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Registration of candidates begins Friday, for 10 days

About 794,000 Kuwaitis eligible to vote

Amir's Representative arrives in UK to attend King Charles III coronation



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir's Representative, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah arrived in the UK on Thursday to attend the coronation of King Charles III. Receiving His Highness was UK government representative Nicholas Hopton and Kuwait's Ambassador to the UK Bader Al-Awadhi. — KUNA

By B Izzak, KUNA

KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry's election department announced on Thursday that registration of candidates for the upcoming parliamentary polls will start on Friday and continues for 10 days. The Amiri decree inviting voters to cast their ballots on June 6 was published on Thursday which means it has become effective.

The election department has said that some 794,000 Kuwaiti citizens are eligible to vote in the snap polls - the second in just nine months. 387,000 of them, or 48.7 percent, are males and 407,000 or 51.3 percent are females. The number is almost the same as the number of eligible voters in the scrapped September 2022 elections.

Under Kuwaiti law, servicemen in the army and the police force, a majority of whom are men, are barred from voting. Kuwait is distributed into five constituencies with each constituency electing 10 MPs to the 50-seat Assembly. Cabinet members, who are not elected, automatically become members of the Assembly and enjoy almost equal rights as fully elected MPs.

Registration of candidates ends on May 14 but withdrawals continue until seven days before the election day on June 6. At the end of the 10-day registration for last year's polls, 376 candidates filed to contest the polls but they were reduced to just 305, including 22 women, on the eve of the polls because of withdrawals.

Due to non-stop political disputes between governments and MPs, Kuwait has held nine elections since 2006. Since then, parliament was dissolved five times and revoked by the Constitutional Court on three occasions, while three prime ministers were changed and several cabinets were dismissed. This has created wide-

spread instability and chaos that blocked development in a small country that has more than \$700 billion in its sovereign wealth fund.

A large number of former MPs have announced they will run in the polls. Among them is the speaker of the scrapped 2022 Assembly 89-year-old Ahmad Al-Saadoun, a former speaker and a leading opposition figure. A number of former MPs have also said they will contest the polls while former MPs Osama Al-Munawer, Ali Al-Deqbasi and Hamad Rouh El-Din said they will not contest the polls. Speaker of the dissolved 2020 Assembly Marzouk Al-Ghanem was the first to announce his candidacy.

Meanwhile, Minister of Information, Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi on Thursday issued two ministerial decisions regulating media and tourist activities and settings terms for the media coverage and advertisement for the upcoming parliamentary and municipal elections. The ministry, in a statement, called upon the media, electronic media and the press to abide by the Ministerial Resolution 17/2023 with respect of the terms and rules governing the media coverage, the advertisement and promotion of the National Assembly and Municipal Council's elections.

The ministry official spokesperson said the decision includes amendments to the Ministerial Resolution 833/2022 regarding the regulation of permits for the media activities and the fees. The applicant must admit that he (or she) had not been stripped of the license in the past. The decision included rules regarding the permits for conducting statistics, public opinion surveys regarding the elections, where the permit would remain valid for two weeks after final declaration of the elections' results.

Sudan truce in tatters as war rages on

KHARTOUM: Gunfire and explosions gripped Khartoum for a 20th straight day Thursday leaving the latest ceasefire effort in tatters, a day after UN chief Antonio Guterres acknowledged the international community had "failed" Sudan. As the latest ceasefire expired at midnight Wednesday, the regular army said it was ready to abide by a new seven-day truce agreed with South Sudanese mediators, but there was no word from its foes in the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

In Khartoum, witnesses reported loud explosions and exchanges of fire on the streets around dawn. Deadly urban combat broke out on April 15 between Sudan's de facto leader Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, who commands the regular army, and his deputy turned rival Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who heads the RSF. According to figures from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, the fighting has killed some 700 people, most of them in Khartoum and Darfur.

"The UN was taken by surprise" by the conflict, because the world body and others were hopeful that negotiations towards a civilian transition would be successful, the UN chief told reporters in Nairobi Wednesday. "To the extent that we and many others were not expecting this to happen, we can say we failed to avoid it

Continued on Page 6

Russia accuses US of masterminding drone attack

MOSCOW: Russia on Thursday accused the US of masterminding a drone attack on the Kremlin and said sabotage attacks by Ukraine behind Russian lines had reached "unprecedented momentum". The Kremlin has said Ukraine carried out the attack with two drones aiming to kill President Vladimir Putin—a charge which Kyiv has denied. "Decisions on such attacks are not made in Kyiv, but in Washington," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. "Kyiv only does what it is told to

do." "Washington should understand clearly that we know this," he said.

Peskov said Putin was working in his office in the Kremlin as normal on Thursday but added that security measures in Moscow would be beefed up following the attack, which the Kremlin said occurred in the night between Tuesday and Wednesday. "Of course, everything will be strengthened. Everything has already been strengthened in preparation for the Victory Day parade" on May 9, he said.

Kyiv and Moscow reported drone attacks Thursday including two that sparked fires in Russian oil refineries, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky visited The Hague to lobby for more support.

Continued on Page 6

Zionist forces kill three Palestinians

NABLUS: Zionist entity said its security forces shot dead three Palestinians blamed for killing a British woman from Zionist entity and two of her daughters last month, in a raid in the occupied West Bank on Thursday. Two suspects in the killings and a third man accused of helping them were killed in a joint operation in Nablus by the army, police and Shin Bet security service, a statement said. The three men were identified as the "murderers of Leah, Maia and Rina Dee" who died after the April 7 attack on their vehicle near Hamra in the Jordan Valley, the Shin Bet said, using the women's Hebrew names.

The army said troops recovered two M-16 rifles and an AK-47 from the apartment where the suspects were holed up. As the army entered the city, clashes erupted with groups of Palestinians who threw stones at military vehicles. Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, said all three men killed were from its ranks.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hailed the successful conclusion of the weeks-long manhunt for the women's killers. "We settled accounts with the murderers of Lucy, Maia and Rina Dee," he said in a statement. "Our message to those who harm us, and those who want to harm us, is that whether it takes a day, a week or a month - you can be certain that we will settle accounts with you."

Continued on Page 6



KOSTYANTYNIIVKA: A car burns after a shelling in a street of Kostyantynivka, Donetsk region, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP



NABLUS: Bullet holes riddle a wall at the site where three Palestinians were killed, during a raid in the occupied West Bank city of Nablus on May 4, 2023. — AFP



First Kuwaiti planeload of supplies arrives in Sudan

Kuwait aid reflects solidarity with brotherly countries: FM



First Kuwaiti planeload of relief supplies arrives in Sudan. — KUNA photos

KHARTOUM: The first planeload of Kuwaiti humanitarian supplies arrived in Port Sudan on Thursday signaling actual launch of Kuwait's humanitarian bridge to relieve the Sudanese people. The aircraft boarding ten tons of relief supplies, out of a total 75 tons of food and equipment due to be sent in from Kuwait, touched down at noon time.

Commander of the Red Sea military zone, Mohammed Hamad, praised in remarks, Kuwait's efforts and its support for the Sudanese nation, noting that the country has always scrambled to aid Sudanese at times of crises, latest of which was last September's floods. He pledged to ensure delivery of the supplies. The Kuwaiti Ambassador in Khartoum Dr Fahad Al-Dhafiri told KUNA that the

first Kuwaiti plane arrived in Port Sudan amid local peoples' greeting, adding that more planeloads of Kuwaiti aid would continue arriving until Monday to bring in a total of 75 tons of the medical and humanitarian materials.

Hospitals and medical centers in Sudan have been heavily damaged since flare-up of the crisis, he said, indicating a large part of the caches contained medical and pharmaceutical supplies. These aid supplies are being sent in line with directions by the Kuwaiti political leadership to alleviate the Sudanese people's suffering.

He alluded in particular to the decision taken by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah to dispatch the aid,



along with close follow-up by Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah. The Kuwaiti Cabinet in its latest session decided to establish the aerial humanitarian bridge to relieve the Sudanese people, with instructions given to Kuwait Red Crescent Society to cooperate with the ministries of health, finance and defense for dispatching the needed assistance immediately within a space of time not exceeding five days. The planeload of Kuwaiti supplies was the first one to reach Sudan from Kuwait since fighting broke out between the Sudanese Army and paramilitary troops on April 15.

Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said Kuwait's four-day aid airlift comes upon direction of the political

leadership and reflects its solidarity with brotherly and sisterly countries. He said the initiative was at the behest of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the cabinet, for sending relief aid to Sudan due to the current circumstances in their country.

In this context, a committee of the ministries of foreign affairs, defense, finance and health as well as the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) was set up, he said. The committee is meant to ensure the delivery of relief and medical aid to Sudanese people as soon as possible, he said, noting that the first flight has already been sent to Sudan. —KUNA

Naval Force, Coast Guard conduct drill

KUWAIT: The Naval Force, in cooperation with the General Department of Coast Guard, carried out on Thursday a joint shooting exercise with live ammunition, upon the directives of the First Deputy of the Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

This exercise comes within the framework of the military and security institution's keenness to raise the level of combat readiness and the efficiency of their personnel, as well as strengthening cooperation between Kuwait's army and the Ministry of Interior to protect the maritime borders and territorial waters of Kuwait, said the General Department of Relations and Security Media at the Ministry of Interior.

In a statement released earlier this week, the army said the exercise would be held on Wednesday, May 3, from 10:00 am until 7:00 pm. It was carried out at a distance of 16.5 nautical miles east of Ras Al-Julaia, stretching to Qaruh Island, and a distance of six nautical miles east of Ras Al-Zour, extending to Umm Al-Maradim Island. Citizens and residents were urged not to go to the sea or approach the area during the announced period in order to ensure the safety of all. —KUNA

Kuwait affirms its relentless support to Palestinian cause

BRUSSELS: Kuwait's Ambassador to the Kingdom of Belgium and the head of its missions to the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Nawaf Al-Enezi has affirmed Kuwait's relentless support to the Palestinian cause, describing the position as "principled and firm." Ambassador Al-Enezi's position came according to the Kuwaiti embassy's statement during his participation in the meeting of the Liaison Committee on Palestine at the level of senior officials in Brussels.

Ambassador Al-Enezi affirmed that Kuwait "did not hesitate in its duty to extend a helping hand to the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority to enable it to carry out its duties towards its people." He added that the State of Kuwait donated \$5.21 million through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) to ensure that the vital educational, health and social services provided by the Agency to millions of Palestinian refugees would not be interrupted.

He stressed the importance of strengthening the Palestinian economy and institutions, including working to preserve the gains that have been achieved and push forward the process of building the Palestinian state. He also affirmed the State of Kuwait's commitment to the two-state solution and to reaching a comprehensive and lasting peace in accordance with international references and relevant United Nations resolutions.

Meanwhile, an uneasy truce between Zionists and Gaza militants was holding on Thursday, following a major exchange of cross-border fire sparked by the death in custody of a Palestinian prisoner on hunger strike. Violence flared after the inmate, Khader Adnan, 45, from the occupied West Bank, died following an 87-day hunger strike after his arrest over ties to the armed group Islamic Jihad.

More than 100 rockets were fired from the blockaded Gaza Strip through the day and overnight, while the army struck targets in the enclave, killing at least one man, Hashel Mubarak, 58, and wounding several more. The Zionist army said it had detected 104 rocket launches in total, with most intercepted by Zionist air defenses or hitting open ground without causing any casualties. Islamic Jihad early Wednesday announced a truce following overnight talks involving Qatar, Egyptian and United Nations mediators, sources in Islamic Jihad and fellow militant group Hamas told AFP. —Agencies

Self-reflection paves path for bettering oneself

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: As we move through life, we are constantly learning and growing regardless of our age and experiences, which makes developing better versions of ourselves part of our growth as humans. However, developing a better version of oneself requires self-awareness to better navigate through one's personal and professional strengths and weaknesses, as identifying one's attributes is necessary for improving one's character.

Kuwait Times interviewed Lama, AlKawther and Ala'a — three young people — to take a look at their techniques of growing into better versions of themselves. According to Lama, a student at Kuwait University, AlKawther, a high school student, and Ala'a, an English teacher at a public high school, self-reflection, productivity and inner peace are three main ways that pave the way for growing into the best version of ourselves.

Lama described self-reflection and highlighted its significant impact on self-development. She told Kuwait Times that self-reflection is the process of analyzing and evaluating one's beliefs, thoughts and actions to gain a deeper understanding of oneself. It is an introspective activity that involves looking inward and examining oneself objectively, without judgment or bias. The practice of self-reflection is essential for personal growth and development, as it helps individuals to better understand their own strengths and weaknesses and identify opportunities for improvement in their personal and professional lives.

Self-reflection can take many different forms, but it typically involves asking oneself thought-provoking questions and reflecting on one's own experiences. Some people choose to journal their thoughts, while others prefer to have conversations with trusted friends or colleagues. One of the major benefits of self-reflection is that it can help individuals to develop greater self-awareness. By examining their own thoughts and beliefs, individuals can begin to understand why they think and act the way they do and can identify patterns in their behavior that may be hindering their personal or professional growth.

"I am constantly striving towards self-improvement. We want to be better versions of ourselves, both personally and professionally. The journey towards self-growth and development is ongoing and can be a challenging task, but the benefits are immeasurable," Lama said. She added working on better versions of ourselves is a lifelong process that allows us to examine our lives and explore ways to make positive changes. It involves an ongoing self-reflection and learning process, as we identify our strengths, weaknesses and areas that need improvement. This helps us to set achievable goals that we can work towards, taking steps to bring us closer to our desired version of ourselves.

In today's fast-paced world, it is crucial to keep up with changing trends and technologies in our respective fields. We must be willing to embrace changes and enhance our skills and knowledge to stay ahead. This requires a willingness to learn and adapt to new situations, as well as a growth mindset that embraces challenges as learning opportunities in order to produce better. AlKawther told Kuwait Times, "Focusing on oneself and being productive are two important aspects that go hand-in-hand. Whether it is in terms of personal growth or excelling at school or work, both factors are essential for success and fulfillment," she said.

Focusing on oneself also involves setting personal goals and identifying the steps necessary to achieve



those goals. This requires an individual to be honest with themselves and recognize areas where they may need to improve. On the other hand, being productive involves utilizing time effectively and efficiently. To be productive, individuals must have clear goals and objectives they wish to achieve. This includes prioritizing tasks and allocating time and resources accordingly.

Additionally, Ala'a said that in life, we often find ourselves struggling to maintain a sense of inner peace. The never-ending hustle and bustle of our daily lives can often make it difficult to slow down and take time out for ourselves. However, it is vital to reflect on one's inner peace to lead a more fulfilling life. "Inner peace refers to a state of tranquility, calmness and well-being that comes from within. It is an internal equilibrium that allows us to feel centered, balanced and content, regardless of external circumstances. Achieving inner peace requires a willingness to prioritize self-care and take deliberate steps towards finding a sense of serenity amidst the chaos of everyday life," he said.

This helps individuals to better understand who they are, which allows them to have a more objective view of themselves. It can help them to focus their energy and make better decisions that lead to greater success in all aspects of life.



IRAQ: KFAED officials inspect the developmental projects for Syrian refugees at Arbat Camp, Iraq. —KUNA photos

KFAED officials inspect projects for refugees

KUWAIT: A delegation from Kuwait's Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) on Thursday, visited a project site in Iraq's northern province of Kurdistan. The project, of restructuring the water

system, aims to better the living conditions of Syrian refugees in Arbat camp. The delegation was invited to attend the inauguration of a refugee enlistment center at Bahrka municipality that services around 160,000 refugees.

The project, part of Kuwait's vows at the third Brussels' conference, aims to raise capacity of water storage, enhance the distribution system. The statement further detailed that projects comes as part of prior agreement with The UN's general commission, through which the fund presented a \$2.6 million grant.

The statement reported on behalf of the fund's director, Waleed Al-Bahar, as saying that Kuwait has been extending a helping hand to those afflicted all over the globe, especially Syrian refugees, to ease their suffering, provide them with urgent aid and ensure a better lifestyle. Camp director Bayan Salam, voiced his appreciation for the delegation, spoke briefly on the camp and its facilities, and presented the camp's most pressing needs as it houses more than 9,000 refugees. At the end of the visit, the fund's director honored Salam, and other officials for their extensive efforts. —KUNA



Local

Treatment abroad to be limited to emergency cases

Ministry of Health directive to be valid for one month

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ministry of Health said Thursday that patients will be sent for treatment abroad only in emergency cases starting Sunday and for a month's period.

Undersecretary of the health ministry Dr Mustafa Redha directed the decision, which restricts allowing patients to get treatment abroad to emergency and urgent cases only, to assistant undersecretaries, directors of health regions, director of treatment abroad, directors of hospitals and spe-

cialized centers and heads of medical departments.

Committees specialized in determining which cases could travel abroad for treatment will only meet if the patient's case was urgent. The decision applies to committees in both public hospitals and specialized medical centers. A case is considered urgent if their health-care provider determines that no treatment is available for their condition in facilities that fall under Kuwait's ministry of health's jurisdiction. A committee can only convene if the head of the department where

the patient is receiving care provides a detailed report of the patient's case to the head of the medical staff and the director of the hospital.

The case would be then submitted to the Supreme Committee for the management of treatment abroad for the final decision.

In related news, The Kuwait Fire Force started receiving requests for treatment abroad for its members and their families of the first degree, through the specialized medical committees, under the directives

of the First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Acting Minister of Defense Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

All regulatory procedures have been completed and the necessary decisions and regulations have been issued in coordination with the Ministry of Defense through its treatment abroad offices. The fire force will start receiving applications next Sunday, May 7, 2023, during official working hours in Al-Rai area.



Ali Alamdar poses in front of one of his artworks.



This photo shows one of the pieces Alamdar displayed at the Dallas Art Fair, "Fragments of what once was".



"Picking up the pieces" is one of the pieces Alamdar displayed at the Dallas Art Fair.

Kuwaiti artist participates in Dallas Art Fair

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti artist Ali Alamdar said he was the youngest artist participating in the Dallas Art Fair in its 15th edition, with the participation of 92 galleries from various countries in a building of 74,000 square feet. "During April 20 to 24, I was part of my biggest and most important show to date, which is the Dallas Art Fair. Art fairs are some of the most important art events that take place every year. They are events where artists, art collectors and galleries are all present in the same place at the same time," Alamdar told Kuwait Times. He mentioned art fairs usually take place in a massive building with many booths, which art galleries can call their home for a few days. Regular art exhibitions take place when a few artists or a single artist — if it is a solo show — participate in a show organized by a single gallery.

"The art fair I participated in was the 15th annual Dallas Art Fair; it is one of the bigger art fairs and takes place in the

city of Dallas in heart of the state of Texas. The Dallas Art Fair attracts galleries and art collectors from all over the world, and this is exactly what happened this year, as 92 galleries from all around the world came to the same place for a few days to put on an unbelievable art-filled show. There were galleries from almost every continent, but it was heavily dominated by galleries from North America and Europe," he said.

Alamdar exhibited two paintings that are a part of his "Picking up the Pieces" series of works. "The two paintings I displayed at the Dallas Art Fair were titled 'Fragments of What Once Was' and 'Picking up the Pieces'. These works, and the series they are a part of, represent how people feel after going through traumatic events that cause them to lose parts of themselves and start doubting everything, they know about themselves," he said.

Alamdar explained that his series of works feature broken, fragmented figures with no fancy background colors. "They are just broken people on linen canvas; this was done to make it as real and as raw as possible. I didn't want anything to cover or alleviate the emotions being portrayed by the works. For my works, I mainly use oil paint. This is the medium I feel most comfortable with and enjoy the most, as it just feels right," he added.

According to Alamdar, the four-day Dallas Art Fair added a lot of value to him and his life. "It gave me even more confidence in my work and myself, and it made me realize that I was born to be in the spotlight. It felt like I was in my element

and I was comfortable being there," he noted. He indicated that the fair allowed him to meet people he intends to collaborate with in the future.

"I've always been into art, and I come from a very artistic family, with even more artistic family friends, so I think it would have been illegal and morally wrong for me not to end up as one," he pointed out. Alamdar did not plan to become an artist, but his desire to be drawn encouraged him to be one. "I have always wanted someone to draw me, but no one ever did, so I decided to take matters into my own hands and draw myself, and accidentally became an award-winning artist because of it," he said.

A trip to a grocery store was a reason behind Alamdar becoming an artist. "One random day in 2016 in Houston, I went with my dad to a grocery store and saw a wooden briefcase of art supplies for sale. I stood there for a few seconds and decided to pick it up. I always buy art supplies but they end up in a closet somewhere. But this time was different for some reason — I actually ended up using it! I woke up the next day being able to draw faces, and even though they were horrible, I liked them enough to keep drawing more and more, and now I'm here," he said.

"So, all of this wouldn't have been possible if my father didn't ask me to go to the store with him, which kickstarted my career. It would not have been possible without him supporting me 100 percent and helping me succeed in every way possible."

Youth Minister heads delegation at GCC meeting

KUWAIT: Information Minister and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi headed Thursday Kuwait's delegation in the 36th meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Ministerial Committee for Youth Affairs and Sports, which was held in the Omani capital of Muscat. During the meeting, importance of strengthening joint youth work between the GCC states was emphasized in addition to the need to develop it to achieve aspirations of Gulf youngsters. Emphasis was also placed on planning for youngsters to innovate and excel by organizing joint programs, activities and youth forums to exchange expertise and experiences. The committee commended the proposals submitted by Kuwait to develop youth work, as they chose Kuwait to chair the Coordination and Follow-up Committee where they show the committee's strategic plan to draw joint plans and policies to promote Gulf youth programs and activities. The committee stressed its keenness to intensify activities and programs provided to young people, under the directives of the leaders of the GCC countries on the need to support youth in all fields. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Information Minister and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi (right) headed the GCC meeting for youth affairs and sports Thursday. —KUNA

Prosecution demands upholding bribery prison sentences

KUWAIT: The Public Prosecution demanded upholding the prison sentences in a case related to bribery of judges during its appeal before the Cassation Court. In "the second Iranian Salehi case," judges and others are accused of bribery, forgery, and money laundering. The Court of Cassation set its first session for July 6, 2023 when it will probably put an end to the case before the last levels of litigation.

