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## No end to Gaza nightmare

Nearly 300 bodies exhumed at hospital • Zionist military intel chief resigns

### Amir to pay state visit to Jordan



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and an official delegation accompanying him leave on Tuesday for Jordan on a state visit. — KUNA

### Prime Minister receives US Ambassador



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah receives US Ambassador to Kuwait Karen Hideko Sasahara at Seif Palace on April 22, 2024. — KUNA

JERUSALEM: The Zionist entity's military intelligence chief has resigned after taking responsibility for failures leading to the Hamas attack on Oct 7, the military said on Monday, as the Zionist entity carried out more shelling in war-battered Gaza. Major General Aharon Haliva is the first top Zionist official to step down for failing to prevent the Hamas attack, which triggered the Gaza war now in its seventh month, and brought intense scrutiny to the Zionist entity's government and military.

The Zionist entity also lashed out at reports that its top ally and military supplier the United States was considering sanctioning the Zionist military's ultra-Orthodox Netzah Yehuda battalion over human rights abuses in the West Bank from before the war.

Gaza's Civil Defence agency said Monday that health workers had uncovered around 200 bodies over the past three days of people killed and buried by Zionist forces at a hospital in Khan Yunis. "Our civil defence crews are still recovering bodies from inside Nasser Medical Complex, and since Saturday bodies of nearly 200 martyrs have been retrieved," Mahmud Bassal, spokesman for Gaza's Civil Defence, told AFP. Bassal said several of the recovered bodies had decomposed. "There is difficulty in the process of identifying them but civil defence efforts are ongoing," he said.

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### Radio Kuwait launches first Hindi broadcast

KUWAIT: The Indian Embassy in Kuwait announced on Monday that the first Hindi radio broadcast has commenced in Kuwait. This initiative is expected to enhance the bonds between the two nations. In a statement shared on X, the embassy expressed gratitude to the information ministry for launching a Hindi program on Radio Kuwait, airing on FM 93.3 and AM 96.3 every Sunday from 8:30 to 9:00 pm, starting from April 21, 2024. This move is anticipated to further solidify the relationship between India and Kuwait.

The Indian community, comprising approximately 1 million individuals, constitutes the largest expatriate group in Kuwait. Among them are professionals such as engineers, doctors, chartered accountants, scientists, software experts, management consultants, architects, technicians, nurses, as well as retail traders and businessmen.

The Indian business community in Kuwait has established a prominent presence in the local market, particularly in retail and distribution sectors. India and Kuwait share traditionally friendly relations, deeply rooted in history and enduring over time. India has historically been a significant trading partner of Kuwait, and until 1961, the Indian rupee served as the legal tender in Kuwait. The year 2021-22 commemorated the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

On April 17, Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Adarsh Swaika met Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Acting Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah to commend the expatriate-friendly measures implemented during his tenure. Ambassador Swaika also briefed him on recent developments within the Indian community.

### Bader Al-Kharafi: Gulf Cables shareholder equity KD 230.3m

KUWAIT: On the sidelines of the general assembly of Gulf Cables & Electrical Industries Group Co KSCP, which approved the distribution of 65 fils in cash for each share, Vice Chairman Bader Al-Kharafi expressed his surprise at the continuation of the government's approach regarding equating national products with GCC products and the failure to give Kuwaiti products preference over their GCC counterparts in government tenders.

"It is not fair for Kuwaiti companies and their products to be equated to markets that do not grant them the same advantages, as the Kuwaiti government is currently pursuing in accordance with the circular issued in this regard," Al-Kharafi said.

He pointed out the total revenues of Gulf Cables grew by 8 percent annually to reach KD 122.1 million compared to KD 113 million. He explained that the stability of the group's conditions was crystallized by the profits it achieved, accompanied by a record growth during 2023 amounting to 62.5 percent to reach KD 21 million compared to KD 13 million for 2022. The company's profit growth was reflected in the total equity of the owners of the parent company to reach KD 230.3 million compared to KD 227.8 million at the end of 2022. (See Page 8)

### UAE, Oman bolster ties

ABU DHABI: UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan and Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tariq on Monday witnessed the announcement of several memoranda of understanding and agreements aimed at strengthening relations between the two countries to achieve further growth and prosperity as part of a state visit by Sultan Haitham to the UAE.

The agreements and memoranda announced by the two countries cover

numerous areas, including investment, renewable energy, and sustainability, in addition to railways, technology and education. The two leaders discussed strengthening the fraternal relations and cooperation between the UAE and Oman to serve mutual interests and meet the aspirations of their peoples for development and prosperity in line with the deep-rooted and historical ties that unite the two countries and peoples. The two sides also discussed regional and international issues of common interest. Sheikh Mohamed and Sultan Haitham reviewed relations between

Continued on Page 6

### Erdogan in Iraq to talk security, water and oil

BAGHDAD: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was in neighbouring Iraq on Monday for his first state visit there in years, with water, oil and regional security issues topping his agenda. Erdogan was greeted with a 21-gun salute at Baghdad's international airport by Prime Minister Mohamed Shia al-Sudani and later met Iraqi President Abdel

Latif Rashid. Erdogan last visited Iraq in 2011. His trip comes as regional tensions spiral, fuelled by the Zionist war in the Gaza Strip and tit-for-tat attacks between the Zionist entity and Iran. He told Rashid that Turkey "had expectations of Iraq regarding the fight against the terrorist organisation PKK, and that Iraq must be rid of all forms of terrorism", Erdogan's office said.

The PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party), which has fought a decades-long insurgency against the Turkish state and is considered a "terrorist" group by Ankara and its Western allies, has a presence in northern Iraq, as does Turkey's military. Both Erdogan and Sudani on Monday stuck to their

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KUWAIT: Vice Chairman Bader Al-Kharafi chairs the general assembly of Gulf Cables & Electrical Industries Group Co on April 22, 2024.



ABU DHABI: Emirati President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan receives Omani Sultan Haitham bin Tariq upon his arrival for a state visit on April 22, 2024. — AFP



BAGHDAD: Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan exchange signed agreements during their meeting on April 22, 2024. — AFP



## Local

# 'UAE Companies Investment Meet' aims to unlock Kuwait potential

## 20 Emirati companies to participate in the exhibition

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** The embassy of the United Arab Emirates in Kuwait held a press conference, on Monday, to announce the launch of the "UAE Companies Investment Meet" titled "Unlocking Kuwait's Potential." The event will take place from April 28 to 29 at the Regency Hotel. Speaking at the conference, Matar Hamed Al-Neyadi, UAE Ambassador to Kuwait, announced that the event will be under the patronage of Kuwait Prime Minister-designate Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and in the presence of Dr. Thani Ahmed Al-Zeyoudi, Minister of Foreign Trade of UAE, the Federation of UAE Chambers of Commerce & Industry and the UAE International Investors Council.

The ambassador revealed that 20 Emirati companies will participate in the exhibition in partnership with the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority, Public Authority for Industry, Public Authority of Manpower, and Union of Investment Companies, noting that the exhibition is accompanied by a forum aimed at reviewing the capabilities of the participating companies.

He added "The event marks the inaugural gathering of its kind in Kuwait, with prominent Emirati government and private enterprises in different sectors such as food security, transportation, and infra-

structure slated to participate. Reflecting a staunch belief in the Kuwaiti market's significance, the exhibition aims to facilitate meetings between Emirati companies and Kuwaiti investors, fostering potential partnerships and cooperation ventures.

Both during the exhibition and in dedicated B2B sessions, the event will explore avenues for collaboration, bolstering the private sectors of both nations and leveraging investment potentials within the region." Initiated by the Kuwait Investment Promotion Authority, the event underscores the mutual eagerness of both countries to exchange expertise and drive investments forward.

Ambassador Neyadi stated that participating companies span various domains, including food security, an area of keen interest for Kuwait, alongside entities specializing in cutting-edge fields like artificial intelligence, emphasizing the strategic importance of AI investment in fostering innovation and national development. In a bid to encourage widespread participation and engagement, the ambassador extends a cordial invitation to all businessmen, urging them to seize the opportunity to interface with leading Emirati enterprises and explore potential avenues for collaboration.

In his turn, Chairman of the Union of Investment Companies, Saleh Al-Selmi expressed his anticipation for the upcoming exhibition, emphasizing its



(Left to right) Hamad Al-Mansouri, Counselor at UAE Embassy, Matar Al-Neyadi, UAE Ambassador, Saleh Al-Selmi, Chairman of UIC and Fadwa Darwish, Secretary General are pictured during the press conference. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

significance as an investment opportunity for Emirati companies and institutions. He conveyed gratitude to the ambassador for facilitating this opportunity, highlighting its potential to strengthen and deepen the historical ties between Kuwait and the

Emirates. He emphasized the exhibition's role in fostering cooperation and development in the Kuwaiti market, noting its distinction as the first of its kind and its potential to stimulate bilateral ties between the two nations.

## Kuwait and Iran tackle drug smuggling, piracy

**KUWAIT:** Director General of Kuwait's Directorate General of the Coast Guard, Commodore Sheikh Mubarak Ali Al-Sabah, discussed Sunday with the visiting Iranian Border Guards Commander, Major General Ahmad Goudarzi, boosting commercial and fishing vessel search and rescue efforts and combating drug smuggling and maritime piracy. In a press statement, the Interior Ministry said that the meeting was held at the Sabah Al-Ahmad Coast Guard Base in Kuwait. Commodore Sheikh Mubarak and Maj. Gen. Ahmad also mulled beefing up the security of maritime borders. Both sides underlined the importance of cementing security cooperation, mainly related to securing maritime borders, streamlining commercial maritime routes, and maintaining the security and stability of maritime navigation. — KUNA



## Kuwait's municipality recovers seized plots

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait municipality announced on Monday that up to 28 seized plots of state-owned land had been recovered in non-developed regions of South Kuwait. The assigned team dismantled a fodder marketplace close to Al-Wafra Farm Road 600, said the head of the offenses department in Al-Ahmedi Municipality, Majed Al-Mutairi, in a press release. The liberated plots have been sealed off with barbed wires and other barricades, he said, affirming that all encroachments on state assets without licenses would be dismantled. The campaign will continue, and the violators will be given warnings before removing the illegal structures. He called for cooperation with the field teams in all the governorates, warning that the laws would be applied literally. — KUNA

## Kuwait inflation grows by 3.02%

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's consumer price index (inflation), on an annual basis, grew by 3.02 percent last March, according to the Kuwait Central Statistical Bureau (KCSB). In a statement to KUNA, the bureau said the inflation rate in Kuwait rose 0.38 percent the same month — on a monthly basis. The benchmark of the first group (food and beverages) went up by 5.71 percent last March, compared to the same month in 2023, while the price index of the second group (cigarettes and tobacco) inched up by 0.15 percent on an annual basis, it added.

The consumer price index (CPI) for the clothing group increased by 6.37 percent, housing services by 1.41 percent, and furniture by 3.90 percent. The health index went up by 3.41 percent, while rates of transport moved up by 3.41 percent in March compared to the same month in 2022, according to the KCSB. Communications moved up by 2.46 percent on an annual basis, culture and entertainment rose by 2.27 percent, and education by 0.80 percent.

Restaurants and hotels climbed on a yearly basis by 2.37 percent, with services and miscellaneous goods rising by 3.96 percent, it said. The consumer price index (inflation), excluding food and beverages, recorded a hike of 2.53 percent in November on an annual basis, it added. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a measurement that examines prices on a monthly or annual basis. Generally, it constitutes a basic index for growth and economic recession, where decision-makers examine taking decisions at the economic level and working out financial and monetary policies. — KUNA



National Immunization Week launched. — KUNA photos

## MoH to review National Immunization Program

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Health (MoH) confirmed on Monday its keenness to regularly review and update the National Immunization Program with the help of national specialists in accordance with the latest scientific developments at the international level. This came in a speech by the Assistant Undersecretary of MoH for Public Health Affairs, Dr. Munther Al-Hasawi, during the opening of National Immunization Week, which includes multiple scientific and awareness-raising activities.

Dr. Al-Hasawi revealed that this week coincides with World Immunization Week, which many countries partake in. This year also happens to be the 50th anniversary of the World Health Organization's Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI).



Assistant Undersecretary of MoH for Public Health Affairs Dr. Munther Al-Hasawi

A seminar about modern medicine and the latest scientific developments regarding the prevention of infectious diseases will be held during the week. Dr. Al-Hasawi mentioned the accomplishments that the



world has made through immunization, especially Kuwait, with the last case of poliomyelitis (Polio) being registered in 1986 after administering the vaccine in 1963. — KUNA

## Seminar explores role of private sector for a greener economy

**KUWAIT:** The European Union (EU) delegation to Kuwait in collaboration with the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) and the International Labor Organization (ILO) organized a high-level seminar titled "Supporting a Just Transition towards a greener economy in Kuwait: The role of the private sector." The seminar which was hosted by the KCCI, aimed to explore the role of the private sector in helping devise strategies to foster a just transition towards an environmentally sustainable society and a greener economy. The participants of the event concluded that private sector plays a very important role to support Kuwait's efforts to reduce carbon emissions, in particular in strategic sectors such as energy, retail, banking, water and desalination, construction and circular economy.

In the opening remarks the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry stated that: "The urgency of addressing climate change and environmental degradation is undeniable, necessitating global economies to

adopt policies prioritizing environmental sustainability and climate adaptation. Today, in light of the success of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) and the inaugural just transition event in Kuwait held by the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in collaboration with the International Labor Organization and the European Union delegation in Kuwait, is hosting a seminar. This seminar aims to illuminate the pivotal role of the private sector in fostering sustainable enterprises, driving innovation, accelerating cleaner production and resource efficiency, all while developing workers' skills."

Speaking at the event, Anne Koistinen, European Union Ambassador to Kuwait said: "The European Union has long been at the forefront of global efforts to combat climate change and transition towards a more environmentally sustainable future. Our commitment to a just transition towards a greener economy is deeply rooted in our policies and actions, aiming to ensure that no one is left behind in this global transformation. We firmly believe that the private sector both in Kuwait and the EU plays a pivotal role in driving sustainable development and facilitating the transition to green economies."

"The EU is a world leader in adopting policies that require European companies to accelerate the green transition, while also protecting human rights of



EU delegation, KCCI, ILO organize high-level seminar.

workers across the supply chain. This seminar aims at sharing our experience and promoting such a policy environment to achieve a just transition towards a greener Kuwait. I am pleased to see that this seminar as part of our Europe Month activities in Kuwait, providing a platform to exchange best practices from Kuwait, Europe and beyond on private sector's efforts to foster sustainability," she added.

From the ILO side, Jose Manuel Medina focused his intervention on the ILO Just Transition approach and the positive contribution the private sector may play. Employers' organizations have identified globally climate change as a common concern.

Supporting a just transition for the private sector means to ensure continued business development and inclusive economic growth for large, but also medium and small companies, including through a more enabling business environment, access to finance, upskilling or re-skilling of the workforce and technical support for companies to adopt environmentally sustainable business practices and even seizing new business opportunities in emerging green sectors". The event brought together Kuwaiti, European and international experts, private sector representatives sharing best practices from both Kuwaiti and European Union companies, sustainability scholars.

Local

# Kuwait-Jordan: Solid 'brotherly ties' established by sagacious leaderships

## Kuwait and Hashemite Kingdom take unified stands toward Palestinian cause



The late Amir His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Jordanian Monarch Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein.



File photo shows the late Amir His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Jordanian Monarch Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein.



File photo shows the late Amir His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Jordanian Monarch Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is scheduled to depart for the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on Tuesday on a state visit during which he will hold talks with King Abdullah II aimed at beefing up further the robust and historic relations between the two brotherly countries. Leaders of the two brotherly countries have been seeking to add more strength to these bonds based on one faith, language, history, and common destiny, elevating them higher to serve joint higher interests.

Bonded with the strategic relationship, Kuwait and the Hashemite Kingdom coordinate at regional and international levels to the extent that it has become an example to be followed at the level of pan-Arab joint action. Kuwait and Jordan have worked out bilateral agreements designed to bolster cooperation and progress in each of the two countries in the political, parliamentary, cultural, educational, health, information and military sectors.

Kuwait-Jordan relations, established in 1961, have been evolving due to continued coordination, stances' harmony toward various issues, partnership, and cooperation agreements amounting to 73 accords in diverse fields. At the political level, Kuwaiti and Jordanian officials have paid an unaccountable number of visits to the two countries, with agendas notably aimed at promoting coordination in various sectors, namely joint Arab action.

The two countries have been taking unified stands toward the Palestinian cause, supporting the Palestinian people in their struggle to end the Zionist occupation of their territories and jointly backing the efforts to establish just peace. Kuwait has eyed the high-value efforts exerted by King Abdullah II, namely his steady stand in support of the people of Gaza and his personal involvement in dropping relief aid to the Gazans from the air.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Jordanian Monarch Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein are pictured in this photo. — KUNA photos

At the parliamentary level, Amman and Kuwait have also maintained close coordination at diverse levels to serve causes that serve the interests of the two brotherly peoples, the Arab and Muslim nations. In the economic realm, Kuwait devotes special concern to promoting economic cooperation with the Hashemite Kingdom, as Kuwaiti investments in the country have reached \$20 billion, topping Arab enterprises.

The invested Kuwaiti funds cover tourism, industries, raw materials, banks, transport, property, and communications. Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) is a main partner at the level of development enterprises in the Kingdom, financing some 32 ventures at a value exceeding KD 230 million (approx. \$746 million). Kuwait, for its part, hosts some 60,000 Jordanian nationals who work in several fields, namely medical care and education.

Moreover, at this level, there are a number of Jordanians who study at the universities in Kuwait, and some 3,700 Kuwaiti students are enrolled at the

higher education faculties in the Hashemite Kingdom. In the military sector, the two countries signed, in February 2024, the minutes of the joint military commission for coordinating training and combat skills. Kuwait's National Guards began cooperating with the Jordanian Army in 2017 after holding the first joint military cooperation session. Amman and Kuwait cooperate at the humanitarian level. The Kuwaiti embassy in Amman spares no effort to support Kuwaiti charities that help Palestinian and Syrian refugees as well as limited-income Jordanian families.

Furthermore, Kuwaitis and Jordanians have close social bonds. In May 2023, the representative of His Highness the Amir attended the wedding of His Royal Highness Prince Al-Hussein bin Abdullah II, the Hashemite Kingdom's Crown Prince. In December 2023, the Jordanian Royal Court announced a seven-day mourning for the demise of the late Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — KUNA

### Kuwait-Jordan ties role model for Arab relations

AMMAN: Kuwait Ambassador to Jordan Hamad Al-Marri said Monday that Kuwaiti-Jordanian relations are a "distinguished" role model at the level of pan-Arab relations and contribute to enhancing joint Arab action. This came in a statement to KUNA on the occasion of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's state visit to Jordan, due on Tuesday, the first since assuming office as the top leader of the State of Kuwait.

He added that the deep-rooted relationship and the shared visions on Arab issues between the two countries will continue in the reign of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Jordanian King Abdullah II. Al-Marri stressed the consistency of positions by Kuwait and Jordan on the Palestinian cause, supporting the Palestinians in regional and international forums until the end of the Zionist occupation of the Palestinian territories.

On the economic and commercial ties, Al-Marri pointed out that Kuwait ranked first among Arab countries in the field of investments in Jordan, indicating that the volume of Kuwaiti investments in the Hashemite Kingdom amounts to \$20 billion. He lauded the Jordanian government and people for warmly welcoming His Highness the Amir, whose important visit reflects the distinguished relationship between both countries. — KUNA



Canvas of photos assembled at the exhibition. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Some of the photos showcased at the event.



One of the center's members presenting the photos to the attendees of the event.

