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The First English Daily in the Arabian Gulf

RAMADAN 29, 1444 AH THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 2023



DHAMAN completes hospital building in Jahra governorate



Scotland's leader Sturgeon announces shock resignation



Archaeologists uncover remains of 5,000-year-old tavern in Iraq



RAMADAN TIMINGS

Fajr 03:55
Shurooq 05:18
Dhuhr 11:47
Asr 15:22
Maghrib 18:17
Isha 19:37

Govt tries to remedy population structure

Authorities target 70-30 percent ratio of Kuwaitis to expats

KUWAIT: Official government sources said the government will start discussing several decisions to remedy the population structure after the Eid al-Fitr holiday and then send them to authorities to start implementing them immediately. They said the government is implementing legislation to remedy the population structure that was issued by the parliament earlier. It agreed on serious steps that guarantees the reduction of expatriate numbers to 30 percent, while Kuwaitis will be 70 percent of the population, contrary to the current situation, as expatriates form the majority of the population.

Sources said the government will approve the comprehensive national development plan that de-

tails the need for expat labor and programs that organize professional qualifications mentioned in this plan and sets certain ceilings on the number of expats. Sources said the government will set the policies and various plans for government entities with regards to the replacement of expat labor by Kuwaitis and improve programs of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training to affirm the replacement policies.

Sources said government discussions include implementation procedures to adopt means of prevention and treatment of diseases and epidemics in the health system for labor coming from abroad, as well as setting the policies of banning the transfer of ex-

pat workers between various sectors.

They said the government's decisions will focus on the relative weight of each community as well as the relative weight of the number of expats in general, but the decisions will exclude GCC citizens, Kuwaitis' foreign spouses and their children, heads and members of diplomatic missions in Kuwait and their families and employees on condition of reciprocity. Military missions of countries Kuwait has security treaties with and workers assisting them and aviation operators are also excluded.

Labor that is brought from abroad and working on infrastructure projects or other economic development projects are also excluded until the project is handed over to the concerned entity. Also excluded are domestic helpers, medical and educational professions and any other category for whom a decision is issued by the Cabinet based on the concerned minister's recommendation.

Sources said the government will caution government entities not to approve the transfer of domestic helpers to the private sector under any circumstances, or transfer visit visas to work permits or family visas. Renewal of the residencies of laborers brought on government contracts is also not allowed after the project is completed and there is no need for them in another government project.

Flexible working hours to continue

KUWAIT: The Civil Service Commission announced that the flexible working hours' system for the public sector will continue after the Eid Al-Fitr holiday and for several months until a study for the system is completed. As per the system, state departments can choose from the following seven-hour-long work timings:- From 7:00 am to 2:00 pm; From 7:30 am to 2:30 pm; From 8:00 am to 3:00 pm; From 8:30 am to 3:30 pm.

RAMADAN KAREEM

Wisdom behind fasting

By Hassan T Bwambale

irst and foremost, it should be clear that every act of worship has immediate benefits to us in various ways. However, we worship Almighty Allah only because we love Him, fear Him with awe and reverence and expect His rewards. Almighty Allah tells us what can be translated as: "O you who believe, respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life. And know that Allah intervenes between a man and his heart, and that to Him you will (assuredly) be gathered." (Al-Anfal 8: 24)

The white days are present in every lunar month. In those days the moon full, from the beginning of the night to its end. They are the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth of every lunar month. They are called white because of the whiteness of the night by the moon, and whiteness and brightness of the day with the sun. It was also said that they were called so because Almighty Allah forgave Adam (AS) during that period of time and whitened his scroll. (Islamonline.net)

Prophet Muhammad (PBÙH) urged us to fast those days. Abu Huraira (ra) narrated, "My intimate friend (ie, Prophet Muhammad - PBUH) advised me to do three things and I will never leave them until I die. They are: To fast three Continued on Page 6



Sudanese flee as death toll mounts

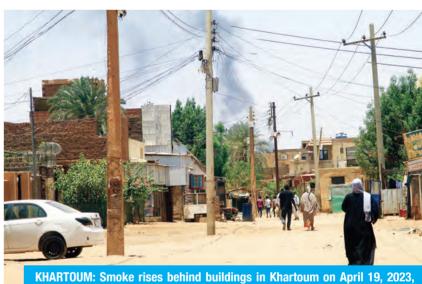
KHARTOUM: Thousands of residents on Wednesday fled Sudan's capital, where witnesses said bodies lay in the street from fighting between the army and paramilitaries after a 24-hour truce failed to take hold. Five days of fighting in Khartoum and elsewhere in the northeast African country have killed at least 185 people, according to the most recent UN toll.

Foreign diplomats have been attacked, and United Nations emergency relief coordinator Martin Griffiths said the UN had received "reports of attacks and sexual violence against aid workers". Governments started planning to evacuate their citizens, among them

many UN staff. The violence erupted on Saturday between the forces of two generals who seized power in a 2021 coup: army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan and his deputy, Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

It followed a bitter dispute between them over the planned integration of the RSF into the regular army - a key condition for a final deal aimed at restoring Sudan's democratic transition. "Life in Khartoum is impossible if this war does not stop," said Alawya Al-Tayeb, 33, on her way out of the capital. "I tried to make children not see the slain bodies on the streets," she said, adding that her children currently suffer from shock and will need treatment.

Continued on Page 6



KHARTOUM: Smoke rises behind buildings in Khartoum on April 19, 2023, as fighting between the army and paramilitaries raged for a fifth day after a 24-hour truce collapsed. – AFP

India population to surpass China

NEW DELHI: India is set to overtake China as the world's most populous country by the end of June, UN estimates showed Wednesday, posing huge challenges to a nation with creaking infrastructure and insufficient jobs for millions of young people. The seismic shift will see India's population hit 1.4286 billion - almost three million more than China's 1.4257 billion - at mid-year, the United Nations Population Fund's State of World Population report forecast.

China has generally been regarded as the world's most populous country since the fall of the Roman Empire but last year its population shrank for the first time since 1960, while India's has continued to rise. The South Asian giant spreads from the Himalayas to the beaches of Kerala, with 22 official languages, and pearly half its inhabitants are under 25.

nearly half its inhabitants are under 25. The country faces huge challenges providing electricity, food and housing for its growing population, with many of its massive cities already struggling with water shortages, air and water pollution, and packed slums. According to the Pew Research Centre, the number of people in India has grown by more than one billion since 1950, the year the UN began gathering population data.

China ended its strict "one-child policy", imposed in the 1980s amid overpopulation fears, in 2016 and

Continued on Page 6

MUMBAl: Commuters exit Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Railway terminus during the morning rush hour in Mumbai. — AFP

Zionist soldiers shoot seven in West Bank raid

JERUSALEM: Seven Palestinians were injured in a Zionist army operation in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry said, hours after two men were injured by gunfire near a Jewish site in annexed east Jerusalem. The shooting comes amid a period of deadly attacks and military raids across the West Bank, along with killings in Zionist entity.

The Palestinian ministry reported six people with "minor injuries from live fire" had gone to Jenin gov-

ernmental hospital, while another person shot had been admitted to a nearby hospital following the raid in the northern West Bank city. A statement from the military confirmed that an operation was underway in the Jenin refugee camp, without giving further details. Earlier Tuesday, Zionist authorities said a suspected Palestinian gunman had wounded two men in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of east Jerusalem after firing at their car.

"Police officers are at the scene conducting searches for the suspect who fled," the police said in a statement. Zionist security forces closed off streets in the neighborhood, where an AFP journalist saw officers entering a Palestinian home, with a drone and helicopter as well as police dogs aiding the search. Officers enforcing the shutdown prevented cars and people from moving in the centre of the neighborhood, as heavily armed forces combed the area.

combed the area.

Continued on Page 6



WEST BANK: A man holds bullet casings and shrapnel found following a Zionist military operation at the Jenin camp for Palestinian refugees in the occupied West Bank. — AFP

Expats find joy during Eid despite longing for home

Going to restaurants, visiting relatives are some of the ways expats mark the holiday

By Ghadeer Ghloum

KUWAIT: After Muslims from all around the globe fast for an entire month during the holy month of Ramadan, they come together to celebrate their adherence and obedience to Allah's obligations on Eid Al-Fitr. The ways of celebrating Eid differs lightly from one culture to another. Muslims in Kuwait usually celebrate Eid by wearing the best clothes they have and visiting family and friends to enjoy a massive feast during the day, where different kinds of the best food are served.

Like their elders, children also await Eid and enjoy it. During Eid, kids usually receive money from their elders as a gift to make them happy and mark the importance of this celebration in their minds. Kuwait Times interviewed some Muslim expats to get a closer look at the way they celebrate Eid in Kuwait while being away from their family due to various circumstances.

Mohammad, a Nigerian man in his early twenties, told Kuwait Times: "On Eid, we make plans to go out with friends, such as booking a trip to Failaka Island for the day or visit other places. We also visit people who are from the same country we come from and spend Eid with them." Although Mohammad gathers with his friends to share the joy of Eid in Kuwait, it is not as enjoyable as it is with his family. "I wouldn't say that we do not really feel the joy, because there are still people to meet up with



Rizwan Shaikh

during Eid. So, yes, I can say that I do feel it a bit. But of course, it's not as it is back home," he said.

Menna, an Egyptian woman also in her early twenties, said: "I used to enjoy Eid in Egypt way more than I do in Kuwait. In Kuwait there is not much to do because it is only my parents and I here. We do not have any other family members here. Therefore, our Eid celebration is very simple — we basically go out for lunch and come back home. I'd rather spend Eid in my country if circumstances were easy."

Rizwan Shaikh, an Indian senior accounting system specialist, also misses his relatives and hopes to celebrate Eid with them here, even though he enjoys the company of his wife and kids in Kuwait. "As expats, we miss our family in India. We wish we could bring them here for Eid, specifically our parents, but

unfortunately Kuwait stopped issuing visas, even for families. I only have my immediate family here. We do not have other relatives in Kuwait." he said.

Despite being away from his relatives in India, Rizwan tries to have fun. "We spend our Eid days with family and friends. Usually, we dine out with friends. As for activities, we arrange a picnic and get together. This Eid we have plans to visit Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center and Khairan resort," he said.

Reem, a middle-aged Lebanese woman, said that her siblings and herself were born, raised and married in Kuwait. A large number of her relatives are also in Kuwait, so she enjoys celebrating Eid in Kuwait more than she does in her home country. She is used to Kuwait and feels closer to the people she knows in

Kuwait. Reem also highlighted the issue of forcing expats aged over 60 to leave. "Everyone used to come to my parents' house, as they are the elders among our family members who live in Kuwait. However, after the law forced people over 60 to leave, my parents had to go back to Lebanon, so, we no longer gather in one place," she said.

Reem added in order to meet at one place, they book a chalet or a family table at a restaurant so they can enjoy their Eid feast. When it comes to visiting each other's homes, Reem said they divide their visits among themselves. Only a certain number of families can visit one house, based on the capacity of that house. According to Reem, the visits usually start with visiting the elder relative's home, then to the younger ones.



Indian Ambassador sends Eid greetings

n behalf of the Embassy of India in Kuwait, I extend my warm greetings to His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber AI-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait,

His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Crown Prince of the State of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, the government and the friendly people of the State of Kuwait, on the occasion of the advent of Eid Al-Fitr. I also



Dr Adarsh Swaika

take this opportunity to convey my good wishes to all members of Indian community in Kuwait.

As in Kuwait, Eid AI-Fitr is a special festival in India that is celebrated with full festivities across the country with different regional variations. India is home to the second largest Muslim population in the world. The diversity of religions and beliefs, with people from different socio-cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds living in complete harmony, is the hallmark of India.

As the largest expatriate community in Kuwait, the Indian community continues to be an integral part of the fabric of Kuwaiti society. Our shared history and cultural ties have fostered strong bonds of friendship and cooperation between our two countries. We are proud of the contributions that the Indian community has made to Kuwait's development and growth. I am confident that these ties will only continue to strengthen in the years ahead.

On this auspicious occasion, I would like to express my continued commitment to further strengthen the historical and time-tested ties between India and Kuwait, including fostering greater people to people contacts. I wish all a joyous Eid, filled with love, happiness, and blessings. Eid Mubarak!

French ambassador sends Eid greetings

n behalf of the French Embassy in Kuwait, it gives me great pleasure to extend our warm wishes to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to the people of Kuwait and all Muslims on the joy-

ous occasion of Eid Al-Fitr. With the end of the holy month of Ramadan, which was indeed a wonderful opportunity to connect and meet through Diwaniyas and ghabqas, I cannot wait to celebrate Eid Al-Fitr.

Eid Al-Fitr, embodies the spirit of mercy and provides another opportunity to promote unity and understanding. It is this festive spirit that unites human hearts, and it is the same spirit that is at the core of Franco-Kuwaiti bilateral relations. May this Eid bring peace, success and happiness to the Kuwaiti people, Muslims and all peoples around the world. I wish you all Happy Eid Al-Fitr!



Claire Le Flecher, Ambassador of France to Kuwait



Zain's Iftar Program continues during last 10 days of Ramadan

Company's team visited Mubarakiya Market, joined by CEO Eaman Al-Roudhan



KUWAIT: Eaman Al-Roudhan and Meshal Al-Ansari with Zain and Kuwait Food Bank teams

Al-Roudhan joins in distributing meals at Mubarakiya Market.

KUWAIT: Zain, Kuwait's leading digital service provider, announces the continuation of its annual lftar Program during the last ten days of Ramadan, part of the company's social campaign during the holy month. Zain provided meals daily at its iftar hall in Ardiya, as well as across the nation in collaboration with its strategic partner, the Kuwait Food Bank, reaching a total of nearly 40,000 meals throughout the holy month.

Local

Zain recently visited Mubarakiya Market, located at the heart of Kuwait City, to distribute iftar meals. The visit was joined by Zain Kuwait CEO

Eaman Al-Roudhan, Vice Chairman of the Kuwait Food Bank Meshal Al-Ansari, as well as Zain and Food bank teams and volunteers.

Zain's Iftar Program, which came back in its 16th year, is one of the main pillars of the company's Ramadan campaign, springing from its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility Strategy. Zain is proud to be one of the local private sector's leading institutions that exert numerous charitable and volunteer efforts during the holy month.

Zain offered the daily iftar meals to fasting individuals at its hall in Ardiya, as well as via trucks that delivered the meals daily across the country in strategic partnership with the Kuwait Food Bank. Trucks visited the most populated areas to secure the daily Iftar meal for workers, underprivileged individuals, families, and others who are in most need during Ramadan.

This annual program is considered a main pillar of Zain's comprehensive Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility (CSSR) campaign during the holy month of Ramadan. The Iftar Program is supervised by Zain's team as part of its commitment to present an added value to the community.

This initiative is part of a series of programs the company has organized throughout the holy month of Ramadan with the aim of having a deep positive impact on the community's various segments, especially the most vulnerable ones. The company's solid CSSR strategy primarily focuses on the wellbeing of the entire nation. For this reason, the company has maintained its support of numerous initiatives that spread awareness and help make a difference to people's everyday lives.

Ukrainian FM lauds Kuwait's support for peace

KUWAIT: Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba lauded Kuwait's firm stance and commitment to international laws and its support for peaceful resolutions to conflicts. This came in an interview with KUNA and Kuwait TV during the Ukrainian minister's visit to Kuwait Tuesday, which also marks the anniversary of 30 years since the inception of diplomatic ties between the two friendly countries. The Ukrainian foreign minister's visit is the first of its kind to any GCC country since the start of the war in his country.

"We have not had any single black spot in our relations in the last 30 years," said Kuleba. "We are grateful to Kuwait for the support we have received since the war in Ukraine began and in particular the humanitarian aid Kuwait has been providing."

Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah welcomed Kuleba to the General Diwan of the foreign minister where they discussed bilateral ties in the fields of trade, investment and business-to-business development. They also discussed the latest developments of the Ukrainian crisis. Sheikh Salem held an iftar banquet in Kuleba's honor.

"Our economy suffered because of the war but our intrapreneurial companies have adapted to the new reality which is another reason why I am in Kuwait, to promote and welcome not only businesses from Kuwait to Ukraine but to restore a positive dynamic in Ukrainian exports to Kuwait," Kuleba stated.

Sheikh Salem praised the strength of the bilateral relations between the State of Kuwait and Ukraine, expressing his pride in the results of the joint cooperation between the two friendly countries in various fields. He affirmed the position of the State of Kuwait

regarding the Ukrainian crisis, calling for the necessity of adhering to the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and affirming the principle of the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of states in accordance with their internationally recognized borders.

He also stressed the importance of supporting international efforts aimed at a cease-fire and de-escalation to find a peaceful solution to the crisis, in compliance with the principle of resolving disputes by peaceful means and through dialogue in accordance with the law. International and the Charter of the United Nations.

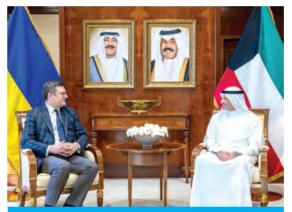
Kuleba also mentioned several historic events where the two countries exercised their goodwill toward one another. Among them is Kuwait's support in constructing shelters for the surrounding areas of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986.

He also expressed his gratitude towards Kuwait's stance in the international scene when it voted in favor of resolutions related to Ukraine, especially the United Nations resolution that called for peace for the ongoing conflict, calling Kuwait's support "the best example of how Kuwait supports Ukraine in international organizations".

"No other country in the world wants peace more than Ukraine and having Kuwait on our side and its support extended to our territorial integrity and sovereignty is a very important part of the global coalition that is struggling to establish peace," referring to the mentioned UN resolution that attracted 141 in favor votes in the general assembly.

Kuleba then said that Ukraine "was a food security guarantor, exporting millions of tons of grain globally; Allowing prices to be controlled and to avoid food crises and famines in many countries," stating that "since the war began, Russia has been blocking our ports putting a risk on the export of Ukrainian grain, yet what is more important are the lives of the millions of people that consume Ukrainian grain that is put to risk."

"Because we know what it means to starve," Kuleba stated, referring to the famine that befell sovi-



Jaber Al-Sabah welcomes Ukrainian Foreign Minister
Dmytro Kuleba during his visit to Kuwait. — KUNA

et-Ukraine in the 30s of the last century when millions died of starvation. "We promised ourselves, no matter how difficult our own situation is, we will be providing bread to people around the world," he said, mentioning various initiatives and programs Ukraine put forward to keep the export of Ukrainian grain going.

Kuleba then said that he expects Ukraine to be "the biggest construction site in the world (after the war), to restore what is being destroyed by guns now." He mentioned the vast opportunities that are available to further expand cooperation in all fields, hoping for both sides to seize them for the utmost benefit.

"While looking at the way you live, I imagine that we want to build the same quality of life when we win and liberate our country, we want to follow in your footsteps to overcome the tragedy of war, to be a peaceful prosperous country like Kuwait," Kuleba said. Kuleba was in Baghdad Monday where he met with several top officials including Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammad Al-Sudani and his Iraqi counterpart Fouad Hussain as part of a regional tour to expand and tighten relations. — KUNA

Arab League launches new media award

CAIRO: The Arab League announced on Wednesday a new award to encourage and promote media services in member countries taking on written, radio, television and digital works related to the environment.

The selection of winners for the Arab Media Excellence Award 2023 will be sponsored by Kuwait, said Assistant Secretary-General and head of media and communication at the Arab League Ambassador Ahmed Khattabi.

