



# Kuwait suspends visas for Filipinos

Movement strongly rejects exploitation of expat workers in Kuwait

## Kuwait beat Kazma to lift Amir Cup



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah hands the Amir Cup to Kuwait Sports Club players after they beat defending champions Kazma 3-0 in the final at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium on May 9, 2023. Kuwait won the Amir Cup for the 16th time in history — KUNA (See Page 16)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Kuwait suspended all types of work and entry visas for Filipinos on Tuesday after the Asian country allegedly violated a bilateral labor agreement with the state, interior ministry sources told Kuwait Times. They said the suspension came at the orders of Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah “because Philippines has not complied with the provisions of the labor agreement between the two countries”. The sources said “Philippines has breached the conditions and provisions of the labor agreement”, adding the decision aims to impose the sovereignty of the state. The Philippine Embassy in Kuwait said late Tuesday it has not been notified yet of any such decision by the Kuwaiti authorities.

The Philippines in February halted the deployment of first-time workers, especially domestic helpers, to Kuwait following the gruesome murder of a 35-year-old Filipina maid by a Kuwaiti teenager. The body of Jullebee Ranara was found in the desert and the 17-year-old son of her employer was detained by police.

Philippine labor officials said in February they planned to engage in negotiations with Kuwait to review the labor agreement which was signed by the two countries in 2018. The agreement was signed following reports of increased abuses against Filipino workers, especially domestic helpers, in Kuwait. There are 268,000 Filipinos working and living in Kuwait.

Earlier, the Kuwaiti Progressive Movement strongly rejected what it said is the exploitation of expatriate workers in the country, calling on authorities not to single them for blame for the imbalance in the demographic structure, as expats form two-thirds of Kuwait’s population. The rejection came in a statement issued by the leftist movement after the Cabinet announced late Monday the establishment of a national committee to regulate the population in the country, mainly to reduce the number of expats.

The statement rejected “the discriminatory proposition that holds expats responsible for the demographic imbalance, which was the result of several factors, including visa trade and recruitment of foreign workers because their wages are much lower”. The movement said expat workers face a series of discriminatory measures including low wages, delayed or unpaid salaries, long working hours, confiscation of passports and others. It decried the kafala or sponsorship system, describing it as a form of slavery, where foreign workers are forcibly bonded to their employers.

Kuwait Society for Human Rights (KSHR) also slammed a decision by the health ministry to charge expat patients KD 20 for each bag of blood, while foreigners on a visit visa will be charged KD 40. The society said the ministry has disregarded international obligations that Kuwait has to uphold with regards to respect for human rights, including health rights, through a non-discriminatory approach.

## Candidates urge citizens to vote to elect reformists

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The total number of candidates for the upcoming June 6 general election rose to 119 after 15 candidates registered on Tuesday, the fifth day of registration, as hopefuls called on citizens to cast their ballots to ensure reformists are elected. The candidate turnout is still very low compared to the previous elections in Sept 2022, when as many as 274 hopefuls registered for the polls after five days.

Former MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari said the short period before the election apparently made it difficult for hopefuls to prepare to contest the polls. But there are still five days to go before the close of registration. Deputy speaker of the 2020 Assembly Ahmad Al-Shuhoumi announced he will not run for re-election, but will continue to serve the people.

Among Tuesday’s candidates, there are three former MPs raising the total number to 27, in addition to six members of the scrapped 2022 assembly raising their number to 25. Candidates urged citizens to ignore what they claimed a campaign calling on them to shun the polls alleging the assembly had no value because of repeated dissolution.

Kandari warned there are some who are trying to show that the Assembly had no value in a bid to discourage voters from going to the ballots, adding that if voters abstain, the results could be disastrous for them and the country. Former MP Hamdan Al-Azemi called on voters to select the best to help stabilize the country.

Mubarak Al-Rasheedi, a member of the 2022 Assembly, said people are experiencing a great deal of frustration, adding that the people are fed up and exhausted by the ongoing political instability. Mariam Al-Mutairi, one of two women who registered on Tuesday, said that if she wins, she will push for allocating monthly salaries for housewives to stay at home to take care of children, who are allegedly influenced by foreign domestic helpers’ religions and habits.

## Zionists kill 15 in Gaza; Kuwait slams attacks

GAZA: A series of Zionist strikes in the Gaza Strip on Tuesday killed 15 people, with both sides bracing for an escalation. Islamic Jihad vowed to “avenge” the deaths in a predawn raid involving some 40 Zionist aircraft. The first Zionist strike hit targets in the crowded coastal territory for nearly two hours from just after 2:00 am (2300 GMT Monday). The Gaza health ministry said four children were among those killed and 20 people were wounded, with some in critical condition in the attacks which left buildings ablaze and reduced others to rubble.

Kuwait’s foreign ministry Tuesday expressed Kuwait’s condemnation and denunciation of the Zionist occupation forces’ aggression against the besieged Gaza Strip and storming of Nablus. In a statement, the ministry stressed Kuwait’s absolute rejection of this dangerous escalation and repeated attacks that constitute a continued series of crimes committed by the Zionist occupation forces against the brotherly Palestinian people and a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law.

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GAZA: A cleric leads prayers during a group funeral in Gaza City for people killed in Zionist air raids on the Palestinian territory on May 9, 2023. — AFP

## Messi set for megabucks Saudi move

RIYADH: Argentine superstar Lionel Messi will play in Saudi Arabia next season under a blockbuster deal, a source close to the negotiations in the kingdom told AFP on Tuesday. The deal would mean Messi potentially joins his archrival Cristiano Ronaldo in the Saudi league as the Gulf state lavishes its oil wealth on sport. There was no confirmation from Messi’s current club Paris Saint-Germain, who noted simply that he was under contract until June 30 when contacted by AFP.

The source said Messi will sign a “huge” deal with an as-yet-unnamed

Saudi club just months after the 35-year-old lifted the World Cup in neighboring Qatar in December. “Messi is a done deal. He will play in Saudi Arabia next season,” said the source, who is not authorized to speak to media and spoke on condition of anonymity. “The contract is exceptional. It’s huge. We are just finalizing some small details,” added the source.

A separate PSG source said the Qatar-owned French club had not offered Messi a new deal. “If the club had wanted to renew his contract, it would have been done earlier,” that source said. Despite several reports linking Messi with Al Hilal, one of the top Saudi teams, club sources told AFP they had not been in direct contact with PSG.

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RIYADH: This handout photo taken on May 1, 2023 shows Argentina’s forward Lionel Messi holding a falcon. — AFP





# Kuwait eager to meet ambitions of youth

Prime Minister commends Kuwait Youth Assembly's efforts in serving country



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (right) receives Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi. — KUNA photos



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (center right) is seen with Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi (center left), accompanied by delegates from the Kuwait Youth Assembly at Bayan Palace on Tuesday.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, accompanied by Chairman of Kuwait Youth Assembly Nawaf Al-Azmi and assemblymen at Bayan Palace on Tuesday.

The Prime Minister affirmed the government's

sustained keenness to communicate with youth and remove obstacles they could face and work to meet their hopes and ambitions. He called for developing their skills and unleashing their energies. His Highness also expressed his appreciation for the assembly's efforts to address challenges, actively get involved in serving their country and achieve reforms and developments.

Minister Al-Mutairi recently headed Kuwait's delegation in the 36th meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Ministerial Committee for Youth Affairs and Sports, which was held in the Omani capital of Muscat. During the meeting, importance of strengthening joint youth work between the GCC states was emphasized in addition to the need to develop it to achieve aspirations

of Gulf youngsters. Emphasis was also placed on planning for youngsters to innovate and excel by organizing joint programs, activities and youth forums to exchange expertise and experiences.

Kuwait was chosen to chair the Coordination and Follow-up Committee, which will show the committee's strategic plan in drawing joint policies to promote Gulf youth programs and activities. — KUNA



## Azerbaijani, Kuwaiti leaders played major role in deepening ties

The Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the State of Kuwait shared the following statement on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Heydar Aliyev, the national leader of the Azerbaijani people.

Close historical, cultural and religious ties connect the people and states of Azerbaijan and Kuwait.

After Azerbaijan restored its independence in 1991, the first international organization it became a member of was the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Diplomatic relations between Azerbaijan and Kuwait were established in 1994. More than 20 intergovernmental agreements have been signed between the two countries. The leaders of the countries have played a significant role in the development of relations between our friendly countries.

On December 13, 1994, the National Leader of the Azerbaijani people, Heydar Aliyev, met with the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, while visiting Morocco to participate in the OIC Summit, and thus the foundation of relations between the two countries was laid. The heads of state invited each other to their countries during the meeting held under conditions of mutual understanding. Sincere meetings and discussions were held between the heads of state in Copenhagen in March 1995 and in the United States in October of the same year. The State of Kuwait provided humanitarian aid to Azerbaijani refugees during the first years of the conflict and participated in the financing of a number of projects implemented in Azerbaijan. The Republic of Azerbaijan and the State of Kuwait cooperate closely both on a bilateral basis and within the framework of organizations such as the UN, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and OPEC+.

On May 10, 2023, the 100th anniversary of the birth of Heydar Aliyev, the National Leader of the Azerbaijani people, the founder of the independent state of Azerbaijan, and an outstanding political figure, who laid the foundation of relations between the states of Azerbaijan and Kuwait, will be commemorated. In this regard, 2023 was declared the "Year of Heydar Aliyev" by a relevant order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Ilham Aliyev.

National Leader Heydar Aliyev led Soviet Azerbaijan in 1969-1982. Heydar Aliyev, a great supporter of his native people, implemented a wide program of reforms in all spheres of life in order to shape Azerbaijan into one of the most advanced republics of the Soviet Union.

While he led Soviet Azerbaijan, hundreds of plants, factories, and production areas were established and 213 large industrial enterprises were launched in the entire territory of the republic. The first air conditioning factory in the former USSR started operating in Baku in 1975. The biggest buyer of Baku air conditioners was Cuba, buying 700 air conditioners a year. Other exporting countries were the 15 allied countries, China, Iran, Egypt and Australia.

Today, hundreds of residential buildings, hotels, schools, hospitals, and cultural palaces that all add to the beauty of Baku and the regions of Azerbaijan, along with factories that make up the core of our economy, plants, huge industrial facilities, large production complexes, water reservoirs, Kura Water Pipeline, green zones, recreation centers, hundreds of roads, including the Baku-Balakan railway connecting the northwestern tip of the country to the capital as well as the railway to the city of Khan-kendi in Karabakh were the result of Heydar Aliyev's tireless activity and love for the Motherland.

In December 1982, Heydar Aliyev was appointed as the first Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers.

Heydar Aliyev has always attached great importance to the development of relations with Islamic countries and to Islamic solidarity. His visits to Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Libya, Iraq, Yemen, Pakistan



and other Muslim countries in 1982-1987, while still working in the USSR administration, made him recognized as one of the leading politicians in the entire Islamic world.

National Leader Heydar Aliyev is also the architect and founder of modern and new Azerbaijan.

As it is known, after the collapse of the USSR, the allied republics gained independence; on October 18, 1991, the Republic of Azerbaijan regained its independence. However, in the first years of our independence, there was a severe socio-economic crisis, chaos and anarchy in the republic. The country was on the verge of a civil war. On top of that, 20% of our land was occupied.

During that difficult period, the people saw the way out in Heydar Aliyev's return to power. Under such complex conditions, the National Leader gave voice to the people and returned to power in 1993, leading independent Azerbaijan for 10 years, and the foundation of independent Azerbaijan's development and many successes was laid during his rule. Above all, he prevented violence and a civil war, created stability in the country and took serious measures to improve the welfare of the population.

Heydar Aliyev took important steps towards attracting foreign investments to the oil sector. To begin with, despite big obstacles, he managed to sign the "Contract of the Century" on September 20, 1994. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline project called the "Legend of the Three Seas" and named after the Great Leader has become a reality and is contributing to the improvement of the material well-being of our people and making our native Azerbaijan a powerful state.

National Leader Heydar Aliyev reshaped Azerbaijan's foreign policy from the first days and rebuilt it on the basis of the country's strategic interests.

Today, Heydar Aliyev's statehood course is successfully continued by his son, Ilham Aliyev, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. With the official visit of the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev to Kuwait on February 10, 2009, bilateral relations entered a new level. In his meeting with Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, it was stated that the rela-

tions between the two countries are developing and political relations are at a high level. The development of relations between Azerbaijan and Kuwait in the fields of economy, trade, tourism, investment was discussed and a number of intergovernmental agreements were signed. The heads of state also exchanged views on international and regional issues.

The Amir of Kuwait presented President Ilham Aliyev with the "Mubarak Al-Kabir" order, the highest award of his country, and the President of Azerbaijan presented the Amir with the "Heydar Aliyev" order, the highest award of Azerbaijan.

It is very gratifying that the relations between our countries are continuing to develop positively. Inter-parliamentary relations are intensive. Additionally, the Intergovernmental Joint Commission is active.

The number of Kuwaiti tourists visiting Azerbaijan is increasing every year. This is related to the implementation of an easy visa regime for Kuwaiti citizens, as well as the implementation of direct flights between Baku and Kuwait by the airlines "Jazeera Airways", "Kuwait Airways" and "Azerbaijan Airlines" (AZAL).

Also, cultural days and a number of cultural events were successfully held in Baku and Kuwait cities. In the field of education, even in the last century during the Soviet rule, Kuwaiti students studied in Azerbaijan. This pleasant tradition continues and currently there are Azerbaijani students studying at Kuwait University.

Today, Azerbaijan is a leading state of the region, and at the same time, it is a victorious state that freed its land from 30 years of occupation due to its own strength. President Ilham Aliyev successfully continues the political course of Great Leader Heydar Aliyev. As long as there is an independent state of Azerbaijan and the people of Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev will live in their hearts.

Next year will mark the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Azerbaijan and Kuwait. We believe that the sincere friendly relations of the country's leaders will help us to further expand our relations and achieve new achievements in the near future.

## Kuwaiti-US kidney disease study uncovers causing gene

KUWAIT: Associate professor at the Medical Sciences Center at Kuwait University Dr Hamad Yassin announced the completion of a research project on the genetic aspects of polycystic kidney disease in cooperation with Mayo Clinic Hospital in the United States of America. Dr. Yassin, an associate researcher at the Dasman Diabetes Institute and the secretary general of the Kuwaiti society for organ transplantation and the head of the research team, said in a statement to KUNA that the project succeeded in discovering a number of new genetic mutations that cause polycystic kidney disease.

The project was implemented by Kuwait University in cooperation with Mayo Clinic Hospital and funded by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences and lasted four years. Yassin said the research team was able to discover an uncommon gene (IFT140) causing the disease in a family



Dr Hamad Yassin

with inherited symptoms of the disease.

Polycystic kidney disease is a chronic genetic disorder that causes the formation of cysts in the kidneys. The cysts accumulate with age and affect the kidneys until the patient reaches the stage of kidney failure.

The research project, said Yassin, focused on the diagnostic genetic aspects of polycystic kidney disease by specialists and kidney and radiology consultants from Kuwait University, the Ministry of Health, the Dasman Diabetes Institute and kidney disease specialists from the American Mayo Clinic Hospital, which ranks amongst the best hospitals in the world in the field of kidney disease treatment.

He pointed out that the research project has been completed and work is underway on the analysis of vital data. The study had many goals, one of which was drawing the genetic map of poly-

cystic kidney disease in Kuwait. The map, he said, will primarily help doctors to deal with cases and help manage symptoms more effectively because it allows identifying patients likely to have severe symptoms before they appear.

He said that it may also allow the treating team to choose a specific group of patients to give them targeted treatment because knowing the genetic defect the patient has enables doctors to select patients that can be affected by the treatment better than others.

Yassin said that the second direction of the research project was studying the use of urine exosomes as diagnostic biomarkers for patients with renal cysts. Exosomes are small particles produced by cells in the body and excreted to the outside and carry a different load of proteins, nucleic acids, etc. They range in size from 30 to 150 Nm, which is a very small size that makes it invisible to the naked eye.

The project aimed to extract these exosomes from urine samples of patients with renal cysts and analyze proteins and nucleic acids the particles carry. Researchers then studied the relationship between the levels of some vital indicators and the stage and severity of the disease.

### 1,700 patients in Kuwait

Yassin said the project concluded that the number of renal cyst patients in Kuwait is estimated at about 1,700 patients and the symptoms of the disease vary from patient to patient. He pointed out that one of the reasons that contribute to the difference in symptoms is the genetic aspect.

He explained that understanding the genetic aspect of the disease will enhance the understanding of the disease and thus improve therapeutic interventions in the future. One of the results achieved, he said, is the development of new methods for the early detection of the disease, which may help in the early diagnosis of the disease and thus improve the chances of treatment and improve its effectiveness.

He added that the project provided an opportunity to participate in a consortium and international research cooperation that includes a number of leading research centers in the world. Yassin praised the important role of Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) in supporting research projects in Kuwait. He explained that through its support for medical research, the foundation is working to improve health care in the country and contribute to improving the quality of life of the community. — KUNA



## Local

# NATO lauds Kuwait's role in maintaining peace, security

## Iran-Saudi deal paves way for better environment

**BRUSSELS:** The outgoing Commander of NATO Mission in Iraq, Lieutenant General Giovanni Maria Iannucci lauded Kuwait's positive role in maintaining peace and security in the region.

"Kuwait has quite an important role to play", he told a small group of journalists including KUNA, speaking via Zoom from Baghdad to the NATO headquarters in Brussels. "I see from Kuwait a positive posture and even the willingness to help Iraq to some extent to become stronger," he said.

"I see a positive dynamic ongoing. The recent Iranian-Saudi agreement to some extent paved the way for better environment," said the NATO commander who was assigned to his post in Iraq in

May 2022. "Even though the agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran was signed in Beijing, Iraq played a very important role in facilitating the dialogue," he stressed.

The Italian Lieutenant General said that the focus of the present government of Iraq led by Prime Minister Mohammad Al-Sudani is on improving regional relations by paying visits to neighboring countries. "He is trying to re-position Iraq in the center of the regional foreign policy to smoothen and improve relations even with some neighboring countries with whom they have some disagreements," he said.

Referring to the problem of terrorism, he said:

"Daesh as we knew years ago in this country is no longer a threat. However, this does not imply that terrorism is no longer alive because there is a different type of terrorism behind the scenes," he said, warning that the nexus between the growing criminality, drug trafficking and terrorism could become a concern in Iraq.

In his presentation, Lieutenant General Giovanni Maria Iannucci referred to the growing role of China and Russia in the Middle East region and said that China will continue to play a major role in the region in the military and security environment. The same applies to Russia, he said noting, "Iraq is in the center of geopolitical confrontation."

NATO Mission Iraq (NMI) is a non-combat advisory and capacity-building mission that assists Iraq in building more sustainable and effective armed forces and security institutions to stabilize their country, fight terrorism and prevent the return of ISIS/Daesh. Several hundred personnel from NATO and partner countries are serving in the mission. The mission was launched at the NATO Summit in Brussels in July 2018, following a request from the government of Iraq, and established in October 2018. Lieutenant General Jose Antonio Aguero Martinez from Spain has been appointed as the new Commander for the NATO Mission to Iraq. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Winners are seen with the trophies they were rewarded for placing first in the competition. — KUNA photos

## Kuwaiti students win big in robotics contest

**KUWAIT:** A Kuwaiti student delegation won first place in a number of competitions held as part of the 14th Arab Robotics Championship held in the Qatari capital, Doha.

The delegation, consisting of ten students from public schools distributed among five teams, proved their excellence in the tournament, which is an important gathering to celebrate the achievements of a number of Arab students in the field of robotics and artificial intelligence.

The "Kuwait 1" team, consisting of students Ali Fadhel and Salman Al-Harbi, won first place in the "Best Strategy" competition for the category "Beginner Line Tracking". The "Kuwait 2" team, consisting of students Mohammed Al-Ajmi and Faisal Al-Ajmi won first place in the "Best Programming" competition, the Ministry of Education said.

The "Kuwait 4" team, consisting of students Idaris Al-Kandari and Ammar Shams Al-Din, won first place in the "Best Control" award for the "Arm" cat-

egory. The "Kuwait 5" team, consisting of students Abdulwahab Al-Kandari and Mohammed Shams Al-Din won second place in the same category.

