and ways to stop it and restore peace.

In its statement, the committee rejected Zionist actions to divide Al-Aqsa Mosque in any way possible and denounced their violations of international laws. The Committee also stressed that Zionist enti-

ty should respect the historical and legal status quo in Al-Aqsa Mosque, and return to what it once was before 2000, to ensure respect that Al-Aqsa Mosque, with an area of 144 acres, is a place of worship purely for Muslims. The statement called on the International Community and the Security Council to take responsibilities in maintaining UN charter and international peace and security, and to

implement its resolutions related to Jerusalem.

The statement stressed the need for Zionist entity to stop the escalatory practices in all the Palestinian territories, lift the siege on the Gaza Strip, and stop all measures that threaten security and peace, and undermine the two-state solution and the chances of achieving comprehensive peace. — AFP

Malaysian embassy holds 'Yes2Malaysia Day' on April 22, 23

KUWAIT: Embassy of Malaysia, in the State of Kuwait in collaboration with Rexpocentral Malaysia and Education Malaysia Office in Jordan, proudly presents Yes2Malaysia Information Day, which will be held on 22 and 23 April 2022 from 9 pm to 1 am during the holy month of Ramadan.

Malaysian Ambassador Dato' Mohammad Ali Selamat is proud to be able to host it at the Embassy of Malaysia in the State of Kuwait and very pleased to welcome all the Kuwaitis, Malaysians and other expatriates who have been residing in Kuwait as well as those who are new to the group/community/association etc.



Dato' Mohammad Ali Selamat

With top-notch education standards, Malaysia is fast becoming a hot favorite with international students. Its educational institutes are counted within the top 200 universities in the world. The best part of Malaysia is its international students from around the globe, including India & other GCC countries. The ambassador is pleased to announce that the operation of its scheduled commercial flights to the city of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, via Bangkok, Thailand, commencing tentatively on 2 June 2022, with tri-weekly flights on Mondays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, which is one of the most important and new destinations of Kuwait Airways, selected after extensive and systematic research due to its historic and touristic attractions along with its rich, diverse culture.

Moreover, Kuala Lumpur also distinguishes itself as a suitable destination for holidays throughout the year and is considered the cultural, financial, and economic centre of Malaysia.

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KFAED grants UNICEF \$340,000

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) on Thursday signed an agreement with UNICEF whereby the Kuwaiti fund would give an additional grant worth \$340,000 as a contribution to financing a water project in Gaza Strip.

KFAED said in a statement that the project envisages securing water to more than 280,000 people and setting up sewage networks. The accord was signed by KFAED's Director General Marwan Al-Ghanem and UNICEF's bureau representative in the Gulf Al-Tayeb Adam. The grant is a follow-up to a \$3 million worth of grant the fund has given to UNICEF to finance the venture. — KUNA



Quran contest held in Ahmadi

KUWAIT: Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said Kuwait was and still is a leader in caring for the Holy Quran and its sciences by organizing scientific, cultural and knowledge contests at various levels, led by Kuwait's major Holy Quran competition under the patronage of HH the Amir, "which distinguishes our beloved country".

The governor was speaking at the end of the Ahmadi governorate Ramadan Quran learning and reciting contest, organized by the governorate under the patronage of the governor in cooperation with the ministry of awqaf and Islamic affairs.

The contest was organized for the sixth year after two years of suspension due to the coron-



avirus pandemic, and was in three categories for boys and girls - the first for youth aged 14 to 18 for learning three chapters by heart, the second for juniors aged 10 to 13 for learning two chapters by

heart and the third for children aged 5 to 9 in learning half of the 30th chapter. The contests were held in four mosques for the 350 contestants, both boys and girls.



Citizens distribute iftar meals to less privileged residents



KUWAIT: Ramadan always represents a chance for people to enhance their good deeds and helping those less fortunate to break their fast is an honorable act during the holy month. It would be common to see rows of expatriate workers lining up to receive Iftar meals prior to the Maghreb (sunset) prayers from food trucks placed near cooperative societies or auditoriums.

The distribution of the food is streamlined with meals available free in line with the generous spirit of the holy month of Ramadan. —KUNA

KUWAIT: Resident workers lining up to receive Iftar meals prior to the Maghreb prayer. —KUNA photos

Local

Caricaturists showcase works to pledge solidarity with Palestine

Kuwait Cartoon Society hosting art exhibition 'Jerusalem in the Eyes of Artists'



KUWAIT: Onlookers watch caricature exhibition hosted by Kuwait Cartoon Society. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: To express solidarity with Palestine, the Kuwait Cartoon Society is hosting an art exhibition 'Jerusalem in the Eyes of Artists' at its premises in Daiya till the end of Ramadan. Twenty-five caricaturists from Kuwait and other Arab nationalities are participating in this exhibition with over 50 pictures.

Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub said through this exhibition, the Kuwaiti people are expressing their feelings towards the Palestinian issue. "This exhibition was organized in less than four days. I would like to thank the Kuwait Cartoon Society for this initiative and all the artists who are participating in this exhibition. We won't let the Zionist occupier desecrate the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and they will pay for their crime," he said.

"Their support gives our people the strength and power to be resilient and strengthens our resolve to face the Zionist occupation in Palestine. It also reflects



what Palestine means for the people of Kuwait and its leadership. Since ages, we know about Kuwait's attitude towards our case, and we are glad and feel proud of this Kuwaiti attitude," he added.

"I appreciate the visit of the Iraqi and the Moroccan ambassadors, which reflects the position of their countries. I also excuse all those who couldn't come

as I know that everyone is busy during Ramadan and they have many responsibilities," concluded Tahboub.

Iraqi Ambassador to Kuwait Almanhal Al-Safi said that he is pleased to see the warm feelings expressed in the artworks at this exhibition. "Kuwait is always supporting the Palestinians on all levels, as well as Iraq and other countries. We pray



to God that the days of relief are near for the Palestinians," he said.

Kuwaiti caricaturist Mohammed Thalaab noted that the exhibition was held in a very short time and after the latest dramatic events in Jerusalem. "This is an initiative by the Kuwait Cartoon

Society in solidarity with Palestine, as caricature is very effective worldwide. Organizing such an exhibition is our responsibility. All the images are related to the latest events in Jerusalem. Last year we also held a similar art exhibition for Palestine," he said.



KUWAIT: Polish Ambassador to Kuwait Pawel Lechowicz meets with deputy chief of Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) board of directors, Anwar Al-Hasawi and team. —KUNA

Polish Ambassador commends Kuwait's humanitarian work

KUWAIT: Polish Ambassador to Kuwait, Pawel Lechowicz, commended Kuwait's efforts in easing the suffering of Ukrainian refugees in Poland, affirming that Kuwait is no stranger to humanitarian work. In a statement to KUNA after meeting with

deputy chief of Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) board of directors, Anwar Al-Hasawi, Lechowicz praised KRCS' quick response to calls of help, and its efforts in garnering support to those afflicted by catastrophes.

On his part, Al-Hasawi welcomed the Polish ambassador to the society's headquarters, affirming KRCS' keenness on contributing to humanitarian efforts in aiding those in need and alleviating their burdens. Al-Hasawi added that the meeting discussed various ways the society could aid Ukrainian refugees in Poland and Romania. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Azerbaijani Ambassador to Kuwait Elkhan Gahraman with media representatives during the iftar.

Azerbaijan Embassy hosts media figures

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: On the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, Azerbaijan Embassy to Kuwait hosted an iftar for local media representatives, on Tuesday, at Marina Hotel.

In a press statement on the sidelines of the iftar, Azerbaijani Ambassador to Kuwait, Elkhan Gahraman expressed gratitude for media cooperation and coverage during his stay in Kuwait, applauding the role of the professional Kuwaiti media. He said that the blessed month of Ramadan has a special atmosphere in Kuwait, pointing out that despite the similarity between the celebration of Ramadan in his country and Arab countries, there are some unique aspects in Azerbaijan regarding

celebrating the holy month.

Gahraman noted that Azerbaijan and Kuwait are similar in the tradition of the family gathering at the Iftar table. "During Eid Al-Fitr, there is a special celebration in the Azerbaijani villages, where each family puts a feast in the outdoor garden of their home and all passers-by are allowed to eat with no invitation," he said. He added that celebrating Eid Al-Fitr in his country shows how Azerbaijani people evaluate the principles of cultural pluralism and tolerance, noting that Azerbaijan values the human aspect and considers the diversity of religious and nationalism as moral unity, emphasizing that Azerbaijanis are the closest people to Arabs in terms of customs and traditions.

At the end of the event, Ambassador Gahraman congratulated Muslims all over the world for the holy month of Ramadan, adding that experiencing Ramadan in Kuwait was a unique experience, where he enjoyed visiting friends in the diwanis and participating in Ramadan Ghabgas.

On the occasion of the



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ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
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GENEVA: Jamal Al-Ghunaim with ILO Director General Guy Ryder.

Kuwait to boost cooperation with ILO: Ghunaim

GENEVA: Kuwait is keen on bolstering cooperation with the International Labor Organization (ILO), said a top Kuwaiti diplomat Thursday. Kuwait Permanent Representative at the UN and international organizations' headquarters in Geneva Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim told KUNA that his meeting with ILO Director General Guy Ryder in Geneva had focused on a number of issues including expanding cooperation between the two sides.

Kuwait and ILO are keen on boosting cooperation within the labor sector to meet the rights of both employers and employees, he affirmed, adding that the two sides had been cooperating closely through the ILO's regional bureau in Beirut, Lebanon. He indicated that his meeting with Ryder had touched on the agenda of the annual meeting of the ILO, which Kuwait would partake with official delegations from the government, the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), and labor force. Ambassador Al-Ghunaim commended the ILO for including the Palestinian laborers' crisis in its annual report, which would be featured in the upcoming meeting. — KUNA

Kuwaiti oil price down to \$110.33

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil barrel dropped \$3.08 to reach \$110.33 per barrel (pb) on Wednesday, compared with \$113.41 pb the day before, announced Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) on Thursday.

In international markets, Brent Crude oil contracts went down by 45 cents to reach \$106.80 pb upon settlement, while West Texas Intermediate went up 19 cents to reach \$102.75 pb.

Meanwhile, the price of OPEC's daily basket of crude went down two cents to settle at \$110.52 per barrel (pb), compared with \$110.54 pb the day before, the cartel said. The annual average OPEC basket price for 2021 reached \$69.89, OPEC daily bulletin, it said Wednesday. The monthly average for the organization's basket of crude in March was \$113.48 pb, while it was \$93.95 in February, it added. — KUNA

KRCS serves iftar meals for Syrian refugees in Jordan

AMMAN: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), backed by Kuwait Finance House (KFH), served an Iftar banquet to 1,000 families of Syrian refugees living in Jordan as part of a relief campaign costing \$1.7 million. The banquet was offered in collaboration with Jordan Red Crescent in Amman on Wednesday evening, said Abdullah Al-Saif, Manager of Social Media and PR Services Center at KFH. During the function, Eid clothing items were distributed to the refugees and a range of festive, recreational and educational activities were held for refugee kids," Al-Saif told KUNA. The relief campaign continues across the Kingdom of Jordan throughout the holy month of Ramadan; it features the projects of loaf of bread, Ramadan basket, Eid clothing and distribution of 15,000 Iftar meals, he added.

The campaign, funded by KFH, targets a daily average of 500 beneficiaries, said Abdulaziz Al-Aon, a KRCS volunteer. — KUNA

Kuwait Heritage



KUWAIT: This postcard image of 1928 from the collection of the British Army shows a group of dry grain vendors offering their goods like rice and chickpeas to potential buyers in front of some shops. The photo by Mohdzakaria Abu El Ella, a researcher in the Heritage, Ministry of Information.



KUWAIT: DWC's guests during the activities and social gatherings of the Ramadan Ghabga and the Girgian night.

DWC hosts social gathering to mark Ramadan

KUWAIT: Within the celebrations of the Diplomatic Women's Committee (DWC) Kuwait during the holy month of Ramadan, the Committee's advisor, Narges Al-Shatti, and the official of media and public relations, Fauzia Abdel Baset, prepared a Ramadan program with its distinguished activities and social gatherings such as the Ramadan Ghabga and the Girgian night.

In the presence of the honorary chairperson of the Committee Sheikha Halah Bader Muhammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Crowne Plaza Hotel a festivity was held by the members of DWC as they welcomed their guests with incense, perfumes and rose water. Among the attendees were the lady ambassadors and the spouse of ambassadors and diplomats accredited to the state of Kuwait. The program was presented by the famous Kuwaiti anchor Abdul Aziz Darwish.

The program included a video presentation about the history, culture and traditions of the holy month of Ramadan in Kuwaiti society. A popular folk art was presented with the musical performance of the Bu Tabla band as well as some Kuwaiti traditional cuisine that characterize the Ramadan table in Kuwait. At the end of the ceremony, DWC distributed the Girgian's sweets to the attendees, and shared the greetings of Ramadan, the month of worship and blessings.



ICSK Junior holds virtual assembly 'Satrarambh'

KUWAIT: To begin the new academic year 2022-2023, a virtual assembly - Satrarambh was conducted by the students of ICSK Junior beginning with a prayer recited in different languages to invoke the blessings for the upcoming academic session.

After the auspicious moment of lighting the lamp and a thought for the day, Principal Sherly Dennis in high spirits expressed her exuberance to meet the students and confirmed that all will be attending offline classes in a single batch, next term. She also motivated the students to take part in extra-curricular activities to enhance their hidden talents.

"All the world's a stage. And all the men and women merely players." With this famous quote a skit was beautifully presented by the students of class 3, which displayed their inherent talents and feelings about this new beginning after two long years. A melodious song rendition was another highlight of the event. The staff of ICSK Junior led

by the Principal and Vice Principal welcomed the students back to school after a recess of two years. Glimpses of these moments were shared in the assembly which brought a glimmer in each eye.

"Yesterday is the past, tomorrow is the future but today is a gift. That is why it is called the present."

The assembly progressed instructing their fellow students to keep going by following certain precautions to keep them safe & sound from the

virus. The students also enlightened with the rules that must be followed while in school. Vice-Principal C. Sheeja appreciated the efforts of the children, parents & teachers who made the event

successful & hoped that the students take up their studies seriously & perform well. Academic coordinator, Shanthi Krishna conveyed her best wishes to all the children. Now in real sense we can say once again.....School bells are ringing loud and clear; long vacations over, school is here.





QR codes, cranes:
Japan embraces
modern cemeteries

Belgian FM steps down to care for husband

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GANDHINAGAR, India: Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson (C) gets a traditional turban tied on his head upon his arrival at the Gujarat Biotechnology University in Gandhinagar on April 21, 2022. —AFP

UK PM in India on anti-Russia action

India trip twice postponed because of COVID-19 flare-ups

AHMEDABAD, India: UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson arrived in India Thursday touting job-creating investment but facing long odds to get his reluctant counterpart Narendra Modi to back Western action against Russia. Johnson arrived in Gujarat—Modi's home state and the ancestral home to half of the United Kingdom's British Indians—where he is meeting business leaders and taking a cultural tour of the historic Ahmedabad city.

He will leave for New Delhi to meet his Indian counterpart on Friday, providing Johnson some respite from the "partygate" controversy over his criminal violation of pandemic lockdown rules. Johnson will miss a parliamentary vote on Thursday into whether he deliberately misled the House of Commons in previously denying any Downing Street rule-breaking—normally a resigning matter. The India trip has been twice postponed because of COVID-19 flare-ups in each country, and was briefly in doubt again this week when the vote was announced, with opposition leaders insisting Johnson stand down.

But UK sources said it was seen as too important to put off again. Downing Street said it would seal two-way investment deals worth more than £1 billion (\$1.3 billion), creating almost 11,000 jobs in Britain. "What we're focusing on today is the incredible opportunities to deepen this partnership," Johnson told reporters while visiting a factory in Gujarat.

Johnson's visit began with a trip to Sabarmati ashram, once the home of independence hero Mahatma Gandhi, where he was invited to sit cross-legged and work a wooden spinning wheel. The tool was once vital to the local textile industry and championed by Gandhi as a symbol of resistance to Britain's colonial rule of India.

No lectures

Downing Street said the visit would yield new partnerships on defence, artificial intelligence and green energy,

along with investment deals in areas including robotics, electric vehicles and satellite launches. But London acknowledges that it is some way off clinching a post-Brexit trade deal with Modi's government, which wants more visas for Indians to work or study in the UK. India meanwhile has refused openly to condemn the Kremlin for its invasion of Ukraine, reliant as it is on Russian imports of energy, agricultural goods and military hardware. "India and Russia have historically a very different relationship, perhaps than Russia and the UK have had over the last couple of decades," Johnson said.

"We have to reflect that reality, but clearly I'll be talking about it to Narendra Modi." Foreign Secretary Liz Truss came away from New Delhi empty-handed last month when she pressed the Indians to do more against Russia, and Modi has also given short shrift to appeals from US President Joe Biden. Johnson will tout the benefits of India moving more quickly towards renewables—a pertinent strategic issue as countries attempt to pivot away from Russian energy.

"Both our countries are excessively reliant on foreign hydrocarbons. And we need to move away from that together," Johnson said. "One of the things that we're talking about is what we can do to build partnerships on hydrogen, on electric vehicles, on offshore wind, on all the ways that you can reduce the cost of energy for people with green technology."

Downing Street has denied that, given the Ukraine war's impact on energy supplies, it is soft-peddling its commitment to net-zero carbon emissions—after India joined with China to torpedo a stronger accord at the COP26 climate summit held in Scotland last year. The UK also has a sizeable Sikh community, and its leaders have been demanding that Johnson raise the case of Scotsman Jagtar Singh Johal, who has been detained without trial in India for more than four years. —AFP

Australia says will not challenge Assange extradition

SYDNEY: Australia will not challenge Wikileaks founder Julian Assange's extradition to the United States and has confidence in the British judicial system, a senior government minister said Thursday. A British court issued a formal order Wednesday for the Australian national to be extradited to the United States, where he would face trial for the publication of a trove of secret files relating to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

If convicted, he could face up to 175 years in prison. "We have confidence in the independence and integrity of the British justice system," Australian Senator Simon Birmingham told the national broadcaster ABC Thursday. Australia's government was not arguing against the extradition, he said.

"This is a process that will be able to continue to work through that system," said Birmingham, who is Australia's finance minister. Following the British court's order, Assange's lawyers have until May 18 to make submissions to Britain's interior minister Priti Patel, with whom the final decision about his extradition rests.

