

Sabalenka, Rybakina march into Australian Open final showdown

Elena Rybakina will face Aryna Sabalenka in Saturday's women's singles final after two entertaining semi-finals in Melbourne | P12

THE DAILY **tribune**



Britney Spears deletes Instagram account again, leaving fans concerned

8 CELEBS

BUSINESS 5 Oil up 1% as US data, China boosts demand optimism

Turkey says it is "meaningless" to restore NATO dialogue with Sweden, Finland



Mevlut Cavusoglu
 Reuters | Ankara

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said yesterday it was "meaningless" to hold a trilateral meeting with Sweden and Finland to discuss their NATO bids after protests this month in Stockholm.

Speaking at a news conference, Cavusoglu also said there is no offer to evaluate Sweden's and Finland's NATO membership separately. Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson has said his country wanted to restore NATO dialogue with Turkey after Ankara indefinitely postponed trilateral talks with Sweden and Finland over their membership.

Lane closures on Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Highway, Shaikh Daij Junction

TDT | Manama

The slow lane leading to Hamad Town on Wali Al Ahd Flyover on Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Highway is now closed for maintenance works, said Works Ministry.

Two lanes will remain open for traffic.

The closure, effective yesterday at 11 pm, ends tomorrow at 5 am.

Besides, two lanes on stages for southbound traffic to Mina Salman will remain closed on Al Fateh Highway between the Shaikh Daij Junction and Bani Otbah Junction for improvement works.

One lane will remain open for traffic.

The closure is effective from tomorrow for 5 nights from 11:00 pm to 05:00 am.



220 fils (includes VAT)



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Big fillip to healthcare

HRH CP, PM inaugurates King Hamad American Mission Hospital



In pictures, HRH Prince Salman during the opening of KHAMH

TDT | Manama

HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, inaugurated the King Hamad American Mission Hospital in A'ali yesterday, hailing the new \$66 million facility as an "extension of the long-standing Bahrain-US partnership."

The opening, HRH said, also highlights the 120-year-long legacy of the American Mission Hospital, one of the first hospitals in the region, that opened in the Kingdom on the 26th of January 1903.

AMH is now serving the King-

dom from five locations, which include satellite clinics in Saar, Amwaj and Riffa.

HRH inaugurated the state-of-the-art health facility on behalf of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

"Such development projects which enhance the Kingdom's economic competitiveness and benefit citizens and residents," His Royal Highness said, enjoy His Majesty's unwavering support.

In this regard, HRH stressed that "investing in sustainable healthcare services continues to be a top priority for Kingdom.

AMH's efforts in broadening accessibility and advancing

medical care, HRH said, have contributed to improving the efficiency of Bahrain's healthcare sector and the Kingdom's development goals.

The Crown Prince and Prime Minister further reminded the importance of maintaining "quality and efficiency" in realizing development plans that benefit citizens.

Bahrain's strategic partnerships with the private sector, HRH stressed, are instrumental in advancing the Kingdom's national development and expediting the implementation of the Economic Recovery Plan and greatly improving the quality of services.

(Continued on page 4)



The newly established King Hamad American Mission Hospital contains 125 beds, a ward for women and children, and another for various surgical medical specialties. It also has operating rooms, intensive care units, a dialysis unit consisting of 20 beds, and a laboratory and radiology centre with the latest technology and medical devices.

Israeli troops kill nine in Jenin clash with Palestinian gunmen, medics say

Reuters | Jenin, West Bank

Israeli commandos killed nine Palestinians, including an elderly woman, and wounded 12 others during clashes with gunmen yesterday in a flashpoint town in the occupied West Bank, witnesses and medics said.

The Israeli military said it sent special forces into Jenin to detain members of the Islamic Jihad armed group suspected of having carried out and planning "multiple major attacks", shooting several of them after they opened fire.

The death toll - the highest in Jenin in years - drew a warning from Islamic Jihad that its truce with Israel, called after a brief exchange of fire across the Gaza Strip border last year, could be in danger.

There were no Israeli casualties. At least one Palestinian was detained during the raid, the military statement said.

Jenin is an area of the northern West Bank where Israel has intensified raids over the past year after local men carried out street attacks in its cities.

The Palestinian health ministry described the nine fatalities in Jenin as an elderly woman and eight men. There were no further details immediately available on their identities. According to the ministry, at least 29 Palestinians, including gunmen and civilians, have been killed by Israeli forces in the West Bank since Jan. 1.



Israeli military vehicles are seen during clashes

Shocking

Iran sentences pregnant woman to death for burning Khomeini's portrait

TDT | Manama

Iran has sentenced a pregnant woman in her early 20s to death for allegedly setting fire to a portrait of Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, amid protests sparked by the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini while in the custody of morality police.

The United Nations Human Rights Council has called for urgent action to save her.

The woman, an ethnic Ira-



Police blocking demonstrators. (Representative picture)

nian-Kurdish woman, is being held in Urmia Central Prison, reported IranWire.

Iranian police arrested Shahla Abdi in mid-October during

mass protests triggered by the death of Mahsa Amini on Sept. 16.

The report, quoting a female inmate in Urmia Central, said

Abdi had been there with them for nearly a month and was moved to Tabriz Prison three weeks ago.

IranWire suggests she could be in a detention centre run by Iran's Ministry of Intelligence.

"When I saw this woman, she looked very young but weak and abused, and I realised that she was four months pregnant," the inmate told IranWire.

Abdi, reportedly, was in solitary confinement in Urmia Central Prison.

Earlier this month, Iran hanged two men, one of them a karate champion with several national titles, in its attempts to stamp out demonstrations, which have slowed considerably, since it began carrying out executions within weeks of arrests.

At least 517 protesters have been killed in Iran, and more than 19,200 people arrested since the wave of Amini protests first swept the country in mid-September.

Bahrain marks Indian Republic Day



Indian Ambassador Piyush Srivastava unfurled the Indian flag alongside Ms Monika Srivastava in the embassy complex

TDT | Manama

Indian Embassy in Bahrain yesterday led the Kingdom's celebrations marking the 74th Republic Day of India, the day on which the country's secular constitution came into effect in 1950.

On the occasion, Ambassador Piyush Srivastava unfurled the National Flag in the Embassy complex and read excerpts from the address to the Nation by the President of India, Droupadi Murmu.

More than 1000 members of the Indian community, including representatives of Indian community associations, Indian schools, Indian professionals, workers & students braved rains to take part in the ceremony. An ICRF Bulletin highlighting their activities of the past year was also released by the Ambassador.

Students and bands from the Indian schools in Bahrain rendered the National Anthem during the occasion.

Earlier, marking the occasion, His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, and HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister sent congratulations to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Droupadi Murmu.

Separately, Dr Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani, the Minister



of Foreign Affairs, attended a reception yesterday held by the Embassy of India in the presence of ambassadors, top officials and

other guests. Dr Al Zayani congratulated the Indian ambassador, the Indian community and the Govern-



ment of India, expressing pride in the close historical ties bonding the two friendly nations. The ministry also stressed

Bahrain's desire to further develop these ties as per the directives of HM King and HRH Prince Salman and benefit from

pioneering Indian experience in economic development and technological progress.

The ties bonding Bahrain and India, Dr Al Zayani said, have their basis in mutual respect and effective communication.

The minister also hailed the continuous cooperation between Bahrain and India in various economic and development fields.

The minister also expressed his appreciation of the honourable stands of the Indian Government, supporting vital issues in the Middle East and continuous support for efforts to promote international peace and security, promote values of tolerance, co-existence and human fraternity.

Celebrations in India yesterday had the participation of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al -Sisi as chief guest and 144 soldiers from the Arab nation's armed forces.

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the chief of defence staff and the three service chiefs were present at a colourful parade at the revamped colonial avenue in New Delhi to mark Republic Day.