The Court of Appeal had sentenced some defendants to prison terms while reducing prison sentences from 10 years to 7 years for others. It also overturned the convictions of some and abstained from punishing them. It also ruled to increase the imprisonment of seven judges from seven to 15 years, remove them from office and confiscate the cars they received as bribes, while acquitting one judge.

Moreover, the court also ruled against imprisonment of some male and female employees of the ministry of justice, dismissing them from office, and imprisoning businessmen. It also ruled against the imprisonment of other defendants and acquitted some of them.

In another case, the Court of Appeals overturned the death sentence for an Egyptian Islamic education teacher accused of kidnapping and assaulting an expatriate child. The court again ruled that he be imprisoned for 10 years in penal servitude. The accused also faces a number of other cases on the same charge that are still pending before the judiciary, and no final rulings have yet been issued.

Social media clip

Regarding what was circulated on social media about a video clip between a school principal and a student in front of the entrance of one of the public schools in Jahra, the official spokesperson for the Ministry of Education, Ahmed Al-Wuhaida, confirmed that the ministry directed the educational district to open an investigation into the matter to find out the circumstances of the incident.

"The ministry affirms its complete and direct rejection of any non-educational behavior that may be attributed to its employees, regardless of their position and responsibilities. The ministry will take all legal and administrative measures after the completion of the results of the investigation in accordance with the regulations," Wuhaida said.

The spokesperson of the Education Ministry also stated: "The ministry stresses the importance of applying all regulations and systems in force in schools without using arbitrariness or behavior that is inconsistent with the lofty mission of education. This is to treat our children with a spirit of educational responsibility," he said, indicating that an investigation is going on to find out the circumstances that led to the incident.



KUWAIT: Highschool students visit the Abdullah Al-Salem University booth at the ninth annual admissions exhibition. —KUNA photos



Universities gear up for new year

KUWAIT: The Acting Director of Kuwait University Dr Fahad Al-Dubais announced that the university will not hesitate to accept all applicants who have achieved the minimum grades for admission, indicating that it is cooperating with both the Ministry of Education and the Minis-

try of Higher Education to take into account the needs of the labor market.

"The university is in the process of launching the National Testing Center, to measure performance for all high school graduates. This center comes within initiatives to improve and develop the education system," he said.

"Sometimes the average for a high school graduate may not reflect the actual level due to some leniency," he added, stressing that the new tests will not be implemented this year but will be applied gradually, with an emphasis on the responsibility

of enabling students to achieve the best scores in these tests.

In related, the new Abdullah Al-Salem University has attracted many high school graduates from both the public and private sectors at the ninth annual admissions exhibition.

The university aims through its participation to introduce students to its new majors so that they can pick a future career in line with their aspirations. The university will be accepting students starting from the first semester of the academic year 2023/2024. —Agencies

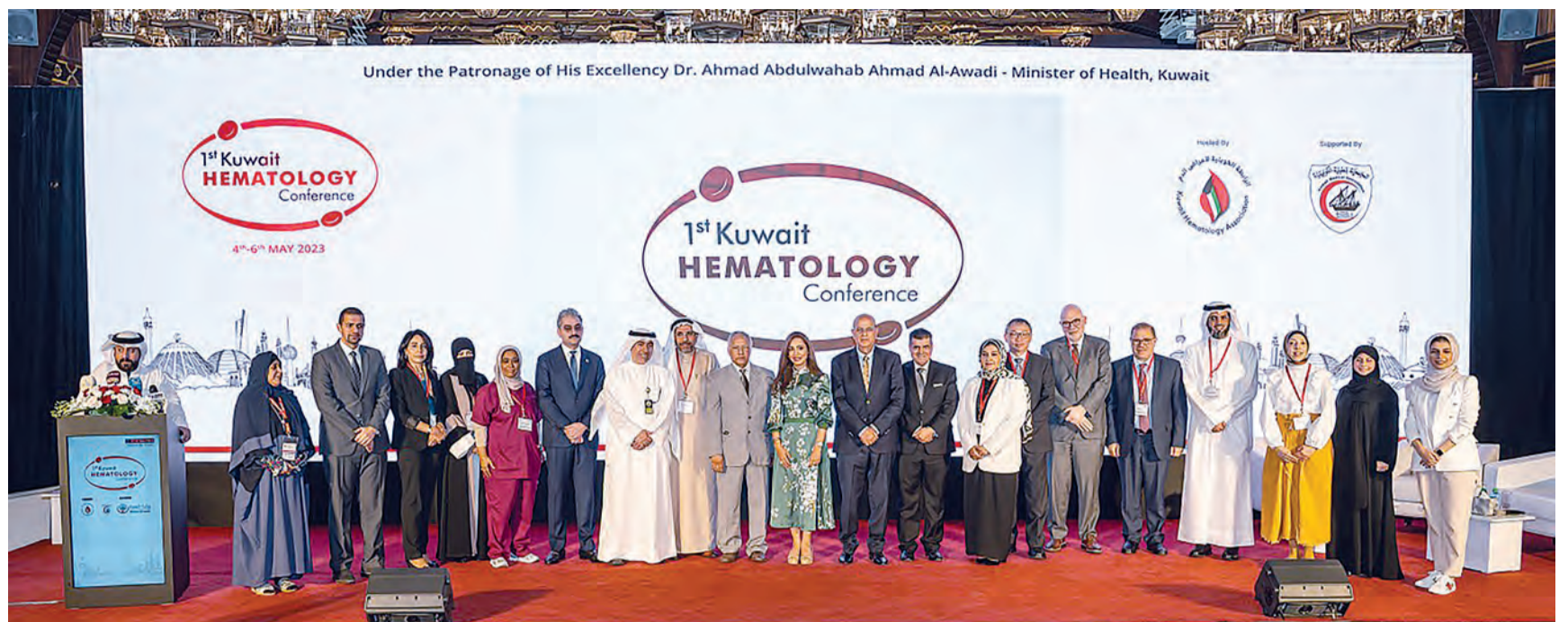
News in Brief

MoI urges getting
Apple update

KUWAIT: The Cyber Security Department of the Ministry of Interior called on the public to download updates as prompted by their smart phones to protect their devices from hacking. Earlier this week, Apple issued the first of a new type of security update for iPhones, iPads and Mac computers, called a "Rapid Security Response". These software releases aim to deliver important security improvements to devices between updates to the operating system. The updates could help to patch up vulnerabilities within the software that could give hackers access to a smartphone. The first 'Rapid Security Response' has been made available to Apple devices running the latest versions of iOS, iPadOS and macOS. These are iOS 16.4.1, iPadOS 16.4.1 and macOS 13.3.1, all of which were released last month. The concept of "Rapid Security Responses" was unveiled at Apple's Worldwide Developer Conference (WWDC) last year. —Agencies

Oil workers
demand pay

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Board of Kuwait Oil Tankers Workers Union Nader Al-Harby condemned the disregard of oil sector workers' rights especially in regards to the delay in paying the frontlines workers during the COVID-19 pandemic rewards. Harby said in a press statement that oil workers were always in the forefront during the pandemic and worked day and night in order to continue oil production and export to various countries around the world. He said the workers' efforts were lauded by everyone and cannot be ignored. He said oil workers should have been on the top of the award lists for their efforts which were acknowledged by everyone on top of whom was HH the Amir and HH the Crown Prince. But the reality is to the contrary to what was supposed to take place and all they got is procrastination and there was an obvious injustice to workers' rights who faced difficulties under the pandemic.



KUWAIT: The first hematology conference in Kuwait gathered specialists from the most prestigious international centers to learn about the latest in scientific studies in the field. —KUNA photos



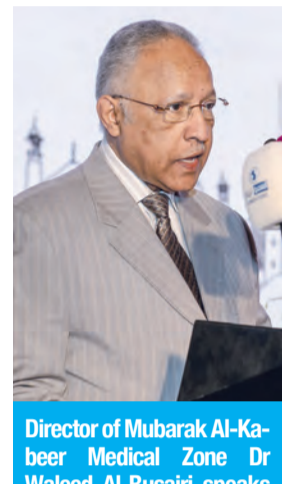
Officials honor one of the participants at the conference.



Chairwoman of the conference Hematologist Hadeel Saleh delivers a speech.



Director of NBK Children Hospital Ali Mulla speaks at the conference.



Director of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Medical Zone Dr Waleed Al-Busairi speaks at the conference.

National blood disorders' registry to be completed by next year

Kuwait records nearly 300 cases of leukemia and bleeding disorders

KUWAIT: Kuwait is preparing a national registry for Leukemia and hereditary bleeding disorders expected to be completed within the next year, Director of NBK Children Hospital Ali Mulla said Thursday. The remarks came in a speech delivered during the opening of Kuwait's first Hematology Conference.

Mulla, who is also chairman of the conference's scientific committee, said there are currently around 300 cases of leukemia and bleeding disorders registered in various hospitals across the country.

Causes of these diseases are hereditary in some cases, said Mulla, so doctors recommend couples to get premarital tests to identify the potential of giving birth to children with these conditions and comply with the test results to avoid hereditary blood disorders. People should also eat health food, maintain good sleep hygiene and exercise regularly.

Mulla said there are around 120 cases of children

with blood cancer every year in Kuwait, which is in line with increase in cases worldwide. Despite a surge in cases, the numbers are considered much lower than those recorded worldwide when examining the number of cases in relation to Kuwait's population.

Director of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Medical Zone Dr Waleed Al-Busairi delivered a speech on behalf of Health Minister Ahmad Al-Awadhi where he commended Kuwaiti doctors for making effective contributions in international scientific research in the field of hematology and producing positive results that appeared in specialized international scientific journals. Busairi said the world is interested in supporting research on the best remedies and mitigation strategies. Kuwait's health ministry is no different, as it's constantly on the lookout for programs adopted by the World Health Organization

(WHO) related to blood disorders.

The ministry has adopted initiatives in line with these programs, said Busairi, including coordination with local and international academic entities to study the requirements for the creation of critical specialties to qualify local doctors in the ministry.

Chairwoman of the conference Hematologist Hadeel Saleh said the conference brings together an elite group of specialists to present the latest in research and scientific development in blood disorders in children and adults. She said that the hematology specialty is multi-faceted and includes many subspecialties, such as cancer and benign diseases both hereditary and acquired. Due to how sensitive the specialty is, the conference gathered specialists from the most prestigious international centers to learn about the latest in scientific studies in this field and discuss ideas based on scientific evidence. —KUNA



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KUWAIT: KUNA launched its space on the Spatial metaverse platform, the first step of its kind amongst news agencies in the region.



A KUNA employee is seen using the Spatial metaverse platform. —KUNA photos

KUNA launches space on Spatial metaverse platform

KUWAIT: Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) launched its space on the Spatial metaverse platform, the first step of its kind amongst news agencies in the region, said Director-General of KUNA Dr Fatma Al-Salem on Thursday. In a statement assisted by Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology, Dr Al-Salem affirmed that the launch was an important leap in the digital transformation of KUNA, which would enable users to provide faster and high-quality news to the masses. AI would be used to analyze data and in-

formation to improve published content, she added.

Dr Al-Salem said that the production process of news and analysis would help diversify services and would benefit those receiving them. KUNA, she asserted, is taking an important stride towards using technology in news-making to reinforce the agency's credibility, adding that employees of KUNA would be able to use the vast resources of the space in news editing.

She revealed that KUNA was ready to launch its news anchor avatar on social media platforms using AI technologies as well as a specialized space dedicated to this kind of venture. These new developments would ease the process of delivering news and interactivity, allowing people to reach the desired information. They would also reinforce cooperation amongst the agency's employees. Spatial is a metaverse platform enabling users to create avatars and spaces to collaborate, brainstorm and produce content remotely through virtual reality. —KUNA

IT summit to help develop Kuwait's digital roadmap

KUWAIT: International Data Corporation (IDC), a market intelligence provider, is organizing Kuwait's second edition of the IDC CIO Summit 2023, which will bring together more than 150 IT and telecom leaders, digital government pioneers and digital regulators and authorities. Industry leaders will come together to examine the current state of the digital economy, assess its ongoing impact on citizens, customers, employees, and operations. It will also address the key challenges that need to be overcome and outline proven best practices and strategies for driving future success.

The summit comes in line with Kuwait Vision 2035, or "New Kuwait", which lays out clear strategies to transform the country into a regional and global financial and trade hub. It's organized in collaboration with the Central Agency for Information Technology.

Acting Director General of agency Ammar Al-Husseini said in a press statement to KUNA that digitalization is a fundamental standard for most industries and establishments. He added that the digitalization process is acceler-

ating in all sectors as the digital economy will be a strong motivator to empower industry and facilitate a tangible economic development in our entire region. According to the CIO summit website, technology and sustainable transformation is a growing area of focus in Kuwait, with 50 percent of Kuwaiti organizations identifying sustainability transformation as one of their key business priorities for the next 12-18 months.

Last March, former Minister of Commerce and Industry Mazin Al-Nahedh said that the ministry is working on forming a high-level committee with the inclusion of all relevant government agencies to build a national roadmap for overseeing the digital transformation of the country and unifying all projects under a comprehensive master system.

Nahedh has said that the ministry was working on developing secure and effective cloud computing to enable institutions to use it in an integrated manner and maximize its benefits. "We in the ministry and under the directives of the political leadership and the Council of Ministers will continue to work with our strategic partners in the field of technology to advance digital transformation through public institutions in Kuwait to achieve the New Kuwait Vision 2035 and transform the country into a regional and international financial and commercial center," he said.

Neil Harbisson, the world's first officially recognized Human "Cyborg", will be at the summit to speak about the importance of technology and how to employ it in the interest of human kind. The summit will be held on May 22.



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Pakistan FM says 'happy' on rare visit to India

Iran's Raisi, on Syria visit, urges anti-Zionist unity

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Rwanda counts cost after floods, landslides kill 130

Rivers of mud swept away homes and other infrastructure



RUBENGERA: Bystanders look at the damaged slope after a landslide caused by heavy rain in Rubengera, Rwanda. At least 130 people have died as floods and landslides engulfed several parts of Rwanda after torrential rains, destroying homes and cutting off roads. — AFP

KIGALI: Rwandans grieved Thursday for lost loved ones and destroyed homes after powerful floods and landslides tore through the country killing at least 130 people and leaving many thousands homeless. The government was still counting the cost as families prepared to bury their dead in the aftermath of a natural disaster caused by torrential rains in the steep and hilly country.

Rivers of mud swept away homes and other infrastructure and cut off roads in several parts of the country, particularly the Western Province bordering Lake Kivu where the worst devastation was reported.

"I found my child buried under rocks and bricks that fell on him during the heavy rains. He died at the hospital," Anonciata, who only gave one name, told AFP in the hard-hit district of Karongi. "It is

very devastating for our family. One of my other children also got badly injured on the head. I pray he survives."

In Rubavu, another district badly affected, survivors were counting their blessings while coming to grips with the scale of destruction. Jacqueline Mukamana rushed out of her home at midnight when neighbors alerted her that the river was flooding only for her home to be swept away. "Our house, and everything (else), has been destroyed," she said. Another resident, Paul Bizimana, was grateful he managed to get his family out: "I managed to rescue my kids and family members... at least they are safe."

Over 5,100 homes destroyed

The government was racing emergency supplies

Charles III. In national polls, the opposition Labor party has built a double-digit lead over the Conservatives, and is portraying the municipal elections as a referendum on "13 years of Tory failure".

Surveys suggest that voters are deeply worried about double-digit inflation and the crisis engulfing the state-run National Health Service, as doctors and nurses strike for better pay. Writing in the Daily Mirror newspaper on Thursday, Labor leader Keir Starmer laid out a charge sheet of failing public services, rising crime and record waiting lists at hospitals.

"Your vote matters," he said. "If you believe it's time to build a better Britain, grab your photo ID, get down to your polling station and vote for Labor today." Sunak has defended a change introduced by his government for these elections requiring voters to show photo identification for the first time, a move denounced by Labor as an attempt to suppress the vote.

'Shambles'

Labor is making progress towards recapturing its former strongholds in northern England, the so-called "red wall", which Johnson turned Tory in the 2019 general election on a vow to "get Brexit done". London is not voting this time but the centrist Liberal Democrats are targeting Conservative districts on the edge of the capital, including in UK parliamentary constituencies represented by members of Sunak's cabinet — dubbed the "blue wall".

"Senior Conservative MPs are in for a big shock,"

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky denied his country was responsible and said: "We fight on our territory, we are defending our villages and cities." Ukrainian presidential spokesman Mikheylo Podolyak suggested Moscow is to blame. "Such staged reports by Russia should be considered solely as an attempt to prepare an information background for a large-scale terrorist attack on Ukraine," Podolyak said.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken also cast doubt on the veracity of Russia's account, saying: "I would take anything coming out of the Kremlin with a very large shaker of salt." And Eastern European expert Sergej Sumlenny said he believes Russia is responsible. He cited factors including the Kremlin providing quick confirmation of the incident, and the circulation of apparent CCTV footage from government-controlled cameras as evidence that Russia "wants us to see it."

Could Ukraine be responsible?

While the perpetrator is unknown, Ukraine has the technical capabilities to carry out long-range

strikes inside Russia, and has done so before. "At this point, it may be Ukraine's own UJ-22 drone, or a Chinese-made Mugin-5, which was apparently used by Ukraine before," while Kyiv's PD-1 drone is another option, said Samuel Bendett, a researcher in uncrewed military systems who is an analyst with the CNA Russia Studies Program.

The UJ-22 "has a long range and can potentially reach Moscow," but it is unclear where the drones were launched from at this point, said Bendett, who emphasized that much is still unknown as of now. Dominika Kunertova, senior researcher at the Center for Security Studies at ETH Zurich, agreed.

"I think it's possible that Ukraine has developed a long-range drone capability that could reach Moscow. Extending the strike distance has been Ukraine's main objective regarding innovation in uncrewed systems," Kunertova said. But she added that "one of the main strategic advantage of using a drone for this purpose is deniability" — the more difficult it is to trace any attack back to Ukraine, the less chance of any escalation in the conflict. — AFP



LONDON: A handout photograph shows Britain's interim Science, Innovation and Technology Secretary Chloe Smith (L), Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Britain's Home Secretary Suella Braverman reacting during the weekly session of Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) at the House of Commons, in London. — AFP

deputy Liberal Democrat leader Daisy Cooper said. "The Liberal Democrats are now on the cusp of causing a major political upset." Overall, the worst-case scenario given by pollsters is for the Conservatives to lose 1,000 council seats across the areas of England that are voting on Thursday. Sunak's party argues that anything less than 1,000 would amount to a win, and Labor has also been managing expectations for its likely successes. — AFP

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UK's PM warns of hard test in first date with voters

LONDON: Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservatives braced for heavy losses Thursday in their first major electoral test since he became the UK's third leader in the space of a few chaotic weeks last year. In the depths of the worst cost-of-living crisis in decades, the local council elections across England will shed light on the main parties' standing ahead of a UK-wide general election expected next year.

Sunak conceded that his Tory party faced a "hard" trial with voters, after it ditched Boris Johnson and then Liz Truss in quick succession last year. "Good councilors will lose their seats because of all that has happened over the past year," he said at a think-tank event late Wednesday, according to the Daily Telegraph. "I've only been prime minister for six months but I do believe we're making good progress," Sunak added. Voting stations opened at 7:00 am (0600 GMT) for more than 8,000 council seats across 230 English districts, and will close at 10:00 pm (2100 GMT).

Most results should be clear by late Friday — just as Britain gears up for Saturday's coronation of King

Kremlin drone attack: Who is responsible?

WASHINGTON: Russia has accused Ukraine of targeting President Vladimir Putin's residence at the Kremlin using drones — an accusation Kyiv has denied. Unverified video footage circulating on social media appears to show an explosion on the domed roof of a building known as the Kremlin Senate, which houses the presidential administration, though the exact target and perpetrator remain unknown.

Here are some key questions about the incident: Who carried it out?

Moscow blamed Kyiv for attempting to assassinate Putin in a "planned terrorist act and an attempt on the life of the President of the Russian Federation." But

'No winner' in Sudan war

JUBA: Sudanese exiled rebel leader Abdel Wahid Nur — a veteran of decades of fighting in the troubled Darfur region — says there can be "no winner" in the war now raging between two rival generals. "The Sudanese people want neither of them," Nur, now based in neighboring South Sudan, told AFP. "They want a civilian government."

Battles have flared for weeks between Sudan's army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan and his former deputy, Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). "What's happening in Sudan is a disaster," Nur, 55, said in an interview in Juba, the capital of South Sudan, where he lives after spending years in Paris.

"There is no winner in this war," said the leader of a faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) whose members, he said, have not joined the fighting. The battles have turned Khartoum into a war zone and also killed scores in Darfur, which Nur said once more suffers "war crimes and crimes against humanity".

Nur was a leader of the Darfur rebellion from 2003 when African minority groups rose up against Arab elites they accused of monopolizing Sudan's political power and wealth. The Islamist-backed strongman then in power, Omar Al-Bashir, unleashed the notorious Janjaweed militias, the forerunners of the RSF, whose atrocities shocked the world.

The unrest killed at least 300,000 people and displaced 2.5 million, according to the UN. The bloodshed led to international charges of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes against Bashir and others. Although Darfur's conflict subsided over the years, the region remains awash with weapons and sporadic violence erupts, often over access to water, land and resources.

