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Parliament Speaker lauds Kuwait Amir's directives

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World's oldest person dies in Japan at 119

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Liverpool close gap on Man City; Everton in danger zone

Ramadan Timings

Fajr	03:47
Shurooq	05:11
Dhuhr	11:46
Asr	15:21
Maghrib	18:21
Isha	19:43



Iran hails latest talks with Saudi Arabia as ‘positive’

Tehran and Riyadh support rival sides in several conflicts

TEHRAN: Iran said Monday that the latest round of talks with its regional rival Saudi Arabia was “positive and serious” and voiced hope for further progress soon. Tehran and Riyadh, which severed diplomatic ties in 2016, held four rounds of talks in Iraq between April and September last year, with a fifth meeting last Thursday.

“The fifth round of negotiations between Iran

and Saudi Arabia in Baghdad ... was positive and serious and saw progress,” foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh told reporters. Iran and the kingdom of Saudi Arabia support rival sides in several conflicts, including in Yemen, where Tehran backs the Houthi rebels and Riyadh leads a military coalition supporting the government.

In 2016, Iranian protesters attacked Saudi diplo-

matic missions in the Islamic republic after the kingdom executed revered Shiite cleric Nimr Al-Nimr. Riyadh responded by cutting ties with Tehran. Iran’s Nour news agency reported the latest talks were attended by “senior officials from the secretariat of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council and the head of the Saudi intelligence service”.

It added that the foreign ministers of the two

countries were expected to meet “in the near future”. Khatibzadeh said that “if the negotiations are upgraded to first-class political level, it can be expected that progress can be made swiftly in different sectors of the talks”. The spokesman also said “an agreement was reached to hold the next round of negotiations” between Iran and Saudi Arabia, but he did not specify a date. — AFP

Ramadan Kareem

How Islam promotes kindness to animals

By Abby Bell

I recently discovered a stray cat that lives upon the doorstep of my home. She likes to lie next to my door where the cool air from the air conditioning inside my house seeps under the door and can cool her in summer heat. My little yellow abandoned cat is not alone in Kuwait; there are many abandoned animals that live among us. This lead me to wonder, according to the Quran what should I be doing for my feline doorstep guest? Does Allah care about the creatures that so many people see as mere pests?

“There is not an animal that lives on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but they form communities like you. Nothing have we omitted from the Book, and they all shall be gathered to their Lord in the end” (Quran 6:38). This was a response to my question, Allah not only created the animals that roam the earth but he has promised to gather them in the end.

The Quran also speaks of God’s awareness of animals and how the animals are able to praise and pray to Allah. “Seest thou not that it is Allah Whose praise all beings in the heavens and on earth do celebrate, and the birds (of the air) with wings outspread? Each one knows its own (mode of) prayer and praise, and Allah knows well all that they do.” (Quran 24:41)

According to the Quran the Muslims’ position on earth is to set an example for mankind. “You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoy what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah.” (Quran 3:110) Seeing as Allah is well aware of the animals of the earth (Quran 24:41), what kind of example should Muslims be setting for mankind when it comes to the treatment of animals?

One Hadith of the Prophet (PBUH) says, “Whoever is merciful even to a sparrow, Allah will be merciful to him on the Day of Judgment.” As I look at the panting cat that has laid claim to my doorstep, I know one simple mercy is simply giving her both food and water. In Kuwait we also have some volunteer organizations that are purposefully offering mercy to abandoned animals.

According to Hadith of Sahi Bukhari the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) believed that Muslims should take care of animals. “The Companions said, ‘O Allah’s Messenger! Is there a reward for us in serving the animals?’ He replied: ‘There is a reward for serving any living being.’” (Bukhari) Just as we serve each other we can also serve the animals that live among us. Islam is clear that Allah values animals and that he expects us to care for them.

Sometimes people fail to realize the value that Allah has put into his creation. It is unfortunate that sometimes people hurt, torture, and purposefully starve animals. In the Hadith of Al Turmithi the Prophet (PBUH) said that, “The farthest people from God are the people who are cruel in their hearts.”

Continued on Page 6

Macron seeks to heal French divisions

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron sought to unite a deeply divided nation Monday after winning re-election in a battle against rival Marine Le Pen that saw the far right come its closest yet to taking power. Centrist Macron won 58.54 percent of the vote in the second-round run-off compared with 41.46 for Le Pen, according to final results from the interior ministry. Macron is the first French president in two decades to win a second term and his victory

prompted a sigh of relief throughout Europe that the far right had again been thwarted from taking power in the key EU state.

But his latest victory over his far-right rival was narrower than their last face-off in 2017 when Macron won over 66 percent, and Le Pen’s result was the best ever for the far right. The president already has a daunting in-tray, ranging from preparing for parliamentary elections as soon as June to implementing explosive pension reform plans and dealing with the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Addressing supporters in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower late Sunday, Macron vowed to heal rifts in a deeply divided country. “From now on, I am not the candidate of one camp, but

Continued on Page 6



PARIS: French President and La Republique en Marche (LREM) party candidate for re-election Emmanuel Macron and his wife Brigitte Macron celebrate after his victory in France’s presidential election on April 24, 2022. — AFP

Violence in Darfur kills at least 160

KHARTOUM: Clashes between rival groups in Sudan’s restive Darfur region killed at least 160 people on Sunday, an aid group said. The violence first erupted on Friday and is still ongoing in the Krink region of West Darfur, said Adam Regal, spokesman for the General Coordination for Refugees and Displaced in Darfur, an independent

aid group. The group said eight people were killed on Friday alone. Regal said at least 46 people were also wounded in the fighting, and voiced fears that the death toll could rise.

A tribal leader from the non-Arab Massalit minority described seeing multiple bodies in villages of the Krink region, which lies some 80 kilometers from West Darfur’s provincial capital, Geneina. On Sunday, the International Committee of the Red Cross called on authorities to ensure the safe arrival of the wounded to hospitals. The latest bout of violence broke out after armed Arab tribesmen attacked villages of the Massalit minority in

retaliation for Thursday’s killing of two tribesmen, the aid group said.

Images posted online showed burning houses sending plumes of thick black smoke to the sky, while others showed round patches of scorched earth where huts had stood before they were set alight. AFP could not independently verify the authenticity of the images. On Saturday the aid group accused the mainly Arab Janjaweed militia of orchestrating the attack on the Massalit villages. The Janjaweed gained notoriety in the early 2000s for its role in the repression of an ethnic minority rebellion in Darfur.

Continued on Page 6

The quest for a universal vaccine

PARIS: As vaccine makers rush to stamp out new COVID-19 variants, some scientists have set their sights higher, aiming for a universal coronavirus vaccine that could tackle any future strains and possibly even stave off another pandemic. Since the race for a first COVID jab supercharged a new generation of vaccine technology, there have been numerous efforts to develop pan-coronavirus immunisation.

Drew Weissman of the University of Pennsylvania, who was a pioneer of the mRNA technology used in Pfizer’s

Covid vaccine, is leading one such project. He said the problem with updating current vaccines to target all existing strains—a plan announced by Pfizer earlier this month—is that “new variants are going to appear every three or six months”.

After more than two years simply trying to infect more people, he said, the virus is now starting to mutate specifically to get around the immunity gained from vaccines—much as influenza’s constant changing requires an updated shot every year. “That makes it a little bit trickier, because now you’re fighting head-to-head with the virus,” Weissman told AFP.

So his team is working on a pan-coronavirus vaccine, which he said has tested well so far. They are trying to find “highly conserved epitope

Continued on Page 6



SHENYANG: An employee works at a facility producing a COVID-19 coronavirus vaccine, which is currently undergoing clinical tests, in Shenyang in China’s northeastern Liaoning province. — AFP

Zionists retaliate after rocket fired from Lebanon

JERUSALEM: UN peacekeepers said Monday they were investigating overnight rocket fire from Lebanon into Zionist entity that prompted the Jewish state to retaliate with dozens of rounds of shelling. Zionist army said that it responded with

artillery fire to a “projectile launched from Lebanon”, which crashed into an open field near a kibbutz.

There were no reports of casualties or damage, and the attack was not claimed by any group. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon said that, after detecting a “rocket being launched from south Lebanon towards Zionist entity”, its commander made contact with both sides “to urge restraint”. “Nonetheless, the Zionist Defense Forces fired back several dozen shells into Lebanon,” UNIFIL said in a statement, adding that it had begun “an investigation to determine the facts”.

Lebanon’s National News Agency said the rocket fire was carried out by unidentified groups and that Lebanese forces had deployed to the area, with calm restored before sunrise. Zionist Defense Minister Benny Gantz called on Lebanon’s government “to take responsibility for what happens on its territory”. “If terrorism and violence continue, we know how to use the necessary force against the right targets.”

Lebanon and Zionist entity are technically in a state of war. The Jewish state and Lebanon’s Shiite Muslim militant group Hezbollah exchanged fire across the heavily guarded border last summer. — AFP

Local



Ramadan a great opportunity for introspection, moral growth: Koytak

Turkish Ambassador talks Ramadan traditions in Turkey, Kuwait

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Ambassador of Turkey to Kuwait Ayse Hilal Sayan Koytak spoke to Kuwait Times about her experience and views about Kuwaiti culture and Ramadan traditions in both countries. "In Turkey, we popularly refer to Ramadan as 'Sultan of Eleven Months', emphasizing the divine character of this month," she said.

"Muslims of Turkey know that the holy month of Ramadan entails more than just fasting and praying. On the individual level, Ramadan takes on a deep, spiritual meaning, offering a great opportunity for introspection, reflection and moral growth. On the social level, Ramadan reminds us of our social responsibilities, fills our hearts with compassion and encourages stronger bonds within our communities. This is where Ramadan traditions play a particularly important role, as they foster collective consciousness and spirit of togetherness among us," she added.

Ramadan will not be a muted occasion as it was in the last two years of the pandemic for Muslims, where traditions and rituals have largely returned after being scaled back. "The past two years have shown in a rather bitter way that without traditions, Ramadan is less joyful and missing something. Due to pandemic restrictions, we could not come together and



Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait Ayse Hilal Sayan Koytak speaks to Kuwait Times.

socialize as we wished. We had to endure separation at a time when togetherness is almost everything. However, inshallah this Ramadan is different as we are cautiously returning to the pre-pandemic days amid a promising decline in cases around the world," Ambassador Koytak noted.

She pointed out that Ramadan's rituals and traditions are not merely acts of joy or kindness - they have a deep social meaning as well. This is particularly true for Kuwait, where centuries of Ramadan traditions are very well-preserved and are still viewed as an opportunity to bring members of the

community closer. "This is my fifth Ramadan in Kuwait, the country I consider to be my second home. I remember the first time I observed Ramadan in Kuwait - it was very pleasing to feel at home, thanks to the cultural and traditional similarities between Turkey and Kuwait," Koytak said.

"Like Turkey, Kuwait has many beautiful Ramadan traditions that have stood over generations. But the most popular of these traditions is the diwaniya, which has a history dating back to the early 1800s," she said. Diwaniyas are purposefully-designed, open-to-public places of social gathering

where people come together to discuss issues related to them.

Koytak said in Ramadan, diwaniyas have become a focal point for social interactions, as people visit each other in diwaniyas to exchange greetings, inquire after someone they haven't seen for a while, and appreciate loved ones over tea or coffee. "To me, diwaniyas are symbols



**Diwaniyas,
a focal point
for social
interactions**



KUWAIT: Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to Kuwait Ayse Hilal Sayan Koytak.

of Kuwaiti hospitality and generosity, which I have always appreciated. All visitors are welcomed warmly, foods and drinks are served to guests, and the host sees visitors off with nice words. I also appreciate the rich diversity of diwaniyas where Kuwaitis and friends of different backgrounds meet and greet each other and chat about daily matters," she said.

The ambassador likes to witness Kuwaitis' interest in her country. "In

diwaniyas, I like to listen to Kuwaitis' memories of Turkey and their future travel or study plans. I believe diwaniyas are more than a casual social gathering. They play an important social role in protecting young generations of Kuwaitis from being alienated from their community during the digital age. I am particularly impressed by youth participation in diwaniyas. It is nice to observe that people in Kuwait are proud to continue this tradition," Koytak added.



Kuwaiti aid agency distributes 4,832 food parcels in Yemen

ADEN: Kuwait Society for Relief (KSR) started on Sunday giving out 4,832 food parcels to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in four governorates in Yemen as part of the 'Kuwait by Your Side' campaign. The aid campaign continues for the eighth year running. The new relief effort was launched today at a ceremony in Taiz city, southwest Yemen, in the presence of Nabil Jamel, director general of the Taiz office of the Yemeni Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, and Deputy Director of KSR's office in Yemen Adel Ba'eshn. The Yemeni official expressed gratitude for Kuwait's assistance to the Yemenis displaced by the conflict. "The State of Kuwait continues contributing to the realization of food security for vulnerable people and alleviating their suffering over the past years," Jamel said in statements to the press during the ceremony. Meanwhile, Ba'eshn said the KSR relief campaign covers the four governorates of Taiz, Shabwah, Hudaydah and Marib. He affirmed that the KSR resolve to continue supporting the Yemeni people and helping the government of Yemen realize sustainable development and improve services across the country. — KUNA



Firemen tackle Ashbiliya blaze

KUWAIT: Firemen battled a blaze which gutted a vehicle in Ashbiliya Sunday. Firemen headed to a house in the area where a fire was reported in a vehicle parked outside. The flames

were extinguished and no injuries were reported, Kuwait Fire Force said in a statement, adding that an investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the fire.

Two dead in garbage truck accident

KUWAIT: Two people died and a third was injured in an accident reported on Seventh Ring Road Monday. Firemen rushed to the scene in response to an emergency call reporting that a garbage truck was involved

in an accident. Two victims were pronounced dead on the scene while the third was rushed to hospital for treatment. An investigation as opened into the accident, Kuwait Fire Force said.



Local

Parliament Speaker lauds Kuwait Amir's directives

Speech reflects leadership's keenness on assuming responsibility

KUWAIT: Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem extolled the valuable directives and contents of the speech of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the occasion of the last 10 days of the holy month of Ramadan. The speech was delivered by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, on behalf of His Highness the Amir. Of the most important points in the Amir's speech are renewing the emphasis of maintaining the national unity described by His Highness the Amir as a "fence and fortress", and the cohesion of Kuwaitis, Ghanem said. His Highness the Amir reiterated of preserving security and stability of Kuwait in light of the constitution and the democratic path, and this shows keenness of the political leadership on assuming its historical responsibility, he added. During the speech, His Highness the Amir focused on the challenges facing the country and the people, Ghanem said, stressing obedience to His Highness the Amir.

His Highness the Amir had urged the people of Kuwait to unify and cooperate in face of any challenges. "Our unity is the most powerful weapon to

preserve our dear homeland. National unity is a fence that protects Kuwait and the Kuwaitis and a fortress to confront adversity and face challenges," said His Highness. During his speech, His Highness the Amir also noted that reform in the country has steps and paths, and that it does not happen overnight, and it will still require great effort, patience and solidarity. "We will spare no effort in order to protect the capabilities and gains of our beloved homeland, and we will not hesitate to take any decision that guarantees the country's security and stability in light of our authentic democratic approach, our sound constitution, and our ancient customs and norms," His Highness added. "In these blessed nights of Ramadan, we proudly recall our Late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, praying to Allah to bestow mercy on his soul, accept our fasting and righteous acts, protect our homeland and maintain further security and prosperity to the country," said His Highness. In addition, His Highness the Amir prayed to Allah Almighty to return this good occasion to Arab and Muslim nations with further blessings and goodness. —KUNA



Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem

Kuwaiti artist participates in Venice Biennale

ROME: Kuwaiti artist Munira Al-Qadeeri participated in the 59th Venice International Art Exhibition, which opened its doors last Saturday, by displaying three colorful sculptural models. Qadeeri expressed appreciation as the first Kuwaiti artist to display her work at the most important international exhibition of contemporary arts. She added that her three sculptural models represent the modern history of the Gulf which derives its idea from oil rigs and spending long time in the ocean for searching pearls. Munira was selected among a group of distinguished artists to allow them to implement unique creative projects that reflect their vision and society. The Venice Biennale, in its current exhibition, displays 1,433 artworks and pieces by 213 artists from 58 countries, including 180 first participation, and expected to receive about 600,000 visitors until November 27, 2022. —KUNA



ROME: Kuwaiti artist Munira Al-Qadeeri participates in the 59th Venice International Art Exhibition. —KUNA

MILSET chooses KU instructor as int'l consultant

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The International Movement for Leisure Activities in Science and Technology (MILSET) announced choosing Dr Abdullah Al-Mutawa, a teacher of computer engineering at the College of Engineering and Petroleum at Kuwait University, as one of its international consultants in its team of experts from different continents.

Adnan Al-Meer, Deputy President of MILSET and the Head of the Regional Office for Asia, noted the selection of Dr Mutawa was based on his great role and cooperation in the scientific field with MILSET Asia. "Dr Al-Mutawa was holding workshops and training for students participating

in robotic competitions organized by the Regional Office. Moreover, he also formed a judging team of computer engineering students of the College of Engineering and Petroleum at Kuwait University for many years for these competitions," stressed Meer.

Dr Mutawa has been volunteering to co-organize the program of activities and competitions since 2006. "He significantly participated in the success of the Kuwait Contest for Robotics Champions, which was the first Arab competition held in Kuwait by the Kuwait office of MILSET in 2006. The ministry of education and the Kuwait University participated in this contest. Students who participate in this contest then start participating in other contests," Meer added.



Dr Abdullah Al-Mutawa



KUWAIT: Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Sibi George met Ghanim Saqer Al-Ghanim, Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for Legal Affairs on Monday and discussed bilateral ties, enhancement of the bilateral institutional cooperation, progress on various MoUs under discussion, implementation of MoUs signed and other matters of mutual interest.

OIC affirms commitment towards Palestinians' rights over their lands

JEDDAH: The Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Hussein Taha stressed Monday, the organization's absolute commitment and firm support for the right of the Palestinian people to sovereignty over their occupied land, including East Jerusalem, as the capital of the State of Palestine.

This came during the extraordinary open-ended meeting of the organization's executive committee at the level of permanent delegates at the headquarters of the General Secretariat in Jeddah, to discuss the ongoing Zionist attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque. Taha said that he had sent letters to several international actors expressing the organiza-

tion's rejection and condemnation of the Zionist occupation's attempts to impose the temporal and spatial division of Al-Aqsa Mosque. He called the international community to take an urgent action to put an end to the Zionist violations of the holy sites and to unify political, economic and media efforts to protect the city of Jerusalem and its holy sites and to take appropriate political and legal measures against the Zionist entity to stop its continuous violations against the Palestinian people and their holy sites.

