

Bahrain teams set for international friendlies

Senior men's football team and under-23 Olympic team in action in coming week | **P12**

WORLD 6 Kyiv threatens Bakhmut counterattack

Sharon Stone dressed herself for first Oscars appearance

Malabar Gold & Diamonds announces new base for international operations



HM King exchanges Ramadan greetings with GCC leaders

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His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa exchanged greetings with HM Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Said of Oman, HM King Abdulla II ibn Al Hussain of Jordan, the Emir of Kuwait HH Shaikh Nawaf Al Ahmed Al Jaber Al Sabah, UAE President HH Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Egyptian President Abdul Fattah El Sisi.

HM King also exchanged Ramadan greetings with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and Dubai Ruler HH Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, and His Eminence Shaikh Dr Ahmed El-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Al-Sharif.

His Majesty expressed congratulations on marking the holy month of Ramada, wishing their countries and peoples further progress and prosperity.

Al-Azhar Al-Sharif Grand Imam congratulates HM King

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His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa was congratulated by His Eminence Shaikh Dr Ahmed El-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Al-Sharif on the holy month of Ramadan in a phone call.

Shaikh Dr El-Tayeb congratulated HM the King, praying to Allah the Almighty to bless Bahrain and the Arab and Islamic nations with further progress and prosperity.



Iftar banquet



His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa yesterday hosted an Iftar banquet at Al Sakhir Palace, in the presence of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister. Their Highnesses, Royal Council members, and senior members of the Royal Family congratulated HM the King, wishing him abundant health and long life and Bahrain and its people further progress and prosperity under his wise leadership.

Lebanon at 'very dangerous moment': IMF

Beirut, Lebanon

Crisis-hit Lebanon is "at a very dangerous moment", a visiting International Monetary Fund delegation said yesterday, criticising slow progress on reforms needed to unlock billions in loans.

Lebanon and the IMF reached a conditional agreement in April 2022 on a \$3-billion-dollar loan needed to save the country's economy, in free fall since 2019. But nearly a year after Beirut signed the agreement, officials have yet to enact the substantial changes required to kickstart the 46-month financing programme. "We think Lebanon is at a very dangerous moment, at a crossroads," said Ernesto Ramirez Rigo, who headed the IMF delegation to Beirut.

Next step 'soon'

Riyadh says Saudi, Iran FMs hold call, vow to meet

- To hold a bilateral meeting soon
- Aims at reopening of embassies and consulates
- To implement security and economic cooperation deals

TDT | agencies

The Saudi and Iranian foreign ministers yesterday vowed to meet "soon" to implement the landmark bilateral reconciliation deal announced on March 10 in a telephonic conversation.

In a statement posted on



Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud

Twitter, the Saudi foreign ministry said Saudi minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, called Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and "exchanged congratulations on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan".

"The two ministers agreed to hold a bilateral meeting soon in order to pave the way for the reopening of embassies and consulates between the two

countries," the statement said.

Saudi officials have said the ministers' expected meeting is the next step in the surprise Chinese-brokered rapprochement intended to fully restore diplomatic ties seven years after they were severed.

Riyadh cut relations after Iranian protesters attacked Saudi diplomatic missions in 2016.

The deal is expected to see

Iran and Saudi Arabia reopen their embassies and missions within two months and implement security and economic cooperation deals signed more than 20 years ago.

On Sunday, an Iranian official said President Ebrahim Raisi had favourably received an invitation to visit Saudi Arabia from King Salman, though Riyadh has yet to confirm.

Amir-Abdollahian told reporters the same day that the two countries had agreed to hold a meeting between their top diplomats and that three locations had been suggested, without specifying which.

Experts say the detente between Saudi Arabia and Iran has the potential to reshape relations across the region characterised by turbulence for decades.

Farmers' market to open at 8 pm



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The Bahraini Farmers Market will open doors this Saturday from 8 pm until midnight at the Budaiya Botanical Gardens.

The market, now in its 10th edition, has the participation of 32 farmers, five nurseries, four apiaries, and four agricultural companies.

This year's market also features four dates specific activities and 20 productive families.

Clean getaway

US prisoners use toothbrush to dig hole, go for pancakes

Washington, United States

It was almost a clean getaway: two American inmates dug their way out of prison with the help of a toothbrush -- only to be arrested hours later at a pancake restaurant.

The two men, identified as John Garza, 37, and Arley Nemo, 43, were reported missing from the Newport News Jail Annex Monday evening in the state of Virginia.

They used makeshift tools made from a toothbrush and a metal object to take advantage of what the sheriff's office called a construction flaw in a wall of the prison to gain access to



They used makeshift tools to take advantage of a construction flaw

unsecured reinforcement bars used in construction.

Using the reinforcement bar, they punched a hole through that wall and scaled another to

make their

escape. But their taste of freedom was brief, as they were arrested in the wee hours of Tuesday at a branch of a pancake restaurant



John M. Garza

Arley V. Nemo

chain called IHOP in the nearby town of Hampton.

"I'm thankful for the citizens who observed Garza and Nemo at the IHOP and notified law enforcement. It reinforces what we

always say, 'see something, say something,' Sheriff Gabe Morgan said.

Garza was in custody on charges including contempt of court and probation violations, while Nemo was in for offenses including credit card fraud and forgery, the statement said.

The sheriff's office would not reveal exactly how the men exploited the flaw in the prison's construction.

"Due to the fact that this weakness presents itself throughout the facility, and until all weaknesses are identified and secured, we will not discuss the situation further for security reasons," the statement said.

InterNations ranks Bahrain as 'Best Destination' for Expatriates



220 fils (includes VAT)



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HM King praises Bahrain's development strides

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa yesterday stressed Bahrain's development strides across all fields, taking pride in citizens' contributions to the Kingdom's progress. King Hamad further hailed the pivotal role of the legislative branch in supporting the development and democratic process and defending the Kingdom's interests. HM King was receiving Speaker Ahmed bin Salman Al Musallam, Shura Council Chairman Ali bin Saleh Al Saleh, their deputies and heads committees. The meeting congratulated HM King on the holy month of Ramadan, wishing HM the King abundant health, happiness and long life and Bahrain and its people further progress and development. Also present during the meeting were His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, and HM King's Personal Representative HH Shaikh Abdulla bin Hamad Al Khalifa, HM King's Representative for Humanitarian Work and Youth Affairs, National Security Advisor HH Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

HM appreciates judicial bodies

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa yesterday expressed his appreciation for the judicial bodies that work tirelessly to serve the nation and its citizens. HM stressed the importance of achieving justice and protecting the rights of both citizens and residents and acknowledged the vital role played by the judiciary, as well as the President and staff of the National Audit Office. His Majesty praised their exceptional performance, achievements, and dedication to safeguarding public funds. His Majesty said this while receiving Court of Cassation President Shaikh Khalid bin Ali bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, Constitutional Court President Abulla bin Hassan Al Bouainain, Public Prosecutor Dr Ali bin Fadhl Al Bouainain, and National Audit Officer President Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Khalifa. The meeting was in the presence of HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, as well as His Majesty's Personal Representative, HH Shaikh Abdulla bin Hamad Al Khalifa, and HM King's Representative for Humanitarian Work and Youth Affairs, National Security Advisor HH Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa - Supreme Judicial Council Deputy Chairman and other prominent officials.

Students to become first responders

“Paramedic in Every House” to train students in 36 secondary schools

● **Ministry to train Physical education teachers**

● **The first phase includes 72 teachers**

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“Paramedic in Every House”, one of the winning ideas of the Government Innovation Competition (Fikra) in 2020, has found its way to secondary schools here.

The project aims at training students as paramedics to provide timely first aid to reduce the number of unexpected fatalities and alleviate the severity of accident-related complications

Training the students will be physical education teachers who will undergo a three-year training to become qualified instructors. The project will



The inauguration of the Paramedic in Every House held in the Ministry of Education hall in Isa Town.

be implemented across 36 secondary schools in the Kingdom, also making Bahrain the first in the Arab world to implement a national educational health programme.

Education Ministry confirmed that 72 physical education teachers will be given the training to

act as trainers.

According to Aisha Al-Zoubi, who is the Head of the School Health Department at the Ministry of Education, the ministry plans to choose eligible teachers and organise them into three groups, with 24 teachers receiving training annually.

The project was announced during an inauguration ceremony held in the Ministry of Education hall in Isa Town.

Dr Mohammed bin Mubarak Juma, Minister of Education, Dr Jalila bint Al-Sayed Jawad Hassan, Minister of Health, and a number of officials and special-

ists were present.

The project, the minister said, will not only contribute to reducing healthcare costs for secondary and rehabilitative care, but also spread community awareness regarding the importance of CPR knowledge.

The Government Innovation

Competition (Fikra), launched as per the directives of HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, aims to stimulate creativity and innovation among the government sector employees and provide them with the opportunity to compete in making effective proposals to develop government performance.



“Paramedic in Every House” makes Bahrain the first country in the Arab world to implement a national educational health programme

First Light by Rashid Al Khalifa opens at Heydar Aliyev Centre Azerbaijan



In pictures, the opening ceremony and art works on display

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The Heydar Aliyev Cultural Centre in Baku, Azerbaijan, is drawing art lovers from around the globe to ‘First Light’ an exhibition featuring a selection of works by renowned artist Rashid Al Khalifa.

The exhibition, which showcases a selection of works by Rashid Al Khalifa began on March 14th, 2023 and continues until the 10th of September 2023.

Anar Alakbarov, the Director of the Heydar Aliyev Centre and Assistant First Vice President of Azerbaijan, opened the exhibition.

“First Light” is an amalgamation of a myriad of inspirations. The sculptures showcased the intersection of tradition and the future, heritage and contemporary design, and the environment and industry.

Shaikh Rashid Al Khalifa said he is glad to exhibit his

works within an architectural marvel, which the late architect Zaha Hadid designed – the Heydar Aliyev Cultural Centre.

“The beauty of the building lies in the seamless overlapping of its structural components. It appears to connect art, architecture and design effortlessly.

On his works, Rashid Al Khalifa said: “I often draws on aspects of my heritage, culture and surroundings to create contemporary sculptures and I am so pleased to share these new works in a museum that is renowned for its innovative and cutting-edge design and in a country with such a rich culture

and heritage.” During the exhibition, Shaikh Rashid Al Khalifa expressed his aspirations for Bahrain to host art exhibitions by Azerbaijani artists in the future. He emphasized the importance of art in connecting people and building bridges.

