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Boursa Kuwait's AGM approves cash dividend of over KD 17m



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France crush Netherlands 4-0; Lukaku hits hat-trick



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Dhuhr	11:54
Asr	15:23
Maghrib	18:03
Isha	19:20



Kuwait calls for enhancing cooperation against terror

Envoy urges fight against money laundering, cross-border crimes



KUWAIT: Picture shows a cannon being shot at the Nayef Palace in Kuwait City - signaling the end of the day's fasting during the month of Ramadan. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

NEW DELHI: Kuwait has urged for wider cooperation among member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) against drugs and scourges alike. The Kuwaiti stance was expressed by the Kuwaiti Ambassador to India during his participation in the international SCO conference, held in the Indian capital on March 23-24.

The organization has substantially contributed to achieving peace, stability and developing member states, said Jassem Ibrahim Al-Najem, addressing a session, themed, "restoring contact for stability: Ensuring re-establishment of the Eurasia safely." He affirmed need for collective action to enhance "the spirit of cooperation in the Shanghai organization and preserve security and stability in the Eurasia region," through fighting terrorism, illegal drugs' trade, money laundering and cross-border crimes.

He noted that GCC countries' joining as dialogue partners in SCO "affirms the organization's mounting significance," adding that the move would enable the organization to play a greater role in enhancing pan-Asian cooperation. Ambassador Al-Najem underlined Kuwait's role in combating terrorist groups,

through the international coalition for fighting militant groups and support for the Afghan people.

The Kuwaiti embassy first secretary, Khaled Ahmad Al-Askar, took part in the conference. The SCO, founded in Shanghai on June 15, 2001, groups Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Russia, China, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and India, in addition to four countries in the capacity as observers: Afghanistan, Iran, Belorussia and Mongolia. It aims at building a multi-polar global order that advocates international laws and nations' mutual respect.

Kuwait participated in the international conference of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in New Delhi. Addressing a session titled 'Reconnect for Stability: Ensuring Secure re-emergence of Eurasia,' Kuwait ambassador said that the SCO has made great contributions to peace, stability, development and prosperity of the countries in the SCO region, as an important platform for regional cooperation in the Eurasia. He stressed the need to work with all concerned parties to enhance the spirit of the SCO and maintain security and stability in the Eurasia region. — KUNA (See Page 3)

RAMADAN KAREEM

Reconciliation in Ramadan and beyond

By Hassan Twaha Bwambale

The arrival of the blessed month of Ramadan every year gives each and every Muslim another opportunity to receive Almighty Allah's Mercy, Blessings, Forgiveness and more. Forgiveness is one of the most important things we should strive for during this blessed month and beyond. Almighty Allah says what can be translated as: "O you who believe, indeed, among your spouses and children are those who are enemies to you. So, beware of them. Yes, if you pardon, excuse and forgive, then (let it be known that), indeed, Allah All-Forgiving, Mercy-Giving." (At-Taghabun 64: 14)

At the end of the above verse, Almighty Allah asserts that reconciliation is (far) better than kindling strife. And we should understand that charity begins at home. Time to change our old bad habits: In the blessed month of Ramadan, we must turn away from our old bad habits, replace our bad deeds with good ones, and work to reconcile and re-establish meaningful relationships with those whom the All-Loving Allah has placed in our lives.

The bridge between forgiveness and reconciliation is Mercy. Just as one of Allah's attributes is Ar-Rahman (The All-Merciful), we should strive to be merciful, because our mercy to others is an act of worship. That mercy should be manifested through our humility, tolerance, and strong bonds - among others - with our kith and kin and others. For Almighty God to forgive us, we need to reconcile with our family members and other members of the society, especially the believers. Abu Huraira (ra) narrated that Allah's

Continued on Page 6

Kuwait: Water crisis threatens development

NEW YORK: Kuwait affirmed that the world is facing a water crisis that impedes the development process of many countries, which may slow down the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. This came in the statement by Kuwait's permanent representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Tariq Al-Bannai, before the United Nations Water Conference. More than a quarter of the

A large asteroid zooms between Earth and Moon

PARIS: A large asteroid safely zoomed between Earth and the Moon on Saturday, a once-in-a-decade event that will be used as a training exercise for planetary defense efforts, according to the European Space Agency. The asteroid, named 2023 DZ2, is estimated to be 40 to 70 meters wide, roughly the size of the Parthenon, and big enough to wipe out a large city if it hit our planet.

Tornado and storm kill 23 in Mississippi

WASHINGTON: At least 23 people were killed as a devastating tornado ripped across the southern US state of Mississippi, tearing off roofs, smashing cars and flattening entire neighborhoods. The state's emergency management agency said Saturday that at least four people were missing and dozens were injured, while tens of thousands of people in Mississippi, Alabama and Tennessee were without power.

The powerful storm system that generated the tornado, accompanied by thunderstorms and driving rain, cut a long path across the state late Friday, slamming several towns along the way. In the town of Rolling Fork, home to less than 2,000 people, an entire row of houses and buildings was demolished,

world's population, or two billion people, suffer from access to potable water sources, while 3.6 billion people suffer from the most basic necessities of hygiene, said Al-Bannai. He also noted that according to the international index for disinfection, 44 percent of the world's population, or nearly half of humanity, deals with unclean wastewater systems, which will impair the quality of life for many peoples.

"As we meet today, 46 years after the last United Nations conference on water, and as all members of the international community, this file must be shed light on - and be given international impetus due to our knowledge of the sensitivity of the water sector, especially those affected by harsh climate challenges," Al-Bannai said.

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At 19:49 GMT on Saturday it came within a third of the distance from the Earth to the Moon, said Richard Moissl, the head of the ESA's planetary defense office. Though that is "very close", there is nothing to worry about, he told AFP. Small asteroids fly past every day, but one of this size coming so close to Earth only happens around once every 10 years, he added. The asteroid passed 175,000 kilometers (109,000 miles) from Earth at a speed of 28,000 kilometers per hour (17,400 miles per hour). The moon is roughly 385,000 kilometers away. An observatory in La Palma, one of Spain's Canary Islands, first spotted the asteroid on February 27. Last week, the UN-endorsed International Asteroid Warning Network decided it would take

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MISSISSIPPI: This image obtained from the Mississippi Highway Patrol, Troop D, shows a damaged home near Silver City, Mississippi, after a tornado touched down in the area March 25, 2023. — AFP

leaving only scattered debris. Cars were overturned, fences were ripped up and trees uprooted, television footage showed. — AFP (See Page 7)



Kuwait's permanent representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Tariq Al-Bannai



IN SPACE: A handout artist's impression shows a grey, irregularly-shaped asteroid, rocky object that often pass safely past Earth. — AFP

Ramadan Kareem


Mohammed Al-Naki

The family diwaniya

Receiving guest tonight

Sunday, 26th March 2023

From 7:30pm at Mansouriya Area, Block No.1, Jassim Al Wazzan Street, Opp Al Othman Mosque





Kuwait condemns Zionist re-settlement decision

Arab League warns of the danger of systematic escalation

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has condemned the decision taken by the Zionist occupying authorities to allow the re-settlement of areas in the northern West Bank. The ministry affirmed Kuwait's complete rejection of this unjust decision, which constitutes a flagrant violation of the UN Charter and UN resolutions, including Security Council Resolution No 2334, which would contribute to undermining regional and international efforts aimed at de-escalation and peace.

The ministry reiterated Kuwait's demand to the international community to shoulder its responsibilities and put pressure on the occupation authorities to reverse their settlement decisions contrary to International laws and resolutions. The Arab Parliament also condemned the approval by the Zionist parliament (Knesset) of a draft law allowing the return to four settlements from which the occupation forces withdrew in the northern occupied West Bank as part of the disengagement plan unilaterally implemented by the occupation in 2005.

In a statement, the parliament described this move as a "provocative step that undermines the efforts of peace," explaining that the step represents a serious violation of international humanitarian law and will hinder the efforts to prevent escalation - and repudiate the agreements and understandings signed recently between the Palestinian and Zionist sides at the meetings in Aqaba and Sharm El-Sheikh to prevent escalation before the holy month of Ramadan.

He warned of the danger of the continuous and systematic escalation against Palestinians which was

triggered led by the far-right Zionist national security minister. He pointed to the serious consequences of Zionist escalation, which contributes to fueling the conflict and the explosion of the situation in a way that no one will be able to control. The Arab Parliament called for effective international pressure to stop Zionists from taking unilateral measures.

Meanwhile, tens of thousands of worshippers attended prayers at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque compound, the first in the holy month of Ramadan, AFP correspondents said, amid heightened tensions in the region. Authorities said the prayers at Islam's third holiest site passed peacefully despite concerns over a recent surge in violence.

The mosque compound in the annexed Old City of east Jerusalem has previously seen clashes and violence between Palestinians and Zionist, particularly during Ramadan. Azzam Al-Khatib, head of the Jordanian Waqf Islamic affairs council which administers the compound, told AFP "the prayers went peacefully and everything went well." Zionist officials estimated the number of worshippers at more than 80,000 while the Waqf said 100,000 had attended the afternoon prayer.

Zionist police said it had deployed 2,300 officers across the city for the day. A massive crowd streamed through the Bab Al-Silsilah entrance to the compound with prayer mats in hand, an AFP correspondent said, while some posed for photos in front of the iconic golden Dome of the Rock. The holy Muslim site is built on top of what Jews call the Temple Mount, Judaism's holiest site. — Agencies



Zionist security forces patrol as Palestinians gather outside the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem's Old City during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan. —AFP

Minister visits Jaber Al-Ali media center



KUWAIT: Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Minister of State for integrity promotion Abdulaziz Al-Majed stressed the Ministry's keenness to grant a large space for religious, scientific, cultural and social activities during Ramadan. Al-Majid said in a press statement during his visit to the headquarters of the Jaber Al-Ali media center af-



filiated to the Awqaf, that the success of the Ministry lies on the extent of its commitment and strategic plan in terms of partnership and affirming the civilized role of mosques and houses of worship. He praised the cooperation of ministries, institutions, official bodies in making this year's Ramadan a success. — KUNA

PAM suspends 16,848 files over violations

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) announced the suspension of 16,848 files that were found without valid civil addresses, including 22,863 licenses on which 61,688 workers with residence in the country are registered under Article 18. The workers have a one-month grace period to reconcile their legal status.

This came on the directives of the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Acting Minister of Defense Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah to "tighten control over violators of the Labor Law in the private sector" in light of the state's tendencies towards regulating the demographics. The Authority gave the employers of the violating files a period of one month from the date of suspending the files with the aim of amending their legal status - indicating that in the event that the legal status is not modified within the specified period, the owners will be referred to the relevant investigation authorities.

KPC CEO inspects site of oil spill in western Kuwait

KUWAIT: The CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, Sheikh Nawaf Saud Nasser Al-Sabah, inspected site of the oil spill accident in western Kuwait to review the ongoing efforts to end it, address its effects and confirm the official support. The KPC said in a press statement on Saturday that Sheikh Nawaf, accompanied by the CEO of Kuwait Oil Company, Ahmad Al-Aidan, was briefed on all details of the leak and the measures that were taken since the first moment of the accident.

He listened to an explanation about ongoing efforts to ensure complete control of the leak as soon as possible. The corporation stated that during the visit, the CEO and the accompanying delegation were informed that the production operations at the accident site were unaffected. No toxic gases were recorded or monitored as the concerned teams worked to take all necessary measures following the appropriate controls and conditions. Kuwait Oil Company announced in a press statement, last Monday, that there were no injuries resulting from this leakage, that production operations were not affected, and that toxic gases were not detected, noting that the concerned teams in the company were present at the accident site to deal according to procedures followed in such matters. It reassured citizens and residents that there was no impact on public health or safety due to the accident and that all readings from the monitoring stations came within the permissible limits. — KUNA

Inflation threatens food security in MENA region

ROME: The World Food Program (WFP) cautioned against the impacts of food inflation and currency collapse on food security in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. As the region celebrates the beginning of the Muslim Holy Month of Ramadan, it is experiencing a deepening food security crisis due to the combination of high food inflation and collapsing currencies, WFP said in a press release on Thursday.

"This is affecting millions of people across the region, particularly those living in countries already facing conflict and instability," according to the statement. Food prices are skyrocketing and many countries in the region are dealing with crippling budget deficits, high levels of public debt, currency devaluation and dangerous levels of inflation.

Five countries in the region have seen food inflation going beyond 60 percent just this year with Lebanon and Syria facing triple-digit food inflation at 138 percent and 105 percent respectively. In Iran, Turkey and Egypt, annual food inflation is more than 61 percent, making it difficult for families to afford essential food items like bread, rice, and vegetables. As national food production cannot satisfy domestic needs, heavy reliance on imports has exposed the region to fluctuations in global food prices - exacerbated by the war in Ukraine - as well as to supply chain disruptions caused most recently by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The region's dependency on food imports means millions of people - particularly the poorest - are vulnerable when internal or external shocks push up food prices," said WFP's Chief Economist Arif Husain. "The combination of high food inflation, collapsing currencies and stagnant incomes has left families unable to put food on the table," Husain regretted. Global food prices remain at a 10-year high despite a slight decline in recent months.

"These fluctuations will not dent domestic food inflation in countries facing a toxic combination of tumbling currency values and high inflation," added Husain. According to February data, four out of 15 countries on WFP's currency watch list are in the region. In Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, and Iran, currencies have depreciated between 45 and 71 percent over the past 12 months alone.

"In 2019, an average Syrian family earned enough to buy more than double what they needed every month for food," said WFP Country Director and Representative in Syria Kenn Crossley. "Right now,



KUWAIT: A vendor waits for customers at a market during the first day of the holy month of Ramadan in downtown Kuwait City. For Muslims across the world, the beginning of the ninth month in the Muslim lunar calendar which marks the start of Ramadan is a time for spiritual reflection, prayers and fasting. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

that same income, which has not gone up, can only buy a quarter of what a family need," he noted. At the same time, food production in the MENA region is curtailed by both conflict and a deepening climate crisis. In Iraq and Syria, prolonged droughts and the effects of conflicts have reduced cultivated areas and cut food production.

The region has been hit hard by the climate crisis, and is seeing prolonged droughts and heat waves, wildfires, flooding, erratic rainfall and landslides. As the crisis continues, it is critical that governments, international organizations, and donor countries take action to address food security across the region. This includes increasing funding for humanitarian assistance, supporting local farmers to boost food production, and addressing the underlying causes of conflict and instability in the region.

"Governments need to invest more in agriculture across the region where almost all countries are import-dependent," says WFP Regional Director for the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe Corinne Fleischer. "This is a long-term strategy that will not help the poor cope with price rises now but will pay dividends some years down the line," Fleischer added.

The number of food-insecure people across the region increased by 20 percent over the past three years - reaching more than 41 million people, compared to 2019. In response, WFP is using integrated approaches, which aim to address the root causes of food insecurity while at the same time meeting

immediate needs. In 2023, WFP is targeting nearly 35 million people across the MENA with food and nutrition assistance and working to increase the resilience of the most vulnerable in the face of regional and global shocks. — KUNA



KUWAIT: People wait for the return of a ship carrying pearl divers at the port of Kuwait in the fifties of the last century. (Source: 'Kuwait' by Ralph Shaw, London, 1976. Prepared by: Mahmoud Zakaria Abu Al-Ella, researcher in heritage at the Ministry of Information.)

Local

Students, parents battle to choose college major

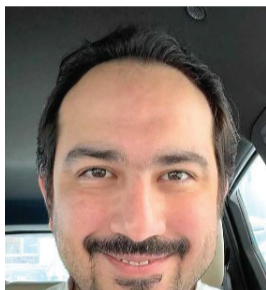
High school graduates to make hard choices



By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Stuck between following their passion, finding the best jobs, acquiring social prestige, obeying parents' pressure and other factors, high school graduates remain indecisive about what to major in at university. University degrees play a major role in deciding what these students are going to become and how their life will look like in terms of social prestige, title and income. This makes making a solid decision on where to continue their journey a heavy responsibility for high school graduates, especially with society's preference of certain jobs and titles, which pushes students towards certain majors that might not suit their interests and passions.

"There are two reasons why students are pushed towards certain professions such as engineering, medicine or law: The prestige that comes with these professions (something to boast about and be proud of), and the presumed demand for these professions," author and educator Haider Al-Mosawi told Kuwait Times. Classifying certain jobs as successful



Haider Al-Mosawi

to keep the following factors in mind: Prestige isn't the only (or most important) factor when deciding a career path. It's really important to also value passion and curiosity. I know someone who gave up a job paying KD 8,000 a month so he can build his own startup. This may not make sense to many peo-

ple, but it's quite common for people to continue working in jobs that make them miserable. That's not a definition of success or an outcome we should encourage our children to pursue," Mosawi said.

Mosawi spoke about the real definition of success, saying despite society defining only a few posts as successful, reaching such positions without genuine passion and satisfaction cannot be considered a success. He also emphasized on the importance of keeping up with the emerging opportunities that the future is promising.

"There are so many career paths that can both be lucrative and fulfilling for our children. The Internet has unleashed many opportunities parents and students may not know about or be comfortable, because it's a new field for them. Unfortunately, career advisors might also be lagging behind when it comes to emerging opportunities and what the careers of the future will be like. ChatGPT, the artificial intelligence chatbot, recently demonstrated how fast the future is approaching, and what we thought would happen in the distant future is already here," he said.

According to Mosawi, parents and students should start pulling themselves out of the old beliefs, as the future is giving rise to new jobs and replacing others. Hence, sticking to their old opinions on certain majors will not necessarily secure the supposed expectations. "What I would recommend: Don't just value the prestige that comes with the profession. Value the happiness, satisfaction and meaning your children will derive from their work. Besides, we've seen many successful individuals shift careers a number of times, and we should expect this to happen with our children, with each shift bringing its own experiences and joys," Mosawi pointed out.

He also stressed on the effect parents have on their children during this phase of their life, being fresh high school graduates. "Parents should remain open-minded about new career paths. Instead of dictating what their children should do, it's best to discuss the pros and cons of the available options with their children and support them in what they choose to pursue," said Mosawi.

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German envoy sends Ramadan greetings, shares 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. Kuwait Times spoke with German Ambassador to Kuwait Hans-Christian Freiherr von Reibnitz to learn about his experience of Ramadan in Kuwait.

Kuwait Times: What would you like to say to the Kuwaiti people and residents on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan?

Hans-Christian Freiherr von Reibnitz: At the beginning of the holy month, I am grateful for the opportunity to wish all Muslims - in Kuwait or elsewhere - a peaceful, festive and inspiring month of Ramadan. On behalf of the German Embassy in Kuwait, I am sending warm Ramadan greetings and best wishes to Their Highnesses the Amir and the Crown Prince and all people and the government of this country.

Ramadan is a very special and important time of the year - both spiritually and socially. It is the holiest month for Muslims and it is the time when families and friends come together and celebrate. It is a time to be cherished, to lift our spirits and take mental rest. We feel united with the people of Kuwait and share your aspirations for peace and prosperity. May the spirit of Ramadan bless you with cheerfulness. Ramadan Kareem to you all!

Kuwait Times: Have you experienced Ramadan in an Arab country before? Tell us about your experience.

Reibnitz: This Ramadan will be my first in Kuwait. However, from the beginning of my diplomatic career, I had the opportunity to celebrate Ramadan



German Ambassador to Kuwait Hans-Christian Freiherr von Reibnitz

in countries as diverse as Turkey, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Oman and neighboring Saudi Arabia.

The casual observer might assume it's all the same - but I beg to differ: Wherever I lived, I experienced the inspiration of this time with different flavors, as it was expressed, lived and celebrated by the people, each with their distinctive national, regional and social characteristics. Over the years, it has become part of my life as well and I am now keen to celebrate Ramadan in Kuwait for the first time and experience local traditions like Girgian and ghabqas firsthand.

Kuwait Times: How do Muslims in Germany celebrate Ramadan?

