



3 Kuwait University opens Al-Shedadiya fire station



7 Rahul Gandhi found guilty of defamation



16 Battle to buy Man United heating up



RAMADAN TIMINGS	
Fajr	04:29
Shurooq	05:48
Dhuhr	11:54
Asr	15:24
Maghrib	18:02
Isha	19:19

Saudi, Iran foreign ministers exchange Ramadan greetings

FM's vow to meet 'soon', reopen embassies, consulates



KUWAIT: A vendor sets up his shop with Ramadan decorations in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

RIYADH: The Saudi and Iranian foreign ministers spoke by phone to mark the beginning of Ramadan, vowing to meet "soon" to implement a landmark bilateral reconciliation deal, Riyadh said on Thursday. The Saudi minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, called Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and the pair "exchanged congratulations on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan", which begins Thursday in both countries, the Saudi foreign ministry said in a statement posted on Twitter. "The two ministers agreed to hold a bilateral meeting soon in order to pave the way for the reopening of embassies and consulates between the two countries," the statement said. Saudi officials have said the ministers' expected meeting is the next step in a surprise Chinese-brokered rapprochement announced on March 10 intended to fully restore diplomatic ties seven years after they were severed. Riyadh cut relations after Iranian protesters attacked Saudi diplomatic missions in 2016 following the

Saudi execution of Shiite cleric Nimr Al-Nimr—just one in a series of flashpoints between the two long-standing regional rivals. The deal is expected to see Shiite-majority Iran and mainly Sunni Muslim Saudi Arabia reopen their embassies and missions within two months and implement security and economic cooperation deals signed more than 20 years ago. On Sunday, an Iranian official said President Ebrahim Raisi had favorably received an invitation to visit Saudi Arabia from King Salman, though Riyadh has yet to confirm. Amir-Abdollahian told reporters the same day that the two countries had agreed to hold a meeting between their top diplomats and that three locations had been suggested, without specifying which. The detente between Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter, and Iran, strongly at odds with Western governments over its nuclear activities, has the potential to reshape relations across a region characterized by turbulence for decades. — AFP

RAMADAN KAREEM

It is not about starving

By Karima BadrKandil

Have you ever tried to stop yourself from eating or drinking? Have you ever gone against your carnal desires? Have you ever had the experience of working under the pressure of hunger, thirst, and exhaustion with the expectation of maximum efficiency? Have you ever tried to bring out the best in yourself and suppress the worst for the entirety of a month? To begin, in Islam, there are five pillars. (1) Testifying that there is no God except Allah and that Muhammad (PBUH) is His messenger. (2) Establishing prayer. (3) Giving Zakaat (obligatory charity taken from the rich and given to the poor). (4) Fasting during Ramadan. (5) Performing Hajj for those who are able to—it is performed once in a lifetime. The fourth pillar, a fundamental principle of Islam, is the fasting of Ramadan. Ramadan is the holy month in which Muslims fast for thirty consecutive days from dawn till dusk during which they abstain from eating, drinking—the halal kind, and having marital relations. It is the opportune time for Muslims because Ramadan motivates and encourages them to face life's temptations. It is a time for a Muslim to enact major resolutions towards becoming a better person which inadvertently requires a great amount of self-regulation and restraint. Unquestionably, such manifestation reaches its pinnacle in a Muslim's life during the holy month of Ramadan. The truth is that this is not applicable to everyone, but it is undeniable that every single Muslim prepares to receive the month, takes delight in its arrival, and grieves for its departure. In Ramadan, Muslims are more aware of the purpose and importance of submitting to God's commands and following the sunnah (tradition) of His prophet (PBUH) and so every household begins to incentivize young children—those who have not yet reached puberty—to practice

Continued on Page 6

MoH preparing report to amend medicine fee law

KUWAIT: The Health Ministry has prepared a report to be presented to Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi, which includes selling medicine to expatriates at hospitals and clinics instead of paying a

fixed KD 5 fee to receive their medicines, even as the report praised the decision to impose higher fees on expatriates for receiving medicine. "The new report finds the consumption of medicines at the ministry's health centers and hospitals is still large, and expatriates are still the most who obtain the drugs relative to their number in the country, being twice the number of Kuwaitis. The procedures that monitor medicine waste require tighter control at medical stores as well as government pharmacies," sources told Kuwait Times. "There are cases where twice as many medicines are

given to expatriates than they need, with the aim of manipulating the payment of fees, as some quantities of medicines are dispensed to an expatriate enough for more than one patient. The report included many cases at hospitals where expatriates are treated who utilize medical devices in addition to x-rays without paying their fees or sometimes paying only once," the sources added. "This is done with the connivance of doctors or employees. The ministry is in the process of applying stricter measures to control and prevent such manipulation, and whoever transgresses the rules will face punitive measures," the sources concluded.

New 'glass-like' orchid species found in Japan

TOKYO: A new species of orchid with delicate, glass-like blooms has been discovered by Japanese scientists, who found the pink and white plant hiding in plain sight. Despite its presence in Japan's parks and gardens, it took researchers at Kobe University a decade to confirm that the plant—dubbed the "Spiranthes hachijoensis"—was a previously unknown species. "It was a surprise to discover a new species of spiranthes, which is so common that you can see it in parks, gardens and among potted plants," lead researcher Kenji Suetsugu told AFP Thursday.



NICHINAN: Photo shows a 'Spiranthes hachijoensis' (Orchidaceae), a new species of orchid, in Nichinan, Miyazaki prefecture. — AFP

Some of the samples were "from potted plants and gardens", including ones kept at a high school in Japan's central Gifu region, the phytoLOGY professor said. — AFP

Barring expats from entering co-ops 'illegal'

KUWAIT: The Consumer Protection Association slammed as illegal decisions made by a number of cooperative societies banning expatriates from entering for shopping and buying products during the holy month of Ramadan under the pretext that a large number of shoppers at co-ops leads to overbuying of Ramadan products sold at discounted prices. "Preventing expatriates from entering any cooperative society and limiting products to citizens only is against the law," Head of the Consumer Protection Association Meshaal

Al-Manae said. "There is absolutely no justification for a co-op's refusal to sell goods to consumers, whether citizens or expatriates. The consumer protection law protects against such decisions. Cooperative societies are establishments that have a commercial license from the commerce ministry and the market law applicable to other similar establishments also applies to them," he said. "We have notified the commerce ministry and concerned authorities of the importance of intervening and preventing such unstudied and harmful decisions," Manae added. In this context, an official source at the National Guard Society denied reports circulated on social media about preventing sales to non-Kuwaiti consumers. "National Guard Society welcomes all segments of the Kuwaiti society, citizens or expatriates," it stressed.

First 3D-printed rocket lifts off but fails to reach orbit

WASHINGTON: The world's first 3D-printed rocket launched successfully on Wednesday, marking a step forward for the California company behind the innovative spacecraft, though it failed to reach orbit. Billed as less costly to produce and fly, the unmanned Terran 1 rocket launched from Cape Canaveral, Florida at 11:25 pm but suffered an "anomaly" during second-stage separation as it streamed towards low Earth orbit, according to a livestream broadcast by aerospace

startup Relativity Space. The company did not immediately give further details. While it failed to reach orbit, Wednesday's launch proved that the rocket—whose mass is 85 percent 3D-printed—could withstand the rigors of lift-off. The successful launch came on the third attempt. It had originally been scheduled to launch on March 8 but was postponed at the last minute because of propellant temperature issues. A second attempt on March 11 was scrubbed due to fuel pressure problems. Had Terran 1 reached low Earth orbit, it would have been the first privately funded vehicle using methane fuel to do so on its first try, according to Relativity.

Continued on Page 6



FLORIDA: This handout screengrab shows the third launch attempt of the first 3D printed rocket, Terran 1, from Launch Complex 16 in Cape Canaveral. —AFP



Local

Nutritious food helps students fight exhaustion in Ramadan

Food rich in vitamin B should be included in suhoor: Experts

By Ghadeer Ghloum

KUWAIT: Many students worry about their academic performance during fasting. Without any food or water consumption all day, students say that they do not have the energy to focus or function well at school. On the other hand, they are not willing to break their fast for believing that it has many spiritual and religious advantages on which they do not want to miss out. To help students mitigate the effect of fasting on their performance at school, Kuwait Times interviewed two diet specialists who shared information on how to manage a healthy diet during the holy month of Ramadan.

US-licensed Clinical Nutritionist Noora Saleh Al-Askar said to Kuwait Times: "What students can do to help them manage their fast is adjusting their lifestyle by limiting their physical exertion. For example: Students should try to avoid exerting a lot of effort at their physical exercise lessons and stay indoors or in the shade."

Waking up early in the morning and fasting the whole day naturally drains students' energy. But when students conserve their physical energy during the day, it can help reduce the amount of exhaustion. Another way to help students is having

a nutritious suhoor meal. "It is important for students to make good food choices when they have their suhoor. They should eat slow-release food and complex carbs such as: oatmeal, brown rice, whole grains, as well as food that has potassium like bananas and watermelon to reduce the feeling of thirst during fasting," Askar said.

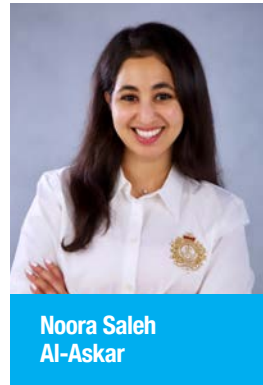
Complex carbs, said Askar, will keep students' bodies energized for longer periods. Students should also include foods that are high in vitamin B because it's known for helping people improve their energy levels and stay focused at school. She further added that it's necessary to include the proper portions of vegetables and fruits to make sure they have enough of the minerals their body needs. A wholesome suhoor like oatmeal, which has vitamin B and complex carbs, and some nuts is a good option for students.

"These tips will ensure that students will have a healthy Ramadan that will not affect their performance. Managing their meals will significantly improve their performance," she said. Clinical Dietitian Manal Dashti said that Ramadan can negatively affect students' concentration levels due to four things: lack of sleep, an unstable diet, low calorie consumption in relation to the body's needs, lack of water and high caffeine intake. Just like Al-Askar, Dashti suggests

focusing mainly on the type of food that is eaten during suhoor meal.

"If students are facing lack of concentration, they need to make sure that their suhoor is a source of complex carbohydrates like whole grain food, sour dough that is made of barley or wheat, besides oats and wild rice. In addition to a source of legumes. I also recommend eating yogurt with fruits and nuts as snacks between iftar and suhoor. Liquids have to be taken gradually and not all at once at iftar time. Soups, fruit smoothies, and kefir milk are considered healthy liquids," said Dashti.

She also advised students to stay away from refined sugars, food that is loaded with preservatives, canned food and processed food because it contains some chemicals that affect the memory and the brain's functioning. However, Dashti said that sugar taken from its natural sources, like honey, fruits, and original maple syrup, is allowed.



Noora Saleh Al-Askar



KUWAIT: Lack of sleep and eating less calories than needed could have a negative effect on students' concentration levels.

Furthermore, Askar pointed out the "placebo effect" that makes fasting difficult for students. She said: "(There's a) placebo effect, where students who think that they are going to feel tired during fasting will psychologically feel that but they can mitigate that feeling by optimizing their health and wellness during the iftar period."



RIYADH: 155th Session of the GCC Foreign Ministers' Council opens in Riyadh. — KUNA photos



Saudi-Iran deal hailed; Foreign ministers meet

RIYADH: The 155th Session of the GCC Foreign Ministers' Council opened in Riyadh on Wednesday with Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah leading Kuwait delegation to the gathering. In his inaugural speech, Omani Minister of Foreign Affairs Badr Albusaidi, the current chair of the Council, hailed the Chinese-mediated Saudi-Iranian deal to resume the diplomatic relations between both countries.

"The agreement constitutes a significant step towards the common targets of the GCC member countries, which will strengthen regional security, stability and prosperity, and enhance neighborliness and mutual trust among the peoples of the region," he noted. Highlighting the shared cultural values among the GCC members, Albusaidi said the GCC states attached great importance to positive cooperation with all peoples around the globe based on mutual respect, diversity of cultures and coexistence.

GCC Secretary-General Jassem Al-Budaiwi said the regional bloc, thanks to the wisdom of the GCC leaders, made great and ambitious achievements in the joint action over the past four decades and more. "The current GCC session coincides with regional and international developments that require closer joint action in all areas of cooperation to enhance the global status of the GCC," he noted in a keynote speech to the session. Al-Budaiwi thanked the GCC leaders for the trust they placed in him and their support for the GCC Secretariat

to realize the aspirations of the GCC peoples.

He congratulated Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tariq Al Said on the current GCC presidency, voicing hope that the Omani leadership will give momentum to the GCC march towards integration. He appreciated the support and dedicated efforts offered by Saudi Arabian, under King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, to the GCC march during the presidency of the GCC session of last year.

Meanwhile, Kuwaiti minister met his Saudi counterpart Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud on the sidelines of the ministerial gathering. At the onset of the meeting, Sheikh Salem renewed congratulations on the tripartite agreement reached between Saudi Arabia and Iran with an initiative by Chinese President on resuming the diplomatic relations between Riyadh and Tehran. The deal is a positive step to maintain security and stability in the region. The two FMs also discussed the brotherly bonds between the two peoples, and some issues on backing and boosting the joint Gulf action as well as the latest developments on regional and international arenas. — KUNA

sociation. On his part, deputy head of the association Lawyer Adnan Abul said the body has the biggest legal library for lawyers' forums around the world, as well as digital archives with over 120,000 books. Abul also noted that many governmental bodies started opening office branches inside the association, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' certification office, civil information, the Ministry of Justice's lawyer's center and office for the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Moreover, deputy head of international relations Lawyer Abdulrahman Al-Tahous said the association provides facilitations in executing legal procedures through the Justice Ministry's office, which can execute all procedures that are done in court. He underlined the role of the association in showcasing and enhancing the level of expertise of Kuwaiti lawyers around the world. This led Kuwait to chair the Arab Lawyers Association and receive the international lawyers membership. — KUNA

Kuwait envoy submits credentials to Grand Duke of Luxembourg

BRUSSELS: Nawaf Al-Anzi presented his credentials to Henri, the Grand Duke of Luxembourg, as Ambassador Extraordinary Plenipotentiary of Kuwait to the Duchy of Luxembourg. During his meeting with the Grand Duke, Al-Anzi conveyed to him the greetings of His

Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

He said the State of Kuwait is looking forward to enhanced relations in all fields to sever the common interests of both sides, according to a statement from Kuwait Embassy in Belgium. On his part, the Grand Duke of Luxembourg appreciated Kuwait's role in the region, voicing hope for building an even stronger partnership with Kuwait. — KUNA



Ministry to boost Kuwait water supply

KUWAIT: Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy stated that it had prepared a water supply plan of producing approximately a billion Imperial Gallons of water by 2035. Ministry Undersecretary Eng Mutlaq Aburgubah stated, on occasion of world water day, that the Ministry is working round the clock to achieve the 2035 vision objectives, adding that the growth of residential and utility projects stipulate an increase in water demand with estimates of it reaching an average of 840 million gallons by 2035.

Celebration slogan, he remarked is "be the change you want to see in the world" serving as a reminder for people to be part of the solution rather than the cause of the water crisis. He stated that it is a national and humane responsibility to change attitude towards water consumption and management. Furthermore, he added the world water day marks an opportunity to rally behind the cause, expedite progress towards finding solutions and better managing these precious resources and ensure their sustainability.

Tackling climate change

Meanwhile, the Environment Public Authority confirmed the Kuwait's interest in following up the climate change file at the local and international levels and tackling it through the implementation of a work program for the cultivation of plants in the country in cooperation with the GCC countries. This was stated in a speech by acting director general of the authority Samira Al Kandari during a workshop organized by the authority in cooperation with the United Arab Emirates embassy and the regional organization for the protection of the marine environment entitled "The role of the Crimean plant in reducing carbon dioxide emissions".

Al-Kandari said that the workshop discussed one of the effective solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and ways to adapt to the negative effects of global climate change, noting that Kuwait ratified the Paris climate agreement in 2016 and the Council of ministers adopted the principle of circular carbon economy to implement the state's obligations under the agreement.

She reported that Kuwait updated its first national contribution document in 2021, which included the expansion of plant cultivation to ab-

sorb approximately two million tons of carbon dioxide by 2035. In October 2021, Kuwait joined the Middle East Green initiative, which aims to plant 40 billion trees.

Kuwait is seeking to join the Crimean Climate Alliance, which was announced on the sidelines of the 27th conference of the parties to the climate change agreement held in Sharm El-Sheikh last November as a global initiative of the UAE, she said, expressing hope that this alliance will promote the rehabilitation of mangroves, coastal zone management and conservation, as well as the exchange of knowledge in the field of scientific research.

She pointed out that the world is facing climate change, as studies indicate that more than 35 percent of the excess carbon in the atmosphere is caused by tampering with ecosystems such as the loss of forests, mangroves and vegetation cover. She pointed out that nature-based solutions are one of the pillars of combating climate change at the global level, as studies indicate that mangroves can store up to 10 times the amount of carbon per acre compared to wild forests - so they are considered green lung of the globe. Al-Kandari said that Kuwait is working to translate the directives of the political leadership through the implementation of a work program for the cultivation of plants (Crimea) in cooperation with other counties in the Gulf Cooperation Council in order to complete the basic principles of the economic cycle of carbon and enhance the absorption of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

UAE Ambassador Dr Matar Al Neyadi said in a similar speech that his country is working hard to raise awareness about initiatives and actions that contribute to reducing emissions and carbon dioxide - including planting trees (mangroves) because of their storage capacity which is more than any tropical forest - in addition to their role in reviving the marine environment.

Al Neyadi stressed the importance of cooperation between the environmental authorities in Kuwait and Abu Dhabi, which resulted in the planting of a hundred Crimean seedlings in Jahra Reserve in cooperation with a group of embassies, explaining that the Gulf Arab countries have made a great way in planting Crimean trees to reduce emissions.

The secretary general of the regional organization for the protection of the marine environment Dr Jassim Bishara said in a similar speech that the Crimean plant has a historical legacy in the Gulf - stressing its ability to adapt to the problems of climate change, which necessitates its rehabilitation and the development of its cultivation because of its great value on the Gulf region. — KUNA

Bar Association celebrates 60 years of achievements

KUWAIT: Kuwait Bar Association is celebrating its 60th anniversary, with a history dating back to 1963 when it was first established and tasked with regulating lawyers' work and protecting the rights of its members. In a statement to KUNA on Thursday, head of the association Lawyer Sharyan Al-Sharyan said the body is proud to have a group of prominent Kuwaiti lawyers who had developed the field throughout the years.

He added that he was pleased with having the association's members work as legislators in the National Assembly, while some of them had also worked in administrative positions inside the as-

Local

Kuwaiti women playing an important role in society

Councilmember tackles pollution, traffic crisis

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti women play an important role in society and have made significant contributions to various fields in the country. In recent years, Kuwaiti women have gained more opportunities to participate in politics, business and other sectors of society. In an exclusive interview, Municipal Councilmember Sharifa Al-Shalfan told Kuwait Times that Kuwaiti women have been proving themselves since the sixties, when they were among the first Gulf women to study abroad in Britain, Egypt and Lebanon.

"Kuwaiti women are now ambassadors, ministers and bank executives in the private sector. Kuwaiti women's achievements have reached the highest levels. Today, the confidence of the Kuwaiti leadership is appreciated in supporting women to enhance these achievements. The presence of women in these positions is important, because it gives young girls encouragement and motivation that women are capable of anything," she said.

Shalfan is one of four women appointed to the

Kuwait Municipal Council for the first time. She said women are now offering a new point of view to the council. "The presence of women today in the Municipal Council contributed to the interest in the environmental aspect, as women see the current problems from another perspective," she said.

"The woman is a mother, and we women see pollution is increasing in Kuwait. I have children with asthma. When I go to the hospital, I see it is full of sick children with masks. It hurts my heart. All of this is because of us and due to air pollution. Environmental campaigns are not just a slogan. Environmental pollution affects our health and the health of our children," she explained.

On the issue of landfills, Shalfan said members of the Municipal Council visited three landfills for household waste, where waste is dumped and covered with a layer of sand daily. "There must be an insulator so that the waste does not decompose into the soil, thus affecting groundwater and emitting gases," she said. She noted that there is no health or environmental control, as workers sort the waste by

hand with no protection. "The situation is not good. We are working with the Municipality to try to fix this situation and put in place regulation for solid waste management."