"The jury will meet soon to decide on the submitted nominations, in preparation for the delivery of awards to the winning personalities and institutions. ... (The meeting will be held) on the sidelines of the 53rd Session of the Council of Arab ministers of information next June in Rabat," he said.

The winning works will highlight the media's contributions to achieving the goals of the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030. He pointed out that the Arab League is exerting every effort in full cooperation with member states, professional organizations and federations working under its umbrella to support media work and ensure its content remains creative, interactive and open to its social, economic and cultural environment.

Khattabi expressed his appreciation and gratitude to Arab media organizations for their role in circulating information, enlightening public opinion and making an effective contribution to national and developmental structure in the region, in addition to defending Arab issues, at the forefront of which is the Palestinian issue. — KUNA

Greenhouses 'better option for Kuwait'

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Farming in a greenhouse can help limit the effects of climate change and it is possible to tweak the temperature, humidity and other environmental variables. Experts have called to use greenhouses as a better option for the Kuwaiti environment. Farmer and agricultural expert Abdulrahman Mohammad told Kuwait Times these greenhouses can produce premium crops out of season, efficiently manage pests and grow crops year-round.

"Greenhouses are used in Kuwait to grow plants and vegetables in the difficult desert climate while providing a controlled environment that can help protect plants from extreme temperatures, dryness and wind, which are common in Kuwait," he said, noting greenhouses are used by both commercial farmers and home gardeners in Kuwait.

"Some of the crops that are commonly grown in greenhouses in Kuwait include tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce and herbs," Mohammad said, revealing that building and maintaining a greenhouse in Kuwait can be challenging due to the extreme weather conditions, but with proper planning and management, it is possible to grow a variety of crops successfully. He added that many greenhouse owners in Kuwait use a combination of techniques such as proper ventilation, shading and irrigation to ensure that their crops thrive. "Greenhouses are used for many different things, such as growing crops, conducting research and experiments," he added.

Mohammad explained the key consideration for building and operating greenhouses in Kuwait is the location should receive plenty of sunlight and is protected from strong winds, in addition to choosing a



design that is appropriate for Kuwait's climate, where the greenhouse should be well-insulated to retain heat during cooler months and have sufficient ventilation to prevent overheating during the summer.

"In Kuwait's dry climate, irrigation is essential for greenhouse plants to thrive. A drip irrigation system is recommended, as it is efficient and conserves water. Also, the soil is generally low in organic matter and nutrients, so it is important to add compost and other organic matter to improve soil quality while controlling pests and disease and selecting the right crops that are well-suited to Kuwait's climate and can thrive in a greenhouse environment," Mohammad said.

Regarding maintaining greenhouses in the summer of Kuwait, the expert said: "It can be challenging due to the extreme heat and dry conditions. But proper ventilation is essential to prevent overheating, as well as shading, watering and maintaining proper humidity levels. With proper management and planning, you can successfully grow crops in a greenhouse even in the extreme summer heat."

Mohammad noted there are some disadvantages of greenhouses — they can be expensive to build and require constant monitoring, maintenance and care, which could increase the use of electricity and water.

Officers sincerely serve worshipers during Ramadan







KUWAIT: Ministry of Interior officials in various sectors were examples of dedication and sincerity in providing all humanitarian and security assistance and facilitating traffic for worshipers throughout the blessed month of Ramadan. The "watchful eyes" are keen to continue working diligently and sincerely around the clock in maintaining the security of the homeland and the safety of its citizens. — KUNA

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EDITORIAL

Debtors-relief campaign gets more donations

KUWAIT: The Minors Affairs Authority has donated KD 250,000 for the initiative launched by the social affairs ministry to help debtors, in cooperation with the communications and justice ministries.

The authority said the initiative has helped relieve the distress of a number of debtors who were burdened with debts and failed to pay them because of their economic. It embodies the authority's leadership in social responsibility and achieving sustainability and its keenness to support the state's social initiatives, reflecting the vision of Kuwait's leadership and people in humanitarian work.

It is noteworthy that the authority has previously provided various contributions to support the state's efforts in facing many social and health crises, the latest of which is the COVID crisis, with an amount of KD 250,000, in addition to its contribution to the relief campaigns provided by Kuwait to support friendly nations in crises.

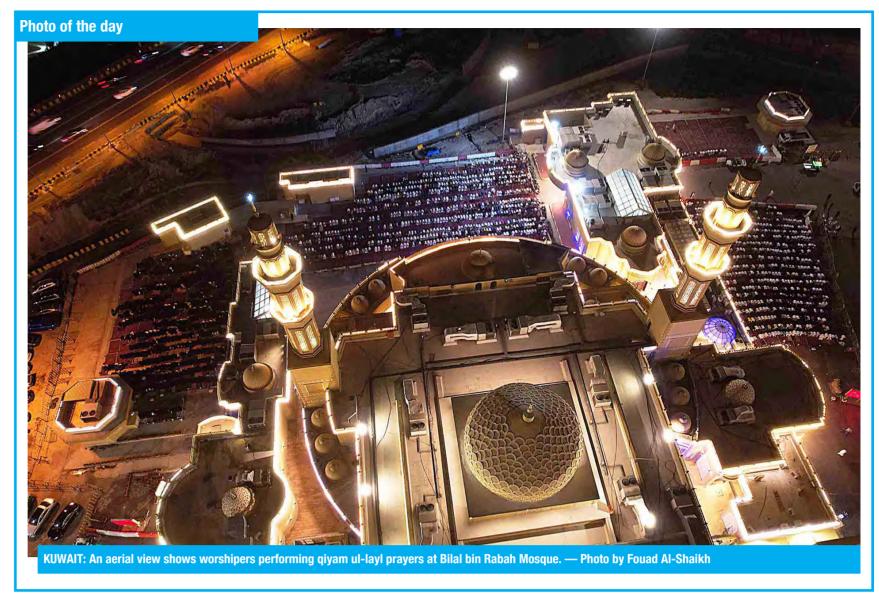
In related news the Kuwaiti Zakat House announced on Tuesday its donation of KD 250,000 to the debt-relief campaign.

Director of the Zakat House Dr Majid Al-Azemi said: "The Zakat House could not miss the opportunity of being part of the national campaign to help pay the debts of debtors announced by the social affairs ministry."

"The donation of 250,000 dinars is only part of the permanent and continuous role of the Zakat House in helping debtors and paying their debts, as they are eligible for zakat," he said.

Azemi said the Zakat House seeks to adopt campaigns that bring benefit to the Kuwaiti family and society, calling on the esteemed benefactors to extend a helping hand and participate in these campaigns to protect the pillars of Kuwaiti families from collapse.

"Over the past years, the House has carried out similar campaigns that resulted in the payment of debts and the lifting of arrest and habeas corpus for a large number of citizens," he explained. — Agencies



Eidiyah ATMs provide new bank notes for Eid

Machines to remain in malls across the country until second day of Eid







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KUWAIT: ATM machines for Eidiyah have been distributed in malls and shopping centers across the country to provide fresh bills for those looking to gift money during Eid. The machines, which will be in place until the second day of Eid Al-Fitr, provide notes of KD 1, KD 5, KD 10 and KD 20.

The Central Bank of Kuwait provided the Eidiyah ATMs in cooperation with Kuwaiti banks and the Shared Automated Banking Services Company (KNET), in order to facilitate and speed up citizens' access to Eidiyah, and in response to the expected increase in demand for new banknotes to be distributed on the occasion of Eid.

Giving Eidiyah is a main part of Eid festivities for many Muslim families. The term "Eidiyah" refers to

Kuwaiti detained in Armenia for over a year, without charge

KUWAIT: Lawyer Mohamad Al-Muthafar is calling on Kuwaiti citizens to respect and apply the laws of the countries they visit. Muthafar has taken on a case of a Kuwaiti citizen who has been detained in Armenia for more than a year, with his family unable to help him despite travelling to the country. Muthafar said he has taken necessary measures to end the suffering of this detained citizen.

Teacher's society decries decision to stop transfers

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Teachers Association called on the Civil Service Commission to exclude the Ministry of Education from the decision to continue stopping transfers, assignments and secondments which was issued this week. It said the commission's decision will negatively affect the education process



money given to children as gifts on both Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha. It is typically distributed to the younger members of the family after the morning Eid prayer when kids gather around elders to receive their bills. This gives them the choice to decide what to buy as a gift for themselves.

Many families also use it as a reward for kids who successfully complete the month-long fasting month of Ramadan. Others give it out as a token of love and appreciation to young family members during the celebration. While giving Eidiyah is predominantly limited to children in some families, others extend the tradition to female members of the family, including sisters, mothers, wives and even sisters-in-laws. — Agencies

According to Muthafar, it is legally not permissible to detain a person of any nationality for such period without being charged with any accusation, or referring him to court. "It is illegal and violates the rules of justice and humanity, whatever the reason for the detention is," he said. "It violates all principles, legal norms and international laws."

Muthafar said he recognizes that the Kuwait Foreign Ministry is doing its best to help the detained citizen, as well as the ambassador of Kuwait in Armenia Nawaf Al-Enezi, who has spared no effort in providing the assistance required. He thanked the Assistant Secretary of Consular Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ambassador Aziz Al-Dehani for their keen concern for the safety and security of Kuwaiti citizens abroad.

and comes at a difficult time, where the association anticipates vacancies in many supervisory positions, in addition to vacancies currently present.

Head of the society Hamad Al-Houli said: "It is really surprising that this decision comes from the Civil Service Bureau at a time when the Ministry of Education is seeking to accommodate leadership and supervisory positions ... and trying to secure plans for its preparations for the new academic year, which requires the accommodation of these positions and the activation of assignment, transfer and other decisions." The Civil Service Commission had issued a circular on April 17, 2023, regarding stopping appointments to leadership positions and filling supervisory positions.

International Cimes at 1011 all

THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 2023

Taiwan civilians train for Chinese invasion

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China hospital fire leaves 29 dead

Twelve people detained in connection with the blaze

Foreign players lurk as Sudan rival generals battle it out

BEIJING: Chinese authorities said on Wednesday they had detained a dozen people over a hospital fire in Beijing that left at least 29 dead and forced desperate survivors to jump out of windows to escape. The blaze, which broke out on Tuesday afternoon at the Changfeng Hospital in China's capital, killed mostly patients, and left scores of other people injured.

Dramatic footage posted to social media showed people clinging to ropes and jumping from the building, while others perched on external air conditioning units in a desperate bid to shelter from the flames. The Fengtai district's deputy mayor expressed his "deep condolences" over the deaths of the 16 women and 13 men killed in the inferno, the deadliest in Beijing in over two decades.

"We feel deep remorse and guilt," Li Zongrong told journalists as he announced the toll at a press conference on Wednesday. "I hereby express our deep condolences for the victims, and express our sincere respects to the victims' families, the injured and their relatives, and apologise to the people of the whole city," he said.

Twelve people, including the hospital's director, have been detained in connection with the fire, said Sun Haitao from Beijing's public security bureau, adding that representatives from a company renovating the facility were among those being held.

A preliminary probe revealed the blaze had been caused by "sparks generated during the internal renovation and construction of the inpatient department of the hospital", according to Zhao Yang from the city fire brigade. The sparks "ignited the volatile elements of the flammable paint on the site", Zhao said.

39 hospitalised

State broadcaster CCTV reported that out of the dead, 26 were patients at the hospital, two were hospital staff, and one was a patient's family member.

State-run People's Daily reported that as of Wednesday morning 39 people were being treated in hospital with injuries, and another three had been discharged. Top city officials visited the hospital shortly after the fire, which broke out at around 1:00 pm on Tuesday and was extinguished half an hour later. Beijing party secretary Yin Li vowed to "quickly identify the cause of the accident and hold the relevant responsible persons accountable", according to the Beijing Daily.

AFP journalists on Wednesday saw dozens of people outside the entrance to the hospital, where a large number of police officers were stationed. Some of the hospital's windows appeared blackened and at least one was broken.

The facade of one of the hospital buildings was completely blackened by soot. AFP journalists saw people who appeared to be investigators taking photos from inside the blackened building, with the interior visibly damaged by the flames. Many family members lost contact with patients in the aftermath of the disaster, the China Youth Daily said in a separate report on Wednesday, adding that many of them were elderly people with mobility problems.



BEIJING: Police officers are seen at the Changfeng Hospital in Beijing, after a fire broke out a day earlier. An investigation was underway on April 19 after a fire ripped through a hospital in China's capital Beijing, killing 29 people, state media reported. —AFP

A police officer on the scene on Wednesday told AFP the city "will probably make the appropriate arrangements" to take care of victims' relatives. The hospital is located in the capital's western urban area, about 25 minutes by car from Tiananmen Square. Deadly

fires are common in China due to weak safety standards and lax enforcement.

Tuesday's tragedy was the deadliest in the Chinese capital since a June 2002 fire at an internet cafe killed 25 students. Ten people died in an apartment block blaze in northwestern Xin-

jiang in November, sparking protests against COVID-19 lockdowns blamed for hindering rescue efforts.

And 38 people were killed in a fire at a factory in central China, also in November, with authorities blaming workers for illegal welding.—AFP

WILMINGTON: Justin Nelson (2R), joined by fellow members of the Dominion Voting Systems legal team, depart the Leonard Williams Justice Center in Wilmington, Delaware. Vote machine maker Dominion and Fox News settled a defamation case over falsehoods about the 2020 presidential election aired on the conservative TV network, a US judge announced Tuesday. —AFP

Fox faces stain of disinformation engine despite settlement

WASHINGTON: Fox News averted a potentially humiliating defamation trial after a last-minute settlement Tuesday, but it took a reputational beating that observers said was unlikely to spur the influential broadcaster to tame its "disinformation engine."

The network, one of the most powerful and profitable in the United States, agreed to a \$787.5 million settlement in a lawsuit launched by voting technology company Dominion over its coverage of false rigging claims in the 2020 election.

While Fox News wriggled out of what was expected to be an explosive trial, analysts said the settlement was a rare example that showed there could be a heavy price for blatant disinformation—even for once-untouchable media giants.

"This can be seen as a wake-up call for live broadcasters and a reminder that there really is a difference between false factual statements, and knowingly broadcasting such false information, and protected speech," Roy Gutterman, a Syracuse University professor, told AFP.

a Syracuse University professor, told AFP.

Dominion, which sued Fox News for \$1.6 billion, had alleged that the network promoted Donald Trump's unfounded claim that its voting machines were used to rig the 2020 election in favor of Joe Biden. The settlement meant that none of the broadcaster's high-profile personalities—including Fox Corporation chairman Rupert Murdoch and hosts such as Tucker Carlson and Sean Hannity—will have to testify. "A loss—and the trial process itself—would have been much worse for Fox," John Culhane, a professor at Delaware Law School at Widener University, told AFP. "They were staring down the prospect of a parade of high-profile witnesses having to try to defend their disinformation machinery to a jury. The audio would have been replayed a thousand times, forever."

'Stain'

Dominion had released copious amounts of internal Fox News communications, including text messages and emails, showing that its executives dismissed Trump's $\frac{1}{2}$

claims and even expressed a revulsion for the former president despite praising him on air. "The stain this leaves on Fox can't be wiped out with money," said Angelo Carusone, president of the advocacy group Media Matters.

"The network has been completely exposed as a partisan propaganda outlet that is willing to do anything for profit and power." Under the terms of the settlement, the broadcaster will neither have to apologize for or admit to spreading falsehoods on network programming, according to US media.

Will the huge settlement be enough to stop the conservative network from doing the same in the future? Many analysts were sceptical. "Will Fox's disinformation engine be chastened? I doubt it," Gregory Miller, the co-founder of the nonpartisan nonprofit OSET Institute, told AFP.

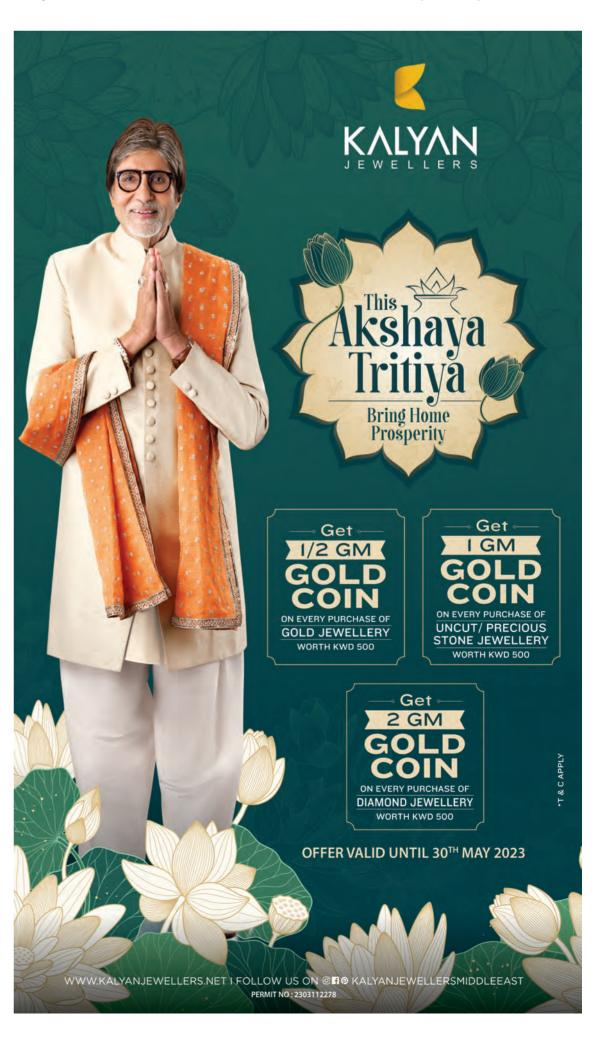
"It may bring about some cooling off, but I fear it will be in full gear" in the lead up to the 2024 presidential election. Experts predict a highly polarized 2024 race. Trump—whose false claim that the previous election was stolen from him incited a violent mob to attack the US Capitol on January 6, 2021 — is running for president for a third time and remains a front-runner for the Republican nomination.

'Roadmap for falsehoods' s legal troubles are hardly ov

Fox News's legal troubles are hardly over. It faces another \$2.7 billion defamation lawsuit by another voting technology company Smartmatic, which has similarly accused the network of false narratives that it played a role in Trump's 2020 defeat.

"Dominion's litigation exposed some of the misconduct and damage caused by Fox's disinformation campaign," a Smartmatic attorney said in a statement reported by US media. "Smartmatic will expose the rest." Miller voiced concern that Tuesday's settlement, which arguably reaffirms the high bar for media defamation, could provide "other networks with a legal roadmap for disseminating future falsehoods." And if the settlement is characterized by Fox or its supporters as a "victory" that could be even more disruptive, he added.

"Fox can basically flip this as being the victim," Andrew Selepak, media professor at University of Florida, told AFP. "I'm sure there are some people... who might be celebrating this result, but don't recognize that once a precedent is set, it can be turned on anybody. "While Fox can survive a settlement this large, you know, there (are) a lot of news organizations that would not be able to." —AFP



Kuwait Times

International Thursday, April 20, 2023

Foreign players lurk as Sudan rival generals battle it out

Nearly 200 people killed and 1,800 injured: UN

KHARTOUM: Sudan has degenerated into a battleground for two rival generals, but they are backed by complex webs of international alliances with conflicting interests that could imperil the country's future, analysts say. Missiles, air strikes and gunfire have been ceaseless in Khartoum since Saturday as army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan wages war with his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who leads the powerful Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary group.

