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US commends Kuwait's role in regional and global peace

Strategic partnership hailed during talks • US sending reinforcements to Gulf

Kuwait mourns Abdulkarim Abdulqader



KUWAIT: Mourners attend the funeral of veteran Kuwaiti singer Abdulkarim Abdulqader at Sulaibikhat cemetery on May 13, 2023. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 4)



KUWAIT: Renowned Kuwaiti singer Abdulkarim Abdulqader was laid to rest at Sulaibikhat cemetery on Saturday, leaving a great void in the hearts of his fans and a rich legacy of immortal works, which abound in the Kuwaiti, Gulf and Arab musical heritage. The mourners' hall at the cemetery witnessed the presence of a large crowd of colleagues, friends and relatives of Abdulqader, who passed away on Friday.

Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi said Kuwaiti, Gulf and Arab art has lost a model artist with high morals. "His journey

extended to about 60 years of giving, and today we console ourselves as we console the family of the deceased. We ask God to have mercy on him and forgive him," he said. An earlier statement by Mutairi recalled Abdulqader's massive artistic impact on the Gulf scene, enriching Kuwaiti and Arab musical heritage throughout his career.

"The artistic scene has lost a great artiste and one of the pillars of Kuwaiti singing, whom we loved as a human being and an artiste. He was a dear friend and companion.

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WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Kuwait plays a vital role in Middle East and world peace during official talks held with visiting Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in Washington, adding both sides share views on a variety of issues including Syria, Yemen and the entire Middle East region. The US secretary also voiced gratitude to Kuwait for its efforts aiming at reviving the Sudanese crisis.

The Kuwaiti foreign minister said Kuwait and the US have a very strong strategic partnership and friendship, saying he will discuss with his US counterpart how to promote this partnership. He said the US plays an important role in maintaining peace and security in the region, hoping it would continue playing its role in maintaining regional stability. He added that amid the numerous regional and international crises, Kuwait, as a bridge-builder, tries to resolve such conflicts by peaceful means.

Speaking to KUNA following the meeting, Sheikh Salem said he had a "good" meeting with his US counterpart in Washington, adding he had asked Blinken to convey the greetings of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to US President Joe Biden. He noted the talks represented an opportunity for them to look into aspects of strong and firm relations between Kuwait and the US.

Sheikh Salem added they also discussed the sixth round of strategic dialogue due in Kuwait in October, voicing shared satisfaction with the current level of bilateral relations. He said the latest regional and international developments, mainly the serious escalation in occupied Palestinian territories, and Syria,



WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken meets Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — KUNA

were also addressed. He thanked the US and Saudi Arabia for their efforts to put an end to the bloody conflict in Sudan.

During the official talks, Sheikh Salem commended Kuwaiti-US strategic partnership and distinguished cooperation between both friendly countries at all levels and in various fields, based on pillars of security and defense, promotion of investment, exchange of expertise and development of education and medicine and others. He also spoke highly of firm and close cooperation between both sides at international gatherings, hoping that this level of bilateral coordination would continue. Blinken voiced much gratitude to Kuwait for its efforts in the evacuation of US citizens from Sudan amid critical and complicated security conditions. He also commended distinguished friendship and existing

Continued on Page 6

Hopefuls appeal to voters a day before registration closes

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Former National Assembly speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem was among 30 new candidates who filed their nomination papers on Saturday to contest the upcoming June 6 polls, raising the total number of hopefuls to 212 with just one day remaining for registration. There were 350 candidates at the end of the ninth day of registration for the annulled Sept 2022 general elections.

There were five ex-MPs among the candidates, raising their number to 56. Four members of the court-annulled 2022 Assembly also registered, raising their number in the race to 44. The former speaker said he is running in the elections because he has a project that can help Kuwait emerge from the current bottleneck. Ghanem also called on the election organizing committee to take a series of measures to ensure the elections are fair and transparent, including transparent voting and counting of votes.

Ghanem and a number of former lawmakers had claimed that some irregularities marred the September elections, which were later scrapped by the constitutional court.

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Kuwait hails 60th anniversary of UN membership

NEW YORK: Kuwait's Permanent Representative at the United Nations Ambassador Tariq Al-Bannai said the 60th anniversary of Kuwait's membership of the UN is an important phase in the history of Kuwaiti diplomacy. In a statement to KUNA late Friday, commemorating Kuwait's joining the UN on May 14, 1963, Bannai noted that Kuwait and the UN share strong ties, as the Kuwaiti leadership is continuously exerting efforts to enhance partnership with the

international body. The two sides have been cooperating with each other in different fields through the decades, especially in the humanitarian, peace, security, economic and developmental fields, he said. Bannai underlined the UN Security Council's role in liberating Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion in 1991. He also spoke of Kuwait's prominent role in protecting international peace and security during its non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council from 1978 to 1979 and from 2018 to 2019.

Moreover, the ambassador noted Kuwait's strong partnership with the UN in supporting regional and international humanitarian work to ease the suffering of people affected by conflict and natural disasters, especially the country's recent contributions to face the aftermath of the violent earthquake that shook Turkey and Syria earlier this year. — KUNA



NEW YORK: Kuwait Permanent Representative to the UN Tariq Al-Bannai meets UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres. — KUNA

Modi's ruling BJP voted out in Karnataka

BENGALURU: India's opposition Congress party won power in a key state Saturday, defeating Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling BJP a year ahead of national polls. It ousted Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party from office in Karnataka, the only southern state controlled by the Hindu nationalist grouping. Karnataka has a population of well over 60 million people — about the same as Britain — and its capital Bengaluru is India's tech hub. Congress won 136 seats in the 224-seat assembly, the election commission website showed. The BJP won 65 seats.

BJP state leader B S Yediyurappa — a former chief minister — conceded defeat. "Victory and defeat aren't new to BJP," he told reporters. "We will introspect about the party's setback. I respectfully accept this verdict."

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BENGALURU: Congress supporters celebrate the party's victory in the Karnataka state legislative assembly election on May 13, 2023. — AFP



Local

Humanitarian aid sits at forefront of Kuwait's contributions as UN member

Support of UN relief efforts throughout six decades of membership commended

NEW YORK: Kuwait marks Sunday six decades since it joined the United Nations (UN) amid fervent efforts to achieve peace and security and promote development and human rights worldwide, reflecting the country's foreign policy since it became the 111th member. Kuwait has ever since proved its competence and efficiency among other UN members by becoming non-permanent UN Security Council (UNSC) member in 1978 and then 2018, and supporting global justice and the self-determination of nations and peoples.

Kuwait has defended Arab and Islamic issues, mainly including the Palestinian cause, humanitarian issues, UNSC mechanism development, promotion of preventive diplomacy and mediation and prevention of conflicts. Since becoming a UN member, Kuwait has adopted an unwavering approach of foreign policy, chiefly centered on the delivery of humanitarian aid and relief to all needy countries only out of its belief in the significance of international partnership.

Over recent years, Kuwait has become in the forefront of international humanitarian action by playing a key role in this field through its official agencies

and charities and organizing three world donors' conferences on Syria. Kuwait's great humanitarian initiatives have prompted the UN to grant the Gulf country the title of a global humanitarian hub and to name late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah a global humanitarian leader in appreciation for his great humanitarian role.

As part of its highly commended relief efforts, Kuwait has recently pledged \$90 million to support UN efforts to help refugees in the aftermath of recent powerful earthquakes in Syria and Turkey. UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths voiced gratitude to the State of Kuwait for this generous aid that would be immediately delivered to affected families in earthquake-hit areas. On this occasion, Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah vowed that his country would remain to be a staunch supporter of UN efforts in offering emergency humanitarian and relief aid.

The State of Kuwait was elected Vice President of the UN General Assembly for the 21st and 27th sessions and member of the Economic and Social

Council for three years in 1967. It was chosen as council member in 1992 and elected member of the council's transcontinental cooperation committee in 1975. It has also proved effective presence in several international organizations such as the Universal Postal Union, International Civil Aviation Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization, International Monetary Fund, World Bank and International Atomic Energy Agency.

In recognition of the significance of the United Nations, Kuwait opened the UN House in January 2009 in a ceremony that was attended by then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, reflecting deep relations between Kuwait and the UN. In response to the anguish of many development countries, Kuwait has established a decent life fund with a capital of \$100 million, aiming at developing and improving agricultural production in developing countries.

It also donated \$150 million to an OPEC fund created in 2007 for research and studies pertinent to energy, environment and climate change. Kuwait's aid makes up over 1.3 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP), exceeding the internationally allo-



Late Amir (Foreign Minister then) Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah addresses the United Nations General Assembly after joining the UN in 1963. —KUNA

ated ratio of 0.7 percent. Kuwait set aside 10 percent of its voluntary contributions for supporting the UN and its agencies; having doubled this figure in September 2014. —KUNA

In my view

Blood bag fees tip of the iceberg for expats



Atyab Al-Shatti

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The issue of imposing fees on residents of Kuwait for blood bags has sparked a debate about the treatment of expatriates in the country. While it is true that every country has the right to regulate its service sectors, this move is viewed by some as racial discrimination against expatriates, who are denied basic civil and human rights in Kuwait.

Actually, the roots of this complication do not lie in spending a few dinars for blood bags. The cost of life of residents of Kuwait does not depend on blood bags, and their expenses vary between housing, food and drink, rent, installments and financial costs that have made their lives more like those who live in their actual "country of origin".

The real dilemma lies in the fact that the laws of Kuwait do not recognize civilized concepts that govern all legal and financial aspects of expatriates in Kuwait. The expatriate, no matter how many years of his life he has spent in Kuwait, will never have the right to become a citizen or at least obtain permanent residency in this country.

Regardless of him spending his whole life, career, sweat and blood, youth, time and energy earning his own bread and butter in this country, he shall never have the right to dream of being a citizen. For this I believe blood bag fees are no longer the biggest dilemma, as an expatriate will not be considered part of this state in which he spends his lifetime in.

The real problem lies in the fact that Kuwait does not recognize the concept of citizenship or permanent residency for expatriates. Despite living, working and contributing to the country for years, they are still considered foreigners without any rights or privileges. This lack of recognition extends to refugees and migrant workers as well, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

It is unfortunate that Kuwait has not ratified or signed the Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers, which would have provided a framework for protecting the rights of expatriates. This highlights the need for Kuwait to review its laws and policies to ensure all residents are treated fairly and with dignity.

If there was a glimmer of hope for expatriates, even just a little, that would be in the possibility of their children becoming Kuwaiti citizens. However, even this is not guaranteed, as Kuwait does not recognize the affiliation of residents to the country over time. This creates a sense of insecurity and instability for expatriates, who are unsure of their future and the future of their children.

In conclusion, the issue of blood bag fees is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the treatment of expatriates in Kuwait. The lack of recognition of their rights and status as residents of the country is a serious problem that needs to be addressed. Kuwait must take steps to ensure that all residents are treated fairly and equally, regardless of their nationality or status. Only then can the country truly be a home for all who live and work in it.



TOKYO: Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Ambassador Samih Hayat (left) hands over the written letter to the Japanese Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Kenji Yamada on Friday. — KUNA photos



Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Ambassador Samih Hayat (left) is seen with Japanese Assistant Foreign Minister and Director-General of the Middle Eastern and African Bureau Nagaoka Kansuke during Hayat's visit to Tokyo last week.

Kuwait, Japan discuss strategic partnership

TOKYO: The State of Kuwait and Japan held on Saturday the third session of political consultations at the level of officials of both countries' foreign ministries. Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Ambassador Samih Hayat led the Kuwaiti side, while Assistant Foreign Minister and Director-General of the Middle Eastern and African Bureau Nagaoka Kansuke chaired the Japanese side.

Speaking to KUNA, the Kuwaiti official hailed the meeting as having been held in a friendly atmosphere, where both sides shared the same views on several issues. He added that these significant consultations would continue at a faster pace in the coming stage in the context of implementing agreements pertinent to bilateral

cooperation between the foreign ministries of Kuwait and Japan.

He cited the fruitful outcomes of the current meetings as clear-cut evidence of deep relations between Kuwait and Japan, based on firm friendship and mutual trust as well shared commitment to broadening bilateral cooperation in all fields. During the third session of political consultations, both sides discussed a set of regional and international developments, mainly Middle East and Northeast Asia. They also looked into a comprehensive strategic partnership in the economic, trade, investment, health, cultural, scientific, technical, academic domains, in addition to renewable energy, oil and petrochemicals. Ambassador Hayat arrived in Tokyo earlier on Thursday on an official visit to head the Kuwaiti delegation at the third session of political consultations between the Japanese and Kuwaiti foreign ministries.

On Friday, Ambassador Hayat delivered a written message from the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to his Japanese counterpart Yoshimasa Hayashi. The letter handover took place during a meeting

between Ambassador Hayat and the Japanese Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Kenji Yamada at the Japanese Foreign Ministry's headquarters in Tokyo.

Ambassador Hayat affirmed the State of Kuwait's keenness on strengthening the friendly and cooperation relations as well as the strategic partnership with Japan. The Japanese minister of state said that the two countries, since establishing diplomatic relations in 1961, have boosted their friendship and established partnerships.

He also expressed satisfaction for expanding the scope of cooperation between the two countries not only in the energy sector but also in various other fields. He recalled that Kuwait and Japan had stood on each other's sides during hard times, namely the 1991 liberation of Kuwait and 2021 quake that jolted Japan. Furthermore, he noted that His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, last December, held a phone conversation with the Japanese Prime Minister, during the two sides affirmed keenness on elevating the level of the bilateral relations. —KUNA



Canadian and Kuwaiti officials are seen during their meeting on Thursday.