Several thousand people watched the parade from seats around Kartavya Path - or path of duty - braving the cold on a foggy morning in New Delhi, while millions more watched on television.



In pictures, the celebrations yesterday in the Embassy complex and reception held for minister Dr Al Zayani and ambassadors



Three captive dolphins swim free to wild after being confined to a resort pool

Zahra Ayaz
TDT | Manama

Three dolphins rescued by authorities from a resort in the Kingdom safely, swam to the wild, sometimes jumping over choppy waves, giving an incredibly emotional experience to officials who worked to secure their freedom.

The dolphins, two females and a young male, caught illegally and sold for entertainment purposes, were rescued by Coast Guard Officials from the resort following a court order.

The animals were in a tiny pool of the resort, confined for the amusement of tourists who would pay to swim and play with them.

As per a judicial ruling, also the first such instance in Kingdom, authorities carted the dolphins to the open sea and released them back to their natural habitat after nursing them back to health.

The Execution Prosecution head Mohammed Al Musallam said the dolphins gained their freedom thanks to joint efforts



between the concerned state agencies and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW).

Incidents leading to the extraordinary rescue started with the Coast Guard officials monitoring the handover of a dolphin to the resort.

However, during another on-site visit, officials found that the facility had three dolphins instead of one.

This incident led Coast Guard officials to approach the Supreme Council for Environment (SCE) in Bahrain, which con-

firmed detecting no dolphins at the facility six months back during their visit.

The Council also confirmed granting no permits to the facility to import dolphins in the past six months.

The findings led the Public

Prosecution to arrest the suspects and seize the vehicles used for transporting the animals inland and the boat used for capturing them.

"The fishing boat was anchored on the beach behind the resort and had no function-

al identification device," Coast Guard officials said.

Announcing the order, Al Musallam said the Kingdom pays the utmost attention to the environment and wildlife, backed by advanced environmental and wildlife legislation and laws.



Dolphins are mammals known for their friendliness. There are over 40 species of dolphins, the most common being the Bottlenose dolphin. Dolphins have very large brains- their brain-to-body size ratio is second only to our own! They also exhibit sophisticated forms of communication, tool use, cooperative feeding methods, culture and social learning, and play.



Lord Stuart Polak

Interior Minister, General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, received yesterday member of the British House of Lords, Lord Stuart Polak. Public Security Chief, Lieutenant-General Tariq bin Hassan Al Hassn, and Chief Executive Officer of the National Centre for Cybersecurity, Shaikh Salman bin Mohammed Al Khalifa, were present. Lord Stuart Polak was briefed about the Interior Ministry's efforts to maintain national security, ensure public safety and consolidate cybersecurity by raising readiness and speed of monitoring and responding to cyber breaches. The two sides also discussed areas of bilateral cooperation and coordination, in addition to the latest regional security developments.

BDF opens 11th Constituent Judicial Session for Military Prosecution officers



TDT | Manama

Bahrain Defence Force (BDF) launched the 11th Constituent Judicial Session for Military Prosecution officers. Human Resources Chief of Staff Assistant Major General Shaikh Ali bin Rashid Al Khalifa was present.

Shaikh Ali commended BDF Commander-in-Chief Field Marshal Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa's care and directives to facilitate the appropriate resources for the participants.

The course included practical and theoretical training in judicial police procedures and

the work of the military prosecution. It also included lectures on international humanitarian law and human rights, as well as field visits to judicial and legal agencies in Bahrain.

A documentary about BDF and the Military Judiciary and its specializations was screened on the occasion.

NIAD to plant 1,194 seedlings along 16 December Avenue

TDT | Manama

The National Initiative for Agricultural Development (NIAD) announced it would plant 1,194 seedlings along 16 December Avenue in the Southern Governorate.

The project will be in partnership with the Ministry of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture and the Supreme Council for the Environment.

This is the third initiative supported by SICO Bank, which initiated the idea of financing afforestation projects in cooperation with NIAD and the Ministry of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture, resulting in the 'Forever Green' campaign with the private sector. The planting site was inaugurated in the presence of NIAD Secretary-General, Shaikha Maram Oweis, and agricultural sector officials.



Officials inaugurating the planting of seedlings

tor-General of the Southern Area Municipality, Asim bin Abdullatif, Municipal Council Chairman, Abdulla Abdullatif, Head of Corporate Communications at SICO Nadeen Oweis, and agricultural sector officials.

Specialists of the Southern Area Municipality helped select the plants, which were placed after ensuring enough space between them.

Officials said they made every effort to determine the appropriate species for the region.



Bahrain-Morocco Joint Higher Committee

Morocco's Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates, Nasser Bourita and Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani yesterday co-chaired the fifth session of the Bahrain-Morocco Joint Higher Committee. Earlier, upon his arrival, Bourita was welcomed by Dr Al Zayani, Bahrain's Ambassador to Morocco Khalid bin Salman Al-Musallam, Morocco's Ambassador to Bahrain Mustapha Benkhay, and senior Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials.

Sustainable healthcare top priority: HRH CP, PM

- **KHAMH is an extension of a longstanding Bahrain-US partnership: HRH**
- **HRH highlighted HM King's unwavering support for development projects**
- **Emphasised strategic partnerships with the private sector**
- **HRH Prince Salman stressed the importance of quality and efficiency in achieving development plants that benefit Bahraini citizens**

(Continued from page 1)

HRH Prince Salman also unveiled a commemorative plaque to mark the inauguration of KHAMH.

The Chief Executive Officer and Medical Director of the American Mission Hospital, Dr George Cheriyan, thanked HRH Crown Prince and Prime Minister for inaugurating the KHAMH.

Dr Cheriyan said KHAMH would provide modern and integrated medical treatment services in line with the Kingdom's ambitions for the healthcare sector. The hospital, he said, is equipped with the latest laboratories, simulation rooms, medical facilities, a library and a lecture hall to further its cor-



In pictures, the inauguration



Designed by IDA, a creative design studio, KHAMH is the first-environment friendly hospital operating with solar energy in the Kingdom.

The hospital will also be the first with a hybrid operational system using robots on a broader scope. According to IDA, the design concept for public areas is inspired by the healing leaves from the "Tree of Life" and used a nature-inspired colour palette, patterns, shapes, and overall elements. The new hospital, IDA said, has references to its woven roofs, pottery, arched windows and details from its old hospital buildings.



porate social responsibility as an educational hospital. "These new state-of-the-art facilities will contribute to cutting-edge research and life-saving medical studies," added Dr Cheriyan. A number of senior government officials and dignitaries from Bahrain and abroad also attended the inauguration.

Executive Committee meeting.



His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, yesterday remotely chaired the 442nd Government Executive Committee meeting. Laws and legislation and their preparation, and implementation of the Economic Recovery Plan's 2022-2026 industrial sector strategy were reviewed



National Security Advisor and Royal Guard Commander Major-General HH Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa received a member of the British House of Lords, Lord Stuart Polak. His Highness praised the strong Bahraini-British relations and stressed keenness to develop ties at all levels to serve the common goals and interests.

Bahrain fully prepared to host 146th IPU, says Speaker

- **200 representatives from 178 parliaments to attend**

TDT | Manama

Bahrain is all set to host the 146th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), which will have nearly 200 representatives from 178 parliaments around the globe, said Speaker Ahmed bin Salman Al Musallam.

Al Musallam asserted that



Speaker Al Musallam chairing a meeting with diplomatic missions with Shura Council Chairman Al Saleh

Bahrain's hosting of the 146th IPU Assembly from March 11-15 is a global vote of confidence in the Kingdom's ability to organise mega-global conferences and events.

"The legislative branch has, in cooperation with the government, led by His Royal Highness

Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, taken all necessary measures to host the largest global parliamentary gathering," he said.

