



Tom Hanks is overcome by 'selfdoubt' when he watches his films

8

**CELEBS**

**Saudi Arabia lifts restrictions on Hajj pilgrim numbers this year**

Riyadh

With no restrictions this year, the number of Hajj pilgrims in Saudi Arabia in the upcoming season will be similar to the pre-pandemic levels.

Saudi Arabia will not impose any restrictions, including age limits, on Hajj pilgrims in 2023, according to the Hajj and Umrah minister, Tawfiq Al Rabiah.

"The number of pilgrims will return to what it was before the pandemic, without any age limit," Al Rabiah announced during the opening of Hajj Expo 2023.



HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister chairs the weekly Cabinet meeting

# Bahrain fights global inflation

**Harry is 'jealous' of Prince William**



Prince Harry

London

A royal expert said that Prince Harry is extremely jealous of Prince William following the release of bombshell excerpts from the Duke of Sussex' memoir 'Spare'.

Royal expert Kinsey Schofield said: "I believe that Harry and Meghan are bitterly jealous of the Prince and Princess of Wales", adding that Prince Harry's jealousy of Prince William goes back to when he was a child.

"People weren't lining up in the streets to meet Meghan Markle from *Suits*," the commentator stated.

**'I'm a mom now'**  
Quito

A man in Ecuador legally changed his gender to female to win a custody battle of his two young daughters in court, a report said.

Rene Salinas Ramos, 47, will now be listed as a female on official documents in Ecuador, the New York Post reported.

He still identifies as a male but the decision came as he wanted to attain the custody of his girls.

220 fils (includes VAT)



HRH Prince Salman issues directive to extend financial support to low-income families

**Urgent plans and procedures underway to stabilise prices and ensure availability of commodities**

TDT | Manama

His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, yesterday issued a directive to help low-income families in the face of global inflation.

HRH Prince Salman directed the concerned authorities and the Ministry of Social Development to disburse an additional month of financial support for them for January 2023.

This came as His Royal Highness yesterday chaired the weekly Cabinet meeting at Gu-daiya Palace.

He also directed the concerned government authorities to develop urgent plans and procedures to stabilise prices

and ensure the availability of commodities.

HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister also ordered the temporary suspension of industrial land fees for food storage facilities for three months; the temporary suspension of approvals and fees required by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce for supermarkets to run promotional campaigns for three months; and the intensification of inspection campaigns to monitor prices in local markets.

**Outcomes**

The Cabinet commended the outcomes of the fifth session of the Bahraini-Jordanian Joint Higher Committee meeting, which was co-chaired by HRH Prince Salman and the Minister of Defence of Jordan, Dr Bisher Al Khasawneh.

The Cabinet highlighted the agreements that were signed during the meeting, which will contribute to enhancing bilateral partnerships across trade and



commerce, labour and vocational training, healthcare, youth, education, information, and sea and air freight services.

The Cabinet declared Thursday, 2 February, a half workday at ministries and state departments, to mark National Sports

Day, which will be dedicated to emphasising the importance of sports and to allow staff to engage in sports events.

On the occasion of Diplomatic Day, which is observed annually in Bahrain on 14 January, the Cabinet commended the achievements made by the Kingdom of Bahrain in the diplomatic field, which have strengthened Bahrain's international standing and contributed to the development of its relations with various countries that share the goals of ensuring security and stability, in enhancing development at a global level.

The Cabinet congratulated the Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Endowments, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education for winning the Arab Government Excellence Awards.

The Cabinet commended the achievements of the ministries and government agencies, for winning awards for excellence in government work at local, regional and international levels.

**(Continued on Page 2)**

**Drones for Russia**

## Iran 'contributing to war crimes' in Ukraine

Mexico City

Iran could be contributing to war crimes in Ukraine by providing drones to Russia, White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said yesterday.

"Their weapons are being used to kill civilians in Ukraine and to try to plunge cities into cold and darkness which, from our point of view, puts Iran in a place where it could potentially be contributing to widespread war crimes," Sullivan told reporters during a trip by President Joe Biden to Mexico.



Ukraine has been hit by swarms of kamikaze drones sold by Iran to Russia

The US has imposed sanctions on companies and people it accused of producing or transferring Iranian drones that Russia has used to attack civilian infrastructure in Ukraine.

The White House said last week that the US is also con-

sidering ways to target Iran's production of the unmanned weaponised aircraft through sanctions and export controls.

**Death penalty**

Meanwhile, Iran has sentenced to death three people accused of killing three members of the security forces during the protests triggered by the death of Mahsa Amini, the judiciary said yesterday.

The Islamic republic has been rocked by civil unrest since the

September 16 death of Kurdish Iranian Amini, 22, following her arrest for allegedly violating Iran's strict dress code for women.

The latest sentences, which can still be appealed, bring to 17 the total number of people condemned to death in connection with the more than three months of protests.

Four of those convicted have been executed and two others are on death row after their sentences were upheld by the country's supreme court.

# Praise for banking and finance sector

TDT | Manama

His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, commended the banking and finance sector's contributions in creating quality opportunities for citizens and in supporting the Kingdom's comprehensive development, led by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

This came as HRH Prince Salman met yesterday with a delegation from Grow Digital Bank, at Gudaibiya Palace.

HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister emphasised the importance of banking and financial institutions in supporting various economic sectors, generating substantial growth, and raising Bahrain's global competitiveness.

He noted the rapid growth of financial services, which will continue to benefit from further plans, initiatives, and strategies



HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister meets with the Grow Digital Bank delegation

that aim at increasing the efficiency of the sector.

HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister highlighted the Kingdom's strategic location as an integral investment hub for regional and global companies.

The Grow Digital Bank dele-

gation expressed their gratitude to His Royal Highness for his support in developing the banking and finance sector, wishing the Kingdom further progress and prosperity.

Finance and National Econo-

my Minister Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, Central Bank of Bahrain Governor Rasheed Mohamed Al Maraj, Cabinet Affairs Minister Hamad bin Faisal Al Malki and Bahrain Economic Development Board Chief Executive Khalid Humaidan also attended the meeting.

## Consensus on Government Action Programme reached

TDT | Manama

An agreement was reached yesterday between the executive and legislative branches to enter amendments in the Government Action Plan.

The consensus was reached during the fourth joint meeting which was held between the Government Programme Study Committee and the Government Team.

The two sides agree to designate the first priority within



The fourth joint executive-legislative meeting in progress

the program to become under the title "Raising the standard of living of citizens in a way that preserves the gains of citizens."

They also reached a consensus

on adding a new initiative to the program that provides for "development of social assistance provided to citizens, including the inflation allowance," and "adopting policies that raise the standard of living in a way that preserves the purchasing power of retirees."

Representatives Council Speaker Ahmed bin Salman Al Musallam and Deputy Prime Minister Shaikh Khalid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa co-chaired the session.

**The 16 projects within the GPF 3.1 are aimed at achieving financial sustainability and securing a supportive environment for development.**

## Cabinet reviews government priority projects

(Continuation from Page 1)  
TDT | Manama

The Cabinet reviewed a memorandum submitted by the Government Executive Committee on the implementation of the Government Priorities Framework 3.1.

The Cabinet directed the ministries, each in its respective capacity, to develop the implementation plan for the remaining 16 projects within the GPF 3.1, aimed at achieving financial sustainability and securing a supportive environment for development.

It also reviewed the progress of a number of development initiatives for electricity and water services, including measures that have been taken to address the gathering of rainfall in certain areas.

In this regard, the Cabinet commended the efforts made by the concerned authorities, led by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture and the Ministry of Works.

The Cabinet discussed several memorandums during the meeting with the following outcomes:

The approval of the following memorandum:

1- A memorandum by the Ministerial Committee for Legal and Legislative Affairs regarding a draft decision outlining which governmental health facilities are subject to the health insurance law.



**2- A memorandum by the Minister of Municipalities and Agriculture Affairs regarding the acquisition of real estate for public use to provide the necessary spaces for urban development.**

The Cabinet then took note of the ministerial reports regarding the visit of the GCC Secretary General's to Bahrain and the visit of the Minister of Sustainable Development to Saudi Arabia.

## Philippine Chancery moves to new location

TDT | Manama

The Philippine Chancery has transferred to its new location at Building 2186, Road 2755, Block 327, Adliya, Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain, effective 1 January 2023.