Nearly 200 people have been killed and 1,800 injured, according to the UN, in the fighting between the one-time partners and authors of a 2021 coup. With a long history of coups, the impoverished north African nation enjoys a strategic location and has long been courted for its natural resources.

Russia and the United Arab Emirates — in addition to earmarking billions for new Red Sea ports are both involved in RSF-controlled Sudanese gold mining, according to experts. The country's sizeable gold deposits have made Daglo — commonly known as Hemeti — rich, and in the process lined the pockets of Russia's Wagner Group mercenary force, according to the US, as well as the UAE, Sudan's main gold market.

Gulf states to 'pick winning side'

Abu Dhabi's approach to the current conflict is best described as "pragmatism, pushed to the level of cynical indifference", a specialist told AFP on condition of anonymity. "If the war drags out, it's not necessarily a bad thing from either a Russian or an Emirati perspective. It lets the UAE keep its influence, which it couldn't do with a conventional power structure," he added.

As opposed to the "classical, traditional" approach of Egypt — which favours the military "the UAE has been much closer to Russia in its tactics", funnelling "shady trades" through Dubai. But like its fellow Gulf heavyweight Saudi Arabia, the UAE is unlikely to antagonise either general, both of whom have served Gulf interests in the past.

"Both Burhan and Hemeti fought the Huthis" as

. Riyadh offers "no real advantage for either" general, said Eric Reeves, a fellow at the Rift Valley Institute. "Gulf states... will pick a winning side, but wait until victory is clear," he added.

part of the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen in 2015, and

European support?

Hemeti's RSF emerged from the Janjaweed militia unleashed by former dictator Omar al-Bashir against non-Arab minorities in the western Darfur region starting 2003, drawing accusations of war crimes. The camel-herder-turned-commander's power is the strongest in Sudan's west, which served as a rear base to send RSF troops to fight in the conflict in neighbouring Libya, according to experts.

In a TV interview a year after the 2021 coup, Hemeti thanked Italy for its "continued technical training" but denied receiving European support to stymie irregular migration by cutting off passage to Libya. Sudan's west, where the RSF also holds positions on the Chadian border, is still "awash in weapons", according to Reeves, and is critical for Hemeti, who will try "to use his connection to Chad and his power in Darfur to secure a supply line".

Egypt's vested interest

On the formal diplomatic front, Burhan — as de facto head of state — is credited as the architect of the normalisation of relations with Zionist entity. The general also looks to Sudan's northern neighbour Egypt for support. He attended the same Egyptian military college as Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, and Cairo has a vested interest in Sudan's stability.

The two countries have strong trade links, share a 1,200-kilometre-long (745-mile) border, and have "mutual security concerns", said Mirette Mabrouk, a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute. "There have already been ramifications for Egypt," Mabrouk said, referring to the RSF capture of a group of Egyptian soldiers in Meroe, where they had been for joint training exercises and whose release has yet to be negotiated.

According to Clement Deshayes, a Sudan spe-



cialist at Paris's Sorbonne University, "the presence of Egyptian soldiers in Meroe seems to have been the straw that broke the camel's back" for the RSF. "Hemeti felt threatened by Egypt," which just a few weeks ago hosted pro-army Sudanese politicians for a dialogue. Cairo might have been "sabotaging the democratic transition" in Khartoum, Deshayes said, where the UN, African Union, Western nations and Gulf allies were pushing for an agreement to bring

civilians back to power. Today, the international community — which had already cut critical aid to Sudan in response to 2021's coup — seems to have little leverage compared with African and Arab players. Upstream of the Nile River, Ethiopia, which hosts the African Union headquarters and shares a border with Sudan, is likely to

Already at loggerheads with Cairo over its ambitious Nile dam project, "the last thing they (Addis Ababa) want to do is piss off the generals" who will be part of the final negotiations, Reeves told AFP. Ethiopa like "most major regional and global stakeholders," according to New York-based think-tank the Soufan Center, has "built ties with all groups in Sudan to position themselves to benefit from any outcome". —AFP

Focus on reproductive rights rather than population numbers

GENEVA: Rather than fixating on the impact of the world's soaring population, the world should look at women's reproductive rights to shore up "demographic resilience," the UN said Wednesday. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) -- the UN's sexual and reproductive health agency—acknowledged there was widespread anxiety over the size of the world's population, which is expected to peak at around 10.4 billion during the 2080s.

But the UNFPA said the focus should be on giving women more power to control when and how they have children. "The question is: 'Can everyone exercise their fundamental human right to choose the number and spacing of their children?'. Sadly, the answer is a resounding no," said UNFPA chief Natalia Kanem. She said that "44 percent, almost half of women, are unable to exercise bodily autonomy. Unable to make choices about contraception, health-

Wisdom behind....

Continued from Page 1

days every month (ie, the white days), to offer the Dhuha (pre-noon optional) prayer, and to offer witr (optional prayer in odd numbers) before sleeping." (Al-Bukhari # 1,178) In another prophetic narration, Abduallah bin Abbas (ra) narrated, "The Messenger of Allah would not break his fast on the white days (Al-Ayyaam Al-Beidh); whether he was a resident or traveling." (Al-Albani rated it as Saheeh (authentic) in Saheeh Al-Ja'mei # 4, 848 and An-Nasaei # 2, 345)

Benefits of fasting

According to modern scientific research, there is a relevant relationship (proportional) between the Earth and Human. The earth's surface consists of about 80% of liquids (seas, oceans and rivers) and about 20% of solids (land mass). Interestingly, the human body also consists of about 80% of liquids and about 20% of solids, (this was proved by Modern Sciences.) (en.islamwav.net)

During the white days and nights according to scientific research, nervous irritability and mental and psychic tension increases in a person. And due to the fact that the impact of lunar gravity causes the ebb and flow in seas and oceans, it causes the same ebb and flow in human body, which explains why people experience mood swings during those three days of the full moon. This ebb and flow effect on the earth and human body reaches the peak in the white days; (thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth days of every lunar month). This effect on a human-being appears as an increase of excitement and agitation (tension, confusion and worry), and leads to an increase in crimes. (en.islamway.net and albaya.ae)

Aisha (ra) narrated that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) looked at the (full) moon and he said what can be translated as: "O Aishah, seek refuge with Allah from the evil of this! For indeed this is the one alluded to as "the gathering darkness when it overspreads." (Al-Albani said that it is Hasan Saheeh, see Saheeh

Almighty Allah and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) instructed us to seek refuge in Him (Allah) from the evil of some of His creatures including the darkness of night, due to the observation that most of the crimes and acts of wickedness are committed at night, harmful animals also come out at night, and the night was a very dreadful thing in those days when chaos prevailed in Arabia.

care and whether or with whom to have sex. And globally, nearly half of all pregnancies are unintended." She said countries with the highest fertility rates contribute the least to global warming and suffer the most from its impact. In its flagship annual "State of World Population" report, the UNFPA found the most commonly-held view is that the world's popu-

But it said that passing the eight billion mark "should be a reason to celebrate. It is a milestone representing historic advances for humanity in medicine, science, health, agriculture and education". "It is time to put aside fear, to turn away from population targets and towards demographic resilience an ability to adapt to fluctuations in population growth and fertility rate," it said. "The world population is rapidly reordering it-

self," Kanem told a press conference. While the population is now the largest ever seen, "the global average fertility rate is the lowest in living memory".

Kanem said the ranking of the world's most populous countries would change significantly over the next 25 years, with India currently overtaking China at the top. Eight countries will account for half the projected growth in global population by 2050: the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines and Tanzania. — AFP

(Refer to www.quran7m.com)

Jabir bin Abdillah (ra) narrated that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said what can be translated as: When night falls, then keep your children close to you; for the devils spread out then. An hour later, you can let them free; and close the gates of your house (at night), and mention Allah's Name thereupon, and cover your utensils, and mention Allah's Name thereupon. (And if you don't have anything to cover your utensil with), you may put across it something (eg a piece of wood etc)." (Al-Bukhari # 3, 280 + Muslim # 2, 012)

There is a great wisdom from fasting the white days, which is that it removes the diseases that settle in the heart like hatred and rancor – among others. Amr bin Shurahbeel (ra) narrated, "A man came to the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) and said what can be translated as: 'O Messenger of Allah, what do you say about a man who fasted for the rest of his life?' The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) replied (in rebuke): 'I wish that he would never eat for the rest of his life.

The man said, 'Two-thirds (of a lifetime)?' The Prophet (PBUH) replied, 'That is too much.' The man said, 'Half?' He (the Prophet – PBUH) said, 'Shall I not inform you of that which will take away impurities (ie grudges, bitter feelings, rage, etc) from the heart?" He said, 'Yes.' He said, 'Fasting for three days each month." (Al-Albani rated it as Saheeh (authentic) in Sunan An-Nasa'ei # 2, 386)

Toxins and the body

Toxins impair the body's natural process of detoxification. They are tough to expel, so they end up being stored in us for years, mostly in our fat cells. Overexposure to chemicals and the toxic build-up that results in our body can play a role in cancer, Alzheimer's disease, and diabetes, as well as in issues such as obesity, sleep disturbances, hormonal problems, and aged skin.

Finally, one cannot stop to wonder as to how modern science continue to discover facts that have been mentioned in the Noble Quran more than 1, 400 years ago. Almighty Allah tells us what can be translated as: "We will certainly show them Our signs in the horizons and in themselves, until it becomes (utterly) clear to them that this (Quran) is, indeed, the (divine) truth. Is it not sufficient that your Lord Himself is witness over all things?" (Fussilat 41: 53). — Courtesy of the TIES Center

CAR accuses rebels of killing miners

BANGUI: A leading rebel group was behind the murder of nine Chinese gold miners in the Central African Republic last month, the justice minister said Wednesday, citing an investigation. The killers were "indisputably elements from the CPC", or Coalition of Patriots for Change, said Arnaud Djoubaye Abazene, quoting the probe's final report into the March 19 deaths in the centre of the country.

The CPC, an alliance of rebel groups formed in December 2020 to overthrow President Faustin-Archange Touadera, has denied carrying out the killings. Prime Minister Felix Moloua had accused the CPC of the attack the day after it took place, but offered no evidence.

The CPC denied any involvement in what it described as a "despicable and barbaric" act. In turn it accused Russia's Wagner mercenary group of being behind the murders, also without providing evidence.

Russian paramilitaries were deployed to the CAR in 2018. Their numbers increased in 2020 to fend off an assault on the capital by the CPC. The nine min-

ers had been employed by China's Gold Coast Group at the Chimbolo mine, 25 kilometres (15 miles) from Bambari, the main town in the Ouaka prefecture. At a press conference, Abazene said the president

thanked "our Russian allies who managed to neutralise certain perpetrators, seized evidence and put to flight the rest of these criminals".

He said he had received the "report of the special commission of inquiry" into the "assassinations" on Wednesday, but journalists at the press conference were not allowed to ask questions. The murders prompted Chinese President Xi Jinping to call on Bangui to "severely punish" the killers.

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said Xi issued "important instructions, demanding an all-out effort to treat the wounded, handle the aftermath in a timely manner, severely punish perpetrators in accordance with the law, and ensure the safety of Chinese citizens".

Two people were seriously wounded, China added. The CAR, one of the world's poorest countries, has been in the throes of civil conflict since 2013. Militias hold sway over large tracts of territory and often clash over access to minerals and other resources. Russian and Chinese companies dominate mining for gold and diamonds in the Bambari region. —AFP

India population to surpass China...

Continued from Page 1

started letting couples have three children in 2021. Many blame its falling birth rates on the soaring cost of living, as well as the growing number of women going into the workforce and seeking higher education.

China said on Wednesday that it "implements a national strategy to actively respond to population ageing, promotes the three-child birth policy and supporting measures, and actively responds to changes in population development". "China's demographic dividend has not disappeared, the talent dividend is taking shape, and development momentum remains strong," said foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin.

India has no recent official population data because it has not conducted a census since 2011, with a follow-up in 2021 delayed by the COVID pandemic. The initiative is now bogged down by logistical hurdles, making it unlikely the massive exercise will begin anytime soon. Some accuse the government of deliberately delaying the count until after national elections next year.

The census will shine a spotlight on how the Indian economy under Prime Minister Narendra Modi is struggling to provide jobs for the millions of young people entering the job market every year. The new UN report also estimated that the global population will have hit 8.045 billion by mid-2023, by which time almost one in five people on the planet will be Indian. — AFP

Sudanese flee as death toll mounts...

Continued from Page 1

Deafening explosions rattled buildings and heavy gunfire was heard in Khartoum, as witnesses said plumes of thick black smoke emanated from buildings around the army headquarters in central Khartoum. RSF fighters atop armored vehicles and pickup trucks laden with weapons swarmed the streets. Fighter jets roared overhead and fired on RSF targets, the witnesses said.

Zionist soldiers shoot seven in West Bank raid...

Continued from Page 1

Police announced they had found the perpetrator's gun near the scene of the attack, which took place near the tomb of Simeon the Just - Shimon Hatzadik in Hebrew - a site frequented by religious Jews. The weapon was identified as a Carlo makeshift submachine gun, which

Civilians huddled in their homes were becoming increasingly desperate, with dwindling food supplies, power outages, and a lack of running water. A 24-hour humanitarian ceasefire announced by South Sudan failed to take hold at its proposed start at 1600 GMT on Tuesday. On Wednesday, the RSF said it would "fully commit to a complete ceasefire", again from 1600 GMT and for 24 hours. The army had made no comment on such a development. Thousands of people took matters into their own

hands and, according to witnesses, began leaving their homes in Khartoum, some in cars and others on foot, including women and children. They said the streets were littered with dead bodies, the stench of which filled the air. — AFP

Palestinians manufacture in the West Bank. Hadassah hospital said they received a 48-year-old gunshot victim lightly wounded, and Shaare Zedek medical centre said it was treating a man in his 50s in moderate condition.

The search was punctuated by the 10:00 am two-minute siren marking Holocaust Remembrance Day, honoring more than six million Jews killed by the Nazis during World War II. Jerusalem mayor Moshe Lion, speaking at a city hall ceremony, said one of the Holocaust's main lessons was "to never be helpless in the face of those seeking to harm us". Later in the morning, most of the security forces had left Sheikh Jarrah, with roads reopened and traffic flowing as normal, the AFP journalist said. — AFP

Kim orders launch of North Korea's first spy satellite

Development of a military reconnaissance satellite was one of the key defence projects

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said the country has finished building its first military spy satellite and gave the green light for its launch, state media said Wednesday. The report of its completion comes about a week after Pyongyang launched what it said was a new solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile, marking a major breakthrough in its banned weapons programmes.

International

Analysts have said there is significant technological overlap between the development of ICBMs and space launch capabilities. Kim gave instructions on Tuesday to "make sure that the military reconnaissance satellite No. 1 completed as of April will be launched at the planned date," the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported.

During a visit to North Korea's National Aerospace Development Administration on Tuesday, he also called on staff to "firmly establish the satellite intelligence-gathering capability by deploying several reconnaissance satellites on different orbits in succession".

State media images showed Kim touring the space agency with his daughter. The items he was inspecting, as well as charts and other wall displays in some of the images were blurred out. The development of a military reconnaissance satellite was one of the key defence projects outlined by

On Tuesday, he said gaining this reconnaissance technology was a "primary task to be indispensably fulfilled" because of what he descibed as threats and aggression from the United States and South Korea.

In December 2022, North Korea said it had carried out an "important final-stage test" for the development of a spy satellite, which it said it would complete by April this year. At the time, experts in South Korea quickly raised doubts about the results, saying the quality of the black-and-white images released by North Korea—purportedly taken from a satellite—was poor. Pyongyang has not provided a launch date, though on Tuesday, Kim said the satellite would be sent up "at the planned date".

'Significant threat'

"It looks like the North will launch its 'symbolic' satellite for now, and upgrade it gradually," An Chan-il, a defector-turned-researcher who runs the World Institute for North Korea Studies, told AFP. "If China and Russia do not provide hightech support, it will be difficult to carry out spying with North Korea's own technology.'

Even so, the latest announcement should be taken seriously, said Yang Moo-jin, president of the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul. "Since North Korea's reconnaissance satellites are an important factor in the event of a nuclear pre-emptive strike, they pose a significant threat to the South," he told AFP. North Korea declared itself an "irreversible" nuclear power last year, effectively ending the possibility of denuclearisation talks.

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 last week as "frantic" drills "simulating an all-out war against" Pyongyang. —AFP

Seismic demographic shift as India overtakes China

NEW DELHI: India will overtake China to become the world's most populous nation by the middle of this year, the United Nations projected Wednesday, the culmination of decades-long trends and a position the South Asian country is likely to retain for centuries to come.

It is a momentous change: China has generally been regarded as the world's most populous country since the fall of the Roman Empire, although pre-Partition British India may have overtaken it for a period. AFP looks at the causes and effects.

How has this happened?

China moved decisively to curtail its population growth in the 1980s, imposing a sometimes brutally enforced one-child policy on its people. It has become increasingly prosperous in recent decades—a phenomenon consistently linked to smaller family sizes—but is now reaping the demographic whirlwind with an ageing, shrinking population.

India has mounted sterilisation and family planning campaigns of its own, including a notoriously unpopular effort to target men in the 1970s. It now focuses on women, with female sterilisation by far the most popular method of contraception, despite the associated health risks.

But India's fertility rates are consistently higher than its northern neighbour, giving it a much younger—and now larger—population: Some 650 million Indians are under 25.

What are the implications?

New Delhi and Beijing are vying for geopolitical influence and the shift in the "most populous" title will bolster India's status as a rising powerone being courted by the West as an alternative to Beijing. It will also strengthen New Delhi's case for a long-sought permanent seat on the UN Security Council. As well as overtaking China, India has a larger population than the other four veto-holding member states combined.

Catering to so many people poses major environmental and infrastructure challenges. But a large and young workforce also has economic benefits: India is the world's fastest-growing major economy

CHENNAI: People walk along a market area in Chennai on April 19, 2023. India is set to overtake China as the world's most populous country by the end of June, UN estimates showed on April 19, 2023 posing huge challenges to a nation with creaking infrastructure and insufficient jobs for millions of young people. —AFP

and last year displaced former colonial power Britain to take fifth place in the global GDP rankings.

How many people do India and China have?

The UN estimates that India will have 1.429 billion people by July 1, with China three million behind on 1.426 billion. But calculating actual numbers for such giant countries is fraught with difficulty. China's National Bureau of Statistics issues a population figure every year and said in January that the

mainland had 1.412 billion people at the end of 2022. This marked the first fall in population since the disaster of Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward in the early 1960s. But India has not issued an official population statistic since the last census in 2011, when it recorded 1.21 billion people.

Why doesn't India know its population?

India in 1969, and the once-a-decade census due in 2021 was delayed by the coronavirus pandemic before becoming bogged down by logistical prob-

been removed from public view in recent years. Birth certificates only became compulsory in In his Independence Day speech last year, Prime

bilities. The day-long classes, which cost 1,000 Taiwanese dollars (US\$33), end with emergency medical training, such as how to apply tourniquets and stuff wounds with bandages.

'Endure. Survive. Prevail!'