Deputy Chairman of the Shura Council, Jamal Mohammed Fakhro. He expressed hope that the Assembly would unify the stances of world parliaments to promote global peace and security and spread the values of tolerance and coexistence.

Speaker of the Council of Representatives, and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Delegation, Al Musallam, was chairing a meeting with diplomatic missions in the presence of Shura Council Chairman Ali bin Saleh Al Saleh.

The meeting reviewed preparations to host the 146th Assembly by the national organising committee, chaired by the First Deputy Chairman of the Shura Council, Jamal Mohammed Fakhro.

Shura Chairman expressed pride in the global trust in the Kingdom's ability and the pivotal role played by ambassadors of brotherly and friendly countries on the theme of the Assembly focusing on spreading coexistence and fraternity, as well as combating intolerance and hatred.

Oil up 1% as US data, China boosts demand optimism

● **The OPEC+ ministerial panel meeting on Feb. 1 is likely to endorse the oil producer group's current output levels**

Reuters | New York

Oil prices rose more than 1% yesterday on expectations that global demand will strengthen as top oil importer China reopens its economy and on positive US economic data.

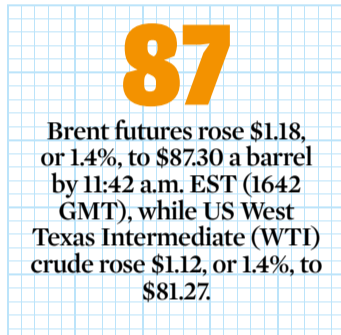
Brent futures rose \$1.18, or 1.4%, to \$87.30 a barrel by 11:42 a.m. EST (1642 GMT), while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude rose \$1.12, or 1.4%, to \$81.27.

Earlier in the session, WTI was on track for its highest close since Nov. 16. Currently, however, both Brent and WTI were on track for their highest closing levels since Jan. 23.

"WTI is deriving some support from liquidation of NYMEX (New York Mercantile Exchange) crack spreads as products begin to shift focus" from bullish supply disruptions in December to weaker demand, analysts at energy consulting



The Imperial Strathcona Refinery which produces petrochemicals is seen near Edmonton, Alberta, Canada



firm Ritterbusch and Associates said in a note.

US crack spreads - measures of refining profit margins - rose earlier this week to their

highest since August for gasoline and October for the 3:2:1 (three barrels of crude makes two of gasoline and one of distillates).

The US economy grew faster than expected in the fourth quarter as consumers maintained a solid pace of spending, but momentum had slowed significantly by the end of the year, with higher interest rates eroding demand.

Meanwhile, US crude inventories edged up by 533,000 barrels to 448.5 million barrels in the week ending Jan. 20, the Energy Information Administration

(EIA) said.

That was short of forecasts for a 1 million barrel rise, though the EIA says crude stocks are at their highest since June 2021.

"China's reopening is supporting demand prospects," said UBS analyst Giovanni Staunovo.

"Also, market participants are closely tracking the upcoming OPEC+ JMMC meeting and the EU embargo on refined products."

China has been easing stringent COVID-19 restrictions this month, with Beijing reopening its borders for the first time in three years.

"(Commodity) markets are set to tighten significantly should the reopening in China - the world's largest driver of commodity demand - be orderly, and ... we anticipate conditions to be ripe for commodity investor inflows," MUFG analyst Ehsan Khoman said.

The OPEC+ ministerial panel meeting on Feb. 1 is likely to endorse the oil producer group's current output levels, OPEC+ sources said.

Global economic growth is forecast to barely move above 2% this year, a Reuters poll of economists showed, suggesting that a further downgrade is possible. That was at odds with widespread opt

Kuwait Airways annual revenue up 115% from 2021, says chairman

Reuters | Kuwait

Kuwait Airways' revenue last year rose by 115% from 2021 and was up 10% from pre-pandemic 2019, Chairman Ali Aldokhan told a news conference yesterday.

The state carrier posted a net loss of 55 million dinars (\$180.3 m) for 2022 and still expects to break even by the end of 2024, Aldokhan said without disclosing a figure for 2021.

Kuwait Airways posted a net loss of 107 m dinars in 2019.

The airline, like its counterparts across the globe, was hit hard by the COVID-19 pan-



A Kuwait Airways plane parked at Cairo International Airport

demic. He added that the airline intends to operate new routes to Athens, Barcelona, Berlin, Budapest and the Saudi Arabian cities of Al-Ula, Taif and Al-Qassim in 2023.

Abu Dhabi leads fall in markets, Saudi rise



A trader walks out of Bahrain Bourse after Joe Biden won the US presidency, in Manama

India's Adani Group says evaluating action against Hindenburg Research

Reuters | Bengaluru

Adani Group said yesterday it is evaluating "remedial and punitive action" under US and Indian laws against short-seller Hindenburg Research, which in a report accused the conglomerate of improper use of offshore tax havens.

Shares in seven listed group companies of Adani lost \$10.73 billion in market capitalisation in India on Wednesday after Hindenburg released the report, which also said it held short positions in the conglomerate through its US-traded bonds and non-Indian-traded derivative instruments. Adani's US bonds also fell.

In a statement to Indian exchanges, Adani Group head of legal, Jatin Jalundhwala, called the report by the US research group "maliciously mischievous, (and) unresearched".

"We are evaluating the relevant provisions under US and Indian laws for remedial and punitive action against Hindenburg Research," the statement said.



The logo of the Adani Group is seen on the facade of one of its buildings on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, India

The report has "adversely affected the Adani Group, our shareholders and investors. The volatility in Indian stock markets created by the report is of great concern," it added.

Hindenburg did not respond immediately to a request for

comment outside regular US business hours. Founded by Nathan Anderson in 2017, Hindenburg says it looks for "man-made disasters" in companies, such as accounting irregularities and mismanagement.

The Jan. 24 report questioned how the Adani Group, which is led by Gautam Adani, the

world's third richest person according to Forbes, has used offshore entities in offshore tax havens such as Mauritius and the Caribbean Islands. It also said key listed Adani companies had "substantial debt" which has put the entire group on a "precarious financial footing".

Adani on Wednesday called the report baseless.



The report coincided with Adani's upcoming \$2.5 billion secondary share sale on Friday. The anchor portion of the issue saw participation from Maybank Securities and Abu Dhabi Investment Authority among others on Wednesday.

● **First Abu Dhabi Bank (FAB.AD), that logged its lowest close in more than eight months**

● **ENBD reported a 40% jump in 2022 net profit**

Reuters

Abu Dhabi stock market slid yesterday on weak earnings from heavyweight companies, while the Saudi Arabian shares ended higher amid firm oil prices.

In Abu Dhabi, the index (.FTFADGI) declined 1.7%, its worst day since September, dragged down by an 8% plunge in the country's biggest lender, First Abu Dhabi Bank (FAB.AD), that logged its lowest close in more than eight months.

The bank reported a 26% drop in fourth-quarter net profit, missing analyst estimates, though annual net profit rose 7%.

The lender also slashed yearly cash dividend by 26% to 52 fils per share compared with 2021.

Al Seer Marine Supplies and Equipment (ASM.AD) dropped 1.1% after it reported a fall in earnings, recording annual net profit of 1.01 billion dirhams, down from 2.52 billion dirhams a year earlier.

The benchmark index (.TASI) in Saudi Arabia added 0.1%, helped by gains in healthcare, financial and materials stocks with Dr Sulaiman Al-Habib Medical Services (4013.SE) rising 2% and Saudi Arabian Mining (1211.SE) climbing 1.4%.