The new Chancery is a four-villa compound with a bigger floor area to accommodate the Embassy's various offices, including the attached offices of POLO, OWWA and SSS, and the Sentro Rizal Manama.

The Philippine and ASEAN flags were hoisted for the very first time at the new Philip-

pine Chancery on 2 January during a flag-raising ceremony attended by the Embassy's officers and staff led by Charge d'Affaires Anne Jalando-on Louis.

The new Philippine Chancery opened its doors for the first time to the transacting public on 3 January.

Visitors and clients may access the Embassy's official website and Facebook and Instagram accounts for the map to the new Chancery as well as to the nearest bus stop. The Embassy's contact numbers remain the same.

## Harlow and Hart live at Al Dana Amphitheatre next month

Staff Reporter  
TDT | Manama

Last year, it was announced that Americans Jack Harlow, rapper, and Kevin Hart, comedian and actor, were set to perform at Al Dana Amphitheatre.

As they are now performing next month, many are waiting in anticipation and are even considering travelling to Bahrain to see the live performances.

Users on social media have stated that: "I am so close to going to Bahrain to see Jack Harlow perform live."

Another user posted: "I have already purchased my ticket to

Bahrain to see Jack Harlow perform and I am so excited!"

The Daily Tribune previously reported the Kingdom's commitment to boosting tourism in the Arab region, as well as utilising recent global developments to attract Arab and foreign tourists to the region.

The Kingdom has been working on ways to strengthen cooperation in Arab tourism integration, tourism marketing, training Arab nationals in the tourism sector, attracting tourism investments to the Arab region, keeping pace with the digital transformation in the tourism industry, and promoting tour-



Al Dana Amphitheatre is the ideal destination for hosting live entertainment events in Bahrain

ist sites and destinations in the Arab world.

Tourism Development Index, Bahrain ranked first amongst Arab countries and second in MENA in Ground and Port Infrastructure.

The report also highlighted other strong rankings for the Kingdom, as it was ranked 12th globally in business development.

As the Kingdom continues to progress their tourism and travel development, it has been announced that Harlow will be performing live at Al Dana Amphitheatre on 23 February 2023.

Also announced last year, Al Dana Amphitheatre will be hosting Hart for the first time ever on

February 24, 2023.

Government plans aim to hold more entertainment events to boost tourism and entertainment in the region. Developing the tourism sector is key for supporting the Kingdom's economy.

Additionally, they are aimed at diversifying its tourism offerings, positioning the country as a major global tourist destination, and expanding on existing source markets, attracts more tourists and boosts average daily visitor spending. Moreover,

boosting economic growth also creates and provides more jobs for Bahrainis.

# Nominations open for HRH Princess Sabeeka Award

## ● 16th local edition to honour productive Bahraini families

TDT | Manama

The Ministry of Social Development has announced the opening of nominations for the 16th local edition of "Her Royal

Highness Princess Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa Award for Productive Families".

The winners will be honoured on March 16, under the patronage of HRH Princess Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, wife of HM the King and President of the Supreme Council for Women (SCW).

Bahraini productive families are encouraged to apply for the award by registering in the electronic form on its website ([\[social.gov.bh\]\(http://social.gov.bh\)\) from January 8 to February 16.](http://www.</a></p>
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Social Development Minister, Osama bin Ahmed Khalaf Al Asfoor, praised HRH Princess Sabeeka's constant interest in encouraging Bahraini productive families, enabling those families to engage in economic career that would ensure the requirements of decent life for their members.

Al Asfoor said that the HRH



HRH Princess Sabeeka

Princess Sabeeka's award is an annual opportunity to recognise the unique experiences of productive families who have set themselves as role models for contributing to the development process.

He noted that the award is among the major national initiatives aimed at enhancing women's status, and increasing their role in achieving sustainable development in the Kingdom.

The award is being organised annually at the local level and every two years at the Arab level after the Council of Arab Social Affairs Ministers issued a resolution in 2010 approving the launch of the award at the Arab level to encourage productive families.

The award is granted in three categories, namely the "Best Productive Family", the "Best Product" and the "Best Sponsor of Productive Families".

## EWA is set to launch new customer services and billing system in February

TDT | Manama

Electricity and Water Authority (EWA) new customer services and billing system will be launched in early February.

This was announced by EWA President Kamal bin Ahmed Mohammed.

The new system is part of EWA's comprehensive development strategy, and is focused on advancing digital transformation in the authority to enhance the quality of services provided to customers.

Kamal said that the new system is comprehensive and capitalises on the latest technologies used in securing optimum service delivery.

Turning to the advantages of the new system, he explained that facilitation of electricity and water services will be more efficient, and that the format of bills, and the information they display will be clearer. Billing operations will also undergo further optimisation to ensure increased transparency and accuracy."



**"The facilitation of electricity and water services will be more efficient, and that the format of bills, and the information they display will be clearer. Billing operations will also undergo further optimisation to ensure increased transparency and accuracy."**

- KAMAL BIN AHMED MOHAMMED, ELECTRICITY AND WATER AUTHORITY (EWA) PRESIDENT

tem follows a series of development projects undertaken by the authority with the aim of providing an integrated, modern, and smart system.

This include developing electricity and water transportation and distribution infrastructure, initiating the digital metres' installation project, and working on a project to establish a new control centre for electricity and water networks.

## Asian woman acquitted of stealing sponsor's money

### ● Court rules there's no enough evidence

TDT | Manama

The Lower Criminal Court has acquitted an Asian domestic helper of robbing BD50 from her sponsor due to a lack of evidence.

The woman allegedly stole the money from the sponsor's wallet, as she was caught by the CCTV cameras installed inside the house.

She was charged with robbery after the sponsor filed a case against her and provided the footage captured by the

cameras as proof for his claims. However, the defendant's lawyer argued that the case was malicious as there were disagreements and differences between them as the woman had allegedly decided to vacate the house.

The lawyer added that the woman's criminal history was clean and never committed a robbery and this represents clear proof that she was innocent.

The Court in its ruling pointed out that it's prescribed by law that any person shall be cleared of charges when insufficient pieces of evidence were submitted. As a result, the woman was acquitted.

# CBSE board exams are just around the corner

## The New Indian School holds remedial classes to help students prepare well

Zahra Ayaz  
TDT | Manama

Many students are nervous about scoring the passing grades they need for the upcoming CBSE board examinations, but school administration is making every effort to motivate students.

As students return to their schools after the winter break, term and model examinations will also begin for higher standards in various schools across the Kingdom.

Educators had difficult times during the pandemic and are still struggling with new challenges yet schools introduce students to new ideas, teach them to socialise more, and participate in activities that enhance growth.

Speaking to The Daily Tribune, K Gopinath Menon, Principal of The New Indian School, said: "Our school management is working on three things: finishing the portion, ensuring students are performing well in revision, and holding remedial classes for pupils who are unable to cope following the pandemic.

"The remedial classes are held from 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm. We are conducting model exams at the end of January, so our calendar is set for all students, particularly those in the 10th and 12th grades.

"Of doubt, students are frightened and concerned, but not all of them are; some are really relaxed about examinations and genuinely want to get the best grade possible."

Mr Menon emphasised that parents are also under pressure, but in addition to all the studies, "we also hold motivational speeches and workshops for



The students are experiencing examination fears and stress



**"Stress can affect your physical and mental wellbeing. Parents and teachers have a great role in helping the students manage exam stress. Parents should refrain from enforcing their expectations on their children."**

- JASEELA MUJEEB, COUNSELOR AND PSYCHOTHERAPIST

students, and we look for both high achievers who want to ramp up their marks and struggling children."

Jaseela Mujeeb, an experienced counselor and psychotherapist, told The Daily Tribune: "Due to unexpected and forced transition due to Covid-19, most students were led to a heightened sense of loneliness, distress and boredom. Since the classes are offline now, most of them are facing anxiety to cope up with their curriculum.

"Some are facing exam fears, according to the number of students coming for counselling,

and symptoms for anxiety is alarming.

"Stress can affect your physical and mental wellbeing. Parents and teachers have a great role in helping the students manage exam stress. Parents should refrain from enforcing their expectations on their children."

She pointed out that students should eat a well-balanced diet and follow a regular sleep pattern, and help them keep a routine for studies and revise often

and be more social, get help from teachers if the students have any doubt.



**"Our school management is working on three things: finishing the portion, ensuring students are performing well in revision, and holding remedial classes for pupils who are unable to cope following the pandemic."**

- K GOPINATH MENON, PRINCIPAL OF THE NEW INDIAN SCHOOL

"Relaxation techniques like deep breathing and meditation will help you overcome stress. For most students, school is not just about academics, it is also about social interaction.