Instructors used images from Saving Private Ryan's Omaha beach landing scene and missile strikes on residential areas in Ukraine to convey their points in the lessons. "It was very difficult to secure the spot. I think it's partially because of the Ukrainian war." said Lin.

Kuma has trained 10,000 people since January 2022, with classes selling out in minutes after their release as Taiwan residents clamour for more knowledge on how to keep themselves safe. That wider trend among Taiwan's 23 million people has seen civilians taking part in war drills, and the government holding air raid practice across the island and creating a Chinese invasion handbook.

Kuma has been bankrolled by several wealthy entrepreneurs who are pouring millions into the island's defence, including Robert Tsao, the founder of Taiwan's first semiconductor company UMC. He pledged funds to the island's defence after Beijing's large-scale drills last August following the visit of then-US House speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Kuma has ambitious goals to complement Taipei's expanding military spending by training three million people and wants to expedite the process through online lessons planned for this summer. In a handbook adorned with a Taiwanese black bear holding a rifle, it told participants: "We can be left without money. Without gas. Without hot water. Without lems. It is a gargantuan exercise involving an army of data enumerators who go door-to-door to collect information, including religion, mother tongue

Critics accuse authorities of shying away from the issue to play down contentious questions, such as unemployment rates, ahead of elections next year.

What does New Delhi say?

The Hindu nationalist BJP government is normally keen to promote India's achievements—but it has been uncharacteristically reticent about the prospect of displacing China as the world's most populous nation. The health ministry did not comment Wednesday on the figures released by the UN, and several officially backed population clocks have

Minister Narendra Modi still referred to India as a country of 1.3 billion people, a milestone experts say it passed several years ago. – AFP



[AIPEI: Picture shows people walking down a street at the Ximen district in Taipei. At a barbed-wire Tai pei museum where political prisoners were once held for decades, visitors laud Taiwan's modern-day democracy that is shaping a national identity on the island across from authoritarian China. —AFP

light. But not without freedom." "We will overcome everything. Endure. Survive. Prevail!" it says.

Kuma has recently launched some women-only classes, saying more women are signing up than men who are already obliged to perform military training or to be called up in the event of a Chinese attack. Housewife Lai, who declined to give her last name, left her two children with her husband to attend.

"If war happened, I would be at the back. I participated in this class to know what I can do to help others," the 40-year-old said. "I need to ensure I know what I need to do and what to prepare, to ensure the safety of my kids." —AFP

Nigeria disinformation tide targets electoral watchdog, courts

LAGOS: A disinformation campaign is targeting Nigeria's election regulators and supreme court judges, who will have to rule on claims of vote rigging following a presidential ballot marred by delays and fraud accusations. Elections in Africa's biggest democracy are often impacted by vote-buying, disenfranchisement and violence. But disinformation has also become an issue, influencing the political discourse both before and after the ballot.

AFP Fact Check has debunked dozens of election-related claims, including allegations that a photo showed president-elect Bola Tinubu bribing a senior judge at his home. But the picture, which surfaced after the February 25 vote, was old and showed Tinubu with an opposition politician in London.

"The impact of the disinformation campaign... is pervasive and will have implications beyond this election cycle," said Afolabi Adekaiyaoja, a research analyst at the Centre for Democracy and Development.

"In the short term, it will be used to discredit the processes and the relative outcome," he warned. Several polls had projected that opposition candidate Peter Obi of the Labour Party, would come out ahead of Tinubu, the candidate of the governing All Progressives Congress (APC), and Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP).

Obi's campaign resonated with Nigeria's large youth population, though his opponents dismissed the elections as flawed. After days of delay in tallying the result, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) declared Tinubu, a veteran political operator, the winner—a decision that left many young Nigerians disappointed.

"The presidential election was just a big mess," the popular rapper Falz told Arise Television. INEC acknowledged technical difficulties in the vote counting but denied any large-scale

Lost trust

The PDP and the Labour Party have filed legal challenges to the result that could lead to a long legal dispute likely to culminate at the Supreme Court. "The election... was invalid by reason of corrupt practices and non-compliance with the provisions of the electoral act," according to a formal petition Obi submitted to the court.

Both Obi and Atiku have asked the tribunal to declare them the election winner. Their supporters believe that Tinubu and the governing party have already struck a backdoor deal with the courts to confirm his election.

This context has provided fertile ground for disinformation, such as the photo allegedly showing Tinubu bribing the Supreme Court's chief justice, Olukayode Ariwoola. In reality, the image dates back to 1996 and shows Tinubu with opposition politician Dele Momodu, who also refuted the bribery allegation on social media.

Still, social media is replete with unsubstantiated claims of Tinubu attempting to bribe Supreme Court judges as well as the International Criminal Court—even though the latter has no role in Nigerian elections.

"[Disinformation] is really a major problem in Nigeria," said Kemi Busari, an editor at the Nigerian fact-checking organisation Dubawa. "People don't care about your fact-check. All they care about is their biases."

The delay in uploading results to a central portal after the ballot also fuelled disinformation. Ahead of the vote, INEC chairman Mahmood Yakubu told political parties that officials would transmit photos of result sheets from the polling units to the viewing portal.—AFP

Taiwan civilians train for Chinese invasion

TAIPEI: Physician Lin Yuh-ting has taken time out of her weekend to learn civilian defence tips she can relay to her two young children in case China invades self-ruled Taiwan. There are no weapons, just vital training on how to react to China's hybrid warfare.

The classes are part of a growing Taiwanese urgency to be ready for a worst-case scenario after seeing the Ukraine war from afar and enduring two rounds of Chinese drills in the past year, including exercises that ended last week. "When there's the possibility of a war, I think we should get prepared," said 45-year-old Lin, who was attending the Kuma Academy's classes in Taipei.

"Being on the frontline isn't the only way to help," she said, adding her eight- and 12-year-old children should know what to do in a crisis. Kuma's instructors offer practical tips on evacuation preparations, such as finding the nearest air raid shelter and what to pack in emergency go-bags.

But they also focus on disinformation around what Beijing's invasion would look like, countering claims of 1,000 missiles raining down on the island or 50,000 ships landing on its shores. The organisers say they are building a "first line of psychic defence" against Chinese narratives trying to sow distrust in Taiwan's democratic system and its defensive capaTHURSDAY, APRIL 20, 2023

Business

Musk touts new moderation policy to reassure advertisers

Twitter to soon begin tagging posts whose visibility has been limited

MIAMI: Twitter head Elon Musk on Tuesday attempted to reassure wary advertisers by hyping up the site's newly introduced content moderation policy against hateful material. Speaking at a meeting in Florida, the controversial billionaire outlined new rules, first announced Monday, to limit the reach of tweets that do not conform to the platform's guidelines.

"If somebody has something hateful to say, it doesn't mean he should have a microphone," the self-described freespeech absolutist told gathered journalists. "He still should be able to say it, but it needs to be not them pushing it on people," he added.

Under the new policy, unveiled in a blog post titled "Freedom of Speech, Not Reach," Twitter will soon begin tagging posts whose visibility has been limited. The labels will "bring a new level of transparency to enforcement actions," the blog post said. "Tweets with these labels will be made less discoverable on the platform. Additionally, we will not place ads adjacent to content that we label."

Since purchasing the so-called bird app in a rollercoaster \$44 billion deal last year, Musk has sharply reined in content moderation on the platform, allowing the return of many users who had been banned for posting tweets that incite hate or spread misinformation.

At the same time, he also reduced the

company's workforce from more than 7,500 to fewer than 2,000 employees. Last week, US public radio NPR said it was quitting Twitter after the site labeled the highly respected news outlet's account as "state-affiliated media," branding it the same way as media in authoritarian countries such as Russia or China.

The tag was later amended to read government-funded media," which was also applied to Britain's BBC. Following the row, Canada's CBC/Radio-Canada and Swedish public radio Sveriges Radio (SR) also quit the social network.

The drama came against the backdrop of the rollout of yet another contentious new policy, as Twitter has said that starting April 20, it will only grant its famous blue checkmark to accounts that pay for its Twitter Blue service.

According to analyst Jasmine Enberg at market research firm Insider Intelligence, Twitter's revenue is set to drop 28 percent this year, because "advertisers don't trust Musk." But for Musk, the ability to tinker with Twitter's protocol might be worth the financial risk of spooking advertisers. "It's totally cool to say that vou want to have your advertisement appear in certain places in Twitter and not in other places," Musk said Tuesday.

"But it's not cool to try to say what you can do or not do. And if that means Twitter loses hundreds of thousands of dollars, we'll lose it." he said. – AFP



MIAMI BEACH: Twitter CEO Elon Musk holds one of his children after a keynote speech at the "Twitter 2.0: From Conversations to Partnerships," marketing conference in Miami Beach, Florida, on April 18, 2023. — AFP

OAPEC reviews preparations for energy conference

CAIRO: Egypt's Petroleum and Mineral Resources Minister Tarek Al-Molla discussed with newly-appointed Secretary General of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) Jamal Issa Al-Loughani latest preparations for the 12th Arab Energy Conference, which is scheduled to be held in Doha during December 11-12, 2023.

In statements on Tuesday, Molla affirmed support to Egypt's relentless efforts to promote the organization's work mechanisms and enhance cooperation frameworks between the member states of the organization, which was established in 1968. Loughani reviewed the general framework to enhance the organization's work mechanism in light of the successive changes taking place in the global petroleum industry.

OAPEC, which includes 10 Arab countries, is aimed to enhance and strengthen the cooperation between member states in the petroleum industry, to safeguard the individual and collective interests of members in oil-related fields, to coordinate the activities of members in order to realize a just and reasonable supply quota to the oil consumer market, and to create a favorable environment for the capital and technical transfers to the oil industry. — Agencies

China's CATL unveils battery planned to power planes

SHANGHAI: China's CATL said Wednesday it was working with partners to develop electric passenger planes as they unveiled a condensed matter battery it said was strong enough to power such an aircraft.

The world's biggest maker of batteries for electrical vehicles made the announcement at the Shanghai Auto Show and said it would also launch a version for cars that would go into mass production this year. "The launch of this cutting-edge technology breaks the limits that have long restricted the development of the battery sector and will open up a new scenario of electrification centring on a high level of safety and light weight," the company said in a news release.

CATL did not specify who its airline partners were but said it was practicing aviation-level standards and testing in accordance with industry requirements. "We believe that condensed batteries will have a positive and far-reaching impact on achieving carbon neutrality," CATL's chief scientist Wu Kai told a media conference. The company announced on Tuesday that its core operations would be carbon neutral by 2025, with the rest following in 2035. Its Yibin factory in the southwestern province of Sichuan was certified as the world's first zero-carbon battery factory last year. — AFP

'Stamp of approval': Musk amplifies misinformation

WASHINGTON: Elon Musk promised to make Twitter the "most accurate source of information about the world," but he has repeatedly used his own account to amplify false claims from some of the most notorious disinformers on the internet, according to an AFP analysis of his online activity. The posts show Musk drawing attention to misinformation about everything from the war in Ukraine to the attack on US Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi's husband. Last week, the billionaire boosted a tweet that wrongly suggested doctors misdiagnosed flu cases as COVID-19 deaths.

"One of the greatest mysteries of COVID-19: Where did the flu go in 2020 and 2021?" an account called "KanekoaTheGreat" said, to which Musk replied: "Good question."

It was one of at least 40 times the billionaire replied to the profile, which has promoted the QAnon conspiracy theory, since purchasing Twitter for \$44 billion nearly six months ago. He has only replied to a handful of accounts more in that time. Using data from PolitiTweet, a website that tracked public figures' posts until Twitter cut off its access, AFP reviewed thousands of replies Musk published between late October and March.

He shared a fabricated CNN segment, called a made-up quote "wise words" and falsely claimed police escorted a rioter through the US Capitol on January 6, 2021. He amplified a post blaming mass shootings on LGBTQ individuals and endorsed a fake casualty count from Ukraine.

Musk has also downplayed COVID-19 and promoted spurious claims about vaccines causing blood clots, miscarriages and heart problems. "We are running out of 'conspiracies' that turned out to be true!" the Twitter owner said in March, replying to a tweet that listed Covid-19 and vaccine safety among the "biggest media lies."

Days later, he tweeted that the "best way to fight misinformation is to respond with accurate information." Experts say Musk's activity is concerning — and not just because of his online influence.

"Musk has almost 135 million Twitter followers and

forced his engineers to increase the reach of his tweets, so we should worry when he spreads misinformation," Brendan Nyhan, a Dartmouth College professor who studies misperceptions in politics, told AFP. "I'm most worried, though, about what these tweets reveal about the judgment of the person who determines the poli cies of a major social media platform."

Musk's feed

Researchers have tied Twitter's recent policy changes — including Musk's reinstatement of suspended accounts and its overhaul of verification practices — to spikes in misinformation.

NewsGuard, a company that assesses websites' credibility, found accounts paying for Twitter's subscription service are inundating the site with false claims. Musk is driving attention to some of these accounts. "Got the Elon Musk stamp of approval," said "KanekoaTheGreat" on Telegram after one such reply.

A January study from the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, a London-based think tank, recorded a "staggering" increase in Musk's interactions with right-wing accounts since acquiring Twitter, including several profiles other research identified as spreaders of US election misinformation. — AFP

Bulgaria bans Ukraine grain imports, Hungary widens restrictions

BUDAPEST, Hungary: Bulgaria's government on Wednesday approved a temporary ban on imports of Ukrainian grain and other food products after Hungary widened the scope of its ban to include more foodstuffs. In recent days, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia banned the import of grain and other food items from war-hit Ukraine after a slump in prices triggered protests from local farmers.

"The government... passed a decision that temporarily bans... a range of products originating from Jkraine... following the example of three other countries," Bulgarian farming minister Yavor Gechev said after a government meeting.

Sofia said it was "forced to adopt... today's extreme measure" after unilateral bans by other countries were announced, "seriously" increasing the risk for Bulgaria due to the potential diversion of goods. The ban will enter into force from April 24 and last until the end of June, but will not apply to the transit of goods through Bulgarian territory.

Bulgaria hopes for a common EU decision in the next weeks, it added. In May 2022, the European Union allowed Kyiv to export its grain stocks through the bloc after the closure of the Black Sea shipping lanes following Russia's invasion sparked a global food crisis. Member states agreed to import certain products from Ukraine without quantitative restrictions, and without customs and official inspection.

'Serious disturbances'

Earlier Wednesday, Hungary's government widened its temporary ban on the imports of Ukrainian agricultural products to include honey, wine, bread, sugar, and a range of meat and vegetable products. The list of items to be banned were revealed in a



government decree, after Budapest announced on Saturday a measure to halt the import of grain, oilseeds, and several other products.

Budapest complained that a significant proportion of imported Ukrainian products do not leave the EU, and instead have been sold at dumping prices in the member states. Orban's spokesman Zoltan Kovacs on Wednesday denounced "the sudden influx of cheap products" that has created an "untenable situation" for European farmers. "In the absence of the obligation to comply with the strict production rules required by EU law, Ukrainian products have a competitive advantage... which causes serious disturbances in the internal market of the member

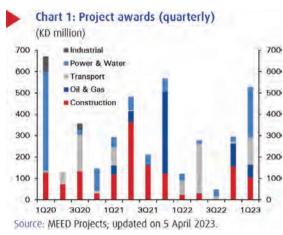
states," the decree stated. Hungary's decree, published overnight, said that its ban would also apply to flour, cooking oil, and wine imports. The temporary ban will last from Wednesday until June 30. Yet, it will not apply to the transit of these products through Hungary, the decree specified. Hungarian authorities will seal shipments of the affected products at the border and monitor them with the help of electronic devices and patrols, it added. Carriers who break the rules may be fined up to the full value of the shipment. Poland and Ukraine on Tuesday struck a deal to allow Ukrainian grain to transit through Poland after Warsaw banned imports. — AFP

NBK ECONOMIC REPORT

Business

Kuwait project market recovers in 1Q23, sets positive tone for 2024

Road and infrastructure works form bulk of KD 127bn awards









KUWAIT: Kuwait's project activity in 1023 staged a rebound following a lackluster 2022. The value of awarded projects rose 78.3 percent quarter-on-quarter (q/q) to KD 527 million (+332 percent y/y) in 1Q23. Three months into 2023, and this figure is already equivalent to more than 70 percent of the total value of projects awarded in 2022.

The acceleration was mainly due to projects in the power and water sectors, awarded by the Ministry of Electricity & Water (MEW). These totaled KD 236 million and accounted for 45 percent of total project awards in 1Q23. Activity in the power sector was notably strong, rising to its highest level in almost six years, with KD 150 million worth of MEW projects and KD 60 million of GCC Inter-

connection Authority (GCCIA) projects awarded. The transport sector continued its solid performance. Total project awards came in at KD 127 million, the bulk of which relate to road and infrastructure works on Sabah Al-Ahmad City by the Public Authority for Housing (KD 110 million).

Activity in the construction sector was firm. though it softened from the previous quarter. Total construction awards declined 33 percent q/q to KD 104 million. The main awards were for Kuwait Oil Company's soil remediation project SKETR-2 (KD 45 million) and for the construction of multiple headquarters for the Capital Markets Authority and the Institute of Banking Studies.

Oil and gas project awards fell quarter-on-quarter but were, nevertheless, solid. Awards in the sector tumbled 44 percent q/q to KD 60 million in 1Q23. Limited activity is expected this year, though KOC's Debottlenecking of Gathering Centers in East Kuwait (KD 210 million) could push total awards above 2021 levels.

There were no projects awarded at all in the chemical and industrial sectors. The chemical sector could see some activity this year if the Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company's (KIPIC) Al-Zour Petrochemicals project (KD2.9 billion) is awarded in 4Q23.

Looking ahead to the rest of 2023, positive momentum could continue. The partial recovery in the expatriate workforce in 2022 could point to some project mobilization and the government could in months to come prioritize an acceleration in development plan execution once parliamentary elections are completed. For the time being, however, the domestic environment remains challenging with a projected decline in government

capital spending outlined in the FY23/24 draft budget, a slowdown in the consumer-spending boom, relatively high costs of labor and construction materials which have weighed on project activity previously and higher borrowing costs as monetary policy tightens.

Nevertheless, MEED Projects sees KD 8.4 billion worth of awards in the remainder of the year, more than four times higher than in 2022. Admittedly, almost half of that figure relates to KIPIC's Al-Zour Petrochemicals Complex (KD2.9 billion) and Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects' (KAPP) Al-Zour North Independent Water and Power project (KD 1.2 billion). But even if only 30 percent of the remaining project awards expected this year materialize, it would represent an improvement on 2022's outturn.

Lebanon's caretaker govt raises public sector salaries

BEIRUT: Lebanon's caretaker cabinet has approved a decision to raise public sector salaries and the nation's minimum wage in an effort to match the local currency's rapid devaluation amid a shortage of US dollars reserves and growing public discontent. The cabinet meeting, which lasted four hours, was held on Tuesday as hundreds of protesters from the public sector — civil servants, public school teachers, and retired soldiers — demonstrated outside the government building, promising they would not leave until

salaries were increased. "We came here to discuss the demands raised, which are justified," caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati said at the beginning of the session. He explained that the salary increases would be approved in proportion with available resources in the central bank's dwindling reserves, and through revenue generated from customs.

The salaries of public sector workers were increased fourfold, the country's state news agency reported. However, the increase was capped at a total 50 million Lebanese pounds a month, or about \$500, and came with the stipulation that employees must attend at least 14 days of work each month.