Regarding the traffic crisis, she said among the simple solutions to resolve the problem is to control traffic and regulate taxis, bicycles, motorcycles and public transportation, pointing out that the law must be strictly applied to everyone. "Also, we can adopt the rapid bus transit system and set special lanes on highways for buses to make their destination easier to reach, as well as organizing regular buses in terms of expanding their routes to cover all areas and work on their timings," Shalfan said.

Shalfan expressed the importance of focusing on the problem of stray dogs, as they cause inconvenience to residents living in several areas around Kuwait. "It is an issue of utmost importance, both from an animal rights perspective as well as the health and safety of people." Proposal by Shalfan and several councilmembers discussed the dangerous diseases transmitted from dogs to humans



Sharifa Al-Shalfan

and possible attacks by dogs. The suggestion was to open shelters for stray dogs in several areas and coordinate with the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources to limit the spread of dogs by removing them from the streets and finding a safe place for them.

Kuwait's Charity distributes Iftar meals to refugees

BEIRUT: To celebrate the advent of the Holy Month of Ramadan and help Syrian refugees, Al-Najat Charity distributed Iftar meals to Syrian refugees in Aarsal camps located at the border area in northeastern Lebanon. Speaking to KUNA, Tarek Al-Essa, public relations official at Al-Najat Charity, said that a delegation from the charity joined the refugees in Aarsal to welcome Ramadan and hold Tarawih prayers.

Within the framework of the "One Million Fast-ing Meals" campaign, which includes several countries including Lebanon, the delegation prepared a mobile kitchen to distribute breakfast meals, he mentioned. In addition to distributing breakfast throughout the month, food baskets were distributed to the camps in the region, he pointed out. Al-Essa, who was accompanied by the director of the Kaifan Zakat Committee at Al-Najat, confirmed the association's keenness to support the refugees and help them, especially in this holy month that represents mercy, goodness and giving.

In another development, GCC Secretary General Jassem Al-Budaiwi on Thursday condemned a decision by the Zionist occupation authorities to re-settle in areas in the north of the West Bank. Al-Budaiwi, in a statement released on Thursday, expressed strong denunciation of the decision that flagrantly breached international laws and added to obstacles in the face of regional and international peace efforts. He has affirmed that the Palestinian cause remains the top question for the Arabs and Muslims, also re-asserting support for establishing an independent Palestinian state within the 1967 June 4th borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Moreover, he called for boosting efforts for pushing the peace process forward.

Protect all basic right

Al-Budaiwi also underlined the GCC countries safeguard human rights and guarantee all basic

rights, including equality and non-discrimination, under the directives of their leaders of the GCC countries. The GCC Secretary-General made the statement on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, annually marked on March 21.

Al-Budaiwi has stressed out that the GCC countries are committed to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination and criminalizing its acts, in accordance with the legislation, laws, procedures and measures adopted by the GCC countries. He indicated that "the world today still suffers from campaigns of racism, discrimination and hatred, and related intolerance that has created challenges for the international community to find solutions to combat racism in all its forms and places."

In addition "the GCC countries have been working to spread and promote a culture of tolerance, respect for human rights, justice, equality, and rejection of racism, in application of the tolerant Islamic Sharia which prohibits discrimination in all its forms." Al Budaiwi stressed the importance that the international



GCC Secretary-General Jassem Al-Budaiwi

community condemns discourses that promote ideas based on racial superiority or hatred, or that incite racism and discrimination. — KUNA



AKKAR: A girl speaks with another as he carries a young boy while walking past tents at a make-shift camp for Syrian refugees in Talhayat in the Akkar district in north Lebanon. — AFP

to the election, which included: (1) The election process was done with false procedures, as the decision to dissolve the 2020 parliament violated article 107 of the constitution, as the government that requested the dissolution was new and sworn in on the same day, nullifying all conflicts between the previous government and the parliament. (2) The election process, namely redistricting, was made without the approval of the National Assembly. (3) The election process in the second district had procedural errors with regards to the voting process, counting of votes and announcement of results.

Constitutional expert Mohammed Al-Faili told Kuwait News and Kuwait Times "the ruling is similar to the first annulled parliament in 2012, where the process of dissolution was made by the resigned government before forming a new government. The court decided to annul the parliament based on the same reasons," he said.

The court headed by Consultant Mohammed bin Naji ruled any conflict between the government and the parliament ends with the formation of a new government. Therefore, the Sept 29, 2022 election is completely annulled and the 17th parliamentary legislative term is annulled along with all decisions made during that term, reverting to the previous 2020 parliament.

to 1.518 million people. While the percentage of Kuwaitis in the total population declined from 33.94% at the end of 2021 to 32.04%, according to the latest figures. The number of Kuwaiti females totaling 773,100 - exceeds the number of males at 744,400.

The non-Kuwaiti population increased by 322,400 people or an increase rate of 11.1%, to reach 3.219 million people with a compound annual growth rate during the years 2013-2022 at 1.9%. The total number of workers in Kuwait amounted to 2.858 million workers or 60.3% of total population, while this percentage for Kuwaitis reached 31.7% of the total number of Kuwaitis. It is noted that the percentage of non-Kuwaiti workers out of the total non-Kuwaiti population amounted to 73.8%.

When compared with the end of 2021, we find that the percentage of Kuwaiti workers out of total number of workers in Kuwait decreased from 18.1% to 16.8% as in December 2022, and the percentage of female workers out of total Kuwaiti workforce



KUWAIT: A picture shows the National Assembly (parliament) building in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

There are two scenarios that may occur if we review the historical context. It is likely that what happened in 2012 repeats again, leading to another election this year, or the 2020 National Assembly will resume its duties until it finishes its term. The 2020 opposition, no longer the majority after the annulment, is put in a tight place, where they will have to accept the current situation, try to cooperate with the government and move forward with new legislation.

stabilized at 51.1% at the end of 2022 and at the end of 2021, while the percentage of female employment out of total employment in Kuwait was 29.5%. The number of Kuwaiti workers increased by 12,000 workers to reach 481,000 workers, rising from 469,000 workers at the end of 2021.

The number of workers in the government reached 380,600 workers or 79.1% of the total number of Kuwaiti workers. It is believed that the unemployment of Kuwaitis has increased to 26,100 workers or 5.4% of total number of Kuwaiti workers at the end of 2022, compared to 25,400 workers or 5.4% at the end of 2021. The total number of workers (Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti) amounted to 492,900 workers in the government sector or approximately 10.4% of the total population, and the percentage of Kuwaitis working in the government sector is about 77.2%, according to the same source. It must be recalled that the two official sources (PACI & CSB) of these numbers are not compatible.

Vietnam envoy shares Ramadan experience

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: On the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, Kuwait Times is chatting with ambassadors to Kuwait in an attempt to see Ramadan through their eyes. Vietnamese Ambassador Ngu Twang Thang spoke with Kuwait Times about his experience of Ramadan in Kuwait. He said his first posting was at an overseas mission in the Gulf region, where he sat at iftar tables during the holy month of Ramadan. "Kuwaiti people are very friendly, and these occasions are an opportunity for ambassadors and diplomats to understand and create connections with the Kuwaiti people, thus boosting trade and investment relations with each other," he said.

The Vietnamese ambassador showed his interest in nightly meetings (diwaniyas), which he considers a very important tradition in Kuwait. "Through the diwaniyas, I understand more about the Kuwaiti culture and appreciate the people's hospitality. I have also tried a lot of fine Kuwaiti delicacies, and I have a few favorites. One of them is machboos, either mutton or chicken — I enjoy it very much. Another is Umm Ali — a dessert whose taste I like. I feel that in the holy month of Ramadan, people seem to get closer than ever, and it seems very easy to communicate for work. It is also a pleasure to see each other," he said.

Regarding Ramadan in Vietnam, Thang said around 100,000 Muslims are currently residing in his country. "I am aware that the holy month of Ramadan is important to Muslims. I think Muslims around the world will celebrate the month with general activities that are proper to the Islamic religion and have their own customs according to the region. In Vietnam, Muslims and people of other religions live in harmony with each other. The holidays of every religion are respected and celebrated in the local community," he said.

The ambassador added the COVID pandemic affected many aspects of daily life. He rued that when he started his mission as ambassador in 2021, the pandemic restricted a lot of close contacts and therefore affected the diwaniyas. "After a year, I got the chance to attend a few of the diwaniyas, but noticed that the time was a bit short, only from 8 to 11 pm. I hope this year with the new situation, the Ramadan activities would last longer — until midnight or later. It would be better for people to have more chances to communicate with each other," he said.

Ambassador Thang expressed Ramadan wishes to HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and to the Kuwaiti people, wishing everyone a Ramadan full of joy, peace and blessings.



Vietnamese Ambassador Ngu Twang Thang

Constitutional Court's ruling and its effects

By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

KUWAIT: The National Assembly was annulled by the constitutional court on Sunday, March 19, 2023, leading to a complete overhaul of the 17th parliamentary legislative term's decisions, including retirement reforms as well as all laws placed on the agenda but have not been voted on.

It is worth mentioning that the National Assembly has been annulled three times in history. A ruling on June 20, 2012 annulled the parliament, reverting to the 2009 National Assembly for similar reasons as the current annulment. After two invitations to the parliament that were not heeded by most members of the parliament, the Assembly was again annulled in Oct 7 of the same year.

The Constitutional Court ruled in the latest instance based on former MP and 2022 election candidate Ahmad Al-Hamad's objection

Kuwait's population and the labor force

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Civil Information issued the latest detailed data on population and employment statistics at the end of December 2022, and it did not release the detailed data for the end of 2021, showing that the total population in Kuwait reached 4.737 million in December 2022, with population growing by 8% compared to the end of 2021 amounting to 4.386 million people (4.217 million people according to the Central Statistical Bureau). There is an absolute increase during 2022 by 351,200 people, and the absolute decline for 2021 was 285,000 people, ie a decline of 6.1% in 2021 compared to a decline of 2.2% in 2020.

The Kuwaiti population increased during 2022 at a growth rate of 1.9% - bringing their total number

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US programs empowering Kuwait youth

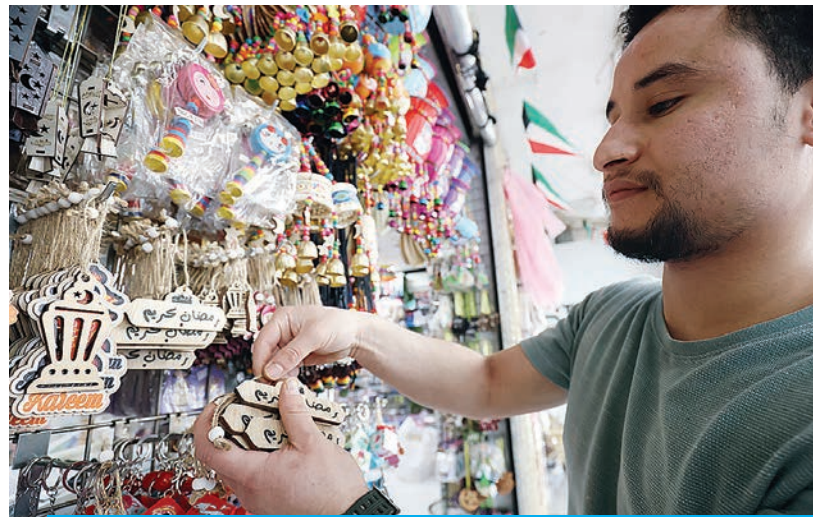
KUWAIT: Head of Kuwait's branch of the US-Kuwait Exchange Alumni Association (US-KAA) Hamad Al-Saad said that the association has enrolled at least 2,000 Kuwaiti citizens since 1966, empowering them with strengthened skills and expertise in diverse fields. Shedding light on 57 years of achievements of cultural exchange, Al-Saad told Kuwait News Agency in an interview that the ten cultural exchange programs provided by the US Department of State aim to develop skills of its members.

USKAA was established in 2019 and was first chaired by Engineer Sharifa Al-Shalfan, under aegis of the US Embassy. It had set a number of rules and plans aiming to include Kuwaiti graduates of the programs, nearing 2,000 since 1966. The programs include leadership skills, social services for students of the ninth and tenth grades, teaching Arabic language in the US and programs for people with PhD degree in math, science, engineering and technology.

The association, Saad added, organizes workshops, seminars, coordinates expertise exchange among the graduates and engages in social and humanitarian activities. The ten programs empower those enrolled to sharpen their skills, help them employ their potentials for serving Kuwait's interests, in addition to cementing the relations with the United States of America, he added. For example, the US State Department's International Leadership Visitor Program targets the distinguished, Saad has said, also mentioning other sub programs namely the Youth Exchange and Study Program that engage students of ninth and tenth grades for social services and volunteering.

The International Writing Program involves novelists and writers. The Fulbright Program for assistant teachers of foreign languages qualifies English-language teachers to partake in teaching the Arabic language in the US. The Fulbright visiting researchers program targets PhD-level individuals in sciences and technology, engineering and mathematics, he said. Saad also mentioned the Sports Envoy Program, held for two weeks in the US, partly designed to enhance coaches' skills. —KUNA

Photo of the Day



Vendors and shoppers prepare for Ramadan at a market in Kuwait City. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait University, EU name 3 students as 'women, environment ambassadors'

Winners' papers explore females' role in mitigating climate change

KUWAIT: The College of Social Sciences at Kuwait University has recognized outstanding students as "Women and Environment Ambassadors," in cooperation with the EU delegation to Kuwait.

The students were the winners of a competition organized by the college and the EU delegation, called "The Role of Women in Environmental Policies in Kuwait". The results of the competition were announced at an awards ceremony held by the two entities.

Acting Charge d'Affaires of the EU Delegation to Kuwait Irina Gusachenko said in a statement that the EU is committed to supporting Kuwait and bright Kuwaiti youngsters in their efforts to protect the environment and enhance the female role in environmental policies.

Acting Assistant Dean for Student Affairs at Kuwait University Dr Mohammad Al-Sahli said that raising awareness of climate change, highlighting the role of women in environmental policy-



KUWAIT: The winners pose for a photo at an awards ceremony held by Kuwait University's College of Social Sciences and the EU delegation. —KUNA

making and improving youth capabilities to preserve the environment are all vital.

The three winners' authored papers addressed

females' contribution to reducing the effects of climate change, including proposing solutions, recommendations and guidelines for Kuwait. —KUNA



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KUWAIT: A member of the Kuwait Fire Force showcases features of the fire station on its opening day. — KUNA

Kuwait University gets state-of-the-art fire station

KUWAIT: Kuwait University inaugurated this week Al-Shedadiya firefighting station at Sabah Al-Salem Campus city. The station is equipped with the latest mechanisms, laboratories, monitoring and control of leaks, in addition to security and safety devices.

In a statement on the sidelines of the opening ceremony, Deputy Chairman of Kuwait University Dr Fahad

Al-Rashidi stressed the importance of having a firefighting station in the campus city that includes more than 43,000 students and 3,000 teaching staff, and located on an area of six million square meters.

He explained that although the university has a prevention department with the highest safety standards used in buildings and facilities, emergencies and accidents are possible, which confirms the need for the presence of a general fire force on campus to respond to any emergency event quickly.

Chief of the General Fire Brigade Lieutenant-General Khaled Al-Mekrad said the center is specialized in dealing with hazardous, gaseous and radioactive materials. "It is one of the leading specialized centers in the State of Kuwait and the region", he noted. — KUNA



KUWAIT: A man walks by a building in 1960s Kuwait. (Source: 'Kuwait' by Ralph Shaw, London, 1976. Prepared by: Mahmoud Zakaria Abu Al-Ella, researcher in heritage at the Ministry of Information.)



Inter-American court hears first abortion case

Page 6

Rahul Gandhi found guilty of defamation

Page 7



BRUSSELS: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres (R) talks with President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen (C) and Cyprus' President of the Republic Nikos Anastasiades as they attend a EU Summit, at the EU headquarters in Brussels, on March 23, 2023. – AFP

Existing France-Germany tensions overshadow EU leaders' summit

While no agreement has yet been reached, Dutch PM hope issue will be resolved

BRUSSELS: A burgeoning row between France and Germany fired by differences over nuclear energy and combustion engines threatened to spill over into a gathering of the 27 European Union leaders Thursday. Existing strains between the European Union's two biggest players after Berlin upset some of its partners by blocking—at the last minute—a landmark deal to prohibit new sales of fossil fuel cars from 2035. The ban is key to Brussels' ambitious plan to become a "climate neutral" economy by 2050, with net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. In an unprecedented action this month, Germany intervened after the car ban had already been approved under the EU legislative process. It demanded that Brussels provide assurances the law would allow the sales of new cars with combustion engines that run on synthetic fuels.

While the last-minute block frustrated many EU capitals, Paris had in turn already irked Berlin by insisting on giving nuclear energy a starring role in European plans to produce more green technology in Europe. Paris and Berlin have traditionally worked together to push forward the EU agenda. But the split hangs over the summit as the leaders meet to discuss EU support for Ukraine and how to boost

economic competitiveness in the face of threats from US and Chinese subsidies.

The European Commission, the EU's executive arm, has been holding talks with Germany's transport ministry to resolve the dispute over cars. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told reporters before the summit that Germany's talks with the commission were "on the right track". "It is now really only a matter of finding the right way to implement this promise," Scholz said.

Domestic affair reaches EU

While no agreement has yet been reached, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said he hoped the issue would be resolved "over the coming days". Some leaders criticised Germany's 11th-hour move to slam the brakes on a proposal that had already cleared all the hurdles in the traditional EU legislative process.

"The entire architecture of decision-making would fall apart if we all did that," Latvian Prime Minister Arturs Krisjanis Karis said. Germany, which boasts one of the world's biggest car manufacturing industries, blocked the deal signed last year in a move viewed as a product of domestic politics.

Scholz heads a coalition made up of his social democrats and rival Greens and liberals. "It is above all a German affair and an internal debate in German politics that has reached Europe," a senior EU diplomat complained. The synthetic fuels Germany wants an exemption for are still under development, produced using low-carbon electricity. The technology is unproven, but German manufacturers hope it will lead to the extended use of combustion engines.

While Germany led the revolt against the combustion engine ban, it is not alone. It has formed a small alliance with countries including Italy, another major car manufacturer, and eastern European states such as Poland and Hungary. France has not held back from singling out Germany for criticism. Earlier this month, French Transport Minister Clement Beaune accused his German counterpart of leading "a revolt" against the ban on new petrol- or diesel-engine cars.

'Scam' nuclear

Against this tense backdrop, French President Emmanuel Macron will meet Scholz one-on-one on Friday. Another bone of contention they will have to thrash out is France's push for EU recognition that

nuclear power has a role to play in Europe's green future. Nuclear divides the EU, with countries like Austria and Luxembourg strongly against while its supporters include the Czech Republic and Poland. "It's not safe, it's not fast, it's not cheap and it's not climate-friendly. With European flags on it, it would be a scam," Luxembourg's Prime Minister Xavier Bettel said, as he arrived.

On March 16, the European Commission launched new plans to boost clean technology production by ensuring permits are given out faster and projects given better access to funding. Nuclear-powered France wanted atomic energy to be included in the list but failed to achieve that goal.

Nuclear did, however, feature in the proposals announced—but it applies only to fourth-generation reactors that do not yet exist, meaning atomic energy would obtain little of the advantages on offer.

Macron will "focus on the role of nuclear in decarbonisation" during the leaders' meeting, a French government source said. Another senior EU diplomat was less optimistic about what the summit would achieve, given the distance between the capitals. "We don't expect a spectacular breakthrough on any specific issue," the diplomat said. – AFP



DRUZHKIVKA: Ivan Synchina, 48, (right) and his daughter Marta Synchina, 25, pose for a picture in Druzhkivka, eastern Ukraine. – AFP

'Together for now': Ukrainian families serving on the front

DRUZHKIVKA: When Marta Synchina was first sent to Ukraine's war-ravaged east as a military nurse, she and her father -- deployed in the same brigade -- decided not to tell her mother. "Mum didn't know I was here for a long time," the young woman told AFP, seated next to her father, Ivan Synchin, on a bench in Druzhkivka, where she treats wounded fighters. "We didn't say anything at first so she wouldn't cry." But, she said, her mother was calmer knowing the pair were near each other, even after Russia launched its full-scale invasion in February last year. The war sparked a mass rallying of Ukrainian forces, often including two generations of the same family.

