



6 Yemen's government, rebels complete prisoner exchange



8 Infrastructure tops agenda in 'Kuwait's Vision 2035'



16 Kings edge Warriors as Sixers, Celtics roll



RAMADAN TIMINGS		
Fajr		03:58
Shurooq		05:20
Dhuhr		11:48
Asr		15:22
Maghrib		18:15
Isha		19:36



Saudi plane hit by gunfire

At least 56 civilians killed as Sudan battle rages



KHARTOUM: People run past a military vehicle in Khartoum amid reported clashes in the city. — AFP

RIYADH: A passenger plane preparing to take off from Sudan for Saudi Arabia came under fire on Saturday as deadly fighting rocked Khartoum, the kingdom's flag carrier said. The Airbus A330 bound for Saudi Arabia "was exposed to gunfire damage... with guests and crew on board" ahead of its scheduled departure to Riyadh, Saudia said in a statement.

"It has been confirmed that all members of the aircraft's cabin crew have safely arrived at the Saudi Embassy in Sudan," the statement said. "Meanwhile aircraft flying over Sudan have returned and all other flights to and from Sudan have been suspended in order to preserve the safety of the guests and crew." The Saudia statement did not mention any casualties in the incident involving its aircraft.

The paramilitaries said they were in control of the airport as well as the presidential palace, claims denied by the army. The Saudi embassy in Sudan "urges all Saudi citizens to remain at home", the state-affiliated Al-Ekhbariya channel reported. Both the Saudi foreign ministry and the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council, headquartered in Riyadh, issued statements of concern about Saturday's violence.

Meanwhile, fighting in Sudan raged for a second day Sunday in battles between rival generals who seized power in a 2021 coup, leaving at least 56

civilians dead, hundreds wounded and sparking international alarm. Deafening explosions and intense gunfire rattled buildings in the capital Khartoum's densely-populated northern and southern suburbs as tanks rumbled on the streets and fighter jets roared overhead, witnesses said.

Violence erupted early Saturday morning after weeks of power struggles between army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan and his deputy, Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, commander of the large and heavily-armed paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), with each accusing the other of starting the fight. "The gunfire and explosions are incessant," said 34-year-old Ahmed Hamid from a northern Khartoum suburb. "The situation is very worrying and it doesn't seem like it will calm anytime soon," said Ahmed Seif, another Khartoum resident, who said he feared his building had been damaged by gunfire but that it was too dangerous to go outside to check.

Both sides claim they control key sites, with state television broadcasting patriotic songs without commentary. Daglo's RSF say they have seized the presidential palace, Khartoum airport and other strategic sites, but the army insist they are in charge, with the air force late Saturday urging people to stay indoors.

Continued on Page 6

RAMADAN KAREEM

Ramadan in Prophet Muhammad's words

By Dr. Teresa Leshner

Salman Al-Farasi (RA) narrated that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) delivered a sermon on the last day of the month of Sha'ban. It can be translated as the following: "O People! The month of Allah (Ramadan) has come with its mercies, blessings and forgiveness's. Allah has decreed this month the best of all months. The days of this month are the best among the days and the nights are the best among the nights and the hours during Ramadan are the best among the hours.

This is a month in which you have been invited by Him (to fast and pray). Allah has honored you in it. In every breath you take is a reward of Allah, your sleep is worship, your good deeds are accepted and your invocations are answered. (Need reference) "Therefore, you must invoke your Lord in all earnestness with hearts free from sin and evil, and pray that Allah may help you to keep fast, and to recite the Holy Quran.

Indeed! Miserable is the one who is deprived of Allah's forgiveness in this great month. While fasting, remember the hunger and thirst of the Day of Judgment. Give alms to the poor and needy, Pay respect to your elders, have sympathy for your youngsters and be kind towards your relatives and kinsmen. Guard your tongue against unworthy words, and your eyes from scenes that are not worth seeing and your ears from sounds that should not be heard.

Be kind to orphans so that if your children may become orphans they will also be treated with kindness. Do repent to Allah for your sins and supplicate with raised hands at the times of prayer as these are the best times, during which Allah Almighty looks at His servants with mercy. Allah Answers if they supplicate, responds if they call, grants if He is asked, and accepts if they entreat. "O people! You have made your conscience the slave of your desires.

Continued on Page 6

India ex-politician, brother shot dead live on TV

PRAYAGRAJ: Gunmen seemingly posing as journalists shot dead a former Indian member of parliament and his brother live on TV as they were being taken in handcuffs to hospital by police, authorities said. Atiq Ahmed, 61, who had been jailed since 2019 and was convicted of kidnapping, was answering reporters' questions late Saturday when he and his brother Ashraf were shot at close range, the television images showed. "According to preliminary information, three persons posing as journalists approached them and opened fire... The attackers have been held and are being questioned," police official

Prashant Kumar said.

The TV clip in the northern city of Prayagraj shows the assailants shouting Hindu slogans after the brazen attack. The two victims were from India's Muslim minority but police did not say whether they were investigating a possible sectarian motive in the killings. The brothers were deeply involved in India's criminal underworld — the ex-MP was reportedly facing more than 100 different cases — and press reports said the attackers were petty criminals.

The pair were being taken to hospital for medical examinations and were surrounded by police officers at the time. Local media reports said one of the gunmen was even carrying a television camera and another a microphone with the logo of a television channel. Several days earlier police in the same state of Uttar Pradesh said they had shot dead Ahmed's 19-year-old son and his accomplice in a shootout. Both were wanted in a case of murder.

Scores of people facing charges have been killed



Ashraf and Atiq Ahmed.

in the state in recent years in similar so-called "police encounters", which rights groups say are often extra-judicial executions. Ahmed, who had been facing charges of murder and assault, last month had claimed in a petition to India's top court that his life was under threat from the police.

Continued on Page 6

Brazil and UAE seal biofuels climate deals

ABU DHABI: Brazil and the United Arab Emirates announced a series of deals on combating climate change and advancing biofuels Saturday as President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva paid an official visit to the oil-rich country. "It was a highly fruitful visit," Lula said in brief comments to Brazil's TV Globo after meeting UAE president Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi on his way home from a trip to China.

The countries said in a joint statement the leaders had discussed a range of subjects including trade, technology, defense, aviation and food security. They also announced a series of deals, including one for the UAE-controlled Mataripe refinery in northeastern Brazil to invest up to \$2.5 billion in a biodiesel project in the region, and another on cooperating against climate change.

The UAE is due to host the COP28 UN climate talks later this year, and Brazil is a candidate to host the 2025 edition. The countries said they had agreed to work together to "encourage ambitious climate action" from the rest of the world. Sheikh Mohamed greeted Lula at the presidential palace, where a 21-gun salute rang out and formation jets trailed Brazil's national colors.

Continued on Page 6



ABU DHABI: UAE President Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan (left) and Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva inspect the honor guard during an official reception at Qasr Al-Watan in Abu Dhabi. — AFP

Ministry launches national campaign to assist debtors

KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs, Women and Childhood Mai Al-Baghli announced launching national campaign aimed at aiding debtors, adding that donations will commence Sunday night and last until Thursday midnight. The campaign, conducted in cooperation with ministries of Information and Justice, comes as an extension of Kuwait's humanitarian role, stated Al-Baghli in a press briefing. She further affirmed the ministry's keenness on nationalizing such campaigns and alleviating the burdens of citizens, as this goes in hand with council of ministers' directives of prioritizing care for nationals.

It is religiously permitted to donate Zakat for the campaign, explained the Minister, adding that a link will be provided to collect donations, and the amount will be transferred to the Ministry of Justice's General Directorate of implementation. The campaign targets people with disabilities or special needs, elders and women, with the condition that all related rulings are of civil cases, clarified Al-Baghli. The Minister called on all donors, whether individuals and enterprises, to take part in the campaign and ease people's suffering. — KUNA



Minister of Social Affairs, Women and Childhood Mai Al-Baghli



Defense minister announces course admission priorities

Kuwaiti youth encouraged to enroll in the military

KUWAIT: The Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences announced that it will grant priority for immediate admission to the deputy officer course for applicants who were not lucky in the draw for the program dedicated to officers with a university degree. The announcement came following orders from First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Acting Minister of Defense Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



Minister of Interior and Acting Minister of Defense Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah

The academy held the draw on April 4, in two sessions: a morning session for science majors and an evening session for literary majors. The course is meant to encourage Kuwaiti youth to enroll in the military and support the security department

of the Ministry of Interior with needed personnel. The academy accepted 300 students out of 3,728 applicants, with an extra 100 students on reserve. Anyone looking to join the year-long deputy officer course should review the Registration and Admission Department at Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences, starting Sunday until Thursday, between 10 am and 2 pm.

In related news, First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Acting Minister of Defense Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah instructed to grant priority and immediate admission to the non-commissioned officer course and to grant the rank of first sergeant, in addition to two bonuses for those who were not lucky in the lottery for the 23rd batch of university officers. The office of the chief of general staff at the Kuwaiti Armed Forces said in a statement Saturday that those wishing to join the course must review the Public Authority of Manpower and Administrative (Building No. 1 - Mubarakiya Camps) starting Sunday until Thursday, between 10 am and 2 pm. — KUNA



KUWAIT: This file photo shows participants during the lottery held on April 4, 2023. —KUNA photos

Guhtka bags seized

KUWAIT: Customs at the Shuwaikh Port have seized a large amount of chewing tobacco (guhtka) hidden within a storage coming from Jabal Ali. Kuwait Customs inspected the container and found cartons of the banned substance. After sending it to X-Ray inspection at the port, three million bags were discovered.



Exam-leak suspect turns himself in

KUWAIT: A man suspected of leaking high school tests has turned himself in to authorities after an arrest order was issued against him. The Ministry of Education had announced last January that 1,741 students were caught cheating or trying to cheat during midterm exams. Public prosecution froze the bank accounts of those accused of leaking high school exam papers and charged them with money laundering. Three of the suspects are Kuwaiti (two men and a woman) and one is Syrian.

Prosecution has ordered a 21-day detention for the suspect who turned himself in this week. The man was sent to central prison for "leaking secret information and money laundering". The suspects involved in leaking tests have been doing it for years in exchange for cash, investigations revealed.

Investigations conducted earlier this year have also identified around 500 male and female students whose names and phone numbers were found on the phones of the suspects who were arrested. The Syrian suspect had confessed about the role of the three citizens, one of whom is physical education teacher in the Farwaniya educational zone, saying they were sending "links" through which money was paid by students to his personal account, after which he delivered the money to the three suspects at their homes in Ahmadi governorate.

Social media groups dedicated to leaking exams were formed of twelfth grade students, in both the science and arts streams, divided into a group for male students and another for female students, according to testimonies. The subscription charges for one group ranged between KD 100 and KD 150.

PAM to cancel 10,000 permits

KUWAIT: The Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) plans to cancel more than 10,000 work permits that are registered with the authority and are not valid, sources said. The authority has initiated the legal procedures for cancellation after verifying the validity of the data with the interior minister. Cancellations will begin following the Eid Al-Fitr holiday.

The authority is taking this step based on article 35 from the work permits procedures, which stipulates that the authority can cancel work permits automatically if the worker has been abroad for more than six months unless they have an exemption from the General Department of Residency. A permit can be cancelled if it expired while the worker is abroad, or if they were deported for any reason.

The authority will look into cancelling work permits for other reasons beginning next month. The reasons include failure to provide real data and documents, as well as unaccredited education certificates. "Decisions to cancel these permits will be issued successively, and from time to time, according to reviews and audits, as well as according to the results of tests received from accredited professional societies such as the Society of Engineers

and the Kuwaiti Accountants Society," sources said. The first wave of cancellations will include 2,500 work permits to be announced this month. "The manpower authority will not issue any work permits to anyone who is found to have previously obtained it in a manner that violates the law, through the inaccuracy of their academic certificate or their failure to pass the professional tests," sources explained. The authority will coordinate issuing residence permits with the interior ministry, meaning that anyone who gets their permit cancelled will become an illegal resident.

According to sources, several ministries will be assigned to take steps to address the demographic imbalance and reduce the number of expatriate workers that the market does not need. The Ministry of Interior is expected to review the conditions for granting expatriates a driving license, as well as the conditions for issuing mobile taxi licenses, which have become a large market for attracting expatriate workers.

These decisions were ready for discussion and issuance, had it not been for the government's resignation and waiting for the formation of a new government, sources said. The supreme committee for addressing the demographic imbalance will reportedly hold a meeting with the Manpower Authority, which could result in a comprehensive review of the requirements for issuing work permits in marginal professions that currently attract expatriate workers.



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KUWAIT: A small bus carries passengers and fruit crates from Basra to Kuwait. Source: Old Kuwait Memories in Photographs by Dr Yacoub Al Hijji, 2001, Kuwait. Prepared by Mahmoud Zakaria Abu Al-Ella, researcher in heritage at the Ministry of Information.

Local

Kuwait University to admit 7,298 students in new academic year

Admission policy based on gaps in the labor market

KUWAIT: Kuwait University is allocating 7,298 seats in different departments for the academic year 2023-24. The number of student admission seats by college is as follows: "30 seats for Dentistry, 63 seats for Pharmacy, 290 seats for physician-assistant disciplines, 150 seats for medicine, 1,175 seats for the sciences, 800 seats for engineering and petroleum, 585 seats for life sciences, 550 seats for social sciences, 120 seats for architecture, 900 seats for administrative sciences, 385 seats for Sharia, 1,000 seats for education, 950 seats for arts and 295 for law."

The announcement came following a meeting held by the university's council to designate admission rules. The approved admission plan will be submitted to the Council of Public Universities for further approval. The plan also included delaying the admission of Kuwait University employees to scholarship programs to the second semester.

The admission policy was prepared based on the university's capacity in terms of the number of faculty members available, the available halls and gaps in the labor market. The allocated seats are based on a study prepared by the planning sector at the university. It resulted in the development of a university admission policy which was distributed to all colleges, then discussed at the council meeting.

The civil service commission represented by the commission's undersecretary Abeer Al-Duajj



KUWAIT: This photo shows Kuwait University. Kuwait University is allocating 7,298 seats in different departments for the academic year 2023-24.

provided her input based on labor market needs. The university will coordinate with the Ministry of Higher Education, the Council of Public Universi-

ties and the Council of Private Universities to set a policy for announcing enrollment dates for each educational institution.

Patients complain about blind spots of therapy in Kuwait

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Listening and understanding people's most profound feelings makes therapists a recourse when times people find themselves in a chaotic situation and unable to think sensibly or clearly understand their own emotions. However, some patients may come across therapists who may not listen carefully or become judgmental, which worsens the case of the patients. To take a closer look at mental healthcare issues in Kuwait, Kuwait Times interviewed Caroline, an expat patient who highlighted certain issues according to her experience that many may relate to.

Therapy as a non-Arab expat

Caroline said as a new expat who is trying to figure things out, she wanted to speak to someone as she was struggling with adjusting to a new country. Being a stranger in Kuwait, she suffered from loneliness and anxiety, which pushed her to seek therapy, where she encountered multiple obstacles. "Some didn't consult in English, so that was a challenge for me. Eventually, I came across one who was quite pricey, but I nonetheless needed the help. But it was not what I expected. I felt like the session was rushed — we went from conversation to conversation without digging deeply into the crux of the matter. That's what I thought a therapist does — explore the deeper side of an individual's mental health. I felt like I did not get any benefit, which made my situation far worse," she said.

For Caroline, it was more like someone was just doing a job, forgetting that this profession is about



being empathetic. "I think the worst thing for me was that it seemed like I was being judged, and no compassion was shown. I felt as a professional therapist, one would need to understand that people come from different backgrounds and experiences. So that level of understanding was supposed to be there. The facial expressions and body gestures of the therapist made me feel way worse," she said.

The therapist's uncomfortableness and unacceptance of Caroline worsened her situation and left her without receiving the help she needed. "I did not receive the help I needed. Instead, it made me more anxious and I felt like I never want to try this again. There is very little knowledge of mental health, and it's so sad because we are all struggling one way or the other. It also made me realize why so many people are unaware of mental health issues, because of the fear of being judged, or 'what will people think if I go for therapy'. There's this unreasonable mindset that if you go for therapy you cannot deal with yourself and you are delusional," she said.

Quality of mental health

Caroline said therapists need to understand that people come from different backgrounds and experiences, and that we are shaped by our socioeconomic factors. "When people come and seek help, they need compassion and empathy from the therapist. Understanding is important, but this cannot happen if the therapist approaches their patients from a judgmental perspective. Therapists should have really good emotional intelligence," she said, adding a therapist must speak more about mental health issues, anxiety, stress, coping skills, etc that can help people living in Kuwait. Moreover, Caroline highlighted the necessity of changing the narrative of mental health, that seeking a therapist is not because "you have gone crazy"; it merely means you want to improve your mental health and boost your emotional intelligence and development. On therapy charges in Kuwait, she said it would be helpful if prices were fair and decent, or at least discounted, so people don't have to think twice before going.

Mexico ambassador sends Eid greetings

KUWAIT: Ambassador of Mexico Miguel Angel Isidro has the honor to extend his sincere congratulations and best wishes to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the government and the people of Kuwait, on the occasion of the advent of Eid Al-Fitr, wishing the friendly people of Kuwait further prosperity and stability.

Isidro added, "I would like to express our continued commitment to strengthening the relation ties between Kuwait and Mexico and assure Kuwait that we will strive to further consolidate the bilateral relations already existing between the two countries. On this festive day, I wish His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah the best of health and happiness and the friendly people of Kuwait peace and prosperity". Tel +965 22261980 Fax +965 25731952 E-mail: embkuwait@sre.gob.mx

Eid Mubarak! 'Wa Kullu Aam Wa Antum Bekhair'



Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassim Al-Budaiwi.

GCC worried over violence in Sudan

RIYADH: Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassim Al-Budaiwi has expressed extreme concern over escalation and military clashes between the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). In a statement, Al-Budaiwi called on all Sudanese political leaderships to keep calm and self-restraint, and hold dialogue and unify the ranks in a way that contributes to completing what has been achieved amid the framework agreement aiming to achieve political stability, economy recovery and prosperity of Sudan.

He affirmed the GCC's firm stances and resolutions on preserving Sudan's security, stability, sovereignty and territorial integrity. The GCC also backs Sudan in the face of economic challenges to achieve aspirations of its people, Al-Budaiwi stressed. He extolled

international efforts of the tripartite mechanism - the UN mission in Sudan, the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the quartet group namely the UAE, Saudi Arabia, the US and the UK as well as Sudan's friends' group.

He said such efforts seek to reach consensus among political powers, end the crisis, and achieve security and stability, according to the statement. The GCC chief appealed to the disputing parties to hold dialogue and use peaceful methods to address disputes, enhance security and stability, and achieve aspirations of Sudan's people.