Bahrain 'ideal place for easy beginnings'

InterNations ranks Bahrain as expatriates' 'Best Destination for Getting Started Abroad' in 2023

● Bahrain takes top rank out of the 52 countries

● Key highlights are easy communication, lack of a language barrier and minimal bureaucratic issues

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Expatriates have chosen Bahrain as the 'Best Destination for Getting Started Abroad' in 2023, confirming that settling in the Kingdom is a "breeze".

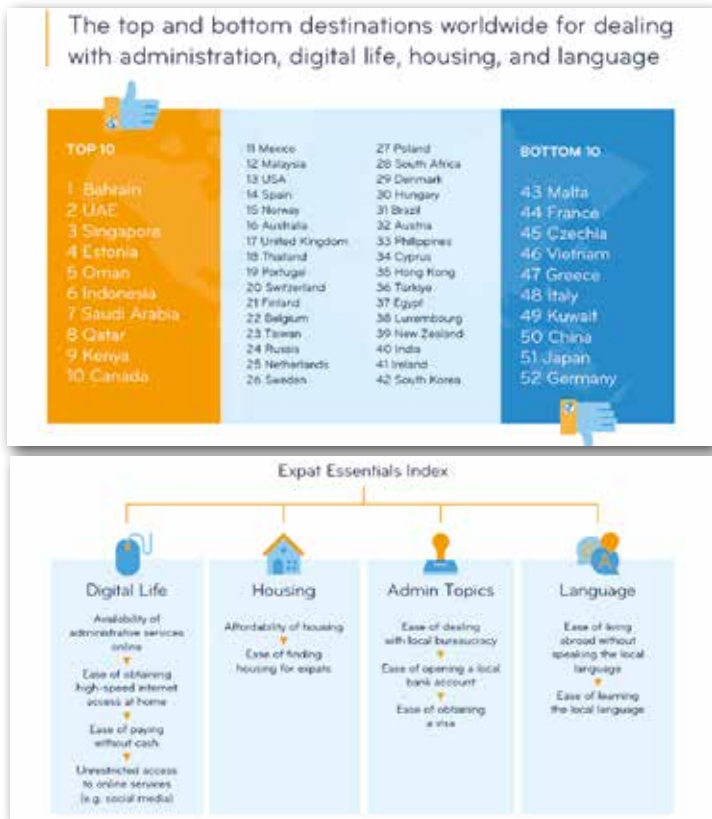
The rating is according to Expat Essentials Index published by InterNations, the world's largest expatriate community with over 4.5 million members.

Bahrain takes the top rank out of the 52 countries around the globe, placing it firmly ahead of leading countries, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Singapore, Saudi Arabia, and Canada.

All the top three destinations, Bahrain (1st), the UAE (2nd), and Singapore (3rd), expatriates said offer easy communication with the lack of a language barrier while also posing minimal bureaucratic issues.

Bahrain is ranked 1st in MENA and 11th globally for Digital Life, showcasing advanced financial and digital infrastructure and progressive regulatory framework.

InterNations finds Bahrain the 'ideal place for easy beginnings', citing vital aspects typically associated with settling into a



country, which include digital readiness, online government services, ease of digital payments, ease of opening a bank account and obtaining a visa in addition to ease and affordability of housing.

Zero language barriers

The metrics assessed potential language barriers - for living without speaking the local lan-

guage - where Bahrain ranked 4th globally.

Two in three survey respondents (67%) confirm that it is easy to deal with the local authorities, an impressive 27 percentage points more than the global average (40%), the report said.

No visa issues

Visa issues also pose very few problems: 70% say it is easy to

get a visa to move there (vs. 56% globally).

Easy to find housing

The survey also highlights that expatriates in Bahrain (82%) say it is easy to find housing, while only about half of them globally (54%) can say the same.

However, only 39% find housing in Bahrain affordable, the same share as the worldwide average (39%).

Expatriates surveyed by InterNations, however, said that, in Bahrain, they are at least not held back by language barriers; 82% say it is easy to live there without speaking the local language(s) (vs. 51% globally).

Easy Bank account

Bahrain also ranked 1st in MENA and 3rd globally in ease of opening a bank account.

UAE takes 2nd rank

From the Gulf Cooperation Council, the UAE takes second place in the ranking. Expatriates voted the country 1st worldwide for the ease of obtaining a visa to move there. Additionally, 61% say it is easy to deal with the local bureaucracy in the UAE, compared to 40% globally. When it comes to the Housing Subcategory (14th), 75% consider it easy to find housing in the UAE (vs. 54% globally), but only 38% say that it is affordable (vs. 39% globally).

Singapore takes the third rank, followed by Estonia, Oman, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Kenya and Canada.

In Saudi Arabia, respondents said the kingdom facilitates a smooth transition to local life for expats, ranking 7th in the Expat Essentials Index. Like

Bahrain (1st), the UAE (2nd), Oman (5th), and Qatar (8th), it offers expatriates relatively worry-free bureaucracy, easily available housing, and not much of a language barrier.

Not only do 62% say that housing in Saudi Arabia is easy for expats to find (vs. 54% globally), another 42% say it is affordable as well (vs. 39% globally).

Admin topics (11th) offer little frustration for expatriates in Saudi Arabia, and 73% say it is easy to open a local bank account (vs. 64% globally).



Geri Halliwell (Geri Horner), wife of Red Bull Racing's British team principal Christian Horner, arrives to attend the Bahrain Formula One Grand Prix at the Bahrain International Circuit in Sakhir

Meat and Vegetable price stable ahead of Ramadan Rush, Saloona emerges as popular dish

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Despite the high demand for meat and vegetables, local market prices largely remained stable yesterday with vendors confirming that stock levels are sufficient to meet the Ramadan rush.

Merchants, however, said they anticipate a surge in demand during the weekend.

According to merchants at the Central Market, Saloona, a curry-based meal prepared using vegetables and enjoyed as an everyday meal, has become a hot-selling dish for its availability and reasonable prices.

Prices of some favourite tray pack items are as follows: Zucchini BD1.3, carrot BD1.8, green pepper BD2, eggplant BD1, green bean BD1.5, and popper BD3.5.

An Indian okra basket cost BD1.3, pumpkin BD2.8, potato bag BD1.8, Large onion bag BD2, garlic bag BD1.4, tomato basket BD1.5, lemon basket BD5.5, broccoli 500 fils each, and small ginger bag 500 fils.

The prices of leafy green vegetables, such as Lettuce, Watercress, and Barbir, range from 100 to 500 fils, depending on the type, source, and quantity.

Pakistan Ambassador calls for boosting ties during National Day celebration

Ashen Tharaka
TDI | Manama

Muhammad Ayub, the Ambassador of Pakistan to Bahrain, called for further strengthening Bahrain-Pakistan bilateral ties during an event held to celebrate the National day of Pakistan at the embassy.

Speaking to The Daily Tribune, the Ambassador the ambassador emphasized the deep and longstanding fraternal bonds that unite both countries, making the occasion significant for all.

Further highlighting the shared history, the cultural and social values, the ambassador emphasized the need for developing economic relationships between the two nations.

The ambassador said that Pakistan is seeking investors and businesspeople, particularly in areas of food production, packaging, and storage.

Besides, the Embassy has declared 2023 as a Tourism year for Bahrainis to visit Pakistan and explore the country's natural beauty.

Marking the day, the Pakistani community members in Bahrain organised an art ex-



In pictures, the National Day celebrations yesterday at the Pakistan Embassy

hibition on the embassy premises.

In a message to Bahraini

leaders, Pakistani leaders expressed gratitude and stressed the importance of developing

stronger economic and tourism connections between both countries.

NBR held 495 inspection visits in two months

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The National Bureau for Revenue (NBR) said it held 495 inspection visits during January and February to protect consumer rights and ensure the effective implementation of VAT and excise.

The campaigns resulted in detecting several violations and possible evasion of VAT & Excise Laws. As a result, some businesses were in danger of being closed as a precautionary measure.

NBR said it will initiate criminal actions against those found guilty. They may face imprisonment for up to five years and a fine equivalent to three times the amount of VAT. Alternatively, they may face imprisonment for up to one year and a fine equivalent to double the amount of the evaded excise, according to the Excise law.

NBR officials said the campaign contributed significantly to addressing tax evasion and preventing the possession, trade, sale, or supply of products that have not fulfilled their VAT or excise obligations.

The Digital Stamps Scheme on cigarette products in the local markets, which came into effect on October 16, 2022, is also a part of these efforts.

Plans on way to develop clock roundabout intersection: Works Ministry

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The Ministry of Works has affirmed its keenness to create a comprehensive strategy for developing the road networks in Bahrain.

The plan will be based on traffic surveys and future traffic predictions, using a traffic model approved by the Traffic Council, said the ministry.

The Ministry is currently working on a number of projects to improve the main road network and intersections, in-



cluding the much-anticipated development of the Clock Roundabout Intersection in the Riffa area.

This came in response to a parliamentary question submitted by Dr Ali Majid Al Nuaimi, Member of Parliament.

The project will convert the Sheikh Salman Street and Crown Prince Street intersection into a multi-level intersection, increasing its capacity from 6,000 vehicles at peak times to 16,000 vehicles.

Other projects aimed at eas-

ing congestion in the Riffa and Wadi Al-Sail regions include the construction of a street linking Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Street and the housing project in Wadi Al-Sail, which is expected to be included in the Ministry's program for 2023-2024.

The Ministry stated that the work of the Crown Prince Street development project has been implemented from the Crown Prince Roundabout in the west to the Clock Roundabout in the east, and the project works included the expansion of the

street to 3 lanes in each direction.

Crown Prince Street, which connects the Riffa area with Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Street and Hamad Town, witnesses a high traffic density of about 80,000 vehicles per day.

The Ministry also reported that the development of Wali Al-Ahed Street will significantly reduce the total waiting time for vehicles on the street, particularly after the opening of the Wadi Al-Sail complex.

UTB to hold conference on 'Sustainable Innovations in Management and Digital Transformation'

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The University of Technology is holding its first international conference "Sustainable Innovations in Management in the Era of Digital Transformation from May 2 to 3 at InterContinental Regency Bahrain.

The announcement was made during a press conference attended by Dr Hassan Almulla, President of UTB, Dr Haitham Al Qahtani, VP of Academic Affairs at UTB, Noof Swar, communication coordinator at Bahrain Association of Banks, Dr Abdulhasan Al Dairi, Chairman SMEs Society Bahrain, and Dr Rania Nafea, Associate Professor and conference organizer at UTB.

