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## Constitutional court to hear petition against scrapping 2022 Assembly

Candidate says even Dracula couldn't think of charging expats for blood

### Zain Group Q1 2023 net profit soars 15% to reach \$177 million

KUWAIT: Zain Group, a leading provider of innovative technologies and digital lifestyle communications operating in seven markets across the Middle East and Africa, announces its consolidated financial results for the first quarter (Q1) ended March 31, 2023. Over the past 12 months, Zain added 2.2 million active customers, a 4 percent increase to serve 53 million customers.

Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi commented, "Our track record of sustainable growth sees Zain in solid financial position today, ideally positioned to invest further and exploit the next phase of growth in the telecom sector and beyond. The truly impressive Q1 2023 results are testament to the skillful execution of the company's '4Sight' strategy, focusing on innovative programs to improve the efficiency and profitability of the operations as well as diversifying income sources from new lucrative business verticals in the digital and enterprise space." (See Page 9)



Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The constitutional court set next Wednesday to look into a petition challenging its March 19 ruling annulling the 2022 elections and scrapping the National Assembly. The petition was signed by six members of the 2022 Assembly, who are arguing that the court had exceeded its powers in issuing that verdict.

Meanwhile, veteran opposition leader and former speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun was among 23 new candidates who filed their nomination papers to run in the June 6 general polls, which a candidate described as a "bone-breaking election". Former MP Marzouq Al-Khalifa, serving a two-year jail term for taking part in outlawed tribal primary elections, on Wednesday registered to run in the election from jail after a senior election department officer visited him. In the September polls, Khalifa registered for the election, then handed himself over to authorities. He won a seat while in prison.

Former MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri said after registering that he expects that between 10 and 12 members of the 2022 Assembly will be changed during the upcoming polls. Meanwhile, Musaed Al-Mane, a new candidate who registered from the fourth constituency, strongly lashed out at the health minister for imposing charges on expats for blood units, saying "even Dracula couldn't think of this measure". Mane said that both expats and citizens are donating blood

for free and it is unacceptable to charge expats for blood. "This is total exploitation" he said.

With the 23 fresh candidates, the total number of hopefuls rose to 142 after six days of registration, way below the 290 candidates who registered after six days in the Sept 2022 elections. There were 10 former MPs among the new candidates who signed up on Wednesday, raising the total number of former MPs to 37. In addition, eight members of the scrapped house registered on Wednesday, bringing their number to 32.

In statements after registering to run in the third constituency, Saadoun issued a passionate appeal for Kuwaiti voters to turn out in large numbers, saying they should ignore problems and frustration to elect their representatives. "Your presence at the ballot boxes will determine your future," said Saadoun, who refused to take questions from reporters. Saadoun has not made any comment on the court decision to annul the 2022 elections.

Former MP Saud Al-Mutairi said the upcoming elections will be "a bone-breaking battle and the Kuwaiti people will emerge victorious". Former MP Abdullah Fahhad said Kuwait is witnessing a crucial phase and called for unity. He urged people to vote to control their future. Former MP Thamer Al-Suwait said a proposal will be submitted in the next Assembly to abolish the constitutional court and then establish a supreme court to settle major disputes.

### Human pangenome ushers in 'new age of genetic diagnosis'

PARIS: Scientists on Wednesday unveiled the first draft of a human "pangenome", a more diverse and accurate DNA blueprint for our species that they hope will help shed light on a range of diseases. The announcement was hailed by researchers as a major scientific milestone that "heralds a new age of genetic diagnosis".

The first human genome was sequenced in 2003, providing a reference point for all other human sequences to be compared to. The breakthrough allowed scientists to identify genes that cause specific diseases, paved the way for the still growing field of personalized medicine, and shed new light on human evolution.

However 70 percent of the genetic data for this original genome reference came from a single person — a man who answered a newspaper advert in Buffalo, New York in 1997 — with snippets from 20 others. This meant it had many gaps and did not work as well as a reference for people from other ethnicities and races, prompting concerns about bias and inequality.

In a series of papers published in the journal Nature, a large team of international researchers described the first draft of a more inclusive "pangenome" reference that they say more accurately reflects humanity.

The group, called the Human Pangenome Reference Consortium, said they have now compiled the genomes of 47 people from different backgrounds — and plan to increase that number to 350 by the middle of next year.

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### 24 Palestinians killed in brutal Zionist raids

GAZA CITY: The Zionist army and Gaza fighters traded heavy cross-border fire Wednesday, with 22 Palestinians killed over two days amid the worst escalation of violence to hit the coastal territory in months. Smoke billowed from the densely populated coastal enclave after the Zionist entity announced it was targeting rocket launch sites of the militant group Islamic Jihad.

Gaza's health ministry said seven people were killed, a day after Zionist strikes on the Palestinian territory left 15 dead. Sirens wailed in the Tel Aviv area warning of incoming rocket fire, an AFP journalist reported, and in communities close to the border, according to the army. In a joint statement Palestinian militant factions said "hundreds of rockets" were fired, while the Zionist army reported 270 launches from Gaza.

Continued on Page 6

### Assad invited to summit as Saudi, Syria restore ties

DAMASCUS: Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad received an invitation to next week's Arab summit in Saudi Arabia, the presidency said Wednesday, the first since his country's war began over a decade ago. The pan-Arab body had suspended Damascus in Nov 2011 over its crackdown on protests which spiraled into a conflict that has killed more than 500,000 people and displaced millions.

On Sunday, the Arab League welcomed back Syria's government, securing Assad's return to the Arab fold after years of isolation. Assad received an invitation from Saudi King Salman "to participate in the 32nd Arab League summit which will be held in Jeddah on May 19", the Syrian presidency said. Assad said the summit "will enhance joint Arab action to achieve the aspirations of the Arab peoples", it said in a statement. Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Jordan, Nayef bin

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GAZA: Relatives mourn outside the morgue of a hospital in Khan Yunis in Gaza on May 10, 2023 following the death of Palestinian Muhammad Abu Taima in a Zionist strike. — AFP

Bandar Al-Sudairi, delivered the invitation, according to Saudi state news agency SPA. He conveyed the King and his son Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's "wishes to the brotherly government and people of Syria for security and stability," SPA said. The last Arab League summit Assad attended was in 2010 in Libya.

The invitation comes a day after Riyadh and Damascus announced that work would resume at their respective diplomatic missions in Syria and Saudi Arabia, after more than a decade of severed relations. The kingdom "has decided to resume the work of its diplomatic mission in Syria," Riyadh's foreign ministry said in a statement carried by SPA, saying it would seek to "develop joint Arab action". Syria's SANA news agency also said "the Syrian Arab Republic has decided to resume the work of its diplomatic mission in Saudi Arabia," quoting a foreign ministry source.

The kingdom cut ties with Assad's government in 2012 and Riyadh had long openly championed Assad's ouster, backing Syrian rebels in earlier stages of the war. But a flurry of diplomatic activity

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DAMASCUS: Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad meets Saudi Ambassador to Jordan Nayef bin Bandar Al-Sudairi on May 10, 2023. — AFP





## Local

# Are residents of Kuwait at risk of becoming climate refugees?

## Kuwait vulnerable to changing weather patterns

By Ghadeer Ghloom

**KUWAIT:** Kuwaitis are at risk of becoming climate refugees due to a variety of reasons. Kuwait is a small country with a limited number of resources, which makes it vulnerable to changing weather patterns and environmental degradation. The country has a dry desert climate with limited sources of freshwater and greenery. This puts Kuwaitis at risk of becoming environmental refugees, because Kuwait is expected to experience more extreme weather patterns such as rising temperatures and droughts if no serious and immediate action is taken.

Another significant issue is air pollution caused by the oil and gas industries that are prevalent in Kuwait. These industries are vital to the country's economy, but they also release harmful chemicals into the air. Exposure to these toxins can lead to respiratory illnesses such as asthma and lung cancer. As the population of Kuwait continues to grow, demand for energy will increase, leading to an increase in pollution unless alternative energy sources are implemented.

Overpopulation can lead to overcrowded cities and lack of green spaces, exacerbating air pollution and creating potential health hazards. If the country does not implement sustainable measures to address these issues, it could lead to the displacement of its citizens. Therefore, it is essential to adopt practices that reduce carbon emissions, invest in renewable energy and protect natural resources for the sake of the country's future and its people.

Calling for more attention to Kuwait's environmental crisis, Kuwait Times interviewed Meteorologist Eisa Ramadan and Associate Professor at Kuwait University Mai Al-Nakib, who expressed concern regarding Kuwait's unlivable environment and the risk of forced displacement. Nakib expressed her dissatisfaction and concerns. "Un-

fortunately, environmental awareness in Kuwait is sorely lacking and doesn't seem to be on the agenda of politicians or citizens. Along with human rights, climate change should be the key issue addressed in every branch of government now," she said.

"Environmental education needs to be integrated into the school system starting at the primary level through university in a consistent and dedicated way. As it stands, the dangers of pollution, the threat of climate change to the sustainability of life in Kuwait, the urgent need for recycling, among other environmental issues, are rarely broached. If attention does not shift and action is not taken immediately, it will be too late: Kuwait will be uninhabitable before long, forcing its citizens and residents to become climate refugees," Nakib added.

On his part, Ramadan highlighted the urgency of the situation, as he said climate change and the rise in temperatures during summer have become increasingly evident over the last 20 years and particularly in the last 10 years. The temperature in Kuwait has started to exceed 50°C more frequently than it did in the past 50 years, indicating the phenomenon of global warming is already impacting Kuwait and nearby regions. This rise in temperatures has led people in Kuwait to travel to other countries during the summer season for many years now.

"However, the concern and all the worry is for the coming years if we do not adapt to these climate changes and there is a shortage in providing electricity to all the new areas that will be built in the future. If sufficient electricity is not available to meet the needs of citizens and residents, they will be forced to migrate if they do not have cooling and air conditioning, because the heat in Kuwait is becoming unbearable. Therefore, the coming years will be very difficult for Kuwait and the region during the summer season. Solutions must be



Eisa Ramadan



Mai Al-Nakib



asphalt streets and red-colored tiles, which increase the absorption of solar radiation and emit heat at night. This creates continuous heat, which is known as the "heat island" phenomenon.

Ramadan shared some solutions for adaptation to climate change and mitigating its impact, as he suggested planting green belts in and outside the city in desert areas on very large scales to reduce rising temperatures. Regional collaboration with neighboring countries is recommended for planting desert areas there, changing the building pattern to intelligent, ecofriendly buildings by using special heat insulation and choosing reflective colors such as white for building exteriors, and creating suitable environments such as lakes in areas that can absorb large amounts of heat in Kuwait. Ramadan emphasized on the necessity of developing a roadmap and strategy for the implementation of such projects, as well as the age limit and duration for their implementation to alleviate high temperatures.

put in place and adaptation must occur before it's too late and this major problem becomes even more difficult to overcome in the future," Ramadan said.

### Factors that could lead to climate migration

According to Ramadan, the factors that can push residents of Kuwait to become environmental refugees include: A lack of suitable green environments to mitigate rising temperatures; severe drought during the summer season due to the continued presence of dry northwestern winds (Bawarih); insufficient water surfaces to cool the weather in the region, as three-quarters of the country is surrounded by dry desert, which increases the heat from the sun's radiation in Kuwait; a lack of green cover in the city and desert areas; and the increase in thermal emissions from long-wave radiation, buildings,

## Kuwait imports from Indonesia hit \$220 million

**KUWAIT:** Indonesia is one of the major exporters to Kuwait with exports amounting to \$220 million during 2021, a member of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce said on Wednesday. Wafa Al-Qatami, in a speech during a meeting with an Indonesian economic delegation headed by Deputy Minister for Investment Promotion at Indonesia Ministry of Investment Nurul Ichwan, praised the success achieved by Jakarta in advancing the economy and activating labor market, noting the strong trade relations between the two countries.

She also stressed the importance of the role of the private sector in the areas of economic development and the promotion of trade cooperation by attracting investment projects and establishing successful partnerships between the Kuwaiti and Indonesian sides.

Ichwan said that his government is interested in expanding economic horizons with Kuwait especially in sustainability and clean energy, in line with its goals of reaching 23 percent renewable energy of overall energy production by 2025. He also added that Indonesia offers 96 ready-made investment opportunities with feasibility studies in the fields of hydroelectric, wind and solar energy, as a commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, expressing his hope that Kuwaiti companies specialized in these projects will contribute to achieving the goals aspired by the Indonesian government. —KUNA

## Great dotted falcon heads back to Russia

**KUWAIT:** The great dotted falcon journeyed back to Russia from Kuwait, a journey taken seven times over the course of three years, reported Kuwait Environment Lens team on Wednesday. The team's treasurer Omar Al-Sayed Omar told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the falcon transits in Kuwait during fall and winter, and flies back to Russia in spring and summer.

This falcon, indicated Al-Sayed Omar, is the first bird to have a tracker device attached to it, making the three-year experiment the first-of-its-kind. Al-Sayed Omar dubbed the findings of the study miraculous as it found that the bird departs from a singular point from southern Russia at a specific time, crosses thousands of kilometers and arrives at a singular point and a specific time in Kuwait, in Al-Jahra nature reserve. The team tracked a number of the falcons to ascertain migratory lines, examine causes of endangerment, and save the beasts from extinction. The experiment was supported by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) and overseen by the Environment Public Authority. The study also aimed to include university students to engage them in real life studies, that could be contributed to international organizations. —KUNA

## UIC organizes two training programs

**KUWAIT:** The investment studies department at the Union of Investment Companies (UIC) organized two training programs (Finance for Non-Finance Professionals and Corporate Credit Analysis) from May 7-10. Both programs held two sessions hosted by UIC General Secretary Fadwa Darwish.

Darwish stressed the program's impact in developing the workforce of companies in the investment and banking sector during a critical situation in the global economy. The first program, "Finance for Non-Finance Professionals", trains employees who haven't had prior experience in the financial sector and who are looking to increase their financial expertise. "This program assists employees and workers of all types



Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah

## Kuwait's leadership congratulates, lauds promoted officers

**KUWAIT:** The First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior, and Acting Minister of Defense, Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, has affirmed the keenness of the wise Kuwait leadership to grant the members of the armed



**KUWAIT:** The First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior, and Acting Minister of Defense, Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah takes a group photo with army officers. —KUNA

forces all the rights stipulated by the law, including their right to promotion in accordance with the controls, conditions, and promotions established in this regard. A top army official stated this on Wednesday.

He said this during the ceremony to honor 405 Kuwaiti army officers with the rank of brigadier general. "Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled conveyed the greetings and congratulations of HHH the Amir and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and HHH the Crown Prince, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to

the promoted officers," the statement stated. "The historic promotions taking place in the military confirm the wise leadership's interest in and follow-up on the affairs of the members of the armed forces and the leadership's constant keenness to raise their morale and grant them all their rights as stipulated by law," he said. Sheikh Talal also pointed out that this promotion carries with it a great deal of trust and responsibility and requires serious and continuous work to complete the march of their predecessors, who laid the foundations and rules to advance the level of this ancient military institution. —KUNA



## European Union Delegation marks 'Europe Day'

**KUWAIT:** The European Union Delegation to Kuwait held a reception, on Tuesday, on the occasion of Europe Day at Grand Hyatt Hotel. In his opening remarks, Gediminas Varanavicius, EU Chargé d'Affaires to Kuwait stated that Europe Day is an annual occasion to celebrate peace and unity on the European continent, where it marks the anniversary of the Schuman Declaration, which in 1950 set out the idea for integration as a new form of political cooperation, the beginning of what is now the European Union.

He praised Kuwait's role as a close and reliable friend of the EU, saying "It was the first Gulf country to sign a Cooperation Arrangement with the European External Action Service in July 2016, which in itself is a reflection

of our close ties. We view Kuwait as a like-minded partner in a dynamic region, especially when it comes to humanitarian issues and advocating for peace and diplomacy." EU Chargé d'Affaires stressed the importance of Kuwaiti cooperation and support, extending his gratitude to the Kuwaiti leadership, including His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, as well as the Kuwaiti government.

"In May last year, the EU unveiled its strategic partnership with the Gulf, a roadmap for broadening and deepening cooperation between the EU and the GCC countries including Kuwait. The Strategic Partnership offers opportunities for expanding ties across several fields including economic affairs, digitization, energy, security, humanitarian issues, human rights, and institutional cooperation, along with green energy transition and fighting climate change," he added. Varanavicius pointed out on the importance of facilitating people-to-people ties, noting that the EU is celebrating 2023 as the Year of Skills, part of a wider initiative to drive innovation, development talent, and empower women and youth, especially in

the areas of green and digital transition.

He revealed that Europe is also becoming a maritime security actor in the Gulf region. Since 2020, several European countries are running a joint maritime security mission in the Gulf, called the European Maritime Awareness mission in the Strait of Hormuz. Thus contributing to safe navigation of vessels, including those leaving and arriving at Kuwaiti ports. I am confident that with our ambitious new EU Strategy for Gulf, we will enhance our cooperation on maritime security even more.

"While we celebrate peace on the European continent, we cannot ignore the ongoing conflict along our Eastern border. Russia's illegal and unjustified aggression against Ukraine that resulted in the loss of many lives, while also forcing millions of Ukrainians to flee their homes in search for new lives across Europe. The war also poses serious risks to the rules-based international order: it has disrupted global trade, causing food prices to soar, resulting in worldwide food insecurity. It is very encouraging and reassuring, to see Kuwait's unwavering support for the UN Charter and the rules-based international order," he concluded.

to understand the effect of their decisions on the financial performance of the institution, in addition to ways to improve it. Participants will demonstrate and analyze financial data as well as understand cashflow in their company and the effects of any commercial contract on financial data. Moreover, we have focused on participants understanding the process of budget preparations and how they connect to financial terms," Darwish explained.

The second program, "Corporate Credit Analysis", aims to improve analytical skills and allows authorities to differ between countries that have financial difficulties as well as rating the relative attraction for risk indicators and returns for investments or loans.

"This program provides understanding of the process of credit risk analysis and discusses in detail different aspects of financial data analysis, including percentage analysis and cashflow to help understand the best decisions related to credit. Moreover, it inspects a number of non-fi-



ancial matters such as workplan, economic and industrial factors, sector-related topics and administrative matters," Darwish added.

Darwish said participants came from different investment

companies and banks, which is a contribution to developing the financial sector in Kuwait through training workers, increasing their capabilities and increasing their knowledge, as they are a part of the economic development of the country.



## Local

# Health Ministry launches anti-smoking campaign

## Smoking causes 16.3% of cancer cases in GCC

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ministry of Health on Wednesday launched an awareness campaign on the dangers of tobacco, in cooperation with the National Anti-Smoking Program. Vice President of the Health Ministry's National Anti-Smoking Program Dr Ahmad Al-Shatti said during the campaign that the ministry is working to reduce the number of smokers due to its negative effects on human health.

