



3 Kuwaiti surgical team successfully performs rare kidney transplant



10 NBK recognized with 6 prestigious MENA Banking Excellence Awards



13 Winds of change buffet Iran's wooden boatbuilding tradition



16 Inter eye Champions League final after seeing off Milan



Kuwait warns top labor-exporting countries to respect agreements

25 Filipinos denied entry to Kuwait • Philippine delegation allowed to enter

MoH defends blood charges as 'symbolic'

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The ministry of health said on Thursday charges imposed by the ministry on expats for blood transfusions are "symbolic" compared to countries of the region and constitute the actual cost of services and technical and administrative procedures of blood transfusion and preservation. It added the fees also aim to rationalize the use of blood.

Responding to strong criticism by Kuwaiti political movements, rights bodies and candidates, the ministry said several cases are exempted from the fees, especially emergency cases, children, cancer patients and others. The ministry has imposed fees of KD 20 per blood unit on expat residents and KD 40 on visitors. It also hiked charges for 37 lab tests.

The committee for studying the prices of services provided by the blood bank and laboratory tests at the health ministry said in a press release the fees are for administrative procedures such as the preservation and transfer of blood bags and lab-

oratory tests, adding patients are exempt from fees when there is a donor, which is an incentive to urge the importance of donation.

The ministry added the fees came after about a year and a half of study through the committee composed of specialists, which is not the goal of the ministry in itself as much as the achievement of "noble" goals to realize the value of blood donation. It stressed that blood is "not a commodity for sale or purchase" as people's lives depend on it, pointing out that promoting community solidarity, encouraging donations and maintaining strategic blood stocks represent the "lofty" goals pursued by the ministry.

The ministry pointed out this decision will contribute significantly to the rationalization of blood transfusion services and derivatives towards actual cases based on medical priority, adding the ministry reviews medical services fees periodically and takes the necessary measures as required by public interest to improve the quality of medical services provided.

KUWAIT: Informed sources revealed the Public Authority of Manpower has sent warnings to labor attachés of various embassies that have large communities of workers in Kuwait of the necessity of adhering to bilateral labor agreements, respecting Kuwaiti laws related to employment and residency and not imposing conditions on Kuwait related to recruiting workers that go beyond the agreements signed. PAM warned that violating these agreements will result in halting the granting of work permits to workers from these countries.

Sources said stopping work permits for new Filipino workers is a state decision and not a decision by the manpower authority, given that the Philippine government used "extortion" in imposing conditions on Kuwaiti offices that recruit workers and imposed financial fees and demands that violate the laws of the state. They warned such measures by Kuwait will be repeated with any country that takes a similar approach.

The sources said messages by the manpower authority means Kuwait will move forward to regulate recruitment of workers from countries that have a large labor presence in Kuwait, indicating that labor agreements will be announced very soon with more than one country to recruit workers, whether domestic workers or others.

The sources indicated the door will be opened again for nationals of countries that do not have large numbers of workers in Kuwait, including Iran, pointing out that Iranian workers in Kuwait currently number less than 50,000. It will be allowed to recruit workers from these countries in sectors that need workers urgently, including the construction sector.

The sources pointed out the labor agreement between Kuwait and Ethiopia regarding domestic workers will be implemented in a new way with conditions that are consistent with the laws of Kuwait and which preserve the rights of both parties, explaining new domestic workers from Nepal, Vietnam and Madagascar will be allowed to work in Kuwait.

On Thursday, 25 Filipinos, mostly domestic workers, were denied entry to the country after arriving at Kuwait airport, in implementation of instructions by the interior ministry to civil aviation authorities to not allow entry to Filipino passengers even if they have entry visas, and only allow entry to those who have valid residencies in Kuwait. Kuwait's foreign ministry informed the Philippines of the decision to suspend entry visas for Filipinos, Deputy Foreign Minister Mansour Al-Otaibi said on Thursday.

Continued on Page 6

Candidates urge end to political disputes

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The number of candidates for the June 6 parliamentary polls rose to 170 after 28 new hopefuls registered on Thursday, as candidates called for an end to lingering political disputes that have stalled development in the country for years. The new candidates included 10 former MPs, raising their number to 47. They also included seven members of the court-annulled 2022 National Assembly, raising their number in the race to 39.

The total number of candidates after seven days of registration is still very modest, compared to 321 candidates who registered after seven days in the run up to the September 2022 elections. Registration ends on Sunday while withdrawal of candidates continues until seven days before the election day. Candidates called for an end to political disputes that rocked the country for most of the past two decades, stressing that Kuwait has retreated in almost all fields as a result of political crises.

"We are no longer dealing with real statesmen but rather with amateur politicians where different groups attack each other. We need wisdom to overcome these differences and focus our work on priorities," former MP Hisham Al-Saleh said after registering. He said that Kuwait has retreated in all fields because of disputes and the country is being harmed by its own people.

Former MP Ahmad Al-Fadhil strongly criticized the opposition, saying they are a group of failed people and thus have no power to deliver and achieve, adding the National Assembly speaker was changed while holes still fill Kuwait streets.

Continued on Page 6

Kuwait slams atrocities by Zionist entity

NEW YORK/GAZA: Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN headquarters in New York Ambassador Tareq Al-Banai, late Wednesday, vehemently condemned the recent Zionist acts of aggression against the hapless Palestinian people, saying the UN Security Council must take responsibility in this regard to ensure peace and security in the region and the world.

Banai, who heads the Arab group for the month of May, told the press outside the UNSC hall that resolutions concerning providing protection to the people of Palestine, as well as the UN charter, human rights and international laws must be upheld in connection with this alarming situation. All members of the UN should hold the Zionist occupation authorities responsible and the protection of Palestinians must be the goal that should be attained by the UNSC.

The Zionist entity and Gaza fighters traded more heavy fire Thursday, the third day of the worst

Continued on Page 6

Pak top court declares Khan arrest 'invalid'

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Supreme Court declared on Thursday the arrest of former prime minister Imran Khan "invalid", in a ruling that came two days after his detention sparked deadly clashes and huge protests nationwide. Khan was ordered to remain in the custody of the court under police protection for his own safety until his appearance at another court hearing on Friday.

"Your arrest was invalid so the whole process needs to be backtracked," Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial told Khan at the hearing in the capital Islamabad. "What we propose is that Islamabad police need to provide security, and he (Khan) will provide a list of his immediate family members and lawyers that should meet him at police lines headquarters," said Bandial.

Continued on Page 6



GAZA: A man retrieves bloodstained baby clothes on May 11, 2023 from the rubble of the house of Ahmed Abu-Deka, killed by the Zionist entity on May 10, 2023. — AFP



PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party activists and supporters of former prime minister Imran Khan celebrate after the supreme court acquitted Khan on May 11, 2023. — AFP



Local

Conference recommends integrating values, developing ethics curriculum

Govt urged to adopt approved, internationally recognized programs

KUWAIT: The conference on sustainable educational development recommended the need to integrate values, develop an ethics curriculum in the education system, and prepare programs for future teachers according to modern strategies. The General Authority for Applied Education and Training said in a press release on Thursday that the recommendations issued at the end of the conference also focused on the importance of practical education offices, their role in the development of education and educational policy, and their compatibility with sustainable development and the vision of "New Kuwait 2035."

The recommendations also stressed the need to reform the educational infrastructure, adopt approved and internationally recognized programs, and work on developing a mechanism for joint work between the Faculty of Education, the Ministry of Education, and all academic institutions that achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The recommendations drew attention to the importance of developing programs for future teachers according to modern strategies, as well as designing and creating smart classrooms through the use of educational institutions and experts to promote sustainable development programs.

They pointed out the need to review the traditional methods and methods of education and work to develop them in parallel with the importance of cooperation and coordination with the GCC coun-

tries to prepare a plan for the development of education that includes a common vision to achieve the concept of sustainable development. The recommendations also dealt with the skill and behavioral aspect because of its impact and major role in refining cadres and talents, in addition to the need to prepare training courses for members of the commission training and students to develop their skills in accordance with the concept of sustainable development in field training.

The recommendations stressed the need to increase the field training hours to over two semesters in line with the foundations and quality standards in training and preparation for the national e-learning platform project in the educational field to reach the concept of sustainable development and quality. Over two days, the conference sessions presented the experiences of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman in the fields of education and sustainable development, how to use technology in the teaching and learning processes, and the role of field training in refining students' skills and qualifying them to enter the labor market.

It is noteworthy that the conference was organized by the Office of Practical Education at the College of Basic Education at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training under the patronage of the Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education, Dr Hamad Al-Adwani. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Photo captures participants at the conference on sustainable educational development. — KUNA

Opinions differ over Kuwait's luxury lifestyle

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Kuwait is a country that is recognized for its luxury lifestyle. It is a place where people can enjoy a high standard of living, and this luxurious lifestyle has been found to contribute to saving time and energy. Some people see this advantage can lead to increased productivity, whereas other see that it can lead to the exact opposite. To look at both opinions, Kuwait Times interviewed life coach Siham Al-Omar and physical trainer and life coach Zainab.

Omar sees that when people are comfortable in their daily lives, they tend to be more productive, as they have fewer distractions and are motivated to maintain their lifestyle. Additionally, engaging in leisure activities, such as visiting luxurious malls and spas, can take part in reducing stress and anxiety, which can enhance individuals' productivity and creativity.

"Providing services should contribute to increasing an individual's contribution and productivity, and not the opposite. Because the ease and availability of services lead to an ease of living, and therefore lead to saving effort and time, which are supposed to be invested and utilized in self-development and serving society. Thus, Kuwaiti youth have a lot of potential and creative energies represented in volunteer teams and personal initiatives to serve society," she said. According to Omar, multiple services in Kuwait lead to less time spent at work and more time for personal productivity.



Siham Al-Omar

Blind spots of living in luxury

However, due to Kuwait's easygoing life and multiple services, some people accuse residents of Kuwait as dependent on luxury benefits, lazy and unproductive. This raises concerns, as it not only affects the individual, but also the society as a whole. One of the primary reasons that luxury living in Kuwait causes people to become lazy is that it provides them with

a sense of security. People who receive luxury benefits for an extended period may begin to take this advantage for granted, which encourages them to become more reliant on the government. As a result, they may begin to rely on the state for everything, including their basic needs, which can lead to a sense of helplessness.

Contrary to Omar's opinion, Zainab said: "People who are dependent on luxury living may not have the motivation to improve their situation. This leads to failure or difficulty in various aspects of their lives, because luxurious living may also discourage personal responsibility. When individuals are not required to work and earn their livelihood, they may not develop a sense of responsibility for their own life outcomes. This can lead to a lack of motivation."

Therefore, it is essential to balance the support provided by the government with a focus on personal responsibility and empowerment. "When individuals receive luxury benefits, they may become less motivated to work and earn their income. This can lead to a lack of drive and ambition, ultimately hin-



dering the individual's ability to produce at their full potential," said Zainab. While luxury programs can be a vital support system for individuals, they can also have negative effects on productivity and creativity. Thus, it is crucial to consider the unintended consequences of living in luxury and start working towards creating policies that empower oneself to achieve one's potential.

According to Zainab, there are several ways to overcome laziness, such as setting specific goals and deadlines to achieve these goals, creating a routine that would put order and reason in one's daily activities, and most importantly, exercising, because the easy lifestyle and multiple services in Kuwait prevents people from moving their bodies. Exercising can help boost energy and improve productivity and creative thinking ability. Exercising does not have to be very hard; going for a brisk walk for half an hour can help boost motivation.

Committee seeks unified definition of Gulf standards

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Mohammed Al-Aiban said that the Gulf industrial cooperation committee discussed at its 50th meeting, which was held in the Omani capital Muscat on Thursday, topics related to the industrial side, such as finding a unified definition of the national (Gulf) product and its standards.

This came in a telephone call to the Minister with the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) after his participation in the ministerial meetings of the GCC countries of the 64th trade cooperation committee and the 50th Industrial Cooperation Committee. The meeting was the fifth ministerial committee for standardization affairs, and the consultative meeting between the ministers of commerce and industry and the heads of the federations and chambers of the GCC countries.

The minister added that the committee also discussed the obstacles facing the gulf common market and the ways to develop it, as well as the challenges facing the Gulf economy and the sustainability of development. He pointed out that the 64th meeting of the trade cooperation committee of the ministers of trade and industry, in turn, discussed the decisions of the financial and economic cooperation committee and the report of the secretariat on the implementation of the decisions of the trade cooperation committee at its previous meetings and several other topics, including investment in the commercial sector. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The head of the general fire force, Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Mekrad on Thursday inaugurated the Al-Samoud Fire Center in the Abdullah Al-Mubarak area. — KUNA photos



Fire force inaugurates Al-Samoud Center

KUWAIT: The head of the general fire force, Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Mekrad, on Thursday inaugurated the Al-Samoud Fire Center in the Abdullah Al-Mubarak area according to modern specifications that contain everything that the fire employees need to practice their profession and cover all incidents in the area and nearby areas. The fire brigade said in a press release that the team confirmed during the opening of the center on behalf of the First Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister, and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Talal Khalid Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, his keenness to quickly provide and expand fire services.

Al-Mekrad added that the opening of the fire stations comes within the framework of the force's keenness to cover all residential areas and increase the speed of response to incidents, which



contributes to achieving community security. The opening ceremony was attended by the Deputy Head of the Force for the Control Sector, Major

General Jamal Badr, and the Director of the Construction and Maintenance Department, Brigadier AbdulMohsen Ibrahim. — KUNA

Kuwait and Saudi discuss ways to tackle smuggling

KUWAIT: The assistant undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior for ports and border security affairs, Major General Mansour Al-Awadhi, and the director general of the border guard in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Major General Mohammed Al-Shehri, discussed aspects of cooperation, coordination, exchange of experiences, and countering all types of smuggling and infiltration through joint border ports in order to achieve security and stability.

The General Directorate of Security Relations and Media at the Ministry of Interior said in a press release on Wednesday that within the framework of cooperation and coordination between Kuwait's Ministry of Interior and its counterparts in the GCC countries, the ongoing meeting (from May 9 to May 13) is aimed at activating the agreement by holding quarterly periodic meetings between the two sides.

Major General Al-Awadhi expressed his welcome. The First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior, and Acting Minister of Defense, Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and undersecretary of the ministry of interior, Lieutenant General Anwar Al-Barjas, conveyed greetings to the members of the brotherly Saudi delegation. He added that these meetings support and consolidate cooperation, joint coordination, and the exchange of experiences, stressing the depth of security relations between the two brotherly countries.

He pointed out that these meetings are an essential pillar of the development of security mechanisms, especially in the border security sector. The Saudi delegation expressed its appreciation to Kuwait for the generous and kind reception, which confirms the depth of the relationship and cooperation between the two brotherly countries, praising the great development and progress witnessed by Kuwait in the security sector of ports and borders. — KUNA

Local

Kuwaiti surgical team successfully performs rare kidney transplant

A rare operation with reconstruction of urinary tract

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti surgical team, under the supervision of Dr Talal Al-Qaoud, Dr Saja Surour and Dr Mohammad Zain, was able to perform a rare kidney transplantation operation with the reconstruction of the urinary tract of a 29-year-old man. The Ministry of Health (MoH) said in a press statement on Thursday that this achievement is a continuation of the success of kidney transplant operations at the Hamed Al-Essa Organ Transplant Center of the ministry.

The patient had been suffering from chronic renal failure since childhood due to a congenital defect in the urinary bladder, which forced him to do dialysis for 20 years, which led to the formation of vein clotting and atrophy, which made the traditional kidney transplantation methods in the pelvic area impossible, MoH explained. A globally rare type of kidney transplant was resorted to, consisting of transplantation and restoration simultaneously, it added. The patient recovered after the operation and is living life normally, benefiting from the organ donation

program without needing chronic dialysis, which shows a new success for the national competencies that MoH abounds with, it stated.

Family medicine conference

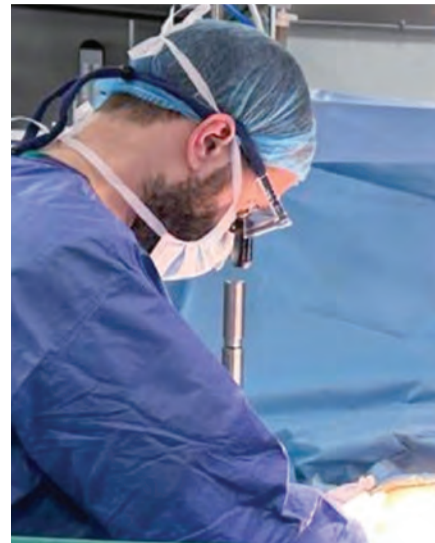
In another development, the Kuwait International Conference on family medicine will be launched on May 18 under the patronage of the Minister of Health, Dr Ahmed Al-Awadi, and organized by the Association of family medicine doctors to discuss a number of modern medical strategies and the latest evidence-based medical information and developments in family medicine.

The three-day conference is the first-of-its-kind in Kuwait for family doctors and will include a number of lectures, workshops and competitions on scientific research and will be attended by 60 doctors in various medical specialties from Kuwait, the United States and the Arab Gulf countries, said the association's treasurer and chairman of the scientific committee at the conference, Dr

Tayba Al-Hassan, in a press statement on Thursday.

Al-Hassan added that it will be held on the sidelines of the conference, a meeting of the Gulf Society of family medicine with the participation of the Gulf Family Medicine associations to discuss a number of strategies and develop recommendations that will improve and develop Family Medicine. She explained that family medicine is one of the specialties of medicine that deals with the physical, psychological and social health of all members of society, through which preventive and therapeutic health services are provided to prevent the occurrence of diseases and to detect and control them early, and through which services are provided that promote health and a healthy lifestyle.

She pointed out that this specialization is also one of the most important pillars of the primary health care system, which constitutes the cornerstone and the first line of Defense for any health system and the provision



Dr Talal Al-Qaoud



Dr Saja Surour

of preventive care through discovery. Early detection of diseases and risk factors leading to them, which helps to improve the health of the individual

and the community, inviting family doctors to take the initiative and register at the conference through the website <https://kifmc.com>. — KUNA



KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah poses with security officers during the ceremonial decoration of 762 Ministry of Interior officers with the brigadier's rank. —KUNA photos

All Interior's personnel must abide by the laws

KUWAIT: All personnel of the Ministry of Interior, no matter how senior they may be, are obliged to abide by the laws, the Interior Minister stressed on Thursday. Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, also the First Deputy Prime Minister and the Acting Minister of Defense, was speaking during

ceremonial decoration of 762 MoI officers with the brigadier's rank. Sheikh Talal affirmed the supreme leadership's keenness on giving the personnel all their rights as stipulated by the laws, according to the set terms and timetables.

He conveyed greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and congratulated them on the confidence accorded to them from the top leaders. The minister of interior has affirmed that the promoted officers have substantial responsibilities to be shouldered ahead, noting nations' need for qualified personnel to face mounting dangers and challenges.

Sheikh Talal stressed on the need for all employees of the Ministry of Interior to commit to applying the law to everyone, regardless of his "status". He called on the senior officers to follow up on the affairs of their subordinates, meet their needs, grant them all their rights, always strive to raise their morale, support and encourage them, and ensure their good preparation, rehabilitation, and training, wishing everyone success and prosperity of the homeland under his wise leadership. The ceremony was attended by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, Lieutenant General Anwar Al-Barjas, assistant undersecretaries, and a number of security leaders at the ministry. — KUNA

Home medical visits for the elderly and severely disabled

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health announced that the medical teams of the home health care delivery service conducted 2,068 home medical visits in various governorates from May 12, 2022, to May 4, 2023 according to the service's periodic statistics report. The ministry said in a press release on Thursday that the visits included the implementation of 173 visits in Jahra governorate, 269 in Ahmadi, 157 in Mubarak Al-Kabeer, 280 in Farwaniya, 137 in Hawally, and 1,052 cases in the capital.