## Chinese Cultural Center hosts International Youth Photography Exhibition

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Through the eyes of vibrant young talents originating from Kuwait, China, and all around the globe, the opening ceremony of the International Youth Photography Exhibition was hosted by Chinese Cultural Center of Kuwait and co-partnered by Kuwait Society for Photography Arts on Monday. Bearing the theme of "Joint visions, shared future," the exhibition, which is scheduled to run for one month, paints a canvas of captured moments from the diverse perspectives of photographers from over 50 countries, each eager to



Xia Jianfeng



Suad Al-Hamar



Abdullah Ahmadi

reflect the splendid beauty of their own homelands.

Photographers, art enthusiasts, and diplomats are invited from both countries to delve into the rich exchange of cultures and civilizations depicted beyond the photos, fostering mutual understanding across various facets of life. "The Exhibition is a vivid demonstration between China and Kuwait for their strategic partner-

ship after both countries signed such relationship six years ago," said Xia Jianfeng, director of Chinese Cultural Center in Kuwait.

The purpose of the event aligns with the aim of the center to implement cultural and tourism agreements signed between the governments of both countries, inviting visitors from Kuwait and all walks of life. "A photo can tell rich story about China and other parts of the world. This is why such activities are quite meaningful for us," Xia told Kuwait Times. He added, "Seeing is believing. After visiting our exhibition today and later exploring China, I am certain you'll discover that China is even more beautiful than what you see in photos."

Having visited China multiple times, exploring their

homes and lands, Suad Al-Hamar, president of the Kuwait Society for Photography Arts confirmed that what is depicted in the photos is genuine and authentic, referring to them as "spontaneous and realistic shots." She felt deeply moved by the emotions conveyed through the pictures, from family bonding to happiness, innocence, and unity. "I've experienced this life firsthand in China, and life there is more beautiful than what's shown in the photos," she concluded.

The exhibition is initiated and organized by the Chinese Ministry of Culture and Tourism and has been undertaken by numerous Chinese cultural centers worldwide. Many of the participating countries, including Kuwait, are part of a joint agreement known as the "Belt and Road Initiative," an ambitious plan aimed at enhancing communication and coordination, improving infrastructure connectivity, facilitating trade, promoting financial integration, and fostering people-to-people exchanges between China and the rest of the world.

## Nazaha, British Embassy, GPG launch accreditation system

KUWAIT: Nazaha, in partnership with the British Embassy Kuwait and the Global Partners Governance Foundation (GPG), announced the official launch of a pioneering accreditation system for Kuwait's public sector entities. This initiative marks a significant step towards fostering transparency and integrity within Kuwait's governmental organizations. The accreditation system serves as a means of incentivizing adherence to the public officials' Code of Conduct. By recognizing and rewarding entities that demonstrate a commitment to rigorous standards of professional and ethical behavior, the scheme aims to cultivate a culture of accountability in Kuwait's public sector.

Five government entities have participated in the pilot phase of the accreditation system: the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority, the Anti-Corruption Authority, the Environment Public Authority, the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition, and

the Public Institution for Social Security. Today these agencies were awarded a 'bronze' status for their ongoing efforts to implement ethical practices. Secretary General of Nazaha, Salem Ali said: "Signed by Kuwait in 2003, the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) encourages State Parties to adopt and circulate codes of conduct for the correct, honorable, and proper performance of public functions.

The "Aadaa" initiative (translates to "Performance") aims to ensure the implementation of the codes of conduct circulated by the Civil Service Commission (CSC), in cooperation with Global Partners Governance. The initiative has developed a program that will contribute to the optimal and effective implementation of public officials' codes of conduct, in line with international standards and best practices as implemented by several ambitious state institutions that will share their experiences in this first series of our conference."

The British Ambassador to Kuwait, Belinda Lewis, said: "The British Embassy has been supporting Nazaha on its anti-corruption awareness, prevention and detection work since September 2022. This new accreditation scheme is a way of acknowledging publicly the implementation of ethical practices in government agencies. This increases trust in public ser-



KUWAIT: Nazaha, in partnership with the British Embassy Kuwait and the Global Partners Governance Foundation (GPG) launched a pioneering accreditation system for Kuwait's public sector entities.

vice delivery, and also has a positive ripple effect for companies and investors who are looking for transparent and stable operating environments."

Greg Power, Founder and Chairman of the Board at UK-based NGO GPGF, said: "The launch of this accreditation system is an important milestone in Kuwait's wider anti-corruption strategy. Thanks to the

British Embassy's support we are delighted to have played a role in helping Nazaha to develop this innovative approach to promoting ethical conduct and driving positive change in the public sector." The introduction of the accreditation system represents a significant step forward in Kuwait's ongoing efforts to combat corruption and promote good governance.

## Kuwait participates in Umrah Forum

**JEDDAH:** Kuwait's Consul in Saudi Arabia and its permanent representative to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Muhammad Al-Mutairi, confirmed Monday the consulate's keenness to harness all efforts that contribute to serving the pilgrims and visitors of Makkah. This came during the participation of Kuwait's consulate and the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs in the Umrah and Visitation Forum held in Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah.

In a statement, Al-Mutairi told KUNA that this would happen by developing integrated planning systems concerned with enriching the pilgrims' experience before their arrival until they complete their rituals in every way. Al-Mutairi stressed the importance of active participation in the forum, including dialogue sessions and workshops, to benefit

from the discussions and apply them within the framework of practical plans, as well as viewing the latest innovative and sustainable services and solutions provided by various companies in the field of umrah.

He also affirmed the importance of the ministry's participation in this important forum to learn about the latest services and facilities for umrah performers and visitors. Al-Mutairi praised the efforts provided by the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by launching development initiatives that contribute to raising the quality levels of services provided in light of the increasing numbers of umrah pilgrims and visitors, and this comes within the Kingdom's vision 2030.

Later today, the first edition of Umrah and Visitation Forum will begin, which is organized by the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah in partnership with the Guests of Al-Rahman Service Program, one of the Kingdom's Vision 2030 programs, and with the participation of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs. — KUNA



Muhammad Al-Mutairi

# Burgan Bank sponsors Free Jabriya's latest musical festival 'Macintosh'

## Bank supports the development of Kuwait's culture and entertainment sector

**KUWAIT:** Following the massive success of "Feykom Tarab: One Night with Miami" and "Graish", Burgan Bank announced that it will be sponsoring Free Jabriya Productions' newest musical festival "Macintosh". The bank's latest sponsored event is set to take place at The Arena on April 26-27, with an expected turnout of 10,000 attendees. This joint effort is an extension of Burgan Bank's expansive social responsibility program and its unwavering commitment to the development of the domestic culture and entertainment sector as well as its support for Kuwait's aspiring artists.

Commenting on the Bank's sponsorship of "Macintosh", Hessa Hussain Al-Najadah, Senior Manager - Corporate and CSR Communications at Burgan Bank, said: "As part of our year-long partnership, we are delighted to be sponsoring Free Jabriya Productions' newest show, "Macintosh", which, similar to their previous productions, promises a re-imagined musical experience that is designed to engage and appeal to audiences of all ages.

Today, Free Jabriya is regarded as one of the most progressive and creative members of Kuwait's arts and entertainment scene, and we are very proud of their positive influence and continued efforts to push the domestic entertainment sector toward new horizons of artistic expression. Our goal as a bank continues to be serving as a patron of Kuwait's booming cultural scene; especially when it comes to supporting young creatives who are keeping our cultural legacy alive by reimagining it in a modern, vibrant way."

On his part, Jassim Al-Qames, Creative Director of "Macintosh", said: "The show holds in its folds an innovative idea for a festival of unbounded musical creativity, delivered to the audience by some of Kuwait's most popular stars who will be performing their most successful tracks as well as other unexpected performances and even first-time duets. The show promises its audience a unique musical experience and an unforgettable journey down memory lane with an assortment of old and new songs, in their original versions and new, unprecedented mixes."

Meanwhile, Ali Al-Nusif, Executive Producer and



Ali Al-Nusif



Hessa Al-Najadah



Jassim Al-Qames



Co-Founder at Free Jabriya Productions, said: "Following the great success of 'Graish', our audience is in for a real treat with 'Macintosh', a show that we designed and curated with passion, to turn our aspirations into a reality on stage. We promise every member of the 'Macintosh' crowd a musical experience like none they have ever seen before in Kuwait."

Al-Nusif went on to note that "Macintosh" isn't only

designed for teenagers and youth, but that it promises memorabilia joy for fans of all ages with its varied genres, from Arabic to Western, both old and new, ensuring that the musical diversity resonates with everyone in the crowd. "As with our previous shows, 'Macintosh' marks another milestone in our continuous efforts to open up the domestic entertainment sector

to a new horizon of quality and grandeur through outside-the-box creativity that sets a new tone for excellence in the Kuwaiti entertainment market," he added.

True to the spirit of artistic creativity and freedom that Free Jabriya adopts in all of their works, "Macintosh" stems from the entwined contributions of many exceptional Kuwaiti artists, both on-stage and backstage. Among the many remarkable artists who are featured on "Macintosh" are Ayed, Bader Al-Shuaibi, Daffy, Rahaf, Hamad Al-Amari, and Khaled Al-Mulla. The show also features an orchestra of 50 phenomenal musicians, led by the renowned Kuwaiti conductor, Ahmad Al-Oud. The show is directed by Jassim Al-Qames and Maryam A-Khatrash.

It serves to note that under the umbrella of its dedicated social responsibility program, Burgan Bank has previously sponsored numerous events and groups that aim to preserve and advance arts, culture, and entertainment in Kuwait. Among these sponsorships are previous works by Free Jabriya, including "Feykom Tarab: One Night with Miami" and "Graish", plays such as the remake of the classic "Al-Sindbad Al-Bahri", events such as Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyya's (DAI) Cultural Season, and groups such as Expo 965 Team for Heritage Crafts Exhibitions and Talented Kuwaitis. Building on this momentum, the Bank remains committed to sponsoring and supporting aspiring and influential artists in Kuwait across all disciplines.



Arab League begins media, information conference for global peace. — KUNA photos

## Kuwait keen on supporting and honoring media

**CAIRO:** Chairman of the Arab Media Excellence Award Committee and representative of Kuwait, Hamad Al-Badri, affirmed on Monday the committee's keenness to encourage media materials and items that would enhance and support the joint Arab media work system. While chairing a meeting of the committee at the Arab League's HQ, Al-Badri stated to KUNA that Kuwait's presidency of the committee highlights the extent of its interest in raising media awareness among Arab audiences.

He noted that Kuwait, with its financial sponsorship of the award, confirms the necessity of honoring and supporting meaningful media production, whether readable, audible, or visual, especially directed at serving Arab issues and promoting joint Arab action. Al-Badri pointed out the categories for which the award is given, which are divided into ten categories, and expanded its scope this year to include "crisis, disaster, and risk media," in line with the crises witnessed by the Arab region with the continued Zionist occupation aggression against the Gaza Strip and the deteriorating humanitarian conditions.

He explained that the number of works presented to the committee reached 100 in the various categories of the award, submitted by member states, and that the committee's meetings on Monday and Tuesday will focus on examining these works and their compliance with the conditions of the award. The winners' names would be announced during the 54th session of the Council of Arab Information Ministers, he noted, expressing his expectations that the award would contribute to presenting distinguished media pieces.

In addition to Kuwait, the committee includes Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Iraq, Syria, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, Egypt, and Morocco. The General Secretariat of the Council of Arab Information Ministers launched the Arab Media Excellence Award in 2015 as part of celebrating Arab Media Day, which falls on April 21 of each year and is awarded annually.

### 'Peace for all'

Meanwhile, the "Media and Information Literacy and Global Understanding: Peace for All" conference commenced Monday at the headquarters of the Arab League, with the attendance of the



Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the Arab League, Ambassador Talal Al-Mutairi



Hamad Al-Badri

Secretary General of the League Ahmad Aboul Gheit and Egypt's Coptic Orthodox Church Pope Tawadros II. The Arab Academy for Science, Technology, and Maritime Transport, in collaboration with the Social Affairs Sector and Culture and Dialogue of Civilizations Department at the League, and in partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Media and Information Literacy Alliance and the Autonomous University of Barcelona, organized the conference.

This three-day conference aims to emphasize the crucial role of media and information culture in promoting global understanding and peace, shaping public awareness, and directing views towards peaceful coexistence issues, while also exploring the role of technology and information in achieving these goals. The conference explored how to use media as a tool to bring people together and enhance dialogue and cultural understanding.

The focus lies on the vital role of media literacy in fostering critical analysis skills and discerning between real and fake news, which are crucial for building peaceful and cohesive societies. The conference is expected to come up with practical recommendations for developing effective media strategies that support global peace and understanding. Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the Arab League, Ambassador Talal Al-Mutairi, represented Kuwait at the conference. — KUNA



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'China the winner' in Maldives polls

## Germany, UK move in on China 'spies'

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Mourners carry the bodies of Palestinian men killed in a Zionist raid in the Nur Shams camp for Palestinian refugees in the occupied West Bank during their funeral procession on April 21, 2024. - AFP photos

# West Bank camp mourns martyrs

## 'They turned Nur Shams into a little Gaza'

**TULKAREM:** Families kissed the faces of the dead and neighbors cried in the streets after one of the worst Zionist raids anyone in the Nur Shams refugee camp can remember. On Sunday a funeral procession for 13 Palestinians killed in the army's West Bank operation passed through roads piled with rubble from Zionist bulldozers and rocket fire.

Zionist forces carry out regular raids on towns and cities in the occupied West Bank, and violence has soared since the war in Gaza broke out last year. The Zionist army said it had killed 10 Palestinians in a three-day "counterterrorism" raid on Nur Shams. Residents in the camp gave a different account.

Niaz Zandeq, 40, said his son Jihad was shot dead by a Zionist soldier on his 15th birthday. Neighbors said troops told Jihad to leave his uncle's house then shot

him as he stepped out of the front door with his hands up. They showed AFP images of his body in the street with a bullet wound to the forehead. "The minute he came out, they opened fire hitting him directly in the head," Zandeq said through tears. "He was unarmed."

### 'Killed so many people'

Jihad was not the only young person among the dead. On Friday the Palestinian health ministry said 16-year-old Qais Fathi Nasrallah was killed by Zionist troops in the nearby Tulkarem refugee camp. His father, a paramedic, was on shift at the hospital when staff brought his son's body in, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent. Including Nasrallah, the organization said the total number of dead in Tulkarem and Nur Shams stood at 14. On Saturday the Zionist army said it

had made eight arrests and seized weapons around Nur Shams, and that eight soldiers and a police officer were wounded. AFP saw armed fighters in the camp and at the funeral, where they fired shots into the air. Ibrahim Ghanim, a 20-year-old law student, said "anyone who fights back in the camp is called a terrorist". "Zionist soldiers have killed so many people here over the years I've lost count," he said.

### 'I was so scared'

As some residents began clearing debris and repairing their smashed homes, others remained in shock. Hamdia Abdallah Sarhan, 85, said she was still shaken after soldiers broke into her home and shot at the wall, trying to open up a firing position while she lay terrified on the ground. Sarhan suffers from a lung condi-

tion and uses a machine to help her breathe. She said the soldiers broke the machine when they burst in and she struggled for air until relatives found an emergency oxygen tank. "I was so scared," she said. "This violence was more than any I have seen."

Nine-year-old Misk Al-Shaikh was upstairs in her home when Zionist bulldozers tore down the front of the building on Thursday night, she and her family told AFP. "I was frightened," she said. "I wanted to hug my dad. The (Zionist) army operation was to target civilian life," her father Mostafa said. "They turned Nur Shams into a little Gaza." The Zionist entity has occupied the West Bank since 1967 and over 480 Palestinians have been killed by Zionist troops or settlers there since the start of the war in Gaza on Oct 7, according to Palestinian officials. - AFP

## Iran president in Pakistan to mend ties after strikes

**ISLAMABAD:** Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi held talks with Pakistani leader Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad on Monday, in what experts said was a "significant" visit aimed at mending ties after the neighbors traded deadly cross-border strikes earlier this year. Prime Minister Sharif's office said the pair had a "vibrant discussion" on advancing bilateral relations — specifically in trade and communication — and also "agreed on the necessity for joint efforts by both countries to combat terrorism".

Pakistan's foreign ministry also released photos of top diplomat Ishaq Dar meeting with Raisi, saying in a statement that the pair "discussed regional and global developments and affirmed commitment to peace and constructive dialogue". Before leaving Tehran, Raisi had said the "discussions with the government of Pakistan will be on the border issues between the two countries".

The three-day visit follows tit-for-tat missile strikes in January in the region of Balochistan, which straddles the two nations' porous border. Tehran carried out the first strikes against an anti-Iran group inside Pakistan, with Islamabad retaliating by hitting "militant targets" inside Iran. Both nations have previously accused each other of harboring militants in the border region.

Raisi's visit is an "opportunity to put the relationship back on track and to repair the damage that was done" in January, said Maleeha Lodhi, a former Pakistani diplomat and foreign affairs analyst. "A key challenge is border management, as there are militants on both sides of the Pakistan-Iran border, so the visit may yield some agreement on this," Lodhi said.

A visit to Islamabad by Tehran's foreign minister in late January led to the two sides pledging to improve dialogue and install liaison officers. Raisi's trip seeks to "diminish mistrust" between the neighbors, said security analyst Qamar Cheema. "But the visit is also significant in commercial terms. We foresee forthcoming enhancements in border management and a transition towards more formalized trade practices, thereby mitigating informal trade and smuggling activities along the border region," Cheema added. - AFP



ISLAMABAD: Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi shakes hands with Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif upon his arrival at the Prime Minister House on April 22, 2024. — AFP



NEW YORK: Police officers stand in front of the entrance of Columbia University occupied by pro-Palestine protesters on April 22, 2024. — AFP

## Pro-Palestinian protests continue at Columbia University

**NEW YORK:** US President Joe Biden condemned any "anti-Semitism" on college campuses Sunday, as pro-Palestinian protesters at Columbia University spent their fifth day demanding the school sever financial ties with key US ally the Zionist entity. Students camped out on university grounds are calling for the prestigious New York school, which has an exchange program with Tel Aviv University, to boycott all activities associated with the Zionist entity in light of the country's war with Hamas militants and the ensuing humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

"Even in recent days, we've seen harassment and calls for violence against Jews. This blatant anti-Semitism is reprehensible and dangerous — and it has absolutely no place on college campuses, or anywhere in our country," Biden said in a statement ahead of the Jewish holiday of Passover, which begins Monday night.

Universities have become the focus of intense cultural debate in the United States since Oct 7, as many students' pro-Palestinian positions have drawn accusations of anti-Semitism. A rabbi associated with an Orthodox Jewish student organization at Columbia "strongly" advised Jewish students to go home Sunday, CNN reported. Recent events "have made it clear that Columbia University's Public Safety and the (New York Police Department) NYPD cannot guarantee Jewish students' safety," Rabbi Elie Buechler wrote in a message to about 300 students, according to CNN.

Hillel, another Jewish organization at Columbia, however, said on X, formerly known as Twitter, that Jewish students should not leave campus, but that the university should "do more to ensure the safety of our

students". According to student newspaper the Columbia Spectator, "a group of around 10 pro-(Zionist) counterprotesters faced instances of anti-Semitism at (campus landmark) the Sundial Saturday night, according to interviews with students and videos."

During the demonstration Sunday, "Music continued to play as students, some laying on blue tarps, others sitting in camping chairs with laptops, talked among each other," the Spectator reported. Social media images posted Friday appeared to show Muslim and Jewish pro-Palestinian student protesters all praying in the so-called "Gaza solidarity encampment".

### Students arrested

Tensions were particularly high Thursday, when 108 protesters were arrested after university president Nemat Shafik requested police intervention to disperse the crowd, who she said had violated campus security regulations. New York Police Chief of Patrol Services John Chell told reporters "the students that were arrested were peaceful, offered no resistance whatsoever and were saying what they wanted to say in a peaceful manner" and that there were "no incidents", but that a separate group gathered and shouted insults at the officers. The daughter of Democratic Representative Ilhan Omar was among those detained.

