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8 Iraq's prized rice crop threatened by drought



12 Ukraine folk rappers boost war morale with Eurovision triumph



16 City keep title fate in their hands despite penalty miss



Palestinians mourn Nakba amid funeral raid outrage

Demos held as tensions remain high over killing of Al Jazeera journalist

News in brief



ABU DHABI: French President Emmanuel Macron offers condolences to newly-elected president of the UAE Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan at Al Mushrif Palace on May 15, 2022. — AFP

World leaders offer condolences

ABU DHABI: The UAE's new president, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, held talks Sunday with French counterpart Emmanuel Macron as world leaders streamed into the Gulf state to pay tribute to his late predecessor. Presidents and monarchs from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Oman and Tunisia and Sudan's de facto ruler were among the leaders to offer their condolences on Saturday. — AFP (See Page 5)

Aussie cricketer Symonds dies

SYDNEY: Australian cricket was reeling Sunday after swashbuckling former all-rounder Andrew Symonds was killed in a car crash - another tragic blow after the recent deaths of fellow greats Shane Warne and Rod Marsh. The 46-year-old, who played 26 Tests and 198 one-day internationals from 1998 to 2009, was involved in a single-car accident outside Townsville in Queensland state on Saturday night. — AFP (See Page 16)



Andrew Symonds

Alien eases Qatar culture shock

DOHA: A cartoon series on an alien who crashlands in World Cup host Qatar aims to ease a culture clash between more than a million foreign football fans and the conservative state's residents. Like the arriving fans, Kawkabani, star of the series launched by Qatar's first animation studio, has to learn Arabic pronunciation, how to drink coffee - and to discover that Qataris prepare way too much food for their guests. — AFP (See Page 11)



Kawkabani is the star of an animated series launched ahead of the World Cup in Qatar.



RAMALLAH: Palestinians wave national flags and carry giant mock keys (as many Palestinians kept the keys to their homes when they were forced into exile in 1948), as they march in a rally marking the 74th anniversary of the "Nakba" or "catastrophe", in this occupied West Bank town on May 15, 2022. — AFP

Officials pay tribute to Abu Akleh

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Embassy of Palestine opened a condolence book on Sunday to pay tribute to martyred Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh. In a press statement, Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub strongly condemned the assassination of Abu Akleh. He noted Abu Akleh was not only a journalist - she was a dear friend and an icon, praising Kuwait's condemnation of the crime of her killing. National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said: "On behalf

of the members of the Kuwaiti National Assembly and the Kuwaiti people to our brothers in Palestine on the death of journalist Abu Akleh - this is evidence of the occupying Zionist regime's lack of respect of any laws. This matter is not surprising and will continue as long as there is no serious action toward the Zionists to confront these moral and inhuman acts."

Saad Al-Saeedi, Al Jazeera Bureau Chief in Kuwait, said: "Today's condolences are for the entire press. The martyr revealed the face of the Zionists and their falsehoods and lies regarding their claims of respect for the press and freedom of speech. They shot her twice - first when they aimed a bullet at her, and then when they targeted her soulless body while she was in her coffin. This is the body that was able to defeat the heavily armed force." (See Page 2)

US mourns 10 victims of racist mass shooting

NEW YORK: Shocked residents of Buffalo, New York gathered Sunday at vigils and church services to mourn 10 people shot and killed by an alleged white supremacist teenager in an act one official described as "domestic terrorism, pure and simple". The shooter, identified as 18-year-old Payton Gendron, was arrested at the scene, a grocery store in a heavily Black neighborhood after police rushed to respond to emergency calls.

He had driven from his hometown of Conklin, more than 320 km away, police said. Gendron was arraigned late Saturday on a single count of first-degree murder and held without bail, the Erie County district attorney's office said. The shooter was wearing body armor, carried an assault rifle and live-streamed the attack, police said, adding that of the 10 dead and three wounded, 11 were African Americans.

Residents gathered outside the store for the vigil, while New York Governor Kathy Hochul, the state's Attorney General Letitia James and Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown addressed a service at the city's True Bethel Baptist Church.

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KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem writes a message of condolence for slain Al Jazeera reporter Shireen Abu Akleh at the Palestinian Embassy on May 15, 2022. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat



BUFFALO, New York: Buffalo police are at the scene of a mass shooting at a supermarket on May 14, 2022. — AFP

Finland announces 'historic' NATO bid

HELSINKI: The Finnish government officially announced its intention to join NATO on Sunday, as Sweden's ruling party held a decisive meeting that could pave the way for a joint application. Less than three months after Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, the move is a stunning reversal of

Finland's policy on military non-alignment dating back more than 75 years.

Sweden, which has been militarily non-aligned for more than two centuries, is expected to follow suit with a similar announcement, possibly on Monday. "This is a historic day. A new era is opening", Finnish President Sauli Niinisto told reporters at a joint press conference with Prime Minister Sanna Marin on Sunday. NATO membership needs to be approved and ratified by all 30 members of the alliance. Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has expressed last-minute objections, but

JERUSALEM: Palestinians rallied Sunday to mark the "Nakba", or catastrophe, 74 years after the Zionist entity's creation, with condemnation spreading over a police raid on the funeral of a slain journalist. The annual demonstrations across the occupied West Bank, annexed east Jerusalem and inside the Zionist entity came with tensions high over the killing of 51-year-old Al Jazeera reporter Shireen Abu Akleh.

The Palestinian-American was shot dead Wednesday during a Zionist raid in Jenin, a West Bank flashpoint. A Palestinian militant wounded in clashes there, Daoud Al-Zubaidi, died from his injuries in a Zionist hospital Sunday. Zionist police have vowed to investigate the chaos that marred the day of Abu Akleh's funeral, after television footage seen worldwide showed pallbearers struggling to stop the casket from toppling to the ground as baton-wielding police descended upon them, grabbing Palestinian flags.

The scenes Friday sparked international condemnation, including from the United States, United Nations and the European Union, with US

Continued on Page 6

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said Sunday that Ankara was not opposed to the two countries' bids. "Turkey made it clear that its intention is not to block membership," Stoltenberg told reporters virtually after alliance foreign ministers met in Berlin. "I am confident we'll be able to find common ground, consensus on how to move on membership issues," Stoltenberg said, adding that he was in touch with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu.

Cavusoglu meanwhile lauded Finland's conciliatory approach in their talks, but criticized Sweden's foreign

Continued on Page 6

Palestine envoy eulogizes fallen reporter: Abu Akleh's death united Muslims and Christians

Crime exposes Zionist regime's lack of respect to law: Speaker Ghanem



KUWAIT: Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub (left) speaks with Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem at the Embassy of Palestine on Sunday. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



A large portrait of fallen journalist Shireen Abu Akleh and a Palestinian flag are draped over the Embassy of Palestine's building.



Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub talks to reporters.



Saad Al-Saeedi, Al Jazeera Bureau Chief in Kuwait, writes a message of condolence for Shireen Abu Akleh.



Canada's Ambassador to Kuwait Aliya Mawani writes in the condolence book.



Ukrainian Ambassador to Kuwait Oleksandr Balanutsa writes a message of condolence.

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Embassy of Palestine opened a condolence book on Sunday to pay tribute to martyred Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh. In a press statement, Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub strongly condemned the assassination of Abu Akleh. He noted Abu Akleh was not only a journalist - she was a dear friend and an icon, praising Kuwait's effort in condemning the crime of her killing.

"Kuwait was one of the first countries to condemn the crime committed by the (Zionist) occupation. We appreciate the continuous support through its media coverage and the great stances adopted by Kuwaiti figures," Tahboub said. "We can only pray for Abu Akleh. I believe God loves her more than anyone on this earth because her death united Muslims and Christians and this showed how Jerusalem is united for all religions. Even her coffin terrified an entire army with weapons," the ambassador added.

UN Secretary General's Representative and Resident Coordinator to Kuwait Tareq Al-Sheikh affirmed what the UN Secretary-General said in his statement on respecting international conventions and human rights, especially in giving full freedom to journalists to work without any harassment or intimidation of being targeted.

Sheikh called for a transparent investigation into

this incident. "We would like to emphasize respect for the press and their right for safe coverage, which is an important requirement for all. We hope to stress the need to respect the resolutions issued by the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council on the Palestinian cause," he added.

Lack of respect

Meanwhile, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said: "On behalf of the members of the Kuwaiti National Assembly and the Kuwaiti people to our brothers in Palestine on the death of journalist Abu Akleh - this is evidence of the occupying Zionist regime's lack of respect of any laws. This matter is not surprising and will continue as long as there is no serious action toward the Zionists in order to confront these immoral and inhuman acts." He affirmed Kuwait's support for Palestinians and their steadfastness in this struggle against the brutal Zionist occupation of Palestinian lands.

Saad Al-Saeedi, Al Jazeera Bureau Chief in Kuwait, said: "Today's condolences are for all the press. The martyr revealed the face of the Zionists and their falsehoods and lies regarding their claims of respect for the press and freedom of speech. They shot her twice. When they aimed a bullet at her, and when they targeted her soulless body while she was in her coffin. This is the body that was able to defeat the heavily armed force."



Ambassador thanks Kuwait for its support



French Ambassador to Kuwait Claire Le Flecher writes in the condolence book.



Head of Armenian church in Kuwait Bedros Manuelian writes a message of condolence.

Saeedi vowed that Al Jazeera network will pursue this case legally. "There are UN resolutions condemning this act. There are ongoing investigations, and it is too early to talk about these results, but certainly, the Palestinian Authority and Al Jazeera will pursue those who committed this ugly crime," he said. Father Pigol Anba-Bishoy of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Kuwait condemned the heinous crime. "We do not believe in violence. God created us for life and not for death," he said.

"I offer my deepest condolences on the killing of journalist Shireen Abu Akleh. She was a light and a role model for so many and our thoughts and prayers are with her family and the Palestinian people at this difficult time. Canada calls for a thorough investigation into this tragic incident," Canada's Ambassador to Kuwait Aliya Mawani said. "Scenes from the funeral procession are very distressing.

Mourners should have been permitted to grieve in dignity. Journalists risk their lives every day to uncover truths and help us better understand our world. We must ensure their rights are upheld globally and that they are free and safe to do their important work," she added.

"Extremely sad and deplorable news for the family, the international community and the freedom of the press. On Nakba day, I convey my heartfelt condolences to and sympathy to the family of Shireen Abu Akleh, her colleagues, friends and loved ones, even more after seeing the ugly use of force and the disrespectful behavior of members of the (Zionist) security forces against participants of the mourning procession," German Ambassador to Kuwait Stefan Mobs said.

Abu Akleh was executed by Zionist occupation forces on Wednesday while she was covering a raid in Jenin refugee camp.

Speaker Ghanem offers condolences to UAE President



ABU DHABI: Kuwaiti National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem offers condolences to UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. —National Assembly photos

ABU DHABI: Kuwaiti National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and his accompanying delegation on Sunday offered condolences to UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Al Nahyan family members over the passing of Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan. The Kuwaiti speaker's accompanying delegation comprised Parliament Deputy Speaker Ahmad Al-Shohumi and a number of MPs, Al-Dustoor news network reported.

Ghanem and his delegation arrived in Abu Dhabi earlier in the day. They were welcomed by UAE Federal National Council's Speaker Saqr Ghabash and Kuwaiti Ambassador to the UAE Salah Al-Buainan and embassy staff. —KUNA

India declares one day of mourning

KUWAIT: Government of India has declared one day national mourning on May 14, 2022 as a mark of respect to Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the President of the UAE and Ruler of Abu Dhabi who passed away on Friday. The country's national flag was flown at half-mast on the day of mourning throughout India on all buildings where the national flag is flown regularly and there was no official entertainment on the day, according to a press release issued by the Ministry of External Affairs.

President of India Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi have expressed condolences at the demise of Sheikh Khalifa. In their messages, they noted that he was a statesman and a visionary leader and recalled his contribution to the strengthening of India-UAE bilateral relations and the welfare of the Indian community in UAE.

"I am deeply saddened to know about the passing away of HH Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed. He was a great statesman and visionary leader under whom India-UAE relations prospered. The heartfelt condolences of the people of India are with the people of UAE. May his soul rest in peace," the prime minister tweeted on Friday.

"We deeply mourn the passing away



KUWAIT: The Indian flag flying at half-mast at the Indian embassy.

of His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE. He will be remembered as a leader who modernized and empowered the United Arab Emirates. This laid the foundation of the transformation of the India-UAE relationship," India's External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar tweeted on Friday. India's national flag was flown at half-mast on Saturday at the Embassy of India, Kuwait as a mark of respect to the departed leader.



Kuwaiti National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem arrives to offer condolences on the passing of Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Local

Kuwait spared early summer start, but sandstorm problem persists

Kuwait funds KD 4 million project in Iraq to help address dust issue

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: People have noticed changes in the weather in Kuwait, as usually in this period of the year, the temperature is above 40 degrees Celsius. Also, sandstorms are becoming more frequent, when in the past they appeared later in the year.

Meteorologist and Astronomer Adel Al-Saadoun said climatic cycles don't repeat annually in exact timings of the year. "Climatic cycles are related to the Sun and the directions of wind. This year summer didn't start early as usual, and the weather is still pleasant during the evening and early morning," he pointed out.

"Global warming during the past five years caused record temperatures not only in Kuwait, but in other countries around the world including the United States, the Amazon, and many other parts of the world. There may be different reasons behind this, including the Earth's rotation, atmospheric pressure or other factors," added Saadoun.

The Indian monsoon depression over India and East Asia affects our climate. "The wind moving from the north brings dust to our area. When it rains there, it affects our climate. So, when the rains started earlier this year, it brought sandstorms earlier. The dust moves from north to south, and the wind is

faster. But in general, the amount of dust this year is not so great yet," he explained. According to Saadoun, weather prediction can only be precise up to four days in advance. "If the forecast is made for a longer period, then it won't always be correct, as it's related to earth's climate," he added.

Kuwait is financing a project in Iraq which should improve the dust problem in Kuwait. "A great part of the dust coming from the north is due to an abandoned area in Iraq. After people left this area, they called it Almgabra (covered by dust). Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development has invested KD 4 million to develop this area. So, after farmers will cultivate this area and benefit from agricultural products, the amount of dust and sand coming to Kuwait will drop," he said.

Saadoun also highlighted that financial losses caused by the changing weather are mainly because the amounts of sand that had to be cleared from the main roads were done by private companies. He said cloudseeding projects carried out in some neighboring Gulf countries will not be done here anytime soon. "The decision to realize such big projects will take time in Kuwait. The artificial rain project needs a lot of equipment and a large budget, so I guess it will take some time. When it does happen, it will reduce dust and sandstorms," he concluded.



KUWAIT: Vehicles drive in dusty weather on Fourth Ring Road in Kuwait on May 13, 2022. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Health Ministry sets new timings at labor testing centers

KUWAIT: The Health Ministry announced new timings at labor testing centers on Sunday as Minister Dr Khaled Al-Saeed paid a visit to Shuwaikh's center to inspect the process of work. The new timings at the Shuwaikh, Sabhan, Jahra, Ali Abdullah Al-Salem centers go in effect as of Monday as follows:

Sunday to Thursday:

- 7:30 am to 1:00 pm for domestic helpers (accompanied by Kuwaiti sponsor).
- 1:00 pm to 7:00 pm for the remaining

expat labor categories.

Saturday:

- 9:00 am to 3:00 pm for domestic helpers (accompanied by Kuwaiti sponsor).

Making an appointment online is required prior to the visit, the ministry said in a statement. Health Minister Dr Saeed's visit to the Shuwaikh labor testing center came following complaints ranging from lack of order to slow work at labor centers in recent days.

He met and spoke with employees and people waiting for inspection and gave instructions to organize and facilitate work for the public, the ministry said in a statement to the press.

Dr Saeed was accompanied by Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health Dr Mustafa Reda as well as Director of the Public Health Department Dr Mohammad Al-Saeedan.



