

7 Afghan orphaned toddler finally reunited with family



8 Alibaba to split into 6 groups, separate IPOs expected



16 Qadisiya beat Salmiya to win Zain Cup



RAMADAN TIMINGS

Fajr	04:22
Shurooq	05:42
Dhuhr	11:53
Asr	15:23
Maghrib	18:04
Isha	19:22



Defendants jailed in 1MDB case

Assembly office holds meeting • Panel to discuss election commission

Sinkhole opens up at Ardhiya construction site



KUWAIT: A sinkhole opened up in Ardhiya industrial area as a result of digging work by a company, which caused an underground pipe to break. The ministry of public works said in a statement the incident is not related to any of its projects, noting a private contractor not contracted by the ministry is responsible for the damage, stressing no landslide

took place. Kuwait Municipality later said it issued a citation to the contractor responsible for the ground collapse. The site was of a building under construction, during the basement digging stage. The contractor has a safety license. Work has been suspended at the location for the safety of pedestrians and workers, the Municipality announced.

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The criminal court on Tuesday sentenced two Kuwaiti defendants to 10 years in jail over money laundering charges as part of the worldwide scandal of the so-called Malaysian Fund. The court also passed a 10-year jail sentence against two foreign accomplices, a French businessman of Syrian descent and a Malaysian businessman and financier, who is the main defendant in the scandal involving 1Malaysian Development Berhad (1MDB), the Southeast Asian country's sovereign wealth fund. The court also jailed a Kuwaiti lawyer for seven years.

The court ordered the convicts to return \$1 billion and fined them KD 145 million. The court convicted them of laundering \$1 billion sent by the Malaysian convict using a Kuwaiti bank account, and then transferring the money to Swiss bank accounts. Under former Malaysian prime minister Najib Razak, the country's sovereign fund was systematically embezzled for a total of \$4.5 billion, with the Malaysian businessman convicted in Kuwait playing an instrumental role in the fraud.

The money was sent to several countries including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Singapore, China and others. The court's ruling is not final, as it can be appealed before the court of appeals and

the court of cassation, the highest in the country. The case attracted huge attention in Kuwait, especially in the National Assembly, where MPs demanded an investigation into the major money laundering case.

Meanwhile, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem on Tuesday chaired a meeting of the Assembly office, the second meeting since the house, dissolved by HH the Amir last year, was re-instated in a landmark ruling by the constitutional court last week. The court found faulty procedures in the Amiri decree dissolving the Assembly and decided to scrap the entire election process held in Sept 2022 that resulted in the opposition winning a landslide victory.

The ruling has plunged Kuwait into a new political crisis with the opposition rejecting the court's verdict and insisting they will not cooperate with the re-instated house. Ghanem had called for holding fresh elections but only after passing a number of laws to ensure the integrity of the polls, including approving a draft law to establish a higher election commission.

The legislative and legal committee of the re-instated Assembly is meeting today to discuss the draft law for setting up the election commission. It will send its report to the Assembly for approval. The re-instated Assembly has not held sessions yet as it awaits Prime Minister-designate HH Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah to announce his new Cabinet.

RAMADAN KAREEM

Loving and respecting parents in Islam

By Hassan Twaha Bwambale

Our parents have been with us throughout most of our lives, teaching and mentoring us – among others. In Islam, honouring and respecting one's parents is not something to be done occasionally, rather, they should be honoured and respected every single moment. Almighty Allah tells us what can be translated as: "And your Lord has decreed (for all) that you should not worship other than Him and be dutiful to your parents. Should either one or both (of them) reach old age (under your care), then do not say to either of them (even so much as) Uff (Fie) nor should you rebuke them. Rather, say to both a gracious word." (Al-Isra'a 17: 23)

Abdullah bin Amr (RA) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said what can be translated as: "The following (categories of) people will not enter Paradise (if they do not repent): One who frequently reminds others of his favours, one who is disobedient to his parents, and a drunkard..." (Al-Albani rated it as saheeh (authentic) in Saheeh An-Nasa'ei # 5, 688)

Nowadays, some people yell and argue with their parents incessantly, often over insignificant and trivial issues and topics. It is easy for them to spend hours online or hanging out with friends, but they cannot stand spending even a second in the presence of a parent. Spending quality time with your dear ones is of paramount significance. As you age, your parents grow older as well, limiting the time that you have left to spend in their company.

Parents in the Noble Quran: The Majestic Allah says what can be translated as: "Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and

Continued on Page 6

6 killed at US school in latest mass shooting

NASHVILLE: A heavily armed former student killed three young children and three staff in what appeared to be a carefully planned attack at a private elementary school in Nashville on Monday, before being shot dead by police. Chief of Police John Drake named the suspect as Audrey Hale, 28, who left behind a manifesto and had maps of the school detailing surveillance and entry-exit points.

Continued on Page 6

Egyptians cling to Ramadan charity as inflation soars

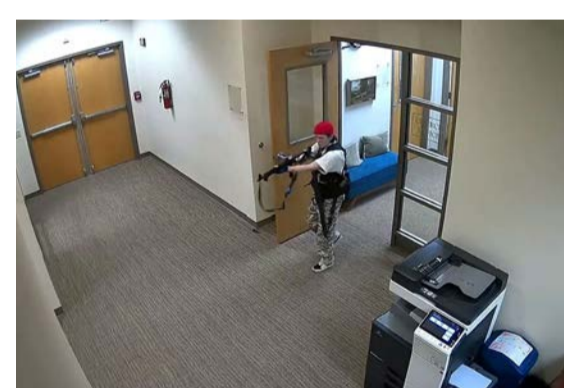
CAIRO: In a time of dire economic trouble, Egyptians are holding fast to the Ramadan tradition of charity, with both donors and those in need pinning hopes on holiday generosity. Families have buckled under the weight of inflation, which hit 32.9 percent in February as Egyptians tried to fill their shelves ahead of the Islamic holy month of daytime fasting and special evening meals, known as iftar.

Continued on Page 6

39 killed in fire at Mexico-US border center

CIUDAD JUAREZ: At least 39 migrants died in a fire that broke out at an immigration detention center in a Mexican city on the US border, the Mexican government said Tuesday. The fire broke out shortly before midnight at the National Migration Institute (INM) facility in Ciudad Juarez, prompting the mobilization of firefighters and dozens of ambulances. An AFP journalist saw forensic personnel remove a dozen bodies from the INM's parking lot, where several other bodies were laid and covered with blankets.

Continued on Page 6



NASHVILLE: This handout video grab released on March 27, 2023 shows suspect Audrey Hale holding an assault rifle at Covenant School. — AFP



CAIRO: In this file photo taken on April 16, 2022, Muslims gather along street-long tables to break their Ramadan fast together in the Matariya suburb. — AFP



CIUDAD JUAREZ: Firefighters and police rescue migrants from an immigration center, where at least 39 people were killed and dozens injured after a fire. — AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Medics to arrive after Ramadan

KUWAIT: After Ramadan, a number of medical specialists from Pakistan, India and the Philippines will arrive to work in hospitals and medical centers in Kuwait. Sources at the health ministry told Kuwait Times the ministry agreed to bring in 300 Pakistani doctors to work in Kuwait, after it found previous batches of doctors to be competent. Approximately 600 new male and female nurses from India and the Philippines will also arrive in Kuwait after Ramadan on thrice-weekly flights, after contracting procedures were completed. Nurses from India and the Philippines contracted earlier this year will arrive at a later date to work in three large private hospitals.

Xi hails Middle East thaw

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping lauded what he called the easing of tensions in the Middle East during a call with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Tuesday. Beijing brokered an agreement between Tehran and Riyadh on March 10 to restore diplomatic ties following a seven-year freeze. In his first public comments on the matter, Xi said the dialogue promoted by China would "play a major role in strengthening regional unity and cooperation". Prince Mohammed on Tuesday "expressed the kingdom's appreciation for the Chinese initiative to support efforts to develop neighborhood relations" between the two sides. — AFP

Saudi bus crash kills 20

RIYADH: A bus ferrying pilgrims to the holy city of Makkah burst into flames after a collision on a bridge in the southern province of Asir on Monday, killing 20 people and injuring more than two dozen others, Saudi state media reported. "According to preliminary information we have now received, the number of deaths in this accident reached 20, and the total number of injuries was approximately 29," the state-affiliated Al-Ekhbariya channel reported. It said the victims had "different nationalities". The channel said the bus had "car trouble", without specifying, while the private newspaper Okaz said the accident resulted from an issue with the brakes. The vehicle "then collided with a bridge, overturned and caught fire". — AFP



Interior warns against the use of Night Calm without permit

'A crime punishable by law'

KUWAIT: Kuwait Ministry of Interior has warned against the use, possession, promotion, import or selling of Night Calm pills without a medical permit or prescription as it's considered "a crime punishable by law." The drug, Zopiclone, which is sold under the name Night Calm as well as other generic names, is used to treat insomnia and usually limited to short treatment periods of 1 to 2 weeks or less, the Ministry said in a press release.

The drug can cause multiple health issues such as depression, addiction, anxiety and can lead to suicide if not used under the supervision of an authorized medical specialist, the statement noted. The Interior ministry's decision comes based on previously adopted laws and regulations issued by the Health ministry in December 2022.

Zopiclone, sold under the brand name Imovane among others, is a nonbenzodiazepine used to



treat difficulty sleeping. Zopiclone is molecularly distinct from benzodiazepine drugs and is classed as a cyclopyrrolone. However, zopiclone increases the normal transmission of the neu-



rotransmitter gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) in the central nervous system, via modulating GABAA receptors similarly to the way benzodiazepine drugs do. Zopiclone is a sedative. It



works by causing a depression or tranquilization of the central nervous system. After prolonged use, the body can become accustomed to the effects of zopiclone. — Agencies

In my view

Governance in institutions from Islamic perspective

By Omar Ezzeldin Omran

Governance is the process that aims at managing matters and employees and making decisions in institutions in an effective, transparent, fair and responsible manner. The governance process includes a number of components, such as management, control, accountability, transparency and participation. Governance aims to achieve stability, as well as economic and social development. Governance is a necessary process to achieve justice for all stakeholders.

The objectives of governance vary according to the social and economic system of the concerned institution. Among the most important general objectives of governance are achieving stability, internal and external security, economic and social development, ensuring the protection of the rights of stakeholders, enhancing their role in decision making, promoting transparency, accountability and combating corruption.

The origin of governance can be traced back to the eighteenth century in Europe. It was aimed, at the outset, to manage large institutions and companies. From this time, governance has evolved to include all institutions. From an Islamic perspective, governance is a necessary process through which justice and comprehensive development are achieved. Governance in Islam aims to achieve wellbeing and prosperity for all people concerned. It is a tool for enhancing the role of stakeholders in decision making, ensuring protection of their rights, achieving equality for all, and encouraging cooperation and solidarity.

In the Noble Quran, Almighty Allah mentions many examples and directives that call for the application of the principles of governance in daily life. For example, He says in Surat An-Nisa'a what can be translated as: "Indeed, Allah commands you to render (all) trusts to their rightful people. Moreover, whenever you judge between people, judge with justice. Indeed, that to which Allah exhorts you is most excellent." (An-Nisa'a 4: 58)

This indicates that Almighty Allah commands us to achieve justice in all fields, including in arbitration of cases and decision making. Almighty Allah says in another verse what can be translated as: "(O mankind), Indeed, Allah Commands the execution of justice (among you), and the doing of good (to all), and the giving (of charity) to close relatives. Moreover, He Forbids all obscenity, shameful deeds and aggression..." (An-Nahl 16: 90)

Almighty Allah also directs the necessity of control and accountability in the Noble Quran. In Surat Al-Shura, Allah says what can be translated as: "And those when tyranny strikes them, they defend themselves. And the retribution for an evil act is an evil one like it, but whoever pardons and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from Allah. Indeed He does not Like wrongdoers." (As-Shoura 42: 39)

This verse shows the need for combating corruption and achieving justice and accountability. There are also directives in the Noble Quran about the need for transparency and participatory decision making. In Surat Al-Shura, the Majestic Allah says what can be translated as: "And they (the believers) conduct their affairs by consultation among themselves." (As-Shura 42: 38)

This indicates that societies and institutions should consult, cooperate, and participate in decision making and avoid hidden dealings. There are also many prophetic narrations (hadiths), which call for the application of the principles of governance in society, and among them is the following hadith in which Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "Any man whom Allah has given the authority of ruling over people, who does not look after them in an honest manner, will never experience even the smell of the fragrance of Paradise." (Al-Bukhari # 7, 150 and Muslim # 142)

The above hadith stresses the need for achieving integrity and justice in managing public affairs. It also stresses that one is not to manipulate people's interests. In this regard, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also said what can be translated as: "All of you are shepherds, and each of you is responsible for his flock." (Al-Bukhari # 2, 409)

The above hadith indicates the necessity of taking responsibility in governance and administration and that leaders, and responsible personnel must be fair and impartial in managing affairs of the people they lead. It also alludes to the fact that everyone is a leader in his own capacity, and so, he should be fair to those under his custody. It was also reported that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "There should be neither harming other nor reciprocating harm." (Al-Albani rated it as saheeh (authentic) in Saheeh Ibn Ma'jah # 1, 909)

This hadith indicates the necessity of achieving the public interest when managing public affairs while avoiding harming people. Therefore, it should be borne in mind that good governance was enshrined in the Noble Quran more than 14 centuries ago.



KUWAIT: Ramadan decorations are seen in a shop at a market in Kuwait City. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat photos

Ramadan guide for first-time expatriates

By Nebal Snan

KUWAIT: On March 23, the world marked the first day of Ramadan, the holiest month in the Islamic calendar. For 29 or 30 days, depending on the lunar calendar, practicing Muslims around the world refrain from eating, drinking and smoking from sunrise to sunset — yes, even water is off limits. The act of piety and sacrifice is meant to strengthen their relationship with God.

While the worship aspect is more or less the same for all Muslims observing Ramadan, different communities have distinct cultural rituals they uphold during the month. If you're new in Kuwait, some of these traditions may leave you confused, or even dumbfounded. But don't worry, we've got you covered: Here's our attempt to demystify some of the confusing situations you might come across in Kuwait during Ramadan.

You can't eat, either

You're not fasting and you feel hungry, but you're in a public place: do you eat? Well, the answer is no. Eating or drinking in public between sunset and dawn is illegal in Kuwait, even if you're not Muslim. If you're caught, you face a maximum fine of KD 100 and/or a maximum one month in prison.

Free food for all

Picture this: A car pulls up at the entrance of your favorite coop. Someone steps out of the vehicle and begins calling passers-by to come grab one of the many rectangular boxes in his open truck. What's going on, you might ask? That person is distributing boxes of pre-packed hot meals — it's also probably the only time when it's safe to get an opaque box from a stranger's car. The boxes typically contain food you would eat to break your fast: rice and meat, water, dates, a yogurt drink and a vegetable stew. Anyone is welcome to get a box, regardless of nationality, race, socioeconomic status or religion.

Closer to iftar time, it's not uncommon for strangers to hand out water and dates at traffic lights. Some parents set up free-water-and-date stands with their chil-

dren at street corners within residential areas. Don't feel taken-aback if you find yourself getting approached by a stranger who gives you an envelope of money. The gesture is one of many acts of generosity displayed by Muslims in Kuwait during the holy month.

Why the long lines?

It's ironic that food is the running theme in a Ramadan list. But socially, the month has become synonymous with hours-long gatherings over a full course meal — and inevitably overconsumption. This explains the uptick in campaigns asking people not to waste food during Ramadan. It's also the reason behind the extra-long lines at your favorite restaurants or grocery stores. You will notice that certain types of food surge in popularity during the month, such as samosas, lentil soup, tashreeb and one infamous deep purple berry drink.

Watch out for road rage

Although Ramadan is all about patience, the way many people behave during the month could leave you scratching your head. One thing to look out for is the blatant disregard of all driving rules, especially during the last hour before Maghreb prayers. If you've driven in Kuwait — or commuted as a passenger — you probably know that road etiquette is close to non-existent. But the closer you're driving to the time people break their fast, the more you're likely to encounter road rage and drivers zigzagging through traffic. So be extra careful.

Counterintuitive slacking

You might be surprised to find that some of your Muslim colleagues are not putting in their best effort at work, despite the emphasis Islam puts on self-discipline in Ramadan. Unfortunately, it's become somewhat socially accepted for people to slack during the month, with many demanding that it becomes mandated as a holiday. The opposite is also true for some people who make it a point to work harder during the month for larger spiritual rewards or to distract them away from their cravings.

A night owl's haven

If you're a night owl, Ramadan will become your favorite time of the year. Most, if not all, shops and restaurants stay open past midnight. The ambiance at night, especially towards the end of the month, is always lively. Crowded streets and shopping centers are a trademark for this time of the year, with many people choosing to do their Eid shopping last-minute.



KUWAIT: Muslim worshippers line up to receive iftar meals, donated by a charity, in Mahboula, south of Kuwait City in this file photo. Food distribution campaigns, a common feature during the holy month of Ramadan in Kuwait, returned in full force this year after disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

News in Brief

MoE holds 'Ahlam Ramadan'

KUWAIT: The Education Ministry distributed Iftar meals to scholarship students in Kuwait at their dormitory in Surra area under the slogan "Ahlam Ramadan". Acting undersecretary for education development and activities Dr Ghanim Al-Suleimani said that the banquet comes under the supervision of the Minister of Education, higher education, and Scientific Research. Kuwait embraces students from 31 countries around the world who come and learn, in addition to receiving social care. The aim of the event is to strengthen the bond with the students and to share with them the Ramadan atmosphere. —KUNA

13 residency violators nabbed

KUWAIT: The residency CID officers have arrested 13 residency violators from different nationalities in Jaleeb Al-Shuyoukh. The suspects were taken to the concerned departments before deportation.