Spokesman of the ministry Ahmed Al-Wahida expressed the ministry's pride in the honorable results achieved by the students in the tournament, and noted the efforts of the participating teams and their supervisory staff with the membership of the heads of the two computer departments at Obaid bin Rabia school Fadel Abdul Salam and Abdulrahman Ahmed from Abdulrahman bin Abi Bakr school.

He considered these honorable results a reflection of the solid will and perseverance of Kuwaiti students to achieve scientific and technical achievements, hoping for more successes to raise the name of the State of Kuwait high regionally and internationally.

"The ministry will continue to support and encourage its students to innovate and excel in all fields in order to achieve the development goals of the state," the Kuwait Information Technology Society announced on Sunday during its participation in the tournament with the student delegates.

"The championship is an opportunity to train students to compete in regional and international competitions and contribute to achieving development goals. Information Technology authority was declared in 1982 to serve specialists in the field of



information technology and follow up their functional and professional demands in light of the relevant development," the authority added. — KUNA



TRIPOLI: Chairman of the International Islamic Charitable Organization Dr Abdullah Al-Maatouq and Chairman of "Al-Tamayuz" society Khaled Al-Sbaihee are seen during a tour of a school in Lebanon. — KUNA photos

## Kuwait-funded schools bring hope to refugees

**TRIPOLI:** Chairman of the International Islamic Charitable Organization and Special Adviser to the UN Secretary General Dr Abdullah Al-Maatouq recently affirmed that "educational empowerment for students constitute the real wealth for nations."

Maatouq, the head of the Kuwait-headquartered organization, made the remarks to KUNA while visiting a number of Kuwait-funded charitable schools that have hosted more than 7,000 Syrian refugee students for the last ten years.

"These schools bring hope" for the young refugees, he indicated while inspecting the schools with a delegation from "Al-Tamayuz" society headed by the chairman Khaled Al-Sbaihee.

Maatouq underlined the significant role that special classes play for students with learning difficulties. Sbaihee said the schools sponsored by the two Kuwaiti associations are exemplary at the level of developing education for Syrian refugees, noting that its students got high scores. The Kuwaiti charitable schools have carried out various activities during the tenth year since their founding, establishing special classes for the gifted as well as providing psychological and social support.

The Kuwaiti delegation kick started its tour in the north in Tripoli, where they visited "Kuwait Al-Hekma School." The city Mufti Sheikh Mohammad Imam praised in a statement to KUNA the State of Kuwait

for caring for Syrian refugees. The Kuwaiti visitors proceeded to "Kuwait Al-Fajr Al-Thaniya" in the Beddawi region, north of the coastal city of Tripoli. Students greeted them with artistic works and paintings. The school rector, Ahmad Abbas, hailed the Kuwaiti charitable organization for supporting the students.

They also visited the center for students with learning difficulties. The center's rector Ali Al-Jamal told KUNA that the personnel provide academic and psychological support for these students. Accompanying the delegation were Dr Mazen Al-Khatib, the director of higher education at the Lebanese ministry of education, the Kuwaiti First Secretary Yassin Al-Majed and a UN official. — KUNA



Visitors sit together during their visit to the Kuwait Al-Hekma School.



The delegates attend a lesson in one of the schools.



Students at Kuwait Al-Fajr Al-Thaniya School wave Kuwaiti flags to welcome the visitors.

## KSHR condemns 'blood bag' fees for foreigners

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** Recently, the Health Ministry issued a new decision that requires expatriates, both residents and visitors, to pay fees for blood transfusions. According to the decision, expats in Kuwait will be charged KD 20 for each bag of blood, while foreigners on a visit visa will be charged KD 40. Kuwait Society for Human Rights (KSHR) said the Ministry of Health has disregarded, with this decision, international obligations that Kuwait has to uphold with regards to respect for human rights, including health rights, pursuing the highest level of healthcare and seeking to implement the right to healthcare through a non-discriminatory approach.

KSHR noted this decision targets cases that are in dire need of blood transfusion to save their lives, especially women in childbirth, and thus it violates what is stated in article 12 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which stipulates "States parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of healthcare in order to guarantee them, based on equality between men and women, access to healthcare services, including services related to family planning," which is the agreement that Kuwait has committed to implement.

KSHR said Kuwait also violated article 12's paragraph 1, which says everyone has a right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. Kuwait also acceded in 1996 to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. "The decision also explicitly violated provision 4 of paragraph H of article 5 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which stipulates the right to enjoy public health services, medical care, social security and social services, which Kuwait ratified in 1968," the society said.

Regarding health insurance, KSHR questioned the amount of insurance that residents pay annually when they renew their residency visas, especially given the increase in health fees and collection of additional fees for dispensing medicines, an increase of 250 percent in clinics and 100 percent in hospitals.

KSHR affirmed its rejection of discriminatory treatment between citizens and resident patients, as these decisions represent violations of health rights stipulated in international conventions and treaties. On the other hand, the society called for facilitating access to all health services and facilities, which are mainly characterized by four dimensions, non-discrimination, physical accessibility, affordability and access to information, in addition to canceling all its discriminatory decisions and studying decisions from the human rights perspective before issuing and implementing them.

## Kuwaiti physician appointed to Qatar anti-doping lab

**KUWAIT:** Former Kuwaiti Minister of Health Dr Mohammed Al-Haifi has been appointed as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Qatar Anti-Doping Lab. He said that his appointment is a source of pride for him and the Kuwaiti medical family due to the importance of the laboratory's role in combating this issue among athletes in various sports.

Haifi said in a statement to KUNA on Tuesday that joining the membership of this important medical organization is an important shift in his career, as the board is entrusted with setting the general policy of the laboratory and supervising its implementation.

He added that the board will develop plans, programs and projects aimed at upgrading the laboratory, which is the only one accredited by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) in the Middle East, as well as approving the Agreements to which the laboratory is a party. He pointed out that the laboratory, which opened in 2012 in the Aspire area of the Qatari capital, Doha, contributed to the rapid completion of the analysis of athletes in the Middle East, West Africa and other regions, and was very successful in the comprehensive anti-doping program supervised by the International Federation of Football Associations (FIFA) before and during the World Cup (Qatar 2022). — KUNA



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## News in Brief

## Municipality shuts down 5 Ardiya cafes

KUWAIT: Five cafes in Ardiya have been closed by the the Farwaniya Governorate Municipality for using public space beyond what's legally entitled to them according to their license. The cafes were shut during a campaign carried out by the Audit and Follow-up of Municipal Services Department within the municipality. The department will continue their inspection tours to find violators of the municipality's laws and regulations and take legal action against them, Inspection Sector and Director of the Audit and Follow-up of Municipal Services in Farwaniya Governorate Nasser Al-Rashidi said in a press statement.

## Healthcare provider caught without license

KUWAIT: Sixteen violators of the residence and labor laws were seized while working at medical clinics and salons, the interior ministry announced. The arrests were made by the General Administration of Residence Affairs Investigations, represented by the Joint Tripartite Committee Department. One of the persons caught was found practicing a medical profession without a license. A violation of practicing a profession without a license was issued by the Ministry of Health and they were referred to the competent authorities in order to take all necessary legal measures against them. The same department also busted three offices hiring 11 people who are in violation of the residency law as workers. They were referred to the competent authorities in order to take all necessary legal measures against them.

## Interior ministry catches escapee

KUWAIT: The interior ministry issued a statement regarding news of a man escaping custody at Kuwait International Airport, which has spread across social media. The ministry said the man, who is waiting to be deported, was caught by the security authorities and referred him to the competent authorities. Administrative penalties are being taken against the servicemen who were on watch when the man escaped due to negligence in the performance of their duty.

# Women shoulder uneven household duties despite lifestyle change

## Societal norms hold back men from supporting women

By Ghadeer Ghloum

KUWAIT: Household chores have been associated with women for ages, to the point where many people believe it is a woman's natural job. Only few recognize that doing house chores is a favor that women provide to whoever they are living with, and it is not something to be taken for granted. Zainab Patwa, senior content editor for a market research company, told Kuwait Times the issue of gender roles and household responsibilities has been a longstanding conflict that has yet to be fully resolved. Historically, men were traditionally expected to be the sole breadwinners, while women were assigned household chores and caregiving responsibilities.

These roles were reinforced by societal norms and cultural beliefs, which have been passed down through generations. However, with the rise of feminism, women are now encouraged to participate in the workforce and share financial responsibilities. Despite this progress, women continue to shoulder a disproportionate burden of household chores and caregiving, along with taking care of financial responsibilities. This is not appreciated, and women are expected to carry on with all these responsibilities due to cultural or familial norms or simply out of habit or convenience.

The responsibility on men, on the other hand, remains unchanged, which is to be the breadwinner. Thus, every little contribution by them is glorified, which is what needs to be changed. Patwa said it is also evident that men today are displaying compassion and actively taking steps to support women in achieving their goals and maintain-



Zainab Patwa

ing a healthy work-life balance. But unfortunately, these men often face societal pressure and criticism for deviating from traditional norms of masculinity. This indicates that societal expectations still hold significant influence and can hinder the pace of change.

"In my personal belief, society plays a crucial role in driving change on this issue, but progress has been slow. Men who defy traditional gender roles and demonstrate empathy and support for women should be commended rather than bullied. It is important for society to recognize that everyone, regardless of gender, should have the freedom to pursue their aspirations and contribute to household responsibilities in a way that aligns with their individual strengths and abilities," Patwa said.

With regards to women's freedom of choice, Patwa said women have the freedom to make choices regarding their career and household responsibilities, but they often face harsh criticism, particularly in Asian societies. For instance, if a woman decides to prioritize her role as a homemaker, she may be judged for not being career-oriented enough. On the other



hand, if she focuses on her career, she may face criticism for neglecting her household duties and losing touch with her femininity. Even if a woman tries to balance both responsibilities, she may be criticized for not being efficient enough. These judgments are often subtle, hidden in snide comments, eye-rolls and smirks.

Additionally, Patwa highlighted the issue of defining women with their work at home. "We define women on how efficient she is with her work at home, especially in Asian societies, which I personally believe needs to change. In today's world, it is important to recognize and respect the choices that women make regarding their careers and household responsibilities without subjecting them to undue scrutiny," she said.

Women should have the freedom to choose whether to stay at home or

work outside without facing societal judgment. There should be no shame associated with staying at home, as it is a challenging and honorable role that is often underappreciated. It is a labor of love that deserves recognition. Similarly, women should not face shame or criticism for choosing to work outside the home or balance both work and household responsibilities.

Every woman has the right to live life on her own terms, with her own individuality and choices. Men are increasingly taking active steps to support women in achieving their goals and finding contentment, whether it's as a stay-at-home parent or an entrepreneur. This positive shift in attitudes and behaviors is commendable and should be encouraged. However, the real challenge lies in transforming society as a whole to fully embrace gender equality.

## MoE, PAAET need joint plan to achieve Vision 2035

KUWAIT: The Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education, Dr Hamad Al-Adwani affirmed the Ministry's insistence on continuing to implement its policy and objectives at a steady pace to improve the educational system in Kuwait by supporting educational institutions, encouraging them to progress, excel and innovate as well as adopt sustainable development projects and artificial intelligence in all fields.

Minister Al-Adwani said: "This is a translation of the directives of the political leadership, which highlight the importance of creating an educational sys-



Dr Hassan Al-Fajam



Dr Hamad Al-Adwani

tem for students in building a society equipped with sustainable knowledge and national capabilities that compete locally and globally."

His remarks came during his sponsorship and attendance at the activities of the first international conference "Sustainable Educational Development in light of Kuwait's Vision 2035", which is organized by the Office of Practical Education in the College of Basic Education of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) on Tuesday.

"The opening of the conference is considered one of the most important conferences in the college and its achievements towards the advancement of education and the teacher together, and is added to the record of the college's achievements and the role it plays in the formation of national human resources, by focusing on the most important pillar of development human capital," he added.

He added that the conference aims at preparing students to fulfill the needs of society, increase production and competing in the local, regional as well as global labor market.

The Director General of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training Dr Hassan Al-Fajam said: "Sustainable development is a basic requirement for the development of societies. The idea of holding this conference came to encourage educational institutions to take the lead in adopting a sustainable development path in education, as it provides learners with the concepts and skills related to the sustainability of economic, social and environmental development that will achieve the well-being of the individual and society."

One of the objectives of the conference is to benefit from the experience of other countries in adopting sustainable development in education, and upgrading the outputs of the College of Basic Education in line with the requirements of Kuwait's future vision and the labor market, said Fajam.



Sheikha Hessa bint Hamad Al-Thani

"A joint work mechanism must be developed between the ministry, PAAET, and other institutions in the country, in order to reach practical and applied recommendations that can be implemented to achieve Kuwait's Vision 2035," he added.

Sheikha Hessa bint Hamad Al-Thani, who represented the delegates participating in the conference, said: "We have all come to this conference, which deals with the issue of sustainability in education, to propose ways to confront contemporary challenges, as this confrontation can only be achieved through concerted efforts."

She added that a sustainable education process enables learners of all ages and educational levels, by instilling the knowledge, skills, values and morals necessary to address the modern global challenges that we face in our societies. This includes problems resulting from accompanying provision of bad models to follow due to the development of technology, as well as the dissemination of misinformation "which often leads to a loss of truth and distraction of the mind," she said. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Attendees listen to a keynote speech during the conference. — KUNA photos



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Indian villages  
burned to ashes

Iraq's climate migrants flee parched land for crowded cities

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# Putin calls for victory in Ukraine

## EU chief meets Zelensky to mark Europe Day

**MOSCOW:** President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday vowed Russia would be victorious in Ukraine during a military parade on Red Square and blamed Western countries for the conflict, comparing the fighting to World War II.

But his defiant address was overshadowed by scathing comments from Yevgeny Prigozhin, the head of Russian mercenary group Wagner, who accused Russia's military of repeated failures in Ukraine. EU chief Ursula von der Leyen met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to mark Europe Day that celebrates peace and unity, a symbolic retort to Moscow's Victory Day parade. During his address, Putin told columns of military personnel in ceremonial uniform in Moscow that the country's future rests on Russian soldiers fighting in Ukraine.

"Today civilization is again at a decisive turning point," Putin said standing shoulder to shoulder with elderly veterans and soldiers from Russia's Ukraine campaign. "A war has been unleashed against our motherland," he said, adding that "the future of our statehood and our people depend on you." "For Russia, for our armed forces, for victory! Hurrah!"

The anniversary of the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany 78 years ago has been overshadowed by the military's slow gains and heavy losses in Ukraine.

### Wagner accusations

In remarks released at the same time as Putin's speech, the head of Wagner accused a Russian unit of abandoning their positions near Bakhmut, the epicentre of the fighting in Ukraine.

"They all fled, exposing the front," Prigozhin said, repeating a vow that his men would leave Bakhmut by May 9 if the Russian military does not supply more ammunition. Wagner has been leading Russia's months-long assault for Bakhmut, a destroyed industrial town in eastern Ukraine, where Russian forces have little to show after a winter offensive.

"Why is the state not able to defend its country?" Prigozhin said in a scathing video, in which he also accused Russian military top brass of trying to

"deceive" Putin on how the Ukraine campaign was being led. In the streets of Moscow, Russian families had come out to view the parade, which had tightened security. Giya Merkelija, a 55-year-old driver, carried a portrait of his grandfather, killed in 1943 during fighting in southern Russia.

"I'm waiting for victory," he said, and "for all our guys to come back, for everything to be okay," he told AFP journalists in Moscow.

Putin, despite being isolated on the world stage since launching the conflict in February 2022, was joined on Red Square by leaders of several ex-Soviet states, including Armenia and Kazakhstan.

### 'Geopolitical'

But in Poland, Russia's ambassador was blocked by pro-Ukrainian activists from laying flowers at a Soviet memorial in the capital Warsaw.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told the European Parliament in Strasbourg that Russia's "show of force" in Moscow would not intimidate the European Union, which he said should reform to become a larger "geopolitical" bloc.

The EU should stay "steadfast in our support for Ukraine, as long as it is necessary", he said in Strasbourg, France. In the run-up to Victory Day, Russia was hit with several acts of sabotage, including an explosion that derailed a train, a drone attack on the Kremlin and a car bomb that wounded a pro-Kremlin writer.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that "all necessary measures" were being taken to ensure the safety of the leaders. Still more than two dozen cities and towns cancelled plans to stage their own military parades over security concerns.

Since coming to power in 2000, Putin has stoked patriotic fervor around the 1945 Soviet victory over the Nazis, boosting his standing as the heir of Soviet power. The Kremlin has also used the memory of the Soviet war effort to justify its offensive in Ukraine, claiming it is fighting "fascists" supported by the West.

### 'European family'

The president of the European Commission



**MOSCOW:** Russian President Vladimir Putin hosts a working breakfast for the leaders of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) after the Victory Day military parade in Moscow on May 9, 2023. — AFP

meanwhile travelled by train from Poland to Kyiv to meet Zelensky and work on his country's quest for eventual EU membership.

"Ukraine is fighting for the ideals of Europe that we celebrate today. In Russia, Putin and his regime have destroyed these values. And now they are attempting to destroy them here in Ukraine," von der Leyen said. Zelensky urged the EU to speed up deliveries of artillery shells, seen as key for an Ukrainian counteroffensive against Russian positions expected in the coming weeks.

"We discussed a key issue: The speed of procurement and delivery of these munitions. The need

for them on the battlefield is already present," Zelensky said during a press conference in Kyiv.

And he said "the time has come" to make a decision on starting talks for Ukraine to join the European Union. Zelensky earlier this week decreed that May 9 would be celebrated in his country as Europe Day, as it is in Brussels, spurning the martial Victory Day tradition of the former Soviet Union.

Shortly before von der Leyen arrived, Ukraine's air force said it had downed 23 out of 25 cruise missiles launched by Russia in the night between Monday and Tuesday. The air alert in Kyiv ended about an hour before her arrival. — AFP

## ASEAN at 'crossroad' as Myanmar violence

**LABUAN BAJO:** Southeast Asian nations are at a "crossroad", a senior Indonesian minister warned Tuesday, as escalating violence in junta-controlled Myanmar loomed over a regional summit. Myanmar has been ravaged by deadly violence since a military coup deposed Aung San Suu Kyi's government more than two years ago and unleashed a bloody crackdown on dissent. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) - long-decried by critics as a toothless talking shop - has led diplomatic attempts to resolve the crisis.

Those efforts have been fruitless, as the junta ignores international criticism and refuses to engage with its opponents, which include ousted lawmakers, anti-coup "People's Defence Forces" and armed ethnic minority groups. An air strike on a village in a rebel stronghold last month that reportedly killed about 170 people sparked global condemnation and worsened the junta's isolation.

It also fuelled calls for ASEAN to take tougher action to end the violence or risk being sidelined. "ASEAN is at a crossroad," Mahfud MD, Indonesia's coordinating minister for politics, legal and security, warned Tuesday, the first day of the summit.

"Crisis after crisis is testing our strength as a community. And failure to address them would risk jeopardizing our relevance," he said according to a copy of his remarks, listing Myanmar among the emergencies facing the bloc. Human Rights Watch said Tuesday that last month's air strike in the central Sagaing region was a "likely war crime", and urged ASEAN to "signal its support for stronger measures to cut off the military's cash flow and press the junta for reform".

Pressure on the regional bloc increased Sunday after a convoy of vehicles carrying diplomats and officials coordinating ASEAN humanitarian relief in Myanmar came under fire. Few details have been released about the shooting in eastern Myanmar's Shan State, but In-



**LABUAN BAJO:** (L-R) Singapore's Senior Officer Leader Albert Chua, Philippines' Secretary of Foreign Affairs Enrique Manalo, East Timor's Foreign Minister Adaljiza Xavier Magno, Thailand's Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai, Laos' Foreign Minister Saleumxay Kommasith, Vietnam's Foreign Minister Bui Thanh Son and ASEAN Secretary General Kao Kim Hourn leave after a family photo. — AFP

donesia and Singapore both confirmed that members of their embassies in Yangon were in the group.

Singapore said its two staff members were unharmed. It condemned the attack in a statement late Monday. Indonesia, the ASEAN chair this year, said two of its diplomats were in the vehicles and were "in good condition".