"School provides structure and outline to the lives of students. Since they were confined to the walls of their homes for the past four years, they lack social skills of adjustment.

"When they are exposed to the external society after the pandemic, some students are not able to express themselves. In that case, it is necessary to seek professional help," she added.

## Kingdom supports global awareness campaign on climate change

Ashen Tharaka  
TDT | Manama

Today, around 194 countries have agreed to reduce fossil fuel use and CO2 emissions by 2050 and keep global warming below 2°C by 2100 under the historic Paris Agreement.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has committed to achieving net-zero by 2060, and a 30% reduction through decarbonisation and

energy efficiency initiatives by 2035.

There is no doubt that physical changes in our environment significantly impact business operations, and there is an increasing level of regulation on climate-related risks at a global level.

In an interview with The Daily Tribune, Abdul Musavir, an Indian national who has worked in this field for the past 22 years, said that the last five years had

seen significant weather variations.

"I believe the chilly weather that is prevailing now was last experienced five years ago and it is gradually changing," Musavir said.

He added that the amount of heat had progressively grown and that dust particles had increased.

The Central Bank of Bahrain recently urged all licensees

in the Kingdom to help raise awareness within their organisations about climate and social-related risks, and to assess how they would identify and address them appropriately.

Referring to the recommendations of the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures, these requirements will likely increase as regulators endeavour to support net-zero targets.

## Bahrain receives three Arab awards for excellent government projects



Bahrain was honoured during the second session of the Arab Government Excellence Award (2021-2022), which was held at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo. The Kingdom's Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Endowments, and Ministry of Education each won an award. The Health Ministry won the Best Arab Government Project Award to develop the health sector through the "telemedicine and therapy" project. The Justice Ministry won an award for its "computerisation of Bahraini courts and the complete transformation from a paper system to an electronic one" project. The Education Ministry won an award for its "My Digital Library" project, which was selected as the best Arab government project to develop education. Above, representatives of the ministries receive the awards.

# Planting seeds for an 'eco-friendly future'

Rotary Club of Salmaniya works to promote education of sustainable farming and living

● Projects organised to encourage locally grown produce in the Kingdom

Staff Reporter  
TDT | Manama

The Rotary Club of Salmaniya has partnered with various societies to carry out projects regarding sustainable farming, supporting the environment, education of farming, educating beneficiaries, and to encourage locally grown produce in the Kingdom.

The club has been helping communities in Bahrain for more than 50 years now.

It focuses on seven areas, namely basic education and literacy, disease prevention and treatment, water sanitation and hygiene, community economic development, maternity and child health, supporting the environment, and peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

The greenhouse project, sustainable farming program, and the permaculture educational program aimed to support the environment and basic education of farming. Additionally, these projects aim to promote zero waste life, as well as promote and encourage the local farming economy.

Hasan Al Mansoor, President of the Rotary Club of Salmaniya, told The Daily Tribune: "We have demonstrated that local farming is possible and we encourage others to participate in sustainable living in the Kingdom."



Participants, including children, take part in Rotary Club of Salmaniya's various activities and projects



He further expanded on the projects, adding: "The Rotary Club of Salmaniya organised the yearly service project (the greenhouse project), and we invited beneficiaries from the Bahrain Down Syndrome Care Center, Al Rahma Center, and The Friendship Society for the Blind to plant seeds of various crops in the greenhouse. "The Khalid Janahi Charity has always been kind enough

to provide the greenhouse and helpers to plant the seeds. This project has helped educate and encourage participants in the process of farming and sustainable living."

For the permaculture initiative, The Rotary Club of Salmaniya and Learn to Grow jointly organised a holistic farming educational activity day for the beneficiaries of Dreams Society and the Friendship Society for

the Blind with support from the newly chartered Rotaract Club of Muharraq.

Hasan said: "The program is a hands-on activity designed for children to interact with nature and learn about permaculture as well as plants and animals located in Bahrain.

"Activities include community circles, art workshops, and a music movement. The event ended with the attendees waving the Bahrain flag in celebration of the National Day."

They also organised the sustainable farming project for children with cancer and survivors of cancer in January 2022.

Children were able to enjoy a full day of activities which included learning about planting, feeding the farm animals, and harvesting vegetables from the farm.

Hasan said: "The children are members of the Dream Society and Smile of Bahrain, in which both societies were very supportive of this project.

"We are grateful as Jasra Or-



A sustainable farming project was organised for children with cancer and survivors of cancer in January 2022. The children were able to enjoy a full day of activities which included learning about planting, feeding the farm animals, and harvesting vegetables from the farm.

ganic Farm was kind enough to offer their venue for the event and provided vegetables to all attendees."

Faisal Juma, vice president of The Rotary Club of Salmaniya, told The Daily Tribune: "The aim of these projects is to engage with all members of our society in the process of farming. We want to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in all our projects.

"We also aim to educate the beneficiaries regarding farming and preserving nature to showcase the natural beauty that Bahrain has to offer."



**"We have demonstrated that local farming is possible and we encourage others to participate in sustainable living in the Kingdom."**

- HASAN AL MANSOOR, ROTARY CLUB OF SALMANIYA PRESIDENT

**Kingdom supports humanitarian and charitable programmes**

TDT | Manama

Social Development Minister Osama bin Ahmed Al Asfoor has affirmed the Kingdom's interest in humanitarian and charitable work by supporting various voluntary initiatives and meet societal needs in various fields.

Al Asfoor was speaking as he participated in the humanitarian and charitable work award-distribution ceremony in its third edition, organised by Tree Of Life Charity Society.

He praised the award's aims in establishing charitable and voluntary work and spread and strengthening the concept of volunteer work culture as a national and humanitarian responsibility ever since its first establishment.

The Minister highlighted the support of the ministry and its keenness to organise charitable and social work as a sector parallel to the efforts of government and private institutions and the importance of community partnership between various sectors, for the success of charitable and development initiatives in the Bahraini society.

He stressed the importance of improving development programs and projects implemented by civil society organisations to develop its sustainability and keeps pace with social changes.

## Saudi deal on Haj arrangements

Jeddah

Justice, Islamic Affairs and Endowments Minister, Nawaf bin Mohammed Al Maawda, has signed an agreement on this year's Hajj arrangements with Saudi Haj and Umrah Minister, Dr Tawfiq bin Fawzan Al Rabiah, as part of the Ministry's early preparations for the Haj season.

The agreement was signed on the sidelines of the Haj and Umrah Expo and Conference (Haj Expo 2023), held here under the patronage of the Advisor to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, Prince Khalid Al Faisal, Governor of Makkah Al Mukarramah Region.

**IDBI Bank gets domestic, global bids for stake sale: India govt official**  
Reuters

The Indian government has received interest from both domestic and foreign investors to acquire a majority stake in IDBI Bank (IDBI.NS), the country's divestment secretary told yesterday.

On Saturday, the government said it got multiple bids for the majority stake in IDBI Bank.

The federal government owns 45.48% of IDBI Bank, and is looking to divest a 30.48% stake in the lender, alongside state-owned Life Insurance Corp of India (LIC) (LIFI.NS), which will sell a 30.24% from its holding of 49.24% in the bank.

"We hope to conclude IDBI Bank sale by first half of the next financial year," Tuhin Kanta Pandey, secretary of Department of Investment and Public Asset Management, said in an interview.

The bidders will be vetted for the Reserve Bank of India's "fit and proper criteria" and then the confidential data of the lender will be shared with potential bidders, Pandey said.

The divestment department, managing privatisation of state-owned firms and overseeing stake sales in companies, has so far mopped up 311.1 billion rupees (\$3.78 billion) out of its 650 billion rupees target for 2022-23.

"The government will explore whatever opportunity (offer for sale) if market conditions remain favourable," Pandey said.

The federal government is planning to sell a part of its stake in Hindustan Zinc in the current financial year, he added. India owns 29.5% stake in Hindustan Zinc.

**Saudi Arabia includes Diriyah tourism project in PIF's portfolio -SPA**



Representative picture

Reuters | Riyadh

Saudi Arabia has included a Diriyah tourism project in the portfolio of its sovereign wealth fund, the Public Investment Fund (PIF), to improve investment efficiency and public-private cooperation, state news agency SPA reported yesterday.

