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Damascus back in Arab fold

Kuwait says Arab League keen on resolving Syrian conflict



CAIRO: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah attends an emergency meeting of Arab League foreign ministers on May 7, 2023. — KUNA

CAIRO: The Arab League on Sunday welcomed back Syria's government, ending a more than decade-long suspension and securing President Bashar Al-Assad's return to the Arab fold after years of isolation. In Nov 2011, the body suspended Damascus over its crackdown on peaceful protests which began earlier that year and which spiraled into a conflict that has killed more than 500,000 people, displaced millions and battered the country's infrastructure and industry.

While the frontlines have mostly quietened, large parts of the country's north remain outside government control, and no political solution has yet been reached to the 12-year-old conflict. "Government delegations from the Syrian Arab Republic will resume their participation in Arab League meetings" starting Sunday, said a unanimous decision by the group's foreign ministers.

Arab foreign ministers agreed to allow the Syrian delegation to take part in the Arab League's meetings in a step showing keenness to resolve the conflict in the fellow Arab country, Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah said on Sunday. Sheikh Salem revealed that the decision reflected Arab keenness on the unity of Syria and a strong desire to resolve the long conflict. He affirmed that the Syrian government must fulfill its commitment to ensure the safe return of the refugees and the displaced in accordance with UNSC resolutions connected with the matter.

There was a decision to form a ministerial committee grouping Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt and the Arab League to implement what was agreed upon during the Amman meeting on Syria, he indicated. He noted that the Amman meeting agreed to continue direct dialogue with the Syrian

government to reach a comprehensive solution for Syria based on UNSC resolution 2254. Sheikh Salem indicated the committee would be reporting to the Arab League regularly to provide updates.

He also noted that the Arab foreign ministers' gathering also touched on developments in Sudan as well as Zionist violations against the Palestinians. The Arab foreign ministers called for respecting Sudanese sovereignty and finding solutions to the crisis in Sudan with the participation of Sudanese and international parties. He affirmed that there were calls to provide urgent humanitarian support to Sudan. He also mentioned Kuwait's campaign to aid Sudan launched on May 4. On Palestine, Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah said the Arab League had issued a statement regarding the brutal Zionist treatment of Palestinians.

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Movement slams new blood bag fees for expats

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti leftist political group, Kuwait Progressive Movement, on Sunday strongly criticized a decision by the health ministry to impose charges on blood units for expats, describing the measure as "discriminatory". The ministry of health on Saturday issued a decision imposing a fee of KD 20 per bag of blood for expat patients if they have legal residency and KD 40 for visitors. The ministry also increased charges on 37 laboratory tests, ranging from half a dinar to KD 15 for residents and between KD 5 and KD 70 for visitors. Emergency cases are exempt from the charges.

The Progressive Movement said in a statement the decision discriminates between patients on the basis of religion, creed, social class and gender. The movement claimed "class-based discrimination has increased rapidly in state institutions", adding that the level of discrimination reached in the country is "unprecedented".

Meanwhile, the low turnout of candidates for the upcoming parliamentary polls continued Sunday, as only 24 hopefuls filed papers, bringing the total number of candidates to just 85 after three days of registration, compared to as many as 222 who registered in the first three days of the Sept 2022 elections.

But with seven days remaining for registration and many prominent candidates who have not filed nominations, the number will most certainly increase sharply. In the Sept 2022 polls, 367 candidates registered, but only 305 remained in the fray after withdrawals. Among the 24 candidates who registered on Sunday, there was only one former MP and two members of the court-scraped 2022 Assembly. So far, 20 former lawmakers and as many as 16 members of the annulled house have registered.

A majority of candidates called for fundamental reforms with the hope to put an end to almost non-stop political disputes that have engulfed Kuwaiti politics for almost two decades. Prominent among candidates who registered on Sunday was Fahad bin Falah Al-Azemi, the son

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Zionists raze Palestinian primary school

JABBET AL-DHIB: Zionist forces on Sunday demolished a Palestinian primary school in the occupied West Bank, citing safety issues and drawing sharp criticism from the European Union which had funded the project. Palestinians hurled rocks at Zionist forces who fired tear gas at them as bulldozers moved in on the site at Jabbet al-Dhib village near Bethlehem.

The EU said it was "appalled" after Zionist forces arrived at dawn at the school site, which a Palestinian Authority official said served 45 students and consisted of five classrooms. The Zionist entity has occupied the West Bank since the 1967 Six-Day War. The territory is home to around 2.9 million Palestinians. Around 475,000 Zionist settlers also live there in state-approved settlements considered illegal under international law.

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JABBET AL-DHIB: Palestinians pick up papers and books from the site of a school that was demolished by Zionist authorities in this village east of Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank on May 7, 2023. — AFP

Gunman kills 8 in rampage at Texas mall

WASHINGTON: Americans were grappling Sunday with yet another mass shooting after a heavily-armed man stormed a shopping mall in Texas, murdering eight people and wounding several others before he was killed by police. Responders, distressed witnesses and police described scenes of panic and horror north of Dallas, where video footage circulating online showed the shooter getting out of a sedan in the outlet mall's parking lot Saturday and opening fire on people walking nearby.

An officer inside on an unrelated call quickly responded to the gunfire and "neutralized" the shooter at the sprawling facility in Allen, police said. The identity of the shooter was not released and no motive was put forward. The suspect's body, sprawled on a sidewalk, was one of seven deaths at the mall when more police arrived. Two others died in the hospital while "three are in critical surgery, and four are stable," said Allen fire chief Jonathan Boyd.

US President Joe Biden, a proponent of stricter gun laws, released a proclamation Sunday "as a mark of respect for the victims of the senseless acts of violence" in Allen. It ordered US flags be lowered to half staff at the White House, public buildings and military facilities. The attack is the latest in a shocking spate of deadly gun violence to convulse the United States. Barely a week earlier, a man shot and killed five neighbors in Cleveland, Texas after one of them

asked him to stop firing his rifle in his yard at night while a baby slept.

Awash in firearms, the country has already endured 199 mass shootings this year, according to the Gun Violence Archive, a non-governmental organization which defines a mass shooting as four or more people wounded or killed. The gunfire Saturday at Allen Premium Outlets, 55 km north of Dallas, began around 3:30 pm (2030 GMT), when it was busy with weekend shoppers, police said. The officer in the mall "heard gunshots, went to the gunshots, engaged the suspect and neutralized the suspect," said chief Brian Harvey of the Allen police department.

Some of the victims were as young as five, a hospital official told NBC News. Texas Governor Greg Abbott called the mass shooting an "unspeakable tragedy".

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Qeshm hopes to cash in on regional shifts

QESHM, Iran: Years of sanctions on Iran have taken their toll, but on the strategically located island of Qeshm, people can still find goods from major global brands otherwise out of reach. Off Iran's southern coast, some 150 km from the United Arab Emirates' commercial hub of Dubai, Qeshm's merchants have been closely watching regional shifts since Tehran's landmark rapprochement with

Saudi Arabia in March.

"The main thing in life is to have good relations with your neighbors," said 50-year-old retailer Mohammad Bazmandegan, who imports electric appliances from Dubai. He has been following the diplomatic developments since his government resumed ties with Riyadh after a seven-year freeze, a shift affecting the entire Gulf region. Along with Saudi Arabia, Tehran is also seeking to mend relations with other neighbors including the UAE and Bahrain, which also severed ties in 2016.

"If relations with our neighbors improve, they will also improve with other parts of the world," said

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QESHM, Iran: A picture taken on April 30, 2023 shows people in a bazaar on this Gulf island. — AFP



Local

Kuwaitis building fourth floor for their newlywed children to avoid high rents

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: As housing prices continue to rise, it is becoming increasingly difficult for young couples to afford renting their own apartments. In Kuwait, many Kuwaiti newlyweds find themselves struggling to pay high rentals while waiting to receive their government houses, which often leads to financial stress. So Kuwaiti families have adopted a potential solution that can alleviate this problem, which is building an extra floor in the parents' house for newly married couples. Such an arrangement provides benefits for both the newlyweds and their parents.

By living in the same household with their parents, the couple can receive practical and emotional support and lower living costs, since parents usually let the couples live for free or pay nominal rent. Despite the multiple benefits of this move for Kuwaiti families, some people discourage this, especially when houses exceed three floors.

Ayoub Al-Saffar, a real estate consultant said: "This phenomenon is spreading among Kuwaitis due to the housing crisis, which has forced people to build a fourth floor on top of their private houses for their newly married children to live near them and prevent paying high rent. This step is related to two main factors: The high cost of housing and rental apartments and directly related to the slow process of distributing government houses to Kuwaiti couples, which leaves newlywed Kuwaitis

with no choice but to either find an apartment on rent or build an extra floor and live in with their parents."

Building an extra floor is an efficient solution for Kuwaitis when compared to renting an apartment. Additionally, parents' houses are often located in neighborhoods the couples are familiar and more comfortable with. However, Saffar discourages exceeding three floors, as he said that it affects the infrastructure of the area and its services. "Each area was designed to accommodate a population density of only 210 percent, while the situation has exceeded 350 percent. We have only seen paper distributions lately. Houses in Mutlaa entered the implementation stage only a short while ago, while in South Saad Al-Abdullah, they are still on paper," he added.

Building an extra floor for newly married couples in their parents' house can be an attractive solution, but as with any major decision, it is important to carefully consider the legal and financial implications before proceeding. The Municipal Council has approved requests to allow Kuwaitis to build a fourth floor in their private houses, but



Ayoub Al-Saffar



based on certain regulations. Saffar said as long as building a fourth floor is not officially legalized in Kuwait, homeowners cannot benefit from the

extra value that is supposed to be added to the house, because it cannot be sold, which makes the expenses and the risk worthless for many people.

Attending coronation reflects deep ties: FM

LONDON: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said His Highness the Amir's Representative, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's presence at UK King Charles III's coronation ceremony reflects deep ties between both sides' leaders, peoples and royals. In a statement to KUNA and Kuwait Television on the sidelines of his participation in the coronation ceremony on Saturday, he said His Highness the Crown Prince met King Charles III at a reception at Buckingham Palace on Friday and conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The foreign minister added that King Charles III expressed gratitude for the bilateral ties, and thanked His Highness the Crown Prince for participating in the coronation ceremony. He pointed out that King Charles III visited Kuwait eight times when he was Crown Prince of the United Kingdom, and is familiar with Kuwait and appreciates it so much. He stressed that the coronation day is a historic day for the British, and the leadership and people of Kuwait share joy with the British people on this day, wishing the King of Britain further best of luck. — KUNA



Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah



KUWAIT: A student at The Universal American School (UAS) in Hawally receives his bonus from the Bankee program.



Sulaiman Al-Marzouq is seen during the tour aimed at following up on the implementation of the Bankee program.



NBK delegates are seen in a photo with students and UAS staff.

Price surges coming to more health services

KUWAIT: Official sources said the health ministry is going ahead with increasing other medical services' fees for residents following its decision to impose additional charges on blood bags for non-Kuwaitis who are residents or visitors.

The sources said the health ministry was hoping to limit its services to Kuwaitis only during this year, but Daman Health Insurance company needs more time to start full service, so health ministry will increase fees to be somewhat close to prices in the private sector.

The sources said the next step will be increasing fees at the maternity hospital, x-rays, in addition to selling medicine and not just paying KD 5 fees at the health center to dispense the doctor's prescription.

They said the current dispensing of medicine has some squandering despite the latest fees as the patient is receiving more medicine than he needs as some doctors want to help some patients and this will be faced by selling medicine and not just by charging a fee, but that in addition to instructing pharmacies to dispense just one box of medicine even if the prescription has more on it.

The sources said the health ministry will not make its fees similar to the private sector but the fees will be increased to be suitable with the international increases in medical services, that in addition to start banning some services for expatriates due to its cost and will be limited to Kuwaitis only and will not wait for Daman's full operations.

NBK 'Bankee' program promotes financial literacy

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues its ongoing follow-up of the pilot phase of "Bankee" financial literacy program for government and private school students, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority "Nazaha". In this context, the bank organized a visit to The Universal American School (UAS) in Hawally, as part of the executive management's tour to follow up on the program's implementation.

The visitors included Sulaiman Al-Marzouq, Deputy CEO of NBK - Kuwait, Athraa Al-Arrak, Senior Supervisor, Private Education at Ministry of Education, Yasmine Al-Sharhan, Observer of Cooperation with Civil Society Organizations at "Nazaha", Norah Al-Ghanim, Owner and Director of UAS, and Sumayah Al-Jasem, Founder, Managing Director at Creative Confidence.

During the tour, the visitors reviewed all the details of implementing the "Bankee" program, including the virtual bank experience that allows students to have a financial account in which they can trade using the "Bankee" virtual currency, and how students receive bonuses as a result of accumulating the program's currency in their accounts. They also visited the classrooms to witness how the program has become part of students' daily lives.

Additionally, they engaged in discussions with teachers and students and listened to various ideas and opinions aiming to enrich the program, as well as all the details of the program's day-to-day implementation in the school.

On the sidelines of the visit, Sulaiman Al-Marzouq said: "Through our follow-up visits to the schools participating in the Bankee program, we witnessed the great success of the program's pilot phase and the high engagement from all stakeholders including students, families, teachers and the program's superintendents. We also felt how the programs positively reflects on the students' behavior and understanding of core financial concepts and practices."

"We focus on aligning NBK's leading CSR's contributions with the government's and the Central Bank of Kuwait's strides to promote financial literacy and increase financial inclusion, recognizing how crucial is spreading financial culture in achieving comprehensive and sustainable development," Marzouq added.

"Bankee combines two key pillars in our strategy to achieve sustainable development. On one hand, it aims to promote financial literacy and support the endeavors to achieve financial inclusion, whereas on the other hand, it serves the endeavors to develop education. We are confident that the program will advance these endeavors in a significant and effective manner moving forward," he explained.

Marzouq mentioned that the program serves as an exemplary for private sector's delivering on its CSR's commitments, and also reflects how the concerted efforts of the private sector, government and civil society contribute to the success of such key initiatives.

"Bankee's substantial success according to all indica-

tors proves that the program will be a milestone in NBK's rich CSR record, as well as in the endeavors to promote financial inclusion and financial literacy in Kuwait, as it introduces a new, integrated vision to advance these endeavors," he noted.

"NBK firmly believes that the human capital is crucial for achieving sustainable future growth. Accordingly, it greatly focuses on supporting all initiatives aiming to up-skill and develop young Kuwaiti people, whose response always exceeds the expectations," he concluded.

The "Bankee" program was introduced in selected Kuwaiti schools by NBK in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, and Kuwait Anticorruption Authority (Nazaha). The program's goal is to enhance financial literacy among students by teaching them financial literacy through practical and engaging experiential methods.

The program is the first-of-its-kind in Kuwait to be introduced by NBK to explore innovative solutions to promote financial inclusion and sustainable financial literacy among society members, especially school students. The program's primary goal is to teach students core financial concepts such as earning, spending, saving, and financial responsibilities. This goal is achieved by employing applied learning and gamification techniques to simulate a real-world economy within the classroom.

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

KFF to use Flyboard in some fire accidents

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) announced on Sunday that it will start using the Flyboard in some fire accidents that take place in narrow places. In a press release, KFF said that it had conducted several trials on the Flyboard in the presence of the KFF Chief Lt-Gen Khaled Al-Mekrad. It added that this experiment seeks to improve the quality

of KFF services and equipment. Several high-ranked members of the KFF have attended the trials, it noted.

In other news, the public relations and media department at the KFF has received a report to the central command administration on Sunday which reported that workers have been trapped by a scaffold on duty. "The search and rescue department went to the site of the incident. Upon the team's arrival, it was found that the building consisted of eight floors and there were two workers trapped by the scaffold while they were doing the external cleaning of the building between the fifth and sixth floors," the KFF announced. — Agencies



KUWAIT: A member of the Kuwait Fire Force practices using the Flyboard. — KUNA



The fire force's rescue and search department helps two workers trapped while cleaning a building.

Local

TIMSS assessment a global indicator of education level

Kuwait historically among lowest scorers despite improvement

By Khaled Al-Abdullahi

KUWAIT: Hundreds of grade 8 and grade 4 students across Kuwait took the TIMSS mathematics and science assessments to measure their performance in the two subjects. The tests, which were conducted by the National Center for Education Development in cooperation with the education ministry, were held in several schools across the country last week, as part of an international study that aims at evaluating the educational level of students in the country.

The 2023 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study is one of the best studies done in Kuwait for this purpose so far, because it evaluates eighth grade students who were included in the same study when they were in the fourth grade during the COVID-19 crisis. Students from 300 schools across the country took the test. "We will see the extent of the impact of the crisis on these students," said Nasser Al-Mutairi, a member of the media committee at the National Center for Education Development.

Conducted every four years since 1995, TIMSS measures how effective countries are in teaching mathematics and science. It's administered by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), headquartered in the Netherlands. Kuwait was one of the first Arab countries to hold this assessment, in 1995.

Low 2019 scores

The 2019 TIMSS exams were held in over 50 countries and jurisdictions from all continents and tested students of both grades in both subjects and graded them based on their average scale scores. In 2019, Kuwait scored among the lowest grades in the two subjects. The top five scorers for grade 4 mathematics were: Singapore (625), Hong Kong (602), South Korea (600), Taiwan (599) and Japan (593). The coun-

tries topped the list with minor differences. Morocco (383), Kuwait (383), South Africa (374), Pakistan (328) and the Philippines (297) came last on the list.