### 'Feckless'

The shooting happened days before the May 9-11 ASEAN summit on the Indonesian island of Flores, where foreign ministers and national leaders will continue efforts to kick-start a five-point plan agreed upon with Myanmar two years ago after mediation attempts to end the violence failed. The foreign ministers held talks Tuesday while their countries' leaders were scheduled to meet Wednesday and Thursday. Ahead of the arrival of officials in Labuan Bajo, the army deployed more than 9,000 personnel and warships to the small fishing town that serves as the entrance to Komodo National Park, where tourists can see the world's largest lizards. — AFP

## 21 dead after bus plunges off bridge in India

**NEW DELHI:** At least 21 people died on Tuesday when a bus crashed off a bridge in India, officials said, reportedly after the driver fell asleep at the wheel. The vehicle smashed through a barrier and plummeted around six metres (20 feet) onto a dry river bed south of the central city of Indore in Madhya Pradesh state.

"At least 21 people have died," a senior police official said, without wishing to be named. The dead included three children and 10 women, the Times of India newspaper reported. The bus driver had fallen asleep at the wheel before the crash and had fled the scene, the daily said.

India accounts for 11 percent of the global road death toll despite only having one percent of the world's vehicles, according to a World Bank report released in 2021. The same report estimated there are about 150,000 car crash fatalities in India annually, or one person every four minutes. — AFP

## Over 600 killed in Haiti violence in April: UN

**GENEVA:** More than 600 people died in gang violence last month in Haiti, where the authorities did not have the capacity to protect civilians, the United Nations said on Tuesday. "Every report I get from Haiti underlines the scale of the suffering and rams home the message that Haitians need urgent support and they need it now," said the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Turk.

He repeated his call for the international community to send a specialized armed force to help Haiti's police and authorities restore order. The Caribbean nation, the poorest in the Americas, has been gripped by a political and economic crisis since the assassination in July 2021 of president Jovenel Moise. Rival gangs now control most of the capital, Port-au-Prince. In its quarterly update for January to March published on Tuesday, — the UN said violence was "becoming more extreme and more frequent (and) spreading relentlessly as gangs seek to extend their control". — AFP

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## International

# Iraq's climate migrants flee parched land for crowded cities

## Years of dire water scarcity left him no choice but to move

**KARBALA:** Haydar Mohamed once grew wheat and barley, but Iraq's relentless drought has forced him off the land and into the city where he now works in construction and drives a taxi. "The transition is difficult," said Mohamed, 42, who abandoned village life several years ago for a shantytown in the central city of Karbala.

He is part of a growing wave of climate migrants in Iraq, a country that is on the frontlines of the global warming crisis. Years of dire water scarcity left him no choice but to move, said the father of five. "If you don't work," he said, "you don't eat."

Until 2017, Mohamed, like his father before him, worked farmland in the remote village of Al-Khenejar in Iraq's southern Diwaniya province. In a good year, they would harvest 40 or 50 tonnes of grain, he said.

But "water shortages have impacted farmland and livestock", said the man with a neat moustache and a traditional black robe worn over a white gown. "In our region, there is no work," he said. "I have children in school, which involves expenses. We needed a livelihood."

He now earns about \$15 a day on construction sites in the holy Shiite city, which thrives thanks to a steady flow of religious pilgrims. To supplement his income, he works shifts as a taxi driver. Near his home, cows graze on rubbish strewn across the dusty ground and grey cinderblock buildings line the bumpy alleys, connected for free by the municipality to power lines and water pipes.

### Blistering heat, dust storms

The United Nations ranks Iraq, still recovering from decades of dictatorship and war, as one of the world's five countries most impacted by some effects of climate change. The economy is driven by oil exports, but the second biggest sector is agriculture,

which makes up five percent of GDP and employs 20 percent of the workforce.

Water scarcity is extreme in the country of 42 million that endures blistering summer heat and regular dust storms, the shortfall worsened by upstream river dams in Turkey and Iran. The UN says nearly one in five people live in an area hit by water shortages, while state authorities have been forced to limit areas designated for cultivation.

In central and southern Iraq, "12,212 families were still displaced due to drought conditions" in March, said the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Across Diwaniya province, 120 villages now rely on trucked water deliveries, up from 75 last summer, said the provincial governor Maitham al-Chahd.

"Thousands of hectares have been abandoned," he said. Among the other worst hit provinces are Dhi Qar and Maysan, said the IOM, which estimates that 76 percent of displaced people move to cities. The rural flight piles pressure on urban areas where infrastructure is dilapidated after decades of conflict, corruption and mismanagement.

A UN report last month warned of the risk of "social unrest" driven by climate factors. "In the absence of sufficient public services and economic opportunity... climate-driven urbanization and mobility can reinforce pre-existing structures of marginalization and exclusion," it said.

### Deserted countryside

Chahd said rural migrants faced unemployment in the cities, where there "are not enough job opportunities" for all the newcomers. "Public services cannot meet the needs of growing city populations."

Meanwhile, rural areas are being deserted, including the village of Al-Bouzayad, where the main irrigation canal has completely dried up. About 100

situation right now," Berliner Kutay Yilmaz said on the first day of voting in Germany late last month. "I want to return (to Turkey) one day. That's why I came here today and voted. I want the leader to change."

The vote has been accompanied by spates of violence that reflect the anger running through Turkey's polarized society during its deepest economic crisis since the 1990s. Dutch police said on Sunday they had to break up a "massive brawl involving some 300 people" at a polling station in Amsterdam.

Police in the French city of Marseille used tear gas to stop a similar fight between Erdogan's supporters and opponents last week. That did not stop a second brawl from breaking out at the same Marseille polling station later in the day. The French police made two arrests. Tensions boiled over during a tour of Turkey's conservative heartland on Sunday by Istanbul's popular opposition mayor Ekrem Imamoglu.

Right-wing protesters pelted his campaign bus with rocks and bottles while he was trying to deliver a speech from its roof. Turkey's defence ministry said on Tuesday it had dismissed an infantry sergeant pending an investigation into his involvement in the violence. The incident prompted Kilicdaroglu - a 74-year-old former civil servant who wants to make Imamoglu his vice president - to appeal for everyone to "please, please stay calm". "We are going to an election and not to war," Kilicdaroglu said in a televised interview.

The febrile atmosphere reflects the stakes for all sides. The opposition casts the vote as decisive for Turkey's democratic future. Erdogan centralized power and unleashed sweeping purges in the second decade of his

of the army's general headquarters in the garrison city of Rawalpindi. Police fired tear gas and water cannon to disperse Khan's supporters in Karachi and Lahore, while protesters blocked roads in the capital Islamabad, Peshawar, and other cities.

Khan faces dozens of charges since being ousted — a tactic analysts say successive Pakistan governments have used to silence their opponents. Video broadcast on local TV channels showed Khan — who has a pronounced limp since being shot during an assassination attempt last year — being manhandled by dozens of paramilitary rangers into an armored car inside the Islamabad High Court premises.

"As we reached the court's biometric room to mark the attendance, dozens of rangers attacked us," said Ali Bukhari, a lawyer with Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party. "They beat him and dragged him out," he told AFP. Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah said Khan had been arrested by the National Accountability Bureau

(NAB), the country's top anti-corruption body. "This arrest is in accordance with the law," he said. "NAB is an independent body and not under government control." It was not immediately clear where Khan was taken.

The arrest comes a day after the military warned Khan against making "baseless allegations" after he again accused a senior officer of plotting to kill him. The rebuke late Monday underscored how far Khan's relations have deteriorated with the military, which backed his rise to power in 2018 but withdrew its support ahead of a parliamentary vote of no confidence that ousted him last year.

"The timing of the arrest is striking," said Michael Kugelman, director of the South Asia Institute at the Wilson Center. "The senior army leadership is uninterested in repairing the rift between itself and Khan, and so with this arrest it's likely sending a message that the gloves are very much off." — AFP



**KARBALA:** Photo shows a girl posing for a picture at the home her family moved to in Karbala after leaving their village home in Diwaniya province due to drought. — AFP

families have left in the past two years, and today only 170 households are still listed on the municipal register, said mayor Majed Raham, several of whose relatives have joined the exodus.

Abandoned adobe houses sit next to unfinished yellow-brick constructions. In one empty dwelling, rooms stripped of their doors and windows show signs of the lives that have been upended. Portraits of the revered Shiite figure Imam Hussein still hang on

the walls, a padlocked room contains personal items, and a satellite dish gathers dust in the courtyard.

Those who have stayed depend on insufficient water deliveries made by tankers sent by the governorate authorities, which they deplore. Raham said most survive on either state benefits or money earned by their children, who commute daily to the nearest town. "The majority want to leave," he said, "but they don't have the means." — AFP

## Turks abroad wrap up voting in landmark election

**ISTANBUL:** Millions of Turks living abroad wrapped up voting on Tuesday, in a tense election that has turned into a referendum on President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's polarizing two-decade rule.

Sunday's presidential and parliamentary ballot will pass judgement on Turkey's longest-serving leader and the social transformation spearheaded by his Islamic-rooted party.

The vote is Turkey's most consequential in generations and the toughest of the 69-year-old's tectonic career. Polls show Erdogan locked in a tight battle with secular rival Kemal Kilicdaroglu and his powerful alliance of six parties that span Turkey's cultural and political divide.

The first votes were cast by Turks who moved from poorer provinces to Western Europe over the decades under job schemes aimed at combating the continent's labor shortage in the wake of World War II. Such voters comprise 3.4 million of Turkey's 64.1 million registered electorate and tend to support more conservative candidates. Official turnout on the morning of the last day of overseas voting on Tuesday was reported at 51 percent - a touch lower than in past elections and a possible sign of worry for Erdogan.

"I am here because Turkey is in a quite terrible



**DIYARBAKIR:** A woman stands in front of election campaign flags of People's Democratic Party (HDP) and a banner with a portrait of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan hanging on historical Sur castle at the historical Sur district in Diyarbakir, southeastern Turkey, on May 1, 2023. — AFP

rule. His courtship of Russia and military incursions into Syria have also chilled his once-warm relations with the West. But the Turkish leader still commands support among poorer and more religious voters, who remember corruption and hardship that blighted half a century of secular rule. Erdogan staged a show-of-force rally in Istanbul on Sunday that drew hundreds of thousands of fervent followers. He announced a new 45-percent hike in wages for 700,000 state workers on Tuesday - the latest in a long line of such announcement during the campaign. — AFP

## Iran executes more than ten people per week

**GENEVA:** UN human rights chief Volker Turk said on Tuesday that Iran has executed a "frighteningly" high number of people this year, rising to more than ten per week on average. At least 209 people were executed in the country since January 1, primarily for drug-related offences, but a United Nations statement said the actual number is likely much higher.

"On average so far this year, over ten people are put to death each week in Iran, making it one of the world's highest executors," said Turk. "At this rate, Iran is worryingly on the same track as last year when around 580 people were reportedly executed," he added, calling this track record "abominable".

Iran on Monday hanged two men on charges of spreading blasphemy on social media, prompting US condemnation and accusations from Amnesty International that the Islamic republic has reached a "new low" in a spree of executions. On Saturday, Iran executed Swedish-Iranian dissident Habib Chaab for "terrorism", prompting sharp criticism from Sweden and the European Union. — AFP

## Clashes across Pakistan after Khan arrested

**ISLAMABAD:** Protests erupted across Pakistan on Tuesday after former prime minister Imran Khan was arrested during a court appearance in the capital for one of dozens of cases pending since he was ousted last year. His arrest follows months of political crisis and came hours after the powerful military rebuked the former international cricketer for alleging that a senior officer had been involved in a plot to kill him.

Some protesters took out their wrath on the military, storming the residence of the corps commander in Lahore and laying siege to a gate

of the army's general headquarters in the garrison city of Rawalpindi. Police fired tear gas and water cannon to disperse Khan's supporters in Karachi and Lahore, while protesters blocked roads in the capital Islamabad, Peshawar, and other cities.

Khan faces dozens of charges since being ousted — a tactic analysts say successive Pakistan governments have used to silence their opponents. Video broadcast on local TV channels showed Khan — who has a pronounced limp since being shot during an assassination attempt last year — being manhandled by dozens of paramilitary rangers into an armored car inside the Islamabad High Court premises.

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**HYDERABAD:** Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party activists and supporters of former Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran stand beside burning tyres as they block a road on May 9, 2023. — AFP

## Zionists kill 15 in Gaza; Kuwait...

### Continued from Page 1

The ministry renewed its call for the international community and the UN Security Council to bear their responsibilities, take action to immediately stop these attacks and provide full legal and civil protection to Palestinian brothers in accordance with the UN charter and international laws, the statement said.

Islamic Jihad confirmed the deaths of three senior members — Jihad Ghannam, Khalil Al-Bahtini and Tareq Ezzedine — before their bodies were later carried through the streets in mass funeral processions. A separate air strike in the late afternoon on the city of Khan Yunis in southern Gaza killed two men in a car, the health ministry said. The Zionist military said they were members of Islamic Jihad "taking anti-tank guided missiles by car to a launch pad" ahead of a cross-border attack.

Following the morning attack, Islamic Jihad vowed to retaliate, with spokesman Daoud Shehab warning that "the resistance considers that all cities and settlements in the Zionist depths will be under its fire". Hamas chief Ismail Haniya, whose Islamist movement rules Gaza, said "assassinating the leadership" would bring "greater resistance".

The Zionist military warned residents within 40 km of the Gaza border to stay near bomb shelters

until Wednesday evening. Moscow's diplomatic mission to the Palestinians said one of the dead was a Russian citizen, a doctor who was killed alongside his wife and one of his children. The Zionist entity last week traded air strikes on Gaza for rocket fire from the enclave, an exchange sparked by the death in Zionist custody of a Palestinian hunger striker with ties to Islamic Jihad, which ended with an Egypt-brokered truce.

Islamic Jihad charged on Tuesday that the Zionist entity had "scorned all the initiatives of mediators" and vowed it would "avenge the leaders" killed in the latest air strikes. The group said Ghannam was secretary of the Al-Quds Brigades military council, Bahtini the military commander in northern Gaza, and Ezzedine a military leader in the West Bank who operated from Gaza.

UN Middle East peace envoy Tor Wennesland said he was "deeply alarmed" by the latest violence and described the killing of civilians as "unacceptable". Jordan said it was taking steps to "immediately stop this dangerous escalation". The Zionist entity told a UN Human Rights Council meeting in Geneva it was justified in carrying out what it labelled Operation Shield and Arrow. Following Tuesday's air strikes, Egypt stated its "total rejection of such attacks" which it said "inflamm the situation in a way that could get out of control in the occupied Palestinian territories." The Gaza deaths bring to 123 the number of Palestinians killed so far this year. — Agencies

## Messi set for megabucks....

### Continued from Page 1

Lionel Messi's father and agent Jorge insisted Tuesday his son has not decided where he will play next season. "There is absolutely nothing agreed with any club for next year," Messi's father wrote on Instagram. "The decision will not be made before Lionel finishes the league with PSG."

Just five years after allowing its first non-Muslim tourists visit and letting women drive, Saudi Arabia is attempting to open up its conservative society and diversify its oil-reliant economy. The world's biggest oil exporter has thrown hundreds of millions at sports deals including Ronaldo's signing, Formula One in Jeddah and the divisive LIV Golf tour.

Messi was suspended by Qatari-owned PSG last week for an unauthorized mid-season trip to Saudi, where he is a tourism ambassador. He has also been heavily linked to a return to his former club, Barcelona. A spokesman for the Spanish La Liga leaders said, "We don't know anything about that," when asked about a potential Saudi deal.

Messi's long-time sparring partner Ronaldo joined Saudi Pro League club Al Nassr in a massive deal in January. Ronaldo's agreement to June 2025 is said to total more than €400 million (\$439 million), making him the world's highest paid athlete according to Forbes. Both deals — along with others including

LIV Golf and the 2021 purchase of Newcastle United football club — are being bankrolled by the Public Investment Fund (PIF), one of the world's biggest sovereign wealth funds, the source said.

In any transfer involving such enormous financial stakes, last-minute changes are not unusual. However the source in Saudi Arabia said the negotiations with Messi had gone smoothly. "The negotiations didn't take as much time as the ones with Ronaldo. As we now know the recipe to contract world-class players," the source said. "It's Saudi Arabia that brought him, not a specific club. The money comes from one place — PIF."

Ronaldo, 38, has not been a guarantee of success at Al Nassr, who have slipped off the top of the Saudi Pro League and missed out on silverware in the Saudi cup competitions. But Messi is also intended to raise the profile of Saudi Arabia as it tries to bring in tourists and investment, the source said. "He is a player at the end of his career and he is not here only for football. He is here to secure international attraction for the kingdom," said the source who is following the Messi negotiations.

"The plan is not only Messi and Ronaldo, the plan is to bring glorious players like these two and also upcoming youth players who have a promising future. We want people to visit Saudi Arabia to watch football stars," the source added.

Messi has had two lacklustre seasons in Paris after a glorious era at Barcelona where he won four Champions League and 10 La Liga titles, and is still worshipped by the fans there. The record seven-time Ballon d'Or winner, joining a mouth-watering attack featuring Kylian Mbappe and Neymar, scored just 11 goals in his first season as he helped PSG to a routine Ligue 1 title. — AFP



International

# Indian villages burned to ashes

## 23,000 residents flee homes for the safety of ad-hoc army-run camps

**HEIROKLIAN:** The road to Heiroklian is smooth and freshly laid, with a sign proclaiming it part of an Indian government development initiative. But ethnic violence has reduced the village itself to little more than smouldering ashes. Sanatomba picked through the ruins of his sister's home in the northeastern state of Manipur, trying to salvage anything of value, but could only recover a traditional stool. "This used to be my sister's kitchen," the 20-year-old says.

"That was her room and she kept her TV there, the fridge there, the almirah (cupboard) for clothes there. But now everything she shared with her husband, four children and other family members is gone forever."

More than 50 people have been killed in the hilly border region in clashes between the majority Meitei people, who are mostly Hindus, and the mainly Christian Kuki tribe. Thousands of troops have been deployed to restore order, while around 23,000 residents have fled their homes for the safety of ad-hoc army-run camps for the displaced.

Sanatomba's sibling is among them. They are Kuki, and he is sure she and her family will never be able to return. "She told me to come here and look for anything I can find," he says, his hands and feet covered in black soot. The rest of the village suffered a similar fate, its three settlements littered with broken doors, burnt-down water tanks, and forced-open metal trunks.

The towering village church, a school building, and even a jackfruit tree were set on fire by the attackers. The raiders stole residents' cattle and poultry, San-



**SENAPATI:** An Indian army soldier inspects the remains of a house that was set on fire by a mob in the ethnic violence hit area of Heiroklian village in Senapati district, in India's Manipur state. — AFP

atomba said. "Those animals they couldn't take alive, they killed and took away as meat. "I am afraid of Meitei people."

### 'Broken hearts'

The far-flung states of northeast India -- sandwiched between Bangladesh, China and Myanmar -- have long been a tinderbox of tensions between

different ethnic groups. The spark for the latest ethnic clash was a protest about plans to give the Meitei "Scheduled Tribe" status. A form of affirmative action to combat structural inequality and discrimination, that classification would give them guaranteed quotas of government jobs and college admissions.

Violence erupted in the regional capital Imphal and elsewhere, with protestors setting fire to vehicles

The subsequent crackdown saw more than 10,000 people arrested over the protests, with more than 6,000 still awaiting formal charges. Under Beijing's national security law, which sounded the death knell for the protest movement, another 150 people have been charged, with dozens of the city's best-known democrats facing allegations of "subversion" and "foreign collusion". National security cases have, so far, had a 100 percent conviction rate. The crackdowns have decimated Hong Kong's once-vibrant civil society, which was made up of dozens of political parties and advocacy groups across a wide spectrum.

At least 60 groups—including the two largest pro-democracy labour unions and the organiser of a yearly Tiananmen vigil—have disbanded. Still standing, however, is the political party League of Social Democrats, where 31-year-old Dickson Chau serves as external vice-chairperson. "Civil society has been seriously atomised," Chau told AFP. The LSD was once known for its boisterous street-level campaigning, with activists using megaphones to deliver pro-democracy messages. "The situation (now) is so bleak that we can only run into each other in courts or prisons and all we can have is small talk—no one would collaborate for any actions," Chau said.