Al-Shatti noted that smoking is not a "masculine behavior and includes both genders," which calls for raising the level of awareness as well as control of sales of tobacco, prevent smoking in public places, and stop advertising and promoting it. Head of the Health Promotion Department and member of the National Anti-Smoking Program Dr Abeer Al-Bahou stated that tobacco harms "our health as well as the planet, adding that the campaign aims to encourage governments to end tobacco cultivation and switch to more sustainable crops that support farmers to improve food security and nutrition."

Meanwhile, chairman of Kuwait Society for Smoking and Cancer Control Dr Khalid Ahmed Al-Saleh launched a press conference in which member of the board of directors of Kuwait Society for Smoking and Cancer Control and member of the National Anti-Smoking Program Dr Hussa Majed Al-Shaheen spoke jointly with Dr Maryam Abdul Mohsen Al-Otaibi, member of the board of directors and in-charge of the smoking cessation clinic at the Kuwait Society for Smoking and Cancer Control, on the occasion of World Anti-Smoking Day.

They said the spread of smoking in Kuwait poses a great danger to the health of citizens and significantly



Hussa Al-Shaheen



Mariam Al-Otaibi

hinders health development. A previous study published in the American Library showed smokers in Kuwait reached 49.9 percent among men and 4.4 percent among women, while the number of smokers who continue to smoke in Kuwait is 39.2 percent among men and 3.3 percent among women.

A study on the relationship between smoking and cancer conducted in GCC countries, including Kuwait, revealed 16.3 percent of cancer cases are related to smoking, and that the most common cancers associated with smoking are lung cancer, followed by bladder cancer and colorectal cancer. Dr Shaheen and Dr Otaibi indicated that smoking in Kuwait has become a direct danger to families, especially after the spread of electronic cigarettes and misunderstanding about its dangers.

A comparative study revealed the percentage of



MoH launches Anti-Smoking campaign, encouraging end to tobacco cultivation and switch to more sustainable crops. —KUNA

smoking among primary education students in Kuwait is 28.8 percent compared to 9.3 percent in Oman, which reflects the danger of smoking, its spread among adolescents and the need to intensify educational programs that promote health culture among young people in Kuwait to combat tobacco in all its forms among students. Dr Shaheen and Dr Otaibi concluded their statement by saying studies have shown the risk of smoking increases among university students, as a study published in 2020

showed the rate of smoking cigarettes and shisha among university students in Kuwait is 46 percent, compared to 42.3 percent in Saudi Arabia.

Dr Saleh said the society prepared a list of activities to celebrate World Anti Smoking Day, including lectures by specialists in cooperation with the education and social affairs ministries, in addition to an exhibition to spread awareness about smoking and TV and newspaper interviews. He said a seminar will be held on the harmful effects of e-cigarettes on May 31.

## Genetics plays role in youths' heart health

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Several deaths among youths have been reported as a result of sudden heart attacks, both locally and globally. Due to this, many people are questioning the reasons that caused these incidents, especially in healthy youths who enjoy good health and lifestyle. Kuwait Times spoke to interventional and sport cardiologist Dr Yahya Al-Ansari and discussed with him his point of view regarding this issue and addressed rumors that the COVID-19 vaccine may have had a negative effect on those youths and caused their death, as this rumor has been spreading among people since the beginning of the pandemic.



Dr Yahya Al-Ansari

Dr Ansari said this question on the effect of the vaccine has been answered before and there were several medical reports and statements related to it, but people are still not convinced as they still blame the vaccine on these sudden deaths among youths. He explained COVID-19 has two consequences: One of them is COVID itself, away from the vaccine, as the COVID virus can cause inflammation of the heart muscle called myocarditis. He pointed out the possibility of this happening due to inflammation is one in a million from the vaccination. "Meanwhile, the possibility of having inflammation of heart muscle or the cover of the heart due to COVID-19 itself is one in 100, which is a huge difference," he noted.

"On top of that, cases of heart attacks that have been reported due to the vaccine had a mild disease, while patients who got the COVID infection and had high or moderately severe disease were exposed more to heart attacks. Therefore, we should



care about the virus itself and not the vaccine as a source of heart attacks," Dr Ansari said.

Regarding the main cause of heart attacks among youths, he explained genetics plays a main role in affecting youths' heart health. This is not the only risk factor, but one of the hidden causes that lead to sudden cardiac arrest or sudden death from a heart problem. He said the main problem about genetics is that it cannot be treated to help the patients. Other factors such as high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, smoking and bad diet are treatable.

Dr Ansari explained the difference between heart problems and attacks. "Sudden cardiac arrest or sudden death from a heart problem differs from heart attacks, as the latter leads to a blockage in the arteries, but heart problems only affect the cover of the heart," he said. "In fact, 80 percent of the time that youth, especially athletes who die suddenly, die of a heart problem and not heart attacks, while the remaining 20 percent die due to other reasons."

Meanwhile, he mentioned that heart attacks are the most common cause of death worldwide, and also ranks first in Kuwait. He pointed out 80 percent of the causes in heart deaths are due to genetics. "When young athletes who enjoy a healthy lifestyle, are in good shape and exercise well die suddenly due to heart problems, mostly it is due to genetics. The medical explanation will not be due to a blockage of the arteries, but because of the muscle itself or abnormal electrical activity in the heart," Dr Ansari said.

### Over exercising

Asked if overexercising may lead to sudden heart problems or heart attacks, Dr Ansari said only if the patient has a genetic problem, they



trigger this with exercising. "It is an existing problem masked by a sedentary lifestyle, but once you exercise, you're putting stress on the heart and it cannot tolerate it. Even mild exercises could lead to bad consequences." But he pointed out that genetic problems are not that common, as only 1 in 500 or 1,000 people have a genetic problem.

### Preventive methods

Kuwait Times asked Dr Ansari about the best preventive methods a person can adopt. "If a person and especially athletes are following a bad diet, it doesn't mean that is the only reason. Sometimes it would be just using a bad supplement, drinking too much caffeine or taking energy drinks a lot before workouts. All of these things affect the electricity of the heart," he said.

Dr Ansari warned that on top of following a healthy lifestyle, if any person has a family member with a history of heart problems, especially the youth (between 20 and 30 years old), they have to seek medical attention and screening for any possible heart problems. "If they have any symptoms while exercising, I recommend them to stop and seek medical attention, whether due to chest pain, difficulty in breathing, dizziness or losing consciousness while exercising," he said.

## Security officials nab suspects and residency violators

KUWAIT: Interior ministry detectives arrested three people who managed a women's salon and received people for treatment, which is a violation of regulations regarding illegal commercial activity. The salon was closed by the ministry of commerce. Authorities also arrested 56 residency violators during a security campaign against unlicensed commercial activities in Khaitan. Detectives also arrested eight absconders.

Meanwhile, as part of security campaigns in Mangaf and Salmiya, authorities arrested 30 people of various nationalities on charges of practicing acts contrary to public morals in exchange for sums of money. Also, Jahra police arrested a suspected thief in Sulaibiya. The suspect had previous charges against him and is wanted for 16 cases of theft. Separately, the Ahmadi detectives arrested a person who set fire to a floor of a building in Mahboula. All suspects were referred to competent authorities to take necessary legal measures against them.



## KU receives Cyprus envoy, delegation

KUWAIT: The Acting Director of Kuwait University Dr Fahad Al-Rashidi received the Ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus, Michael Mavros, the Director of International Relations at the University of Cyprus and other officials. The visit is aimed at strengthening the cultural and academic bonds with the exchange students between the University of Cyprus and Kuwait University. The acting president of Kuwait University, Dr Al-Rashidi welcomed the delegation. He stressed on the university's keenness to exchange experiences and cultures between educational institutions, in addition to enhancing cultural communication and joint cooperation.

## Ministry to set new cleaning regulations

KUWAIT: Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Minister of State for Communications Affairs Fahad Al-Shula stressed on Wednesday on the need of setting new cleaning regulations to place penalties on non-compliant companies. Al-Shula stated on the sidelines of his visit to municipal councils' members that cleaning issue is priority to any minister amidst complaints by citizens regarding this issue.

However, he announced an upcoming nationwide campaign starting next week in addition to discussing with the Municipal Council members means of boosting cooperation with the objective of facilitating procedures. During the meeting, the Minister stressed on transforming paper applications to paper-less applications to make things easy for citizens and architecture offices. From his side, Municipal Council chairman Abdullah Al-Mehri said in statement council members were keen on approving the State's fourth structural plans. —KUNA



Minister of Health, Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi inaugurates the Kuwait Center for Poison Control. —KUNA photos

## Kuwait Center for Poison Control inaugurated

KUWAIT: Minister of Health, Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi on Wednesday inaugurated the Kuwait Center for Poison Control as the first center spe-

cialized in following up on poisoning cases, providing advice and treatment plans, controlling toxic substances, and coordinating with the concerned state institutions. In a press statement, the minister said that the center carries out a number of tasks and provides information based on scientific evidence regarding poisoning cases.

The Center's Head, Dr Abdullatif Al-Oumi, affirmed that the center specializes in organizing laboratory tests related to toxins, preparing studies on poisoning cases, coordinating with



the concerned authorities to monitor toxic substances, and training medical staff. Dr Al-Oumi also noted that the poisoning cases dealt with by the center include all cases resulting from poisoning due to nutritional supplements, medicines, medical preparations, chemicals, narcotics, toxic fumes, foods, biological or radioactive toxins, heavy metal toxins, plants, or poisoning cases resulting from poisonous mushrooms, snake bites, scorpions, or marine organisms of all kinds. —KUNA



## Palestinian issue 'central' to Arab Media strategy

CAIRO: The Arab League affirmed on Wednesday that the Palestinian issue was central to the Arab Media strategy, pointing out that Palestinian media is being violated without consideration to the safety and wellbeing of its journalists. This came in a press release on the (World Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian Media) that is celebrated by the Arab League on May 11, in implementation of the Council of Arab Information Ministers' decision during its 52nd session held last September.

The press release stressed on the need to treat journalists and media workers during armed conflicts in accordance with the provisions of international humanitarian law, particularly the requirements of Article 79 of the First Additional Protocol of the Geneva Conventions. It also pointed out that today marks the anniversary of the tragic death of Palestinian reporter Sherine Abu Aqleh, who was shot and killed on duty.

### GCC slams Zionist entity's crime

Meanwhile, Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassim Al-Budaiwi has expressed his strong condemnation of the Zionist entity's aggression in Gaza and storming the city of Nablus. In a statement, Al-Budaiwi denounced the violent crimes committed by Zionist entity's occupation authorities in Gaza, calling on the international community to shoulder its responsibility and put an end to the ongoing attacks on Palestinian people, who demand their legitimate rights to establish their independent state. Al-Budaiwi reaffirmed the GCC's stand with the Palestinian case, as it is a priority to Arabs and Muslims. —KUNA

# Sudanese receive relief aid from 'Kuwait by your side' campaign

## Officials commend Kuwait's outstanding efforts



Tons of humanitarian aid material were delivered to the Sudanese people by 'Kuwait by your side' campaign. — KUNA photos



KHARTOUM: As part of "Kuwait by your side" humanitarian campaign, the first batch of support containing 75 tons of aid material arrived in Sudan and met people's praise and adulation. Speaking to KUNA on this occasion, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Sudan Dr Fahad Al-Dhufairi told KUNA that his country was keen on supporting Sudan during such turbulent times, saying that additional relief aid material would be sent in coordination between Kuwaiti and Sudanese authorities.

The Sudanese doctors union revealed that 69 percent of medical services and clinics near the areas of conflict had ceased operations, while 27 hospitals were struggling to operate due to the lack of staff and material. The Kuwaiti and Sudanese red crescents societies had delivered thus far thousands of relief aid material, foodstuff, and medical supplies to those affected by the violence in Sudan.

Reflecting the Sudanese people's gratitude, head of the Red Sea military zone Mohammad Osman Mohammad Hamad commended the outstanding efforts by Kuwait in supporting Sudan. He affirmed that Kuwait was well known for extending humanitarian assistance to Sudan, citing such support during the floods and heavy rainfall in September last year.

On his part, Bashara Mohammad Abdullah, head of the eastern Sudan patients' fund, thanked Kuwait for its swift response to the humanitarian needs. He expressed gratitude to the Kuwaiti people and government for their stance. The Sudanese people have launched the hashtag (#thanks\_Kuwait) on Social Media platforms in expression of gratitude towards the Gulf state.

The Kuwaiti government decided to launch an emergency relief aid campaign to aid Sudan, tasking the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) and sev-

eral ministries to coordinate efforts within this frame. The Kuwaiti relief aid batch is the first to reach Sudan since armed clashes began on April 15 between the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) as political discussions crumbled over transition to a civilian government.

In another development, the sixth dispatched Kuwaiti aid plane arrived in Khartoum airport, carrying 10 tons of medical and humanitarian supplies to the people of Sudan, Kuwait's Ambassador in Khartoum Fahad Al-Dhufairi said. In a statement to KUNA, Al-Dhufairi added that an expansion of aid planes has been approved from previously five Kuwaiti aid plane trips to 13 trips, which comes as response to the shortages of medical supplies to violence-hit Sudan. Al-Dhufairi noted that such efforts is in complete coordination between KRCS and Sudan counterpart. —KUNA

## NBK warns against fraudulent emails

KUWAIT: Aiming to raise awareness and actively participate in promoting financial culture and inclusion among different segments of society, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) pursues its endeavors in supporting the "Let's Be Aware" banking awareness campaign launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK), in collaboration with Kuwait Banking Association (KBA).

In this regard, NBK intensified its awareness campaigns by publishing educational materials and awareness content including video clips and SMS, as well as awareness tips on all its social media platforms and other digital channels, and reposting of CBK's communications. This aims to increase awareness among all segments of society and familiarize them with the various fraud techniques, how to protect themselves from bank fraud, social media hacking, suspicious websites, imposters of official personalities or authorities, and other important topics.

NBK emphasized on disregarding suspicious e-mails, as phishing e-mails are usually sent from suspicious domains using the logos of well-known institutions such as banks, telecom companies, or big companies, so that the user cannot distinguish between real and suspicious e-mail. Therefore, the bank advised customers to follow important tips when dealing with e-mails, including always making sure that the e-mail sender is from a legitimate organization, as well as checking the grammar and spelling in the e-mail, as many phishing e-mails are poorly written, and making sure to disregard those

## Kuwait, Korea officials discuss Mideast, ties

SEOUL: Kuwait Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Sameeh Hayat and Deputy Minister for Political Affairs of the Korean Foreign Ministry Choi Young Sam on Wednesday discussed the latest political developments in the Middle East, and ways to enhance joint cooperation to boost peace and stability at the international level. In a press statement, Kuwait Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the



emails to avoid being a victim of fraud. NBK also called for cautious dealing with links and not saving any confidential information such as debit/credit card number or PIN on the mobile phone, as well as not to write down the PIN on the card or share it with any person, and the same also applies to the "OTP". The bank also advised customers to log out of the mobile banking app or website immediately after the transaction is completed.

The bank also reaffirmed that it will not ask for personal information via e-mail, SMS or phone calls, warning customers not to respond to those messages representing fraudulent attempts to obtain their banking information to steal their money or data. NBK harnesses its huge capabilities in communicating with customers as well as all its digital channels, which the most popular among all Kuwaiti banks, to support CBK's endeavors to protect customers and the economy.

It is worth mentioning that NBK is a key supporter and partner in all CBK's campaigns and initiatives aiming to increase financial and banking awareness among different segments of society. As a leading financial institution in Kuwait, NBK frequently organizes various activities to raise awareness on all topics related to the banking sector, as well as various training courses for its employees to enhance their experience in the areas of combating fraud and financial crime.

meeting was held at the Korean Foreign Ministry and came on the occasion of launching the fourth round of political consultations between Kuwait and the Republic of Korea.

During the meeting, they reviewed the distinguished bilateral cooperation ties and ways to enhance them in the fields of oil, renewable energy, infrastructure and health, as well as discussing ways to promote trade and investment collaboration. Ambassador Hayat held a meeting before the start of the political consultations round, with the Korean First Vice Foreign Minister Ambassador Chang Ho-jin, where he presented a letter from Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Sabah to his Korean counterpart Park Jin. —KUNA



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Thaksin's daughter carries Shinawatra torch in Thai polls

Tributes pour in for AFP reporter Arman Soldin killed in Ukraine

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## 5 shot dead in Tunisia synagogue attack

Killing spree was Tunisia's first deadly attack on foreigners since 2015



DJERBA: Tunisian forces secure an area near the Ghriba synagogue following a shootout on the resort island of Djerba. —AFP

**DJERBA:** Tunisian authorities were Wednesday investigating a shooting spree by a police officer that claimed five lives and sparked mass panic during a Jewish pilgrimage at Africa's oldest synagogue. Security forces threw a tight cordon around the site on Djerba island as officials probed whether Tuesday's shootings were a random killing spree or an anti-Semitic terrorist attack.

The police officer first killed a colleague and took his ammunition, then went to the Ghriba synagogue and opened fire, sparking terror on the final day of the annual pilgrimage. Wearing his uniform and a bulletproof vest, he shot dead two visitors and injured two more. In the ensuing gun battle, he also wounded six police officers, two of whom later died, hospital sources said.

The assailant was then shot dead himself, the interior ministry said, without identifying him. "Without the rapid intervention of the security forces,

there would have been wider carnage" because hundreds of people were at the site, said Rene Trabelsi, a former tourism minister, speaking on Mosaïque FM radio.

Trabelsi, who was at the synagogue during the shootings, named the visitors killed as Tunisian Aviel Haddad, 30, and his France-based cousin, dual national Benjamin Haddad, 42. The killing spree was Tunisia's first deadly attack on foreigners since 2015, and the first to target the Ghriba pilgrimage since a suicide truck bombing killed 21 people in 2002.

### 'Cowardly aggression'

"Investigations are continuing in order to shed light on the motives for this cowardly aggression," the interior ministry said, refraining from referring to the shooting as a terrorist attack. France "condemns this heinous act in the strongest terms," said foreign

ministry spokeswoman Anne-Claire Legendre. US State Department spokesman Matthew Miller earlier said: "The United States deplores the attack in Tunisia coinciding with the annual Jewish pilgrimage that draws faithful to the El Ghriba Synagogue from around the world."

"We express condolences to the Tunisian people and commend the rapid action of Tunisian security forces." According to organisers, more than 5,000 Jewish faithful, mostly from overseas, participated in this year's event. The annual pilgrimage only resumed in 2022 after two years of pandemic-related suspension.