Birmingham noted that Assange's right of



Julian Assange

appeal remained—he can seek appeal to the High Court—and said Australia would continue to provide consular assistance to its jailed citizen. A coalition of 25 human rights groups—including the American Civil Liberties Union, Human Rights Watch and Reporters Without Borders—has challenged Assange's extradition saying it poses a "grave threat to press freedom both in the United States and abroad."

The Australian has been fighting to avoid extradition for more than a decade, dramatically taking refuge in the Ecuadorian embassy in London in 2012 to avoid extradition to Sweden over sexual assault charges.

He has been held in London's high-security Belmarsh prison since 2019 for skipping bail on the Swedish charges, which were dropped in 2020. —AFP

Macron, Le Pen in final push after fiery TV debate

PARIS: President Emmanuel Macron and far-right rival Marine Le Pen on Thursday launched a final push for votes in working class heartlands of France after a pre-election debate marked by bitter clashes. The televised debate on Wednesday evening—a pivotal moment ahead of Sunday's run-off vote—was marked by a highly aggressive performance by Macron, who lost no opportunity to attack his opponent throughout the marathon three-hour session.

Le Pen chose a more cautious approach, making every effort not to be ruffled by the incoming fire and clearly mindful not to repeat her flustered appearance in a 2017 debate that was widely derided as a fiasco. The stakes are huge in the election, a rematch of the 2017 run-off between the two candidates. That earlier contest was easily won by Macron but the margin is far narrower this time.

Le Pen is contending to be the first far-right leader of France and Macron the first French president to win a second term since Jacques Chirac in 2002. "Macron on the attack, Le Pen on the defensive," headlined the Le Parisien daily in its Thursday edition.

Polls show Macron has a clear advantage over Le Pen of some 10 percentage points but allies warn nothing is in the bag due to the large

number of undecided voters. Both rivals have their eyes on left-wing voters and especially those who backed hard-left candidate Jean-Luc Melenchon, who finished third in the first-round vote on April 10. The president was due on Thursday to visit the low-income Seine-Saint-Denis region outside Paris. He lagged far behind Melenchon in round one in the region, where purchasing power and housing have been voters' main concerns. Le Pen was due to spend the day in the northern industrial region of Hauts-de-France—where she enjoyed strong support in the first round—winding up with a final campaign rally in the town of Arras.

'Boa constrictor'

Brice Teinturier, director-general of the Ipsos polling group, told France 2 television that in a "relentless" debate performance, Macron had tried to portray Le Pen as both dangerous and potentially incompetent, adopting an often "condescending" tone. "The accumulation of these elements can create an impression of conviction but also one of being over the top and just too bloody," he said. Macron sought to land a direct hit on Le Pen against the background of Russia's invasion of Ukraine by focusing on a loan her party had taken from a Czech-Russian bank ahead of the 2017 presidential election. "When you speak to Russia you are speaking to your banker," he said, accusing his rival of being "dependent" on Russian President Vladimir Putin. Le Pen replied that her party had only taken that loan because it could not find financing in France, where banks refused to lend to her.

Macron adopted a variety of poses to express scepticism at her arguments, raising his eyebrows, leaning his chin on his fists and lamenting in apparent bewilderment, "Madame Le Pen... Madame Le



SAINT-DENIS, France: French President and La République en Marche (LREM) party candidate for re-election Emmanuel Macron (R) joins hands as he arrives next to Saint-Denis Mayor Mathieu Hanotin during a campaign visit in Saint-Denis, a northern suburb of Paris, on April 21, 2022. —AFP

Pen!" The most explosive clash came when Le Pen confirmed she was sticking to her controversial policy of banning the wearing of the Islamic headscarf by women in public, describing it as a "uniform imposed by Islamists". Macron responded: "You are going to cause a civil war if you do that. I say this sincerely." She also sought to put heat on the president, mocking him as a "Mozart of finance" who had left the economy in a poor state and a "climate hypocrite" whose environmental credentials were a sham. —AFP

In the Court of Ms. Preeti Parewa LD. ACJ/CCJ/ARC Room No. 03, Patiala House Courts, New Delhi Petition No. SC-28/2022 Mr. Javed Mazhar ... Petitioners Versus State & Ors.

FOR SUCCESSION CERTIFICATE UNDER INDIAN SUCCESSION ACT, 1925. To All Concerned

Whereas in the above noted petition, the applicant/petitioner has applied for Succession Certificate to the Hon'ble Court Under Section 372 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925, in respect of the debt and securities any person having a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the deceased SYED MOHAMMAD MAZHAR S/O IKRAM FATIMA DIED ON DT 14-04-2015 AT KUWAIT AND TAHERA MAZHAR W/O LATE SYED MOHAMMAD MAZHAR DIED ON 14-04-2021 AT 177/1A, AKBARPUR, ALLAHABAD ALLAHABAD PRAYAGRAJ UTTAR PRADESH 211016. Are required to send particulars thereof in writing to the undersigned Court, to be standing in the name of deceased.

Whereas the 23-05-2022 at 10' o'clock in the forenoon has been fixed for hearing or the application notice is hereby given to all concerned.

Given under my hand and the seal of the court on this 08-04-2022. Sd/ Ms. Preeti Parewa LD. ACJ/CCJ/ARC Patiala House Courts, New Delhi



International

Horrors of Bucha: Street filled with dead bodies

Russian troops accused of massacring hundreds of civilians

BUCHA, Ukraine: An AFP team were the first journalists to discover the horrors of Bucha, a quiet commuter town near Kyiv occupied by the Russian army for over a month. Russian troops are accused of massacring hundreds of civilians there, shocking the world and prompting allegations of war crimes.

AFP's bureau chief in The Hague, Danny Kemp, was part of the team that uncovered the atrocities on April 2, 2022. Here is his account of what they saw that day, originally published on AFP's Correspondent blog site.

Some may find the account distressing. We saw three of them at first, lying in the dirt like piles of rags. That alone would have been bad enough. "Bodies," someone in the car said, because it was all that could be said. Our driver screeched to a halt and we jumped out of the vehicle. A long grey road on the edge of Bucha stretched out under an equally grey Ukrainian sky. The three bodies lay next to a stack of construction materials and wooden pallets.

As we approached we could see that one had his hands tied behind his back. Yet it seemed to take a while before any of us — myself, photographer Ronaldo Schemid, video journalist Nicolas Garcia, along with our fixer, our driver and our security consultant — actually looked up and down the rest of the street. When we did, we realised that these three bodies were only the beginning. Dotted here and there, for as far as we could see in either direction, were more, many more. Corpse after corpse after corpse along this single debris-strewn street. This lonely place had become a special kind of hell for the inhabitants of Bucha. A wave of shock and disbelief washed over me: This horrible scene could not be real. But it was. I looked at my colleagues, and that was when the professional instinct kicked in, helped by the robotic tiredness at the end of a three-week stint in Ukraine.

We began to work, because we knew that this was a huge story, one that could possibly lead to allegations of war crimes. We knew that as journalists we had to tell the world about it, and quickly. Ronaldo and Nicolas were taking images, the evidence to prove that the reports on social media about bodies in Bucha were true. I set about counting them. We knew, too, how fast disinformation campaigns about such incidents can spread (and later so it proved), and how important it was to get everything right.

What we did not know was that within 24 hours, the images and the text we would produce would spark international outrage against Russia, and calls for sanctions that moved the war in Ukraine into a new and more distressing phase. We had been trying for days to get into the once sleepy commuter towns of Irpin and Bucha on the pine-forested northwestern outskirts of Kyiv. The main checkpoint out of Kyiv had been closed to journalists since the death of US filmmaker Brett Renaud on March 13. The answer at the checkpoint remained a firm "Ni" (No), even after authorities declared the towns liberated - this was the flipside of the tightly controlled Ukrainian media operation that had beamed President Volodymyr Zelensky's speeches into parliaments across the world.

From the checkpoint we could hear the booms of constant shelling and wondered what the situation was like for people inside the towns.

A change of route finally got us into Irpin on the foggy late afternoon of Friday April 1. We discovered a wasteland of destroyed and badly damaged buildings, crushed and bullet-ridden cars, and burned out Russian tanks, almost completely devoid of any human population.

The next day, Saturday April 2, was grey, cold and drizzly as we headed for Bucha. The evening before we



BUCHA, Ukraine: Relatives of Mykhailo Romaniuk, 58, who was shot dead on his bicycle on March 6, help to bury his coffin at a cemetery in Bucha, on April 19, 2022, during the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

had seen videos on social media purporting to show someone driving through a street full of bodies in the town, but no journalists had yet reached the scene to corroborate that the videos had been filmed there.

We were on edge as we drove through Bucha's devastated streets, fearing that Russian troops had not pulled out and that there could be more fighting. At

first we found stories of survival, like the group of elderly people who had survived without food, running water or electricity for a month. Ukrainian soldiers had started to hand out aid.

Then the mood turned darker. A body lay on the ground, half covered by a blanket, near the shell-blasted railway station. — AFP

Belgian FM steps down to care for husband

BRUSSELS: Belgium's Foreign Minister Sophie Wilmes announced Thursday she was temporarily stepping down to support her husband in his battle against an aggressive brain cancer. Wilmes, 47, who has been in her post since October 2020 after spending a year as prime minister, said she needed to provide "help and comfort" to her husband Christopher Stone and their three children. Prime Minister Alexander De Croo will cover her portfolio. "Unfortunately, life sometimes takes painful turns," Wilmes said, in a letter posted on Twitter. "Illness has suddenly entered our lives and, in particular, that of my husband, Christopher, who must begin like far too many men, women and even children his fight against an aggressive brain cancer."

Stone, 63, is an Australian businessman and former Australian rules footballer who played for Melbourne side St Kilda between 1978 and 1981. Wilmes said the "total commitment" required by her job "would not allow me to provide the help and comfort that Christopher and our children will need during this difficult time".



Foreign Affairs Minister Sophie Wilmes

She said she had immediately put herself on unpaid leave from her ministerial duties. "This gives us the ability to fully consider our situation by the end of the summer," said Wilmes. In a separate statement, De Croo announced that he would temporarily take over the foreign and European affairs brief. He said Wilmes would officially remain a member of the government. In addition to his presence at heads of state and government summits, De Croo will therefore represent Belgium at European Union and NATO foreign ministers' meetings.

The portfolio has grown increasingly important since the outbreak of Russia's war in Ukraine. "I wish Sophie, Chris and their children much courage and strength," De Croo said. — AFP

UN top court raps Colombia over sea row with Nicaragua

THE HAGUE, Netherlands: The UN's top court on Thursday ordered the Colombian navy to stop interfering in Nicaraguan waters as it ruled on a longstanding legal battle over maritime borders. The court "finds by nine votes to six... that the Republic of Colombia must immediately cease (this) conduct," Judge Joan Donoghue at the International Court of Justice said, referring to incidents between the Colombian navy and Nicaraguan fishing vessels.

The ICJ, which rules in disputes between countries, awarded Nicaragua a swathe of disputed Caribbean sea territory extending 200 nautical miles (230 miles, 370 kilometres) from its coastline in 2012. But the following year, Nicaragua lodged a fresh case accusing Colombia of ignoring the ruling.

It alleged Bogota had threatened to use force to back up its claims in the oil- and fish-rich region. Nicaragua's lawyers also asked the ICJ make Colombia pay compensation for "the threat or use of

force by the Colombian navy against Nicaraguan fishing boats." Colombia denied the accusations, saying its presence in the region was "due to other imperatives" including the fight against drug trafficking and international maritime rescue.

Legal ping pong

In a game of legal ping-pong, Bogota accused Managua of interfering with indigenous fishing rights. The loss of fishing grounds because of the ICJ's 2012 ruling particularly affected the Raizal people, an English and Creole-speaking community who are mainly descendants of slaves abducted from Africa, Colombia's lawyers said. Judge Donoghue however, said that Colombia "failed to establish that the inhabitants of the San Andres Archipelago, in particular the Raizales, enjoy fishing rights in waters now within Nicaragua's exclusive economic zone."

Although there are no land borders between Nicaragua, located in Central America, and Colombia, in South America, diplomatic relations have been strained for almost a century over disputed maritime limits. Nicaragua finally took Colombia to the ICJ in 2001, and in 2012 it won several thousand square kilometres of territory in the southwestern Caribbean that had previously been Colombian.

Colombia, which was left with only seven islets, said at the time it would no longer recognise the court's jurisdiction on border disputes. — AFP

UK Queen turns...

Continued from Page 1

Royal tradition since the 18th century has also seen the monarch have a second, official birthday, typically celebrated in warmer weather in June.

This year's official birthday coincides with four days of public events from June 2 to 5 to mark her record-breaking 70th year on the throne. US toy manufacturer Mattel released a new Barbie doll of the queen to commemorate the Platinum Jubilee.

The Sandringham trip is being seen as a "positive step", given her recent health problems, British media reported. Since an unscheduled overnight stay in hospital last October, she has cut down massively on public appearances on doctor's orders. A back complaint and difficulties standing and walking have seen her cancel a

number of engagements, including recent church events to mark Easter. A bout of COVID-19 in February left her "very tired and exhausted", she admitted earlier this month. But William's brother Prince Harry told US broadcaster NBC in an interview aired on Wednesday that she was "on great form" when he saw her last week. The queen was last seen in public at Westminster Abbey in central London on March 29 at a memorial service for her late husband Prince Philip, who died last year aged 99.

The queen's enforced retreat from public life in her Platinum Jubilee year has increased attention on the succession and future of the monarchy. Her eldest son and heir, Prince Charles, has assumed more of his mother's responsibilities in preparation to take over the throne. His popularity has increased in recent years, according to an Ipsos poll of more than 2,000 adults in Britain in March. But his 43 percent approval rating is still well behind that of his mother (69 percent), his eldest son Prince William (64 percent) and his daughter-in-law Kate Middleton (60 percent). — AFP

Defense Minister Christine Lambrecht said, explaining that Germany would then replenish those countries' stocks. The deliveries would happen "in the next few days", she said, because "military experts agree that the next two weeks will be decisive in Ukraine's fight against Russia".

In all, according to new United Nations figures, at least 2,345 Ukrainian civilians have been killed since Russia invaded on February 24. In morgues around the capital, the bodies of some 1,020 civilians are being stored after Russian troops withdrew from the region, Deputy Prime Minister Olga Stefanishyna told AFP.

The bodies of nine civilians, some showing signs of torture, have been found in the town of Borodyanka outside Kyiv, Ukrainian police said. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, visiting Borodyanka, said he was "shocked to witness the horror and atrocities of Putin's war". In Bucha near Kyiv, some 400 bodies have been discovered since the Russians withdrew on March 31, local police chief Vitaly Lobas told AFP. Around a quarter of them are still unidentified. Retaliating against US sanctions, Russia imposed a travel ban on Vice President Kamala Harris, Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg and 27 other prominent Americans "in perpetuity". It also indefinitely banned 61 Canadians whom it deemed "directly involved in the development, substantiation and implementation of the Russophobic course of the ruling regime in Canada".

But Russia's international isolation deepened in turn. A June meeting of the UN cultural agency's World Heritage Committee scheduled to take place in the Russian city of Kazan was postponed indefinitely, a senior UNESCO source told AFP. — AFP

Rockets, Zionist airstrikes stoke...

Continued from Page 1

Al-Aqsa mosque compound - the third-holiest site in Islam. By long-standing convention, Jews are allowed to visit, but not pray in, the compound, which is also Judaism's holiest site.

On Wednesday, Zionist police prevented hundreds of far-right Jewish nationalists from parading through the Muslim quarter of the Old City. Last year, a similar ultra-nationalist march had been set to start when

Hamas launched a barrage of rockets towards Zionist entity, sparking the 11-day war.

Far-right lawmaker Itamar Ben Gvir, a controversial opposition politician, led this year's protest after being barred from the Damascus Gate area by Prime Minister Naftali Bennett. On Wednesday afternoon, over a thousand of his supporters gathered outside the Old City, some shouting "death to the Arabs!"

"I'll say it clearly, I'm not going to blink, not going to fold," Ben Gvir told AFP, as youth behind him chanted "Bennett go home!" "Some Jews don't surrender to Hamas," he said. On Tuesday, Zionists carried out its first strike on Gaza in months, in response to the first rocket fire since January from the Palestinian enclave, which was intercepted by Zionist air defenses. — AFP

Ramadan: Ancient practice, modern...

Continued from Page 1

focus on other activities. And then, when the meal is finally served after sunset, I guarantee you will put your phone away so you can enjoy your breakfast. We generally have less physical strength and lower stamina than our parents and grandparents had due to our sedentary lifestyles and the prevalence of desk jobs. Fasting Ramadan will improve your fortitude and determination; how else would you be able to refrain from satisfying your basic needs and desires for such long periods? How else would you be able to ignore hunger, thirst and fatigue while you carry on with life's usual demands? Ramadan is a perfect time to show yourself what you're capable of. You will find a self-disciplined, patient, flexible and resilient person.

Another byproduct of our modern lifestyles is isolation. Families are often separated and must resort to social media to keep in touch. Social media also enable us to have friends from around the world that we meet in virtual spaces. However, this has had a negative impact on the "in-person" relationships with those around us, with many people preferring to relate to others through their phones.

Ramadan helps this situation because there are many communal meals, whether at home, in mosques, or special gatherings for social groups. In addition, the extra attention on prayer brings neighbors together in the mosques daily, which builds stronger communities. Finally, zakat ul-fitr, or the pre-holiday charity, requires us to reach out to someone less fortunate in the spirit of sharing and celebration.

Modern life can sometimes lead to apathy, which is caring little for others, and a sense of entitlement, which is overestimating your rights. Feeling the hunger and thirst of fasting makes you keenly aware of the blessing of food and clean water in your life, and more aware of the fact that many people do not have what you will now consider a luxury. Feeling the deprivations of the poor is a wonderful lesson in empathy and compassion, one that is never forgotten after fasting the month of Ramadan, and which makes it so much easier to share our resources with the disadvantaged.

Finally, all the above symptoms of the modern man lead to depression, which is common today. Fasting Ramadan is a way to start overcoming depression because it has several positive results simultaneously: a renewed sense of purpose, realizing your personal strength, increased involvement with others, awareness of blessings that you formally took for granted, taking control of yourself through managing your needs, desires and thoughts, and drawing closer to your Creator and the Provider of all your needs.

Fasting the month of Ramadan definitely has its benefits in this life, especially in the modern age. And this is just the tip of the iceberg, because there are medical and spiritual benefits, as well as blessings that accrue in the Hereafter. The total benefits of fasting are known only to God, who says in the Quran, "... and it is better for you to fast, if you only knew" (2:184).