The development of Diriyah, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was previously under Diriyah Gate Development Authority (DGDA), which will continue its supervision, SPA said, citing an announcement by the Saudi crown prince.

# Shares ride high on upbeat oil prices; FAB drags Abu Dhabi

Reuters

**M**ost major Gulf stock markets closed higher on Monday, as risk appetite picked up and investors hoped rising oil prices would continue pumping more dollars into the region.

Oil, which fuels the region's growth, extended gains on Monday, rising about 3% after China's move to reopen its borders boosted the outlook for fuel demand and overshadowed global recession concerns.

Brent crude was up \$2.29, or 2.9%, at \$80.86 a barrel by 1150 GMT.

Fadi Reyad, chief market analyst at CAPEX.com MENA, said GCC stock markets were mostly seeing positive performances on back of improved sentiment as China continues its reopening.

The benchmark Qatari index (.QSI) jumped 1.5%, boosted by financial and petrochemical stocks, as the Gulf's largest lender Qatar National Bank (QNBK.QA) surged 2.5%, while Industries Qatar (IQCD.QA) was up 1.7%.

Qatari IT services firm MEEZA,



Representative image

## 80.95

Brent crude was up \$2.38, or 3.03%, at \$80.95 a barrel by 1312 GMT while U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude rose \$2.36, or 3.2%, to \$76.13.

part-owned by telecom operator Ooredoo (ORDS.QA), said it is selling 50% of its share capital in a public-share sale with a planned listing on the Qatar

Stock Exchange.

Saudi Arabia's benchmark index (.TASI) rose 1.1%, led by a 1.3% hike in Al Rajhi Bank (1120.SE) while oil behemoth and index heavyweight Saudi Aramco (2222.SE) settled 0.6% up.

Among other active stocks, Zain KSA (7030.SE) ended up 3.3%, paring gains after rising as much as 7.3% in the session after saying it sold its stake in the tower's infrastructure to Golden Lattice Investment Company

in a deal valued at 3.02 billion ryals (\$803.94 million).

Dubai's main share index (.DFMGI) edged up 0.6%, as its

## Closing Bell

SAUDI	▲ 1.1% to 10,647
ABU DHABI	▼ 0.3% to 10,170
DUBAI	▲ 0.6% to 3,322
QATAR	▲ 1.5% to 11,467
EGYPT	▲ 0.6% to 16,097
BAHRAIN	▲ 0.1% to 1,889
OMAN	▲ 0.3% 4,848
KUWAIT	▲ 0.4% to 7,959

blue-chip developer Emaar Properties (EMAR.DU) and Sharia-compliant lender Dubai Islamic Bank (DISB.DU), were up 1.4%.

Abu Dhabi's index (.FTFADGI), however, slipped 0.3%, extending losses to the fourth session in a row, pressured by a 3% slump in its largest lender First Abu Dhabi Bank (FAB.AD).

FAB said on Thursday it had considered a bid for London-listed Standard Chartered (STAN.L), but was no longer doing so.

Outside the Gulf, Egypt's blue-chip index (.EGX30) was up 0.6%, with Commercial International Bank Egypt (COMI.CA) rising 2.2%.

## Traffic in Suez Canal normal after ship breakdown dealt with, SCA says

Reuters | Cairo

**S**hipping traffic in the Suez Canal was proceeding normally yesterday after tugs towed a cargo vessel that broke down during its passage through the waterway, the Canal Authority said.

The breakdown was expected to cause only minor delays, with convoys of ships resuming regular transit by 11:00 local time (09:00 GMT), shipping agent Leth said.

The M/V Glory, which was sailing to China, suffered a technical fault when it was 38km into its passage southward through the canal, before being towed by four tugs to a repair area, the Suez Canal Authority (SCA) said in a statement.

The M/V Glory is a Marshall Islands-flagged bulk carrier, data from trackers VesselFinder and MarineTraffic showed.

In 2021, a huge container ship, the Ever Given, became



A tugboat pulls the Marshall Islands-flagged bulk carrier M/V Glory in the Suez Canal (SUEZ CANAL AUTHORITY)

stuck in high winds across a southern section of the canal, blocking traffic for six days before it could be dislodged.

The M/V Glory is a Marshall Islands-flagged bulk carrier, data from trackers VesselFinder and MarineTraffic showed.

It departed Ukraine's Chornomorsk port on Dec. 25 bound for China with 65,970 metric

tonnes of corn, according to the Istanbul-based Joint Coordination Centre (JCC) overseeing Ukraine grain exports.

The JCC, which includes representatives from the United Nations, Turkey, Ukraine and Russia, said the ship had been cleared to carry on its journey from Istanbul after an inspection on Jan. 3.

## Sukuk Al Salam Securities oversubscribed by 258%

TDT | Manama

**T**he Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB) announced that the monthly issue of the Sukuk Al Salam Islamic securities has been oversubscribed by 258%.

Subscriptions worth BD 111,040 million were received for the BD 43 million issue, which carries a maturity of 91 days.

The expected return on the issue, which begins on January 11 and matures on April 12, is 5.72% compared to 5.60% on the previous issue on December 14 2022.

The Sukuk Al Salam is issued by the CBB on behalf of the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

This is issue No.261 (BH000H8P7158) of the short-term Sukuk Al Salam series.

**India's Paytm bank gets central bank nod to name new CEO**

Reuters | New Delhi

**P**aytm Payments Bank, majority owned by billionaire Vijay Shekhar Sharma, has received India's central bank's approval to name Surinder Chawla as its new chief executive, a statement said.

Last year, India's central bank barred Paytm Payments Bank from taking on new customers and ordered a comprehensive audit of its IT systems, citing "material" supervisory concerns observed in the bank.

Paytm Payments Bank facilitates transactions on mobile commerce platform Paytm.

## Indian court grants bail to ICICI Bank ex-CEO Chanda Kochhar



Chanda Kochhar  
Reuters | Mumbai

**A**n Indian court yesterday granted bail to former ICICI Bank (ICBK.NS) chief executive Chanda Kochhar and her husband after they were arrested in December in connection with an alleged loan fraud case involving the bank and Videocon Group.

Kochhar was one of India's highest-profile business leaders before she was ousted as ICICI CEO in 2019 following allegations that the bank, under her watch, sanctioned "high value" loans to Videocon in violation of its lending policies.

In return, Videocon's owner invested in NuPower Renewables, founded by Kochhar's husband Deepak, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) alleges. The agency arrested Videocon Chairman Venugopal Dhoot late last month.

All the parties have denied the allegations of loan fraud.

The Bombay High Court on Monday ordered that the Kochhars be released on bail.

It said the arrests, done by the CBI alleging that the Kochhars had been not been cooperating with the investigation, were "not in accordance with law".

The ground for arresting the petitioners as stated in the arrest memos, is unacceptable and is contrary to the reason(s)/ground(s) on which a person can be arrested," said the order by judges Prithviraj K. Chavan and Revati Mohite Dere.

The Kochhars will be released on cash bail of 100,000 rupees (\$1,214) each "for a period of two weeks".

## Walaa Radhi wins "Lamae" Programme award

TDT | Manama



Walaa Radhi with Mikkel Vinter and Faisal Aljalahma

Resources Officer, Faisal Aljalahma greeted Walaa and congratulated her.

Vinter said: "We are delighted that a team member from Batelco, part of the Beyon group, won this prestigious trophy and are extremely proud of Walaa's accomplishment."

Walaa Radhi commended: "I'm extremely honoured to have won in the national leadership programme, and to receive this prestigious recognition. I also feel proud and privileged to have gotten the opportunity to represent Batelco and I would like to thank everyone who supported and helped me achieve my ambitions."

tencies, to empower, mold and prepare them to take on leadership roles in various industries in the Kingdom.

Beyon & Batelco CEO, Mikkel Vinter and Beyon Chief Human

## News in brief

◆ **The Omicron-adapted COVID-19 vaccine booster** developed by Pfizer Inc (PFE.N) and BioNTech SE (222UAY.DE) sharply reduced hospitalizations among older patients, Israeli researchers said on Monday, in some of the first evidence of the jab's real-world effectiveness. The study by researchers from healthcare provider Clalit, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and Sapir College has not yet been peer reviewed. It found an 81% reduction in hospitalizations among people aged 65 and older who had received the booster against those who had previously received at least two COVID vaccinations, but not the Omicron-adapted shot. The study was carried out from the end of September until mid-December and looked at 622,701 people aged 65 and over who were eligible for the bivalent booster. Among them, 85,314, or 14%, had received it.



