

Al Khaldiya take control in title race

Mahdi Humaidan scores hat-trick to help Al Khaldiya power to top of league table, just one point ahead of Manama | **P12**

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Gwyneth Paltrow 'proud of making divorce easier'

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Israel kills three suspects in murders of UK-Israelis

Nablus, Palestinian Territories

Israel said its security forces shot dead three blamed for killing a British-Israeli woman and two of her daughters last month, in a raid in the occupied West Bank yesterday.

Two suspects in the killings and a third man accused of helping them were killed in a joint operation in Nablus by the army, police and Shin Bet security service, a statement said.

Israel had identified them as the "murderers of Leah, Maia and Rina Dee" who died after the April 7 attack on their vehicle near Hamra in the Jordan Valley, the Shin Bet said, using their Hebrew names.

The army said troops recovered two M-16 assault rifles and an AK-47 from the apartment where the suspects were holed up. Huge crowds later gathered in central Nablus for the funerals of the three men.

17 killed in Egypt motorway collision

Cairo, Egypt

Seventeen people were killed when a truck and a bus collided on a motorway in southern Egypt yesterday, the health ministry said.

It said another 29 people were injured, and that 26 ambulances were sent to the scene of the accident on the road between the southern cities of Kharga and Asyut.

The injured were taken to nearby hospitals.

In 2021 there were 7,000 deaths caused by traffic accidents, according to official figures.

BJA announces election

TDT | Manama

The Bahrain Journalists Association (BJA) has scheduled its annual assembly meeting for June 3, during which board elections will be held.

The association will notify its members of the meeting at least two weeks in advance of the specified date.

Candidates will be able to register for the elections 15 days prior to the date set for the elections, with registration closing three days before June 3.

HM King to attend Coronation in UK



At the invitation of His Majesty King Charles III of the United Kingdom, Head of the Commonwealth, His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa yesterday departed for the United Kingdom to attend the coronation ceremony. (Story on page 2)

Bahraini business delegation heads to Japan, South Korea

TDT | Manama

A high-level delegation from Bahrain, led by Abdullah bin Adel Fakhro, Minister of Industry and Commerce (MOIC), supported by Noor bint Ali Al Khalifa, Minister of Sustainable Development, is on a visit to Japan and South Korea from May 5-12.

The visit, organised by MOIC, is backed by Bahrain Economic Development Board.

The delegation will be supported by the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTEA), Nogaholding, Alba, Export Bahrain, and Bahrain-based Gulf Aluminium Rolling Mill (GARMCO).

During the visit, the Bahrain EDB will host two headline events in Tokyo, highlighting investment opportunities in Bahrain and promoting economic ties with Japan and South Korea.



Adel Fakhro

Sudan gets ultimatum

Biden says Sudan conflict 'must end,' threatens sanctions

● Clashes between rival factions began on April 15

● Killed an estimated 700 people

● Biden also signed an executive order to impose sanctions

TDT | agencies



Smoke billows during fighting in the Sudanese capital Khartoum

US President Joe Biden on Thursday threatened to impose new sanctions over Sudan's conflict, saying the fighting "must end", as gunfire and explosions rocked Khartoum for a 20th straight day.

Hundreds of people have been killed in Sudan since battles began on April 15 between army chief Abdel Fattah al-Bur-

han's forces and his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo's Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

As the latest ceasefire expired at midnight (2200 GMT), the army said it was ready to abide by a new seven-day truce, but there was no word from its foes in the paramilitary RSF.

Biden signed an executive

order on Thursday that broadens authority to impose sanctions on those responsible for "threatening the peace, security, and stability of Sudan" and "undermining Sudan's democratic transition", the US leader said in a statement without naming potential targets.

"The violence taking place in

Sudan is a tragedy -- and it is a betrayal of the Sudanese people's clear demand for civilian government and a transition to democracy. It must end," Biden said.

Within hours of the latest supposed ceasefire taking effect, witnesses in Khartoum reported explosions and exchanges of fire on the streets around dawn and clashes during the day in the city of five million people.

The foreign ministry later accused the RSF of attacking the Indian embassy and other evacuated diplomatic missions.

In El Obeid, some 300 kilometres (185 miles) south of the capital, witnesses also reported battles.

The fighting has killed about 700 people so far across Sudan, most of them in Khartoum and the western Darfur region, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project.

UN short \$24 mn to prevent Yemen oil spill

United Nations, United States

The United Nations is short nearly \$24 million needed to safely remove oil from an abandoned tanker off Yemen's coast, officials said Thursday, urging donors to stump up the remaining funds.

A virtual donor conference yesterday raised \$5.6 million in new contributions towards the \$129 million unprecedented rescue operation, in which the UN purchased its own supertanker to remove more than a million barrels of oil from the beleaguered FSO Safer in the Red Sea.

"It is urgent that this gap is closed to successfully implement the operation," said Farhan Haq, spokesman for the UN secretary-general.

"While we appreciate the contributions received so far, there's a crucial need for the funds to allow us to complete the task that we have begun."

"She's not my type"

Trump denies rape allegation in video testimony played in court

AFP | New York

Donald Trump described his rape accuser as "mentally sick" in a videotaped deposition that was played for jurors in his sexual assault and defamation civil trial yesterday.

"She's a liar and she's really a sick person. I think she's sick, mentally sick," Trump said of former American columnist E. Jean Carroll. He made the comments in October when he sat for a deposition in Carroll's lawsuit against the ex-president. Carroll sued Trump last year



About a dozen women came forward accusing Trump of sexual misconduct in the run-up to the 2016 presidential election. Among them was former businesswoman Jessica Leeds who testified in Carroll's lawsuit that Trump sexually assaulted her on a plane in the 1970s.

alleging that he raped her in a New York department store in the mid-1990s.

She also claims that he defamed her when he accused her of lying after she went public with the allegation in 2019.

Trump has repeatedly and strenuously denied the allegations and has not been criminally prosecuted over them.

During the deposition, Trump reiterated his claim that he does not know who Carroll is and re-

peated several times comments he's made before that "she's not my type."

A friend of Carroll's testified Thursday that Carroll told her shortly after the alleged rape that Trump had attacked her.

"I was fighting, I was fighting," retired journalist Carol Martin recalled Carroll as saying, adding that Carroll had not used the word rape.

Trump's lawyers have said the former US leader will not take the stand in court during the trial.

King Charles III's coronation: His Majesty departs for UK

TDT | agencies

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa yesterday left for the United Kingdom to attend the coronation ceremony of King Charles III on Saturday.

His Majesty is taking part in the ceremony as invited by King Charles III, who succeeds Queen Elizabeth II, seven long decades after named heir to the throne at the age of just three.

The hour-long ceremony takes place eight months after the death of his mother Queen Elizabeth II.

Born on November 14, 1948, Charles III is now the King of the United Kingdom, of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Head of the Commonwealth.

The Coronation will be in the presence of some 2,000 people, from foreign leaders and royalty to elected officials and civil society representatives, inside Westminster Abbey.

The ceremony is also the first for UK in 70 years and only the



HM King departs for UK

second in history to be televised.

Turning up alongside HM King Hamad will be World leaders including the French President Emmanuel Macron; Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese; German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier; Polish President Andrzej Duda; President of the Philippines Ferdinand Marcos Jr; and Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission.

Royals including King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia of

Spain; Crown Prince Frederik and Crown Princess Mary of Denmark; Crown Prince Fumihito and Crown Princess Kiko of Japan; Prince Albert II and Princess Charlene of Monaco; and King Abdullah II and Queen Rania of Jordan are also invited.

UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and his wife Akshata Murty along with members of the cabinet will be present.

The day begins with the "King's Procession" -- a 1.3-mile (two-kilometre) trip from Buck-

ingham Palace in central London to Westminster Abbey.

The couple will travel in the Diamond Jubilee State Coach, drawn by six Windsor Grey horses, and escorted by members of the king's bodyguard, the Household Cavalry.

They will arrive for the start of the ceremony at 11:00 am (1000 GMT).

Charles will be crowned at 12:00 pm and the service, led by the highest-ranking cleric in the Church of England, Archbishop

of Canterbury Justin Welby, ends at 1:00 pm.

The ceremony has largely remained the same for more than 1,000 years.

The king will first be presented to the congregation, who respond with shouts of "God Save the King!"

Following the ceremonies, The king and queen will return to Buckingham Palace in the Gold State Coach in a larger ceremonial "Coronation Procession".

The coach, first used in 1762, weighs four tonnes and will be drawn by eight Windsor Greys, at walking pace.

They will be joined by other members of the royal family and some 4,000 British and Commonwealth troops in full regalia.

At the palace, they will appear on the balcony at about 2:15 pm to greet the crowd and watch a Royal Air Force fly-past.

Charles's two sons from his first marriage to Princess Diana -- their apparent Prince William and Prince Harry -- will both be there.

Harry, attending without his wife, Meghan, or their two children, and Charles's brother Prince Andrew, are not expected to have a formal role to play.

But William's nine-year-old son Prince George, second in line to the throne, is one of the king's four pages.

Three of Camilla's grandchildren -- Gus, Louis and Freddy -- and her great-nephew Arthur are among her pages.



Charles will be the 40th reigning monarch to be crowned at the central London church since King William I in 1066.



Outside the UK, he is also king of 14 other Commonwealth countries, including Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

Camilla, his second wife, will be crowned queen.



Elizabeth's coronation in 1953 cost £912,000 -- equivalent to £20.5 million (\$25.5 million) now. The most expensive was of Charles's grandfather, George VI in 1937. It cost £454,000, or £24.8 million in today's money.

Indian Minister hails steady growth in ties, holds talks with ministers

Julia Cassano
TDT | Manama

V. Muraleedharan, the Indian Minister of State for External Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs, yesterday held a series of meetings with ministers and top officials on boosting bilateral ties and cooperation in various sectors.