KUWAIT: Health Minister Dr Khaled Al-Saeed tours the Shuwaikh labor testing center on Sunday. —Health Ministry photos



Kuwait delivers on Intellectual Property Rights Protection

By Pete Cyrus Mehravari, the United States Intellectual Property Attache for the Middle East and North Africa

Imagine you developed an innovative new technology that would revolutionize the way that people lived or created a new hit television show. What would you look for when deciding where to invest in commercializing your invention or producing your TV show? Likely you would select a place where you knew the local government would protect your invention, creative work, and your company name from unscrupulous imitators looking to profit from your valuable time and work. Increasingly, Kuwait is becoming one of these places. In 2022, after 25 years, Kuwait has achieved what many countries still hope to accomplish: removal from the Office of the United States Trade Representative's Special 301 Report for countries that do not sufficiently protect and enforce intellectual property rights.

Intellectual property protection and enforcement are essential parts of developing a diversified and knowledge-based economy where innovative and creative industries thrive and generate high quality private sector jobs. As Kuwait increasingly seeks to attract investment across its economy, owners of inventions, protected by patents, and creative works, protected by copyrights, must know their technological and artistic investments are protected from unauthorized

imitation. Likewise, these companies' names and logos, protected by trademarks, and valuable commercial knowhow, protected by trade secrets, also require robust protection to allow consumers to safely differentiate between their and their competitors' products and content. Countries that protect intellectual property attract investments from major global companies and grow dynamic startup and entrepreneur hubs. However, if intellectual property is not protected, respected, or valued, be it in the form of online piracy, the sale of counterfeit items in local markets, or the theft of trade secrets, these investments and entrepreneurs will seek safer markets.

Kuwait's focus on enhancing intellectual property rights protections and cracking down on violations demonstrates that it is serious about preparing itself for its future economy. I have observed this commitment firsthand in Kuwait ever since I arrived in 2018. Kuwaiti officials across several agencies remedied many deficiencies that kept Kuwait on the Special 301 Report since 1997. The government passed the 2019 Copyright Law and increased their inspections and enforcement at ports of entry, in local markets, and online. Authorities closed businesses selling counterfeit and pirated goods. They also developed online portals where intellectual property rights owners and consumers could submit complaints and know they would be heard. The next time you see counterfeit or pirated goods in Kuwait, please do use these new resources and help keep Kuwait clean of intellectual property violations. With proper teamwork between the Kuwait government, intellectual property owners, and consumers, counterfeiters and content pirates will increasingly find Kuwait is not a welcoming market for their fakes.

Kuwait wins gold in Arab Artificial Intelligence Olympiad



AMMAN: Kuwait's team won first place in the internet of things category in the Arab Artificial Intelligence Olympiad (AIO 2022) held in Jordan. Students

Abdulrazaq Al-Qallaf and Hawraa Merza, representing the Youth Public Authority, brought the gold medal to Kuwait through their 'Blue Tech Lunar Base' project.

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Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
Website: www.kuwaittimes.comNo Kuwaiti victims
in Buffalo mass
shooting: Consulate

KUWAIT: No Kuwaitis were amongst the casualties of the Buffalo mass shooting, said a Kuwaiti diplomatic source late Saturday. The Kuwaiti Consulate in New York affirmed in a press statement that no Kuwaitis were amongst the 13 casualties of the Buffalo mass shooting. It urged Kuwaitis to avoid the place of the incident and obey the local authorities' instructions. The statement called on Kuwaiti citizens to contact the Consulate in New York on +19172426688 in case of emergency. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The vehicle involved in the fatal accident.



Paramedics examine the two people rescued from the waters.

Two dead, two
injured in 6.5
Ring Road crash

KUWAIT: Two people died, and two others were injured when their vehicle crashed into a light post on 6.5 Ring Road on Saturday. Firemen rushed to the scene in response to an emergency call, and they removed the bodies and injured people from the car. An investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the accident, Kuwait Fire Force said.

Separately, firemen rescued two people after their inflatable boat sunk in Kuwait Bay. The two held on to a buoy until fire boats arrived and saved them, Kuwait Fire Force said, adding that they were suffering from exhaustion.

Political turmoil leads to loss of
confidence in reform: Al-Shall

Speedy government formation needed to handle post oil price fall period

KUWAIT: The ongoing political turmoil in Kuwait, highlighted by repeated standoffs between the legislative and executive authorities, is causing the public to lose confidence in reform and state institutions, which poses critical impediments to national security, Al-Shall report reads.

"By May 12, 2022, 514 days have passed since the last elected National Assembly. During this time, three governments formed and resigned, with the latest resignation on April 5, 2022. The total number of working days for three governments was 383 days, of which 131 days for handling urgent matters. In other words, there was one day dedicated to urgent matters for every 2.9 working days, for working with supposedly assuming full powers. In fact, the other days were lost in attempts to resolve disputes. This is a chronic phenomenon which, we can almost ascertain, does not occur in normal conditions for any country in the world or at a time when the world and the region are troubled. Analysts, instead, have assimilated these conditions to the era before the turmoil of the 1980s or the era that preceded the first and second world wars," Al-Shall said in its weekly report released Sunday.

"We believe three possible reasons explain the continued phenomena that is contrary to logic. The first is the lack of awareness of the detrimental effects the governance vacuum has on the country's stability and future. The second reason is ceding to the inability to form a different and capable government, resulting in being indifferent about the existence or absence of a government. The last reason is the costly bet on buying time, perhaps after a long idle summer comes a miracle that resolves this administrative dilemma. If any of the mentioned possible reasons is actually true, hopefully not, more wasted time will result in the inability of any future administration to achieve any desired reforms. The 'right' stance in such conditions is a 'worst case scenario' rather than an optimistic outlook," the report adds.

Loss of confidence

"The most critical impediments to national security, that are unfortunately currently crystallizing, are the loss of confidence in reform, fear of the future, the erosion of the state's institutions authority including its three constitutional powers, the spread of corruption and the impunity of senior corrupt officials, all of which are definitely not in the interest of anyone regardless of the dif-



ferent political orientations," the report warns. "Economically and more dangerously, the administrative failures and wasted time will be compen-

Time wasted
in attempts
to resolve
disputes

sated by populist parliamentary and governmental decisions, those that will deepen the structural imbalances of the economy, undermine the econ-

omy's strength, widen the financial deficit, erode job opportunities for four hundred thousand incoming labor force and increase the demographic gap quantitatively and qualitatively with an overwhelming increase in marginalized expatriate workers."

"When the global geopolitical conditions stabilize and oil prices begin to fall, all the issues Kuwait has suffered from in the few years following the autumn of 2014 will resurface. With the depleted liquidity of its public reserves, Kuwait will resort to the international borrowing market. All of this can only be managed by a prudent administration, and can only be remedied by a speedy government formation. Kuwait would have been in a much better situation had such a wise decision been taken in December 2020. Despite the delay and its huge costs, this decision has not yet lost all its effectiveness," the report concludes.

Celebrating 15
years of Gulf
Journal of Oncology

By Abdellatif Sharaa

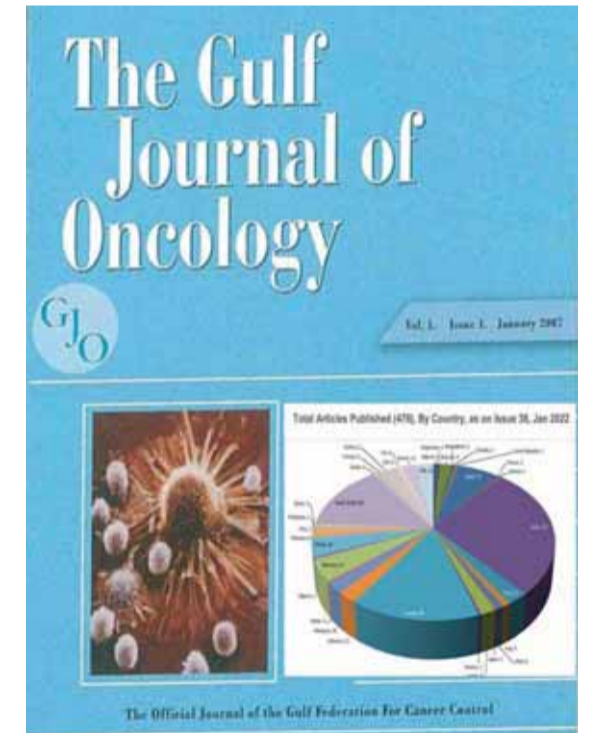
KUWAIT: Secretariat General of the Gulf Federation for Cancer Control celebrated the 15th anniversary of the publication of the Gulf Journal of Oncology during a press conference held in the presence of several members of the association, during which research published on cancer in these 15 years was reviewed.

Secretary General of the Association, Founder and Editor-in-Chief of the Journal Dr Khalid Al-Saleh said the number of published papers has reached 478 from 35 countries around the world. He said the journal has received recognition as a reference journal in the American national register PubMed and Medline since Jan 2009, and it is now a refer-

ence for scientific research related to cancer in the Middle East.

Saleh said the journal is the main source to encourage researchers in GCC countries, which publishes their outstanding papers that receive approval. He said 50 papers are published every year, adding it receives more than 150 papers annually from countries around the world. He said 50 percent of the papers are approved, while the waiting time for publication is six months to a year. The association publishes three issues annually.

Dr Saleh said this journal is published on the Gulf Federation for Cancer Control webpage www.gffcc.org. Researchers can submit their papers online on www.gffcc.org/journal. Dr Saleh thanked Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences for its support, besides the National Campaign for Cancer Awareness (CAN), for their technical support for the journal and all societies in the GCC, and members of the association for their continued support for this journal, which is an important source of scientific publications.

Customs officers foil attempts to
smuggle 730 kg drugs into Kuwait

KUWAIT: This handout photo released by the Interior Ministry shows 600 of hashish caught before being smuggled into Kuwait.



This handout photo released by the Interior Ministry shows three persons arrested on charges of attempting to smuggle 130 kilograms of shabu into Kuwait.

KUWAIT: Customs officers seized nearly 730 kilograms of drugs that were on their way to be smuggled into Kuwait, the Interior Ministry announced on Saturday.

Officers were able to stop a boat that was mak-

ing its way into the territorial waters towards Kubbar Island. They found 600 kilograms of hashish on the boat, the ministry said.

Meanwhile, customs officers arrested three people who tried to smuggle 130 kilograms of

shabu found on their boat that was stopped on its way to Kuwait. The suspects and contrabands were referred to the relevant authorities for further action, the Interior Ministry said in a press statement.



Okinawa marks 50 years since US rule ended

'My body my choice': Thousands rally across US for abortion rights

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Crisis-hit Lebanon goes to polls

Major test for new opposition groups bent on ousting the ruling elite



JOUNIEH, Lebanon: A Lebanese woman registers to vote for the parliamentary election at a polling station in the town of Jounieh, north of the capital Beirut, on May 15, 2022. —AFP

BEIRUT: Lebanon held its first election Sunday since a painful economic crisis dragged it to the brink of becoming a failed state, a major test for new opposition groups bent on ousting the ruling elite. But few observers expected a seismic shift, with all levers of political power firmly in the hands of traditional sectarian parties and an electoral system seen as rigged in their favour.

Lebanon shares power among its religious communities, and politics is often treated as a family business. By convention, the president is a Maronite Christian, the premier a Sunni Muslim, and the parliament speaker a Shiite. "We tried this current political class before, and now is the time to bring in new faces," said 28-year-old Beirut voter Nayla after casting her ballot.

A new generation of independent candidates hopes to kindle the kind of change that a 2019 protest movement failed to deliver, and looked likely to do better than the single assembly seat they clinched last time. But most of parliament's 128 seats are expected to remain in the grip of the entrenched groups blamed for the country's woes—chiefly the economic downturn that is the worst crisis since the 1975-1990 civil war.

Turnout in the election was low, with only about 25 percent of registered voters casting their ballots by 3:00 pm, according to the interior ministry. "It

seems almost impossible to imagine Lebanon voting for more of the same," said Sam Heller, an analyst with the Century Foundation. "And yet that appears to be the likeliest outcome."

Years of crisis

Lebanon's crisis has been so severe that more than 80 percent of the population is now considered poor by the United Nations, with the most desperate increasingly attempting perilous boat crossings to flee to Europe. The Lebanese pound has lost 95 percent of its value, people's savings are blocked in banks, the minimum wage won't buy a tank of petrol and mains electricity comes on only two hours a day.

Deepening the country's woes, much of the capital was devastated by the deadly August 2020 explosion of volatile chemicals that had been left for years in a portside warehouse, one of the largest non-nuclear blasts ever recorded. Top political barons have stalled an investigation into the disaster, and legal proceedings against the Central Bank governor over alleged financial crimes are equally floundering.

Lebanon, once described as the Switzerland of the Middle East, ranked second-to-last behind Afghanistan in the latest World Happiness Index released in March. The army deployed across the country Sunday to secure the election, which

Lebanon's international donors have stressed is a prerequisite for financial aid crucial to rescue it from bankruptcy. After an underwhelming campaign stifled by the all-consuming economic turmoil, voting was only disrupted by minor incidents in some polling stations.

'Getting back our Lebanon'

Despite government assurances that polling stations would have power on election day, local media reported blackouts in some centres. Videos shared online showed people sporting their candidate's colours and shepherding voters into polling booths, continuing a decades-old trend of vote buying.

At one candidate's rally in the northern city of Tripoli, some well-wishers disappointed by the lack of cash handouts made off with the plastic chairs. The outgoing parliament was dominated by the Iran-backed Shiite movement Hezbollah and its two main allies, the Shiite Amal party of speaker Nabih Berri, who has held the job since 1992, and President Michel Aoun's Christian Free Patriotic Movement.

One of the most notable changes in the electoral landscape is the absence of former prime minister Saad Hariri, which leaves parts of the Sunni vote up for grabs by new players. For many voters, the election was a chance to vent their anger at the entire ruling elite. "These elections are first and foremost a means of rooting out this political class and getting back our Lebanon," said Shadi, a 38-year-old whose flat was destroyed in the port explosion. Like many others who posted pictures on social media Sunday, he chose to dip his middle finger in the bottle of electoral blue ink after casting his ballot. —AFP

Russian radio voices sow fear in Ukraine war zone

LYSYCHANSK, Ukraine: The portable radio in the dark cellar of the rocket-damaged kindergarten was transmitting news in Russian over whistling airwaves about the Kremlin's military triumphs in Ukraine. The six frightened women and lone man cowering in the heart of the east Ukrainian war zone had no idea whether to believe the monotone voice or who was actually patrolling the streets of the besieged city of Lysychansk above their heads.

All they knew was that their building was hit a few days earlier by a Grad volley that left the tail end of one of the unexploded rockets sticking out of the pavement at a sharp angle just steps from the back door. Their feverish fears vacillated between the idea that their shelter's lone entrance might get blocked by falling debris and that the Kremlin's forces might come knocking unannounced.

"The Russians on the radio just said that they have captured Bakhmut. Is that true?" Natalia Georgiyevna anxiously asked about a city 30 miles (50 kilometres) to the southwest that remains under full Ukrainian control. "We do not really know anything," her neighbour Viktoria Viktorovna added from a corner cot positioned just outside the beam of light illuminating a lone patch of the dank cellar. "I guess we still have the Ukrainians here, no?"

Nearly three months of war have transformed this coal mining city of 100,000 mostly Russian speakers into a wasteland that lacks everything from water and power to cell phone service. Most people who crawl out of their shelters during afternoon lulls in fighting make a beeline for the city's lone natural spring to stock up on water that they must boil to make safe to drink. —AFP



PRAGUE, Czech Republic: Children hold Ukrainian flags as hundreds of demonstrators, mainly Ukrainian refugees living in Prague, take part in an anti-war protest on the Old Town square in Prague on May 15, 2022. —AFP



Few expect major change

New UAE president meets Macron as leaders stream in

ABU DHABI: The UAE's new president, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, held talks Sunday with French counterpart Emmanuel Macron as world leaders streamed in to the oil-rich Gulf state to pay tribute to his late predecessor. Macron, on his first foreign trip since his second term started last week, expressed his condolences to the leader dubbed "MBZ" following the death of his half-brother Sheikh Khalifa on Friday after a long illness.

Macron, the first Western leader to pay his respects, will be followed by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, US Vice President Kamala Harris and Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Israel's president and the king of Spain, among a long list of dignitaries.

The United Arab Emirates has begun wielding increased influence in the Middle East and further afield due to its wealth, oil resources and strategic location. MBZ has been quietly running the country since 2014 when Sheikh Khalifa, his 73-year-old half-brother, was sidelined by a stroke. The cause of his death was not announced.