**Omicron COVID booster cuts hospitalization in over 65s, Israeli study finds**

◆ **Pope Francis** yesterday privately met Archbishop Georg Ganswein, former Pope Benedict's closest aide, who has rattled the Vatican with a book describing what he says were the strains while two men wearing white lived within its ancient walls.



The Vatican's daily bulletin listed Ganswein in the pope's schedule of audiences but as is customary gave no details. Hours after Benedict was buried on Thursday, an Italian publishing house sent some news outlets including Reuters advance copies of Ganswein's 330-page "Nothing But The Truth - My Life Beside Benedict XVI". Ganswein, 66, was Benedict's personal secretary from 2003, when Benedict was still Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, and remained as his side for nearly 20 years until his death on Dec. 31. He was also Francis' gatekeeper until the two had a falling out. The main question now facing Francis is what position to give Ganswein. Many are waiting to see if he will get another job in the Vatican or be assigned somewhere else in the world.

## CURIOSER & CURIOSER

## Prince Harry says UK royals got into bed with tabloid press 'devil'

Reuters | London



Prince Harry has said he had made public his rifts with the British royal family and taken on the press to try to help the monarchy and change the media, the latter described by his father King Charles as a "suicide mission".

In the first of a series of TV interviews broadcast on Sunday ahead of the launch of his memoir, Harry accused members of his family of getting into bed with the devil - the tabloid press - to sully him and his wife Meghan to improve their own reputations.

He told Britain's ITV he had fled Britain with his family for California in 2020 "fearing for our lives" and said he no longer recognised his father or his elder brother Prince William, the heir to the throne.

"After many, many years of lies being told about me and my family, there comes a point where, going back to the relationship between certain members of the family and the tabloid press, those certain members have decided to get in the bed with the devil ... to rehabilitate their image," he said.

"The moment that that rehabilitation comes at the detriment of others, me, other members of my family, then that's where I draw the line."

In the ITV interview, Harry repeated and elaborated on accusations that he and Meghan have made since they left royal duties; that the royals and their aides not only failed to

protect them from a hostile and sometimes racist press, but actively leaked stories about them via anonymous sources.

"The saddest part of that is certain members of my family and the people that work for them

are complicit in that conflict," he said, indicating that included both Charles and Camilla.

So far, there has been no comment from Buckingham Palace. Harry said he didn't think his father or brother would read his book.

An unnamed friend of William told the Sunday Times that the Prince of Wales was "burning" with anger, but would not respond "for the good of his family and the country".

Harry told ITV he wanted reconciliation with his family members but said they had shown no interest, giving the impression it was better to keep him and Meghan as villains.

"I genuinely believe, and I hope, that reconciliation between my family and us will have a ripple effect across the entire world. Maybe that's lofty, maybe that's naive," he said.

Harry, in an interview with CBS' "60 Minutes" that aired later on Sunday, said the ball was in his family's court to heal the rupture.

"This all started with them briefing, daily, against my wife with lies to the point of where my wife and I had to run away from our country - my country," he said.

## Brazilian troops clear ex-prez Bolsonaro supporters' camp after capital strike

● **Lula promises justice for those behind Sunday's riots**

● **Bolsonaro, in Florida, says protesters 'crossed the line'**

● **Biden and other world leaders condemn 'outrageous' act**

● **Lula took office in January after narrow October win**

Reuters | Brasilia

**B**razilian soldiers backed by police dismantled a camp of supporters of far-right former President Jair Bolsonaro in the capital yesterday, a day after rioters launched the worst attack on state institutions since the country's return to democracy



Supporters of Brazil's far-right former President Jair Bolsonaro gather outside Brazil's Congress after protesters had invaded the building as well as the presidential palace and Supreme Court, in Brasilia, Brazil

cy in the 1980s. After thousands of Bolsonaro's backers stormed Congress, the Supreme Court and the presidential palace on Sunday, police in riot gear amassed at the pro-Bolsonaro camp outside Brasilia's army headquarters, while troops took down tents, Reuters witnesses said. The protesters were dispersed. President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Bolsonaro's

leftist rival who took office on Jan. 1 after a narrow October election win, promised to bring those responsible for the violence to justice, after demonstrators broke windows and furniture, destroyed art work and stole guns and artifacts.

Lula, who was back at work at the Planalto presidential palace,

met with his defense minister and the armed forces commanders to discuss the attacks that recalled the assault on the U.S. Capitol two years ago by backers of former President Donald Trump.

U.S. President Joe Biden joined other world leaders in condemning Sunday's riots, calling them "outrageous," while Bolsonaro, who is now in Florida, denied inciting his supporters and Police cars are pictured amidst tear gas after being pushed off the road by supporters of Brazil's far-right former President Jair Bolsonaro

said the rioters had "crossed the line."

Pro-Bolsonaro truckers, who have caused havoc on Brazil's highways for weeks, held more protests through the night.

A toll road operator for the BR 163 highway that cuts through

said on Saturday its significance lay in the network of mines there.

"It not only (has the ability to hold) a big group of people at a depth of 80-100 metres, but tanks and infantry fighting vehicles can also move about."

Military analysts say the strategic military benefit for Moscow would be limited. A US official has said Prigozhin, a powerful ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin, is eyeing the salt and gypsum from the mines.

President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said in a video address on Sunday that Bakhmut and Soledar were holding on despite widespread destruction after months of attacks.

"Our soldiers are repelling constant Russian attempts to ad-



A firefighter works at a site of a market hit by Russian missiles, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in the town of Shevchenkove, Kharkiv region

statement.

Yevgeny Prigozhin, founder of the Wagner mercenary group, has

been trying to capture Bakhmut and Soledar for months at the cost of many lives on both sides. He

## A child or youth died once every 10 seconds in 2021

● **Another 1.9 million babies were tragically stillborn during the same period, according to a separate UN report.**

New York | Geneva | Washington DC

**A**n estimated 5 million children died before their fifth birthday and another 2.1 children and youth aged between 5-24 years lost their lives in 2021, according to the latest estimates released by the United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UNGME).

In a separate report also released today, the group found that 1.9 babies were stillborn during



Julien, 8 months, received his vaccines against polio and measles at a health centre in As-Sweida city, south Syria



The roll-out of the Typhoid Conjugate Vaccine (TCV) to children between 15 months to 15 years at the Ambrosia Ideal Secondary School in Kathmandu, Nepal

the same period. Tragically, many of these deaths could have been prevented with equitable access and high-quality maternal, new-

born, adolescent and child health care.

"Every day, far too many parents are facing the trauma of

49 BC

Julius Caesar defies the Roman Senate and crosses the Rubicon, uttering "alea iacta est" (the die is cast), signaling the start of civil war which would lead to his appointment as Roman dictator for life



1475

Stephen III of Moldavia defeats the Ottoman Empire at the Battle of Vaslui

1839

First tea from leaves of indigenous plants of Assam, India arrives in the United Kingdom [date approximate]

1946

UN General Assembly meets for 1st time in London

# Isonaro formed

Brazil's top grain-producing state Mato Grosso reported several blockades that were cleared by dawn. Police said blockages on another highway in Parana state were also cleared.

"There are still people trying to block roads and access to oil refineries," presidential spokesman Paulo Pimenta told reporters. State-run oil company Petrobras (PETR4.SA) said its refinery operations and fuel supplies had not been affected.

Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes ordered the governor of Brasilia removed from office late on Sunday for 90 days over alleged security failings and demanded that social media platforms Facebook, Twitter and TikTok block accounts of users spreading anti-democratic propaganda.

Facebook parent Meta (METACQ) said yesterday it was removing content supporting or praising the weekend actions. Telegram, TikTok, Twitter and YouTube did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

## attacks

vance," he said. In Soledar "things are very difficult".

In an evacuee centre in nearby Kramatorsk, Olha, 60, said she had fled Soledar after moving from apartment to apartment as each was destroyed in tank battles.

"All of last week we couldn't come outside. Everyone was running around, soldiers with automatic weapons, screaming," said Olha, who gave only her first name.

"There isn't one house left intact," she said. "Apartments were burning, breaking in half."

Pro-Russian bloggers quoted Prigozhin as saying his forces were fighting for the administration building in Soledar.

# Indian PM Modi opens 17th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention in Indore

Modi calls Pravasis "brand ambassadors" on foreign soil.