Sudan's military ousted Bashir in April 2019 following mass pro-democracy protests, and Burhan has been the de facto leader since then. Daglo, from Darfur's pastoralist camel-herding Arab Rizeigat people, rose to prominence with the Janjaweed, which made up the bulk of the RSF formed in 2013. In October 2021, Burhan and his then number-two Daglo jointly staged another coup that upended the country's fragile transition to civilian rule. The two generals then engaged in a power struggle, most recently over the RSF's integration into the regular army, which has now flared into bloody violence. — AFP

International

Iran's Raisi, on Syria visit, urges anti-Zionist unity

First such visit in over a decade of war

DAMASCUS: Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi called Thursday for "resistance forces" to unite against Zionists on his second day in Syria - the first such visit to Tehran's close ally in over a decade of war. Tehran has long provided logistical and military support to many factions fighting its arch-foe Zionist entity, including some Palestinian groups but also Lebanon's powerful Hezbollah - a major Damascus ally.

Zionists carried out hundreds of air strikes against Iran-backed forces in Syria since the conflict erupted in 2011. While it has rarely commented on the raids, Zionists repeatedly warned they will not allow Iran to extend its footprint in its war-torn northern neighbor. During his meetings in Damascus with what Iran's IRNA news agency called "Palestinian resistance commanders", Raisi appealed for a united front against Zionists.

"The unity and cohesion of the resistance forces, the region and the Islamic world is necessary to speed up the defeat of the Zionist regime," Raisi said in reference to Zionists. "The Islamic republic always pursues the issue of Palestine as a priority in its foreign policy, and we believe that all the equations of the Islamic world are defined under this issue," he was quoted as saying by IRNA.

Raisi's two-day visit to Syria comes weeks after Iran and its arch-rival Saudi Arabia agreed to restore ties, prompting regional capitals to re-engage with the internationally isolated governments in Damascus and Tehran. The Iranian president met his Syrian counterpart Bashar Al-Assad on Wednesday, praising him for "achieving victory" in the country's war. The Syrian conflict has killed more than 500,000 people and displaced millions.

While the front lines have mostly quietened in recent years, large parts of the country's north remain outside government control. Iran has long propped up Damascus with economic and military assistance, helping the Syrian government claw back most of the territory it lost at the start of the conflict. The Islamic republic is now positioning itself in a leading role as Assad seeks to focus on Syria's reconstruction, despite both countries remaining under heavy Western sanctions.

Raisi, who arrived with a high-level ministerial delegation, also signed memoranda of understanding on "long-term strategic cooperation", covering fields including in oil, aviation, railways and agriculture. He said on Wednesday that Iran would "stand by its Syrian brothers in the field of development and progress". The



DAMASCUS: Syria's President Bashar al-Assad (R) shakes hands with his Iranian counterpart Ebrahim Raisi in Damascus. — AFP

last Iranian president to visit Damascus was Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in September 2010. Assad has officially visited Tehran twice since the war broke out, the last time in May 2022. — AFP

Turkey's Syrians root for Erdogan in May vote

SANLIURFA: The Syrian refugee unhooked some laundry drying in the baking sun and made a wish for this month's Turkish election: "May Erdogan win". A mother from Kurdish-majority Kobane in Syria's northwest, Neroz Hussein is crystal clear about why she supports the Turkish leader, who faces the toughest election of his 20-year rule on May 14.

"Recep Tayyip Erdogan will help us stay," Hussein said. Since the Syrian war broke out in 2011, Turkey has become the new home of at least 3.7 million people—probably closer to five million—who fled the regime of President Bashar al-Assad, Russian bombardments, and Islamic State group attacks.

Most have "temporary protection" status, leaving them vulnerable to a forced return. The secular CHP party of Kemal Kilicdaroglu, who is running neck-and-neck against Erdogan, pledges to repatriate the Syrians "within two years". Neroz, 35, and her husband Adil Sheho, 38, fled to Turkey in 2015. "Two weeks after we got married, Kobane was attacked by ISIS," Adil said, using one of the acronyms of Islamic State jihadists. Now based in Sanliurfa, a city 40 kilometres (25 miles) from the Syrian border, the family treats Turkey as their "second homeland", Neroz said.

"Our four children were born here. They don't know Syria," Adil chipped in. "We were well received at first, but the situation changed because of the economy," he added, referring to a cost-of-living crisis that saw annual inflation reach 85 percent last year, fanning anti-migrant sentiments. "Even if they don't send us back all at once, they will put pressure on us, demand papers, increase our rents and bills."

The CHP mayor of Bolu in Turkey's northwest did just that in 2021, abolishing social aid and imposing an



SANLIURFA: A Syrian couple walks near Balıkligol (or Pool of Abraham, Halil-Ur Rahman Lake), in the southwest of the city centre of Sanliurfa on April 27, 2023. — AFP

11-fold hike in the water bills of Syrian refugees in his municipality. He also more than doubled their marriage registration tax. Disavowed by his party, the mayor himself eventually had to pay a fine. But the episode reflected the winds of change that have swept across Turkey since it became the world's largest home to refugees and migrants under Erdogan's Islamic-rooted rule.

Some 240,000 Syrians have obtained Turkish citizenship and the accompanying right to vote in the approaching polls, which will also elect a new parliament. They can gain citizenship by making big investments or, like Hussein Utbah, by becoming students in sought-after fields such as electrical engineering. Naturalised in 2020, the 27-year-old will be voting in Turkey for the first time.

But he will be the only one eligible in his family, casting his ballot for Erdogan in the hope that his

mother and five siblings will have a future in Turkey.

"My friends and I all have the same view: not only because we are Syrians, but because of what we see he has done for the country," Hussein said.

Hussein also scoffed at the CHP's pledge to ensure the Syrians' "voluntary and dignified" return. "We can't go back and trust Bashar al-Assad," said Hussein, whose family fled Raqqa when it became the self-proclaimed IS capital in 2015. Zara Dogbeh, a 50-year-old widower, has launched a popular Middle Eastern food catering service since arriving in 2018, the last time Turkey had a presidential election.

"We are more fearful this time. The (CHP) talks about sending us back in every speech," she said. "They are going to hunt us down on a moonless night," she sighed. "Even our Turkish neighbours are afraid of us." — AFP

Russia accuses US of masterminding...

Continued from Page 1

Zelensky's surprise visit to meet top officials of the International Criminal Court, which has issued an arrest warrant for Russian leader Vladimir Putin, came a day after Moscow accused Kyiv of a drone attack on the Kremlin. Russia has accused Ukraine of trying to kill Putin, but Zelensky denied his country was behind the Kremlin strike.

He is due to meet Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte and Defense Minister Kaja Ollongren and make a speech entitled "No peace without justice for Ukraine". An AFP correspondent saw Zelensky arrive at the ICC under heavy security measures, as a Ukrainian flag was flown at the court. The Netherlands has pledged both financial and military support to Ukraine since Russia launched its invasion in February 2022. The country announced last month that it would buy 14 Leopard 2 tanks with Denmark to give to Kyiv, which is demanding more heavy weapons.

The Ukrainian air force said Thursday that Russia had fired 24 attack drones overnight, of which 18 were downed. Authorities said there were no casualties. "The invaders launched up to 24 Shahed-136/131 attack drones..."

The Air Force of Ukraine, in cooperation with other air defence units, shot down 18 attack drones," the air

force said on Telegram. Sergiy Popko, the head of the city of Kyiv's military administration, said that "all enemy missiles and UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles) were destroyed over Kyiv by air defence forces".

Popko said it was the third day of attempted strikes on Kyiv in May. "Our city has not experienced such intensity of strikes since the beginning of this year," he said, adding that debris from the downed drones had fallen on different parts of the city but there were no casualties. Russia on Thursday said a drone attack in the southern Krasnodar region's Ilsky settlement sparked a blaze at an oil refinery.

Krasnodar Governor Veniamin Kondratyev said the refinery fire had been localized to a 400-square-metre area and was quickly extinguished by emergency services. Shortly afterwards the governor of Russia's Rostov region, which also borders Ukraine, said a drone had hit a local refinery near the village of Kiselevka and caused an explosion and a fire. A similar blaze Wednesday at an oil reservoir in the nearby village of Volna engulfed 1,200 square meters, with officials also blaming a drone crash.

That same day, Moscow said it shot down two drones aimed at Putin's residence and accused Ukraine of attempting a "terrorist act", with the Kremlin threatening a tough response. Ukraine has denied any involvement and the country's Western allies have also cast doubt on the report. "We do not attack Putin or Moscow," Zelensky said on a visit to Finland. "We defend our villages and cities." On Wednesday, Kyiv said Russian strikes had killed 21 people in the southern region of Kherson, including at a supermarket and a train station. — AFP

UN's top humanitarian official, Martin Griffiths, made a lightning visit to Sudan Tuesday to try to negotiate safe passage for aid and aid workers after six trucks laden with food supplies from the World Food Program were looted on their way to the war-torn western region of Darfur. He was due to fly on to Nairobi Thursday after a brief stop in Saudi Arabia, his spokeswoman said. Darfur is still scarred by a war that erupted in 2003 when then president Omar Al-Bashir unleashed the Janjaweed militia, mainly recruited from Arab pastoralist tribes, against ethnic minority rebels.

The UN said Darfur civilians were again being armed in the latest fighting. The Norwegian Refugee Council said violence in the West Darfur state capital, El Geneina, has "resulted in the loss of at least 191 lives". "Dozens of settlements have been burnt and destroyed, and thousands have been displaced," the rights group said. Both Griffiths and the UN's Sudan envoy, Volker Perthes, spoke to Burhan and Daglo over the telephone about the necessity of aid reaching people, Griffiths tweeted. — AFP

Population a burden for India moms

DARBHANGA: Married off by her parents at 14, Indian mother-of-seven Jaimala Devi kept having children because her husband insisted she could only stop once she had given birth to two sons. Devi's story is common across Bihar, the poorest state in the world's most populous country and also its fastest-growing: with around 127 million people, it already has roughly as many people as Mexico. India's overall birthrate has fallen in tandem with its rising economy, but poverty and a deep-rooted bias for male heirs have kept Bihar an engine room of national population growth.

"Having seven kids and managing everything on my own really drives me crazy at times," said Devi, who at 30 has never left her home village. "I thought we'd be comfortable with one or two kids," she told AFP. "But we had girls first, and because of that we have seven." Devi, her five daughters and two sons live in a ramshackle one-room hut, unadorned except for a small television, an old fan and some posters of Hindu deities on its unplastered walls.

Bihar has scarce opportunities for well-paid employment and Devi's husband Subhash is gone for most of the year, sending back his meagre earnings as an unskilled storehand in the capital New Delhi. Many fathers

Iraqi Kurds in the crossfire of Turkish army

HIROR: Under an almond tree in his garden, Mustafa Ahmed shows a handful of bullet casings he collected near his home in Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region. Residents of his village in Iraq's mountainous far north often find themselves caught in the crossfire between the Turkish army and fighters from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). "Most of the inhabitants have left," said Ahmed, from the Kurdish village of Hiror in a green valley near the Turkish border, an area that for decades has seen fighting between the two forces. Turkish forces hold dozens of positions on the mountain heights while PKK fighters, who are Turkish Kurds, maintain rear bases in the Iraqi territory.

"Our life has become hell, we no longer feel safe at home," said Ahmed, aged in his 70s, who said once a shell hit the ground near his home. Ten of Ahmed's 12 children have left the region, he said, a cigarette between his lips. "Out of the 50 families in the village, there are only 17 left. The others have abandoned their homes and their land for fear of the bombardments." Those who have stayed endure the daily roar of military planes above and the buzzing of Turkish military drones. Armed men are nearby, "over there, on these heights," Ahmed said, pointing to the wooded mountains surrounding Hiror. "They see us and know what we are doing. We can no longer go to our fields or graze our animals."

'Gunfire, shrapnel, shelling'

The PKK, designated a "terrorist" group by Ankara and its Western allies, has since 1984 waged an insurgency in Turkey in unrest that has claimed tens of thousands of lives. Turkish forces have long maintained military positions inside northern Iraq where they regularly launch operations against the militants. In early April, Turkey was accused of bombarding the airport at Sulaimaniya, Iraqi Kurdistan's second city. Several days earlier, Ankara had halted flights to and from Sulaimaniya, citing an increased PKK presence at the airport. In Hiror village, 60-year-old Adib Moussa was preparing to drive his pick-up truck to a nearby village that has been spared from the conflict, where he has left his cattle in the care of an acquaintance.

"This is the third year that we have seen this—Turkey entered our regions and surrounded our village," said the moustachioed farmer with a weathered face. "There are many houses damaged by gunfire, shrapnel or shelling," added Moussa, a father of 10 children. His neighbour, father of two Mahvan Ahmed, showed AFP a concrete railing riddled with bullet holes on his roof terrace. "After dark, we hear gunshots and explosions," said the 37-year-old. He said he hopes that Baghdad will intervene to "solve this problem, so that the Turks leave and we can resume a normal life". Baghdad and Arbil, Iraqi Kurdistan's capital, have long been accused of ignoring the situation to preserve their strategic alliances with Ankara, only offering symbolic condemnations of violations of Iraq's sovereignty and the impact on civilians. — AFP

Sudan truce in tatters as war...

Continued from Page 1

to happen," Guterres said. "A country like Sudan, that has suffered so much... cannot afford a struggle for power between two people."

On the day that fighting broke out, the two generals had been due to meet with international mediators to discuss the RSF's integration into the regular army - a key condition for the transition to democratic rule. Instead, Khartoum awoke to the sound of gunfire ringing through the streets.

"Every minute of war, more people die or are thrown into the streets, society disintegrates and the state weakens and decomposes a little more," said Khalid Omar Youssef, a civilian minister in the government overthrown by the rival generals in a 2021 coup. The

Zionist forces kill three...

Continued from Page 1

The Palestinian health ministry confirmed three people had been killed in the morning raid in the Old City of Nablus. "Two of the martyrs have completely distorted features due to the intensity of the shooting, which makes it difficult to identify them," the ministry said. An AFP correspondent heard gunfire erupt near the Old City around 7 am as dozens of army vehicles swooped in from multiple directions.

Widower Leo Dee said in a statement he was "comforted" to hear the men had been killed, adding that he had "asked for the opportunity to speak with the terrorists' families." Hamas described the killing of the three men as an "assassination" of the "heroes of resistance in the city of Nablus". Hours

later, in the town of Huwara, south of Nablus, a Palestinian was shot dead after attempting to stab a soldier, the army said. It added that a soldier was "lightly injured" in the alleged attack. The raid came just days after violence flared along the Gaza border following the death of a Palestinian hunger striker in custody on Tuesday.

Palestinian militants fired more than 100 rockets from Gaza in response to the death of Khader Adnan, 45, a leading figure in Islamic Jihad in the occupied West Bank, who died in prison following an 87-day hunger strike. The latest deadly raid brings to 105 the number of Palestinians killed in the Zionist-Palestinian conflict so far this year. Nineteen people (from Zionist entity), one Ukrainian and one Italian have been killed over the same period, according to an AFP count based on official sources from the two sides. These figures include combatants as well as civilians, and, on the Zionist side, include three members of the Arab minority. —AFP

International

Kenya's highest profile pastor in the dock over cult massacre

109 confirmed dead in Shakahola forest case

MOMBASA: One of Kenya's highest profile pastors appeared in the dock on Thursday in connection with the horrific discovery last month of dozens of bodies in mass graves. Ezekiel Odero, a wealthy televangelist who boasts a huge following, is being investigated on a raft of charges including murder, aiding suicide, abduction, radicalization, crimes against humanity, child cruelty, fraud and money laundering.

Prosecutors accuse Odero of links to cult leader Paul Nthenge Mackenzie, who is in custody facing terrorism charges over the deaths of more than 100 people, many of them children, in what has been dubbed the "Shakahola forest massacre".

Mackenzie, the head of the Good News International Church, is alleged to have incited his followers to starve to death in order to "meet Jesus" in a case that has deeply shocked Kenyans.

About 50 Odero supporters gathered outside the courtroom in the Indian Ocean port city of Mombasa, some dressed in all white, some in red, and praying with bibles in hand.

Kenyan police had arrested Odero last Thursday over the "mass killing of his followers" and closed his New Life Prayer Centre and Church that lies south of the coastal town of Malindi.

A total of 109 people have so far been confirmed dead in the Shakahola forest case, the majority of them children. Autopsies carried out so far on about

40 of the bodies unearthed in the forest inland from Malindi found that while starvation appeared to be the main cause of death, some of the victims were strangled, beaten or suffocated.

'Innocent and vulnerable followers'

Police are seeking to hold Odero, who is popularly known as Pastor Ezekiel, for another 30 days to enable their investigations to be completed. Prosecutors have said in court documents that they have credible information linking the corpses exhumed at Shakahola to the deaths of several of Odero's "innocent and vulnerable followers".

Police are also investigating information that the bodies were kept in a privately-run morgue before being transported and buried in the forest, according to the documents. Prosecutors have also claimed that Odero and Mackenzie share a "history of business investments" including a television station used to pass "radicalized messages" to followers.

In a court filing earlier this week, Odero said he wanted to "strongly disassociate" himself from Mackenzie and disagreed with his teachings. Mackenzie himself is due back in court in Mombasa on Friday with another 17 co-accused, where prosecutors are expected to ask for him to be detained for 90 days. The deeply religious Christian-majority country has been stunned by the case and President



MOMBASA: Members and worshippers of the New Life Prayer Centre and Church sing and pray before the beginning of court case against televangelist Ezekiel Odero. — AFP

William Ruto has pledged to take action against unscrupulous churches and cults that have dabbled in criminality. Odero, a fisherman who was born into poverty, draws huge crowds and he has shared the pulpit with prominent Kenyan figures. His church can seat 40,000 people and he is also building a

helipad, restaurant and an international school on the expansive grounds.

Odero claims that "holy" scraps of cloth and water sold at his mega-rallies for 100 Kenyan shillings (75 US cents) can heal any disease, including HIV -- provided people have a strong faith. — AFP

Japan PM heads to Seoul as ties warm over N Korea threat

SEOUL: Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida will visit Seoul this weekend as the two countries seek to bury historical animosities and reboot their relationship in the face of a growing threat from North Korea. The two-day trip starting Sunday will be the first official bilateral visit to Seoul by a Japanese leader for over a decade. Kishida will meet with President Yoon Suk Yeol — who has made resetting ties with Japan a top priority — just weeks after the South Korean leader visited Tokyo in March.

Yoon has also just returned from a state visit to Washington, where he met President Joe Biden and signed an accord aimed at boosting the nuclear protection afforded to South Korea by the United States.

Relations between Seoul and Tokyo — both key regional US security allies — have long been strained over Japan's brutal 1910-45 colonial occupation of the Korean peninsula, including the imposition of forced labour and sexual slavery.

But Yoon, who took office last year, has sought to bury the historical hatchet, earlier announcing a plan to compensate Korean victims of Japanese forced labor despite the absence of any direct involvement from Tokyo. His endgame is improving regional security to counter perceived threats from North Korea, experts say.

"The Korea-Japan relationship is known as the weakest link in the trilateral cooperation with the United States," said Choi Eunmi, a researcher at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies in Seoul. "So when this part is strengthened, it can eventually advance into proper South Korea-US-Japan cooperation."

Record sea surface heat sparks fears of warming surge

PARIS: With sea surface temperatures swelling to new highs in recent weeks, scientists warn that humanity's carbon pollution has the potential to turn oceans into a global warming "time bomb". Oceans absorb most of the heat caused by planet-warming gases, causing heatwaves that harm aquatic life, altering weather patterns and disrupting crucial planet-regulating systems. While sea surface temperatures normally recede relatively quickly from annual peaks, this year they stayed high, with scientists warning that this underscores an underappreciated but grave impact of climate change.

"The ocean, like a sponge, absorbs more than 90 percent of the increase in heat caused by human activities," said leading oceanologist Jean-Baptiste Sallee, of the French research agency CNRS. Year by year ocean warming is increasing at "an absolutely staggering rate", he told AFP.

In early April, the average surface temperature of the oceans, excluding polar waters, reached 21.1 degrees Celsius, beating the annual record of 21C set in March 2016, according to data from the United States NOAA observatory that goes back to 1982.

Although temperatures began to drop at the end of the month, they have remained above seasonal records for the past six weeks, with fears that the looming warming El Nino weather phenomenon could load even more heat into the climate system.

The most immediate consequence of the surge in ocean temperatures is more marine heatwaves, which he said "act like underwater fires" with the potential to irreversibly degrade thousands of square kilometres of underwater forest — for example of kelp or corals. Higher sea surface temperatures disrupt the mixing of nutrients and oxygen that are key to supporting life and potentially alter the ocean's crucial role in absorbing carbon from the atmosphere.

"As the water is warmer, there will be increased evaporation and a high risk of more intense cyclones, and perhaps consequences on ocean currents," said oceanologist Catherine Jeandel, of CNRS. Temperatures are also rising throughout the water column and all that heat does not disappear.

'War plot'

Efforts to boost military cooperation come as North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un, who last year declared his country an "irreversible" nuclear power, doubles down on weapons development and testing. Pyongyang has conducted a record-breaking string of launches in 2023, including test-firing the country's first solid-fuel ballistic missile — a technical breakthrough.

The United States and South Korea have in turn been ramping up their defence cooperation, staging a series of major military exercises including two trilateral drills involving Japan this year. But they are eager to do more. At their summit last month, Biden and Yoon issued the Washington Declaration, which bolsters the US nuclear umbrella over South Korea, and they vowed to speed up trilateral cooperation with Japan.

North Korea views all such cooperation as "absolutely identical with a dangerous war plot", according to a commentary carried by the country's official KCNA news agency.



Japan PM Fumio Kishida

Scientists expect that excess heat stored in the world's waters will eventually be returned to the Earth system and contribute to more global warming. "As we heat it up, the ocean becomes a bit like a time bomb," said Jeandel.