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.

Putin claims 'liberation' of...

Continued from Page 1

Up to 2,000 civilians are also enduring terrible conditions as they seek refuge inside the plant, according to Ukrainian authorities.

Putin said the "liberation" of Mariupol was a "success" for Russian forces but ordered Shoigu to call off the planned storming of the plant, dismissing it as "impractical". "There is no need to climb into these catcombs and crawl underground through these industrial facilities. Block off this industrial area so that not even a fly can escape," Putin said. Olexiy Arestovych, an advisor to Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky, said that Russia had in fact admitted defeat in Mariupol and diverted forces further north.

Its aim was to reinforce the fight for all of Lugansk and Donetsk, two regions of Ukraine controlled by pro-Moscow separatists. "They won't succeed," Arestovych warned. The West staged another show of support for Zelensky with a visit to Kyiv by the Spanish and Danish prime ministers, who both pledged more military assistance. Germany, under fire for not giving more to Zelensky's government, said it had agreed with eastern European partners to indirectly supply Ukraine with heavy weapons.

"It's about tanks, armored vehicles, or other options individual countries are able to give,"

International

China reinforces tight control over plane crash mystery

Crash was China's deadliest in around 30 years

BEIJING, China: The cause of China's deadliest air crash in decades remains a mystery, with authorities giving few details in a preliminary report on Wednesday while enforcing strict censorship one month after the disaster. In the immediate aftermath of the crash, China's ruling Communist Party moved quickly to control information, revving up its censorship machine as media outlets and local residents raced to the crash site.

It has maintained its tight grip over the narrative, with the preliminary probe leaving key questions unanswered. China Eastern flight MU5375 was travelling from Kunming to Guangzhou last month when it inexplicably plunged from an altitude of 29,000 feet into a mountainside, killing all 132 people on board.

Beijing was required to submit a preliminary report to the International Civil Aviation Organisation within 30 days. According to that report, investigators found no evidence of "anything abnormal", the country's Civil Aviation Administration (CAAC) said on Wednesday. The regulator has indicated, however, that it will not make the preliminary report available to the public and a full investigation may take years.

In a statement, the CAAC said staff had met safety requirements before takeoff, the plane was not carrying dangerous goods and did not appear to have run into inclement weather. No reasoning was given as to why the plane abruptly dropped out of the sky, nor were details shared about the two flight trackers or "black boxes" that were recovered.

The devices—a cockpit voice recorder and a flight data tracker—are being analysed at an American lab with the help of US government

investigators. The crash was China's deadliest in around 30 years and dented the country's otherwise enviable flight safety record.

Information chokehold

After the fatal descent near the southern city of Wuzhou, authorities swiftly cordoned off a huge area, with officials—some wearing military fatigues—initially denying access to AFP journalists. Attempts to reach the victims' relatives were rebuffed, as officials housed the bereaved in heavily guarded hotels and blocked reporters who tried to approach them.

Relatives did not respond to AFP interview requests for this story. State media played up the rescue and recovery effort, even as the few outlets that published details of the deceased found themselves ensnared in online controversy for appearing to capitalise on grief. Meanwhile, China's internet regulator announced it had scrubbed vast amounts of "illegal information" on the crash from China's tightly controlled web, as a social media hashtag bearing the plane's flight number appeared to be censored.

The information chokehold was a far cry from past disasters, when buccaneering Chinese reporters unearthed damning evidence of government shortcomings—notably the shoddy construction of thousands of government-built schools that collapsed during the 2008 Sichuan earthquake.

Beijing's strategy in reporting on the MU5375 tragedy has been to stress official action and "de-emphasise emotion", said David Bandurski, director of the University of Hong Kong's China Media Project. "They don't want human personalities," he told AFP. "It creates sympathy and emotion that can be directed

she can visit after work. Traditionally in Japan, cremated remains are placed in family tombs used over many generations and tended by the family's eldest sons.

But Japan's disproportionately greying population makes for an imbalance between the number of new graves needing tending and the young people willing and able to do it. Families are increasingly moving to urban areas far from ancestral graveyards, and many elderly don't have sons who can take on the traditional responsibility.

'A new style'

Tomohiro Hirose, resident monk at the temple that supervises the Kuramae-ryoen facility, has a traditional cemetery with some 300 graves. "But about half of the graves no longer have anyone in the family to look after them," he told AFP. To address the problem, a crop of modern, indoor cemetery facilities have emerged, offering to store remains for a set period, often up to three decades.

The ashes are eventually transferred to collective memorials, but individual names or QR codes are engraved on plaques to provide some personalisation, and monks pledge to continue offering prayers for the souls of the departed. Facing a busy boulevard in the Japanese capital, Kuramae-ryoen features warehouse-style industrial stacking racks that can store 7,000 zushi boxes, each of which can hold two urns or the bagged ashes of up to eight people.

Hirose decided to build the site after the temple's old building was badly damaged in the 2011 earthquake. He felt the new building, which includes a temple, his living

lic security provisions," Sri Lanka's information department said in a statement.

The military "will assist the police in maintaining public order" until Saturday, it added. Police violently broke up the Rambukkana protest after a crowd blocked a railway line and highway connecting the capital Colombo with the central city of Kandy to protest oil shortages and high prices.

A curfew imposed in Rambukkana was lifted on Thursday, but heavily armed police were seen patrolling the streets. A judicial inquiry into the shooting is under way. Sri Lanka is suffering its most painful economic downturn since 1948, with months of lengthy blackouts and acute shortages of food, fuel and other essentials causing widespread misery.

Protesters have demanded Rajapaksa step down over the government's mismanagement of the crisis, and a large crowd has been camped outside his seafront office in Colombo since April 9 to call for his resignation. —AFP

conflicts across Africa, sending thousands of troops to battle Islamic State-linked jihadists in Mozambique last year. The deal is aimed at bolstering Rwanda's international prestige and deflect concern over its handling of human rights, Kigali-based lawyer and analyst Louis Gitinywa told AFP. "President Kagame is eyeing to leverage this agreement as a vote of confidence (in) his human rights record," Gitinywa said. It will burnish the profile of Kagame, who has kept tight control over Rwanda since the 1994 genocide, "as a key African leader—a kind of Mister-Fix-it" for the continent. Gitinywa added. "This also probably ensures that President Kagame (has) secured the diplomatic backing of the UK when resolutions against Rwanda are submitted and discussed at the UN Security Council."

How will this affect Rwanda's human rights record?

In January last year, the British government took Kigali to task over "continued restrictions to civil and political rights and media freedom". But last week, Prime Minister Boris Johnson appeared to have reversed course, hailing Rwanda as "one of the safest countries in the world, globally recognised for its record of welcoming and integrating migrants". The contradictory comments offered a glimpse of how the deal might help Kigali rewrite the public narrative around its treatment of dissidents, including those who have fled abroad. "Rwanda has routinely demon-



WUZHOU, China: File photo shows rescue workers combing through the site of where China Eastern flight MU5375 crashed on March 21, near Wuzhou in southwestern China's Guangxi province. —AFP

towards agendas that aren't the leadership's."

No surprises

The enhanced public scrutiny around the crash helps to explain Beijing's kneejerk attempts to direct the narrative, said Margaret E. Roberts, an associate professor specialising in Chinese censorship at the University of California San Diego.

Disasters, she told AFP, "can easily turn political". "Many people pay attention to them at once. As a result, one misstep by the government in their response to the crisis can be very damaging." In the

month after the crash, state media pivoted towards the message that it was time for the public to put the incident behind them—allowing other events to drown out coverage of the disaster, Bandurski said.

Such diversion tactics mean "we can expect the same type of sensitivity" around reports on the causes of the crash, he added, warning of heightened secrecy in a potentially turbulent year that will likely see President Xi Jinping bid for a precedent-smashing third term in office. "The last thing they want is another story to come out of left field and surprise them." —AFP

QR codes, cranes: Japan embraces modern cemeteries

TOKYO: Masayo Isurugi settles into a booth on the sixth floor of a sleek Tokyo building, scans an ID card and waits for an automated system to deliver her late husband's ashes. More and more people in Japan are breaking with traditions on burial and mourning, swapping hometown graveyards for modern takes on cemeteries.

As the 60-year-old waits in one of ten mourning booths on the floor, cranes behind the walls move almost silently and retrieve the "zushi" box with the urn containing her late husband Go's ashes. Chic wooden doors inside the booth quietly part like an elevator at a luxurious hotel and a gleaming, dark-stone altar emerges with Go's zushi box as its centrepiece, while a photo of him appears on a monitor.

"Initially, I thought maybe these facilities might feel cold and that I might prefer a traditional grave on soil," Isurugi told AFP. "Now I feel it's better to have a place where I can visit whenever I want and offer prayers, rather than having a family grave that I could rarely visit."

Her family considered a traditional cemetery, but it was a two-hour train ride away. The Kuramae-ryoen facility is only brief bus ride from Isurugi's house and

Sri Lanka deploys military ahead of protester's funeral

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka called out the military on Thursday to bolster security ahead of a funeral for the first person killed during weeks of running anti-government protests in the island nation. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa ordered the three-day deployment to maintain order in the central town of Rambukkana, where police dispersed a demonstration with live rounds and tear gas on Tuesday.

A 42-year-old man was shot dead in Tuesday's melee and nearly 30 others were wounded. "To ensure there are no incidents during and after the burial, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa invoked pub-

Hosting Britain's migrants: The view from Rwanda

KIGALI, Rwanda: Britain's controversial deal to send migrants and asylum-seekers to Rwanda has attracted a flood of criticism in the UK, with opposition politicians, campaigners and the UN refugee agency calling for the multi-million-dollar agreement to be scrapped. But little has been said about the view from Rwanda—a tiny nation of 13 million people in Africa's Great Lakes region that has drawn praise for its modern infrastructure but sparked unease over its record on human rights.

Here is a look at Kigali's reasons for signing the deal and the challenges ahead:

Why is Rwanda doing this?

The deal will be funded by the UK to the tune of up to £120 million (\$157 million, 144 million euros), but observers say cash may not be Kigali's main motivation. President Paul Kagame has sought to position Rwanda as a Western ally and firefighter for

Singapore news site's editor jailed

SINGAPORE: The editor of a shuttered Singaporean news website was on Thursday jailed three weeks for defamation over a letter the portal published alleging corruption among government ministers. It is the latest case to fuel concerns about worsening press freedoms in tightly controlled Singapore, with authorities accused of using heavy-handed tactics to silence dissent.

The Online Citizen (TOC), which was often critical of authorities, had its licence to operate cancelled in October over a failure to declare funding sources. Terry Xu, TOC's former chief editor, was convicted the following month of defaming cabinet members over the publication of a letter stating there was "corruption at the highest echelons".

District Judge Ng Peng Hong sentenced Xu to three weeks' jail on Thursday. Ng said in sentencing remarks he thought a jail term was warranted after considering "the nature of the allegation, the standing of the defamed parties, as well as the wide spread of the publication".

The letter's author, Daniel De Costa, was also sentenced to three months and three weeks in jail. He was convicted last year of defamation and breaking computer crime laws for sending the opinion piece from another person's email account without their consent.

Xu wrote on Facebook that he had opted to serve his sentence immediately, even though he planned to appeal against the conviction. "I am not afraid of the jail sentence imposed upon me and strongly deny the charge placed before me," he wrote.

He had argued that the letter was not referring to individual members of the cabinet. Separately, Xu and another TOC writer were ordered to pay substantial damages last year after losing a defamation suit against Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

Singapore's media sector is dominated by pro-government outlets. The city-state ranks 160th out of 180 countries and territories in Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom Index, where number one indicates the country with the greatest media freedoms. —AFP



TOKYO, Japan: photo shows Masayo Isurugi prays in front of an altar with the urn containing her late husband's ashes after an automated system delivered the zushi box to the mourning booth at the Kuramae-ryoen facility, a multi-storey chanel house and Buddhist temple, in Tokyo. —AFP

quarters, and the cemetery facility, would revitalise a site that dates back to 1608. "This offers a new style. Many families find it easy to visit their graves," Hirose said. The cemetery uses machinery developed by Daifuku, a firm that produces storage, transport and collection systems for factories and warehouses. "Our company has built systems for around 60 (cemetery) facilities across the country," said Hidenobu Shinaka, a senior official at Daifuku. The first order came in the 1990s, and more recently there has been interest from other Asian markets too, he said. —AFP



RAMBUKKANA, Sri Lanka: District magistrate Wasana Nawarathna (G) inspects a damaged Ceylon Petroleum Corporation fuel station in Rambukkana on April 20, 2022. —AFP

strated how it holds protections afforded refugees under international law in low regard," said Lewis Mudge, Central Africa director at Human Rights Watch.

"There are credible allegations that Rwandan agents carried out assassinations of Rwandan refugees abroad and many refugees fear the Rwandan government's long arm as far afield as Europe, Canada or Australia," he told AFP. Last September, "Hotel Rwanda" hero and Kagame critic Paul Rusesabagina was sentenced to 25 years in jail on terrorism charges, following his arrest in August 2020 when a plane he believed was bound for Burundi landed instead in Kigali in what his family called a kidnapping. The country was ranked 156th out of 180 countries in the 2021 World Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), a fall of one place over with 2020.

How do Rwandans feel about the deal?

Rwandans have largely stayed tight-lipped about the agreement, although some have praised it. One positive voice is that of Tom Mulisa, lecturer of constitutional law at the University of Rwanda. "It is a good thing that Rwanda has positioned itself in this way, as a way of contributing to solve the immigration crisis that is affecting the whole world," he told AFP. Local journalist John Williams Ntwali is among the few willing to make his unease public, saying the agreement "vio-

lates the rights of refugees and asylum seekers." "It is an immoral deal that forces people to go to a country that they did not choose," he added.

What challenges will Rwanda face?

Frank Habineza, president of the opposition Democratic Green Party of Rwanda, said the deal was not sustainable, pointing to already fierce competition for land and other resources. "Taking on migrants from the UK will increase the land burden and survival challenges for the limited natural resources available," he said in a statement last week.

Opposition leader Victoire Ingabire, a fierce critic of Kagame, also highlighted the economic pressures facing the country following the COVID-19 pandemic. "It is uncertain how Rwanda would support relocated migrants with their personal development and employment," she said.

"The Rwandan government (should) focus on solving its political and social internal issues that make its citizens... refugees in other countries before it offers to host refugees/migrants." Rwanda has previously taken in African refugees stranded in Libya under an agreement with the African Union and the UN refugee agency. Last year it offered temporary asylum to Afghans fleeing a Taliban takeover. —AFP

Business

FRIDAY, APRIL 22, 2022

Zain Group's net profit for 1st quarter 2022 grows 6% to reach \$156 million

Revenues for quarter up 7 percent to \$1.3 billion

KUWAIT: Zain Group, a leading telecom innovator with operations in seven markets across the Middle East and Africa, announces its consolidated financial results for the first quarter (Q1) ended March 31, 2022. Across its footprint, Zain increased its active customer base by 2.3 million to serve 50.9 million. Zain Group generated consolidated revenue of KD 408 million (\$1.3 billion) for the Q1 2022, up 7% year-on-year (Y-o-Y).

EBITDA for the quarter reached KD 154 million (\$507 million), down 3% Y-o-Y,

revenue streams particularly related to Enterprise (B2B) services to government and businesses of all sizes, a key area we will continue to nurture and expand.

Net profits increase

We have made giant strides transforming Zain into the digital partner of choice for governments and enterprises across our markets. "The solid performances of our operations in Kuwait and KSA, where net profits increased 22% and 97% respectively, are

with oodi in Iraq. Both Yaqoot and oodi offer a simple, all-digital mobile experience for customers who are afforded the power to manage their mobile service through the app."

"The Middle East is one of the fastest-growing gaming regions in the world and Zain Esports aims to unlock the many opportunities that will arise. The joint venture to establish PLAYHERA MENA creates a regional gaming powerhouse targeting the region's lucrative gaming market." "The recent rebranding and transformation of the

"Notably, ZainTech has introduced a comprehensive range of managed cloud services and cybersecurity solutions to corporate customers first in Kuwait, with other key regional markets in the pipeline, signifying our determination to transform Zain into a multi-core digital business, and vision of becoming a leading ICT and digital lifestyle provider." On a final note, Al-Kharafi commented on the latest brand valuation of Zain. "We are proud to have one of the most powerful brands in the

million (\$104 million), representing an EBITDA margin of 37%. Net income increased 22% to reach KD 21 million (\$68 million) for Q1 2022, with data revenue growing by 5% and accounting for 39% of total revenue.

Saudi Arabia

For Q1 2022, Zain KSA revenue grew by 12% to \$582 million. EBITDA for the period reached \$193 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 33%. Net income for the three months increased 97% reaching



Chairman, Ahmed Al Tahous

“Our future-ready approach to invest heavily in 5G and 4G network expansion payoff as customer base grows 5% to reach 50.9 million”



Vice-Chairman & Group CEO, Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi

“Digital transformation and cost optimization initiatives drive impressive performance in key markets”



reflecting an EBITDA margin of 38%. Net income for the quarter reached KD 47 million (\$156 million), up 6% Y-o-Y reflecting an Earnings Per Share of 11 fils (\$0.04). For Q1 2022, foreign currency translation was impacted mainly due to the currency devaluation in Sudan from an average of 271 (SDG/USD) during Q1 2021 to an average of 483 (SDG/USD) during Q1 2022, cost the Group \$120 million in revenue and \$80 million in EBITDA.