Modi opens 17th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention 2023 in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India

● A 100 member delegation from Bahrain is at Indore for the convention

● Modi yesterday also opened the first ever digital PBD Exhibition

TDT | agencies

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday opened the 17th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention 2023 in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, calling Pravasi Bharatiyas as India's "brand ambassadors" on foreign soil.

Modi further stressed that Pravasis have a significant role to play in the country's journey as it enters the "Amrit Kaal" of the next 25 years.

"I consider Pravasi Bharatiyas as brand ambassadors of India on foreign soil. Your role is diverse. You are the brand ambassador for yoga, Ayurveda, cottage industry, handicrafts and also millets," Modi said.

The GenNext Pravasis are also curious to know about the country of their parents' origin," he said.

He also urged Indian universities to document the contri-



Indian PM inaugurates the 1st ever digital PBD Exhibition



Indian Ambassador Piyush Srivastava watches the live broadcast of PBD convention along with community members

butions made by the diaspora in their respective nations for the benefit of students.

The event was streamed live at Indian Embassy in Bahrain in the presence of Indian community members and Ambassador Piyush Srivastava.

A 100 member delegation from Bahrain is at Indore for the

convention, where they had discussions with V Muraleedharan, Minister of State for External Affairs of India, on Sunday.

Modi yesterday also opened the first ever digital PBD Exhibition on the theme AzadiKaAmritMahotsav - Contribution of Diaspora in Indian Freedom Struggle.

President of the Republic of Suriname, Chandrikapersad Santokhi, the special guest of honour at the event, said India has proven to be a reliable partner on regional and global platforms.

"Suriname has sought partnership (with India) in various fields including health, financial sectors and strengthening cultural ties by setting up institutes for Hindi language promotion in the Caribbean country," he said.

Guyana President Mohamed Irfaan Ali, the chief guest at the event, praised Modi for his efforts during the pandemic.

"When globalisation failed during the pandemic, Modi showed that it exists," he said.

Calling India an important strategic partner, Irfaan Ali recalled how the country helped it with COVID-19 vaccines and medicines in its time of need.

He further said there are massive opportunities for India's private sector in Guyana.

"I visited this country earlier and studied here before becoming the president (of Guyana) and felt the love of Indian people," he added.



TOP  
4  
TWEETS

01



Addressing the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention in Indore. The Indian diaspora has distinguished itself all over the world.

@narendramodi

02



I'm in Mexico to meet with President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador of Mexico and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada at the North American Leaders' Summit. This gathering will deepen our coordination and advance our shared priorities for North America.

@POTUS

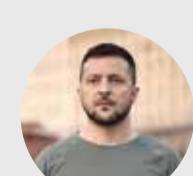
03



I hope that the people of Brazil are able to resolve matters peacefully

@elonmusk

04



Spoke with Prime Minister of Portugal @antoniocostapm. We talked about security cooperation. Thanked for the readiness to provide effective support to the energy system of Ukraine. We also discussed concrete steps to implement our #PeaceFormula.

@ZelenskyyUa

# every 4.4 seconds in 2021 – UN report

losing their children, sometimes even before their first breath," said Vidhya Ganesh, UNICEF Director of the Division of Data Analytics, Planning and Monitoring. "Such widespread, preventable tragedy should never be accepted as inevitable. Progress is possible with stronger political will and targeted investment in equitable access to primary health care for every woman and child."

The reports show some positive outcomes with a lower risk of death across all ages globally since 2000. The global under-five mortality rate fell by 50% since the start of the century, while mortality rates in older children and youth dropped by 36%, and the stillbirth rate decreased by 35%. This can be attributed to more investments in strengthening primary health systems

to benefit women, children and young people.

However, gains have reduced significantly since 2010, and 54 countries will fall short of meeting the Sustainable Development Goals target for under-five mortality. If swift action is not taken to improve health services, warn the agencies, almost 59 children and youth will die before 2030, and nearly 16 babies will be lost to stillbirth.

"It is grossly unjust that a child's chances of survival can be shaped just by their place of birth, and that there are such vast inequities in their access to lifesaving health services," said Dr Anshu Banerjee, Director for Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health and Ageing at the World Health Organization (WHO). "Children everywhere

need strong primary health care systems that meet their needs and those of their families, so that – no matter where they are born – they have the best start and hope for the future."

Children continue to face wildly differentiating chances of survival based on where they are born, with sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia shouldering the heaviest burden, the reports show. Though sub-Saharan Africa had just 29% of global live births, the region accounted for 56% of all under-five deaths in 2021, and Southern Asia for 26% of the total. Children born in sub-Saharan Africa are subject to the highest risk of childhood death in the world – 15 times higher than the risk for children in Europe and Northern America.

Mothers in these two regions

need strong primary health care systems that meet their needs and those of their families, so that – no matter where they are born – they have the best start and hope for the future."

More than 5 million children died before reaching their fifth birthday in 2020. Almost half of those deaths, 2.4 million, occurred among newborns

also endure the painful loss of babies to stillbirth at an exceptional rate, with 77% of all stillbirths in 2021 occurring in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Nearly half of all stillbirths happened in sub-Saharan Africa. The risk of a woman having a stillborn baby in

sub-Saharan Africa is seven times more likely than in Europe and North America.

While COVID-19 has not directly increased childhood mortality – with children facing a lower likelihood of dying from the disease than adults – the pandemic may have increased future risks to their survival. In particular, the reports highlight concerns around disruptions to vaccination campaigns, nutrition services, and access to primary health care, which could jeopardize their health and well-being for many years to come. In addition, the pandemic has fuelled the largest continued backslide in vaccinations in three decades, putting the most vulnerable newborns and children at greater risk of dying from preventable diseases.

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





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# Manama edge Al Sadd in West Asian basketball

Bahrain league champions claim hard-earned overtime win against Qatars in Gulf sub-zone game of FIBA West Asia Super League

Charles Wayne Garcia makes one of two free-throws with one second to go in regulation to force overtime

TDT | Manama

Manama eked out a hard-earned 99-94 victory in overtime over Al Sadd of Qatar in their Gulf sub-zone contest of the FIBA West Asia Super League (WASL).

The game was played at the Al Gharafa Sports Club Multi-Purpose Hall in Doha.

Manama's Charles Wayne Garcia made one of two free-throws with one second to go in regulation to force the extra five-minute session.

There, the Bahrainis were able to pull away from their



Manama's Ali Hussain posts up against Faisal Nabil Abuissa

opponents with baskets from American Elijah Robinson and standout national team guard Mustafa Hussain to peg the final score.

The result earned Manama their second win in three tries in their WASL Gulf group. They previously lost to Kuwait Club at

home after opening their tournament bid with a win over Al Nasr Riyadh from Saudi Arabia.

Hasan Nowrooz led six Manama players in double figures with 20 points, while Hussain added 18 and Robinson 14. Lamonte Ulmer chipped in with 11 while Garcia and Ahmed Alder-

## Muharraq rout Isa Town

Muharraq routed Isa Town 99-69 last night in their week 16 game of the 2022/2023 Zain Bahrain Basketball League, played at Zain Basketball Arena in Um Al Hassam.

The victors built a comfortable 28-14 lead at the end of the first quarter and then enjoyed their biggest advantage of 39 in the second half. They stretched their advantage with a 34-17 third period.

American professional Tony Mitchell top scored for the winners with 35 points, while Bader Abdulla Malabes added 24 markers, firing in six three-pointers in the process.

Oumar Barry had 25 for Isa



Muharraq's Tony Mitchell goes for a fadeaway as he is guarded by Isa Town's Jihad Ahmed

Town.

With the result, Muharraq claimed their 10th win to go with four losses, while Isa Town suffered their league-worst 13th loss.

Dieng had 23 in the loss.

It was a tightly contested game throughout, with neither team

building leads of more than seven points.

Hussain buried a three-pointer to beat the buzzer to give Manama a 44-41 lead at the half, and then they went up 65-60 heading into the final canto. Omar Mohamed Saad buried a go-ahead triple with seven seconds to go to give Sadd a slim 86-85 advantage, which paved the way for Garcia's tying charity shot to force overtime.

Manama are back on the hard-wood for WASL action on 23 January when they take on Nasr in the return affair at home.

The WASL is a new basketball competition sanctioned by FIBA, the sport's global governing body. Manama are one of 16 teams in the inaugural edition. They are in Group B of the Gulf sub-zone alongside Sadd, Nasr and Kuwait. The Bahrainis will be facing each of the three sides in home-and-away contests.