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (left) shakes hands with Canadian counterpart Melanie Joly during official talks held Thursday. —KUNA photos

Kuwait, Canada ink deal to exchange political expertise

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah held Thursday talks with Canadian counterpart Melanie Joly on boosting bilateral ties and broadening coordination regarding regional and international issues of common interest. The talks, during Sheikh Salem's current visit to Canada, focused on all aspects of the close historical relations that bind the two friendly countries and the efforts to strengthen and develop them at various levels to serve the common interests.

They also discussed intensifying joint coordination and cooperation on many regional and international issues and continuing joint efforts to maintain international peace and security. Sheikh Salem Abdullah conveyed greetings of Kuwait's

leadership, government and people to the Canadian leadership, government and people, and their wishes for continued growth, prosperity, progress and prosperity for Canada and its friendly people. He lauded steady progress in cooperation between Kuwait and Canada at all levels, in particular in the humanitarian and development fields.

Kuwait's top diplomat appreciated the prominent role played by Canada and its armed military forces in Kuwait in preserving the security and safety of Kuwait and the countries of the region. The two ministers reviewed regional and international developments including the security developments in Sudan, the international efforts to end the bloody conflict there.

They tackled the situation in Syria and Yemen as well as the continuous escalation in the occupied Palestinian territories. They touched upon the developments in Ukraine and its repercussions at the regional and international levels, international endeavors to resolve the crises ravaging the region, humanitarian efforts in this framework and joint action to help preserve the world order, promote the values and principles of international

law, and maintain international peace and security.

Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Joly expressed her country's thanks and gratitude for Kuwait's hosting of Canadian Armed Forces on its territory and for the facilities provided by the Kuwaiti government in this regard. She spoke highly of the high level of cooperation between the two friendly countries, hoping it would expand two broader horizons. The Canadian top diplomat admired the wisdom of the State of Kuwait and its balanced foreign policy as well as its efforts to consolidate security and peace in the region.

She expressed appreciation for Kuwait's humanitarian endeavors and efforts to support development and help people around the world. The bilateral talks culminated in the signing of a memorandum of understanding regarding the establishment of a bilateral political consultation mechanism between the two foreign ministries, which reflected the determination of the two countries to develop and consolidate bilateral relations in all fields and at various levels. — KUNA

Local

Kuwaitis see voting a powerful tool to get their voices heard

Voters must not be influenced by nepotism, tribalism

By Ghadeer Ghloum

KUWAIT: Voting is the cornerstone of democracy, as it provides citizens with a means of expressing their views and opinions freely. By voting, citizens have the power to influence the decisions made by their elected representatives. This is especially important in a country like Kuwait, where the government is elected by its people. In such a system, citizens have the power to shape the policies and laws of their country through the ballot box. Thus, the responsibility to vote should not be taken lightly.

Kuwaiti citizens have a duty to participate in the electoral process to uphold the principles of democracy. By voting, citizens help ensure their government is accountable to the people and that their voices are heard. This is especially important in Kuwait, where the constitution guarantees the rights of Kuwaiti citizens to participate in the democratic process. However, some individuals within the country may choose not to exercise this right.

It is crucial to recognize the importance of participating in the democratic process and fulfilling one's national responsibility by casting a vote. Failure to vote not only undermines the legitimacy of the government, but also weakens the country's democratic institutions.

Kuwait Times interviewed three citizens to shed light on their responsibility and perspec-

tive on participating in the electoral process.

Kuwaiti engineer Ala'a Murtadha told Kuwait Times that one must understand the significance of democratic elections in Kuwait. It is necessary for the citizens to fulfill their constitutional obligation to be a part of the decision-making process.

"Voting is one important way that we can participate in our democracy and lead to positive changes. It promotes fairness, justice and equality, as each individual has their own voice in choosing the elected officials whose decisions impact our lives, families and society. The elected officials are responsible for making decisions that will impact citizens greatly. Therefore, by voting, Kuwaiti citizens can play an active role in shaping their society," he said.

Mohammad Al-Ansari, a Kuwaiti teacher, said: "As a citizen, I genuinely believe that voting is a necessity in our society. It is one of, if not the only, weapon the citizen has — to pick someone genuine and put them in a place of high power to try and rejuvenate the country from the damage that has befallen it, as a means of damage control."

By not voting, citizens are essentially giving up their right to have a say in their country's future. "Kuwait gives us the privilege to choose the right person for the right job. While I believe that every citizen should have the right to vote, I also think there should be some restric-

tions and tests in place to filter those who are well-informed and are able to make sound decisions and those who aren't," he said.

Moreover, Ansari highlighted a serious issue. "One of many issues that we face in voting is tribalism. The vast majority of known, socially high-ranking tribes, dare I say, aren't qualified to vote. To them, it's a matter of honor, of not rejecting a tribal call when in need. Declining such calls could potentially have them thrown out of the tribal circle, and that's the equivalent of being banished — exiled from their own tribe," he pointed out.

"We need to ensure that voters are not influenced by nepotism when it comes to voting. To sum up and just to be straightforward, the Holy Quran makes it clear and easy. In Surah Al-Nisa (4:58), Allah says 'Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing.'"

Concurring with both Murtadha and Ansari, Khaled Kandari, also a Kuwaiti citizen, said: "I vote in every election because it is my responsibility to do so. If I wish to see change in my country, I have to be part of it as well and have to be genuine in choosing the people I vote for. Voting must not be according to a certain tribe, sect, relationship or any kind of personal connections, but rather according to the candidate's qualities and motives."

Education fund seeks stronger partnership with Kuwait as donor

By Faten Omar



Laura Frigenti

KUWAIT: As the emergency in education continues to grow in lower-income countries, CEO of Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Laura Frigenti arrived in Kuwait as a part of her GCC tour to sign a key letter of intent regarding the education system and for high-level talks with leaders in key countries in Gulf. Kuwait Times spoke with Frigenti to learn more about GPE, which mobilizes partners and funds to support nearly 90 lower-income countries to transform their education systems and get 160 million more girls and boys in school.

Kuwait Times: When did the Global Partnership for Education start?

Frigenti: Founded in 2002, GPE is the world's only partnership and fund entirely dedicated to education in lower-income countries. It was established initially as Education for All – FastTrack Initiative (EFA FTI) to accelerate progress on the Education for All goals, endorsed in 2000, and based on the recognition that education is crucial to building a more prosperous, secure and equal world. For two decades, GPE has been delivering funds and supporting solutions to build strong and resilient education systems in countries affected by extreme poverty or conflict so that more children, especially girls, get the education they need to thrive.

KT: How does GPE gather funding and how many students have you helped so far?

Frigenti: Every few years, GPE mobilizes resources from donors to replenish its fund to be able to give every child a quality education. Since 2002, 107 million students have benefitted and over 675,000 teachers received training, 56 million textbooks were distributed, 8,500 classrooms were built or renovated and 71 percent of GPE partner countries increased their share of education expenditure or maintained it at the 20 percent benchmark or above.

KT: Explain how GPE funding works at the country level.

Frigenti: GPE is one of the largest sources of grant aid for education in lower-income countries. We use our direct funding to leverage billions of dollars more in domestic and international financing — creating better opportunities for millions of children, their communities and their countries. GPE funding directly supports partner countries' education strategies and plans, and GPE advocates aligning other development partners' resources behind countries' priorities.

KT: Tell us about the Kuwait visit and meeting with officials.

Frigenti: I am thrilled to have visited Kuwait and strengthened GPE's relationship with one of our newest donor partners. Kuwait joined GPE as a donor in 2021, pledging \$30 million, another example of the leadership we are seeing out of the Gulf region. We commend Kuwait's scaling up of investments in education because a well-educated and properly skilled workforce is vital to diversify economies and fostering peaceful and prosperous societies.

GPE and Kuwait have co-financed a successful \$63 million program in Nigeria, and I am hoping to create more opportunities for similar partnerships, including through the ACG SmartEd initiative that has generated \$500 million to support education.

KT: How do you evaluate the level of education in Kuwait, and how can other countries learn from what Kuwait has achieved with its education system?

Frigenti: Kuwait engaged in a modernization program that addresses critical issues in Kuwait's education system including curricular reform, the development of national assessment systems, the improvement of school leadership and the creation of professional standards. The world now needs more partnerships like the one between Kuwait and GPE, to ensure that any nation seeking to invest more in education will receive the amount and type of funding it needs, to enable access to more girls and boys and develop their learning opportunities.

Gulf countries have used education to help transform their societies into prosperous and generous nations and to place them now in a position to step up their support for schooling at a critical moment. We hope that other countries will follow some of the prominent countries in the GCC region in investing more in education, to give all girls and boys everywhere the skills to match the demands of a rapidly changing and ever more complex future.

KT: How do you think leading Arab countries can best contribute towards the development of education in lower-income countries?

Frigenti: As education needs spiral in the wake of COVID-19, conflict, and economic challenges and traditional donors retreat from the education space, Gulf countries have an important opportunity to step up their engagement in global education efforts through funding and political leadership in key international milestones. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have already shown their willingness to be more actively involved by becoming new GPE donor countries, setting a foundation for future collaboration and investment.

Gulf countries are beginning to confront the rapidly growing skills mismatch that risks leaving millions of youths — particularly young women — underprepared for the future. But this remains a critical issue in the region. In Arab states, youth unemployment has climbed to 25 percent, while unemployment for young women has reached 40 percent.

This is a symptom of a far greater crisis. We face a deepening calamity in education, exacerbated by the impacts of COVID-19. Before the pandemic, around half the world's 10-year-olds struggled to read and comprehend a basic story; today, that level is closer to 70 percent. Neglecting the plight of education across the globe will condemn a generation and leave us facing dire consequences socially, politically and economically.

Interior minister warns no one is above the law

KUWAIT: The interior minister on Saturday supervised a number of recent narcotics seizures, estimated at 152 kilograms of hashish, one million Lyrica tablets, 150,000 Captagon pills, eight kilograms of marijuana, two kilograms of shabu, five unlicensed firearms and live ammunition.

"We affirm that no one is above

the law and we continue to pursue smugglers and dealers of narcotic substances to safeguard society from this destructive scourge," warned Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, who is also Deputy Prime Minister and Acting Defense Minister.

Sheikh Talal expressed his pride and appreciation for the distinguished efforts of security personnel and their fruitful cooperation in confronting drug smugglers and repelling all smuggling methods and attempts. He called on them to continue their work with more care, readiness and vigilance, and exert all efforts to pursue drug smugglers.



US Army concludes 'Best Squad' contest

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: The US Army in Kuwait held a "Best Squad Competition" at Camps Arifjan and Buehring from May 6 to 11, 2023, which aims at building teamwork and developing the capabilities of soldiers in a variety of areas such as physical fitness, tactical tasks, problem-solving and using latest technology on the modern battlefield.

The competition included selecting the best 14 teams from across the US Central Command in Kuwait and adopting the strategy of teams confronting against each other in a grueling test of the warriors' missions and combat training.

Command Sergeant Major Jacinto Garza, Senior Enlisted Advisor at US Army Central, said during a press statement the winning team will be able to participate in the Best Squad Competition of the US armed forces in August. He added the US Central Command is responsible in supporting

and managing more than 12,000 troops, including those assigned to joint task forces and embassies, across 21 countries in the US Central Command's area of responsibility.

Sergeant Major Brian Disque, Army Central Operations for Plans and Training, said this competition is held annually. The purpose of holding this joint competition is to encourage army soldiers and teams to be at their best. Disque revealed a discussion took place between the US Army and the Kuwaiti side for the participation of ground forces, which he described as high-quality training and competitions, stressing the Kuwait Army is a main partner of American forces, in addition to the fact that they are the host country of these forces.

Master Sergeant Donte DeBrow, React to Contact Evaluator, said the teams, before starting their arrangements, receive a report from the team leader mainly to inform them of the maneuvers and how to deal with the target as well as reviewing the attack plan to confront the enemy, pointing out that his duties include evaluating the performance of the soldiers participating in the training, especially regarding their reactions and how they interact with the enemy firing at them. He explained he is also working on evaluating the soldiers' performance in terms of

their progress, obtaining sufficient ammunition and all equipment, and not being injured during training.

The Winner

On Thursday, the US Army held at Camp Arifjan an announcement ceremony for the Best Squad Competition. The winner was Staff Sergeant Joshua Hutchins from Idaho State National Guard and his team. Hutchins also won best NCO (non-commissioned officer). "To the people of Kuwait, as the winner of the best non-commissioned officer of the 2023 Army Central Best Squad Competition, I would say that it is an example of exemplary performance as a non-commissioned officer (sergeant) in the US Army because we need to be experts in our skills as well as professionals and leaders and to know and care for our soldiers," Hutchins said.

During the ceremony, the highest-ranking Army NCO in the entire region, Command Sergeant Major Garza, said the Best Squad Competition urges the Kuwaiti military to work on building the potential of non-commissioned officers. "We have known for a long time that our success in the army is based on junior leaders who are empowered to make decisions. If we can effectively share our training model, this will help make the Kuwait Army even better," he said.



KUWAIT: US military personnel participate in the Best Squad Competition at the Buehring base camp in Udairi, in the northwestern region of Kuwait, on May 10, 2023. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Milset Asia launches conference for outstanding students

KUWAIT: Asia's Regional Office of the International Movement for Leisure Activities in Science and Technology (MILSET Asia) announced in a press release Saturday the launch of the activities of the "Second Scientific Conference for Outstanding Graduate Students in the Secondary Stage" for the academic year 2022/2023. The conference, which will be held on May 15, is organized in cooperation with the general technical direction of science at the Ministry of education and with the support of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS).

Last March, 108 students were selected to participate in the conference through panel discussions held by MILSET Asia. The discussions are one of the most important and best methods of communication between students through the presentation of ideas and the exchange of opinions and experiences, said MILSET Asia. The selection process



was done over four days, with each day being devoted to one of the four scientific fields to be discussed at the conference. The panel discussion was conducted by a moderator, after which the results of the dialogue were extracted and a paper was prepared by a student who was selected to represent all students of the field to read the proposals

during the conference.

