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End of the road for PART after bumpy 9-year ride

Cabinet approves demographics panel • Slow pace of registration for polls



KUWAIT: Heavy traffic is seen on two main highways in this March 27, 2023 aerial file photo, after heavy rain the previous night caused flooding and road closures. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The Cabinet approved during its weekly meeting Monday a recommendation to scrap the Public Authority for Roads and Land Transport (PART), which was founded in 2014. The decision was referred to HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah before being submitted to the National Assembly for approval. Minister of Public Works Amami Bugammaz had submitted a request to the Cabinet in March to scrap PART, while a number of lawmakers had also proposed abolishing PART because of conflict in duties between the authority and the ministry of public works.

The Cabinet also approved a recommendation to establish a national committee to regulate demographics, to be headed by Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah. The committee includes the undersecretaries of the interior, health and commerce ministries, the deputy foreign minister, Public Authority of Manpower director and Civil Service Commission undersecretary, as well as the general directors of the Public Authority for Civil Information, Public Authority of Applied Education and Training, Supreme Council of Planning and Development and Central Statistical Bureau.

Meanwhile, just 19 candidates filed their nomination papers on Monday to contest the June 6 snap general elections, with hopefuls warning that the situation could become dangerous in the country if the polls do not achieve elusive political stability. The total number of candidates after four days

of registration rose to just 104, the lowest compared to many previous elections. As many as 264 candidates registered for the scrapped Sept 22 polls during four days of registration.

Only two women have so far filed nomination papers, compared to more than 20 females in the previous polls. Among the new candidates, there were four former MPs and also four members of the annulled 2022 Assembly. This brings the total former lawmakers who are bidding for elections to 24, in addition to 20 members of the 2022 Assembly.

Former MP Adel Al-Damkhi warned after registering of calls being circulated on social media to deter people from voting in the coming elections. Former MP Mekhled Al-Azemi also warned that if the outcome of these polls does not lead to political stability, the "situation could become extremely dangerous". He did not elaborate. Azemi stressed that if all parties and all the three authorities — the Assembly, the judiciary and the government — do not cooperate, there will be no political stability.

Kuwait has experienced non-stop political disputes between MPs and the government for most of the past two decades. During this period, nine general elections were held either after HH the Amir dissolved the Assembly or the constitutional court revoked the elections over procedural mistakes. Many governments have been formed and three prime ministers were dismissed. Abdullah Al-Anbuci, a member of the 2022 Assembly, said we have to undertake many reforms to meet the aspirations of the Kuwaiti people.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Biden aide meets MBS

RIYADH: US national security advisor Jake Sullivan discussed efforts to end Yemen's eight-year war during a meeting with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Sunday night. Sullivan and Prince Mohammed "reviewed significant progress in talks to further consolidate the now 15-month long truce in Yemen and welcomed ongoing UN-led efforts to bring the war to a close", a White House statement said. — AFP (See Page 6)

Iran executes two men

TEHRAN: Iran on Monday executed two people convicted over burning the Holy Quran and insulting Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the judiciary said. Sadrollah Fazeli Zare and Youssef Mehrdad were hanged in the morning, the judiciary's Mizan Online website reported. The pair were also accused of administering social media channels and groups that promoted atheism and insulted Islamic "sanctities", Mizan noted. — AFP

Major drug trafficker killed

BEIRUT: An air strike killed a major drug smuggler and his family in southern Syria Monday, a war monitor said, attributing the strike to Jordan which has neither confirmed nor denied. Drug dealer "Marai Al-Ramthan, his wife and six children were killed in a Jordanian air force strike" in the eastern countryside of the Sweida province, near the Syrian-Jordanian border, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. — AFP

Qatar says it will not normalize ties with Syria

DOHA: Qatar, an outspoken opponent of President Bashar Al-Assad, said on Sunday it would not normalize relations with the Syrian government despite its readmission to the Arab League. The Gulf emirate has long argued against renewing ties with Syria but fell in with the unanimous consensus at an Arab League foreign ministers' meeting in Cairo earlier Sunday. The Arab bloc ended a more than decade-long suspension of Syria.

22 dead as India tourist boat capsizes

MALAPPURAM, India: At least 22 people died when a tourist boat capsized in India, officials said Monday, with many of those on board thought to be children. It was not clear why the double-decker boat carrying at least 30 people tipped over in the southern state of Kerala's Malappuram district late Sunday. Dozens of people searched for survivors in and around the stricken vessel all night, which was partially

submerged, and the search continued into Monday.

Some used ropes to stabilize the boat while others were in the water, desperately looking inside the vessel's windows for any survivors. "We have recovered 22 bodies, including 15 females and seven males. There are around six people in the hospital. Rescue operations are on," a police officer told AFP. Local publication Onmanorama reported that 11 people from one family, including three children, had died in the accident.

Rajisa, who was on the boat with her husband and daughter, told the publication most of the passengers on board were children and that there

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8 killed as SUV rams migrants at Texas bus stop

BROWNSVILLE, Texas: At least eight people were killed and several others injured on Sunday when an SUV ran a red light and plowed into a group waiting at a bus stop outside a migrant aid center in the US state of Texas, police said. Law enforcement

Qatar's position on "normalization with the Syrian regime has not changed," said foreign ministry spokesman Majid bin Muhammad Al-Ansari. He told the state Qatar News Agency that the government would not be "an obstacle" to the Arab move but any individual normalization would be linked to political progress that "fulfills the aspirations of the brotherly Syrian people".

Assad's government must "address the roots of the crisis that led to its boycott, and to take positive steps towards addressing the issues of the Syrian people," the spokesman added. Syria was suspended from the Arab League in 2011 after Assad ordered a brutal crackdown on a pro-democracy uprising, which spiraled into a conflict that has killed more than 500,000 people, displaced millions, and drew in foreign powers.

While Syria's 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. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, head of the 22-member Arab League, said Syria's return to the body is "the beginning... not the end of the issue", he added, noting it was up to individual countries to decide whether to resume ties with Damascus.

Qatar has given significant support to Syrian opposition groups which have taken over the Syrian embassy in Doha. Even as other Arab countries moved toward renewing ties with Assad's government, the Qatari spokesman condemned to the Qatari media what he called "crimes" by the Damascus government and added that "We need a real price to be paid to the Syrian people." — AFP



TANUR, India: Onlookers gather near the site of a boat accident in Malappuram district of Kerala on May 8, 2023. — AFP

said they were treating the incident as an accident for now, although a witness told AFP the driver had yelled insults at the group before accelerating.

The gray sport utility vehicle "went through a red light and ran over several people" at around 8:30 am (1330 GMT) in Brownsville, a border city at the southernmost tip of the state, police spokesman Martin Sandoval told AFP. He said seven people died and "nearly 10" others were injured. US media later reported that one person had died from their injuries at a local hospital.

Witness Luis Herrera, whose arm was hurt in the incident, told AFP the crash was "sudden". "A woman

went by in a car and warned us to get out of the way," he said. "It was a matter of moments. The killer came (through) in the car, gesturing at us, insulting us," the 36-year-old Venezuelan said. Herrera then described the driver as accelerating the car with full force.

The motorist, whom Sandoval said was also taken to the hospital, was detained by witnesses until police arrived. He has been charged for now with reckless driving. "More than likely there's going to be other charges coming on later," Sandoval earlier told a local ABC affiliate, without clarifying what the additional charges might be.

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Local

Kuwaiti student leader campaigns against using GRE as prerequisite

Exam considered inaccessible, too technical

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) is a standardized test that is commonly required for admission to graduate programs in universities in the United States and many other countries. The GRE measures a student's readiness for graduate-level academic work through a variety of question types. But according to student Abdulghaphor Hajjeh, calling GRE test a math and verbal test is quite deceiving, as it tests some general knowledge, but then gets too technical, needing obscure math properties to solve some questions that have no use in real-life applications.

Speaking to Kuwait Times, the graduate

student on a scholarship from Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, who was elected to the University of Kansas' student senate as a single-issue candidate, said most prospective students either do well in the math section or the verbal section, depending on which program they're applying to.

"GRE requires an extensive time investment, and most often private tutoring, as you do well depending on how much time you put in. Therefore, it's not a math and verbal test, but a test of commitment, where this exam favors affluent individuals who can afford tutoring services, young people that have minimum to low social commitments such as marriage or taking care of children or elders, and in-

dividuals with low-stress jobs or unemployed individuals who can invest time studying for this laborious exam," Hajjeh noted.

Hajjeh campaigned on making the GRE optional across all academic programs to increase accessibility to underrepresented students on campus, adding that almost all major schools have stopped using the GRE as a benchmark to check for mathematics or English language skills. "My counterargument, which I campaigned on during the student senate election, is that this exam negatively affects underrepresented and non-traditional students, as it favors young individuals with minimum commitments. So if you're married with children or have a demanding job, most

likely you won't be able to invest enough time to study for the GRE. Furthermore, not everyone can afford to pay KD 500 a month for private tutoring," he stressed.

Hajjeh explained that graduate program directors use this exam as an 'initial filter' to check for a particular skill as a proxy for their ability to keep up with their peers in the master's/PhD program, pointing out that in 2018, an academic paper on the GRE showed data does not support the claim that doing well in the GRE necessarily means doing well in a graduate program. He affirmed there are better tools to check if a person is fit for a particular program, such as knowledge of the subject matter or grades in specific courses.



Abdulghaphor Hajjeh

In my view

Will well-educated Kuwaitis leave?



Dr. Khalid Al-Saleh

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Political activities in Kuwait are not linked to education, and when electing National Assembly members, and sometimes selecting government members, education, wisdom and scope of thinking are far from the attributes in those selected. That is why the educated are suffering in Kuwait. They are suffering from the deteriorating cultural situation, the many pretenders, end of the evaluation era and the supremacy of superficiality in most fields of thought and culture.

We have popular leaders today, who if they lead a situation and start speaking, the educated become embarrassed and wish nobody outside Kuwait hears or sees it, because the language will be shameful and lowbrow, while the dialogue will be closer to being a fight in a football field.

When you listen to parliamentary leaderships in developed countries, be they foreign or Arab, you hear an address that comforts the mind and the language is sublime, because the choices do not rely on influence or money; rather it is away from them, as the influential and rich do not have time for reading about culture and gaining awareness.

The cultural movement in the past was shadowing the leadership, as the late Abdelaziz Hussein and Abdelaziz Al-Saraawi, along with others, had a positive influence that made the rulers love literature. Many times the late Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem used poetry to express his intentions, giving his speech clout with little words and many meanings.

We hear today childish screams and useless arguments from those who read few books and do not have but the minimum of prestigious culture. What they have is a culture of fighting and lurking, that is if we have the right to describe these attributes as culture. Culture was previously sky high in Kuwait, but today it is under our soil after the rich and influential began to practice culture, making nations laugh at us. The educated remain shameful towards what they hear in the language of addresses.

So, will the educated in Kuwait leave the country and Kuwait becomes devoid of the educated who are full of sadness? This is a question that has its answer among the Kuwaiti people in the upcoming new era.

Kuwait dispatches 5th aid aircraft to Sudan

KUWAIT: Kuwait has dispatched its fifth Air Force plane carrying 10 tons of medical supplies to violence-hit Sudan. The aid plane is part of the recently announced airlift, directed by the country's political leadership, aiming at helping the Sudanese people amid their country's tough circumstances due to ongoing fighting there. Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Public Relations Manager Khaled Al-Zeid told KUNA. He added that Kuwait would keep sending its relief aircraft to Sudan via the humanitarian airlift, noting that over the last years Kuwait had greatly contributed to easing out the humanitarian situation due to Sudan's natural disasters.

The KRCS official affirmed that Kuwait's humanitarian aid reflects the strong and firm relations between Kuwait and Sudan, and shows its determination to help all affected world countries only out of its humanitarian role. The Kuwaiti cabinet had decided to dispatch urgent relief and medical aid to Sudan under the direction of the country's political leadership.

Meanwhile, the UN's top humanitarian official arrived in the Saudi coastal city of Jeddah on Sunday for talks aiming for a ceasefire between Sudan's warring generals, a spokesperson said. "Martin Griffiths is in Jeddah at the moment and the purpose of his visit is to engage in humanitarian issues related to Sudan," spokesperson Eri Kaneko said. Fighting that broke out in Sudan on April 15 between army and paramilitary forces has killed at least 700 people, most of them civilians, wounded thousands and driven a mass exodus of Sudanese and foreign nationals. A UN official said Griffiths would meet representatives of the two generals at the heart of the

DDI organizes health awareness campaign

KUWAIT: Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI) organized an awareness campaign at the Canadian Embassy in Kuwait in the presence of Ambassador Aliya Mawani. The mobile clinic at the embassy was used to carry out tests for embassy employees. Public Relations and Information Manager at the institute Tarek Al-Eryan said DDI participated in the event. The mobile clinic was a medically equipped bus which is used to carry basic and preventive tests such as checking blood sugar levels, blood pressure, vital signs and other several tests.

This is part of the institute's efforts in spreading awareness about diabetes so as to prevent the disease and its complications. The medical team offered various consultations and answered questions about the disease. Educational brochures and booklets were distributed on healthy food, intermittent fasting, how to prevent diabetes, insulin doses and many other topics.



KUWAIT: KRCS delegates are seen in this photo with the aid plane. —KUNA

conflict, army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his rival Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who heads the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

There was no indication that Griffiths would play a direct role in discussions about a possible ceasefire. The warring generals have already announced multiple truces but none has taken hold. Sudanese and Saudi officials have provided scant details about what the Jeddah talks will cover and how long they will last. A joint US-Saudi statement on Saturday described them as "pre-negotiation talks". Saudi Arabia has assumed a high-profile role in evacuations from Sudan, dispatching naval and commercial vessels to bring thousands of civilians across the Red Sea from the Sudanese coastal city of Port Sudan. On Sunday, King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman directed \$100 mil-

lion to be donated for assistance including medical aid and help for displaced people, the official Saudi Press Agency reported.

Saudi officials will also organize a public donations campaign "to mitigate the effects of the conditions that the Sudanese people are currently going through," the agency said. Riyadh's mobilization on the humanitarian and diplomatic fronts reflects its desire "to be seen as a key regional interlocutor and player," said Hussein Ibish of the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington. "It can't effectively position itself to be a leading international force... if it doesn't at least try to broker in very destabilizing nearby disputes," Ibish said. "That said, it doesn't have to achieve success in any given field. It has to be seen as a key party involved in some or all of them." —Agencies

Murals commemorating Kuwait martyrs on display

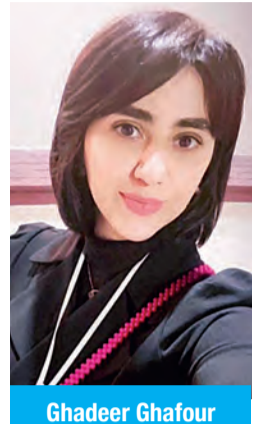
KUWAIT: Murals honoring the 1,317 Kuwaiti martyrs who lost their lives in defense of their homeland, were sent Monday by the Martyr's Bureau to the Ministry of Education. The 836 murals were dispersed across schools of all levels, and in all six governorates to serve as a reminder to younger generations of the martyrs' significant sacrifice, the bureau said in a statement. Number of schools in Kuwait Capital Governorate amounted to 165 schools whereas 127 schools are located in Al-Jahraa governorate, 155 in Al-Farwaniyah, 104 Mubarak Al-Kabeer, 181 in Al-Ahmadi and 113 schools in Hawally governorate, it added. The Bureau reiterated its commitment to the memory of the martyrs, and noted the role of the education ministry in commemorating their stories. —KUNA



Local

Opinions differ over segregating boys and girls at public schools

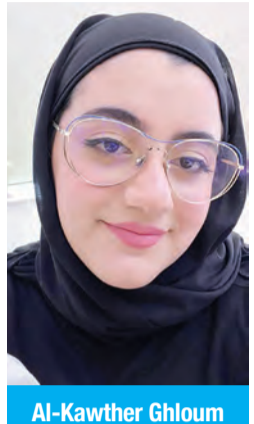
Coeducation 'encourages equality and mutual respect'



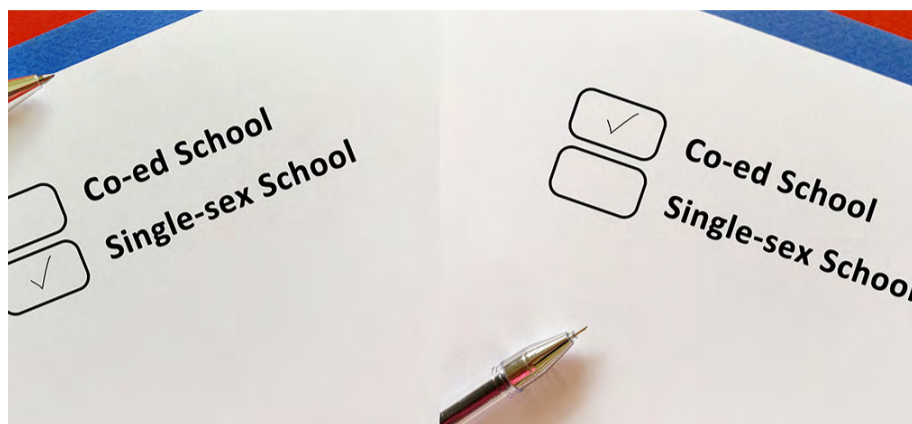
Ghadeer Ghafour



Abdulrahman Al-Khalidi



Al-Kawther Ghloum



By Ghadeer Ghloum

KUWAIT: The issue of boys and girls mixing at schools in Kuwait has been a controversial topic over the years. Many people have differing opinions about the effect of coeducation on the academic performance and moral behavior of students. Some support coeducation and argue that it provides an opportunity for both boys and girls to work collaboratively, which can improve academic performance. Coeducation also encourages equality and mutual respect between both sexes, which is a necessary skill in the workplace and in society as a whole.

Experiencing coeducation provides a more realistic representation of the society we live in, where both men and women work together and interact on a regular basis. On the other hand, opponents of coeducation argue that it may lead to inappropriate behavior and distract students from their studies. They argue that teenagers may become prone to distractions and hormonal impulses at this age and may find it challenging to focus on academics. Moreover, opponents argue that coeducation may lead to depraved behaviors such as sexual abuse and immorality. This can be detrimental to societal and family values, which are deeply ingrained in the Kuwaiti culture.

To further examine this issue, Kuwait Times spoke to Islamic teacher Abdulrahman Sayir Al-Khalidi, English teacher Ghadeer Ghafour and high school student Al-Kawther Ghloum. In Islamic teachings, modesty and decency are highly valued, and it is believed that coeducation can compromise these values. Islam also places great emphasis on the physical differences between men and women, and it is believed that coeducation can lead to temptation and immoral behavior. Khalidi began with a verse from the Holy Quran — "And the male is not like the female" (3:36), then explained that when one looks at this verse, they can understand the differences between males and females.

These differences do not mean that one gender is better than the other, he said. Rather, each gender has been distinguished by God in several ways. For

example, in education, we find females often outperform males due to their ability to concentrate and their strong memory skills. Looking back in history, we find that women were often deprived of their right to education, which goes against the teachings of our religion, he added.

Khalidi cited the example of Aisha (wife of the Prophet (PBUH)), who one of the most knowledgeable companions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Many of the companions would seek knowledge from her. He also said after giving women the right to education, our communities have chosen to maintain separation between males and females in order to give each gender more freedom and prevent them from facing embarrassment, harassment or distraction from other matters. Additionally, this aligns with the religious view on the mixing of sexes. Therefore, since every society has its own nature, our communities have chosen to protect their children by avoiding the risks of temptation, while abiding by honorable customs and traditions, Khalidi explained.

Ghafour supports coeducation, saying: "Coeducation at school has a lot of benefits for both genders in terms of socializing. Especially at a younger age, it is very crucial that both genders know and accept each other's differences. By doing this, we are allowing students to have mutual respect and confidence from the opposite gender and eventually prepare them for future jobs."

According to Ghafour, coeducation prepares children for the realities of the real world. Coeducational classrooms reflect the diversity of society and work, and students learn to accept and value people of different backgrounds and perspectives. This prepares them for the demands of the real world, where they will need to work effectively and respectfully with a diverse group of people, she said.

"Despite the fact that stereotypes do exist, a coeducational environment is vital to build a sense of acceptance and prevent any kind of stereotyping of traditional gender roles. Certainly, boys and girls think differently, so by studying together, we are forming a strong perspective during classroom discussions. As a result, these collaborative skills

will stay with them for a long time as they move to college, as well as benefit them at work," Ghafour said. Giving people access to a broader range of experiences helps them break down gender barriers, explore new interests and develop a more diverse range of skills at work and social life, she added.