Marta joined the military seven months before Moscow sent in its troops. The country's east was already gripped by conflict, but at the time she saw only a few wounded per month. Now, she treats countless more. She had followed her father into the military after initially taking her mother's lead into medicine, training as a midwife.

"Before, my work was about the start of life, and now it is about saving life," she said, tucking her hands into her camouflage jacket against the cold. While Ivan and his wife were proud of their daughter, he said he did not think she would accept having their nearly 18-year-old son also join the armed forces. "There are already too many of us in the military,"

said the 48-year-old, who has served more than seven years and whose brother also volunteered to fight after the February invasion.

'They died together'

Marta had not seen her mother or brother for nearly a year since the war started, but sporadic visits with her father keep both their spirits up. Each time, Ivan said, he is grateful that "we're together, for now". Marta said she knew of several relatives serving: A father and son at the front, a mother and two sons working as drivers, and another nurse whose father and brother are in the infantry battalion of their brigade.

The list is emblematic of how the war has extended its deadly reach into the heart of Ukraine, leaving few untouched by loss as a mounting toll of coffins are sent home from the front. Oleg Khomyuk, 52, and his 25-year-old son Mykyta volunteered for the army together shortly after the invasion. Not long after its first anniversary on February 24, both were killed in a trench near the embattled city of Bakhmut.

Khomyuk covered his son with his body during an attack but a shell exploded nearby, killing them both, said Yuriy Samson, Oleg's brother, at their funeral in Kyiv. The Ukrainian defence ministry posted a photo on Twitter of the pair side by side in fatigues, cradling rifles. "They died together," the ministry wrote.

It's a fate Volodymyr Chaikovsky, 54, tries not to dwell on. He serves in the same brigade as his 25-year-old son, also named Volodymyr. "Of course I worry about my son," he said, seated next to the younger man at the dust-covered patio table of an abandoned home not far from the front lines near Lyman.—AFP

Trump jury fails to meet, indictment decision delayed

NEW YORK: The drama surrounding Donald Trump's possible indictment over hush money paid to a porn star took a new twist Wednesday, after a New York grand jury failed to convene as expected—pushing back a decision, potentially into next week. Speculation that a historic indictment of a former president may be imminent has been building ever since Trump himself announced he was expecting to be arrested. But Wednesday's grand jury session was called off, unnamed law enforcement officials told multiple US outlets, without giving a reason. The New York Times reported that such interruptions are not unusual.

With barricades outside Trump Tower and police on high alert, New York has been holding its breath over an expected indictment for days—with tension peaking on Tuesday, the day Trump said he would be arrested. He wasn't. The jury panel usually meets on Thursdays too but Insider, which broke the news of the canceled meeting, quoted one source as saying it may not gather again this week, meaning the earliest a decision might come is Monday. The 76-year-old Republican would become the first former or sitting president to ever be charged with a crime if the panel eventually votes to indict. The unprecedented move would send shockwaves through the 2024 election campaign, in which Trump is running to regain office.

It would also raise the prospect of a former leader of the free world being arrested, booked, fingerprinted and possibly handcuffed. The Times has reported that Trump favors the idea of being paraded in front of cameras by law enforcement, in what is known as a perp walk. Prosecutor Alvin Bragg likely wants to avoid any spectacle that could rile up Trump's base.

Bragg formed the grand jury—a citizens' panel tasked with deciding whether there is a case to answer—in January following his investigation into \$130,000 paid to Stormy Daniels in 2016. Grand juries operate behind closed doors to prevent perjury or witness tampering before trials, making it virtually impossible to follow their proceedings.

A spokesperson for Bragg told AFP that she couldn't comment "on grand jury matters." Even once the panel takes a decision, it is unclear when Bragg would announce any charges. Legal experts have suggested it could take some time before Trump, currently at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Flor-



NEW YORK: Anti-Trump demonstrators protest outside the Manhattan District Attorney's office in New York City. Former US President Donald Trump is expected to be indicted over hush money paid to a porn actress, with Trump calling for mass demonstrations if he is charged. – AFP

ida, is arraigned before a Manhattan Criminal Court judge. The payment to Daniels was made weeks before the 2016 election, allegedly to stop her from going public about a liaison she says she had with Trump years earlier. Trump denies the affair and has called the inquiry a "witch hunt."

Trump calls for protests

Trump's ex-lawyer-turned-adversary Michael Cohen, who has testified before the grand jury, says he made the payment on his boss's behalf and was later reimbursed. If not properly accounted for, the payment could result in a misdemeanor charge for falsifying business records, experts say.

That might be raised to a felony if the false accounting was intended to cover up a second crime, such as a campaign finance violation, which is punishable by up to four years behind bars. Analysts say that argument is untested and would be difficult to prove in court. Any jail time is far from certain.

An indictment would begin a lengthy process that could last several months, if not more. The case would face a mountain of legal issues as it moves toward jury selection and pose a security headache for Secret Service agents who protect Trump. Trump has called for demonstrations if he is charged, fueling fears of unrest similar to the January 6, 2021 riot at the US Capitol, but so far protests have been small and muted. New York police have erected barricades outside the courthouse and Trump Tower. – AFP

International

People smugglers use TikTok to promote their services

In Mexico, ‘digital service companies are obliged to hand over information when there’s a crime’

MEXICO: A photo posted to TikTok shows a group of people dressed in camouflage, hoping to blend into the shadowy vegetation dotting the nighttime landscape of the Mexican desert. The picture was not uploaded by social media influencers on an adventurous vacation—it’s an advertisement by people smugglers.

Technology-savvy criminals using the popular video-sharing app are posing a growing challenge to Mexican and US authorities fighting a regional migration crisis. “Departing this weekend. People from Mexico interested in crossing to the United States, leave your messages,” the TikTok post said.

Another account offering to smuggle irregular migrants through the violence-wracked Mexican border state of Tamaulipas shows a photo of minors in an inflatable boat on a river. “We also make crossings with children and family,” it said.

An AFP investigation found dozens of similar accounts around the region, including in Guatemala, Colombia and Ecuador. And using the hashtag #pollero—a slang term for a people smuggler—one account offered “safe work” for drivers in the southwestern US state of Arizona for payment of up to \$15,000. “If you have a car and want to make easy money, write to me,” said a message in English.

The advertising violates TikTok’s official rules, which prohibit the “promotion and facilitation of criminal activities.” “Maintaining the safety of our community is a responsibility we take very seriously,” a spokesman for the app told AFP. “We do not tolerate content that promotes human exploitation, including human trafficking,” he added.

According to TikTok, in the third quarter of 2022 the firm removed 82 percent of the videos linked to criminal practices on its own initiative. Seeking to fend off calls for the app to be banned in the United States as long as it remains a Chinese company, Tik-

Tok chief executive Shou Zi Chew was due to testify before US lawmakers on Thursday.

He would deny that the app has, or would ever, share data with the Chinese government, according to his prepared remarks made available by the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

Cyber police patrols

In Mexico, authorities have formed specialized cells to counter the threat posed by people smugglers on social media. In a room full of computers in Mexico City, dozens of experts from the government’s Criminal Investigation Agency have been monitoring social media accounts since 2017. A board lists people of interest and their online activities. The unit has been involved in around 300 human trafficking investigations, said Rolando Rosas, head of the communications center at the Federal Ministerial Police, part of the Attorney General’s Office.

In Mexico, “digital service companies are obliged to hand over information when there’s a crime,” he said, welcoming the good cooperation with social media platforms. The unit’s head, Benjamin Oviedo, said that his team intervenes, for example, when payment to a trafficker is agreed on or made through the internet.

But the advertisements are not always real. “Many of the things that we find can sometimes be a fraud,” said Rosas. According to a report published by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in February, TikTok is used by people smugglers as a way to promote successful cases of irregular crossings. It warned that the crime opened the door to others, such as the sexual exploitation of minors.

The organization surveyed more than 500 migrants in transit, of whom nearly two-thirds said they had accessed a smartphone and the internet during the trip. Transporting migrants by road, often in



WASHINGTON: People gather for a press conference about their opposition to a TikTok ban on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC on March 22, 2023. — AFP

vans or crammed into the back of trucks, sometimes without ventilation, is one of the quickest but most dangerous methods used by people smugglers.

More than 7,600 migrants have died or disappeared in transit in the Americas since 2014, according to the IOM. Of those, nearly 1,000 were the result of vehicle accidents or linked to hazardous transport, the United Nations agency says.

TikTok is also used by migrants to share advice with each other on how to survive the treacherous journey to the United States. Andrea, 25, and her friend Beatriz, 29, who left Venezuela in October,

for an abortion was denied despite the non-viability of the fetus. Eighty-one days later she went into premature labor, and after doctors performed a cesarean section, the baby died five hours later.

“I think we made her suffer a lot and I think I have a responsibility to the mom and to the family,” said Ortiz, who testified in court. Gisela de Leon of the Center for Justice and International Law (Cejil), a rights NGO also among the plaintiffs, said the state had “violated (Beatriz’s) rights to life and personal integrity” by forcing her to carry the fetus knowing it could not survive.

“We are claiming that the suffering to which she was subjected, knowing that her right to life was at risk, is a form of torture,” said De Leon. Humberto said his sister was a victim of a poor, marginalized upbringing which causes “such situations happening to women because they do not have access to a system that guarantees reproductive health.”

In Latin America, elective abortion is legal in Argentina, Colombia, Cuba, Uruguay, and some states in Mexico. In several countries it is allowed in certain circumstances, such as rape or health risks, while outright bans apply also in Honduras, Nicaragua, Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

Several states in the United States have banned or curtailed abortion access since a Supreme Court ruling last June overturned the landmark Roe v. Wade decision that had long protected abortion rights.

“Beatriz’s situation is typical because it represents thousands of women... whose right to make decisions about their lives is not respected,” protester Carla Ansolini, 36, who had traveled to Costa Rica from Brazil, told AFP.

In El Salvador, around 100 women followed the trail by video link from inside the auditorium at the University of El Salvador, most of whom wore green T-shirts bearing the words: “Beatriz wanted to live and be happy.” The IACHR will hear testimony from relatives of Beatriz and doctors who treated her. The case will be heard over two days, with judgment expected in about six months. — AFP

used the app to find recommendations on traveling through danger zones such as the Darien Gap, an inhospitable jungle area straddling the Colombian-Panamanian border.

Now in Mexico, Andrea, who did not want to give her full name, pulled out her cellphone to show the profile of a young woman who has managed to reach the United States and put together a travel blog.

She gives recommendations of what to pack and which medicines to carry—advice that is sometimes, but not always, useful, Beatriz said. “Everyone’s experience is very personal,” she added. — AFP

Inter-American court hears first abortion case

SAN JOSE: The Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) on Wednesday held its first day of testimony in a landmark abortion rights case as women called for “justice” outside the Costa Rica-based tribunal. A woman identified only as “Beatriz” is symbolically squaring off at the IACHR against the Central American country of El Salvador, which enforces an absolute ban on the procedure.

The country is accused of alleged human rights violations and torture after Beatriz was forced to carry a non-viable fetus for nearly three months despite a risk to her health.

Protesters had appeared outside the court building in San Jose at dawn to follow the hearing live on a big screen sporting purple accessories -- the symbolic color of the fight for gender equality.

They waved banners stating: “This fight is for Beatriz and for everyone,” and asserting the case could “change the future of women in Latin America.”

Across the street, about two dozen anti-abortion demonstrators also gathered, praying silently. The case comes as some Latin American countries are taking cautious steps towards easing abortion restrictions, even as the United States -- which has signed but not ratified the IACHR founding convention -- sees several states rolling back access.

The court’s decision to hear the case “strongly indicates... that the denial of any health service, including those that are controversial such as abortion, is a human rights violation,” said Maria Antonieta Alcala of the Ipas reproductive rights NGO, which is among the plaintiffs. Beatriz died in a traffic accident in 2017 after the case was filed. Her family decided to take the case forward anyway.

“What we really want is for other women not



SAN SALVADOR: Women gather at the Faculty of Jurisprudence of the University of El Salvador to tune in to the live broadcast from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in Costa Rica of the public hearing in the case of Beatriz and Others v. El Salvador, in San Salvador. — AFP

to suffer what my sister had to go through,” Beatriz’s 30-year-old brother, using the pseudonym Humberto, told AFP.

‘A form of torture’

In El Salvador, abortion has been prohibited since 1998 under penalty of eight years in prison. Courts frequently find women guilty of the crime of aggravated homicide instead, imposing sentences that can go up to 50 years.

Beatriz suffered from an auto-immune disease when she fell pregnant for the second time in 2013 at age 20, after already going through a previous complicated birth. After the fetus was found to be unviable due to a severe developmental defect, a medical board determined “it was necessary to perform an abortion at that moment (12 weeks of pregnancy) to prevent her health from being damaged or she could possibly die,” Beatriz’s doctor, Guillermo Antonio Ortiz, told AFP.

An appeal to the country’s Constitutional Court

more of the Quran, reflecting on its implications, learning about its verses, and attempting to comprehend God’s intended message. All these combined puts forth a Muslim who is able to restrain himself, be aware of the weight of their words and actions upon all kinds of beings, and be weary of losing all the hard work they have put in.

As a result, Ramadan ends with graduating a person whose character, habits, and relationships are significantly improved. Lastly, fasting Ramadan is not designed to torment people. Soon after dusk, Muslims are allowed to satiate their natural desires: to have food and to enjoy intimacy with their spouses. Furthermore, once thirty days pass, Muslims have a grand celebration, known as Eid Al Fitr, where they buy new clothes and visit each other.

Charity is paid so that everyone, no matter their financial status, can enjoy Eid, and thus you can be sure that at the end of Ramadan, 1.8 billion human beings are happily clothed, fed, and content, in a beautiful representation of The Musketeer’s motto, “all for Here lies the symbolism of it all, self-restraint is greatly rewarded, be that in the simple delicious meal after a long day of fasting or in entering Paradise after conforming to God’s commands. Now, I ask you this, isn’t it time to get your fast on?”

(Courtesy of the TIES Center: The TIES Center is one of the projects of Kuwait Society for Cultural Dialogue, and is the social and educational hub for English speaking expats in Kuwait and aims at empowering Kuwait’s expats through social and educational services that promote a positive and productive role in society. It also facilitates opportunities for intra- and interfaith interactions that promote social solidarity. For more information, you can contact TIES at Tel: 25231015/6; Hotline: 94079777; e-mail: info@tiescenter.net.)

First 3D-printed rocket lifts off but...

Continued from Page 1

Terran 1 was not carrying a payload for its first flight, but the rocket will eventually be capable of putting up to 2,755 pounds into low Earth orbit. The rocket is 110 feet tall with a diameter of 7.5 feet. Eighty-five percent of its mass is 3D-printed with metal alloys, including the nine Aeon 1 engines used in its first stage and the one Aeon Vacuum engine employed in the second. It is the largest ever 3D-printed object and was made using the world’s largest 3D metal printers, according to the Long Beach-based company.

Relativity’s goal is to produce a rocket that is 95 percent 3D-printed. Terran 1 is powered by engines using liquid oxygen and liquid natural gas—the “propellants of the future,” capable of eventually fueling a voyage to Mars, Relativity says. SpaceX’s Starship and Vulcan rockets being developed by United Launch Alliance use the same fuel. Relativity is also building a larger rocket, the Terran R, capable of putting a payload of 44,000 pounds into low Earth orbit. The first launch of a Terran R, which is designed to be fully reusable, is scheduled for next year.

A satellite operator can wait for years for a spot on an Arianespace or SpaceX rocket, and Relativity Space hopes to accelerate the timeline with its 3D-printed rockets. Relativity said its 3D-printed versions use 100 times fewer parts than traditional rockets and can be built from raw materials in just 60 days. Relativity has signed commercial launch contracts worth \$1.65 billion, mostly for the Terran R, according to CEO Tim Ellis, who co-founded the company in 2015 — AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

UK parliament bans TikTok

LONDON: Britain’s parliament Thursday joined the government in banning TikTok, depriving lawmakers of access to the Chinese-owned video app via its internet network. The announcement came as TikTok’s chief executive Shou Zi Chew appeared before a hostile US Congress over its alleged ties to the communist government in Beijing. The app “will be blocked from all parliamentary devices and the wider parliamentary network”, the House of Commons and House of Lords said, adding: “Cyber security is a top priority for parliament.” Individual lawmakers who are dedicated users of TikTok, such as Energy Security Secretary Grant Shapps, will still be able to use the app on their own phones, but not when connected via parliament’s own WiFi network. — AFP

Zionists kill Palestinian

TULKARM: Zionist forces shot dead a Palestinian man Thursday, the Palestinian health ministry said, the first killing in the occupied West Bank during Ramadan as the army said it targeted an armed suspect. Amir Imad Abu Khadija, 25, was killed by “the occupation bullets during their aggression on Tulkarm,” the ministry said in a statement. He was shot in the head and lower limbs, the statement added. — AFP

It is not about...

Continued from Page 1

fasting. Parents and care givers encourage the children to fast for periods of time that are appropriate to their age and stamina by preparing gifts or celebrating. Ramadan also allows Muslims to empathize with those suffering from famine, thirst, and poverty which ensues a magnanimous spree of charity. Undoubtedly, spirituality levels skyrocket during this holy month and Muslims are even more drawn to experience and apply the six mainstays of belief which are the belief in God, judgment day, God’s angels, His messengers, His books, and in predestination. Muslims see Ramadan as the golden opportunity to consolidate these mainstays.

You can see that translated in how they comply to the commands of God whom they do not see. You can also observe in how they internalize accountability which results in the augmented fear of the day of judgment. A fear that springs from the knowledge that they will be responsible for every word and action, and that nobody will intercede nor bear the consequences of their actions except themselves.

It may sound distressing, but the reality is that God has bestowed upon human beings the freedom to choose between good and evil and He has supplied them with the means and the capability of following through with their choice. For that reason, it is only natural that they bear the consequences of their decisions. This is where Ramadan comes into play, Muslims start to double down on monitoring their actions in want of more reward from God. They try their best to avoid major and minor sins alike in hopes of accumulating as much rewards as possible during that short period of time.

During this holy month, Muslims also tend to read

International

Taiwan recalls ambassador to Honduras over FM's China visit

China 'ready' to establish ties with Honduras

TAIPEI: Taiwan recalled on Thursday its ambassador to Honduras over a visit by Tegucigalpa's foreign minister to China, Taipei's government said in a statement. "Honduras ignored more than 80 years of friendship between (Taiwan and Honduras) when they sent their foreign minister to China, which has seriously damaged the feelings of our government and people," said a foreign ministry statement.

"We have decided to immediately recall our ambassador in Honduras to express our strong dissatisfaction." The announcement came as Honduran Foreign Minister Eduardo Enrique Reina was heading to China to hold talks on the establishment of diplomatic relations with Beijing, government officials said.

China considers self-ruled democratic Taiwan as a part of its territory, to be retaken one day—by force, if necessary. Last week, Honduran President Xiomara Castro ordered Reina to establish diplomatic relations with China, a move that would sever its ties with Taiwan.

Under Beijing's "One China" principle, no country may maintain official diplomatic relations with both China and Taiwan. Taipei maintains a similar policy, having cut ties in the past with countries that switched recognition to Beijing.

If Honduras does formally switch recognition, it would leave Taiwan with just 13 countries with which it has formal diplomatic ties, having lost several Latin American allies in recent years. Reina was being ac-

companied to China by lawmaker Xiomara Zelaya, the daughter of President Castro, three government and diplomatic officials told AFP on condition of anonymity. The Honduran delegation will meet Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang, Minister of the Presidency Rodolfo Pastor told local daily El Heraldo. Beijing has not confirmed the visit, but on Thursday foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said China was "ready" to establish ties with Honduras.

"China welcomes the positive remarks made by the Honduran government on developing relations with China and stands ready to establish and develop bilateral relations with Honduras on the basis of equality and mutual respect," said Wang.

Last week, Reina said economic necessity and Taiwan's refusal to increase financial aid to Honduras were behind the decision to establish ties with China. Honduras is one of the poorest countries in Latin America, with almost 74 percent of its almost 10 million population living in poverty. Reina put the country's internal and external debt at \$20 billion, of which \$600 million is owed to Taiwan.