Kuwait oil price drops

KUWAIT: Kuwait oil price dropped 37 cents to USD 76.18 pb on Monday vis a vis \$76.55 pb Friday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation said on Tuesday. In international markets, the forward Brent crude contracts rose by \$3.13 to \$78.12 pb, while the rate of the identical transactions of the West Texas Intermediate crude climbed by \$3.55 to settle at \$72.81 a barrel. Meanwhile, the exchange rate of the US dollar against the Kuwaiti Dinar on Tuesday steadied at KD 0.306 but the Euro rose by 0.47 percent settling at KD 0.331, compared with Monday's rates, said the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK). The CBK added in its daily bulletin that the British Sterling Pound climbed by 0.70 percent to KD 0.377 and the Swiss Franc by 0.41 percent to settle at KD 0.334. The Japanese Yen remained stable at KD 0.002. The currency exchange rates as declared by the CBK reflect average rates, not actual trade. — KUNA

Commerce Ministry warns of fake adverts

KUWAIT: The Commerce and Industry Ministry has warned of texts that are being sent over SMS, social media, and sponsored adverts that use the Ministry's name to defraud and deceive people into taking their personal information. The Ministry affirms that when registering complaints on "Sahel" app, the Ministry will never ask for an OTP. The official website link of the Commerce and Industry Ministry ends with (moci.gov.kw). Make sure that the link does not contain any special link that end with (.com or .net). To submit complaints please use the official portal of the Commercial Control and Consumer Protection Sector ccas.moci.gov.kw or through the official government application "Sahel".

Local

Psychological effects of exposure to different ideologies, opinions

Concerns raised over inappropriate contents

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Now, more than ever, exposure to different ideologies and opinions is easy through several media platforms. With the wide space of freedom and limited monitoring, inappropriate content has become not just easily accessible, but also pops up on the screen without one's choice. This raises concerns for society's morals, especially among teenagers, as they are in a vulnerable phase of mental and ethical upbringing.

Regarding improper content's effect on individuals' personality, Psychology Specialist Dr Ali Al-Baghliani told Kuwait Times: "Exposure to inappropriate content definitely has an effect on individuals' personality, because people naturally give and receive from others, which takes part in shaping their personality and mentality."

Today, almost everyone can display their thoughts, regardless of whether they are good or bad. "Especially in this social media era, being exposed to unsuitable content has become easier and widespread. Unfortunately, most movies and series are now presenting perverse ideologies and highlighting and giving them greater attention," Baghliani said.

According to him, inappropriate content is not only easily available, but also prevails over other content that has better value and lessons. This raises serious concern when it comes to teenagers.



ers. "What makes the issue worse is that teenagers are not prevented from being exposed to such content, which creates a fertile atmosphere for them to be affected by improper content and consuming its ideas. To avoid being outcast and in order to keep themselves updated to get along with others in their age group, people, especially teenagers, become mindless disciples of trends on social media platforms, which are spreading widely and appearing rapidly," Baghliani said.

Parents are also concerned about raising their children in this era. Om Aziz, a mother of three, is concerned about her children, believing that social

media is competing with her over values and beliefs. "My kids are still young, but I can already see there is a gap between them and myself with regards to values and norms that I have been raised upon," she said.

Despite their young age and immaturity, children are being exposed to wide and deep ideas that can develop their mentality in other directions, which may not adhere to their parents' or their society's standards. "By time, I see raising kids becomes harder, especially teenagers, because they have a lot of curiosity, yet are still vulnerable and unable to think wisely. Convincing my kids about



our values has to go through a long process, because they are being exposed to a diversity of ideologies, of which some are undeniably good, but others are very bad," said Om Aziz.

She is not against using social media, because it teaches people to recognize and coexist with human diversity. "I do not see that avoiding social media platforms is a good decision, because I cannot deny that it has a lot of advantages with the diversity of content that is present. It teaches my kids to accept and acknowledge diversity, which I am not against. However, I worry about some perverse content and bad values,

because my kids are still young and unable to clearly differentiate between what is right and what is wrong and what are the consequences of embracing certain beliefs and disregarding certain values," she pointed out.

As a suggestion for individuals to protect themselves from being easily affected, Baghliani said: "To emancipate ourselves from following unsuitable ideologies, we have to get rid of the pack mentality. We have to stick to our values and respect them in order to fix the direction that content on social media and other media platforms are heading towards, or at least shield ourselves from it."



KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality announced that the sanitation departments in the Kuwait municipal and Hawally governorates have dealt with more than 1,257 reports of floods in a number of areas of the two governorates following the recent rains. The municipality said in a press release on Tuesday that the two departments handled the drainage issue to allow the flow of traffic. — KUNA photos



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi on Tuesday chaired a meeting of the diplomatic and Consular Corps Affairs Council with the participation of Assistant Foreign Ministers of the council during which the topics on the agenda were discussed. — KUNA photos

Ramadan in the past

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The holy month of Ramadan has undergone some changes in recent years compared to the way it was practiced in the past. Researcher Muhammad Yaqoub Al-Bakr explained the preparations by people in Kuwait in the past for the month of Ramadan. According to Bakr, preparation for Ramadan used to start from the month of Rajab – spiritually, mentally and physically – by buying foodstuff and supplies as well preparing homes, diwanias and mosques.

In his book 'Ramadan in the Past of Kuwait', he revealed men in Kuwait saved for Ramadan to buy the supplies needed for their homes and families, either in cash or on debt, until they fulfilled the requirements of the month depending on their financial ability and the number of family members. In the month of Shaaban, a number of wealthy people would hand out zakat to benefit the poor and the needy. The zakat money used to be collected in bags and distributed to the poor in front of diwanias.

Needy people stood in separate lines for men and women to receive the alms. "As a child, I remember we used to see many people waiting for zakat in front of the diwaniya of the merchant Thunayan Muhammad Al-Ghanem, as his diwaniya was next to Omar Ibn Al-Khat-tab School," he said, adding some people were embarrassed to queue for the alms, so the zakat was allocated to them through trustworthy men and women.

Bakr said that merchants of Kuwait sought every Ramadan to renovate mosques by providing them with furnishing and equipment to ready them for tarawih and qiyam prayers, in addition to preparing a decent place for people to break their fast and do itikaf. They provided water, rugs, dates, incense and rosewa-

ter. "In the past, every Kuwaiti mosque had a 'qaro', a rectangular basin filled with water from a well. Young Kuwaitis used to fill that basin with water from the well to help people make wudu," he explained.

People of Kuwait were keen to teach children how to fast from a young age. From the age of seven, parents would start making children fast in order to train them, but if they feel hungry, they would be fed. Bakr also spoke about "warda", explaining children under the age of 10 used to play a game before sunset, where they got a long stick and filled the end of it with matchheads. They then closed it and hit it on the wall to make explosive sounds. They also made a loud sound while moving

their hands over their mouths continuously, howling like wolves to make fasting people hear their voices and eat iftar.

"The reason for this game was because of the lack of microphones and loudspeakers in mosques. Some fasting people were unable to hear the call to prayer due to the distance of some houses from the mosque," he mentioned. Regarding "negsa", Bakr indicated that back then, people used to take some of their daily meals and send them to neighbors, family and relatives. "Also, people used to distribute and exchange dishes amongst neighbors on the night of Monday and Thursday of every week, and that was called 'nafela'. Nafela in Arabic means gift or reward," Bakr pointed out.



Muslim men read the Quran at Fatmah Mosque in the Kuwait City just before daybreak, early on May 9, 2021, during Laylat Al-Qadr, which falls on the 27th day of the holy month of Ramadan. Laylat Al-Qadr, the most important prayer of the fasting month, is the night when Muslims commemorate the revelation of the first verses of the Quran to their Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) through the Angel Gabriel. Muslims spend the night in worship and devotion, praying for the souls of the dead. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

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News in brief

Cancer Patients Fund to help more patients

KUWAIT: Director of Cancer Patients Fund at Kuwait Society for Preventing Smoking and Cancer said the fund is increasing aid to a large number of cancer patients. He said the fund receives cases that apply for assistance monthly and is committed to provide the monetary assistance needed to alleviate their illness. Saleh said the fund receives many calls from cancer patients during Ramadan who commend it for supporting them. The fund, he added, with the grace of Allah and the generosity of its donors, gives monthly assistance for those who have lost their jobs as they get treatment and are bearing the cost of exams and other needs. He said the aid in its various forms improves the patients' psychological health and support them as they go about their lives. Fund officials are continuously working in order to the procedures related to handing aid and paying the tests costs.

Privatization priority lifted for South Saad Al-Abdullah

KUWAIT: The Deputy Director General for Applications and Privatization Affairs at the Public Authority for Housing Welfare, Fatima Naqi, announced that the historical priority for privatization on the South Saad Al-Abdullah project plots has been lifted for applications dated December 31, 2005 and before. Naqi explained in a statement Tuesday that citizens who with housing applications filed on the specified date and before that and who still wish to apply for privatization in the project must apply through the "Sahil" app or visit the authority's external branches at Qurain Center, the Avenues, Tahrir Tower and Jahra Center during the morning period from 10 am to 1 pm. They can also visit the main building only during the evening period from 2 pm until 4:45 pm, starting from Sunday, April 2. She said a team from the authority who have expertise in using the "Sahil" application present at the lobby of the authority's main building to answer citizens' inquiries. They will also direct them on how to use the services provided by the authority through the application during official working hours from 10 am to 1 pm.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Buildings stand tall in downtown Kuwait on a cloudy day. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait judicial institute inks deal with Diplomatic Institute

Agreement to strengthen cooperation between two entities



KUWAIT: Director of the Institute, Chancellor Hani Al-Hamdan and Assistant Foreign Minister for Institute Affairs, Ambassador Nasser Al-Sabeeh on behalf of the Sheikh Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah Diplomatic Institute sign the agreement. — KUNA

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies signed at its headquarters on Tuesday, a memorandum of understanding with the Sheikh Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah Kuwait Diplomatic Institute at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Institute of Judicial Studies said in a press statement that the agreement included strengthening means of cooperation and exchanging experiences in areas of common interest.

According to the institute's website, the Kuwait Diplomatic Institute was established to provide the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with an effective supervision and training tool for the State of Kuwait's diplomatic personnel, to adapt and perform in an ever-changing international climate. The training of new diplomats is the top priority of the Institute. These recruits go through extensive training for a whole year which covers all the necessary skills for excellent diplomacy. The institute also handles the training and qualification of military attaches, and the diplomatic and consular corps of the Ministry.

The Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies is aimed at qualifying judges and nationals working at public prosecution, Fatwa and Legislation department and general department of investigations on practical



KUWAIT: The Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies. — KUNA

and applied basis to qualify them for their career duties. The institute provides training courses, and compiles, files and publishes judicial research. The memorandum of understanding was signed by the Director of the judicial studies institute, and by Assistant Foreign Minister for Institute Affairs, Ambassador Nasser Al-Sabeeh on behalf of the Sheikh Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah Diplomatic Institute. — KUNA



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Royale Hayat recognized as best hospital

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Royale Hayat Hospital has once again been recognized as the best private hospital for the 13th consecutive year by Service Hero and third highest ranking brands in Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) in the state of Kuwait. Every year, the entire Royale Hayat team — management and staff — works hard to not only be the greatest, but also significantly impact the healthcare sector.

Because of its ongoing innovation, empathy, enthusiasm and distinctive attitude and approach toward its customers, the Royale Hayat Team has consistently demonstrated its "dominance" in the healthcare sector, earning it this coveted honor. This is one of the primary outcomes of the arduous efforts and dedication made by a magnificent hospital team to not only continuously strive for and develop a distinctive facility but also to serve as the best health care providers for both general and maternal care.

And there goes the saying, "What you sow is what you reap". Along with the aforementioned prestigious award is another overflowing effort in the selection of the Chairman of Royale Hayat Hospital Pradeep Kumar Handa by Forbes as one of the Top 100 Best Leaders in the field of healthcare in the current year 2023.



KUWAIT: Royale Hayat management and staff celebrate their achievements.





Afghan orphaned toddler reunited with family

Caution in crisis-hit Zionist entity after PM pauses reform



This undated and unlocated handout picture released by Monjasa shows the Liberian-flagged oil tanker, Monjasa Reformer, owned by Monjasa, and technically managed by Montec Ship Management. A Danish-owned Liberian-flagged oil tanker was boarded by pirates over the weekend in the Gulf of Guinea. — AFP

Pirates board Danish ship in Gulf of Guinea

Crew sought refuge in the tanker's citadel when pirates boarded

COPENHAGEN: A Danish-owned Liberian-flagged oil tanker was boarded by pirates over the weekend in the Gulf of Guinea, the owner said Tuesday, adding that contact with the 16 crew members had been lost. The 135-metre-long Monjasa Reformer "experienced an emergency situation" on Saturday about 140 nautical miles west of Port Pointe-Noire in Congo-Brazzaville, owner Monjasa said. The shipowner added that the crew had sought refuge in the tanker's citadel when the pirates boarded, "in accordance with the onboard anti-piracy emergency protocol". A citadel refers to a secured room where the crew of the ship can hide in the event of an attack or when pirates board the ship.

"Onboard communications channels are currently down and we are working with the local authorities to establish communication to understand the situation on board and provide all the support needed by the crew to overcome these dreadful events," Monjasa said.

Monjasa also said that "the vessel was sitting idle" when the incident occurred. Monjasa declined to give any information on the nationalities of the crew members when asked by AFP. According to an official at the port of Pointe-Noire, the ship had arrived in Congolese waters on March 18 and left on March 22, and was in international waters when it was attacked. "Three men took control of the ship and since then the crew can no longer be reached," the official told AFP. Pirates have long been a risk in the Gulf of Guinea -- a major shipping route stretching 5,700 kilometres (3,500 miles) from Senegal to Angola, with Nigerian gangs carrying out most attacks.

But since 2021, shippers say pirates have been raiding farther out in international waters. Their violence and sophisticated tactics prompted pleas from shippers for a more robust foreign naval presence like the mission to curb attacks from Somali pirates a decade ago.

Lull in attacks

Many of the attacks in recent years have been carried out by Nigerian criminal gangs who strike out in speed boats from hideouts in the Delta region to raid vessels. Some gangs have captured larger fishing vessels which they use as a "mothership" base to raid further out to sea.

But the region, which sees a lot of traffic from oil tankers, has also seen a lull in activity recently. According to a report by The Maritime Information Cooperation and Awareness Center (MICA), three ships were attacked in the area in 2022 compared to 26 in 2019. The sharp decline in Gulf of Guinea attacks contributed to 2022 recording the lowest number of incidents of piracy and armed robbery worldwide with 132 cases, according to the annual report from the International Maritime Bureau. Two other attacks were recorded in the region in 2023 so far.

Denmark, home to shipping giant Maersk, sent a

naval frigate in 2021 to patrol the waters, after the country had pushed for a stronger international naval presence. The Absalon-class Danish frigate Esbern Snare -- equipped with a helicopter and around 175 marines onboard -- was sent to patrol the waters between November 2021 and March 2022, a period when the risk of attacks was higher.

The gulf has periods of calmer seas when it is easier for pirates to race out from hidden bases on the Nigeria coast to raid commercial vessels offshore and kidnap crew. In November 2021, sailors from the frigate were involved in a firefight resulting in the deaths of five suspected pirates.

A suspected Nigerian pirate was transferred to Denmark to receive medical care after the skirmish. After needing to have his leg amputated the man, who has also applied for asylum in Denmark, was put on trial for and convicted of endangering the lives of the Danish sailors. — AFP

Seven dead, more than 60 missing in Ecuador landslide

ALAUSI: Rescuers searched Monday for more than 60 people reported missing after a landslide triggered by months of heavy rain killed at least seven people in southern Ecuador. The mudslide happened overnight Sunday into Monday, burying dozens of homes and injuring 23 people in the village of Alausi in Chimborazo province, some 300 kilometers (180 miles) south of Quito, officials said.

Shocked residents, many in tears, stood waiting for news Monday as crews with shovels, pick axes and sniffer dogs dug through the debris to get to survivors stuck between sheets of twisted metal and split tree trunks.

"Five are buried here," Manuel Upai, a 40-year-old laborer, told AFP, referring to relatives of his as he stared at the muddy ground. Alausi, a village of some 45,000 people surrounded by green hills, also saw several public buildings hit by the avalanche, which damaged roads and closed three schools.

"I managed to escape with about 15 minutes to spare," survivor Jose Aguasaca told local TV network Teleamazonas, saying he was rushing to get things out of his house before the mud came. Ecuadoran President Guillermo Lasso said on Twitter that firefighters from neighboring areas had been rushed to the village to help people affected by the tragedy. — AFP



LONDON: A Ukraine Army recruit prepares to enter a trench as they take part in a trench warfare training session with members of Britain's and New Zealand's armed forces personnel, at a Ministry of Defence (MOD) training base in southern England on March 27, 2023. — AFP

West's Ukraine response exposes double standards

PARIS: Outrage over Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year has exposed the West's "double standards" towards human rights abuses throughout the world, Amnesty International said on Tuesday. In its annual world report for 2022, Amnesty pointed to what it described as the West's silence on Saudi Arabia's rights record, repression in Egypt and Zionist entity's treatment of the Palestinians.

"The West's formidable response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine underscored double standards, exposing in comparison how inconsequential their reactions have been to so many other violations of the UN Charter," said Amnesty secretary general Agnes Callamard as she presented the group's world report in Paris.

Russia's full-scale assault, which began on February 24, 2022, "gave us an all too rare view of what becomes possible when there is political will to act" as the West closed ranks to support Ukraine, she added. Many countries imposed sanctions on Moscow and opened their borders to Ukrainian refugees after the invasion, while the International Criminal Court launched an investigation into war crimes in Ukraine. But Amnesty said the conflict had highlighted shortcomings in responding to abuses in other parts of the globe.