The group is now allowed only to operate a single booth at a designated location, and police scrutinise every word on their banners. Police question every new volunteer, Chau said, and group members are warned not to protest around "politically sensitive" days, such as the anniversary of the city's 1997 handover to Chinese rule. Still, the LSD continues to oppose some government policies, such as a recent \$74 billion project to develop new artificial islands around Hong Kong. "Citizens can no longer speak out in public... but Hong Kong is not yet a pond of stagnant water," Chau said.

### Creating space

With the streets of Hong Kong cleared of rallies and protests, some have tried to build alternative spaces. "Civil society around a decade ago was very different... Now, having a space is precious because we don't have many groups and venues left," said Sum Wan-wah, a veteran journalist who recently opened a bookshop named "Have A Nice Stay". Sum's business partners are former reporters of Stand News, an independent online news platform that closed after police raided its newsroom and arrested its editors for "sedition". Since opening last May, the bookstore has registered over 1,500 members and organised more than 50 closed-door events—mostly talks by journalists, authors and documentary filmmakers.—AFP



**HONG KONG:** Picture shows, Dickson Chau, external vice-chairperson of one of the city's last remaining pro-democracy parties League of Social Democrats (LSD), distributes leaflets while campaigning at a designated area in Hong Kong. — AFP

part of efforts to bolster its forces. "You may not see any 'Rambos' here," ministry spokesman Sun Li-fang told reporters on Tuesday, after 14 former women soldiers took part in the five-day training programme in Taoyuan city. "But what you will see are our male and also first batch of female reservist soldiers who are willing to use their time to return to the barracks for training," he said.

"I think this is very important in ensuring our country's safety and demonstrating the people's resolve in protecting our country," Taiwanese men are required to do mandatory military service and reservist training, but women can also volunteer to serve in the armed forces. On Tuesday the former women soldiers pulled gas masks over the heads, crawled across a playground, patrolled streets by a temple and performed other mock defence exercises.

"Poisonous gas dissipated, clear to take off

masks!" one of their officers yelled before they quickly removed their gear. Reservist Tang Mi—who is a realtor—said that "with no country, there's no home". "That's why I'm here—because what concerns the country is everyone's business," the 26-year-old said. Military analysts have urged Taiwan to do more to boost its reservists and prepare the civilian population for a potential invasion, including by allowing more women to train. Some lawmakers have proposed including women in some form of mandatory service. Tensions between Taipei and Beijing soared last year after China staged massive military exercises around the island in response to then-US House speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan. Last month, Beijing conducted war games simulating a blockade of the island in protest against a meeting between Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen and Pelosi's successor Kevin McCarthy in California. — AFP



**MOMBASA:** Self-proclaimed pastor Paul Nthenge Mackenzie (2nd L), who set up the Good News International Church in 2003 and is accused of inciting cult followers to starve to death "to meet Jesus", appears in the dock with his wife Rhoda Mumbua Maweu at the Shanzu law courts in Mombasa. — AFP

## Autopsies reveal missing organs in Kenya cult deaths

**NAIROBI:** Autopsies on corpses found in mass graves linked to a religious cult in Kenya have revealed missing organs and raised suspicions of forced harvesting, investigators said, with a fresh round of exhumations set to resume Tuesday. The discovery of mass graves last month near the Indian Ocean coastal town of Malindi has stunned the deeply religious Christian-majority country in what has been dubbed the "Shakahola forest massacre".

Police believe most of the bodies belong to followers of self-styled pastor Paul Nthenge Mackenzie who is accused of ordering them to starve to death "to meet Jesus." While starvation appears to be the main cause of death, some of the victims—including children—were strangled, beaten, or suffocated, according to the chief government pathologist Johansen Oduor. Court documents filed on Monday said that some of the corpses had their organs removed, with police alleging that the suspects were engaged in forced harvesting of body parts. "Post mortem reports have established missing organs in some of the bodies of victims who have been exhumed," chief inspector Martin Munene said in an affidavit filed to a Nairobi court.

It is "believed that trade on human body organs has been well coordinated involving several players," he said, giving no details about the suspected trafficking. Munene said that Ezekiel Odero, a high-profile televangelist who was arrested last month in connection with the same case and granted bail on Thursday, had received "huge cash transactions," allegedly from Mackenzie's followers who sold their property at the cult leader's bidding.

The Nairobi court ordered the authorities to freeze more than 20 bank accounts belonging to Odero for 30 days. A total of 112 people have so far been confirmed dead, interior minister Kithure Kindiki said Tuesday after arriving in Malindi to supervise the resumption of exhumations, which were suspended last week because of bad weather. "Search and rescue efforts for persons suspected to be holed up in the thickets and bushes have been going on," Kindiki said. Questions have been raised about how Mackenzie managed to evade law enforcement despite a history of extremism and previous legal cases.— AFP

## Taiwan holds training for women reservists

**TAOYUAN:** Strapped with gas masks, soldiers crouched on a playground Tuesday with rifles aimed at their target during Taiwan's first-ever reservist training for women as the island bolsters its defences against China.

Beijing—which claims Taiwan as its territory to be taken one day—has conducted multiple military exercises around self-ruled Taiwan in the past year. Taipei's defence ministry announced in January that it would allow more than 200 women to join voluntary reservist training for the first time as

and buildings. According to villagers, Meitei mobs armed with guns and petrol cans then attacked Kuki settlements in the hills. Authorities are concerned there could be more reprisal attacks "as both communities have now accumulated weapons", an army officer said. "Are you sure that none of you have any weapons that you would like to surrender?" a senior officer asked a Kuki gathering at a village outside Imphal on Monday.

"The other community has promised to surrender their weapons if you do too," he added. "I want you to consider this as it doesn't help either community to have these weapons in circulation."

None of the mostly male audience did so. Thanglalem Kuki, 32, a teacher at a private school, watched from a hilltop as his village of Kamuching was attacked and burned to the ground, spending two nights in the jungle before being rescued and taken to an army camp. He said the Meitei mob went from house to house, retrieving valuables, electronic gadgets, cooking gas cylinders, and even mattresses, loading their loot into vehicles.

"After that they burned the houses and they were burning one house to another house. "For the first time when they burned the houses, they left some houses unburnt and they stormed in after two days again and they completely burnt it."

He had been left with nothing, he said. "We were looking and crying with broken hearts and we looked down on our houses being burnt to ashes with helplessness and without hope." — AFP

## Canada, China expel diplomats in escalating row

**SHANGHAI:** China said Tuesday it was expelling Canada's consul in Shanghai, in a tit-for-tat move after Ottawa announced it was sending home a Chinese diplomat accused of trying to intimidate a lawmaker. The expulsions have plunged the two nations into a fresh diplomatic row after years of souring relations.

They follow an outcry in Canada over allegations that Chinese intelligence had planned to target MP Michael Chong and his relatives in Hong Kong with sanctions for sponsoring a motion condemning Beijing's conduct in the Xinjiang region as genocide.

In response, Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly said Toronto-based Chinese diplomat Zhao Wei -- who allegedly played a role in the scheme -- would have to leave the country. Canada, she said, would "not tolerate any form of foreign interference in our internal affairs". The Chinese foreign ministry on Tuesday condemned the decision to expel Zhao, and said it had ordered Canadian consul Jennifer Lynn Lalonde to leave the country by May 13.

China decides to declare Jennifer Lynn Lalonde, consul of the Consulate General of Canada in Shanghai persona non grata," the ministry said in a statement? "As a reciprocal countermeasure in reaction.

And foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin urged Canada to stop "unreasonable provocations". "If the Canadian side doesn't listen to this advice and acts recklessly, (China) will take resolute and forceful retaliatory measures, and all consequences will be borne by the Canadian side," Wang told a regular press briefing.

A single police car was parked outside the Shanghai office building where the consulate is based, AFP journalists saw. Inside, appointments appeared to be running as normal, and staff at reception said they were unaware of Tuesday's developments.

Neither Canada's foreign ministry nor its embassy in Beijing replied to requests for comment from AFP. "We remain firm in our resolve that defending our democracy is of the utmost importance," Joly said Monday, adding that foreign diplomats in Canada "have been warned that if they engage in this type of behaviour, they will be sent home".

### 'Playground for interference'

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has faced growing pressure to take a hard line on China following revelations in recent months that it sought to sway Canada's 2019 and 2021 elections in his party's favour.

Relations between Beijing and Ottawa have been tense since Canada's 2018 arrest of a top Huawei executive and the detention of two Canadian nationals in China in apparent retaliation.

All three have been released, but Beijing has continued to blast Ottawa for aligning with Washington's China policy, while Canadian officials have regularly accused China of interference.

After China's ambassador was summoned last week over the latest interference allegations, Beijing on Friday slammed what it called "groundless slander and defamation" by Canada. The Chinese foreign ministry insisted the scandal had been "hyped up" by Canadian politicians and the media. On Monday, Chong told reporters in Ottawa: "It shouldn't have taken the targeting of a member of Parliament to make this (expulsion) decision."

"We have known for years that the PRC is using its accredited diplomats here in Canada to target Canadians and their families," he said, using an acronym for the People's Republic of China. He said Canada has become "a playground for foreign interference," including the harassment of diaspora communities. — AFP



WEDNESDAY, MAY 10, 2023

# Business

## Saudi Aramco reports Q1 net profit of \$31.9bn, down 19.25 %

### Kingdom’s budget 2023 foresees a surplus of \$4bn and GDP growth of 3.1 %

**RIYADH:** Oil giant Saudi Aramco announced first-quarter net profit of \$31.9 billion on Tuesday, down 19.25 percent from a year earlier after a drop in crude prices. The result was lower than the \$39.5 billion reported in the same period in 2022, when Russia’s invasion of Ukraine caused oil prices to surge.

It is more than three-quarters of the \$40.5 billion in combined first-quarter profits reported by the five oil majors: BP and Shell in Britain, ExxonMobil and Chevron in the United States, and TotalEnergies in France. “The results reflect Aramco’s continued high reliability, focus on cost and our ability to react to market conditions as we generate strong cash flows and further strengthen the balance sheet,” president and CEO Amin H Nasser said in a statement.

“We are... moving forward with our capacity expansion, and our long-term outlook remains unchanged,” he added. Aramco is the jewel of the Saudi economy and the main source of revenue for Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman’s ambitious economic

and social reform program known as Vision 2030.

The firm reported record profits totaling \$161.1 billion last year, allowing the kingdom to notch up its first annual budget surplus in nearly a decade. “Net income would be higher still, but Aramco is ramping up investments in contrast to the (international oil companies) which are still retaining more capital discipline,” said Jamie Ingram, senior editor at MEES.

In mid-April, Saudi Arabia announced it was transferring a four percent chunk of Aramco shares, worth nearly \$80 billion, to Sanabil Investments, a firm controlled by the kingdom’s Public Investment Fund (PIF), one of the world’s biggest sovereign wealth funds with more than \$620 billion in assets.

An earlier transfer of four percent of Aramco shares last year went directly to the PIF.

**Budget deficit**

The national budget approved for 2023 foresees a surplus of 16 billion Saudi riyals (\$4 billion) and GDP

growth of 3.1 percent, the finance ministry said in December. On Sunday, the finance ministry announced a budget deficit of 2.9 billion Saudi riyals (roughly \$773 million) for the first quarter of 2023, reflecting a three-percent decline in oil revenues and a 29 percent jump in expenditures, according to the official Saudi Press Agency. “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” in support of Vision 2030 reforms, the news agency said.

Last month, major oil producers led by Saudi Arabia announced a surprise output cut of more than one million barrels per day, calling it a “pre-cautionary” step aimed at stabilizing the market. It followed a controversial decision in October by OPEC and its allies, including Russia—collectively known as OPEC+ -- to slash production by two million barrels per day. UAE-based oil expert Ibrahim Al-Ghitani said the production cuts, combined with



broader economic trends, could boost oil prices later in the year. “Now, unfortunately, the oil market is dominated by negative sentiment from traders due to the banking risks existing in the US market,” he said. But “expectations are that Chinese demand will increase” as the year goes on, he said. — AFP

## AI could replace 80 % of jobs ‘in next few years’

**RIO DE JANEIRO:** Artificial intelligence could replace 80 percent of human jobs in the coming years—but that’s a good thing, says US-Brazilian researcher Ben Goertzel, a leading AI guru. Mathematician, cognitive scientist and famed robot-creator Goertzel, 56, is founder and chief executive of SingularityNET, a research group he launched to create “Artificial General Intelligence,” or AGI—artificial intelligence with human cognitive abilities.

With his long hair and leopard-print cowboy hat, Goertzel was in provocateur mode last week at Web Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the world’s biggest annual technology conference, where he told AFP in an interview that AGI is just years away and spoke out against recent efforts to curb artificial intelligence research.

**As smart as humans?**

**Q: How far are we from artificial intelligence with human cognitive abilities?**

“If we want machines to really be as smart as people and to be as agile in dealing with the unknown, then they need to be able to take big leaps beyond their training and programming. And we’re not there yet. But I think there’s reason to believe we’re years rather than decades from getting there.”

**AI risk**

**Q: What do you think of the debate around AI such as ChatGPT and its risks? Should there be a six-month research pause, as some people are advocating?**

“I don’t think we should pause it because it’s like a dangerous superhuman AI... These are very interesting AI systems, but they’re not capable of becoming like human level general intelligences, because they can’t do complex multi-stage reasoning, like you need to do science. They can’t invent wild new things outside the scope of their training data.

“They can also spread misinformation, and people are saying we should pause them because of this. That’s very weird to me. Why haven’t we banned the internet? The internet does exactly this. It gives you way more information at your fingertips. And



**RIO DE JANEIRO:** SingularityNET Founder and CEO Ben Goertzel performs along with the AI robot Desdemona during the Web Summit Rio 2023 at the RioCentro Expo Center in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.—AFP

it spreads bullshit and misinformation. “I think we should have a free society. And just like the internet shouldn’t be banned, we shouldn’t ban this.”

**Threat to jobs**

**Q: Isn’t their potential to replace people’s jobs a threat?**

“You could probably obsolete maybe 80 percent of jobs that people do, without having an AGI, by my guess. Not with ChatGPT exactly as a product. But with systems of that nature, which are going to follow in the next few years. “I don’t think it’s a threat. I think it’s a benefit. People can find better things to do with their life than work for a living... Pretty much every job involving paperwork should be automatable.

“The problem I see is in the interim period, when AIs are obsoleting one human job after another... I don’t know how (to) solve all the social issues.”

**AI positives**

**Q: What can robots do for society today, and what will they be able to do in the future, if AGI is achieved?**

“You can do a lot of good with AI. “Like Grace, (a robot nurse) we showcased at Web Summit Rio. In

the US, a lot of elderly people are sitting lonely in old folks’ homes. And they’re not bad in terms of physical condition—you have medical care and food and big-screen TV—but they’re bad in terms of emotional and social support. So if you inject humanoid robots into it, that will answer your questions, listen to your stories, help you place a call with your kids or order something online, then you’re improving people’s lives. Once you get to an AGI, they’ll be even better companions. “In that case, you’re not eliminating human jobs. Because basically, there’s not enough people who want to do nursing and nursing assistant jobs. “I think education will also be an amazing market for humanoid robots, as well as domestic help.”

**Regulation**

**Q: What regulation do we need for AI to have a positive impact?**

“What you need is society to be developing these AIs to do good things. And the governance of the AIs to be somehow participatory among the population. All these things are technically possible. The problem is that the companies funding most of the AI research don’t care about doing good things. They care about maximizing shareholder value.” —AFP

## LinkedIn closes China service, cuts over 700 jobs

**BEIJING:** Social networking firm LinkedIn announced Tuesday that it will close down its last service available in China, citing “fierce competition and a challenging macroeconomic climate”. Microsoft-owned LinkedIn was one of the few US technology companies to successfully operate a social media site in China, where the internet is heavily regulated and censored.

The company had introduced a unique domestic version of the career networking platform operated locally in order to comply. In 2021, new sign-ups for the LinkedIn app in mainland China were suspended by the firm, which referenced a “significantly more challenging operating environment and greater compliance requirements in China”.

Microsoft then replaced it with a simplified version called InCareer, which allowed local professionals to continue to find and apply for jobs as well as stay connected with their network.

“After careful consideration, we’ve made the decision to discontinue InCareer effective August 9, 2023,” the platform said in a statement on Tuesday. “Despite our initial progress, InCareer faced fierce competition and a challenging macroeconomic climate, which ultimately led us to the decision of dis-



**BEIJING:** This file photo illustration taken on October 15, 2021 shows the LinkedIn China application on a mobile phone in Beijing. — AFP

continuing the service,” LinkedIn said.

An email from CEO Ryan Roslansky published online added that closing the China service would result in “a reduction of roles for 716 employees”. But a representative from the company told AFP that LinkedIn would “continue to have a presence” in the country by focusing on “assisting companies operating in China to hire, market, and train abroad”.

The US firm once achieved a rapid rise in China, benefiting from a culture of connections, or “guanxi”, in which one’s contacts and professional network are essential assets. — AFP

## Nintendo banks on ‘Zelda’ to boost fortunes

**TOKYO:** Japanese video game giant Nintendo is banking on the latest instalment of its 40-year-old saga “Zelda” to breathe life into its business, after forecasting a drop in profits this year. The firm will release “Tears of the Kingdom” on Friday, with clips circulating on the internet already racking up millions of views and generating feverish excitement among fans.

The saga of Princess Zelda and the elf-like warrior Link has shifted 125 million copies worldwide since its first edition in 1986. It helped to forge “open world” games where the player is free to roam in virtual landscapes—an idea later taken up by games from “Grand Theft Auto” to “Skyrim”.

But its main challenge this year will be to boost the figures for the Japanese studio and prolong the life of its Switch console, which experts say is in its dotage after seven years on the shelves.

The game “will be by far the biggest contributor to Nintendo’s sales this year”, said Serkan Toto, an analyst at Kantan Games. Yet the franchise was something of a risk during the 1980s for a company that also boasts the “Super Mario” series as part of its stable.

The first episode, “The Legend of Zelda”, plunged

gamers into an unknown universe largely without instructions. Creator Shigeru Miyamoto, who also gave life to Mario, was inspired by his childhood explorations of the Japanese countryside to offer a landscape of forests, lakes, caves and mountains.

“The scale of the game was huge at a time when most games were finished in an hour or two,” said Kiyoshi Tane, an author specializing in the history of video games.

“The map was designed with a real emphasis on exploration, so it was something of a pioneer of what open-world games would become.” The first Zelda hit the market only a few months after “Super Mario Bros”, but the two games were far apart on the gaming spectrum.

While Mario runs from left to right through various platforms, Zelda “encouraged the player to explore, discover and map its world and take on its challenges”, said Mark Brown, who analyses game design on his YouTube channel. The game was a smash hit from the off, and for the next two decades it pushed the boundaries of game design. The 1998 edition “Ocarina of Time” pioneered a system to allow gamers to aim properly in 3D. Yet the game eventually hit the skids at the turn of the 2010s.

Nintendo wanted to expand the game’s appeal but only managed to create editions that satisfied nobody. Hardcore fans drifted away and sales suffered. “The development team had a sense of crisis,” Katsuhiko Hayashi of trade magazine Famitsu told AFP. The designers rethought the basics of the game, eventually creating 2017’s “Breath of the Wild”. — AFP



## Business

# iPhone maker Foxconn buys huge site in India tech hub

## Apple looks to diversify production away from China

**BENGALURU:** Taiwanese electronics giant Foxconn has bought a huge tract of land on the outskirts of Indian tech hub Bengaluru, the key Apple supplier said in a filing Tuesday as it looks to diversify production away from China. Also known by its official name, Hon Hai Precision Industry, Foxconn is the world's biggest contract electronics manufacturer and a principal assembler of Apple iPhones.

Both companies are seeking to shift manufacturing away from China after strict COVID policies, a bout of industrial unrest and ongoing diplomatic tensions with the United States hurt production. The 1.2 million-square-meter (13 million-square-foot) acquisition in Devanahalli, near the airport for Indian tech hub Bengaluru, was announced in a statement to the London Stock Exchange.

