

7 Myanmar's junta court jails Suu Kyi for 5 years



12 In Egypt, the president is a Ramadan TV hero




16 City let Madrid off the hook in 7-goal classic



Ramadan Timings

Fajr	03:45
Shurooq	05:10
Dhuhr	11:46
Asr	15:21
Maghrib	18:21
Isha	19:44





# Kuwait lifts all corona-related measures; face masks ‘optional’

## No need for vaccination, PCR to enter Kuwait



KUWAIT: Photo shows Kuwait security operatives and passengers at Kuwait Airport. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By B Izzak


KUWAIT: The Council of Ministers yesterday effectively lifted all measures that were imposed to contain the coronavirus disease - making wearing face masks anywhere optional and removing vaccination certificates and PCR tests as conditions to enter Kuwait, the government spokesman said. Tareq Al-Mazrem said in a statement that the Cabinet decided during an extraordinary meeting to allow all individuals to enter all closed public places without the need for vaccination or a PCR test.

The Cabinet decided to abolish all decisions and regulations that had been imposed since the outbreak of the COVID-19 disease. Wearing of masks is compulsory only for people who show symptoms of the disease, Mazrem said. People arriving from outside Kuwait are not required to show a PCR test or a vaccination certificate as unvaccinated people can freely enter the country, the Cabinet said.

Unvaccinated people are no longer required to carry out a PCR test as a condition to enter

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Gulf Cable and Electrical Industries’ assets increase to KD 316.35 million



KUWAIT: Chairman of the Board of Gulf Cable and Electrical Industries Co Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi

Ramadan Kareem

Levels of fasting

By Hassan Twaha Bwambale

Ramadan is not just about abstaining from food, drink, conjugal intimacy, and other acts that nullify the Fast from dawn to sunset. Real fasting should bring about a real inner change in the Muslim individual and in a Muslim community at large. The Islamic Fast is not about a mere starvation or self-denial; rather it is an act of worship and obedience to Almighty Allah, thanksgiving, forgiveness, spiritual training, self-examination, etc. If you perform an act of worship during the month of Ramadan, your reward is doubled or even tripled. Fasting in Ramadan is very special for the reason that God Almighty Himself determines the amount of rewards you will receive.

**What are levels of fasting?**

(A) The fast of the masses, which entails abandoning food, drink and sensual pleasure for some hours. Anyone who falls under this category will get abundant rewards from Allah (the Almighty and Majestic). Almighty Allah says in Al-Hadeeth Al-Qudsi, describing the condition of a fasting person, translated as: "... he abandons his food, drinks and conjugal rights because of Me. Therefore, fasting is for Me and I am the One to determine the nature and amount of rewards for him." (Al-Bukhari # 1904)

• The majority of the Muslims fall under this category. Therefore, I urge those who are fasting this year to try their level best to upgrade their fast and fall under the highest of all the three categories of fasting. Our long-sought goal should be to please Allah (the Exalted in Might) and to keep Him in our minds with the realization that He watches over us all the time.

(B) The fast of special people, which entails not only abstaining from food, drink and conjugal rights from dawn to dusk, but also keeping one's eyes, tongue, hands, ears, and indeed his whole body away from committing sins. Abu Huraira narrated that Prophet (PBUH) said, translated as: "Whoever doesn't abandon false speech or acting upon it, there is no need for him to abstain from food and drinks" (Al-Bukhari # 1,903)

• We infer from this prophetic narration that real fasting is to abstain from sins as much as possible. On this issue, Jaber bin Abdullah (ra) said, translated as: "When fasting, your ears, eyes, and mouth should shun lying as well as committing other sins. Moreover, there should be

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EU to lift Schengen visa requirements for Kuwaitis

BRUSSELS: The European Commission Wednesday proposed to lift visa requirements for nationals of Kuwait and Qatar. Under this proposal, once agreed, Kuwait and Qatar nationals holding biometric passports would no longer need a visa when travelling to the EU for short stays of up to 90 days in any 180-day period for business, tourism or family purpose, it said in a press release.

This proposal comes after the commission assessed a number of criteria including irregular migration, public policy and security, economic benefits, and the union's relations with the two countries. It will contribute to strengthening relations with Gulf countries. EU High Representative Josep Borrell said: "Our proposal to lift visa requirements for Qatari and Kuwaiti nationals is a first step to make it easier for people from the entire region to travel to the European Union."

"The final objective is to ensure regional coherence and ultimately

Continued on Page 6

UAE to roll out ‘responsible’ AI

DUBAI: The world's first minister for artificial intelligence (AI) says the United Arab Emirates isn't only looking for economic benefits as it seeks to become a leading nation in the sector. The UAE's minister of state for AI, Omar bin Sultan Al-Olama, said "quality of life" considerations were key, and also stressed the importance of a "responsible" rollout-with impacts potentially reverberating for decades.

"We are looking at AI as a tool," he told AFP in an interview in Dubai. "It's a tool that we need to use to unleash the quality of life aspect." The UAE also calls AI "machine intelligence", defining it as a branch of technology enabling systems to "think, learn, and make decisions like humans", which can support everything from virology to transport. "Yes, economic gain is something that every country wants, and we want it too," Olama added. "But... we want to ensure the development and deployment and the use of AI is responsible."

Olama was just 27 when he was handed the cabinet-level position in 2017, tasked with launching the oil-rich Arab nation's strategy in a field which touches everything from speech

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Climate change, overuse kill off Iraq Sawa Lake

SAWA LAKE: A "No Fishing" sign on the edge of Iraq's western desert is one of the few clues that this was once Sawa Lake, a biodiverse wetland and recreational landmark. Human activity and climate change have combined to turn the site into a barren wasteland with piles of salt.

Abandoned hotels and tourist facilities here hark back to the 1990s when the salt lake, circled by sandy banks, was in its heyday and popular

with newly-weds and families who came to swim and picnic.

But today, the lake near the city of Samawa, south of the capital Baghdad, is completely dry. Bottles litter its former banks and plastic bags dangle from sun-scorched shrubs, while two pontoons have been reduced to rust. "This year, for the first time, the lake has disappeared," environmental activist Husam Subhi said. "In previous years, the water area had decreased during the dry seasons."

Today, on the sandy ground sprinkled with salt, only a pond remains where tiny fish swim, in a source that connects the lake to an underground water table. The five-square-kilometer lake has been drying up since


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EU flags fly near the EU headquarters in Brussels. The European Commission Wednesday proposed to lift visa requirements for nationals of Kuwait and Qatar.



DUBAI: Photo shows newly deployed fast-track gates that use face and iris-recognition technologies at Dubai International Airport. — AFP



SAMAWAH: An aerial view shows a pond remaining at the dried-up Sawa Lake in Iraq's southern province of Al-Muthanna. — AFP



## Local



# Eid Al-Fitr joy returns after COVID restrictions lifted

## High demand on Eid clothes, sweets



By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** Citizens and residents in Kuwait are preparing for Eid Al-Fitr after a two-year disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic. People are eager to celebrate and embrace the true spirit of Eid, now that COVID-19 restrictions have been eased.



**Priority for people now is to travel**



Ali, a gold seller in Souk Al-Mubarakiya, said sales of gold in recent days have not been much compared to last year. "There is weak demand for gold due to the high gold rate, which forced us to stop importing new designs and make do with local pieces," he told Kuwait Times. He added the lockdowns in the past years is one of the reasons for low demand, saying priority for people now is to travel, not to spend money on gold.

Hussain Al-Ali, another gold seller, told Kuwait Times the gold price has increased because of the Russian war on Ukraine. "Domestic demand for gold will spike hopefully after Eid," he said. "Children's jewelry from the Eid collection are most in demand. Every year we have a new collection for each occasion. We lower the markup on gold jewelry for Eid to encourage people to buy," he added.

Bedour Nasser, a shopper, said preparations for Eid will be huge this year with family gatherings, after the pandemic has ended. "We are prepared for the blessed Eid Al-Fitr. With the return of public life, Eid this year will be different and the holiday will be enjoyed with family and



friends," she said. "We bought new clothes, Eid decorations and toys in order to distribute them in a competition we are planning to organize during the festival. It is a relief to have such an important celebration return to normality after such a long time," she noted.

Ahmad Bahaa, a watch salesman, said the market is witnessing high demand for watches and accessories, especially from women. "As we are approaching Eid, the number of customers is increasing. People nowadays mostly buy from our store rather than online, especially in malls. Customers

buy clothes first, then match them with watches and accessories from our store," he explained.

Eid cookies and Middle Eastern sweets are among the popular pastisseries consumed during Eid Al-Fitr. Rose Blase, who works in a sweetshop, told Kuwait Times her shop has prepared hundreds of boxes of Eid cookies stuffed with nuts, dates and fruit jelly. "They're all sold out in all of our branches and we still haven't reached Eid. Usually, people can pre-order online then collect from the store," she told Kuwait Times.



KUWAIT: People shop for Eid Al-Fitr items in several locations around Kuwait. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



## Local

# Ambassador hails EU Commission request to lift Schengen visa requirements for Kuwaitis

The decision is ‘culmination of a lot of hard work from many people’

**BRUSSELS:** Kuwait's ambassador to the European Union, NATO and Belgium, Jasem Al-Budaiwi Wednesday lauded the decision by the European Commission to lift Schengen visa requirements for Kuwaiti citizens as a “momentous day for Kuwait.” “Today we are added to a list of countries whose nationals will be exempted from visa to the Schengen area for short term stays. This is a culmination of a lot of hard work from many people, colleagues,” Budaiwi said on his twitter message. “The people of Kuwait have increasingly looked to Europe and all the EU member states for tourism, education, health, investment, business, and much, much more,” he noted. “This breakthrough will positively facilitate this trend and ensure that Kuwait remain important partners,” he stressed.

Kuwait and EU share a special bond that will

only continue to grow deeper with this new decision, he said. The Kuwaiti ambassador expressed a “big thanks to the efforts of EU High Representative Josep Borrel and his team for guiding and supporting Kuwait through its endeavor to achieve visa free travel for its citizens.” He also thanked European Commission vice-president Margaritis Schinas for his relentless support and assistance and advice and voiced his gratitude to EU Commissioner for interior affairs Ylva Johansson for constantly pushing and championing Kuwait's



## Momentous day for Kuwait

efforts to obtain a Schengen visa waiver for its citizens. Budaiwi added on his twitter account that “he is looking forward to even closer cooperation with our EU partners.”

Kuwait's mission to the European Union in Brussels welcomed the European Commission's announcement of inclusion of Kuwait in the list of countries whose nationals will be exempted from the Schengen visa. In a statement, it noted that this is a start of a series of official final negotiations between Kuwait and the European

Union aimed at exempting Kuwaiti citizens from the Schengen visa, stressing However, this declaration reflects the distinguished and strong relations between the two sides at all levels. The statement stressed that the decision's entry into force requires time, affirming the need for citizens wishing to travel to the Schengen area to obtain the required visa until the completion of those procedures and the official announcement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. —KUNA



Ambassador Jasem Al-Budaiwi

## Kuwait welcomes UN's ‘exceptional’ veto resolution

**NEW YORK:** The State of Kuwait late Tuesday welcomed the UN's “exceptional” resolution requiring veto justification. “It is natural to have opposing views on veto use, and this resolution would guarantee transparent and constructive discussions on the matter,” said Minister Plenipotentiary Bader Al-Munayek, Acting Charge d'Affaires of Kuwait's Permanent Mission to the United Nations, addressing its assembly. Earlier Tuesday, the UN's 193-member General

Assembly adopted the Liechtenstein-spearheaded resolution by consensus. Veto abuse had previously contributed in the Security Council's inability to shoulder its responsibility, which eventually led to jeopardizing international peace and security, noted the Kuwaiti senior diplomat. “I anew, in this session, the State of Kuwait's full commitment to multilateralism, coinciding with the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace,” he noted. Tuesday's resolution does not eliminate or limit the veto power of the permanent members – the US, Russia, Britain, France and China. But for the first time it will require the General Assembly “to hold a debate on the situation” that sparks a veto in the Security Council within 10 working days. The US, Britain and France were among the majority of countries that joined Liechtenstein in co-sponsoring the reform. Neither Russia nor China were among the sponsors. —KUNA



NEW YORK: Minister Plenipotentiary Bader Al-Munayek makes his address at the United Nations General Assembly. —KUNA

## DGCA expects 352,140 passengers during Eid holiday

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said Wednesday that the movement of passengers to and from Kuwait

International Airport is expected to reach 352,140 passengers during Eid Al-Fitr holiday, distributed as 207,760 departing and 144,380 arriving to the country.

Speaking to the press, Deputy Director General for Planning and Projects Affairs Saad Al-Otaibi confirmed the readiness of civil aviation in all operational sectors for the Eid holiday during the next nine days, in line with all governmental and non-governmental agencies operating at Kuwait's air-

port. Up to 2,800 flights will be operated during the period from April 28 to May 7, distributed over 1,400 departing flights and 1,400 incoming flights, he said, noting that 76 additional flights will be operated during Eid. He commended the efforts of all government agencies working at the airport, led by the Ministry of Interior and the General Administration of Customs, in addition to the great efforts made by all workers in civil aviation to make the holiday plan a success. —KUNA

## Kuwait rejects Iraqi MP's allegations of attacking fishermen

**KUWAIT:** Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Majdi Al-Dhafiri met Wednesday Iraq's Ambassador to Kuwait Al-Manhal Al-Safi, and they discussed bilateral ties between both countries. The two sides tackled the latest remarks of an Iraqi Parliament Member, regarding claims of attacking Iraqi fishermen. Dhafiri expressed the rejection and resentment of Kuwait regarding those remarks that do not reflect the deep ties between both countries, and do not meet the principles of good neighborliness.

Dhafiri refuted such allegations and highly trusted the integrity of the procedures followed by the Kuwaiti Coast Guard forces. He praised the continuous cooperation between the Kuwaiti Coast Guard Force and the Iraqi Naval Forces in dealing with the violations of Iraqi fishermen of sailing into Kuwaiti territorial waters. —KUNA

## Gulf Bank wraps up successful month of Ramadan events



**KUWAIT:** Gulf Bank successfully wrapped up a successful month of Ramadan events, with multiple initiatives under its belt during the holy month. The initiatives, which encompassed family-friendly sports and health activities, also included celebrations of authentic Kuwaiti customs and humanitarian and relief efforts for disadvantaged families, debtors and refugees.

On this occasion, the Deputy General Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, Ahmad Al-Amir, stressed that social responsibility is one of the main pillars of Gulf Bank's strategy, which aims to support all members of the local community and engage directly with various groups. Al-Amir continued: “As a testament to its slogan, ‘Always With You,’ and in line with its five-year strategy, Gulf Bank presents a distinct model for sustainability programs at the community, economic, and environmental levels – through strategically selected initiatives that are designed to benefit all segments of society.”

### Health and fitness activities

As part of its ongoing initiatives for community sustainability, Gulf Bank launched the “Gulf Bank Fit” week of activities at 360 Mall, in collaboration with local fitness studio, 9Round. The initiative encompassed multiple sports and health events, competi-

tions, and prizes, and falls within the bank's efforts to engage with the local community with various “GB COMMUNITY” events.

### Aiding disadvantaged communities

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

### Ramadan iftars

As part of its social responsibility program, and in keeping with Gulf Bank's various charitable initiatives during the holy month of Ramadan, Gulf Bank distributed Iftar meals in multiple areas in Kuwait. The initiative was held as part of Gulf Bank's strategic partnership with the Kuwait Food Bank for the fifth year in a row.

### Alleviating debtors

During the holy month of Ramadan, Gulf Bank also announced its participation in the campaign “Charity Begins at Home” organized by local organization, Allakaful. The campaign aims to alleviate the distress of debtors, who are burdened with debts and have

been unable to pay them due to various economic conditions.

### Refugee relief efforts

As part of the Bank's commitment to supporting the United Nations' various institutions and achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, Gulf Bank supported the Zakat Fund set up by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The initiative provided aid and covered costs for refugee and forcibly displaced families' basic needs during Ramadan, including rent for housing, food, health services, and cash assistance.

### “Nuqsat Al-Khamees”

In celebration of Kuwaiti customs and traditions, and in support of local SMEs, Gulf Bank also organized a weekly “Nuqsat Al-Khamees” initiative. The initiative, which encompassed collaborations with multiple Kuwaiti restaurants and bakeries throughout the holy month, is part of a long roster of community events that the Bank spearheads for its customers and community during the month of Ramadan.

### Last 10 days of Ramadan

As part of its community initiatives during the holy month, Gulf Bank distributed water bottles and cold

refreshments to worshippers at the multiple local mosques, following Tarawih and Qiyam prayers during the last 10 days of Ramadan.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience. Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining a robust sustainability program at the community, economic, and environmental levels through sustainability initiatives that are strategically selected to benefit both the country and the bank. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 “New Kuwait” and works with various parties to achieve it.



Ahmad Al-Amir



## Local

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The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

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## News in brief

## ABK announces Eid timings

**KUWAIT:** Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced it will be closed from Sunday, 1 May, 2022 through to Wednesday, 4 May, 2022. However, the Bank will be operating on a limited basis with the following branches open on Thursday, 5 May, 2022 from (8:30am to 3:00pm): Head Office Branch, Farwaniya Branch, Fahheel Branch, Shuwaikh Branch, New Jahra Branch, Salmiya Branch, Hawally Branch. The bank will resume regular working hours on Sunday, 8 May, 2022.

## KRCS distributes food in Yemen

**ADEN:** Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) on Tuesday started giving out 2,418 food parcels to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in four governorates in Yemen as part of "Kuwait by Your Side" campaign, which continues for eighth year running. "The relief effort targets needy families in the governorates of Aden, Taiz, and Marib and Hadhramaut," said KRCS Director-General Abdulrahman Al-Aoun. "It aims to alleviate the suffering of IDPs in the holy month of Ramadan," he said, affirming KRCS resolve to continue the aid campaign in collaboration with the Yemeni local authorities and partners.

## Kuwait oil at \$104.19 pb

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait crude oil dropped 22 cents during Tuesday's trading session to close at \$104.19 per barrel (pb) compared with \$104.41 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said Wednesday. Brent crude rose \$2.67 to reach \$104.99 pb and West Texas Intermediate jumped \$3.16 to \$101.70 pb.



## stc successfully concludes its Ramadan campaign

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced the conclusion of its Ramadan campaign for the year 2022. The campaign primarily focused on initiatives that empowered the youth, supported the development of mental and physical health, in addition to initiatives that contributed to the community across different aspects during the Holy Month. stc launched interactive initiatives and organized several activities including sports competitions, challenges, youth development activities, and employee focused initiatives under its CSR program in collaboration with different organizations from both the Government and private sectors in Kuwait.



Danah Al-Jasem

## Community driven initiatives

The community driven initiatives stc participated in this year included sponsoring Al-Qabas' first Ramadan Padel tournament, considering the role of sports during the holy month, with 250 Teams participating and the participation of the number one ranked Padel player in the world, Juan Lebron Chincoa, during the closing ceremony that witnessed the attendance of 2,000 people.

stc partnered with Flare Fitness gym to host several fitness challenges for a good cause under the slogan "Transform your power". The fitness challenges enabled the participants to donate iftar meals to charity and families in need, as well as other initiatives organized through the partnership to spread a positive impact within the community.

stc also sponsored and participated in the 'Your Steps = Free Internet' and 'Al-Hamra in Motion' fitness challenge for a three weeks period at Al-Hamra Tower. Your Steps = Free Internet', a daily 5,000 steps challenge held for 3

# Govt sets aside KD 2.1 billion to South Saad Al-Abdullah project

## KD 6 million initial budget to restore Souq Al-Mubarakiya

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic and Investment Affairs Abdulwahab Al-Rushaid said Tuesday the government gave the green light to the funding of South Saad Al-Abdullah Town and the rehabilitation of Souq Al-Mubarakiya in FY 2022-2023. The South Saad Al-Abdullah housing project costs a total of KD 2.1 billion (nearly \$6.8 billion) which will be phased over the coming state budgets according to the construction stages of the project.