The world's largest Islamic bank by market capitalization,

Closing Bell

SAUDI	▲ 0.1% to 10,822
QATAR	▼ 0.5% to 11,110
BAHRAIN	■ at 1928
OMAN	▲ 0.1% to 4,751
KUWAIT	▼ 0.5% to 8,113
ABU DHABI	▼ 1.7% to 10,177
DUBAI	■ at 3,357

Al Rajhi Bank (1120.SE), surged 1.4%, extending its rally since last Thursday.

Dubai's benchmark index (.DFMGI) rose marginally.

Most real estate stocks in the index dropped, with heavyweight Emaar Properties (EMAR.DU) down 1%, while the utilities and finance sectors stocks rose with Emirates Central Cooling Systems (EMPOWER.DU) adding 0.7% and lender Emirates NBD (ENBD) (ENBD.DU) gaining 0.4%.

Dubai's biggest lender, ENBD, reported a 40% jump in 2022 net profit to 13 billion dirhams (\$3.5 billion) on Thursday, helped by higher interest rates and transaction volumes which boosted its overall income.

Qatari Index (.QSI) slipped 0.5%, ending a five-day winning streak, as most of the index constituents were in the negative territory.

Index heavyweights Qatar International Islamic Bank (QIIB.QA) and Qatar Islamic Bank (QISB.QA) declined 3.5% and 0.8%, respectively.

"The Qatari stock market returned to the downside as traders moved to secure their gains after successive gains," said Farah Mourad, Senior Market Analyst of XTB MENA.

"The main index remains under pressure from the continuously falling natural gas prices".

Qatar in talks to join TotalEnergies' \$27 bn Iraqi energy project

Reuters | Dubai/London

Qatar is in talks to acquire a stake from French company TotalEnergies' (TEF.PA) \$27 billion cluster of energy projects in Iraq, three sources told Reuters, as Baghdad hopes to stem efforts by Western energy companies to exit the country.

A major investment by a Gulf state would mark an important

win for Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed al-Sudani, who took office last October following more than a year of political turmoil, and would also be considered a step towards countering Iranian influence.

QatarEnergy is looking to acquire a stake of around 30% in the project, one source said. Energy companies rarely own

100% of projects and prefer partnerships to reduce risk.

After a flurry of deals after the U.S. invasion over a decade ago, international oil companies have been trying to leave Iraq due to poor returns from revenue sharing agreements.

When TotalEnergies and Baghdad in 2021 signed an agreement to build four giant

solar, gas, power and water projects in southern Iraq over 25 years, hopes for an exodus reversal were high. Exxon Mobil (XOM.N), Shell (SHEL.L) and BP (BP.L) have all sought to scale back their operations in Iraq in recent years. But the project, aimed at boosting economy and reducing its dependency on Iranian gas, is yet to take off.

News in brief

'Invasion Day' rallies mark divisive national holiday in Australia

◆ Thousands protested



Australia's increasingly divisive national day yesterday as the public debates whether the country's Indigenous population should be recognised in the constitution. Australia Day on January 26 has traditionally celebrated the arrival of European settlers at Sydney Harbour in 1788, and has typically been observed with beach parties and backyard barbecues. But in recent years, it has also become a day of national protest, with some Australians calling it "Invasion Day" and saying it was the start of a cultural genocide by European colonisers.

◆ Spanish police have arrested a 74-year-old man on suspicion of sending letter bombs to high-profile targets, including the country's prime minister. The man was reportedly taken into custody in the north of Spain and is due to appear in court later this week. In total six bombs were sent to addresses across Spain including PM Pedro Sánchez's official residence and the US and Ukrainian embassies. Most were defused but an Ukrainian embassy worker was slightly injured. Letter bombs were also sent to the ministry of defence, an air force base and a weapons manufacturer - all linked to Spain's support for Ukraine in its defence against Russian aggression.

Elderly man held over Spain letter bombs



Donald Trump to be allowed back on Facebook after 2-year ban

◆ Facebook parent Meta said Wednesday it will restore former



President Donald Trump's personal account in the coming weeks, ending a two-year suspension it imposed in the wake of the Jan. 6 insurrection. The company said in a blog post it is adding "new guardrails" to ensure there are no "repeat offenders" who violate its rules, even if they are political candidates or world leaders. "The

public should be able to hear what their politicians are saying - the good, the bad and the ugly - so that they can make informed choices at the ballot box," wrote Nick Clegg, Meta's vice president of global affairs. Clegg added that when there is a "clear risk" to real-world harm, Meta will intervene.

CURIOSER & CURIOSER

Archaeologist hails possibly 'oldest' mummy yet found in Egypt



A general view inside a tomb after the announcement of the discovery of 4,300-year-old sealed tombs in Egypt's Saqqara necropolis, in Giza, Egypt
Reuters | Cairo

Egyptologists have uncovered a Pharaonic tomb near the capital Cairo containing what may be the oldest and "most complete" mummy yet to be discovered in the country, the excavation team leader said on Thursday.

The 4,300-year-old mummy was found at the bottom of a 15-metre shaft in a recently uncovered group of fifth and sixth dynasty tombs near the Step Pyramid at Saqqara, Zahi Hawass, director of the team, told reporters.

The mummy, of a man named Hekashepes, was in a limestone sarcophagus that had been sealed in mortar.

"This mummy may be the oldest and most complete mummy found in Egypt to date," Hawass, one of Egypt's former ministers of antiquities, said in a statement.

Among other tombs found was one belonging to Khnumdjedef, an inspector of officials, a supervisor of nobles

The Saqqara site is part of a sprawling necropolis at Egypt's ancient capital of Memphis that includes the famed Giza Pyramids as well as smaller pyramids at Abu Sir, Dahshur and Abu Ruwaysh. The ruins of Memphis were designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in the 1970s

and a priest during the reign of Unas, last pharaoh of the fifth dynasty. It was decorated with scenes of daily life.

Another tomb belonged to Meri, "keeper of the secrets and assistant to the great leader of the palace".

Numerous statues were found among the tombs, including one representing a man and his wife and several servants, the statement said.

Deadly Russian missiles hit Ukraine power facilities

AFP | Kyiv

Russian forces fired dozens of missiles at Ukraine yesterday in a blistering wave of strikes targeting energy infrastructure a day after Germany and the United States pledged modern tanks for Kyiv.

The latest wave of attacks came as the Kremlin said Moscow perceived the tank deliveries "as direct involvement in the conflict" and Ukraine conceded it was facing mounting pressure from Russian troops on the eastern front line.

Leopard tanks pledged by Berlin will arrive in "late March, early April", German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said.

Training of Ukrainian troops on German Marder infantry fighting vehicles will start in the next few days, he added, and "a little later" for the Ukrainian soldiers who will be trained on the Leopard.

Russian missiles killed one person and wounded two more in the capital, Kyiv mayor Vitali Klitschko said on social media.

The 55-year-old man was killed by fragments of a missile that was shot down by Ukrainian air defence systems, Kyiv city officials said.

Ukrainian energy operator DTEK said it was instituting



Ukrainian tanks move in Donetsk region, eastern Ukraine (file photo)

"We expect more than 30 missiles, which have already started to appear in various territories. Air defence systems are working"

UKRAINIAN MILITARY SPOKESMAN YURIY IGNAT

emergency power cuts around Kyiv and also in the southern Odessa and Dnipropetrovsk regions.

Russia has launched regular waves of aerial attacks targeting Ukraine's energy infrastructure since last October.

Those assaults have crippled

the electricity grid with temperatures near zero degrees Celsius (32 degrees Fahrenheit) as winter deepens.

Yesterday, two critical infrastructure facilities in the Odessa region on the Black Sea were damaged, the head of the regional military administration said.

Ukrainian military spokesman Yuriy Ignat announced the fresh missile salvo, telling local media that several Russian Tu-95 bombers had launched the attack from northern Murmansk region.

"We expect more than 30 missiles, which have already started to appear in various territories. Air defence systems are working," Ignat said.