UTB, in cooperation with FIRST India, said it has signed



Officials during a photocall and press conference

strategic partnerships with the Bahrain Small and Medium Enterprises Society (SMEs) and the Bahrain Association of Banks

(BAB) under the sponsorship of Batelco. According to Dr Nafea, the conference organizer,

BAB and Bahrain SMEs have been instrumental partners since the inception of the conference.

Dr Hassan Almulla revealed that they anticipate the participation of around 300-400 attendees, including seven key-

note speakers from Canada, Egypt, India, Poland, and Turkey, at the conference.



Year End 2022 Financial Results

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION		
	All figures in BHD '000	
	31 December 2022	31 December 2021
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	1,270	1,037
Balance held as collateral with a related party	7,540	3,770
Non-trading investments	94,550	74,513
Due from the Head Office - net	75,476	20,745
Credit cardholders receivable	2,044	382
Other assets	4,297	1,729
Premises and equipment	227	182
TOTAL ASSETS	185,404	102,358
LIABILITIES AND HEAD OFFICE ACCOUNT		
Liabilities		
Deposits from customers	164,886	86,564
Other liabilities	5,634	1,715
Total liabilities	170,520	88,279
Head Office Account		
Capital funds	20,000	20,000
Accumulated losses	(5,858)	(5,921)
Fair value reserve	742	-
Total Head Office Account	14,884	14,079
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND HEAD OFFICE ACCOUNT	185,404	102,358

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME		
	All figures in BHD '000	
	2022	2021
Interest income	4,231	1,494
Interest expense	(1,446)	(691)
Net interest income	2,785	803
Fee and commission income / (expense) - net	573	(114)
Other operating income	936	417
Total operating income	4,294	1,106
Staff costs	4,038	2,673
Other operating expenses	5,297	3,685
Total operating expenses	9,335	6,358
Net operating loss before depreciation, amortisation and credit loss expense	(5,041)	(5,252)
Depreciation and amortisation	(809)	(669)
Credit loss expense	(8)	-
Net loss for the year	(5,858)	(5,921)
Other comprehensive income:		
Other comprehensive income that may be reclassified to profit or loss in subsequent periods		
Net change in fair value of debt instruments carried at FVOCI during the year	742	-
Total comprehensive loss for the year	(5,116)	(5,921)

CONDENSED STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS		
	All figures in BHD '000	
	2022	2021
OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Net cash from operating activities	19,783	40,981
INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Net cash used in investing activities	(19,516)	(40,701)
FINANCING ACTIVITY		
Cash used in financing activity	(34)	(13)
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents	233	267
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of the year	1,037	770
Cash and cash equivalents at end of the year	1,270	1,037

The above statement of financial position, statement of comprehensive income and condensed statement of cash flows have been extracted from the financial statements of Arab Banking Corporation (B.S.C.) Retail Bank (Branch) for the year ended 31 December 2022 which were audited by Ernst & Young, who have expressed an unqualified audit opinion on 23 March 2023.

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Rotary Club of Salmaniya launches charitable initiatives for Ramadan



In pictures, the launch event of charitable initiatives

Julia Cassano
TDT | Manama

The Rotary Club of Salmaniya announced the launch of a series of charitable initiatives during the holy month of Ramadan.

One of the first initiatives will be the annual Ramadan Box distribution programme, for which the Club has teamed up with Alosra Supermarket.

The joint effort, club officials said, will see the distribution of 500 Ramadan boxes to various charitable societies and NGOs across the Kingdom.

Speaking to The Daily Tribune, Hasan Al Monsoor, President of the Rotary Club of Salmaniya, said the club members will also perform "a door-to-door box distribution across various neighbourhoods in Bahrain."

Additionally, the club will collaborate with other Rotary Clubs in Bahrain for the Geragoun night celebration held at Nakheel Centre in Saar in the middle of the month.

This event aims to provide an opportunity for mentally and physically challenged children from various societies, friends,

and parents of the disabled to celebrate the occasion, said Hasan.

Traditional games, live music performances, food stalls, and gift distribution to beneficiary children will be part of the event.

"The Clubs invite mentally and physically challenged children, friends and parents of the differently abled children to celebrate the glorious occasion," Hasan said.

The club officials said they hope to make a positive impact on the lives of those in need during the month of Ramadan.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds announces new base for international operations

Opens Malabar International Hub (M-IH) in Dubai Gold Souq

● Inaugurated by Cabinet member and UAE Minister of Economy, Abdulla Bin Touq Al Marri

● The signing of CEPA between UAE and India directly led to the conceptualization of the M-IH, based on the opportunities presented to the brand

TDT | Manama

Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally with an extensive retail network of over 310 outlets across 10 countries in India, the GCC, Far East and the USA, has unveiled their brand-new global base of international operations, the Malabar International Hub (M-IH) at Dubai Gold Souq in Deira, Dubai. M-IH was inaugurated by Abdulla Bin Touq Al Marri, Cabinet member and UAE minister of economy on the 22nd of March.

Celebrating its 30th year anniversary, the opening of M-IH marks a momentous landmark for Malabar Gold & Diamonds,



Malabar International Hub (MIH), the new centralized hub for Malabar Gold & Diamonds' International operations being inaugurated by Cabinet member and UAE Minister of Economy, HE Abdulla Bin Touq Al Marri, in the presence of Malabar Group Chairman, M.P Ahammed, other directors, distinguished guests, government officials, well-wishers and management team members of Malabar Gold & Diamonds. With an extensive retail network of over 310 showrooms across 10 countries, Malabar Gold & Diamonds is currently ranked as the 6th largest jewellery retailer global

which began their international operations in 2008 from the UAE.

The 28,000 sq ft LEED Gold Certified hub, which is located in the heart of Dubai's gold district has been designed to be the epicenter of the brand's current and future business aspirations. Spread across 4 floors, houses all functions, from a global centralised supply chain to all enabling and supporting functions for existing operations in GCC, USA, Singapore, and Malaysia. It also set the foundation for

the growth aspirations of the group to continue its ambitious expansion plans into countries such as the UK, Australia, Canada, Turkey, Bangladesh, New Zealand and many more.

The Chairman of Malabar Group, M.P Ahammed commented, "As we celebrate 30 years of providing exemplary jewellery shopping experience to our loyal customers across the world, our dedication towards quality, perfection and service has propelled us to the position of world's most trusted

jewellery retailer."

Shamlal Ahamed, Managing Director-International operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds said, "The removal of import duty through the CEPA will help us in using that to add new international markets as well as improve our retail presence in current markets such as the US. With the opening of our new global base in the UAE, all our existing international operations including the US and Far East will be managed from Dubai."

Ramadan in bloom: A curated collection of elegant, modest fashion

TDT | Manama

With the holy month right around the corner, Splash launches an elegant and modest-focused collection to pay homage to the spirit of the festivities. Exuding opulence with the captivating charm of regional motifs, the collection is an amalgamation of trends coming together to present a wholesome line that takes care of festive day-to-night dressing.

As faith and self-expression take centre stage, fashion choices blossoms with resplendent colours, easy-to-wear layers, and modest silhouettes that are largely crafted from sustainably sourced BCI cotton, recycled polyester, sustainable viscose, and other eco-friendly materials.

Whilst the iftar edit for wom-



en is headlined with regency-era inspired silhouettes like floral dresses, sweeping hemlines, and delicate embellishments of lace and pearls, suhoor dressing seeks modernity by etching a neutral narrative with contemporary colours, textures, and patterns.

Tiered, wrapped, pleated, and kaftan-esque – the dresses are the focal point of the collection that celebrates 30 days of faith and modesty with elegance. Channelling the joyous, reflective mood of the season with soulful patterns, free-spirited aesthetics, and relaxed sil-

houettes, the most distinctive appeal of the line is the use of statement prints like ikat, paisley, and painterly foliage in new colours like citrus, emerald, pink and white.

Packed with summer-approved denim, activewear, and athleisure options—the collection also goes beyond the revelry of the season to include stylish options for workwear and day-to-day looks.

Matching the festive vibe and artistic charm of the women's collection, the men's Ramadan collection bustles with dopamine-inducing colours, soothing neutrals, and dessert-inspired palm tree prints with rustic details. From linen blends to embroidery shirts to printed tees and denim—the collection sets the tone for a fashionable Ramadan.

Takaful International Company AGM approves 5% cash dividends

TDT | Manama

Shareholders of Takaful International Company has approved the distribution of cash dividends of 5%, an equivalent of BD 425K (5 fils per share) during its Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Wednesday at the Company's headquarters in Seef Area. The meeting also approved the company's financial results for the year ended 31 December 2022. The company had reported Net profit of BD 1,703m compared to BD 1,603m last year with an increase percentage of 6%, and shareholders' net profit of BD 1,002m compared to BD 931k last year. Earnings per share was 11.79 fils compared to 10.95 fils last year.

Ebrahim Al Rayes, Chairman



Takaful officials during the AGM on Wednesday

of the Company's Board of Directors, said that despite the significant economic fluctuations during the year 2022, the Company's total written contributions increased to BD 24,920m compared to BD 22,806m for the previous year.

Al Rayes also stated that the

Company was able to achieve an adequate increase in its shareholders' fund and increase the accumulated surplus of the policyholders' portfolio, which was achieved as a result of the strategies adopted by the Board of Directors to reduce costs and increase productivity, and the

prudent underwriting policy, as well as the efforts of the team.

Essam Al Ansari, Chief Executive Officer of the Company, said that the results achieved reflect the Company's ability to achieve financial stability despite the conditions in the insurance market.

Crowne Plaza Bahrain opens Khaimat Al Crowne tent



TDT | Manama

Crowne Plaza, a leading hotel brand in Bahrain, held a pre-Ramadan iftar event at its Bahrain property to launch its new tent, Khaimat Al Crowne on Monday.

Crowne Plaza said the tent offers an authentic Ramadan experience, complete with traditional decor, indoor and outdoor seating, and live entertainment.

The highlight of the evening was the live tanoura dance and live Arabic music, which added to the festive atmosphere of the event. Guests were also treated to a buffet featuring more than 100 varieties of food, including traditional Arabic dishes and international cuisine.



"We are thrilled to launch Khaimat Al Crowne and offer our guests a truly unique experience this Ramadan," said Charbel Hanna, General Manager of Crowne Plaza Bahrain. "The tent has been designed to bring the true spirit of Ramadan to life and we look forward to welcoming guests to our iftar and ghabga throughout the month."