She pointed out that the visits included the follow-up of the elderly and people with severe disabilities, noting that among the most prominent health services provided during the visits are medical consultations, clinical evaluation, treatment of chronic diseases, nursing services, therapeutic nutrition, pharmacy services, and drug safety. Others include: physiotherapy, rehabilitation, work therapy, ensuring the safety of the home environment, treatment of swallowing and speech problems, palliative care for advanced cases of cancer patients, remote assessment of eye conditions, laryngeal incision replacement, and vaccination for seasonal diseases.

She reported that the service request is submitted via the ministry's website from Sunday to Wednesday (8 am-7 pm) and Thursday (8 am-1 pm) with the attachment of the medical reports of the references, in addition to the possibility of submitting and requesting the service through the health center according to the area of residence. The ministry stressed that the continuation of the service comes from the keenness to ensure a healthy lifestyle for all and promote decent living for citizens based on the pillars of the development plan and the Vision (New Kuwait 2035) on the health service. — KUNA



Food Authority participates in forum on food

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition participated in the fourth annual meeting of the International Heads of Food Agencies Forum (IHFAF) held in the Irish capital Dublin on Wednesday under the chairmanship of the CEO of the Irish Food Safety Authority. Chairperson of the Board of Directors, Director General of the authority and head of the Kuwaiti delegation Dr Reem Al-Fulaij said: "The participation comes to learn about the latest findings by the countries of the world in the field of food safety and the use of technology, such as artificial

intelligence, to conduct laboratory tests to achieve food safety."

She also expressed pride that Kuwait was one of the first countries to join the international forum since its establishment in 2020 and is keen to participate in all its meetings. "The field visits that took place on the sidelines of the forum provided an opportunity for the Kuwaiti delegation to learn about the technology used to ensure food safety and the possibility of opening the field of cooperation with the Irish side and other countries."

The meeting, which was opened by Ireland's Secretary of State for Public Health and National Medicines Strategy Hildagarde Naughton, discussed the challenges facing food safety and food emergencies, as well as foods processed using modern technologies and the most important ways to combine global efforts to ensure the safety of food supplies in situations of peace and disaster.

Democracy in Kuwait and the social contract

By Khaled Al-Abdullhadi

KUWAIT: The National Assembly has been an influential part of the Kuwaiti political process and a fundamental factor in the social contract between the ruler and the people. In fact, communication between the ruler in Kuwait and the people has always been the norm, ever since the Kuwaiti people elected Sheikh Sabah bin Jaber Al-Sabah I in 1752 to be the ruler of Kuwait at the time, asserting Kuwait as an entity of its people.

In "The Origins of Kuwait's National Assembly", Dr Michael Herb, a professor of political science at Georgia State University, writes the strength of the Kuwaiti parliament is in its power to withdraw confidence from any minister, including the prime minister. He also considers six arguments on the power of the National Assembly in Kuwait, evaluating them from the time of the 1962 constitution and the people's perspectives at the time.

Herb observes experts' views regarding the effect of the power of merchants with regards to the social contract, as the power of the merchant class played a vital role in the formation of the parliament. "The position of merchants in Kuwaiti society prompted the Al-Sabah family to put in place a powerful National Assembly to counterbalance the influence of the merchants," he said.

Herb also describes another variant on the argument which focused on the ruler-merchant coalition's beginning, as internal and external challenges resulted in negotiations between the two sides, which formed "a durable coalition built on an alliance between the ruling family and the merchant class". Moreover, he sees the social contract also played a role when facing external threats, as Kuwait has been under foreign pressure since its inception.

Herb also writes that rulers of Kuwait contributed greatly to the expansion of the social contract. "The degree of power enjoyed by the National Assembly under the 1962 constitution also owes something to the political inclinations of the Amir at the time, Abdullah Al-Salem. Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem ensured the National Assembly had several key powers, including the ability to withdraw confidence in ministers via a majority vote by the elected members of the body," he wrote.

In her study, "The parliamentary experience in the state of Kuwait and its development paths", Dr Nadia Fadhi, assistant professor at the University of Baghdad, writes: "Practices of shura appeared in Kuwait for the first time in the 1930s. This was represented by the formation of the country's first legislative council, which was formed to build an emerging democratic society based on power-sharing. This was clearly represented when Kuwait got its independence in 1961. The political currents and forces in Kuwait contributed to the development of the concept of democracy and the exercise of parliamentary order through the Kuwaiti National Assembly."

Fadhi describes Kuwait's parliamentary experience has a character and a political culture that has emerged from the society. "The Kuwaiti constitution then came to regulate the relationship between the ruler and the public and set the beginning of the modern state of Kuwait in terms of parliament and law and tried to establish a state of modern institutions," she added.

Rulers of Kuwait has almost always listened to citizens' problems, from its inception to this day. People in history used to sit and discuss matters with the ruler, and today we have seen the same in HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's speech on behalf of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah last year, which was again solidified by another speech last month, that the people are an integral part of democracy, taking significant steps in the future of democracy in Kuwait.

In conclusion, the nature of the relationship has always been cohesive, regardless of disagreements that may arise from the government and the people. Kuwait always came first, symbolized in the ruler who brings critical situations to stability. The democratic process in the country has its own unique identity that needs time to flourish, and that we look at it from the perspective of the good of Kuwait and not from the perspective of self-interest.

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher

YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief

ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432

ADVERTISING : 24833199 Extn. 301

CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 220

ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125

P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.

Email: info@kuwaittimes.com

Website: www.kuwaittimes.com

Passenger traffic records increase of 41 percent

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) stated that passenger traffic to and from Kuwait International Airport witnessed an increase of 41 percent during the month of April, with the total number of passengers reaching 912,096 compared to 646,774 passengers in the same month last year. Deputy Director General for Aviation Safety, Air Transport, and Aviation Security Emad Al-Jalawi said on Thursday: "The arriving passengers reached 354,646 passengers, while the departing passengers reached 557,450 passengers during the month of April."

Al-Jalawi explained that aircraft movements during the same period increased by 29 percent, as the total number of flights operated to and from Kuwait International Airport reached 8,983 flights, compared to 6,948 flights in April 2022. "Air cargo traffic decreased by 5 percent in April, reaching about 16.5 million kilograms, compared to 17.4 million kilograms during the same period in 2022," he said.

He pointed out that the total of incoming cargo goods amounted to about 13.3 million kilograms, while the outgoing cargo amounted to 3.1 million kilograms last April, pointing out that the most requested destinations during the same period were Jeddah, Dubai, Cairo, Istanbul, and Doha. On the percentage of market traffic of airlines during April, he explained that the share of Kuwait Airways Company amounted to 29 percent, Jazeera Airways 26 percent, and the rest of the companies reached a market share of 45 percent. — KUNA

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: An aerial view of the Khairan Mall, the biggest outlet mall in the Middle East, in the Sabah Al-Ahmad Sea City some 95 km south of Kuwait City. Khairan is a mixed-use, development located in the heart of the Sabah Al-Ahmad Sea City. The 70,000 square meter multi-use waterfront complex includes a five-star resort, 500 retail stores, tempting restaurants, a shopping mall, two residential towers, one furnished apartment tower, and a 900-berth luxury marina. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait participates in ITEX 34th exhibition in Malaysia



KUALA LUMPUR: Participants attend the 34th edition of the International Exhibition for Invention, Innovation and Technology (ITEX) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. — KUNA photo

KUALA LUMPUR: The 34th edition of the International Exhibition for Invention, Innovation and Technology (ITEX) kicked off on Thursday in

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia for two days. This year's edition witnesses a Kuwaiti participation, engineer Jenan Al-Shehab, as part of the General Secretariat of the GCC delegation. The exhibition was inaugurated by the Malaysian Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, Shang Lih Kang, in the presence of Kuwait Ambassador to Malaysia Rashed Al-Saleh, alongside the ambassadors of the GCC countries in Malaysia.

In a statement to KUNA, Ambassador Al-Saleh expressed his joy for Al-Shehab's participation and displaying her invention (Electromagnetic Cells), saying that this participation is considered a motive for other Kuwaiti engineers to prove their competence and their creative abilities. On her part, Jenan Al-Shehab said that she was nominated by a specialized team of arbitrators at the Patent Office of the GCC general secretariat to represent Kuwait in the ITEX 2023 exhibition.

She noted that this is her eighth participation in international exhibitions where she had won several gold medals in competitions in such expos, in addition to an officer badge from the European Union and the International Commission for Officers and Supervisors (Science and Innovation) for her electromagnetic cells invention. She pointed out that the electromagnetic cells invention is a system that



transfers energy wirelessly, which can be used in charging and operating electronic devices without wires or cables to reduce electrical contacts and adds an aesthetic look to halls.

The International Invention, Innovation and Technology Exhibition (ITEX) is an annual exhibition initiated by the Malaysian Invention and Design Society (MINDS) in 1989 that features the best innovations, promote inventions, technologies, commercial exchange and expertise in the field of science and knowledge. — KUNA



Scan & Subscribe
KD 20 a year

For Individuals Only



Scan Now

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First English Daily in the Arabian Gulf



Tel: 24833199 Ext: 220



KUWAIT: The Director of the Ahmadi Governorate Mosques Department at the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Thamer Al-Satlan, made an inspection tour of a number of mosques to follow up on maintenance work.

Awqaf official checks mosques' maintenance

KUWAIT: The Director of the Ahmadi Governorate Mosques Department at the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Thamer Al-Satlan, made an inspection tour of a number of mosques to follow up on maintenance work and readiness at all levels, as was briefed on other works related to maintenance and cleaning.

Al-Satlan inspected the Othman Bin Abi Al-Aas Mosque in the Hadiya area and the Kaa'b bin Umair Mosque and the Aws bin Al-Sumait Mosque in Fahad



Al-Ahmad. He said that the administration is keen to follow up on the maintenance of mosques and work orders, as well as follow up on companies and the extent of their implementation of the plan prepared by the administration. Al-Satlan stressed on the need to follow up and provide everything the worshippers need, as well as hear their complaints and observations and resolve them according.

Al-Satlan also indicated that the summer period requires extra maintenance monitoring, continuous work, and follow-up of all work related to periodic maintenance, whether for air conditioners, lighting, or cleanliness, and addressing all negatives. "We are aware of the size of the responsibility entrusted to us, but this does not prevent us from continuing to work and provide all the necessary needs for worshippers," he said.



Indian ethnic clashes shatter harmony, houses

Yemen peace push 'serious' but next steps unclear: Saudi envoy



MANCHESTER: Supporters of former US President and 2024 Presidential hopeful Donald Trump rally to welcome him at Manchester airport in Manchester, New Hampshire, on May 10, 2023 ahead of his CNN town hall meeting. — AFP

Trump refuses to accept 2020 defeat

Hurls insults and mocks former magazine columnist

GOFFSTOWN: A combative Donald Trump made a rare live appearance on longtime adversary CNN on Wednesday, repeating his false claims about the 2020 election, hurling insults and mocking a former magazine columnist he was found liable of sexually abusing and defaming.

Trump, during a one-hour "town hall" on the cable television network that he regularly denounced as "fake news" while in the White House, took questions on a broad range of subjects including the war in Ukraine, the debt limit, immigration and his multiple legal challenges. "Most people understand that what happened was a rigged election," Trump said of his 2020 presidential election defeat by Democrat Joe Biden.

If reelected, he said he would pardon a "large portion" of the hundreds of Trump supporters who have been jailed for their roles in the January 6, 2021 storming of the US Capitol. "They were there with love in their heart," the 76-year-old Trump said of the rioters who attempted to block the congressional certification of Biden's win. Trump, the frontrunner for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, refused to unreservedly commit to accepting the results of the next White

House vote when pressed by CNN anchor Kaitlin Collins, the mediator for the event. "If I think it's an honest election, absolutely I would," Trump said.

The former president also waded into the tense negotiations between the Biden White House and Congress over raising the US debt limit, urging Republican legislators not to do so if Democrats don't agree to spending cuts. "I say that the Republicans out there congressmen, senators, if they don't give you massive cuts, you're gonna have to do a default," Trump said, before quickly adding that he sees such a scenario as unlikely. The US government has never intentionally defaulted on its debt, and some economists warn that the effects could be calamitous.

On Ukraine, Trump said Russian leader Vladimir Putin made a "tremendous mistake" by invading but he declined to say who he wanted to win the war or whether he would continue to provide military aid to Ukraine.

"I don't think in terms of winning and losing, I think in terms of getting it settled," he said. "They're dying, Russians and Ukrainians. I want them to stop dying and I'll have that done in 24 hours."

Trump slammed Biden over his handling of immigration

saying that Thursday, when a Covid-era policy lapses, will be a "day of infamy" along the US border with Mexico. "You're going to have millions of people pouring into our country," he said, while suggesting that he would reinstate a policy of separating families at the border. "When you have that policy, people don't come," he said. "I know it sounds harsh."

'Four more years of that?'

The CNN event was seen as the first major test of the 2024 campaign for Trump, who has done only a couple of rallies since launching his new White House bid. Biden, who announced last month that he will seek re-election, responded to Trump's appearance with a fund-raising appeal. "It's simple, folks," Biden tweeted. "Do you want four more years of that?"

Never Back Down, a political action committee backing Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, a potential rival for the 2024 Republican nomination, called the CNN event "an hour of nonsense that proved Trump is stuck in the past."

The CNN appearance came just one day after Trump was ordered by a New York jury to pay \$5 million in dam-

ages to E. Jean Carroll, a former columnist for Elle magazine who accused him of raping her in a Manhattan department store changing room in 1996. Trump vehemently repeated his denials and called Carroll a "wack job."

Trump dismissed other legal challenges he is facing as the work of Democrats out to torpedo his bid to be the Republican standard-bearer in 2024. "They're doing this for election interference," he said. Trump had a number of testy exchanges with Collins, a former CNN White House correspondent, calling her a "nasty person" at one point, while playing to the friendly Republican crowd, which responded with repeated applause and laughter.

CNN said the audience was made up of New Hampshire Republicans and undeclared voters who plan to vote in the state's 2024 Republican presidential primary, the first in the nation. CNN has come in for some criticism for giving the twice-impeached Trump a primetime slot but defended the move by saying it plans to provide the same town hall format to other presidential candidates.

Trump sued CNN in October, accusing the network of waging a campaign of "libel and slander" against him and seeking \$475 million in punitive damages. — AFP

Finnish footbridge collapse injures 27, mostly children

ESPOO: Some 27 young people, mostly children, were injured in Finland on Thursday when a temporary footbridge near a construction site collapsed and they fell several metres onto a road, officials said.

The accident occurred at around 9:20 am (0620 GMT) in Espoo, near the capital, Helsinki, when wooden planks are believed to have given way and the group fell five to six metres (feet) onto the carriageway of the small side road.

Most of the injured were eighth-year pupils aged around 14 or 15, who were on a school field trip, city officials said. Their teacher was among the injured. Twenty-four people were taken to various hospitals in the Helsinki region.

"No one has life-threatening injuries," Helsinki hospital service HUS said, adding that the majority had limb fractures. "There has been no indication of any risk of paralysis but there are some head injuries involved as well," HUS medical director Eero Hirvensalo told reporters.

Photos from the scene showed the sides of the footbridge largely intact but a gaping hole across half of it and a pile of wooden planks in a jumble under one end. Rescue workers could be seen treating multiple people lying injured on the road shortly after the accident.

Cause unknown

The cause of the collapse has not been confirmed and is being investigated, the Espoo city authorities said. "I saw the bridge was no longer up and many people (were) on the ground," Jaakko Markkula, who lives on the fifth floor of a building near where the accident took place, told AFP.

The head of the Helsinki city education department, Satu Jarvenkallas, told AFP the injured were pupils from the Kalasatama comprehensive school in the capital. "They were on a normal field trip to the Emma Art Museum. And then the accident took place," she said. A crisis team has been set up at the school, she added. The city of Espoo said weekly inspections had been conducted on the structure, most recently on May 5. The contractor whose company built the bridge, Jarno Tuuri, told the Iltalehti daily "nothing out of the usual was observed" during the weekly checks.

"The situation is of course very bad. We're now checking all the structures and making the necessary additional reinforcements," he said. "We're assisting the authorities in every way we can," he added.

infected with Covid-19 out of the country, allowing border guards to refuse entry to anyone.

In practice it has been a quick and easy way to avoid accepting asylum claims. But with the ending of the Covid emergency, Title 42 is finished, replaced instead with regular migration policies that the Biden administration says will offer pathways to legitimate asylum seekers, and harsh penalties to those who do not follow the rules.

Old, outdated phones

From Friday would-be migrants must register their name, date of birth, details of their travel documents, and upload a photograph on CBP One. The app can also log their location and their device details. But old, outdated phones make the process hard. It's harder still for those whose phones were broken or stolen on the long trek north.

Antonio Sanchez Ventura lives on the streets of Ciudad Juarez with nothing, eating only what he can scrounge. His sole focus now is to raise the money to buy a phone and download the app. "It is the dream of every human being to cross to the United States to help our relatives," he said.

'A nightmare'

Ciudad Juarez is a tangle of tents and desperation, where people who have made impossible journeys scrape by on hope and charity. Those who have phones search for exposed wires from street lights to charge them, and save every penny they have to buy credit to access the internet.

Migrants battle glitchy app at US border

CIUDAD JUAREZ: The fate of tens of thousands of people seeking asylum at the United States' southern border will, from Friday, hinge on an app that has just 2.5 stars in the App Store. For immigration managers, a sleek, computerised way to manage the wave of people expected to arrive when COVID-era rules lapse must have been tempting.

But for poor, exhausted people whose phones don't work, or who have no access to wifi or electricity, it's just another almost-impossible hurdle. "It's amazing that an app practically decides our lives and our future," Jeremy de Pablos, a 21-year-old Venezuelan who has camped out in the Mexican city of Ciudad Juarez for weeks, told AFP.

De Pablos, who has dark skin, said the hardest part of using the CBP One app was the facial recognition — an issue that many migrants with darker complexions have pointed to. "It's like a game of chance. It recognizes who it wants to."

President Joe Biden's administration launched the Customs and Border Protection app in January, as it eyed a way to manage the expected chaos when Title 42 expires overnight Thursday into Friday. The measure was imposed under Donald Trump, with a stated purpose of keeping those



ESPOO: Rescue teams work at the site of an accident in which around 27 people, a majority of them children, were injured on May 11, 2023 in Espoo, Finland, when a pedestrian bridge collapsed. —AFP

The director of Espoo city services, Jukka Makela, expressed his "regrets" to the injured, adding: "This simply should not happen." "Shocking news from Espoo. Our strength to those injured in the accident and their loved ones. You are in our thoughts," Prime Minister Sanna Marin said on Twitter. — AFP



SAN YSIDRO: Migrants wait for asylum hearings at the US-Mexico border on May 10, 2023 in San Ysidro, California. The US will officially end its 40-month COVID-19 emergency, also discarding the Title 42 law, a tool that has been used to prevent millions of migrants from entering the country. —AFP

But the challenge does not end there. "Look, it's stuck," said Ronald Huerta, a Venezuelan who on Wednesday couldn't get past the application's language settings. A few meters away, Ana Paola, a 14-year-old Venezuelan, cried disconsolately because the application had been updated and all the information for her family had been deleted. — AFP

Biden family earned millions from shady business deals

WASHINGTON: Republicans charged Wednesday that President Joe Biden's family has earned more than \$10 million from shady business deals crafted while he was vice president. With Biden ramping up his bid for a second term as president in the 2024 election, the Republican-controlled House Oversight Committee alleged that the family took in \$1 million tied to a business deal with a Romanian tycoon when the then vice-president oversaw relations with the country in 2014-2015.

The deal was allegedly done by Rob Walker, a business partner of Biden's son Hunter. In a detailed report, committee Republicans said Walker began receiving money from Romanian tycoon Gabriel Popoviciu shortly after Biden welcomed Romanian President Klaus Iohannis to the White House in September 2015.