The diplomatic switch—which Castro had promised to make while on the campaign trail—came weeks after her government announced it was negotiating with China to build a hydroelectric dam. Addressing questions from lawmakers about reports that Honduras had demanded more aid from Taipei, Taiwan Foreign Minister Joseph Wu said Thursday



TAIPEI: File photo shows a woman walking past a Honduras flag (C) at Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Taipei. Taiwan recalled on March 23, 2023 its ambassador to Honduras over a visit by Tegucigalpa's foreign minister to China, Taipei's government said in a statement. — AFP

that his government was not prepared to accept an "unreasonable request." "I will be frank, we are in a rather difficult situation. We are still trying our best, and we will do our best to the last minute," he said.

"But we will not accept any unreasonable request, from Honduras or any other country, especially if they are opaque." In a separate statement on the same issue, Taiwan's foreign ministry said the island "will not engage with China in dollar diplomacy".

"(The foreign ministry) would like to once again appeal and remind the Honduran government not

to fall into China's debt trap." Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen will depart on March 29 on a 10-day trip to shore up ties with two of its remaining allies—Belize and Guatemala—and will also stop in the United States while in transit.

On March 7, US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy confirmed that he would meet Tsai in his home state of California, with the US State Department asserting the expected travel was "transit" rather than a "visit". Beijing has expressed opposition to that meeting. — AFP

Australian PM calls on voters to back Aboriginal 'voice'

SYDNEY: Australia's prime minister on Thursday made a tearful appeal to voters, asking them to support the creation of an Aboriginal "voice" in lawmaking as he announced the wording of the referendum question. Anthony Albanese said that Australians had a chance to make up for centuries of injustice, to formally recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island groups, and give them a voice in decision-making at a vote later this year. This is "about how our nation sees ourselves. Whether we have the confidence to embrace our history", said Albanese, painting the vote as a chance for Australians to make their country fairer. "What we have done up to now hasn't worked," he said, hailing the vote as a "historic democratic opportunity, a chance to show the very best of our national character, our fundamental optimism and a deep sense of fairness, our instinctive respect and kindness for each other."

The referendum aims to create an Indigenous advisory body that would have a constitutionally en-

shrined obligation to advise parliament on new laws and regulations. Sometime later this year, Australians will be asked to vote on a proposal to "alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice". Albanese said he felt a "weight of responsibility" about a proposal that is far from certain to pass. Polls show that about 60 percent of Australians back the constitutional change, but support has been declining and there are lingering questions about how the "voice" would work.

The body will not have a veto on legislation. It is not yet clear how or if the body would be democratically elected. Albanese sought to allay concerns about the project, stressing it was a "modest" request that was as much about how Australia sees itself as nuts-and-bolts lawmaking. For decades, Australia's white majority has struggled to reckon with its frequently brutal past. For more than a century, Indigenous Australians were not considered full citizens and although those rights are now enshrined in law, there is still deep inequality. Indigenous Australians are much more likely to be poor, to have limited access to education or healthcare and to be incarcerated than their white compatriots. "A Voice to Parliament, enshrined in our Constitution, will mean that our people are listened to and heard on the issues that affect us," said Aboriginal Senator Patrick Dodson. — AFP



NADI: Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese is presented a whale tooth, known as tabua, from a military official during a traditional welcoming ceremony at the Black Rock Army Camp in Fiji's coastal city Nadi. — AFP

Across globe, women battle 'gendered disinformation'

WASHINGTON: Fake photos showing Ukraine's first lady sunbathing topless, incorrect video subtitles defaming Pakistani feminists for "blasphemy", slow-motion clips falsely depicting "drunk" female politicians—a barrage of disinformation targets women in the public eye. Researchers say "gendered disinformation"—when sexism and misogyny intersect with online falsehoods—has relentlessly targeted women around the world, tarnishing their reputations, undermining their credibility and, in many cases, upending their careers.

AFP's global fact-checkers have debunked falsehoods targeting politically active women, or those linked to prominent politicians, exposing online campaigns that feature fake information or manipulated images that are often sexually charged. Last year, a fake image of Ukraine's First Lady Olena Zelenska lying topless on a beach in the Zionist entity was shared widely on Facebook, triggering criticism that she was having fun while her war-torn country was suffering.

A reverse image search by AFP showed the woman in the photo was, in fact, a Russian television presenter. Former American first lady Michelle Obama and current French first lady Brigitte Macron have also been targeted in false online posts that claimed they were born as men. The disinformation sparked an av-

alanche of mockery and transphobic remarks.

New Zealand's Jacinda Ardern, who announced her resignation as prime minister in January, is another prominent figure that faced a torrent of disinformation about her sex. "Women—especially those in positions of power and visibility—are unduly targeted by online disinformation," Maria Giovanna Sessa, a senior researcher at the nonprofit EU DisinfoLab, wrote in a report last year.

'Chilling effect'

In another tactic that raised alarm in 2020, a slowed-down version of a video of Nancy Pelosi, the then US House Speaker, went viral. The effect made her speech slurred and gave the false impression that she was drunk. "Building on sexist stereotypes and disseminated with malign intent, gendered disinformation campaigns have a chilling effect on the women they target," Lucia Di Meo, a gender equality expert wrote in a study published last month.

The disinformation often leads to "political violence, hate and the deterring of young women from considering a political career," said the study titled "monetizing misogyny." In disinformation tactics typically deployed by political opponents, female politicians are sometimes framed as inherently undependable, too emotional or promiscuous to hold office. When Germany's current foreign minister, Annalena Baerbock, was running for chancellor in 2021, she was the subject of frequent disinformation campaigns which raised questions about whether she was fit for the job. One of them featured images of a nude model purporting to be of her, alongside suggestions that she had engaged in sex work. Gendered disinformation represents a national security threat as it

Rahul Gandhi found guilty of defamation

AHMEDABAD: An Indian court Thursday found opposition leader Rahul Gandhi guilty of defamation for a 2019 campaign trail remark implying that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was a criminal. Modi's government has been widely accused of using the law to target and silence critics, and the case in the premier's home state of Gujarat is one of several lodged against his chief opponent in recent years. Gandhi, the leading face of the opposition Congress party, was sentenced to two years imprisonment but immediately granted bail after his lawyers announced their intention to appeal. The case stemmed from a remark made during the 2019 election campaign in which the 52-year-old had asked why "all thieves have Modi as (their) common surname". His comments were seen as a slur against the prime minister, who went on to win the election in a landslide. Members of the government also said the remark was a smear against all those sharing the Modi surname, which is associated with the lower rungs of India's traditional caste hierarchy.

"If you are going to insult the entire Modi surname, this is completely defamatory," Ravi Shankar Prasad, a lawmaker for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), told reporters. "There was a proper hearing. He got an opportunity to present his side of things," he added. "The decision has been taken according to the due judicial process." Gandhi's lawyer B. M. Mangukhiya said his client had not meant to insult anyone. "When the magistrate asked Gandhi what he had to say in his defence, the Congress leader said that he was fighting to expose corruption in the country," Mangukhiya told reporters outside the court. "His comments were not meant to hurt or insult any community." Gandhi is the son, grandson and great-grandson of a dynasty of former Indian prime ministers, beginning with independence leader Jawaharlal Nehru.

But the scion of India's most famous political dynasty has struggled to challenge the electoral juggernaut of Modi and its nationalist appeals to the country's Hindu majority. Gandhi, who was present in court in Surat for the verdict, was greeted by supporters on his arrival. He faces at least two other defamation cases elsewhere in the country. Gandhi is also on bail in another money laundering case that has been snaking its way through India's glacial legal system for more than a decade. He denies any financial impropriety. — AFP

can be exploited by autocratic states such as Russia to exercise foreign influence, according to multiple researchers. It can also be used to subdue the opposition. "When autocratic leaders are in power, gendered disinformation is often used by state-aligned actors to undermine women opposition leaders, as well as women's rights," Di Meo's report warned.

'Attacks on dignity'

Women around the globe battle falsehoods that reinforce stereotypes that they are unintelligent or inefficient. In 2021, Egyptian sports shooter Al-Zahraa Shaaban faced false social media posts that she had been excluded from the Tokyo Olympics because she had shot the referee.

That sparked a wave of comments that ridiculed women and questioned their ability to pursue such sporting activities. Similar questions were raised about their ability to take on military jobs following last year's crash of an F-35 fighter jet on the deck of a US aircraft carrier in the South China Sea. False social media posts held the world's first woman to fly an F-35 responsible for the crash. The pilot, in fact, was a man. Such humiliating falsehoods, researchers say, can have a silencing effect on women, who are drawn to disengage, censor themselves and even avoid male-dominated professions, including politics. That was a concern raised in a letter by dozens of US and international lawmakers in 2020 to Facebook, which along with other platforms has been blamed for the algorithmic amplification of false and hateful content targeting women. In a statement to US media at the time, Facebook acknowledged that online abuse of women was a "serious problem" and pledged to work with policymakers on their concerns. —AFP

News in Brief

Man charged for murders

LONDON: UK police on Thursday charged a 28-year-old man with the attempted murders of two elderly men who were set on fire after they left mosques, in separate attacks. West Midlands Police said Mohammed Abbrk, 28, from Edgbaston in Birmingham, central England, would appear at the city's magistrates court. He was arrested on Tuesday following an investigation involving counter-terrorism police and remains in custody. Abbrk allegedly sprayed a substance on the two men outside or near mosques they had attended and then set them alight, in incidents in west London on February 27 and Birmingham on Monday. — AFP

Toilet spycams

BANGKOK: A former IT manager at the Australian embassy in Thailand was sentenced on Thursday to two years in jail for installing spy cameras in women's bathrooms at the mission. Nayot Thamsongsana, 39, pleaded guilty to two counts of committing an indecent act, under the kingdom's sexual and public nuisance laws. The cameras were discovered after a memory card was found on the bathroom floor in 2021, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) reported. It is not clear how long they had been installed for. "The court found him guilty of two counts and sentenced him to two years on each, but with his confession, the penalty was reduced by half," a prosecutor told AFP. — AFP

Five migrants drown

TUNIS: Five migrants from sub-Saharan Africa drowned and another 28 were missing Wednesday after their boat capsized off Tunisia, a rights group said. "Five migrants' bodies were recovered and five other migrants were rescued, but 28 are still missing," said Romdhane Ben Amor of the Tunisian Forum for social and economic rights (FTDES). He said it had sunk "because it was overloaded" with 38 people, mostly from the Ivory Coast. The boat had set off from the coastal region of Sfax in the direction of the Italian island of Lampedusa, a popular launchpad for people from people escaping war and persecution across Africa to try to reach safety in Europe. The sinking is the latest such tragedy on the central Mediterranean, known as the world's deadliest migration route. — AFP

One dead, 8 hurt in stampede for free flour in Pakistan

PESHAWAR: One person was killed and eight others injured during a stampede for free flour in inflation-wracked Pakistan on Thursday, the first day of the holy month of Ramadan. The price of basic food items has rocketed in recent months, with inflation at a near 50 year-high as the country grapples with a balance of payments crisis that has seen it forced back into negotiations with the International Monetary Fund.

"Nine people were trampled and were taken to hospital where one person died," said Muhammad Arif, police chief for Charsadda in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province where the incident happened. Arif said hundreds of people gathered at the local market for the handouts, one of hundreds of distribution points set up by the government during Ramadan. Millions of low income families across the country are registered under the scheme. In a nearby district, a man died and four others were injured when a wall they were sitting on collapsed as crowds amassed for free flour. Authorities told AFP it was not clear why the wall collapsed.—AFP

FRIDAY, MARCH 24, 2023

Business

Zain completes trial for 5.5G IoT RedCap technologies in Kuwait

Zain Kuwait continuously enhancing its 5G network and striding to 5.5G

KUWAIT: Zain Group, the Middle East's leading digital ICT service provider, has completed the technical prototype validation of RedCap based on 5.5G technology in Kuwait.

RedCap is defined as part of the 3GPP Internet of Things architecture. It has network speeds of 100Mbps downlink and 10Mbps uplink and can be used in supporting use cases such as industrial Internet, electric power industry, wearables, video surveillance, smart vehicles, and other similar medium to high-speed IoT applications. From the perspective of application scenarios, RedCap has huge potential in the industrial and consumer markets. Take video surveillance and wearable devices as examples:

Video surveillance: Mobile cameras mainly provide upstream services. The upstream rate of 4 Mbps can meet the requirements of 1080p video, and the upstream rate of 20 Mbps can meet the requirements of 4K HD video. Therefore, RedCap can meet video surveillance requirements in most scenarios and facilitate the large-scale development of wireless cameras.

Wearable devices: include smart glasses, smart watches, smart bands, and the like. The RedCap technology reduces terminal complexity and optimizes power consumption to save power. RedCap supports ITIR, facilitating small-sized UE integration. In terms of rate, the RedCap terminal can meet the requirements of wearable devices (5–50 Mbps in the downlink and 2–5 Mbps in the uplink). In the future, RedCap-enabled wearable devices will grow rapidly after the popularity of RedCap networks.

As a critical technology of 5G R17, RedCap offers numerous advantages. First, RedCap reduces terminal complexity by about 60 percent compared

Use cases include industrial Internet, electric power industry, wearables, video surveillance, smart vehicles and other IoT applications

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to traditional 5G terminals. Second, RedCap takes on some of the best features of 5G NR, such as low latency, high reliability, service assurance, and low power use. Third, RedCap can be introduced on demand for various application scenarios to meet service requirements effectively. RedCap also employs cutting-edge power-saving technologies to extend battery life. The overall cost of the RedCap module is

estimated to be significantly lower than that of ordinary 5G mobile phones, achieving a better "cost-effective" balance between the performance and cost of 5G RedCap terminals and having strong market competitiveness. This test showed that the 5G RedCap technology meet all of the procedures and expected performance requirements of the 3GPP R17 protocol, and the test marks a critical step in the

evolution of 5.5G technology.

To promote social digital transformation in the GCC region, Zain will continue to explore additional use cases for 5G RedCap with the assistance of its partners. It will also continue to construct the ecosystem for the 5G Internet of Things industry. Millions of connections will be possible soon, accelerating the digitalization of industries.



Most GCC central banks raise interest rates

ABU DHABI: The central banks of the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar raised their benchmark borrowing rates after the US Federal Reserve increased its key interest rate at a more moderate level as it tries to balance fighting inflation and avert further volatility in the banking sector.

The Fed increased the policy rate by 25 basis points as it continues its push towards bringing inflation down to its target range of 2 per cent and restoring price stability amid market turmoil fuelled by recent bank failures in the world's largest economy.

Most central banks in the GCC follow the Fed's policy rate moves due to their currencies being pegged to the US dollar. Kuwait is an exception in the six-member economic bloc as its dinar is linked to a basket of currencies.

The Saudi Central Bank, better known as Sama, raised its repurchase agreement (repo) rate by a quarter-point to 5.50 per cent and its reverse repo rate by a similar margin to 5 per cent. The kingdom's inflation rate for 2022 was estimated at 2.6 per cent and has been forecast at 2.1 per cent in 2023, Saudi Finance Minister Mohammed Al-Jadaan said in December.

The UAE Central Bank raised its base rate for the overnight deposit facility by a quarter of a percentage point to 4.9 per cent, effective from Thursday. It maintained the rate applicable to borrowing short-term liquidity from the regulator through all standing credit facilities at 50 bps above the base rate.

The base rate, which is anchored to the Fed's

Bank of England hikes rate despite banking turmoil

LONDON: The Bank of England on Thursday hiked its interest rate for the eleventh time in a row, as policymakers seek to tackle soaring inflation despite turmoil in the banking sector. The British central bank's Monetary Policy Committee voted at a regular meeting to lift its key interest rate by 25 basis points to 4.25 percent, the highest level since late 2008.

The announcement followed hikes in the United States, Norway and Switzerland. Policymakers "will continue to monitor closely indications of persistent inflationary pressures, including the tightness of labor market conditions and the behavior of wage growth and services inflation", the BoE said in a statement. "If there were to be evidence of more persistent pressures, then further tightening in monetary policy would be required."

The decision had been widely expected after shock official data showed

that British annual inflation accelerated in February despite central bank efforts to tame a growing cost-of-living crisis. The Consumer Prices Index rose by 10.4 percent in the 12 months to February, up from 10.1 percent in January. The news strengthened the case for another interest rate hike, despite calls for no change amid recent turmoil in the commercial banking sector.

British inflation unexpectedly accelerated in February, official data showed Wednesday, deepening a cost-of-living crisis and pressuring the Bank of England to hike interest rates further despite global markets turmoil. After slowing for three straight months, the UK Consumer Prices Index shot up to 10.4 percent in February -- not far from 40-year highs and more than five times the BoE's target. That followed CPI of 10.1 percent in January and dashed expectations for a slowdown to 9.9 percent.

Wednesday's data comes after the UK government last week forecast inflation would slow sharply to 2.9 percent by year-end, adding that the country would avoid recession in 2023. The predictions were published alongside finance minister Jeremy Hunt's £94-billion (\$114-billion) cost-of-living measures for this year and next. —AFP

Toshiba says it will 'support' \$15bn takeover bid

TOKYO: Troubled Japanese conglomerate Toshiba said Thursday it will "support" a \$15 billion takeover bid by a consortium led by investment fund Japan Industrial Partners. The long-awaited move follows years of turmoil for the company, which once symbolized Japan's tech prowess but has more recently faced scandals, financial trouble and high-level resignations.

The engineering giant remained cautious in a statement issued after a board meeting, however saying it would ask a special committee to review the deal, before recommending how its shareholders proceed. "At this point, the board... expresses our support for the tender offer if it is commenced," it said. "However, the board has also passed a resolution to not go as far as to recommend it at this point." Toshiba, which produces everything from rice cookers to medical equipment and nuclear plants, said it would likely take four months before the takeover bid gets underway.

The JIP-led consortium includes 17 Japanese businesses and six Japanese financial institutions which are investing in or issuing

loans for the deal. When approved under global competition laws, the acquisition—worth nearly two trillion yen (\$15 billion) -- is expected to take the engineering giant private. Nearly two years ago, a bombshell buyout offer from private equity fund CVC Capital Partners put a question mark over the future for Toshiba.

The ensuing saga has been closely watched in business circles for clues on what could become of other huge, diversified conglomerates in Japan and elsewhere. After the CVC offer was dropped, plans were floated to split the company up and spin off its device segment—meeting stiff opposition from some investors. Several shareholders argued that a spin-off would only add to Toshiba's woes by creating more managerial posts at smaller units, rather than improving the firm's governance. But that plan was rejected last year at an extraordinary shareholder meeting, dealing a blow to management as deadlock reigned over the next steps for the company.