The minister arrived in Bahrain for a two-day official visit from Saudi Arabia, where he landed on the 1st of this month. This is also his second visit to Bahrain. He last visited Bahrain in August 2021. The latest visit also follows the minister's visit to Jeddah from 25 to 28 April to oversee Operation Kaveri for the evacuation of Indian citizens from Sudan.

Among those he met were Finance and National Economy Minister Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, Labour Minister Jameel bin Mohammed Ali Humaidan, and Social Development Minister Osama Bin Ahmed Khalaf Al Asfoor.

Talks were in the presence of top officials, including Piyush Srivastava, the Indian Ambassador to Bahrain.

Speaking to The Daily Tribune, Piyush Srivastava, the Ambassador of India to Bahrain, said that the Minister's visit to the Kingdom reflects the depth of bilateral relations between both countries.

"This is the Minister's second visit in less than two years, and this directly highlights the



Indian Minister V. Muraleedharan during talks with Labour Minister Humaidan (left), Minister of Finance and National Economy (right)



Minister Muraleedharan during meetings yesterday at the Indian Embassy

close bilateral interaction at the higher political level, and we are very confident that this visit will further progress our relations in all spheres, especially in trade and investment," the Ambassador said.

During his talks with Humaidan, Muraleedharan discussed ways of boosting cooperation, particularly in the labour sector and exchanging expertise in workforce training. The ministers also talked about efforts to align national labour laws with that of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Humaidan

highlighted the labour policies prioritising labour rights, healthy working conditions, and high productivity.

Muraleedharan praised the progress made by the Bahraini labour sector and expressed his interest in boosting cooperation in all sectors. Additionally, he discussed avenues of future cooperation, including skilling.

He expressed appreciation for ensuring the well-being of the Indian community, affirming interest in boosting cooperation in all sectors, especially in trade and investment.

Piyush Srivastava, Dr Shaikh Abdulla, V. Muraleedharan, and MP Abdunabi Salman Ahmed

Separately, the minister met with Osama Bin Ahmed Khalaf Al Asfoor, Minister of Social Development of Bahrain and discussed ways to boost support to the Indian community.

Discussions with Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, the Minister of Finance and National Economy, were in the presence of Khalid Humaidan, the CEO of the Economic Development Board.

Earlier, following his arrival, the minister tweeted: "Arriving in the beautiful Kingdom of

Bahrain again. I look forward to interactions with the Bahraini leadership, dignitaries and the Indian community."

Indo-Bahrain Dance Festival

While in Bahrain, Muraleedharan will also inaugurate the Indo-Bahrain Dance and Music Festival organised by Bahrain Keraleeya Samajam and Embassy of India, with support of Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (AKAM). He will hold discussions with var-

ious Bahraini dignitaries and meet Indian community organisations, as well as Indians working in different sectors.

India-Bahrain enjoy strong ties

During a reception at The Diplomat Radisson Blu Hotel, the minister said: "The Kingdom has welcomed the Indian community with open arms, creating a connected and integrated society that establishes deeper bonds and also furthers both countries' progression."

He highlighted the expanding economic and commercial partnership between the two nations in various domains, including IT, big data, Fintech, space technology, food security, and renewable energy. Additionally, the growing collaboration between the two countries encompasses the development and assistance of education, agriculture, healthcare, and pharmaceuticals.

"As our economic relations grow, we will only see steady growth and new records. Last year our bilateral trade reached a record figure of \$1.65 billion (BD622,135), and I am happy to share that this year, we have already surpassed this figure," Muraleedharan said.

Dr Shaikh Abdulla bin Ahmed bin Abdulla Al Khalifa remarked that the ongoing development and growth of relationships between nations is having a significant impact on both governmental institutions and the private sector.

Bahrain to lead globally by 2027 in real-time payments, says ACI

ACI Worldwide and GlobalData expect Bahrainis to make 83.3 real-time transactions per month by 2027

● Bahrain (19.1) holds second place globally in 2022 ranking

● Leads the Middle East, Africa and South Asia segment

Julia Cassano
TDT | Manama

Bahrain will lead the world nations for consumer adoption of real-time payments by 2027.

The projection is according to the 2023 Prime Time for Real-Time report, published by ACI Worldwide, which sees Middle East as fast becoming the global hotspot for the real-time payments' revolution sweeping the globe.

It says, by 2027, every Bahraini citizen, now 1.5 million, is forecast to make an average

Global Top Ten: Real-Time Payment Transactions per Head per Month (TPHM)					
Global Ranking 2022			Global Ranking 2027		
Global Ranking	Country	TPHM	Global Ranking	Country	TPHM
1	Thailand	23.0	1	Bahrain	83.3
2	Bahrain	19.1	2	Brazil	51.8
3	South Korea	14.7	3	Thailand	43.6
4	Brazil	14.2	4	South Korea	21.9
5	Sweden	9.5	5	Netherlands	21.7
6	Denmark	8.8	6	Sweden	18.9
7	India	7.4	7	India	18.2
8	Netherlands	6.2	8	Denmark	15.5
9	U.K.	5.9	9	Finland	15.2
10	Malaysia	5.3	10	Hong Kong	15.0

Middle East, Africa and South Asia: Real-Time Payment Transactions per Head per Month							
2022				2027			
Global Ranking	Country	TPHM	Regional Ranking	Global Ranking	Country	TPHM	Regional Ranking
2	Bahrain	19.1	1	1	Bahrain	83.3	1
7	India	7.4	2	7	India	18.2	2
17	Nigeria	3.3	3	23	Nigeria	5.0	3
31	Saudi Arabia	1.1	4	33	Saudi Arabia	3.2	4
37	Sri Lanka	0.5	5	38	U.A.E.	1.5	5
38	U.A.E.	0.4	6	41	Sri Lanka	1.4	6
39	South Africa	0.4	7	43	South Africa	1.1	7
42	Oman	0.2	8	45	Egypt	1.0	8
46	Pakistan	0.04	9	47	Pakistan	0.8	9
48	Kenya	0.03	10	48	Oman	0.8	10
50	Egypt	0.01	11	51	Kenya	0.1	11

Rankings showing Real-Time Payment Transactions per month based on head of population over 15 years old

of 83.3 real-time-transactions per month (TPHM), the highest level of RTP consumer adoption, compared to 23 in 2022.

That number makes Bahrain a world leader, ahead of Brazil (51.8), Thailand (43.6) and its immediate regional competitors, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

In the 2022 ranking, Bahrain (19.1) holds second place globally for real-time transactions per month after Thailand, with a TPHM of 23.0. In the Middle East, Africa and South Asia, Bahrain leads.

The report highlights that real-time payments are 'strongly embedded' in the everyday lives

of consumers and businesses in Bahrain. With the support of the Central Bank enabling easier use through digital apps like BenefitPay, real-time payments are helping promote financial inclusion and increase financial stability across the economy, leading to stronger economic growth.

Meanwhile, the total real-time transactions in Bahrain are projected to grow from 276 million in 2022 to 1.3 billion in 2027, representing an annual growth rate of 35.5%, outpacing any other market in the Gulf.

According to the report, Middle East is the fast-growing re-

al-time payments market globally, with transactions expected to grow from \$675 million (BD 254,484,517) in 2022 to a staggering \$2.6 billion (BD 980,236,660) by 2027.

"In 2022, countries like Thailand, Brazil and Bahrain took the lead in real-time transactions and it is having a profound impact on how they conduct their financial affairs."

"This year's report highlights how consumer and business adoption of real-time payments accelerates when the conditions are right," said Craig Ramsey, the global head of real-time payments and banking of ACI Worldwide.

"Bahrain's government and Central Bank support, as well as its innovative digital infrastructure, have made it an ideal environment for businesses and consumers to take advantage of real-time payments," said Santhosh Rao, Senior Vice President, MEASA, ACI Worldwide.

Works Ministry issued over 1,000 traffic diversion permits in Q1, 2023

TDT | Manama

During the first quarter of this year, the Works Ministry granted more than 1,000 work permits for traffic diversion, according to an announcement made by the ministry.

Maha Khalifa Hamada, the Director of the Planning and Roads Design Department, explained that the permits were for managing traffic flow at construction sites, reducing congestion, and ensuring the safety of road users. These permits were for various types of infrastructure development, including roads, sanitation, electricity, water, and communications.

Out of the 1,419 requests for traffic diversion received, the ministry approved 1,039.

Hamada clarified that diversions for smaller projects, like maintenance of streets, typically took place during off-peak hours, such as evenings or weekends, to minimise traffic disruptions. In addition,



Maha Khalifa Hamada



Traffic diversions are seen at a highway in the Kingdom

the ministry said it notified the public of these diversions through local newspapers and social media channels and suggested alternate routes.

Works Ministry receives requests for traffic diversions from ministries and institutions through the websites www.bahrain.bh and www.works.gov.bh, according to Hamada.

ICRF celebrates Labour Day with more than 500 workers

TDT | Manama

The Indian Community Relief Fund (ICRF) organised a celebration for workers in honour of International Labour Day on May 1, 2023.

The event, held at the Indian School Bahrain Isa Town campus, featured cultural programmes, sports activities, and birthday celebrations, with over 500 workers from different labour camps in attendance.

The event's chief guest, Ravishankar Shukla, Second Secretary at the Indian Embassy, joined the workers in cutting a cake to celebrate birthdays. ICRF Chairman Dr Babu Ramachandran said the event aimed to create a fun atmosphere for low-income workers and raise awareness of support systems available to them.

The event included Tug of War, Running Race, Karaoke Singing, and Cinematic Dance activities, with medals awarded to the winners.

ICRF thanked the event's



Labour Day celebration organised by ICRF

sponsors, and medical teams were on hand from Shifa Al Jazeera Medical Centre and Al Rabea Medical Centre to provide first aid if required.