As for the grade 8 mathematics exams, Singapore (616), Taiwan (612), South Korea (607), Japan (594) and Hong Kong (578) scored the highest. Oman (411), Kuwait (403), Saudi Arabia (394), South Africa (389) and Morocco (388) came last.

Singapore (595) was the top scorer once again in the grade 4 science category, closely followed by South Korea (588), Russia (567), Japan (562) and Taiwan (558). The lowest countries were Kuwait, Morocco, South Africa and the Philippines.

For eighth graders in the science exams, again Singapore, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and Russia topped the list, while Kuwait with 444 points just missed the bottom five countries, placing before Saudi Arabia (431), Morocco (394), Egypt (389), Lebanon (377) and South Africa (370).

Improving education

The issue of education has been a public matter for years. According to the official document database of the National Assembly, there have been 1,470 MPs' questions addressed to the education minister from Aug 15, 2013 till date, many of which concern the quality of education in the country.

Principal of Abdellatif Al-Shamlan Intermediate School for Boys Bader Al-Shammari said more students participated in this year's test compared to 2019, with 27 students from his school taking part. "The future benefit of the study is to measure quality standards in education in Kuwait," he said. The General Director of the National Center for Education Development Amina Al-Jaber said the outcomes of the evaluation will be studied and used to develop education in Kuwait.

According to the ministry of finance, the budget allocated for the ministry's expenditure was KD



KUWAIT: Parents are seen taking their children to school in this file photo. - KUNA

1.843 billion in 2014/15, KD 1.673 billion in 2015/16, KD 1.726 billion in 2016/17, KD 1.864 billion in 2017/18, KD 2.070 billion in 2018/19 and KD 2.136 billion in the 2019/20 fiscal years. The numbers show the education budget has increased over the years.

The big spending seems to have reflected positively on Kuwait's scores in the TIMSS exams. When comparing 2015 to 2019 numbers, Kuwait is one of the participants with the most drastic

improvements across all categories. The results of the 2023 exams won't be out soon, but it is important to track the results of this year's exam in order to understand where we stand, how we compare with countries of the world, and how to improve our standings at the global level. Education is an important element in the future of any country, as countries that fall back in education almost always end up losing their global rankings.



KUWAIT: Canadian Ambassador to Kuwait Aliya Mawani meets with KRCS' delegates. — KUNA photos



Canadian Ambassador to Kuwait Aliya Mawani

Canadian envoy commends Kuwait's humanitarian role

KUWAIT: Canadian Ambassador to Kuwait Aliya Mawani extolled on Sunday the humanitarian and relief role of Kuwait in helping disaster-affected peo-

ple around the world. Speaking to KUNA, Mawani said, after her meeting with the KRCS Chairman Dr Hilal Al-Sayer, that KRCS contributed to highlighting the civilized aspect of Kuwait, the government and people, and has become known in helping in the humanitarian field, thanking Kuwait's speed in providing support to those in need.

She discussed with Sayer multiple issues in connection to humanitarian and voluntary work and ways to enhance them between both sides, appreciating KRCS' efforts to help the afflicted countries.

During the meeting, Mawani was briefed on the humanitarian programs implemented by KRCS internationally and locally, and its great role in supporting countries, she noted. In a similar statement to KUNA, Sayer welcomed Mawani's visit to the KRCS headquarters, stressing KRCS' keenness to participate in Kuwait's humanitarian efforts. The meeting mentioned the help provided by KRCS to affected people, as well as its most vital humanitarian actions and movements to provide relief and assistance to the affected areas, Sayer stated. — KUNA

News in Brief

34,837 traffic violations recorded

KUWAIT: The traffic department at the interior ministry recorded 34,837 violations during the period between April 29 until May 5. The ministry issued 41 residency permit violations during the same period, according to the public relations and media department at the interior ministry. "As part of the efforts of the sectors of the Ministry of the Interior to control violators and outlaws, the General Traffic Department issued a weekly statistic of its efforts, which included referring 85 people to the traffic department, referring 80 juveniles to the Juvenile Prosecution, and seizing 25 wanted vehicles during the period," the interior ministry announced. Moreover, 34 cars and 178 motorcycles were towed. The ministry arrested 19 wanted people, towed 25 warranted cars and recorded three seizures and one environmental violation.



KHARTOUM: Sudanese Army soldiers walk near armored vehicles stationed on a street in southern Khartoum, on May 6, 2023, amid ongoing fighting against the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. — AFP



KHARTOUM: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) delegates are seen standing in front of the fourth aid aircraft sent by Kuwait. — KUNA

Kuwait sends more aid to crisis-hit Sudan

KUWAIT: The State of Kuwait on Sunday dispatched its fourth Air Force plane carrying 10 tons of food supplies to violence-hit Sudan. The aid aircraft is part of the recently announced airlift aiming at helping the Sudanese people amid their country's tough circumstances due to ongoing fighting there, Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Emergency Chief Yusuf Al-Mearaj told KUNA. Variation in Kuwait's relief and humanitarian aid is primarily meant to answer the basic needs of the Sudanese people, he said, elaborating that the country's humanitarian airlift is continuing as per blueprints and programs jointly worked out by the KRCS and

the ministries of foreign affairs, defense, health and finance. The fresh aid is part of Kuwait's humanitarian initiative: "Kuwait is by Your Side", which comes in the context of Kuwaiti-Sudanese relations and reflects the Kuwaiti humanitarian role in offering relief aid to the needy and affected people, he noted. The Kuwaiti cabinet had decided to dispatch urgent relief and medical aid to Sudan at the behest of the country's political leadership.

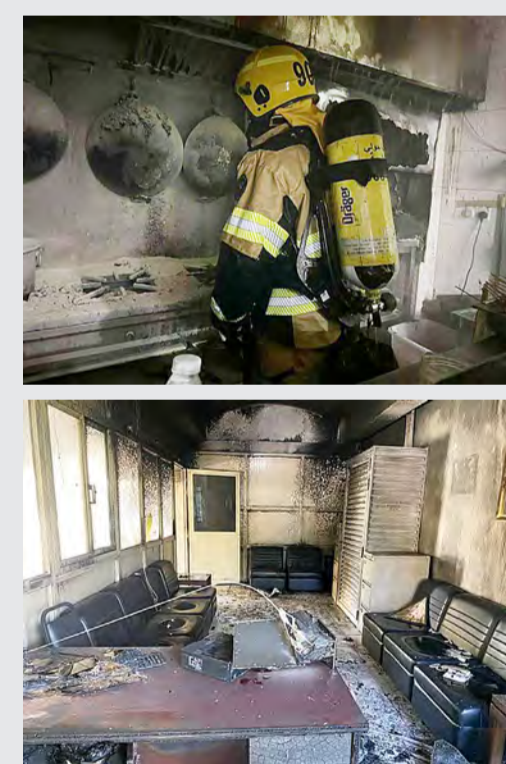
Multiple truce deals have been declared and quickly violated since fighting erupted between army and paramilitary forces on April 15 in the poverty-stricken country with a history of political instability. Fierce combat since then has killed at least 700 people, most of them civilians, wounded thousands and driven a mass of exodus of Sudanese and foreign nationals.

Envoys from Sudan's warring military factions — the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces — were reportedly in Jeddah for talks on Saturday, Saudi Arabia's foreign minister told

media, as international mediators pressed for an end to the three-week old conflict.

The US-Saudi initiative is the first serious attempt to end fighting that has turned parts of the Sudanese capital Khartoum into war zones and derailed an internationally backed plan to usher in civilian rule following years of unrest and uprisings. Riyadh and Washington earlier welcomed the "pre-negotiation talks" between the army and the RSF, and urged them to actively engage following numerous violated ceasefires.

Kuwait welcomed on Sunday the Saudi-US initiative to start the talks, said Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In a press statement, the ministry praised Saudi-US efforts for urging Sudanese parties to seriously get engaged in talks and dialogue in a bid to de-escalate tensions and halt military operations. The ministry reaffirmed Kuwait's stand based on calling for an immediate cessation of escalation and fighting in order to maintain Sudan's security and stability. — Agencies



Fires in Salmiya Mall, Rabiya school

KUWAIT: The public relations and media department at the Kuwait Fire Force announced that they received a report regarding a fire in a mall in Salmiya. "The Central Operations Department directed the Salmiya and Al-Bida fire stations to the location of the fire. Upon the arrival of the teams, it was found that the fire was in the kitchen of a restaurant in the basement of the complex. The fire was immediately extinguished and no injuries were reported," the KFF announced. Also, on Saturday, a report was received from the Central Operations Department, stating a fire at a school in Rabiya. The public relations and media department at the Kuwait Fire Force announced: "The firefighting teams were directed from Ardhiya and Farwaniya centers to the site of the incident. When the teams arrived, it was found that there was a fire in the air conditioning unit, which was contained without any injuries."

News in Brief

Court delays 'Interior hospitality' verdict

KUWAIT: The cassation court adjourned the final ruling of the "Interior Hospitality" case to June 18, it decided Sunday. Sunday's session was attended by all released and imprisoned defendants whose lawyers demanded that they be acquitted. Following the final verdict, the case will be closed after nearly 1,550 days have passed since the interior ministry referred the case to the Public Prosecution. The Court of Appeal had sentenced the first defendant, Adel Al-Hashash, to 15 years in prison, instead of 30 years, and fined him KD 113 million. It also ruled to cancel the 10-year imprisonment sentence against the defendants and sentenced them to two years' imprisonment with a stay of enforcement. The court decided to imprison Sheikh Ahmed Al-Khalifa for a period of two years with a bail of KD 20,000 to stop the enforcement. The ruling upheld previous convictions against other cases.

Fahaheel road development on hold

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Roads and Land Transport requested the withdrawal of the Fahaheel Expressway Development study from the Municipal Council. The request came in a letter directed by the Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Roads and Land Transport Rajaa Al-Moumen to the speaker of the Municipal Council Abdullah Al-Mehri. It urged the council to return the project to the authority to complete the study. The authority said the measure comes within the framework of the government's plan to "rationalize spending." The Fahaheel Expressway project, which was passed by the council last March, aims to build a road at a distance of 36 km from the capital to Al-Sabahiya. The project will include 22 multi-storey intersections and is estimated to cost KD 1.3 billion.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A bird is seen flying in front of the full moon on Friday, May 5, 2023. The photo was taken during the peak of the penumbral lunar eclipse, which occurs when the earth's outer shadow falls on the moon's face. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait to survey heart attack patients to improve services

Study first-of-its-kind in Gulf region: Heart foundation

KUWAIT: Scientific Research Ethics Committee at the health ministry approved a study, that Kuwait Heart Foundation (KHF) presented, which aims at conducting a field survey of all acute heart attack patients admitted to hospitals in six months. The study is named "Kuwait Heart Foundation Study of acute heart attacks syndrome" referred to as "KHF RACE".

KHF met with health ministry undersecretary Dr Mustafa Redha and briefed him in detail about the goal behind the study and its importance to Kuwait. The society said that it is trying hard to achieve Kuwait 2035 developmental vision and lauded health

ministry's response to its request to conduct field surveys in its hospitals. It said health ministry made notable advances at both health and administrative levels and thanked the undersecretary for his distinguished role in such positive developments.

KHF board member, cardiology professor at Kuwait University Dr Mohammad Zubaid said the expected number of patients to be included in the study is 4,000. He said the study will be carried out in Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Adan, Amiri, Sabah, Jahra, Farwaniya, Chest and Jaber Hospitals, and all heads of cardiology departments at the said hospitals will

participate in this field research.

He said this is the first-of-its-kind study in Kuwait and at the Gulf level as far as it includes all Kuwait hospitals and all heart attack cases which gives it an element of strength scientifically. He said the study's importance comes from including Kuwaitis and residents and the ministry will provide doctors with valuable information about the extent of success of treatment given to patients and the doctors' compliance with treating patients with the most modern means of treatment and the influence of that on the health and recovery of patients.

Sabah Al-Ahmad Center sponsors 8 youth innovators

KUWAIT: The Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC) of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) announced the support of eight Kuwaiti youth innovators and technological projects to present Kuwaiti technological projects and ideas at the GITEX Africa Technical Exhibition, which will start at the end of May 2023 in Marrakech, Kingdom of Morocco.

Neda Al-Daihani, Director of the Center said: "The center provides the opportunity for young people to meet the leaders of change in the world of technology in one of the largest startup events in the world, which is the GITEX Africa Technology Exhibition in the Kingdom of Morocco. The exhibition is an important window to highlight their capabilities in order to progress and develop in the field."

"GITEX Africa is one of the largest technology events in the continent, which is a meeting place for technology giants, governments, small, emerging and medium companies, programmers, investors and academics to cooperate in order to accelerate and explore new projects, in addition to exploring creative ideas," he added.

Daihani added that the center will open the door for applications for Kuwaiti youth wishing to present their ideas and technological projects at the exhibition, as registration is available for the age group from 21 to 35 years, during the period from May 7 to May 13, 2023.

Kuwait, UAE launch joint parking service for disabled

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Disability Affairs announced that, within the framework of cooperation between Kuwait and the UAE in the Zayed Higher Organization for People of Determination, preparations have been made to launch a parking service for people with disabilities.

The service, which will be shared between the two countries, will be officially unveiled on Monday with the aim of facilitating the movement of people with disabilities and improving the quality of their daily lives.

The service provides parking lots for people with disabilities anywhere in the two countries, including parking lots for government buildings, public facil-



Hamad Al-Aftan, Acting Innovation Department Manager at SACGC, (left) and Neda Al-Daihani Director of the center speak to media.

"The center will display the projects and study them. After that, the projects participating in the exhibition will be selected and nominated on May 20, 2023." The center's follow-up and support for innovative and creative Kuwaiti youth reflects its continuous commitment to promoting innovation and technological progress in Kuwait, especially for those with promising technological ideas.

The main objective of the center is to discover and select individuals with high potential and develop their talents, with the aim of helping them achieve their full goals in the world of technology, where interactive opportunities for cooperation and scientific exchange are provided between aspiring entrepreneurs and innovators.

The center continues its efforts to support and empower Kuwaiti youth, especially those with technological ideas to be an effective element in promoting development and innovation in the field of technology.

ities, commercial centers, hospitals and airports. It also contributes to saving a lot of their time and effort in searching for suitable parking spaces, the public authority for disability affairs announced.

The service will be launched in the presence of the UAE Ambassador to the Kuwait Matar Al-Niyadi and Director of the Public Authority for People with Disabilities Dr Bibi Al-Amiri.

The authority also indicated that work will be done to establish a website to improve the services provided to these groups, through which requests to issue temporary parking permits for people with disabilities in the two countries will be received.

"There will be a special portal for each country to receive and approve applications," the authority said, stressing that the launch of the service comes within a comprehensive plan of cooperation between the two countries to provide several services that support the integration of people with disabilities into society, facilitate their daily lives and contribute to the development of their services.



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Tokyo, Seoul try to bury hatchet, hailing 'new future' for ties

Let down by Erdogan, Kurds cautiously back secular rival

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23,000 flee violence in northeast India

Fleeing tribal families recount horror after Manipur carnage



IMPHAL, India: This picture taken on May 4, 2023, shows vehicles allegedly burned by the Meitei community tribals protesting to demand inclusion under the Scheduled Tribe category, in Imphal, the capital of India's Manipur state. —AFP

IMPHAL: Some 23,000 people have fled ethnic violence in northeast India that has reportedly killed at least 54, the army said Sunday, although there was no new "major violence" overnight. The unrest in Manipur state erupted after a protest march by a tribal group last week sparked clashes, with vehicles and houses set on fire and authorities firing tear gas.

The military has deployed thousands of troops to the state bordering Myanmar, issued "shoot-at-sight" orders in "extreme cases", imposed curfews and cut the internet. The army said on Sunday no major flare-ups were reported overnight and that a curfew was lifted between 7-10 am in Churachandpur district, one of the main flashpoint areas. "Past 24

hrs also witnessed Army significantly enhancing surveillance efforts through aerial surveillance, movement of UAV's & redeployment of Army Helicopters within Imphal Valley," it said, referring to unmanned aerial vehicles or drones.

"Total 23,000 civilians have been rescued till now & were moved to own operating bases/ military Garrisons," the statement said. Authorities have not given an official death toll but hospital morgues in the state capital Imphal and Churachandpur had reported a combined total of 54 dead, according to local media.

Tribal groups including the Kukis are unhappy about the prospect of the state's majority Meitei community being recognized under a "Scheduled Tribe" category. This designation would give them

a certain quota of government jobs and college admissions in a form of affirmative action aimed at addressing structural inequality and discrimination.

L Sanglun Simte, 29, a Kuki who has been camping outside the airport in state capital Imphal with 11 of his family members since Saturday, recounted the horror as violence broke out. "We fled for safety. Things are not okay. They are just attacking us Kukis," he told AFP.

Simte said his 49-year-old cousin, Siemcha Gangete, was killed by a mob on Thursday and his house was set on fire. "The attackers say we are outsiders and need to leave Imphal. When they attacked us, the local police didn't help." Simte, who has booked a flight for Agartala, the capital

of neighboring Tripura state, said he would return only if security improved.