Toshiba can trace its history back to 1875, when its forerunner operated as a telegraph factory in Tokyo. It grew into a vast conglomerate, but has been rocked by turbulence since 2015 when a profit-padding scandal erupted. That led to huge losses, followed by a recovery that brought pressure from new activist shareholders. Foreign investors have kept Toshiba afloat, but have also pushed for faster growth and a clearer long-term strategy. —AFP



BRUSSELS: European Central Bank (ECB) President Christine Lagarde answers questions during the European Parliament Committee on Economic Affairs at the EU Parliament in Brussels on March 20, 2023. —AFP

ECB sees smaller carbon footprint in bond portfolio

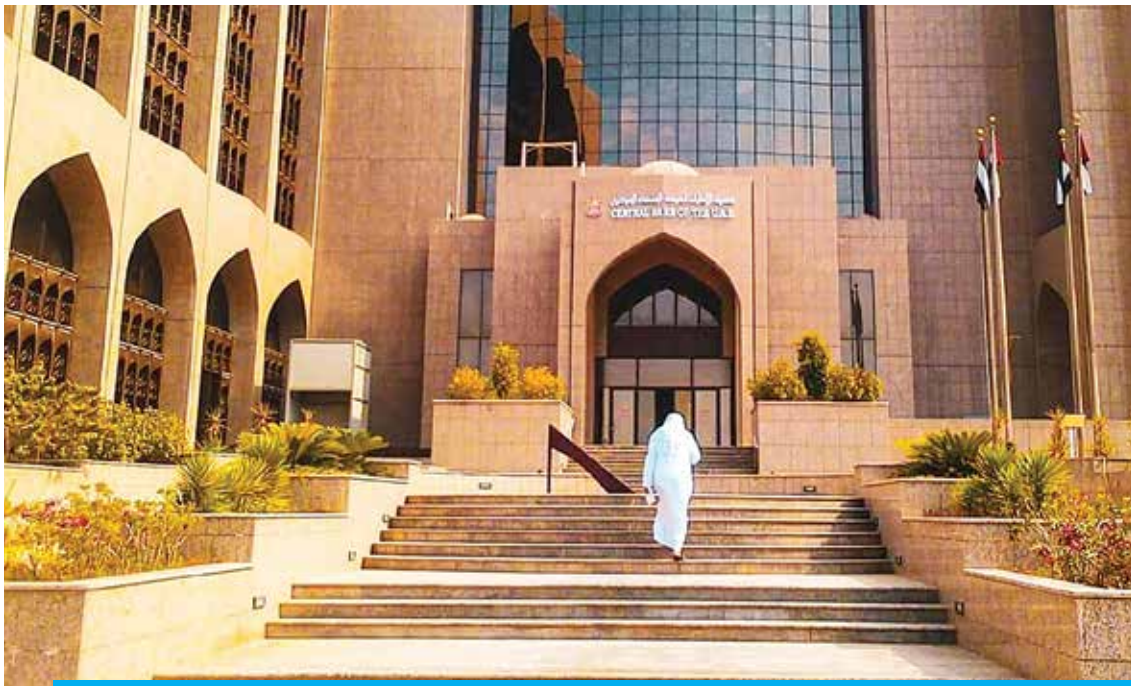
FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank said Thursday it was making progress in reducing the carbon footprint of its massive corporate bond portfolio, as part of wider efforts to green its finances and help combat climate change. In a new report, the ECB unveiled details for the first time of the climate impact of its huge corporate bond holdings, amassed over years of crisis-fighting in the eurozone.

Although the portfolio's overall greenhouse gas emissions rose in recent years as the ECB hoovered up more debt to bolster the eurozone economy, the relative carbon footprint of debt issuers actually decreased, the report showed. The ECB's corporate bond holdings swelled from 173.1 billion euros (\$188 billion) in 2018 to 358.2 billion euros in 2022, a 123-percent increase, but the "carbon intensity" of its portfolio fell by 30 percent over that period.

The decline was partly down to companies' own efforts to boost their carbon efficiency, resulting in lower emissions for every million euro of revenue they earned, the ECB said. Another contributing factor was the ECB's decision to "tilt" its bond buys towards companies "with a better climate performance", which it started doing in October. The Frankfurt institution said it plans to publish the climate report annually from now on. "These disclosures are a further piece of the puzzle in our efforts to contribute to fighting climate change," ECB president Christine Lagarde said in a statement.

"They give us a clear view of our progress in decarbonizing our portfolios and, over time, they will help us to chart the most effective course towards the goals of the Paris Agreement."

Lagarde has repeatedly stressed that the ECB has a role to play in the fight against global warming, even though its main mandate is maintaining price stability. The ECB has begun holding "climate stress tests" for the more than 100 banks it supervises, to examine their resilience to environmental shocks. —AFP



ABU DHABI: The Central Bank of UAE building.

Business

US Fed lifts key interest rate amid banking sector concerns

CB seeks to curb inflation, avert further banking sector upheaval

WASHINGTON: The US Federal Reserve raised its benchmark lending rate on Wednesday, as it sought to strike a balance between curbing high inflation and averting further upheaval in the commercial banking sector.

The quarter-point increase, which was in line with expectations, lifted their interest rate target to between 4.75 and 5 percent at the end of a two-day policy meeting, the Fed said in a statement. The policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) added that “some additional policy firming may be appropriate” to get to a stance that is sufficiently restrictive to bring inflation down.

The latest increase was the same size as the central bank’s previous rate decision in February, and marks its ninth straight rate hike. The Fed also updated its economic projections on Wednesday, slightly lowering its 2023 GDP growth projections 2023 to 0.4 percent from 0.5 percent in December.

Median projections for the Fed’s benchmark rate at the end of this year were unchanged, while inflation expectations rose slightly.

‘Bumpy ride’ to bring inflation down

Wednesday’s decision underscores the Fed’s determination to tackle inflation, which remains stubbornly above policymakers’ long-term annual target of two percent despite the sustained effort to lower price increases. “Getting inflation back down to two percent has a long way to go and is likely to

After Fed, European central banks hike their rates

ZURICH: Switzerland and Norway hiked interest rates Thursday to tackle inflation despite banking-sector turmoil, with the UK’s central bank next in line after the US Federal Reserve also lifted borrowing costs. The Swiss National Bank, which helped oversee the recent UBS buyout of troubled Credit Suisse, lifted its key rate as expected by a hefty 50 basis points to 1.5 percent. Norway’s central bank followed suit moments later, hiking its rate by a more modest 25 basis points to 3.0 percent after its policymakers concluded “that a higher policy rate is needed to curb inflation”.

be bumpy,” Fed Chair Jerome Powell said during a press conference on Wednesday afternoon.

The Fed warned in its earlier rate announcement that the recent banking turmoil sparked by the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) could impact the availability of credit for households and businesses, and “weigh on economic activity, hiring, and inflation.” SVB’s excessive exposure to interest-rate risk left it vulnerable when the Fed began rapidly raising rates. The Californian lender was forced to realize losses on bonds it had intended to hold for a long time, which led concerned customers to rapidly pull their money from the bank, bringing about its collapse and striking fear into the financial markets. Banking stocks tumbled in the weeks that followed, leading to the collapse of two additional regional lenders and the merger under pressure between Credit Suisse and its regional rival UBS.

In response, regulators introduced a series of policies designed to ensure that banks could access loans in a hurry if they needed, in order to avoid a repeat of the conditions that precipitated SVB’s collapse.

Regulation

The bank’s management had “failed badly,” Powell told reporters after the rate announcement Wednesday, adding that the Fed would look into boosting the supervision and regulation of US banks. The impact of SVB’s collapse on monetary

The Bank of England is forecast to join them in hiking rates in the face of stubbornly-high inflation—and as markets remain jittery over turmoil in the global banking sector. “The SNB is tightening its monetary policy further... In doing so, it is countering the renewed increase in inflationary pressure,” the Swiss institution said in a statement.

The Fed decided Wednesday to push up interest rates by a quarter of a percentage point, or 25 basis points. While the Fed hiked its rate despite banking turmoil, analysts say its accompanying statement signaled it may soon pause its monetary tightening.

The Fed statement replaced a previous warning that “ongoing increases ... will be appropriate” to tame inflation with a conditional one saying “some additional policy firming may be appropriate”. Recent banking sector developments “are likely to result in tighter credit conditions for households and businesses and to weigh on economic activity, hiring and inflation,” the Fed added.

policy was equivalent to “another rate hike, or perhaps more than that,” he said, suggesting it could aid the bank in its fight against inflation. But he insisted that the US banking system remained “sound and resilient” overall.

“We will continue to closely monitor conditions in the banking system and are prepared to use all of our tools as needed to keep it safe and sound,” he told reporters, adding that the Fed was “committed to learning the lessons from this episode, and to work to prevent episodes from events like this from happening again.”

Confusion

A short distance from the Fed, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen caused confusion during a Senate hearing about the level of support US authorities were willing to extend to uninsured depositors—those who hold more than \$250,000 in a single bank.

“I have not considered or discussed anything having to do with blanket insurance, insurance, or guarantees of all deposits,” Yellen told Senators on Capitol Hill. Her comments appeared to contradict Jerome Powell’s comments during the Fed press conference. “Depositors should assume that their deposits are safe,” he told reporters. “You’ve seen that we have the tools to protect depositors when there’s a threat of serious harm to the economy or to the financial system, and we’re prepared to use those tools,” he said.

The Swiss rate call, which matching the last increase in December, comes just a few days after the SNB joined other major central banks in boosting liquidity in the wake of the latest banking crisis. Switzerland at the weekend had brokered the takeover of crisis-hit Credit Suisse by its Swiss rival UBS.

The buyout followed the collapse this month of Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank in the United States, which sent shockwaves across global markets. A catalyst for SVB’s demise was the Fed’s shift from near-zero interest rates to higher borrowing costs aimed at taming decades-high inflation.

This is the reason economists have in recent days spoken about the possibility of central banks pressing the pause button on interest-rate hikes. But hot inflation remains a major problem and is widely seen as threatening a global recession this year. At the start of the week, there was much talk about how the Bank of England could decide against lifting its key rate, which stands at 4.0 percent. — AFP



WASHINGTON: Federal Reserve Board Chair Jerome Powell speaks during a news conference at the Federal Reserve in Washington, DC, on March 22, 2023. — AFP

The S&P 500 index ended the day down almost 1.7 percent following Powell and Yellen’s comments. Wednesday’s announcement follows on the heels of the European Central Bank’s decision last week to raise rates by 0.5 percentage points. ECB chief Christine Lagarde warned on Wednesday that the eurozone’s monetary policymakers “will still have ground to cover to make sure that inflation pressures are stamped out.” She said the recent banking turmoil could add to “downside risks” in the single currency area. —AFP



BERN: (Left to right), Vice chairman of the Swiss National Bank (SNB) Martin Schlegel, SNB Chairman Thomas Jordan and member of the SNB governing board Andrea Maechler pose prior to the quarterly news conference on economic growth and monetary policy prospects in Zurich, on March 23, 2023. — AFP



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KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 23 MARCH 2023

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No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	1,070	1,060	1,085	1,054	31	14,477,693	-6	-0.56%	-1.67%	1,055	1,068	15.8	1.97	3.3%	1.01
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	293	289	295	285	10	18,368,784	-3	-1.03%	-7.96%	285	294	14.8	1.28	3.5%	1.27
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	184	187	188	183	5	25,652,095	2	1.08%	-4.59%	186	194	23.4	0.57	2.2%	1.16
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	214	220	221	214	7	2,455,316	7	3.29%	0.46%	217	222	17.2	0.79	3.7%	1.27
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	826	824	834	819	15	58,838,526	-1	-0.12%	0.12%	815	834	25.5	1.89	1.8%	1.16
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	700	651	700	651	49	26,814,128	-45	-6.47%	-18.42%	651	691	47.7	2.63	0.9%	1.13
201	Kuwait Investment	Financial Services	120	125	126	119	7	3,788,877	3	2.46%	-17.76%	123	129	109.6	0.58	4.0%	1.82
204	National Investments	Financial Services	234	241	253	234	19	15,616,048	7	2.99%	1.69%	237	244	21.9	0.96	18.8%	1.85
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	113	120	127	111	16	46,006,406	8	7.14%	7.14%	116	122	-	0.63	4.1%	0.95
212	Arzan Financial Group	Financial Services	113	109	115	108	7	7,260,131	-3	-2.68%	-5.22%	106	110	11.2	0.79	2.1%	1.15
222	Aayan Leasing and Investment	Financial Services	126	130	134	126	8	42,978,062	3	2.36%	-2.26%	128	136	9.7	0.94	5.8%	1.66
252	Al Imtiaz Investment	Financial Services	60.1	57.1	60.1	54.4	6	4,577,543	2.1	3.82%	-23.77%	56	59.1	-	0.36	15.4%	1.23
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	109	108	112	106	6	18,802,051	0	0.00%	0.00%	108	111	13.9	0.78	2.7%	1.08
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	760	745	769	730	39	2,812,102	-15	-1.97%	-12.15%	734	755	15.1	1.60	1.9%	1.04
418	The Commercial Real Estate	Real Estate	104	100.1	104	99.2	5	8,782,541	-3	-2.82%	1.21%	99	104	14.1	0.60	3.0%	0.61
501	National Industries	Financial Services	191	194	196	190	6	7,045,829	3	1.57%	-10.60%	190	202	10.9	0.86	5.7%	1.51
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,086	1,099	1,119	1,068	51	382,478	-19	-1.70%	-9.55%	1,090	1,149	10.6	1.06	5.5%	1.04
506	HEISCO	Industrials	600	591	611	591	20	1,081,265	-11	-1.83%	-3.59%	590	611	19.2	1.52	3.3%	0.76
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	760	758	763	732	31	809,939	-2	-0.26%	-5.25%	750	769	7.6	1.47	8.1%	0.94
603	Agility	Industrials	586	613	634	583	51	44,404,083	23	3.90%	-14.86%	583	618	40.2	1.13	2.7%	1.55
605	Zain	Telecommunications	540	540	542	535	7	15,624,676	-3	-0.55%	-4.09%	528	546	12.4	1.94	6.5%	0.77
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,709	3,829	3,830	3,675	155	1,876,506	167	4.56%	8.78%	3,750	3,840	9.1	3.43	10.6%	0.63
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	189	189	191	186	5	617,627	0	0.00%	-6.90%	184	195	-	0.82	0.0%	1.18
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,850	1,847	1,870	1,825	45	640,132	-21	-1.12%	-2.79%	1,820	1,880	20.2	11.13	2.5%	1.40
813	GFH Financial Group	Financial Services	72	74.4	77	71	6	39,163,061	2.5	3.48%	-2.11%	74	77	9.6	0.89	6.2%	1.36
821	Warba Bank	Banking	221	223	225	219	6	12,005,970	4	1.83%	-5.11%	216	229	30.1	1.19	1.4%	1.10
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	384	379	390	375	15	3,999,341	-4	-1.04%	-3.56%	375	380	-	1.21	4.1%	0.48
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	350	356	360	349	11	6,058,198	3	0.85%	-3.78%	351	358	22.8	1.43	2.8%	0.73
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	179	176	180	175	5	2,907,323	-3	-1.68%	-6.38%	175	178	13.5	1.67	10.1%	0.49
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	1,880	1,788	2,007	1,781	226	1,164,873	-91	-4.84%	-12.87%	1,770	1,840	20.1	5.52	4.7%	1.03
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	890	901	905	877	28	1,930,514	8	0.90%	11.93%	895	950	12.2	3.35	0.0%	0.33

* As of end of week closing

Business

Defiant French unions dig in after Macron defends pension reform

Kerosene supply to capital, airports 'critical' • Macron's approval rating drops

PARIS: French unions on Thursday staged a new day of disruption against President Emmanuel Macron's pension reform after he defiantly vowed to implement the change, with refineries at a standstill and mass transport cancellations. Interrupted supply from refineries has raised concern over fuel shortages for planes at Paris airports, adding to a growing list of headaches in the crisis that include growing piles of rubbish in Paris and questions over the looming state visit of King Charles III. Macron on Wednesday said he was prepared to accept unpopularity because the bill raising the minimum retirement age from 62 to 64 was "necessary" and "in the general interest of the country". Protests were planned across the country on Thursday, in the latest day of nationwide stoppages that began in mid-January against the pension changes.

Some 12,000 police, including 5,000 in Paris, were to be deployed during the day, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin has said. In an early action Thursday, protesters blocked road access to Terminal 1 at the capital's Charles de Gaulle airport, French television pictures showed. Half of all high-speed trains were cancelled, national railway operator SNCF said, after union sources reported around a third of staff would be striking. At least half the trains into Paris from the suburbs were not running. In the suburb of Nanterre, Paul Kantola, a 57-year-old carpenter, said he had to wake up at 5:00 am to be able to get to work, but said he agreed with the protesters. "It's scary to grow old in these conditions. Already when you have a pension it's not enough to live off," he said.

Paris municipal garbage collectors have pledged to uphold a rolling strike until Monday, as thousands of tons of rubbish linger in the streets. Acting on Macron's instructions, Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne invoked an article in the constitution a week ago to adopt the reform without a parliamentary vote.

The government on Monday narrowly survived a

no-confidence motion, but the outrage has spawned the biggest domestic crisis of Macron's second term.

Airport fuel 'under pressure'

A survey on Sunday showed Macron's personal approval rating at just 28 percent, its lowest level since the height of the anti-government "Yellow Vest" protest movement in 2018-2019. Blockades at oil refineries were also to continue, with only one such TotalEnergies site in four working in the country.

The ministry of energy transition on Thursday warned that kerosene supply to the capital and its airports was becoming "critical". The Directorate General of Civil Aviation has warned that its fuel stocks at the two main Paris airports are "under pressure", and urged planes to fill up at foreign stopovers. Spontaneous protests have broken out on a daily basis in recent days, leading to hundreds of arrests and accusations of heavy-handed tactics by police. Amnesty International has expressed alarm "about the widespread use of excessive force and arbitrary arrests reported in several media outlets". Paris police chief Laurent Nunez on Thursday denied this, saying the security forces only detained people from "gatherings towards committing violence". On Wednesday evening, hundreds again took to the streets in Paris, the southeastern city of Lyon and the northern city of Lille, the authorities said.

'Disdain'

While France's Constitutional Court still needs to give the final word on the reform, Macron told the TFI and France 2 channels in a televised interview on Wednesday that the changes needed to "come into force by the end of the year". Backtracking on earlier comments that the crowds demonstrating had "no legitimacy", he said organized protests were "legitimate", but violence should be condemned and blockades should not impede normal activity. He appeared to draw a comparison with insurrections by supporters of the ex-US and Brazilian presidents



MARSEILLE, France: Protestors walk during a demonstration, a week after the government pushed a pensions reform through parliament without a vote, using the article 49.3 of the constitution, in Marseille, southeastern France, on March 23, 2023. —AFP

Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro after election defeats, adding: "We cannot accept rebels or factions." His comments during the lunchtime interview, when most people would have been at work, have incensed union workers.

Philippe Martinez, head of the hard-line CGT union, said that the remarks showed "disdain for the thousands of people who have been protesting". The tensions have also raised questions over whether France can host the UK's

King Charles III when he arrives Sunday for his first foreign state visit as monarch. The government has said the reform is necessary to keep the system from slipping into deficit and to bring France in line with its European neighbors, where the legal retirement age is typically higher. Critics however say the changes are unfair for people who start working at a young age in physically challenging jobs, and for women who interrupt their careers to raise children. —AFP

Warba announces its working hours during Ramadan

KUWAIT: During the holy month of Ramadan, Warba Bank continues to provide its banking services to its valued clients by receiving clients from 10 am to 1.30 pm from Sunday to Thursday. The bank will also welcome clients in the Avenues and Egaila branches on Saturdays from 10 am to 1.30 pm, while the airport branch will continue to receive clients from 3am till 4pm and from 9pm to 2am on a daily basis. In addition, EBM devices in the Avenues, Airport and Keifan branches will continue to operate to facilitate the provision of services.

The telephone service through the call center 1825555 and the bank's platforms on social networking sites or via the Internet will also continue during Ramadan.

Abdullah Nasser Al-Shuail, senior director of branches and private banking services stated that Warba Bank is ready to serve its clients by providing all its banking services during this holy month, including EBM services. These devices offer a variety of banking solutions through the best secure technologies, including cash and check deposit services. It also allows Warba Bank clients to include check funds in their accounts as soon as they are deposited. EBM devices play an important role in providing several electronic services, including cash withdrawals and deposits, balance inquiries, password changes, and other services. Warba clients have qualitative advantages, as they can perform some of the basic banking operations via smart phones through the unique Warba Bank application.

Warba Bank succeeded, after a short period of its foundation, in positioning itself in the banking sector, and occupied a leading position in the field of Islamic digital banking services for individuals, as it is considered the local bank with the highest number of shareholder base from members of society, which makes it the closest bank to them by providing the best banking services.. It became up to the aspirations of the Kuwaiti society and deservedly earned their trust in a short period.

IMF warns South Africa economy risks stagnation

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa's growth is set decelerate sharply this year due to power cuts and the economy risks stagnation, the International Monetary Fund warned Wednesday. The near-term growth outlook for Africa's most industrialized economy has deteriorated, an IMF team said after a visit to the country. "South Africa's economic and social challenges are mounting, risking stagnation amid an unprecedented energy crisis, increasingly binding infrastructure and logistics bottlenecks..." said in a statement. "Real GDP growth is projected to decelerate sharply to 0.1 percent in 2023 mainly due to a significant increase in the intensity of power cuts, as well as the weaker commodity prices and external environment," it added. In January, South Africa's central bank said it expected the economy to grow by 0.3 percent in 2023, down from 2.0 percent in 2022. —AFP

Earbuds and watch come into one: Huawei Watch Buds

KUWAIT: What if you could have a smartwatch and a pair of earbuds in one device? Sounds too good to be true, does it? Well, it's not. The recently launched Huawei Watch Buds does just that. It's a sleek and smart watch that hides a pair of earbuds inside its body. Whenever you feel like jamming to some tunes, chatting with your mates, or talking to the virtual assistant, just pop up the cover, take the earbuds out and pop them in your ears. And the best part is that the Huawei Watch Buds is a full-blown smartwatch with all the health and fitness features you would want. Here is a lowdown on this premium 2-in-1 smartwatch-earbuds combo. The Huawei Watch Buds will be available in Kuwait on the 30th of March, 2023, on Huawei's official website and select retailers.