The salary increase for the public sector will take effect from May 1. The national minimum wage for the private sector was also raised to nine million pounds, or \$90 at today's market rate, up from 2.6 million pounds, or \$26 a month. – Agencies





UK inflation holds above 10% on rampant food prices

LONDON: UK inflation slowed last month but held above 10 percent on soaring food prices, official data showed Wednesday, further fuelling a costof-living crisis despite a series of aggressive interest-rate hikes. The Consumer Prices Index rose by a stronger-than-expected 10.1 percent in March from 10.4 percent in February, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement. Inflation held in double figures on surging food and housing costs, dashing expectations for a drop below 10 percent after the Bank of England sharply raised borrowing costs.

The rate had zoomed to a 41-year peak at 11.1 percent last October on sky-high energy bills after key gas producer Russia invaded Ukraine. The UK's Conservative government, headed by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, had last month unveiled a budget aimed at tackling the cost-of-living crisis, which has sparked strikes as wages drop in value. "These figures reaffirm exactly why we must continue with our efforts to drive down inflation so we can ease pressure on families and businesses," said finance minister Jeremy Hunt. "We are on track to do this... and we'll continue supporting people with cost-of-living support." Despite the efforts, official data this week showed that pay continues to grow more slowly than prices.

Food prices rocket

"Inflation eased slightly in March, but remains at a high level," said ONS chief economist Grant Fitzner. The main downward impact was from falling motor fuel and heating oil costs, while clothing, furniture and household goods rose by less than one year ago.

Fitzner cautioned that this was "partially offset by the cost of food, which is still climbing steeply". Food

Goldman Sachs hit by slowdown in corporate mergers

NEW YORK: A slowdown in corporate transactions and weak trading results weighed on Goldman Sachs' first-quarter results on Tuesday, sending shares lower. The big investment bank pointed to a "significant decline in industry-wide completed mergers and acquisitions transactions" and much lower revenues for currency and commodities trading as drivers of the dip in profits.

Net income came in at \$3.1 billion, down 19 percent from the year-ago period on a five percent drop in revenues to \$12.2 billion. The results came on the LONDON: UK food price inflation rocketed in March to 19.1 percent, hitting the highest level since August

price inflation rocketed in March to 19.1 percent, hitting the highest level since August 1977.

The food rate has hit a series of 45-year peaks for several months. There were record March gains for bread and cereal, chocolate and confectionery, other food products including ready-meals and sauces, and hot beverages, the ONS said. "The cost of simply living has crept insidiously higher and wage increases are struggling to keep pace with such high inflation," noted AJ Bell analyst Danni Hewson.

Rate cuts

"UK consumers will be utterly fed up with the situation and they'll be angry that other parts of the world seem to be benefiting from inflation falling

Hunt in March extended a subsidy on energy bills

heels of a stream of solid earnings reports by JP-Morgan Chase, Citigroup and other large banks that benefited from a rise in interest rates that allowed them to charge more for loans in their vast consumer banking businesses.

Goldman's results included a \$470 million loss connected to a partial sale of the loan portfolio of Marcus, a consumer banking initiative Goldman launched in 2016 that has been largely phased down.

On the positive side, Goldman scored higher revenues in asset and wealth management, thanks partly to the rise in public equity investments during a quarter in which US stocks rallied. Alluding to the travails of midsized US banks following the demise of Silicon Valley Bank as "another real-life stress test," Chief Executive David Solomon said the events last month showed "the resilience of Goldman Sachs and the nation's largest financial institutions.'

Shares of Goldman dropped 3.7 percent to \$327

in pre-market trading. – AFP

for a further three months, after the Ukraine conflict sent them surging — and fuelled runaway global inflation. The government forecasts inflation will sink to 2.9 percent by the end of this year. The Bank of England has ramped up interest rates 11 times in a row since late 2021 in a bid to tame consumer prices. The BoE's key rate currently stands at 4.25 percent, the highest level since late 2008. Yet inflation remains at more than five times its official target of two percent. The central bank's next decision is due in May.

"The (inflation) drop is too modest for the (BoE) to stop raising rates; we now look for a final 25 basis-point hike," commented Pantheon Macroeconomics analyst Samuel Tombs. BoE governor Andrew Bailey recently warned that policymakers needed to see inflation come down sharply before ending its current monetary-tightening cycle. — AFP



NEW YORK: In this file photo taken on January 17 2023, the Goldman Sachs booth at the New York Stock Exchange in New York City. — AFP

EU agrees plan to boost chip production

STRASBOURG: The European Parliament and EU member states reached an agreement Tuesday on a plan to boost the supply of semiconductors in Europe, as the bloc races to reduce its dependence on Asian suppliers. The European Union has prioritized local chip production after the coronavirus pandemic triggered supply chain shocks that led to significant shortages.

Asian industry, especially firms in China and Taiwan, currently dominate the manufacture and export of semiconductors. EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said the deal "will allow for a competitive chips industry and build the foundation for a global market share. It will power a clean tech industry made in Europe and strengthen our digital resilience and sovereignty."

Under the provisional political agreement, the EU aims to double its current global market share to 20 percent in 2030 and mobilize more than 43 billion euros (\$47.2 billion) in public and private investments to feed Europe's growing appetite for chips. Europe will need to quadruple its production to meet this target.

Funding will come from existing EU budget money and the deal will also loosen state aid rules to spend money on developing centers to produce the key component. The EU will also mobilize 3.3 billion euros for research and development, and the deal includes a system to monitor supply shortages to act in times of crisis. The legislative text also forms part of the bloc's bid to produce more in Europe to reduce its vulnerability to geopolitical shocks like the war in Ukraine.

When Russia invaded Ukraine last year, the EU scurried to find alternative energy sources after years of relying upon Russian fossil fuels.

"This will allow us to rebalance and secure our supply chains, reducing our collective dependence on Asia," Thierry Breton, the EU's industry commissioner, said in a statement after the parliament and the European Council reached an agreement.

Hunger for chips

Europe was under pressure to act fast. In August, the United States approved its own Chips and Science Act that included around \$52 billion to promote production of microchips and tens of billions of dollars more for scientific research and development.

Japan and South Korea have also vowed to spend billions on developing their countries' semiconductor production. Washington has leaned on allies including Japan and the Netherlands this year to curb exports on semiconductor technology to China, much to Beijing's chagrin.

French-Italian chipmaker STMicroelectronics, US-based GlobalFoundries and US tech giant Intel said last year they would pour billions into new production sites in France and Germany. They will now be able to seek state subsidies for their projects. Brussels is racing to protect the bloc's competitive edge in the face of threats from China and the United States, which have ploughed billions into green technology.

Last month, the EU's executive arm published two proposals to push Europe to produce more clean technology including critical raw materials needed to manufacture batteries for electric vehicles.

"Europe aims to become an industrial powerhouse in the markets of the future — the digital and clean technologies that will allow us to remain a competitive export force, generate quality jobs and ensure our security of supply," Breton said. "Because there will be no green or digital transition without a strong manufacturing base," he added. – AFP

Soaring inflation dampens Eid holiday spirit in crisis-hit Pakistan

Food prices surge more than 47%, transport costs rise 55%

LAHORE: The holiday that marks the end of the shoppers compared to last year—and it's because of Muslim fasting month of Ramadan used to be a guaranteed earner for Pakistan's small shops and businesses—a big-spending week that could match the take from the rest of the year. This year, however, many worry they will not even make enough to pay their monthly rent, with inflation hitting its highest levels in decades and political turmoil miring the country in uncertainty.

"There are no customers, there are no buyers," said Shehzad Ahmed, who runs a shop selling bags, jewelry and other goods in the eastern city of Lahore. The South Asian country of more than 220 million people saw year-on-year inflation hit 35.4 percent in March. Food prices surged more than 47 percent in 12 months, with transport costs rising by 55 percent.

Pakistan is deeply in debt and needs to introduce tough reforms to unlock a tranche of a \$6.5 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund in order to avoid default. The economy has been wrecked by years of financial mismanagement and political instability—a situation exacerbated by a global energy crisis and devastating floods that left a third of the country under water last year.

The end of Ramadan, Eid Al-Fitr, is celebrated by Muslims around the world by feasting with relatives and friends, exchanging gifts, and dressing up in new clothes and shoes.

The dire economic straits have, however, cast a decidedly somber mood across the country's normally vibrant markets. "There are significantly fewer

inflation," trader Saif Ali told AFP.

'Going through the motions'

Sheikh Amir, who runs a small shop selling glass bangles and imitation jewelry, said he was usually able to earn enough for the whole year during Eid. "It's become very difficult these days," he said. "We are just going through the motions in the hope that we will be able to make enough to pay the rent for our shops.'

Major shopping districts across the country usually see a surge in spending in the week leading up to the holiday, which begins with the sighting of the new moon, expected this weekend. In urban centers, markets and shops stay open until after midnight many putting on special offers or sales to attract customers. Twinkling holiday lights adorn many bazaars to attract customers, while street vendors set up stalls offering special holiday treats. This year, all have reported a significant drop in sales.

"Our business is slow," said Ali, who was hoping to sell hundreds of embroidered shawls in the runup to Eid. For Fatima Azhar Mehmood, a mother of seven daughters, this Eid will be a budget-conscious one. "I have to shop for them, and at the same time I have to buy things for the house," she said.

Instead of buying off-the-rack clothes for the girls, Fatima went shopping for fabric in the Old Lahore district and plans to home-stitch their holiday outfits.

"We have to buy rations, buy things for the



LAHORE: In this picture taken on April 16, 2023, people throng a market during shopping ahead of the upcoming festival of Eid Al-Fitr in Lahore. — AFP

children... and our rent is going to be due soon too," she said. "Everything is upon us at the same time." Shocked at the price of goods this year, Amna Asim decided that in her household, only the children would get gifts this year—adult rela-

tives would have to go without.

"Shopping for the kids is a must," she said. "We can't leave the kids out. Even if we don't get anything for ourselves we must get something for the kids." —AFP

News in Brief

United reports Q1 loss

NEW YORK: United Airlines reported a quarterly loss on Tuesday but offered a bullish summer outlook in light of travel demand that it said still shows no sign of ebbing. The major US carrier reported a first-quarter loss of \$194 million, despite a 51.1 percent surge in revenues compared with the year-ago period to \$11.4 billion. But results were hit by higher costs, especially on salaries and for jet fuel. Still, United Chief Executive Scott Kirby echoed comments from rival Delta Air Lines in touting a still-strong travel market as it eves a busy summer travel season. —AFP

S Africa food prices soar

JOHANNESBURG: Inflation in South Africa edged higher in March with food prices recording the highest year-on-year jump in more than a decade, official figures showed Wednesday. Inflation for food and non-alcoholic beverages continued to accelerate and was up 14 percent on March last year, national statistics agency StatsSA said in a statement. "This represents the largest annual increase since the 14.7% rise in March 2009," the agency said. Overall, consumer inflation rose to 7.1 percent last month from 7.0 percent in February and 6.9 percent in January. — AFP

Glencore to up Teck Resources bid

ZURICH, Switzerland: Swiss commodities giant Glencore told Teck Resources shareholders on Wednesday that it is willing to sweeten its takeover offer after the Canadian miner's board rejected a previous proposal. Glencore already added an \$8.2 billion cash component to its original \$22.5 billion all-share offer earlier this month, but it failed to sway Teck's board. In a letter signed by Glencore chief executive Gary Nagle, the group said it was willing to take the offer directly to shareholders if the board would not engage. "In fact, we believe that with engagement, we could improve our proposal's terms and value, which would be in the best interests of all Teck shareholders," the letter said. — AFP

EU unveils reform of bank bailout rules to protect taxpayers

STRASBOURG: The EU unveiled long-awaited measures Tuesday to shield taxpayers from the bill for bank bailouts, acting with renewed urgency after recent turmoil in the US and European banking sectors. Under the proposals, troubled medium-sized and smaller banks will be encouraged to use funds from the financial sector instead of public money, the

European Commission, the EU's executive arm, said. The EU was under pressure to act fast after three US banks failed last month and the merger of Swiss investment banking giant Credit Suisse with its regional rival UBS. "Recent failures of some US and Swiss banks and resulting stress in the international banking sector are just a reminder of why we need a strong functioning system to deal with all banks whatever the size when they get into trouble," Valdis Dombrovskis, commission executive vice president, told a news conference in Strasbourg.

Brussels' aim is to stop member states ploughing taxpayers' money into mid-size lenders and to force banks to build up their own reserves. Previously, mid-size banks found it difficult to access resolution schemes funded by the banking sector, meaning depositors would take a hit above levels guaranteed by deposit insurance programs. The new proposal says they could use funds from national deposit schemes as a "bridge" to meet the levels needed to trigger resolution schemes, helping reduce the risk of panic spreading and triggering bank runs. — AFP

Gulf Bank participates in Ramadan iftar with members of MoI

KUWAIT: As part of its role in consolidating the principles of social sustainability, Gulf Bank participated in a Ramadan Iftar with men from the Coast Guard Base in Fintas, as a token of appreciation for the members of the Ministry of Interior in protecting the security of society and for carrying their national duty, regardless of the circumstances.

On this occasion, Bank's Corpo-Communications Officer, AbdulMohsen Al-Nassar, said: "While most citizens get to enjoy Iftar time with their families and loved ones during the holy month of Ramadan, the men of the Ministry of Interior leave all parents and loved ones behind to serve their country. And as a way to express our appreciation for all their



AbdulMohsen Al-Nassar

sacrifices, we were keen to be present at their workplace today to make this Iftar extra special for them."

Al-Nassar pointed that this initiative is part of several social sustainability initiatives organized by Gulf Bank during the holy month of Ramadan, of which included contributing to distribute electrical

New hotel manager

at Four Seasons Hotel

Kuwait's Burj Alshaya

KUWAIT: Spring 2023 sees the gourmands of

Kuwait spoiled for choice, with Four Seasons Ho-

tel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya reimagining its popular

day-to-night Sky 21 Feast, alongside the debut of

a creative new lunch menu from Italian Chef, Luigi

to be enjoyed with a side of panoramic city views

from the Hotel's 21st floor—are among the events

that the property's newly arrived Hotel Manager,

Ksenia Novikova, will be overseeing as she starts

Novikova aims to make the same impact at Four

Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya as she has

during her previous award-dotted tenures at some

of the most respected luxury hotels and resorts

across the United States, China, Eastern Europe and

the Middle East. Her driving ethos is to create and

cultivate opportunities for guests to make heartfelt

have the potential to impact them, from guests to

our fellow team members," she states. "There is

something very special about playing a meaningful

part in milestone moments in people's lives, whether

The return of a Kuwaiti taste institution:

Sky high feasting is back

Celebrating is definitely on the menu for the ex-

travagant Sky 21 Eid thanks to its evening offering

too—which makes a return on Eid-al-Fitr holidays.

This always well-subscribed and utterly decadent

sensory feast sees Dai Forni and Sintoho, the Ho-

tel's two 21st floor restaurants, join culinary forces

under the expert craftsmanship of Executive Chef

interactive cooking stations set up in both Ital-

ian-styled Dai Forni and Asian-inspired Sintoho,

as well as a behind-the-scenes peek into the two

Guests are invited to meander through dazzling

Thierry Papillier.

it's a wedding or another landmark celebration."

"In hospitality, we are not saving lives, but we

connections together, no matter the reason.

Fizzing with energy and infectious excitement,

These highly-anticipated culinary adventures—

Frassanito, at Dai Forni.

her first Four Seasons assignment.

Ahmed Al-Amir and Rear Admiral Talal Al-Mounas pose for a group photo with members of the Coast Guard and bank's team.

appliances to needy families in Kuwait with Red ing and empowering its employees as part of an in-In addition to alleviating debt distress from debtors and distribution of cold refreshments at mosques during the last ten days of Ramadan.

He further stated that Gulf Bank continues its strong commitment to sustainability programs at community, economic and environmental levels - through various initiatives that are strategically selected to benefit the Bank and society. This falls in line with the Bank's 2025 strategy, and with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Kuwait Vision 2035.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engag-

Crescent Society and distributing Iftar meals and clusive and diversified workplace in recognition of food baskets "Majlat Ramadan" to needy families. every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience.

Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining robust developments in sustainability at environmental, social and governance levels through diverse sustainability initiatives, strategically selected to benefit the Bank both internally and externally. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.



restaurants' kitchens for a truly 360 degree dining experience. This is the first time guests have been invited into these spaces to witness culinary creatives at work and interact with the chefs as they prepare the food. As they wander the mouth-watering array of offerings between the two venues, guests are encouraged to do their bit to bridge East and West as they savor life

high above the city.

The culinary journey starts with freshly brewed Arabic coffee and the opportunity to capture memories with families and friends in a fun photo booth. Those entering via Sintoho will enjoy an Asianstyle welcome, with Dai Forni arrivals greeted in warm Italian style.

From here, for daytime seating, guests can sip on a cool drinkas they take in the unrivalled city views to a musical backdrop of Kuwaiti singer-guitarist Zak Musawi. In the evening, the vibe will switch gears as a DJ takes over to spin celebratory beats.

Eastern selections on offer include a dim sum station, teppanyaki table, sushi corner and traditional Peking duck carving station, while Western delights include a fresh seafood bar, live pasta station, and crispy pizza, served straight from Dai Forni's iconic copper-sheathed, wood-burning ovens. Free-flowing water, soft drinks, fresh juices, tea and coffee are all included.

An East versus West Dessert-Off?

The Sky 21 Eid will see Sintoho and Dai Forni's private dining areas transformed for the first time into heavenly havens for dessert lovers, thanks to the artistry of Executive Pastry Chef Gregory. Dai Forni presents the "Choux-Choux Room", an indulgent selection of authentic French pastries, including eclairs, religieuses and Paris-Brest. Over in Sintoho, a "Dark Room" will feature chocolate art that might just look too beautiful to eat (but isn't!).

LunchCon Vistaat Dai Forni

Meanwhile, Italian Chef Luigi Frassanito also



Dai Forni Restaurant

brings his free-spirited cucinalibera style of cooking to Dai Fornith is spring with a new lunchtime menu. The huge ovens that dominate the Sicilian-inspired interiors at Dai Forni set an imposing standard for the dining experience to follow: elevated Italian comfort food in a casual and familv-friendly setting.

The new Dai Forni Business Lunch set menu adds a tantalising three-course option to the restaurant's existing à la carte selections. New starters like Carpaccio di Manzo—a beef carpaccio perfectly paired with parmesan cream, truffle dressing, and shaved black truffle—leads effortlessly into flavorful Sicilian mains like Branzino in Crosta, a fillet of baked seabass accompanied by caponata and pine nuts. Dessert selections include the refreshing balance of Crostata a Limone di Amalfi e Basilico, a sugar dough combined with smooth lemon-basil curd, yuzu namelaka, and a lemon-basil sorbet.

Adding traditional flair to the à la carte menu, Dai Forni's copper ovens—which lend the restaurant its name—turn out a sublime selection of pizzas. The menu also includes a range of imaginative antipasto dishes, soups, pastas, risottos, mains and desserts, all plated with Chef Luigi's signature creative twists and accompanied by an equally compelling beverage menu. Sky 21 Brunch is held on the first, second and third days of Eid Al FitrHoliday; lunch 12pm -4pm and dinner 7pm - 11pm.

