

'Disgruntled' Parks steps away from PBA season

11 **SPORTS**

BUSINESS

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Takaful Q1 profit jumps 30% on funds' growth, strategies



Public Awareness Campaign to Combat Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Preventative measures reduce the spread of COVID-19



Two rockets fired at US airbase in Iraq Baghdad

The Iraqi army said two rockets were fired yesterday at a base hosting Americans, in the third such attack in three days and as a US government delegation is visiting the country.

The two rockets fell on an unoccupied segment of the Ayn al Asad air base, "without causing damage or casualties," the army said.

The latest rocket attack follows one against an air base at Baghdad airport housing US-led coalition troops on Sunday night, and another against Balad air base, which hosts US contractors, north of the capital on Monday night.



Work as one team: HRH Prince Salman



Public Awareness Campaign to Combat Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Last update - 9:00 pm
4 May 2021

Individuals vaccinated

(First dose)

7 4 7 4 0 9

(Second dose)

5 5 4 3 6 4

Heavy flooding in Yemen kills five Al-Mukalla, Yemen

Heavy flooding in south-east Yemen has left five people dead and hundreds homeless as the war-torn country battles a new wave of coronavirus.

Most of the deaths occurred on Sunday in the southeastern province of Hadramout, where heavy rains triggered flash floods that killed five people, injured two and destroyed at least 10 houses in Tarim's Aeed district.

BAHRAIN COVID-19

ACTIVE CASES

11366

DEATHS

662

DISCHARGED

169852

NEW CASES

1414

CRITICAL

101

210 fils (includes VAT)



Threat to regional security

Gulf countries condemn continued Houthi drone and missile attacks on Saudi Arabia

Bahrain expresses solidarity with Kingdom

Dubai

Gulf countries have condemned Houthis' continued launching of drones and ballistic missiles towards Saudi Arabia.

Bahrain further expressed its solidarity with the Kingdom against anything that would target its security and safety.

Saudi Arabia's defense forces intercepted a ballistic missile and two Houthi explosive

drones targeting the southern city of Najran, the Arab Coalition reported.

The UAE's foreign ministry said the continuation of these extremist attacks reflects the militia's disregard for all international laws and norms.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's foreign ministry said the attacks pose a threat to the security of the Kingdom and the region.

The Council of the Arab Ministers of Interior called for holding the Iranian-backed militia accountable, as it exceeded all religious, humanitarian and ethical limits and values, during the Holy Month of Ramadan.



Coalition forces foil missile and drone attack by Houthi militants

Set for divorce

Bill and Melinda Gates agree to split over \$130 billion of assets

New York

After 27 years of their marriage, Bill Gates and Melinda Gates have filed for a divorce, saying in a court filing that "this marriage is irretrievably broken".

The billionaire benefactors who are co-founders of one of the world's largest private charitable foundations, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, said they have come to an agreement on how to



Gates couple ... marriage is irretrievably broken

split their assets. In their divorce petition, the couple asked the court to divide their communal property, business interests and liabilities as set forth in their separation contract.

As per Forbes, the Microsoft co-founder is fourth on the list of the world's richest individuals with a net worth of \$130.5 billion. However, the net worth of Melinda Gates, who founded Pivotal Ventures, an investment company fo-

cused on women and families in 2015, is not clear. She has also authored a book.

Besides, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation had net assets of \$43.3 billion at the end of 2019. Last year, the foundation said it would spend \$300 million on treatment, detection and vaccines to fight the coronavirus pandemic.

From 1994 through 2018, the couple gifted more than \$36 billion to the Seattle-based foundation.

HM the King receives governors and citizens on Ramadan's last 10 days

TDT | Manama

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa yesterday met remotely, at Al Safriya Palace, Southern Governor His Highness Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, Muharraq Governor Salman bin Isa bin Hindi Al Mannai, Capital Governor Shaikh Hesham bin Abdulrahman Al Khalifa and Northern Governor Ali Abdul Hussein Al Asfoor.

HM the King also met remotely citizens from the four governorates, marking the last 10 days of Holy Month of Ramadan, as part of HM the King's meetings with leading Bahraini personalities.

HM the King delivered a speech on this occasion, congratulating the audience and all the people of Bahrain on the holy month of Ramadan and the last 10 days of fasting, wishing Bahrain and its loyal people, the Arab and Islamic nations many happy returns.

He expressed delight at meeting the audience during these blessed days of Ramadan, taking pride in Bahraini longstanding traditions which mark the holy month and embody the noble Islamic values.

He praised the loyal people of Bahrain, expressing delight at their congratulations and good wishes marking the Holy Month of Ramadan.

He commended their keenness on reviving longstanding traditions during this blessed month of fasting despite these



HM the King

challenges times.

HM the King prayed to Allah the Almighty to lift the pandemic, bless the infected people with speedy recovery and the deceased with mercy in vast paradise and protect Bahrain and all countries in the world from any harm. HM the King extended greetings to all loyal citizens countrywide, appreciating their dedication to their families, homeland and nation.

Southern Governor HH Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali bin Khalifa Al Khalifa congratulated HM the King on the last 10 days of the Holy month of Ramadan, reiterating full allegiance to HM the King and the homeland.

He praised HM the King's sound directives, lauding the vision and support of the Government, chaired by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister.

Oil and gas sector investments discussed

● HH Shaikh Nasser receives Oil Minister, ASRY Chief Executive

TDT | Manama

Representative of His Majesty the King for Humanitarian Work and Youth Affairs and Board Chairman of the Oil and Gas Holding Company (Nogaholding), His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, received Oil Minister Shaikh Mohammed bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, and Arab Shipbuilding and Repair Yard Company (ASRY) Chief Executive Mazen Matar.

HH Shaikh Nasser expressed appreciation of the remarkable efforts of ASRY in promoting investments in the oil and gas sector, in line with the visions of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and the aspi-

rations of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister.

HH Shaikh Nasser affirmed the importance of boosting the role of the oil and gas sector in supporting the national economy, in line with the kingdom's Economic Vision 2030.

He said the efforts of ASRY company will maximise achievements in the two vital sectors.

He discussed with the Oil Minister and ASRY Chief Executive various economic and investment issues pertaining to the oil and gas field. He was also briefed about ASRY's plans and programmes to further develop the two sectors.

Matar expressed thanks and appreciation to HH Shaikh Nasser for his efforts to upgrade the oil and gas sector and enhance the economic momentum, wishing him every success.

● It reflects Interior Ministry's transparency and openness

TDT | Manama

The Shura Council's Human Rights Committee, chaired

by Ahmed Mahdi Al Haddad, has praised the positive outcome of the visit made by several Ambassadors to Bahrain to the Reformation and Rehabilitation Centre in Jau upon an invitation from the Ministry of Interior.

The Interior Ministry's initiative consolidates the principles of transparency and openness to which it is committed while

enforcing the law, implementing approved human rights standards, and providing great care and attention to inmates in the Centre, in addition to providing them with protection, and preserving their health and safety within the national measures to address Coronavirus (COVID-19), the committee said in a statement.

The committee indicated that the visit reflects the landmark achievements attained by the kingdom in developing the human rights system and delivering advanced services and programmes to inmates.

The panel pointed out that the visit to the centre is not the first of its kind, noting that many independent human rights or-

ganisations are keen to monitor the reformation and rehabilitation centres, in cooperation with the relevant authorities, as well as meet inmates to make sure that they enjoy their rights and basic needs, in accordance with the law.

The Shura committee lauded the health care and treatment services provided by the General

Direktorate of Reformation and Rehabilitation to all inmates, citing its pioneering initiative to provide vaccines against COVID-19 for all inmates wishing to take them.

The panel added that the tremendous efforts exerted by the Interior Ministry embody its commitment to carrying out its national duty.

'Work as one team'

HRH Prince Salman calls on newly appointed officials to continue process of developing government agencies

TDT | Manama

His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, yesterday met remotely with a number of newly appointed officials.

HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister said that developing government agencies is an ongoing process to ensure citizens continue to receive quality services.