Innovative 2-in-1 design

The trickiest part of combining earbuds and a smartwatch in a single device is actually finding enough space for the earbuds inside a smartwatch. You would think that such a device would end up being heavy and bulky. But using an innovative 2-in-1 design, the Huawei Watch Buds manages to stay sleek and compact while hiding two earbuds under the watch dial, which also doubles as a pop-up cover that reveals the earbuds when opened.

Brazil's Lula irks foreign oil firms with new tax

BRASILIA: Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has not even been in power for 100 days but has already provoked the wrath of foreign oil companies with the creation of a new tax on crude exports. Multinationals Repsol, TotalEnergies, Shell, Equinor and Galp have petitioned a federal court to suspend the 9.2 percent tax due to run from March to July and announced by the government last month. That announcement came on the same day that Finance Minister Fernando Haddad partially restored a tax on fuel that had been suspended by Lula's predecessor Jair Bolsonaro during last year's election campaign.

Mining and Energy Minister Alexandre Silveira said the new crude tax would be an "opportunity to attract (investors) interested in the internal refining" of crude to sell to the domestic market rather than to export. Brazil is the world's ninth largest producer of crude with more than three million barrels a day, mostly drilled from offshore platforms.

Lula, who began his third mandate on January 1, wants to boost the public purse to fund social programs. During his first two terms as president from 2003-10, his social programs lifted millions out of poverty. However, unlike the first decade of the century when there was a boom in primary materials, Brazil's economic situation in 2023 is a lot less prosperous.

The latest projection from Brazil's central bank is for growth to be less than one percent this year.

Due to a lack of resources, the government "looked for the easiest solution, which puts it in conflict with fewer people," said economics professor Juliana Inhasz, from the IUPERJ institute. It is a decision that is "more political than economic" and allows the government to avoid hiking up fuel

The cover opens with the push of a button, and you can take out the earbuds to immerse yourself in high quality audio.

When you think of a smartwatch, you might wonder about its style, health & fitness tracking, and other smart features. But did you ever imagine asking yourself: how does it sound? Well, here we are. So, talking about sound quality, Huawei Watch Buds sounds surprisingly good for calls. And it all starts with dual microphones and a bone conduction sensor. The dual microphones pick up your voice and the sounds around you, and the bone conduction sensor detects how your voice vibrates through your bones. Then using a Deep Neural Network (DNN) call noise reduction algorithm, it can separate your voice from the noise and enhance the vocals for crystal clear calls. No more shouting or repeating yourself.

All-round health management

Despite making design accommodations to fit in a pair of earbuds, the Huawei Watch Buds doesn't make any compromise when it comes to any of the smart features. That means you get impeccable health management features on the Huawei Watch Buds. It can monitor your SpO2 levels and heart rate with Huawei's TruSeen 5.0+ technology.

Fits your ears perfectly

The earbuds are designed to fit your ears snugly and securely without any ear handles or wires. They are lightweight and compact, weighing only 4g each. The sleek octagonal cylindrical design makes them easy to wear and store back inside the watch. Since the earbuds sit closer to the ear canal, they are stable



when worn and won't be accidentally knocked off.

The Huawei Watch Buds' earbuds also have a unique feature called Wide-Area Auricle Touch Controls that makes the touch controls a delight to use. This feature makes it possible to access the earbuds' functions just by tapping your ears, anywhere from the earbuds to the auricle to the area in front of your ears. You can access multiple functions such as play/pause tracks, answer calls and more.

Bluetooth calling

But you know what makes the Huawei Watch Buds even more amazing? It's that you can answer calls just by slipping on an earbud without having to fiddle around on the screen. You can also synchronise text messages from your smartphone and quickly reply with text messages and emojis. That's not all. You can also access a wide variety of apps via Watch AppGallery.



SERRA DO MEL, Brazil: In this file photo taken on June 30, 2016 an oil drilling platform is seen next to wind turbines at Vamcruz Windfarm in Serra do Mel, Rio Grande do Norte state, Brazil. —AFP

prices too much, which would anger a far larger number of Brazilians, Inhasz told AFP.

'It stinks of Robin Hood'

The new crude export tax will create "better fiscal balance," according to the government, and will help make up for the 6.6 billion reais (\$1.25 billion) missed out on by only partially restoring the fuel tax. But the oil sector, which employs 450,000 people and is responsible for 15 percent of industry's contribution to GDP, is up in arms.

In a statement sent to AFP, Shell said it was "worried" about a measure announced "without significant dialogue" that created "uncertainty about new decisions regarding investments." The crude exporters feel unfairly prejudiced by the tax and consider it a "breach of contract" given that it

did not exist when they invested in oil exploration in Brazil. "During the next oil auction, it is possible that the bidders will take into account the risk that the rules will change" at a later date, said Livio Ribeiro, a researcher at the Brazilian Economic Institute at the Getulio Vargas Foundation.

He said this tax sets a "precedent" that creates legal uncertainty and could discourage not just major oil companies but other investors from putting their money in Brazil.

It has attracted scorn not just from foreign oil companies, with newspaper O Globo calling it "a very bad idea" in a recent editorial. Such measures "stink of Robin Hood, who redistributes money from the rich to the poor. But invariably it turns out to be counterproductive," said the newspaper. — AFP

Lifestyle



Tourists and guests swim in the hot water of a Cave Spa in Miskolctapolca, an unique labyrinthine cave complex located 185 kms far from Budapest, Hungary.



General overview of the lake of Heviz, the world's largest biologically active natural thermal lake.



Tourists and guests swim in the hot water of a Cave Spa in Miskolctapolca, an unique labyrinthine cave complex located 185 kms far from Budapest.



Tourists and guests swim in the water of the Gellert Spa.

Hungary's grand thermal baths are struggling to stay afloat, buffeted by rocketing energy bills. For many tourists a highlight of a trip to Budapest is a relaxing soak at one of its many ornate bathhouses. The capital boasts an array of spectacular venues, from neo-baroque pools where bathers can play chess to sumptuous art nouveau confections and exotic Ottoman-era hammams. But running the energy-guzzling baths "costs 170 percent more than last year," said Edit Reffy of Budapest Spas, which operates the city's bathhouses.

While much of the water is naturally hot, the large historic buildings cost a fortune to run and heat. "It's a daunt-

ing challenge," she told AFP, saying they have had to up ticket prices, reduce opening hours and cover outdoor pools. Prices at historic Budapest baths like the Gellert have been hiked "by more than 30 percent", said Reffy, including at the Szechenyi Spa, famed for its wild parties or "sparties".

Cave baths

Cheaper and less well known countryside bathhouses have been hard hit by the energy crisis, with several closing. "Spas carry heavy burdens... A quarter of all bathhouses nationwide are restricting their opening hours," according to Zoltan Kantas, head of the Hungarian Baths Association. Hungary

has more than 1,300 sources of thermal water including the unique labyrinthine cave complex in Miskolctapolca in the northeast.

The world's largest biologically active natural thermal lake is at Heviz in the southwest. Its geothermally-heated water stays above 22 degrees Celsius (71.6 degrees Fahrenheit) in winter and can reach 38 degrees Celsius in summer. Hungary's thermal bath culture was first developed 2,000 years ago by the Romans and continued under the Ottomans in the 16th century. —AFP



A child swims in the lake of Heviz, the world's largest biologically active natural thermal lake.



General overview of the Szechenyi Spa in Budapest, Hungary.



Tourists and guests swim in the water of the Gellert Spa.



A child swims in the lake of Heviz, the world's largest biologically active natural thermal lake in Heviz, Hungary.



Tourists and guests swim in the water of the Gellert Spa.



Tourists and guests swim in the lake of Heviz, the world's largest biologically active natural thermal lake.



This image released by the Newport News Sheriff's Office, shows the hole made by inmates John Garza and Arley Nemo to escape from jail.

US prisoners use toothbrush to dig hole, go for pancakes

It was almost a clean getaway: two American inmates dug their way out of prison with the help of a toothbrush—only to be arrested hours later at a pancake restaurant. The two men, identified as John Garza, 37, and Arley Nemo, 43, were reported missing from the Newport

News Jail Annex Monday evening in the state of Virginia.

They used makeshift tools made from a toothbrush and a metal object to take advantage of what the sheriff's office called a construction flaw in a wall of the prison to gain access to unsecured reinforcement bars used in construction. Using the reinforcement bar, they punched a hole through that wall and scaled another to make their escape.

But their taste of freedom was brief, as they were arrested in the wee hours of Tuesday at a branch of a pancake restaurant chain called IHOP in the nearby town of Hampton. The sheriff's statement did not say if the men were inside or outside the restaurant when they were caught. "I'm thankful for the citizens who observed Garza and Nemo at

the IHOP and notified law enforcement. It reinforces what we always say, 'see something, say something,' Sheriff Gabe Morgan said. Garza was in custody on charges including contempt of court and probation violations, while Nemo was in



for offenses including credit card fraud and forgery, the statement said.

The sheriff's office would not reveal exactly how the men exploited the flaw in the prison's construction. "Due to the fact that this weakness presents itself throughout the facility, and until all weaknesses are identified and secured, we will not discuss the situation further for security reasons," the statement said. —AFP

This image released by the Newport News Sheriff's Office, shows a captured poster with escaped inmates John Garza and Arley Nemo. — AFP photos



Chineke! Orchestra with conductor Andrew Grams perform with members of the New York Philharmonic during a rehearsal at David Geffen Hall in New York City. — AFP photos



Chi-Chi Nwanoku, founder of Chineke! Foundation poses after a rehearsal with Chineke! Orchestra at David Geffen Hall in New York City.



Principal clarinetist Anthony McGill of the New York Philharmonic and conductor Andrew Grams perform with Chineke! Orchestra during a rehearsal at David Geffen Hall in New York City.



Chi-Chi Nwanoku (right), founder of Chineke! Foundation performs with Chineke! Orchestra during a rehearsal at David Geffen Hall in New York City.

EUROPE’S FIRST MAJORITY BLACK ORCHESTRA DEBUTS STATESIDE



Members of the Chineke! Orchestra perform during a rehearsal at David Geffen Hall in New York City.

After more than three decades in the classical music industry, British double bassist Chi-chi Nwanoku began grappling with the question that had troubled her for years: Why was she consistently the only Black musician onstage? "Why did I never ask anyone about it? Why did we never talk about it?" she describes wondering. "Was I being tolerated, or were people just completely unaware?" "Or were people okay with the status quo?" In 2015 Nwanoku took a leading role in creating a more diverse future for classical music, which, from musicians to conductors to repertoire, traditionally skews heavily white. She founded Chineke!, Europe's first majority Black and ethnically diverse professional orchestra, which this week played at the prestigious New York Philharmonic's David Geffen Hall in Manhattan's Lincoln Center.

The performance was part of their long-awaited North American debut tour—it was among the many performances the pandemic pushed back—which included stops in New York, Ottawa, Toronto, Boston, Worcester and Ann Arbor. The New York show featured the pioneering composer Florence Price's Symphony No. 1, along with a rendition of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto featuring the New York Phil's principal clarinet Anthony McGill.

'Door-opener'
The London-headquartered Chineke! echoes similar efforts in the United States, including the Detroit-based Sphinx organization that promotes representation of Black and Latino artists in classical music. Yet the League of American Orchestras, which represents professional and

amateur symphonies across the United States, found in a 2014 study on diversity that just 1.4 percent of orchestra musicians were Black—and there's little reason to believe much has changed.
"Because the great majority of American orchestras are not individually transparent with racial and ethnic data on their artists, we do not know the percentage of Black orchestral artists in our orchestras today," writes the Black Orchestral Network, a collective of Black musicians from more than 40 orchestras launched in 2022. "From our vantage point, however, we have seen little meaningful progress."
It's mind-boggling to Nwanoku, who told AFP during a rehearsal break that "it seems to me that the only colleagues of color that I see who have a job in an orchestra in this country are

those who are exceptional." "We have to be that much better to actually be given a job," Nwanoku believes that especially for young people, seeing more diverse faces onstage is "an immediate door-opener."
"It's the most incredibly winning thing to feel represented on a stage," she said. "Even if when you walk through the front of house to buy a ticket, if you don't see anyone who looks like you, that is immediately uncomfortable." "But when you see people that look like you in any place—in the supermarket, at the train station, at the concert hall, at the cinema—you immediately feel that is a place that I can walk into with confidence," Nwanoku continued. "You can be what you can see." —AFP

'Man on Wire' Philippe Petit still risks it all at 73

Almost 50 years after his famed tight-rope walk between the Twin Towers in New York, Philippe Petit still has his head in the clouds. Clad in an orange shirt and red suspenders, the 73-year-old French native peers across the vast lobby of a Washington museum, the site of his next exploit. Reaching into his pocket, he pulls out a short red string. "Sometimes I stop and say, 'It would be nice to put a wire there,'" he told AFP, showing how he holds it out at arm's length to get a sense of the set up.
"This little rope, for me, it helps me to dream of crossings." Even at his advanced age, Petit still plans to make the walk without safety net or harness. At 50 feet (15 meters), his high-wire act in Washington will be at a much lower height than the 1,350-foot World Trade Center skyscrapers—but the risk of death certainly remains.
He'll step out onto the wire Thursday evening—this time with permission—above a watchful gala audience in the National Building Museum's voluminous central hall. He began prepping for the event years in advance.



Plans and cables are pictured ahead of French high-wire artist Philippe Petit's performance in the Great Hall of the National Building Museum in Washington, DC.



French high-wire artist Philippe Petit makes preparations ahead of his performance in the Great Hall of the National Building Museum in Washington, DC. — AFP photos

Next to where the cable is anchored to a wall, lies a thick notebook containing hundreds of detailed sketches and calculations. "I will never retire," says the energetic septuagenarian. "I have a lot of projects up my sleeve."

'Life of passion'
Petit says he keeps plans for possible tight-rope locations—"extraordinary places... canyons, icebergs and incredible buildings"—stored in a box at his home in New York state, where he has lived for decades. From childhood, "I started not following the lead of authority," he said, describing how he climbed everywhere—on kitchen chairs, in the trees. "And then one fine day, quite naturally, I put a rope between two trees."



A feature film, "The Walk" starring Joseph Gordon-Levitt, and the Oscar-winning documentary "Man on Wire" tell the historic story of his 1974 crossing, under the wide eyes of New York pedestrians and police. Tired of being reduced to those few minutes, he prefers to bring up other moments from his "life of passion."
"Two performances are never the same... each time is an adventure where I learn, where I discover," he says in front of the wooden beams, pulleys and measurement tools that will support his aerial stroll Thursday night. "With my 50-55 years of experience, I am more in control," says the veteran daredevil. —AFP



French high-wire artist Philippe Petit makes preparations ahead of his performance in the Great Hall of the National Building Museum in Washington, DC.

DNA analysis of Beethoven's hair provides clues to his death

Ludwig van Beethoven died in Vienna nearly 200 years ago after a lifetime of composing some of the most influential works in classical music. Ever since, biographers have sought to explain the causes of the German composer's death at the age of 56, his progressive hearing loss and his struggles with chronic illness. An international team of researchers who sequenced Beethoven's genome using authenticated locks of his hair may now have some answers. Liver failure, or cirrhosis, was the likely cause of Beethoven's death brought about by a number of factors, including his alcohol consumption, they said.
"We looked at possible genetic causes of his three main symptom complexes—the progressive hearing loss, the gastrointestinal symptoms and the liver disease ultimately leading to his death due to liver failure," said Markus Nothen of the Institute of Human Genetics at the University Hospital of Bonn, one of the co-authors. Beethoven, Nothen said, had "a strong genetic disposition to liver disease" and sequences of the hepatitis B virus were detected in his hair. "We believe the disease arose from an interplay of genetic disposition, well documented chronic alcohol consumption and hepatitis B infection," Nothen said.

No explanation for deafness
Johannes Krause of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology said hepatitis B "was probably quite common at that time in the early 19th century." "At least in the last few months before his death he was infected with hepatitis B virus," Krause said. The authors of the study, published in the Cell Press journal Current Biology on Wednesday, were unable to determine any genetic causes for the progressive hearing loss that eventually left Beethoven completely deaf by 1818.
The researchers analyzed eight locks of hair said to be from Beethoven and determined that five of them were "almost certainly authentic," said Tristan Begg, a PhD student at the University of Cambridge and the lead author of the study. "Because we recon-



In this file photo a life mask (left) and a death mask of composer Ludwig Van Beethoven are on display at the Funeral Museum in Vienna, Austria.

structed the genome from ultra-short DNA fragments, we only confidently mapped about two-thirds of it," he said. One of the most-famous strands of hair, known as the "Hiller Lock," which has been the subject of previous research and found to contain high levels of lead, was revealed not to be from Beethoven at all but from a woman.

Family secret
Beethoven, who was born in Bonn in 1770 and died in 1827, battled gastrointestinal problems at various times of his life as well as jaundice. "There were periods of acute illness where he was unable to work, for example, his month-long period of acute illness in the spring of 1825," Begg said. The researchers, by studying Beethoven's DNA data and archival documents, also uncovered a discrepancy in his legal and biological genealogy.
They found an "extra-pair paternity event"—a child resulting from an extra-marital relationship—in Beethoven's direct paternal line, said Toomas Kivisild of the Institute of Genomics at the University of Tartu. Kivisild said it occurred sometime within seven generations that separate a common ancestor, Aert van Beethoven, at the end of the 16th century and Beethoven's birth in 1770. Begg said it was no surprise it was not recorded. "You wouldn't necessarily expect an extra-pair paternity event to be documented," he said, it being "probably clandestine in nature." "You cannot rule out that Beethoven himself may have been illegitimate," Begg said. "I'm not advocating that," he stressed. —AFP

Lifestyle



This handout photo shows Finnish TikTok cleanfluencer Auri Kananen wearing pink gloves and making victory signs as she sits on a pile of trash and food remains in a flat in Helsinki, Finland.



This video grab shows Finnish TikTok cleanfluencer Auri Kananen with a rotten pizza as she is tidying up a pile of trash and food remains in a flat in Helsinki, Finland.



This video grab shows Finnish TikTok cleanfluencer Auri Kananen with a rotten pizza as she is tidying up a pile of trash and food remains in a flat in Helsinki, Finland.



This video grab shows Finnish TikTok cleanfluencer Auri Kananen amidst a pile of trash and food remains in a flat in Helsinki, Finland.

'Cleanfluencers' sweep TikTok, drawing millions

Marie Kondo may have admitted defeat, but a new generation of “cleanfluencers” is taking social media by storm, with millions watching them scour filthy homes and dole out cleaning hacks. Digging through a mountain of trash, Auri Kananen uncovered a rotten piece of pizza on the floor of a Helsinki flat, with insects devouring it. “I love cleaning, I love dirt,” declared the 30-year-old Finn, who has far more social media followers than Kondo, the Japanese tidying guru who has admitted embracing the messier side of life since having her third child.

Kananen has quickly become one of the world's most successful “cleanfluencers”, travelling the globe hunting for “the dirtiest homes possible”. “I remember when I had 19 followers. Even then it felt really cool to have 19 strangers wanting to see me clean,” said Kananen, or aurikatarina as she is known to her nine million followers on TikTok, with two million on YouTube. In her upbeat videos, she dusts, scrubs and sorts, wearing her signature hot pink rubber gloves as zippy pop music plays in the background. Her voiceovers often explain how the person she is helping ended up living in squalor. “Usually people have some mental health problem or other tragedy that has happened in their lives,” Kananen told AFP.

The flat in Helsinki is the home of a depressed young man whose brother suffers from multiple sclerosis, she explained. She can relate to people living in miserable conditions because she



This video grab shows Finnish TikTok cleanfluencer Auri Kananen tidying up a pile of trash and food remains in a flat in Helsinki, Finland.

went through a period of depression herself, she said. “I know how overwhelming it is,” she said. But her experience has shown her that no situation is hopeless.