Al-Kawther told Kuwait Times about her experiences as a student at a public high school in Kuwait. "Both sides have weaknesses and strengths. It is true that being a teenager and having hormonal imbalances can lead to bad actions. Also, being Muslims, we know that our religion prohibits being around a stranger from the other sex unless it is for an appropriate reason that necessitates interaction with the other gender. Another factor that may give reason to separating boys and girls is the mindset of many people in our society, as being around a stranger from the other gender may ruin one's reputation," she said.

Al-Kawther highlighted the role of societal ideals, besides Islamic rules, in encouraging segregation between male and female students. However, she sees that coeducation helps students develop a higher sense of self-esteem and confidence by learning in a supportive and inclusive environment. "The fact that there are no co-ed public schools in Kuwait affects our confidence and socializing skills due to not being used to interacting with the other gender. I know this from experience. Another thing is that if boys and girls are segregated by force in schools, they would still find a way to interact with each other if they wanted to," she pointed out.

Al-Kawther suggested leaving the option open for parents and students to choose, rather than forcibly segregating the sexes. "Like private English schools, public schools can provide the option and leave it to the students and their parents to decide. Or maybe bring both genders in one building but separate their classrooms. This might help them coexist with each other in the long run," she said. While there are valid arguments for both sides, it is important to recognize that ultimately the decision should be based on providing a safe environment for all students to learn effectively, while also promoting respect, equality and morality among students.

In my view

Stop discrimination against expats



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Lately, there are many proposals in place which discriminate against foreigners. The latest discriminatory law comes from the ministry of health, as mentioned in a report in Kuwait Times on Sunday, May 7: As per the report, "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."

After all the discriminatory rhetoric in the last few years, from a member of parliament who stated that expatriates should be taxed for the air they breathe to proposals to have residents over 60 pay exorbitant sums to reside in our country, we have now decided that it is time to make the lives of expats even more difficult by charging them for health woes, yet another example of our incessant desire to remind expatriates that they are not Kuwaiti and they never will be.

If the health services have become a burden on the ministry, then perhaps we need to raise fees for everyone — locals and residents alike (and take into account those who cannot afford to pay). This division between locals and expats is becoming tiresome at best and is dangerous, because it is galvanizing a mindset which is poisoning our society.

Thankfully, the Kuwait Progressive Movement has criticized this latest move by the ministry. "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".

This nationalistic rhetoric goes against the values of Kuwait's founders and even against the constitution. It contradicts our spiritual and humanitarian values. Kuwait is not just for Kuwaitis. Everyone who works and lives here has the right to be treated with dignity and respect. All foreigners should be made to feel welcome. One of the most apt quotes comes from Mahatma Gandhi: "No culture can live, if it attempts to be exclusive." Our exclusivity will be the end of us. And who will lament other than our sorry selves when we bring about our downfall?

Instead of charging expatriates extra to live here, why can't we focus on education, tourism, entertainment, human rights and our infrastructure? Why can't we bridge divides and find ways to reward all the people who have left their homes to make Kuwait a better place? Our ancestors hail from different nations who came together to build this nation. And as Martin Luther King Jr said: "We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now." That boat, or dhow for that matter, is Kuwait. And we can enhance our minds and hearts when we realize that Kuwait, a microcosm of the world, has a place for every single person who inhabits its borders.

We need to stop discriminating against expats, for they are our brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, coworkers and so much more. Kuwait's beauty lies in its diversity and if we want to ascend, we must come together with expatriates and build a society which transforms the lives of all for the better, regardless of nationality, religion, gender, skin color, ethnicity or social and financial status. Kuwait is for all of us. All. Of. Us. And the time is now to accept that.

O brothers and sisters, expatriates are in a very precarious position now, so the onus is on locals to speak up and defend them and include them in our decision-making. And with another election coming up, let us remember to choose well. As Suzy Kassem warns the world: "Choose a leader who will invest in building bridges, not walls... Morality, not corruption. Intellectualism and wisdom, not ignorance ... Love, not hate. Convergence, not segregation. Tolerance, not discrimination... Environmental improvement and preservation, not destruction. Truth, not lies." Let us find our common ground and walk on it peacefully. Together. As one nation composed of many. Enough discrimination. Enough. Viva l'amore!



KU honors chemistry dept staff members

KUWAIT: The Department of Chemistry at the College of Science at Kuwait University held a ceremony to honor a group of faculty members, the supporting academic staff, and technicians out of loyalty and gratitude for their services, on the occasion of their retirement after a career full of giving and sincerity. The ceremony was held in the presence of the Acting Director of Kuwait University, Prof Dr Fahad Al-Rashidi, and the Acting Dean of the College of Science, Dr Muhammad Hussein bin Sabt, Dr Faizah Al-Kharafi and a number of college leaders, at the College of Science, in the southern building in Sabah Al-Salem University City.

The sponsor of the ceremony Dr Al-Kharafi ex-

pressed her happiness at honoring her colleagues in the Chemistry Department, with whom she shares the best memories - praising their cooperation and hard work. She also expressed her pride in the College of Science and its distinguished achievements in the academic and research aspect.

Dr Al-Kharafi indicated the depth of her relationship with Kuwait University, which she hopes will always be a beacon for science and scholars. She urged male and female students to be keen on science and learning to serve the country and raise its status. In his speech, the acting Director of Kuwait University Dr Fahad Al-Rashidi blessed the honorees for: "their selfless giving and contributions throughout their career in the College of Sciences. The importance of honoring is in raising morale and making more efforts," he said. At the end of the ceremony, memorial photos were taken with the celebrants.

creating competition and promoting production efficiency, under the umbrella of enabling government institutions, which accentuates values, safeguards social identity, and achieves human resource development as well as balanced development, providing adequate infrastructure, advanced legislation and inspiring business environment." The plan recognizes education as key for achieving these goals.

The conference will include a number of scientific and educational sessions and workshops presented by lecturers from different countries, including Sweden, the UK, Egypt and Gulf countries, who will tackle solutions for the issues marring the educational process.

While the conference will focus on basic education, Hanan Ali Taqi vice dean with the basic education college, said in an interview with Kuwait TV that the college hopes to draw on the expertise of the lecturers in attendance and find ways to utilize the knowledge the present in other educational sectors.

Taqi said the attendance of people in leadership positions in the Ministry of Education and teachers in universities and schools will help get the learning outcomes across to as many people as possible. —Agencies



Embassy clarifies new labor rules

KUWAIT: The Labor Attaché at the Philippines Embassy in Kuwait Ati Manuel Diamond, said the procedures he announced lately about individuals and companies that want to bring in labor according to Article 18 were at the instructions of concerned authorities in Manila. The regulations are aimed at reducing the cycle of requests and the time of completing the documents. He said new requests will be governed by Kuwaiti laws and rules. He added that the declared conditions to bring in labor for the private sector are not related to the current discussions over an agreement to bring in domestic helpers, as the requirements are implemented at all Philippine labor offices in the GCC countries. He said the new contracts will improve the working conditions of the workers and gave comfort to employers. The new procedures were suspended in Kuwait until discussions with all concerned parties were completed. "There is no relation between the new rules and sending domestic help to Kuwait," he added.

Conference to tackle sustainable education

KUWAIT: Kuwait is holding a conference to explore sustainable educational development in light of Kuwait Vision 2035. The conference, to be kicked-off Tuesday, will discuss appropriate steps for drawing up a future vision in line with the requirements of Kuwait's future. In a statement, Secretary General of the conference Dr Munira Sharar said it aims to activate joint Arab action by presenting the experiences of other countries in the field of education. The two-day conference is held under the auspices of the Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Hamad Al-Adwani.

The importance of the conference stems from the necessity of developing education to the highest levels of quality and improving educational outputs in line with the requirements of the labor market, she added.

Kuwait Vision 2035, the country's multi-sector long-term development plan, aims to "transform Kuwait into a financial and trade hub, attractive to investors, where the private sector leads the economy,

News in Brief

Expats, citizens
spend more in 2023

KUWAIT: Official data revealed that citizens and expatriates in Kuwait spent about KD 11.45 billion in just three months. Total spending by Kuwaitis and expats between January and March of this year has increased by KD 1.385 billion, or 13.7 percent, compared to the same period in 2022. The value of what citizens and residents spent on purchases online amounted to KD 4.19 billion, an increase of 25.6 percent or KD 854.4 million, compared to KD 3.337 billion in the first quarter of 2022. They spent KD 4.4 billion on direct purchases, an increase of 11.29 percent or KD 446.5 million, compared to KD 3.95 billion spent during the same period of 2022. The value of cash withdrawals via ATMs increased to a total of KD 2.865 billion at the end of March, compared to KD 2.78 billion at the end of March 2022.

Ports director
suspension cancelled

KUWAIT: The Court of Appeal upheld the ruling of the Court of First Instance, which judged to cancel the decision to suspend the Director General of the Kuwait Ports Corporation, Sheikh Yousef Al-Abdullah, from work. Al-Abdullah's defense said: "This ruling is final and enforceable, with the return of our client, Sheikh Yusuf Al-Abdullah, to his position as Director General of the Kuwait Ports Corporation, indicating that based on the ruling, the period of his Amiri decree, which included an illegal suspension from work for a period of nearly two years, will be completed." Al-Abdullah was first suspended in August 2021, initially for three months, until investigations into unspecified violations were completed. Al-Abdullah had made headlines in 2016 for attacking two financial auditors in his office following a disagreement on cashing benefits for an unnamed employee.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: This photo, taken at a bakery in Souk Al-Mubarakiya, shows the tanoor bread baker's hand as he tries to get the dome-shaped dough as close to the fire as possible. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Plan needed for pasture management to maintain sustainability, diversity

Kuwait continues its battle against destructive pest attacking date palms



KUWAIT: Facilitators of field schools for palm pest management pose for a picture with FAO representatives during a workshop held for red palm weevil eradication. — KUNA



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KUWAIT: Kuwait needs a comprehensive plan for pasture management and allocating specific areas for grazing, a representative from the country's Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources said Monday.

The plan is essential to rehabilitate the environment in a sustainable manner and help increase the botanical diversity of fungal flora, said environment management expert in the resilient agricultural livelihoods program Dr Munir Al-Wahaishi.

The recommendation is part of several released by the authority following a program it ran in collaboration with the International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA). The center's goals are to address the challenges facing the world's non-tropical dry areas: rising temperatures, critical water scarcity, diminishing natural resources and an insecure food and nutritional future under often unstable social conditions. Their work closely aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The ICARDA-agriculture authority program aims at qualifying and assisting the national cadres in the agriculture authority to manage pastures in the agricultural Wafra region. It also aims to spread awareness among livestock owners regarding environment-friendly practices and adherence to laws that safeguard pastures in order to avoid penalties specified by the authority against violators.

The center has been working with Kuwait since at least 2007, when they signed a memorandum of understanding whereby the two sides would carry out joint research programs in the fields of agriculture, environment protection and human resources. Amal Abdul Kareem, ICARDA's national coordinator, said the center helped the authority create many of its research programs.

Saving the palms

Also Monday, the authority said it concluded a workshop for facilitators of field schools for palm pest management with the goal of stopping the spread of the red palm weevil, a pest that attacks date and coconut-producing palms and ornamental palms. "Kuwait pays close attention to the issue of the red palm weevil. The country prioritizes preserving and improving the productivity of



Thaer Yaseen



Nasser Taqi

date palms. The measures taken so far to limit its spread indicate positive results," he told KUNA.

The workshop is conducted in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as part of its regional program on red palm weevil (RPW) eradication in the Near East and North Africa. It aims at developing the skills agricultural engineers and agricultural supervisors and bring their attention to prevention and discovery methods of the red palm weevil, said the Deputy Director General of the Authority for Plant Wealth Affairs Nasser Taqi. The Near East and North Africa region dominates the production and trade of dates, as about 75 percent of the global area producing date palms (1.35 million hectares) is located in the region. The region produces more than 77 percent of the global production of about 9.2 million tons of dates.

The red palm weevil attacks about 40 species of palms in more than 50 countries causing widespread damage to palm trees and other crops, affecting production, farmers' livelihoods and the environment.

Recent studies, said Regional Plant Protection Officer with FAO Thaer Yaseen, estimate the annual value of lost palm trees and associated lost revenues amounts to about \$213 million in Egypt and about \$401 million in Saudi Arabia. Kuwait has been working with FAO to eradicate the pest since 2017. —Agencies

ROPME marks Regional Environment Day

KUWAIT: The Regional Organization for Protection of Marine Environment (ROPME) on Monday celebrated the Regional Environment Day, coinciding with the 1978 treaty according to which the organization was founded. ROPME's Acting Director General Samira Al-Kandari, in a statement on behalf of the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Bader Al-Mulla, underscored the need to educate the youth namely the students about negative impact of green-house emissions.

Greenhouse emissions and climate change have become a global concern, Kandari affirmed during a cere-

mony marking the occasion. Kuwait's territory is largely arid and the country often witnesses raging dust storms that sometimes leave damage.

Kandari added that ROPME exchanges information and expertise with authorities of the regional countries on means of protecting the environment, particularly the marine ecosystem. Meanwhile, ROPME Executive General Secretary Dr Jassem Al-Bechara indicated in a statement during the ceremony that an affiliate photo exhibition was also organized on the Regional Environment Day and intends to promote environment awareness among students. The organization has allocated an annual award to honor winners of a competition for the students. The latest competition involved students who presented 500 paintings and some 90 articles, Bechara added. ROPME includes the six GCC member states in addition to Iran and Iraq. —KUNA



Second blast near Sikh shrine in India

Biden aide discusses Yemen peace push with Saudi crown prince

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IMPHAL: People wait at a temporary shelter in a military camp, after being evacuated by the Indian army, as they flee ethnic violence that has hit the northeastern Indian state of Manipur. — AFP

Tales of horror as thousands flee ethnic violence in northeast India

Military issues 'shoot-at-sight' orders, imposes curfews and cuts internet

ANDRO: Father-of-five S. Mamang Vaiphei hid in the jungle for three nights after a mob attacked his village in Manipur, the remote Indian state where ethnic violence has reportedly killed at least 54 people.

Around 23,000 people have fled the unrest which erupted last week in the hilly northeast state bordering Myanmar. "The Meitei people first burnt down 26 or 27 houses," Mamang, now sleeping out in the open in an army camp with around 900 others bringing similar horror stories, told AFP.

"Then they came again and finished all 92 houses (in the village), ransacked the church, the school and whatever was left," the 54-year-old said, surrounded by exhausted and traumatized men, women and children.

The far-flung states of northeast India sandwiched between Bangladesh, China and Myanmar have long been a tinder box of tensions between different ethnic groups as well as a hotbed of sepa-

ratism. The latest clashes erupted last week between the majority Meitei people, who are mostly Hindu, living in and around the Manipur capital Imphal and the mainly Christian Kuki tribe of the hills.

The spark was a protest about plans to give the Meitei "Scheduled Tribe" status giving them, in a form of affirmative action, guaranteed quotas of government jobs and college admissions. Violence erupted in Imphal and elsewhere with protestors setting fire to vehicles and buildings and according to villagers, Meitei mobs armed with guns and petrol cans then attacking Kuki settlements in the hills.

The military has deployed thousands of troops, issued "shoot-at-sight" orders in "extreme cases", imposed curfews and cut the internet. Mamang, spending his fifth night homeless on Sunday, is one of around 23,000 people that the military says it has brought to safety. He said that on May 4 he fled his village of Kamuching, which had a population

of more than 500 people before the unrest, when a "large crowd" started attacking. "Everything was on fire... We ran away, all of us ran to the jungle and we try to survive," he said.

Mostly people only managed to grab a small bag with a few personal belongings, an extra pair of clothes or their smartphones. In the absence of social media with the internet shutdown — to curb disinformation, which could fuel further tensions — others at the army camp had similar stories.

"Every one of us here, we're nervous, we're afraid of death," said Alun Vaiphei, 50, a Kuki tribal villager from Gotangkot. "To save our lives, we contacted Assam Rifles, so that they rescued us from our place of hiding," he told AFP.

In and around Imphal on Sunday, life had come to a standstill, with businesses shut and deserted roads still littered with charred cars. The violence has eased but Brigadier Sandeep Kapoor from the

Indian army said on Sunday they still received "50 to 60 calls" for help. His teams had rescued about 2,000 people — both Kukis and some Meitis — in the last 48 hours, he said.

The army said that bringing people to safety was not easy given the polarization and complete breakdown of dialogue between the communities. "We can't move them in the open as there are chances that if members of the other community see them, when we cross their villages along the highway, they may get aggressive," another Indian army officer told AFP.

A few men, infants, older women and young girls were huddled inside three military trucks, including Leh Haokip, 35, from Gotangkot village. He told AFP he saw the "looting of my home, the stealing of my cattle and the fire" from a distance. "There was no police or state help and now we don't know what to do or where to go," he said. — AFP

Taiwan in talks for \$500m weapons package from US

TAIPEI: Taiwan is expecting a fast-tracked \$500 million weapons package from Washington this year to make up for delays in arms procurements, the island's defence minister said on Monday. The self-ruled, democratic island lives under constant threat of an invasion by China, which claims Taiwan as part of its territory to be seized one day - by force if necessary.

With Beijing increasing its sabre-rattling towards the island, Taiwan's key ally the United States in September approved the Taiwan Policy Act - which would see new legislation provide billions in military aid to Taipei.

But there have been reported delays in delivering weapons, and Taiwan's Defence Minister Chiu Kuo-cheng on Monday confirmed that Washington has been discussing a separate - and fast-tracked - weapons package with Taipei.

"The use of the \$500 million package is aimed at prioritizing supplying us with spot goods (available for immediate delivery) over any delay or late delivery in our arms procurement," Chiu told lawmakers when questioned in parliament about the "military aid" package.

"It should be implemented this year," he said, adding that the \$500 million package "is not counted into (previous) arms sales" and that Taiwan would be asking first for its "priorities". However, he did not elaborate on what type of equipment would be prioritized in the \$500 million weapons package, saying only that the details would be thrashed out by both sides soon.

"For the delayed arms sales, they will make up by providing some of their spot goods or simulators or training equipment," he said. "So when the arms are delivered in the future, we can start using them right away." The United States has for decades sold weapons to Taiwan. — AFP

Russia will be defeated as Nazism: Zelensky

KYIV: President Volodymyr Zelensky vowed Monday that Russian forces would be defeated in Ukraine just as Nazi Germany was beaten in 1945, during an address commemorating the end of World War II. His speech recorded at a war memorial in Kyiv comes one day ahead of Victory Day in Moscow, a Soviet war anniversary to be marked by an army parade through Red Square with security on high alert.

Ukrainian forces meanwhile said they had downed nearly three dozen Russian attack drones, spurring explosions and air raid sirens in the capital overnight. "All the old evil that modern Russia is bringing back will be defeated just as Nazism was defeated," Zelensky said in a video at Kyiv's World War II memorial and park.

"Just as we destroyed evil together then, we are destroying a similar evil together now," he added. Zelensky was speaking on the anniversary of Nazi Germany's surrender to allied forces on May 8, 1945, Victory in Europe Day. He said he had submitted a bill to parliament to formally commemorate World War II in Ukraine also on May 8, which for years was marked on May 9 like in Russia and other ex-Soviet countries.

The move is just the latest in a series of steps Ukraine has taken in recent years to distance itself from Moscow, including by renaming streets and towns named after Soviet figures. Zelensky said Ukraine would instead mark Europe Day on May 9, which promotes peace and unity on the continent.

The EU welcomed the move, and said European Commission head Ursula von der Leyen would visit Kyiv for talks with Zelensky on Tuesday. It came as Brussels proposed a fresh round of sanctions on Russia. A spokesman said the measures would seek to tackle "the evasion of sanctions".

The Kremlin has leaned on World War II rhetoric to justify its invasion, saying in February last year it was launching the war to "de-Nazify" Ukraine. But



KHARKIV: People lay flowers at Memorial of Glory in Kharkiv on May 8, 2023 on the 78th anniversary of the victory against the Nazis and the end of the World War II in Europe. — AFP

the Ukraine leader said the Kremlin was responsible for "aggression and annexation, occupation and deportation," as well as "mass murder and torture". "All of this will be answered by our victory — the victory of Ukraine and the free world."