The Khaimat Al Crowne tent will be open every evening during Ramadan for iftar & ghabga from sunset until 2:00 AM.

The Avenues-Bahrain announces Ramadan activities

TDT | Manama

The Avenues-Bahrain, the largest seafront shopping and entertainment destination in Bahrain, has announced a range of activities for Ramadan.

The shopping centre has also announced the second season of its popular competition programme "Our Gathering at The Avenues," which will be broadcasted live on Bahrain TV. Guests can participate in the quiz and win cash prizes and gifts from stores and brands located within The Avenues-Bahrain.

In addition, The Avenues - Bahrain will host a daily chess tournament beside Gate 1 from 9:30 pm to 11:00 pm, with cash prizes for the winners.

Other daily activities include an arts and crafts station, face painting, handicrafts and canvas painting, a hospitality section serving traditional Arabic coffee and dates, and a henna artist all taking place daily from 8 pm to 12 am.

The Avenues-Bahrain also offers its visitors a unique dining experience iftar and suhoor meals, through a large group of international restaurants. Guests can also enjoy traditional Bahraini foods such



as Bahraini kebabs, samosas, and sweets that will be available at special booths every Thursday and Friday from 8pm to 12pm by the boardwalk outside Gate 8. Guests can also visit the calligraphy station and enjoy instrumental performances every weekend.

The Avenues-Bahrain said it has partnered up with "Kaaf", a charitable foundation in Bahrain, on a large-scale charitable campaign aimed at supporting those suffering from health conditions, and those in need of financial support for education. Visitors are encouraged to visit the charitable booth during the month of Ramadan, located next to Gate 1, to learn more about the campaign and donate.





News in brief

Marburg virus toll rises to 20 in Equatorial Guinea

The Marburg virus epidemic in Equatorial Guinea has left 20 people dead over the past two months, the World Health Organisation said yesterday. The outbreak of the haemorrhagic fever, which is almost as deadly as Ebola, has now spread beyond the province of Kie-Ntem, where it caused the first known deaths in January, and has reached Bata, the economic capital of the small central African country, according to the government.

Australia's prime minister yesterday (Mar 23) made a tearful appeal to voters, asking them to support the creation of an aboriginal 'voice' in lawmaking as he announced the wording of the referendum question.

Anthony Albanese said that Australians had a chance to make up for centuries of injustice, formally recognise aboriginal and Torres Strait Island groups, and give them a voice in decision-making at a vote later this year. This is "about how our nation sees ourselves. Whether we have the confidence to embrace our history", said Albanese, painting the vote as a chance for Australians to make their country fairer.

Taiwan recalls ambassador to Honduras over FM's China visit

Taiwan recalled yesterday its ambassador to Honduras over a visit by Tegucigalpa's foreign minister to China. Taipei's government said in a statement. "Honduras ignored more than 80 years of friendship between (Taiwan and Honduras) when they sent their foreign minister to China, which has seriously damaged the feelings of our government and people," said a foreign ministry statement. "We have decided to immediately recall our ambassador in Honduras to express our strong dissatisfaction." The announcement came as Honduran Foreign Minister Eduardo Enrique Reina was heading to China to hold talks on the establishment of diplomatic relations with Beijing, government officials said.

Kyiv threatens Bakhmut counterattack

Ukrainian commander warns of impending counterattack against Russian forces in Bakhmut as Zelensky visits Kherson

Battle for Bakhmut has been longest, bloodiest of war

AFP | Kyiv

A top Ukrainian commander yesterday threatened an impending counter-attack against Russian forces in the frontline town of Bakhmut as President Volodymyr Zelensky visited Kherson, still partially controlled by Russia.

Oleksandr Syrsky, commander of Ukraine's ground forces, said Russian troops were "exhausted" near Bakhmut, the scene of the longest and bloodiest battle since the Russian invasion last year.

Bakhmut -- an eastern town which once had an estimated population of around 70,000 people -- has virtually emptied of civilians over months of fierce fighting between Russian and Ukrainian forces.

"The aggressor has not given up hope of taking Bakhmut at all



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky (C) taking a selfie with servicemen after meeting them in a warehouse and handing out awards, near Bakhmut

costs despite losses in manpower and equipment," said Syrsky. "Sparing nothing, they are losing significant strength and becoming exhausted.

"Very soon we will take advantage of this opportunity, like we did near Kyiv, Kharkiv, Balakliya and Kupiansk," he added, referring to successful Ukrainian counteroffensives last year.

Kyiv considers Bakhmut key to

holding back Russian forces along the entire eastern front. Both sides have invested heavily in the fight, even though analysts say the city has little strategic value.

The head of Russia's Wagner mercenary group said this week that his forces were in control of around 70 percent of the city. A Russian aide in the wider Donetsk region has said the city was "prac-

The aggressor has not given up hope of taking Bakhmut at all costs despite losses in manpower and equipment. Sparing nothing, they are losing significant strength and becoming exhausted

OLEKSANDR SYRSKY

tically surrounded". Zelensky on Wednesday recognised troops had a "difficult" task as he visited the eastern front near Bakhmut.

'Returning' to Kherson

Yesterday, he said he was on a "working trip to Kherson region" -- the southern region still partly controlled by the Russians, who are dug in on the eastern bank of the Dnipro river and routinely shell Kherson city, killing civilians.

Bakhmut -- an eastern town which once had an estimated population of around 70,000 people -- has virtually emptied of civilians over months of fierce fighting between Russian and Ukrainian forces

Ukrainian forces recaptured Kherson city, the administrative centre of the southern region, last November following a strategic withdrawal of Russian forces.

Zelensky said his visit included a village where "houses and civilian infrastructural facilities were damaged" as a re-sult of Russia's invasion.

He said local authorities were restoring essential services like electricity and water in the village and rebuilding a medical centre. "People are returning," he said in the post on social media yesterday.

"I talked to the locals about their problems and needs," he added.

Kherson, a gateway to the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, was captured easily and early by Russian forces in the early days of their February 2022 invasion.

Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed to have annexed Kherson and three other regions in Ukraine last September, despite not having full military control over any of them.

Zelensky, in a separate post, said he held a coordination meeting with officials and discussed de-mining and reconstruction in recaptured territory.

The head of Kherson's regional military administration, Oleksandr Prokudin, said Russian forces had killed one person and wounded two others over the last 24 hours.

China says it warned US warship to leave S. China Sea, US denies claims

AFP | Beijing

The Chinese military said it warned a US warship to "leave" waters in the disputed South China Sea yesterday, claims swiftly denied as "false" by American forces.

China claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea -- a strategic waterway through which trillions of dollars in trade pass annually -- despite an international court ruling that the assertion has no legal basis.

The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei all have overlapping claims in the sea, while the United States sends naval vessels through it to assert freedom of navigation in international waters.

The Southern Theater Command of China's People's Lib-



The USS Milius DDG69, a multi-mission-capable guided missile destroyer ship, is shown docked at Manila's south harbour

eration Army (PLA) said the USS Milius, a guided missile destroyer, yesterday entered waters around the Paracel Islands, which are also claimed by Vietnam.

The PLA "organised sea and air forces to track and moni-

harming peace and stability" in the region, he said.

The US military swiftly denied the claims, telling AFP that "the PRC's statement is false", using the acronym for the People's Republic of China.

The vessel "is conducting routine operations in the South China Sea and was not expelled", said a spokesperson for US Indo-Pacific Command.

"The United States will continue to fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows," the spokesperson said.

While asserting their claims in the South China Sea, Chinese authorities in recent years have built artificial islands, including some with military facilities and runways.

Regional nations have also accused Chinese vessels of harassing their fishing boats.

CURIOSER & CURIOSER

First 3D-printed rocket lifts off but fails to reach orbit



The first 3D printed rocket, Terran 1, taking off from Launch Complex 16 in Cape Canaveral, Florida

The world's first 3D-printed rocket launched successfully yesterday, marking a step forward for the California company behind the innovative spacecraft, though it failed to reach orbit.

Billed as less costly to produce and fly, the unmanned Terran 1 rocket launched from Cape Canaveral, Florida at 11:25 pm (0325 GMT yesterday) but suffered an "anomaly" during second-stage separation as it streamed towards low Earth orbit, according to a livestream broadcast by aerospace startup Relativity Space.

The company did not immediately give further details. While it failed to reach orbit, Wednesday's launch proved that the rocket -- whose mass is 85 percent 3D-printed -- could withstand the rigors of lift-off.

The successful launch came on the third attempt. It had originally been scheduled to launch on March 8 but was postponed at the last minute

BETTER YOU KNOW

While it failed to reach orbit, the launch proved that the rocket -- whose mass is 85 percent 3D-printed -- could withstand the rigors of lift-off

because of propellant temperature issues.

A second attempt on March 11 was scrubbed due to fuel pressure problems.

Had Terran 1 reached low Earth orbit, it would have been the first privately funded vehicle using methane fuel to do so on its first try, according to Relativity. Terran 1 was not carrying a payload for its first flight, but the rocket will eventually be capable of putting up to 2,755 pounds (1,250 kilograms) into low Earth orbit.

Thai police shoot gunman dead after 15-hour standoff

AFP | Bangkok

Thai police shot dead a gunman who killed three people and wounded three others, a senior officer said yesterday, after a 15-hour standoff.

The shooter started firing in Phetchaburi, about 100 kilo-



Policemen with guns take positions on a street near the neighborhood of a gunman's house in Phetchaburi province

eters (60 miles) southwest of Bangkok, at around 3 p.m. (0800 GMT) on Wednesday, before police surrounded a house he was in.

The standoff ended early yesterday when armed po-

lice stormed the building and killed the gunman, who has not been named but was reported by local media to be a 29-year-old former national park official.

"We proceeded step by step,

starting with negotiation but he kept fighting back and shot others," Police Lt. Gen. Thanawut Wutjarasthamrong said. "He ran into his room (on the second floor). If we did not have shields, my men would have been shot."

Tornado hits southern California as wild weather continues



An aerial image shows a vehicle in flood waters following flooding in the Central Valley from a winter storm in Tulare County near Allensworth, California

A tornado tore through a southern California city, ripping roofs off buildings and throwing cars around, as the state's ongoing winter weather drama turned even wilder.

A swirling mass of wind -- of the kind usually seen in the Midwest -- raked the city of Montebello near Los Angeles, breaking windows and sending residents scurrying to safety.

"I was driving... and I saw this tornado in front of me and had to reverse out," one local business owner told broadcaster KTLA.

"The tornado took off the roof of the building. All the windows of the cars were shattered. Cars were destroyed, it was just a mess."