'Deafening silence'

Amnesty, fellow rights watchdog Human Rights Watch and a UN special rapporteur have concluded that Zionist entity's treatment of Palestinians amounts to apartheid, or segregation on grounds of race, a charge the Zionist state denies.

Last year, "successive Zionist governments rolled out measures forcing more Palestinians from their homes, expanding illegal settlements, and legalising existing settlements and outposts across the occupied West Bank", Amnesty said. But despite this—and despite Zionist forces killing "at least 153 civilians, including dozens of children" in the occupied West Bank—Western nations failed to demand an end to that "system of oppression", it said.

In Egypt, the group said, thousands of human rights defenders, journalists, protesters and alleged dissidents lingered behind bars, and "torture remained rampant". Although European countries welcomed Ukrainian refugees, they did not show the same kindness to people fleeing fighting in Syria, Afghanistan and Libya, Amnesty said.

The United States also welcomed Ukrainians, "yet under policies and practices rooted in anti-Black racism, it expelled more than 25,000 Haitians between September 2021 and May 2022, and subjected many to torture and other ill-treatment", the group said.

Amnesty also stressed the failure of global institutions "to respond adequately to conflicts killing thousands of people, including in Ethiopia, Myanmar and Yemen". "The deadliest conflict in 2022 was not in Ukraine but in Ethiopia," said Callamard, "away from world's attention". — AFP

Belgium arrests eight in 'terror attack' probe

BRUSSELS: Police have detained eight people during investigations into an alleged jihadist plot to commit "terrorist attacks" in Belgium, authorities said Tuesday. Raids were conducted late Monday on homes in the capital Brussels, the port city of Antwerp and the border town of Eupen, the federal prosecutor's office said. A judicial source told AFP those arrested were "very young radicalised people" suspected of belonging to a jihadist movement. The prosecutor's statement cited two inquiries, one led by federal police in Brussels and the other by an investigating magistrate in Antwerp.

Both led to house raids on Monday, and the statement said: "There are links between the two files, but further research will have to show to what extent the two groups were intertwined." The Antwerp inquiry led to five arrests, including one in Eupen, near the German border, and the Brussels probe led to three arrests. The statement said at least five of those detained were suspected of planning to "commit a terrorist attack in Belgium". In both cases the suspects have been detained but not yet charged. Sources spoke of more than one possible attack, but the statement said the eventual target or targets had not yet been determined.

The parallel investigations triggered a raid in Molenbeek, an inner-city Brussels district with a large North African population that has been the focus of some previous terror probes. The investigations in Antwerp and Brussels initially focused on "two young adults suspected of violent radicalism", state broadcaster RTBF reported.

'Rise in radicalisation'

Between 2016 and 2018, Belgium faced a wave of deadly jihadist attacks. The country's biggest ever criminal trial of nine suspects accused of taking part in the March 2016 suicide bombings that killed 32 people is underway in Brussels.

These bombings were carried out by the same jihadist cell that killed 130 people during the November 2015 attacks in Paris, helping to prepare the attacks from hideouts in Belgium. Monday's arrests mark the first such terror inquiry to be made public in Belgium since November, when a Brussels man was charged with terrorism offences after stabbing a police officer to death. Officials had however warned of the continued danger. The threat of terrorism "still remains, with planned attacks that are regularly prevented by our services", Belgian federal police chief, Eric Snoeck, told RTBF on March 24. — AFP



ALAUSI: A rescuer with a sniffer dog search for victims following a landslide in Alausi, Ecuador on March 27, 2023. At least 7 people have died, and 60 other are still missing after a landslide in the south of Ecuador caused by months of heavy rainfall, the government said. — AFP

International

Founder of Afghan girls' school project arrested in Kabul: UN

'The damage that closure of schools causes is irreversible and undeniable'

KABUL: The founder of a project that campaigned for girls' education in Afghanistan has been detained by Taliban authorities in Kabul, his brother and the United Nations said Tuesday. The Taliban government last year barred girls from attending secondary school and later university, making Afghanistan the only country in the world to issue such restrictions on education.

Matiullah Wesa, the head of PenPath was stopped by men outside a mosque after prayers on Monday evening, his brother Samiullah Wesa told AFP. "When Matiullah asked for their identity cards, they beat him and forcefully took him away," he said.

"He has been arrested for his activities in the education sector. He never worked with anybody else, neither with the previous government. He only worked for PenPath." The UN mission in Afghanistan confirmed in a tweet that Matiullah had been arrested. Taliban officials have so far not responded to requests for comment.

PenPath campaigns for schools and distributes books in rural areas, and has long dedicated itself to communicating the importance of girls' education to elders in villages, where attitudes have been slowly changing.

Since the ban on secondary schools for girls, Wesa has continued visiting remote areas to drum up support from locals. "Men, women, elderly, young, everyone from every corner of the country are asking for the Islamic rights to education of their daughters," he said in a tweet, hours before he was arrested. Last week, as the new school year started without teenage girls, he vowed to continue his campaign.

"The damage that closure of schools causes is

irreversible and undeniable. We held meetings with locals and we will continue our protest if the schools remain closed," he tweeted. Taliban officials have so far not responded to requests for comment.

'Raise your voice'

The Taliban government have imposed an austere interpretation of Islam since storming back to power in August 2021 after the withdrawal of the US and NATO forces that backed the previous governments. Taliban leaders have repeatedly claimed they will reopen schools for girls once certain conditions have been met.

They say they lack the funds and time to remodel the syllabus along Islamic lines. Taliban authorities made similar assurances during their first stint in power—from 1996 to 2001—but girls' schools never opened in five years. In a recent speech in Geneva, UN special rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett said that the Taliban authorities' policy was to "repudiate the human rights of women and girls" in Afghanistan.

"It may amount to the crime of gender persecution, for which the authorities can be held accountable," he said. The order against girls' education is believed to have been made by Afghanistan's supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada and his ultra-conservative aides, who are deeply sceptical of modern education—especially for women.

As well as sparking international outrage, it has stirred criticism from within the movement, with some senior officials in the Kabul government as well as many rank-and-file members against the decision.

Matiullah is the second leading educator to be arrested in recent months for campaigning for girls'

One man was shot dead in Kisumu, the head of the city's main hospital told AFP, the second fatality reported since the demonstrations kicked off the previous Monday, when a university student was killed by police fire. The protesters had defied a warning by the Inspector General of Police Japhet Koome that the demonstrations were "illegal".

'Stop this madness'

Hundreds of looters descended on former president Uhuru Kenyatta's vast farm on the outskirts of Nairobi, stealing sheep and cutting trees before setting a section of the property on fire. Kenyatta backed Odinga's candidacy in the presidential poll in August last year after falling out with his former deputy Ruto.

Gangs also targeted Odinga's gas company Spectre International Ltd in Nairobi. The violence has sparked worry among Kenyans, who are already grappling with skyrocketing inflation and a jobs crisis. "Stop this madness," the Daily Nation newspaper headlined on Tuesday. The National Cohesion and Integration Commission, a peace-building body set up after the 2007-2008 post-election clashes that killed more than 1,100 people, also called for dialogue "as a means of moving our country forward."

"The wanton destruction of cars, mosques, churches etc is not acceptable and is hereby condemned in the harshest terms possible," commission chairman Samuel Kobia said in a statement on Tuesday. Koome said two police vehicles were destroyed in the chaos and 23 officers injured. "Our investigation into the destruction and injuries caused has begun, and those found culpable

Maryam was the youngest of about 200 Afghan children to be evacuated alone on the flights that carried tens of thousands out of Afghanistan. "We took them in and gave them specialised care," said the Qatari official, speaking on condition of not being identified. "We worked with UNICEF to see if there were any family members." The UN children's agency was quickly besieged with frantic requests from families back in Afghanistan looking for missing relatives.

DNA tests

Niazi and the other three orphaned children were back in Afghanistan, where the Taliban installed a government for what they named the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Six weeks after the massive Kabul bomb blast, UN sleuths thought they had the baby's identity. "They contacted us to carry out DNA tests," the Qatari official said.

Transporting the genetic test results between Doha and Kabul to seek a match took more time, as Niazi waited for months to get a passport from the new Taliban authorities so he could get his family to Qatar. Now arrived in the Gulf state, Niazi said he would start the process of moving to the United States, together with his wife and the total of eight children now in their care.

"We just want to be somewhere safe," he told AFP. Social workers will give him and the siblings gradually increased access to Maryam, so they can slowly get to know each other. Niazi said the little girl will keep her new name because it is the one she answers to.

Other children at the Qatar orphanage have also been reunited with family members. A three-year-old boy there has joined his father in Cana-

in Korean. The North has long sought the technology to "miniaturise" a nuclear warhead allowing it to be mounted on its intercontinental ballistic missiles to threaten the United States. Diagrams on the walls in the photos indicate this could be possible with the Hwasan-31.

Kim was briefed by officials from the North Korean nuclear weapons institute, the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported. He called on them to expand "the production of weapon-grade nuclear materials" for an "exponential" increase in the North's arsenal.

Kim also "put spurs to continuing to produce powerful nuclear weapons" that he said would strike fear into the North's enemies, KCNA said. Experts warned the unveiling of a potential tactical nuclear weapon did indeed show key signs of technical progress, and could indicate an imminent nuclear test.



SPIN BOLDAK: File photo shows, Matiullah Wesa, head of PenPath and advocate for girls' education in Afghanistan, speaks to children during a class next to his mobile library in Spin Boldak district of Kandahar Province. —AFP

education. In February, the authorities detained veteran journalism lecturer, Ismail Mashal, after local media showed him carting books around Kabul and offering them to passersby.

It followed a live appearance on television in which he tore up his degree certificates to condemn the Taliban government's restrictions on

women's right to work and education. UN special rapporteur Bennett expressed alarm at Matiullah's arrest: "His safety is paramount & all his legal rights must be respected."

"Raise your voice for him," added Pashtana Zalmai Khan Durrani, the head of Afghan non-profit education provider Learn. —AFP

Appeals for calm after violent Kenya protests

NAIROBI: The African Union on Tuesday led appeals for calm and political dialogue after anti-government protests in Kenya turned violent, with police firing tear gas and looters going on a rampage. Opposition leader Raila Odinga has called for regular protests every Monday and Thursday, accusing President William Ruto of stealing last year's election and of failing to control the surging cost of living. AU Commission head Moussa Faki Mahamat voiced "deep concern" at the violence and appealed for calm.

"The chairperson urges all stakeholders to exercise calm and engage in dialogue to address any differences that may exist in the supreme interest of national unity and reconciliation," Faki's office said in a statement.

Faki "expresses deep concern at violence... which has resulted in loss of life, damage of property and the interruption of certain economic activities," his office added. On Monday, police fired tear gas in Nairobi and the western city of Kisumu—an Odinga stronghold—to disperse crowds, aiming canisters at cars carrying journalists in the capital.

Officers also used tear gas and water cannon as Odinga's convoy moved through a congested neighbourhood in Nairobi, sending people running for cover.

Afghan orphaned toddler reunited with family

DOHA: An Afghan toddler who was bundled onto an evacuation flight from Kabul in 2021 after her parents died in a bomb blast has been reunited with relatives at a Qatar orphanage. The little girl, now believed to be about 21 months old and given the name Maryam by the orphanage, saw her uncle Yaar Mohammad Niazi and her brother and two sisters again for the first time. "I did not know if we would ever find her again, and now I am overcome" with emotion, said Niazi, aged about 40 and with four children of his own. "When I held her, I just told myself 'she is alive.'" The tearful reunion ended a desperate search for Maryam since the chaotic days of August 2021 when the Taliban took control of the Afghan capital, sparking a panicked mass flight.

Maryam's parents were among those trying to flee with their four children when they were killed in a huge bomb blast and gun battle at Kabul airport that claimed 183 lives on August 26. The little girl, whose birth name was Aliza, was only weeks old at the time her mother and father died in the attack that was claimed by the local chapter of the Islamic State group. Amid the carnage, a teenage boy grabbed her and carried her onto a US military flight taking Afghans and stranded expatriates to Doha, a Qatari official said. She found a new home in Qatar's Dreama orphanage, while her elder brother and two sisters stayed back in Afghanistan.

Kim calls for ramping up 'weapon-grade nuclear material'

SEOUL: Leader Kim Jong Un called for North Korea to expand production of "weapon-grade nuclear materials", state media said Tuesday, as Pyongyang unveiled what appeared to be a new, smaller tactical nuclear warhead.

Kim was shown in state media images surrounded by uniformed generals inspecting a row of compact green warheads identified as the "Hwasan-31", which means volcano



NAIROBI: Opposition supporters gather stones and tyres during clashes with Kenya Police Officers at the informal settlement of Mathare in Nairobi, Kenya on March 27, 2023. —AFP

shall face the law," he said in a statement.

Police said they had received reports of the unrest at Kenyatta's and Odinga's properties and had "responded swiftly and prevented further crimes". Ruto, who is on a four-day trip to Germany and Belgium, last week urged his rival to halt the demonstrations. "I am telling Raila Odinga that if he has a problem with me, he should face me and stop terrorising the country," he said Thursday. Many Kenyans are struggling to put food on the table, battling high prices for basic goods as well as a plunging local currency and record drought that has left millions hungry. —AFP



DOHA: Afghan toddler Maryam, who was bundled onto an evacuation flight after her parents were killed in a huge bomb blast at Kabul airport in 2021, reunites with her sisters at an orphanage in Doha on March 27, 2023. —AFP

da after a Qatari diplomat recognised him from a missing-child photo. Most of the other children were aged at least eight, and many have now either joined relatives or been adopted by families in the United States, Canada or Europe.

At one stage thousands of Afghans were in temporary shelters in Doha waiting for countries to take them. Now there are only about 15 left, the Qatari official said. Hundreds more Afghans are still at a US military base in Qatar, many of them more recent arrivals, still awaiting the chance to find new homes abroad. —AFP

It came as a US Navy carrier strike group arrived in South Korea on Tuesday. Relations between the two Koreas are at one of their lowest points in years, with Seoul and Washington ramping up joint military drills as North Korea conducts ever more provocative weapons tests while blaming the South for the deteriorating security situation.

"The current hard-line approach is likely aimed at justifying their tests for new weapons and a nuclear test in the future," said Cheong Seong-chang, a researcher at the Sejong Institute. "North Korea unveiled a significantly miniaturised tactical nuclear warhead this time," he said.

"The possibility that North Korea will carry out a seventh nuclear test with these tactical nuclear warheads as a next step has increased," Cheong told AFP.

Pyongyang has got into a pattern of "tit-for-tat" missile launches and tests to counter US and South Korean

News in brief

Indonesia's volcano erupts

JAKARTA: The offspring of Indonesia's infamous Krakatoa volcano erupted several times on Tuesday, sending a huge volcanic ash tower some 2,500 metres (8,200 feet) into the sky. Mount Anak Krakatoa, which means Child of Krakatoa, erupted four times, officials said, with the biggest followed by another that sent a column of smoke and ash 1,500 metres above its crater. "This is part of an eruption phase associated with the formation of a new body for the volcano," Oktory Prambada, an official at the Centre of Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation, told AFP. In 2018, its crater partly collapsed when a major eruption sent huge chunks of the volcano sliding into the ocean, triggering a tsunami that killed more than 400 people and injured thousands. There were no immediate reports of injuries or damage on Tuesday. Prambada said the volcano's alert status remained at the second-highest level after the series of eruptions, with authorities imposing an exclusion zone of five kilometres (3.1 miles) around the crater. —AFP

UN calls for release of Ho

GENEVA: The United Nations on Tuesday urged the Hong Kong authorities to release Albert Ho, one of the city's best-known rights activists, saying his health was in a critical condition. Ho, 71, formerly led the now-disbanded Hong Kong Alliance, which organised an annual candlelight vigil for more than three decades to mourn the victims of China's bloody crackdown at Tiananmen Square in 1989. He was arrested by Hong Kong's national security police over alleged witness tampering, a police source told AFP. The lawyer is already facing up to a decade in jail over an "incitement to subversion" charge under the national security law, which Beijing imposed on Hong Kong in 2020 after widespread and sometimes violent pro-democracy protests. —AFP

Massive tax fraud case

PARIS: French authorities raided five banks on Tuesday as part of an investigation into massive suspected cases of tax fraud and money laundering. Some 150 investigators, along with six German prosecutors, conducted searches in Paris and the financial district La Defense, the financial prosecutor's office said in a statement. The raids follow five preliminary investigations that were opened in December 2021 in connection with money laundering and aggravated tax fraud related to dividend payments, the statement said. The operation "required several months of preparation", the statement said. A spokesman for Societe Generale confirmed to AFP that the French bank was being searched by authorities, but he said he did not know the reason. —AFP

military exercises, which represents a huge—and unsustainable—financial outlay for the impoverished country, one expert said. "North Korea warned of an overwhelming response against each South Korea-US joint training, but looking at the number of missiles fired, they can't continue this forever," Park Won-gon, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul, told AFP.

"If so, the seventh nuclear test will mark some kind of an end, they will declare themselves a nuclear power, and they will turn to negotiating with the United States," he said. The North Korean military also conducted a firing drill on Monday, simulating a nuclear attack using tactical ballistic missiles, KCNA said in a separate report, part of a record-breaking streak of tests over the past year. "North Korea is sending a very coherent message. They are fighting for recognition as a perfect nuclear power," Park said. —AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29, 2023

NIC holds financial analysts conference for year ended on 31 December, 2022

National Investments Company records KD 8.7m net profit in 2022

KUWAIT: On March 21, 2023, the National Investments Company held its Analysts Conference for the fiscal year ending on 31 December, 2022. The conference witnessed the participation of Girish Nair, NIC's Chief Financial Officer; Bashar Khan, Senior Vice President – Investment Banking Sector; Al-Muthana Al-Maktoum, Executive Vice President – Wealth Management Sector, who presented a brief about the company and shed light on the positive financial results achieved in 2022, which proved that NIC was able to achieve stable financial performance, thanks to its strategy and dynamic diversification to achieve value aimed at providing sustainable returns and maximizing shareholder value.