### Dwindling Jewish community

Coming between Passover and Shavuot, the pilgrimage to Ghriba is at the heart of Jewish tradition in Tunisia, where only about 1,500 members of the faith still live—mainly on Djerba—compared with

around 100,000 before independence in 1956. Pilgrims travel from Europe, the United States and Zionist entity to take part, although their numbers have dropped since the deadly bombing in 2002. Tuesday's shooting came as the tourism industry in Tunisia has finally rebounded from pandemic-era lows, as well as from the aftereffects of a pair of attacks in Tunis and Sousse in 2015 that killed dozens of foreign holidaymakers.

Tunisia suffered a sharp rise in Islamist militancy after the Arab Spring ousted longtime despot Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in 2011, but authorities say they have made significant progress in the fight against terrorism in recent years.

The Ghriba attack also comes as Tunisia endures a severe financial crisis that has worsened since President Kais Saied seized power in July 2021 and rammed through a constitution that gave his office sweeping powers and neutered parliament. — AFP

## Khan remanded in custody after arrest prompts riots

**ISLAMABAD:** Former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan was remanded in custody for eight days on Wednesday by an anti-graft court as violent nationwide protests over his arrest erupted for a second day. Khan was arrested on Tuesday during a routine hearing in the capital Islamabad and whisked away to an unknown location overnight before appearing behind closed doors in a specially convened court at police headquarters.

The drama follows months of political crisis during which Khan, who was ousted in April last year, has waged an unprecedented campaign against the country's powerful military. "If they think that the arrest of Imran Khan will demoralize us, then they are hugely mistaken," said Niaz Ali in Peshawar, where several monuments and government buildings have been torched. "We stand with Imran Khan and will support him till death."

Ali Bukhari, a lawyer for Khan, told AFP by phone that the court had approved eight days of physical remand of Khan demanded by the country's top graft agency. Afzal Marwat, another of Khan's lawyers, earlier said Khan was in "good spirits" but had complained of being hit on the back of the head and leg by paramilitary forces who arrested him.

The former cricketer superstar, who remains wildly popular, has previously said the dozens of cases brought against him are part of an effort by the



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party activists and supporters of former Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan clash with police during a protest against the arrest of their leader on May 10, 2023. —AFP

struggling government and military establishment to prevent him from returning to power. His arrest has brought thousands of his supporters to the streets in cities across the country, where police have attempted to quell crowds with tear gas. At least six people have died in protest-related incidents, police and hospitals reported, including one person who died from smoke inhalation after a multi-storey building was set on fire in Lahore.

Khan's arrest came hours after the military rebuked him for alleging that a senior officer had been involved in a plot to kill him. Pakistan politicians have frequently been arrested and jailed since the coun-

try's founding in 1947, but few have so directly challenged a military that has staged at least three coups and ruled for more than three decades.

Criticism of the military establishment is rare in Pakistan, where army chiefs hold significant influence over domestic politics and foreign policy, and have long been accused of interfering in the rise and fall of governments. "The senior army leadership is uninterested in repairing the rift between itself and Khan," said Michael Kugelman, director of the South Asia Institute at the Wilson Center. "So with this arrest it's likely sending a message that the gloves are very much off." — AFP

about human rights and democratic backsliding in the world's most populous nation.

Modi's government has been widely accused by political opponents and rights groups of using the law to target and silence critics. It will be the first state visit by Modi to the United States. He visited Biden at the White House in 2021, but as part of the Quad summit bringing together the United States, Australia, Japan and India.

"This time India is understood to have pushed for the pomp of a full state visit. The trip will include a state dinner. The visit will also strengthen the two countries' "shared resolve to elevate our strategic technology partnership, including in defense, clean energy, and space," the White House statement continued.

"The leaders will discuss ways to further expand our educational exchanges and people-to-people ties, as well as our work together to confront common challenges from climate change, to workforce development and health security," it said. — AFP

## Biden to host Modi for state visit in June

**WASHINGTON:** US President Joe Biden will host India Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a state visit on June 22 that will affirm the two countries' "deep and close partnership," the White House announced Wednesday.

The visit, the highest level of diplomatic reception at the White House, will boost Washington and New Delhi's "shared commitment to a free, open, prosperous, and secure Indo-Pacific," the statement said.

The invitation comes as both India and the United States seek to shore up support against China's growing assertiveness, and despite rising concerns

## Trump found liable for sexually abusing writer

**NEW YORK:** A New York jury found Donald Trump liable Tuesday for sexually abusing and defaming an American former magazine columnist and ordered the ex-president to pay her \$5 million in damages. The nine jurors rejected E. Jean Carroll's accusation of rape but unanimously upheld her other complaints in the closely watched civil trial, following less than three hours of deliberations.

It marks the first time Trump has faced legal consequences over a string of sexual assault allegations dating back decades—and the former leader immediately rejected the verdict as a "disgrace." Carroll, 79, sued Trump last year, alleging that he raped her in the changing room of the luxury Bergdorf Goodman store on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue in 1996.

The former columnist for Elle magazine also claimed that Trump defamed her when he called her "a complete con job" after she went public with the allegation in 2019. Trump, the 76-year-old frontrunner for the Republican nomination in next year's presidential election, called her case a "hoax" and "a lie."

The jury determined that Carroll had proved sexual abuse—effectively sexual contact without consent—by a preponderance of the evidence and awarded her \$2 million. The six men and three women on the jury also said Trump should pay Carroll nearly \$3 million for defamation.

Following the verdict, Carroll left the Manhattan federal court smiling but did not speak to reporters. "We're very happy," said her lawyer, Roberta Kaplan. Trump slammed the outcome on his social media platform Truth Social.

"I have absolutely no idea who this woman is," he wrote, using all capital letters. "This verdict is a disgrace—a continuation of the greatest witch hunt of all time." Trump's 2024 campaign team said in a statement that the case was a "political endeavor" intended to derail Trump's bid to regain the White House, and that he would appeal.

Carroll told the two-week-long civil trial that the assault had left her feeling "ashamed" and unable to have romantic relationships. She said it took her more than 20 years to go public because she was "frightened" by Trump.

Her lawyers called to the witness stand two other women who testified that Trump sexually assaulted them decades ago. Former businesswoman Jessica Leeds said that Trump groped her in the business class section of a flight in the United States in the 1970s. — AFP



ELMAU CASTLE: File photo shows, US President Joe Biden (R) greets India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi as they arrive to attend the outreach program at Elmau Castle, southern Germany, during the Group of Seven Summit. — AFP



## International

# Tributes pour in for AFP reporter Arman Soldin killed in Ukraine

‘Journalism continues to shine a light in the darkness of this war’

**KYIV:** Messages of grief poured in Wednesday following the death of AFP journalist Arman Soldin in Ukraine, paying tribute to his bravery in covering Europe's worst conflict since World War II.

He was killed when an AFP team came under fire by Grad rockets while they were with a group of Ukrainian soldiers near Bakhmut, the epicentre of the fighting for months. His death brings to at least 11 the number of journalists, fixers or drivers for media teams killed since Russia invaded Ukraine more than a year ago, according to advocacy groups.

French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna on Wednesday paid tribute to Soldin's "courage" and described his work as "essential" to understanding the facts around the war in Ukraine. "Arman was a talented and courageous journalist and his death is obviously devastating for those who knew him," said UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's spokesman. "Journalism continues to shine a light in the darkness of this war, and Arman's work was vital to that. Ukrainian Culture Minister Oleksandr Tkachenko blamed Russia for Soldin's death and said those responsible must be held accountable.

## 'Destruction and suffering'

"Our condolences to Arman's family and friends, and gratitude for his courage," he said in a post on social media. Pavlo Kyrylenko, the head of the Donetsk region where Bakhmut lies and which has been partially controlled by Kremlin-backed forces for years, offered his condolences to Soldin's friends and family.

"I thank everyone who—risking their own lives—continues to tell the truth about our war," he said.

Soldin, a French citizen born in Bosnia, once said he was drawn to telling stories of people displaced by fighting, stemming from his family's experience fleeing conflict.

The Bosnian member of the country's tripartite presidency, Denis Becirovic, condemned Soldin's killing, describing his death as a "great loss" and a "painful reminder" of the risks undertaken by front-line journalists. "At the cost of his own safety, he had been travelling to the front lines since day one, doing his job as a journalist, establishing the facts and showing images of the destruction and suffering in Ukraine," Becirovic said.

Phil Chetwynd, AFP's global news director, said Wednesday "we are all incredibly shocked at AFP this morning" and that news of Soldin's death was "incredibly painful". "He's someone who understood the risks but really wanted to tell the story, in particular the human story of what was happening on the ground in Ukraine," he added.

## 'Indebted'

"It was the commitment to that story that took him back to the front again and again and again." The Director General of UNESCO, Audrey Azoulay, denounced Soldin's killing and urged parties of the conflict to adhere to international law.

"I condemn the attack that killed video journalist Arman Soldin and call for an investigation to identify the circumstances of his death," she said. French President Emmanuel Macron earlier hailed Soldin on Twitter, applauding his "bravery".

And in Washington, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said the world was "indebt-



**CHASIV YAR:** AFP journalist Arman Soldin smiles to photographer as a cat stands on his shoulders during an assignment for AFP in Ukraine on November 11, 2022. Arman was killed by a rocket strike as he reported with AFP colleagues from Ukrainian positions in Chasiv Yar. — AFP

ed" to the journalists who lost their lives covering the conflict. The Kremlin told reporters Wednesday it was saddened to hear reports of Arman's killing but that the circumstances of his death remained unclear.

"We need to understand the circumstances of the death of this journalist," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. "We can only express sadness on this matter," he added, referring further questions to the defence ministry. — AFP

## Ex-policeman goes on trial in France over Rwanda genocide

**PARIS:** A former Rwandan military policeman went on trial in France on Wednesday, charged with genocide and crimes against humanity during the 1994 slaughter in his home country. Philippe Hategekimana fled to France after the genocide, obtaining refugee status and then French nationality under the name Philippe Manier.

The 66-year-old appeared in court on the first day of his trial on Wednesday morning, wearing tortoiseshell glasses and a suede jacket over a checked shirt. "My name is Philippe Manier," he told the judge, when asked to confirm his identity.

It is the fifth such trial in France of an alleged participant in the massacres, in which around 800,000 people, most of them ethnic Tutsis, were slaughtered over 100 days. Hategekimana is accused of involvement in the murder of hundreds of Tutsis while working as a senior police official in the southern provincial capital of Nyanza.

He is suspected in particular of being involved in the murder of the mayor of the town of Ntazozo who opposed the killings, and of a nun. He is also accused of playing a role in the killing of 300 Tutsis on a hill called Nyamug-



**PARIS:** This court sketch made on May 10, 2023 shows former Rwandan gendarme Philippe Hategekimana (R), naturalised French in 2005 under the name Philippe Manier, accused of participating in massacres of Tutsi civilians, during his trial at Paris courthouse. — AFP

ari, and in an attack on another hill called Nyabubare in which around 1,000 civilians were slaughtered.

Plaintiffs have accused Hategekimana of "using the powers and military force conferred to him through his rank in order to... take part in the genocide." He has denied the charges. He faces life in jail if found guilty.

In 1999 Hategekimana arrived in France and obtained refugee status under a false identity. He became a university security guard in the western city of Rennes, gaining French citizenship in 2005.

He fled France for Cameroon in late 2017 after the press reported that the Col-

lective of Civil Parties for Rwanda (CPCR), one of the plaintiffs in the trial this week, had filed a complaint against him. He was arrested in the capital Yaounde in 2018 and extradited to France. His trial is scheduled to run until June 30.

France, one of the top destinations for fugitives from the massacres, has tried and convicted a former spy chief, two ex-mayors, a former hotel chauffeur and an ex-top official in similar trials since 2014. But it has generally refused requests to extradite suspects to Rwanda, prompting President Paul Kagame to accuse Paris of denying Rwanda jurisdiction. — AFP

## Iran hangs seven more in execution 'spree': Rights group

**PARIS:** Iran executed seven men in two prisons outside Tehran on drugs and rape charges Wednesday, a rights group said, accelerating what activists describe as a hanging spree over the past two weeks. The United Nations had warned on Tuesday of a "frighteningly" high number of executions in the country after a rare execution on Monday of two men on blasphemy charges.

Three men were executed on drug-related charges in Ghezel Hesar prison in the city of Karaj outside Tehran, the Norway-based Iran Human Rights (IHR) NGO said. It added that four other men were hanged on rape charges in Rajai Shahr prison, also in Karaj.

The judiciary's Mizan Online website confirmed the three executions on drug charges, saying the convicts were members of a cocaine distribution cartel. There has been no official confirmation so far of the four executions on rape charges. IHR said the latest hangings mean Iran has seen at least 64 executions in the last 12 days alone.

"The killing machine of the government is accelerating—its goal is to intimidate the people and its victims are

the weakest people in society," said IHR director Mahmood Amiry Moghaddam. IHR posted footage which it said showed families of the three men executed on drug charges protesting outside Ghezel Hesar prison in a last-ditch bid to stop the hangings. Gunfire was audible in the video and it said police used tear gas and batons to disperse the protest. One family member was hospitalised with severe injuries after being beaten, it added.

## 'Silence dissent'

Campaigners accuse Iran of using the death penalty as a means to intimidate the public following weeks of protests that erupted in September last year following the death in custody of Mahsa Amini after she was arrested for allegedly violating Iran's dress rules for women.

At least 582 people were executed in Iran last year, the highest number of executions in the country since 2015 and well above the 333 recorded in 2021, IHR and Paris-based Together Against the Death Penalty (ECPM) said in a joint report in April. — AFP

## Human pangenome ushers in 'new age...

Continued from Page 1

The 47 people are anonymous, having consented for their genomes to be used as part of a previous project. More than half came from Africa, 34 percent from the Americas, with six people from Asia and one, an Ashkenazi Jew, from Europe. Oceania was not represented. The researchers said that they were looking into how best to include people from other areas and backgrounds as the project continues.

The genome is the genetic blueprint of every organism — the complete set of DNA containing the instructions it needs to survive and thrive. Any two people's genomes are more than 99 percent identical — but the tiny differences can point towards an individual's potential to develop particular diseases. So the pangenome reference could have a vast — and difficult to predict — range of future applications for health, the researchers said.

One of the study co-authors, Benedict Paten of the University of California, said it would make

it easier to spot small differences in new genetic samples. "This will ultimately help improve genetic testing and simultaneously give us a clearer understanding of the contribution of all types of genetic variation to health and disease," he told an online press conference.

Another study co-author, Erich Jarvis of Rockefeller University, said just one example was gene clusters known as major histocompatibility complex (MHC), which are involved in the body's immune system. "It was impossible to study MHC diversity" previously because it differs so much between every person, Jarvis said. But the pangenome reference "will help us understand how immune responses against specific pathogens vary among people," he said. It could also help better match organ transplant donors with patients, he added in a statement.

David Adelson, an expert in genetics at Australia's University of Adelaide who was not involved in the research, said that even in the draft phase, the pangenome had already increased the accuracy of detecting genetic changes by 34 percent. "This paper heralds a new age of genetic diagnosis, that will benefit people from all ancestries, unlike our current reference genome that does not reflect all the diversity of humanity," he said. — AFP

street much. I definitely feel like there's a war coming," the 50-year-old told AFP.

Hamas spokesman Abdul Latif Al-Qanou said Wednesday "the strikes of the unified resistance are part of the process of responding to the massacre committed by (the Zionist entity)." Among those killed Tuesday were four children and three senior Islamic Jihad operatives. The top militants were named as Jihad Ghannam, Khalil Al-Bahtini and Tareq Ezzedine, a Gaza-based militant leader in the West Bank.

Earlier Wednesday, Zionist troops raided the West Bank town of Qabatiya, killing two people whom the army accused of firing at soldiers. The Palestinian health ministry identified the two men as Ahmed Jamal Tawfiq Assaf, 19, and Rani Walid Ahmed Qatanat, 24. The Zionist military said troops detained one person during the raid when soldiers were shot at from a vehicle. Mourners including armed militants later carried the two men's bodies through the streets in a funeral procession. The Zionist has occupied the West Bank since the Six-Day War of 1967 and its forces regularly operate in Palestinian cities. — AFP

## Climate change raising heat risks for workers

**DOHA:** Rising global temperatures are increasing the risk of workers dying or becoming disabled from laboring in extreme heat, an international conference has been told. The conference, held in Qatar as spring temperatures raced towards 40 degrees Celsius, heard that tens of thousands of workers around the world have died from chronic kidney disease and other illnesses linked with extreme heat over recent decades.

"Science tells us that all countries can do more," the International Labor Organization's regional chief for Arab countries, Ruba Jaradat, told the Occupational Heat Stress conference, which focused on climate change and how rising temperatures threaten workers' health. Last year's World Cup in Qatar drew attention to workers toiling in temperatures that can top 50 degrees Celsius during the

summer peak in countries across the Gulf.

Since 2021, Qatar has banned outdoor working between 10:00 am and 3.30 pm from June 1 to Sept 15. Its reforms have been praised by the UN labor agency, though some experts say more can be done. There is no international standard for temperatures for outdoor working, but climate change has forced new scrutiny. The US administration promised new rules in 2021 after a deadly heatwave and the White House said that "heat is the nation's leading weather-related killer". Nothing has been produced yet, however.

Europe has also seen devastating heatwaves. But apart from Qatar, Cyprus is one of the rare countries to have restricted working hours, ordering extra breaks and heat protective clothing when temperatures rise above 35 degrees Celsius. Extreme heat and sun radiation unleash heatstroke, kidney, heart and lung diseases and raise cancer rates, according to researchers. Justin Glaser, head of La Isla Network, an occupational health group, said more than 20,000 sugar workers in Central America had died in a single decade from chronic kidney disease. He pointed to about 25,000 deaths from kidney disease in Sri Lanka. — AFP

## Assad invited to summit as Saudi...

Continued from Page 1

has been underway since a deadly earthquake struck Syria and Turkey on Feb 6. A decision in March by former archrivals Saudi Arabia and Iran, a close ally of Damascus, to resume ties also shifted the political landscape. In April, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan met with Assad in Damascus on the first such visit since the war broke out.

Regional capitals have gradually been warming to Assad as he has held onto power and clawed back lost territory with crucial support from Iran and Russia. In 2018, the United Arab Emirates re-established ties with Syria and has been leading the recent charge to reintegrate Damascus into the Arab fold.

Turkey, which supported early rebel efforts to topple Assad and maintains a military presence in Syria's north, has also shown interest in mending ties with Damascus. The foreign ministers of Syria

and Turkey were meeting Wednesday in Moscow for the first time since the start of the war. Russia's top diplomat proposed a roadmap to normalize Syrian-Turkish ties, with Iran's foreign minister also attending the meeting.