The address came hours after Ukrainian forces said they had downed 35 drones launched by Russia in an attack that left five people wounded in Kyiv. AFP journalists on the scene after the attack saw a gutted apartment damaged by debris in the Svyatoshynsky district of the capital.

Vadym, a 47-year-old resident of the neighborhood, said he heard air raid sirens and the shaking of his neighboring building when the debris hit. "We've been at war for a year. It's always scary. Not as scary as on the front line. But of course it's scary. Terrible for children," he told AFP.

He said his own children had just arrived for a vis-

it hours before the attack. In the southern region of Odessa, officials said a Russian strike had hit a warehouse, leaving one dead and several injured. In the eastern Donetsk region, Ukraine said Russian forces had deployed phosphorus munitions in Bakhmut, the epicentre of fighting for several months.

Victory Day, a key event on the Russian political calendar under President Vladimir Putin, is going ahead despite a series of recent sabotage attacks in the country. Events in several Russian cities have been cancelled over security concerns, as well as in hubs controlled by Russian forces on the annexed Crimean peninsula.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announced on Monday he would visit Moscow for Victory Day events despite growing frustration at home over Russia's role in Yerevan's standoff with historic rival Azerbaijan. — AFP

International

'We will win': Erdogan leads show-of-force rally in Istanbul

'Are you ready for change? Are you ready to restore democracy?'

ISTANBUL: "Istanbul!" President Recep Tayyip Erdogan shouted to the sea of supporters he gathered for a show-of-force rally ahead of next Sunday's election—the toughest of his two-decade rule.

"If you say okay, we will win for sure!" The masses were packed shoulder-to-shoulder across the tarmac of Istanbul's old Ataturk airport: A tidal wave of Turkish flags and banners with the 69-year-old president's face. Erdogan was the mayor of this city before leading his Islamic-rooted party to power and ending half a century of secular rule in the mostly Muslim but officially secular state.

The loss of Istanbul to the opposition in 2019 mayoral elections cracked Erdogan's aura of invincibility and sounded the first warning bell for the approaching vote. The latest polls suggest that Erdogan and opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu are locked in a dead heat and probably heading to a runoff on May 28.

But surveys in Turkey are an inexact science and both are trying to show their supporters that they can win outright next weekend by picking up more than 50 percent of the vote. Kilicdaroglu staged a smaller but still-impressive rally that filled a park on the Asian side of the city facing the Sea of Marmara the day before. But Erdogan and his party charted 10,000 buses to bring in people from 39 provinces for what the president dubbed "the rally of the century" on Sunday. He claimed that more than a million people had shown up—and aerial footage of the event beamed live across the nation suggested that Erdogan might have been right.

"I am honoured to be here," 68-year-old Heyiye Kefal said with a smile. The disabled pensioner was transported to the event by a party bus. "We were in bad shape before but today we have everything: Freedom and comfort," she said. The old airport was abandoned in 2018 in favour of a new one the size

of Manhattan that the president built near the Black Sea. "We have reshaped the country," Erdogan proclaimed from the stage.

'We are not free'

Kilicdaroglu's message was equally upbeat. "Are you ready for change? Are you ready to restore democracy?" the 74-year-old head of Turkey's oldest party asked his supporters. "Together, we will rule the country with reason and virtue," he said.

Istanbul's popular mayor Ekrem Imamoglu—a presidential hopeful until a court effectively barred him from higher office in a case stemming from his 2019 victory—was the guest star of Kilicdaroglu's event. "Rights, law, justice" and "Erdogan thief!" the crowd chanted as Imamoglu spoke.

"Because of Erdogan, innocent people are in jail," pensioner Yunus Mensur said while clutching a Turkish flag. The 76-year-old echoed Kilicdaroglu's pledge that an opposition victory would bring "freedom and democracy". "Kilicdaroglu will do what is right," added Sabit. The 55-year-old accountant refused to give his last name because "we are not free—and you can write that down".

'He is like us'

Polls suggest Kilicdaroglu is beating Erdogan by a two-to-one margin among younger voters, who have known just one leader throughout their life. The young were out in force at the Istanbul park on the pleasant Saturday evening.

"He is like us, he understands people," 20-year-old Aleyna Erdem said of the grandfatherly opposition leader. "Kilicdaroglu will raise the status of women," added Mujde Tosun. The 24-year-old supermarket employee lives in one of Istanbul's most conservative districts and stays veiled in public.

sweeping the Middle East for years.

An activist in Sweida province with knowledge of the local drug trade told AFP that "we expect to see a noticeable impact on smuggling operations from Sweida after the strike." "No one could smuggle anything across the border without Ramthan's knowledge," he said, requesting anonymity for his own security.

Some traffickers in the area have fled their homes following the strike, the activist added. The rare attack comes on the heels of a May 1 meeting of several Arab foreign ministers in Amman in which Damascus had agreed to "enhance cooperation" with countries "affected by drug trafficking and smuggling across the Syrian border", a Jordanian foreign ministry statement said.

It added Syria would work with neighbours Jordan and Iraq to identify sources of drug production and smuggling, and seek "steps to end smuggling operations". Jordan's army had said last year drug trafficking from Syria into Jordan had become "organised", with smugglers stepping up operations and using sophisticated equipment including drones, warning of a shoot-to-kill policy. During the first two months of 2022, the army said Jordanian forces had killed 30 smugglers and foiled attempts to smuggle 16 million captagon pills from Syria—surpassing the entire volume seized throughout 2021. Jordan has previously launched strikes targeting drug smugglers in Syria, some dating back to 2014. On Sunday, the Arab League welcomed Syria back into the bloc after a more than a decade-long suspension, securing President Bashar al-Assad's return to the Arab fold after years of isolation. — AFP

do told AFP. "It was pretty intense." The homeless center is open 24 hours per day, Maldonado said, as "we've been housing individuals coming from Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, China, Ukraine — and multiple Venezuelans," he added. Sandoval said at least some of the victims were migrants but could not confirm whether they all were. "It's something that we are investigating with border police," he said.

Texas Congressman Vicente Gonzalez, a Democrat whose district includes Brownsville, said on Twitter he was "praying for all those involved in this horrific incident". The news of the tragedy comes as authorities brace for the lifting on Thursday of a Donald Trump-era federal policy that allows border patrol officers to deport or turn away migrants without even accepting their asylum applications.

The looming expiration of the rule known as Title 42 has authorities fearing a spike in undocumented migrants entering the United States. It also comes a day after a shooter killed at least eight people at a shopping mall, also in Texas, in the latest mass shooting to rock the country. — AFP

underwater cameras to look for those still missing. VD Satheesan, a politician from the opposition Congress party in the state, said the accident was "man-made" and called for a probe. "Nobody even knows if the boat had a license or not," he said Monday, speaking to reporters.

A case has been registered against the boat's owner for alleged culpable homicide, media reports said. Kerala's sports and fisheries minister V Abdurahiman, who was helping to coordinate rescue efforts, said most of the victims were children on school holidays. Police said that there were around 30 people on board. But NDTV reported that 40 people had tickets, although there were many others on the vessel who did not.

Abdurahiman said four people were taken to hospital in critical condition, according to the Press Trust of India news agency. "Pained by the loss of lives due to the boat mishap in Malappuram, Kerala. Condolences to the bereaved families," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Twitter, adding that families would get compensation. — AFP



ISTANBUL: Turkish President and People's Alliance's presidential candidate Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his wife Emine Erdogan wave to supporters during an election campaign rally on May 7, 2023. — AFP

But she voiced no fear with the historically secular position of Kilicdaroglu's party. Its previous decision to bar women from wearing the veil at school or civil service was a "thing of the past" she said. Kilicdaroglu has since pledged to make the wearing

of headscarves protected by law.

But Tosun said she was not particularly worried about the veil. Her main concern was the possibility that Erdogan might be re-elected. If that happens, "we're doomed," she said. — AFP

Air strike in Syria kills major drug trafficker: Monitor

BEIRUT: An air strike killed a major drug smuggler and his family in southern Syria Monday, a war monitor said, attributing the strike to Jordan which has neither confirmed nor denied. Drug dealer "Marai al-Ramthan, his wife and six children were killed in a Jordanian air force strike" in the eastern countryside of the Sweida province, near the Syrian-Jordanian border, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. "Ramthan is considered to be the most prominent drug trafficker in the region, and the number one smuggler of drugs, including captagon, into Jordan", said the Observatory, which relies on a wide network of sources inside Syria.

When asked about the strike, Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi told reporters: "When we take any steps to protect our national security... we will announce them at the appropriate time". "Drugs... are a great threat to the kingdom, the region and the world as smuggling operations soar," Safadi said. An AFP investigation in November found that Syria has become a narco state, with the \$10 billion captagon industry dwarfing all other exports and funding both Assad and many of his enemies. The main destinations are oil-rich Gulf countries, but Jordan has also become a transit route for trade in the amphetamine-type stimulant that has been

8 killed as SUV rams migrants at...

Continued from Page 1

Police still had not publicly identified the driver by late Sunday evening. Authorities have launched an investigation into whether the fatal crash was an accident or intentional. Sandoval said. "We're looking (into it)," he told AFP. The victims were among a crowd of about 25 people waiting at a bus stop, according to Victor Maldonado, the executive director of the Ozanam Center, a homeless shelter across the street from the crash.

The group, whom he said were all Venezuelan, had just eaten breakfast at the facility. He described a grisly scene, with body parts left behind along the street. Witnesses were "really shocked," Maldona-

22 dead as India tourist

Continued from Page 1

was smoke coming from the boat during the journey. "We survived only because we were wearing life jackets," Rajisa, who bruised her neck after hitting the boat, was quoted as saying.

She said three life jackets were brought to her and her family, and four jackets were given to children on the boat's top deck. "The boat swerved sometime after it set sail. Everyone was thrown off to one side as the boat wobbled," she told Onmanorama. "I fell before my child and sank into the water. The boat overturned on top of the people who had fallen into the water. There were mostly children on the boat," she said.

Broadcaster NDTV said rescue teams, including personnel from National Disaster Response Force and the Indian Coast Guard, were using

Biden aide discusses Yemen peace push with Saudi crown prince

RIYADH: US national security advisor Jake Sullivan discussed efforts to end Yemen's eight-year war during a meeting with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the White House said in a statement. The meeting Sunday night in Saudi Arabia came during a tense period for US-Saudi ties, marred by disputes over human rights issues and oil production.

Sullivan and Prince Mohammed, the kingdom's de facto ruler, "reviewed significant progress in talks to further consolidate the now 15-month long truce in Yemen and welcomed ongoing UN-led efforts to bring the war to a close", the White House statement said.

Since 2015, Saudi Arabia has headed a coalition to topple the Iran-backed Huthi rebels who seized the capital the previous year. But a truce that went into effect in April 2022 has largely held despite officially expiring in October.

Last month, Saudi envoy Mohammed Al-Jaber led a delegation to the Yemeni capital Sanaa to negotiate with the Huthis and "stabilise" the truce. The delegation left without a new truce deal but with a commitment from the rebels to hold a second round of talks, according to Huthi and Yemeni government sources.

Saudi Arabia is widely believed to be seeking a military exit from Yemen, and analysts say efforts to

negotiate with the Huthis were given a boost by a surprise Chinese-brokered rapprochement deal between the kingdom and Iran announced in March.

Saudi Arabia has also played a major role in the international response to fighting in Sudan that broke out last month, hosting in Jeddah since Saturday the first direct talks between the warring sides. Riyadh has also dispatched naval and commercial vessels to bring thousands of people from numerous countries across the Red Sea to Jeddah from the Sudanese coastal city of Port Sudan.

Sullivan "thanked the Crown Prince for the support Saudi Arabia has provided to US citizens during the evacuation from Sudan", the White House statement said. Along with Saudi leaders, Sullivan met with counterparts from the United Arab Emirates and India "to advance their shared vision of a more secure and prosperous Middle East region interconnected with India and the world", the White House statement said.

US news outlet Axios reported on Saturday that the meeting would examine a possible joint infrastructure project linking "Gulf and Arab countries via a network of railways that would also be connected to India via shipping lanes from ports in the region". The talks were also expected to touch on "the possibility of further normalization steps between Saudi Arabia and Zionist entity", Axios said.

The official Saudi Press Agency said the US delegation included Brett McGurk, National Security Council coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa, and Michael Ratney, Washington's new ambassador to Riyadh. — AFP

Airstrikes rock Sudan as truce talks yield no breakthrough

KHARTOUM: Air strikes again shook Sudan's capital Monday while the latest truce talks in Jeddah have yielded no progress, with a Saudi diplomat saying both sides consider themselves "capable of winning the battle". Sudan was thrown into deadly chaos when fighting broke out on April 15 between the forces of army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his deputy turned rival Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who heads the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

The battles have since killed hundreds, wounded thousands and left millions barricaded inside their homes amid dire shortages of water, food and basic supplies. The feuding generals have sent representatives to Saudi Arabia for talks on establishing a humanitarian truce in an effort also backed by the United States, but to no avail so far. By Monday, the talks had yielded "no major progress", a Saudi diplomat told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"A permanent ceasefire isn't on the table... Every side believes it is capable of winning the battle," the diplomat added. In Khartoum, a city of five million, terrified residents reported more combat, now in its fourth week, as they hid out in their homes amid power outages and sweltering heat. A southern Khartoum resident told AFP the family could hear "the sound of airstrikes which appeared to come from near a market in central Khartoum".

The fighting has sparked a mass exodus of foreigners and of Sudanese, in both air and sea evacuations and arduous overland journeys to Egypt, Chad, South Sudan and other neighboring countries. "It's very dangerous everywhere," said Rawaa Hamad, who escaped from Port Sudan on an evacu-

ation flight to Qatar on Monday carrying 71 people.

In Sudan, she said, there is "no safety now, unfortunately", with its people enduring "a lack of everything — a lack of water, lack of fuel, lack of medicine, lack of even hospitals and doctors". The battles have killed more than 750 people and injured over 5,000, according to a count by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project.

The United Nations has warned of a widening humanitarian crisis after fighting has already displaced 335,000 people and created 117,000 refugees. More than 60,000 Sudanese have fled north into Egypt, 30,000 west to Chad, and over 27,000 to South Sudan, according to the UN. The UN top humanitarian official, Martin Griffiths, has travelled to the Saudi coastal city of Jeddah, the site of what Washington and Riyadh have labelled "pre-negotiation talks".

A UN official said on Monday that Griffiths had "asked to join the negotiations" between the warring sides, but that his request had not been approved so far. Saudi Arabia is pushing for "a timetable for expanded negotiations to reach a permanent cessation of hostilities", its foreign ministry said. The Jeddah talks, which are set to continue "in the following days", aim to reach "an effective short-term halt" to the fighting, facilitating aid delivery and restoring basic services, it added.

A major breakthrough would be to secure humanitarian corridors to allow aid through Port Sudan on the Red Sea coast to Khartoum and to the strife-torn Darfur region bordering Chad. Since mid-April, multiple truce deals have been declared and quickly violated in the poverty-stricken country with a history of instability.

Mediation efforts have multiplied. The African Union — which holds little leverage after suspending Sudan following a coup in 2021 — and East African regional bloc IGAD are pushing for discussions mediated by South Sudan. The Arab League on Sunday called for an end to hostilities and the preservation of Sudan's "sovereignty", but without specifying details. — AFP

International

Ukraine looms over Chinese foreign minister's European visit

Gang to hold meetings with counterparts from Germany, France, Norway

BEIJING: Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang will visit Europe this week, Beijing said on Monday, as China pushes to act as a mediator in the Ukraine conflict and rebuild ties with the continent. Beijing has sought to portray itself as a neutral party in Russia's war in Ukraine, with President Xi Jinping last month holding his first call with Kyiv's leader since Moscow's invasion. But recent comments by China's ambassador to France questioning the sovereignty of ex-Soviet states threw its neutral stance into question, and a position paper from Beijing on ending the conflict was met with scepticism by the United States and NATO. Qin's visit comes on the heels of several high-profile visits to China by European leaders, most notably French President Emmanuel Macron and German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock.

He will hold meetings with counterparts from Germany, France and Norway from Monday to Friday, foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said. Qin and French counterparts are expected to hold an "in-depth exchange of views on implementing the consensus reached by the two heads of state" last month, he told a news briefing Monday.

They will also "promote the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and France to continuously reach new heights", Wang said. The Ger-

man foreign ministry confirmed Qin will hold talks with Baerbock in Berlin on Tuesday. Spokesman Christopher Burger told a regular news conference the Ukraine war "is a very high foreign policy priority for us in all our talks".

Burger said Berlin believed "China has an important role to play in this issue and, in this respect, it would not surprise me if this were to be raised again". Officials in Paris said Qin will meet French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna on Wednesday, and Norway's top diplomat said his visit on Friday would allow the nations to "discuss issues relating to our common interests". "It is important to have a regular dialogue with China, which is one of the most important players in international politics and the world economy," Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt said, adding Qin would also meet Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store.

Balancing act

Qin's visit comes after Beijing restated that it respects the sovereignty of all former Soviet countries. This followed comments by Lu Shaye, China's envoy in Paris, that countries that emerged after the fall of the Soviet Union "don't have effective status under international law". His comments to French broadcast-



Qin Gang

er LCI appeared to be referring not just to Ukraine, which Russia invaded in February 2022, but to all former Soviet republics that emerged as independent nations after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said an explanation from Beijing had "duly clarified" the issue

and that China was not calling into question the sovereignty of ex-Soviet states. Xi spoke with Zelensky by phone shortly after the furor over Lu's comments, a nearly one-hour discussion during which Xi reportedly advocated for peace negotiations.

The call prompted Russian accusations that Ukraine was undermining efforts to end the fighting. Beijing's 12-point "position paper", released in February, was seen by many Western governments as skewed towards Russia. A friendly Moscow visit by Xi in March to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin also sparked widespread criticism. Beijing says it is neutral in the Ukraine conflict. Xi has never condemned the Russian invasion but the Chinese leader has come under increased pressure from Western nations to step in. Baerbock urged China to ask "the Russian aggressor to stop the war" in Ukraine during her visit to Beijing last month and said "no other country has more influence on Russia".

She also said she had expressed concerns about human rights issues and warned of the dangers of escalating tensions with Taiwan. Her visit to the Chinese capital came a week after that of Macron and Ursula von der Leyen, the head of the European Commission, who also urged Beijing to play a greater role in resolving the crisis in Ukraine. — AFP



NEW DELHI: Farmers gather at the site of an ongoing protest by Indian wrestlers in New Delhi on May 8, 2023. Dozens of Indian farmers broke down police barricades in New Delhi to join wrestlers protesting against the sport's local federation chief over allegations of sexual harassment. — AFP

Indian farmers join protesting wrestlers

NEW DELHI: Dozens of Indian farmers broke down police barricades in New Delhi on Monday to join wrestlers protesting against the sport's local federation chief over allegations of sexual harassment and intimidation. Several of the wrestlers are from the nearby state of Haryana, a rice-producing area where many people make their living from farming.

The farmers were led by one of the groups behind demonstrations against agriculture reform bills that lasted for more than a year, and with hundreds of them at the site by Monday afternoon, its involvement increases the likelihood that the wrestlers' protest will go into the long term.

The athletes - including Olympic medalists and Commonwealth champions - have been demanding the arrest of Wrestling Federation of India (WFI)

president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who is also a ruling-party lawmaker. Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella group of protesting farmers, released a statement at the weekend condemning Delhi police for denying the athletes "basic civil rights" and backing the calls for Singh's arrest, adding it would mount nationwide protests this week.

Delhi police last month registered two complaints against Singh, who has denied the allegations. In a video posted on Facebook on Saturday, Singh urged the farmers to wait until investigations were completed, broadcaster NDTV reported.

"If these children are committing a mistake, let them do so, my request to the elderly with folded hands is that you should not commit the mistake," NDTV quoted him as saying. The protesting wrestlers, including Olympic bronze medalist wrestlers Sakshi Malik and Bajrang Punia, have been backed by some of India's most famous athletes. Retired tennis great Sania Mirza said it had been difficult to watch her fellow athletes in distress. Olympic gold medalist javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra also called on authorities to launch a speedy investigation to "ensure that justice is served". — AFP



YANAQUIHUA: Relatives of miners wait at the entrance of the La Esperanza mine, where at least 27 people died in the Yanauquihua district of Arequipa, southern Peru. — AFP

ers would have died of asphyxiation and burns. As of late Sunday, 12 bodies had been recovered before rescue teams suspended their operations at nightfall, police said in a statement.