Girish Nair presented a detailed report about the company's financial position, emphasizing that the company has recorded a net profit of KD 8.7 million and earnings per share equivalent to 11 fils. Through shareholders' equity, the company's comprehensive income has reached KD 9.4 million, and the total comprehensive income reached KD 18.1 million for 2022.

During the comparative period of 2021, the company recorded a profit of KD 24.4 million, earning per share of 31 fils, and a profit of KD 25.6 million as other comprehensive income. The total comprehensive income amounted to KD 50 million.

Girish pointed out that during 2022, the return on average equity and average assets based on net profit amounted to 4.2 percent and 3.3 percent, respectively and the leverage ratio reached 24.9 percent and the liquidity ratio reached about 56.3 percent during that period. And that the total assets and shareholders' equity attributable to the parent company for 2022 amounted to KD 271 million and KD 198.8 million, respectively, compared to KD 290.6 million and KD 216.8 million, at the end of 2021.

Earnings per share for the current year amounted to 11 fils. In line with NIC's commitment to delivering consistent and positive returns to shareholders, the Board of Directors has recommended a dividend of 28 fils per share for the year ended 31 December, 2022, through Retained earnings and part of the voluntary reserve, subject to approval by the General Assembly and other regulatory bodies.

NIC's assets

Nevertheless, the company's total owned assets and shareholders' equity decreased by 7 percent to reach KD 271 million compared to KD 290.6 million at the end of 2021, while the company's total assets under management increased to reach KD 1.121 billion as of December 31, 2022, compared to assets



Al-Muthana Al-Maktoum



Bashar Khan



Girish Nair

- Earnings per share equivalent to 11 fils
- Total assets under management witnessed a 3% increase to KD 1.121bn

of KD 1.09 billion during the previous year 2021, an increase of 3 percent.

NIC's performance

Presenting and analyzing the main drivers of NIC's performance, Girish has referred to the total income during 2022, which amounted to KD 19.9 million; a primary contributor to this is a dividend income of KD 8.5 million as well as the management, brokerage, and advisory fee income of KD 9 million. The total expenses in 2022 amounted to KD 10.4 million, compared to KD 11.1 million in 2021.

Income from management, brokerage, and advisory fees grew by 19 percent to reach KD 10.9 million by the end of 2022, compared to KD 9.1 million during the same period in 2021. This growth was mainly driven by brokerage revenues of Al-Waseet Financial Business Company, with an increase of 11 percent and an increase in consulting fees and other income by 755 percent.

Performance of NIC's main sectors

At the conference, Girish also reviewed the achievements of NIC's leading sectors. He stated that the MENA securities sector had taken advantage of Boursa Kuwait's new authorized tools, provided Market Maker service to 11 companies, and benefited from some investment opportunities by directing clients' funds and portfolios toward qualified sectors and companies. This has led to achieving positive returns for the company's investment funds.

Wataniya Fund yielded 3.05 percent and yields of Mawarid, Al-Mada, Zajil, and Al-Darij were -1.84 percent, -5.09 percent, 3.00 percent, and 0.25 percent, respectively as of 31 December, 2022. The company's discretionary

portfolios generated a return of 3 percent higher than the benchmark, while our flagship local mandate produced a return of 8.9 percent as of December 31, 2022, increasing interest rate environment has negatively affected the performance of equity markets.

Girish also shed light on the remarkable achievement of the Investment Banking Sector at NIC; it has played the lead coordinator role, listing advisor, and a joint placement manager and subscription agent in several listings, such as the listing of Ali Alghanim and Sons Automotive Company, covering more than 10.8 times the offering value, to be the fastest listing process in Boursa Kuwait's Premier market. Also, the subscription to increase the capital of National Consumer Holding Company and Alrai Media Group, and the merger of Boubyan Petrochemical Company, Educational Holding Group, Safat Investment Company, and Capcorp Investment Company. Also, the company is in the final stages of negotiating an IPO, listing authorization for a Kuwait-based company, a sale and acquisition mandate for an oil and gas company in Kuwait, and a robust set of cross-sector proposals in Kuwait.

NIC's Alternative Investments Department has invested in an Amazon facility and a real estate fund based on retail services assets in the United States of America. The company has also invested in several direct venture capital opportunities in a leading global financial technology company, Mezzanine investment for multi-family development in the United States of America, and other financial products. It continues exploring new investments and direct investment opportunities.



Girish Nair

As for the Real Estate Investments Sector, it continued to improve the collection rates and occupancy of the real estate portfolio. The company achieved collection rates of 73 percent and occupancy rates of 87 percent during the fourth quarter of 2022. The sector also launched the automated real estate system, expanded the number of clients and secured new real estate portfolios and is also working on renovation of several managed real estate portfolios, and renewal of Al-Wataniya Resort management contract.

Business development

Bashar Khan, Senior Vice President of Investment Banking Sector, said that NIC's strategy focuses on four key elements to grow the business and enhance its competitive position, those are: building assets under management, utilizing technology, and attracting competencies, improving governance, and developing the investment banking leadership in the market segment.

Building assets under management works on three main initiatives, where advisory services are developed in a structured manner, focusing on venture capital and international real estate products. To achieve this, the company maintains a strong team and a group of professional bankers that can support growth; in addition, a solid reputation is being built to bring joint investment opportunities to the company's investors, such as Boursa Kuwait, Kuwait Foundry, FINCO, and Amazon.

He went on to say that the second element of NIC's strategy focuses on utilizing technology and attracting competencies; the company puts much effort into digital resilience and investing in the digitization of processes and the development of work environments; in line with that, NIC has launched new digital channels for customers such as online trading, customer platform, and WhatsApp customer relationship management application, while harnessing operational efficiencies through outsourcing processes and working with

co-consultants to leverage their capabilities, knowledge, and experience.

The third element of our company's strategy is improving governance, one of the key reasons behind upgrading NIC to the first market status on Boursa Kuwait, demonstrating our commitment to increasing transparency and control, in addition to updating our risk management framework to include quantitative and qualitative metrics in line with international best practices. Finally, the fourth element in the strategy is building and developing investment banking leadership in the mid-market segment of investment banking with a focus on medium-sized clients, where the company could attract new key clients, complete high-profile transactions, and build specialized teams in capital markets, mergers and acquisitions, and venture capital that were identified as key growth areas.

Seizing opportunities

On the other hand, Bashar Khan shared many examples that reflect the company's ability to seize opportunities and execute them in the market, such as Boursa Kuwait, which was an idea of investing in obtaining a strategically important asset with strong, recurring and sustainable cash flows, due to its leading position in the market. A controlling stake in Boursa Kuwait was acquired in February 2019. The company's direct stake reached 14.4 percent since the acquisition as Boursa Kuwait underwent an IPO and listing process, and today's market price has reached twice the purchase cost. The investment has achieved a total return of 9.67 times based on the current market values.

"Kuwait Foundry is another example," added Khan, adding that the investment's significance was to acquire the pricing asset with an intrinsic value much greater than the prevailing market value, where 20 percent was received in January 2019. The necessary work was done to achieve weight. Most of the company's shares were recovered in this transaction with a total multiplier return of 1.22 times on a market value basis. A third good example is Amazon Kitzingen, where NIC has financed this facility in Germany. The project has been leased for 15 years and is expected to generate a cash return of 10 percent over 15 months. A fourth case is a Mezzanine investment in Germany to develop the Amazon Contwig project, where the same developer of Amazon Kitzingen develops the project, which will generate a return of 11 percent over 12 months.

Concluding the conference, NIC has confirmed constant communication with customers and shareholders while keeping them informed of developments in the company through the quarterly analyst conference.

Alibaba to split into 6 groups

BEIJING: Alibaba announced Tuesday that it would split into six business groups in one of the most significant overhauls of a leading Chinese tech firm to date. The Hangzhou-based firm is one of China's most prominent tech giants, with business operations spanning cloud computing, e-commerce, logistics, media and entertainment, and artificial intelligence.

Daniel Zhang, the company's chairman and CEO, said in a statement that the restructuring would enable each separate business to pursue its own fundraising and public listing plans.

Alibaba claimed the moves were intended to "unlock shareholder value and foster market competitiveness". Under the new arrangement, each of the six newly established units will be managed by its own CEO and board of directors.

A key exception to the restructuring is Taobao Tmall Commerce Group—the operator of one of China's top online purchasing platforms—which will remain wholly owned by Alibaba Group. Zhang will remain in his post as CEO of the company, although day-to-day operations of the individual business units will be ceded to the new management bodies. The company said the new structure would bring greater market visibility to the value of its diverse business operations.

These changes will not affect Alibaba shares currently listed in New York and Hong Kong, the firm said. Aiming for a more "nimble structure", the reorganization will also involve cuts to the firm's middle



HANGZHOU, China: This file photo taken on May 27, 2022 shows staff members walking past the logo of Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba at its headquarters in Hangzhou, in China's eastern Zhejiang province. — AFP

and back office functions. Recent years have seen the internet giant face unprecedented headwinds as Beijing has imposed tighter restrictions on the domestic tech industry.

Combined revenue at China's internet companies shrank by just over one percent to 1.46 trillion yuan (\$212 billion) in 2022, the first contraction in almost a decade, according to data from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology. Alibaba founder Jack Ma has kept a low profile since late 2020, when a speech he made attacking Chinese regulators was followed by Beijing pulling the plug on Alibaba affiliate Ant Group's planned IPO. Having ballooned into a sprawling corporate behemoth since its founding in 1999, the company has been seeking new ways to drive growth and reinvigorate its development. —AFP

Bahrain economy grows 4.9% in 2022

KUWAIT: The Bahraini economy grew in 2022 on annual basis by 4.9 percent, the highest growth since 2013. The ministry of finance said in a report that the positive outcome, in 2022, came as a result of overall growth of the domestic non-oil sectors. By contrast,

Qatar ranks 6th globally in terms of trade surplus in 2022

DOHA: Qatar was ranked in sixth place in terms of trade surplus in 2022, up five spots from 2021, with a trade surplus of \$97.5 billion. According to a report by the Russian "RIA Novosti" news agency, Qatar came ahead of Germany, which dropped to seventh place globally with a surplus of \$85.34 billion, 2.5 times lower than 2021 results.

Under the title 'China and Russia become world leaders in trade surpluses,' the report by the Russian "RIA Novosti" news agency stated that China and Russia became the world leaders in terms of trade surplus in 2022 and broke their records for that indicator.

According to the study by RIA Novosti, during 2022, China's trade surplus rose by 30 percent and

the oil sector declined by 1.4 percent.

Moreover, the non-oil sector posted the highest contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) reaching 83.1 percent, during 2022, due to successful economic diversification ventures. The hotels' sector posted the highest growth, 13.9 percent, followed by public services, 6.7 percent, real-estate and business services, 5.5 percent. The manufacturing industries grew by 4.9 percent, while communication and transport grew by 4.5 percent. —KUNA

reached its peak point in the entire history of observations – \$877.6 billion. Russia increased its surplus by 1.7 times to a record \$333.4 billion, allowing it to rise to second place among the largest economies in the world, while Saudi Arabia came third ahead of Norway and Australia.

The study was based on data from the national statistical services of the 60 largest economies in the world from January till December. The final sample includes economies that, as of mid-March, disclosed data for 2022 and received a trade surplus.

Qatar's trade balance surged 64.9 percent on annual basis with the support of increased Qatari exports. According to the Planning and Statistics Authority (PSA), in 2022, Qatar recorded a trade balance surplus of QR354.85 billion compared to QR215.25 billion in 2021. Qatar's trade balance performance was supported by the increase in Qatar's exports by 50.2 percent to reach QR476.71 billion compared to QR317.42 billion in 2021. Qatar's imports increased by 19.3 percent to reach QR121.86 billion in 2022 compared to QR102.17 billion in 2021. — Agencies

Business

New strike turmoil grips France as Macron remains defiant

Macron's ratings near record low amid French protests

PARIS: Fresh strikes and protests roiled France on Tuesday with a record number of police deployed, as President Emmanuel Macron remained defiant over a pensions reform that is sparking turmoil in the country. The day of action is the tenth since protests began in mid-January against the law, which includes raising the retirement age from 62 to 64.

Last Thursday saw the most violent clashes yet between protesters and security forces, as tensions erupted into pitched battles on the streets of Paris and police reported 457 arrests across France and injuries to 441 officers. Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said 13,000 members of the security forces would be deployed -- 5,500 of them in Paris alone. The number, a record, was justified by "a major risk to public order".

Nearly two weeks after Macron rammed the new pensions law through parliament using a special provision sidestepping a vote in the lower house, unions have vowed no let-up in mass protests to get the government to back down. A state visit to France by Britain's King Charles III, which had been due to begin on Sunday, was postponed because of the unrest.

Macron on Monday instead met Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne, other cabinet ministers and senior lawmakers for crisis talks at the Elysee Palace. "We need to continue to hold out a hand to the unions," a participant in the meeting quoted Macron as saying, although the president rejected any revision of the pensions law. In a conciliatory gesture, Borne has scheduled talks over three weeks with members of parliament, political parties and local authorities, while still hoping to meet union leaders.

She is expected to offer worker representatives new measures designed to ease the impact of the pensions law targeting physically demanding jobs, conditions for older workers and retraining. But early reactions were not promising for the prime minister.

Geneva watch show opens in throes of banking turmoil

GENEVA: The Geneva watch fair opened Monday buoyed by booming growth in the watchmaking industry, but insiders warily eyed the banking sector turmoil, evoking painful memories of the 2008 financial crisis. Industry professionals were upbeat on the first day of the Watches and Wonders annual fair, where 48 prestigious brands including Rolex, Patek Philippe and Cartier were showing off their new creations.

The fair, which runs until Sunday with the weekend open to the public, kicked off after two years of record gains for Swiss watchmakers. Exports soared by 31.2 percent in 2021, after a strong rebound in sales in the United States and the Middle East. And the return of luxury tourism to Europe in 2022 after two years of COVID disruptions pushed exports up a further 11.4 percent to 24.8 billion Swiss francs (\$27.1 billion). The growth has also continued so far this year, with exports up by another 10.6 percent during the first two months of 2023, according to statistics from the Federation of the Swiss Watch Industry.

But optimism at the Geneva fair was somewhat dampened by the angst surrounding the turbulence currently lashing the banking sector. Switzerland—whose vibrant banking scene is a key part of the country's economy and culture—has been rocked to the core after the government strong-armed the nation's biggest bank UBS into swallowing up its troubled competitor Credit Suisse, in a bid to ward off a larger global banking crisis.

'Global repercussions'

The upheaval has brought back difficult memories for Swiss watchmakers. After the 2008 round of bank failures sparked a global financial crisis, Swiss watch exports plunged 22.3 percent in 2009 -- more even than during COVID-dominated 2020. "I am unable to say what the global repercussions will be," Thierry Stern, the boss of Patek Philippe, told AFP.

"But I still think it should be easier than in 2008-2009." For the moment the difficulties remain "very localized" as Patek Philippe "sells all over the world", said Stern, who is counting in particular on Asia to ensure growth in 2023. Jerome Lambert, man-

WB warns of 'lost decade' of growth on China-led slowdown

WASHINGTON: An anticipated economic slowdown in China is likely to drag global growth down to its lowest level this century, the World Bank said Monday, proposing measures to prevent a "lost decade" of growth. The world's potential growth—its maximum long-term growth rate without sparking inflation—will slow to an average annual rate of just 2.2 percent this decade, the World Bank said in a statement.

A confluence of factors, including the lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the ongoing risks to the financial sector in Europe and the United States, are all acting to slow the global economy, which the bank expects to expand by just 1.7 percent this year.

The Washington-based multilateral lender predicts that China's economy will help keep the global economy from entering a recession due to an annual growth rate of five percent this year. But its ability to keep the world's economy afloat will wane as its growth slows in the years ahead, the bank said.—AFP

'Cooling off'

Laurent Berger, the head of the moderate CFDT union, said he would accept the offer of talks but only if the reform was first "put to one side". On Tuesday, he also called for the appointment of a mediator between unions and the government saying this would be "a gesture in favor of cooling off, and finding a way out". Hard-left CGT union leader Philippe Martinez said: "The aim is the withdrawal" of the pensions law.

But government spokesman Olivier Veran said the law was no longer up for discussion. "It's in the past now," he said. The protest movement against the pension reform has turned into the biggest domestic crisis of Macron's second mandate. Meanwhile, Macron's personal ratings are approaching their lowest recorded level over his handling of pension reform and protests, a poll indicated Tuesday. The survey by the Odoxa polling group said only 30 percent of respondents thought he was a "good" president, down by six percentage points in a month, while 70 percent judged him negatively. Macron's popularity is approaching the low reached in December 2018 during so-called "Yellow Vest" anti-government demonstrations, when only 27 percent of people held positive views of the president.

'Not going to make it'

"I agree with the protesters," said Yasmine Mounib, a 19-year old student in Lille, northern France. "But they should keep some trains running for students. This is costing me my education," she said, adding that she was going to miss her 8 am (0600 GMT) class although she got up at 4.

Carole Guibert, a high school teacher in Douai, also in northern France, was also worried. "I told my pupils that I would teach my class, but I'm not going to make it," she said. The head of the French Catholic



BORDEAUX, France: Protesters hold a banner reading "Good salaries for a good pension" during a demonstration in Bordeaux, southwestern France, on March 28, 2023. — AFP

Bishops' Conference, Eric de Moulins-Beaufort, said Tuesday violence accompanying protests was "an alarming symptom of the state of the social fabric" in France. Veran, meanwhile, said that the government was a "bulwark against illegitimate violence".