The evening concluded with

a dinner, spot prizes, and gift hampers for all participants. Organizing committee convenors Subair Kannur, Javad Pasha and ICRF members were present.

NEET (UG) 2023 exam on Sunday at ISB Bahrain campus

TDT | Manama

The National Testing Agency (NTA) will conduct the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (UG) 2023 at The Indian School Bahrain (ISB) Isa Town campus on Sunday.

Candidates should arrive at the centre between 8:30 am and 11 am local time in Bahrain (11 am to 1:30 pm IST).

The gate to the examination centre will be closed at 11 am (1:30 pm IST). The exam writing time will begin at 11:30 am (2:00 pm IST) and end at 2:50 pm (5:20 pm IST).

Ministry of Education refutes reports on student registration

TDT | Manama

The Ministry of Education has dismissed a false news report circulating online that claimed the start of registration for new students.

In a statement, the ministry clarified that there are no plans to begin registration for new students on May 21, 2023, as reported.

The Communication Department of the Ministry of Education confirmed that the official registration dates will be announced through the ministry's media channels at a later date.



The Global 6G Summit, hosted by the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), successfully concluded yesterday in a hybrid format, gathering telecommunications and related industries' representatives and decision-makers from across the globe. The two-day event revolved around various topics concerning 6G network technologies, such as 6G standards' research and coordination, 6G's economic potential, and how it can contribute to a more sustainable future. The summit featured keynote addresses and panel discussions from leading industry professionals hailing from Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Thailand, China, Europe, the United Kingdom, Canada, and other countries.



Aluminium Bahrain B.S.C. (Alba)
Condensed Consolidated Interim
Financial Statements

For the three months ended 31 March 2023 (Reviewed)

www.albasmelter.com

INTERIM CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

At 31 March 2023 (Reviewed)

	31 March 2023 (Reviewed) BD '000	31 December 2022 (Audited) BD '000
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	1,864,253	1,880,527
Trade and other receivables	2,491	3,013
Derivative financial instruments	10,210	18,095
Deferred tax assets	81	81
	<u>1,877,035</u>	<u>1,901,716</u>
Current assets		
Inventories	434,455	371,542
Trade and other receivables	235,045	243,189
Derivative financial instruments	4,823	7,120
Bank balances and cash	129,549	93,617
	<u>803,872</u>	<u>715,468</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>2,680,907</u>	<u>2,617,184</u>
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Equity		
Share capital	142,000	142,000
Treasury shares	(4,824)	(4,831)
Statutory reserve	71,000	71,000
Capital reserve	249	249
Cash flow hedge reserve	14,863	25,209
Retained earnings	1,515,007	1,588,831
Total equity	<u>1,738,295</u>	<u>1,822,458</u>
Non-current liabilities		
Loans and borrowings	536,774	505,098
Lease liabilities	4,761	4,752
Employees' end of service benefits	1,615	1,401
	<u>543,150</u>	<u>511,251</u>
Current liabilities		
Loans and borrowings	222,660	124,115
Lease liabilities	518	615
Trade and other payables	176,284	158,745
	<u>399,462</u>	<u>283,475</u>
Total liabilities	<u>942,612</u>	<u>794,726</u>
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	<u>2,680,907</u>	<u>2,617,184</u>

INTERIM CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS

For the three months ended 31 March 2023 (Reviewed)

	Three months period ended	
	31 March 2023 BD '000	31 March 2022 BD '000
Revenue from contracts with customers	369,920	454,949
Cost of revenue	(290,068)	(276,940)
GROSS PROFIT	<u>79,852</u>	<u>178,009</u>
Other income	1,811	702
Foreign exchange gain - net	645	4,605
General and administrative expenses	(11,412)	(9,626)
Selling and distribution expenses	(16,580)	(20,496)
Finance costs	(14,793)	(6,889)
Realised gain on settlement of cash flow hedge for interest rate swap (IRS)	8,272	-
Changes in fair value of derivatives financial instruments	164	1,108
PROFIT FOR THE PERIOD BEFORE TAX	<u>47,959</u>	<u>147,413</u>
Income tax expense	(512)	(610)
PROFIT FOR THE PERIOD	<u>47,447</u>	<u>146,803</u>
BASIC AND DILUTED EARNINGS PER SHARE (FILS)	<u>34</u>	<u>104</u>

INTERIM CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY

For the three months ended 31 March 2023 (Reviewed)

	Share capital BD '000	Treasury shares BD '000	Statutory reserve BD '000	Capital reserve BD '000	Cash flow hedge reserve BD '000	Retained earnings BD '000	Total BD '000
Balance at 1 January 2023	142,000	(4,831)	71,000	249	25,209	1,588,831	1,822,458
Profit for the period	-	-	-	-	-	47,447	47,447
Other comprehensive loss for the period	-	-	-	-	(2,074)	-	(2,074)
Total comprehensive (loss)/income for the period	-	-	-	-	(2,074)	47,447	45,373
Net movement in treasury shares	-	7	-	-	-	74	81
Final dividend for 2022 approved and paid	-	-	-	-	-	(121,345)	(121,345)
Reclassification adjustment of realised gain on settlement of cash flow hedge to profit or loss for interest rate swap (IRS)	-	-	-	-	(8,272)	-	(8,272)
Balance at 31 March 2023	<u>142,000</u>	<u>(4,824)</u>	<u>71,000</u>	<u>249</u>	<u>14,863</u>	<u>1,515,007</u>	<u>1,738,295</u>
Balance at 1 January 2022	142,000	(3,742)	71,000	249	944	1,292,569	1,503,020
Profit for the period	-	-	-	-	-	146,803	146,803
Other comprehensive income for the period	-	-	-	-	9,222	-	9,222
Total comprehensive income for the period	-	-	-	-	9,222	146,803	156,025
Net movement in treasury shares	-	112	-	-	-	1,450	1,562
Final dividend for 2021 approved and paid	-	-	-	-	-	(75,316)	(75,316)
Balance at 31 March 2022	<u>142,000</u>	<u>(3,630)</u>	<u>71,000</u>	<u>249</u>	<u>10,166</u>	<u>1,365,506</u>	<u>1,585,291</u>

INTERIM CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

For the three months ended 31 March 2023 (Reviewed)

	Three months period ended	
	31 March 2023 BD '000	31 March 2022 BD '000
PROFIT FOR THE PERIOD	<u>47,447</u>	<u>146,803</u>
Other comprehensive (Loss) Income		
<i>Other comprehensive (loss)/income that may be reclassified to profit or loss in subsequent periods:</i>		
Effective portion of changes in fair value of cash flow hedge	(2,074)	9,222
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD	<u>45,373</u>	<u>156,025</u>

INTERIM CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

For the three months ended 31 March 2023 (Reviewed)

	Three months period ended	
	31 March 2023 BD '000	31 March 2022 BD '000
OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Profit for the period before tax	47,959	147,413
<i>Adjustments for:</i>		
Depreciation and amortisation	31,989	31,770
Provision for employees' end of service benefits	411	435
Provision for slow moving inventories	330	-
Allowance for expected credit losses	157	153
Loss/(gain) on disposal of property, plant and equipment	102	(80)
Changes in fair value of derivative financial instruments	(164)	(1,108)
Interest income	(807)	(49)
Forex loss/(gain) on revaluation of loans and borrowings and bank balances - net	1,835	(5,665)
Realised gain on settlement of cash flow hedge for interest rate swap (IRS)	(8,272)	-
Finance costs	14,793	6,889
Operating profit before changes in working capital	<u>88,333</u>	<u>179,758</u>
<i>Working capital changes:</i>		
Inventories	(63,243)	(55,468)
Trade and other receivables	8,953	17,599
Trade and other payables	8,770	(12,046)
Net cash generated from operations	<u>42,813</u>	<u>129,843</u>
Employees' end of service benefits paid	(197)	(447)
Income tax paid	(512)	(610)
Net cash flows generated from operating activities	<u>42,104</u>	<u>128,786</u>
INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Purchase of property, plant and equipment	(15,820)	(14,108)
Proceeds from disposal of property, plant and equipment	3	729
Interest received	807	49
Net cash flows used in investing activities	<u>(15,010)</u>	<u>(13,330)</u>
FINANCING ACTIVITIES		
Proceeds from loans and borrowings	125,714	117,419
Repayment of loans and borrowings	(2,716)	(122,237)
Interest on loans and borrowings paid	(1,609)	(1,059)
Payment of lease liabilities	(88)	(243)
Dividends paid	(121,345)	(75,316)
Settlement of derivatives	8,272	-
Purchase of treasury shares	(3,284)	(3,100)
Proceeds from resale of treasury shares	3,365	4,653
Net cash flows generated from (used in) financing activities	<u>8,309</u>	<u>(79,883)</u>
NET INCREASE IN CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS	<u>35,403</u>	<u>35,573</u>
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 January	93,617	93,311
Effect of movement in exchange rates on bank balances and cash	529	1,187
Restricted cash (Deposit pledged against short term borrowings)	(24,590)	(33,578)
CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS AT 31 MARCH	<u>104,959</u>	<u>96,493</u>
Cash and cash equivalents comprise:		
Bank balances	76,484	71,239
Short term deposits with maturities of three months or less	53,009	58,762
Cash in hand	56	70
Bank balances and cash in interim condensed consolidated statement of financial position	<u>129,549</u>	<u>130,071</u>
Restricted cash (Deposit pledged against short term borrowings)	(24,590)	(33,578)
	<u>104,959</u>	<u>96,493</u>

These condensed consolidated interim financial statements were authorised for issue in accordance with a resolution of the Directors on 4 May 2023 and signed on their behalf by:

Dajj Bin Salman Bin Dajj Al Khalifa Chairman	Isa Bin Khalid Bin Abdullah Al Khalifa Director	Ali Al Baqali Chief Executive Officer

Alba reports Q1 profit

● Q1 profit was BD47.5 million

● Alba generated BD370 m (US\$984 m) in revenue

● Sales' volume topped 359,677 metric tonnes (MT)

TDT | Manama

Aluminium Bahrain reported a profitable first quarter of 2023, thanks to exceptional performance on both operational and financial fronts, despite being negatively impacted by lower LME prices and premiums.