Mining accidents

"The interior and defense ministries have been working since this tragedy occurred on the recovery and transport of the bodies," said the presidency in a tweet. Family members headed to the nearest police station for information on their relatives. Mining is one of the engines of the Peruvian economy, the largest gold and copper producer in Latin America, accounting for more than eight percent of GDP. The mine, operated by Minera Yanauquihua, is a legal enterprise but there are many illegal mines in the region. The company has been operating mines in Peru for 23 years. Last year, 39 people died in mining-related incidents, according to the mining and energy ministry. In 2020, four workers died after becoming trapped when a mine in Arequipa collapsed. Peru is the world's second-largest producer of silver, copper and zinc, according to official sources. — AFP

At least 27 dead in Peru gold mine fire

YANAQUIHUA: At least 27 workers were killed in a fire at a remote gold mine in southern Peru, authorities said Sunday, as grief-stricken relatives gathered near the site awaiting news of their loved ones. The blaze was sparked by a short circuit and quickly engulfed one of the tunnels, leading to one of the worst mining tragedies in the South American country's recent history. "Where are you darling, where are you?" cried Marcelina Aguirre Quispe, whose husband was among the victims. "We know there was a short circuit and from that an explosion. We are very shocked by everything that happened," said Francisco Idme Mamani, whose 51-year-old brother Frederico also perished.

Police and the public prosecutor's office confirmed that the fire at the La Esperanza I mine in the Arequipa region, was caused by a short circuit. Public prosecutor Giovanni Matos told Channel N television that there were "27 dead inside the mine."

Local media said earlier that the blaze started Saturday after an explosion at the mine in the remote Condesuyos province, a 10-hour drive from the city of Arequipa, the regional capital. The explosion ignited the wooden supports inside the mine in the town of Yanauquihua.

The victims were 100 meters below ground, local media said. News of the fire was only published Sunday once police had gathered details of those who died. Rescue teams were trying to secure the mine before removing the victims' bodies. "We have to make the place where the dead are safe so we can enter it and recover the bodies," said Matos. There have been no reports of survivors, nor confirmation about how many people were in the mine at the time of the fire. Yanauquihua mayor James Casquino told the Andina news agency that most of the min-

Three dead after MiG jet crashes in India

NEW DELHI: Three people on the ground died in India on Monday when a Russian-made MiG-21 military aircraft suffered an "onboard emergency" and obliterated a house, authorities said. India's air force has seen a string of crashes in recent years, many of them linked to decades-old planes supplied by the former Soviet Union.

The MiG fighter jet crashed onto the house in the western state of Rajasthan and three villagers died, police officer Sudhir Chaudhary told AFP. The Indian Air Force (IAF) said that the pilot ejected safely and the accident happened shortly after take-off in a routine training sortie.

The pilot "experienced an onboard emergency, following which he attempted to recover the aircraft as per existing procedures," an IAF statement said. "Having failed to do so, he initiated an ejection, sustaining minor injuries in the process," it said. "The IAF regrets the loss of lives and offers its deepest condolences to the bereaved families. A Court of Inquiry has been constituted to ascertain the cause of the accident."

'Flying coffins'

The crash was the latest in a series of accidents suffered by the Indian military. Last week, an Indian-made army helicopter with three people on board crashed in Jammu and Kashmir region. In July 2022, two pilots were killed when a MiG-21 crashed in a training sortie in Rajasthan. That crash was the sixth MiG-21 aircraft to have gone down since January 2021, with five pilots killed. Russian-made MiG-21 jets first entered Indian service in the 1960s during the Cold War and for decades served as the backbone of the country's air force.

Numerous crashes in the past few decades have led to the planes being dubbed "flying coffins". Two Indian Air Force fighter jets crashed in January, killing one pilot and injuring two others, in an apparent mid-air collision while on exercises south of New Delhi. It involved a Russian-made Sukhoi Su-30 and a French-built Mirage 2000. India's defence chief, General Bipin Rawat, was among 13 people killed when his Russian-made Mi-17 helicopter crashed while transporting him to an air force base in December 2021.

India is investing billions of dollars in modernizing its military, an initiative motivated by its decades-old rivalry with Pakistan and increased tensions with China. It has also sought to diversify away from Russia, with its air force buying dozens of French Rafale fighter jets. New Delhi is also investing heavily in developing its own defence industry. India opened its largest helicopter manufacturing plant in February, months after it unveiled its first locally made aircraft carrier and test-fired a ballistic missile from its maiden domestic nuclear-powered submarine.

At the same time it has been trying to sell more of its domestically produced hardware to other countries, particularly poorer nations unable to afford more expensive Western-made kit. — AFP

Danish oil tanker crew kidnapped off west Africa rescued

COPENHAGEN: Six crew members kidnapped by pirates last month from a Danish oil tanker off Congo have been rescued from Nigeria, the ship's owner said Monday. The Liberian-flagged Monjasa Reformer had 16 sailors on board when it was attacked by pirates on March 25. Despite being owned by a Danish company, none of the crew were Danish.

When the 135-metre-long tanker was found by the French navy the following week off the coast of Sao Tome and Principe in the Gulf of Guinea, the remaining crew said six of their colleagues had been kidnapped. "All six crew members who were kidnapped from the oil tanker, Monjasa Reformer, are now safely recovered from an undisclosed location in Nigeria," Monjasa said. It did not specify if ransom was paid.



AMRITSAR: Punjab Police Director General (DG) Gaurav Yadav (C) inspects the site of another blast at Heritage Street in Amritsar. — AFP

Second blast near Sikh shrine in India

AMRITSAR: A second blast in 36 hours rocked the area around the Sikh holy site of the Golden Temple in India's Amritsar city on Monday, police said. Authorities said that one person was injured. The previous blast late Saturday night, which police said they were still investigating, also left at least one person wounded in the city, in the Sikh-majority northern state of Punjab.

Punjab's director general of police said a terrorism angle had not been ruled out, and preliminary investigations suggested a crude device had been used. "Blast occurred when a thread was pulled accidentally by a passerby," said Gaurav Yadav. "The container fell down and it went off."

The Golden Temple — a gleaming edifice in a large artificial pond — is revered by Sikhs the world over. But it has been the scene of violence in the past, most notably when Indian special forces stormed it in 1984 to remove Sikh militants.

Devotees told AFP that officials arrived soon after the early morning blast on Monday — when hundreds of people would have been at the shrine — to collect forensic samples. "Such happenings are creating panic," said worshipper Jasbir Singh Patti, who visits the temple daily.

"It is time for the police administration to act swiftly to present the truth before the public." Several windows cracked in the blast in the same area on Saturday — a day when around 200,000 people typically visit the site.

In March, a manhunt was launched in Punjab to arrest a firebrand Sikh separatist that sparked protests and vandalism among the diaspora. It was unclear if the latest blasts were linked. Thousands of officers were deployed in the northern state and mobile internet was cut off for days in the effort to locate Amritpal Singh, 30, who was arrested last month. Singh rose to prominence calling for a separate Sikh homeland known as Khalistan, the struggle for which sparked deadly violence in India in the 1980s and 1990s. — AFP

Monjasa's CEO Anders Ostergaard said they "are in a relatively good health condition given the difficult circumstances they have been under in the last more than five weeks."

"They have all been receiving medical checks and are now being repatriated to their home countries to reunite with their families," Ostergaard said. Monjasa had previously said it had lost contact with the crew after pirates boarded the ship.

Pirates have long been a risk in the Gulf of Guinea — a major shipping route stretching 5,700 kilometres (3,500 miles) from Senegal to Angola, with Nigerian gangs carrying out most attacks. But since 2021, shippers say pirates have been raiding farther out in international waters. Their violence and sophisticated tactics prompted pleas from shippers for a more robust foreign naval presence like the mission to curb attacks from Somali pirates a decade ago. Many of the attacks in recent years have been carried out by Nigerian criminal gangs using speed boats from hide-outs in the Delta region. Some gangs have captured larger fishing vessels which they use as a "mother-ship" base to raid further out to sea. — AFP

Business

TUESDAY, MAY 9, 2023



KUWAIT: Undersecretary, Ministry of Commerce and Industries Mohammad Al-Enezi, delivers the keynote speech.



Indian Ambassador Dr Adarsh Swaika delivers his opening remarks.



KIA Managing Director Ghanem Al-Ghenaiman.



KCCI Board member Diraar Al-Ghanem

Kuwait-India conference explores new investment opportunities

KIA seeks to boost investments in India

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: The Indian Embassy in Kuwait hosted a conference on India-Kuwait investment on Monday titled 'Unleashing Synergies', exploring new opportunities for collaboration and investment in various sectors. The conference held at the Four Seasons Hotel was organized in collaboration with the Indian Business and Professional Council (IBPC) and supported by the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) and the Union of Investment Companies (UIC).

High-ranking officials and delegates from India's Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Invest India, National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) participated in the conference.

"We are here today to exchange ideas, experiences and expertise and to identify more investment opportunities in both Kuwait and India," said Ministry of Commerce and Industry Undersecretary Mohammad Al-Enezi, delivering a keynote speech as the chief guest on behalf of Minister of Commerce and Industry Mohammed Othman Al-Aiban.

Bilateral relations between Kuwait and India have witnessed significant growth in recent years, especially in the areas of trade and investment. The volume of trade between the two countries exceeded \$2.3 billion in 2021, an increase of 25.6 percent over 2020, Enezi said. "However, we recognize that there are many investment opportunities available between the two countries, which need to be strengthened by joint efforts," he pointed out.

Enezi said the conference is an ideal platform to enhance investment relations and consolidate friendship between the two countries. "Kuwaiti-Indian relations go back many centuries, as India was and continues to be an important supplier of Kuwaiti trade. Today, we are witnessing a new transformation in these relations, as the economic, trade and investment ties between the two countries develop increasingly and fruitfully," he said.

"The conference will discuss investment opportunities that are available in Kuwait and India and review the latest developments in this regard. I am confident that this conference will witness productive and effective discussions, during which cooperation and partnership between the private and public sectors in both countries will be strengthened. I look forward to seeing positive results that benefit Kuwait, India and their people," he added.

Scope for diversification

In his opening remarks, Indian Ambassador Dr Adarsh Swaika spoke about the huge scope for diversification of the bilateral relations between India and Kuwait. "Clearly, there are very good possibilities

in pharmaceuticals and medical devices, automobiles and related spares, electronics goods and components, high efficiency solar PV modules, textiles and apparel, white goods, ceramics and so on. I would encourage the captains of Kuwaiti businesses present here today to look at the quality and cost competitiveness that Indian products offer today," he remarked.

The ambassador pointed out that India is the fastest growing major economy in the world, fifth largest economy currently, third largest in terms of purchasing power parity and projected to be a \$5 trillion economy by 2030. "India is expected to be the only major economy to keep growing at well above 6 percent per annum in the foreseeable future, and thus will remain one of the major growth engines of the world," he said.

Ghanem Al-Ghenaiman spoke at length about the close partnership the KIA has with Indian entities. KIA, one of the largest and oldest sovereign funds in the world, established its official operations in India in 1990s. "If the initial investment was a mere \$35 million, today it has reached double-digit billions of dollars," Ghenaiman stated.

"The KIA has noticed over the years India's resilience and reassuring macroeconomic stability. The GDP is growing at a healthy rate driven forward by a young and growing population. To put this into perspective, the KIA's investment in India has doubled within a short period starting from March 2020 to the present day," he stated. He reiterated KIA's continued interest in further strengthening its relationship with India.

Ali Hasan Khalil, CEO, Markaz from the Kuwaiti side and Rajat Kumar Saini, director, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Padmanabh Sinha, ED & CIO, National Fund for Investment and Infrastructure (NIIF), Pankaj Kumar Tandon, CEO and Joint Managing Director, Jackson Group and representative of CII delegation from Kuwait from Indian side participated. Sunny Bhatia, CFO, KIPCO Group, moderated the discussion. Earlier, IBPC Chairman Gurvinder Lamba welcomed the gathering.

"The conference gave us an opportunity to know Kuwait more closely, the opportunities for India and the successful Indian diaspora here. This time, we have important representatives from NIIF, CII and Invest India which are pillars for facilitating businesses and com-



Indian and Kuwaiti delegates with the Indian Ambassador, Indian embassy officials and IBPC office-bearers.

India's FDI inflows have increased 20 times in the last 20 years, with cumulative FDI inflow of \$871 billion and highest FDI inflow in the last FY of \$84.8 billion. Swaika also mentioned that India's 'Make in India' initiative is to position itself as a major global manufacturing hub, a bigger trader, and a stronger service provider. The productivity linked investment scheme with an outlay of \$26 billion in 13 priority sectors is a major step in this regard, he pointed out.

Showcasing the investment potential of both countries, the event provided an ideal platform for investors and entrepreneurs to discuss challenges and identify areas of cooperation. By bringing together key stakeholders from both nations, the conference has succeeded in fostering stronger ties and enhancing mutual understanding, leading the growth of the economies of both Kuwait and India. Speaking at the conference, Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) Managing Director

Union of Investment Companies (UIC) Chairman Saleh Al-Selmi and KCCI board member Diraar Al-Ghanem also addressed the conference. NIIF's Executive Director Padmanabh Sinha gave a presentation on potential investment cooperation with NIIF. Invest India Vice president Aastha Tyagi gave an elaborate presentation on the India growth story with statistics and analysis of opportunities for FDI investments in India.

Dari Al-Bader, CEO, Asiya Investments, shared his positive investment experience in the hospitality sector in India and Abdul Lateef Al-Sharikh, head of Corporate Communications, Alghanim Industries, presented a detailed overview of Kirby Industries' manufacturing plants in India. A panel of eminent Kuwaiti and Indian speakers presented a discussion on 'Unlocking the Full Potential of India' in which Faisal M Sarkhou, CEO, Kamco Invest, Abdulaziz Al-Loughani, CEO, Floward and

petent bodies for sharing information," Tandon, who heads the Indian delegation, told the Kuwait Times on the sidelines of the conference.

Talking to Kuwait Times, Bhatia said the conference could create awareness about potential investment opportunities for both India and Kuwait. "Most importantly, it enabled Kuwaiti investors and audience to know the new India growth story. It is also important to understand the Indian side what Kuwaiti investors are looking for in India to make an investment in the country. Significantly, the conference had strong representations from both Kuwaiti and Indian sides," Bhatia pointed out. Separately, Ghenaiman and a KIA delegation met Swaika, Smita Patil, First Secretary [Political and Commercial, Indian Embassy], members from the NIIF, Invest India, CII, members from the Indian Embassy in Kuwait and various entities from the IBPC during the pre-conference bilateral meeting.

Recession fears grow as German output falls

FRANKFURT: German industrial production declined more than expected in March due to a heavy fall in car manufacturing, official data showed Monday, deepening fears Europe's top economy faces a sharp downturn.

Output dropped 3.4 percent on the previous month, seasonally adjusted figures from the federal statistics agency Destatis showed. It follows two strong months of growth in January and February, and was worse than the one percent decline forecast by analysts surveyed by financial data firm FactSet.

The news comes after data released last week showed a surprise plunge in new orders at German factories, as the country's vast industrial sector is pummeled by high energy prices following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. While hopes had been growing that Germany could dodge a downturn, the latest batch of negative data has fuelled fears a recession may be on the cards.

"After production in the industrial sector developed dynamically at the beginning of the year, there was an unexpectedly sharp decline in March," the economy ministry said

in a statement. The automotive industry was a major contributor to the decline in March, with the manufacture of vehicles and parts falling 6.5 percent.

That compared to a 6.9 percent increase in February. Germany is home to carmakers including Volkswagen, BMW and Mercedes-Benz, and the auto sector is a pillar of the country's industry.

There were also heavy decreases in the manufacture of machinery and equipment, as well as production in the construction sector. "More bad news from Germany industry," said LBBW bank

analyst Elmar Voelker. The figures "underline that the dangers of recession have by no means been averted," he said. However the economy ministry insisted business sentiment had been improving recently, which "points to an economic recovery in the course of the year".

After contracting at the end of 2022, the German economy dodged a recession in the first quarter of this year, registering flat growth. The German government has forecast growth of 0.4 percent for the whole of 2023. —AFP



Trade with Hong Kong should thrive further: KCCI

KUWAIT: Trade with Hong Kong should thrive even further, given the region's open economy policy, said Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) on Sunday. With \$96.5 million in trade volume, more work is needed to achieve such perceived goal, said KCCI Vice Chair Fahad Al-Jawan, considering Hong Kong a "major" business partner. He was addressing a gathering that included Jonathan Choi, Chairman of the Hong Kong Chinese General Chamber of Commerce (CGCC), who on his part introduced the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area initiative.

Focusing on the Gulf area, Choi explained the initiative would link the six Arab countries with the megalopolis consisting of nine cities and two special administrative regions in South China. The venture also aims to attract global direct investments, with Choi specifically urging the Kuwaiti economic sector to take advantage of it. The Greater Bay is envisioned as an integrated economic area aimed at taking a leading role globally by 2035, as it is among the four largest bay areas in the world. —KUNA

Business



Ahmed Al-Amir, Muath Al-Roumi, Alaa Al-Failakawi, Omar Baydoun and Asma Al-Mulla.



The sponsors of the event.

Gulf Bank offers Kuwaiti fashion designers a global opportunity

Second edition of Oud Fashion Talks on May 11 and 12

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank, in partnership with Oud – one of the region's leading fashion and beauty Platform – is launching the second edition of Oud Fashion Talks Conference on May 11, 2023. The conference is set to happen across two days, at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre, and is sponsored by Tamdeen Group, Maserati Kuwait, Yeprem Jewelry and Beidoun Company. The second edition of the conference will witness the participation of international and Kuwaiti experts and designers, as well as a large number of investors and journalists specialized in fashion – who will discuss all issues related to the fashion industry both locally and globally, through discussion sessions and workshops.

The first day will witness five panel discussions with the participation of a group of experts and specialists, on a number of topics such as: The Evolution of Luxury Retail in the GCC, Making Kuwaiti Fashion Firms an Attractive Investment, Shaping a New Era of Arab Style for the New Generation, Creating the Future of Fashion and Fashion in the Middle East. In addition to a special session on Gulf Bank's role in supporting SMEs, designers and young talents in the fashion industry.

During the press conference held yesterday, the Deputy General Manager of Corporate Communications at the Gulf, Ahmed Al-Amir said: "Last year, we have witnessed great success and interaction from various parties interested in the fashion industry in the first edition of the Oud Fashion Talk conference. And this year, we were keen to develop the second edition, to further support young designers and help provide them with a global reach opportunity."

He added: "During the first edition, we sought to provide a platform that brings together young designers in Kuwait, with international experts and designers, due to the importance of this sector and the increasing interest and demand from entrepreneurs and youth in Kuwait. The aim was to help them gain new experiences and showcase their talents and innovations to international designers and investors. This also helps them follow the latest developments in the fashion industry."

Furthermore, Al-Amir indicated that the first edition shed light on sustainable fashion and has al-



Ahmed Al-Amir

ready received a great deal of attention due to the presence of a large number of experts. Additionally, he stated that the Bank was keen to develop the second edition by adding interactive workshops that create the necessary environment for young Kuwaiti designers to interact with international experts.

Al-Amir mentioned that Gulf Bank will spare no effort in financing entrepreneurs in the fashion industry who meet the SMEs' criteria, in order to help them grow and expand. He also referred to Gulf Bank's role in supporting various initiatives, aimed at consolidating the principles of sustainability in society; especially those related to youth, entrepreneurs and SMEs. Al-Amir noted that such initiatives aid in enhancing the Bank's role in developing the national economy and support Gulf Bank's 2025 strategy and Kuwait Vision 2035.

He further mentioned that this conference is a wonderful opportunity to delve deeper into the fashion industry and highlight the challenges facing young designers and creators in Kuwait, and across the region, as it also encourages investment in local creators and designers. Al-Amir stressed that Kuwait is full of creative youth who possess creative energies and ideas in various fields – and that it is Gulf Bank's role to provide the required support to develop their talents and ideas and help them achieve their dreams and lead their future.

In his final statement, Al-Amir expressed his best wishes to the participants in the conference – including young designers, international experts and the general public – in achieving the desired goals, so that the second edition will be a strong addition to build on next year.

aware of safety because you are working high up in the air." Students learn how to firmly saddle the bamboo frame so that they can free up their hands to work on the scaffolds, which are held together with simple knots tied using nylon strips. "This basic knot is something we learn first... we practice for an entire week to get it right," said another student, Ho Cheuk Wai. "Then, the instructors will teach us how to put on the safety harness, and step-by-step we learn how to build all the way to the top."