Also, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) expressed deep concern over ongoing clashes between the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). In a statement, OIC Secretary General Ibrahim Taha called for an immediate cease-fire and urged the two sides to turn to dialogue. Clashes escalated between the two sides after the army used tanks and fighter jets, while the two sides claim they have taken control over vital locations. — KUNA

News in Brief

Crown Prince hosts PM

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace on Sunday. He also hosted the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and the Acting Minister of Defense, Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. —KUNA

CBK extends working hours

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) on Sunday announced that an extension for the working hours of the real time gross settlement system between participants, and the Kuwait Electronic Cheques Clearing System. In a press release, the CBK indicated that the extension of working hours of the Real Time Gross Settlement System (KASSIP) between participants, and the Kuwait Electronic Cheques Clearing System (KECCS) would contribute to the development of the banking sector and settlement system in the country. Extending working hours for the KASSIP system for example would allow more transactions among banks, reflecting positively on the banking sector and would increase accepted and deposited cheques in clients' accounts during the same working day, added the CBK. — KUNA

Gold prices retreat 1.9%

KUWAIT: Gold prices backtracked by 1.9 percent to \$2,004 per ounce in last week's trades, to record the first weekly loss since February. A report issued by Kuwait Dar Al-Sabaek indicated that the sharp decline of prices last Friday was prompted by a slight increase of the dollar, a 0.6 percent raise compared to other main currencies, as well as rise of US treasury 10-year bond revenues to more than 3.5 percent. The precious metal concluded a six-week long series of gains, despite the decrease it touched the \$2,005 margin midweek, a level it hadn't reached since March 2022. The report mentioned predictions of main central banks, namely the US Federal Reserve, loosening aggressive financial policy and interest rate hike, adding that should this happen gold prices would rise anew. — KUNA

Tweeters charged for 'fake info'

KUWAIT: The Public Prosecution office investigated about 100 cases on charges of spreading false news and misinformation through tweets on the social networking site Twitter within the previous 12 months. In addition to spreading false information, the prosecution charged the tweeters with broadcasting information that they "believe is non-incriminating but disrupts society". The charge of spreading false news with the aim of undermining confidence in society and creating panic carries a penalty of up to five years in prison and is often categorized under the State Security Offenses Act.

CBK provides machines, new notes

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) on Sunday announced that it provided automatic withdrawal machines in a number of commercial complexes that include new banknotes of dinar denominations, due to the increased demand by citizens for these denominations to distribute Eid money giveaways "Ayadi". The CBK announced: "The ATM service will be available in the Avenues, 360 Mall, Al-Asimah and Al-Kout malls until the second day of Eid, as this service will save citizens the trouble of obtaining different denominations of banknotes, especially the smaller denominations that are not usually available in ATMs." The central bank also announced that it provided local banks earlier with new banknotes of the aforementioned categories so that they can be made available to the public in bank branches spread across all regions of Kuwait.



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PAM announces new authorized signee service

KUWAIT: Official Spokeswoman of the Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) and Director of Public Relations and Information Aseel Al-Mazyad said PAM has added a new electronic service to register the authorized signee on the Sahel application. She added that the service can be reached through the administrative services list, then registering the signee's data and signature on the screen without the need to go to PAM departments.

The registration steps include logging on the Sahel business application, selecting the authority's services from the administrative services, then opening "addition of an authorized signee" and filling in the required data such as file number, phone and e-mail then registering the electronic signature.

If the applicant was the administrator of the file, they should select (administrator) and in this case the application will be approved automatically, but if the applicant is not the file administrator the power of attorney transaction number will be registered and a copy of the power of attorney issued by the justice ministry at the request of the administrator should be attached to the application. There will be a 24-hour wait for the justice ministry to verify the power of attorney information, then the application will be sent automatically to the labor department where the file belongs.



Aseel Al-Mazyad

Photo of the day



Pigeons fly as the sun rises over Kuwait City on April 15, 2023. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Opinions differ as husband buys properties in his mother's name

By Chidi Emmanuel

KUWAIT: There has been a raging debate over the idea of a man buying properties in his father's or mother's name. The case of Achraf Hakimi, a PSG footballer, has ignited a debate about trust and loyalty. According to reports, Hakimi's wife, Hiba Abouk, filed for divorce, seeking half of the husband's fortune, only to discover that the husband owns nothing. In a surprising turn of events, the court informed her that her 'millionaire' husband legally owns nothing, as all his assets are registered under his mother's name.

The 24-year-old football star appears to have no property—cars, houses or even jewelries—registered in his name. The Moroccan international footballer registered most of his assets and properties, including his reported \$234,621 weekly salary, under his mother's name. Hiba is now reeling from the unexpected development in the divorce case and is currently consulting her legal team to determine their next course of action. Kuwait Times sought people's opinions on the ongoing debate. "This is really an unusual arrangement. What a smart move. Well done Hakimi. I salute you! He knows the kind of woman he married, and that prompted his action. Although it is not an ideal thing to do, I guess he took that measures after what happened to golf player Tiger Woods and other celebrities," Mark Smith, an American expat, told Kuwait Times.

"Many women have rendered their former husbands useless with divorce cases. Initially, we used to

hear that this is a man's world, but in divorce cases, it is always a woman's world. Being an African and Arab man, Hakimi must have learned from the best. He planned it ahead of time. Some men do buy properties in their mother's or brother's name, especially when there are risks of divorce. Nowadays, some ladies (including celebrities) go into marriage hoping for the proceeds from divorce. This is a lesson for women who divorce for the sake of the benefits," Hamid Dakuo, an African expat, explained.

Contrary to Mark and Hamid's views, Sara Angelo and her friends see it as "betrayal or breach of trust and lack of love." "It is legal to buy properties in someone else's name, including your mother's name, as long as you have her consent. However, it is important to consider the woman who stood by you and suffered with you. Although I don't support divorce, leaving her with nothing after her years of marriage is not fair," Sara said. Supporting Sara's views, Kristine Garcia (Sara's friend) sees Hakimi's action as unreasonable. "It is quite awkward to use your mother as next of kin instead of your wife or child. His action shows lack of love and trust. Will Hakimi's mother feel happy if her husband treats her in such a manner?" she questioned.

Mama's boy

"It is generally not advisable for a husband to buy properties in his mother's name, as it can create legal and financial complications. What Hakimi did, undermined what his wife went through in the marriage. This is what you get when you marry a mama's boy.



Some mothers like to interfere in their sons' marriages. A man like Hakimi will be very difficult to live with," Reem Abdulla and Dalal, her friends (Kuwaiti students), argued. Buying properties in a mother's name in case of divorce is a common practice in some cultures. However, it is important to understand the legal implications of such a decision.

"As a married man, buying property in your mother's name may create legal and financial complications in the event of a divorce. Depending on the laws of the jurisdiction, the property may be considered that of the mother and not subject to division in a divorce settlement. This could result in the wife losing any claim to the property, even if she worked for or paid for it. It is unfair to buy properties in your mother's name when you have a wife. If you can't trust her, don't marry her," Akhil Ajay, an Indian expat, advised.

Reconnaissance Research hosts Ramadan diwaniya

Institute marks fourth anniversary of its founding



Ramadan diwaniya with attendance from diplomatic missions and a number of Kuwaiti societal figures.

Reconnaissance Research held its Ramadan diwaniya with attendance from diplomatic missions and a number of Kuwaiti societal figures. Founder and CEO of Reconnaissance Research Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri said: "This year's diwaniya coincides with the fourth anniversary of our establishment. This is an occasion that means a lot to me". He continued: "Despite the obstacles, challenges and few mistakes during the way, we were able to cement ourselves as a leading and independent research institute."

Reconnaissance Research continues to work with a team of experts from different fields to provide comprehensive insights and analysis on many complex issues. The work conducted by Reconnaissance Research aims to inform policymakers, businesses, and other stakeholders about the political, social and economic dynamics of Kuwait and the GCC.

Al-Anjeri said: "After 4 years of rigorous work, we have identified the need to provide customized advisory services to potential clients in the Middle East region and beyond who seek bespoke insights, reports and analysis on a set of issues such as energy, economics, security, politics and social issues, among others."

Statement from the Ambassador of Oman



Reconnaissance Research has become a prominent research institution not just within Kuwait but also across the Gulf and Arab regions. One of the main reasons for its significance is the platform it offers for transparent dialogue that encourages diverse per-



(From left) Tunisian Ambassador, Greek Ambassador-Chinese Ambassador and Ukrainian Ambassador

spectives without bias. The center's founder, Mr Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri, has a clear vision and long-term strategy to establish the institution as a center of excellence and high quality. Despite only being four years old and operating during the COVID-19 pandemic, the center has successfully hosted numerous conferences, seminars and dialogues in person and virtually, covering a variety of issues and featuring high-level decision makers from multiple countries. We are expecting a close collaboration with the Sultanate of Oman on various fields. This initiative is



Statement from the French Ambassador

It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Reconnaissance Research



(From left) Reconnaissance Research directors, Ali Zaizalah, Qais Aljoan and Yousef Alghusain



(From left) Indian Ambassador and Sheikh Abdullah M Alsabah, Undersecretary at Ministry of Defence

on the fourth anniversary of the launch of this esteemed think-tank. It was my honor to participate in many of Reconnaissance Research's programs, and I appreciate the quality of their work. Independent think tanks like Reconnaissance are needed in Kuwait and in all countries to provide honest, clear, objective and expert analysis of the most important issues facing a society. They help locals and onlookers understand more than one side of an issue and can guide decision makers as they plot a better future. I wish Reconnaissance the best of success as they continue to work as hard as they've always been, bringing more international spotlight and awareness to Kuwait in a very unique way.



Statement from the Chinese Ambassador

I was very pleased to



(From left) Abdulaziz Al-Anjeri, Tarek Sultan, Vice Chairman of Agility and Ahmad Baqir

attend Reconnaissance Research's Ramadan diwaniya on the occasion of its fourth anniversary. The center plays an active role in promoting exchanges between Kuwait and other countries. With the world experiencing rapid changes not seen in a century, it is imperative that countries promote universal values and work towards building a future that is shared by all. Intellectual institutions like Reconnaissance Research have a vital role to play in promoting people-to-people exchanges and international cooperation to achieve a world of peace, stability, development and equity.

We have great confidence in Reconnaissance Research's ability to continue serving as a robust connection between China and Kuwait, fostering deeper bonds between the people of both countries. As an essential hub for intellectual and cultural exchange in the Gulf region, the center will undoubtedly elevate Kuwait's prominence and prestige. We extend our best wishes to the center and its leaders for continued progress, achievement and success.



At least 12 inmates killed in Ecuador prison clashes

Thousands in Jerusalem for Orthodox Easter ‘Holy Fire’ rite



KARUIZAWA: (From L to R) Karuizawa mayor Michio Tsuchiya, Deputy Secretary-General of the European External Action Service (EEAS) Enrique Mora, Britain's Foreign Secretary James Cleverly, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Japan's Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi, Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly, French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna, Italy's Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani and Nagano governor Shuichi Abe pose at a welcoming ceremony for G7 Foreign Ministers' meeting. —AFP

China, Ukraine headline as G7 FMs meet

Japan is keen to ensure regional challenges top the agenda

KARUIZAWA: The G7's top diplomats arrived in the Japanese resort town of Karuizawa Sunday for talks set to be dominated by twin crises: China's growing pressure on Taiwan, and Russia's war in Ukraine. There will be no shortage of diplomatic and security challenges to discuss for the foreign ministers, but recent regional events are likely to sharpen the focus on Asia.

The meeting comes days after China concluded major military drills around self-ruled Taiwan, and with Beijing barring ships from an area north of the island on Sunday. On Thursday, North Korea launched what it said was a new solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile -- the latest in a stepped-up barrage of tests that have rattled nerves.

Host Japan is keen to ensure regional challenges top the agenda, and will emphasise its belief that Russia's invasion of Ukraine heightens the need for vigilance in Asia. Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, whose government has revamped defence policy and spending in the face of growing Chinese power, has repeatedly warned that "Ukraine today could be East Asia tomorrow".

"Japan's basic position... on Ukraine is that the security of Europe and that of the Indo-Pacific cannot be discussed separately," a Japanese government official said ahead of the talks. "They are intertwined with each other."

The G7 has regularly warned China against attempts to seize Taiwan, and individual members have sounded the alarm in recent days.

"A military escalation in the Taiwan Strait... would be a horror scenario for the entire world," German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said Friday in Beijing. But there will be renewed focus on the grouping's language after recent comments by French President Emmanuel Macron.

His insistence, after a trip to Beijing, that Europe should avoid "crises that aren't ours" has raised eyebrows and ire among Paris's allies, while delighting Chinese officials.

Paris has worked to temper the reaction, insisting France's views have not changed, and most observers expect the group to reiterate previous positions warning China against "changing the status quo by force".

'Freedom of manoeuvre'

Still, Macron's comments expose a reality for the group -- Japan, the United States, Britain, Canada, France, Italy, Germany and the European Union -- said Paul Nadeau, adjunct professor of political science at Temple University's Japan campus.

"Each member of the G7 still wants a bit of autonomy in the way they pursue their relationship with China," he told AFP.

"They don't want to overcommit, they want to maintain some freedom of manoeuvre."

A senior US State Department official said discussions would reflect "collective concern about a number of the actions that China is taking".

"I think there will be a discussion of how we can continue to be fully aligned on a common and concerted approach," he said.

Consensus for the group, whose foreign ministers arrived by special bullet train to Karuizawa, will be easier on Ukraine. The group is likely to again demand Russia's immediate withdrawal and pledge continued support for Ukraine.

It already imposed significant sanctions on Rus-

sia, so substantive new measures are not expected, though backing for a war crimes tribunal and fresh expressions of concern about Russian nuclear sabre-rattling are likely.

Both Russia's invasion and growing concerns about China have put renewed focus on economic security and the need to diversify supply chains for everything from energy to semiconductors.

Tokyo and Washington have warned about "economic coercion", and G7 ministers are expected to pledge measures to counter the issue.

The two-day meeting will also tackle international crises, from the Taliban's continuing grip on Afghanistan to the military junta's latest attacks in Myanmar.

Nuclear proliferation will also be up for discussion ahead of the leaders' summit in Hiroshima this May, where Kishida wants the push for a nuclear-free world to be a central topic.

He called Sunday for Japan to ramp up security to protect G7 events, a day after he escaped unharmed when an explosive was thrown at him during a campaign event. — AFP



File photo shows a security agent inspecting the turbine room linked to the OL3, the latest among three reactors at the nuclear power plant Olkiluoto on the island of Eurajoki, western Finland. — AFP

Europe largest nuke reactor enters service in Finland

HELSINKI: Finland's next-generation Olkiluoto 3 nuclear reactor, the largest in Europe, has gone into regular production after months of delays, its operator said Sunday, hours after Germany ended its nuclear era. Olkiluoto 3, now producing around 14 percent of the country's electricity, is expected to remain operational for "at least the next 60 years", according to the site's operator TVO.

The European pressurised water reactor (EPR), already more than 12 years behind schedule, was supposed to come fully online in December, but the start was pushed back several times during its testing phase.

Built by the French-led Areva-Siemens consortium, the reactor was first started up in December 2021 and connected to the Finnish power grid in March last year. "Test production has been completed and regular electricity production started today," TVO said. "From now on, about 30 percent of Finnish electricity is produced in Olkiluoto," which already had two reactors.

On Sunday, more than 50 percent of Finnish electricity was being produced from nuclear power, according to Finland's transmission system operator Fingrid. The most powerful nuclear reactor in Europe, with a capacity of generating 1,600 megawatts, Olki-

luoto 3 reached full power in late September for the first time since construction began in 2005.

Finland had been hoping to rely on the new reactor for its electricity needs earlier this winter, given fears of energy shortages after Russia, a major supplier to Europe, invaded Ukraine and cut off gas exports in response to Western sanctions.

Safety vs climate

The EPR was designed to relaunch the European nuclear industry after the Chernobyl catastrophe of 1986, and was touted as offering higher power and better safety. But several EPR projects have been plagued by delays and billions of dollars in cost overruns. At the end of last year, France's state-owned energy group EDF had to announce another six-month delay for a new reactor being built at Flamanville, in northwest France, pushing back its projected start to mid-2024.

Hinkley Point in Britain and the Taishan plant in China have also suffered EPR production setbacks, cost overruns and delays. The two EPR units in China have already entered commercial production, making Olkiluoto 3 the third to go into operation in the world.

Germany meanwhile has officially ended decades of atomic energy use by turning off its last three nuclear reactors on Saturday. Europe's largest economy had been looking to leave behind nuclear power since 2002, but the phase-out was accelerated by former chancellor Angela Merkel in 2011 after the meltdown at the Fukushima nuclear plant in Japan. The decision was popular in a country with a powerful anti-nuclear movement, stoked by lingering fears of Cold War tensions and the risk of accidents. —AFP

Tunisian sets self alight in protest

TUNIS: A professional footballer in Tunisia has died after setting himself alight earlier this week in what he called a protest against the "police state" ruling the country, his brother said Friday. Nizar Issaoui, 35, suffered third-degree burns from his action in the village of Haffouz in the central region of Kairouan, his brother Ryad told AFP.

He was taken from hospital in Kairouan to the specialist burns hospital in the capital Tunis, but doctors were unable to save his life, the brother said. "He died yesterday (Thursday) and will be buried today," Issaoui's protest recalled that of street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi, who burned himself to death on December 17, 2010, sparking the Tunisian revolution that was the trigger for the Arab Spring uprisings which toppled authoritarian regimes across the Middle East.

News of Issaoui's death sparked protests on the streets of Haffouz on Thursday evening, Tunisian media reported. Young demonstrators hurled stones

at police who responded with tear gas. There was no immediate comment from the authorities. On Friday, hundreds of mourners gathered outside Issaoui's house awaiting his funeral, shouting: "With our blood and with our soul we will sacrifice ourselves for you, Nizar".

During his funeral, clashes broke out between protesters and the police, who fired tear gas, local media reported. Issaoui was a free agent at the time of his death, after a career that saw him play for a range of clubs from the lower divisions to the top flight. In a Facebook post shortly before his fatal action, Issaoui said he had sentenced himself to "death by fire". "I have no more energy. Let the police state know that the sentence will be executed today," he wrote.

According to Tunisian media, Issaoui decided to make his extreme protest against the police after officers accused him of "terrorism" when he complained that he was unable to buy bananas for less than 10 dinars (\$3.30) a kilogram, double the price set by the government. A video selfie circulating on social media shows Issaoui screaming: "For a dispute with someone selling bananas at 10 dinars, I get accused of terrorism at the police station. Terrorism for a complaint about bananas." — AFP

UK nurses prepared to strike until Christmas: Cullen

LONDON: Nurses in Britain are prepared to strike until Christmas if they cannot reach a deal with the government on pay, the leader of the country's main nursing union said on Sunday. Members of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) would strike at the end of April and the beginning of May before holding a ballot on continuing the strike to the end of the year, union leader Pat Cullen said.