Alba highlighted that despite the rebound in economic activity in China, there has not yet been a corresponding recovery in the consumption of aluminium, which remains down by 3% compared to the previous year. Demand in the Middle East was also down by 6% YoY due to lower consumption in Bahrain (-9% YoY), UAE & KSA, respectively (-6% YoY).

Looking ahead, Alba said it expects market uncertainty to continue to cloud the Aluminium market and LME prices. Alba also said smelters' cuts in Europe are likely to keep the



Alba board members during a meeting yesterday

market in deficit in 2023. The Eurozone economy to be challenged by weak manufacturing activities and higher inflation

Q1 results

First quarter profit of the company was BD47.5 million (US\$126.2 m), down 68% from BD146.8 m (US\$390.4 m) in the year-earlier quarter. Earnings Per Share was fils 34 versus fils 104 in the year-ago quarter.

Quarterly total comprehensive income stood at BD45.4 m (US\$120.7 m) versus BD156 m (US\$415 m) for the same quarter in 2022 – a drop by 71% YoY. Gross profit was BD79.9 m (US\$212.4 m) versus BD 178 m (US\$473.4 m) for the same peri-

od in 2022—a drop by 55% YoY. Alba said it generated BD370 m (US\$984 m) through revenue from contracts with customers against BD455 m (US\$1,210 m) in Q1 2022 – a drop by 19% YoY.

The top-line and bottom-line were driven by lower LME prices (27% YoY) and premiums (27% YoY).

Sales' volume topped 359,677 metric tonnes (MT), up by 2% YoY while Production reached 398,252 MT, up by 2% YoY.

Chairman, Shaikh Daij Bin Salman Bin Daij Al Khalifa stated: “Despite lower LME prices and weak investor sentiment, we have managed to voyage the first quarter of 2023 by achiev-

ing an exceptional performance on the operational and financial fronts. As we journey amidst the market challenges, we remain committed to execute our strategic priorities – progressing Line 7's Feasibility Study and accelerating Power Station 5 Block 4 construction – in line with our ESG roadmap.”

Adding further, Chief Executive Officer, Ali Al Baqali, said: “In this bearish economic backdrop, we remain focused on what we can really control: Safety, Efficient Operations and Lean Cost Structure while we collectively navigate with our team -- employees and contractors' personnel -- the waves to get better at what we do.”

Mohamed Al Kayed wins “40 Under 40 Award”

TDT | Manama

Mohammed Ahmed Al Kayed, a Bahraini executive and former CEO, has been named the winner of the Elite Business Award for best executive leader under the age of forty, surpassing 40 other participants and becoming the first Bahraini to receive the prestigious award.

Currently, Al Kayed, former CEO, serves as an advisor to the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Sevens Holding, a leading hospitality, food, and beverage company in Bahrain.

In a statement, Al Kayed expressed his gratitude for the honour and recognised Sheikh Khalifa bin Rashid Al Khalifa, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Sevens Holding, for



Mohammed Ahmed Al Kayed

his support and guidance. He also credited the success of the company's strategic plan for the accomplishment, along with the efforts and sacrifices of the company's employees.

Al Kayed expressed his hope that the company would continue to achieve more successes in the years to come.

The Elite Business Award is part of the “40 under 40” programme by Business Elite.

Nissan accelerates efforts to eliminate counterfeit spare parts



Nissan Aftersales Conference

TDT | Manama

Nissan Bahrain said it took a bold step to reduce counterfeit spare parts in the Kingdom.

Engaging a broad aftersales ecosystem, Nissan said it held counterfeit spare part identification training sessions for authorities, partners and customers across Bahrain.

Trainings currently deployed to Customs Authorities, Economic Departments and Police in Bahrain to identify frequently counterfeited items, including spark plugs, brake pads, and oil filters, and detect the subtle differences between a genuine and counterfeit product.

Ahmed Dailami, General Manager, Nissan Bahrain, said:

“Through our partnerships with authorities across Bahrain, we are taking concrete steps to ensure that our customers have access to genuine products that deliver added safety and peace of mind, while retaining the authenticity of our Intellectual Property Rights (IPR).”

The trainings hosted and provided by Nissan, form part of the brand's wider efforts against counterfeit products in the region, such as visits to over 320 retailers across the GCC in the past six months to verify the genuineness of aftersales products in the market.

Nissan's aftersales product portfolio in Bahrain, comprises of over 9 spare parts branches, including Nissan Genuine Oil, Nissan Genuine Batteries, and Nissan Genuine Accessories.

Bahrain Commercial Facilities Company, Beyon Connect join hands

TDT | Manama

Bahrain Commercial Facilities Company (BCFC) will become the first Bahraini financial services institution to onboard the digital identity and digital postbox solutions delivered by Beyon Connect, part of the Beyon group, commencing with its Tasheelat Insurance (TISCO) Brand and subsequently rolled out to other BCFC brands throughout the year.

The announcement follows the signing of an MoU in 2022, which will see Beyon Connect delivering its digital postbox solution, OneBox, and OneID, a new platform to register a unique digital identity. OneID will be made available as a mo-



Officials following the deal signing

bile application for both iOS and Android. It allows onboarding of BCFC customers through the e-KYC process, supporting passport and national ID cards with facial recognition and liveness check.

BCFC CEO Abdulla Bukhwa

safe and compliant financial digital transformation within the Kingdom.”

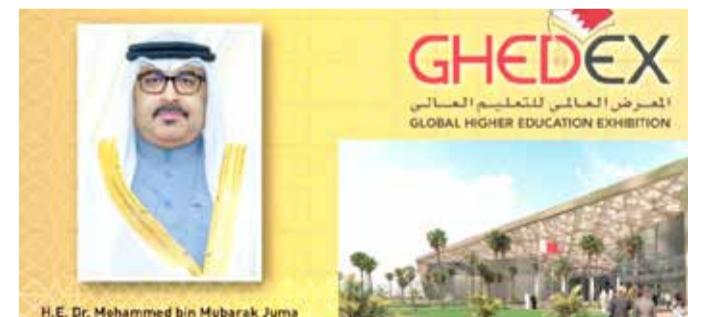
BCFC VP of Information Technology and Operations Ali Al Marzooq added, “Financial and insurance services have always been about trust, and we are committed to delivering on our promise to be the first choice for our customers by providing innovative digital products, services and solutions.”

Following the announcement, Beyon Connect CEO Christian Rasmussen said, “We are proud that BCFC will utilize OneID and OneBox, our highly secure digital ID and communication platform built on transparency, privacy, and trust.”



The General Federation of Bahrain Trade Union workers held its annual awards ceremony to recognize hardworking employees in both public and private sectors on International Labour Day. The event was held under the patronage of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa. During the ceremony, 25 Banagas employees were honoured by Jameel Bin Mohammed Humaidan, Minister of Labour. Jamal Mohamed Al Buainain, Manager of HR & Admin Services, represented the company's Executive Management and was accompanied by the Head and Members of the Company's Trade Union.

Education Minister to inaugurate GHEDEX 2023



TDT | Manama

The Global Higher Education Exhibition “GHEDEX 2023” will be inaugurated by Dr Mohammed bin Mubarak Juma, the Minister of Education and the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Higher Education Council, on Sunday.

The event will bring together various local, regional, and international higher education institutions, providing students with the opportunity

to explore academic programs and educational training offered by these institutions.

In addition to the Technical Education and Vocational Training Exhibition, the exhibition will feature an international conference on innovation and entrepreneurship, as well as the GHEDEX Awards for Excellence in Higher Education.

The exhibition will take place between May 6 and May 8, with doors opening at 9 am to 1 pm and 4 pm to 8 pm.

News in brief

17 killed in Egypt motorway collision



Seventeen people were killed when a truck and a bus collided on a motorway in southern Egypt yesterday, the health ministry said. It said another 29 people were injured, and that 26 ambulances were sent to the scene of the accident on the road between the southern cities of Kharga and Asyut. The injured were taken to nearby hospitals. Egypt's roads are notoriously dangerous and often badly maintained, and drivers often break speed limits and other traffic rules. With a population of more than 105 million, Egypt is the Arab world's most populous country.

Indian authorities deployed hundreds of military personnel and cut off internet services to a northeastern region yesterday, after the deaths of six people in violent ethnic clashes.

Troops deployed to Indian state after protests kill six



The troops were sent to the state of Manipur, along the border with Myanmar, after a protest march by tribal groups turned violent on Wednesday. "Curfew has been imposed... situation is tense but is now under control," Awangbow Newmai, a Manipur government minister, said. He confirmed the death toll. The state governor yesterday issued "shoot at sight orders in extreme cases" to local authorities.

Suspect arrested in deadly Atlanta hospital shooting



Police have arrested a man suspected of shooting five people -- one of whom died -- at an Atlanta hospital on Wednesday, authorities in the southern US city said. One person was killed and four were injured when Deion Patterson allegedly opened fire in a hospital waiting room just after midday (1700 GMT). Patterson then allegedly stole a truck that had been left running at a nearby gas station and fled. A manhunt went into the night before Patterson was apprehended outside the city in neighbouring Cobb County.

CURIOSER & CURIOSER

Star swallows planet in first glimpse of Earth's likely end



An artist's impression shows a star devouring one of its planets
AFP | London

Scientists said that they have observed a dying star swallowing a planet for the first time, offering a preview of Earth's expected fate in around five billion years.

But when the Sun finally does engulf Earth, it will cause only a "tiny perturbation" compared to this cosmic explosion, the US astronomers said.