"We don't feel safe right now," he said. Lalpu Suan-tak, 45, who works with a state-owned bank in Imphal and is also from the Kuki community, said he fled his house with 12 family members after some homes and a neighborhood church were set on fire. "My house hasn't been touched yet but there was fear when a mob burnt one house in our area," he told AFP. India's northeast has seen decades of unrest among ethnic and separatist groups seeking more autonomy or even secession from India, with at least 50,000 people killed in Manipur since the 1950s. These conflicts had waned over the years, with many groups striking deals with New Delhi for more powers. — AFP

Sudan maternity hospital fights to save lives under fire

KHARTOUM: When a maternity hospital in the Sudanese capital came under bombardment, Esraa Hesbalrasoul snatched her premature twins from an incubator and rushed out in a panic. In the chaos, only one of the infants survived.

Hesbalrasoul now tends to her baby in a small hospital in the capital's twin city of Omdurman that for weeks has struggled to weather the near-cessant fighting.

Numerous medical facilities have been shelled in the fighting that broke out on April 15 between rival generals and the forces they command. The battles have left only 16 percent of hospitals in Khartoum fully functional, according to the United Nations, putting countless lives at risk.

But the small Al-Nada hospital in Khartoum's twin city of Omdurman remains a lifesaver, keeping its doors open to offer vital health care despite the mounting odds. When strikes shook the ground on April 20 around the facility initially caring for the twins, "we were told we had to evacuate everyone right away", Hesbalrasoul told AFP.

"There were no ambulances available so we had to transport our babies as best we could," she said. "But one of them died because of the lack of oxygen." Her tragedy is hardly an isolated one.

The UN estimates that there are "219,000 pregnant women in Khartoum, including 24,000 women expected to give birth in the coming weeks". Al-Nada is one of the rare facilities they can turn to.

Its director, Mohammed Fattah Al-Rahman, in particular credits a generous donation from the Sudanese American Physicians Association (SAPA-USA), which has allowed it to keep running.



OUMDOURMAN, Sudan: This image grab taken from AFP video footage shot on May 4, 2023, shows infants at a maternity hospital in Omdurman, the Sudanese capital's twin city. — AFP

With this money, "we have been able to deliver 500 births, naturally and through caesarian sections, and to admit 80 children", he told AFP, surrounded by premature babies in incubators. But the war is never far from the dimly-lit facility. Sounds of gunfire and blasts can often be heard echoing in the distance.

There is no air conditioning, only overhead fans that attempt to relieve the heat which often reaches up to 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) even before the blazing peak of summer. As the war rages, killing hundreds and injuring thousands so far, much of Sudan's meager medical resources have been diverted to tending the war-wounded with urgent care. "There have been no obstetrics or pediatric services since the beginning of the conflict," Rahman says.

That meant that Sudanese couple Fatima and her husband Jaber could find no facilities to treat their young son for meningitis, until they arrived at

Al-Nada, which offers pediatric care as well as maternity facilities.

Even before the war broke out, mothers and children faced grave dangers in Sudan, one of the world's poorest countries. Almost three out of every thousand women die in childbirth in Sudan, eight times higher than the figure in neighboring Egypt, according to the UN children's fund, UNICEF.

It says 56 out of every 1,000 Sudanese children die before reaching the age of five. Last year, the UN estimated that one in three Sudanese needed to walk more than an hour to get medical care. Today, the small team that keeps the Al-Nada hospital going fears conditions will soon force them to stop their essential work. "Our stocks of medicines are starting to dwindle," said Alaa Ahmed, a pharmacist at the hospital. "If it goes on like this, everything will collapse." — AFP

a government security adviser, was handed down by a Baghdad criminal court and can be appealed, the judiciary said. A well-respected academic and expert on jihadist groups, Hashemi was shot dead outside his Baghdad home in July 2020 by gunmen on motorcycles. A year later, state television aired the alleged confession of the mastermind of the assault who was then identified by his full name Ahmed Hamdawi Oueid Al-Kenani.

Then a police lieutenant aged 36, he said he shot Hashemi with a pistol. At the time a security source told AFP that the suspect was linked to the powerful pro-Iran Kataeb Hezbollah, which Hashemi had criticised in his writings and media commentary. On Sunday, Iraq's Supreme Judicial Council said in

a statement that "a death sentence has been issued against the criminal Ahmed Hamdawi Oueid for the murder of security expert Hisham Al-Hashemi".

Hashemi's murder sparked outrage across Iraq and was denounced by several Western countries as well as the United Nations. Hashemi had thrown his support behind popular protests that had broken out in Iraq a year before his death against the government, which was seen by many as inept, corrupt and too close to Iran. More than 600 people were killed and thousands wounded in the protests that had erupted in October 2019 and a crackdown on the demonstrations. In the aftermath of the protests, a spate of killings, attempted murders and abductions targeted dozens of activists in Iraq. — AFP

Iraq court sentences to death killer of academic Hashemi

BAGHDAD: An Iraqi court on Sunday sentenced to death a former policeman convicted of killing prominent academic Hisham Al-Hashemi, whose murder in 2020 sparked condemnation in Iraq and abroad.

The sentence against Ahmed Hamdawi Oueid for killing Hashemi, an expert on Sunni extremism and

UK anti-monarchy leader freed after coronation arrest

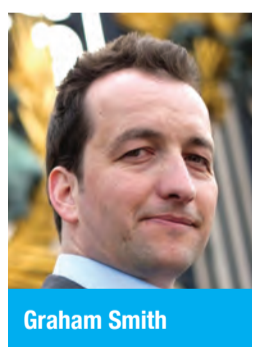
LONDON: The head of an anti-monarchy group who was arrested before a protest at King Charles III's coronation has been released from police custody, the group said. Republic, which wants an elected head of state, said late on Saturday that its chief executive Graham Smith was released, some 16 hours after he was first detained.

He was one of more than 50 people held using new powers rushed into law this week by the UK government to crack down on protests by direct action groups.

London's Metropolitan Police has been criticized for making the arrests, which included volunteers of a local women's safety team that the force supports. Last month, the Daily Mail newspaper claimed that protesters were planning to throw rape alarms to spook horses taking part in the parade, which included military bands. The newspaper also said climate change activists from the Just Stop Oil group were planning to disrupt the event.

Just Stop Oil members were among those picked up on Saturday. Republic's Smith, who last week told reporters he and other members had no plans to disrupt the procession. The protest went ahead, with opponents waving "Not My King" placards and booing. "Make no mistake. There is no longer a right to peaceful protest in the UK," Smith tweeted. "I have been told many times the monarch is there to defend our freedoms. Now our freedoms are under attack in his name."

Human rights groups likened the arrests to those in authoritarian states but police defended their tactics, claiming it was "proportionate... in line with relevant legislation" after public concern. London has been repeatedly targeted in recent years by direct action groups. Hard-line interior minister Suella Braverman promised police more powers to stop protesters using "guerrilla tactics". — AFP



Graham Smith

International

Tokyo and Seoul try to bury historical hatchet, hailing 'new future' for ties

Kishida, first Japanese leader to visit South Korea in a decade

SEOUL: Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Sunday his "heart aches" for Koreans who suffered under colonialism, as Seoul and Tokyo seek a rapid reset of long-strained ties in the face of North Korean threats. Kishida was in Seoul on the first official bilateral visit by a Japanese leader to South Korea in over a decade. He met President Yoon Suk Yeol, who has made improving testy relations with Japan a top priority for his administration.

The East Asian neighbors, both crucial security allies of the United States, have long been at odds over historic issues linked to Japan's brutal 1910 to 1945 colonial occupation of the Korean peninsula, including sexual slavery and forced labor. "My heart aches as many people went through a very difficult and sad experience in the harsh environment at that time," Kishida said, speaking after the summit with Yoon.

Yoon said Kishida's visit showed "shuttle diplomacy"—regular mutual visits and high-level talks—was back on track, after a lengthy pause during a bitter trade spat linked to the forced labor issue.

"Based on the friendship and trust I have with Prime Minister Kishida, I will promote deeper bilateral cooperation toward a new future," said Yoon, who was in Tokyo in March for a fence-mending visit. Bilateral ties were torpedoed in 2018, when South Korea's Supreme Court ordered Japanese firms to compensate the wartime victims of forced labor, enraging Tokyo and triggering an escalating series of tit-for-tat economic measures. But Yoon, who took office last year, has sought to bury the historical hatchet, earlier announcing a plan to compensate victims without direct involvement from Tokyo—a move that was unpopular domestically, but helped improve ties with Japan.



SEOUL: South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol (right) and his wife Kim Keon-hee (second right) receive Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (second left) and his wife Yuko Kishida (left) during a welcoming ceremony at the presidential office in Seoul on May 7, 2023. — AFP

"As the South Korean government moves forward... I am touched to see how so many people are opening their hearts to the future while not forgetting the hardships of the past," Kishida said Sunday.

'Expression of sincerity'

Experts had widely predicted Tokyo would not offer a new apology, and Kishida stopped short of this, instead reaffirming the "heartfelt apology" made by previous administrations in Tokyo. "There are parts of Kishida's statement that definitely fall short of our expectations," Choi Eunmi, a researcher at the Asan In-

stitute for Policy Studies, told YTN. "But even though he said it was his personal feeling, I would like to note his expression of sincerity. And I think this is meaningful as we are just taking our first step in restoring shuttle diplomacy."

During their March summit, Kishida and Yoon agreed to end tit-for-tat trade curbs, with Kishida inviting the South Korean leader to a G7 meeting in Hiroshima this month. For Yoon, it is long overdue that the two countries "end the vicious cycle of mutual hostility and work together" to improve regional security, he told AFP in March before he flew to Tokyo.

'Grave threat'

Efforts to mend ties come as North Korean 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 defense cooperation, staging a series of major military exercises including two trilateral drills involving Japan this year.

"Prime Minister Kishida and I shared the recognition that North Korea's nuclear and missile development poses a grave threat to peace and stability not only on the Korean Peninsula and Japan, but also throughout the world," Yoon said Sunday. The two leaders agreed to hold a trilateral meeting with the United States on the sidelines of the upcoming G7 summit.

Yoon recently returned from a state visit to Washington, where he and US President Joe Biden agreed to boost the United States' nuclear defense of South Korea and improve cooperation with Japan.

"Further North Korean provocations and weapons developments are expected soon, so it is important for US allies to stay a step ahead of Pyongyang," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul. "They can do so by better coordinating sanctions enforcement, intelligence sharing, missile defense exercises, and anti-submarine drills. Progress on such trilateral cooperation is likely to be highlighted by a Biden-Yoon-Kishida meeting on the sidelines of the G7 summit in Hiroshima later this month." — AFP

Thais queue at temples, schools as early voting begins

BANGKOK: Thais queued under the blistering sun outside temples, shopping centers and schools to cast their early ballots Sunday ahead of a much-anticipated election next week.

More than two million Thais nationwide are registered to vote early ahead of the kingdom's May 14 election, which is shaping up to be a clash between army-backed establishment parties and resurgent opposition movements. Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, who took power in a 2014 coup before cementing control in a controversial 2019 election, has been languishing in opinion polls with voters favoring old-school opposition party Pheu Thai and the more radical Move Forward Party.

But with an electoral system heavily stacked in favor of the army-backed parties, challengers must achieve a landslide victory to have any hope of forming the next government.

"I hope this election will change the country in a better way," said shopping mall worker Srisuda Wongsa-ad, 28, after casting her ballot. She was among hundreds queuing quietly at a polling station in Bangkok's fashionable Ekkamai district to vote at the Wat That Thong temple, overlooked by golden standing buddhas. "I am voting for a candidate and party that I like, that can answer my needs," she said, adding that she was voting early as it was more convenient for her.

Elsewhere in the capital, the Royal Paragon Hall shopping centre was packed with voters, albeit cooler ones, enjoying the complex's air conditioning. Despite the early hour, temperatures across the capital—which like much of Thailand endured a vicious April heatwave—were soaring and expected to hit 39 degrees Celsius later Sunday. Shortly before midday outside one of Bangkok's largest poll sites at Ramkhamhaeng University, machines sprayed a fine mist of water over orderly queues as the day's heat rose. But crowds were still out in force, with traffic and congestion around busy polling stations.

"I am quite excited," said first-time voter Pasawee Sriarunothai, 20, who will not be in Bangkok on May 14. "I decide to cast my vote based on the party's policies, and I hope this election will bring the country a better future," Pasawee said.—AFP



BANGKOK: Voters queue to cast their ballot during advance voting at a polling station outside Wat That Thong Buddhist temple in Bangkok on May 7, 2023, a week ahead of the May 14 general election. — AFP



JAKARTA: This handout picture taken and released on April 29, 2023 by the Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) shows army tactical vehicles and troops to be transported by warships from a naval port in Jakarta to Labuan Bajo where the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit will be held in May. — AFP

Myanmar crisis to dominate ASEAN leaders summit

SINGAPORE: The festering crisis in Myanmar will loom over talks between Southeast Asian leaders in Indonesia this week, as they renew calls for an end to the escalating violence. Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military putsch that ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's government in February 2021, with the junta's bloody crackdown on dissent sparking social unrest and an economic disaster.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) — long decried by critics as a toothless talking shop—has been trying to kick-start a five-point plan agreed with Myanmar two years ago after mediation attempts to end violence failed. But its efforts have stalled as the junta ignores international criticism and refuses to engage with its opponents, which include ousted lawmakers, anti-coup "People's Defence Forces" and ethnic minority armed groups. An air strike on a village in a rebel stronghold last month that reportedly killed dozens of people sparked global condemnation and worsened the junta's isolation.

Diplomats told AFP that the crisis would be a key issue during the May 9-11 summit on the Indonesian island of Flores. The 10-member regional bloc will again "strongly condemn" the air strike and demand an immediate end to the violence in its end-of-summit statement to be issued by this year's chair Indonesia, according to a draft seen by AFP.

"This would be the only way to create a conducive environment for an inclusive national dialogue to find a sustainable peaceful solution in Myanmar," the draft statement said. Myanmar remains an ASEAN member but has been barred from top-level summits over the junta's failure to implement the peace plan.

Vietnam reports record-high temperature

HANOI: Vietnam has reported a record-high temperature, with climate experts warning such extreme weather events would continue. The country's scientists have warned that global warming is exacerbating adverse weather, with the region sweltering under a heatwave in April—when neighboring countries also registered record temperatures.

A temperature of 44.1 degrees Celsius (111.38 degrees Fahrenheit) was measured in Vietnam Saturday, the National Centre for Hydro Meteorological Forecasting said, breaking the 2019 record of 43.4 degrees Celsius. Farmer Nguyen Thi Lan told AFP that temperatures in the central city of Danang had been increasingly hot, forcing workers to start earlier than ever.

'Quiet diplomacy'

Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi said Friday that her country was using "quiet diplomacy" to speak with all sides of the Myanmar conflict and spur renewed peace efforts. But former Indonesian foreign minister Marty Natalegawa said the worsening crisis posed an "existential threat" to ASEAN.

He urged the bloc to do more or risk being sidelined as other nations, such as China and individual member countries of ASEAN, take the lead in trying to resolve the situation. Natalegawa said ASEAN should "openly invite" the National Unity Government (NUG) — a shadow administration dominated by lawmakers from Suu Kyi's party which is working to overturn the coup—to their meetings to make the junta "feel the consequence of their intransigence". "We are led to believe that there is some quiet diplomacy going on, but it can't be too quiet that it becomes a deafening silence," Natalegawa told AFP.

But Singapore Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan has urged caution and "strategic patience".

"We need to make sure the actions we take collectively and individually do not make the situation worse and do not allow or encourage or enable the military to shed more blood for their own narrow parochial interests," Balakrishnan said in Australia last week. This week's ASEAN leaders summit is the first of two to be held in Indonesia this year. Jakarta's chairmanship of the bloc has raised hopes ASEAN could push for a peaceful solution, using its economic weight as well as its diplomatic experience.

ASEAN has long been criticized for its inaction but its initiatives are limited by its charter principles of consensus and non-interference. Among other issues to be discussed at the summit will be the disputed South China Sea. Several ASEAN members have partial claims to the waterway, which China claims almost entirely. Indonesian President Joko Widodo is also expected to outline a roadmap for East Timor's membership in the bloc. — AFP

"We have had to finish before 10:00 am to avoid the heat," she said. Lan said forecasters said temperatures had risen to nearly 40 degrees Celsius. "But at lunchtime, I think it was much hotter." Vietnam's weather varies from north to south, but the entire country is now entering its hottest summer months. The record temperature was measured indoors at Hoi Xuan station in northern Thanh Hoa province. It topped the previous high of 43.4 degrees Celsius, recorded in April 2019 at Huong Khe District in central Ha Tinh Province. "This is a worrying record in the context of climate change and global warming," climate change expert Nguyen Ngoc Huy told AFP from the capital Hanoi.

"I believe this record will be repeated many times," he said. "It confirms that extreme climate models are being proven to be true." Across the country, weather experts and authorities had warned the population to remain indoors during the hottest parts of the day.