Reibnitz: Germany is home to a large and growing number of Muslims, many of whom came to Germany in recent years in search of peace and stability for themselves and their families. And as they settled down, they brought their beliefs and traditions along from their countries of origin - this is how celebrat-

ing the holy month of Ramadan has also found its way into everyday life in Germany. In many places, Germans and Muslims gather socially for the traditional breaking of the fast (iftar), and churches and mosques open their doors for people to learn from each other. The customs around Ramadan and the various foods prepared during the month of Ramadan are as diverse as the Muslims who have set up homes in Germany.

Kuwait Times: Are there common factors between Kuwait and Germany in the month of Ramadan?

Reibnitz: As German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier has put it repeatedly: "It is nice to see that Ramadan has now become a natural part of life and the community in Germany. It shows that we can rejoice together, live together and treat each other with respect and care."

These are universal values and I personally believe in them, and I will support them whenever and wherever I can. Respect for our beliefs and traditions and care for each other, our families and the less fortunate in our societies are values to be defended by us all.

Kuwait Times: In your opinion, did the coronavirus pandemic change the atmosphere of Ramadan?

Reibnitz: During the pandemic, it was very difficult to gather in crowds and observe the traditional iftar. But the restrictions were necessary and served to protect more vulnerable people among us from infection, disease and suffering. The spirit of Ramadan, however, did not change and I am sure that it will always prevail - even in difficult times.

Kuwait Times: What types of traditional dishes have you got to know during your stay in Kuwait?

Reibnitz: Kuwaiti food is full of flavors and Ramadan will not be complete without them! Murabban is my undisputed favorite, but I also enjoy machboos, harees and jareesh. There is so much to discover and trying different tastes and experiencing all the preparations has turned into a welcome pastime for me.

News in Brief

Bedoon inmate dies

KUWAIT: A bedoon inmate died in one of the wards of the central prison. Supervisors were informed by security men, who immediately transferred the man to the inpatient clinic. However, the doctor on duty announced he had died before arriving. A case was registered and the body was referred to forensics to determine the cause of death.

Two die in accidents

KUWAIT: An Egyptian man died after hitting the side of a bridge on Nuwaiseeb Road. Servicemen and air ambulance personnel arrived at the accident site and began to treat the severely injured man, but he died before reaching the hospital. In related news, another Egyptian man was killed after being hit by an SUV in Saad Al-Abdullah. The driver, a Kuwaiti, notified operations about the incident. Upon arrival at the location of the accident, it became clear to paramedics that the Egyptian had died. A run-over and death case was registered, and the citizen was detained at the police station after the body was removed.

Drug suspect nabbed

KUWAIT: Customs officers at Kuwait Airport arrested an Asian in possession of 88 bags of hashish, in addition to Psychedelic tablets. Director of airports department Usama Al-Shami said that the Asian has been sent to concerned authorities.

Kuwait participates in SCO conference

NEW DELHI: Kuwait participated in the international conference of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) being held in New Delhi on 23-24 March. Addressing a session titled 'Reconnect for Stability: Ensuring Secure re-emergence of Eurasia,' Ambassador of Kuwait to India Jasem Ibrahim Al-Najem said that the SCO has made great contributions to peace, stability, development and prosperity of the countries in the SCO region, as an important platform for regional cooperation in the Eurasia.

He stressed the need to work with all concerned parties to enhance the spirit of the SCO and maintain security and stability in the Eurasia region, by combating terrorism and its financing, drug trafficking, money laundering and transnational organized crime. Al-Najem emphasized the importance of expanding security cooperation, and building a balanced, effective and sustainable security structure in order to eliminate the threat of terrorism, separatism and extremism.

He also pointed out that the induction of some countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council as dialogue partners in the SCO indicates the growing importance of the Organization, which will lead to play a greater role in developing cooperation among Asian countries. Al-Najem highlighted Kuwait's role in combating terrorist groups, especially with the global coalition to defeat extremist orga-



Kuwait participates in SCO conference in New Delhi. - KUNA photos

nizations and through its participation in numerous meetings at the ministerial level, adding that it supports continuous efforts with international and regional groups to help the Afghan people achieve their aspirations and basic needs.

First Secretary Khaled Ahmed Al-Askar also participated in the conference. It is worth noting that the SCO is an intergovernmental organization established in Shanghai on June 15, 2001. It currently

consists of eight member states including Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Russia, China, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and India and four observer states including Afghanistan, Iran, Belarus and Mongolia. The regional organization aims to build a multi-centric world order, fully consistent with the rules of international law and the principles of mutual respect, that meet the interests of each country, taking into account their needs and aspirations. — KUNA



Ambassador of Kuwait to India Jasem Ibrahim Al-Najem



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News in brief

Amiri Diwan thanks mourners

KUWAIT: In the name of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (may God protect and preserve him) , the honorable Al-Sabah family, the Amiri Diwan extends its sincere thanks to all exemplary fellow citizens and residents who participated in offering condolences on the death of the late Sheikh Mohammad Sabah Sabah Saud Al-Sabah, as we ask God Almighty to reward them well. And he protects them from all harm, and we pray to Him, the Almighty, to cover the deceased with the abundance of His mercy and to dwell him in His spacious gardens. —KUNA

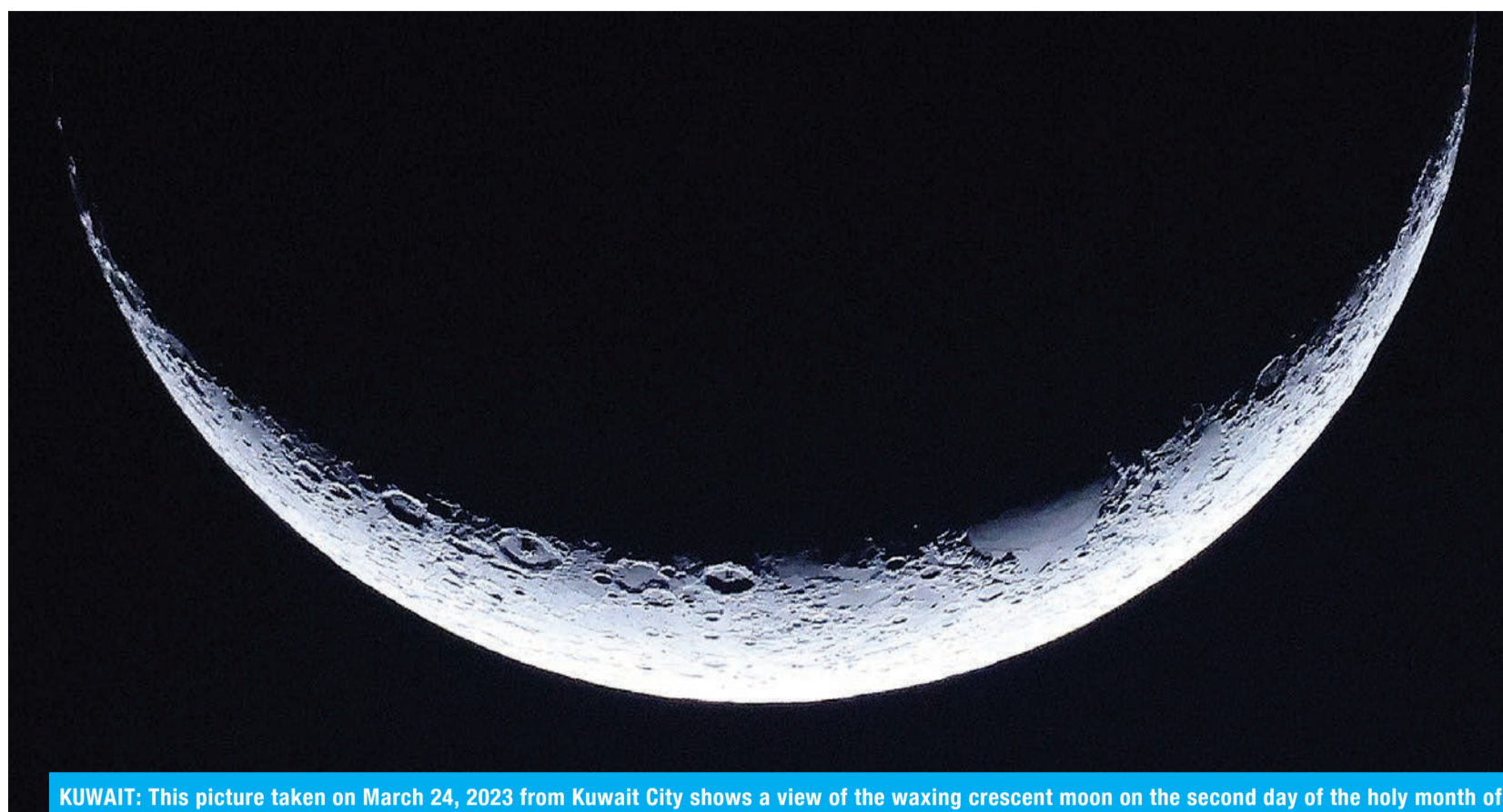
Kuwait advises pilgrims

RIYADH: Kuwait Consulate in Jeddah city, southwest Saudi Arabia, called on its nationals willing to perform Umrah (lesser pilgrimage) to abide by the rules set by the Saudi regulators for their safety. The regulations require that Umrah performers book via “Tawakkalna” and “Nusuk” apps, the Consulate reminded in a statement. The performers can enter into the “Tawaf yard” in the ground floor of Masjid Al-Haram (the Grand Mosque of Makkah) easily through the gates of King Fahad, Umrah, King Abdulaziz, Al-Salam and Al-Marwah, according to the statement. They are allocated on the first floor, the third expansion, the external yard, and the pathways of AlKaaba Mount and Al-Shabikah, it added, advising the Kuwaiti Umrah performers who might need help to contact the emergency line: 00966535571133. —KUNA

Kuwait crude oil drops

KUWAIT: The Kuwait crude oil price went down by 95 cents during Friday's trading sessions to reach \$76.55 per barrel, compared with \$77.50 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said Saturday. Meanwhile, Brent crude futures went down by 92 cents to reach \$74.99 pb, as well as West Texas Intermediate oil declined by 70 cents to \$69.26 pb. —KUNA

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: This picture taken on March 24, 2023 from Kuwait City shows a view of the waxing crescent moon on the second day of the holy month of Ramadan. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

San Marino and Kuwait to deepen ties, cooperation

Kuwait signs initial agreement on investment protection

ROME: Kuwait's Non-Resident Ambassador to San Marino Nasser Sanhat Al-Qahtani held talks with Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Economic Cooperation and Telecommunications Luca Beccari on the bilateral ties. During the meeting, Beccari affirmed his government's keenness on promoting co-operation with the State of Kuwait in the economic, cultural, diplomatic areas, a statement from Kuwait Embassy in Rome said on Saturday.

The minister and the Kuwaiti diplomat explored ways to enhance economic and investment cooperation, increase the trade exchanges, and coordinate the diplomatic stances of both countries at international forums, according to the statement. Beccari extolled progress in the bilateral ties that resulted in signing, in initials, a deal on investment and double taxation protection, stressing keenness of his government on boosting diplomatic and political cooperation with Kuwait.

He affirmed that strong relations between San Marino and Kuwait constitutes a bridge for communication and dialogue among Europe, the Arab world

and the Gulf region in a way that contributes to enhancing a multi-lateral system and its organizations on common issues and challenges, according to the statement. Beccari conveyed greetings of the Captains Regent of San Marino Maria Luisa Berti and Manuel Ciavattato to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The minister also expressed his greetings to Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, wishing Ambassador Al-Qahtani every success in his post. Meanwhile, Ambassador Al-Qahtani voiced his pride for progress in the friendly relations between Kuwait and San Marino that are a firm pillar to enhance cooperation in all domains to serve the interests of the two countries and their peoples. Al-Qahtani conveyed greetings of Sheikh Salam Abdullah Al-Sabah to Beccari, affirming eagerness of Kuwait to deepen and promote bilateral ties with San Marino.

Sign agreement

Meanwhile, the governments of Kuwait and the Republic of San Marino signed, in principle, have inked a bilateral agreement to frame common financial and investment aspects within the framework of strengthening and developing excellent bilateral relations. The Kuwaiti embassy said in a statement to Kuwait News Agency that the Assistant Undersecretary at the Ministry of Finance, Osama Jassem Al-Qassar, and the Director of Economic Affairs at the San Marino Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dario Galassi, initialed last Thursday an agreement to encourage and protect investments and prevent double taxation between the two countries.

The statement said that the signing of the agreement (in initials) pending its approval by the governments of the two parties came after precise and fruitful technical deliberations held by a high-ranking Kuwaiti delegation with officials of San Marino at the headquarters of the Republic's Foreign Ministry.

The Ambassador of Kuwait in Rome and the non-resident envoy to the Republic of San Marino, Nasser Al-Qahtani, welcomed this important step



Kuwait's Non-Resident Ambassador to San Marino Nasser Sanhat Al-Qahtani is received by Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Economic Cooperation and Telecommunications Luca Beccari. —KUNA

that lays down legal frameworks and foundations that support and encourage mutual investments and enhance aspects of economic relations between the two countries.

Ambassador Al-Qahtani congratulated the delegation of the Kuwaiti Ministries of Finance and Foreign Affairs on the success of the negotiation with high professionalism and the achievement of this accord, which adds foundations for building and developing friendship relations and pushing forward fruitful cooperation between the State of Kuwait and San Marino.

He added that he was looking forward to endorsing it as soon as possible. The Kuwaiti delegation was headed by the Assistant Undersecretary for Financial and Tax Affairs at the Ministry of Finance, Osama Al-Qassar, with the membership of the Head of the Investment Agreements Department, Suhail Fahd Al-Zanki, and the observer of international agreements in the Legal Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ahmad Abdul Rahman Al-Buajjan. —KUNA

Kuwait charity to distribute one million iftar meals

ADEN: The Kuwait-based Alnajat Charity has launched a campaign to distribute one million iftar (fast-breaking) meals to needy people in 26 countries. On this occasion, head of the resources and campaigns department at Alnajat Charity Omar Al-Shaqra told KUNA that the campaign is meant to offer aid and bring smiles to faces of needy people. It comes in light of the rising hungry, malnutrition, unemployment and poverty in many countries, he said. Al-Shaqra added that the campaign is launched from Yemen due to the difficult humanitarian conditions there, particularly among the displaced people.

Meanwhile, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) said the Islamic giving plays increasing role in helping the forcibly displaced people in 26 countries. At the start of the holy month of Ramadan, UNHCR is launching its 5th Islamic Philanthropy Annual Report, which shows the power and growing potential of Islamic giving to save lives and build better futures for the forcibly displaced globally.

The report shows that since UNHCR's Refugee Zakat Fund was piloted in 2017, 6 million forcibly displaced people in 26 countries have benefitted from Zakat (obligatory almsgiving) and Sadaqah (voluntary charity) funds. Through the Refugee Zakat Fund, last year UNHCR received more than \$21.3 million in Zakat contributions (including \$137,000 as Zakat al Fitr - small obligatory donations) and over \$16.7 million in Sadaqah donations (including \$398,000 as Sadaqah Jariyah - voluntary contributions). While this is a small proportion of UNHCR's global expenditure, its importance and impact on the



ADEN: The Kuwait-based Alnajat Charity has launched a campaign to distribute one million iftar (fast-breaking) meals to needy people in 26 countries. —KUNA

displaced is growing, contributing to progress in several Sustainable Development Goals, notably around ending poverty and hunger while improving education and well-being. In 2022, the Refugee Zakat Fund enabled UNHCR to improve the lives of more than 1.5 million people in 21 countries, with Zakat and Sadaqah funds.

Zakat contributions enabled UNHCR to assist more than 756,000 refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) in 17 countries. Sadaqah donations meant UNHCR assisted more than 839,000 people in 15 countries. Since 2017, UNHCR's main recipient operations have been Bangladesh (Rohingya), Yemen (IDPs), and Lebanon (Syrian refugees). Zakat contributions were distributed last year through Zakat compliant cash assistance and direct provision of goods. Cash assistance was provided to refugees in Algeria, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mauritania, Pakistan, and Tunisia, as well as to IDPs in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, and Yemen.



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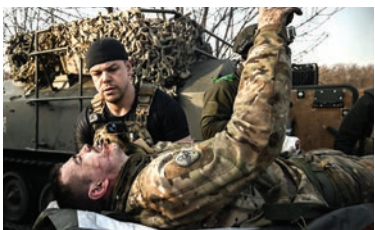
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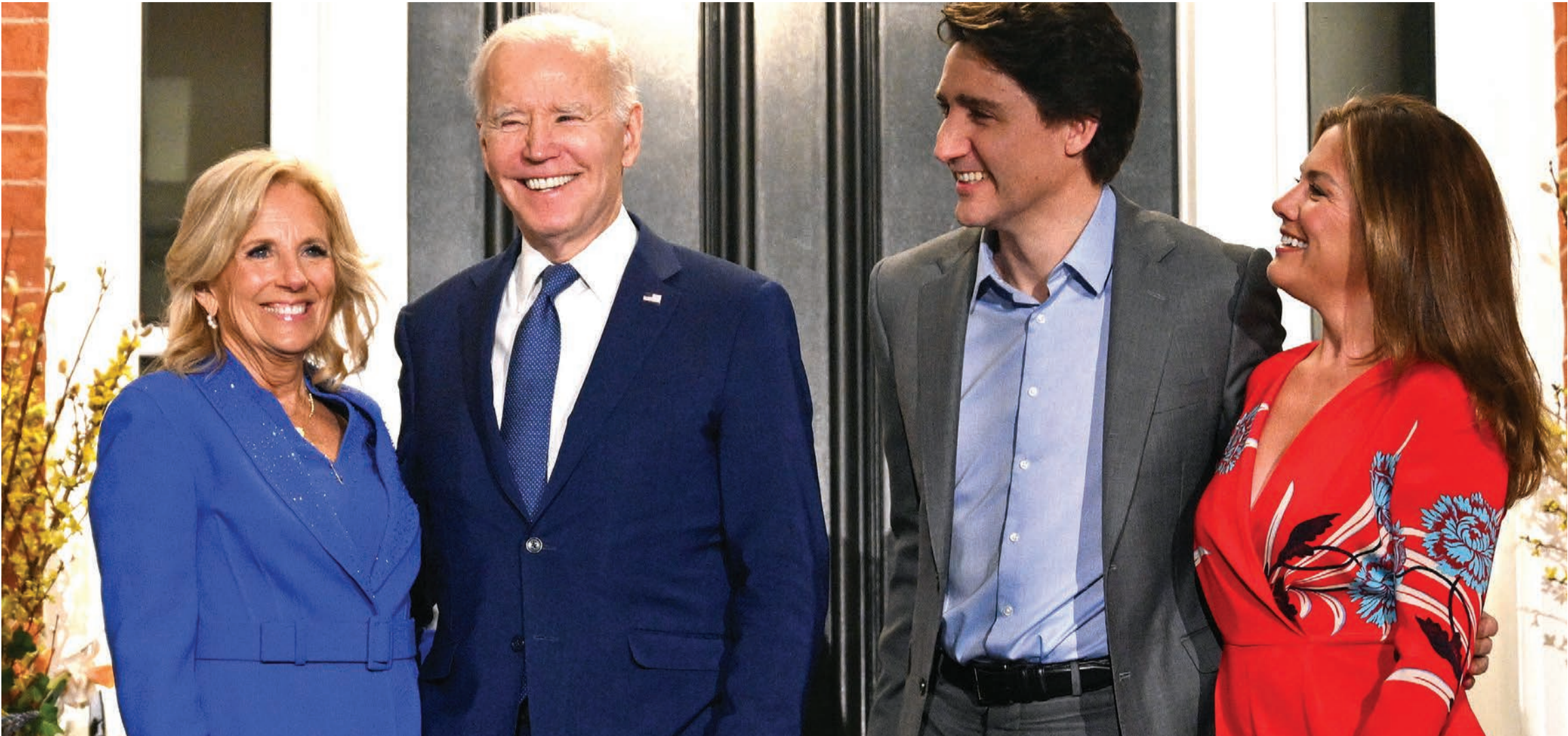
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UN accuses Russia, Ukraine forces of ‘summary executions’

Seeking a reset, Brazil’s Lula heads to China



OTTAWA: Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his wife Sophie Grégoire Trudeau greet US President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden as they arrive at Rideau Cottage, the Prime Minister’s Residence, on March 23, 2023. – AFP

US, Canada ink deal on illegal migration during Biden trip

Deal to push migrants to rely on more dangerous crossings, smugglers: Critics

OTTAWA, Canada: President Joe Biden laid out a vision of world-leading US-Canadian economic co-operation in a speech to Canada’s parliament Friday, and announced that the giant neighbors had reached a deal on curbing illegal migration.