It is listed in the draft bill linking the budgets of the state departments for FY 2022-2023, he told reporters, noting that bill still awaits endorsement from the National Assembly. "The housing question is a top priority for the government, which does its utmost to provide adequate funding for the Public Authority for Housing

Welfare (PAHW) to meet its obligations towards the people of Kuwait," the minister pointed out.

On January 25, the government injected liquidity to appropriation of 11,428 plots of land," Rushaid said, appreciating cooperation from the legislative authority. "Only three months later, the executive authority approved today KD 2.1 billion funding for the South Saad Al-Abdullah project, which signals out keenness on enabling PAHW to find solutions to the housing question," he explained.

Dealing with Souq Al-Mubarakiya which was hit by a huge fire late last month, he said an investigation panel was set up to determine the causes of the fire and draw up safety measures that could prevent recurrence of similar incidents. "An initial budget amounting to KD 6 million (some \$19 million) was set aside for the



Finance Minister Abdulwahab Al-Rushaid

rehabilitation process of the landmark marketplace," the minister disclosed, refuting media speculations in this regard. —KUNA

## AU holds annual Ramadan meal distribution drive

**KUWAIT:** The Australian University (AU) held its annual Ramadan meal distribution drive in order to deliver meals as a part of its Corporate Social Responsibility strategy. This year the university was able to include a larger number of volunteers including students and staff members to contribute and take part in this humanitarian initiative. May Al-Musallam, Senior Manager of Public Relations and Marketing at AU, highlighted the importance of giving back to the community, especially during the holy month of Ramadan, and further noted that AU always strives to live up to its values of care and altruism. Concerning this year's distribution drive and its volunteers, Musallam said: "I am happy that this year's drive has attracted so many volunteers. It shows the culture of care at AU extends beyond just the institution, but the values have also been ingrained into its students and staff."



selection of entertainment options.

Danah Al-Jasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc, said, "We are proud to have participated in a variety of community driven initiatives that reflected our Ramadan campaign theme this year. This year was special for us, especially considering the return of normal activities following the pandemic, and we were keen to play an impactful role."

Jasem added, "We collaborated with various entities this Ramadan from both private and government sectors with the objective of spreading positivity within the community. The initiatives we participated in also helped spread awareness on various topics that reflect the true values behind the Holy Month, as well as the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle through regular fitness activity. Our strategy further builds on the direction we have set to not only be a pioneer within the telecom industry but also in our community through our progressive CSR program. stc aims to enrich people's lifestyles whether it is through our wide range of solutions and offerings, or by organizing various activities that entertain and bring the community together for a good cause."

Jasem concluded, "On behalf of stc, I would like to thank all the entities and organizations we partnered with as we conclude our Ramadan campaign this year. stc



greatly values the role it aspires to play within the community and will continue to organize and participate in initiatives that have a positive impact on the community. We are also proud of the gradual growth and diversity of our CSR framework, which has addressed the most common topics within our key pillars, which are health, the environment, entrepreneurship, and the youth. We will continue to play an active role within our community and organize initiatives that empower and encourage the youth to adopt positive habits that will enrich their lives."





Myanmar junta court jails Suu Kyi for 5 years for corruption

## Relief and alarm as El Salvador rounds up alleged ‘gangsters’

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# Singapore hangs mentally disabled man

## Nagaenthran was ‘the victim of a tragic miscarriage of justice’

**SINGAPORE:** A mentally disabled Malaysian man was hanged in Singapore on Wednesday, his family said, after losing a long legal battle and despite a storm of international criticism and appeals for clemency. Nagaenthran K. Dharmalingam was arrested in 2009 for trafficking a small amount of heroin into the city-state, which has some of the world's toughest drugs laws, and handed a death sentence the following year.

The plan to hang him sparked widespread criticism due to concerns about his intellectual disabilities, with the United Nations, European Union and British billionaire Richard Branson among those condemning it. “It is unbelievable that Singapore proceeded with the execution despite international appeals to spare his life,” his sister Sarmila Dharmalingam told AFP.

The 34-year-old was executed in the early hours, she said from Malaysia, leaving her family “extremely saddened” and “in a state of shock”. Nagaenthran spent more than a decade mounting legal challenges, but they were dismissed by Singapore's courts, and the city-state's president rejected appeals for clemency.

His body will be brought back to the Malaysian city of Ipoh for his funeral, his sister said. Singaporean authorities did not respond to requests for comment. The European Union (EU) on Wednesday described the death penalty as “cruel and inhumane” and urged Singapore to “adopt a moratorium on all executions” and abolish capital punishment.

The death penalty “fails to act as a deterrent to crime and represents an unacceptable denial of

human dignity and integrity,” said Nabila Massrali, a foreign policy spokeswoman for the bloc. Reprieve, an NGO that campaigns against the death penalty, said Nagaenthran was “the victim of a tragic miscarriage of justice”.

“Hanging an intellectually disabled, mentally unwell man... is unjustifiable and a flagrant violation of international laws that Singapore has chosen to sign up to,” said the group's director, Maya Foa.

### ‘Inhumane’

Nagaenthran was originally scheduled to be hanged in November but that was delayed as he sought to appeal on the grounds that executing someone with mental disabilities contravenes international law. He was arrested aged 21 as he tried to enter Singapore with a bundle of heroin weighing about 43 grams (one and a half ounces) — equivalent to about three tablespoons. Supporters say he has an IQ of 69, a level recognised as a disability, and was coerced into committing the crime.

But authorities have defended his conviction, saying legal rulings found he knew what he was doing at the time of the offence. His mother mounted a desperate 11th-hour legal challenge on Tuesday, but it was swiftly rejected by a judge, prompting his relatives to break down in tears in court. In an interview with AFP on Tuesday, Branson had urged Singaporean President Halimah Yacob to grant Nagaenthran clemency, calling the death penalty “inhumane”.

After exhausting the usual appeals process, presidential clemency was the only avenue remaining to halt the execution. Nagaenthran's case has



SINGAPORE: People pay tribute at a wake for Malaysian national Nagaenthran K Dharmalingam, who was executed for trafficking heroin into Singapore, during a memorial service in Singapore. — AFP

sparked concerns in some quarters in Singapore, and hundreds of demonstrators attended two protests against the hanging in recent weeks. Protests are rare in tightly controlled Singapore. Without prior police approval, the only place they can be held is in one downtown park.

Vigils and small protests have also been held in Malaysia, and the country's king and prime minister had both appealed for Nagaenthran's life to be spared. A petition calling for Singapore's president to grant him clemency garnered more than 100,000 signatures. The city-state resumed execu-

tions last month after a hiatus of more than two years, when it executed another drug trafficker.

Activists now fear authorities are set to embark on a wave of hangings as several other death-row convicts have recently had appeals rejected. Another Malaysian drug trafficker is scheduled to be hanged on Friday. Despite mounting pressure to abolish the death penalty, Singapore insists capital punishment is an effective deterrent against crime. The city-state has a low crime rate, and believes the death penalty has helped keep it one of the safest places in Asia. —AFP

## Zionist in deadliest Syria strikes this year

**BEIRUT, Lebanon:** Zionist air strikes near Damascus on Wednesday killed nine combatants, among them five Syrian soldiers, in the deadliest such raid since the start of 2022, a war monitor said.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said an ammunition depot and several positions linked to Iran's military presence in Syria were among the targets.

Government media in Syria confirmed four of the five casualties in the strikes, on which Zionist entity did not comment. “The Zionist enemy carried out an air assault at dawn... targeting several positions around Damascus,” a military source was quoted as saying by the state news agency SANA.

“The investigation indicated that four soldiers were killed, three others injured and material dam-

age noted.” The latest strike follows another near Damascus on April 14, without casualties, according to SANA.

The UK-based Observatory, which relies on a vast network of sources in every region of Syria, said eight people were also wounded in the strikes.

The other four killed were not members of the Syrian military but belonged to Iran-backed militia, Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman said, adding

he could not verify their nationality.

He said at least five separate sites were targeted in the latest Zionist raid. AFP correspondents in the Syrian capital said they heard loud explosions.

Since the war broke out in Syria in 2011, Zionist entity has carried out hundreds of air strikes inside the country, targeting government positions as well as allied Iran-backed forces and Shiite militant group Hezbollah. —AFP

## Healing by helping: Mexico's acid attack victims

**MEXICO CITY:** After Mexican mother Carmen Sanchez left her abusive ex-partner he attacked her with acid, leaving her severely scarred. As part of her healing process, she now helps fellow victims rebuild their lives. In the eight years since her life was changed forever, the 37-year-old has undergone 61 operations, including skin reconstruction and grafts.

“Every day I endure it but I don't know if I will heal completely at some point,” said Sanchez, who wears dark glasses to cover traces of the attack. “It wasn't an accident. I wasn't born that way. He planned it, went and bought the acid and threw it at me. When I look in the mirror, I see him,” she said.

Her Carmen Sanchez Foundation—launched in 2021 to “put a stop to acid violence”—believes that companionship and friendship are crucial for victims. It faces challenges such as dealing with a public health system that guarantees only limited treatment for victims, and a judicial system beset by impunity and ineffectiveness, Sanchez said.

Gender-based violence is a major problem in Mexico, which registered around 3,750 murders of women in 2021, of which about 1,000 were classified as femicides. The foundation has documented 31 acid attacks against women since 2001, of whom six died.

The crime is on the rise, with seven cases in 2021, compared with two on average in previous years, according to the group, whose goal is for victims to regain some enjoyment of life. “The moments of leisure, the celebration of important dates, going out to eat or simply talking on the phone is a fundamental part of what can keep them on their feet,” said its co-president Ximena Canseco.

### ‘Remember forever’

Sanchez, who has two daughters, reported her abusive ex-partner three times but he escaped punishment and sprayed acid in her face in 2014 after she left him. “He told me that he was going to do something to me that I would remember forever,” she said. Sanchez spent eight months in a public hospital, after which she relied on private doctors who treat victims free of charge.

At the public hospital, “they told me I could live with my scars” and to “be thankful I survived,” she said. After the police failed to arrest her ex-partner, Sanchez tracked him down herself and he was finally captured in 2021.

“I was the one who did all the work,” she said. Yazmin, 34, is one of eight women whom



MEXICO CITY: Ximena Canseco, vice-president of the Carmen Sanchez Foundation, which helps and protects women who were attacked with acid, poses for a picture after an interview with AFP at her office in Mexico City. —AFP

the Carmen Sanchez Foundation helps to obtain free medical treatment, legal advice and psychological therapy. A year and a half ago, when she was leaving her work, a woman threw a liquid on her, leaving her in agony. Yazmin lost an ear and suffered burns to her eyelids, neck, legs and one arm.

She suspects her attacker was sent by her ex-partner. “Days before, we argued on the telephone and he told me to be careful because he had a little surprise for me,” said the woman, who did not want to give her full name.

### ‘A global problem’

Yazmin kept silent about her violent relationship for years before the attack, but now she feels liberated thanks to the foundation. “We're not judged. They don't say: ‘They did it to you for a reason.’ You feel protected. I thought I was the only one, but I discovered that it is a global problem,” Yazmin said.

Among other affected countries, hundreds of acid attacks are reported in India each year, although-like in Mexico—experts fear they are only the tip of the iceberg. Colombia, where the crime is punishable by 50 years in prison, registered 50 cases in 2021, 28 of them against women, according to official figures.

Britain has one of the world's highest rates of recorded acid attacks per capita—most apparently gang-related and targeting men, according to the charity Acid Survivors Trust International (ASTI). Martha Avila, 63, calls herself a “collateral victim” of acid violence in Mexico.

In March 2017, she was assaulted by her daughter's Argentine ex-husband. “He came to attack her, but since he couldn't find her, he came for me. He said he was going to ‘destroy what she loved the most,’” she said.

Despite suffering burns on nearly half her body, Avila is glad that she was the victim, not her daughter. “I couldn't imagine what it's like to have your life destroyed so young, and even more so if he's the father of your children,” she said. —AFP

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## International

## Relief and alarm as El Salvador rounds up alleged ‘gangsters’

87 civilians killed in 72 hours of violence

**SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador:** An unprecedented round up of alleged gangsters in El Salvador has netted thousands of suspects and brought relief to citizens living in constant fear. But the clampdown has drawn complaints of rights abuses, and experts say mass arrests are but a stop-gap as long as so many Salvadorans have no feasible exit from a life of penury.

With a poverty rate of 30.7 percent and sky-high unemployment that pushes ever more people to emigrate, a career as a gangster is one of few options available to those who remain. The most prominent gangs, Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and Barrio 18, count some 70,000 members in the country of 6.5 million people. Almost half are thought to be behind bars.



I have had  
to bury my  
brother

They eke out a living by extorting protection money from anyone who wishes to avoid harm and from drug dealing that brings them into regular conflict with one another. In a particularly bloody weekend in March, 87 ordinary civilians died at the hands of gangs in 72 hours of violence around the country. That bloodbath prompted President Nayib Bukele to announce a state of emergency that has allowed the police and military to round up more than 18,000 alleged gang members in just a month.

## ‘Trade is flowing’

In the short term, removing criminals from the streets has allowed residents and entrepreneurs to breathe a sigh of relief. At least temporarily. “On some of my routes, the criminals are no longer collecting protection money,” bus company operator Juan Pablo Alvarez told AFP. The gangs have extracted a heavy toll from him over the years, he said. “I have had to bury my brother, more than 10 col-

## Kharkiv youth brave the bombs to deliver food

**KHARKIV, Ukraine:** With their red Opel Astra blaring techno music and the boot full to the brim with supplies, three Ukrainian volunteers deliver aid to Kharkiv neighbourhoods targeted by Russian rockets. While the previous two days had been fairly quiet in Ukraine’s second city, on Tuesday, the roar of Ukrainian cannon and Russian artillery rang out again.

The frontline is less than five kilometres (three miles) from Kharkiv’s northern and eastern districts. The Russian border itself is only a few dozen kilometres away. None of that discourages the volunteers Nazar, Alexei and Oleg.

Outside a kindergarten now serving as a food storage centre, they load their car boot with plastic bags containing bread and canned food. “Our main goal is to feed children and the elderly, they need it most,” said Nazar Tishchenko, 34. “Unfortunately, at the moment, people have no money or work. Many of them can’t even get to a supermarket,” he added.



**SAN SALVADOR:** People arrested for alleged gang links are escorted by the National Civil Police during the state of emergency declared by the Salvadoran government at the San Salvador penal center. — AFP

leagues and 25 employees, mainly drivers,” he added. In the city center of San Salvador, where even vegetable sellers fall victim to racketeers, vendor Felipe told AFP he, too, was enjoying a reprieve from being shaken down.

“We are not paying anything, the guys (gangsters) have not been seen, they have practically disappeared and the trade is flowing,” said Felipe, who preferred to withhold his last name for fear of reprisal. Clients “have stopped being afraid of coming to the (city) center.”

Eduardo Cader, president of the Salvadoran Industry Association, said delivery trucks were, for the first time in a long time, able to enter certain areas where they previously had to pay bribes. According to a recent CID Gallup poll, an overwhelming majority of Salvadorans support Bukele’s anti-gang operation. And on Sunday, lawmakers extended the state of emergency for another month. But not everyone is on board.

## ‘Criminal populism’

Emergency powers have done away with the need for arrest warrants, and sentences for gang membership have

been raised five-fold to up to 45 years. Rights observers say innocent people are getting caught in the dragnet and journalists have raised censorship fears over jail terms of up to 15 years for “sharing” gang-related messages in the media.

Rather than ordinary courts, suspected gangsters are brought before judges whose identities are hidden, ostensibly to protect them. But sitting judge Juan Antonio Duran told AFP these were measures of “criminal populism.” He pointed out that trial by an anonymous judge, without witnesses or even the defendant present-as has happened-“is prohibited by the constitution.” On Monday, Amnesty International said Bukele’s state of emergency “has created a perfect storm of human rights violations.”

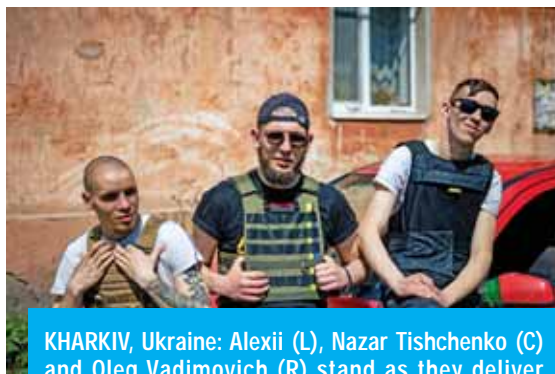
And US Secretary of State Antony Blinken reminded Bukele last week that “we can tackle violence and crime while also protecting civil rights and fundamental freedoms.” Veronica Aguirre, 26, claimed her husband was arrested groundlessly, telling AFP that under the state of emergency, “we cannot provide proof” of innocence. — AFP

## Music against bombs

With the car filled up, it heads off to a former post office now serving as an aid centre distributing meat. There, they exchange bread for chicken legs. At the wheel is Alexei, 23, a wiry youngster with blue eyes and a single lock of hair on his shaved skull. Starting the delivery operation was his idea. For two years, he delivered bread to Kharkiv in the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine before getting work as a mechanic.

When the war broke out, he went back to delivering bread, then when his company shut down he started doing deliveries himself. “But I couldn’t do it alone, so I asked Nazar to help me,” Alexei said. Outside the former post office, more than 100 people wait in a queue. With the chicken on board, they set off to do their first delivery, the red Opel driving through the streets with techno playing at full blast.

“We cannot drive without music. If there is shelling, we simply put up the volume. We are tired of the bombing. (The music) helps us relax, we’re not afraid,” Nazar said. Russian rockets pound Kharkiv-home to nearly 1.5 million people before the war-almost every day, its northern and eastern districts particularly affected. The strikes, which come at random times at any hour of the day or night, can sometimes prove deadly. One day during a bombing, all the shelters were closed, said Nazar. “We couldn’t hide so we lay on the ground and protected civilians to save them.” — AFP



**KHARKIV, Ukraine:** Alexii (L), Nazar Tishchenko (C) and Oleg Vadimovich (R) stand as they deliver humanitarian aid to a family in a district of Kharkiv, eastern Ukraine. — AFP

Wearing his cap the wrong way round, a T-shirt, black shorts and bright red trainers, Nazar resembles French football star Karim Benzema with his goatee, shaved skull and imposing frame.

A football fan, he likes a fight, but he is no fan of the police. He has the numbers 13 and 12 tattooed on his shins, numbers representing the letters forming the acronym ACAB: “All cops are bas.....”. Born in Tyrmayuz, Russia, he has lived his “whole life in the football fan movement, with nationalist guys who are imbued with love for our country”, Ukraine.

## EU to lift Schengen visa requirements...

Continued from Page 1

achieve visa free travel for all Gulf Cooperation Council countries. Together with our upcoming joint communication on the Gulf, this proposal will reinforce the overall partnership and strengthen the cooperation between the EU and the Gulf Cooperation Council,” he said.

On his part, European Commission Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life, Margaritis Schinas, said: “Today we are proposing short-stay visa-free travel to the EU for Qatari and Kuwaiti citizens with biometric passports - facilitat-

## Levels of fasting...

Continued from Page 1

a change in you when fasting.” In other words, you should be a better person when fasting than when you are not (Al-Bayhaqi and Ibn Abi Shayba)

(C) Fasting of the crème de la crème entails keeping one’s heart from lowly aspirations and motives as well as thoughts that would keep him far from Allah (the Almighty and Majestic). Anyone in this category is always pre-occupied with things that please Allah (SWT). Once Umar’s wife prepared for him sumptuous food, the ingredients of which she bought from her own savings, Umar (the second caliph in Islam) refused to eat until the poor and weak were invited to share the meal with him.