A Cyprus company allegedly owned by Popoviciu, Bladon Enterprises, paid a private company owned by Walker over \$3 million from November 2015 to May 2017. The Republicans alleged that after the transfers came in from Bladon, Walker's company paid more than \$1 million into accounts controlled by Hunter Biden, his sister-in-law Hallie Biden, and James Gilliar, another business partner of Hunter. They said the pattern matches that of an already well-reported business deal Hunter Biden and Walker had with an energy company in China. After receiving money from that company in 2017, the committee said Walker distributed more than \$1 million to Gilliar and the Bidens.

Oversight Committee Chair James Comer said the Romanian funds were part of more than \$10 million that Hunter Biden, his family and business associates had received from deals with foreigners in China, Ukraine, and elsewhere while Joe Biden was vice president from 2009 to 2017. "Hunter Biden and his associates courted business in countries that correlated directly with Joe Biden's work as vice president. This is also not normal. It is not ethical," Comer said in a press conference.

The Republicans showed no evidence that Joe Biden directly benefitted from or even knew of the business deals and money transfers. But they said he must have been aware of all of the companies set up by Hunter and his associates to conduct the business.

"Nobody in this room can logically sit here and say that the president of the United States had no idea that these companies were being formed while he was vice president of the United States," said Republican Representative Byron Reynolds. — AFP

International

Yemen peace push 'serious' but next steps unclear: Saudi envoy

'Nothing is clear, but I'm optimistic, Yemenis can find a way as soon as possible'

ADEN: Warring parties in Yemen are "serious" about ending a devastating eight-year-old conflict but it is impossible to predict when direct talks, much less a breakthrough, might happen, Saudi Arabia's envoy told AFP.

"Everybody is serious. Serious means everybody is looking for peace," Mohammed Al-Jaber said in his first extensive comments after meeting with Huthi leaders in Sanaa last month. But he added: "It's not easy to be clear about next steps."

The comments seemed to undercut expectations for an imminent deal to conclude fighting that has killed hundreds of thousands of people directly and indirectly and left two-thirds of Yemen's population dependent on aid, according to the United Nations.

Saudi Arabia mobilized a coalition to back the internationally recognized government in 2015, after the Iran-backed Huthis seized the capital Sanaa the previous year. Subsequent coalition air strikes killed and injured tens of thousands, according to the UN, while failing to dislodge the Huthis, though fighting diminished considerably after a truce announced in April 2022.

Jaber, Riyadh's ambassador to Yemen, travelled to Sanaa in April as part of a plan to "stabilize" the truce, which officially expired in October. But no deal was struck and Jaber said there were no concrete plans to move the process forward.

"Nothing is clear, but I'm optimistic, and we hope inshallah (God willing) Yemenis can find a way as soon as possible," he said. The push for peace in Yemen appeared to be revived by a surprise rapprochement deal between Saudi Arabia and Iran announced in March. However, hopes for a quick resolution "have somewhat receded", according to one diplomat working on the file.

The Huthis see Saudi Arabia as a party to the

conflict, whereas Jaber indicated that Riyadh sees itself as more of a mediator trying to facilitate an agreement between the rebels and Yemen's government. "Because of Saudi Arabia's relationship with all Yemenis, including the Huthis, we used our leverage to convince all Yemenis to sit at the table and discuss those issues," Jaber said during the interview on a flight back to Saudi Arabia from Aden, where he inaugurated Saudi-funded upgrades to the main hospital and airport.

"In the end, it's about Yemenis," he added, though he also noted the two sides currently "refuse to sit together". In a separate interview at the presidential palace in Aden, Rashad Al-Alimi, chair of the Yemeni government's Presidential Leadership Council (PLC), also told AFP that Riyadh was acting as a mediator.

"The Saudi role is a mediating role between the official government and the rebels," Alimi said in his first public remarks on the process. Diplomats and analysts have said PLC members are frustrated by being excluded from the talks, especially as they touch on issues like whether Yemeni oil revenue could be used to pay Huthi-appointed civil servants' salaries. "There has to be more consultation with other Yemenis. All the (PLC members) hunkered down in Riyadh only have a basic knowledge of what is happening," one diplomat said.

'Out of the war'

Yet Alimi said talks between Riyadh and the Huthis are merely "a way to reach Yemeni-Yemeni peace talks" and pushed back on claims the PLC had been sidelined. "We were informed by the Saudi side of these steps before they began, and we are also informed of what is going on in these contacts," he said.

There are also persistent concerns about whether

Bakawan, director of the French Centre for Research on Iraq, who stressed that Ankara's role in the region is "fundamental". Iraq's Kurdish leaders have built relationships with Erdogan, he said, adding that, if "the president changes, the whole relationship between Arbil and Ankara changes... The diplomatic world hates the unknown."

Erdogan, after two decades in power as premier and then president, has strengthened Turkey as a regional player that at times challenges Europe and the United States and negotiates with Russia on Syria's war. When he first took office, Erdogan launched talks aimed at ending the Kurdish armed struggle for broader autonomy in Turkey's southeast. But the community, estimated to be 15 to 20 million strong, came under pressure when those talks collapsed, and violence resumed in 2015.

Turkey's battle against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), classified as a "terrorist" group by Ankara and its Western allies, has long since flared again across its borders into Iraqi Kurdistan. The Turkish military maintains dozens of bases in northern Iraq and carries out air strikes and ground operations against the PKK, which operates rear bases in the region.

Iraq's regional Kurdish government rarely rebukes Ankara, despite Turkey routinely bombarding its territory and causing civilian casualties. Instead, Arbil usually limits its public response to press releases condemning violations of Iraq's sovereignty and their impacts on the population.

Kilicdaroglu, while making no concrete proposals to resolve Turkey's Kurdish question, has

ing visas to Filipino workers after Manila allegedly did not comply with a bilateral labor agreement signed with Kuwait and following recent statements by the Philippine Embassy. Later Thursday, the interior ministry allowed the entry of a delegation of the Philippine foreign ministry to discuss the latest developments on the terms of the agreement related to Filipino workers, after a request by the Kuwaiti foreign ministry to issue visas to the Filipino delegation.

The former cricket superstar was ousted in April 2022 in a no-confidence vote in parliament after he lost the support of Pakistan's powerful military. Khan has said the dozens of legal cases brought against him following his ousting are part of an effort by the government and the army to prevent him from returning to power ahead of elections due in the autumn.

The military earlier issued a statement warning of a "severe reaction" to any further attacks on state and military facilities, and said responsibility for any violence would lie with "a group that wants to push Pakistan into civil war". Khan's party dismissed the statement as "contrary to facts and the situation on the ground".

Since Wednesday, the army has been deployed in two provinces — including Punjab, the most populous — and in the capital. The interior ministry has ordered mobile Internet services cut and restricted access to social media sites Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, Pakistan's communications agency said. Authorities also closed schools nationwide — with year-end exams cancelled.

"People should protest but it doesn't mean setting fire and damaging government property, or harming poor people and damaging their cars," said 45-year-old Syed Muzaffar Shah in the city of Peshawar. Pakistan is struggling through a severe economic downturn, brought about in part by the deepening political instability of the past year, with the rupee plummeting to a record low against the dollar on Thursday.

Khan was arrested hours after the military rebuked him for alleging that a senior officer was involved in a plot to assassinate him. The army has denied Khan's accusation. Criticism of Pakistan's military establishment is considered a red line. Pakistani politicians have frequently been arrested and jailed since the country's founding in 1947. — AFP



ADEN: Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to Yemen Mohammed Al-Jaber (L) listens to Rashad Al-Alimi (C), President of Yemen's new leadership council, during the unveiling of a renovated hospital in Aden on May 10, 2023. — AFP

the PLC, an eight-member body formed in Riyadh in April 2022, can stay united. Earlier this week, the United Arab Emirates-backed Southern Transitional Council (STC), whose leadership is represented on the PLC, unveiled a new charter affirming its push for a "federal independent" state.

Alimi insisted there was "no disagreement within the Presidential Leadership Council", which he said "rep-

resents all Yemeni parties". For his part, Jaber rejected the notion that Riyadh is focused solely on securing a quick exit from a war that did not go as planned.

"I don't agree," he said. "We are working hard to take Yemen out of the war. If we take Yemen out of the war, we can go out of the war and start supporting the economy and supporting the government." — AFP

Iraqi Kurds keep nervous eye on Turkish election race

ARBIL: As Turkey's presidential vote nears, Iraqi Kurds are keeping a close watch on the tightest electoral battle yet for Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the outcome of which could have major security and economic implications for their region.

For many years, fighting between Turkey's armed forces and Kurdish militants has spilled over into Iraq's autonomous Kurdish north, a rugged mountain region where both sides operate military bases.

Many Kurds in war-scarred Iraq sympathize with the ethnic minority in Turkey, but their own region also relies on the big neighbor for business, with its crucial oil long exported via a pipeline that runs through Turkey.

Political leaders in Arbil are not officially commenting on Turkey's tight electoral race between Erdogan and his challenger Kemal Kilicdaroglu, who has pledged to "bring democracy to this country by changing the one-man regime".

But, whatever the outcome of the Turkish presidential vote, with the first round to be held Sunday, Iraq's Kurdish region will look to preserve its strategic partnership with Ankara, analysts say.

"The media, the political scene, everyone is highly preoccupied with the Turkish elections," said Adel



QAMISHLI: Thousands of Syrian Kurds protest in Qamishli in northeastern Syria on May 10, 2023 against Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in a show of support for the opposition in Turkey's upcoming elections later this week. — AFP

accused Erdogan of "stigmatizing" Kurds. He has also pledged to free the Kurdish leader of the left-wing Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), Selahattin Demirtas, who has been incarcerated since 2016 for spreading "terrorist propaganda".

According to Bakawan, given the gestures Kilicdaroglu has already made to the Kurdish community, there is "the possibility of appeasement" in the conflict should he win. "The result of the election will directly impact the direction of this war," said Bakawan, a French-Iraqi political scientist of Kurdish origin.

Political scientist Botan Tahseen argued that Turkey's opposition is "betting on relaxation" and wants "to turn a new page" after Erdogan, at a time when the Middle East is thirsty for "political, security and economic stability".

If Erdogan is re-elected, he added, Turkey will still "need an initiative to normalize its relations with its neighbors, especially (Iraqi) Kurdistan". Ankara remains a strategic economic partner to Arbil. For years, all of Kurdistan's oil exports — some 450,000 barrels per day — were sent to Turkey, without the approval of Iraq's federal government. — AFP

Kuwait warns top labor-exporting...

Continued from Page 1

This comes after directives by First Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah to stop issu-

Pak top court declares Khan...

Continued from Page 1

He added that the headquarters, where Khan was taken into custody following his arrest, should instead be treated as a "residence".

Bandial denied Khan's request to return to his farmhouse on the outskirts of Islamabad. "The court has ordered that he will remain in the custody of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and that he can meet and consult his friends and lawyers during his stay there," Khan's lawyer, Babar Awan, told reporters. Pakistan's top judge had ordered police to bring Khan before him in response to a petition by his political party challenging his arrest on Tuesday on corruption charges.

On Thursday, Khan told the apex court he had been "treated like a terrorist". Several thousand supporters of his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party have for two days rampaged through cities around the country, setting fire to buildings and blocking roads. At least nine people have died in the unrest, police and hospitals said. Hundreds of police officers have been injured and more than 2,000 people arrested, mostly in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces, police added. At least eight officials from PTI's central leadership accused of orchestrating the protests were also detained, Islamabad police said. Security forces have responded with tear gas and water cannon to quell the crowds and on Thursday came equipped with batons and riot shields. Supporters turning up to a protest venue in Karachi were swiftly rounded up while in Islamabad police beat handcuffed PTI supporters, AFP journalists saw.

Kuwait slams atrocities by...

Continued from Page 1

escalation of violence in months that has killed 26 people in the blockaded Palestinian enclave. Air strikes by the Zionist army since Tuesday have killed civilians, including several children, said officials in the crowded coastal territory.

Cairo mediated in efforts toward a truce between the Zionist entity and the Islamic Jihad militant group, while France, Germany, Jordan and Egypt called for an end to the violence. "The bloodletting must end now," said German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock after hosting her three counterparts for talks in Berlin.

Militants in the Gaza Strip have fired more than 500 rockets at the Zionist entity, causing no casualties so far, the Zionist military said. Of these, 368 rockets made it over the border and 154 were intercepted by the Iron Dome missile defense system, while 110 fell inside Gaza, it said. Shops in Gaza were shuttered and the streets largely abandoned as Zionist military aircraft circled over the territory where several buildings lay in ruins.

Islamic Jihad confirmed it has lost five military leaders in strikes in recent days, including Ahmed Abu-Deka. Abu Deka was the deputy of Ali Ghali, the commander of a rocket launch unit killed by the Zionist entity earlier on Thursday. The Gaza health ministry said a man had been killed in southern Gaza, with the Islamic Jihad confirming it was Abu Deka. Another militant group, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, said

four of its fighters had been killed.

In Gaza City's Al-Rimal district, Mamoun Radi, 48, said: "We hope that the wave of escalation will end, but we support revenge for the martyrs. (The Zionist entity) assassinated a leader of (Islamic) Jihad at dawn today because it does not want calm." Across the southern Zionist entity, sirens wailed intermittently through the night and Thursday morning. Miriam Keren, 78, an Ashkelon resident, said a Gaza rocket had destroyed a workshop and damaged her house. "All the shrapnel is in the room; the house was shaken very powerfully, the glasses fell, the walls were damaged," she told AFP.

An Islamic Jihad source told AFP that senior member Mohammad Al-Hindi, head of the group's political department, would arrive in Cairo on Thursday for talks with Egyptian intelligence officials. An Egyptian source meanwhile told AFP that a security delegation from Cairo would be in Tel Aviv later Thursday for talks with Zionist officials on a ceasefire.

Zionist officials confirmed Egypt's involvement in attempts to facilitate understandings between the sides toward halting the hostilities. On Thursday, US Ambassador to the Zionist entity Tom Nides said "we stand by (the Zionist entity's) right to defend itself", and that Washington was engaged in efforts "towards a quick de-escalation".

Violence has also flared in the occupied West Bank, where the Zionist army has staged repeated raids against militants which have often flared into street clashes or gun battles. On Thursday, a Palestinian died from his wounds after being shot by the Zionist army in a raid the day before in the West Bank city of Qabatiya, the Palestinian health ministry said. — Agencies

Candidates urge end to political...

Continued from Page 1

Former MP Mohammad Al-Hadiya said that the on-going political crisis has paralyzed the country and the Assembly chamber has become a place for disputes.

Candidates also called for comprehensive politi-

cal reforms and urged Kuwaiti voters to turn out in large numbers at the ballot boxes to elect the best. Former MP Hasan Jowhar said there are attempts to discourage voters from going to the polls, while former MP Mohammad Hayef said millions of dinars are being pumped into the election. One of the leaders of the Kuwaiti resistance during the 1990-91 Iraqi invasion, Mohammad Al-Fajji, filed his papers for the first time on Thursday and called on voters to ensure that corrupt forces fail.

International

Indian ethnic clashes shatter harmony

Most victims are reported to be from the mainly Christian Kuki

CHURACHANDPUR: Houses in a remote village in the restive northeastern Indian state of Manipur daubed with "Don't Burn" notices stand untouched while many unmarked buildings are in ruins, their Meitei owners having fled. "It all started with an attack on two houses... But there was so much anger at what had happened in the afternoon that the people kept coming back to attack the entire neighbourhood," said Khumujamba village resident Muan Pau, 25. The predominantly Hindu Meitei, Manipur's main ethnic group, live mostly in the capital Imphal and the surrounding plains. The Kukis and other smaller tribal groups live in the hills.

But several hill pockets, like Khumujamba in Churachandpur district, were also home to some Meitei, living side-by-side in uneasy harmony with the Kuki and other tribal peoples. That was until last week, when an explosion of ethnic violence killed around 60 people and left 30,000 displaced and almost 2,000 houses burnt down across the state.

Most victims are reported to be from the mainly Christian Kuki, some of their villages destroyed by Meitei mobs and their residents killed or fled to the safety of army camps. But the Meitei were also targeted by the Kukis, as a visit by AFP journalists to debris-strewn Khumujamba showed. "I am not sure what I will do in the future," traumatised Meitei carpenter Oinam Parshuram, 48, told AFP as he sat waiting to be evacuated in an army truck with his wife and daughter.

Imran Khan's U-turn from military's man to army critic

ISLAMABAD: Former prime minister Imran Khan has gone from being the chosen one to a thorn in the side of Pakistan's military—long considered the nation's political power brokers. His arrest this week—after delivering another broadside against a senior intelligence officer—marks an escalation in the duel between Khan's staggering popular appeal and the army's vast influence. "What he has done is say the quiet bits out loud and has broken down some of the taboos around directly criticising Pakistan's establishment, and its military specifically," said analyst Elizabeth Threlkeld at the US-based Stimson Center.

"Now that that genie is out of the bottle it's proving quite difficult—if not impossible—to put it back in," she told AFP. Pakistan's military has staged three coups since independence in 1947, ruled the nation directly for more than three decades, and continues to wield huge influence in domestic politics. When Khan rose to office in 2018 after winning over an electorate weary of the dynastic politics of Pakistan's two major parties, many political leaders and analysts said it was with the blessing of the military establishment. Likewise, his ousting last April via a parliamentary no-confidence vote came only after a falling out with the top brass of the world's sixth-largest army.

Broken convention

The relationship began to sour following Khan's push for more of a say in foreign policy, as well as a stand-off with the military over a delay in rub-

More than 71m people internally displaced worldwide in 2022

GENEVA: A "perfect storm" of overlapping crises forced tens of millions to flee within their own country last year, sending the number of internally displaced people to a record high, monitors said on Thursday. An unprecedented 71.1 million internally displaced people (IDPs) were registered in 2022 -- up 20 percent from a year earlier—amid mass displacement for Russia's war in Ukraine, as well as by the monsoon floods that drenched Pakistan. A full 60.9 million new internal displacements were meanwhile reported in 2022, with some people forced to flee multiple times during the year, according to a joint report by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). That marks an all-time high for new internal displacements, and an increase of 60 percent compared to the some 38 million fresh displacements seen in 2021. That number is "extremely high", IDMC chief Alexandra Bilak told AFP.

"Much of the increase is caused, of course, by the war in Ukraine, but also by floods in Pakistan, by new and ongoing conflicts across the world, and by a number of sudden and slow onset disasters that we've seen from the Americas all the way to the Pacific."

'Very volatile'

Last year, new internal displacements from conflict surged to 28.3 million—nearly doubling from a year earlier and three times higher than the annual average over the past decade. Beyond the 17 million displacements inside Ukraine last year, eight million were forced from their homes by Pakistan's monster floods.

Sub-Saharan Africa saw around 16.5 million displacements—more than half of them due to conflict, especially in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in Ethiopia. The global internal displacement figures are only expected to grow this year, driven in part by fresh conflicts like the violence ravaging Sudan forcing hundreds of thousands to flee.

More than 700,000 people have already become internally displaced by the fighting that erupted on April 15, while another 150,000 people have fled the country, according to UN numbers. "Since the start of the... most recent conflict in April, we've already recorded the same number of displacements as we did for the whole year in 2022," Bilak said. "Clearly, it's a very volatile situation on the ground," she said, pointing out that those being newly displaced by the fighting were joining the ranks of more than three million people already displaced across Sudan.—AFP

Looting

The violence was sparked by Kuki anger at the prospect of the Meitei being given guaranteed quotas of government jobs and other perks in a form of affirmative action. This also stoked long-held fears among the Kuki that the Meitei might also be allowed to acquire land in areas currently reserved for them and other tribal groups.

On Tuesday, days after most Meitei fled Khumujamba, village men were still scavenging loot including taps, iron grills and firewood from different buildings. The few structures left standing had "Eimi In" and "Haal Louh Ding" written on their external walls, messages in the local language exhorting rioters and looters not to touch them.