Standing ovations by Canadian lawmakers punctuated Biden’s roughly half-hour speech in Ottawa that was thick on praise for North American unity — a sentiment matched earlier when Prime Minister Justin Trudeau delivered his own address.

“Americans and Canadians are two peoples, two countries, in my view sharing one heart,” Biden said, getting cheers when he vowed Canada will “always be able to count on the United States.”

Biden signaled a resolution to one irritant in the close relationship, with a deal on managing the growing issue of undocumented migration on their lengthy border. “The United States and Canada will work together to discourage unlawful border crossings,” he said. The arrangement will see undocumented asylum seekers crossing from the United States into Canada turned back, while Canada will simultaneously expand the pathway for legal entries.

The plan — similar to a crackdown on the much more heavily used US-Mexican border — has been

criticized by migrants’ rights activists. However, Biden and Trudeau are both under political pressure to relieve their badly strained immigration systems and Biden said that regardless, “welcoming refugees and asylum seekers is a part of who Canadians and Americans are.”

The deal will have “devastating impacts on refugee claimants who are already at extreme risk,” Amnesty International’s Julia Sande told AFP. “It will push people to more dangerous crossings in either remote areas or relying on smugglers.”

Biden opened his speech with a nod to Canadian bilingualism, greeting parliamentarians with “good afternoon” and “bonjour” — joking that this was as far as he’d got in four years of French at school. And the bonhomie flowed from then on.

Biden laid out a vision of the neighbors being ever more closely bound with the joint goal of building high-tech economies and reinforcing supply chains for things like semiconductors and critical minerals used in electric vehicle manufacturing, saying: “We’re going to write the future together.”

Trudeau earlier greeted Biden at the parliament building, saying Canada has “no greater friend and ally than the United States” — a mes-

sage underlined through the gift to Biden of a chocolate bar from Peace by Chocolate, a brand started by Syrian refugees.

NORAD, China, Haiti

Face-to-face talks between Biden and Trudeau covered a range of areas where both sides are pushing for improvements. The US government has been pressuring Canada to increase its defense spending, which in 2022 was just 1.33 percent of GDP. This is scheduled to rise to 1.59 percent from 2026, but that’s still well below the NATO alliance requirement of a minimum two percent of GDP spending.

A joint statement said that Biden and Trudeau agreed to modernizing their countries’ joint air defense alliance, NORAD, with Canada putting billions of dollars into improved radar and fighter aircraft infrastructure. The two leaders also reaffirmed support for pro-Western Ukraine “for as long as it takes” in its war to push back Russian invasion, and issued a warning to China.

“Canada and the United States acknowledge the serious long-term challenge to the international order posed by the People’s Republic of China, including disruptive actions such as economic coercion,

non-market policies and practices, and human rights abuses,” the statement said. “While we will cooperate with China in areas of mutual interest, such as on climate change, we remain committed to ensuring our ability to compete effectively with China on a level playing field.” At a joint news conference with Trudeau, Biden said he believed China has not sent arms to Russia after President Vladimir Putin’s forces invaded Ukraine, saying: “Doesn’t mean they won’t, but they haven’t yet.”

“I don’t take China lightly. I don’t take Russia lightly,” he added, while also suggesting that reports of their rapprochement had probably been “exaggerated.” The United States and Canada are among the countries that have provided strong support to Kyiv. Closer to home, the two leaders said they “remain concerned about deteriorating security in Haiti,” but did not say whether progress had been made on long-discussed plans for an international intervention force to stabilize the chaotic Caribbean nation. rudeau announced an additional Can\$100 million (US\$73 million) in humanitarian relief and training for Haitian police, and a plan to welcome 15,000 more migrants from Haiti, Colombia, Ecuador and other nations in the Western Hemisphere. — AFP

Unrest in France prompts delay of King Charles visit

PARIS: Violent pension reform protests in France led to the postponement Friday of King Charles III’s trip to the country, highlighting the growing security and political problems faced by President Emmanuel Macron. The French president condemned the latest burst of violence overnight, while a human rights watchdog criticized the “excessive use of force” by police during recent demonstrations.

King Charles’ first foreign trip as monarch had been intended to highlight warming Franco-British relations. Instead, it has underlined the severity of demonstrations engulfing Britain’s neighbor just 10 months into Macron’s second term.

Uproar over legislation to raise the retirement age from 62 to 64 was enflamed when Macron exercised a controversial executive power to push the plan through parliament without a vote last week. With fresh strikes expected next Tuesday on what would have been the second day of the king’s tour, Macron asked for the postponement of the royal visit, a UK government spokesperson said.

The decision was made “to welcome His Majesty King Charles III in conditions which reflect our friendly relations”, Macron’s office said. Police arrested more than 450 people on Thursday, according to interior ministry figures.

In addition, 441 members of the security forces were injured on the most violent day of protests since the start of the year. More than 900 fires were lit around Paris, with anarchist groups blamed for setting uncollected rubbish ablaze and smashing shop windows, leading to frequent clash-



PARIS: Employees put the final touches on the wax effigy of Britain’s King Charles III before its unveiling at the Musee Grevin in Paris on March 24, 2023. – AFP

es with riot police. But rights groups, magistrates and left-wing politicians have also denounced alleged police brutality in recent days. The Council of Europe — the continent’s leading human rights watchdog — warned that sporadic acts of violence “cannot justify excessive use of force by agents of the state” or “deprive peaceful protesters of their right to freedom of assembly”.

Over a million

More than a million people marched in France on Thursday, according to official estimates, as the protest movement was reinvigorated by Macron’s refusal to back down over the past week. In the northeast city of Rennes, regional officials denied claims by union leaders that police had deliberately targeted them with tear gas and a water cannon during Thursday’s protests. In Bordeaux, protesters set fire to the

ancient wooden entrance to the city hall on Thursday. King Charles had been set to visit the southwestern city on Tuesday, after a day in Paris. With protesters threatening to disrupt the royal visit and the streets of the capital strewn with rubbish because of a strike by waste collectors, some feel the trip’s postponement will avoid further embarrassment for France.

Speaking to reporters during a trip to Brussels on Friday, Macron said discussions over rescheduling the visit could take place in the coming months. “We have proposed that at the beginning of the summer, depending on our respective agendas, we can arrange a new state visit,” he said. He also insisted that Paris “would not give in to the violence.” “I condemn the violence and offer my full support to the security forces who worked in an exemplary manner.”

Way out

It remains unclear how the government will defuse a crisis that comes just four years after the “Yellow Vest” demonstrations rocked the country. “Everything depends on one man who is a prisoner of the political situation,” political scientist Bastien Francois from the Sorbonne University in Paris told AFP. The leader of the moderate CFDT union, Laurent Berger, said Friday he had spoken to an aide to the president and suggested a pause on implementing the pensions law for six months while opening a channel for negotiations. “It’s the moment to say ‘listen, let’s put things on pause, let’s wait six months,’” Berger told RTL radio. “It would calm things down.”

While France’s Constitutional Court still needs to give the final word on the reform, Macron said in a televised interview Wednesday that the changes needed to “come into force by the end of the year”. Blockades of oil refineries by striking workers continued on Friday, but the energy transition ministry said it had requisitioned enough workers to restart production at one of these and resume fuel supply to the capital.—AFP

Statement by Secretary Antony J. Blinken on the occasion of Ramadan

I wish a peaceful Ramadan to all those observing the holy month. For Muslims here in the United States and abroad, Ramadan is a sacred period of prayer and reflection, celebrating with family and community and remembering and serving those less fortunate with compassion and openness.

It is also a time to act on our collective responsibility to help those in need, including those stricken by poverty, persecution, conflict and natural disaster. Muslims worldwide will also commemorate this month through acts of service in their communities.

In this spirit, many of our embassies and consulates abroad will host iftars and other events to share in the month’s beautiful traditions and demonstrate our commitment to promoting social cohesion, inclusion and diversity within our communities. These conversations support our shared hope for the peace and dignity of all people. We express deep appreciation for our longstanding partnerships with diverse communities across the Muslim world and remain committed to promoting religious freedom for all, both at home and abroad. I wish the 1.8 billion Muslims around the world Ramadan Kareem.



International

Seeking a reset, Brazil's Lula heads to China

Talks to revolve around Ukraine, trade, technology investments

BRASILIA: Brazil's leftist leader Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva will meet Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing this week, where he hopes to reinforce trade, discuss international mediation in Ukraine, and reclaim his country's role in global geopolitics. After a period of isolation under his far-right predecessor, Jair Bolsonaro, Lula is wasting no time in renewing ties with allies. Just three months into his latest term as president — he has already visited Argentina and the United States — the six-day trip to China, Brazil's largest trading partner, is key to Lula's ambitions.

"Lula's visit is a very clear signal that he wants a high-level bilateral dialogue and a deepening of this relationship," Evandro Menezes de Carvalho, a China expert at the Getulio Vargas Foundation, told AFP. Analysts say Chinese hopes are also high. Officials in Beijing see Brazil — a leader in the global south — as a linchpin in their strategic and economic plans.

Ukraine will be a main topic of discussion during the visit, which officially begins Tuesday, with Lula hoping to promote his proposal for mediated talks to end Russia's invasion of the country. Xi himself will be fresh from talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow, where he presented himself as a peace-seeking mediator — though he made no apparent breakthrough. Ukraine's Western allies have heavily criticized Xi's approach as tacit support for Moscow's invasion. But Lula sees China as an "important ally" of his own initiative of creating a group of countries seeking a negotiat-

ed peace deal, the government in Brasilia said in a statement. Lula, who has been president of Brazil twice before, is keen to position the South American giant as a go-between, like he did during his second term, which ended in 2010, during nuclear discussions between Iran and the United States.

However, his diplomatic stock took a hit last year when he came under fire for claiming that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was "as responsible" for the war as Putin. He has also refused to join Western nations in sending weapons to Ukraine to help it defend itself.

'Clear signal'

Trade will also be high on the agenda in Beijing, with a large business and ministerial entourage from Brazil. Bolsonaro also visited China, but that relationship soured after he joined then-US president Donald Trump in blaming Beijing for the Covid-19 pandemic.

That did not affect business dealings, though, with commercial exchanges last year surpassing \$150 billion. Brazil received a boost on Thursday when China decided to lift a month-long suspension of Brazilian beef imports after an isolated case of mad cow disease was confirmed in February.

The country wants to promote "trade, concentrating on the diversification of products ... but also to bring Chinese investments and advance in other guidelines," said Menezes. He pointed to the poten-

tial for developing technology like semiconductors and artificial intelligence, or resuming projects for a bullet train between Brazilian cities.

Brazil was also the main destination for Chinese investment in Latin America between 2007 and 2020, worth \$70 billion according to the Brazil-China Business Council. The money was mostly invested in oil and electricity generation, but also in the automobile industry, heavy machinery, mining, agriculture and information technology.

Brazil is a huge market for Chinese companies, such as technology giant Huawei. And an agreement between the two countries to use the yuan in bilateral multi-million-dollar trade could help internationalize the Chinese currency. "The size of Brazil and the size of the relationship also means that successful engagement with Brazil more than any other country supports China's global strategic economic goals," said Evan Ellis, China and Russia expert at the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies in Washington.

'Strategic partnership'

"It is certainly about economics and business and there is a huge business partnership, but one should not lose sight of the fact that there is also a strategic partnership" based on Brazil's role as a leader in the global south, said Ellis. Lula made multilateral diplomacy a priority in his previous two terms as president, and visited Beijing three times.

It was on his watch that the BRICS group of



BRASILIA: Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has postponed by one day the start of his state visit to China due to a case of "mild pneumonia", his office said on March 24, 2023. — AFP

emerging economies comprising Brazil, India, China, Russia and South Africa was created. In Beijing, Lula will also meet Premier Li Qiang and Zhao Leji, president of the Popular Assembly. He will head to Shanghai where his domestic political ally Dilma Rousseff, who succeeded him as president in 2011, is due to take over as head of the New Development Bank, also known as the BRICS bank.

Lula's visit was delayed by one day due to a case of "mild pneumonia," his office said, now departing on Sunday. On his way home, Lula will visit the United Arab Emirates for two days. — AFP

LatAm-Ibero leaders discuss food crisis, financing at summit

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic: Addressing a food crisis affecting a fifth of Latin America's population featured high on the agenda of the Ibero-American leaders' summit held in the Dominican Republic. According to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization, Latin America and the Caribbean is the region of the world where eating a basic healthy diet is most expensive — at \$3.89 per person per day in 2020, compared to \$3.19 in North America and Europe.

It is a price that 22.5 percent of the region's population cannot afford, according to the UN — more than 130 million people in 2020. Heads of state and government from 14 of the 22 Spanish — and Portuguese-speaking countries of Latin America and Europe, were due to attend the two-day summit.

Spain's King Felipe VI and Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez and Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa are among those gathered in Santo Domingo with the leaders of Chile, Uruguay, Honduras and others. The surprise attendance of Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro was announced by a master of ceremonies listing the arrival of leaders.

It is the first time Maduro has taken part in the summit since he came to power in 2013. Since his re-election in 2018, his legitimacy has been questioned by several members of the forum,

including Spain, Ecuador and Paraguay. Maduro was absent from the opening ceremony, but was expected to participate in discussions.

Latin America, which faces a "difficult" 2023 according to predictions by the Inter-American Development Bank (IIBD), will be hoping the meeting results in more support for its struggling economies. Financing will be "a central point," the Dominican Republic's deputy minister of multi-lateral foreign policy, Ruben Silie, said at a press conference this week.

Much current financing "does not take into account the crisis situation that our countries are experiencing," he added. "They do not respond adequately to the indebtedness of the countries and ... the burden of the health crisis and later the crisis in Europe," Silie said, referring to the Ukraine war.

The Ibero-American group's secretary general, Andres Allamand, said the summit should approve "a roadmap that marks the path towards food security" and charters dealing with technological threats and environmental protection.

It should also adopt "a proposal for a fairer and more inclusive international financial architecture that allows financing the post-pandemic recovery," he said in a statement. The meeting will also serve as preparation for a July summit of the UN Economic Commission for Lat-



SANTO DOMINGO: Argentine President Alebrto Fernandez (left) and King Felipe VI of Spain (right) chat during the inaugural act of the XXVIII Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government on March 24, 2023. — AFP

in America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the European Union, according to Mariano de Alba, an analyst with the Crisis Group think tank. "Many issues on the agenda of this Ibero-American summit will be the main ones of the July summit," he told AFP. These include to "strengthen ties and coordination between Europe and the region to address three issues: food security, environmental challenges and how to cooperate to increase access to technology."

The IIBD had forecast economic

growth of 1.0 percent for Latin America and the Caribbean. The International Monetary Fund has put the figure at 1.8 percent. Among the notable summit absentees is Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador who also did not send his foreign minister but an under-secretary. According to De Alba, this reflected tensions between Spain and Mexico after Lopez Obrador accused Spanish firms of having paid bribes in his country in the past in exchange for contracts. — AFP

Two dead, more than dozen migrants found trapped in Texas train

WACO, United States: An anonymous emergency telephone call on Friday led authorities to halt a train that contained a group of "suffocating" migrants, two of whom were dead, police in Texas said. The US Border Patrol stopped the train east of Knippa, a small community in southern Texas near the city of San Antonio, police said. "Approximately 15 migrants were discovered to be in need of immediate medical attention, five of the immigrants were flown out to San Antonio area hospitals, five were transported to area hospitals, and their conditions are unknown," the statement by the Uvalde Police Department said.

"Two of the immigrants were pronounced deceased," Uvalde mayor Don McLaughlin confirmed that two people had died, according to ABC News, but put the total number of people trapped in the container at 17.

Twelve were sent to hospitals, while three were "okay," McLaughlin said. Union Pacific, a freight-hauling railroad company, "will lead the investigation," police said. Temperatures near where the train was stopped reached 87 degrees Fahrenheit (30 degrees Celsius) in the late afternoon, according to local news channel KSAT in San Antonio.

"We are heartbroken to learn of yet another tragic incident of migrants taking the dangerous journey," US Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas said on Twitter. "We will work with the Uvalde County Sheriff's Office to hold those (perpetrators) responsible. Smugglers are callous and only care about making a profit," he added. Uvalde, where police received the 911 emergency call at 3:50 pm (2050 GMT), burst into the news 10 months ago with an elementary school shooting in which 19 students and two teachers were killed, along with the gunman. It was the third-deadliest school shooting in US history after one in 2007 at Virginia Tech and another in 2012 at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut. — AFP

Kuwait: Water crisis threatens...

Continued from Page 1

Ambassador Al-Bannai reaffirmed the solidarity of Kuwait with all friendly countries that have been affected in the past months by climate crisis such as floods, especially the torrential rains that swept through the Sudanese, Pakistani, American and New Zealand lands.

A large asteroid zooms between...

Continued from Page 1

advantage of the close look, carrying out a "rapid characterization" of 2023 DZ2, Moissl said. That means astronomers around the world will analyze the asteroid with a range of instruments such as spectrometers and radars. The goal is to find out just how much we can learn about such an asteroid in only a week, Moissl said. It will also serve as training for how the network "would react to a threat" possibly heading our way in the future, he added.

Moissl said preliminary data suggests 2023 DZ2 is "a scientifically interesting object", indicating it could be a somewhat unusual type of asteroid. But

Regarding the water situation in the Middle East, which suffers from scarcity of water resources, Al-Bannai said, "A specialized UN report classified 13 Arab countries out of 19 countries in the world as among the countries most threatened by water security. Al-Bannai also lauded Kuwait's efforts towards achieving the sixth international goal, saying, the United Nations Committee on Water Resources ranked Kuwait in 2019 among the 20 most efficient countries in water use, which confirms the keenness to implement all international goals and indicators related to efficiency.

he added that more data was needed to determine the asteroid's composition. The asteroid will again swing past Earth in 2026, but poses no threat of impact for at least the next 100 years - which is how far out its trajectory has been calculated. Earlier this month a similarly sized asteroid, 2023 DW, was briefly given a one-in-432 chance of hitting Earth on Valentine's Day 2046.

But further calculations ruled out any chance of an impact, which is what normally happens with newly discovered asteroids. Moissl said 2023 DW was now expected to miss Earth by some 4.3 million kilometers. Even if such an asteroid was determined to be heading our way, Earth is no longer defenseless. Last year, NASA's DART spacecraft deliberately slammed into the pyramid-sized asteroid Dimorphos, significantly knocking it off course in the first such test of our planetary defenses. — AFP

Reconciliation in Ramadan...

Continued from Page 1

Messenger (PBUH) said what can be translated as: "The deeds (of Allah's servants) are presented (to Him) every Thursday and Monday and the Exalted and Majestic Allah pardons every person who does not associate any partners with Him, except the person who harbors a grudge against his brother (either filial brother or brother in faith). Then it is said, 'Put their forgiveness on hold until they reconcile.'" (Muslim # 2, 565)

Time to start afresh: We must exert more efforts and spend more time to rebuild trust, with patience, love and understanding. Let's push behind the discomfort and awkwardness that comes after forgiveness, and reconcile with our loved ones in order to have meaningful and rewarding relationships.

Abdullah bin Amr (ra) narrated that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said what can be translated as: "The one who maintains and strengthens a relationship with his relatives only because they reciprocate his dutifulness and favors to them, is not a true upholder of the ties of kinship. The one who truly upholds those ties is the one who does so even if they break off the relationship with him (and turn to ingratitude.)" (Al-Bukhari # 5, 991).