El Nino

The recent record might be explained by the end of the temporary atmospheric phenomenon known as La Nina — which tends to have a cooling effect — and the expected arrival of its warming opposite, El Nino. "During El Nino years, the deep ocean releases heat to the surface and warms the atmosphere," said Sallee, one of the authors on the landmark UN reports on climate change. But scientists have cautioned that the real concern is the temperature rise over decades — and beyond.

When you take into account the background rise in sea surface temperatures, "2023 doesn't look too out of place relative to other El Nino years," climate scientist David Ho, a professor at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, said on Twitter. "It's the long-term sea surface temperature trend that should alarm us," he added.

Heating the deep

In January, an international group of researchers said heat content in the upper oceans in 2022 exceeded the previous year's levels by around 10 Zetta joules — equivalent to 100 times the electricity generation worldwide in 2021.

Records going back to the late 1950s show a relentless rise in surface temperatures with almost continuous increases going back to around 1985. While the sea's surface responds relatively quickly to global warming, the deep ocean "typically adjusts over centuries to millennia", said Karina Von Schuckmann, a researcher specialized in ocean monitoring at Mercator Ocean.

Just like the sea level rise that will play out over hundreds of years as a result of today's carbon emissions, she said ocean heat content will "continue to increase long after surface temperature stabilizes".

"In other words, projections suggest that historic ocean warming is irreversible this century", with the ultimate net warming dependent on our emissions. For Frederic Hourdin, research director at the CNRS Dynamic Meteorology Laboratory, the latest surface temperature should raise awareness of the bigger climate change picture. Clearly, he said, we are still "not sufficiently aware that the objective is to do without oil and coal". — AFP

Beyond the 'turbulence'

The Japanese prime minister said this week that his trip to Seoul would "give momentum to 'shuttle diplomacy'" between the neighbors. During their March summit in Tokyo, Kishida and Yoon agreed to end tit-for-tat trade curbs and restart mutual visits, with Kishida also inviting the South Korean president to a G7 meet in Hiroshima this month.

"The exchange of summits, first in Japan and now in Korea, is meant to signify the turbulence of the recent past is behind South Korea and Japan," Benjamin A. Engel, research professor at the Institute of International Affairs at Seoul National University, told AFP.

In 2018, often-testy ties between the two countries deteriorated further after South Korea's Supreme Court ordered Japanese firms to compensate the wartime victims of forced labor. But in March this year Seoul announced a plan to pay those affected without Tokyo's direct involvement — a move that enraged much of the South Korean public.

A Gallup Korea poll published in the same month showed nearly 60 percent of respondents were opposed to the government's proposal. As long as general sentiment in South Korea stays sour towards Japan, the current diplomatic bonhomie risks being "short-lived", said Engel.

"If the US does have a positive role to play, it should be to lean on Tokyo to show more remorse towards Korea," he added. Should Kishida's trip go well — with Japanese media suggesting he will reaffirm Tokyo's previous apologies over wartime conduct — it could herald the start of a new level of engagement. "The success of the visit will be measured by how there will be regular meetings and engagement between the two countries at the leadership level," Shihoko Goto, deputy director of the Asia Program at the Wilson Center in Washington, told AFP. "The challenge will be whether public opinion in both countries will support such overtures." — AFP

Prep in the pool for Europe's next astronauts

COLOGNE: A new cohort of astronauts at the European Space Agency's training centre in Cologne, Germany, can expect to see time in both the pool and the classroom as they get ready to head into orbit.

Trainees dive into the water to emulate the experience of working in zero gravity, as well as studying a variety of subjects from medicine to geology. The aim of the curriculum is to prepare the group for service on the International Space Station (ISS) and later on a potential mission to the moon. "The biggest challenge is to learn so many different things in a very short period of time," British astronaut Rosemary Coogan, 31, told AFP in an interview. Along with four other hopefuls, Coogan in April began the 13-month course and will have finished by May 2024. By then, the group will know who among them will be the first to climb aboard the low-orbit station in 2026. For French candidate Sophie Adenot, 40, the "variety of the training" is part of the pleasure. "It is everything from theoretical science to operational training. I am astounded by everything we have done in the last month," she told AFP. Graduates from the course could be headed for the moon, in the scope of the Artemis mission, which hopes to return astronauts to the rock within a decade and to establish a permanent base on Earth's natural satellite.

The current cohort of astronauts includes the highest number of women to date after a push by the ESA to make space travel less masculine. The agency encouraged more women to apply for the opportunity to go to space. In all, almost a quarter of candidates in 2021 were women, up from 15 percent in the last round in 2008. "More than just having women in the team, what is important is diverse backgrounds and professions," said Adenot. "A doctor will have a different way of thinking than an engineer or a pilot... it's important to have various ways of thinking in the team," she said. Adenot, herself a helicopter test pilot, is joined in the group by Swiss doctor Marco Sieber, Belgian neuroscientist Raphael Liegeois and Spanish aeronautical engineer Pablo Alvarez Fernandez. In addition to the five candidates, the ESA has also appointed a "parastronaut" — an astronaut with a handicap — 41-year-old Briton John McFall, who will take part in the training. — AFP



BENAULIM: Policemen stand guard outside the venue of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Council of Foreign Ministers' meeting in Goa on May 4, 2023. — AFP

Pakistan FM says 'happy' on rare visit to India

BENAULIM: Pakistan's foreign minister arrived in India Thursday to take part in an international conference, the first official visit by a senior Pakistani official to the country's eastern neighbour since 2016. The South Asian neighbours have fought three full-fledged wars since they were created at the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, and relations between the nuclear-armed countries have remained tense in recent years, mainly over the disputed territory of Kashmir.

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is in the Indian coastal resort state of Goa for a Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meeting of foreign ministers, along with counterparts from China and Russia. "I am very happy that today I have arrived here leading the delegation of Pakistan," he told reporters.

Bhutto gave no indication whether he would hold one-on-one talks with his opposite number in India, but said he hoped the SCO meeting would be "very successful". Pakistan suspended trade and diplomatic ties with India in 2019, when New Delhi imposed direct rule on the part of Muslim-majority Kashmir it controls and enforced a heavy security lockdown.

Both countries withdrew their top diplomats and several consular staff were expelled or withdrawn in tit-for-tat measures. That development came after a military standoff earlier in the year — also centred over Kashmir — that saw both countries launch air strikes and an Indian fighter jet shot down. The most recent visit to India by a high-ranking Pakistan diplomat was in 2016, when Sartaj Aziz — then the senior foreign affairs adviser to the prime minister — travelled there. India currently holds the rotating presidency of the SCO, a forum established in 2001 that also includes several Central Asian states, rivalling Western institutions.

S. Jaishankar, India's foreign minister, met with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov ahead of Friday's meeting to discuss ties and "current global and regional agenda topics", a statement from Moscow said. India's security ties with Russia have put it in an awkward diplomatic position following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has walked a tightrope between India's increased security cooperation with Western countries and its reliance on Russia for defence and oil imports. Jaishankar also sat down with Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang on Thursday, a week after the defence ministers of both nations met in New Delhi to discuss military deployments on their disputed Himalayan frontier. "Focus remains on resolving outstanding issues and ensuring peace and tranquility in the border areas," Jaishankar tweeted after the meeting. — AFP

Business

FRIDAY, MAY 5, 2023

Most central banks in Gulf raise interest rates after Fed move

Kuwait Central Bank keeps discount rates unchanged

DUBAI: Most of the central banks of the Gulf region including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman and Qatar raised their benchmark borrowing rates after the US Federal Reserve increased its key interest rate to tame inflation and maintain price stability.

However, Kuwait's Central Bank kept its discount rates unchanged. Most central banks in the six-member GCC bloc follow the Fed's policy rate moves since their currencies are pegged to the US dollar, barring Kuwait which links its dinar to a basket of currencies.

The Fed bumped up the policy rate for a third consecutive time this year by 25 basis points (bps) as the labor market remains tight, the unemployment rate is at a multi-decade low and the central bank continues to try to bring inflation down to its target range of 2 per cent after prices hit a four-decade low.

The Saudi Central Bank, better known as Sama, raised its repurchase agreement (repo) rate by a quarter point to 5.75 per cent and its reverse repo rate by a similar margin to 5.25 per cent. The kingdom's inflation rate for 2022 was estimated at 2.6 per cent and, according to preliminary forecasts, has been forecast at 2.1 per cent in 2023, Saudi Finance Minister Mohammed Al-Jadaan said in December. Consumer prices in the kingdom rose 2.7 per cent year-on-year in March, the lowest rate of

price growth since July 2022.

The UAE Central Bank raised its benchmark borrowing rate for the overnight deposit facility by a quarter of a percentage point to 5.15 per cent from 4.9 per cent, effective from Thursday. UAE banks remain adequately capitalized while the average loan-to-deposit ratio edged down to 86 per cent in December 2022, according to official estimates. The net foreign assets of commercial banks more than doubled to \$104 billion at the end of 2022. IIF deposits and credit to the economy to grow by about 8 per cent in 2023.

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) on Thursday increased its interest rate for local banks at the rate of 25 basis points to 5.75% in line with the decision of the US Federal Reserve. The Central Bank of Bahrain also increased its key rate on one-week deposits by 25 bps to 6 per cent. The Bahraini regulator raised its interest rate on overnight deposits by a quarter-point to 5.75 per cent, and by a similar margin on its four-week deposit rate, raising it to 6.75 per cent. The lending rate was also increased by a quarter of a percentage point to 7 per cent.

The Central Bank of Qatar raised its repo rate by a quarter of a percentage point to 5.75 per cent. It also increased its deposit rate by a similar margin pushing it to 5.5 per cent and the lending rate by 25 bps to 6 per cent. — Agencies



ABU DHABI: The UAE central bank building in Abu Dhabi.

ECB slows rate hikes but signals more needed

FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank delivered a smaller interest rate hike Thursday as higher borrowing costs begin to take their toll, but said it had "more ground to cover" in fighting red-hot inflation. It was the seventh-straight increase in the ECB's unprecedented campaign of monetary tightening that began last year after costs of everyday goods began to soar.

The 26-member governing council however decided to downshift to a quarter percentage point lift, from half percentage point hikes at its three previous meetings. While consumer price rises remain stubbornly above the central bank's two-percent target, closely-watched core inflation — excluding volatile energy and food costs — may be easing, while the impact of hikes is starting to weigh on the euro area. While the ECB did not commit in its statement to future increases, saying its approach would remain "data-dependent", bank president Christine Lagarde signaled there were more to come.

"Based on the information today, we have more ground to cover," she told a press conference after the rate decision was announced. "We are on a jour-

ney, and we are not pausing". Thursday's increase brings the ECB's deposit rate to 3.25 percent, its highest level since 2008.

Sticky inflation

The move came a day after the US Federal Reserve made its 10th straight increase, raising borrowing costs by a quarter point, and hinting it could pause on additional hikes.

But US stocks ended lower after Fed Chair Jerome Powell ruled out interest rate cuts in 2023, and fell further on Thursday. Inflation in the 20 countries that use the euro started surging last year after Russia invaded Ukraine and slashed gas deliveries to Europe, triggering an energy crisis.

Despite the ECB's tightening, consumer prices rose in April after five consecutive months of declines, edging up to 7.0 percent on an annualized basis from 6.9 percent in March. It peaked at 10.6 percent in October. But core inflation fell slightly in April, its first drop for months and a potential turning point that gave ammunition to those calling to slow rate hikes.

The impacts of the aggressive rate-hiking campaign are also starting to be felt, with a survey this week showing eurozone banks dramatically tightened lending criteria in the first quarter and that demand for loans has plummeted. That could have contributed to the ECB deciding to ease its foot off the gas, as policymakers walk a fine line between combating high prices while avoiding pushing the euro area into a sharp downturn.



FRANKFURT: European Central Bank (ECB) President Christine Lagarde addresses a press conference on the eurozone's monetary policy in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany on May 4, 2023. — AFP

But while Lagarde said the impacts of tightening were now visible on the "financing leg" of the economy, the ECB was not sure about the "next leg, which is transmission from banks to the economy". There had been debate in the run-up to Thursday's meeting about whether the ECB would opt for a quarter-point or half-point increase, and Lagarde confirmed some ECB members had pushed for a bigger hike. Concerns about the banking sector also resurfaced this week after the collapse of another US lender, and could prompt ECB officials to reflect on the risks of their hikes. — AFP

PacWest Bancorp reassures investors as shares plummet

WASHINGTON: US regional bank PacWest Bancorp sought to reassure investors late Wednesday after its shares plummeted by more than half, saying its deposit flows had not been unusual and liquidity remained "solid."

The 52 percent dive in its stock price during after-hours trading on Wednesday followed reports that PacWest was considering a sale or other capital-raising measures. PacWest's struggles come after several other mid-size lenders recently collapsed in the United States, sparking fears over the health of the sector. "The bank has not experienced out-of-the-ordinary deposit flows following the sale of First Republic Bank and other news," California-based PacWest said in a statement.

"Our cash and available liquidity remains solid and exceeded our uninsured deposits." First Republic, another California-based lender, went under on Monday and was bought by JPMorgan Chase. In March the failure of three other regional banks and the takeover of Credit Suisse by rival UBS triggered market turmoil.

PacWest also said Wednesday that it had been exploring "strategic asset sales," including a "\$2.7 billion Lender Finance loan portfolio" sale that remained "on track." It was normal to "continuously review strategic options," the bank said, adding that it had been "approached by several potential partners and investors" with discussions ongoing. Tim Waterer, chief market analyst at KCM Trade, told Bloomberg that PacWest's statement "offers little in the way of confidence." — AFP

Sinopec, Total in talks with Aramco on \$10bn gas deal

RIYADH: Sinopec and TotalEnergies SE are among companies holding talks to invest in the Jafurah development in Saudi Arabia, according to reports. The Chinese and French energy giants are in separate discussions with Saudi Aramco about the plans that may include the construction of facilities to export the fuel as liquefied natural gas. Aramco is seeking to raise a total of around \$10bn for the projects as the kingdom seeks to exploit one of the world's largest untapped gas fields, the report said.

Saudi Aramco has been seeking equity investors that could help fund midstream and downstream projects at its more than \$100 billion Jafurah gas development in the east of the kingdom. The state-controlled company has been reaching out to private equity firms and other large funds that invest in infrastructure to offer stakes in assets such as carbon capture and storage projects, pipelines and hydrogen plants, Bloomberg reported in December.

Talks are ongoing and no final decisions have been made. The war in Ukraine has led to a surge in demand for natural gas, led by European nations that traditionally got their supplies from Russia. This has led Gulf states to embarking on ambitious plans to expand their gas output, the report added.

Saudi Arabia has some of the biggest gas reserves in the world, but has barely exploited them in the past. Now, Jafurah is a key part of Riyadh's strategy to diversify its exports beyond oil. The field is estimated to hold 200tn cubic feet of gas, and Aramco expects to begin production there in 2025, reaching about 2bn standard cubic feet per day of sales by 2030. A decision to build an LNG export terminal would mark a u-turn for Aramco. The company has recently said that the majority of the gas from Jafurah and other fields would be used for the domestic market and to make blue hydrogen. — Agencies



ISLAMABAD: People browse through second hand footwear for sale at a roadside bazaar in Islamabad on May 2, 2023. — AFP

Pakistan inflation hits record high

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's year-on-year inflation hit its highest-ever level of 36.42 percent in April, after the government introduced new taxes and raised fuel prices to try to meet International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditions for a crucial bailout. Government data released Tuesday showed month-on-month inflation was 2.41 percent, while average inflation for the past 12 months stood at 28.23 percent.

Years of financial mismanagement and political instability have pushed Pakistan's economy to the brink of collapse, exacerbated by a global energy crisis and devastating floods that submerged a third of the country in 2022. Poor Pakistanis are feeling the brunt of the economic turmoil, with rising food prices and soaring transport costs.

"Inflation has broken our backs. Savings aside, it is difficult to meet even the monthly expenses," said Zaibunissa, a housewife in Rawalpindi. Food prices were up by nearly 50 percent in April

from a year earlier, with transport costs 57 percent higher. To pull the country out of its spiral, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is battling to revive the next tranche of a \$6.5 billion loan deal agreed with the IMF in 2019.

The global lender is demanding more stringent reforms, including tax rises and subsidy cuts, likely to rile voters ahead of a general election due no later than October. Pakistan also has to win guarantees of bilateral support from friendly nations, with China, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates already contributing. Analysts say inflation is expected to rise even after a deal has been reached.

In March-April, the Pakistan government set up distribution sites across the country to provide low-cost and free flour to people to ease their burden amid spiraling prices and the ongoing economic crisis in the country. But instead of doing good, the initiative caused trouble in several places where stampedes broke out, killing and injuring people. Pakistanis are putting their lives at risk to collect something as basic as a sack of flour. It illustrates how the rising cost of food and other necessities is driving desperation and impacting the masses. — AFP

Egypt hikes diesel prices, bus fares

CAIRO: Egypt has increased the price of diesel by almost 14 per cent to reflect the recent gain in global crude oil prices and the decline of the local currency. Starting on Thursday, the fuel that powers most of the country's public transport sector will cost users 8.25 Egyptian pounds (\$0.27) a liter, an increase of 1 pound. The decision was made "in light of the increase in international prices for crude oil and petroleum products and the exchange rate of the pound against the dollar", Egypt's domestic fuel pricing committee said in a statement.

Consequently, public bus fares will be increased by 10 per cent, the Egyptian Ministry of Local Development said. However, the price of petrol will remain unchanged.

The meeting was the second this year. At the first, in March, the committee raised domestic fuel prices by 0.75 Egyptian pounds for 80-octane petrol to 8.75 pounds a litre, and by 1 pound to 10.25 pounds for 92-octane fuel. The price of premium 95-octane petrol was raised by 0.75 pounds to 11.50 pounds a liter. The price of natural gas for vehicles was also increased from 3.75 pounds a cubic meter to 4.50 pounds. To secure funding from the International Monetary Fund, Egypt has agreed to gradually reduce subsidies offered to its population of 104 million, about 30 per cent of whom are living below the poverty line. The country's Finance Ministry has allocated 119.4 billion Egyptian pounds, or about \$3.8 billion, to subsidize petroleum products in the 2023/2024 fiscal year, it said earlier this year. — Agencies

Business

Palestinian economy faces 'bleak' outlook amid Zionist blockade

Zionist entity collects taxes and customs revenues on behalf of Palestinian Authority

RAMALLAH: The World Bank warned the Palestinian economy faces a "bleak" outlook as Zionist entity continues its blockade of the Gaza Strip and has increased restrictions on the occupied West Bank.

In a new report, the global lender commended efforts by the Palestinian Authority (PA) to slim its public wage bill but said the economies of the Gaza Strip and West Bank remain heavily dependent on foreign donor support and hindered by Zionist entity's restrictions.

Zionist entity-imposed "restrictions on movement and access in the West Bank and the restrictions resulting in near-blockade in Gaza remain among the most important obstacles to growth and private sector development in the Palestinian territories," the report said.

"If not eased or lifted, the Palestinian economy is expected to continue operating well below its potential," it added.

Zionist entity routinely withholds tax revenues from the West Bank-based PA, claiming to do so in response to the Authority's payments to the families of Palestinians killed by Zionist entity forces. Under past peace accords, Zionist entity collects taxes and customs revenues on behalf of the Authority.

In January, Zionist entity's far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said the Zionist entity would withhold around \$40 million of revenues

in response to the PA successfully lobbying for a UN General Assembly vote referring Zionist entity's occupation of Palestinian territories to the International Court of Justice. Some observers expressed fears of radical Zionist entity's policy changes in the West Bank under Zionist entity Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's new government, formed in December.

The World Bank report warned that "decisions by the newly elected Zionist entity government to double the monthly deductions from clearance revenues... could signal a discouraging trend going forward." Further highlighting the West Bank's economic dependence on Zionist entity, the report noted some 22.5 percent of Palestinians in the territory work in Zionist territory or Zionist settlements in the West Bank. Overall unemployment across Gaza and the West Bank stood at 24.4 percent, it added. Outside "sources of risks, such as in the areas of food and energy prices, mean the overall economic outlook remains bleak", Stefan Emblad, the World Bank's country director for the Palestinian territories, said in the report.