Presidents and monarchs from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Oman and Tunisia and Sudan's de facto ruler were among the leaders to offer their condolences on Saturday. On Sunday, Qatar's emir, Bahrain's king and the Palestinian, German and Indonesian presidents were among more than 20 senior officials expected.

Macron, in his talks with Sheikh Mohamed, 61, expressed his "sincere condolences to his family and the people" over Sheikh Khalifa's death, according to



ABU DHABI: French President Emmanuel Macron (L) meets newly-elected president of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan at Al Mushrif Palace in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, on May 15, 2022. —AFP

the French presidential office. "The United Arab Emirates are a strategic partner for France, a fact that is borne out by the degree of our cooperation in areas as varied as defence, culture and education," it added.

Flags at half-mast

Flags are at half-mast around the country, which is observing 40 days of mourning for Sheikh Khalifa who took over after the death of his father, founding president Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan, in 2004. Sheikh Mohamed was chosen to head the government of the desert state in a unanimous vote Saturday by leaders of the country's seven emirates, as had been widely expected.

MBZ's close ally, Saudi Arabia's de facto leader Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, called to congratulate the new president and India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted to commend his "dynamic and visionary leadership".

Blinken and Harris were due Monday for a visit that could help repair ties strained since President Joe Biden replaced Donald Trump in the White House. The two sides have been at odds over Abu Dhabi's refusal to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Washington's reopening of nuclear talks with Iran, long accused by Gulf states of creating regional chaos.

Both Macron and Johnson were making their second visits to Abu Dhabi in recent months. Johnson's visit in March failed to convince the UAE and Saudi Arabia to pump more oil after Russia's war in Ukraine sent markets into turmoil.

The wealthy UAE has emerged as a leader of a reshaped Middle East, forging ties with Zionist entity and joining a Saudi-led war against Iran-backed rebels in Yemen. The UAE signed a 14-billion-euro contract for 80 Rafale warplanes during Macron's previous visit in December. —AFP

CONSUMER PROTECTION DEPARTMENT

RECALL INFORMATION

GLE-Class (167 Platform)

GLS-Class (167 Platform)

Mercedes-Benz Cars
Model: GLE/GLS-Class (167 Platform)
Model year: 2019 – 2022

RECALL REASON

Mercedes-Benz AG has determined that on certain GLE and GLS (167 platform) vehicles the bolting of the 48V ground connection under the passenger seat might be fastened with an insufficient torque. In this case, the cable lug of the ground line might not be fixed correctly. Subsequently, the electric resistance of the connection might increase. In combination with the high electrical currents potentially flowing through this connection, the temperature in this area might rise. As a consequence, a risk of fire cannot be ruled out completely.

REMEDY

As a precautionary measure, Mercedes-Benz AG, via its Mercedes-Benz service partners, will check the bolting of the ground connection on the affected vehicles and correct it, if necessary. The required work will certainly be carried out free of charge.

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Phone 1-887-888 at Extension 1721, 1722, 1723, 1724, 1726, 1731, 1732
Mercedes-Benz Service Centre – Al Shuwaikh Industrial Area – 11 Street
Mercedes-Benz Service Centre – Al Shuwaikh Industrial Area – 13 Street
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This Recall is run pursuant to articles (42,43,44,45,46 and 47) of no. (39/2015) issuing the executive by laws of law no. (39/2014) on Consumer Protection.

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International

Discontent simmers as Okinawa marks 50 years since US rule ended

Anniversary marked with official ceremonies in Tokyo and Okinawa

TOKYO: The Japanese island of Okinawa marks 50 years since the end of US rule Sunday, with discontent simmering about the ongoing presence of American troops and fears about growing regional tensions. The post-World War II US occupation of Japan lasted until 1952, but it took another 20 years for Okinawa, the country's southernmost prefecture, to regain its sovereignty.

The anniversary was marked with official ceremonies in Tokyo and Okinawa, with the island's governor Denny Tamaki calling attention to the "excessive burden" he said is placed on residents in his prefecture as it hosts the bulk of United States bases. The long-festering controversy was highlighted by Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, too. "The government takes this fact seriously, and will continue to make an utmost effort to reduce this burden," he told the ceremony in Okinawa. Longstanding concerns for Okinawans about the US troop presence—and more recent worries about the threat of a military confrontation involving China—remained palpable.

"I'm not in the mood to celebrate at all," Okinawan native Jinshiro Motoyama told AFP ahead of the anniversary as he sat outside a Tokyo government building on a week-long hunger strike. Like many Okinawans, he feels the region bears an unfair burden in hosting the majority of about 55,000 US military personnel in Japan and is protesting to draw attention to the issue.

Okinawa accounts for just 0.6 percent of Japan's landmass but hosts about 70 percent of all US military bases and facilities. And that presence has pro-

duced a host of issues—from crashes and noise pollution to crimes involving servicemen, including the 1995 gang rape of a local schoolgirl.

"Only when issues surrounding US bases have been resolved in a way that satisfies Okinawans can we celebrate," said Motoyama, a 30-year-old graduate student. A nationwide poll by broadcaster NHK this month found 80 percent of Japanese consider the current disproportionate distribution of United States forces "wrong" or "somewhat wrong."

'Island of peace'

A key flashpoint is the planned relocation of Okinawa's Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, sometimes dubbed the "world's most dangerous base" due to its proximity to residential areas. It is scheduled to move to less-populated Henoko, but many Okinawans want it transferred elsewhere in the country, with 70 percent of local voters rejecting the relocation plan in a non-binding 2019 referendum.

"Upon Okinawa's reversion, the prefecture and the central government agreed they will aspire to make it the island of peace, but fifty years on, that goal is not achieved yet," Tamaki told the ceremony on Sunday.

Construction in Henoko has continued nonetheless, with the central government defending it as the "only possible way" to mitigate Futenma's dangers and maintain the Japan-US alliance's deterrence. The US military presence accounts for around five percent of Okinawa's annual income, but it remains Japan's poorest prefecture, with a child poverty rate



TOKYO, Japan: A counter-protester (2nd R) confronts anti-US military base protesters (not pictured) take part in a march to mark the 50th anniversary of the US return of Okinawa to Japan, in Tokyo on May 15, 2022. —AFP

of nearly 30 percent, more than twice the national average.

Local officials argue transferring some of the bases elsewhere would free up land that could bring in other revenue, including by attracting more tourists. US President Joe Biden visits Japan later this month for the first time since taking office, with concerns about China's growing military assertiveness in the region likely to be on the agenda.

"I am profoundly grateful for Japan's resolute support for democracy, freedom, and the rule of law and for Okinawa's contribution to advancing these

ideals," Biden said in a statement released Sunday. In recent months, Japanese officials have expressed concern about stepped-up local Chinese marine activity including hundreds of take-offs from an aircraft carrier.

That makes Okinawa an increasingly strategic location for US and Japanese troops, and has raised worries among residents about whether they could be caught up in any future conflict. "When you think of Okinawa, the first thing that crosses your mind might be its beautiful sea, clear blue sky, good food and kind residents," Motoyama said. — AFP

Australia PM makes final push for re-election

SYDNEY: Australia's conservative prime minister sounded the gun on the last lap of a bitterly-fought election campaign Sunday, admitting "not everything went to plan" during the country's pandemic response. At an official launch of his party's election campaign ahead of the May 21 vote, conservative Scott Morrison acknowledged missteps during the crisis but declared "Australia has prevailed"

In reality, the election campaign has been underway for months—if not years—but the event offered Morrison a chance to rally the party base and appeal to voters who appear set to boot him out after three tumultuous years in office.

According to the latest opinion polls, the centre-left Labor party, led by Anthony Albanese is expected to win Saturday's vote. But both sides know an upset is still possible. Morrison's tenure has been beset by a rolling series of crises, from climate-fuelled droughts, bushfires and floods to the global Covid-19 pandemic.

"It has been one of the most challenging times we have ever known," Morrison said, while insisting the country was now "heading in the right direction." The 54-year-old from Sydney's affluent Eastern Suburbs has come under fire for a glacial vaccine rollout that helped make sure Australia's borders were shut for the better part of two years.

He is also facing anger over the government's handling of natural disasters and reluctance to pivot away from fossil fuels. Polls consistently show



MELBOURNE, Australia: Independent candidate Monique Ryan (C) smiles at a pre-polling centre in Melbourne on May 12, 2022 with Ryan ahead in the polls to defeat Australia's treasurer Josh Frydenberg in the usually safe seat Liberal of Kooyong in the May 21 general election. —AFP

around 70 percent of Australians want more action on climate change, but Morrison has repeatedly rejected calls for ambitious climate targets or scaling back the country's vast coal mining industry.

Seeking to make the election a choice rather than a referendum on his leadership, Morrison has painted the Labor party as "loose units" on the economy

and an Albanese premiership as an "experiment."

To sweeten the deal, Morrison also announced plans to allow first-time buyers to use their pension savings to purchase a home. That policy is likely to be popular among young Australians struggling to get access to a turbocharged property market but is also likely to stoke home price inflation further. —AFP

Three children, three soldiers killed in Pakistan suicide blast

ISLAMABAD: Suicide bomber killed three children and three soldiers in an attack on a military vehicle in Pakistan's restive northwestern region bordering Afghanistan, officials said on Sunday. The mountainous frontier separating Pakistan and Afghanistan has long been a hive of militant activity, with fighters using the porous border to escape state security forces.

On Saturday evening a suicide bomber detonated in a small market near Miran Shah in North Waziristan, just 26 kilometres (16 miles) southeast of Afghanistan. Pakistan's army said three children aged between four and 11 years-old were killed in the "suicide blast" alongside three soldiers in the heavily militarised area.

"The bomber came by foot and blew himself up when a vehicle of security forces passed by," a local government official told AFP on condition of anonymity. Pakistan prime minister Shehbaz Sharif said that "murderers of innocent children are enemies of humanity and Islam".

"We will not sit in peace until we hunt down these barbarians and those who patronise them," he added in a statement. The attack has not yet been claimed by any militant groups. The Pakistani Taliban-Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) — has a long history of plotting strikes in the region.

The group is responsible for some of the bloodiest chapters of recent Pakistani history. But after a brutal massacre of nearly 150 schoolchildren in Peshawar, a 2014 military offensive crushed the movement and drove its remaining members over the border into Afghanistan. — AFP

Hundreds stage anti-French protest in Chad

N'DJAMENA, Chad: Hundreds of people demonstrated Saturday against France in the Chadian capital, accusing the former colonial power of supporting the country's military junta. Demonstrators in N'Djamena burned at least two French flags and vandalised several petrol stations belonging to the French oil giant Total, an AFP journalist reported.

Two police officers were hurt in the violence, according to a fellow officer who asked to remain anonymous. The authorities had given permission for the protest organised by the civil society platform Wakit Tamma Cette, but deployed a large police presence around the marchers.

The government later issued a statement saying "Chad's problems should remain strictly national ones and should be debated among Chadians." It invited "all Chadians to join the inclusive dialogue process" paving the way for "free and democratic elections" following an 18-month transition period.

Communications Minister Abderaman Koulamallah also acknowledged "the international community and friendly countries like France for their constant support to the Chadian people during this transition". The opposition said public awareness was growing.

"We are glad that Chadians are becoming more aware of our struggle and are joining us," Max Loalngar, a Wakit Tamma coordinator, told AFP. "France installing dictators on our heads. We only ask that our people be respected."

The landlocked African nation was thrown into turmoil after long-time leader Idriss Deby Itno died fighting rebels in April 2021. His son Mahamat Idriss



N'DJAMENA, Chad: Demonstrators carry placards which read 'No to France' as they take part in an anti-French protest in N'Djamena on May 14, 2022. —AFP

Deby Itno and a military junta seized control but he promised free elections this year.

He was swiftly supported by France, the European Union and the African Union—powers that imposed sanctions on military men who carried out coups elsewhere in Africa—mainly because Chad is a key player in the fight against jihadists in the Sahel.

Ahead of these elections, he had wanted a national dialogue to start on May 10. Before that dialogue, the government and more than 40 opposition groups had sent delegations to Doha for preliminary talks.

But they spent much of the time in luxury hotels and had yet to meet face-to-face, as the Qatari mediators seek to establish enough common ground for the two sides to begin full talks. Two weeks ago, the Chadian Foreign Ministry said it had agreed "to postpone the inclusive national dialogue to a later date to be decided, after consultations with the relevant institutions and political actors".

France then urged Chad to hold "without delay" the landmark national talks with opposition forces that have been postponed indefinitely. —AFP

Armed groups clash west of Libyan capital

TRIPOLI: Violent clashes rocked a western area of the Libyan capital overnight and until Sunday morning, an interior ministry source said, as local media reported the death of a militia commander. Janzour, on the western outskirts of Tripoli, is home to the headquarters of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya as well as guarded compounds reserved for staff of foreign diplomatic missions.

"The clashes between armed groups broke out late Saturday night and continued until Sunday morning in the area between the towns of Sayyad and Janzour," the ministry source told AFP, asking to remain anonymous. The fighting "damaged private homes" and for several hours forced the closure of the coastal road that runs from Tripoli to the Tunisian border, said the source who did not report any casualties.

Local media reported the death of a commander of one of the groups in Sayyad, a small town about 25 kilometres (15 miles) west of Tripoli, killed by another armed group. On social networks, several unauthenticated videos showed gunfire between armed men using military vehicles near Janzour.

Libya plunged into violent lawlessness in 2011 with the NATO-backed revolt that toppled longtime dictator Moamer Kadhafi. Armed groups have vied for control of territory as a string of interim governments have come and gone. Many such groups have been integrated into the state, partly in order to access a share of the country's vast oil wealth, and rights organisations have often accused them of abuses. — AFP

Business

MONDAY, MAY 16, 2022

Saudi Aramco says Q1 profits jump 82% as oil prices surge

A booming oil sector in kingdom fuelling fastest growth rate in a decade

RIYADH: Saudi Aramco on Sunday posted an 82 percent jump in first quarter profits, buoyed by a global surge in oil prices that has made it the world's most valuable company. The announcement continued a string of recent positive economic news for Saudi Arabia, where a booming oil sector is fuelling the fastest growth rate in a decade.

Aramco's net income of \$39.5 billion was up from \$21.7 billion compared with the same period in 2021, "primarily driven by higher crude oil prices and volumes sold and improved downstream margins," it said in a press release. The latest financial results were published four days after Aramco dethroned Apple as the world's most valuable company, with shares worth \$2.42 trillion compared to Apple's \$2.37 trillion.

In March, Aramco reported a 124 percent net annual profit increase for 2021. But the firm, the kingdom's "crown jewel" and primary source of government revenue,

has faced security challenges from the war which involves a Saudi-led military coalition against Yemen's Houthi rebels who have repeatedly targeted the kingdom, including Aramco sites.

A two-month truce in the war has generally been holding since it started in April, but in 2019 Houthi-claimed aerial assaults on two Aramco facilities in eastern Saudi Arabia temporarily knocked out half of the kingdom's crude production. A March attack by the Houthis on facilities of the largely state-owned firm caused a "temporary" drop in production. The net income for the first quarter was a record for Aramco since its initial public offering in 2019.

Also on Sunday, Aramco announced it was issuing 20 billion bonus shares to shareholders—one share for every 10 shares already owned. A dividend of \$18.8 billion will be paid in the second quarter, it said. "Against the backdrop of increased volatility in global markets, we

remain focused on helping meet the world's demand for energy that is reliable, affordable and increasingly sustainable," Aramco president and CEO Amin Nasser said.

Oil-fuelled boom

In early May, Saudi Arabia reported its fastest economic growth rate in a decade, as a booming oil sector fuelled a 9.6 percent rise in the first quarter over the same period of 2021. The world's biggest oil exporter has resisted US entreaties to raise output in an attempt to rein in prices that have spiked since the Ukraine war began. As the war got underway, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates stressed their commitment to the OPEC+ oil alliance, which Riyadh and Moscow lead, underscoring Riyadh's and Abu Dhabi's increasing independence from long-standing ally Washington.

Saudi Arabia's GDP is expected to grow by 7.6 percent in 2022, the



RIYADH: Saudi Aramco on Sunday posted an 82 percent jump in first quarter profits, buoyed by a global surge in oil prices that has made it the world's most valuable company.