Fasting is in essence a deeply individual act: No one knows whether you are fasting or not, except you and your Creator. Through acts of worship during the blessed month of Ramadan, we take up a dialogue with Almighty Allah, a dialogue of intimacy, sincerity, love, and trust. This re-examination allows us to realize that we merge the purpose of our existence with the purpose of our subsistence, while nurturing the inspiration from the Noble Quran that "God will not change anything for the good if you change nothing."

Almighty Allah says what can be translated as: "...

for each one is a succession of angels (sent by Allah), before him and behind him, to guard him by Allah's Command and to record his deeds. Indeed, Allah does not change a people's condition (of grace) until they change what is in their souls (and become disobedient)." (Ar-Raad 13: 11)

That is, 'Allah not only directly Watches over whatever each person does, and is fully aware of everything he does, but He has also Appointed Guardians which accompany him everywhere and keep a full record of all his deeds. "This has been stated here to warn those people who live their lives under the delusion that they have been left absolutely free to do whatever they like and shall not be required to render an account of what they did in this worldly life.

Do you know what is better than charity and fasting and prayer? Abu Ad-Darda'a (ra) narrated that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said what can be translated as: "Shall I not inform you of something better in degree (and reward) than (optional) fasting, (optional) Salah (Muslim Ritual Prayer), and charity?" The people replied, "Yes." He (then) said, "Making peace between each other.

For indeed spoiling relations with each other is the shaver (destructive).'" (Al-Albani rated it as Saheeh (authentic) in Saheeh Abi Dawud # 4, 919 and Al-Tirmidhi # 2, 509) We are urged to re-examine our relationship with our community. Ramadan is a feast of faith of fraternal atmosphere that is shared with all brothers and sisters.

Courtesy of the TIES Center: The TIES Center 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.



IN SPACE: This handout image shows an artist's impression of the first interstellar asteroid called Oumuamua. — AFP

International

UN accuses Russia, Ukraine forces of ‘summary executions’ of prisoners

‘They did not just beat us, they broke us’: Prisoner

KYIV: The United Nations said Friday it was “deeply concerned” by what it said were summary executions of prisoners of war by both Russian and Ukrainian forces on the battlefield. The allegations came shortly after Kyiv accused Russian forces of killing a captured Ukrainian serviceman who was filmed saying “Glory to Ukraine” before being shot dead.

The head of the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, Matilda Bogner, said that her organization had recently recorded killings by both sides. “We are deeply concerned about (the) summary execution of up to 25 Russian prisoners of war and persons hors de combat by the Ukrainian armed forces, which we have documented,” Bogner said at a press conference in Kyiv on Friday. “This was often perpetrated immediately upon capture on the battlefield,” she said. “While we are aware of ongoing investigations by Ukraine authorities into five cases involving 22 victims, we are not aware of any prosecution of the perpetrators,” she added.

Bogner also expressed “deep” concern over the alleged executions of 15 Ukrainian prisoners by Russian armed forces after their capture. She said the Wagner mercenary group, which claims to be leading Russia’s assault on Bakhmut — the longest and bloodiest battle of the war — was responsible for 11 of those killings. Moscow and Kyiv have accused each other of mistreating prisoners of war since Russian President Vladimir Putin invaded a year ago. In response to the UN report, Kyiv’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it was “unacceptable” to hold the “victim of aggression” responsible.

‘They broke us’

One UN report issued Friday claimed Ukrainian military personnel had subjected prisoners of war to death threats, mock executions or threats of sexual violence. Some beatings were “purely retaliatory”, it said. “In some cases, officers beat POWs saying: ‘This is for Bucha,’” the mission reported detainees as saying, referring to a town near Kyiv where Russian forces were accused of widespread atrocities. Before questioning, they showed me an axe handle



BAKHMUT: A wounded Ukrainian serviceman flashes the V-sign as he is being carried away from the front line near Bakhmut, on March 23, 2023. — AFP

covered in blood as a warning,” the report quoted a Russian POW as saying. “The questioning lasted for about an hour and they used electricity six times, whenever they thought I was lying,” the detainee said, according to the report.

Ukrainian POWs quoted in the report said they were subjected to torture, sexual violence, a lack of food and water and denied medical attention. They said they were tortured and ill-treated to extract information or as a form of punishment, the mission said. Ukrainian prisoners reported being beaten with shovels, stabbed, subjected to electric shocks and strangled. “Some of them lost their teeth or fingers, had their ribs, fingers or noses broken,” the report said. “They did not just beat us, they broke us.

They used their fists, legs, batons, tasers. There were POWs who had their arms or legs broken,” one man was quoted as saying. The Ukrainian parliament’s human rights commissioner Dmytro Lubinets said Friday that he was “surprised” by the allegations against Ukrainian troops and said he had not been informed of them in advance.

On Telegram, he wrote that he wanted to “know the facts and the indisputable arguments on which the conclusions” of the UN report were based. In a separate statement on Friday, Kyiv’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs thanked the UN monitors for their work but emphasized that Ukraine “expects that the UN mission will avoid any steps that may be interpreted as equalizing the victim and the aggressor”. — AFP

Do Kwon: S Korea’s crypto ‘genius’ now disgraced fugitive

SEOUL: Once hailed as a genius, South Korean entrepreneur Do Kwon — now facing multiple criminal charges over his failed cryptocurrency — was a brash industry figure whose fame disintegrated into global notoriety. After months on the run, the 31-year-old, whose full name is Kwon Do-hyung, was arrested Thursday in Montenegro after being caught trying to catch a flight using fake Costa Rican travel documents.

He is accused of fraud over the dramatic implosion last year of his company Terraform Labs, which wiped out about \$40 billion of investors’ money and shook global crypto markets. Immediately after his arrest the United States hit him with a slew of charges over what they called a “multi-billion-dollar crypto asset securities fraud” and South Korea, where he faces separate charges, said it wants to extradite him. The cryptocurrency he created, an “algorithmic stablecoin” called Terra, was in reality a glorified Ponzi scheme, experts say. Yet as recently as March 2022, Kwon was being described in glowing South Korean media reports as a “genius” as thousands of private investors lined up to pour cash into his company.

“Kwon and his story are a product of our times,” Cho Dong-keun, an economics professor emeritus at Myongji University, told AFP. “He knew how to win the hearts of those who so desperately wanted to make a fortune in one stroke. He also knew how to exploit their anxiety and turn it into massive profits.”

Elite connections

Born in 1991, Kwon attended South Korea’s elite Daewon Foreign Language High School where, according to a book he wrote about his school days, he founded an English-language student paper and competed in various English debating championships. He went on to major in computer science at Stanford University in the US, and reportedly interned at Apple and Microsoft before returning to Asia to start his own business. In 2018, he co-founded Terraform Labs with Daniel Shin — who is linked to South Korea’s elite Samsung family through his uncle — and developed the TerraUSD and Luna currencies. He quickly rose to fame, partly thanks to Shin’s connections, successfully branding himself as a young industry luminary. TerraUSD was marketed as a “stablecoin”, a type of cryptocurrency which is typically pegged to stable assets such as the US dollar to prevent drastic price fluctuations.—AFP



PODGORICA, Montenegro: South Korean cryptocurrency entrepreneur co-founder of Terraform Labs (Terra Luna), Do Kwon (Right) is taken to court after being arrested at the airport on March 24, 2023. — AFP



New Zealand Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta walks through the New Zealand embassy in Beijing before an interview on March 25, 2023. — AFP

New Zealand raises concerns with China over rights, Taiwan

BEIJING: New Zealand has raised concerns with China over human rights abuses and growing tensions with Taiwan, Wellington’s foreign minister told AFP in an interview Saturday. Nanaia Mahuta held talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang in which they discussed “challenging issues”, she said, including human rights in Xinjiang, freedoms in Hong Kong and China’s influence in the Pacific.

“There’s a lot that we can agree on and we also discussed some of the challenging issues, working through where we don’t agree on,” she said at the New Zealand embassy in Beijing. “Human rights was an area where we did discuss some of those issues where we don’t agree on.” Mahuta this week made the first visit to China by a New Zealand foreign minister since 2018. She earlier said in a statement she had told her counterpart that the New Zealand government had “deep concerns regarding the human rights situation in Xinjiang and the erosion of rights and freedoms in Hong Kong”.

Ukraine war

In the interview, Mahuta said she had “used the opportunity to highlight New Zealand’s position on Russia’s illegal and unprovoked aggression against Ukraine”. Beijing has notably refrained from using such strong language to refer to the Russian invasion, instead accusing NATO of “fanning the flames”.

Mahuta added that New Zealand “urged China to use its influence with Russia to see the withdrawal of troops and ceasing of war”. The Saturday morning statement affirmed that Wellington “would be concerned by any provision of lethal aid [by China] in support of Russia’s illegal war”. President Xi Jinping’s visit to Moscow last week further exacerbated concerns that Beijing plans to provide material support to Russia. Mahuta said that despite close economic ties between the two

countries, there were still certain topics related to human rights on which the sides disagree. New Zealand has also called out China, its largest trading partner, over reports of the repression of the Uyghur minority in Xinjiang. “In the discussion I urged China to respond to the recommendations of the Office of the [UN] Human Rights Commissioner,” she told AFP.

Last year the commissioner’s office detailed a string of rights violations against Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in the far northwestern region, highlighting “credible” allegations of widespread torture, arbitrary detention and violations of religious and reproductive rights. Beijing vehemently rejects the charges and insists it is running vocational training centers in the region to counter extremism.

‘Pacific resilience’

New Zealand has also joined the United States in accusing China of attempting to increase its military presence in the Pacific. In Mahuta’s talks with Qin she also raised concerns “over developments in the South China Sea”, the statement said.

Mahuta later said that, while New Zealand does not take any official position on specific territorial disputes in the region, it had registered “concerns with regards to maritime and aviation access”. Beijing has significantly ramped up its presence across the wider Pacific region in recent years, including by deepening diplomatic ties, strengthening economic relationships, and bolstering military capabilities.

“We support greater Pacific resilience and that is the message that we have put to China,” said Mahuta. Another major flashpoint she raised was Taiwan, whose 23.5 million people live under constant threat of invasion by China.

Beijing claims the self-ruled democracy as part of its territory to be seized one day, by force if necessary. China’s saber-rattling has intensified in recent years under Xi, and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has deepened fears in Taiwan that China might move similarly.

Mahuta also met the director of China’s Central Foreign Affairs Commission, Wang Yi, during her trip. She said she hoped her trip would mark a resumption of “high-level” discussions between the two nations, touting a potential visit from New Zealand’s new Prime Minister Chris Hipkins. — AFP

At least 23 dead as tornado, storms rip through Mississippi

WASHINGTON: At least 23 people died as violent storms and at least one tornado ripped through the southern US state of Mississippi, tearing off roofs and flattening neighborhoods, officials and residents said Saturday.

The state’s emergency management agency said at least four people were missing and dozens were injured, while tens of thousands of people in Mississippi, Alabama and Tennessee were without power. In the hard-hit town of Rolling Fork, all that was left of an entire row of houses and buildings was scattered debris. Cars were overturned and smashed, fences were ripped up and trees uprooted, according to local television footage.

“At least 23 Mississippians were killed by last night’s violent tornados. We know that many more are injured. Search and rescue teams are still active,” Governor Tate Reeves said on Twitter. “The loss will be felt in these towns forever. Please pray for God’s hand to be over all who lost family and friends.” Confirming the death toll at 23, the emergency management agency cautioned: “Unfortunately, these numbers are expected to change.” Search and rescue operations were underway in Sharkey and Humphreys counties, about 70 miles (110 kilometers) north of the state capital Jackson.

“My city is gone,” Rolling Fork Mayor Eldridge Walker, whose town is located in Sharkey County, told CNN. “Devastation — as I look from left to right, that’s all I see.”

Town resident Shanta Howard said residents had to help remove the dead from the wreckage of their homes. “That is very disturbing, actually seeing people losing their lives over bad weather like this,” she told ABC affiliate WAPT.

‘Completely gone’

Woodrow Johnson, a local official in Humphreys County, told CNN his wife woke him up and they heard what sounded like a train. He said his home was destroyed. “It was a very scary thing,” Johnson said, adding his neighbor’s house, a trailer, was “completely gone.”

The National Weather Service warned residents that as clean-up operations continue, “dangers remain even after the storms move on.” A local tornado watch expired in the early hours of Saturday, meteorologists said. More thunderstorms were expected, but they were not forecast to be severe. Malary White, a spokeswoman for the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, said damage assessments would not be possible until officials could do a complete survey in the daylight. “Our main priority right now, especially for the local first responders, it’s life safety and accounting for the people and making sure they are safe,” she told CBS News affiliate WJTV.

In Rolling Fork, Walker said several people were rescued from the wreckage of their homes and taken to hospital for treatment. “A lot of families are hurting. This community is in a situation that we never expected,” he told CNN. “Houses that are torn up can be replaced but we can’t replace a life.” — AFP

Peru shaken by woman burned alive by boyfriend

LIMA, Peru: A woman burned alive in a town square by her jilted ex-boyfriend died following five days of agony, Peru’s women’s minister said Friday, slamming police for their slow response.

Katherine Gomez, 18, was admitted to hospital last Saturday suffering from burns to 60 percent of her body. “She fought for her life but, unfortunately, the amount of damage she suffered made it impossible for doctors to save her life and they told us she has died,” Minister Nancy Tolentino told RPP radio station.

The grim case has shocked Peruvians. According to police, the perpetrator was a 19-year-old Venezuelan who fled the scene after dousing Gomez with petrol and setting her alight in a central square in Lima. Just days earlier, Gomez had decided to end their relationship. Tolentino criticized police for only issuing an arrest warrant for the suspect, identified as Sergio Tarache Parra, on Thursday, five days after the deadly crime.

“Police promised me they would do everything possible to find him,” said Tolentino. She also urged young women not to meet their violent exes alone because “it is risky.” She warned them to neither accept “compromises nor relationships with a person who does not respect you, who violates your rights.” Peru, a country of 33 million, recorded 136 femicides in 2022, a similar number to the two previous years. — AFP

Business

SUNDAY, MARCH 26, 2023

Boursa Kuwait's AGM approves cash dividend of over KD 17 million for 2022

Cash dividends to be distributed to shareholders on April 12

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait Securities Company (KPSC) held its Annual General Assembly meeting for the year ended 31 December 2022 on March 23, 2023 at the Boursa Kuwait building. The board of directors' recommendation to distribute cash dividends of 85 fils per share was approved, amounting to KD 17,065,939 (Seventeen million, sixty-five thousand, nine hundred and thirty-nine Kuwaiti dinars). Shareholders registered by the end of the record date of April 9, 2023 will receive their share dividends by the end of April 12, 2023, the company's scheduled payment date.

The board of directors' report, the independent auditor's report and the consolidated financial statements for the fiscal year ended on 31 December 2022 were all approved, as were the corporate governance and audit committee reports and the remunerations and benefits report for BOD members.

The meeting was chaired by Chairman Hamad Mishari Al-Humaidhi, who welcomed the esteemed shareholders then read the reports issued by the Kuwait Clearing Company regarding the quorum of attendance, which came in at 68.92 percent as well as the items on the agenda.

Shareholders agreed to grant the board of directors' authorization to buy or sell the company's shares, provided they do not exceed 10 percent, in accordance with the provisions of Law No 7 of 2010 and its executive regulations and amendments. Shareholders also discussed and approved the related parties' transaction report for 2022 and the related parties' transactions, which are proposed to be conducted during the upcoming 2023 financial year. Finally, the reappointment of Badr Adel Salem Al-Abduljader from Ernst & Young (Al-Aiban, Al-Osaimi & Partners) as the auditor for the fiscal year ending on 31 December 2023 was also approved.

Boursa Kuwait Chairman Hamad Mishari Al-Humaidhi commented on the results, stating: "Boursa Kuwait delivered exceptional financial results in 2022, with an increase in profit by 13.3 percent from 2021, from KD 15.9 million to KD 18 million. The Group's total assets came in at approximately KD 119.6 million in 2022, which is an 8.3 percent increase versus the 2021 total of KD 110.4 million, while shareholders' equity attributable to equity holders of the parent company increased from KD 60.6 million as of 31 December 2021, to KD 65.5 million as of 31 December 2022, an increase of approximately 8.1 percent."

Al-Humaidhi continued, "Boursa Kuwait maintained its proactive approach to drive strategic sustainability progress in line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and our Corporate Sustainability pillars – Community and Environment – while leveraging our resources, reputation and relationships to support all our valued stakeholders throughout the year."

Al-Humaidhi extended his sincerest gratitude to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on behalf of Boursa Kuwait and its Board of Directors, for their continued support to the stability of Kuwait's economy and development.

He concluded by thanking the shareholders for their continuous trust in Boursa Kuwait, and the Capital Markets Authority, the Kuwait Clearing Company, and all participants in the Kuwaiti capital market for their efforts in promoting Kuwait's position as a leading regional market and Kuwait as a prominent destination for international investment.

The Boursa Kuwait Chairman also thanked his fellow board members and executive management for their diligence and dedication in contributing to the realization of the company's strategy and goals, which resulted in the notable improvement



KUWAIT: Hamad Mishari Al-Humaidhi (second from right) and Mohammed Saud Al-Osaimi (second left) during the general assembly meeting of Boursa Kuwait.

Cash dividends to be distributed to the company's registered shareholders by the end of the record date of April 9

Announcement of Dividend Distribution

Boursa Kuwait Securities Company (KPSC) is pleased to announce the timeline for the distribution of cash dividends for the year ended December 31, 2022. Shareholders registered on the company's records at the end of the Record Date will be entitled to receive 85 fils per share, as discussed at the Annual General Assembly and outlined below:

Timetable	Date	Description
Cum-Dividend Date	Tuesday 04/04/2023	The last day to purchase the share in order for the shareholder to be entitled to the dividends
Ex-Dividend Date	Wednesday 05/04/2023	The first day on which the share is traded without cash dividend
Record Date	Sunday 09/04/2023	The day that the company determines the shareholders entitled to receive dividends, which is based on the company's register at the end of that day
Payment Date	Wednesday 12/04/2023	The day on which dividends are paid

Please note that cash dividends will be deposited in the shareholders' bank accounts through the automated payment service at the Kuwait Clearing Company.

Shareholders not subscribed to the service can do so by visiting any local or foreign bank branch in Kuwait.



Hamad Mishari Al-Humaidhi



Mohammed Saud Al-Osaimi

exchange's efforts to promoting the Kuwaiti capital market and its unique investment opportunities to the worldwide investment community, adding that the company organized two Corporate Days with HSBC and EFG Hermes respectively, which saw the participation of 15 listed companies, including Boursa Kuwait. A total of over 300 meetings between the listed companies and over 130 representatives from world-renowned asset management firms were conducted over the course of the two events. The bourse also participated in the 16th Annual EFG Hermes one-on-one conference, meeting with 20 international asset management firms and investment companies.

Al-Osaimi concluded his statement by thanking the board of directors for their unwavering support of the company's strategy and operations, as well as the executive management team and every company employee, who have played significant roles to advance the development of the market. He also thanked the Capital Markets Authority, Kuwait Clearing Company, and brokerage firms whose expertise, knowledge and professionalism are reflected in every aspect of the successful development of Kuwait's capital market.

Al-Osaimi reiterated the company's commitment to modernize the Kuwaiti capital market by expanding its offerings and improving market efficiency, enhancing access and reinforcing transparency and governance as well as increasing liquidity and transparency, while fortifying investor confidence as part of the company's efforts to enhance the market and offer investors more opportunities to profit.

Since its inception, Boursa Kuwait has worked diligently to create a thriving capital market that attracts local and foreign investors through a broad spectrum of new products and services, infrastructure upgrades, and market reform initiatives, as part of its multi-phase market development plans.

The company was fully privatized in 2019, the first government entity in the country to successfully undergo the process, bringing about greater levels of efficiency. Boursa Kuwait also self-listed in September 2020 and has made great strides in sustaining its operations and business continuity in the face of uncertainties and challenges.