Most planets are believed to meet their end when their host star runs out of energy, turning into a red giant that massively expands, devouring anything unlucky enough to be in its path.

Astronomers had previously seen the before-and-after effects of this process, but had never before caught a planet in the act of being consumed.

Kishalay De, a postdoc researcher at MIT in the United States and the lead author of the new study, said the accidental discovery unfolded like a "detective story".

"It all started about three years ago when I was looking at data from the Zwicky Transient Facility survey, which takes images of the sky every

BETTER YOU KNOW

The team of researchers established that the swallowed planet was a gas giant with a similar mass to Jupiter, but was so close to its star that it completed an orbit in just one day

night," De told an online press conference.

He stumbled across a star that had suddenly increased in brightness by more than 100 times over a 10-day period.

The star is in the Milky Way galaxy, around 12,000 light years from Earth near the Aquila constellation, which resembles an eagle.

De had been searching for binary star systems, in which the larger star takes bites out of its companion, creating incredibly bright explosions called outbursts.

Russia blames US for Kremlin

Kremlin administration shifts focus from Kyiv to Washington

Washington denies accusation

AFP | Moscow

Moscow yesterday accused the US of masterminding a drone attack on the Kremlin, a charge denied by Washington, and said Ukrainian sabotage on Russian territory had reached "unprecedented momentum".

Moscow said President Vladimir Putin was working from the Kremlin the day after the attack, which it said was a Ukrainian attempt to kill him.

"Decisions on such attacks are not made in Kyiv, but in Washington," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

"Kyiv only does what it is told to do... Washington should understand clearly that we know this," he said.

Ukraine has denied responsibility, with President Volodymyr Zelensky saying "We do not at-



A "No Drone Zone" sign sits just off the Kremlin in central Moscow

tack Moscow or Putin."

The US also denied any involvement.

"Peskov is just lying there, pure and simple," John Kirby, spokesperson for the White House National Security Council, said on MSNBC.

Throughout its more than year-long offensive in Ukraine, Moscow has maintained that Kyiv is taking orders from the US -- accusing the West of leading a war against Russia by proxy.

'Unprecedented' sabotage

The Kremlin attack came as Russia prepares to mark one of

its main holidays of May 9 -- celebrating the Soviet victory over the Nazis -- with a traditional military parade on Red Square.

It came after five days of extraordinary apparent sabotage attacks, including trains derailed by explosions and massive fires in annexed Crimea.

Yesterday, Russia's southern Krasnodar and Rostov regions, both near Ukraine, reported drone strikes that caused fires.

But the Kremlin insisted the May 9 parade will go ahead, despite the attacks in border regions and in the heart of Russian power, though under "strengthened"

Decisions on such attacks are not made in Kyiv, but in Washington. Kyiv only does what it is told to do... Washington should understand clearly that we know this

KREMLIN SPOKESMAN DMITRY PESKOV

security. Russian television yesterday showed Putin in the Kremlin for the first time since the drone attack.

The Russian leader does not plan "any address on this topic", according to his spokesman.

Moscow did however acknowledge that the country was facing an "unprecedented" wave of sabotage.

Russia has opened a terrorism probe into the Moscow attack.

Russia has not released official images of the attack. Unverified social media images showed a drone hitting the Kremlin Senate building.

Peskov said "two copper sheets" on the dome of the 18th-century building had been damaged by fire.

"They have been or will be re-

Five teachers among eight killed in Pakistan sectarian attack

AFP | Parachinar

Five teachers were among eight people killed in rural Pakistan yesterday, in an attack linked to sectarian tensions, police and government officials said.

Two gunmen entered a school in the remote border town of Teri Mangal in Kurram district -- less than a kilometre (mile) from the Afghan border -- as teachers gathered exam papers students had completed earlier in the day.

"They identified Shiite people and separated them before opening fire," Muhammad Imran, police chief for the district, told AFP.

Officials said five teachers and two labourers were gunned



Security personnel and officials at the site of sectarian violence in a school

down at the school -- their bodies taken to hospital before carried out in coffins to be buried the same day.

The shooting occurred hours

after a man from the local Sunni community died in hospital from injuries he sustained after being hit in his car, said Amir Nawaz, a senior govern-

ment official in the area.

Sectarian tensions stretch back decades and have practically divided the district in two, said Akhtar Ali Shah, a former provincial police chief.

"There is Shiite population on one side and a Sunni population on the other. Even a minor incident can spark clashes, so caution is always needed," he said.

Shiite Muslims make up roughly 20 percent of Pakistan's population of more than 220 million, but they are a majority in Kurram district -- part of the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas that were merged with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in 2018, bringing it into the legal and administrative mainstream.

Fears 860,000 could flee as Sudan fighting leaves truce in tatters

AFP | Khartoum

Gunfire and explosions rocked Sudan's capital Khartoum for a 20th straight day yesterday, leaving the latest ceasefire effort in tatters as the UN warned of an exodus of 860,000 refugees.

As the latest ceasefire expired at midnight, the army said it was ready to abide by a new seven-day truce, but there was no word from its foes in the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

In Khartoum, witnesses reported loud explosions and exchanges of fire on the streets around dawn and clashes during the day in the city of five million people.

The foreign ministry accused the RSF of attacking the Indian embassy in Khartoum, the latest in a spate of such incidents which the diplomatic mission



Smoke billows during fighting in the Sudanese capital Khartoum

did not immediately confirm.

Deadly urban combat broke out on April 15 between Sudan's de facto leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who commands the regular army, and his deputy turned rival Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who heads the RSF.

The fighting has killed about 700 people, most of them in

Khartoum and Darfur, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project.

The UN refugee agency said it was preparing for an outflow of 860,000 people from the north African country, adding \$445 million would be needed to support them just through October.

"We urgently need timely,

We urgently need timely, new funding to respond to the mounting needs. The needs are vast, and the challenges are numerous. If the crisis continues, peace and stability across the region could be at stake

RAOUF MAZOU, THE UNHCR'S ASSISTANT CHIEF OF OPERATIONS

new funding to respond to the mounting needs," said Raouf Mazou, the UNHCR's assistant chief of operations.

"The needs are vast, and the challenges are numerous. If the crisis continues, peace and stability across the region could be at stake."

1260

Kublai Khan, grandson of Genghis Khan, becomes ruler of the Mongol Empire



1941

Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie returns to Addis Ababa

1955

West Germany is granted full sovereignty by its three occupying powers

1965

First large-scale US Army ground units arrive in South Vietnam

1980

Siege at Iranian Embassy in London ends as the SAS and police storm the building

Drone attack



The Kremlin attack came as Russia prepares to mark one of its main holidays of May 9 -- celebrating the Soviet victory over the Nazis -- with a traditional military parade on Red Square

believes "deserves to be sanctioned for his criminal actions here, in the capital of international law."

Zelensky called for a special tribunal to be created to hold Russia to account for its "crime of aggression".

"There should be responsibility for this crime. And this can only be enforced by the tribunal," he told diplomats and officials at the court.

The Netherlands has pledged both financial and military support to Ukraine since Russia launched its offensive in February 2022.

Zelensky also met Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, and said that Ukraine was "realistic" that it would not be able to join NATO while still fighting Russia.

"But we want a very clear message that we will be in NATO after the war," he said.

Putin has used Ukraine's wish to join the alliance to justify launching his offensive.

On the day of the alleged Kremlin attack, Ukraine said Russia shelled the southern Kherson region, including in a strike on a supermarket.

At least 23 people died, and 46 were wounded in the strikes, officials said.



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



On #FirefightersDay, we honour and thank all firefighters who risk their lives to save others. Firefighters are at the heart of our #EUCivilProtectionMechanism, helping out other firefighting teams when they are overwhelmed with an emergency. Thank you for your devotion and solidarity!

@JanezLenarcic

02



The climate crisis is a health crisis. @WHO welcomes @COP28_UAE 's strategic decisions to include health at the centre of #COP28 discussions and hold the first-ever health and climate ministerial meeting.

@DrTedros

03



Small businesses employ nearly half of the nation's private sector workforce. They are essential to our communities and our prosperity.

@VP

04



For too long, Big Oil has made huge profits and failed to invest those back into production. It's time we end special tax treatment for oil and gas company investments, saving the taxpayer over \$30 billion in the process. That's what my budget does.

@POTUS

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stances)

A checkpoint established for future peace and stability



SHAHIN ABDULLAYEV

The South Caucasus is the crossroads between resource-rich Central Asia and resource-hungry European economy. Peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan will foster the prosperity not just of the Armenians and Azerbaijanis but of all Eurasia. The resounding victory of Azerbaijan in the Second Karabakh War of 2020 created an historic opportunity to turn the page, to leave hostilities behind and normalize relations based on international law. To seize this opportunity, the West must acquire a better awareness of the irrefutable facts on which the Azerbaijani views are based. Unfortunately, Armenia, its diaspora and foreign supporters have recently launched a propaganda campaign designed to obscure these facts from view. The immediate goal of the campaign is to bring American and European pressure to bear on Baku. The longer-term goal is to scuttle the peace process that began in November 2020, when Armenia acknowledged its defeat in the war.

The disinformation campaign focuses on events along the Lachin Road, linking Armenia with the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, and it advances two main claims. First, that "blockade" of the road, which began on Dec. 12 by Azerbaijani environmental activists created a humanitarian disaster, endangering the lives of about 25 thousand ethnic Armenians in Kara-

in its sovereign territories, on the border with Armenia, at the beginning of the Lachin-Khankendi to ensure transparency of road traffic, the rule of law, and, thus, the safety of traffic. We should state that mentioned control mechanism is being coordinated with the Russian peacekeeping contingent.