Even the main commercial road, now under curfew, had two types of shops: Those spray-painted with the word "Tribal" and the ones that were ransacked by mobs. One of the latter group belonged to Oinam Ravi, 28, who also had a home in the same district. "Both of them are gone now," he told AFP, one of a group of about 3,000 Meiteis being moved by the army, which has deployed thousands of troops and imposed curfews.

'Trust is gone'

Tongbran Rajesh Meitei, 36, said he and other Meitei men spent a sleepless night guarding women and children in a building when tensions peaked on May 3. The teacher, who said his grandfather settled in the region more than a century ago under British



PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party activists and supporters of Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan celebrate after Supreme Court acquitted Khan, in Peshawar on May 11, 2023. — AFP

ber-stamping the appointment of a new intelligence chief. But in his campaign to return to power, the 70-year-old has broken with political convention and directly criticised both retired and serving officers. Widely popular Khan "doesn't feel beholden to the same benefactors" previous prime ministers might have, said Threlkeld.

After the former cricket superstar was ousted, his successor Shehbaz Sharif appointed a new army chief—widening the rift with Khan by selecting a man who had famously fallen out with him while he was in office. Sharif's government also drafted new regulations to shield the military from criticism.

In February, Islamabad proposed punishing those who ridicule the army with up to five years in prison. In March, media reports suggested they were also taking measures to rein in critique on social media. Nonetheless, Khan steadily ratcheted up his attacks over the past year, culminating in explosive allegations



RAKHINE STATE: Picture shows fishing boats anchored near Gwa township in Myanmar's Rakhine state on May 11, 2023 after Cyclone Mocha, the Bay of Bengal's first cyclone of the year formed. — AFP

Cyclone Mocha heads for Myanmar, Bangladesh

GWA: Myanmar and Bangladesh deployed thousands of volunteers and ordered evacuations from low-lying areas on Thursday as the Bay of Bengal's first cyclone of the year approached. Cyclone Mocha is forecast to make landfall on Sunday along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border, according to India's meteorological office, packing winds of up to 175 kilometres (108 miles) per hour.

The office predicted a storm surge of between two and two and a half metres (6-8 feet) for the low-lying coastal region, which on the Bangladeshi side is home to sprawling camps hosting hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees.

Thar Tin Maung, 60, was moved from his village in Myanmar's Rakhine state to the town of Sittwe in preparation for the storm. "As it is located at the entrance to the river, our village can't even resist a small storm," he told AFP. "There will



MANIPUR: An Indian army personnel gestures as children evacuated by the Indian army during the ethnic riots in Manipur state prepare to leave after reuniting with their parents at a temporary shelter at the Leimakhong Army Cantonment in the northeastern Indian state of Manipur on May 10, 2023. — AFP

colonial rule, was abandoning the area with his seven family members. "We will stay in a camp initially and see what the government does for us," he said.

Rajesh fears his house has been ransacked but said he doesn't have the courage to risk going back to his old neighbourhood to look. "No one wants to come back. We want to leave and settle somewhere among our Meitei brothers," he said. "The trust is

gone and it will take a long time. It may take decades if not a century." Back in Khumujamba, tribal R. Kholum, 50, put the onus for the violence on the regional state government. "The tribal people didn't start this, they just reacted," he told AFP. "What do you think will happen in a state which has over 50 different communities but the government is seen favouring only one or two of them?" — AFP

following a November assassination attempt, which saw Khan shot in the leg while on the campaign trail.

Khan alleged a senior intelligence officer, Major-General Faisal Naseer, was in cahoots with Sharif in plotting the attack. "Perhaps he thought that by building pressure on the army, by criticising the army, the army will pull back from supporting the present government," said analyst Hasan Askari. "It's a risky strategy," he told AFP.

Day in court

Khan has never offered proof of his claims regarding the assassination plot. This weekend, he repeated the allegations, causing the army's public relations wing to raise the stakes with a rare public rebuke, branding his remarks "fabricated and malicious". A day later, Khan was swarmed by paramilitary Rangers and arrested at Islamabad High Court as he appeared to face a graft case. "The timing of the arrest is striking," said Michael Kugelman, director of the South Asia Institute at the Wilson Center.

"The senior army leadership is uninterested in repairing the rift between itself and Khan, and so with this arrest it's likely sending a message that the gloves are very much off." Supporters of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party have raised the stakes by attacking military targets—torching the residence of the corps commander in Lahore and attacking the entrance to the army's headquarters in Rawalpindi.

In Peshawar, a mob razed the Chaghi monument—a mountain-shaped sculpture honouring the location of Pakistan's first nuclear test, while several memorials to service members killed on active duty were also vandalised. On the streets of major cities, social media footage showed some PTI supporters attacking army vehicles on security duty, attempting to beat soldiers with sticks. "The long-term future of democracy at this stage appears to be very uncertain in Pakistan," Askari warned. — AFP

Armenia-Azerbaijan clashes threaten to derail peace talks

YEREVAN: Armenia and Azerbaijan on Thursday blamed each other for an exchange of fire along their restive border, which killed one person and wounded few four days ahead of EU-hosted peace talks. The Caucasus neighbours have been locked in a decades-long territorial dispute over the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, which has reignited in recent months.

Russia urged the sides to de-escalate tensions after the fatal exchange of fire, but its influence as a power broker in the region has waned since it launched its invasion of Ukraine last year. Armenia initially said four of its soldiers had been wounded by incoming fire in an eastern region of the ex-Soviet country.

"Azerbaijani forces are shooting artillery and mortars at Armenian positions in the Sotk region" the Armenia's defence ministry said. Baku meanwhile accused Armenia of a "provocation" that had left one of its soldiers dead. It said Armenian soldiers had "once again violated the ceasefire agreement" with "large-calibre weapons," referring to an accord from November 2020 that ended six weeks of hostilities.

In Moscow, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters Thursday: "We expect a restrained approach from the parties and urge them not to take any actions that could lead to an increase in tensions."

'Very little' chance

Thursday's flare up in fighting comes just days before European Council President Charles Michel is to host Armenia's Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijan's Ilham Aliyev for talks in Brussels. The two leaders had also agreed to jointly meet the leaders of France and Germany on the sidelines of a European summit in Moldova on June 1, according to the EU.

Pashinyan on Thursday accused Azerbaijan of looking to "undermine the talks" in Brussels. "I have not changed my mind about going to Brussels," he said in his statement -- but there was "very little" chance of signing a peace deal with Azerbaijan at the meeting.

A draft agreement "is still at a very preliminary stage and it is too early to speak of an eventual signature", said Pashinyan. The European Union-hosted meeting comes after talks in the United States at the beginning of May. After that meeting, US top diplomat Antony Blinken spoke of "tangible progress on a durable peace agreement" between the two sides. Baku and Yerevan however put out quasi-similar statements following the talks, noting progress but acknowledging that they differed on key issues.

Decades-long dispute

The Western mediation efforts come as major regional power Russia has struggled to maintain its influence, part of the fallout from its war in Ukraine. Armenia has traditionally relied on Russia as its security guarantor but Yerevan has grown increasingly frustrated with Moscow.

It has accused Russia of failing to fulfill its peacekeeping role when Azerbaijani activists blocked the Lachin corridor, the only land link to Armenia. The two countries have gone to war twice over disputed territories, mainly Nagorno-Karabakh, a majority-Armenian region inside Azerbaijan.

Tens of thousands of people have been killed in the two wars over the region. The first war lasted six years, until 1994. The second, fought in 2020, ended in a Russia-negotiated ceasefire. Under the Russia-brokered 2020 ceasefire, Azerbaijan is required to guarantee safe passage on the Lachin corridor, which is patrolled by Russian peacekeepers. In a new escalation at the end of April, Azerbaijan said it had built a checkpoint on the corridor following "threats and provocations" from Armenia. Armenia denounced the move as a ceasefire violation said the claims were a "far-fetched and baseless pretext". — AFP

Business

FRIDAY, MAY 12, 2023

G7 tackle crises from Ukraine to banking

Finance ministers from India, Indonesia and Brazil to join Niigata talks



NIIGATA: President of the European Central Bank Christine Lagarde (L) talks with Commissioner for the Economy of the European Commission Paolo Gentiloni (2-L) before the start of the G7 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting opening session at the International Conference Room of Toki Messe in Niigata. — AFP

NIIGATA: Support for war-torn Ukraine topped the agenda at G7 finance talks on Thursday in Japan, where ministers and central bankers also weighed concerns ranging from banking uncertainty to US debt default fears.

The meeting of the Group of Seven developed nations comes with the global economy still unsteady after years of pandemic woes compounded by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. So the three-day talks in the coastal city of Niigata in central Japan are a chance to set out a vision for financial stability before G7 leaders get together next weekend in Hiroshima.

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen arrived under the cloud of Washington's debt limit impasse, warning that a default risked "catastrophe" and even political brinkmanship on the issue could trigger "serious economic costs". She also called for the enforcement of US-led economic measures imposed on Moscow.

"This year, a central piece of our strategy is to take further actions to disrupt Russia's attempts to evade our sanctions," she said in a speech as the event kicked off. This includes "identifying and shutting down specific channels used by Russia to equip

and fund its military", and pressuring companies and jurisdictions facilitating evasion, Yellen added.

When G7 finance ministers met in April in Washington, they hailed IMF approval of \$15.6 billion in financing for Kyiv, recommitted to sanctions on Moscow and pledged "further actions as needed". There has been no official indication that new measures will be agreed to during this week's talks but the door is open, said John Kirton, director of the G7 Research Group at the University of Toronto.

Banking stability

Fresh action could centre around "strengthening sanctions evasion... starting with China", he told AFP ahead of the Niigata talks, which Ukrainian Finance Minister Sergii Marchenko will join virtually. EU officials are already discussing halting exports of sensitive technologies to eight Chinese companies over suspicions they are selling them to Russia. The G7 could also try to stop tankers from covertly selling Russian oil in violation of the group's oil price cap, Kirton said.

Stronger supply chains, crypto regulation and

climate finance will be talking points for the ministers, central bank chiefs, and the heads of the IMF, OECD and World Bank. Japanese Finance Minister Shunichi Suzuki has stressed the need for vigilance in the banking sector, which is likely to loom large in discussions.

Three regional US banks have collapsed since early March, sparking panic among customers and turmoil for the shares of mid-sized institutions. "The environment surrounding the financial sector has changed drastically, with outflows of funds happening all at once. This is a common challenge faced by countries including Japan," Suzuki told reporters on Thursday.

Kirton said the G7 could use the Niigata meeting to send a "strong, unified message to reassure and convince customers", but warned that European members and the United States may disagree on the need for regulation on digital bank runs.

European Central Bank president Christine Lagarde has already insisted "supervision needs to be intrusive and as granular as possible" to minimise risks, in an interview with Japan's Nikkei business

daily. There will also be a gulf on monetary policy, with Japan maintaining ultra-low interest rates even as most major central banks have hiked theirs to tackle inflation in recent months.

The bloc, which includes Japan, the United States, Germany, Britain, France, Canada, Italy and the European Union, is expected to discuss infrastructure investment in less developed nations.

Japan has been keen to use this year's G7 for outreach to countries beyond the group, and finance ministers from India, Indonesia and Brazil will join the Niigata talks, along with the South Korean and Singaporean ministers.

The move is seen as key to swaying international opinion on both Russia and China, which funds infrastructure around the world through its huge Belt and Road Initiative. On Thursday, Yellen touted the opportunities that the G7-led price cap on Russian oil could offer.

"We continue to urge developing countries to save on their oil costs by taking advantage of the price cap to negotiate steep bargains on Russian oil," she said. — AFP

Emirates Group unveils record \$3 billion profit

DUBAI: Emirates Group announced a record \$3 billion annual profit on Thursday, hailing a "full recovery" for the Dubai-based carrier after last year's losses due to the pandemic. "We're proud of our 2022-23 performance which is not only a full recovery but also a record result," Emirates chairman and CEO Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum said in a statement.

The Emirates airline business alone banked \$2.9 billion, another record, after returning a \$1.1 billion loss in the previous financial year as passengers began to return to the skies. The Middle East's biggest airline had posted a \$5.5 billion loss for Covid-ravaged 2020-2021, its first in more than three decades, after grounding its fleet and making heavy lay-offs.

Emirates Group, which reported a \$1.0 billion loss last year, ended 2022-2023 with its highest ever cash balance of \$11.6 billion. The group declared a dividend of \$1.2 billion to its owner, the Investment Corporation of Dubai sovereign wealth fund, and repaid \$817 million of debt raised during the Covid crisis.

"We had anticipated the strong return of travel and, as the last travel restrictions lifted and triggered a tide of demand, we were ready to expand our operations quickly and safely to serve our customers," Sheikh Ahmed said.

Separately, Emirates also announced a \$200 million investment in research and development to reduce the impact of fossil fuels in aviation, calling it "the biggest single commitment by any airline on sustainability".

"It's clear that with the current pathways avail-



DUBAI: File photo shows ground crews prepare an Emirates Boeing 777-300ER aircraft. Emirates Group announced a record \$3 billion annual profit on May 11, 2023, hailing a "full recovery" for the Dubai-based carrier after last year's losses due to the pandemic. — AFP

able to airlines in terms of emissions reduction, our industry won't be able to hit net zero targets in the prescribed timeline," company president Tim Clark said in a statement. "We believe our industry needs better solutions."

In January, Emirates flew a Boeing 777 powered by sustainable aviation fuel, calling it a "milestone". However, the biomass-based fuel is in extremely short supply, covering only around 0.1 percent of airlines' total needs in 2022, according to the International Air Transport Association.

"I don't think we should over-promise," Clark told journalists at the Arabian Travel Market industry fair in Dubai last week, when asked about the potential of sustainable fuel. "You will not fly an A380 to Los Angeles, with 500 passengers on board burning 200 tonnes of fuel, on anything other than fossil fuel for the time being." — AFP

UBS merger with Credit Suisse raises job fears

ZURICH: Among the many concerns over the new megabank created by the merger of UBS and the beleaguered Credit Suisse is how it will affect jobs and competition in Switzerland's banking sector. The Swiss government strongly urged UBS to buy its rival for \$3.25 billion after the collapse of three US lenders in March raised concerns about Credit Suisse's own financial health, following a series of scandals in recent years.

But little has been said about the most robust part of the sprawling bank—its domestic retail banking division, responsible for mortgage loans and financing for Swiss companies. Credit Suisse's heavy losses were mostly due to the international wealth management and banking divisions.

The Swiss division's turnover only fell by five percent last year—whereas turnover in international wealth management slid by nearly a third, and the investment bank tumbled 54 percent. Investors are becoming impatient with the scattered details around the complex integration. UBS insisted this week that "all options" would be considered for the Swiss activities of the bank, promising to share more details in the coming months.

UBS now 'too big'

But investors are anxious to know whether UBS will integrate the Swiss banking division into its own domestic business, sell it, or even split it through a share offering. "One of the reasons that supports the idea of a spin-off is probably the fact that UBS has gotten too big after swallowing Credit Suisse for the Swiss



ZURICH: Credit Suisse CEO Ulrich Korner looks on during the annual general meeting of Credit Suisse bank, in Zurich, following the takeover by UBS of Credit Suisse hastily arranged by the Swiss government to prevent a financial meltdown. — AFP

market," said Ipek Ozkardeska of Swissquote. "Another could be to maximize the Swiss branch potential and to offer Swiss clients an alternative to UBS." Keeping it as an independent unit appeals to many in Switzerland—particularly as it could prevent mass layoffs in the important banking sector.

Together, the two banks employ 120,000 people worldwide, including 37,000 in Switzerland. "Full integration means that UBS would have to take a lot of costs and fire a lot of people at Credit Suisse," said Andreas Venditti, analyst at asset manager Vontobel.

Credit Suisse itself had considered a partial IPO of its Swiss branch in 2016. "We are still in favour of splitting off the Swiss branch," the Foundation Ethos, which represents pension funds in Switzerland, told AFP. Ethos said this was the best option not only to protect jobs, but to avoid concentrating risks in one giant bank. Venditti says that UBS could "carve out Credit Suisse Switzerland's front office only... (the brand) would survive and the two banks would compete." — AFP

SoftBank Group logs \$7.2bn full-year loss on tech woes

SoftBank Group's performance very much depends on share prices

TOKYO: SoftBank Group reported an annual net loss of over \$7.2 billion on Thursday after a bruising year for the tech startup sector in which it is heavily invested. The company said its annual net loss came to 970 billion yen (\$7.2 billion) on sales of 6.57 trillion yen, reflecting in part major losses from its Vision Fund portfolios. The Vision Fund 1 and 2 vehicles were hit by the global tech rout, SoftBank Group said in a statement. But the depth of the group's loss was reduced by unwinding its stake in Chinese tech giant Alibaba. "Share prices of numerous public portfolio companies declined for the fiscal year amid the weakness in global stock markets, although share prices of several companies rose in the fourth quarter," SoftBank said.

"The fair value of a wide range of private portfolio companies also decreased, reflecting markdowns of weaker-performing companies and share price declines among market comparable companies." The two Vision funds recorded a whopping 4.3 trillion yen in losses (\$32 billion), SoftBank said — a record, according to Bloomberg News.

SoftBank took hits across a range of startup investments, from long-struggling WeWork to delivery service DoorDash. The Japanese group has made aggressive investments in tech startups and has been exposed to fickle market forces. "SoftBank Group's performance very much depends on share prices," Hideki Yasuda of Toyo Securities told AFP ahead of the company's announcement. Analysts fear more bad news may be on the cards.



TOKYO: Pedestrians walk outside the headquarters for Japanese company SoftBank Group in Tokyo Portcity Takeshiba on May 11, 2023. — AFP

"We believe that the private company portfolios... are at risk of further meaningful markdowns going forward," wrote Victor Galliano, an analyst who publishes on SmartKarma. Vision Fund vehicles had reported losses for four straight quarters through December. Risk evaluator Standard and Poor's gave SoftBank Group's long-term bonds a BB+ rating in February. The group said earlier this year that it was focused on "defence", though it was convinced of investment opportunities for artificial intelligence. Led by billionaire founder Masayoshi Son, SoftBank

Group is going through a broad rethink to restore its financial health, hit hard by global economic disruptions caused by the pandemic. It is moving to take British semiconductor firm Arm public while selling down its stake in Alibaba.

Britain had hoped to see the chip designer listed on the London stock exchange, but in March the firm and SoftBank said they would instead pursue a US-only listing for now. SoftBank initially hoped to sell Arm to US chip giant Nvidia, but the \$40 billion deal was scrapped over regulatory objections. — AFP

Nissan's results beat estimates, forecast bullish

TOKYO: Nissan said Thursday its full-year net profit slightly topped estimates and offered an upbeat forecast for the current fiscal year, despite warning of "challenging" conditions ahead. The Japanese automaker said it logged a net profit of 221 billion yen (\$1.6 billion) for the year to March 2023, just beating its prediction of 220 billion yen, and projected 315 billion yen (\$2.3 billion) for the coming year. The company said the gains were the

result of sales improvements and cost-cutting, as well as favorable foreign exchange rate fluctuations. These helped offset the effects of an increase in raw material prices and inflation.

"The prolonged shortage of semiconductors and tight supply of parts due to the shutdown in China had a sizeable impact on production plans and vehicle supply," the company said. But while crises such as the global semiconductor crunch are yet to be fully resolved, there is reason to be cautiously optimistic about Nissan's business in China for the year ahead, said president and CEO Makoto Uchida.

"China's end to zero-COVID policy resulted in normalizing its economic activity," he said, adding that the situation there "is improving". Nissan is on course to recover from the havoc wrought by pandemic lockdowns, the war in Ukraine and the arrest of

former boss Carlos Ghosn, which all helped plunge its full-year results into the red in 2020 and 2021.

The company said last month its global sales for the year to March 2023 stood at 3.16 million units, up 5.4 percent from a year earlier. But despite the increase, the sales were still lower than its earlier estimate of 3.4 million units, an indication that virus lockdowns in China and semiconductor shortages hit Nissan hard, analysts said.