The objectives of the conference, said MILSET Asia, are to spread scientific culture among students, develop scientific trends and inclinations among outstanding students and instill a spirit of competition among students. It also aims at helping outstanding students determine their future scientific goals.

News in Brief

Eid Al-Adha to
fall on June 28

KUWAIT: Astronomical calculations predict that the day of Arafah will fall on Tuesday, June 27, the Ojairi Scientific Center said on Saturday. The first day of Eid Al-Adha is expected to be on Wednesday June 28. The Islamic calendar is based on the lunar cycle, meaning that months are determined by the birth of the new moon. Therefore, months in the Islamic calendar could be 29 or 30 days depending on when the new moon is seen. The Ojairi Scientific Center expects that Thul-Qi'da, which is the month preceding Thul-Hijja where Eid Al-Adha falls, will be 29 days. However, many countries in the Muslim world, including Kuwait, rely on sighting the moon with the naked eye rather than astronomical calculations. If the new moon is not sighted on the 29th of Thul-Qi'da, Eid Al-Adha will be pushed forward by one day to June 29. —KUNA

Liquor factory busted,
operators missing

KUWAIT: Ahmadi Security Directorate raided a local liquor factory in Um Al-Haiman where they found a large number of barrels full of moonshine liquor along with bottles ready for sale in addition to liquor making equipment. The raid was made following information received by security men, but those operating it were not found and are being sought.

Power cut off of
violating garages

KUWAIT: Head of the Judicial Jurisdiction team at the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Adnan Dashti said the team made a joint campaign with the interior, commerce and industry ministries, Kuwait Municipality and the Public Authority for Industry and issued 11 citations for garages in Fahaheel area that connected power without meters. He said power was disconnected and the violators were referred to concerned authorities.

Abdulkarim Abdulqader enriched Arab
musical library with everlasting works

Award-winning artist was voice behind liberation song 'Watan Al-Nahar'



KUWAIT: Mourners gather at the cemetery for Abdulkarim Abdulqader's burial.



Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi is seen standing with other mourners at the mourners' hall at the Sulaibikhat cemetery.



Veteran singer Nabil Shuaib (right) speaks with renowned Kuwaiti actor Waleed Al-Deera at Abdulkarim Abdulqader's burial on Saturday May 13, 2023. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT: After a career full of giving in the field of singing, the great artist Abdulkarim Abdulqader has departed our world on Friday, after suffering with illness. During his career spanning about six decades, the late artist enriched the Kuwaiti, Gulf and Arab music library with a collection of the most wonderful songs with their distinctive rhythms, for which he received many appreciation awards locally and regionally.

The work of the artist — nicknamed the wounded voice after the release of his song "Ajr Al-Sout" in 1988 — was distinguished by its quality and quantity, as he provided hundreds of songs in about 47 albums. He did not study music, but started his working life in the Ministry of Interior and then moved to the customs department until he ended up in the Ministry of Information before retiring from work.

The late singer collaborated with the most skilled Kuwaiti and Gulf composers, including Abdulrahman Al-Buajian, Ahmed Baqer, Abdulrab Idris, Rashid Al-Khader, Anwar Abdullah, Sulaiman Al-Mulla, Marzouq Al-Marzouq, Khalid Al-Zayed, Ghanam Al-Degan, Talal Maddah and others. The late singer's singing was not limited to a specific genre, as he kept pace with the changing public taste, while always committing to giving his artistic personality to each genre he presented.

Sports, national anthems

He excelled in his patriotic works, which were one of the best at expressing feelings of belonging and attachment to the land of Kuwait and its love. Among those works are "Hobi wa Taqdeer Laha", "Um Al-Thalath Aswar", "Mahmal Al-Khair" and "Watan Al-Nahar". The latter became a symbol of the liberation of the country from the brutal Iraqi invasion. The deceased presented sports anthems which fans have repeatedly chanted in the stands while supporting Kuwait's national teams, including the song "Bismi Allah", which brought excitement to the followers of the Kuwait National Football Team in its golden era.

Unlike most singers, Abdulqader did not prefer performing in public or private concerts. He believed that singing behind the recording microphones allowed his art to reach a wider audience. He gained overwhelming popularity in the Gulf countries at a quieter time when the internet and social networks were not used in promoting art.

The artist Abdulqader received many awards, including the bronze Record Award at the Cairo Music Festival for the song "Jamr Alwadaa" and the best song award at the Cairo Music Festival in 1998 for the song "shakhbarak". He was honored at the 24th Qurain cultural festival, the Winter of Tantora festival in Saudi Arabia in 2019 and the Kuwait Music Festival in 2015.

A singing heritage

Earlier today, the Ministry of information sent its condolences on the passing of the the great artist who left an eternal artistic legacy in the history of Kuwaiti song and everlasting love and appreciation in the hearts of his fans in Kuwait, the Gulf and the Arab world.

The spokesperson of the ministry, Anwar Murad, conveyed the condolences of the Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, to the family of the deceased and his prayers to the Almighty to inspire them with

patience and good consolation. Murad said that the late singer is one of the artists who had a deep imprint on the Kuwaiti art scene. She said his fine art and authentic voice gained him fame across the Arab world, where he presented many singing works that represent a singing heritage that the State of Kuwait is proud of.

Murad added that the State of Kuwait has lost a great artist with high morals, whom everyone unanimously loves, praying to Allah Al-mighty to bestow His Mercy on the deceased and grant his family patience and fortitude. —KUNA

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Lulu Hypermarket
honors nurses

KUWAIT: Lulu Kuwait, a leading retail chain in Kuwait, has recently announced that it successfully honored the invaluable contribution of nurses to the healthcare sector on International Nurses Day, May 12, 2023. As part of its corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts, Lulu Hypermarket offered a range of exciting discounts and gifts to nurses across the country as a token of appreciation for their unwavering commitment to patient care.

To show recognition for the tireless efforts of nurses, Lulu Kuwait announced a 25 percent discount on all garments and footwear, in addition to free gift hampers for all nurses who showed their work ID card. These offers were exclusively available to nurses at any Lulu Hypermarket outlet in Kuwait on May 12 and 13. Lulu hypermarket took pride in supporting

the nursing community by allocating a special check-out counter exclusively for nurses during the two-day promotion period. The company believed that nurses play a vital role in the healthcare sector, and it hoped that these initiatives served as a fitting tribute to their efforts. Lulu Kuwait is committed to recognizing the contribution of healthcare professionals and has always been supportive of the healthcare sector. The company invited all nurses in Kuwait to visit their nearest Lulu Hypermarket outlet on May 12 and 13 to take advantage of these exclusive offers.

The discounts and gifts offered by Lulu Kuwait aimed to bring a smile to the faces of nurses across the country and serve as a small token of appreciation for their dedication and hard work. The company thanks all the nurses for their unwavering commitment to patient care and looks forward to supporting the nursing community in the future. Overall, Lulu Kuwait's efforts to honor nurses on International Nurses Day demonstrated the company's commitment to social responsibility and the healthcare sector.

Kuwait's Al-Shehab
wins gold at ITEX

KUALA LUMPUR: Kuwaiti engineer Jenan Al-Shehab won a gold medal of the 34th edition of the International Exhibition for Invention, Innovation and Technology (ITEX) on Friday. Shehab took the gold for her invention of (Electromagnetic Cells) at the two-day Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia event that kicked off Thursday.

Shehab is part of the GCC General Secretariat delegation to the exhibition. Voicing pride and joy over the win, Shehab told KUNA that her invention would help charge electronic devices remotely, lessening dangers of electric faults, while lending an aesthetic ambience to public and private places.

Shehab was nominated by a specialized team of ar-

bitrators at the Patent Office of the GCC general secretariat to represent Kuwait in ITEX. 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. ITEX is an annual exhibition initiated by the Malaysian Invention and Design Society (MINDS) in 1989, featuring the best innovations, promote inventions, technologies, as well as commercial exchange and expertise in the field of science and knowledge. —KUNA



Jenan Al-Shehab



Pakistan social media blackout boosts Khan momentum

Meteorologists targeted in climate ‘misinfo surge’

Zionist air strikes batter Gaza

Fighting rages despite latest truce efforts

GAZA: Zionist air strikes battered Gaza and militants fired rockets again on Saturday, as deadly fighting resumed after a night of relative calm despite efforts to secure a truce. A new ceasefire proposal was circulated late Friday by Egypt, which has been mediating between the two sides, after a previous bid fell through, a Palestinian source said. Zionist anti-aircraft defenses went into action Saturday after a barrage of rocket fire from Gaza during the funeral of Islamic Jihad military commander Iyad al-Hassani, who was killed the previous day in a Zionist strike, AFP reporters said.

The Islamic Jihad said its fighters were pursuing “missile strikes on cities” in revenge for Zionist “assassinations” of their commanders and strikes on inhabited regions. Residents in the crowded Gaza Strip covered indoors as the fighting raged, with streets empty and only a few shops and pharmacies open. The exchange of fire came after the Palestinian health ministry reported the death of two men aged 19 and 32 in a Zionist army raid on a refugee camp in the occupied West Bank city of Nablus.

The army said it was a “counterterrorism” operation targeting operatives who had been planning attacks on soldiers. “Armed gunmen fired at the forces, who responded with riot dispersal means and live fire,” it said. “Two of the terrorists were targeted.” The Fatah movement of Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas said the two men killed in the raid were members of its armed wing, the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades.

‘Honorable agreement’

The current bout of violence erupted on Tuesday when Zionist strikes on Gaza killed three leading Islamic Jihad members. Three other senior figures from the Palestinian militant group were killed in later strikes. They are among at least 33 Palestinian lives lost in the fighting, according to Gaza’s health ministry, including children. There has been one fatality on Zionist territory: an elderly woman who rescue services said was killed on Thursday night when a rocket struck the central city of Rehovot.

On Saturday, sirens warning of incoming fire sounded throughout the day in Zionist communities close to the border with Gaza. Egypt, a historic mediator between Zionist and Gaza’s factions, has been working on bringing an end to the fighting,



BALATAH: Palestinians take part in the funeral procession of Saed Masheh, 32, and Wassim Al-Araj, 19, who died earlier during a Zionist army raid, at the Balata refugee camp in the occupied West Bank, on May 13, 2023. — AFP

the worst in the Zionist-Palestinian conflict since an August flare-up that killed nearly 50 Palestinians. A Palestinian source on Friday said Gaza factions were studying Cairo’s new ceasefire formula, while Zionist public television said an “improved” truce proposal had been handed to Zionists.

There had been cautious optimism a truce may be nearing, but an Islamic Jihad source said Zionists were “disrupting Egypt’s efforts for a ceasefire”. The United States, which along with the European Union has blacklisted Islamic Jihad and Hamas as terrorist

groups, urged steps be “taken to ensure that violence is reduced”. Islamic Jihad said it had been seeking “an honorable agreement that reflects the interests of the Palestinian people and the resistance”.

US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, in a call to Minister of Strategic Affairs Ron Dermer, “stressed the urgency of reaching a ceasefire agreement in order to prevent any further loss of civilian life”, the State Department said. Morocco, which normalized relations with Zionists in 2020, said it “firmly condemns recent attacks on the Gaza

Strip, which have left numerous casualties among innocent civilians”. The army said nearly 1,100 rockets had been fired from Gaza towards Zionist entity in the current fighting, including 300 intercepted by its air defenses. People living in areas bordering the Palestinian territory have been told to stay close to bomb shelters. Gaza, a coastal enclave with a population of about 2.3 Palestinians, has been plagued by poverty and unemployment since a blockade imposed by Zionists in 2007 when the Islamist movement Hamas took over. — AFP

Lebanese security forces moonlight as waiters, mechanics

TRIPOLI: A crushing economic crisis in Lebanon has impelled members of the security forces to take on side hustles to get by, raising concerns about security in the eastern Mediterranean country. Soldiers in Lebanon have seen their salaries diminish to around an eighth of their value in dollar terms since the country’s economy began tanking in late 2019. To make ends meet, 28-year-old soldier Samer says he works three days a week with his uncle at a garage in the northern port city of Tripoli. “Almost all of my army friends have a second job,” he said, standing near an open car bonnet, his hands dirty with grease and oil.

In regular times, moonlighting while serving in the military can be punishable by imprisonment. But now “the army turns a blind eye because if not, everybody would quit”, said Samer, whose name has been changed as he is not allowed to talk to the media. The devastating economic crisis — which the World Bank says is one of the planet’s worst in modern times — has plunged more than 80 percent of the Lebanese population into poverty.

On average, a soldier used to earn about \$800 a month before the crisis, but the value of the Lebanese currency, the pound, has since crashed and salaries are now worth around just \$100. Working at the garage,

Samer says he earns double what he does as a soldier — but still struggles to survive, with nappies and milk to buy for his young son. Since June last year, Qatar and the United States have announced millions to help prop up security force salaries — particularly for the army, seen as a key pillar of Lebanon’s stability.

“Even with the \$100 extra from the Qataris every 45 days, it’s still not enough,” Samer told AFP. “At the end of the month, I’m penniless.” Around 80,000 Lebanese serve in the army, while almost 25,000 police serve in Lebanon’s Internal Security Forces (ISF), according to official sources. The army declined to respond to an AFP request for comment on the issue of soldiers taking up second jobs.

Ahmad, 29, chose to desert after 10 years of service, preferring instead to work full time as a waiter. “I realized that staying was hopeless,” he told AFP, also using a pseudonym. He quit early last year and said others from his barracks had also left the army. “I was raised to love the uniform. I still do, but we are suffocating,” he said. Lebanon’s cash-strapped military struggles to even maintain its own equipment. After the economic meltdown began, the army cut down on meat in meals for on-duty soldiers, while in 2021 it introduced helicopter joyrides for tourists in a bid to boost its coffers.