Let's take these misleading claims in turn, starting with the alleged humanitarian crisis. Humanitarian shipments, including medicines, food, and other essential goods, move easily into Karabakh. Local civilians facing urgent medical and other essential needs can leave for Armenia and return along the road.

To prevent any humanitarian crisis, Baku gave the International Red Cross unimpeded access to the road. It is recorded that 614 vehicles of RC and 5178 of Russian peacekeepers moved through the corridor in each direction freely. Soldiers of Russia, Armenia's greatest ally, are better placed than any other international actor to reassure Yerevan regarding the physical security of Karabakh Armenians.

Which brings us to the second spurious claim, namely, that Azerbaijan is denying ethnic Armenians in Karabakh their rights. Understanding why this is a blatant falsehood requires historical context, though it is quickly told. During the First Karabakh War, which ended in 1994, Armenian forces occupied and ethnically cleansed Karabakh and other surrounding Azerbaijani territories of ethnic Azerbaijanis. They killed, raped, and tortured many hundreds of innocent civilians, driving over 800,000 people from their homes in Karabakh and 250,000 Azerbaijanis forced to relocate from present-day Armenia often in the dead of winter, with the Khojaly massacre being the peak of this barbarity.

These crimes, committed with impunity and still awaiting justice, were well documented while they happened. In the wake of this, international law and every major power in the world reaffirms Karabakh as sovereign Azerbaijani territory, and full restoration of effective Azerbaijani control of Karabakh is seen as the basis for a just and lasting peace. For this reason, UN Security Council Resolutions 822, 853, 874 and 884 all demand the "complete, immediate and unconditional withdrawal" of Armenian forces from the territory of Azerbaijan. Even now, 10,000 Armenia's troops and as many as 15,000 terrorists and militias remain in Karabakh—a time bomb threatening peace and stability.

The UN issued those orders in 1993. For nearly three decades Azerbaijanis waited patiently for the international community to implement them. Meanwhile, Armenia played for time, just as it is doing now: talking about peace, preparing for war, and spreading misinformation. Its forces looted Azerbaijani towns and villages, erasing every sign of Azerbaijani cultural heritage, and plundered its mineral resources. Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev has said that During occupation Armenia destroyed 65 of 67 mosques in Azerbaijan and used to keep pigs and cows in mosques in Nagorno-Karabakh when it was under their occupation for about 30 years.

By 2020, Azerbaijan's patience had worn thin. In the Second Karabakh War, it demonstrated its resolute determination to reclaim its stolen land.

Time is of essence. Sane policy grounded in reality can still prevent new tragedies. Yerevan must stop relying on dreams and fantasies and deal with hard facts. Armenia and its allies must stop using the Armenians of Karabakh as pawns in a cynical game of power politics. If those involved in facilitating the peace process will read the realities accurately, they can help Armenia avoid the mistakes of the past and make the peace of the brave.

(The author is Azerbaijan's ambassador to Saudi Arabia. The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Daily Tribune)

Pakistan foreign minister says 'happy' on rare visit to India



A vehicle carrying Pakistan's Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari arrives in a convoy to attend the SCO meeting in Banaulim in Goa

AFP | Banaulim



I am very happy that today I have arrived here leading the delegation of Pakistan

BILAWAL BHUTTO ZARDARI

Pakistan's foreign minister arrived in India yesterday to take part in an international conference, the first official visit by a senior Pakistani official to the country's eastern neighbour since 2016.

The South Asian neighbours have fought three full-fledged wars since they were created at the partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947, and relations between the nuclear-armed countries have remained tense in recent years.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is in the Indian coastal resort state of Goa for a Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meeting of foreign ministers, along with counterparts from China and Russia.

"I am very happy that today I have arrived here leading the delegation of Pakistan," he told reporters.

Bhutto gave no indication whether he would hold one-on-one talks with his opposite number in India, but said he hoped the SCO meeting would be "very

successful".

Pakistan suspended trade and diplomatic ties with India in 2019.

Both countries withdrew their top diplomats and several consular staff were expelled or withdrawn in tit-for-tat measures.

That development came after a military standoff earlier in the year that saw both countries launch air strikes and an Indian fighter jet shot down.

The most recent visit to India by a high-ranking Pakistan diplomat was in 2016, when Sartaj Aziz -- then the senior foreign affairs adviser to the prime minister -- travelled there.

India currently holds the rotating presidency of the SCO, a forum established in 2001 that also includes several Central Asian states, rivaling Western institutions.

Since April 23rd the units of the State Border Service of Azerbaijan established a border crossing point in its sovereign territories, on the border with Armenia, at the beginning of the Lachin-Khankendi to ensure transparency of road traffic, the rule of law, and, thus, the safety of traffic

bakh. Second, that it is part of a wider effort by Azerbaijan to deny the Karabakh Armenians their rights and security.

In the Trilateral Statement of Nov. 10, 2020 (the agreement signed by the leaders of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia that brought the Second Karabakh to an end), Armenia agreed to accept new reality on the ground and build peace. Ever since, however, Armenia has misused the Lachin road to export from Karabakh to Armenia plundered Azerbaijani mineral resources; build up its military forces in Karabakh; infiltrate third-country nationals to erect new fortifications; and smuggle in landmines. Currently, the threat of landmines is continuing and 299 Azerbaijanis became victims of landmine explosions since the end of the 44-day patriotic war which is terror against Azerbaijanis.

These are not the actions of a country preparing for peace—and Azerbaijan is all too familiar with these tactics. It will not permit Armenia, once again, to ensnare it in interminable negotiations all the while preparing for war. As to the Lachin road, transparency of any movement along it must be immediately guaranteed.

As a result of this, since April 23rd the units of the State Border Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan established a border crossing point

Classifieds



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email: advt@newsofbahrain.com

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KENTUCKY FRIED CHICKEN has a vacancy for the occupation of SHIFT LEADER, suitably qualified applicants can contact 17262998 or ssaleh@americana-food.com

ALSATER MARKETS WLL has a vacancy for the occupation of WORKER, suitably qualified applicants can contact 17692009 or ALSATER.ACTS@GMAIL.COM

DRAGON HOUSE WLL has a vacancy for the occupation of WAITER, suitably qualified applicants can contact 34399991 or MISHAL@ALGHALIA.COM

ZAFEER CONSTRUCTION W.L.L. has a vacancy for the occupation of TECHNICIAN, suitably qualified applicants can contact 39339937 or ZAFEER2030@YAHOO.COM

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Spanish clubs generated almost 5 billion euros last season



Barcelona's Raphinha (L) vies with Real Madrid's Karim Benzema during a match (file photo)

AFP | Madrid

Clubs in the top two Spanish divisions made 4.8 billion euros (\$5.3 billion) in revenue last season, according to a balance sheet released yesterday.

That figure is up 22.6 percent from the Covid-hit 2020/21 campaign.

"Spanish professional football has almost returned to pre-pandemic revenue levels, with Spanish clubs also being those with the lowest cumulative losses," La Liga said in a statement.

The main income, around 1.7 billion euros, came from television rights but the most significant reason for the increase was the return of fans to stadiums following the Covid crisis.

However, income from player transfers fell by 25.8 percent.

La Liga ranks second in club revenue behind only the Premier League.

Haaland loving life under Guardiola despite demands

● Erling Haaland sets new Premier League record of 35 goals in a season

AFP | London

Erling Haaland said he is loving the challenge of meeting Pep Guardiola's demands as Manchester City close in on a potential treble in the Norwegian's first season in England.

Haaland set a new Premier League record of 35 goals in a season as he took his tally for the campaign in all competitions to 51 against West Ham on Wednesday.

Victory took City back one point ahead of Arsenal at the top of the table, with a game in hand to come.

Guardiola's team face Real Madrid in the Champions League semi-finals later this month and Manchester United in the FA Cup final on June 3.

City had won back-to-back league titles largely without a focal point up front prior to

"I am enjoying it every single game. It's hard, he demands a lot, but I try to do my best to develop and do my best on the pitch. That's what you have to do - nothing more to do than do your best. It's a pleasure and I love to play under Pep. I'm really happy to have him as a coach"

PEP GUARDIOLA

Haaland's arrival.

But suggestions he would struggle to fit into Guardiola's system have long since been forgotten.

"I am enjoying it every single game," Haaland said of life under the

former Barcelona and Bayern Munich boss.

"It's hard, he demands

a lot, but I try to do my best to de-

velop and do my best on the pitch. That's what you have to do - nothing more to do than do your best.

"It's a pleasure and I love to play under Pep. I'm really happy to have him as a coach."

Haaland's goal record could have been even

greater had Guardiola not taken the opportunity to often rest the 22-year-old once games are won throughout the course of the season.

But that has paid dividends as the striker has largely remained free from injury in contrast to his two-and-a-half years at Borussia Dortmund.

"Potentially nine games left and I'm enjoying it," added Haaland amid suggestions he could be rested for Saturday's



Erling Haaland

YOU KNOW WHAT
Haaland's goal record could have been even greater had Guardiola not taken the opportunity to often rest the 22-year-old once games are won throughout the course of the season

visit of Leeds in the Premier League just three days before City travel to Madrid.

"To have games all the time, this is something I love so we will see.

"We are in good shape, the mentality's right. The only thing we can do is focus on the next game and try to win the next game.

"Now it's Leeds, we have to focus on the game, we have to only think of that game and to try to win it."

Ramsey says he would be happy to stay in Nice



Aaron Ramsey (L) runs past Angers defender Souleyman Doumbia (file photo)

AFP | Paris

Veteran Wales international Aaron Ramsey said yesterday he was hoping to extend his stay with French Ligue 1 side Nice.

"It's a club that's going in the right direction and this season we've taken a step forward," he told a press conference ahead of Saturday's home game against Rennes.

"From my personal point of view we'll be in discussions at the end of the season."

Ramsey, who is 32, has made 33 appearances in all competitions since joining the Riviera club on a free transfer last summer after an injury-hit time at Juventus.