US Republicans probe art sales by Biden's son

AFP | Washington

The matter of who buys artwork produced by Joe Biden's son, a former lawyer with a troubled past, is taking center stage on Capitol Hill -- where Republicans have vowed to use their new House majority to aggressively investigate the president's family.

The chairman of the powerful House Oversight Committee on Wednesday demanded a New York art gallery produce a list of who has bought artwork made by Hunter Biden.

"Your arrangement with Hunter Biden raises serious ethics concerns and calls into question whether the Biden family is again selling access and influence," Republican James Comer of Kentucky said in his letter.

Comer requested the gallery's owner, Georges Berges, testify before his committee next month.

Hunter Biden is a favorite



Hunter Biden painting

"Why would anyone pay Hunter Biden top dollar for artwork that is arguably worthless? He's no Pablo Picasso"

JAMES COMER

target of Republicans, particularly over his prior work with foreign firms.

He is the president's second

YOU KNOW WHAT
Some of Hunter Biden's paintings exhibited by the New York gallery have price tags up to \$225,000

of four children, though his older brother died of cancer in 2015, and he has publicly discussed struggles with addiction.

The Republicans suggest that wealthy influence seekers may buy Hunter Biden's artwork with the aim of winning favor at the White House.

According to Comer, some of the paintings exhibited by the New York gallery have price tags up to \$225,000.

8 dead, including 6 Chinese nationals, after ship sinks near Japan

Reuters | Seoul

Eight people are dead, including six Chinese nationals, after a ship sank in waters off the coast of Japan, a Chinese diplomat said yesterday.

The Jin Tian, carrying crew from China and Myanmar, sent a distress signal on Tuesday evening from a position around 110 kilometres (68 miles) west of the remote and uninhabited Danjo Islands in far southwestern Japan.

The ship's captain used a satellite phone to tell the South Korean coast guard that he and the crew would abandon the sinking ship in the early hours of Wednesday morning, the



Members of South Korea coast guard conduct a search operation in waters between South Korea and Japan

Jeju coast guard said.

Multiple vessels and aircraft from Japan's coast guard and

military have also been involved in the search, which retrieved 13 crew members.

Ex-kickboxer Andrew Tate says Romanian prosecutors have no evidence against him



Andrew Tate answers questions from the media while being escorted by police officers
Reuters | Bucharest

Reuters | Bucharest

Divisive internet personality Andrew Tate said on Wednesday there was no justice in Romania and that the case file against him in a criminal investigation for alleged human trafficking and rape was empty.

Tate, his brother Tristan and two Romanian female suspects have been in police custody since Dec. 29 pending an ongoing criminal investigation on charges of forming a criminal gang to sexually exploit women, accusations they deny.

Yesterday, a Romanian court extended their detention until Feb. 27. Prosecutors have said the Tate brothers recruited their victims by seducing them and falsely claiming to want a relationship or marriage.

One dead in attack on Spain



Police officers stand guard at the scene of an attack on Spain
Reuters | Madrid

Spanish authorities said they were investigating what they called a possible "terrorist" incident after a machete-wielding man attacked several people at two churches in the southern port city of Algeciras, killing at least one person.

The man attacked clergymen at two different churches - San Isidro and Nuestra Senora de La Palma, around 300 metres (1,000 feet) apart - just after 8pm on Wednesday evening in downtown Algeciras, a spokesperson for the city said. A source at Madrid's High Court said the incident was being investigated as terrorism.

Police said the attacker had been arrested, and a police source shared footage showing two officers escorting a man in a hooded

Russian Antarctic Expedition led by Fabian Gottlieb von Bellingshausen and Mikhail Lazarev discover the continent of Antarctica

US Congress approves Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma), clearing the way for the forced relocation of the Eastern Indian tribes via the "Trail of Tears"

The National Geographic Society is founded in Washington, D.C. for "the increase and diffusion of geographic knowledge"



Lenin placed in Mausoleum in Red Square, Moscow

India marks Republic Day with Egyptian president as guest

India showcases military might in Republic Day parade

AP | New Delhi

Tens of thousands of people endured a winter chill and mist yesterday as they gathered to watch a parade in the Indian capital showcasing the country's defense capability and cultural heritage on a newly revamped ceremonial boulevard. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sissi looked on as an official guest at India's Republic Day event, which marked the anniversary of the adoption of the country's constitution on Jan. 26, 1950, nearly three years after it won independence from British colonial rule.

A 144-member band and marching contingent from the Egyptian Armed Forces also joined battalions of the Indian military and police in the parade.

El-Sissi, in a blue suit and matching tie, was flanked by Indian President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who wore a saffron-and-yellow-coloured turban.

Scores of women, men, school-



India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi (C) shaking hands with Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi as India's President Droupadi Murmu (L) watches upon their arrival to attend the Republic Day parade



Indian defence forces march through the ceremonial Kartaya Path boulevard during Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi



We will move together to fulfil the dreams of the heroes of our freedom movement

NARENDRA MODI

children and folk dancers in colourful dresses performed cultural and fusion dances down the boulevard amid big cheers from the crowd.

Howitzer guns, tanks, supersonic cruise missiles, anti-tank missiles and armoured personnel carriers were displayed at the parade, with hundreds of men from police and military battalions marching along. Stunt performers

on motorbikes also joined from the presidential palace.

Other participants included a camel-mounted regiment with its moustachioed riders led by a shiny brass band with tubas.

The 90-minute parade ended with a flypast featuring 75 air force fighters, including Rafale jets, transport planes and heli-

copters.

Rajpath Avenue, built by India's former British rulers, was redeveloped as part of India's 75th-anniversary celebrations of independence the past two years. It is lined on both sides by huge lawns, canals and rows of trees, and has been renamed "Kartavya-path" (Boulevard of Duty).



For the first time the parade was held in the revamped colonial-era boulevard that hosts India's most important government buildings, following years of renovations at the direction of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's nationalist government

Workers who helped refurbish the boulevard, their families and maintenance workers were seated in front of the main dais during the parade as part of this year's theme: "Participation of the Common People."

Machete in churches



stabbing incident at a church in Algeiras



Algeiras is near the southern tip of Spain, resting across from a bay from Gibraltar. It is home to an important port with ferry connections to northern Africa

spots top in handcuffs through a police station. Police have not released details of his name or nationality. Local media, including El Pais newspaper, said he was a 25-year-old Moroccan.

Onions now cost more than meat products in the Philippines

Julia Cassano
TDT | Manama

Although onions are a staple in Philippine cuisines and dishes, many have cut back on the use of the vegetable as the cost of onions continues to soar.

Onions are a staple vegetable in many Philippine households and are often used with garlic as a base of many traditional dishes; however, the skyrocketing prices has led families to rationing the vegetable or using cheaper options of vegetables in their cooking.

Red and white onions were selling for as much as 600 Philippine pesos (4.1 BD) to 700 Philippine pesos (4.8 BD), sources report.

National Public Radio (NPR) reports that locals would usually purchase around two to three kilos of onions a day; however, as the cost of onions skyrocket, many are rationing and only using half an onion.

Jane Marie, a Philippine national, told The Daily Tribune: "I have noticed prices rising up to 700 pesos per kilo in Manila, which is an absurd amount to pay for onions in the Philippines and many are now frustrated as they cannot afford to purchase onions.

"From my personal experience, this is not a normal situation, and I am noticing many people resorting to using green scallions or different kinds of vegetables in their cooking to



Onions displayed at a shop in the Philippines

save money. However, using scallions or other kinds of vegetables to replace onions does not give the same flavour to our traditional dishes."

Sources are now reporting that onions have become three times as expensive as chicken and 25 percent to 50 percent more expensive than pork or beef.