For his part, Representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the OIC, Dr Saleh Al-Suhaibani, expressed the Kingdom's strong condemnation on the repeated attacks and Zionist violations against worshippers in Al-Aqsa Mosque. Suhaibani called on the international community to take an effective action on occupation forces to hold full responsible for these crimes and violations provocative actions. —KUNA

News in brief

Amir congratulates France President

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to France's President Emmanuel Macron on the occasion of reelection, wishing him success and good health, and the relations tying the two nations further progress. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar congratulatory cables.

Eid Al-Fitr Monday: Al-Ojairi center

KUWAIT: Eid Al-Fitr that marks end of the fasting month of Ramadan will fall on May 2, Al-Ojairi Scientific Center said in a statement on Monday. Eid prayers will be held at 5:21 am. The center expressed congratulations on the forthcoming eid to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince, as well as the people of Kuwait.

Interior Ministry launches e-visa service for companies

KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry has launched the e-visa service for the private sector through the companies' portal on the ministry's website. Thus, the ministry will stop issuing the paper visa through the Public Authority for Manpower, it announced in a press statement Monday.

USD Dollar traded at KD 0.305: CBK

KUWAIT: The US Dollar stabilized Monday at KD 0.305, while the Euro declined by 0.050 percent to KD 0.328 compared with Sunday's rate. The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) said in its daily bulletin the British Sterling Pound went down by 0.050 percent to KD 0.390, as the Swiss Franc decreased by 0.011 to KD 0.318 and the Japanese Yen stayed at KD 0.0023. The CBK publishes daily average exchange rates that do not necessarily reflect actual prices of the currencies' trade for the day.

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KUWAIT: The HR Department at Gulf Bank.

Gulf Bank family celebrates annual Ramadan ghabga

Highlighting familial spirit that makes Gulf Bank family unique



The Wealth Management Department.



The Direct Sales Department.

KUWAIT: After a two-year hiatus, and in keeping with a beloved workplace tradition, Gulf Bank brought its employees and executive management together for its annual Ramadan ghabga. This year's ghabga took place at Al-Raya Hall and celebrated the familial spirit that sets the Gulf Bank family apart. The annual ghabga is a wonderful opportunity for employees from different administrative divisions and branches to enjoy an evening of delicious food and great conversation, entertainment segments, surprises, prizes, and more.

"The annual ghabga is one of our most anticipated events throughout the year, and one that we greatly look forward to organizing for the Bank," said Gulf Bank's General Manager of Human Resources, Salma Al-Hajjaj. "We are so proud to bring together employees from all over the Bank, especially during the holy month of Ramadan, a time of strengthening bonds and our familial spirit."

She continued: "Gulf Bank is keen to continuously enhance a spirit of communication and camaraderie between its employees with a variety of activities and entertainment throughout the year. We are overjoyed to witness an atmosphere of familiarity and warmth that unites everyone at

the Bank, and we hope our events will continue to strengthen the bonds that hold our Gulf Bank family together."

She continued: "We are proud that Gulf Bank is one of the leading banks that continues to invest generously in our human capital, enhancing the competencies of our employees, who make up the foundation of our strategic goals. By providing our employees with ongoing opportunities to enhance their expertise and skills, Gulf Bank is keeping pace with major banking developments and global banking requirements." Hajjaj noted that employee training and development represents a cornerstone of the bank's commitment to implementing economic sustainability, by recruiting and developing Kuwaiti talent and preparing them for future leadership positions in the private sector.

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



The Branches Department.

the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience.

Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining a robust sustainability program at the community, economic,

and environmental levels through sustainability initiatives that are strategically selected to benefit both the country and the bank. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.

Zain shares blessings of Qiyam prayers with worshippers

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, shared the blessings of Qiyam prayers with worshippers during the last 10 days of Ramadan. The initiative, which came in line with the company's social campaign during the Holy Month, was held at some of the nation's biggest mosques.

Zain's contributions stemmed from its annual social campaign for the holy month of Ramadan, through which the company has launched numerous initiatives since the beginning of the month to share the joys and blessings it brings with all segments of the community by partnering with various institutions, reflecting the spirit of giving in the month of giving.

As it does every year during the last 10 days of Ramadan, specifically during Qiyam prayers, Zain shared the spiritual atmosphere of this period of time with worshippers by offering hospitality services in front of two of the country's biggest mosques: Jaber Al-Ali Mosque at South Surra and



Mohammed Al-Sadah Mosque at Abdullah Al-Salem Area.

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

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



KUWAIT: Ambassador of Bangladesh to Kuwait Md Ashikuzzaman hosted a ghabga for representatives of the Kuwaiti media on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Qatar Airways hosts sohour for media



KUWAIT: Qatar Airways recently held a sohour banquet for media figures at Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan. It was attended by Qatar Airways Regional Manager, Fadi Hijazin, Lead Public Relations Officer

Abdulla Al-Kuwari, Marketing Manager Haitham Abdelraouf, and representatives of the Kuwaiti media. Speaking on the occasion, Hijazin thanked the media for its constant support, noting that Qatar Airways has grown way beyond after the COVID-19 pandemic.



KUWAIT: Zain's team offers hospitality services to worshippers.



Philippine dynasties tighten grip on power

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The world of vaccines, before and after COVID

War exposes Russia military shortcomings

Moscow has failed to calibrate its firepower

PARIS: Two months into the war in Ukraine, military experts say they have been shocked about how ill-prepared Russia has been in its invasion of its pro-Western neighbour.

Despite an initial offensive on multiple fronts, Moscow has failed to gain the upper hand in the air, sent in columns of tanks without cover or coordination and has vastly underestimated the strength of Ukraine's resistance, experts say.

The unanimous opinion among western military general staff is that Russian President Vladimir Putin's original aim was to decapitate the Ukrainian forces in a lightning operation.

But Moscow has failed to calibrate its firepower to handle a level of resistance which intelligence services completely failed to foresee.

"Russia's political leaders imposed on the military command a completely absurd scenario where everything would proceed like in the annexation of Crimea in 2014," said the Russian military expert, Alexander Khramchikhin.

"They thought that the Russian army would be welcomed as the liberators of all of Ukraine, except for the territories in the west. It is clear that the Russian military command was not prepared for such resistance on the part of the Ukrainians," he said. Vincent Turret, research fellow at the Foundation for Strategic Research, agreed.

"The Russians have completely under-estimated the balance of power," he said. "The only part of the operation that was thought of as a war operation was the raid on Hostomel airport (on the outskirts of Kyiv) and the attempt to decapitate Ukrainian power," the expert continued.

"The other Russian troops entered the country as if they were going to take possession, and with

too many objectives, they were completely dispersed over the entire territory," he said.

On February 24, Russia launched its offensive on three fronts simultaneously, meaning its 150,000 troops were spread over several different axes: in the north towards Kyiv, in the east and in the south.

101: Air supremacy

But experts say that Russia has made a major error in deploying its forces on the ground without obtaining control of the skies beforehand, despite the mobilisation of 500 aircraft.

"Gaining supremacy of the air is the 101 that shapes everything else in a modern conflict," said a French pilot, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"They should have knocked out Ukrainian fighter planes, radars, ground-air systems, landing strips," the pilot said. On the ground, manoeuvres are confused, revealing failures in the chain of command and shortcomings in training, experts say.

Elite units were parachuted into Hostomel airport without air support, while long columns of Russian tanks advanced, sometimes without cover, vulnerable to Ukrainian air and ground strikes aided by Turkish Bayraktar tactical drones.

In two months, the Russians have lost more than 500 tanks and more than 300 armoured vehicles, according to the specialised blog Oryx, which lists material losses in Ukraine on the basis of photos or videos collected on the battlefield.

"That's not the end of the tank era," said William Alberque, director of strategy, technology and arms control at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London.

"Armoured vehicles work well when combined with artillery, infantry and air support" and that is



IRPIN, Ukraine: This aerial photograph taken on April 24, 2022 shows a destroyed residential area in Irpin, northwest of Kyiv, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

what has been lacking in the first phase of the war in Ukraine, he said.

'Battle of the roads'

For all the strikes that the Russians are sending, they lack precision — according to the US government, only 50 percent of cruise missile strikes reach their intended target.

By contrast, "the Ukrainians are remarkably well-prepared," said a European military source. "They mounted a real diversionary operation" by not trying to defend their borders within range of artillery fire, instead diluting their ground-air assets and their aviation and regrouping in the cities to complicate the Russian offensive, the source said.

After about a month, having failed to encircle

and bring down Kyiv, Moscow decided to change strategy and focus on the conquest of the Donbas region in the east, bordering Russia, instead.

Since then, "we've seen some consolidation," said Alberque at IISS. "We finally see a unified command and a more unified objective," the expert said, but he predicted a "bitter battle over difficult terrain dotted with rivers and forests".

"The Ukrainians have the advantage in this field," said a high-ranking French officer. "They will fight a battle of the roads to complicate Russia's manoeuvres and supplies."

Nevertheless, Kyiv's supply lines, too, are now very stretched, as the weapons supplied by the United States and Europe are arriving in the west of the country. — AFP



TRIPOLI, Lebanon: Mourners fire in the air during a funeral of a victim, killed after a boat loaded with migrants capsized near the coast of the northern city of Tripoli, in the northern Lebanese city on April 25, 2022. — AFP

Lebanon rescue teams search for migrant boat disaster survivors

TRIPOLI, Lebanon: Lebanese rescue teams searched the Mediterranean for survivors Monday after an overloaded people-smuggling boat capsized while being pursued by naval forces, with dozens unaccounted for still missing at sea. At least seven people died as a result of the tragedy, which occurred late Saturday just off the coast of the northern port city of Tripoli.

It was Lebanon's worst such disaster in years, igniting widespread rage just three weeks before May 15 parliamentary elections. The latest body was retrieved on Monday morning. "The body of a woman from the Al-Nimr family was recovered

today from the Tripoli beach," the director general of Tripoli Port Ahmed Tamer told AFP, adding that rescue efforts were ongoing.

The Lebanese army said on Sunday that 48 people had been rescued, but it was not immediately clear exactly how many would-be asylum seekers were crammed onto the boat when it set off. The United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) said the boat was carrying at least 84 people when it capsized, about three nautical miles (3.5 miles, 5.5 kilometres) off the coast of Tripoli.

According to UNHCR figures, that means potentially some 30 people are still unaccounted for. The passengers included Syrian and Palestinian refugees but most were Lebanese, local media reported.

The circumstances that led the small and overloaded craft to sink were not entirely clear, with some survivors claiming the navy rammed into their boat, and officials insisting the smuggler attempted reckless escape manoeuvres. Lebanon was once a transit point for asylum seekers from elsewhere in the region who were hoping to reach the shores of European Union member Cyprus by sea, an island 175 kilometres (110 miles) away. — AFP

freedom, we stand with the people of Ukraine who do the same thing at this very moment," Prime Minister Scott Morrison said as the sun rose over the Northern Territory capital of Darwin.

"Coercion travels our region once more," he added, in an allusion to China's growing political and military sway in the Pacific. In New Zealand, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the Russian invasion of Ukraine made Anzac Day especially poignant.

'Threat to all'

"Fresh in all our minds is the invasion of Ukraine, a most grim reminder of the fragile nature of peace, and the devastating impact of war on people's lives," she said at a memorial service in Auckland where she laid a wreath.

"It is a threat to the international laws that a nation like ours relies on but it is also a threat to our sense of humanity," she added. "And that makes it a threat to all of us." Earlier she attended a dawn service at Pukeahu National War Memorial Park in Wellington. The annual commemoration comes in the run-up to May 21 elections in Australia, where the conservative coalition government is touting its defence credentials as it trails the Labor Party opposition in opinion polls. — AFP

Crowds join Anzac Day services for Australia, NZ forces

SYDNEY: Crowds of Australians and New Zealanders joined Anzac Day services at dawn on Monday to honour their armed forces as the countries' leaders pointed to new global threats and the war in Ukraine. With COVID-19 restrictions of the past two years eased, large numbers of people gathered just before the sun rose to observe solemn ceremonies, many held at beaches and war memorials in towns and cities across the two countries.

Anzac Day marks the ill-fated World War I landing of Australia and New Zealand Army Corps troops at Gallipoli, in what is now Turkey, in 1915. Facing dug-in German-backed Ottoman forces, more than 10,000 Australian and New Zealand servicemen were killed in the Allied expedition.

Anzac Day now honours Australians and New Zealanders who have served in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations. "On this particular day, as we honour those who fought for our liberty and

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International

The world of vaccines, before and after COVID

Rise of COVID-19 created new players in the field

PARIS: The COVID-19 pandemic has forever changed the world's relationship to vaccines, spurring unprecedented production and innovation even while poorer nations were left behind. At the start of World Immunization Week, AFP looks at the current state of play.

Millions of lives saved

Vaccines for more than 20 life-threatening diseases prevent between two to three million deaths a year, according to the World Health Organization. Until COVID-19, vaccines tended to be targeted at specific groups, such as children, the elderly or vulnerable people. And before the pandemic, the world produced around five billion total vaccine doses a year. Then everything changed: 11 billion doses of COVID vaccines were produced in 2021 alone.

While vaccines against COVID were created in under a year, there are still no jabs for other infectious diseases like HIV that have been around for decades and killed millions. The huge differences in vaccination rates between rich and poor countries has also shone a light on other vaccine inequalities. Despite an effective measles vaccine being available for more than half a century, 140,000 deaths from the disease were recorded in 2018 - mostly among children in developing countries, according to France's INSERM institute.

Different technologies

Since British physician Edward Jenner came up with the first vaccine in 1796 for smallpox, several different kinds have been developed. Inactivated

vaccines, which are used for polio and influenza, kill or inactivate the germ, but retain its ability to produce antibodies to fight future infections. Attenuated vaccines-used for measles, mumps and rubella as well as chickenpox-contain a weakened version of the virus, again to boost antibodies.

More recently, viral vector vaccines, used for Ebola or AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson's COVID vaccines, take a modified version of a different, harmless virus to smuggle genetic instructions to the body's cells, telling them to make antibodies. The newest technology is mRNA, used in Pfizer and Moderna's COVID vaccines, which delivers instructions to build the spike protein of the coronavirus, to evoke antibodies.

mRNA 'shuffling the deck'

Traditionally, only a few large pharmaceutical firms have had the capacity to develop new vaccines because of the huge costs involved. "It was the preserve of a happy few. Messenger RNA is shuffling the deck," said Loic Plantevin, a healthcare expert at the Bain and Company consultancy.

Before the pandemic, four companies accounted for 90 percent of the global vaccine market: American giants Pfizer and Merck, Britain's GSK and France's Sanofi. However, none except Pfizer-thanks to a partnership with German firm BioNTech-managed to quickly get a COVID vaccine to market. But the rise of COVID has created new players in the field, such as mRNA vaccine leaders BioNTech and Moderna.

It has also spurred production in nations that

China during the early phase of the pandemic.

China's strategy of snap lockdowns, strict travel curbs and lengthy quarantines largely kept the virus at bay in the first two years of the Covid crisis, and allowed people to maintain a semblance of normal life.

But the fast-spreading Omicron variant shook that approach, as authorities scrambled to contain outbreaks with a rapidly changing mosaic of curbs that tested even the most seasoned expats' resolve.

More than a third of the firms surveyed by the American Chamber in March said their foreign staff had been reduced by at least 10 percent because of Covid curbs since the beginning of the pandemic.

'Crazy direction'

Nowhere is this more evident than in Shanghai, whose 25 million residents are seething under a weeks-long lockdown that has seen food shortages, scattered protests and a stream of online vitriol. The cosmopolitan economic powerhouse boasts a large overseas community of around 164,000 according to census data released last year. They work in a range of industries, from tech and finance to teachers at international schools.

But there are signs that even the hardest of them may decide to leave. One longtime British resident in Shanghai told AFP they planned to repatriate over worries that the latest lockdown marked the beginning of a "really crazy direction" in virus policies. "Zero-COVID is like a belief now, a really fervent belief," they added, requesting anonymity as they had not informed their employer of their plans. "It doesn't really matter that COVID's not that serious (now)... We have to get to zero." — AFP



GUADALAJARA: A nurse from the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS) gives a dose of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine to a local resident, as part of a campaign to reach out to people in low-income neighborhoods, in Guadalajara, Jalisco state, Mexico, on April 24, 2022. — AFP

missed out on the lion's share of vaccine doses earlier in the pandemic. The WHO plans to set up mRNA vaccine production centers in six African countries as early as 2024. Such projects have made possible by mRNA vaccines, which can be updated and developed more swiftly, while "traditional technologies remain complicated to deploy and relocate," Plantevin said.

Drew Weissman of the University of Pennsylvania, whose decades of research paved the way for mRNA

technology, said his team has also been working to set up COVID vaccine production sites in Thailand and in several African countries. "My overall goal is that if you have local production and local control, when COVID is over these vaccine sites will be able to make the vaccines that they need," Weissman told AFP. "So Thailand will make dengue, Africa will make malaria-those are vaccines that pharmaceuticals don't have much interest in." — AFP

China's pursuit of zero COVID driving expats away

BEIJING: Colin Chan spent more than a decade building a life in China, but enduring ever-changing COVID rules and five weeks of quarantine convinced the Singaporean that it was time to leave. China's reluctance to budge on its strict zero-COVID policy is hastening the departure of expats from the world's second-largest economy, with business groups warning that unpredictable regulations were driving foreigners away.

When Chan returned to China from Singapore at the end of February, he was prepared for a long quarantine in Shanghai before he could head home to Beijing-direct international flights to the capital are vastly reduced because of COVID. But within days of reaching Beijing, he was told to stay at home for another two weeks, with a device installed on his door that sounded an alarm if it was opened. "Restrictions seemed to be changing all the time," said Chan, who left China this month after completing these back-to-back quarantines.

He is among a wave of expats who have left, or are considering leaving China. Over 80 percent of companies surveyed by the American Chamber of Commerce last month said China's virus policies had hit their ability to attract or retain foreign staff. And the British Chamber said Wednesday that business risk was "at the highest level seen since 2020" when the virus was spreading rapidly in

Gambian on trial in Germany over AFP reporter murder

CELLE, Germany: The trial began in Germany on Monday of a Gambian man accused of being part of a death squad that assassinated opponents of former dictator Yahya Jammeh, including an AFP journalist.