New York Mayor Eric Adams on Sunday said he was "horrified and disgusted" by reports of anti-Semitism at Columbia, and that police "will not hesitate to arrest anyone who is found to be breaking the law". However, he said, "Columbia University is a private institution on private property, which means the NYPD cannot have a presence on campus unless specifically requested by senior university officials."

The strained scenes came the same week that university president Shafik appeared in Congress, where she said "anti-Semitism has no place on our campus". Congressional Republicans have taken up the issue of concerns over college anti-Semitism, with Harvard's president Claudine Gay resigning shortly after she was also called to testify. - AFP

## UK deportation flights to Rwanda will take off 'come what may': PM

**LONDON:** UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Monday promised that deportation flights of asylum seekers to Rwanda will begin in "10 to 12 weeks", as the plan entered its final stage in parliament. "We are ready, plans are in place and these flights will go, come what may," Sunak told a Downing Street news conference, hours before parliament is set to approve the contentious proposal. Sunak says it is essential to deter record numbers of asylum seekers crossing the Channel to England from France in small boats and has made it a key pillar of his Conservative party's pitch to voters. Sunak said that parliament would finally pass into law a bill about the safety of Rwanda for asylum seekers later on Monday following several weeks of legislative to-and-fro between its two chambers.

"Enough is enough. No more prevarication. No more delay," Sunak told reporters, adding that he envisaged "multiple" flights a month over the summer months. The UK is due to go to the polls in a general election later this year. The Tories, who promised tighter immigration after the UK left the European Union, are expected to be trounced by the main opposition Labour party, after 14 years in power. But the party's flagship scheme has been mired in difficulties and legal challenges since it was first proposed by Boris Johnson in May 2022 when he was prime minister. So far no migrants have been sent to Rwanda.

The legislation is Sunak's answer to a Supreme Court ruling last year that sending migrants to Rwanda was illegal under international law. The new bill would compel judges to regard the east African nation as a safe third country and gives ministers the power to disregard sections of international and British human rights law. The government has said it will not concede to two amendments sought by the unelected upper chamber House of Lords when members of the elected House of Commons lower chambers considers them on Monday afternoon. One seeks exemption from deportation for people who worked with the UK military overseas, such as Afghan interpreters. The other asks that an independent monitor be established to determine whether Rwanda is in fact safe. — AFP



LONDON: Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak speaks during a press conference at the Downing Street Briefing Room on April 22, 2024 regarding the Britain and Rwanda treaty to transfer illegal migrants to the African country. — AFP

## International

## Germany, UK move in on China 'spies'

## Berlin arrests three, London charges 2, including ex-parliamentary researcher

BERLIN: Germany and Britain on Monday both swooped on suspected spies accused of passing on secret information to China, as concern deepens in the West over aggressive Chinese espionage. In Germany, investigators arrested three German nationals in the west of the country suspected of sharing information on maritime technology, prosecutors said in a statement.

The trio, named as Herwig F, Ina F and Thomas R, are accused of taking part in an information-gathering project funded by Chinese state agencies, as well as illegally exporting a laser to China. In Britain, two men were charged with handing over "articles, notes, documents or information" to China between 2021 and last year. Police named the men as Christopher Berry, 32, and Christopher Cash, 29, who previously worked at the UK parliament as a researcher.

The German arrests and British charges come amid repeated Western warnings of Chinese intelligence services targeting advanced technologies. German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser warned of the "considerable danger posed by Chinese espionage in business, industry and science". "The area affected in the current case — innovative technologies from Germany that can be used for military purposes — is particularly sensitive," Faeser said.

## 'Extensive business'

Germany's first national security strategy, unveiled last year, was noticeably tough on China and accused Beijing of repeatedly acting against Berlin's interests. In its 2023 annual report, the German military's counter-intelligence service (MAD) also warned against potential espionage as China seeks to become a technological world leader by 2049. In

particular, it mentioned joint projects with the German armed forces as a major risk.

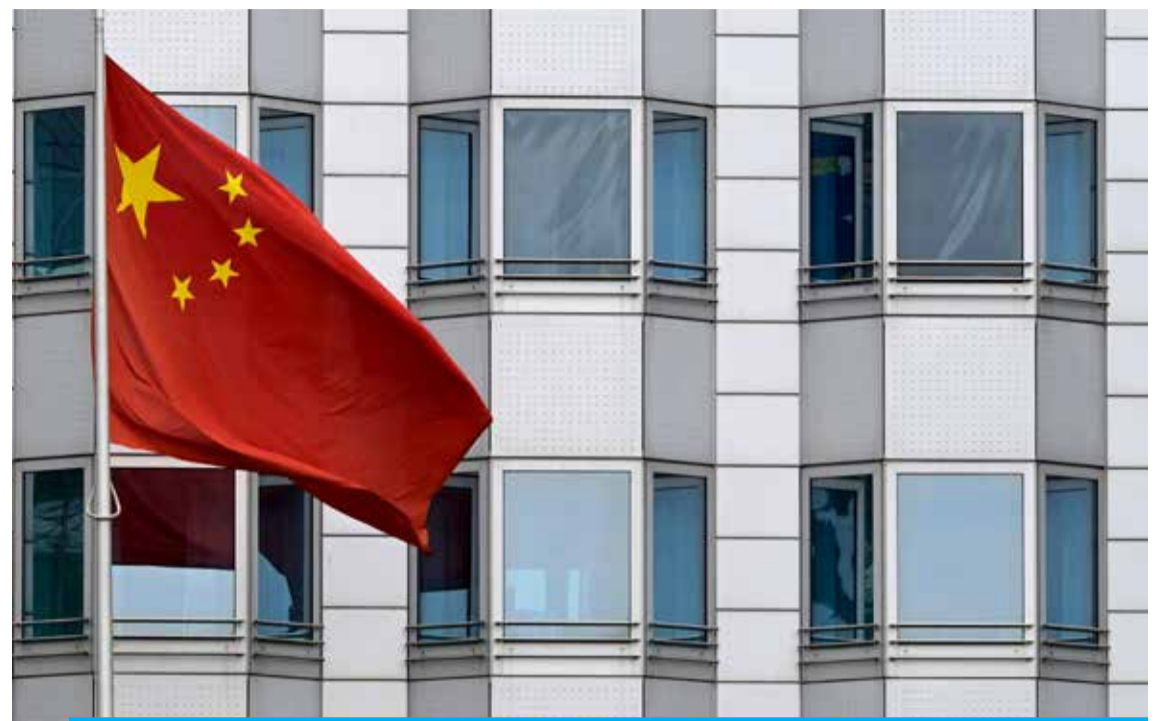
German domestic intelligence chief Thomas Haldenwang on Monday said the security authorities were "very vigilant" on the issue of Chinese espionage. Although he did not want to call the latest case the "tip of the iceberg", Haldenwang said it was "certainly part of a very extensive business".

One of the suspects in the German case, Thomas R, is accused of working as an agent for an employee of the Chinese ministry of state security (MSS). He is said to have established contact with Herwig F and his wife Ina F, who ran a company in Duesseldorf with expertise in technologies that could be used for military purposes. The company allegedly signed an agreement with a German university to prepare a study for a Chinese "contractual partner" on state-of-the-art machine parts used in powerful ship engines.

## Cyber groups

The contractual partner was the MSS employee that Thomas R was working for and the project was financed by Chinese state agencies, according to the prosecutors. At the time of their arrest, the suspects were also allegedly in further negotiations about research projects that could be useful for the expansion of China's maritime combat capabilities. As well as accusing Beijing of using espionage to gather technological information, multiple Western nations have also accused hacking groups backed by China of a global campaign of cyber espionage targeting critics.

The United States, Britain and New Zealand in March accused Beijing-backed cyber groups of



BERLIN: The Chinese flag is pictured in front of the building of the Chinese embassy on April 22, 2024. — AFP

being behind a series of attacks against lawmakers and key democratic institutions—allegations that prompted angry Chinese denials. In Britain, the Commons intelligence and security committee last year claimed China was targeting the country "prolifically and aggressively" and that the government did not have the "resources, expertise or knowledge" to deal with it.

Domestic intelligence service MI5 last year warned that a Chinese government agent called Christine Lee had been "engaged in political interference activities on behalf of the Chinese Communist Party, engaging with members here at parliament". The British pair outed on Monday are accused of breaking the Official Secrets Act 1911 and will appear in a London court on Friday. — AFP

## Bolsonaro hails Musk's 'courage' on free speech

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro hailed Elon Musk at a rally in Rio de Janeiro on Sunday, saying the billionaire has stood up for freedom of expression — which the former president claims is at risk in his country. Musk, whose ownership of social media platform X, formerly Twitter, has provoked widespread controversy, "is a man who really preserves freedom for all of us," the far-right leader told the rally on Rio's famed Copacabana beach.

Musk is under investigation in Brazil after he accused a Supreme Court justice this month of censoring social networks, calling him a "dictator" and vowing to disobey rulings to block users found to be spreading disinformation. But Bolsonaro told his thousands of supporters — many dressed in the national football team's jersey — on the beach Sunday that the billionaire

"had the courage to show, with some evidence ... where our democracy was going, how much freedom we have already lost."

The 69-year-old former leader also denounced a "dictatorship" in Brazil and called on supporters to "continue the fight" to defend freedom of expression. Supporters echoed Bolsonaro's words, with 38-year-old rally-goer Daiana Mesquita saying, "I came to fight for my freedom of expression, because we no longer have this right" after the Supreme Court ruling. The judge Musk targeted, Alexandre de Moraes, has waged a crusade against disinformation, especially attempts by far-right supporters of Bolsonaro to discredit Brazil's voting system.

## Musk weighs in

Brazilian authorities are investigating whether Bolsonaro plotted an attempted coup to prevent his 2022 election opponent and current president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva from assuming office in Jan 2023. Online users blocked by Moraes include figures like far-right ex-congressman Daniel Silveira, who was sentenced to nine years in prison in 2022 on charges of

leading a movement to overthrow the Supreme Court.

Musk had vowed to reinstate blocked accounts on X, saying: "We will probably lose all revenue in Brazil and have to shut down our office there" but "principles matter more than profit." He has not followed through on his threats, however, and the Brazilian office of X has said it will comply with court orders to block users spreading disinformation.

Moraes has responded to Musk's attacks by ordering fines of 100,000 reais (around \$20,000) a day for any blocked account that X reactivates. Accusing Musk of "criminal instrumentalization" of the platform, Moraes also placed the Tesla and SpaceX boss under investigation for crimes including conspiracy and obstruction of justice. "Where are the massive crowds cheering for petty tyrant @Alexandre de Voldemort and censorship in Brazil? There are none," one X user wrote Sunday, responding to images of the rally.

"Because he is against the will of the people and, therefore, democracy," Musk wrote in reply. Brazil is part of a growing international debate



RIO DE JANEIRO: Former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro waves to supporters during a demonstration at Copacabana Beach on April 21, 2024. — AFP

free speech on social media, where some say a free-for-all approach endangers democracy. Bolsonaro's Rio rally follows

a Sao Paulo gathering of his supporters in February that researchers said attracted around 185,000 people. — AFP

## Portugal poised to celebrate 50 years of democracy

LISBON: Portugal on Thursday marks 50 years since the Carnation Revolution, a military coup that ended its colonial wars in Africa and ushered in a democracy that has recently had a brush with the far right. On April 25, 1974, the oldest authoritarian regime in Western Europe at the time fell within a matter of hours, virtually without bloodshed, thanks to an uprising by non-commissioned officers that was immediately backed by the public.

The red carnations placed in the muzzles of the rifles carried by young soldiers who became the heroic liberators of a people languishing under a dictatorship that began in 1926 quickly became the dominant image of this moment of political, economic and social upheaval. The coup would open the way for the country's first free elections based on universal suffrage on April 25, 1975, as well as the independence of Portugal's remaining African colonies: Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde.

"The colonial wars had a fundamental influence in opening our eyes to the situation in Portugal," retired colonel Vasco Lourenco told AFP, one of the officers who took part in the coup and now heads the April 25 Association which represents putschist soldiers like him.

## 'Coup d'etat turned revolution'

The "immediate and overwhelming" support of the public was very encouraging for "those of us who really wanted radical change, real freedom and democracy", he said. For historian Maria Inacia Rezola, who is running the anniversary celebrations which will include hundreds of commemorative events, April 25 "was technically a coup d'etat which, on the same day, was transformed into a revolution".

On Thursday, some of the 5,000 or so soldiers who were part of the putsch will parade through central Lisbon in some 15 restored military vehicles that were used on the day. As it does every year, parliament will hold a special commemorative session and there will be a traditional parade but this year, the celebrations will also be joined by the heads of the African states that were once Portuguese colonies.

Some believed Portugal's authoritarian past would offer it some protection from the rise of the far right as seen elsewhere in Europe, but the extremist Chega party made a breakthrough in last month's

general election. Set up in 2019, it won 18 percent of the vote, consolidating its position as Portugal's third-largest political force. Although its founder and leader Andre Ventura has criticized the dictatorship years, the party has become a refuge for some nostalgic supporters of the former authoritarian regime.

## 'Don't know much about history'

"Within the Portuguese right, there are many people who don't have a totally negative view of Salazar and his regime," said Italian researcher Riccardo Marchi, an expert in the far right at the University Institute of Lisbon (ISCTE). Portugal's dictatorship years began in 1926 after which the regime was consolidated under prime minister Antonio de Oliveira Salazar and continued from 1968 by his successor Marcelo Caetano.

Rita Rato, director of Lisbon's Resistance and Freedom Museum, which is set up in a former jail where anti-fascist activists were tortured, says most Portuguese people "don't know much about their past". "What's happening now makes it even more clear how important it is for young people to know the recent history of our country," said Rato, a former Communist lawmaker.

According to a survey published on Friday, half of the respondents said the former regime had more negative aspects than positive, but a fifth said the



LOSIBON: People facing soldiers demonstrate on May 1, 1974 on Rossio square to celebrate the April 25 military coup that overthrew the authoritarian Estado Novo government after the Carnation Revolution. — AFP

opposite. And about two-thirds — or 65 percent — said the Carnation Revolution was the most important event in Portugal's history, more than the end of its monarchy in 1910 or its 1986 accession to what would become the European Union. Until 1974, Portugal was "a poor, backwards, illiterate country that was isolated from the rest of the world", said historian Rezola. But the events of April 1974 enabled it "to modernize at every level", she added. — AFP

## No end to Gaza nightmare...

## Continued from Page 1

Ismail Al-Thawabta, head of the Hamas government media office in the Palestinian territory, gave a higher figure of 283 bodies found at the hospital. "We discovered mass graves inside Nasser Medical Complex" of people killed by "the occupation (Zionist) army", Thawabta told AFP. The Zionist military said it was checking the reports, which come after the World Health Organization in early April said Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City had been reduced to ashes by a Zionist siege, leaving an "empty shell" containing many bodies.

Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said late Sunday that the Zionist military would increase military pressure to "deliver additional and painful blows" on the Hamas Palestinian fighters it is fighting in Gaza. The prime minister has for two months talked of sending troops into Gaza's southernmost city of Rafah to go after Hamas there. The Zionist entity's allies including Washington have warned against such an operation, fearing a worsening of Gaza's already catastrophic humanitarian situation. A majority of Palestinians in Gaza have sought refuge in Rafah from elsewhere in the territory.

The announcement of further military pressure came amid growing global opposition to the Zionist entity's Gaza offensive which has turned vast areas into rubble and sparked fears of famine. Gaza was hit

by heavy shelling overnight Sunday-Monday, with strikes reported in several areas in the centre and south of the territory, an AFP correspondent said Monday.

Doctors at Al-Aqsa Hospital in the central Gaza city of Deir al-Balah told AFP that six people were wounded in a Zionist air strike. A mosque in the nearby Al-Bureij refugee camp was destroyed in a strike, with footage from the scene showing multiple levels of the building collapsed in front of a still-standing minaret. "At 1:15 am, all of a sudden we saw fire, debris and destruction all around us," camp resident Mohammed Musaad told AFP. "We started running and found the mosque destroyed."

Also in Deir al-Balah, Palestinians made a tent out of a parachute used to air-drop aid off the coast. "When the parachute fell into the sea, we brought it in a small boat," said Naeem al-Goaan. His sister sleeps in the tent at night, while they use it as a store during the day, he added. Gaza's crossings and borders authority said 34 Palestinian detainees had been released from Zionist prisons since Monday morning. Authority spokesman Hisham Adwan said some of the prisoners showed "signs of torture". Zionist soldiers have rounded up hundreds of Gazans during the war against Hamas, holding them without charge before releasing some in groups.

In the occupied West Bank, where violence has surged alongside the Gaza war, a funeral procession was held on Sunday for 13 Palestinians killed during a Zionist raid on Nur Shams refugee camp. The Zionist entity's offensive has killed at least 34,151 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the territory's health ministry. — Agencies

## UAE, Oman bolster ties...

## Continued from Page 1

the two countries, especially in the economic, investment, and trade areas, which have witnessed significant advancement in recent years in a way that serves developmental priorities and enhances the prosperity of the two countries. The meeting also addressed joint Gulf action in light of the challenges

## Erdogan in Iraq to talk security...

## Continued from Page 1

countries' positions on contentious issues, while also highlighting the economic opportunities raised by the visit. "We discussed joint measures that can be taken against the PKK and its allies which target Turkish territory from inside Iraq," Erdogan said in an appearance with Sudan. "I shared with my counterparts my firm conviction that the PKK presence in Iraq will end as soon as possible, with it being declared a terrorist organisation," he said.

For decades, Turkey has operated from several dozen military bases in northern Iraq against the PKK. Its military operations, which sometimes

the region is witnessing and highlighted its importance in achieving the mutual interests of Gulf Cooperation Council countries and their peoples while bolstering regional security and stability.

The two sides discussed several regional and international issues of common interest, most notably developments in the Middle East and efforts to contain tensions and prevent escalation, as this entails a serious threat to security and stability. They also addressed the importance of self-restraint and prioritizing the voice of wisdom to spare the region from new crises that affect all and hinder cooperation and development for the benefit of its peoples. — Agencies

take place deep into Iraqi territory, have regularly strained bilateral ties, while Ankara has sought out increased cooperation from Baghdad in its fight against the PKK. Sudan on Monday spoke of "bilateral security coordination" that would meet the needs of both Iraq and Turkey. He said this would "make it possible to face the challenges posed by the presence of armed elements".

Apart from security, another major contentious point is water and sharing of the precious resource. Baghdad has been highly critical of Turkish upstream dams on their shared Tigris and Euphrates rivers, saying the reduced flow has worsened water scarcity in Iraq. Erdogan said the water issue would be "one of the most important points" of his visit following "requests" made by Iraq. "We will make an effort to resolve them. That is also their wish," he said. — AFP

## International

# 'China the winner' in Maldives polls

## Landslide victory for Muizzu's party reflects president's foreign policy shift

MALE: A landslide parliamentary election victory for the Maldives' pro-China president clears the way for him to redraw the physical and geopolitical map of his strategically-located Indian Ocean archipelago in Beijing's favor, diplomats and analysts say. President Mohamed Muizzu's party, the People's National Congress (PNC), will have 67 seats in the 93-member majlis, or parliament, full preliminary results showed Monday — already a two-thirds supermajority, plus support from five allied legislators.

A raft of Beijing-funded and Chinese-built projects, including an artificial island with tens of thousands of apartments, fish factories, and a new airport that had been obstructed by the outgoing opposition-controlled chamber — are now expected to go ahead. "The people voted for Muizzu's party because they believe he will deliver," said Fathimath Rasheedha, 47, a housewife in Male. "He promised a lot of construction. I think he is capable and he will do it."