Lifestyle Thursday, April 20, 2023









Al work sparks fierce debate after winning photo award

German artist has sparked an angry row after winning a prestigious photography prize with an entry that was generated by artificial intelligence. Boris Eldagsen eventually rejected the gong from the Sony World Photography Awards after concluding that such competitions were not yet equipped to handle Al entries. The awards organizers initially accused the artist of "misleading" behavior, but removed the accusation from a later statement after a furious reply from Eldagsen on Tuesday.

Many photographers and artists fear their livelihoods are under threat from AI tools that allow anyone to create striking images with just a quick text prompt. The rapid rise of AI image generators has already sparked legal cases, as the tools are "trained" on a vast number of images—many of which could be copyright protected. Last year, an Al-generated artwork won a prize at the Colorado State Fair, prompting soul-searching in the art

Sony World Photography Awards announced Eldagsen's entry—a sepia-toned image of two women entitled "Pseudomnesia: The Electrician"—as the winner of its creative category in mid-March. Eldagsen gave interviews at the time explaining how he had made the work and saying he wanted to spark a debate over AI.

However, he wrote last week that "Al images and photography should not compete with each other in an award like this" and rejected the prize. "I applied as a cheeky monkey, to find out if the competitions are prepared for Al images to enter. They are not," he wrote. The awards body said in its initial response that it had been looking forward to engaging the artist in a discussion about Al but had withdrawn

the work "in keeping with his wishes"

Its statement added: "Given his actions and subsequent statement noting his deliberate attempts at misleading us, and therefore invalidating the warranties he provided, we no longer feel we are able to engage in a meaningful and constructive dialogue with him." But Eldagsen wrote on his website that it was "nonsense" to suggest the awards body had been willing to engage.

"They had so many options to use this for good. They used none of them," he wrote, accusing them of ignoring questions from the media and other photographers. The organizers later sent an edited version of the statement to AFP removing the accusation that they had been misled but insisting they had been prepared to engage with Eldagsen and the AI debate.—AFP



A sepia-toned image of two women entitled "Pseudomnesia: The Electrician".

Michelle Yeoh urges women to resist being 'put in a box'

scar winner Michelle Yeoh spoke up on Tuesday for diversity and women's empowerment in the entertainment industry, telling reporters in Kuala Lumpur "we should never allow somebody to put us in a box". Speaking at her first news conference in her home country since her historic best actress win, the Malaysian star returned to themes that had been staples of her awards season interviews. "I have been very blessed that I've continuously been able to work, and work (with) very interesting, very diverse and very forward-thinking filmmakers. That has enabled me to fight for what I



Malaysian actress Michelle Yeoh (center), winner of the Oscar for Best Actress in a Leading Role for "Everything Everywhere All at Once", waves to fans during a public appearance in Kuala Lumpur.

truly believe in: representation, diversity, especially empowerment of women," she said.

"I don't believe just because we are women, we are a weaker sex... We should never allow somebody to put us in a box." Winning the best actress Oscar—as the first Asian woman ever to do so—"represents so much to so many of us", she said, adding that she "heard the roar of joy, happiness all across the world to Los Angeles" following her victory.

'Directors have no life'

Yeoh, 60, won the award for her portrayal of Chinese-American laundromat owner Evelyn Wang, who deals with family turmoil while battling an interdimensional villain in the sci-fi action comedy "Everything Everywhere All at Once". The lack of Asian representation at Hollywood's highest levels had been a recurring topic in her interviews ahead of the awards. Yeoh later met around 2,000 fans at a trendy shopping mall in the Malaysian capital, many of them screaming and taking photos and videos.

of them screaming and taking photos and videos.

There were more cheers when she lifted her stat-



A fan holds a drawing of Malaysian actress Michelle Yeoh, winner of the Oscar for Best Actress in a Leading Role for "Everything Everywhere All at Once", as she waits for Yeoh's public appearance in Kuala Lumpur.

uette to show it to the fans. "She is a role model for me. Her tough and no-nonsense attitude empowers young women like me," Ng Xue Ying, a 21-year-old broadcast student, told AFP. Asked at the news conference for her advice to young people around the world, Yeoh said: "Don't become me, be you... I believe that you are going to be better."

The Hollywood veteran was born to Chinese-Malaysian parents in the northern city of Ipoh. She em-



Malaysian actress Michelle Yeoh (L), winner of the Oscar for Best Actress in a Leading Role for "Everything Everywhere All at Once", greets fans during a public appearance in Kuala Lumpur. — AFP photos



Malaysian actress Michelle Yeoh, winner of the Oscar for Best Actress in a Leading Role for "Everything Everywhere All at Once", gives a press conference in Kuala Lumpur.



Malaysian actress Michelle Yeoh arrives on the red carpet for the 41st Hong Kong Film awards in Hong Kong.

braced dance as a child and specialized in ballet, which she studied in England. Yeoh's film credits stretch back to the 1980s, but her Hollywood breakthrough came when she was cast as the first ethnic Chinese Bond girl in 1997's "Tomorrow Never Dies" opposite Pierce Brosnan.

She also starred in the Oscar-winning 2000 martial arts film "Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon", the 2005 period drama "Memoirs of a Geisha" and the

2018 romantic comedy "Crazy Rich Asians". Yeoh said she has no interest in becoming a film director. "Directors have no life. I love my life so much," she said. "You have no time for anything because being a director you have to know everything and be everywhere all at once." — AFP

Lifestyle

'No legs, no limits': Amputee veteran eyes Everest summit

urkha veteran Hari Budha Magar grew up in the shadow of the Himalayas, but only after losing his legs did he resolve to make his childhood dream of scaling Everest a reality. Magar, 43, stepped on an improvised explosive device in 2010 while serving in Afghanistan with the Brigade of Gurkhas — a unit of Nepalis recruited into the British Army.

After years of rehabilitation and training, next month he plans to summit the world's highest mountain, an endeavour promoted on his website under the slogan "no legs, no limits". If successful, the expedition will make him the first double above-the-knee amputee to see the world from the 8,849-m peak.



"After losing both of my legs, my aim became to see what I could do physically. It opened my mind, and I attempted everything I could put my hands on," Magar told AFP before setting off for the Everest base camp. Magar grew up in Nepal, in the foothills of the Himalayan mountain range, and was always drawn to adventure sports. "When I would ski, the sight of the mountains would remind me of Everest. I would always wonder if I could climb," he said.

Two below-the-knee amputees have reached the peak in the past - New Zealander Mark Inglis in 2006 and China's Xia Boyu in 2018. Magar began preparing for his own expedition the same year as Xia's ascent. But he was forced to put his training on hold to campaign against a since-revoked Nepal law that banned climbers with disabilities on safety grounds. He climbs wearing a specially designed suit and grips attached to shortened prosthetics, with silicon liners under his thighs to prevent frostbite.

Magar finally feels ready for the monumental task ahead after successful summits of Nepal's Mera Peak (6,476 m) and the highest peak in the Alps, Mont Blanc (4,808 m). "There have been many difficulties, but finally everything is coming together for my dream," he said. His expedition has echoes of the first-ever summit of Everest by Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay Sherpa, news of which reached the United Kingdom on the day of Queen Elizabeth II's coronation.

It is a happy coincidence for Magar that his summit coincides with next month's crowning of King Charles III, almost 70 years later, giving him an opportunity to honor the country he served in battle. "That's the crown I fought for. That's the crown I lost my legs for," he said.

'I thought my life was over'

Magar wears shorts everywhere, even in the chilly Himalayan weather, to proudly flaunt his prosthetic legs — but it took him a long time to come to terms with his injury. "I thought my life was over, I thought I would have to spend the rest of my life in a wheelchair," he said. The father of three felt suicidal and developed a drinking problem before the thought of his children's futures forced him to



Gurkha veteran Hari Budha Magar poses during an interview with AFP in Kathmandu. — AFP photos

"Mv main aim is to raise awareness about disability. Because if I was aware, wouldn't waste two years of my life, would have made good use of it," he said. Magar said he wanted to show that people with disabilities can do anything, but there is "just a different way of doing things". "As long as you can adapt your life according to the time and the situation, we can do anything we want. There is no limit, the sky is the limit," he said. Magar's guide, Krishna Thapa, is confident the expedition will succeed. "He is a great mountaineer... he has six years of preparation and several records," he told AFP. "None of the other climbers have that." - AFP



Ali Sethi's infectious hit 'Pasoori' reverberates from Pakistan to Coachella

tale of forbidden love with an infectious hook, Ali Sethi's song "Pasoori" has become an international phenomenon, fusing poetic tradition with global beats to fuel the rise of the Pakistani singer's star. The Punjabi track whose title roughly translates to "difficult mess" was 2022's most-searched song on Google and has surpassed half a billion views on YouTube, offering a melodic metaphor for conflict between India and Pakistan in the form of an impassioned love song with an eminently danceable flow.

The song's origins stem from when Sethi was asked to pen a song for the popular Pakistani television program Coke Studio, which occurred just after an experience where an Indian broadcaster had pulled out of a creative partnership because the 38-year-old is Pakistani. "You're a Pakistani, and India and Pakistan are at war, and now we can't really put up a billboard saying we're working with you because extremists will set fire to our building," the singer recalls being told. "As a Pakistani I've grown up with that... 'Oh you can't do this because it's prohibited, yada yada."

The experience got his creative wheels turning: "Of course the theme of prohibition is such an eternal theme in South Asian love songs—all true love is prohibited," he told AFP following an electrifying party of a performance at the Coachella music festival in the United States, a cherry on top of his remarkable year. "So I wanted to write a song that was sort of a flower bomb hurled at nationalism and hetero-patriarchy," Sethi continued, wearing a wide-brimmed hat and black button-up with colorful embroidery alluding to styles of the American southwest. "With all the

fun innuendos and all this camp energy." He says he drew on Punjabi folk songs of his youth, imbuing the lyrics with puns and double entendres, "a nice way to slip in and subvert orthodox views without really appearing to be out beyond the veil." He performs the track with Shae Gill, a singer born to a Christian family in Lahore. Sethi was "astounded" by the global response to the song, which has the improvisational framework of a traditional South Asian "raga" mixed with the region's contemporary sounds, along with Turkish strings, flamenco-style claps and the four-four Latino reg-



Pakistani Singer Ali Sethi poses for a portrait during the first weekend of the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in Indio. — AFP photos

gaeton beats keeping rhythm for much of today's reigning pop. "I thought it was going to be this like, indie, niche thing that a bunch of my nerdy fans were gonna like," Sethi laughed. "I'm just astounded by how many people around the world-particularly in India-loved it and embraced it."

'The latest wild idea'

The son of journalist Najam Sethi and politician Jugnu Mohsin, Ali Sethi is also a published author, who began his formal Hindustani classical musical training after graduating from university. He studied Qawwali, a form of Sufi devotionals, and ghazal, a style of lyricism traceable to ancient Arabic poetry. Today he lives in New York, and is enjoying the "fertile frontier" of experimenting outside the confines of his education, and collaborating with musicians spanning genres including jazz, reggaeton, hip hop and salsa.

"Bringing my stuff to dialogue with it feels very

exciting," Sethi said, adding that it's helped him embrace a multiculturalism that societal strictures had denied. "Multilingual, multi-ethnic, multi-valent identities were celebrated in the Sufi shrines 800 years ago-in Lahore, which was where I was born," he continued. "And yet growing up I was never really encouraged to think of it that way."

For his Coachella set on Sunday-he'll perform again at the major festival next weekend-he brought onstage Raja Kumari, an American rapper and singer born in California to Indian parents. "What we can't do over there we can do over here," he said as he grasped Kumari's hand onstage following their electrifying "Pasoori" duet. "There's all kinds of forbidden love represented here today." "If you forbid it we will do it!" he said to resounding applause.

Sethi has toured recently across the United States and Canada, in cities where he can reach fans in the Indian diaspora. Yet he can't perform in India itself, where, according to streaming met-



Pakistani Singer Ali Sethi performs during the first weekend of the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in Indio.

rics, he has an enormous fan base. But for all the surface-level novelty of singing ragas in the California desert, Sethi noted that the form has been thriving there for decades.

The Indian Hindustani classical musician, Ali Akbar Khan, was instrumental in popularizing the genre in the United States, establishing a music school and also teaching at the University of California, Santa Cruz. "There's like this ancestry... but it's also so American on some level," he said with a wide smile. "America is the land of wild ideas, and I'm just the latest wild idea." "And I love it—it feels fine to be a little eccentric, a little new, a little unexpected, a little extra, a little too traditional," Sethi said. "That makes sense to me." — AFP

Iranian filmmaker recounts torture to 'unsettle' abusers

ne man mimes his bones being broken, a woman recounts her surrender to religious brainwashing, and a third man replicates his confinement in a tiny prison cell.

With his new documentary "Where God is Not", French-Iranian filmmaker Mehran Tamadon hopes that the testimonies of former detainees who say they were tortured in Iran will "unsettle" some of their persecutors. All recount abuse that occurred before the protests that are now shaking Iran, from the brutal repression of the 1980s in the immediate aftermath of the revolution up until the last decade.

But "everything I am filming speaks of today," said the director who was born to communist parents in Iran in 1972, but fled to France with his mother as a child. "Right now, there are people being tortured in prison in Iran.

Iranian authorities have arrested thousands since nationwide protests broke out following the September 16 death in custody of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini for allegedly breaching the country's strict dress



Iranian director Mehran Tamadon poses during a photo session in Paris.—AFP photos

rules for women. Security forces have also killed 537 people during the crackdown, Norway-based Iran Human Rights watchdog says.

"For 43 years," since the 1979 revolution that installed an Islamic theocracy in the country, Iran has been in the grips of a "totalitarian system", said Tamadon, an architect who turned to cinema in the first decade of the millennium when he lived in Tehran. After 2009 documentary "Bassidji" ("Basij") in which he interviewed members of the paramilitary volunteer force, the atheist engaged in conversation



with four clerics for his 2014 work "Iranian".

The authorities were so unhappy with him that they confiscated his passports.

After they returned them to him in 2012, he decided to leave Iran, where he says violence has become so ingrained that, "like a Russian roulette", it can strike at any time.

In "Where God is Not", which premiered at the Berlinale in February, 50-year-old Mazyar welds a metal bed frame like the one he was tortured on after being detained for alleged spying and murder.

It was there the once business manager was tied up, and his torturers broke the bones of his feet with a metal rod, he says. When he was no longer able to walk, he was dragged in front of a camera to confess to crimes he had never committed.

Also in the film, Homa, a Marxist woman who was detained in an overcrowded prison in the 1980s, breaks down in tears as she recounts being so blasted with endless religious chants that she woke up one day brainwashed and started to pray.

Taghi Rahmani, a political activist who was locked up for 15 years for his views, re-enacts his confinement in a tiny Parisian cellar.

"I spent six months like this," he said, counting out the three steps between the two walls of a former cell. Rights groups have long lambasted the use of torture in Iranian jails, with Amnesty International in a September 2020 report detailing methods including beatings, floggings, electric shocks, stress positions, mock executions, water-boarding and sexual violence. The group said in March that in the crackdown on the protest movement child protesters as young as 12 were being subjected to torture that included electric shocks and rape. - AFP

Lifestyle Thursday, April 20, 2023



Group photo with local media

irstly, please let me take this opportunity to start by conveying a warm message of congratulations to HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and to HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal, on the occasion of the Ramadan celebrations, and extend our best wishes for the people of Kuwait in these important festivities for all Muslims throughout the world, including Spain.

Our bilateral relations are strong - strengthened by the traditional friendship between the Royal Houses of the two countries. Fruitful political consultations were held in Madrid last June 2022 at the level of Vice Minister of Foreign affairs, where many issues were discussed including high level contacts. The Joint Trade Committee discussed ways to increase the volume of our bilateral exchange, the cooperation in the realms of defense, cultural or in the promotion of the Spanish language, science, or sports. Many issues of international and regional dimension were discussed.

Real hallmark

Let me point out that there is indeed a large space of understanding and for collaboration between both countries. I sincerely hope that soon, there will be a normalized cycle of high-level visits in both directions, giving an impulse to these multifaceted relations. Kuwait Airways presented officially in Madrid last September its first direct flight between both capitals in almost 40 years, as well as an agreement with the Spanish Air Europa for a shared code agreement, a real hallmark in our relations and a wonderful bridge for both countries to improve our links in all fields.

Important new avenues are from now on to be explored and rendered effective. The first bilateral Joint Economic and Trade Committee took place in Madrid on November 14 and 15, 2022, which was a hallmark in our bilateral relations. I would also like to mention here that around 600 Spaniards are living in Kuwait now. I am proud to say that they are a well-integrated community present in almost every sector: education, business, sports, engineering. They are a very valuable part of these people to people relationship between Spain and Kuwait, and I want to thank them for their contribution.

Additionally, let me emphasize the value of the EU-Kuwait relations. Spain, as one of the largest EU countries, is fully committed to the strengthening of these relations and from next July, we will hold the six-month Presidency of the Council, when will try to give an impulse to the EU-GCC and EU-Kuwait relations. A Spanish Business Council was created last year, which I hope will definitely help to give our economic relations more vitality and visibility. We already enjoy a strategic partnership, bound to grow exponentially in the next few years, if we all make the right decisions and take the adequate steps.

I sincerely think we can do better to improve our cultural links, in both directions. Spanish culture is well-known all over the world and Kuwait people, due to their special bond with Spain, really like every aspect of our culture. For instance, flamenco is very popular in Kuwait, as well as the Spanish gastronomy. What can we say about Spanish sports like football or tennis!, Both Real Madrid and Barcelona have academies in Kuwait and even Rafael Nadal inaugurated his fabulous academy here.

Bringing Spanish artists

In this spirit, we are working hard to bring Spanish artists to Kuwait. As a result of these endeavors, a Spanish duo playing guitar and violin will perform a concert here in Kuwait on May 14th, with the much appreciated collaboration of the National Council. There is a huge potential but more must be done. In this regard, the academic exchanges and internships are vital. Every year dozens of Kuwaitis go to Spain, most of them, for post-graduate studies in some of our excellent business schools.

Several young Kuwaitis come to our country too, thanks to the generosity of the Kuwait Fund in order to work in some of the best companies of engineering and architecture. On the other hand, I would like to highlight the contribution of Al



Spanish Ambassador to Kuwait Miguel Maro Aguilar — Photo By Jana Al-Naqeeb

Babtain Foundation to promote, in collaboration with several Spanish Universities, the study and research of the Arabic language and its literature. Many youngsters are learning Spanish in Kuwait and every year the official exams of Spanish as foreign language are hold. We want to encourage more and more people to starting learning Spanish, doubtlessly that would be a very important investment in the relations between our countries.

Unfortunately, there is not an Institute Cervantes, the Spanish entity in charge of promoting our language, but I had the chance to meet many teachers of Spanish as a foreign language who are doing a great job in the Institut FranÁais, the American University of Kuwait, the Gulf University or in Kuwait University. I really would like to work with them so that we can all together raise awareness about the importance of the Spanish language.

Economic, trade relations

Economic and trade relations between Kuwait and Spain have intensified with a sustained increase in Spanish exports (from €149 million in 2009 to €394 million euros in 2022). The Spanish imports from Kuwait have also increased 145% until €133 million in 2022, mainly oil products. There is a trade balance favorable to Spain, with a diversity of Spanish exports compared to imports concentrated in oil, plastics and chemical products and the high relative weight of clothing items. The main chapters exported were mechanical machinery, non-knitwear (14%), knitwear (9%), fuels (7%) and ceramics (5%).