His Royal Highness commended Bahraini citizens' excellence, adding that their aspirations and passion for suc-

cess, as well as their endurance in meeting challenges, are unmatched.

He emphasised the importance of continuing to work as one team, in support of the government's strategic plans and achieving the Kingdom's comprehensive development goals, led by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

His Royal Highness congratulated the recently appointed officials, wishing them success in their new positions serving the Kingdom and its citizens.

His Royal Highness noted that achievements are a meas-



HRH Prince Salman

ure of success, expressing his confidence in Bahraini citizens' ability to drive creativity and

excellence in the implementation of government plans, programmes and projects directed for the benefit of the Kingdom and its citizens.

The newly appointed government officials expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to meet His Royal Highness, and expressed their pride in being appointed by Royal Order to their positions.

The officials further noted His Royal Highness's continued support for the Kingdom's workforce, and for his continued commitment to further develop government workstreams.

Protecting worker's financial rights

● BFC Payments offers easy Employee Salary Account Opening compliant with Wage Protection System

TDT | Manama

The Kingdom of Bahrain has launched Wage Protection System (WPS) along with the collaborative effort of the Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA) and Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB).

WPS will require employers to pay their employees through any medium facilitated by entities licensed by the CBB, protecting worker's financial rights which are governed by their contracts of employment. WPS is to be implemented as a three-phase programme with the first phase having commenced on 1 May.

BFC Payments, the Fintech arm of BFC Group, delivers digital payments services for Corporates, SMEs, Proprietors and Consumers. BFC Payments offers Salary Accounts for the workers to receive their salary and manage the salary using a mobile app.

The service provided by BFC Payments ensures WPS compliance for the corporates who disburse the salary through our straightforward process. The product will also help to boost the digital financial inclusion to the underserved and unbanked segment in the Kingdom.

Davis D Parakal, Head of Business Development, Strategic Partnerships and Innovation of BFC Payments said: "We are proud to be part of the LMRA's wage protection system. It ensures the timely transfer of wages to workers and at the same time brings simplicity and



A timely digital transfer of wages for workers



BFC Payments, the Fintech arm of BFC Group, delivers digital payments services for Corporates, SMEs, Proprietors and Consumers.

transparency to businesses.

"Currently our systems are WPS compliant and are processing salaries for multiple enterprises in the Kingdom. Our fast account opening process for businesses along with mobile wallet and cards for the workers make it a unique proposition in this market."

BFC Payments offers a mobile wallet that considerably reduces the customer dependency on cash, welcoming them to the mobile payment's ecosystem in the country. BFC Payments App also enables users to remit money back home at great rates quickly, safely and conveniently.

The App can be downloaded

by employees on the App Store and Google Play Store.

BFC Payments is a part of BFC Group which is one of the financial leaders in the region that includes an international network of money exchanges across four countries.

The history of the companies that are incorporated under the Group date back over 100 years, with Bahrain Financing Company (BFC) trading in gold bullion and continually growing its services.

For more information on BFC Payments, please visit www.bfcpayments.com or contact a BFC Payments' business development officer on +973 1700 4548.

Shura committee hails Ambassadors' visit to reformation centre

● It reflects Interior Ministry's transparency and openness

TDT | Manama

The Shura Council's Human

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Direktorate of Reformation and Rehabilitation to all inmates, citing its pioneering initiative to provide vaccines against COVID-19 for all inmates wishing to take them.

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Stay healthy and have fun

BIC Fitness on Track Batelco Ramadan Special continues for runners and cyclists on Friday

TDT | Manama

Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) continues on Friday its widely popular Fitness on Track Batelco Ramadan Special, with runners and cyclists of all ages invited to take part.

BIC's Fitness on Track is an extensive programme for those looking to maintain or improve their physical fitness. The first three events are being held during the Holy Month of Ramadan, with entry permitted to COVID-19 vaccinated and recovered individuals.

This week's event takes place between 5.30pm and 8.30pm at "The Home of Motorsport in the



Cyclists and runners get an opportunity to train or simply casually exercise



Middle East" in Sakhir. A beautiful backdrop of the sun setting in the distance can be enjoyed during this period.

After the sun goes down, those on site will be able to marvel at the iconic Sakhir Tower, which will be brilliantly lit with its all-

new façade that made its global debut at the Formula 1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix 2021 last March.

The Fitness on Track activity is dedicated to offering cyclists and runners an opportunity to train or simply casually ex-

ercise within a safe and controlled environment at Bahrain's world-renowned F1 circuit.

The cycling and running take place on separate track layouts, with cyclists able to ride their bikes along BIC's 3.543-kilometre Outer Track, and runners and

walkers utilising the 2.554km Inner Track. There is also a dedicated area for children's cycling.

Facilities provided on site include food and beverage trucks available from sunset onwards, water stations kindly provided by Arwa, and a prayer area.

Over the past two weeks, a large number of participants turned up at BIC to take part in the programme. Among them were many families who were able to enjoy the experience while getting a good workout in the process.

To ensure the safety of all participants, entry is restricted to vaccinated or COVID-19 recovered people only, as shown by the green badge on the BeAware

app. Children under 18 may attend when accompanied by a qualifying adult. Each individual attending must also fill in the online health declaration sent in advance of the event.

All those wishing to take part must pre-register and pay in advance on BIC's official website bahraingp.com. The cost to take part is BD2 for cyclists and BD1 for runners. Those under the age of 12 can participate for free if accompanied by a paying adult.

The Ramadan Special events are being sponsored by Batelco and also supported by Agility and American Express.

For more information on BIC's Fitness on Track programme, visit bahraingp.com.

Ardent outpour of literary creativity at New Millennium School-Bahrain

● 'English Week' celebrated through digital platform

● Various activities held for 'deep love for language'

TDT | Manama

New Millennium School, Bahrain celebrated the 'English Week' through the digital platform from 25 to 29 April with great ebullience.

Premised on the theme "Explore and Excel", the event aimed at promoting linguistic competence, effective communication skills and the creativity



Students take part in fun-filled and exciting guided activities

of the students.

The creativity of the students was unveiled through a plethora

of fun-filled and exciting guided activities like story writing, post card making and message writing, book mark making, self-created quotes, self-composed poems, designing pamphlets, posters, advertisements and comic strips, compilation of biographies and writing autobiographies, presenting online news bulletin, all for the deep love for language.

Originality came in from all the corners and each child was proud of his contribution towards creating different masterpieces throughout the week.

The highlight of the week was the Community Service – Each One, Teach One – wherein children took up the role of English language tutor to their siblings or house servant or the watchman, teaching them spoken English thus basking in the magic of language.

Chairman Dr Ravi Pillai, Managing Director Geetha Pillai and Principal Arun Kumar Sharma complimented the students for their excellent feat in the English Week and adored the efforts of all the parents and teachers for the successful completion of this special week.

BPC signs cooperation deal with UNDP



The Bahrain Paralympic Committee (BPC) has signed a cooperation agreement with the United Nations Development Programme's office in the Kingdom of Bahrain to launch a strategic cooperation between both parties. The agreement aims at aligning the BPC's plans and projects with the Sustainable Development Goals, covering various initiatives, with a current focus on supporting the 2021 Asian Youth Para Games, which will be hosted by the Kingdom of Bahrain in November. BPC Chairman Shaikh Mohammed bin Duaij Al Khalifa and UNDP Resident Representative in the Kingdom Stefano Pettinato were delighted to seal the collaboration.

Six facing trial for trying to smuggle drugs using puppet

TDT | Manama

Four Bahrainis and two Asian women are facing trial for attempting to smuggle drugs into Bahrain using a puppet.

Prosecutors said their techniques in narcotics trafficking was hard to detect. However, using a puppet was the last straw as customs officers suspected it and informed the anti-drug department at the Ministry of Interior.

"We received a call from the customs requesting us to come and examine a suspicious package. We went there

immediately. It was a puppet, we x-rayed it and found drugs hidden inside it," an anti-drug officer told prosecutors.