Protesters in Nantes, western France, blocked access roads to the city, creating 45 kilometers (30 miles) of congestion early Tuesday. Mass transit in Paris was heavily affected, with traffic both on metros and suburban trains disrupted.

Rubbish collectors in the capital are continuing their strike, with close to 8,000 tonnes of garbage piled up in the streets as of Sunday. Adding to the blockage, workers at an incineration plant just outside Paris stopped work on Monday. About 15 percent of service stations in France are short of petrol because of refinery strikes. France's civil aviation au-

thority told airlines to cut some of their scheduled flights for the rest of the week.

The Louvre in Paris, the world's most visited museum, was closed on Monday after workers blocked entry to the attraction. French industrial action comes a day after a major strike brought much of Germany's air traffic, rail service and commuter lines to a halt as workers demand wage hikes in the face of brisk inflation. It also comes only days after protesters and police engaged in major clashes at a protest over water storage facilities in Sainte-Soline in southwestern France.

French police have come under severe criticism for heavy-handed tactics and the IGP, the internal affairs unit of the French police, has launched 17 investigations into incidents since the pensions protests began.—AFP



GENEVA: Participants stand at the booth of luxury Swiss watchmaker Ulysse Nardin, on the opening day of the luxury watch fair 'Watches and Wonders Geneva', in Geneva on March 27, 2023. — AFP

aging director of the luxury giant Richemont—owner of the Cartier, Piaget and IWC brands—acknowledged that the turnaround in demand in 2009 had been "very rapid" and very "severe".

"But it was a big lesson for us," he said, explaining that the group had since taken distribution in hand. Edouard Meylan, owner of the Haulteule brand, nevertheless believes that "lights are turning red".

"If there is a financial crisis, it will have a very big impact on our sector," he told AFP, especially since with supply difficulties some watchmakers have gone from "very large orders from their suppliers" and risk finding themselves with large stocks if the market turns. Other analysts believe there is little reason to panic just yet. "For now, I would expect the impact to be muted," Jon Cox, an industry analyst with the Kepler Cheuvreux financial services company, told AFP, adding that he is still expecting to see growth this year of around 10 percent in exports.

Full steam ahead for China?

However, the Credit Suisse debacle, which threatens tens of thousands of jobs in the financial sector, could take its toll. "The financial community is an important part of the buying public for

the watch industry and there could be impact in local markets, such as Switzerland, on domestic business," Cox warned, adding though that "this is likely to be offset by tourism". For now, Swiss watchmakers are looking to the Chinese market to pick up pace and ensure their 2023 export growth. When demand was exploding in other markets as they rolled back pandemic protection measures, the watch market in China remained subdued as the country ploughed on with its zero-COVID rules, and then saw infection numbers explode when it abruptly ended that policy late last year.

But watchmakers and experts are expecting that to change with the reopening of the Chinese economy. Jean-Philippe Bertschy, an analyst with Swiss investment managers Vontobel, warned however that "a return to normalcy" for Chinese watch sales—traditionally Swiss watchmakers' largest market—will take time.

On the positive side, he told AFP he was confident, given "the level of savings the Chinese had set aside during the health restrictions". As for tourism, he cautioned that while Chinese travellers may quickly flock to Asian destinations, "it will take more time before they return to Europe," due to the continued limited air transport capacity and visa backlogs.—AFP

Fed: SVB collapse 'textbook case of mismanagement'

WASHINGTON: The collapse of Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) was a "textbook case of mismanagement" which requires tougher banking regulation, according to prepared remarks by a top Federal Reserve official. "SVB failed because the bank's management did not effectively manage its interest rate and liquidity risk," the Fed's vice chair for supervision Michael Barr said in remarks released ahead of a Senate hearing Tuesday. He added that its failure "demands a thorough review of what happened, including the Federal Reserve's oversight of the bank."

Silicon Valley collapsed on March 10 after taking on excessive interest-rate risk, leaving it exposed when the Fed began hiking rates to tackle rising inflation. Its "concentrated" business model, which relied heavily on a closely-interconnected network of venture capitalists, also left it vulnerable to a bank run by concerned depositors, Barr added in remarks released Monday.

"The bank waited too long to address its problems, and ironically, the overdue actions it finally took to strengthen its balance sheet sparked the uninsured depositor run that led to the bank's failure," he said.

Oversight relaxed

Barr said the passage of the 2019 Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act, led the Fed to reduce its regulation of smaller banks, including SVB. The "less stringent" standards put in place by the Fed after the Republican-backed bill's passage meant SVB was subject to "less frequent stress testing" and "less rigorous capital planning and liquidity risk management standards."

Barr said SVB's failure "illustrates the need to move forward with our work to improve the resilience of the banking system." The Fed will propose a number of reforms to increase capital and long-term debt requirements for banks of SVB's size, he added. "We will need to enhance our stress testing with multiple scenarios so that it captures a wider range of risk and uncovers channels for contagion, like those we saw in the recent series of events," he said, adding that changes to liquidity rules may also be required. "To improve the resiliency of the financial system."—AFP



BOAO, China: This photo taken on March 27, 2023 shows journalists working at the media center ahead of the Boao Forum for Asia in Boao, south China's Hainan province. — AFP

China ramping up bailout loans to 'Belt and Road' countries: Report

BRI countries such as Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Turkey get loans

BEIJING: China has handed out \$240 billion worth of bailout loans to 22 developing countries at risk of default over the past two decades, with the trend accelerating in recent years, a report said Tuesday. Almost all the funds went to Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) countries such as Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Turkey—mostly low- and middle-income nations that have received Chinese loans for infrastructure development, according to the study.

The 40-page report by the US-based research lab AidData, the World Bank, the Harvard Kennedy School and the Kiel Institute for the World Economy showed bailout loans had accelerated between 2016 and 2021, with Beijing doling out 80 percent of its rescue lending in that period. Around the world, BRI nations have come under strain as soaring inflation and interest rates, compounded by the lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, have hurt their ability to repay debts.

The bailouts allow the countries to extend their loans and remain solvent, the report said. China says more than 150 countries have signed up to the BRI, a trillion-dollar global infrastructure push unveiled by President Xi Jinping a decade ago. Beijing says the initiative aims to deepen friendly trade relations with other nations, particularly in the developing world.

But critics have long accused China of luring lower-income countries into debt traps by offering huge, unaffordable loans. "China has devel-

oped a system of 'Bailouts on the Belt and Road' that helps recipient countries to avoid default, and continue servicing their BRI debts, at least in the short run," the report said.

Opaque

In comparison to the International Monetary Fund and the vast liquidity support extended by the US Federal Reserve, China's bailouts remain small but are growing quickly, according to the AidData report. "Beijing has targeted a limited set of potential recipients, as almost all Chinese rescue loans have gone to low- and middle-income BRI countries with significant debts outstanding to Chinese banks," its authors wrote. The report warned that Chinese loans tend to be more opaque compared with other international lenders of last resort—and often come at an average interest rate of five percent, compared with a typical two percent rate on an IMF loan.

Many such agreements were so-called "roll-overs", in which the same short-term loans are repeatedly extended to refinance debts about to come due. China's foreign ministry hit back at the criticism on Tuesday, accusing "some people" of "hyping up so-called Chinese 'debt traps' and opaque loans, and slinging mud at China, something that we absolutely do not accept".

"China... has never forced any party to borrow



Workers take down a Belt and Road Forum panel outside the venue of the forum in Beijing in this file photo. —AFP

money, has never forced any country to pay, will not attach any political conditions to loan agreements, and does not seek any political self-interest," spokeswoman Mao Ning said at a regular press

briefing. China this month agreed to restructure its loans to Sri Lanka, clearing the way for an IMF bailout of the island nation that lists Beijing as its biggest bilateral creditor. —AFP

5X campaign by BEC

KUWAIT: Bahrain Exchange Company (BEC), specialists in worldwide money transfers and currency exchange, has launched its latest promotional campaign '5X'. This campaign allows customers to multiply their remittance five times every week. Running from the March 26 to December 31, 2023, the campaign will be open to all customers that make any money transfer transaction from one of its 63 branches, plus customers who send money online through BEC's secure online money transfer service BEC online through website or App will also be eligible to take part.

Customers will be entered into the weekly draw for the transactions made between each draw dates throughout the campaign period. The draws will be held every Sunday throughout the campaign except for the last draw which will be on Tuesday, 2nd January, 2024.

Mathews Varughese, BEC CEO commented on the campaign, "We are delighted to launch a special campaign '5X' which allows our customers a chance to win 5 times their remittance. This campaign is one of a kind ever launched where customers can win 5 times more every week for the next 40 weeks. We wish all our customers happy Ramadan and great year ahead."

BEC currently has 63 branches across Kuwait including 3 branches at Kuwait International Airport in T4 and T5 terminals respectively. BEC specializes in sending money around the globe safely and quickly to over 46,000 locations in 30 countries. Its global reach has extended to over 200 countries and territories through its partnership with international remittance companies such as MoneyGram, EzRemit and TransFast.

Consortium agrees \$12bn deal for Origin Energy

SYDNEY: A North American consortium says it has agreed to take over Australia's Origin Energy in a deal valued at Aus\$18.7 billion (\$12 billion), vowing to slash carbon emissions. Origin shares crept a little higher in early Sydney trading Tuesday, after its board unanimously called on shareholders to back the binding offer by a consortium led by Canada's Brookfield and US investor EIG.

If approved by regulators and shareholders, Brookfield will take over Origin's major power generation and energy retail operations, while EIG's MidOcean will snap up the gas and LNG side of the business, the firms said on Monday evening. "As the energy transition gathers pace, what's needed is increasingly clear: faster deployment of large-scale renewables, the accelerated, responsible retirement of coal generation, and an interim, supportive role for gas as the dependable back-up fuel," said Brookfield Asset Management chair Mark Carney, a former Bank of England governor.

"Brookfield is determined that the new Origin Energy Markets will lead the way in all respects at this critical moment for the Australian economy," Brookfield said it planned to invest at least Aus\$20 billion over the next decade in building renewable energy and storage in Australia. —AFP

Jazeera Airways AGM approves 50% cash dividend for H2 2022

KUWAIT: The shareholders of Jazeera Airways approved the Board of Directors' recommendation to distribute cash dividends equivalent to 50 percent of its capital which is 50 fils per share, a total of KD 11 million for the second half of 2022. This was announced at the company's Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) held at its headquarters in Kuwait earlier on Tuesday.

For the first half of 2022, interim cash dividends of 30 fils per share were distributed bringing the total cash dividends distribution for full year 2022 to an unprecedented 80 fils per share. The EGM also approved an amendment to the Article of Association allowing the AGM to delegate the Board of Directors to declare and distribute interim dividends, which facilitates the process of dividend distribution.

In February 2023, Jazeera Airways announced record profits of KD 20.1 million for the financial year 2022. In the last 10 years, Jazeera has returned a total of KD 107.6 million in cash to shareholders, which is

equivalent to five times its paid-up capital.

Jazeera Airways reported record full year earnings at 91.28 fils per share, an increase of 174.4 percent over the same period in 2021. This was supported by passenger traffic of 3.6 million, an increase of 247.5 percent over the last comparable period. Load factor at 77 percent was higher by 10.2 percent. Operating revenues for 2022 rose by 126.5 percent to KD 182.1 million and operating profit was higher by 148.4 percent to KD 26.8 million.

Jazeera Airways Chairman Marwan Boodai said: "For 2022, Jazeera Airways announced the highest profits in the history of our airline, despite a year marred with high fuel prices that added significantly to our costs. This highlights our stringent cost management strategy, strong business plan and hardworking team that drove this success across our network. We are pleased to share our success with our investors and shareholders and look forward to continuing this dynamic growth in the coming future."



Marwan Boodai



2023 outlook

In 2023, Jazeera Airways will continue to stay focused on its expansion plans for its fleet and destinations network. The airline will be launching direct flights to several new destinations in the summer including Munich, Belgrade and Tirana, in addition to resuming Prague and Sarajevo operations. With the new cities added to Jazeera's network, the airline now serves 62 destinations across Europe, the Middle East, Central & South Asia and Africa.

Jazeera has also collaborated with Saudi partners to announce their intent to establish a low-cost airline in the Kingdom that will be based at the King Fahad International Airport in Dammam.

Huawei Watch Buds: The high-end 2-in-1 earbuds and smartwatch

KUWAIT: In today's world, technology is advancing at a rapid pace, and wearable devices have become an essential part of our daily lives. With the ever-increasing demand for convenience, smartwatches and earbuds have gained immense popularity. However, Huawei has taken things a step further by designing a product that combines the two into one device - the Huawei Watch Buds. This 2-in-1 device has taken the market by storm with its high-end watch and earbuds design, AI noise cancellation calls and high quality sound, all-day health management, comfortable wear and easy controls, professional exercises mode in addition to Bluetooth calling and we are excited to announce that it is our editor's choice. In this article, we will explore the Huawei Watch Buds in detail and explain why it is the perfect device for anyone looking to simplify their life and get the best of both the smartwatch and earbuds worlds. Available from March 30 in Kuwait.

Watch and earbuds come into one

Huawei created the industry's first smartwatch with a magnetic pop-up cover design, which hosts a pair of TWS earbuds within it. The Huawei Watch Buds adopts a highly cohesive structural design, using custom miniaturized precision components and advanced manufacturing processes bring a new and convenient experience. Huawei Watch Buds is housed in a refined

steel case with improved hardness and corrosion-resistance. Through exquisite hand- and satin-polishing, the watch brings an elegant sheen that creates an aura of atmospheric beauty around the aesthetics. With a vast high-definition display with a 1.43-inch, 466 x 466 resolution, AMOLED high-definition color screen, it flawlessly complements the stainless-steel case, showing a new level of sophistication. The dazzling diamond-facet button with 710 Clous de Paris pattern present a unique metallic luster with delicate texture. It comes with a Full-grain leather strap made from top-layer calfskin, softly milled with exquisite textures and subtle luster adding an elegant and stylish touch.

AI noise cancellation

In terms of sound quality, The Huawei Watch Buds earbuds are equipped with quad-magnetic full-Range Planar Diaphragm drive, enabling the small unit to deliver powerful, full-frequency and high-resolution audio, allowing users to listen to rich sound details. In addition, Huawei Watch Buds earbuds also support Triple Adaptive EQ. The sound is optimized in real time according to the differences in ear canal structure, wearing status and volume level, customizing the sound to achieve the best full-frequency listening experience for the users.

Other than listening to music, taking calls are another essential part of owning earbuds. The Huawei Watch Buds are small yet mighty - built with dual microphones with audio pickup and a bone conduction sensor. The two microphones can pick up both vocals and ambient sound while the bone conduction sensor accurately identifies sounds through reverberations in the user's bones and absorbs their voice, distinguishing



it clearly from ambient noises. This is then processed by a deep neural network call (DNN) noise reduction algorithm that effectively cancels noise and enhances vocals to deliver clear calls.

The unique 2-in-1 aspect of the Huawei Watch Buds does not simply put earbuds into the smartwatch. In addition to ensuring that both aspects are compatible, there is also the need to carefully polish the design to ensure overall comfort when in use. The earbuds come in a lightweight octagonal cylindrical design with dimensions of 21.8x10.3x10.3mm. The weight of each earbud is roughly 4g. It is easy to wear and can be seamlessly placed back into the watch. With its cylindrical design, the earbuds provide a comfortable audio experience. At the same time, the earbuds adopt an in-ear design without any ear handles. Compared with traditional earbuds, the gravity centre of the Huawei Watch Buds earbuds is closer to the ear canal making it more stable and will not be accidentally knocked off, making it the perfect fit for daily use, and exercising.

Markaz launches first of its kind 'GCC Momentum Fund'

KUWAIT: Kuwait Financial Centre (Markaz) announced the launch of its newest 'GCC Momentum Fund,' the first fund of its kind to invest in the GCC markets. The Fund's strategy is to invest in shares with high momentum score and tracks the S&P Momentum GCC Composite Index.

The fund is the first in the GCC to implement factor-investing, whereby the index provider follows a transparent process to select stocks in line with best international practices, considering the level of liquidity and market depth. The GCC Momentum Fund offers our individual and institutional investors exposure to stocks with the best risk-adjusted returns.

The "GCC Momentum Fund" launch reflects Markaz's ongoing effort to offer its clients innovative investment tools and solutions to improve risk-adjusted returns to its investors. The Fund's methodology has been developed internally by Markaz's MENA Equities technical team, who spent over two years analyzing and doing due diligence to test and



Mohammed A Al-Ghannam



Fahad S Al-Rushaid

prove the concept's validity in collaboration with the index provider S&P.

Commenting on the Fund, Senior Vice President Fund & Portfolio Management, MENA Equities, Mohammed A Al-Ghannam, said: "We are pleased to launch the "GCC Momentum Fund", as the first passive Fund in the GCC that adopts earning momentum methodology. The process was developed by conducting a thorough historical analysis and comparing several investment methodologies factoring in stock performance and risk. The momentum strategy has increasingly attracted the demand of investors. In the past ten years, the S&P GCC Momentum In-

dex outperformed S&P GCC Composite Index by 1.7 percent per annum. The Fund is catered to investors seeking to invest in the GCC markets and with an investment objective to achieve a long-term favorable risk-adjusted return. The Fund's investors will benefit from the compounding effect by investing long-term. The Fund is a gateway to Markaz's "factor strategies."

Also commenting on the Fund, Vice President MENA Equities at Markaz, Fahad S Al-Rushaid, said: "The Markaz's momentum methodology selects stocks according to factors and foundations that are in line with the global markets' practices. To enhance liquidity and volatility, the stocks are selected from those that collectively compose 50 percent of the market capitalization of the GCC markets. The constituents of the index are reviewed every six months. Markaz GCC Momentum Fund offers a lower expense ratio than other GCC equities funds."