The Daily Tribune went out to speak to the Philippine population in Bahrain regarding the soaring prices of onions and they told us: "Most of our family members live in the Philippines, and it is already difficult for them to survive on their current salaries and cost of living.

"Our families have said that the increase of prices could have resulted from the weather and seasons, as well as hoarding during the Christmas season which is when the prices started to rise. Many of our families have

asked us to bring or send onions to them as they simply cannot afford to pay the cost."

The Bureau of Customs claims to have intercepted smuggling syndicates that have attempted to import large amounts of onions through cargo shipments that were labelled as clothing items or home products.

Why has the Philippines experienced a shortage of onions?

Business World reported that the onion shortage has been blamed on the failure of the Department of Agriculture to properly control supply and demand for the commodity, which has resulted in a delay in turning to imports.

The Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food, Inc. claimed they have failed to import the vegetable which is why there is a shortage currently. Additionally, it is usual during



The Bureau of Customs claims to have intercepted smuggling syndicates that have attempted to import large amounts of onions through cargo shipments that were labelled as clothing items or home products

the festive seasons that demand increases for various products; however, this should be planned and anticipated for.

Business World reports that the shortage is estimated at about 40,000 to 50,000 metric tons, and that imports should have been placed in July and August to meet the current demand. However, the products were not imported, and this results in supply being low whilst now, the demand is high.

Now, The Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food are expecting farmers to plant more onions because of prices, which means they can expect a large harvest by April, whilst the government must prepare for more cold storage.



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



The world is facing multiple crises, but this is not the time for short-term thinking or knee-jerk fiscal austerity. Bold & targeted measures, international support & debt restructuring can help turn around the world economy.

@antoniogetterres

02



Among targets of today's mass missile strike, Russia struck Odesa causing massive power outages. This destruction is Putin's response to @UNESCO inscribing Odesa on its World Heritage List yesterday and placing it under reinforced protection of the World Heritage in Danger List.

@DmytroKuleba

03



The United States is committed to imposing costs on corrupt officials who undermine democracy and the rule of law. Today we announce the designation of former Panamanian President Ricardo Alberto Martinelli Berrocal for his involvement in significant corruption.

@SecBlinken

04

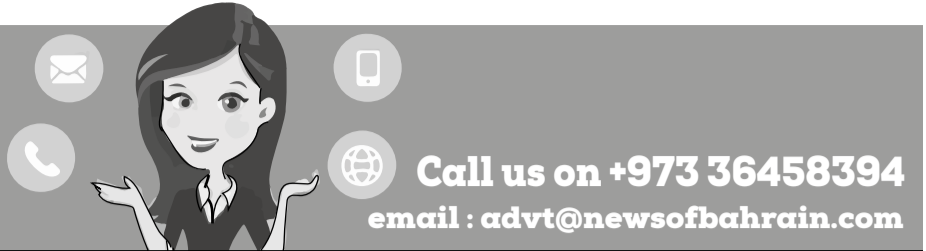


Changed my name to Mr. Tweet, now Twitter won't let me change it back

@elonmusk

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

Classifieds



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Vinicius effigy hung from bridge before Madrid derby



Real Madrid's Vinicius Junior, right, and Athletic Bilbao's Mikel Vesga challenge for the ball during the match

AFP | Madrid

A dummy dressed in a Vinicius Junior shirt was hung from a bridge near Real Madrid's training ground ahead of the Copa del Rey quarter-final clash against Atletico Madrid yesterday.

"Madrid hates Real," read a banner draped on the bridge close to Valdebebas overnight Wednesday.

The Vinicius effigy was described as a "racist attack" and "serious threat" against the Brazilian forward by Spanish media.

Police sources told AFP they were investigating the incident, without offering further details.

The slogan is one which has been used by Atletico Madrid ultras in the past.

"Such acts are absolutely repugnant and inadmissible and shame society," said Atletico in a statement.

"Our condemnation of any

YOU KNOW WHAT

Vinicius, who is Black, has been subjected to racist taunts more than once in Spain. The Brazil forward has complained on social media about being targeted by racists since he came to play in Europe

act that attacks the dignity of persons or institutions is categorical and unreserved."

Atletico fans were filmed aiming racist chants at Vinicius in September before the Madrid derby at the Wanda Metropolitano in La Liga.

Arsenal reaping rewards of patience with Arteta - Guardiola

AFP | London

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola believes Premier League leaders Arsenal are benefitting from the patience showed to Mikel Arteta in his early years in charge of the Gunners.

Arteta worked as Guardiola's assistant at City for three-and-a-half years before taking his first senior managerial role at the Emirates in 2019.

The Spaniard had immediate success in winning the 2020 FA Cup, but failed to break into the Premier League's top four in any of his first three seasons.

Now Arsenal are well on course to end a 19-year wait to win a league title as they lead City by five points and have a game in hand on Guardiola's men.

The two sides face off for the first of three meetings in the coming months in the FA Cup fourth round on Friday.

"I had the feeling. We knew it when he was here," said Guardiola on Arteta's coaching ability.

"The biggest compliment for Arsenal as well, is for backing him in the bad moments and



Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola and Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta after a match (file photo)

"I don't know my impact on him (Arteta) but his influence on me was so important to become a better manager"

PEP GUARDIOLA

trusting him, and keeping him and relying on him.

"At the end, you need time, you need investment and the re-

sults are there. It is a challenge for us to challenge them."

During Guardiola's reign in Manchester, City have dominated English football, winning four Premier League titles among nine major trophies.

But he has tried to light a fire under his players in recent weeks to revive the hunger that has brought so much success.

Guardiola has even used Arsenal's desire during the first half of the season as the example for

BETTER YOU KNOW

Guardiola has even used Arsenal's desire during the first half of the season as the example for his side to match

his side to match. "A team with 50 points in one leg (half of the season) is the best. We have to prove how far away or how close we are," added Guardiola on Friday's cup clash.

"I encourage them to look themselves. When they are not happy for many reasons, the only way is to perform better.

"Think in the past is the past. What happened in the past is the past. We get the salary for what we will do in the future. Extend the contract, what we're going to do in the future. The past is done."

Soccer mom Azarenka ordered to take off PSG shirt at Australian Open

AFP | Melbourne

Self-described "obnoxious soccer mom" Victoria Azarenka was ordered to take off her Paris St Germain shirt at the Australian Open yesterday before bowing out of the Grand Slam with a straight sets defeat by Elena Rybakina in the semi-finals.

The 33-year-old Belarusian twice champion has worn shirts showing support for French soccer champions PSG at the tournament and as a gesture to her six-year-old son Leo, who is also a big fan of the Paris club.

After an exchange of words with the chair umpire at Rod Laver Arena, Azarenka took off the PSG shirt before warming up in her regular kit against Rybakina.

"They told me to take it off twice because I had a different shirt," the 22nd seed told reporters after losing to Rybakina.

"I think it's the issue with the



Victoria Azarenka enters the court wearing a PSG shirt ahead of her semi final match against Elena Rybakina

sponsorships. I guess the logos are too big ... I know that I'm not allowed to play in that. I knew

those type of things.

"But I can still step on the court in what I want to step on

"They told me to take it off twice because I had a different shirt. I think it's the issue with the sponsorships. I guess the logos are too big ... I know that I'm not allowed to play in that. I knew those type of things. But I can still step on the court in what I want to step on the court. I do it for my own reasons"

VICTORIA AZARENKA

the court. I do it for my own reasons.

"My son wore the white jersey today to his practice, and I tried to wear a white jersey to my match but couldn't. So that's okay."

CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, BEGUM URF AFTAB ZAMANI w/o RAIS UZ ZAMA holding Indian Passport No- K9599231 dated 16/06/2013 issued at Bahrain having permanent residence at H.No. 2 Mirchi Tola, Pul Kali Nadi, Bulandshahr, **UP, INDIA PIN - 203001** presently residing at Flat 42 Bldg 453 Road 2407 Block 324 Juffair Bahrain will henceforth be known as (Given name) **BEGUM AFTAB (Surname) ZAMANI** Objection(s) if any, may be forwarded to Embassy of India, P.O Box 26106, Bldg 1090, Road 2819, Block 428, Al Seef, Kingdom of Bahrain.

Djokovic wary of semi-final underdog in quest for 22nd Slam title

Novak Djokovic targets 10th Australian Open final, Tommy Paul looks to flip the script

TDI | Manama

Novak Djokovic has won all nine of his Australian Open semi-finals and is not ready to let Tommy Paul ruin his unblemished record today as he closes in on a 22nd Grand Slam crown.

The Serb, who won his first Slam at Melbourne Park in 2008, struggled physically in the early rounds this year with a hamstring injury.

But straight-sets thrashings of Alex de Minaur and Andrey Rublev for the loss of just 12 games ominously signalled that the favourite is back to his best for the semi-finals.

Should he beat the unseeded American Paul on Rod Laver Arena, he will face either third seed Stefanos Tsitsipas or Russian 18th seed Karen Khachanov as a final roadblock to a 10th Australian Open title on Sunday.

Djokovic has extra motivation to go all the way and equal Rafael Nadal's 22nd Grand Slam crowns after missing last year's event when he was deported over his Covid vaccination stance. In his absence the Spanish great won.

"I always try to give my best, particularly in Grand Slams,



Novak Djokovic in action during his quarter final match against Andrey Rublev

because at this stage of my career those are the tournaments that count the most," said the 35-year-old.

"But you could say that there is something extra this year. You could say because, yeah, the injury, what happened last year, I just wanted to really do well.

"So far I have a perfect score in Australian hard courts, in Adelaide (which he won) and here. I've been playing better and better. I couldn't ask for a better situation to be in at the moment."

With Djokovic on a 26-match win streak at the Australian Open -- equalling Andre Agassi's Open-era record at the first Grand Slam of the year -- the 35th-ranked Paul is a heavy underdog.

The 25-year-old is a surprise semi-finalist, making this far at a major for the first time on the 14th attempt.

"We never played a match against each other. Obviously he's pretty comfortable here in Australia," Paul said.

"It's going to be a challenging

"I always try to give my best, particularly in Grand Slams, because at this stage of my career those are the tournaments that count the most. But you could say that there is something extra this year. You could say because, yeah, the injury, what happened last year, I just wanted to really do well

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

match, but I'm playing some of my best tennis, so it's a good time."

Djokovic said he had been monitoring the American and would not underestimate the challenge.

"He's been playing probably the tennis of his life," he said. "Very explosive, very dynamic player. I think he can hit all the spots with the serve. Very complete player.

"First semi-finals for him, so

BETTER YOU KNOW

With Djokovic on a 26-match win streak at the Australian Open -- equalling Andre Agassi's Open-era record at the first Grand Slam of the year -- the 35th-ranked Paul is a heavy underdog

since Djokovic won the title in 2011 aged 23.

"I'm feeling great with my tennis. I don't think I felt so good in a long time," the Greek said.

"I've said it -- I'm a different player (from the past), playing different. My mentality is different."

He has won all five previous encounters with Khachanov, most recently at the Rome Masters last year, and said he was eager to face the Russian again.

"It's a match that I'm looking forward to," he said. "I'm looking ahead for more, for better. Looking to create some magical experiences here in Australia."

The 26-year-old Russian also made the semi-finals at September's US Open.

He has now made the quarters or better at all four Grand Slams and will draw on the experience when he plays the Greek star.

"I think the first semi-finals, which I did in US Open, that gave me an extra boost and extra confidence to show where I really am, and what I can do when I'm at my best," he said.

"I think all those things together, they push me to where I am right now."

Returning Archer wants to rediscover 2019 Ashes, World Cup form

Reuters | London

Jofra Archer rates himself "about 80%" fit ahead of his long-awaited England return but the fast bowler is determined to get himself back in the kind of shape that saw him play a starring role in the 2019 Ashes and Cricket World Cup.

Archer spearheaded England's 50-overs World Cup success on home soil that year, bowling the super over that helped them lift the trophy, and took 22 wickets in the Ashes series against Australia.

Elbow and back injuries disrupted his career over the last two years and the 27-year-old



England's Jofra Archer in action during a match (file photo)

only made his competitive return earlier this month in South Africa's Twenty20 league, impressing with eight wickets in five matches.

Archer is set to make his first England appearance since March 2021 in the three-match ODI series against South Africa, which starts in Bloemfontein today.

With an Ashes series and World Cup looming this year, he is keen to pick up where he left off.

"Hopefully it can be a repeat of 2019," Archer said. "We've got a 50-over World Cup again

and an Ashes in the same year so more of the same, please.

"I need to spend the next two, three, four months fine-tuning the body and making myself a bit more resilient. Let me sort that out first and then I can look forward to holding the red ball in my hand again.

"I know whenever I'm fully fit, I don't think there's much that can stop me, it's just a matter of when that was going to be."

A fit and in-form Archer would be a major boost for England's World Cup title defence as well as their bid to win the

YOU KNOW WHAT

Archer is set to make his first England appearance since March 2021 in the three-match ODI series against South Africa, which starts in Bloemfontein today

Ashes for the first time since 2015.

"It is an exciting prospect to think about playing with the guys again, especially with the brand of cricket they are playing, which is very exciting," Archer added.

"I might have to do some extra bowling during the weeks when I'm in India (for the Indian Premier League). But that is absolutely fine because I want to play in the Ashes, so I'm going to have to do all the hard yards to tick those boxes."

English clubs surpass \$2bn transfer spend for first time in 2022

Reuters | London

English soccer clubs spent over \$2 billion on new signings in 2022 for the first time, FIFA's Global Transfer Report revealed yesterday, with the number of international transfers of male and female players reaching record numbers.

There were 20,209 international transfers in men's professional soccer in 2022, representing an increase of 11.6% compared to 2021 and even exceeding the levels of 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Of the 2,843 transfers that included fees, the top 100 were responsible for almost 50% of all money spent, with English clubs again topping the list. For the first time, their total outlay exceeded \$2 billion, reaching a record high of almost \$2.2 billion.

"The two-year negative trend in clubs' spending on transfer fees was turned around in 2022, with last year's total outlay reaching \$6.5bn, an increase of 33.5% compared to 2021, yet still below the all-time high of 2019," Emilio Garcia Silvero, FIFA's Chief Legal and Compliance officer, said.

Women's professional football continued to grow in 2022. The number of international transfers last year was almost double the figure of 2018.

In 2022, the number of clubs involved in international transfers went up from 410 in 2021 to 500 last year, a 22% increase," Silvero said.

"All of this reflects the impressive strides being taken as more and more female players



General view outside Manchester City's Etihad Stadium

BETTER YOU KNOW

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Djokovic's father seen posing with fans carrying Russia flags

AFP | Melbourne

Australian Open organisers have issued a reminder to players and their entourages about their policy on "inappropriate flags" after a video emerged showing Novak Djokovic's father posing for pictures with fans holding Russian flags.

Four fans with "inappropriate



Novak Djokovic's father Srdjan

flags and symbols" were questioned by Victoria Police following Wednesday's quarter-final between Djokovic and Russia's Andrey Rublev.

A video also posted on social media showed one supporter on the steps of Rod Laver Arena holding up a Russian flag with the image of President Vladimir Putin on it.

Late on Wednesday another video showed Djokovic's father Srdjan posing for pictures with fans holding Russian flags.

"Players and their teams have been briefed and reminded of the event policy regarding flags and symbols and to avoid any situation that has the potential to disrupt," Tennis Australia said in a statement yesterday.

continue to turn professional. Some 1,555 international transfers were recorded in 2022, an increase of 19.3% compared to the previous year, while a new high of 119 associations were involved in international transfers."