Key Operational Notes

1. Zain Group consolidated data revenue reached \$536 million, representing 40% of the Group's overall revenue
2. Over the quarter, Zain Group invested \$74 million in CAPEX (tangible and intangible) reflecting 5.5% of total revenue, mainly in expansion of Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) infrastructure; spectrum fees; 4G upgrades and new network sites across its markets, as well as ongoing 5G rollouts in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain
3. Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain witness impressive growth in 5G customers
4. Focus on government and enterprises accounts results in 19% B2B revenue growth
5. Zain KSA approves sale of its 8,069-tower infrastructure for SAR 3.03 billion (\$807 million) to the Kingdom's Public Investment Fund
6. Zain Global Connect (ZGC) announces first investment in PEACE cable through the J2M (Jeddah, KSA to Marseille, France) submarine cable system
7. ZainTech launches a comprehensive range of managed cloud services and cybersecurity solutions for corporate customers in Kuwait, with other key Zain markets to follow
8. Zain Group API platform rebrands to Dizlee, continues to grow with 20 digital partnerships offering 41 compelling services
9. Zain Esports teams up with PLAYHERA to rollout gaming tournament platform targeting region's lucrative gaming market with an estimated 100 million gamers
10. Zain's pure digital operator Yaqoot in Saudi Arabia and oodi in Iraq witness robust growth
11. Zain publishes its 11th annual sustainability report, entitled 'A resilient journey across a challenging year'
12. Brand Finance, a leading valuation and strategy consultancy based in London, values the Zain brand at \$2.4 billion, a 9.6% annual increase

Commenting on the Q1 2022 results, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Zain Group, Ahmed Al Tahous said, "Our future-ready approach to invest heavily in 5G technology and 4G network expansion across all markets in recent years is paying off, evident by the 2.3 million additional customers and resulting revenue growth during the first quarter. The Board is working closely with executive management in seeking new lucrative opportunities and we are well primed to exploit the next phase of growth in the telecommunications sector to drive shareholder value."

Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO commented, "The overall profitable growth and impressive performances in key markets witnessed during Q1 2022 reaffirms the success of the 4Sight strategy in driving digital transformation and cost optimization initiatives. Our operational focus on expanding and monetizing our 4G, FTTH and 5G networks has created lucrative

predominantly on the back of 5G and B2B customer and revenue growth, are extremely pleasing, as is the 156% net profit increase in Sudan where 4G customer uptake combined with currency mitigation related price revamps have contributed positively to all its financial metrics.

The Group financial performance would have been even more impressive if not for the unfortunate currency devaluation mainly in Sudan that impacted revenues by \$120 million." "We have witnessed exponential rev-

Group API platform into Dizlee is a game changer for our digital partners and customers. This powerful digital monetization ecosystem provider has already had over 132 million payment transactions and generated over US\$125 million in gross revenues since its launch in mid-2018."

"Our strategy to sell our passive tower infrastructures across our footprint creates significant value for shareholders as it enhances operational efficiencies and unlocks capital to invest in technologies. It also

region and all that it represents with respect to empowering and improving the lives of the communities we serve.

9.6% increase in brand valuation

This year's 9.6% increase in brand valuation has been driven by the tangible developments occurring within the company, where talent development, customer-centric initiatives, heavy investment in network upgrades, and digital innovation is impacting customer experience positively. Our corporate sustain-

\$21.5 million. Having the Kingdom's largest 5G network covering 51 cities, the operator's data revenue represents 44% of total revenue and active customers increased 17% to stand at 8.4 million.

Iraq

Zain Iraq's Q1 2022 revenue increased by 5% to reach \$194 million and EBITDA grew by 8% to \$81 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 42%. The operation reported a net profit of \$3 million for Q1 2022. The customer base increased 9% to 17.6 million, reflecting a market leading position.

Sudan

For Q1 2022, Zain Sudan witnessed a healthy growth in all its KPIs, revenue increased by 6% to reach \$98 million, with EBITDA up 22% amounting to \$51 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 53%. Net income for the period reached \$46 million, up 156%. Data revenue grew by 13% representing 31% of total revenue. The customer base stood at 16.6 million, maintaining its market leadership.

Jordan

For Q1 2022, Zain Jordan revenue reached \$124 million, EBITDA reached \$56 million, reflecting an efficient EBITDA margin of 45%, with net income at \$20 million. With the ongoing expansion of 4G services, data revenue grew 5% representing 50% of total revenue. The customer base increased by 3% to stand at 3.6 million, maintaining a market leading position.

Bahrain

Zain Bahrain generated revenue of \$46 million, an increase of 4% for Q1 2022. EBITDA increased 3% reaching \$15 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 33%. Net income increased 3% to \$4.2 million, with data revenue growing 6% to represent 45% of total revenue.

Kuwait

Maintaining its market leadership, the flagship operation saw its customer base serve 2.5 million. It is the Group's most profitable operation with revenue for Q1 2022 reaching KD 85 million (\$280 million), a 7% YoY growth, EBITDA grew by 12% to KD 31

enue and customer growth in several of our digital initiatives, particularly in regard to our fintech, pure digital operator, esports and API platform categories."

"Tamam in Saudi Arabia, Zain Cash in Iraq and Jordan, and M-Gurush in South Sudan continued their substantial customer growth of 180% over the year and we are currently in the process of applying for a digital banking license in Kuwait, where we expect similar success once operational." "In the pure digital telco space, Yaqoot continues to deliver healthy growth in Saudi Arabia, and equally so

enables a laser focus on customers to offer them the best mobile and data experience. We expect the sale of the 8,069 towers in Saudi Arabia to be completed in the near future, following the successful transition we had in Kuwait, and most recently in Jordan."

"The recent ground-breaking announcement of Zain Global Connect's first subsea investment in the PEACE cable through the J2M (Jeddah, KSA to Marseille, France) submarine cable system will foster regional digital transformation initiatives, particularly for cloud and IoT services once operational."

ability programs, eye-catching marketing and social media campaigns have captured the hearts and minds of the region." Financial KPIs of key markets for first quarter (Q1) ended March 31, 2022.



Business

KD 69.5m profit to shareholders for Q1 of 2022; increase of 39%



Hamad Al Marzouq:

- Net finance income for Q1 this year reached KD 159 million; an increase of 3.5%
- Finance portfolio reached KD 11.9 billion; an increase of 4.4 %
- The competitive performance on the Group level attracted more customers and investors
- Continuous efforts to offer unique digital financial solutions that exceed customers' expectations



Abdulwahab Al Rushood:

- Strong operational performance and continuing the strategy of focusing on core banking
- Improving of profitability continues in 2022 supported by economic recovery and rising discount rate
- Millions in contributions to many strategic societal initiatives
- KFH won "World's Best Islamic Financial Institution 2022" award from Global Finance

KUWAIT: Chairman of Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Hamad Abdulmohsen Al Marzouq said that KFH has, by the grace of Allah, reported net profit of KD 69.5 million for the first quarter of 2022 for KFH shareholders: an increase of 39.0% compared to the same period last year. Earnings per share for the first quarter of 2022 reached 7.55 fils; an increase of 39.0% compared to the same period last year.

Net financing income for the first quarter of the year reached KD 159.0 million; an increase of 3.5% compared to the same period last year. Financing receivables as of the end of the first quarter of 2022 reached KD 11.9 billion, ie an increase of KD 496.5 million or 4.4% compared to end of year 2021. Investment in Sukuk as of the end of the first quarter of 2022 reached KD 3.0 billion; an increase of KD 228.6 million or 8.4% compared to end of year 2021.

Total assets as of the end of the first quarter of 2022 reached KD 22.2 billion ie, increase of KD 375.3 million or 1.7% compared to end of year 2021. Depositors' accounts as of the end of the first quarter of 2022 reached KD 15.8 billion. Shareholders' equity as of the end of the first quarter of 2022 reached KD 1.9 billion. In addition, the capital adequacy ratio reached 17.77% which is above the minimum limit required by regulators. This ratio confirms the solid financial position of KFH.

Solid financial results

Al Marzouq added that KFH has successfully achieved solid financial results and growth in all key financial indicators for the fiscal first quarter 2022 despite local and global economic challenges. This emphasizes the efficient strategy and plans set up by KFH. He explained that KFH maintained remarkable ratios in terms of ROA, ROE, optimization, maximizing profitability,

improving asset quality ratios as well as the coverage ratio of provisions for non-performing debt. He noted that the KFH's competitive performance on Group level attracted more customers and investors.

Digitization and ESG

Al Marzouq emphasized that KFH is moving forward with digital transformation efforts and offering unique digital financial solutions that exceed customers' expectations. He highlighted the pioneering role of KFH in leading the Islamic finance industry by offering innovative products and services, improving economic environment, supporting sustainability through promoting investment in Green Sukuk while observing ESG factors in line with KFH strategy in this regard.

Development support

Al Marzouq said that, as part of its pioneering national role, KFH is keen on promoting and financing government development projects as well as offering wide range of retail, corporate and SME banking and financing solutions. He added that KFH has a specialized professional banking management, providing full financing services to such a promising segment.

Strong operational performance

Meanwhile, the Acting Group Chief Executive Officer at KFH, Abdulwahab Essa Al Rushood said that the first-quarter 2022 profits confirm KFH's continuous efforts to maximize profitability and ROE, maintain strong operational performance, continue the strategy of focusing on core banking as well as expanding its investment and business activities in Primary and Secondary Capital Markets. He explained that KFH's profitability will improve in 2022 owing to continuous growth and higher business volumes from the

recovery in the domestic economy and the discount rate increased by CBK.

Group subsidiaries

Al Rushood emphasized that KFH enjoys high liquidity ratios, creditworthiness and diversified financing portfolio that support its business growth and raise the investment and financial capabilities of the Bank in Kuwait and the countries where Group subsidiaries operate (Turkey, Bahrain, Germany, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia). He noted that KFH is the largest Islamic bank in Kuwait and the second-largest bank overall, with a market share of 22.4% by local assets at end-2021.

Millions in contributions to social initiatives

Al Rushood said that KFH proved its CSR leadership through millions in contributions to many strategic societal initiatives, adding that KFH signed agreements with Kuwait Red Crescent Society to execute several relief, medical, humanitarian and societal projects inside and outside Kuwait. He noted that KFH won "Corporate Social Responsibility in the Middle East" Award from the prestigious EMEA Finance magazine.

Al Rushood said that KFH received "World's Best Islamic Financial Institution 2022" award from Global Finance Group in recognition of its contributions to the growth of Islamic Finance, usage of technological innovation in providing services and the quality of product, reputation, customer satisfaction and compliance with ethical standards and strategic relations. In conclusion, Al Rushood expressed his appreciation for the trust of shareholders and customers and the support of the Board of Directors and thanked the regulatory authorities, praising the efforts of employees and all partners and stakeholders.



Praise be to Allah



Financial Results for Q1 of 2022

		31/03/2022	31/03/2021	%
Net Profit for Shareholders	"KD Million"	69.5	50.0	39.0
Earnings per Share	"Fils"	7.55	5.43	39.0
Net Financing Income	"KD Million"	159.0	153.6	3.5
		31/03/2022	31/12/2021	%
Financing Receivables	"KD Million"	11,852	11,355	4.4
Total Assets	"KD Million"	22,164	21,788	1.7
Depositors' Accounts	"KD Million"	15,789	15,867	(0.5)
Shareholders' Equity	"KD Million"	1,853	1,932	(4.1)

Business

Italy seeks to end dependence on Russia, signs gas deal with Angola

Algeria - currently Italy's second-largest supplier

LUANDA: Italy on Wednesday penned a deal with Angola to ramp up gas supplies from the southern African country as it urgently scrambles to break away from Russian gas over the Ukraine war. A declaration of intent was signed to develop "new" natural gas ventures and to increase exports to Italy, a statement from the Italian foreign minister announced.

"Today we have reached another important agreement with Angola to increase gas supplies," Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio said in the statement. "Italy's commitment to differentiate energy supply sources is confirmed," said Di Maio at the end of a two-and-a-half-hour long visit to Luanda. Prime Minister Mario Draghi wants to add Angola and Congo-Brazzaville to a portfolio of suppliers to substitute Russia, which provides about 45 percent of Italian gas.

"We do not want to depend on Russian gas any longer, because economic dependence must not become political subjection," he said in an interview with the *Corriere della Sera* daily published on Sunday. "Diversification is possible and can be implemented in a relatively short amount of time-quicker than we imagined just a month ago," he said. Draghi was due to go himself but after testing positive for COVID-19 sent Di Maio and Ecological Transition Minister Roberto Cingolani in his place.

Cingolani described the deal as "an important agreement that gives impetus to the partnership between Italy and Angola in the fields of renewables, biofuels, LNG (liquefied natural gas) and training in technology and environment". The two ministers, accompanied by Claudio Descalzi, chief executive of Italian energy giant ENI, also met President Joao Lourenco. They were later headed to neighboring Congo-Brazzaville where they are expected to meet President Denis Sassou Nguesso on Thursday.

"This is a race against time to make sure we stock gas and oil for the next winter season," said

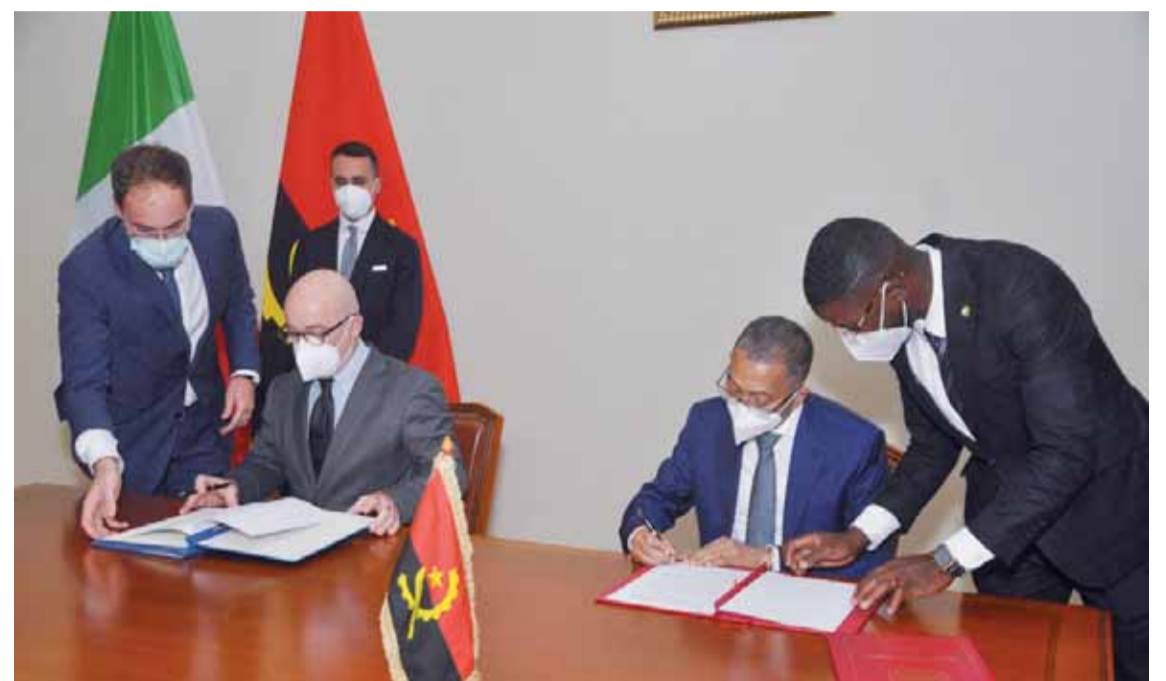
Francesco Galiotti, head of Rome-based consultancy Policy Sonar. Angola's Foreign minister Tete Antonio described the signature as "very important". A similar declaration will be signed in the Republic of Congo. The foray follows the clinching of agreements with Algeria and Egypt in recent weeks.

Algeria is currently Italy's second-largest supplier, providing around 30 percent of its consumption. ENI said the deal with Algeria's Sonatrach would boost deliveries of gas through the Transmed undersea pipeline by "up to nine billion cubic metres per year" by 2023-24. Transmed only had spare pipeline capacity of 7.8 billion cubic metres per year in 2021 - though it has said it is ready to expand. Italy has also been in talks with Azerbaijan over the expansion of the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP).

'Fanciful'

The Egypt accord could result in up to three billion cubic meters of liquefied natural gas (LNG) being bound for Europe and Italy in particular this year, ENI said. Italy is looking into buying or renting two floating storage and regasification units (FSRU) to allow it to import more LNG. Diversification will not be cheap, warn experts, who foresee extra taxes passed on to businesses and families. Davide Tabarelli, head of energy think tank Nomisma Energia, said Rome was rightly exploiting the "excellent relationships" that ENI has built up over 69 years in Africa, where it is the sector leader in terms of production and reserves.

But the idea of replacing Russian gas "in the short term" was "fanciful", he told AFP. "It will take at least two or three years." The government said it expects to get the floating regasification units into place within 18 months. It has also talked of kick-starting stalled projects for two onshore regasification plants, which would take some four years to build.



LUANDA: Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Luigi di Maio (left, behind) looks on as Minister of Ecological Transition Roberto Cingolani and Angola Minister of Mineral Resources and Petroleum Diamantino Pedro Azevedo a declaration of intent on a 'new' gas venture in Luanda on April 20, 2022. —AFP

'Operation thermostat'

Italy is one of Europe's biggest guzzlers of gas, which currently represents 42 percent of its energy consumption, and it imports 95 percent of the gas it uses. The government hopes to reduce that by accelerating the investment in renewables and has vowed to cut red tape on wind and solar farms. Draghi has called for a collective sacrifice, asking Italians this month: "Do we want to have peace or do we want to have the air conditioning on?" His rallying cry was met with some grumbling in a country feeling the effects of

global heating, which science shows is driven by humans burning fossil fuels. Undeterred, the government is readying so-called "operation thermostat", which could see the public sector turn down heating in schools and offices by one degree, and the equivalent for air conditioning in the summer. The rule would apply to private households and companies too, though it would be difficult to police. It could save some four billion cubic metres of natural gas a year-around 14 percent of the total gas imported from Russia, according to *La Stampa* newspaper. —AFP

Twitter, analysts wary of Musk takeover bid

SAN FRANCISCO: As tempting as access to Elon Musk's wealth may be, Twitter is not eager to be ruled by a billionaire known for shooting from the hip with little regard for the consequences. The global one-to-many messaging platform is moving to prevent the Tesla boss from getting his hands on all of Twitter's outstanding shares, signaling that worries about where he would lead the company outweigh the proffered payoff.

"It's management, the board, that feels something is wrong," said Endpoint Technologies analyst Roger Kay. "Musk is essentially an autocrat; his form of libertarianism has a twinge of far right politics to it." Earlier this month Musk, the world's richest person and a controversial and frequent user of Twitter himself, made an unsolicited bid of \$43 million for the social media network, citing better freedom of speech as a motivation.

The offer, which he said was final, values Twitter at \$54.20 per share-above the closing price ahead of his bid, but below a high of \$77.06 hit in February of last year. Twitter's board opted to swallow a "poison pill," saying any acquisition of over 15 percent of the firm's stock without its OK would trigger a plan to flood the market with shares and thus make a buyout much harder.