Over the past six years, the company has rolled out numerous market reforms and new initiatives as part of its comprehensive multi-phase market development (MID) plans. The company also showcases some of the standout listed companies and the investment opportunities that reside in the Kuwaiti capital market through its series of roadshows and corporate days, putting these companies in touch with some of the world's leading investment firms and financial institutions and highlighting their financial health and business strategies and outlooks, in an effort to help investors gain an in-depth understanding of the benefits and opportunities of investing in Kuwaiti companies.

Gordon Moore, titan of Silicon Valley, dies at 94

WASHINGTON: Gordon Moore, a pioneer in the microprocessor industry and a cofounder of Intel, which at one time was the world's largest semiconductor maker, died on Friday at the age of 94, Intel said. Moore was a giant in the technological transformation of the modern age, helping companies bring ever more powerful chips to smaller and smaller computers.

An engineer by training, he cofounded Intel in July 1968, eventually serving as president, chief executive and chairman of the board. Intel, based in Santa Clara, California, said Moore died "surrounded by family at his home in Hawaii." In its early days, Intel was known for continuous innovation, growing to become one of the biggest, most important companies in technology.

In an article in 1965, Moore first coined a theory that later became known as "Moore's Law." It stated that integrated circuits would essentially double in power every year. He later revised the law to say the doubling would occur every two years.

The axiom held true for decades and became syn-

onymous with the rapid rate of technological change in the modern world. "All I was trying to do was get that message across, that by putting more and more stuff on a chip we were going to make all electronics cheaper," Moore said in a 2008 interview.

After earning his PhD from CalTech, Moore and a colleague in 1957 joined Fairchild Semiconductor Laboratory, one of the earliest firms to manufacture commercially viable transistors and integrated circuits. As the company grew, the seeds were planted for the transformation of the peninsula of land south of San Francisco into what is now known as Silicon Valley.

Moore and longtime colleague Robert Noyce struck out on their own in 1968, bringing along a third, Andy Grove, who would become a future Intel CEO. Moore retired from Intel in 2006.

Over his lifetime, Moore donated more than \$5.1 billion to charitable causes through the foundation he set up with his wife of 72 years, Betty. "Though he never aspired to be a household name, Gordon's vision and his life's work enabled the phenomenal innovation and technological developments that shape our everyday lives," said Harvey Fineberg, president of the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation.

Leaders of Intel heaped tribute on Moore. "He was instrumental in revealing the power of transistors, and inspired technologists and entrepreneurs across the decades," said Intel chief executive Pat Gelsinger. "He leaves behind a legacy that changed



This handout from Intel Corporation taken in 2015 and released on March 24, 2023 shows Gordon Moore being interviewed during 50th anniversary ceremonies of Moore's Law. —AFP

the lives of every person on the planet. His memory will live on," Gelsinger added on Twitter.

Google CEO Sundar Pichai said in a tweet that Moore's vision "inspired so many of us to pursue technology," while Apple CEO Tim Cook called him "one of Silicon Valley's founding fathers." "All of us who followed owe him a debt of gratitude," Cook said on Twitter. "May he rest in peace." — AFP

US manufactured goods orders drop in February

WASHINGTON: Orders of big-ticket manufactured items ticked down in February on a slump in defense aircraft and parts, according to US government data released Friday. Durable goods orders dipped 1 percent last month to \$268.4 billion, said the Commerce Department, less than January's fall but defying analyst expectations of a monthly increase instead. "Excluding transportation, new orders were virtually unchanged," said the department in a statement, adding that orders of transportation equipment have been down for three of the last four months.

Orders of defense aircraft and parts fell 11.1 percent, while those of computers and related products edged down 2.7 percent. Meanwhile, orders of non-defense aircraft and parts dropped 6.6 percent. Civilian aircraft figures often dominate swings in orders and "have trended higher over the past couple of years as air travel has recovered post-COVID," Ian Shepherdson, chief economist of Pantheon Macroeconomics, wrote in a recent report. "That rebound now looks to have run its course, however," Shepherdson said, adding that airline passenger volumes returned to 2019 levels at the end of last year and have leveled off over the past couple months. — AFP

Business

Zain holds week-long initiative to promote sustainability strategy

Featured seminars, workshops, documentary screenings and visits to natural reserves



KUWAIT: Eaman Al-Roudhan outlines Zain's sustainable development strategy.

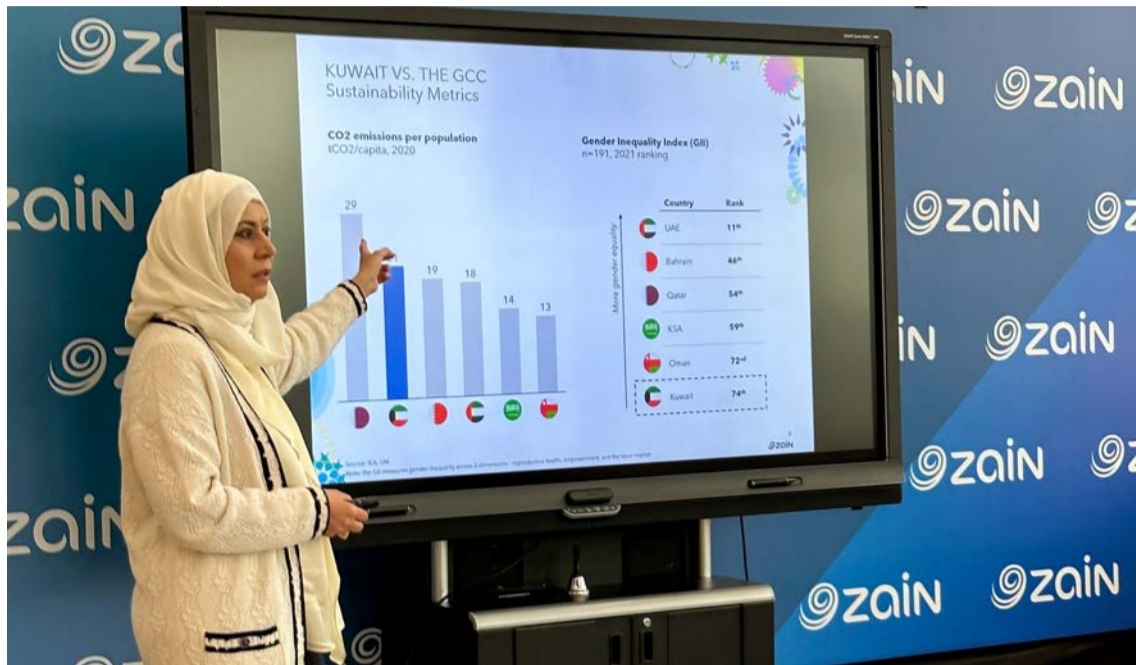
KUWAIT: Zain, Kuwait's leading digital service provider, announced the successful conclusion of Sustainability Week, a week-long internal awareness initiative that targeted employees and featured a wide range of interactive programs aimed at promoting the company's sustainability strategy. Zain is committed to building a comprehensive program that adapts the company's operational processes to align with its sustainable development goals. The company has made addressing climate change one of the four pillars of its corporate sustainability strategy and is dedicated to reducing its overall energy consumption and emissions across its entire value chain, enhancing the environmental performance of its workplaces, and promoting environmental care. Sustainability Week targeted Zain employees across the company's departments and aimed at promoting the principles of its sustainability strategy. The initiative featured various interactive programs and activities that ran for a week, including extensive seminars, discussion panels, workshops, documentary film screenings, and field visits to parks and natural

Company committed to building comprehensive program that adapts operational processes to align with its sustainable development strategy



Zain employees at Al-Shagaya Solar Farm.

reserves. The programs featured participation from both employees and executive management teams.



Initiative featured field visits to natural reserves.

The initiative kicked off with a welcoming session by CEO Eaman Al-Roudhan, where she discussed

and outlined the company's strategic plans to achieve sustainable development goals, as well as the most crucial steps taken to achieve such goals. The week-long program also featured workshops, interactive sessions, field visits to Al-Abdali and Al-Jahra natural reserves, and a visit to Al-Shagaya Solar Farm.

Sustainability Week aimed at promoting key sustainability pillars and increase employee awareness to shed more light on the role every employee plays in achieving the company's sustainable development goals. The initiative gave employees an opportunity to learn more about sustainability as a concept as well as to participate in activities with their colleagues outside of the office environment.

Zain has established short and medium-term targets to lower its entire carbon footprint and aims to achieve net zero by 2050 to minimize its negative environmental effects. The company continues to conduct extensive research on cutting-edge technologies such as 5.5G, artificial intelligence, and renewable energy to reduce the ICT infrastructure's carbon footprint.

Deutsche Bank shares plunge, fuelling fears

FRANKFURT: Shares in Deutsche Bank fell heavily on Friday on the lender's surging cost of default cover, reigniting fears about a widening banking sector crisis. Germany's biggest lender dropped more than 14 percent on the Frankfurt Stock Exchange in early trade, before clawing back ground to close 8.5 percent lower, at 8.54 euros.

The cost of insuring the bank's debt against a risk of defaulting—so-called credit default swaps—has surged as investors fret about the banking sector's health. Long-troubled Deutsche Bank has become the focus of investor concerns after the collapse of three regional US lenders and the enforced takeover of Credit Suisse by rival UBS triggered market turmoil earlier this month.

Deutsche's cross-town rival Commerzbank also fared poorly, dropping 8.5 percent in early trade, before winning back ground to close 5.45 percent off at

8.88 euros. The German banks led falls among lenders across Europe, with Societe Generale and BNP Paribas in Paris, and several banks in London among those tumbling. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz however offered reassurances about Deutsche Bank, saying the lender had "modernized and organized the way it works. It's a very profitable bank. There is no reason to be concerned". Speaking in Brussels after a summit of EU leaders, he also said the European banking system was "stable", with strict rules and regulations. Deutsche Bank also said Friday it would redeem \$1.5 billion in tier 2 bonds early—such a move is normally aimed at boosting confidence in a bank, although its shares plunged regardless. The bank was hit by a string of problems linked to its pre-2008 crisis attempts to compete with Wall Street investment banking giants.

But it launched a major restructuring, which involved thousands of job cuts and a greater focus on Europe, and has returned to financial health—last year, it booked its highest annual profit since 2007. Tumbling bank stocks dragged down markets across Europe Friday. Contagion fears re-emerged after central banks pushed on with monetary tightening as they focused on fighting inflation—even though the troubles in the banking sector have been linked to their rate hikes.

EU leaders and the head of the European Central

Bank scrambled on Friday to reassure the markets that the eurozone banking sector is resilient and able to withstand shocks, after European bank shares plunged. ECB chief Christine Lagarde told EU leaders the single currency area's banking sector was "strong", an EU official said, during a euro area leaders' summit in Brussels. "The euro area banking sector is resilient because it has strong capital and liquidity positions," the official quoted Lagarde as saying.

"The euro area banking sector is strong because we have applied the regulatory reforms agreed internationally after the (2008) global financial crisis to all of them," she also reportedly told the leaders of the 27-member bloc. The leaders of the EU's biggest economies also insisted on the banking system's good health. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said the European banking system is "stable" while French President Emmanuel Macron said the bloc's banks were the "most solid".

"It paid off that we had strict rules and regulations in the past years, the banking system is stable in Europe," Scholz said after the summit. Scholz added there was no reason to worry about Deutsche Bank.

"Deutsche Bank has modernized and organized the way it works. It's a very profitable bank. There is no reason to be concerned," Scholz told reporters after



the summit. Macron echoed these assurances: "European banks' fundamentals are solid. The eurozone is the zone where the banks are the strongest." A plan to complete the EU's long delayed banking union has long been delayed but has gained greater urgency amid the recent turbulence in the markets.

"The recent developments remind us how important it has been to continuously improve these regulatory standards," the ECB chief said. Lagarde said the bloc needed to progress on completing the banking union and added that further work was also necessary to create truly European capital markets. "There is no trade-off between price stability and financial stability. Our toolbox enables us to address risks to both," she said during the meeting. — AFP

AD Ports launches Ro-Ro shipping service to link Kuwait

ABU DHABI: AD Ports Group on Saturday announced the launch of a new direct shipping service dedicated to Ro-Ro, between UAE's Khalifa Port and Kuwait's Shuwaikh Port. The new service aims to improve commercial connectivity and facilitates trade with Kuwait. Commenting on the launch of the new shipping service, Captain Ammar Mubarak Al Shaiba, Acting CEO of the Maritime Cluster and SA-

FEEN Group, AD Ports Group said: "As the region's premier facilitator of logistics, industry, and trade, AD Ports Group is committed to utilizing its integrated logistics capabilities to meet customers' requirements, help grow their businesses, and facilitate their access to their target markets with competitive rates and reduced time through Khalifa Port, the strategic gateway to Abu Dhabi."

The long-standing bilateral trade ties enjoyed between the two GCC countries in recent years saw a rapid growth in several key commodity markets. During 2022, the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Centre's preliminary data shows an increase in non-oil trade exchange between the two countries estimated at AED 43.5 billion, compared to AED 38.5 billion in 2021, recording 13 percent growth.



Saudi allocates over \$80bn for water projects

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia allocated more than \$80 billion for the implementation of hundreds of water projects over the coming years. The move is part of the government's efforts to achieve equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water.

Abdulaziz Al-Shaibani, vice minister of environment, water and agriculture, said 'Vision 2030' comes in line with the goals of sustainable development as well as the development of the public sector, to be more flexible and sustainable, including the water sector. The Kingdom adopted the National Water Strategy 2030 in 2018, to reach a sustainable water sector that develops and preserves water resources, protects the environment, and provides safe supply, high quality, and efficient services.

The Kingdom is working to deliver sanitation services to all citizens and increase the percentage of population benefiting from the sanitation services network from 54 percent in 2017 to more than 95% by 2030. —Argaam

Bank shares sink as contagion fears return

NEW YORK: Bank shares tumbled Friday, jolting stock markets as fears about the health of the financial sector resurfaced with Deutsche Bank now in the eye of the storm. Markets had rallied earlier this week after financial authorities took steps aimed at preventing contagion from the collapse of US regional lenders this month. But sentiment soured following decisions by central banks in the United States, Britain and Switzerland to hike interest rates despite concerns about the impact of the monetary tightening on banks.

Fears of contagion led to the takeover of embattled Swiss bank Credit Suisse by domestic rival UBS on Sunday. The focus has now turned to another major European lender, Deutsche Bank, whose shares nosedived by as much as 14 percent on Friday, as the cost of insuring against the bank defaulting on its debt spiked. It closed 8.5 percent lower.

The German lender returned to financial health

last year following a major restructuring after years of problems. European officials lined up to reassure the markets. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said after a European Union summit that "there is no reason to be concerned" about Deutsche Bank as the lender is "very profitable." European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde told EU leaders that the single currency area's banking sector is "resilient because it has strong capital and liquidity positions," according to an EU official.

After markets closed on Friday, US President Joe Biden sought to reassure investors, saying banks are "in pretty good shape" following recent financial sector turmoil. "I think it's going to take a little while for things to just calm down, but I don't see anything on the horizon that is about to explode," he told a news conference in a visit to Ottawa. But City Index analyst Fiona Cincotta told AFP that the selloff in bank shares has highlighted "just how fragile sentiment is towards the sector." "As central banks continued hiking rates this week, the outlook is looking increasingly shaky," she said.

European stock markets finished another turbulent week sharply lower, with London down 1.3 percent while Frankfurt and Paris both shed around 1.7 percent. Wall Street's three main indices opened lower but shook off gloomy banking news from Europe by day's end. But shares in US financial giant JPMorgan

Chase were down 1.5 percent while Citigroup slipped 0.8 percent. In Paris, Societe Generale sank more than six percent and BNP Paribas dropped more than five percent. UK bank Standard Chartered also tanked by more than six percent in London while Barclays was down around four percent.

Oil prices slide

Concerns that the turmoil could trigger a recession sent oil prices sliding more than two percent. Share prices in energy majors including BP, Shell and TotalEnergies also slumped. Global markets were slammed this month by the collapse of three regional US lenders, notably Silicon Valley Bank, which had lost \$1.8 billion in the sale of a bond portfolio whose value dropped due to the higher interest rates.

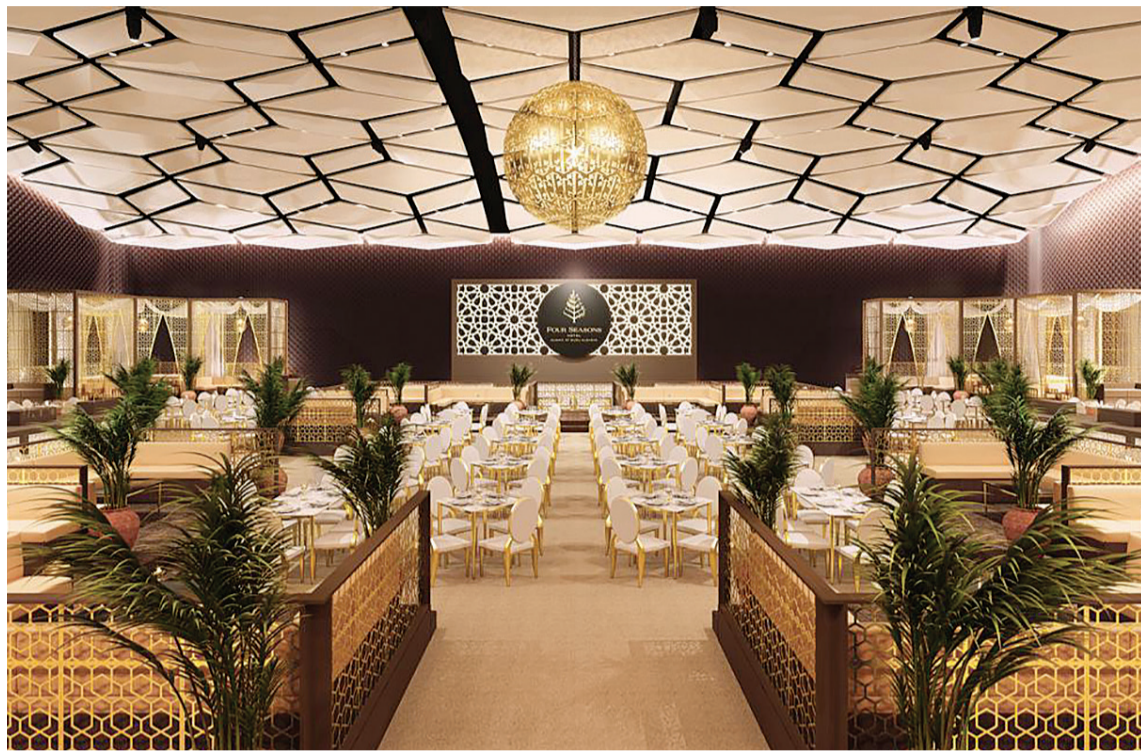
US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen chaired a meeting of financial regulators on Friday, who heard a presentation from New York Federal Reserve staff on market developments, the Treasury Department said in a statement. The Financial Stability Oversight Council "discussed current conditions in the banking sector and noted that while some institutions have come under stress, the US banking system remains sound and resilient," the department added.

But "contagion fears are not yet going away," said Fitch analyst Neil Wilson. "It only stops once people stop asking who's next." — AFP

Business

Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya in collaboration with Al Mulla Automotive

Embrace the spirit of Ramadan with spectacular celebrations



KUWAIT: This Ramadan, Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya welcomes guests to treasure the special traditions of the Holy Month with heart-warming celebrations designed to unite family and friends in the spirit of togetherness. Interweaving exquisite cuisine, live music, and signature Four Seasons hospitality, the inspirational event promises a spellbinding atmosphere in which to share the joys of Ramadan.

“We’re honored to welcome guests to celebrate the holy month of Ramadan with us here at Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait,” says General Manager Martin Kipping. “Uniting exceptional experiences with luxurious hospitality and heartfelt connection, this is a moment to create cherished memories in truly unforgettable style.”