Ahmad said he worried about being arrested for deserting. “But at least I earn seven times the amount from before—and have enough to eat.” Dina Arakji from Control Risks consultancy said morale in the security forces “has decreased as a result of the crisis”. Unofficially allowing soldiers to work other jobs has jeopardized “the forces’ ability to effectively cover and respond to the country’s domestic security needs”, she told AFP. — AFP

Envoys in Jeddah agreed on Thursday to “affirm our commitment to ensure that civilians are protected”. However the deal, dubbed the Jeddah Declaration, did not amount to a truce and the situation on the ground appeared unchanged as battles raged throughout the week of negotiations and into Saturday. In the capital’s twin city of Omdurman, “houses are shaking from the force of explosions”, a witness told AFP Saturday, reporting “clashes using all kinds of weapons”.

Thursday’s deal commits both sides to let in badly needed humanitarian assistance and also calls for the restoration of electricity, water and other basic services. Sudan launched on Saturday a call to the international community, including the United Nations, the African Union, and other regional organizations, “to provide humanitarian assistance”, a foreign ministry statement said.

The government committed to “dedicating the port and airports of Port Sudan” on the Red Sea, Dongola airport in the country’s north and Wadi Seidna air base near the capital “to receive aid”. Civilians and aid groups have repeatedly pleaded for humanitarian corridors to secure vital assistance, as aid agencies have been systematically looted and at least 18 humanitarian workers killed. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres expressed hopes the Jeddah deal would “ensure that the relief operation can scale up swiftly and safely to meet the needs of millions of people in Sudan”, where a third of the population relied on aid even before the current conflict. Guterres also reiterated “his call for an immediate ceasefire and expanded discussions to achieve a permanent cessation of hostilities”, in a Friday statement. — AFP

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International

Meteorologists targeted in the climate ‘misinformation surge’

Experts accused of faking or even fixing the weather

PARIS: Once trusted faces on the news, meteorologists now brave threats, insults and slander online from conspiracy theorists and climate change deniers who accuse them of faking or even fixing the weather. Users on Twitter and other social media falsely accused Spain's weather agency of engineering a drought, Australia's of doctoring its thermometers and France's of exaggerating global warming through misplaced weather stations.

"The coronavirus is no longer a trend. Conspiracy theorists and deniers who used to talk about that are now spreading disinformation about climate change," Alexandre Lopez-Borrull, lecturer in Information and Communication Sciences at the Open University of Catalonia, told AFP. "These scientific bodies are seen as part of the establishment, so anything they say may get disputed on social networks. "They are providing evidence against what the climate deniers claim, so the latter try to discredit them."

Meteorologists threatened

In a harsh drought and with local elections looming, Spain's State Meteorological Agency (AEMET) spoke out after its members were threatened in Twitter messages, phone calls and emails. "Murderers", "Criminals", "You'll pay for this", "We're watching you", the messages shouted. They came from people who believe the widely debunked theory that aeroplane condensation trails are really "chemtrails" sprayed by the authorities to poison people or create weather disasters. Some referred to the "2030 agenda", a debunked theory that global elites are plotting to subjugate people through COVID and climate policies.

"Do you want us to publish your contact details and those of your family?" read one Tweet aimed at an AEMET

employee. "Crooks! You are destroying nature on the orders of the damned 2030 agenda," said another. "We have seen an increase in insulting messages as a result of a thread we published about condensation trails" on April 10, AEMET spokesperson Estrella Gutierrez-Marco told AFP. "What makes no sense is that they are insulting an institution that is constantly watching out for their interests, whose aim is... to contribute to people's safety."

Lopez-Borrull noted a "significant increase" in climate change denial - particularly among far-right supporters who see it as a leftist cause and oppose reforms aimed at curbing its impacts. "People distrust politicians, judges and the media, and the cost of living is rising," he said. "In this context people feel alienated and end up listening to people they never listened to before, with messages appealing directly to the emotions."

Australian thermometers

In another case investigated by AFP Fact Check, conservative media and Facebook users shared unfounded claims that Australia's Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) doctored its temperature readings. In an analysis of data obtained via a freedom of information request, prominent climate sceptic Jennifer Marohasy said BOM's electronic probes returned readings up to 0.7 degrees Celsius warmer than those of its older mercury thermometers.

Experts who analyzed the data said the claims were inaccurate. Monash University emeritus environment professor Neville Nicholls said the difference between most readings on the electronic probes and the mercury thermometers was negligible - between zero and 0.1C (0.18 degrees Fahrenheit). "This dif-



MOSCOW: A meteorologist at Russia's weather service, Rosgidromet, collects data at a weather station in Moscow. — AFP

ference is very small compared to the strong warming trend in average temperature over Australia" - about 1.4C over the past century - Nicholls told AFP. The World Meteorological Organization told AFP that the BOM's measurements were in line with its standards, contrary to Marohasy's allegation.

Temperatures in France

After a series of heat records in March in southwestern France, a critic on social media published a thread alleging that the country's national weather service overstated warming by relying on readings from stations in urban districts, where temperatures are typically higher. The thread received more than 139,000 views and spread to Facebook.

"Yet another way of making us feel scared and guilty," one woman commented on the thread, referring to the weather service, Meteo-France. "Luckily fewer and fewer people believe them af-

ter the COVID business. I'm glad not to watch their forecasts on France TV." Climatologists consulted by AFP debunked the claims, pointing out that the limited network of 30 weather stations referred to in the thread is not what scientists use to measure climate change, and the climate is also observed to be changing in rural districts.

"Meteo-France researchers use all possible measures and create computer models with various hypotheses and a longer timeframe for analysis," said Christine Berne, a climatologist in the service. "You can be sure we don't just have our 30 little weather stations." One Twitter user accused Dutch broadcaster RTL Nieuws of exaggerating a late-April heatwave in Spain, posting as evidence a screenshot showing moderate temperatures in the Costa Blanca. However, his screenshot was taken three days after the heatwave, in the cool of the morning. — AFP

The deadline for the latest investigation has not been revealed nor who will lead it. Khumbudzo Ntshavheni, a minister in the president's office, told local media South Africa "cannot be bullied by the US" and would follow a "time frame that is suitable for us". If confirmed, the shipment would mark a break from South Africa's professed neutrality over the conflict in Ukraine.

The foreign ministry on Friday said there was no record of any approved arms sales to Russia during the period in question but the probe would shed light on the case. "There should be nothing to investigate," Kobus Marais, a lawmaker with the main opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (DA), told AFP. "The president as the commander-in-chief and the minister of defence should know exactly what happened," he said. "It's disingenuous of them to suggest they're innocent and just bystanders."

The Kremlin meanwhile said Putin and Ramaphosa "expressed their intentions to further intensify mutually beneficial ties in various fields" during a call. The quarrel has heightened concerns about South Africa's ailing economy, with analysts saying the country, facing near zero growth and contracting demand, has much to lose from a fight with Washington. The rand dropped sharply against the dollar, reaching its lowest point in three years on Thursday. — AFP

S Africans fret over US arms-to-Russia charge

JOHANNESBURG: South Africans were left angry and baffled after the United States accused their country of secretly shipping arms to Russia, a charge that triggered both a government rebuke but also the announcement of an inquiry. US ambassador Reuben Brigety on Thursday said Washington was confident weapons and ammunition had been laden onto a Russian freighter that docked at a Cape Town naval base.

The explosive remarks drew an angry response from President Cyril Ramaphosa, who did not deny the charge but said a retired judge would lead an investigation into the matter. They were also seized on by the Kremlin, which on Friday said Russian President Vladimir Putin has agreed to deepen ties with Ramaphosa.

South Africa has been walking a diplomatic tightrope over Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which it has refused to condemn, saying it prefers dialogue to end the war. The country has strong economic and trade relations with the United States and Europe. Trade with Russia is much smaller, but Pretoria has ties with Moscow dating back decades, to when the Kremlin supported the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party in its struggle against apartheid.

The announcement of a probe was welcomed by the United States but met with ridicule and bewilderment at home. "It perhaps points to a South African president who simply is unaware of what is happening effectively under his nose," political and economic analyst Daniel Silke told AFP. The Lady R, a cargo vessel under western sanctions flying a Russian flag, docked at South Africa's largest naval base in December, officially to offload an old order of ammunition.

But Brigety said intelligence showed weaponry was loaded onto the vessel before it headed back to Russia. "Did we or didn't we? And if we did, shouldn't the president know?" Bongani Bingwa, host of a popular morning radio show, wrote on Twitter. Others quipped that the government appeared to be setting up inquiries for everything. South Africa's foreign ministry said late Friday that the US envoy had been summoned and he had "admitted that he crossed the line and apologized unreservedly to the government and the people of South Africa".

"South Africa is known globally for having one of the most stringent processes when selling arms to other countries," it said. Brigety tweeted that he was "grateful" to speak with South African Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor to "correct any misimpressions left by my public remarks". The State Department also said that Secretary of State Antony Blinken had "underscored the importance of the US-South Africa strategic partnership" in a call with Pandor.

officials of Kuwait's ministry of foreign affairs and the embassy in Washington. This is the first official visit by the Kuwaiti foreign minister to Washington since he took up his position.

Meanwhile, the US said Friday it was sending reinforcements to the Gulf after what it called increasing harassment by Iran of ships in the oil-rich waters. "The Department of Defense will be making a series of moves to bolster our defensive posture" in the Gulf, National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters, saying there would be "details on those reinforcements in coming days".

The US Navy's Fifth Fleet, based in Bahrain, said in a statement that it was "working with regional allies and partners to increase the rotation of ships and aircraft" that patrol the Strait of Hormuz, the crucial chokepoint into the Gulf. Kirby said that Iran, which has tense relations with the United States — although it has recently been repairing ties with Arab neighbors — has "harassed, attacked or interfered" with 15 internationally flagged merchant vessels over the past 15 years.

"We've seen repeated Iranian threats, arm seizures and attacks against commercial shippers who are exercising their navigational rights and freedoms in international waters and strategic waterways of the region," Kirby said. "The United States will not allow foreign or regional powers to jeopardize freedom of navigation through the Middle East waterways including the Strait of Hormuz," he said. — Agencies

dullah expressed his deep sadness and regret at the passing of 'Bu Khaled', recalling a series of collaborations that brought them together, including the song "Mahal" and others. "May God have mercy on him — he lived quietly, he died quietly," he said in a brief speech.

Journalist Mohammed Al-Masri said: "He was a human being who was loved by everyone and had no differences with anyone. Personally, I knew him closely during our repeated meetings in the office of poet Khaled Al-Badhal, and I found him to have all the qualities of a respectable person and a humble artist," he said.

Hopefuls appeal to voters a day before...

Continued from Page 1

Asked if he plans to contest the speaker's post, Ghanem said he is ready to serve the Kuwaiti people, whether as a speaker or a member of the Assembly. He is likely to compete with veteran opposition leader and former speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun for the post. Saadoun was speaker of the

Modi's ruling BJP voted out...

Continued from Page 1

The party had mounted a major campaign in the state with Modi himself visiting to promote its muscular brand of Hindu politics.

At one of his rallies, Modi praised an incendiary new film that wildly exaggerates the number of Hindu women converting to Islam and joining the Islamic State jihadist group. Modi — who is widely expected to stand again in the 2024 general election — also attempted to woo Hindu voters by chanting an ode to Hanuman. Congress campaigned hard on secularism, giveaways of electricity and rice for the poor, and accusations of BJP corruption. "The marketplace of hatred has been shut down," its leader Rahul Gandhi told reporters at party headquarters in Delhi.

But analysts say the Karnataka result has limited implications for next year's poll, at which the BJP is widely expected to secure a third consecutive victory. "This election has exposed the limits of Modi's popularity," said Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay, political commentator and author of the book "Narendra Modi: The Man, The Times". "It shows the BJP's attempts to polarize the voters somehow or the other has not worked and that there are limits to the politics of Hindutva," he told AFP.

The win would "enhance Congress party's position within the gamut of opposition parties", he said, but would not affect the overall result in 2024. Congress, the party of India's Nehru-Gandhi dynasty,

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Doomsday' mom found guilty

LOS ANGELES: A US mother with "doomsday" religious beliefs was found guilty Friday of murdering two of her children and conspiring to kill her husband's ex-wife. Lori Vallow was on trial in the northwestern US state of Idaho over the deaths of her 16-year-old daughter Tylee Ryan and adopted seven-year-old son Joshua "JJ" Vallow. Vallow, who has reportedly claimed to be a goddess charged with preparing humanity for the second coming of Christ, faces up to life in prison without parole. Her fifth husband Chad Daybell — the self-published author of several apocalyptic novels — will soon go on trial separately over similar charges, which also include the murder of his first wife, Tammy. The couple's "religious beliefs" were cited by prosecutors as a factor in the murders, and their story was the subject of a Netflix true-crime documentary series "Sins of Our Mother," released last year. — AFP

Iran frees French citizens

PARIS: Iran has released two French citizens, including one also holding Irish nationality, as Paris urged Tehran to free other foreigners jailed by the Islamic republic. French-Irish citizen Bernard Phelan, held since October, and Frenchman Benjamin Briere, whose ordeal in Iran lasted two years, were freed from their prison in the north-eastern city of Mashhad, the French foreign ministry said. They rapidly boarded a special flight to Paris and landed at the capital's Le Bourget airport—no longer used for commercial flights—in the evening, according to AFP TV images. There had been grave concerns about the health of both men, both of whom had been on hunger strikes to protest their conditions. President Emmanuel Macron said on Twitter: "Free, finally. Benjamin Briere and Bernard Phelan can reunite with their loved ones. It's a relief". — AFP

Five killed in militia attack

BANDUNDU: Five people were killed in an attack in western Democratic Republic of Congo, officials said Saturday, in the latest violence to hit the restive region. "Mobondo" militants attacked the village of Batshongo, in Kwango province, late on Friday, said provincial government spokesman Adelar Nkisi, referring to a militia from the Yaka community. Nkisi told AFP that two soldiers, one police officer and two civilians were killed in the attack, saying the soldiers had been "practically chopped to pieces". AFP was unable to independently confirm the death toll, which Nkisi said could rise further. A police spokesman could not be reached for comment, and an army spokesman was not immediately available to comment on the Batshongo attack. Symphorien Kwengo, a Kwango civil society leader, said that a clash between Mobondo fighters and security forces had left at least four people dead. — AFP

court-dissolved 2022 Assembly. Ghanem did not contest the previous polls.