It said that subsidiary Foxconn Hon Hai Technology India Mega Development was paying three billion rupees (\$37 million) for the site, the size of more than 50 Manhattan city blocks. Another Foxconn unit was acquiring land use rights to a 480,000-square-metre site in Vietnam's Nghe An province, it added.

Karnataka state chief minister Basavaraj S. Bommai said in March that Apple would "soon" manu-

facture iPhones at a new plant in the state, creating "about 100,000 jobs". Bloomberg News reported that month that Foxconn was planning to invest \$700 million in a new factory in Karnataka, citing unnamed sources. Foxconn chairman Young Liu visited the state then to "deepen partnerships... and seek cooperation in new areas such as semiconductor development and electric vehicles", he said in a statement. He also met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who said the pair's "discussions covered various topics aimed at enhancing India's tech and innovation eco-system".

Foxconn has manufactured Apple handsets in India since 2019 at its plant in the southern state of Tamil Nadu. The company is expected to break ground on a new facility in Telangana state next week, local media reported. Two other Taiwanese suppliers, Wistron and Pegatron, also manufacture and assemble Apple devices in India.

### New territory

Apple has been making its own push into India and chief executive Tim Cook last month opened its first two retail stores in the world's most populous

country. The California-based firm is betting big on the nation of 1.4 billion people — home to the second-highest number of smartphone users in the world, after China.

The world's biggest company in terms of market value is also expanding its manufacturing footprint in India. Apple said last September it would manufacture its latest iPhone 14 in India, just weeks after launching the flagship model. The country last year accounted for seven percent of Apple's iPhone production, according to Bloomberg, lagging behind the United States, China, Japan and other countries. China, by far the leading producer of Apple products, saw production disrupted by violent protests last November at the country's largest iPhone factory, also owned by Foxconn.

Hundreds of employees protested over conditions and pay at the plant in the central city of Zhengzhou, spurred in part by public frustration over the government's zero-tolerance approach to COVID during the pandemic. Apple's expanding manufacturing in India is a boost to Modi's "Make in India" strategy, under which he has urged foreign businesses to manufacture goods in the South Asian nation. — AFP



**MUMBAI:** In this file photo taken on April 18, 2023 Apple employees (in green) cheer as they welcome customers during the opening of Apple's first retail store in India, in Mumbai. — AFP



**SUQIAN, China:** A worker produces solar photovoltaic modules used for solar panels at a factory in Suqian in China's eastern Jiangsu province on May 9, 2023. — AFP

## China exports rise at a slower pace in April

**BEIJING:** China's exports grew at a slower pace in April compared to the previous month, according to official data released Tuesday, as the world's second-largest economy endures a patchy recovery from tough COVID curbs. Rising global inflation, the threat of recession elsewhere and geopolitical tensions with the United States have weakened demand for Chinese products.

Exports growth cooled to 8.5 percent in April in US dollar terms, after a surprise jump of 14.8 percent in March, customs data showed. Beijing's exports to Russia leapt 67.2 percent in April, year-on-year, but demand from markets elsewhere shrank.

China's exports have grown for two months, snapping a run of five straight declines, when production was disrupted by sweeping lockdowns and delays at ports when China enforced its zero-COVID policy.

The stifling health restrictions were scrapped in December but domestic consumption remains sub-

dued. Imports fell much more sharply than expected in April, sliding 7.9 percent year-on-year, compared with a 1.4 percent decline in March. Analysts polled by Bloomberg had expected imports to decline by 0.2 percent.

"The contraction of imports may be partly driven by the slowdown of global demand, which in turn affects China's imports of parts and components," said Zhang Zhiwei, chief economist at Pinpoint Asset Management. China's trade surplus grew to \$90.21 billion in April, up from \$88.2 billion in March. Its economy grew 4.5 percent in the first three months of the year.

But manufacturing activity contracted in April due to tapering global demand and a slow domestic recovery. The official manufacturing purchasing managers' index (PMI) — a key gauge of Chinese factory output — fell unexpectedly to 49.2 in April from 51.9 in March, and below the 50-point mark that separates expansion and contraction in activity, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed. The services sector remains a bright spot, with millions travelling and going to cinemas during the Labor Day holiday, after nearly three years of travel curbs during the pandemic.

"China's recovery in the service sector is strong... The momentum in the manufacturing sector is less clear," Zhang said. — AFP

## 'Big gap' in Biden, Republican positions on debt limit: Yellen

**WASHINGTON:** Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Monday that there is a "big gap" between the positions of US President Joe Biden and Republican leaders when it comes to a decision on raising the debt limit. Her comments in an interview on CNBC come a day before Biden is due to meet Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell at the White House, alongside top Democrats in Congress. While Republicans seek to lift the \$31.4 trillion borrowing limit only in combination with drastic spending cuts, Biden has refused to agree to such reductions — raising fears of the first national debt default.

"Clearly, there's a very big gap between where the President is and where the Republicans are," said Yellen on Monday. While she acknowledged the need for discussions and compromise over fiscal policy and spending, she added that Biden is not willing to do this with "a gun to the head of the American people and the American economy." "It's really essential that Congress raise the debt ceiling so that we're not in the position of defaulting on our bills," Yellen said, adding that this could produce "financial chaos."

Asked about who gets prioritized if the government runs out of money to pay all its obligations, Yellen said: "There are no good options. Every option is a bad option." She also weighed in on banking system stress, saying the system remains well-capitalized despite turmoil in the sector in the wake of four regional lenders' recent collapse. "Regulators stand ready to use the same tools we have in the past, if there are further pressures that arise, that could create contagion," she said. She also maintained that there remains a path to bring down inflation while still having a strong labor market. — AFP

## US needs \$30bn to seal 14,000 unplugged offshore wells: Study

**PARIS:** The cost to secure thousands of inactive oil and gas wells in the US Gulf of Mexico could top \$30 billion, according to research published Monday weighing potential environmental damage against the estimated price tag. Researchers in the United States found there are some 14,000 unplugged oil and gas wells that are either officially idle or have been inactive for at least five years in the waters off the southeastern coast of the United States. With new US government funding available for plugging old fossil fuel wells, the authors focused on offshore sites which are relatively more costly and complicated to secure than those on land.

They said both taxpayers and fossil fuel giants would likely be liable for the costs of plugging and abandoning the wells — a process that includes encasing the opening in concrete to stop oil and the potent greenhouse gas methane from leaking out.

"The wells aren't supposed to just be leaking into the environment if they're not actively producing... but sometimes they do," said Mark Agerton, lead author of the study published in the journal Nature Energy.

## Illegal mining booms in Brazilian 'promised land'

**CANAA DOS CARAJAS, Brazil:** Working under an improvised shed hidden in the rainforest, Webson Nunes hears a shout and flips on his winch, hauling a colleague up from deep inside a giant hole with a bucket full of riches. Nunes, 28, and his four colleagues are "garimpeiros," illegal miners who dig for precious minerals — in their case, at a wildcat copper mine outside Canaa dos Carajas, a small city at the edge of the Brazilian Amazon that has become a boom town in recent years thanks to mining.

Canaa — Portuguese for Canaan, the Biblical "Promised Land" — is a place of extremes: At one end of the spectrum sits mining giant Vale, which runs one of the world's biggest open-air mines here.

Known as S11D, the iron-ore mine made the city the richest in Brazil in 2020 in GDP per capita.

At the other end are an estimated 100 illegal mines like the one where Nunes is employed, bootstrap operations where "garimpeiros" — Portuguese for "prospectors" — make a living digging holes in the earth, living on constant alert in case of a raid. "I work with one eye here (on the mine), and the other outside. The police could arrive at any moment," says Nunes, inside the tarp-covered shack above the narrow, wet, 20-meter (22-yard)-deep hole into which he lowers his colleagues with a harness and steel cable to haul up big blue buckets of shiny, mineral-rich rocks.

But Nunes, who has been doing this for seven years, says he sees it as just another job — albeit a lucrative one. The mine owner pays him 150 reais (\$30) a day, a nice salary in these parts.

### 'Severe environmental damage'

Illegal mines make around \$800 per metric ton of copper they sell on the black market.

This one typically produces more than that in a day, the miners told AFP. Authorities say the copper mined illegally in Canaa mainly gets exported to China. Police say they have also detected illegal gold mines in the area, which cause greater environmental damage because of the mercury used to separate gold from soil. Canaa's population has boomed along with its economy.

Since 2016, when Vale launched S11D, employing 9,000 people, the town has nearly tripled in size, from 26,000 inhabitants to 75,000. The town, located in the northern state of Para, voted heavily in Brazil's presidential elections last year for far-right incumbent Jair Bolsonaro, who narrowly lost to veteran leftist Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

Bolsonaro, whose father was a garimpeiro, defended wildcat miners as president, pushing to allow mining on protected lands in the Amazon and drawing condemnation from environmentalists.

Since taking office in January, Lula has cracked down on illegal mining in the world's biggest rainforest. Police have staged six raids in the Canaa region since August 2022, unearthing what they called "se-

### Shallow waters

The research found that while 90 percent of the inactive wells in the US Gulf of Mexico region were in shallower waters closer to shore, they accounted for only a quarter of the \$30 billion in plugging costs — and presented a greater environmental risk. "The policy implication is that you'd likely focus on those shallow ones," said co-author Gregory Upton of Louisiana State University in a press briefing. Researchers identified some 13,000 idle wells in shallow waters close to shore, either in the state waters of Texas, Louisiana, and Alabama, or in federal jurisdiction.

Oil leaks from these shallow wells would be more likely to pose a threat to coastal habitats than those from deeper wells, the authors said. "Also, any leakages are more likely to get to the surface and in the case of methane emissions going into the atmosphere and thus cause climate damages," Upton said.

The study said much of what is known about the environmental impacts of oil and gas spills at different depths comes from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon explosion in the Gulf of Mexico, one of the worst environmental disasters in US history. The BP-leased rig exploded off the coast of Louisiana, killing 11 people and spewing out an oil slick the size of the state of Virginia. While inactive wells are more likely to produce "small, chronic and potentially unobserved" leaks, the study said the underlying processes affecting ecological impacts "have many similarities". — AFP

vere environmental damage" in the form of "severely" discolored rivers and forestland turned into giant pools of toxic mud. Officers typically destroy miners' operations, flooding their mine shafts and seizing or burning their equipment. But it does little to stop them: The same miners can sometimes be seen back at work the next day, says Genivaldo Casadei, a garimpeiro leader. Casadei, 51, is treasurer of a local small-scale miners' cooperative trying to win legal status for their work. Under Bolsonaro, miners were in advanced talks with the federal mining agency to do just that, he says. Lula's victory put an end to that.

"In the cities, people see garimpeiros as criminals. But we're just workers trying to feed our families," says Casadei. "If (wildcat mining) were regulated, it would create jobs and tax revenue. Canaa could be the richest city in the world."

### 'Dangerous job'

Garimpeiros say it is unjust that Vale, the world's biggest iron ore producer, has a monopoly on mining rights on local land, but uses just 13 percent of it. Getting authorization for small-scale mines is nearly impossible, they say. Crouching over a pile of shiny rocks from a mining pit, Valmir Souza bangs at them with a hammer, separating the copper from the rest.

"It's a hard, dangerous job," says Souza, 33, who works in gloves, rubber boots and a white helmet.

He arrived here seven months ago from his northeastern home state, Maranhao, the poorest in Brazil, where he worked teaching capoeira, a Brazilian dance form and martial art. There is more opportunity in Canaa, he says. But "we have to work in secret," he adds. "What else can we do?" — AFP



**CANAA DOS CARAJAS, Brazil:** Miner Valmir Souza Silva works in an illegal copper mine, in Canaa dos Carajas, Para State, Brazil, on April 19, 2023. — AFP

## UAE-India non-oil trade expected to top \$50bn in 2023

**ABU DHABI:** Non-oil trade between the UAE and India is expected to exceed \$50 billion this year, aiming to achieve their goal of reaching \$100 billion by 2030 after signing a major economic pact.

In the first 11 months of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between the two countries — between May 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023 — bilateral non-oil trade reached \$45.5 billion, Dr Thani Al-Zeyoudi, minister of state for foreign trade, told the Annual Investment Meeting (AIM) conference in Abu Dhabi on Monday. This was a 7 per cent increase from the same period a year ago, he added. "We're going to exceed \$50 billion for sure this year for non-oil trade and this means we're moving towards the right direction of \$100 billion by 2030 ... we're going to push by all means to ensure that we hit the target even earlier," Dr Al-Zeyoudi on the sidelines of the AIM.

"You cannot judge an agreement within one year because of the geopolitics and the situation globally in terms of the movement of trade ... looking at the numbers, it shows we are outperforming in comparison to the rest of the world." In the first three months this year, bilateral trade between the UAE and India reached \$13.3 billion, up 24.7 per cent on the previous quarter and 5.4 per cent from the first quarter of last year, the minister said. The UAE's non-oil exports to India in the first quarter climbed 33 per cent from the previous quarter, while re-exports from India rose 31.5 per cent. — Agencies



## Business

# Pakistan buys Russian oil but sees diversified future

## Country hopes to generate 30% of electricity from renewables by 2030

### Data for the community

By Mai Bader Al-Owaish

Imagine for a moment that you are in your home in Kuwait. You have an appointment in Salmiya that starts in just 30 minutes. You get into your car and input the address into your phone. The app returns two possible routes. The first route utilizes congested local roadways. It will take an estimated 40 minutes to reach your destination. The second route uses the highway and will take 25 minutes. You select the 25-minute route to ensure that you will arrive at your appointment in time. Without realizing it, you have just made a data-driven decision.

In this instance, the data-driven decision was possible because:

1. Other drivers shared their location with the app (while fully anonymous), making the DATA available; and
2. App developers used analytics to personalize the estimates for your trip, giving you options that were both available and accurate.

Aided by technology and user-friendly applications, we make personalized data-driven decisions in countless digital encounters every day. The ticket you're trying to book online, the phone bill you're trying to pay on the app, the doctor appointment you're booking, or the restaurant delivery that you're anticipating. While some may argue that it requires a digital-savvy customer to get this experience, it starts with the "content creators." They are the app developers and website authors who can develop content that digitally transforms the customer experience. Moreover, they can use platforms that read, process, and analyze data as well as customize offerings for the audience based on their needs and behavior. In other words, digital transformation starts at the organizational level and trickles down.

#### Kuwait 2035 & digital transformation

According to the 2022 Kuwait's Digital Inequalities Report "From Digital Skills to Tangible Outcomes" by researchers from the London School of Economics and the Gulf University for Science and Technology, the access to smartphones and the internet in Kuwait is almost universal across different demographic segments.

Moreover, the report summary states that "A high degree of technical skill exists among the various populations in Kuwait" and recommends that corporations and businesses need to match up to the digital expectation and mature their offerings into better content. This content in turn, transforms the experience to provide digital and valuable outcomes to the local community. Additionally, the report recommends that in order to achieve digital transformation, Kuwait must focus on:

1. Improving people's content creation skills through methods such as formal and informal educational initiatives; and
2. The ability to create more homegrown technology applications rather than developing an imbalanced reliance on outside perspectives and expertise to steer the way.

At Gulf Bank, we take ownership in contributing to the digital transformation of Kuwait and the Kuwait 2035 vision. We are committed to hosting events and using our resources to help foster a homegrown tech community.

Gulf Bank held the first Datathon in the country in May 2022 and is in the process of holding the second edition in May 2023. A Datathon is a fast-paced competitive event where participants gather to solve practical problems through the application of data science tools and techniques. The event helped spread and improve data culture throughout the digital community of data analysts, app developers, e-commerce specialists, website authors, and all types of digital content creators. The objective is for participants to learn more about data science, data visualization and digital analytics tools and techniques, as well as connect with others in the local tech community.

#### Data also benefits sustainable development

There is a common misconception that data science is only used by large private companies. The viewpoint indicates that financial services, firms, and tech companies, use their data for monetization purposes or to achieve corporate goals. Yet global and social challenges also benefit from data science. For example, data can help address issues such as building sustainable cities, providing clean energy, reducing inequalities, and many other initiatives. This is something that organizations like the United Nations are well aware of. In fact, the UN has an entire section on its website dedicated to Big Data for Sustainable Development.

Data science techniques allow us to gain real-time insights into people's lives and wellbeing, as well as direct aid to vulnerable groups. Creating quality sources of data, developing new technologies, and adopting new analytical approaches can help make evidence-based decision-making more agile, and efficient, while contributing to Kuwait's growth of sustainable cities and a strong economy.

Let's return to your trip to Salmiya. You used an app that gave you two separate routes and estimated travel times for each. To get to that point, the app first needed to collect data and analyze it. This same process applies to the many other digital encounters that we experience in our daily lives. Whether you are responsible for creating digital content or using it to make data-driven decisions, like the best route to take, you are playing an important role in digitally transforming your community.

*Note: Mai Bader Al-Owaish is chief data and innovation officer at Gulf Bank*



**WASHINGTON:** Facing a deep economic crisis, Pakistan has started to buy Russian oil, but the country's petroleum minister says the future lies in diversified, especially green, energy. Minister Musadik Malik was visiting the United States for talks with corporations as well as with the government, which has led global efforts to choke off Russia's oil exports that help fund its invasion of Ukraine.

Malik confirmed that a first order was placed for Russian oil and would arrive within a month in Pakistan, which will then assess how much to import in the future.

"Based upon the results, we'll move forward and see for what part of our portfolio we can use Russian energy," he told AFP. Asked if Pakistan will pursue more Russian imports, he said, "if today we get cheaper sources of energy, we'll go there."

#### 'A little drop'

Pakistan, the world's fifth most populous country, faces chronic energy shortages and imports 84 percent of its petroleum products, overwhelmingly from Gulf Arab allies Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Malik said Pakistan had been fully transparent and that its initial dealings with Moscow were far less than those of other countries—notably China and Pakistan's rival neighbor India, whose enthusiastic buying of Russian oil has cast a shadow over New Delhi's warming relationship with Washington.

"We have not faced any problems, either with the United States or with any other country," Malik said. "A whole lot of countries are legitimately getting energy from Russia," he said. Pakistan's share "is a little drop, but it helps." Russian oil exports

in March jumped to their highest level since the Ukraine invasion more than a year earlier despite European cuts in purchases, according to the International Energy Agency, as China and developing countries buy at a discount.

But revenue to Russia was still significantly lower, with the Group of Seven industrial democracies trying to enforce a cap of \$60 per barrel. A State Department spokesperson said the United States understood "the pressure governments face to secure affordable fuel," while saying that Russia has shown that it is "not a reliable supplier of energy." "We hope countries are able to leverage the oil price cap to purchase Russian oil at a lower price," the spokesperson said.

#### Seeking green boost

Michael Kugelman, director of the South Asia Institute at the Wilson Center, said he believed there was a broad consensus in Washington that "this is an opportunistic situation where Pakistan is desperate for cheap oil" and substantively different from India's historic relationship with Russia. "My sense is that Islamabad is in such a difficult state that it's not going to risk antagonizing the United States, given Washington's influence over key international financial institutions that are important to Pakistan right now," Kugelman said. Pakistan, fearing the collapse of its economy, has been seeking a new tranche of a bailout from the International Monetary Fund which has demanded lasting reforms including subsidy cuts, with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif taking the unpopular step of raising fuel prices.

Malik said he spoke with US companies about buying shale liquefied natural gas, upgrading Pakistani refineries and storage facilities, exploring offshore oil

On this occasion, Abdullah Al-Najdi, marketing segment manager, Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait said: "NBK always aims to enrich customers' banking experience by offering them exclusive customer value to match their various needs, expectations and lifestyles."

"Salary transfer qualifies customers to special benefits including quick loan approval, banking and investment solutions, as well as instant discounts and points earned through Kuwait's largest rewards program, NBK Rewards," he added.

"All offers provided in salary transfer campaign this year are tailored to customers' needs and seasonality, aiming to always provide the most valuable and relevant offers to our customers."

Customers get various benefits when transferring

unemployment—but above all sky-high commodity prices. Vast and sparsely populated, Australia is teeming with ores, fuels and minerals that have sustained decades of almost unbroken economic growth. The country is a leading exporter of iron ore, which reached an all time price high in 2021, and coal, which reached a record soon after.