"If that ballot is successful it will mean further strike action right up until Christmas," Cullen told the BBC's Sunday with Laura Kuenssberg programme. Members of the union rejected a government pay offer on Friday and immediately announced an escalation in strike action. Hopes had been high that nurses in England would accept the five percent pay offer brokered by the RCN and the government in March.

But after putting the offer to its members, the RCN said 54 percent turned it down. RCN members will walk out for 48 hours from 8:00 pm (1900 GMT)

on April 30, with the action extended to staff in emergency departments, intensive care and cancer care units for the first time. The refusal is a setback for the government, which had hoped for an end to the crippling health sector strike that has seen thousands of operations and appointments cancelled.

Hospital doctors below consultant level have this week been on a four-day strike demanding better pay and conditions. Cullen said she had received a letter from Health Secretary Steve Barclay on Sunday morning after requesting talks with him about the pay offer last week.

RCN members walked out for the first time in the union's 108-year history late last year, joining a wave of public and private sector workers calling for pay rises as inflation soared. The government said the RCN rejection of the pay offer was "hugely disappointing" and said it was "fair and generous".

As well as a five percent pay increase in the next financial year, the offer included a one-off bonus worth at least £1,250 (\$1,510) per person. Two other unions representing healthcare workers have yet to announce the results of their ballot on the offer.

Healthcare bosses say further strikes would have an impact on reducing already lengthy waiting lists for treatment, which Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has pledged to reduce. —AFP

International

Thousands in Jerusalem for Orthodox Easter ‘Holy Fire’ rite

Zionist police said attendance inside the church would be limited to 1,800 people

JERUSALEM: Thousands of Christians thronged Jerusalem on Saturday for the traditional Holy Fire rite ahead of the Orthodox Easter, despite a security clampdown in the holy city. The ancient Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where the thousand-year-old rite takes place, was built over the site where Christian tradition says Jesus Christ was crucified, buried and resurrected. The ceremony, when a flame which the faithful believe sparks miraculously each year is brought from the tomb, marks the most important event in the Orthodox calendar. Clutching candles, so the flame can be passed from one to another, pilgrims attended the church this year in reduced numbers.

The church is in Zionist entity-annexed east Jerusalem, and for the second consecutive year Zionist police had told church leaders access would be considerably restricted. In the past about 10,000 worshippers would fill the church, with many more crowding outside, before the flame was flown to Orthodox communities internationally.

This year's ceremony also comes after deadly attacks and clashes in Zionist entity, east Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank, and cross-border fire several days ago between Zionist forces and militants in the Gaza Strip, Lebanon and Syria.

On Wednesday, Zionist police said attendance inside the church would be limited to 1,800 people including 200 police officers as a safety measure. AFP journalists said thousands of Palestinian believers and foreign pilgrims also gathered in the square outside the church, in adjacent streets and outside the walls of the Old City on Saturday.

Theophilus III, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, emerged from the Edicule built over the presumed tomb of Jesus shortly before 3:00 pm (1200 GMT), bearing two bundles of lighted candles. Cries of joy, cheers and singing broke out as the flame was passed between believers.

"It's like I'm dead and alive again... I feel in heaven," said Laura, a 47-year-old Romanian tourist. Georges, a Palestinian retiree living in the Old City, said he regretted that "many Christians from



JERUSALEM: Christian worshippers carry candles lit with the 'Holy Fire' obtained from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, during the Orthodox Christian Easter Saturday celebrations. — AFP

the West Bank cannot come" because of the lack of permits issued by Zionist entity. Police say the restrictions are intended to ensure safety after a stampede left several dead during a 2021 Jewish pilgrimage to Zionist entity.

But many Palestinian Christians say they are proof of discrimination against them. Ahmad Tibi, an Arab-Zionist member of parliament, said on Saturday: "All Palestinians in east Jerusalem, Muslims

and Christians, are suffering from the occupation. We must do more to end these restrictions, violations and police violence."

Police spokesman Dean Elsdunne said the event was "very special, including for us the police". "Of course we want a lot of people to be able to come. But our number one priority is human life," he added. "We want to ensure that people can come and celebrate safely," Elsdunne said of the restrictions.

Palestinian teacher Tamar Ashariyeh, 45, said she could only get within 100 metres (yards) of the site. "I'm a local here, so I have to be inside this church, praying. I've been fasting for 55 days. It's Easter time, so we have to celebrate," she said.

Abed, a Palestinian merchant in the Old City, accused Zionist entity of having "closed everything" for the ceremony. But Maria, 25, said she lives in the area and was used to the measures. — AFP

Yemen rebels, govt forces complete prisoner exchange

SANAA: Yemeni rebels and government forces freed scores of prisoners Sunday on the last of a three-day exchange of nearly 900 detainees, boosting hopes of ending their protracted war. Planes carrying detainees took off at the same time from the Huthi rebel-held capital of Sanaa and the government-controlled northern city of Marib, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said.

Some were taken to the Red Cross planes in wheelchairs. All released prisoners were given plastic bags with food to eat when the daily Ramadan fast was over. At the airport in Sanaa, Huthi fighters staged a ceremonial dance with swords to greet their comrades.

"Forty-eight former detainees were on board the Marib-Sanaa flight, and 42 on the Sanaa-Marib flight," ICRC media adviser Jessica Moussan told AFP. Three other flights during the day were to complete the deal reached in Switzerland last month to exchange 181 government forces for 706 rebels, just before the major Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr.

Four journalists sentenced to death by the Iranian-backed Huthis are part of the exchange, said government negotiator Majed Fadail. Rebel politi-

cal chief, Mahdi al-Mashat, said the next round of talks with Saudi Arabia, which leads the military coalition against the Huthis, would start after Eid al-Fitr expected on April 21, Yemen's Saba news agency reported.

The last talks ended hours before 318 prisoners were transported on four flights on Friday between Sanaa and government-controlled Aden, reuniting detainees with their families. On Saturday, 357 detainees took flights between the Saudi city of Abha and Sanaa. Saudis were among the prisoners freed. It is not known how many prisoners each side still has.

The Huthis seized Sanaa in 2014, prompting the Saudi-led intervention the following year. Hundreds of thousands have died in the conflict which triggered a major humanitarian crisis. A UN-brokered ceasefire that started in April 2022 has sharply reduced casualties. The truce expired in October, but fighting has largely remained on hold.

Marib governorate, an oil-rich region, saw some of the most bitter fighting in the last two years. The city of Marib is the last northern bastion of the government, which is now based in the southern city of Aden.

The prisoner exchange is a confidence-building measure coinciding with an intense diplomatic push to end the war, as it nears its nine-year mark. "Let us not forget the real purpose of these releases: reuniting loved ones," said the ICRC's Moussan. "These past three days have brought back joy to so many shattered families who have been torn apart by conflict. We only hope more of these releases will happen in the near future." — AFP

‘Not our friends’: Anger with Russia builds in Armenia

YEREVAN: Standing in a busy street flanked by green sycamores near Yerevan's Opera House, Artur Sargsyan says Russia is an unreliable partner and Armenia should look for allies elsewhere. "I dream of a day when Armenia leaves the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and the Russian sphere of influence," said Sargsyan, a 26-year-old philologist, referring to the Moscow-led regional pact.

"Russia and the CSTO have not helped Armenia during a very difficult time," he told AFP, referring to the inaction of the security bloc in the face of hostilities with arch-foe Azerbaijan. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has sent shock waves across former Soviet countries and prompted Moscow's traditional partners to seek allies elsewhere.

A key illustration of Russia's diminishing regional influence is Armenia, until now one of Moscow's closest allies. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the tiny Caucasus country of around three million people has relied on Russia for its military and economic support. The country hosts a Russian military base and many people in the country speak Russian.

But now many in Armenia say they cannot forgive Moscow for shirking its responsibility to defend their

country militarily against Turkey-allied Azerbaijan. The two Caucasus nations have fought two wars for control of the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, and the latest conflict in 2020 led to Armenia's defeat and the loss of swathes of territory it had controlled for years.

The frustration with Moscow, which is bogged down in Ukraine, has grown further after Azerbaijan blocked the sole land link between Karabakh and Armenia in mid-December. "Armenia is a small country and it must join a Western bloc, an alliance where it will receive real help," said another Yerevan resident, Arpine Madaryan. "We should leave the CSTO. They are not helping us, they are not our friends," added the 42-year-old English teacher.

During the six weeks of fighting that claimed thousands of lives in autumn 2020, Turkey backed Azerbaijan diplomatically and militarily, while Armenia was left alone in the face of the much more powerful enemy. The Kremlin only intervened diplomatically.

President Vladimir Putin brokered a ceasefire deal that saw Yerevan cede territory it had controlled for decades, and Russia deployed peacekeepers to oversee the fragile truce. In Armenia, the deal was seen as a national humiliation.

Its prime minister, Nikol Pashinyan, has openly complained to Putin about "problems" with Russian peacekeepers in Karabakh and appealed to the international community to help prevent "genocide" in Azerbaijan's breakaway region. In January, Armenia scrapped plans to host CSTO drills, but has so far refused to quit the pact altogether. — AFP

Saudi plane hit by gunfire...

Continued from Page 1

as it continued air strikes targeting RSF bases. Footage obtained by AFP showed heavy smoke billowing from a building near the army headquarters in Khartoum, with the military saying a building had "caught fire" amid the clashes but that it had been contained.

Created in 2013, the RSF emerged from the Janjaweed militia that then-president Omar Al-Bashir unleashed against non-Arab ethnic minorities in the western Darfur region a decade earlier, drawing accusations of war crimes. The RSF's planned integration into the regular army was a key element of talks to finalise a deal that would return the country to civilian rule and end the political-economic crisis sparked by the military's 2021 coup. The Central Committee of Sudan Doctors said they had recorded 56 civilians killed as well as "tens of deaths" among security forces, and around 600 wounded.

Medics on social media have continued to call for help, pleading for safe corridors for ambulances and a ceasefire to treat the victims, warning the streets were too dangerous to bring many casualties to hospitals. On Sunday, the stench of gunpowder wafted through Khartoum's streets, deserted except by soldiers as frightened civilians sheltered inside their homes. Fighting has also erupted outside Khartoum, including in the troubled western Darfur region. In the

eastern border state of Kassala, army fired artillery at a paramilitary camp, witness Hussein Saleh said.

UN chief Antonio Guterres called for "an immediate cessation of hostilities", while US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the fighting "threatens the security and safety of Sudanese civilians". Similar appeals came from the African Union, Britain, China, the European Union and Russia, while Pope Francis said he was following the events "with concern" and urged dialogue. The AU is to hold an emergency meeting on Sunday, as is the Arab League, following a request by Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

But the two generals appear in no mood for talks. In an interview with UAE-based Sky News Arabia, Daglo, also known as Hemeti, said, "Burhan the criminal must surrender". The army declared Daglo a "wanted criminal" and the RSF a "rebel militia", saying there "will be no negotiations or talks until the dissolution" of the group. The latest violence, during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, came after more than 120 civilians had already been killed in a crackdown on regular pro-democracy demonstrations over the past 18 months.

The October 2021 coup triggered international aid cuts and sparked near-weekly protests, adding to the deepening troubles of one of the world's poorest countries. Burhan, a career soldier from northern Sudan who rose through the ranks under the three-decade rule of now jailed Islamist general Bashir, has said the coup was "necessary" to include more factions into politics. Daglo later called the coup a "mistake" that failed to bring about change and reinvigorated remnants of Bashir's regime ousted by the army in 2019 following mass protests. — AFP

by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party.

The shooting sparked outrage among opposition parties accusing the BJP of ruling by fear. Hundreds of politicians belonging to all parties across India have criminal cases pending against them, with poor Uttar Pradesh a particular hotspot. These include nearly half of government ministers in the state including the state premier, according to independent monitoring group the Association for Democratic Reforms. — AFP

India ex-politician, brother shot...

Continued from Page 1

Following his shooting, gatherings of more than four people were banned Sunday across the crime-rife northern state of 200 million people that is ruled

Ramadan in Prophet Muhammad's words...

Continued from Page 1

Make it free by invoking Allah for forgiveness. Your back may break from the heavy load of your sins, so prostrate yourself before Allah for long intervals, and make this load lighter. Understand fully that Allah has promised in His Honor and Majesty that, people who perform prayer and prostration will be guarded from Hellfire on the Day of Judgment. "O people! if anyone amongst you arranges for iftar (meal at sunset) for any believer, Allah will reward him as if he had freed a slave, and Allah will forgive him his sins.

A companion asked, "But not all of us have the means to do so." The Prophet (PBUH) replied, "Keep yourself away from Hell-fire though it may consist of half a date or even some water if you have nothing else." "O people! Anyone who during this month cultivates good manners, will walk over the Sirat (bridge to Paradise) on the day when feet will tend to slip.

For anyone who during this month eases the workload of his servants, Allah will make easy

his accounting, and for anyone who doesn't hurt others during this month, Allah will safeguard him from His Wrath on the Day of Judgment. Anyone who respects and treats an orphan with kindness during this month, Allah shall look at him with kindness on that Day.

Anyone who treats his kinsmen well during this month, Allah will bestow His Mercy on him on that Day, while anyone who mistreats his kinsmen during this month, Allah will keep away from His Mercy. Whoever offers the recommended prayers during this month, Allah will save him from Hell, and whoever observes his obligations during this month, his reward will be seventy times the reward during other months.

Whoever repeatedly invokes Allah's blessings on me, Allah will keep his scale of good deeds heavy, while the scales of others will be tending to lightness. Whoever recites during this month an ayah (verse) of the Holy Quran, will get the reward of reciting the whole Quran in other months. "O people! The gates of Paradise remain open during this month. Pray to your Lord that they may not be closed for you. While the gates of Hell are closed, pray to your Lord that they never open for you. Satan has been chained; invoke your Lord not to let him dominate you." — Courtesy of the TIES

Brazil and UAE seal biofuels...

Continued from Page 1

Lula, who returned to power in January after two terms as president between 2003 and 2010, was played the Brazilian national anthem and inspected an honor guard. His counterpart also invited him to attend an "iftar" dinner — the daily fast-breaking meal during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. He is due to give a press conference early on Sunday before leaving, officials said. The strategically located Gulf monarchy is Brazil's second-largest trading partner in the Middle East, according to the official WAM news agency.

Bilateral trade excluding oil products totaled more than \$4 million last year, representing a 32-percent rise from 2021, WAM said. In Beijing, where Lula sought to consolidate economic ties with Brazil's main trading partner, he said his country was "back on the international stage" and ready to mediate an end to Russia's war in Ukraine. Lula also accused the United States of "encouraging" the war and said it should "start talking about peace".

Both China and Brazil have refused to join Western nations in imposing sanctions on Moscow for its invasion, and there are concerns in the West that both potential mediators are overly cosy with Russian President Vladimir Putin. The UAE has maintained a neutral stance in the conflict. Its financial hub Dubai has attracted Russian professionals and businesspeople fleeing the impact of Western sanctions since the invasion in February 2022. — AFP

International

Japanese premier urges better security after blast targets speech

Japan needs to maximise its efforts to ensure security and safety

TOKYO: Japan needs to increase security as Group of Seven officials visit, the country's prime minister said Sunday, a day after an explosive was thrown at him during a campaign event. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida escaped unharmed after the device, reportedly a pipe bomb, was thrown towards him as he campaigned in the western city of Wakayama on Saturday.

A 24-year-old man was arrested, but has so far revealed nothing about his motives in the attack, which came as Japan hosts two G7 ministerial meetings. "At a time when high-ranking officials from all over the world are visiting... Japan as a whole needs to maximise its efforts to ensure security and safety," Kishida told reporters on Sunday.

"It's unforgivable such a violent act was committed during an election campaign," he added. He said he expected police to step up security measures in the wake of the incident, which came less than a year after Japan's former prime minister Shinzo Abe was assassinated by a gunman in the western city of Nara.

His killing sent shockwaves through the country, and prompted an overhaul of security around public officials. Kishida was about to deliver a speech at a fishing port in Wakayama when Saturday's incident occurred. Footage from the scene showed a metal canister being thrown from within a small crowd behind him, and the prime minister turning before being surrounded and led away by security.

Security officials and civilians at the scene quickly detained a man, whom

local media have named as 24-year-old Ryuji Kimura from Hyogo region, also in western Japan. As Kimura was detained, a large blast sounded and white smoke filled the air, with people in the crowd screaming and running away. A local fisherman who helped detain Kimura said he picked up a pipe-shaped object at the scene. "I picked up this metal thing and wanted to hand it to a police officer. But he told me, 'Just put it down! Leave it there,'" he told national broadcaster NHK.

Local media reports said Kimura, who was arrested on suspicion of obstruction of business, has so far refused to speak to investigators. Kishida resumed campaigning not long after the incident and insisted the lower house by-elections, scheduled for April 23, would not be affected. Security at local campaign events can be relatively relaxed in Japan, a country with little violent crime and strict gun laws.

But the country bolstered security around politicians after the assassination of Abe, who was shot and killed while speaking at a campaign event in July 2022. His alleged assassin, Tet-suya Yamagami, reportedly targeted him over his links to the Unification Church, and the incident sparked revelations about the connection between the sect and political figures in Japan.

Yamagami was said to have been angry over large donations his mother made to the group, which left the family bankrupt. The head of Japan's National Police Agency, and the local police chief, resigned in the wake of Abe's assassination after an investiga-



WAKAYAMA: Police officers investigate Saikazaki port, where Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida was evacuated unharmed from the scene of an apparent "smoke bomb" blast a day before, in Wakayama on April 16, 2023. — AFP

tion confirmed "shortcomings" in security for the former leader.

The attack against Kishida comes as

G7 climate and energy ministers meet in the northern city of Sapporo and the bloc's foreign ministers gather in the re-

sort town of Karuizawa, west of Tokyo. Japan will host the G7 leaders' summit in May in Hiroshima. — AFP

China rocket launch sends debris into sea near Taiwan

TAIPEI: China said Sunday it had launched a satellite into orbit, with authorities in Taiwan saying rocket debris had fallen into the sea where Beijing announced a no-sail zone this week. Maritime authorities in China's eastern Fujian province this week banned ships from an area north of Taiwan from 9:00 am (0100 GMT) to 3:00 pm (0700 GMT) on Sunday due to "possible falling rocket wreckage".

Taiwan's transport ministry said Beijing had also planned to prohibit aircraft from entering the zone—criss-crossed by a number of international routes—for around half an hour from 9:30 am, though Chinese authorities later criticised the claim as inaccurate.

The announcements came days after Beijing declared an end to large-scale military drills around Taiwan carried out as a furious response to its leader Tsai Ing-wen's recent visit to the United States. Chinese state media on Sunday announced the successful launch of a "new meteorological satellite" from a space centre in northwestern China at 9:36 am.