After enjoying the food with the poor, he thanked Allah (the Majestic and Sublime) for that blessing. By this, Umar (ra) demonstrated that he was so much pre-occupied with pleasing Allah (the Almighty) than satisfying his appetite. (Refer to Umariyyat, pages 47 and 48) Fasting is given preference over other acts of worship for two major reasons:

(1) It is a secret and an intrinsic act of worship that none can see except Almighty Allah and the fasting person. (2) By fasting, a Muslim actually conquers the devil, which capitalizes on food, drinks and other appetites to lure human beings into committing sins.

In Ramadan, we are trained to strike a balance

ing people-to-people contacts and strengthening business, social and cultural ties.”

This is the result of the success of the governments of Qatar and Kuwait in achieving far-reaching reforms and reflects the increasing intensity and depth of EU relations with both countries. It is an important achievement for citizens in both regions, and I hope that the European Parliament and the Council will adopt our proposal swiftly,” he said.

EU Commissioner for Interior Affairs, Ylva Johansson, said: “The proposal for visa exemption for Qatar and Kuwait nationals facilitates business travels, tourism and family visits to the EU. It is also a step towards stronger regional coherence in the Gulf region when it comes to visa regimes. The EU will continue to engage with the remaining visa-required Gulf countries that are interested in visa-free travel to the EU.” — KUNA

between our physical needs and our spiritual ones. According to Al-Balkhi (850-934), the body and soul both can be either healthy or sick. Signs of imbalance in the body are different ailments such as aches and pains, while an imbalance in the soul results in related symptoms such as anxiety, depression, anger, etc. (International Medical Journal. 4 (2): 76-79.2) If you want to have a healthy mind, you need to have a healthy soul. If these two crucial aspects of one’s self (physical body and soul) are not in balance, the person might struggle with finding the peace he craves for in life.

## What is mental health?

Mental health is a status that is achieved once the soul is practicing to reach its full potential (of salvation) and being away from any factors that can disturb its peace. Therefore, those factors that can hurt and disturb your mind are originally factors that hurt your soul. Once you achieve a healthier soul, you will have a healthier mind. Fasting in Ramadan can help you achieve both.

*Courtesy of the TIES Center: As one of the projects funded and managed by Kuwait 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.*

## Kuwait lifts all corona-related...

Continued from Page 1

educational establishments and places of work, according to the cabinet decisions which become officially effective on Sunday. The Cabinet also abolished the need to undergo quarantine for people who had come in contact with infected cases regardless of whether they are vaccinated or not. Such people need

## Climate change, overuse kill off...

Continued from Page 1

2014, says Youssef Jabbar, environmental department head of Muthana province. The causes have been “climate change and rising temperatures,” he explained. “Muthana is a desert province, it suffers from drought and lack of rainfall.”

A government statement issued last week also

## UAE to roll out...

Continued from Page 1

and facial recognition to commerce and autonomous cars. His appointment came a year after the UAE also named ministers for happiness, hoping to create a “happier society”, and tolerance, mainly aimed at promoting coexistence in the Gulf country where foreigners make up the majority of the population.

The UAE’s stated goal is to become one of the leading AI nations by 2031, creating new economic and business opportunities and generating up to 335 billion dirhams (\$91 billion) in extra growth. According to consultancy firm PwC Middle East, nearly 14 percent (\$96 billion) of the UAE’s gross domestic product will come from AI by 2030. “The UAE was the only country that appointed someone to actually oversee this

## Disgraced surgeon on trial in Sweden

**STOCKHOLM, Sweden:** An Italian doctor who made headlines for pioneering windpipe surgery went on trial in Sweden on Wednesday, charged with assault for performing the experimental procedure.

Paolo Macchiarini won plaudits in 2011 after claiming to have performed the world’s first synthetic trachea transplants while a surgeon at Stockholm’s Karolinska Institute.

The procedure was hailed as a breakthrough in regenerative medicine. But allegations soon emerged that the risky procedure had been carried out on at least one individual who had not been critically ill at the time of the operation.

Dressed in a blue suit, the 63-year-old listened to translated audio as prosecutors listed the charges of “aggravated assault” against three patients. The Karolinska Institute has confirmed that the three individuals have since died, but did not directly link the deaths to the operations.

“Paolo Macchiarini has carried out the surgery with complete disregard for science and tried experience,” prosecutor Karin Lundstrom-Kron told the court. Macchiarini has maintained they constituted treatments and not experiments, and denied being criminally responsible. “His only motivation has been to treat the patients,” his lawyer Bjorn Hurtig told the court.

In 2013, the Karolinska hospital suspended all transplants and refused to extend Macchiarini’s contract as a surgeon. A year later, several surgeons at the hospital filed a complaint alleging that Macchiarini had downplayed the risks of the procedure.

Macchiarini carried out three surgeries at Karolinska University Hospital — where he also worked as a surgeon — in 2011 and 2012, using an artificial windpipe made of plastic and coating it with the patient’s own stem cells.

Together with his colleagues, he performed a total of eight such transplants between 2011 and 2014, the five others taking place in Russia.

An external review in 2015 found Macchiarini guilty of research misconduct, but despite sacking him, the Karolinska Institute repeatedly defended him until 2018, when it found him and several other researchers guilty.

The university’s principal stepped down over the scandal, as well as a number of other people. Medical journal The Lancet in 2018 retracted two papers authored by Macchiarini. The trial, held in the Solna district court near the Karolinska Institute, is scheduled to take place over 13 days. — AFP

only to wear masks for 14 days from the day of the contact. People who have come in contact with infected cases need to carry out a PCR test only if they show some symptoms within 14 days, Mazrem said.

Infected people are required to undergo house quarantine for five days only and then wear face masks for another five days, as per the new cabinet decisions. The Cabinet also decided to allow unvaccinated people to fully attend all types of games. The Cabinet urged people who go to mosques for prayers to observe health conditions like bringing their own mats but are no longer required to wear the face mask.

pointed to “more than 1,000 wells illegally dug” for agriculture in the area. Additionally, nearby cement and salt factories have “drained significant amounts of water from the groundwater that feeds the lake”, Jabbar said. It would take nothing short of a miracle to bring Sawa Lake back to life.

Use of aquifers would have to be curbed and, following three years of drought, the area would now need several seasons of abundant rainfall, in a country hit by desertification and regarded as one of the five most vulnerable to climate change. The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, a global treaty, recognized Sawa as “unique... because it is a closed water body in an area of sabkha (salt flat) with no inlet or outlet. — AFP

mandate seriously,” Olama said.

The wealthy Gulf country has invested heavily in technology over the past decade as it diversifies its economy and reduces its reliance on oil. Its bets include driverless cars, with autonomous taxis already tested on the streets of the capital Abu Dhabi, while Dubai, another of the country’s seven emirates, aims to have a quarter of its transport driverless by 2030.

Abu Dhabi’s Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence, touted as the world’s first graduate-level AI university, opened to students last year, and the country has launched a number of start-up hubs and training schemes. However, the UAE has also drawn concern over its high levels of surveillance, and in 2019 it denied reports that a popular mobile app was being used for government spying. Olama said a big part of his job was instilling public confidence and avoiding costly errors when AI systems are put in place. — AFP



## International

# Myanmar junta court jails Suu Kyi for 5 years for corruption

‘The days of Aung San Suu Kyi as a free woman are effectively over’

**YANGON, Myanmar:** A Myanmar junta court on Wednesday sentenced Aung San Suu Kyi to five years in jail for corruption, part of a barrage of criminal cases that could see the deposed civilian leader jailed for decades. Suu Kyi has been in military custody since a coup ousted her government in February last year and plunged Myanmar into turmoil.

In the latest case, the Nobel laureate was accused of accepting a bribe of \$600,000 in cash and gold bars. After two days of delays, the special court in the military-built capital Naypyidaw handed down its verdict and sentence at 9:30 am (0300 GMT) on Wednesday. “Regarding taking gold and dollars from U Phyo Min Thein, the court sentenced her to five years’ imprisonment,” junta spokesperson Zaw Min Tun told AFP.

“She will be under house arrest. I do not know whether she asked for appeal. They are working according to the legal way. As far as I know, she’s in good health.” Local media, citing unnamed sources close to the court, later reported she plans to appeal Wednesday’s conviction for corruption. Suu Kyi still faces a raft of other criminal charges, including violating the official secrets act, corruption and electoral fraud, and could be jailed for more than 100 years if convicted on all counts.

The 76-year-old had 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. She has not appealed any of those convictions.

Journalists have been barred from attending the court hearings and Suu Kyi’s lawyers have been

banned from speaking to the media. Under a previous junta regime, Suu Kyi spent long spells under house arrest in her family mansion in Yangon, Myanmar’s largest city. Today, she is confined to an undisclosed location in the capital, with her link to the outside world limited to brief pre-trial meetings with her lawyers.

“The days of Aung San Suu Kyi as a free woman are effectively over,” Phil Robertson Deputy Asia Director, Human Rights Watch told AFP. “Destroying popular democracy in Myanmar also means getting rid of Aung San Suu Kyi, and the junta is leaving nothing to chance.”

## Turmoil, investor flight

The coup sparked widespread protests and unrest which the military sought to crush by force. According to a local monitoring group, the crack-down has left more than 1,700 civilians dead and seen some 13,000 arrested. Suu Kyi has been the face of Myanmar’s democratic hopes for more than 30 years, but her earlier six-year sentence already meant she is likely to miss elections the junta has said it plans to hold by next year.

Independent Myanmar analyst David Mathieson said the junta was using the criminal cases to make Suu Kyi “politically irrelevant”. “This is just another squalid step in solidifying the coup,” he told AFP. “This is politically motivated pure and simple.”

Many of her political allies have also been arrested since the coup, with one chief minister sentenced to 75 years in jail, while many others have been forced into hiding. A tranche of ousted lawmakers from her National League for Democracy (NLD)

Pakistani driver were killed near the gate of the Confucius Institute at Karachi University, when the bomber detonated explosives next to their minibus.

A security official at the university told AFP he had previously raised concerns about the safety of 15 Chinese staff on the campus. “Reports emerged in February that an attack might be carried out on campus,” the source, who asked not be named, told AFP.

The bomber was named as 30-year-old Shaari Baloch, a married mother of an eight-year-old girl and four-year-old boy, the BLA said, adding that she was a science teacher studying for a master’s degree. Police confirmed the details.

Suicide attacks by women are very rare in Pakistan, reported only four times in recent years. China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs urged Pakistan to ensure the safety of all Chinese citizens and interests in the country and to launch a full investigation. It also advised citizens to “take strict precautions, and do not go out unless necessary”.

China is upgrading energy links and infrastructure as part of a \$54 billion programme known as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, with both nations wary of security threats to the projects. In April 2021 a suicide bomb attack at a luxury hotel hosting the Chinese ambassador in Quetta, the provincial capital of Balochistan, killed four and wounded dozens.

spokesman but retired in 2015, several years before his presidency was prematurely curtailed by mounting scandal.

“The country is facing a moment where there is a conjunction of different crises that are all feeding into one major crisis,” Maharaj said, citing graft, poverty and unemployment. Maharaj believes that current President Cyril Ramaphosa is tackling corruption, albeit too slowly for some. “There is real sense that under Cyril Ramaphosa, he is not doing enough, fast enough,” Maharaj said.

“But what I think Cyril had done right is that in the face of these challenges of weeding out corruption, he has never overstepped the boundaries of law,” he said. “That has slowed the process.” “I hear people say they want a quicker prosecution, but we are dealing with corruption of an extremely complicated nature,” he said.

The judicial inquiry laid significant blame on the Gupta family from India, accused of widespread bribery, and on American consultancy Bain, which has been forced to recant some its work and refund its fees.

The international nature of the corruption makes prosecution difficult, Maharaj said. The inquiry also singled out senior ANC members, which has only deepened in-fighting within a party that voters are increasingly disillusioned with.

matic bag of issues that started well before he was born — including relations with arch-rival India.

Bhutto was sworn in two weeks after he helped lead an alliance that toppled Imran Khan and saw Shehbaz Sharif become prime minister.

His first foreign mission in the role will be accompanying Sharif Thursday to Saudi Arabia, a key trade partner and regular source of relief for Pakistan’s struggling economy.

Bhutto is the son of assassinated former prime minister Benazir Bhutto and ex-president Asif Ali Zardari, as well as the grandson of another former premier, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

His grandfather also served as foreign minister in the mid-1960s and was the founder of



**NAYPYIDAW:** File photo shows Myanmar’s State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi (C) looks on as health workers receive a vaccine for the COVID-19 at a hospital in Naypyidaw. —AFP

formed a parallel “National Unity Government” (NUG) in a bid to undermine the junta’s legitimacy.

However, the NUG holds no territory and has not been recognised by any foreign government. Numerous “People’s Defence Force” (PDF) civilian militias have sprung up around the country to take the fight to the junta.

Analysts say Myanmar’s heavily armed, well-trained army has been surprised by the effectiveness of the PDFs and in some areas struggled to contain them. Last week junta supremo Min Aung

Hlaing called for peace talks with Myanmar’s long-established ethnic rebel groups—which control large areas of territory and have been battling the military for decades.

The turmoil that has engulfed Myanmar in the wake of the coup has spooked foreign investors who flocked to the country after the dawn of democracy around 2011. Energy giants TotalEnergies and Chevron, British American Tobacco and Japanese brewer Kirin have all announced plans to pull out. —AFP

## News in brief

### Denmark signs deal for prisoners

**COPENHAGEN:** Denmark on Wednesday signed an agreement with Pristina to send 300 prisoners to Kosovo to reduce overcrowding in the kingdom’s busy jails. The two countries initially agreed in December for the Scandinavian country to rent 300 jail cells for an annual fee of 15 million euros (\$16 million). “We have now signed a ground-breaking agreement that will ensure better capacity in our overcrowded prisons and will ease the pressure on our prison officers,” Justice Minister Nick Haekkerup said in a statement. The inmates will be sent to a prison in Gijlan town—about 50 kilometres (30 miles) from the capital Pristina—starting from early 2023. The foreign prisoners will be deported after serving their sentence. “With this agreement, Denmark also sends a clear signal to foreigners from third-party countries who have been sentenced to deportation,” Haekkerup said. —AFP

### Sudan releases key civilian figure

**KHARTOUM:** Sudanese authorities released a former member of the ruling Sovereign Council on Wednesday, a lawyer said, the second key civilian figure to be freed in two days. “Mohamed al-Fekki has been released,” defence lawyer Azhari al-Haj said, more than two months after the politician was detained on February 13. On Tuesday, authorities released Khaled Youssef, a former minister and prominent opponent of a military coup led by army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan on October 25 last year. The military’s power grab derailed a fragile transition to civilian rule that had been established in the wake of longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir’s fall from power in 2019. Fekki’s spell in detention was his second since last year’s coup. —AFP

### 11 electrocuted in India

**NEW DELHI:** At least 11 people including three minors were killed Wednesday after a temple chariot procession came into contact with a high-voltage wire in India, police said. Initial indications suggested that the crowd used water to contain an initial fire after the top of the chariot touched the wire in the southern state of Tamil Nadu. At least 15 other people were hospitalised after the incident at around 3:00 am (2130 GMT) in the city of Thanjavur. “The top of the chariot was heavily decorated and that is the part that hit the wire,” senior police officer V Balakrishnan told AFP. The victims were part of the team that was pulling the chariot. At least three people died on the spot. Hundreds of devotees took part in the procession which has taken place annually for around 90 years. A senior police official told broadcaster NDTV that the power line along the temple route is usually turned off but this time it was kept on. —AFP

## Pakistan separatist group warns China of more deadly attacks

**KARACHI:** A Pakistan separatist group warned Wednesday of more deadly attacks on Chinese targets, a day after a woman suicide bomber killed four people—including three teachers posted from Beijing. The Baloch Liberation Army—one of several groups fighting for independence in Pakistan’s biggest province—claimed responsibility for Tuesday’s blast, saying it was the first time a woman had “self sacrificed” for the group.

Chinese nationals and interests have regularly been targeted by separatists in Balochistan, where Beijing is involved in lucrative mining and energy projects. “Hundreds of highly trained male and female members of the Baloch Liberation Army’s Majeed Brigade are ready to carry out deadly attacks in any part of Balochistan and Pakistan,” spokesman Jeeyand Baloch said in a statement published in English.

He threatened Beijing with “even harsher” attacks unless the neighbouring country halted its “exploitation projects” and “occupying of the Pakistani state”. Three Chinese teachers and a

## Mandela ally reflects on crises as S Africa celebrates freedom

**JOHANNESBURG, South Africa:** As South Africa on Wednesday marks a key date in the fight against apartheid, one of the last surviving leaders of that struggle says the nation’s liberators have fallen out of touch with the people. In an interview with AFP, 87-year-old Mac Maharaj warned that corruption risked undermining the gains of the democracy that he fought and suffered for.

“Everything shows it has lost contact with the ground,” Maharaj said of the ruling African National Congress (ANC). He was one of the party’s leading figures, spending more than a decade imprisoned alongside Nelson Mandela. Maharaj famously smuggled Mandela’s autobiography “Long Walk to Freedom” out of prison and joined Mandela’s cabinet after he won the first free elections on April 27, 1994.

But a judicial inquiry this year laid out an extensive web of graft and cronyism under former president Jacob Zuma that left even basic government services gutted. Maharaj also served as Zuma’s

## Young Bhutto scion appointed Pakistan foreign minister

**ISLAMABAD:** The scion of Pakistan’s most influential political dynasty was appointed foreign minister on Wednesday, the latest step up a ladder likely to take Bilawal Bhutto Zardari to the top of the country’s leadership.

Aged 33, Bhutto becomes one of the world’s youngest foreign ministers but inherits a diplo-



**KARACHI:** Police inspect a site around damaged vehicles following a suicide bombing near the Confucius Institute affiliated with the Karachi University, in Karachi. —AFP

The ambassador was unhurt in that attack, which was claimed by the Pakistan Taliban. In July last year, a bus carrying engineers to a construction site near a dam in northwestern Pakistan was hit by a bomb, killing 13 people including nine Chinese workers.

The attack, which went unclaimed, frayed relations between Islamabad and Beijing, and Pakistan later paid millions in compensation to the families of the Chinese workers killed. —AFP



**MIDRAND, South Africa:** Anti-apartheid activist Mac Maharaj, 87, poses for a portrait in his house in Midrand, on March 31, 2022. As South Africa marks nearly three decades of liberation from the yoke of apartheid. —AFP

“We have made many mistakes, and we have also moved the country forward in many respects,” he said, sitting opposite a bookshelf at an upmarket house he shares with his older sister and son, on the northern outskirts of Johannesburg. “We have accumulated vast experience, but we are not drawing lessons from those mistakes,” said Maharaj. —AFP

the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) that Bhutto now leads.

He became party leader aged just 19, while a student at Oxford University, following his mother’s assassination in 2007.

She, in turn, had taken over the party’s stewardship from her mother Nusrat, who became chairwoman following the execution of her husband Zulfikar in 1979 under military dictator Zia-ul-Haq. The new foreign minister is considered a progressive, in his mother’s image, and has frequently spoken out on the rights of women and minorities.

With more than half of Pakistan’s population aged 22 or below, Bhutto’s social media savvy is also a hit with the young, although he is frequently

mocked for a poor command of Urdu, the national language.