In March, iron ore prices were more than double what the government had initially forecast—as traders eyed increased demand from a gradually reopening China.

Decades-old efforts to diversify Australia's economy away from resources that are dug or pumped from the ground have come to little. Iron ore, coal and gas remain the country's three largest exports, even as countries worldwide rush to decarbonise.

#### Making friends

Aside from a posting a surplus, the budget included notable spending on supporting Pacific Island neighbors and defense. Australia and allies like the United States have ramped up efforts to woo several small island nations to ward off Chinese diplomatic, economic and military inroads across a region of increasing strategic importance.

The budget earmarks Aus\$1.9 billion on the Pacific, including labour mobility schemes to bring Pacific Island workers Down Under. That is a popular policy across a region where remittances are vital to supporting many communities.

Australia will also expand security assistance, bolstering regional infrastructure and

standards across all loan categories," the Fed said on Monday. Among the most frequently cited reasons included an expected deterioration in credit quality of loan portfolios and in customers' collateral values, alongside reduced risk tolerance, found the senior loan officer opinion survey on bank lending practices.

Other reasons included "concerns about bank funding costs, bank liquidity position, and deposit outflows," the survey added. In the first quarter, respondents reported tighter standards and weaker demand for various types of loans to businesses and households, the report added.

"In general, the tightening in standards for business loans was more frequently reported across the mid-sized banks," the report said. On commercial and industrial lending, midsized and other banks more often cited their liquidity positions and issues such as heightened concerns about the impact of legislative changes. And among banks' worries were an uncertain economic outlook.

#### Risk of slowdown

In a separate financial stability report released



**WASHINGTON:** Pakistani Petroleum Minister Musadik Malik speaks during an interview with AFP at the Embassy of Pakistan in Washington, DC, on May 8, 2023. — AFP

and gas and starting horizontal drilling, a method the country does not yet use. But Malik said his talks with the United States will also seek support for green energy in line with Pakistan's goal of generating 30 percent of electricity from renewables by 2030, including a plan for widespread solar power on rooftops.

Pakistan is one of the nations most vulnerable to climate change, with floods last year submerging one-third of the country. A 2020 World Bank study said Pakistan could meet all electricity demand at the time by devoting just 0.071 percent of its land for solar power. Geoffrey Pyatt, the assistant secretary of state for energy resources, promised US backing for renewable goals on a March visit to Pakistan. "Strategically, it's very clear to us that the future of energy security is in green energy," Malik said. —AFP



**Abdullah Al-Najdi**

their salary to NBK including access to the largest branch and ATM network in Kuwait, as well as the broad geographical footprint across key regional and global markets. Moreover, NBK Customers can enjoy quick and easy banking anytime using the digital channels including NBK's recently enhanced Mobile Banking Application.



**CANBERRA:** In this file photo taken on May 23, 2022 Australia's treasurer Jim Chalmers smiles during a swearing-in ceremony at Government House in Canberra. —AFP

maritime security capabilities. Foreign Minister Penny Wong said Australia would also be funding additional diplomatic staff across the Pacific. Defense spending will also increase, to just over two percent of gross domestic product.

Over the next four years Aus\$9 billion will spent on the joint Australia, United Kingdom and United States—or AUKUS—nuclear-powered submarine program and Aus\$4.1 billion for long-range missile capabilities.

In 2023-2024 a Aus\$13.9 billion deficit is forecast. Chalmers said economic growth was expected to slow from 3.3 percent in 2022-23 to 1.5 percent in 2023-24. —AFP

Monday—the first since four regional banks failed recently—the central bank highlighted concerns over tighter credit. "Concerns about the economic outlook, credit quality, and funding liquidity could lead banks and other financial institutions to further contract the supply of credit to the economy," said the Fed's report.

"A sharp contraction in the availability of credit would drive up the cost of funding for businesses and households, potentially resulting in a slowdown in economic activity," the report added. Analysts have recently warned that the full impact of March's banking shock is yet to materialize.

It was "hardly surprising" that many banks tightened lending standards across a range of loans in the first three months this year, said Michael Pearce of Oxford Economics in a note. "But the bigger concern is that a majority of banks plan to tighten standards further over the rest of the year," he added.

"That will starve firms and households of credit and help push the economy into recession in the second half of this year," he said. —AFP

## US banks expect to tighten lending standards: Survey

**WASHINGTON:** US banks tightened lending standards in the first few months this year, and expect this to continue over the rest of 2023, said a Federal Reserve survey released on Monday. The report, which is closely watched on Wall Street, comes as the financial sector contends with deposit outflow worries on the back of turmoil after the high-profile collapse of Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank in March.

In recent weeks, shares of midsized banks suffered brutal trading days while investors remained on edge for a repeat of earlier episodes in which deposit runs precipitated or played a significant role in bank failures. Asked about their outlook for lending standards over the rest of 2023, "banks reported expecting to tighten



Lifestyle



Venezuelan migrant Laura Linares buys vegetables to prepare turmada, a Venezuelan Andean dish.



Venezuelan migrant Laura Linares buys vegetables to prepare turmada.



Venezuelan migrant Laura Linares prepares turmada, a Venezuelan Andean dish, at her house. — AFP photos

# TASTE OF HOME OFFERS COMFORT TO NOSTALGIC MIGRANTS

Like many migrants who leave their family and friends behind, Laura Linares finds that when she misses Venezuela, preparing traditional dishes from her childhood helps to ease her homesickness. "I want to feel close to my family, to my grandmother, to important moments," the 29-year-old told AFP while cooking in her small apartment in the Mexican capital. Linares moved to Mexico to study for a master's degree in linguistics after leaving her crisis-racked country five years ago.

She was one of the winners in March of the international culinary and cultural competition Sabores Migrantes Comunitarios (Community Migrant Flavors), organized by IberCultura Viva, a cooperation program between the governments of the region, chaired by Mexico.

Linares, who hails from the Andean city of San Cristobal, won the competition with a typical potato stew from her region called turmada -- made with milk, chives, cheese and hard-boiled eggs. "It's a warm dish. You feel like you're at home. You feel like you're being hugged," she said.

Migrating -- as seven million Venezuelans have done in recent years -- has not been easy for Linares, even if it means she can enjoy food like apples,

which have become something of a luxury in Venezuela.

The South American country is going through an unprecedented crisis, with the national economy contracting by 80 percent between 2013 and 2021.



Venezuelan migrant Laura Linares prepares turmada, a Venezuelan Andean dish, at her house in Mexico City.

### Building a community

To overcome the emotional highs and lows of leaving home, Linares immersed herself in preparing dishes from her country. As well as turmada, she makes pastel de platano -- banana cake -- and bollitos alinados, a

type of corn dumpling made with fried onions and seasoned with paprika and sweet pepper.

Cooking is a way of "bringing my home" to Mexico, Linares said. It has also helped her create a community



around little-known dishes not usually found in Venezuelan restaurants in the Mexican capital.

Around 340,000 foreigners settled in Mexico in 2022, according to official figures. When "we are in another country, we experiment with other foods,

but we always come back to the origin of our food, the one that our mothers gave us, to feel this connection," said Edizon Muj Cumes, a Guatemalan researcher on the food systems of indigenous peoples.



It is part of an "identity process that is forged from the moment we are born," he told AFP. Jose Bustillos, a 45-year-old Venezuelan, said that he cried the first time he tasted an arepa -- a kind of cornmeal patty -- two and a half months after arriving in Mexico.

"My country, my city, my people came back to me," he said.

In front of a shelter for migrants in the Mexican capital, a group of Haitians gathered around a compatriot selling chicken. For the price of one serving,



Laura Linares shows the Venezuelan Andean dish known as turmada.

the equivalent of \$5.50, they could buy up to eight Mexican tacos.

But the chicken is seasoned like on their island, so for them it is worth it for a taste of home. —AFP

# IWG celebrates diversity at Member's Day event

The International Women's Group Kuwait (IWG) held a mesmerizing event celebrating "IWG Member's Day" on Sunday, May 7, 2023 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. In her opening speech, Ghada Shawky, President of the IWG and wife of the ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt, thanked Sheikha Hanouf Bader Al-Muhammad Al-Sabah, Honorary President of the group, for her support and guidance throughout the year. She also praised the outstanding teamwork of the IWG Executive Board.

In her remarks honoring Member's Day, Shawky stressed the group's core values of comradery, cultural enrichment and empowerment through understanding. She also said that everyone is unique and special in their own way and that the beauty of the IWG is in its diversity, emphasizing the importance of always trying to learn from each other and connect to one another. In closing, Shawky acknowledged

and thanked all who had supported the group during her presidency.

On behalf of the Executive Board, Vice President and wife of the ambassador of the state of Palestine, Rima Khalidi, delivered a speech in recognition of the distinguished achievements of Shawky during the period of her presidency, stressing that she is a great example of a successful Arab woman and an excellent representative of her country, Egypt.

The event then continued with a video display of images from all the many events organized in the year 2022 - 2023. Fascinated by the different cultures of the people of the world, and starting a special hobby since childhood, Sanaa Kamelia Al-Mutawa, Executive Board member of IWG, displayed a huge collection of dolls from around the world with their traditional dresses. Members admired the dolls and were happy to participate in

a quiz, where they had to identify the represented country of each doll.

In honor of their diverse cultures, members were dressed in their traditional attires, and were proud to show their beautiful dresses and give a short explanation about their special culture. The IWG celebration also included a brilliant musical performance on the Qanun instrument played by Nourhan Al-Fiky. At the end of the program, Ghada Shawky honored a number of journalists and presented them with certificates of appreciation and symbolic gifts as an expression of the International Women's Group's appreciation for their support.

The event was followed by a raffle kindly offered by Beverly Hills Optics, La Reve, and ACE. Members then enjoyed a delicious International buffet prepared by the chefs of the Crowne Plaza Hotel.



## Opera icon Grace Bumbry dies at 86

Mezzo-soprano Grace Bumbry, a pioneering Black opera singer who blazed trails and broke barriers, has died, her son and publicist announced Monday. She was 86. The artist died on May 7 at a hospital in Vienna, having suffered a stroke in October, according to her adopted son David Lee Brewer, who was speaking to the press agency APA.

The decorated singer made her operatic debut in Paris in 1960, playing Amneris in "Aida," and became a favorite of US first lady Jackie Kennedy. Over a nearly four-decade career, Bumbry received great acclaim for her performances in roles that showcased her wide vocal range and singular star power. Grace-Melzia Bumbry was born in St. Louis on January 4, 1937, to parents hailing from Mississippi. A unique talent in the church choir, she grew up in an era of profound racial segregation, and was barred from entering the local music conservatory.

But she went on to study at Boston University and Northwestern University on scholarships, later going with her instructor Lotte Lehmann to the Music Academy of the West in California to hone her operatic and stage skills. Following fellow pioneering Black artists including Marian Anderson and Leontyne Price, Bumbry was a major figure in breaking down racial barriers entrenched in classical music.

She gained international attention in 1961 when she became the first African American to perform at Germany's Bayreuth Festival, an institution dedicated to Richard Wagner, a figure acclaimed for his music but whose anti-Semitism and white supremacist views have complicated his artistic legacy.

Wagnerites voiced some protest that she would perform, but the composer's grandson, Wieland Wagner, said "I require no ideal Nordic specimens," arguing that his grandfather's music was "for vocal color, not skin color." Across her storied career Bumbry gained a reputation for glamour and high-living, wearing dramatic gowns and jewels while sating a penchant for show dogs and luxury cars. In 2009 she was awarded a Kennedy Center Honor, among the highest American arts awards, in the presence of then-president Barack Obama. —AFP



## Lifestyle

## THE TIKTOK STAR MAKING SERIOUS POINTS ABOUT POVERTY - AND ICE CUBES



Shabaz Ali, a chemistry teacher and social media star, poses for a photograph in Manchester, northern England.—AFP photos

Lying on his bed with a camera close to his face, Shabaz Ali raises his eyebrows, widens his eyes and drily ridicules the excessive lifestyles of internet influencers.

His videos on TikTok and Instagram have propelled the 30-year-old from Blackburn, northwest England, to internet celebrity and the cusp of mainstream fame -- yet he is the first to admit he is hardly a natural fit.

He is a chemistry teacher with a thick northern accent, using slang unlikely to travel very well even to neighbouring counties, and he makes serious points about the growing gap between rich and poor. "My issue has always been overindulgence," he told AFP in a recent interview. "I think the Kardashian era is definitely coming to an end, because we've come to a point where we really don't need to see how many billions you have and how much money you're spending." Ali, known as Shabaz Says on social media, has amassed tens of millions of views, with 1.6 million followers on TikTok and 1.2 million on Instagram. His main series -- "I'm rich, you're poor" -- sees him comment on videos made by influencers.

He expresses incredulity as an influencer irons a bed, or makes ice cubes in the shape of pineapples, or cooks a "blood quiche". Internet culture may be a golden goose for comedians, but Ali reckons his rich-poor humour has



Shabaz Ali, a chemistry teacher and social media star, poses for a photograph in Manchester, northern England.

struck a chord because many people are struggling to afford the basics right now, even in wealthy nations. "They just want to talk about it," he said of those commenting on his videos.

#### 'Povvo pride'

"In Britain, we grow up to be really ashamed about not having much. But you shouldn't be ashamed," Ali said. Instead, he wants to instil a sense of "povvo pride", using northern England slang for someone experiencing poverty. Seeing the ridiculousness of someone fixing a wedding cake to the ceiling, or spending \$50,000 on an Hermes bag, hammers home the absurdity of current times.

"It has allowed the rest of us to think:

'I might not have it, but at least I'm not an idiot spending silly money on stupid things'," he said. Ali has always mixed his professional life with social-media hobbies, starting out by editing YouTube videos. But during the COVID-19 lockdowns, when life migrated online across the world, his pupils encouraged him to get serious with TikTok.

Fuelled by boredom and a hot summer indoors, he started pushing out more short sketches, eventually hitting on the "povvo" vein of humour that saw his follower count take off. Now, he is selling his own merchandise, writing a book and thinking about a podcast and other media projects. Could he become the type of person he has been lampooning?

#### Ice cube fascination

Ali is clear: He has no plans to give up teaching and he is not swapping Blackburn for Dubai, the global epicentre of influencer excess.

"I think Dubai has lent itself to everything I'm the opposite of," he said. Equally important, he wants to avoid "bullying" humour and make sure he uses his celebrity to promote more important causes. "It is a form of escapism, but when you have one million people watching you, do something with that," he said. "Don't fall into the trap of just selling stuff."

Ali has never been a fan of internet personalities and does not spend his spare time watching the videos he lampoons. But after a pause for thought, he admits one exception. "I'm fascinated by the ice cube videos," he said of those showing people spending hours to create ice cubes in weird shapes, weirder flavours or even printing patterns on them.

For Ali, the people making these videos are legitimate targets because they are effectively saying, "I can afford to do this, you can't." Or to put it another way: "You've got fish fingers and food in your freezer, and I've got an entire freezer of ice cubes."—AFP

## YOUNG SENEGALESE REVEL IN GRAFFITI SCHOOL

Pencil and rubber in hand Ibrahima Soumare takes his time as he carefully traces the outline of a handful of letters on a white piece of paper. Dissatisfied, he tosses the effort away and starts again on today's exercise: Draw a piece of graffiti bearing the word "Top".

"It's not easy, especially for a newbie such as myself," says Ibrahima with a shy smile. The 26-year-old Senegalese abandoned other studies to register at RBS Akademya, a graffiti school in the Dakar suburb of Guediawaye.

In the capital Dakar, graffiti forms part of the urban backdrop, especially along certain major highways through the capital and out into the suburbs where many youngsters have a craze for hip-hop.

Graffiti is considered an art form in Senegal, the works often bearing messages on issues such as politics, education, health and the environment.

The school, which opened its doors in December 2021, "wants to serve as a meeting place, a place to exchange, to share, one of savoir-faire," says Serigne Mansour Fall. Better known as Madzoo, he is one of a 25-strong founding collective behind the project.

The objective, says Madzoo, "is to bring to the table our heritage... to train young professionals" to be useful to society and enable people to "understand the challenges of their era".

#### Recognition

Long seen by many as "a pastime for the lazy that couldn't earn a man a crust", in Madzoo's words, graffiti is gaining increasing recognition. The founding of the RBS Akademya was a timely stroke of luck for fans seeking formal training.



Students participate to a portrait class at RBS Akademya, in the Golf Sud neighbourhood on the outskirts of Dakar, Senegal.—AFP photos

Art tableaux and graffiti pieces jockey to show off their beauty and colour in the corridors of the two-storey building that houses the school.

One arresting painting of an old, white-bearded man draped in blue fabric draws the visitor's gaze, a small plant made up of shells sprouts from his shaven head.

"He symbolises Pan-Africanism," explains Madzoo, the artist of the work.

The classroom, with a long work table and wall chart, is no less original. Large letters in a mix of pink and green decorate the wall at the entrance. It is difficult to make out what is written.

It is "Style", Soumare says. "I also had trouble reading it," he admits with a smile. Today's course revolves around "concept art" -- how to express or create an idea -- and "colours", says Cherif

Tahir Diop, aka Akonga, a graffiti artist, designer, and now teacher.

#### Theory and practice

"Here, we are not in a conventional school. Everything is done in a light spirit," he says against a soft backdrop of reggae music. Like Ibrahima, Libasse Sarr, 18, and Maurice Diouf, 25, have given up study programmes to join the Akademya's ranks for six months of three classes a week mixing graffiti theory and practice.

They will leave with a certificate -- albeit one not recognised by Senegalese state authorities. To register at the school costs 25,000 CFA francs (40 euros) and then 15,000 francs per month. The money goes towards buying material for lessons and the school's rental charges.

RBS Akademya, very active on social media such as Instagram and Facebook, also serves as an artists' residence. According to Madzoo, some international artists stay there periodically to join exhibitions or share their experiences. Introduced to graffiti art aged just seven by older youths in his district, the bespectacled Madzoo, 36, is today seen as one of Senegal's leading "street art" figures.

#### Political pictures

He describes himself as a Pan-Africanist "on the people's side" who happily airs his political views.

In March 2021, after serious rioting in Dakar following the arrest on rape allegations of opposition leader Ousmane Sonko, one of Madzoo's murals bearing the signature of his collective was widely shared on social media.

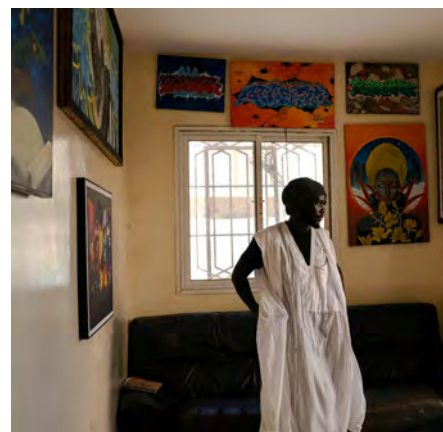
It represented President Macky Sall, his blazer sleeve in French red, white and blue, shooting at point blank range at a youth holding a Senegalese flag.

The drawing was swiftly removed from public view and Madzoo says the authorities have since had him in their sights. Though graffiti does not offer many outlets, Madzoo's students hope one day they will themselves know his success, but they "will have to be patient and strong", cautions Akonga.

Sarr, says he enrolled in the school out of "passion". "I don't ask myself too many questions about the future, but I dream of travelling around the world to express my talent and improve my skills."—AFP



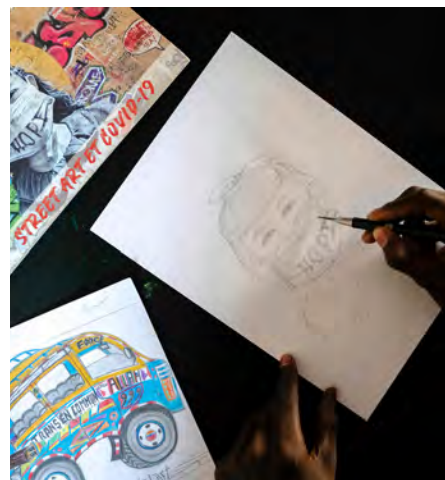
Maurice Diouf participates in a portrait class at RBS Akademya.