The bank's assessment coincided with another report Tuesday by UN Middle East peace envoy Tor Wennesland, warning that without an immediate "strategic shift" there could be a "serious reversal in the Palestinian state-building project". — AFP



A Palestinian man counts stacks of banknotes at a currency exchange counter in the West Bank city of Ramallah. — AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Norway CB raises rate to 3.25%

OSLO, Norway: Norway's central bank said Thursday that it was raising its key interest rate by a quarter-point to 3.25 percent to dampen inflation, and warned that it would probably increase the rate again in June. The inflation rate, which stood at 6.5 percent in March, "is high and markedly above the target of 2 percent", the bank said in a statement, adding that despite a slowing of growth, economic "activity remains high". "The labour market is tight, and wage growth is set to be higher in 2023 than last year," it added. Thursday's increase, which was widely expected, brings the rate to its highest level since 2009. After five consecutive increases, the central bank paused its hikes in February amid signs the economy was slowing because of the monetary tightening, before resuming again in March. — AFP

BMW profits falls, sales slip in Q1

FRANKFURT: German automaker BMW reported Thursday a sharp drop in first-quarter profits due to an accounting effect, while sales also slipped in Europe and China. Net profits fell 64 percent to 3.7 billion euros (\$4.1 billion) compared to the period last year, when the figure had been boosted by the full integration of its Chinese business BMW Brilliance. The Munich-based group's operating profit nevertheless jumped 58.5 percent to 5.4 billion euros, lifted by continued high prices for the luxury carmaker's vehicles. But overall vehicle sales declined by 1.5 percent year-on-year, with a 6.6 percent slide in China and a 1.9 percent decrease in Europe. — AFP

Volkswagen profit falls, sales up

FRANKFURT: German auto giant Volkswagen reported Thursday a sharp fall in first-quarter net profits to 4.7 billion euros (\$5.2 billion) due to an accounting effect, while both sales and revenues increased. Net profit dropped 29.9 percent, with VW saying it was due to the impact of commodity hedging, which had pushed up operating profit in the period a year earlier. Sales revenue rose 22 percent from January to March, boosted by improved sales in Europe and North America, said the group, which also confirmed its positive forecast for the year. Deliveries of all types of vehicles were up 7.5 percent year-on-year. — AFP

Lufthansa expects summer boom

FRANKFURT: German airline Lufthansa said Wednesday it had reduced its net loss for the first quarter, as pent-up demand for travel is expected to further boost its bottom line in the upcoming summer months. The group's net loss for the first three months of the year reached 467 million euros (\$515 million), an improvement from a loss of 584 million euros a year ago. The negative result was mainly down to normal seasonality, the airline said, although strikes at German airports as well as costs for the planned expansion of flights in the summer also weighed on its earnings. — AFP

Lloyds bank profits soar

LONDON: Britain's Lloyds Banking Group said Wednesday that net profit jumped almost 50 percent in the first quarter, as revenues were boosted by rising interest rates. After-tax profit rallied to £1.5 billion (\$1.9 billion) in the three months to March from a year earlier, it said in a results statement. Lloyds, the final major UK bank to log first-quarter numbers, added that income swelled 18 percent to £3.4 billion on "the higher (interest) rate environment". Rivals Barclays, HSBC and NatWest have also posted strong earnings as higher interest rates attracted more savers and increased returns on bank loans. — AFP

Shell caps blazing profits season for energy majors

LONDON: Shell unveiled Thursday a sharp jump in profits, capping a blockbuster first-quarter earnings season for global energy majors that have shrugged off weaker gas and oil prices. BP and Shell in Britain, ExxonMobil and Chevron in the United States, and TotalEnergies in France have together logged more than \$40 billion in net profits for the three months to March.

"Looks as though earnings have held up much better than expected, largely it seems down to bumper trading revenues and much tighter cost control than in the past," said Fitch analyst Neil Wilson.

At \$70-80 per barrel, "crude still trades higher than just about any time since 2014 — October 2018 aside — so relatively speaking, pricing is still strong in terms of where it has been in the last decade," he told AFP. For Shell, profit after tax surged 22 percent to \$8.7 billion from a year earlier, when it faced a \$3.9 billion charge over its exit from Russia after Moscow invaded Ukraine.

Kaspersky experts share what's new on the cyberthreat agenda in META

KUWAIT: During Kaspersky's 8th annual Cyber Security Weekend — META 2023, held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, the company's experts discussed the biggest cyberthreats specifically targeting governments, enterprises, businesses and industrial organizations, while forecasting the trends that will influence the cybersecurity landscape in the future. The impact of Artificial Intelligence, compromised corporate data on the Darknet, risks carried by deepfakes as well as critical industry-specific threats — all these topics were discussed during the conference. Special attention was put on Kaspersky's Cyber Immunity approach as a way to create solutions that are virtually impossible to compromise and that minimize the number of potential vulnerabilities.

"Considering how quickly the threat landscape is expanding its boundaries and the number of new devices appearing in users' daily lives, it's not surprising that we were detecting over 400,000 malicious files per day and this number is growing year by year," comments Dr Amin Hasbini, Head of Global Research & Analysis Team (GREAT) for META, at Kaspersky.

"It is crucial for individuals, businesses, and governments to take proactive steps to protect their systems and data from these evolving threats. This includes implementing strong cybersecurity measures, staying vigilant against emerging threats, and keeping up to date with the latest security trends and best practices."

A gradual rise in phishing attacks

Diving deeper into social engineering cyberattacks, Kaspersky shared insights on phishing attacks which are most common in the META region. Comparing Q1 2022 to Q1 of 2023, Egypt (49 percent), UAE (33 percent), Qatar (88 percent), Oman (28 percent), Kuwait (27 percent) and Bahrain (20 percent) saw an increase in phishing attacks on users. On the other hand, phishing attacks in Saudi Arabia saw a slight decrease of 1 percent in Q1 of 2023 as compared to the same time period in 2022.

In the African region, phishing attacks grew in South Africa (7 percent), Nigeria (53 percent) and Kenya (87 percent) in Q1 of 2023 as compared to Q1 of 2022. Turkey (53 percent) witnessed a 53 percent increase in Q1 of 2023 as opposed to Q1 2022.

Ransomware

According to Kaspersky's data, the number of organizations that faced ransomware mainly dropped in Q1 2023 in META region in comparison with the same period in 2022. The decline was observed in the Middle East region, where the number of B2B ransomware detections dropped by 61 percent. Over the same period ransomware attacks also dropped in Turkey, with a 59 percent decrease, as well as in Africa (a 65 percent drop).

"While we see a decrease in ransomware in the META region, that doesn't mean that it becomes less dangerous. We can clearly see a distinctive trend in ransomware getting more sophisticated and targeted, exposing victims to more

threats. In the recent years, ransomware groups have come a long way from being scattered gangs to businesses with distinctive traits of full-fledged industry. They continue to evolve by adopting techniques, such as developing cross-platform ransomware, embedding self-propagation capabilities and even using zero-day vulnerabilities that were previously affordable only for APT actors. It explains why it remains one of the most crucial threats for business despite the detection numbers decreasing", comments Dmitry Galov, Senior Security Researcher at Kaspersky. "This is a global trend, while in those regions that put more efforts into proper protection measures on governmental and organizational levels the decrease is more dramatic. For countries with a lower level of cyber readiness ransomware remains a critical threat and the decrease is less prominent."

The company benefited from falling costs and a better performance at its chemicals division, as it also unveiled a \$4.0 billion stock buyback.

The news came after rival BP announced Tuesday that it rebounded into net profit of \$8.2 billion in the first quarter, after a record loss a year earlier sparked by its own exit from Russia.

Outcry on election day

The surging profits prompted outcry from critics as Britons face a cost-of-living crisis, which has topped the agenda for Thursday's local elections in England. They have also rekindled calls for more taxation to help offset tax-high household energy bills caused by key producer Russia's war on Ukraine.

The Unite trade union, which campaigns for pay increases that keep pace with rampant UK inflation, slammed the "obscene" profits generated by the industry. "The scale of profiteering displayed today by Shell and earlier this week BP is one of the corporate scandals of our times," said Unite general secretary Sharon Graham, urging the UK government to expand its windfall tax on energy-sector profits. Environmentalists meanwhile slammed BP and Shell over the climate impacts of their operations.

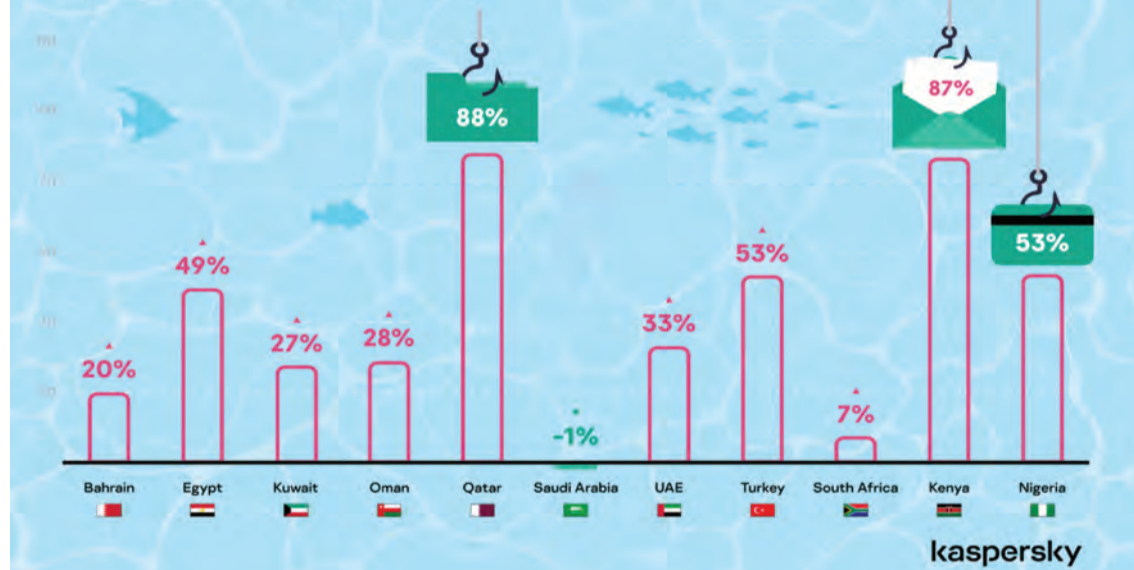
"It's time for the oil giants to start feeling the heat," said Greenpeace UK climate advisor Charlie Kronick. "The UK government should... force

Shell and the rest of the industry to start using their obscene profits to pay for the damage that their fossil fuel habit is causing to lives and livelihoods around the world."

Profits are also forging ahead outside Britain. France's TotalEnergies saw net profit advance 12 percent to \$5.6 billion in the first quarter. US giants benefitted from refining activities and cost-cutting, with ExxonMobil more than doubling profit to a first-quarter record of \$11.4 billion, while Chevron chalked up \$6.6 billion. But the earnings come as energy majors have also drawn fire over their plans for transitioning away from hydrocarbons, particularly after BP decided to slow its move toward cleaner energy sources. That has prompted derision by critics over its longstanding ambition to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Analysts warn that the global energy sector now faces a massive struggle to transition to clean energy. "Although the oil majors are enjoying strong profits for now, the industry faces an uphill battle as the world looks to wean itself off fossil fuels, shifting to renewables instead amid the fight against climate change," said Victoria Scholar, an analyst at Interactive Investor.

"As a result, there is much hesitation about investing in new fossil fuel products as net zero targets take centre stage." — AFP

Dynamics of users affected by phishing, Q1 2022 vs Q1 2023



threats. In the recent years, ransomware groups have come a long way from being scattered gangs to businesses with distinctive traits of full-fledged industry. They continue to evolve by adopting techniques, such as developing cross-platform ransomware, embedding self-propagation capabilities and even using zero-day vulnerabilities that were previously affordable only for APT actors. It explains why it remains one of the most crucial threats for business despite the detection numbers decreasing", comments Dmitry Galov, Senior Security Researcher at Kaspersky. "This is a global trend, while in those regions that put more efforts into proper protection measures on governmental and organizational levels the decrease is more dramatic. For countries with a lower level of cyber readiness ransomware remains a critical threat and the decrease is less prominent."

Fast paced growth of trojan banking

New malware families and cyberattack campaigns have contributed to a rampant rise of Trojan banking attacks in Q1 of 2023 as compared to Q1 of 2022. The highest increase was in Turkey (238 percent). Overall, the Middle East too saw an increase in trojan banking attacks in the first quarter of 2023 — Kuwait (218 percent), Egypt (186 percent), Saudi Arabia (168 percent), Oman (115 percent), Qatar (99 percent), UAE (67 percent) and Bahrain (33 percent). Nigeria (268 percent) and Kenya (129 percent) also posted an increase.

Anticipated trends that will impact the cybersecurity landscape in META

Major drivers of growth in cybercrime are expected to be Crimeware and Advanced Persistent Threats (APTs).

• Middle East to witness a rise in Crimeware: Crimeware is malicious software that is covertly installed on computers. Crimeware programs can be Trojans, keyloggers or spyware, and represent a new type of threat to security, posing new challenges and vulnerabilities. For example, some trojans are used to log every key you type (keyloggers), some capture screenshots when you are using banking websites, some

download other malicious code, and others let a remote hacker access your system. What they each have in common is the ability to 'steal' your confidential information — such as passwords and PINs — and send it directly to the criminal. Armed with this information, the cybercriminal is then able to steal your money. Notably, North and South Africa too will evolve into a hotbed for Crimeware.

• APT attacks in Central and East Africa: As countries in Central and East Africa accelerate on their digitization agenda, government and diplomatic institutions as well as key industrial organizations can become rich targets for stealthy APT attacks this year, according to Kaspersky experts. A strong cyber defense and intelligence sharing is important in this environment to identify and expose APT patterns, disarming cybercriminals and disrupting the kill chain.

• Geographical expansion of APTs: Kaspersky experts have also witnessed advanced actors performing attacks with a focus on Europe, the US, the Middle East, and various parts of Asia. While most actors previously targeted victims in specific countries, more and more APTs are now targeting victims globally. For instance, MuddyWater, an actor that previously showed a preference for targeting Middle Eastern and North African entities, has expanded its malicious activity to organizations in Azerbaijan, Armenia, Malaysia, and Canada.

Kaspersky is a global cybersecurity and digital privacy company founded in 1997. Kaspersky's deep threat intelligence and security expertise is constantly transforming into innovative solutions and services to protect businesses, critical infrastructure, governments and consumers around the globe. The company's comprehensive security portfolio includes leading endpoint protection, specialized security products and services, as well as Cyber Immune solutions to fight sophisticated and evolving digital threats. Over 400 million users are protected by Kaspersky technologies and we help over 220,000 corporate clients protect what matters most to them.

Business

US Fed lifts interest rates again

Powell signals potential pause, stocks slide

WASHINGTON: The US Federal Reserve raised its benchmark lending rate for a tenth time Wednesday in a move that could be the last in the current cycle if the economy cools sufficiently. The central bank embarked on an aggressive campaign of rate hikes in March last year to take aim at price increases. But more than a year later, inflation remains stubbornly above its long-term target of two percent.

The latest quarter-point increase lifts the target lending range to between 5.0 percent and 5.25 percent, the Fed confirmed in a statement, the highest in around 16 years.

Meanwhile, European stock markets slid Thursday after the Federal Reserve again hiked US interest rates to fight elevated inflation, while hinting the next move could be a pause. "The dollar sold off on the idea that the Fed will now take a breather and pause the rate hikes, and perhaps on the idea that the ongoing bank stress will likely make the Fed change its mind regarding a rate cut later this year," noted Swissquote analyst Ipek Ozkardeskaya.

Tighter credit conditions for households and businesses are likely to weigh on the economy, the Fed said, adding that the extent of the impact "remains uncertain." The policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee's (FOMC) latest decision was in line with expectations, leading analysts and traders to scrutinize the statement for any shift in the Fed's guidance on future decisions. In its statement, the Fed said it will "take into account the cumulative tightening of monetary policy" and the lags with which policy impacts the economy, when "determining" whether to hike rates again.

This marks a departure from the last rate an-

nouncement in which policymakers said they expected "additional policy firming" could be needed to rein in inflation. "Support for the 25 basis-point rate increase was very strong across the board," Fed Chair Jerome Powell told a press conference after the decision was announced.

"A decision on a pause was not made today," he said, later adding: "People did talk about pausing but not so much at this meeting."

Banking woes

After a relatively calm period for banks following crisis-level concerns in March, this week saw the reemergence of turbulence with the collapse of California-based lender First Republic.

The commercial bank's failure — the second-largest in US history — was announced early Monday along with a sale to JPMorgan Chase, with regulators hoping that fears would finally be calmed. But regional banks came under renewed pressure Tuesday, with some share prices declining by as much as 25 percent on concerns about the impact of interest-rate hikes on their financial health. Further declines were recorded on Wednesday. Powell sounded a more upbeat note on regional banks' financial prospects, telling reporters that the resolution and sale of First Republic was "an important step toward drawing a line under that period of severe stress."

Tighter credit conditions

Powell also sounded positive on the US economy, telling reporters that the chance of avoiding a recession was "more likely than that of having a recession," due to the enduring strength of the labor

market. Minutes from the Fed's last meeting showed that the US central bank was forecasting a mild recession for later this year, suggesting differing views within the Federal Reserve on the outlook for the American economy. The broader US economic data remains mixed but is showing some signs of softening, with growth slowing to an annualized rate of 1.1 percent in the first quarter. The data on inflation paints a picture of slowing price increases in some areas and ongoing stubbornness in others, while figures on employment point to a

weakening job market as the economy slows. Fed officials have in recent weeks suggested that the tighter lending conditions after Silicon Valley Bank's (SVB) dramatic collapse in March could act like an additional rate hike and help bring down inflation. Powell refused to be drawn on exactly how much of an impact tighter bank lending conditions could have on the Fed's decision-making. But he conceded that, "in principle we won't have to raise rates quite as high as we would have had this not happened." — AFP



WASHINGTON: Federal Reserve Board Chair Jerome Powell speaks during a news conference at the Federal Reserve in Washington, DC, on May 3, 2023. — AFP

Meanwhile, the White House warned on Wednesday of a future of tumbling stocks and spiking unemployment if the United States defaults on its debt payments, a looming possibility as Democrats and Republicans fight over national spending. The president's Council of Economic Advisers, a top federal consultative body, warned that if the US government stops meeting its financial obligations, the resulting economic shocks could cause eight million job losses this summer and a six percent drop in GDP.

The stock market could drop 45 percent in the third quarter, the council added. Even a brief interruption in payments would increase unemployment as the economy tumbles into a recession, the economists said. President Joe Biden is at odds with Republicans in the lower chamber of Congress,

which they control, over national spending and public debt. The Democratic president has asked Republicans to raise the country's debt ceiling — the amount of debt it is legally allowed to take on. But Republicans in the House of Representatives have said they won't do so without a broader agreement to cut government spending.

The two sides don't have much time to negotiate: The Treasury Department estimates that the country will reach its debt cap on June 1, triggering massive cuts in government spending, including toward debt payment. Raising or suspending the debt ceiling, a policy unique to the United States, was long considered a formality, as larger questions about public debt and national spending were hammered out in the background. — AFP

US trade deficit falls in March on rise in exports

WASHINGTON: The US trade gap narrowed in March as exports of goods including industrial supplies rose, according to government data released on Thursday. In March, the overall trade deficit stood at \$64.2 billion, narrowing more than expected by \$6.4 billion from February, according to the Commerce Department. As the world's biggest economy shows signs of cooling, analysts have said they expect some softening in trade as consumers pull back on spending.

US economic growth slowed to an annual rate of 1.1 percent in the first quarter, while the full impact of the Federal Reserve's interest rate hikes to rein in inflation and unrest in the banking sector threaten to weigh on the outlook ahead. For now, exports rose by \$5.3 billion to \$256.2 billion in March, said the Commerce Department, while imports slipped by \$1.1 billion to \$320.4 billion.

Among categories, the rise in exports was largely driven by goods such as industrial supplies and materials — including crude oil and fuel oil, alongside autos and parts. Imports of goods such as semiconductors and petroleum products slipped, but that of consumer goods like pharmaceutical-related items rose. The US goods deficit with China declined \$2.3 billion to \$22.9 billion in March, while the US deficit with the European Union dropped as well.



شركة الصفاء للاستثمار
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KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 4 MAY 2023

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No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	1,000	980	1,009	967	42	16,413,485	-23	-2.29%	-4.55%	974	1,009	15.2	1.94	3.4%	1.02
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	281	276	281	273	8	13,228,659	-5	-1.78%	-7.71%	270	285	14.3	1.31	3.5%	1.30
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	185	184	188	183	5	12,715,598	-1	-0.54%	-2.37%	177	186	24.0	0.58	2.1%	1.17
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	216	206	217	205	12	8,386,525	-10	-4.63%	-1.23%	202	212	17.4	0.80	3.6%	1.28
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	750	738	752	730	22	96,089,344	-6	-0.81%	-1.36%	715	744	21.6	1.86	1.9%	1.16
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	677	640	677	632	45	22,350,404	-34	-5.04%	-14.99%	620	649	46.1	2.82	0.9%	1.19
201	Kuwait Investment	Financial Services	129	120	130	118	12	6,719,863	-9	-6.98%	-21.05%	119	129	111.4	0.56	4.2%	1.83
204	National Investments	Financial Services	255	244	256	243	13	18,832,253	-10	-3.94%	2.95%	244	257	22.2	0.97	11.5%	1.85
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	131	126	135	126	9	26,293,122	-4	-3.08%	12.50%	126	132	21.8	0.77	0.0%	0.95
212	Arzan Financial Group	Financial Services	105	109	114	103	11	34,907,885	4	3.81%	-3.32%	106	110	10.9	0.77	3.6%	1.14
222	Aayan Leasing and Investment	Financial Services	138	138	140	136	4	18,386,107	0	0.00%	3.76%	136	140	10.2	0.99	5.5%	1.70
252	Al Imtiaz Investment	Financial Services	62.6	61.2	64.8	61	3.8	3,845,270	-1.4	-2.24%	-18.29%	60.1	62.0	-	0.38	14.7%	1.26
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	116	114	117	113	4	13,497,152	-1	-0.87%	5.56%	113	119	14.4	0.81	2.7%	1.09
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	761	705	769	703	66	3,915,549	-55	-7.24%	-11.87%	703	725	15.3	1.63	1.9%	1.05
418	The Commercial Real Estate	Real Estate	100	94.2	100	94.2	6	13,744,159	-4.8	-4.88%	-1.89%	94.2	96	14.1	0.60	3.0%	0.57
501	National Industries	Financial Services	217	209	218	208	10	11,784,182	-7	-3.24%	-3.69%	205	210	12.0	0.94	5.2%	1.56
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,260	1,240	1,275	1,200	75	317,650	-25	-1.98%	2.06%	1,226	1,260	19.5	1.10	5.0%	1.02
506	HEISCO	Industrials	636	634	640	629	11	524,930	-6	-0.94%	3.43%	611	638	20.3	1.62	3.1%	1.01
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	814	775	819	775	44	1,512,139	-41	-5.02%	-3.13%	769	790	8.0	1.56	7.6%	0.99
603	Agility	Industrials	617	605	621	594	27	13,175,072	-11	-1.79%	-15.97%	598	618	23.2	0.96	2.8%	1.57
605	Zain	Telecommunications	569	561	572	553	19	23,561,193	-8	-1.41%	-0.36%	557	571	12.3	1.96	6.3%	0.70
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,714	3,350	3,802	3,320	482	1,182,540	-364	-9.81%	-0.07%	3,350	3,499	8.5	3.21	11.3%	0.62
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	189	190	192	183	9	2,133,385	0	0.00%	-6.40%	184	195	-	0.82	0.0%	1.19
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,790	1,750	1,840	1,701	139	1,401,213	-50	-2.78%	-7.89%	1,700	1,780	21.1	14.27	4.5%	1.46
813	GFH Financial Group	Financial Services	77.8	76.3	77.8	75.5	2.3	13,909,407	-0.9	-1.17%	0.39%	74.2	76.6	9.2	0.86	6.5%	1.33
821	Warba Bank	Banking	228	224	229	222	7	11,484,595	-4	-1.75%	-1.82%	221	229	31.1	1.23	1.3%	1.12
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	379	372	379	370	9	4,251,967	-7	-1.85%	-5.34%	360	375	-	1.13	4.2%	0.48
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	395	376	396	374	22	4,463,224	-20	-5.05%	1.62%	371	380	30.3	1.53	4.0%	0.71
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	174	178	178	173	5	6,109,734	3	1.71%	-5.32%	176	179	13.5	1.67	9.6%	0.46
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	1,800	1,780	1,803	1,765	38	1,318,372	-11	-0.61%	-13.26%	1,770	1,820	20.8	6.72	4.8%	1.00
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	880	885	899	870	29	2,236,487	0	0.00%	9.94%	860	900	12.0	3.28	6.6%	0.30

* As of end of week closing

Lifestyle

Kabuki kids: The children of Japan's traditional theatre

Like most 10-year-olds in Japan, Maholo Terajima enjoys baseball and video games, but recently his schedule has also included lessons in swordfighting, choreography and fan dancing - preparations for his kabuki debut.