Scaffolding using bamboo dates back centuries and was once a widespread practice across China and elsewhere in Asia. Most cities in the region have phased it out to favor materials such as steel and aluminum. In Hong Kong, intricate bamboo webs are still part of the cityscape, latticed around both old residential flats and glitzy skyscrapers.

Scaffolding is regulated by strict safety guidelines but is still viewed as a dangerous profession since the work is often done at dizzying heights. "You need courage as well as skill to survive," said Wallace Chang, a professor at Hong Kong University's architecture department. — AFP

Hong Kong's bamboo scaffolders preserve ancient technique

HONG KONG: Mo Jia Yu wraps his legs around a pole to balance high above the ground and secure a joint, a skill he must master to become a bamboo scaffolder in Hong Kong. The metropolis is one of the world's last remaining cities to use bamboo scaffolding in modern construction and building repair.

Scaffolders perched on bamboo frames several storeys high are a common sight, and are nicknamed "spiders" by Hong Kongers for their agility over the web-like latticework.

Mo is among dozens of students who enroll each year at the city's Construction Industry Council (CIC) to learn the traditional method. "You have to have a daring heart," said Mo, who has been at the school for nearly three months. "You have to be



HONG KONG: This picture taken in Hong Kong on April 28, 2023 shows multiple under construction buildings (bottom) wrapped in bamboo scaffolding. The world's most skyscraper-laden metropolis is also one of the last remaining major cities to use bamboo scaffolding for modern construction and building repair. — AFP

Yellen warns of 'chaos' if US fails to raise debt ceiling

WASHINGTON: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen warned Sunday that unless Congress acts soon to raise the nation's debt ceiling, "financial and economic chaos would ensue." Republicans have been pressing President Joe Biden to strike a deal

to provide spending cuts in exchange for lifting the national borrowing limit, but Yellen insisted the onus remains on US lawmakers.

"It simply is unacceptable for Congress to threaten economic calamity for American households and the global financial system as the cost of raising the debt ceiling," she told ABC talk show "This Week."

Yellen had warned on Monday that the United States could run out of money to pay its financial obligations as early as June 1. The ceiling on US public debt is legally fixed and can be raised only by passage of congressional legislation signed into law by the president. The Republican-led House of Representatives, positioning itself for a showdown with

- We believe in our role in supporting young talents, and in helping them grow and expand in the fashion industry
- We will spare no effort in funding young talents who meet the SMEs' criteria

Tamdeen Group

For his part, the General Manager of Marketing at Tamdeen Group, Muath Al-Roumi, said: "We are pleased to be a supporter and partner of the second edition of Oud Fashion Talk conference, which adopts the concept of sustainability in fashion world locally and regionally, and creates links between local talents and international designers."

He added, "During the last few years, we have seen significant growth in the fashion industry in Kuwait and across the region; hence, we would like to take this opportunity to create a space to learn more about these designers and influencers in this industry, and the most prominent challenges they face."

He continued: "As part of our social responsibility, we, at Tamdeen Group, support such initiatives and participate in this dialogue. We support forming institutional and community partnerships to develop the concept of sustainable fashion; with the aim of consolidating this culture amongst members of society, and to bring about the required change in this sector."

Maserati Kuwait

On this occasion, the Public Relations Manager at Maserati Kuwait, Alaa Al-Failakawi, commented saying: "We are pleased with your participation today in announcing the launch of the second edition of Oud Fashion Talks, and in expressing our belief in the importance of community participation to support young talents in Kuwait." He added: These sponsorships reflect our vision and social responsibility towards society by investing in youth, which helps build a creative generation and leads to positive, long-term results for the benefit of youth and the national economy."

What happens if 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:

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 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.

Biden, voted in late April to lift the borrowing limit but only with drastic cuts to rein in what that party sees as excessive spending. The bill has no chance of being adopted in the Senate, with its Democratic majority. Biden has so far refused to negotiate, noting that the debt ceiling has routinely been raised scores of times over the years — including under former Republican president Donald Trump.

But Republicans insist Biden's refusal to talk is the principal obstacle. "The president has refused to negotiate," Senator James Lankford, a Republican on the Senate Appropriations Committee, told ABC. "That has been the most stunning part about this." — AFP

Oud.com

The Creative Director of Oud.com, Asma Al-Mulla, expressed her thoughts stating: "The first edition of the conference was a unique experience in Kuwait to support local designers and Kuwaiti talents in the fashion industry. The second edition will be the most prominent event that brings together the most important personalities, fashion experts and major influencers in the fashion world locally and globally. The conference will discuss the idea of sustainable fashion, and the challenges faced by creators in the fashion industry across the region."

She added: "We believe in the necessity of connecting Kuwait with the world of fashion at a global level, in order to shed light on the challenges facing the fashion industry and creativity in the region. Hence, we were keen to introduce Kuwaiti creators and designers, and encourage their talents — as Kuwait has become the center for art and creativity, especially in the field of fashion. And with the changes and openness that the region is witnessing, the time has come to unveil new initiatives to keep pace with the latest developments in the fashion industry."

Registrations for the workshops and talks happening on May 11 and 12, can be done through Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre application or website.

Four workshops

The second day of the conference will witness four workshops run by Kuwaiti and international experts and designers, which include: Kuwaiti Fashion Designer, Bazza Al-Zouman, Fashion Photographer, Patrick Sawaya, Founder and Director of F2Max Production Company, Maxim Sapozhnikov, and Strategic Partner Manager from Meta International, Joana Jamil.

Fashion exhibition

An exhibition will be held throughout the conference, to promote the brands of 11 Kuwaiti designers, and exhibits, which will include designs by seven fashion designers, two jewelry designers and two shoe designers.

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 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. While foreign holders of US federal debt draw the most attention, they only comprise about a quarter of the total. The path towards a potential default will be well-telegraphed, said Yaros of Moody's Analytics.

"They need to do that because if they don't provide any concrete guidance about when the X-date or the default date is, then lawmakers aren't going to feel the pressure to come to a compromise," he said. — AFP



WASHINGTON: In this file photo taken on April 20, 2023, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen speaks at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC. — AFP

Business

NBK announces Al-Jawhara grand prize winner of KD 1m

Al-Othman: Al-Jawhara offers the biggest annual prizes in Kuwait with total amount of KD 4,925,000



NBK's Jawhara draw at 360 Mall.



KUWAIT: Salah Al-Fulaij, Mohammad Al-Othman and Hisham Al-Nisf and the presenter of the ceremony Suleiman Al-Majadi during the ceremony.

KUWAIT: Pursuing its endeavors to offer customers an exceptional experience that matches up to their expectations and makes them feel special, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has already increased the total annual amount of Al-Jawhara Account draw prizes by more than a double. According to the new structure, the weekly draw prize will be KD 20,000, while the grand prize was increased 4 times with 3 draws annually; each amounting to KD 1,000,000.

Celebrating Al-Jawhara second draw worth KD 1 million, which was postponed from Tuesday, April 25 to May 4, NBK organized a special ceremony at its headquarters, which was attended by Salah Al-Fulaij, CEO of NBK – Kuwait, Mohammed Al-Othman, GM – Consumer Banking Group and Hisham Al-Nisf, Deputy GM – Consumer Banking Group.

The ceremony included conducting the draw and announcing the winner of the Grand Prize, as well as the winner of the weekly prize postponed from Tuesday, May 2 to 4. Concurrently, the bank organized three special events at key shopping malls including The Avenues Mall, 360 Mall and The Assima Mall, which featured engaging activities that were well received by the audience.

NBK started presenting the prizes with the new amounts starting from Al-Jawhara draws in 2023,

- This special event aims to match up to the grand prize, and demonstrates our policy to be always closer to our customers
- We identify the needs of our customers using the most advanced methods, and set them as imperative goals
- Al-Jawhara is instrumental to our customer rewarding strategy and promoting the saving culture

and the names of the winners are announced on all the bank's digital channels, as usual. All Al-Jawhara draws are held live on NBK's Instagram page in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, as well as representatives from NBK, as well as a representative from Deloitte as the external auditor to oversee the draws as per the mandates of the MoCI in this regard.

Al-Jawhara Account can be opened very easily through NBK Mobile Banking or NBK Online Banking for existing customers or by visiting the nearest NBK branch.

On this occasion, Mohammed Al-Othman, GM – Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait said: "We are committed to provide our customers with a banking experience that reflects our

leadership and excellence. To this end, we offer the biggest rewards and prizes in Kuwait, with Al-Jawhara total annual prizes amounting to KD 4,925,000, which complements our banking services that best meet their high expectations." "NBK largely focuses on Al-Jawhara Account, being instrumental to our strategy to provide customers with exceptional prizes to help enrich their banking experience. It also serves as important means for winning, saving and planning for the future for all family members, while supporting NBK's endeavors to promote the saving culture and financial inclusion," he noted.

Commenting on the event, Al-Othman said: "We organized this special event to celebrate the exceptional event, demonstrating our policy to be always closer to our customers. And we are

thrilled with the high engagement of the audience at all malls."

"All the services, rewards and payment solutions offered by NBK are based on accurate studies, analytical tools and surveys of our customers' opinions in order to identify their needs and expectations in detail, so that we set these needs' imperative goals. In this, we rely on our highly professional and experienced staff as well as the most advanced analytical tools and programs globally," he remarked. Starting from 2023, Al-Jawhara Account customers were given the opportunity to enter draws and win prizes of KD 20,000 weekly, KD 125,000 monthly, as well as the grand prize worth KD 1,000,000 three times a year.

The minimum opening balance for Al-Jawhara Account is KD 400, whereas account balance cap in all Al-Jawhara Accounts is KD 500,000. If no withdrawals or transfers are made on the account during the holding period, the customers will receive an additional chance to enter the draw for every KD 50 held in the account, doubling their chance to win.

It is worth mentioning that since 2012, National Bank of Kuwait has been rewarding loyal customers with total prizes now worth KD 4,925,000 annually in Al-Jawhara draws.

CBK bonds and related Tawarruq

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the most recent issues of CBK bonds and related Tawarruq at a total value of KD 160 million for six months with a rate of return at 4.375 percent.

Australian firm finds gas, oil in Zimbabwe

HARARE: Australian oil and gas firm Invictus Energy announced Monday it has found light oil, gas and helium in remote northeastern Zimbabwe, a culmination of months of exploration.

Analysis of samples from its remote sites near the border with Mozambique confirmed the "presence of light oil, gas condensate and helium", it said in a statement.

The result "definitively proves the presence of hydrocarbons in multiple reservoir pay zones" at one of the wells. It said analyzed samples "demonstrate a consistent, high-quality natural gas composition, exhibiting low inert content, containing less than" one percent carbon dioxide.

The discovery comes 30 years after US giant ExxonMobil gave up its quest to secure crude oil in the area. The find could lead to Zimbabwe's first gas production and help improve power supplies in a country plagued by dire electricity shortages.

Zimbabwe suffers severe power outages of up to 19 hours a day. Invictus Energy signed the exploration, development and production deal with Zimbabwe in 2018.

It plans to build a gas-to-power facility to supply the national grid. The find is also a boon for President Emmerson Mnangagwa's government which is entitled to as much as 60 percent of the project's output under an agreement with Invictus Energy. The site contains the largest undrilled structure in inshore Africa according to the Australia Stock exchange-listed firm.

Exploration started in August some 200 kilometers (120 miles) north of the capital Harare at a field that is estimated to hold 20 trillion cubic feet of gas. — AFP

Saudi reports budget deficit in first quarter

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia has reported a budget deficit of 2.91 billion Saudi riyals (\$770 million) for the first quarter of the year after

Kaspersky launches training program in Saudi Arabia

KUWAIT: Kaspersky on Monday announced its Training and Internship program in Saudi Arabia, further fueling its commitment to build national capabilities within the cybersecurity sector in the Kingdom. One of the many initiatives pioneered by Kaspersky, this program is open for all students and aims to increase cybersecurity awareness, while enabling skills and knowledge sharing to defend against the evolving threats of today's cyberreality.

The training program will be held online and offline and will be divided into two categories to expand reach, explore various areas of an ever-challenging threat landscape, and accommodate students with and without a background in IT or cybersecurity. The 'Basic' training category is developed for students with minimal knowledge of cybersecurity, with sessions designed to increase their level of cyber hygiene and understand the fundamentals of digital

Airlines, unions in rare unity on US pilot diversity drive

NEW YORK: Airlines and unions disagree on many aspects relating to today's tight labor market, but concur on at least one thing: the need to diversify the pilot workforce pool.

At a recent congressional hearing, Regional Airline Association (RAA) President Faye Malarkey Black rued the "very limited diversity" within airline cockpits, echoing remarks from the Air Line Pilots Association's (ALPA) Jason Ambrosi who noted a dearth of pilots who are women and people of color, saying "that must change." The alignment stood out because Ambrosi and Black disagreed about key elements in today's employment market, including whether a pilot shortage exists.

The population of US airline pilots and engineers is currently 95.7 percent white and 9.2 percent female, according to US data. Tapping into underrepresented populations has emerged as a solution to the industry's workforce stresses from the surge in travel demand following the Covid-19 downturn, issues that have also affected other corners of aviation.

Over the last 18 months, there has been a scramble for seasoned pilots after thousands of pilots accepted early retirement while airlines cut costs during the pandemic.

Whereas major US airlines drew 50 percent of their pilots from the military in the year 2000, that share has

spending on the kingdom's economic diversification projects increased. Expenditure from January to March rose by 29 per cent annually to 283.85 billion riyals, driven by a 75 per cent yearly increase in capital expenditure and a 52 per cent rise in social benefit expenses.

Meanwhile, total revenue during the period grew by 1 per cent annually to 280.9 billion riyals as non-oil revenue rose by 9 per cent, year on year, to 102.3 billion riyals, the Min-

istry of Finance said on Sunday. Oil revenue fell 3 per cent annually to 179 billion riyals in the three-month period on lower crude prices. "At a time when oil revenues decreased slightly, the kingdom's Vision 2030 program of supporting the non-oil sector and diversifying sources of income succeeded in playing a prominent role in raising non-oil revenues in the first quarter," the state-run Saudi Press Agency cited the ministry as saying.

Government reserves stood at 415 billion riyals while the current account balance at the end of the quarter was 35.38 billion riyals. The deficit was fully funded from external debt, without withdrawing from the reserve, the ministry said.

"This level of deficit does not cause concern in light of the strong financial position of public finances, so there is a great ability to continue the expansionary fiscal policy and consider accelerating projects with an economic return," it said. — Agencies

dropped to just 15 percent due to the military's shift to unmanned aircraft. Today, three-quarters of major airline recruits come from regional airlines, according to consultancy Oliver Wyman.

Oliver Wyman currently forecasts a North American pilot shortfall of 17,000 in 2032 after an earlier projection pointed to an even bigger gap. The moderation follows stepped-up industry efforts, such as United's Aviate Academy, which wants at least half its trainees to be women or people of color. But the smaller forecasted shortage also reflects deep US air travel service cutbacks to rural markets and small cities, said Geoff Murray, a partner at Oliver Wyman.

European airlines do not face similar challenges today because of more generous pandemic employee maintenance programs. But Murray said the continent's pilot labor market is expected to encounter stresses in about three years, in part due to a full restoration of international travel service.

Lifting pilot retirement age?

At an April 19, congressional hearing, the RAA's Black said the country was suffering from an "air service collapse" following the exit of major carriers from 73 markets that have led to fewer flights in places like Erie, Pennsylvania and Pueblo, Colorado. Saying the shortfall would worsen because of "a coming tsunami of pilot retirements," Black asked Congress to raise the mandatory retirement age to 67 from 65. She also urged a reconsideration of the current US standard that requires pilots to have 1,500 hours of service before they can fly for a commercial carrier, arguing that modern training techniques prepare pilots for the cockpit with far fewer costly hours.



Mohamad Hashem



ing the cybersecurity awareness culture, which is much needed as we progress to a hyper digitized era. Nothing is impossible with quality education," said Mohamad Hashem, General Manager for Saudi Arabia & Bahrain at Kaspersky.

Kaspersky is a global cybersecurity and digital privacy company founded in 1997. Kaspersky's deep threat intelligence and security expertise is constantly transforming into innovative security solutions and services to protect businesses, critical infrastructure, governments and consumers around the globe.

But ALPA's Ambrosi objected to both of these recommendations, pointing to a European Union study that rejected raising the retirement age beyond 65 and calling a rethink of the 1,500-hour rule a safety risk after Congress lifted the standard in 2010 from 250 hours following a fatal plane crash.

"Since 2010, fatalities are down 99.8 percent," Ambrosi told the committee. "Responding to temporary post-COVID industry problems with permanent changes to pilot training and qualification requirements is ill-considered and dangerous."

Ambrosi also criticized the analysis by Oliver Wyman that the current labor market dynamics constitute a "shortage," saying the number of new FAA pilot certifications is more than sufficient to cover airline hiring needs, adding that the impact of COVID pilot retirements had been overstated.

"Airline decisions to leave communities are market-driven business choices and should not be conflated with pilot supply," Ambrosi said. But both Black and Ambrosi agreed that more must be done to address the runaway costs of pilot training that price out underrepresented populations.

The cost to become a pilot can exceed \$100,000 following extensive classroom study and years of training, certifications and trial flights. A 2022 "Youth in Aviation" report by a federal task force urged more in-person awareness campaigns and after-school aviation activities for middle- and high-schools, as well as the establishment of a federal pilot scholarship and more generous federal education grants.

Congress is expected to consider these measures later this year during debate on the FAA reauthorization bill. — AFP

Lifestyle

New York cyclists gather for 'blessing' from perils of city



Cyclists attend the 25th annual 'Blessing of the Bicycles' celebration at the Cathedral of St John the Divine.

Hundreds of cyclists received "blessings" Saturday in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, a ritual for a quarter of a century aimed at protecting riders from accidents in New York City. Cyclists in racing togs lined up next to everyday commuters to receive a sprinkling of holy water. "May the wind be ever at your back. May your paths be always joyful. May all your journeying be joyous... May the Lord hold you and your bicycles in the palm of his hand," proclaimed the

erend Malloy rode his bicycle through the entire nave sprinkling holy water on his congregants after reading from the Gospel and delivering a homily.

'May God be with you'

"Nothing is going to happen to your bike today," said Reverend Malloy, a high dignitary of the Episcopal Church, a branch of Anglicanism in the United States. Once "blessed," the cyclists applauded and rang their bicycle bells, then went around the nave and transept

Columbia University in the Morningside Heights neighborhood.

Cyclists face peril

As in Europe, cycling is encouraged for environmental and public health reasons by New York City's Democratic administration. But in this city of 8.5 million, sprawling and chaotic, cyclists dwell in a kingdom of cars and trucks and face mounting perils. According to the municipal Department of Transportation, 17 people died on bicycles in 2022 in the city's five boroughs, and at Saturday's ceremony, worshippers recalled the names of 13 people killed on the streets already this year.

They also remembered the 132 pedestrians killed in accidents in the city last year. "It's a real travesty that it's so dangerous to be a cyclist in New York," Allison Considine, a 28-year-old environmental activist, told AFP as she left the church. "A lot of motorists drive really dangerously in this city and think that the road is just for them."

She said city officials know what works—dedicated bike lanes in the city and on bridges and even streets closed off entirely to vehicular traffic. "Every year that passes that they don't do that, they have to do things like the memorial for people who've died." Katherine Schoeller, a 32-year-old manager from Austria, said she felt glad to be among so many cyclists. "It's nice to know there's a lot of people out there who bike and, you know, want to be, like, safe," she said.—AFP



Cyclists attend the 25th annual 'Blessing of the Bicycles' celebration at the Cathedral of St John the Divine.



Cyclists attend the 25th annual 'Blessing of the Bicycles' celebration at the Cathedral of St John the Divine.

Very Reverend Patrick Malloy, dean of St. John the Divine Cathedral in northwest Manhattan, one of the largest churches in the world. Greeting a particularly large crowd this year after the lengthy Covid-19 pandemic, Rev-

of this late 19th-century neo-Gothic church, modeled on the architecture of French cathedrals. The "blessing of the bikes"—open to all faiths and nonbelievers alike—has been a beloved service for 25 years at the cathedral near



A white bicycle memorializing cyclists killed in traffic accidents is held during the 25th annual 'Blessing of the Bicycles' celebration at the Cathedral of St John the Divine in New York city.



Cyclists attend the 25th annual 'Blessing of the Bicycles' celebration at the Cathedral of St John the Divine.



Cyclists attend the 25th annual 'Blessing of the Bicycles' celebration at the Cathedral of St John the Divine.