Footage showed what appeared to be roofing material circling above industrial buildings in the city, which lies just a few miles (kilometers) from downtown Los Angeles.

Aerial pictures in the aftermath showed holes in several roofs, pipes and installations twisted and broken, and cars seemingly pushed out of their parking bays.

"I saw cars just swiveling through the streets and it was just the craziest thing I've ever seen,"

YOU KNOW WHAT

The tornadoes came at the tail end of an intense storm that ripped through California, downing trees and knocking out power to hundreds of thousands of people as it dumped heavy rain and snow

The business owner said.

The National Weather Service said it was investigating the event, which it called "a weak tornado," and another in Carpinteria, near Santa Barbara.

"A weak, narrow tornado briefly touched down in the Sandpiper Village mobile home park in Carpinteria on the evening of Tuesday, March 21," the NWS said. "It damaged around 25 mobile home units and there was minor tree damage to the cemetery adjacent to the mobile home park."

India's Rahul Gandhi found guilty of defamation over Modi remark

AFP | New Delhi

An Indian court yesterday found opposition leader Rahul Gandhi guilty of defamation for a three-year-old campaign trail remark implying that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was a criminal.

Gandhi, the leading face of the opposition Congress party, was sentenced to two years imprisonment but immediately granted bail after his lawyers announced their intention to appeal.

The case stemmed from a remark made during the 2019 election campaign in which the 52-year-old had asked why "all thieves have Modi as (their) common surname".

His comments were seen as a slur against the prime minister, who went on to win the election in a landslide, and those sharing his surname.

Gandhi's lawyer B. M. Mangukia said his client had not meant to insult anyone.

"When the magistrate asked Gandhi what he had to say in his defence, the Congress leader said that he was fighting to expose corruption in the country," Mangukia told reporters outside the court.

"His comments were not meant to hurt or insult any community."

Gandhi is the son, grandson and great-grandson of a dynasty



Rahul Gandhi, his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and other Congress leaders stand during a public meeting amid heavy snowfall in Srinagar (file photo)

YOU KNOW WHAT

Rahul Gandhi is the son, grandson and great-grandson of a dynasty of former Indian prime ministers, beginning with independence leader Jawaharlal Nehru

if you are going to insult the entire Modi surname, this is completely defamatory. There was a proper hearing. He got an opportunity to present his side of things. The decision has been taken according to the due judicial process

RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD, LAWMAKER FOR BJP

of former Indian prime ministers, beginning with independence leader Jawaharlal Nehru. But the scion of India's most

famous political dynasty has struggled to challenge the electoral juggernaut of Modi and its nationalist appeals to the country's Hindu majority.

WHO warns of 'fake news' after Musk pandemic treaty tweet

AFP | Geneva

The World Health Organization yesterday warned against "fake news" after Twitter boss Elon Musk tweeted that countries should not "cede authority to WHO" amid negotiations over a new pandemic treaty.

"The claim that the accord will cede power to WHO is quite simply false. It's fake news. Countries will decide what the accord says," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a press conference.

Tedros did not mention Musk by name, but earlier yesterday he had also tweeted a response at the Twitter chief, insisting "countries aren't ceding sovereignty to WHO."

"The Pandemic Accord won't



Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

change that. The accord will help countries better guard against pandemics. It will help us to better protect people regardless of whether they live in countries that are rich or poor," he tweeted.

The exchange came as ne-

THE PANDEMIC ACCORD won't change that. The accord will help countries better guard against pandemics. It will help us to better protect people regardless of whether they live in countries that are rich or poor

TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS

gotiations proceed towards a global accord aimed at helping prevent and swiftly respond to future pandemics, with a final text expected to go to a vote among WHO member states in May 2024.

Man accused of attacks near UK mosques held in custody

AFP | London

A 28-year-old man was remanded in custody yesterday accused of attempting to murder two elderly men who were set on fire shortly after leaving mosques in the UK.

Mohammed Abbk, 28, from Edgbaston in Birmingham, central England, was placed in custody by the city's magistrates court following the attacks last month and earlier this week.

Police arrested him on Tuesday following an investigation also involving counter-terrorism police.

Abbk, originally from Sudan, will next appear at Birmingham



Police officers stand near a crime scene (file photo)

Crown Court on April 20.

His lawyer appeared in court via a video-link, but gave no indication of how his client will plead and made no bail application.

Abbk allegedly sprayed a substance on the two men outside or near mosques they

had attended and then set them alight, in west London on February 27 and Birmingham on Monday.

The victim in the attack in the British capital, 82-year-old Hashi Odowa, was treated for severe burns to his face and arms.

The perpetrator spoke to him before dousing him in what is believed to be petrol and setting him on fire, according to police.

In the Birmingham attack, Mohammed Rayaz, 70, was set on fire as he walked home from a mosque in Edgbaston on Monday evening.

He remains in hospital with severe injuries.

TOP 4 TWEETS 01 Humanity faces a difficult truth: climate change is making our planet uninhabitable. On #WorldMetDay & beyond, let's commit to live up to our responsibilities & ensure that future generations inherit a better tomorrow. It's time to end the relentless & senseless war on nature. @antonioguterres

02 R amadan Mubarak! I'm sending my warmest wishes to Muslims across the country and around the world who are marking the start of the holy month of Ramadan. May this time with your loved ones be blessed and peaceful. @JustinTrudeau

03 President Obama says: We're a nation that does what's hard, what's necessary, and what's right. That's the Affordable Care Act. And because of it -- today -- 40 million Americans have the peace of mind that comes with health coverage. @POTUS

04 Grateful to Iceland for recognizing the Holodomor of 1932-1933 as genocide of the Ukrainian people, for honoring the memory of millions of Ukrainians killed by the Moscow regime. It is a clear signal that such crimes do not go unpunished and do not have a statute of limitations. @ZelenskyyUA

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

celebs

Jennifer Aniston says Adam Sandler questions her relationship decisions: 'What's wrong with you?'

Fox | Los Angeles

Adam Sandler has not always been the biggest fan of Jennifer Aniston's past romances.

During Tuesday night's episode of "The Tonight Show," Aniston spoke to Jimmy Fallon about her decades long friendship with Sandler.

"[We've been friends for] over 30 years. We met at Jerry's Deli on Ventura Boulevard when we were 20 and 22," the actress said of Sandler.

Even though Aniston and Sandler are pretty close, the duo do not typically give each other advice. However, Sandler has shared his opinions of Aniston's past relationships.

"If I get anything from him, it's, 'What are you doing?'" usually based on someone I'm dating," Aniston shared before imitating Sandler yelling, "What are you doing? What's wrong with you?!"



Jennifer Aniston and Adam Sandler

The "Friends" star was previously married to Brad Pitt and Justin Theroux. Aniston has also dated John Mayer, Vince Vaughn and Tate Donovan.

Aniston was a guest on "Good

Morning America" on Tuesday and was joined by her "Murder Mystery 2" co-star.

Sandler and Aniston addressed rumors that there was competition with Drew Barry-

more on starring alongside the "Hustle" star.

"We want to do [a movie with] all three of us together and just put an end to this competition," Aniston shared.

Sandler chimed in, "There's no competition. Just two great ladies. That would be amazing doing a movie all together."

Both Barrymore and Aniston supported Sandler at the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor at the Kennedy Center on Sunday. During the ceremony, the actresses performed a skit where they both shared all the things Sandler has done for them over the years.

Aniston and Barrymore joked about doing a movie without Sandler.

"We should do that movie that you and I have been talking about," Aniston quipped, and Barrymore replied, "You mean the one where we don't need that goofy boyfriend?"

Sharon Stone dressed herself for first Oscars appearance

Celebretainment | Los Angeles

Sharon Stone had to wear a polyester jumpsuit to her first Academy Awards because no designer would lend her a dress.

The 'Basic Instinct' star was asked to present an award at the Oscars in 1992 just days after the iconic movie hit the big screen, and so as an unknown actress she wasn't given the same support as more famous names.

Appearing on iHeartRadio's 'Table for Two with Bruce Bozzi' podcast, she said: "All these people in their \$40,000 or \$50,000 dresses and I went and bought a Betsey Johnson polyester jumpsuit, because that was the best I could do."

"I'm doing my own hair and makeup and I was just like, 'Wow, this is awful. Like, how



Sharon Stone

am I going to do this, right?"

However, the 64-year-old star has recalled receiving high praise from the likes of Anthony Hopkins for her role in the film, which ended up being a breakthrough role.

She added: "When I walked by, he put his hands together and put them over his head like a champion and held them up to me when I passed him. I was like, 'Oh my God, he saw my movie.'"

CINEMA

BHEED
(PG-15) (HINDI/DRAMA) (NEW)
RAJKUMMAR RAO, BHUMI PEDNEKAR, DIA MIRZA
FROM FRI 24th
OASIS JUFFAIR: 12.00 + 2.30 + 8.30 + 11.00 PM
CITY CENTRE: 7.00 + 9.30 + 12.00 MN
SEEF (I): 12.30 + 3.00 + 9.00 + 11.30 PM
WADI AL SAIL: 8.00 + 10.30 PM

AYOTHI
(TAMIL) (NEW)
M. SASIKUMAR, PREETHI ASRANI, YASHPAL SHARMA
OASIS JUFFAIR: 1.45 + 11.15 PM
SEEF (I): 6.45 + 9.15 + 11.45 PM
AL HAMRA ON THURS 23rd: 12.00 + 2.30 + 9.00 + 12.00 MN
AL HAMRA FROM FRI 24th : 2.45 PM

VELLARIPATTANAM
(MALAYALAM) (NEW)
SOUBIN SHAHIR SHABAREESH VARMA K OTTAYAM RAMESH
FROM FRI 24th
OASIS JUFFAIR: 12.00 + 2.30 + 8.30 + 11.15 PM
SEEF (I): 1.30 + 9.00 + 11.45 PM
AL HAMRA : 12.00 + 9.00 + (12.00 MN FRI)

SHAZAM! FURY OF THE KINGS
(PG-15) (ACTION/ADVENTURE/COMEDY/FANTASY)
ZACHARY LEVI, HELEN MIRREN, LUCY LIU
OASIS JUFFAIR (ATMOS): 12.30 + 8.45 + 11.30 PM
OASIS JUFFAIR (VIP): 12.00 + 2.30 + 8.15 + 11.00 PM
CITY CENTRE: 1.30 + 7.00 + 9.45 PM + (12.30 MN THURS/FRI)