Political commentators have mixed opinions on Bhutto’s abilities — or how long he can maintain good relations with premier Sharif, of the rival Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) party.

“I believe he is an un-tested missile,” analyst Hassan Askari Rizvi told AFP. “It is too early for a young MP like Bilawal Bhutto... and it will be difficult for him to handle issues Pakistan faces, with serious challenges on external fronts.”

Fellow analyst Farzana Bari disagreed. “I think Bilawal is intelligent enough to hold the fort,” she told AFP, adding he was “more progressive” than the leaders of other political parties. —AFP



THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 2022

# Business

## Gulf Cable and Electrical Industries' assets increase to KD 316.35 million

Company adopts promising strategy to carry out quality takeover operations

**KUWAIT:** Chairman of the Board of Gulf Cable and Electrical Industries Co Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi said the company adopted a promising strategy to carry out controlled quality takeover operations, which will have positive effects on the company's performance and revenues, in addition to shareholders' equity.

Al-Kharafi, who spoke on the sidelines of the company's general assembly that was held recently, said Gulf Cable is currently interested in expanding its operational investment to go along with approved strategic plans, which reflects its ability and solvency as a main umbrella that has become like a holding company.

### Plans and standards:

Going for various acquisitions.  
The right selection at the right time.  
Concentrating on highly active management.

Al-Kharafi said the search for acquisitions resulted in the quality takeover of National Investments Company, which is now categorized as an associate company after the increase of Gulf Cable's share in it. "The creation of various investment Gulf Cable is only the start towards more sustainable growth, and maybe our presence as a major shareholder in National Investments Company is one of the historic main steps of the portfolio," he said.

### Effects of takeovers

Al-Kharafi expected the operation to have a great impact on Gulf Cable and its assets as a comprehensive entity that is enough to expand it to various sectors. He added the plan includes ownership of other operational entities including Care for Building and Cities Cleaning Contracting Company as a subsidiary, along with Heavy Engineering Industries and Shipbuilding Co (HEISCO), which is considered among the strategic moves, besides NIC and other promising assets.

Al-Kharafi said the ambitious future vision of Gulf Cable relies on moving along with quick changes in local, regional and international markets, as the company is currently concentrating its efforts on the development of its resources and plans on seizing promising investment opportunities to increase income and profits in a way that guarantees it ability to compete and expand.

### Performance

Al-Kharafi spoke about Gulf Cable's annual per-



Chairman of the Board of Gulf Cable and Electrical Industries Co Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi speaks during the company's general assembly.

formance, which reflects a growth in its profits for the year by 188.2 percent to reach KD 16.06 million at 77 fils per share, compared to KD 5.57 million for 2020. The general assembly approved the board of director's recommendation to distribute cash dividends estimated by 60 fils per share according to the rules in effect at Boursa Kuwait. The general assembly approved all items on the agenda including the board of director's and auditors' reports.

### Asset growth

The company's assets recorded a 56 percent increase reaching KD 316.35 million, compared to KD 202.77 million, according the annual financial data for 2020. Cables achieved total revenues of KD 81.3 million for 2021, a growth rate of 2.6 percent compared to KD 79.3 million for 2020. It is worth mentioning that the company revenues are made up of three elements - Gulf Cable sales at KD 65.5 million, investments of KD 12.8 million and rendering services of KD 3 million.



KUWAIT: Gulf Cable and Electrical Industries Co officials led by Chairman of the Board Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi pose for a group picture during the company's general assembly.

## Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait announces 17 percent increase in net profit

Total assets reach KD 5.8 billion

**KUWAIT:** Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) has announced its financial results for the quarter ended 31 March 2022. Demonstrating a strong start to the year, ABK reported a Net Profit of KD 8.3 million for the first quarter of 2022, a 17 percent increase over the same period last year. Over the same period Total assets increased by 21 percent to KD 5.8 billion, Total loans increased by 19 percent to KD 3.6 billion and customer deposits increased by 29 percent to KD 4.1 billion. The Capital Adequacy Ratio was 17.7 percent, while Shareholders' Equity was KD 522 million.

The Bank's balance sheet remains healthy with strong capital, liquidity and impaired loan coverage ratios. Non-Performing Loan (NPL) ratio stood at 1.48 percent and NPL coverage at 368 percent. Commenting on the robust results, George Richani, Group Chief Executive Officer of ABK, said, "We are pleased with the start of the year.

The continued execution of our 'Transform and Grow' strategy has enabled us to deliver an excellent performance in the first quarter of this year as we maintained steady growth on all key parameters. We also remain focused on sustaining strong returns for our shareholders through prudent financial management. To support our clear momentum and long-term growth, we will continue to invest in digitization and human capital in order to create a seamless experience for our customers."

As for ABK-Egypt, the operational profits and net profits for the first quarter of this year have increased considerably despite the stressed economic conditions. The Bank's regional branches continued to excel in their operations. ABK-DIFC, was awarded a



George Richani ABK CEO

'Category 1 Banking License' by the Dubai Financial Services Authority (DFSA). ABK-DIFC is now able to offer a vast portfolio of wholesale banking services, including accepting deposits from corporates and financial institutions.

ABK has been rated A2 and A, with a Stable outlook from Moody's and Fitch respectively. This reflects the Bank's healthy capital position and excellent liquidity, which is fully compliant with the Central Bank of Kuwait's conservative and robust regulatory system. Noting that customers are at the forefront of the Bank's operations, Richani added, "We remain committed to our

'Simpler Banking' promise. In this quarter, we introduced a suite of innovative services with unique features and benefits that support customers' access to seamless banking services.

These services included enabling customers to open and manage a term deposit account digitally, either through eahli.com or through the ABK Mobile Banking app. In addition, the Bank also launched the '5-Year Term Deposit,' a first of its kind product in Kuwait that allows customers to receive interest in advance." ABK continues to prove itself as a key catalyst in the financial sector, focusing on employee development.

The Bank organizes and runs industry-leading training programs geared toward developing the leadership pipeline at ABK by identifying the talent pool of potential future leaders and empowering them to go through structured developmental streams while undertaking multiple aptitude and psychometric assessments to align their performance with their career aspirations. The Bank also actively participates in career fairs to support young talent in Kuwait and assists them in navigating their careers.

In addition, ABK continues its commitment to giving back to the communities in which it operates through several comprehensive corporate citizenship and socially responsible initiatives. The Bank's support towards initiatives and organizations such as Health Awareness Run organized by Al Amiri Hospital, Kuwait University Medical Association, and a First-of-its-Kind 'Sustainable Living Event' are demonstrative of this commitment.

Richani also reinforced the Bank's com-



mitment to the 'Let's Be Aware' campaign, Kuwait's nationwide joint initiative by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and Kuwait Banking Association (KBA). During the first three months of the year, ABK raised financial awareness by highlighting the risks associated with loan encashment and trad-

ing with cryptocurrency. ABK will continue to provide the public with the necessary knowledge to foster financial literacy amongst the community. For more information about ABK please visit eahli.com or contact an ABK customer service agent via 'Ahlan Ahli' at 1899899.



## Business



KUWAIT: DHAMAN top executives are pictured during the Ordinary General Assembly (GA) at the Company's headquarters.



# Completion rate of DHAMAN hospitals exceeds 70 percent

## Health Assurance Hospitals Company holds Ordinary General Assembly

KUWAIT: The Ordinary General Assembly (GA) of the Health Assurance Hospitals Company (DHAMAN) was held yesterday at the Company's headquarters, with an attendance percentage of (74%). The meeting reviewed the most important advancements in the development of the Company's business, the implementation of its plans, the results of the annual performance, the financial statements for the year ending on December 31, 2021, and approving the agenda.

During the beginning of the (GA), DHAMAN Chairman of the Board of Directors Mullaq Mubarak Al-Sanea said that the repercussions of COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect many dimensions of life, including the economic aspects and the business sector in Kuwait and the world as a whole.

DHAMAN faced and dealt with the challenges of this global crisis by determination to execute its plans and strategy with extensive efforts to complete the first phase of its integrated healthcare system, which includes five primary healthcare centers distributed over the various regions of Kuwait, in addition to two hospitals in Ahmadi and Jahra governorates with a total of 600 beds.

The third primary healthcare center in Dhajeej was opened during the year 2020 and became operational at the beginning of 2021. In addition, work began on preparing and equipping two other centers in Jahra and Fahaeel, to complete the first phase with five primary healthcare centers during 2022.

Al-Sanea added that DHAMAN continued construction of hospitals in Ahmadi and Jahra at an accelerated rate of completion in preparation for receiving them at the end of 2022, while making the necessary preparations for operation, including selecting medical equipment and devices, attracting the necessary medical staff, and so on. The completion rate of hospitals exceeded 70% to date. Meanwhile, cooperation and coordination with the Ministry of Health continues to start transferring the beneficiaries, who are residents working in Kuwait's private sector, from the Ministry to DHAMAN's network once operational.

Al-Sanea indicated that with DHAMAN launching operations and receiving patients commercially, the Company's healthcare centers witnessed an increasing turnout from beneficiaries as a result of the high efficiency and outstanding quality associated with international accreditations applied by the company's various staff in the medical and other fields, such as the standards of the Joint Committee International (JCI).

Al-Sanea added that based on its vision of raising health awareness and advancing the principles of pre-

ventive health, and in commitment to its leading health role and social responsibility, DHAMAN continued to build bridges of cooperation with civil institutions during the year 2021 and concluded a number of agreements with voluntary and charitable associations to provide medical services to relevant segments of society, such initiatives confirm DHAMAN's awareness of the importance of corporate social responsibility.

al and organizational practices. On his part, DHAMAN CEO, Thamer Arab reviewed the latest developments to build and equip DHAMAN hospitals in Ahmadi and Jahra during the year 2021, asserting that efforts continued to conform with the approved schedule for delivery at the end of 2022, to complete phase one.

In conjunction with the continuation of construction, the supply work of DHAMAN Hospitals began through

ambulance helipad, outpatient clinics with an area of 8,340 square meters, in addition to the pharmaceutical department with an area of 1,739 square meters. Each hospital also has a car parking building with a capacity exceeding 550 cars.

Arab added that in preparation for the start of operations in the Company's hospitals anticipated in 2022, the relevant departments commenced developing the administrative and technical systems, as well as procedures necessary to manage and organize work at DHAMAN Hospitals in a smooth and orderly manner. The electronic Unified Health Record System was implemented, which increases improving the process of collecting, classifying and disseminating data in two phases, the first in primary healthcare centers and the second will be implemented in DHAMAN hospitals in Ahmadi and Jahra.

Major contracts were signed for the infrastructure of the hospital stage related to the digital healthcare system, including a contract to operate a network for transmitting data and internet between the Company's facilities, and a contract for the supply, installation and operation of servers and networks for data centers in Jahra and Ahmadi hospitals.

Arab pointed out that the existence of three healthcare centers already operational at Hawally, Farwaniya and Dhajeej providing family medicine, dentistry, pediatric, radiology, and laboratory services and the plans to establish more in near future offers a clear edge in establishing a network of healthcare centers that covers a wide range of population with varying healthcare needs. In addition, Jahra and Fahaeel centers are under construction and procurement process for all medical devices has already started. The two new PHCs are expected to become operational in the second and third quarters of 2022.

**Al-Sanea: Completion rate of hospitals exceeded 70% to date**

**Arab: Enhancing the commercial operation of DHAMAN and increasing operational revenues**

**Al-Sanea: Work is underway to complete the requirements of the first operational phase of DHAMAN system during 2022**

**Al-Sanea: DHAMAN cooperates with an international consulting office to recruit an operator specialized in operating the HMO system**

**Al-Sanea: Company Primary Healthcare Centers witnessed increasing turnout from beneficiaries**

**Arab: Two Primary Healthcare Centers in Jahra & Fahaeel to be opened during current year**

### Financial indicators

Although the company continues to bear the burden of establishment costs and construction of hospitals and primary healthcare centers, the operating income increased by 326% with the start of the Company's operational activities in three primary healthcare centers during the current year 2021, while the value of non-current assets increased from KD 78,995,601 for the year 2020 to KD 113,726,046 in 2021, at a rate of 44%. Total equity amounted to KD 181,337,241 for the year 2021.

It is expected that a qualitative leap will occur in the financial indicators of DHAMAN as soon as the first phase is completed and the beginning of receiving of beneficiaries of the mandatory assurance service. The General Assembly decided not to distribute profits for the fiscal year ending on December 31, 2021, given that the Company is still in the establishment and construction of hospitals stage and has not started full operation.

In conclusion, Al-Sanea affirmed that in preparation for the completion of the network as specified in the bidding booklet during 2022, the Board of Directors is cooperating with an international consulting office to attain an operator specialized in operating the HMO system, with extensive experience in this sector to take over, with the cooperation of the executive management, the responsibility of realizing efficient operation of the network in accordance with the latest and finest profession-

the selection of medical devices and equipment, the plan for the implementation of smart healthcare, and the completion of an integrated recruitment plan to hire the medical and administrative staff necessary to operate the hospitals. Each of DHAMAN Hospitals in Ahmadi and Jahra consists of 5 floors and a basement with a total area of 82,000 square meters.

Each hospital has the capacity of 300 beds for inpatients, 14 operating rooms, 21 intensive care units for adults and newborns, laboratories with an area of 1,700 square meters, the radiology department with an area of 3076 square meters, the emergency department with an area of 5,289 square meters while being linked to an air

# Eid Mubarak



**DHAMAN** ضمان  
شركة مستشفيات الضمان الصحي  
Health Assurance Hospitals Company



Health Assurance Hospitals Company (DHAMAN)  
Part of National Development Plan (New Kuwait 2035)

### New HAHC (DHAMAN) Headquarters Design & Site Supervision

**Tender Announcement Ref. # RFP 224**

Health Assurance Hospitals Company (DHAMAN) invites all interested organizations to participate in this open tender to provide Architectural Design, Supervision & Detailed Engineering Design for DHAMAN new main Headquarters building.

#### The Minimum Requirements:

- The required designers' scope of work shall include the Development of the Facility Space Program; Budget Analysis, Cost Estimating & Evaluation; Concept designs; System and specification development for all MEP, ELV; Initial planning and specification of equipment, furniture, fixtures; Obtaining approval from Government Authorities; Development of tender documents for procurement which will cover the requirements for final design, furnishing, equipping, commissioning, and maintenance.
- The selected Consultant must demonstrate a clear track record of successfully and timely accomplishing five projects comparable or larger than the scope of work / background.
- Minimum 10 years Design and Supervision experience with similar projects.

Companies interested in participating in this tender should be registered with Kuwait's relevant Authorities. Please contact DHAMAN to purchase the RFP Booklet (1,000 KWD Non-Refundable Fee) through the below address:

Supply Chain Management Dept.  
• Al Dhow Tower  
• 13th Floor  
• Khaled ibn Al-Waleed Street -Sharq

Date	Milestone
16 May 2022	Pre-Tender Meeting at DHAMAN
01 June 2022	RFP Due Date

For enquiries, contact [procurement@dhaman.co](mailto:procurement@dhaman.co)

18 000 19 | [www.dhaman.co](https://www.dhaman.co) | [www.facebook.com/dhamanhealth](https://www.facebook.com/dhamanhealth)

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## Business

# Shuaiba Industrial Co's net profits reach KD 1,341,388

## Distinguished performance; best total sales of KD 12,290,351

**KUWAIT:** Deputy Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of Shuaiba Industrial Co Bader Al-Qattan said the company's annual financial results reflected the strength of its financial status, its quality investments and efficiency of its operation, adding the company is committed to going ahead with achieving its goals through studied and steady steps that aim at maximizing shareholder equity.

Al-Qattan, who spoke following the general assembly that was held on Wednesday, said 2021 was an extension of the correct approach the company is taking and efforts of the board of directors and the executive administration. He said shareholders approved the distribution of cash dividends of 12 fils per share.

He said the company registered a distinguished performance through the achieve-

ment of best total sales of KD 12,290,351 for the previous year, a growth percentage of 4.49 percent from the previous year. He said the total operational profit for the current period is KD 2,685,225, compared to KD 2,379,139, which is 12.87 percent from last year in the presence of fierce competition inside and outside Kuwait, and the gradual rise in paper prices on the international level.

Al-Qattan said net total profits for the fiscal year ending Dec 31, 2021 reached KD 1,341,388 compared to the same period in the previous year of KD 1,024,917, which is a 30.88 percent growth from 2020. He said despite the regression in the operational environment and the general economic weakness that prevailed last year regionally and internationally in the form of political and social turbulence in the region and the worsening international financial crisis, and

commenting on the financial results for 2021, Industrial Shuaiba exerted efforts to maintain its achievements despite the repercussions of the coronavirus pandemic, its effects and precautionary measures governments worldwide imposed.

The book value reached 187 fils per share in 2021 compared to 184 fils for the previous year, while total assets reached KD 23,309,101 compared to the previous year of KD 22,404,351, a 4.04 percent growth from the previous year. Shareholders' equity reached KD 18,527,523 compared to the same period of last year of KD 18,228,218, a growth of 1.64 percent from the previous year.

Al-Qattan said the company produced and manufactured 23,760 tons this year, as exports still represent around 63 percent of total company sales during 2021.

This is a matter the company is keen to strengthen through maintaining its share in various international markets despite fierce competition.

He said the administration worked during 2021 on marketing its products through small bag production lines (mainly for the food sector) in Kuwait and GCC, adding to the initiative to enter international markets to compete. He said the entry in those markets requires us to improve production quality and maintain the competition level to be able to gain satisfactory shares in such markets.

The general assembly approved the board of director's recommendation to distribute profit dividends to shareholders whose names are in the company's register at the end of May 24, 2022, which will be distributed to those who are entitled to them on May 31, 2022.



Bader Al-Qattan

## Russia stops gas supplies to 'unfriendly countries'

**MOSCOW:** The Kremlin said Wednesday the halt of natural gas supplies to Poland and Bulgaria over the refusal to pay in rubles was a result of unfriendly actions towards Russia. "The need for a new payment method was a result of unprecedented unfriendly steps in the economic sphere and the financial sector, which were taken against us by unfriendly countries," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"This need was dictated by the fact that, as you know, they blocked from us-or, to put it plainly, stole-a fairly significant amount of our reserves," Peskov said, adding that this led to a "transition to a new payment system". "So there is no question of blackmail here," Peskov said in response to comments by European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen, who said this was "another attempt by Russia to blackmail us with gas".

Russia's energy giant Gazprom on Wednesday said it was completely halting gas supplies to Poland and highly

dependent Bulgaria "due to their failure to pay in rubles". President Vladimir Putin last month said Russia will only accept payment for deliveries in its national currency, with buyers required to set up ruble accounts or have their taps turned off. In response to Russia's military campaign in Ukraine, Moscow was hit with unprecedented economic sanctions, which also froze \$300 billion of Russia's foreign currency reserves held abroad.

The war in Ukraine has "significantly" impacted the Middle East and North Africa, with the crisis dealing a heavy blow to low-income countries while benefiting oil-producing states, the IMF said Wednesday. The International Monetary Fund's 2022 growth forecast for the region, which includes Arab countries and Iran, was forecast at 5.0 percent, up from the 4.1 percent prediction for this year made in October.

But the predicted growth masks the disparities between the region's 22 countries, which range from major oil exporters to nations wracked by war and others that depend heavily on wheat imports as well as hydrocarbon imports.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine and economic sanctions on Moscow have affected the region "through a multitude of direct and indirect channels", according to the IMF report. "Prior to the war in Ukraine, the economy in the region was showing strong recovery... the only caveat to that is inflation

started to increase in 2021 and remained high," Jihad Azour, IMF director for the Middle East and Central Asia, told AFP.