In March, ratings agency S&P downgraded Nissan's credit rating to junk status on the assumption of another tough year ahead. But the worst of a surge in raw material costs may now have passed, said Satoru Takada, an auto analyst at research and consulting firm TIW. Nissan signed a landmark deal this year rebalancing its freight alliance with French partner Renault. — AFP

iPhone maker Foxconn's profits slump in Q1

TAIPEI: Profits for Taiwanese tech giant and key Apple supplier Foxconn fell 56 percent in the first quarter, it announced Thursday, a plunge blamed on weakened demand due to a global downturn. Foxconn - also known by its official name Hon Hai Precision Industry - is the world's biggest contract electronics manufacturer and assembles devices for many international brands, most notably Apple's iPhone products. For the January-March period, net profit slumped 56 percent year-on-year to \$12.8 billion Taiwan dollars (US\$417 million), while revenue rose four percent on-year to \$1.46 trillion Taiwan dollars. During Thursday's earnings call, Foxconn Chairman Young Liu blamed the profit plunge on unspecified "asset write-off from non operational business".

"There was growth in our operational business... We will enhance management of our investments," Liu said without elaborating. Looking ahead, Liu said the company expects both quarterly and yearly decreases in its smart consumer electronics and other products for the three months to June, which is traditionally a slow season.

"The pandemic-spurred high growth period has come to an end and we are currently in the inventory adjustment period," he said. But Liu also touted Foxconn's global expansion, most notably in India, where this week the company announced a massive land purchase worth \$37 million on the outskirts of tech hub Bengaluru. "Our footsteps (in India) have surpassed our peers and our scale of business is also the largest... Our capacity planning will be based on client's demand to continue expanding assembly and components layout in India," he said. "We expect that with the supply chain becoming more and more complete, the competitiveness of Indian manufacturing will gradually emerge," Liu added. — AFP



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT WEEK ENDED ON 11 MAY 2023

- (965) 22 675 140
- Al-Safat Tower, Hawalli, Beirut St.
- alsafatinvest.com
- research@alsafatinvest.com
- alsafatinvestment
- al-safat-investment-company

No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	980	960	985	956	29	17,184,573	-20	-2.04%	-6.49%	952	1,010	15.2	1.94	3.4%	1.02
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	276	267	276	265	11	18,319,176	-9	-3.26%	-10.72%	261	270	14.2	1.29	3.5%	1.30
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	185	181	186	180	6	9,528,038	-3	-1.63%	-3.96%	177	186	23.9	0.58	2.1%	1.17
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	209	192	209	191	18	17,611,595	-14	-6.80%	-7.95%	191	202	18.1	0.73	3.9%	1.29
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	740	731	743	721	22	61,077,904	-7	-0.95%	-2.30%	715	744	21.5	1.85	1.9%	1.16
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	643	620	647	617	30	15,036,328	-20	-3.13%	-17.64%	620	649	45.3	2.77	0.9%	1.20
201	Kuwait Investment	Financial Services	122	116	122	113	9	4,179,394	-4	-3.33%	-23.68%	113	119	111.4	0.54	4.3%	1.84
204	National Investments	Financial Services	245	245	251	243	8	12,751,446	1	0.41%	3.38%	244	257	22.3	0.98	11.5%	1.84
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	127	126	129	122	7	15,846,100	0	-	12.50%	126	132	21.5	0.76	-	0.95
212	Arzan Financial Group	Financial Services	108	107	110	105	5	15,775,594	-2	-1.83%	-5.10%	106	110	10.9	0.77	3.6%	1.14
222	Aayan Leasing and Investment	Financial Services	140	142	143	137	6	17,951,576	4	2.90%	6.77%	140	146	10.7	1.03	5.3%	1.68
252	Al Imtiaz Investment	Financial Services	61.1	58.7	61.9	58	3.5	2,457,736	-2.5	-4.08%	-21.63%	57.1	59.1	-	0.37	15.4%	1.27
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	111	109	112	106	6	12,652,631	5	-4.39%	3.95%	108	111	19.6	0.81	2.7%	1.09
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	710	719	727	690	37	5,461,848	14	1.99%	-10.12%	703	725	15.1	1.64	1.8%	1.05
418	The Commercial Real Estate	Real Estate	95	95.4	96.5	94.3	2.2	16,452,376	1.2	1.27%	-0.65%	94.2	96	13.9	0.59	3.0%	0.58
501	National Industries	Financial Services	210	206	211	205	6	5,348,702	-3	-1.44%	-5.07%	205	210	11.7	0.91	2.4%	1.56
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,245	1,225	1,270	1,205	65	395,347	-15	-1.21%	0.82%	1,202	1,260	20.0	1.13	4.8%	1.01
506	HEISCO	Industrials	629	632	636	626	10	272,096	-2	-0.32%	3.10%	611	638	20.3	1.61	3.2%	1.01
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	771	780	786	769	17	880,418	5	0.65%	-2.50%	777	790	7.9	1.53	7.7%	0.99
603	Agility	Industrials	606	617	622	603	19	9,263,557	12	1.98%	-14.31%	598	618	23.9	0.99	-	1.56
605	Zain	Telecommunications	562	527	565	527	38	21,462,193	-34	-6.06%	-6.39%	527	537	11.9	1.89	6.5%	0.71
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,350	3,226	3,365	3,102	263	1,173,647	-124	-3.70%	-3.77%	3,200	3,250	8.8	2.84	11.8%	0.64
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	194	192	194	188	6	1,020,648	2	1.05%	-5.42%	184	195	-	0.82	-	1.18
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,750	1,830	1,880	1,730	150	1,262,115	80	4.57%	-3.68%	1,820	1,880	22.0	14.89	4.3%	1.44
813	GFH Financial Group	Financial Services	76	76.8	77	74	3	15,169,980	0.5	0.66%	1.05%	76.6	77.8	9.5	0.88	6.3%	1.33
821	Warba Bank	Banking	224	217	225	215	10	25,451,680	-7	-3.13%	-4.89%	216	221	32.6	1.20	1.3%	1.12
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	374	411	417	370	47	7,472,575	39	10.48%	4.58%	405	432	-	1.22	3.9%	0.45
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	376	380	380	364	16	5,391,041	4	1.06%	2.70%	371	380	29.9	1.51	4.0%	0.71
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	178	182	185	178	7	8,451,573	4	2.25%	-3.19%	182	186	14.1	1.74	9.2%	0.44
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	1,780	1,786	1,820	1,770	50	1,204,611	6	0.34%	-12.96%	1,770	1,820	21.3	6.90	4.7%	0.98
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	885	934	934	866	68	4,583,783	49	5.54%	16.02%	900	950	12.3	3.38	6.4%	0.31

* As of end of week closing

Business

NBK recognized with six prestigious MENA Banking Excellence Awards for 2023

Al-Othman: A testament to our commitment towards innovation and customer service excellence.

- We thank our customers for trust and loyalty, promising them continued innovative financial solutions that meet all their expectations.

Al-Ablani: The awards acknowledge our consistent efforts to create a more inclusive workplace for all.

- We strive to build a diverse culture enabling our employees to achieve their full potential and drive our future success.



KUWAIT: In recognition of its excellence in consumer banking and leadership in digital innovation, women's empowerment initiatives, and sustainable development of human resources, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has received six prestigious awards from MEED international magazine within its MENA Banking Excellence Awards 2023.

MEED magazine honored NBK with three awards for digital innovation including Best Retail Bank –Kuwait, Excellence in Service: Priority Banking, and MENA Retail Banker of the Year which was presented to Mohammed Al-Othman, GM-Consumer Banking Group at NBK, for the second year in a row.

On the other hand, NBK's initiatives supporting women's empowerment and sustainable development of human resources were recognized with three awards: NBK Academy was named "Best Youth Programme Initiative" for the second year in a row, whereas NBK won "Best Implementation of Diversity & Inclusion Initiatives" award, and NBK Rise was selected as "Best Initiative for Women in Business".

"These awards reflect NBK's commitment to innovation and exceptional customer service and building strong and long-term relationships with customers," MEED mentioned.

MEED Banking Excellence Awards were received by Emad Al-Ablani, GM – Group Human Resources

at NBK, and Mohammed Al-Othman, GM-Consumer Banking Group at NBK, on the sidelines of the ceremony held in the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) in Dubai.

On this occasion, Al-Othman said: "These awards are a testament to the hard work and dedication of our employees towards delivering the best banking experience to our customers. We are proud of recognizing our commitment to innovation in offering the latest and most advanced digital services."

"Thanks to the extensive experience gained over long decades, we are capable of understanding customers' needs, assess their goals and even exceed their expectations. Therefore, delivering a uniquely outstanding customer experience, including innovative products and services, is firmly embedded in our corporate culture, which drives us to continue hard work to deliver the highest service

level and reinforce our competitive edge," he noted

"NBK is incessantly perusing development and innovation. We were the first bank to introduce NFC technology in Kuwait. We also launched "Weyay", Kuwait's first digital bank relevant to the needs and lifestyle of the youth segment. Recently, we implemented a major revamp of NBK Mobile Banking App with comprehensive changes aiming to enrich customers' experience, and enhance the way NBK Customers fulfill their daily banking needs in a much easier way. We also re-designed NBK Credit Cards based on customers' preferences," he elaborated.

"We would like to thank our customers for their trust and loyalty that enabled us to win these awards, and promise to continue delivering innovative financial solutions and exceptional experiences that meet all their needs," he added.

On his part, Al-Ablani said that Banking Excellence

Awards reflect NBK's unwavering commitment to creating a work environment in which everyone can thrive. "We, at NBK, firmly believe that diversity and inclusion are instrumental to our success, and we are committed to continuing our efforts to build a more inclusive work environment for our employees," he mentioned.

"Recognizing NBK Rise with this distinguished award is an acknowledgment of NBK's serious strides in advancing women's empowerment. "This program is not exclusive for NBK, but brings together a number of leading corporations in Kuwait, which signed a pledge to increase the representation of women in leadership positions, reflecting their firm commitment to work jointly to achieve the goals of this global program," he added.

Al-Ablani remarked that NBK is one of the first regional private sector signatories on United Nations Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs). "We also provide, on an ongoing basis, specialized programs for developing female leaders, which helped increase the number of women in leadership and supervisory positions in the bank to 29.2 percent," he highlighted.

"Naming NBK Academy as "Best Youth Programme Initiative" for the second year reinforces our endeavors to place sustainable development of human resources as a top priority, regarding it as a strategic goal and a shared responsibility between the various government agencies and the private sector.

MENA Banking Excellence Awards 2023

- **Best Youth Programmed Initiative** was won by NBK Academy for the second year in a row.
- **Best Initiative for Women in Business** was won by NBK Rise.
- **MENA Retail Banker of the Year.**
- **Excellence in Service: Priority Banking.**
- **Best Retail Bank – Kuwait.**
- **Best Implementation of Diversity & Inclusion Initiatives.**

NBK Economic Report

Chart 1: Consumer price inflation (% y/y)

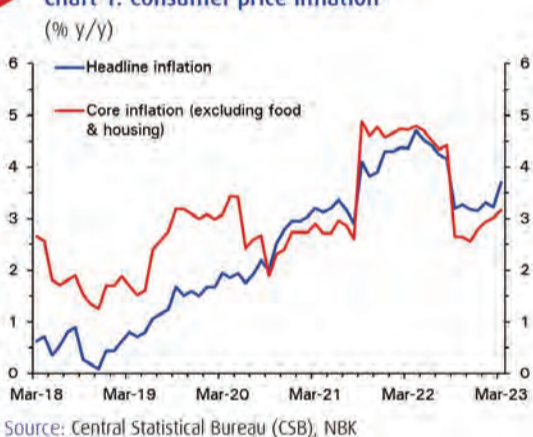


Chart 2: Food price inflation and FAO Index (% y/y)

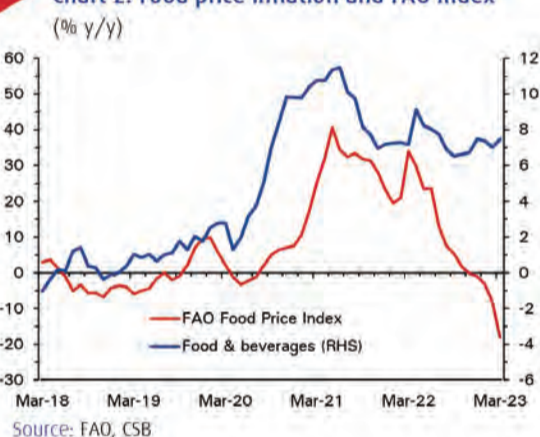
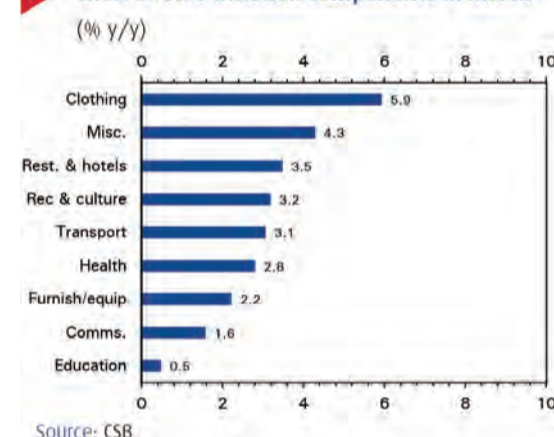


Chart 3: Core inflation components in March (% y/y)



Oil prices reverse all gains from OPEC+ cut decision in April

KUWAIT: Oil prices closed lower in April as economic recession fears in the US and EU dominated sentiment. International benchmark Brent crude ended the month at \$79.5/bbl (-0.3% m/m; -7.4% ytd), reversing all the gains that followed OPEC+'s production cut announcement from early April amid intensifying economic headwinds. Local marker Kuwait Export Crude (KEC), in contrast, closed the month at \$80.9/bbl, up 2.0% m/m (-1.3% ytd) in April.

Earlier in April, Brent rallied by more than \$7.5/bbl to a high of \$87.0/bbl in the wake of the announcement by several OPEC+ members including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE that oil production would be voluntarily cut by around 1.2 mb/d from May until the end of 2023. Russia, in turn, promised to complement these cuts by extending its own 500 kb/d cut from March to the end of the year, despite any meaningful drop in its export volumes, as shown by tanker tracking data. These moves by OPEC+ members were ostensibly a response to a softening global economy, still reeling from turmoil in the US banking sector and weighed down by tighter global monetary policy amid stubbornly high inflation.

The global economic growth forecast this year was trimmed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in its April World Economic Outlook (-0.1% pts to 2.8%), citing higher interest rates and heightened risk of financial system turmoil. Underwhelming economic readings in the US, particularly GDP, retail sales and jobs also added to headwinds, while in China manufacturing unexpectedly contracted in April, according to the official PMI. These developments as well as more recent concerns about the US defaulting on its debt in the absence of congressional approval to raise the debt ceiling were behind oil's tumble to a fresh year-low of \$72.3/bbl in early May. Moreover, refining margins for petroleum products such as diesel, a key gauge of industrial activity and transportation, have also signaled some weak-

ness in the Far East, amid sub-optimal demand and stock builds.

Compounding matters and stoking volatility has been the decline in oil market liquidity. Open interest (the number of outstanding Brent futures and options contracts) declined by 4.7% w/w to 2.15m contracts by 2 May, while money manager net length continued to retreat as speculators increased positions on prices falling ("shorts") amid palpable bearish sentiment.

Nevertheless, the consensus among energy agencies and analysts is that global oil demand will eventually accelerate in the second half of the year, led mainly by China and other non-OECD countries. Despite the near-term softness, Chinese GDP growth in 1Q23 actually surprised on the upside at 4.5% y/y, and both the International Energy Agency (IEA) and OPEC see China as the impetus for their improving oil demand forecast through the rest of the year. They left their demand growth forecasts (annual average) unchanged for 2023 at 2.0 mb/d and 2.3 mb/d, respectively in their April oil market reports.

On the supply side, OPEC+'s surprise output reduction will likely deepen the anticipated supply shortages in 2H23, with the result that oil supply will likely start undershooting oil demand before the end of the current quarter. Based on IEA oil demand and non-OPEC crude projections and assuming OPEC+ cuts are adhered to for the rest of the year and there is no meaningful increase in output by members currently under-producing relative to their targets, we see the supply deficit widening and implied stock draws of as much as 2.5 mb/d in 4Q23.

The buildup in global oil inventories over the last year could, however, cushion some of this expected tightness. According to OPEC, commercial OECD oil stocks stood at 2.8 billion barrels in February (+237 mb y/y), 18 mb over the five-year average.

OPEC secondary sources showed OPEC-10 production in March falling by 79 kb/d to 24.4 mb/d on broad-based declines in members' production but especially Angola, which saw its output fall by 6% (-65 kb/d to 1.0 mb/d) due to field maintenance. Among non-OPEC members, according to S&P Global, Russia's crude production retreated by 260 kb/d (-3.0% m/m) to 9.6 mb/d after instigating its own voluntary production cut, though March's

drop is only around half of the volume Russia said it would pare back. Total production among OPEC+ members subject to quotas therefore fell to 37.7 mb/d in March, with the supply shortfall extending to 2.3 mb/d.

In Kuwait, official sources showed crude production relatively unchanged month-on-month in March at 2.68 mb/d, now only 2 kb/d above its OPEC+ quota. Kuwait has also agreed to cut output voluntarily by 128 kb/d from May, bringing its production to a target level of 2.55 mb/d. In order to reconcile the reduction in crude production with the need to ramp up more valuable refined products exports to a diesel-short European products market from the nearly fully operational Al-Zour refinery—the third and final crude distillery unit (CDU) is due online this quarter—Kuwait will likely redirect crude intended for export to Al-Zour instead. An unintended shut-down in the facility's first CDU in early April did temporarily halt exports, though.

Outside of OPEC+, US crude production reached 12.3 mb/d by the end of April, up 200 kb/d so far in 2023, according to weekly US Energy Information Administration data (EIA) data. The EIA expects US crude oil output to average 12.5 mb/d this year and 12.8 mb/d in 2024, with annual gains of 657 kb/d and 211 kb/d, respectively, coming amid elevated oil prices and a fundamentally tighter oil market that is spurring upstream oil investment. However, forecasts may not play out entirely that way, with the number of active US oil rigs continuing to trend lower. By 5 May, oil rig counts had fallen to 588 (-4.8% ytd), their lowest level in almost a year.

The outlook for the oil market and prices in 2023 remains highly uncertain amid a myriad of negative and positive risk factors. While the outlook for the next couple of months remains weighed down by demand-impacting macroeconomic concerns, specifically OECD recession fears and lagging Chinese consumption growth, in the second half of the year, supply-side pressures stemming from OPEC+ production cuts will increasingly come to the fore. Allied to expectations of increased oil consumption over the summer months and especially in China and the Far East, the market is expected to flip from a surplus to a deficit, with the result that prices should begin to firm quite a bit from current levels.

Philippines GDP slows as inflation hits spending

MANILA: The Philippines' economy grew more than expected in the first three months of the year, official data showed Thursday, though the pace was the slowest in two years as soaring inflation and interest rate hikes crimped consumer spending.

The 6.4 percent expansion in the first three months was well down from the revised 7.1 percent enjoyed in the last quarter of 2022, which analysts said could give the country's central bank some room to step back from its monetary tightening drive. Expectations were for 6.2 percent growth.

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said the lower print was partly due to high inflation and last year's rate hikes, which reined in consumer spending. "Higher interest rates last year could have impacted on the consumption and investment already this year," Balisacan said in a briefing.

Consumer spending slowed to 6.3 percent in the first quarter, down from 10 percent during the same period last year. The Philippine central bank raised interest rates several times last year to rein in inflation, which hit its highest level in more than a decade.

"Perhaps we are starting to feel that because there are usually some lag effects," Balisacan said. Balisacan said the government remained "confident" it will hit its 6-7 percent economic growth target this year despite headwinds. The government expects that to pick up pace through 2028, to hit 6.5-8.0 percent.