While Syria's front lines have mostly quietened, large parts of the north remain outside government control, and no political solution to the conflict is in sight. Top diplomats from nine Arab countries discussed the Syria crisis in Saudi Arabia last month. Officials at several recent meetings have said Arab leadership would be needed to find a settlement to the conflict.

The fate of millions of Syrian refugees — many of them living in neighboring Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon — are among some states' main concerns. Several Arab countries are also seeking increased security co-operation with Syria, which has turned into a narco-state with a \$10 billion Captagon industry, mostly trafficked to the Gulf. During a meeting of several Arab foreign ministers in Jordan on May 1, Damascus agreed to "enhance cooperation" with countries "affected by drug trafficking and smuggling across the Syrian border", a statement said. — AFP

## 24 Palestinians killed in brutal...

Continued from Page 1

Four of those killed Wednesday were fighters with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the group said in a statement. The fatalities also included a 10-year-old girl, whose body was seen by an AFP journalist in Gaza City's Shifa Hospital. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the Zionist entity was "ready for the possibility of an expanded campaign and harsh strikes against Gaza", in a meeting with local leaders near the coastal territory.

The latest violence comes a day after Zionist strikes on Gaza killed three top Islamic Jihad militants and 12 others, including four children, according to a health ministry toll. Ahead of Wednesday's exchange of fire, Gaza's usually bustling shops were closed. People in Gaza "expect the worst", said resident Monther Abdullah. "Everyone feels anxious and people aren't on the



## International

# No justice, no burial: Relatives mount corpse protest in India

Families of Kukis killed in the violence are demanding a separate entity of their own

**CHURACHANDPUR:** The stench of death hangs heavy over the morgue at an Indian hospital — and relatives are refusing to bury the rotting corpses in protest at their killings in ethnic violence. Kamlallian Ype, 35, from the mainly Christian Kuki tribe, was killed fleeing attackers from the majority Meitei people, who are mostly Hindus, said his friend P Hentinglian.

"He was shot in the back and fell down," the 25-year-old told AFP at the mortuary in Churachandpur. "They approached him and shot him point blank at the forehead. I saw it all." Around 60 people have been killed on both sides in the clashes in the hilly northeastern state of Manipur and around 35,000 residents have fled their homes since last week.

The far-flung states of northeast India — sandwiched between Bangladesh, China and Myanmar — have long been a tinderbox of tensions between different ethnic groups. Now the families of Kukis killed in the latest violence are demanding a separate entity of their own.

Ype's widow and their four sons want nothing from the Manipur state government and see him as a "martyr for the people... for the tribal community", said his elder sister Siamting, 39. "What I really want now is the separation of tribal regions from Manipur, for the Indian government to carve out a separate state for tribals in the region," she went on.

Another father of four, daily wage laborer Lal-thansang Siekzathang, lay among the bodies in the morgue. "Real justice would be a separate state cut away from Imphal" — the regional capital — "which only promotes one community", said his widow Jelevi Hmingthangmoi, 30. Both women insisted their families will not hold funerals for their menfolk until the government agrees to their demands. "He died defending our land," said Siamting. "As our demands are not met he is still at the morgue."

## Mob attacks

The clashes in Manipur were sparked by 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 Imphal and elsewhere, with protestors setting fire to vehicles and buildings. According to villagers, Meitei mobs armed with guns and petrol cans then attacked Kuki settlements in the hills.

Hentinglian, 25, said Ype was trying to escape to the paddy fields near his village of Kangvai after it was overwhelmed by a 200-strong mob, who he alleged were accompanied by police commandos. "The commandos were taking (the) lead holding automatic rifles and some of the Meiteis were taking pistols



**CHURACHANDPUR:** People walk past a burnt vehicle and rubble on a street in Churachandpur in violence hit areas of northeastern Indian state of Manipur. — AFP

along with them," he said. AFP was unable to independently confirm his account and has sought comment from police authorities in Manipur. Police in the state have been accused of bias in favor of the majority Meitei community, with Kukis evacuated to the safety of army-run camps accusing them of not defending them, or joining the mobs.

Mary Jones, head of Research and Preservation of Zo Identities, an activist group which promotes tribal cultures, told AFP: "We have more than 15 people who have been killed. There will be no funeral until our demands are met by the Indian government. "We want the government to give us a separate state, away from Manipur. It would be a tribal land." — AFP

## HK bans foreign lawyers from state security cases

**HONG KONG:** Hong Kong amended a law Wednesday to bar foreign lawyers from working on national security cases, allowing exceptions only if the city's leader permits their participation. The amendment is the latest change to the financial hub's legal and political landscape as China works to snuff out dissent in Hong Kong following huge and at times violent democracy protests in 2019.

Hong Kong was once lauded for its common law traditions that allow international lawyers to work in

its legal system. But under a national security law imposed by Beijing in 2020, the Hong Kong government has said their participation brings "potential risks".

"Parties involved in a case are never entitled to a right to choose an overseas lawyer," Hong Kong's Secretary for Justice Paul Lam said Wednesday. Exceptions can be granted by Hong Kong's leader if their participation "would not be contrary to the interests of national security", the Department of Justice said in a proposal passed by the city's legislature Wednesday.

The change stems from repeated failed attempts by the Hong Kong government to prevent Tim Owen, a prominent British rights lawyer, from defending media tycoon Jimmy Lai. Lai — one of Hong Kong's best-known democracy activists — has been behind bars since late 2020 and is facing further charges of "collusion with foreign forces" under the security law. Ad hoc admissions of overseas lawyers were pre-

viously decided by Hong Kong's courts. But China's top lawmaking body in December handed Hong Kong leader John Lee the authority to screen applicants. Beijing's decision came after three Hong Kong judges backed Lai's request to be represented by Owen, repeatedly ruling against the government.

Lawmaker Ambrose Lam said Wednesday he was disappointed the amendment allowed foreign lawyers to apply for exemptions. "Being merciful to the enemies is being cruel to ourselves," he said in the legislature. Lai's legal team have argued the government's actions violate his rights and have sought to suspend the security case against him.

They have also lodged a judicial challenge against Hong Kong's powerful national security committee and the city's Immigration Department over the decision to deny Owen a visa. Both cases have been heard and are pending rulings. — AFP



**NONTHABURI:** File photo shows Pheu Thai Party candidate Paetongtarn Shinawatra as she speaks on stage during an election rally at the Thunder Dome Stadium in Nonthaburi, north of the capital Bangkok. — AFP

## Thaksin's daughter carries Shinawatra torch in Thai polls

**BANGKOK:** Less than a fortnight after giving birth to her second child, Paetongtarn Shinawatra, the scion of Thailand's most famous political dynasty, has a date with destiny. As Thailand goes to the polls on Sunday, the 36-year-old hopes to deliver victory for the opposition Pheu Thai party — the latest incarnation of the movement founded by her billionaire father Thaksin Shinawatra.

Paetongtarn swiftly returned to campaigning after giving birth to her son on May 1, albeit only by video link so far, as she seeks to become Thailand's youngest-ever prime minister. A political newcomer who until last year helped run the hotel arm of the ultra-rich family's business empire, Paetongtarn is now the face of their latest battle against the military establishment that ousted her father and aunt from power.

Paetongtarn was a near-constant presence on the campaign trail before the birth of her son on May 1, cheerfully glad-handing supporters at rallies in searing heat despite being heavily pregnant. Two days after giving birth she presented her son to the media, hailing him as her "secret power", and vowing to get back to the campaign trail. On Friday she addressed hundreds of supporters in Bangkok by video link, urging them to bring Pheu Thai a landslide victory to thwart the military establishment's attempts to keep the party from power.

## Energy, youth

Paetongtarn, known in Thailand by her nickname Ung Ing, is the third child of Thaksin, a policeman turned billionaire telecoms tycoon who won two elections in the early 2000s before being ousted in a coup in 2006. She grew up in Bangkok and studied hotel management in Britain, then in 2019 married commercial pilot Pidok Sooksawas with two glitzy receptions in the Thai capital and Hong Kong. The couple now have two children.

She shares her jet-setting lifestyle with half a million followers on Instagram, and her youth and energy put her in stark contrast to her main military-allied rivals — two strait-laced former army chiefs. Often decked out in designer labels — or the party's signature bright red — she has energized the Pheu Thai base, taking the Shinawatra brand to a new generation while endearing herself to older Thaksin supporters with regular expressions of filial devotion on social media.

Her charisma on the campaign trail has surprised some who had written her off as little more than a figurehead with the right name. If successful, Paetongtarn will be the fourth member of the family to become prime minister after Thaksin, her aunt Yingluck and uncle Somchai Wongsawat.

She will hope to avoid the fate of her father and aunt, ousted by military coups in 2006 and 2014 respectively, and uncle, kicked out of office by a court ruling. As well as the military, Paetongtarn faces a new challenge of her own, as she seeks to connect with young voters. She faces a tough fight against a rival opposition outfit, the Move Forward Party, which has attracted many of those who took part in the 2020 pro-democracy street protest movement. — AFP

## Sudan refugees fear uncertain future in Ethiopia

**METEMA:** After a perilous three-day journey from conflict-torn Sudan, Muhamad Yusuf reached the Ethiopian border town of Metema. But like so many who had fled the deadly chaos, his relief was clouded by anxiety. His immediate prospects were limited to a seemingly interminable wait in a makeshift camp in northwestern Ethiopia, where everything was in short supply.

More than 15,000 people have fled Sudan via Metema since fighting broke out in Khartoum in mid-April, according to the UN's International Organization for Migration, with an average of 1,000 arrivals registered every day.

Every person interviewed by AFP spoke of the terror leading up to their departure — days spent holed up at home in a city gripped by gunfire and bombings, followed by a 550-kilometre (350-mile) journey haunted by fear of armed robbery en route.

Despite the dust and scorching sun, Metema, accessible by a direct road heading southeast from Khartoum, offers a welcome respite to this exhausted population — Sudanese, Ethiopian and other nationals. "Now we are secure and they provide us with shelter and some food sometimes," Yusuf, a 30-year-old auditor, told AFP. But life is difficult in the camp, he said, with most refugees "lacking even the necessities — even they don't have money to feed their children, this situation is very bad."

## 'Checkpoints'

The hastily erected camp is little more than a cluster of tarpaulin fabric roofs tied to trees. By the end of the afternoon the 10,000-litre (2,600-gallon) water tank serving thousands of people is empty, and there is possibility of refilling it until the next morning.

Those who can afford it approach local hawkers to purchase mineral water or fruit juice — kept cool

under damp canvas coverings. Every day, more people make the crossing, with their belongings towed by donkeys or packed inside wheelbarrows — a "mandatory" porter service that they have to pay for.

An Ethiopian waiter who moved to Khartoum seven years ago to earn a living, Mohamed Ali left behind everything he owned as he made a desperate push to leave the Sudanese capital. "I spent a lot of money to go there but had to borrow money to return to my country," he told AFP.

"It is tough to get transportation from Khartoum... Big buses ask you for up to 150,000 Sudanese pounds (\$250), and there are many checkpoints on the road," he said. "At each checkpoint, (armed men) searched us... and took whatever they found, including our money and any belongings we had." His fellow citizen Zakir Aba Jihad, 25, worked at a steel factory in Khartoum. "I lived there for eight years and I left only with the clothes I'm wearing," he told AFP.

## 'No hope'

Both hoped to restart their lives in Ethiopia, once they had found their way home to Jimma in the southwest — about 1,000 kilometres away. Others no longer have a passport or a country to return to. Mohammad Yousuf, a 29-year-old Afghan who was studying engineering in Khartoum, told AFP he and his compatriots had approached the UN refugee agency UNHCR for help.

"At the moment we cannot expect anything... but we hope something good will happen." A Nigerian at the camp told AFP that he felt trapped by his circumstances because of a shortage of funds. If he leaves the camp, he will need to get an Ethiopian visa, which he cannot afford. "They ask me \$80 for a visa, but I don't have money."

For Sudanese citizens like Yusuf, hope is fading fast. Even if the fighting ends, he does not anticipate going back in the absence of a civilian-led government. The situation in Sudan is going "from bad to worse", he said. "If the war stopped today... what's the future there? Is there gonna be democracy?"

"We have to be realistic, we have to manage to find another solution," Yusuf said, adding that he wanted to find asylum in a third country if possible. But with no prospects in sight, and no possibility of returning home, "we don't have a hope, really." — AFP

## Modi's party bids to retain power in south Indian bastion

**BENGALURU:** Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi faced a key test Wednesday as the only southern state where his Hindu nationalist BJP party holds power went to the polls a year before national elections. The BJP has applied its muscular brand of Hindu politics to Karnataka as it attempts to make further inroads in the south of the country of 1.4 billion people, where other parties have long held sway.

Last year, the government banned the hijab — the headscarf worn by some women in the Muslim minority — in Karnataka government schools, stoking sectarian tensions and sparking violence. In one of almost 20 election rallies he has held in the state, Modi praised an incendiary new film that wildly exaggerates the number of Hindu women converting to Islam and joining the Islamic State jihadist group.

## 15 children drown, 25 missing in Nigeria boat accident

**KANO:** Fifteen children drowned and 25 others were missing when their overloaded boat capsized in a river in northwest Nigeria, a local official said on Wednesday. The children were on their way from Dundeji village in Sokoto State to collect firewood in the bush on Tuesday on the other side of Shagari river when their boat sank. Aliyu Abubakar, local administrator of Shagari district, said.

"We woke up to a tragedy yesterday morning, where a boat carrying children capsized mid-river," Abubakar told AFP. "Fifteen bodies, 13 girls and two boys, were recovered by local rescue teams and buried in the village," said the official, who supervised the rescue operation.

River accidents are frequent in Nigeria, often caused by overloading, poor maintenance, heavy flooding in rainy season and disregard of safety regulations. Divers were working in the Shagari river late on Tuesday searching for more of the children.

In April last year, 29 children from nearby Gidan Magana village in Sokoto drowned in the same river when their vessel capsized while they were also on their way to fetch firewood for their families. During massive flooding in rainy season in December, at least 76 people drowned when their boat went down in a swollen river in southeast Anambra State.

In one of the country's worst river disasters in May 2021, only 20 people were rescued and more than 150 went missing when a boat transporting people to market broke apart while travelling between Kebbi and Niger states.

Nigeria's waterways authority has tried to ban night-time sailing on rivers to stop accidents, and overloading vessels is a criminal offence, but skippers and crews often flout the rules. River transport and market trade are common in Nigeria, where roads are often poor. The Niger, West Africa's main river travelling through Guinea to Nigeria's Niger Delta, is a key local trade route. — AFP

In another speech, the 72-year-old Modi, who is widely expected to run again in the 2024 national elections, encouraged people to vote while chanting an ode to the Hindu god Hanuman. Karnataka's most recent election in 2018 saw the BJP emerge as the top vote-getter but fall short of securing a ruling majority in the state of over 60 million people.

They assumed power a year later — allegedly by persuading members of the ruling coalition to defect. But staying in power could be hard, with the BJP's popularity hit by corruption allegations and the opposition Congress party campaigning hard on promises of free electricity and rice for the poor.

Congress has also promised to ban Bajrang Dal, a Hindu nationalist group, if voted to power, prompting BJP accusations that it is against the Hindu majority. But political scientist Sanjay Kumar said that while a loss in Karnataka would be a blow to the BJP, it offered little indication of how the BJP would perform nationwide in 2024.

"Whether the party wins an election or loses an election, they just look forward to the next election," Kumar told AFP. Results from the state election are due on Saturday. — AFP



**BENGALURU:** Polling officials collect the electronic voting machines (EVMs) in rural Bengaluru, on the eve of Karnataka State Legislative Assembly Elections. — AFP



# Business

THURSDAY, MAY 11, 2023

## Google to show off AI and Pixel gadget innovations

SAN FRANCISCO: Google is expected to enrich its popular online services with more artificial intelligence as it scrambles to catch up with rival Micro-

soft despite fears that AI poses a threat to society. Leaks ahead of the internet titan's annual developers conference have revealed that Google will also

show off new gadgets, including a foldable smartphone, and reveal additions to its Pixel line of devices. Most attention will focus on Google's expected

release of a more muscular version of its Bard generative AI being put to work across the platform. Microsoft upped the pressure last week by expanding public access to its generative AI programs — including the Bing chatbot — that have put the company founded by Bill Gates back on the map as a big tech disruptor.

The services have been enhanced with the ability to work with images as well as text, and Microsoft intends to add video to the mix, according to executives. Google is expected to follow suit in AI announcements at its annual "I/O" software developers conference held a short walk from its headquarters in the Silicon Valley city of Mountain View.

A more powerful large language model built into the heart of Bard will likely be unveiled, along with expanded use of the AI powers in Gmail, work software, search and more, according to media reports.

Large language models involve machine learning applied to massive amounts of data harvested from the internet. Generative AI can be prompted to quickly deliver written tasks from poetry and homework to computer code. It can also be prompted to create images or video.

Risks from AI include its potential uses for fraud, with voice clones, deep-fake videos and convincing written messages. A prominent computer scientist



MOUNTAIN VIEW: An annual Google I/O gathering of software developers near the internet giant's headquarters in Mountain View.

dubbed "the godfather of artificial intelligence" recently quit his job at Google and spoke out about the dangers of the technology.

Geoffrey Hinton said at a recent MIT forum that it makes sense to halt the development of AI, but added that the idea is naive given the intense competition between countries and companies involved in the sector. Hinton, who created some of the technology underlying AI systems, maintained that the existential threat from AI is "serious and close."

A range of experts in March urged a pause in the development of powerful AI systems to allow time to make sure they are safe. Their open letter, signed by more than 1,000 people, including tech billionaire Elon Musk and Apple cofounder Steve Wozniak, was prompted by generative AI technology from Microsoft-backed firm OpenAI.

### Folding phone

The I/O gathering is aimed at software developers who make apps or services that dovetail with Google's "ecosystem" and should include details about the latest Android operating system for mobile devices. Recent tweaks to Android hint it is being adapted for phones with screens that bend, allowing them to be folded. Google recently posted a brief video clip teasing a foldable phone that it is likely to formally introduce at the conference. Leaked information in recent weeks indicates that Google will also show off a lower-priced version of its Pixel 7 smartphone along with a new Pixel tablet.

Google might provide a glimpse of a Pixel 8 phone coming as its new flagship model to challenge iPhone at the premium end of the market. Google's latest quarterly earnings exceeded expectations after the company slashed 12,000 staff, or six percent of its workforce, in January. — AFP

## US consumer inflation eases

WASHINGTON: Consumer inflation in the United States nudged down only slightly in April, the Labor Department said on Wednesday, despite strong efforts to cool the economy and rein in price increases. The consumer price index (CPI), a key inflation gauge, rose 4.9 percent from a year ago, just a touch lower than March's 5.0 percent figure.