Danang has asked Vietnam's industry and electricity ministries to "cooperate to effectively deal with the heat, possible drought, lack of water," according to state media. Officials have also told the city's wa-

News in Brief

Six die in DR Congo mine crash

KANANGA, DR Congo: Six people died when a diamond mine collapsed in the Democratic Republic of Congo over the weekend, officials said on Sunday. The accident took place in the Diboko area in the central Kasai province on Friday. Those killed were "unauthorized diggers who entered an area where mining is forbidden", the province's vice-governor Gaston Nkole said. Despite the mining ban, which the authorities put in place for safety reasons, informal miners have been coming to the site at night in search of diamonds. —AFP

Dutch suspects held over ATM heist

FRANKFURT: Two Dutch nationals have been arrested on suspicion of blowing up a cash machine in Germany and stealing a large sum after a car chase, German authorities said Sunday. Using explosives to carry out bank machine robberies has become increasingly common in Germany. The latest incident took place on Saturday in the centre of Bad Homburg, outside Frankfurt, according to a joint statement from police and prosecutors. Explosives were used to break open the cash machine, with the bank housing it "badly damaged due to the force of the explosion," they said. More than 150,000 euros (\$168,000) was stolen before the men made off in a car, with police in pursuit in cars and a helicopter. —AFP

Zionists repatriate Jordanian MP

JERUSALEM: Zionist entity on Sunday transferred a Jordanian member of parliament to Amman's authorities, weeks after arresting him for attempting to smuggle pistols, rifles and gold into the occupied West Bank, officials said. Imad Adwan was detained at the Zionist-administered Allenby (King Hussein) crossing between Jordan and the West Bank on April 22 with Zionist security forces allegedly finding 12 rifles and 194 pistols in his car, the Shin Bet internal security agency said. — AFP

113 migrants rescued in Mexico

MEXICO CITY: Authorities in northwest Mexico rescued 113 kidnapped migrants of different nationalities from a building along the border with the United States, the state prosecutor's office said. Thousands of migrants fleeing violence and poverty risk abduction and exploitation at the hands of criminal gangs while crossing Mexico on the way to the US border. The latest discovery in the municipality of San Luis Rio Colorado, which borders the US state of Arizona, arose from follow-up investigations by authorities who found on Friday 10 Colombian citizens presumed to have been kidnapped. — AFP

ter supply company to ensure that there are adequate "supplies of water for domestic use". At midday Saturday, Hanoi city centre was almost empty as many remained indoors to avoid the sun.

In April, Asian countries sweltered under hot conditions—posting record or near-record temperatures. The Thai meteorological department reported a record-equaling 44.6 degrees Celsius in western Tak province, while Myanmar media said a town in the country's east reported decade-highs of 43.8 degrees. While both countries typically endure a hot period before the rainy season, the intensity of the heat has exceeded previous records. Further west, the capital of Bangladesh—long dramatically impacted by climate change—recorded its highest temperature since the 1960s. At the same time, Indian weather authorities said parts of the country were experiencing temperatures roughly three to four degrees above normal. A recent report from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned that "every increment of global warming will intensify multiple and concurrent hazards". — AFP

Business

MONDAY, MAY 8, 2023

Resourceful Gazans create work to overcome economic hardship

Unemployment rate for young Palestinian graduates hits 73.9%

GAZA CITY: Seeking a path out of the Gaza Strip's grinding poverty, Islam Abu Taima combs market alleyways for scraps of cardboard, hoping to transform the castoffs into sellable toys. Poverty in the conflict-wracked Palestinian territory, a thin strip of land wedged between Zionist entity, Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea, has hit a rate of 53 percent, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. Work opportunities are scarce in Gaza, which has been under a crippling Zionist entity-led blockade since the Islamist movement Hamas took power in 2007, and Abu Taima, an English literature graduate, has struggled to find a job.

She lives with her husband Mohammed, who is also unemployed, in Al-Shati refugee camp where they began making toys for their five children because "the children keep asking" for them.

Abu Taima's husband "started making bicycles and a small car for them to play with". "They were happy and we found them lovely," said the 39-year-old, whose home lacks running water or electricity. She now sells their creations for five to 10 shekels (\$1.40 to \$2.80) a piece on pavements in central Gaza's more affluent areas. Abu Taima and her husband also use their creative skills to make models and toys that would otherwise be unattainable to their family.

"My husband thought of making old planes and convertibles like the ones famous people drive. It helps him come out of his depression," she said. For Abu Taima, scouring Gaza's markets for cardboard can be tough. "I find it difficult when I walk on the street because people look at me with confusion and ask: 'Why do you collect cardboard?' I can't answer everyone," she said.

The couple makes one or two toys a day, but even if they sell all their wares the profit falls short of the 450 shekels needed to pay their monthly rent.

"The goal is to help my family live, and make my living on a daily basis, as simple as it is." With the unemployment rate hitting 45 percent, according to the International Monetary Fund, many more Gazans are finding alternative ways to make a living.

Soap startup

In Deir Al-Balah in central Gaza, Alaa and Salama Badwan have transformed their rooftop into a



DEIR EL-BALAH, Palestinian Territories: In this picture taken on March 29, 2023, Salama Badwan, a 40-year-old Palestinian man, and his wife Alaa, 40, tend to Aloe Vera plants grown on their roof to be used for oil extraction and soap-making, at their home in Deir Al-Balah in the centre of the Gaza Strip. — AFP photos

small plant nursery. "We use the roof because we lack space," said Salama, 40, between red and green-painted tires serving as pots. Alaa collects the sap from aloe vera plants, which Salama then uses to make soaps in a makeshift home workshop.

So far, they have yet to cover the start-up costs of the nascent project.

Alaa, 37, came up with the idea while researching natural cosmetics online, which have become fashionable in the coastal enclave. They sell their produce to local pharmacies and have ambitions for it to become as popular as the famed olive oil soap from Nablus, a city in the occupied West Bank.

"The situation is difficult but people's attitudes are positive," said Alaa. After returning to Gaza to

help her family, 25-year-old graduate Amani Shaath failed to find work.

According to Palestinian figures, the unemployment rate for young graduates has hit a staggering 73.9 percent. Shaath had worked for four years in fast-food outlets in Turkey, and in February took matters into her own hands by opening a kiosk on Gaza's seafront, selling hamburgers for 15 shekels each at the popular recreational spot. Beachside food outlets have multiplied in recent years, but few are staffed by women. "The first day, people looked at me with astonishment. That shocked me and I was scared that the project would fail," Shaath said. "Then people started to come and they encouraged me, especially because I'm a girl." — AFP



GAZA CITY: A picture taken on April 13, 2023, shows Palestinian graduate Amani Shaath, 25, working at her fast-food kiosk on the Gaza seafront.

Saudi economy expands 3.9% on non-oil sector boost

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's economy expanded by 3.9 percent in the first quarter on an annual basis, boosted by growth in its non-oil sector as the kingdom continues efforts to diversify its economy from hydrocarbons. Non-oil activities grew 5.8 percent in the first three months of the year compared with the same quarter in 2022, while oil activities rose 1.3 percent during the period, initial estimates released by the General Authority for Statistics on Sunday showed.

Meanwhile, government services activities increased 4.9 percent year-on-year during the first quarter, the government agency said. The economies of oil-exporting countries in the Middle East and North Africa region are expected to remain resilient, supported by robust momentum of their non-oil economic growth, even if hydrocarbon revenue declines, the International Monetary Fund said earlier this month. Saudi Arabia benefitted from a surge in oil prices last year up to as much as a notch under

\$140 per barrel after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The Arab world's largest economy expanded 8.7 percent last year, the highest annual growth rate among the world's 20 biggest economies, driven by higher oil prices and the strong performance of its non-oil private sector. The hydrocarbon revenue windfall in 2022 helped the oil exporter to build fiscal buffers and invest in driving its non-oil economic growth.

Saudi Arabia's economic growth of 3.9 percent in the first quarter slowed from the 5.5 percent annual expansion in the fourth quarter of 2022, Gastat data showed. This decrease was primarily due to a decline in oil activities in the first quarter, which rose 6.1 percent in the fourth quarter, compared with the 1.3 percent increase in the January-March period.

This year, the IMF expects a drop in the growth of the GCC region's oil gross domestic product due to "several cuts" in oil production and "various adjustments in the OPEC+ agreement", Jihad Azour, director of the IMF's Middle East and Central Asia Department, said last week.

OPEC+ producers have announced voluntary output cuts totaling 1.16 million barrels per day to ensure oil market stability. Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter and OPEC largest producer, will cut its output by 500,000 bpd from May until the end of the year.

Republican message that Biden has been profligate and irresponsible. Biden, who will be joined in the White House talks by the Democratic minority leader in the House of Representatives, Hakeem Jeffries, and the Democratic majority leader in the Senate, Chuck Schumer, accuses Republicans of "hostage" taking.

He insists that the debt ceiling first be raised—as in other years—and only then can he and the Republicans discuss cutting the budget to reduce that decades-old accumulated debt, currently the world's biggest at \$31 trillion. A dispute over sequencing might sound academic. However, with both sides dug in and the deadline approaching, the debate has turned into a life-or-death test of political strength.

Fail to authorize more borrowing and the government will run out of money and default. Cue worldwide panic. Soaring interest rates, stock sell-offs, Treasury bond downgrades, and near certain US recession will be on the menu—and that's before factoring in long-term harm to the US geopolitical brand.

"Even getting close to a breach of the US debt ceiling could cause significant disruptions," warned a White House analysis. "An actual breach of the US debt ceiling would likely cause severe damage." When is doomsday? No one knows for sure. But US coffers could run dry as early as June 1, according to the Treasury. That's just over three weeks from the

"It's important, especially for the GCC, to differentiate between their oil and the non-oil sectors," Azour said. "The good news is that growth in the non-oil sector is somehow resilient — around 4 percent to 4.5 percent on average this year and next. "This reflects the efforts that were made to diversify economies and also the fact that governments have increased their capacity to raise revenues outside of oil."

It is important for Mena oil exporters to remain on the path of non-oil economic growth and being "less dependent" on oil revenue to accelerate the diversification of their economies, which, in turn, will allow governments to generate additional income, he said. The kingdom is in the midst of a major economic diversification drive under its Vision 2030 agenda, amid a push to reduce its reliance on oil and tap into other high-growth industries to boost its economy, create more jobs and attract private investment. Saudi Arabia is investing heavily in its non-oil sector including developing tourism, hospitality, aviation, logistics, advanced manufacturing and technology industries. Saudi Arabia plans to add 315,000 new hotel rooms with an estimated development cost of \$37.8 billion by 2030, taking the total stock to nearly 450,000 hotel rooms, with giga-projects such as the futuristic city of Neom leading the supply pipeline, according to Knight Frank's 2023 Saudi Report issued last week. — Agencies

Tuesday sit-down. As the clock ticks away, the divide appears unbridgeable. The White House is clinging to an "irrational, reckless" strategy and Democrats are "terrified" about allowing "clueless" Biden to negotiate, tweeted the Freedom Caucus—the group of hard-right Republicans effectively controlling the razor-thin Republican majority in the House.

Biden is not budging. A strong economic recovery from the COVID era is one of Biden's main cards in his bid for a second term next year. So the 80-year-old has all the more reason to steer the country clear of crisis. Yet he's also adamant about not caving into the Republican attempt to link budget negotiations to the debt ceiling, saying this will transform a basic, fundamental obligation into a political football.

"They're trying to hold the debt hostage to (get) us to agree to some draconian cuts," he told advisors Friday. Biden repeated one of his favorite stats, noting that Republicans had voted, without imposing any conditions, to extend the debt ceiling three times during the presidency of Republican Donald Trump. "No one's ever not voted to increase the debt limit," he said. "I'm going to reiterate to congressional leaders that they should do what every other Congress has done—that is, pass the debt limit, avoid the default." Analysts say there are several potential exit ramps from imminent default. —AFP

CBK: Kuwait's money supply increased to KD 39.2bn in March

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced on Sunday that its data for the "Monthly Monetary Statistics" showed that the Money Supply (M2) went up by 0.4 percent in March, reaching KD 39.2 billion (around \$129.3 billion).

The CBK's economic research department revealed in its data, obtained by KUNA, that residents' private sector deposits in Kuwaiti dinar increased by 0.4 percent to KD 35.8 billion (around \$118 billion). The residents private sector deposits in foreign currency went down by 1.1 percent to KD 1.7 billion (an estimated \$3.6 billion).

The statement also revealed that local banks claims on CBK went up to reach KD 3.4 billion (around \$11.2 billion). Local banks' total assets decreased by 0.8 percent to register KD 85 billion (around \$280 billion), while net foreign assets went up by one percent KD 10.1 billion (around \$33.3 billion). Time deposits with the CBK jumped last March by 76 percent to KD 2.6 billion (estimated \$8.5 billion). Balance of utilized cash credits facilities decreased by 0.6 percent to KD 52.3 billion (an estimated \$172.5 billion). Interest rate (return) on one-year treasury bonds remained stable at 4.5 percent last March.

Financing of Kuwaiti imports leapt by 60.3 percent to KD 1.1 billion (around \$3.6 billion), while average USD exchange rate against KD (fils) went up by 0.3 percent last March to 306.6 fils. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait's money supply (M2) went up by 0.4 percent in March, reaching KD 39.2 billion (around \$129.3 billion).

Biden, Republicans meet Tuesday to foil default disaster

WASHINGTON: Washington's power brokers love playing chicken. But the rest of the world will watch in dread Tuesday when President Joe Biden and Republican leaders meet to negotiate the US debt ceiling—praying that one side finally blinks.

The White House summit between Biden, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell sets in motion the deciding round of a power struggle whose outcome will impact the global economy and could upset the 2024 US presidential election. The immediate issue is raising the debt ceiling, an arcane budgeting procedure that most years passes with little controversy. Basically, the US government always spends more than has been budgeted but, unlike in most countries, then requires congressional approval to borrow extra.

This year, McCarthy and his radicalized right-wing party have decided to say no, unless Democrats first agree to sweeping budget cuts, giving in to the

Business

Boom and bust: Quakes define legacy of Turkey's 'Erdonomics'

Lira crash forces Erdogan to become dependent on rescues from Gulf states

ISTANBUL: The earthquake's frightening rumble came deep in the night. Its ferocity killed thousands of people in their sleep and helped bring down a Turkish government. Fury over the scale of the 1999 disaster fed into broader economic discontent that ultimately propelled Recep Tayyip Erdogan to power.

The Turkish leader now hopes a similar mix of economic despair and anguish over an even deadlier pre-dawn quake in February does not push him out in elections next Sunday.

"They came with an earthquake and they might leave with an earthquake," Ankara University assistant professor Melih Yesilada said of Erdogan's Islamic-rooted party. "The AKP took power after an earthquake. Modernising the infrastructure was one of its main promises from the start. And 20 years later you see this happen," he said.

The 1999 calamity killed more than 17,000 people and put the shoddiness of Turkey's buildings on soul-crushing display.

But it also made a more profound impact. The AKP's election victory in 2002 and the rise of Erdogan a year later heralded a new economic model based on construction that changed the way Turkey worked. The vast country entered a building frenzy that became central to a growth policy dubbed "Erdonomics".

Erdogan and a clique of construction companies that consolidated around his rule ended up erecting more than 10 million housing units over 20 years. "This is an incredible amount," Yesilbag said. "This is more than half of all the EU countries combined over the same period." Some of those houses toppled in the February quake that killed more than 50,000 people. The disaster exposed a flagrant disregard for beefed-up building standards for all to see.

'It really worked'

Erdogan and constructors made a natural fit. "The AKP's original base was small businesspeople. Anatolian businesspeople. These people were excellent

in property development, property transactions and trade," said analyst Atilla Yesilada of the Global-Source Partners consulting firm.

"It was only natural that Erdogan, who also had a business background, looked at the immense possibilities of land development in Turkey." This boom accelerated when the global financial crisis of 2007-2008 prompted the United States and Europe to slash lending rates to zero.

It was manna for Turkey. The inflow of billions of dollars of nearly free loans allowed Erdogan's government to reshape city skylines and interconnect provinces with highways and airports.

The building frenzy plugged less educated Turks into the workforce and created a new base of political support. "It really worked for Turkey," Yesilada said. "It boosted wealth and created a new class of wealthy AKP supporters who became urban dwellers, joining the middle and upper class."

'Incestuous relationship'

Turkey's economic growth exploded in the first decade of Erdogan's rule. The World Bank estimates that per capita GDP grew from \$3,640 the year the AKP came to power to \$12,507 at its zenith in 2013.

Construction and the various industries connected to it made up nearly a third of that figure. "The construction sector is labor intensive, so it generates employment for the masses in the short term," said urban planning professor Osman Balaban at the Middle East Technical University.

But it did not last. A 2018 crisis in relations with Washington and a gradual rise of interest rates across the West set off a lira slide that made all those dollar loans expensive to pay off.

"The cost of construction became very high," Yesilbag said. This created a quandary that remains unresolved to this day. Contractors continued supporting Erdogan's government in return for new projects whose economic returns did not add up.

"Eventually it turned into a sort of incestuous relationship where the con-



SANLIURFA, Turkey: Syrian women walk inside a bazaar near Balıkligol (or Pool of Abraham, Haliil-Ur Rahman Lake), in the southwest of the city centre of Sanliurfa on April 27, 2023. —AFP

struction companies felt obligated to support Erdogan's re-election campaign," said Yesilada. "Over the years the system had a negative marginal return."

Broken contract

The parallels between this year's earthquake and economic crisis to those of 1999 are striking. Turkey's annual inflation rate hit 85 percent last year—the highest since 1998. Analysts view it as a self-inflicted wound: Erdogan fought the economic slowdown by cutting the main interest rate far below that of inflation to help producers. The lira crashed and Erdogan became dependent on short-term res-

cues from wealthy Gulf states. Analysts widely agree that Erdogan's original social pact with his voters has been broken.