The French-Japanese child made his first appearance to rapturous applause this week under his new stage name, Onoe Maholo, at Tokyo's Kabuki-za theatre, the storied home of the classical artform. He joins just a handful of children who tread the boards in the ranks of Japan's kabuki actors, part of a tradition that is hundreds of years old.

"Practice is hard," the soft-spoken Terajima said, conceding he is sometimes jealous of friends who don't have hours of training after school. "I need to make sure not to get the choreography or the lines wrong, or to forget movements for a fighting scene."

Balancing school and kabuki is "tough", he added. "But I'll do it." Kabuki dates back to the 17th century, when a series of civil wars ended in Japan and a merchant class emerged.

Shows combine dance, drama and music, with actors often donning ornate costumes, wigs and heavy makeup for performances in old dialect on elaborate sets.

Terajima's preparation for this month's run of performances, in which he plays a young warrior initially disguised as a girl, required dedication.

One afternoon saw him jousting with a wooden sword under the direction of a veteran actor-choreographer before moving

Family tradition

Like most child kabuki actors, Terajima is following a family tradition: his grandfather Onoe Kikugoro VII is a star of the artform, even receiving "national treasure" status from the government.

But his kabuki inheritance runs through his mother Shinobu Terajima, who as a woman was not eligible to take up her father's mantle.

"I worried of course, because (kabuki actors) grow up watching their father, thinking they're cool and they want to be like him," she told AFP.

"I cannot fulfil that role."

She is an accomplished film and television actress in her own right, and introduced her son to the kabuki world early on.

Even at the age of two, the little boy was happy to spend day and night at the Kabuki-za, she said. "While infants normally get bored, he wouldn't move." Though this week was his first time performing under his official stage name -- a rite of passage for



This picture shows 10-year-old French-Japanese kabuki actor Maholo Terajima (left) during a rehearsal at the Kabuki-za theatre in Tokyo.



French-Japanese kabuki actor Maholo Terajima practising in Tokyo.



Kabuki actor Maholo Terajima (left) practising in a rehearsal room at the Kabuki-za theatre in Tokyo. — AFP photos



French-Japanese kabuki actor Maholo Terajima (left) during a rehearsal at the Kabuki-za theatre in Tokyo.



French-Japanese kabuki actor Maholo Terajima (left) practising in Tokyo.



French-Japanese kabuki actor Maholo Terajima performing at the Kabuki-za theatre in Tokyo.

on to a session learning how to wield the highly ornamented fans used in kabuki dances. "I'm playing the lead role and I'm performing a lot... I'm excited," he said after the fight practice, wearing a casual striped "yukata" robe for rehearsals.

Like other classical performing arts, "kabuki requires training from childhood", said Ryuichi Kodama, a professor at Waseda University who specializes in the subject.

"They acquire traditional techniques and learn to exude a certain traditional atmosphere," he said. "That's how they live in the (kabuki) world."

kabuki stars, and considered their formal debut - Terajima has appeared on stage several times before, starting at age four.

Kabuki was originally performed by men and women, but government concerns about public morals caused female roles to be taken over by men, a tradition that endures today. Despite its modern reputation as a high art, "kabuki has always been an entertainment for the popular classes", Kodama said.

Nowadays, though, it tends to attract an older audience, with show tickets priced around 4,000 to 20,000 yen (\$30 to \$150). Not all Kabuki actors come from longstanding theatre fami-

lies. But while talent once flocked to join, the rise of Western artforms after World War II sapped kabuki's ranks, Kodama said.

That made it all the more important for kabuki families to ensure sons followed their fathers, continuing the lineage of theatre stars.

Terajima is one of 10 actors under age 12 currently performing - all from kabuki families - and is the first dual national officially recognized as a kabuki actor. "I may be overstating it, but he's making history," his mother said.

"I think this is a very important moment." Actor Ichimura Uzaemon, who was adopted into a kabuki family in 1878, is said to have had a French-American father but is not officially recognized as having had a mixed background.

Terajima's mother and art director father are both keen for their son to have a relatively normal childhood and choose his own path as an adult. "I'll support him if he wants to be a taxi driver," his father Laurent Ghnassia said.

The Frenchman confesses he "did not know what kabuki was" before marrying his wife, but now "feels great pride" for his son.

And he said he never worried the insular kabuki world might reject Maholo because of his mixed background.

"They are people of the stage. They... have an open mind because they are artists," he said. For now, Terajima's dream involves kabuki, including performing in France and achieving renown like his grandfather. "I have something to aim for," he said. — AFP

Sells like teen spirit? Cobain guitar up for auction

A guitar smashed on stage by Nirvana front man Kurt Cobain is going under the hammer later this month in the United States.

The guitar has been put back together, but is no longer playable, said Kody Frederick of Julien's Auctions, which expects the musical artifact to fetch \$80,000.

"You can see here the break that took place as he slammed down the guitar, where the neck here kind of connects, as well as down here on the bottom



Kurt Cobain's smashed Fender Stratocaster is pictured on display at Julien's Auctions in Gardena, California.

where he slammed the guitar down," Frederick told AFP. "Kurt Cobain, when he was on stage, when he played, he was a machine. The man was angry, and you could feel that on stage. And you would feel that by the way he would treat his instruments."

"This broken element, in a strange way, from this broken musician, that really defined this rough and tumble era of music."

The busted black Fender Stratocaster was signed by all three members of the Seattle grunge outfit as they rocketed to global fame. Nirvana's hits, many of which were penned by Cobain, included "Come As You Are," "Lithium" and the breakout "Smells

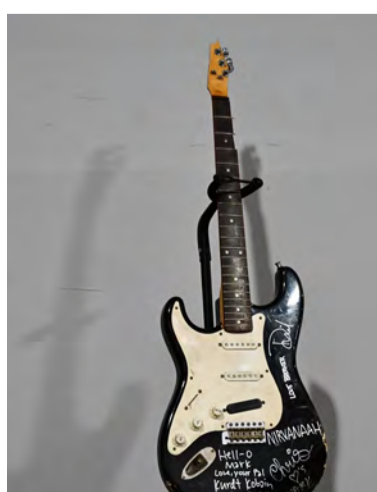


Julien's Auctions gallery director Kody Frederick arranges a display in Gardena, California ahead of Julien's "Music Icons" auction of over 1,200 items from Rock And Roll history and exclusive artist collections. — AFP photos



David Bowie's hat from the 1976 film 'The Man Who Fell to Earth' is pictured on display at Julien's Auctions in Gardena.

Like Teen Spirit - a track that became anthemic for a generation of alienated teenagers. Cobain struggled with substance addic-



US musician Kurt Cobain's smashed Fender Stratocaster is displayed at Julien's Auctions in Gardena, California.

Missy Elliott, George Michael among Rock Hall inductees

Groundbreaking rapper Missy Elliott, the late English chart-topper George Michael and rap-rock changemakers Rage Against the Machine are among this year's inductees into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, organizers announced Wednesday.

Eclectic rock experimentalist Kate Bush will also be inducted, as country icon Willie Nelson, rock-folk powerhouse Sheryl Crow and R&B group The Spinners round out 2023's class of new members.

The Cleveland, Ohio, institution's chairman, John Sykes, emphasized that this year's crop of musicians "reflects the diverse artists and sounds that define Rock & Roll," and also coincides with a milestone year that includes the 50th anniversary of the hip-hop genre and country icon Nelson's 90th birthday.

Crow, Elliott, Michael and Nelson were on the ballot for induction into the prestigious music pantheon for their first time. Rap innovator Elliott made the cut in her first year of eligibility.

Artists can be inducted 25 years after their first commercial music release.

They are voted on by a body of more than 1,000 artists, music historians and industry veterans. The new honorees will be formally inducted on November 3 in the Rock Hall's annual concert ceremony, which this year will return to Brooklyn's Barclays Center. — AFP

Harry in the spotlight for coronation return

Prince Harry will be heavily scrutinized at his father King Charles III's coronation, as he rejoins other royals for the first time since airing a barrage of criticism about them. Harry, 38, will take his seat at the May 6 ceremony in Westminster Abbey without wife Meghan or either of their two children, Prince Archie and Princess Lilibet. The American former television actress will be at their California home, celebrating Archie's fourth birthday, sparing her potentially awkward interactions with her increasingly estranged-in-laws.

The couple have repeatedly castigated the monarchy since relocating in 2020, stepping up the attacks in recent months through a series of television interviews and in Harry's memoir. In the explosive autobiography, "Spare", published in January, the prince laid bare years of family feuding, including alleging that elder brother Prince William physically attacked him during an argument about Meghan.

In early March, Harry told developmental expert Gabor Mate he came from a "broken home" and was trying not to pass "trauma" on to his children. Buckingham Palace only confirmed Harry's attendance earlier this month, following lengthy speculation about whether he would be there. "A lot of eyes will be on him," said Pauline Maclaran, from Royal Holloway University of London, who has written a book about Meghan's impact on the monarchy. "People will be fascinated to see the interaction between him and other royals," she told AFP.

'Come and go'

Harry has been in Britain sporadically this year for court hearings as he pursues legal action against UK newspapers over alleged phone hacking. Even court filings have become an avenue for the family rancour. In witness statements made public this week, the prince claimed his father's household blocked his bids to launch the lawsuits a decade ago due to a "long-term strategy" to keep the media supportive of his stepmother, Camilla, becoming queen consort.



Britain's Meghan, Duchess of Sussex (left) and Britain's Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, attend the annual One Young World Summit at Bridgewater Hall in Manchester, north-west England. — AFP photos

The revelation follows Harry writing in his memoir that he and William had begged their father not to marry Camilla before their eventual nuptials in 2005. Ahead of their grandmother Queen Elizabeth II's funeral in September, the warring brothers tried to showcase family unity by jointly greeting well-wishers alongside their wives in Windsor. But tensions were evident, and the subsequent accusations by Harry and Meghan are seen as only worsening the rift.

"Everybody will be looking for the interaction between Harry and William, but I gather they're going to be kept far apart so there probably won't be any interaction," Maclaran said. She predicted Harry "will be kept in the background" and "come and go pretty quickly, trying not to cause any fuss. "I don't think that there's any reconciliation possible at the moment," Maclaran added. "It does seem that there is an unwillingness on both sides really to repair."

'Excluded'

The breakdown in relations between the Duke and Duchess of Sussex—as they are formally known—and other royals is seen by some as damaging to the monarchy. The centuries-old institution is grappling with the loss of Elizabeth II, a widely respected figure credited with maintaining the monarchy's popularity during her record-breaking reign—and keeping any latent republican sentiment at bay. With Charles now king, the family feud and sexual abuse allegations against his brother Prince Andrew are sowing public "doubts around who these people are", said Graham Smith, of the pressure group Republic, which wants an elected head of state.

"They see him (Charles) as part of this questionable family," he told reporters at a recent briefing. Harry "continues to cause him problems", he added. But others argue Harry and Meghan have made themselves deeply unpop-

ular in Britain by quitting royal duties and giving so many incendiary interviews. "Duty is what people want from the royal family and Harry does not provide it," said Sean Lang, a history lecturer at Anglia Ruskin University. Charles was right to invite them to the coronation, he argued, because "not to have done so would have looked petty".

But it was "wise" of Meghan to stay away, given the state of relations and the considerable risk of crowds booing them. "It is possible that the spectacle of the coronation... might emphasize the extent to which Prince Harry has excluded himself from the monarchy, and that might make it a difficult day for him," Lang added. "But I think many people in Britain will simply take the view that he brought this difficulty on himself." —AFP



Britain's Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex arrives at the Royal Courts of Justice, Britain's High Court, in central London.

'A grand occasion': UK woman, 90, remembers 1953 coronation

Joyce Lewis has just turned 90, a little over a week before King Charles III's coronation. But she still has strong memories of watching the last one 70 years ago. In 1953 she and friends camped out on The Mall, the avenue leading to Buckingham Palace, to watch the coronation procession of Queen Elizabeth II. At home in the Warwickshire countryside in central England, Lewis, who was born in London and spent 17 years in Malawi as a teacher and missionary, remembers the day—and night before—vividly. The day before the coronation she and her friends camped out from about 5:00 pm, braving torrential overnight rain and huddled together, trying to catch some sleep. "It absolutely poured down," she told AFP. "It wasn't comfortable at all."

But the summer rain failed to dampen the mood among the hundreds of thousands who turned out to watch the following day, June 2. "One of my big memories is how joyful it all was," Lewis recalled. "There was a lot of laughter, a lot of happiness. "People were expecting a really grand occasion—and a grand occasion it was."

Lewis and her friends were packed in at the side of the sweeping, tree-lined avenue. But she said the father of a south Asian family, who had spread out a rug to secure their spot, made space for her, just as the parade began. "He took me and stood me on the curb next to his family, which was wonderful. So I had a lovely view," she said.



Joyce Lewis poses for a photo at her home in Bidford-on-Avon, central England. — AFP photos

"I was very grateful to him for that." Despite the hardship of a soggy night out in the open, Lewis said her abiding memory was the purple sky at dawn, quiet and still.

"Then, in the distance, we heard a voice saying, 'Everest is conquered, Hillary has conquered Everest'. So, of course, there was a great cheer," she went on. The ascent of the world's highest mountain by the New Zealander Edmund Hillary and Nepalese sherpa Tenzing Norgay was backed by British funding. The news was "like a sign of a new thing happening to us as a country", she added.

'Great privilege'

Lewis had a clear view of the procession to and from Westminster Abbey. She remembered the white flowers on the queen's lap on the way to the abbey swaying with the motion of the state-



Joyce Lewis poses for a photo at her home in Bidford-on-Avon, central England.

coach. On the way back, she was clutching the sovereign's orb and sceptre. "We were close enough to see right into the carriage... so it was really something to remember," she said.

Britain in 1953 was a different place, recovering from the destruction of World War II, and with rationing of food and clothing still in force. The coronation of a glamorous young queen cut through the drudgery, reflecting a new-found optimism.

To be there was a "great privilege", said Lewis, describing the sight of the queen in her finery, flags and pageantry as "a day of sheer luxury". As she has aged, Lewis said she has appreciated it more and has faith in Elizabeth's son as "somebody who will do his best", despite the very different challenges he faces. "That's all a person can do, I think."

Charles's coronation—after a lifetime of waiting—has been met with widespread apathy, particularly among younger people. Republi-

can protesters are expected to be among the throng lining the procession route, making their case for an elected head of state. But Lewis, a self-confessed royalist, cautions against getting rid of more than a millennium of monarchy and replacing the hereditary principle with potentially volatile, politicized elections for a new figurehead. "We're very blessed as we are," she said. Unlike in 1953, weather forecasters are predicting "dry and mild weather" for May 6 but that will not tempt Lewis back to the streets of London. "No, I will be camped hopefully in front of a television screen," she said. —AFP

Pretty Yende, African soprano making coronation history

Pretty Yende has performed at major opera houses, but nothing is likely to compare to May 6, when she sings before a global audience of tens of millions at the coronation of King Charles III. The 38-year-old says her performance in Westminster Abbey will mark the first time an African singer has performed solo for the coronation of a British monarch.

"I feel very, very honored because it is something that has never happened before," she told AFP. "Generations from now they will read about the British monarchs... and they'll see the name of a girl from the tip of Africa written in there—that she was actually invited by the king himself to sing at Westminster Abbey." Yende, born at the height of apartheid in 1985 in a township in eastern South Africa, would sing traditional Zulu songs on the way to church and gospel music with the choir.

It was hearing Leo Delibes's operatic "Flower Duet" on a British Airways advert that changed her life. Opera "is a gift to humanity and there's something divine about it too", Yende said, adding that she hoped her performance would encourage more people to try it. Some critics have called on her to boycott the coronation in protest at Britain's colonial past, but that is not her style. "I see each and every opportunity I get as a possibility for my gift to reconcile, to heal, to love, to give joy, to give hope and to give dreams for the future," she said. "We cannot change the past but each generation... with a small action can give hope for tomorrow."

'Dream come true'
Yende, who will sing a new piece by British composer Sarah Class, "Sacred Fire", has been in demand at the world's leading opera houses for a decade, with critics praising her charisma and luminous, bel canto timbre. Charles III, a classical music fan, saw her perform at Windsor Castle a year ago when he was still Prince of Wales. "It's a dream come true, because when I found out that I have this incredible gift I wanted to share it with as many people as possible," Yende said.

Active on social media, sharing positive messages to her legions of #PrettyArmy fans, she says she is excited for the big day. "I am counting the hours now. The preparations are going very well and I can't wait," she said. "I know that my life will no longer be the same." Yende's will not be the only unprecedented performance, with Bryn Terfel set to be the first to sing in Welsh at a coronation. — AFP

Music fit for a king's coronation

Music has evolved over the centuries into a crucial part of a British coronation, and that of King Charles III will feature perennial favorites alongside new commissions. "The ritual really can only survive and actually produce the emotional response if it has this enormous swell of music going through it," historian Simon Schama told AFP. "It won't work without it."

British coronations became much more of a national celebration in the early 20th century, largely thanks to the appearance of Edward Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstance" marches as well as Hubert Parry's "Jerusalem". Prior to that, coronations had been centered on the church and their choirs.

But Elgar gave Britons "a musical expression of what it meant to love the country... a feeling of national communion," said Schama. That was particularly the case with the first march, composed by Elgar in 1901. A year later, for the coronation of Edward VII, the famous lyrics were added that gave it the title "Land of Hope and Glory" and it became Britain's unofficial anthem.

It was used without the words for the coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953, and is still a regular before many rugby and football matches. The lyrics, which praise the British Empire, were at the heart of a controversy in 2020 when the BBC announced they would not be sung as is traditional on the last night of The Proms, though the decision was reversed after an uproar. The march is also well known in the United States where it is used during graduation ceremonies.

Edward VII's coronation also included a new version of the well-known hymn "I Was Glad When They Said Unto Me" created by Parry. The hymn had been used as the entrance hymn for every monarch since



Red London buses pass beneath Union flags in central London, on April 30, 2023 ahead of the coronation ceremony of Charles III and his wife, Camilla, as King and Queen of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth Realm nations.— AFP

the coronation of Charles II in 1661, but the composer added a new twist. "Parry famously paced the length of the Abbey so that the monarch arrives at the choir stalls at the exact time to be welcomed by the shouts of Vivat Rex ("Long live the King")," said Peter Linnitt, librarian of the Royal College of Music. The anthem was also sung at William and Kate's wedding in 2011.

Another perennial favorite is "Zadok The Priest" by German composer Handel, which has been used at every coronation since George II's in 1727. "It may seem old and dusty now, but every time one hears it I recognize how timeless it is," said Susan Wollenberg, music professor at Oxford University. Based on a story from the Old Testament, the song is played at the crucial anointing moment of the coronation, with lyrics evoking the way in which Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anointed King Solomon. The tune is also recognizable to football fans as the inspiration for the UEFA Champions League anthem, created in 1992 by Tony Britten. — AFP



Pretty Yende

Lifestyle

CORONATION GOWN SPOTLIGHTS QUEEN CAMILLA'S STYLE

In just a few days' time, the eyes of Britain and millions more around the world will be on Camilla as she is crowned queen alongside her husband, King Charles III. "It'll be the dress that will be the most talked about, it will be analyzed in every detail," said Caroline Young, a writer specializing in fashion. While the design of Camilla's gown is being kept under wraps, the 75-year-old queen consort commissioned British couturier Bruce Oldfield, who boasts a long list of high-profile clients, including Charles' ex-wife Princess Diana.



In this file photo Britain's Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, leaves at the end of the National Service of Thanksgiving for The Queen's reign at Saint Paul's Cathedral in London as part of Queen Elizabeth II's platinum jubilee celebrations. — AFP photos

According to fashion expert and royals' commentator Miranda Holder, the coronation gown is going to "define" Camilla. "It's going to go down in history," she added. Britain last held a coronation in 1953. Charles' mother Queen Elizabeth II wore an intricately embroidered white satin gown on the day.