International Monetary Fund said in April. Saudi Arabia has sought both to open up and diversify its oil-reliant economy, especially since Mohammed bin Salman's appointment as crown prince in 2017.

Aramco floated 1.7 percent of its shares on the Saudi bourse in

December 2019, generating \$29.4 billion in the world's biggest initial public offering. In February, the kingdom shifted four percent of Aramco shares, worth \$80 billion, to the country's sovereign wealth fund—a move analysts saw as a possible prelude to further opening up the oil giant. — AFP

Job fair offers hope to young unemployed in Iraqi province

MOSUL: In an Iraqi province where unemployment is about 40 percent, a lucky few hoped to find work Sunday at a university job fair attended by French firms alongside local companies. The three-day event is taking place at the University of Mosul in Iraq's war-ravaged second city, where reconstruction has been slow five years after the Iraqi army backed by US-led coalition air strikes pushed out Islamic State jihadists.

Laith Abdallah, 24, was among dozens of students wandering on the campus lawn among stands set up by about 40 companies, most of them locally-based but including Carrefour and Schneider Electric from France. Abdallah said he'd been looking for

work since 2019 when he graduated in petroleum engineering. "Our number increases each day and the opportunities are rare," he said of the unemployed. "A young person has to get married and help his parents." Statistics from Nineveh province, of which Mosul is the capital, say unemployment is around 40 percent generally and 20 percent for those aged 24-45.

Joblessness is similarly high elsewhere in the country which is trying to move past decades of war but is hobbled by corruption and other problems which sparked a youth-led protest movement in 2019.

"Unemployment is perhaps the ogre that devours the dreams of the young," said

Qussay al-Ahmad, president of the University of Mosul. Ahmad hoped that the job fair would lead to "employment opportunities for hundreds of young people."

Mustafa Aziz, 26, is among those fortunate to already be working. He hoped to recruit graduates with expertise in renewable energy or electrical engineering for his seven-member team at Mosul Solar. "We need specific competence and expertise," he said.

The job fair is part of a project called Yanhad, financed by France and the European Union, Jeremie Pellet, director general of Expertise France, told AFP over the phone. "This fits into our perspective of looking for future prospects and diversification of the private sector economy for Iraqi youth," said Pellet. Yanhad had already supported a business "incubator" which has trained about 320 young people in entrepreneurship and financed a dozen start-ups, Pellet said. — AFP



MOSUL, Iraq: Men walk past a sign advertising for the "Youth Career Festival 2022" employment fair hosted at the University of Mosul in the northern Iraqi city on May 15, 2022. — AFP

Iraq's prized rice crop threatened by drought

BAGHDAD: Drought is threatening the Iraqi tradition of growing amber rice, the aromatic basis of rich lamb and other dishes, and a key element in a struggling economy. The long-grained variety of rice takes its name from its distinctive scent, which is similar to that of amber resin. It is used in Iraqi meals including sumptuous lamb qouzi, mansaf and stuffed vegetables.

But after three years of drought and declining rainfall, Iraq's amber rice production will be only symbolic in 2022, forcing consumers to seek out imported varieties

and leaving farmers pondering their future. "We live off this land," Abu Rassul says, standing near a small canal that in normal times irrigates his two hectares (five acres) near Al-Abassiya village in the central province of Najaf.

"Since I was a child I have planted amber rice," says the farmer in his 70s, his face wrinkled and unshaven, dressed in a dazzling white dishdasha robe. "Water enables us to plant every year."

Normally, rice fields planted in mid-May should stay submerged all summer until October—but that's a luxury Iraq can no longer allow. The country's available water reserves "are well below our critical level of 18 billion cubic meters (4.8 trillion gallons)", Shaker Fayeze Kadhim, Najaf's water resources manager, told AFP. Rice drains between 10 and 12 billion cubic meters during its cultivation period of about five months, so it is "difficult to grow rice in Najaf

or other provinces because of the high level of water it needs", Kadhim said.

Previously, more than 70 percent of the amber crop was grown in Diwaniyah and neighboring Najaf provinces. In early May, officials limited total rice crop areas to 1,000 hectares (2,471 acres), in Najaf and Diwaniyah only, according to the agriculture ministry. The normal quota is 35 times that. Water shortages have also led to reduced quotas for wheat farmers.

The country's annual rice production had been 300,000 tons (tons), according to Mohammed Chasseb, a senior official in the ministry's planning department. Iraq is known in Arabic as the "country of the two rivers"—the Tigris and the Euphrates. But despite those two legendary water sources, the supply of water has been declining for years and the country is classified as one of five most vulnerable to climate change effects and desertification. — AFP



NAJAF, Iraq: A worker fills bags in a rice mill in Iraq's central province. Drought is threatening the Iraqi tradition of growing amber rice, the aromatic basis of rich lamb and other dishes, and an important sector in a struggling economy. — AFP

Tech titans curb hiring to endure difficult times

PARIS: From e-commerce colossus Amazon to social networking star Facebook, US tech firms that once grew with abandon have reined in hiring to endure tumultuous times. Internet giants that saw business boom during the pandemic have taken a hit from inflation, war, supply-line trouble and people returning to pre-COVID lifestyles.

Corporate belt-tightening was a common theme as big tech firms reported earnings from the first three months of this year. Facebook parent Meta told analysts that hiring goals were being adjusted as it continued to look to a bright future. "We regularly re-evaluate our talent pipeline according to our business needs, and in light of the expense guidance given for this earnings period, we are slowing its growth accordingly," a Meta spokesperson told AFP.

"However, we will continue to grow our workforce to ensure we focus on long-term impact." Seattle-based Amazon, the second largest employer in the United States, revealed that its ranks are overly plump after ending last year with more

than twice as many workers as it had in 2019. As the spread of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 slowed during the first quarter of this year and workers returned from time off, Amazon "quickly went from being understaffed to overstaffed," chief financial officer Brian Olsavsky told analysts. Twitter confirmed that it has flat-out suspended hiring, and even showed a few senior executives the exit, as it faces a takeover by Elon Musk, the richest person on the planet.

Musk sent mixed messages Friday about his proposed Twitter acquisition. In an early-morning tweet, Musk said the \$44 billion takeover was "temporarily on hold," pending questions over the social media company's estimates of the number of fake accounts or "bots." Two hours later, the unpredictable Tesla chief executive tweeted that he was "still committed to acquisition." "Our industry is in a very challenging macro environment—right now," Twitter chief executive Parag Agrawal said Friday in a tweet. "I won't use the deal as an excuse to avoid making important decisions for the health of the company, nor will any leader at Twitter."

At ride-share pioneer Uber, CEO Dara Khosrowshahi said they will "treat hiring as a privilege," according to an email to employees seen by CNBC.

While big tech players have steered clear of budget-driven layoffs, such is not the case for stock trading platform



Robinhood or Cameo, an app that sells custom video messages from celebrities.

Robinhood said in April that it will cut nearly 350 positions, about 9 percent of its workforce. Cameo terminated the contracts of 80 employees recently, according to news website The Information.

Reasons for hiring curbs, freezes or cuts vary. Meta, for example, put some blame on a tweak Apple made to software running its popular mobile devices that stymies the gathering of user data to target ads more effectively. Uber, meanwhile, reported it was hit with a big loss in the first three months of the year, despite a rebound in its ride-share business.

The loss was due almost entirely to reevaluation of its stakes in Grab and Didi in Asia and US-based autonomous driving firm Aurora, the earnings report said. — AFP

COVID-hit Shanghai reopening businesses

SHANGHAI: Shanghai announced a gradual reopening from Monday of businesses, though it remains unclear when the millions of people still locked down in China's economic capital will finally be allowed out of their homes. Confronted with its worst COVID-19 outbreak since the beginning of the pandemic, China—the last major economy still closed off to the world—put the city of 25 million under heavy restrictions in early April. The rigid strategy to root out virus cases at all costs has wreaked havoc on supply chains, crushed small businesses and imperiled the country's economic goals.

For many Shanghai residents, some of whom were already confined to their homes even before April, the frustrations have included problems with food supplies, access to non-Covid medical care and spartan quarantine centers, and many are venting their anger online.

Shanghai vice mayor Chen Tong on Sunday announced a reopening of businesses "in stages" from May 16. Chen however did not specify if

he was referring to a gradual resumption of activity in the city or if it was conditional on certain health criteria.

Under China's zero-COVID strategy, any lifting of restrictions is generally conditional on seeing no new positive cases for three days, outside of quarantine centers. Shanghai authorities were aiming for this goal by mid-May. Infections appear to be on the decline, with 1,369 new cases reported on Sunday in Shanghai, way down from more than 25,000 at the end of April.

In some areas of the city, however, restrictions have been tightened in recent days. Some 1,200 kilometers (750 miles) north, residents of Beijing fear they could face a similar lockdown after more than a thousand cases were recorded in the capital since the end of April. Beijing has repeatedly tested its residents and locked down buildings with positive cases and closed metro stations and non-essential businesses in certain neighborhoods. — AFP

Business

US companies eye more consumer pushback as inflation toll mounts

Consumer behavior resilient despite broad-based price increases

NEW YORK: Prices on household goods have been rising for months in the United States, souring the national mood but not significantly affecting sales-yet. Producers of everything from paper towels to soda to mattresses have described consumer behavior as relatively resilient despite broad-based price increases.

But just how much further companies can hike prices without facing pushback remains an open question. Chris Scharff, who works in computer security and lives in New York's Hudson Valley, is watching the higher prices for gasoline and household items.

"It hasn't changed my behavior but I've been more mindful," said Scharff who predicts "people will start to cut back, or they'll go for non-premium" options if prices continue to rise.

Eric Schwartz, who works in publishing, says he will cut back at the margins, drive less frequently, or "eat a little more pasta." With inflation at a 40-year peak and little sign of immediate relief, the consumer-driven US economy faces question marks, despite very low unemployment and accelerating wage gains. Americans have seen a growing wave of price hikes since last year, amid global supply chain snarls and labor shortages, but the increases picked up speed after Russia invaded Ukraine and sanctions on Moscow sent energy costs soaring.

Many observers expect the surge will shift in consumer behavior in the months ahead. "Although inflation has been around for a while, it's only really now starting to bite in a serious way," said Neil Saunders, an analyst at GlobalData Retail. More consumers will cut back as they conclude they "can't keep coping with all these price increases," he said.

Limited 'trade down' so far

The recent batch of corporate earnings reports have shown some limited evidence of consumer shifts, like cigarette maker Altria which pointed to increases in sales of its value smokes. McDonald's too has seen a "little bit of a trade down" among lower-end consumers, said Chris Kempczinski, chief executive of the fast-food chain.

The hamburger chain increased food prices by about eight percent in the first quarter, and estimates food and paper costs will rise 12-14 percent this year, with labor up 10 percent. Kempczinski described the US consumer as overall "in good shape," but said higher prices for gasoline and rent are "why we need to make sure we continue to have value be an important part of our proposition."

Procter & Gamble, which raised prices in all 10 of its product categories in the United States and plans additional hikes this summer in oral care and feminine care, so far has seen a much smaller-than-expected impact on sales. Jon Moeller, chief executive of the consumer products giant, said the company beefed up distribution to discount retailers, a shift that could preserve sales as those retailers see an increase in traffic of customers looking for bargains.

So far, "our pricing execution is holding up," Moeller said. "We'll have to monitor this closely. Things can change tomorrow." At Coca-Cola, executives say they are front-loading price hikes while the economy is healthy, and the increases have yet to weigh on sales.

"Trying to catch up on pricing in a recessionary environment is very hard," said Chief Executive James Quincey. "And so we have a bias to action."

Impact on housing market

Hong Kong banks have so far kept their best lending rates steady, but they will feel the squeeze in three to six months, analysts say. "The interest rate may increase quicker than in the past, given the faster pace from the Fed and also the change in the overall background risk sentiment in the world," economist Gary Ng of Natixis told AFP. Homebuyers whose mortgages are linked to the Hong Kong inter-bank offered rate (HIBOR) will be the first to feel the heat, said economist Heron Lim at Moody's Analytics. "This usually has a downward effect on housing prices, (which) should shrink in 2022 and into 2023 as well, especially if there's low demand from mainland Chinese investors," Lim told AFP.

The Hong Kong government on Friday said it expected signs of revival later this year following the relaxation of coronavirus curbs that ground the economy to a halt in the first quarter.

But the rate hikes could dampen a domestic rebound as the higher burden shouldered by homebuyers will eat into their consumption power. Small and medium-sized businesses also potentially face a "really tough time" if the rising rates coincide with a COVID resurgence, economist Samuel Tse of DBS Bank told AFP. Hong Kong is still hewing to a lighter version of China's zero-COVID model that has taken a toll on businesses in the city.

Hong Kong allows its currency to trade within a range of 7.75-7.85 to the greenback.

Capital outflows and intense selling of the Hong Kong dollar in recent months have pushed it to the weak end of that trading band. Last week, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) spent HK\$8.53 billion (\$1.08 billion) in three attempts to prop up



NEW YORK: Fruit is displayed inside a store in New York City. Prices on household goods have been rising for months in the United States, souring the national mood but not significantly affecting sales-yet.—AFP

Other levers

As consumers tighten their belts, the most likely purchases they jettison will be discretionary items, such as streaming services and some apparel, Saunders said. "When it comes to things like food, where there's a lot of inflation, they might buy different things or shop at a different retailer," he said.

"But the volumes of food purchase don't really change that much because people still need to eat." Companies have other levers available as they

seek to protect profits from rising costs. Saunders notes that retail chain Zara recently stopped providing free return of online orders unless customers go to store. Other techniques for "camouflaging" increases is to introduce a new product and charge more for it, said Z John Zhang, a marketing professor at Wharton School.

Another common strategy is to reduce the package size but charge the same amount because "consumers are a whole lot more price sensitive than quantity sensitive," Zhang said.—AFP

US rate hikes strain HK's virus-hit economy

HONG KONG: Recent rate hikes from the Federal Reserve have come at a bad time for Hong Kong which, thanks to its US dollar peg, must follow suit despite its own flagging economy. Hong Kong has pegged its currency to the US dollar since 1983, which has helped the city weather economic storms such as the 1997 Asian financial crisis and underpinned its status as a major global finance hub.

But it also means Hong Kong has little choice but to follow the Fed's latest round of hawkish rate hikes—the biggest of its kind in 22 years. "The COVID outbreak in Hong Kong and in mainland China is already hurting growth," senior economist at Oxford Economics Lloyd Chan told AFP.

"The last thing that Hong Kong needs now is a rising interest rate." The city on Friday revised its 2022 GDP growth forecast down to between one and two percent, after a worse-than-expected four percent drop in the first quarter. Financial Secretary Paul Chan wrote last week that Hong Kong was now facing a reversal of the low interest rate environment it had enjoyed for more than a decade.

"As the economy has not yet fully recovered from the epidemic, we have to pay attention to the impact of interest rate hike... (on) people and small and medium enterprises," he wrote on his official website.



Russia inflation hits 20-year high in April

MOSCOW: Russia's annual inflation jumped to a two-decade high of 17.8 percent in April, fuelled by Western sanctions over Moscow's military campaign in Ukraine, the statistics agency said on Friday.

Since President Vladimir Putin moved troops into Ukraine on February 24, Russia has been hit with a barrage of international sanctions, including embargoes on key exports, accelerating already high inflation. Inflation of food prices, a huge concern for Russians on low incomes, has reached 20.5 percent year-on-year, according to Rosstat.

Pasta has gone up by 29.6 percent, butter by 26.1 percent, and fruit and vegetables by 33 percent. Annual inflation could reach 23 percent this year before slowing down next year and returning to the target of 4 percent in 2024, according to the Central Bank.

"Looking ahead, we expect monthly increases in prices to ease further from May," Capital Economics said. Inflation has been speeding up for months due to a number of factors including the post-pandemic recovery and high prices for raw materials. Putin's decision to send troops to Ukraine has added sanctions and the resulting logistical difficulties as factors.—AFP

Tanzania raises minimum wage by nearly 25%

DAR ES SALAAM: Tanzania's president on Saturday approved a nearly 25-percent increase in the minimum wage, marking a departure from the policies of her autocratic predecessor amid protests about the high cost of living. President Samia Suluhu Hassan decided on an increase of 23.3 percent, while also increasing the salaries of government workers for the first time since 2016, her office said in a statement. "The salary increment was approved considering the country's gross domestic product, domestic revenue and developments in both the local and global economies," the presidency said.