Cherif Tahir Diop poses surrounded by paintings in the hallway of RBS Akademya.



The office of the artist Madzoo, member of the collective RBS Crew who created the School RBS Akademya, is seen in the Golf Sud neighbourhood on the outskirts of Dakar.



A student draws during a class at RBS Akademya.



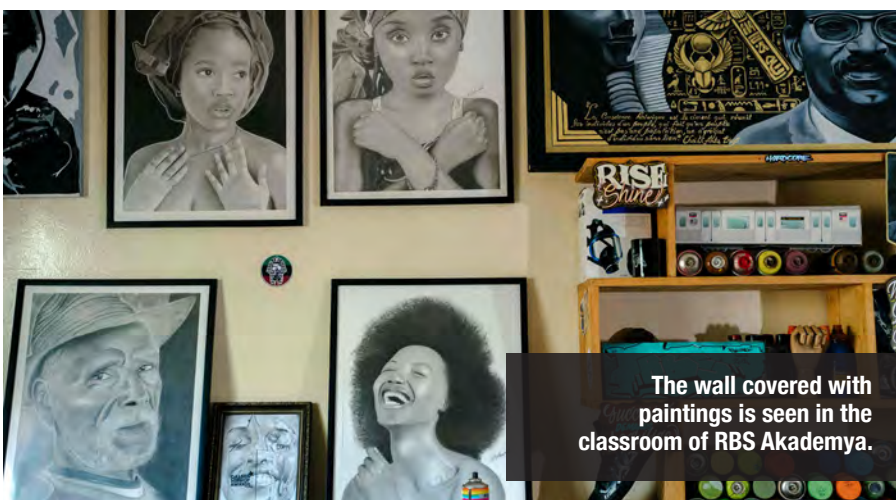
The artist Madzoo, member of the collective RBS Crew who created the School RBS Akademya.



An artist is drawing in the schoolyard at RBS Akademya.



An artist is sitting in the schoolyard at RBS Akademya.



The wall covered with paintings is seen in the classroom of RBS Akademya.



An artist is drawing in the schoolyard at RBS Akademya.



## Lifestyle

# Iraqi Kurdish bodybuilder breaks down gender barriers

As a young girl, Iraqi Kurd Shylan Kamal would help her mother knead bread until one day she realized the work was a way to build up muscles—and she liked it. Now 46 and herself a mother, Kamal sees her passion for bodybuilding as a matter of gender equality in Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region. "Having muscles is good for women too," she told AFP during a session at a gym in the provincial capital Arbil, where she spends four hours training every day. "We can express our beauty through bodybuilding," Kamal said.

The nutritionist and former photographer returned to Kurdistan from Germany three years ago and found a conservative and patriarchal society where her passion for bodybuilding raised some eyebrows. But she refused to let opinions stop her. "I don't care at all what people say, I have my own opinions," she said, adding that she dislikes the traditional beauty norms society imposes on women.

"I hate that people consider women as inferior beings or sex symbols and that they're expected to look after the children and make themselves beautiful for their husbands," she said. "Why can't women be both beautiful and strong at the same time?" Kamal has trained since the age of 22.

On Instagram she can be seen posing in a bikini and flexing her muscles at bodybuilding competitions across

Europe, sometimes also waving the flag of Iraqi Kurdistan. After a

warm-up, she alternates between weight machines, lifting dumbbells and doing pushups, her hair cascading over powerful shoulders. In recent months, she has competed in three events across Britain and Germany, each time placing third. The most recent was mid-April's FIBO Global Fitness show, in Cologne. "People here are not used to seeing women in bathing suits showing off their muscles," Kamal said, regretting the prejudice in her homeland—and also coming from people abroad who are surprised to learn she is Iraqi.

## 'Full of energy'

Originally from Sulaimaniyah, Iraqi Kurdistan's second city, Kamal emigrated to Germany with her uncle when she was 14. Two years later she married. Her three children are now aged in

their 20s. While living in Germany, she went to university and became a photographer, working at a studio in Duesseldorf. Kamal said she has received only support from her family in her endeavors.

"Since I was a kid I've been full of energy, and I need an outlet for that energy," she said. "When I was helping my mum knead the dough to make bread I could feel my muscles developing—and that made me happy." Acceptance of women's sports is progressing slowly in Iraqi society. Recent years have seen a rise in women playing football, boxing, kickboxing and weightlifting.

The relative stability in Kurdistan—largely spared the ravages of conflict afflicting other parts of Iraq since the 2003 US-led invasion—has allowed the region to develop sporting infrastructure. Ranjbar Ali trains in the same gym as Kamal and said he is "happy" to see "women like Shylan breaking down



Iraqi Kurd Shylan Kamal trains at a gym in Arbil, the capital of the autonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq. — AFP photos



Iraqi Kurd Shylan Kamal trains at a gym in Arbil, the capital of the autonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq.



Iraqi Kurd Shylan Kamal trains at a gym in Arbil, the capital of the autonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq.

barriers and preconceived ideas to reach world-class level".

Ali, muscles bulging from his black singlet, offered his support to Kamal's efforts to achieve gender equality in bodybuilding. "Some people think it shameful for women to show off their bodies and their muscles. But why does that not also apply to men?" the 45-year-old said. For Kamal, her advice to aspiring women bodybuilders, from Kurdistan and beyond, is



Iraqi Kurd Shylan Kamal poses for a picture at a gym in Arbil, the capital of the autonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq.



Iraqi Kurd Shylan Kamal trains at a gym in Arbil, the capital of the autonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq.

simple—hit the gym and practice. "It's a physically demanding discipline that needs concentration and a healthy diet," she said, adding the routine will help physical and mental health. "I'm convinced that going to the gym is more beneficial than going to the beauty salon." — AFP

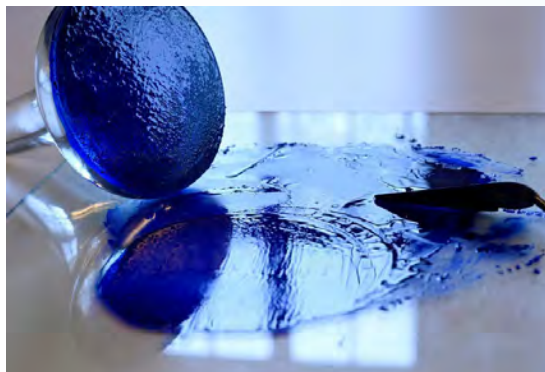
## Dutch windmill offers last link to paint made in Vermeer's day

Every morning for the last 42 years, Piet Kempenaar has cast a careful eye over the Dutch sky before releasing a brake and "steering" the giant blades of his centuries-old mill into the wind. To match the force, he adjusts the sails of De Kat (The Cat), the world's last remaining mill using wind power to crush rocks into fine dust and make paint pigment—just as it was done almost 400 years ago. Driven by a system of wooden gears, ropes and pulleys, two massive grinding stones together weighing 10 tons churn and crush rocks for hours on end, until they become colorful pigments with enticing names like lapis lazuli, terre verte, umber and burnt sienna.

Now retired and leaving most of the paint-making business to his son Robert, Kempenaar still cuts the quintessential figure of a seasoned Dutch "colourman" in a cap, blue workman's jacket streaked with pigment dust, and a pipe angled in the corner of his mouth. Behind him, De Kat, standing on the spot where rocks were first ground into pigment around 1646, creaks and groans as the four giant blades power the grinding stones in a never-ending circle.

The original mill burned down in 1782 before being rebuilt. De Kat has been reconstructed and repurposed over the centuries for a variety of roles including a chalk storage space at one stage, before resuming its rock-crushing duties in 1960.

Kempenaar has leased De Kat from the local milling association since 1981 for his pigment-making business, which attracts thousands of buyers every year. "I am not interested in painting, but I am obsessed with pigments," the 73-year-old Kempenaar told AFP at the famous



At Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum, art lecturer Peter Pelkmans prepares a paste of lapis lazuli and linseed oil to make ultramarine blue paint. — AFP photos

mill in the picturesque but tourist-heavy Zaanse Schans north of Amsterdam.

## 'King of the blue'

In his rugged hands, Kempenaar holds a block of a famous blue pigment favoured by a Dutch master. "Here we have the king of the blue. It's a half-diamond from Chile or Afghanistan. You're talking about lapis lazuli, used by Johannes Vermeer," he said. "Vermeer had the money—he could pay for it. Back then, this was literally worth its weight in gold".

Dozens of pigments made at De Kat are neatly stacked on shelves—terre verte or "green earth" from Verona, dark umber from Cyprus and carmine red, made from grinding up female cochineal insects, from the Canary Islands. "We grind pigment the old



Piet Kempenaar

way here. That's why people from all over the world come to buy from us. It's unique," Kempenaar said. "And it hasn't changed in almost 400 years."

Art experts say many of the pigments used by Dutch masters like Vermeer and Rembrandt almost certainly came from "dye mills" dotted around the Dutch landscape at the time. This includes the precious lapis lazuli which produced the ultramarine blue paint for the apron of Vermeer's famous work The Milkmaid. Today, De Kat is the last link to the original way of paint-making before the process was industrialized around 1850, experts say.

## 'Step back in time'

At Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum, some 20 kilometers (12.5 miles) to the south of the Zaanse Schans, art lecturer Peter Pelkmans has been preparing a paste of lapis lazuli and linseed oil to make ultramarine blue paint. At the museum's Teekenschool (Drawing School) workshop, amateurs and artists



Piet Kempenaar

alike can learn how to prepare the traditional way using De Kat's pigment.

"We give people a chance to take a step back in time," Pelkmans told AFP before mixing another color, this time a burnt sienna, much loved by Rembrandt. Rembrandt was known to grind most of his own pigment in a giant iron mortar in his studio and used a cheaper alternative called "smalt" as a substitute for the precious and more expensive lapis lazuli.

Vermeer's ultramarine blue pigment was however made from lapis lazuli, almost certainly ground in a windmill, Pelkmans said. He explained just how precious the prized color was. "Often the blue was left as the last part of a commissioned painting. The artist would only add it once he had been paid in full," Pelkmans laughed. — AFP



News in Brief

Zuckerberg wins jiu-jitsu gold

SAN FRANCISCO: Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg took part in his first jiu-jitsu martial arts tournament on Saturday and went home with silver and gold medals, he posted on social media. The competition was held at Woodside High School in California near the Silicon Valley headquarters of Meta, Zuckerberg's company that owns Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. "Competed in my first jiu-jitsu tournament and won some medals for the Guerrilla Jiu-Jitsu team," Zuckerberg wrote on Facebook and Instagram. The 38-year-old tech billionaire told an interviewer last year that he began studying martial arts during the coronavirus pandemic. He told podcaster Joe Rogan that the sport's "primal" nature helped him boost his energy level and tackle challenges at work. Zuckerberg trains with coach Dave Camarillo, who has taught several UFC mixed martial arts (MMA) champions. Unlike MMA, Brazilian-style jiu-jitsu emphasizes fighting opponents through holds and control instead of kicks or striking. —AFP

Nantes sack coach Kombouare

NANTES: Relegation-threatened Nantes sacked coach Antoine Kombouare on Tuesday with just four matches remaining of the Ligue 1 campaign. The club have tasked the coach of the under-19 team, Pierre Aristouy, with the job of retaining their place among the French elite. Kombouare, 59, leaves with the Canaries in the relegation places, third from bottom of the table after a catastrophic week of results. A 5-1 thrashing by Toulouse in the French Cup final - a trophy they lifted under Kombouare in 2022 - was followed by 2-0 defeats by fellow relegation rivals Brest and Strasbourg. It left Nantes two points adrift of Auxerre and three shy of both Brest and Strasbourg. Nantes president Waldemar Kita, who has never been shy of firing coaches, decided enough was enough and called on former Nantes forward Aristouy. He has achieved some good results with the Under-19 side since he returned to the club in 2017. —AFP

Struggling Archer out of IPL

NEW DELHI: England fast bowler Jofra Archer was ruled out of the ongoing Indian Premier League on Tuesday in a fresh injury blow ahead of the Ashes. His franchise the Mumbai Indians said the 28-year-old will be replaced by England team-mate Chris Jordan. Archer only returned to international cricket in January after being sidelined for more than a year with elbow and back injuries. But his right elbow has continued to trouble him and the latest setback makes him a doubt for the Ashes this summer and the 50-over World Cup later this year. Archer, who was bought by Mumbai for \$1.06 million in last year's auction despite not being available for the whole season, played five of Mumbai's 10 matches so far this season. He looked off-color when he did play, taking just two wickets, and reportedly travelled to Belgium to visit a specialist during a short IPL break. The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said that Archer would return home "with immediate effect". —AFP

Matthews wins Giro 3rd stage

MELFI: Australian Michael Matthews prevailed in a sprint finish to Monday's third stage of the Giro d'Italia with Remco Evenepoel retaining the leader's pink jersey. Belgium's Evenepoel, winner of the opening time-trial, heads the general classification by 32 seconds from Joao Almeida, with arch rival Primoz Roglic 44sec adrift. This was Matthews' 10th success on one of cycling's big three tours but his first in Italy since 2015. "I'm lost for words, these last three months have been difficult. So to win a stage is amazing, it's more than I could have ever imagined," said the 32-year-old. He paid tribute to the effort his Jayco-Alula team put in to deliver him the win in a dashing end to the 216km ride in wet conditions from Vasto to Melfi. Dane Mads Pedersen crossed in second with another Aussie, Kadem Groves, third. Tuesday's fourth stage from Venosa features three ascents of over 1,000m altitude. —AFP

Sunderland secure play-offs

LONDON: Sunderland secured their place in English football's Championship play-offs with a 3-0 win away to Preston on Monday but only after Millwall suffered an extraordinary loss at home to Blackburn Rovers. The final day of the regular second-tier season kicked off with Millwall knowing a win would guarantee their place in the play-offs that decide the last available spot on offer in next term's lucrative Premier League. Burnley, the champions, and second-placed Sheffield United were already assured of automatic promotion. But the identity of the clubs finishing fifth and sixth—the teams that would join third-placed Luton and fourth-placed Middlesbrough in the play-offs—had still to be decided. All seemed set fair for south London club Millwall when they led 3-1 at the interval following two goals from Duncan Watmore and one from Oliver Burke. But with Joe Rankin-Costello having reduced the deficit, Ben Brereton Diaz's second-half double inspired a Rovers revival as they won 4-3 at the New Den. —AFP

# Russell and Rinku star as Kolkata win IPL thriller

## Kolkata Knight Riders in the hunt for play-offs

KOLKATA: Andre Russell's blazing 42 and a finishing act by Rinku Singh kept Kolkata Knight Riders in the hunt for the IPL play-offs with a tense final-ball win over Punjab Kings on Monday. Kolkata looked in trouble at 124-4 while chasing 180 for victory when Russell and Rinku, who hit an unbeaten 21 off 10 balls, put on a destructive partnership of 54 to win by five wickets at their home Eden Gardens.

Russell smashed three sixes off England left-arm quick Sam Curran in the 19th over but got run out on the penultimate delivery with Kolkata needing two off the final ball. The left-handed Rinku, who smashed five sixes on the final five balls in a match-winning knock for Kolkata last month to become an IPL sensation, hit the winning boundary off Arshdeep Singh.

"I didn't think about the last ball. Even when I hit those five sixes, I hadn't thought much," said an elated Rinku. "I was playing on the merit of the ball. I had the belief in me that I could finish the game." Man of the match Russell said, "When I have Rinku at the other end I am not worried. I have confidence in him. I get goosebumps when I see what he is doing now. I have company at the backend." Kolkata jumped from eight to five in the 10-team table led by holders Gujarat Titans as teams jostle for the final four spots to make the play-offs.

Skipper Nitish Rana set up the chase with his 51 after England's Jason Roy, who came in as an impact player, gave the home team a solid start with his 38 off 24 balls but a few wickets set Kolkata back. But the Russell-Rinku combination tore into the opposition attack as Kolkata hammered 53 runs in the final four overs to pocket their fifth win in 11 matches. Spinner Varun Chakravarthy set up victory with bowling figures of 3-26 including the key wicket of Liam Livingstone, lbw for 15, as Punjab finished on 179-7.

## Little goes a long way as Ireland bid for World Cup spot

LONDON: Ireland captain Andrew Balbirnie believes the return of Josh Little from the Indian Premier League for a series against Bangladesh that could see his side qualify for the World Cup is proof of how much international cricket still matters to the left-arm seamer. If Ireland gain a 3-0 sweep in a one-day international campaign that starts on Tuesday at English county Essex's headquarters in Chelmsford, east of London, they could leapfrog South Africa in eighth in the World Cup Super League (WCSL) standings and secure automatic qualification for the 50-over showpiece event in India later this year.

Little, 23, has been a cornerstone of the table-topping Gujarat Titans in the current IPL, tak-

## ATP hails 'new era' for Chinese tennis

SHANGHAI: ATP executives hailed a "new era" for Chinese tennis as they relaunched the lucrative Shanghai Masters on Monday after three consecutive years of Covid cancellations. The flagship event of the men's game in the Asia-Pacific region was among many international sporting fixtures stopped by Beijing's strict anti-virus measures over the past few years.

International sports bodies have sought to bring back such events since those restrictions were lifted in December. "We are very confident this is the moment we will start a new journey... for tennis in China," ATP CEO Massimo Calvelli said at a launch ceremony. Elite women's tennis is also returning to China after the WTA abandoned in March a boycott it had imposed over concerns for the safety of player Peng Shuai.

Peng, a former doubles world number one, has not been seen outside China since 2021, when she made - and then withdrew - accusations of sexual assault against a high-ranking official. The WTA had said it would not return to China without a formal investigation into the allegations and an opportunity to meet privately with Peng. Calvelli, when asked why the men's

## Kuwait Ice Hockey Team book semis

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Ice Hockey Team have qualified for the semifinals of the first Arab Cup Tournament after defeating Bahrain's team 6-4. The Blues were involved in a hard and strong game on Monday - and gained six points to top the first group. Meanwhile, Tunisian team revived their chances to reach the semifinals - defeating Algeria by the same score. Competition for second place is between Bahrain and Tunis. In the second group, Oman and Lebanon reached the semifinals. Oman defeated Saudi Arabia 10-3 and Lebanon defeated Egypt 7-0.



KOLKATA: Kolkata Knight Riders' Rinku Singh (2nd left) celebrates with Varun Chakravarthy (2nd right) after winning the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Kolkata Knight Riders and Punjab Kings on May 8, 2023. —AFP

Skipper Shikhar Dhawan's 57 and late cameo boosted Punjab's total with 36 runs from the last two overs, but the effort was not enough. Fast bowler Harshit Rana provided the early breakthroughs including Sri Lanka's Bhanuka Rajapaksa for a duck. Chakravarthy and Suyash, who got

ing six wickets in the lucrative Twenty20 franchise tournament, including a player-of-the-match 2-25 against the Kolkata Knight Riders at Eden Gardens last week. But, amid talk of the threat posed to international cricket by the expansion of franchise tournament around the world, Little has rejoined the Ireland set-up for the first time since the tour of Zimbabwe in January. "It's a huge boost," Balbirnie told a press conference on Monday. "He has become a world-class operator, and we're very grateful to have him back into the squad for these games."

"He's obviously had a really good time of it at the IPL... Hopefully, from our point of view, he can have a good week performance-wise and have an impact for us. He added: "There's no angst about him not playing for us in certain games. We're just delighted with the progress he's made." The first spots in the 10-team World Cup go to the top eight finishers of the WCSL, a competition that has run over the last three years. Reigning champions England, India, New Zealand, Australia, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan have already assured their places.

The bottom five Super League teams travel to the

game had not joined the boycott, said the ATP had made "different considerations". "For me the important part is the WTA is coming back, which is the right thing for the sport," he told journalists before the ceremony for the Shanghai Masters.

Calvelli pointed to the success of Chinese players as another reason it was a "special time to come back". Wu Yibing beat US player John Isner in the Dallas Open in February to become the first Chinese player to lift an ATP tour trophy. Zhang Zhizhen then became the first Chinese player to reach the quarter-finals of an ATP Masters 1000 event when he beat American Taylor Fritz in the Madrid Open last week. October's Shanghai Masters will double its duration and the prize-money pool will exceed \$10 million, making it the richest sports event in Asia, the ATP said Monday.