Candidate Hamed Al-Bathali, a former member of the 2022 Assembly, called on Kuwait voters to actively participate in the voting. He said Kuwait needs political reforms and improving the standard of living of the people. Mohammad Al-Mutairi, deputy speaker of the 2022 Assembly, said only honest lawmakers can forge ahead with a reformist program and not those who collaborated with previous governments. Former MP Abdullah Al-Aradah said Kuwait needs stability through the application of the law and respecting the constitution.

dominated the country's politics for decades but has been in decline for years, and the victory in Karnataka will raise the number of states it controls to just four. The BJP fell short of a majority in the last state election in Karnataka in 2018, but it assumed power a year later allegedly by persuading members of the ruling coalition to defect. — A FP



BENGALURU: Congress candidate Byrathi Suresh flashes the thumbs up sign to supporters outside a vote counting center on May 13, 2023. — AFP

US commends Kuwait's role...

Continued from Page 1

strategic partnership with Kuwait in all fields, hoping that it would be expanded to cover more domains. Blinken lauded existing communication and coordination between both friendly countries on the international scene, while hailing Kuwait's wise and balanced foreign policy and fervent efforts to ensure regional security and peace.

During the official talks, both sides discussed the latest regional and international developments, including in Sudan, and shared views on a set of vital regional issues and ways of promoting bilateral cooperation to ensure peace and stability worldwide. In this regard, the Kuwaiti foreign minister spoke highly of joint efforts being exerted by the US and Saudi Arabia to put an end to ongoing fighting between Sudanese rivals and resolve the crisis through dialogue.

They also addressed the developments of Syria, Palestine, Iraq and Yemen, vowing joint efforts to strengthen security and stability in the region. The meeting was attended by Kuwait's Ambassador to the United States Sheikhha Al-Zain Sabah Nasser Al-Saud Al-Sabah, Assistant Foreign Minister for the Foreign Minister's Office Affairs/Minister Plenipotentiary Nawaf Al-Ahmad and a number of senior

Kuwait mourns Abdulkarim...

Continued from Page 1

Today we can only pray to God to have mercy on him and to dwell in His spacious paradise," veteran singer Nabil Shuaib said.

Poet Abdul Latif Al-Bannai mourned Abdulkader, calling on God Almighty to inhabit him in His spacious gardens and give patience and solace to his family and loved ones. Composer Anwar Ab-

Business

SUNDAY, MAY 14, 2023



KUWAIT: Al-Safat Investment Company Chairman of the Board of Directors Abdullah Hamad Al-Terkait (center) during the general assembly meeting on Thursday.

Al-Terkait: Al-Safat Investment, Cap Corp merger promising step with positive effect

Company plans to expand and seize meaningful opportunities locally and regionally

KUWAIT: Al-Safat Investment Company's Chairman of the Board of Directors Abdullah Hamad Al-Terkait said during the company's general assembly meeting Thursday that the merger between Al-Safat Investment Company and Cap Corp Investment Company is a "promising step that will leave a positive effect". "Al-Safat enjoys a stable financial position, and it prepares to enter a new phase with its merger with Cap Corp," Al-Terkait said.

The ordinary general assembly of Al-Safat Investment Company approved all the items on the agenda, including the reports of the board of directors, auditors and other items, while the approval of the merger between Al-Safat and Cap Corp, which is on the agenda of the extraordinary assembly, was postponed until the end of next week.

Al-Terkait said on the sidelines of the assembly, which was held with an attendance of 56.7 percent of total shareholders, that "the company was able to deal with the challenges facing the market in general with experience that reflects its ability to face any developments, and perhaps its success in structuring its financial conditions and re-entering the market is a good proof of the success of its strategy followed during the previous period".

A new stage

Al-Terkait added that Al-Safat is on the verge of a new stage, where it has developed promising strategies complementary to its goals and investment mission. "One of the priorities of the board of directors and the executive management will be to focus and support everything that maximizes shareholders' rights, as Al-Safat intends to move forward with a sustainable vision towards a prudent strategic plan to seize investment opportunities and develop them by targeting certain local and regional expansions, enabling it to achieve strong profits and financial results, and then look forward to new horizons that enhance its presence and durability," he said.

The merger process

Regarding the future aspirations of Al-Safat, Al-Terkait said it is prosperous and based on a package of key steps, most important of which is the merger with Cap Corp, which is expected to be approved by the extraordinary assembly during the next meeting, as the process will result in higher operational efficiency in terms of revenue, cost and financial balance, which will create a financial entity with a positive impact on the company's value and position in the local market.

Al-Terkait said the targeted merger process requires raising the capital of Al-Safat Investment Company by 35.3 percent, equivalent to KD 10 million, which will lead to an increase in the company's authorized, issued and paid-up



Abdullah Hamad Al-Terkait

capital to reach KD 38.3 million divided by 383.27 million shares.

Expected results after completion of merger

Based on this, it is expected that equity will reach approximately KD 37 million, which will contribute to increasing the company's book value by 19 percent after the completion of the merger, while Al-Terkait confirmed that Al-Safat is looking to form a larger and stronger investment entity through which it will be able to increase its market share, which will reflect positively on its market value and provide greater value to its shareholders.

According to Al-Terkait's statements, the company is targeting a wider customer base through this merger to increase fees and commission revenues for clients' portfolios by 20 percent. He pointed out that the merged entity benefits from a balanced and diversified income-generating asset portfolio, including investments in associates that are active in the investment, real estate and information technology sectors, and this creates a more stable income flow.

Al-Terkait expected the company's assets to rise to about KD 51 million, which is equivalent to an increase of 39 percent. This results in an increase in managed assets to a total of \$250 million, with a growth rate equivalent to 48 percent.

"After the merger, Al-Safat Investment Company will enjoy an increase in its human resources with specialized experienced cadres who are expected to play an effective role in achieving the company's goals and strategic direction in the future," Al-Terkait said.

Market maker

In a related context, Al-Terkait confirmed that the board of directors agreed to complete the necessary requirements to enable Al-Safat Investment Company to obtain a market maker license, noting the executive management's efforts to complete the requirements of the Capital Markets Authority and obtain the necessary approvals to start applying the market maker activity.

Hex office for small projects

Regarding small businesses, Al-Terkait said, "We are in the initial stages of transforming the Hex Office project from a joint office headquarters of our company to an incubator that contributes to the development, upbringing and success of small and medium enterprises in Kuwait, through obtaining official accreditation from the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprise Development. Hex Office contributes to helping entrepreneurs develop their idea into a successful project by creating a modern innovative technological environment.

Economic conditions

In terms of economic conditions, Al-Terkait said: "The year 2022 was characterized by uncertainties that overwhelmed most of the world's economies, which led to a decrease in vision, along with fluctuations and resulting challenges".

Among these challenges, inflation rates exceeded their levels during previous decades, which resulted in tightening monetary policy by raising the interest rate in an attempt to curb inflation, which reached record levels. Accordingly, the Central Bank of Kuwait increased the dis-

count rate from 1.5 percent in December 2021 to 3.5 percent in December 2022," he said. This had a direct impact on risk ratios, which is reflected in the evaluation of investments. In addition to these challenges are the war in Ukraine and remaining pandemic deposits.

Despite the economic fluctuations in Lebanon, Al-Terkait reported that Al-Safat Investment Company managed to get out of 75 percent of one of its residential properties in Lebanon, which belongs to the Tourism Prosperity Real Estate Company. By the end of last year, assets under the management of Al-Safat reached around KD 50 million, a decrease of 25 percent compared to the previous year as a result of the sale of one of the portfolios worth KD 25 million.

The Ahmadi project

Al-Terkait reviewed the Ahmadi project as one of the company's achievements in the real estate sector, which is one of the economic pillars in which Al-Safat Investment Company invests. "Al-Safat Investment Company was able to develop a multipurpose complex specialized in craft and industrial activities for medium and small enterprises located in east Ahmadi, with warehouses, shops and of-

cooperation with Al Salam International Hospital to spread the preventive health culture among all employees and visitors at Al-Safat Tower during November, a month dedicated globally to men's health awareness, not to mention the charitable work represented by a donation campaign contributed by the company's employees and all employees in the tower. This campaign was directed to collect the largest amount of clean used clothes and donate them to the needy in Kuwait and around the world in cooperation with the Humanitarian Excellence Society.

Acknowledgements

Terkait thanked the shareholders for their constant support, as well as the employees for continuing to work with full flexibility in light of the challenging business environment, as well as for their efforts to focus on achieving the long-term goals of the company in line with its strategies, seeking to achieve a better future for the company based on solid foundations.

Regulatory authorities

Terkait thanked the various regulatory authorities in Kuwait (Capital Mar-

- The merger requires raising the capital of Al-Safat by 35.3%, equivalent to KD 10 million
- The company is in the process of completing the necessary requirements for obtaining a market maker license.
- The real estate sector is one of the vital economic pillars that Al-Safat Investment Company pays great attention to in its investment strategies.
- Sincere greetings and thanks to the Capital Markets Authority and regulatory authorities for their cooperation in completing the merger process positively.

count rate from 1.5 percent in December 2021 to 3.5 percent in December 2022," he said. This had a direct impact on risk ratios, which is reflected in the evaluation of investments. In addition to these challenges are the war in Ukraine and remaining pandemic deposits.

Financial statements 2022

The total combined operating and investment revenues of the group amounted to KD 2.8 million, compared to last year's KD 4.5 million, a decrease of 38 percent. Al-Terkait explained this decrease is due to the decline in the fair value of real estate investments from KD 19.6 million in 2021 to KD 17.4 million, which resulted in KD 1.3 million unrealized book losses. "These declines remain book based as long as we do not exit these investments, and with the return of markets rising again, there will be the possibility of compensating for all these declines," he said.

"Despite this, operating revenues amounted to KD 3.4 million compared to last year's KD 3.2 million, which represents

faces spread over 12,335 square meters. The complex is considered one of the outstanding complexes in that area, as it provides technological services and data protection according to international standards," he said.

Social responsibility

As for social responsibility of Al-Safat Investment Company, Al-Terkait stressed that Al-Safat considers social responsibility of the company an integral part of its mission, which is reflected in the activities and events organized throughout the year, the most important of which was the empowerment of women and the knights of industry program on youth awareness by introducing them to what investment is and its importance in the development and emergence of the state economy and improving the level of per capita income.

Health culture

Al-Safat also pays great attention to the dissemination of health culture, as the company established a health corner in

kets Authority, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Central Bank of Kuwait and Boursa Kuwait) for their continuous cooperation and efforts and keenness to develop and improve the financial market sector of Kuwait.

Shareholders of Al-Safat and Cap Corp

The merger is expected to be in the interest of the shareholders of Al-Safat and Cap Corp, as it will entail the formation of a leading entity in the investment and Islamic financial services sector, in light of the focus on efforts related to the provision of investment products and services provided. It will lead to the creation of greater added value at the level of the customer base and shareholders by both companies in the framework of supporting the future direction locally and regionally, especially in light of the maximum utilization of operational capabilities and professional human resources to achieve the goals and visions of the company strategy.

NBK RISE, a cross-border success story, concludes inaugural edition

Bank reaffirms its dedication to empower women through various initiatives



A group photo with the Ambassador of the State of Kuwait in Spain Khalifa Al-Kharafi.

KUWAIT: The inaugural cohort of the NBK RISE program wrapped up its 9-month program with a final training session at IE Business School in Spain, culminating in a special visit for the program participants. As part of the visit, Deputy Group CEO of National Bank of Kuwait, Shaikha Al-Bahar, organized a dinner banquet to recognize the Ambassador of the State of Kuwait in Spain, Khalifa Al-Kharafi, and the University's management, as well as students from Kuwait enrolled at the university.

During the visit, Al-Bahar inaugurated the training course and held meetings with the university's top leadership. She also took part in panel discussions featuring the IE Women in Business Club and Kuwait Business women Club.

While visiting, Al-Bahar also joined in reviewing the participants' work plans and delivered a speech about the program's key takeaways, which the participants could apply to their work. She also encouraged them to share experiences and take the lead in driving positive change in their respective societies.

Meanwhile, the university invited Al-Bahar as a guest speaker at a panel discussion titled "Women in Leadership Positions and the Positive Impact of the Workplace." The discussion was moderated by Professor Caterina Moschieri, a specialist in Strategy Management, and included participation from the IE Women in Business Club and the IE Middle East and North Africa Club.

On the sidelines of the event, Al-Bahar expressed that leaders should establish a secure environment where women can feel comfortable reporting any form of biased behavior, whether it was subtle or overt actions, and to enforce strict policies that prevent such conduct.

"Modifying our perception of women is crucial in eliminating biases," Al-Bahar said, adding that it was equally important to consider how gender balance can enhance workplaces and bring significant value.