The suspect, identified by media as Bai Lowe, is accused of crimes against humanity, murder and attempted murder, including the 2004 killing of AFP correspondent Deyda Hydara. Lowe, 46, wore a black hood and hid his face behind a green folder as he arrived in court in the northern town of Celle.

Outside the courtroom, activists held a placard demanding that Jammeh "and his accomplices be brought to justice". The trial is "the first to prosecute human rights violations committed in Gambia during the Jammeh era on the basis of universal jurisdiction", according to Human Rights Watch. Universal jurisdiction allows a foreign country to prosecute crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide, regardless of where they were committed. Arrested in Hanover in March 2021, Lowe is accused of being involved in two murders and one attempted murder while working as a driver for the hit squad known as the Junglers between December 2003 and December 2006.

"This unit was used by the then-president of Gambia to carry out illegal killing orders, among other things" with the aim of "intimidating the Gambian population and suppressing the opposition," according to federal prosecutors. Hydara, 58, was gunned



CELLE, Germany: Baba Hydara, son of the late Deyda Hydara, poses with a photo of his father on the sidelines of the trial against Gambian defendant Bai L., accused of crimes against humanity, murder and attempted murder. —AFP

down in his car on the outskirts of the Gambian capital Banjul on December 16, 2004. Lowe is accused of helping to stop Hydara's car and driving one of the killers in his own vehicle.

Hydara was an editor and co-founder of the independent daily The Point and a correspondent for AFP for over 30 years. The father-of-four also worked as a Gambia correspondent for the NGO Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and was considered a doyen among journalists in the tiny West African state.

In his newspaper The Point, he had a widely read column, "Good morning, Mr President", in which he expressed his views on Gambian politics. According to investigations by RSF, Hydara was being spied on by Gambian intelligence services just before his death. —AFP

How Islam promotes...

Continued from Page 1

In another Hadith of Bukhari the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) told a story of a woman who kept a cat locked up and didn't feed it. The Prophet (PBUH) warned that she would go to the hellfire for her cruelty to the cat. Cruelty to animals is never acceptable according to Islamic faith.

The Prophet (PBUH) warned us about being cruel, but Allah takes it farther and tells us to do good. In the Quran 4:36 it says, "Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him; and do good- to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet), and what your right hands possess: For Allah loveth not the arrogant, the vainglorious."

Not only does Allah indicate that we should be good to people but also whatever our right hand might possess. Perhaps what your right hand might possess is a bird, cat, or dog: are you doing good to the animals that Allah has made your possession? Perhaps, you don't have a pet at this time, but every day we see animals around us, are we doing anything to relieve some of their suffering?

In Hadith Muslim after returning from getting a drink from a well a man sees a dog that is thirsty and can tell the dog is in pain. The man then goes

down to the well and fills his shoe with water and gives it to the dog. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) says that because of the kindness of the man to the dog, that Allah forgave the man's sins.

The little yellow cat has returned to lie against my door and I am certain that it is my responsibility to alleviate some of her suffering. Islam promotes kindness to animals and makes it clear that we have the responsibility for caring for some of these animals. There are many ways in which a person can help care for the animals around us.

You can offer food or water to animals, you can adopt an abandoned pet to care for yourself, you can be careful not to purchase animals that are bred unethically, you can make pet food donations to support local charities for pets, or you can take time to volunteer at a center for abandoned animals. In a world that has been so carefully created by the One True God, His creation is special to Him and Allah values the acts of kindness done unto his creation even the least of the creatures that walk among us. I urge you to take action and to do good for the animals that Allah has placed in Kuwait.

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.

imals to humans this century: its older relative SARS killed nearly 800 people from 2002-2004, and the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) followed in 2012. When US-based biotech firm VBI Vaccines announced its pan-coronavirus project in the early days of the pandemic in March 2020, it targeted all three. Francisco Diaz-Mitoma, VBI's chief medical officer, explained the premise by likening each antigen of their proposed vaccine to one of the three primary colors.

The firm hopes to provide antibodies not just for these three-but also for "the various shades of orange, green, and purple found in between". "In other words, we are trying to teach the immune system to expand upon the variations of virus it is capable of 'seeing' from the start," he told AFP. — AFP

Macron seeks to heal French...

Continued from Page 1

everybody's president," he said. "An answer must be found to the anger and disagreements that led many of our compatriots to vote for the extreme right."

Turnout was the lowest in any presidential election second-round run-off since 1969 and, in another striking sign of disenchantment with politics, 8.6 percent of people who voted either delivered a blank ballot or spoiled their papers. The 44-year-old president now faces the challenge of parliamentary elections in June, where keeping a majority will be critical for his ambitions.

In a sign of roadblocks ahead, two polls published late Sunday showed that most voters do not wish for him to also carry the parliamentary vote. "Macron's biggest challenge will be to create a sense of cohesion in an extremely fragmented country," said Tara Varma, senior policy fellow and head of the Paris office of the European Council on Foreign Relations.

French daily Le Monde called Macron's win "an evening of victory without a triumph", while left-leaning Liberation called it "a victory without the glory". Conservative daily Le Figaro said after all the challenges of his first term, Macron's win was "no mean feat", but also asked: "Who can possibly believe that it is rooted in popular support?"

For Le Pen, her third defeat in a presidential poll was a bitter pill after years of effort at making herself elec-

table. On Sunday Le Pen, 53, said she would "never abandon" the French and was already preparing for the June legislative elections. Macron's re-election sparked relief across Europe where he has been seen as a guarantor of continuity.

Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi called Macron's victory "great news for all of Europe" while German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said French voters "sent a strong vote of confidence in Europe today". European Council president Charles Michel said the bloc could now "count on France for five more years" while European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said she was "delighted".

The praise was echoed by other world leaders, including US President Joe Biden, Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison. Russian President Vladimir Putin-who Macron has unsuccessfully sought to persuade to end the invasion of Ukraine-said Monday he wished the French president "success in your state activities, as well as good health and well-being".

Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky told Macron he was "a true friend of Ukraine". China's President Xi Jinping said he wanted "to maintain diplomatic relations based on independence, mutual understanding, foresight and mutual benefit" with Macron.

The French leader will now try to implement his vision of more pro-business reform and tighter EU integration, after a first term shadowed by protests, then the coronavirus pandemic and finally Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The president's re-election failed to spark much positive sentiment on the Paris stock exchange, where investors paid more attention to geopolitical worries and inflation fears, but also noted France's coming challenges. — AFP

The quest for a universal...

Continued from Page 1

sequences"-more integral parts of the virus that cannot mutate readily because it would die without them. But it's not going to be easy. "We may have a universal vaccine in two or three years, but we're going to have to keep working on it and changing it over time to keep ahead of the virus," Weissman said.

Covid was not the first coronavirus to jump from ani-

the United Nations and medics say. Darfur was the scene of a bitter conflict in 2003 between ethnic minority rebels and the Arab-dominated government in Khartoum killed 300,000 people and displaced 2.5 million, according to UN figures.

Large-scale fighting has subsided across much of Darfur but the region remains awash with weapons and deadly clashes often erupt over access to pasture or water. The latest violence has reflected a broader security breakdown in Darfur following last year's military coup led by army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, that derailed a transition to full civilian rule. — AFP

Violence in Darfur kills...

Continued from Page 1

Krink and neighboring villages are suffering under a "tight economic blockade by the Janjaweed militias", Regal said on Saturday. Scores of people have been killed and hundreds of houses torched in several bouts of violence in Darfur in recent months,

International

All in the family: Philippine dynasties tighten grip on power

Families can win and lose it and make a comeback

LAOAG, Philippines: If the son of former Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos wins the May 9 presidential election, he will not be the only Marcos currently in power—and will almost certainly not be the last. Elite families have long ruled the poverty-ravaged nation, holding on to positions of power for generations by dishing out favours, buying votes or resorting to violence. Analysts say the system has become more pervasive in the decades since a popular uprising deposed Marcos and forced the family into exile. New dynasties have entrenched themselves in politics, smothering electoral competition, stunting economic development and worsening inequality.

“Power begets power—the more they stay in power, the more they accumulate power, the more powerful they get,” said Julio Teehankee, a professor at De La Salle University in Manila. The archipelago has produced about 319 dynastic families, dating back to when the country was a US colony in the first half of the 20th century, Teehankee said.

Dozens have withered, but in 2019, members of at least 234 such families won positions in mid-term elections, he said. They have flourished in a feudal and corrupt democracy where parties are weak, fragmented along clan lines and plagued by defections. Power, however, is not static. Families can win and lose it—and make a comeback.

After the fallen dictator died in 1989, the Marcoses returned to their traditional stronghold of Ilocos Norte and began tapping local loyalties to get elected to a succession of higher positions. Ferdinand Marcos Jr, 64, is now on the verge of clinching the ultimate dynastic victory: The presi-

dency. The family also wants to make a clean sweep of the top posts in its northern bastion.

Launching their campaigns in the provincial capital Laoag, Marcos candidates stood together in front of a “Team Marcos” sign as thousands of supporters cheered. Marcos Jr’s eldest son is a first-time candidate, seeking one of two congressional seats in the windswept province of corn and tobacco farms. A cousin is defending the other.

His nephew—the son of his sister Imee, a senator—is vying for re-election as governor, while a cousin’s widow is the incumbent vice-governor. Marcos Jr told AFP the family was not a dynasty, but his cousin Michael Marcos Keon, seeking a second term as Laoag mayor, disagreed. “This is all dynastic,” said Keon, 67, who also served as governor after Marcos Jr hit the three-term limit—a tactic often used to keep positions in the family. “I wouldn’t be where I am today if I weren’t a Marcos.”

‘Family is paramount’
The Marcoses’ stranglehold on power in Ilocos Norte was “typical” of provinces across the country, said Ronald Mendoza, dean of Manila’s Ateneo School of Government. And their influence is growing.

Eighty percent of governors belong to “fat dynasties”—clans with two or more members in power at the same time—compared with 57 percent in 2004, Mendoza said. Political families held 67 percent of seats in the House of Representatives, compared with 48 percent in 2004, and 53 percent of mayoral posts, up from 40 percent.

Among the leading candidates for the 12 Senate seats being contested, at least three already have a

Heritage site for its pristine natural environment and diverse wildlife.

The tour went ahead despite high winds and waves that reportedly prompted some local fishing boats to return to shore to avoid the worsening conditions. Japan’s Self-Defense Forces and police, as well as some local fishing boats, were assisting in the search operation, with local media saying bodies had been retrieved from both the water and coast.

The transport ministry has sent officials to the company that operated the sightseeing boat to determine whether they were operating within safety guidelines, and to investigate the cause of the accident, a ministry spokesman told AFP.

Rescue operations were delayed in part by rough seas that meant the first boats did not arrive on the scene until more than four hours after the distress signal was sent, a government spokesman said. The aircraft closest to the site was out on patrol at the time, and had to refuel and pick up divers before it headed to the site, also creating delays, he added.

‘Praying for their safety’
Those killed in the accident have not yet been identified, though officials said they included seven men and three women, in addition to the child. A man whose parents and brother were on the boat told the Mainichi Shimbun newspaper that he had given them the tour as a present.

“They may still be in the cold sea, but I’m praying for their safety,” he told the newspaper. “I want to find out what happened to them as soon as possible, but I don’t know what to do,” he added. And

junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun told AFP.

He did not give any details on when a verdict would be reached. Journalists have been barred from attending the special court hearings in the military-built capital Naypyidaw and Suu Kyi’s lawyers have been banned from speaking to the media.

Suu Kyi is facing a total of 10 corruption charges—each with a possible 15-year jail term. She is also on trial for breaching the official secrets act, where she is accused alongside detained Australian academic Sean Turnell.

She has already been sentenced to six years in jail for incitement against the military, breaching Covid-19 rules and breaking a telecommunications law—although she will remain under house arrest while she fights other charges.

That likely excludes the popular leader from elections the junta has said it plans to hold by next year. Since the coup, many members of her National League for Democracy—which trounced a military-backed party in 2020 elections—have been arrested, with one chief minister sentenced to 75 years in jail.

Under a previous junta regime, Suu Kyi spent long spells under house arrest at her family’s colo-

are being held in Egypt.

Among those freed Sunday, prominent lawyer Khaled Ali told AFP, were journalist Mohamed Salah, researcher Abdo Fayed and activists Walid Shawky, Haitham Al-Banna and Hassan al-Barbary. Activist Radwa Mohamed, who was arrested in 2019 for criticizing the regime amid rare protests calling for Sisi’s removal from office, was another of those released, according to her lawyer Nabeh Al-Ganadi.

All six were charged with “belonging to a terrorist organization and spreading false news” — an accusation frequently levelled against dissidents in Egypt. Shawky had begun a hunger strike in February. Both he and Salah had previously been ordered released before new charges were levelled against them—a common tactic used to circumvent Egypt’s two-year maximum pretrial detention peri-



LAOAG, Philippines: File photo shows, Philippine presidential candidate Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr (C), the son of late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, raises his hands with his son Sandro Marcos (centre L) and nephew Matthew Marcos Manotoc (centre R) during a campaign rally in Laoag City, Ilocos Norte province. —AFP

relative in the chamber. Even the party-list system, which seeks to give citizens from marginalised groups representation in Congress, has been largely taken over by a handful of surnames. As his daughter leads the race for the country’s second-highest office, outgoing President Rodrigo Duterte said recently he had “accomplished” his job. “I have a daughter running for vice-president, a son for congressman and one other as mayor. I am fulfilled,” he said.

More than 18,000 posts are being contested in

next month’s elections. At least 800 have only one candidate. Mendoza said the pandemic had made it even more likely that incumbents would win.

“You have more voters potentially vulnerable to vote-buying, more voters concerned about their continued access to social protection,” he said. Mendoza said poverty tended to rise as dynasties fattened, especially in provinces beyond the main island of Luzon, where “checks and balances” on governance are weaker. —AFP

Japan boat accident toll rises to 11

TOKYO: Japanese rescuers on Monday confirmed the death of a child in a weekend sightseeing boat accident, raising the death toll to at least 11, as efforts to find survivors continued. The Kazu I was carrying 24 passengers, including two children and two crew, when it sent a distress signal on Saturday afternoon as it began to take on water in the frigid waters off Japan’s northern Hokkaido island.

Ten people were recovered and confirmed dead by early Sunday evening, and the coast guard said it retrieved a child later that night, whose death was confirmed on Monday morning. The boat sent a distress signal from off the coast of the Shiretoko Peninsula, prompting the launch of a search-and-rescue operation.

But the remote location and poor conditions meant it took several hours for coast guard vessels and aircrafts to arrive on the scene. All those on board were reportedly wearing life jackets, but hopes for survivors faded quickly given the icy temperatures in the region, with the water estimated to be around two or three degrees Celsius (36 or 37 degrees Fahrenheit).

The boat had set out on Saturday morning on a sightseeing cruise of the sort that is popular in the Shiretoko Peninsula, a designated UNESCO World

Myanmar junta court delays verdict in Aung San Suu Kyi trial

YANGON, Myanmar: Myanmar junta court on Monday postponed giving its first verdict in the corruption trial of ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi, a junta spokesman told AFP, a case which could see the Nobel laureate jailed for 15 years. Suu Kyi, 76, has been detained since the generals staged a coup and ousted her government in February last year, ending the Southeast Asian country’s brief period of democracy.

She has since been hit with a series of charges, including violating the official secrets act, corruption and electoral fraud, and she faces decades in jail if convicted on all counts. “There was no verdict today,” in the corruption trial in which Suu Kyi is accused of accepting a bribe of \$600,000 cash and gold bars from the former chief minister of Yangon,

Egypt releases 41 political prisoners

CAIRO: Egypt on Sunday released 41 political prisoners from pre-trial detention, according to a politician-turned-negotiator, in a country where many more remain behind bars. “Forty-one of those held on remand detention on political charges and (charges related to) freedom of thought and expression” have been released, Mohamed al-Sadat said.

Long a fixture of Egypt’s political scene, Sadat is a nephew of former president Anwar al-Sadat and has recently emerged as an unofficial negotiator for political prisoners. Rights groups estimate that tens of thousands of such prisoners



SHARI, Japan: Picture shows Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism officials entering the office of a sightseeing boat operator to conduct a special audit in the Hokkaido town of Shari, after the “Kazu 1” boat went missing with 26 on board. —AFP

the father of a passenger said his 22-year-old son had taken the trip with his girlfriend and had planned to propose.

“I learned that my son brought a ring and decided to propose to her on the trip as a surprise,” Tsuyoshi Suzuki told local station Hokkaido Broadcasting. “I talked to her parents last night, crying. We discussed how we really hope they come out of this together, not separately,” he said.

“I know there is no hope, but I just want them to be found together.” The Kazu I ran aground in shallow water in June last year, but was able to free itself and return to port, where its captain was subsequently investigated for endangering traffic by negligence in the conduct of business. —AFP



YANGON, Myanmar: File photo shows opposition leader and head of the National League for Democracy (NLD) Aung San Suu Kyi leaves the stage after addressing a press conference from her residential compound in Yangon. —AFP

nial-era mansion in Yangon. More than 1,700 people have been killed and over 13,000 arrested in a crackdown on dissent since the coup, according to a local monitoring group. —AFP

od, according to rights groups.

More detainees will be released, Sadat hinted, as “legal and humanitarian reviews” will very likely leave some eligible for “presidential pardons” that are conventionally handed down around Eid, set for the first week of May. In an interview with AFP, Egyptian-Palestinian activist Ramy Shaath, who was released in January, detailed brutal conditions and treatment in prison, describing inmates as “rotting in hell”.

This week, four social media comedians were arrested on charges of terrorism and spreading false news for a song posted online that satirised the authorities’ failure to rein in rampant inflation. In November, Human Rights Watch accused the international community of “rewarding repressive rule” by selecting the North African country to host the next climate summit—the COP27, scheduled for November. —AFP

Hong Kong press club scraps rights awards over fears

HONG KONG, China: Hong Kong’s foreign press club scrapped its annual human rights awards on Monday citing fears it could be prosecuted for crossing “new red lines” as Beijing stamps out dissent in the international business hub.

The decision has triggered a row within the Foreign Correspondents’ Club Hong Kong (FCCCHK) and sparked resignations from within its press freedom committee, four people with knowledge of the decision told AFP.

The FCCCHK has hosted an annual Human Rights Press Awards for the last 26 years to recognise rights-related reporting from around Asia. But this year’s awards were canned at the last minute, just weeks before the winners were set to be announced.