Ramsey has 80 Wales caps. When he joined the Turin giants he was reportedly the highest-paid British player.

Nice's season has run out of steam. They were beaten in the Europa Conference League quarter-finals by Basel after

"It's a club that's going in the right direction and this season we've taken a step forward. From my personal point of view we'll be in discussions at the end of the season"

AARON RAMSEY

extra time in the second leg and slipped to ninth in Ligue 1, out of touch with the European places.

"In spells we've seen this season what this team is capable of. Now it's just a question of getting consistency," said Ramsey.

Nice have been owned since 2019 by English billionaire Jim Ratcliffe who has brought in several other Premier League veterans including Ross Barkley and Kasper Schmeichel.

Sharp-shooting Celtics blitz Sixers to square series

AFP | Los Angeles

The Boston Celtics produced an exhibition of three-point shooting to blow away the Philadelphia 76ers 121-87 and square their Eastern Conference playoff series on Wednesday.

Jaylen Brown led a clinical offensive display for the second-seeded Celtics to swat aside a Sixers line-up who welcomed back newly crowned NBA Most Valuable Player Joel Embiid after an injury absence of nearly two weeks.

Brown finished with 25 points while Malcolm Brogdon poured in 23 from the bench, including six three-pointers, as the Celtics bounced back from Monday's game-one loss at the TD Garden.

The best-of-seven series is now level at 1-1 as the teams head to Philadelphia for game three on Friday.

After Wednesday's rout, Sixers coach Doc Rivers will have



Malcolm Brogdon #13 of the Boston Celtics drives to the basket against Paul Reed #44 of the Philadelphia 76ers

plenty of food for thought despite the mostly successful return of Embiid, who had not played since injuring his right knee in game three of the first-round sweep of Brooklyn.

Embiid made his presence felt

with 15 points and five blocks but was clearly not at full fitness, before being removed from the fray in the third quarter as Boston surged into a commanding lead.

Boston meanwhile will be

"We just set the tone on defence trying to be aggressive on both sides of the ball, getting our team-mates going. But really just setting the tone on defence and having fun"

CELTICS FORWARD JAYLEN BROWN

buoyed by a display that mixed defensive ruggedness with free-scoring offense.

"We just set the tone on defence, trying to be aggressive on both sides of the ball, getting our team-mates going. But really just setting the tone on defense and having fun," Celtics forward Brown said afterwards.

No fewer than eight Celtics players contributed to Boston's tally of 20 three-pointers from 51 attempts.

Oliveira out of French MotoGP after collision

AFP | Paris

Portuguese rider Miguel Oliveira has withdrawn from next week's French MotoGP with a shoulder injury, his RNF-Aprilia team announced yesterday.

Oliveira, 28, who is 14th in the standings, sustained a dislocated shoulder in a fall at last weekend's Spanish GP after colliding with Fabio Quartararo.

"While immediate medical attention successfully repositioned his dislocated left shoulder, further assessments revealed a more severe injury, in-

cluding a fracture in the humerus and an anterior ligamentous labrum injury," the team said.

"Although Oliveira and his doctors have decided against surgery, he will need to focus on the healing process and will not be able to participate in the French round."

The team said it looked forward "to welcoming him back for the Italian GP" on June 11.

Italian Lorenzo Savadori, an Aprilia test rider, will step in to replace Oliveira.

The French MotoGP takes place between May 12-14.



Rescuers tend to Yamaha French rider Fabio Quartararo (R) and Aprilia Portuguese rider Miguel Oliveira after falling during the Spanish MotoGP

Bahrain names squad for Asian volleyball tournaments

Twenty players called up for latest training under head coach Sydney Luciano ahead of Asian Volleyball Confederation tournaments

● **Top talents called up from Dar Kulaib, Al Nasser, Al Ahli, Al Najma, Muharraq and Nabih Saleh**

TDT | Manama

Bahrain have named a 20-player squad for the senior men's national volleyball team that will begin their preparations for major continental championships coming up this summer.

The Bahrain Volleyball Association (BVA) announced yesterday the list of names for the team.

The Kingdom's talents who have been called up include six from Isa bin Rashid Bahrain Volleyball League and Crown Prince's Cup champions Dar Kulaib, five from Al Nasser, four from Al Ahli, two apiece from Al Najma and Muharraq, and one from Nabih Saleh.

The nationals will be prepar-



Bahrain national team star Nasser Anan in action during last year's AVC Cup for Men (File photo)

ing for their upcoming participation in the fourth AVC Men's Challenger from July 8 to 15 in Taipei, Chinese-Taipei and the 22nd Asian Senior Men's Volleyball Championship from August



Bahrainis to compete in fourth AVC Men Challenger from July 8 to 15 in Taipei and 22nd Asian Senior Men's Volleyball Championship from August 18 to 26 in Tehran

18 to 26 in Tehran.

Both are top Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC) events featuring the leading national teams from across Asia.

The Bahrainis are to be guided by head coach Sydney Luciano over the coming period. It is Luciano's first stint with the Kingdom's senior national team, although has had experience in Bahrain in the past at the club

level.

Luciano has replaced his countryman Issanaye Ramires, who last year helped Bahrain capture an historic bronze medal in the 2022 AVC Cup for Men, which was held in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand.

The nationals are set to include Mohammed Yaqoob, Ali Habib, Mahmoud Abdulwahed, Hassan Alaiwi, Hussain Sultan and Abbas Sultan from Dar Kulaib; Hussain Mohammed, Ebrahim Mohammed, Hussain Mahdi Al Jishi, Mohammed Omar and Mohammed Jassim from Al Nasser; Nasser Anan, Mahmood Abdulhussain, Mohammed Anan and Abbas Al Khabbaz from Al Ahli; Ali Ebrahim and Ayman Haroona from Al Najma; Mahmood Al Afia and Hussain Ali Ehsan from Muharraq; and Sayed Hashim from Nabih Saleh.

In the 2023 AVC Men Challenger in Taipei, the Bahrainis are among a record 17 teams that will vie for the lone berth up for grabs in the FIVB Men's Challenger Cup—a pathway to the FIVB Men's Volleyball Nations

League.

The nationals will be playing in Pool F for the tournament's preliminary round alongside Sri Lanka and Indonesia. Pool A features two teams in hosts Chinese Taipei and Kazakhstan; Pool B comprises Saudi Arabia, Thailand and South Korea; while Uzbekistan, India and Hong Kong are in Pool C. Pool D consists of Mongolia, the Philippines and Macau, with Australia, Pakistan and Vietnam in Pool E.

Meanwhile, in the 22nd Asian Senior Men's Volleyball Championship in Tehran, Bahrain are amongst a field of 18 competing nations.

They have been drawn in Pool D with Chinese Taipei and Mongolia for the event's opening stage. Two-time champions Iran are in Pool A with Hong Kong and Iraq; while Japan, Uzbekistan and Thailand are in Pool B. Pool C consists of China, Kazakhstan and Indonesia; while Qatar, India and Afghanistan are in Pool E. Pool F rounds out the teams with Pakistan, South Korea and Bangladesh.

Klopp calls for coach's challenge in football after Dortmund no-penalty call

AFP | London

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp has spoken out in favour of introducing a 'coach's challenge' for referee calls in football, after Borussia Dortmund's controversial 1-1 draw with Bochum on Friday.

Klopp, the Liverpool manager and former Dortmund coach, has a history of run ins with match officials and is facing charges from the English Football Association for his rant at



Liverpool's German manager Jurgen Klopp (R) jokes with Liverpool's French defender Ibrahima Konate (R)

referee Paul Tierney following the explosive end to Liverpool's 4-3 Premier League win over Tottenham at Anfield on Sunday.

Speaking with German football magazine Kicker yesterday, Klopp said the idea of a coach formally challenging a contentious call has worked in other sports.

"A challenge would be a solu-

tion to avoid something like that happening again in the future," Klopp said, calling it "an interesting idea for football."

"There are many good examples of how this can work", saying "in field hockey, for instance, the challenge has long proven its worth."

American football allows coaches to challenge calls during the game, along with the



In Germany, a refereeing decision last Friday could have cost Klopp's former club Dortmund top spot in the Bundesliga

NBA and other sports such as rugby league, while tennis allows players to review umpire calls.

In Germany, a refereeing decision last Friday could have cost Klopp's former club Dortmund top spot in the Bundesliga.

In the match at Bochum, forward Karim Adeyemi was taken out in the box by defender Danilo Soares. Referee Sascha Stegemann waved off the incident and it was not reviewed.

Kerley challenges Jacobs to head-to-head 100m clash



Fred Kerley Marcell Jacobs

AFP | London

World 100 metre champion Fred Kerley threw down the gauntlet again to Olympic title-holder Marcell Jacobs to stage a one-on-one race but expressed doubt yesterday whether his arch-rival would turn up.

One of the headliners at Friday's opening Diamond League meeting of the season in Doha, Kerley's mind is fixed on the world championships in Budapest in August which could see a Kerley-Jacobs clash. But the American wants a chance before.

Kerley last month proposed a two-man race against Jacobs, who stunned the world with his Tokyo Olympics triumph but then pulled out after the world championship heats last year, during a social media exchange between the two last month.

"If it happens I will be there.

If it happens I will be there. Will he show up? I don't know. I will definitely win. If it happens I will win. Will he show up? I don't know

FRED KERLEY

Will he show up? I don't know," Kerley told a press conference ahead of Friday's meeting.

"I will definitely win. If it happens I will win. Will he show up? I don't know."

Italy's Jacobs has not commented publicly on a potential two-man race, but told Kerley on social media: "Whenever you want and wherever you want."

Kerley, from Texas, would not say if serious contacts have taken place on a one-versus-one race, repeating only "if it happens, it happens".