"With perseverance and determination, women can defeat any obstacles they encounter in industries or sectors predominantly led by men," Al-Bahar confirmed, highlighting that no obstacle is insur-



Shaikha Al-Bahar

- It is our duty as leaders to ensure a safe and conducive workplace environment that enables women to advance and excel in their careers.
- Our approach towards women must be altered if we wish to eradicate biases and stereotypes.
- With hard work and a genuine desire to lead, women can overcome any challenges that come their way.
- NBK RISE is taking its initial steps in assisting women in advancing to higher leadership positions.



Shaikha Al-Bahar with IE President Santiago Iniguez de Onzono.

mountable for those willing to put in the hard work and effort required to become successful leaders.

Al-Bahar advocated for an end to the practice of telling women that they have limits or that there is a



Shaikha Al-Bahar during a panel discussion that brought together participants in the program and a number of Kuwaiti students affiliated with the university.

glass ceiling to their ambitions. She emphasized that women should not be made to believe that the path to success is full of hurdles just because of their gender, calling for equal opportunities for both men and

women to follow their dreams and flourish.

Al-Bahar highlighted a common misconception that women often view each other as adversaries or competition, which she believes is untrue. She emphasized the importance of women supporting one another, given the unequal opportunities they face in their journey to reach top leadership positions. This is the fundamental concept behind the creation of programs like NBK RISE, which is designed by women for women to provide support in their pursuit of higher leadership positions. The program aligns with NBK's sustainability objectives of promoting diversity and inclusion.

Al-Bahar stressed the significant achievements of the first cohort of the NBK RISE program. She announced that the program would be held annually and include participants from Kuwait as well as other countries. Moreover, the program will strive to attract women from different industries to support and foster future female leaders for higher leadership positions. Graduates of the program will have the opportunity to mentor future female candidates, thereby creating a sustainable cycle for the program. "NBK offers various programs that promote women's empowerment, such as initiatives for equal pay and opportunities for career development," Al-Bahar concluded.

NBK RISE

NBK RISE program is an inspiring initiative that extends beyond NBK's efforts alone. Several top institutions in Kuwait have joined forces and signed a pledge to increase women's representation in leadership roles, demonstrating their unwavering commitment to working together towards achieving the program's global objectives.

The 9-month program was structured into various units that focused on different areas of leadership. Participants collaborated with renowned international universities to receive comprehensive training and equip themselves with strategies and skills to assist them in their leadership roles.



The first batch of NBK RISE trainees.



Al-Bahar during the panel discussion.



Shaikha Al-Bahar with William Valery, Executive Director of Institutional Relations at the university during the gala dinner held in Spain.



Shaikha Al-Bahar with the NBK RISE trainees and faculty members at IE Business School.

Business

Gulf Bank's EGM approves increasing company's authorized capital by KD 150m

The assembly was held with an attendance of 76%

KUWAIT: The Extraordinary General Assembly of Gulf Bank's shareholders was held yesterday with an attendance of 76 percent in the presence of Gulf Bank Chairman Jassim Mustafa Boodai. The assembly approved the increase of the authorized capital and approved to amend two articles: Article four in the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) and Article five in the Articles of Association (AoA).

The assembly approved increasing the company's authorized capital from KD 336,056,100,600 (three hundred and thirty-six million, fifty six thousand, one hundred Kuwaiti dinars and 600 fils) to be 486,056,100,600 (four hundred eighty six million, fifty six thousand one hundred Kuwaiti dinars and 600 fils) by KD 150,000,000 (one hundred and fifty million Kuwaiti dinars), divided into 4,860,561,006 shares of 100 fils each.

These measures enable Gulf Bank to obtain the necessary approvals to conduct its banking business, and to accommodate any potential bonus share distribution, that may be approved by the bank's Extraordinary General Assembly in the upcoming years.

'Nothing left' as looting guts Sudan's crippled economy

KHARTOUM: A month ago, Mohsen Abdelrahman owned a small but profitable jewelry store in Khartoum. Now, he has nothing to his name but a broken lock and a hollowed-out shopfront. Ten days after battles broke out between two rival Sudanese generals, he received a call from the shopkeeper next door to his business saying it had been looted.

Despite the danger, Abdelrahman braved the relentless gunfire and air strikes ravaging the capital to get to his store on the other side of town, only to have his worst fears confirmed.

"Everything I owned was gone," he told AFP, adding that now he just wants "this war to end, so I can start over." There is no end in sight to the conflict pitting the forces of army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan against those of his deputy-turned-foe Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

But even before the fighting broke out, Sudan was one of the world's poorest countries, brought to its knees by decades of international sanctions under former dictator Omar Al-Bashir, as well as rampant corruption and the 2011 independence of South Sudan which held almost all the country's oil.

After a brief respite following Bashir's ouster, a 2021 coup led by Burhan and Daglo saw the international community cut \$2 billion of annual aid to the country, slashing 40 percent of its budget.

The economy has been in free fall since, with the government never announcing a



KUWAIT: Gulf Bank Chairman Jassim Mustafa Boodai (right) addresses the extraordinary general assembly meeting.

2023 budget but instead boasting that dizzying inflation had recently fallen under 100 percent.

Broken locks

Prior to the ongoing conflict, Khartoum saw signs of economic renewal, with international restaurants and supermarkets stocked with organic food and American goods — although much of it was smuggled through the Sahel. But nowadays Khartoum, which is home to five million people, is a city whose shattered windows, gutted shopfronts, pockmarked cars and empty shelves bear witness to the rampant violence and looting.

Khartoum airport, now a shell of its former self, has been shut down since the fighting began on April 15. Sudan once depended on vital trade coming through Port Sudan on the Red Sea, where now only planes and ships full of fleeing civilians take off, and crucial humanitarian aid trickles in. Nothing has been spared from the looting, including hospitals, humanitarian organizations, and the abandoned houses of more than 500,000 people who fled the capital for neighboring towns, or other countries. Nouredine Adam's mobile phone store was no exception. On the fifth day of the conflict, a lock was broken and his shop was ransacked. "They didn't leave anything, and now I have nothing left," he told AFP. In addition to having lost their inventory, shop owners and traders like Adam are now saddled with debt, he said.

Empty silos

According to a customs official who spoke to AFP on condition of anonymity, the Soba container terminal south of Khartoum — where imports are processed before coming into the capital and other areas — has been stripped bare. "It was all products from abroad that had come in and were waiting to be processed, but their importers couldn't come and



AL-JAZIRAH, Sudan: Sudanese men harvest onions in the region of Jazira, south of Khartoum. As fighting in Khartoum shows no signs of abating, small business owners have been left at a loss with no prospect of making up weeks of unmitigated downturn. — AFP

finish the paperwork because of the war," he said. According to witnesses in Khartoum North, wheat silos at Sayga, Sudan's largest producer of flour, have been emptied out — a potential disaster for a country where the UN predicts 19 million people could be food insecure within six months.

Khartoum residents have tried to hold out hope, even while sheltering under air strikes and seeing their fleeing neighbors' homes broken into and ransacked. But Abdeldayem Omar knows his clothing store is gone for good. "On the third day of the war, a rocket fell on the market," he told AFP.

"Some stalls burned to the ground, including mine. Others partially survived the flames, but whatever was left was looted." The irony, according to him, is that "the main police station in the district is headquartered inside the market itself." "But the police have completely disappeared, and there's no protection left." — AFP



Deliveroo launches new office space

KUWAIT: Deliveroo, has strengthened its presence in Kuwait with the opening of a new office in the heart of Kuwait city, Burj Alshaya. The central location is in close proximity to leading businesses in Kuwait and will enable the company's growth in the region.

The office setup is customized to meet the needs and requirements of the company's growing team of almost 50 employees, spanning across various departments including Business Development, Operations, Marketing, Communications, Sales, Commercial, and Management, and HR.

Since its launch in Kuwait in 2019, Deliveroo has partnered with over 5,000 local and international restaurants and groceries, onboarded over 2,000 agency riders, and achieved 95 percent delivery coverage in Kuwait to serve millions of cus-

tomers. Commenting on the office opening, Seham AlHusaini, General Manager of Deliveroo Kuwait and Qatar, said, "We are thrilled to open our new expanded office in the heart of Kuwait, this is a testament to our growth and commitment to the country and to providing the highest quality of service to our Employees, Restaurant & grocery partners, Riders and consumers."

"Earlier this year, we also celebrated our fourth anniversary in Kuwait, having partnered with so many restaurants and delivered millions of orders. We are truly honored to be working with stakeholders who share our love for food and make Kuwait such an outstanding food hub." She added.

Deliveroo Kuwait celebrates its fourth year anniversary and expands into Qatar under the leadership of Seham Al-Husaini, marking the company's third market entry in the Middle East. The new office in Kuwait is a testament to Deliveroo's continued growth and commitment to the region as it continues its mission to become the definitive on-demand food company. Designed with the comfort and productivity of its employees in mind. The open-flow work

reliance on trade with China or Russia as motivation for the initiative, which focuses on clean energy technology.

But the United States has led a push for export controls on chip components to China, citing national security concerns, and US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen pointed to recent shocks to the global economy. "Spillovers from Russia's war against Ukraine and disruptions caused by the pandemic have made clear the importance of diversified and resilient supply chains," she told reporters.

Japanese Finance Minister Shunichi Suzuki also said COVID had revealed "the downside of supply chains being too concentrated in one place". In a joint statement, the Group of Seven's finance ministers and central bank chiefs said they hoped to launch the partnership in collaboration



environment, meeting rooms named after the most-loved food, pantry and recreation area are all customized to meet the team's needs. The office space is inspired by Deliveroo's brand colors and food theme, keeping with its brand ethos. These features aim to enhance productivity and collaboration.

In an effort to promote sustainable practices in its internal operations, Deliveroo has taken steps to reduce its carbon footprint and environmental impact. The office will utilize eco-friendly cleaning chemicals that are biodegradable and non-toxic, ensuring that its offices are clean and safe for its team, while also being better for the environment. The lunchroom is equipped with biodegradable bamboo cutlery, and employees are provided with reusable water bottles to reduce single-use plastic. In addition, the company has implemented a program for collecting shredded paper and installed plastic and paper sorting containers to encourage recycling.

Deliveroo was named the "Best Delivery App" in Kuwait for two years in a row by Service Hero, the region's only consumer-powered customer satisfaction index.

with the World Bank "by the end of this year at the latest". The scheme, dubbed RISE — Resilient and Inclusive Supply-chain Enhancement — builds on guidance released in April, and will offer interested developing countries "finance, knowledge and partnerships". How much will be spent on the program has not been disclosed.

'Stand ready'

The three-day meeting in the city of Niigata took place just days before the leaders of the group of major developed economies — which also includes France, Germany, Britain, Canada, Italy and the EU — gather in Hiroshima. Support for Ukraine and the G7's relationship with China is expected to be high on the agenda at

Musk picks ad exec Yaccarino as Twitter CEO

SAN FRANCISCO: Elon Musk has chosen top ad executive Linda Yaccarino to take the day-to-day reins of Twitter as he fights to reverse the tide at the struggling platform he bought for \$44 billion last year.



Linda Yaccarino

Yaccarino is a highly respected advertising executive who stepped down from NBCUniversal "effective immediately" on Friday as rumors swirled that she would replace the mercurial tycoon as Twitter CEO.

Twitter is struggling to find its footing after Musk's controversial takeover that saw him fire thousands of staff and welcome back far-right and controversial figures on the platform, scaring off its highest paying advertisers. Musk on Thursday teased Yaccarino's hiring, saying in a tweet that he had hired a woman to replace him as boss of Twitter and its newly named X Corporation parent, but without revealing the name.

Yaccarino's departure from the company that owns NBC, Universal and Telemundo — where she has been since 2011 — came a few weeks after she interviewed Musk at a marketing conference in Miami.

Asked by Yaccarino at the time how it's been going since the acquisition, Musk replied: "It's going well...It's entertaining...It's a trainwreck sometimes." Yaccarino will face an uphill battle trying to lure back major advertisers that are afraid of unwanted associations with conspiracy theorists and far-right content makers who Musk encouraged back to Twitter.

As a leading member of the US media establishment, Yaccarino's hiring blindsided that audience, with her senior role at the World Economic Forum especially singled out for vitriol. Yaccarino "is a vaccine-pushing, pro mask-wearing, WEF globalist," wrote conservative website Outkick.

In a tweet, Musk said he would remain in charge of design and technology at Twitter, with Yaccarino focusing primarily on business operations and turning Twitter into an "everything app" called X. Musk's history with the letter X goes back to 1999 when he helped created X.com, an online bank that was bought and later morphed into PayPal. He has also longed to create a so-called everything app that would be modeled on China's WeChat, which functions as a Twitter-like social media platform as well as offering messaging and mobile payments.

'Hands full'

According to NBCUniversal's website, Yaccarino led a team of 2,000 people there and "reengineered the advertising business for the 21st century." Her job involved nurturing relationships with the world's biggest companies in order to get them to shell out money to advertise on the NBCU family of channels. "Yaccarino is exactly what Twitter needs to regain advertiser trust and bring back big brands," said Jasmine Engberg, an analyst for Insider Intelligence.

"She will also bring back the professionalism that Twitter has lost under Musk (but) that said, she's still going to have her hands full," she added. Musk has fully owned Twitter since late October and has repeatedly courted controversy as CEO, sacking most of its staff, readmitting far-right figures to the platform, suspending journalists and charging for previously free services.

With Yaccarino's hiring, he is belatedly fulfilling the promise he made to honor the results of a Twitter poll he posted in December. In that unscientific survey, a total of 57.5 percent of more than 17 million accounts voted for him to step down.

Wall Street had grown frustrated that Twitter was luring Musk away from his other businesses, and share prices in Tesla rose on news he had found a CEO. — AFP

G7 finance chiefs move to diversify supply chains

NIIGATA, Japan: The G7 plans to launch a partnership scheme to diversify supply chains this year, the group's finance ministers said Saturday following talks in Japan ahead of a major summit next week.