Holy water is sprinkled on bicycles and cyclists attending the 25th annual 'Blessing of the Bicycles' celebration at the Cathedral of St John the Divine in New York city.—AFP photos

Move over Corgis: Jack Russell becomes new royal top dog

Beloved by the late Queen Elizabeth II, corgis have become an enduring symbol of the British royal family. But there is a new breed on the block—the plucky Jack Russell Terrier. Bluebell and Beth, two rescue dogs belonging to King Charles III's wife Queen Camilla, are the new hairy residents of Buckingham Palace. The pooches have been captured in photos with the queen consort and appeared in a portrait of the royal couple for their 15th wedding anniversary in 2020. "I think it's fair to say that the Jack Russell is probably going to increase in popularity," said Bill Lambert, spokesman for The

Kennel Club. The governing body for all matters canine in Britain has noted a rise in registrations of new puppies.

Ownership of corgis, Queen Elizabeth's constant companions throughout her 70-year reign, may "fall back a little bit", he added. According to Lambert, Jack Russells, like all dogs, enjoy company but they also like "a bit of luxury". Queen Camilla adopted Beth from the Battersea Dogs and Cats Home, where she is the royal patron. Bluebell was rehomed from the same south London shelter some time later.

Originally bred in the 19th century for fox hunting, the energetic Jack Russell Terrier is already a popular breed in Britain. At an agility training course for dogs, Lesley Roberts said she has owned Jack Russells for about 35 years. Sporting a purple collar, her pet Lorna jumped up and down impatiently in the hope of securing a treat. "I suppose it's quite a nice thing to have a royal dog," Roberts said with a laugh.—AFP



Superhero fatigue? Not for the third 'Guardians' film

Despite talk of growing superhero fatigue among moviegoers, Marvel's "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3" opened to a solid \$114 million in ticket sales in North American theaters, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported Sunday.

That estimated total, while well below last year's opening of Marvel's "Doctor Strange and the Multiverse of Madness" -- which launched to the tune of \$187 million -- was still "an excellent opening for a Marvel episode 3 sequel," said analyst David A. Gross, adding, "This is strong business."

The latest tale of oddball intergalactic mercenaries, human and otherwise, again stars Chris Pratt, Zoe Saldana, Dave Bautista, Bradley Cooper and Vin Diesel -- this time on a mission to save comrade Rocket Raccoon from a scientist intent on removing his brain.

The "Guardians" finally unseated Universal's "The Super Mario Bros. Movie" from the top spot in its fifth week out. The video game-based film, which has earned more than a billion dollars globally, took in \$18.6 million for the Friday-through-Sunday period.

Warner Bros.' blood-soaked horror film "Evil Dead Rise" dropped one spot to third, taking in \$5.7 million. It has two sisters (Lily Sullivan and Alyssa Sutherland) battling the demonic Deadites crew.



In this file photo US actor Chris Pratt arrives for Marvel Studios' "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3" world premiere at the El Capitan Theatre in Hollywood, California.—AFP

In fourth place, also down one spot, was Lionsgate comedy-drama "Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret," at \$3.4 million. Abby Ryder Fortson plays sixth-grader Margaret Simon as she navigates the challenges of that awkward age.

And in fifth spot was new Sony rom-com "Love Again," at \$2.4 million. Priyanka Chopra Jonas plays a young woman trying to cope with the death of her fiancé. Trying to help her do so is journalist and -- spoiler alert: eventual love interest -- Rob Burns, played by Sam Heughan. Celine Dion plays her-

self. The film has a paltry 17 percent positive rating on website Rotten Tomatoes, with one critic calling it "lazy, misguided and uninspired."

Rounding out the top 10 were:
"John Wick: Chapter 4" (\$2.4 million)
"Dungeons & Dragons: Honor Among Thieves" (\$1.5 million)
"Air" (\$1.4 million)
"Guy Ritchie's The Covenant" (\$1.2 million)
"Sisu" (\$1.1 million).—AFP



Britain's Queen Camilla (center) and Britain's King Charles III (third right) acknowledge the applause during the Coronation Concert at Windsor Castle in Windsor, west of London. — AFP photos



Take That (from left) Mark Owen, Howard Donald and Gary Barlow perform inside Windsor Castle grounds.

Stars take centre stage as UK steps up coronation celebrations



Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak (center) attends the Coronation Concert.



Gary Barlow (left) of Take That and Calum Scott perform inside Windsor Castle grounds.



Welsh opera singer Bryn Terfal (left) and Italian opera singer Andrea Bocelli perform inside Windsor Castle grounds.



Britain's Prince William, Prince of Wales, speaks on stage inside Windsor Castle grounds.

Britain revelled in the coronation of King Charles III on Sunday as it staged a star-studded concert watched by 20,000 people at Windsor Castle and millions more across the country and world. Charles, 74, and Queen Camilla, 75, watched on from a royal box in the grounds of the castle west of London, as Lionel Richie, Katy Perry and British band Take That topped the bill of performers.

Screens erected nationwide broadcast the televised event - featuring a 70-piece orchestra, choirs and several unique dramatic performances - to communities, while organizers said it would also be seen in over 100 countries.

Amid the music and video message tributes from an array of public figures, Prince William took to the stage to pay tribute to his father the day after he was formally crowned king.

Noting his late grandmother, Queen Elizabeth II, was "up there, fondly keeping an eye on us", William added she would be "a very proud mother".

"For over 50 years, in every corner of the UK, across the Commonwealth and around the world, he has dedicated himself to serve others, both current and future generations," the heir to the throne said. "Pa, we are all so proud of you."



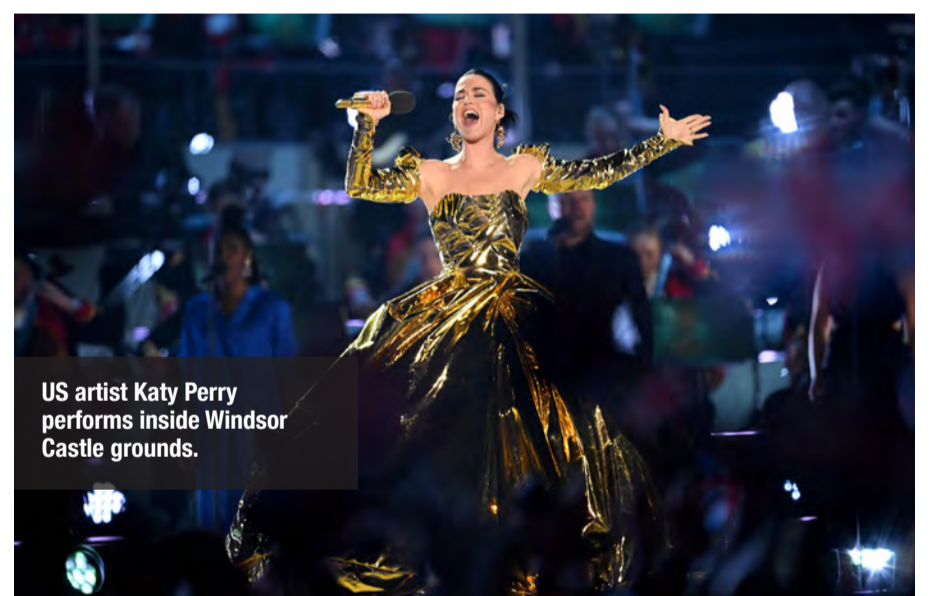
Crowds watch performers inside Windsor Castle grounds during the Coronation Concert.

Earlier, partygoers flocked to tens of thousands of street celebrations and "Big Lunch" events looking to bring modern Britain's communities closer. After the post-World War II hardships, street parties were a feature of Queen Elizabeth II's 1953 coronation - and a memorable part of celebrations for her long reign in 1977 and her platinum jubilee last year.

"It's lovely... you need these things to bring the community together," Annette Cathcart, 67, told AFP at a village hall gathering in Ashley Green, in Buckinghamshire, southern England.

"It's the perfect way to celebrate." More than 67,000 big lunches were planned, according to organizers Eden Project Communities, with Coronation Quiches - the specially created, baked savory tart featuring spinach, broad beans and tarragon - encouraged.

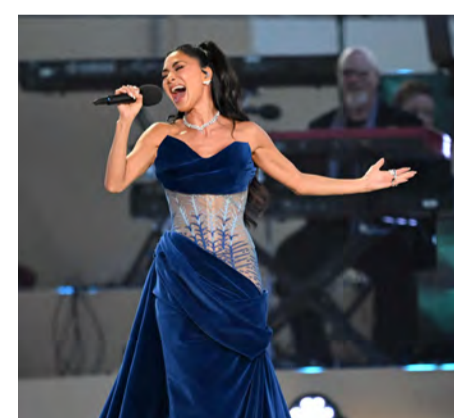
Prime Minister Rishi Sunak hosted one in Downing Street, inviting community volunteers, Ukrainian refugees and dignitaries including US First Lady Jill Biden. The British leader was joined by his wife, two daughters and the family dog, Nova, who sported a union flag bandana.



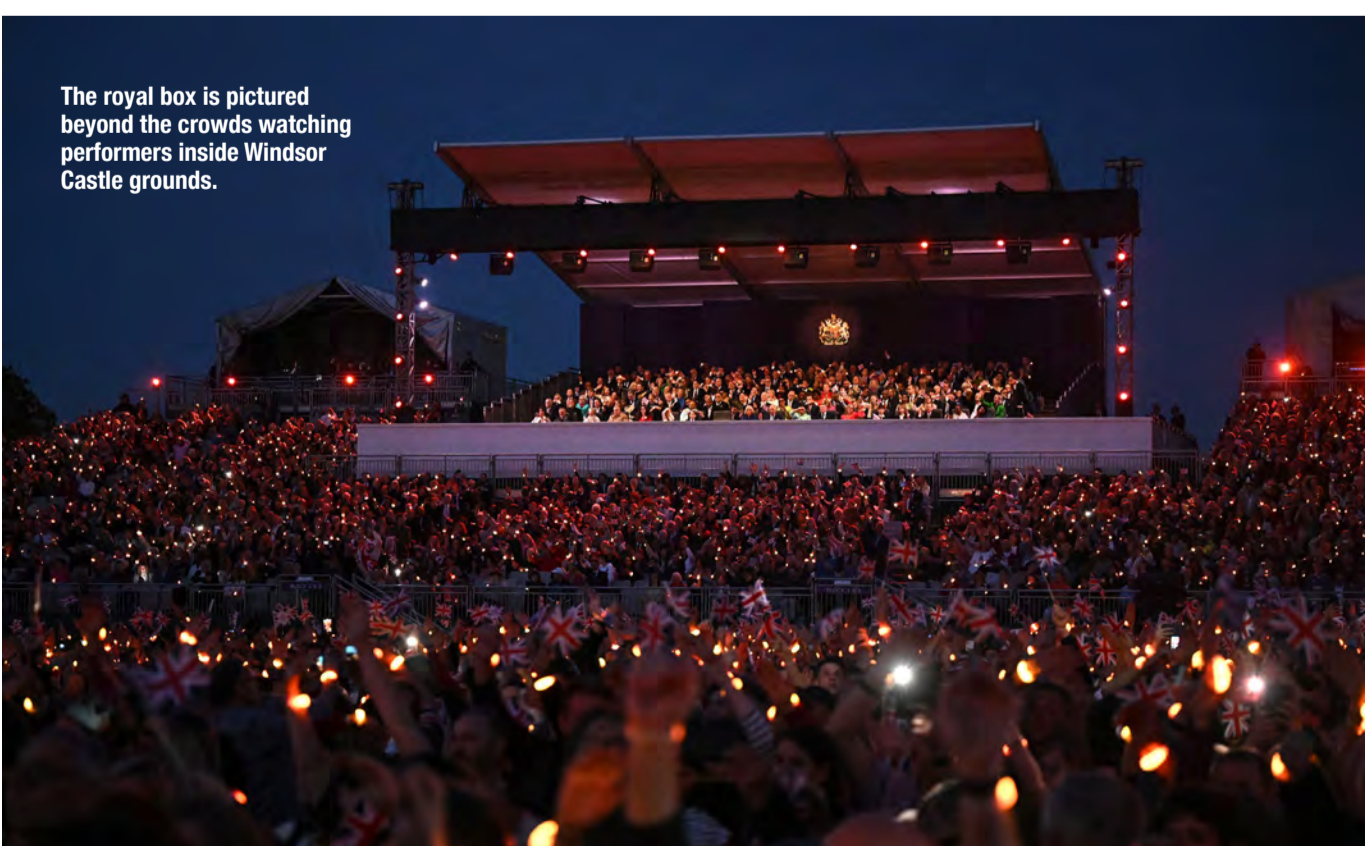
US artist Katy Perry performs inside Windsor Castle grounds.



Chinese pianist Lang Lang performs inside Windsor Castle grounds.



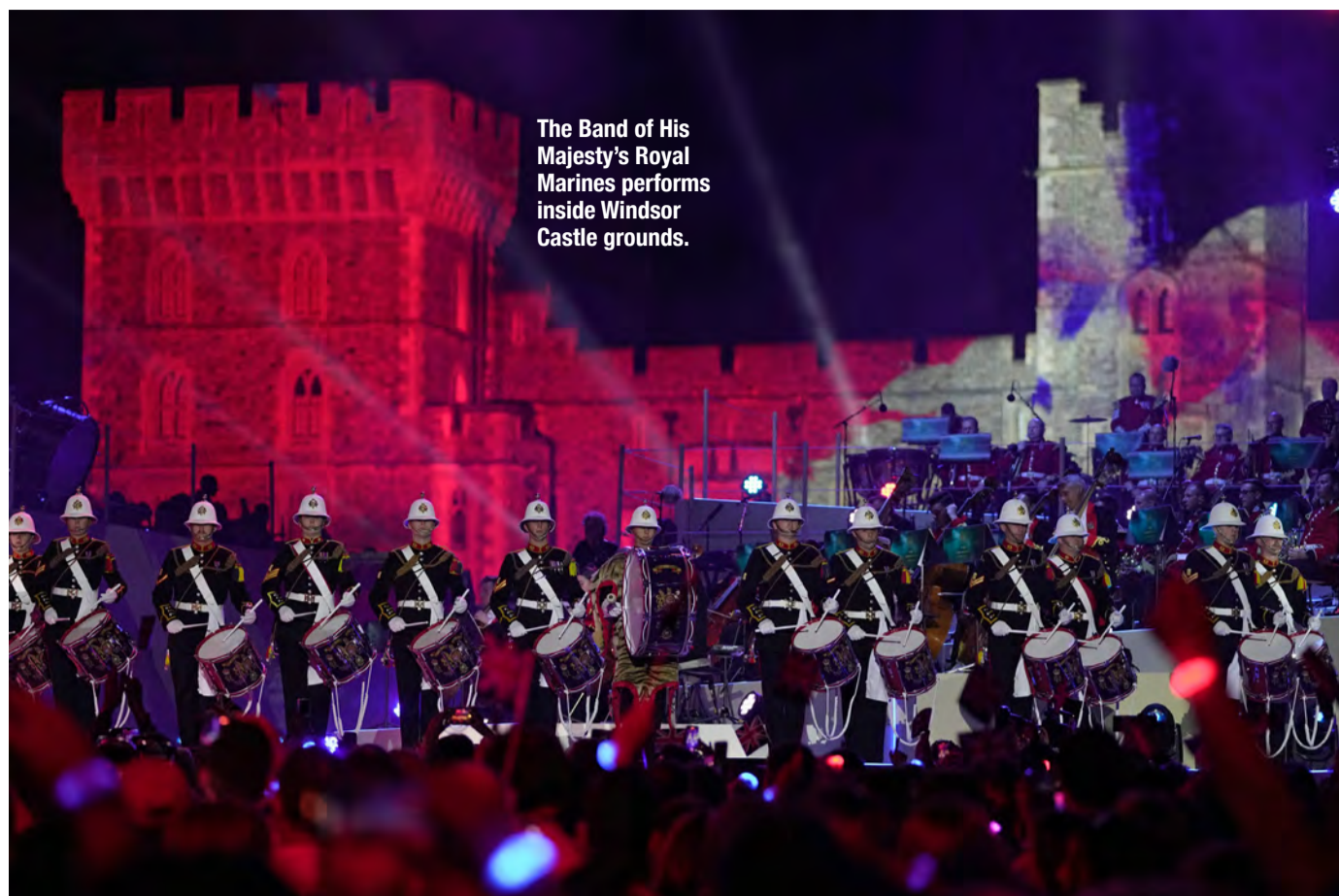
US singer-songwriter Nicole Scherzinger performs inside Windsor Castle grounds.



The royal box is pictured beyond the crowds watching performers inside Windsor Castle grounds.



Dancers perform on stage inside Windsor Castle grounds.



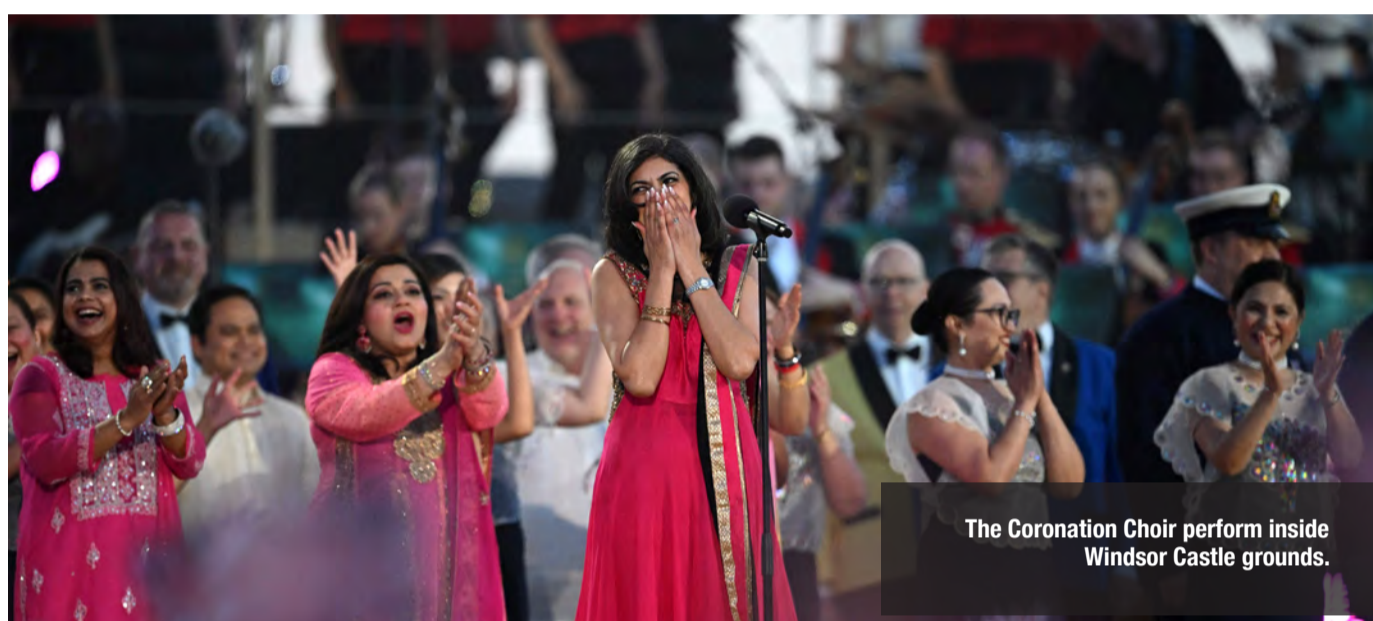
The Band of His Majesty's Royal Marines performs inside Windsor Castle grounds.



Mei Mac and Ncuti Gatwa perform on stage inside Windsor Castle grounds.



(From left) Britain's Prince George of Wales, Britain's Prince William, Prince of Wales, Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and his wife Akshata Murty watch acts inside Windsor Castle grounds.



The Coronation Choir perform inside Windsor Castle grounds.