Footage released by state broadcaster CCTV showed a white rocket blasting off into clear skies from the launch centre in arid Gansu province, leaving a plume of smoke and dust in its wake. Taipei's defence ministry said the satellite's orbit "passed over the seas off (the) northern coast of Taiwan" and that "some rocket wreckage fell into the warning area".

"The military has used joint intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance measures to monitor the situation of the rocket launch," the ministry said. The debris "did not affect our homeland security", it added. Beijing's Xinhua news agency reported that the launch of the Long March 4B rocket had carried the Fengyun-3 07 satellite "into its preset orbit".

The satellite "will provide services for weather forecasting, disaster prevention and mitigation, climate change response and ecological conservation", according to Xinhua.

Military drills

China views Taiwan as part of its territory and has vowed to bring the self-ruled island under its control one day—by force if need be. Beijing this month held three days of "Joint Sword" military manoeuvres after Tsai travelled to the US—Taipei's main security backer—for meetings with a bipartisan group of lawmakers including House Speaker Kevin McCarthy.

China's People's Liberation Army said the exercises simulated targeted strikes on Taiwan and an encirclement that would have effectively "sealed" it off. The operations "comprehensively tested the integrated joint combat ability of multiple military branches under actual combat conditions", the PLA's Eastern Command said.

They were also expected to include live-fire drills in a closed-off area near the coast of Fujian—about 80 kilometres (50 miles) south of the Taiwan-administered Matsu islands—but it is not clear whether those drills actually took place. — AFP

S Korea fires warning shots at boat incursion

SEOUL: South Korea's military fired warning shots to turn back a patrol boat from the North that had crossed the countries' de facto maritime border, Seoul said Sunday. The boat breached the Northern Limit Line on Saturday morning near South Korea's Baekryeong Island, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.

"Our Navy's high-speed boat sent warning messages and conducted warning shots and immediately warned it off," it said. "Our military is prepared against various provocations and keeping a decisive combat posture while closely monitoring the enemy's movements," the statement added. During the operation, some South Korean crew members were being treated for injuries

sustained when their vessel collided with a Chinese fishing boat.

The de facto maritime border—which was never officially recognised by the North—has long been a flash-point between the two Koreas, which remain technically at war after the 1950-53 Korean War ended with an armistice rather than a peace treaty.

Last year the nuclear-armed North fired a ballistic missile across the maritime border, prompting Seoul to fire three missiles of its own in response, while also suspending flight routes and warning island residents in the area to shelter in bunkers.

Relations between the two Koreas are at one of their lowest points in years after Pyongyang declared itself an "irreversible" nuclear power last year, effectively ending the possibility of denuclearisation talks. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has doubled down on weapons testing, with Pyongyang firing several of its most powerful intercontinental ballistic missiles this year.

Bodies found in Japan helicopter crash search

TOKYO: Japan's army found wreckage and five bodies Sunday during a deep-sea search for crew on board a helicopter that disappeared from radar earlier this month, an army spokesman said. The aircraft with 10 people on board had been on a reconnaissance mission when it went missing on April

6, in what the Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) described as an "aerial accident".

Two pilots, two mechanics and six crew members were on board the UH-60JA, including a GSDF general from the 8th division. The newly found wreckage appeared to be from the missing helicopter, but there were no details yet on the identities of the bodies retrieved, the army spokesman said.

"There are still five left undiscovered, so search and rescue operations are underway simultaneously," the spokesman told AFP. Coastguard rescuers had already discovered several pieces of debris that appeared to be from the helicopter, including a door, a snapped blade and a yellow life raft that was still packed inside a bag.



Photo released by North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on April 11 shows North Korean leader Kim Jong Un (C) gesturing in front of a map (digitally blurred as received from source) while attending the 6th Enlarged Meeting of the 8th Central Military Commission of the Workers' Party of Korea. — AFP

Washington and Seoul have ramped up defence cooperation in response, staging joint military exercises with advanced stealth jets and high-profile US strategic assets.

North Korea views such exercises as rehearsals for invasion and described them on Tuesday as "frantic" drills "simulating an all-out war against" Pyongyang. — AFP

At least 12 inmates killed in Ecuador prison clashes

GUAYAQUIL: At least 12 inmates were killed in clashes that broke out in a prison in the Ecuadorian port of Guayaquil, the prosecutor's office said Saturday, the latest deadly violence to rock the city's penitentiary system. The dozen inmate deaths occurred after a bloody confrontation erupted Friday—part of a spate of brutality that began when six detainees were found hanged in the same prison and three female guards were killed earlier in the week.

Ecuadorian prisons are the scene of recurrent massacres between prisoners, against a backdrop of rivalry between criminal groups fighting for control of lucrative drug trafficking. "An investigation has been opened to identify those responsible for the death of 12 inmates from the Litoral Penitentiary," which is also known as Guayas 1, the prosecutor's office said, adding that the bodies had bullet wounds.

The country's main port on the Pacific coast, Guayaquil has in recent years become the epicenter of drug trafficking in Ecuador, located between Colombia and Peru—the world's main cocaine producers. Since February 2021, eight massacres have been recorded in these prisons, with more than 400 prisoners killed, most of them dismembered and burned.

After the six hanged inmates were found on Wednesday, three female guards were shot dead Thursday by hired killers at a restaurant outside the prison complex. On Friday, AFP correspondents



GUAYAQUIL: Relatives of inmates wait for information outside Medicina Legal in Guayaquil, Ecuador, on April 15, 2023, after clashes broke out in the Guayas 1 prison. — AFP

could hear gunfire from within the prison and were able to record aerial images in which five bodies could be seen lying on the ground.

"We do not deny the reality and the fact that we are in the worst moment of violence in the country," Ecuadorian Defense Minister Juan Zapata said on Friday, when the clashes began. Overnight Friday to Saturday, the police and the army regained control of the prison, which houses around 6,800 inmates and is part of a large prison complex.

Drug traffickers use prisons as centers of operation, leading to deadly clashes at regular intervals. In September, some 120 prisoners were killed in the Guayas 1 penitentiary during the deadliest massacre in the history of the country and one of the bloodiest in

Latin America. Drug-related violence is endemic in Ecuador. On Tuesday, around 30 armed men opened fire in the small fishing port of Esmeraldas, in the north of the country, near the Colombian border, killing nine people.

The assailants arrived by boat and car and, without a word, started shooting. "What happened in Esmeraldas were not acts of common crime, they were terrorist acts," said Zapata. Faced with the onslaught of violence, President Guillermo Lasso declared a 60-day state of emergency on March 3 in three provinces, including Guayaquil and Esmeraldas. According to the first census of the country's prisons carried out in 2022, Ecuador has about 31,000 prisoners in 36 prisons with a capacity of 30,000 people. — AFP

MONDAY, APRIL 17, 2023

Business

Infrastructure tops Kuwait vision as project pipeline hits \$27bn

KPMG Kuwait illustrates current state and challenges in sector

KUWAIT: Infrastructure has emerged as a vital agenda in 'Kuwait's Vision 2035' and is adding to the demand for advancements in the national infrastructure, thanks to the country's strong pipeline of infrastructure projects, according to audit and advisory services group KPMG.

Titled 'The Kuwait Perspective,' the report published by KPMG takes a leaf from the global thought leadership publication 'Emerging Trends in Infrastructure' to paint a comprehensive narrative around factors such as sustainability, ESG, mass customization, inflation, supply chain, climate change, globalization, sunk costs and geopolitics with regard to Kuwait's infrastructure sector's future.

Speaking about the report, Imran Shaik, Director — deal advisory and head of Infrastructure Services, KPMG in Kuwait said, "Infrastructure has emerged as a vital agenda in Kuwait's Vision 2035 and is adding to the demand for advancements in the national infrastructure. Kuwait has a strong pipeline of infrastructure projects with an estimated value of \$27.6 billion in the bidding stage, which is setting a tone of optimism for the sector." The report mentions that despite the slowdown in the awarding and implementation of projects, the prevalent tone in the sector is positive.

The Kuwait edition of the global report featured interviews with five key personalities from Kuwait's infrastructure sector, who spoke to members of KPMG in Kuwait in personal capacities to make the publication more insightful. They were Kapil Kumra, deputy general manager and head of project finance, National Bank of Kuwait, Hassan F Choudhry, chief financial officer, Umm Al-Hayman for Wastewater Treatment Company KSPC, Dr Dheeraj Bhardwaj, Group CEO, City Group Co. KSCP, Shi Yifei, Deputy Chief Representative of AVIC INTL in Arabic Gulf Area, and Yang Chunsen, Representative of China State Construction Engineering Corporation Limited in Kuwait and the President of Chinese Enterprise Association in Kuwait.

The report called attention to the push for public-private partnerships (PPPs), citing their potential long-term benefits. As the Gulf nation looks to PPPs to set the pace in the sector, Hassan F Choudhry said, "I think the overall essence of the market in Kuwait toward PPP projects is welcoming. There is a general understanding that public and private partnerships can bring significant overall efficiencies and economic benefits to the State of Kuwait."

"Some other countries within the region have moved quite ahead within the PPP industry. But with the current pipeline of PPP projects that are to be executed in the State of Kuwait, I am sure that Kuwait will be competing and at par with such economies soon," he added.

In view of Kuwait's commitment to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2060, the report found that oil and gas companies and financial service-based organizations, are driving the agenda as the early adopters. Speaking at an individual capacity with KPMG in Kuwait, Kapil Kumra said, "The banks in Kuwait are aligned with Kuwait's commitment to be carbon neutral by 2060 and have formulated sustainable financing policies. Many banks have regionally and internationally signed up to be part of the net-zero alliance. This is expected to provide better and more competitive financing for sustainable infrastructure projects."

The report also pointed at mobility-as-a-service's (MaaS) potential to be cost-competitive with public transport services and more convenient in servicing the last mile of customer journeys. Addressing the same, Dr Dheeraj Bhardwaj said, "If you want to make public transport more attractive and thrive, you need to have a one-stop end-to-end mobility solution available preferably through a mobile app." He added, "Mobility as a service makes your life easier by offering you all the modes of transport to go from one destination to another."

Dr Bhardwaj further emphasized that public transport is an ecosystem and it needs to be provided on a

Aramco, one of the world's most valuable companies.

Prince Mohammed "indicated that the transfer of part of the state's shares in Saudi Aramco is a continuation of Saudi Arabia's long-term initiatives to boost and diversify the national economy and expand investment opportunities," the report said. "The transfer will also solidify PIF's strong financial position and credit rating," it added, noting Riyadh still owns 90 percent of Aramco's shares.

Sanabil's investments "include venture, growth capital and small buyouts", according to its website.

Aramco and its assets were once kept under vice-like government control, off-limits to outside investment. But under Prince Mohammed the kingdom has shown readiness to cede some of that control. The oil giant sold 1.7 percent of its shares on the Saudi bourse in December 2019, generating \$29.4 billion in the world's biggest initial public offering.

The firm, which reported record profits totaling \$161.1 billion last year, has pledged to achieve "operational net-zero" carbon emissions by 2050. That applies to emissions that are produced directly by Aramco's industrial sites, but not the CO2 produced when clients burn Saudi oil in their cars, power plants and furnaces.

Aramco CEO Amin Nasser and other top Sau-



KUWAIT: Kuwait has a strong pipeline of infrastructure projects with an estimated value of \$27.6 billion in the bidding stage, which is setting a tone of optimism for the sector, according to a report by KPMG, Kuwait.

single platform, i.e., MaaS. The government has recognized the need for a comprehensive digital transformation to drive better investment timelines, resource commitments and attract more capital into the sector, mentioned the report. Shi Yifei talked about the benefits that digitalization can bring to the sector and quoted, "Digital tools can also help contractors gather and analyze data on project performance, which can be used to improve decision-making and project outcomes. We firmly believe that by embracing digital tools and technologies, contractors can position themselves for success in an increas-



RIYADH: In this file photo, a sign indicates the Saudi Aramco in front of the company's offices in Riyadh. — AFP

di officials have simultaneously called for further investment in fossil fuels to ensure global energy security. The PIF has made high-profile investments in firms including Uber and Disney, and its so-called mega-projects — centerpieces of Prince Mohammed's reform agenda — include Neom, a \$500 billion futuristic megacity under construction in the Saudi desert. The crown prince has said he wants the fund to have one trillion dollars in assets by the end of 2025. — AFP

Saudi transfers more Aramco oil shares to wealth fund

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia has put a second four-percent chunk of shares of the Aramco energy giant, worth tens of billions of dollars, under the control of the country's sovereign wealth fund, state media said Sunday. The move underscores Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's campaign to use the Gulf kingdom's vast energy resources to open up the economy under his "Vision 2030" domestic reform agenda. The official Saudi Press Agency said the shares had been transferred to Sanabil Investments, a firm controlled by the kingdom's Public Investment Fund (PIF), one of the world's biggest sovereign wealth funds with more than \$620 billion in assets.

Last year, four percent of Aramco shares, estimated at the time to be worth \$80 billion, were transferred directly to PIF. The latest shares are worth nearly \$80 billion, based on the current market capitalization of

G7 pledges to quit fossil fuels faster, but no new deadline

SAPPORO, Japan: The G7 pledged on Sunday to quit fossil fuels faster and urged other countries to follow suit, but failed to agree to any new deadlines on ending polluting power sources like coal.

The language reflects the depth of disagreements among the allies on the balance between climate action and energy security, with host Japan leading a pushback against the most ambitious proposals discussed. After two days of talks in the northern city of Sapporo, the bloc's climate and environment ministers vowed to "accelerate the phase-out of unabated fossil fuels so as to achieve net zero in energy systems by 2050 at the latest... and call on others to join us in taking the same action".

But they offered no new timelines beyond last year's G7 pledge to largely end fossil fuel use in their electricity sectors by 2035. France's energy transition minister Agnès Pannier-Runacher said the "phase-out" wording was nonetheless a "strong step forward" ahead of the G20 and COP28 summits.

Britain and France had suggested a new goal of ending "unabated" coal power — which does not take steps to offset emissions — in G7 power grids this decade. But with global energy supplies still squeezed by the war in Ukraine, the target faced opposition from other members, including Japan and the United States. "I would obviously have liked to have been able to make a commitment to phase out coal by 2030," Pannier-Runacher told AFP.

But "it is one issue on which we can still make progress in forthcoming discussions, particularly at COP28", the UN climate conference in Dubai set for November.



SAPPORO, Japan: Japan's Minister of the Environment Akihiro Nishimura (third left) and Japan's Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Yasutoshi Nishimura (third right) attend the G7 Ministers' Meeting on Climate, Energy and Environment in Sapporo, Hokkaido prefecture on April 16, 2023. — AFP

Call to reduce 'gas demand'

The Group of Seven industrialized nations, which also includes Germany, Italy, Canada and the EU, pledged to end new plastic pollution by 2040. Britain, Canada and the EU already belong to an international coalition with the same goal, but this is the first time Japan and the United States have made the 2040 commitment. Plastic waste has doubled globally in two decades and only nine percent is successfully recycled, the OECD says. The G7 ministers also urged a peak in global greenhouse emissions by 2025 at the latest—language that experts say is aimed at the world's largest carbon emitter, China, which is targeting its own 2030 peak. Other topics proved more divisive. The ministers had been under pressure to announce bold steps after a major UN climate report warned last month that global warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius would be seen in about a decade without "rapid and far-reaching" action.

But campaigners feared backsliding on previous pledges such as ending new overseas fossil fuel financing. G7 leaders said last year that the "exceptional circumstances" of Russia's war in Ukraine made gas investments "appropriate as a temporary response". Sunday's statement contains similar language, but also sets multiple parameters around such investments and highlights the "primary need" for "gas demand reduction".

Still, climate campaigners warned the ambiguity sends the wrong message. "The science is crystal clear that leaving the door open to investments in new gas or (liquefied natural gas) leaves the G7 off track for 1.5C," said Laurie van der Burg of Oil Change International. Even so, Japan's minister of economy, trade and industry Yasutoshi Nishimura characterized the communique as "ambitious" and praised the G7 for "recognizing diverse paths towards carbon neutrality". — AFP

Microsoft bid to buy games giant faces triple anti-trust threat

BRUSSELS: Depending on which side you're on, tech giant Microsoft is either the hero fighting to bring some of the most popular video games to more people, or the villain on the brink of killing competition in the sector. The Xbox-owner has embarked on a campaign to convince all three EU, UK and US regulators to back its \$69 billion bid to take over Activision Blizzard, owner of hit games "Candy Crush" and "Call Of Duty".

The effort to create the world's third largest gaming company by revenue was launched last year but the company must now address concerns from all three regulators that if it takes control of such market-leading games it could stifle competition. Sony, which produces the bestselling PlayStation console, says the deal will give Microsoft the power to limit rivals' access to the popular franchise. Microsoft argues it would not make financial sense for it to do so.

And the toughest authority to convince could be the UK Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), which in February issued preliminary findings that the takeover could harm competition and consumer choice. The British market is smaller than that of the United States or the European Union, but if the CMA blocks the Activision Blizzard takeover, Microsoft would probably have to back down.

Microsoft would have to comply since removing all of its products from British users would mean losing a huge market. Anne Witt, a professor of anti-trust law at EDHEC business school in France, told AFP: "It is unthinkable that Microsoft would completely withdraw from the UK. It's not only video games, it's Windows," Witt said, referring to Microsoft's globally dominant PC operating system. Witt pointed to the UK regulator's recent decision to order Facebook owner Meta to sell animated graphics startup Giphy, ruling that the deal would harm competition. "The CMA is the first competition agency ever to have prohibited a big tech acquisition," Witt said AFP.

'Loss-making'

If the CMA takes a harder line than Brussels on the Microsoft and Activision Blizzard deal, it would mark the first time since Brexit that the UK regulator has differed from the EU in such a major case.

But deep-pocketed Microsoft could appeal to the competition appeals tribunal, where experts say they have a real chance of winning. And Microsoft appeared to get a reprieve last month when the CMA narrowed the scope of its probe to cloud gaming—agreeing with Microsoft that if the firm made "Call of Duty" exclusive to the Xbox console it "would be significantly loss-making". The CMA is expected to rule by April 26, while the EU is due to decide by May 22, so there is space for them to diverge from each other — or for either to disagree with the US Federal Trade Commission (FTC). "It's possible for the UK and EU and then even the FTC, to say that it is anti-competitive," said Eleanor Fox, a professor at New York University law school. — AFP

Fed remains cautious amid turmoil, IMF lowers global growth outlook

US inflation continues to trend lower, UK GDP shrinks

KUWAIT: Federal Reserve policymakers rolled back their expectations for rate hikes this year after a series of bank collapses roiled markets last month, and stressed they would remain cautious for the potential of a credit crunch to further slow the economy, last week's released minutes showed. "Many participants noted that the likely effects of recent banking-sector developments on economic activity and inflation had led them to lower their assessments of the federal funds rate target range that would be sufficiently restrictive," according to minutes of the March 21-22 Federal Open Market Committee.