“Over the last two years, journalists in Hong Kong have been operating under new ‘red lines’ on what is and is not permissible, but there remain significant areas of uncertainty and we do not wish unintentionally to violate the law,” club president Keith Richburg said in a statement. “This is the context in which we decided to suspend the Awards.”

The decision came after five award categories were to be won by Stand News, a local outlet that shuttered late last year as its top editors were charged with sedition, according to the insiders. The club’s board were rattled by legal advice that they might face a probe under sedition or Hong Kong’s new national security law if they went ahead with giving awards to Stand News.

Resignations

The following day eight members of the club’s press freedom committee resigned in protest. “The fact eight of us resigned speaks volumes about the fact we now think our function is useless,” Shibani Mahtani, one of the committee members who quit—and who also helped judge the awards—told AFP. “I just think we should be real and intellectually honest about what we’re seeing in Hong Kong instead of pretending things are normal and that we’re still able to be a genuine press club,” she added.

Hong Kong was once a bastion of media freedom in Asia but that reputation has taken a battering as China remoulds the city in its own authoritarian image following huge democracy protests three years ago.

Three government critical local outlets, including popular tabloid Apple Daily, have shuttered following national security police probes. The Hong Kong Journalist Association, which represents local reporters, is currently deciding whether to disband. Authorities often point to the continued existence of the FCCCHK as proof that media freedoms remain respected, something that some of those who resigned now feel increasingly alarmed by.

Tensions within the press freedom committee were already high this month after the FCCCHK’s board vetoed a statement expressing concern about the arrest of veteran journalist Allan Au—a contributor to Stand News—for sedition. “By censoring statements and ending the awards the club is not only failing to uphold this mission but risks being used as a prop to keep up the myth that things in Hong Kong are carrying on as normal,” said Timothy McLaughlin, an independent journalist who also resigned from the committee. —AFP

Business

TUESDAY, APRIL 26, 2022

Twitter reexamining Musk's takeover offer, shares jump

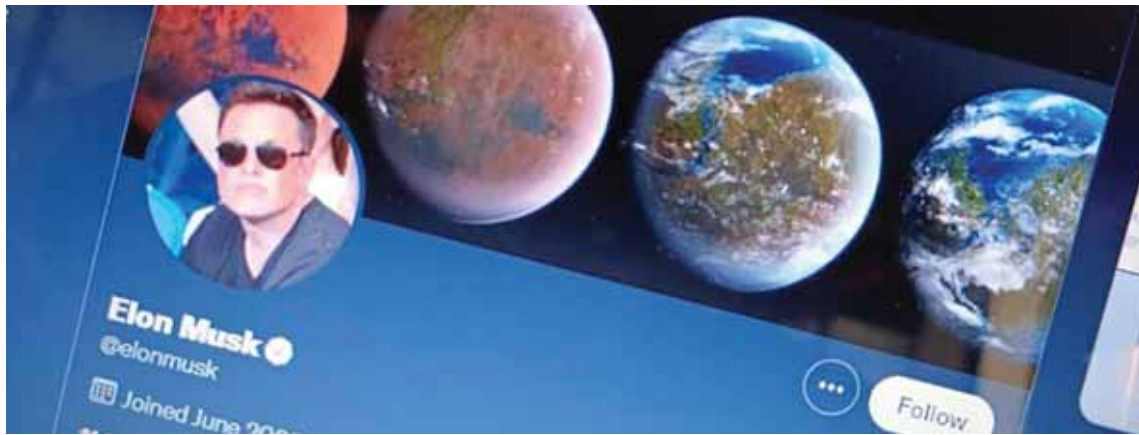
Turnabout as Musk meets privately with several Twitter shareholders

WASHINGTON: Twitter is reconsidering Elon Musk's buyout proposal, with discussions between the two camps ongoing Sunday, The Wall Street Journal reported, after the billionaire said Thursday he had secured the necessary funding. "Twitter is taking a fresh look at the offer and is more likely than before to seek to negotiate," the business daily reported, citing sources familiar with the matter.

Meanwhile, Twitter shares climbed at the open of Wall Street trading on Monday amid reports the company will soon accept Elon Musk's takeover offer, though indices generally declined. About 10 minutes into trading, Twitter stock was trading 3.7 percent higher. However the tech-rich Nasdaq Composite Index was down 0.5 percent at 12,778.57, and the broad-based S&P 500 had lost 0.7 percent to 4,240.83. The benchmark Dow Jones Industrial Average had fallen 0.5 percent to 33,639.01.

Tesla CEO Musk said Thursday he had secured close to \$46.5 billion to finance the transaction, but also said that he planned to appeal directly the company's shareholders as he looks to take over the social media platform. The Twitter board of directors had been opposed to the proposal, lining up a "poison pill" clause that would make it harder for Musk to acquire more than 15 percent of the company via the market. He currently owns 9.2 percent of shares.

"The potential turnaround on Twitter's part comes after Mr Musk met privately Friday with several shareholders of the company," the Journal reported. Musk "pledged to solve the free-speech issues he sees as plaguing the plat-



form and the country more broadly, whether his bid succeeds or not," the sources added, according to the Journal.

Musk has previously cited concerns over freedom of speech as motivation for buying the platform, though free-speech experts have pointed to Musk's unpredictable statements and history of bullying critics as contradictory to his stated aims. He "made his pitch to select shareholders in a series of video calls, with a focus on actively managed funds... in hopes that they could sway the company's decision," the sources told the Journal.

The polarizing billionaire said last week he was consid-

ering bypassing Twitter's board of directors in his takeover bid by purchasing shares directly from existing shareholders, "but has not determined whether to do so at this time," according to a securities filing released Thursday. The Journal said Twitter could make an announcement on the matter by Thursday or even before, according to these sources. Musk has apparently recently told Twitter chairman Bret Taylor his original April 14 offer of \$54.20 per share has not changed, the daily added. Twitter had previously invited Musk to join its board of directors, but the SpaceX head declined. — AFP

Boursa Kuwait advances; world oil prices drop

KUWAIT: Shares on Boursa Kuwait moved up on Monday scoring 92.78 points and closing at 1,8329 points. Around 191.5 million shares were traded through 10,664 cash transactions worth KD 52 million (about \$184 million) on Monday.

The Main Market Index gained 77.18 points while the First Market Index rose 5.9 points, a 1.5 percent increase through transactions of 73 million shares worth KD 34.4 million.

Meanwhile, world oil prices sank more than five percent Monday on fears that China's worsening Covid outbreak could slam demand from the major energy consumer. Europe's benchmark contract Brent North Sea crude fell as low as \$101.20 per barrel and US WTI oil dropped to \$96.85.



China is struggling to get a grip on a renewed COVID outbreak that has forced Shanghai-the country's biggest city-into lockdown and dealt a blow to energy demand. Global markets have also been stung by the prospect of a sharp increase in US interest rates. "Market moods have deteriorated as the COVID situation in China is not improving and the media is hinting that Beijing could be next in line for a lockdown after Shanghai and several other major cities," said XTB analyst Walid Koudmani.

"As China is the second largest economy in the world, the situation ... has a big impact on commodity markets with oil and industrial metals dropping significantly." — AFP

Jazeera Airways reports KD 3.8m profits for Q122

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Jazeera Airways announced profits worth KD 3.8 million (about \$12.4 million) in Q1 2022, with a share value of 17.47 fils per share. The company's performance income reached KD 35.7 million (about \$116.7 million); with a rise of 339.2 percent, said Jazeera Airways Board Chairman Marwan Boodai in a press statement on Monday.

He added that performance profits reached KD 5.3 million (\$17.3 million), with a rise of 199.3 percent. The number of passengers rose six times higher, after removing coronavirus restrictions in Kuwait International Airport, he noted. The company was established in 2004 and was enlisted in Boursa Kuwait in 2008, focusing on low budget flights. — KUNA



COLOMBO: Muslim devotees break their fast during the holy fasting month of Ramadan while protesting along with others near the president's office in Colombo on April 25, 2022, demanding President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's resignation over the country's crippling economic crisis. — AFP

Sri Lanka shares sink as Buddhists ask govt to quit

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's stock market halted trading after a nearly 13 percent plunge Monday as the island nation's beleaguered government faces new pressure to resign from influential Buddhist leaders over a crippling economic crisis. The country's worst downturn since independence in 1948 has brought widespread hardships to its 22 million people, with months of regular blackouts and acute shortages of food and fuel.

Monday was the first morning of trade on the Colombo bourse after a two-week break, during which the government imposed a record interest rate hike and defaulted on its \$51 billion foreign debt. But trading was halted after a frenzied market sell-off, and called off for the day entirely when a brief resumption failed to dampen the downward slide, with the local S&P index finishing 12.6 percent down. Equities had already shed nearly 40 percent of their value since January and the local currency has fallen by a similar amount against the greenback in the past month.

The latest market crash came as the country's most

influential Buddhist clerics joined a growing list of former allies calling for the government's resignation.

"The country is fast becoming a failed state," senior monk Medagama Dhammananda told reporters in the central city of Kandy. Dhammananda said he and fellow Buddhist leaders had jointly petitioned President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to establish an interim government "to pull the country out of this crisis".

Such a move would require the resignation of Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa-the president's brother and head of Sri Lanka's powerful ruling family. Gotabaya has faced similar calls to step down, with thousands of protesters camped outside his seafront office in Colombo for more than two weeks.

Before the crisis, both men were beloved by much of the country's Sinhalese Buddhist majority for bringing a decades-long ethnic civil war against the Tamil Tigers to a brutal end.

Monday's rebuke from the Buddhist clergy is the latest public departure by formerly steadfast allies of the Rajapaksa clan. Recent weeks have seen the fracturing of the government's ruling coalition, along with business leaders and a former cabinet minister urging the Rajapaksas to resign.

'Painful few years'

Sri Lanka's economic collapse began to be felt after the coronavirus pandemic torpedoed vital revenue from tourism and remittances. Utilities unable to pay

for fuel imports have imposed lengthy daily blackouts to ration power, while long lines snake around service stations as people queue for petrol and kerosene. Hospitals are short of vital medicines, the government has appealed to citizens abroad for donations and record inflation has added to everyday hardships.

Public anger over mismanagement of the crisis is at a fever pitch, with weeks of protests demanding the government's resignation around the island. Last week a man was shot dead when police fired on a road blockade in the central town of Rambukkana, sparking further outrage against authorities.

Sri Lankan officials were in Washington last week to negotiate with the International Monetary Fund for a bailout, but official sources said there was no immediate prospect of emergency funding from the lender. Colombo is now banking on further bilateral help from India, China and Japan to help keep the country afloat, a finance ministry source told AFP.

Beijing's ambassador to Colombo, Qi Zhenhong, said his country was already involved in "all-out efforts" to help Sri Lanka and said European former colonial powers should also lend their assistance. Finance minister Ali Sabry, who is part of the Washington delegation, warned last week that the economic situation would likely deteriorate even further. "It is going to get worse before it gets better," Sabry told reporters. "It is going to be a painful few years ahead." — AFP

users globally, will allow clients to invest, trade, withdraw and deposit virtual assets directly in dirhams. Kraken has become the first crypto exchange to be granted a license to operate a regulated digital assets platform in Abu Dhabi as the Middle East becomes a focus of expansion for the industry. The exchange will count Abu Dhabi as its regional hub, having had its license granted by the Abu Dhabi Global Market (ADGM), the regulatory body said. It is viewed as the latest in a sea shift of companies looking to the UAE for regulatory approval.

In March, Dubai unveiled its new agency, VARA, tasked with virtual asset regulation as its leadership looks to solidify the city's position in the emerging global digital economy. Shortly after, Binance said that it had been granted a virtual asset license in Dubai, as well as has in-principle approval from ADGM to operate as a broker-dealer in virtual assets. Binance's approval in Dubai followed hot on the heels of FTX. The exchange operator said it would plan its regional headquarters in the Emirate city. — Agencies

Abu Dhabi grants Kraken license to operate crypto exchange

ABU DHABI: Kraken, one of the world's biggest cryptocurrency exchanges, received a license to operate its virtual asset trading platform in Abu Dhabi, according to reports on Monday. It has set up its regional headquarters in Abu Dhabi.

The company is expected to start operations during the second or third quarter, according to Dhafer bin Dhafer, CEO of Abu Dhabi Global Market's Registration Authority. Kraken, which has more than eight million



Business

Ooredoo Kuwait Group reports EBITDA growth of 10% for Q122

Earnings per share was 17 fils

KUWAIT: National Mobile Telecommunications Company K.S.C.P "Ooredoo" announced on Monday its financial results for the quarter ended 31 March 2022:

- Net profit attributable to NMTC increased to KD 8 million in Q1 2022 from KD 1 million in Q1 2021. Net profit growth was driven by solid operational and financial earnings from Ooredoo Kuwait, Ooredoo Tunisia, Ooredoo Algeria, Ooredoo Palestine and Ooredoo Maldives.

- EBITDA increased by 10 percent in Q1 2022 to KD 56 million, compared to KD 51 million in Q1 2021.

- Consolidated revenue increased by 5 percent to KD 153 million in Q1 2022, compared to KD 146 million in Q1 2021. Revenues in Kuwaiti dinar were positively impacted by the gradual easing of restrictions in Kuwait, record revenue in Palestine and healthy Tunisian and Algerian market growth in local currency terms.

- The consolidated earnings per share was 17 fils for Q1 2022, compared to 2 fils per share earned in Q1 2021.

- Consolidated customer base stood at 24 million as of Q1 2022.

Sheikh Mohammad Bin Abdullah Al-Thani, Chairman of the Board of Directors commented: "NMTC is off to a strong start to the year, delivering solid results for the quarter ended 31 March 2022. We saw COVID restrictions ease in Kuwait, reported record revenues in Palestine, and Tunisia and Algeria continue to deliver steady growth in local currency terms, which led to solid growth in NMTC's overall revenues and performance."

Consolidated revenue increased by 5 percent to KD 153 million, with an improved EBITDA margin to 37 percent. In Kuwait, revenue increased by 14 percent while operational efficiencies led to a 17 percent increase in EBITDA. In local currency terms, Tunisia reported a 3 percent growth in revenue.

Algeria reported strong numbers with an 11 percent increase in EBITDA and revenues of KD 45.4 million for the quarter. In Palestine, revenue increased by 5 percent to KD 8.7 million driven by an increase in its customer base by 4 percent to 1.4 million.

Driven by the uptick in tourism, Ooredoo Maldives reported a 9 percent increase in Revenues, with a 10 percent increase in EBITDA for the quarter. In 2022, our focus remains on digital transformation in our core markets and broadening our product offering, whilst expanding and diversifying our customer base. We remain optimistic about the year ahead and look forward to reporting further in due course."

Review of operations

The Group's operational performance can be summarized as follows:

Ooredoo - Kuwait

Ooredoo Kuwait reported 14 percent increase in revenue to KD 57.6 million in Q1 2022 compared to KD 50.5 million in Q1 2021. The company reported a strong EBITDA with an increase of 17 percent to KD 16.5 million in Q1 2022 compared to KD 14.1 million in



Sheikh Mohammad Bin Abdullah Al-Thani



Abdulaziz Yaqoub Al-Babtain

Q1 2021, driven by operational efficiencies across the business. Ooredoo's customer base in Kuwait increased to 2.6 million in Q1 2022, up by 5 percent compared to Q1 2021.

Abdulaziz Yaqoub Al-Babtain, Ooredoo Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer, said, "It goes without saying that Ooredoo has made quantum leaps in the world of telecommunication, technology, cybersecurity and security services, making it a well-reputed company with a leading position in the world of innovative digital services, information technology, Internet and communications." Al-Babtain said.

Al-Babtain added: "With the diversity of customer segments, we have diversified our campaigns and marketing strategies to satisfy every segment. This led to an increase in the number of our customers, which mirrors their great trust in us which we take pride of."

'Fastest 5G Network in Kuwait' for 2021

Ooredoo Kuwait's 5G rollout increased further during 2021, and has taken proactive steps in the Kuwait market and outperformed its competitors in providing in providing the best and fastest coverage. Ooredoo Kuwait's continued commitment to its customers through providing world-class services was named the "Fastest 5G Network in Kuwait" for 2021; at the Mobile World Congress Barcelona 2022, awarded by the Ookla, the company behind Speedtest, and the global leader in fixed broadband and mobile network testing applications, data and analysis.

Strategic partnership with Kuwait Sports Club for the Deaf

Among this quarter's remarkable partnerships are: Ooredoo's collaboration with Kuwait Sports Club for the Deaf, to ensure people of determination (people with special needs) receive equal opportunities so they reach their full potential. According to the agreement, Ooredoo will boost the infrastructure of the main building of the Kuwait Sports Club for the Deaf by offering a complementary internet network along with a set of sophisticated digital solutions and WiFi boosters to increase the speed and efficiency of the internet. The company also treats the club employees and members with exclusive offers on its services, products and plans tailored to their needs.

Elmar Voelker, an analyst at LBBW bank. The continuing impact of the conflict in Ukraine was "hard to estimate", including the possibility of Russian gas supplies being cut off, Voelker said.

Germany, like many European countries, is highly dependent on deliveries of natural gas from Russia to meet its energy needs. In the chemicals sector, where the impact of the taps being turned off could be significant and lead to production stops, expectations worsened, according to the Ifo survey.

Confidence in the construction sector also plunged against the overall trend to its lowest level since May 2010, as the sector wrestled with persistent disruptions to supply. —AFP

CBK bonds and related Tawarruq

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the most recent issues of CBK bonds and related Tawarruq at a total value of KD 200 million for three months with a rate of return at 1.375 percent.



The export of aircraft, parts and equipment to Russia has been banned, as has maintenance work on Russian-registered Airbus and Boeing aircraft. Western insurers cannot provide coverage.

Boeing and Airbus planes make up almost all the fleet of Aeroflot and Pobeda, while more than half of Rossiya's planes are Sukhoi Superjet 100s. Pobeda said in March it will reduce its Boeing fleet from 41 to 25 aircraft due to a lack of parts. Russia's largest airport, Sheremetyevo in Moscow, said it was cutting back its services as passenger traffic dropped. — AFP

Financial Highlights:

	Quarterly Analysis		
	Q1 2022	Q1 2021	% change
Consolidated Revenue (KWD m)	152.9	146.0	5%
EBITDA (KWD m)	55.8	50.8	10%
EBITDA margin (%)	37%	35%	-
Net Profit attributable to NMTC (KWD m)	8.4	1.0	757%
Consolidated Customers (m)	24.2	23.6	3%

Rapid technology evolutions

Among the rapid technology evolutions that occurred during this quarter, is that Ooredoo business upgraded its Push-to-Talk (PTT) service with the aim to sustain its market position and stay afloat through the challenges occurred due to the rapid technological evolutions, need to constantly evolve and invest in the future of their businesses to maintain the same potential for growth and improvement. Push-to-Talk is an enhanced communications service offered for different industries such as the security, manufacturing and logistics along with many other industries that require a private voice-based network with multi-party communications, with instant access to the corporate digital network. That is, providing a seamless communication process, time saving and maximizing productivity. Push-to-Talk also provides GPS and route history tracking services for maximum efficiency.