While the latest number is a step in the right direction and marks the smallest annual rise in around two years, it remains well above pre-pandemic levels. "The index for shelter was the largest contributor to the monthly all items increase, followed by increases in the index for used cars and trucks and the index for gasoline," said the Labor Department in a statement.

On a monthly basis, overall CPI rose 0.4 percent in April, picking up from a 0.1 percent rise in March. Excluding the volatile food and energy segments, consumer inflation rose 0.4 percent in April on a monthly basis, as it did in March. Analysts are closely eyeing inflation numbers as a key data point, as the Federal Reserve mulls the need for further interest rate hikes and how long to keep policy restrictive. — AFP



### FINANCIAL RESULTS Q1 2023

KD **54** Million  
**NET PROFIT**  
↑ 15%

REVENUE

↑ 15%

**468**  
KD Million

EBITDA

↑ 8%

**165**  
KD Million

EPS

**13**  
Fils

CUSTOMERS ↑ 4%

**53**  
Million



# Zain Group Q1 2023 net profit soars 15% to reach \$177 million

Revenue increases 15% to reach \$1.53bn • Customer base grows by 2.2m to reach 53m



**Newly-appointed Chairman Osamah Al-Furaih**  
The Board will build on the strong ESG foundations it inherited, and continue the company's profitable growth trajectory



**Vice-Chairman & Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi**  
Our track record of sustainable growth and solid financial position today primes Zain to execute its ambitious '4Sight' strategy"

**KUWAIT:** Zain Group, a leading provider of innovative technologies and digital lifestyle communications operating in seven markets across the Middle East and Africa, announces its consolidated financial results for the first quarter (Q1) ended March 31, 2023. Over the past 12 months, Zain added 2.2 million active customers, a 4 percent increase to serve 53 million customers.

Zain Group generated consolidated revenue of KD 468 million (\$1.53 billion) for Q1 2023, up 15 percent year-on-year (YoY). EBITDA for the quarter reached KD 165 million (\$540 million), up 8 percent YoY, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 35 percent. Net income for the quarter reached KD 54 million (\$177 million), up 15 percent YoY reflecting an earnings per share of 13 fils (\$0.04).

**Key operational notes for Q1 2023**

1. Zain Group consolidated data revenue grows 15 percent to reach \$591 million, representing 39 percent of the Group's overall revenue
2. During the quarter, Zain Group invested \$112 million in CAPEX (tangible and intangible)
3. Kuwait, KSA, and Bahrain witness impressive growth in 5G customers
4. Zain KSA completes the sale of 8,069 tower assets to the Kingdom's PIF for \$807 million, transferring 3,600 out of the 8,069 tower assets. The ownership of the remaining towers will be transferred in batches in the coming quarters.
5. Zain Iraq finalizes the sale and leaseback as well as the management rights of 4,968 towers to TASC Towers Iraq (a subsidiary of Zain Group) for \$180 million. The second phase to sell these towers to TASC Towers Holding will be concluded during second half of 2023.
6. Fintech services Group-wide witness exponential growth as total revenue soared five-fold, customer growth of 60 percent to reach 1.1 million customers with transaction value doubling
7. Enterprise revenue up 37 percent as ZainTech and local B2B teams secure multiple deals offering dynamic new and lucrative ICT services to businesses and governments.
8. Dizlee API platform and VAS digital services Group-wide witness revenue growth of 48 percent.
9. Zain's digital operator Yaqoot in KSA, and oodi in Iraq, witness robust growth in revenue and customer growth YoY
10. Brand Finance, a leading valuation and strategy consultancy based in London, values the Zain brand at \$2.74 billion, up 14 percent YoY

Newly-appointed Chairman of the Board of Directors of Zain Group Osamah Al-Furaih said, "It is a distinct honor and privilege to be appointed as Chairman of Zain Group, a company with a proud history of having a positive socio-economic impact on communities across all the countries it has operated in over the years. I want to thank my predecessor, Ahmed Al-Tahous for his contribution and legacy that took Zain to new heights, and I look forward to building on these strong foundations and working with fellow Board members and executive management to continue this upward trajectory of profitable growth and creation of shareholder value."

He continued, "A key focus of the Board will be to ensure that our Environmental, Social and Governance practices continue to be at the forefront of our sustainability and business strategies. The Board also looks forward to constructive cooperation with telecom regulators and government authorities across our footprint given the vital role they play in supporting Zain to provide meaningful connectivity to the communities, businesses, and governments we proudly serve."

- Group consolidated EBITDA up 8 percent to reach \$540 million (KD 165 million)
- Data revenue grows 10 percent to reach \$591 million
- Operations in KSA, Sudan and Iraq record impressive Q1 growth in major KPIs
- Focus on fintech services driving healthy customer and revenue growth
- Digital services revenue soar 48 percent
- Enterprise revenue up 37 percent as ZainTech and local B2B teams secure lucrative deals

## Al-Kharafi: Zain maintains leadership position of A- in 'CDP Score Report – Climate Change 2022

**KUWAIT:** Zain has re-affirmed its commitment to setting emissions targets that are in line with the Science-Based Targets initiative (SBTi) guidance (@sciencetargets) to halve carbon emissions before 2030 and achieve Net-Zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Endorsing the company's commitment and progress in this area, Zain maintained its leadership position of A- score in the 'CDP Score Report – Climate Change 2022', a grade it first achieved in 2021, becoming the highest ranked and only telecom operator in the Middle East and Africa to achieve this high rating.

Zain's activities to mitigate the negative impact of its operations on the environment are in line with the reductions required to keep global warming to the 1.5C goal set by the Paris Agreement by 2050.

Bader Al-Kharafi commented, "Addressing climate change and protecting biodiversity should be key priorities for every organization and everyone living on this planet, and private-sector organizations have a crucial role to play in setting an example as to the importance of this matter. We are passionate about being one of the most active, transparent, and outspoken advocates for achieving Net-Zero greenhouse gas emissions throughout our operations."

Furthermore, Zain has established near and long-term company-wide emission reductions targets that will soon be submitted to the SBTi for validation. The SBTi a partnership between the CDP; the United Nations Global Compact; World Resources Institute (WRI); the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) and one of the We Mean Business Coalition commitments.

quarter, as the teams in these markets effectively navigate their respective competitive and socio-economic challenges."

"The current conflict in Sudan is an unfortunate situation for humanity, and we are doing our utmost to maintain operational stability and provide connectivity to the community there. Crisis management teams have been established, implementing strategic initiatives to support our customers and workforce, and safeguard the network. Voice and data services remain functional in most parts of Sudan at this point, and we are doing everything in our power to ensure this remains the case, with Zain teams working 24/7. We are taking all reasonable measures to protect our people, assets, and commercial operations during this turbulent time and as soon as normality is restored, the entire network will become operational without much delay. Zain Sudan is a significant component of the Zain Group family given its outstanding performance in recent times, and we look forward to a peaceful solution in the country soon."

"The exponential revenue and customer growth in several of our digital initiatives, particularly in regard to our fintech, pure digital operators in Saudi Arabia and Iraq, and the Dizlee API platform and related VAS activities, are extremely gratifying, and we will continue to foster their growth. We look forward to receiving a Digital Bank license in Kuwait soon, and we are actively preparing the go-to-market roadmap and resources to launch fintech services in the country thereafter."

Al-Kharafi concluded by commenting on the increased brand valuation of Zain. "We are proud to have one of the most powerful brands in the region and all that it represents with respect to providing meaningful connectivity and empowering and improving the lives of the communities we serve. This year's 14 percent increase in brand valuation to reach \$2.74 billion has been driven by the demonstrable developments within the company, where strong corporate governance, customer-centric initiatives, heavy investment in network upgrades, B2B strategies and digital innovation are all impacting stakeholders and customer experience positively. Our corporate sustainability program and talent development through our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiative, eye-catching marketing, and social media campaigns have captured the hearts and minds of the region."

**Financial KPIs of key markets for Q1 ended March 31, 2023**

**KUWAIT:** Maintaining its market leadership, the flagship operation saw its customer base grow 4 percent to serve 2.6 million. Revenue for Q1 2023 reached KD 87 million (\$285 million), a 3 percent YoY growth. EBITDA grew by 2 percent to KD 32 million (\$105 million), representing an EBITDA margin of 37 percent. Net income reached KD 19 million (\$62 million) for Q1 2023, with data revenue growing by 1 percent and accounting for 38 percent of total revenue.

**SAUDI ARABIA:** For Q1 2023, Zain KSA revenue grew by 11 percent to \$644 million, EBITDA for the period reached \$189 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 29 percent. Net income for the three months increased six-fold reaching \$151 million mainly driven by the gain on sale of towers. The operator's data revenue represented 40 percent of total revenue and active customers increased 4 percent to stand at 8.7 million.

**IRAQ:** Zain Iraq's Q1 2023 revenue increased by 15 percent to reach \$223 million and EBITDA recorded was \$76 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 34 percent. The operation reported eight-fold increase in net profit of \$30 million for Q1 2023 mainly driven by the gain on sale of towers, noting this Tower sale represents an intergroup transaction that was eliminated upon Zain Group consolidation. The customer base increased 4 percent to 18.2 million, reflecting a market leading position.

**SUDAN:** For Q1 2023, Zain Sudan witnessed a robust growth in all its KPIs that saw revenue increase by 70 percent to reach \$167 million, with EBITDA up 66 percent amounting to \$86 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 51 percent. Net income for the period reached \$77 million, up an impressive 68 percent. Data revenue grew by 90 percent representing 34 percent of total revenue. The customer base increased 2 percent to 16.8 million, maintaining its market leadership.

**JORDAN:** For Q1 2023, Zain Jordan revenue grew 4 percent to reach \$129 million, EBITDA reached \$52 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 40 percent, with net income at \$18 million. Data revenue grew 2 percent representing 50 percent of total revenue. The customer base increased by 5 percent to stand at 3.8 million, maintaining a market leading position.

**BAHRAIN:** Zain Bahrain generated revenue of \$48 million, an increase of 6 percent with EBITDA reaching \$15 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 30 percent. Net income reached \$3.8 million, with data revenue growing 5 percent to represent 45 percent of total revenue.

**Group Key Performance Indicators (KD and USD) for first three months (Q1) of 2023**

<b>Total Managed Active Customers</b>	<b>53 million</b>
<b>Revenue</b>	<b>KD 468 million (\$1.53 billion)</b>
<b>EBITDA</b>	<b>KD 165 million (\$540 million)</b>
<b>EBITDA Margin</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>KD 54 million (\$177 million)</b>
<b>EPS</b>	<b>13 fils (\$0.04)</b>

The Chairman concluded by commenting on the situation in Sudan. "With sincere sadness and concern, we are mindful of the challenges faced by our operation in Sudan and its dedicated workforce that are making personal sacrifices to provide vital connectivity to the local community. We pray for their safety and are hopeful that the conflict will end soon."

Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi commented, "Our track record of sustainable growth sees Zain in solid financial position today, ideally positioned to invest further and exploit the next phase of growth in the telecom sector and beyond. The truly impressive Q1 2023 results are testament to the skilful execution of the company's '4Sight' strategy, focusing on innovative programs to improve the efficiency and profitability of the operations as well diversifying income sources from new lucrative business verticals in the digital

and enterprise space."

"We have made giant strides in positioning Zain as the preferred digital lifestyle communications provider and transformation partner for our consumer, enterprises, and government customers across our markets. Our future-ready approach to proficiently monetize the vast investments in 5G technology, 4G networks, and fiber expansion across all markets in recent years is paying off, evident by the 2.2 million additional customers and resulting revenue and net profit growth during Q1."

"Our flagship operation in Kuwait continues to perform strongly, especially in the B2B sector, as well as through its introduction of Zain Max, a quad-play redefining a new generation of Internet and entertainment plans for postpaid customers. Similarly, the solid performances of our operations in Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Iraq standout for the





## Business

# KIA eyes long-term investment collaboration with India: MD

## Indian delegation meets UIC, KDIPA and Kuwait Hospital officials



KUWAIT: KIA Managing Director Ghanem Al-Ghaneiman and KIA officials pose for a photo with Indian delegation.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority officials with Indian Embassy First Secretary Smita Patil and the members of the Indian delegation.

By Sajeev K Peter

**KUWAIT:** An Indian business delegation, which was on a three-day visit to Kuwait, called on officials at the Kuwait Investment Authority on Tuesday and discussed means of further bolstering investment collaboration between the countries. KIA Managing Director Ghanem Al-Ghaneiman received the Indian delegation representing Invest India and National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF). Both sides discussed means to further deepen investment cooperation between India and Kuwait.

The delegation also held discussions with officials

of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA). Separately, the delegation from Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) met with Kuwait Hospital CEO Alexander Jankuloski and team and discussed ways of further building synergies between the health-care sectors of the two countries.

In another meeting with the Chairman of the Union of Investment Companies (UIC) Saleh Al-Selmi and UIC officials, the Indian delegation explored potential areas of collaboration and engagement with Kuwait's top investment companies. "India is viewed as world's one of the most exciting long-term investment opportunities," said Ghaneiman while addressing the invest-

ment conference titled 'Unleashing Synergies' on Monday. Reaffirming KIA's commitment to exploring more opportunities to collaborate with India, he said: "As we look towards the future, I am confident that our investment relations will continue to grow from strength to strength and play a crucial role in strengthening greater economic ties between Kuwait and India."

KIA is one of the world's oldest and largest sovereign wealth funds. KIA has a well-diversified investment portfolio across all assets and regions and has been actively participating in India's growth trajectory over the past few years. "KIA's initial investment in India was a mere \$35 million. Today KIA has reached

double-digit billions of dollars," Ghaneiman said.

The Indian Embassy in Kuwait hosted a conference on India-Kuwait investment on Monday. It was organized in collaboration with the Indian Business and Professional Council (IBPC) and supported by the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) and UIC. The delegation comprising high-ranking officials and delegates from India's Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Invest India, NIIF and CII held a series of discussions with top industry and business officials over the last three days. The delegation wrapped up its three-day visit on Wednesday.

## Stock markets down as US inflation eases slightly

**LONDON:** Stock markets were muted Wednesday after much-anticipated data showed US consumer inflation had eased only slightly in April.

Annual consumer inflation rose 4.9 percent last month, just a touch lower from 5.0 percent in March, official figures showed, despite strong efforts to rein in price increases. While the latest number is a step in the right direction and marks the smallest annual rise in around two years, it remains well above pre-pandemic levels.

"Holding relatively firm at 4.9 percent, inflation is persisting despite the Fed's long-running campaign of rate hikes," said Srijan Katyal, global head of strategy and trading services at brokerage ADSS. Following last week's Fed hike to interest rates and a forecast-beating jobs report for the world's biggest economy, cautious investors were waiting for the key US data for insights into the direction of US policymakers. Inflation data is likely to play a key decision-making role in the US central bank's June policy meeting, according to market watchers.

"The sharp rise in the cost of borrowing has had a brutal impact on consumers and businesses and any relief on this front would be welcomed by the market — even if it is just a rates pause rather than reduction in the near-term," said Russ Mould, investment director at AJ Bell. The Fed has hinted at a possible pause in its long-running tightening cycle but observers warned that any sign inflation is creeping up would put pressure on officials to turn the screws further.

Stock markets in Europe slid after the release of the data, with Paris, London and Frankfurt all down at the close. In New York, the Dow Jones climbed slightly on opening before declining in afternoon trading. Major Asian indices also traded down Wednesday.

### Crunch talks

While the US economy shows resilience, several indicators suggest it is easing, feeding concerns that it could be heading for a recession. "The central bank has made it perfectly clear that returning inflation to target over the medium term remains the primary goal whatever the cost but we've now likely entered the uncomfortable period in which things are breaking, credit conditions are tightening considerably but the data isn't quite there yet," said Craig Erlam, senior market analyst at OANDA.

Adding to the headache for the Fed is the need to avoid causing more ructions in the finance sector after the recent upheaval that has seen three US regional lenders go under, one taken over by JPMorgan, and UBS buying Credit Suisse in the space of two months.

The lenders' troubles have been partly blamed on the rapid rate hikes since last year, meaning monetary policymakers have been forced to rethink their approach to bringing down inflation.

Dealers are also keeping tabs on developments in the talks to raise the US debt ceiling, with congressional leaders unable to reach an agreement on how to lift borrowing before a deadline to avoid a catastrophic default. Crunch talks between President Joe Biden and key lawmakers from both parties Tuesday yielded no breakthrough, though they did decide to meet again Friday to hammer out a deal. However, the way forward will be tough because the Republicans, who control the House of Representatives, said they would only raise the limit from its current \$31.4 trillion maximum if spending curbs were enacted. Still, Jason Wong, at the Bank of New Zealand, said traders were biding their time for now. — AFP

### NBK ECONOMIC REPORT



## Kuwait's consumer inflation ticks up in Q1 2023 to 3.7%

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's consumer price inflation ticked up during 1Q23, from 3.2 percent at end-2022 to 3.7 percent y/y in March, amid price rises across several components including food, clothing and housing services. This comes against a backdrop of still strong (albeit slowing) consumer spending growth. Core inflation, which excludes food and housing, continued to rise in 1Q23, finishing the quarter at 3.2 percent y/y (+2.8 percent in December 2022).

Growth in the food and beverages component of the CPI remained elevated in March, though unchanged from December's rate of 7.5 percent y/y. Among the subcomponents, price rises in the meat & poultry (+8.8 percent y/y), fruits (+9.8 percent)

## No US debt limit deal yet after Biden meets Republicans

**WASHINGTON:** A high-stakes meeting between President Joe Biden and key lawmakers from both parties on Tuesday yielded no breakthrough on the impasse over the US debt limit, but the group agreed to keep trying to avert a devastating default.

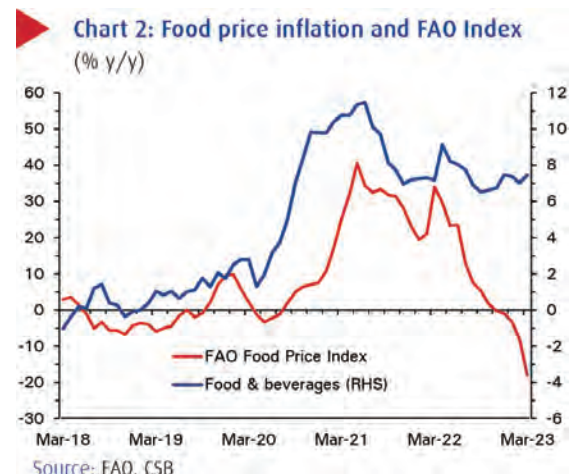
Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and Mitch McConnell, the Senate minority leader, met with Biden and top Democratic leaders at the White House in the latest round of a power struggle threatening massive consequences for the world's largest economy.