Prices continue to trend lower

Inflation in the United States fell for the ninth consecutive month to its lowest level since May 2021. Annual CPI came in at 5.0 percent, slightly below expectations but much less than the previous print of 6.0 percent. Monthly CPI rose 0.1 percent, less than forecasted and significantly below the previous print of 0.4 percent. Meanwhile, Core CPI came in at 5.6 percent annually and 0.4 percent monthly, in line with expectations while the annual figure came in higher than the previous figure of 5.5 percent. Despite decreasing price pressures on a surface level, core inflation remains persistent and sticky, and is one of the gauges the Fed watches closely to inform monetary policy decisions. Markets are still pricing in a 25bps hike at the upcoming FOMC meeting, meanwhile expectations of larger cuts in the second half of the year rose and weighed heavily on the US dollar index.

Meanwhile, producer prices unexpectedly fell in March as falling energy prices dragged the producer price index down 0.5 percent from February to March after it had been unchanged from January to February. Compared with a year ago, wholesale prices were up 2.7 percent in March, the slightest 12-month increase since January 2021 and down significantly from a 4.6 percent annual rise in February. The core index was down 0.1 percent on a monthly basis while the annual figure showed prices were up 3.4 percent versus 4.4 percent in February.

Jobless claims rise

Initial unemployment claims rose by 11,000 to 239,000 in the week ended April 8. Economists ex-

pected claims to rise to 235,000 applications. Continuing claims, which include people who have received unemployment benefits for a week or more and are a good indicator of how hard it is for people to find work after losing their job, fell to 1.81 million in the week ended April 1.

Retail sales

Retail sales fell 1 percent in March, more than the 0.4 percent decline economists expected. Excluding volatile autos and gasoline, sales declined 0.3 percent. Consumer spending was solid in January and February but economists attribute the performance to unusually warm weather that boosted retail and restaurant revenue along with travel. Retail sales slowed in late 2022 and many economists expect that trend to resume as inflation, rapidly rising interest rates, and stricter bank lending standards continue to limit consumer spending.

Market reactions

Market reactions indicate expectations that the Fed will continue with its 25 basis point hike in May but tightening credit conditions caused by recent stress from the banking sector have fueled expectations that the Fed might need to cut rates sooner. The US dollar index traded significantly lower against the euro, pound and Swiss franc, only to recoup most of its losses as the lack of clarity in the market continues to fuel volatility. Against the Japanese yen, the dollar managed to end the week where it started following a volatile trading session. 2-year Treasury yields closed the week at 4.10 percent continuing to trend lower from its one-month peak of 5.0823 percent.

On the equities front, major indices rose as data indicating a moderation in prices brought relief to worries on how far the Federal Reserve will continue to hike rates to fight inflation. Gold continues to rise to new highs as recession fears continue to spur safe haven demand and amid expectations that the Fed has started to recalibrate its interest rate hike path. The precious metal closed the week at 2,004.17 per troy ounce. Meanwhile, both West Texas intermediate and Brent crude gave up some of their gains at the end of the week as recession fears continue to loom, the two price gauges closed the week at 82.52 and 86.31 respectively.

Retails sales decline

Eurozone, retail sales contracted at 0.8 percent m/m as forecasted. The volume of retail sales decreased by 1.8 percent for automotive fuels, 0.7 percent for non-food products, and 0.6 percent for food and drinks. On an annual basis, this represents a retail sales decline of 3.0 percent. Several sources have indicated that European Central Bank (ECB) policymakers are converging on a 25bps interest rate hike in May. In its attempt to fight inflation, the ECB had raised rates by 50bps in each of its last six consecutive meeting. Market expectations are skewed towards a 25bps hike in May amid last month's volatility in the finance sector, along with past rate hikes not yet coming into play in the economy, indicating that this might be the time to slow down rate hikes. News sources have reiterated that the decision is not certain with several ECB members, like Austria's Robert Holzmann, still pushing for a 50bps hike.

UK GDP

Britain's economy has stagnated, with the latest GDP m/m reading showing a 0.0 percent change since February, against the forecasted 0.1 percent growth. The 2.4 percent surge in construction output, which accounts for 6.0 percent of the economy, was the leading factor of economic growth in February. Nevertheless, January's strong figure (0.3 percent m/m) seems to have handed Britain a lifeline with the UK now expected to avoid a first-quarter contraction predicted by the Bank of England last month, barring a sensational 0.6 percent contraction in March. The latest International Monetary Fund projections published this week had Britain in the bottom of its world's major economies list for expected economic growth in 2023. The IMF predict a 0.3 percent contraction in the British economy.

Bank of Canada pauses

The Bank of Canada (BOC) left interest rates unchanged for the second straight meeting, saying recent data is reinforcing its confidence that inflation will continue to slow. Policymakers led by Governor Tiff Macklem held the overnight lending rate at 4.5 percent, in line with the expectations. They reiterated that they are still prepared to increase rates if needed. "The bank expects CPI inflation to fall quickly to

around 3 percent in the middle of this year and then decline more gradually to the 2 percent target by the end of 2024," it said in a statement, blaming services prices and wage growth for the slow decrease. Previously, the BOC had been less specific about when inflation would reach target, saying it would happen sometime next year. At the same time, the BOC raised its growth forecast for this year to 1.4 percent from 1.0 percent in January.

China exports rise

Chinese exports rose by a staggering 14.8 percent from a year ago, dwarfing the impact of the five consecutive months of decline. Lv Daliang, spokesperson of the General Administration of Customs, claimed that the high demand for electric vehicles facilitated the sudden increase in exports. While analysts predicted the sudden rise was due to the exporters' backlog of orders that had been disrupted by the pandemic, raising doubts over the sustainability of China's strong performance. Meanwhile, imports dropped by 1.4 percent, smaller than the predicted 5.0 percent decline, along with the 10.2 percent contraction in the previous two months. Capital Economists said, "[they] aren't convinced that this rebound will be sustained given the still gloomy outlook for foreign demand." This is further backed by the fact that other Asian exporters, such as South Korea and Vietnam, have witnessed a decline in exports in the first months of 2023.

Ueda takes BoJ throne

In Japan, Kazuo Ueda has officially succeeded Haruhiko Kuroda as the new governor of the Japanese central bank. The appointment of Ueda, an academic, marks a first for Japan, as the position of governor has been historically reserved for central bank or finance ministry officials. Ueda will lead his first policy meeting on April 27, with his main obstacle being his predecessor's decade long ultra-loose monetary policy that is seen as unstable in the current environment. While Ueda has previously backed the ultra-loose monetary policy, it will be interesting to see if he can avoid the pressure of not pivoting away.

Kuwaiti dinar

USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30620.



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 13 APRIL 2023

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Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	33,383	7,758.46	0.4%	-0.8%	-4.4%	336,050,757	140,424,817	31,078	17.2	1.1	78.8%
Main Market	8,990	5,440.00	-0.3%	-1.1%	-2.8%	128,600,367	13,114,215	7,927	13.9	0.7	21.2%
All Share	42,373	6,989.87	0.3%	-0.9%	-4.1%	464,651,124	153,539,032	39,005	14.2	0.8	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Banking	25,736	1,725.29	-0.2%	-1.6%	-3.8%	145,803,869	83,349,535	16,366	21.7	1.3	60.74%
Basic Materials	473	837.15	-0.9%	-2.3%	-3.2%	1,093,365	731,028	436	7.7	1.5	1.12%
Consumer Discretionary	957	1,428.74	-0.7%	-2.3%	-3.9%	37,675,248	4,338,599	2,319	13.4	0.9	2.26%
Consumer Staples	137	448.72	0.8%	0.8%	-6.5%	3,733,147	1,363,311	177	-	0.9	0.32%
Energy	209	998.20	0.0%	0.0%	-12.3%	863,964	62,544	133	11.1	0.6	0.49%
Financial Services	4,329	1,211.44	1.0%	1.3%	-3.6%	136,120,843	17,098,611	5,898	17.0	0.7	10.22%
Health Care	229	462.45	0.0%	1.5%	0.1%	-	-	-	12.0	1.1	0.54%
Industrials	3,437	977.57	1.9%	-0.9%	-9.4%	47,213,713	26,508,686	5,709	15.0	0.8	8.11%
Insurance	779	1,896.37	-1.0%	-0.7%	22.3%	830,124	320,644	180	10.3	0.8	1.84%
Real Estate	2,401	1,117.84	2.2%	3.5%	-7.5%	65,337,910	7,177,621	3,356	13.7	0.5	5.67%
Technology	9	623.47	-1.5%	-1.9%	-10.4%	82,168	6,678	11	NM	0.8	0.02%
Telecommunications	3,484	1,135.99	1.5%	0.3%	-3.8%	21,721,435	11,859,466	4,100	13.0	1.9	8.22%
Utilities	194	463.16	1.2%	-0.6%	-6.4%	4,175,338	722,306	320	13.4	1.7	0.46%

Top Gainers

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
TAHSSILAT	17.9	17.76%	269,408	4,535	41
ALAQARIA	26	15.56%	429,500	25,751	74
Emirates	30	14.94%	43,596	1,297	15
ENERGYH	59	11.53%	3,614	3,202	36
SULTAN	100	11.11%	2,793,288	266,007	84

Top Losers

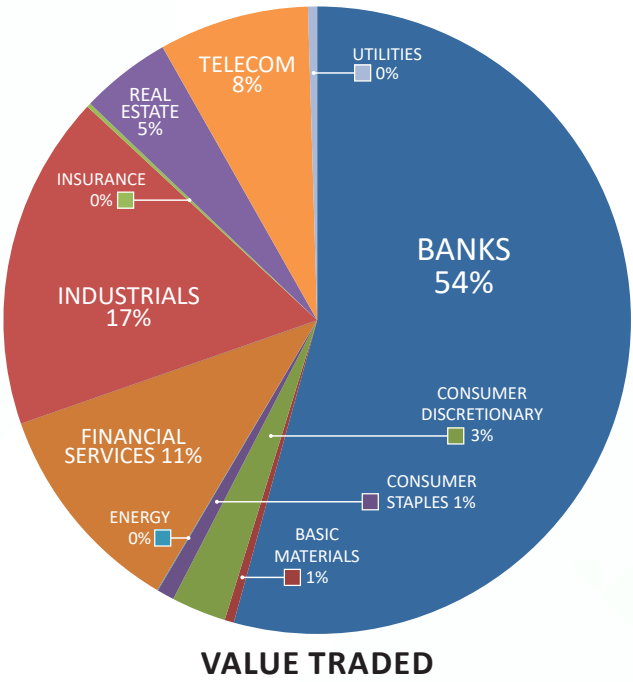
Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
MARAKEZ	49.6	-13.29%	1,190	63	8
ABK	302.0	-6.74%	2,049	1,223,250	105
WETHAQ	21.2	-9.01%	56,751	1,277	18
KGL	45	-8.57%	823,118	43,003	186
GBK	276	-6.76%	10,817,769	3,035,761	927

Top Volume

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	740	0.14%	2,910,795	41,970,283	8,539
KPROJ	129	1.58%	37,405,382	4,807,565	769
AGLTY	598	3.46%	33,983,100	19,970,732	3,443
JIYAD	19	-4.12%	24,117,358	461,273	806
BOUBYAN	630	2.58%	79,223,797	13,692,372	1,736

Top Value

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	740	0.14%	2,910,795	41,970,283	8,539
AGLTY	598	3.46%	33,983,100	19,970,732	3,443
NBK	963	-1.23%	16,429,352	15,727,184	3,210
BOUBYAN	630	2.58%	79,223,797	13,692,372	1,736
ZAIN	550	1.48%	103,100	11,144,346	3,588



Market Summary:

- Premier market volume and value dropped 6% and 13%, respectively. In comparison, Main Market dropped 43% and 32%, respectively.
- Premier and Main indexes both rebounded from support levels.
- Technically, the All Share index closed at 6989, with support levels at 6981, 6959, and 6918, and resistance at 7000. The Premier index closed at 7758, with support levels at 7701 and 7639, while resistance at 7784. The Main index closed at 5440, with support levels at 5424, 5393, and 5339, while resistance at 5467.

Business

Chinese economy expected to rebound as zero-COVID era fades

Analysts forecast 3.8% y-o-y growth in Q1 2023

BEIJING: China is expected to announce an economic rebound on Tuesday, when Beijing releases its first quarterly GDP figures since abolishing growth-sapping COVID restrictions late last year. The Asian giant's virus containment policy — an unstinting regime of strict quarantines, mass testing and travel curbs — strongly constrained normal economic activity before it was abruptly ditched in December.

The disclosures on Tuesday will give the first snapshot since 2019 of a Chinese economy unencumbered by public health restrictions, with analysts polled by AFP expecting an average of 3.8 percent year-on-year growth in the period from January through March. But the world's number two economy remains beset by a series of other crises, from a debt-laden property sector to flagging consumer confidence, global inflation and the threat of recession elsewhere.

"The recovery is real, but still in its early stage," said Larry Hu, chief China economist at the investment bank Macquarie. Any rebound "will be gradual, largely due to the weak confidence" of consumers, which in turn makes companies "reluctant" to hire more staff, he said.

China's economy grew by just three percent in the whole of last year, one of its weakest performances in decades. It posted a 4.8 percent expansion in the first quarter of 2022, though growth pulled back to just 2.9 percent in the final three months of the year.

Property perils

A creeping crisis in the property sector — which together with construction accounts for around a

quarter of China's GDP — continues to "pose challenges to economic growth", said Rabobank analyst Teeuwe Mevissen. Real estate was a key driver of China's recovery from the initial wave of the pandemic in 2020, when Beijing managed to stop the coronavirus from spreading widely.

But weak demand has since plagued a sector already afflicted by falling home prices and crippling debts that have left some developers struggling to survive. The situation appears to have eased slightly in recent weeks as official support helped prices stabilize in March, according to figures released on Saturday by the National Bureau of Statistics. Economists will also be watching keenly on Tuesday for March's retail data, the main indicator of household consumption.

Retail sales finally ticked up in January and February following four successive months of contraction, according to official figures. But nearly 60 percent of urban households still prioritize saving money over investing or spending it, up from 45 percent before the pandemic, according to a survey by China's central bank. Consumer confidence "remains well in negative territory" despite the heartening abolition of Beijing's COVID curbs, said Harry Murphy Cruise, a macroeconomist focusing on the Asia-Pacific region at the ratings agency Moody's. "Households have long memories and will take time to forget the economic pain of recent years," he told AFP.

Global tensions

Beijing has set a comparatively modest growth target of around five percent this year, a goal the



LIANYUNGANG, China: Cranes and shipping containers are seen at Lianyungang port in China's eastern Jiangsu province on April 13, 2023. — AFP

country's Premier Li Qiang has warned could be hard to achieve. While many experts tend to take China's official figures with a grain of salt, most expect Beijing to hit that mark. An AFP analysts' poll predicted that the Chinese economy would grow by an average of 5.3 percent this year. That is roughly in

line with the International Monetary Fund's forecast of 5.2 percent. Still, analysts warned that wider global trends could yet weigh on China's recovery.

They include geopolitical tensions with the United States, the threat of recession in other major economies and galloping global inflation. — AFP

Nomo Bank offers services to ADCB and Al-Hilal Digital Bank

KUWAIT: Nomo Bank, the Digital Bank of the Bank of London and the Middle East "BLME", a subsidiary of Boubyan Bank Group, announced inking a new partnership with Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank "ADCB" and the Sharia-compliant Al-Hilal Digital Bank, a subsidiary of ADCB Group, to give their UAE customers the ability to benefit from the innovative services and solutions of Nomo Bank.

This digital partnership will offer a unique banking experience to UAE customers, allowing them to benefit from Nomo's digital services and products in an easy and secure manner through ADCB-Nomo and Al-Hilal Nomo Apps.

On this occasion, Adel Abdul Wahab Al-Majed, Chairman of the Bank of London and the Middle East "BLME", and GCEO of Boubyan Bank Group, stated: "We are pleased to cooperate with Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank (ADCB) and Al-Hilal Digital, being among the leading banking institutions in innovation and excellence. This step confirms the reach of Nomo's innovative banking solutions to global markets."

"This partnership is aligned with Nomo's expansion strategy that aims at increasing the number of its GCC customers and providing them with the best digital solutions backed by state-of-the-art innovations, while focusing on certain segments of customers who are interested in specific services such as property finance and many other services through ADCB-Nomo and Al-Hilal Nomo Apps. UAE resident customers will be able to benefit from the Sharia-compliant digital banking services offered by Nomo as if they were in the UK," Al-Majed added.

He elaborated: "We have recently launched new products and services from Nomo such as the mul-



Sean Gilchrist

tocurrency account which allows customers to open it within seconds using the Nomo App, and immediately benefit from its remittance and fund-transfer services, coupled with the possibility of linking the account with Nomo card and Apple Pay to use it globally without incurring any international fees." Speaking about

those interested in owning residential or investment properties in the United Kingdom, Al-Majed said: "They can now benefit from the property finance product to own properties in the UK, after applying within minutes for property finance. We can see that all products launched by Nomo are bundled as integrated services to serve as a complete set of innovative banking solutions, while guaranteeing the highest levels of protection and security."

Accelerating Digital Transformation

On his part, Ala'a Eraiqat, ADCB Group CEO, and Al-Hilal Bank Chairman, commented on this partnership and said: "It comes as a part of implementing the group's strategy that aims at bolstering growth by accelerating digital transformation and maintaining the group's leadership and excellence in offering an exceptional banking experiences to customers, while providing them with innovative digital banking solutions."

Eraiqat went on to add: "Today, we offer our customers in the UAE a group of innovative digital services by collaborating with Nomo, the World's First Islamic Digital Bank, enabling us to offer unique banking experiences, marked by swiftness and smoothness. This allows our customers to manage and control their accounts in the United Kingdom without having to leave the UAE, in a step that confirms the leadership of ADCB in keeping pace with

service to its customers of Premium Classes (Royal, First and Business). The company had initially launched free limousine services, to and from Terminal 4, in February for the passengers of Royal and First Class. This service has been further expanded, now making it available for the passengers of Business Class, in view of the tremendous response and requirement received from Kuwait Airways' valued passengers for the service.

Moreover, passengers of Premium Classes can avail this service by booking through the Kuwait Airways' website or application and enter their flight details 48 hours before their travel so that transportation can be provided to the passengers before their flight timings.

Kuwait Airways is committed to its efforts to provide distinguished and comfortable services to

flects the broader growth seen in the Saudi economy, Jadwa said in a new report.

"More specifically, unemployment dropped by 3 percentage points during 2022, and we believe this improving trend will continue during the coming years. In light of this, we expect unemployment to see further declines and reach 7.8 per cent by end of 2023," the Saudi investment bank said. Saudi Arabia's gross domestic product exceeded \$1 trillion for the first time in 2022 as its economy grew 8.7 per cent, driven by oil and non-oil sector growth in the country.