The customs informed the person whose name was registered in the shipment to come and collect it. It was one of the Asian women, and she was accompanied by her co-defendants. All the five defendants remained in the car, and she entered the customs premises alone.

The Asian woman who was arrested while receiving the shipment told prosecutors she was paid on a commission basis.

Renowned jewellery firm embezzlement case

● Manager ordered to pay BD297,000 by High Appeals Civil Court

TDT | Manama

A manager in a renowned jewellery company embezzled BD297,000, but the company took him only to the Civil Court, DT has learned.

Astonishingly, the manager was related to the company owners, as a result of which the company is said to have decided against filing a criminal lawsuit against him.

The owners resorted to the



He allegedly sold jewellery to clients and pocketed the money, taking advantage of forging their signatures in receipts.

Civil Court to ensure that the manager commits to returning the money after he backed away from the agreement he signed with the company.

The defendant has reportedly already inked documents binding him to return the money he stole from the company over the course of 16 years after the owners discovered the crime.

He allegedly sold jewellery to clients and pocketed the money, taking advantage of forging their signatures in receipts. He also manipulated receipts of goods he bought for the company in a bid to steal more money.

The company's lawyer Rabab Al Orayedh said that her client

lost BD680,000 due to the behaviour of the manager, but it was established that he stole BD320,000, out of which he returned around BD18,500.

Initially, the High Civil Court ordered the defendant to pay BD7,500 only to the company, and this verdict was appealed by the company which requested to assign an expert to audit its accounts, according to lawyer Al Orayedh.

The case was re-heard by the High Appeals Civil Court and it ordered the manager to pay BD297,000 after the expert confirmed that the defendant signed documents obligating him to pay BD320,000 to the company.

TDT | Manama

The Kingdom of Bahrain expressed its sincere condolences and sympathy to the government and Mexican people over the victims of the collapse of a railway bridge when a train was passing over it in Mexico

City, which resulted in the death and injury of dozens of people.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs affirmed Bahrain's full solidarity with the government and the friendly Mexican people in the aftermath of this painful incident, wishing the injured a speedy recovery.

Takaful International Company B.S.C.

INTERIM CONDENSED FINANCIAL STATEMENT

AS AT 31st March 2021



Bahraini Dinars

INTERIM STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION As at 31 March 2021 (Reviewed)

	Shareholders		General takaful		Family takaful		Total	
	31 March 2021 Reviewed	31 December 2020 Audited						
ASSETS								
Cash and investments:								
Statutory deposit	125,000	125,000	-	-	-	125,000	125,000	
Cash and balances with banks	7,359,564	7,678,395	9,963,296	8,512,369	2,531,405	2,100,488	19,854,265	18,291,252
Investments	2,746,539	2,634,093	2,190,159	2,031,884	1,253,600	1,252,954	6,190,298	5,918,931
Investment in an associate	184,897	260,776	-	-	-	184,897	260,776	
Takaful and retakaful receivables	10,416,000	10,698,264	12,153,455	10,544,253	3,785,005	3,353,442	26,354,460	24,595,959
Retakaful providers' share of takaful liabilities	-	-	7,938,390	5,599,724	475,015	486,885	8,413,405	6,086,609
Deferred acquisition costs	-	-	6,335,062	5,583,715	352,773	300,570	6,687,835	5,884,285
Property and equipment	744,544	493,161	-	-	-	744,544	493,161	
Other receivables, accrued income and prepayments	76,670	72,728	-	-	-	76,670	72,728	
Right-of-use assets	1,054,987	1,156,184	540,095	373,669	43,818	27,070	1,638,900	1,556,923
Retakaful providers' share of family takaful technical reserves	581,452	-	-	-	-	581,452	-	
TOTAL ASSETS	12,873,653	12,420,337	26,967,002	22,101,361	7,206,862	6,718,218	47,047,517	41,239,916
LIABILITIES, PARTICIPANTS' FUNDS								
AND OWNERS' EQUITY								
Liabilities								
Takaful liabilities	-	-	20,735,447	17,363,546	663,938	498,210	21,399,385	17,861,756
Unearned commissions	-	-	407,063	285,762	-	-	407,063	285,762
Family takaful technical reserves	-	-	-	-	5,197,202	5,052,328	5,197,202	5,052,328
Payables and accrued liabilities:								
Takaful and retakaful companies	-	-	3,548,677	2,256,096	861,454	792,177	4,410,131	3,048,273
Participants'	518,792	350,760	1,041,727	1,094,879	5,194	4,065	1,565,713	1,449,704
Others	770,041	905,444	1,114,020	1,186,724	271,653	175,360	2,155,714	2,267,528
Ijarah liabilities	575,626	-	-	-	-	575,626	-	
Total liabilities	1,864,459	1,256,204	26,846,934	22,187,007	6,999,441	6,522,140	35,710,834	29,965,351
Participants' fund								
(Deficit) / surplus in participants' fund	-	-	37,609	(159,838)	136,164	132,449	173,773	(27,389)
Investments fair value reserve	-	-	82,459	74,192	71,257	63,629	153,716	137,821
	-	-	120,068	(85,646)	207,421	196,078	327,489	110,432
Owners' equity								
Share capital	8,500,000	8,500,000	-	-	-	8,500,000	8,500,000	
Statutory reserve	770,569	770,569	-	-	-	770,569	770,569	
General reserve	200,000	200,000	-	-	-	200,000	200,000	
Retained earnings	1,402,972	1,578,365	-	-	-	1,402,972	1,578,365	
Investments fair value reserve	135,653	115,199	-	-	-	135,653	115,199	
Total owners' equity	11,009,194	11,164,133	-	-	-	11,009,194	11,164,133	
TOTAL LIABILITIES, PARTICIPANTS' FUNDS AND OWNERS' EQUITY	12,873,653	12,420,337	26,967,002	22,101,361	7,206,862	6,718,218	47,047,517	41,239,916

INTERIM STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN OWNERS' EQUITY

Three months period ended 31 March 2021 (Reviewed)

	Share capital	Statutory reserve	General reserve	(Accumulated losses)	Retained earnings/ fair value reserve	Investments fair value reserve	Total equity
Balance at 1 January 2021	8,500,000	770,569	200,000	1,578,365	115,199	11,164,133	
Effect of adoption of a new accounting standard	-	-	-	(5,729)	-	(5,729)	
Balance at 1 January 2021 (restated)	8,500,000	770,569	200,000	1,572,636	115,199	11,158,404	
Profit for the period	-	-	-	255,336	-	255,336	
Other comprehensive Income	-	-	-	-	20,454	20,454	
Dividend paid	-	-	-	(425,000)	-	(425,000)	
Balance as at 31 March 2021 (Reviewed)	8,500,000	770,569	200,000	1,402,972	135,653	11,009,194	
Balance at 1 January 2020	8,500,000	656,159	200,000	548,670	174,142	10,078,970	
Profit for the period	-	-	-	230,747	-	230,747	
Other comprehensive loss	-	-	-	-	(249,932)	(249,932)	
Total comprehensive income / (loss) for the period	-	-	-	230,747	(249,932)	(19,185)	
Balance as at 31 March 2020 (Not reviewed)	8,500,000	656,159	200,000	779,417	(75,790)	10,059,785	

INTERIM STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN PARTICIPANTS' FUND

Three months period ended 31 March 2021 (Reviewed)

	General takaful	Family takaful	General takaful	Family takaful	Total
Balance at 1 January 2021	(159,838)	132,449	74,192	63,629	110,432
Realised fair value losses on investment securities	-	-	-	6,981	6,981
Unrealised fair value gain on investment securities	-	-	8,267	647	8,914
Surplus for the period	197,447	3,715	-	-	201,162
Balance as at 31 March 2021 (Reviewed)	37,609	136,164	82,459	71,257	327,489
Balance at 1 January 2020	(591,591)	163,939	130,039	6,917	(290,696)
Realised fair value losses on investment securities	-	-	1,376	76,103	77,479
Unrealised fair value loss on investment securities	-	-	(151,589)	(104,282)	(255,871)
Surplus / (deficit) for the period	157,279	(37,064)	-	-	120,215
Balance as at 31 March 2020 (Not reviewed)	(434,312)	126,875	(20,174)	(21,262)	(348,873)

INTERIM STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

Three months period ended 31 March 2021 (Reviewed)

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Takaful Q1 profit jumps 30% on funds' growth, strategies

● General Takaful fund achieved a surplus of BD 197K

● Shareholders' fund achieved a net profit of BD 255K

● Family Takaful fund achieved a profit of BD 4K

● Q1 total net profit was BD 457K

TDT | Manama



Jamal Ali Al Hazeem, the Chairman

Essam Mohamed Al Ansari, Chief Executive officer

Takaful International Company reported a 30% growth in its first-quarter profit, helped mainly by the improved performance of the General Takaful fund and shareholders' fund.