Muizzu's pledges are expected to pull the nation of 1,192 tiny coral islands, scattered some 800 km across the equator astride key international shipping lanes,

significantly further into Beijing's sphere of influence. "Ultimately, China is the winner of these elections in the Maldives," a Western diplomat based in neighboring Sri Lanka told AFP.

The election, held under the shadow of rivalry between China and the regional powerhouse India, the Maldives' traditional benefactor, was a test of Muizzu's foreign policy shift. But an aide to the president said the margin of victory was beyond even their own expectations. "People believed his promises of bridges, airports and more importantly housing," they said, asking not to be named.

### 'Debt distress'

The projects are expected to be funded by Chinese loans, and the contracts executed by Chinese state-owned companies — under Beijing's ambitious Belt and Road Infrastructure development model which has proved controversial elsewhere. "China is willing to work with the Maldives to maintain traditional friendship (and) expand exchanges and cooperation in various fields," foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said Monday.



MALE: Maldives' President Mohamed Muizzu addresses the media after casting his ballot during the country's parliamentary election on April 21, 2024. — AFP

But Western nations led by the US have warned the initiative amounts to a debt trap for developing nations. Sri Lanka borrowed heavily from China for infrastructure projects before a foreign exchange crisis left it unable to finance essential imports such as food, fuel and medicines and it declared sovereign default in April 2022.

Two months ago, the International

Monetary Fund (IMF) warned the Maldives of "debt distress" and urged "urgent policy adjustments" without giving specifics. World Bank figures put the Maldives' total foreign debt at \$3.99 billion, or 71 percent of GDP, in 2022. And an IMF study showed three years earlier that 53 percent of the country's public and publicly guaranteed external loans were to China, its main economic and

development partner. The Maldives is also vulnerable to climate change, with the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warning in 2007 that rising sea levels could make it virtually uninhabitable by the end of the century.

### Chinese contracts

The biggest planned project is to create a brand new island near the capital called Ras Male, where 30,000 apartments will be built — a key factor that swayed voters, analysts said. A week before the election, Muizzu also awarded more than \$250 million worth of contracts to Chinese state-owned companies to build three fish processing factories. After tourism, fish exports are the nation's second-largest source of foreign exchange. Another contract for an undisclosed amount was awarded to another Chinese company to upgrade a domestic airstrip into an international airport. "Doing business with China does not have to be at the cost of relations with India," insisted Masood Imad, the Maldives' ambassador-designate for Sri Lanka. "There is scope for expanding ties with New Delhi too." — AFP

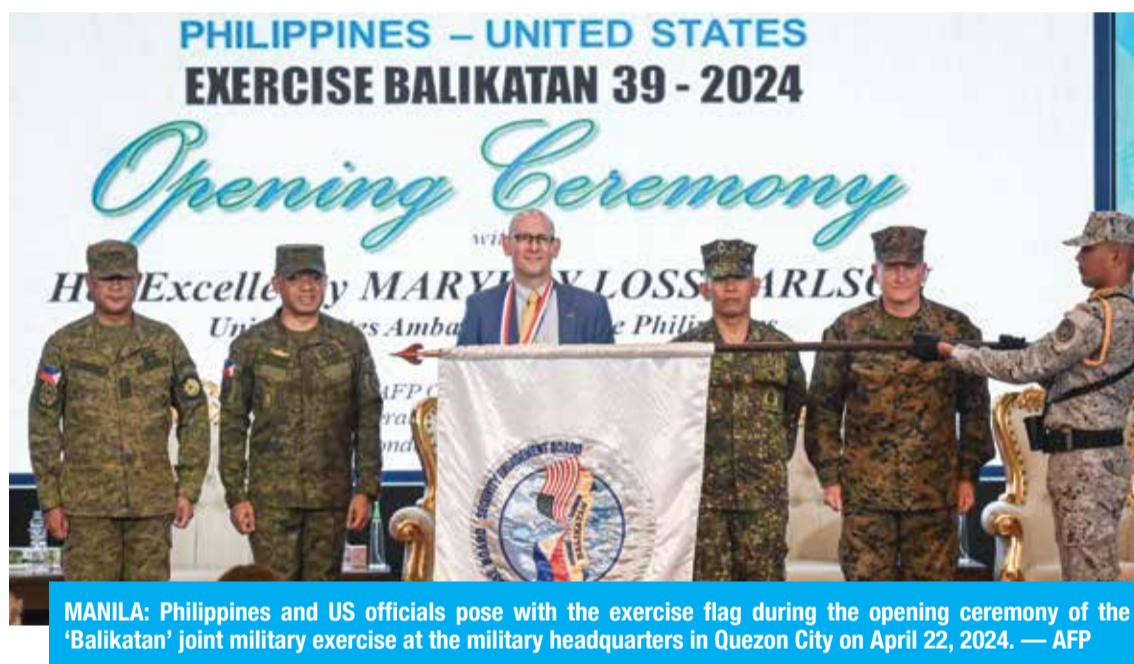
## Philippines, US launch annual joint military drills

MANILA: Thousands of Filipino and American troops kicked off joint military exercises in the Philippines on Monday, as Beijing's growing assertiveness in the region raises fears of a conflict. The annual drills — dubbed Balikatan, or "shoulder to shoulder" in Tagalog — will be concentrated in the northern and western parts of the archipelago nation, near the potential flashpoints of the South China Sea and Taiwan.

China claims almost the entire waterway, a key route for international trade, and also considers self-ruled Taiwan to be part of its territory. "We're going to show the people of the Philippines and the world that we've gotten better and we're never going to stop doing so," Lieutenant General William Jurney, commander of US Marine Corps Forces, Pacific, said at the opening ceremony in Manila. "When we get better the Philippines gets stronger, safer and more secure."

In response to China's growing influence, the United States has been bolstering alliances with countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including the Philippines. Washington and Manila are treaty allies and have deepened their defence cooperation since Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos took office in 2022. While the Philippines is poorly armed, its proximity to the South China Sea and Taiwan would make it a key partner for the United States in the event of a conflict with China.

"The purpose of armed forces, why we exist, is really to prepare for war," Philippine Colonel Michael Logico told reporters ahead of the drills. "There's no sugarcoating it... for us not to prepare, that's a disservice to the country." The Philippine Coast Guard will join Balikatan for the first time following several confrontations between its ves-



MANILA: Philippines and US officials pose with the exercise flag during the opening ceremony of the 'Balikatan' joint military exercise at the military headquarters in Quezon City on April 22, 2024. — AFP

sels and the China Coast Guard, which patrols reefs off the Philippines' coast. The joint drills involve a simulation of an armed recapture of an island in Palawan province, the nearest major Philippine landmass to the hotly disputed Spratly Islands in the South China Sea. The same exercise will be held in the northern provinces of Cagayan and Batanes, both less than 300 km from Taiwan.

Like last year, there will be a sinking of a vessel off the northern province of Ilocos Norte. Other training will concern information warfare, maritime security, and integrated air and missile defence. The United States has deployed its Standard Missile-6 (SM-6) guided missiles to the Philippines for Balikatan, but Logico said the weapons would not be used in the drills. China's foreign ministry has accused the United States of "stoking military confrontation", and warned the Philippines to "stop sliding down the wrong path".

### 'Safer global community'

The exercises, which will run until May 10, will involve around 11,000 American and 5,000 Filipino troops, as well as Australian and French military personnel. France, which is participating in Balikatan for the first time, will deploy a warship that will take part in a joint exercise with Philippine and US vessels. Fourteen countries in Asia and Europe will join as observers.

In another first, the drills will go beyond the Philippines' territorial waters, which extend about 22 kilometres from its coastline, Logico said. Philippine military chief General Romeo Brawner said Balikatan was an "extraordinary opportunity for us to deepen our collaborations with friends, partners and allies". "Cooperation and military to military collaboration play vital roles in ensuring a safer global community for generations to come," Brawner said. — AFP

## Modi accused of targeting Muslims in election speech

NEW DELHI: India's main opposition Congress party filed a complaint to the Election Commission Monday accusing Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi of "blatantly targeting" minority Muslims in a campaign speech. The world's most populous country is constitutionally secular and its election code bans canvassing based on "communal feelings".

Modi's muscular Hindu-first politics is a key part of his electoral appeal and his opponents accuse him of marginalising India's 200 million Muslim population. The prime minister usually steers away from explicit references to religion — the word "Hindu" does not

## North Korea fires salvo of short-range ballistic missiles

SEOUL: North Korea has fired several short-range ballistic missiles, Seoul's military said on Monday, the latest in a volley of tests by Pyongyang this year. The launch comes after UN sanctions monitoring against the nuclear-armed nation was upended last month by Pyongyang's ally Russia. South Korea's military said it had detected the launch of "several short-range ballistic missiles" from the Pyongyang area, which flew around 300 km before splashing down into waters east of the Korean peninsula.

"This missile launch is a blatant provocation that threatens peace and stability of the Korean peninsula," South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said, adding that the military was maintaining "full readiness". Tokyo also confirmed the launch, with Japanese government spokesman Yoshimasa Hayashi saying one missile had a maximum altitude of 50 kilometres and landed outside of the country's EEZ.

The launch is the second in less than a week by Pyongyang, which on Friday tested a "super-large warhead" designed for a strategic cruise missile, state media said. Seoul's military confirmed it had detected cruise missile launches at the time. Pyongyang's ally Moscow in March used its United Nations Security Council veto to effectively end UN monitoring of violations of the raft of sanctions on Kim Jong Un's gov-

### News in Brief

#### PNG PM dismisses Biden 'loose' talk

PORT MORESBY, Papua New Guinea: Papua New Guinea's leader has dismissed Joe Biden's unlikely suggestion that his uncle was eaten by cannibals as "loose" talk that does not reflect the US president's feelings for the country. "Sometimes you have loose moments," James Marape said in an interview after Biden's contentious remarks, adding that the relationship was stronger than "one blurry moment". Biden said last week that his uncle Ambrose Finnegan was shot down over the Pacific nation during World War II, suggesting his body was never found because "there were a lot of cannibals" in the area. "I've met him on four occasions, until today, and on every occasion he's always had warm regards for Papua New Guinea," Marape said. "Never in those moments (has) he spoke of PNG as cannibals," he added. — AFP

#### Fire engulfs 19 cars at Manila airport

MANILA: A grass fire at Manila's international airport ignited 19 vehicles in a car park on Monday, airport and fire authorities said, with videos on social media showing thick plumes of black smoke billowing into the sky. There were no immediate reports of injuries. Video shared on social media and verified by AFP showed multiple vehicles ablaze in a car park in terminal three. The heat index was expected to reach 41 degrees Celsius at the airport on Monday, according to the state weather forecaster. "It started with one car that caught fire in the car park then the rest of the vehicles followed because it was so hot," said Lane Macleod, who filmed one of the videos from inside the terminal. Flight operations were unaffected by the blaze, the Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA) said in a statement. — AFP



QINGYUAN, China: This aerial photo taken on April 22, 2024 shows a general view of flooded buildings and streets after heavy rains in this city in the southern Guangdong province. — AFP

## Southern China storms kill 4, force mass evacuations

BEIJING: Four people are dead and 10 others missing following storms that battered southern China, state media said Monday, with tens of thousands evacuated from areas hit by torrential downpours. Heavy rain has descended upon the vast southern province of Guangdong in recent days, swelling rivers and raising fears of severe flooding that state media said could be of the sort only "seen around once a century".

"Three deaths were reported in Zhaoqing City while the remaining one is a rescuer in Shaoguan City," state news agency Xinhua reported, citing local authorities. Ten others remain missing as search and rescue efforts in the area continue to be carried out, said Xinhua. China is no stranger to extreme weather but recent years have seen the country hit by severe floods, grinding droughts and record heat.

More than 110,000 people have been relocated across Guangdong, according to Xinhua. Of those, more than 45,000 were evacuated from the northern city of Qingyuan, which straddles the banks of

the Bei River, a tributary in the wider Pearl River Delta, state media reported Sunday. Heavy rain is expected to continue on Monday, with meteorological authorities forecasting "thunderstorms and strong winds in Guangdong's coastal waters" — a stretch of sea bordering major cities including Hong Kong and Shenzhen.

### Yellow alert

Neighboring provinces, including parts of Fujian, Guizhou and Guangxi, will also be affected by "short-term heavy rainfall", the National Meteorological Centre said. "It is expected that the main impact period of strong convection will last from daytime until night," it added. Authorities on Monday issued a yellow alert for rainstorms — the second-lowest in its four-tier system — with high levels of precipitation expected to continue across large swathes of the country.

Guangdong province is China's densely populated manufacturing heartland, home to around 127 million people. In the town of Jiangwan, six people were injured and a number were trapped in landslides caused by heavy rain on Sunday, state media reported. Photographs published by state broadcaster CCTV showed waterfront homes destroyed by a wall of brown mud, and people sheltering in a soaked public sports court. — AFP



SEOUL: People watch a television screen showing a news broadcast with file footage of a North Korean missile test at a railway station on April 22, 2024. — AFP

ernment for its nuclear and weapons programme.

Analysts have warned that North Korea could be testing cruise missiles ahead of sending them to Russia for use in Ukraine, with Washington and Seoul claiming Kim has shipped weapons to Moscow, despite UN sanctions banning any such moves. Seoul claims Pyongyang has sent around 7,000 containers of weapons to Moscow for use in Ukraine. Pyongyang's recent track record on launches indicates the North is trying to push its technical abilities, said Hong Min, a senior analyst at the Korea Institute for National Unification. "Today's launch also appears to be a part of its weapons development programme that needs testing rather than ones that are fully developed," he told AFP. — AFP

## Business

TUESDAY, APRIL 23, 2024

## Bader Al-Kharafi: Gulf Cables shareholder equity reached KD 230.3m by end of 2023



KUWAIT: Vice Chairman Bader Al-Kharafi chairs the general assembly of Gulf Cables &amp; Electrical Industries Group Co KSCP.

## Bader Al-Kharafi:

- Is it logical that a Kuwaiti company that maintains national employment should be equated with a GCC company whose affairs are managed by a representative office comprised of four employees?
- We support any positive trend but demand that Kuwaiti companies in GCC markets be treated similarly
- The Group continues to expand despite economic and geopolitical volatility
- Assets of Gulf Cables in the stock exchange, investments, shipbuilding, etc maximized returns
- Sustaining the Group's profit growth was a result of a strategic plan that was meticulously implemented
- Our results confirm our success in achieving the Group's objectives, most notably improving revenues and profitability
- Shareholders' equity reached KD 230.3 million by the end of 2023
- Gulf Cables always seeks to identify value-added investment opportunities
- Comprehensive follow-up of performance and investments to ensure the best returns and explore whenever opportunities are favorable

KUWAIT: On the sidelines of the general assembly of Gulf Cables & Electrical Industries Group Co KSCP, which approved the distribution of 65 fils in cash for each share, Vice Chairman Bader Al-Kharafi expressed his surprise at the continuation of the government's approach regarding equating national products with GCC products and the failure to give Kuwaiti products preference over their GCC counterparts in government tenders.

"It is not fair for Kuwaiti companies and their products to be equated to markets that do not grant them the same advantages, as the Kuwaiti government is currently pursuing in accordance with the circular issued in this regard," Al-Kharafi said.

"Is it reasonable for a company that employs 700 Kuwaiti employees, perhaps even a thousand or more, and supports employment, pays the percentage to the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, is keen to deduct zakat annually, and pays electricity and water fees and other requirements, to be competed with by a representative administrative office of a Gulf company that contains four employees who follow the procedures of competition and apply for contracts and tenders, without virtue or discernment for the Kuwaiti company in the competition for tenders offered by state institutions?" Al-Kharafi asked.

"We support any positive government trends that ensure that Kuwaiti companies are treated similarly in the Gulf as well and in a way that guarantees fair procedures," he said. Al-Kharafi added that if GCC countries give Kuwaiti companies the opportunity to enter their markets with the same facilities, justice imposes the same, but if the activity of the national company is limited to the local market and even surprised by unfair competition from other Gulf countries, the whole matter needs to be reconsidered, otherwise such a trend will be detrimental to the national product and national employment."

Al-Kharafi said in a press statement after the general assembly: "Such a trend is no longer acceptable, and proceeding with it will have a significant impact on all locally manufactured companies, but will cast a negative shadow on small enterprise companies, entrepreneurs and consumer products."

"The local product should not be equal to the Gulf unless we are treated similarly according to a clear agreement with features and details, as what we have monitored in those countries is completely contrary to that, as the concerned authorities in each Gulf market are interested in providing their product over any other product through facilities and explicit discrimination," Al-Kharafi said.

## General assembly

The ordinary general assembly of Gulf Cables & Electrical Industries Group approved the cash dividends recommended by the board of directors to shareholders at the rate of 65 cash fils per share in accordance with the eligibility controls followed by Boursa Kuwait.

## Special profits

This comes in light of the group's outstanding operating results and profits in 2023, compared to a cash dividend of 60 fils per share for 2022. Al-Kharafi said that the sustainability of the growing profitability recorded by the group is the result of a strategic plan implemented on the ground, pointing out that the group continues to expand and achieve its strategic goals despite the economic and geopolitical fluctuations on the regional scene currently.

## Achieving goals

Al-Kharafi added: "The annual financial results of Gulf Cables have shown our success in achieving the financial objectives and improving the performance at the level of revenues and profitability of the group, as it witnessed a significant improvement in the key financial performance indicators." Al-Kharafi stressed that this achievement reflects and confirms once again the strength, capability and resilience of Gulf Cables in all aspects of its business in accordance with our firm commitment to increasing financial returns and enhancing value for its shareholders.

## Revenue growth

In the context of his remarks after the meeting, he pointed out that the total revenues of Gulf Cables grew by 8 percent annually to reach KD 122.1 million compared to KD 113 million. Al-Kharafi explained that the stability of the group's conditions was crystallized by the profits it achieved, accompanied by a record growth during 2023 amounting to 62.5 percent to reach KD 21 million compared to KD 13 million for 2022. The company's profit growth was reflected in the total equity of the owners of the parent company to reach KD 230.3 million compared to KD 227.8 million at the end of 2022.

## Digital transformation

"Based on the group's belief that there is an opportunity to help achieve long-term economic diversification and industrial development, help deliver energy sources to new cities and regions, and achieve sustainability by providing products and adopting environmentally friendly practices, Gulf Cables is interested in new global digital transformation technologies to gain more flexibility and competitiveness and enhance efficiency across the group's companies and sectors," said Al-Kharafi.

## Investment opportunities

Al-Kharafi pointed out that Gulf Cables always seeks to identify investment opportunities with high added value that are in line with its general strategy based on several objectives and determinants so that they are more aligned and compatible with the group's vision, as well as there is a comprehensive follow-up of the performance and value of the group's existing investments to ensure the best rate of return and growth, as well as exiting whenever the opportunities are favorable.

## Premier market

At the level of Boursa Kuwait, Al-Kharafi stressed the Group is keen to be among the premier market companies in Boursa Kuwait, which is the elite market for the best listed companies that are characterized by high liquidity and medium to large market capitalization, which enhances the position of the financial group and its stability and its ability to provide a high degree of transparency to its shareholders and stakeholders. It is noteworthy that the general assembly approved all the items included in the agenda, including the reports of the board of directors and the auditors.

## Reduced loans

The Group's total value of Islamic loans and financing showed a significant decrease for the second consecutive year by KD 12.7 million (decrease by KD 28.2 million in 2022) and a decrease of 29.1 percent to reach KD 31.2 million by the end of 2023 compared to KD 43.9 million at the end of 2022.