CITY CENTRE: (ATMOS) :1.00 + 9.15 + 12.00 MN
SEEF (I): 12.00 + 2.00 + 2.30 + 8.30 + 9.00 + 11.15 PM + 11.45 PM
WADI AL SAIL: 7.45 + 8.15 + 10.30 PM + 11.00 PM

CREED III
(PG-13) (DRAMA/SPORT) III
MICHAEL B. JORDAN, TESSA THOMPSON, JONATHAN MAJORS
OASIS JUFFAIR :12.30 + 8.15 PM
CITY CENTRE: 2.00 + 7.00 + 9.30 + 12.00 MN
SEEF (I): 12.15 + 2.45 + 8.30 + 11.00 PM
WADI AL SAIL: 6.45 + 9.00 + 11.30 PM

PLANE
(PG-15) (ACTION/THRILLER)
GERARD BUTLER, MIKE COLTER, YOSON AN
OASIS JUFFAIR :3.00 + 10.45 PM
CITY CENTRE: 12.45 + 3.00 + 7.30 + 9.45 + 12.00 MN
SEEF (I): 12.00 + 2.15 + 6.45 + 9.00 + 11.15 PM

OPERATION FORTUNE: RUSE DE
(PG-15) (ACTION/COMEDY/THRILLER)
JASON STATHAM, JOSH HARTNETT, AUBREY PLAZA
CITY CENTRE: 1.45 + 6.45 + 9.15 + 11.45 PM
SEEF (I) : 12.15 + 2.45 + 8.15 + 10.45 PM

65
(PG-13) (ACTION/ADVENTURE/DRAMA)
ADAM DRIVER, CHLOE COLEMAN, ARIANA GREENBLATT
CITY CENTRE: 3.00 + 10.00 PM
SEEF (I) : 1.15 + 3.15 + 7.15 + 9.15 + 11.15 PM

MRS. CHATTERJEE VS NORWAY
(PG-13)(HINDI/BIOGRAPHY/DRAMA)
RANI MUKERJI, NEENA GUPTA
CITY CENTRE: 12.30 + 2.45 + 7.15 + 9.30 + 11.45 PM
SEEF (II): 12.30 + 2.45 + 6.45 + 9.00 + 11.15 PM

OASIS JUFFAIR: 1.00 + 8.30 + 11.15 PM
SEEF (I): 12.00 + 2.30 + 8.00 + 10.45 PM
WADI AL SAIL: 10.30 PM

ROMANCHAM
(PG-13) (MALAYALAM)
SOUBIN SHAHIR, CHEMBAN VINOD JOSE, ARJUN ASOKAN
OASIS JUFFAIR: 2.00 + 7.30 + 10.15 PM
SEEF (I): 12.00 + 2.30 + 8.00 + 10.45 PM

DEMON SLAYER: KIMETSU NO YAIBA -
(PG-13) (JAPANESE/ANIMATION/ACTION/ADVENTURE/DRAMA/FANTASY)
ZACH AGUILAR, ABBY TROTT, ALEKS LE
SEEF (I): 12.15 + 2.30 + 7.00 + 9.15 + 11.30 PM
WADI AL SAIL: 8.45 + 11.00 PM

TU JHOOTHI MAIN MAKKAAR
(PG-15) (HINDI/ROMANTIC/COMEDY)
RANBIR KAPOOR, SHRADDHA KAPOOR
OASIS JUFFAIR: 1.30 + 8.00 + 11.15 PM
SEEF (II): 1.00 + 7.30 + 10.45 PM
WADI AL SAIL: 7.15 PM

NABIL EL GAMIL AKISAIE TAJMEEL
(PG-13) (ARABIC/COMEDY)
MOHAMMAD HENIDY, NOUR, MOHAMED SALLAM
CITY CENTRE: 12.30 + 2.45 + 7.15 + 9.30 + 11.45 PM
SEEF (II): 12.30 + 2.45 + 6.45 + 9.00 + 11.15 PM

EMERGENCY DECLARATION
(PG-15) (THRILLER/DRAMA)
SONG KANG-HO, LEE BYUNG-HUN, JEON DO-YEON
OASIS JUFFAIR: 8.15 PM.
SEEF (II): 1.45 + 7.45 + 10.45 PM

MAVKA: THE FOREST SONG
(PG) (ANIMATION/ADVENTURE/COMEDY)
NATALIYA SUMSKAYA, ELENA KRAVETS, NATALIYA DENISENKO
OASIS JUFFAIR:(KIDS CINEMA): 12.15 + 6.45 + 11.00 PM
SEEF (II): 12.45 + 2.45 PM

ANT-MAN AND THE WASP: QUANTUM
(PG-15) (ACTION/ADVENTURE/FANTASY)
PAUL RUDD, EVANGELINE LILLY, MICHAEL DOUGLAS
CITY CENTRE: 12.30 + 7.30 + 12.00 MN

PATHAAN
(PG-15) (HINDI/ACTION/THRILLER)
SHAH RUKH KHAN, DEEPIKA PADUKONE, JOHN ABRAHAM
OASIS JUFFAIR: 8.15 PM.
SEEF (II): 1.45 + 7.45 + 10.45 PM

MUMMIES
(PG) (ANIMATION/ADVENTURE/COMEDY)
SEAN BEAN, ELEANOR TOMLINSON, HUGH BONNEVILLE
SEEF (I) : 1.00 + 3.00 + 7.00 PM

PUSS IN BOOTS: THE LAST WISH
(PG) (ANIMATION/ACTION/ADVENTURE/COMEDY)
ANTONIO BANDERAS, SALMA HAYEK, OLIVIA COLMAN
OASIS JUFFAIR:(KIDS CINEMA): 2.15 + 8.45 PM
CITY CENTRE: 12.15 + 2.30 PM
WADI AL SAIL: 6.45 PM

AVYON
(PG) (ANIMATION/ADVENTURE/COMEDY)
ANTONIO BANDERAS, SALMA HAYEK, OLIVIA COLMAN
OASIS JUFFAIR:(KIDS CINEMA): 2.15 + 8.45 PM
CITY CENTRE: 12.15 + 2.30 PM
WADI AL SAIL: 6.45 PM

MAVKA: THE FOREST SONG
(PG) (ANIMATION/ADVENTURE/COMEDY)
NATALIYA SUMSKAYA, ELENA KRAVETS, NATALIYA DENISENKO
OASIS JUFFAIR:(KIDS CINEMA): 12.15 + 6.45 + 11.00 PM
SEEF (II): 12.45 + 2.45 PM

Priyanka Chopra: Nick is my biggest champion!



Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas
Celebretainment | Los Angeles

Priyanka Chopra says her husband Nick Jonas is her "biggest champion."

The 40-year-old actress has been married to former Disney Channel star Nick, 30, since 2018 and has 14-month-old daughter Malti Marie with him and explained how they are both each other's biggest support in life.

Speaking at the South Asian Excellence after the Oscars event in Los Angeles, she said: "My husband is my greatest champion and he's half Indian,

as you will see when the music starts, but he's just such a supporter of me. He finished his shoot, came directly all jazzed up, and ready to be here by my side. And, you know, he champions me and reminds me when I forget."

The 'Quantico' star went on to add that having the combined support of her family and Nick's is the "only way" she could pursue a career in showbusiness she noted that she had "never" seen a room full of so many people who looked like her as she spoke at the Hollywood event.

SUDOKU

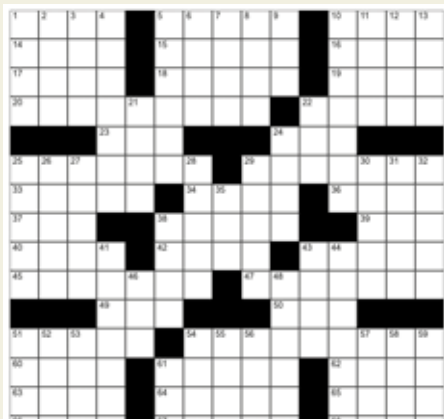
		4	6	5	2			9
		5						6
6			3	9				1
4	9		1					
	7		2	4	6			8
					8			3
	4			6	3			
								1
7							6	
8		5	2	9	7			

Yesterday's solution

7	1	5	9	3	4	6	2	8
3	2	8	6	5	7	9	4	1
6	9	4	2	1	8	5	3	7
5	6	3	7	8	2	4	1	9
2	7	9	3	4	1	8	5	6
8	4	1	5	9	6	3	7	2
4	3	6	1	7	9	2	8	5
9	8	7	4	2	5	1	6	3
1	5	2	8	6	3	7	9	4

How to play
Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

CROSSWORD



Across

1- Friendly; 5- Theme; 10- Rime; 14- Zeno's home; 15- ___ Gay; 16- Woody's son; 17- Sponsorship; 18- Silvery fish; 19- Require; 20- Long drawers with fancy trimming; 22- Leers at; 23- Mound; 24- Male sheep who may play football for St Louis; 25- Large, striped female feline; 29- A chewy candy; 33- Follows orders; 34- General ___ chicken; 36- American space agency; 37- Sugar suffix; 38- Author of fables; 39- The racer's edge; 40- Discounted by; 42- Actress Russo; 43- Healing plants; 45- Scooped; 47- Protection; 49- Penlight battery; 50- Joplin tune; 51- Inflated; 54- Algebraic; 60- Gutter site; 61- Column style; 62- ___ Raton; 63- French friend; 64- It's a plus; 65- Permits; 66- Comic Fox; 67- Noodles; 68- Actress McClurg;

Down

1- Read 'em and ___; 2- Pond organism; 3- Bridle strap; 4- Expert skill; 5- Magnetic induction units; 6- Treater's words; 7- Ovid, e.g.; 8- Evils; 9- Feline; 10- Executioner; 11- Hurler Hershiser; 12- Away from the wind; 13- Fishing gear; 21- War god; 22- Paddle; 24- Coarse file, angry tone of voice; 25- Implements; 26- Norwegian dramatist; 27- Farm layers; 28- War horse; 29- Whispered sweet nothings; 30- Person who dresses stones; 31- Adlai's running mate; 32- Pass into disuse; 35- Nine-digit ID; 38- Carpenter's measurement; 41- Kelp; 43- From a distance; 44- Readable; 46- Hurried; 48- Establishes; 51- Tolerate; 52- Gammy; 53- "Ars Amatoria" poet; 54- Centrepiece of the human face; 55- Bear up there; 56- Appearance; 57- Like some dorms; 58- Broadway opening; 59- Emit coherent light; 61- Apply lightly;

Yesterday's solution

O	T	T	E	R	E	N	S	U	E	T	E	L
L	O	O	S	E	V	E	I	N	Y	A	M	A
D	E	N	S	E	I	S	S	E	C	I	D	
P	I	A	N	I	S	T	S	W	E	E	T	E
U	N	D	O	N	E	A	T	E	A	R		
S	L	A	N	G	C	L	E	A	R	A	N	C
H	E	P	A	R	O	A	R	T	I	R	A	
Y	T	T	E	R	B	I	U	M	D	E	G	A
C	A	S	A	B	A	S	S	N	E	E	R	E
O	R	A	L	B	I	H	O	P				
A	M	P	E	L	I	D	E	E	V	E	R	T
S	O	P	R	E	L	E	E	S	I	R	E	N
T	R	Y	Y	U	K	O	N	T	A	R	O	T

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Man Utd owners await revised offers for Premier League giants



A general view outside Old Trafford stadium

AFP | London

Manchester United's owners were yesterday awaiting fresh bids from a Qatari banker and British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe after the deadline passed for revised offers to buy the Premier League giants.