General Takaful fund achieved a surplus of BD 197K compared to a surplus of BD 157K for the same period last year, while shareholders' fund achieved a net profit of BD 255K compared to a net profit of BD 231K for the same period last year. The Family Takaful fund achieved a profit of BD 4K compared to a deficit of BD 37K for the same period last year.

Q1 total net profit was BD 457K compared to BD 351K in the year-ago quarter with an increasing percentage of 30%.

Jamal Ali Al Hazeem, the Chairman, said the good results reflect the stability of performance despite the continuation of the pandemic.

He added that the company strengthened its financial position during this quarter by allocating additional technical reserves to meet the challenges posed by the pandemic conditions.

Essam Mohamed Al Ansari,

Chief Executive officer, attributed the improved results to the policies and strategies adopted by the company recently. He said the company provided many insurance covers during the past months to provide insurance options with Islamic solutions that suit the various needs of individuals and institutions.

Q1 net profit attributable to the shareholders of the parent was BD 255K compared to BD 231K for the same period last year, an increase of 11%. Earnings per share at 3 Fils compared with 2.71 Fils for the same

period last year. Total comprehensive income attributable to the shareholders of the parent stood at BD 493K compared to losses of BD 77 for the same period last year.

Total gross contributions increased by 18% to BD 9,540m compared to BD 8,075m for the same period last year. Net earned contributions also increased by 7% to BD 4,467m as compared to BD 4,189m for the same period last year. The net incurred claims decreased by 1% to BD 2,874m as compared to BD 2,838m for the same period last year.

Saudi cuts Q1 deficit

Reuters

Saudi Arabia reduced its budget deficit to 7.4 billion riyals (\$1.97 b) in the first quarter of the year, the finance ministry said yesterday, as the government reaps the benefits of consolidation measures introduced last year.

The kingdom, the Arab world's largest economy and the world's top oil exporter, cashed in 117 bn riyals in oil revenue in the first quarter - 9% below the first three months of 2020.

Total revenue however rose 7% annually, with a 75% increase in income from taxes boosting non-oil revenue by 39% year on year.

In the first quarter last year the budget deficit stood at roughly \$9 bn.

The Saudi government spent 212 bn riyals in the first three months of this year, a 6% annual reduction partly due to a significant cut in capital expenditure - down by over 13 billion riyals year on year.

Military spending was also down by nearly 10 bn riyals.

The International Monetary Fund said this week it expects the kingdom to post a deficit of 4.2% of GDP in 2021 - which would be slightly better than Saudi budget forecasts.

KFH-Bahrain launches new ATM services

● Services include card-less withdrawals, debit cards activation, cash withdrawals using "BenefitPay", and corporate deposit cards

TDT | Manama



Abdulrahman AlKhan and Hamed Mashal

Kuwait Finance House-Bahrain announced it is launching several upgraded services across its ATMs network in Bahrain.

The revamped services provide customers with the chance to make card-less withdrawals, activate debit cards without visiting the branch or contacting the service centre, and activate cash withdrawal using "BenefitPay", and enable corporate clients to make deposits using ATM card.

On this occasion, Hamed Mashal, Head of Retail Banking, said: "We are always committed to ensuring that our customers get the most convenient banking experience when dealing with KFH-Bahrain. The launch of our new ATM services aims to improve this experience by helping cater to their banking needs, especially during these challenging times."

Further commenting on the upgrades, Abdulrahman AlKhan, Head of Cards & E-Channels at Kuwait Finance House-Bahrain, stated: "We are actively seeking to continue offering the best and most innovative solutions to fulfil our customers' needs while providing optimum convenience."

It is worth noting that Kuwait Finance House-Bahrain owns a network of 30 ATMs strategically located across the Kingdom.

Dubai optimistic visitors will return but numbers unclear

Reuters

Dubai's tourism chief yesterday said he was very optimistic business and leisure travellers would return this year, though the pandemic made it difficult to predict exactly how many.

Dubai, a trade and tourism hub which has kept its borders open since reopening last July, saw 1.26 million visitors in the

first quarter, while last year the number of visitors fell 67% to 5.5 million.

"We are very optimistic on the numbers for the year," Dubai Tourism Chief Executive Issam Kazim told reporters yesterday.

But he said forecasts were "a little bit up in the air" as some markets expected to be allowing international travel were in fact imposing restrictions.

Kazim did not identify any particular market.

The United Kingdom, a top source market, has suspended most direct flights from the United Arab Emirates while arrivals who have recently been in the Gulf state must quarantine in hotels. Meanwhile, the UAE has largely banned entry for those who have recently visited India, another key market, due to the latest outbreak there.

Aramco beats quarterly profit forecast, maintains dividend

● Net income rose to \$21.7 billion

● Aramco average total hydrocarbon production came in at 11.5 million barrels per day of oil equivalent in the first quarter of 2021

● Aramco declared a dividend of \$18.8 bn

Reuters

State-run oil producer Saudi Aramco beat analysts' forecasts yesterday with a 30% rise in first-quarter net profit and maintained its dividend payout, helped by strong oil prices.

Earnings by global energy companies such as Exxon Mobil have climbed on the back of rising crude prices, which are up by about a third this year, as fuel demand recovers from the pandemic and as a global surplus of crude shrinks.

"Given the positive signs for energy demand in 2021, there are more reasons to be optimistic that better days are coming," Amin Nasser, chief executive of the world's top oil exporter, said in a statement.

"And while some headwinds still remain, we are well-positioned to meet the world's growing energy needs as economies start to recover," he said.

Net income rose to \$21.7 billion for the quarter to March 31 from \$16.7 bn a year earlier. Aramco was expected to post net profit of \$19.48 bn, according to an average of estimates by five analysts.

Aramco, which listed in 2019 with the sale of a 1.7% stake mainly to the Saudi public and regional institutions, said earnings were boosted by stronger crude prices and higher refining and chemicals margins, helping offset lower production.

The OPEC+ group, the alliance that groups the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, Russia and several other producers, have cut output to support prices but agreed on a plan in April to start gradually easing those curbs from May 1.

Aramco, which reduced its output as part of that pact and as a result of Saudi Arabia's additional voluntary production cuts, said global demand for petroleum products was recovering from its lows in 2020 but remained below pre-pandemic levels.

Aramco declared a dividend of \$18.8 bn for the first quarter, to be paid in the second quarter, in line with company guidance of a \$75 billion dividend for this year.

"Aramco's dividend commitment is already pretty ambitious, particularly given the continued volatility in the market," said Dmitry Marinchenko, oil and gas analyst at Fitch Ratings.

Aramco would possibly prefer to keep dividends stable, particularly in light of some uncertainty around the Shareek or Partner programme by the Saudi government, he said. The programme encourages Saudi companies including Aramco to lead private sector investments in the domestic economy.

HSBC, in an equity note to clients, said the move could restrict headroom to boost dividends in the next few years.

Aramco average total hydrocarbon production came in at 11.5 million barrels per day of oil equivalent in the first quarter of 2021. That includes 8.6 m barrels per day of crude oil.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed has said more Aramco shares could be sold in the next year or two, including to international investors. He has said the kingdom was in talks to sell 1% to a leading global energy company.

Egypt, France agree large warplane deal

Reuters

against terrorism and work for stability," she said.