"High inflation remains a challenge... but the improvement in (the) business climate can counter this unintended effect," he said. The Philippines had previously trimmed its growth target as geopolitical and trade tensions, a possible global economic slowdown and typhoons could dampen economic activity. Balisacan said the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia as well as tensions in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait were among the risks to the growth outlook. —AFP



MANILA: A vendor waits for customers along a street in Manila. — AFP

Lifestyle

Race row as Egyptian archaeologist releases Cleopatra documentary



An Egyptian archaeologist on Wednesday released a documentary on the life of Cleopatra, the same day Netflix began streaming a controversial production depicting the ancient queen as black.

For weeks, pundits and officials in Egypt have reacted angrily to streaming platform Netflix's decision to cast British actress Adele James in the lead role of its production "Queen Cleopatra" -- insisting the ruler had lighter skin.

Archaeologist Zahi Hawass's 90-minute documentary "Cleopatra", released on director Curtis Ryan Woodside's You-

Tube channel, describes itself as telling the "true" story of the Ptolemaic dynasty's last ruler.

"Was Cleopatra black? First of all, I have nothing against black people at all, but I am stating the facts -- look at the Macedonian queens, none of them were black", Hawass, a former antiquities minister, says in the documentary. In April, Egypt's antiquities ministry weighed in on the debate, insisting the historical Cleopatra had "white skin and Hellenistic characteristics".

Netflix promoted its documentary-drama "Queen Cleopatra", produced

by Jada Pinkett Smith, as featuring "reenactments and expert interviews". Cleopatra was the last sovereign of the Ptolemaic dynasty, which was of Greek origin and ruled Egypt between 332 and 30 BC.

While legend holds the queen, born around 69 BC, was a great beauty, her appearance and the colour of her skin are largely open to interpretation. Following the release of a trailer for the Netflix production, an online petition accusing the streaming service of rewriting history had garnered more than 40,000 signatures by late April.

In a country where some were already calling for Netflix to be banned for content deemed offensive to Egypt or "its family values", legislator Saboura al-Sayed last month repeated her call for parliament to block the platform.

Commentators in Egypt often decry campaigns among mostly African-American groups claiming the black origins of pharaonic civilisation. In 2009, a BBC documentary claimed that Cleopatra had African blood, an assertion that passed without incident. —AFP



This photo shows Haruyasu Makino, producer of the Netflix animated series Ultraman S3, speaking during a media tour and press conference at the office of streaming giant Netflix in the Roppongi area of Tokyo.—AFP photos



A Netflix display at the main entrance to the office of streaming giant Netflix during a media tour and press conference in the Roppongi area of Tokyo.

Disney Plus sheds subscribers for second straight quarter

Subscribers to Disney Plus fell for the second straight quarter, the company said on Wednesday, though it stemmed financial losses as it competes with Netflix for viewers. Analysts had foreseen an increase in subscribers for the period, but a hike in prices sent customers turning away from the platform that streams Marvel, Star Wars and Disney content across the globe.

Total subscribers to Disney Plus fell to 157.8 million, the Burbank, California-based group said, with the company losing \$659 million in its streaming unit, though this was not as bad as expected. The contraction of the Disney Plus subscriber portfolio was mainly due to an 8 percent drop in India, where the Hotstar version of the service accounts for almost a third of the global total. But the entertainment giant also saw a slight decline in North America. "We were pleasantly surprised that the loss of subs due to what was a substantial increase in pricing... was relatively small," CEO Bob Iger told analysts after the company posted its earnings.

Solid performance

Disney said that despite the fall in subscribers, revenue per customer had increased and added it believed the subscribers would again pick up, especially with the rise of cheaper ad-based service. Overall, Disney generated \$21.8 billion in revenue, with a solid performance by its theme parks.



This file picture shows fans are reflected in Disney+ logo during the Walt Disney D23 Expo in Anaheim, California.—AFP

The company pointed to especially good attendance at Disney resorts in Paris, Shanghai and Hong Kong. Iger came out of retirement late last year to return as chief executive, taking back the reins from Bob Chapek, who he had hand-picked to succeed him in 2020. In his first post-return earnings in January, Iger announced a major restructuring of the company as well as belt-tightening and layoffs that he said saved the company over \$5 billion.

Strike factor

Looking forward, Disney will be watching how long the writers' strike in Hollywood plays out with production of Marvel Studios' "Blade" as well as Star Wars series "Andor" already shut down. More than 11,000 Hollywood television and movie writers went on their first strike in 15 years last week.

The last time Hollywood writers laid down their pens and keyboards, in 2007, the strike lasted 100 days, costing LA's entertainment economy around \$2 billion. This time, the two sides are clashing as writers demand higher pay, minimum guarantees of stable employment and a greater share of profits from the boom in streaming, while studios say they must cut costs due to economic pressures.

Also looming over Disney is the feud with Florida governor Ron DeSantis, though the potential impact on the bottom line remains unclear. Disney, a major employer in the southern state with its Orlando-based Walt Disney World theme park, has been under increasing legal sanction by the governor after it spoke out last year against a DeSantis-backed education bill concerning LGBTQ youth.

DeSantis, a rising conservative star with presidential ambitions, called out the "woke" corporation as part of his battle with institutions he deems too progressive. In response, Iger led Disney to file suit against DeSantis, alleging "a targeted campaign of government retaliation" against the company. —AFP

STREAMING GIANTS BATTLE FOR ANIME SUPREMACY

From R-rated sci-fi to teen biker gang adventures, streaming platforms are locked in an intensifying battle for dominance in one of the entertainment sector's hottest and most lucrative mediums: anime.

Fuelled in part by the pandemic, the popularity of the cartoons pioneered in Japan has created a goldmine for streaming giants such as Netflix, Disney+ and Amazon Prime.

The global anime market was valued at \$28.6 billion in 2022, according to Grand View Research, and is forecast to double in value by 2030. "The peak may still be ahead of us," Aya Umezu, CEO of Tokyo-based entertainment consulting firm GEM Partners, told AFP.

"We doubt the competition in anime will slow down soon." Globally, demand for anime increased by 35 percent from 2020 to 2021, according to industry specialist service Parrot Analytics.

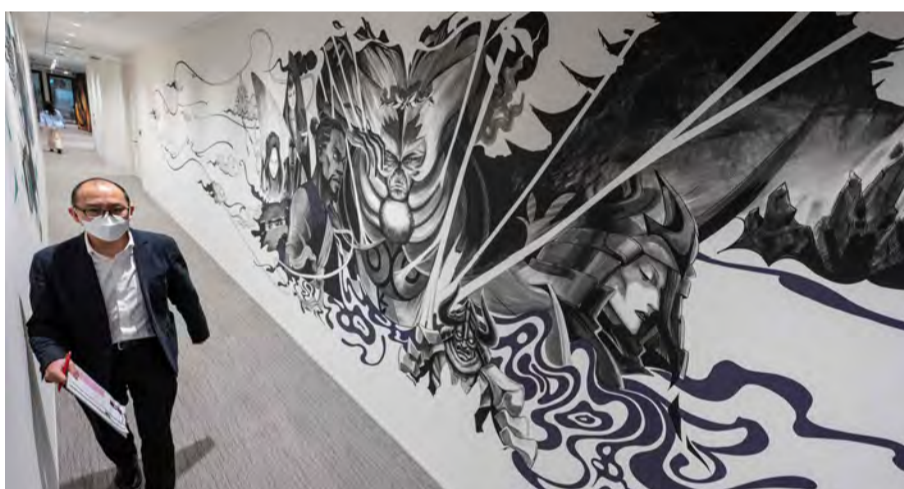
It is little wonder, then, that international streamers are scrambling for ways to capitalise on the surging interest. Recent years have seen Disney+, a relative latecomer to anime, start offering fan favourites also found elsewhere like "Demon Slayer", "Spy x Family" and "Jujutsu Kaisen".

"Having them can prevent subscription cancellations -- that's how strong these IPs (intellectual properties) are," Umezu said. Offering these titles is seen as a baseline, and far from sufficient to win the loyalty of anime fans with increasingly diverse options available.

That has meant platforms are looking to either secure exclusive rights to content or co-produce their own original anime in a bid to stand out.

Breaking open the market

Last year, Disney+ announced exclusive streaming rights to season two of



This photo shows an employee walking past animation on the hall wall during a media tour and press conference at the office of streaming giant Netflix in the Roppongi area of Tokyo.

smash-hit teen biker gang saga "Tokyo Revengers", part of a lucrative deal with publishing giant Kodansha.

Amazon Prime has also sought to "monopolise" blockbusters, said anime expert Tadashi Sudo, including "One Piece Film: Red" -- Japan's highest-grossing movie last year.

Netflix has proven something of an outlier in this market, going beyond snatching up existing hits to work directly with animation studios, granting them an unusual amount of creative leeway to make new stories. Traditionally, Japanese anime emerges from "production committees" made up of publishers, TV broadcasters, toy-makers and other industry players. These have long had a key role in broadening revenue possibilities for a series, from character merchandising to gaming.

Netflix ruffled industry feathers when it teamed up directly with Tokyo animation studio Production I.G in 2018, bypassing the system. "Some (in the anime industry) were upset because they

thought we would destroy what they had built over all these years," Production I.G president Mitsuhiro Ishikawa said. He went as far as likening Netflix to the "Black Ships" -- the 19th-century US vessels that forced the opening of Japan after hundreds of years of trade isolation. "The domestic way of making anime was suddenly forced open," he said. Netflix has reaped the rewards, with its original content making it "the platform that drove the largest increase in global demand for anime in 2021", said Christopher Hamilton of US-based Parrot Analytics.

'Experimental' push

But even streaming golems with worldwide influence have comparatively small audience numbers in Japan.

That raises red flags for some industry players, especially publishers who want maximum exposure for anime adaptations of their manga titles and worry exclusive streaming deals would limit their reach in Japan.

There is "a clash of two opposing interests -- between platforms who want more exclusives and production committee players who want as little of a monopoly (for streaming services) as possible", said anime specialist Sudo.

Experts say this conflict often leads to Netflix original deals being based on works that are less likely to become national sensations like "Demon Slayer".

None of Netflix's original anime made their top-20 most-watched list for Japan users in 2022, according to GEM Partners senior data analyst Shota Ito. The streamer is, however, an attractive prospect for studios with more commercially challenging projects that the traditional market could find too niche.

Early original content on Netflix reflected this, and was heavy on shows critics say evoked the hardcore sci-fi anime of a few decades ago. Among these was "Devilman Crybaby", the tale of a "demon-boy" that featured violence and nudity galore. "My sense is that creators wanted to do something with us that they had little chance to do under the existing system," Netflix chief anime producer Taiki Sakurai told AFP.

That initial "experimental" push has since given way to a broader roster, including comedy, traditional "shonen" targeting young boys and even a stop-motion project starring a teddy bear. Long-standing fans also have other dedicated services to turn to, including the huge online anime library Crunchyroll.

Netflix content director Yuji Yamano is convinced the market is far from saturated, though, and believes competition will only make "the industry even more exciting". "Globally, I only see more room for growth in anime." —AFP

Paris's Moulin Rouge cabaret draws curtain on snake act

The storied Moulin Rouge cabaret in Paris said Tuesday that it had dropped a long-running snake act under pressure from animal rights groups. Management at the famed venue had already promised in March to end the sequence, in which non-aquatic snakes are immersed in a transparent tank with a woman for an acrobatic performance.

The cabaret "announces the permanent end of the snakes number as of today, Tuesday, May 9, ahead of its commitment," it said, having said previously it would end all performances involving live animals in 2024.

The cabaret, founded in 1889, has now bowed to pressure from Paris officials and campaigners who said it was cruel to submerge terrestrial snakes. Animal rights advocates said they had

seen the snakes trying to keep their heads above water in the segment.

The two species used in the act, Southeast Asian reticulated and Indian pythons, are protected and live on land, officials from the Paris mayor's office had informed the venue.

The Moulin Rouge's decision followed a heated campaign with petitions and demonstrations.

"It's a historic move" that "goes in the right direction for ending animal captivity in France", said Amandine Sanvicens of the Paris Animaux Zoopolis (PAZ) advocacy group, which had been planning a new protest in front of the institution. Last year the cabaret told Le Parisien newspaper: "We have never mistreated and will never mistreat animals." —AFP



Lifestyle



Fans of US musician Beyoncé queue to enter to the Friends Arena to watch her first concert of the World Tour named "Renaissance", in Solna, north of Stockholm. —AFP photos

Fans in frenzy as *Beyoncé* kicks off concert tour

Ecstatic Beyoncé fans sang and danced in feverish excitement in Stockholm Wednesday as the superstar kicked off her first solo tour in seven years with a futuristic spectacle featuring a lunar rover, an airborne horse and wall-to-wall rhinestones.

Hours before the doors opened hundreds of people were thronging outside the stadium, including some who had travelled halfway around the world to catch the show, anxious to see the global music icon -- one of the world's best-selling artists. Once the concert was about to begin, the tens of thousands of fans in the 60,000-capacity Friends Arena -- filled to the brim -- erupted in cheers as their "queen" emerged on stage. "Just want to say: Y'all make me so happy," Beyoncé said as the concert began.

"I see familiar faces, people that flew from very, very far to come see the first show tonight," she told the audience at the outset of the three-hour space and science fiction themed show.

The show features Beyoncé performing atop a lunar vehicle, playing the role of a news anchor while dressed as a queen bee, and suspended above the crowd as she sits on a model horse completely covered in sparkling rhinestones.

"This was another level. Amazing, I can't wait for the rest of the tour," Abdul Ibrahim, a 33-year-old artist manager from London, told AFP after the show. "There was a lot of anticipation



for what she was going to do, and yes I'm speechless, it was just incredible," Shane Barkey, a 31-year-old radio host from Ireland, said. Beyoncé, who has a record 32 Grammy awards; is in the top 10 biggest grossing female artists. She is also a fashion icon, with designers queuing up for her attention.

Many of the fans in Stockholm sported cowboy hats and rhinestones, mimicking the look of the performer's outfit in the ads announcing the 57-stop European and North American tour.

Julie Vargas, who flew in from Houston, Texas -- Beyoncé's hometown -- confessed to having a "shrine" dedi-

cated to the star at home. "I don't want any spoilers, I wanted to be the first to see it and take the news back to H-town baby!" the 38-year-old surgical technologist told AFP as she waited in line in the early afternoon.

'The queen'

The "Renaissance World Tour", announced in February after being teased last autumn, is the star's first solo tour since 2016. Tickets sold out so quickly for the opening show that tour organisers added a second concert at the same venue for Thursday. From there, she goes to Brussels this weekend.

The tour, which continues until September, is expected to earn the international artist nearly \$2.1 billion, according to business magazine Forbes. She is already a multi-millionaire. "We love Beyoncé, she's the queen, that's why we are here of course," 36-year-old artist Kasher Bloom from Riga told AFP.

"Beyoncé is the queen! Our mother, everything! I would do anything for her," Jarra Jatta, a 21-year-old fan from Helsingborg in southern Sweden. In February, Beyoncé made history by becoming the most successful artist in the history of the Grammys, surpassing the late classical conductor Georg Solti's long-standing record of 31 lifetime trophies. But despite winning another four Grammys, fans were disappointed that she missed out on the award for album of the year for her seventh studio album, the house-tinged "Renaissance". The 16-song 2022 album was an instant hit and earned wide praise for its deep ambition.

Decades at the top

Born Beyoncé Giselle Knowles, the now-41-year-old has been in the upper echelons of pop music since her teenage years. She initially rose to fame as part of Destiny's Child -- whose smash hits included "Survivor" and "Say My Name" -- before embarking on a wildly successful solo career.

From setting the standard for the overnight album drop to delivering her



earth-shattering "Homecoming" show at Coachella in 2018, Beyoncé has long bucked the industry's conventional wisdom. She is simultaneously one of music's most private and most watched stars. Her paradigm-shifting 2016 album "Lemonade," which emphasised Black womanhood against the backdrop of America's heritage of slavery and culture of oppression, remains one of the most venerated musical projects in recent memory.

Then she dropped the critically acclaimed song "Black Parade" in June 2020, amid nationwide protests ignited by the murder of an unarmed Black man, George Floyd, at the hands of a white police officer. —AFP



Van Gogh's frenzied final days highlight of new show

Vincent Van Gogh's feverish final months in a French village, when he churned out masterpieces even as he spiralled into despair, are the subject of a one-off exhibition opening this week in Amsterdam.

The show at the Van Gogh Museum in the Dutch capital, which opens Friday, features 50 of the 74 works produced in his frenzied last days in Auvers-sur-Oise, just northwest of Paris, before his death at the age of 37.

More than 30 drawings are also featured among the works that have been loaned from museums and private collections all over the world and have never previously been shown together, curators said.

"It is fair to say that this is a once-in-a-lifetime exhibition about Van Gogh's very last period, his last 70 days," museum director Emilie Gordenker said at a press preview on Wednesday.

"During that period, he worked like a man possessed," producing some of his best works including the ominous "Wheatfield with Crows" and the melancholic portrait of his friend and physician Dr Paul Gachet.

The painting "Dr Paul Gachet", which the museum's researchers said was made on 6 and 7 June 1890, is one of eight works provided by the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, along with "The Church at Auvers".

What makes the exhibition unique is that all its paintings are arranged in chronological order, from the first painting when Vincent arrived in the village until his very last work, "Tree Roots", painted two days before his death.

Van Gogh arrived in Auvers-sur-Oise near Paris on May 20, 1890, after

spending time in Arles and Saint-Rémy-de-Provence in southern France, where he already struggled with bouts of mental illness.

The painter arrived in Auvers full of hope and fresh enthusiasm, mainly because of the presence of Dr Gachet, a physician specialising in the treatment of "melancholia".

Once there, the painter entered one of his most productive periods. "Vincent had a really tough time before he came to Auvers. He really suffered very much from his mental condition," Gordenker told AFP. "He comes to Auvers and he really has a new energy and he really gets to work," she said.

'The audacity'

"He must have worked very fast. But he knew exactly what he was doing," added Nienke Bakker, senior curator at the Van Gogh Museum.

"Working on this exhibition, we are not just amazed by the number of paintings that he did in Auvers in this short period, but also the great quality of it and the audacity, the expressiveness, the experimenting that was there until the very last day," Bakker told AFP.

"It shows what an amazing artist he was," she said. But as time went on, a feeling of unease again crept over Van Gogh, as seen in paintings like "Wheatfield with Crows", which was followed by another ominous landscape, "Wheatfield under Thunderclouds".

Indeed, Van Gogh, in one of his last letters to his brother Theo, says about his final painting, "Tree Roots", that "my life too is attacked at the very root, my step is also faltering".

Feelings of failure, loneliness and melancholy gradually gained the upper hand. Van Gogh shot himself in the chest shortly after finishing "Tree Roots" and died two days later. The exhibition "Van Gogh in Auvers. His Final Months" runs from May 12 to September 3 before moving to the Musée d'Orsay from October 3 until February 4, 2024. —AFP

Meet the parent: De Niro a dad again at 79

Robert De Niro has become a father again at the age of 79, the "Raging Bull" actor said in a recent interview. Double-Oscar winner De Niro corrected an interviewer who suggested he only had six children, telling her it is now "seven, actually." "I just had a baby," he told ET Canada, without revealing the baby's gender or the identity of the mother. De Niro's publicist confirmed the news to AFP.

The almost-octogenarian already shares two children with his first wife, "Taxi Driver" co-star Diahnne Abbott, and two more with socialite Grace Hightower, from whom he separated in 2018.

He also had twin sons with model Toukie Smith, whom he dated in the late 1980s and early 1990s. De Niro is currently promoting his new comedy film "About My Father," which will be released in US theaters May 26.