The report said inflation in MENA surged to 14.8 percent in 2021 and is projected to remain elevated at 13.9 percent this year, largely due to higher food and energy prices. Azour said low-income countries face increased pressure due to lower levels of food security and heavy reliance on imports from Russia and Ukraine, both major wheat producers.

Sudan and war-torn Yemen are among those particularly hard hit. Emerging markets and middle-income countries, including Egypt, Jordan and Morocco, are forecast to register GDP growth of 4.4 percent, on average. The IMF warned that emerging markets and middle-income countries face worsening prospects, given their governments' limited capacity to cope with inflation as geopolitical uncertainties persist.

However, Azour said that the surge in crude prices has supported economic recovery in oil-exporting countries. "It has compounded the recovery that they have witnessed last year thanks to a high level of vaccination (against COVID-19) and the various measures they took in order to accelerate the recovery," he told AFP. This is particularly true of Saudi Arabia, the Arab world's largest economy and a leading oil exporter, whose GDP expected to grow by 7.6 percent in 2022.— AFP

### News in brief

#### CAR adopts bitcoin as currency

**BANGUI:** The Central African Republic (CAR) has adopted bitcoin as legal tender, the president's office said Wednesday, becoming the second country in the world to do so behind El Salvador. Lawmakers unanimously adopted a bill that made bitcoin legal tender alongside the CFA franc and legalized the use of cryptocurrencies, and President Faustin Archange Touadera signed the measure into law, his chief of staff Obed Namsio said in a statement. The CAR "is the first country in Africa to adopt bitcoin as legal tender," Namsio said. "This move places the Central African Republic on the map of the world's boldest and most visionary countries," he declared. The landlocked state is one of the planet's poorest and most troubled nations, with an economy that is heavily dependent on mining.— AFP

#### Boeing reports \$1.2 bn loss

**NEW YORK:** Boeing reported a \$1.2 billion first-quarter loss Wednesday, hit by a series of new one-time costs on its Russia business, the Air Force One presidential jet and the new 777X plane. The big US aerospace company now expects first deliveries of the 777X in 2025, resulting in a \$1.5 billion hit to earnings. Results were also dented by costs of \$1 billion connected to Air Force One and a second military aircraft, the T-7 Red Hawk, and \$212 million related to the conflict in Ukraine. The loss marks the latest round of disappointing results for the commercial jet maker, which has also suspended deliveries of its 787 jet due to a series of production issues. Revenues came in at \$14 billion, down eight percent, and-as with profits-missing analyst estimates. Work on the 777X began in 2013, but the timeframe has been repeatedly pushed back as Boeing works to address certification questions from US air safety regulators.— AFP

#### Court rejects Airbnb challenge

**LUXEMBOURG:** The European Union's top court on Wednesday ruled that property rental platform Airbnb is obliged to share booking data with regional tax authorities in the Belgian capital Brussels. The firm's Irish-based European subsidiary had challenged the Brussels Capital Region's order that it provide information on transactions with tourists who visited the city in 2017. US giant Airbnb's online portal puts travelers in touch with private property owners offering short-term rentals. The firm has been a global success, and reported record profits last year, but is fighting various regulatory challenges in several jurisdictions. Brussels imposes a tourist tax on overnight accommodation, but the firm argued that, under EU market law, the city could not oblige Airbnb Ireland to provide data about bookings.— AFP

#### Russia withdraws from UNWTO

**MADRID:** Russia is withdrawing from the United Nation's tourism body, the UN World Tourism Organization said Wednesday ahead of a vote to suspend Moscow's membership over its invasion of Ukraine. "Russia has announced its intention to withdraw from UNWTO," the UNWTO said in a tweet, adding that Russia's suspension "is effective immediately". The UNWTO announced in March that it wanted to suspend Russia over its invasion of Ukraine. The decision must be approved by two-thirds of its 159 member states at a two-day extraordinary general assembly which got underway in Madrid on Wednesday. The UNWTO said the vote will go ahead even though Russia has said it is withdrawing from the body to give member states "their say". — AFP

## FASTtelco modernizes its communications network for business customers

**KUWAIT:** Having successfully replaced FASTtelco - Subsidiary of Ooredoo Kuwait ISDN-based core network with an IP-based Communi5 solution, has now taken the next step. With the introduction of the Communi5 Voice Application Server, the company is opening up the doors to a whole array of service possibilities for its business and enterprise customers. The most up-to-date Unified Communications services are now available.

B2B customers can now upgrade to Cloud PBX/Unified Communications Services or enhance their existing PBX. The legacy managed PBX platform for SMB customers has also been replaced with the Communi5 solution. This is a much easier system to set up and run because it contains all of the functions in one place. In the past, the services had to be configured and integrated individually. Now this is done by simply turning them on or off. Home or remote office services can be quickly and easily implemented because the functions can be made available by computer or smartphone apps. In times of crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become standard practice to work from home, or indeed from any location, and the Communi5 platform provides the best possible support for these scenarios.

"Our solution offers any number of profitable expansions for FASTtelco's business customer segment - for example, the integration of Microsoft Teams, and the complete native integration of mobile networks. The Communi5 solution unifies mobile and fixed networks and transforms mobile devices into UC extensions," said Werner Schimek, Communi5 Technologies GmbH Sales Director for MENA. Commenting on this, Sherin Sultan, Head of Voice and Next Generation Network at FASTtelco; subsidiary of Ooredoo Kuwait, said: "We are very pleased to have found a reliable partner in Communi5, a company whose future-oriented technology we can trust. This solution allows us to perfectly fulfil the needs of our business customer segment."

Communi5 offers a platform for enterprise communications services, ranging from a PBX PSTN trunking, to cloud trunking for Microsoft Teams, to a fully convergent Unified Communications Service. The solution is multi-client capable and highly scalable. The implementations are supported by a highly-qualified team with almost twenty years' experience in this segment, meaning that not only are they technically savvy but very well-versed in market trends and movements. Communi5 has helped telephony providers all over the world to turn opportunities into wins.



Sherin Sultan



MUMBAI: Men walk past a logo of the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) in Mumbai on April 27, 2022. — AFP

## India slashes size of the biggest IPO

**MUMBAI:** India has slashed the size of an initial public offering by insurance giant LIC but the share issue will still be the country's largest to date, with a targeted windfall of \$2.7 billion, regulatory filings showed Wednesday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government is desperate for proceeds from the IPO by Life Insurance Corporation of India and the sale of other state assets to help fix tattered public finances.

The long-awaited IPO—originally slated for March—will open next week, the filing seen by AFP showed, after the government chose to wait out recent market volatility triggered by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. "While global sentiments are weak, Indian markets are resilient," finance ministry official Tuhin Kanta Pandey told reporters. "This is an opportunity for the Indian consumer to participate in the wealth creation of one of India's most valuable corporations," he said. But the adverse market conditions did force the government to substantially cut its stake sale to 3.5 percent, down from five percent. The government will sell 221 million shares within a price band of 902 to 949 rupees, the prospectus showed. This implies an IPO size of between 200 and 210 billion rupees (\$2.61 billion to \$2.74 billion), overtaking that of payments firm Paytm, which raised \$2.5 billion in November in India's largest public share sale to date.

The offer values LIC at \$78 billion, and follows a years-long effort by bankers and bureaucrats to appraise the mammoth insurer and ready it for listing. Founded in 1956 by nationalizing and combining 245 insurers, LIC was for decades synonymous with life insurance in post-independence India, until the entry of private companies in 2000. It continues to lead the pack with a 61 percent share of the life insurance market in a country of 1.4 billion people, with its army of 1.3 million "LIC agents" giving it huge reach, especially in rural India.

LIC's market share has, however, declined steadily in the face of competition from net-savvy private insurers offering specialized products. The firm warned in its regulatory filing that "there can be no assurance that our corporation will not lose further market share" to private companies. The insurer is also India's largest asset manager, with 39.55 trillion rupees under management as of September 30, including significant stakes in Indian blue chips like Reliance and Infosys.—AFP

## Google-parent Alphabet sees quarterly profit slip

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Shares in Google's parent company Alphabet sank Tuesday after the internet giant reported that earnings in the recently ended quarter missed market expectations, with profit down from a year earlier. Alphabet reported net income of \$16.4 billion in the first quarter on revenue that climbed 23 percent to \$68 billion when compared to the same period last year. Alphabet profit was \$17.9 billion in the first quarter of 2021.

Shares sank nearly five percent to \$2,257 on the news. The quarter brought strong growth in Alphabet's search and cloud computing businesses while the company continued to invest heavily in products and services, chief executive Sundar Pichai said in an earnings release.

While Alphabet saw revenue from online ads climb to more than \$46 billion, the cost of acquiring online "traffic" that helps fuel that income was up some \$2 billion from the same period a year ago, the earnings report showed. Alphabet's ranks of employees grew to just shy of 164,000 people from 140,000 people in the same quarter last year.—AFP



## Business



Baitak Holy Quran contest



Distributing Iftar meals

# Kuwait Finance House concludes Ramadan program 'Increase good deeds in Ramadan'

## Al-Ruwaieh: Several events and initiatives based on technology and virtual reality

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Finance House concluded its Ramadan program "Increase good deeds in Ramadan" for this year 2022 with various social and voluntary participations, awareness initiatives, daily communication with the public, competitions, events, Girgian, sport and youth activities with tremendous participation by individuals inside and outside Kuwait, thus reiterating KFHH's leadership in social responsibility and its keenness to enhance sustainable development goals.



Yousef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh

Group DGM, Public Relations and Media, Yousef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh emphasized that KFHH's distinction in social responsibility reflects its position as a leading and pioneering financial institution at the private sector level. He indicated that KFHH has ensured that its Ramadan program "Increase good deeds in Ramadan" is integrated and full of activities and events to cover all society segments and the youth segment to cope with technology and utilize innovations in several events where mobile applications and V-Thru technologies were used. He added that KFHH events during Ramadan have witnessed tremendous and vast participations by the public.

### Distribution of thousands of meals

Al-Ruwaieh added that the opening of Ramadan program comprised a breakfast meal campaign during which KFHH's voluntary team prepared and distributed thousands of breakfast meals on a daily basis in various governorates of Kuwait. He reiterated that this initiative which KFHH performs annually, enhances the voluntary spirit and contributes to the strengthening and deepening of the concept of giving.

### Agreement with Kuwait Red Crescent Society

Al-Ruwaieh indicated that KFHH has signed an agreement of cooperation with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society as part of its program "Increase good deeds in Ramadan". The agreement comprised Ramadan Iftar, Ramadan Catering, and food and consumer materials during the holy month of Ramadan. He added that this agreement is construed as an extension of the partnership with Kuwait Red Crescent Society which has resulted into several social and human projects and initiatives inside and outside Kuwait.

### Group Iftar Initiative

Al-Ruwaieh said that KFHH's voluntary team was present in the Jordanian capital "Amman" to prepare and distribute Iftar meals in cooperation with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society which has made the group

Iftar initiative for 1,000 families in Jordan with the support of KFHH as part of the agreement between the two parties. He mentioned that Eid clothes were distributed to the refugees and needy people and entertainment and educational events were organized for children during the initiative. Also, food baskets were distributed. He emphasized that more than 15,000 Iftar meals were distributed to the refugees in Jordan during Ramadan.

### Hospitality service at mosques

He said that KFHH has provided hospitality services at mosques in different areas of Kuwait during the Taraweeh and Qiyam prayers in the last 10 days of Ramadan. The initiative was highly admired and appreciated by society, worshippers, police, and the organizers at mosques.

### Participation in V-FIT challenge

Al-Ruwaieh said that KFHH has launched, in cooperation with V-Thru, the walking challenge to the public in Avenues and the

deeds in Ramadan" program comprised competitions and prizes which have enhanced interaction and bondage with the public and customers through social media. Competitions comprised religious, educational, and interactive quizzes as well as a competition program offering valuable prizes through live broadcast on Instagram for customers and employees. The program recorded unprecedented participation by the followers.

### Flare fitness tournament

Al-Ruwaieh said that based on its interest in health and sport activities, KFHH has organized the Flare Fitness event for the 5th year respectively. The event comprises the challenge to burn calories. Prizes and iftar meals are presented for burning calories. The event witnessed wide participation. The organizing and judging in the competition was carried out by the Flare Fitness Team. He emphasized that these participations contribute to the spread of health awareness and inspire the youth to practice sports in an

### Quran Application presented by KFHH

Al-Ruwaieh said that KFHH has provided the public with the Holy Quran Application as a gift. He emphasized that the application launched by KFHH on IOS and Android devices has achieved record number of users which has exceeded 10 million users.

### Awareness sessions on social media

He added that for a better investment of social media during this holy month, KFHH has released a series of awareness sessions in various fields including sharia advice and instructions in cooperation with Sheikh Khaled Shujaa Al-Otaibi, health tips in cooperation with Dr Ghanima Al-Faleh, awareness messages in cooperation with the General Fire Department and the public relations and security media department at the Ministry of Interior in addition to Ramadan Fasting Time Schedule.

He indicated that KFHH has launched a program "Your Doctor is at Baitak" in cooperation with Salam Hospital. The program gathered a group of highly reputable doc-

Health for Better Life."

### 'Learn Cooking' Initiative

He said that KFHH has presented to its female customers an exclusive free cooking session with Chef Faisal Al-Nashmi in collaboration with "Off the Menu". The course continued for four days and witnessed remarkable participation by KFHH's female customers.

### Employees' participation in Ramadan events

Al-Ruwaieh said that KFHH has participated in Ramadan events with all KFHH family members to better enhance and strengthen functional bondage and appreciate employees' efforts and congratulate them on Ramadan. KFHH has organized several sport events e.g., Ramadan Padel Championship, employee soccer competition and live competitions on Instagram.

### 'Keep it Green' initiative

Al-Ruwaieh said that KFHH was keen on



'Learn Cooking' Initiative for Baitak clients



Children carrying girgian boxes

students at GUST to encourage them to practice sports in general and walking. Presents and gifts were presented to the winners and participants. The challenge continued throughout the month of Ramadan with major significant participation by the public. This third time partnership with V-Thru comes as part of the campaign "Better Health for Better Life". The walk challenge using V-Thru functions demands participants to gather points on the applications at the rate of KDI/- on every 1,500 steps. The gathered balance may be used in purchases or to participate in the plantation and greening campaign of Kuwait within KFHH initiative "Keep it Green" to achieve a sustainable environment.

### Girgian events

Al-Ruwaieh added that KFHH has organized the children's Girgian festival at Avenues and other locations. Also, it has provided Eid gifts (ATMs) in KFHH's pavilion at Avenues. KFHH's Girgian festival has brought happiness and delight to the children, thus reflecting KFHH's keenness to interact with various society segments on various occasions.

### Competitions and valuable prizes

Al-Ruwaieh said that the "Increase good

advanced and developed manner.

### Quran competition

Al-Ruwaieh added that KFHH has conducted the "KFHH Reciters" competition for the recitation of Quran during the month of Ramadan for the eighth year respectively under the supervision of Sheikh Fahad Al-Kandari and a group of highly distinguished reciters in Kuwait. The event took place in KFHH's auto showroom among tremendous participation by the public. The number of finalists reached 80 competitors for the age group -25 for males and females. 26 competitors were declared as winners and honored after the final eliminations.

### Partnership with TV program 'Quran Decoration'

Al-Ruwaieh said that KFHH has sponsored the TV program "Quran Decoration" which was presented by the Imam of Grand Mosque, Sheikh Fahad Al-Kandari. The program was presented on daily basis on KTV and YouTube during Ramadan. He indicated that KFHH's sponsorship of this program enhances KFHH's Ramadan program to include religious programs, awareness campaigns, medical and health tips and security instructions.

tors in various fields. The media materials and awareness videos released by KFHH were highly welcomed, admired and appreciated by the followers and the public.

### Participation with authorities

Al-Ruwaieh said that KFHH has supported the Military Beach Soccer Championship, thus reiterating its keenness to support sports and cooperate with the state institutions in such initiatives and enhance communications.

### Ramadan Padel Championship

Al-Ruwaieh announced the success of the first Ramadan Padel Championship which was organized by Play Padel Academy in partnership with KFHH. He reiterated KFHH's keenness to support sports and sportsmen. He emphasized that supporting such events is compatible with the "Better health for better life" program launched by KFHH to enhance a healthy lifestyle by focusing on sports and youth activity programs.

### Partnership with 'Play' Application

Al-Ruwaieh referred to the strategic partnership with the "Play" application which has organized several sport events, thus enhancing KFHH's program "Better

including "Keep it Green" initiative in the Ramadan events. He also mentioned the V-Thru event in Avenues and Mishref through which one tree is planted for every 1,500 steps. Through this event, KFHH has planted hundreds of trees including 3 years care program in cooperation with the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources.

### Weekly offers to 'Hesani' customers

KFHH continued its weekly offers to "Hesabi" customers. The bank organized several surprises to customers and followers e.g., "Iftar Sweets on Us".

### 'Corporate Social Responsibility'

Al-Ruwaieh concluded his press release statement by saying that KFHH's social efforts have witnessed global appreciation and praises. KFHH has won the "Corporate Social Responsibility" prize at the Middle East level which was awarded by the reputable MEA Finance Magazine. He affirmed KFHH shall continue its social participations and strategic initiatives and support all voluntary work initiatives based on KFHH's 45 years of experience in social responsibility which has played a basic role in sustainable development.



## Alshaya & Alsagar inaugurates TYREPLUS 7th outlet

**KUWAIT:** The TYREPLUS store in Al-Zeena Street will provide customers with various services, including tyre replacement, fitting and balancing, batteries, nitrogen inflation, alignment, brakes, tyre repair, shock absorber-suspension, and oil changes.

TYREPLUS an independent professional network of tyre retail stores and a global retail concept developed by Michelin, recently inaugurated its 7th outlet in Zeena Street. TYREPLUS was established in 2002 and is currently present in 20 countries today, such as Australia, Brazil, China, Russia, Thailand, Taiwan, Kuwait, and Gulf Countries.

Ashish Tandon, General Manager of Alshaya & Alsagar "We are very happy to have opened this new store in Kuwait, expanding our footprint in the region.

Since introducing the TYREPLUS concept in the region, our stores have served as one-stop-shop solutions, catering to a variety of automotive needs and requirements of our customers. Distribution and retail are critical levers for our partners' growth, and Michelin has been a leader over the years. And now we are complementing this focus with our support to reach consumers directly to assist them and provide them a seamless online to offline journey."

Mohan Uthappa, Divisional Manager of Michelin stated, "We are glad to expand the operations for our Tyres department through the opening of this latest store. We are increasingly focusing on those distributors that deliver long-term benefits to the brand prospects through comprehensive brand strategies,



rather than constantly trying to capitalize on short-term advantages".

### About Michelin

Michelin, the leading mobility company, is dedicated to enhancing its clients' mobility, sustainably; designing and dis-

tributing the most suitable tyres, services and solutions for its clients' needs; providing digital services, maps and guides to help enrich trips and travels and make them unique experiences; and developing high-technology materials that serve a variety of industries.



## Lifestyle | Features

## In Egypt, the president is a Ramadan TV hero

As Egyptians mark the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, they are being treated to a blockbuster TV series that celebrates their army marshall turned president, Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi. Fans hail "Al-Ikhtiyar 3" (The Choice 3) for enlightening the masses about Egypt's turbulent recent history. Critics see it as propaganda by a regime that rules with an iron fist.

While the first two seasons paid tribute to soldiers who battle Islamist extremists and to national security agents, the third has the 67-year-old Sisi as its central character. The 30 episodes-watched by millions after the traditional iftar sunset meals-trace the path of the then-defense minister who in 2013 deposed Islamist president Mohamed Morsi on his path to becoming head of state.