But Camilla is likely to opt for something less luxurious with the new king keen to slim down the ceremony as the country grapples with a cost of living crisis. When the royal procession arrives

at Westminster Abbey on Saturday, the queen will be cloaked in a crimson velvet "Robe of State", originally made for Elizabeth 70 years ago.

'Working with Diana'

Camilla will be crowned with Elizabeth's grandmother Queen Mary's Crown, which she wore at the coronation of her husband King George V in 1911.



In this file photo Britain's Camilla, Queen Consort reacts during a visit at Cardiff Castle, in Cardiff, in south Wales.

In honor of Camilla's late mother-in-law, the crown will be reset with several diamonds from her personal jewellery collection. According to British media, Oldfield, 72, has designed Camilla's gown but Buckingham Palace was keeping tight-lipped when contacted by AFP.

Oldfield designed dozens of evening gowns — several of them iconic — for Diana before her death in a Paris car crash in 1997. "He was developing his own style and aesthetic while he was working with Diana," Holder, the royal fashion commentator, said. But after Diana's formal separation from Charles in 1992, she distanced herself from royal life and the designer.

Oldfield had since become one of Camilla's favorite fashion creators, as well as a long-time acquaintance. He designed the elegant black evening gown Camilla wore on the royal couple's state visit to Germany in March.

Glamour v confidence

"I gave Diana her glamour and Camilla her confidence," Oldfield was quoted as saying in 2014. While the outfits of heir to the throne Prince William's wife Kate are some of the most scrutinized on the planet, Camilla's style has often left commentators indifferent. "I don't think people kind of go, 'wow, look at

what she's wearing!' But I think she knows perfectly what is the right fit for the right occasion," Young said.

According to Holder, Camilla likes pastel colors but also "flamboyant" jewellery. "She is very earthy and natural in her spare time. She was in her 60s when she married prince Charles. It was a little bit of an advantage," Holder added. She said Camilla was not under the same "scrutiny" as Kate or Meghan, whose husband is Charles' younger son Harry. As for the design of the coronation gown, it's a guessing game for now. Holder predicts Camilla will be wearing blue or a "pastel color". But definitely not black.

'Fantastic fashion'

"Black is a no-no. It's for evening, red carpet," Holder said. The fashion expert also expects "much symbolism"

that will reflect the Commonwealth nations and the countries making up the United Kingdom: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Young says that Camilla will not want her outfit to be "too showy". "She's got a difficult job because she's been criticized for years and years as being the other woman," Young said. "So she has a reputation at stake as well," she added.

The start of the king's reign also comes as many Britons struggle with stubbornly high double-digit inflation. "So there can be the worry that it might be criticized for being too ostentatious, too expensive. All that will be in her mind," Young said. But Holder hopes that cutting costs in other areas of the coronation will allow "to splash out on a bit of fantastic fashion". — AFP



In this file photo Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, poses in front of the Louvre's pyramid in Paris, after her visit to the Louvre museum.



Britain's King Charles III and Britain's Camilla, Queen Consort arrive to meet the guests attending the Garden Party at Buckingham Palace, in London to celebrate their coronation ceremony as King and Queen of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth Realm nations.

Knit my king: UK 'yarnbombers' crochet for the coronation

They are the knitting and crocheting enthusiasts who secretly craft themed decorations for British royal weddings and jubilees, then put them out in public places under the cover of darkness. Now the country's small army of unassuming "yarnbombers" has swung into action for King Charles III's coronation on Saturday — and no postbox is safe from their tea cozy like creations.

Decorations have been popping up on the country's distinctive red postboxes in recent days, featuring everything from knitted horse-drawn coaches and crowns to Charles and Camilla dolls, Union Jack flags and bunting. In the towns of Hertford and Ware, just north of London, a group of knitters and crochet enthusiasts calling themselves the Secret Society of Hertford Crafters have just finished decorating 37 postboxes for Saturday's coronation.

Member Marge Ellis, who has been knitting since she was a child, said townspeople had been delighted with the arrival of the quirky decorations. "One woman pulled up as I was putting one out. She said she hadn't had much interest in the coronation until now, but seeing the topper had suddenly made her really excited about it," she told AFP. The now 160-strong group of crafters got started in 2017 at the beginning of the postbox topper trend in the UK and hasn't looked back.

They produce decorations regularly to mark anniversaries and national events as well as at Christmas and Easter. Ellis, who declined to give her age stressing that the group spanned the generations with members aged 19 to 99, said true "yarnbombing" involved putting the decorations out in secret so they were a surprise.

'Kind of magic'

Members had been "creeping around" at three and four in the morning to put out toppers for previous occasions like Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee last year. "This time we actually put them out in the evenings which was nice because people could actually see us doing it. "It brings a kind of magic to people's lives and people love it, especially children," she said. Yarnbombing is thought to have started in the United States nearly 20 years ago but has since spread worldwide, with enthusiasts using their creations to decorate everything from statues to bridges. One yarnbomber in the central English town of Syston styles herself the "Syston Knitting Banksy", after the British graffiti artist whose anonymous murals began appearing on buildings in the early 1990s.



The Syston knitter's coronation offering is a woolly version of the king wearing the St Edward's Crown and sitting in the coronation chair. Although she chooses to remain anonymous, she told a local newspaper last year she had lived in the town for around three decades and was a life-long knitter. — AFP



Best of the vestments: King Charles' coronation clothes

King Charles III will dress in heavy, shimmering golden robes worn by his ancestors during his coronation on Saturday, inspired by priestly outfits and intended to evoke the divine nature of kingship. In keeping with the British monarch's re-use and recycle outlook, many of the items were worn by his grandfather King George VI for his coronation in 1937, and by his great-grandfather King George V in 1911.

Although it is customary to wear certain historic "vestments", the king will use others from previous coronations "in the interests of sustainability and efficiency", Buckingham Palace said. Caroline de Guitaut, deputy surveyor of the king's works of art for the Royal Collection Trust, said: "It was the king's personal decision.

"They are in remarkable condition and it's also reflecting back to the coronation of his grandfather", the last king. The vestments are usually kept at the Tower of London as part of the coronation regalia. The palace has yet to say whether the king will wear military uniform or not beneath the robe he will don for his arrival at London's Westminster Abbey.

Robe of State

Robes of State are worn on arrival at Westminster Abbey. King Charles will arrive at the abbey in King George VI's crimson velvet Robe of State. The lining and lace has been conserved in advance of the coronation by Ede and Ravenscroft. London's oldest tailor has made garments for every coronation since that of King William III and Queen Mary II in 1689.

White linen shirt

The sovereign will wear a simple white linen shirt for his anointment with holy oil.

Colombium Sindonis

Latin for shroud tunic, this is worn after the anointing. The sleeveless white linen tunic has a plain collar fastened with a single button. It was worn by King George VI.

Supertunica

The glittering Supertunica is a full-length, sleeved coat of gold silk worn after the anointing ceremony. It was made for King George V and was also worn by King George VI, and by Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. The supertunica weighs around two kilos (4.4 pounds). The Supertunica's style has changed little since medieval times and is based on priestly and religious



Robes of State

vestments. The silk is wrapped in thin pieces of gold.

Coronation sword belt

Again from 1937, the girdle is made of embroidered cloth of gold and has a gold buckle. It is placed around the monarch's waist over the Supertunica.

The buckle is stamped with national emblems. Its gold clip is used to attach the Sword of Offering, to be used for the protection of good and the punishment of evil.

Stole Royal

The long, narrow embroidered band of gold silk goes around the shoulders on top of the Supertunica, mirroring outfits worn by a priest or a bishop.

Imperial Mantle

Along with the Supertunica, the mantle, or Robe Royal, is the other



The Imperial Mantle

dazzling vestment in the coronation. The floor-length cloak is worn over the Supertunica. It was made for the coronation of King George IV in 1821 and is the oldest vestment being used in Saturday's ceremony. It is made of cloth of gold woven in colored threads. It is closed at the chest with a gold clasp featuring an eagle. The pattern features red roses, blue thistles, green shamrocks, fleur-de-lys and eagles. It weighs 3-4 kg. King Charles' eldest son, the heir to the throne Prince William, will assist in placing the robe on his father.

Coronation Glove

The monarch will wear the single white leather glove on his right hand while holding the sovereign's sceptre with cross during the crowning.

Also called the Coronation Gauntlet, it was made for King George VI.



The Coronation Glove

The cuff is embroidered with national emblems including roses, shamrocks, thistles and acorns in gold metal threads.

Robe of Estate Worn to leave the abbey, Robes of Estate are more personalized than the Robes of State. The king will wear his grandfather's robe, which is made of purple silk velvet embroidered in gold. — AFP

Sports

Mumbai Indians chase down 215 in 6-wicket win over Punjab Kings

Kishan, Suryakumar smash blistering half-centuries

News in brief

Leon book CONCACAF final

LEON: Leon defeated Mexican rivals Tigres UANL 3-1 to reach the final of the CONCACAF Champions League for the first time on Wednesday. Goals from Fidel Ambriz, Angel Mena and Adonis Frias secured a 4-3 aggregate victory for Leon, who have never reached the final of the regional club tournament in its modern format. Leon will face Major League Soccer champions Los Angeles FC in the two-legged final. Tigres, leading 2-1 after last week's first leg, were left reeling after a blistering start from Leon, who scored twice in the opening 15 minutes to take a 3-2 aggregate lead. Ambriz fired Leon in front after just 10 minutes, unleashing a ferocious 30-yard effort that flew into the top corner beyond Tigres goalkeeper Nahuel Guzman. Mena then made it 2-0 on 15 minutes, tucking away a low finish after Guzman could only parry away an effort from Jose Alvarado. Tigres raised the prospect of extra time on 68 minutes after a stunning strike from Raymundo Fulgencio made it 3-3 on aggregate. — AFP

Pirates caught napping

JOHANNESBURG: Second-placed Orlando Pirates and bottom-of-the-table Maritzburg United were hit by sucker punches on Wednesday in the South African Premiership. Former Buccaneer Menzi Masuku nodded an added-time equalizer for Royal AM in a 1-1 draw against Pirates in Soweto that kept the race to finish runners-up in the balance. Pirates dominated the match despite fielding a virtual B team because of an FA Cup semi-final against arch rivals Kaizer Chiefs on Saturday and should have won comfortably. But for all their possession, they had to rely on an own-goal involving players aged 17 and 39 to take a first-half lead. Teenager Relebohile Ratomo struck a loose ball after a corner into a crowded goalmouth and veteran Mozambican Elias 'Domingues' Pelembe deflected it past his goalkeeper, Mondli Mpotso. Mid-table Royal barely threatened in the second half until substitute Masuku glanced a cross past goalkeeper Siphon Chaine and into the corner of the net for his first goal of the season. — AFP

Mahomes' brother charged

LOS ANGELES: Jackson Mahomes, the younger brother of Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes, was arrested on Wednesday on charges of aggravated sexual battery. Jackson Mahomes, 22, was booked into Johnson County Detention Center in Kansas on Wednesday morning, online records show. He was charged with three counts of aggravated sexual battery and a count of battery, all stemming from an incident on February 25. The Kansas City Star reported he appeared briefly in court on Wednesday afternoon, with another hearing scheduled for May 11. He was to be freed on bond on condition he not use alcohol or firearms. He is not allowed to contact the alleged victims or comment publicly about the case. The charges stem from an incident in which the woman who owns Aspens Restaurant and Lounge accused Mahomes of forcibly kissing her. Mahomes allegedly also shoved a 19-year-old male waiter. — AFP

LIV rebels quit European Tour

LONDON: LIV Golf players Sergio Garcia, Ian Poulter, Lee Westwood and Richard Bland have resigned from the European Tour, the tour announced on Wednesday. Last month, the European Tour won its legal battle with rebels after the players appealed against punishments the tour wanted to impose on those who took part in the inaugural LIV event last year. Ryder Cup stars Garcia, Poulter and Westwood will not be eligible for the matches against the United States in Rome later this year. "(The tour) would like to take this opportunity to thank the four players for the contribution they have made to the Tour and in particular to Sergio, Ian and Lee for the significant part they have played in Europe's success in the Ryder Cup over many years," the European Tour said in a statement. "Their resignations, however, along with the sanctions imposed upon them, are a consequence of their own choices." Former world number one Westwood, 2017 Masters champion Garcia and Poulter have 53 European Tour victories between them. — AFP

Horse deaths cloud build-up

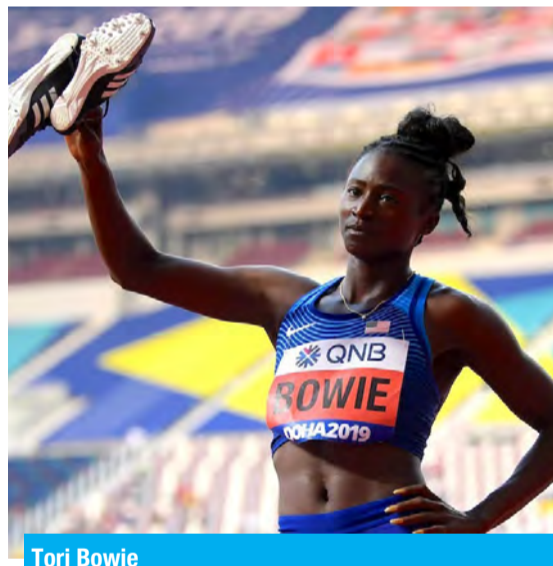
LOS ANGELES: The deaths of four horses at Churchill Downs in the space of a week have cast a cloud over Saturday's Kentucky Derby, with race-track officials saying Wednesday the situation is "unacceptable." "While a series of events like this is highly unusual, it is completely unacceptable," a statement from the iconic course in Louisville, Kentucky, said. "We take this very seriously and acknowledge that these troubling incidents are alarming and must be addressed. "We feel a tremendous responsibility to our fans, the participants in our sport and the entire industry to be a leader in safety and continue to make significant investments to eliminate risk to our athletes." The 149th edition of the Kentucky Derby will be run on Saturday, launching US flat racing's annual Triple Crown treble that also includes the Preakness Stakes in Baltimore and Belmont Stakes in New York. — AFP

MOHALI: Indian stars Ishan Kishan and Suryakumar Yadav smashed blistering half-centuries to help Mumbai Indians chase down 215 in a six-wicket IPL win over Punjab Kings on Wednesday. Kishan (75) and Suryakumar (66) put on a key third-wicket partnership of 116 before Tim David and Tilak Varma steered the team home with seven balls to spare in the second match of the day in Mohali. Varma smashed the winning six in his 10-ball 26, and David, who starred in his team's previous match, made 19 as the two combined in an unbeaten stand of 38. "When we started T20 format, 140-150 was a winning score. But look at this one," Mumbai skipper Rohit Sharma said. "Plus one extra batter makes a huge difference as well. Not just to us but across the IPL. I just checked that the average score this IPL is 180." The batting effort boosted Mumbai's chances of making the play-offs and trumped an unbeaten 82 by Punjab's Liam Livingstone.

Mumbai switched places with Punjab to be sixth in the 10-team table led by holders Gujarat Titans. Rohit went for a duck in the first over of Mumbai's chase and impact sub Nathan Ellis sent back fellow Australian Cameron Green for 23. The left-handed Kishan, who was named man of the match, and Suryakumar, who has recently hit form after a bad start this season, turned the match around with a flurry of fours and sixes. Suryakumar raised his second successive fifty in 23 balls with two sixes and two fours off Punjab's expensive England import Sam Curran.

Bowie mourned, remembered as a rare talent

LOS ANGELES: Tori Bowie, a three-time Olympic medalist and 2017 100m world champion, was remembered Wednesday as a rare athletics talent and warm friend after her death at the age of 32. Bowie anchored the US team that won 4x100m relay gold at the 2016 Rio Olympics, where she also earned silver in the 100m and 200m bronze. USA Track and Field and her management company confirmed her death a day after sheriff's deputies in Orlando, Florida, found her dead at her home. "This is beyond stats and speed," retired US sprint great Justin Gatlin said on Instagram. "Tori was a beautiful human being and had a smile that made you want to smile too."



Tori Bowie

"A country girl that loved her roots. I remember sitting with Tori and listening to her stories of growing up and racing horses on foot lol. She was a fierce competitor and great teammate. A true legend that made her mark in our sport and hearts." USA Track and Field chief executive Max Siegel said the federation was "deeply saddened" by Bowie's death. "A talented athlete, her impact on the sport is immeasurable, and she will be greatly missed," Siegel said.

Icon Management tweeted they were "devastated to share the very sad news that Tori Bowie has passed

Alcaraz books Madrid Open semi-finals

MADRID: Defending champion Carlos Alcaraz on Wednesday moved into the Madrid Open semi-finals with a straight sets victory over Karen Khachanov in his final match as a teenager, while Iga Swiatek reached the women's last four. US Open winner Alcaraz, who turns 20 on Friday when the last-four ties are played, overturned 4-1 and 5-2 deficits in the second set to defeat 12th-ranked Khachanov, 6-4, 7-5.

"Winning this match will give me a lot of confidence, Karen was at a great level and took me to the limit," said world number two Alcaraz who unleashed 31 winners. "It was decided by small details and I am very, very happy to be able to get through this round." The top seed triumphed in one hour and 52 minutes and will next face Borna Coric of Croatia who eased past German lucky loser Daniel Altmaier 6-3, 6-3.

"It was pretty tough. The first set as well, it was close," added Alcaraz whose record on clay this year now stands at 17 wins against one defeat. "I was in trouble in the second set, a break down and he had two break points to have the second break. So it was really tough for me to come back and he had his chances to win the second set. Luckily I knew I was going to have my chances. I just tried to take my opportunities and I'm really happy to get through."

If Alcaraz lifts the trophy on Sunday in the Spanish capital, he will knock Novak Djokovic from top spot in

Livingstone blitz in vain

Arshdeep Singh cut short Suryakumar's stay with a leaping catch at short third-man off Ellis and then sent back Kishan with his left-arm pace bowling but leaked 66 runs. Varma and David once again ensured a second straight win for the IPL powerhouse with five titles. "We should have bowled tighter lines," Punjab skipper Shikhar Dhawan said. "Because we saw the wicket and saw it's a very good wicket, we thought change of pace will work a lot and I feel Nathan bowled really well but other bowlers didn't step up today."

Punjab rode on an unbeaten 119-run partnership between Livingstone and Jitesh Sharma (49) to post 214-3. Livingstone hit the opposition bowlers to all parts of the ground in his 42-ball knock and was especially severe on England teammate Jofra Archer, hitting the Mumbai pace bowler for three sixes in an over.

Livingstone later revealed he had lunch with Archer before the game and was prepared for the challenge. Archer returned his most expensive IPL figures of 0-56. The first match of the day between Lucknow Super Giants and Chennai Super Kings was abandoned due to rain in the north Indian city of Lucknow. Lucknow reached 125-7 in 19.2 overs when rain stopped play and after an hour and 40 minutes of waiting, the officials decided the points would be shared between the teams. — AFP

away. "We've lost a client, dear friend, daughter and sister," the firm said. A cause of death was not immediately known. The Sheriff's Office in Orange County, Florida, said deputies had found the woman identified as Bowie "when conducting a well-being check of a woman in her 30s who had not been seen or heard from in several days."

"Entry was made into the residence and a woman, tentatively identified as Frenetorish 'Tori' Bowie (DOB: 8/27/1990), was found dead in the home. There were no signs of foul play." Bowie, raised by her grandmother in rural Mississippi, converted from the long jump in 2014 and became the fastest woman in the world that year. Two years later in Rio, she prevented a Jamaican clean sweep of the 100m medals when she finished second to Elaine Thompson in a time of 10.83sec with Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce third.

She won the 100m world title in London the following year and remains the lone American woman to win an Olympic or world 100m title since Carmelita Jeter in 2011.

"I'm so heartbroken over this," 2012 Olympic long jump gold medalist Britney Reese said. "You have made a lot of us proud thank you for representing our state of Mississippi like you did." "This hurt," tweeted Will Claye, who has represented the US internationally in triple jump and long jump. "Long live the champ, the sister, the daughter, the model and so much more!" Sprinter Tianna Madison posted a picture of herself and Bowie on Twitter as they celebrated the United States' relay triumph in Rio. Fraser-Pryce, the Jamaican reigning world 100m champion, tweeted: "My heart breaks for the family of Tori Bowie. A great competitor and source of light. Your energy and smile will always be with me. Rest in peace." US Olympic athlete Lolo Jones also paid tribute to Bowie on Twitter, calling her an "incredible talent" and "A beautiful runner."

Like miracles

Bowie received a hero's welcome in her home state after her 2016 Olympic exploits, the governor declaring November 25, 2016 "Tori Bowie Day." Pisgah High School, in the small town of Sand Hill, displayed a sign designating "Tori Bowie Lane" on campus. "To see things like that and like this, it's just like miracles, I guess," Bowie told the Hattiesburg American newspaper in Mississippi.

Bowie re-entered the long jump and came fourth at the 2019 world championships in Doha, her last major competition. International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach said in a statement he was "Shocked and deeply saddened to learn of the sudden passing of Olympic gold medalist Tori Bowie. "In this moment of grief, let me express my heartfelt condolences to her family and friends. The sports world has

the rankings simply by playing a match at the Italian Open in Rome next week. Djokovic missed the Madrid Open with an elbow injury. Alcaraz blew away Alexander Zverev on Tuesday in a repeat of last year's Madrid final, but Khachanov put up stiffer opposition. The Russian, who knocked out compatriot Andrey Rublev this week and also reached the Australian Open semi-finals, showed no fear in the first set despite his opponent's form.