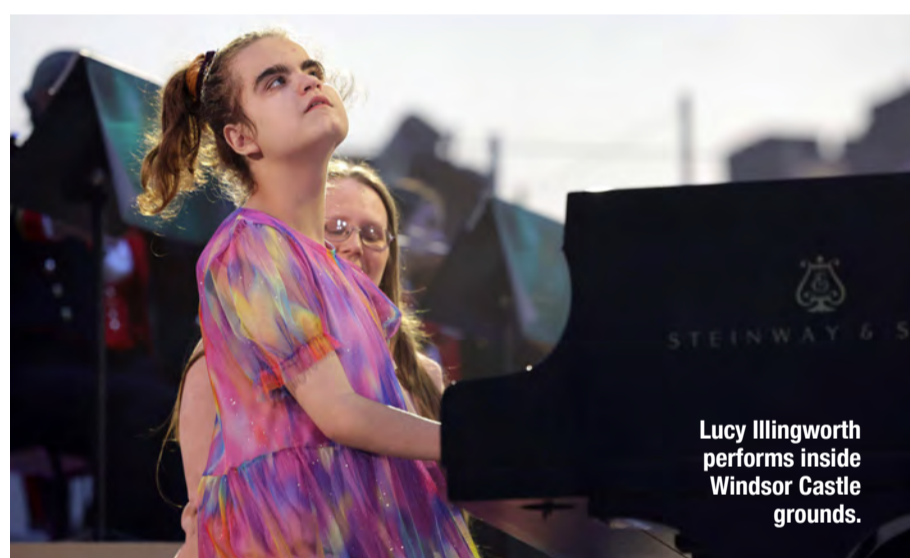
Britain's Catherine, Princess of Wales (left) and her daughter Britain's Princess Charlotte of Wales attend the Coronation Concert.

'Wingman'
Attention soon turned to Windsor, where the evening spectacle harked back to previous royal jubilees of the late queen.

Guests waved union flags as senior royals - including William, wife Kate, and two of their three children - joined Sunak and other VIPs in the royal box.

"We are delighted and honored to be joined by our newly crowned King Charles III, whose life-long passion for the arts we will be celebrating throughout the show," host Hugh Bonneville promised the crowd.

"He himself, of course, is a painter, an artist - the artist formerly known as Prince," Downton Abbey and Paddington actor Bonneville quipped, earning widespread laughs, including from the former Prince of Wales Charles.



Lucy Illingworth performs inside Windsor Castle grounds.



British singer-songwriter Olly Murs performs inside Windsor Castle grounds.



US pop star Lionel Richie performs inside Windsor Castle grounds.

An early highlight saw the Royal Ballet, the Royal Opera, the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Royal College of Music and the Royal College of Art combine for a one-off performance.

Lionel Ritchie lit up the show midway through, performing hits like "Easy Like Sunday Morning" and "All Night Long", bringing the royals to their feet.

Hollywood star Tom Cruise, actress Joan Collins and singer Tom Jones all appeared via video message. "You can be my wingman any time", Cruise told the monarch.

A series of pre-recorded sketches also aired, revealing little-known facts about Charles and included moments from The Muppets and beloved literary character Winnie the Pooh. The evening also featured "Lighting up the Nation",

in which well-known locations across Britain were illuminated using projections, lasers and drone displays. After reconstituted pop group Take That -- minus former frontman Robbie Williams -- closed out the show, audience member Caroline McDonough described it as "incredible... a real once-in-a-lifetime experience".

The 53-year-old, who runs a firm getting the long-term unemployed back into work, told AFP people had been "really enjoying themselves... waving their flags and dancing and singing along, just really going for it".

of £100 million (\$126 million) - has caused disquiet as many struggle with rising bills and widespread strikes.

The BBC said more than 14 million watched the ceremony on its two main terrestrial channels - well down on previous major royal occasions. And it reportedly wasn't all smooth sailing for Charles.

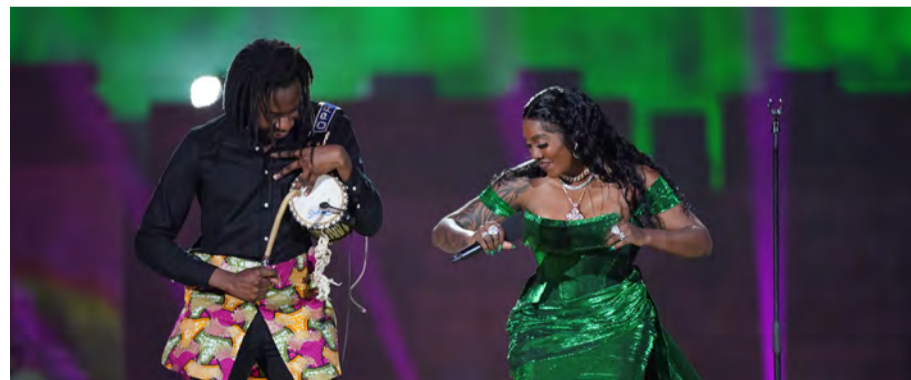
The king grumbled about not being "on time" and that "this is boring" as a hiccup delayed the start of his coronation, according to a lip reader who analyzed footage of the monarch for Sky News. — AFP

'This is boring'

The once-in-a-generation coronation comes with Britain gripped by the worst cost-of-living crisis in decades. The long weekend's cost - reported to be upwards



State Trumpeters prepare to welcome Britain's King Charles III inside Windsor Castle grounds.



Nigerian singer Tiwa Savage performs inside Windsor Castle grounds.



British singer-songwriter Paloma Faith performs inside Windsor Castle grounds.



US pop star Lionel Richie performs inside Windsor Castle grounds.



Choir of St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle performs on stage inside Windsor Castle grounds.

Sports

News in Brief

World freediving kicks off

KUWAIT: CMAS World Freediving Indoor Championship involving men and women athletes was launched on Monday with divers from 44 nations partaking. The opening ceremony that was held at Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammed's aquatic indoor facility was attended by a number of officials from various ministries and administrations. The championship, one of the largest sports tournament of its kind, would be organized at Al-Nasr SC Complex. In a statement to KUNA, President of the Kuwaiti Diving Rescue Club Talal Al-Sarhan said the hosting of the championship is considered among the largest of its scale, as the organizing committee is looking forward to the outcomes. — KUNA

Iran sports boss quits

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 program came into force last month aiming for stricter enforcement of hijab-wearing in public. — AFP

Tsunoda wins first gold

DOHA: Natsumi Tsunoda won her third successive global title on Sunday as judo superpower Japan collected their first gold medal of the world championships. Tsunoda, 30, beat the number world one Shirine Boukli of France by ippon in the under-48kg category in Doha, adding to the titles she won in Tashkent in 2022 and Budapest a year earlier. Wakana Koga also won one of the bronze medals for Japan, with the other going to Assunta Scutto of Italy. In the men's title of the opening day, Spain's Francisco Garrigós added the world gold in the under-60kg category to the European championship he won last year. Garrigós beat Dilshodbek Baratov of Uzbekistan in the final, while Giorgi Sardalashvili of Georgia and Lee Ha-rim of South Korea each took bronze medals. These championships mark the return to competition of Russian and Belarusian judokas, albeit as neutral competitors, after they were banned in reaction to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

Pakistan 'in good position'

KARACHI: Captain Babar Azam says the "dominant" one-day series win over New Zealand sets Pakistan up nicely for the World Cup, despite doubts over their participation. The hosts beat a depleted New Zealand 4-1 in the five-match series and on their way briefly reached the top of the one-day rankings for the first time. Pakistan scored 337 in the second match — their second-highest successful chase in one-day internationals — and Azam became the fastest player to 5,000 ODI runs en route to his 18th century in the format. Opener Fakhar Zaman meanwhile achieved the distinction of hitting hundreds in three successive ODIs, firmly establishing his place in Pakistan's top three, which also includes opener Imam-ul-Haq. Uncertainty looms over Pakistan's participation in the World Cup in October-November because of tensions with hosts India. Despite that and defeat in the final match on Sunday, Azam was in buoyant mood. — AFP

Meronk wins Italian Open

ROME: Adrian Meronk won his third European Tour title at the Italian Open on Sunday, boosting his chances of playing in the Ryder Cup to be staged at the same course later this year. The 29-year-old from Poland held off France's Romain Langasque by one shot with overnight leader Julien Guerrier finishing three off the pace at the Marco Simone Golf and Country Club. His victory was timely, coming in front of Europe's Ryder Cup skipper Luke Donald who also featured in the Italian Open. "It was definitely on my mind coming here, performing well in front of Luke," said Meronk. "I think it might help but there's still a lot of time left. I still have to work on my game and get better to make the team." Meronk, who was the first Pole to win a European Tour title when he triumphed at the 2022 Irish Open, edged ahead of Langasque at the 16th hole with his fifth birdie of the day and holed a par putt from the edge of the green on the 17th. — AFP

Kompany pens 5-year deal

LONDON: Burnley gave manager Vincent Kompany a new five-year deal on Sunday as reward for leading the club back to the Premier League in style. The former Manchester City defender won the Championship title with ease in his first season at Burnley after he replaced Sean Dyche and his success has attracted the interest of Premier League clubs Chelsea and Tottenham. But the 37-year-old Belgian has committed his future to the Clarets until 2028. Kompany said: "Burnley and Turf Moor felt right pretty much from the start — so it also feels right to sign for the next five years. "Together with the fans we have made Turf Moor a fortress again and continue to look forward to the future and the job of making Burnley better with every step." Kompany replaced Dyche last summer after Burnley were relegated to the Championship. — AFP

Harden-led Sixers edge Boston as Suns win despite Jokic's 53

Durant, Booker lift Suns over Nuggets

LOS ANGELES: A resurgent James Harden scored 42 points, including a last-gasp three-pointer to lift the Philadelphia 76ers over Boston 116-115 in overtime on Sunday to level their NBA playoff series. But in Phoenix, not even a career playoff-high 53 points were not enough for Nikola Jokic to spark the Denver Nuggets to a victory over the Suns. Harden drained a 24-foot corner three with just 19 seconds remaining in overtime at the Wells Fargo Center for a win that leaves the Eastern Conference best-of-seven second round series squared at 2-2.

In a nerve-shredding finale, Boston's Marcus Smart nailed a potential buzzer-beating basket but it did not count as he was unable to get the shot off before time expired. That left Philadelphia celebrating a gutsy victory that owed everything to the majestic performance of Harden, who bagged his second 40-point game of the series, which continues Tuesday at Boston. "I put the work in and it was all about being aggressive," said Harden afterward. "Tonight it was really do or die. We found a way to win and that's all that matters in the post-season."

In the Western Conference, two-time NBA Most Valuable Player Jokic's heroics were not enough as Kevin Durant and Devin Booker each scored 36 to lead the Suns over the Nuggets 129-124 to equalize their series at 2-2 with game five Tuesday at Denver. "It's our job to protect home court," Booker said. "They say a series doesn't start until someone wins on the road so we're going to try to do that in game five." Jokic could be looking at a suspension after he was issued a technical foul for shoving a spectator, none other than Suns owner Mat Ishbia, after the ball went into the crowd in the first half.

But Booker, who added 12 assists, is fine with Jokic scoring big — if he still loses. "It's a tough match-up," Booker said. "He's either scoring or getting his teammates involved or doing both. Every possession, just try to make it hard on him. He can have 50 all he wants as long as we get the win." Harden's performance was especially sweet as it came in front of John Hao, a Chinese student left paralyzed in a mass shooting at Michigan State in February that left three students dead and five others injured.

"He's my good luck charm," said Harden, who has been in regular contact with Hao since the shooting

Fast-rising teqball crashes Southeast Asian Games

PHNOM PENH: As teqball continues its fast growth with its debut at the Southeast Asian Games, the young sport has drawn resentful glances from similar sports in the region that feel it is treading on their turf. Invented in Hungary in 2012, teqball is a non-medal exhibition sport at this year's SEA Games in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, being played over three days with the finals on Monday. It is also on the schedule for the European Games in Poland in June and July.

Teqball already has more than 140 national federations, leading its backers to call it "the fastest-growing sport in the world". Top international football teams including Spain and Portugal bond over games of teqball during downtime, and stars such as Brazilian footballer Ronaldinho have become ambassadors for the game. Played on a curved table, it melds elements of football, volleyball and ping-pong. Players—alone or in pairs—trade shots without using their arms. The catch is they cannot use the same body part twice consecutively.

"In Europe, North America, South America, it's more developed than in Asia," said Marton Keresztury, from governing body Fiteq. "So here, it's just

Alcaraz 'at the door' to world's Number 1

MADRID: Carlos Alcaraz celebrated "being almost at the door" of becoming the top ranked tennis player in the world again after defending his Madrid Open title on Sunday. The Spaniard earned his 10th career title with a hard-fought 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 win over Jan-Lennard Struff and can reclaim the world number one ranking from Novak Djokovic simply by playing a single match at the Rome Masters next week, before the French Open.

Currently ranked second, Alcaraz spent 20 weeks in the top spot after his US Open triumph in September, becoming the youngest player to reach world number one. Djokovic's Australian Open triumph saw him depose Alcaraz but the 20-year-old confirmed he would play next week in the Italian capital.

"These are very nice achievements, winning my fourth Masters 1000, defending my title here and being almost at the door of recovering the number one spot," Alcaraz told a news conference. "These are very big things I'm doing, and I'm very proud of the work and of these accomplishments. I am ambitious and we'll try and go for Rome." Alcaraz continued his Roland Garros build-up by adding the Madrid trophy to victories in Barcelona, Buenos Aires and Indian Wells this year, although he was below his best against lucky loser Struff, the world number 65.

The triumph and his impending return to the top of the rankings reiterated his bright future at the game's summit. Alcaraz said his only worry for his future in tennis is injury, rather than any mental aspects. "You have to try to take care of yourself as much as possible," said Alcaraz. "The mental issue, of getting tired of winning, travelling or playing tennis, doesn't worry me because I know it's not going to happen. What may worry me in the future is the issue of injuries, which is what we are going to try to take care of together with my team."

Title defense

Alcaraz was given a tricky time by his German opponent but eventually became the youngest player since Rafael Nadal in 2006 to defend an ATP Masters 1000 title. Despite being 13 years Alcaraz's senior, Struff showed nerves



PHILADELPHIA: Tyrese Maxey #0 of the Philadelphia 76ers grabs the rebound during Game Four of the Eastern Conference Semi-Finals of the 2023 NBA Playoffs against the Boston Celtics in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. — AFP

tragedy. "He just gave me good luck, brought me good vibes, good energy. We knew this game was for him." Harden — who scored just 28 points across games two and three — rediscovered his shooting form just in time. "James was awesome," said Sixers coach Doc Rivers. "For a day and a half, James had to get himself back. No one did that but James."

Harden made 16-of-23 shots from the floor with six three-pointers. NBA Most Valuable Player Joel Embiid had 34 points. Tyrese Maxey added 14. Jayson Tatum led Boston with 24 points while Jaylen Brown had 23. Tatum sank a 27-foot three-pointer for a 115-113 Boston lead late in overtime, a foul going uncalled after he appeared to push off on Maxey. "That was awful that that wasn't called," Rivers said. "It was a push off. That could have decided the game."

starting slowly." On Sunday, the much-fancied Thai men's doubles team ruthlessly saw off their Cambodian opposition, the affront to their hosts compounded by Phakpong Dejaroen's acrobatic winning shots repeatedly bouncing up and scudding into the home fans.

That set the Thais up for a final on Monday against another Cambodian duo. In the women's doubles, the Thai duo of Suphawadi Wongkhamchan and Jutatip Kuntatong also swatted away the opposition on their way to the final. One reason Thailand excels at the sport is a pre-existing love for the game of sepak takraw, a similar sport popular around the region, played on something more resembling a volleyball court.

Fahrish Khan, of the Singapore men's doubles team who beat Brunei in their last group game, but did not progress, noted the overlap. "We play football. So, if you see a lot of them are sepak takraw players. It's very different," said the 27-year-old. "The difference is they know how to kill," he said, referring to the bouncing winners that the Thai team reeled off with elan. Keresztury said teqball had more tournaments coming in Asia soon, in China, Thailand, "and maybe Indonesia".

He noted that the sport risked butting heads with sepak takraw. "The players who are here, they come from (sepak takraw). Sometimes you have clashes with sepak takraw federations because they don't want to let their players play teqball. That's why it's developing slowly in Asia." "I think 80 percent of the players come from sepak takraw, from all nations."



MADRID: Spain's Carlos Alcaraz poses for pictures with the trophy after winning the 2023 ATP Tour Madrid Open tennis tournament singles final match against Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff on May 7, 2023. — AFP

in the first game and conceded a break in only his second tour-level final. Struff soon found his range and broke to love for 2-2 as he showed Alcaraz he would be no pushover, despite the strong home support and their disparity in ranking, and then won a third consecutive game.

However Alcaraz broke again for a 4-3 lead and survived a triple break point to win the first set. Struff's power game created plenty of problems of Alcaraz — hitting 14 winners in the first set to the Spaniard's seven. "I knew bombs would come my way, Jan is very aggressive," said Alcaraz. Struff roared into a 3-0 lead in the second set and produced a remarkable hold in the 15-minute fifth game for 4-1, saving five break points as Alcaraz's hitting deserted him. The 33-year-old served it out as Alcaraz dropped only his second set of the tournament and first in a Masters 1000 final.

However the top seed broke for a 3-1 lead in the third set and it proved decisive. Alcaraz eventually clinching victory when his opponent sent a backhand long. "Of course I wanted to go all the way to win today, but I would definitely say if someone told me two weeks ago you're gonna play the finals, I would take it," said Struff who had initially lost in qualifying last weekend before being awarded a 'lucky loser' slot in the main draw following injury pull-outs. On Saturday, world number two Aryna Sabalenka beat top-ranked Iga Swiatek to win the women's title in the Spanish capital. — AFP

Suns sizzle

The Suns hit 14-of-18 shots in the third quarter, their best-shooting quarter of the season, for a 98-92 edge entering the fourth. A Jokic three-point play and Aaron Gordon's tip-in put the Nuggets within 121-118, but T.J. Warren's two free throws gave Phoenix a five-point edge. Jokic missed a layup and the Suns, whose reserves outscored Denver's bench 42-11, cruised home. "The two games in Denver I felt our defense was great. We left it somewhere in the desert. It didn't arrive in Phoenix," Nuggets coach Michael Malone said. "Going home, that has got to be paramount. If we're getting control of the series again, it has to start with defense. And it has to be everybody. They are scoring too easy." "It's an even series now," said Suns coach Monty Williams. "But we've still got a lot of work to do." — AFP



PHNOM PENH: Thailand's Suphawadi Wongkhamchan competes with teammate Jutatip Kuntatong (unseen) in their women's doubles final teqball match against Cambodia during the 32nd Southeast Asian Games (SEA Games) on May 8, 2023. — AFP

But he added: "It's easy to get some skills from sepak takraw, but if you want to have all the skills you have to play more teqball." — AFP

Taekwondo championship kicks off

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The South Korean Ambassador to Kuwait Chung Byung-ha Taekwondo championship will kick off on Tuesday (5:00 pm) with the participation of 100 players of both genders from government and private clubs. The tournament is organized by Kuwait Taekwondo Federation (KTF) and will be held at Sheikh Saad Al-Abdallah complex in Sabah Al-Salem area. It lasts till Thursday. There will be two performances by the Korean show team on Tuesday at the Avenues Mall.

Chairman of KTF Hani Marshad said the South Korean Ambassador Championship is the result of a cooperation protocol that was signed by the federation at the embassy to organize the championship. He asked fans to support the players. Al-Marshad thanked the Public Authority for Sport and Kuwait Olympic Committee for supporting the federation as well as the volleyball federation for allowing the tournament to be held in its arena.



Sports

Zain invites fans to Amir's Cup final

Fun activities and valuable prizes at Jaber Al-Ahmad Int'l Stadium

KUWAIT: Zain, Kuwait's leading digital service provider, invites fans and football enthusiasts to attend the special event to be held on Tuesday, 9 May at 3:30 pm, to celebrate HH the Amir's Cup Final at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium. The event, which comes in partnership with the Kuwait Football Association, the Ministry of Information, and the Public Authority for Sports, celebrates the final match of the most cherished local cup between title holders Kazima SC and Kuwait SC.

The special celebration is set to kick-off with many fun activities and competitions in the Fans Zone, opposite Gate 6, at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium. The packed program includes up to 200 valuable prizes like smartphones, smart watches, and headphones, along with special prizes for social media followers. The event will also feature a unique performance prior to the match start whistle.

Zain participates in HH the Amir's Cup as part of the company's official sponsorship of the KFA's competitions for the 2022-2026 seasons, including the Kuwaiti Premier League (Dawri Zain), the First Division League, HH the Crown Prince's Cup, and the KFA Cup (Zain Cup). As the Official Sponsor, Zain offers KD 50,000 worth of prizes for athletes and fans per season, which is the biggest prize pool ever to be distributed in the Kuwaiti League's history. By dedicating cash prizes for athletes, the company seeks to encourage players to pursue excellence and elevate the league's performance.