Musk already owns more than nine percent of the company, making him its largest stakeholder. The billionaire went on to tweet "Love me tender," an Elvis Presley song title that some took to hint he is mulling whether to sidestep the board and take his "tender" directly to shareholders. "I think he is running with scissors," said analyst Rob Enderle of Enderle Group. "Poor impulse control and too much money are not a good combination."

Right-wing Twitter?

Musk has said he'd like to lift the veil on the algorithm that runs on the platform, even allowing people to look through it and suggest changes. He advocates a hands-off approach to policing content, a thorny matter particularly in high-profile cases such as that of former US president Donald Trump, who was banned after the assault on the Capitol by his supporters as they sought to overturn the US election result last year.

"Musk says he is going to turn Twitter into a social media platform with no moderation; there have been several of those and they don't work," said analyst Rob Enderle of Enderle Group. "The trolls take over, they get too hostile and drive people away from the platform." Attempts to make "right-wing Twitters" have failed to gain traction, the analyst told AFP, giving examples such as Parler and Trump's own social network.

Musk has said that he is averse to banning people from Twitter due to misbehavior, prompting many to believe that if he owned the platform he would allow Trump to return. Despite his free speech talk, Musk's actions include mocking a Tesla whistleblower, and calling a rescue worker who pointed out flaws in the Tesla chief's idea to save children from a flooded cave in Thailand several years ago "a pedo guy." —AFP

Tesla reports record profits

NEW YORK: Tesla reported another banner quarter of profit growth Wednesday on pricier vehicles and said its 2022 output plan was on track despite ongoing supply chain problems and a hit from recent Covid-19 lockdown measures in China. Elon Musk's high-flying electric vehicle company notched a new record in quarterly profits of \$3.3 billion following the unveiling of new factories in Germany and the US state of Texas that have begun commercial deliveries.

Headwinds facing the company include increasing raw material costs, as well as a weeks-long outage at the Shanghai plant following the Chinese government's latest Covid-19 restrictions. "Our own factories have been running below capacity for several quarters as supply chain became the main limiting factor, which is likely to continue through the rest of 2022," Tesla said in its earnings press release.

Still Musk said it "seems likely" the company will produce more than one and a half million vehicles in 2022, which would be above the company's long-term target of at least 50 percent output growth. "We are growing very rapidly year over year and remain confident of exceeding 50 percent growth for foreseeable future," Musk said on a conference call with investors and analysts. "The future is very exciting."

But the Model 3 Tesla currently lists for a starting price of \$42,690, putting it beyond reach for many households. Musk, who has long

spoken of the need to make electric vehicles affordable for the masses to combat climate change, insisted "we absolutely want to make EVs as affordable as possible." "It's been very difficult when inflation is at a 40- or 50-year high" said Musk, who noted how suppliers have sought 20 to 30 percent price increases for parts.

Struggle for affordability

For the latest quarter, Tesla reported profits of \$3.3 billion, up 658 percent from the year-ago period on an 81 percent jump in revenues to \$18.8 billion. The company produced 305,407 autos in the period, slightly below the level in the prior quarter, but enough to push output above one million over the last 12 months.

Chief Financial Officer Zach Kirkhorn said Tesla's Shanghai plant "lost about a month of built volume" due to the lockdown, but that manufacturing "is resuming at limited levels working to get back to full production as quickly as possible." Kirkhorn said cost inflation on raw materials had accelerated during the first quarter, and second-quarter costs are trending "slightly higher" than that.

As supply chain problems have persisted, auto analysts have cautioned that the EV build-out could be constrained by limited raw materials. ISeeCars analyst Karl Brauer cited rising costs for lithium, palladium and nickel as a challenge for Tesla and the auto industry more generally. "Cost and supply concerns around various battery components isn't going away, and will likely grow as global EV production and demand grows," Brauer said.

"Electric vehicles have always struggled to



FREMONT: In an aerial view, Tesla cars sit parked in a lot at the Tesla factory on April 20, 2022 in Fremont, California. —AFP

be as cost effective as internal combustion cars. And there's every indication that struggle will continue." Musk acknowledged some of these challenges for EVs, calling for entrepreneurs to focus on building lithium supply. "Can more people please get into the lithium business?" Musk quipped. "Do you like minting money? The lithium business is for you!"

The results are the latest in a series of strong earnings that has brought glory to Musk, who has most recently launched an unsolicited bid to acquire Twitter. The social media platform is fighting the effort, unveiling a "poison pill" plan that would make it harder for the billionaire to get a controlling stake. The matter did not come up during the Tesla conference call. Tesla shares rose 5.0 percent to \$1,026.99 in after-hours trading. —AFP

HUAWEI nova 9 SE: First 108 MP AI Quad Camera capable of High-Res photography

KUWAIT: The HUAWEI nova Series has always led the way for mid-range smartphones with serious photography capabilities. Last year's iteration - the HUAWEI nova 9 - unveiled a new vision in photography, with a 50 MP ultra-vision camera and large sensor, taking in up to 40% more light, coupled with Huawei's breakthrough XD Fusion software for impeccable clarity and results.

Inheriting the aesthetics and powerful performance of its predecessors, the HUAWEI nova 9 SE is finally making its debut. The next-generation smartphone provides an incredible 108MP AI Quad Camera system, 66W HUAWEI SuperCharge, and a 6.78-inch display with ultra-thin 1.05mm bezels in an incredibly thin body. Out of these, the feature that turns the most heads is, of course, the 108MP High-Res Quad Camera system.

Capture in crystal-clear detail

With more pixels than ever before, the 108MP ultra-high-definition main camera (f/1.9 aperture) allows you to experience the extraordinary and unleash your true creativity. Whether you're shooting scenery, portraits, architecture, or more, the moment you take a photo, the HUAWEI nova 9 SE captures what you see before your eyes in crystal-clear detail. Compared to a 12MP image, 108MP pictures achieve three times lossless magnification. So images can be zoomed in and cropped to your heart's content before posting on social platforms.

The HUAWEI nova 9 SE can shoot high-quality images across numerous scenarios. When shooting a vast landscape, its 8MP ultra-wide-angle camera with 112 degrees field of view can be handy. In contrast, if you want to focus on the microscopic world of flora

and fauna, its 2MP macro lens can capture every visible detail you desire. Finally, its depth camera can be used to make layered images with bokeh effects.

Smartphone for day or night

Whether you are taking photos day or night, a phone's sensor plays a key role in capturing photos or videos at high resolution. HUAWEI nova 9 SE is equipped with a 1/1.52-inch large sensor, which provides excellent resolution and light sensitivity. In bright scenes, such as a beach or a contemporary art gallery, the high-pixel mode can be enabled manually to shoot 108MP high-res images. In low-light scenarios, such as at a concert or in a restaurant, the smartphone's Super Night Shot feature helps to capture bright images even when it's dark.

Beautiful selfies

Selfies have become a key mechanism of modern expression. That's why the HUAWEI nova 9 SE is equipped with a 16MP wide-angle camera on the front to ensure that beautiful selfies can be captured in one shot. Of course, you don't only want to take selfies when the light is perfect. Luckily, the HUAWEI nova 9 SE is flawless whether the sun is up or down. The Super Night Shot also supports selfies and can accurately recognize human faces and optimize the background while keeping noise in control - perfect for those crowded bistros and landmark buildings.

Intelligent shutter adjustment

The HUAWEI nova 9 SE is also equipped with AI



recognition shutter technology, enabling the smart adjustment of the shutter. Be it photographing people, landscapes, dynamic scenes (such as playing, jumping, cycling), sports, or over 10 other commonly encountered scenarios, the HUAWEI nova 9 SE captures dynamic scenes with precision, allowing every single memory that matters to be preserved.

With the HUAWEI nova 9 SE's 108MP high-res photography, it will surely only grow in popularity this year. Its 108MP AI Quad Camera system retains every emotion, ensuring all your precious memories can be captured, day or night. Built for young people to truly express themselves, the HUAWEI nova 9 SE is a powerful 108MP fast-charging smartphone on the market. With its slim body and 3D Glass Rear Cover, it is light and fits well in your palm, making the smartphone comfortable and easy to hold. In short, this is the perfect smartphone for budding social media influencers, both young and old.

Business

Small bees better at coping with warming, bumblebees struggle

US scientists 'trapped and studied' more than 20,000 bees

PARIS: Climate change could lead to more small-bodied bees but fewer bumblebees, according to research published Wednesday, warning of potential "cascading" effects on plant pollination and across whole ecosystems. Scientists in the United States trapped and studied more than 20,000 bees over eight years in an area of the Rocky Mountains to find out how different types of bees reacted to changing climatic conditions.

The authors said that while environmental conditions varied from year to year, the sub-alpine region from which they took samples is "particularly vulnerable to climate change", with generally warming spring temperatures and earlier snow melt. They found that comb-building cavity nesters and larger bodied bees declined in abundance as temperatures increased, while smaller,

soil-nesting bees increased. "Our research suggests that climate-induced changes in temperature, snowpack and summer precipitation may drastically reshape bee communities," the authors said.

Bumblebees 'more threatened'

Researchers said the findings suggest a reduction of bigger bees, including in the families of bumblebee, leafcutters and mason bees, with higher temperatures. Declines were particularly marked for bumblebees, which the researchers said suggests "this group is more threatened under climate warming than other bees in our system". That tallies with other studies showing that bumblebees, the dominant pollinators in many ecosystems, have a lower heat tolerance than other bees and

move to cooler regions at higher altitudes as temperatures warm.

Researchers said their findings suggest both bumblebees' body size and nest behavior could also make them more vulnerable in a warming world. In general, the authors said climate-driven changes to pollinator communities "could have cascading effects on pollination and ecosystem functioning". For example, they said losing bigger bees, which tend to fly further for food, may mean a reduction in longer-distance pollination.

The study, published in the journal *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, was specifically focused on mountainous areas, but the researchers said other research across the US showed declines in larger bees in

response to environmental changes. They did however say their findings that drier conditions favoured bees with specialist diets may not be applicable to other ecosystems, where climate change is expected to bring more rainfall.

Insects are the world's top pollinators - 75 percent of 115 top global food crops depend on animal pollination, including cocoa, coffee, almonds and cherries, according to the UN. In a landmark 2019 report, scientists concluded that nearly half of all insect species worldwide are in decline and a third could disappear altogether by century's end. One in six species of bees have gone regionally extinct somewhere in the world. The main drivers of extinction are thought to be habitat loss and pesticide use.—AFP

Climate, agriculture slashing insect populations 'by half'

PARIS: A warming world and intensive agriculture are causing insect populations to plummet by nearly half compared to areas less affected by temperature rises and industrial farming, researchers said Wednesday. The researchers measured both insect abundance and number of species in areas across the world and compared that to insects in more pristine habitats.

The study published in *Nature* found that the double whammy of global warming and shrinking habitats has not just hit population numbers, but also provoked a 27 percent drop in the diversity of species. "The reductions are greatest in the tropics," lead author Charlie Outhwaite, a macroecologist at University College London's Centre for Biodiversity and Environmental Research, told AFP.

But less data from tropical regions, which are richest in biodiversity, means the global decline in insects is likely worse than the study's headline figures suggest, she said. The calculations may also be too conservative because areas used to benchmark change—while the most pristine on the planet—have already been degraded to some extent by human activity. While in line with earlier estimates of insect decline, the new findings are based on different

methodologies.

Covering 18,000 species from beetles to butterflies to bees, the study drew from 750,000 data points collected from 1992 to 2012 at 6,000 locations. "Previous studies have been carried out at the small scale on a limited number of species or species groups," Outhwaite said. The consequences of insect decline are significant.

Some three-quarters of 115 top global food crops depend on animal pollination, including cocoa, coffee, almonds and cherries. Some insects are also crucial for pest control—especially of other bugs. Ladybugs, praying mantis, ground beetles, wasps and spiders all play crucial roles in keeping pest insects in check, from aphids and fleas to cutworms and caterpillars. Insects are also crucial for decomposing waste and nutrient cycling.

'A catastrophic outcome'

The study is the first to look at the combined impact of rising temperatures and industrial agriculture, including the widespread use of insecticides. "We often only consider one driver of change, such as land use, whereas in reality a lot of drivers will be impacting the same space," Outhwaite said. The interaction between these drivers, the study shows, is worse than if they had acted independently. Even without climate change, converting a tropical forest into agricultural land leads to drier hotter areas due to the removal of vegetation that provides shade and retains moisture in the air and soil.

Add a degree or two of warming, and these regions become even hotter and drier, pushing certain species of insects up to or beyond their limits. In some regions, insects are now experiencing

extended periods in which temperatures exceed the highest extremes of less than a century before. Up to now, intensive agriculture and habitat loss have been the major driver of insect decline.

Earlier research, for example, estimates the number of flying insects across Europe has dropped 80 percent on average, causing bird populations to shrink by more than 400 million in three decades. "We know that you can't just keep losing species without, ultimately, causing a catastrophic outcome," said Tom Oliver, a professor of applied ecology at the University of Reading. "You cannot keep removing rivets from an aeroplane without it eventually falling out of the sky."

Farming hope

The new study points to a strategy that could extend a lifeline to threatened insects. Areas practicing low-intensity agriculture—fewer chemicals, less monoculture—that were surrounded by at least 75 percent natural habitat saw only a seven percent decline in insect abundance. But if the density of surrounding natural habitat dropped below 25 percent, insect population declined by nearly two-thirds.

"I think this finding gives us hope that we can successfully design landscapes to produce food where biodiversity can thrive," Jane Hill, a professor of Ecology at the University of York, told the Science Media Centre. Insects comprise about two-thirds of all terrestrial species, and have been the foundation of key ecosystems since emerging almost 400 million years ago. Moles, hedgehogs, anteaters, lizards, amphibians, most bats, many birds and fish all feed on insects.—AFP

Britain gears up to watch TV in self-driving cars

LONDON: Motorists can sit back and watch TV once self-driving cars are approved on British roads but will be banned from using handheld mobile phones, government plans revealed Wednesday. The Department for Transport set out changes to The Highway Code to "help ensure the first wave of self-driving vehicles are used safely". A DfT spokesman confirmed that in self-driving mode, users would not be responsible for crashes, handing the baton to insurers.

However "motorists must be ready to resume control in a timely way if they are prompted to—such as when they approach motorway exits", said a DfT statement. The government hopes to have a full regulatory framework in place by 2025. Changes would allow drivers to view content unrelated to driving "on built-in display screens, while the self-driving vehicle is in control."

"It will, however, still be illegal to use mobile phones in self-driving mode, given the greater risk they pose in distracting drivers as shown in research," the statement added. The plans come in the wake of recent similar proposals by the US National Road Safety Agency.—AFP



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AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 21 APRIL 2022

(965) 22 675 140
Al-Safat Tower, Hawalli, Beirut St.
alsafatinvest.com
research@alsafatinvest.com
alsafatinvestment
al-safat-investment-company

No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	1,055	1,051	1,064	1,048	16	21,347,271	-4	-0.38%	5.42%	1,030	1,055	22.7	2.20	2.9%	1.26
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	326	320	330	309	21	25,735,942	-4.762	-1.47%	14.70%	316	325	27.0	1.57	2.1%	1.13
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	252	267	269	251	18	14,780,883	15	5.95%	22.48%	260	269	NM	1.16	1.5%	1.01
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	300	311	312	298	14	19,868,487	11	3.67%	23.90%	308	312	23.5	1.41	1.6%	1.03
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	999	995	1,000	976	24	45,808,850	-12	-1.19%	19.59%	995	1,000	39.0	4.35	1.2%	1.39
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	929	917	929	913	16	2,197,814	1	0.11%	16.08%	915	927	67.7	5.29	0.5%	1.05
204	National Investments	Financial Services	424	418	431	407	24	2,528,796	-5	-1.18%	90.87%	405	419	13.3	1.77	10.8%	1.26
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	197	193	199	191	8	23,344,958	-3	-1.53%	35.92%	190	195	NM	2.39	2.4%	0.60
252	Al Intiaz Investment	Financial Services	134	123	135	123	12	23,995,144	-10	-7.52%	4.24%	123	129	NM	0.75	6.9%	1.00
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	166	171	174	166	8	46,736,968	5	3.01%	-4.47%	166	174	26.4	1.24	1.6%	0.96
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	887	867	887	860	27	950,025	-12	-1.37%	9.33%	850	876	19.2	1.98	1.6%	1.10
501	National Industries	Financial Services	277	272	279	271	8	11,924,781	-6	-2.16%	-3.89%	272	284	5.4	0.98	4.4%	1.44
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,357	1,496	1,540	1,357	183	2,449,161	124	9.04%	71.76%	1,490	1,513	52.8	1.52	4.0%	0.96
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	987	1,003	1,006	978	28	2,115,330	20	2.03%	17.72%	995	1,010	28.5	2.36	5.3%	0.74
526	Al Qurain	Basic Materials	385	381	385	379	6	2,138,297	-1	-0.26%	9.80%	379	388	NM	1.03	4.0%	0.75
603	Agility	Industrials	1,192	1,227	1,260	1,181	79	25,898,192	49	4.16%	29.84%	1,222	1,250	2.8	1.33	1.5%	1.48
605	Zain	Telecommunications	616	630	632	611	21	15,723,744	16	2.61%	5.88%	626	634	14.4	2.29	3.7%	1.33
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,297	3,437	3,439	3,275	164	2,087,433	147	4.47%	6.61%	3,350	3,440	7.5	3.75	11.6%	0.50
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	219	216	219	215	4	3,317,035	-3	-1.37%	-0.92%	212	217	NM	0.69	0.0%	0.88
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,730	1,800	1,849	1,689	160	1,870,199	63	3.63%	39.53%	1,770	1,810	NM	17.16	1.8%	0.73
818	Ahli United Bank	Banking	323	319	328	312	16	95,908,460	-4.184	-1.29%	14.75%	314	325	24.1	2.71	3.4%	1.16
821	Warba Bank	Banking	278	277	279	275	4	11,276,220	-1	-0.36%	1.09%	275	280	21.1	2.74	0.0%	0.99
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	579	575	580	573	7	2,359,846	-4	-0.69%	-2.38%	570	579	17.9	1.62	2.7%	0.43
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	410	427	428	401	27	16,134,344	20	4.91%	2.30%	410	428	NM	1.79	2.3%	0.47
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	223	223	225	222	3	4,658,370	-1	-0.45%	-2.19%	222	225	18.9	3.95	4.0%	0.58
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,681	2,606	2,681	2,509	172	1,020,689	-54	-2.03%	29.01%	2,600	2,700	33.4	9.27	2.5%	0.69

* As of end of week closing



Photo shows Mohammad Al-Sanousi honoring TV presenter Ghada Al-Rozouqi.