The event is the last of four ATP Tour events in China scheduled this year. Former world number one Daniil Medvedev will headline the Zhuhai Championships on September 20-26, which will run concurrently with another tournament in Chengdu. The China Open will then begin in Beijing in late September, leading into the Shanghai Masters. Several other major international sports events will be held in China in 2023. Badminton's Sudirman Cup begins on Sunday, and the Asian Games kick off in Hangzhou in September. Major snooker and golf tournaments are also planned. —AFP

World Cup qualifier in Zimbabwe from June 18 that will decide the final two entrants into the main event. Ireland, beaten 2-0 away to Bangladesh in an ODI series in Sylhet in March, have enjoyed their greatest days in the format, with spectacular World Cup wins over Pakistan (2007) and England (2011). But they have struggled for series wins against leading nations. "Consistency is what we crave as a team, but at the same time we know we are playing against world-class players and it's difficult to beat these teams in a series," Balbirnie said.

Balbirnie admitted it was "disappointing" to be playing this week's matches in Chelmsford rather than at home, with Irish pitches not deemed to be up to ODI standard at this early stage in the season. The expense of erecting temporary facilities required for staging internationals in Ireland was another reason for moving the fixtures. Fans from the Bangladeshi expatriate communities in London are set to outnumber Ireland supporters at Chelmsford Balbirnie was phlegmatic. "I think no matter where we play in the world, there'll probably be more Bangladeshi people there than Irish," he said. —AFP

## Kuwait host Bowling Committee meeting

KUWAIT: Kuwait will host the International Bowling Federation Executive Committee on Wednesday. Representatives from all continents will discuss Kuwait preparations for hosting the upcoming world championship, which will be held from October 3rd to October 18th. Members of the executive committee will review the preparations. They will also be briefed on the security measures and transportation to make sure that they meet the technical and administrative specifications. Kuwait Bowling Federation Board under the chairmanship of Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah succeeded in removing all obstacles in cooperation with Public Authority for Sport and is ready for this major event.



Sheikh Talal Al-Sabah





## Sports

# Lakers leave NBA champions on the brink of elimination

## Unheralded Walker sparks Lakers rally as Warriors wobble

**MIAMI:** Unheralded bench player Lonnie Walker led a fourth-quarter rally as the Los Angeles Lakers defeated the Golden State Warriors to leave the NBA champions on the brink of elimination from the play-offs on Monday. The 24-year-old Walker erupted for 15 fourth-quarter points as the Lakers completed a dramatic 104-101 victory to put them one win away from clinching the best-of-seven Western Conference second-round series.

Walker, who has struggled to establish himself since joining the Lakers on a one-year contract last year after battling a series of injuries, was mobbed by LeBron James and other Lakers teammates after the victory. James, who scored 27 points in the victory, said he had urged Walker before the game to be ready to help out. "I've been telling him 'Lonnie you stay ready. We're going to need you at some point'," James said.

"For him to be as young as he is, to have that professionalism, to come out and stay ready when his number was called - we don't win this game without Lonnie Walker tonight, that's for sure." Walker said he had been primed to make a contribution. "It means the world to me, truly," Walker said. "By the grace of god I was given an opportunity to play. Night-in, night-out I've been going to the gym, everyone's been telling me to stay ready - Bron, coach, all of them. So when the call came I was locked in the entire time."

The Lakers will take a 3-1 series lead to San Francisco for game five on Wednesday with the Warriors needing to win to keep the series alive. For long periods of Monday's game it looked as if the champions were poised to square the series. Stephen Curry finished with 31 points, 10 rebounds and 14 assists in a dazzling playmaking performance that helped Golden State take an 84-77 lead into the fourth quarter. But the introduction of Walker changed the game,

with the unlikely hero scoring 15 points as the Lakers outscored their opponents 27-17 in the final frame to clinch victory.

### 'A resilient bunch'

"We're just a resilient bunch," James said. "They hit us with haymaker after haymaker after haymaker, trying to get us to fall. 'We just stayed in the fight. It's a 48-minute game, a 12-round boxing match. And we stayed in it for 12 rounds and were able to pull through.'"

Warriors coach Steve Kerr paid tribute to Walker's fourth-quarter performance. "I don't know whether he scored all their points in the fourth quarter but it felt like it," Kerr said. "He made a huge impact. 'A lot of times that's what the playoffs are about. A close game and somebody comes in who you don't expect to make an impact. The fourth was about Walker.'" In Monday's other playoff game, Jimmy Butler scored 27 points as the Miami Heat outmuscled the New York Knicks to take a commanding 3-1 lead in their Eastern Conference playoff series.

Butler was one of five Miami players to finish in double digits as the Heat edged to a 109-101 victory that leaves the eighth seeds just one win away from a place in the Eastern Conference finals. It was another ruthlessly clinical performance from Miami, who looked hungrier and sharper throughout at both ends of the court. Miami hauled down 13 offensive rebounds to New York's eight and out-hustled New York defensively with 31 defensive rebounds to the Knicks' 27.

Miami coach Erik Spoelstra said his team was now reaping dividends from their resilience forged in the regular season, when they were forced to battle through the play-in tournament to reach the playoffs. "We found the value in the grind of the regular season, the grind and the struggle," Spoelstra said. "Without



**LOS ANGELES:** Lonnie Walker IV #4 of the Los Angeles Lakers drives to the basket during Game Four of the Western Conference Semi-Finals of the 2023 NBA Playoffs against the Golden State Warriors on May 8, 2023 at Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles, California.—AFP

that struggle - where we had to find different solutions to win, with different guys stepping up for these kind of moments - if we didn't do that in the regular season you have zero chance to be able to do that in the playoffs."

Butler finished with 27 points, 10 assists and six rebounds while Bam Adebayo produced another tower-

ing defensive display with 23 points and 13 rebounds. Jalen Brunson led New York's scorers with 32 points, while RJ Barrett added 24 and Julius Randle 20. The Knicks now must win all three of their remaining games to stay alive in the playoffs, while Miami can book their place in the conference finals with a win in game five in New York on Wednesday. —AFP

## Champions League derby days decisive for Milan and Inter

**MILAN:** Milan is gearing up for its biggest local derby in a generation as two of Europe's grand old clubs face off on Wednesday in a blockbuster Champions League semi-final. Two clashes full of color, noise and drama await in one of the continent's football capitals, AC Milan and Inter Milan battling at the San Siro for the chance to take the Italian city's European trophy tally to 22. Milan and Inter are no longer true giants like the other semi-final's contenders Real Madrid and Manchester City but Wednesday's match will be unbeatable for atmosphere and played in one of football's most evocative arenas.

"The atmosphere at the stadium is incredible... Everyone here is a fan, men and women alike. The pressure is there all the time," said AC Milan defender Pierre Kalulu in an interview with AFP. "When you first arrive here you don't feel all that involved, but after a while you begin to feel that passion. You can feel that it's a match which can change your season."

"You kind of go back to being a kid scoring a goal in the playground. You put all that in the Champions League and I can't imagine what these matches will be like." Both team's seasons hinge of the result of the all-Italian tie, with qualification for next year's competition far from certain thanks to disappointing league campaigns which left last season's main Serie A title challengers miles behind newly-crowned champions Napoli.

## Sorry Sampdoria relegated to Italy Serie B after loss

**NAPLES:** Sampdoria slid into Italy's Serie B on Monday as they lost 2-0 away to Udinese while Empoli held their nerve to beat Salernitana 2-1 to pull away from the relegation zone. Sampdoria are last in Serie A on just 17 points, 13 from safety with four games left. Roberto Pereyra put the hosts ahead after nine minutes running onto a pass by Festy Ebosele and clipping the ball over the diving Nicola Ravaglia. Adam Masina scored

Inter, though, come into the match in blistering form and with a previously misfiring attack suddenly banging in the goals left and right.

Simone Inzaghi's side have won five on the bounce, scoring 14 times in that run. Of those goals 10 have been scored by the forwards, with Romelu Lukaku in particular suddenly finding some form towards the end of what has been a largely dismal return on loan from Chelsea. Since the start of April Lukaku has scored five times and set up four more in all competitions, and his well-taken goal in Saturday's 2-0 win at Roma was the latest sign the Belgium striker might be getting back to his best.

### Electricity

Lukaku wants to stay at Inter but there is little chance that his loan will be extended beyond the end of a season which could end with them crowned European champions or not even in the competition. "The most important thing is Inter. All I can focus on is helping the team," said Lukaku. Strike partner Lautaro Martinez has netted six times in as many appearances and set up three after breaking a worrying eight-match scoring drought and even Edin Dzeko is back in the goals after not scoring since January. Milan meanwhile are sweating on the fitness of Rafael Leao, who in recent weeks has shown just how important he is to Stefano Pioli's attack but picked up a thigh injury in the weekend's win over Lazio.

Of the eight matches this season which Leao has either missed through injury or not started, Milan have won only one. The Portugal winger has started every single one of Milan's 10 continental matches and was crucial to their getting past newly-crowned Italian champions Napoli in the last eight. Leao played the crucial pass for both Milan's goals in the tie and his burst downfield for

the second with a header from the penalty spot after 34 minutes.

Empoli meanwhile pulled 11 points clear of danger and leapfrogged the team they beat, Salernitana. Nicolò Cambiaghi put them ahead with a diving header after 37 minutes. Francesco Caputo added a second in the 63rd minute. Finding himself alone in front of goal following a corner, he stepped round goalie Guillermo Ochoa and smacked the ball into the empty net. Substitute Krzysztof Piątek pounced on a rebound in the 86th minute to give the visitors hope.

But the nearest either team came to scoring in the dying minutes was a ferocious strike by Empoli's Marco Pjaca, disallowed after a video review because team-mate Razvan Marin was offside. Sampdoria meanwhile dropped out of Serie A after



**CARNAGO:** AC Milan's Italian coach Stefano Pioli watches his players during a training session at The Milanello Sports Centre on May 9, 2023, on the eve of the UEFA Champions League first leg semi-final football match between AC Milan and Inter Milan. —AFP

Olivier Giroud's decisive tap-in in Naples exemplified the difference he brings to the team when he's in the mood.

Without him Milan's chances against an in-form Inter will diminish as the left flank, with Theo Hernandez, is such an important part of the way the team attack. "We need to enjoy everything that will surround us up until the minute before kick-off, then we need to unload everything we have," said Pioli at the weekend. "Inter are in great form right now, and they're a great team. I don't think we're favorites but it doesn't matter, we're in good shape. "We're in a Champions League semi-final, for almost all of us it's the first time. We need to feel the electricity, the excitement of the occasion." —AFP

11 years following a disastrous season, on and off the field. Things could grow worse for the Genoese club as they face possible further relegations because of financial problems. The club has struggled to pay its bills and only avoided a points deduction by convincing the players to give up December's salaries.

Massimo Ferrero, who had to resign he presidency in December 2021 after being arrested in a case of fraudulent bankruptcy but remained the club owner, might be ready to sell, Italian media have reported. The 71-year-old film producer has owned Sampdoria since 2014. In February, a box with a pig's head was left at the club's headquarters with a threatening message for Ferrero and vice-chairman Antonio Romei. Sampdoria's rival and co-tenant at the Luigi Ferraris Stadium, Genoa secured promotion back to the Italian top flight on Saturday. —AFP

## Everton, Forest crawl out of EPL relegation zone

**LONDON:** Everton moved out of the Premier League (EPL) relegation zone with a ruthless 5-1 win at Brighton on Monday, while Leicester's hopes of survival are hanging by a thread after a 5-3 defeat at Fulham. Nottingham Forest also pulled themselves clear of the bottom three as they beat fellow strugglers Southampton 4-3. Brighton are in the hunt to qualify for Europe for the first time in the club's history, but a heavy schedule appeared to have taken its toll on Roberto De Zerbi's men as they were torn apart by an Everton side that had not won away since October. The Toffees had the dream start as Abdoulaye Doucoure opened the scoring after just 34 seconds.

Doucoure's brilliant volley from Dwight McNeil's cross doubled Everton's lead before Brighton goalkeeper Jason Steele deflected McNeil's cross into his own net. De Zerbi responded by making four half-time substitutions and Brighton peppered the Everton goal but were caught out on the counter-attack when McNeil showed great poise to round Steele to make it 4-0.

Alexis Mac Allister pulled a goal back after Kaoru Mitoma's initial effort came off the post. But McNeil had the final say as he rounded off a dazzling performance by smashing into the top corner in stoppage time. A first win in eight games lifts Sean Dyche's men two points clear of the drop zone. "It's a quality of performance that we want to build," Dyche said. "It shows it is in there - it's the consistency I've been searching for." Brighton remain in seventh, two points behind Tottenham with two games in hand, but their outside shot at a top-four finish appears gone.

### Leicester's mental struggles

Leicester boss Dean Smith admitted his players are struggling with the pressures of a relegation battle after a disastrous defensive display at Craven Cottage. The Foxes, who won the Premier League in stunning fashion in 2016 and lifted the FA Cup two years ago, are staring relegation in the face. Victories for Everton and Forest pushed Leicester into the relegation zone and they also face a tough run-in with Champions League-chasing Liverpool and Newcastle to come before ending the season at home to West Ham. Only Leeds and Bournemouth have conceded more goals than Leicester in the Premier League and defensive deficiencies were again their undoing at Craven Cottage. —AFP

# Classifieds

### Hospitals & Clinics

#### Hospitals

|                           |            |
|---------------------------|------------|
| Sabah Hospital            | 24812000   |
| Amiri Hospital            | 22450005   |
| Maternity Hospital        | 24843100   |
| Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital | 25312700   |
| Chest Hospital            | 24849400   |
| Farwaniya Hospital        | 24892010   |
| Adan Hospital             | 23940620   |
| Ibn Sina Hospital         | 24840300   |
| Al-Razi Hospital          | 24846000   |
| Physiotherapy Hospital    | 24874330/9 |

#### Clinics

|               |          |
|---------------|----------|
| Kaizen center | 25716707 |
|---------------|----------|

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

### Change of Name

**I, GURSEWAK**, holder of Indian Passport No. V1964367, having permanent address Moga, Punjab, India-142001, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) **GURSEWAK** and (surname) **SINGH**. **(#3530) 10/05/2023**

**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 Mohalla Bohra Colony, Galiyakot, Distt Dungepur, Rajasthan-India and presently residing in Kuwait hereby declare my given name is **SHABBIR HUSAIN** and surname is **BADRI**. **(#3526) 8/5/2023**

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

### 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**



## Kuwait Club crowned champions

Amir congratulates winners; Kuwait Club overpower Kazma 3-0



KUWAIT: Kuwait Sports Club were crowned champions of His Highness the Amir Cup for the 16th time in history after defeating holders Kazma 3-0 in the final of the 2022-2023 season.

By Chidi Emmanuel

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Sports Club were crowned champions of His Highness the Amir Cup for the 16th time in history after defeating holders Kazma 3-0 in the final of the 2022-2023 season. The match was held on Tuesday at Jaber Al-Ahmad International

Stadium. With the match being goalless until fulltime, Kuwait scored three goals in extra time. Kazma and Kuwait have met five times since October 2022. Two matches ended in a draw while Kuwait won thrice. Kazma scored four goals in these

five head-to-head matches in total, while Kuwait scored nine. The Amir Cup is a professional football cup in Kuwait for men. There are overall 16 teams that compete for the title every year between January and May. The teams that hold the most titles are Qadsiya, Arabi and Kuwait. Amir Cup is a Kuwaiti football competition creat-

ed in 1962. It is the last football competition held in the Kuwaiti football season. It is considered the most valuable cup. Al Arabi SC is the only team to go to the final 11 consecutive times since 1962 up to 1972 - holding the record. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent congratulatory message to the winners.

## Messi the 'greatest' leaves PSG on low note

**PARIS:** Lionel Messi's uninspiring two-year stint at Paris Saint-Germain is set to come to an acrimonious end with a move to join long-time rival Cristiano Ronaldo in Saudi Arabia, just months after his crowning glory at the 2022 World Cup. For his legions of admirers, the debate about Messi's right to be regarded as the greatest footballer in history was officially put to bed when he led Argentina to the title in Qatar in December. But his career at the highest level in Europe appears to have finished on a low note. Messi was suspended by PSG last week for making an unauthorized trip to Saudi Arabia.

He has scored 31 goals in 71 appearances for the French champions and is likely to win a second consecutive Ligue 1 title later this month, but failed in his mission to help PSG to a maiden Champions League triumph, suffering back-to-back last-16 defeats. Barcelona had been hopeful of bringing the 35-year-old back to the Camp Nou, where he won 10 La Liga titles and four Champions League crowns before a tearful departure in 2021.

Instead though, Saudi Arabia, regularly accused of sportswashing, or hosting the biggest names in sport to deflect attention from its human rights record, will be able to boast having arguably the two greatest players of the modern era in their unheralded domestic league. Ronaldo is playing for Al Nassr, while a source close to the negotiations who told AFP that Messi's move to Saudi Arabia was a "done deal", stopped short of saying which club the Argentine will join.

The absence of a World Cup winners' medal had long been Exhibit A in the argument about why Messi did not rank above Pele and Diego Maradona in football's pantheon. But with Argentina's victory over France in last year's jaw-dropping World Cup final in Doha, the case was surely closed. In a glittering career that has spanned three decades, Messi has won 37 club trophies, seven Ballon d'Or awards and six European Golden Boots.

There has been a Copa America title, an Olympic gold medal and a list of scoring and statistical records that may never be beaten. In his final World Cup appearance, Messi scored twice as Argentina battled to a 3-3 draw in extra time before prevailing on penalties. Not even Kylian Mbappe's hat-trick for France could upset Messi's appointment with destiny on a night that seemed pre-ordained. Whether Messi really is the 'greatest ever' is a question, of course, that is as futile as the answer is subjective.

What is undeniable though is that by sheer volume and range of silverware, Messi has won more than the other serious rivals to his "GOAT" status: Pele and Maradona. While Pele's three World Cup triumphs remain unrivalled, the Brazilian icon's club career pales in comparison to Messi's.

In his peak years with Barcelona, the Argentinean regularly scaled the pinnacle of European club football in the Champions League — arguably a technically superior arena than international football. Maradona meanwhile won only one World Cup, and never lifted a European Cup during a club career in Europe remembered mostly for spells with Barcelona and Napoli. The counter-argument of course is that Pele and Maradona played in an era where players were offered far less protection than the likes of Messi and Ronaldo. — AFP



KUWAIT: CAMS World diving tourney inaugurated in Kuwait. — KUNA photos

## CAMS World diving tourney kicks off

**KUWAIT:** CAMS Freediving World Pool Championship was inaugurated in Kuwait Monday with the participation of 350 male and female athletes from 44 countries. Representative of Minister of Information and Culture, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutatri, Director General of Public Authority for Sport Yusuf Al-Baydan announced inaugurating the event at Abdullah Al-Dhakhil Complex that will continue until May 13.

The inauguration ceremony was held in the presence of President of Kuwait Olympic Committee Sheikh Fahad Al-Nasser Al-Sabah and some sports dignitaries across the globe. Kuwait's hosting of this tournament is a gate to host several world sports events, Sheikh Fahad told KUNA in a statement. He expressed pride to Kuwaitis for organizing one of the biggest championships in the world, stressing that the Kuwaiti team is able to obtain some medals.

He welcomed heads and members of international federations. Meanwhile, head of the Kuwaiti Diving and Rescue Club Talal Al-Sarhan said organizing this tournament was fruits of the sports strategy set by the minister. He said Kuwait managed to organize this tourney for the first time in the Middle East after making great efforts by the government and the club. The Kuwaiti male and female team includes Hassan Al-Sharrah, Hamad Al-Kandari, Abdullah Al-Hammad, Mai Al-Bader, Zeinab Al-Wazzan, Maryam Al-Qattan and others. — KUNA



Director General of Public Authority for Sport Yusuf Al-Baydan



Head of the Kuwaiti Diving and Rescue Club Talal Al-Sarhan



RIYADH: This handout picture provided by the Saudi Tourism Authority shows Argentina's forward Lionel Messi, his wife Antonela Rocuzzo and their children during their visit in Riyadh. — AFP