Smith hopes in-form Vardy can help Leicester beat the drop

AFP | London

Leicester manager Dean Smith says his team have had to play more to Jamie Vardy's strengths as they battle to avoid relegation from the Premier League.

The veteran forward has scored in each of the past two games, draws against Leeds and Everton, to help the club edge out of the relegation zone after Vardy went 19 matches without a goal.

Smith, who replaced Brendan



Jamie Vardy

Rodgers last month with a brief to keep 2016 champions Leicester up, said Vardy was "firing" ahead of Monday's trip to mid-table Fulham.

"People will have seen in his last few performances the hun-

ger and desire he has got, the work rate, the fact his legs are still there and his brains are definitely still there," Smith said yesterday.

The former England forward, 36, has scored 136 Premier League goals in his career but has found the net just three times in the league this season, during which he has struggled to hold down a starting spot.

Smith, who has a contract until the end of the season, added: "I don't think we have had

to rebuild his confidence, we have had to play more to his strengths.

"We know he is an intelligent player with his runs, but he needs the ball to go into the right areas with his runs.

"We have to have a supply line to him and he has to make the runs as well."

Leicester, with four games to play, are 16th in the Premier League table on 30 points, outside the drop zone only on goal difference.

Al Khaldiya take control in title race

Mahdi Humaidan scores hat-trick to help Al Khaldiya power to top of league table, just one point ahead of Manama

● **Manama held to crucial 1-1 stalemate by East Riffa**

● **Bahrain Club end Sitra's title aspirations with 3-1 win**

TDT | Manama

Al Khaldiya moved into the driver's seat in the thrilling race for the coveted title in the 2022/2023 Nasser bin Hamad Bahrain Premier Football League.

Khaldiya leapfrogged long-time leaders Manama to first place on the standings with just one match week remaining after routing lowly Budaiya 6-0, while Manama dropped points after being held to a 1-1 stalemate by 10-man East Riffa.

Khaldiya headed into yesterday's week 21 fixtures just a single point behind Manama, but with their big victory, have turned the tables and are now one ahead of their rivals.

Also last night, Sitra fell out of title contention after losing 1-3 to



Al Khaldiya's Mahdi Humaidan evades a tackle during their match against Budaiya last night

Bahrain Club. Sitra thus dropped four points behind Khaldiya on the rankings.

The league now heads into its final week of action, with only Khaldiya and Manama still with a chance at clinching the crown. Following last night's results, having their title hopes end along with Sitra were Muharraq and last year's champions Riffa.

In Khaldiya's big win, Mahdi Humaidan had a superb hat-trick to spearhead his team.

Samy Frioui opened their account in the 24th minute after scoring from close range, having taken advantage of poor Budaiya defending. Ayman Al Harzi had a poorly hit pass to Frioui but he beat the opposing defenders to the ball and struck home.

Ismael Abdullatif then doubled Khaldiya's lead in the 34th minute with a brilliant low strike from a few metres outside the box. Humaidan then scored his first in the 41st minute off a fine



Al Khaldiya headed into last night's week 21 fixtures just a single point behind Manama, but with their big victory, have turned the tables and are now one ahead of their rivals. They are now the only two teams still in contention for the league crown

assist supplied by Dominique Mendy.

In the second half, Humaidan made it 4-0 in the 68th minute following a fantastic through-pass by Zahir Al Aghbari. Humaidan hit home with a turning, left-footed strike from near the penalty spot.

Al Aghbari then scored in the 72nd minute with a fine left-footed effort to make it 5-0.

Standings

	P	W	D	L	+/-	Pts
Al Khaldiya	21	12	5	4	22	41
Manama	21	11	7	3	19	40
Muharraq	21	9	10	2	20	37
Sitra	21	10	7	4	10	37
Riffa	21	10	6	5	11	36
Al Ahli	21	7	9	5	1	30
Hidd	21	7	6	8	-7	27
Al Shabab	21	7	5	9	-4	26
East Riffa	21	4	9	8	-6	21
Al Hala	21	5	6	10	-10	21
Bahrain Club	21	4	6	11	-10	18
Budaiya*	21	1	2	18	-46	-1

(*Budaiya deducted six points due to a decision by the Bahrain Football Association)

Humaidan applied the final nail in the coffin and completed his hat-trick four minutes from full time with a fine shot from inside the penalty area off another assist by Al Aghbari.

Khaldiya claimed their 12th win and improved to 41 points with just one match to play, while Budaiya suffered their 18th loss.

In Manama's draw, Mohammed Al Hallaq put them ahead in the 30th minute with a strike from inside the box off a long pass from beyond the half-pitch

line.

But East Riffa struck back in the 61st minute through Jassim Khelaif, who put on a show of brilliant individual skill. He received a pass and controlled the ball with his first touch before sending it home with a header in one fluid motion.

Manama posted their seventh draw and went to 40 points, while East Riffa claimed their ninth deadlock and went to 21 points, earning them a crucial improvement on the standings in the hopes of avoiding a relegation play-off.

In Bahrain Club's win, Ebrahim Abdulla Khudair scored for the victors in the 28th minute and then Joel Vinicius Silva Dos Anjos headed in their second three minutes from the half.

Sitra got a goal back in the second half but Abdulrahman Yousef Salem fired in a penalty in the seventh minute of second-half stoppage time to seal the win.

Bahrain Club improved to 18 points with only their fourth victory and are looking to avoid relegation, while Sitra stayed on 37 points following their fourth loss.

Sabalenka enjoys early birthday present with Madrid final spot

AFP | Madrid

Aryna Sabalenka gave herself an early birthday gift by easing into the Madrid Open final for the second time in three years yesterday.

The world number two turns 25 on Friday and the Belarusian celebrated in style by breezing past Greek world number nine Maria Sakkari, 6-4, 6-1.

Sabalenka, the 2021 champion in Madrid, will face either world number one Iga Swiatek or 13th-ranked Veronika Kudermetova in Saturday's championship match.

Reigning Australian Open champion Sabalenka will be chasing a fifth WTA 1000 title, a 13th career title overall and third in 2023.

Yesterday, she took her head-to-head record over Sakkari to 6-3.

From 3-3 in the opening set, Sabalenka won nine of the last 11 games including the last five. Aslan Karatsev won the battle



Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka returns the ball to Greece's Maria Sakkari

of the underdogs when he edged Zhang Zhizhen 7-6 (7/3), 6-4 to make the last four of the men's event.

Karatsev, the Russian ranked 121 in the world, had to come through qualifying in the Spanish capital.

Zhang, ranked 99, was the first Chinese player to make an

ATP 1000 event last eight.

"I am happy with my condition. Back to the top level," Karatsev said. "Playing well and feeling well."

Between them the two men had knocked out six seeds to reach the quarter-finals with Karatsev dropping only one set in seven matches, as he elim-



Reigning Australian Open champion Sabalenka will be chasing a fifth WTA 1000 title, a 13th career title overall and third in 2023

inated second seed and compatriot Daniil Medvedev in the round of 16.

Yesterday, Karatsev kept his nerve better at key moments and saved all three break points he faced in the first set before winning the tie-break.

He immediately broke in the opening game of the second set before going on to win in one hour and 40 minutes.

PSG boosts security after protests target Neymar and Messi



PSG's Lionel Messi (L) and Neymar celebrate during a match (file photo)

AFP | Paris

Paris Saint-Germain have ordered extra security at the club's training ground and at the homes of Lionel Messi and Neymar after protests by fans angry over recent results at the Ligue 1 leaders, sources close to the club said yesterday.

Several hundred PSG supporters gathered outside club headquarters on Wednesday evening where they set off smoke flares and sang hostile chants about underperforming stars Messi, Neymar and Italian midfielder Marco Verratti.

Some of them, dressed in black, then travelled to Neymar's home in a wealthy suburb west of Paris where they chanted "Neymar, get lost".

"Paris Saint-Germain condemns in the strongest possible terms the unacceptable and insulting actions of a small group of individuals," a club statement said on Wednesday evening.

"Whatever the differences of opinion, nothing justifies such behaviour."

Neymar, who has been

Don't let people put you in their storm. Put them in your peace

NEYMAR

plagued by injuries at PSG and is out until the end of the season, reacted by writing on Instagram: "Don't let people put you in their storm. Put them in your peace."

The club decided to boost security at its training ground and outside the homes of the players singled out during the protests, two sources told AFP, asking not to be named.

Some of the fans had indicated "they wanted to do the same thing every evening," one of the sources said.

The protesters left "calmly, several minutes after their arrival" without any clashes with police, the source added.

Messi's future at PSG was plunged into doubt on Wednesday after he was suspended for two weeks for travelling to Saudi Arabia to fulfil a commercial role without the club's permission.

Bowlers hold nerves in death overs as Kolkata beat Hyderabad

AFP | Hyderabad

Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) bowled held their nerves to deliver skilful bowling spells in death overs to clinch a five-run win over Sunrisers Hyderabad in their Indian Premier League (IPL) match at Hyderabad yesterday.

Now, KKR is at eighth position with four wins and six losses. They have a total of eight points. SRH is at ninth position with three wins and six losses. They have a total of six points.

In the chase of 172, Sunrisers Hyderabad was off to a solid



Anukul Roy of Kolkata Knight Riders celebrates with teammates after a wicket

Scorecard

Kolkata Knight Riders 171/9 (Rinku Singh 46, Nitish Rana 42, T Natarajan 2/30) won against Sunrisers Hyderabad: 166/8 (Aiden Markram 41, Heinrich Klaasen 36, Shardul Thakur 2/23)

start. But Harshit Rana disrupted the chase by dismissing Mayank Agarwal for 18 off 11 balls. SRH was at 29/1 in 2.5 overs.

Abhishek Sharma was also dismissed for nine runs by Shardul Thakur, after he was caught by Andre Russell at deep backward square. SRH was at 37/2 in 3.5 overs.