Photo shows (from left) Malak and Basma Hamada pose with their awards during the event.



Jamal Al-Edwani and Ali Al-Rayes honors Mohammad Al-Sanousi during the event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Stars shine at the 'Art and Media' Festival

By Faten Omar

In the presence of former Information Minister Mohammad Al-Sanousi, the seventh edition of the Stars of Art and Media Festival kicked off on Wednesday at Millennium Hotel. The festival is a milestone cultural event that celebrates and honors Gulf and Kuwaiti actors and media figures.

Festival Director Jamal Al-Adwani said the annual award is to encourage Kuwaiti, Gulf and Arab drama, adding the Stars of Art and Media Festival honored a number of stars of cinema, media and sports in Kuwait for their contributions during Ramadan, where the award was a token of appreciation and gratitude for their distinguished role that achieved success on all social media and TV channels.

Adwani expressed his overwhelming joy to host the festival after two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. "Our selection of the stars at the art and media festival is great, especially having former Information Minister Al-Sanousi, who is considered one of the pioneering figures who have made a great imprint and influence on the Kuwaiti media since the sixties of the last century," he said.

Adwani noted that honoring elites in the fields of art, media, drama and sports is a kind of appreciation, pointing out that revealing the names of winners at the "Gulf Oscars" was an honor for him. On the mechanism of selecting the winners, Adwani said it was under the leadership of media judge Ali Hassan Al-Rayes, Director-General of GCC Joint Program Production Institution, who has worked

since the first edition of the festival in 2016 in ensuring transparency and credibility in the selection process.

The festival witnessed was attended by a host of artistes and media professionals, including singer Shams and actors Abdul Imam Abdullah, Dawood Hussain, Ismael Al-Rashed and others.



Mohammad Al-Sanousi with media figures who were honored during the event.



A group photo during the event.

End of an era as Netflix faces stagnation challenges

Having lost subscribers for the first time in more than a decade, Netflix faces the new challenge of stagnation from a position of strength. A drop of just 200,000 users—less than 0.1 percent of its total customer base—was enough to send Wall Street panicking, with shares plunging more than 30 percent on Wednesday. The loss of subscribers and the company's various plans to revive business "change the historically simple story" of Netflix's solid success, said Wells Fargo analysts, who cut its price target in half. "The new outlook is clear as mud," they said. If the Q1 loss of subscribers might seem a blip at first blush, Netflix is signaling otherwise: The company anticipates a much larger drop in its second quarter of around two million net subscribers.

"I'm not sure that's a turning point" for Netflix, said Scott Zari of S&P Global Ratings. "But I think it is indicative of maybe a new phase of slower growth," he said. Bank of America analysts said in a note that Netflix "made it clear that we can expect very low subscriber growth in '22 and '23 with no margin expansion." The shift was felt even in the tone of the company's results presentation on Tuesday evening. The affair focused less on the streamer's mega hits such as "Bridgerton" and "Ozark" and more on combating the 100 million households who watch Netflix for free thanks to shared passwords.

"When we were growing fast, it wasn't the high priority to work on," co-founder Reed Hastings admitted. "And now we're working super hard on it." Chief operating officer Gregory Peters said Netflix wasn't trying to shut down sharing, "but we're going to ask you to pay a bit more to be able to share." According to Zari, "future growth will be dependent on how can they monetize those households."

Advertising is coming

To attract viewers, Netflix is preparing cheaper subscriptions with advertising—which it expects to roll out in the next couple years. The Los Gatos, California-based company has long defended its no-ads model, which set it apart from competitors such as Disney+, HBO Max and Apple. For Pivotal analyst Jeff Wlodarczak, streaming "appears nearly fully penetrated globally post-COVID," and the companies now must set their sights on converting pirates into subscribers, gaining greater market share from each other and driving up prices. "Increasing prices won't help Netflix in the short term, though it raised its fees in January to the extent that it is now the most expensive among the major streamers."

"I think they'll have to adjust their business," said Paul Hardart, a professor at New York University, including "on the cost side, investing in content." For University of Richmond professor Joel Mier, Netflix's price increases and axing of password sharing are "peripheral but meaningful" short-term solutions, while its long-term strategy remains "investing in local-content creation and establishing its gaming presence."—AFP

'Rust' producers showed 'indifference' to gun safety

Producers of the movie "Rust" demonstrated "plain indifference" to firearms hazards and repeatedly violated industry safety protocols on the set where actor Alec Baldwin fatally shot a cinematographer, New Mexico health officials said Wednesday. Filmmakers behind the low-budget Western where tragedy struck last October were handed the maximum allowable fine over the safety breaches, following a report by the southwestern US state's environment department.

A separate and unrelated criminal investigation into how a Colt gun brandished by Baldwin during a rehearsal inside a church building discharged a live round, killing Halyna Hutchins, is still ongoing. "Rust" producers "demonstrated plain indifference to the hazards associated with firearms by routinely failing to practice their own safety protocols, failing to enforce adherence to safety protocols," the environment department report said. They failed "to ensure that the handling of deadly weapons was afforded the time and effort needed to keep the cast and crew safe," and ignored crew complaints over earlier instances when guns misfired on set, it said.

The set's safety coordinator "took no direct action to address safety concerns," while management "was provided multiple opportunities to take corrective actions and chose not to do so." Hutchins died and director Joel Souza was severely injured "as a result of these failures," the report concluded. The department's Occupational Health and Safety Bureau (OHSB) — which interviewed 14 people and reviewed more than 500 documents—issued a "willful-serious citation" and a \$136,793 civil penalty.

"This is the highest level of citation and maximum fine allowable by state law in New Mexico," said a statement. The report listed breaches of several industry guidelines, including bringing live ammunition on set, pre-loading weapons, and leaving weapons unattended. Other breaches it found included failing to hold safety meetings every day when firearms were being handled, and a lack of weapons-handling training for actors.



In this file photo US actor Alec Baldwin attends DreamWorks Animation's "The Boss Baby: Family Business" premiere at SVA Theatre in New York City.

in its investigation, we disagree with its findings and plan to appeal. "Our thoughts and prayers remain with Halyna's family."

'Not me'

Police have not yet filed criminal charges over the tragedy, and have refused to rule out charges against anyone involved, including Baldwin. Hutchins' family has sued Baldwin and other "Rust" producers, claiming "substantial" damages for her wrongful death. Other civil proceedings over the fatal shooting have been launched against producers by the movie's chief lighting technician and script supervisor.

Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, the set's armorer in charge of weapons, has sued the film's ammunition supplier, accusing him of leaving real bullets among the dummy cartridges. Baldwin, who was the star and a producer on "Rust," has said he was told the gun contained no live ammunition, had been instructed by Hutchins to point the gun in her direction, and did not pull the trigger. "I feel that someone is responsible for what happened and I can't say who that is," Baldwin said in an interview in December. "But I know it's not me." — AFP



In this file photo a photo of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins stands during a candlelight vigil in Burbank, California, for Hutchins, who was accidentally killed by a prop gun fired by actor Alec Baldwin. — AFP photos



In this photo illustration, the Netflix app is shown on a mobile phone in Houston, Texas. —AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Kim Pan-jun (right), president of 'Queen Forever' South Korea Queen fan club poses while wearing a mask next to a statue of British rock group Queen's lead singer Freddie Mercury after the statue was unveiled outside a restaurant on the northern coast of Jeju.— AFP photos



Business owner Baek Soon-yeob (right) and other fans hold a Ukrainian flag as they pose with a statue (back) of British rock group Queen's lead singer Freddie Mercury.



A fan's phone case with pictures of members of British rock group Queen is used for a live stream during an event where a statue of lead singer Freddie Mercury was unveiled.

FREDDIE MERCURY TO LIVE FOREVER IN SOUTH KOREA STATUE

A die-hard Queen fan unveiled a life-size bronze statue of Freddie Mercury on Thursday on South Korea's resort island of Jeju, after an eight-year quest to honor his late hero. The music of British rock band Queen is popular in South Korea, a country more associated with home-grown K-pop dance bands, including global megastars BTS. Jeju businessman and Queen

superfan Baek Soon-yeob, 57, used to listen to bootleg recordings of Freddie Mercury—who died of AIDS-related complications in 1991.

Queen's music was banned in South Korea in the 1970s by then-military dictator Park Chung-hee's regime, which considered it "unsuitable" in an era when men were also barred from growing their hair. Mercury's songs "kept me going

despite many hurdles along the way", Baek told AFP, adding it had been an emotional eight-year effort to build the statue. "I started emailing Queen's company in 2014 asking for a rights approval" to erect the statue, Baek told AFP.

He wrote an email every month but did not get a reply for seven years. In early 2020, he finally received a response ahead of Queen's first ever

South Korean concert-band members and label officials were prepared to meet him in Seoul. That concert was a result of South Korea's recent fervent embrace of Queen, after nearly 10 million people watched the 2018 Oscar-winning biopic "Bohemian Rhapsody" starring Rami Malek. In a country of 51 million people, that means approximately a fifth of the population watched the movie in cine-

mas, where it grossed \$70 million and sat atop box office lists for weeks. After receiving approval in 2020, Baek spent 50 million won (\$40,000) commissioning the 177-centimetre statue of Mercury clenching his fist, which was finally unveiled Thursday on the scenic Jeju coast. — AFP



Actor Johnny Depp demonstrates how he claims he shielded himself from an alleged attack by his ex-wife Amber Heard as he testifies during his defamation trial against Heard, at the Fairfax County Circuit Courthouse in Fairfax, Virginia. — AFP photos



Actress Amber Heard listens to her ex-husband Johnny Depp, as a picture of an injury to his face is seen on a screen, during his defamation trial against her at the Fairfax County Circuit Courthouse in Fairfax, Virginia.

Johnny Depp says abuse allegations have cost him 'everything'

"Pirates of the Caribbean" star Johnny Depp said Wednesday that domestic abuse allegations made against him by his ex-wife Amber Heard had cost him "nothing less than everything" and claimed that she was the one who was frequently violent. Depp, taking the witness stand for a second day of testimony in his defamation case against Heard, said she would regularly insult him and once threw a vodka bottle at him, severing the tip of one of his fingers.

The 58-year-old Depp filed the defamation suit against Heard over a column she wrote for The Washington Post in December 2018 in which she described herself as a "public figure representing domestic abuse." Heard, who starred in the movie "Aquaman," never named Depp, whom she met in 2009 on the set of the film "The Rum Diary," but he sued her for implying he was a domestic abuser and is seeking \$50 million in damages.

Heard, who turns 36 on Friday, countersued, asking for \$100 million and claiming she suffered "rampant physical violence and abuse" at his hands. Depp, who was wearing a grey suit with a black shirt and tie, was asked by one of his lawyers what the domestic abuse allegations had cost him. "Nothing less than everything," he replied. "When the allegations were rapidly circling the globe, telling people that I was a drunken cocaine-fueled menace who beat women—suddenly in my 50s - it's over. I lost then, no matter the outcome of this trial," he said. He said that a "couple of days" after the Post column appeared, Disney announced he would no longer appear as Captain Jack Sparrow in the blockbuster "Pirates" franchise.

'Verbally decimate me'

Heard's lawyers have claimed that Depp would become a "monster" during drug- and alcohol-fueled benders and physically and sexually abuse Heard. She filed a temporary restraining order against him in May 2016 after he told her he was filing for divorce. Depp said his relationship with Heard began to deteriorate shortly after their 2015 marriage. "I was suddenly just wrong about everything," Depp told the jury hearing

the case in Fairfax County Circuit Court in Virginia.

He denied ever striking Heard and said she was the one who was abusive. She would "verbally decimate me" with a "rapid fire, endless parade of insults," he said. The thrice Oscar-nominated actor, who was married to the Texas-born Heard from 2015 to 2017, said he would often retreat to another room to escape her rage. "I would just go and lock myself in the bathroom," he said. "If I stayed to argue, eventually I was sure that it was going to escalate into violence," he said. "In her rage and her anger she would strike out. "She would begin with a slap. It could begin with a shove," he said. "It could begin, you know, with throwing a TV remote at my head. It could be throwing a glass of wine in my face."

'Madness, chaos and violence'

Depp recounted one incident for the jury in detail which took place while he was in Australia filming the fifth installment of "Pirates." Heard was angry because one of his attorneys had discussed a possible post-nuptial agreement with her, he said. "It escalated and escalated and turned into madness, chaos and violence," he said. Depp said he had been sober for "many months" but after arguing with Heard he had "two or three stiff shots" of drinks.

Heard was upset to see him drinking again, he said, and threw a bottle at him, which shattered and severed the tip of the middle finger on his right hand. "I was looking directly at my bones sticking out," Depp said, displaying the crooked digit for the jury. Depp said he was in "shock" and "started to write in my own blood on the walls" — "lies that she told me" and "little reminders of my past." Heard listened attentively, taking occasional notes on a yellow legal pad as Depp testified in a slow and measured voice. Depp filed the defamation complaint in the United States after losing a separate libel case in London in November 2020 that he brought against the tabloid The Sun for calling him a "wife-beater." — AFP

UKRAINE WAR STEALS THE SHOW AT VENICE ART BIENNALE

Pavlo Makov fled Russia's invasion with almost nothing but is proud to represent Ukraine at this year's Venice Biennale, which raises questions about the role of art at a time of war. "I feel myself much more a citizen of Ukraine than an artist from this country," the 63-year-old told AFP ahead of the opening this weekend of one of the world's most prestigious art exhibitions. He added: "I'm simply doing something that I have to do. It's like a duty."

Back after a pandemic-induced break, the 59th edition of the Biennale has been overshadowed by the war in Ukraine. Organizers banned Moscow's representatives in protest at the invasion, while Ukraine's national exhibit only made it here after being whisked out of Kyiv on the day Russian troops crossed the border. Makov's installation comprises 78 light blue funnels mounted on a triangle through which water flows, slowing as it travels downwards to drip slowly into the collecting basin, echoing in the otherwise silent space. He describes his work, "The



Art curator Maria Lanko poses by 'Fountain of Exhaustion' by artist Pavlo Makov at Ukraine's pavilion during a press day at the 59th Venice Art Biennale in Venice. — AFP photos

one place, at the front," he said.

No place for art

The funnels for his work were brought from Kyiv by curator Maria Lanko, who left the Ukrainian capital when Russia invaded on February 24 and drove for six days through Romania, Hungary and Austria to Italy. The 35-year-old had been preparing for war, although she had to leave behind the massive base of

are dying".

Organizers of the Biennale praised the move and subsequently banned anyone linked to the Russian government from the entire event, joining a global cultural boycott of Moscow over the war. They also financed the reconstruction of Makov's artwork. "It is definitely due to this solidarity (that) we have this project finished here," he said. Makov himself left Ukraine with his family-including his 92-year-old mother. They are currently in Austria. Packing in haste, initially "I only took documents and money," he said. But then came the thought that "I may not be able to have shower in the next coming week... So you take underwear with you and the pair of jeans and that's it."

Turmoil of history

The Biennale, which is open to the public from April 23 to November 27, was due to take place in 2021 but was postponed due to the coronavirus outbreak. This year's edition—the theme of which is "The Milk of Dreams"—is curated by Italian Cecilia Alemani, who has ensured there is a majority of women and non-binary artists. "In the 57 editions of the Biennale, except for the last one, there has been a great preponderance of male artists.

This is why I wanted to rebalance the history," the 45-year-old told AFP. Looking to the Ukraine conflict, Alemani said she appreciated the Russian team's decision to resign rather than "have that brand for the rest of their lives". — AFP



A view shows the entrance to the 'Giardini', one of the venues of the Biennale, during a press day at the 59th Venice Art Biennale in Venice.

Fountain of Exhaustion", as "a metaphor for contemporary life". "I don't think art can change the world. But art can help us to survive," he said. Makov sees as unavoidable Russia's exclusion from the Biennale, where 58 countries are represented in national pavilions showcasing 213 individual artists. "The dialogue with Russian culture we have now has only

Makov's installation. "We kind of joked, saying: 'Okay, if ever something starts we can put those boxes in a private car and take them out'," she told AFP. In the nearby Giardini, the halls of the Biennale's Russian pavilion are empty. The curator and artists resigned following the invasion, with artist Kirill Savchenkov saying "there is no place for art when civilians

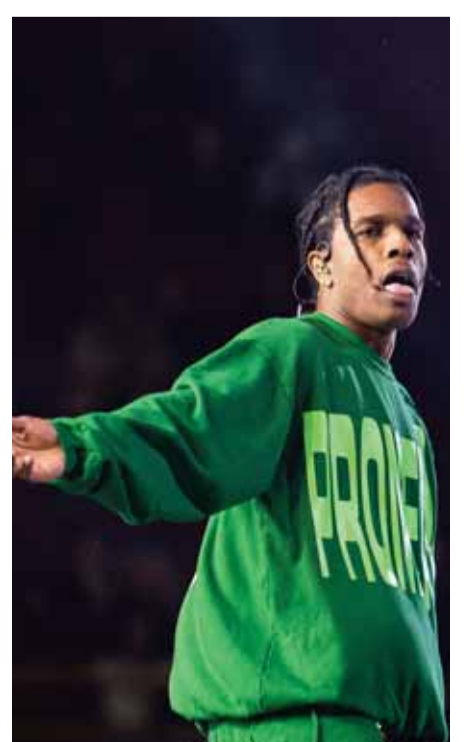
US rapper A\$AP Rocky arrested over 2021 shooting

US rapper A\$AP Rocky was arrested Wednesday over a shooting incident last year as he arrived at Los Angeles international airport, police said. A\$AP Rocky, whose real name is Rakim Mayers, was arrested for assault with a deadly weapon in relation to the shooting in Hollywood last November. Mayers, 33, is expecting a baby with pop superstar Rihanna, and TMZ reported the rapper was returning by private jet from her home island of Barbados when he was arrested.

The Los Angeles Police Department said the arrest was made in connection with an "argument between two acquaintances" on November 6, 2021 in

Hollywood which "resulted in the suspect firing a handgun at the victim." The victim, who has not been named, suffered a minor injury and the suspect fled on foot along with two other men. He was later identified by detectives as Mayers. Mayers' attorney did not immediately respond to AFP request for comment.