Swiatek eases through

Eventually Alcaraz found a decisive break to take a 4-3 lead with a strong forehand which Khachanov



MADRID: Spain's Carlos Alcaraz returns the ball to Russia's Karen Khachanov during their 2023 ATP Tour Madrid Open tennis tournament singles quarter-final match on May 3, 2023. — AFP



MOHALI: Mumbai Indians' Ishan Kishan plays a shot during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Punjab Kings and Mumbai Indians at the Punjab Cricket Association Stadium in Mohali on May 3, 2023. — AFP

Pakistan register first ODI series win over NZ in 12 years

KARACHI: Pakistan registered their first one-day international series win over New Zealand (NZ) in 12 years with a hard-fought 26-run victory in the third match in Karachi on Wednesday. Imam-ul-Haq scored a 107-ball 90 while Babar Azam made a 62-ball 54 for his 26th ODI half-century to guide Pakistan to 287-6 in their 50 overs. Opener Tom Blundell hit 65 for New Zealand while debutant Cole McConechie struck an undefeated 45-ball 64 but the visitors were bowled out for 261 in 49.1 overs.

Pakistan, who won the first two matches by five and seven wickets respectively in Rawalpindi, took an unassailable 3-0 lead in the five-match series. "It's always a relief when you win a series and it was a good team effort," said Azam. "We put (on) a good total and then (the) bowlers were outstanding."

"The focus is now to not relax and come out strongly for the next two matches and hopefully we can continue to give one hundred percent." The last two matches are on Friday and Sunday, also in Karachi. Pakistan's last ODI series win over New Zealand was in 2011 and since then they had lost six of the seven series, with one drawn. New Zealand threatened to run away with a win as Blundell and Will Young (33 off 41 balls) gave them a confident opening stand of 83 in 15.3 overs. Pakistan finally broke through with Young's run out off a direct throw from short third-man, before Mohammad Wasim dismissed Daryl Mitchell for 21 - the man who had hit successive hundreds in the last two matches. Fifteen runs later, Blundell was also run out after failing to reach his crease in an attempt to complete a second run. He hit seven boundaries in his knock. Tom Latham, who made 45, and Mark Chapman (13) added 40 for the fourth wicket but pacer Naseem Shah bowled Chapman with a beautiful delivery before Latham was cleaned up by Wasim.

McConechie tied valiantly to snatch a victory for New Zealand, smashing two sixes and six fours but ran out of partners. Naseem, Wasim and Shaheen Shah Afridi all took two wickets for Pakistan. "The pitch probably slowed up a little bit," said New Zealand captain Latham. "If we had a couple of partnerships here and there then things could have been a little different but we were not quite at our best." Earlier, New Zealand started well by getting the in-form opener Fakhar Zaman caught off Matt Henry for 19. — AFP

could not return successfully. The Spaniard consolidated and served it out. In the second set Khachanov broke for a 3-1 lead when Alcaraz went long after saving a first break point. The Russian forced two more in the sixth game but could not convert either as Alcaraz fought hard to hold.

Alcaraz's perseverance paid off as he broke with a volley to get back on serve at 4-5. The Spaniard consolidated his break and then earned another when Khachanov hit the net with an attempted forehand winner. Aiming for his 10th tour level title the crowd-pleasing home favorite sealed his progress with a powerful forehand drive. Women's world number one Swiatek raced into the semi-finals with a 6-0, 6-3 victory over Croatia's Petra Martic.

The world number one, playing the event for only the second time, will take on Russian 12th seed Veronika Kudermetova on Thursday for a place in the final. Swiatek lost just eight points in a completely one-sided first set before one break of serve in the second set proved enough to send her into a fifth successive WTA Tour semi-final. The Polish star has now won eight straight matches as she bids to hit top form in time for the start of her French Open title defence later this month.

"I feel like I'm playing better and better every day," said Swiatek. "This is pretty great, because I didn't know if that was going to be possible at the beginning of the tournament." Kudermetova ousted world number three Jessica Pegula 6-4, 0-6, 6-4 in a topsy-turvy clash. The 26-year-old beat the American five-time Grand Slam quarter-finalist to reach a WTA 1000 event semi-final for the first time, recovering after a collapse in the second. It will be the 26-year-old's third semi-final appearance of 2023 following Adelaide and Doha. — AFP

Sports

PSG suspend Messi, future in doubt after Saudi trip

WCup winning captain to be sidelined for 'several days'

PARIS: Lionel Messi's future at PSG was plunged into doubt on Wednesday after he was suspended by Paris Saint-Germain after travelling to Saudi Arabia without the club's permission. A source with knowledge of the disciplinary procedure told AFP that Argentina's 35-year-old World-Cup winning captain, who is out of contract at the end of the season, would be sidelined for "several days", while various media in France reported that he would be suspended for two weeks. "He cannot train, cannot play, and will not be paid while disciplinary measures are in place," the source added.

Another source, also speaking on condition they were not identified, indicated that the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner would "probably" be sidelined for a fortnight, noting that "nobody is more important than the club". Messi played the whole game in PSG's 3-1 home defeat by Lorient in Ligue 1 on Sunday.

He then travelled to Saudi Arabia to fulfill commercial commitments in his role as a tourism ambassador for the Gulf state. The Saudi Tourism Authority said in a press release on Wednesday that Messi had "returned to Saudi for a second time, this time

with his family" and had been treated to a demonstration of palm weaving and had fed Arabian gazelles. As a result of the trip, Messi missed a training session scheduled for Monday following the weekend defeat. The PSG squad were given a day off on Tuesday and Messi did not take part in training on Wednesday either.

'Fed up with mercenaries'

PSG are due to return to league action away at struggling Troyes on Sunday, a game that Messi may now miss. If he were to be sidelined for two weeks he would also sit out a home match against Ajaccio on May 13. The disciplinary measures make the prospect of Messi staying in the French capital after his two-year deal expires at the end of this season even more remote. Having at one point looked set to extend his stay for another year, a source close to the club told AFP last month that he was now "much more likely" to depart.

Messi arrived from Barcelona, the club where he had spent the majority of his career, in 2021 but has struggled to reproduce his best form at Qatar-backed Paris. Despite that, he has scored 31 goals in 71 appearances in all competitions. He was

recently jeered by a section of the PSG support, who see him as a symbol of all the club have done wrong in focusing on superstar signings while failing to build a genuinely competitive team. Messi has scored 20 goals in all competitions this season and is the leading assist provider in Ligue 1, with 15.

However, his form since leading Argentina to World Cup glory in Qatar has declined along with that of most of the PSG team. Their insipid performance against Lorient was a sixth defeat in 17 Ligue 1 matches in 2023. They remain five points clear of Marseille at the top of the table with five games left, and are therefore still on course for a record 11th French title. However, they were knocked out of the Champions League in the last 16 by Bayern Munich and also went out of the French Cup at the same stage to Marseille.

Meanwhile hundreds of fans gathered at the club to protest over PSG's current form and the Messi saga. "We're fed up with mercenaries! We must sack Messi! We must sack Nasser Al-Khelaifi (the club's Qatari president)," supporters chanted. "We are sincerely worried about the future and the sustainability of our



RIYADH: This handout picture provided by the Saudi Tourism Authority shows Argentina's forward Lionel Messi holding a falcon in Riyadh. — AFP

club," the team's 'ultras' supporters said in a statement, adding "is there still a pilot on the plane?" Meanwhile, several videos posted on Twitter appeared to show

a group of supporters, dressed in black gathered in front of the home of Neymar, shouting abuse at their injured Brazilian superstar. — AFP



STUTT GART: Frankfurt's German goalkeeper Kevin Trapp dives for a free kick during the German Cup (DFB Pokal) semi-final football match VfB Stuttgart v Eintracht Frankfurt on May 3, 2023. — AFP

German Cup final: Frankfurt book a date with Leipzig

STUTT GART: Eintracht Frankfurt came from a goal down to book a date with RB Leipzig in the German Cup final with a 3-2 win over Stuttgart on Wednesday. Trailing after a Tiago Tomas goal, the Europa League champions scored two goals in five second-half minutes through Evan Ndicka and Daichi Kamada to turn the game. France striker Randal Kolo Muani was brought down in the box with 15 minutes remaining and converted the penalty.

Stuttgart's Enzo Millot pulled one back but the home side were reduced to 10 men shortly after when Borna Sosa picked up a second yellow. Frankfurt survived a VAR review for a handball in the penalty area in the seventh minute of injury time to remain on track for a sixth German Cup title. Frankfurt manager Oliver Glasner admitted his team "were lucky today", telling Germany's ARD network "I'm crazy happy and proud of the boys." "We're very happy to be going to Berlin." Stuttgart goalkeeper Fabian Bredlow said his side's "disappointment is huge", complaining "the ball clearly hit

the arm" of a Frankfurt player in the final seconds. "With a little bit of luck we'd get the penalty, we'd shoot 3-3 and it'd go into extra time."

Despite sitting just one spot above the Bundesliga relegation spots on goal difference, hosts Stuttgart came into the match unbeaten in five games under new manager Sebastian Hoeneß. Ninth in the league, Frankfurt arrived amid a terrible run of form, with only one win in 11 matches since being eliminated from the Champions League by Napoli.

Tomas gave Stuttgart the lead after 18 minutes, smashing the ball past goalie Kevin Trapp at the near post after collecting a cutback from Josha Vagnoman. Frankfurt emerged from the half-time break a different side and took the lead five minutes in, Kolo Muani finding Ndicka in the box who hammered a low finish to equalize. Kamada made it two five minutes later with a solo effort, beating several Stuttgart defenders before placing the ball into the left-hand corner.

With 15 minutes remaining, Stuttgart pushed several players forward looking for an equaliser, but the ball fell fortunately for Kamada who ran 50 metres before finding Kolo Muani, who was felled in the box by goalie Fabian Bredlow. Bredlow escaped with a yellow card but Kolo Muani converted the penalty to give the visitors a 3-1 lead. The France striker now has 21 goals in 41 games for Frankfurt. With the home fans in full voice, Stuttgart's frustrations rose, with Sosa yellow carded for kicking the ball away. — AFP

PSG boosts security after protests target Neymar and Messi

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain have ordered extra security at the club's training ground and at the homes of Lionel Messi and Neymar after protests by fans angry over recent results at the Ligue 1 leaders, sources close to the club told AFP on Thursday. Several hundred PSG supporters gathered outside club headquarters on Wednesday evening where they set off smoke flares and sang hostile chants about underperforming stars Messi, Neymar and Italian midfielder Marco Verratti.

Some of them, dressed in black, then travelled to Neymar's home in a wealthy suburb west of Paris where they chanted "Neymar, get lost". "Paris Saint-Germain condemns in the strongest possible terms the unacceptable and insulting actions of a small group of individuals," a club statement said on Wednesday evening. "Whatever the differences of opinion, nothing justifies such behavior." Neymar, who has been plagued by injuries at PSG and is out until the end of the season, reacted by writing on In-



BOULOGNE-BILLANCOURT: Paris Saint Germain's (PSG) football club supporters gathered in front of the club's headquarters to protest over PSG's current form and the Messi saga on May 3, 2023. — AFP

stagram: "Don't let people put you in their storm. Put them in your peace."

The club decided to boost security at its training ground and outside the homes of the players singled out during the protests, two sources told AFP, asking not to be named. Some of the fans had indicated "they wanted to do the same thing every evening," one of the sources said. The protesters left "calmly, several minutes after their arrival" without any clashes with police, the source added. — AFP

Lazio reclaim 2nd spot; Napoli title party delayed

MILAN: Napoli will have to wait at least one more day to be crowned Italian champions after Lazio beat Sassuolo 2-0 on Wednesday to reclaim second place in Serie A. Lazio needed to win at the Stadio Olimpico to remain in mathematical contention with five matches to go in their season but more importantly for their own fight to qualify for the Champions League. Run-away league leaders Napoli are 15 points in front of Lazio ahead of their match at Udinese on Thursday night, when a draw will be enough for Luciano Spalletti's side to seal the Scudetto with a month of the season remaining.

As such Wednesday's clash at the Stadio Olimpico

was never about the destination of the league title but rather gaining an advantage in the crowded scrum for the three places left for a spot in Europe's top club competition. And Lazio are six points ahead of fifth-placed Atalanta thanks to Felipe Anderson's ninth goal of the season, which came in the 14th minute of a tight game after a beautiful chipped pass from Marco Antonio, and a late strike from Toma Basic. "We're all really happy. We know that at this stage of the season things aren't going to be easy, they get more difficult," said Anderson to DAZN.

Anderson's opener came five minutes after a bizarre incident in which Ciro Immobile had a goal disallowed for offside, then given following a long VAR check, and then disallowed again seconds later after Immobile was found to be offside earlier in the move. Lazio's bid for the top four was helped by Davide Frattesi's powerful effort in first half stoppage time hitting the bar and AC Milan only drawing 1-1 with Cremonese thanks to Junior's Messias' fortunate leveler in the final seconds. — AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Hospitals

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, Koteswar Babu Kondeti** (old name), holder of Indian Passport No. L3463636, having permanent address D. No:13/38-A, Kothapalli, Kanchelu, Rajampeta, Anamayya Dist. Andhra Pradesh, India, presently residing in Kuwait, hereby declare that I have changed my name to Koteswar Babu (as given name) Narayana Nellore (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Koteswar Babu Narayana Nellore. I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C 3523) 5-5-23
- I, Nazia Can**, R/o. H. No. 81/3, near Ameenya High School, Islampur, Baina, Vasco-Da-Gama, South-Goa, hereby change my name from Nazia Nurulla Khan to Nazia Can. Hereafter in all my dealings & documents, I will be known by the name Nazia Can. (C 3524) 5-5-23
- I, Rajendra Gopalji Sharma**, holder of Passport No. M4249815 do hereby change my name to Rajendra Suthar for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Rajendra Suthar and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C 3519)4-5-23
- I, TASNIMA**, holder of Indian Passport No. U0747486 having permanent address Dungarpur, Rajasthan, India 314001 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name TASNIMA and surname COCHIN. (#3518) 3/5/2023
- I, PALA HARIBABU**, holder of Passport No. P9481361, do hereby change my name to Ali (as given name) MOHAMMED (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name, ALI MOHAMMED and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (#3521) 3/5/2023
- I, RASHIDA**, holder of Passport No. L5937183, do hereby change my name to RASHIDA (as given name) KUTUBUDDIN (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name RASHIDA KUTUBUDDIN and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (#3522) 3/5/2023

Automated enquiry about the CivilID card is 1889988

Man City move back to top

Haaland sets Premier League goal record



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Norwegian striker Erling Haaland celebrates the title of "most goal in a single season" at the end of the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and West Ham on May 3, 2023. — AFP

MANCHESTER: Erling Haaland set a new record of 35 goals in a Premier League season as Manchester City overcame West Ham 3-0 to move back to the top of the table on Wednesday, while Liverpool edged out Fulham 1-0. City were made to work by an under-manned Hammers to edge one point clear of Arsenal in the title race, with a game in hand still to come. But they cut loose after half-time as Haaland wrote himself into the record books with his 51st goal in all competitions of his debut season at City.

"I do not think of all these records, I would go crazy in my head," said Haaland. "I go home now, play some video games, eat something and then sleep." The Norwegian was given a guard of honor by his teammates as he left the pitch after full-time. "In football when there is a special occasion we have to show how special it is,"

said City boss Pep Guardiola. "We are very pleased for him because he is a joy to work with, to be with, and everyone is happy to have him with us. The record will be broken in the future, maybe by him."

The visitors were missing England international Declan Rice, Tomas Soucek and Nayef Aguerd through illness, while injuries meant David Moyes could only name five outfield substitutes. But Moyes' men held out for 50 minutes before succumbing at the Etihad to remain rooted in a relegation battle. Nathan Ake was the unlikely figure to break the deadlock as the Dutch defender rose highest to power home Riyad Mahrez's free-kick. But there was no surprise over the scorer of City's second as Haaland raced onto Jack Grealish's pass and deftly dinked the ball over the advancing Lukasz Fabianski.

Salah on spot

The 22-year-old moved past Alan Shearer and Andy Cole's mark of 34 set for Blackburn and Newcastle respectively in the 1990s. However, he will still fall some way short of the all-time scoring record for a season in the English top flight of 60 set by Everton's Dixie Dean in 1927/28. Phil Foden came off the bench to add the final flourish as his sweetly-struck volley deflected off Emerson Palmieri to leave Fabianski wrong-footed five minutes from time.

City's 13th consecutive home win in 2023 edges Guardiola's men ever closer to a fifth Premier League title in six seasons. The champions need just four wins from their remaining five games to ensure Arsenal are denied their first title in 19 years. Defeat leaves West Ham still four points above the relegation zone with four games to

play. At Anfield, Liverpool refused to give up the fight for a top-four finish by keeping the pressure on Newcastle and Manchester United for the final two places in next season's Champions League behind City and Arsenal.

Jurgen Klopp's men have now won five league consecutive league games for the first time this season. "Five games in a row is good. I liked it a lot. We have to try to do something we can use, something we can build on in the next season," said Klopp. Mohamed Salah's 29th goal of the season was the difference between the sides as the Egyptian shrugged off his recent struggles from the penalty spot to convert after Darwin Nunez had been fouled by Issa Diop six minutes before half-time. Liverpool close to within four points of fourth-placed Manchester United, who have two games in hand.—AFP

Atletico rout Cadiz 5-1, overtake Real

BARCELONA: Antoine Griezmann shone as Atletico Madrid thrashed Cadiz 5-1 on Wednesday to climb above rivals Real Madrid into second in La Liga. Diego Simeone's side are a point above the champions but 13 behind leaders Barcelona, who just need two more points to clinch the title. Struggling Valencia earned a 1-1 draw with fifth-placed Villarreal but remain in 17th place, level on points with Getafe, 18th, who beat Celta Vigo 1-0. Griezmann broke the deadlock in the second minute and added a second to give Atletico a comfortable lead against Cadiz and continue his own superb form.

The French forward has 13 goals and 13 assists this season in La Liga. With Griezmann pulling the strings, the Rojiblancos have been the division's best

side in 2023. While it is too late for them to earn any silverware, overtaking Real does offer some small reward. Alvaro Morata netted the third in the 49th minute and Yannick Carrasco converted a penalty for the fourth. Chucky Lozano smashed in a brilliant consolation for Cadiz, 15th and only a point above the drop zone, but Nahuel Molina tucked home Atletico's fifth immediately after.

Samuel Lino struck for Valencia to cancel out Villarreal forward Nicolas Jackson's opener at Mestalla, saving the hosts from a fourth defeat in six games and keeping them just outside the drop zone. Getafe stayed on their tail with their narrow victory thanks to Enes Unal's early penalty, putting pressure on Espanyol, 19th, who are three points behind and visit Sevilla on Thursday. Jose Bordalas' side undid some of the damage from their 1-0 defeat by Espanyol on Sunday. The draw dents Villarreal's chances of Champions League qualification, leaving them seven points behind Real Sociedad in fourth, who beat champions Real Madrid on Tuesday. — AFP



MADRID: Atletico Madrid's Argentinean forward Angel Correa (center) vies with Cadiz's Spanish defender Jorge Mere (right) during the Spanish league football match between Club Atletico de Madrid and Cadiz CF on May 3, 2023. — AFP

Celtics blitz Sixers to square series

LOS ANGELES: The Boston Celtics produced an exhibition of three-point shooting to blow away the Philadelphia 76ers 121-87 and square their Eastern Conference playoff series on Wednesday. Jaylen Brown led a clinical offensive display for the second-seeded Celtics to swat aside a Sixers line-up who welcomed back newly crowned NBA Most Valuable Player Joel Embiid after an injury absence of nearly two weeks.

Brown finished with 25 points while Malcolm Brogdon poured in 23 from the bench, including six three-pointers, as the Celtics bounced back from Monday's game-one loss at the TD Garden. The best-of-seven series is now level at 1-1 as the teams head to Philadelphia for game three on Friday. After Wednesday's rout, Sixers coach Doc Rivers will have plenty of food for thought despite the mostly successful return of Embiid, who had not played since injuring his right knee in game three of the first-round sweep of Brooklyn.

Embiid made his presence felt with 15 points and five blocks but was clearly not at full fitness, before being removed from the fray in the third quarter as Boston surged into a commanding lead. Boston meanwhile will be buoyed by a display that mixed defensive ruggedness with free-scoring offense. "We just set the tone on defense, trying to be aggressive on both sides of the ball, getting our team-mates going. But really just setting the tone on defense and having fun," Celtics forward Brown said afterwards.

No fewer than eight Celtics players contributed to Boston's tally of 20 three-pointers from 51 attempts. Philadelphia by contrast made only six of 30 from beyond the arc with their off-night underscored by James Harden's futile shooting from three-point range. Harden, the 45-point hero of Monday's game one, made zero of six attempted three-pointers, finishing with just 12 points from 2-of-14 shooting.

Philadelphia led by two points briefly early in the first quarter, but the Celtics scored steadily thereaf-



BOSTON: Jayson Tatum #0 of the Boston Celtics and Al Horford #42 defend a shot from Joel Embiid #21 of the Philadelphia 76ers during the first quarter of game two of the Eastern Conference Second Round Playoffs on May 03, 2023. — AFP

ter to edge clear. "Offensively we were pretty bad, but give them credit—their ball pressure ate us up all night," Rivers said. "I thought they pressured us, they denied us, they played in our airspace all game. We talked about it before the game. "But you can talk about intensity and force all you want. When you get out on the court and it's actually being applied to you, you have to be able to handle it. And we didn't handle it very well tonight."

Embiid was satisfied with his fitness on his return from injury but admitted the Sixers had been outplayed. "They beat us to every loose ball," Embiid said. "They played with more desperation than us. We didn't execute what we wanted to. We've got to be better. "We knew they were going to respond after the first game and we just weren't ready enough. But we'll fix it." — AFP