Since coming to power last year following her predecessor John Magufuli's death, Hassan has attempted to break with some of his policies by reaching out to the opposition and reversing course on his approach to the coronavirus pan-

African Union chief wants pan-African ratings agency

DAKAR: Senegalese president Macky Sall called Sunday for the creation of a pan-African credit ratings agency, saying that the "very arbitrary" nature of the system of assessment by international organizations made it more expensive for African countries to borrow on global debt markets.

Sall, who is currently head of the African Union, told private radio RFM that there was a need—"given the injustices, the sometimes very arbitrary ratings" by international agencies—"to have a pan-African" body. His comments came on the eve of the Dakar Economic Conference 2022, organized



HONG KONG: In this picture taken on May 13, 2022, people walk past a real estate agent in Hong Kong. Recent rate hikes from the Federal Reserve have come at a bad time for Hong Kong which, thanks to its US dollar peg, must follow suit despite its own flagging economy.—AFP

the local currency, the first intervention since 2019.

Some commentators have begun questioning the sustainability of the peg, citing pressures of the pandemic and geopolitical tensions between China and the United States. Responding to a Bloomberg op-ed, HKMA deputy chief executive Edmond Lau said earlier this month that the US dollar peg was a "highly robust and transparent system" and "highly resilient".—AFP

demic, which he downplayed.

Magufuli refused to review wages following his election in October 2015, pursuing ambitious infrastructure plans instead by developing ports and railways and reviving the national airline.

Tanzania's economy slowed to 4.8 percent in 2020, barely edging up to 4.9 percent the following year, as COVID-19 travel restrictions battered the tourism sector, a key earner in the East African country. Meanwhile, the cost of fuel and food has risen as supplies have tightened following the war in Ukraine. During Labour Day celebrations on May 1, trade unions and civil servants led demonstrations in Tanzania's capital Dodoma calling for an increase in wages, with many holding up placards saying: "Better salaries and benefits for workers is our demand."

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) last year loaned Tanzania more than half a billion dollars in emergency financing, saying the country faced "urgent" health, economic and humanitarian costs due to a pandemic-induced downturn. Under Magufuli, whose uncompromising leadership style earned him the nickname "the Bulldozer", Tanzania was an outlier in the global fight against the coronavirus and dismissed the gravity of the disease.—AFP

by African economists. "In 2020, when all economies were suffering fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, 18 of the 32 African economies rated by at least one of the big agencies saw their ratings downgraded," he said.

That meant that 56 percent of African countries saw their credit ratings downgraded, compared with 31 percent of countries globally over the same period, Sall argued. "Studies show that at least 20 percent of the ratings criteria for African countries are based on more subjective factors, cultural or linguistic ones for example, which bear no relation to the parameters used for measuring economic stability," he said. As a result, "the perception of investment risk in Africa is always much higher than the real risk. That means our insurance premiums are higher and that makes our credit more expensive." African countries continued to pay much higher interest rates as a result of this unfair system, Sall said.—AFP

When stocks and bonds tumble, investors look for alternatives

NEW YORK: Wall Street equities have had the worst start to a year since 1939, while the bond slump is the steepest since 1842, which is sending many investors on the hunt for alternatives. As US inflation has soared to its highest in four decades, the central bank has begun to raise interest rates aggressively. And the war in Ukraine and sanctions against Russia, together with COVID-19 lockdowns in China have added to investor anxiety about the prospects for the economy. "For the first time in over a decade, investors face both a hawkish Federal Reserve and genuine inflation pressure," said Ross Mayfield of Baird Private Wealth Management.

"This has led to the sort of rate-driven selloff that can hit stocks ... and bonds at the same time."

With interest rates rising, bond prices are falling—the two move in opposite directions—so they are no longer playing the safe-haven role they usually serve when equities are losing ground. "It is a very tough environment," said Anwiti Bahuguna from Columbia Threadneedle Investments. Uncertainty about the persistence of inflation and the outlook for global add to the challenges, said Chaguir Mandjee, portfolio manager at Tailor AM. "It's a headache," he said. Retail investors share the anxiety.

"I believe this market crash is going to be much bigger than 2008," one told AFP. "Right now I am looking to move into a mix of cash and precious metals," said the investor, contacted on the Reddit social media site, who declined to be identified. Greg McBride, chief analyst at Bankrate, agreed a lot of investors are moving their funds out of other assets into cash, despite the fact that inflation will cause capital to lose value, unlike the situation following the 2008 global financial crisis.

Art and commodities

Other popular options include money market funds, which are shielded from the vagaries of the stock market but offer little return, as well as term deposits and even simple savings accounts, he said.

Those safe options were shunned in recent years due to low interest rates, often less than 0.50 percent annually. After selling off bond holdings at a nine percent loss, the Redditor found a two-year term account with a 2.65 percent return.

Bahuguna's team saw the slide in bonds coming and shifted focus toward commodities, which are now easily accessible to institutional investors and individuals alike. From precious metals to energy and agricultural goods, commodities are considered a premier anti-inflation weapon. Index funds—also known as exchange-traded funds or ETFs—which track the prices for particular goods or companies, have won impressive gains since the start of the year, often in excess of 30 percent. But even these popular investments are showing signs of running out of steam, after hitting recent records, impacted by the end of cheap credit as well as the specter of an economic slowdown which would weigh on demand for raw materials.

Coffee, copper, nickel and silver have all deflated after a dazzling start to the year, as has gold, which is sometimes seen as a shield against inflation, and bitcoin, which has sunk dramatically in recent weeks. In addition to commodities, McBride said real estate offers a longer-term option "for those that are just going to hunker down until the situation calms down." Since 2019, prior to the pandemic, US median home prices have surged 39 percent, helped by bargain mortgage rates, and are still rising, according to the National Association of Realtors. There are some more unconventional options for investors as well, like art and trading cards.—AFP

Business

Heatwave-hit India irks G7 with ban on wheat export

Ban deals a blow to countries reeling from supply shortages

NEW DELHI: India banned wheat exports without government approval Saturday after its hottest March on record hit production, in a blow to countries reeling from supply shortages and soaring prices since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The announcement drew sharp criticism from the Group of Seven industrialized nations' agriculture ministers meeting in Germany, who said that such measures "would worsen the crisis" of rising commodity prices.

"If everyone starts to impose export restrictions or to close markets, that would worsen the crisis," German Agriculture Minister Cem Ozdemir said at a press conference in Stuttgart.

Global wheat prices have soared on supply fears following Russia's February invasion of Ukraine, which previously accounted for 12 percent of global exports. The spike in prices, exacerbated by fertilizer shortages and poor harvests, has fuelled inflation globally and raised fears of famine and social unrest in poorer countries. It has also led to concerns about growing protectionism following Indonesia's halting of palm oil exports and India putting the brakes on exports of wheat.

India, the world's second-largest wheat producer, said that factors including lower production and sharply higher global prices meant it worried about the food security of its own 1.4 billion people.

Export deals agreed before the directive issued Friday could still be honored, but future shipments need government approval, it said. But exports could also take place if New Delhi approved requests from other governments "to meet their food security needs".

"We don't want wheat to go in an unregulated manner where it may either get hoarded and is not used for the purpose which we are hoping it will be used for-which is serving the food requirements of vulnerable nations and vulnerable people," said BVR Subrahmanyam, India's commerce secretary.

On Thursday New Delhi said it was sending

delegations to Morocco, Tunisia, Thailand, Vietnam, Turkey, Algeria and Lebanon "for exploring possibilities of boosting wheat exports from India". It was unclear whether these visits would still take place.

Global help

Possessing major buffer stocks, India previously said it was ready to help fill some of the supply shortages caused by the Ukraine war. "Our farmers have ensured that not just India but the whole world is taken care of," Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said in April.

India said that it planned to increase wheat exports this financial year, starting April 1, to 10 million tons from seven million tons the year before. While this is a tiny proportion of worldwide production, the assurances provided some support to global prices and soothed fears of major shortages. Egypt and Turkey recently approved wheat imports from India.

But India endured its hottest March on record-blamed on climate change-and has been wilting in a heatwave in recent weeks, with temperatures upwards of 45 degrees Celsius (113 Fahrenheit).

This has hit farmers hard, and this month the government said that wheat production was expected to fall at least five percent this year from 110 million tons in 2021 — the first fall in six years. Indian wheat exports in the past have been limited by concerns over quality and because the government buys large volumes at guaranteed minimum prices. The country's exports have also been held back by World Trade Organization rules that limit shipments from government stocks if the grain was bought from farmers at fixed prices.

Urgent need

The Ukrainian agriculture minister has travelled to Stuttgart for discussions with G7 colleagues on



NEW DELHI: India, the world's second-largest wheat producer, says that factors including lower production and sharply higher global prices meant it worried about the food security of its own 1.4 billion people.

getting its produce out. About "20 million tons" of wheat were sitting in Ukrainian silos and "urgently" needed to be exported, Ozdemir said.

Before the invasion, Ukraine exported 4.5 million tons of agricultural produce per month through its ports — 12 percent of the planet's wheat, 15 percent of its corn and half of its sunflower oil. But with the ports of Odessa, Chornomorsk and others cut off from the world by Russian warships, the supply can only travel on congested land routes that are much less efficient. G7 ministers urged countries not to

take restrictive action that could pile further stress on the produce markets.

They "spoke out against export stops and call as well for markets to be kept open", said Ozdemir, whose nation holds the rotating presidency of the group. "We call on India to assume its responsibility as a G20 member," Ozdemir added. The agriculture ministers would also "recommend" the topic be addressed at the G7 summit in Germany in June, which India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been invited to attend. —AFP

stc participates in 'Leaders' Summit 2022'

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced its participation in the 'Leaders' Summit 2022', the region's premier platform, organized by the SAMENA Telecommunications Council, for outstanding multi-stakeholder engagement, collaboration, innovation display, and knowledge-exchange, with a focus on "integration". stc participated in the summit as part of its ongoing strategy to form relationships with key and innovative players throughout the region while sharing valuable insights on the industry.

The theme of the Leaders' Summit this year focused on 'Thriving with Resilience and Integration in the New Opportunity Realm', where key players including high level executives and industry leaders joined together at the Atlantis in Dubai, UAE to discuss key subjects related to the telecom and digital solutions market in the MENA region. The event consisted of seven separate panel discussions each covering the need for integration, connectivity infrastructure investments, and 5G era policy and business enablement, especially as the digital-led economy begins to interface with the space-led economy.

Engineer Maziad Al-Harbi, CEO of stc and Member of the Board of Directors at SAMENA Telecommunications Council, participated

in the Leaders' Summit 2022. Participating on behalf of stc's specialized business arm, solutions by stc, Meshari Al-Hamad, General Manager- Sales & Account Management at solutions by stc, was panelist in a panel discussion titled 'Resilience Roundtable - Cloud & Network Synergies: Achieving Resilience in Service Delivery', which featured an advanced discussion on cloud resilience, hybrid-cloud, cloud native security, multi-cloud, cybersecurity, cloud service models, "X2B", cloud & network synergies, as well as fintech.

Through its role as an industry leader in the regional and international telecom markets, stc showcased its various milestones and challenges that it has overcome over the years to achieve its targeted objectives. One of which included capitalizing on the latest rapid global developments in the ICT field, where stc expanded its presence in the ICT sector through the acquisition of Qualitynet, now solutions by stc, in May 2019. The strategic acquisition enabled stc to provide a wide range of innovative solutions on the individual and enterprise level. stc further expanded on this vision in its latest acquisition of e-portal Holding Company in April 2022. These significant milestones assisted stc in providing its diverse customer base with the latest and most advanced services in the field of telecommunications, information technology, and digital services.

In a statement released by stc, the Company highlighted that its participation serves as an opportunity to engage with industry experts to exchange ideas and knowledge to capitalize on opportunities in the market through an established platform such as the Leaders' Summit. Participating in key events within the industry fall in line with



stc's strategy to enable digital transformation and enrich the customer's journey experience. This will in return provide stc with the knowledge and capacity to implement pioneering digital solutions that will sustain stc's position as an industry leader. Through its strategic investments in the 5G infrastructure, stc has successfully evolved into a pioneer offering digital, cloud, internet of things (IoT), data centers, as well as advanced IT solutions within the integrated communications technology sector. stc can now support the vision of enterprises, government, and SMEs through innovative solutions that are custom tailored to suite their diverse needs and requirements.

It is worth mentioning that the SAMENA Telecommunications Council's Telecom Leaders' Summit is the annual industry

advocacy and leadership platform that showcases SAMENA Council's sector-development partnership value-proposition to the Public and Private sectors of the ICT Industry, provided in a lasting legacy of collaboration with Huawei. Chairman and Chief Executives of leading communications services companies, Regulators, Ministers, Investors, Influencers, and renowned ICT Industry and non-ICT as well as Media Leaders attend Leaders' Summit annually, to witness and enrich knowledge-sharing on critical business, policy and regulatory challenges as well as to open doors to new opportunities, while bridging gaps in an ambience conducive to open communication among a diverse group of key stakeholders of the ICT Industry and industry verticals.

NBK Money Markets Report

Risk-off sentiment sends dollar to 20-year high

KUWAIT: In the United States, the big macroeconomic data release of the week - the US inflation data - did not behave as was anticipated with another higher than expected print that has clearly reinforced this bout of risk-off in the financial markets. In detail, Headline CPI rose 0.3 percent m/m in April. The y/y rate fell to 8.3 percent, down from 8.5 percent in March. The food index rose 0.9 percent m/m, and the food at home index rose 1.0 percent. The index for gasoline fell 6.1 percent m-o-m, offsetting increases in other energy prices. Core CPI y/y fell to 6.2 percent from 6.5 percent in March. The airline fare index rose 18.6 percent m/m, the biggest one-month increase in the history of the series going back to 1963 as traveling and tourism are heading toward pre-pandemic levels. The Fed has not even begun to shrink its balance sheet and has only delivered about one-quarter of the monetary tightening that is priced into the US rates market and the inflation report showing price reductions overall. The market remains aggressive with its rate hike projections which remain at 7 hikes till year-end and 50 basis point hike in the upcoming June meeting.

Market movement

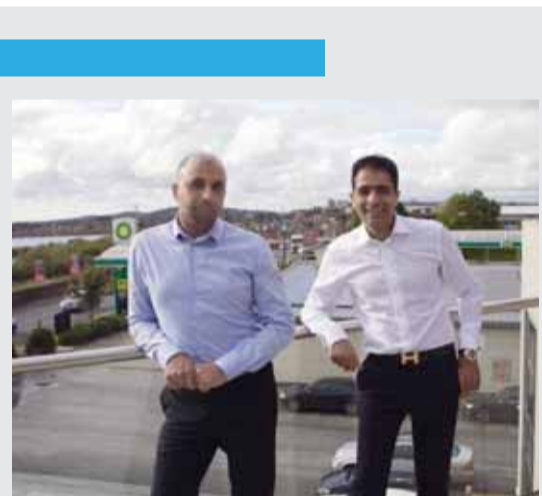
On the forex front, the dollar remained on top of the currencies hill and gained as much as 1.22 percent reaching a high of 104.925 on Thursday. The bull-run of the dollar pushed the euro below the 1.04 level to a low of 1.0348 while the cable reached a low of 1.2154.

KUW GDP contracts

The gross domestic product (GDP) of the United Kingdom fell 0.1 percent m/m taking the q/q rate down to 0.8 percent.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30680.



UK billionaire brothers Zuber and Mohsin Issa who made their money in petrol stations have succeeded in buying UK supermarket giant Asda.

Issa Brothers and Ambani face off in battle for Boots

LONDON: UK's billionaire Issa brothers and Indian industrial tycoon Mukesh Ambani are bracing for a face-off in the final battle for the Boots drugstore chain, one of the UK high street's most well-known names.

The Issas are expected to win the race ahead of next week's deadline for proposals, after they submitted the highest offer in the first round, according to sources familiar with the matter.

The duo are going up against Ambani, who's been working on a bid together with buyout firm Apollo Global Management Inc. Bidders are also working around the clock to arrange financing in a difficult market, which has gotten that much tougher due to the war in Ukraine, soaring inflation and rising interest rates, according to the people.