## End of restrictions

The restrictions on dealing with Gulf Cables and Electrical Industries Company's ownership in Boursa Kuwait, which represents 14.41 percent of the shares, have expired as of March 13. The discount applied to the declared purchase price will be canceled when determining the fair value of the investment in that share, as the group recorded a 15 percent discount on the total market value of KD 49.75 million for those shares as of December 31, 2023 of KD 7.46 million to reach KD 42.28 million. The group explained that the impact of canceling the discount rate by increasing the value of investments at fair value will be reflected in other comprehensive revenues within non-current assets, and increasing the value of accumulated changes in fair value within the total equity of the owners of the parent company by KD 7.46 million, as of the first quarter of this year.

## The perfect balance

Al-Kharafi stated that the Group continues to achieve impressive revenues from the investment sector by recording meaningful cash dividends. "This distinction is due to the focus of our investment policy on key factors, led by achieving an ideal balance between profitable financial returns for our shareholders and ensuring sustainability and future growth, by identifying low- and medium-risk stock options in different activities and industries with moderate and diversified geographical distribution," he said.

## Acknowledgements

At the end of the meeting, Al-Kharafi thanked all shareholders for their trust and continuous support for the group's march. He expressed his deep gratitude and appreciation to the executive team and all the group's employees for their sincere efforts, loyalty and continued commitment to the group's objectives and in enhancing its capabilities to move forward with confident steps on the right track to achieve the desired growth and sustainability.

## Markets bounce as Mideast fears ease; US inflation in view

HONG KONG: Asian markets rose Monday, clawing back some of last week's losses, as Middle East worries subsided and traders looked ahead to the release of key US inflation data and corporate earnings. With Iran downplaying a reported the Zionist attack on the country, which came days after a drone and missile strike on the Zionist entity by Tehran, tensions between the regional foes appeared to have cooled.

While the situation remains tense, the lack of escalation over the weekend provided traders with an opportunity to pick up equities and helped push oil down. The gains came despite a largely negative lead from Wall Street, where the Nasdaq shed more than two percent owing to

hefty selling in tech giants including Amazon, Apple and Netflix.

Investors are now setting their sights on the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) index, the Federal Reserve's preferred gauge of inflation, which is due on Friday. The reading could play a major role in the central bank's decision-making on interest rates, and comes after a third successive month of above-forecast consumer price index figures. The disappointing CPI data has dented hopes for a cut in June, and traders have scaled back their outlook for how many the Fed will make this year.

The PCE report is followed by the bank's policy announcement next week,

which will be pored over for clues about its next step. Several officials have lined up to temper expectations for cuts, citing sticky inflation as well as a still-strong economy and labor market. Chicago Fed boss Austan Goolsbee said last week that the battle against surging prices had stalled. "Right now, it makes sense to wait and get more clarity before moving," he said, warning that bringing inflation back to the bank's two percent goal would likely take longer than initially thought.

Hong Kong led gainers, jumping 1.8 percent, while Tokyo, Sydney, Seoul, Singapore, Mumbai, Manila, Bangkok and Wellington also rose. There were small losses in Shanghai, Jakarta and Taipei, however. London, Paris and Frankfurt all rose in the morning. Earnings from big-name firms including Google parent Alphabet, Tesla and Microsoft are also in play this week, with investors hoping for strong reports to back up a recent surge in equities. — AFP



RUICHANG: Employees work at a factory that produces charging stations for electric cars in Ruichang, in central China's Jiangxi province. — AFP



# Boubyan Bank releases its 2023 sustainability report and vision

**KUWAIT:** Boubyan Bank released its 4th Sustainability Report for the year 2023, titled: "Integration into Corporate Strategy" to reflect the bank's initiatives towards adopting proactive practices that effectively contribute to our sustainable ESG approach. In this regard, Boubyan Bank's CEO - Private, Consumer, and Digital Banking, Abdullah Al-Tuwaijri, stated: "Thanks to Almighty Allah, Boubyan Bank continued making a clear progress on its ESG goals in 2023, while sparing no effort to build a more inclusive and sustainable future for everybody, while reinforcing and integrating sustainability elements into the bank's overall strategy and business practices."

"The report has become one of the key pillars through which Boubyan reinforces its priorities and reviews the leading stories towards emphasizing sustainability principles and assessing the extent to which ESG practices are mature, in addition to the roadmap towards fostering a sustainable future," he added.

Al-Tuwaijri went on to add: "Boubyan Bank always seeks to safeguard shareholders' rights, protect the investment value, and minimize conflict of interest through commitment to implementing all standards, and enhancing the role of shareholders in participating in decision-taking processes related to their investments." On his part, Boubyan Bank's Executive Manager - Business Continuity and Sustainability, Khaled Abdulwahab Al-Haqqaan, stated: "We are proud of the progress we have made on instigating sustainable development and change, not only on the level of the bank but also community-wise."

This came in line with our clear strategy and vision to be a champion for sustainable development, governance, and responsible practices to make a positive change, which reflects positively on our customers and employees." "Boubyan adopts a strategic pathway that incorporates international sustainability metrics and the implementation approach thereof in a manner that guarantees mitigating risks, reinforcing its core banking business, and improving customer satisfaction levels to ensure the highest levels of services", he added.

## Special strategy

Al-Haqqaan added: "Boubyan continues its efforts to drive sustainable growth across all of its group companies, whilst maintaining its core values of being Innovative, Empowering, and Driven. The Boubyan ESG Strategy 2029 will prove to be essential in effecting the needed change to achieve Boubyan's vision of becoming a leading Islamic bank that advocates sustainable development across



**Al-Tuwaijri:**  
Our goal is more inclusive and sustainable future for everybody.



**Al-Haqqaan:**  
We are committed to bringing a positive change to the environment and the society through sustainable practices.

all of its operations worldwide."

Al-Haqqaan reviewed the ESG strategy, which focuses on integrating the mission and vision into the internal and external ESG elements, while setting broader performance measurement goals through KPIs, in addition to focusing on stakeholders and identifying compliance and goals against international standards. He elaborated: "In this report, we explore Boubyan Bank's journey towards incorporating sustainability metrics into its operations to ensure sustainable growth through actions that include minimizing environmental footprint, uplifting socio-economic well-being, and the ESG strategy."

## Transparency and governance

The report dwells on Boubyan Bank's commitment to implementing robust governance through accountable board performance, data and information security, and transparent disclosures, in addition to risk-control approach, ESG management, corporate governance, and ethical practices across the bank's operations. Boubyan Bank adopts a policy of protection of shareholders' rights and respecting the same, based on the principles of transparency and equality, including compliance with all laws, regulations, and instructions governing the bank with regard to the protection of their rights, in addition to adopting a policy for the protection of stakeholders' rights.

## Digital transformation

The report further highlights Boubyan's strategy towards digital transformation that showed a swift response to the accelerating growth of its banking solutions and services, which would improve customer service and align with the total transformation aiming at the digitalization of services in line with a well-studied

strategy, especially amid the boom of the digital Islamic banking industry worldwide, thus leading the bank to be named the "World's Best Islamic Digital Bank" for the past 9 years in a row.

Through well-studied steps, Boubyan managed to be among the early Islamic financial institutions to consider digital transformation as the fulcrum of regional expansion and the upgrade of the digital infrastructure, driving the percentage of the users of Boubyan App for smart phones to 73 percent and 72 percent of retail and corporate customers respectively.

The report reiterates Boubyan Bank's commitment to sparing no effort to evaluate and improve customers' experience. Boubyan Bank further remained atop the pyramid of customer service by being named the "Best Islamic Bank in Customer Service" for the 14th year in a row since 2010. This award reflects the bank's commitment to adopting the best international practices in customer service, which confirms the solid leadership of Boubyan and its exceptional contributions in this area atop of all institutions of the financial sector in Kuwait.

## Leadership and inclusiveness

The report further highlights the bank's role and ongoing efforts to guarantee an inclusive and engaging work environment for its employees, who represent the main engine of the ongoing success of the bank. The group adopts a number of initiatives and training programs in collaboration with international institutions at the hands of the most prominent training specialists, while improving the best careers, and the ways of career progress amid an exceptional work environment. Accordingly, the number of staff who attended specialized training programs reached 81.3 percent.



Bank's commitment to setting specific standards targeting ongoing engagement with customers, staff, and others, aiming to have a positive and targeted effect on the bank's journey and its growth to achieve sustained growth.

## Environmental sustainability

The report highlights Boubyan's efforts towards measuring and implementing sustainable practices to reduce the carbon footprint, energy & water consumption, and waste generation, with clear plans already developed to contribute to addressing such issues. The bank installed 22 electric vehicle (EV) charging stations with dedicated parking slots at the new Boubyan HQ, while introducing exclusive promotions and discounts on electric cars, further demonstrating the bank's vision regarding the environment and encouraging environmental awareness, as well as the bank's commitment to environmental sustainability.

## Highlights

### 1st highlight

Boubyan managed to become a leading franchise despite the fierce competition among the banking sector's institutions, thus following a tailored path that reinforces customer satisfaction levels, leading to receiving a 95 percent Customer-Satisfaction Index score among all Islamic and conventional local banks, in addition to a Net Promoter Score of 73 percent.

### 2nd highlight

The OHI survey taken by all employees of the bank returned extremely positive results, with an 86 percent participation rate among all the bank's employees. The survey revealed the satisfaction of 84 percent of the bank's staff, which is a great percentage that places Boubyan Bank in the top decile globally among all organizations that took the survey.

### 3rd highlight

Boubyan Bank managed to stand out as an excellent role model in CSR and in the support of sustainability through many events and initiatives that emphasized the bank's social excellence, locally and regionally, which were crowned with the "World's Best Islamic Bank for CSR" award by Global Finance in recognition of the bank's achievements over



## AAW receives delegates from 'Business France'

**KUWAIT:** Chairman and CEO of Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Co (AAW), Faisal Ali Al Mutawa, received members from 'Business France' - the French national agency supporting the international development of the French economy. The meeting was attended by Head of French Trade Commissions in the Middle East, Axel Baroux, Business France Middle East coordinator, Camille Tricoire, and the Head of Trade Commission Commercial Counsel, Embassy of France in Kuwait Rabih Soufngi.

During the visit, the parties discussed bilateral commercial relations between AAW and private sector companies in France and explored potential business opportunities. AAW Chairman and CEO Faisal Ali Mutawa said: "We are delighted to welcome members from Business France, the

prestigious French agency with whom we share the goal of supporting partnership and exploring opportunities for bilateral cooperation between private sector companies in France and Kuwait."

AAW is a partner and supporter of Business France. The company has participated in numerous conferences and events including the first edition of the "Vision Golfe" 2023 and the "Ambition Middle East Forum" 2022. Additionally, AAW regularly contributes to the French Business Guide, which is published periodically. Founded in 2015, Business France is the French national agency that supports the development of exports and international investments in France. Its goal is to help the French economy on the international level by assisting the French producers and entrepreneurs and encouraging investment in France.

It also seeks to increase France's attractiveness and strengthen its economic ties. Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Company is one of the largest retail and distribution companies in Kuwait, with world-class operations across various industries. The company is the distributor for over 200 global brands in Kuwait's surging wholesale and retail market, and is a primary distributor for several French brands.

president was to conduct an "audit of the mining, gas and oil sector".

According to Senegal's state-owned oil company, Petrosen, the combined revenues of the two main deposits of gas and oil are estimated at an annual average of 700 billion CFA francs (\$1.1 billion) over 30 years. The West African nation, among the 25 least developed countries in the world, is betting on these resources to make an economic leap. However, the new government believes that the contracts signed by those previously in power are "very unfavorable" to Senegal. This claim was always dismissed by the former government and experts in the sector. — AFP

## Senegal's renegotiation of oil, mining contracts 'risky'

**DAKAR:** The renegotiation of mining and oil contracts announced by Senegal's new president to benefit local populations would be "risky" for investment and future partnerships, industry players have warned. Bassirou Diomaye Faye, who became Africa's youngest democratically elected president on a promise of radical reform, vowed on the campaign trail to prioritize renegotiating oil and gas contracts. A key figure in Faye's election, Ousmane Sonko - who was appointed prime minister - during the campaign called out the "hung-up intellectuals (who) make you think it is impossible to renegotiate". Among one of Faye's first announcements as

## Gulf Bank celebrates Kuwaiti heritage with 'Journey of the Dinar' exhibition

**KUWAIT:** In alignment with its commitment to upholding sustainability principles and supporting educational endeavors within the Ministry of Education, Gulf Bank successfully concluded its sponsorship of the "Journey of the Dinar" art and cultural exhibition. Organized by the Capital Educational Zone at The Avenues Mall, the event marked the initial issuance of the Kuwaiti currency in April 1961.

It took place under the patronage of the Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Public Education, Dr. Hessa Al-Mutawa, with Gulf Bank's General Manager of Consumer Banking, Mohammed Al-Qattan, also in attendance. The exhibition showcased the evolution of the Kuwaiti Dinar through 80 artistic pieces from different educational districts within the Ministry of Education, creatively depicting the currency's history from its initial issuance to its rise as one of the most valuable currencies in the world.

Since its initial release, the Kuwaiti Dinar has undergone several updates, the most recent being the sixth issuance released in June 2014. This edition is marked by a consistent and sophisticated design, highlighting important symbols from Kuwait's national heritage and key economic milestones. The currency notes feature representations of significant national symbols on the front and historical narratives of Kuwait's development and economic achievements on the reverse side.

Gulf Bank eagerly sponsored this distinctive cultural art exhibition, which highlights the younger generation's connection to symbols of national independence, particularly the introduction of the national currency. This sponsorship aligns with celebrating the country's founding and the start of its modern revival. In line with Kuwait's vision and its five-year banking strategy that prioritizes youth, Gulf Bank is committed to actively supporting and encouraging young individuals in various sectors and activities, with a particular focus on the arts, creativity, and Kuwaiti heritage.

Furthermore, the bank organizes numerous events and initiatives aimed at educating and training youth in financial and banking matters, prepar-



ing them for the job market and qualifying them to enter the world of entrepreneurship. Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large.

With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience. Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining robust developments in sustainability at environmental, social and governance levels through diverse sustainability initiatives, strategically selected to benefit the bank both internally and externally. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.

# NBK launches 'NBK 247 Cashback Visa Platinum Prepaid Card' with up to 24 percent cashback

## Giving cardholders opportunity to meet beloved star Mohammed Salah

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) always seeks to reward its customers and ensure providing them with innovative products serving their needs and enhancing their banking experience. In this context, the bank has launched the new NBK 247 Cashback Visa Platinum Prepaid Card offering customers up to 24 percent cashback on their daily purchases.

Customers will be able to transfer their daily spends from their debit card to the new prepaid card to get cashback of 24 percent on streaming services (Payment should be done through the streaming app or website and not through any other service provider), 7 percent on Food delivery (food delivery applications, it doesn't include ordering directly from the restaurant), 4 percent on Bill payments (Telecom bills that are paid through the app or website of the telecom companies or through any of their branches, and not through any service provider), 2 percent on Grocery, 2 percent on Hospitals, clinics and pharmacies and 0.7 percent on Digital payments (made using digital wallets).

One of the first 1,000 customers to apply for the card will get the opportunity to meet the beloved star Mohamed Salah. Noting that date and place to meet the star will be confirmed later on by the bank. Customers can apply for the card through NBK Mobile Banking App and once they enroll the card in the digital wallet, they will be able to use the card immediately. Now and for the first time, customers will have the option of using a digital card or choosing to issue a physical card.

Speaking on the new card, Mohammed Al Othman, Consumer Banking Group at National Bank



Mohammed Al Othman

of Kuwait said, "At NBK, we always strive to provide our customers with new products tailored to their needs. As the name suggests, the newly introduced NBK 247 Cashback Visa Platinum Prepaid Card will be customers' companion 24/7, giving them valuable cashback on their daily purchases."

"The new card launch comes within NBK's consistent endeavors to be always closer to its customers and to serve all their banking needs through unmatched products providing the best benefits," he noted. "We also wanted to provide customers with the unique opportunity to meet global icon Mohamed Salah who is loved worldwide, being one of the best soccer players of his generation, with unprecedented achievements over the span of his career," he added.

"We're delighted to partner with NBK to reward their Visa cardholders with innovative products that meet their needs and enhance their payment experience. The launch of the NBK 247 Cashback Visa Platinum Prepaid Card is a prime example of this commitment," said Mohamed Reyad, Visa's Head of Financial Institutions in Kuwait. NBK provides an array of prepaid cards which offer numerous benefits, while helping customers spend their money confidently and conveniently, making sure they never go over their budget.



## NBK Economic Report

### Economic data 'soft'; higher oil prices ease budget pressures

KUWAIT: Data on Kuwait's economy remained relatively soft in Q1 2024, following a muted 2023. Both real estate sales and project activity dipped, while credit growth stood at multi-year lows. Inflation also eased, albeit modestly, pointing to cooling private demand. Some of this softness may have been linked to seasonal factors, including the holy month of Ramadan, which fell mostly in March, perhaps auguring for a better Q2.

On the positive side, oil's recent rise to over \$90/bbl (above our estimates of the breakeven oil price for the government's budget) has boosted the public finances and perhaps overall confidence as well, though the government still ran a significant fiscal deficit in the first 10M of FY23/24 on elevated and difficult-to-rein in spending. Q1 was also characterized by fresh domestic political volatility, with HH the Amir dissolving parliament for the 4th time in 4 years and elections called for early April. The poll ultimately resulted in the return of most of the previous MPs, pointing to no obvious shift in the political deadlock that has delayed key economic reforms until now.

#### Non-oil activity accelerated

According to data published by the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB), non-oil GDP rose by 2.8 percent y/y in Q3 2023 while the oil sector declined for the second consecutive quarter, by a steep 9 percent y/y, due to Kuwait's OPEC+ production cut obligations. The pick-up in non-oil growth came from gains in the financial services (+2.7 percent y/y), public administration (+1.0 percent) and transportation & storage (+28 percent) categories, with the latter contributing almost half of the increase in non-oil activity.

However, manufacturing activity, which includes oil refining and accounts for almost 16 percent of non-oil GDP in real terms, remained in negative growth territory (-1.3 percent y/y) for the sixth quarter in a row. Moreover, the CSB release included revisions for the previous quarter (Q2 2023), which saw growth shift from 1.5 percent y/y to -2.5 percent.

Non-oil growth for Q1-Q3 2023 averaged 0.1 percent y/y and, in the absence of further data revisions or especially robust growth in the final quarter, decent growth for the full-year looks unattainable. Although an improvement in growth is expected for 2024, given the soft start to the year across a range of non-oil metrics mentioned above, as well as ongoing domestic and international headwinds, we expect growth to remain on the soft side at 2.5 percent or less.

#### Oil prices rise in Q1

Oil prices surged in Q1 2024, with Kuwait Export Crude (KEC) rising 8.5 percent q/q to end March at \$86.3/bbl. The rally reflected tightening oil market fundamentals following the implementation—and later extension—of OPEC+ supply cuts (2.1 mb/d) to end-H1 2024. This was also allied to stronger-than-expected oil demand growth, with the global economy proving surprisingly resilient amid elevated interest rates and fears of entrenched inflation across the US and EU and higher geopolitical risk premia linked to the Zionist-Iran tensions. We have raised our 2024 oil price forecast to \$85/bbl reflect the above dynamics.

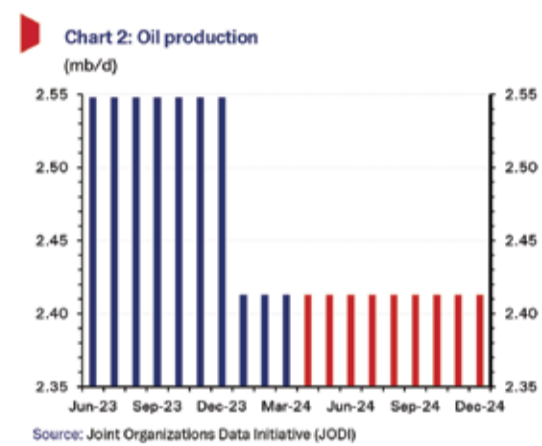
Meanwhile, Kuwait's crude production in Q1 was broadly in line with its OPEC quota of 2.41 mb/d. OPEC+ will meet in June to assess the state of the market and decide on any potential unwinding of the supply cuts. Our base case sees these cuts ex-



tended to end-2024, though if oil trades consistently in the \$95-\$100 range in H2 2024, there might be pressure from both outside and inside OPEC+ to loosen the market a little.