The kingdom recorded the highest annual growth rate among the world's 20 biggest economies in 2022, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. Its non-oil economy has continued to expand this year and business activity remained robust in March on increasing output and new business, further supporting employment growth in the kingdom, according to the Riyadh Bank purchasing managers' index.

The country's PMI reading, which hit 58.7 in March, signaled a marked improvement in operating conditions, and one that was among the strongest



Al-Majed and Eraiqat during the signing of the partnership.

the latest digital banking technology."

"Both ADCB-Nomo and Al-Hilal-Nomo Apps will help provide our customers with the banking services currently offered by Nomo Bank, thus allowing them to manage their wealth and savings internationally by following easy steps and a simple process," he pointed out.

On his part, Sean Gilchrist, CEO - Nomo, stated: "It is no secret that the Middle East harbors an excellent and huge customer base aspiring to avail Sharia-compliant digital banking services. Through this partnership, we can employ our vast experience in the United Kingdom to help meet the increasing demand for Nomo's digital solutions and to offer unprecedented innovative solutions to customers." He added: "In Nomo Bank, we always seek to be closer to our customers to make international banking and investment services easily within their reach, while offering them a world-class banking experience backed by easily available and innovative technology."

He elaborated: "Ever since the launch of Nomo Bank, we have been witnessing continued growth whether in the number of customers or the innovative digital banking products offered by the bank, which are highly welcomed and used by our customers."



its valued customers, from their entry at Terminal 4, completing their travel procedures, boarding the aircraft, and experiencing an enjoyable journey during their flight.

reported since early-2015. As part of Saudi Arabia's ambitious Vision 2030 agenda, aimed at diversifying its economy away from oil, the kingdom plans to lower the unemployment rate to 7 per cent, from a previous high of 11.6 per cent, while also increasing the participation of women in the workforce to 30 per cent from 22 per cent.

Last year, the number of Saudi workers in the private sector rose by 15 per cent annually to 2.2 million, according to Jadwa. Labor force participation also rose during the year to 52.5 per cent from 51.5 per cent in 2021, with higher participation among both genders and the youth.

"During the past three years, female labor force participation has seen tremendous improvement ... reflecting the overall improvement in labor policies," the report further said. Female representation in labor force increased to 36 per cent over the past three years from 20 per cent, according to Jadwa.

The increase was spurred by expanding child-care and transport services, which added to the new job opportunities in developing sectors such as tourism, leading to more women joining the labor market, it said. — Agencies

NBK intensifies awareness on the importance of saving

KUWAIT: Aiming to raise financial culture and promote awareness among different segments of society, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) pursues its endeavors in supporting the "Let's Be Aware" banking awareness campaign launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait. In this context, the bank publishes on its social media platforms and all communication channels awareness tips that provide valuable content covering all the campaign's topics as well as helping to raise financial culture among customers and promote financial inclusion.

In this campaign, NBK aims, through promotional material and publications on all its social media platforms to educate customers on the importance of saving and investment, and how to benefit from the products offered by banks instead of high-risk investments. This comes in line with NBK's commitment to play its leading role in educating the society on all issues related to the banking sector using its branches and all digital channels, which are the most-followed among all Kuwaiti banks. NBK provides various secure savings and investment channels that suit all segments of customers while offering them many benefits, in line with their investment needs and aspirations.

Additionally, NBK is constantly developing banking products and services relevant to the youth and offering products that suit the needs of the salaried customers' segment, as well as private banking services and investment solutions for high-net-worth customers, aiming to cover all segments of society. NBK is a key supporter and partner in all Central bank of Kuwait's initiatives and campaigns aiming to raise financial and banking awareness among all segments of society. As a leading financial institution in Kuwait and the region, NBK frequently organizes different activities that help raise awareness about all topics related to the banking sector. It also organizes a wide range of activities and training courses on combating fraud and financial crime.

The "Let's Be Aware" is a banking awareness campaign launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait, in cooperation with Kuwaiti banks, as part of the efforts to spread financial culture and raise awareness among banks' customers of their rights and responsibilities. It also highlights the best ways to benefit from banking services and to promote saving and investment culture, as well as other related topics, by publishing a variety of awareness material and information related to financial culture.

UAE is India's second biggest export destination

NEW DELHI: The UAE continues to be the second most important export destination for India, according to annual trade figures released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry here, reports WAM. The US and the UAE retained the first and second places respectively in this category during the financial year 2022-23, the ministry's figures showed.

The figures for the year were released a fortnight after the new year began. They showed that India's overall exports of merchandise and services rose by six percent during the financial year that got over at the end of last month. The Netherlands rose to the third place in this category during the same period, replacing China. The importance of The Netherlands was owed to a high level of refined petroleum products through the maritime nation last year.

The Ministry simultaneously released India's trade figures for March 2023, soon after the month ended. It showed the UAE in second place after the US among India's export destinations. On India's import graph, the UAE was in third place during last month, after China and Russia. Among the GCC states, only Saudi Arabia figured among India's top export destinations and sources of imports. The Kingdom was in the eighth place for Indian exports and in the fifth place as an import source. — WAM

Saudi jobless rate set to drop to 7.8% by year-end: Report

RIYADH: The unemployment rate among Saudis is expected to decline further this year, falling to 7.8 per cent by the end of December, after a sharp drop in 2022, as the kingdom's non-oil sector continues to expand, according to a report released by Jadwa Investment.

Unemployment among citizens dropped to 8 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2022, from 9.9 per cent in the third quarter, the General Authority for Statistics (Gastat) said last month.

The overall unemployment rate in the Arab world's largest economy, for Saudis and non-Saudis, was at 4.8 per cent in the fourth quarter, down from 5.8 per cent in the previous quarter and 6.9 per cent a year ago, the authority said. The kingdom's overall improvement of the labor market in 2022 was "better than our expectations" and re-



Expensive amber worry beads



Amber bracelets



Museum curator Maria Josephine



Very pricy transparent gem



Very pricy transparent gem



Moscow boasts of amber museum

The amber museum is located on Arbat street, the historic street that lures many tourists. The museum curator, Maria Josephine, said in an interview with KUNA that the museum building hosts diverse amber pieces, some weighing more than one kilogram and there is a single one that weighs 3,060 kg, found in 2017. The largest amber gem weighs 4,280 kg and is kept at the amber complex in Kaliningrad, she added.

The State treasury compels the complex in Kaliningrad to hand over any amber piece that

weighs above a kilogram, Josephine said. She also put the who output of amber in Russia at 500 tons per year. Most of the mining for amber is in Kaliningrad in the Baltic Sea region. There are more than 1,100 personnel and workers specialized in extracting amber in Kaliningrad, the region that boasts 90 percent of the world wealth of the gem. Russia exports amber in the raw form to China, Kirgizia, Armenia, Arab countries and Serbia. Amber is used for decoration, making medicines, construction materials and paints. —KUNA



Very pricy transparent gem



Amber mines in Yantar town in Russian region Kaliningrad

Wind farms drive away certain seabirds: Study

Offshore wind farms drive away a species of bird in the North Sea, scientists found in a study published Thursday, warning that energy reforms must not “amplify the biodiversity crisis”. Researchers based in Germany monitored numbers of red-throated loons—a long-necked duck-like bird also known as a diver—around five offshore wind farm (OWF) sites from 2010 to 2014.

Abundance of loons in their spring resting sites declined by 94 percent within one kilometer (0.6 miles) of a wind farm and 52 percent within 10 kilometers, said their study in the journal Scientific Reports, published by Nature. The overall number of birds around the sites declined by nearly a third, from nearly 35,000 before the wind farms were built to

just under 25,000 afterwards.

Previous studies had indicated “significant impacts” for other birds, the paper noted—some species were attracted to them and risked getting killed by the rotor blades. But “no other seabird species group has demonstrated such a strong, negative response” to offshore wind-farms as the loons, it said. “We are quite confident that loons react primarily to the existence and visibility of these structures and less to the movements of the rotors,” lead author Stefan Garthe told AFP.

“Loons are also very sensitive towards ship traffic” such as boats servicing the wind farms, he said. “It seems that they avoid all above-surface activities of humans.”

After the wind farms were built, the

seabirds flew further afield in search of food. “These new areas are likely less good feeding sites for the birds, otherwise they would have visited those areas in high numbers before,” Garthe said. Solar and wind power are expanding as countries seek carbon-free forms of energy to limit the planet-warming effects of fossil fuels. A survey published by climate and energy think tank Ember showed that electricity generation from wind grew by 17 percent in 2022, to represent 7.6 percent of the world total.

“Although renewable energies will be needed to provide a large share of our energy demands in the future, it is necessary to minimize the costs in terms of less-adaptable species, to avoid amplifying the biodiversity crisis,” the seabird study warned. —AFP

Sniff test: Japan declares war on hayfever woes

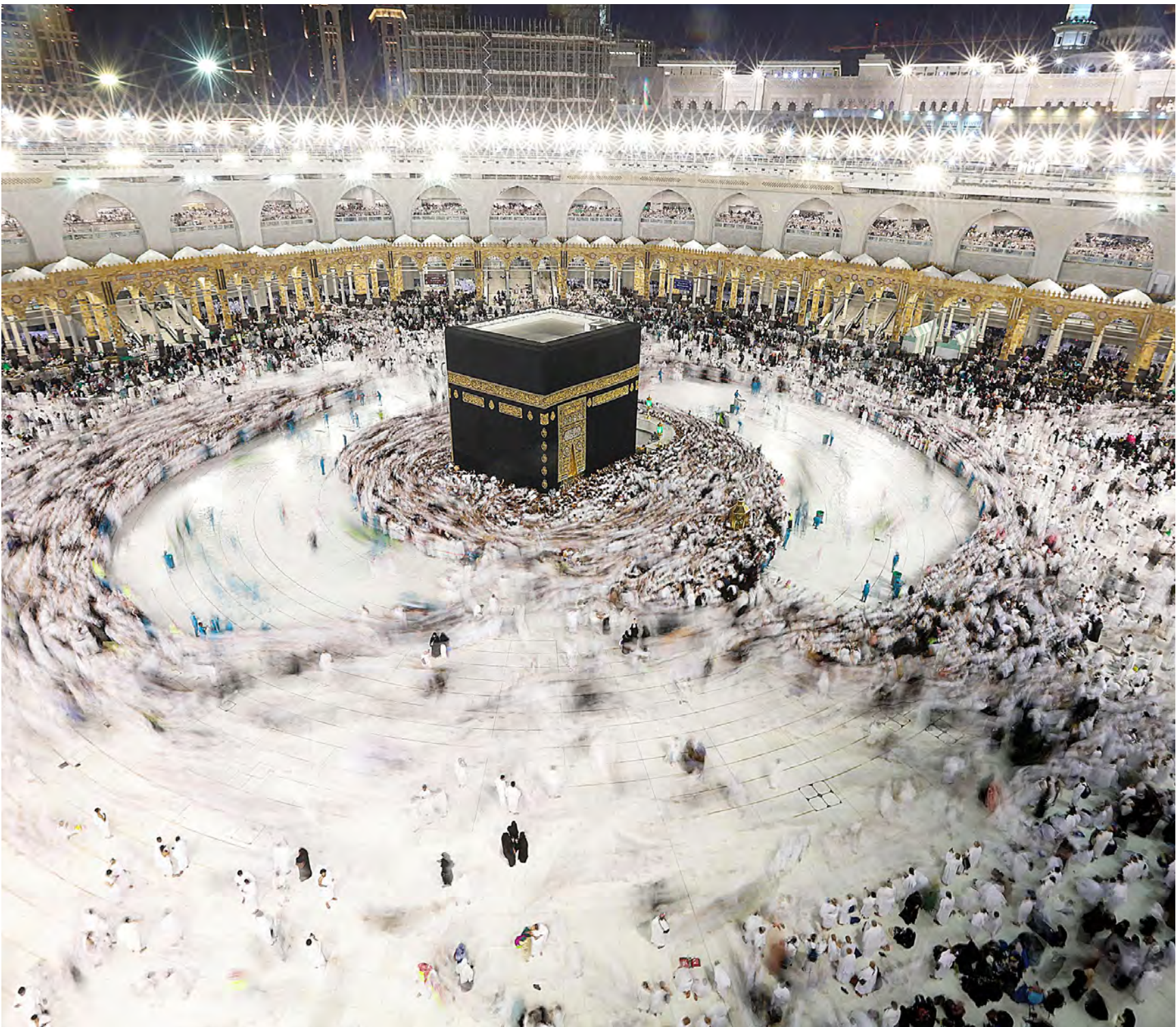
Japan’s prime minister vowed Friday to tackle an insidious enemy that causes enormous economic damage and misery for the country’s citizens each year: pollen. Japan’s spring season might be best known for the blooming of its famed cherry blossoms and the good cheer of flower-watching picnics, but for many it is mostly synonymous with sneezes.

Each spring, the country’s vast tracts of cedar trees in particular release potent clouds of pollen that prompt many to seek relief from prescription medication, but also surgical masks and even special glasses. This year’s season has been described as the worst in around a decade by experts and sufferers alike, prompting Prime Minister Fumio Kishida to convene the country’s first ever high-level meeting to tackle it.

“Hay fever is a national prob-

lem for Japan that troubles many people,” he told the meeting on Friday, urging officials to develop measures to address the scourge by June. Among the proposals are cutting down cedar trees to replace them with species that produce less pollen, and using artificial intelligence like supercomputers to “fundamentally improve” Japan’s hay fever forecast system, land minister Tetsuo Saito told reporters.

The problem is so endemic it afflicts about 40 percent of the Japanese population, according to one nationwide survey. And the economic impact is sizable because of productivity losses from workers affected by hay fever. A 2020 poll by electronics giant Panasonic estimated the nation incurs an economic loss of over 220 billion yen (\$1.6 billion) each day during the worst of pollen season. —AFP



Muslim worshippers circumambulate around the Kaaba, Islam's holiest shrine, at the Grand Mosque in the holy city of Makkah in the holy month of Ramadan. —AFP photos



Muslim devotees offer their last Friday prayers during the holy fasting month of Ramadan at Memom mosque in Karachi.



Women Muslim worshippers look on at the Grand Mosque in the holy city of Makkah during the fourth Friday Noon prayers in the holy month of Ramadan.



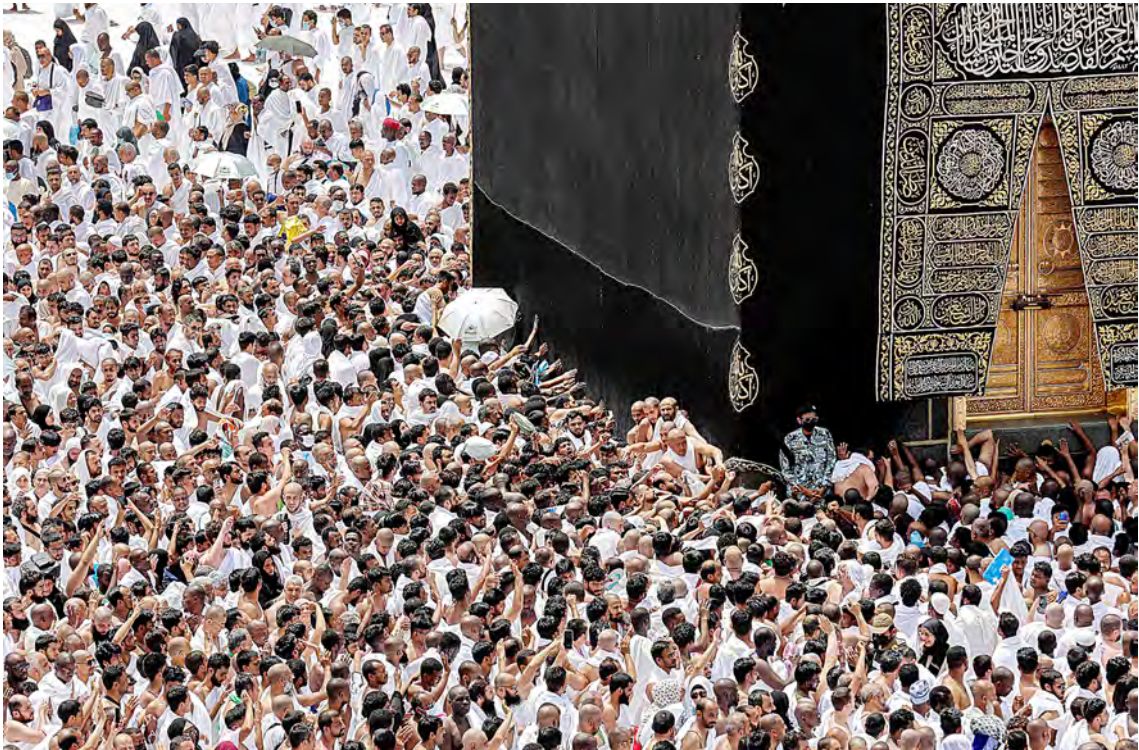
A Muslim worshipper reads from the Quran, Islam's holy book, at the Grand Mosque in the holy city of Makkah during the fourth Friday Noon prayers in the holy month of Ramadan.

Ramadan from around the world: Muslims celebrate with prayer, reflection and food

Millions of Muslims around the world celebrated the holy month of Ramadan, which began on March 23. The month is marked by prayer, reflection, charity, and community.



Muslim devotees offer their last Friday prayers during the holy fasting month of Ramadan at Memom mosque in Karachi.



Muslim worshippers pray around the Kaaba, Islam's holiest shrine, at the Grand Mosque in the holy city of Makkah during the fourth Friday Noon prayers in the holy month of Ramadan.



A Muslim worshipper prays at the Grand Mosque in the holy city of Makkah during the fourth Friday Noon prayers in the holy month of Ramadan.



Muslims devotees break their fast during the fasting month of Ramadan in grand Faisal Mosque in Islamabad.



Muslim devotees arrive to sit before the start of Itikaf, a spiritual retreat, stay in the last ten days of the holy fast-month of Ramadan in the grand Faisal Mosque in Islamabad.



Muslim devotees offer their last Friday prayers during the holy fasting month of Ramadan at the Data Darbar mosque in Lahore.



Muslim devotees offer prayers in the Sunehri Mosque before the start of Itikaf, a spiritual retreat, in a mosque during the holy month of Ramadan in Peshawar.



A picture taken with a fisheye lense shows Palestinian worshippers gathered to pray outside the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque compound.



Young female Muslim worshippers pray during the fourth Friday Noon prayers of the holy fasting month of Ramadan outside the Dome of the Rock mosque at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound.



Young female Muslim worshippers pray during the fourth Friday Noon prayers of the holy fasting month of Ramadan outside the Dome of the Rock mosque at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound.