## Kvitova wins battle of Wimbledon champions at Adelaide

AFP | Adelaide



Petra Kvitova reacts after winning a point



I tried to play faster than Elena. She played really great (in Ostrava), it was a good match and I know that she's serving really well

PETRA KVITOVA

Russia's 23rd-ranked Rybalkina won their first head-to-head meeting last year in Ostrava.

World number 16 Kvitova never faced a break point in 86 minutes, while breaking Rybalkina at the tail end of each set to move safely through.

"I tried to play faster than Elena," said Kvitova, who won Wimbledon in 2011 and 2014.

"She played really great (in Ostrava), it was a good match and I know that she's serving really well."

"I was focusing on my serve and I was trying to wait for some chances to break her."

There are two ATP-WTA

Adelaide Internationals this month, with Novak Djokovic and Aryna Sabalenka winning the titles in week one.

### CLASSIFIEDS

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## Bahrain handball team wrap up friendly tournament in Spain

Nationals now head for final lead-up to world championships, co-hosted by Poland and Sweden

Worlds begin tomorrow, Bahrainis to play first game on Friday against African giants Tunisia

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's senior men's national handball team have concluded their participation in the Torneo Internacional de Espana and are now set for their final lead-up to the 28th International Handball Federation (IHF) Men's Handball World Championship, which is scheduled to begin on Wednesday.

The nationals lost all three of their games in the friendly tournament, first bowing to Argentina 27-31, then losing to hosts



Ali Issa, left, presents a commemorative national team shirt to Francisco V Blazquez Garcia, centre, in the presence of Bahrain national team official Ismail Bager

Spain 21-34, before completing the competition with a 24-27 loss to Romania.

At the end of the tournament, Bahrain Handball Association president Ali Issa presented Royal Spanish Handball Federation president Francisco V Blazquez Garcia a commemorative souvenir in appreciation of the hosts.

The Bahrainis are now headed for the worlds, which are to be co-hosted by Poland and Sweden. The nationals are in Group H, which will be played at Malmo Arena in the Swedish city of Malmo.

Bahrain's first fixture will be against Tunisia on Friday. They then play Denmark on Sunday before closing out the first stage

on Tuesday next week against Belgium.

The Bahrainis are one of 32 national teams from five confederations competing in the event. They have been divided into eight groups for the tournament's preliminary stage.

After a single round-robin, the top three teams from each of the eight groups move on to the main round, where they will be divided into four further groups of six teams apiece.

The other eight squads will vie for the President's Cup.

Bahrain head coach Aron Kristjansson from Iceland has 19 players for the worlds. They include long-time skipper Hussain Al Sayyad, Mohammed Mirza, Ali Mirza, Jassim Al Salatna, Mohammed Abdulhussain, Mohammed Habib Mohammed, Ali Eid, Hasan Alsamaheji, Ahmed Fadhl, Mohammed Ali, Hassan Mirza, Komail Mahfoodh, Hassan Ahmed Isa, Qassim Qambar, Abdulla Alzaimoor, Mujtaba Alzaimoor, Mahmood Hussain Mohammed, Muntadher Ebrahim Ali and Abdulla Ali.

## 'Frenemies' Djokovic and Kyrgios to play practice match before Australian Open

AFP | Melbourne

Novak Djokovic and Nick Kyrgios will rekindle their bromance by playing a practice match before the Australian Open, giving the latter a chance to stretch his legs before the year's first Grand Slam.

Kyrgios, ranked 22nd in the world and runner-up at last year's Wimbledon, has not played since October. He missed the United Cup and also pulled out of warm-up tournaments due to an ankle injury.



Novak Djokovic poses with the trophy after winning the Wimbledon men's singles final alongside runner up Nick Kyrgios (file photo)

Australian Open organisers

that he had discussed playing a practice match with Kyrgios, adding that the Australian wanted shorter sets.

The pair were once at loggerheads and had a frosty relationship when Kyrgios labelled Djokovic "boneheaded" and a "tool".

But Kyrgios defended the Serbian when he was detained and then deported ahead of last year's Australian Open, leading to an unexpected friendship blossoming between the two ahead of the Wimbledon final where Djokovic won in four sets.

# Loeb poised to lead another Dakar charge by Bahrain Raid Xtreme

Al Nasser manager Garcia presents French star with Cristiano Ronaldo shirt on visit to BRX in Saudi

● Loeb pursues another stage win in his BRX Prodrive Hunter when the rally resumes today

TDT | Manama

**S**ebastien Loeb is ready to lead another charge by Bahrain Raid Xtreme in the Dakar Rally, with a prized Al Nasser shirt carrying the name of superstar signing Cristiano Ronaldo safely tucked away.

The shirt was presented to Loeb by Rudi Garcia, manager of Ronaldo's new Saudi Pro League club Al Nasser, when he paid a visit to the BRX team at the end of the eighth stage from Al Duhadimi to Riyadh on Sunday evening.

Garcia then stepped inside the cockpit of Loeb's BRX Prodrive Hunter to check out the car which the nine-time World Rally Champion and co-driver Fabian Lurquin had earlier taken to their second stage victory of



Al Nasser manager Rudi Garcia presents a Cristiano Ronaldo shirt to Sebastien Loeb



**It was a very good day, and a good way to end the first week. The feeling with the car was so good. It's really nice to be like this in the car, I have to say**

SEBASTIEN LOEB

the 45th Dakar Rally in Saudi Arabia.

It was also the fourth day in a row that three Prodrive Hunters had finished in the top ten, with Guerlain Chicherit and Alex Winocq taking sixth and Vaidotas Zala with Paulo Fiuza in 10th.

The result maintained a powerful climb up the rankings by Loeb following a succession



**With yesterday being a rest day in the Dakar, Loeb will be looking for another stage win, and more valuable World Rally-Raid Championship points, when the rally resumes with the 358km ninth stage from Riyadh to Haradh today**

of punctures and misfortunes which had dropped him from overall contention.

"It was a very good day, and a good way to end the first week," said Loeb. "The feeling with the car was so good. It's really nice to be like this in the car, I have to say."

With yesterday being a rest



Guerlain Chicherit and Alex Winocq in their Prodrive Hunter

day in the Dakar, Loeb will be to the finish in Dammam on Sunday.

The 67-strong BRX team in Saudi is helping drive alternative solutions for motorsport. The three Hunters being prepared for more action in Riyadh yesterday run on Prodrive EcoPower biofuel created by Coryton from sustainable sources. This produces 80% less CO2 than petrol.

## Messi and Ronaldo to meet in friendly between PSG and Saudi select

AFP | Riyadh

**L**ionel Messi and Paris Saint-Germain will play a friendly against a select side made up of players from Cristiano Ronaldo's new club Al Nasser and their Saudi rivals Al Hilal in Riyadh on January 19, the French champions announced yesterday.

PSG will travel to Saudi capital for the match at the King Fahd Stadium which will see Messi and Ronaldo renew their rivalry.

Messi returned to training



**As the coach of Al Nasser, I cannot be happy with this match. For development, to see PSG, to see the great Parisian players, indeed it is a good thing. But we have a championship game three days later**

RUDI GARCIA



Juventus' Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo (L) walks past Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi (file photo)

with PSG last week after being given a fortnight off following Argentina's World Cup triumph in Qatar in December.

Meanwhile Ronaldo, who will turn 38 in February, recently joined Al Nasser after agreeing a contract that runs until 2025 and is reportedly worth more than 200 million euros (\$214m).

His arrival at Al Nasser, who are coached by Frenchman Rudi Garcia, comes as Saudi Arabia

seeks to improve the profile of football in the country ahead of a possible joint bid to host the 2030 World Cup along with Greece and Egypt.

Ronaldo and Messi have dominated the sport over the last 15 years, winning the Ballon d'Or 12 times between them.

Their rivalry grew during nine years in which they came up against each other in Spain, when Messi was starring for

Barcelona and Ronaldo for Real Madrid.

Riyadh clubs Al Hilal and Al Nasser are Saudi Arabia's two most successful sides.

PSG have made a habit of travelling to Qatar in winter since the Gulf state bought the club in 2011.

However, this trip comes despite the Ligue 1 leaders having a French Cup tie scheduled for the weekend of January 21 and 22 against lower-league opponents yet to be determined.

final on December 18.

However, Deschamps on Saturday signed a new deal until the 2026 World Cup.