Reports said bidders were initially told they had until 2100 GMT on Wednesday to submit new bids, but that has now been extended.

It is unclear when the new cut-off will be.

Sheikh Jassim Bin Hamad Al Thani, the chairman of Qatar Islamic Bank, and Ratcliffe, the founder of chemicals giant INEOS, are the only bidders who have gone public with their intentions.

A first round of bidding took place last month and it has been reported there are as many as eight separate potential investors for the club owned by the American Glazer family, who are deeply unpopular with United supporters.

The BBC said several other proposed investors made their submissions by the Wednesday deadline.

No figures have been revealed but one or more of the initial bids was understood to be in the region of £4.5 billion (\$5.5 billion).

That would make Manchester United -- who have



No figures have been revealed but one or more of the initial bids was understood to be in the region of £4.5 billion (\$5.5 billion)

not won the Premier League for a decade -- the most expensive sports club in history, although it would be short of the £6 billion valuation reportedly placed on United by the Glazers.

United's owners announced in November they were conducting a strategic review, with the sale of the club one option being considered.

Sheikh Jassim is bidding for 100 percent control, aiming to return the club to its "former glories".

A source close to Sheikh Jassim's bid told AFP he remains confident his bid is "the best for the club, fans and local community".

INEOS chemical company founder Ratcliffe, a boyhood United fan, wants to buy the combined Glazer shareholding of 69 percent of the 20-time English champions.

New-look Pakistan bracing for competitive T20I series with Afghanistan

● Shadab replaced Babar for the series as skipper

AFP | Karachi

Pakistan skipper Shadab Khan vowed his new-look side will put up a good fight against a formidable Afghanistan side in the three-match Twenty20 International series starting in Sharjah on Friday.

Shadab replaced Babar Azam for the series as Pakistan decided to rest their regular skipper along with seniors Mo-hammad Rizwan, Fakhar Zaman, Shaheen Shah Afridi and Haris Rauf.

Instead, Pakistan have drafted in top performers from its domestic T20 league -- the Pakistan Super League (PSL).

"It is a great honour for me to be leading Pakistan," Shadab said yesterday. "As a player this is the highest you can go in your career."

"I am very excited for the upcoming three T20Is. We have a brilliant mix of youth and experience, which makes us a well-balanced side, and we have what it takes to win this series."

Shadab previously led Pakistan in a three-match T20I series in New Zealand when Azam was injured, losing 2-1.



Afghanistan captain Mohammad Asghar plays a shot during the ODI Asia Cup cricket match between Pakistan and Afghanistan

"I am very excited for the upcoming three T20Is. We have a brilliant mix of youth and experience, which makes us a well-balanced side, and we have what it takes to win this series"

SHADAB KHAN

Batters Saim Ayub and Tayyab Tahir, and fast bowlers Ihsanullah and Zaman Khan are all uncapped while Imad Wasim, Faheem Ashraf, Azam Khan and Abdullah Shafique have earned

recalls. Afghanistan have also recalled former skipper Mohammad Nabi after leaving him out of the three-match T20 series against United Arab Emirates that they won 2-1 last month.

Wily leg-spinner Rashid Khan will lead the Afghanistan side, having replaced Nabi last year.

Shadab said Afghanistan were a dangerous side "and they have some good T20 players in their side but I am very confident with the players that I have in my squad."

Pakistan have beaten Afghanistan in all three previous T20Is -- a one-off match in 2013 in Sharjah, T20 World Cup 2021 and Asia Cup last year.

Pakistan agreed to play the se-

YOU KNOW WHAT

Shadab previously led Pakistan in a three-match T20I series in New Zealand when Azam was injured, losing 2-1

ries, the first bilateral between the two countries, in place of three one-day internationals that Afghanistan were supposed to play against Australia this month.

Cricket Australia pulled out of that series following an announcement from Afghanistan's ruling Taliban that it was banning university education for girls and not forming a women's cricket team.

Afghanistan Cricket Board chief executive Khan hoped fans will enjoy a good series.

"Both nations have passionate fans who support their teams with enthusiasm and pride," said Naseeb.

"As neighbours, we have a special bond and we hope to showcase not only our cricketing skills but also the spirit of friendship and sportsmanship."

Madhevere hat-trick sets up dramatic Zimbabwe win

AFP | London

Wessly Madhevere took a hat-trick and set up a dramatic finish as Zimbabwe beat Netherlands by one run in the second of three World Cup Super League one-day internationals in Harare yesterday.

It went down to the last ball when last man Ryan Klein was run out attempting a near-impossible third run which would have tied the match.

The Netherlands were seemingly cruising in pursuit of Zimbabwe's 271 all out at 213 for



Wessley Madhevere in action

four before off-spinner Madhevere dismissed Colin Ackermann, Teja Nidamanuru and Paul van Meekeren off the first three balls of the 44th over.

Netherlands captain Scott Edwards hit 36 but his team's hopes seemed over when he fell to off-spinner Sikandar Raza with 20 runs still needed off nine balls.

It came down to 10 needed off the last two balls.

Fred Klaassen hit a six off Tendai Chatara and then drove the last ball into the covers. The batsmen ran two but Brad Ev-

ans' throw to Chatara left Klein well short of his ground.

Max O'Dowd (81) and Tom Cooper (74) laid the foundation for what seemed a likely Netherlands win with a second-wicket partnership of 125 off 152 balls.

Sean Williams, returning after a finger injury, top-scored for Zimbabwe with 77 while 19-year-old leg-spinner Shariz Ahmad took five wickets for 43 runs for the Netherlands.

The series decider will be played at the same venue on Saturday.

Bahrain Turf Series prize boost!

Jamie Osborne, David O'Meara-trained horses claim £50,000 Bahrain Turf Series bonus

● **European-trained horses return home with £303,800 of total £650,000 prize money on offer**

TDT | Manama

Two British-trained horses have each won £25,000 after the conclusion of the second edition of the Bahrain Turf Series.

The Bahrain Turf Series, which consists of 10 races run between December and February, saw 20 European horses compete against locally trained horses for £600,000 in prize money and £50,000 of bonuses.

Of the total £650,000 prize money on offer, European-trained horses returned home with £303,800 after winning five of the 10 series races.

Following the disqualification of Hesham Al Haddad-trained racehorses from two Bahrain Turf Series racedays on December 30 and January 13, Inigo Jones has been promoted to the top of the middle distance 'Pot



Action from the Bahrain Turf Series

B', off the back of his first place finish in The Dana Cup and third place finish behind Goemon in The Vision 2030 Cup.

Inigo Jones's owner Gary Allsopp Partnership has been awarded £15,000 and his trainer Jamie Osborne £10,000. In a British clean sweep, Nomadic Empire, who won the opening sprint race of the 2022/23 Turf

Series and finished third in two further races, came out on top in 'Pot A' giving his trainer David O'Meara £10,000 and his owner Al Mohamediya Racing £15,000.

From the Bahrain Turf Series fixture on December 30, The Covex Kid and Mobaadel also were disqualified for the same prohibited substance. As a result, all five horses have been disqualified and the results of the respective races have been

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The Bahrain Turf Series has been a great success once again. We will be back next year, we're committed to Bahrain. Our owners have committed to it. We've had three horses here this year, if we came back with six or seven next year that would be absolutely wonderful

GEORGE BAKER

amended accordingly. Lucander was the undoubted international star performer from the class of 2022/23. Bought for £60,000 in October 2022 and expertly trained by George Baker, he scooped £116,044 in prize money throughout the Bahraini season for owners Nigel Jones and Paul Bowden.

Lucander stormed to success in the opening Bahrain Turf Series race, The Muharraq Cup. He then finished fourth behind Tawaareq in The Adiyat Cup before stepping up in class to finish fourth in the Listed Crown

Bahrain Turf Series 2022/23 winners

(in order of race, horse, trainer, jockey)

Al Muharraq Cup, Lucander (IRE), George Baker, Pat Cosgrave

Al Manama Cup, Nomadic Empire (IRE), David O'Meara, Neil Callan

Al Riffa Cup, Dark Shadow (IRE), Osama Hashim, Hector Crouch

Al Dana Cup, Inigo Jones (GB), Jamie Osborne, Saffie Osborne

Al Adiyat Cup, Tawaareq (IRE), Hesham Al Haddad, Stephane Ladjadi

Al Wasmiya Cup, Get It (GB), George Baker, Andrea Atzeni

Anchorman Cup, King Of Conquest (GB), Charlie Appleby, Richard Mullen

Hawar Cup, Deep Intrigue (GB), Hesham Al Haddad, Anas bin Salim Al Siyabi

Al Sakhir Cup, Devaste (GB), Hesham Al Haddad, Neil Callan

Vision 2030 Cup, Goemon (GB) Haider Ebrahim, Andrea Atzeni

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Prince's Cup. His final appearance of the Bahraini season was a career best as he demolished a strong field, which included last year's King's Cup winner Zagato, to win by 2 3/4-lengths and scoop a lucrative prize.

George Baker said: "The Bahrain Turf Series has been a great success once again. We will be back next year, we're committed to Bahrain. Our owners have committed to it. We've had three horses here this year, if we came back with six or seven next year that would be absolutely wonderful."

Blow for British as Raducanu, Murray crash out in Miami

AFP | Miami

Canada's Bianca Andreescu won a first-round battle of former US Open champions, defeating Britain's Emma Raducanu 6-3, 3-6, 6-2 on Wednesday to advance to the second round of the Miami Open.