But they caution that Turkey's sharp polarization among groups with deeply entrenched views may still keep opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu from winning a tight race.

"The damage after the earthquake was huge and it overturned the welfare and development image that Erdogan and his party were imposing," Balaban said. "So, unchecked construction may have an influence in the elections. But I am still not sure if it will be big enough to bring about his fall." —AFP

Al-Wazzan appointed as head of strategic planning unit at Gulf Bank

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has appointed Meshal Al-Wazzan as Head of the Strategic Planning and Follow-Up Unit, following the approval from the Central Bank of Kuwait. This comes as part of the Bank's policy to enable national talents to advance and obtain leadership positions, with the aim of contributing towards the growth and prosperity of the Bank's business, and to empower national talents, which is an essential part of Gulf Bank's 2025 strategy.



Meshal Al-Wazzan

Al-Wazzan will be given the responsibility of developing and implementing the Bank's long-term strategy, in addition to working with various sectors to develop their annual plans and handle several strategic projects. It is worth mentioning that Gulf Bank established the unit independently, in line with the recommendations issued by the Central Bank of Kuwait in 2020, in order to ensure that the Kuwaiti banking sector is well equipped and prepared to face any challenges that may be imposed by global economic conditions in the future. The unit provides the Bank with the necessary capabilities and tools to predict any internal and external challenges that may arise as a result of any developments in the global economy.

Meshal Al-Wazzan has 17 years of experience in the banking industry and held many leadership and executive positions within the bank and abroad. He began his career at Wafra Financial Consulting Company in New York, and then worked and progressed in several departments in the Corporate Banking Group at Gulf Bank from 2006 to 2017. Al-Wazzan then resumed to work at the Bank from 2019 to 2022, before being assigned as Acting Head of Strategic Planning Unit. Additionally, Al-Wazzan was the Executive Vice Chairman at the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises Development and the Executive Director at the Competition Protection Agency.

Academically, Al-Wazzan holds an MBA from IE Business School in Madrid, and a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, with a specialization in Information Systems and E-Commerce, from the University of Toledo in Ohio. He also holds several courses in leadership and strategy from Harvard University and University of Chicago Booth School of Business.

What happens if the US fails to raise its debt ceiling?

WASHINGTON: Time is running short as US policymakers remain at an impasse on lifting the debt ceiling, while the Treasury warns that the country could run out of cash to pay its bills as early as June 1.

With President Joe Biden set to meet Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and other leaders on Tuesday, here is what could happen if Congress does not raise or suspend the debt limit in time:

Abu Dhabi accounts for 14% of global IPOs in Q1 2023

ABU DHABI: Abu Dhabi has accounted for 14 percent of all initial public offerings worldwide in the first quarter of 2023, an indication of the strength of its capital markets amid a challenging global IPO market, a new study has found. The UAE capital attracted \$3 billion worth of IPO proceeds in the three months ended March, placing it third worldwide, consultancy EY said in the latest edition of its Global IPO Trends report.

Lulu Hypermarket launches summer fashion promotion

KUWAIT: Lulu Hypermarket Kuwait, one of the leading retail chains in the country, has launched its summer fashion promotion, featuring discounted garments and footwear from top fashion brands. The promotion, which will run from May 6 to May 16, 2023, is available at all Lulu Hypermarket outlets in Kuwait, both online and offline.

The promotion was launched on May 6, 2023, at the Lulu Hypermarket Al-Rai outlet, in the presence of major fashionistas from the town. The launch event also featured a kids' fashion show with a summer theme, with over 100 kids participating. All participants received consolation prizes, while the first, second, and third prize winners received valuable gift prizes.

Lulu Hypermarket Kuwait is proud to partner with own top fashion brands, including Debacker, Eten, Marco Doneitelli, Cortigiani, and Tom Smith, to offer customers a wide range of summer garments and footwear. The promotion offers customers the chance to purchase high-quality fashion items at discounted prices, making it the perfect opportunity to update their summer wardrobe.

The promotion also featured fashionistas who provided customers with trial demos of summer garments, as well as tips and advice on how to style them. Fashion vloggers were also present to explain Lulu Hypermarket's latest trends and fashions to customers, which they shared on their social media platforms. Lulu Hypermarket Kuwait is committed to providing its customers with

What happens after June 1?

The United States could run out of funds to meet all its financial obligations by June 1, or in the weeks after then, said Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen. If that happened, it is likely the Treasury would follow the contours of a contingency plan it had in 2011, when the country faced a similar situation, said Wendy Edelberg, senior fellow in economic studies at the Brookings Institution.

Under this plan, there would be no default on Treasury securities, and the Treasury would continue to pay interest on those securities as they come due. "As securities mature, Treasury would pay that principal by auctioning new securities for the same amount," thus not increasing the overall stock of debt held by the public, she added.

But other payments—such as to agencies, Social Security beneficiaries, or Medicare providers—would likely be delayed unless Treasury could meet all such obligations due on a given day.

A government shutdown is unlikely, although

The top 10 was dominated by Asian markets, which took six spots. China's Shenzhen and Shanghai took the top two, accounting for 22 percent and 20 percent, respectively, and raising \$4.7 billion and \$4.3 billion. Abu Dhabi was followed by the tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite in New York, attracting \$2.1 billion for 10 percent of the market, making the top four and the only bourse to record double-digit shares. The top 10 was rounded out by Indonesia, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Beijing and Italy's Borsa Italiana and AIM.

The New York Stock Exchange, Germany's Deutsche Borse and Switzerland's SIX were all tied for 10th place. Other exchanges accounted for 12 percent, with a value of about \$2.9 billion. Overall, about \$21.5 billion was raised through 299 IPOs globally in the first quarter of the year. However, these are

down from the year-ago figures: proceeds dropped 61 percent from \$54.6 billion and the number of IPOs declined 8 percent from 326, it said.

The challenging IPO environment comes as investors are prioritizing value over growth, as IPO windows are "fleeting and funding conditions getting tougher" amid persistent macroeconomic and geopolitical uncertainty, Paul Go, EY's global IPO leader, wrote in the report.

The sector is also being exacerbated by stress in the global banking system, which is rooted in troubles in the US and Credit Suisse, he said. "IPO-bound companies need to focus on building sustainable businesses with strong fundamentals to be well-positioned in a volatile environment and meet the challenges and opportunities of going public," Go said. —Agencies



the best possible shopping experience, and the Summer Fashion promotion is a testament to that commitment. Customers can take advantage of

the exciting offers and discounts, both in-store and online, to make the most of the summer fashion season.

federal workers' paychecks could be delayed.

Are there further consequences?

Even without a debt default, such a situation "would be very disruptive to markets and the economy," said economist Nancy Vanden Houten at Oxford Economics. Moody's Analytics economist Bernard Yaros drew parallels to the 2008 financial crisis, when Congress failed to pass a major bailout plan for banks—the failure sparked a selloff in stock markets that pressured lawmakers.

And interest rates would spike, especially Treasury yields and mortgage rates, Yaros told AFP.

"That would lead to higher borrowing costs for consumers, for corporations," he said. "Long-term interest rates would just be permanently higher, especially Treasury yields, because investors would demand compensation for the risk of another future breach," he added. In the long haul, the value of the dollar could be lower too.

Households or businesses who fail to receive federal

payments owed would likely pull back on near-term spending due to their loss of income, while consumer confidence may worsen, hurting the economy, Yaros said. On Wednesday, the Council of Economic Advisers warned that if the US government stops meeting its financial obligations, resulting economic shocks could cause over eight million job losses this summer and around a six percent drop in GDP.

When does a debt default occur?

A country is considered in a payment default when it does not meet its financial obligations such as to another country, or to investors who bought its bonds. A default is considered partial when a country fails to repay just a portion of its debt, and a government can declare itself in default by announcing it will not repay its debt.

A ratings agency can also announce a default, after the end of an automatic 30-day grace period following the payment due date. Or, a private borrower can say publicly that a country has not paid up. —AFP

Lifestyle



In this photograph visitors stand near a colour mixing plate approved by US forces for Ahmed Rabbani, a Pakistani recently freed from Guantanamo Bay prison, during an exhibition of his work, in Karachi. — AFP photos



Visitors look at the paintings made by Ahmed Rabbani.



Ahmed Rabbani, a Pakistani recently freed from Guantanamo Bay prison, gestures to a painting while speaking to AFP during an exhibition of his work, in Karachi.

FREEDOM TO PAINT: PAKISTANI GITMO PRISONER FINDS RELEASE IN ART

When Ahmed Rabbani ran out of paint to satisfy his artistic yearnings during 20 years of incarceration at Guantanamo Bay, he turned to whatever came to hand -- dirt, coffee grinds and even spices such as turmeric from the prison canteen.

“Through painting, I would feel myself outside Guantanamo,” the was a notorious militant known as Hassan Ghul, but Rabbani always insisted it was a case of mistaken identity. He was also accused of recruiting his older brother Muhammed into extremist circles. Both were never charged or faced trial during two decades in detention, and they were only released in February this year.

-- only to be released back to Pakistan for ‘cooperating’. “While Ghul went back to his terrorist ways and was killed in a drone strike in 2012, Ahmed got a one-way trip to Guantanamo Bay.”

Drawing from coffee, turmeric
Born in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, where his parents worked, Rabbani moved back to Karachi as a teen and was a taxi driver at the time of his detention. Fluent in Arabic, he specialised in guiding visitors from the Middle East -- a factor which contributed to him being misidentified. While imprisoned in Guantanamo Bay, painting became an obsession for Rabbani, although years spent on hunger strike meant he was often too frail to even hold a brush.

If he ran out of materials, he would improvise. “I would find and turn a piece of discarded or torn clothes into canvas,” he said. “Sometimes I drew from coffee, sometimes from turmeric.” In “The Unforgotten Moon: Liberating Art from Guantanamo Bay”, around two dozen pieces Rabbani was allowed to take from prison are on display -- alongside works by local artists who have “re-imagined” paintings that were confiscated.

“He is someone who has lost so much of his life, so to produce the images of this quality is a miracle... it’s remarkable,” said Natasha Malik, curator and organiser of the exhibition. “Displayed alongside Ahmed’s uncensored artwork, the artists amplify his



Ahmed Rabbani (left), a Pakistani recently freed from Guantanamo Bay prison, stands along with his lawyer Clive Stafford Smith during an exhibition of his work, in Karachi.



A visitor looks at a painting made by Ahmed Rabbani.



Ahmed Rabbani (center), a Pakistani recently freed from Guantanamo Bay prison, addresses the media during an exhibition of his work, in Karachi.

53-year-old Pakistani said this week at an exhibition of his work in the port city of Karachi. “Painting was everything for me there.” Rabbani was detained by Pakistan authorities in September 2002 and handed over to the US Central Intelligence Agency for a bounty of \$5,000. He was “sold” on the basis he

“The US had paid good money and did not want to have been taken for a ride,” Rabbani’s lawyer, Clive Stafford Smith, wrote in the exhibition catalogue. “Something neither he nor I knew until the US Senate published its Rendition Report in 2014 was that Ghul was captured and brought to the same prison

protest and creative expression, by recreating the work that the public was never meant to see.” Sporting a salt-and-pepper beard and wearing a traditional shalwar kameez and waistcoat, Rabbani was the centre of attention at the exhibition opening.

With a smile and twinkle in his eye, he outlined grand plans for the years ahead. First up is the publication of a cookery book -- he rekindled a passion for the kitchen while at Guantanamo.

“It will have his memoirs in it -- but in the setting of a cookbook,” Stafford Smith told AFP. Then he wants to open a restaurant based on recipes he learnt while in prison -- hopefully using funds

raised from sales of his art. Depicting his hopes and despair, his artwork is astonishingly accomplished for someone who did just a smattering of art at school.

Some pieces are obvious expressions of yearnings for freedom -- nature seen through narrow openings, birds flying and endless oceans. Another shows a cage containing bright orange fish -- the colour of overalls Guantanamo prisoners were forced to wear. “I spent many years in orange,” he said. “I never accepted their laws. I would always break their laws.” — AFP



Writers on the picket line on the fourth day of the strike by the Writers Guild of America march past Netflix in Hollywood, California — AFP photos



Writer Eric Heisserer holds his sign on the picket line on the fourth day of the strike by the Writers Guild of America in front of Netflix in Hollywood, California.

Hollywood strikes inflamed by claim AI could do writers’ jobs

The Hollywood writers’ strike broke out this week over pay, but the refusal of studios like Netflix and Disney to rule out artificial intelligence replacing human scribes in the future has only fueled anger and fear on the picket lines.

With their rapidly advancing ability to eerily mimic human conversation, AI programs like ChatGPT have spooked many industries recently. The White House this week summoned Big Tech to discuss the potential risks.

As part of the weeks-long talks with studios and streamers that collapsed Monday, the Writers Guild of America asked for binding agreements to regulate the use of AI.

Under the proposals, nothing written by AI can be considered “literary” or “source” material -- industry terms that decide who gets royalties -- and scripts written by WGA members cannot “be used to train AI.” But according to the WGA, studios “rejected our proposal,” and countered with an offer merely to meet once a year to “discuss advancements in technology.”

“It’s nice for them to offer to have a

meeting about how they’re exploiting it against us!” joked WGA negotiating committee member Eric Heisserer, who wrote Netflix hit film “Bird Box.”

“Art cannot be created by a machine. You lose the heart and soul of the story... I mean, the first word is ‘artificial,’” he told AFP on the picket line outside the streaming giant’s Hollywood HQ Friday. While writers already know this, the danger is that “we have to watch tech companies destroy the business in an attempt to find out for themselves,” he said.

‘Not just scripts’

While few television and film writers who spoke to AFP on the picket lines believe their work could be done by computers, the apparent conviction of studios and streamers that it can has been an extra slap in the face.



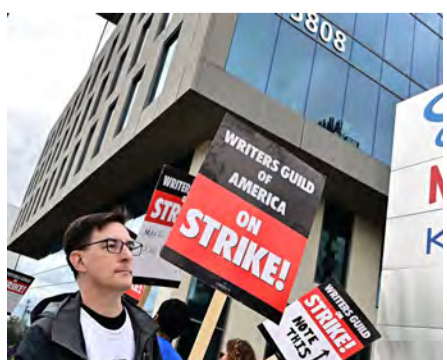
Writer Ilana Pena holds her sign on the picket line on the fourth day of the strike by the Writers Guild of America in front of Netflix in Hollywood, California

They fear that belt-tightening executives in Hollywood, where Silicon Valley companies have upended many traditional practices such as long-term contracts for writers, may seek to cut costs further by getting computers to write their next hit shows. Comments by top Hollywood executives at this week’s Milken Institute Global Conference in Beverly Hills will have done nothing to quell writers’ concerns.

“In the next three years, you’re going to see a movie that was written by AI made... a good one,” said movie producer Todd Lieberman.

“Not just scripts. Editing, all of it... storyboarding a movie, anything,” added Fox entertainment CEO Rob Wade.

“AI in the future, maybe not next year or the year after, but if we’re talking 10 years? AI is going to be able to do absolutely all of these things.”



Writer Eric Heisserer holds his sign on the picket line on the fourth day of the strike by the Writers Guild of America in front of Netflix in Hollywood.

The studios’ own account of the breakdown in WGA talks offered a more nuanced take. In a briefing note shared with AFP, they said writers do not in fact want to outlaw AI, and appear happy to use it “as part of their creative process” -- so long as it does not affect their pay. That scenario “requires a lot more discussion, which we’ve committed to doing,” the studios said.

‘Guardrails’

For Leila Cohan, a 39-year-old writer on Netflix smash hit “Bridgerton,” the only usefulness of AI for writers is limited to “busy work” such as coming up with names for characters. But she predicted that studios “could start making incredibly bad first drafts with AI and then hiring writers to do a rewrite.”

“I think that’s certainly a very scary possibility... it’s very smart that we’re addressing this now,” she said.

Indeed, the last Hollywood strike in 2007-08 won writers the right to be paid for online viewing of their shows or films -- highly prescient, at a time when streaming was in its infancy. Back then, Netflix had barely started online viewing, and the likes of Disney+ and Apple TV+ were more than a decade away.

Even for sci-fi writer Ben Ripley, who believes there is no role whatsoever for AI in writing, introducing legislation now “to put guardrails up” is “very necessary.” Writers “have to be original,” he said. “Artificial intelligence is the antithesis of originality.” — AFP

US director Damien Chazelle to head Venice Film Festival

US director Damien Chazelle, best known for the Oscar-winning “La La Land”, will lead the jury of the upcoming Venice Film Festival, organisers announced Friday. The 80th edition of the prestigious festival will take place from August 30 through September 9 on the swanky, beach-lined Lido island.

“For ten days each year this city of the arts, of Tintoretto and Titian and Veronese, becomes a city of cinema, and I am humbled and delighted to be invited to lead this year’s jury,” said Chazelle, 38, whose most recent film is “Babylon”. Chazelle’s musical about making it in Hollywood, “La La Land,” opened the Venice festival in 2016, and went on to win six Academy Awards, including for its director, the youngest ever to win the prize.



US director Damien Chazelle

Heading the jury for Venice’s parallel competition, Orizzonti, will be Italy’s Jonas Carpignano, director of a trilogy (“Mediterranea”, “A Ciambra”, “A Chiara”) based in the Calabrian port city of Gioia Tauro.