The comments sections of her videos are filled with people saying how her videos have helped them cope with their difficulties, praising her non-judgemental manner. “I love how she is understanding the person in this situation and helping them instead of blaming them,” one commenter wrote.

TikTok tidiers

With the global rise of TikTok, cleaning videos have become hugely popular on social media, inspiring a growing number to start posting content. “I was watching videos and I thought, that’s what I do at home, I can just film my-

self doing it,” recalled 27-year-old Abbi, known as cleanwithabbi to her two million followers. The English single mum films herself cleaning, doing the dishes and hoovering in her red brick home in Huyton near Liverpool.

Cleaning has always been an important part of her life as her youngest son Billy lives with sensory processing disorder. “He really loves his routine and he does like things to be clean,” she said. Now Abbi, who does not wish to reveal her full name, posts TikTok videos for a living. Brands sponsor her to use their products, and she earns between \$720 and \$1,200 a video.

Abbi—whose sons Jack and Billy are six and five—hits the record button on her phone and swiftly makes their beds, arranging the soft toys nicely. “It relaxes me, it’s like therapy,” she told

AFP. “For me it’s like an escape from any worries I’ve got.”

‘It’s satisfying’

Ann Russell, a 59-year-old full-time cleaner from the south of England, has a different approach. Sitting on her sofa with her black dog Hollie, she answers a question from one of her TikTok followers, holding her phone up to her face. To remove a felt tip mark from a wooden table without removing the varnish she recommends isopropyl alcohol: “Dip a cotton bud in it and just rub it gently.” She said people need to be taught how to clean properly. “If nobody told you, how on earth are you supposed to know?” she told AFP.

Russell makes between four and 12 videos every day, answering questions from her 2.3 million followers in a no-nonsense fashion. “I turn the phone on, I talk to the phone, and that’s it. That’s about as good as it gets. I am not very proficient,” she said with a laugh.

The fact that cleaning “is satisfying” may be behind the videos’ success, Russell said. Most of her and Abbi’s viewers are women and millennials, as well as people struggling to find the motivation to clean. “Washing your socks, pairing them up and putting them in the drawer (gives) a sense of a good job well done,” she said. “It makes people feel in control. And because they feel in control in their personal life, they feel that the outside world is a safer place.”—AFP

S Africa art show highlights destructive ties between Man and Nature

A lioness towers over a seemingly dead hunter, her paws pinning his body to the ground. A woman dressed in black, her face replaced by a leopard’s head, sits flanked by three prowling wild cats. The two installations are part of the latest exhibition by 72-year-old American photographic artist Roger Ballen, which opens in Johannesburg, South Africa, next Tuesday.

Renowned for his thought-provoking work into the human psyche, Ballen said the display aims to explore the “antagonistic” relationship between Man and Nature, especially the decimation of African wildlife. “If you look at the history of humanity, it’s just been a destruction of nature, the destruction of wildlife,” said Ballen, a New York native, who has lived and worked in South Africa for almost 40 years. Wildlife numbers across the continent have dropped 66 percent since 1970, according to the World Wildlife Fund. From black rhinos to pangolins, numerous species are now critically endangered.

The display zooms in on the “Golden Age” of African hunting around the end of the 19th century, when Ballen said “the problem started”. It looks at the is-



US Photographic artist Roger Ballen poses for a portrait at the Inside Out Centre for the Arts in Johannesburg. — AFP photos

sue from both an “aesthetic” and “documentative” perspective, said the artist. The display, titled “End Of The Game”, is the first to be hosted in Ballen’s newly opened Inside Out Centre for the Arts in an affluent suburb of Johannesburg.

The photographer hopes the space will help lift Johannesburg’s cultural scene and become a stop for tourists passing through the city on their way to big game parks. “We would hope that they come in as one person (and) go out as another,” Ballen said.

‘Flowers and love’

Clips of former US President Theodore Roosevelt’s 1909 hunting trip, where more than 11,000 animals were killed for cataloguing purposes, are played, as the mannequins of two children sporting safari hats sit among the audience. Near the entrance, a man covered head to toe by a roaring lion’s skin holds two screaming human heads in wooden, orange bags. Photos juxtaposing man and animals adorn the walls

that enclose other artworks dominated by taxidermy animals, skeletons, and puppets. Yet Ballen, who cuts a slender figure in a black shirt over black trousers and black sneakers, refutes descriptions of his work as dark or unsettling. “I find it interesting. It’s bits and pieces of the world around me as I see it,” he told AFP in an interview. “The world isn’t necessarily flowers and love... life is made up of positives (and) negatives”.

Still, the exhibition hopes to “psychologically challenge” and make a “deep impression on people”, he said. This has been a recurring theme in Ballen’s career, which has long featured black-and-white photographs of fictionalized scenes aiming to stir the viewer. “It is not just like looking at another cloud, or another thing on Instagram that you just forget immediately,” said Ballen. “If it has a psychological impact, that’s likely to remain in somebody’s mind”.—AFP



General views of US photographic artist Roger Ballen’s work at the End of the Game exhibition at the Inside Out Centre for the Arts in Johannesburg.



Celebrities Lindsay Lohan, Jake Paul charged for touting crypto

Actress Lindsay Lohan, YouTuber Jake Paul and six other celebrities were charged by the US Securities and Exchange Commission for touting cryptocurrencies on social media without disclosing that they were paid to do so. The charges come as part of a case targeting entrepreneur Justin Sun for marketing Tronix and BitTorrent crypto assets without registering with the relevant authorities, and for manipulating crypto trading on his platform.

The case is one of several from the enforcer of US rules on the financial markets that has stepped up its crack-down on cryptocurrencies since the spectacular collapse of industry leader FTX at the end of last year. The SEC alleges that Sun sought to boost Tronix by artificially creating the appearance of trade on the secondary market by having his own employees buy and sell the asset.

“This case demonstrates again the high risk investors face when crypto asset securities are offered and sold without proper disclosure,” said SEC Chair Gary Gensler in a statement. Sun also induced investors to purchase cryptocurrency through a campaign in which he and his celebrity promoters hid the fact they were paid for their tweets, Gensler said.

Without admitting or denying their guilt, Lohan and Paul agreed to pay \$40,670 and \$101,887 in restitution and fines respectively. Pornographic film actress Michele Mason (also known as Kendra Lust), rapper Lil Yachty (Miles Parks McCollum), singers Ne-Yo (Shaffer Smith) and Akon (Aliaune Thiam) have also agreed to settle the lawsuit. Rapper Soulja Boy (DeAndre Cortez Way) and YouTube singer Austin Mahone were not part of the settlement.—AFP



In this file photo Lindsay Lohan attends the 2019 Ali Forney Center Gala at Cipriani Wall Street in New York City. — AFP photos



In this file photo YouTube personality Jake Paul attends the fight between his brother Logan Paul and former world welterweight king Floyd Mayweather in an eight-round exhibition bout at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami, Florida.

Sports

Yadav fails again as Australia stun India to win ODI series

CHENNAI: Australian spinners Adam Zampa and Ashton Agar turned the match to hand India their first one-day international series defeat at home since 2019 in a thrilling third and final match in Chennai on Wednesday. Left-arm spinner Agar removed in-form Virat Kohli (54) and the world's top-rated Twenty20 batter Suryakumar Yadav for his third consecutive golden duck with the first two balls of the 36th over to leave the hosts reeling at 185-6 with a target of 270 to win.

The visitors won the match by 21 runs after bowling out the hosts for 248 in the last over. The 2-1 win in the series was also important practice on South Asian pitches for Australia before the ODI World Cup in India later this year. Australia's stand-in-captain Steve Smith won the toss and chose to bat first in the series-decider.

India bowled out Australia for 269 and were cruising in the first 10 overs of their chase before skipper Rohit Sharma fell after a 17-ball 30 with the team at 65-1. Sharma's in-form opening partner Shubman Gill fell after a steady 49-ball 37 to leg-spinner Zampa. India's star batters Kohli and KL Rahul struck a busy 69-run partnership before Rahul fell to Zampa for 32.

The hosts' otherwise reliable lower-middle order offered little resistance. All-rounders Hardik Pandya (40) and Ravindra Jadeja (18) also fell to Zampa, who finished with 4-45 in his 10-over spell. Zampa was named player of the match but said his spin-partner Agar, who finished with 2-41, actually "changed the

game". "I probably don't think I deserve this one tonight to be honest," Zampa said after the game.

"Kudos to the guys who bowled before me as well.... We always have a lot of trust in each other, trust in our process and trust in our game plan, and we stick to it," he added. Australian pacers Sean Abbott and Marcus Stoinis took one wicket each.

'Loss really hurts'

Three wickets apiece from Hardik Pandya and Kuldeep Yadav left India in need of 270 to win the series, which stood at 1-1 going into the final game. Sharma said that Indian batters failed to carry on after getting a start to "take the game deep". "All of us were trying our best to go out and achieve that but it just didn't happen," the Indian skipper said. "Obviously a loss like this really hurts. But again we can understand what we need to do better as a team, as a group," he added.

Earlier, Pandya (3-44) and India's left-arm spinner Kuldeep (3-56) played an important role in restricting Australia to a chaseable 269 in the 49th over. By the eighth over, in-form openers Travis Head and Mitchell Marsh had hit 10 boundaries between them, including three sixes, and looked set for a commanding partnership before Pandya took the quick wickets of Head (33), Smith (0) and Marsh (47).

Yadav had the better of the middle order beginning with David Warner, who made 23 batting at number four on his return from the elbow fracture that forced him out of the second Test in February. Marnus La-



CHENNAI: Australia's players celebrate after winning the third one-day international (ODI) cricket match between India and Australia at the M A Chidambaram Stadium on March 22, 2023. — AFP

buschagne (28) was next but Alex Carey stubbornly held on for another 10 overs before his departure on 38. Left-arm spinner Axar Patel and frontline pac-

er Mohammed Siraj each took two wickets as Sean Abbott (26), Agar (17) and Mitchell Starc (10) added important runs to a below-par score. — AFP

Blow for British as Raducanu, Murray crash out in Miami

MIAMI GARDENS: Canada's Bianca Andreescu won a first-round battle of former US Open champions, defeating Britain's Emma Raducanu 6-3, 3-6, 6-2 on Wednesday to advance to the second round of the Miami Open. There was further bad news for Britain with two-time Miami winner Andy Murray crashing out in the first round after a 6-4, 7-5 loss to Serbia's Dusan Lajovic.

Andreescu and Raducanu, both born near Toronto and both of whom won the US Open as teenagers, battled for 2.5 hours in an entertaining opening to the WTA and ATP combined tournament's main draw. Andreescu, ranked 31st in the world, struck the ball with confidence and freedom as she dominated the first set, but Raducanu regrouped and fought back in the second.

The 2021 US Open winner went 5-3 up in the set after an epic game which she secured with her seventh break point and went on to force a third set. But Andreescu's power proved to be too much for the tiring Raducanu, who had shown promising signs of an upturn in form by reaching the last 16 at Indian Wells. "I thought it was a very good match from both sides. I think Emma played really well. I think the key for me was just sticking with it, fighting as much as I could," said Andreescu, who struck seven aces.

The Canadian has a tough test in the next round, where she will face seventh seed Maria Sakkari of Greece. For the 20-year-old Raducanu, though, there was yet another injury concern with her re-



MIAMI GARDENS: Andy Murray of Great Britain plays a backhand against Dusan Lajovic of Serbia during the Miami Open at Hard Rock Stadium on March 22, 2023. — AFP

porting pain with her wrist. "It's something I've been managing for some time. I just need to review after this tournament really and figure out what my next steps are," she said, adding that she may get a fresh pair of eyes to look at the problem.

World number one Iga Swiatek of Poland withdrew from the tournament on Wednesday citing a rib injury. Murray has made a reasonably promising start to the year, reaching the final in Doha but he was well below-par as he crashed out to 76th ranked, 32-year-old Lajovic. The Serb took his chances - winning 72 per cent of second-serve points and saved two of the three break points he faced, while converting all three opportunities on Murray's serve.

At 5-4 down in the second, Murray showed his grit to break Lajovic and raise hopes of a comeback but he was quickly broken back as he paid the price for some mis-timed strokes. — AFP

hara took gold with an overall score of 222.16, ahead of Knierim and Frazier in second place on 217.48.

Sara Conti and Niccolo Macii won bronze to claim Italy's first ever world pairs medal on 208.08. Russian skaters have again been banned from the competition because of the war in Ukraine. Miura and Kihara went into the free skate with a whopping six-point lead over Knierim and Frazier, having earned a personal best in the previous day's short program.

A fall from the American pair in the free gave Miura and Kihara some breathing space, but a late slip by Miura left the Japanese skaters sweating on the judges' score. "We didn't know what the score was going to be but I told her to puff her chest and be proud, and just pray for the score," said Kihara. The pair, who have competed together since 2019, broke down in tears once their victory was confirmed. "We have some regrets from the free skate but I'm very, very happy," said Miura.

Knierim and Frazier's preparations for the event were rocked when their coach Todd Sand suffered a heart attack earlier this month. Frazier said the competition had been "challenging and emotional"

would "detect in real time pre-determined events likely to pose or reveal a risk" of "terrorist acts or serious breaches of security", such as unusual crowd movements or abandoned bags. Systems would then signal the events to police or other security services, who could decide on a response.

The government is at pains to reassure that the smart camera tests would not process biometric data and especially not resort to facial recognition, technologies the French public is wary of applying too broadly. "The experiment is very precisely limited in time... (and) the algorithm does not substitute for human judgement, which remains decisive," Sports Minister Amelie Oudea-Castera told MPs.

The interior ministry highlights a February survey for the Figaro daily suggesting that large majorities back using the cameras in public spaces and especially in stadiums. But opponents say the plans overstep the bounds of the French constitution and European law. Digital rights group La Quadrature du Net (QDN) wrote in a report sent to lawmakers that the systems would in fact handle sensitive "biometric" data under a broad 2022 definition from France's rights ombudsman.

As biometric data, those characteristics would be shielded by the European Union's powerful General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), QDN argues. An interior ministry spokesman rejected that finding, insisting that the planned

MotoGP boss welcomes Asia expansion

PARIS: The new MotoGP season gets underway this weekend in Portugal with Carmelo Ezpeleta, the boss of Dorna, the sport's promoter, relishing the prospect of debut races in India and Kazakhstan. The addition of the two races, taking the season calendar to 21 races, is intended to broaden the sport's appeal from its traditional powerbase - 19 of the 22 riders come from Europe — and open up new markets.

The Kazakhstan race takes place at the Sokol International Racetrack near Almaty on July 9 while the Buddh International Circuit hosts India's first MotoGP on Sept 24. "We are a world championship and while Europe is lucky enough to have most of the riders come from there, that doesn't mean we should only race there," Ezpeleta told AFP. "The place where the motorcycle industry is developing the most is Asia."

"We should be able to have the majority of the Grands Prix in Europe but there is no doubt that for a motorcycle world championship, as well as for the manufacturers, it is important to go to a continent where the stands are full and the TV ratings are very high." The two new races mean 10 of this year's 21 will take place outside Europe but Ezpeleta said there may be room for more non-European races as they aim for a 22-race season in future.

"We do not know yet if there will be 22 but it is possible that there will be fewer in the Iberian Peninsula and more in other countries," he said. "I would especially like to see more nationalities represented among the riders." Another under-represented



Carmelo Ezpeleta

group on the MotoGP grids is women. Ana Carrasco, who has signed for the BOE SKX team in Moto3, will be the only woman competing in any of the three classes this season.

Indeed there have been but a handful of women who have taken part since Beryl Swain broke the mould of the boy racer back in 1962. "We have always wanted men and women to be able to compete in the same category, this has been seen in other disciplines," said Ezpeleta. "We are working on that, to have more. We are thinking of creating a women's world championship, which could then allow some of them to compete with the men. At the moment there are not many women in our championships because there are not many women in the lower categories."

Ezpeleta also maintained that MotoGP wants to "reduce our carbon footprint", something they have started by "trying to group several far away races together so that we don't have to make long trips for one GP". "The issue of ecology is one of our main concerns," he said. "One hundred percent of the fuel used in 2027 will be sustainable, and 40 percent as early as 2024." — AFP

Japanese skaters aiming to inspire after historic win

SAITAMA: Riku Miura and Ryuichi Kihara said they wanted to inspire a new generation after becoming Japan's first ever figure skating pairs world champions on Thursday. The Japanese duo survived a late slip to hold off Americans Alexa Knierim and Brandon Frazier for the gold in front of an expectant crowd in Saitama, north of Tokyo. The win gave Miura and Kihara an incredible season sweep, the pair having already claimed the NHK Trophy, Skate Canada, Grand Prix final and Four Continents titles.

Kihara said he hoped their latest win would usher in a new era of Japanese pairs success. "I would love it if boys and girls watching this thought that they wanted to try pairs skating themselves and we get more and more Japanese pairs," he said. "I hope people will look back in 10 or 20 years' time and say this was the catalyst for it changing." Miura and Ki-



SAITAMA: Japan's Riku Miura and Ryuichi Kihara react after winning gold medal during the pairs - free skating at the ISU World Figure Skating Championships on March 23, 2023. — AFP

but he and his partner were proud of their performance. "We've had a couple of mistakes here but we held our chins high and we attacked everything," he said. "I'm just so fulfilled with how Alexa and I performed this week." — AFP

processing did not use any biometric data or any facial recognition techniques.

The camera test period is slated by the bill to run to the end of 2024 - well after the end of the games and covering other major events including the Rugby World Cup later this year. Once the law is passed, public authorities such as the emergency services and the bodies responsible for transport security in the Paris region will be able to request its use. The interior ministry said it "should cover a significant number of large events" for "the most complete and relevant evaluation".

But QDN activist Naomi Levain told AFP: "It's classic for the Olympic Games to be used to pass things that wouldn't pass in normal times". "It's understandable for there to be exceptional measures for an exceptional event, but we're going beyond a text aimed at securing the Olympic Games," Socialist MP Roger Vicot told the chamber on Monday. Elise Martin, an MP following the process for hard-left opposition party France Unbowed (LFI), told AFP that the bill was just the latest of a slew of additional security powers introduced under President Emmanuel Macron since 2017. "The way this law is thought out is as if we live in a permanent state of emergency," she said. Meanwhile QDN's Levain highlighted that "many of the leaders in this market are French businesses", calling the bill's provisions a "favor to industry". — AFP

Scheffler, McIlroy win while Rahm falls at WGC Match Play

WASHINGTON: Top-ranked Scottie Scheffler and world number three Rory McIlroy won while second-ranked Jon Rahm sank to Rickie Fowler in Wednesday's opening group matches at the WGC Match Play Championship. US seventh seed Will Zalatoris and Norwegian eighth seed Viktor Hovland were also among five top group seeds to fall on day one at Austin (Texas) Country Club.

Sixteen winners from four-man groups will advance to weekend knockout rounds. Reigning Masters champion Scheffler, who won the Players Championship earlier this month, sank a 13-foot birdie putt at the 18th hole to edge US 54th seed Davis Riley 2&1. "Fortunate to come away with a win," Scheffler said. "I'm going to remember that putt on the last hole and take that energy into tomorrow."

Scheffler, who never trailed, holed out from 52 feet for eagle to win the par-4 fifth hole and eagled from 24 feet to take the par-4 13th. Riley missed a three-foot birdie putt at the par-5 16th that would have pulled him level but Scheffler missed a 3.5-foot putt at the par-3 17th to win the match. "I got off to a really good start. Outside of that I didn't really play great," Scheffler said. "Fortunately I saw that putt go in on 18."

South Korean Tom Kim edged Sweden's Alex Noren 2&1 in Scheffler's group. Spain's Rahm fell to US 49th seed Fowler 2&1. Rahm, a three-time PGA winner this year, missed a par putt from just inside five feet to drop the 15th. Fowler sank a seven-footer for par at 16 and halved 17 as well to win. "Just had to stay patient and rely on iron play," Fowler said. "I just kept grinding and pushing forward."