Markaz has continuously and effectively innovated investment products and financial services, and this is evident through the development of unique investments to cater to the various investor needs. Amongst these products are "Mumtaz," the first domestic mutual fund, and "MREF", the first real estate investment fund in Kuwait, as well as "Forsa Financial Fund", the first options market maker in the GCC since 2005.

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Lifestyle

Danish artist hatches epic global troll hunt



Danish recycling artist Thomas Dambo reacts as he sits on his latest "troll" sculpture 'The Moon Mother' (Måne Mor), at an unspecified location in Denmark.



A Danish artist famous for his towering wooden trolls sent fans on a worldwide quest Monday to find his latest creation.

Thomas Dambo has created a complex treasure hunt to find "Moon Mother", his 100th troll sculpture, who he said has "crawled into the most secret spot in the forest" to give birth. His giant figures inspired by Scandinavian folk tales are often located off the beaten track to tempt children and adults to venture out into nature, and to show what you can do with recycled materials.

To find "Moon Mother", fans will have to piece together codes placed near his existing trolls across the world. "I decided to make a super secret one and make it an intricate treasure hunt that leads you around all the other ones I've made through the years," Dambo told AFP.

His giant troll sculptures are dotted around the globe from a German forest to a South Korean mountain. But most are in the United States and his native Denmark. The former graffiti artist and rapper dedicated himself to epic "trolling" back in 2014, after making his first two trolls for a music festival.

'It's hard'

His sculptures have been visited by about 10 million people, he said. Each is unique, with its own name, design and personality. Not all are still standing -- Hurricane Maria in 2017 claimed a troll called "Hector Protector" in Puerto Rico. "In all of Scandinavia, we have trolls in our mythology and in our folklore," said Dambo of the ugly mythological creatures that are said to live under

bridges. "I grew up with many different fairy tales." Almost all of the Copenhagen-based artist's trolls can be found using an online "Troll Map". But fans looking for his latest will have to use QR codes placed on metal plaques next to his other 99 creations and enter them on the online map.

Once fans have found all the codes -- something that will require collective effort -- a riddle will reveal the location of the new troll. "It's a little bit cryptical, a little bit hard," Dambo admitted.

'Trash is a treasure'

An AFP reporter was driven in a car with blacked-out windows to a secret location to see "Moon Mother" taking shape recently.

Members of Dambo's team carefully attached long wooden branches to the six-metre-

tall sculpture to create the troll's flowing hair. "We're going for a wild, untamed hairstyle," one worker smiled.

Dambo went to extreme lengths to keep the site a secret, not telling his own team the exact location until the final stages and using different paths every day so as not to leave tracks.

His works are made almost entirely of recycled materials. The face of "Moon Mother", for instance, is made from oak scraps from a Danish flooring company. "I like to build all my things out of trash because I think that trash is a treasure," he Dambo said. He said he hoped his art "can be a part of the movement that shows people that trash is not disgusting and it's not worthless. It's something that has the value to bring thousands of people out to find it as a treasure." —AFP



A metal plaque reading name and number of the latest "troll" sculpture 'The Moon Mother' (Måne Mor) by Danish recycling artist Thomas Dambo is pictured before being mounted near the sculpture at an unspecified location in Denmark.



Danish recycling artist Thomas Dambo's latest "troll" sculpture 'The Moon Mother' (Måne Mor), is pictured at an unspecified location in Denmark.



Members of Danish recycling artist Thomas Dambo's team stand beside the artist's latest "troll" sculpture 'The Moon Mother' (Måne Mor), at an unspecified location in Denmark.



DAY OFF FOR MONA LISA AS STRIKING WORKERS SHUT LOUVRE

The Louvre in Paris, the most visited museum in the world and home to the Mona Lisa, was shut to visitors all day Monday after workers striking over pension reforms blocked the entrance, AFP correspondents said.

The action came ahead of a new day of national strikes and protests in France against President Emmanuel Macron's pension reforms.

The Louvre is closed on a Tuesday but, unlike many other museums in France, is traditionally open on a Monday "Due to public strikes, the

Musee du Louvre is not able to be open for now. We thank you for your understanding," it said in English on Twitter.

Dozens of employees of the museum and other cultural sites stood outside the museum holding banners opposing the pensions reform and waving flags of their unions. The museum was visited by almost eight million people last year, with long queues normally snaking outside its iconic pyramid entrance as visitors seek to view da Vinci's Mona Lisa and other masterpieces. —AFP



Employees hold banners and unions' flags as they block the entrance of the Musee du Louvre to denounce government's controversial pension reform, in Paris. —AFP

Italy curator slams 'ignorance' in US Michelangelo row

The head of the Italian museum housing Michelangelo's David criticised Monday "twisted minds" who equated nudity with pornography, after a US teacher was forced out for showing pupils the statue.

Cecilie Hollberg, director of the Accademia in Florence, told AFP the row showed a "huge ignorance" about art history, and was the product of "misplaced puritanism".

A school principal in Tallahassee, Florida, was forced to resign last week following complaints that her class of 11 and 12-year-olds was shown a picture of the naked statue of David. One parent reportedly said the image was pornographic.

"This is absolutely astonishing because we are talking about the icon of the Renaissance, Michelangelo's David, which has been recognised across the world for generations," Hollberg said in a telephone interview. She said the statue was hailed for its beauty and "purity", adding: "One must have a twisted mind to combine nudity with what was suggested, because obviously there is a big difference between nudity and pornography."

The director decried "a huge ignorance" about history and the history of art which, "more than anything, is quite sad". Florence mayor Dario Nardella, for his part, condemned the US row as "simply ridiculous".

Michelangelo's David, sculpted between 1501 and 1504 from a single block of marble, depicts the Biblical hero David, who killed the giant Goliath with his sling, and is considered an emblem of the Italian Renaissance. "Anyone who feels disturbed by this has a serious problem with the roots of Western culture," Hollberg said.

Parental rights

She warned that "we are really losing our connection with our culture and history... to think that once in Greece, at the Olympic Games, everyone was naked!" The Tallahassee Classical School principal, Hope Carrasquilla, was told to resign or be sacked.



This file photo taken on September 15, 2003 shows the world's most famous statues in the world, Michelangelo's David during its restoration at the Galleria del'Accademia in Florence where the statue has been kept since 1873. —AFP

Barney Bishop, chairman of the school board, confirmed that the art class "was an issue, along with many others".

But he told CNN that "we aren't trying to ban the picture". He said David's image was used every year in the Renaissance Art class. But this year, contrary to procedure, parents had not been notified in advance. While almost all the parents in the class concerned were happy with the lesson, he said, the school did receive some complaints.

"We think it's beautiful, but we are going to make sure the concept of parental rights is supreme in Florida and at our charter school," Bishop said.

In a nationwide US debate, Florida emphasises parental rights in education -- a policy driven by Governor Ron DeSantis, who is forecast to run against Donald Trump to become the Republican Party candidate for the 2024 presidential election.

"It saddens me that my time here had to end this way," Carrasquilla told a local newspaper, Tallahassee Democrat. —AFP



The wooden pier surrounded by sea waters.



A tourist cruise ship.



Visitors entertain themselves in various sections of the harbor.

Doha ancient harbor is distinguished with a strategic location in the heart of the Qatari capital. The harbor is close to Waqif market, museums and other tourist attractions. There are various services at the port location for travelers and tourists, with a chain of restaurants and cafes. —KUNA



Tourists walk on tiled lanes snaking among the harbor buildings.



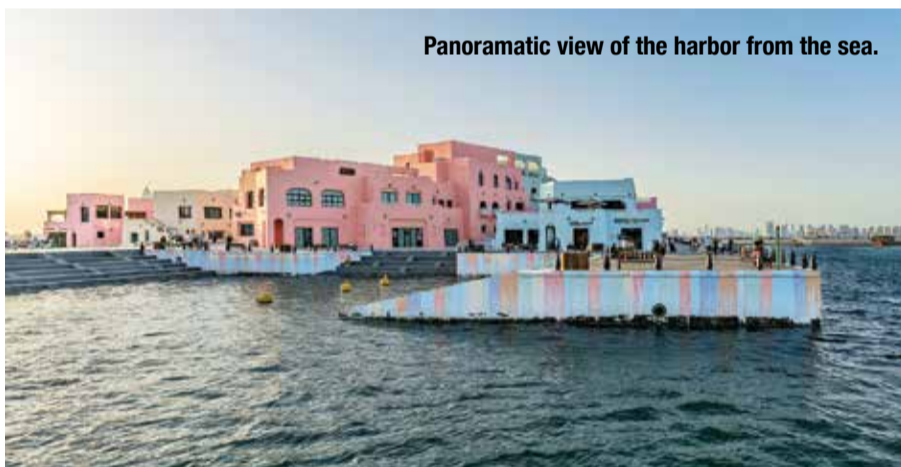
The colored buildings in harmonious colors.



The fish market



A boy playing with the sea gulls.



Panoramic view of the harbor from the sea.



An alley at Doha port.

Zip line row erupts at Rio's iconic Sugarloaf Mountain



View of a Sugarloaf Cable Cars during a demonstration against proposals to create a zip line attraction at Sugarloaf Mountain in Rio de Janeiro.



Protestors demonstrate against proposals to create a zip line attraction at Sugarloaf Mountain in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.



The chance to speed down a zip line from the top of Rio de Janeiro's breathtaking Sugarloaf Mountain should easily draw huge crowds of thrill-seekers to the iconic tourist destination.

But not if Grisel Osorio Hor-Meyll has anything to say about it. Hor-Meyll, a psychologist, was one of dozens of people who protested Sunday against the construction of a 755-meter (2,477-foot) zip line that promises to let tourists whizz down from the top of Sugarloaf, the dramatic mountain at the mouth of the Brazilian beach city's Guanabara Bay. "It's not right. It's going to disfigure a UNESCO World Heritage Site," said Hor-Meyll, a member of the environmental group Ecological Action and an activist in the "Movement for a Sugarloaf with no Zip Line."

"It's bad for the city, and bad for conservation," she told AFP. The company that manages the Sugarloaf visitors' area, Parque Bondinho, launched work on the zip line project last year, and plans to finish it by mid-2023.

It says the attraction will be a "unique and environmentally sustainable experience": four zip lines connecting Sugarloaf—elevation 396 meters (1,299 feet) above sea level—to the neighboring peak, Urca—elevation 220 meters (722 feet) -- and transporting visitors at speeds of up to 100 kilometers (62 miles) an hour.

Critics warn the project could harm the local environment and wildlife, already suffering from the impact of helicopter flights for tourists and night-time parties on the mountain. They also detest the idea of drilling holes to plant the zip line cables in the mountains, which are protected national monuments in Brazil and an iconic part of Rio's cityscape, which UNESCO declared a World Heritage site in 2012. "They're not just rocks. They're living things," said Hor-Meyll.

'Tip of the iceberg'

Sugarloaf's tropical-green peaks offer stunning panoramas of Rio's famed beaches, Christ the Redeemer statue and other postcard-perfect landmarks. The park comprising Sugarloaf and Urca receives around 1.6 million visi-

tors a year, most of whom make the trip up on a cable car known as the "bondinho," completed in 1913.

Parque Bondinho, which manages the cable car, argues the zip line will have limited impact on the landscape, saying the cables are thinner and vibrate less than the ones already linking Sugarloaf and Urca for the cable car system. The company said in a statement it has fulfilled all regulatory requirements, conducted consultations with civil society groups and obtained all necessary permits for the project.



View of a Sugarloaf Cable Car during a demonstration against proposals to create a zip line attraction at Sugarloaf Mountain in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AFP photos

That did not assuage protesters at the base of the mountain, who brandished signs reading "SOS UNESCO" and "Down with zip lines." An online petition against the project has collected more than 11,000 signatures. Activists say there should have been a broader public discussion on the zip line, which the group warned in a statement is "just the tip of a gigantic iceberg." That is a reference to an even bigger development project the authorities are currently evaluating, which would include building stores, a concert venue and a nightclub on the mountains.

"It's a horrific, awful thing," said artist turned protester Regina Costa de Paula, 67. "It would kill the mountaintop." Businessman Hans Rauschmayer, a 57-year-old German now living in Rio, said the company is "using Sugarloaf as if it were private property." "But actually, it's a treasure that belongs to Rio, to Brazil, to the entire world," he said. —AFP

Lifestyle

UK's Queen consort Camilla: From palace margins to royal limelight



In this file photo taken on March 13, 2023 Britain's King Charles III and Britain's Camilla, Queen Consort attend the Commonwealth Day service ceremony, at Westminster Abbey, in London. —AFP photos



In this file photo taken on February 23, 2023 Britain's Camilla, Queen Consort (right) and Britain's King Charles III (left) share a joke at a reception at Clarence House in London.



In this file photo taken on June 3, 2022 Britain's Prince Charles, Prince of Wales (left) and Britain's Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall (right) leave after attending the National Service of Thanksgiving for The Queen's reign at Saint Paul's Cathedral in London.

Queen Consort Camilla is taking her first steps on the international stage as wife of the British monarch, marking the end of a long and sometimes bumpy journey from palace margins to royal limelight.

Camilla, 75, will be at King Charles III's side when he makes his first state visit of his reign to Germany on Wednesday. In the turbulent 1990s, Camilla was vilified as "the other woman" in Charles's marriage to his first wife, Princess Diana. But she has slowly won acceptance — if not adulation — for her steadfast support for her husband and an unshowy dedication to good causes.

Although her popularity ratings remain lower than most other senior royals, she is increasingly seen by the public as a warm and down-to-earth figure. Royal commentator Richard Fitzwilliams said the public now took a "benign view of Camilla" nearly three decades after Charles and Diana's very public separation and divorce.

The royal couple were "very, very well suited", being of a similar age and with a "similar sense of humour, similar friends", he told AFP. "She was everything Diana wasn't, of course, but I think what has got across is that she is very supportive in a pretty quiet way."

'Quiet dignity'

Since the death of Charles's mother, Queen Elizabeth II, last year, the causes Camilla has supported for years have been given a much bigger platform. They include the arts, promoting literacy and



In this file photo taken on November 09, 2022 Britain's King Charles III and Britain's Camilla, Queen Consort are welcomed to the City of York during a ceremony at Micklegate Bar during their visit to York, northern England.

supporting survivors of rape and sexual assault. "She's been very low profile in the UK in recent decades. Now she has a moment to come more into the spotlight," said the former UK ambassador to France, Peter Ricketts.

Camilla is a "strong woman" and "a very warm person" who "believes passionately in her charitable convictions", he added. One cause closest to her heart is the Royal Osteoporosis Society which she has been president of for more than 20 years. Both her mother and grandmother died from the crippling bone-weakening condition.

"She has done a lot of good work (but) it's hard



In this file photo taken on March 13, 2023 Britain's King Charles III and Britain's Queen Consort Camilla host the annual Commonwealth Day Reception at Buckingham Palace in London.

to know how much of that has permeated to the public," Fitzwilliams said, adding she had a "quiet dignity". Camilla's improved press was largely a reflection of "the genuine person" rather than a reported palace spin operation aimed at making her more acceptable to the public as Charles's queen, he said. The royal seal of approval for Camilla came last year when the late queen said it was her "sincere wish" that Camilla be known as Queen Consort after her death. That finally put to rest suggestions she might instead hold the lesser title of Princess Consort -- something Charles had long fought against.

Traditional upbringing

Camilla Rosemary Shand was born in London on July 17, 1947, and had a traditional upbringing among Britain's monied upper classes. Self-confident and attractive, she first met Prince Charles as a young woman at a polo match in the early 1970s, and they later became close. However, believing Charles would never propose, she married British Army officer Andrew Parker Bowles in 1973. The couple had two children: food writer Tom Parker Bowles and art curator Laura Lopes. She also has five grandchildren.

Later, as the royal marriage crumbled, Charles and Camilla rekindled their relationship. Camilla and Andrew Parker Bowles divorced in 1995, a year before Charles and Diana. After Diana died in a Paris car crash in 1997, the couple made their first public appearance together in 1999.

Windsor wedding

They married on April 9, 2005, in a civil ceremony in Windsor, drawing a cheering crowd of 20,000 on the streets before a religious blessing.

Camilla has since been widely accepted by the royal family, including Charles and Diana's eldest son Prince William. In his tell-all biography "Spare", published in January, their younger son Harry revealed that he and William begged their father not to marry his former mistress. In the end, however, he said, they "pumped his hand (and) wished him well". "We recognised that he was finally going to be with the woman he loved, the woman he had always loved," he wrote. —AFP

Meet Prince Eduard, King Charles' German cousin



In this family handout picture released on March 21, 2023 and dated summer 1987 Germany's Prince Eduard von Anhalt (right) sits next to his cousin, then Britain's Prince Charles, on the sidelines of a polo tournament in Windsor. —AFP photos



Germany's Prince Eduard von Anhalt, a cousin of King Charles III, poses in front of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin.

They first laid eyes on each other as children at Buckingham Palace and later crossed paths on the polo field at Windsor. Prince Eduard von Anhalt, descendant of an ancient Germanic line, likes to regale listeners with tales of his close hereditary ties with the British royal family and especially King Charles III.

However, the 81-year-old distinguished aristocrat will be just another face in the crowd of journalists covering the event during his illustrious relative's official visit to Berlin from Wednesday. "I hope to be able to talk to him briefly at the ceremony in the Bundestag (lower house of parliament)," said the man who made his name in Germany as a society journalist and television commentator on royal events.