The main chapters imported were mechanical machinery... (50%), organic chemical products (30%) and plastics (14%). Clothing in our export, especially the INDITEX group among others, results in the extensive presence of scores of fashion brands under franchise in the major malls and shopping centers in the country. There is a growing number of Spanish companies (14), with awarded projects worth €4,300 million in various fields of activity, (infrastructure and engineering, oil and gas, health, security...), and a greater flow of Kuwaiti investors in Spain in recent years.

Institutionally, the Agreement to Avoid Double Taxation (2013) and several Memoranda of Understanding of economic content are helping to the strengthening of existing relations. There is no data available on our services trade with Kuwait and its classification but they are definitely an important part of our relationship.



Carmen Paredes, Deputy Chief of Mission

Tourism, transport

The main services demanded by Kuwait are tourism, transport and insurance operations. On tourism, let me tell you first that Spain was visited in the last few years by almost 90 million people (with the exception of the Pandemic period), making our country the second most visited worldwide. Spain is also a traditional destination during holidays for many Kuwaiti families. Tens of thousands of Kuwaitis travel to Spain every year, among them a considerable number even own their own properties, especially in the south of the country.

Spain offers high quality services with very competitive prices and beyond the famous slogan "Spain everything under the sun", our country has many more things to offer, such as one of the best football league in the world, a great gastronomy with scores of Michelin. Starred chefs, an incredible variety of landscapes, a magnificent architecture, hundreds of thrilling golf courses or great shopping facilities all over the country are only some of the attractive features in our country. Spain is full of wonderful sites and towns, a rich nature and a variety of landscapes. I can only recommend you to explore it and enjoy it.

The activity of our consular section regarding the visas is hectic. On average, we issue between 25,000 and 30,000 visas per year, most of them during the summer season. We are also responsible for Bahrain visas at our Embassy. We don't only issue visas for tourism, also for students, businessmen or for medical reasons, which shows the diversity of our relations. In Health, every year hundreds of Kuwaiti citizens sponsored by the Ministry of Health, or on their own expense, travel to Spain for health reasons. The Spanish health system is one of the best and more solid ones in the World and It's time now to boost all kind of cooperation and exchange information and best practices.

We can mention in that regard the recent agreement with the Spanish Ribera Salud for the management and operation of the DHAMAN healthcare network within the framework of an integrated health maintenance organization system, with 3 hospitals, 15 primary care centers and about 7,000 employees. The objective of this great PPP project is to relieve the public health through more efficient private management.

Railway project

Another area of potential, cooperation is the Railway project in the GCC and in Kuwait. Let me highlight the important cooperation in the region

and in particular in Saudi Arabia, which has several projects with Spanish companies. In particular, I would mention the Haramain High Speed Rail, capable of reaching speeds of approximately 320 km/h, an electrified line with a length of more than 300 kilometers. Spanish companies are very competitive in the supply of electrified high-speed rolling stock, more respectful with the environment and more efficient in energy consumption. As regards the renewable energy, Kuwait has announced its commitment to boost renewable energy to reach the 15 percent in 2030.

We have to point out that for Shagaya's solar power station, the Spanish company TSK has developed and is operating the biggest project in the area and in the country. ELECNOR and GAMESA are also part of the first wind projects



Spanish Ambassador to Kuwait Miguel Maro Aguilar with Jana Al-Naqeeb, Public Relations and CSR Manager of Kuwait Times

in the same Shagaya area. Spain wants to become one of the major European hubs in green hydrogen produced exclusively from renewable energy. We are ready to collaborate with Kuwait in this field and in the Renewable energies in general. There is room for improvement regarding the cooperation between Kuwait and Spain in science and technology.

We want to boost this cooperation, and on the 11th of May, the Director General for the Center for the Development of Technology and Industry will visit Kuwait to explore new ways of collaboration between both countries. As Ambassador of Spain in Kuwait, I would like to express my gratitude to all the Kuwaiti people who have shown me, from the very first minute, their love and fondness of Spain. I feel myself at home, so often surrounded of so many friends of my country. This encourages me to keep on working along with the authorities and the Kuwaiti society so that together we build an even stronger friendship between our two countries.



Sports Thursday, April 20, 2023

Booker brilliance as Suns sink Clippers, Celtics dominant

LOS ANGELES: Devin Booker led a second-half rally as the Phoenix Suns came from behind to defeat the Los Angeles Clippers 123-109 and level their Western Conference playoff series 1-1 on Tuesday. Booker scored 18 points in the third quarter before finishing with a 38-point haul to complete a battling comeback by Phoenix, who had trailed by 13 in the second quarter against the Kawhi Leonard-inspired Clippers.

The Clippers stunned Phoenix at home in game one on Sunday and appeared to be well on their way to taking a commanding 2-0 series lead after surging into a 49-36 lead with just over five minutes remaining in the second quarter. But Kevin Durant, veteran Chris Paul and Booker sparked into life for Phoenix in the closing minutes of the first half to erase the Clippers' lead, and Booker drained a 27-foot three-pointer on the stroke of half-time to make it a tie game at 59-59 at the break.

Booker then took over with a flurry of scoring in the third quarter to fire Phoenix into a 92-87 lead heading into the final quarter. Durant finished with 25 points while Paul chipped in with 16 to help see Phoenix home as the series heads to Los Angeles for game three on Thursday. "We wanted to protect home court in game two, we got one, and now we're off to LA," Booker said afterwards.

"It's the playoffs, it's win at all costs — doesn't matter what happened these past two games. You've got to move on to the next one — it's a new assignment for us." Leonard led the scoring for the Clippers with 31 points, eight rebounds and seven assists while Russell Westbrook had 28 points. Clippers coach Tyronn Lue paid tribute to the performance of Suns trio Booker, Durant and Paul.

"In that second half they really took over," said Lue, who insisted the Clippers were still confident of a series victory. "I feel good where we're at," Lue said. "Our guys are going to keep competing, keep scrapping. One hundred percent of the battle is believing.

And we believe we can win this series." In other playoff action, Jayson Tatum starred as the Boston Celtics took a 2-0 series lead over the Atlanta Hawks while Darius Garland delivered a 32-point gem in Cleveland's series-leveling rout of the New York Knicks.

'Another level'

Tatum finished with 29 points as the second-seeded Celtics overcame a slow start to dominate the seventh-seeded Hawks for a 119-106 victory at Boston's TD Garden. "We want to be peaking at this time of year," Tatum said. "Everybody's healthy, playing the right way, playing really well — but we've got another level we can go to hopefully."

another level we can go to hopefully."

Atlanta jumped out to a 22-11 lead in the first quarter before Boston's offense clicked to give the Celtics a 28-25 lead heading into the second quarter. Once in front, the Celtics never relinquished the advantage, opening up a 61-49 half-time lead and extending that to 20 points midway through the third quarter as Boston's defense shut down Atlanta's scoring.

Atlanta rallied to get within eight points of the Celtics in the fourth quarter, but Boston never looked like squandering their lead down the stretch and pulled away convincingly to ensure they will take a 2-O advantage into game three in Atlanta on Friday. Tatum finished with 29 points including five three-pointers, while Derrick White provided offensive support with 26 points and Jaylen Brown added 18 points. Dejounte Murray led Atlanta's scorers with 29 points while Trae Young finished with 24. "They won, we lost — we've just got to be better," Atlanta playmaker Young said.

Elsewhere in the Eastern Conference on Tuesday, the Cleveland Cavaliers roared back into their best-of-seven series with the Knicks to score a 107-90 win. Beaten 101-97 in game one on Saturday, the Cavaliers bounced back in spectacular fashion to score a blowout victory. Cleveland opened up a 25-



PHOENIX: Kevin Durant of the Phoenix Suns handles the ball against Kawhi Leonard of the LA Clippers at Footprint Center on April 18, 2023. — AFP

22 first-quarter lead and never looked back, outscoring Cleveland 34-17 in the second quarter to take a decisive grip on the contest.

New York failed to get within 15 points of the Cavs throughout the second half, as Cleveland powered on to lead by as many as 29 midway through the fourth quarter. Cleveland point guard Garland produced a sparkling display with 32 points – 26 of

them in a devastating first-half scoring burst. Caris LeVert added 24 off the bench while Donovan Mitchell added 17 points with 13 assists. The Knicks' offense failed to fire, with the team's 90-point total their second-lowest tally of the season. Julius Randle finished with 22 points while Jalen Brunson added 20. Game three of the series takes place at Madison Square Garden in New York on Friday. — AFP



Salwa Club crowned volleyball champions

KUWAIT: Salwa Women Sports Club volleyball team was officially crowned champion of the league for the 2022-2023 season after winning three out of five matches in the final round. Fatat club was second and Kuwait third after defeating Fatayat Al-Oyoun 3-2 during the matches that were played at the Kuwait Volleyball Association hall at Sheikh Saad Al-Abdallah complex.

Charmain of Volleyball Association Dr Abdelhadi Al-Shabeeb, Board Member Bader Al-Kous, Chairwoman of Salwa Club Sheikha Naeima Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Chairwoman of the women committee at the association Dr Istiqlal Al-Raqam, Salwa Club Secretary Hameeda Al-Yousufi and Kuwait Sports



Club Board Member Balsam Al-Ayoub awarded the winners their medals and prizes and Salwa Club the league plaque.

Titmus defies illness to cruise to Aussie 400m free title

GOLD COAST: Ariarne Titmus powered to the Australian 400m freestyle title with ease Wednesday — but in a time well outside Canadian teenager Summer McIntosh, who smashed the Olympic champion's world record last month. Titmus hit the wall at the Australian championships on the Gold Coast in 4:00.49, in contrast to the new 3:56.08 world mark set by the 16-year-old in Toronto. Titmus played down expectations before the race, revealing she was unwell leading into the event.

"I've had a bit of sickness, which has been tough trying to get over that," the 200m and 400m freestyle Olympic champion told reporters. "I'm just battling through." She added after the race that her main focus was Australia's world championship trials in June, ahead of the main event in Japan a month later. "We want to race fast at trials and at worlds and here is more about a stepping stone and having good race practice," she said.

McIntosh's stunning swim broke the 3:56.40 Titmus clocked at the Australian championships last year, where she bettered American Katie Ledecky's six-year-old world mark of 3:56.46 set at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics. The emergence of McIntosh as a serious contender sets the scene for a blockbuster 400m clash with Titmus and Ledecky at the worlds in Fukuoka.

In other events, the versatile Kaylee McKe-



GOLD COAST: Australia's Ariarne Titmus competes in the final of the women's 400m freestyle event during the Australian swimming championships on April 19, 2023. —AFP

own stunned a strong field to win the women's 200 breaststroke title in 2:24.18 – a stroke she doesn't usually swim outside of the medley. The Olympic 100m and 200m backstroke champion, whose retired sister Taylor was a breaststroke specialist, touched well clear of the more accomplished Abbey Harkin and Jenna Strauch.

"One McKeown is out so guess I have to fill in for Taylor," said McKeown, who also swam the 100m freestyle this week, finishing eighth. "This is a really fun event for me and think having no nerves I just gave it a red-hot crack." Mollie O'Callaghan, the 100m freestyle world champion, powered home in the 50m backstroke in 27.42. McKeown holds the year's fastest 50m back time of 27.31 but did not enter. Cameron McEvoy won the men's 50m freestyle in 22.11 while Thomas Neill swam sub-two minutes to take out the 200m medley and Matt Temple touched first in the 100m butterfly in 51.49. — AFP

All-round Green stars as Mumbai down Hyderabad

HYDERABAD: Australia's Cameron Green hit his maiden half-century in the Indian Premier League and took one wicket to lead Mumbai Indians to a 14-run win over Sunrisers Hyderabad on Tuesday. The day — April 18 — marked the 15th anniversary of the T20 league, which began in 2008 and has grown to be the world's richest cricket tournament. Rohit Sharma's Mumbai remain the most successful franchise with five trophies in the men's edition and moved to sixth in the 10-team table after three successive wins.

Green, a big buy for Mumbai after being bought for \$2.11 million in the auction, steered the team to 192-5 with an attacking 64 following his promotion to number three in Hyderabad. Aiden Markram-led Hyderabad were bowled out for 178 in 19.5 overs despite a whirlwind 36 by Heinrich Klaasen and Mayank Agarwal's 48. Needing 20 in the final over, Mumbai handed the ball to Arjun Tendulkar, son of legendary Sachin Tendulkar, and the left-arm quick bowled a perfect over and got his maiden IPL wicket to seal the match

to seal the match.

But it was the 1.98m (6 feet, 6 inches)tall Green, who stood out with key partnerships including a stand of 56 off 28
balls with Tilak Varma, who hit a 17-ball 37.
Green struck three successive boundaries
to reach his maiden IPL fifty and followed it
up with a six and along with fellow Australian Tim David took the total past 190.

South African's left-arm quick Marco Jansen took two wickets but missed a faceoff with his twin brother Duan Jansen, who made his IPL debut for Hyderabad in the previous match but did not make the XI for this game. In Hyderabad's chase, Arjun started with the new ball for Mumbai to bowl two economical overs in his second IPL outing after his debut on Sunday. But it was Jason Behrendorff's left-arm pace that got two key wickets including Hyderabad's England import and previous-match centurion Harry Brook for nine. Wickets kept tumbling and Green worked with the ball as well when his pace bowling got Markram back in the pavilion for 22. Klaasen and Agarwal attempted to raise the hopes in their stand of 55 but their departure triggered the final slide for Hyderabad. Behrendorff and impact player Riley Meredith claimed two wickets each while David took four catches. — AFP



HYDERABAD: Mumbai Indians' Tilak Varma plays a shot against Sunrisers Hyderabad at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium on April 18, 2023. — AFP

'Absolute jet' Varma heading for India callup after takeoff

NEW DELHI: Rising talent Tilak Varma has earned predictions that he is destined to play for his country after lighting up the Indian Premier League with his fearless batting. Five-time champions Mumbai Indians bought Varma for \$200,000 in last year's auction and the 20-year-old has repaid their faith with some stellar performances since. An attacking left-handed batsman, Varma smashed a 17-ball 37 in a crucial stand with Australia's Cameron Green in Mumbai's win over Sunrisers Hyderabad on Tuesday.

The knock, laced with four sixes, came at a strikerate of over 217 and Rohit Sharma hinted that the youngster could work his way into the India team. "What I like about his game is his approach, he is not afraid," Rohit, the India and Mumbai skipper, said after his team's third successive win in the IPL. "He is not playing the bowler, he is playing the ball, which is quite important for someone of his age coming out and playing the way he is. He has got a long way to go and we will see him play for some different teams."

The Indian Express newspaper called Varma, who also bowls off-spin and only made his IPL debut last year, the "IPL's best young Indian batting talent". The numbers back that up. Varma is seventh in the list of batsmen during the current IPL with 214 runs from five matches, just a spot below Indian superstar Virat Kohli (220 from five matches). South Africa's Faf du Plessis tops the batting charts with 259 runs.

Varma started this season with an unbeaten 84 off 46 balls in Mumbai's opener, albeit in a losing cause, and hit winning knocks including a quickfire 41 against Delhi Capitals. Former player and India coach Ravi Shastri told Star Sports that "I would be very surprised if he does not play T20 cricket for India in the next six months or eight months". "He has got the maturity, he has got the flare. He will make a world of difference to the Indian middle-order," said Shastri. — AFP

LIV boss says 'long list' of players want to join rebel tour

ADELAIDE: LIV Golf boss Greg Norman says "a long list" of players want to join the rebel tour, as Brooks Koepka and Dustin Johnson on Wednesday conceded it would benefit from more depth. Norman, who is preparing for the Saudi-backed circuit's first event in his Australian homeland this week, said some of the names would "surprise" people. "We've got a long list of players who want to come in, we just don't have the ability today because players are under contract," he told NewsCorp Australia, without giving names.

"But we'll get to a position where there will be a relegation series and places will start opening up. It's incredible the amount of players who want to come on board," he added. "It would surprise you how good those names are." Bankrolled by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, LIV split the golf world last year by luring away top stars from the US PGA Tour and DP World Tour (formerly the European Tour) with lucrative contracts to its 54-hole, no-cut experiment.

Now in its second season, it has faced resistance from traditionalists and struggled for credibility in the United States, in particular. But LIV looks to have been embraced by some Australians, with tickets selling out for this week's event in Adelaide. Koepka, runner-up at the Masters two weeks ago, and current British Open champion Cameron Smith are among the top names who have defected to LIV. They headline the action at The Grange Golf Club this week. Phil Mickelson, who tied for second with Koepka at Augusta, and Dustin Johnson also jumped ship to LIV, as did Patrick Reed, who finished fourth at the Masters.

Koepka said he had not spoken to any players about making the move to LIV because it was "not my style". But he added: "I'm sure there's a bunch of guys who are still looking to come over, whether that be college players, younger players, to guys who have played on the PGA Tour and the DP Tour. "And yes, you can always add depth to anything — the stronger we get, the better we are." — AFP

Sports Thursday, April 20, 2023

Martial handed chance to salvage Man Utd career on Sevilla return

MANCHESTER: Anthony Martial was shipped out on loan to Sevilla last season with his Manchester United career seemingly at an end, but the Frenchman has returned to prominence in time for a Europa League reunion with the Spanish club. An injury to Marcus Rashford means Martial will likely lead United's attack on his return to the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan on Thursday with a place in the Europa League semi-finals on the line.

Two late United own goals in the first leg at Old Trafford have left the tie against the Europa League specialists finely poised at 2-2. Martial played a major part as United shot into a 2-0 lead thanks to Marcel Sabitzer's double inside the first 21 minutes. But the Austrian midfielder could be one of a number of players unavailable to Erik ten Hag for the return leg, putting pressure on Martial to step up.

Sabitzer pulled up with an injury in the warm-up prior to Sunday's 2-0 win at Nottingham Forest. First-choice center-backs Raphael Varane and Lisandro Martinez are also missing for the trip to Spain after picking up injuries in the first

leg. The biggest blow of all, though, could be the absence of Bruno Fernandes due to suspension. Fernandes shone as he was reunited with Christan Eriksen and Casemiro in midfield at the City Ground. In 17 matches where all three have started, United have won 15 and drawn two.

Unrealized potential

Injury problems have also minimized Martial's impact this season and been the story of his United career. The world's most expensive teenager when he was signed from Monaco in 2015, the 27-year-old has never truly realized his potential despite scoring 86 goals for the club in 288 appearances. His time at Sevilla was even less fruitful.

Having been pushed down the pecking order by Cristiano Ronaldo's return for a second spell at United, Martial sought first-team football in Spain, but scored just once in 12 appearances in the second half of last season. Ronaldo's departure last year has given Martial a final chance to rekindle his career at Old Trafford. But fitness problems have limited his impact to just 19 appearances in United's grueling 51-match campaign to this point.

United boss ten Hag, though, has remained steadfast in his support as he desperately seeks a firing number nine. Rashford's 28 goals - his best ever return in a single season - have papered over the cracks for United. However, the England international has spoken of his preference to start from a wide left position rather than through the middle.

Ten Hag's patience with Wout Weghorst has also run out in recent weeks after the Dutch international scored just twice in 22 games. "When he is fit our team plays better," said Ten Hag on Martial's impact. "He's an incredibly good player. He can link up, keeps the ball, also the pressing is good. He will score goals, he is capable of scoring goals. He can finish no doubt about that.