Consumer spending, the pre-eminent driver of non-oil activity post-pandemic, has slowed sharply, albeit from exceptional levels. According to central bank cards data, total card spending grew by 5.4 percent y/y in Q4 2023, down from 8.7 percent in Q3 2023. Looking ahead to 2024, we expect only limited upside amid a challenging local and international macroeconomic environment, which includes elevated interest rates and some budgeted cuts in government spending. That said, the recent increase in oil prices, if sustained, could provide a boost to consumer confidence.

After showing improvement in Q4 2023, real estate sales weakened in the first three months of 2024, falling to a cumulative KD 697 million (-9.5 percent q/q; -2.3 percent y/y) by the quarter's close. The quarterly fall reflected reduced activity in the commercial property sector, while sales in both the residential and investment sectors increased only slightly, the latter for the third con-



lowest in two decades, although as with real estate sales above, it could be partly explained by seasonal effects, including Ramadan. The outlook for the rest of 2024 should be better given positive signals emanating from the Al-Zour IWPP phases 2&3 project (KD 1.2 billion) and the pipeline of PAHW-related city projects. MEED estimates total awards could reach KD 6.3 billion in 2024.

Consumer price inflation came in at 3.4 percent y/y in February, ticking up slightly from January but down on the 3.7 percent average recorded in Q4 2023. Core inflation, which strips out food and housing, stood at 3.3 percent y/y in February, not far off its 2023 peak of 3.5 percent recorded last November. Although not high, price pressures have been somewhat persistent across the CPI basket, easing only gradually. Food price inflation has now risen for two months in a row to 5.0 percent in February. We think inflation this year will trend downwards to an average of around 3.0 percent or slightly below, in line with expectations of still muted economic activity.

According to the Public Authority of Civil Information (PACI), Kuwait's population rose by 2.6 per-

#### Fiscal balance

Ministry of Finance data for 10M FY23/24 (April-January) showed the government posting a fiscal deficit of KD 1.1 billion (-2.6 percent of estimated GDP) on revenues of KD 17.8 billion (-24 percent y/y) and expenditures of KD 18.9 billion (+61 percent y/y). The 10-month figure is in stark contrast to last year's equivalent period reading, when the public finances were in surplus (KD 10.2 billion; +18.5 percent of GDP) amid spiking international oil prices. Nevertheless, the fiscal deficit is narrower than the KD 1.7 billion posted in the 9-month accounts published a month earlier, an improvement that reflects revenue growth outpacing expenditure growth. Oil revenues stood at KD 16.4 billion (-25 percent y/y) and non-oil revenues KD 1.4 billion (+8.4 percent y/y).

On the expenditure side, current expenditures came in at KD 16.6 billion (+66 percent y/y) on higher outlays in the compensation of employees and grants categories. Meanwhile, capex reached KD 821 million, declining 15.6 percent y/y. As a proportion of the capex budget allocation, 55 percent remained unspent by January's close. Based on historical spending patterns, the deficit could widen to more than KD 3 billion (6 percent of GDP) in FY23/24.

The draft budget for FY24/25 projects another sizeable deficit of KD 5.9 billion and still reflects long-standing structural challenges, namely the high reliance on oil revenues and inflated current spending, which continue to undermine long-term sustainability. Recently, Fitch rating agency affirmed Kuwait's sovereign credit rating at a high AA- with a stable outlook on a strong fiscal balance sheet (financial assets at 529 percent of GDP in FY24/25) while noting the ever-expanding welfare state coupled with lack of traction on economic reforms.

#### Credit growth picks up

After a weak 2023, credit growth showed some improvement in Jan-Feb 2024, though remained historically below in year-on-year terms. According to the latest CBK release, credit increased by a strong 0.7 percent m/m in February (+1.8 percent y/y; +0.5 percent ytd) on the back of higher household (+0.2 percent m/m; +1.9 percent y/y) and business lending (+0.5 percent m/m; +0.7 percent y/y).

In the former, so far in 2024 growth in consumer loans (+1.1 percent ytd) outpaced housing loan growth (+0.3 percent ytd), a reversal of the trend in 2022-2023. Business lending, meanwhile, has been broad-based across sectors, with the construction sector posting the quickest growth after two months (+5.6 percent ytd), in line with its performance in 2022-2023.

Meanwhile, after a weak January, resident deposits increased by a solid 1 percent m/m in February (+3.7 percent y/y; +0.7 percent ytd), with all three sub-components (private sector, public institutions, and government) rising. Private sector deposits, after a flat January, increased by 0.8 percent m/m (+0.3 percent y/y), and while private sector CASA increased by 0.6 percent m/m, it was outstripped by 1.4 percent growth in private sector time deposits.

The US Fed has likely ended its rate hiking cycle, and the attention has shifted to the timing and extent of rate cuts in 2024. The most recent Fed projections (March 2024) continued to indicate three 25bps rate cuts in 2024. Futures markets have toned down their expectations from the previous five or six cuts to perhaps only two.

#### Equities rallied in Q1 2024

The Kuwait All-Share Index recovered from its quarterly decline in Q4 2023 (-1 percent q/q) with a strong gain of 7.5 percent q/q in Q1 2024, helped by seasonal factors (earnings season), firming oil prices, fairly resilient global economic data and more positive investor sentiment regarding rate cut prospects in 2024. March did see, however, a modest retreat in the All-Share Index, likely due to Ramadan (-1.5 percent m/m). Liquidity also recovered in Q1, with monthly turnover at KD 1.2 billion compared to KD 956 million in Q4 2023.

Table 1: Population

	Population (period-end, '000)			% y/y		
	Kuwaiti	Non-Kuwaiti	Total	Kuwaiti	Non-Kuwaiti	Total
Dec-19	1,432	3,344	4,776	2.1	3.9	3.3
Dec-20	1,460	3,211	4,671	2.0	-4.0	-2.2
Jun-21	1,473	3,154	4,628	1.8	-3.5	-1.8
Dec-21	1,489	2,897	4,386	2.0	-9.8	-6.1
Jun-22	1,502	2,962	4,464	2.0	-6.1	-3.5
Dec-22	1,518	3,219	4,737	1.9	11.1	8.0
Jun-23	1,531	3,293	4,824	1.9	11.1	8.0
Dec-23	1,546	3,313	4,860	1.9	2.9	2.6

Source: PACI

secutive quarter. Seasonality, with the holy month of Ramadan falling in March, may have played a part in Q1—transaction volumes were down on Q4 2023—though if so, the effect appears to have been limited to the commercial sector, where bigger ticket, more complex sale executions are the norm.

Looking ahead, while it is noteworthy that the rate of annual decline in real estate sales had slowed to -2.3 percent y/y in Q1 from its lowest point of -38 percent in Q2 2023, we still expect any improvement this year to be modest given elevated interest rates, relatively subdued sentiment and an uncertain macroeconomic backdrop.

#### Project activity dips in Q1

Following a much-improved 2023, the value of awarded projects in Q1 2024 declined significantly to KD 98 million (-78 percent q/q; -80 percent y/y), with only a handful of mainly infrastructure-related projects (eg the Al-Mutlaa and Sabah Al-Ahmad cities) seeing any movement. The Q1 figure was the

cent in 2023 to 4.86 million (+8 percent in 2022). The population of Kuwaiti nationals increased by a steady 1.9 percent to 1.55 million, while the number of expatriates rose by 2.9 percent to 3.31 million (much slower than the 11.1 percent recorded in 2022), just below the peak level, pre-pandemic.

Meanwhile, the number of Kuwaitis in employment rose in 2023 by 3.3 percent to 470K. Gains (net) were exclusively on account of public sector hiring (+17K new jobs), as Kuwaiti employment in the private sector continued to decline, with 1.8k jobs shed to 72.6k. Expatriate jobs, on the other hand, rose by 5.4 percent y/y, led by domestic workers (+6.6 percent). Should project activity gain more momentum in 2024, then it is reasonable to expect this number to increase. The boost to private consumption may be less pronounced, however, given that most new hires would likely be in the low-end wage category. The resumption of family visa issuance could also work to augment the number of expatriates.

TUESDAY, APRIL 23, 2024



Visitors sing as they enjoy a karaoke with giant holograms featuring members of Swedish disco band ABBA on May 7, 2013 in Stockholm, Sweden, in an interactive installation exhibited at world's first permanent ABBA museum.



Swedish band representing Sweden with the song "Waterloo" (from left to right, up) Björn Ulvaeus, music producer, writer and manager Stig Anderson, Swedish record producer, composer Sven-Olof Walldoff and Benny Andersson, (from left to right, down) Anni-Frid Lyngstad (Frida) and Agnetha Fältskog, hold the trophy as they celebrate on stage after winning the final of the Eurovision Song Contest 1974 Grand Final on April 6, 1974 in Brighton.

"It was love at first sight". Fifty years after ABBA won the Eurovision Song Contest, Belgian fan Claudine, still remembers how their performance paved the way for Swedish pop's international success. With their sparkling platform shoes and glittering costumes, Agnetha, Bjorn, Benny and Anni-Frid "created magic". "They had a style that was different from everyone else. I've never felt that again at Eurovision," the 76-year-old pensioner told AFP. Ingmarie Halling, who worked as the group's costume designer, explained that the eye-catching clothes were no accident. "They decided to both be seen and heard and (decreed) 'no one should forget what we sound like and how we look,'" said Halling, who is now the curator of the ABBA museum in Stockholm.

In May, Sweden hosts the contest for the seventh time, in the southern city of Malmo. It earned that slot after Swedish singer Loreen won last year's contest with the song "Tattoo". The timing has presented an opportunity to celebrate the jubilee of ABBA's 1974 Eurovision victory with "Waterloo". With their unique style and catchy melodies, the four members of ABBA - whose initials make up the name of the group - personified disco around the globe until they stopped performing in 1982. Their prolific output - eight albums in as many years - and decision to allow journalists access to their private lives have solidified their place in the pantheon of Swedish music. "Before Eurovision, there were both those who dismissed ABBA as commercial garbage and those who thought ABBA was great," Halling told AFP. After the victory in Brighton on April 6, 1974, "the positive came out on top".

#### 1974, a landmark year

"They became an inspiration for many artists and musicians that you can break out internationally even if you are from little Sweden," Halling explained. Adding to the inspiration, at the same time, small Swedish pop group Blue Swede topped US charts with their cover of "Hooked on a Feeling". "(The year) 1974 has become somewhat of a point of reference as the start of Swedish music success internationally," Christel Valsinger, editor-in-chief of Musikindustrin.se, which specializes in the Swedish music industry, told AFP.

In ABBA's footsteps followed acts such as Roxette, Ace of Base, The Cardigans, Robyn, Avicii and Zara Larsson. Other less recognizable names have



Swedish music band ABBA's wax figures are displayed at the ABBA museum in Stockholm, Sweden. - AFP photos

## Fifty years ago, **ABBA** paved the way for Swedish pop

also made an international impact. They include composer Ludwig Goransson, who has twice won Academy Awards for best original film score, and producer Max Martin, who has collaborated with a range of pop stars from Britney Spears to The Weeknd. Since the late 1990s, songs composed by Martin have reached the top spot in the coveted American Billboard chart 26 times - as many as John Lennon. He has also topped the chart 24 times as a producer.

While rarely speaking in public, Martin has said he owes his career to the Swedish system of local public music schools.

In the country's conservatories, young people can, for a modest fee, learn an instrument and the basics of music theory. The network of popular education establishments also offers study circles, courses and workshops that provide broad access to music throughout the country, Valsinger noted.

#### New technology

In addition, "Sweden has been open to new technology", she added. "This has created favorable conditions for Swedish music producers to quickly adopt new methods for music production." Today,

the Scandinavian country of 10.5 million inhabitants - home to the world's number one music streaming platform Spotify - is the third largest net exporter of music, just behind the United States and the UK. A 2020 report by industry group Export Music Sweden noted that this was "thanks in part to the enduring and exceptional popularity of ABBA and Roxette and the number of Swedish songwriters that work with big international artists".

In 2022, revenue from the Swedish music sector topped two billion kronor (\$188 million). ABBA's popularity was rekindled by the "Mamma Mia" films,

which introduced the group's music to new generations. The quartet has also returned to the stage through ABBA Voyage, a new album released in 2021, and a permanent show of the same name in London in which they are represented by digital avatars (holograms). The four have sworn this will be their last collaboration. But Halling thinks the saga may not be over. "I'm not ruling anything out with Bjorn and Benny," she said with a smile. — AFP



This picture taken on May 6, 2013 in Stockholm shows a room at world's first permanent ABBA museum, on the eve of the official opening.



A visitor walks by as golden records of the Swedish music band ABBA are displayed at the ABBA museum in Stockholm, Sweden on November 5, 2021.



A woman walks by in front of a theatre in Buenos Aires.

### US linguist couple map fantasy languages for the screen

From Dothraki and Valyrian in "Game of Thrones" to the Chakobsa desert tongue in "Dune", American couple David and Jessie Peterson have devised numerous imaginary languages — apparently the only two people in the world who earn a living concocting fantasy grammar and vocabulary for film characters.

Immortal lines from the "Game of Thrones" scripts such as: "You are my last hope, blood of my blood," plunge viewers deeper into the series' fantastical world when uttered in the original Dothraki: "Yer athzalar nak-hoki anni, zhey qoy qoyi." In Dune, the Fremmen desert warriors roll the "r" in their Chakobsa tongue — the name comes from a real ancient hunter's language that inspired author Frank Herbert in writing the original series of "Dune" books.

But Herbert and Game of Thrones novelist George R. R. Martin only included a few words of these fantasy languages in their pages — it was the Petersons who fully developed them for the screen. "Languages can be fun. Often I think languages are treated very seriously," said David Peterson. "People can laugh if they make a mistake."

#### From Klingon to Dothraki

The use of language creators in films dates at least to 1985 when Marc Okrand created Klingon for that alien species in Star Trek. It has since taken off in numerous fantasy series — but few people make a living from the work. A trained linguist, Peterson landed his first paid assignment to develop Dothraki by winning a competition in 2009.

Speaking at a masterclass during a television series festival in the French city of Lille, the Petersons described how they devise languages by discussing the characters' environment, backgrounds and the objects they use. From there, "we extrapolate," David Peterson said.



Tasked with inventing a language which sounded like fire for the Pixar cartoon "Elemental", for example, Jessie Peterson formed words from a series of sounds like explosions and matches. Now she proudly recalls hearing children call out to their father in the language in the street.

#### Inventing grammar, vocabulary

With short turnaround times for filming — sometimes just a couple of months — the Petersons share the work. Creating a language means more than just making up words — the couple start by building grammar, including word genders and tenses. From there music lover David Peterson works on how the language sounds and Jessie Peterson develops the vocabulary.

They send actors recordings of the dialogue at a normal speed, slow speed and even syllable by syllable. The high-pressure process "usually involves a lot of swearing," David Peterson said.

#### Language and humanity

The pair have also created alphabets for messages written on screen by using images and symbols to create letters. David Peterson compares the process to the invention of writing five millennia ago. Fans can study High Valyrian from "Game of Thrones" on learning app Duolingo — or in regular lessons, along with Dothraki.

The Petersons share their expertise on their Youtube channel "Lang-Time Studio" with some 600 episodes for fans of co-called "conlangs" — constructed languages. Could artificial intelligence get the work done faster? "It would be more work to train the AI to actually produce a small amount of things. You might as well use that time to create the language on your own," David Peterson said. Jessie Peterson agreed: "The beauty of language is that it is inherently human and there is no reason I want to take humanity out of language." — AFP

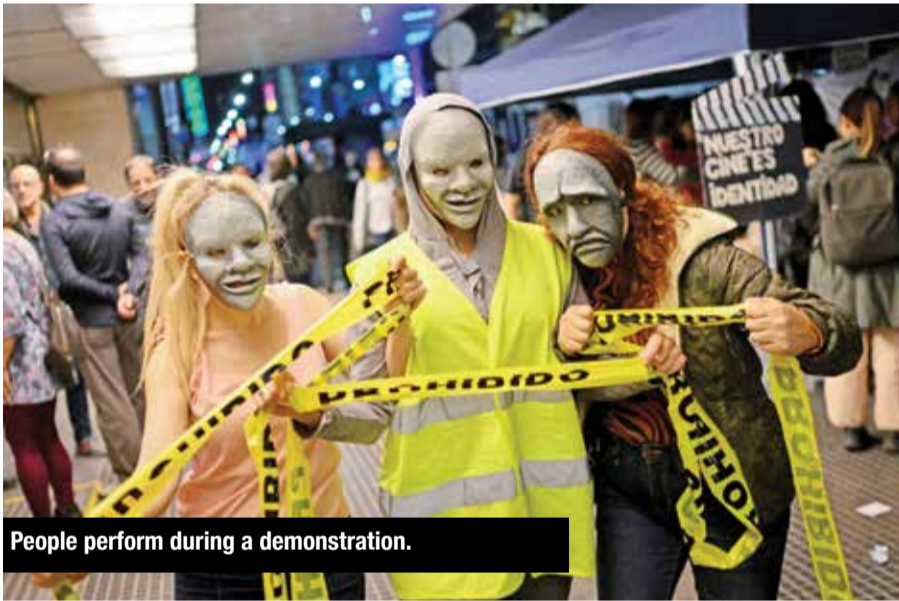
## Like a bad movie: Argentina's culture industry agonizes under Milei

President Javier Milei's "chainsaw" approach to budget cuts have not only caused deep financial pain to many Argentines, but is also threatening the country's Oscar-winning culture scene, industry players say. At home and abroad, actors, directors and musicians accuse the self-declared "anarcho-capitalist" leader of showing disdain towards their industry as he slashes funding and rails against those who question him. Milei himself has said the government must choose between "funding movies that nobody watches" and "feeding people."

He has denounced at least one artist criticizing his funding cuts as a "parasite" living off taxpayer money at the expense of hungry kids. The cultural industry in Argentina, the birthplace of tango, is responsible for some 300,000 formal jobs. But under Milei, "they are dismantling everything related to culture in general and cinema in particular," award-winning Argentine actress Cecilia Roth, who has played in several movies by Spain's Pedro Almodovar, said at a press conference in Mexico on Friday. On top of losses in direct state support, the industry is also reeling from the average Argentine having much less money to spend on such luxuries as films or plays as disposable income has shrunk and poverty levels have risen to 60 percent.

#### 'Little hope'

Argentina's Incaa film institute has dismissed 170 of its 645 employees in recent months, suspended overtime payments and is not accepting any new projects for a period of 90 days. Incaa is financed mainly by taxes on ticket sales and 25 percent of the revenues of the National Communications Agency which co-finances dozens of films every year, including eight Oscar nominees and two winners: "The Official Story" and "The



People perform during a demonstration.



A woman passes by the Lola Membrives theatre in Buenos Aires. - AFP photos

secret in their eyes." "Every day the panorama is darker," Argentine production and audiovisual director Paula Orlando, told AFP. "I am considering leaving the country," added the 31-year-old, who has 12 years of experience in the industry. "There is little hope."

#### 'Strong bias'

Voices of concern have also been



A woman walks by in front of the Metropolitan theatre in Buenos Aires.

raised abroad, from directors such as Almodovar himself, and Finland's Aki Kaurismaki. Earlier this month, Belgian film-making siblings Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, France's Claire Denis and American Viggo Mortensen penned an article in which they said Argentina's cinema industry was "on the brink."