The relationship between Mayers and Rihanna, the billionaire entertainment and fashion mogul behind the hits "Diamonds" and "Umbrella," was confirmed last year. In an interview with GQ magazine published in May 2021 the rapper called Rihanna the "love of my life" and "the One." New York-born Mayers was previously arrested in Stockholm in 2019 over a street brawl. He was held in Swedish custody for a more than a month, in an incident which drew global attention, and was handed a suspended sentence. — AFP



In this file photo US rapper A\$AP Rocky performs during a concert in Stockholm. — AFP

Sports

Japan's rowdiest baseball fans eager to end pandemic silence

OSAKA: In a country of baseball fanatics, Hanshin Tigers supporters are known as Japan's rowdiest - so they are aching to cut loose as a pandemic ban on cheering drags into a third season. In pre-coronavirus times, the Tigers' Koshien Stadium near Osaka was a riot of noise and color with fans shouting, singing and playing trumpets in fervent support of their team.

But since COVID they have been silenced and their voices replaced by recorded chants piped into the stands through loudspeakers after cheering was banned at Japanese sports stadiums to combat the virus. Tigers supporters, who often outnumber home fans at away games and are easily recognizable in their weird and wonderful yellow and black outfits, say they are "praying" for the day when they can yell their full-throated support again.

"I think people will be so happy that they'll all get naked," 57-year-old life-long Tigers fan Hideyuki Takashima told AFP. The start of the new baseball season in March saw fans in the league allowed back in full numbers, after attendances had been limited to maintain social distancing. But signs asking them to wear face masks and refrain from chanting, singing and talking in loud voices remain.

Some Tigers fans, like 59-year-old Hiroshi Umehara, say the cheers can "just slip out" after a drink or two, but others find different ways to release their pent-up emotions. "I wait until I get home and then I let it out there, I sing in the bath," said 56-year-old Shigeyuki Morishita.

'Way of life'

The Tigers have won the Japan



(Left) This picture taken on April 10, 2022 shows "Angel", a fan of Nippon Professional Baseball team Hanshin Tigers, getting made up as a tiger before gathering with other team supporters at a restaurant in Osaka. (Right) This picture taken on April 10, 2022 shows Hanshin Tigers fan Yuko Kawase meeting her sister Takako Ueoku, both wearing Hanshin-themed homemade kimonos, to attend a Nippon Professional Baseball match between the Hanshin Tigers and Hiroshima Toyo Carp at Koshien Stadium in Nishinomiya, between Kobe and Osaka. —AFP photos



Series title only once, but they enjoy massive support in Osaka, Japan's third-biggest city and known for its rough-and-ready humor and down-to-earth character. When the team won the title in 1985, fans celebrated by jumping into Osaka's Dotonbori Canal. Yuko Kawase, who attends games wearing a home-made kimono covered in the team's logo, says it is "a way of life".

"It's like you're sitting on the bench with them, competing alongside them," said the 47-year-old, who attends about 80 or 90 games a season and also travels to the team's pre-season training camps. "Hanshin fans don't look at it as a sport or a pastime - your life is Hanshin. No Tigers, no life." The

Tigers' lack of trophies over the years stands in stark contrast to Japan's most successful team, the Yomiuri Giants.

The Tokyo-based Giants have won the Japan Series 22 times and are considered their country's version of the New York Yankees for their unrivalled dominance and spending power. Tigers fan Kawase says she refuses to attend regular season games at Yomiuri's Tokyo Dome stadium and cannot even bring herself to say the word "Giants", calling the team "G" or "that orange lot".

Another Tigers supporter, who gives his name as "Angel", says the rivalry between the Tigers and the Giants reflects the difference between Osaka and Tokyo - the capital is perceived as

more uptight. "The Giants don't have such passionate fans," said Angel, dressed in full tiger costume complete with stripy face paint. "They only support their team when they're doing well. They suddenly desert them when they're not doing well."

'Win or lose'

At the moment, it is the Tigers who are most definitely not doing well. They have made their worst-ever start to the season, losing 18 of their first 21 games. Kimono-wearing Kawase says fans are quick to boo the players for poor performances, but she says those who do are "not true Hanshin supporters". "If we win the rest of our games this season we'll win the title, that's how the

fans console each other," she said. "Whether we win or lose, if the Tigers are playing, we'll go and watch them."

No timetable has been set for the end of Japan's cheering ban, but the Tigers fans are largely resigned to it continuing for at least a few more months. They long to sing the team's anthem "Rokko Oroshi" and release balloons into the sky after the seventh inning, a tradition that has also been put on ice since the pandemic. Kawase says she can hardly wait to feel the "togetherness" in the stadium when the rules are finally lifted. "When you have tens of thousands of people all expressing themselves and not having to worry about it, it will be an amazing atmosphere," she said. —AFP

COVID-hit Delhi kept focus, says Pant after big win

MUMBAI: Delhi Capitals skipper Rishabh Pant on Wednesday said they overcame "nervousness" after a Covid outbreak in the camp to keep their focus and hammer Punjab Kings by nine wickets in the IPL. Delhi's New Zealand import Tim Seifert tested positive for COVID-19 just hours before the start of the match at Mumbai's Brabourne Stadium. Seifert became the second overseas player of the side to test positive after Australia all-rounder Mitchell Marsh who was admitted to hospital on Monday. Four support staff members have also contracted the virus. But Delhi put on an inspired performance to bowl out Punjab for 115 after electing to field first and then overhauled the target in 10.3 overs with David Warner hitting an unbeaten 60.

"Obviously there was confusion in our camp because in the morning we got to know that Tim is also positive," Pant said. "There was some confusion, nervousness and 'What are we going to do now' feeling, but we spoke in the team meeting and pointed out on what we can focus." Left-arm spinner Axar Patel stood out with figures of 2-10 as he took the key wickets of England big-hitter Liam Livingstone, stumped for two, and Punjab top-scorer Jitesh Sharma, lbw for 32.

Left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav returned figures of 2-24 to be named man of the match but said he will share the award with Axar. Axar said motivational words by head coach Ricky Ponting made them come alive after they got back to practice following two days of quarantine.

"He (Ponting) told us that we can either think about our lack of preparation and what has happened or think that this is not in our hands and just remain committed to the match," Axar told reporters. "So we kept a positive mindset, focused on the game and just went ahead with it." Openers Prithvi Shaw, who hit a 20-ball 41, and Warner smashed the bowlers to all parts of the ground in an opening stand of 83 in 39 deliveries. —AFP

Leclerc favorite for Ferrari home race, rivals play catchup

IMOLA, Italy: Charles Leclerc is in for a momentous weekend if Ferrari's early season form holds firm in the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix with the team's tifosi ready to turn Imola into a sea of red. Ferrari fans could well have double cause for celebration with Sunday's race accompanied by the first of this year's three beefed-up sprints. The winner of Saturday's 100km dash around the bumpy old school circuit will earn eight points compared to only three in last year's trials.

The outcome of the sprint defines the grid for the main race, while in a change the honor of pole position now goes to the driver who tops Friday qualifying for the speed event. Leclerc is riding the crest of

Fury wary of Whyte threat as tensions mount before fight

LONDON: World heavyweight champion Tyson Fury said he will need his "A-game" to beat Dillian Whyte on Saturday as the tensions mounted ahead of the bout with his British rival. Fury and Whyte joined forces to play peacemaker at their final pre-fight press conference on Friday after the champion's father John and a member of Whyte's camp became involved in a heated exchange on stage.

The unbeaten Fury is widely expected to retain his WBC title in front of a post-war British record boxing crowd of 94,000 at Wembley. But, in what he says is the last fight of his career, the 33-year-old has no intention of taking a farewell victory for granted. "I think everybody is underestimating how good this fight is going to be. I see the odds and laugh at them because they're obviously coming from people who don't know boxing," Fury

Djokovic survives scare to beat Djere in Belgrade

BELGRADE: Novak Djokovic battled back from a set and a break down to beat Laslo Djere in his opening match of the ATP event in Belgrade on Wednesday, avoiding a third consecutive defeat. The world number one trailed 4-3 in the second set but won a dramatic encounter against his fellow Serb 2-6, 7-6 (8/6), 7-6 (7/4) after three hours and 21 minutes.

The 20-time Grand Slam champion is playing in just his third tournament of the season after being deported from Australia before the Australian Open over his COVID vaccination status. Djokovic also missed the Indian Wells and Miami Open events in the United States. After a surprise quarterfinal exit to unheralded Czech Jiri Vesely in Dubai in February, he returned at the Monte Carlo Masters last week but lost to eventual runner-up Alejandro Davidovich Fokina in his first match.

"Djere was the better player today, he controlled the

a wave after joining the select group of drivers to achieve F1's 'Grand Slam' - pole, win, fastest lap and lead throughout in Australia. His Melbourne masterclass, after a win in the Bahrain season-opener and second in Saudi Arabia, has netted 71 of the 78 points available.

George Russell, settling in nicely at Mercedes, is 34 points adrift in second with his seven-time champion teammate Lewis Hamilton a further five points back. The constructors world champions cancelled Easter as they frantically searched for the answer to their car's deficiencies before it is too late.

"We know we haven't got the pace of the Ferrari and Red Bull right now, but we're working hard to reduce their advantage," said team principal Toto Wolff on Wednesday.

"There's been a lot of hard work over the Easter weekend in the factory to bring improvements to the car and get it ready to head to the next race, and that shows the team's dedication to turning the situation around." —AFP

told reporters on Friday.

"This is a heavyweight boxing fight, anybody can win with one punch. If I'm not on my A-game then that man's going to knock my head right off my shoulders. "I'm going to have to be on form to beat him and he will have to perform at his best to beat me. He's definitely a man that needs a lot of respect and that's what I've given him. I've done everything I can possibly do to train for this. I've trained as hard for Dillian as I have for (Deontay) Wilder or (Wladimir) Klitschko. He'll be fighting the best Tyson Fury."

Ahead of Fury's first on British soil since Aug 2018, the mutual respect between the champion and his former sparring partner was evident as they shared a handshake after their staredown for photographers. Mandatory challenger Whyte has waited years for his world title shot. The Jamaica-born 34-year-old is no stranger to adversity, having been shot and stabbed when he was drawn into London's gang culture in his youth.

Whyte, who fathered the first of his three children aged 13, has turned his life around through boxing and is relishing the opportunity to fight for a world title. "I'm willing to do whatever it takes. I'm that kind of fighter where whatever I've

game, attacked, I didn't feel good about my game, I served badly," Djokovic told reporters. "But it's a positive difference compared to Monte Carlo where I was not able to hold on physically in the third set." Djokovic had to watch on as long-time rival Rafael Nadal won the Australian Open to clinch a record-breaking 21st Grand Slam singles title, moving him out of a tie with Djokovic and Roger Federer.

He will be hoping to hit back at the French Open, which starts on May 22 and where he is the defending champion after an epic final victory over Stefanos Tsitsipas last year. It has been a tough start to 2022 for the 34-year-old on and off the court, but he showed all his fighting qualities on Wednesday despite not being at his best. Djokovic will next face another compatriot, Miomir Kecmanovic, in the quarterfinals after his 6-4, 7-6 (7/5) win over Australian John Millman.

The 50th-ranked Djere raced through the first set against Djokovic before seemingly taking total control of the match with a break in the seventh game of the second. But Djokovic broke straight back and managed to force a decider, despite needing six set points to eventually win the second set in a tie-break. The players traded breaks at the start of the third, before Djokovic staved off two break points in game eight.

ATP, WTA slam Wimbledon ban

LONDON: Wimbledon has banned Russian and Belarusian players from the 2022 tournament in response to the invasion of Ukraine, but ATP and WTA organisers branded the move "unfair" and "very disappointing" on Wednesday. The All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC), which runs Wimbledon, said it was acting to "limit Russia's global influence through the strongest means possible".

Russian men's world number two Daniil Medvedev and Belarusian female world number four Aryna Sabalenka - a Wimbledon semi-finalist last year - are the leading players affected by the ban. "In the circumstances of such unjustified and unprecedented military aggression, it would be unacceptable for the Russian



LONDON: World Boxing Council (WBC) heavyweight title holder Britain's Tyson Fury (left) tickles his compatriot Dillian Whyte as they meet during a pre-fight press conference at Wembley Stadium on April 20, 2022. —AFP

got to do I will do: it's victory by any means necessary," Whyte said. "It means everything to fight in my home country for the world title. It's massive. I'm not scared to take risks, I've taken risks my whole life so it's nothing new. I'm ready to rock and roll." —AFP



BELGRADE: Serbia's Novak Djokovic returns a ball to Serbia's Laslo Djere during their tennis single match at Serbia Tennis Open ATP 250 series tournament on April 20, 2022. —AFP

The top seed saw two break points come and go in a marathon 11th game, the second when a Djere forehand struck the net cord and looped onto the baseline. But he got the job done in the deciding breaker, as Djere missed two simple forehands and Djokovic secured victory on his first match point. —AFP

regime to derive any benefits from the involvement of Russian or Belarusian players," an AELTC statement said.

"Given the profile of The Championships in the United Kingdom and around the world, it is our responsibility to play our part in the widespread efforts of Government, industry, sporting and creative institutions to limit Russia's global influence through the strongest means possible." The Lawn Tennis Association has also banned Russian or Belarusian players from competing in other British grass-court tournaments, including Wimbledon warm-up events at Queen's Club and Eastbourne.

Players from Russia and Belarus have been able to compete on the ATP and WTA tours since the war in Ukraine started, but they were not allowed to use their national flags. The ITF had already banned both countries' teams from the Davis Cup and the Billie Jean King Cup. ATP and WTA bosses claim the Wimbledon ban is discriminatory and sets a damaging precedent. —AFP

Sports

Man City back on top as Arsenal rekindle Champions League dreams

MANCHESTER: Manchester City regained top spot in the Premier League from Liverpool with a 3-0 win over Brighton on Wednesday, while Arsenal revived their push for the top four by beating Chelsea 4-2 at Stamford Bridge. Liverpool stormed to the top of the table by tearing Manchester United to shreds in a 4-0 win at Anfield on Tuesday.

City were not so sparkling, but held their nerve to edge back one point ahead in the title race thanks to second-half goals from Riyad Mahrez, Phil Foden and Bernardo Silva. "We are facing one of the best teams ever," said City boss Pep Guardiola at going head-to-head with Liverpool. "If we drop points they will be champions, if we win all our games we will be champions."

Mahrez was guilty of missing the best chances of a tense first 45 minutes for the English champions against a Brighton side that had won at Arsenal and Tottenham in their last two outings. However, there was little doubt over the outcome once Mahrez bundled the ball home after Kevin De Bruyne's burst opened up the visitors' defense. There was a hint of fortune about City's second as Foden's shot from a well-worked corner deflected past Robert Sanchez. Silva then sealed the points with a sumptuous finish from De Bruyne's lay-off.

Gunners finally fire

Arsenal were in pole position for a return to the Champions League until a run of three consecutive defeats. But they moved level on points with fourth-

placed Tottenham after a six-goal thriller. "It's a great night and the players deserve it," said Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta. "It has been a tough two weeks but you have to bounce back and show spirit."

Scoring goals has been a problem for Arteta's men since the departure of Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, but Eddie Nketiah took his chance with a rare start to score his first Premier League goals in over a year. The all-time record goalscorer for England's under-21s pounced on a huge error from Andreas Christensen to slot the opener past Edouard Mendy.

Chelsea took just four minutes to equalize as Timo Werner's deflected shot caught Aaron Ramsdale napping at his near post. Emile Smith Rowe put the Gunners back in front with a cool finish at the end of a glorious Arsenal move that started with Granit Xhaka dribbling out of his own box. Again, though, Arsenal were pegged back as Cesar Azpilicueta steered home Mason Mount's cross.

There was a reduced crowd at Stamford Bridge for the first time since restrictions placed on the club prevented them from selling tickets not purchased prior to UK government sanctions imposed on owner Roman Abramovich. However, Arsenal were able to sell out the full away allocation and the visiting fans were jubilant when Nketiah took advantage of more shoddy Chelsea defending from Malang Sarr to put his side ahead for a third time. Bukayo Saka then sealed the win with a stoppage-time penalty after he had been brought down by Azpilicueta.



LONDON: Arsenal's German-born Portuguese defender Cedric Soares vies with Chelsea's French defender Malang Sarr during their English Premier League match at Stamford Bridge on April 20, 2022. —AFP

At the bottom of the table, Everton snatched a much-needed point in their battle to beat the drop as Richarlison's 92nd-minute strike earned a 1-1 draw against Leicester at Goodison Park. The Foxes led for 87 minutes after Harvey Barnes' early opener. Everton edge four points clear of the relegation

zone. Newcastle were also fretting about relegation at the turn of the year, but the Magpies are up to 11th after a sixth consecutive home win. Miguel Almiron scored the only goal at St James' Park to round off a disappointing week for Crystal Palace after their FA Cup semifinal exit to Chelsea. —AFP

Benzema misses two penalties in win over Osasuna

MADRID: Karim Benzema missed two penalties in seven minutes on Wednesday but Real Madrid still had enough to defeat Osasuna 3-1 as they continued their march towards the La Liga title. Benzema was looking for his 45th goal of the season but was twice denied by Osasuna goalkeeper Sergio Herrera, who both times dived to his right and both times made the save with Madrid leading 2-1 at El Sadar.

But Osasuna were unable to find an equalizer in the second half and Madrid added a third in injury-time, Vinicius Junior teeing up Lucas Vazquez for an easy finish. David Alaba's opener had earlier been cancelled out by Osasuna's Ante Budimir, before Marco Asensio restored Madrid's advantage on the stroke of half-time.

Carlo Ancelotti was unconcerned by Benzema's misses from the spot. "If there was another penalty, he would have taken it and the next one he will take as well," Ancelotti said. Madrid move 17 points clear at the top of La Liga, ahead of Atletico Madrid, who missed the chance to pull away in the race for the top four after being held to a goalless draw by Granada.

The stalemate means Atletico move up to second in the table but could be overtaken by both Barcelona and Sevilla on Thursday. Barca play at Real Sociedad after Sevilla travel to Levante. Real Betis, who were beaten by Elche on Tuesday, are four points behind Atletico in fifth. Ancelotti started Toni Kroos and Vinicius on the bench while Luka Modric was left out of the squad completely, with the first leg of Madrid's Champions League semifinal against Manchester City less than a week away.

Alaba went off in the second half but Ancelotti said the problem does not seem serious. "We're optimistic," he said. "It doesn't seem serious. His groin was bothering him so we decided to take him



PAMPLONA: Real Madrid's French forward Karim Benzema takes a penalty kick during the Spanish League football match between CA Osasuna and Real Madrid CF at El Sadar stadium on April 20, 2022. —AFP

off." Alaba put Real Madrid in front in the 13th minute, bundling in the rebound after Benzema had tapped the ball across, but the advantage was brief as Budimir knocked in Chimy Avila's pass to the back post a minute later.