Biden said he made one thing clear during the talks: "Default is not an option." While McCarthy said he "didn't see any new movement," he, McConnell, Democratic Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries and Biden would meet again Friday. The lifting of the so-called debt ceiling — a limit on government borrowing to pay for bills already incurred — is often routine.

But budget-minded Republicans, who won control of the House of Representatives in the 2022 midterm elections, have vowed to only raise the limit from its current \$31.4 trillion maximum if spending curbs are enacted. After the White House talks, Jeffries said that "extreme" Republicans "have indicated that they are willing to take us down the path of default."

Schumer added that by not taking default off the table, McCarthy was "greatly endangering America."

A similar impasse in 2011 resulted in the United States losing the coveted AAA debt rating. Biden has warned of dire consequences this time too. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has said that unless Congress



and vegetables (+10.2 percent) segments trended higher during the quarter while those in the volatile fish & seafood component eased. Domestic food price trends continued to diverge from international food price benchmarks, such as the UN's FAO index, which fell 18.0 percent y/y in March on a likely combination of base effects from Russia's invasion last year and normalizing global food supply chains.

Meanwhile, prices in the housing services components (the largest CPI component by weight at 33 percent) rose 2.5 percent y/y at end-1Q23, up from 1.4 percent at end-2022. The gain was largely due to an increase in housing rents, which rose 2.8 percent y/y. Inflation in this component has spent most of the past six years in flat-to-negative territory, turning mildly positive only in 2H 2021. Growth in the much smaller "Services of Maintenance and Repair" subcomponent, which tends to reflect construction and raw material costs, was unchanged at 1.6 percent y/y.

The latest move in core inflation included a month-on-month gain in March of 0.5 percent. This

acts in the coming weeks, "financial and economic chaos would ensue." Yellen has also had conversations with CEOs to discuss the dangers of brinkmanship, a source familiar with the matter confirmed to AFP.

### Asia trip on the line

While McConnell said "the United States is not going to default," he stressed that "we are running out of time." Biden indicated that he might call off his upcoming trip to Asia for Group of Seven meetings, adding that while he is "still committed" to attending, the debt ceiling talks are crucial.

He conceded it was "possible" that he would not make the trip, telling reporters: "If somehow we got down to the wire and still haven't resolved this... I would not go." McCarthy maintained that House Republicans were doing their jobs by passing a plan that raises the borrowing limit, while instituting major government spending cuts. Democrats call that plan the "Default on America Act."

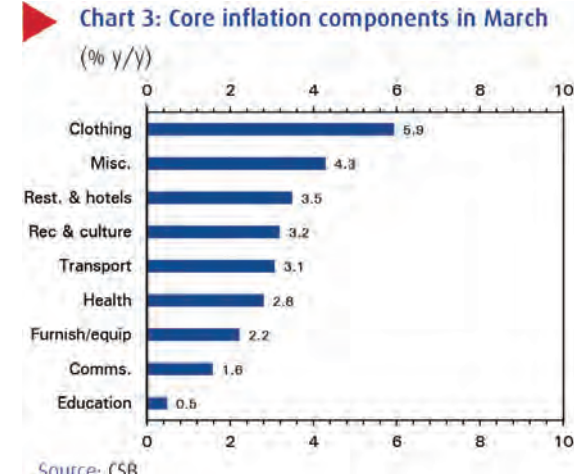
Both sides have accused each other of taking the country "hostage."

Biden has repeatedly called for a "clean" lifting of the US borrowing limit, arguing that the deficit spending has already been approved by Congress and is therefore not up for debate. The Senate is bracing for a clash, as 43 Republicans in the Democratic-controlled chamber pledged over the weekend to impose legislative hurdles to any attempt to raise the debt ceiling "without substantive spending and budget reforms."

It remains unclear when the government will run out of funds, but the Treasury has warned it could happen as early as June 1. In addition to triggering Wall Street turmoil, failure to address the debt limit impasse may also impact Biden politically as he forges ahead into a re-election campaign.

### Uncertainties ahead

Should the United States be unable to meet all its obligations, the Treasury would likely prioritize debt and interest payments, analysts say. That could



came on the back of a broad-based rise in subcomponent prices in which the biggest contributors (after accounting for their weight in the index) were Clothing (+5.9 percent y/y), Furnishings & household maintenance (+2.2 percent), Services & miscellaneous goods (+4.3 percent), and Transportation (+3.1 percent).

The increase in the "Services & miscellaneous" component, which includes jewelry, will have been affected by rising prices of precious metals including gold, which were up considerably in Q1.

Looking ahead, we expect inflation to average 3.1 percent for the 2023 overall (from 2.7 percent previously). This is down from last year's average of 4.0 percent amid an absence of large external shocks such as the Russian invasion, an easing of domestic labor market shortages, the ongoing softening of consumer spending growth and as the impact of tighter monetary policy continues to filter through. However, with the US Federal Reserve near or at the end of its own tightening cycle, the scope for further increases in domestic interest rates could be limited.



WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden speaks to the press after meeting with US Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy, House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell at the White House in Washington, DC, on May 9, 2023. — AFP

mean delays in doling out funds to politically sensitive groups, such as Social Security beneficiaries or Medicare providers.

Financial markets would also be rattled by the uncertainty. In a recent report, Moody's Analytics projected that the most likely date the Treasury Department will exhaust its accounting measures is June 8, signaling "precious little time" to reach agreement. This date means Treasury payments will likely be disrupted for a few days "until a mid-June surge of tax payments materializes" and helps with revenue flows. But markets are sure to react negatively, with the subsequent selloff on Wall Street likely to catalyze action on Capitol Hill.

"We think lawmakers will try to negotiate a compromise bill first if they are still at a stalemate when the debt limit is at risk of being breached, which seems likely," Nancy Runden Houten of Oxford Economics said Tuesday. She earlier told AFP that "risks are certainly elevated compared to prior debt limit standoffs." — AFP



## Lifestyle

# Al-Terkait: Al-Safat Investment pursues a sustainable, prudent development plan

## Annual report discusses macroeconomic challenges, expansion strategy

KUWAIT: The Al-Safat Investment Co released its annual report that discusses the company's sustainable vision towards a prudent strategic plan of seizing and developing investment opportunities through local and regional expansions. The report highlights the company's women empowerment initiatives as part of its social responsibility program. The report also discusses global macroeconomic challenges and ongoing structural reforms taken by the local economic authorities that supported the stability of Kuwait's economy compared to the global economy. Following is the report presented by Abdullah Hamad Al-Terkait, Chairman, Al-Safat Investment Company.

It gives me pleasure to welcome you on this auspicious annual occasion, to meet you again in order to keep abreast of the major economic developments and the company's performance this year. It is with honor that I submit to you Al-Safat Investment Company's annual report which includes the independent auditor's report, the consolidated income statement and the consolidated statement of financial position for the financial year ending 31 December, 2022.

On behalf of members of the Board of Directors I extend my thanks to the shareholders and the staff for their continuous work with full resilience within a business environment fraught with developments and transformations, and for the efforts they exerted to achieve the company's long-term goals in line with its strategies and to seek a better future for the company based on solid foundations.

### 2022 overview

The year 2022 was characterized with global macroeconomic uncertainty leading to a challenging investment decision making environment. Inflation was the main headline of this year's global economic challenges, which are at multi-decade highs leading the global economic authorities to take remedial decisions to tame inflation. Consequently, the Central Bank of Kuwait increased its discount rate from 1.5 percent in December 2021 to 3.5 percent in December 2022, directly impacting the country's risk premium pressuring asset valuations. The macroeconomic challenges were also heightened by the war in Ukraine and the residual



Abdullah Hamad Al-Terkait

effects of the pandemic. Nevertheless, the local economy benefited from the rise in oil prices which contributed to the recovery of Kuwait's budgetary deficits. Also, ongoing structural reforms taken by the local economic authorities supported the stability of Kuwait's economy compared to the global economy.

### Financial statements 2022

Throughout the year, Al-Safat Investment Co has reported an overall consolidated operating and investment income amounting to KD 2.8 million compared to KD 4.5 million last year witnessing a 38 percent Y-o-Y decrease. This was mainly due to the decrease in the fair value of our investment properties from KD 19.6 million in 2021 to KD 17.4 million in 2022, resulting in KD 1.3 million unrealized losses. We remain confident that these asset price decreases are short-term and will readjust in line with long term trends in the near future. Despite that, the operating income amounted to KD 3.4 million compared to KD 3.2 million last year representing 6 percent Y-o-Y increase, owing to Al-Assriya Printing, Press Publishing and Distribution Co's revenue recovery to its pre-pandemic levels after being impacted in the last two years.

The company also bore foreign exchange rate losses resulting from Egyptian pound and Lebanese lira currency devaluation, amounting to KD 1 million compared to last year's losses of KD 22,000. As a result of the aforementioned points, Al-Safat Investment Co has reported an earnings per share of 0.66 fils compared

to 5.08 fils last year.

It is worth noting that Al-Safat Investment Co succeeded in exiting 75 percent of its residential property portfolio in Lebanon belonging to Al-Ezdehar Real Estate Tourism Company, a subsidiary, amidst Lebanon's economic obstacles.

Total Assets Under Management (AUM) decreased from KD 66.6 million in 2021 to KD 49.9 million in 2022, representing a 25 percent decrease from last year. This was due to exit transactions worth KD 25 million through our Clients Portfolio. During the year, Assets Management achieved a 10 percent profit for Clients Portfolio.

### Al-Ahmadi Project

The real estate sector is one of the economic pillars of Al-Safat investments because it is one of the profitable fixed assets with limited risks. Therefore, and through our subsidiary Nakhl Al-Safat Real Estate Co, Al-Safat Co managed to develop the East Ahmadi complex, with its multi-purpose stores, shops and offices, focusing on handicraft and manufacturing of medium and small enterprises, covering a rental area of 335.12 sq. m. The company has leased approximately 48 percent of the rentable areas of this distinguished complex which provides technological services and data protection at world standards.

### Social responsibility

As you are aware, we don't shun giving and showing gratitude to the state which hosts us and the surrounding society. The company societal responsibility is an integral part of its message, and it is reflected in the activities and events we organize all the year round.

### Awareness and the Youths

Al-Safat was one of the sponsors of the Fursan Al-Sena'a, aka; the Knights of Industry program organized by the Kuwait Industries Union in cooperation with LOYAC. We hosted over 50 Intermediate and Secondary school students in two stages for a full day to introduce them to the nature of investment and its importance in developing and raising of the state economy and improving the individual's income.

### Health

We attach great importance to this aspect and strive continuously to spread culture and health awareness, in particular protective health which we see as an effective and successful means to not just treat diseases but to pre-empt them. In October we launched in Al-Safat Tower a breast cancer awareness campaign. We also hosted a health corner in cooperation with Al-Salam International Hospital to disseminate protective health culture among staff and visitors of Al-Safat Tower in November, a month globally dedicated to raising awareness of men's health.

### Charity Work

We launched a campaign with participation from Company staff and all workers in the Tower to collect the largest quantity of clean second-hand clothes to be donated to the needy in Kuwait and around the world in cooperation with the Humanitarian Excellence Society.

### Company outlook

Al-Safat Investment Co is at a new phase in its journey based on a clear vision of its future investment strategy goals. The company is looking forward to devising its market positioning and expansion plan through opportunistic local and regional strategies. It is the Board of Directors and the Executive Management's top priority to focus on value creation for its shareholders'.

### The merger

The company has announced that it is in the process of a merger with Cap Corp Investment company which would result in a higher operational efficiency in terms of revenue, costs and financial

included vital civic infrastructure, leaving many children growing up without outdoor recreational facilities, parents told AFP.

There is little room for bigger playgrounds, schools and hospitals, many of which were built under Communist rule more than 30 years ago. "My kids' only chance to play outside is on the weekend," said Ulzii, a mother of three. "They stay home and watch screens."

### Out of reach

Just a stone's throw from parliament, the Shangri-La hotel — which boasts impressive views and hundreds of rooms priced well out of reach of the average Mongolian — was built on land once intended to be occupied by a children's amusement park.

Existing civic services such as schools



Al-Safat Investment Company's annual report cover features an image to show the company's commitment to women empowerment.

stability, therefore creating a financial entity more capable of rising and future development which would have a positive impact on the Company value and its position in the local market.

### Market Maker

Al-Safat Investment Co seeks to increase the Company business and add the Market Maker license to its activities which would have a positive impact on the local market. The Board of Directors has approved the carrying out of the necessary studies and the completion of requirements to enable the Company to obtain a Market Maker license. The Executive Management sought to meet the requirements of the Capital Markets Authority and obtain the initial approval to begin implementing the requirements for practicing the Market Maker activity.

### Incubator of Small and Medium Enterprises

We are at progress stages of transforming the Hexoffice project from a headquarters of the joint offices of our Company into an incubator that contributes to the development, nursing and advancing of small and medium enterprises in Kuwait by obtaining the official approval of the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprise Development so that Hexoffice becomes a strategic partner of the Fund and the State through helping entrepreneurs develop the idea into a thought-out project, create a modern technological and innovative environment and introduce them to the latest in technological innovations with a view to cutting down time and facilitating the process of nurturing and implementation. We also aim through the incubator to provide the incubated with administrative, marketing, media and logistical services, as well as following up their enterprises through periodic evaluation of the entrepreneurs enrolled in the incubator and pin-pointing the causes of success or failure.

### Conclusion

After this detailed exposition I must stress that the company intends to go ahead with its sustainable vision towards a prudent strategic plan of seizing and developing investment opportunities through the targeting of certain local and regional expansions that would enable us to realize robust profits and financial results and seeking new horizons that would enhance the presence of the company and its strength.

Finally, I must thank our shareholders for their precious trust and extend my full appreciation and gratitude to the Al Safat Investment Co. staff who were the first and most vital investment of the Company over many years of friendship and sophisticated professional partnership.

My thanks are also extended to the various regulatory authorities in Kuwait (Capital Market Authority, Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Central Bank of Kuwait, Boursa Kuwait) for their continuous cooperation and their efforts and dedication to developing and improving the Kuwaiti financial markets sector.

Abdullah Hamad Al-Terkait  
Chairman, Al-Safat Investment Company

### Larger issues

Some are pushing back: in the face of protests, the city's mayor in 2021 announced a ban on construction permits for new buildings, with the exception of schools, until 2040. That ban does not, however, cover already-approved projects, meaning construction crews are still hard at work all over the city. "When the country became democratic in 1990 Mongolians travelled abroad, and when they saw megacities like New York or Singapore, they wanted shiny skyscrapers and built the same ones here," Achit-Erdene Darambazar, an investment banker, told AFP. In a country where poverty remains stagnant, some believe the construction boom is emblematic of larger issues — specifically alleged corruption by public officials. "We're asking each other: 'Where did the mining export income go?'" Achit-Erdene said.—AFP



## Mongolia's building boom traps residents

ULAANBAATAR, Mongolia: Otgoos recalls running around freely as a child in Mongolia's once sparsely populated capital city, but he fears a rapid construction boom has now trapped his children in a concrete jungle. Across Ulaanbaatar, high-rises are replacing the yurts that Mongolians have for centuries called home, symbols of a nomadic life that is fading away. Locals say the construction boom — fuelled by a decade-long mining windfall — is squeezing out room for much-needed public services, from new hospitals to

children's playgrounds.

"When I was a child I spent all day outside," said Otgoos, who only gave one name. "We used to play soccer, running like a wolf or rabbit in big empty spaces." "My kids can't run like us. All places are filled with new apartment buildings." Mongolia's mining boom drove double-digit growth, with vast profits from coal making up a quarter of the country's gross domestic product in 2022.

The industry has sparked a wave of demand for office space and luxury apartments in Ulaanbaatar. The haphazard and rapid mushrooming of the capital city — its population growing from half a million in the 1990s to roughly two million in 2022 — has also led to massive daily traffic jams, trapping people in often hours-long commutes to and from work. The boom, however, has largely not



## Lifestyle

# Syrian stand-up comedy has war-weary crowds in stitches



Mary Obaid performs during a comedy night titled "Styria" which is an Arabic mash-up of Syria and hysteria, in Damascus. —AFP photos



Hussein Al-Rawi performs during a comedy night titled "Styria" which is an Arabic mash-up of Syria and hysteria, in Damascus.

In a dimly lit Damascus cafe, Sharief Homsy kicked off comedy night with a quip about war-battered Syria's modern-day prince charming: an eligible bachelor with attractive supplies of fuel and electricity. "Marry me, I have a bright future: 100 litres of petrol, solar panels to generate electricity and three gas canisters," he said, performing a mock proposal that had the audience howling. Every week, members of Syria's first stand-up comedy troupe crack jokes about daily struggles like power cuts and fuel shortages, lightening the mood for despondent Damascenes after 12 years of war.

The audience prefers "to laugh and forget the problems they cannot solve", said Homsy, 31. "There is nothing else to do but laugh." He and a few of his friends founded "Styria"—an Arabic mash-up of Syria and hysteria—four months ago, and put out a call on social media for others to join. The group has since swelled to 35 members and has become a success, regularly drawing crowds at the capital's Deez cafe. "The country's situation is hysterical," Homsy told AFP, and "filled with problems and gloom". "We must face it with hysterical laughter."

The war in Syria, which broke out in 2011, has killed more than 500,000



People attend a comedy night titled "Styria" which is an Arabic mash-up of Syria and hysteria, in Damascus.

people, displaced millions and battered the country's infrastructure and industry. In government-held Damascus, religion and politics are off-limits for the comedians, deemed too risky to broach. Before performances, they meet at a troupe member's home to brainstorm and try out new lines.

"They told me to draw in the crowds with funny stories," said one comedian during a rehearsal, as the power dropped in and out. "I thought long and

hard and found that the funniest thing in my life is... my life." His colleagues encouraged him to talk about his love life. "He now has so many exes, his life is an equation," one quipped.

### 'Red lines'

At the Deez cafe, comedian Malke Mardinali, 28, said the troupe's inspiration came from "our daily lives, which are full of suffering". "In Europe, even under three metres of snow, the elec-

tricity still works," he told the crowd. "Here, when we hear Fairuz sing 'Winter Is Back' the power cuts out automatically," he said, drawing chuckles with the reference to a famous Lebanese tune. Mary Obaid, 21 -- the only woman in "Styria"—joked about Syria's public transport, badly overcrowded as petrol shortages push people to abandon their cars.