The ministers did not directly cite a desire to reduce

the May 19-21 summit, along with nuclear disarmament and action on climate change.

As the finance talks wrapped up Saturday, the ministers reaffirmed their commitment to sanctions on Russia and said they were working together to enforce them, but did not announce any concrete new steps to tackle sanctions evasion. "We, together with the international community, have increased our commitment of budget and economic support for Ukraine for 2023 and early 2024 to \$44 billion," their statement said. The total amount has risen from a figure given by the G7 in February of \$39 billion for 2023. They also stressed the need to bolster financial stability following recent banking sector turmoil, saying their governments "stand ready to take appropriate actions". — AFP

Lifestyle



People arrive at a cinema hall to watch Bollywood movie Pathaan in Dhaka.



In this photograph film distributor Anonno Mamun looks on during an interview with AFP at his office in Dhaka.—AFP photos

Bangladesh audiences see first Indian movie in 50 years

Thousands flocked to cinemas in Dhaka on Friday as Shah Rukh Khan's blockbuster "Pathaan" hit the big screens, the first Bollywood movie to get a full release in Bangladesh in more than half a century.

The action-packed spy thriller smashed box office records when it opened in India in January and the star has a huge fan following around the world. But Dhaka banned films from its neighbour soon after its independence in 1971, in the face of lobbying from local movie-makers, despite India backing it in its independence war with Pakistan.

"I am so excited because a Hindi film is being released in Bangladesh for the first time," said Sazzad Hosain, 18, at a cineplex in the capital. "We are all Shah Rukh Khan fans. For the first time I'll watch Shah Rukh Khan on a giant screen."

Bangladeshi cinemas have gone into steep decline, with poor-quality local films unable to match Bollywood's glitz and glamour or draw audiences, and the ageing Shakib Khan its only bankable star.

Some movie houses even switched to illegally showing pornography to try to remain viable, but more than 1,000 have shut their doors in the last 20 years, many of them to be converted to shopping centres or apartments.

At the Modhumita Cinema Hall,



People arrive at a cinema hall to watch Bollywood movie Pathaan in Dhaka.

once Dhaka's most luxurious movie theatre, heroin addicts sat outside this week in front of posters for Jinn, a newly released Bangladeshi movie.

"I haven't seen such a poor crowd in many years," said one theatre employee. "Only a few rows have been filled up. Nobody watches these local art movies or films with poor storylines." Cinemas used to be a mainstay of Bangladeshi social life. "This hall was like a great meeting place of the Old Dhaka community," Pradip Narayan told AFP at the Manoshi Complex, a 100-year-old movie theatre turned

into a market in 2017. "Women used to come in the night to watch films here. Our mothers and sisters from neighbouring areas would come here, and when the show ended at midnight or 12:30 at night, it looked like a fair here. "A woman even gave birth to a child in this cinema hall. Such was the craze for movies back then."

'Monopoly destroys business'

Authorities attempted to lift the ban on Indian movies in 2015 when two Bollywood hits -- "Wanted" and "The Three Idiots" -- were screened, but

protests by local movie stars forced theatres to stop the shows.

The government finally issued a decree last month allowing the import of 10 movies a year from India or South Asian nations. "In Pakistan the number of cinemas came down to 30-35 once. Then they allowed importing Indian Hindi films," said information minister Hasan Mahmud.

"The number of cinemas has since risen to about 1,200 and the standard of Pakistani films also improved."

"Pathaan" was released in 41 theatres across the country and many shows in the capital were already sold out, said distributor Anonno Mamun.

Allowing the screening of Bollywood movies would prove to be a "game-changer", he told AFP. "Everyone loves Hindi movies here. Many also love southern Indian movies," he said. The Modhumita cinema's owner Mohammed Iftekharuddin -- a former president of the Bangladesh Motion Picture Exhibitors Association -- is hoping for a business turnaround.

"I think 200-300 more cinema halls will reopen after this," he said. "Monopoly destroys business. When there is competition, there will be business." But Bangladeshi filmmakers are alarmed at the prospect, with some threatening to protest by wearing white shrouds of death to symbolise the demise of the local industry.



"Don't they know about the Nepalese film industry?" asked director Khijir Hayat Khan. "Don't they see that the Mexican film industry was destroyed after opening the market (to Hollywood's products)?"

Nonetheless, there is undoubtedly unsatisfied demand among audiences. Forest department official Raj Ahmed, 30, travelled 250 kilometres (155 miles) from Khulna in southern Bangladesh to see "Pathaan", but could not secure a ticket. "I feel very bad," he said. "I was waiting for many days to watch Shah Rukh Khan on a big screen."—AFP



People arrive at a cinema hall to watch Bollywood movie Pathaan in Dhaka.



In this photograph film distributor Anonno Mamun walks past posters of Bollywood films 'Pathaan' and 'Kisi Ka Bhai Kisi Ki Jaan' at his office in Dhaka.



Bangladeshi film director Khijir Hayat Khan gestures during an interview with AFP in Dhaka.

Johnny Depp makes comeback in scandal-hit period drama

Johnny Depp's comeback film is full of scandal both on-screen and off, as he tests out his French in the role of King Louis XV.

There were rumours Depp only had a few minutes of screentime in "Jeanne du Barry", which opens the Cannes Film Festival on Tuesday and has a nationwide release in France the same day. But the 59-year-old actor is present for most of the film, even if his

Maiwenn, the French star who directs and plays the lead role in "Jeanne du Barry", admitted she was worried about the impact of the trials. "The film was shot last summer and he was coming out of his second trial," Maiwenn, who goes by a single name, told AFP.

"I had a lot of worries. I was wondering: 'what will his image become?'" she said. But Maiwenn said she had no doubts about casting Depp.

"It was so clear (he was right for the role)," she said, though she approached two French actors first.

Depp gives an impressive physical performance -- mostly through amused and imperious facial expressions -- and his short bursts of dialogue suggest a decent level of French for the actor, who was previously married to French star Vanessa Paradis.



File picture shows US actor Johnny Depp arrives on the red carpet of the 47th Deauville US Film Festival in Deauville, western France.—AFP photos



File picture shows French actress Maiwenn arrives for the screening of the film "Tralala" at the 74th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France.

dialogue is kept to short phrases that help disguise his American accent.

Depp plays the 18th century monarch, who fell in love with a prostitute to the horror of much of his family and court. He signed up for the role before the court cases against ex-wife Amber Heard involving bitter accusations of domestic violence that threatened to derail his career.

Journalist assault

Many still see Depp as a toxic figure, despite his victory in the last defamation trial against Heard, but he has already lined up his next film, directing Al Pacino in a biopic of artist Amedeo Modigliani. Depp's trials are not the only scandal surrounding "Jeanne du Barry", however.

In March, a well-known French journalist, Edwy Plenel of Mediapart, lodged a criminal complaint for assault against Maiwenn, accusing her of approaching him in a restaurant, grabbing him by the hair and spitting in his face. She refused to discuss the "ongoing case" with AFP, but admitted the assault in an interview on French TV this week, without going into details.

Plenel says it may have been motivated by articles about the rape allegations surrounding Maiwenn's ex-husband and father of one of her children, director Luc Besson ("The Fifth Element"). Maiwenn, now 47, got involved with Besson when she was still under-age and they married when she was 16 and he was 33.

She seemed somewhat irritated just being asked about her motivations for making "Jeanne du Barry".

"It's hard to always justify your desires. It was just like that -- she intrigued me," Maiwenn said, impatiently. But she added that her first interest in the courtesan came from watching Sofia Coppola's 2006 film "Marie Antoinette". "I always fantasised about making a period drama one day, but it was the discovery of Jeanne du Barry as played by Asia Argento that completely obsessed me," Maiwenn said.

Her film is a grand costume affair, shot in the Palace of Versailles, and its \$20 million budget was part-funded by Saudi Arabia's Red Sea Film Foundation. Maiwenn dismissed any ethical concerns about taking cash from the kingdom, which is accused of spending lavishly on culture and sports to distract from its myriad human rights abuses. "It's proof that mentalities are evolving," she said. "And the 18th century is expensive."—AFP

K-pop megastars BTS to release memoir in July

K-pop megastars BTS will release a memoir in South Korea and the United States in July, its US publisher said, triggering feverish excitement from the supergroup's global fanbase. BTS has become a global cultural phenomenon, selling out stadiums and dominating charts around the world while raking in billions for South Korea's economy.

Titled "Beyond the Story: 10-Year Record of BTS", the book was co-written by South Korean journalist Kang Myeong-seok and members of the band, according to the publisher.

"Who is excited?... #BTSbook," US publisher Flatiron Books said Thursday on its Instagram account, sharing a news article about the launch.

Online forums and social media sites had been awash with speculation about a potential celebrity book release in July, with some commentators saying that it may be authored by Taylor Swift. The mystery book shot to the top of Amazon and Barnes and Noble bestseller lists after pre-orders by fans. The K-pop group's 544-page memoir will be released on July 9, according to the book's Amazon page. It is a tribute to a significant date in

the septet's history: the megastars' loyal international fan base known as ARMY came into being that day, 10 years ago.

"I'm so looking forward to the book... It's so cool to be able to look back on the last 10 years with BTS," one fan wrote on Twitter in Korean. "Will I be able to buy it since the competition is so global?" another feared. The US edition of the book was translated by Anton Hur with Clare Richards and Slin Jung. Hur said in a tweet.

BTS are currently on a "hiatus", with members pursuing solo projects while two of the group have enlisted for mandatory South Korean military service. All able-bodied men in South Korea must serve at least 18 months in the military and, after a years-long debate about whether BTS deserved an exemption, Jin, the oldest member of the group, enlisted last year. BTS star J-Hope started his mandatory South Korean military service last month, South Korea media reported at the time, becoming the K-pop juggernaut's second member to enlist.—AFP



Gamers rush to get Nintendo's new 'Zelda' after six-year wait

Video game fans around the world flocked to shops on Friday to get their hands on the new edition of "Zelda", one of the most successful franchises in history and now central to the success of Japanese giant Nintendo. Gamers queued hours before shops opened in cities from Paris to New York and Tokyo, desperate to be among the first to play "Tears of the Kingdom", featuring the exploits of Princess Zelda and elf-like warrior Link.

Standing in line outside a Paris store before midnight, 19-year-old Taylor Meguire told AFP the previous entry in the franchise's storied cannon, 2017's "Breath of the Wild", had been a "real revolution". "Knowing that there is a sequel coming out in an hour or a little less, it's just incredible, it just makes me so happy," he said.

In Tokyo, Yutaka Hirai, 30, queued with dozens of others, telling AFP the seemingly endless scale of previous Zelda games helped draw him in.

"I want to find the same wide open spaces and adventure in this game as in the previous ones," he said, confessing he had played the previous title for "over 100 hours".

Early reviews have gushed about the game, giving it a score of 97 out of 100 on metacritic, a site that compiles ratings from reviewers.

The Zelda franchise has sold 125 million copies worldwide since its first edition in 1986. It helped forge "open world" games where the player is free to roam in virtual landscapes - an idea later taken up by titles ranging from "Grand Theft Auto" to "Skyrim".

First customer David Castillo wields the Master Sword as he poses for a photo after purchasing "The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom" during a launch event for the game at a Nintendo store in New York.

find the fun in adult life. Games such as Zelda help to remind you that if you look at things the right way, it's everywhere," wrote Keza MacDonald in a five-star review for the UK's Guardian newspaper.

The franchise has come a long way since its 1980s launch, which was something of a gamble for a company then best known for "Donkey Kong" and "Super Mario Bros".



People queue up at the check-out counter as dozens of shoppers arrived early at a popular electronics chain store for the latest offering from Japanese gaming giant Nintendo's long-running "Legend of Zelda" game series - "Tears of the Kingdom" .

Potential blockbuster

But its main challenge this year will be to boost earnings for Nintendo and prolong the life of its Switch console, which experts say is approaching the end of its life after more than six years on the shelves.

Earlier this week, Nintendo posted better than expected profits but issued a gloomy forecast for the year ahead.

The Zelda game is expected to be "by far the biggest contributor to Nintendo's sales this year", said Serkan Toto, an analyst at Kantan Games.

Charles-Louis Planade, an analyst at Midcap Partners, reckons "Tears of the Kingdom" could become "the best-selling game in history," potentially approaching \$1 billion in revenue. And so far, reviews have backed up the hype. "It is easy to forget how to

The first edition, "The Legend of Zelda", plunged gamers into an unknown universe largely without instructions. "The scale of the game was huge at a time when most games were finished in an hour or two," said Kiyoshi Tane, an author specializing in the history of video games. "It was something of a pioneer of what open-world games would become."

It was a smash hit and pushed the boundaries of game design for the next two decades.

After a slump in quality that saw fans drift away from the franchise, designers rethought the game entirely and created "Breath of the Wild" in 2017. That game launched at the same time as the Switch and has since become the best-selling edition of Zelda by far. — AFP



People pose for a photo as they line up to purchase "The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom" video game in New York City. — AFP photos



A customer purchases "The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom".



Copies of "The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom" video game are displayed during a launch event for the game.



A visitor poses next to a statue of a character from Japanese gaming giant Nintendo's video game "The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom" on display.



A customer poses for a photo with Zelda's character Link after purchasing "The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom".



A woman poses for a photo at a display outside a popular electronics chain store advertising the latest offering from Japanese gaming giant Nintendo's long-running "Legend of Zelda" game series - "Tears of the Kingdom" .



A display (right) for Japanese gaming giant Nintendo's long-running "Legend of Zelda" game series, at the company's official store in Tokyo's Shibuya district.