Last few days to buy F1 Bahrain Grand Prix tickets with free access to pre-season testing

TDT | Manama

Only a few days remain for fans to purchase their tickets to the Formula 1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix 2023 and get free access to F1 pre-season testing next month at Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) in Sakhir.

“The Home of Motorsport in the Middle East” is offering fans the fantastic opportunity to enjoy both the race weekend and the tests at a single price.

All those who have purchased their F1 tickets before next Wednesday, 1 February, will be able to attend the two public days of the F1 Aramco Pre-Season Testing 2023 at BIC at no extra cost.

With all the F1 teams having confirmed the dates of their much-anticipated car or livery launches for the new campaign, the excitement is building for



F1 cars in action at BIC (file photo)

the tests, which are scheduled to take place 23 to 25 February. The public will be able to watch the on-track action the last two days.

The testing will be the first time the motorsport world will see all the F1 cars hitting the track together ahead of the season, and it will be the only chance for F1's superstar drivers

and teams to get all-important data on their challengers before the world championship kicks off in Sakhir just one week later from 3 to 5 March.

Fans will be able to follow the tests from seats along BIC's Main Grandstand. They can enjoy a fantastic view of the F1 teams' garages along the main pit lane



as well as the main straight of BIC's 5.412-kilometre track layout.

Tickets to this year's F1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix are selling fast and those looking to experience the pinnacle of motorsport must purchase their tickets at the soonest to get the added bonus of pre-season testing access for free.

Visit bahraingp.com or call the BIC Hotline on +973-17450000 to make a purchase or to get more information on ticket prices and hospitality options.

The F1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix will be the first of 23 rounds on the 2023 FIA F1 World Championship calendar.

It is the fifth time that BIC is hosting the first race of the season, following 2006, 2010, 2021 and 2022. It is also the event's 19th edition and the 10th time it is being held at night under BIC's state-of-the-art floodlights.

For more information, visit bahraingp.com or call the BIC Hotline.

Pedrosa to make wildcard return at Spanish GP

Dani Pedrosa
Reuters | London

Dani Pedrosa will make a wildcard MotoGP appearance at his home Spanish Grand Prix in Jerez in April, the KTM factory team said yesterday.

Pedrosa, 37, retired from the championship at the end of 2018 with 31 top class wins but still carries out testing duties for the Austrian manufacturer.

A three times world champion in junior categories, Pedrosa was three times runner-up in the main MotoGP championship with the Repsol Honda team.

Sabalenka, Rybakina march into Australian Open final showdown

Elena Rybakina will face Aryna Sabalenka in Saturday's women's singles final after two entertaining semi-finals in Melbourne

● **Aryna Sabalenka swats aside Magda Linette**

● **Elena Rybakina wins bruising tussle with Victoria Azarenka**

AFP | Melbourne

Aryna Sabalenka and Elena Rybakina will clash in what promises to be a bruising Australian Open final on Saturday after both won in straight sets in the last four.

Big-serving Wimbledon champion Rybakina defeated two-time Melbourne winner Victoria Azarenka 7-6 (7/4), 6-3 at a blustery and chilly Rod Laver Arena in Melbourne yesterday.

Powerful Belarusian Sabalenka then marched into the championship match with a 7-6 (7/1), 6-2 win over unseeded Magda Linette.

The 24-year-old Sabalenka will be contesting her first Grand Slam final.

The fifth seed has battled nerves in big matches previously and worked with a sports psychologist, but said after dismissing the Pole that both were a thing of the past.

“I realised that nobody (other) than me will help, you know?” she told reporters.

“On the pre-season I spoke to my psychologist, saying: ‘I feel like I have to deal with that by myself because every time hoping that someone will fix my problem, it's not fixing my



Aryna Sabalenka plays a backhand return to Magda Linette

“I was trying to scream less after some bad points or some errors. I was just trying to hold myself, stay calm, just think about the next point. Actually, I'm not that boring, I think. I'm still screaming ‘come on’ and all that stuff. I don't think it's that boring to watch me. I hope so

ARYNA SABALENKA

problem.”

“I just have to take this responsibility and I just have to deal with that.”

Whatever she is doing, it is working: Sabalenka has been in the form of her life since arriving in Australia.

She won the Adelaide International warm-up tournament and has now extended her unbeaten

streak to 10 matches, not losing a single set in any of them.

And yet it was 30-year-old Linette, contesting her first major semi-final, who was out of the gate fastest, breaking to love in the opening game and holding for an early lead.

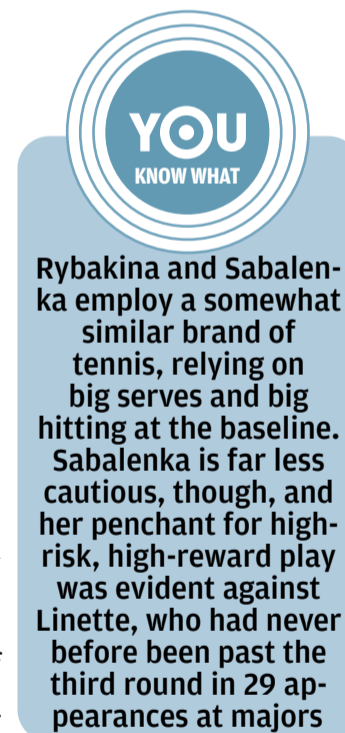
Sabalenka was being made to work hard and showed all her new-found patience to get back on terms with a break of her own, to love, for 2-2 and the set went to a tiebreak.

Sabalenka timed her moment perfectly to up the aggression, and the decibel level, racing to 4-0 with a scream.

An ace that barely clipped the line stretched it to 5-0 and she closed out comfortably after 51 minutes, having smacked 20 winners to just seven from Linette.

“I would say that I didn't start really well,” admitted Sabalenka.

“And then on the tiebreak I kind of found my rhythm and just started trusting myself, started going for the shots. It



was great tennis from me in the tiebreak.”

Sabalenka showed no sign of letting up in the second set, breaking Linette and with a scream of “Come on!” holding for a 3-1 advantage.

A second break took her within sight of the finish line, which she raced across in 1hr 33min.

Missed opportunities

Reigning Wimbledon champion Rybakina, 23, said she hoped she had made her watching family proud after another impressive display.

The Moscow-born Kazakh prevailed in 1hr 41min against the 2012 and 2013 champion Azarenka of Belarus to account for a third major winner in as



Elena Rybakina serves to Victoria Azarenka

“For me this time I would say it was a bit easier also compared to Wimbledon when I was playing for the first time quarters, semis, final. Everything was new at Wimbledon. Now I more or less understand what to expect

ELENA RYBAKINA

many matches.

The 22nd seed Rybakina had already defeated reigning French and US Open champion Iga Swiatek in the fourth round and 2017 Roland Garros winner Jelena Ostapenko in the quarter-finals.

Rybakina said her semi-final triumph was even more special because she had her sister and parents all watching at Mel-

bourne Park for the first time.

“I'm super happy that we can spend evenings together and they can watch me live,” said Rybakina, whose parents were not there to see her win Wimbledon last year.

“For sure it's great for them. I didn't even talk with them yet. I'm sure they're happy. They don't see me often playing live, so I think this time, it's a big result already.

“No matter how I play in the final, I think they're very proud and happy.”

Azarenka, 33, was left to rue missed opportunities as her dream of a third Australian Open crown dissolved.

“Right now especially it's kind of hard to digest,” she said.

“I'm proud of myself how I fought and I tried.

“Tennis-wise I felt like I just wasn't there, especially in the important moments when I kept creating those opportunities for me. Just couldn't convert them.”