"Syrian buses can accommodate 24 million people," she joked, referring to Syria's pre-war population. "In the end, without misery there is no comedy," she told AFP. Fellow comedian Amir Dayrawan, 32, said doing stand-up helped him "face the fears locked inside". Depression set in after he lost his sister and nephew in the conflict, and worsened after a deadly earthquake struck Syria and Turkey on February 6, killing thousands.

Joining "Styria" helped him shake off his despair and cope with his loss, he said, despite having to self-censor. "We don't mention politics, though we sometimes hint at sexual and religious issues—but within the red lines," he said. "One day, I hope we can free ourselves intellectually and discuss any topics without fear." —AFP

## 'PICASSO SCULPTOR' EXHIBITION OPENS IN MALAGA

An exhibition of sculptures by Picasso, who is better known for his Cubist and surrealist works, opens on Tuesday in the legendary Spanish artist's hometown of Malaga.

Housed at the southern resort city's Picasso Museum, the "Picasso Sculptor. Matter and Body" exhibition brings together 61 sculptures he made between 1909 and 1964.



A visitor walks past a sculpture of Spanish painter and sculptor Pablo Picasso during the inauguration of his "Picasso Escultor". —AFP photos



Visitors attend the inauguration of Spanish painter and sculptor Pablo Picasso's "Picasso Escultor".

It forms part of the global celebrations marking 50 years since the artist's death and will run until September 10.

"It is the first major exhibition in Spain devoted exclusively to Picasso's sculpture," the exhibition's curator Carmen Gimenez told reporters. "The human body was always his primary interest and for that reason" it is the focus of this exhibition, she added.

Among the works on display are the "Reclining bather" (1931), a plaster sculpture of a woman lying down, "Woman with vase" (1933), a bronze woman fashioned from ovals, and "Child" (1960), a rounded face with arms and legs, also in bronze. The exhibition traces Picasso's development as an artist over almost six decades of sculpting. It reflects the influences of

Cubism, abstraction and 'found object' (pieces made with items not normally used in art) through works made in materials from wood and iron to cement, metal and bronze. Sculpture was one of Picasso's lesser-known talents and the artist "may have made some 700 sculptures compared to the approximately 4,500 paintings he produced", the Picasso Museum said.

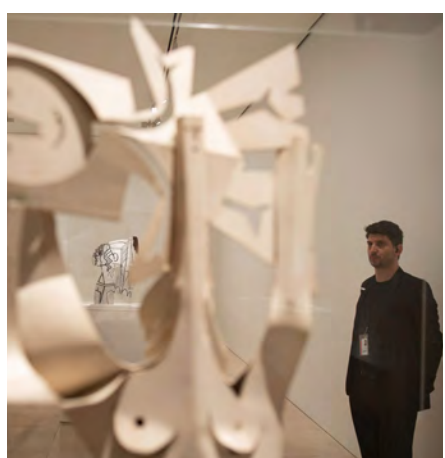
The start of the exhibition coincides with the 20th anniversary of the opening of the Picasso Museum of Malaga. Picasso was born in Malaga in 1881 and died in Mougins on the French Riviera in 1973. He first mooted the idea of a Picasso museum in Malaga in 1953 but it only became a reality five decades later in 2003, according to the museum's website. — AFP



Grand-son of Pablo Picasso, Bernard Ruiz-Picasso (left) and Art Curator Carmen Gimenez, pose during the inauguration of the "Picasso Escultor".



A visitor attends the inauguration of Spanish painter and sculptor Pablo Picasso's "Picasso Escultor".



Visitors attend the inauguration of Spanish painter and sculptor Pablo Picasso's "Picasso Escultor".



## Daft Punk to unveil never-heard song where it all began

The music of pioneering French electronic duo Daft Punk will resound on Thursday through Paris' Centre Pompidou, as a never-released track is unveiled at the spot where their love affair with the genre began. Dubbed "Infinity Repeating", the tune was recorded as the robot-helmeted pair were working on their 2013 album "Random Access Memories" but it was left on the cutting room floor in favour of others like global mega-hit "Get Lucky".



Recording artists Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo (left) and Thomas Bangalter of Daft Punk attend the 56th GRAMMY Awards at Staples Center in Los Angeles, California — AFP

Two years after the group broke up for good and ten years after that album's release, fans of their pop, funk and disco-infused sound can head to the central Paris modern art museum to discover the new track. Entry is free on a first-come first-served basis.

Featuring the voice of The Strokes' Julian Casablancas, the demo and its accompanying video will be played at "ultra-high-fidelity" for 150 people in a gallery space, as well as in a 350-seat cinema auditorium and on a giant screen in the Centre Pompidou atrium. The Pompidou was the jumping-off point for Daft Punk's leap into electronica, as the teenaged Thomas Bangalter and Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo attended a 1992 rave there that opened their eyes to machine music's possibilities.

"The first rave we went to was on the roof" of the Pompidou... "We discovered a different kind of music, as well as an energy, with people dancing to songs they didn't know," Bangalter said in a 2009 podcast. "We said to ourselves there was something we could do with electronic music". Their new name was appropriated from a scathing review of their guitar-based band Darlin' in British magazine Melody Maker. "Infinity Repeating" forms part of 35 minutes of unheard material included on a new release Friday of "Random Access Memories" -- Daft Punk's fourth and final studio album that won five Grammy awards. — AFP





## Honey production in Gaza continues despite Zionist harassment



The process of producing honey in the Gaza Strip continues strong despite the Zionist occupation's harassment and intimidation. To reach their place of work, Palestinian beekeepers have to go through various

hardships, including a labyrinth of inhumane and unnecessary Zionist checkpoints. There are some 350 beekeepers in Gaza tending to 18,000 beehives situated near Gaza's borders. — KUNA



## Brazilian rock icon Rita Lee dies at 75

Rita Lee, a Brazilian rock-and-roll icon who sang with legendary group Os Mutantes and went on to a trailblazing solo career as one of Latin America's first female rockers, has died at age 75, her family said Tuesday.

The Latin Grammy-winning singer-songwriter, who was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2021, died at home in Sao Paulo Monday night "surrounded by the love of her entire family, as she always wanted," relatives said in a statement on Instagram. Lee was "one of the biggest and most brilliant names in Brazilian music," President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva wrote on Twitter, hailing her "creativity and daring."

"She spared nothing and no one with her humor and eloquence. She fought machismo in her music and her life, and inspired generations of women in rock and art. We will never forget her."

Known as the "Queen of Rock" in Brazil, Lee was a leading figure in the "Tropicalismo" movement that revolutionized Brazilian music amid the country's 1964-1985 military dictatorship.

With her eye-grabbing outfits, bright red hair and colored sunglasses, she remained a national fixture across the decades, revered for her irreverent songs on love and freedom. Her family said a public wake would be held at the planetarium of Sao Paulo's Ibirapuera Park on Wednesday. Her body will be cremated in a private ceremony, in line with her wishes, they said.

Her father, a dentist, included the "Lee" in her name in tribute to Confederate General Robert E. Lee. Lee got her start singing Beatles covers in an all-female band, the Teenage Singers. She shot to fame in the 1960s with Os Mutantes and the Tropicalismo movement, which blended international pop and psychedelic rock with Brazilian sounds.

### 'Intense, spectacular life'

Lee went solo in the 1970s, releasing a string of hits including "Ovelha Negra" (1975), "Mania de voce" (1979) and "Lanca Perfume" (1980). She remained a bridge with the world throughout her career, opening for the Rolling Stones in their first-ever concert in Brazil in 1995,

and releasing an album of bossa nova covers of Beatles songs in 2001. Lee, who released more than 30 albums across her five-decade career, won the Latin Grammy for best Brazilian rock album in 2001, with her record "3001."

She retired from performing live in 2012, at age 64, citing "physical fragility." "My mother, whom I loved more than anything in this life, has become a star in the sky," her son Joao, one of her three children, wrote on Instagram. "What an intense, spectacular life you've had. Admired and loved by so many people, so far ahead of your time. Your legacy, story and art will live forever." — AFP

### 'Revolutionary woman'

Fellow legend Gilberto Gil led tributes from the music world, posting a compilation online of pictures and videos of himself and Lee playing together through the years. "Rest in peace, my sister," wrote the 80-year-old singer-songwriter and former culture minister.

Current Culture Minister Margareth Menezes hailed Lee as a "revolutionary woman" in remarks to the Brazilian Senate, where she called for a minute of silence in the late singer's honor.

Rita Lee Jones was born on December 31, 1947 in Sao Paulo, to a family descended from immigrants from the American South who left for Brazil after the US Civil War.



File photo shows Brazilian singer Rita Lee arriving at a hotel next to the Sambadrome to attend the second night of carnival celebrations in Sao Paulo, on February 19, 2012.



Handout picture taken on July 18, 2012, shows Brazilian rock singer Rita Lee performing during the Serginho Groisman show in Sao Paulo, Brazil. — AFP photos



## US woman who wrote book on grief charged with killing husband

A US woman who wrote a book on dealing with grief after the death of her husband has been charged with his murder. Kouri Richins penned "Are You With Me?" in the months after Eric Richins was found dead in their bedroom in Utah in March 2022.

Richins told police she had mixed her husband a drink and taken it to him in bed. When she came back later she found he was "cold to the touch," Fox News 13 reported Monday. An autopsy revealed he had died from an overdose of fentanyl, with five times the lethal dosage in his body. Investigators found Kouri Richins had asked an acquaintance to get her strong prescription pain medication, specifically "some of the Michael Jackson stuff." Richins received up to 30 fentanyl pills.

A few days later, Eric Richins "told a friend that he thought his wife was trying to poison him," investigators' documents said, according to Fox News 13. Kouri Richins obtained another batch of fentanyl shortly before her husband died. Richins' book, which was published almost exactly a year after her husband died, is described by its blurb as "heart-warming and reassuring." — AFP



## Sports

# France's Paret-Peintre secures Giro stage; Norway's Leknessund in pink

## Dog causes world champ Evenepoel to crash at Giro

**LAGO LACENO:** French climber Aurelien Paret-Peintre hailed his "perfect day" as he broke away to win stage four of the Giro d'Italia on Tuesday with Andreas Leknessund of Norway taking the overall leader's pink jersey. The duo had led the peloton by over five minutes and held on to just enough of that lead on the final sharp climb to the ski resort Lago Laceno for the Norwegian to take the fabled pink jersey held overnight by race favorite Remco Evenepoel.

"It was a dream day, a perfect day for me – the breakaway was super hard to make," said Paret-Peintre, who rides for AG2R-Citroen. On the final climb, Leknessund attacked first but Paret-Peintre was able to come back on the flat of the last three kilometers.

"I was patient on the last climb and I think he blew his legs a bit. Afterwards I knew I was faster than him in the sprint," added the Frenchman. While Evenepoel took pink on the opening day in a time-trial along the Adriatic coastline, Leknessund, a former Norwegian time-trial champion, trailed him by 1min 18sec and is the new leader due to that effort combined with Tuesday's escape. "It's super special to be in the pink," said Leknessund. "As everyone knows cycling is not so easy and to actually make it is unbelievable."

Overall Leknessund leads Evenepoel by 28sec with Paret-Peintre third at 30sec followed by UAE's Joao Almeida and Jumbo-Visma's Primoz Roglic. Evenepoel suffered a late puncture as the peloton rolled through heavy rain into the mountains of the

Lucanian Apennines, which his team dealt with swiftly. The Belgian also had an early scare when his key rival Roglic joined a failed escape whilst the Quick-Step star was stuck at the back. Evenepoel displayed his trademark confidence after the stage.

"It's no problem giving up the pink jersey, on Wednesday I'll be wearing the rainbow one," he said, referring to the world champion colors he claimed in Australia last season. "I was relaxed throughout the stage even if it was difficult, high-speed and nervous out there at times." On the last climb Evenepoel was isolated from his Quick-Step team, while the yellow Jumbo-Visma shirts and the blue of Ineos had numbers all the way to the last climb. French veteran Thibaut Pinot remains in the blue king of the mountains jersey with 30 points. Wednesday's stage five is a 175km run from Atripalda to Salerno on the Amalfi coast where a mass sprint is expected.

### Evenepoel crashes

In another development, Remco Evenepoel crashed during the fifth stage of the Giro d'Italia when a dog crossed the road early in Wednesday's 171-kilometre ride towards Salerno. World champion Evenepoel hit the deck more than 150km from the finish in rain-soaked southern Italy after a dog ran across Evenepoel's Soudal-Quick Step teammate Davide Ballerini. Evenepoel is second in the Giro's general classification and is the favourite to win the three-week Grand Tour.



**CASSANO IRPINO:** AG2R Citroen Team's French rider Aurelien Paret-Peintre celebrates as he crosses the finish line to win the fourth stage of the Giro d'Italia 2023 cycling race, 175 km between Venosa and Lago Laceno, on May 9, 2023. — AFP

The 23-year-old Belgian was attended to by a number of teammates and Quick Step staff and once on his bike raced back into the peloton, assisted by

his teammates. He appeared to have avoided serious injury as he smiled and gave the thumbs while he made his towards the pack. — AFP

## Skyscraper totals becoming a norm in run-fest IPL

**NEW DELHI:** A marauding Faf du Plessis and emerging power-hitters including Rinku Singh have helped make team totals over 200 the new normal in this high-scoring edition of the Indian Premier League. The 38-year-old South African Du Plessis, captain of Royal Challengers Bangalore, leads the batting charts with 576 runs at a destructive strike rate of over 157 and 32 sixes. This season does not finish until the end of the month but it has already witnessed 30 innings totaling 200 or above.

That happened on 18 occasions in the entire edition last year. Du Plessis hit 65 on Tuesday and forged a 120-run stand with Glenn Maxwell - but opponents Mumbai Indians still reached the 200 target with 3.3 overs to spare. This season third-placed Mumbai have chased down three 200 or 200-plus totals with Suryakumar Yadav hitting half-centuries in all of them. "I have no idea what a safe score is. The last four games we have seen excess of 200 has been scored," said Mumbai skipper Rohit Sharma.

"Most of the teams are taking risks and it is coming off. The batters are taking risks and 200-plus scores are being chased. The mindset of the batters is to do something special for the team and it is coming off as well." Players and pundits say there are a few reasons for the tall totals. IPL pitches are more batting friendly than before to encourage big-hitting and provide more entertainment. Former Australia batsman and ex-IPL coach Tom Moody says that the Kookaburra balls could have something to do with it because they are not swinging as much.

The nature of Twenty20 cricket is also evolving, with a new breed of specialists. But the biggest factor behind the skyscraper scores in the IPL looks to be the new Impact Player rule. It allows a substitute and effectively adds an extra batsman or bowler to the team line-up. Lucknow Super Giants have led the high-rise war after they posted the second-highest team total since the IPL began in 2008. They made 257-5 in a 56-run victory last month against Punjab Kings, with West Indies' Kyle Mayers and Australian all-rounder Marcus Stoinis smashing 11 boundaries each.

### 'Yesterday's approach'

Virat Kohli recently scored a 46-ball 55 in a losing cause for Bangalore and the superstar batsman was criticized for consuming too many deliveries. Moody called Kohli's innings "yesterday's approach or last year's approach". "Now we have an impact player, the game has changed," the Australian, who took Sunrisers Hyderabad to the 2016 title, told ESPNcricinfo. "We already have evidence of that with the number of teams who have scored over 200, (it) is a record number of 200-plus scores of any IPL and we are not even close to the finish." While the likes of Kohli and David Warner have struggled to meet the intensity, left-handed batsman Rinku has come into his own as a finisher this season.

He raised the hitting stakes when he smashed five sixes in the last five balls to pull off a miracle chase for Kolkata last month. The tournament has witnessed six last-ball finishes this season and Mumbai batsman Nehal Wadhwa pointed to the impact sub again. "The Impact Player rule also gives the batters a bit of freedom to play fearlessly as they know they have an extra batter in their wings," Wadhwa said. "The rule has also led to more close finishes in the IPL, which we love to watch." — AFP

## Stump lands historic judo gold for Swiss

**DOHA:** Nils Stump won Switzerland's first ever world judo title on Tuesday, taking gold in the men's under-73kg category in Doha. Stump, 26, defeated former European champion Manuel Lombardo of Italy in the final, having delivered an ippon to beat Japanese star Soichi Hashimoto earlier in the day. Hashimoto, the 2017 world champion, claimed bronze with Murodjon Yuldoshev of Uzbekistan.

Canada's Christa Deguchi added to her 2019 gold medal with another title in the women's under-57kg class. Deguchi beat Japan's Haruka Funakubo by ippon less than two minutes into the final. Jessica Klimkait, who shared third place at the Tokyo Olympics,

earned another medal for Canada, pocketing bronze alongside Mongolia's Enkhriilen Lkhagvatogoo.

### Russian military emblem

Meanwhile, the International Judo Federation (IJF) said on Wednesday it had ejected a group of spectators from the World Judo Championships in Doha for refusing to remove a Russian military symbol. Three spectators were seen wearing the Ribbon of St George, which is considered by many Ukrainians as a symbol of Russian aggression and has been banned in several European countries, as they watched Tuesday's action at an arena in the Qatari capital.

The IJF told AFP that the spectators refused to remove the emblem and so were thrown out of the venue. The IJF has allowed Russian and Belarusian judokas to take part in these championships as neutral competitors, having previously banned them in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. As a result of the decision to allow the Russians and Belarusians to return, Ukraine has boycotted the event. — AFP



**DOHA:** Switzerland's Nils Stump (white) and Italy's Manuel Lombardo compete in the men's -73kg final bout at the World Judo Championships in Doha on May 9, 2023. — AFP



## Special Olympics, US Army to organize tournament

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Special Olympics will organize a combined tournament of a number of sports with the US Army in camp Arifjan as part of the Special Olympics' preparations for the World Games "Berlin 2023", which will be held from 12-26 June. The tournament was announced during the visit of the delegation of the Kuwait Special Olympics Board of Directors and the Tomooh Sports Club to the US Army Camp. Head of Kuwait Special Olympics Hind Al-Zawawi said the visit is a confirmation of the good relations and cooperation with the US Army and Tomooh Club. She thanked the US Army for the kind invitation and excellent reception and hospitality.

## Leicester challenge Ashton's red card

**LONDON:** Leicester are prepared to launch an appeal against Chris Ashton's red card that could rule him out of the champions' English Premiership semi-final against Sale this weekend. The 36-year-old former England wing was sent off for a high tackle on Harlequins' Cadan Murley during Leicester's 20-17 defeat last Saturday. Ashton, the Premiership's record try-scorer, will retire at the end of the season but his



career could now be at an end if his suspension is upheld. Any ban would likely rule Ashton out of both the last-four clash and the Premiership final on May 27.