That's a lot to sort through, and suitors are getting a few extra days to firm their bids up after the chain's owner Walgreens Boots Alliance Inc pushed back the May 16 deadline to later in the week, the people said. A deal would fit in well with the Issas' empire-building ambitions. In recent years, they've gone on an acquisition spree that's turned their main company EG Group into a global gas station and convenience store colossus. They've snapped up UK supermarket operator Asda Group Ltd. and the Leon chain of fast casual restaurants.

The brothers, who are pursuing Boots together with TDR Capital, seem to have found a neat solution to the financing issue: they're considering piling more debt onto Asda and selling some of the supermarket chain's assets to help fund the acquisition, people with knowledge of the matter said this month.

The emergence of Ambani, first revealed by Bloomberg News in April, promises to keep the race competitive. Apollo is known to be wary of overpaying on deals, which has led it to lose auctions for British companies like Asda and packaging firm RPC Group Plc. Teaming up with India's second-richest person could give it more firepower: Ambani is an experienced operator who's keen to expand the retail arm of his conglomerate Reliance Industries Ltd. —Agencies

Ukraine's key IT sector booming despite invasion

KYIV: Ukraine's IT sector is booming despite the Russian invasion. Workers with stickers on their laptops recline on beach chairs outside a warehouse for start-ups in the west Ukraine city of Lviv giving off major Silicon Valley vibes. But the atmosphere inside is different.

Through the glass doors of the complex, young Ukrainians zig-zag between stacks of bulletproof vests and cardboard boxes filled with helmets ready for the front. They are part of Ukraine's burgeoning tech sector which was forced to adapt after Russia's invasion and has become key to supporting the war effort.

"Most tech companies had developed contingency plans" in case of war said Stepan Veselovskiy, the head of the "IT Cluster Lviv" community. He told AFP that companies transferred servers to secure locations and established back-up systems outside the country before Russia invaded on February 24.

When Russian bombing started, IT companies shut offices in the capital Kyiv and eastern city of Kharkiv and engineers found refuge in western Ukraine or Poland next door.

Veselovskiy said there were already around 500 tech companies in Lviv before the war but now estimates that 80 percent of the sector is in the western city. One is Infopulse, which provides various digital services to mainly European customers. It brought 300 of its 2,300 employees to Lviv, where it has offices in one of the city's few buildings equipped with a bunker.

There are bunk beds and stable internet underground so employees to continue working in the event of an air raid. There are also generators in case Russian forces target power stations and terminals for Elon Musk's Starlink internet service. —AFP

Lifestyle | Features

CARTOON ALIEN AIMS TO EASE WORLD CUP CULTURE SHOCK IN QATAR

A cartoon series on an alien who crash-lands in World Cup host Qatar aims to ease a culture clash between more than a million foreign football fans and the conservative state's residents. Like the arriving fans, Kawkabani, star of the series launched by Qatar's first animation studio, has to learn Arabic pronunciation, how to drink coffee—and to discover that Qataris prepare way too much food for their guests. Creators Hossein Heydar and Amal al-Shammari hope the series will help Qataris to be more understanding of the 1.4 million football fanatics expected to besiege them in November and December.

Conservative Qataris prefer sipping on speciality coffee and fruit juices while European football fans are known for their beer fuelled good times in the street. Kawkabani seeks "to explain to Qataris that there must be acceptance of these cultures... and help them (visitors) coexist or understand the Qatari culture as well," said Shammari, who wrote the scripts. The first two 10-minute episodes of "Kawkabani"—which means "The Planet Person" in Arabic—have already been launched on YouTube by their company, Nefaish Animation.

"As an animation studio, we looked at content in the region, even in Qatar, and we felt there was a lack of content that represents Qatari culture," said Shammari, Nefaish's creative director. Arabic words were sometimes garbled and costumes not always quite right.

"We felt like we need a studio in Qatar that pays attention to all these details and represents Qatari culture in the right way," he said. Tiny Qatar's triumph in securing the right to host the World Cup gives it the opportunity to show off its customs and



A handout picture released by Nefaish Animation studio shows creative director Amal Al-Shammari (left) and managing director Hossein Heydar pose for a picture in the capital Doha. —AFP

idiosyncrasies. "When the Alien falls into Doha, again he is an alien so he doesn't know anything so we are not expecting him to understand the Qatar society and in the Qatar society we have," said Shammari, who wrote the script. "We want to explain a lot of things and share our culture with the visitors." Nefaish only hired artists from the Middle

East with knowledge of Arabic culture, added Heydar, in charge of animation. Besides Kawkabani, the series has three main Qatari characters representing what the creators consider to be the main strands of the 270,000-strong indigenous community, which lives alongside more than 2.5 million foreign workers.

Coffee culture

Faisal is a traditional bedouin, the community that used to inhabit the desert. "You know they're more proud of their culture, and then they sometimes overreact," said Shammari. But "they would support you no matter what. They'll always be there for you." Saad, another of the Qatari characters, is a more "modern" city dweller. "He is open to different cultures, he's open to people, he wants to be a businessman," said the writer. As for Khalifa, he represents the growing mixed community in Qatar. A vegan, his mother is British and father Qatari.

Each of the five episodes in the first series—translated into English, French, Spanish, Hindi, Mandarin Chinese and Japanese on YouTube—shows the Qatari way of life, especially food and drink. Kawkabani runs into trouble for not knowing the right-handed gesture used to indicate having drunk too much coffee. But the series also pokes fun at Qataris.

Kawkabani was part-financed by Qatar's World Cup organisers, the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, as well as the Doha Film Institute and telecoms giant Vodafone. While the first programmes do not touch on controversial issues such as rights of migrant workers and women, Heydar insisted there had been complete artistic freedom. "This is our show and the sponsors were very supportive and they gave us all the freedom to create it the way we see it," he said. The pair already plan two more series alongside other projects to highlight Arab culture. "Our heritage is full of stories, is full of characters, full of heroes and we want to showcase them from Qatar or from the Arabic region to the whole world," he said. —AFP

'LE PARIS CAFE': A FESTIVAL GATHERING GLOBAL COFFEEHOLICS, MIXOLOGIST, BARISTAS



For Coffeeholics, Baristas, and Mixologists, the "Le Paris Café" festival on May 14-16 becomes a sort of a holy ground to exchange views on all things coffee-related. The festival, held on the space of 3,700 square-meters in the cent-quatre-Paris, features an assortment of events ranging from a coffee trading event to Latte art workshops and demonstrations. The event itself is trying to bridge the gap between the modern coffee industry and the classical espresso movement in the French capital. —KUNA



Britney Spears and Sam Asghari

Britney Spears and partner announce miscarriage

Pop star Britney Spears said in an Instagram post Saturday that her surprise pregnancy, which she announced last month, had ended in miscarriage. "It is with our deepest sadness we have to announce that we have lost our miracle baby early in the pregnancy," the 40-year-old singer wrote in a joint-post with her partner Sam Asghari.

Spears had announced the pregnancy in an Instagram post on April 11, saying "So I got a pregnancy test ... and uhhhhh well ... I am having a baby." That news came five months after a Los Angeles judge dissolved a conservatorship long overseen by Spears's father—an arrangement the singer said had prevented her from having a contraceptive IUD removed despite her desire for more kids.

In their post Saturday, Spears and Asghari added that they "will continue trying to expand our beautiful family... We kindly ask for

privacy during this difficult moment." Spears had said in her post announcing her pregnancy that she would be lying low during the pregnancy to avoid paparazzi, and that she had previously suffered from perinatal depression, which she described as "absolutely horrible."

She is already mother to two teen sons, Sean and Jayden, with her ex-husband Kevin Federline. Asghari and Spears met in 2016 when they co-starred in a music video for her single "Slumber Party." After announcing their engagement late last year, Spears has since started referring to her 28-year-old partner as her "husband." At the time Spears announced she was pregnant, Asghari said in a separate Instagram post that "fatherhood is something i have always looked forward to and i don't take lightly. It is the most important job i will ever do." —AFP

Brazilian director Breno Silveira dies on set

Brazilian director Breno Silveira, an award-winning veteran of the international film festival circuit, died Saturday after suffering a heart attack on the set of his latest movie, his production company and media reports said. The 58-year-old, who directed contemporary classics including "Two Sons of Francisco" (2005) and "Gonzaga" (2012), was "one of our greatest filmmakers, a symbol of Brazilian culture and art," his production firm, Conspiracao Filmes, said in a statement.

Brazilian media reports said he had suffered a massive heart attack on the set of his latest project, "Dona Vitoria," starring famed actress Fernanda Montenegro. The movie, based on the true story of an elderly woman who started filming the drug dealers on the street outside her window and uncovered a major cor-

ruption scheme, was being shot in the northeastern state of Pernambuco.

Silveira studied cinema at the Ecole Louis Lumiere in Paris. He started his career as a director of photography, gaining notice with films such as "Me You Them" (2000), which was screened at Cannes in the Un Certain Regard category. He made his directorial debut in 2005 with "Two Sons of Francisco," which broke box office records in Brazil.

It won four awards at Brazil's Grand Prizes of Cinema and was the country's entry for Best Foreign-Language Film at the Oscars. Silveira's films had played at festivals in Toronto, Havana and Monte-Carlo, and he was also noted for his work in television. He is survived by his wife and two daughters, his production company said. —AFP

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Members of the band "Kalush Orchestra" (center and right) celebrate onstage with Ukraine's flags as (From left) Italian television presenter Alessandro Cattelan, Italian singer Laura Pausini and Lebanese-born British singer-songwriter, Mika applaud, after winning on behalf of Ukraine the Eurovision Song contest 2022 on Sunday at the Pala Alpitour venue in Turin. —AFP photos



Members of the band "Kalush Orchestra", Oleh Psiuk, Tymofii Muzychuk, Ihor Didenchuk, Vitalii Duzhyk, Oleksandr Slobodianiuk and Vlad Kurochka performs on stage.

Ukraine folk rappers boost war morale with Eurovision triumph

Ukraine won the Eurovision Song Contest Sunday with an infectious hip-hop folk melody, boosting spirits in the embattled nation fighting off a Russian invasion that has killed thousands and displaced millions of people. Riding a huge wave of public support, Kalush Orchestra beat 24 competitors in the finale of the world's biggest live music event with "Stefania", a rap lullaby combining Ukrainian folk and modern hip-hop rhythms.

"Please help Ukraine and Mariupol! Help Azovstal right now," frontman Oleh Psiuk appealed in English from the stage, referring to the port city's steelworks where Ukrainian soldiers have been surrounded by Russian forces for weeks. In the Ukrainian capital Kyiv, the triumph was met with smiles and visible relief.

"It's a small ray of happiness. It's very important now for us," said Iryna Vorobey, a 35-year-old businesswoman, adding that the support from Europe was "incredible". Following the win, Psiuk—whose bubblegum-pink bucket hat has made him instantly recognizable—thanked everyone who voted for his country in the contest, which is watched by millions of viewers. "The victory is very important for Ukraine, especially this year. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Glory to Ukraine," Psiuk told journalists.



Singer Monika Liu, who is to perform on behalf of Lithuania, arrives onstage during the presentation of participating finalists.

Music conquers Europe

The win provided a much-needed morale boost for the embattled nation in its third month of battling much-larger Russian forces. "Our courage impresses the world, our music conquers Europe!" Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky wrote on Facebook. "This win is so very good for our mood," Andriy Nemkovich, a 28-year-old project manager, told AFP in Kyiv.

The victory drew praise in unlikely corners, as the deputy chief of the NATO military alliance said it showed just how much public support ex-Soviet Ukraine has in fighting off Moscow. "I would like to congratulate Ukraine for winning the Eurovision contest," Mircea Geoana said as he arrived in Berlin for talks that will tackle the alliance's expansion in the wake of the Kremlin's war.

"And this is not something I'm making in a light way because we have seen yesterday the immense public support all over Europe

and Australia for the bravery of" Ukraine, Geoana said. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson called the win "a clear reflection of not just your talent, but of the unwavering support for your fight for freedom". And European Council President Charles Michel said he hoped next year's contest "can be hosted in Kyiv in a free and united Ukraine".

'Ready to fight'

Despite the joyous theatrics that are a hallmark of the song contest, the war in Ukraine hung heavily over the festivities this year. The European Broadcasting Union, which organizes the event, banned Russia on February 25, the day after Moscow invaded its neighbor. "Stefania", written by Psiuk as a tribute to his mother before the war, mixes traditional Ukrainian folk music played on flute-like instruments with an invigorating hip-hop beat. The band donned richly embroidered ethnic garb to perform their act.

Nostalgic lyrics such as "I'll always find my way home even if all the roads are



Members of the band "Kalush Orchestra" pose onstage with the winner's trophy and Ukraine's flags after winning on behalf of Ukraine the Eurovision Song contest 2022.



A giant heart shape is displayed as Lebanese-born British singer-songwriter, Mika (center) performs during an interlude at the final of the Eurovision Song contest 2022.

destroyed" resonated all the more as millions of Ukrainians have been displaced by war. Kalush Orchestra received special authorization from Ukraine's government to attend Eurovision, since men of fighting age are prohibited from leaving the country, but that permit expires in two days. Psiuk said he was not

sure what awaited the band as war rages back home. "Like every Ukrainian, we are ready to fight as much as we can and go until the end."

Britain's 'Space Man'

Ukraine beat a host of over-the-top acts at



Singer Sam Ryder, who performs on behalf of The United Kingdom, arrives onstage.



Members of the band "Systur", Sigga, Beta, Elin and Eythor perform on behalf of Iceland during the final of the Eurovision Song contest 2022.



Singer Konstrakta performs on behalf of Serbia during the second semifinal of the Eurovision Song contest 2022.

Lifestyle | Features



Singer Jeremie Makiese performs on behalf of Belgium during the final of the Eurovision Song contest 2022.



Italian singer Laura Pausini (center) performs during the final of the Eurovision Song contest 2022.



Italian rock band "Maneskin" performs during an interlude at the final of the Eurovision Song contest 2022.



Members of the band "The Rasmus", Aki Hakala, Eero Heinonen, Emppu Suhonen and Lauri Ylonen perform on behalf of Finland during the final of the Eurovision Song contest 2022.



Singer Malik Harris performs on behalf of Germany during the final of the Eurovision Song contest 2022.



Members of the band "Subwoolfer", Jim, Keith and DJ Astronaut performs on behalf of Norway.



Singer Rosa Linn performs on behalf of Armenia during the final of the Eurovision Song contest 2022.

the kitschy, quirky annual musical event, including Norway's Subwoolfer, who sang about bananas while dressed in yellow wolf masks, and Serbia's Konstrakta, who questioned national healthcare while meticulously scrubbing her hands onstage. Coming in second place was Britain with Sam Ryder's "Space Man" and its stratospheric notes, followed by Spain with the reggaeton "SloMo" from Chanel.

After a quarter-century of being shut out from the top spot, Britain had hoped to have a winner in "Space Man" and its high notes belted by the affable, long-haired Ryder. Britain had been ahead after votes were counted from the national juries, but a jaw-dropping 439 points awarded to Ukraine from the public pushed it to the top spot. Eurovision's winner is chosen by a cast of music industry professionals and members of the public from each country, with votes for one's home nation not allowed.

Eurovision is a hit among fans not only for the music, but for the looks on display and this year was no exception. Lithuania's Monika Liu generated as much social media buzz for her bowl cut hairdo as her sensual and elegant "Sentimental". —AFP



Singer Stien den Hollander, a.k.a. "S10" performs on behalf of The Netherlands during the final of the Eurovision Song contest 2022.



Lebanese-born British singer-songwriter, Mika performs during an interlude at the final of the Eurovision Song contest 2022.



Singer Sam Ryder performs on behalf of The United Kingdom during the final of the Eurovision Song contest 2022.

'Our music conquers Europe': Zelensky

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky thanked a hip-hop group from his country as they took home the Eurovision Song Contest title on Sunday.