Regularly voted among the greatest actors of his generation, De Niro won two Academy Awards before he was 40. De Niro scored his first Oscar, for best supporting actor, in 1974's "The Godfather Part II," followed by another in 1981 for his leading actor role as boxer Jake LaMotta in "Raging Bull." In his later career he has found popular, if not always critical, success with family-friendly comedies, including "Meet the Parents" with Ben Stiller, and "The Big Wedding" with Diane Keaton. Other Hollywood and entertainment stars who became fathers again later in life include George Lucas, at 69, and Charlie Chaplin and Mick Jagger -- both at 73. —AFP



Robert De Niro attends the "About My Father" premiere at SVA Theater in New York City. —AFP

France to shut Pompidou museum for five years in 2025

The Pompidou Centre in Paris, one of the world's top modern art museums, will shut down for refurbishment for five years from 2025, France's culture minister said Wednesday. The Pompidou houses work by artists from Pablo Picasso to Wassily Kandinsky and welcomed more than three million visitors last year. But its ground-breaking "inside out" structure by architects Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano, that displays pipework on the outside, has suffered serious wear and tear.

The institution is also facing stiff competition from newer Parisian galleries created by the mega-wealthy Louis Vuitton Foundation and billionaire Francois-Henri Pinault. Culture minister Rima

Abdul Malak said the refurbishment would "enable its survival" and hailed the museum for hosting 300 million visitors since it was opened in 1977. The Pompidou boasts Europe's biggest modern art collection and is the world's leading lender of paintings and sculptures, lending out between 8,000 and 10,000 a year to other museums and galleries.

The building's first major upgrade in its history will cost 262 million euros (\$287 million) and will see the structure updated for fire safety, disability access and general repairs. On the inside, gallery spaces will be reworked, new areas will be installed for younger visitors and its hugely popular public library will be expanded.

The upgrade was initially planned to run from 2023 to 2027 to allow the building to reopen for its 50th anniversary, but it now will not reopen until 2030. The Pompidou has sought to boost its coffers recently with international deals, signing an agreement with Saudi Arabia in March to help build a modern art museum at the Al-Ula heritage site. It already has franchise museums in Shanghai, Brussels and Malaga, Spain, as well as a large outpost in Metz in eastern France. It is also working with Korean business group Hanwha on a series of exhibitions in Seoul. —AFP



Lifestyle



Traditional wooden ships (lenj) are pictured on Iran's touristic Qeshm island in the Gulf.—AFP photos



A traditional wooden ship (lenj) is laid ashore for restoration, in Iran's touristic Qeshm island.



A man walks in front of a traditional wooden ships (lenj).

Winds of change buffet Iran's wooden boat building tradition

Iranian captain Hassan Rostam has braved the Strait of Hormuz aboard his lenj for four decades, but now watches with despair as the wooden ships are being replaced by cheaper, faster boats.

The sturdy vessels, built by hand, have sailed Gulf waters for centuries, their potbellied silhouette emblematic of regional maritime traditions like the dhows of the Arabian Peninsula.



A traditional wooden ship (lenj) is laid ashore for restoration, in Iran's touristic Qeshm island.

But these days, "there are fewer and fewer" of them, said Rostam, 62, who has spent his life travelling the waterway between Iran and the United Arab Emirates.

With a lean body and weathered face, he gazes at the calm seas that are criss-crossed by huge tankers taking Gulf oil to the world's markets, and naval vessels patrolling the strategic waterway.

But the island of Qeshm off Bandar Abbas is also home to the much older tradition of building wooden boats, around 30 of which were resting at low tide in the coastal village of Guran. This small port has long housed several shipyards specialising in their maintenance and repair. But that morning, fewer than two dozen workers were there, barefoot in the mud.

A half-built lenj hull propped on beams will not be finished for lack of money, as its owner plans to dis-

mantle it and use the boards for other projects.

"Today, a new lenj is very expensive" because "the wood comes from abroad" and construction is done entirely by hand, said Ali Pouzan, who supervises the Guran site. Each lenj is unique and the ships vary in size, with the craft "transmitted from generation to generation", he said.

UNESCO back in 2011 recognised the lenj as intangible cultural heritage requiring "urgent safeguarding".

As modern alternatives have taken the wind out of its sails, "the philosophy, the ritual context and the traditional knowledge linked to navigation in the Persian Gulf... are gradually fading", the UN body warned.

Open-air museum

In their golden age, the rustic lenjes were used to transport cereals, dates, dried fish, spices, wood and textiles across the Gulf and as far as the coasts of East Africa and the Indian subcontinent.

But commercial shipping has been taken over by engine-powered boats made of fibreglass or steel, navigating the turquoise waters where huge oil tankers now roam.

Lenj vessels were also used for fishing, as well as the lucrative pearling tradition, which has nearly disappeared altogether.

Younes, a 42-year-old Guran resident, has been repairing lenjes in his native village for more than 20 years. "It's a painful job," he said in the baking heat, as he used an old technique called "kalfat koobi" to waterproof a vessel with strips of cotton soaked in sesame and coconut oil.

Recognising the demise of shipbuilding in Guran, Pouzan is betting on tourism instead, a promising sector on Qeshm as the island attracts a growing number of visitors.

"We have restored several boats to adapt them to sea trips," he said. An old ship was being repurposed into a cafe, and there are plans to transform the scenic port, with coloured lenj hulls



lying in the sand, into an open-air museum. Near mangroves on the beach, Pouzan plans to build lenj-inspired huts for tourists. Each will bear the

name of the most famous destinations the ships once reached -- from Zanzibar and Mombasa to Kolkata.—AFP

A traditional wooden ship (lenj) is laid ashore for restoration, in Iran's touristic Qeshm island.



Tourists visit a traditional wooden ships (lenj).



Workers restore a traditional wooden ship (lenj) in a shipyard.



Workers restore a traditional wooden ship (lenj) in a shipyard.



Workers restore a traditional wooden ship (lenj) in a shipyard.



Traditional wooden ships (lenj) are laid ashore for restoration, behind fishing boats in a shipyard in Iran's touristic Qeshm island.

Sports

Tiger out, Spieth in doubt as PGA Championship field set

Breakaway circuit lures top talent from the PGA Tour

ROCHESTER: Tiger Woods was confirmed out for next week's PGA Championship following right ankle surgery while injured Jordan Spieth, chasing a career Grand Slam, was on the entry list released Wednesday. The field of 156 for next week's showdown at Oak Hill also includes 18 players from the Saudi-backed LIV Golf League, among them Masters runner-ups and multiple major winners Phil Mickelson and Brooks Koepka.

Woods, a 15-time major champion and a four-time PGA Championship winner, underwent his latest operation last month after withdrawing in the third round of the Masters. There is no timetable for the 47-year-old star's return. The same is true for Spieth, a three-time major winner who

needs the PGA Championship to join Woods, Jack Nicklaus, Ben Hogan, Gary Player and Gene Sarazen with at least one victory at each major. Spieth is questionable for the showdown at Oak Hill with a left wrist injury that made him skip his hometown PGA event this week in Dallas.

"I'm focused on healing as quickly as possible and will have to evaluate my recovery week to week," 10th-ranked Spieth said, adding that doctors said his wrist needs rest and limited movement. Oak Hill, host of six prior majors as well as the 1995 Ryder Cup, will serve as a second major showcase this year for top PGA Tour players facing rivals from the upstart LIV series. Spain's Jon Rahm won last month at Augusta National with Mickelson, a six-time major

winner, and Koepka, a four-time major winner sharing second and another LIV standout, 2018 Masters champion Patrick Reed, sharing fourth.

The breakaway circuit lured top talent from the PGA Tour, which banned LIV players from its events, although the majors allow LIV and PGA players to compete, turning them into the only places for bragging rights battles between the rivals in golf's civil war. Other LIV players at Oak Hill next week will include major winners Dustin Johnson, Bryson DeChambeau, Sergio Garcia, Martin Kaymer and Australia's Cam Smith, the reigning British Open champion. A final vacant spot in the PGA Championship field is reserved for this week's PGA Byron Nelson tournament winner. —AFP



AUGUSTA: Tiger Woods of the United States catches a ball on the practice area during the third round of the 2023 Masters Tournament at Augusta National Golf Club in Augusta, Georgia. —AFP



CHENNAI: Chennai Super Kings' Mahendra Singh Dhoni watches the ball after playing a shot during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Chennai Super Kings and Delhi Capitals on May 10, 2023. —AFP

Super Kings down Delhi Capitals in IPL

CHENNAI: A late cameo by skipper MS Dhoni and disciplined bowling helped Chennai Super Kings edge closer to an IPL play-off berth with a 27-run win over Delhi Capitals on Wednesday. Dhoni, who hit a nine-ball 20, put on a key seventh-wicket stand of 38 with Ravindra Jadeja, who hit 21, to steer Chennai to 167-8. "This is what my job is, I have told them this is what I am supposed to do, don't make me run a lot and it has been working," Dhoni said of his role at number eight. "This is what I need to do, happy to contribute." Sri Lankan quick Matheesha Pathirana took three wickets to help limit Delhi to 140-8 as Chennai consolidated their second spot in the 10-team table with seven wins in 12 matches.

The David Warner-led Delhi, who started the season with five losses, remain rooted to the bottom of the standings and all but out of the play-off race. The top four teams qualify for the play-offs. Delhi began the chase with left-handed Warner out for a duck on the second ball to Deepak Chahar, who also sent back previous-match winner Phil Salt, for 17. Australian all-rounder Mitchell Marsh was run out for five but impact sub Manish Pandey and Rilee Rossouw attempted to revive the chase in their 59-run stand before impact player Pathirana broke through.

"This is the fifth or sixth time we have lost a wicket in the first over," Warner said after his team's seventh loss. "And it was us throwing our wickets away. We lost a wicket to a run-out. We threw wickets away." Pathirana, an up and coming Sri Lankan speedster nicknamed "Baby Malinga" for his slinging action similar to former pace ace Lasith Malinga, pinned down Pandey lbw with his trademark yorker and ended with figures of 3-37. Jadeja took down Rossouw with his left-arm spin to dent the chase and was named man of the match.

Earlier Chennai lost regular wickets before Shivam Dube, who smashed 25 off 12 balls, and Ambati Rayudu, who hit 23, stood out in an attacking stand of 36. But it was Dhoni and the left-handed Jadeja who took the attack to the opposition with their late blitz that got Chennai 39 runs from the final three overs. The 41-year-old Dhoni, who many suspect is playing his final IPL as player, raised the noise at a near-capacity crowd with his two sixes off left-arm quick Khaleel Ahmed. Dhoni has led Chennai to four IPL titles and is attracting large crowds at all the venues across India. —AFP

Groves wins wet Giro stage as dog unseats Evenepoel

SALERNO: Australian Kaden Groves won a ferocious sprint at the end of a rain-soaked and crash-filled fifth stage of the Giro d'Italia on Wednesday as Andreas Leknessund retained the overall lead and favourite Remco Evenepoel fell twice. World champion and Vuelta a Espana winner Evenepoel now faces a nervy wait to discover the seriousness of his injuries. "After the second fall, he felt a lot of pain on his right side. He has a muscle hematoma and was hurt in his sacrum (at the base of the spine)," said Toon Cruyt, the doctor for the Soudal Quick-Step team.

"We hope that after a good massage and a good night's sleep he will be better. We will know more Thursday but what is certain is that the sixth stage will be difficult for him." Leknessund, who also had a scare, remained 28 seconds ahead of 23-year-old Evenepoel after a largely flat 171km run from Atripalda to Salerno on the coast. The Norwegian said he is enjoying leading a major tour. "Rainy and cold but still a nice day," he said, adding that he was happy the team had prepared rain jackets in the pink of the Giro leader's jersey.

Groves, Leknessund and another favorite, Primož Roglic, were the beneficiaries of the decision of rival teams not to take advantage of a late crash. Groves and Roglic fell with 6km to go which split the peloton. Leknessund was caught in the second group but Evenepoel's Soudal Quick-Step team and Ineos, which has former major Tour winners Tao Geoghegan Hart and Geraint Thomas in the top ten, eased up allowing the chasers to catch up. "It was a hectic final," said Leknessund. "I was behind this crash. We went all in too close with a few other teams. I could see it would come back and tried to stay calm."



SALERNO: Astana Qazaqstan Team's British rider Mark Cavendish falls on the arrival of the fifth stage of the Giro d'Italia 2023 cycling race in Salerno. —AFP

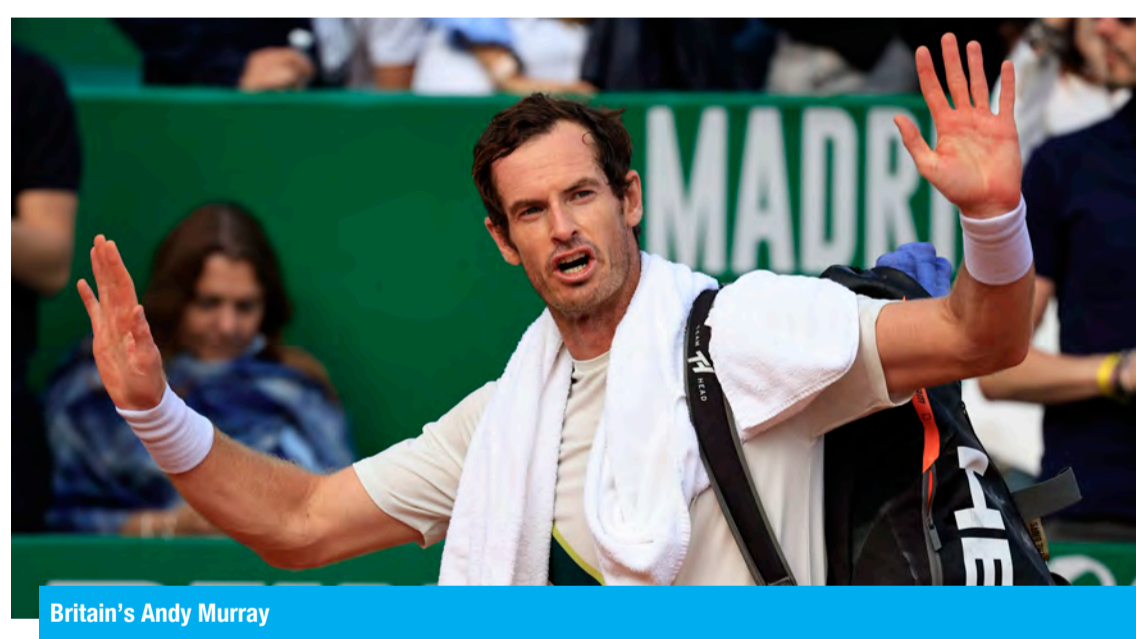
'A big mess'

That set up a frantic finish in which Evenepoel, cruising along in the peloton, fell for the second time in the day. Groves made the most of his reprieve by edging Jonathan Milan and Mads Pedersen. "Surprised myself today," said the Australian. "Everything was going well but I crashed at the roundabout. I bounced back up and put the chain on again and caught up." Mark Cavendish was fifth even though he had lost control 50m from the finish. He managed to avoid falling off until he had crossed the line.

Evenepoel had hit the deck for the first time with 150km to go after a small dog ran out toward the peloton. As the dog approached, Davide Ballerini, the Ital-

ian wobbled and then fell. His bike slid across the wet surface and took out Evenepoel, his Soudal Quick-Step teammate. Major tours have tangled with animals before. On the 1997 Giro, Marco Pantani had to abandon after a crash caused by a black cat. In 2015, cows wandered onto the road causing chaos in the Tour de France.

The second crash on Wednesday occurred with under 3km to go so Evenepoel, guaranteed the same time as the winner, was able to roll slowly to the line gesticulating angrily at the team car, other riders and the cameras. "A lot of stuff happening," Max Sciandri, the head of the Movistar team, told Eurosport. "A big mess. Mess everywhere. That happens on a day like this when the roads are slippery and everyone wants to go for the sprint." —AFP



Britain's Andy Murray

Fognini defeats Murray in battle of tennis dads

ROME: Fabio Fognini edged out Andy Murray in a battle of veteran tennis dads to reach the Italian Open second round on Wednesday. Fognini, ranked outside of the top 100 for the first time in 14 years, came through 6-4, 4-6, 6-4 against his fellow 35-year-old. Former number seven Fognini delighted his home crowd with a controlled final set serving display in which he conceded just three points.

It was his fifth win in nine career meetings with Murray but just his third on the tour in 2023. The Italian maverick, like Murray a father of three, fired 46 winners past the former world number one and three-time major winner in a first round tie which stretched to almost three hours. "For sure I'm happy because coming back from injury is never easy, especially at our age. But winning here in Rome against a really big player like Andy," said Fognini, who has been troubled by a foot injury. "Now it's important to recover. It's going to be tricky and a nice question to my mind if I will recover well. But I just want to enjoy this night and going home with this victory."

Next up for Fognini is a clash with Miomir Kecmanovic while 42nd-ranked Murray, the 2016 champion in Rome, licks his wounds after celebrating his first title since 2019 at the Aix-en-Provence Challenger on Sunday. Novak Djokovic will begin his bid to retain the Italian Open title against Tomas Etcheverry after the 61st-ranked Argentine beat Luca Van Assche of France in the first round 7-6 (9/7), 6-3. Djokovic comes into the tournament he has won six times recovering from an elbow injury and set to lose top spot in the world rankings to Carlos Alcaraz.

Alcaraz just needs to play a match in the Italian capital to return to the world number one ranking ahead of the French Open which starts later this month. Djokovic won his record-equalling 22nd Grand Slam at the Australian Open in January. However, he missed the American hard-court swing in March due to his refusal to be vaccinated. The 35-year-old has endured a tough start to the European clay-court season, being eliminated in the last 16 at the Monte Carlo Masters, in the quarter-finals at Banja Luka and then pulling out of Madrid.

Wawrinka advances

Veteran Stan Wawrinka will face 26th seed Grigor Dimitrov in the last 64, the three-time Grand Slam winner easing past Ilya Ivashka 6-4, 6-2. Wawrinka, 38, and playing in the Italian capital for the 18th time, hit 26 winners and saved the one break point he faced. "I was ready for it. I am playing well. It was a good first match and I am really happy to get through again," said Wawrinka, who was runner-up to Djokovic in Rome in 2008. The former world number three now down at 84 in the rankings added: "I have been working hard to get to this level. This year I am playing much better, but I need to win more matches." In the women's event, Lesia Tsurenko won an all-Ukrainian clash, beating Elina Svitolina 6-4, 6-3.

The 28-year-old Svitolina, returning to the tour from maternity leave, says the Russian invasion of her country means her career now has greater significance than in her pre-motherhood days when she was number three in the world and swept up 16 titles. "I want to make sure Ukraine is still in the news," said 540th-ranked Svitolina who is married to French tennis star Gael Monfils. "Playing tournaments, trying to organize events on the side, connecting with people around the events—that's really important. "The war continues, so we need to continue helping people." —AFP

Lee seeking major boost in defending LPGA Founders Cup

NEW YORK: Australia's Minjee Lee, who used a victory in last year's LPGA Founders Cup to spark a major triumph, hopes to repeat that success when this year's event teases off on Thursday. The 26-year-old Aussie chases her ninth career LPGA title this week at Upper Montclair Country Club in Clifton, New Jersey. World number six Lee said meeting the challenges of the course last year made her lift her level, which contributed to her winning a second major title just three weeks later at the US Women's Open.

"Because the golf course is quite demanding, I feel like all parts of my game came together for that win," Lee said. "Gave me a lot of confidence for the next couple weeks and obviously the US Open. "Really have great memories here and hoping to do the same this week." Lee hasn't cracked the top 30 in any event since her US Women's Open crown, but she helped Australia reach the championship match of last week's International Crown team event, losing the title to Thailand. "I was striking it really well last week," Lee said. "Hopefully I can bring it on this week."