It was Fowler's first appearance at the event since 2016 and Rahm's first opening-match loss in six starts. Four-time major winner McIlroy beat American Scott Stallings 3&1 with a new putter and new driver. "It was a good first outing for both those clubs," McIlroy said. "They performed pretty well." The 2015 Match Play winner from Northern Ireland said the event helps prepare him for stroke-play challenges to come. "There's a ton of golf left this season but to get a bit of match play in our lives is good, and to get under pressure," McIlroy said. US 20th seed Keegan Bradley, 4-down after 13, won four of the last five holes, his six-foot birdie putt taking 18 to tie countryman Denny McCarthy in McIlroy's group. —AFP

French MPs battle over AI-assisted Olympics surveillance

PARIS: French government plans to trial surveillance cameras upgraded with artificial intelligence at the 2024 Olympics have opponents fuming at what they say is unnecessary and dangerous security overreach. While the government says such systems are needed to manage millions-strong crowds and spot potential dangers, critics see the draft law as a gift to French industry at the cost of vital civil liberties.

Last week, around 40 mostly left-leaning members of the European Parliament warned in an open letter to French lawmakers that the plan "creates a surveillance precedent never before seen in Europe", daily Le Monde reported. Debates kicked off late Monday in the National Assembly, France's lower parliamentary chamber, with discussions to continue Friday.

Even before the debates started, MPs had already filed 770 amendments to the government's wide-ranging Olympics security bill, many aimed at its Article Seven. That section provides for video recorded by existing surveillance systems or new ones — including drone-mounted cameras — to be "processed by algorithms". Artificial intelligence software

Sports

Zain Strategic Partner of region's first Rafa Nadal Academy

Company renews support for one of nation's biggest sports initiatives to empower young talents

KUWAIT: Zain, Kuwait's leading digital service provider, announces the extension of its Strategic Partnership with the Spain-based Rafa Nadal Academy in collaboration with Tamdeen Sports, a subsidiary of Tamdeen Group. The academy is the first of its kind in the Middle East, and only the second branch of the most famous tennis center in the world: Rafa Nadal Academy in Majorca, Spain.

The partnership was announced at the academy's HQ in Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber International Tennis Complex, attended by Zain Kuwait CEO Eaman Al-Roudhan, Tamdeen Sports CEO Mohammed Mustafa Al-Marzouq, and executive teams from both partners. Zain extends its support to this prestigious world-class academy in line with its comprehensive corporate sustainability strategy, which centers around supporting and progressing Kuwait's youth and sports sectors at the highest standards. Zain is a strategic partner of the academy since its inception back in 2020.

Zain is committed to empowering the next generation of professional Kuwaiti athletes who can compete at top international arenas. The company strongly believes that the private sector has a pivotal and essential role in supporting and encouraging the various sports projects in the nation to enable local athletes develop their skills, and em-



Eaman Al-Roudhan and Mohammed Al-Marzouq with Waleed Al-Khashti and Academy GM Martijn Belgraver.



Eaman Al-Roudhan and Mohammed Al-Marzouq during the announcement.

power them to raise the Kuwaiti flag high at regional and international arenas.

The academy features 15 tennis courts, a 1,500 sq m gym, 2 squash courts, 3 indoor padel courts, a swimming pool, and a boxing ring. The main, multi-purpose indoor court features over 5,000 seats, while the secondary outdoor court features 1,500 seats. All courts are equipped with the lat-

est world-class tools, and the facility also features a members lounge that offers nutrition programs, sports shops, and more. The hall is connected to many other facilities, such as a 5-star hotel, 360 Mall, a multi-storey parking building, and more.

Zain strongly believes in the crucial role played by private sector organizations in supporting social and economic sustainability

projects, as well as further pushing the sports community's growth in the country. Springing from its growing commitment towards practicing its social responsibility, the company is committed to printing a positive print through all its activities. This has led Zain to embrace the most influential projects in the community, including the support of this world-class academy.

Benin held by Rwanda despite new coach, 'fearsome' nickname

JOHANNESBURG: Benin introduced a new coach and a 'fearsome' nickname against Rwanda on Wednesday, but had to settle for a 1-1 draw as matchday three of Africa Cup of Nations qualifying began. Gilbert Mugisha gave the visiting Rwandan Wasps an early lead in Cotonou. After losing teen Hakim Sahabo to a red card, the visitors conceded a late equalizer when substitute Steve Mounie struck.

The result suited neither team as Senegal have six points and Mozambique four from two matches in Group L, and Rwanda two and Benin one having played an additional match. Gernot Rohr, a 69-year-old German who coached Gabon, Niger, Burkina Faso and Nigeria, succeeded local Moussa Latoundji last week. Charged with turning around the fortunes of a team beaten by Senegal and Mozambique last June, Rohr cut a colorful figure in a green cap, red top, black pants and gleaming white shoes.

He will have been disappointed that Benin, who had a numerical advantage for 35 minutes, could not convert their second-half dominance into a victory. Nicknames are revered in African football and after many years of debate, Benin recently changed their name from Squirrels to Cheetahs, believing the new name would strike fear into rivals. "Squirrels are harmless creatures who do not frighten anyone whereas Cheetahs are much more imposing animals," said a Beninese football spokesman.

Elsewhere, Sao Tome e Principe banished memories of a 10-goal Group A drubbing from Nigeria last year by drawing 2-2 with Sierra Leone in the Moroccan coastal city of Agadir. Argentina-based Luis Leal, the 35-year-old star of Sao Tome, put the Portuguese-speaking island nation ahead in each half only for Mustapha Bundu and Abu Komeh to notch equalizers.

The draw was a blow to the Leone Stars as they trail second-placed Guinea-Bissau by two points having played an extra match. The game was played in southern Morocco because Sierra Leone do not have an international-standard stadium. Leaders Nigeria host Guinea-Bissau, who are seeking a fourth straight appearance at the finals, in Abuja on Friday. —AFP

Sports sponsorships in limbo after Credit Suisse collapse

GENEVA: The takeover of Swiss bank Credit Suisse leaves many sports stars, teams and tournaments with a big question mark hanging over their lucrative sponsorship deals. The Swiss national football team, the country's top football division, tennis great Roger Federer, golf star Sergio Garcia and Zurich's new stadium were all sponsored by the bank, which is being taken over by Swiss rival UBS. The deal was hastily arranged on Sunday after Credit Suisse's share price plunged.

Golf and equestrian events also relied on Credit Suisse money, as did the Swiss Sport Aid Foundation, which backs talented young athletes in minority sports. "Our sponsorships reflect our passion for excellence, sustainability, and partnership," Credit Suisse boasts. The Neue Zurcher Zeitung newspaper said that no matter how much Credit Suisse got embroiled in scandals or rejigged its strategies, "the bank has always been a reliable partner for sports".

"For the time being, we will continue our corresponding commitments unchanged," a Credit Suisse spokesman told AFP. But UBS, which has its own portfolio of sports sponsorships focusing on Formula One, athletics and ice hockey, may not necessarily continue with the deals.

Football focus

Credit Suisse has been the main sponsor of the Swiss Football Association (SFA) governing body since 1993. The men's national team, ranked 12th in the world, has enjoyed some of its best years since the bank came on board. Having only appeared at

Reiten goal gives Chelsea advantage against Lyon

PARIS: Norwegian international Guro Reiten's first-half goal gave Chelsea a 1-0 win away to holders Lyon in France in the first leg of their Women's Champions League quarter-final tie on Wednesday. Reiten curled a first-time effort low beyond goalkeeper Christiane Endler just before the half-hour for the visitors, a fine finish coming after an outstanding piece of play by Scotland's Erin Cuthbert to create the chance.

The result puts Emma Hayes's Chelsea — runners-up two years ago — in the driving seat as they seek to become the first English winners of the competition since Arsenal in 2007. "A 1-0 win at the home of the reigning champions to take into the second leg, I can't ask for any more," said Hayes. "We were really compact and defended well. But we're only half-way there." Chelsea had already beaten France's other

one World Cup between 1966 and 2006, Switzerland have qualified for the last five World Cups, reaching the last 16 in four of those tournaments.

The contract runs until June 30 next year. It is worth around five million Swiss francs (\$5.4 million) per year, according to Blick newspaper. The Credit Suisse logo will stay on the national teams' training jackets and jerseys for as long as the bank exists, SFA spokesman Adrian Arnold said ahead of Saturday's Euro 2024 qualifier against Belarus.

"We had good discussions with our contacts at Credit Suisse, who assured us that the existing contracts would be honored," Arnold said. "We would like the partnership to continue thereafter, in whatever form." Credit Suisse is also the main sponsor of Switzerland's bid to host the 2025 women's European Championships, and the takeover comes shortly before the hosting decision is due on April 4.

The bank is the title sponsor of the Super League, Switzerland's 10-team top football division, including well-known clubs like Young Boys, Grasshopper, FC Zurich and FC Basel. Blick said the contract runs until 2025 and is worth around eight million Swiss francs (\$8.7 million) per season. Money goes into every club as well as the tournament, with the bank's name appearing on all team strips and on advertising boards around the stadiums.

In 2019, the bank won the naming rights for a proposed new football stadium in Zurich, where Grasshopper and FC Zurich are expected to play. But the planned "Credit Suisse Arena" has faced delays. It was due to open in mid-2022, but little progress has been made and its future now seems even more uncertain.

Close ties to Federer

Federer is by far the biggest name associated with Credit Suisse. Although Switzerland's greatest sports star retired in September, he remains a brand ambassador for Credit Suisse. The bank was on board for



Roger Federer

his transition into a post-tennis career, saying: "We look forward to many more years together".

Federer has a host of other sponsors he can fall back on, including Rolex, Lindt, Mercedes-Benz and Moet et Chandon. Credit Suisse also sponsors the Federer-instigated Laver Cup, which features six top men's tennis players from Europe against six from the rest of the world, captained by Bjorn Borg and John McEnroe. The Laver Cup did not respond when contacted by AFP.

Sponsors leave, others arrive

In golf, Credit Suisse sponsored the European Masters golf tournament in Crans-Montana and Spanish former world number two Garcia, who won the 2017 Masters. European Masters tournament director Yves Miltaz said the contract runs until the 2024 tournament so the event is not at risk. "There is no reason to panic," he told the Tribune de Geneve newspaper. "That's the business of sport: sponsors leave, others arrive." In equestrianism, Credit Suisse is a main sponsor of the Concours Hippique International de Geneve and White Turf in St. Moritz, a glitzy exclusive event featuring horse racing on a frozen lake. —AFP



DECINES-CHARPIEU, France: Lyon's French defender Selma Bacha fights for the ball with Chelsea's Norway defender Maren Mjelde at The Groupama Stadium on March 22, 2023. -- AFP

challenge on Sakina Karchaoui, only for the English referee to decide after a VAR review that there was in fact no foul. Moments later a handball at the other end by Paris defender Elisa De Almeida was given as a penalty following a VAR check after initially being missed by the officials. —AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

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

Clinics

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

Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Change of Name

I, **Katcha** Chalapathi (old name), R/O D. No:1/40, Garala Madugu Village, Apparajupeta Post, Pullampet Mandal, Annamaiah District, A.P. hereby changed my name as Kicha Chalapathi S/o Kicha Krishnaveni (new name). **24-03-2023**

I, **KHOJEMA**, holder of Indian Passport No. Z5708610 having permanent address 131, naya pura bakhhal patel marg Ujjain, Pin 456006, Madhya Pradesh, India, residing in Kuwait at

present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under given name Khozema and surname Bawajan. **(C#3187)**

I, **SHIVA**, holder of Passport No. T9188939 do hereby change my name to SHIVA (as given name) MADAN LAL (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name SHIVA MADAN LAL and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. **(C#3188) - 22-03-2023**

Warriors win as Mavs cry foul



DALLAS: Stephen Curry of the Golden State Warriors scores on a layup against Maxi Kleber of the Dallas Mavericks at American Airlines Center on March 22, 2023. — AFP

LOS ANGELES: The Golden State Warriors boosted their hopes of an automatic playoff berth with a crucial road victory over the Dallas Mavericks on Wednesday as Ja Morant made a smooth return from suspension for the Memphis Grizzlies. Steph Curry finished with 20 points as the Warriors clinched only their ninth away win of the season to edge past the Mavericks 127-125 at Dallas' American Airlines Center.

A back-and-forth battle saw the lead change hands 14 times, with Curry eventually giving Golden State a 125-122 lead with 8.5 seconds remaining from a superb layup. Kevon Looney bagged a pair of free throws to make the game safe before Reggie Bullock's three-pointer at the buzzer trimmed the deficit to two points. But the main talking point was a bizarre moment in the third quarter, when Dallas came out onto the court following a timeout and set up on the wrong side of the court.

That left Golden State free to dunk unopposed into the Mavs basket for a gifted two points. "It was great work the way we got organized and confused them," Warriors coach Steve Kerr joked

after the incident. "When I saw them at the other end I had to stop and think 'Wait, isn't this our basket?' I don't know what happened. I guess they assumed it was their ball."

Mavs owner Mark Cuban could be seen remonstrating with officials at the side of the court following the incident. Cuban later took to Twitter saying officials had erred by wrongly giving the ball to the Warriors, claiming they initially signaled possession to Dallas. "Worst officiating non call mistake possibly in the history of the NBA," Cuban said.

Curry, who finished with 20 points, 13 assists and five rebounds, was one of six Warriors players to make double figures. Luka Doncic led the scoring for Dallas with 30 points while rookie Jaden Hardy added 27, including six three-pointers. The win saw Golden State improve to 38-36 for sixth place in the Western Conference and on course for an automatic ticket to the postseason. But the defeat leaves the Mavs in ninth place and potentially at risk of missing the playoffs altogether with less than three weeks of the regular season remaining.

Elsewhere on Wednesday, Memphis claimed a 130-125 win over the Houston Rockets to remain in the second spot in the Western Conference. Grizzlies coach Taylor Jenkins opted to use returning superstar Morant off the bench. Morant had not played since he posted video of himself waving a handgun in a Colorado strip club on March 4. He was subsequently given an eight-game suspension by the league for conduct detrimental to the NBA.

There was little sign of rustiness though in Morant's 23-minute-and-47-second cameo on Wednesday, with the 23-year-old finishing with 17 points, four rebounds and five assists. "Before the game I did some meditation, just to ease the nerves and emotions I was feeling," Morant said. "Once I got out there on the court, just seeing how the fans reacted to me being back, it meant a lot, made me feel good inside. I can't put it in words."

In Los Angeles, the Lakers boosted their playoff hopes with an impressive 122-111 defeat of the Phoenix Suns. Anthony Davis led the Lakers with 27 points, while D'Angelo Russell (26) and Austin

Reaves (25) combined for 51 points. The win lifted the Lakers into 10th place in the Western Conference with nine regular season games remaining.

In Chicago meanwhile, the Philadelphia 76ers avenged Monday's loss to the Bulls with an emphatic 116-91 win. But the victory was tinged with concern for the Sixers, who saw Joel Embiid exit with a calf strain after the first half with Philadelphia leading 76-48. The Sixers played down fears of a serious injury however and said Embiid is expected to play on Friday against Golden State.

"He'll be ready for the next game," Sixers coach Doc Rivers said afterwards when asked about Embiid's fitness. "It was just precaution. We had a lead and felt like we could hold it. We're about to go on a long trip, it just felt like the right thing to do." De'Anthony Melton led the scoring for the Sixers with 25 points while Tyrese Maxey added 21 and Tobias Harris 20. In Miami, Jimmy Butler's 35-point haul and 22 points from Tyler Herro helped the Heat dig out a 127-120 win over the New York Knicks. R J Barrett led the Knicks scoring with 26 points. —AFP

France begin new era with Mbappe as captain

PARIS: Three months on from their agonizing defeat in the World Cup final in Doha, France begin a new era with several veterans having retired and Kylian Mbappe handed the captain's armband for their Euro 2024 qualifying campaign. The aftermath of that loss on penalties to Argentina in Qatar has been turbulent, to say the least. Off the field, a series of scandals brought down veteran French Football Federation president Noel Le Graet but not before he had agreed a deal for coach Didier Deschamps to remain in his job until 2026.

Not everyone in France agreed with the decision to extend the reign of a coach who has been in charge since 2012, especially as Zinedine Zidane is seen as an ideal successor. On the pitch, the biggest name to bow out is goalkeeper Hugo Lloris, who retired from international duty at the age of 36 and after over a decade as captain. The Tottenham 'keeper became France's most-capped player during the World Cup and his departure left Deschamps needing a new goalkeeper as well as a new skipper.

With long-term back-up goalkeeper Steve Mandanda also quitting, AC Milan's Mike Maigman will take the gloves when France welcome the Netherlands to the Stade de France on Friday for their opening qualifier. There was never any doubt about that, but there was some doubt over who would become captain, with Antoine Griezmann a contender.

Yet it was impossible to ignore Mbappe, who showed himself to be a leader with his breathtaking hat-trick in the World Cup final. At 24, the Paris Saint-Germain forward could realistically skipper the side for a decade. "Kylian ticked all the boxes to have that extra responsibility. But on the other hand it is nothing against Antoine who has always been an im-



Kylian Mbappe

portant player," Deschamps said this week. Olivier Giroud, France's all-time record goal-scorer, is still there at 36. But Raphael Varane has retired, as has Real Madrid's Karim Benzema, who missed the World Cup after succumbing to injury on the eve of the tournament.

"You can't replace people who have been there for 10 years, you need time," admitted Deschamps, who said he understood the decision of Manchester United center-back Varane to step down at the age of 29. "The demands of the highest level can lead to fatigue, whether that be physical or psychological," said Deschamps, who himself quit playing entirely at 32. The luxury for Deschamps is that France's conveyor belt of talent seems to be never-ending. Varane's retirement opened the door for Chelsea prospect Wesley Fofana to get a first call-up at 22. He and Arsenal's William Saliba both then pulled out injured, but the coach then turned to ex-Barcelona center-back Jean-Clair Todibo, now excelling at Nice. — AFP

Battle to buy Man Utd heats up as parties prepare fresh bids

MANCHESTER: The battle to buy Manchester United heated up on Wednesday as Qatari banker Sheikh Jassim Bin Hamad Al-Thani and British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe prepared to raise their bids for the 20-time English champions. Both parties were expected to increase their initial offers after the submission deadline of 2100 GMT was extended by merchant bank Raine, which is assisting with the sale of the club, following confusion over the timing, the BBC reported.

Sky Sports also reported that Sheikh Jassim and Ratcliffe had been granted extensions to submit fresh bids. The new deadline for offers has not been made clear, according to the BBC. United's owners, the Glazer family, have reportedly set a world record £6 billion (\$7.3 billion) valuation for a sports club. Sheikh Jassim's bid for 100 percent control of the club promises to wipe United's \$620 million debt and invest in a new stadium and training ground, in addition to backing for the men's and women's teams.

A source close to Sheikh Jassim's bid told AFP he remains confident his bid is "the best for the club, fans and local community". INEOS chemical company founder Ratcliffe, a boyhood United fan, has been more circumspect in his assessment, insisting he will not pay a "stupid" price in a bidding war for one of football's most iconic clubs.

"How do you decide the price of a painting? How do you decide the price of a house? It's not related to how much it cost to build or how much it cost to paint," Ratcliffe told the Wall Street Journal this week. "What you don't want to do is pay stupid prices for things because then you regret it subsequently." Ratcliffe, who wants the 69 percent stake owned by the Glazer family, said his interest in United would be "purely in winning things", calling the



Sheikh Jassim Bin Hamad Al-Thani

club a "community asset". Deeply unpopular with supporters since they saddled the club with debt in a £790 million leveraged takeover in 2005, the Glazers appeared ready to cash out at an enormous profit when they invited external investment in November. However, they could yet shun the option of selling a controlling stake in the club, with other parties interested in a minority shareholding.

The initial offers from the first round of bidding last month were believed to have been worth around £4.5 billion. That would surpass the Premier League record of £2.5 billion paid for Chelsea last year by a consortium led by LA Dodgers co-owner Todd Boehly and private equity firm Clearlake Capital, with a further £1.75 billion promised in investment in infrastructure and players. Bidders are expected to hear from United next week, with another round of bidding still in play. If one bid is vastly ahead of the others, it could be chosen to enter into a period of exclusivity, which would allow further negotiation ahead of a final sale.

Ratcliffe visited Old Trafford last Friday along with INEOS representatives, a day after a delegation from Sheikh Jassim's group toured the club's stadium and training ground to hold more talks as part of their due diligence. Just months after hosting the 2022 World Cup, a successful Qatari bid would give the Gulf state pride of place in the Premier League — the world's most-watched domestic competition. — AFP