"Our courage impresses the world, our music conquers Europe!" Zelensky wrote on Facebook, praising the Kalush Orchestra after they beat out 24 other competitors. —AFP



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky gestures during a joint press conference with Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Unseen) in Kyiv amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

Eurovision win shows 'immense public support' for Ukraine

Ukraine's win at the Eurovision Song Contest showed the immense public support for the country in its battle against Russia, NATO's deputy secretary-general said Sunday. "I would like to congratulate Ukraine for winning the Eurovision contest and this is not something I'm making in a light way because we have seen yesterday the immense public support all over Europe and Australia for the bravery of" Ukraine, said Mircea Geoana as he arrived for talks in Berlin. —AFP

Sports

Blues tighten Super Rugby grip as Crusaders down Brumbies

Auckland Blues crush Queensland Reds

SYDNEY: The Auckland Blues crushed the Queensland Reds to tighten their grip at the top of the Super Rugby Pacific table, while the Canterbury Crusaders inflicted a rare defeat on the ACT Brumbies at the weekend. Coach Leon McDonald's red-hot Blues have now won 11 on the trot, unbeaten since narrowly losing their season opener 32-33 to the Wellington Hurricanes. They blitzed the Reds at Eden Park with five second-half tries to win 53-26 and reinforce their championship credentials. The win moved them seven points clear of the Brumbies and Crusaders after round 13.

"For us winning is contagious, the last couple of years we've been fighting battles ... we've got on a roll now and the winning is contagious," Blues captain Dalton Papali'i told reporters. "The playoffs ... we'll think about that later on. But right now we just celebrate this one and it's on to the next." The top

four teams at the end of the regular 15-round season will earn a home quarter-final. The Blues ran in eight tries with Stephen Perofeta bagging one of them while contributing 13 points off the boot.

It was a fourth straight defeat for the Reds, all against New Zealand teams. "I'll never fault this side for effort, we just got to make sure in those key moments we're executing, which we're not doing at the moment," said Reds skipper Tate McDermott. In Canberra, the sublime Crusaders prevailed 37-26 to hand the ACT Brumbies only their second defeat of the campaign. The visitors went to the break with a 25-5 lead and withstood a powerful second-half fightback to secure the win and move level with the Brumbies, behind only the Blues.

Both sides scored four tries with the kicking prowess of All Black Richie Mo'unga making the difference as he nailed four conversions and three

penalties. Brumbies captain Allan Alaalatoa said it was now all about how they bounce back against the Blues next week. "We obviously know the Blues are in some good form, we've just got to make sure (we improve) with errors and our physicality," he said. "We've just got to make sure we're clear on those learnings and how we can turn that around."

Special day

Elsewhere, the Hurricanes staged a remarkable fightback from 15-0 down at half-time to beat the NSW Waratahs 22-18 in Sydney, with skipper Ardie Savea saving the day with a late try. It moved them above the Waratahs into fifth place. Savea said he couldn't repeat what was said at half-time, but it clearly worked. "The win is very important coming into the back end of the competition," he said.

In a Sunday game, the Melbourne Rebels fell at

home to the Waikato Chiefs 33-30, a result that pushed the New Zealand side into fourth place. Western Force's poor form continued with a 61-10 drubbing by the Otago Highlanders in Dunedin, while Fijian Drua came out on top of the first Super Rugby clash between Pacific island sides when they beat Moana Pasifika 34-19.

The powerful islanders have always been an integral part of teams in the southern hemisphere club competition, but this year for the first time have squads of their own. Both sides have struggled, with the Australia-based Drua winning for only the second time in 12 games while the New Zealand-based Moana Pasifika have lost 10 from 11. Moana captain and former Wallaby Sekope Kepu said the match was about more than the result. "Today was a special day, a historic day for Pacific Island people, for Polynesian people," he said. —AFP

News in brief

Bastianini wins French MotoGP

LE MANS: Enea Bastianini grabbed his third MotoGP victory in seven races this season as he took the French Grand Prix on Sunday. The Italian, riding a Gresini Ducati, cruised home 2.718 sec ahead of Australian Jack Miller on a factory Ducati. Bastianini overtook compatriot Francesco Bagnaia in the late stages when the factory Ducati rider made an error. Bagnaia reacted to his first mistake by at once making another, falling off his bike as he tried to hit back in the 20th lap. At one stage there had been a three-way battle for first, but Joan Mir rode his Suzuki off the track in the 13th lap, managed to steer the bike back onto the tarmac but then immediately fell off. — AFP

Bordeaux woes intensify

PARIS: Marseille slumped to third in the Ligue 1 table after defeat at Rennes on Saturday, while Bordeaux remain on the cusp of relegation after a goalless draw with Lorient. In the penultimate round of matches, Monaco leapfrogged Marseille, 2-0 losers at Rennes, into second with a 4-2 win over Brest. But things look bad for Bordeaux, where play was halted for six minutes as toilet rolls were thrown onto the pitch along with chants to the players of "You are sxxxt". Bordeaux remain rooted to the bottom of the table, on 28 points, three behind Saint-Etienne, 2-1 losers at home against Reims, and Metz, who hosted Angers and won 1-0. Paris Saint-Germain, already confirmed as league winners, ran out 4-0 victors over Montpellier. — AFP

Salernitana miss chance

ROME: Salernitana missed the chance to claim almost guaranteed Serie A survival on Saturday after Diego Perotti had a late penalty saved in a 1-1 draw at Empoli which also sent down bottom team Venezia. Perotti's spot-kick was pushed aside by man-of-the-match Guglielmo Vicario, who made a series of superb saves to stop Salernitana from gaining a win which would have moved them five points clear of the relegation zone ahead of their rivals matches this weekend. Davide Nicola's team sit 17th and two points ahead of Cagliari who are just inside the drop zone and face title-chasing Inter Milan in Sunday's late match. The draw is a not a dreadful result as Cagliari must beat reigning champions Inter to move out of trouble in place of Salernitana. — AFP

Lyon book European final

LYON: French side Lyon reached their first European final, clinging on to edge English Premiership club Waspas 20-18 in a Challenge Cup semi-final on Saturday. Lyon trailed 8-3 at halftime but tries from Leo Berdeu and Yanis Charcosset saw them bounce back to squeeze through to the final against Toulon or Saracens in Marseille on May 27. "We haven't won anything," said Lyon veteran Jean-Marc Doussain at the end. "We're happy but we gave ourselves a scare. Everyone will say that it's historic for the club but people remember the winner. There is work to do." Wasps scrum-half Dan Robson put the first points on the board after 23 minutes at the Stade Gerland when he took off down the blind side to touch down. Veteran New Zealander Jimmy Gopperth, who is leaving Wasps to join Leicester next season, missed the conversion but popped over a penalty to give the English side an 8-0 lead. — AFP

Imahira secures place

TOKYO: Japan's Shugo Imahira secured a place in the 150th British Open at St Andrews later this year as he profited from a late collapse by compatriot Yuto Katsuragawa to win the Asia Pacific Open Golf Championship Diamond Cup on Sunday. Imahira's one-stroke victory at Oarai Golf Club in Ibaraki, in the Asian Tour's first event in Japan since September 2019 because of the pandemic, was enough to secure a third career appearance at Open for the Japan Golf Tour professional. The 29-year-old first played in the British Open at Royal Troon in 2016 and qualified again for Royal Portrush in 2019, but failed to make the cut on both occasions. — AFP

Ton-up Mathews steers Sri Lanka to 258-4 in first Test

CHITTAGONG: Former captain Angelo Mathews hit an unbeaten 114 to help Sri Lanka finish strongly on the opening day of the first Test against Bangladesh on Sunday. The tourists reached 258 for four at stumps after electing to bat first on what looked like a placid pitch in Chittagong at the start of the two-match series. Mathews put on a key third-wicket 92-run stand with Kusal Mendis, who made 54, to rebuild the Sri Lankan innings after off-spinner Nayeem Hasan removed the openers.

"Somebody had to go big and go long, and on a placid wicket like this, first-innings score is very important," Mathews said of his knock laced with 14 boundaries and one six. "You can't take anything from the Bangladesh bowlers. They bowled some very good lines and lengths, with a sort of an umbrella field. It was not easy for us to go big."

He kept up the pressure on Bangladesh after Mendis' departure as he put up an unbeaten partnership of 75 for the fifth wicket with Dinesh Chandimal, who was batting on 34. Nayeem dismissed skipper Dimuth Karunaratne, for nine, and Oshada Fernando, for 36, in the opening session to give Bangladesh some early momentum. But Mathews and Mendis seized back the initiative and kept Bangladesh bowlers at bay in the entire post-lunch session. Tajul Islam struck on the first ball after tea break as Mendis fell giving a catch to Nayeem at midwicket.

Fellow left-arm spinner Shakib Al Hasan removed Dhananjaya de Silva cheaply for six with a bat-pad catch, but Mathews stood firm to deny Bangladesh further success. Bangladesh thought they had Mathews out caught behind for 38 off Tajul after



CHITTAGONG: Sri Lanka's Angelo Mathews (left) plays a shot as Bangladesh's wicketkeeper Liton Das watches during the first day of the first Test cricket match between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka on May 15, 2022. —AFP

lunch but the decision against the veteran batsman was reversed on review. The experienced right-hander flicked left-arm pacer Shoriful Islam towards mid-wicket for a four to bring his 12th Test hundred off 183 balls.

Nayeem trap

Sri Lanka earlier made a confident start as Fernando hit pace bowler Khaled Ahmed for two consecutive fours in the second over. The introduction of spin, however, halted their progress as Nayeem trapped Karunaratne leg-before on only his fifth ball.

Karunaratne misjudged an arm ball and attempted to cut, but the ball was quicker than he had expected and hit him on the back foot. He was given out and

the skipper unsuccessfully reviewed. Local boy Nayeem, who came into the side after an injury to the stalwart Mehidy Hasan, brought Bangladesh their second success in the session when he took an edge from Fernando in the 22nd over. Wicketkeeper Liton Das completed the catch as Fernando departed after hitting three fours and one six in his brisk innings.

A minute of silence was observed before the match in memory of Australian cricketer Andrew Symonds, who died in a car crash on Saturday. The Bangladesh Cricket Board said it was "deeply saddened" at the passing of "one of Australia's greatest all-rounders in limited overs cricket". Neutral umpiring also returned for the first time since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, with England's Richard Kettleborough officiating alongside Bangladesh's Sharfuddoula. —AFP

IBAK conducts 9th Master Cup 2022

KUWAIT: The Indian Badminton Association Kuwait (IBAK) successfully conducted the 9th edition of IBAK Master Cup at its Salwa Gym on the 5th and 6th of May, 2022. The event witnessed participation by players from all major clubs in Kuwait with over 300 players registered into the event. The winners of various categories in IBAK Master Cup 2022 are as under:

In men's singles, Varun Sriram won while in professional men's doubles Abdul Jabbar and Aneef Latheef won the cup. In advance men's doubles Eric Thomas and Rohan Vagavela won the cup and in intermediate doubles (open for all), Areef Shaik Hahammad and Haneef Shaik Mohammad bagged the cup.

In lower intermediate doubles (for IBAK members only), Nithin Baiju and Sion Baiju won the cup. Above 50 men's doubles, Manimara Chozhan and Tamer Kandil won while above 40 men's doubles (non-professional) category, Joy Jino Joy and

'Nation elated' as ruthless India win first Thomas Cup

BANGKOK: India made history by winning the Thomas Cup for the first time with a ruthless 3-0 upset of reigning champions Indonesia in Bangkok on Sunday. India, competing in their debut final of the men's team championship, sealed the title when world number 11 Kidambi Srikanth defeated higher-ranked Jonatan Christie 21-15, 23-21. A devastated Indonesia, the tournament's most successful team having previously won it 14 times, could not keep pace with the fire brought by the Indian team—who joyfully rushed the court following Srikanth's win.

India were already 2-0 up, with Lakshya Sen beating Anthony Ginting in the first singles match and then Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty defeating Mohammad Ahsan and Kevin Sukanuljo in the doubles. It fell to Christie, an Asian Games gold medalist now in his fourth Thomas Cup campaign, to save Indonesia's flagging title hopes.

But the eighth-ranked Christie couldn't do it and seemed overcome with nerves at the onset of his do-or-die match against Srikanth. The 29-year-old Srikanth took full advantage, bearing down relentlessly on Christie in the second game. Srikanth



Prakash Muttel Mathew won the cup. In ladies doubles Nikita Rebello and Zoya Ismail won.

The tournament was inaugurated on the 5th of May, 2022 by Yasmine Al-Sayeh. The two-day thrilling event saw the clash of many young talents and veterans alike. Huge audience turnout and their constant cheering added further brilliance to the

mood in the arena. IBAK Chairman Dr Manimara Chozhan reminded everyone present about the prestigious international tournament, Kuwait Badminton Challenge 2022, which is next in the line-up of events hosted by IBAK. This highly anticipated event is scheduled to be held on the 6th, 7th and 8th of October, 2022.

praised his teammates for their performance individually and as a team, noting: "I think everyone really stepped up when it was required." "A credit goes to the whole team, players, coaches, support team. I love them, they have been fantastic. It's one of the best teams that I have been part of," he said.

"Thomas Cup is something that India has never won and now to be part of a team that won the Thomas Cup and to contribute to the team's win just gives me a lot of happiness," he added. Srikanth, who told reporters the team's WhatsApp group was called 'it's coming home', said while the team hadn't got any firm plans for celebrations that evening, "it's definitely going to be crazy". A dispirited Christie said it wasn't easy coming into his match 2-0 down in the tie, but that he had given his all. "We already tried our best, I think, and we will try our best the next time," he said.

PM on the phone

In the first match of the tie, world number five Ginting grabbed the first game in style over Sen, 21-8. But he then wobbled, and with Sen growing in confidence, the Indian world number nine won the next two games 21-17, 21-16. "I think this one is for the team, they have been backing me throughout my performances," the 20-year-old Sen said. "In the closing stages I was really nervous and trying to calm myself with deep breaths."

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi led the praise back home and personally rang the team in the



BANGKOK: India's Kidambi Srikanth hits a return against Indonesia's Jonatan Christie during the men's finals of the Thomas and Uber Cup badminton tournament in Bangkok on May 15, 2022. —AFP

Thai capital to congratulate them. "The Indian badminton team has scripted history! The entire nation is elated by India winning the Thomas Cup!" he tweeted. A subdued Ginting admitted there were things he could have improved on. "I play in a rush today and that's why I make a lot of mistakes," he said. South Korea sprang an upset of their own in the women's team championship, the Uber Cup, when they defeated holders China in their final on Saturday. —AFP

Sports

Swiatek wins Italian Open to claim fifth straight title

Djokovic's 1,000th career win sets up Roland Garros replay

ROME: Iga Swiatek swept to victory at the Italian Open on Sunday, beating Ons Jabeur 6-2, 6-2 to claim her fifth tournament crown in a row. World number one Swiatek dropped to her knees in tears of joy after winning her 28th match in a row, and is red-hot favourite for the French Open which starts later this month.

The Pole has dropped just one set in her last 20 matches and made light work of Jabeur, ranked seven in the world, in a largely one-sided final in Rome. Jabeur had come into Sunday's final at a roaring Foro Italico centre court on the back of two thrilling comeback wins over Daria Kasatkina and Maria Sakkari. Tunisia's Jabeur had made history last week after becoming the first Arab or African woman to win a WTA 1000 title but could not extend a career-best 11-match winning streak against her relentless opponent.

Swiatek never looked like giving up her serve and after winning the first three games came close

to taking the fourth, failing to capitalise on two break points before Jabeur eventually got a score on the board. After her heroics in the quarter- and semi-finals fans on the court were hoping for another fightback but by the time she started to show signs of life she was already too far behind.

Down in the second set Jabeur shanked a poor shot wide at break point in game two, and Swiatek then claimed the next two to move into an unassailable lead. Jabeur then fired up the crowd by winning the next two and another unlikely comeback bid looked to be on when she had three break points in game seven. However Swiatek took the game to duce and saved another break point in a superb rally before taking the game, breaking Jabeur's resolve and taking the title.

Djokovic's 1,000th career

Meanwhile, world number one Novak Djokovic took his place in the Italian Open final on Saturday

by claiming his 1,000th career win in straight sets over Norway's Casper Ruud 6-4, 6-3 in Rome. Djokovic will face Monte Carlo Masters champion Stefanos Tsitsipas in Sunday's final, the Serb's fourth in as many years in the Italian capital and he basked in the warm applause of a crowd for whom he always enjoys playing.