Madrid restored their lead at the end of the half as Asensio played inside from the right wing and continued his run into the penalty box. Eduardo Camavinga chipped to the left side of the box and while Dani Ceballos' effort was saved, Asensio's run was rewarded with a simple finish. Benzema's pair of penalties came in the 52nd and 59th minutes, both won by Rodrygo, whose sharp turn tempted Avila into a handball on the ground before Nacho Vidal stumbled into the back of the Brazilian.

At the first attempt, Benzema struck left but Herrera dived to make the save. The second time, Herrera pointed to Benzema's right but Benzema opted for the same side, Herrera guessing correct-

ly again to palm away to safety. Vinicius came off the bench and should have added a third in injury-time but side-footed wide, before tearing away again and this time laying across for Vazquez to find the corner.

Atletico frustrated

Atletico Madrid had earlier been left frustrated by a goalless draw with Granada. After six consecutive victories between February and April, Atletico have now managed just one win from their last five in all competitions, bringing back some of the concerns that hung over the team earlier in the season. Without Joao Felix, who will miss the rest of the season through injury, La Liga's reigning champions lacked the thrust needed to break down a determined Granada side, who were playing their first match under new coach Aitor Karanka. Granada sit 18th, a point behind Cadiz, who have a game in hand. —AFP

Forsberg sends RB Leipzig into German Cup final

BERLIN: Emil Forsberg headed RB Leipzig into their third German Cup final in four years with a last-gasp winner in a 2-1 home victory over Union Berlin on Wednesday. After an Andre Silva penalty had cancelled out Sheraldo Becker's first-half header for Union, Forsberg scored in the second minute of stoppage time to seal the semifinal win. It was the third time Forsberg has scored in a German Cup semi-final.

He also scored a 121st-minute winner in last year's win over Werder Bremen, having previously netted in a 3-1 victory against Hamburg in 2019. "These are moments you never forget. It's unbelievable, it only happens in football," Forsberg told Sky. Leipzig will face Freiburg, who beat Hamburg 3-1 on Tuesday, in the final on May 21 at Berlin's Olympic Stadium. Leipzig are chasing their first cup title after previous final defeats by Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund. Visitors Union took the lead with 25 minutes gone when Becker tucked a cross inside the far post to the delight of the travelling fans. It was the first goal Leipzig had conceded in the competition this season. Leipzig drew level in the 61st minute after their top-scorer Christopher Nkunku was brought down in the area and Portugal striker Silva converted the resulting penalty.

Having missed three penalties this season against Paris Saint-Germain, Real Sociedad and Atalanta in Europe, Silva roared in celebration when his spot-kick sailed past Union's Danish goalkeeper Frederik Roennow. Extra time was beckoning when Swedish playmaker Forsberg rose above his marker and guided a header into the corner. It extended Leipzig's unbeaten run to 15 games in all competitions. Leipzig host Union again this Saturday in the Bundesliga ahead of their Europa League semi-final first leg at home to Rangers on April 28. —AFP

PSG win but title celebrations put on hold

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain won 3-0 away at Angers on Wednesday but will have to wait a little longer to be confirmed as Ligue 1 champions after nearest challengers Marseille beat Nantes 3-2. PSG started the day 15 points clear with six games left and so knew they could clinch their eighth Ligue 1 crown in 10 years if second-placed Marseille slipped.

Mauricio Pochettino's side got the result they needed, brushing aside struggling Angers despite being without the injured Lionel Messi and the suspended Neymar. Kylian Mbappe put PSG in front as Ligue 1's leading scorer notched his 22nd of the season just before the half-hour mark at the Stade Raymond Kopa. Sergio Ramos then marked a rare appearance by doubling the lead in first-half stoppage time when he headed in Angel Di Maria's cross, and his central defensive colleague Marquinhos added a late third.

However PSG, who had young midfielder Edouard Michut sent off in stoppage time, were made to wait for the record-equaling 10th French title in their history as Amine Harit's strike gave Marseille victory at the Velodrome. OM came from behind twice against Nantes through Dimitri Payet penalties before Harit struck in the 75th minute to make it 3-2 and secure a precious win for Jorge Sampaoli's side as they chase Champions League qualification.

PSG remain 15 points clear with just 15

points left to play for and also boast a far superior goal difference. They will be confirmed champions on Saturday with a point at home to Lens. "It is really important for us to win the championship and I hope we can do it on Saturday," Pochettino told broadcaster Canal Plus. "We always talk about wanting to win the Champions League but there is also value in winning the league," he told reporters later.

"PSG must accord value to every competition they play in. Let's hope we can celebrate the title together with our fans on Saturday." A 10th title will see them equal the record set by the Saint-Etienne side of Michel Platini when they won their last championship in 1981. The capital club had only been French champions twice before the Qatari takeover of 2011.

Behind them Marseille are now six points clear in second place, with only the top two in Ligue 1 qualifying automatically for the Champions League and third place entering in the qualifying rounds. Rennes remain third but are only above Strasbourg and Monaco on goal difference while Nice are two points back in sixth. Strasbourg beat Rennes 2-1 in Alsace with Ludovic Ajorque grabbing their winner after Martin Terrier had cancelled out Habib Diallo's early opener for the home side.

Meanwhile Monaco have surged back into European contention and climbed above Nice by beating their Cote d'Azur rivals 1-0 on Wednesday thanks to a first-half strike by Russian international Aleksandr Golovin. It was a fifth consecutive victory for the principality side. Nice are now out of the European places altogether, with fourth qualifying for the Europa League and fifth going into the Europa Conference League. Lens remain in contention after beating Montpellier 2-0 to



ANGERS, France: Paris Saint-Germain's Spanish defender Sergio Ramos celebrates with French forward Kylian Mbappe and Argentinian midfielder Angel Di Maria after scoring his team's second goal during the French L1 football match against Angers SCO at the Raymond-Kopa Stadium on April 20, 2022. —AFP

move to within one point of Nice, but Lyon and outgoing champions Lille saw their European hopes suffer potentially decisive blows. Peter Bosz's Lyon lost 2-1 away to Brest despite a 15th league goal of the season for Moussa Dembele, while a sublime Renato Sanches strike could not prevent Lille from going down 2-1 at Reims.

Meanwhile six-time champions Bordeaux remain in serious danger of being relegated to Ligue 2 after throwing away a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 at home to Saint-Etienne. The result means Bordeaux are 19th, four points and one place behind Saint-Etienne who sit in the relegation playoff spot. Clermont climbed above the latter and out of the relegation zone altogether by winning 1-0 at Troyes. Bottom side Metz are eight points from outright safety after losing 1-0 at Lorient. —AFP

Juventus set up Cup final with Inter Milan

TURIN: Holders Juventus booked their spot in next month's Italian Cup final against Inter Milan with a 2-0 win over Fiorentina in their semi-final, second leg in Turin on Wednesday to advance 3-0 on aggregate. Juventus lost their Serie A crown last season to Inter Milan and also fell to an Italian Super Cup defeat by their northern rivals in January.

Sitting fourth in Serie A, Juventus's hopes of avoiding a season without a trophy for the first time since 2011 will likely be played out at Rome's Stadio Olimpico on May 11. "I could not ask for more from these lads, as for the last four months it's been practically the same players all the time," Juve coach Massimiliano Allegri told Mediaset. "They're throwing their hearts out there. We did well defensively this evening, which had gone awry lately."

Juve took control of the semi-final against their Tuscany rivals after Lorenzo Venuti's late own goal in the first leg in Florence. On Wednesday, former Fiorentina winger Federico Bernardeschi fired the hosts ahead after half an hour, with Danilo adding a second just before the final whistle. Fiorentina could thank goalkeeper Bartlomiej Dragowski for denying ex-Fiorentina striker Dusan Vlahovic twice in the first half-hour, but Bernardeschi volleyed home the opening goal.



TURIN: Juventus' Dutch defender Matthijs De Ligt and Fiorentina's Argentine forward Nicolas Gonzalez go for a header during the Italian Cup semifinal, second leg match on April 20, 2022 at the Juventus stadium. —AFP

Juventus goalkeeper Mattia Perin saved headers from Arthur Cabral and Lucas Martinez Quarta either side of the break. Denis Zakaria missed the chance to double Juve's lead on the night, hitting the woodwork after the interval. An Adrien Rabiot goal was then ruled offside before Juan Cuadrado set up Danilo to score late on as Juve maintained their bid for a record-extending 15th Italian Cup. On Tuesday, Lautaro Martinez scored twice as Inter Milan beat city rivals AC Milan 3-0, after a goalless first leg, as the seven-time winners look to reclaim a trophy they last won in 2011. —AFP



TORONTO: Joel Embiid #21 of the Philadelphia 76ers drives to the net against Chris Boucher #25 and Precious Achiuwa #5 of the Toronto Raptors during the second half of Game Three of the Eastern Conference First Round at Scotiabank Arena on April 20, 2022. —AFP

Sixers win on Embiid stunner

WASHINGTON: Joel Embiid hit a stunning three-pointer with 0.8 seconds remaining to give the Philadelphia 76ers a shock 104-101 overtime NBA playoff victory over Toronto on Wednesday. NBA scoring champion Embiid, a 28-year-old center from Cameroon, took an inbound pass near the sideline with less than a second on the shot clock, turned to the hoop and fired, sinking his first career last-second game winner after 14 prior misses.

"That's the best one," Embiid said of his last-second shots. "Just get the ball to me or whoever was open. We did that and I'm glad I made a good play." Embiid, a 2022 NBA Most Valuable Player award finalist, scored a game-high 33 points and grabbed a game-high 13 rebounds as the visiting Sixers rallied from a 17-point deficit to seize a 3-0 lead in the best-of-seven series with game four on Saturday. "The job is not done," Embiid said. "We've got one more. We've got to come back here and try to beat them again."

Philadelphia trailed by as many as 17 points and never led until overtime. The Sixers weren't the only team to overcome a 17-point hole as the host Boston Celtics took a 114-107 fightback victory over Brooklyn thanks to a fourth-quarter rally, seizing a 2-0 series edge over the Nets. At Milwaukee, the defending champion Bucks tried to rally from 18 points down but visiting Chicago got an NBA play-

off career high 41 points from DeMar DeRozan in a 114-110 triumph that leveled their series at 1-1.

Philadelphia's James Harden had 19 points and 10 assists before fouling out in the final seconds of regulation time. Tyrese Maxey added 19 points and Tobias Harris had 11 points and 12 rebounds for the 76ers. It was a heartbreaker for the Raptors, who were led by 26 points from O G Anunoby and 24 from Gary Trent Jr with Precious Achiuwa adding 20 off the bench.

The 76ers matched a season high with 21 turnovers, 15 in the first half setting up 21 Toronto points. "We have to take care of the ball, don't allow last second chances, move the ball to each other and make plays," said Embiid, who was ripped at half-time by Sixers coach Doc Rivers with Toronto ahead 56-46. "The first half I was just floating around. I didn't really want the ball," Embiid said. "Coach got on me, said I'm the biggest guy out there and I have to dominate. That's what I tried to do."

Bulls hold off Bucks

DeRozan, who had a private extra shooting session Tuesday, lifted a Chicago squad that lost all four times this season to Milwaukee and in the play-off opener. "We came together," DeRozan said. "We had some man to man talks as a team. Everybody

has to man up. We just took on the challenge." Greek star Giannis Antetokounmpo had 33 points, 18 rebounds and nine assists in a losing cause.

The Bucks pulled within 112-109 late on a three-point play by Brook Lopez, but DeRozan made a late driving layup and Antetokounmpo had an offensive foul to doom Milwaukee. At Boston, Celtics star Jaylen Brown scored 10 of his 22 points in the fourth quarter and Jayson Tatum added 19. The Nets never trailed until the final eight minutes as Boston charged back from a 17-point second-quarter deficit.

Kevin Durant led Brooklyn with 27 points but was tested all night by swarming, physical Boston defenders in a bruising contest - the Celtics having led the league in defensive statistics. Former NBA MVP Durant shot 4-of-17 from the floor, 0-for-10 with four turnovers in the second half. Kyrie Irving was only 4-of-13 from the floor for 10 points.

Grant Williams had 17 points off the Boston bench while Al Horford had 16 points and Daniel Theis added 15 for the Celtics. Bruce Brown had 23 for Brooklyn and Goran Dragic added 18 off the Nets bench. The Celtics couldn't grab their first lead until reserve Payton Pritchard hit a jumper to make it 94-92 with 7:49 remaining. The Nets managed only two points over four minutes and Boston unleashed a 23-4 run in the fourth for the triumph. — AFP

Kuwait SC clinch Premier League after Kazma draw

KUWAIT: Kuwait Sports Club were crowned champions of Kuwait Premier League for the 17th time in history after Qadsia drew with Kazma on Wednesday. Kuwait secured the title with one round to go with 39 points, four points ahead of second-placed Kazma. Kuwait now equal Qadsia and Al-Arabi clubs in the number of league titles, which portends fierce competition in the coming season to claim leadership.

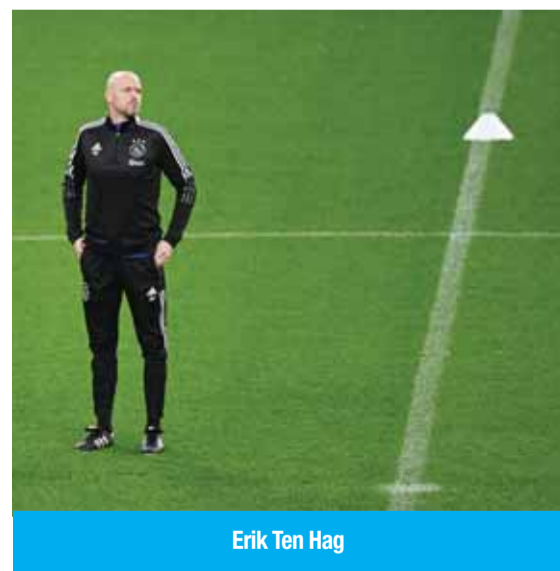
Kazma needed to win to keep alive their hopes of winning the league in the final round, but they only managed a draw. In his first reaction, Kuwait SC's Tunisian coach Nabil Maabul said he was happy for the win. "Almighty Allah helped us in our mission to become champions," he said, thanking the fans, players and the technical, physical, medical and administrative staff for their efforts.

Ten Hag to become Manchester United manager next season

MANCHESTER: Erik ten Hag will leave Ajax to become Manchester United manager next season, the English giants confirmed on Thursday. The 52-year-old, who has signed a three-year contract, faces a huge task to revive the Red Devils fortunes after a fifth consecutive trophyless season. The Dutchman becomes the fifth permanent manager at Old Trafford since Alex Ferguson's retirement in 2013 sent the 20-time English champions into decline.

Ten Hag is on course to win his third league title with Ajax and took the four-time European champions to the semi-finals of the Champions League in 2019 for the first time in 22 years. "It is a great honor to be appointed manager of Manchester United and I am hugely excited by the challenge ahead," said Ten Hag. "I know the history of this great club and the passion of the fans, and I am absolutely determined to develop a team capable of delivering the success they deserve. It will be difficult to leave Ajax after these incredible years, and I can assure our fans of my complete commitment and focus on bringing this season to a successful conclusion before I move to Manchester United."

United sit sixth in the Premier League, 23 points behind leaders Manchester City, and are unlikely to qualify for next season's Champions League. The club have been looking for a permanent manager since Ole Gunnar Solskjaer was sacked in October. Ralf Rangnick was appointed interim boss for the remainder of the season, but the German has been unable to inspire any improvement in United's per-



Erik Ten Hag

formance. Rangnick has been fiercely critical of the standard of the United squad in recent weeks, claiming after Tuesday's 4-0 defeat by Liverpool that United are "six years" behind their rivals.

An overhaul of the squad is expected in the coming months with Paul Pogba, Edinson Cavani, Jesse Lingard and Juan Mata all out of contract and Nemanja Matic having already announced his decision to leave at the end of the season. A summer of long-needed change will put Ten Hag's ability to work constructively with the club's new CEO Richard Arnold, technical director Darren Fletcher and football director John Murtough immediately to the test. "During the past four years at Ajax, Erik has proved himself to be one of the most exciting and successful coaches in Europe, renowned for his team's attractive, attacking football and commitment to youth," said Murtough. — AFP

Maradona shirt auction opens with bid of \$5m

NEW YORK: An auction of the jersey worn by Diego Maradona when he scored twice against England in the 1986 World Cup, including the infamous "hand of God" goal, kicked off Wednesday with a bid of over \$5 million. Sotheby's is selling the blue number 10 Argentina shirt in an online sale that runs until May 4. A few hours after bidding opened, the site showed that a first offer of £4 million (\$5.2 million) - matching the low end of the auction house's pre-sale estimate - had been registered.

That would set a new record price for a football jersey at auction. The record for a game-worn shirt from any sport is \$5.6 million, set in 2019 for a jersey Babe Ruth wore while on the New York Yankees. Maradona's daughter cast doubt on the sale earlier this month when she claimed that the shirt put up for auction had been the one her father wore in the goalless first half, not the second when he scored his two goals.

Sotheby's insists they have the right shirt, though. It had been owned since the end of the controversial encounter by opposing midfielder Steve Hodge, who swapped his jersey with Maradona after England lost 2-1. Hodge, whose autobiography is titled "The man with Maradona's shirt," has for the past 20 years loaned the jersey to be on public display at the National Football Museum in Manchester.

The quarterfinal showdown became etched in football folklore for Maradona's two goals - one

notorious and one sublime - in Mexico City's seething Aztec Stadium. The first came shortly after half-time when Hodge, on the edge of the England penalty area, intercepted a pass and flicked the ball back towards goal.

Maradona, running into the box, rose with England's goalkeeper Peter Shilton and punched the ball into the net. He later said the goal had been scored "a little with the head of Maradona, a little with the hand of God." Soon after, Maradona left five English defenders in his wake before gliding past Shilton and slotting home for a strike that was voted "Goal of the Century" in a 2002 FIFA poll. Argentina went on to win the final and Maradona, who died from a heart attack in 2020, became worshipped in his home country. — AFP



LONDON: A Sotheby's technician adjusts a football shirt worn by Argentina's Diego Maradona during the 1986 World Cup quarterfinal match against England during a photocall at Sotheby's auction house on April 20, 2022, ahead of its sale. —AFP