There was further bad news for Britain with two-time Miami winner Andy Murray crashing out in the first round after a 6-4, 7-5 loss to Serbia's Dusan Lajovic.

Andreescu and Raducanu,



Bianca Andreescu shakes hands at the net after her three set victory against Emma Raducanu

both born near Toronto and both of whom won the US Open as teenagers, battled for 2.5 hours in an entertaining opening to the WTA and ATP combined tournament's main draw.

Andreescu, ranked 31st in the world, struck the ball with confidence and freedom as she dominated the first set, but Ra-

ducanu regrouped and fought back in the second.

The 2021 US Open winner went 5-3 up in the set after an epic game which she secured with her seventh break point and went on to force a third set.

But Andreescu's power proved to be too much for the tiring Raducanu, who had

shown promising signs of an upturn in form by reaching the last 16 at Indian Wells.

"I thought it was a very good match from both sides. I think Emma played really well. I think the key for me was just sticking with it, fighting as much as I could," said Andreescu, who struck seven aces.



Andreescu, who retired with a shoulder injury during her semi-final match at the Thailand Open in February, is still looking for her first title since the 2019 US Open

World Athletics doping ban on Russia lifted, but Russians still suspended



Russian flags are seen above the podium during an athletics meet (file photo)

AFP | London

World Athletics yesterday lifted the ban on the Russian track and field federation for state-sponsored doping although its athletes remain barred from competition while Moscow's invasion of Ukraine continues.

The Russian federation (RusAF) was banned in 2015 after a damning World Anti-Doping Agency report identified "a deeply-rooted culture of doping".

For the athletics superpower to return to the fold, it had to meet a series of strict conditions including establishing a culture of zero tolerance and an effective anti-doping structure.

Just a handful of Russian athletes took part in track and field at the Tokyo Olympics, which were postponed from 2020 to 2021 because of the Covid pandemic, and they did so under a neutral flag.

A lifting of sanctions over the doping issue will have little immediate effect, however, as all Russian and Belarusian athletes have been banned from competition "for the foreseeable future" since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. That includes



RusAF will, however, be required to comply with a set of 35 "special conditions" that are intended to ensure that RusAF's anti-doping reforms remain in place and continue to operate effectively

the option of competing as a neutral.

The decision was announced after a three-day meeting of World Athletics' decision-making Council in Monaco.

"The Council approved the Russia Taskforce's recommendation that RusAF, which has been suspended for seven years due to doping, be reinstated after meeting all the requirements of the Reinstatement plan, which has been confirmed by an independent audit," the head of the anti-doping Taskforce, Rune Andersen, said.

Spain had 'no plan B' under ex-coach Enrique, says Aspas

AFP | Madrid

Spain striker Iago Aspas said yesterday that former coach Luis Enrique had "no plan B" which led to them being knocked out of last year's World Cup last 16.

Enrique was sacked after Spain lost on penalties to Morocco in December.

"Luis Enrique had a very clear game plan, when plan A didn't work, there was no plan B or others for the players to try and change things," Celta Vigo's Aspas told reporters.

"I was impatiently waiting for Spain to score," the 35-year-old added.



Celta Vigo's Spanish forward Iago Aspas reacts during a match (file photo)

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Luis Enrique had a very clear game plan, when plan A didn't work, there was no plan B or others for the players to try and change things. I was impatiently waiting for Spain to score

IAGO ASPAS

La Rioja, under new boss Luis de la Fuente, starts their Euro 2024 qualifying campaign on Saturday by hosting Norway.

They also face Scotland, Georgia and Cyprus in the group.

UEFA launch probe into Barcelona refereeing scandal



A general view of the inside of the Camp Nou stadium

AFP | Barcelona

European football's governing body UEFA said yesterday it was launching an investigation into claims Barcelona paid for favourable refereeing decisions.

UEFA said its ethics and disciplinary inspectors would probe "a potential violation of UEFA's legal framework by FC Barcelona in connection with the so-called 'Caso Negreira'", referring to the Spanish league's former refereeing chief Jose Maria Enriquez Negreira.

Barcelona have already been charged with corruption by Spanish prosecutors for payments between 2001 and 2018 to a company owned by Negreira, totalling around 7.3 million euros (\$7.95 million).

The club say they were paying for reports and advice on refereeing but prosecutors have accused the club of seeking to gain favourable decision-making from officials.

Charges were filed earlier this month against the club, Negreira and two former Barcelona presidents, Sandro Rosell and Josep Maria Bar-

YOU
KNOW WHAT

Barcelona have already been charged with corruption by Spanish prosecutors for payments between 2001 and 2018 to a company owned by Negreira, totalling around 7.3 million euros (\$7.95 million)

toeu, among others.

Negreira, a former referee, was the vice president of the refereeing committee of the Spanish football federation between 1994 and 2018.

The investigation began after Spain's tax authorities identified irregularities in tax payments made between 2016 and 2018 by the company Dasnil 95, owned by Negreira.

Dasnil 95 reportedly received payments from Barcelona between those years.

Bahrain teams set for international friendlies

Senior men's football team and under-23 Olympic team in action in coming week

● Senior men's team to take on Palestine tomorrow and then face off with Syria on Tuesday

● Olympic side will be facing Estonia tonight and then again on Sunday

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's senior men's national football team and under-23 Olympic team are both set to play a pair of international friendly matches over the next week at home.

The senior men are first set to take on Palestine on Saturday and then face off with Syria on Tuesday. Meanwhile, the Olympic side will be facing Estonia tonight and then again on Sunday.

The matches are scheduled for 9.30pm kick-off.

Both teams have begun their local training gatherings in preparation for their tune-up games. The seniors are being supervised by national team head coach Helio Sousa, while the Olympic team are practising under head coach Dario Basic.

The senior team friendlies be their first international games since competing in the 25th Arab Gulf Cup in Iraq in January.



National team midfielder Ali Haram in action during training



Olympic team coach Dario Basic during his team's practice session



Senior men's national team using friendly matches to prepare for upcoming competitions, including the 2023 AFC Asian Cup next January

They are using the matches to prepare for their upcoming competitions, including the 2023 AFC Asian Cup, to be held in Doha. The tournament was originally scheduled to take

place this summer, but has been rescheduled to January of next year.

Bahrain are one of 24 teams who have qualified for the Asian Cup. The draw for the preliminary round has yet to be held by the AFC.

Bahrain's friendlies with Palestine and Syria have emerged after the national team withdrew from the West Asian Football federation (WAFF) Championship, which was supposed to be held in March.

Sousa has called up a 25-player squad for their upcoming friendly games. The roster includes Ali Madan from Ajman in the UAE and Mohammed Jassim Marhoon from Kuwait SC in Kuwait; Ali Haram, Sayed Hashim Issa, Jassim Al Shaikh and Koma Al Aswad from defending Bahrain league champions Riffa;

and Ahmed Bughammar, Mahdi Humaidan, Mohammed Adel, Mohammed Hardan and Sayed Dhiya Saeed from Al Khaldiya.

From Manama are Ahmed Nabeel, Ammar Abbas, Ebrahim Al Khattal, Mahdi Abduljabbar and Mahdi Abdullatif; while from Muharraq are Abdulla Al Khalasi, Amine Hasan, Hamza Juban, Waleed Al Hayyam and veteran goalkeeper Sayed Mohammed Jaafar.

Abbas Fadhel and Ebrahim Al Luthfallah have been called up from Al Ahli, while completing the squad list are Omar Salem from Budaiya and Hussein Al Abdulla from Shabab.

Meanwhile, the Olympic team are using the friendlies to help prepare for their qualifiers to the AFC U23 Asian Cup 2024, which are set to take place later this year.

Bangladesh thrash dismal Ireland by 10 wickets to win series 2-0

AFP | London

Liton Das and Tamim Iqbal breezed past Ireland's dismal 101-run total in less than 14 overs for Bangladesh's first-ever 10-wicket win, sealing a 2-0 series victory during yesterday's final one-day-international in Sylhet.

Liton was unbeaten on 50 alongside Tamim with 41, both untroubled by an Irish bowling attack that served up 10 wides and a leg bye.

Pacer Hasan Mahmud claimed his maiden five-wicket ODI haul while conceding only 32 runs after the tourists elected to bat first.



The way we played the whole series was very nice. Now I can proudly say we have a solid, solid, solid fast-bowling department. We need to keep believing in our players, there will be ups and downs but we have the unit to be the best in the world

TAMIM IQBAL



Tamim Iqbal and Litton Das celebrate the winning moment

Taskin Ahmed and Ebadot Hossain also shone with the ball to claim 3-26 and 2-29 respectively, with Ireland recording the lowest one-day score against Bangladesh.

"The way we played the whole series was very nice. Now I can proudly say we have a solid, solid, solid fast-bowling department," said skipper Tamim,

according to Cricinfo.

"We need to keep believing in our players, there will be ups and downs but we have the unit to be the best in the world," he said.

"The wicket was very good, the way we chased down with authority was a message."

Curtis Campher top-scored with 36, while Lorcan Tucker

made 28 after surviving a golden duck when Liton dropped his catch at slip.

"We're very disappointed. Don't think the cricket over the past three days reflects the type of cricket we've played in the last 2-3 years," said Ireland captain Andy Balbirnie.

"We did expect spin to play a big part, but our defence with the bat wasn't good enough. We did not adapt well enough."

Hasan struck in his opening spell to leave Ireland tottering at 22-3 in the ninth over.



The drubbing was Bangladesh's first 10-wicket win in any format, with the hosts smashing records in each match. Saturday's opener marked their biggest ODI victory margin

Dutch lose Gakpo, De Ligt and others for France clash due to virus



Netherlands' Cody Gakpo and Leandro Paredes fall during a match (file photo)

AFP | Paris

Liverpool forward Cody Gakpo, Bayern Munich defender Matthijs de Ligt and three other Netherlands players have a virus and will miss the Euro 2024 qualifier against France, the Dutch federation said yesterday.

The Netherlands were already without Barcelona playmaker Frenkie de Jong and winger Steven Bergwijn due to injuries for the match against

the World Cup finalists at the Stade de France on Friday.

They will now also have to do without 23-year-old Gakpo, who has netted four Premier League goals since joining Liverpool in January from PSV Eindhoven after he shone at the World Cup for the Dutch.

Gakpo, De Ligt, Newcastle United's Sven Botman, Anderlecht goalkeeper Bart Verbruggen and Joey Veerman from PSV Eindhoven all had to leave the Dutch training camp.