Recently becoming the first ever Hotel in the city to achieve a coveted Forbes Five-Star rating, Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait offers a beautifully curated setting in which to celebrate. The Ramadan events take place in the opulent surrounds of the Jawaher

Tent, a luxurious dining destination with seating for up to 600 guests. Created by a global team of expert interior designers, this breath-taking space showcases Arabian craftsmanship and an elegant atmosphere for a range of experiences, from premium seating in the VIP Lounge to six privately partitioned exclusive majlis areas.

During the holy month of Ramadan celebrations at the Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait, Al Mulla Motors Company, a member of Al Mulla Group and the sole authorized distributor of Mitsubishi vehicles in Kuwait since 1972, will display the all-new Mitsubishi Outlander 2023 at the main entrance of the hotel, giving visitors the opportunity to discover all specifications, features and performance of this luxurious car.

Al Mulla Auto Co, a member of Al Mulla Group and the sole authorized distributor of ACURA will also showcase at the same time the MDX Type S, which excels in road driving experience, and combines dazzling performance with luxury, a combi-

nation that every family desires. All fans of ACURA cars and guests of Four Seasons hotel will have the opportunity to discover the latest vehicle available at the hotel during the holy month of Ramadan.

A creative culinary adventure awaits guests as they savor the joyful tradition of breaking the fast. Lavish iftar meals and sumptuous ghabga spreads, prepared by Executive Chef Thierry Papillier, feature local favorite dishes of jareesh, harees and machboos, alongside dazzling Asian flavors from Sintocho and mouth-watering Italian favorites from Dai Forni, as well as many traditional Middle Eastern and Arabic dishes. A delicious array of finely crafted desserts and sweet treats including a free-flowing chocolate fountain round off the gastronomic delights and all the traditional Arabic sweets, alongside an elegant shisha area in which to relax and unwind late into the night.

Ghabga meals are accompanied by live performances from traditional musicians, offering a magical ambience and an authentic taste of Kuwait’s rich

culture. A dedicated Kids’ Corner with a program of special activities cater to little ones until midnight, while Gergean celebrations will also extend to the main tent for young and old to share in together.

Available for the first three days of Eid, The Sky 21 Brunch—available for lunch and dinner—unites flavors from the East and West as Sintocho and Dai Forni join hands to create a dazzling feast, complete with live music and DJ, interactive cooking stations and spectacular 21st floor views. Extended celebrations across the rest of the Hotel include unique sweet treats in Al-Soor Lounge, where sumptuous selections of dates and chocolate boxes make the perfect Ramadan gift to share with friends and family. Iftar will be served daily from sunset until 8.30 pm, with rates starting at KD 25 per person, including full buffet access and hot and cold beverages. Ghabga is available from 9.30 pm until 2 am, including live entertainment. Diners who wish to entertain in their own private space can choose from special majlis or VIP Lounge packages for up to five people.



Deliveroo to raise food box donations throughout Ramadan

KUWAIT: Driven by its deep-rooted belief in the importance of giving back to our local communities, Deliveroo is extending its partnership with Food Box to raise food box donations via the Deliveroo app throughout Ramadan. The initiative comes as part of Deliveroo’s goal of fighting hunger across Kuwait and as part of the platform’s global Full Life campaign.

For the second year in a row, customers in Kuwait will be able to donate food boxes containing basic foods and essential ingredients through the Deliveroo app. The donations raised will be distributed with the help of Deliveroo and a local charity to families in need. Alongside fundraising through the app, Deliveroo riders and employees will also lend their efforts to the distribution process and play a vital role in raising awareness about the campaign, its goals, and how to get involved.

Seham Al-Husaini, General Manager at Deliveroo, said: “At Deliveroo, we want to be a force for good in the communities in which we operate. I am pleased we are extending our partnership with Food Box to support disadvantaged families and people in need as of the holy month. With our fantastic customers, restaurant and grocery partners, and riders by our side, we can’t wait to achieve our donation goal and play our part in helping to tackle food insecurity.”

Mohammad Al-Salem, from Food Box said: “We could not be more excited to extend our partnership with Deliveroo. By joining forces, we hope to contribute to granting food security to local families, and we encourage everyone to donate a food relief box to those in need during Ramadan. We look forward to building on Deliveroo’s Full Life campaign’s success and momentum, and we can’t wait to help Deliveroo achieve their humanitarian goal. Deliveroo’s Full Life campaign allows customers to donate food relief boxes from Food Box on the Deliveroo app from 26 March onwards. All food boxes will then be delivered through a local charity, whose members will assist in their distribution to communities in need. A variety of food boxes will be available for purchase starting from KD 7 giving buyers the option to choose Food Box relief boxes to suit their budgets and making it easier for everyone to give back.

Deliveroo welcomes support from all customers, noting that each curated box will include essential food ingredients such as rice, wheat, sugar, oils, canned food, pasta, lentils, and other staples.

Gulf Bank launches GB Fit Ramadan sport event at Al-Shaheed Park

KUWAIT: As part of its ongoing initiatives to consolidate the principles of social sustainability and following the great turnout for GB Fit at 360 Mall last Ramadan, Gulf Bank is launching the second edition of GB Fit activities this year. The event will feature special sport activities at Al-Shaheed Park, in collaboration with Alyasra Wellness, from March 27 to April 1, 2023.

Sport competitions will be held daily through different exercises in Al-Shaheed Park, where participants will be equipped with sports equipment and specialized trainers. Participants can register through Technogym’s application or by going directly to Al-Shaheed Park.

And based on the bank’s keenness to communicate with the public and its customers on various occasions, a virtual competition will also be held throughout the holy month of Ramadan on the Tech-

EU, Germany reach deal on fossil fuel car phaseout plan

BRUSSELS: The European Union and Germany on Saturday said they had struck a deal after a dispute over the planned phaseout by 2035 of the sale of cars using fossil fuels. A landmark deal to prohibit new sales of fossil fuel cars from 2035 is key to the bloc’s ambitious plan to become a “climate-neutral” economy by 2050, with net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. But in an unprecedented move earlier this month, leading car producer Germany blocked the agreement at the last minute after it had already been approved under the traditional EU legislative process.

Berlin demanded that Brussels provide assurances the law would allow the sales of new cars with combustion engines that run on synthetic fuels, the focus of the breakthrough announced on Saturday.

“We have found an agreement with Germany on the future use of e-fuels in cars,” EU environment commissioner Frans Timmermans said on Twitter. “We will work now on getting the CO2-standards for cars regulation adopted as soon as possible.”

German Transport Minister Volker Wissing said on Twitter that vehicles with combustion engines could

continue to be registered after 2035 if they only use fuels that are neutral in their CO2 emissions. Weeks-long negotiations between the European Commission and Germany to break the impasse centered on Berlin’s desire for a stronger commitment on synthetic fuels than that presented in the initial text. The synthetic fuels Germany wanted an exemption for are still under development and produced using low-carbon electricity. The technology is unproven, but German manufacturers hope it will lead to the extended use of combustion engines.

Environmental NGOs have disputed the value of synthetic fuels in the automotive sector’s transition towards clean energy sources, saying they are too expensive, polluting and energy-intensive. Some industry experts have expressed doubt over whether vehicles powered by synthetic fuels can compete in a market against electric cars that are expected to become cheaper over time. Audi boss Markus Duesmann told the Der Spiegel weekly that synthetic fuels “will not play an important role in the medium-term future of passenger cars,” even if they prove to be helpful in the green transition.

For her part, the Brand Manager at Alyasra Wellness, Fatima Buhaimed said: “We are delighted to collaborate with Gulf Bank in organizing virtual Technogym activities throughout the month of Ramadan, and to be part of the six-day GB Fit event at Al-Shaheed Park. Our aim is to help people shift to-

wards a healthier lifestyle by staying active.”

Gulf Bank’s vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee’s role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience. Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining robust developments in sustainability at environmental, social and governance levels through diverse sustainability initiatives, strategically selected to benefit the Bank both internally and externally. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 “New Kuwait” and works with various parties to achieve it.

Some observers saw domestic political calculations behind Germany’s initial move to block the deal, which ruffled the feathers of some of Berlin’s EU partners. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz’s Social Democrats form a coalition government with the Greens and the liberal FDP party, which initiated the move. The FDP, which has lost five regional elections in a row, is struggling in national polling and hoped to gain the support of voters hostile to a ban on combustion engines.

Scholz was seen as acting to maintain the unity of the coalition by aligning with the FDP position against the Greens. Fellow major car manufacturer Italy, Poland and Hungary joined Germany in a small alliance against the combustion engine ban. The EU aims to reduce CO2 emissions from new vehicles to zero, with the planned combustion engine plan effectively imposing electric vehicles from the middle of the next decade. The industry has anticipated the new EU rules by massively investing in electric vehicles in recent years. —AFP

Unlike western companies that hurried to disengage from Russia after the attack, Leroy Merlin defiantly resisted calls to leave the country, saying it owed it to customers to keep them supplied and to local staff to keep them in work. Russia is Leroy Merlin’s biggest foreign market with 113 stores, and contributes around 20 percent to the company’s overall revenues. But Ukraine heaped scorn on the retailer for the stance, accusing it of sponsoring Russia’s war effort.

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DORTMUND: In this file photo taken on May 25, 2020 used cars of German car maker Volkswagen (VW) are for sale at a car dealer in Dortmund, western Germany. —AFP

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Business

‘Bankee program’ promotes financial literacy among students: Al-Bahar

Students, teachers and parents demonstrate remarkable involvement

- Al-Bahar: We are extremely proud of having a bright rising generation that represents a genuine investment in Kuwait's future
- We are thrilled with the Bankee program's outstanding achievement in boosting financial literacy among school students

- This initiative demonstrates our ongoing commitment to supporting the next generation in preparing for the future
- Bankee is our latest initiative to assist young individuals in developing their financial literacy and broadening their access to financial services



Al-Bahar and Sumayah Al-Jassem during the activities.



KUWAIT: Teachers, students and parents pose for a group photo.

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) organized a visit to Mohammad Al-Shayji Elementary School as part of the executive management's tour to follow up on the pilot phase of "Bankee" financial literacy program for government and private school students, which was launched in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority "Nazaha".

Shaikha Al-Bahar, NBK Deputy Group CEO, Ghanem Al-Sulaimani, Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Development and Activities at the Ministry of Education, Yasmine Al-Sharhan, Observer of Cooperation with Civil Society Organizations at "Nazaha", Sumayah Al-Jassem, Founder, Managing Director at Creative Confidence, were among the visitors.

A vast number of parents of participating students attended the visit and discussed the program's benefits with their children. They were delighted to see significant improvements in their children's financial behavior and knowledge. Additionally, they engaged in discussions with teachers about the program's impact on the students.

During the visit, participants reviewed all the details of implementing the "Bankee" program, from the virtual bank experience that allows students to have a financial account in which they can trade using the "Banks" virtual currency, and how students receive bonuses as a result of accumulating the program's currency in their accounts. They also visited the classrooms to witness how the program has become part of students' daily lives and how they were rewarded for their academic excellence and positive behavior.

Shaikha Al-Bahar remarked, "We are delighted with the tremendous success of the Bankee program, representing our latest efforts to foster financial inclusion and enhance financial literacy among students and youth."

"The students' interactions we witnessed today demonstrate that Kuwait has a promising generation with a passion for knowledge from an early age. We should all take pride in this generation, as they represent a significant investment in the future of Kuwait," she added.

According to Al-Bahar, sponsoring Bankee pro-



Al-Bahar and Ghanem Al-Sulaimani while listening to an explanation from the students about the program.



Al-Bahar and Ghanem Al-Sulaimani listen to the teachers' explanation about the students' interaction during the program.

gram aligns with NBK's broader objective of promoting financial inclusion among all segments of society. "We are committed to contributing to this cause by educating young individuals on prudent financial management and helping them establish a strong financial foundation that will serve them throughout their lives," Al-Bahar noted.

"We believe that this initiatives introduced by the private sector in collaboration with schools and educational institutions, to provide the youth with the knowledge and skills needed to manage their finances positively impact their lives and contribute to the creation of a more financially inclusive society," Al-Bahar further explained.

"The process of financial education is a continuous learning journey, and the earlier it begins the more effective and beneficial it becomes. Starting financial education at a young age sets individuals on the right path towards achieving their goals related to investment, savings, entrepreneurship, and even planning for retirement," Al-Bahar confirmed.

"NBK firmly believes that the youth are the future leaders of our nation, and we are dedicated to playing an active role in their development journey by teaching them the importance of wise financial management," she added.

Highlighting the bank's commitment to fulfilling its national obligations and responsibilities, Al-Bahar emphasized that NBK continues to utilize its unique capabilities and extensive financial knowledge to actively promote awareness of financial stability and independence among the current generation of Kuwaiti youth. She also emphasized that high-quality education leads to the long-term well-being of individuals, families, and societies. Furthermore, improved financial literacy is the foundation for personal and national prosperity.

The "Bankee" program was introduced in selected Kuwaiti schools by NBK in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, and Kuwait Anti-corruption Authority (Nazaha). The program's goal is to enhance financial literacy among students by introducing them to financial culture through prac-

tical and engaging experiential methods.

"Bankee" is the first-of-its-kind program in Kuwait, created by a team of young trainees under NBK's sponsorship to explore innovative solutions that promote sustainable financial literacy among society members.

The program's primary goal is to introduce students to core financial concepts such as earning, spending, saving, and financial responsibilities. This objective is achieved by employing applied learning and gamification techniques to simulate a real-world economy within the classroom.

The pilot phase will span the entire 2022/2023 academic year, with nine schools from various governorates (for boys and girls), including six government and three private schools. The primary objective of this phase is to evaluate the program's implementation settings by engaging teachers and students in introductory workshops to assess, enhance, and modify implementation features to align with the existing educational curriculum.



DHAMAN launches a visit program for diplomatic corps

KUWAIT: Health Assurance Hospitals Company (DHAMAN) organized a tour in DHAMAN Hospital in Ahmadi governorate for heads and members of the diplomatic and consular corps in Arab and foreign embassies in Kuwait, as part of the institutional communication program for members of the diplomatic corps, in preparation for the start of operations of the company and the transfer of Article 18 beneficiaries and their families from the Ministry of Health to the integrated health assurance network.

The visiting diplomatic delegations were received by DHAMAN CEO, Thamer Arab, and a number of members of the executive management; the delegations included Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Osama Shaltout, the Chargé d'Affaires of the Embassy of the Republic of the

Philippines, Jose Cabrera, and the Chargé d'Affaires of the Embassy of the State of Bangladesh, Muhammad Abu Al-Hussein, and other members of the embassy of the United States of America and the Spanish Republic and others.

In a press release, DHAMAN stated that the invitation of embassies to visit DHAMAN Hospital comes as part of a visit program dedicated to members of the diplomatic corps in Kuwait to allow them to see the facilities of Daman Hospital and its various departments and give them an overview of the role of Daman in providing the health assurance certificate and its coverage of integrated health services for all communities residing under Article 18 and their families. Furthermore, the company indicated that such activities contribute to creating public awareness of Daman and its developmental role in the healthcare sector in the national development plan and the 'New Kuwait 2035 Vision'.

The CEO gave an introductory presentation about the company and its operational preparations to receive its target segment, and an overview of its health network, which includes primary healthcare centers, hospitals, and screening of expatriate workers. In turn, diplomatic delegations exchanged

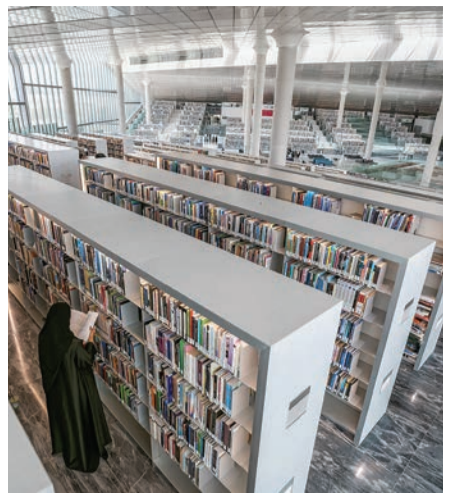
dialogue and talks about arrangements for the next stage, for cooperation between Daman and embassies to coordinate the transfer of beneficiaries from the various communities from the Ministry of Health to DHAMAN's health network.

Afterward, the visiting delegations toured the various departments of the hospital, where officials and doctors provided an overview of the departments' preparations, its modern medical equipment, and the numbers expected to be received in preparation for the activation of DHAMAN's health network in cooperation with the Ministry of Health. The company explained that it has worked since its inception on a pioneering vision for healthcare and the future directions of this vital sector. Through this vision, it aims to build a healthier society through the implementation of sustainability programs, especially in the healthcare field, as the future issuer of the mandatory healthcare assurance certificate for residents working in the private sector and their families, whose number exceeds 1.8 million people, through a network distributed in various governorates of Kuwait, covering a wide range of primary and secondary medical specialties, which include primary healthcare centers, currently operating as



Thamer Arab

private centers that receive those wishing to obtain healthcare in family medicine, dental and pediatric clinics, plus radiology and laboratory services, in addition to two hospitals in Ahmadi and Jahra governorates with a capacity of 660 beds, covering a wide range of basic medical specialties in hospitals along with all specialties of outpatient clinics, pharmacies, laboratories and related radiology services.



Qatar National Library: Modern-style facility supports creativity, cultural development



Qatar National Library is a modern-style facility with more than a million books in its collection, along with more than 500,000 ebooks, periodicals and newspapers, and special collections. The library provides equal access for all visitors to an environment that supports creativity, independent decision-making and cultural development. Qatar National Library aims to be one of the world's preeminent centers of learning, research and culture; a guardian of the region's heritage; and an institution that promotes imagination, discovery and the nourishment of the human spirit. —AFP



Gwyneth Paltrow takes the stand in skiing trial

Actress Gwyneth Paltrow took the stand in her US trial over a skiing accident Friday, telling a Utah courtroom that the man suing her had crashed into her from behind and was at fault for the collision. The "Shakespeare in Love" actress is being sued for damages by retired optometrist Terry Sanderson over a skiing accident seven years ago, which his lawyers blame on Paltrow and say caused him damages worth \$3.3 million.

Paltrow has in turn countersued, for a token \$1 plus legal expenses, and had her chance to speak on the trial's fourth day at a courthouse in the Rocky Mountain resort town of Park City. "Mr Sanderson categorically hit me on that ski slope, and that is the truth," said Paltrow, under cross-examination by Sanderson's lawyer. "When he slid between my skis, I absolutely froze," she recalled.



US actress Gwyneth Paltrow sits in court, where she is accused of injuring another skier, leaving him with a concussion and four broken ribs.

Asked by Sanderson's lawyer if immediately following the incident she had screamed "You skied directly into my effing back," Paltrow replied: "Yes I did. I apologize for my bad language." At question in the trial is which of the skiers was further downslope when the crash occurred. Both claim they were hit from behind.

Paltrow told the court that she had briefly feared she was being sexually



US actress Gwyneth Paltrow carries two beverages as she walks past the man suing her after testifying in court during her trial, in Park City, Utah. — AFP photos

assaulted. "I was skiing, and two skis came between my skis, forcing my legs apart, and then there was a body pressing against me, and there was a very strange grunting noise" she said. "So my brain was trying to make sense of what was happening. I thought, 'Is this a practical joke? Is someone doing something perverted?'"

At the time of the crash, Oscar-winning actress Paltrow was on vacation with her now-husband Brad Falchuk, and Moses and Apple—her two children with her ex, Coldplay singer Chris Martin.

All three are expected to testify at the trial, where Sanderson's lawyers claim Paltrow fled the scene of the crash.

On Friday, Paltrow acknowledged she left the scene, but said she had been told she could do so by her ski instructor Eric Christiansen, who remained there. "Mr Christiansen stayed and filled out the report, made sure Mr. Sanderson was okay, and said to me, 'you can go ahead,'" she said. "He knew also that my daughter was at the bottom waiting for me," added Paltrow. The trial began in Park City, in the western state of Utah, on Tuesday.