Last year, the festival’s top Golden Lion prize went to US director Laura Poitras for “All the Beauty and the Bloodshed.” The documentary traced the campaign by photographer and activist Nan Goldin to hold the rich Sackler family accountable for the US opioid crisis. US actress Julianne Moore headed last year’s jury, with Spanish director Isabel Coixet at the helm of Orizzonti. — AFP



Britain's Catherine, Princess of Wales arrives at Westminster Abbey in central London ahead of the coronations of Britain's King Charles III and Britain's Camilla, Queen Consort. — AFP photos



Britain's Prince Louis of Wales and Britain's Princess Charlotte of Wales arrive at Westminster Abbey in central London ahead of the coronations of Britain's King Charles III and Britain's Camilla, Queen Consort.



Britain's King Charles III wearing the Imperial state Crown carrying the Sovereign's Orb and Sceptre leaves Westminster Abbey after the Coronation Ceremonies in central London.

Floral headpieces replace tiaras at Charles' dress-down coronation



Britain's Camilla sits on the throne wearing a modified version of Queen Mary's Crown during the Coronation Ceremony inside Westminster Abbey in central London.

Prince William's wife Catherine on Saturday chose a floral headpiece instead of a tiara for the coronation of Charles III, in line with the "green" tone set for the coronation by the king. Charles, a long-time environmental advocate with a passion for nature, made his wishes clear when he sent out coronation invitations featuring the Green Man, an ancient figure from British folklore symbolizing the arrival of spring and rebirth. The break with tradition was also in keeping with Charles's reported desire that the coronation be "meritocratic not aristocratic", which saw the aristocracy largely replaced with "community heroes" who had earned their place.

At the last coronation in 1953, almost all senior royal women and female aristocrats wore tiaras featuring precious stones and pearls. Catherine, whose formal title is Princess of Wales, instead wore a silver Jess Collett x Alexander McQueen headpiece with three-dimensional leaf embroidery, Buckingham Palace said. Her dress, also by Alexander McQueen, was in ivory silk crepe with embroidery featuring rose, thistle, daffodil and shamrock motifs to signify the four nations of the United Kingdom. It was worn with a

ceremonial cape. She also wore a set of pearl and diamond earrings that belonged to Prince William's late mother Princess Diana.

Floral motifs

Catherine's daughter Princess Charlotte, a granddaughter of King Charles, wore a headpiece that matched her mother's while her dress was also by Alexander McQueen and featured similar floral motifs. Queen Camilla meanwhile turned to British couturier Bruce Oldfield, a favorite of the king's former wife Diana, for her coronation dress. Her ivory silk dress with silver and gold embroidery featured "garlands of abstract wildflowers from fields and hedgerows: daisy chains, forget-me-nots, celandine and scarlet pimpernel", the palace said in a statement.

Oldfield designed dozens of evening gowns—several of them iconic—for Diana before her death in a Paris car crash in 1997. Oldfield has since become one of Camilla's favorite fashion creators. He designed the elegant black evening gown Camilla wore on the royal couple's state visit to Germany in March.

Charles, a biodiversity enthusiast, had a four-acre (1.6-hectare) wild-



(From left) Britain's Prince William, Prince of Wales, Britain's Catherine, Princess of Wales, Princess Charlotte of Wales and Prince Louis of Wales, arrive for the coronations of Britain's King Charles III and Britain's Camilla, Queen Consort at Westminster Abbey in central London on May 6, 2023. - The set-piece coronation is the first in Britain in 70 years, and only the second in history to be televised. Charles will be the 40th reigning monarch to be crowned at the central London church since King William I in 1066.

flower meadow at his former Highgrove home in Gloucestershire, western England. To mark his coronation, 200,000 packets of wildflower seeds have been sent to primary schools for

children to scatter in their green spaces and encourage them to develop a love of nature. —AFP



A handout photo shows Britain's Queen Camilla and Britain's King Charles III standing on the balcony of Buckingham Palace, following their Coronation Ceremony, in central London. — AFP

14 million watched coronation of King Charles III: BBC

More than 14 million people tuned in to watch King Charles III's coronation on BBC television, the corporation said on Sunday. At its peak, 13.4 million watched on the main BBC One channel, with an average of 11.9 million watching Saturday's coverage of the ceremony. A signed version on BBC Two peaked at 1.7 million, averaging at 1.4 million, a statement from the public broadcaster read. Saturday's coronation—the first to be held in Britain in 70 years—was only the second to be televised, and the first to be shown in color.

But the figures indicate that overall viewing figures were well down on previous major royal occasions. Last year's state funeral of Charles's mother Queen Elizabeth II attracted one of the biggest television audiences in the UK in modern times. An estimated average audience of 26.2 million watched on TV sets alone, peaking at 28 million, including 18.5 million on the BBC. In 2011, more than 24 million viewers

watched the wedding of Charles's son Prince William on BBC terrestrial television. In 1997, more than 32 million viewers in the UK watched the funeral of Charles's first wife and William's mother, Princess Diana. The 1953 coronation of Elizabeth is seen as a breakthrough in broadcasting, as it was the first shown on TV. Then some 27 million people watched and 11 million listened to the service on the radio, according to Buckingham Palace. But TV set ownership was low.

The BBC was the only broadcaster at the time. Since then the media landscape has been transformed, with dozens more channels, as well as online, on-demand and streaming services. Charles's coronation was also broadcast live by commercial channel ITV—which only launched two years after Elizabeth's coronation—and other figures were not immediately available. —AFP

Princes Harry, Andrew parked on third row at coronation

Princes Harry and Andrew attended the coronation of King Charles III but were relegated to the third row of the royal family seating—and did not join them later Saturday on the Buckingham Palace balcony. Charles's younger son Harry and his American wife Meghan quit royal duties in 2020 and have since unleashed a string of barbed attacks on the monarchy.

Andrew, the king's eldest brother, has been frozen out over his past association with the disgraced late US financier Jeffrey Epstein and a related sexual abuse allegation which was settled out of court. But both Harry, 38, the Duke of Sussex, and 63-year-old Andrew, the Duke of York, were in the royal ranks for the coronation at London's Westminster Abbey, albeit without a formal role.

Andrew was driven in a state car from Buckingham Palace to the Abbey and part of the crowd in a grandstand in front of the palace booed as he went past. Harry and Andrew walked into the abbey with other members of the Windsor family. It was the first time Harry has joined his family since subjecting them to a torrent of stinging criticism in his recent memoir "Spare" and in a series of television interviews. Meghan has remained in California with the couple's young children, thereby avoiding potentially awkward interactions with her in-laws.

Smiles in the abbey

Former British Army captain Harry, who served in Afghanistan, was wearing a morning suit with his medals, while Andrew—who flew Royal Navy helicopters in the 1982 Falklands War—wore his robes as a knight of the garter. Harry was seen chatting with Edoardo Mapelli Mozzi, husband of his cousin Princess Beatrice, Andrew's elder daughter. He also had a quick word with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, after entering the Great West Door. Welby married Harry and Meghan at St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle in May 2018.

Both Harry and Andrew were seen smiling as they walked through the abbey to their seats. They were both seated on the third row—out of keeping with their places in the line of succession to



Britain's Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex leaves after attending the coronations of Britain's King Charles III and Britain's Camilla, Queen Consort, at Westminster Abbey in central London. —AFP

the throne. Harry is fifth in line, following his brother Prince William, and William's three children—Prince George, Princess Charlotte and Prince Louis of Wales.

Andrew is eighth in line, coming after Harry and his children—Prince Archie and Princess Lilibet of Sussex. Andrew sat at the end of the row next to Beatrice. Harry sat next to Jack Brooksbank, the husband of Andrew's younger daughter Princess Eugenie, the cousin who is perhaps Harry's closest ally in the family.



(From left) Britain's Prince Andrew, Duke of York, Britain's Princess Beatrice of York, Peter Phillips, Edoardo Mapelli Mozzi, Zara Tindall, Princess Eugenie, Jack Brooksbank, Mike Tindall and Britain's Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex at Westminster Abbey in central London attend the coronations of Britain's King Charles III and Britain's Camilla, Queen Consort.

Lifestyle



Lebanon's music national conservatory teacher, composer and saxophonist Nidal Abu Samra rehearses with singer Sarah Kouzi at the Al-Madina theatre in Beirut ahead of a concert. — AFP photos



In this file photo head of Lebanon's national conservatory, operatic soprano, composer, and academic Hiba Al-Kawas poses during a studio photoshoot session at her office in Sin el-Fil east of Beirut.



Lebanon's national conservatory of music teacher, soprano and concert organizer Ghada Ghanem (left) sings as student Aline Chalvarjian plays oud (lute) during a concert at the Al-Madina theatre in Beirut.

LEBANON CRISIS MUTES NATIONAL MUSIC CONSERVATORY

At Lebanon's national music conservatory, pianos collect dust and classrooms sit empty, making the institution another casualty of an economic collapse that has crippled the public sector and hampered education. Toufic Kerbage, 65, watched the value of his pay packet and pension evaporate after the Lebanese economy began melting down in 2019, taking the local currency and people's savings with it.

Without family support "I would have starved," said the music teacher, who began working at the conservatory in the late 1980s. "It's difficult at my age to ask for money," he said from the silence of the conservatory's branch in Sin el-Fil, a suburb of the capital Beirut. Once on a comfortable income, Kerbage now earns around \$70 a month, in a country the World Bank says suffers the highest food price inflation globally. He has been teaching his classes online, battling Lebanon's "disastrous" internet and spending more than he earns on a generator subscription to get through hours-long daily power cuts.

The state-run conservatory, with several thousand mostly school-aged students and 17 branches around the country, counts prestigious musicians like the composer and oud player Marcel Khalife among its alumni. But as the economic crisis grinds on, some teachers have quit. Many others have turned to online class-



Lebanon's national conservatory of music teacher, soprano and concert organizer Ghada Ghanem (center left) and guest singer Elie Rizkallah take part in a rehearsal session at the Al-Madina theatre in Beirut.

es to save on travel costs or teach private lessons on the side to make ends meet. Kerbage said he was "worried" about colleagues without a support network.

'Musical revolution'

Taking matters into their own hands, a group of teachers and students have been holding independent concerts to highlight their plight and give musicians a chance to support each other and perform. "I am here today to stand with my colleagues who are not happy with the way we are treated," said concert organizer Ghada Ghanem, who is also a teacher and soprano. Some teachers have moved house or "sold their cars" to survive, added Ghanem, herself a conserva-

tory student during Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war. The shows' proceeds will be invested into creating further performance opportunities or distributed among those involved, she said, calling the initiative a "musical revolution". "Let's fix our problems with our own talent," Ghanem said recently from a darkened Beirut theatre before a recent show - the second in a planned series. "Depression will attack us if we sit and do nothing." Matthew Ata, 10, said he was "a bit nervous" about his debut concert performance.

Despite starting with the conservatory two years ago, he only met his guitar teacher for the first time at the show. "We really hope that things will get better" and in-person classes will resume, said Mat-

thew's mother, Rita Jabbour. Some students said the protracted online teaching and disruptions had left them feeling discouraged. Software engineer Aline Chalvarjian, 33, who studies oud and lyric singing, said she had "lost motivation". The conservatory used to be "like a second home", she said. Now, "we feel that we are left behind".

'First' pay boost

Like other public sector workers throughout the crisis, conservatory staff have taken strike action to demand their rights are respected, with the head of the conservatory teachers' league sacked in January after organizing protests. In recent months, teacher strikes at Lebanon's public schools have paralyzed the education sector. Soprano Hiba al-Kawas, who last year became the first woman to head the conservatory, said she had worked day and night to improve the situation, but political deadlock has stymied progress. Lebanon's entrenched political elite, widely blamed for the country's crisis, has failed to take action to stem the three-year economic collapse.

As sectarian barons bicker over who should be the country's next leader, the presidency has remained vacant since October 31, while a caretaker government with limited powers has been at the helm of the bankrupt state for almost a year. Despite the obstacles, Kawas said



Lebanon's national conservatory of music teacher, soprano and concert organizer Ghada Ghanem speaks to the public before a concert at the Al-Madina theatre in Beirut.

she had managed to secure pay increases that should allow a return to in-person teaching. A teacher who was paid 30,000 Lebanese pounds per hour - \$0.50 based on an exchange rate used for public sector salaries - would earn 300,000 once the wage hike takes effect, she said. It is "just a first step", Kawas added. Teacher Kerbage expressed optimism at the new regime, which he said should push his monthly earnings into the hundreds of dollars. "Anything" would be welcome, he said. "I would be able to pay for my fuel, for my electricity, and for some food - that's a lot." — AFP



Lebanon's national conservatory of music teacher, Fadi Rashid, plays guitar during a concert at the Al-Madina theatre in Beirut.



Lebanon's national conservatory of music teacher, soprano and concert organizer Ghada Ghanem (right) and guest singer Elie Rizkallah perform during a concert at the Al-Madina theatre in Beirut.



Lebanon's national conservatory of music student, Aline Chalvarjian, plays oud (lute) during a concert at the Al-Madina theatre in Beirut.



Adidas posts loss as Kanye West split 'hurts' business

German sportswear giant Adidas reported Friday a hefty first-quarter loss, acknowledging its split from controversial US rapper Kanye West was "hurting" its bottom line. The company booked a net loss of 39 million euros (\$43 million) from January to March, compared to a profit of 482 million euros in the period a year earlier.

The end of its highly successful Yeezy line, designed in collaboration with West, hit sales by about 400 million euros in the quarter. But overall sales were not as bad as feared, with analysts seeing early signs of improving fortunes, and Adidas's share price rose 7.5 percent in the afternoon on the Frankfurt Stock Exchange.

Adidas halted its tie-up with West - now known as Ye - in October after he made a series of anti-Semitic outbursts. The loss of Yeezy, along with falling revenues for its lifestyle brands, "are of course hurting us," said new CEO Bjorn Gulden in a statement.

But there was no news Friday about what it would do with its huge stock of Yeezy trainers. "The options are narrowing," Gulden told reporters after the results were released, but finding a solution will take time as there are "so many interested parties". —AFP

'Very happy' Ed Sheeran wins US copyright trial

British pop phenom Ed Sheeran expressed joy and relief Thursday after a US jury found he did not plagiarize Marvin Gaye's "Let's Get It On" in composing his hit "Thinking Out Loud," calling the ruling a win for creative freedom. The English musician hugged his team inside a Manhattan federal courtroom after jurors ruled that he had "independently" created his 2014 song. Outside, he told reporters he was "very happy" but "unbelievably frustrated that baseless claims like this" even make it to trial.

The civil lawsuit was filed by heirs of Gaye co-writer Ed Townsend, who alleged that harmonic progressions and rhythmic elements of Sheeran's song were lifted without permission from the classic made famous by Gaye. The heirs sought a share of the profits from Sheeran's hit.

"If the jury had decided this matter the other way, we might as well say goodbye to the creative freedom of songwriters," Sheeran told reporters.

"It is devastating and also insulting to be accused of stealing other people's songs when we put so much into our livelihoods," he added. "I am just a guy with a guitar who loves writing music for people to enjoy." "I am not and will never allow myself to be a piggy bank for anyone to shake."

'Songwriter's alphabet'

The jurors spent some three hours deliberating whether Sheeran's song and Gaye's classic are substantially similar and if their common elements are protected by copyright law.

Sheeran spent days testifying with guitar in hand, playing demos for the court to prove the 1-3-4-5 chord pro-



Ed Sheeran leaves Manhattan Federal Court and speaks to members of the media after he was found not guilty in a music copyright trial.

gression in question is a basic building block of pop music that can't be owned.

The 32-year-old said he writes most of his songs in a day, and said he co-wrote "Thinking Out Loud" with singer-songwriter Amy Wadge, a regular creative collaborator. A musicologist retained by the defense told the court the four-chord sequence was used in a number of songs before Gaye's hit came out in 1973.

"These chords are common building blocks," Sheeran said Thursday. "They are a songwriter's 'alphabet', our tool kit." "No one owns them, or the way they are played, in the same way nobody owns the color blue." Plaintiff Kathryn Townsend Griffin left court and breezed by reporters smoking what appeared to be a cigarillo, saying only: "God is good all the time, all the time God is good."

'Sense of relief'

Industry insiders closely followed the copyright lawsuit as some feared



British singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran departs Manhattan Federal Court in New York. — AFP photos

it could chill songwriters' creativity and open the door to future litigation.

It was the second trial in a year for Sheeran, who successfully testified at a London court last April in a case over his song "Shape Of You," saying the lawsuit was emblematic of copyright litigation going too far. The judge also ruled in his favor in that case.

Sheeran's "Thinking Out Loud" shot up America's Billboard Hot 100 charts upon release, and won Sheeran a 2016 Song of the Year Grammy.

There have been a handful of landmark music copyright cases in recent years, notably when Gaye's family - who was not part of the New York lawsuit against Sheeran - successfully sued the artists Robin Thicke and Pharrell Williams over similarities between the song "Blurred Lines" and Gaye's "Got to Give it Up." That result in 2015 surprised many in the industry, including legal experts, who considered many of the musical components cited as foundational, and existing largely in the public domain.