Ooredoo business organized "Data Classification: Unlocking Insights, Innovation and Security" Event

Ooredoo business held a private event "Data Classification: unlocking insights, innovation and security" The event shed the light on the importance of the ongoing data classification to support data security requirements and prevent security incidents. The event was attended by a select group of experts in the field of data classification, and a panel discussion was held during the event.

Ooredoo - Tunisia

The Tunisian dinar depreciated by 6.5 percent year on year, leading to a decrease in revenues to KD 31.6 million in Q1 2022 compared to KD 32.7 million in Q1 2021. In local currency terms, Revenues were up by 3 percent. EBITDA stood at KD 13.6 million in Q1 2022. Ooredoo's customer base in Tunisia increased to 7.0



million customers in Q1 2022 compared to 6.9 million customers in Q1 2021.

Ooredoo - Algeria

Ooredoo Algeria reported strong numbers despite the continued devaluation of the Algerian dinar, which depreciated by 5.9 percent year-on-year. EBITDA increased by 11 percent to KD 17.3 million in Q1 2022 compared to KD 15.6 million in Q1 2021. Revenues stood at KD 45.4 million in Q1 2022. In local currency terms, Revenues were up by 5 percent. Ooredoo Algeria's customer base increased by 2 percent to 12.9 million in Q1 2022 compared to 12.7 million in Q1 2021.

Ooredoo - Palestine

Revenue increased by 5 percent to KD 8.7 million in Q1 2022, compared to KD 8.3 million in Q1 2021. The business reported a strong EBITDA with an increase of 17 percent to KD 3.3 million in Q1 2022 compared to KD 2.8 million in Q1 2021, driven by operational efficiencies across the business. Customer base in Palestine increased by 4 percent to reach 1.4 million customers in Q1 2022 compared to 1.3 million in Q1 2021.

Ooredoo - Maldives

Ooredoo Maldives reported a 9 percent increase in revenues to KD 9.6 million in Q1 2022, compared to KD 8.8 million in Q1 2021. EBITDA improved by 10 percent to reach KD 5.2 million in Q1 2022 compared to KD 4.8 million in Q1 2021. Ooredoo Maldives now serves a total of 370,000 customers.

German business mood up slightly despite Ukraine war

BERLIN: The business climate in Germany improved slightly in April as Europe's largest economy absorbed the initial shock of the war in Ukraine, an economic think-tank said on Monday. "The German economy has shown its resilience," Ifo president Clemens Fuest said after the closely watched index rose to 91.8 points from 90.8 points in March.

Companies were less pessimistic about the outlook for the economy, after the mood plunged in March following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Ifo said. The overall indicator lost almost eight points in March, while forecasts took a bigger knock than at the start of the coronavirus pandemic two years ago.

The assessment of current conditions was "minimally better", Fuest said, adding that sentiment among businesses had "stabilized at a low level". "The initial shock of the war seems to have abated somewhat, but given the multitude of risks, it is too early to start talking about a turning point," said

Aeroflot passenger numbers fall 20% in March

MOSCOW: Russia's flagship carrier Aeroflot on Monday reported a 20 percent fall in passenger traffic in March year-on-year following tough Western sanctions over Moscow's military operation in Ukraine. Passenger traffic on international and domestic flights fell to 2.2 million in March, the first full month after the conflict began, from 2.77 million last year, the airline said

Passenger traffic on international flights declined by half, it said in a statement. The Aeroflot group includes the Pobeda budget airline and the Rossiya domestic airline. The Russian state owns a 57.3 stake in the group. Aeroflot suspended all international flights from March 8, a move it said was temporary.

This came after the carrier and all Russian airlines were banned from the airspace of the entire European Union, Britain and Canada. In retaliation, Russia has banned airlines from these countries from flying over its territory. Aeroflot's passenger traffic on domestic flights has declined by 15.7 percent as Russia's economy shrinks.

Financial Results for the First Quarter of 2022



NMTC NET PROFIT GROWTH OF

+757%

8.4 Million KD

EPS

17

Kuwaiti Fils

Consolidated Customer Base

+3%

24.2 Million customers

Consolidated Revenue

+5%

153 Million KD

EBITDA

+10%

56 Million KD

Business

India, EU set up special council to boost trade and technology

EU commissioner in Delhi to push free trade talks

NEW DELHI: India and the European Union announced on Monday the launch of a special council to boost trade and tech cooperation, despite divergent views over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen is the latest Western diplomat to visit New Delhi in a bid to press India over its neutral stance on the conflict. India, which gets most of its arms from Moscow, has called for a halt to the violence in Ukraine but stopped short of condemning Russia's invasion.

"The EU has only one Trade and Technology Council and that is with the US and I think therefore it is telling that it was so important for us to put up a second... with India," von der Leyen said.

The measure is part of a broader EU plan to accelerate trade talks with India and to give New Delhi a viable alternative to diversify away from Russia, Bloomberg News quoted an unnamed source as saying. The "strategic coordination mechanism will allow both partners to

tackle challenges at the nexus of trade, trusted technology and security, and thus deepen cooperation in these fields," India and the Commission said in a joint statement.

Both sides said they had "agreed that rapid changes in the geopolitical environment highlight the need for joint in-depth strategic engagement". Talks on a free trade agreement between India and the EU have been stuck since 2013 over issues like patent protection and tariff reductions, although both sides agreed in May 2021 to resume negotiations.

The EU is India's third-largest trade partner and the two sides traded goods worth about 62.8 billion euros (\$67.5 billion) in 2020, according to the European Commission.

Talks on full free trade deals are underway or due to start soon with multiple countries including Britain, Australia and Zionist entity. India and the United Arab Emirates signed a "milestone" economic deal to boost trade and investment in February. —AFP



NEW DELHI: This handout photograph taken on April 25, 2022 and released by the Indian Press Information Bureau (PIB) shows India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi (right) with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen during a meeting in New Delhi. —AFP

KFH provides Eid cash gifts at all branches and via KFH GO

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) provides customers with new banknotes "Eid Gifts" in all denominations KD 1, KD 5, KD 10 and KD 20 at all branches all over Kuwait.

Also, KFH shall provide customers with the Eid cash gift ATMs through its smart branches KFH GO at Ishbilia Society, Jabriya Society, Mangaf Society, KFH Auto Shuwaikh, Salam Society, Bu Fatira Society and Kuwait International Airport during the period 18th-30th Ramadan.

KFH has also provided the public and Avenues visitors, during the Qerge'an ceremony with Eid Gift machines comprising all kinds of bank notes, thus reiterating KFH keenness to interact with society in all events and festivals by providing various widely spread communication channels that brings it closer to customers wherever they are.

The Central Bank of Kuwait announced earlier that it has provided ATM machines in several malls during Eid, comprising bank notes in all denominations due to the increase in demand on cash by the citizens to distribute Eid cash gifts.

CBK shall also provide ATMs at Avenues and 360 malls effective 4th April till 4th May 2022. This service is provided in collaboration with the Kuwait Banking Association, K-Net and the said two malls.

This service was greatly appreciated and welcomed by the public earlier. It has saved them the effort of obtaining various bank notes specially the small notes which are not usually available in other ATM machines.

Markets plunge on China lockdowns, rate hike fears

LONDON: Stock markets and oil prices sank Monday on growing concern that lockdowns in China aimed at fighting a worsening COVID outbreak could further harm a world economy battling decades-high inflation. The losses extended last week's sell-off triggered by Federal Reserve boss Jerome Powell indicating that the US central bank would hike interest rates by half a percentage point next month and possibly several times more this year.

That has lent strong support to the dollar, which is benefitting also from its traditional haven status.

Dollar-denominated oil prices at one point tumbled more than five percent Monday. Among the world's major stock markets, Shanghai led the losses, closing down more than five percent.

In Europe, Paris shed 2.2 percent in afternoon deals. French President Emmanuel Macron is set to begin efforts to unite a deeply divided nation after winning re-election Sunday in a battle against rival Marine Le Pen that saw the far right come its closest to taking power.

The euro and yuan slid against the dollar, while sterling lost one percent to hit a 19-month low at \$1.2705. "The markets have fallen out of bed... in a big way," noted AJ Bell investment director Russ Mould.

"The prospect of further restrictions in China could lead to a poisonous mix of further inflationary pressure, as supply chains in the so-called 'factory of the world' get disrupted, and weaker economic growth." Officials in finance hub Shanghai reported 51 deaths Monday, its highest daily toll despite weeks of strict containment measures, while Beijing warned of a "grim" situation as infections rise.

Investors were already fleeing risk assets as they became worried that the Fed tightening will knock the pandemic economic recovery off course and dent companies' bottom line. —AFP

ECB chief: Interest hikes won't drop energy prices

FRANKFURT: A European Central Bank rate hike will not reduce energy prices, the cause of half of the continent's inflation, ECB president Christine Lagarde said Sunday, even as the institution faces pressure to raise interest rates. "Inflation in Europe is very high at the moment. Fifty percent of that is related to energy prices" and Russia's war in Ukraine "has dramatically increased those prices," Lagarde told US network CBS in an interview.

"If I raise interest rates today, it is not going to bring the price of energy down."

Central banks around the world have largely begun raising interest rates in response to inflation, in order to increase the cost of credit to slow consumption—and therefore ease the pressure on prices. Lagarde again defended the position adopted by the ECB, which seeks to gradually withdraw its accommodation policy intended to support eurozone economies during crisis. "We will be interrupting the purchases of assets in the course of the third quarter, high probability that we do so early in the third quarter," said the French Lagarde, who is in Washington attending finance meetings.

"And then we will look at interest rates and how and by how much we hike them."

Lagarde also stressed that the distinct policies adopted by Europe and the United States in the

Coca-Cola relauches glass bottle beverages

HONG KONG: The Coca-Cola and its bottling partner Swire Coca-Cola Hong Kong announced that the highly anticipated returnable glass bottle beverage is coming back with a new design and a refreshed look starting from Monday. Fans of the Coca-Cola brands who prefer to be served with glass bottles will be able to immerse in this unique experience again.

The first batch of beverages coming in glass bottles are "Coca-Cola", "Coca-Cola" No Sugar, "Sprite", "Fanta", "Schweppes" Cream Soda and Soda Water, and for the first time showing up in glass bottles are "Kochakaden" "Craftea" Lemon Tea and Peach Tea. More brands will be coming in glass bottles to provide consumers with a broader range of beverages in an environmentally friendly packaging. Environmentally

friendly design for recycling again and again "Coca-Cola" comes back with the classic contour bottle design and meets consumers with its familiar look.

At the same time, other brands under Coca-Cola, including "Sprite", "Fanta", "Schweppes" and "Kochakaden" are coming with another bottle design. Both designs are adopting transparent bottle and make the appearance sleeker and cleaner.

It is more convenient for consumers to return them after usage for the bottling plant to clean, disinfect and refill them. After adding the labels, they will be relaunched in the market, which is more efficient in protecting the environment.

For environmental protection, the bottle comprises 60 percent recycled glass materials, with a weight loss by one-third compared to the previous bottles, making it easier to hold. Remarkably, the volume increases while the bottle becomes lighter; it increases from 192 ml to 250 ml, which is excellent news for the consumers! Each box now contains 24



bottles instead of 12 for easier transportation and storage.

Connie Yeung, general manager of Swire Coca-Cola HK, said, "Swire Coca-Cola HK (SCCHK) has been the authorized bottler of The Coca-Cola Company since 1965. For more than a half century, we have been providing refreshing beverages to

our community. To realize the company's vision in sustainable development, we have been actively enhancing packaging designs with more environmentally friendly elements throughout the years so that consumers, while enjoying the great taste, can have more options in recyclable packaging." —AFP

Nissan ending production of Datsun brand

TOKYO: Japanese automaker Nissan is ending production of Datsun brand vehicles, less than a decade after reviving the famed budget car to woo cost-conscious customers in emerging markets, the company said on Monday. "Nissan is focusing on core models and segments that bring the most benefit to customers, dealer partners and the business," it said in a statement.

"Production of Datsun redi-GO will cease at the Chennai Plant," it said, adding that sales of already built models would continue.

The facility in India was the last one operating for the brand, after production ended in Indonesia and Russia. The company said aftersales service and parts would remain available.

Nissan first killed off the Datsun brand in 1981, but it was revived in 2013 by then-CEO Carlos Ghosn.

Ghosn would go on to be arrested in Japan on



allegations of financial misconduct, before jumping bail and fleeing to Lebanon where he remains an international fugitive.

Datsun's second death reportedly follows disappointing sales, and comes as Nissan tries to pull

itself out of a years-long slump. The Datsun first went on sale in 1931 and was sold in 190 countries.

Its revived version had a much smaller footprint, with over 7,000 units sold last year, according to Nissan. —AFP

Business



KUWAIT: Sheikha Dana Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (center) addresses KIPCO's annual Shafafiyah 'Transparency' Investors' Forum.



KIPCO looks to 2022 as the year of transformation

Proposed merger with QPIC would allow us to pursue opportunities in new sectors: Group CEO

KUWAIT: At its Annual Shafafiyah 'Transparency' Investors' Forum, KIPCO - Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) - said that the proposed merger with Quraish Petrochemical Industries (QPIC) would form a larger investment holding with the ability to strengthen existing sectors and pursue new opportunities.

The Shafafiyah Forum followed the company's General Assembly meeting, where KIPCO's shareholders approved a cash dividend of 5 percent (5 fils). At the forum, KIPCO presented a review of its activities in 2021 and its outlook for 2022 to an audience of shareholders, financial analysts and institutional investors. Commenting on the outlook for 2022, Sheikha Dana Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah,

KIPCO's Group Chief Executive Officer, said:

"Following the announcement of the proposed merger, we look to 2022 as the year of transformation for KIPCO. The due diligence process is underway. We believe that this merger will create greater value for all shareholders as it would result in a balanced and diversified portfolio of assets that would generate a more stable income stream. KIPCO's size would rank in among the largest in the MENA region and would allow it to pursue more opportunities in new business sectors, while continuing to support the growth of the existing portfolio."

The proposed merger would create an entity with businesses in a diverse number of sectors, namely

petrochemical and oil services, banking, foodstuff, AMIB, media, insurance, healthcare and logistics, and real estate. As part of its review of 2021, KIPCO noted the success of its capital increase, which served to raise KD 80 million and increased the issued and paid-up capital by 32 percent. The success of the transaction reflects the confidence and trust of the shareholders in KIPCO's long-term strategy.

KIPCO highlighted the performance of its main operating companies. Gulf Insurance Group completed its acquisition of AXA's operations in the Gulf. The insurance company entered the debt capital market for the first time in 2021, and successfully issued a KD 60 million Subordinated Perpetual non-callable five-year

Tier 2 bond. Meanwhile, Burgan Bank's net profit was up 35 percent, total operating revenue increased 10 percent, and net operating profit increased 21 percent. The bank's successful capital increase was 2.25 times oversubscribed.

United Real Estate's activities in Hessah District continue. In terms of the sale of residential units, the company sold 60 percent of Hessah Towers and over 40 percent of Byouthessah. Work is underway on the Commercial District.

For OSN, KIPCO said that the focus on streaming continues, following a major upgrade in the streaming platform, OSN+. The partnership with HBO has been extended, and more original content is in the pipeline.

NBK supports Kuwait's mega industrial projects

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) is strongly committed to delivering its national role and supporting the state's development plans in line with its strategic relationship and continuous communication with all government institutions.

In this context, NBK held a meeting at its Headquarters with the Public Authority for Industry's management, during which they discussed PAI's vision and strategy as well as its key projects, mainly including: establishing integrated fully-serviced industrial cities, and NBK's role in securing financing solutions, investment services and banking advisory to support new development projects.

The meeting was attended by Abdul-Karim Taqi, General Manager- Public Authority for Industry, Salah Al-Fulaij, CEO of NBK - Kuwait, and Sulaiman Al-Marzouq, Deputy CEO of NBK-Kuwait, in addition to a number of senior PAI's officials and senior NBK's executives from Foreign Corporate, Domestic Corporate, Economics & Research and NBK Capital.

"Our strategy at NBK is mainly focused on supporting development plans and backing the State's agenda to advance economic growth, by providing all financing solutions, investment services and advisory as a key partner and the largest financier of all government development project", Salah Al-Fulaij, CEO of NBK, said.

"We are firmly committed to supporting the industrial sector, and always look forward to supporting that strategic sector as we firmly believe in its pivotal role in diversifying the national economy, especially in light



Abdul-Karim Taqi

Salah Al-Fulaij

of the strong and extended relations that bind us with all parties involved in the sector, led by the Public Authority for Industry and key players in the industrial sector," Al-Fulaij added.

Al-Fulaij indicated that PAI's strategy lays out an integrated framework for its future plans set for developing the national industry and outlines a clear path for strategic partnerships and connecting the government with the private sector. He praised the authority's efforts in developing the legislative and institutional environment to govern the industrial sector and for offering incentives to attract investment opportunities, encouraging research and innovation, and promoting industrial exports.

Al-Fulaij highlighted that the banking sector in Kuwait, spearheaded by NBK, is capable of meeting the substantial financing needs required to support PAI's projects, most notably, a frontier project like the industrial cities. He reiterated that NBK enjoys a solid financial position and maintains strong capital and liquidity position, positioning it to maintain its position as the bank of choice for financing government projects.

On his part, Abdul-Karim Taqi, General Manager of Public Authority for Industry said: "We are pleased to communicate with NBK as a leading banking institution, as part of the continuous cooperation between

PAI and the Kuwaiti banking sector, as we keep in touch with it to identify how possible it can contribute in financing industrial cities projects as well as to exchange opinions and suggestions, given the extensive experience of its cadres in this field."

"We focus on accelerating the implementation of the necessary infrastructure projects for the industrial cities, which include mega, advanced projects in the petrochemicals industry, medical and foodstuff sectors, and 4th generation industries, in conjunction with preparing the necessary legislative framework to enable the success of our strategy in implementing these projects in partnership with the private sector," he added.