France said yesterday it will begin delivering 30 Dassault warplanes to Egypt from 2024 in a 4 billion euro (\$4.8 bn) deal, as it strengthens ties with a partner it considers vital in fighting Islamist militants.

Armed Forces Minister Florence Parly said the deal, confirmed yesterday, illustrated the "strategic nature of the partnership" between the countries and would secure 7,000 jobs in France over three years.

"Our two countries are resolutely committed to the fight



French Navy Rafale fighter jets are seen onboard the Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier, currently moored at the port of Limassol, Cyprus

News in brief

◆ **India's total Covid caseload soared past 20 million on Tuesday, official data showed.** In the past 24 hours, India added 357,229 cases, taking the total to 20.3 million, according to the health ministry. Deaths rose 3,449 to 222,408. India has added around eight million new cases since the end of March in a ferocious new wave blamed on virus variants.



India Covid cases soar past 20 million: official data

◆ **Germany's Oktoberfest cancelled again over Covid**

◆ **Germany is cancelling its iconic Oktoberfest** festival for the second year running due to the coronavirus pandemic, Bavaria's state premier Markus Soeder said Monday. The Oktoberfest, which draws around six million visitors annually from around the world in late September to October, was cancelled in 2020 for the first time since World War II.

◆ **Florida governor Ron DeSantis on Monday lifted all Covid-19 restrictions** in the US state, citing the effectiveness and availability of vaccines, in a move that attracted criticism from Democratic mayors. DeSantis signed a law invalidating local emergency orders -- which impose restrictions due to Covid-19 -- effective from July 1, and then signed an executive order that bridges the gap between now and then. "That's the evidence thing to do," the Republican governor said at a news conference, referring to the reduction in infections and deaths as the vaccine rollout continues.

Florida governor lifts all Covid restrictions

◆ **Efforts to remove the cargo of an oil tanker that leaked oil into the Yellow**



Sea near China's Qingdao after a collision last week should be completed later on Tuesday, the vessel's manager said. The A Symphony was anchored roughly 40 nautical miles off the coast of Qingdao when it was struck in dense fog by the bulk carrier Sea Justice on April 27. The collision ruptured A Symphony's cargo and ballast tanks, causing it to leak roughly 400 tonnes of its bitumen mix cargo.

◆ **The Myanmar junta has charged a Japanese journalist**



Myanmar charges Japanese journalist over 'fake news'

Yuki Kitazumi was arrested last month and charged on Monday -- World Press Freedom Day -- with spreading fake news, according to a report by Kyodo news agency. He is one of 50 journalists currently held in Myanmar as part of the junta's crackdown on widespread protests against its February 1 coup. The country has been in turmoil since civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi's government was ousted, with more than 750 people killed as security forces struggle to quash near-daily demonstrations against their rule.

COVID-19 Countries worst affected

	Country	Total cases	Total deaths	Global tally
1	USA	33,261,297	592,181	154,421,174
2	India	20,658,234	226,169	
3	Brazil	14,791,434	408,829	
4	France	5,680,378	105,387	
5	Turkey	4,929,118	41,527	
6	Russia	4,839,514	111,535	
7	UK	4,423,796	127,543	
8	Italy	4,059,821	121,738	
9	Spain	3,544,945	78,399	
10	Germany	3,448,182	84,285	
11	Argentina	3,021,179	64,792	
12	Colombia	2,905,254	75,164	
13	Poland	2,808,052	68,133	
14	Iran	2,575,737	73,219	

Figures as of closing

Middle East

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	230,713		13,531		172,774	44,408
Saudi Arabia	421,300	+999	7,006	+14	404,707	9,587
UAE	527,266	+1,699	1,598	+2	507,706	17,962
Kuwait	277,832		1,590		261,369	14,873
Oman	197,802	+902	2,062	+9	179,175	16,565
Qatar	207,592		480		194,099	13,013

AI can Power Bahrain's Environmental Protection

KOTA SRIRAJ

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a wide-ranging branch of computer science concerned with building smart machines capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence. It is the endeavour to simulate human intelligence in machines. The most common example of AI is how it has made it possible to deposit cheques from the comfort of one's home. AI is proficient in deciphering handwriting and signatures thereby making online cheque processing practical. Yet another example is how banking processes powered by AI have perfected fraud detection by observing credit card spending patterns. In the business world, AI has minimised human-error and increased insights from big data which have lowered operational costs and increased profitability.

With each passing day, the world is being besieged by environmental concerns such as global warming, animal endangerment, carbon emissions, disease containment, air, and water pollution. Bahrain is no stranger to these threats and in an effort to counter these challenges, the kingdom has already taken a slew of appreciable measures. Some of the measures include the increased utilisation of renewable sources of energy such as wind energy, solar energy, tidal power and biogas instead of conventional sources. But in addition to these measures, Bahrain can stand to benefit much more if AI is roped in for environmental protection as it can take conservation to next level by combining scalability with accuracy.

Globally the application of AI processes are rapidly changing the narrative in the international environmental protection arena. The use of AI in environment protection includes machine learning for protecting the oceans, monitoring shipping, ocean mining, fishing, coral bleaching or the outbreak of marine diseases. For an island nation such as Bahrain these applications of AI can have a far reaching impact which can further be bolstered by forging productive collaborations. For instance, The NGO, Nature Conservancy is collaborating with Microsoft on using AI for carbon storage, seafood harvesting, and conservation of marine life. Bahrain can also find multiple inland uses of AI that can go the extra mile not only for ecological protection but also for ensuring food security. AI can be used in Bahraini agricultural sector for automated data collection, detection of crop diseases and optimizing agricultural inputs and returns based on demand and supply.

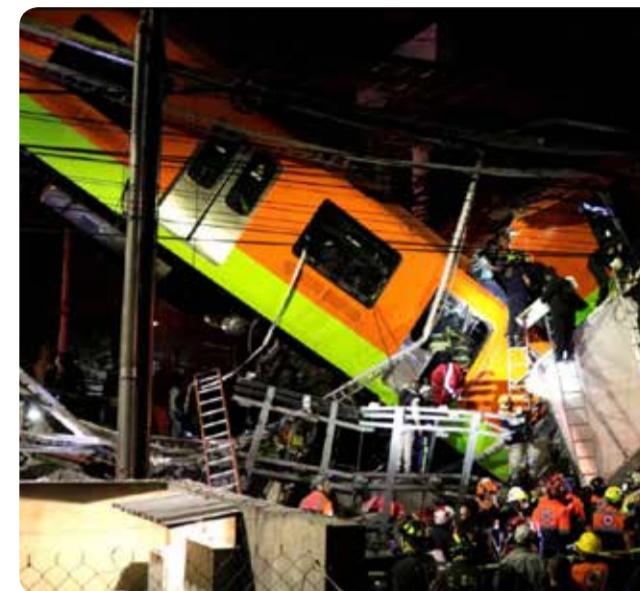
Bahrain can also use AI to accelerate the process of environmental analysis. AI can process a huge amount of data quickly and draw conclusions that may have not been possible by humans. For instance, in China, IBM's Green Horizon project uses AI technology to forecast air pollution, track pollution sources and provide potential solutions to deal with it. This is critical for Bahrain because the scale of pollution is reaching such levels that it may soon be difficult to manage the problem with only human efforts. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that exposure to air pollution causes around 4.2 million mortalities across the globe each year. As per its further estimation, around 91% of the global population lives in places where the air quality is much more than the guidelines of WHO and this has led to be a concern for nations around the globe, especially Bahrain.

As challenges arising out of climate change get more complex Bahrain will do well to be an early adapter in the mass scale implementation of AI in environmental protection. In the process of doing this the kingdom must set up a triangular integrated system of people, government and AI. As people get aware of the importance of environmental conservation, the government must take AI to grass root level and provide tools to people in the form of nature conservation apps powered by AI for the people to download. Through these apps the public can track their carbon foot print, reduce greenhouse emissions, provide crucial data pertaining to environment and much more.