A young Palestinian Muslim worshipper sits with a prayer bead on a prayer mat ahead of the fourth Friday Noon prayers of the holy fasting month of Ramadan outside the Dome of the Rock mosque at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound, Islam's third holiest site, in the Old City of Jerusalem.

Religious fervor rises in the last ten days of Ramadan



Women devotees gather to attend the ritual prayers for Laylat al-Qadr (Night of Destiny), outside the Imamzadeh Saleh mosque in Tehran.



Women devotees gather to attend the ritual prayers for Laylat al-Qadr (Night of Destiny), one of the holiest nights during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, outside the Imamzadeh Saleh mosque in Tehran. —AFP photos



Muslims perform a prayer ritual on 'Laylat al-Qadr', at the shrine of Imam Musa al-Kadhim in Baghdad's Kadhimiya neighbourhood.



Shiite Muslim devotees gather for prayer rituals on 'Laylat al-Qadr', at the Grand Mosque of Kufa, east of Iraq's central holy city of Najaf.



Muslim devotees read the Quran during prayer rituals on 'Laylat al-Qadr', at the Grand Mosque of Kufa, east of Iraq's central holy city of Najaf.



Muslim devotees read the Quran during prayer rituals on 'Laylat al-Qadr', at the Grand Mosque of Kufa, east of Iraq's central holy city of Najaf.



Muslims perform a prayer ritual on 'Laylat al-Qadr', at the shrine of Imam Musa al-Kadhim in Baghdad's Kadhimiya neighbourhood.



A Muslim devotee reads the Quran during prayer rituals on 'Laylat al-Qadr', at the Grand Mosque of Kufa, east of Iraq's central holy city of Najaf.

Sports

Delhi suffer fifth straight IPL loss as Punjab enter top 4

BANGALORE: Delhi Capitals captain David Warner remains hopeful of a turnaround despite his team's fifth straight loss in the IPL after their 23-run defeat by Royal Challengers Bangalore on Saturday. Virat Kohli struck 50 to guide hosts Bangalore to 174-6, a total their bowlers defended by restricting Delhi to 151-9 in the first match of the day.

Later, Zimbabwe all-rounder Sikandar Raza's 57 and an unbeaten cameo by Shahrulkh Khan led Punjab Kings to a two-wicket win over Lucknow Super Giants as they entered the top four in the table. "The positives were great... the bowling and the fielding were exceptional. I said that to the guys that their energy and attitude were absolutely amazing," Warner said after Delhi's loss. "It's just our batting. We need to work out how to take on the powerplay and not lose early wickets."

Delhi were never in the chase, losing regular wickets. Even Warner, who has scored 228 runs with three half-centuries in the tournament but has struggled with his strike rate, only scored 19. Manish Pandey made 50, but the rest of the batting fell apart as debutant and local boy Vijay-kumar Vyshak returned figures of 3-20 for RCB. The returning Mitchell Marsh, back after getting married in Australia, struck first for Delhi with

the wicket of Faf du Plessis and later dismissed Mahipal Lomror.

Kohli makes another fifty

Left-arm wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav also took two wickets, but Bangalore scored enough to claim a second victory in four matches. Kohli posted his third fifty of the season before falling to Lalit Yadav in the 11th over. Kohli smashed six fours and one six in his 34-ball knock. Lucknow skipper KL Rahul anchored his team's innings of 159-8 against Punjab with 74.

But questions remained over Rahul's batting approach after his 56-ball stay. Raza's maiden IPL half-century kept Punjab, captained by Sam Curran in the absence of the injured Shikhar Dhawan, on track in their chase before his departure in the 18th over. The big-hitting Shahrulkh then hit the winning runs in his 10-ball 23 as Punjab achieved their target with three balls to spare.

Curran, who became the most expensive IPL player in the auction, posted his best bowling figures of the tournament so far, taking 3-31. "Raza played nicely in the middle, and the way Shahrulkh came in and finished," said Curran. "The word around the dressing room is that he (Shahrulkh) has worked very hard and the coaching staff have been clear with his role." — AFP



LUCKNOW: Lucknow Super Giants' Krunal Pandya runs to save his wicket during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between against Punjab Kings at the Ekana Cricket Stadium on April 15, 2023. — AFP

Rune fights back to set up final against Rublev

MONTE CARLO: Danish teenager Holger Rune edged a thrilling clash with fellow rising star Jannik Sinner on Saturday to set up a Monte Carlo Masters final against Andrey Rublev. The 19-year-old claimed a 1-6, 7-5, 7-5 win under floodlights after a rain-affected day in the principality. Russian fifth seed Rublev saw off Taylor Fritz 5-7, 6-1, 6-3 in the first semi-final.

Rune continued his meteoric rise in the sport with another statement victory, having climbed into the world's top 10 this season after a breakthrough 2022 which he capped off with the Paris Masters title, beating Novak Djokovic in the final. "It was quite unbelievable," Rune said. "Jannik started firing, hitting a lot of winners and he has been in good form the past few months. "I had to dig deep and find solutions, which I did well. It was fun to play like this."

Sinner dominated the opening set but was 3-0 down in the second when the players were forced off



MONTE CARLO: Denmark's Holger Rune returns the ball to Italy's Jannik Sinner during their Monte-Carlo ATP Masters Series tournament semifinal on April 15, 2023. — AFP

by the inclement weather. Rune lost that advantage after the resumption but continued to put pressure on the Sinner serve and levelled the match in the 12th game on his fourth set point. World number nine Rune saw five break points come and go in the third set as it stayed on serve for 11 games. But he made the decisive move and secured a place in his second Masters final on his first match point as Sinner dumped a forehand into the net.

Rublev reaches second final

Earlier, Rublev also battled back from a set down to beat big-serving American Fritz and reach his second Monte Carlo final. The 25-year-old is bidding to go one better than in 2021 when he lost the final to Stefanos Tsitsipas. "It was really tough, especially against Taylor," Rublev said after his first win in his last four meetings with Fritz.

"It was tough mentally to play against him because I was thinking if I would have chances. I started really well and then I was up a break and then he broke me back, but I knew I would have chances. In the end we had a great match and I am pleased with the win." Fritz is still waiting to reach a maiden ATP final on clay despite an excellent week.

Both players struggled on serve in a long opening set, but eighth seed Fritz grabbed the lead with a break in the 12th game. Rublev raced through the second set to force a decider, which was halted by a long rain delay with the world number six 3-2 ahead on serve. Rublev further upped his level following the restart with an immediate break. He saw three match points pass him by in the eighth game but wrapped it up with a hold to love. Rublev will be playing in his second final of the season, after losing to Daniil Medvedev in Rotterdam in March. — AFP

Awadhi wins Riding Center championship

KUWAIT: Masayel Club Rider Abdullah Al-Awadhi won the Kuwait Riding Center championship, as he competed with local club riders. Awadhi made a major achievement when he won first, second and fourth places in the main event at 125-130cm. Rider Fawaz Al-Subaie was third, Hamad Al-Hajiri fifth and Khaled Al-Khubaizi sixth.

Technical Director of Kuwait Equestrian Federation, Head of the Fourth Regional Group and Member of the Asian Equestrian Federation Waleed Al-Jassem awarded the winners their prizes. The official committee was headed by Raghad Al-Dabbous. The race path was designed by rider Abdelrahman Al-Fuzaie assisted by Abdelaziz Al-Ajeel. Field referees were Bader Al-Haifi, and Mai Al-Suqobi. The third run at 115-120 cm was won by Hamad Al-Hajiri, while Mohammad Ghuloum won the second run at 105-110 cm.

Zimbabwe's Vincent wins International Series Vietnam

HANOI: Zimbabwean Kieran Vincent won his first Asian Tour title after grabbing six birdies on the final day of the International Series Vietnam on Sunday. The 25-year-old rising star, in only his second year of professional play, started in fourth position before battling against the odds at the Cam Ranh seaside resort to win \$360,000 prize money, carding a six-under-par 66.

A play-off threatened when Vincent shared the lead with India's Anirban Lahiri from the 14th hole, until his decisive birdie at the final hole secured the win. Lahiri enjoyed a bogey-free day with eight birdies, but lacked the magic touch to beat the young contender



CAM RANH, Vietnam: Kieran Vincent of Zimbabwe poses with the winner's trophy after round four of the International Series Vietnam golf tournament on April 16, 2023. — AFP

USA sweep into BJK Cup Finals with France, Czechia

PARIS: Jessica Pegula sealed victory for the United States over Austria on Saturday as the record 18-time champions secured their place in the Billie Jean King Cup Finals. World number three Pegula made quick work of Julia Grabher, winning 6-1, 6-3, to give the heavily favored Americans an unsailable 3-0 lead over Austria in their tie in Delray Beach, Florida. "I really wanted to clinch today," said Pegula. "It's so much more exciting when you get to guarantee your team through."

It was a second singles victory in 24 hours for Pegula after she followed up Coco Gauff's opening win over Grabher on Friday by defeating Sinja Kraus in straight sets. Gauff skipped the singles game against Kraus but secured a 4-0 win for the Americans with a doubles victory alongside Caty McNally against Melanie Klaffner and Kraus. Canada defeated Belgium 3-2 with Leylah Fernandez and Gabriela Dabrowski winning the deciding doubles game with a 6-1, 6-2 victory over Kirsten Flipkens and Greet Minnen.

In Saturday's singles games, Minnen beat Katherine Sebov 6-2, 3-6, 6-3, and Fernandez fought back for a 4-6, 7-5, 6-2 win over Ysaline Bonaventure. The Czech Republic saw off Ukraine 3-1, with Marketa Vondrousova earning the winning point against Katarina Zavatska 6-3, 6-4, after former French Open champion Barbora Krejickova lost 3-6, 6-1, 6-4 to 38th-ranked Marta Kostyuk. On Friday, 12th-ranked Krejickova eased past Zavatska after 2019 Roland Garros runner-up Vondrousova dispatched Kostyuk.

The matches were played in the Turkish city of Antalya because of the war in Ukraine. World number five Caroline Garcia sent France through with a 6-1, 6-7 (10/12), 6-1 win over Britain's Harriet Dart in Coventry. Britain, which reached the semi-finals last year, were missing Emma Raducanu, leaving 138th-ranked Dart as their top singles player.

On Friday, Garcia and Alize Cornet had to play almost six hours between them to edge out Katie Boulter 6-7 (2/7), 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7/2) and Dart 7-6 (8/6), 7-6 (7/3) respectively. "She (Garcia) knew the job was not done yet, yesterday evening she told me 'I'm ready to go tomorrow,'" said France captain Julien Benneteau.

Rybakina leads Kazakhstan

Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina beat Poland's Magda Linette to wrap up victory for Kazakhstan. Rybakina won 6-4, 6-2 in the third rubber in Astana having also won Friday against Weronika Falkowska when teammate Yulia Putintseva defeated Linette. "I'm delighted that Kazakhstan will be able to fly our flag on this big stage once again," said Rybakina after the tie against a Polish side missing injured world number one Iga Swiatek.

Nuria Parrizas Diaz secured Spain's win over Mexico on clay in Marbella, breezing past 196th-ranked Marcela Zacarias 6-3, 6-0. Parrizas Diaz also won her singles match in straight sets on Friday, along with Sara Sorribes Tormo, to ensure Spain's presence in the finals in November at a venue to be decided. In Stuttgart, Germany's Anna-Lena Friedsam made up for losing the hosts' opening rubber by clinching the winning point with a 6-1, 6-0 thrashing of Brazil's Laura Pigossi. "It was really a golden day for me — I played unbelievably well," said Friedsam, ranked 91.

She had lost in three sets to world number 14 Beatriz Haddad Maia on Friday before Tatjana Maria saved a match point to haul Germany level against Pigossi. Jule Niemeier earlier defeated Haddad Maia 7-6 (7/3), 3-6, 6-2. Italy got the better of Slovakia 3-2 as Martina Trevisan and Elisabetta Cocciaretto beat Viktorija Hrunckova and Tereza Mihalikova 6-4, 4-6, 7-5 in the deciding doubles.

Slovakia rallied from a 2-0 deficit in the tie with singles wins on Saturday for Anna Karolina Schmiedlova and Hrunckova but could not complete the turnaround despite leading 5-3 in the final set of the doubles. Bad weather interrupted Slovenia's comeback bid against Romania with the teams level at 3-3 in the first set of the decisive doubles rubber.

Slovenia trailed 2-0 at home in Koper after Friday's action but fought back as Tamara Zidansek and Kaja Juvan both won their matches. Defending champions Switzerland and 2022 runners-up Australia received automatic qualification to the November 7-12 finals, which will feature four groups of three. — AFP



EWA BEACH, Hawaii: Grace Kim of Australia poses with the Lotte Championship trophy at Hoakalei Country Club on April 15, 2023. — AFP

Kim wins LPGA Lotte Championship after playoff

LOS ANGELES: Australia's Grace Kim won the LPGA's Lotte Championship on Saturday after triumphing in a three-woman playoff in Oahu, Hawaii to give the 22-year-old her first tour triumph. China's Liu Yu held the clubhouse lead on 12-overall 276 but Kim and South Korean Sung Yu-Jin both joined her at the top of the leaderboard after 18 holes after making birdies on the final hole to force the playoff.

The trio went to the par-5, first hole for the sudden death playoff and while Liu made par and Sung bogeyed, Kim produced a birdie for the victory. Kim, who has picked up five wins on the WPGA Tour of Australasia, was playing just her third event on the LPGA Tour. The Australian birdied the final two holes to card a four-under 68 and then in the playoff took a 3-wood for her second shot, which fizzed over the water to the edge of the green.

"I think just the birdie on 17 was definitely the big momentum changer. I am just kind of speechless right now," she said. "I will let you know that my second shot on that playoff hole, that wasn't intentional. I kind of got lucky there. I guess it was a good day after all," she said, admitting she had pushed her shot right. "I think I have done well mentally this week and that paid off for me," she added.

Liu, yet to win on the LPGA Tour, produced the round of the day with a bogey-free eight-under 64 at the Hoakalei Country Club after starting the day five shots off the lead. She got off to a flying start with four birdies in the opening five holes but said she hadn't felt under any pressure to attack. She had a long wait for the playoff as the clubhouse leader before losing out in the decider.

"It was a bit unexpected to be honest. I felt pretty over-achieved today. If I knew starting off the day I knew I would end up in a playoff I would be definitely very happy," she said. Taiwan's Chien Pei-Yun and Sweden's Linnea Strom both finished just a stroke behind the leading trio. American Lauren Hartlage, Thailand's Natthakritta Vongtaveelap and England's Georgia Hall all finished tied for sixth place, three strokes back of the leaders. — AFP

Sports

Haaland at the double as City heap pressure on Arsenal

MANCHESTER: Erling Haaland equaled the Premier League record for goals in a 38-game season on Saturday as Manchester City closed the gap on leaders Arsenal to just three points after a day of drama in the top-four race. The Norway forward netted twice in the first half of City's 3-1 win over relegation-threatened Leicester to reach 32 goals — the same as Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah's tally in 2017/18.

John Stones opened the scoring at the Etihad Stadium before a goal from the penalty spot and a clever dinked finish from Haaland. Pep Guardiola substituted the 22-year-old at half-time, denying him the chance to hunt down the overall single-season record of 34 goals in the Premier League era — set in the days of 42 games per side. Leicester, with Dean Smith in charge for the first time, pulled a goal back in the second half through Kelechi Iheanacho but they slumped to a fourth straight defeat and remain second from bottom of the table.

City, chasing a fifth Premier League title in six years, are on 70 points, three behind Arsenal with eight games to go — the Gunners play West Ham on Sunday. The two teams meet at the Etihad on April 26 in a potential title-decider — City's next league fixture. "Like I said lately, it is win, win and win," said Guardiola, whose side have now won 10 consecutive games in all competitions. "They have had an incredible run this season and I don't think they are going to drop many points, so what we have to do is be there. It was important for us to win today to arrive for the 'final' we have against them in the next Premier League game."

Villa form

Aston Villa put themselves in the mix for a top-four finish by beating Newcastle 3-0 for a fifth

straight league win as Tottenham also lost. Villa are still six points off the top four, but are in red-hot form after a seventh win in eight games. Ollie Watkins, who has now scored 11 goals in 12 matches, netted twice after Jacob Ramsey had fired Unai Emery's men into an early lead.

Emery, who took over at Villa Park in October, was cautious about his side's chances of qualifying for the Champions League despite their impressive run. "We can think about being a candidate for a Europa (League) position but the top four is very, very difficult," said the Spaniard. "Of course if we keep winning we can add for the next weeks, but not now."

Newcastle had won their previous five games to climb to third but barely laid a glove on Villa to leave Eddie Howe's men looking over their shoulders. With Manchester United not in action until Sunday, at Nottingham Forest, Tottenham had the chance to move into the top four but blew it as Bournemouth took a potentially decisive step towards survival with a 3-2 win.

Son Heung-min fired Spurs into an early lead, but the Cherries hit back with goals from Matias Vina and Dominic Solanke. Substitute Arnaut Danjuma looked to have salvaged a point for Spurs when he scored against his old club two minutes from time but Dango Ouattara curled home in the 95th minute to lift Bournemouth six points clear of the relegation zone.

Brighton boosted their chances of European football with a 2-1 win at Chelsea to prolong Frank Lampard's wait for a first victory since returning to Stamford Bridge as interim manager. Conor Gallagher opened the scoring for Chelsea but Danny Welbeck came off the bench to equalize just before half-



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Norwegian striker Erling Haaland fights for the ball with Leicester City's Australian defender Harry Souttar at the Etihad Stadium on April 15, 2023. — AFP

time and Paraguayan teenager Julio Enciso won the game in spectacular style. Crystal Palace and Wolves edged towards safety but it was a terrible day for Everton, who lost 3-1 at home to Fulham.

Bottom side Southampton look increasingly likely to be relegated after Eberechi Eze scored twice for Palace in a 2-0 win at St Mary's to clinch a third

consecutive victory for the Eagles since Roy Hodgson returned as manager. Wolves are seven points clear of the drop zone after they beat Brentford 2-0 thanks to goals from Diego Costa and Hwang Hee-chan. Everton remain outside the relegation zone only on goal difference after they were sunk by goals from Fulham's Harrison Reed, Harry Wilson and Dan James. — AFP

Messi scores stunner as PSG beat rivals Lens

PARIS: A brilliant Lionel Messi goal helped Paris Saint-Germain to a 3-1 home win over Lens on Saturday to surely end any doubt about the outcome of this season's Ligue 1 title race, after an early sending-off left the visitors with a mountain to climb. Lens, who began the day six points behind league leaders PSG in second place, looked the better team until Ghana midfielder Salis Abdul Samed was dismissed for a dangerous challenge on Achraf Hakimi in the 19th minute.