"I'm the only relative (of the Windsors) who gets in front of a camera and explains things in detail" about the royal family, he told AFP in the German capital. This journalistic role, which he took on after his family was dispossessed of its castle and property in the east German state of Saxony-Anhalt under Communism, is "more important" than attending the big festivities. During the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II last year, to which von Anhalt says he was invited, he chose instead to comment for television.

Invitations to Windsor

The link between his lineage — from the ancient House of Ascania,



Germany's Prince Eduard von Anhalt, a cousin of King Charles III, poses in a Berlin hotel.

which helped create Berlin — and the British royal family is not exactly direct.

It derives from the marriage of his great uncle Aribert of Anhalt, who died in 1933, to Princess Marie-Louise, a granddaughter of Queen Victoria, herself a great-great-grandmother of Elizabeth II, the prince explained. It was this great aunt, who died in 1936, who invited his mother and siblings to Windsor outside London, where the imposing British royal residence is located. "At the time, we children could go to Buckingham Palace but not my mother because

she was divorced," he recalled.

If this rule still applied today, "Buckingham Palace would be virtually empty", he added with a laugh. He met Charles, seven years his junior, at one of these occasions, "when we were children". After that, "we bumped into each other several times" during his many visits to Germany, often "incognito", or when both were attending British polo tournaments. And in the 1990s, Charles agreed to become patron of Woerlitzer Park in Saxony-Anhalt. Charles visited the park, the largest

English garden complex in continental Europe, in 2019, the prince added.

French rosé

Von Anhalt also fondly remembers the time spent with Charles' father, Prince Philip, who came from Danish-German stock. "He often organised events and was also happy to welcome German relatives," he said. "He was very funny. He taught me, for example, to drink French rosé because it is much more digestible than white for older gentlemen," he recalled.

As for Charles, he praised his relative's "socially conscious" character and pointed to his long-standing commitment to the underprivileged. Although Charles was the longest-serving heir to the British throne, he was never "frustrated" by it, von Anhalt said. "He really enjoyed being the Prince of Wales because he could say whatever he wanted," Eduard says. "When he is crowned king, he will only be allowed to say what the government likes."

By deciding to travel to Germany for his first foreign visit as king — the French leg of the trip has been postponed due to anti-government protests there — he is nevertheless sending a message about the importance of his country's relationship with Europe. "Even though the family could never say that Brexit was not a good thing, I know that they did not approve of it," the prince said. —AFP

Plaintiff says Gwyneth Paltrow ski crash changed his 'essence'

The man suing Gwyneth Paltrow over what he claims was a hit-and-run ski accident on a posh US slope said Monday the accident had changed his "essence". Terry Sanderson, a 76-year-old retired optometrist, said the 2016 collision in Utah had left him with four broken ribs and lasting psychological damage. "I'm like living another life now," he told a court in Park City. "My interaction with my family has been more difficult and I think.... I of course... I'm desperate to be close to my family and my girls. "But something's wrong with my essence and what I bring to the table with them. Communication is not as smooth and it's been more difficult."



Gwyneth Paltrow

Sanderson is suing the "Shakespeare in Love" actress over the collision, which his lawyers say caused him damage to the tune of \$3.3 million. He filed the suit in 2019 and the case has taken this long to reach court. Paltrow has in turn countersued, for a symbolic \$1, plus legal expenses. The actress told the trial last week that Sanderson had ploughed into the back of her.

But on Monday, Sanderson took the stand to insist that it was he who was the victim. "I got hit in my back so hard and it was right at my shoulder blades, a serious, serious smack. I've never been hit that hard, and I'm flying," he told the jury. "Last thing I remember, everything was black." Sanderson, who before the incident had suffered vision problems and a heart attack, said the collision knocked him out. Asked about an email he sent to his daughters about the crash with a Hollywood celebrity with the subject line "I'm famous," Sanderson said: "My head was scrambled." "I didn't pick my words well. I was trying to add a little levity to a serious situation and it backfired."

He did not deny sending the email, but insisted: "It's the other personality that's inhabiting my body right now." Stephen Owens, representing Paltrow, argued that any changes in Sanderson's personality were more to do with the natural ageing process.

Paltrow was skiing with her children and her partner, Brad Falchuk. Last week she told the court "Mr. Sanderson categorically hit me on that ski slope, and that is the truth." "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. In his opening statement last week, Paltrow's lawyer 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

Sports

Rybakina, Sabalenka march on as Pegula progresses in Miami

Andreescu suffers injury blow at Miami Open



MIAMI GARDENS: Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan plays a forehand to Elise Mertens of Belgium in their fourth round match at Hard Rock Stadium on March 27, 2023. — AFP

MIAMI GARDENS: Elena Rybakina extended her winning streak to 11 matches as she booked her place in the Miami Open quarter-finals with a 6-4, 6-3 win over Belgium's Elise Mertens on Monday while world number two Aryna Sabalenka powered past Barbora Krejčíková in straight sets. But there was agony for Canadian former US Open winner Bianca Andreescu, who had to be wheelchaired off court after suffering a left ankle injury and retiring against Ekaterina Alexandrova.

Rybakina is looking to complete the "Sunshine Double" after her triumph in Indian Wells, but she was far from euphoric after her victory. "Physically I'm not the freshest, but I'm happy that I'm managing and finding my way. To be in a quarter-final is great and hopefully I'm going to play better," she said. The Kazakh allowed Mertens to break in the sixth game of the first set but then two double faults from the Belgian allowed Rybakina to swiftly break back and then she struck again to take the opening set.

The Wimbledon champion broke early in the second set and never looked back and she will now face Italian Martina Trevisan in the quarters. Trevisan beat former French Open winner Jelena Ostapenko 6-3, 6-3. Sabalenka looked in ominous form as she blasted her way to victory over Krejčíková, the 2021 French Open winner, 6-3, 6-2.

Krejčíková had ended Sabalenka's 13-match win streak in February in Dubai but Sabalenka defeated the Czech two weeks ago at Indian Wells. This time Sabalenka took just 65 minutes to take care of business, going unbroken in the match and facing just one break point. The Belarusian lost just 10 points on her serve and will start as strong favourite on Wednesday against Romanian Sorana Cristea. Andreescu's return to form was cut brutally short when she suffered a left ankle injury in her match against Ekaterina Alexandrova.

While attempting a return, Andreescu injured the ankle, collapsing to the court as she yelled in pain. After receiving medical attention on court she was lifted into a wheelchair and taken off court in tears. The 22-year-old, who won the US Open in 2019 but then missed all of 2020 due to injury, returned to the circuit last April after a six-month break. In Miami she has looked very much back to her best with wins over Emma Raducanu, Maria Sakkari and Sofia Kenin. American Jessica Pegula looked comfortable and in command of her game as she beat Poland's Magda Linette 6-1, 7-5. World number three Pegula got off to a flying start - she struck seven winners in the opening nine minutes and won the first three games. With only 19 minutes on the clock she was 5-0 up. The second set was a different story though

with Linette grabbing a 5-2 lead. However, she twice let set point slip on her serve and Pegula went on to win the final five games to secure victory.

Weird match

Pegula had lamented her slow starts at Indian Wells but said her rapid-fire opening to matches in Miami had not been part of any strategy. "It wasn't something I was really thinking about. I think it just has been happening that way, which is nice," she said. "It was kind of a weird match. I had strings of games where I was playing really well, then (went) a little bit off. For the most part I was able string together good games, so that's always a good sign," she said. The American will face Anastasia Potapova after the Russian beat China's Zheng Qinwen 6-4, 7-6 (7/4) to continue her impressive run.

Romanian Cristea followed up her quarter-final at Indian Wells by securing another last eight appearance thanks to a 7-6 (7-3), 6-4, win over Czech Marketa Vondrousova. Revitalized by her Swedish coach Thomas Johansson, Cristea is enjoying a revival in fortunes at the age of 32 but knows she will need to produce one of the performances of her life as she is to get past Sabalenka. "I know it's going to be very tough but I've been winning a lot of matches this American swing and I have the confidence. I know what I can play." — AFP

Japanese boxing champion Murata hangs up gloves

TOKYO: Japan's former world and Olympic boxing champion Ryota Murata announced his retirement Tuesday, saying he had run out of challenges following his loss last year to Kazakh star Gennady Golovkin. Murata became Japan's first-ever Olympic middleweight gold medallist at the 2012 London Games before turning professional and capturing the WBA world title at the same weight five years later.

He was back in the global spotlight last April when he fought Golovkin in Saitama, north of Tokyo, putting in a strong performance until the man known as

"GGG" stopped him in the ninth round. Murata told reporters in Tokyo he had "always thought that the Golovkin fight would be the last one". "After that, I couldn't really find anything more that I wanted out of boxing," local media quoted the 37-year-old as saying. Murata retires with a professional record of 16-3, winning 13 by knock-out.

He became a big star in his home country after beating Brazil's Esquiva Falcao to win gold at the London Games, becoming Japan's first Olympic boxing champion since 1964. His humble, easy-going character won him friends in and out of the ring, and Golovkin presented him with his ring gown following their match as a mark of respect. Murata said he wants to become "a good role model" now that his career is over. "If you're an athlete, once your dream comes true, you lose your enthusiasm," he said. "Now I want to build a career and prove that life isn't just about competition." — AFP



TOKYO: Japan's former world and Olympic boxing champion Ryota Murata holds a press conference to announce his retirement in Tokyo on March 28, 2023. — AFP

Tsitsipas wins after long wait in Miami

MIAMI: World number three Stefanos Tsitsipas finally got his Miami Open campaign under way on Monday with a 6-3, 4-6, 6-4 win over Cristian Garin while Argentine Francisco Cerundolo upset fifth-seeded Felix Auger-Aliassime. There were no shortage of upsets at Hard Rock Stadium with 12th seeded American Francis Tiafoe beaten by 59th ranked Italian Lorenzo Sonego in straight sets.

France's Adrian Mannarino beat seventh-seeded Pole Hubert Hurkacz and American qualifier Christopher Eubanks defeated Gregoire Barrere in straight sets. Tsitsipas arrived in Miami a week ago, had a first round bye and then had a walkover win in the second round when Richard Gasquet pulled out with injury. "It has almost felt like a vacation this past week, staying in Miami. I glad I got started. It was a difficult match against an opponent who has played good tennis against good opponents in the past," said the Greek.

Tsitsipas has not be on court much in recent weeks. He withdrew from Acapulco due to a shoulder injury and was beaten in his opening match at Indian Wells this month. The rest has, however, helped Tsitsipas to recover a little from his injury and although he was not at his sharpest, he did enough to book his place in the fourth round against Karen Khachanov.

Tsitsipas broke at 4-4 in the third set to make sure of his progress against the Chilean, who enjoyed plenty of support from the South Florida crowd. Khachanov defeated Czech Jiri Lehecka 6-2, 6-4 to reach the Miami last 16 for the first time. Cerundolo was knocked out of Indian Wells in straight sets by Canadian Auger-Aliassime two weeks ago, but it was a very different game on the faster courts in

South Florida. The 25th-seeded Argentine was on top from the outset, taking the first set 6-2 and he kept his nerve to triumph 7-5 in the second.

Miami is a happy hunting ground for Cerundolo, who made a surprise run to the semi-finals last year, and he relished the vocal support from his fans in the crowd. "That was another important win for me. I think I played really good from beginning to end," he said. "It is super nice to play here, a lot of Argentinians, a lot of people, so I really enjoyed it. Last year was amazing, so I'm really excited to be in the round of 16 again and to try to keep winning," he added.

Exciting American Tiafoe was tipped by many observers to go deep in the tournament but he fell 6-3, 6-4 to Sonego in a game disrupted by a second set rain delay of over an hour. Mannarino, playing inventive tennis, beat Hurkacz 7-6 (7/5) 7-6 (7/0) but will face a tricky test against the 26-year-old Eubanks who will break into the top 100 for the first time in his career thanks to his victory over 65th ranked Barrere, who had beaten Britain's Cam Norrie in the previous round.

Confident Halys

Eubanks trailed 6-2 in a second-set tie-break before a rain delay of more than an hour and he won seven of the next eight points for an emotional 6-3, 7-6 (9/7) victory. French qualifier Quentin Halys hit 15 aces as he beat American Mackenzie McDonald 7-6 (7/2), 6-3 to set up a fourth round clash with world number five Daniil Medvedev.

Halys had never won a match at ATP 1000 level prior to this tournament but has beaten Spain's Pedro Martinez and Australian Alex de Minaur before taking out McDonald. "I think I'm just the same player, I am just more confident, I know exactly what I have to do on court and I am very confident in my serve," Halys told AFP.

The 26-year-old said he has sharpened his mental approach to the game, handling better the dis-

Shadab leads Pakistan's consolation T20I win as Afghanistan take series

SHARJAH: Stand-in skipper Shadab Khan gave an all-round performance to guide Pakistan to a consolation 66-run win in the third and final Twenty20 international in Sharjah on Monday but Afghanistan take the series 2-1. Having lost the first two matches by six and seven wickets respectively, Pakistan's new-look side posted a strong 182-7 in 20 overs before restricting Afghanistan to 116 in 18.4 overs. Opener Saim Ayub led an improved batting show as Pakistan scored 182-7 after their below-par 92-9 and 130-6 in the first two matches.

Shadab then became the first Pakistani and seventh bowler overall to complete 100 T20I wickets in his 87th match, claiming 3-13. Afghanistan were never in hunt for the stiff target as fiery pacer Ihsanullah dismissed Rahmanullah Gurbaz (18) and Karim Janat (nought) before his sharp bouncer left Najibullah Zadran's chin bleeding. Najibullah was stable but could not resume his innings. Azmatullah Omarzai, concussion substitute for Najibullah, top-scored with 20-ball 21, hitting a six and two boundaries. Ihsanullah finished with 3-29. Mohammad Nabi was run out for 17. Rashid Khan made 16 and Usman Ghani scored 15 before becoming Shadab's 100th T20I wicket. New Zealand's pacer Tim Southee leads the T20I wicket takers with 134 followed by Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan (131), Afghanistan's Rashid (129), New Zealand's Ish Sodhi (114), Sri Lankan Lasith Malinga (107) and Bangladesh's Mustafizur Rahman (100).

Despite the series defeat, Pakistan can take heart from the fact that they checked their bench strength, having rested regular skipper Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan, Fakhar Zaman, Shaheen Shah Afridi and Haris Rauf. Shadab said the motive for the series was achieved. "The main motive of this series was to give the youngsters a chance, hopefully, they will get confidence from these matches and it will help them in the long run," said Shadab. Series win, Rashid said, was memorable. "It's special to be part of this team, it was a great effort from everyone. We won the series, but we have some areas to improve on," said Rashid. "Any series after this is a good preparation for us before the World Cup," said Rashid of the 50-over World Cup in India later this year. — AFP

appointment of missing out on break opportunities against McDonald in the second set. "I was still very focused, very positive after those games. Maybe in the past I was negative with myself and I am more positive now, maybe that is the key," said Halys who is ranked 79th in the world. — AFP



MIAMI GARDENS: Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece serves to Cristian Garin of Chile during the Miami Open at Hard Rock Stadium on March 27, 2023. — AFP



Kuwait Rhythmic Gymnastics team shines in Georgia

By Abdellatif Shara

KUWAIT: Kuwait Girls Rhythmic Gymnastics team won 3 gold, 2 silver and 1 bronze medals at the Georgia International Championship which was concluded Monday in the capital Tbilisi. Gymnast Nabila Al-Kharafi (10 years) won two gold medals in the general individual and ball performance and the silver medal in the free style.

Sarah Al-Bannai (11 years) won the mace gold, the ring silver and the general individual performance bronze while Raya Al-Qassar was not able to win despite her outstanding performance in the tournament where 300 players from Georgia, Kazakhstan, Iraq, Turkmenistan, UAE, Egypt, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Armenia participated. Kuwait national team technical director Mohammad Abdelrasoul lauded the new achievement of Kuwait girls. He said the Gymnastics federation will continue with its plan following the successes and the major improvement of the players.

Women's Premier League hailed as 'game-changing'

NEW DELHI: Indian cricket administrators and pundits on Monday hailed the Women's Premier League as a huge success after the inaugural tournament ended in fireworks with the Mumbai Indians winning the trophy in front of a huge crowd. Franchise and media rights for the women's version of the Indian Premier League sold for around \$700 million, making it the second-most lucrative domestic women's sports competition after US professional basketball.

Mumbai beat the Delhi Capitals by seven wickets in a thrilling final on Sunday to conclude the three-week Twenty20 extravaganza of the newest addition to women's cricket. England's Nat Sciver-Brunt hit the winning runs to trigger wild celebrations at Mumbai's Brabourne Stadium, which was nearly full to its capacity of 20,000.

"It was like a festival for women's cricket which the entire world was celebrating. The atmosphere at the stadium was at par if not better than any big tournament final," IPL chairman Arun Dharam told AFP. "The way the tournament was conducted, the response to the matches, it went off as one of the best women's cricket tournaments, even if you compare with the recently held World Cup. "As far as TV ratings are concerned, as far as competitive cricket is concerned, it was a great tournament." West Indies all-rounder Hayley Matthews was named player of the series for her 16 wickets and 271 runs. — AFP

Sports

Jokic lifts Nuggets over Sixers; Timberwolves frustrate Kings

Good news for slumping Dallas Mavericks

LOS ANGELES: The Denver Nuggets continued their march toward the Western Conference top seed Monday with a 116-111 win over Philadelphia, while the Sacramento Kings' hopes of ending a 16-year NBA playoff drought remained on hold. Two-time reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Nikola Jokic had his 29th triple-double of the season for Denver with 25 points, 17 rebounds and 12 assists.

But he was unhappy that the Nuggets let a 20-point fourth-quarter lead dwindle to just three with 28.9 seconds remaining against a Sixers team missing star center Joel Embiid and playmaker James Harden. "We didn't do a good job today," Jokic said. "We had control of the whole game, and then in the fourth quarter, we lost control. We took bad shots, we didn't play defense, and that's why they came back." The Nuggets pushed their lead to three and a half games over Memphis atop the West with a fourth straight victory.