Taqi accentuated that the projects are of huge size, which will generate large economic returns, expecting financing operations to witness the participation of Kuwaiti and international banking alliances. PAI's vision to establish sustainable, environmentally friendly industrial cities that contribute to creating more diverse job opportunities is fully aligned with NBK's strategy to promote future growth and maintain its leading position in supporting responsible business practices that contribute to sustainable growth and development of the local economy, as well as NBK's initiatives, the latest of which was developing its sustainable financing framework.

NBK enjoys a dominant market share across all business sectors thanks to its resilient business model, solid financial position, its key role in financing development projects, and outperforming most key financial indicators compared to its local and regional peers, which is clearly reflected in all its exclusive and distinguished offerings. NBK continues to enjoy a very prominent position in the market, as Kuwait's leading banking group in terms of total assets value, customer deposits, loans, and advances to customers. The bank also maintained its listing in the World's 50 Safest Banks and was named as one of the top 10 banks in the region. Moreover, NBK was recognized as the most valuable banking brand in Kuwait.



mode that can identify breaststroke, freestyle, butterfly and backstroke to help track kids swimming and provide detailed insights. Moreover, the Huawei Watch Kids 4 Pro makes selfies more fun with different motion-tracking stickers that users can choose from, delivering a more interesting selfie shooting experience.

The Huawei Watch Kids 4 Pro boasts an 800mAh large capacity battery. It supports a 2-day long battery life in typical circumstances. With fast charging technology, it only takes 20 minutes for the Huawei Watch Kids 4 to reach a 50 percent charge.

Lastly, the Huawei Watch Kids 4 Pro was designed in a style that emphasizes the combination of technology and quality. Unique LED lights are placed on either side of the smartwatch with a space-themed animated watch face, which flashes in a breathing rhythm. The Huawei Watch KidsS 4 Pro can adjust the 1.41-inch AMOLED display's brightness according to the surroundings through the ALS, allowing kids to view the display clearly under the sun and protect their eyesight at night by avoiding the display being too bright.

ABK launches quick money transfer initiative to Egypt

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is pleased to be offering customers a money transfer solution for those wiring funds to Egypt. Its new service ensures that funds can be transferred to ABK-Egypt accounts within the same day or the next working day, subject to the banking hours in Kuwait and Egypt. This new initiative demonstrates ABK's commitment to strengthening its banking services to all segments of the community, particularly the Egyptian community, which is one of the largest Arab groups in Kuwait.

Designed to streamline cross-border remittances, ABK's newly launched initiative is set to allow Egyptian customers to avail of the best transfer rates on Kuwaiti Dinar to Egyptian Pound conversions. The service is seamless and available at key customer touchpoints, including

ABK's branches and online and mobile banking platforms. For remittances done through ABK online and mobile banking, the Overseas Telex or Swift fees will be waived. ABK customers who are Prestige Salary accountholders or Al-Raed Salary account holders can avail of these services, in addition to the suite of benefits already associated with these accounts.

Speaking on the launch, Loai Muqames, CEO of ABK - Kuwait said, "Reports have shown that the country of Egypt ranks in the top five in terms of countries that receives remittances. As many of our loyal customers are Egyptians residing in Kuwait, ABK designed this new service to ease the process for those who are transferring funds back to Egypt. ABK's Egyptian customers can benefit from seamless and efficient services and get the best transfer rates on conversions, enabling them to effectively manage their remittances for planned or emergency transfers, knowing that their funds will be received immediately. One of the attractive features of this service is that remittances conducted through ABK online and mobile banking will have a zero-processing fee. This service is open to Egyptian nationality holders residing in Kuwait between the ages of 21 to 60 years old. You can be an existing account holder, or a new account holder to use the service."

"At ABK, we are dedicated to delivering on our 'Simpler Banking' promise. This new campaign underpins our commitment to ensuring our services are seamless, secure and convenient through a suite of touchpoints. Developing innovative solutions is pivotal to achieving this goal," added Muqames. For over five decades, ABK has showcased robust financial expertise and a relentless focus on customer-centricity to deliver the best-in-class banking services to its customers. ABK strives to continuously develop diverse solutions to meet individuals, corporations, and governments' dynamically changing financing needs.

Huawei Watch Kids 4 Pro, a safe watch made for kids

KUWAIT: Huawei's newest kids Watch - the Huawei Watch Kids 4 Pro is now available on Huawei's official website and select retailers in Kuwait. Available in blue and pink with a starting price of KD 49,900, the Huawei Watch Kids 4 Pro features a multi-dimensional safety guard with 9-system AI positioning, 4G voice & HD video calls, up to 5 ATM water resistant, interactive and fun features, a large battery with fast charging capabilities in addition to a dynamic and child-friendly design.

The Huawei Watch Kids 4 Pro

The Huawei Watch Kids 4 Pro applies 9-system positioning technologies. Thanks to the GPS, Beidou,





A miniature of the unpublished manuscript titled "A Book of Rhymes by Charlotte Bronte, Sold by Nobody, and Printed by Herself" written by English novelist and poet Charlotte Bronte on display at the New York Antiquarian Book Fair. — AFP photos



Tiny Bronte book heads home to Yorkshire after New York sale

A miniature book of poems written by a 13-year-old Charlotte Bronte will return to her windswept Yorkshire home after it was bought for \$1.25 million by a British consortium, the buyers said Monday. Smaller than a playing card, the 15-page manuscript dated 1829 is a collection of 10 unpublished poems that was unveiled in New York last week after more than a century hidden away.

Titled "A Book of Rhymes (sic) by Charlotte Bronte, Sold by Nobody, and Printed by Herself," the volume is hand-stitched in its original brown paper covers. Friends of the National Libraries, a British literary charity, confirmed it had raised the

\$1.25 million, meaning that "inch for inch, (it) is possibly the most valuable literary manuscript ever to be sold".

It will be donated to the Bronte Parsonage Museum in Haworth, Yorkshire, where the "Jane Eyre" novelist grew up with her siblings including young sisters Emily and Anne. Ann Dinsdale, the museum's chief curator, thanked all the British benefactors who came together to fund the purchase after the charity was offered first refusal by the anonymous sellers in New York.

"It is always emotional when an item belonging to the Bronte family is returned home," she said in a statement. "And this

final little book coming back to the place it was written, when it had been thought lost, is very special for us."

The book had not been seen in public since November 1916, when it sold at auction in New York for \$520. It was the last of more than two dozen miniature works created by Charlotte Bronte known to remain in private hands. Along with their brother Branwell, Charlotte, Emily and Anne entertained themselves by weaving intricate stories set in a sophisticated imaginary world.

The sisters went on to write some of the best-loved novels in English literature, including Emily's "Wuthering Heights" and

Anne's "The Tenant of Wildfell Hall". Henry Wessells of New York-based James Cummins Bookseller told AFP last week that the private owner had found the manuscript "in an envelope tucked into a book". "It's wonderful to look at it inside and soon the world will be able to see it," Wessells said. In December, the same charity acting for UK libraries purchased a collection of books and manuscripts, including seven of Charlotte's miniatures, for £15 million (\$19.5 million). — AFP

Nobel laureate Vargas Llosa to head home after beating COVID

Nobel literature laureate Mario Vargas Llosa has "beaten" COVID and will leave the Madrid clinic where he was being treated to complete his recovery at home, his family tweeted on Monday. The 86-year-old writer "has beaten COVID. Now he's going home to continue his recovery," his son Alvaro Vargas Llosa tweeted, thanking the medical staff at the clinic. He went in for treatment last week following "complications caused by coronavirus", his son tweeted on Friday, saying he had entered the clinic "a few days ago" with his condition "progressing favorably". The tweet was also signed by the writer's two other children Gonzalo and Morgana. Born in Peru in 1936, Vargas Llosa took Spanish citizenship in 1993.



In this file photo Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa delivers a speech after being honoured with the Grand Cross National Order of Merit by Ecuadorian President Guillermo Lasso at the Carondelet Palace in Quito. — AFP

At the beginning of April, he published his latest work, "The Quiet Gaze (of Perez Galdos)", an essay on the Spanish writer Benito Perez Galdos (1843-1920). The last survivor of a golden generation of Latin American literary giants, Vargas Llosa's writing explores universal themes often set outside his native Peru. — AFP

Olympic status gives surfing a boost in Cuba



Cuban surfer Ayax Borrero rides a wave in the coast of Havana.

When they were children, Cuba's surfers used to transform their school desks into boards to ride the waves. They now have real equipment. And since surfing became an Olympic sport, it is gaining acceptance amongst authorities on the Communist-ruled nation where its practitioners have often faced police harassment. In the fishing community of Santa Fe to the west of Havana, Ayax Borrero, 34, carries his surfboard under one arm as he and two friends meander through the streets that separate his home from the sea. It's a

reminds Borrero of his youth, although back then boards were almost impossible to find. "I started young, around seven or eight, with wooden school desks. That's what we used back then. "They were really heavy!" he added, laughing. He recognizes that it was a good starting point as "afterwards, when my dad bought me my first board at 11 years old, I was able to stand up straight away."

'Shark food'

There was a time when surfers also removed the polystyrene tray at the back

to Florida.

In March, US authorities rescued a Cuban who took on the 370 kilometer journey by windsurf. Cubans have been flocking in their droves to emigrate to the United States as Cuba reels from its worst economic crisis in almost 30 years, partly due to the coronavirus pandemic. But "by surfing, you're shark food," joked Frank Gonzales, 35, one of the only people repairing boards on the island. Even so, he does not always have the choice. "It's annoying to be surfing, taking part in a sport in a specific place with the best waves, and the police come and tell you to go," said Gonzales, who has taught his six-year-old daughter to surf. "I hope in the future the police will respect surfers as sportspeople."

'Great sport'

Some say their boards were confiscated, others tried to swim away from the police. But things are starting to look up. Surfing made its Olympic debut at the Tokyo Games in 2021, and now Cuba's authorities are recognizing it as a sport. "What happened is that the sport was being practiced but it wasn't being paid attention to by" the Cuban Sports Institute

(INDER), said Eric Gutierrez, the body's chief. "Now INDER is taking steps to pay attention, give recognition and develop surfing."

He insisted that the police were not preventing people from surfing but "they're looking after their lives." "I remember once the fire brigade turned up to rescue us. Someone had called them," said Yaliagni "Yaya" Guerrero, 39, one of Cuba's first women surfers. She has worked alongside Gonzales with INDER since 2019 to try to change the "lack of culture or ignorance" surrounding surfing. In December, an INDER official watched for the first time a competition between surf clubs in Havana, won by Gonzales. That official was Gutierrez, who described surfing as "a great sport." Since last year, INDER has been in contact with the International Surfing Association and has plans to welcome a delegation from the global governing body in the coming months. We want to present them a work project that will support us in terms of instruction, equipment, specific surfing elements such as first aid and refereeing," said Gutierrez. — AFP



A surfer falls as he rides a wave in the coast of Havana.

cloudy day and the waves are crashing against the shore. "Over all, we depend on weather conditions like cold fronts, hurricanes-which are what create the waves here-so that's why the season begins in winter" from November to April, said Borrero, an architect.

Their playground is the ruins of an old rock pool allegedly once belonging to a bourgeois called Antolin before the 1959 revolution that brought Fidel Castro to power. The area now serves as a promontory from where surfers can launch themselves into the water. Surfing

of refrigerators to make boards. In Cuba, a country where most people lack many basic products, such a practice is known as "inventing"-the art of finding a solution to every problem. "It's a bit difficult to surf here," said Yasel Fernandez, 29. Born into a fishing family, he began surfing at 13 but he only managed to "have my own board at 29 and that was my dream, having my own board and surfing." Getting hold of their own board is not the only difficulty for surfers, who have often aroused the suspicion of police in a country where the sea is also seen as the escape route



Cuban surfer Alejandro Pino falls as he rides a wave in the coast of Havana.

'Bad Guys' finish first in N American box office

Three new releases helped fuel the North American box office this weekend, with Universal's animated action-comedy "The Bad Guys" on top with an estimated \$24 million take, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported Sunday. "Bad Guys," a sort of animal-eye version of "Oceans 11," follows the exploits of a wickedly clever gang of creatures. Produced by DreamWorks Animation, the film has a voice cast including Sam Rockwell, Craig Robinson, Awkwafina, Marc Ramon, Anthony Ramos and Lilly Singh.

Overall, this was a good weekend for family-gearred films-hit harder by the Covid effect than films targeting other demographics-with Paramount's "Sonic the Hedgehog 2" again placing second, at \$15.2 million for the Friday-through-Sunday period. "Family moviegoing was certainly rocked by the pandemic, but families are returning now," said David A. Gross of Franchise Entertainment Research. "We're still far from pre-pandemic levels... but this is a good start."



Third spot went to "Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets of Dumbledore" on Warner Bros., at \$14 million, a fairly sharp drop from last weekend's \$43 million opening for the Wizarding World film. New releases claimed the next two spots. "The Northman" from Focus Features took in \$12 million. It tells the blood-soaked story of a Viking (played by a ripped Alexander Skarsgard) who seeks revenge on the man who killed his parents and usurped his father's throne.

Nicole Kidman, Ethan Hawke, Bjork, Anya Taylor-Joy and Willem Dafoe round out the ensemble cast. And in fifth was Lionsgate's very meta film "The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent," at \$7.2 million. Nicolas Cage plays, none too seriously, a man named Nick Cage. Rounding out the top were:

"Everything Everywhere All at Once" (\$5.4 million)

"The Lost City" (\$4.4 million)

"Father Stu" (\$3.3 million)

"Morbius" (\$2.3 million)

"Ambulance" (\$1.8 million)—AFP

Lifestyle | Features

World's oldest person dies in Japan at 119

A Japanese woman certified the world's oldest person has died at the age of 119, local officials said Monday. Kane Tanaka was born on January 2, 1903, in the southwestern Fukuoka region of Japan, the same year the Wright brothers flew for the first time and Marie Curie became the first woman to win a Nobel Prize. Tanaka was in relatively good health until recently and lived at a nursing home, where she enjoyed board games, solving maths problems, soda and chocolate.



This handout picture shows the world's oldest person, Japanese woman Kane Tanaka who was born on January 2, 1903, and died at the age of 119 on April 19, 2022. — AFP photos

In her younger years, Tanaka ran various businesses including a noodle shop and a rice cake store. She married Hideo Tanaka a century ago in 1922, giving birth to four children and adopting a fifth. She had planned to use a wheelchair to take part in the torch relay for the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, but the pandemic prevented her from doing so.

When the Guinness World Records recognized her as the oldest person alive in 2019, she was asked what moment she was the most happy in life. Her answer: "Now." Her daily routine was described at the time as including a 6:00 am wake-up, and afternoons spent studying mathematics and practicing calligraphy.

"One of Kane's favorite pastimes is a game of Othello and she's become an expert at the classic board game, often beating rest-home staff," Guinness said. Local governor Seitaro Hattori hailed Tanaka's life after she passed away on April 19. "I was looking forward to seeing Kane-san on this year's Respect for the Aged Day (a national holiday in September) and celebrating together with her favorite soda and chocolate," he said in a statement on Monday. "I am extremely saddened by the news." Japan has the world's most elderly population, according to World Bank data, with around 28 percent aged 65 or over. The oldest-ever living person verified by Guinness was Frenchwoman Jeanne Louise Calment, who died aged 122 years and 164 days in 1997. — AFP



This picture shows the world's oldest person, Japanese woman Kane Tanaka who was born on January 2, 1903, and died at the age of 119.



Members of Kyiv Symphony Orchestra are pictured during a rehearsal in Warsaw. — AFP

'Speaking to the soul': Kyiv orchestra starts European tour

Ahead of their first concert since the start of Russia's invasion, members of the Kyiv Symphony Orchestra voice hope that their music will heal troubled souls and help boost Ukrainian culture. Some of the orchestra's musicians fled the country to the sound of Russian bombs, others remained in Ukraine but had to leave their homes and have been playing only to their families or in bomb shelters.

The concert at the Warsaw Philharmonic will start a European tour for the orchestra. "Our concerts are truly a cultural mission," Oleksii Pshenychnikov, a 22-year-old second violin in the orchestra, told AFP during a break in the rehearsals. "In Ukraine, we say

there is a 'cultural front', meaning it is not escaping from the war, it is another aspect of the war," Pshenychnikov said.

The men in the orchestra have been granted special dispensation from Ukrainian authorities to leave the country as martial law is in place in Ukraine and fighting age men are not normally allowed to leave. The exemption only lasts until the end of the tour and its Italian conductor Luigi Gaggero said he hoped other venues will come forward to offer to host the orchestra "maybe until the end of the war".

Gaggero, who had himself been due to travel to Ukraine on the day the conflict began, said the process of rehearsing together had been invigorating for musicians forced to spend long weeks apart. "They do not just feel nostalgia for a job, they feel nostalgia for the very reason of their existence, which is music. It is like the air they breathe and they can finally breathe again," he said. Several of the musicians are travelling with their whole families and loved ones left behind are on everyone's minds as the conflict intensifies in southern and eastern parts of the country.

'Transmitting our pain'

The rehearsals are accompanied by

therapy sessions. Participants were skeptical about the idea at first, but organizers said more and more are taking part. "Music, particularly being able to practice my violin, has helped me to get away from the terrible reality," said Elizaveta Zaitseva, 25. "Now I can live again in my own world, the one I am used to, the world of music," said Zaitseva, who studies in Nuremberg in Germany. Thursday's concert will include the works of Ukrainian composers Maxim Berezovsky, Myroslav Skoryk and Boris Lyatoshynsky as well as a piece by Polish composer Henryk Wieniawski. "It is unfortunately because of the war but our culture has a big opportunity" to make lesser-known composers known in the West, Zaitseva said.

"Europe will become much richer if it discovers the richness of Ukrainian culture." Speaking at the Warsaw Philharmonic, where the walls are decorated with stark images of the ruins of post-war Warsaw, Zaitseva said she hoped that the music she plays could "access people's souls". "Through music and art we are speaking to the soul, we are transmitting our pain and our wishes, our hopes into people's hearts through music," she said. — AFP

IRAQ EXHIBITS RESTORED ART PILLAGED AFTER 2003 INVASION

Verdant landscapes, stylized portraits of peasant women, curved sculptures—an exhibition in Baghdad is allowing art aficionados to rediscover the pioneers of contemporary Iraqi art. Around one hundred items are on display in the capital, returned and restored nearly two decades after they were looted. Many of the works, including pieces by renowned artists Jawad Selim and Fayiq Hassan, disappeared in 2003 when museums and other institutions were pillaged in the chaos that followed the US-led invasion to topple dictator Saddam Hussein.