In his opening statement, Lawrence Buhler, representing Sanderson, said Paltrow had been skiing in a "dangerous" and "reckless" manner, and had caused his client "four broken ribs and permanent brain damage." On Friday, she repeatedly denied those claims. "I was gently skiing and he kind of gently skied right into me," she said.

Under questioning, Paltrow acknowledged she did not inquire about Sanderson's injuries or health after the crash. "I think you have to keep in mind when you're the victim of a crash, your psychology is not necessarily thinking about the person who perpetrated it," she said.

Sanderson is set to take the stand later in the trial. In his own opening statement, Paltrow's lawyer Steven Owens said Sanderson is "obsessed" with the lawsuit, and that the case was a "meritless claim of false allegation." In addition to her Oscar-winning acting career, Paltrow has forged a second career marketing wellness products on her Goop website. —AFP

Russian film seeks new home in exile

From Paris to Berlin, Los Angeles to Istanbul, Russian filmmakers who fled after the invasion of Ukraine are slowly rebuilding their industry in exile. Many are happy just to be out. "Maybe I won't be on any more red carpets, but at least I'm free," said Mariya Shalaeva, a 42-year-old actress and director who left with "two children and three suitcases" after being briefly arrested during an anti-war protest in Moscow.



Russian theatre and film director Kirill Serebrennikov poses during a photo session in Paris on March 15, 2023. — AFP

Now exiled in Paris, Shalaeva worries about finding decent work again, but refuses to talk about material difficulties which are "nothing compared to the suffering of Ukrainians".

She is showing a short film at a mini-festival of Russian cinema in Paris this week, featuring the last spate of independent films from before the war. Things have gone downhill fast for Russian cinema. Just two years ago, a film like "Captain Volkonogov Escaped", which is sharply critical of the Stalinist period,

had Russian state funding and premiered at the Venice Film Festival.

There is "no chance" that would happen today, said its producer Charles-Evrard Tchekhoff. Its directors Alexey Chupov and Natalya Merkulova had told AFP in Venice that they were confident they could keep working in Russia. Today, they are in exile in Azerbaijan and no longer speak to the press.

'Managed to survive'

Many of the country's best filmmakers are in a similar situation. Oscar-nominated director Andrey Zvyagintsev ("The Return", "Leviathan") is in Paris. Two promising young talents, Kira Kovalenko and Kantemir Balagov, have chosen Los Angeles. Balagov had planned to set his next film in his native Russian republic of Kabardino-Balkaria. Now it will be New Jersey, where he can at least call on a sizable Russian diaspora.

"Historically, Russian culture has always managed to survive," said director Kirill Serebrennikov, a renowned theatre and film director who was targeted by authorities even before the invasion and now lives in Berlin. The 53-year-old has shifted his next project from Russia to Latvia. "Limonov, the Ballad of Eddie", starring Ben Whishaw, is the first big production from the new generation of Russian exiles.

Perhaps fittingly, it will tell the true story of a Soviet poet "who became a bum in New York, a sensation in France, and a political antihero in Russia". Initially after the invasion, there was pushback against including Russians in European festivals and other cultural events—some Ukrainians were outraged that Serebrennikov was selected for Cannes last year. But "the vindictiveness has subsided," said film expert Joel Chapron. The much-lauded director Alexander Sokurov presented his latest, "Fairytale", at the Locarno Film Festival last year, while a Chechen film, "The Cage is Looking for a Bird", played at Berlin last month. —AFP

Lifestyle



PALESTINIANS TURN NEIGHBORHOOD WALLS INTO COLORFUL RAMADAN THEME MURALS



Residents of Harat Azzaytoun, one of Gaza's oldest quarters, turned their neighborhood walls into colorful Ramadan theme murals to bring some cheer and joy to their sight, especially their children's, during the holy month. Ramadan lanterns and greetings, Arabic calligraphy, and some verses from the Holy Quran were painted on the once war devastated walls. Gaza's municipality helped by providing paint and art supplies while locals and artists recycled whatever materials they could find to create the murals. —AFP



'Nixon in China': An opera with fresh relevance

Opera rarely feels like a topical medium but modern classic "Nixon in China" is growing in popularity and offering a pointed reminder of how much geopolitics has shifted in the past 50 years. It recounts the historic moment in 1972 when US president Richard Nixon travelled to Beijing and established diplomatic ties with Chinese leader Mao Zedong. The irreverent opera received mixed reviews when first performed in 1987 but has since become a beloved part of the canon in the United States. It is increasingly a hit abroad, playing in at least five European opera houses this year.



In this file photo taken on March 10, 2023 US soprano and opera singer Renee Fleming poses during a photo session in Paris.

It carries a new poignancy at a time of growing East-West tensions. An illustrious Paris production opens on Saturday in the week that Chinese President Xi Jinping held a state visit to Moscow. "We take it seriously right now because China and the US are in the news every day, and in a way that kind of highlights the fragility of world peace," said Renee Fleming, the superstar soprano who plays Nixon's wife in the Paris production. She is



In this file photo taken on February 24, 1972 US President Richard Nixon (second right), his wife Patricia (right) and US Secretary of State William Rogers (fourth right) visit the Great Wall of China north of Beijing during an official visit in China. - What is the most appropriate opera to see in the midst of tensions between Washington and Beijing? "Nixon in China", John Adams' masterpiece, makes its debut on March 25, 2023, at the Paris Opera, with a particular resonance. Created in 1987, fifteen years after the historic visit of the American president to China, this American opera had a controversial debut before becoming a classic. Thirty-six years later, it is on the bill of at least five opera houses in Europe, where it is less known. — AFP

disheartened by current affairs, having always been "tremendously welcomed" in China and Russia. "This is a time where I'm thinking please hold it together. Let's everybody calm down and resume the fantastic relationship—not without challenges... but it's still worth keeping the peace," she told AFP.

No more 'yellowface'
One big change these days—insisted upon by composer John Adams—is that companies use Asian singers for the Chinese roles. Scottish Opera was accused of "yellowface" in 2021 for staging the play with white actors, as was previously typical. "It's right that now, when things are so sensitive, we

work hard to find Asian singers," Adams, 76, told AFP.
"But ultimately I want to believe that it doesn't matter." The play was controversial for different reasons when it first opened. "Opera was always considered to be about Greek myths or Norse gods or melodrama like Puccini," Adams recalled. "But I thought this subject matter was something that opera could treat very well, because... it's about the collision of the two main philosophies of how life should be lived."
The Paris production uses elaborate and symbolic staging, such as the choir split into opposing table tennis teams, referencing the "ping-pong diplomacy" that helped thaw relations

at the time. It does not shy away from criticism of Mao's regime, with an underground prison revealed beneath the library where the politicians are meeting and a mini-documentary, screened halfway through, about the horrific repression of Chinese musicians during the Cultural Revolution. But Xiaomeng Zhang, who plays the Chinese premier Zhou Enlai, told AFP the opera was above all "a stark reminder... that making peace, not war, despite ideological and political differences, is not only a strategic choice but also a moral choice". —AFP

Bulgaria unveils possible find of Jackson Pollock work

Bulgarian authorities said Thursday they were investigating a painting seized by police that could be a little-known work by the American abstract artist Jackson Pollock. Clues indicate the two-meter-tall painting may have been a gift to Hollywood star Lauren Bacall—and could have been held in the extensive private collection of Romania's former dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. The painting was found in an apartment in Sofia in a raid last month carried out in cooperation with the Greek police and overseen by Europol.



It had been held in Greece for several years before being smuggled into Bulgaria, where a painter had intended to sell it further abroad, Interior Minister Ivan Demerdzhiev said. "The most qualified experts in Bulgaria examined the painting and assured us that its authenticity is almost certain," Demerdzhiev told bTV television, adding the country would seek "additional expertise".
The work, a vibrant skein dominated by reds and black against a golden backdrop, is not listed in Pollock catalogues but is signed by the artist. On the back is a handwritten note that reads: "Dedicated to my dear and very talented friend Lauren Bacall, Happy Birthday, September 16, 1949", according to Sofia City Prosecution spokeswoman Desislava Petrova. Bacall, born on September 16, 1924, was known to be a friend of Pollock's.

Also on the back is the signature of Ceausescu and a seal indicating it belonged to the dictator toppled in a coup in December 1989, Petrova said. Experts at the National Gallery in Sofia concluded that its style and execution techniques are consistent with those used by Pollock from 1949 to 1950, as do the paint pigments, Petrova added. But National Gallery spokeswoman Vesela Radoeva told AFP that they could not vouch for the painting's authenticity, saying they were not specialized in Pollock's works.
Greek police and Europol declined to give further details when contacted by AFP. Demerdzhiev said Bulgarian authorities would make every effort to keep the painting as property of the state if it is confirmed to be an original. "The last painting of Pollock was sold for over 100 million euros (\$110 million), and I don't expect this one to cost less," he said. —AFP

New York's famous Flatiron Building sells at auction



New York's iconic Flatiron Building—famous for its thin, triangular shape—has sold at auction for \$190 million following a court order. The 22-story skyscraper, built in 1902 and often said to resemble a clothes iron, fetched almost four times the opening pice of \$50 million following a keen bidding war. "It's been my lifelong dream of mine since I'm 14 years old," winner Jacob Garlick, managing partner at the Abraham Trust investment fund, told TV station NY 1.
Garlick has not said what he plans to do with the landmarked building, the channel added. The Flatiron—which straddles Fifth Avenue, Broadway and

East 22nd Street in Manhattan—has been empty since 2019 when its last tenant, MacMillian Publishers, vacated.
Prior to the auction, the building had been owned by a consortium of real estate companies that disagreed about renovations and future occupants. Following a lawsuit and counter lawsuit amongst the parties, a judge ordered them to put the building on the auction block. Matthew Mannion of Mannion Auctions, which ran Wednesday's sale, told AFP that Garlick has to pay ten percent by close of business on Friday or the building will be awarded to the second highest bidder. —AFP

Sports

Grizzlies clinch playoff berth with Rockets rout, Warriors down 76ers

LOS ANGELES: The Memphis Grizzlies clinched an NBA playoff berth in emphatic style on Friday, with Luke Kennard leading a dazzling display from three-point range in a 151-114 rout of the Houston Rockets. Kennard set a franchise record with 10 three-pointers — on just 11 attempts — as Memphis set a franchise record with 25 from beyond the arc. Their 25 treys came on just 42 attempts. Eight Grizzlies players converted from beyond the arc and Kennard was the most ruthlessly efficient of all. “It feels like every shot I take is going to go in,” Kennard said after scoring 30 points.

Desmond Bane added 25 points and two-time All-Star Ja Morant added 18 in a confident performance off the bench in his second game back from an eight-game NBA suspension for brandishing a gun at a nightclub. Even against Western Conference stragglers Houston, it was an impressive display. Most importantly, Kennard said, it was the team’s most complete game since his arrival. “Playing hard, playing fast, communicating a lot better,” he said. “We put it together for about a 48-minute game, so it was a fun game. I love the way we played — we’ve just got to build off that.”

In Salt Lake City, the Milwaukee Bucks made 22 three-pointers in a 144-116 wire-to-wire victory over the Utah Jazz that preserved their two-and-a-half-game lead over Boston atop the Eastern Conference. The Celtics kept the pressure on with a 120-95 victory over the Indiana Pacers while third-placed Philadelphia slipped back with a 120-112 loss to the Golden State Warriors in San Francisco.

Grayson Allen scored a season-high 25 points for Milwaukee, draining five three-pointers. Giannis

Antetokounmpo scored 24 points and handed out 11 assists for the Bucks before sitting out the fourth quarter. The Greek superstar took a hard foul early in the game and grabbed his right wrist—the same wrist he injured in February. But if Antetokounmpo was slowed, the Bucks weren’t. They drained eight three-pointers — four by Allen — in the first quarter and Brook Lopez had four of his seven blocks in the first frame as they seized control.

Six Bucks players scored in double figures and Milwaukee dished out 42 assists. “It’s a really fun way to play,” Allen said. “We were getting the ball up the court super quick today. A bunch of those possessions were less than five seconds — you get, like, three passes in and a good shot.”

In Boston, Jayson Tatum led the Celtics with 34 points — his 40th 30-point game of the season, setting a franchise record. Jaylen Brown added 27 points and grabbed seven rebounds and Derrick White chipped in 22 points for Boston, who out-scored the Pacers 32-21 in the third quarter and rolled from there. Tyrese Haliburton and Myles Turner scored 20 apiece for Indiana, who are chasing the Chicago Bulls for 10th place in the East and the final play-in tournament berth. The Bulls beat the Trail Blazers 124-96 in Portland.

Lakers silence Thunder

In San Francisco, Jordan Poole scored 33 points and Stephen Curry added 29 as the reigning champion Warriors withstood 46 points from Sixers star Joel Embiid. With James Harden sidelined by injury, Embiid had Philadelphia poised to hand Golden State a rare home defeat. He made 19 of 22 free



SAN FRANCISCO: Tobias Harris of the Philadelphia 76ers dribbles with the ball in the third quarter against Jonathan Kuminga of the Golden State Warriors at Chase Center on March 24, 2023. — AFP

throws, grabbed nine rebounds and handed out eight assists, and Philadelphia led by 11 early in the fourth quarter. The Warriors pulled level four times in the period before Curry got past Embiid for the go-ahead bank shot with 2:20 remaining.

In Los Angeles, Anthony Davis scored 37 points

and grabbed 14 rebounds as the Lakers boosted their post-season hopes with a 116-111 victory over the Oklahoma City Thunder. The Lakers, with superstar LeBron James sidelined by a foot injury, have won three straight and at 37-37 are level with the Minnesota Timberwolves for seventh in the West. —AFP

Drone threat hovers over Paris Olympics

PARIS: It may be a long way from any battlefield but the 2024 Paris Olympics is preparing for the threat of a drone attack with what one official calls “unrivalled” measures. Fear of a terror attack has haunted every Olympic host nation for half a century since Palestinian gunmen took members of the Israeli team hostage during the 1972 Olympics in Munich. The last terror act at an Olympics was in Atlanta in 1996 when a pipe bomb exploded as revelers enjoyed a rock concert. Two people were killed and more than 100 injured in the attack, for which a US extremist was jailed.

But the use of civilian drones by armed and criminal groups in recent years poses a new and high-tech nightmare scenario for Olympic organizers. “It’s really something we are taking very seriously, we’ve been working on it for a long time,” a senior French official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told AFP. A part of warfare for years, drones have become a defining feature of the Ukraine conflict, deployed on a scale never seen before to carry out both surveillance and strikes.

“The hybridization of civilian drones for military or terrorist use is not new, as we can see in Ukraine among other places,” Thibault Fouillet, a historian and researcher at the Paris-based Foundation for

Strategic Research, said. “The risk can be transposed to the Olympic Games, it’s no fantasy.”

‘All scenarios’

The unprecedented opening ceremony planned for the 2024 Paris Olympics already poses a serious security headache. The plan is to take the ceremony out of its customary location in the main stadium and place it in the heart of the capital, with sporting delegations sailing down the river Seine in boats. Drones are “very clearly a matter of high priority”, the senior official said. “The Olympic Games are an ideal showcase, (shown) live around the world, and naturally the security services are working on all the scenarios to prevent a possible attack.”

Nevertheless, on top of concerns about overall security and budget worries for the Paris Games — set to be a centerpiece of President Emmanuel Macron’s second term — there have been questions about its preparedness for dealing with a drone attack. A parliamentary information team in summer 2021 raised the alarm about France being insufficiently prepared for such a threat.

Just a few weeks earlier, a report by senators had highlighted the “complex” and “evolving” nature of the anti-drones battle. Among multiple solutions both for detecting drones and their neutralization, none taken on their own was “completely satisfactory”, it said. “Systems have evolved since,” the senior official said.

The big issue, explained Fouillet, is ensuring the effectiveness of a system “which must be multi-layered”. “You don’t fight military drones in the same way as civilian drones,” he said. Civilian drone capabilities have



This file photo taken on Feb 27, 2015 shows an illustration picture of a drone flying over Saint-Cloud, as the Eiffel Tower is seen in Paris.— AFP

been of concern to authorities for some time. A mere drone owned by a tourist had to be intercepted by law enforcement officers in Paris in 2021. “It was flying at 140 kilometers an hour and could reach several kilometers high up in the sky. With that, we saw we had a problem,” a security source, also speaking on condition of anonymity, said. Another issue authorities must consider is the way in which an attack could be mounted, such as a so-called drone swarm where an armada of the small devices suddenly fills the skies, flying in coordination. — AFP



MIAMI GARDENS: Carlos Alcaraz of Spain plays a forehand against Facundo Bagnis of Argentina at Hard Rock Stadium on March 24, 2023. —AFP

dicted he was ready to win a Grand Slam and he returns now having achieved that goal and, he concedes, as a different man.

It was also a straightforward start to the tournament for America’s top ranked player, world number 10 Taylor Fritz who saw off 21-year-old Californian Emilio Nava 6-4, 6-1. Nava’s ultra-attacking style had earned him an upset win over John Isner in the previous round and he hit some spectacular winners early against Fritz. But Fritz kept his calm and with the first set under his belt, picked off Nava with ease in the second. — AFP



SAITAMA: Gold medalists USA’s Madison Chock and Evan Bates pose during the medal ceremony for the ice dance event during the ISU World Figure Skating Championships 2023 on March 25, 2023. — AFP

Jabeur crashes out, Sabalenka struggles, Alcaraz cruises

MIAMI: Fourth seed Ons Jabeur crashed out of the Miami Open on Friday, losing her opening match to Russian qualifier Varvara Gracheva 6-2, 6-2. In another surprise, Canadian Bianca Andreescu, the former US Open winner now ranked 31st, overcame seventh seed Maria Sakkari of Greece 5-7, 6-3, 6-4, in a gruelling three-hour, three-minute battle in the early afternoon South Florida sun.

Romania’s Sorana Cirstea upset world number four Caroline Garcia 6-2, 6-3 in a repeat of her Indian Wells win over the Frenchwoman last week. But world number two Aryna Sabalenka got past American Shelby Rogers 6-4, 6-3, despite being hampered by what appeared to be a groin injury.

The win was the biggest scalp yet for Gracheva, who earlier this month reached her first WTA final, losing in Austin to Ukraine’s Marta Kostyuk. Andreescu, the US Open winner in 2019, had eliminated Britain’s Emma Raducanu in the previous round and after losing the first set to Sakkari’s powerful stroke play, the Canadian settled into a solid pattern of steady returns, peppered with aggressive winners as she took control of the second set.

Chock and Bates finally claim ice dance world gold

SAITAMA: American ice dancers Madison Chock and Evan Bates hailed their own “grit” as they finally claimed their first world title in Japan on Saturday, after recovering from a fall in their free dance. Chock and Bates took gold in the 10th world championships of their career, beating Italy’s Charlene Guignard and Marco Fabbri and Canada’s Piper Gilles and Paul Poirier in Saitama, north of Tokyo.

Chock said the experience the pair had picked up over their long careers helped them shrug off her tumble midway through their routine. “I know that we wouldn’t be sitting here today without many of those challenges that we’ve faced, not just this season but throughout all the many seasons of our career,” she said. “We have really persevered and shown a lot of

grit. I think maybe our performance today was a little reflection of that.”

Chock and Bates, who last year got engaged to be married, finished with 226.01 points overall, ahead of Guignard and Fabbri’s 219.85, and Gilles and Poirier’s 217.88. France’s reigning Olympic and world ice dance champions Gabriella Papadakis and Guillaume Cizeron are sitting out the competition, and Russian skaters have again been banned because of the war in Ukraine. Chock said that her fall was “so fast, so unexpected”, but the pair kept their cool to see out the win. “It was a blip in what felt like a really special performance between the two of us,” she said. “I was really enjoying every second of being out on the ice with Evan.”