Music and literature, too, have suffered the effects of Milei's cost-cutting

measures, including the repeal of a law protecting independent book stores from being undercut by large chains. Such actions go to show that Milei and his government carry "a strong bias against cultural industries," according to Martin Gremmlenspacher, president of the Argentine Book Chamber. Book sales, he said, fell 30 percent in both January and February from a year earlier.

#### 'Dangerous' future

Luis Sanjurjo, a professor of cultural policies at the University of Buenos Aires, said it was wrong to think that "the market can replace the state." "In no serious capitalist country in the world is there an absence of the state" in the development of culture, he told AFP. Sanjurjo formerly headed an arts and culture industry sub-division in the now-defunct culture ministry, scrapped by Milei. He said it appeared the ultra-liberal Milei government was "bitter" towards the industry amid the global culture wars increasingly pitting people against each other on issues such as gay rights, abortion, religion, women's rights and even political correctness.

Last week, renowned Argentine concert pianist Martha Argerich published an open letter lamenting the government's decision to stop the issuing of grants to impoverished artists under a scholarship named after her. Culture Minister Leonardo Cifelli later said the decision was merely the temporary result of an "administrative transition," without saying when the grants would be resumed. "I myself received the support of the Argentine State as a young girl," Argerich wrote. "If the state does not support and contribute to culture, the future is really dangerous." - AFP



A woman holds a poster that reads "No to the cultural shutdown" during a demonstration.



A woman takes part in a performance during a demonstration against the economic adjustment measures of the government of Argentine President Javier Milei.



A man takes part in a performance during a demonstration.



People perform during a demonstration.



A 50 meter anamorphic field painting of a girl holding the Earth, created by artists from 'Sand In Your Eye' to mark Earth Day, adorns a hillside above Hebden Bridge, north west England on April 19, 2024. — AFP

## Earth Day art urges UK to think green ahead of election

From the air over the rolling hills of Hebden Bridge in northern England, a gigantic painting interrupts the placid green pasture with a call to action. The work measuring 50 meters (164 feet) long depicts a smiling girl cradling the Earth and beside it are the words: "Vote for Climate, Vote

for Our Future". Artist Jamie Wardley, who created the painting for Earth Day on Monday, hopes the message will remind voters to consider the environment when they cast their ballots in a UK general election due this year.

Wardley, who used football pitch paint and sprayers to create the painting, said

the election was an opportunity for voters to prioritize the environment, which was why the work was hopeful in tone. "She's optimistic because this year it's the UK elections, and it's a chance for us to make a real difference for our children's future," he told AFP. "It's only governments that can set policies and regulations that

make a significant difference," he added. It took a team of 10 artists three days to complete the painting and Wardley's daughter was used as the model.

"It survived the rain a bit, and it'll be here for probably another week," Wardley said. "This isn't going to change the world, but it might help a little. And if we

all pitch in, then hopefully we make a difference." Earth Day is observed annually on April 22. First celebrated in 1970, it now includes a wide range of events across more than 193 countries, demonstrating support for environmental protection. —AFP



Marija Lah, one of Europe's last umbrella repairers, poses for photos in her workshop in Ljubljana, Slovenia. —AFP photos



This photograph shows one of Europe's last umbrella repairers Marija Lah's workshop in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

### Slovenia's umbrella doctor weathers the economic storm

While most people believe a malfunctioning umbrella means you have to buy a new one, Slovenian Marija Lah -- one of Europe's last umbrella repairers -- has spent her life proving them wrong. "Everything can be repaired! I believe I can repair 98 percent of all the umbrellas I get," the 56-year-old laughs, waving around a 50-year-old model to demonstrate its quality.

While most umbrella repairers have closed shop as millions of broken, cheap umbrellas are tossed out each year around the world, Lah is catering

to a growing base of new customers who try to throw away less due to environmental concerns. "It is a fashionable thing now," she told AFP in her shop packed with umbrellas, an old sewing machine and thousands of different spare parts, including ribs, caps and wires piled on shelves.

#### Reluctant apprentice

Founded almost 60 years ago by Lah's father, the tiny shop in a stone-paved Ljubljana street is one of the oldest in Slovenia. Lah, who used to work as a kindergarten teacher, never thought of working there until her father -- then struggling with an advanced cataract condition -- asked her to join as an apprentice. Reluctantly, she agreed, to save the shop, working alongside him from 1991 for 14 years. And after his death, customers encouraged her to keep going. "I told myself: 'Marija, you can't just throw away a knowledge that nobody else has in Ljubljana!'" she recalls.

Lah explains that to make or repair an umbrella you need to master the craft of sewing and fine mechanics. Some umbrellas take just minutes to repair, sewing the rib to the canopy for example; others, with complex mechanisms or plastic parts, can take weeks to disassemble and put back together. Mass production of umbrellas by thousands of different factories -- and with customers constantly demanding new models -- also makes repairs difficult. "You have to learn constantly," Lah said. She is unsure whether her children want to take over the shop one day, saying it was up to them as she does "not intend to force them".

#### 'Savior'

Lah believes besides satisfied customers, rain is her "best advertisement" though she does not fear dry summers, which gives her time to clean up her shop. As scientists warn that extreme weather is becoming more intense as a result of climate change, the Alpine

nation of two million last year suffered its worst flooding since 1991 independence, hitting two-thirds of the country.

Refusing to reveal business figures, Lah insists she can make a living as customers from all over Slovenia bring their and often their friends' umbrellas for repair. "I like to repair my umbrellas," customer Danica Tercon, a pensioner in her early 70s from Ljubljana, told AFP, adding those who throw away their old umbrellas "are not aware what we are doing to our planet". Another customer, Katja Buda, who brought her grandmother's umbrella for repair, described "Mrs Marija" as "a savior" and regretted the vanishing profession. "We throw away old things that were of much better quality instead of repairing them," the philologist in her late 30s said. "I love umbrellas. They can make the rainy days much nicer." —AFP



## Sports

# Korda captures Chevron crown for second major, LPGA record fifth straight win

'It was a little bit of a grind on the back nine but happy to get the win'

WASHINGTON: World number one Nelly Korda matched an LPGA record with her fifth consecutive victory on Sunday, winning the Chevron Championship for her second major crown and 13th career tour triumph. The two-stroke triumph over Sweden's Maja Stark stretched Korda's season win streak to five titles in five starts to equal the LPGA record set by American Nancy Lopez in 1978 and matched by Sweden's Annika Sorenstam from 2004-05. Korda withstood a tension-packed back nine but never lost her lead in holding off rivals over the closing holes at Carlton Woods in suburban Houston to claim the \$1.2 million top prize in the first women's major tournament of the season. "I can finally breathe now. That back nine felt like the longest back nine of my entire life," Korda said.

"It was a little bit of a grind on the back nine but happy to get the win." The 25-year-old American fired a three-under par 69 in the final round to finish on 13-under 275 after 72 holes. Stark was second on 277 after a closing 69 followed by American Lauren Coughlin and Canada's Brooke Henderson sharing third on 278 and South Korean Ryu Hae-ran fifth on 279 after closing on 74.

Korda, the daughter of former Czech tennis star Petr Korda, won her only prior major crown at the 2021 Women's PGA Championship while also capturing a

gold medal at the Tokyo Olympics. This year, Korda also won January's Drive On Championship, last month's Seri Pak and Ford championships and the LPGA Match Play earlier this month.

"There's a key in the simplicity that I have. I honestly take it a shot at a time," Korda said. "It has been working so far. I feel like sometimes golf can get overcomplicated." There were plenty of late complications.

At 10, Korda missed the green with her approach but chipped in for birdie to reach 14-under and lead by four. Korda went way right off the 11th tee on the way to her first bogey, trimming her lead to three over Ryu and Coughlin, who both closed the front nine with back-to-back birdies.

"I was definitely starting to feel it on the back nine, the nerves setting in," Korda said. "It's a major. It's everything I've always wanted as a little girl, to lift that major trophy. "I can finally breathe now and enjoy the moment because I was definitely really nervous. I feel sick to my stomach."

Coughlin closed within two strokes with a birdie at the par-4 14th and Korda missed a five-foot birdie putt at the par-5 13th as tension built. Coughlin, however, made bogeys at 16 and 17 and Henderson took a bogey at 14, leaving Korda with a four-stroke lead.

Korda, however, stumbled with a bogey at 15 and

when Coughlin closed with a birdie and Stark birdied the par-3 17th. Korda's lead was again down to two. After clutch pars at 16 and 17, Korda watched from the fairway at the par-5 18th as Stark came up a foot short on an eagle chip then tapped in for birdie, cutting Korda's lead to a single stroke. Korda sent her second shot just over the green, missed an eagle putt but sank a short comeback birdie putt for the victory.

## Early start for Korda

After a Saturday storm halted play and dumped 1.5 inches of overnight rain on the course, Korda made seven pars to close out her third round on 69 and share second with Henderson, one stroke behind Ryu, last year's LPGA Rookie of the Year.

The three went out in the last group for Sunday's final round and Korda quickly grabbed the lead. Ryu opened with back-to-back bogeys to tumble from the top. Henderson answered a bogey at the second with a birdie at the third to stand on 10-under but Korda birdied the par-3 third from 15 feet and escaped a bunker to birdie the par-5 fourth for a two-stroke lead at 12-under. Henderson answered a double bogey at the fourth with birdies at five and six while Korda sank a 14-foot birdie putt at the eighth, reaching 13-under and stretching her lead to three strokes at the turn. —AFP



THE WOODLANDS: Nelly Korda of the United States celebrates with the trophy after winning The Chevron Championship at The Club at Carlton Woods on April 21, 2024 in The Woodlands, Texas. —AFP



KOLKATA: Royal Challengers Bengaluru's player Virat Kohli (R) and Kolkata Knight Riders' mentor Gautam Gambhir (L) greet each other at the end of the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Kolkata Knight Riders and Royal Challengers Bengaluru at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata. —AFP

## Kohli fined for angry outburst at IPL umpires

NEW DELHI: India star Virat Kohli has been fined half his match fee for an angry outburst in response to his dismissal from an Indian Premier League match, the league said Monday. Kohli fell early in Royal Challengers Bengaluru's chase on Sunday after he was caught and bowled by Kolkata Knight Riders pace bowler Harshit Rana and his team went on to lose by one run at Kolkata's Eden Gardens.

But the former India captain looked confident the high full-toss was above his waist as the umpires checked for a no-ball. TV umpire Michael Gough declared it out after technology suggested the trajectory of the ball dipped below the waist of the batsman, who returned furious after exchanging words with the on-field officials.

"Kohli committed a Level 1 offence under Article 2.8 of the IPL's Code of Conduct," an IPL statement said. "He admitted to the offence and accepted the Match Referee's sanction." Visuals on social media showed Kohli having a long discussion with an umpire after the match ended and pundits weighed in on the dismissal.

Former India batsman Navjot Singh Sidhu slammed the call and asked for the "rules to be changed." Ex-India quick Irfan Pathan said on X, formerly Twitter, "if Virat Kohli was standing at the popping crease the ball would have been lower than his measured waist height, making it a legal delivery".

Kohli has been the top run-getter in the T20 tournament so far with 379 runs in eight matches but his team Bengaluru remains bottom of the 10-team table with just one win. —AFP

## Demolition man Head, Pandya booed, red-hot Kohli

NEW DELHI: The Indian Premier League is around the halfway mark this season with teams scrambling to make the top four of the T20 tournament. AFP Sport looks at five talking points in the first half of the world's richest cricket competition.

### Head starts and tall scores

Opener Travis Head has been the demolition man for Sunrisers Hyderabad with his explosive starts taking the team to two record IPL totals of 277 and 287 this season. The Australian left-hander has amassed 324 runs so far including a hundred and two half tons in this campaign. Head has a strike-rate of 216 in six matches. At the weekend he smashed a 32-ball 89 to guide Hyderabad to 266-7 against Delhi Capitals and said it was good to be "on a roll".

### Impact player rule has... impact

The impact player rule has been the reason behind the skyscraper totals, with the teams getting a better understanding of how to use it. The measure was introduced last year and allows the replacement of a player named in the starting team at any point after the toss. But it hasn't found favour among some players.

## Chapman leads NZ to shock win over Pakistan in third T20

RAWALPINDI: Mark Chapman hit an undefeated 87 to lead an under-strength New Zealand to a shock seven-wicket victory over Pakistan in the third Twenty20 international in Rawalpindi on Sunday. The 29-year-old left-hander smashed his runs off 42 balls to anchor New Zealand's chase of a 179-run target in 18.2 overs against a much-vaunted Pakistan bowling attack, silencing a packed 16,000-strong holiday crowd.

Shadab Khan (41) and Babar Azam (37) were the main contributors in Pakistan's 178-4 after the hosts were sent in to bat. Tim Robinson hit 28 off 19 balls and Tim Seifert 21 off 16 to set the tone for New Zealand's chase.

New Zealand were already strongly placed at 53-2 in the sixth over before Chapman and Dean Foxcroft (31) took over, adding a solid 117-run third-wicket partnership to square the five-match series at 1-1. Pakistan won the second game by seven wickets while the first match was washed out after just two balls—both were also in Rawalpindi.

Captain Michael Bracewell, appointed skipper after a host of players missed out due to playing in the Indian Premier League, unavailability and injuries, praised his team's effort. "I think the partnership between Foxy

and Chapman was outstanding," said Bracewell. "Really happy with the way the guys put the learnings from last night."

Pakistan skipper Azam rued dropping Chapman on 16 and 36. "We started well with the ball in the first six overs, but when you drop a set batter's catches then he will take the game away from you," said Azam.

"Chapman has always done well against us," Chapman, whose only T20I hundred came at the same venue last year, clobbered four sixes and nine fours in his eighth half century in the format. Azam brought spearhead Shaheen Shah Afridi on in the 15th over with 61 to defend, but Chapman cracked two fours. He then smashed two sixes and two more fours off Naseem Shah's next over to bring the target down to 21 of 24 balls. Fast bowler Abbas Afridi (2-27) dismissed Foxcroft, but by then New Zealand were just nine away from victory. Chapman and Jimmy Neesham (six not out) reached the target with ten balls to spare. Earlier Shadab hit two sixes and four fours while Azam hit four fours and a six.

Opener Saim Ayub scored a 22-ball 32 and Muhammad Irfan Khan chipped in with a 20-ball 30 not out as Pakistan added 54 in the last five overs. Azam and left-hander Ayub gave Pakistan a brisk start of 55 as the duo played some aggressive shots.

Shadab and Irfan boosted the innings with a brisk 62-run stand for the fourth wicket. For New Zealand, leg-spinner Ish Sodhi was the best bowler with 2-25. The final two matches are in Lahore on April 25 and 27. Both teams are preparing for June's Twenty20 World Cup in the United States and the West Indies. —AFP



RAWALPINDI: New Zealand's Michael Bracewell (C) celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of Pakistan's Babar Azam (not pictured) during the Twenty20 international cricket match between Pakistan and New Zealand at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi. —AFP

"I am not a big fan of the impact sub rule," said India captain and Mumbai Indians player Rohit Sharma. "It is going to hold all-rounders back, eventually cricket is played by 11 players, not 12 players." IPL chairman Arun Dhimal has said the board will review the rule at the end of this edition.



MOHALI: Gujarat Titans' Sai Sudharsan is clean bowled by Punjab Kings' captain Sam Curran during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Punjab Kings and Gujarat Titans at the Maharaja Yadavindra Singh International Cricket Stadium in Mohali. —AFP

### Kohli top, Bengaluru flop

Virat Kohli has been the lone warrior for Royal Challengers Bengaluru—he is the leading batsman in the IPL so far with 379 runs including a ton and two half-centuries. But the former India captain, fondly known as "King Kohli" for his prolific run-scoring, cannot do it all. His team are bottom of the table with one win in eight matches.

Kohli hit the first ton of this edition but his unbeaten 113 was not enough in a match where Jos Buttler cracked an unbeaten 100 to steer Rajasthan Royals to victory. Kohli and Bengaluru have never won the IPL and it seems the wait will go on for another year.

### Pandya's tale of woe

Hardik Pandya joined five-time champions Mumbai Indians ahead of this season and replaced veteran Rohit as captain. The joy was short-lived after the IPL heavyweights lost their opening three matches. The star all-rounder has been repeatedly booed, prompting commentator Sanjay Manjrekar to say "behave" to the crowd at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium. Mumbai have won three of their seven matches, but Pandya's form with bat (141 runs) and ball (four wickets) is a cause for concern. The lowest point was when Chennai's M.S. Dhoni smashed Pandya for three straight sixes in a 26-run final over. Australia's Mitchell Starc hasn't lived up to his top billing in the IPL with his six wickets and an economy of 12.94 proving costly for Kolkata Knight Riders. The left-arm quick returned to the IPL after nine years when he became the most expensive buy in IPL history at \$2.98 million. —AFP

## News in Brief

### Indian makes chess history

MONTREAL: A 17-year-old from India will become the youngest player to challenge for the World Chess Championship crown after winning a major tournament in Canada. Gukesh Dommaraju will face reigning champion Ding Liren from China for another piece of history, after being the youngest player to win the prestigious Candidates Tournament. "I'm just so relieved, so happy following this crazy game," Gukesh said following his landmark triumph in Toronto on Sunday. "I was in the right mindset throughout the event. From start to end, I was in good spirits, fully motivated and I really wanted to win the event." A grandmaster since he was 12, he is now set to be the "youngest World Chess Championship challenger in history", the International Chess Federation said. Asked how he felt about his history-making feats, the teenager said: "I don't really care about youngest and all these records, but it's a nice thing to say. —AFP

### Udinese sack Cioffi

MILAN: Udinese sacked Gabriele Cioffi on Monday with the Serie A club ready to hire Italy legend Fabio Cannavaro in an attempt to avoid relegation. In a statement Udinese said that they had "relieved Gabriele Cioffi of his role as first team coach" and added that his staff had also been sacked. Cioffi was dismissed after Udinese fell to a 1-0 defeat at fellow strugglers Verona on Saturday, a loss which left them locked on 28 points with Frosinone and one place above the relegation zone. Italian media widely report that former Ballon d'Or winner Cannavaro, who captained his country to 2006 World Cup glory, will be in charge on Thursday when Udinese play the final 18 minutes of their home clash with Roma. Play in that match just over a week ago was suspended with the teams locked at 1-1 after Roma defender Evan Ndicka collapsed on the pitch with what was initially feared to be a heart problem. —AFP

### Italy's Paris flag bearers

ROME: Olympic high jump champion Gianmarco Tamberi will be one of Italy's flag bearers at this summer's Games in Paris alongside fencer Arianna Errigo, the country's Olympic Committee announced on Monday. "Tamberi and Errigo will lead the athletes of the Italian delegation during the opening ceremony of the next Games on July 26," CONI said in a statement. Tamberi, 31, shared Olympic gold with Qatar's Mutaz Essa Barshim three years ago and is also the reigning high jump world champion. Errigo has 10 world titles to her name, including two individual crowns, the most recent at last year's worlds in Milan. The 35-year-old has also won three Olympic medals, including team women's gold at the 2012 London Games. —AFP

### Marsh on track for T20 WCup

NEW DELHI: Australia's Mitchell Marsh remains on course to play at the T20 World Cup despite being likely ruled out of the rest of the IPL, Delhi Capitals coach Ricky Ponting said Monday. Marsh, who is expected to captain Australia in T20's showpiece event in the West Indies and the United States starting on June 1, returned home after playing just four matches for Delhi in the IPL. "I don't think he would be coming back (to India)," Ponting told reporters. "Cricket Australia were really keen to have Mitchell at home to start his recovery process, so we sent him back as soon as we could." The former Australia captain added: "They have been managing his rehab over the last couple of weeks now. I spoke to him the other day, it seems like it has taken a little bit longer than he first thought, to get over it. "I don't think the World Cup will be an issue but I think it will be hard to see him coming back here at the back end of this tournament." The 32-year-old Marsh suffered a partial tear in his right hamstring after he scored just 61 runs and claimed one wicket from four matches. The all-rounder has played 54 T20 internationals for Australia. This year's IPL ends on May 26 with the final in Chennai. —AFP

Sports

# Djokovic skips Madrid Open, Nadal to face teen Blanch

## Nadal signs up for 2024 Laver Cup in Berlin



BARCELONA: (FILES) Spain's Rafael Nadal serves the ball to Australia's Alex De Minaur during the ATP Barcelona Open "Conde de Godo" tennis tournament singles match at the Real Club de Tennis in Barcelona. - AFP

MADRID: World number one and record 24-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic will not play at the Madrid Open this week. Media reports said the 36-year-old Serbian star had pulled out of the tournament and he was not included in the draw on Monday.