Thousands of pieces were stolen, and organized criminal networks often sold them outside Iraq. Tracked down in Switzerland, the US, Qatar and neighboring Jordan, sculptures and paintings dating between the 1940s and 1960s have been on display since late March at the Ministry of Culture, in a vast room that used to serve as a restaurant. "These works are part of the history of contemporary art in Iraq," ministry official Fakher Mohamed said.

Artistic renaissance

Pictures and sculptures were in 2003 spirited away from the Saddam Arts Centre, one of Baghdad's most prestigious cultural venues at the time. While he crushed all political dissent, Saddam cultivated the image of a patron of the arts. The invasion and years of violence that followed ended a flourishing arts scene, particularly in Baghdad. Now, relative stability has led to a fledgling artistic renaissance, including book fairs and concerts, of which the exhibition organized by the ministry is an example. It helps recall a golden age



Visitors look at paintings by renowned artist Fayiq Hassan on display at Iraq's Ministry of Culture in Baghdad. — AFP photos

when Baghdad was considered one of the Arab world's cultural capitals.

Among canvases of realist, surrealist or expressionist inspiration, a picturesque scene in shimmering colors shows a boat sailing in front of several "mudhif", the traditional reed dwellings found in Iraq's southern marshes. Other paintings, in dark colors, depict terrified residents surrounded by corpses, fleeing a burning village. Elsewhere, a woman is shown prostrate in a scene of destruction, kneeling in front of an arm protruding from stones.

There is also a wooden sculpture of a gazelle with undulating curves, and the "maternal statue"—a work by Jawad Selim that represents a woman with a slender

neck and raised arms. The latter, worth hundreds of millions of dollars, was rediscovered in a Baghdad district known for its antiques and second-hand goods shops. It was in the possession of a dealer unaware of its true value, according to sculptor Taha Wahib, who bought it for just \$200.

'Priceless works'

Looters in some cases had taken pictures out of their frames, sometimes with cutters, to steal them more easily. "Some pieces were damaged during the events of 2003 - or they were stored in poor conditions for many years," Mohamed, the culture ministry official, told AFP. But "they



Restored art pieces by renowned Iraqi artists are on display at Iraq's Ministry of Culture in Baghdad.

were restored in record time," he said. Other works are being held back for now, with some waiting to be restored-but they will be exhibited once more, Mohamed pledged. He wants to open more exhibition rooms to show the entire collection of recovered items.

"Museums must be open to the public—these works shouldn't remain imprisoned in warehouses," he said. The 7,000 items stolen in 2003 included "priceless works", and about 2,300 have been returned to Iraq, according to exhibition curator Lamiaa Al-Jawari. In 2004, she joined a committee of artists committed to retrieving the many stolen national treasures. "Some have been recovered through offi-

cial channels" including the Swiss embassy, she said, but individuals also helped.

Authorities coordinate with Interpol and the last restitutions took place in 2021. The selection on display will be changed from time to time, "to show visitors all this artistic heritage," Jawari said. Ali Al-Najar, an 82-year-old artist who has lived in Sweden the past 20 years, has been on holiday in his homeland. He welcomed the exhibition. "The pioneers are those who initiated Iraqi art. If we forget them, we lose our foundations" as a society, Najjar said. — AFP



The "maternal statue", a work by Iraqi artist Jawad Selim that was rediscovered in a district known for its antiques and second-hand goods shops, is on display at Iraq's Ministry of Culture in Baghdad.



Visitors look at paintings by Iraqi artists Suad Al-Attar (left) and Rafa Al-Nasri (right) on display at Iraq's Ministry of Culture in Baghdad.

Sports

Verstappen wins Emilia Romagna Grand Prix to rekindle title bid

IMOLA, Italy: World champion Max Verstappen rekindled his title defense and acclaimed his resurgent Red Bull team on Sunday after he led Sergio Perez home in a dominant one-two triumph in Ferrari's backyard at the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix. In a rain-affected race, the 24-year-old Dutchman came home 16.5 seconds ahead of his Red Bull team-mate as Charles Leclerc and Ferrari endured a disappointing day in front of passionate home support at the Autodromo Enzo e Dino Ferrari.

Leclerc, who started second on the grid, finished sixth after making a poor start and spinning in the closing laps while running third, allowing Lando Norris to take third for McLaren. After Saudi Arabia, it was Verstappen's second win this season which has also included two retirements, and the 22nd win of his career. He reeled off a 'grand slam' weekend with pole position, victory and fastest lap as well as victory in Saturday's sprint race.

He moved up to second in the title race behind Leclerc, reducing his deficit from 45 points to 27 to set up the prospect of an intense duel this year between them and their teams. "It's always tough to achieve something like that, but already yesterday and the day before, we were on it," said Verstappen. "And it was looking like a strong weekend. You never know with the weather how competitive you are going to be, but I think we did very well and this one-two is very deserved. "The start was very important, but afterwards, judging the conditions and when to swap to the slick tyres - because in the lead you have to always dictate the pace."

Perez said he was delighted to bring smiles to the Red Bull team. "It was really intense," he said. "The most important thing today was not to make mistakes because with these conditions it was so

tricky. To get a one-two, out there, is a great result for the team.

'Undriveable' Mercedes

"I am very pleased to see everyone in my team smiling today and I am happy for Max," Norris said: "An amazing race! An amazing weekend. "I'm happy. The team deserves it. It was a mixture of tricky conditions, but we've been able to capitalize on that - I love these conditions, so always do quite well." George Russell produced a stirring drive for Mercedes to come home fourth after starting 11th, fending off Valtteri Bottas's Alfa Romeo at the finish, while team-mate seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton finished a distant 13th.

Mercedes team chief Toto Wolff apologized to a disappointed Hamilton on team radio after the race. "I am sorry for what you had to drive today," said Wolff. "I know it was undriveable - this was a terrible race." "No worries, Toto," Hamilton responded. "Just keep working hard." "We will come out of this," said Wolff, who added later that Mercedes "are not good enough for a world champion - and just need to fix the car."

AlphaTauri's Yuki Tsunoda finished seventh ahead of four-time champion Sebastian Vettel in an Aston Martin, Kevin Magnussen of Haas and Lance Stroll of Aston Martin. Verstappen surged into the lead from pole position. Leclerc, starting second, was passed by the Dutchman, Perez and Norris before Daniel Ricciardo in a McLaren tangled with Sainz at the first chicane. It was a second consecutive early exit for Sainz after his misery in Melbourne.

Hamilton, who had been reluctant to pit, was impeded by Estaban Ocon's Alpine, but avoided a collision while Perez, who stopped on lap 19, man-



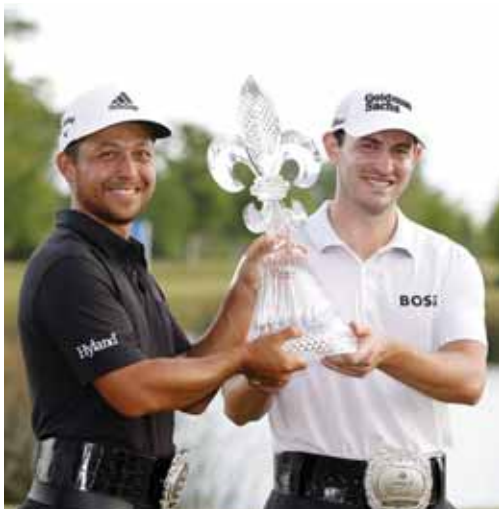
IMOLA, Italy: Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen holds the winner's trophy as he celebrates on the podium after the Emilia Romagna Formula One Grand Prix at the Autodromo Internazionale Enzo e Dino Ferrari race track on April 24, 2022. — AFP

aged to retain second place ahead of a charging Leclerc. Ocon was given a five seconds penalty for his unsafe release.

By half-distance, Verstappen was cruising with a 10-second cushion ahead of Perez and Leclerc, frustrated in third. On lap 41 came Hamilton's most humbling moment when he was lapped by Verstappen as he battled for 13th with Pierre Gasly's Alpha Tauri. Leclerc pitted on lap

50 for softs, dropping to fourth behind Norris. Perez followed on 51, as Leclerc passed the McLaren and Verstappen one lap later, retaining a 13-second lead.

The Monegasque charged hard to pass Perez on lap 53, but spun off at Variante Alfa, damaging a front wing. He pitted, re-joining eighth as Norris inherited third and Russell took fourth, resisting Bottas in the final laps. — AFP



AVONDALE, Louisiana: Xander Schauffele and Patrick Cantlay pose with the trophy after putting in to win on the 18th green during the final round of the Zurich Classic of New Orleans at TPC Louisiana on April 24, 2022. —AFP

Schauffele, Cantlay claim Zurich Classic team crown

MIAMI: Xander Schauffele and Patrick Cantlay combined for a level-par 72 to complete a wire-to-wire victory at the PGA Tour's Zurich Classic of New Orleans team event on Sunday. The American duo, who started the day five shots clear of the field after a blistering third round 60 on Saturday, dug deep during Sunday's foursomes to hold on for a two-shot win at TPC Louisiana in Avondale.

Schauffele and Cantlay's final round 72 was the duo's highest score of a low-scoring week which included an opening round 13-under-par 59 in addition to Saturday's 12-under-par 60. "Today was probably the worst of our four quarters," Schauffele said afterwards. "Pat was very calm, which helped me stay calm. It's been a while since I've been in contention here. It was overall just calmness and patience."

Victory was especially sweet for Cantlay, who bounced back from the disappointment of losing in a playoff to Jordan Spieth at last week's PGA Heritage. The win also cemented Cantlay and Schauffele's on-course partnership - the duo were unbeaten in two matches at last year's Ryder Cup. "Today was a great day," Cantlay said. "We definitely bring out the best in each other. We really enjoy being out here together," he added. "I said earlier this week, if there's anyone I could share success with, it would be Pat," Schauffele said. "I'm happy we could get it done."

The Americans finished the tournament on 29 under, two clear of Sam Burns and Billy Horschel, who had looked to be mounting a charge before a bogey on the 17th checked their momentum. Burns and Horschel carded a closing four-under-par 68 to take second at 27 under. Doc Redman and Sam Ryder shot a five-under-par 67 to jump up the leaderboard and finish third on 24 under, ahead of six pairings tied for fourth on 23 under. That cluster included South Africa's Garrick Higgo and Branden Grace, who had lit up the field with a nine-under-par 63 on Saturday only to fade with a one-over-par closing 73 on Sunday. — AFP

Japan's Hataoka wins LA Open for sixth LPGA title

LOS ANGELES: Nasa Hataoka fired an eagle and four birdies in a four-under par 67 on Sunday to notch her sixth career LPGA title at the LA Open. Japan's Hataoka, who led by four entering the final round, finished with a 15-under total of 269. That was one shot off the tournament record set by Canadian Brooke Henderson last year and gave her a five-stroke triumph over Australian Hannah Green, who carded a closing 68 for 274.

It was a particularly satisfying victory, coming a week after Hataoka missed the cut at the Lotte Championship in Hawaii. The 23-year-old had four birdies and a bogey in the first seven holes at Wilshire Country Club. She drilled a 35-foot eagle putt at the par-four 15th to lead by six shots so that

a closing bogey was barely a blip.

"That eagle really helped me kind of relax a little bit, kind of feel like I was putting really good today," Hataoka said. "Putting-wise, poa annua greens are really difficult to play, but my experience on this type of green helped me a lot." Although Green wasn't able to apply much pressure on Sunday, the Australian was pleased to finish with a solid round. "Definitely, really happy with how things are trending," She said. "It was nice to be a bit more consistent. Last week I got off to a great start and then just couldn't maintain it in Hawaii. "So, I feel like once I get the putter hot, I'm pretty excited to see what's to come."

Sweden's Madelene Sagstrom had five birdies without a bogey in a 66 that put her tied for third on 277 alongside 2019 LA champion Minjee Lee of Australia, who carded a 68, and South Korean star Park In-bee, who closed with a 70. World number one Ko Jin-young, who was tied atop the leaderboard with Hataoka on Saturday before a late quadruple bogey, closed with a four-over par 75 that left her tied for 21st. — AFP



LOS ANGELES: Nasa Hataoka of Japan poses for photos with the DIO Implant LA Open Trophy after winning in the final round at Wilshire Country Club on April 24, 2022. —AFP

Quartararo sweeps to victory in Portugal

PORTIMAO, Portugal: Reigning MotoGP champion Fabio Quartararo put his early-season speed issues behind him as he cruised to victory in the Portuguese Grand Prix on Sunday. The Yamaha rider dominated the race and finished more than five seconds ahead of fellow Frenchman Johann Zarco of Ducati-Pramac. Zarco was the beneficiary when Spaniard Joan Mir, on a Suzuki, and Australian Jack Miller, on a Ducati, collided battling for second place in the closing stages.

"This morning I felt very good during the practice laps but I was surprised to be so fast during the race," said Quartararo, who started on the second row of the grid. "I pushed myself to the limit," he said. "I made a great start and I'm happy to win for the first time this season." Quartararo's first victory since the British Grand Prix last August, lifted him to joint first in the standings, tied on 69 points with Spaniard Alex Rins who started on the eighth row of the grid on his Suzuki.

Spaniard Aleix Espargaro of Aprilia finished third and climbed to third in the standings three points off the leaders. Zarco said he was "impressed" by Quartararo's dominance. "It's a great French victory but unfortunately it's not mine," he said. Zarco has never won a race in MotoGP. He has finished runner-up nine times, twice behind his compatriot. Italy's Enea Bastianini (Ducati-Gresini), who led the championship before the race, dropped to fourth in the standings after crashing out on Sunday.

Rins, who started 23rd on the grid, got off to a great start and made a series of overtaking moves to finish just off the podium. Mir started in the lead but



PORTIMAO: Yamaha French rider Fabio Quartararo celebrates on the podium after winning the MotoGP race of the Portuguese Grand Prix at the Algarve International Circuit on April 24, 2022. — AFP

Quartararo overtook him on lap four before steadily extending his lead. Mir was then caught by Zarco and Miller. But when the Australian braked too late in a corner he lost control and slid off taking Mir, who had been on his outside, into a gravel trap with him. Zarco then held off Espargaro at the line.

Behind them, the two Marquez brothers both on Hondas, battled hard in the closing stages repeatedly swapping places before Marc finished fifth and Alex sixth, just ahead of Italian Francesco Bagnaia

(Ducati), who recovered from a heavy crash in practice that sent him to hospital. American Joe Roberts won a Moto2 race interrupted by a red flag after a string of riders slid off the track one after another at the same corner. None was hurt.

Spaniard Sergio Garcia won in Moto3, edging compatriot Jaume Masia with Japanese rider Ayumu Sasaki third. Garcia moved a point ahead of Italian Dennis Foggia in the standings. The next race is the Spanish GP on May 1. —AFP

Referee punched, kicked as Morocco club reach semis

JOHANNESBURG: Tunisian referee Sadeq Al-Salmi was punched and kicked after Moroccan club Renaissance Berkane reached the CAF Confederation Cup semifinals at the weekend with a 1-0 win over Egyptian visitors Al Masry.

Youssef El-Fahli converted a seventh-minute penalty for the only goal of the quarter-final second leg and Berkane won the fiery tie on away goals after a 2-2 aggregate draw. Berkane will face fellow former Confederation Cup winners TP Mazembe from the Democratic Republic of Congo on May 8 and 15 for a place in the final.

Masry technical staff constantly complained about the decisions of Al Salmi at the Municipal Stadium in Berkane, the hub of the Moroccan citrus-growing region in the northeast of the kingdom. When the final whistle blew the match official showed red cards to Egyptian players Farid Shawky and Mohamed Abdel Latif.

Almost immediately, a Masry technical staff member punched the referee in the face and kicked him before security staff intervened. An ill-tempered match was marred by constant lengthy stoppages for injuries, angering Masry, who believed some were designed to waste time. The first leg, won 2-1 by Masry in Alexandria last weekend, was also a stormy affair with two of the home side, Amr Moussa and Elyes Jlassi, sent off. Berkane, who won the African equivalent of the UEFA Europa League in 2020 after finishing runners-up the previous season, had threatened to overrun Masry in the early stages.

Apart from the El Fahli goal, a Charki el Bahri

header rebounded off the crossbar as Berkane exploited an aerial weakness in the heart of the Masry defense. The trend continued in the second half with Masry rarely threatening to equalise and get back in front on aggregate. Known as the 'Orange Boys', Berkane are guided by Florent Ibenge, the vastly experienced former Democratic Republic of Congo coach.

Elsewhere, Al Ahly defeated Tripoli neighbors Al Itihad 1-0 in a Libyan derby in Benghazi to book a semifinal date with 2015 Confederation Cup runners-up Orlando Pirates from South Africa. The only goal of the two legs came 19 minutes into the first half on an artificial pitch in the eastern coastal city.

After Itihad goalkeeper Muad Allafi pushed away a pass lofted into the box, Ayoub Ayed hammered the loose ball into the roof of the net. Itihad had chances to equalize after half-time, notably when unmarked Omar al Khouja failed to connect with an Abdulati Abbasi cross. — AFP

Sports

Liverpool close gap on Man City to leave Everton in relegation danger

LONDON: Liverpool closed the gap on Premier League leaders Manchester City to one point as the quadruple chasers pushed Everton deeper into relegation trouble with a 2-0 win, while Chelsea beat West Ham 1-0 to ease their top four anxiety on Sunday. Jurgen Klopp's side had to work hard to break Everton's stubborn resistance in a fractious Merseyside derby at Anfield.

They couldn't muster a shot on target until Scotland defender Andrew Robertson scored with a second-half header. Divock Origi's late strike ensured Liverpool kept the pressure on champions City, who had crushed Watford 5-1 on Saturday to move four points clear at the top. With five games left for both Liverpool and City, the title race looks destined to go down to the wire.

Liverpool, trying to become the first English club to win all four major trophies in one season, now turn their attention to Wednesday's Champions League semi-final first leg against Villarreal. "A football game has two halves; thank god. In the first half, we didn't pass quick enough. At half-time, I told the players it was easy to improve. We had to work hard for it, but all good," Klopp said. "There are not a lot of points we can drop, the next one is always waiting around the corner. That is the situation we are in."

Everton have lost eight successive away games for the first time since 1948 and are in grave danger of relegation to the Championship. Frank Lampard's men were dumped into the relegation zone by Burnley's 1-0 win against Wolves earlier in the day. They sit two points behind Burnley with a game in hand as they try to avoid playing in the second tier for the first time since 1954.