Sisi himself told a reception this week that Al-Ikhtiyar "tells exactly what happened at the time". Sahar Salaheddine, a columnist for state-owned newspaper Al-Gomhuria, praised the army-sponsored series for "showing the love the people have for their president", and the actors for being "soft power... soldiers". The lead actor Yasser Galal has by all accounts mastered Sisi's mannerisms, his slightly arched eyebrows, pursed lips and signature whisper.

But, whatever Galal's acting skills, criticizing his performance can be dangerous. The Egyptian Front for Human Rights said

that lawyer Nabil Abu Sheikha, after mocking the show on Facebook, was detained on April 11, accused of "disseminating false information" and belonging to a "terrorist" group. While state prosecutors did not comment on the case, local media reported, citing unnamed "security sources", that Abu Sheikha was being prosecuted for an old case, without mentioning details. Writer Shady Lewis Botros argued in an editorial that Galal's performance evoked "equal amounts of admiration and ridicule" and that, "like the regime's entire propaganda machine, it becomes a mechanical replication of itself".

#### 'Educate new generation'

The film studios of Cairo, long regarded as the Hollywood of the Arab world, have made on-screen heroes of Egyptian presidents before. In 1996, "Nasser 56" told the story of Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalizing the Suez Canal in a two-and-a-half-hour black and white epic. In 2001, his successor Anwar al-Sadat got his own biopic, "Days of Sadat". But Al-Ikhtiyar isn't looking to the past, said one of its screenwriters, Baher Dowidar. He argued the series will serve as nothing less than "a history book" 50 years from now.

The goal, argues the local press, is to "educate the new generation" about Egypt, where over half of the 103-million-strong population is under 25. Those who do not



Vehicles drive along a highway beneath a billboard showing an advertisement for the Ramadan television series "Al-Ikhtiyar 3" (The Choice 3) with Egyptian actor Yasser Galal posing as President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, in the Egyptian capital's twin city of Giza. — AFP

remember the summer of 2013 must be shown "the state's efforts to protect them from terrorism", said one state-owned newspaper.

#### 'Unforeseeable turmoil'

The show is a fictionalized look at the final 96 hours in power of Muslim Brotherhood candidate Morsi, who was elected in 2012 following the Arab Spring

protests and who died in prison in 2019. The army deposed Morsi then violently crushed protests by his supporters in what Human Rights Watch called "one of the world's largest killings of demonstrators in a single day in recent history". A highlight of the TV show, the trailers promised, was to be a series of leaked videos purportedly exposing Muslim Brotherhood leaders including Morsi. One clip of apparently

real-life footage shows Morsi warning the late field marshal Mohamed Tantawi, who was then the de facto president, of "unforeseeable turmoil" if he did not win the presidential election.

Though the series never sources the footage, it appears to have been shot by the military without the Islamist leaders' knowledge. Lawyer Sherif Gadalla has said in an official complaint that he believes the video shows that Tantawi used to "secretly record his visitors", and argues that the footage should never have been leaked.

An ardent Sisi supporter, Gadalla targets the show's director and producer, not the government, reasoning that "the Egyptian state apparatus is far too intelligent to be the source of the leaks". A very different reaction to the show came from another lawyer, Khaled Ali, a prominent figure on the left. He argued that the show, if indeed historically accurate, proves the innocence of his client Abdelmoneim Aboul Fotouh. The lawyer argued that the series backs the claim of Aboul Fotouh, who ran unsuccessfully against Morsi in the election, that he had no financial ties to the now outlawed Muslim Brotherhood and announced plans to submit four episodes of the show as evidence to the court. — AFP



In this file photo tourists disembark after a boat ride in the old town of Chania on Crete Island as the tourist season has started on the island.



In this file photo tourists and locals sit at a restaurant cafe in the old town of Chania on Crete Island as the tourist season has started on the island. — AFP photos

## Calling cooks and cleaners: Greece tourism hit by staff shortages

Chryssa Vertakis's three-star Crete hotel is nearly booked up this summer, but her guests will have to eat elsewhere because her kitchen has no chef, and no cooks. Like hotel owners across the country, she's facing acute staff shortages after two years of pandemic restrictions that have seen droves of hospitality workers seek work elsewhere. The key industry-which provides a quarter of Greece's national income-relies largely on foreign staff to work as waiters, cleaners, busboys and cooks.

Many Bulgarians working as cleaners in Vertakis's hotel Alexia Beach went home during last year's lockdown, and did not return, she told AFP. Greeks have also sought jobs in other sectors in response to COVID-shortened seasons that compounded long-existing grievances over working hours and low pay. "Seasonal employees cannot support their families on three and four months of work (per year)," Nikos Kokolakis, chairman of hotel workers in Crete's capital Iraklio, told state TV ERT on Wednesday. The union of Greek restaurant workers also says it's no surprise eligible workers steer clear of an industry where some operators "demand 10 to 12 hours of work without a day off, offering barely 700 euros (\$740) per month."

#### 'Quality tourism in danger'

Andreas Andreadis, honorary chairman of the association of Greek tourism enterprises (SETE), has warned that Greece's travel industry is currently short of over

50,000 mainly kitchen and service staff. "Our quality tourism is in danger," he tweeted earlier this month. The shortage threatens to stymie a positive start to the season, helped along by Greece's decision to open up in March, two months earlier than in 2021.

In a bid to further boost visitor numbers, the government in February scrapped mandatory screening tests for travelers who hold a European vaccination certificate. And vaccine passes will no longer be

fled to Greece since Russia's invasion in February. Seremetis is not opposed to the idea, provided the refugees can speak English. But few Ukrainians have so far travelled to Crete, he said.

#### 'We can't do better'

The war has also dented tourist numbers to Greece. The conflict has meant the loss of some 600,000 Russians and 240,000 Ukrainians who have cancelled reservations, Lyssandros Tsilidis, head of



In this file photo tourists sit at a restaurant in the old town of Chania on Crete Island as the tourist season has started on the island. — AFP photos

required in restaurants, bars and shops from May 1, while mandatory masks indoors will be scrapped from June 1. Vertakis said the loosening of restrictions had raised hopes in the industry of a return to 2019 levels, when 33 million tourists had visited.

"But without staff to accommodate this many people, it will be a problem," she said. Nektarios Seremetis, who manages the restaurants and bars at the four-star Thalassa Beach Resort down the same coast, is three waiters short. "Those who worked for us in 2019 left and found jobs in Cyprus or Italy, where salaries are higher," he said.

Tourism Minister Vassilis Kikilias last month suggested some of these vacancies could be filled from among the over 22,000 refugees from Ukraine who have

the Federation of Travel Agencies of Greece, told AFP earlier this month. At the Chryssi Akti hotel in Crete, Alexandros Pantelakakis has mostly resigned himself to minding the parasols and lounge chairs on his own this season.

Pantelakakis said many Greeks, including the man normally helping him out on the beach, did not receive enough state support to cope through two pandemic-shortened work seasons. "They hadn't made enough social insurance payments these past two years to earn unemployment benefits," Pantelakakis said. "So when the tourism season (in 2020 and 2021) was cut short by the pandemic, many had to find jobs elsewhere," he said. — AFP

for in the final FBI report in regards to the analysis of the firearm, the munitions, the latent prints and DNA. "We're also waiting on the office of the medical investigator to complete their report and analysis of a little bit more cell phone data." Cinematographer Hutchins, 42, died after being hit by a live round that came from the gun Baldwin was holding as he rehearsed on the New Mexico set in October.

Baldwin, who was a producer as well as the star of the movie, had been told the gun was safe and has previously said he did not pull the trigger. Footage released by the sheriff's department show first responders rushing to treat Hutchins, as well as a dazed Baldwin's first encounters with law enforcement. Other clips, apparently from the now-abandoned movie, show the Hollywood star in period dress sitting in the pew of the wooden church



This handout shows actor Alec Baldwin being processed after the death of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins at the Bonanza Creek Ranch in Santa Fe, New Mexico. —AFP

and pulling out the Colt gun, which he points in the direction of the camera. The moment of the shooting, in which director Joel Souza was also hurt, is not seen.

## Psychologist testifies that Amber Heard has personality disorders

A psychologist hired by lawyers for "Pirates of the Caribbean" star Johnny Depp testified on Tuesday at his defamation case against his former wife Amber Heard that she suffers from twin personality disorders. Shannon Curry, a clinical and forensic psychologist, said she had examined Heard's mental health records and personally evaluated her for 12 hours over two days in December 2021.

Curry said it was her opinion that the 36-year-old actress, who had a starring role in the movie "Aquaman," has borderline personality disorder and histrionic personality disorder. "She obtained scores that were consistent with those diagnoses," Curry said. Lawyers for Heard sought to discredit Curry's testimony during cross-examination, noting she had been hired by Depp's attorneys to testify on his behalf. "If you did not find something that would be in favor of Mr Depp and negative to Miss Heard than you wouldn't be an expert in this case?" Elaine Bredehoff, an attorney for Heard, asked Curry. "I present science regardless of what that science may be," Curry responded.

Curry said some of the primary characteristics of borderline personality disorder include a "lot of inner anger and hostility," a tendency to be "self-righteous" and "fluctuating moods." "They can react violently, they can react physically," she said. "Oftentimes they will be abusive to their partners." "It's almost play-acting," she said.

Curry, who has experience with US combat veterans, said it was her opinion that Heard did not suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as the result of alleged domestic abuse. Heard had "grossly exaggerated" her symptoms of PTSD in a test she was given, she said. The 58-year-old Depp has denied ever being physically abusive towards Heard and has claimed repeatedly at the trial that she was the one who was frequently violent.

#### 'Washed-up actor'

Depp filed a defamation suit against Heard over a column she wrote for The Washington Post in December 2018 in which she described herself as a "public figure representing domestic abuse." Heard never named Depp but he sued her for implying he was a domestic abuser and is seeking \$50 million in damages. The Texas-born Heard countersued, asking for \$100 million and claiming she suffered "rampant physical violence and abuse" at his hands.



US actor Johnny Depp (left) and his attorney Camille Vasquez in the courtroom at the Fairfax County Circuit Courthouse in Fairfax, Virginia. — AFP photos



Actress Amber Heard talks to her attorney in the courtroom at the Fairfax County Circuit Courthouse in Fairfax, Virginia.

Depp, a three-time Oscar nominee, and Heard met in 2009 on the set of the film "The Rum Diary" and were married in February 2015. Their divorce was finalized two years later. Heard's attorneys have alleged that Depp would become a physically and sexually abusive "monster" when he was drunk or on drugs, and pressed him extensively about his drug and alcohol use during his three days of cross-examination on the witness stand. Also testifying Tuesday was Tara Roberts, who for the past 15 years has managed a private island in the Bahamas owned by Depp.

Roberts was asked by Depp's lawyers to recount details of an argument the couple had on the island one evening. "Amber was telling him that he was a washed-up actor," Roberts said. "He was going to die a lonely old man." She said Heard was yelling at Depp, grabbing at him and trying to pull him back into their house.

Roberts said she was "worried" about what might happen and took Depp to a cafe on the island and applied ice to an injury he had received to the bridge of his nose. Depp filed the defamation complaint in the United States after losing a separate libel case in London in November 2020 that he brought against The Sun for calling him a "wife-beater." — AFP

## Alec Baldwin deadly shooting: Probe nearly finished, says sheriff

The criminal investigation into the fatal shooting on a US movie starring Alec Baldwin is "nearing completion," the officer leading the probe said Tuesday. Santa Fe Sheriff Adan Mendoza's comments come as his department released a trove of materials around the incident that claimed Halyna Hutchins' life on the set of low-budget Western "Rust," including footage of Baldwin apparently practicing with the gun that killed her. "We've estimated a time frame...in weeks and not months," Mendoza told broadcaster ABC.

"There's a few things that we're waiting

blank rounds in any production involving firearms. But a health and safety probe by New Mexico officials, which levied a fine of over \$136,000, said last week that producers had shown "plain indifference" to these protocols. Mendoza said Tuesday the provenance of the live round that killed Hutchins was "one of the key questions" of the criminal probe.

"Nobody's come forward and admitted to bringing ammunition to the set," he said. The raft of materials includes messages from Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, the young armorer who was responsible for weaponry on the set, that refer to the use of live rounds on another movie. "That's concerning, because it was just a few months before the production of 'Rust' went into effect," Mendoza said. "And these are some of the same employees and people that played a role in the 'Rust' production." — AFP

#### Criminal charges

Strict measures are supposed to be in place on movie sets to prevent tragedies, including the exclusive use of dummy or





US actor Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson receives the "Entertainment Icon of the Decade Award" onstage during the Warner Bros Pictures "The Big Picture" presentation during CinemaCon 2022.



(From left) British actress Helen Mirren, US actors Jack Dylan Grazer, Asher Angel and Zachary Levi and US actress Aisha Tyler speak onstage during the Warner Bros Pictures "The Big Picture" presentation during CinemaCon 2022.



Australian Producer/Director James Wan and US actress Aisha Tyler (right) speak onstage during the Warner Bros Pictures "The Big Picture" presentation during CinemaCon 2022.



Australian director Baz Luhrmann speaks onstage during the Warner Bros Pictures "The Big Picture" presentation during CinemaCon 2022.

## The Rock brings superheroes to CinemaCon as 'Elvis' returns to Vegas

Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson topped a superhero-packed bill as Warner Bros presented its upcoming slate of blockbusters at CinemaCon on Tuesday, while Baz Luhrmann's "Elvis" graced the Las Vegas casino stage at the movie industry summit. Johnson-Hollywood's top-grossing actor-appeared unannounced to promote his upcoming DC film "Black Adam" at the annual gathering, where Warner bosses also confirmed a sequel to Robert Pattinson's "The Batman" is on the way.



US actress Quintessa Swindell speaks onstage during the Warner Bros Pictures "The Big Picture" presentation during CinemaCon.

Further superhero sequels "Shazam! Fury of the Gods" and "Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom," as well as new standalone film "The Flash," were also presented to movie theater executives and managers, who gather each year at Caesars Palace casino to be courted by Hollywood's top studios and A-listers. Johnson described his character in "Black Adam" as "the Dirty Harry of the superhero world," with



US actress Aisha Tyler speaks onstage during the Warner Bros Pictures "The Big Picture" presentation during CinemaCon 2022.

ambiguous morals.

"Heroes don't kill people," says one villain in never-before-seen footage, to which Black Adam replies: "Well I do." Warner and Johnson are banking on "Black Adam"-out in October-becoming a major draw for their DC superhero film universe, which has grossed billions without reaching the heights of the rival and record-breaking Marvel films such as "Avengers: Endgame." Johnson surprised attendees by pretending to speak from Hawaii via video, before suddenly appearing in the Caesars Palace ballroom.

### 'The original superhero'

Beyond the superhero fare, which dominates modern megaplexes, Baz Luhrmann took the stage to discuss "Elvis." Luhrmann called the film-out in June, starring Austin

Butler as Elvis Presley and Tom Hanks as his domineering manager-as less a biopic and more the tale of "America in the 1950s, 60s and 70s."

"At the center of culture, for the good, the bad and the ugly, is the figure Elvis Presley," said Luhrmann, describing the music icon as "the original superhero." "What this movie is about is America in those three epochs: Elvis the rebel, Elvis the highest paid actor in Hollywood and Elvis the living legend, the icon, trapped in that hotel not 10 minutes from here," he told the Las Vegas crowd.

Early footage was shown from "Wonka"-starring Timothee Chalamet as Roald Dahl's chocolatier before he opened his factory-and Olivia Wilde's "Don't Worry Darling," a twisty thriller inspired by mind-bending movies such as "The Truman

and Memoirs of A Geisha.

In what may well prove to be his last interview, Tsang told the Sin Chew Daily he had completed a two-week trip to Malaysia and had flown back to Hong Kong via Singapore. He described relishing time spent solo travelling after being looked after by others for almost all previous trips in his life. "I will quarantine if I must," Tsang told the Chinese language Malaysian newspaper which ran a photo of the actor beaming as he held a piece of durian fruit.

Like China, Hong Kong has stuck to a strict zero-COVID strategy that has kept borders mostly closed throughout the pandemic with compulsory quarantine in designated hotels for returning residents. For much of last year, people had to complete 21-days in quarantine although it has more recently been reduced to seven days. Last week Hong Kong lifted a ban on non-residents flying to the city that had been in place for two years. However, the return of widespread tourism or frictionless business travel in the short term future is unlikely. Airlines are only flying a handful of routes to Hong Kong compared to before the pandemic and carriers that bring in more than five coronavirus cases face a five-day ban on that route under current rules. — AFP

more than 200 acting credits listed on film database IMDB. He was also the face of a Hong Kong hair dye brand for four decades.



File photo shows Hong Kong actor Kenneth Tsang smiling as he walks down the red carpet at the 31st Hong Kong Film Awards. — AFP

While he began acting in earnest in the 1960s, many of his most memorable roles came during the golden period of Hong Kong cinema in the 1980s and 1990s with films like The Killer, Supercop, Peking Opera Blues and Once A Thief. He was also one of the few Hong Kong stars of that era to cross into Hollywood with supporting roles, mostly villains, in movies like The Replacement Killers, Die Another Day-a James Bond film-Anna and The King



US actor Noah Centineo speaks onstage during the Warner Bros Pictures "The Big Picture" presentation during CinemaCon 2022.

Show" and "Inception," out in September.

### Bowie and body horror

Earlier Tuesday, an experimental new David Bowie documentary featuring never-before-seen footage and the late music superstar's own narration was previewed by indie studio Neon. "Moonage Daydream" will premiere at next month's glitzy Cannes film festival before hitting theaters in September. It is the first film to be approved by Bowie's estate, which gave director Brett Morgen access to thousands of hours of archives. "Bowie cannot be defined. He can be experienced," said Morgen.

"We've crafted 'Moonage Daydream' to be a unique cinematic theatrical experience-to offer audiences that which they can't get from a book or an article." Neither

biopic nor traditional documentary, the film blends Bowie's songs, concert clips, extensive fan footage and a series of surreal, trippy and abstract images.

Neon also previewed "Crimes of the Future" from David Cronenberg, the director of "Crash" and "The Fly," who pioneered the "body horror" genre. The film starring Kristen Stewart, Viggo Mortenson and Lea Seydoux imagines a world in which humans are forced to speed up their evolution with grisly organ transplants and body modifications to survive their changing environment. Cronenberg told AFP the film, which will also premiere at Cannes, was "a difficult film maybe, an extreme film, an unusual film." CinemaCon runs until Thursday. — AFP

## Veteran Hong Kong actor found dead in quarantine hotel

Kenneth Tsang, a stalwart of the "Golden Age" of Cantonese cinema, was found dead in a Hong Kong hotel room on Wednesday while undergoing mandatory quarantine after returning from overseas, local media reported. Tsang, 87, was discovered by staff in a quarantine hotel two days after returning from Singapore, multiple outlets including Now News, the South China Morning Post and Oriental Daily said.

In an incident report, police said they were informed a "body" had been found by hotel staff around noon (0400 GMT). The deceased was an 87-year-old male surnamed Tsang, the incident report said. For Hong Kongers and fans of Cantonese cinema, Tsang was a household name thanks to a career that spanned six decades with

## British DJ Tim Westwood accused of sexual misconduct

Several women have accused veteran British hip-hop DJ Tim Westwood of predatory sexual behavior or groping, allegations which the radio and former TV presenter on Tuesday strenuously denied. Three women told the BBC and the Guardian newspaper that the former BBC Radio 1 DJ, 64, had abused his position in the music industry to exploit them sexually. Two of the women say they agreed to come to London to discuss their musical

aspirations but were driven to Westwood's flat where he initiated unwanted and unexpected sex.