These steps can help Bahrain in setting up state of the art environment protection systems that monitor and reduces the amount of energy consumption and water usage that helps in preserving precious resources. As the entire process is data driven, it will become easy for the government to track the progress of the conservation initiatives and make necessary changes to increase efficiency and spot problems in the processes long before they crop up. The use of AI can aid the nation to also succeed in achieving the Economic Vision 2030 by ensuring sustainable growth of the country that is friendly towards the environment.

Environmental protection powered by artificial Intelligence is the future, and Bahrain can set the global benchmark by adopting AI for nature preservation.

Mexico City r



In pictures, rescuers work at a site where an overpass for a metro parti

China calls for 'basic etiquette' after Philippine outbur

Reuters



China urged the Philippines yesterday to observe "basic etiquette" and eschew megaphone diplomacy after the southeast Asian nation's foreign minister used an expletive-laced Twitter message to demand that China's vessels leave disputed waters.

The comments by Teodoro Locsin, known for occasional blunt remarks, follow Manila's protests over what it calls the illegal presence of hundreds of Chinese boats inside the Philippines' 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). read more

In a statement, China's foreign ministry urged the Philippines to respect the nation's sovereignty and jurisdiction and stop taking actions that complicate the situation.

"Facts have repeatedly proved that megaphone diplomacy cannot change the facts, but can only undermine mutual trust," it said.

"It is hoped that relevant people in the Philippines will comply with basic etiquette and their position when making remarks."

The ministry cited by Philippines President Duterte that different countries on islands should not affect friendly cooperation. "China has always will continue to work with Philippines, to prop differences and advancement through friend relations."

Taliban launches h

Reuters

Afghan security forces fought back a huge Taliban offensive in southern Helmand province in the last 24 hours, officials and residents said on Tuesday, as militants launched assaults around the country following a



Handover ceremony at Camp Anthonic, from U.S. Army to Afghan Defen

1955

West Germany is granted full sovereignty by its three occupying powers

1965 1980

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

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

1982

After 66 days on hunger strike, 26 year old Provisional IRA member and British MP Bobby Sands dies in the Maze Prison. Nine more hunger strikers die in the next 3 months.



Rail overpass collapses, killing at least 23

Reuters



Fully collapsed with train cars on it at Olivos station in Mexico City, Mexico

At least 23 people were killed and 65 were hospitalised when a railway overpass and train collapsed onto a busy road in Mexico City on Monday night, crushing cars under fallen carriages and rubble.

The authorities halted rescue efforts shortly after they began, saying there was a risk that more train parts and debris could slam down onto the road.

A video on local channel Milenio TV showed the structure plummeting onto a stream of cars near the Olivos station in the southeast of the city at around 10.30 p.m. local time, sending up clouds of dust.

At least two train carriages precariously hung from the

damaged overpass. Initial rescue efforts saw medical and fire crews trying to access the carriages. The army was also in attendance.

Speaking to reporters at the site, Mexico City Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum said it appeared a girder had given way on the overpass but the cause was being investigated.

She said the rescue had been suspended as the structure was very weak. A crane was working to stabilise the train carriages so rescuers could resume their search for survivors.

The authorities were working to identify the dead, which included children, Sheinbaum said. One person trapped in their car underneath the wreckage had been rescued alive and was

taken to hospital. Seven of the people transported to hospital were in a "grave condition" and undergoing surgery, she said.

The Metro 12 line that runs over the collapsed overpass was built almost a decade ago when Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard was mayor of Mexico City.

"What happened today with the Metro is a terrible tragedy. My solidarity is with the victims and their families," Ebrard said on Twitter. "Of course, the causes must be investigated and responsibilities defined."

Ebrard and Sheinbaum are seen by many political observers as the most likely successors to President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador once his six-year term is over in 2024.



TOP

4

TWEETS

01



Had a productive Virtual Summit with my friend UK PM @BorisJohnson. We adopted an ambitious Roadmap 2030 for elevating India-UK ties to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. We welcomed launch of an Enhanced Trade Partnership as a roadmap to a comprehensive FTA, with a target to more than double the bilateral trade by 2030. etc.

@narendramodi

02



Dubai today welcomed delegates representing 173 countries and 24 international organizations at the final International Participants Meeting before Expo 2020 Dubai opens in October. The world is recovering.. and we are ready to welcome 190 countries to the World's Greatest Event

@HHShkMohd

03



It's #World AsthmaDay. Did you know that an estimated 262 million people worldwide suffered from #asthma & over 460K people lost their lives last year. Effective treatment & management of asthma saves lives. Let's ensure that all people have access to adequate care. #HealthForAll

@DrTedros

04



Georgia, when you sent @Ossoff and @ReverendWarnock to the Senate, you made history. Thank you.

@JoeBiden

sic

Lebanon, Israel resume talks on disputed maritime border

Reuters

Lebanon and Israel resumed US-mediated talks yesterday over a dispute about their Mediterranean Sea border that has held up hydrocarbon exploration in the potentially gas-rich area, an official Lebanese source said.

The longtime foes held several rounds of talks in October - a culmination of three years of diplomacy by the United States - hosted by the United Nations at a peace-keeper base in southern Lebanon.

But negotiations stalled after each presented contrasting maps outlining proposed borders that actually increased the size of the disputed area.

On Tuesday, the talks resumed at the same base in Lebanon's Naqoura.

Since the talks stalled, Lebanon's caretaker prime minister and ministers of defence and public works approved a draft decree which would expand Lebanon's claim, adding around 1,400 square km (540 square miles) to its exclusive economic zone.

The draft decree has yet to be approved.

Israel already pumps gas from huge offshore fields.

Lebanon, which has yet to find commercial gas reserves in its own waters, is desperate for cash from foreign donors as it faces the worst economic crisis since its 1975-1990 civil war.

Israeli navy boats are seen in the Mediterranean Sea as seen from Rosh Hanikra, close to the Lebanese border, northern Israel



Kuwait bars unvaccinated citizens from travel abroad

Reuters

Kuwaiti citizens who have not been vaccinated against COVID-19 will not be able to travel abroad from May 22, the information ministry said on Monday, citing a decision by Kuwait's cabinet.

The ban does not include people in age groups ineligible to receive vaccinations. A previous directive banning

the entry of non-Kuwaitis into the Gulf state still stands, the statement said.

New daily COVID-19 cases in Kuwait have risen since the start of the year and are now hovering between 1,300 and 1,500 a day. Kuwait has registered more than 276,500 cases in total. The country suspended flights from India 10 days ago following a surge in infections there.

Senior Swiss diplomat in Iran found dead after fall from high-rise

Reuters

The first secretary at the Swiss embassy in Tehran was found dead on Tuesday after falling from a high-rise building where she lived in the north of the city, a spokesman for emergency services was quoted as saying by Iranian news agencies.

The Swiss foreign ministry (FDFA) said an employee at its embassy in Iran had died of an accident, without identifying the victim. "The FDFA and its head Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis are shocked by the

tragic death and express their deepest condolences to the family," it said.



Huge Afghan offensive after deadline for US pullout

missed U.S. deadline to withdraw troops.

Although the United States did not meet the May 1 withdrawal deadline agreed in talks with the Taliban last year, its pull-out has begun, with President Joe Biden announcing all troops will out by Sept. 11. Critics of the decision to withdraw say the militants will try to sweep back into power.

"There was a thunderstorm of heavy weapons and blasts in the city and the sound of small arms was like someone was

making popcorn," Mulah Jan, a resident of a suburb of provincial capital Lashkar Gah, told Reuters.

"I took all my family members to the corner of the room, hearing the heavy blasts and bursts of gunfire as if it was happening behind our walls," he said. Families that could afford to leave had fled, but he had been unable to go, waiting with his family in fear before the Taliban were pushed back.

Attaullah Afghan, the head of Helmand's provincial council, said the Taliban had launched their huge

offensive on Monday from multiple directions, attacking checkpoints around the outskirts of Lashkar Gah, taking over some of them.

Afghan security forces had launched air strikes and deployed elite commando forces to the area. The insurgents had been pushed back but fighting was continuing on Tuesday and hundreds of families had been displaced, he added.