Then an appeals court decision confirmed Led Zeppelin's victory over a similar case focused on the classic "Stairway to Heaven" - a victory for songwriters that Sheeran's case should bolster. "I hope that the verdict gives songwriters and publishers some sense of relief that they don't need to be looking over their shoulders quite so much," said Joseph Fishman, a law professor specialized in intellectual property at Vanderbilt University. "That would be a big shift from the mood following the 'Blurred Lines' verdict."

'Sanity prevailed'

The swinging pendulum has nevertheless left some songwriters fearful of the volatility of opinions from jurors who almost certainly do not have a background in musicology and must rely on expert witnesses for context.

After delivering the verdict, juror Sophia Neis told journalists it took a beat for all seven members to find common ground. "There was a lot of back and forth" with advocates on both sides, the 23-year-old said.

Joe Bennett, a forensic musicologist at the prestigious Berklee College of Music, told AFP he was "delighted" that "sanity prevailed" in the case. "In music copyright litigation cases involving one or two bars of music, the plaintiff's allegation of plagiarism is almost always wrong," he said. "Coincidental similarity happens all the time, particularly with chords and short melodic fragments." "Hopefully this sensible verdict will discourage other spurious complaints." — AFP

Sports

Perez takes pole in Miami as Leclerc crash leaves Verstappen in ninth

Verstappen frustrated that he had not been able to complete a peak lap before the red flag

MIAMI GARDENS: Red Bull's Sergio Perez grabbed pole position for Sunday's Miami Grand Prix and with team-mate Max Verstappen left back in ninth on the grid, has his eyes on a victory that could send him to the top of the standings.

Perez is just six points behind defending world champion Verstappen after the Mexican's second victory of the season in Azerbaijan last week. Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso, enjoying a strong season, claimed second place and Ferrari's Carlos Sainz will start in third in an all-Spanish speaking front row of the grid.

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc crashed out with one minute 36 seconds left, causing a red flag and the decision was taken not to resume the session. Leclerc, who had clipped the wall earlier in qualification, lost control through Turn Six and span out of control the entry to the next turn, with his Ferrari spinning into the wall.

The premature end to the session left Verstappen, who had topped the final two practice sessions, without the chance to make a final lap to challenge for pole and Leclerc back in seventh. Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton, the seven-times world champion, failed to make it out of Q2 and will start down in 13th place on the grid for Sunday's race.

Duel provides drama

With Red Bull consistently the fastest this season, the duel between their two drivers is so far the source of the most drama. "I'm enjoying (the battle)," said Perez. "I'm just thinking race by race. Tomorrow (Sunday) is a new opportunity starting from pole, we are the ones that have something to lose," he said.

Perez said he had been struggling in practice

before finding his pace when it counted. "It wasn't coming together. I was struggling for balance, confidence," he said. "It has been my worst weekend up to qualifying. I was just resetting everything we did, we made a small change into qualifying that really everything became more alive. We put in the lap when it mattered," added the Red Bull driver.

Verstappen was left frustrated that he had not been able to complete a peak lap before the red flag. "I was trying to put it on the limit and then I made a mistake and had to abort the lap," Verstappen said. "Then you rely on a bit of luck that there is not going to be a red flag, but that can happen on a street circuit. I'm just a bit upset with myself."

"It's going to be difficult. I made it difficult for myself, so I have to accept that," he said. Hamilton has an even more difficult task as his frustrations continued. "Last run I was at the last of the pack and trying to get the temperatures into the tyres. Everyone slowed into the last corner and I lost all temperatures and couldn't do the lap," he said.

"We knew it was very hard and there was a 50:50 chance we could get into Q3 so we need to be better with our timing. It's done, I'll try and get my head down tomorrow and see what I can do -- 13th to God knows where," he said.

Kevin Magnussen of Haas was a surprise fourth, ahead of Alpine's Pierre Gasly and Hamilton's Mercedes team-mate George Russell. After Friday's practice several drivers had complained about the relaid track being slippery and Sainz said it remained a difficult challenge.

"It was a very tricky quali for all," he said. "I think it's very difficult to find the right feeling with the tyres around this tarmac, and it was a fight the whole



MIAMI GARDENS: (L-R) Aston Martin's Spanish driver Fernando Alonso, Red Bull Racing's Mexican driver Sergio Perez and Ferrari's Spanish driver Carlos Sainz Jr., pose after the qualifying session for the 2023 Miami Formula One Grand Prix at the Miami International Autodrome in Miami Gardens. — AFP

way through and very easy to make mistakes. "It was getting windier and windier...but in general it was a decent outcome for tomorrow, but today I think we could have been even better," he said.

Rain is possible on Sunday which could add a further element of difficulty. The debut Miami race

attracted plenty of celebrity attention last year and entrepreneurs Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos were both at the track on Saturday. Tesla, SpaceX and Twitter owner Musk watched the practice session from inside Red Bull's garage while Amazon founder Bezos was with McLaren. — AFP

USA claims last semi final berth at LPGA International

SAN FRANCISCO: The United States claimed the last semi-final berth at the LPGA International Crown on Saturday to book a clash with Thailand, the only team to emerge from four-balls pool play with a maximum six wins.

The United States, already closing in on a semi-final spot after Friday's matches, lost one match and halved another against Sweden, but that was more than enough as China split their two with England—unable to get the two victories they needed to have a chance of advancing.

Meanwhile, Thailand completed a perfect pool play performance as Patty Tavatanakit and Atthaya Thitikul beat Australia's Minjee Lee and Stephanie Kyriacou 1-up and Moriya and Ariya Jutanugarn beat Hannah Green and Sarah Kemp 3&2.

Tavatanakit and Thitikul were 3-up through 13 holes when Lee and Kyriacou won two straight holes with birdies. "I think it woke me up a little bit when they started making putts," Tavatanakit said. "Steph was really clutch coming down the end. You've got to give that to her."

"But we did what we had to do, and we ended up finishing, winning." After the 16th hole was tied with pars, Thitikul matched Kyriacou's birdie at 17 and Tavatanakit matched Kyriacou's birdie at the par-5 18th to seal the win. "We had to get the birdies to beat them," Thitikul said.

With six match wins under their belts this week, Tavatanakit said the Thais are feeling "good vibes" heading into Sunday at TPC Harding Park, where each semi-final will consist of two singles and a foursomes match.

The winners will return Sunday afternoon for a final in the same format. "It's match play," Tavatanakit said. "At the end of the day anything can happen. We're just going to give it our best and hopefully we bring home the trophy."

They'll be up against a US team featuring world number one Nelly Korda, newly minted major winner Lilia Vu, Lexi Thompson and Danielle Kang.

Sweden unbeaten

Sweden's Anna Nordqvist and Caroline Hedwall beat Vu and Korda 1 up on Saturday while Thompson and Kang tied with Madelene Sagstrom and Maja Stark in the final match of the day. Vu holed out from the fairway for eagle on the sixth hole as she and Korda led much of their match, but Nordqvist's birdies at 15 and 17 were enough for a win.

Sagstrom and Stark were 2-up through 13 holes, but the Americans won 14, 15 and 16 to go 1-up, only for Stark's birdie to win the 18th and forge the tie. By then, however, the United States were already assured of going through. China's Yin Ruoning and Lin Xiyu had earned one of the points they needed with a 2&1 win over England's Bronte Law and Jodi Ewart-Shadoff.

But Alice Hewson and Liz Young claimed England's only round-robin win when Hewson's birdie at 18 gave them a 1-up win over Liu Yu and Liu Ruixin. The other semi-final will pit Sweden, winners of Pool A with 5 ½ points, against Australia, who finished second in Pool B to Thailand with 3 ½ points.

In other matches on Saturday, defending champions South Korea nabbed their first two wins of the week as Choi Hye-jin and Chun In-gee beat Japan's Nasa Hataoka and Ayaka Furue 3&1 and Ko Jin-young and Kim Hyo-joo beat Yuka Saso and Hinako Shibuno 3&2. — AFP

'One Pandya will win': Brothers skipper IPL teams

AHMEDABAD: Hardik and Krunal Pandya hugged and joked Sunday as they made history by becoming the first brothers to captain two opposing sides in an Indian Premier League match.

"It's a dream come true for us, leading our respective sides," elder brother Krunal Pandya, 32, skipper of Lucknow Super Giants, said after winning the toss in Ahmedabad. But he added: "Once we go into the field, the game face will be on."

Gujarat Titans skipper Hardik Pandya, 29, adjusted his big brother's hat and also told the host, who called it wrong, that the coin fell in Krunal's favour. "Big, emotional day for the family, our father would

Al Muzaini unveils Kuwait women's cricket training kit

KUWAIT: Al Muzaini Exchange Company, the number one exchange company in Kuwait and the proud sponsors of Kuwait Cricket joined the Kuwait women's cricket team and the Management of Kuwait Cricket for the unveiling of the women's training jersey with the Al Muzaini logo at the front of the kit.

The event was held in Sulaibiya cricket ground. Members of the women's cricket team were presented with their new training kits by Guruprasad Kadri, the Operations manager at Al Muzaini, Trevin Cutinho, the Digital Marketing officer at Al Muzaini and Sajid Ashraf, Director General of the Kuwait Cricket Council Board. The team were provided with words of support and encouragement from the guest panel as the names of the 20-women Kuwait National Women's Cricket Team shortlist was announced.

The players were excited to receive their kits and

Mage wins 149th Kentucky Derby

LOS ANGELES: Mage roared from off the pace to win the 149th Kentucky Derby on Saturday, launching US racing's Triple Crown campaign as two more horse deaths on Saturday cast a pall on proceedings at Churchill Downs.

Trainer Gustavo Delgado and jockey Javier Castellano—both from Venezuela—each claimed a first Kentucky Derby win, Mage surging around the final turn and out-dueling Two Phil's down the stretch. Two Phil's, trained by Larry Rivelli and ridden by Jareth Loveberry, finished second and Angel of Empire, trained by Brad Cox and ridden by Flavien Prat, was third.

Mage, a 16-1 shot who had impressed in running second to Forte in the Florida Derby five weeks ago, was among the beneficiaries when the race was thrown wide open Saturday morning as favorite Forte became the fifth horse scratched from the 1 ¼-mile event.

Now he's poised to challenge for the Triple Crown, with the Preakness Stakes in Baltimore on May 20 to be followed by the Belmont Stakes in New York in June. "Give me a couple of days at least," Delgado laughed when asked if Mage would be pointed toward the coveted treble.

Mage became the fourth horse to win the Derby off only three prior career starts. But Castellano, denied in 15 prior Derby attempts, said he never doubted the lightly raced colt could win. "He did it really well today," Castellano said. "He got a lot of dirt in his face, came from behind horses."

have been proud," said an emotional Hardik, a regular in the national side and a much bigger star than Krunal. "This is something that's happening for the first time. Short of words, but the family is proud. One Pandya will win." The occasion was especially momentous since the two brothers were playing in their home state Gujarat in western India at the world's biggest cricket stadium.

Brothers have played against each other in the money-spinning T20 tournament, including India stars Irfan and Yusuf Pathan, but never before have two siblings led their teams. The occasion arose when Krunal took over as leader of Lucknow after injured regular captain KL Rahul was ruled out on Friday for the rest of the tournament. Hardik, a pace bowler and a hard-hitting batsman who has played 11 Tests, 74 ODIs and 87 T20 matches for India, led Gujarat to a fairytale title last year in the team's debut season. Krunal, a left-hand batsman and left-arm spinner, has played five ODIs and 19 T20 matches for India, with his last match in 2021. — AFP



AHMEDABAD: Gujarat Titans' Hardik Pandya plays a shot during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Gujarat Titans and Lucknow Super Giants at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad. — AFP



Kuwait women's cricket team

expressed their gratitude towards Al Muzaini for the support and confidence that the company has placed in supporting women's cricket and for being the first company to sponsor women's cricket in Kuwait.

Al Muzaini is extremely proud to be a part of the growth of women's cricket in Kuwait and encourages the young girls to actively take up the sport and conquer all milestones and break all records. Al Muzaini also recently announced their Mega Pro-

motion Campaign 2023. Transfer money through Al Muzaini for a chance to win a BMW X3 2023 and incredible prizes worth over \$130,000. Send money through Al Muzaini's branches, self-service kiosks, online or the mobile app and use any of their services for a chance to win every day. Transferring through the app multiplies your chances of winning. The campaign lasts from 23rd March to 11th June. Al Muzaini, always near you!



LOUISVILLE: US-Venezuelan Jockey Javier Castellano on Mage (front L) rides during the 149th Kentucky Derby at Churchill Downs Racetrack in Louisville, Kentucky. — AFP

"He's a little horse but with a big heart." The scintillating run capped a disturbing week at the iconic racetrack in Louisville, Kentucky, where seven horses have died in the space of 10 days. That included two horses on Saturday's race programme—Chloe's Dream and Freezing Point—that were euthanized after being taken from the course by horse ambulance after breaking down in races.

Last week, Derby-bound Wild on Ice and Take Charge Briana were euthanized after suffering leg injuries. Chasing Artie and Parents Pride, both trained

by Saffie Joseph, collapsed and died with the cause of death still unknown.

The Board of Stewards announced Thursday that all Joseph-trained horses had been scratched from all races until further notice. That included Derby runner Lord Miles. Those four deaths prompted a statement of concern from Churchill Downs officials on Wednesday, and the Daily Racing Form then reported that another horse, Code of Kings, flipped over while being unsaddled in the paddock and broke his neck. — AFP

Sports

Aryna Sabalenka earns Iga Swiatek revenge to win Madrid Open title

Sabalenka earned her 13th career title and only her second on clay

MADRID: World number two Aryna Sabalenka played a superb attacking game to beat Iga Swiatek in the Madrid Open final on Saturday for her first win on clay against her top-ranked rival. The Belarusian prevailed 6-3, 3-6, 6-3 to capture the title in the Spanish capital for the second time.

Until Saturday, the 25-year-old had lost all of her three previous meetings with the Pole on clay without even winning a set. "It's something unbelievable. I'm really happy that I'm able to fight against her and I'm able to get this win so it's not like so super boring for people to watch our matches," said the champion.

"I really enjoy playing on clay, because I have extra time. It's not super fast, so I can go for my powerful shots. There are longer rallies. It's like not just bomb, bomb." The big-hitting Belarusian gained revenge for defeat by her Polish rival in the Stuttgart final a fortnight ago with a thrilling triumph to end Swiatek's nine-match winning streak ahead of her French Open defence.

Two-time Roland Garros winner Swiatek fought her way back into the match after an explosive start by Sabalenka, but the second seed came back strongly in the third set to win the first WTA 1000 final featuring the top two ranked players since 2014.

Sabalenka earned her 13th career title, and only her second on clay in two hours and 25 minutes, clinching victory on her fourth championship point with a forehand cross-court winner. "I'm just super happy with this win, especially against Iga on the clay, it's always tough matches against her," added Sabalenka.

The Australian Open champion started with great intensity in her serve and forehand, given some extra zip because of the altitude — Madrid is the second highest European capital city. Sabalenka earned two break points but sought a winner too keenly to convert and Swiatek held for 3-3.

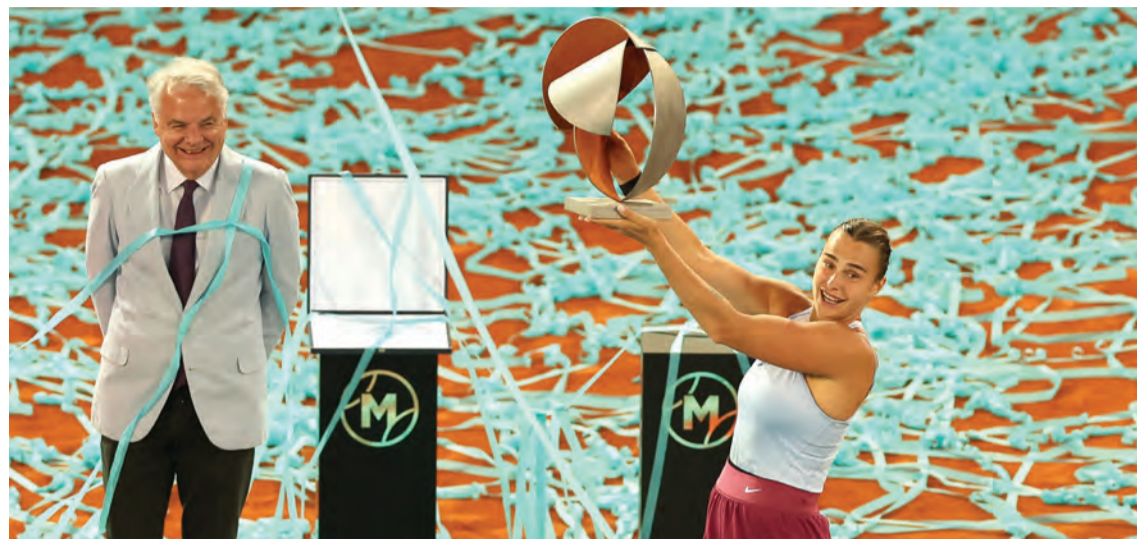
She did the same again on Swiatek's next service but this time earned the break for a 5-3 lead when the top seed sent a backhand long. The 2021 Madrid victor consolidated to clinch the first set, her first ever against Swiatek on the dirt, having lost in straight sets in their three previous clay clashes.

'No fun at 1am'

Swiatek, who failed to earn a single break point in the opening set to Sabalenka's four, converted her first for a 2-0 lead in the second set as her opponent pushed a return into the net. The world number one consolidated it to love, showing a flash of her usual prowess on clay.