The 36-year-old is yet to win a title this season and has only played in four tournaments this year, having decided to lighten his schedule. Veteran tennis great Rafael Nadal will continue his comeback from injury in Madrid and has been pitted against 16-year-old American Darwin Blanch in the first round.

Djokovic has now pulled out of the Madrid Open three times in four years. The Serbian could still appear in Rome at the Italian Open before defending his French Open title from May 26. Djokovic is a three-time champion at the two-week clay court event in the Spanish capital. It is his second Masters 1000 withdrawal this year after skipping the Miami Open in March. Djokovic attended Real Madrid's 3-2 win over Barcelona at the Santiago Bernabeu on Sunday and is expected to appear at the Laureus Awards in Madrid on Monday, where he is in contention to win the Sportsman of the Year trophy.

Veteran tennis great Nadal, 37, played at the Bar-

celona Open but was defeated in the second round by Alex de Minaur in straight sets. If he defeats teenager Blanch then he will face Australian world number 11 De Minaur in the second round for the second week in a row. Reigning champion and second seed Carlos Alcaraz said he was hoping to be fully fit to play in Madrid after a forearm problem and will face either Alexander Shevchenko or Arthur Rinderknech in the second round.

Jannik Sinner, second in the world rankings and top seed in Djokovic's absence, will face either Italian compatriot Lorenzo Sonego or a qualifier in the second round. Meanwhile, Rafael Nadal will represent Team Europe at the Laver Cup in Berlin this September in what could be one of the final events of the 22-time Grand Slam champion's career, organizers announced on Monday.

Nadal, who turns 38 in June, has said he expects this to be his final year on tour after struggling with a hip injury that sidelined him for virtually all of 2023 as well as the start of this season. The Spaniard played doubles with Roger Federer at the 2022 Laver Cup as the Swiss star made a tearful farewell to the sport at the team competition.

Nadal will join compatriot Carlos Alcaraz, Daniil Medvedev and Alexander Zverev as Europe attempt to win back the Laver Cup under coach Bjorn Borg from September 20-22. "I am very happy to be playing Laver Cup in Berlin for Team Europe," Nadal said in a statement. "I have some really special memories from my Laver Cup experiences, including all the emotions from London two years ago playing alongside Roger for the last time. "At this stage in my career I really want to go out there and make the most of every opportunity I am given."

Nadal made a brief comeback in Brisbane in early January but missed the Australian Open and spent another three months out after he felt a hip problem resurface. He returned to action at the Barcelona Open last week but lost in the second round of a tournament he has won 12 times.

The former world number one, whose ranking has tumbled to 512, has not won a title since claiming the last of his record 14 French Open crowns two years ago. Team World at this year's Laver Cup will again be coached by John McEnroe, with Australian Alex de Minaur so far joined by US duo Taylor Fritz and Tommy Paul in the line-up. - AFP

## Erik ten Hag under intense pressure at Man Utd

LONDON: Manchester United have kept their season alive by reaching the FA Cup final for a second straight year but their chaotic display against Coventry leaves manager Erik ten Hag under intense pressure. United were cruising at 3-0 up against the Championship side with 20 minutes to go at Wembley on Sunday before their staggering collapse. The Premier League club had VAR to thank for escaping a humiliating 4-3 defeat in the final moments of extra time.

Victor Torp's "winner" sent scores of United fans scurrying for the exits before they realized the goal had been ruled out for a marginal offside. Even then there was still time for more drama, with Casemiro failing to convert United's first penalty in the shootout before they eventually prevailed 4-2.

Ten Hag admitted his team "got away with it" but denied it was an embarrassment, preferring instead to focus on the achievement of reaching the final against Pep Guardiola's Manchester City. "I see we can play at very high levels but in the same match we can also go very low," he said. "That's not explainable. It has to do with managing the game."

"I have to teach my players, clearly. We have to do better in such occasions. "On several occasions we've let the result slip away but today we got away with it."

### Character?

Harry Maguire, the only fit central defender at the club, said United showed "great character" to find a way past Coventry, managed by former Red Devils striker Mark Robins. But will Ten Hag be given the time he needs as he fends off a rising tide of criticism?

The Dutchman appeared to be on an upward curve in his first season in charge in 2022/23, ending a six-year trophy drought by lifting the League Cup and finishing third in the Premier League. But any lingering goodwill has all but disappeared as United limp toward the end of the campaign.

The beleaguered club, who are realistically out of the running to qualify for next season's Champions League, have not won any of their past five matches. In four of those, including the match at Wembley, they have carelessly tossed away winning positions in the final few minutes and they are paying a heavy price. "We're having the same conversation every week," former United captain Roy Keane told ITV. "With Man United you don't know what you're going to get. They are inconsistent, they give you chances, they always play in moments, that's what they tend to do."

He added: "I don't see character in this group of players, I really don't. I'm getting to the stage where I'm almost disliking them because I see what qualities they have." United are engaged in a wholesale shake-up of their backroom team under new co-owner Jim Ratcliffe, who must make a decision on whether he has seen enough from the former Ajax boss to give him another chance.

Former Blackburn and Chelsea forward Chris Sutton believes the manner of United's performance at Wembley has sealed Ten Hag's fate, even though they edged through. "Erik ten Hag through to the Cup final but that performance will cement his sacking at the end of the season," he tweeted.

Ten Hag can point to a punishing list of injuries to his defenders but must take some responsibility for the way several key players including Casemiro, Marcus Rashford and Antony have badly underperformed this season.

United, seventh in the Premier League, will now focus on qualifying for Europe and preparing for next month's daunting FA Cup final date with holders City, who beat them at Wembley last year. Ex-United captain Gary Neville, now a Sky Sports pundit, said United had saved themselves an "absolute battering" from critics but could not be certain about Ten Hag's fate.

"If they'd have gone out... it would have been a shocking last three or four weeks to the end of the season," he said. "Whether that changes the outcome of what happens to Erik ten Hag and the players is one thing, but what they have saved themselves is an absolute battering. They may get it for two or three days, but not four weeks." United chiefs have a decision to make over the next few weeks and Ten Hag must prove he has what it takes. - AFP



LONDON: Manchester United's Dutch manager Erik ten Hag gestures on the touchline during the English FA Cup semi-final football match between Coventry City and Manchester United at Wembley Stadium in north west London. - AFP

## Swimmer doping reports 'fake news': China

BEIJING: Beijing on Monday called reports about 23 Chinese swimmers testing positive for a banned substance ahead of the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 "fake news". The sport was rocked at the weekend by revelations that the swimmers tested positive for trimetazidine (TMZ) - a prescription heart drug that is banned in athletes because it can enhance performance - before the Games three years ago.

The swimmers were allowed to compete in Tokyo after world governing bodies accepted China's findings that they had ingested it unwittingly from food during a competition in late 2020 and early 2021. Several went on to win medals, including gold, and many are in line to compete at the Paris Olympics this summer.

China's foreign ministry on Monday hit back at the widespread reports, which first emerged in the New York Times and German broadcaster ARD on Saturday and cited a review of confidential documents and emails. "The relevant reports are fake news and not factual," said foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin.

World anti-doping agency WADA has said there was "a lack of any credible evidence" to challenge China's version of events. "I believe you will also have noted that the World Anti-Doping Agency has put out a very clear response," Wang said. However, the United States Anti-Doping Agency called news of the failed tests "crushing" and blasted WADA's response as "a devastating stab in the back of clean athletes".

### 'Detailed' probe

Wang said China's anti-doping centre conducted an "in-depth and detailed" probe into the incident, which found the athletes had ingested contaminated drugs "without their knowledge". "The Chinese swimmers involved were neither at fault nor guilty of negligence, and their behaviour did not constitute a doping violation," he told a regular press conference in Beijing.

"After an investigation, WADA affirmed the findings of the China anti-doping centre." An Australian coach who works with the Chinese Swimming Association also rejected claims of systemic state-run doping, saying it is "so far from anything I have seen".

Denis Cotterell, who has coached drug-tainted Chinese swimmer Sun Yang, told The Sydney Morning Herald he disputed "any suggestion of anything orchestrated". The 74-year-old has had an on-off association with Chinese swimming for more than a decade and said he was speaking from first-hand experience.

"I see what they (the swimmers) go through, I see the measures, I can tell you the stories. I know the facts and I am comfortable," he told the paper. "The suggestion that it's systemic is so far from anything I have seen here the whole time." Chinese state media downplayed the accusations in domestic reports and said other countries were conspiring against Beijing's national swim team. Xinhua news agency published an article on Sunday referring to "some foreign media reports" without mentioning details of the allegations, with most of the article a paraphrase of WADA's statement.

State-owned tabloid Global Times on Monday called the allegations "slandorous accusations", suggesting that foreign media reports on the issue were part of Western efforts to block China's rise as a sporting power. "Relevant countries are currently manipulating the issue of doping and smearing China's swimming program, clearly doing so intentionally," the Global Times said. - AFP



The winners with coaches.

## Kuwait bags ten medals at Keti Cup championship

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Girls Rhythmic Gymnastics team proved outstanding during the Keti Cup Championship that is being held in Georgia by winning 10 medals (5 gold, 4 silver and one bronze).

Kuwait's Aljazi Al-Haroun, born in 2015, who participated in level A won first place and gold medal in the hoop category and second place and the silver medal in the general individual. Her colleague Talia Behbehani, born in 2014, won first place and gold medal in the ribbon category.

Raya Al-Qassar, born in 2013, who participated in the "A" level won the ribbon's gold medal, the hoop's silver and the bronze for general individual.

Amina Al-Kandary (2013) won two gold medals of the general individual and the ball. She also won a silver medal in the hoop in the "A" level while Nabeela Al-Kharafi (2013) won the silver medal in the same level. Kuwait Gymnastics Federation congratulated the champions and lauded the efforts of their coaches and affirmed the importance of participating in this international tournament in which more than 300 players are competing.

# Classifieds

### Clinics & Hospitals

#### Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804

Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

#### Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620

### Change of Name

I, Samir Mohammad Ali Shaikh, holder of Indian passport number M6713212 issued at Kuwait having permanent address in Maharashtra, India, Pin:400010 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) Samir Mohammad Ali and (surname) Sheikh. 22/04/2024

Emergency call 112

## Bellingham gives Madrid late Clasico win over Barcelona

Madrid, seeking a fifth league and Champions League double



MADRID: Real Madrid's English midfielder #5 Jude Bellingham (C) kicks the ball during the Spanish league football match between Real Madrid CF and FC Barcelona at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid. — AFP

### Scheffler wraps up fourth win at RBC Heritage



HILTON HEAD ISLAND: Scottie Scheffler of the United States celebrates with the trophy after winning during the continuation of the final round of the RBC Heritage at Harbour Town Golf Links on April 22, 2024 in Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. — AFP

MIAMI: Masters champion Scottie Scheffler wrapped up his fourth win of the year on Monday, securing victory by three strokes at the delayed finish to the RBC Heritage at Hilton Head. A two-and-a-half hour storm and rain delay meant play was suspended on Sunday with Scheffler still having three holes to complete with a five-stroke lead.

The world number one took care of business making par on the 16th and 17th before ending with a bogey on the final hole — his first since a double bogey on the third hole of the tournament. Sahith Theegala made a 28-foot birdie putt on 16 to finish solo second, his fifth top ten finish of the year.

Scheffler, who claimed his tenth career win on the PGA Tour, becomes the first player to win four times in a five-tournament stretch since Tiger Woods in 2007-08. The Texan also became the first player since Bernhard Langer in 1985 to win the Masters and then triumph at the Heritage, which is held the following week.

"Last week was fantastic and then coming into this week, I didn't have my usual prep work but showed up rested and ready to go," Scheffler said in his post-round broadcast interview. "I got off to a slow start on Thursday but other than that I played some really nice golf in the middle of the tournament and it's nice to be done," he said.

Scheffler finished with a three-under 68, 19-under for the tournament. Before his back-to-back wins this month, Scheffler had won the Arnold Palmer Invitational at Bay Hill and The Players Championship in March.

He said his streak of victories showed that he was maturing. "I think mentally the last month or so has been as good as I've been in a long time and I think that is why I'm seeing some of the results," he said. "Just staying in it, doing the best I can - and lot of that stuff is easier said than done," he added. — AFP

MADRID: Jude Bellingham snatched Real Madrid a dramatic 3-2 Clasico win over champions Barcelona on Sunday with a "fundamental" goal to take them 11 points clear at the top of La Liga.

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti hailed the England midfielder's decisive intervention to take Los Blancos to the brink of the Spanish title.

Madrid twice came from behind with Vinicius Junior and Lucas Vazquez netting to level Andreas Christensen and Fermin Lopez strikes, before Bellingham rammed home the winner in stoppage time.

"He arrived at just the right time, he worked so hard in the game, it's been a while since he scored and today he scored a goal that could be fundamental in winning the league," said Ancelotti. Barcelona, second, bounced back with a strong performance after their Champions League exit at the hands of Paris Saint-Germain but their last stand was demolished by Bellingham.

Madrid showed the same grit to stay in the match as they did midweek against Manchester City on the way to the final four in Europe, before Bellingham's knock-out blow left the Santiago Bernabeu crowd delighted. Madrid's top scorer with 21 goals across all competitions, the former Borussia Dortmund man netted twice in Madrid's Clasico win over Barcelona in October and is shining in his first season in Spain at only 20 years old.

"We took a huge step towards La Liga," Vazquez, key

in all three Madrid goals, told Real Madrid TV. "We've had a very good season, we're on a very good path, now we just have to polish it off and we'll go for everything." Madrid's penalty-saving hero against City, goalkeeper Andriy Lunin, made an early mistake to hand Barcelona the lead. The Ukrainian strayed from his line to try and deal with a corner but got nowhere near the ball and Christensen nodded into the empty net.

However Madrid were quickly level through Vinicius, who fired over a fine chance before levelling from the spot. The sensational Vazquez escaped Joao Cancelo far too easily and was tripped in the area by 17-year-old Barca centre-back Pau Cubarsi.

Barcelona were not deterred and made inroads down their right flank with Lamine Yamal giving Eduardo Camavinga a torrid time.

#### 'Disgrace'

The 16-year-old starlet thought he had struck with a clever flick from a corner but Lunin pushed the ball to safety, with Barcelona arguing it had already crossed the line. La Liga does not contract goal-line technology and using VAR the officials could not confirm the ball had completely entered the goal, so the Catalans were left frustrated.

"We deserved much more given the way we played but there's not much we can do," said Xavi. "(Not having goal-line technology) is a disgrace."

Barcelona were dealt a blow on the stroke of half-

time when midfielder Frenkie de Jong was taken off on a stretcher after hurting his ankle in a challenge by Fede Valverde. Xavi also brought Lopez on for Christensen at the interval and it paid dividends for the coach after a slower start to the second half.

The midfielder was in the right place at the right time to finish after 69 minutes when Lunin could only parry Yamal's low effort back into danger. However Madrid, seeking a fifth league and Champions League double, swiftly struck back when Vinicius crossed to the back post and Vazquez arrived to finish. Marc-Andre Ter Stegen made a brilliant save to thwart Vinicius with Madrid looking for a winner to virtually wrap up their La Liga title.

Bellingham dealt the killer blow, despite largely being kept quiet by the Catalans until he appeared to emphatically decide the match in stoppage time from Vazquez's cross. "Xavi, stay," mocked Real Madrid's fans with the Barcelona coach due to leave at the end of the season.

Earlier, Atletico Madrid suffered a 2-0 defeat at Alaves to dent their chances of a top four finish and end a woeful week, following their Champions League exit. Diego Simeone's side, fourth, lead fifth place Athletic by three points after Carlos Benavidez and Luis Rioja's strikes consigned them to defeat. "We're in a terrible dynamic," Atletico goalkeeper Jan Oblak told DAZN. "We have to improve and if we don't, this end to the season will be very tough." — AFP

They are two points above Brest and three ahead of fourth-placed Lille, who bounced back from their midweek Europa Conference League exit on penalties to Aston Villa by beating Strasbourg 1-0. Canada's Jonathan David scored the only goal of the game to take his tally in Ligue 1 this season to 17.

The team finishing fourth will enter next season's Champions League in the preliminary rounds. Marseille needed a stoppage-time goal by Cameroonian striker Faris Moumbagna to grab a point in a 2-2 draw at Toulouse.

Moumbagna had also scored on Thursday as Marseille overcame Benfica in a penalty shoot-out to reach the Europa League semi-finals. However, they have now failed to win in four league games and sit ninth in the table, meaning it may well be that they have to win the Europa League in order to qualify for Europe again next season.

Jordan's Mousa Al-Tamari netted a late winner as Montpellier won 2-1 at Reims, while Metz moved out of the relegation zone by winning 1-0 at Le Havre. The Normandy team dropped into the bottom three in their place. — AFP

### PSG crush Lyon to stand on brink of Ligue 1 title

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain are on the brink of winning another French Ligue 1 title after crushing Lyon 4-1 on Sunday, the same scoreline by which they beat Barcelona in the Champions League in midweek. All the goals came in the first half at the Parc des Princes, with a Nemanja Matic own goal and a Lucas Beraldo effort having PSG two ahead inside six minutes.

Goncalo Ramos then scored twice either side of an Ernest Nuamah strike as the Parisians cruised to victory despite the rested Kylian Mbappe spending the whole evening on the bench. PSG, who have not lost a Ligue 1 game since September, are now 11 points clear of Monaco in second with just five matches remaining.

It means that they will secure a 10th French title in 12 seasons if they win at Lorient in a rearranged game on Wednesday and Monaco fail to beat Lille at the same time. "I'm very happy with the result, with the match, and with the week," PSG coach Luis Enrique told broadcaster Amazon Prime.

He rested Mbappe and Ousmane Dembele among five changes to the side that started in last Tuesday's 4-1 win away to Barcelona in the second leg of their Champions League quarter-final tie. "After the match

in Barcelona, you never know how it's going to be, but I think the team was extremely precise and I am very confident and very happy."

Lyon have enjoyed a remarkable revival in the last few months under new coach Pierre Sage and are still hoping to qualify for Europe after sitting bottom of the table at the end of November. However, they were blown away as Matic diverted Marco Asensio's cut-back into his own net and Brazilian defender Beraldo converted at a corner to make it 2-0 after six minutes.

Ramos headed in Achraf Hakimi's cross to make it 3-0 just after the half-hour mark, although Ghanaian starlet Nuamah came in from the right flank to pull one back for Lyon soon after. Ramos restored PSG's three-goal cushion by finishing off a fine move just before the break for his 13th of the season in all competitions.

That rounded off the scoring, and whatever happens in midweek PSG will hope to be confirmed as title winners before travelling to face Borussia Dortmund in the first leg of their Champions League semi-final on May 1.

Lyon are a point away from seventh position, which will be enough to qualify for Europe if they fail to beat PSG when the teams meet again in the French Cup final at the end of May.

#### Monaco go second

Monaco moved up into second place by winning 2-0 earlier away at Brest in a battle of two teams chasing Champions League qualification. Swiss mid-