Afghan forces in Helmand province, Afghanistan

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

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In Damascus, crispy pastry sweetens frugal Ramadan

Damascus is famous for pastry shops that make mouth-watering desserts like syrupy baklava stuffed with pistachios

AFP | Damascus

Year after year Ramadan meals become more frugal in war-torn Syria as the economy worsens, but Damascus dwellers say a traditional wafer-thin crispy pancake called "naeem" is here to stay.

During the Muslim fasting month, just before sundown Damascus residents flock to buy the deep-fried sweet from street vendors who make them in bubbling cauldrons all over the sidewalks.

The crunchy pastry -- also called "Ramadan bread" -- is prepared by dropping a thin circle of dough into hot oil until it snaps like a crisp.

Fished out, the sweet-smelling pancake is then drizzled with dark brown date or grape molasses.

Government employee Abdallah, 51, said he rushes out to buy a naeem to share with his wife and two daughters at the end of every day.

"However tough the circumstances, the naeem is a tradition we can't go without during Ramadan," he said.

At around 2,500 Syrian pounds (less than a dollar), the crunchy dessert is still one of the few affordable ones, he said.



A Syrian vendor holds on a traditional sweet known as "naeem"

Other more elaborate sweets, such as sesame-covered barazeq biscuits or syrupy baklava stuffed with pistachios, have become prohibitively expensive.

Dizzying price hikes have forced many Syrian households like Abdallah's to cut back on some food items this Ramadan. This year, red meat, chicken broth, and pistachio-filled sweets are largely off the menu for iftar, the meal at the end of a

day's fasting.

Instead, most families opt for cheaper items to put on their dinner tables such as naeem.

"Children love it, and that's the most important thing," Abdallah said.

'Within everyone's reach'

In one Damascus market, 49-year-old Abu Tareq called out to customers in a bellowing voice, near endless airy stacks of crispy naeem.

He said they disappear fast in the run-up to iftar.

"Sweets are an essential part of the Ramadan spread, and naeem are the cheapest and most delicious," he said.

But the wealthy too are customers, he added, because the dessert is a traditional Ramadan sweet.

Just a stone's throw away from Abu Tareq's shop, the scent of more freshly baked pastries wafts out of some of the sweets



A Syrian vendor shows a traditional sweet known as "naeem"

famous.

But each year, fewer and fewer people buy and take home trays of syrupy treats, baked in ghee and stuffed with nuts or tender date flesh.

A kilo of those sweets can cost up to 50,000 Syrian pounds (\$17 at the black-market exchange rate).

In a country where the currency has lost 98 percent of its value since the start of the war in 2011 and millions struggle to put food on the table, that is money many simply do not have.

Instead, crispy "Ramadan bread" is still a delight they can afford.

"The naeem is within everyone's reach," said Abu Tareq.

"Ramadan wouldn't taste the same without it."



A Syrian vendor prepares on a traditional sweet known as "naeem"



A Syrian vendor prepares on a traditional sweet known as "naeem"



A Syrian vendor spreads grape molasses on naeem



Bahrain Indian School- BHAVANS conducted a charity drive during the month of Ramadan to help the needy. BIS Management, teachers & parents donated non-perishable food items to Indian Community Relief Fund (ICRF), a non-profitable organization which runs under the patronage of Indian Embassy. Representing ICRF, Dr. Babu Ramachandran, Vice Chairman received the donation from BIS Directors, Himanshu Verma & Ritu Verma accompanied by Principal, Saji Jacob

Ramadan cooking

Afghan Tomato, Cucumber and Onion Salad (Salata)

Ingredients

- 3 tomatoes, finely diced
- Baby cucumber
- 1 diced sweet onion
- 3/4 cup of freshly chopped cilantro
- 3 tbsp of freshly extracted lemon juice
- Salt to taste

Method

1. Before combining all the veggies, peel and dice the cucumbers.
2. Once done, toss all the vegetables together.
3. Pour in some lemon juice and sprinkle salt before tossing again.
4. Refrigerate for an hour.
5. Garnish with cilantro before serving.



BRAVE CF releases official poster for Belarus debut

BRAVE CF 51 to be headlined by Lightweight battle between Marcel Grabinski and Lucas "Mineiro" Martins

● Number of stars from Belarus to be featured

TDT | Manama

The fastest-growing MMA organization in the world, BRAVE Combat Federation will return to Europe with yet another huge fight card, showcasing the continental talents against top fighters worldwide. And the main event of BRAVE CF 51: The Future Is Here relates to that as perhaps the number one fighter in Germany Marcel Grabinski takes on Brazilian former world champion Lucas "Mineiro" Martins in a Lightweight battle.

Both men are heavily featured in the official poster that has just been released by BRAVE Combat Federation. Donning the colours of their flags on their faces, Grabinski and Martins are joined on the poster by the co-main event fighters.

A two-division champion in Germany, Grabinski made waves last month as he dismantled Issa Isakov in a Super Lightweight bout on the historic BRAVE CF 50 fight card. Now he will look to join the mix of top fighters at Lightweight with a win over Martins.

Lucas "Mineiro" Martins is



going for his fifth main event for BRAVE Combat Federation, but is eager to showcase that he will not be a stepping stone to the up-and-comer Grabinski and is looking forward to getting back to winning ways in Minsk.

Denis Maher will be among the Belarus representatives, and will be making his international debut on home soil, as he takes on Sweden's Fernando Gonzalez in a Super Welterweight matchup of epic proportions.

Maher, who is widely known as one of the biggest rising stars in the region, is one of Belarus'

BETTER YOU KNOW

BRAVE CF 51 will feature athletes from Brazil, Germany, Sweden, Belarus, Russia, France, England, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan and Turkey

best kept secrets and will look to announce himself in a big way on the world stage.

BRAVE CF 51: The Future Is Here takes place on June 4th at the Falcon Club, in Belarus, Minsk, and will be held in association with Rukh Sports Management.

BRAVE CF 51 will feature athletes from Brazil, Germany, Sweden, Belarus, Russia, France, England, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan and Turkey in yet another international fight card brought to the fans by the truly global organization in the MMA world.

'Demolition Man' fully focused on MMA

TDT | Manila

Despite an unsuccessful debut last month, Filipino sensation Jenel "The Demolition Man" Lausa has no regret giving up his boxing career in favor of a total commitment to the sport of mixed martial arts.

Last March 11, the hard-hitting warrior fought for the first time at "BRAVE CF 47: Asian Domination" at the Arad Fort in Arad, Bahrain. He, however, lost via unanimous decision to 28-year-old Ryskulbek Ibramov of Kyrgyzstan.

"The loss turned out to be a blessing, not just a lesson," Lausa said. "Now, I am living as a true and dedicated Filipino MMA fighter. Here in MMA, you have to think as a mixed martial artist day in and day out. Today, I can say that I see things clear as day."

He was last seen in action in the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) in 2018, where he lost to Japanese Yuta Sasaki. He fought in the UFC four times, finishing with a 1-3 record.

"I've been missing the MMA cage for too long. I'm so excited to share that I have joined the Brave Combat Federation," said Lausa, who signed an exclusive multi-bout contract with Brave CF last February.

"I will represent the Philippines in the biggest Asian event."

With a new home at Brave,



Lausa is motivated to come back stronger

I'm very, very happy I will be able to showcase my talent again so everyone will know that I'm representing the Philippines in MMA

JENEL LAUSA

oil native is motivated to come back stronger and put himself back in contention in the promotion's flyweight division.

"Coming back to mixed martial arts is really something that I look forward to. I am very grateful for this opportunity, and I value the trust that Brave CF has given me," he said.

Lausa holds a professional MMA record of 7-5 with two knockouts wins and two by way of submission. He once held the Pacific Xtreme Combat fly-

weight title by defeating Team Lakay's Crisanto Pitpitunge via split decision in 2016.

He is also an accomplished boxer, holding a perfect 10-0-1 record with six knockouts. He captured the Philippine Boxing Federation Super Bantamweight Championship in 2016 and then clinched the Global Boxing Organization Asia-Pacific Super Featherweight title three years later.