However at 3-1 down, the relentless Sabalenka earned four break points, getting back on serve with a beefy backhand winner down the line. The Belarusian consolidated and again put Swiatek under the cosh on her serve, but the Pole dug deep and saved two break points to hold. Swiatek showed her fine defensive game as she broke again for 5-3 and served it out to force the decisive third set. Sabalenka broke for a 2-0 advantage as Swiatek went a fraction long, and saved a break point with a vicious forehand and another after that to consolidate.

Swiatek broke back but Sabalenka did it again



MADRID: Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka poses for pictures with the winner's trophy after beating Poland's Iga Swiatek during their 2023 WTA Tour Madrid Open tennis tournament singles final match at Caja Magica in Madrid. — AFP

for a 5-3 lead and, after missing three championship points as the 21-year-old battled until the end, eventually triumphed. "Sometimes it's tougher; sometimes it's easier. That's why we have variety in tennis, and that's why sometimes players are playing better on some surfaces and some on different," said Swiatek.

The world number one aimed a jab at the tournament organizers for some of the late nights over

the past week, with matches regularly finishing in the early hours. "It's not fun to play at 1 am though," she added. "I'm happy anyway I was able to get past this experience and survive and be in the final."

In the men's final on Sunday home favorite and world number two Carlos Alcaraz is aiming to defend his title against German lucky loser Jan-Lennard Struff. — AFP



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's Egyptian striker Mohamed Salah (left) fights for the ball with Brentford's German midfielder Kevin Schade (right) during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Brentford at Anfield in Liverpool. — AFP

Salah keeps Liverpool in top four hunt

LIVERPOOL: Mohamed Salah's landmark goal sealed Liverpool's 1-0 win against Brentford to keep their Premier League top four hopes alive on Saturday. The Egypt forward's first half finish made him the first player in Liverpool history to net in nine successive games at Anfield, with his strike taking him to 100 career goals at the stadium.

He also moved level with Steven Gerrard's Liverpool tally of 186 goals, sitting in joint fifth place in the club's all-time scoring list. For the third season in a row, Salah has reached 30 goals in all competitions. "Mohamed Salah is special. A lot of people don't appreciate players when they are still playing. For us, it's clear. He is an all-time great," Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp said.

"I can't see him stopping, that's just his nature.

You need to have this desire to score goals. "He works hard to close players down. We all know some world class players don't do that, but he does. I'm really proud of him." Klopp's fifth placed team climbed within one point of fourth placed Manchester United after their sixth successive league victory.

United's defeat at Brighton in midweek has given Liverpool renewed hope of qualifying for the Champions League via a top four berth. But United, who travel to West Ham on Sunday, have two games in hand and remain favorites to finish above their bitter rivals. "If Manchester United win their games in hand, then they are seven points away and it is pretty much done. We know that," Klopp said. "It's an interesting period. We have to make sure we keep the teams behind us, behind us because they are coming. Nothing is decided and that's good."

Salah's memorable evening was partially overshadowed by the Liverpool fans who booed the national anthem just hours after the coronation ceremony for King Charles III at Westminster Abbey. Liverpool said on Friday they would play the anthem prior to kick-off despite acknowledging "some supporters have strong views" on the subject. — AFP

Alvarez batters Ryder to retain super middleweight crown

GUADALAJARA: Saul "Canelo" Alvarez made a triumphant return to Mexico, punishing John Ryder on the way to a unanimous 12-round decision to retain his undisputed super middleweight world title. Ryder, whose face was already a bloody mess by the time Alvarez knocked him down in the fifth round, battled gamely in the later stages but Alvarez emerged a clear winner in his first fight in his native Mexico in nearly 12 years.

Judge Jeremy Hayes scored the bout 120-107 for Alvarez while Joe Pasquale and Gerardo Martino both saw it 118-109 for the champion, who delighted a sellout crowd of some 50,000 at the open-air Akron Stadium in his hometown.

"It's a historic moment for me," Alvarez said. "I'm blessed to be here with my people who supported me from the beginning." Alvarez improved to 59-2-2 with 39 knockouts while Ryder, the mandatory challenger, fell to 38-6 with 18 wins inside the distance.

After a tentative opening round, the 32-year-old Alvarez began to open up, landing a bevy of right hands that had Ryder bleeding from the nose and



GUADALAJARA: Mexican boxer Saul "Canelo" Alvarez (left) fights British boxer John Ryder (right) during their boxing match for the WBA, WBC, IBF and WBO super middleweight titles at Akron Stadium in Guadalajara, Jalisco State, Mexico. — AFP

mouth by the third round. A brutal left-right combination dropped Ryder in the fifth round.

He beat the count and held on until the bell, but he was in trouble again in the sixth when another big right from Alvarez had the Briton's knees sagging. But Ryder, nicknamed "The Gorilla," kept coming. He was down again after a right from Alvarez late in the eighth, but that was ruled a slip and he had bounced back up moments before the bell. — AFP

Iran sports boss quits after women compete unveiled

TEHRAN: The head of Iran's athletics federation resigned Sunday over a sporting event featuring women without the mandatory headscarf, state media reported, as the Islamic republic toughens enforcement of hijab rules.

"Hashem Siami resigned from his post due to the controversies that arose from the endurance (running) race organized in Shiraz" in Iran's south, official news agency IRNA said. According to images from Friday's competition published by Iranian media, some women were running without headscarves, made compulsory shortly after the Islamic revolution of 1979.

Local organizers of the public event have also been summoned to provide "explanations", the provincial prosecutor said Sunday in a statement. Siami told IRNA he was not involved in organizing the competition, and the unveiled athletes were not part of the national federation.

A new police programme came into force last month aiming for stricter enforcement of hijab-wearing in public. The number of women in Iran defying the dress code has increased since a wave of protests following the September 16 death in custody of Kurdish-Iranian Mahsa Amini, 22, for allegedly breaching it. Authorities in Tehran last week launched proceedings against at least four actors who had appeared in public without a headscarf, local media said. More than 150 commercial establishments nationwide were closed after employees had allegedly violated the dress code, authorities said in mid-April. Police in Shiraz arrested in June girls who removed their veils at a skateboarding event, as well as the organizers. — 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
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsia	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, MOHAMMAD AZAM SIDDIQUE S/o ABDUL WAHEED SIDDIQUE holder of Indian passport No. L4907223, having permanent address: Ghooripur Nizamabad Azamgarh, 276206, Uttar Pradesh, India. Street No. 170, Building No:302 Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under: Given name MOHAMMAD AZAM SHAIKH S/o ABDUL WAHEED SHAIKH and surname SHAIKH. **(#3528) 8/5/2023**

I, HUSENI BHAI holder of passport no. R7728766 do hereby change my name to HUSENIBHAI (as given name) KATABJIWALA (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name HUSENIBAHAI KATABJIWALA and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. **(#3527) 8/5/2023**

I, SHABBIR HUSAIN ABDUL HUSAIN, holder of Indian passport No. Z5712083 issued at Embassy of India, Kuwait. I am a permanent resident of Ezzy Mohalla Bohra Colony, Galiyakot, Distt Dungepur, Rajasthan-India and presently residing in Kuwait hereby declare my given name is SHABBIR HUSAIN and surname is BADRI. **(#3526) 8/5/2023**

I, ZENAB BAI, holder of Indian Passport No. Z4824509 issued at Embassy of India, Kuwait. I am a permanent resident of Ezzy Mohalla Bohra Colony, Galiyakot, Distt Dungepur, Rajasthan-India and presently residing in Kuwait hereby declare my given name is ZENAB BAI and surname is BADRI. **(#3526) 8/5/2023**

I, Nazia Can, R/o. H. No. 81/3, near Ameeniya 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, 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**

Lost & Found

I, JAMIMAH CARIS SADIQ have lost my original senior school marks statement year 2016 Roll No: (9114432) (CBSE) board, if found contact; 65766538. **(#3525) 8/5/2023**

Automated enquiry about the CivilID card is 1889988

Rodrygo fires Real to Copa del Rey glory

Ancelotti's Madrid earn their 20th Spanish Cup at La Cartuja



SEVILLE: Real Madrid's French forward Karim Benzema (C), Real Madrid's Italian coach Carlo Ancelotti (2nd-L) and teammates celebrate with the trophy after winning the Spanish Copa del Rey (King's Cup) final football match between Real Madrid CF and CA Osasuna at La Cartuja stadium in Seville. — AFP

SEVILLE: Rodrygo Goes fired Real Madrid to Copa del Rey glory with a clinical double in a 2-1 victory over Osasuna in Seville on Saturday, with Brazilian compatriot Vinicius Junior playing a part in both goals.

Carlo Ancelotti's Madrid earned their 20th Spanish Cup at La Cartuja in their 40th final, ending a nine-year wait to lift the trophy again.

Osasuna, who have never won a major trophy, fought well but ultimately fell short against the reigning Spanish and European champions, who face Manchester City on Tuesday in the Champions League semi-finals.

Madrid have now won all six of the trophies available to them during Ancelotti's second reign at the club, after the Italian returned in 2021.

Rodrygo fired Madrid ahead inside two minutes after Vinicius' run down the left, and Ancelotti's team had the better chances in the first half.

However, Lucas Torro levelled for Osasuna in the 58th minute to give them hope of an upset in their first cup final since 2005, and second ever.

Rodrygo whisked it away, firing home after a re-

bound fell his way following another Vinicius charge, ensuring Madrid would take the trophy back to the capital. "They made the difference, Vini unbalanced them and Rodrygo scored the two goals," said Ancelotti of his Brazilian wingers. Madrid beat both Atletico Madrid and then rivals Barcelona to reach the final and Ancelotti said it was time to celebrate, but not too heavily ahead of the clash with City.

"This Copa arrived at an important moment, we came through very tricky ties, it's a deserved prize against strong opponents," added the coach.

"This night we will celebrate, a little bit, not too much, and then we will get back to work for Tuesday." Osasuna coach Jagoba Arrasate deployed midfielder Jon Moncayola at right-back to try and stop Madrid winger Vinicius. It didn't work. Vinicius broke in down the left in the second minute and his dangerous cut-back was missed by Fede Valverde but slammed home by Rodrygo.

The Brazilian, in sparkling form, scored the earliest Copa del Rey final goal since 2006 -- a year after Osasuna finished runners-up to Real Betis.

Karim Benzema should have doubled Madrid's

lead but Sergio Herrera saved brilliantly to deny the forward after another lightning Vinicius break.

Osasuna earned a foothold in the game and came inches from equalising when on loan Barcelona winger Ez Abde broke through on goal but Dani Carvajal cleared his effort off the line.

Vinicius in wars

Madrid continued to push for their second goal -- David Alaba struck the crossbar with a free kick and Vinicius went down in the box under pressure from Osasuna defender David Garcia.

His appeals were waved away and Vinicius clashed with Garcia, who attended the 2005 final as a childhood supporter, who ruffled his hair to annoy him further.

Vinicius was booked just before half-time for complaining, and exchanged heated words with Osasuna substitute Chimy Avila as the players walked in at half-time.

Torro drilled Osasuna level from the edge of the box when Abde's deflected cross fell into his path. The club's passionate supporters celebrated wildly,

including letting off a flare which needed to be extinguished, and one fan was taken away on a stretcher, although he appeared to be smiling.

Osasuna's joy did not last long though, with Vinicius making another dangerous burst in down the left -- Madrid president Florentino Perez later calling him the best in the world in his position.

Vinicius fed Toni Kroos, whose shot was blocked, but Rodrygo was in the right place at the right time to finish with aplomb and put Madrid's name on the trophy. "I'm really happy, we were talking about this in the week, that it was a long time since Madrid had won this competition," Rodrygo told Spanish television broadcaster La 1. Osasuna departed with the taste of defeat but their heads held high.

"It's very difficult to defend against (Vinicius) and on Tuesday I am sure City will suffer too," said coach Arrasate. "It's not news that Vinicius stood out, Rodrygo scored two as well, we're talking about two of the best players in the world.

"(Madrid) are champions because they deserve this cup, but we're proud of the team, and let's try to do it again." — AFP

Lakers rout Warriors, Heat rip Knicks to grab NBA series leads

LOS ANGELES: Anthony Davis and LeBron James powered the Los Angeles Lakers in a rout of defending champion Golden State on Saturday while Jimmy Butler returned from an ankle injury to spark Miami's romp over New York in the NBA playoffs.

Davis scored 25 points and grabbed 13 rebounds while LeBron James added 21 points to lead the host Lakers over the Warriors 127-97. Davis made 7-of-10 shots from the floor, 11-of-12 from the free throw line, and had four blocks, three assists and three steals while overwhelming with defensive plays.

"I just wanted to come out and get back to the dominant performance that I do defensively," Davis said. "We wanted to get back to our roots, and defending and guarding. This is a tough team to guard but we know that we can do it and we did it well tonight, holding them to 97 points." James, who went the first 13 minutes without shooting, added eight assists and eight rebounds while D'Angelo Russell posted 21 points, all in the first half. The Lakers grabbed a 2-1 lead over the defending champion Warriors in their best-of-seven Western Conference semifinal series with game four on Monday in Los Angeles.

"It's a battle," Davis said of the series. "Two teams that want it and can score and can give each other a beat down any given night. "We know they're going to come out with a lot of firepower Monday trying not to go down 3-1. We've got to have the mindset we had tonight."

An 18-4 run to end the first quarter gave the Warriors a 30-23 lead, with James not taking a shot in the first period of a playoff game for the first time in his career. "It's just a case of allowing the game to come to him, letting a natural rhythm happen and not forcing things," Lakers



LOS ANGELES: Moses Moody #4 of the Golden State Warriors passes the ball during Round 2 Game 3 of the Western Conference Semi-Finals 2023 NBA Playoffs against the Los Angeles Lakers at Crypto.Com Arena in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

coach Darvin Ham said. After falling behind 40-29, the Lakers answered with a 30-8 run in the final 7:22 of the second quarter for a 59-48 half-time lead. "As a group, we wasn't shooting the ball well. We locked up defensively and got easy ones," D'Angelo Russell said.

The Lakers, who stretched the lead as large as 20 points in the third quarter, entered the fourth ahead 86-68 and cruised from there, Ham praised Davis for his defending. "He sets a tone for us defensively," Ham said. "He's the catalyst. He's the anchor. His activity, when he is changing shots, blocking shots, it's amazing. He's locked in." Stephen Curry led the Warriors with 23 points while Andrew Wiggins added 16 and Klay Thompson had 15. In the Eastern Conference, Butler scored 28 points to lead the Heat over the Knicks 105-86, giving Miami a 2-1 series lead with game four Monday on their home court. "It feels good to get a dub (W) on

our home floor in front of our fans," Butler said. "We're going to take that and roll with it."

Butler missed Miami's loss Tuesday after suffering an injury in the series opener, but returned to help the Heat lead from start to finish. "I'm comfortable, I'm confident and I work extremely hard at my craft," Butler said.

"My teammates have got a lot to do with that. They always make sure I'm catching the ball in spots where I'm comfortable and letting me be aggressive." Max Strus added 19 points for Miami while Bam Adebayo added 17 points and 12 rebounds and Kyle Lowry had 14 points.

Miami coach Erik Spoelstra said Butler's return infused his teammates with confidence. "You can't put an analytic to it. It's just the overall confidence level your team has—that you can always get the ball to him and know that we'll get something efficient and coherent," Spoelstra said of Butler. — AFP

Lens win put PSG under Ligue 1 title pressure

PARIS: Lens defeated Marseille 2-1 on Saturday to move to second place in Ligue 1 and pile the pressure on crisis-hit leaders Paris Saint-Germain whose lead was cut to three points. The victory was Lens' 15th at home this season in the league against just one defeat and one draw.

Marseille slipped back to third in the table, five points behind PSG. Skipper Seko Fofana opened the scoring for Lens after 42 minutes with a powerful, long-range shot before Lois Openda headed in the second on the hour mark.

"It's magnificent, I have no words. It's deserved, but there are still four games left to get as high as possible in the table," said Lens goalkeeper Brice Samba. "Given what we've shown since the start of the season, this is no coincidence and that's

good for us. Our coach (Franck Haise), he's the best, he's got it all figured out."

Dimitri Payet gave Marseille hope of getting something from their 800km trip north with a goal in the 88th minute but Lens held on. "In football, there is no question of merit, it doesn't matter who deserves to win, the important thing is victory," said Marseille coach Igor Tudor who criticised the referee for not sending off Lens' Facundo Medina for kicking the ball at the bench.

Marseille were also incensed that an Alexis Sanchez goal in the eighth minute was chalked off for a foul on Kevin Danso despite there appearing to be minimal contact. "I told the referee at half-time that he had the courage to rule out a goal but not to give a second yellow card to Medina," said Tudor. PSG are still expected to sweep to the French title and should be too strong for relegation-threatened Troyes on Sunday even if they will be missing Lionel Messi after the World Cup-winning superstar was sanctioned for an unauthorised trip to Saudi Arabia this week. Both Lille and Rennes saw their push for European places stall. — AFP



LENS: Lens' Polish defender Przemyslaw Frankowski (L) fights for the ball with Marseille's Portuguese defender Nuno Tavares (R) during the French L1 football match between RC Lens and Olympique de Marseille (OM) at Stade Bollaert-Delelis in Lens. — AFP