Lee, who will defend her US Women's Open title next month at Pebble Beach, appreciates the event paying tribute to pioneers of women's golf. "It's going to be a special week," Lee said. "We're really grateful for what they did for us. Hopefully we can live up to their standards and leave the LPGA and women's golf in a better place than we found it." Hannah Green, one of Lee's teammates at the International Crown, is coming off a victory in Los Angeles two weeks ago. "I must admit I'm feeling a little bit tired. This is my fourth week in a row," Green said. "I'm still probably on Cloud Nine. I think that helped me push through."

Green, ranked 14th, has headed home to Australia after two prior LPGA victories but stayed two extra weeks this time. "I'm going back home on Monday," she said. "So I'm so close to being home I got to make sure that I remember I'm here to win a golf tournament and I'm not in Australia yet." Also in the field this week is fourth-ranked American Lilia Vu, who won her first major title at last month's Chevron Championship. World number one Nelly Korda of the United States has a new caddie for this week in former Tiger Woods bagman Joe LaCava, who is working with other players while the 15-time major winner is idled indefinitely following right ankle surgery. —AFP

Sports

Basketball's globe-trotters do battle in Southeast Asia

'Basketball takes you everywhere'

PHNOM PENH: If someone had told Lester Prosper back in 2011 that the then-NBA hopeful would one day play for Indonesia, he would have told them they were "crazy". "I would have been like 'No way,'" the Dominica-born centre, now 34, told AFP after doing just that in a 141-37 thrashing of Laos. Players who once dreamed of major-league careers in the United States have become unlikely draftees in the battle for regional basketball dominance at the Southeast Asian Games.

Chief among them are Prosper, US-born Indonesian team-mate Anthony Beane Jr and the Philippines' Justin Brownlee. "I love it man, I love playing for the country," said the six-foot-10 (2.08m) Prosper, who like Brownlee went undrafted by the NBA in 2011, the same year Kyrie Irving was the number one

pick. Irving won the NBA championship with Cleveland in 2016, is an eight-time All-Star and now plays for the Dallas Mavericks.

Prosper's career went in another direction. He embarked on an itinerant career that has taken him around the world, including stops in Slovakia, Venezuela, the Philippines and Indonesia, where he was given a passport to play for the national team. He has most recently played in South Korea. He is a kind of one-man Harlem Globetrotters, the famed basketball team best known for travelling all over the globe for exhibition games. "I love meeting fans all over the world," Prosper said. "Love experiencing different cultures - showing them respect, learning about them, learning the language a little bit. Learn as much as you can."

Taking you everywhere

Prosper scored 18 points in the one-sided group-stage opener against Laos on Wednesday in Phnom Penh, just behind top-scorer Andakara Prastawa Dhyaksa, who put away 21. Beane, a Missouri-born point guard, was also in the Indonesian team, along with Senegal-born Dame Diagne, 17. "Basketball will take you everywhere," said Beane, who has had stints in Latvia, Belgium and Bulgaria. "It's going great so far," said the 29-year-old of his adopted country, adding that Indonesia's aim was to win SEA Games gold again. Playing naturalized athletes is fairly common across international sport, though often not with fast-track conditions.

Most of the imported players at the Games have been given speedy naturalization at their government's behest, rather than going through the normal process

after a certain number of years living in the country. At least one player at this year's Games has raised concerns about an excess of imported basketball talent. "I think if there's gonna be a lot of imports like this, I don't think the essence of SEA Games is gonna be there," said Jack Animam of the Philippines women's 3x3 basketball team, after facing a Cambodia side composed entirely of naturalized athletes.

Like rivals Indonesia, Brownlee's Philippines are also off to a winning start, having beaten Malaysia 94-49. The Philippines are out for revenge after Indonesia beat them in the final at the last Games, ending their 20-year gold-medal streak. Prosper would not be drawn on the prospect just yet of a rematch. "We'll see," he said. "This is interesting... we're just gonna take it one game at a time." — AFP



Kuwait shine at Arab Ice Hockey championship

KUWAIT: The Kuwait National Ice Hockey Team topped the first group for the first Arab men's ice Hockey Cup Competitions after winning on Wednesday against their Algerian counterpart 6-2. This was their third consecutive victory in the championship. Kuwait players played a strong match at the end of the first round of the Championship, which is taking place at the Club's Lounge in Bayan area. The victory enabled them to go top of the group with nine points, while Algeria remained fourth in the group.

The Bahrain national team qualified for the semi-finals for the same group after a well-deserved victory over their Tunisian counterpart (7-2), to occupy the second place - while the Tunisia national team dropped to the third place. The Lebanese team took the lead of the second group after a big victory over Oman (15-4) to occupy the second place, while the Egypt recorded their first victory in the championship at the expense of its Saudi counterpart (7-0) to book the third place as Saudi Arabia remained fourth. With these results, the contract of the teams reaching the Golden Square of the championship was completed. Kuwait played with Oman as Lebanon faced off against Bahrain on Thursday evening. The winners will meet to battle for the title while the losers will fight for the third and fourth places next Saturday.



NFL adds 2nd game in Germany, announces international pairings

MUNICH: The National Football League on Wednesday announced the matchups for its five European games as it released the highlights of its 2023 regular-season schedule. In addition to three games in London, the NFL said it would play two games in Germany while dropping the game in Mexico City, which returned last year.

The NFL also announced the matchups for three big domestic games. The league played its first regular-season game in Germany in Munich last November, when Tampa Bay and Seattle drew a crowd of almost 70,000. This year there will be two games in the Waldstadion in Frankfurt where defending Super Bowl champions the Kansas City Chiefs will be the 'designated home team' against Miami Dolphins on November 5 and New England will face Indianapolis a week later.

Regular London visitors Jacksonville will play two games in the city this season. The Jaguars will host the Atlanta Falcons at Wembley on October 1 and then act as the away team against the Buffalo Bills at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium a week later. The Tennessee Titans will face the Baltimore Ravens at Tottenham on October 15. The Waldstadion was the home of the Frankfurt Galaxy, which appeared eight times in the 'World Bowl' played at the end of the World League of American Football and NFL Europe seasons between 1991 and 2007, winning four.

Among the three domestic matchups announced on Wednesday were the inaugural 'Black Friday Game' when the Dolphins will visit the Jets on November 24. Amazon, which hold the rights to the Thursday night games, is moving one back a day to Black Friday, when retailers in the United States traditionally attempt to kick-start Christmas shopping with sales. The New York Giants will visit the Philadelphia Eagles on Christmas Day and Kansas City will host division rivals Cincinnati Bengals on New Year's Eve. — AFP

International Aquathlon Championship kicks off

KUWAIT: The International Aquathlon Championship will be held on Friday at the Marina beach. The event was organized by Kuwaiti Triathlon Club and Federation with the participation of 350 male and female competitors. The men's race will begin by 6 am, followed by the women's race. The Championship will end by 8 am.



Chairman of the board of Directors of Kuwaiti Triathlon Club and Federation Rashed Al-Kandari wished the contestants success. The championship comes after the participation of our national triathlon team in four friendly European Championships, including the triathlon of Senser in the Spanish city of Ibiza, followed by the multi-race world championship in Spain as well. Al-Kandari pointed out that the current season is considered one of the strongest. He said the Federation intends to continue developing the game and discovering new talents.

4 superstars who dipped their toe in football backwaters

PARIS: Argentine football superstar Lionel Messi's move to spend the final years of his stellar career in Saudi Arabia, according to a source close to the negotiations, will come as a crushing blow to Barcelona fans who dreamed of a return to the club that nurtured him. In fact, 35-year-old Messi will be following a well-trodden path of the greats of the 'Beautiful Game' by taking a lucrative pay day in football's backwaters. Here AFP Sport picks out four examples:

Pele - New York Cosmos (USA) 1975-77

It took the persuasive powers of US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to lure the man, who vies for the greatest ever with Messi and Diego Maradona, to the North American Soccer League (NASL) in 1975. "They want to make soccer big in the United States," Pele told CNN in 2011. "That was the reason (I went). I started my mission." Aged 34 at the time, he stirred huge public interest and crowd numbers soared. Averaging below 10,000 a match before his arrival, Cosmos attendances surged

to over 40,000. Pele took to the New York nightlife but did not neglect his duties on the pitch, inspiring the team to a Football Bowl title in 1977. His endorsement of the NASL prompted other legends such as Franz Beckenbauer and George Best to sign up - though it was to crash and burn in 1984.

Gabriel Batistuta - Al Arabi (QAT) 2003-05

The Argentine striker took the high road to the previously low-key Q-League on a free transfer and reportedly received \$8million to join Al Arabi. 'Batigol's' eye for goal - which had seen him rattle in the goals for Serie A sides Fiorentina and AS Roma - did not desert him in Doha. He scored a record 25 goals for the club in his maiden season. Batistuta was joined by Pep Guardiola. Frank de Boer and Marcel Desailly as Qatar raised its football profile in what was arguably a key first step towards successfully winning the rights to hosting the 2022 World Cup.

Zico - Kashima Antlers (JPN) 1991-94

His exploits on the pitch earned him a stint as Brazil's sports minister but despite being in his early forties he broke off his nascent political career to play for second tier Japanese side Sumitomo Metals. The task was to secure them a place in the first ever Japanese professional league which was due to kick off its inaugural season in 1993. Even in early middle age, the Brazilian inspired them to promotion and then to the runner-up spot in the J League - and the club changed its name to Kash-

ima Antlers. There is a statue of him outside Kashima's stadium and he draws great pleasure from the subsequent success of Japanese football - this month Urawa Red Diamonds won their third Asian Champions League crown. "It was all about starting from scratch and getting the direction right," Zico told FIFA.com last December. "And look at Japan today. They haven't missed one World Cup since the game went professional there. That's pretty pleasing."

David Beckham - LA Galaxy 2007-2012

It was quite a coup when the MLS franchise secured the signature of arguably European football's highest-profile player at the age of 32, bringing to an end his time as one of Real Madrid's Galacticos. Beckham's five-year contract - paying him \$6.5 million a year - reaped dividends for Galaxy in terms of a new shirt deal and a huge rise in season ticket sales. Of far more importance to the former England star, though, was the clause that stated he could buy a MLS franchise - with the exception of New York - in the future for a fixed rate of \$25 million.

He duly exercised that right in 2014, purchasing Inter Miami. "I'm not saying me coming over to the States is going to make soccer the biggest sport in America," said Beckham when he signed for Galaxy. "But I wouldn't be doing this if I didn't think I could make a difference." Beckham inspired Galaxy to two MLS Cup successes before he returned to European football - with PSG. — AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300

Al-Razi Hospital 24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital 24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507

Abdullah Salem 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, GEZA S/o Najar Singh r/o Vill. Pakhowal, Po. Saidowal, Distt. Kapurthala, Punjab have changed my name from GEZA to GURMEJ SINGH. (#3531) 12-05-2023)

will be read as: Given name Mohammad Altaf Abdur Rehman and surname Berekar (C #0890) - 11-05-2023

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

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 Civild card is 1889988

Warriors keep NBA title defense alive

Warriors survive against Lakers as Knicks hold off Heat



SAN FRANCISCO: LeBron James #6 of the Los Angeles Lakers shoots the ball during Game Five of the Western Conference Semi-Finals of the 2023 NBA Playoffs against the Golden State Warriors on May 10, 2023. — AFP

SAN FRANCISCO: The Golden State Warriors kept their NBA title defense alive on Wednesday with a 121-106 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers, who saw star center Anthony Davis depart after taking a blow to the head. The Warriors cut the deficit in their Western Conference semi-final series to 3-2. The New York Knicks also stayed alive as Jalen Brunson scored 38 points in a 112-103 victory over the Miami Heat at Madison Square Garden that pushed their Eastern Conference semi-final series to a sixth game.

Golden State and New York now must win on the road on Friday to give themselves a chance to win their respective series on Sunday. Only 13 NBA teams have rallied from 3-1 down to win a series. The Warriors did it against the Oklahoma City Thunder in the 2016 Western Conference finals—then a Cleveland Cavaliers team led by LeBron James did the same against them in the NBA Finals.

“Coming into this game, we just wanted to win one, give ourselves a chance, knowing that we have a big game six down in L.A and we obviously need that one

to stay alive,” Warriors star Stephen Curry told broadcaster TNT. Curry scored 27 points to lead six Warriors players in double figures. Andrew Wiggins scored 25 points and Draymond Green delivered a double-double of 20 points and 10 rebounds. “All the way up and down the roster there were contributions,” Curry said.

The Lakers are unbeaten at home this post-season, but they could find themselves without Davis, who departed in the fourth quarter after taking an inadvertent elbow to the head from Golden State’s Kevon Looney. A rattled Davis, who scored 23 points and grabbed nine rebounds, headed for the bench and was eventually helped to the locker room, not returning to the game. “He took a shot to the head,” Lakers coach Darvin Ham said after the game. “He seems to be doing really good already. That’s the status right now.”

James led the Lakers with 25 points, but Los Angeles couldn’t match the energy of the desperate Warriors. Curry drained a three-pointer at the half-time buzzer to give Golden State a 70-59 halftime

lead. Wiggins’s putback dunk pushed the Warriors’ lead to 18 points early in the third quarter. They led by double-digits most of the second half, but Austin Reaves drilled a three-pointer that cut the deficit to nine with 5:25 remaining. Curry responded with a step-back jumper and a three-pointer and the Lakers wouldn’t get the deficit under 10 again.

Knicks hang on

In New York, the Knicks built a 19-point lead in the third quarter then fended off a late Miami charge to cut the deficit in their series to 3-2. “You’ve got to give them credit, that’s a hard team to play,” said Brunson, who played all 48 minutes. “But we just came out to fight. “We didn’t get discouraged with the 10-point deficit in the first quarter, we just kept fighting,” said Brunson, who added nine rebounds and seven assists.

RJ Barrett scored 26 points and Julius Randle shrugged off an early blow to the eye to add 24 for the Knicks, who will try to level the series in Mi-

ami on Friday. It was close in the early going, but after Quentin Grimes’s three-pointer put the Knicks up 10-8 midway through the first quarter the Heat closed the period on a 16-4 run to lead 24-14. The Knicks hit back and Randle’s step-back three-pointer with 1.3 seconds remaining in the second quarter put the Knicks up 50-47 at halftime. The Knicks poured it on in the third, pushing the lead to 19 with 5:55 left in the period.

Miami, finally getting their three-point shots to fall, cut that to 10 going into the fourth, and Jimmy Butler’s pull-up basket, followed by his free throw on the Heat’s next possession, had Miami just two down with 2:37 left. New York’s Isaiah Hartenstein answered with a dunk and the Knicks held on. Butler led the Heat with 19 points, seven rebounds and nine assists. Bam Adebayo added 18 points and Duncan Robinson scored 17 off the bench for Miami, who are trying to become just the second eighth-seeded team—after the 1999 Knicks—to reach the conference finals. — AFP

Inter trounce AC Milan 2-0

MILAN: Inter Milan have one foot in the Champions League final after an impressive 2-0 win over AC Milan in Wednesday’s pulsating last-four derby. Inter have the upper hand ahead of Tuesday’s second leg of the biggest Milan derby of a generation thanks to strikes in the first 11 minutes from Edin Dzeko and Henrikh Mkhitaryan.

Inter could have won by a wider margin as Hakan Calhanoglu smashed a shot off the post and Dzeko wasted a great chance early in the second half, but they are still heavy favorites to reach the final of Europe’s top club competition for the first time since they last won it 13 years ago. “Sometimes I don’t score goals and that’s all anyone talks about, but I also give something else,” Dzeko told Prime Video after his third goal since January. “Today I worked for the team and that was what was needed in such a big match.”

Reaching the final would be extra sweet for Inter as it would avenge semi- and quarter-final eliminations at the hands of Milan in 2003 and 2005. The winners of the tie will face holders Real Madrid or Manchester City in the June 10 showpiece in Istanbul. The first leg of that semi-final finished 1-1 in Spain on Tuesday. Milan, who also struck the woodwork through Sandro Tonali, have their work cut out if they want to have a chance at being crowned European champions for the eighth time and will hope Rafael Leao is available for next week’s decisive clash.

The absence of star man Leao left Milan without their key attacking threat and allowed Inter to play more on the front foot knowing their opponents didn’t have the Portugal winger’s pace in their armory. “We conceded two quick goals, and against Inter that’s difficult to come back from,” Milan defender



MILAN: Inter Milan’s Bosnian forward Edin Dzeko (center) shoots to open the scoring during the UEFA Champions League semi-final first leg football match between AC Milan and Inter Milan, on May 10, 2023. — AFP

Fikayo Tomori told Prime Video. “We’re disappointed, we could have done better, especially at the beginning, but we need to believe if we’re going to reach the final.”

One team in it

A colorful San Siro was nearly full an hour before kick-off, with both sets of fans exchanging chants and insults before the huge displays traditional to the fixture were unfurled as the teams came out. But once the match was underway there was really only one team on the pitch, with nominal away side Inter looking the more settled and dynamic off the back of five straight wins and the recent hot form of their attack. It didn’t take long for the away side to open the scoring and it was a fabulous Dzeko goal which did it in the eighth minute. The Bosnia striker held off Davide Calabria and met Calhanoglu’s in-swinging corner with a perfect volley which left Milan goalkeeper Mike Maignan with no chance. With their tails up and their fans falling over each other with joy in the Curva Nord, Inter went for Milan and three minutes

later Mkhitaryan doubled their lead.

Federico Dimarco was set scampering down the left flank and his low cut-back was first left by Lautaro Martinez and then collected by Armenian midfielder Mkhitaryan, who smashed in his fifth goal of the season. Milan escaped being three goals down after just a quarter of an hour when Calhanoglu nearly silenced the boos of his former supporters with a long-range drive which crashed out off the post. And Martinez then won a penalty which was rightly overturned by referee Jesus Gil Manzano following a look at the pitch-side monitor.

Dzeko should have all but sealed the tie when one-on-one with Maignan in the 53rd minute and not long after, while Milan’s fans unleashed a volley of flares and explosives, Tonali held his head in despair after striking the bottom of the post. However that was the last major chance of the game for Milan as Inter comfortably held off their rivals for the final half an hour and then bathed in the applause of their supporters who are dreaming of a trip to Turkey. — AFP

All-NBA First Team named

NEW YORK: NBA Most Valuable Player Joel Embiid of Philadelphia, Milwaukee’s Giannis Antetokounmpo, Dallas star Luka Doncic and Boston’s Jayson Tatum were among those named Wednesday to the All-NBA First Team. The elite squad, among three chosen in voting by a global media panel, also included Oklahoma City’s Shai Gilgeous-Alexander. Greek star Antetokounmpo, a two-time NBA MVP, was the only unanimous first-team selection with 100 votes and 500 points and was joined among forwards by US standout Tatum, who was second with 98 votes and 484 points.

Embiid, the star big man from Cameroon, was named to his first All-NBA First Team with 87



Joel Embiid

first-team votes and 474 total points. Canadian guard Gilgeous-Alexander had 63 first-team votes and 407 points to 60 first-team ballots and 403 points for Slovenian guard Doncic. It marked the first first-team selections for Embiid and Gilgeous-Alexander, the second for Tatum, the fourth for Doncic and the fifth for Antetokounmpo. The All-NBA Second Team included Denver center Nikola Jokic, a two-time NBA MVP from Serbia; guards Stephen Curry of Golden State and Donovan Mitchell of Cleveland and forwards Jimmy Butler of Miami and Jaylen Brown of Boston. The All-NBA Third Team included Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James, New York forward Julius Randle, Portland guard Damian Lillard and two Sacramento Kings -- guard De’Aaron Fox and Lithuanian center Domantas Sabonis.

Four-time MVP and four-time champion James, who became the NBA’s all-time leading scorer in his 20th NBA campaign, was among the 15 honor selections for the 19th time in his career with his third nod to the third team after 13 first-team and three second-team selections. Curry was among the All-NBA squads for the ninth time in his career, four times on the first team and four more on the second. Jokic and Butler were each among the 15 elite players for the fifth time. Jokic has had three first-team spots while Butler has never been on the top unit. Lillard was in the All-NBA group for the seventh time in his career. He made the top squad once and the second team four times. — AFP