"If I can pick the two places in the world where I would want to celebrate the thousandth win it's in Serbia and here in Rome," Djokovic said in Italian after being given a cake in honor of the milestone. "Let's go for another thousand." Djokovic is chasing a sixth title at the Foro Italico ahead of Roland Garros later this month and dealt with world number 10 Ruud on his way to a 12th final at one of his favorite venues. The 34-year-old has already secured a record-extending 370th week as world number one thanks to his straight sets victory over by Felix Auger-Aliassime on Friday.

And after racing into a rapid 4-0 lead in the

first set he never looked back, Ruud playing some fun tennis and winning entertaining rallies but never really offering the impression he could overhaul Djokovic. The second set was as routine as it gets, Djokovic breaking Ruud in game eight and then dispatching his opponent at the first opportunity two games later. "I thought I played really, really well in the first four and last four games of the match. Let's hope I can take that form into tomorrow's final," added Djokovic in a courtside interview.

Djokovic's clash with Tsitsipas will be a rematch of their final at last year's French Open, a five-set thriller eventually won by the Serb. "He's definitely in form. These last few years he's been one of the top two, three clay court players.... I can expect a big battle on the court but I'm ready for it." Greek world number five Tsitsipas is in the final after beating Alexander Zverev 4-6, 6-3, 6-3 in an entertaining last four battle. — AFP



Klopp eyes final quadruple push

LONDON: Jurgen Klopp urged Liverpool to give one last push for the quadruple after they beat Chelsea on penalties in the FA Cup final to keep their history bid alive. Klopp's side won 6-5 in the shoot-out following an enthralling 0-0 draw after extra-time at Wembley on Saturday. Kostas Tsimikas scored the decisive penalty after Alisson Becker saved Mason Mount's effort, sparking wild celebrations from Liverpool boss Klopp and his players.

Having already beaten Chelsea on penalties in the League Cup final in February, Liverpool remain in contention to become the first English team to win all four major trophies in a single season. The Reds face Real Madrid in the Champions League final in Paris on May 28 and still have an outside chance of catching Premier League leaders Manchester City.

Liverpool are three points behind City with two games left for both teams. City travel to West Ham on Sunday before Liverpool return to action at Southampton on Tuesday and Klopp wants his squad to drag a final effort from their weary limbs in what will be their 61st game of a marathon season. "The quadruple, it's outstanding that we can talk

about it, it's crazy," Klopp said. "But we play Tuesday against Southampton and we have no clue who can play. I think we will have to make a few changes.

"It will be incredibly tough. The quadruple is on if you like, but also off as well. City are three points ahead and have a better goal difference. If they win at West Ham it's hard." The quadruple chase might have been dented after Mohamed Salah and Virgil van Dijk were unable to finish the final due to injuries. Klopp doesn't expect them to be long-term absentees, but is unsure if they will face Southampton. "I think they will both be fine, for Tuesday we will see. We will train on Sunday and if they are available I will take it," he said.

Liverpool's first FA Cup triumph since 2006 was especially meaningful for Klopp, who saluted his players for matching Chelsea blow for blow after such a gruelling campaign. "My team knows exactly what I think of them. This is a trophy for the whole club. It's massive, it means the world," Klopp said. "You saw with the performance what it means to the players. It's massive. It's game number 60 in a very intense season and pulling out a performance like this is absolutely incredible." Klopp also revealed that Liverpool's penalty success was in part due to their work with a company who specialise in neuro science. "The penalties are a lottery but we did it again. — AFP

Gulf Games kick off

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The third Gulf Games, hosted by Kuwait will kick off today under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. 1,700 athletes will compete in 16 games. The games were postponed for three days due to the death of UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan.

Today's events will include athletics for men and women at Ahamad Al-Rashdan Track and Field in Keifan area; Futsal and basketball at Sheikh Saad Al-Abdallah complex in Sabah Al-Salem area in addition to shooting training at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex. The men's athletics will start by 9:00 am. At 4:00 pm, the women's pole vault, 100 m hurdles, shot put, long jump, javelin throw and 10,000 meters running will begin.

The men's competition will resume by 7:00 pm with the finals of the pole vault, 110 meters hurdles, shot put, long jump, 10,000 meters running, 100 meters dash and 400 meters running. Assistant Secretary and Head of the Teams committee at Kuwait Athletics Association Dr Manea Al-Ajmi said he expects tough competitions.

Futsal: Kuwait vs UAE

Kuwait Futsal men national team will start their



competition against UAE by 9:30 pm. This will be followed by Bahrain and Saudi Arabia (4:30 pm). The women's team will play UAE at 7:00 pm while Saudi Arabia will play Bahrain at 2:00pm. All matches will be played at Sheikh Saad Al-Abdallah complex in Sabah Al-Salem area. The basketball team will face Qatar's team at 7:00 pm, after which Bahrain and UAE will face off. The basketball competitions are played in a knockout league style and the team with the most points will be declared the winner. Member of Kuwait Basketball Association and team Manager Dr Abdelrahman Al-Nashi said preparations for the tournament were on two stages. The team held training camps both in Kuwait and abroad.

Successful camp for Volleyball

Kuwait's volleyball team returned home from their training camp in Serbia in preparation for the Gulf Games. The volleyball games will start on May 20th. Deputy Chairman of Kuwait Volleyball Association Nayef Al-Khamili said he is happy with the players' compliance with the daily training.

Anti-doping efforts

Director General of Antidoping Committee Hanaa Al-Butti said the Committee has intensified its efforts by training specialized personnel on collecting samples (according to international standards) to carry out necessary tests. She said that the anti-doping tests will be carried out on all competitions.



Ahly stay on track for third straight CAF League title

JOHANNESBURG: Mohamed Sherif equalized in added time for Al Ahly of Egypt as they drew 2-2 at Entente Setif of Algeria on Saturday to stay on course for an unprecedented third straight CAF Champions League title. Ahmed Abdel Kader put Ahly in front after only two minutes of the semi-final second leg before goals either side of half-time from Ahmed Kendouci and Riad Benayah edged Setif ahead.

But two-time African champions Setif were denied the consolation of a home victory in Algiers when South African Percy Tau set up Sherif to equalise. Ahly won the semi-final 6-2 on aggregate having built a four-goal first-leg lead in Cairo last weekend, and will face long-time rivals Wydad Casablanca of Morocco in the May 30 final. The Confederation of African Football (CAF) have scheduled the title decider in the premier African club competition for Morocco, saying they were the only bidders.

However, record 10-time champions Ahly want the match staged at a neutral venue and have appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in Switzerland to overturn the CAF decision. Ahly and Wydad met in the 2017 final with the Moroccans winning 2-1 on aggregate over two legs, before sin-

gle-match finals were introduced two seasons ago. CAF say they will consider reverting to two-leg Champions League finals, but are adamant that the 2022 title decider must go ahead in Morocco.

Hopeless task

Tau scored twice and created the other two goals in the first leg and his pass put Abdel Kader through to fire past goalkeeper Sofiane Khedairia less than two minutes after the kick-off. The goal left Setif needing to score at least six to pull off the greatest comeback in Champions League history. That was never going to happen against opponents as formidable as Ahly, who have won 23 titles across four CAF competitions.

Instead, the Black Eagles sought the consolation of a home victory over the Red Devils and drew level as half-time approached. Kendouci turned in the box and unleashed a hard, rising shot that flew into the net past captain and goalkeeper Mohamed el Shenawy off the underside of the crossbar. Benayah notched his fifth goal in Africa this season to give Setif the lead just past the hour mark, beating El Shenawy with a shot from outside the box that flew into the net off the surface.

Substitute Sherif then spoilt the pending victory celebrations of Algerian supporters with his sixth goal-one less than Champions League leading scorer Tiago Azulao from Angolan club Petro Luanda. On Friday, Petro exceeded expectations by holding Wydad to a 1-1 draw in Casablanca in the other second leg, but the Moroccans advanced 4-2 on aggregate to their third final appearance in six seasons. — AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000

Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9
Clinics	
Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134

Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
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LONDON: Manchester City's Brazilian striker Gabriel (left) is tackled by West Ham United's English striker Jarrod Bowen (center) and West Ham United's Argentinean midfielder Manuel Lanzini (right) during the English Premier League football match between West Ham United and Manchester City on May 15, 2022. —AFP

Man City salvage a vital point

City's comeback keeps title in their hands; Spurs book top four

LONDON: Manchester City came from 2-0 down to salvage a vital point in a 2-2 draw at West Ham to keep the Premier League title in their hands as Tottenham moved into the top four on Sunday. City travelled to the London Stadium knowing they needed a maximum of four points from their final two games of the season to guarantee a fourth title in five years. However, the Hammers took full advantage of City's injury crisis at the back as the pace and poise of Jarrod Bowen put Liverpool right back in the title race.

Pep Guardiola was without Ruben Dias, John Stones and Kyle Walker and a makeshift defence was easily cut open on the counter-attack. Bowen burst onto Pablo Fornals' ball over the top to round Ederson and put City behind in a league game for the first time since February. City did not learn their lesson as Bowen broke the offside trap once more in the final seconds of the first half to fire low past Ederson.

The champions were rattled but responded to keep the destiny of the title in their own hands. Jack Grealish has failed to live up to his £100 million (\$123 million) price tag, but came up with his biggest City goal four minutes into the second period to get the comeback started. West Ham still had huge chances to restore their two-goal lead as Bowen hit the side-netting from a narrow

angle and Michail Antonio's lob drifted wide with just Ederson to beat.

City had fortune on their side to get level when Vladimir Coufal turned Riyad Mahrez's free-kick into his own net. But Guardiola's men missed the chance to complete the comeback and move to the brink of the title when Mahrez's penalty was saved by Lukasz Fabianski four minutes from time. City move four points clear of Liverpool at the top of the table, but the quadruple-chasing Reds have a game in hand away to Southampton on Tuesday.

Spurs apply pressure

At the Tottenham Hotspur stadium, Harry Kane's penalty moved Spurs into fourth with a nervy 1-0 win over Burnley. Antonio Conte's men move two points ahead of north London rivals Arsenal, who travel to Newcastle on Monday, in the battle for a place in next season's Champions League.

Tottenham still need a slip up from the Gunners to return to the Champions League next season, but upped the pressure on Mikel Arteta's men. Defeat sees Burnley drop into the relegation zone after Leeds snatched a late 1-1 draw at home to Brighton. A brave Burnley performance was undone by a stroke of misfortune deep

into first half stoppage time. Davinson Sanchez's flick brushed off the outstretched arm of Ashley Barnes.

There was barely an appeal inside the Tottenham Hotspur stadium in real time, but the incident was picked up by VAR and given after a review. Kane was dead as usual from the spot as the England captain converted his 23rd consecutive successful penalty. Son Heung-min's bid to beat Mohamed Salah to the Premier League Golden Boot was frustrated after the break by two brilliant saves from Nick Pope. His heroics could have salvaged his side a point when Barnes struck the post from long range.

Leeds' late leveller

Burnley now need something from their final two games to survive as Pascal Struijk's late leveller at Elland Road gave Leeds hope. Danny Welbeck put in-form Brighton in front, but he then missed a glorious chance to double Brighton's lead and Struijk's stoppage time header earned a point. Dropped points for Leeds means Everton can realistically guarantee survival if they beat Brentford later on Sunday. Jamie Vardy and Harvey Barnes each scored twice as Leicester thrashed already-relegated Watford 5-1, while Aston Villa and Crystal Palace played out a 1-1 draw. —AFP



MUMBAI: An art student gives final touches to a painting of late Australian cricketer Andrew Symonds as a tribute in his memory in Mumbai on May 15, 2022. —AFP

Flamboyant Australia cricketer Symonds dies in car crash

SYDNEY: Australian cricket was reeling Sunday after swashbuckling former all-rounder Andrew Symonds was killed in a car crash—another tragic blow after the recent deaths of fellow greats Shane Warne and Rod Marsh. The 46-year-old, who played 26 Tests and 198 one-day internationals from 1998 to 2009, was involved in a single-car accident outside Townsville in Queensland state on Saturday night.

Police said emergency services attempted to revive him, but he died from his injuries after the car left the road and rolled. Pictures published by the Brisbane Courier-Mail showed a vehicle on its roof and skid marks on the road. "We are still in shock—I'm just thinking of the two kids," his tearful wife Laura told the newspaper, referring to their young children. "He was the most laid-back person. Nothing stressed him out."

Cricket Australia chairman Lachlan Henderson said the sport had lost "another of its very best". "Andrew was a generational talent who was instrumental in Australia's success at World Cups and as part of Queensland's rich cricket history," he added. "He was a cult figure to many who was treasured by his fans and friends." Symonds' fatal crash comes just months after the deaths of fellow Australian greats Warne and Marsh, who both died unexpectedly from heart attacks.

"Unfortunately I've been here too often this year under these circumstances. I actually can't quite believe it, to be honest," former Australia captain Mark Taylor told Channel Nine. "Another tragic day for cricket." The larger-than-life Symonds was hugely popular, not only for his hard-hitting approach to the game but also for his easy-going personality. He was widely considered one of the most skilled all-rounders Australian cricket has seen, bowling both off-spin and medium pace, while playing many match-winning hands with his explosive middle-order batting.

Symonds was also a top-rate fielder and was a key part of Australia's back-to-back 50-over World Cup triumphs in 2003 and 2007. Domestically, he played for Queensland for 17 seasons, while appearing for Gloucestershire, Kent, Lancashire and Surrey in the English County Championship and for Deccan Chargers and Mumbai Indians in the Indian Premier League. —AFP

'Depressed' Filipino bodybuilders out of SEA Games

HANOI: Bodybuilders from the Philippines were left heartbroken on Sunday after being barred from competing at the ongoing SEA Games for failing to fulfill anti-doping rules. The bodybuilding team of eight men and one woman were set to fly home from the Vietnamese capital Hanoi just as they should have been competing for medals. An official said the Philippines had not provided sufficient evidence that the athletes had done doping tests three weeks in advance.

Lorelei Rose Pedrano Deloria, who should have been competing on Sunday in the mixed pairs, said that she and her team-mates' dreams had been shattered and they were "depressed" as a result. "We were super-excited about this (the Games). It was an opportunity to represent the country and bring honor to our country," the 29-year-old told AFP at their hotel. "We weren't able to compete. We weren't even able to step on the stage."

The Filipino bodybuilders said they first learnt of the problem when they arrived in Hanoi on Wednesday, with the team desperately trying to find a way to save their Games. But Chetan Pathare, a technical delegate for the event, told AFP: "The doping certificate, the clearance certificate, is a must. It clearly mentioned (in an event handbook), and (was) not complied by the Philippines."

"And that is the only reason they were not allowed," he said, adding that Vietnam sports officials had "well informed" all national Olympic committees involved in the Games of the rules. Despite the setback the bodybuilders are determined to have a crack at the next SEA Games, in 2023 in Cambodia. "Our preparation for next year's SEA Games... will start when we arrive back in the Philippines," said Jesse Virata Bermudo.



HANOI: Singapore's Terry Tay Wei An competes during the floor exercises final of gymnastics event in the 31st Southeast Asian Games (SEA Games) at Quan Ngura Sports Complex in Hanoi on May 15, 2022. —AFP

Swim controversy

In another development, Olympic swimming hero Joseph Schooling had a first gold of this year's Southeast Asian Games dramatically snatched away when Singapore's sprint relay team were disqualified. Schooling, Quah Zheng Wen, Jonathan Tan and Mikkel Lee came home well clear of their regional rivals in the 4x100m freestyle relay at the SEA Games in Hanoi on Saturday night and celebrated winning gold.

But while conducting a post-race interview the quartet's elation turned to agony when were informed they had been disqualified - because one of their swimmers had left his blocks early at a changeover - before being ushered away. Schooling, 26, stunned Michael Phelps to win the 2016 Olympic 100m butterfly title and has won 27

SEA Games golds, along with three Asian Games golds. The disqualification ends Singapore's winning streak in SEA Games 4x100m freestyle relays dating back to 2001.

Malaysia finished second but were also disqualified for the same offence which left hosts Vietnam to take the gold with silver for Indonesia and bronze going to Thailand. Malaysian swimming coach Chris Martin said official timing showed one of their swimmers had left the blocks at a changeover 0.12 seconds before the incoming swimmer had touched the wall, in comments reported by state news agency Bernama. Vietnamese swim coach Phan Quang Minh Quan told state outlet VnExpress: "This is something very difficult and sensitive in sport, but the digital machine detected the violations, not human, so it's fair." —AFP