"The gameplan was understanding they are one

of the best teams in the world. We wanted to be disciplined. If we get the first goal, the game feels different," Lampard said. "We have to take that spirit forward to the final games. We'll give everything until the end."

In the 62nd minute, Origi combined with Mohamed Salah, who crossed to the far post for Robertson to head his second goal this season. Origi, a regular scorer against Everton, grabbed the second goal with a close-range header in the 85th minute as Liverpool made it 12 wins from their last 13 league matches.

Puliscic to the rescue

At Stamford Bridge, Chelsea looked set for more angst on home turf when Jorginho's penalty was saved by Lukasz Fabianski. But Christian Pulisic came off the bench to inspire third-placed Chelsea, lifting them seven points clear of fifth-placed Tottenham in the fight to qualify for next season's Champions League via a top four finish. A 4-2 defeat against Arsenal on Wednesday had condemned Chelsea to three successive losses at the Bridge for the first time since 1993, sparking fears they could fall out of the top four.

In the 87th minute, Thiago Silva flicked a header towards Romelu Lukaku, prompting Craig Dawson to concede a penalty with a pull on the substitute. Dawson was initially booked before being sent off after a VAR check, but West Ham avoided further punishment as Jorginho's weak spot-kick was easily saved by Fabianski. Pulisic spared Jorginho's blushes in the 90th minute as the United States forward met Marcos Alonso's cross with a clinical low finish from 10 yards. "It feels like a giant step. We have some



LIVERPOOL: Everton's French midfielder Abdoulaye Doucoure vies with Liverpool's Spanish midfielder Thiago Alcantara during their English Premier League match at Anfield on April 24, 2022. — AFP

games in hand. It was necessary and I'm glad," Chelsea boss Thomas Tuchel said.

Burnley boosted their bid for a remarkable escape act as they moved into 17th place thanks to Matej Vydra's 62nd-minute strike from a Wout Weghorst cross at Turf Moor. Since Sean Dyche's

surprise sacking after 10 years in charge, Burnley's caretaker boss Mike Jackson has taken seven points from three games to revive their hopes of beating the drop. James Ward-Prowse scored twice as Southampton came from two goals down to draw 2-2 at Brighton. — AFP



VILLENEUVE-D'ASCO, France: Strasbourg's French midfielder Jean-Ricner Bellegarde fights for the ball with Lille's French midfielder Benjamin Andre during their French L1 football match at the Pierre-Mauroy Stadium on April 24, 2022. — AFP

Marseille edge Reims as Rennes regain third spot

PARIS: Gerson struck a late winner as Marseille beat Reims 1-0 away in Ligue 1 on Sunday, while Rennes shrugged off back-to-back losses to direct rivals for a Champions League spot by crushing Lorient to reclaim third place. Brazil international Gerson came off the bench to grab the only goal seven minutes from time and keep Jorge Sampaoli's side six points clear of the chasing pack in second.

They remain well placed to take France's only other automatic qualifying berth for next season's Champions League, but still have to play Lyon, Rennes and Strasbourg in three of their four remaining games. OM also travel to Feyenoord next week for the first leg of their Europa Conference League semifinal.

"It was a tough match against an opponent who defended very well, but I think it was a deserved win," said Sampaoli. "It's good to keep the gap with those chasing us because we have a difficult fixture list and those behind us also won so that put pressure on us to do the same." Rennes recovered from defeats by

Monaco and Strasbourg over to demolish Lorient 5-0 at Roazhon Park.

Martin Terrier scored his 21st goal of the season shortly after Benjamin Bourigeaud had given Rennes the lead at Roazhon Park. Terrier is now just one behind the league's top scorer Kylian Mbappe. Captain Hamari Traore headed in a third at the start of the second half, with Flavien Tait and Gaetan Laborde also on target after Rennes defender Nayif Aguerd was sent off.

"Scoring twice in the first 20 minutes gave us confidence," said Rennes coach Bruno Genesio. "We again showed that after two negative results that we were capable of reacting. It's a form of character that is starting to emerge from this team." Rennes moved back above Monaco on goal difference, but Strasbourg missed the chance to stay level with them after losing 1-0 at Lille - their first defeat in 12 matches - as Zeki Celik struck three minutes from time.

Nice remained in the race for the top three thanks to a 94th-minute goal from Khephren Thuram in a 1-0 win over Troyes. Nantes, who face Nice in next month's French Cup final, came from two goals down to defeat Bordeaux 5-3 and plunge the six-time French champions further into relegation trouble. Metz appear doomed to drop into the second tier and finished their 1-0 loss at home to Brest with nine men. They are now winless in 13 matches. — AFP

Rayo win puts Real Madrid on brink of title

BARCELONA: Barcelona suffered a shock 1-0 defeat by Rayo Vallecano on Sunday, handing Real Madrid the chance to win La Liga if they draw at home to Espanyol next weekend. Barca's place in the top four is still not secure either after a third consecutive defeat at Camp Nou continued their late-season wobble and saw them squander the chance to pull away in the race for Champions League qualification.

Madrid remain 15 points clear with five games left to play and while Barcelona have a better head-to-head, Carlo Ancelotti's side know they will be uncatchable if they take just a point from Espanyol on Saturday at the Santiago Bernabeu. Barcelona should still have enough for the top four given they sit six points clear of Real Betis in fifth, with five games left to play, but winning this game in hand against an out-of-form Rayo side would certainly have made the run-in more comfortable.

Tonali sends Milan back to summit as Napoli wilt in fight

ROME: Sandro Tonali scored in stoppage time as AC Milan came from behind to win 2-1 at Lazio on Sunday and retake top spot from Inter Milan in Serie A, while Napoli's title hopes appear over after their meltdown in Empoli. Ciro Immobile gave Lazio an early lead at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome, but Olivier Giroud levelled shortly after half-time before Tonali's late heroics kept Milan firmly in the title hunt.

They moved back two points above of Inter, who beat Roma 3-1 on Saturday and have a game in hand Wednesday away to Bologna. Inter also knocked Milan out of the Italian Cup semifinals in midweek. Ciro Immobile became the leading active scorer in Italy's top flight when he turned in a cross from Sergej Milinkovic-Savic inside four minutes.

"There are games that get complicated because we don't start how we should," said Xavi. "It's a shame because it was a golden opportunity." Instead, their form, as much as their position, will be a real concern for coach Xavi, whose team have now won only twice in their last six matches. This loss comes after they were beaten at home by Eintracht Frankfurt in the Europa League quarterfinals and then defeated by Cadiz in La Liga, also 1-0.

"We're struggling a lot at home," said Sergio Busquets. "We're in this negative dynamic at Camp Nou. We have a cushion and we had a chance to take advantage but we haven't managed it." Xavi talked on Saturday about "recovering the sensations" of a few weeks ago, when a 4-0 thrashing of Real Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu looked set to place Barcelona even as favorites in La Liga next season.

But that feels like a distant memory now, with the team's season in danger of ending with a whimper. Missing out on the Champions League would be unthinkable for Barcelona, who started the season with debts of more than a billion euros. Missing out on second place would have consequences too given qualification for the Spanish Super Cup is also believed to be worth around eight million euros to the Catalans. — AFP

The Italy international's 181st Serie A goal took him past veteran Sampdoria striker Fabio Quagliarella as Immobile extended his league-leading haul for the season to 26.

But Giroud poked in from after excellent work from Rafael Leao, and Milan won it at the death as Zlatan Ibrahimovic nodded across for Tonali to force home following a poor defensive header by Francesco Acerbi. "My players are lions," said Milan coach Stefano Pioli. "I am so proud of my players and if I was in their shoes, I'd be angry, as people don't give them enough credit," he told DAZN.

Napoli's Scudetto prospects are hanging by a thread after they blew a two-goal lead late on and crashed to a shock 3-2 loss at Empoli. Luciano Spalletti's side were 2-0 ahead with 10 minutes to go before Scottish midfielder Liam Henderson sparked a revival for the hosts who scored three goals in an eight-minute spell. With four matches to play this season, Napoli are seven points behind Milan and five adrift of second-placed Inter. Napoli have not won the Serie A title since the days of club legend Diego Maradona who led them to their two league crowns in 1987 and 1990. — AFP

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DENVER: Monte Morris #11 of the Denver Nuggets collides under the basket with Draymond Green #23 of the Golden State Warriors in the third quarter during Game Four of the Western Conference First Round NBA Playoffs at Ball Arena on April 24, 2022. —AFP

Nuggets stay alive as Bucks, Heat roll

WASHINGTON: Nikola Jokic scored 37 points and the Denver Nuggets avoided being swept out of the NBA playoffs on Sunday, holding off the Golden State Warriors 126-121. The 27-year-old Serbian, last season's NBA Most Valuable Player, also delivered eight rebounds and six assists as the Nuggets pulled within 3-1 in their best-of-seven Western Conference first-round series to force a fifth game on Wednesday at San Francisco.

The defending champion Milwaukee Bucks and the Eastern Conference top-seeded Miami Heat pushed their series leads to 3-1 with lopsided victories. The Bucks routed the Chicago Bulls 119-95 and the Heat dominated the Atlanta Hawks 110-86. The upstart New Orleans Pelicans, last team to clinch their playoff spot, beat the West's top-seeded Phoenix Suns 118-103 to knot their series two games apiece.

Jokic acknowledged that the Nuggets were determined to avoid a sweep on their home floor against the Warriors. "We put up the fight," Jokic said. "We didn't want to get swept. We have more pride in ourselves." After Stephen Curry nailed a long jumper to give Golden State a 121-119 lead with 1:21 to play, Jokic made a layup, Monte Morris sank a go-ahead jumper with 33 seconds remaining and, after a steal by Austin Rivers, Jokic fired a pass to Will Barton for the deciding corner three-pointer with 8.3 seconds remaining.

No team in NBA history has overcome a 3-0 deficit to win a playoff series, but Jokic says the Nuggets have

the spirit to make history. "We've really got our second wind, so why not?" he said. In the 2020 playoffs played in the coronavirus bubble, the Nuggets became the first team to rally from 3-1 down in a series twice in the same post-season. "Can I say we have them right where we want them? No," said Nuggets coach Michael Malone. "But we're alive." Morris had 24 points and Aaron Gordon added 21 for Denver. Curry had 33 off the bench - 15 in the fourth quarter - to lead Golden State, while Klay Thompson had 32 in his first 30-point playoff game since the 2019 NBA Finals.

In Chicago, Giannis Antetokounmpo delivered game highs of 32 points and 17 rebounds to lead the Bucks. The Greek star also passed off seven assists and blocked two shots to put the Bucks in control as they head home for game five on Wednesday. Bucks reserve Grayson Allen scored a career-playoff-high 27 on 10-of-12 shooting, 6-of-7 from three-point range, while Jrue Holiday added 26 points and Bobby Portis had 14 for Milwaukee, who were again without injured forward Khris Middleton. The Bulls, who haven't won a home playoff game since 2015, were led by Zach LaVine with 24 points and 13 assists while DeMar DeRozan added 23 points.

Heat scorch Hawks

Jimmy Butler led the Heat in Miami, scoring 36 points to put the team on the brink of advancing. Miami held Atlanta star Trae Young to just nine points on 3-of-11

shooting - all three of his baskets three-pointers. "They brought the pressure and we just couldn't match it," Young said. Butler added 10 rebounds, four assists and four steals for a Heat team that was without Kyle Lowry, who was sidelined with a hamstring strain but was a vocal presence on the bench.

Trailing by one after the first quarter, the Heat seized control with a 30-15 second quarter that featured a 15-0 scoring run and closed with an 11-0 surge. They'll try to close it out on their home floor on Tuesday. Phoenix, who led the league with 64 regular-season wins, find themselves heading home for game five on tied 2-2 with a young Pelicans team that harried them throughout a sometimes tense battle in New Orleans.

Brandon Ingram scored 30 points and Jonas Valanciunas added a playoff-career-high 26 points and 15 rebounds to lead the Pelicans against a Suns team missing top scorer Devin Booker, sidelined the remainder of the series with a hamstring strain. Phoenix, led by 23 points from DeAndre Ayton, led 51-49 at halftime.

But New Orleans outscored Phoenix by 13 points in the third quarter to take a 10-point lead and put it away with a 12-0 scoring run that pushed their lead to 16 points midway through the final period. Suns star Chris Paul, harried all night by New Orleans' Jose Alvarado, scored just four points with 11 assists and was whistled for one of three technical fouls meted out to the Suns. —AFP



Carlos Alcaraz

Alcaraz youngest entrant into ATP top 10 since Nadal

PARIS: Spanish star Carlos Alcaraz, aged 18, on Monday became the youngest player to enter the top 10 of the ATP world rankings since his compatriot Rafael Nadal did so at the same age in 2005. Alcaraz climbed two places to ninth in the world due to his straight-sets victory over Pablo Carreno Busta in the Barcelona Open final on Sunday. Britain's Cameron Norrie drops out of the top 10 to number 11.

It was the third title of the season for Alcaraz, having won the Miami Masters at the beginning of the month and the Rio tournament in February. Carreno Busta swaps places with another Spaniard Roberto Bautista Agut, the former climbing to 18 and the latter moving down one spot to 19th. Novak Djokovic still sits atop the standings despite losing to Russian Andrey Rublev in the final of the Belgrade Open. World number two Daniil Medvedev is out with a hernia problem. —AFP



Iga Swiatek

Swiatek extends lead as world no. 1, Badosa up to second

PARIS: Iga Swiatek extended her lead as world number one on Monday, after winning a fourth straight title at the weekend in Stuttgart, while Paula Badosa climbed to second place in the WTA rankings. Poland's Swiatek, who took over at the top from Ashleigh Barty after the Australian retired last month, thrashed Aryna Sabalenka in the final in Stuttgart on Sunday. Spain's Badosa moved to a career-high mark by reaching the semi-finals in Germany before losing to Sabalenka. Britain's Emma Raducanu edged closer to breaking into the top 10 after her run to the quarterfinals of the same event. —AFP

Wimbledon's Russia ban faces battle of wills

PARIS: WTA president Steve Simon warned Wimbledon that they face "strong reactions" to their decision to ban Russian and Belarusian players and the week ahead could see more twists in the controversy which has split tennis. The All England Club (AELTC) said they had decided to bar the likes of Daniil Medvedev, Andrey Rublev, Aryna Sabalenka and Victoria Azarenka in response to the invasion of Ukraine.

On Tuesday, the AELTC will hold its annual Wimbledon event launch where the saga will dominate the agenda. Meanwhile, ATP and WTA officials are expected to meet on the sidelines of the Madrid Open from next week to discuss their response to the crisis. As the Grand Slam tournaments are autonomous, possible sanctions by the ATP and the WTA could include a refusal to award ranking points at the June 27-July 10 Grand Slam tournament.

That could reduce Wimbledon to the status of a high-profile exhibition event. The ATP does not seem inclined to take legal action, while according to French daily L'Equipe, which obtained an email sent by the WTA to its players, the body is studying "the actions that you (the players) could take according to the Grand Slam regulations". "I do think that you'll see some strong reactions that will come from us but what those are and how far they'll go is still to be determined," Simon told The Tennis Podcast at the weekend. "We don't have the same jurisdiction over the Grand Slams as we do over our own sanctioned events."

There are three potential avenues of action, Tatiana Vassine, a lawyer in sports law, told AFP. They lie in discrimination based on nationality, an attack on the freedom to work and the right to equal treatment. "It's a measure which it seems applies only to tennis players - other professionals of Russian and Belarusian nationality are able to continue their professional activity on English soil," she said. —AFP

Kohli 'anxious' and 'fried' but will battle out of alarming slump

NEW DELHI: Virat Kohli deserves more respect and will fight his way out of an alarming slump which hit a new low when he suffered a second successive golden duck in the IPL, fellow cricket stars say. It is the first time in the Indian's stellar career that he has got out on the opening ball twice in a row and has scored just 119 runs in eight matches this season for Royal Challengers Bangalore.

Pictures of "King Kohli" talking to West Indian great and Sunrisers Hyderabad batting coach Brian Lara went viral on social media after Bangalore's big loss on Saturday, when they crashed out for 68. Fans reacted with excitement to the picture of two greats in one frame, with many believing the talk would help turn around Kohli's form in the ongoing Twenty20 tournament.

Former Bangalore captain and coach Daniel Vettori feels that the 33-year-old Kohli, who will likely next play on Tuesday against Rajasthan Royals, will eventually strike form again. "People talk about him being mentally fatigued, but I think he's better than that, I think he's bigger than that," Vettori told ESPNcricinfo. "I think he'll find a way to battle through it and the way is through that aggressive nature."

The former New Zealand skipper said that Kohli should go back to his roots. "I think this is the time when he'd turn to his friends, his closest confidantes and maybe a mentor from when he was young," said Vettori. "I think space is the key, and understanding and respect for him as a player," he added. Kohli, one of the best batsmen of the modern game and often the standard-bearer for Indian cricket, got out first ball to Lucknow Super Giants pace bowler Dushmantha Chameera and then fell to Hyderabad left-arm quick Marco Jansen.

Jansen, a 21-year-old South African who had caught Kohli's attention as a net bowler back in 2018 in South Africa, got his prized scalp with a fuller-angled delivery that got the batsman caught at second slip. "If a batsman has played even half a dozen deliveries, you notice whether his foot is moving or his batting is not coming right," batting great Sunil Gavaskar said on Star Sports.



Virat Kohli

"But when a batsman gets out on the first ball, I think it's just the anxiety."

The slide

Kohli's successive golden ducks have made headlines, but statistics suggest his problems go deeper than that. His miserable run with the bat has coincided with him stepping down as captain of India in T20 and Test cricket, and also being removed as ODI skipper, all in the last seven months. He has failed to score a century in over 100 matches in all formats.

Former England batsman Kevin Pietersen said it was only a matter of time until Kohli is back to his prolific best. "You want a fact? Every single great of our game has been through what Virat is going through," Pietersen tweeted. "Want another fact? They all get through it and deliver on the big stage again."

Bangalore retained Kohli, who stepped down as captain of the franchise, last year for nearly \$2 million but it was a pay cut for the star player who previously had the biggest IPL annual salary of \$2.7 million. Former India coach Ravi Shastri believes that Kohli is "overcooked" because of so much cricket and should be given a break to relieve his "fried brain".

Kohli has played 101 Tests, 260 one-day internationals and 97 Twenty20 matches for India since 2008, during which time he has amassed 23,650 runs across the three formats including 70 centuries. He is still searching for a first IPL title with Bangalore. —AFP