The absence of MVP candidate Embiid took some shine off the contest, but Philadelphia coach Doc Rivers said the decision to hold him out because of a sore calf was "not a hard decision for us." "We want to get him and the whole team healthy for the playoffs," Rivers said. The stage was set for a celebration in Sacramento, but the Minnesota Timberwolves crashed the party with a 119-115 victory over the Kings, who could have sealed their first playoff berth since 2006 with a victory.

Jaden McDaniels scored 20 points to lead seven Minnesota players in double figures as they notched a fourth straight win and tied reigning champions Golden State for sixth in the West. Trailing by one entering the fourth quarter, the Timberwolves gradually pulled away, a dunk by McDaniels giving them a 114-104 lead with 3:52 to play - to the dismay of

the sell-out crowd at the Golden 1 Center. De'Aaron Fox scored 29 points and Domantas Sabonis added 24 points and 10 rebounds for the Kings, who are third in the West and will try again this week to end the longest active playoff drought in any major US professional sports league.

Doncic delivers

Elsewhere, there was good news for the slumping Dallas Mavericks, who snapped a four-game skid with a 127-104 victory over the Indiana Pacers. Luka Doncic led the Mavs with 25 points - starting the game after the NBA rescinded the technical foul he was assessed in a loss at Charlotte on Sunday, which would have been his 16th of the season and triggered an automatic one-game suspension. Doncic made the most of the reprieve, adding seven rebounds and six assists - one of them an impressive side-armed pass across the court to rookie Jaden Hardy for a three-pointer when Doncic himself couldn't get a shot off in the face of a fierce double team.

"I didn't think he saw me at first," Hardy said. "Then, when saw me, I didn't think he was going to be able to get it to me. But he did ... so I was like, I've got to knock this down for him." Mavs coach Jason Kidd wasn't surprised. "He's one of the best passers in the league," Kidd said. "He can find guys - he's strong enough, I don't know if anybody else can make that pass." Kyrie Irving added 16 points and six assists for the Mavericks, who are half a game behind the Los Angeles Lakers and Oklahoma City Thunder in the hunt for the final two Western Conference play-in tournament berths.

Milwaukee's Khris Middleton scored a season-high 34 points as the Bucks improved their



DENVER: Nikola Jokic #15 of the Denver Nuggets handles the ball during the game against the Philadelphia 76ers on March 27, 2023 at the Ball Arena in Denver, Colorado. —AFP

NBA-best record with a 126-117 victory over the Detroit Pistons despite the absence of superstar Giannis Antetokounmpo. Antetokounmpo, out with a sore knee, was just one of the Bucks' high-profile absentees, with Jrue Holiday away for personal rea-

sons and Jae Crowder sidelined by a calf injury. In New York, Immanuel Quickley scored 40 points to help the Knicks rout the Houston Rockets 137-115. Julius Randle added 26 points for New York, who are holding down fifth place in the East. —AFP

US beat El Salvador 1-0 in CONCACAF Nations League

MIAMI: Second-half sub Ricardo Pepi needed almost no time to make his presence felt, delivering the game-winning goal in the United States' 1-0 victory over El Salvador on Monday in the CONCACAF Nations League. The Netherlands-based striker, who scored twice in a starting role in the United States' 7-1 thrashing of Grenada on Friday, came on in the 60th minute at Exploria Stadium in Orlando, Florida. He'd barely had a chance to touch the ball when Weston McKennie's crisp through ball found him in the area and he shook off defender Roberto Dominguez and lofted a shot over Salvadoran keeper Mario Gonzalez in the 62nd minute.

Although the defending champions needed only a point against El Salvador to assure themselves of a place in the final four of the Nations League in June, Pepi said the win at home mattered. "I think it was important for me personally and for the team," said the 20-year-old, who missed out on a place in the US World Cup squad last year. "It was a roller coaster," he said. "Up and down, not making it to the World Cup and now back with the squad. Happy to be back."

The first half saw the United States struggle to create openings against El Salvador's suffocating defense. El Salvador threatened less than two minutes into the game, with Jairo Henriquez's shot from the edge of the box pushed wide by a diving Turner. Gio Reyna, playing his first match before home fans



ORLANDO: Brayan Paz #17 of El Salvador and Weston McKennie #8 of United States of America battle for a header in the first half of a game at Exploria Stadium on March 27, 2023. —AFP

since he was engulfed in World Cup controversy, had one of the best first half efforts for the United States with a long range shot that Gonzalez tipped wide with his fingertips.

The hosts opened the second half aggressively. Reyna hit the post in the 46th minute and seconds later Tim Ream went close with a volley. Pepi had a chance to double the lead in the 79th minute when

Taylor Booth found him on the left side of the area, but his shot skimmed wide of Gonzalez's far post. The match was the United States' second competitive fixture under interim coach Anthony Hudson. The United States are trying to retain the Nations League title they won in 2021 with final victory over Mexico—who have also secured their place in the final four by finishing top of Group A. —AFP

Tottenham focus on saving season after Conte's departure

LONDON: Tottenham chairman Daniel Levy admits the Premier League club have a "fight" on their hands as they scramble to save their season after Antonio Conte's turbulent reign came to an end. The Italian's departure appeared almost inevitable after his extraordinary post-match rant following a 3-3 draw at bottom club Southampton earlier this month. But Sunday's divorce by "mutual agreement", with just 10 Premier League games remaining, is a gamble by the Spurs hierarchy, who are desperate to secure a place in the lucrative Champions League next season.

Tottenham are fourth in the Premier League table but are just two points ahead of Newcastle having played two games more - finishing in the top four guarantees entry into Europe's elite club competition. Cristian Stellini, Conte's assistant at Spurs, will take charge for the rest of the campaign, with former midfielder Ryan Mason working as his deputy. With the club out of all cup competitions, at least Stellini can afford to put all of his eggs in one basket.

"We have 10 Premier League games remaining and we have a fight on our hands for a Champions League place," Levy said in a club statement issued late on Sunday. "We all need to pull together. Everyone has to step up to ensure the highest possible finish for our club and amazing, loyal supporters." The writing appeared to be on the wall for Conte when he tore into his "selfish" players after they let a 3-1 lead slip against Southampton, saying they did not want to play under pressure and criticizing the club's culture. —AFP

Saad Al-Tameemi Ramadan football tournament

KUWAIT: Organizing Committee of the first Saad Al-Tameemi Ramadan football tournament said the number of participating teams has increased from 32 to 64 as many people want to participate in the tournament which will be launched on Thursday. It was decided that the number of teams to win financial prizes has increased as third place team will now receive KD 1000, besides what was allocated earlier (KD 5000) for first place and KD 3000 for second place, in addition to gifts for fans. The matches will be played on five outdoor fields in a knockout system and each match will last for 20 minutes.

Spanish police scuffle with Peru football players

MADRID: Spanish police scuffled with Peru national football players in front of their hotel in Madrid and detained a member of the squad, police and Peruvian officials said Tuesday. The altercation happened when the squad arrived at their hotel in Madrid on Monday night where some 300 fans were waiting to greet them, a police spokeswoman said.

The Peru squad are in Madrid to play a friendly against Morocco on Tuesday night at Atletico Madrid's Metropolitan stadium. "The supporters tried to reach the players and police got in the middle between the fans and the players to avoid a crush," the spokeswoman said. "A player hit an officer in the eye. The player was then detained and taken to a police station," the spokeswoman added without naming the player. Peru's foreign ministry said in a tweet that the detained player was Peruvian goalkeeper Pedro Gallese, who was released without being charged.

The Peruvian government has demanded a "clarification" of what happened from the "concerned authorities", it added. Videos shared on social media showed officers pushing and shoving the crowd gathered outside the hotel. Among the players who can be seen in the crowd are Gallese and fellow goalkeeper Jose Carvallo as well as midfielder Yoshimar Yotun. Some Spanish media said some of the officers failed to recognize the Peruvian players and confused them with supporters.

In a statement, the Peruvian Football Federation said it was "totally supportive and backs" Gallese, who it had "accompanied since the incident occurred". "We reiterate that we are respectful of the authorities and the procedures of each country that we visit," it added. The Moroccan squad's team stay in Madrid was marked by the arrest on Sunday of a 27-year-old Spanish employee of the hotel where they are staying for allegedly racially insulting members of the team on social media. —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

Change of Name

I, SYED AAHIL (old name), S/o SHAIK MAHA-BOOB BASHA, resident of D.No. 2/361, Sastri Nagar, Akkayapalli, Kadapa City, YSR Kadapa Dist, hereby declare that I have changed my surname as SHAIK AAHIL (new name) hereafter for all purpose in future. (C #3190)

I, AZIZ, holder of Passport No: L5937953, do hereby change my name to AZIZ (as given name) MAIMOON (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name AZIZ MAIMOON and I also undertake in all my documents. (C #3191) - 28-03-2023

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Qadisiya SC champions of Zain Cup

Zain supports tournament as part of strategic partnership with KFA



Zain Cup winner

KUWAIT: Zain, Kuwait's leading digital service provider, joined in crowning Qadisiya Sports Club as the champions of the 20th edition of the Kuwait Football Association's Cup (Zain Cup), after the team beat Salmiya Sports Club on penalties in Kazma Stadium. During the post-match ceremony, Zain presented the tournament cup to Qadisiya Captain Bader Al Mutawa, attended by Chairman of the Kuwait Football Association Abdullah Al Shaheen and Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti, who both congratulated Qadisiya players and fans for the club's achievement in becoming the cup's all-time winner with 6 titles.

Zain is the Official Sponsor of the KFA's competitions during the 2022-2026 seasons, including the Kuwaiti Premier League (Dawri Zain) and the First Division League. Zain is also supporting H.H. the Amir's Cup, H.H. the Crown Prince's Cup, and the KFA Cup (Zain Cup). Zain's role centers around three main areas: supporting athletes with cash prizes, launching social events and interacting with fans at stadiums, and the first-ever Fantasy Football League in Kuwaiti football's history. These contributions and more go in line with the KFA's vision to further enrich the local football scene, given that it is the most beloved sports among Kuwaitis.

Zain offers KD 50,000 of prizes for athletes and fans per season, which is the biggest prize pool ever to be distributed in the Kuwaiti League's history. By dedicating cash prizes for athletes, the company seeks to encourage players to pursue excellence and elevate the league's performance. Zain has started presenting the prizes from the ninth round of the current season.

Zain's cash prizes for athletes are as follows: Player of the Season Prize: KD 10,000, Player of the Round Prize: KD 500, Season's Top Scorer Prize: KD 5,000, Season's Best Goalkeeper Prize: KD 5,000, Season's Best Coach KD 3,000, and Season's Rising Star Prize: KD 2,000. A special committee has been formed in coordination with the Kuwait Football Association to outline the standards and criteria on which the winners are selected. The committee is membered by former Kuwaiti international players Saad Al Houli (as the committee's head), Wael Sulaiman, Osama Hussain, and Mohammed Benyaan.

Zain firmly believe that the private sector has a vital and active role in developing the local sports and youth sectors, and it makes this belief a reality by sponsoring and supporting some of the biggest sports programs in the nation. This partnership with Kuwait's top football competition comes to strengthen



Al-Shaheen and Al Khashti present the Zain Cup to Bader Al Mutawa.

the leadership role Zain plays in the local sports scene and is perfectly in line with the company's sustainability and social responsibility strategy towards the sports and youth sectors.

Nigeria avenge shock Guinea-Bissau loss as Algeria qualify

JOHANNESBURG: Nigeria avenged a humiliating Africa Cup of Nations qualifying loss to Guinea-Bissau three days ago by winning the rematch on Monday, while Algeria edged Niger to book a finals place. Moses Simon was the Nigerian scorer in a 1-0 victory in Bissau, converting a 30th-minute penalty after Fali Cande fouled Bright Osayi-Samuel. Simon fired the spot-kick into the right corner of the net as goalkeeper Jonas Mendes dived in the opposite direction. Desperate for revenge after a solitary-goal loss to much lower-ranked Guinea-Bissau in Abuja last Friday, Nigeria looked likely winners for most of the top-of-the-table Group A clash.

Prolific Napoli scorer Victor Osimhen turned smartly in the penalty area as the hour mark approached only to see his low shot rebound off the far post. Portuguese coach Jose Peseiro made five changes after the Abuja debacle with Nice forward Terem Moffi among those promoted. But the scorer of 15 Ligue 1 goals this season did not impress and was replaced midway through the second half. Victory returned Nigeria to first place with nine points after four rounds, followed by Guinea-Bissau (seven), Sierra Leone (five) and Sao Tome e Principe (one).

For the second time in five days, Algeria made hard work of defeating Niger, with a sixth-minute Baghdad Bounedjah goal producing a 1-0 win near Tunis. The match-winner was set up by Manchester City winger Riyad Mahrez, whose late goal delivered a 2-1 win in Algiers last week. Coach Djamel Belmadi retained only Mahrez, AC Milan midfielder Ismael Bennacer and Nantes forward Andy Delort for the rematch. Algeria have 12 points in Group F and are assured of a top-two finish and qualification for the finals next January and February.

The Desert Foxes are the third qualifiers for the 24-nation tournament after shock 2022 World Cup semi-finalists Morocco and the Ivory Coast, who are guaranteed a place as hosts. Tanzania have four points, Niger two and Uganda one in the three-way race for the other ticket to Abidjan from the section. Ghana earned a precious Group E point by forcing a 1-1 draw with Angola in Luanda, where a Lucas Joao goal off a penalty soon after half-time was cancelled by Osman Bukari. Serbia-based Bukari made an instant impact as a substitute, with his 72nd-minute equaliser arriving less than 60 seconds after coming on.

The Central African Republic, one of 10 countries never to qualify for the Cup of Nations, climbed above Angola to second after a 2-0 win over Madagascar in Douala. Louis Mafouta scored twice against the Indian Ocean side last week, and repeated the feat as the Wild Beasts completed a double. Four-time African champions Ghana have eight points, Central African Republic seven, Angola five and Madagascar one with the final two rounds scheduled for June and September.

South Sudan, another nation seeking a first appearance at the African football showpiece, suffered a Group G setback after conceding a late goal to lose 1-0 against Congo Brazzaville. It was the third defeat in four matches for the Bright Stars and relegated them to last place, six points behind pacesetters Mali and three below second-placed Congo. — AFP

France survive scare as Netherlands ease past Gibraltar

PARIS: France held on to beat Ireland 1-0 in Dublin on Monday to win their second Euro 2024 qualifier, while the Netherlands eased past Gibraltar 3-0. Right-back Benjamin Pavard pounced with half an hour remaining at a sold-out Lansdowne Road before two superb Mike Maignan saves in the final two minutes. With 30 seconds to play in Dublin, AC Milan's Maignan, who has succeeded former captain Hugo Lloris as Les Bleus' goalkeeper, tipped over team-mate Jules Kounde's panicked header.

From the resulting corner Maignan saved the visitors' skin as he made a similar save from Nathan Collins' powerful effort. "Mike's stop allowed us to stay in the match and claim a clean sheet, so I'm going to say that he's the man of the match," Bayern Munich's Pavard told television channel TF1. "I had the chance to play, it was successful, I scored, even if a defender's main objective is to defend well," he added. In Rotterdam, Manchester City centre-back Nathan Ake scored twice in a little over half an hour as the Netherlands overcame 10-men Gibraltar, 200th in the FIFA rankings.

Atletico Madrid forward Memphis Depay opened the scoring in the first half with a towering header before veteran Liam Walker was shown a red card the other side of the break. Oranje captain Virgil van Dijk bemoaned a lack of goals at De Kuip from his team, who lost heavily to France in their Group B opener on Friday. "You score three goals, but you have to score many more," van Dijk said. "This is a game where you can hardly ever get it right. You have to win 10-0, so to speak," he added.

Gregoritsch's 'rollercoaster'

In Group F, Sweden bounced back from a heavy



DUBLIN: France's defender Benjamin Pavard celebrates after scoring the opening goal of the UEFA Euro 2024 group B qualification football match between Republic of Ireland and France on March 27, 2023. — AFP

opening defeat to Belgium by hammering Azerbaijan 5-0 in Solna. Emile Forsberg, Viktor Gyokeres, Jesper Karlsson and Anthony Elanga netted for the hosts and Bahlul Mustafazade scored an own goal. Austria avoided an upset at home to beat Estonia 2-1 despite trailing after 25 minutes from a Rauno Sappinen effort.

Cologne winger Florian Kainz opened his account for his country with 22 minutes to play before Michael Gregoritsch completed the comeback with two minutes to go. Real Madrid's David Alaba came off the bench after 46 minutes after Gregoritsch has missed a first half penalty. "I've had enough of rollercoaster rides," Gregoritsch told broadcasters ORF. "I also have to apologize to the team for letting them worry for so long," he added. Dominik Szoboszlai superb free-kick set Hungary on their way to a 3-0 success over Bulgaria as they started their campaign clinically.

Elsewhere in Group G, Dusan Vlahovic's double were more than enough as Serbia beat Montenegro 2-0 in only their third meeting since Montenegro de-



DUBLIN: Republic of Ireland's goalkeeper Gavin Bazunu (left) sees a shot from France's defender Benjamin Pavard hit the back of his net for the game's only goal, during the UEFA Euro 2024 group B qualification football match on March 27, 2023. — AFP

clared independence in 2006. In Group E, the Czech Republic were held 0-0 by lowly Moldova as Karol Swiderski scored his ninth goal in 21 internationals as Poland beat Albania 1-0 after losing to the Czechs on Friday. On Tuesday, the pick of the ties is in Group A as Spain head to Scotland with the next international window in June. — AFP