Chock and Bates had previously won one silver and two bronze medals at the world championships. Bates thanked their coaches for handing them “a lifeline” after a disappointing showing at the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics. “Five years ago, we could have easily been done,” he said. “They just gave us a renaissance in our careers and we’re so grateful to them.” Britain’s Lilah Fear and Lewis Gibson finished fourth on 214.73. — AFP

NZ’s Shipley tears through Sri Lanka in ODI thrashing

AUCKLAND: Henry Shipley tore through Sri Lanka’s batting line-up as New Zealand romped to a 198-run win in the first one-day international in Auckland on Saturday. Playing just his fourth match for the Black Caps, tall seamer Shipley took 5-31 as the tourists were skittled for 76 at Eden Park, their lowest ODI score against New Zealand and their fifth-lowest ever. Sri Lanka’s capitulation in 19.5 overs made it their second shortest innings.

The visitors never recovered after slumping to 31-5, with only three batters reaching double figures, including top scorer Angelo Mathews (18). It comes just two months after Sri Lanka’s world-record 317-run loss to India in Thiruvananthapuram — when they were out for 73. Captain Dasun Shanaka identified some glaring shortcomings that would need to be improved on for game two in Christchurch on Tuesday. “Especially with the bat, we need to tighten up the techniques,” Shanaka said.

“The way Shipley bowled, the movement he got and the bounce, I think all sorts of things happened tonight. “Credit should be given to Shipley, it’s outstanding bowling.” Sri Lanka’s batters succumbed to a series of loose shots, allowing Shipley to claim New Zealand’s first five-wicket bag in the format for more than four years. The 26-year-old worried his opponents with steep bounce and pace throughout his seven overs, beating the bat routinely and prompting a series of shots to be lofted aimlessly to waiting fielders.

Daryl Mitchell took 2-12 and Matt Henry 2-20 in an innings that lasted less than two hours. New Zealand captain Tom Latham said he was unsure if their score of 274 all out would be enough at the small Eden Park venue where international teams regularly surpass 300. However, he noted the pitch was less friendly than usual. “We knew it was a tricky wicket, it was holding a little bit and the guys bowled fantastically well,” Latham said. “I thought we managed to scrap to 270. To put a score on the board, we knew it would be challenging. The guys then came out and set the tone with the ball.” — AFP

Nabi stars as Afghanistan stun Pakistan

SHARJAH: Veteran all-rounder Mohammad Nabi guided Afghanistan to a six-wicket win over a new-look Pakistan in the first Twenty20 international of a three-game series on Friday. Nabi took 2-12 and was ably assisted by Mujeeb Ur Rahman (2-9) and pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi (2-13) to restrict Pakistan to 92-9 after they won the toss and batted at Sharjah Stadium. Nabi then kept his cool with a cautious run-a-ball 38 not out and added 53 for the unbroken fifth wicket with Najibullah Zadran (17 not out) to help Afghanistan overhaul the target in 17.5 overs.

Nabi hit his first boundary off his 27th ball and then hit two more in the next over from Naseem Shah before sealing the win with a six off Ihsanullah. This becomes Afghanistan’s first win in four Twenty20 internationals against Pakistan. Pace bowler Ihsanullah (2-17) dismissed Ibrahim Zadran (nine) with the first ball of his T20I career and then had Gulbadin Naib (nought) to leave Afghanistan tottering at 45-4 but Nabi and Najibullah made sure victory was achieved.

“It was a tough score to chase in these conditions,” said Nabi after being named man of the match. As a bowling unit, we wanted to keep them under 100 and that’s what we did. With the bat, I wanted to take responsibility and close the game. Most of the guys in our squad are playing big leagues, some have been here in the UAE for 15 days. So we were set. Thirty eight on this wicket can feel like a hundred.” Stand-in Pakistan skipper Shadab Khan confessed his new players were nervous. “Tactics wise, we were fine,” said Shadab. — AFP

Sports

Messi goal tops off Argentina homecoming celebration

BUENOS AIRES: Lionel Messi capped a night of unbridled joy with the 800th goal of his career as world champions Argentina celebrated their homecoming with a 2-0 friendly victory over stubborn Panama in Buenos Aires on Thursday. The 35-year-old seven-time Ballon d'Or winner's stunning free-kick in the dying minutes came after 21-year-old MLS sensation Thiago Almada gave a glimpse of what the future holds with his first goal for the national team in only his third appearance.

It was an emotional night as fireworks crackled overhead before kick-off at the impressive Monumental stadium where the 83,000 lucky fans that managed to get tickets among the more than 1.5 million people who tried, created an electric atmosphere. Messi, coach Lionel Scaloni and numerous players came onto the pitch with their children and several seemed on the brink of tears as fans in unison sung "Muchachos", the anthem of Argentina's victorious World Cup campaign in Qatar.

After the match the party continued, with every member of the World Cup winning squad given a replica trophy to lift, surrounded by their families. "I always dreamt of this moment, being able to celebrate with you (the fans), being able to come to my country to lift a Copa America, a World Cup. It's the best thing there is," said Messi, who was presented with several awards after the game.

"I am eternally grateful to this group of players. Football is theirs, it belongs to all those that wear this jersey," said Scaloni, who finally cracked and let the tears flow. "They leave every last drop of sweat and sometimes the result doesn't follow. This time it did and it's amazing."

Archers hit bullseye at maiden event

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Boubyan Shooting Club organized an archery tournament for men and women under the patronage of the Public Authority for Sport. The tournament, which the club organized for the first time, was held at Sulaibikhat Sports Club. Boubyan Shooting Club Secretary General Fahad Al-Suhaibi distributed the prizes to the top six winners of each category.

In the women's category, the winner was Zainab Al-Enezi, Ayesha Al-Kandari second, Muna Al-Hajeri third, Anwar Al-Harshani fourth, Amenah Al-Harshani fifth and Qairawan Al-Azmi sixth. In the men's category Abdelmir Yousuf was first, Mohammad Al-Beloushi second, Mohammad

Iwobi says Nigeria will bounce back after shock loss

JOHANNESBURG: Everton midfielder Alex Iwobi promised that Nigeria will bounce back after suffering a shock 1-0 home loss to Guinea-Bissau on Friday in Africa Cup of Nations qualifying. It was one of the biggest upsets in the history of the competition as Mama Balde scored for the Wild Dogs, who are 81 places below the Super Eagles in the FIFA world rankings.

"As players and staff, we know we have to react to this result," said Iwobi, one of three Premier League stars in the starting line-up. "All we can do is improve and, to the fans, all I can say is that they should stick by us and support us because we give 100 percent not just for ourselves, but also for our nation. Next time we are going to do our best and make the country proud," he added, referring to a Group A rematch in Guinea-Bissau on Monday.

Balde, who plays for French top-tier club Troyes, scored on 30 minutes in Abuja to take the Portuguese-speaking nation to the top of the table. Guinea-Bissau have seven points, Nigeria six, Sierra Leone two and Sao Tome e Principe one, halfway

Persistence pays for Messi

It was clear that this was more a celebration than a football match but Panama clearly had not read the script. Despite fielding a weakened side, they were organized and disciplined and managed to frustrate the new world champions for 78 minutes before their defenses were finally breached. Argentina, who started the game playing champagne football, created relatively little given their 73 percent possession in the first period.

Messi struck the woodwork with a freekick while Enzo Fernandez brought a diving one-handed save out of goalkeeper Jose Carlos Guerra with a shot from distance. Scaloni had picked the same starting XI that faced France in the World Cup final in December — when Argentina triumphed 4-2 on penalties after a sensational 3-3 draw — but after a goalless first half he made three changes.

In the second period, Argentina knuckled down to trying to win a football match but Guerra was twice equal to Messi free-kicks and also saved a low curling effort from veteran Angel Di Maria. As the minutes ticked by, the tension rose with Argentina acutely aware that their party risked falling flat if they did not win. But, eventually their main man came to the fore and ensured Panama would not be party poopers.

Messi had a hand in the opening goal, crashing another free-kick off the woodwork, with Almada, a second half substitute, following up to slot home. The stadium erupted and the tension drained from Argentina's players, by now mostly substitutes. With a minute to go, Messi was given yet another free-kick within shooting range — his fifth of the match — and



BUENOS AIRES: Argentina's forward Lionel Messi celebrates with midfielders Leandro Paredes, Rodrigo De Paul and Thiago Almada and forward Lautaro Martinez after scoring a goal during a friendly match against Panama at the Monumental stadium on March 23, 2023. —AFP

this time he curled it into the top corner to seal the dream scenario for his delirious fans.

Then the party continued with singing and dancing and a video recap of Argentina's glorious run to

their third world title on the stadium's giant screens. No one left as the players, accompanied by partners and children, embarked on a lap of honor, each clutching their own replica trophy. —AFP



Al-Hamadi third, Suleiman Al-Mulla fourth, Muath Al-Hamadi fifth and Abdellatif Mulla Yousuf sixth.

Suhaibi said the first edition of the archery tournament had strong competition and produced several talented archers. He thanked the board of Sulaibikhat Club of hosting the event

through the six-round mini-league. The top two finishers progress to the finals.

Nigeria, whose line-up included prolific Napoli scorer Victor Osimhen, were firm favorites to win at home. But after a bright start, with Osimhen coming close to scoring on 16 minutes, the home side battled to create clear-cut scoring opportunities in the capital city. As the match reached the half hour mark, Balde raced on to a lofted pass and fired a low shot past goalkeeper Francis Uzoho. Osimhen, who has been linked with a move to Manchester United or Arsenal, became increasingly frustrated as poor service and close marking restricted his threat.

South Africa drama

It was the fifth loss in seven matches for Nigeria coach Jose Peseiro, and another defeat next week in Bissau could spell the end for the Portuguese. "We could have been here for another hour and not scored," said Peseiro. "I am not happy. I am sad, like my team, but they did the maximum. If you play like we played, you can beat any team, not only Guinea-Bissau."

In Soweto, Belgium-born South Africa coach Hugo Broos stormed back to the dressing room before the final whistle after seeing his side surrender a two-goal lead in a 2-2 Group K draw with Liberia. Lyle Foster put the hosts two goals ahead by half-time, but Tonia Tisdell halved the deficit entering the final quarter and Moham-

med Sangare levelled in added time. Broos initially refused to attend the post-match press conference, then spoke briefly and refused to answer questions.

"There are too many disappointments, too many frustrations and too much anger in my body. If I say anything, it will not be nice," he said. "In the past, I have always been ready to answer your questions — even difficult ones. But I hope that you understand that tonight it is going to be very, very difficult to do that." The draw meant 2022 World Cup semifinalists Morocco, who had a bye, became the first team to book a place at the finals apart from hosts the Ivory Coast, who qualify automatically.

Elsewhere, some of the biggest names in Africa were among the goals, including Sadio Mane, Mohamed Salah and Sebastian Haller. Returning to the Senegalese line-up after missing the World Cup due to a leg injury, Mane scored the second goal in a 5-1 Group L rout of Mozambique in Dakar. Salah claimed the first goal and played a role in the second as Egypt beat Malawi 2-0 in Cairo to rise from last to first in Group D.

Haller, who resumed playing last month after successful treatment for testicular cancer, notched the second goal for the Ivory Coast in a 3-1 Group H victory over the Comoros in Bouake. Tanzania won an east African showdown against Uganda in Group F 1-0 thanks to a superb second-half strike from Simon Msuva. —AFP

McKennie, Pepi double as US thrash Grenada

MIAMI: Weston McKennie and Ricardo Pepi scored two goals apiece as the United States put their off-field troubles behind them to beat Grenada 7-1 in the CONCACAF Nations League on Friday. Chelsea's Christian Pulisic, Leeds forward Brenden Aaronson and Mexico-born Alejandro Zendejas also scored for the US, who were playing their first competitive fixture under interim coach Anthony Hudson.

The build-up to the game had been dominated by the fallout from the World Cup controversy surrounding US forward Gio Reyna, handed a start by Hudson for Friday's game at the Kirani James National Stadium in St George. However Reyna endured a frustrating night, contributing little of note to the US performance before being substituted midway through the second half.

The Americans effectively wrapped up victory after a dominant opening 45 minutes that saw them take a 4-1 lead at halftime. Netherlands-based striker Pepi, earning a start after missing out on a place in the US World Cup squad, opened the scoring after just four minutes. Pulisic crossed from the left and Pepi was on hand to direct a firm glancing header into the Grenada net.

The US were given a scare moments later though when only a fine diving save from Arsenal's Matt Turner denied Jacob Berkeley-Agyepong an equalizer, the American goalkeeper tipping the London-born forward's low shot onto the post. Pepi almost doubled the US lead on 13 minutes, but saw his shot saved from close range by Grenada goalkeeper Jason Belfon.

The US did not have to wait too long for their second goal however, with Pulisic again the creator, passing low to Leeds forward Brenden Aaronson who danced past his marker before rifling a low shot into the bottom corner. McKennie added a third on 31 minutes, hooking in a volley after a Pulisic free-kick sowed panic in the Grenada defense.

Grenada hit back almost immediately with Myles Hippolyte — who plays in the fourth tier of English football for Stockport County — lashing home from the edge of the area. But any hopes of an unlikely Grenada fightback were snuffed out within minutes, when McKennie grabbed his second. Pulisic's free-kick was headed back across the six-yard area by Auston Trusty for McKennie who stabbed home from close range for 4-1. —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

Khaldiya	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

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Mbappe and France crush Netherlands

Lukaku hits Belgium hat-trick against Sweden



SAINT-DENIS, France: France's forward Kylian Mbappe fights for the ball with Netherlands' midfielder Jurrien Timber and defender Lutsharel Geertruida during their UEFA Euro 2024 qualification match between at the Stade de France on March 24, 2023. — AFP

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe marked his first game as France captain with a brace in a 4-0 demolition of the Netherlands in Euro 2024 qualifying on Friday, while Romelu Lukaku scored a hat-trick as Belgium began a new era with a 3-0 victory in Sweden. In Paris, France were three goals up before the midway point in the first half of their Group B opener against a Dutch side depleted by a virus.

Mbappe, who has taken over the armband from long-term skipper Hugo Lloris, set up his vice-captain Antoine Griezmann to open the scoring inside two minutes at the Stade de France. Griezmann, with his hair dyed pink, then set up the second goal in the eighth minute as his free-kick was bundled in from close range by Dayot Upamecano after Dutch goalkeeper Jasper Cillessen failed to clear the danger.

Mbappe then ran through to make it 3-0 after Randal Kolo Muani had cleverly left an Aurelien Tchouameni through ball, and the Paris Saint-Germain superstar wrapped up the win in emphatic fashion late on. A perfect evening for Les Bleus was completed when Mike Maignan, France's new first-choice goalkeeper, saved a stoppage-time Memphis Depay penalty.

"We didn't want to disappoint our fans. This was our first game back here after the World Cup and we really wanted to pick up where we left off there, except for the final," Mbappe, who now has 38 goals in 67 appearances for his country, told broadcaster TF1. This was the first time the Netherlands had lost by a four-goal margin since going down to defeat by the same scoreline against France in Paris in August 2017. France's next game is away to the Republic of Ireland on Monday, while the Netherlands host Gibraltar. Gus Poyet's Greece beat Gibraltar 3-0 in Faro, Portugal, on Friday, with Giorgos Masouras, Manolis Siopis and captain Anastasios Bakasetas all scoring for the 2004 European champions.

Poland beaten, Serbia win

Knocked out of the World Cup in the group stage, Belgium have since seen Roberto Martinez depart and he has been replaced as coach by Domenico Tedesco. He could not have asked for a better debut as Inter Milan forward Lukaku scored all the goals away in Sweden in Group F. Lukaku headed in the opener on 35 minutes and then netted with a tap-in,

in off Victor Lindelof, after being set up by Dodi Lukebakio early in the second half.

The 41-year-old Zlatan Ibrahimovic came off the bench for Sweden before Lukaku made it 3-0 with another easy finish. "To take three points and score three goals in Sweden is never easy for any team," Tedesco told Belgium's RTBF. In the same section, Marcel Sabitzer scored twice as Ralf Rangnick's Austria beat Azerbaijan 4-1 at home in Linz. Michael Gregoritsch and Christoph Baumgartner also scored for the hosts.

Robert Lewandowski's Poland got off to a losing start in Group E in their first game under new coach Fernando Santos, the man who led Portugal to glory at Euro 2016. Ladislav Krejci and Tomas Cvanec scored in the first three minutes for the hosts in Prague and Jan Kuchta later got the third. Damian Szymanski pulled one back for Poland as Lewandowski was kept quiet. Moldova needed a late penalty to draw 1-1 at home to the Faroe Islands in the same group. In Group G, Dusan Tadic and Dusan Vlahovic scored the goals as Serbia beat Lithuania 2-0 in Belgrade while Montenegro were



SOLNA: Belgium's forward Romelu Lukaku celebrates scoring the opening goal with his teammates during the UEFA Euro 2024 group F qualification football against at the Friends Arena on March 24, 2023. — AFP

1-0 winners away in Bulgaria, Nikola Krstovic getting the winner. Qualifying for next year's finals in Germany continues on Saturday when Spain face Norway and Croatia take on Wales. — AFP



Cristiano Ronaldo

Kane leads England to win, Ronaldo sets new caps record

LONDON: Harry Kane became England's all-time leading goalscorer as the Three Lions enjoyed a perfect start to Euro 2024 qualifying by winning 2-1 away to Italy on Thursday, as Cristiano Ronaldo scored twice on his record 197th cap in Portugal's 4-0 win over Liechtenstein. Kane netted his 54th goal for England in his 81st international appearance from the penalty spot in Naples after Declan Rice had fired the visitors into an early lead.

The England captain moves clear of the record mark he had shared with Wayne Rooney. "Thanks to everyone who's helped me get to this stage. It's a great night. We haven't won in Italy for so long so to score, and win this game, is just special," said Kane. Gareth Southgate's men gained some measure of revenge for their defeat by the Azzurri in the Euro 2020 final.

In their first match since bowing out in agonizing fashion to France in the World Cup quarterfinals, England were dominant in the first 45 minutes. Rice rifled home his third international goal on 13 minutes after Italy failed to clear a corner. Another set-piece led to Kane's record-breaking moment as Giovanni Di Lorenzo handled inside the area. The Tottenham striker banished the memories of his missed penalty late on against France in Doha by sending Gianluigi Donnarumma the wrong way.

But Italy rallied after the break when Argentine-born striker Mateo Retegui fired home on his international debut. England were forced to see out the final 10 minutes a man down after two quickfire

yellow cards for Luke Shaw, but they held out for their first win away to Italy since 1961. "We feel like we are one of the best teams in Europe," added Kane. "Coming here and putting in a performance like that today shows we are ready for the next challenge." In the other game in Group C, North Macedonia beat Malta 2-1.

Ronaldo marks historic night

Ronaldo marked Roberto Martinez's bow as Portugal boss with another historic night in Lisbon. The 38-year-old, who was dropped from the Portuguese starting XI during the World Cup, set a new record for men's international appearances by passing the previous mark of 196 caps held by Kuwait's Bader Al-Mutawa. Joao Cancelo fired home the opening goal after just eight minutes but it was not until Bernardo Silva doubled Portugal's lead early in the second half that the floodgates opened.

Ronaldo made it 3-0 from the penalty spot before blasting home a free-kick from the edge of the area for his 120th international goal. "It's a new cycle. It is very important that a player shows commitment and that he can use his experience," said Martinez. "Cristiano has that: A lot of experience and a lot of commitment to the national team."

Mutawa congratulated Ronaldo on breaking his record. "I'm very honored to have represented my country in 196 international matches and I'm grateful for the privilege of becoming the most-capped men's player," Mutawa wrote on Friday. "I'm glad that the record will now be passed on to Cristiano Ronaldo. You are truly a legend and an idol to every football player. I wish you the best of luck and many more amazing achievements." Ronaldo in turn thanked Mutawa. "Thank you for your kind words @bader_almotawaal!" Ronaldo wrote in a reply to Mutawa's tweet. "It's an honor to become the most capped men's player. All the best for you too." — AFP



Harry Kane runs with the ball during the UEFA Euro 2024 Group C qualification match against Italy and England on March 23, 2023 at the Diego-Maradona stadium. — AFP