One of the women was 19 at the time, when Westwood was 53. Another woman who was already in an R&B group said she was subjected to unwanted sex when she met the DJ when she was 17. Four other women accuse the DJ, who was an early champion of hip-hop in the UK, of touching them inappropriately while posing for photographs at events where Westwood was performing. A representative for Westwood said in a statement that the DJ "strongly denies all allegations of inappropriate behavior. "In a career that has spanned 40 years, there have never been any complaints made against him officially or unofficially. —AFP





## Sports

# Depleted Heat down Hawks, Morant sinks Wolves in thriller

**MIAMI:** Victor Oladipo led the depleted Miami Heat to a series-clinching 97-94 victory over the Atlanta Hawks on Tuesday as Ja Morant produced a dazzling late scoring spree to give Memphis a thrilling win over Minnesota in the NBA playoffs. Miami, missing injured stars Jimmy Butler and Kyle Lowry, produced a superb defensive performance to shut down Atlanta and advance to an Eastern Conference semi-final series against either Philadelphia or Toronto.

Oladipo, who only returned to action in March after an 11-month injury layoff, was handed his first start of the playoffs by Heat coach Erik Spoelstra. The 29-year-old two-time All-Star repaid that faith with a 23-point display alongside Bam Adebayo, who finished with 20 points and 11 rebounds. The win marked a fairytale return to center stage for Oladipo, whose career has been decimated by injuries and surgeries over the past three years.

Oladipo was sidelined for nearly a year after undergoing surgery to repair a ruptured quadriceps tendon in May last year. He had undergone surgery to treat the same problem in Jan 2019. "There's nothing I can't handle," Oladipo said after Tuesday's win. "There's nothing I haven't gone through. At the end of the day I feel like I can come back and get through anything. So when they told me I needed to start tonight, I just stepped up to the plate and did everything I could to help my team win... this is only the beginning."

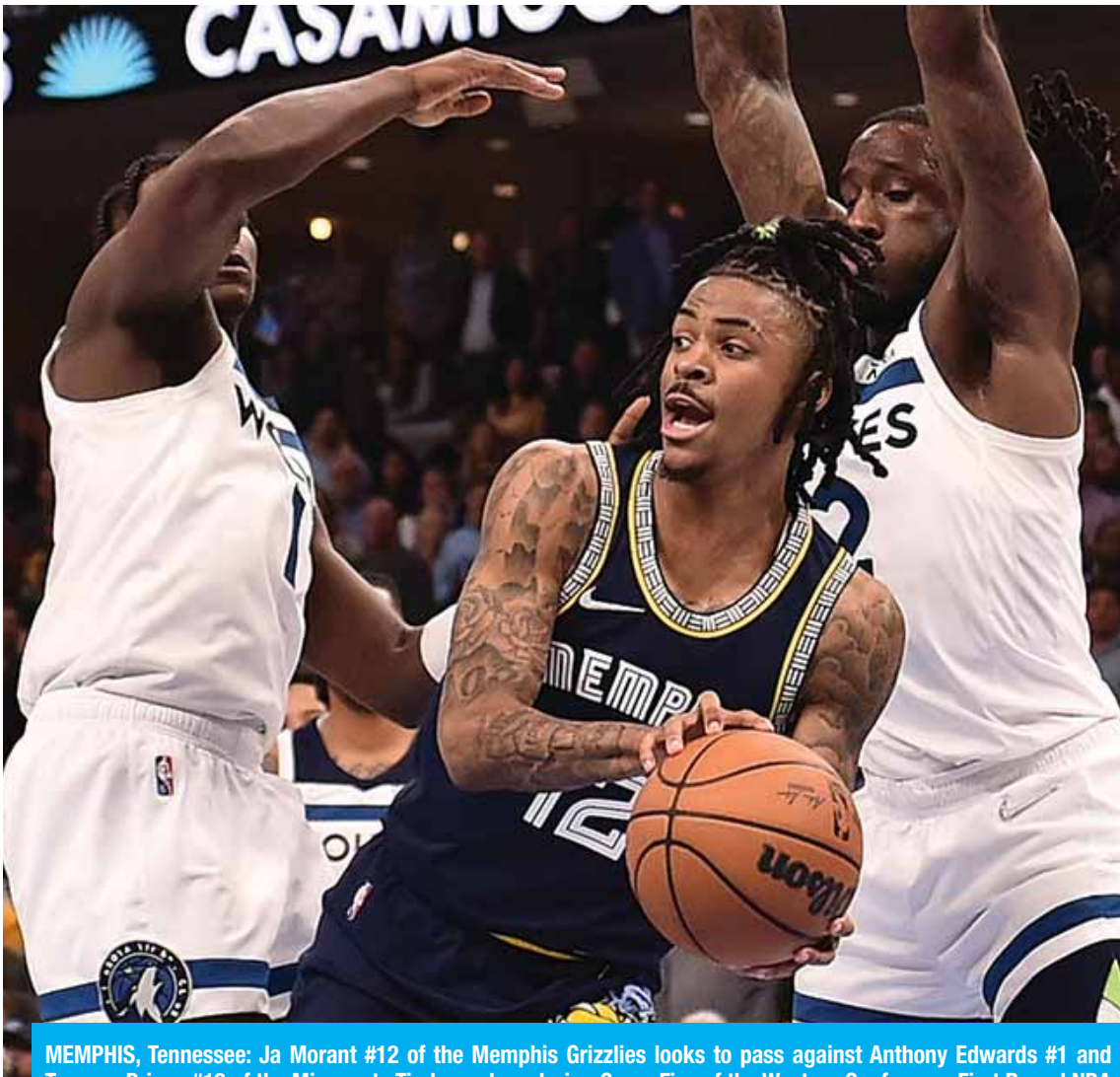
Adebayo took pride with a Miami defensive performance that restricted Hawks star Trae Young to just 11 points. De'Andre Hunter led the Atlanta scoring with 35 points. "We knew it was going to be a fight to the end, we just had to finish it with our defense," Adebayo said. "Defense wins championships."

## Morant magic sinks Wolves

In the Western Conference playoffs Morant scored a gravity-defying last-gasp layup as the Grizzlies conjured an epic late fightback to stun the Minnesota Timberwolves 111-109. Morant's wizardry with one second remaining sealed an enthralling battle which leaves Memphis 3-2 ahead in the best-of-seven series with game six in Minnesota on Friday.

Minnesota had led by 13 points early in the fourth quarter after big performances from Karl Anthony-Towns, who finished with 28 points and Anthony Edwards (22 points). But Morant, who bagged 30 points, suddenly found his scoring touch to haul Memphis back into contention. The 22-year-old rising star of the NBA erupted for 18 points in the fourth quarter as Memphis outscored Minnesota 37-24 in the final period.

The catalyst for Morant's masterpiece appeared to be a jaw-dropping dunk over Wolves guard Malik



MEMPHIS, Tennessee: Ja Morant #12 of the Memphis Grizzlies looks to pass against Anthony Edwards #1 and Taurean Prince #12 of the Minnesota Timberwolves during Game Five of the Western Conference First Round NBA Playoffs at FedExForum on April 26, 2022. — AFP

Beasley at the end of the third quarter that brought the Memphis crowd to their feet. Morant later said he was "not that excited" by the dunk, but added: "It definitely ignited the crowd and that gave us some energy." The Grizzlies' come-from-behind win was too close for comfort for Morant though. "Me personally, I'm tired of it, tired of playing from behind," he said. "Last three games we haven't played our basketball."

Morant, who also had 13 rebounds and nine assists, was backed with a 25-point display from Desmond Bane while Brandon Clarke added 21 points with 15 rebounds. In Tuesday's other game, Western Conference top seeds Phoenix returned to winning

ways with an emphatic 112-97 win over New Orleans in Arizona to take a 3-2 series lead. Mikal Bridges led the way for Phoenix with 31 points and five rebounds while Chris Paul added 22 points with 11 assists. "Hell of a win tonight," Bridges said. "We stayed together to get the win, now we've got to go and get another one."

The win marked a return to form for Phoenix, who had been erratic over the opening four games of the series against the eighth-seeded Pelicans. "They've been playing harder than us so we knew we'd have to come out tonight and play harder than them," Bridges said. Game six in the series takes place in New Orleans on Thursday. — AFP

## Seattle chase elusive CONCACAF Champions League crown

**MEXICO CITY:** The Seattle Sounders are eyeing an end to more than two decades of futility on Wednesday when they take on Mexico's Pumas UNAM in the first leg of the CONCACAF Champions League final. The Sounders are bidding to become the first Major League Soccer side to be crowned continental champions since Los Angeles Galaxy lifted the title in 2000.

No MLS side has won the tournament since it was remodeled in 2008 as the CONCACAF Champions League, along the lines of the UEFA Champions League. Since the Galaxy's victory 22 years ago, the top competition for teams from North America, Central America and the Caribbean has been treated as the near-exclusive fiefdom for teams from Mexico. Pumas would become the 17th straight Mexican side to lift the title if they thwart Seattle's ambitions this year.

Despite that record of Mexican dominance, the Sounders start this year's final as favorites in the eyes of many. Seattle have already accounted for one Mexican club in their journey to the final, beating Leon 4-1 on aggregate in the quarter-finals before vanquishing New York City in the last four. The Sounders also have the advantage of playing the May 4 second leg at home, where they have a 100 percent record in this year's tournament.

"I think it's an incredible, historic opportunity," Seattle general manager Garth Lagerwey told the club's website. "I know I've been perhaps hyperbolic in some of my public speaking about it but everything I say is sincere. This is for immortality." Lagerwey says a Seattle victory would be the "biggest achievement in club history, period."

"It's certainly the hardest tournament to win, if you think about what you have to achieve just to

qualify for the tournament and then the process you have to go through playing games both home and away, just a massive amount of travel, starting early in the season, just all the difficulties, there can be no greater degree of difficulty than winning this tournament," he said.

### Lessons to learn

Seattle's title ambitions received a reality check on the domestic front last weekend however when they were stunned 4-3 by the San Jose Earthquakes in California. The Sounders squandered leads of 2-0 and 3-1 as San Jose forward Cristian Espinoza scored a hat-trick to engineer victory. Sounders manager Brian Schmetzer said a "little complacency" had crept into his players as they looked ahead to Wednesday's final. "We just need to be hard to beat, a little bit harder defensively in certain moments of the game, a little bit more steely," Schmetzer said, adding that he believed the San Jose loss was a "one-off". Schmetzer has also been encouraged by the fact that his squad recognized what went wrong against San Jose during video analysis. "Any time in life where you can have good conversations about things that happened in the past are good conversations," Schmetzer.

"I credit the senior guys on the team. They all get it. It's always best if it comes from within the team. It's a really resilient, smart group." Seattle's Cristian Roldan believes a repeat of the lapses against San Jose in Wednesday's final at Mexico City's Estadio Olimpico Universitario could be fatal. "We have to learn from these moments, keep the positive because going into Wednesday, it's not going to be easy," Roldan said. "These moments in a final will put you down bad." — AFP



Colin Morikawa

ous to what's going on. But do I care who's going to be playing or do I care who's going to be making money?

"No, not at all. At the end of the day I'm here to win majors. I'm here to win PGA Tour tournaments. Hopefully return and defend my Race to Dubai title. There's a lot of other things that are on my mind and a lot of goals that I set at the beginning of the year that I look forward to."

World number three Morikawa believes he is not alone in prioritizing tournament victories over money. But the 25-year-old concedes that he has not looked too closely at whether players deserve a greater share of the revenue generated by major championships.

"Sure, I'm guessing that the majors do make a lot of money and there's never anything bad about making more money, but when you say something like that and you put us in the boat of the only other thing that could keep us here is the money, then that's just not true," he said.

"Because if that were the case, then you would have had 100 out of 100 sign up for this other tour that's happening, but you don't, right? You have the 15, the unknown 15. When it comes down to it, it's just the love for the game. I think what the PGA Tour and the DP World Tour have aligned themselves to do and what we're going to be growing into is great." — AFP



MUNTINLUPA, Philippines: Indonesia's Chico Dwi Wardoyo plays against Japan's Kento Momota during their men's singles qualifying match at the Badminton Asia Championships on April 27, 2022. — AFP

## Top seed Momota suffers shock early exit

**MANILA:** Two-time world champion Kento Momota suffered a shock first-round defeat at the Asia Championships on Wednesday as his poor run of form hit a new low. Indonesia's Chico Aura Dwi Wardoyo, ranked 52nd in the world, lost the first game but stormed back to stun the Japanese top seed 17-21, 21-17, 21-7 in just over an hour in Manila.

In the women's singles, top seed and Momota's fellow Japanese Akane Yamaguchi had no such trouble with a 21-15, 21-9 demolition of India's Aakarshi Kashyap in just 26 minutes. The 27-year-old Momota, a former world number one but now ranked second behind Denmark's Viktor Axelsen, said: "I couldn't cope with the wind and heat at the venue today." — AFP

## Morikawa puts golf glory ahead of financial gain

**LONDON:** British Open champion Collin Morikawa on Tuesday insisted he will always put golf glory ahead of financial gain amid the controversy over a series of new Saudi-backed tournaments. Phil Mickelson's agent revealed on Monday that the six-time major winner has requested a release from the PGA Tour to play the first LIV Golf Invitational Series event in June.

The lucrative event has reportedly persuaded 15 of the world's top 100 players to ask for their releases from the PGA and DP World Tours in order to play at Centurion Club from June 9-11. On a conference call to promote his British Open title defence at St Andrews later this year, Morikawa made it clear he would not be joining the rush to chase a profit.

"No, I said at Riviera earlier this year (in February) that my alliance is to the PGA Tour," he said. "Will I still watch what's going on? I mean, yeah. You're curi-

## Parag, bowlers help Royals return to top IPL

**PUNE:** Rryan Parag's unbeaten 56 and inspired bowling helped Rajasthan Royals defend 144 against Royal Challengers Bangalore to go top of the IPL table on Tuesday. The 20-year-old Parag smashed 30 off the last two overs to steer Royals, who won the inaugural IPL title in 2008 under late Australian great Shane Warne, to a competitive total before pace bowler Kuldeep Sen took 4-20 to complete a 29-run victory in Pune.

Ravichandran Ashwin returned figures of 3-17 after Sen dismissed skipper Faf du Plessis (23) and Glenn Maxwell (0) in successive deliveries to put Bangalore in trouble at 37-3. Ashwin rattled the middle order with his off-spin and a dramatic run out of Dinesh Karthik, who departed for six after a mix-up with Shahbaz Ahmed, took the wheels off the chase. Sen returned to wrap up the Bangalore innings as they were bowled out for 115 in 19.3 overs. "The top order is a trick we need to fix," Du Plessis said after his team's second straight loss and batting failure following their 68 all out last week in the IPL. "You need someone in the top four to bat through and we haven't done that consistently. We tried changing the batting lineup today and we feel that they can try playing positively, they can't go into a shell."

A struggling Virat Kohli opened the innings for Bangalore and avoided a third straight golden duck but nearly got caught on the third delivery, with the ball falling short of the fielder at square leg. Kohli, who has scored just 128 runs in nine matches, got off the mark on the fourth ball with a boundary and survived a few inside edges that missed the stumps but finally fell to Prasad Krishna in the next over, for nine.

"Great players go through phases like this. We wanted him to get in straightaway so that he doesn't sit on the sidelines and think about the game," Du Plessis said of his team's star batter and former captain. "He is a great player and we still back him to turn it around and hopefully it's around the corner. It's a game of confidence."

Earlier, Bangalore's Josh Hazlewood removed the in-form Jos Buttler for eight to push Royals on the back foot after fellow quick Mohammed Siraj struck twice in his opening two overs. Buttler, who has hit three centuries this IPL season and is the leading batter with 499 runs, mistimed a pull to mid-on where Siraj took a stunning catch. Skipper Sanju Samson attempted to hit back in his 21-ball 27 but was bowled by Sri Lankan leg-spinner Wanindu Hasaranga.

Hazlewood took 2-19 as Bangalore dried up the runs for Royals between overs 10 to 18, but Parag cut loose and survived a dropped catch on 32 to set up the team's sixth win of the season in eight matches. Parag returned to the field to take four catches and named man of the match. — AFP

## 'Fantastic cricketer' Kohli will turn form around: Du Plessis

**NEW DELHI:** Royal Challengers Bangalore skipper Faf du Plessis is confident Virat Kohli will overcome his IPL batting slump. Kohli took his Indian Premier League tally this season to just 128 runs from nine matches after scoring a scratchy nine in the defeat to Rajasthan Royals on Tuesday following two golden ducks. Moved up to open the batting, Kohli was inches away from failing to score for a third match in a row with a shot that fell just short of a fielder.

The former India captain remained jittery and lasted only 10 balls before an attempted pull shot off Prasidh Krishna was edged on to his helmet to give a catch at cover point. "Great players go through things like this and great characters have to find a way to get through it," Du Plessis said after his team fell 29 runs short of a modest target of 145. "Our thinking was to get him into the game straight away so he does not sit on the side and think too much about the game. "He is a fantastic cricketer, so we still back him that he will turn it around and it's just the case of getting a good start."

Kohli, one of the best batsmen of the modern era, has failed to score a century for more than two years for club or country and departed first ball in his previous two IPL innings. He has been the flagbearer for Indian cricket and Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB), for whom he amassed a record 973 runs in the 2016 edition of the Twenty20 tournament.

"He is a great player and seen many ups and downs in his career," Bangalore coach Sanjay Bangar told reporters. "I have seen him up close and he is a fighter. So he will come out of this run of low scores in the last three matches and will soon get us a win." Bangar, who worked as India batting coach with Kohli, said he "possesses the art of coming out of difficult situations". "His mental capability is such that he will do well in the upcoming games."

The match also saw England's Jos Buttler, the 2022 IPL's highest scorer with 499 runs and three sparkling centuries, make just eight, his lowest of the season. Former India coach Ravi Shastri called for Kohli to take a break and come back refreshed. "He has played non-stop cricket, captained the team across formats. It would be wise of him to take a break," Shastri said on an internet chat show.—AFP



## Sports

## Dismissed at first, Europa Conference League captures the imagination

**PARIS:** The subject of some derision when it was introduced at the start of this season, the new Europa Conference League has turned out to be a hit and now has some of the continent's most famous names in the semifinals eyeing a rare piece of European silverware. Leicester City take on Jose Mourinho's Roma and Feyenoord play Marseille in the first legs of their semifinal ties this Thursday, with the winners advancing to the final in Tirana in late May.

Twenty-three years after the abolition of the Cup Winners' Cup, the idea behind UEFA's new third-tier European competition was supposedly to give clubs from smaller countries the chance to play more matches, earn more money and get more exposure. It has seen the unheralded Norwegians of Bodo/Glimt put six past Roma and later knock out Celtic on their way to the quarter-finals, while the Slovenians of Mura claimed a famous win over Tottenham Hotspur as the English giants were knocked out in the group stage.

Both Bodo/Glimt and Mura started the season in the Champions League but defeats in the qualifying rounds saw them effectively relegated. It was the same for Leicester and Marseille, who each ended up in the Conference League after being knocked out of the Europa League group stage. Leicester won last season's FA Cup and just missed out on Champions League qualification, so their manager Brendan Rodgers appeared to turn his nose up at the idea of going into the knockout phase of the new competition.

"I've got to be honest, I don't even know what the competition is," he said in an interview with broadcaster BT Sport. "With all due respect to the competition, I'm

not sure what it is. But I'm sure I will find out soon enough." Leicester have since knocked out Randers of Denmark, French club Rennes and former European Cup winners PSV Eindhoven on their way to the semi-finals.

Their story is hardly the most romantic - after all, the Foxes won the Premier League in 2016 and are the 15th-richest club in the world according to the latest Deloitte Football Money League. Yet, having lost a Champions League quarter-final to Atletico Madrid five years ago, Leicester are now in a European semifinal for the first time in their history.