Zain's role centers around three main areas: sup-



porting athletes with cash prizes, launching social events and interacting with fans at stadiums, and an all-new surprise: the first-ever Fantasy Football League in Kuwaiti football's history. These contributions and more go in line with the KFA's vision to further enrich the local football scene, given that it is the most beloved sports among Kuwaitis.

Zain firmly believes that the private sector has a vital and active role in developing the local sports and youth sectors, and it makes this belief a reality by sponsoring and supporting some of the biggest sports programs in the nation. This partnership with

tophe Galtier said: "That looked far more like what we have to do to take control of games and have consistency. It was an important win." Galtier refused to comment on Messi's suspension, saying it was an "internal matter".

Four-goal Lacazette

Former Arsenal forward Lacazette had a remarkable day, scoring four goals including a penalty with the last kick of the match as Lyon fought back from three goals down to beat Montpellier 5-4. "I believed in it," said Lacazette. "I believed because I know a game is never over and lasts 90 minutes." In an extraordinary game, Elye Wahi also scored four goals for the visitors, who led 4-1 after 55 minutes. Lyon made the most of slips on Saturday by Lille and Rennes, the teams above them, to lift themselves into the European qualification picture.

The 31-year-old Lacazette, who returned to Lyon last summer after five seasons with Arsenal, headed his side ahead in the 30th minute. But Wahi profited from errors by midfielder Johann Lepenant and a foul by Dejan Lovren which yielded a penalty before pouncing on another error to chip the ball over goalkeeper Anthony Lopes and run on to put Montpellier 4-1 ahead. Lacazette started the fightback in the 59th minute, running onto Bradley Barcola's cross to score.

Lovren headed a goal in the 70th minute and Lacazette equalized from another Barcola assist in the 82nd minute. Nine minutes into added time Lyon's last chance of victory seemed to have gone when Barcola blazed over. With time up, referee Clement Turpin reviewed the buildup and ruled that Christo-

pher Julien had wrestled Lacazette to the ground. The striker drilled home the penalty to complete a memorable comeback win. The result brought Lyon three points behind Lille who occupy fifth place.

Earlier, fourth-placed Monaco pulled five points clear of Lille with a 2-1 win at Angers. Nantes meanwhile continued their slide towards Ligue 2 as they lost 2-0 at home to relegation rivals Strasbourg. They remain 17th in the 20-team league, but this season four clubs go down as Ligue 1 will shrink to 18 clubs next season. After starting the day trailing Strasbourg only on goal difference, Nantes are two points behind 16th-placed Auxerre. "We're not good, but 16th place is just two points away. It's in our hands," said Nantes coach Antoine Kombouare. —AFP

enveloped Naples since Thursday's draw in Udine, and on Sunday afternoon fans let off fireworks and flares in the jammed streets around the stadium named after their icon Diego Maradona on a gorgeous sunny day in southern Italy. Packed bars and restaurants did a roaring trade with locals and tourists alike decked out in blue as a festive but relaxed mood dominated the city.

Before kick-off supporters put on a display of the Italian flag with the number three in honor of their title wins and hailed their team with loud chants of "we are the champions". But once the match got underway a torpor slowly washed over the ground, not helped by two teams with nothing to play for going through the motions and Napoli creating next to nothing. However Osimhen saved the day when Khvicha Kvaratskhelia's weaving dribble towards goal was stopped illegally by Nicolas Gonzalez and the striker duly punished Fiorentina.

Light show

Flares were lit all around the ground and blue smoke filled the air to hail a win which takes Napoli's massive lead at the top of the table to 17 points over detested rivals Juventus. The team were greeted with huge cheers from the crowd as the players trotted around the stadium's athletics

PSG beat Troyes to take control of French League

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain got their bid for a record 11th French League title back on track by beating Troyes 3-1 on Sunday after a troubled week for the Qatar-owned club. After PSG lost to Lorient at home the previous weekend, angry fans protested outside the club's headquarters and at the home of injured Brazilian star Neymar. Adding to the sense of crisis, the club suspended Lionel Messi for a reported two weeks after he made an unauthorized trip to Saudi Arabia.

But the win at relegation-threatened Troyes, combined with Marseille's 2-1 defeat at Lens on Saturday, gave PSG a six-point cushion over second-placed Lens. Kylian Mbappe scored first with a close-range header after seven minutes, drawing level with Lyon's Alexandre Lacazette on 24 league goals this season. Vitinha's right-footed finish on 58 minutes seemed to have put PSG on the way to victory but they lowered their guard and allowed Xavier Chavalierin to pull a goal back for Troyes when he headed past Gianluigi Donnarumma.

PSG poured forward looking for a third goal and after Mbappe's poked finish from Renato Sanches was saved, Fabian Ruiz curled in the rebound to make the three points safe. Coach Chris-

Osimhen, Napoli sink Fiorentina at Serie A title party

NAPLES: Napoli fans hailed the return of their Serie A title-winning heroes on Sunday as Victor Osimhen shot Napoli to a 1-0 win over Fiorentina in their first home match since being crowned kings of Italy for the first time in 33 years. Nigeria striker Osimhen lashed home the winning penalty in the 74th minute, after missing from the spot just after half-time, to take his league-leading tally to 23 just a few days after netting the goal which sealed Napoli's third Scudetto with a record-equaling five matches to play.

The 24-year-old is now the highest scoring African player in the history of Serie A after overtaking George Weah and lapped up the applause of Napoli fans as the team did their post-match lap of honor. "I had the confidence I would score the second one. It's a good feeling to get the goal," said Osimhen to DAZN. A party mood has

News in Brief

Clark wins first PGA victory

WASHINGTON: Wyndham Clark outclassed reigning Olympic champion Xander Schauffele in a back-nine battle on Sunday to win the Wells Fargo Championship by four strokes for his first career PGA Tour triumph. The 29-year-old American fired a three-under par 68 to complete 72 holes on 19-under 265 at Quail Hollow in Charlotte, North Carolina and defeat fifth-ranked Schauffele, who shot 70 to finish on 269. "I'm a little choked up," Clark said as he fought back tears. "It has been a long five years to get to this point on tour. I thought I would have had one earlier but it was well worth the wait. I'm just so grateful." Clark squandered the two-stroke lead he had when the day began, then picked up strokes on every hole from the eighth through the 12th to seize command and denied playing partner Schauffele by matching his birdies down the stretch. —AFP

Thailand win LPGA Crown

SAN FRANCISCO: Thailand captured the LPGA International Crown on Sunday, blanking Australia 3-0 in the championship match to complete a near-perfect run in the global team event at Harding Park. Patty Tavatanakit defeated Hannah Green 4&3 and Athaya Thitikul beat Stephanie Kyriacou 4&2 in singles to clinch the trophy before Ariya and Moriya Jutanugarn downed Minjee Lee and Sarah Kemp 4&3 in four-omes to complete the sweep. "It means a lot for all of us," said Thitikul. "It's incredible work we put in this week to get this trophy for our country. "We're one of the best teams in the world and I think we can beat every team in the world." Sixth seed Thailand went 11-1 in all matches during the week, making a perfect streak through round-robin play before ousting top seed United States 2-1 in a Sunday morning semi-final. The seventh-seeded Aussies beat Sweden 3-0 in the other semi but had no answer for the Thai stars. —AFP

Verstappen win Miami GP

MIAMI GARDENS: World champion Max Verstappen powered from ninth on the grid to beat team-mate Sergio Perez and extend Red Bull's all-conquering start to the season with victory at the Miami Grand Prix on Sunday. The win — Red Bull's fifth from five races this season — extends Verstappen's lead at the top of the standings to 14 points and follows his triumph in the inaugural Miami race last year. The 1-2 for Red Bull is their fourth in five races so far this year as the team utterly dominate the sport leaving their rivals to battle for the third podium position. Aston Martin's Spanish veteran Fernando Alonso took third for his fourth podium in five races this season as he continues to enjoy his late career revival. Verstappen had to work hard for his third victory of the campaign after his disappointing performance in Saturday's qualifying left him in the middle of the grid. —AFP

Murray wins first title

MARSEILLE: Former world number one Andy Murray won his first title since 2019 on Sunday with victory at the Aix-en-Provence Challenger in France. Three-time Grand Slam champion Murray had gone without a title since he triumphed in Antwerp in October 2019. Murray, now ranked 52, defeated top seed Tommy Paul, the world number 17 from the United States, 2-6, 6-1, 6-2 in the final of the clay court event. The 35-year-old Briton, who is hoping to boost his ranking to ensure a seeded spot in the Wimbledon draw in July, last won on the second-tier Challenger tour at American events in Aptos and Binghamton in 2005. "This last year, 18 months has been a bit of struggle with my game. But my team have been there supporting me and working with me to try and get better," said Murray at the trophy presentation. "We keep going from here." —AFP

Gallant out as Rangers coach

NEW YORK: Gerard Gallant was dropped as coach of the National Hockey League's New York Rangers after two seasons on Saturday, the team saying they "mutually agreed to part ways." The Rangers were blanked 4-0 on Monday to be ousted by the New Jersey Devils four games to three in their best-of-seven first round series of the Stanley Cup playoffs. New York, which went 47-22 with 13 overtime losses in the regular season, had taken a 2-0 lead over the Devils before dropping four of the next five games, managing only two goals in the four defeats. "I have a ton of respect for Gerard as both a coach and person and truly appreciate everything he did for us on and off the ice these last two seasons," Rangers president and general manager Chris Drury said. "After my evaluation of the season and discussions with Gerard, we mutually came to the conclusion that a change would be beneficial for both parties." —AFP



Kuwait's top football competition comes to strengthen the leadership role Zain plays in the local sports scene and is perfectly in line with the company's sustainability and social responsibility strategy towards the sports and youth sectors.



TROYES: Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe celebrates after he scored the first goal for his team during the French L1 football match between ES Troyes AC and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) on May 7, 2023. — AFP

pher Julien had wrestled Lacazette to the ground. The striker drilled home the penalty to complete a memorable comeback win. The result brought Lyon three points behind Lille who occupy fifth place.

Earlier, fourth-placed Monaco pulled five points clear of Lille with a 2-1 win at Angers. Nantes meanwhile continued their slide towards Ligue 2 as they lost 2-0 at home to relegation rivals Strasbourg. They remain 17th in the 20-team league, but this season four clubs go down as Ligue 1 will shrink to 18 clubs next season. After starting the day trailing Strasbourg only on goal difference, Nantes are two points behind 16th-placed Auxerre. "We're not good, but 16th place is just two points away. It's in our hands," said Nantes coach Antoine Kombouare. —AFP

track, taking it in turns to give piggy backs to Hirving Lozano who suffered a potentially serious knee injury towards the end of the first half.

Supporters in the ground were then treated to music from local pop stars while Oscar-winning director Paolo Sorrentino cut through an over-the-top spectacle which featured flames, powerful fire works, a light show and a pulsating electronic Italian flag flashing on the running track. "We've won this Scudetto because Maradona showed us how it's done," said Sorrentino to warm applause. —AFP

Today's Matches

Kuwait Amir Cup		
Kazima v Al-Kuwait		19:00
Kuwait Sports HD		
UEFA Champions League		
Real Madrid v Man City		22:00
beIN Sports HD 1 English		
beIN Sports 1 FR		
beIN Sports 1 HD Premium		

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
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Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Change of Name

I, KALAMARLA SUBBAIAH @ SUNKARA MAHMOUD C/o. Sunkara Ramachandra, residing at D.No.: 3-40-2-7, Vasavi Nagar, Kadiri Town & Mandalam, Sree Satya Sai (Dist.), A.P., India. My name is calling as **KALAMARLA SUBBAIAH** and **SUNKARA MAHMOUD** both names are belongs to me and both names are one and same and there is no other person above said name's. Hence I am making this declaration for clarification of my name. Vide affidavit, dated **03/04/2023** before advocate **T. BABA JOHN**, Notary, Sri Sathya Sai district. This is for kind information of all concerned. **(#3529) 9/5/2023**

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 **HUSENIBHAI 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 Moha-

lla 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**

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**

Arsenal keep title hope alive

Gunners trounce Newcastle 2-0



NEWCASTLE: Arsenal's English goalkeeper Aaron Ramsdale (3rd right) tries to catch the ball during the English Premier League football match between Newcastle United and Arsenal on May 7, 2023. — AFP

NEWCASTLE: Arsenal kept the Premier League (EPL) title race alive as Martin Odegaard's strike and Fabian Schar's own goal beat Newcastle 2-0 on Sunday to close to within one point of leaders Manchester City. City have a game in hand on top of their slender lead, but the Gunners are refusing to give up the fight in their hunt for a first league title in 19 years.

Newcastle's second home defeat of the season slows the Magpies' charge towards Champions League football next season as their lead over fifth-placed Liverpool remains three points. Arsenal held an eight-point lead at the top of the table just a month ago but had won just one of their previous five league games to let the destiny of the title slip out of their hands.

Mikel Arteta's men, though, showcased their im-

provement over the last 12 months since defeat at St. James' Park last season cost them a place in the top four. "It is a big step for a young team like ours to come here and do the things we did. It shows we have come a long way," said Odegaard. "Last year here was one of the toughest days of my career, to be honest. After dropping points against Man City, to win against Chelsea and then come here and win shows the mentality. "We have to keep going and digging in and fight until the end. It is football, anything can happen and we need to be ready."

The visitors wobbled early on as Jacob Murphy smashed the inside of the post after just three minutes before the home side thought they had a penalty when Bruno Guimaraes' effort hit the arm of Jakub Kiwior.

However, the Polish defender was handed a reprieve by a VAR review as the ball appeared to come off his thigh first. Having ridden their luck, Arsenal took full advantage to go in front with their first shot on goal as Odegaard took aim from long range and arrowed the ball low beyond Nick Pope's left hand on 14 minutes.

Martinelli magic

Pope then had to make a series of big saves just to keep Newcastle in a pulsating game before the break. Three times the England goalkeeper stood up tall to block one-on-ones with Bukayo Saka, Gabriel Martinelli and Odegaard. The unrelenting pace did not let up after the break as both sides hit the woodwork inside the first six minutes of the restart.

Alexander Isak's header came off the post before Aaron Ramsdale produced a remarkable save from Fabian Schar to keep Arsenal in front. At the other end, Martinelli finally had Pope beaten only for the ball to come back off the crossbar. Tempers started to flare on both sides of a feisty contest before another piece of brilliance from Martinelli produced the crucial second goal. The Brazilian ran half the length of the field and then fired in a low cross that Schar could only turn into his own net. While Arsenal still need favors from City in the run-in to achieve their goal, a top-four finish is still within Newcastle's reach. Eddie Howe's men likely need just six points from their final four games to guarantee Champions League football for the first time in 20 years. — AFP

Dortmund stun Wolfsburg 6-0

BERLIN: Two goals from England's Jude Bellingham helped Borussia Dortmund to a spectacular 6-0 win over Wolfsburg on Sunday, keeping the Bundesliga title race on a knife edge with three games to go. Bellingham struck twice in the second half as Dortmund ran Wolfsburg ragged in a statement victory to keep alive their hopes of a first title in 11 years. The win keeps Edin Terzic's team within a point of league leaders Bayern Munich, who battled to a narrow 2-1 win over Werder Bremen on Saturday.

"It's not over yet. We need to win all our games and see what happens, but the belief is definitely still there," said Dortmund midfielder Emre Can, who also heaped praise on Bellingham and fellow goalscorer Karim Adeyemi. "It makes it easier for me when they play like that. They both have the quality to score goals and

they showed that today," he said. England international Bellingham, who has been linked with a move to Real Madrid in recent days, now has 13 goals in all competitions this season. Dortmund took the lead after just 14 minutes as both sides went for the throat in the opening exchanges. Adeyemi was quicker than his marker to pick up Julian Ryerson's deflected cross and headed the ball expertly under the bar for the opener. Wolfsburg should have equalized when Patrick Wimmer found himself through on goal, but the German striker fired the ball straight at Dortmund keeper Gregor Kobel.

At the other end, Donyell Malen wasted a brilliant opportunity on the counter-attack when he decided to square the ball instead of shoot in a one-on-one with Wolfsburg keeper Koen Casteels. Unfazed, Dortmund doubled the lead through a Sebastien Haller tap-in just before the half-hour mark. After Mats Hummels won the ball back brilliantly in midfield, Adeyemi found space to charge on the left wing and picked out Haller in front of goal with a fizzing low cross.

'No offer' for Bellingham

With Dortmund's attacks now flooding through the leaky Wolfsburg defence, Malen quickly added a third. The home side continued to tear through their guests after the break, with Bellingham scoring his goal after a rampaging run from inside his own half. Adeyemi made it 5-0 a few minutes later, tapping the ball into the empty net after he and Haller had teamed up to win back possession in the Wolfsburg box. The Germany striker could have had a hat-trick when Bellingham was brought down in the box, but blasted his penalty high over the bar.

Bellingham completed the rout a few minutes from time, slotting the ball in from close range after a flick on from Julian Brandt. The England midfielder's future remains uncertain, but Dortmund sporting director Sebastian Kehl insisted before the game that he was yet to receive any official offer for a transfer. "It's not surprising that the rumors are swirling, we've been in this situation before. But there's nothing new to announce and there has been no offer," he told DAZN. — AFP



DORTMUND: Wolfsburg's Belgian goalkeeper Koen Casteels makes a save during the German first division Bundesliga football match between Borussia Dortmund and VfL Wolfsburg on May 7, 2023. — AFP

United face nervy end to season as problems mount

LONDON: Manchester United's season is at risk of imploding in spectacular style after they appeared to have turned the corner in Erik ten Hag's first campaign as manager. The Red Devils, already with the League Cup in the bag and through to the FA Cup final, were hot favorites to secure a top-four Premier League place just a week ago. They are still fourth but after dropping eight points in their past four games are just a single point clear of fast-charging Liverpool in the race for a Champions League place, albeit with a game in hand.

United, who appear exhausted after a punishingly long season, are counting the cost of a lack of fire-

power and a serious defensive crisis. Both issues have shown that the club lack the depth of squad to sustain a title challenge despite making significant strides under their Dutch manager. United have managed just 49 goals in the English top-flight, the second-lowest total in the top nine and a whopping 40 fewer than leaders Manchester City.

Marcus Rashford has enjoyed the best season of his career, scoring 16 Premier League goals and 29 in all competitions, but United are over-reliant on moments of inspiration from the England man. Next on the list is midfielder Bruno Fernandes, who has just six league goals. Jadon Sancho has five while Antony and the injury-plagued Anthony Martial have each only found the net four times. Sancho and Brazilian winger Antony, who together cost more than £150 million (\$190 million) have been frustratingly inconsistent.

Loan signing Wout Weghorst, brought in to add firepower after the departure of Cristiano Ronaldo in November, has not managed a single league goal. Ten Hag admitted after Sunday's 1-0 loss at West Ham that

he was frustrated his side could not capitalize on their chances. A new number nine will be United's priority in the upcoming transfer window, with Tottenham's Harry Kane often mentioned, but the caliber of player they can attract may depend on whether they qualify for the Champions League.

Double injury blow

Ten Hag has been forced to juggle in recent weeks after losing his first-choice centre-back pairing of Lisandro Martinez and Raphael Varane in the same match last month against Sevilla. Argentine World Cup winner Martinez, ruled out for the season with a metatarsal injury, has added steel to United's defence alongside the silky Varane, who could be back in action soon. Luke Shaw has been used as a makeshift centre-back alongside Victor Lindelof, with club captain Harry Maguire reduced to a bit-part role. Behind the defenders, there are growing doubts about whether goalkeeper David de Gea is the right man for the long term after another howler against West Ham.

The Spaniard has now made four errors leading to a goal in all competitions this season, the joint-most of any Premier League player. Ten Hag came to his goalkeeper's defense after the match at the London Stadium, pointing out that he has the most clean sheets in the Premier League this season. "We want him to stay and we want him to extend his contract," he said. United's long campaign—Sunday's game was their 57th of a season in which they have progressed deep into every cup competition—appears to be catching up with them.

But Ten Hag, who delivered the club's first trophy for six years at Wembley in February, said his men could not afford to "feel sorry" for themselves. "Tiredness is in your head," he said. "If you want, if you have the willingness, you can take it. It's now up to the players and me and the coaching staff to be together to get the willingness in and the belief we can take it and this team has it." He added: "It's not about Liverpool, it's about us - look at the table. We have everything in our hands. If we bring our performance, if we bring our standards, we will win games. — AFP