Asked whether Zidane, who won the 1998 World Cup as a player alongside Deschamps and was a runner-up in 2006, had called him in recent days, Le Graet dismissed the former Real Madrid coach as having been a potential candidate.

"I wouldn't even have taken his call," Le Graet said. "To tell him what? 'Hello sir, don't worry, look for another club, I just agreed a contract with Didier'."

## Roberto Martinez named new Portugal coach

Reuters | Lisbon

**F**ormer Belgium coach Roberto Martinez has been named the new manager of Portugal's national squad, the country's football federation (FPF) said yesterday.

"I appreciate the enthusiasm and ambition with which he (Martinez) received the invitation," FPF President Fernando



Portugal coach Roberto Martinez during the presentation

Gomes told a news conference as Martinez stood next to him. "This is an important moment for the national team"

Martinez, from Spain, stepped down as Belgium's coach following his side's World Cup group stage exit, saying he had made the decision to end his six-year tenure some time ago and would have left even if they had been crowned champions

## Mbappe defends 'legend' Zidane amid 'disrespectful' FFF boss comments

AFP | Paris

**K**ylian Mbappe blasted as "disrespectful" comments made by the head of the French football federation (FFF) concerning former international Zinedine Zidane with the PSG superstar describing his fellow World Cup winner as a "legend".

"Zinedine Zidane, I wouldn't even have taken his call on the phone," FFF president Noel Le Graet quipped dismissively in an interview on French radio when asked whether Zidane



Real Madrid's coach Zinedine Zidane beside PSG's Kylian Mbappe during a match (file photo)

**Zidane is France, we don't disrespect the legend like that...**

KYLIAN MBAPPE

had called him to express an interest in taking over as coach from Didier Deschamps.

Deschamps' contract expired after the World Cup in Qatar where reigning champions France lost to Argentina in a penalty shootout after a thrilling

final on December 18.

However, Deschamps on Saturday signed a new deal until the 2026 World Cup.

Asked whether Zidane, who won the 1998 World Cup as a player alongside Deschamps and was a runner-up in 2006, had called him in recent days, Le Graet dismissed the former Real Madrid coach as having been a potential candidate.

"I wouldn't even have taken his call," Le Graet said. "To tell him what? 'Hello sir, don't worry, look for another club, I just agreed a contract with Didier'."

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# Bahrain 'focused on next game' in Gulf Cup title-defence

Head coach Helio Sousa stresses that defending champions are taking things one game at a time as they next take on Qatar in 25th Arab Gulf Cup in Basra, Iraq

● Bahrain to clash with Qatar at 7.15pm at Al Minaa Olympic Stadium

● UAE and Kuwait to face off in other Group B match starting at 4.15pm

TDT | Manama

Bahrain are taking their title-defence one game at a time at the 25th Arab Gulf Cup, says head coach Helio Sousa as they get set to face off with Qatar in their second Group B fixture of the tournament tonight.

Speaking in his pre-match Press conference yesterday, Sousa said that the nationals are not looking too far ahead in the competition, in which they are the defending champions, but are focused solely on their upcoming opponents.

"We are focused on the next game; not thinking right now



Helio Sousa speaks during his pre-game Press conference yesterday

We are focused on the next game; not thinking right now on the title. We are taking it game by game before we get the chance to fight for the title again

HELIO SOUSA

their first outing, beating Kuwait 2-0.

"We are thinking mostly of ourselves as always and preparing for the next game to win again," Sousa added.

"If we win, we will be more near to reach the next stage of the competition, and more near to fight for the title again. But mostly it is the next game we are more concerned about at this moment."

Sousa said that his side felt added pressure in their game against the Emiratis, being the reigning title-holders.

"It is always difficult the first



Bahrain players warming up during their training yesterday

games of short competitions, but this time it was even more so because it was the first time as a team that we were winners of the previous competition, and that makes it different for sure,"

Sousa explained. "Expectations are on us and the players."

The Portuguese tactician said that while the national team has shown great development

over the last few years, there is still plenty of room for them to continue growing—something they can only achieve together.

"The last time Bahrain won against the UAE was before 2010," he said. "The people see us as very good, but we are not so strong yet as the results sometimes show."

"That, we can only do it all together, all wishing for the same side."

Bahrain's match with Qatar tonight is scheduled for a 7.15pm kick-off, Bahrain time, at Al Minaa Olympic Stadium in Basra. Prior to the game, the UAE and Kuwait face off at 4.15pm.

The last match day in Group B is then scheduled for Friday, when Bahrain take on Kuwait at Basra International Stadium and Qatar face the UAE at Al Minaa, both kicking off simultaneously at 6pm.

The top two teams move on to the semi-finals on Monday next week, with the final scheduled for 19 January.

## BRAVE CF announces Fighter of The Year nominees for 2022

● Katona, Bandel, Lutterbach, Almabaev, Hanekom make the list

TDT | Manama

BRAVE Combat Federation has announced the nominees to one of its most prestigious awards: BRAVE CF 2022 Fighter of the Year. BRAVE CF gladiators did not make it easy this time as copious amounts of stars argued a compelling case who should earn the title of the most-global promotion's elite fighter for 2022.

BRAVE CF Bantamweight champion Brad Katona silenced many critics when he erased all doubts about him being the king of the division. Katona handled his business with big wins over Bahrain's Hamza Koohji and his training partner Gamzat Magomedov to earn and retain the 135-pound belt this year.

Former number-three ranked Super Welterweight Marcin Bandel did not waste any time this year. The Pole beat Brazil's Luis Felipe Dias via unanimous decision before shocking the world with an incredible armbar over crowd favorite and number-two ranked Super Welterweight Ismail Naurdiyev to earn the vacant BRAVE CF



175-pound title.

Brazil's Joilton Lutterbach came in and rocked the show from day one. His first show-stopping event was when he was called in as a late replacement to fight the former number-one ranked Super Lightweight and Germany's Marcel Grabinski. Lutterbach quickly proved that he is more than just a filler-fighter when

he stopped Grabinski via strikes in the first round of their BRAVE CF 61 main event fight. He then sent a strong message to the undisputed Super Lightweight champion, Eldar Eldarov, after he TKO'd the dangerous Moldovan, Mihail Cotruta in the first round of their BRAVE CF 68 bout last year.

Kazakhstan's Asu Almabaev reminded BRAVE Nation fans

### Fighter of The Year

Brad Katona

Marcin Bandel

Joilton Lutterbach

Asu Almabaev

Chad Hanekom

why he is set for great things in the BRAVE CF Flyweight division when he recorded three wins (one stoppage and two decisions) in 2022. His all-out action is a must for global fans, and his last submission (rear-naked choke) win over the Philippines' Kenneth Maningat highlighted his plans of dominating the 125-pound division and wrapping that vacant belt around his waist.

Last - but not least - South Africa's Chad Hanekom convinced the world that he would never let a title shot slip through his hands again. After suffering that disappointing BRAVE CF Middleweight title loss in South Africa, Hanekom has been on a warpath to secure his status as the king of the 185-pound division. This year he came back with a vengeance as he dominated Mateusz Janur over three rounds before the number-two-ranked South African ended the year with a bang with a colossal "hellbow" over the dangerous South Korean In Jae La at BRAVE CF 66 in November.

## Wales captain Bale announces end of playing career

Reuters | London

Wales and Los Angeles FC winger Gareth Bale said yesterday he had decided to end his playing career at the age of 33.

Bale played a Wales record of 111 games for his country and was a five-time Champions League winner with Real Madrid. He helped the Welsh reach the 2016 and 2020 Euros before leading them in their first World Cup since 1958 at Qatar 2022.

"After careful and thoughtful consideration, I announce my immediate retirement from club and international football," Bale said on Twitter.

"I feel incredibly fortunate to have realised my dream of playing the sport I love. It has truly given me some of the best moments of my life.

The highest of highs over 17 seasons, that will be impossible to replicate, no matter what the next chapter has in store for me



Gareth Bale

"I feel incredibly fortunate to have realised my dream of playing the sport I love. It has truly given me some of the best moments of my life.

The highest of highs over 17 seasons, that will be impossible to replicate, no matter what the next chapter has in store for me

GARETH BALE

Southampton to my last with LAFC and everything in between, shaped a club career that I have an immense pride and gratitude for," Bale added.

"Playing for and captaining my country 111 times has truly been a dream come true."

The player released a separate statement to bid farewell to the Welsh fans and team, saying his decision to retire from international football had been "by far the hardest of my career."