## 'I would like to win it'

Roma's European pedigree is on another level, with the Italians having reached the European Cup final in 1984 before later losing a UEFA Cup final. They were Champions League semifinalists only four years ago but this run has certainly captured the imagination. Over 65,000 fans were at the Stadio Olimpico to see them beat Bodo/Glimt in the quarterfinals and there will be another huge crowd at next week's second leg.

Mourinho, meanwhile, could complete the sweep of the main European honors having previously won two Champions Leagues as well as the UEFA Cup at Porto and its successor, the Europa League, at Manchester United. "I don't want to lie to you guys and tell you this competition doesn't interest me. It does interest me. I would like to win it," Mourinho said at the start of the campaign. The other semi-final brings together two former European Cup winners, with Feyenoord having won that prize in 1970 and Marseille doing so in 1993.

Feyenoord also won the UEFA Cup twice while



**LEICESTER:** Leicester City's Belgian midfielder Youri Tielemans, Leicester City's Nigerian striker Kelechi Iheanacho, Leicester City's English midfielder Harvey Barnes attend a training session at Leicester City's training complex on April 27, 2022 on the eve of their UEFA Conference League semifinal first leg match against Roma. —AFP

Marseille have lost in four European finals, including the 1991 European Cup and in the Europa League in 2018. Both sides have fervent fanbases but, in the age of the super club, Champions League glory is beyond their reach and even success in the Europa League is a big

ask. Far from dismissing the Conference League, both have embraced it, especially Feyenoord, whose adventure began in the second qualifying round last July against Drita of Kosovo and could end 10 months later in Tirana. —AFP

## How Tedesco has transformed RB Leipzig's season

**BERLIN:** When RB Leipzig sacked Jesse Marsch last December, it was inconceivable that the struggling German club would approach the end of the season on the brink of reaching two finals. In the last four months, Marsch's replacement Domenico Tedesco has overhauled RB Leipzig, who are confident of beating Rangers in Thursday's Europa League semi-final, first leg at home.

Since he took charge, Leipzig have shot up the Bundesliga from 11th last December to fourth, punched their ticket for next month's German Cup final and reached the last four of the Europa League. Saturday's 2-1 home Bundesliga defeat to Union Berlin, when they conceded two late goals, was Leipzig's first loss since February and ended a 15-game unbeaten run.

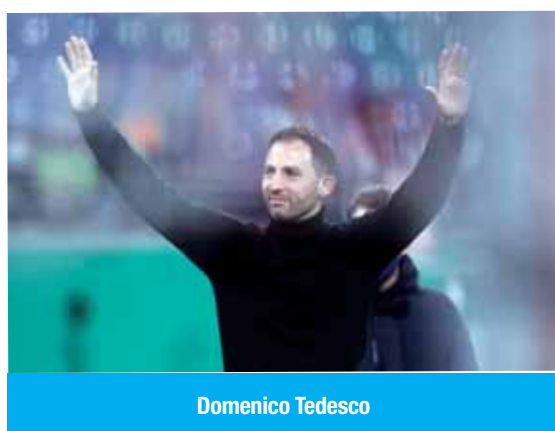
"Nobody would have thought we would make it to the (German) cup final when I think back to last December," admitted club boss Oliver Mintzlaff. The turnaround has been nothing short of miraculous under Tedesco, who coached Schalke to sec-

ond place in Germany's top flight in 2017-18. Since the 36-year-old German-Italian took over, Leipzig have picked up 32 points in the second half of the season - exactly the same as Bayern Munich, who were confirmed Bundesliga champions on Saturday for the 10th straight year.

RB labored badly under Marsch, who won Austrian league and cup titles at sister club Red Bull Salzburg, but lasted just five months after a bad start both at home and in Europe. "In the first half of the season, many players were just unhappy," midfielder Marcel Halstenberg told local newspaper MZ. "We have the quality, we just need the right plan."

After talking to the players, Tedesco put emphasis on again dominating possession, as Leipzig had done under Marsch's predecessor Julian Nagelsmann. Tedesco abandoned a back four for a compact three or five-man defence supported by wing-backs Angelinho and Nordin Mukiele. French winger Christopher Nkunku has thrived on the space created inside for Leipzig's forwards by Tedesco's approach.

The Paris Saint-Germain youth product has been a revelation this season with 30 goals and 20 assists in 46 games. He also struck twice at Atalanta in the quarter-finals to seal a 3-1 aggregate victory. Hungary international Dominik Szoboszlai is a constant menace for defences when



Domenico Tedesco

he cuts in from out wide while Spanish attacking midfielder Dani Olmo can decide games on his own. Yussuf Poulsen and Emil Forsberg, who headed in the winning goal in last Wednesday's German Cup semi-final, have the experience to turn games off the bench. The recent unbeaten run means confidence is high despite Saturday's home defeat. If Leipzig get through to the Europa final, on May 18 in Seville, they will have the chance to lift two trophies in four days with the German Cup final on May 21 at Berlin's Olympic Stadium. "We have such quality in the team that we have to think it's possible to win both," insisted Forsberg. —AFP

## Mourinho rebuilding reputation as Roma eye European glory

**MILAN:** Jose Mourinho returns to England on Thursday on a wave of enthusiasm as upbeat Roma prepare for their third European semifinal in five seasons with fans firmly behind their charismatic manager. Mourinho's spell at Tottenham, the first since 2002 where he left a club without winning a trophy, left the man formerly known as The Special One's stock at an all-time low.

A crop of attack-minded coaches had left Mourinho behind as he crept towards his 60s, but he is rebuilding his reputation in the country where his star has never waned thanks to the historic treble he won for Inter Milan nearly 12 years ago. Defeat on Saturday at Italian champions Inter ended a 12-match unbeaten run in Serie A and fifth-placed Roma's outside hopes of reaching the Champions League.

They were outclassed at the San Siro by a superior team

who are heavily fancied to retain their league title but the 3-1 loss failed to end the positive vibes in Rome ahead of Thursday's trip to Leicester for the first leg of their European Conference League semi. Fans have been packing the Stadio Olimpico for recent matches with more than 65,000 attending wins over Salernitana and Bodo/Glimt and 1,600 will be in fine voice at the King Power Stadium hoping that their team end an England hoodoo.

Roma have won just one of their 22 matches played in England, at Anfield way back in 2001 with Fabio Cappello at the helm for a 2-1 aggregate UEFA Cup defeat to Liverpool, and have taken some heavy beatings from Premier League sides down the years. Last season's Europa League first-leg 6-2 hammering at Manchester United cost Roma their first continental final since 1984, when they were beaten by Liverpool on penalties at their own ground. Under Mourinho, Roma look more solid than they did under predecessor Paulo Fonseca and he has managed to create a cohesion between the team and a notoriously volatile fan base which last saw their team win a trophy in 2008.

"He's instilled in everyone the idea of never giving up, staying on it and coming together to get results," starlet Nicolò Zaniolo said in an interview with UEFA. "We have a coach who knows what it takes to win, I think we've got a chance." Roma

supporters have continually backed their coach even in the face of some deeply poor performances and at time embarrassing results - not even a 6-1 hammering at the hands of Bodo in the Conference League groups stage led to vociferous training ground protests which have been inflicted on previous coaches.

Considered yesterday's man in England, Mourinho's name still carries immense weight in Italy and fans have been prepared to stick by him in the hope that he weaves the same magic which denied them the Serie A crown in 2010. Back then Mourinho was public enemy number one in the 'Giallorosso' half of the Italian capital as his Inter team pipped Roma to the league on the final day of the season, a triumph that came after Lazio fans had hailed him a "true man in a fake football" in a match against Inter they had demanded their own team lose. —AFP



Jose Mourinho

## 'Part of our DNA': Eintracht bank on away support at West Ham

**BERLIN:** Eintracht Frankfurt expect thousands of German fans to travel again in the hope of inspiring another away victory, like the shock win at Barcelona, for Thursday's Europa League semi-final first leg at West Ham. Around 30,000 Eintracht fans managed to get tickets for the second leg of their quarter-final at Camp Nou, roaring the German club to a stunning 3-2 win at Barcelona to seal a 4-3 aggregate victory.

Visiting Frankfurt fans have been allocated 5,000 tickets for the game at West Ham's London Stadium, which has a capacity of 60,000, but the German club expects tens of thousands of fans to make the journey. "I am absolutely sure there will be more than 5,000 in the city," Eintracht CEO Axel Hellmann told AFP. "Our fans like to travel and support their team abroad - that's why we brought 15,000 to Inter Milan" for the last-16 tie in 2019. Frankfurt reached the semi-finals that year before losing to Chelsea on penalties. 30,000 at Barcelona was absolutely the peak of our club history's going abroad. It's part of our DNA."

Frankfurt's Colombia forward Rafael Borré explained why the upset win on a magic night in Barcelona has captured the imagination of Frankfurt fans. "Many people thought it was impossible. So when you achieve it, it's normal for people to feel euphoric," said Borré, who scored away to Barcelona in the quarterfinal.

In a bid to avoid a repeat of the scenes at Camp Nou that prompted Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez to say it felt like they had been "robbed in their own home", West Ham have warned their supporters against selling tickets to Frankfurt fans. Under Austrian coach Oliver Glasner, Frankfurt have struggled at times in the Bundesliga this season, saving their best performances for Europe.

Their fans are desperate to reach the final in Seville on May 18 for the chance of silverware. Before their shock win over Bayern Munich in the 2018 German Cup final, Eintracht's previous title was in 1979-80 when they won the UEFA Cup - the precursor to the Europa League - by beating Borussia Moenchengladbach over two legs in an all-German final. —AFP

## Classifieds

## Hospitals &amp; Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Khaldiya	24848075
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Kaifan	24849807
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Shamiya	24848913
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Shuwaikh	24814507
Chest Hospital	24849400	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Nuzha	22526804
Adan Hospital	23940620	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Qadsiya	22515088
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Dasmah	22532265
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
		Shaab	22518752
		Qibla	22459381
		Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
		Mirqab	22456536
		Sharq	22465401
		Salmiya	25746401

## Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144

## CHANGE OF NAME

**I, Ralston** Gaynor Mendes, resident of India, have changed my son's name from Michael Mendes to Michael Jay Mendes vide Gazette no. 1561, dated 21/11/2021. (C1445) 27-4-2022

**I, Nalakat Anwar**, S/o Mohamed Nalakat, Parasseri, P.O. B.P. Angadi, Malappuram District, Kerala. (Indian Passport No. 52388731) have changed my name and address: Nalakath Anwar, S/o Mohammed, Nalakath House, Parasseri, P.O. B.P. Angadi, Talakkad, Malappuram District, Kerala - 676102 (C1444)

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MANCHESTER: Real Madrid's Croatian midfielder Luka Modric fights for the ball with Manchester City's Belgian midfielder Kevin De Bruyne during their UEFA Champions League semifinal first leg match at the Etihad Stadium on April 26, 2022. —AFP

## City let Madrid off the hook in 7-goal classic

**MANCHESTER:** Pep Guardiola said he had to reiterate to his players they had beaten Real Madrid 4-3 in a Champions League classic on Tuesday despite the disappointment of not killing off their semifinal tie at the Etihad. Kevin De Bruyne, Gabriel Jesus, Phil Foden and Bernardo Silva were on target for Guardiola's men, who held a two-goal lead three times. But Karim Benzema's double and a brilliant individual effort from Vinicius Junior gave Madrid hope of another famous Champions League fightback at the Santiago Bernabeu on May 4.

Guardiola lamented letting Liverpool escape "alive" in the Premier League title race after a 2-2 draw at the Etihad nine days ago and will have similar regrets after a blistering opening that could have seen City go 4-0 up inside half an hour. "I want to try to convince to my players that we won the game and we have to go to Bernabeu to play like we did today," said Guardiola. "It doesn't matter if we would have won by one goal or four, in the Bernabeu you have to show who you are otherwise there is no chance. It is a good test for us."

Madrid, the record 13-time European champions, were playing in their 30th semifinal to City's third, but the English champions lived up to their tag as pre-tie favorites early on. Only 92 seconds had passed before the Madrid rearguard was breached by Riyad Mahrez's

quick feet and perfect cross for De Bruyne to stoop and head past Thibaut Courtois. Jesus pounced to make it 2-0 after just 10 minutes when David Alaba failed to deal with De Bruyne's cross. "We started the game very badly, we were too soft in conceding the goals," said Madrid boss Carlo Ancelotti. "After that the team showed what they have shown recently, a great reaction. "We have to defend better. If we defend better in the second leg we'll win. If we don't, we will be out." The Spanish champions-elect were without Casemiro and his absence showed as City cut through midfield on the counter-attack at will.

Guardiola was furious with Mahrez after he selfishly smashed into the side-netting with Foden awaiting the cross for a tap-in. Moments later it was Foden who was guilty of wasting a glorious chance when he dragged wide another pinpoint De Bruyne through ball.

### Benzema rouses Madrid

Benzema dragged Madrid back from the dead to see off Paris Saint-Germain and Chelsea in the previous two rounds and again rose to his side's rescue before half-time. The Frenchman cushioned in his 40th goal of the season off the post from Ferland Mendy's cross. "We never gave up," said Benzema. "Sometimes you have to grin and bear it and we did that. City are a great team

but kept working hard and got the three goals."

Yet, Madrid's good work in steadying the ship towards the end of the first half was undone in another slow start after the break. Mahrez hit the post when one-on-one with Courtois before Dani Carvajal blocked Foden's follow-up on the line. Fernandinho was forced to deputize at right-back after replacing the injured John Stones in the first half. And the City captain had a major role to play in two goals in two minutes at either end.

Firstly, he picked out Foden to restore City's two-goal lead. But the 36-year-old showed his age as Vinicius sprinted clear of his Brazilian compatriot from the halfway line before slotting past Ederson. City continued to create chances at an alarming rate for Ancelotti but it took something special when they did finally get a fourth.

Oleksandr Zinchenko was fouled on the edge of the area, but Romanian referee Istvan Kovacs played advantage and Silva thrashed into the top corner. Again City failed to put the tie to bed as Mahrez was inches away from finding the far corner from the narrowest of angles. But there was a final twist eight minutes from time when Aymeric Laporte handled inside the area. Benzema was the coolest man in the stadium as he chipped the spot-kick down the middle to leave the tie on a knife-edge headed back to the Spanish capital. —AFP

## Forest delay Fulham party as Bournemouth hit back

**LONDON:** Fulham missed a chance to clinch the Championship title as Nottingham Forest beat the promoted leaders 1-0 on Tuesday. Marco Silva's side, who clinched promotion on April 19, had to better the result of second-placed Bournemouth to make sure of earning the trophy. But Philip Zinckernagel's strike sealed a crucial win for Forest, who survived a Fulham barrage of 20 shots at Craven Cottage.

Fulham are eight points clear of Bournemouth and have two games left to guarantee they seal the title. Forest's win moved them up to third and within three points of Bournemouth who host them in a potentially decisive promotion showdown on May 3. Bournemouth had to stage an incredible late comeback from 3-0 down to draw 3-3 at Swansea.

Kieffer Moore's brace and Dominic Solanke's penalty all came in the final 18 minutes of a pulsating contest. Joel Piroe's double inside the opening 12 minutes had set Swansea on their way and Cyrus Christie added the third goal. With three games remaining for both teams, Bournemouth and Forest are locked in a dramatic battle to join Fulham in the Premier League. Relegated Barnsley started life after boss Poya Asbaghi with a 2-0 defeat at home to Blackpool. —AFP

## Benzema keeps Real Madrid alive

**MANCHESTER:** "We have to do a magical thing," said Karim Benzema after Real Madrid performed another Houdini act in the Champions League to escape only 4-3 down from Tuesday's thrilling semi-final, first leg against Manchester City. Benzema set up what should be a special night at the Santiago Bernabeu on May 4 by scoring twice to take his tally for the season to 41 goals in as many games.

Without the Frenchman, Madrid's quest for a 14th European crown would have long since sunk. Benzema scored hat-tricks against both Paris Saint-Germain and Chelsea in the past two rounds as Real walked a tightrope to reach the last four for the 30th time. By contrast, this was just City's third trip to the semifinals, but the English champions justified their status as tournament favorites on the night the Etihad Stadium may finally have warmed to the Champions League.

The competition's anthem was again lustily booed before kick-off by City fans who have not forgotten the financial fair play charges laid against their club by UEFA. Had City not successfully appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport, they would have been banned from the Champions League for the past two seasons. Instead, they are 90 minutes away from reaching the final for a second consecutive season.

It was the first time the City fans had something to cheer in a semifinal. When the sides met at this stage in 2016, Madrid edged a cagey tie 1-0 on aggregate. Last season, City swept aside Paris Saint-Germain but in front of empty stadiums due to coronavirus restrictions. This time it took just 10 minutes for Madrid to be clinging on to stay in the tie. Kevin De Bruyne headed in after 90 seconds before Gabriel Jesus doubled the home side's lead.

Riyad Mahrez and Phil Foden should have put Real out of sight, but PSG and Chelsea had similar regrets only to be stung by the survival instincts of Carlo Ancelotti's men. "When you lose it isn't good," said Ancelotti, dismissing suggestions he



MANCHESTER: Real Madrid's French striker Karim Benzema celebrates after scoring a penalty kick and his team's third goal on April 26, 2022. —AFP

should be pleased to have escaped still alive in the tie. "It is easy to read this game, we were good on the ball and bad without it."

### The holy grail

Once again it was left to Benzema to dig Los Blancos out of the mire by halving the deficit before half-time. A wild second half raged from end to end as Foden and Bernardo Silva extended City's advantage, only to be pegged back by Vinicius Junior's stunning solo run and finish before Benzema had the final word from the penalty spot. "No one can say they didn't enjoy it," said Guardiola. "It was a good advertisement for football."

Eleven years have passed since Guardiola last lifted the European Cup as Barcelona coach. That same year City began their Champions League journey, backed by the wealth of Abu Dhabi that

has made them the dominant force in English football over the past decade. Now in Guardiola's sixth season, conquering Europe remains their holy grail. There has been much frustration at the failures along the way, particularly when Guardiola has at times tried to be too clever by half.

But the sight of Madrid being put to the sword with the eyes of the world on the Etihad was why City have invested so much to bring the Spaniard to east Manchester and keep him around longer than he has stayed at any other club. "There is not one complaint about the result, the performance," added Guardiola. "I'm so proud and incredibly happy with the way we performed." The ultimate test of whether City are ready to win the Champions League awaits next week when the cauldron of the Bernabeu will expect another Real revival. —AFP

## London police face action over sprinter stop and search

**LONDON:** Five police officers could face disciplinary action in relation to the stop and search of British sprinter Bianca Williams, their force said on Wednesday. Williams, a European and Commonwealth 100m gold medallist, accused London's Metropolitan Police of racial profiling after she was stopped in July 2020.

The force later apologized after she disclosed that she and her partner, the Portuguese 400m runner Ricardo dos Santos, had been repeatedly stopped. The organization that deals with police complaints in England and Wales has been reviewing whether forces discriminate against ethnic minorities.

The review includes police stop and search powers, with longstanding evidence that they are used disproportionately. The Metropolitan Police said on Wednesday that five officers would face a gross misconduct hearing as a result of the search in London's Maida Vale area. The athletes' young child was in the car at the time.

The officers will answer claims that they failed to adhere to professional standards, including on use of force, and equality and diversity, the force said. Williams, 28, and dos Santos, 27, were handcuffed and their car was searched but nothing was found. They were not arrested and were allowed on their way.

She told BBC radio after the incident: "They (the police) see a black male driving a nice car, an all-black car, and they assume that he was involved in some sort of gang, drug, violence problem." The Met said at the time that they were satisfied, after reviewing footage from social media and bodycam footage, that the officers acted appropriately. —AFP