"When we get the date of the hearing, which I would have thought would be Wednesday, we will contest it," Leicester boss Richard Wigglesworth said Tuesday. "It will be this week and if we get it turned around he will be available (for the play-off). "The slipping and the dipping, there were mitigating factors in the tackle and the mitigating factors are why we think it is a yellow (card) and not a red." Wigglesworth added: "I am not calling anything dodgy. I know they (referees) have got a difficult job.

We just want everything to be clear and obvious."

As for Ashton's fitness to face Sale on Sunday should his suspension be overturned, Wigglesworth said: "Chris will know his stuff and be good to go. "He is experienced and he will still have a training day knowing he is in the starting team, if that happens, so that wouldn't be a problem for us." Premiership champions Leicester face a Sale side that finished one place and 10 points above them during the 20-game regular season. Saracens take on Northampton in the other play-off, opening up the possibility of a repeat of last year's final between Leicester and Saracens. — AFP

## Suryakumar lifts Mumbai to third

**MUMBAI:** Suryakumar Yadav hammered 83 off 35 balls as Mumbai Indians thrashed Royal Challengers Bangalore by six wickets on Tuesday to jump from eighth to third in the IPL table. Chasing 200 to win, Suryakumar put on a blistering stand of 140 with Nehal Wadhwa, who made an unbeaten 52, as Mumbai romped home with 21 balls to spare at Wankhede Stadium.

Mumbai's sixth win in 11 matches revived their faltering campaign as the five-time champions target a top-four finish to qualify for a play-off berth.

Suryakumar's blitz laced with six sixes was his IPL best and made Bangalore's 199-6 look a small total after skipper Faf du Plessis (65) and Glenn Maxwell (68) lit up the first innings. "He is one of the best isn't he?" Du Plessis, who leads the tournament batting chart with 576 runs, said of Suryakumar. "When he gets going he's really difficult to bowl to. So many options you can't shut him down. One of the greats of the game at the moment."

Suryakumar, who had a bad start to the season before hitting form, said: "Much needed from team's point of view. I am very happy to win a home game like this." Opener Ishan Kishan hit a quick-fire 42 but Mumbai slipped to 52-2 when skipper Rohit Sharma fell for seven to extend his batting slump. However,

Suryakumar and the left-handed Wadhwa soon revived the chase and took the attack to the opposition. Once settled, Suryakumar burst into life to reach his 50 in 26 balls and kept up the charge with a string of sixes and fours.

Suryakumar fell with his team needing eight more to win and Tim David got out for a duck, but Wadhwa hit the winning six to bring up his fifty. Earlier the in-form Du Plessis survived a dropped catch on nought before he hit back and registered his sixth half-century of the season. England's Chris Jordan had a bruising introduction with his first two overs leaking 31 runs, hours after Mumbai announced his inclusion in place of the injured Jofra Archer, who flew back home to "focus on his rehabilitation". — AFP



Sports

# Philippines beat rivals Vietnam, but crash out of regional games

## Rain-sodden Cambodian badly loses race, but wins hearts

**PHNOM PENH:** The Philippines women's football team battled to a 2-1 win over rivals Vietnam Tuesday in the meeting of their region's two World Cup-bound teams, but still crashed out of the Southeast Asian Games on goal difference. In an at-times-rough encounter, Thi Bich Thuy Nguyen cancelled out Sarina Bolden's converted penalty in the first half, before Filipinas captain Hali Long secured the three points with an 82nd-minute goal.

But that proved insufficient, as Myanmar battered Malaysia 5-1 in the other Group A game to progress as runners-up to Vietnam, San Thaw Thaw and July Kyaw with a brace each. The Philippines' next major engagement will be the World Cup in July and August in Australia and New Zealand. And coach Alen Stajcic said beating one of Asia's top teams for the second time in a row - after a 4-0 win over Vietnam last year - showed "we can compete at this level".

"The next step of our evolution is to do it every game," he said, after a group stage hobbled by a 1-0 opening loss to Myanmar. "It's still a very, very young team. I know that we've got a lot more good times ahead of us." In Group B, Thailand beat Cambodia 3-0 to go through as winners. They will play Myanmar in the semi-finals, while Cambodia face Vietnam. Singapore beat Laos 2-1 to take third place. The semi-finals will be played on May 12, with the final three days later.

**Losing badly**  
A Cambodian athlete won a special place in her compatriots' affections after persevering to complete the women's 5,000m in torrential rain at the Southeast Asian Games, despite the winner having finished nearly six minutes earlier. When Bou Samnang did make it over the line, she broke down in tears, joining her palms in thanks to her supporters. The winner,

Vietnamese athletics star Nguyen Thi Oanh, had already finished the race, five minutes and 54 seconds earlier. The second-last-placed competitor, the aptly named Run Romdul, was also from Cambodia, which is hosting the Games in the capital Phnom Penh. "Although you lost, you won the hearts of Cambodia," wrote Facebook user Mao Vanthan.

Another user, Chanphal Ngy, was equally effusive: "We dropped tears with you... You will be successful in life as your wishes." "Your resilience is a true inspiration to all of us," chimed in Kong Dara. "Your commitment to pushing through the challenges, maintaining a positive attitude, and never giving up on yourself is a testament to your strength and character. "You may not have won the race, but you have won our admiration and respect for your unwavering spirit." She also won a \$250 bonus from information minister Khieu Kanharith, according to a ministry official. — AFP



PHNOM PENH: Vietnam's Hung Nguyen Tran competes in the men's 200m backstroke swimming final during the 32nd Southeast Asian Games (SEA Games) on May 10, 2023. — AFP



## Barcelona's legend Busquets to leave

**BARCELONA:** Sergio Busquets will leave Barcelona in June at the end of his contract, the midfielder confirmed Wednesday, ending a highly successful era at the club. "The moment has arrived to announce this is my last season at Barcelona," said Busquets on Instagram. "It has been an unforgettable journey." Busquets has won the Champions League three times with Barcelona and La Liga on eight occasions before this season, with the Catalans set to triumph again for the first time in four years.

The 34-year-old has been a key player for Barca since breaking into the first team under their former coach Pep Guardiola in 2008, becoming the club's captain in 2021. Busquets is Barcelona's third-highest appearance maker of all time, playing for the club on 718 occasions, lifting 31 trophies in total.

He did not say where he might go next, with Spanish reports suggesting he may move to a team in Saudi Arabia. "It has been an honor, a dream, a pride. It has been everything to be able to defend and represent this badge for so many years, but everything has a beginning and an end," continued Busquets. "Although it has not been an easy decision, I think the time has come." Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez, who played with Busquets in the team's midfield for several years, wanted the midfielder to stay next season, but said the decision was up to him.

Busquets' team-mates past and present paid tribute to him on social media after he announced his future lay outside the club. "My friend, after so much we've lived through together, what can I say that you don't know?" wrote Barcelona defender Jordi Alba on Instagram. "You're leaving your home, having made an indelible imprint on Barcelona's history. "More than 700 games and a fundamental part of so many titles, and glorious nights that all Barca fans will forever remember." Former Barcelona playmaker Andres Iniesta said Busquets was "number one".

"You are the best, Sergio, I will miss you," wrote Barca midfielder Sergi Roberto, who is set to inherit the captain's armband. "An example in all senses, I have been lucky to share many moments with you and it will not be easy day to day without you." Barcelona hailed him as "one of the best players ever to represent the club". "Busquets' story at Barca is one of class and commitment in the centre of midfield," read a statement on the club website. "His talent and his ability to read the game has made him one of the best defensive midfielders in the game." Busquets has been notable as a ball-playing pivot, using perfect positioning and anticipation rather than physicality to recover the ball for his side.

The veteran has long been thought to favour a move to Major League Soccer in the United States at the end of his Barcelona contract, with Inter Miami one of the teams mentioned. However in recent days the player has been linked in Spanish media with a move to the Saudi Arabian top flight. Former Barcelona forward Lionel Messi, a close friend of Busquets, is another player who may end up in the oil-rich kingdom after a source close to negotiations told AFP it was a "done deal" for the Argentine forward to move to the Middle East. — AFP



## Arab Ice Hockey Federation selects leaders

**KUWAIT:** The General Assembly of the Arab Ice Hockey Federation has selected President of the Kuwait Winter Games Club Fuhaid Al-Ajmi, to head the first Arab Federation for the game for the next

four years. At a meeting, which was held in Kuwait on the sidelines of the first Arab Cup tournament, UAE's Juma Al Dhaheri was picked as vice president for the continent of Asia, and the Moroccan Khaled Al-Marini was elected vice president for the continent of Africa. The meeting, which was attended by representatives of 11 countries from Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Lebanon, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco, in addition to Kuwait, decided to choose 8 members for the membership of the Council from the countries that did not obtain the three main positions.

## Tennis Federation to increase number of tournaments

**KUWAIT:** Secretary General of the Tennis Federation, Faleh Al-Otaibi, said that the Board of Directors of the Federation has decided to increase the number of international tournaments in the 2023-2024 season - raising the number to 12 tournaments for juniors and men in order to promote and upgrade the game. Al-Otaibi congratulated the members of the new Board of Directors. He said that the closing ceremony of the sports season 2022-2023 (on May 14) will feature a number of events, including the final of the men's singles championship in addition to crowning the winning clubs in the first three places in the Excellence Cup. There will be surprises and prizes dedicated to the fans, including cash prizes.



## S Korean Ambassador Taekwondo Championship

**KUWAIT:** The South Korean Ambassador Chung Byung-ha Taekwondo Championship that was organized by the Kuwait Taekwondo Federation concluded on Thursday with the participation of 100 male and female players from government and private clubs. The closing day will witness the final fights and the crowning of the winners. The tournament was launched on Tuesday in the presence of the Korean ambassador and President of the Kuwaiti Taekwondo Federation Hani Al-Murshad and members of the Board of Directors. South Korean Ambassador



Chung Byung-ha praised the excellent organization of the tournament and the work done by the committees to bring out the best of the tournament. The Korean ambassador expressed his admiration for the hall in which the tournament was held.

# 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 Nuzha	22549134
Industrial Shuwaikh	22526804
Qadsiya	24814764
Dasmah	22515088
Bneid Al-Gar	22532265
Shaab	22531908
Qibla	22518752
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22459381
Mirqab	22451082
Sharq	22456536
Salmiya	22465401
	25746401

### Change of Name

**I, MAHAMMAD** Altaf Abdur Rehman Berekar, holder of Indian Passport No. M1343878, having permanent address Post Mhasla, Raigad, Maharashtra, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: Given name Mohammad Altaf Abdur Rehman and surname Berekar (C #0890) - 11-05-2023

**I, KALAMARLA SUBBIAH** @ 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 SUBBIAH 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, 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

Automated enquiry about the CivilID card is 1889988



## Man City, Madrid draw 1-1

De Bruyne's brilliant drive saves Manchester City



MADRID: Manchester City's Brazilian goalkeeper Ederson deflects the ball during the UEFA Champions League semi-final first leg football match between Real Madrid CF and Manchester City on May 9, 2023. — AFP

**MADRID:** Kevin De Bruyne's brilliant drive earned Manchester City a 1-1 draw at Real Madrid in a gripping Champions League semi-final first leg battle on Tuesday. The Belgian slammed Pep Guardiola's visitors level after Vinicius Junior opened the scoring for the reigning champions from distance in similarly spectacular fashion.

Madrid managed to completely shackle lethal striker Erling Haaland but De Bruyne's powerful effort left the tie on a knife edge ahead of the second leg in Manchester next week. The record 14-time winners knocked City out at the same stage last season despite being outplayed in both games, and took the lead at the Santiago Bernabeu against the run of play. However when Madrid found their stride in the second half, City — still chasing their first ever Champions League trophy — hit back through De Bruyne.

Madrid central defenders David Alaba and Anto-

nio Rudiger did not give Haaland room to breathe. "We have to see if we can attack (better), Alaba and Rudiger were so close on Erling," Guardiola told reporters. "It was not easy to find the spaces. We'll try to adjust something in the second leg to be more fluid and play with a bit more rhythm." The visitors controlled much of the first half, with nearly 70 percent possession, but went in trailing at the break. Thibaut Courtois fielded an early barrage of shots from De Bruyne, Rodri and Haaland, as City dominated and Madrid sat back, soaking up the pressure.

The hosts took the lead through a lethal counter-attack 10 minutes before the break, with Eduardo Camavinga surging past Bernardo Silva, tearing into space and feeding Vinicius. The Brazilian arrowed a strike into the top left corner from almost 25 yards, past Ederson's helpless dive. It was Madrid's only shot in the first half, but the game's most effective one. "It's normal that City have the ball, we don't have

to go mad about that," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said. "After the goal we played very well, controlling the space, creating things, we played very well, I hope we can repeat it in the second leg."

### Haaland shut down

Alaba thwarted Haaland with a fine block early in the second half, as Madrid kept the Norwegian goal machine under lock and key on his first appearance against them. Madrid did not allow him a clear sight of goal, ensuring he could not add to his 51 goals from 46 games this season across all competitions. Rudiger, who played ahead of the suspended Eder Militao, put in one of the best performances of his Madrid career.

"He had a fantastic game, clearly we have to highlight that," said Ancelotti. "But everyone did, because defensively we did very well, they did not make many chances. "They scored from outside the box ... because the team had a great game on a defensive lev-

el." Madrid's pressing was greatly improved after the break and they pinned City back at times, showing far more initiative than they offered at the start. However with Los Blancos ascendant, City sucker-punched them, just as Madrid did to the Premier League leaders in the first half.

De Bruyne slammed the visitors level with a shot from the same range as Vinicius' opener, at the same end, hammered low past Courtois. "We started really well and then Vinicius finished cleverly," said Guardiola. "Then when they were better than us, we scored a goal. We go to Manchester, it will be a final." Ederson palmed away a Karim Benzema header and a vicious Aurelien Tchouameni effort in the final stages ensuring whoever wins next week progresses. "At the Etihad at the moment we feel unstoppable," warned City winger Jack Grealish. "I really enjoyed it tonight, I loved it." The second leg takes place on May 17, with the winner facing Inter Milan or AC Milan in the final. — AFP

## Sixers sink Celtics; Nuggets rout Suns

**LOS ANGELES:** The Philadelphia 76ers moved to within one win of a series victory over the Boston Celtics in the NBA playoffs on Tuesday as the Denver Nuggets thrashed the Phoenix Suns to edge closer to a place in the conference finals. A towering performance in Boston from NBA Most Valuable Player Joel Embiid helped the Sixers power to a 115-103 victory over the Celtics to stun the home fans into silence. The result gives the Sixers a 3-2 lead in the best-of-seven series, meaning they will advance to the Eastern Conference finals with a win in game six back in Philadelphia on Thursday.

In the Western Conference, the top-seeded Nuggets are also in the driving seat against Phoenix after pummeling the Suns 118-102 in Denver. Denver star Nikola Jokic finished with a 29-point triple-double for a win that leaves the Nuggets 3-2 up in the series, with game six in Arizona on Thursday. The Sixers will head into their clash with Boston brimming with confidence after an assured game-five display. Embiid led the scoring in a superbly balanced Sixers offensive performance, with five players finishing in double figures. Tyrese Maxey tormented the Celtics with 30 points, including six three-pointers, while point guard James Harden was a constant thorn in the side of the Celtics, finishing with 17 points, 10 assists and eight rebounds.

### 'Magician' Harden

"I thought Joel did a great job of shooting when he needed to shoot and passing when he needed to pass," Sixers coach Doc Rivers said. "Our composure overall was good. You know they're going to make shots, they're going to make runs. That team is tough, and you've got to breathe through it. I thought our guys did that." Rivers reserved special praise for the contribution of Harden. "I thought James was a magician tonight. He called a perfect game. He was aggressive early on, when he needed to be aggressive. And then he got everybody else involved."

Boston coach Joe Mazzulla was left ruing what he described as his team's worst performance of the postseason. "That was the first game of the playoffs

where we didn't play well," Mazzulla said. "We can't lose perspective because the players have played some really good basketball. But that was our first really really bad game of the playoffs. "Doesn't come at necessarily the best time, but we just need to shift perspective and get ready for the next game."

Boston never recovered after the Sixers pulled away to lead by 14 points in the second quarter. Although the Celtics closed the deficit to nine at half-time they were unable to apply sustained pressure. The Sixers always found a way of responding to keep them at arm's length throughout the second half, with Philadelphia leading by double digits for almost the entirety of the third and fourth quarters. Boston's scoring was led by a 36-point display from Jayson Tatum while Jaylen Brown finished with 24 points.

### Jokic triple

In Denver, the Nuggets took control early on with a 35-point first quarter before Phoenix roared back to outscore the home side 25-17 in the second quarter. Phoenix took a brief lead in the final minutes of the first half but Denver hit back to lead 52-49 at the break. The Nuggets then roared out of the blocks in the opening minutes of the second half, outscoring Phoenix 21-6 to open up a 73-55 lead.

Denver outscored Phoenix 39-25 in the third quarter and led by as much as 24 points in the final frame. Phoenix coach Monty Williams pulled his starters from the floor long before the end as Denver celebrated a crucial win. Jokic finished with 29 points, 13 rebounds and 12 assists to lead Denver's scorers, while Michael Porter Jr had 19 points including five three-pointers. Devin Booker led the Suns with 28 points, while Kevin Durant finished with 26.

Nuggets head coach Michael Malone said an improved defensive display had laid the foundation for his team's emphatic win. "We didn't play any defense in the two games we lost in Phoenix," Malone said. "When we're not running, and we're not defending, we're going nowhere. "And that's what we'll have to do in game six if we're going to close this series out." Suns coach Williams said his team's challenge wilted in the lop-sided third quarter. "It was like nothing we've put on the floor this year from our standards," Williams said. "We stood still and didn't move them around enough. I felt we were somewhat stagnant. "We've got to meet the challenge with the physicality." — AFP

## Kuwait SC eye WASL basketball Gulf title

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait SC Basketball Assistant Coach Yahya Al-Bahar, on Wednesday, said that the win against Bahrain's Manama Club took them a step closer to winning the West Asia Super League Gulf finals. Al-Bahar said that despite the players being exhausted, they have performed very well and are the Arab and Gulf champions due to the number of matches played locally and internationally. He pointed out that his players are determined to win the second game that will decide the series of a Best-of-3 format. Game one of the WASL Gulf Finals was played on Tuesday in Kuwait at the Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Sport Hall Complex. Meanwhile, Game two will be played on May 15 at in Manama, Bahrain at Khalifa Sport City. If necessary, Game three will be played on May 22 in Kuwait. — KUNA



Kuwait SC Basketballer aiming for the hoop. — KUNA photos