Martial has netted seven times at a rate of a goal every 133 minutes under Ten Hag. Yet, he has plenty to prove if United are to be convinced of extending his contract beyond the end of next season. Ten Hag's men face a huge week in their quest for a hat-trick of trophies as the League Cup winners face Brighton



NOTTINGHAM: Manchester United's French striker Anthony Martial reacts to a missed chance during a match against Nottingham Forest at The City Ground on April 16, 2023. – AFP

in the FA Cup semifinals on their return from Seville. Few would have imagined 12 months ago that the English giants would be relying on Martial for goals at the

business end of the campaign. But needs must for Ten Hag, offering the enigmatic Frenchman most likely his final chance to become a hero for the Red Devils. — AFP

Chelsea's limp exit completes season from hell

LONDON: As Chelsea owner Toddy Boehly surveyed the wreckage of his club's season from hell after their Champions League exit on Tuesday, the American might have pondered just how long it will be before they feature in the competition again. Chelsea are left with nothing but pride to play for in the final weeks of a disastrous campaign after Real Madrid's 2-0 victory in the quarter-final second leg at Stamford Bridge completed a 4-0 aggregate success for the holders.

Appropriately, the troubled Premier League side once again paid the price for a lack of cutting edge as they wasted a host of chances before succumbing to a pair of clinical Real moves finished by Rodrygo. Since Boehly joined forces with co-owner Behdad Eghbali's Clearlake Capital to buy Chelsea last year, the west London club have suffered one self-inflicted wound after another.

They are languishing in 11th in the Premier League,

Burnley made to wait

LONDON: Burnley were made to wait for the

Championship title after being held to a 2-2 draw at

Rotherham, while Sheffield United's 1-0 win against

Bristol City moved them a step closer to the Pre-

mier League on Tuesday. Goals from Scott Twine

and Manuel Benson either side of Vitinho's own goal

pushed Vincent Kompany's promoted side to the

ed winning, it meant the champagne celebrations will

have to wait until Saturday, where a win against QPR

will secure top spot for the Clarets. Sheffield United

should join Burnley in the top-flight next season after

substitute James McAtee's second-half goal gave the

Blades a win that moved them eight points clear of

Lukas Jutkiewicz's first-half strike put a dent in

fifth placed Millwall's play-off push as Birmingham

claimed a 1-0 win at the Den. Blackpool slipped

closer to relegation with a 2-0 defeat against West

Bromwich Albion, who moved up to sixth place. Will

Keane's goal kept alive Wigan's faint hopes of avoid-

ing relegation as their 1-0 win at Stoke moved them

within five points of safety. — AFP

third placed Luton with four matches remaining.

But Georgie Kelly equalised to earn the Millers a deserved point and with second placed Sheffield Unit-

brink of clinching the second-tier silverware.

will finish without a trophy and are unlikely to even qualify for the Europa Conference League, leaving Boehly and Eghbali facing a turbulent close-season as they try to repair Chelsea's tarnished reputation. In a sign of the turmoil enveloping Chelsea, former Blues striker Didier Drogba ripped into Boehly on French television ahead of the Real game.

"I don't recognize my club. It's no longer the same club. There is a new owner and a new vision. A dressing room of over 30 players is difficult for a manager," Drogba said. The question is how much lower can Chelsea sink after suffering four successive defeats since Frank Lampard returned as manager until the end of the season following Graham Potter's sacking.

"Chelsea have had huge success for 20 years, winning the Premier League, qualifying for the Champions League year after year. Maybe this is the year where we aren't quite where we want to be," Lampard said. "Manchester United and Arsenal have spent time out of the Champions League. Maybe some clubs are more stable than we are at the minute in terms of the squad. But we can set the building blocks now for where we want to get to.'

Boehly's chaotic influence has turned Chelsea into a laughingstock less than 12 months into his reign. The team that lifted the Champions League trophy under Thomas Tuchel just two years ago is already being broken up. Of the 11 that started Chelsea's 1-0 win

LONDON: Chelsea's US owner Todd Boehly reacts ahead of a match against Real Madrid at Stamford Bridge on April 18, 2023. — AFP

against Manchester City in the final in May 2021, only four were in Lampard's line-up to face Real on Tuesday. Despite masterminding Chelsea's European triumph, Tuchel was surprisingly dismissed in September amid reports of rows between the German and Boehly over transfer policy. Perhaps Tuchel had a point because Boehly's £550 million (\$671 million) spending spree on new signings has done nothing to solve Chelsea's problems. — AFP

Moroccan club for Championship title, FAR favorites Blades eye promotion to lift CAF Cup

JOHANNESBURG: Moroccan armed forces club and former African champions, FAR Rabat will be the team to beat in the CAF Confederation Cup knockout stage this season. Coached by former France indoor football international Fernando da Cruz, the Black Devils have won seven and drawn four of 12 qualifying and group matches en route to the quarterfinals.

The 22 goals they scored have been shared among 13 players with the four of Cape Verde international Diney Borges making him the unlikely leading scorer as he is a center-back. FAR are the only quarterfinalists this season in the African equivalent of the UEFA Europa League who have won a CAF

They achieved two firsts for Morocco by the winning the African Cup of Champions Clubs — later renamed the CAF Champions League — in 1985 and the Confederation Cup 20 years later. But after finishing runners-up in the Confederation Cup a year after winning it, FAR faded as a force in Africa while Casablanca clubs Raja and Wydad won CAF

Last year, the Rabat club did not even make the group stage of the Confederation Cup, losing home

and away to JS Kabylie of Algeria in the second qualifying round. They return to Algeria this weekend for the first leg of a quarterfinal against USM Alger who, along with FAR and Pyramids of Egypt, have previously reached the knockout stage.

The other hopefuls — Marumo Gallants of South Africa, US Monastir of Tunisia, ASEC Mimosas of the Ivory Coast, Rivers United of Nigeria and Young Africans of Tanzania — are first-time qualifiers. Should FAR eliminate USM, whose line-up includes 2022 African Nations Championship leading scorer Avmen Mahious, they would confront Monastir or ASEC for a place in the final.

The Tunisian and Ivorian sides have lost only once each in eight African outings and boast regular scorers in Boubacar Traore and Aubin Kramo respectively. Pyramids are competing in the Confederation Cup for the fourth straight season having reached the 2020 final, the semifinals the following year and the 2022 quarter-finals. Their multinational line-up includes veteran Tunisian Fakhreddine Ben Youssef, the leading scorer in the competition with six goals, including a hat-trick.

They face Marumo, who have won seven of 10 matches in Africa but only five of 26 in the South African Premiership, leaving them battling to avoid relegation. Ranga Chivaviro stars for the South African outfit, with his five Confederation Cup goals placing him joint second behind Ben Youssef in the Golden Boot race. Ghanaian Paul Acquah shares second place with Chivaviro and Rivers will rely heavily on him against Young Africans in their quest to become the first titleholders from Nigeria. — AFP

Kahraba stars as Ahly eye African title after surviving scare

JOHANNESBURG: Egyptian giants Al Ahly will hope for more goals from Mahmoud Kahraba as they chase a record-extending 11th CAF Champions League title having survived a huge group-stage scare. Ahly host three-time title winners Raja Casablanca this weekend in the most attractive quarter-final pairing, with the return match in Morocco seven days later.

But in mid March it seemed Kahraba and his teammates would be following the knockout stage of the premier African club competition on TV rather than participating. The Cairo Red Devils were five points adrift of the second and last qualifying place in Group B, and there were only two rounds remaining. But four goals from Kahraba helped Ahly to convincing victories over Coton Sport of Cameroon and Al Hilal of Sudan and second place behind Mamelodi Sundowns of South Africa.

Hussein el Shahat was another Egyptian to pack a goalmouth punch, scoring twice against Hilal, who missed a penalty in the previous round against Sundowns that would have eliminated Ahlv. Winners of 23 CAF titles in four competitions, Ahly thrived against Hilal partly due to the backing from 50,000 of the most fanatical football supporters in Africa

Egyptian authorities, who often restrict crowds to 10,000 or less for security reasons, have agreed to a 52,000 crowd for the visit of Raja and the tickets were quickly sold out. While Ahly had an unexpectedly tough passage to the round of eight, Raja cruised through their mini-league, winning five matches, drawing the other, scoring 17 goals and conceding three. — AFP

Today's Matches

UEFA Europa League AS Roma v Feyenoord Rotterdam 22:00 beIN Sports HD 3 English beIN Sports 3 HD Premium Sevilla v Manchester United 22:00 beIN Sports HD 1 English beIN Sports Connect beIN Sports 1 HD Premium **Sporting v Juventus** 22:00 beIN Sports Connect beIN Sports 2 HD Premium Royale Union Saint v Bayer 04 22:00 beIN Sports HD Xtra 1

Classifieds

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22549134

22526804

24814764

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22532265

22531908

22518752

22459381

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22465401

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Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital 24812000 Kaifan 22450005 Amiri Hospital Shamiya Maternity Hospital 24843100 Shuwaikh Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital 25312700 Abdullah Salem Chest Hospital 24849400 Nuzha Farwaniya Hospital 24892010 Industrial Shuwaikh Adan Hospital 23940620 Qadsiya Ibn Sina Hospital 24840300 Dasmah Al-Razi Hospital 24846000 Bneid Al-Gar Physiotherapy Hospital 24874330/9 Shaab Clinics Qibla Kaizen center 25716707 Ayoun Al-Qibla Rawda 22517733 Mirgab Adaliya 22517144 Sharq Khaldiya 24848075 Salmiya

Change of Name

I, QUTBUDDIN, holder of passport No. Z2690395 do hereby change my name to QUTBUDDIN (as given name) HAKANI (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name QUT-BUDDIN HAKANI and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C 3506)

I, Kashim, S/O Samsher holder of passport No. R5455215 and H.No N559 Gali No. 19 Saurabh Vihar Jaitpur South Delhi-110044, changed my name to Kashim Khan, for all future purposes. (C 3507) 19/04/23

I SEKHAR KAKI holder of Indian passport no L4533078 Indian permanent address Hno 4112 Rv Nagar Cuddapah Ysr Dist 516003 India residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under Given name SEKHAR and Surname NAGAPPAGARI. (C 3505) 18/04/23

I, HUSAIN S/O ESMAIL AMARJI (Current name in passport) holder of Indian passport no. U0751052 having permanent address Ward No. 22, Shabbir Mohallah ñ Sagwara, Rajasthan, pincode No. 314025 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under given name HUSAIN and surname AMARJI. (C 3508) 20/04/2023



Sport Cimes

THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 2023

Real Madrid beat wasteful Chelsea



MADRID: Rodrygo scored twice as Real Madrid cruised into the Champions League semi-finals on Tuesday, completing an emphatic 4-O aggregate win against Chelsea that ends a disastrous season for the London club. The home team, with Frank Lampard back in the dugout for a second spell, came into the match at Stamford Bridge with form and history against them.

They started brightly but rued a number of huge missed chances that would have heaped pressure on the defending champions. The Spanish giants made Chelsea pay for their profligacy when Rodrygo scored in the 58th minute after a speedy counter-attack and he made it 2-0 with 10 minutes to go. "We suffered a lot and helped us stay at 0-0 at the end of the first half," Real Madrid boss Carlo Ancelotti told BT Sport. "Second half we were much better and scored the two goals. We are happy to have qualified."

Chelsea, the 2021 European champions, have now lost all four of their matches since Lampard returned

to the club as caretaker boss earlier this month in place of the sacked Graham Potter. Lampard, who also managed the club from 2019 until early 2021, bemoaned his team's profligacy. "We played really well for 60 minutes," he said. "We created chances but you have to take them."

The former Chelsea midfielder said his men must find motivation from playing for the club as they contemplate a bleak final few weeks of the season. "You're playing for Chelsea," he said. "So regardless, every game you play you have to give everything. I won't let anyone off the hook and we have to show. That standard cannot drop."

Ancelotti stuck with the same team that won the first leg 2-0 last week while Chelsea caretaker boss Lampard restored Reece James, Mateo Kovacic and N'Golo Kante to his line-up. Roared on by an expectant crowd despite their current woes, the home side made a good start against the 14-time winners.

Chances

They had a glorious chance to take the lead but Kante skewed his left-foot shot wide from about 12 yards. The visitors, content to bide their time, looked sharp on the break. Midway through the opening period Rodrygo created space for himself and thumped an effort against the outside of the post from an acute angle while Luka Modric tested Kepa. But Chelsea should have been ahead on the stroke of half-time when James fizzed a ball across the box from the right and it fell to Marc Cucurella at the back post.

The defender took a touch and shot but Thibaut Courtois came flying out of his goal to save. Kante had another golden opportunity to take the lead early in the second half but his close-range effort hit Eder Militao and deflected away to safety. Real took the wind out of Chelsea's sails with just over half an hour to go, when Rodrygo scored from close range after an assist by Vinicius Junior.

Lampard made a number of attacking substitutions, bringing on Raheem Sterling, Joao Felix and Mykhailo Mudryk in a desperate bid to get back into the match. But Rodrygo found the net again in the 80th minute, tapping home after a clever assist from Federico Valverde. Real Madrid will likely play Manchester City in the semifinals, with Pep Guardiola's team 3-0 up against Bayern Munich after the first leg of their last-eight tie.

Former Chelsea boss Ancelotti is chasing a record-extending fifth win as a coach in the tournament. But Chelsea, used to winning silverware over the past two decades, are contemplating the final stretch of a horrendous campaign despite a staggering spend of more than £500 million (\$621 million) in the first year of the club's new ownership. Trophyless this season, they are languishing in 11th in the Premier League and look unlikely to qualify for European football next season. — AFP

Giroud seals Milan's passage past Napoli

NAPLES: AC Milan reached the semifinals of the Champions League on Tuesday after Olivier Giroud struck the crucial goal in a 1-1 draw at Napoli which completed a 2-1 aggregate victory over their fellow Italians. Giroud tapped in what turned out to be the decisive goal two minutes before the break after a blistering run from Rafael Leao, who was once again key as Milan beat Napoli for the third time this month.

The France striker's 13th goal of the season saved his blushes after he missed a penalty midway through the first half. Stefano Pioli's side now have the prospect of a local derby in the last four as Inter Milan hold a two-goal lead ahead of their second leg with Benfica on Wednesday night. "I'm very proud of this team, with that spirit we can dream of anything," said Giroud to Mediaset. "In the next round there will be another hard match whether it's against Inter or Benfica, but if we keep this spirit we can go anywhere."

After the match Mediaset showed Leao a video of Ruud Gullit setting up a goal with an almost identical run at Napoli in 1988. "It's the same," said a shocked Leao. "It's what I try to do, go at players, it's how I can make difference. If I can't score I look for my teammates. I saw Giroud there." Milan have not contested a Champions League semi-final since they were crowned kings of Europe for the

seventh and most recent time in 2007. Victor Osimhen scored in stoppage time but it was not enough for Napoli who are creaking as they come towards the end of what has been a phenomenal season. Luciano Spalletti's once freewheeling team are struggling for goals and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia also had a penalty saved with 10 minutes remaining, a miss which condemned his team to defeat. Napoli are on the verge of their first league title since 1990, but after being placed on the easier side of the draw Tuesday's exit was an underwhelming end to their European adventure.

Their hardcore fans had agreed a truce in an ideological battle with owner Aurelio De Laurentiis which had made the atmosphere at home matches poisonous, and on Tuesday a packed Stadio Maradona was initially in fine voice. Their team went straight at Milan, dominating possession and pushing the opposition back towards the vibrating stands. However, the best they could muster was two long-distance efforts from Matteo Politano which crept wide. On Milan's first serious attack Mario Rui clattered into Leao and handed Giroud the chance to give the away side a huge advantage from the penalty spot.

However Giroud's weak effort was easily stopped by Alex Meret, whose save unleashed a roar from the stands, a colossal racket repeated when he prevented Giroud netting a more than presentable chance shortly afterwards. Napoli had scored at least three goals in all of their previous Champions League home games this season but looked short on ideas against a well-organized Milan defense which kept a tight lid on Osimhen. And as the hosts pushed to level the scores on aggre-



NAPLES: AC Milan's French goalkeeper Mike Maignan dives in the net with the ball after conceding a last-minute goal against Napoli on April 18, 2023 at the Diego-Maradona stadium. — AFP

gate, Milan pounced at the end of the first half. Leao scooped up the ball after Tanguy Ndombele's sloppy control and charged from deep his own half, breezed past three Napoli players and rolled an unmissable chance across to Giroud, who fell to his knees in a mixture of joy and relief.

Napoli were again on the front foot after the break but struggled to create much, with Mathias Olivera's header wide from a 64th-minute corner the best chance until Fikayo Tomori handled Giovanni Di Lorenzo's low cross as he put in a challenge in the penalty area. Kvaratskhelia fluffed his own spot-kick just like Giroud, meaning Osimhen's bullet header in the 93rd minute meant nothing for Napoli who will wonder what might have been after wasting so many chances in the first leg. — AFP

Hamlin resumes NFL activities after heart stoppage

NEW YORK: Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin, who went into cardiac arrest after making a tackle and was resuscitated on the field, rejoined the team for a workout on Tuesday as he began his NFL comeback. "This event was life-changing, but it's not the end of my story," Hamlin said. "I plan on making a comeback to the NFL. "I've been beating the statistics my whole life so I like my chances."

Bills general manager Brandon Beane said Hamlin had been medically cleared to resume NFL activities despite his near-death experience on an NFL field. "He's fully cleared," Beane said. "He's here and he's of the mindset — he's in a great headspace — to come back and make his return." During the first quarter of a nationally televised NFL game at Cincinnati in January, Hamlin tackled Bengals wide receiver Tee Higgins after a 13-yard reception.

Hamlin rose to his feet, then collapsed backward onto the ground. The Bills said his heartbeat was restored on the field by medical technicians before he was transported to a nearby hospital for further treatment. "I died on national TV in front of the whole world, so I see it from all perspectives," Hamlin said. "That right there is the biggest blessing of it all—for me to still have my people and my people to still have me."

Players from both teams were emotional and shaken while Hamlin was being treated, loaded onto a stretcher and driven off the field in an ambulance. The game was halted and never completed. Hamlin revealed that his diagnosis was commotio cordis, or a blow to the chest during a heartbeat that led to a cardiac shutdown. Since then, Hamlin has seen multiple specialists who all agree he's ready to return to NFL activities.

"Damar saw his last specialist on Friday," Beane said. "It's not 2-to-1 or 3-to-1 or anything like that. They're all in lockstep of what this was and that he is cleared (to) resume full activities just like anyone else who was coming back from an injury or whatever." US President Joe Biden was among those who paid tribute to Hamlin, saying his "courage, resilience, and spirit inspired the American people.' Hamlin, who turned 25 in March, was able to breathe on his own four days after the injury and made a video call to his teammates. He made his first public appearance since the incident at a Bills home playoff game and also attended the Super Bowl in February.

Watching NFL games in a hospital bed days after the incident was, Hamlin said, when he decided he would attempt to strap on a helmet and pads once more. "That's where I was like, 'I don't want to be done yet,'" Hamlin said. "My heart is still in the game. I love the game. It's something I want to prove to myself not nobody else. I just want to show people that fear is a choice and you can keep going." — AFP