That changed everything, and by half-time the hosts were out of sight thanks to three goals in the space of 10 minutes from Kylian Mbappe, Vitinha and then Messi, with Przemyslaw Frankowski pulling one back for Lens from a penalty. Mbappe opened the scoring and Vitinha's long-ranger doubled PSG's lead in the 37th minute.

Both goals were good but Messi's that made it 3-0 was stunning, the Argentine finding a pocket out of space outside the area, feeding a pass to Mbappe and then receiving the France striker's backheel return before slotting beyond goalkeeper Brice Samba and into the far corner. The result leaves the reigning champions nine points ahead with seven games left, meaning it is surely just a matter of time until PSG secure a French record 11th league title.

"We must not think that it's done and dusted," said coach Christophe Galtier. "We will need to remain serious and determined to maintain our lead and not give any hope to the teams chasing us." The win comes at the end of a week overshadowed by allegations of racism against Galtier, who had already been under pressure since PSG's elimination from the Champions League last month.

Galtier said on Friday that he was "deeply shocked" by accusations that he made racist and Islamophobic remarks about Nice players when he was in charge there last season. The allegations surfaced in an email apparently sent by former Nice sporting director Julien Fourmier and which have been reported by various French media. AFP has not been able to verify the message.

The affair looks set to hang over the coach and the club in the coming weeks. "I was very determined and focused on the match, like my players," Galtier said of trying to stay concentrated on the game. "It was obviously an important match, if not



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's Argentine forward Lionel Messi and Lens' Franco-Ivorian midfielder Seko Fofana fight for the ball at the Parc des Princes on April 15, 2023. — AFP

decisive, and so it was important to get the result and enjoy it." Lens were hoping to take advantage of the leaders' problems and extend a four-match winning run that had got the northern club's supporters dreaming of a first league title since 1998. — AFP

Today's Matches

English Premier League

Leeds United v Liverpool 22:00

beIN Sports 1 HD Premium

beIN Sports HD 1 English

beIN Sports Connect

Spanish League

Celta de Vigo v Real Mallorca 22:00

beIN Sports HD 1

beIN Sports HD 2 English

beIN Sports Connect

Italian League Serie A

ACF Fiorentina v Atalanta 21:45

AD SPORTS Premium 1

Bayern held by Hoffenheim as Dortmund stumble

MUNICH: Borussia Dortmund failed to take advantage of Bayern Munich's 1-1 home draw against Hoffenheim on Saturday, conceding a last-gasp equalizer after blowing a two-goal lead against 10-man Stuttgart. Bundesliga leaders Bayern led through a first-half goal from Benjamin Pavard, but had to settle for a point as Hoffenheim equalized in the second half via an Andrej Kramaric free-kick.

Dortmund were 2-0 ahead in Stuttgart when Konstantinos Mavropanos received a second yellow card, but the hosts hauled themselves level in a dramatic finish. Gio Reyna fired Dortmund back in front three minutes into injury time only for Stuttgart

Madrid waltz past Cadiz ahead of Chelsea clash

BARCELONA: Real Madrid were made to wait, but eventually conjured a stylish 2-0 victory at Cadiz on Saturday in La Liga, ahead of their Champions League trip to face Chelsea. Nacho Fernandez and Marco Asensio struck to help champions Madrid cut Barcelona's lead at the top of the table to 10 points, before the Catalans visit Getafe on Sunday. Both sides hit the woodwork in the first half but Madrid overran their opponents, with only Cadiz goalkeeper David Gil keeping them at bay.

Eventually, when it seemed they had tried everything, Nacho broke the deadlock in the 72nd minute with a drive from distance, with Asensio adding another four minutes later. "Good attitude, good commitment, good combinations, the team played very well," said Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti. "It was a game that could have been a trap—the players were concentrating well, and we played well."

Ancelotti rang the changes at the Nuevo Mirandilla to rest players for the visit to Stamford Bridge for the quarter-final second leg, including veteran midfielders Toni Kroos and Luka Modric and winger Vinicius Junior. Madrid suffered a 3-2 home defeat by Villarreal last weekend before the 2-0 first leg win over Chelsea, and Ancelotti admitted his team

to snatch a 3-3 draw courtesy of Silas, who scored with virtually the last kick of the game. The results left Bayern still two points clear of Dortmund at the top with six games to play.

Bayern came into their match after a tumultuous week, forward Leroy Sane sporting a visible mark on his upper lip after a confrontation with Sadio Mane, for which the latter suspended. Pavard gave his side an early lead, tapping in from close range after 17 minutes. With Bayern in cruise control, coach Thomas Tuchel took off Sane, Leon Goretzka and Kingsley Coman, with Wednesday's return leg against Manchester City in mind.

Hoffenheim took the initiative and equalized after 71 minutes, Kramaric curling a perfect free-kick from well outside the box past Yann Sommer. Tuchel said he was surprised with his side's lackluster response after being thrashed 3-0 by City. "I thought we'd play with anger in the belly. That was not the case... We need a different spirit - and quickly." — AFP



CADIZ, Spain: Real Madrid's French forward Karim Benzema vies with Cadiz's Spanish defender Fali at the Nuevo Mirandilla stadium on April 15, 2023. —AFP

were not motivated enough. On this occasion they arrived with the right mindset and on another day would have ended the first half several goals in front. Gil made stunning saves to deny Karim Benzema, Rodrygo and Asensio.

Madrid were racking up the shots and, finally, their 26th effort of the night went in. It came from an unlikely source, in veteran defender Nacho, who drove home from the edge of the box into the bottom corner. With Cadiz's resistance broken, Madrid quickly added another. Fede Valverde carried the ball forward and fed Asensio, who finished clinically. — AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

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
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Sharq	22465401
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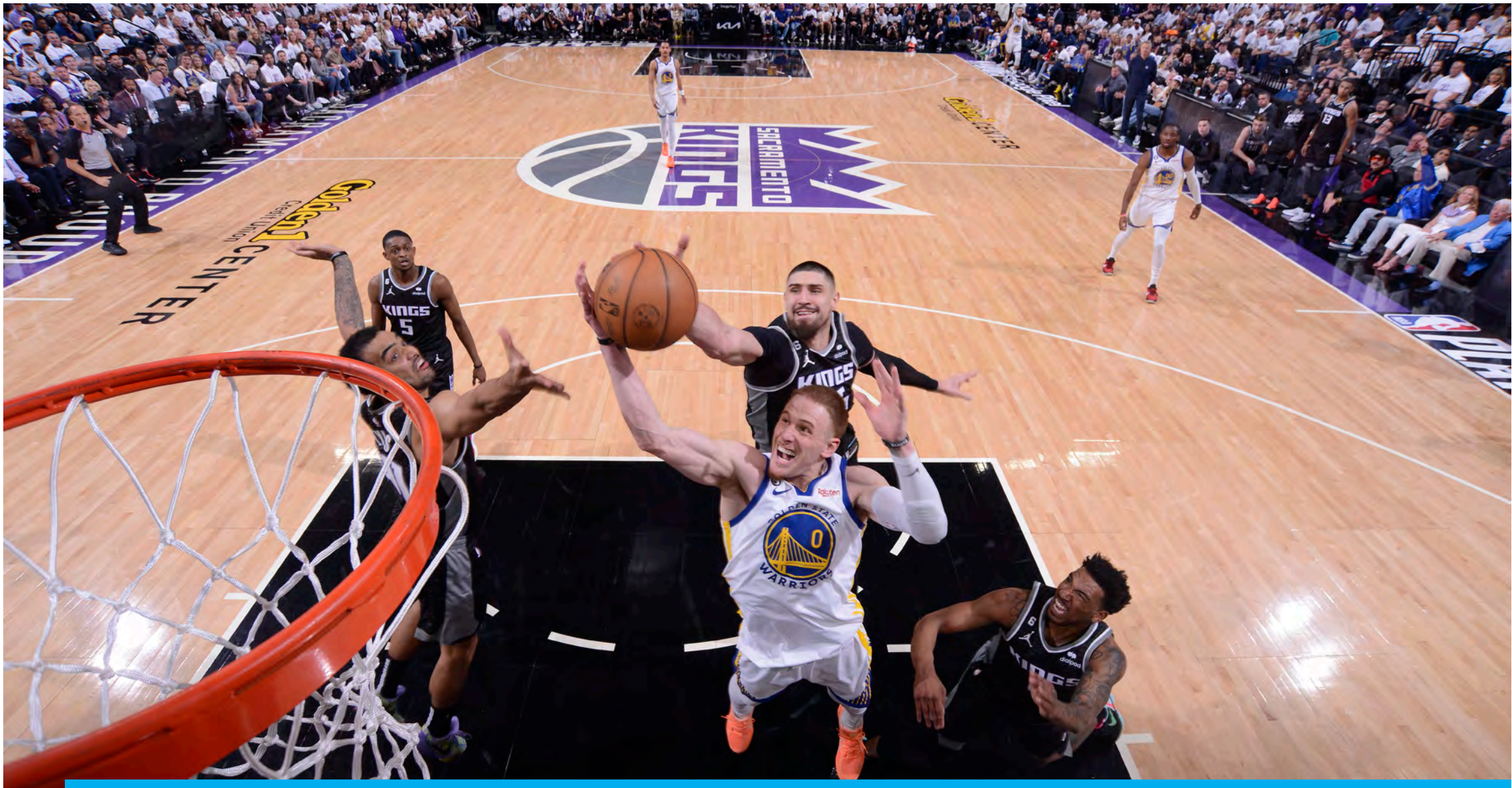
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Kings edge Warriors in NBA playoff as Sixers, Celtics roll



SACRAMENTO: Donte DiVincenzo of the Golden State Warriors goes up for the rebound during Round One Game One of the 2023 NBA Playoffs against Sacramento Kings on April 15, 2023 at Golden 1 Center. — AFP

WASHINGTON: De'Aaron Fox scored 38 points and Malik Monk added 32 off the bench in leading the Sacramento Kings to a 126-123 victory over Golden State for their first NBA playoff triumph in 17 years. The Kings, who had not reached the post-season since 2006, seized a 1-0 lead over the defending champions in a Western Conference best-of-seven first round series that continues in Sacramento on Monday.

In Eastern Conference playoff series openers on Saturday, the New York Knicks edged host Cleveland 101-97, Boston routed Atlanta 112-99 and Philadelphia beat Brooklyn 121-101. Fox made 13-of-27 shots in his playoff debut, 4-of-8 from 3-point range, and 8-of-12 free throws then after the victory pushed the button to send the Kings' laser light — symbolic of a Kings victory — from the outside of the arena.

Monk sank 8-of-13 from the floor and 2-of-4 from 3-point range plus all 14 of his free throws. He made two late free throws to create the final

margin and Stephen Curry missed a final 3-point shot for the Warriors to force overtime. Reserve Trey Lyles added 16 points and NBA rebounds leader Domantas Sabonis had 12 points and 16 rebounds for Sacramento.

"Our bench came in and they did a hell of a job tonight, especially Malik and Trey. They ignited us," Fox said. "We knew we had to go out and be physical — try not to foul because this is probably the best free throw shooting team in the league — and get it done on the defensive end and we got some key stops."

Fox caught fire in the second half and Sacramento used a late 7-0 run for a 119-114 lead that put the hosts ahead to stay. "In the second half, I got into a rhythm, my teammates continued to hit me in my spot and I just did what they want me to do," Fox said. Curry led Golden State with 30 points while Klay Thompson added 21. At Cleveland, Jalen Brunson scored 21 of his 27 points in the second half to

lead New York's victory while the Cavaliers were led by 38 points from Donovan Mitchell.

A late Brunson miss was rebounded by New York's Julius Randle, who had 19 points and 10 rebounds, and that set up two clinching Knicks free throws by Quentin Grimes. "They just kept fighting," Brunson said. "We kept our composure. Made plays down the stretch, made a couple of huge stops. We just kept fighting, kept sticking together and stayed poised."

NBA scoring champion Joel Embiid had 26 points while NBA assists champion James Harden added 23 points and 13 assists in the Sixers' romp. The host Sixers, who led the NBA in 3-point shooting percentage, sank a club playoff record 21 3-pointers in 43 attempts. "(That) was a good win for us," Harden said. "We'll be watching film. Game two is going to be the toughest game of the series for us. We'll be ready to go." Cameroonian star Embiid went 7-of-15 from the floor and 11-of-11 from the free throw line.

'Keep pushing'

Harden hit 7-of-13 from 3-point range and helped eight Sixers in all make 3-pointers. "Just finding ways to impact the game possession by possession," said Harden, a former Nets backcourt star. "It's the play-offs. Things don't go the way you want as much as you want them to. You've got to keep pushing, keep fighting, and I'm happy we got a win."

Philadelphia made a club one-half playoff record of 13 3-pointers on the way to a 67-58 halftime edge. Brooklyn's Mikal Bridges scored a game-high 30 points, but only seven in the second half. The Celtics ripped visiting Atlanta 112-99 behind 29 points and 12 rebounds from Jaylen Brown and 25 points and 11 rebounds from Jayson Tatum.

Brown played with a wrapping on cut fingers and a protective mask he has had for two months due to a facial fracture. "Got to come out and be ready to go," he said. "My team depends on me. My city depends on me. I don't make no excuses. I come out and play ball." — AFP

Azam and Rauf star in T20 win over N Zealand

LAHORE: Skipper Babar Azam smashed a magnificent century while pace bowler Haris Rauf took four wickets as Pakistan beat New Zealand by 38 runs in the second T20 international in Lahore on Saturday. Azam, who fell for just nine in his 100th T20I on Friday, compensated with a brisk 58-ball 101 not out to lift Pakistan to a solid 192-4 in their 20 overs. Rauf, who took a career best 4-18 in Pakistan's 88-run win in the series opener, finished with 4-27 to restrict New Zealand to 154-7.

Pakistan now lead the five-match series 2-0 with the last three matches in Lahore (April 17) and Rawalpindi (April 20 and 24). "I am very happy to perform in this match," said Azam, who is now the joint most successful T20I captain with 42 wins, alongside England's Eoin Morgan and Afghanistan's Asghar Afghan. "I had two good partnerships and then our bowling was once again excellent. We have got experienced and exciting young bowlers who gave us back-to-back wins."

Mark Chapman scored a battling 65 not out for New Zealand featuring four fours and as many sixes, but lost partners at regular intervals after the tourists made a decent start. Chad Bowes (26) and skipper Tom Latham (19) put on 44 for the first wicket in 6.2 overs, but as the asking rate soared New Zealand's chase lost steam. "We have been there or thereabouts but weren't able to finish the innings off, both with the ball and bat," said Latham. "When Babar plays like that, you tip your hat off."

Azam was the mainstay of the Pakistan innings after he won the toss and chose to bat. He smashed a six and two fours in the last over to reach his third T20I century, becoming only the sixth batter to do so in the shortest format at international level. Azam put on 99 for the opening wicket with Mohammad Rizwan, who scored 50 off 34 balls.



LAHORE: Pakistan's captain Babar Azam celebrates his century against New Zealand at the Gaddafi Cricket Stadium on April 15, 2023. — AFP

Azam, whose knock included 11 fours and three sixes, then added 87 for the fifth wicket with Iftikhar Ahmed, who finished 33 not out as the home team added 65 runs in the last five overs. After removing Rizwan in the 11th over, New Zealand slowed Pakistan's charge as Matt Henry then dismissed Fakhar Zaman for a duck and finished with 2-29.

Saim Ayub also fell without scoring and Imad Wasim was out for two as Pakistan lost four wickets for just six runs in the space of 14 balls. Azam started the 20th over on 84 and looked like he would end short of a century, but he took the attack to James Neesham — dispatching the last ball over cover for a four to reach his ninth hundred in all T20 cricket. Only Chris Gayle of the West Indies has hit more hundreds in the format with 22, while India's Rohit Sharma leads the T20I chart with four tons. — AFP

Scottish raider Corach Rambler outfoxes rivals to win Grand National

AINTREE, United Kingdom: Corach Rambler gave trainer Lucinda Russell and rider Derek Fox their second Grand National in six years, winning in impressive style after Saturday's race had been delayed due to animal rights protestors. Fox — who had just returned from injury — eased alongside long-time leader Mister Coffey at the 30th and final fence to give Scotland their third win in the world's greatest steeplechase.

Fox and Russell combined with One For Arthur to win in 2017, with Rubstic Scotland's first winner in 1979. For Fox it was a remarkable return to the saddle as he had suffered a serious shoulder injury in a dreadful fall nine days ago. It was a case of déjà vu, as prior to One For Arthur's win, he had broken his collarbone and wrist, only to make it back in time. "He's just a phenomenal horse," said Fox of Corach Rambler. "I can't believe it to be honest. He's the cleverest horse, so intelligent, he won so easily."

Fox, 30, returned to the winners enclosure grasping the Scottish flag to be greeted with raucous cheers. Awaiting him was Russell, her boyfriend and eight-time champion jockey Peter Scudamore, and the owners, the seven-member Ramblers syndicate. "It is very personal this one," gasped 56-year-old Russell. "I will always remember One for Arthur, he was a brilliant horse, but this was very special. It is fantastic, fairytale stuff. They (the syndicate) have got themselves a very, very good horse. He is a very intelligent horse and when he jumped the last I just felt he would win."

One of the syndicate owners is 21-year-old student Cameron Sword who said: "Derek Fox rode a blinder. And Corach Rambler — what a horse. I'm lost for words. 'I'll be out in Liverpool tonight!' Aintree management and the police reacted quickly to break up the protest shortly before the horses were to exit the saddling enclosure."



LIVERPOOL: Jockey Derek Fox celebrates after riding Corach Rambler to victory in the Grand National Steeple Chase at Aintree Racecourse on April 15, 2023. — AFP

The police made 118 arrests — including nine protestors who had managed to get onto the track — while some spectators out on the course also helped prevent more people getting past security. It prevented a repeat of the 1993 debacle when activists delayed the National and then two false starts led to the race being declared null and void. Filling the minor places behind the 8/1 favorite were 20/1 shot Vanillier, with the Willie Mullins-trained Gaillard Du Mesnil third. Last year's winner Noble Yeats had looked under pressure going out onto the second circuit but ran on strongly in the final stages under Sean Bowen to take fourth.

The top weight Any Second Now — third in 2021 and second last year — was pulled up early on the second circuit, giving trainer Ted Walsh a miserable 73rd birthday. Delta Work — one of five runners for trainer Gordon Elliott — exited at the 21st fence. There was no joy either for 43-year-old jockey Davy Russell, who had come out of retirement in January to help Elliott after his stable jockey broke his leg.

However, Galvin and Russell came to grief at the first fence. Another faller at the first, Hill Sixteen, suffered a fatal injury. "Sadly, while racing in the Grand National, Hill Sixteen sustained an unrecoverable injury. Our sincere sympathies are with connections," said a Jockey Club spokesperson. Of the 39 runners, just 17 finished. — AFP