"I'm very, very happy I will be able to showcase my talent again so everyone will know that I'm representing the Philippines in MMA," Lausa said.

Though he admitted that it was a "tough" decision to call, Lausa believes that focusing entirely on MMA will benefit him in the long run.

"My priority right now is MMA and to perform to the best of my ability as part of BRAVE CF," Lausa said.

Moyes sets sights on Europe as West Ham impress against Burnley



David Moyes celebrates a victory with Michail Antonio

AFP | London

West Ham United boss David Moyes picked an attacking side and told them to "go for it" against Burnley and they responded by racking up 22 shots on goal in a 2-1 win that puts them within touching distance of Champions League football next season.

The Hammers rose to fifth in the Premier League table, three points behind Chelsea in the final Champions League spot with four games left to play.

West Ham still have to face Everton (8th), Brighton & Hove Albion (14th), West Bromwich Albion (19th) and Southampton (15th), while Chelsea have a tougher run-in, taking on leaders Manchester City, Arsenal (9th), Leicester City (3rd) and Aston Villa (10th).

'Disgruntled' Parks steps away from PBA season



Parks' absence is a big blow for Tropang Giga

TDT | Manila

"

It is with a heavy heart that I will have to excuse myself and not partake in this year's PBA season due to personal reasons which in particular, my family

BOBBY RAY PARKS JR.

in Clark, Pampanga, accumulating 38.2 statistical points. He normed 22.3 points, 7.8 rebounds, 3.1 assists in 17 games, en route to becoming one of the frontrunners of the Best Player of the Conference honors ultimately won by Stanley Pringle.

Due to his calf injury, he missed the last four games of the Philippine Cup Finals against Brgy. Ginebra, as his team fell in five games.

Parks also thanked team management and hopes to return to the team soon.

"Hopefully one day, once everything is resolved I can come back to the team and help bring a championship to TNT," said the NU alumnus.

Even without Parks, incoming TNT head coach Chot Reyes believes that his current roster can continue to contend in the upcoming season.

"First of all, our prayers go out to him, together with our wish that he finds resolution to his personal issues.

Obviously losing him is a big blow, because Ray is such a big part of our plans moving forward. But I have faith in the players we have in this team. We will find a way," Reyes said.

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Al Najma set for Asian clubs handball



TDT | Manama

Back-to-back Bahrain league champions Al Najma have been drawn in a tough Group A for the 23rd Asian Men's Club League Handball Championship 2021.

The other teams in their division are defending champions Al Arabi of Qatar, Shahid Kazeroun Club of Iran, Al Salmiya of Kuwait and Mudhar of Saudi Arabia.

Group B consists of Al Wehda of Saudi, Uzbek Club of Uzbekistan, Al Qaten of Yemen, Mes Kerman of Iran, Al Duhail of Qatar and Al Kuwait Club of Kuwait.

The draw was held at King Abdullah Sports City in Jeddah, setting the stage for the

preliminary round of the competition, which is scheduled to take place from June 12 to 21.

Najma head into the tournament as the only Bahraini side. They are the only club from the Kingdom to have won the championship in the past, having taken the 2017 title when the event was played in Hyderabad, India. Najma have also won the silver and bronze medals once each.

Other Bahraini teams to taste success in the competition are Al Hilal Club, who have won bronze twice before; and Al Ahli and Barbar, who have each one third place once.

The clubs championship was supposed to be played last year, but was postponed by the Asian Handball Federation due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

IPL suspended over Covid-19

IPL 2021 postponed after several players tested positive for COVID-19

● Members of three franchises have been confirmed to have tested positive

AFP | New Delhi

The Indian Premier League, the world's richest Twenty20 cricket tournament, was suspended yesterday and its players sent home as India battles a massive surge in coronavirus cases.

The move, which follows growing controversy over the competition, comes a day after two players -- Varun Chakravarthy and Sandeep Warrier -- tested positive, forcing a match to be postponed.

The Chennai Super Kings added in a statement yesterday that its bowling coach L. Balaji and a member of the side's travel support staff tested positive after undergoing tests in India's capital New Delhi on Sunday.

"The Indian Premier League Governing Council and Board of Control for Cricket in India in an emergency meeting has unanimously decided to post-



The Indian Premier League trophy is seen at a stadium

pone (the) IPL 2021 season, with immediate effect," a statement from organisers said.

"The BCCI does not want to compromise on the safety of the players, support staff and the other participants involved in organising the IPL," it added.

The high-paying IPL, which was taking place in biosecure "bubble" conditions, attracts many of the world's top cricketers, including players from Australia, England and South Africa.

'Difficult times'

BCCI Vice-President Rajiv Shukla told AFP that the gov-

erning body would "make the arrangements" for the IPL's international players to leave India.

"About the foreign players, as we have said, we will try and ensure all of them get to their homes," he said.

Cricket Australia said in a statement that it was in touch with the BCCI to "ensure the safe accommodation and repatriation of Australian players, coaches, match officials and commentators back home".

The governing body added that it was not seeking exemptions from the Australian government's move to ban travel-

You WILL get through this! You WILL be stronger coming out of this! Your kindness & generosity NEVER goes unnoticed even during this crisis! #IncredibleIndia

KEVIN PIETERSEN

lers from India from entering the country until at least May 15.

Cricket South Africa said it was in touch with franchises for the "expedited travel of all South African players and support staff" back home, where they will undergo home quarantine.

The IPL has been running since early April, even as India's health care system has been overwhelmed by a vicious second wave of virus cases.

This prompted criticism from some who said it was inappropriate, given the suffering in the country, while others defended it as a welcome distraction.

Eight teams have been playing behind closed doors in six cities including Delhi and Mumbai, both badly hit by the pandemic.

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UEFA allows 26-player squads for Euro 2020

AFP | London

UEFA said yesterday it would allow expanded 26-man squads at Euro 2020, meeting a demand from coaches who feared they could lose players due to coronavirus.

European football's governing body said it had agreed the increase from 23 players "to mitigate the risks of teams facing a shortage of available players for certain matches due to possible positive Covid-19 test results and subsequent quarantine measures".

France coach Didier Deschamps and Belgium boss Roberto Martinez were among those who had called for the change while England manager Gareth Southgate had been opposed.

Matchday squads will still be limited to 23 players.

UEFA clarified that the current regulations that allow coaches to change their squads after the cut-off point of June



The trophy of the UEFA Euro 2020 is pictured on Sant'Angelo bridge in Rome

5

substitutions will be allowed in games at the delayed Euro 2020 instead of the usual three, in line with current rules across many club competitions

UEFA had already decided that teams would be allowed to make up to five substitutions in games at the delayed Euro 2020 instead of the usual three, in line with current rules across many club competitions.

National teams have named squads of 23 players at the World Cup and European Championship ever since the 2002 World Cup in Japan and South Korea.

Euro 2020 was postponed last year because of the pandemic but is due to take place at venues across the continent, from June 11 to July 11.

Halep knocked out of Madrid Open by Mertens

AFP | Madrid

World number three Simona Halep was dumped out of the Madrid Open yesterday, losing 4-6, 7-5, 7-5 in the round of 16 to the Belgian Elise Mertens.

Halep had sailed through the first two rounds on the Spanish clay without dropping a set but she ended up second best in a match which yielded 15 breaks of serve.

Halep produced 10 double faults in the match, Mertens nine.



Simona Halep

Halep, a two-time Grand Slam champion and former world number one, was twice a break up in the final set at 3-1

and 4-3 but finally succumbed after just over two and a half hours of play.

In the quarter-finals 13th seed Mertens will meet the Belarusian seventh seed Aryna Sabalenka, who dispatched American Jessica Pegula 6-1, 6-2 in just 52 minutes.

Two other quarter-final line-ups are also settled with world number one Ashleigh Barty set to meet ninth seed Petra Kvitova while eighth seed Belinda Bencic is up against unseeded Spaniard Paula Badosa, ranked 62 in the world.