Jamie Foxx out of hospital after medical scare

Oscar-winning US actor Jamie Foxx is out of hospital and recuperating from an unspecified medical emergency, his daughter and publicist said Friday. Last month, the 55-year-old Foxx was rushed to a medical facility in the state of Georgia, where he was filming a Netflix movie at the time.

No details on his medical condition had been divulged since, leading to some speculation that the "Django Unchained" star could be deteriorating.

But Corinne Foxx dispelled those rumors in an Instagram post Friday.

"Sad to see how the media runs wild. My Dad has been out of the hospital for weeks, recuperating. In fact, he was playing pickleball yesterday!" she wrote.

Foxx's publicist confirmed the news to AFP, without providing further detail.

Foxx, an actor, co-median and



Jamie Foxx

Grammy-winning singer, won an Academy Award in 2005 for the Ray Charles musical biopic "Ray," and was also Oscar-nominated for "Collateral" that same year.

He was recently filming "Back in Action," co-starring Cameron Diaz, in Georgia.

In her initial post April 12, Corinne Foxx wrote that her father had "experienced a medical complication" but "due to quick action and great care he is already on his way to recovery."

Foxx himself last week posted a message on the social media platform, simply reading: "Appreciate all the love!!! Feeling blessed." — AFP

Javier Bardem to get lifetime achievement award at San Sebastian

Movie star Javier Bardem will receive a lifetime achievement award at Spain's San Sebastian film festival, organizers said Friday. The 54-year-old, the first Spanish actor to win an Oscar, will collect the Donostia award at the opening gala on September 22, a statement said. His image will also feature on the poster of this year's festival.

The organizers praised Bardem for his "ability to slip into another's skin as he

morphs into his characters", and a career that has gone from "strength to strength".

Bardem won the best supporting actor award in 2008 for his chilling portrait of a psychopathic killer with a strange haircut in "No Country For Old Men". He also portrayed gay Cuban poet Reinaldo Arenas in the 2000 biopic "Before Night Falls", and played the villain in the 2012 James Bond movie "Skyfall".

Past recipients of the Donostia

award - the festival's highest honor - include Meryl Streep, Richard Gere and Robert De Niro.

The festival was originally intended to honor Spanish language films but has established itself as one of the world's top movie festivals. It hosted the world premiere of Alfred Hitchcock's spy thriller North by Northwest in 1959 and Woody Allen's Melinda and Melinda in 2004. — AFP



In this file photo Spanish actor Javier Bardem (left) hands the 58th San Sebastian International Film Festival's Donostia Award to US actress Julia Roberts in the northern Spanish Basque city of San Sebastian.



In this file photo Spanish actor Javier Bardem arrives for the Closing Ceremony of the 75th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP photos

Mosque of Ibn Tulun:

An Islamic architectural wonder in Egypt

Mosque of Ibn Tulun in the Egyptian capital Cairo is an example of Islamic architecture that stood the test of time. The mosque is the third oldest in the capital and its minaret is considered the oldest. Ahmad Ibn Tulun constructed the mosque in 263 Hijra (876 AD). The minaret was inspired by infrastructure in ancient Iraq. The mosque survived floods, fires, and time itself so far, continuing to stand tall during the modern era. — KUNA



The central dome structure is situated in the middle of Ibn Tulun mosque.



The minaret of Ibn Tulun Mosque is flanked by walls. — KUNA photos



A top view of Ibn Tulun mosque's courtyard.



Columns of the majestic mosque.



An inside view of Ibn Tulun mosque.



A picturesque ground view of Ibn Tulun mosque's courtyard and minaret.



Columns and corridors of the majestic mosque.



Contestants for the title of Miss Roses pass through Kalaat M'Gouna city in Tinghir.

Kalaat M'Gouna's rose festival:

A traditional event in Morocco

The Kalaat M'Gouna city's rose festival in the southern Tinghir province brings people from far and wide and is considered a traditional event for the locals. During May, men, women and children flock to the fields to pick their favorite roses. A beauty pageant is held on the sidelines to determine who is the most beautiful in the city. — KUNA



Folkloric band plays popular songs at the Rose Festival.



One of the contestants who won the Miss Roses title.



Contestants during the rose festival.



Women picking roses from the field.

Sports

Suryakumar outshines Rashid as first century seals Mumbai win

Mumbai Indians beat reigning IPL champions Gujarat Titans

News in Brief

Ahly beat Esperance 3-0

JOHANNESBURG: South African Percy Tau scored twice as Al Ahly of Egypt all but sealed a CAF Champions League final place after winning 3-0 away to Esperance of Tunisia on Friday. Tau, who turns 29 on Saturday, struck after eight and 55 minutes of the semi-final first leg in an empty national stadium on the outskirts of Tunis following crowd trouble there two weeks ago. Mahmoud Kahraba completed an unexpectedly easy victory for the record 10-time African champions with a third goal on 75 minutes. Cairo hosts the return match on May 19 and it is almost certain that Ahly will advance to a two-leg title decider against Wydad Casablanca of Morocco or Mamelodi Sundowns of South Africa. Defending champions Wydad, who beat Ahly in the 2022 final of the premier CAF club competition, have home advantage over Sundowns on Saturday in the other first leg. — AFP

Rovanpera leads; Evans crashes

MATOSINHOS: Finn Kalle Rovanpera took control after day one of the Rally of Portugal on Friday as world championship co-leader Elfyn Evans crashed out. Welsh driver Evans, who shared the lead before the race with Toyota team-mate Sebastien Ogier, went off the gravel road in the penultimate stage while in sixth position. Eight-time world champion Ogier is only competing in a partial program this season with the French driver skipping the Portuguese race but will be back in action in Sardinia in early June having already won in Monte Carlo and Mexico. If Evans's car can be repaired before Saturday morning, he can still hope to score points in the championship in the last special, the "Power Stage", on Sunday. World champion Rovanpera won four of the day's eight stages and is well positioned to take advantage this weekend as he is just one point behind Ogier and Evans in the overall championship standings. — AFP

'Solid golf' lifts Scheffler

WASHINGTON: World number two Scottie Scheffler fired his second straight 64 on Friday to take a one-shot lead in the US PGA Tour Byron Nelson, the Texan's home tournament in suburban Dallas. Scheffler's round was less eventful than his seven-under effort in the first round, which featured two eagles and three bogeys along with six birdies. On Friday Scheffler had eight birdies with just one bogey on the par-71 TPC Craig Ranch course and was one stroke clear of fellow American Ryan Palmer and Canadian Mackenzie Hughes. "Yeah, just solid golf," Scheffler said. "I didn't really struggle for too many pars out there, and I felt like I putted a little bit better today than yesterday." Scheffler opened his round with a nine-foot birdie at the 10th hole and rolled in a five-footer at 11. He drained a 34-foot birdie putt at the 16th and got up and down for birdie at 18. — AFP

Djokovic secures 3rd round

ROME: Novak Djokovic fought his way into the third round of the Italian Open on Friday, beating Tomas Etcheverry 7-5 (7/6), 6-2 in a surprisingly tight encounter. A six-time winner in Rome, the world number one was made to work by the 61st-ranked Argentine, prevailing in one hour, 51 minutes to set up a third round clash with Grigor Dimitrov who beat Stan Wawrinka. Djokovic, a 22-time Grand Slam title winner, has not been knocked out of an ATP Tour event at the first attempt since the Monte Carlo Masters last year. Still nursing an injury to his right elbow he had to battle his way past Etcheverry, winning the first set via a tie-break before finally ensuring passage into the next round. "I've said before that this surface requires more time for me than maybe for other players to get myself to a good level, move well and hit the ball well. Rome has always been a tournament that I need for Roland Garros," said Djokovic who was plagued by 21 unforced errors in the opener. — AFP

Ko and Kemp share lead

NEW YORK: Third-ranked Ko Jin-young fired a bogey-free four-under par 68 to seize a share of the lead with Australia's Sarah Kemp after Friday's second round of the LPGA Founders Cup. The two-time LPGA Player of the Year from South Korea stood alongside Kemp on eight-under 136 after 36 holes at Upper Montclair Country Club in Clifton, New Jersey. "It was awesome. I had a great round," Ko said. I tried to make a bogey-free round and I made it." Ko, a two-time major champion, seeks her 15th career LPGA title and second of the year after defending her title at Singapore in March. The 27-year-old from Seoul won back-to-back Founders Cup titles in 2019 at Arizona and 2021 in New Jersey, with the 2020 event wiped out due to COVID-19. World number 74 Kemp, a 13-time winner on the Australian tour, fired a 65 as she seeks her first LPGA triumph. Her last top-five LPGA result was fourth at Kingsmill in 2021. — AFP

MUMBAI: A blazing unbeaten century by Suryakumar Yadav helped Mumbai Indians beat the reigning IPL champions Gujarat Titans by 27 runs in Mumbai on Friday. The world's top-rated Twenty20 batter hit a 49-ball 103, with six sixes and 11 fours, to propel his team to 218-5 and outshone an inspired all-round performance by Afghanistan and Gujarat maverick spinner Rashid Khan.

Khan, who earlier took 4-30, hit an unbeaten 32-ball 79 with ten sixes to take Gujarat from 103-8 in the 14th over to 191-8 in reply. Gujarat captain Hardik Pandya won the toss and chose to field, but immediately faced aggressive hitting by Mumbai skip-

per and opener Rohit Sharma, who hit 18-ball 29, in a 61-run opening partnership with Ishan Kishan.

However, Mumbai lost Sharma, Kishan (31) and rookie Nehal Wadhwa (15) to slip to 88-3 before Yadav took charge for his first IPL century in yet another player-of-the-match performance. Khan, who removed both the openers as well as Wadhwa and Tim David, was the only threatening Gujarat bowler. Gujarat then made the worst possible start, losing openers Wriddhiman Saha (2), Shubman Gill (6) and skipper Pandya (4) by the fourth over. In-form all-rounder Vijay Shankar (29) failed to convert a promising start and fell to Piyush Chawla's leg spin.

The current IPL table-toppers kept losing wickets to tight lengths by Mumbai spinners Chawla (2-36) and Kumar Kartikeya (2-37). Indian rookie pacer Akash Madhwal bowled four tight overs and took three wickets for 31 runs and Mumbai looked set wrap the game early before Khan's arrival. Mumbai had no answers to Khan's power. Pandya said that it "felt like only Rashid Khan turned up from our team (and) batted and bowled incredibly well". "People have spoken enough about" Yadav, "one of the best batters in T20 cricket. Really tough to set fields for him," Pandya said about his India teammate after the defeat. — AFP



KUWAIT: Photos capture the winners' coronation in the presence of the ambassador of Korea Chung Byung-ha and members of the Federation.



Taekwondo tournament successfully concludes

KUWAIT: In the presence of the Kuwaiti sports leaders, headed by president of Kuwait Olympic Committee Sheikh Fahd Al-Nasser and officials of the General Authority for Sports, as well as ambassador of the Republic of South Korea Chung Byung-ha, the Korean Ambassador Taekwondo Tournament concluded at the Volleyball Federation Hall in Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah complex.

The large number of fans enjoyed the dazzling show presented by the Korean team of Taekwondo Kukyuan, which is considered the most famous in the world and has already entered the Guinness Book of Records. The final day of the championship witnessed Salwa Club winning the first place of the girls' according to Olympic rules; Al-Fatat Club came second, while Al-Mustaqbal Club took third place. In the competitions of the Youth under Olympic rules, Kuwait Club came first, Al-Nasr Club came second and Burjan Club came third.

In the women's open competitions, Al-Fatat Club won the first place; Al-Tadamon second and Salwa third. Ambassador of the Republic of South Korea Chung Byung-Ha said he was pleased with the successful and impressive conclusion of the championship that bears his name and was organized by Kuwait Taekwondo Federation professionally, and witnessed the performance of the Korean team, which impressed everyone with its great style. He continued: "the fans' attendance was great, which indicates the

good level that the game has reached in Kuwait, thanks to the interest of the taekwondo federation headed by Hani Al-Murshad during recent years."

Impressive display

On his part, the President of Kuwait Olympic Committee, Sheikh Fahad Al-Nasser, praised the wonderful conclusion of the Korean Ambassador Taekwondo Championship, and said: "it was a different conclusion from the rest of the championships thanks to the impressive performance presented by the Korean team, which won the admiration of everyone. He added that the Kuwaiti Taekwondo Federation has proved its great success in organizing tournaments, stressing that the Kuwait Olympic Committee stands with such successful federations in order to promote the game and spread it more widely among the fans.

Meanwhile, President of Kuwait Taekwondo Federation Hani Al-Murshad extended his sincere thanks to the Ambassador of the Republic of South Korea, Chung Byung-ha, for sponsoring the tournament, as well as for the great support by Kuwait Olympic Committee, the Public Authority for Sport and the Committees of the tournament. Al-Murshad pointed out that the board of Directors of the taekwondo federation will work to implement the game development plan and promote it for the better and organize tournaments in addition to external participation through our national teams in an appropriate manner.

Kuwait to host bowling tourney

KUWAIT: President of International and Asian Bowling Federations, Chairman of Kuwait Bowling Club Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah said the International Federation's executive commit-

tee has approved Kuwait to host the upcoming world championship to be held on October 3rd-13th. He said members of the executive committee inspected Kuwait's preparations and found out that all requirements have been met. The Federation's general assembly will hold a meeting October 6th to elect a new board of directors. The success of the sports event requires cooperation and serious efforts.



demonstration sport back then. From then on, Kuwait has been one of the active countries in this Olympic sport, winning medals in various competitions," he added.

An old saying goes "sound body, sound mind". "In this regard, this event is our special campaign for all of us, including our young generations and more, to have a chance to think about this simple truth. I hope we also think about the five pillars of Taekwondo which consists of courtesy, integrity, perseverance, self-control and indomitable spirit.

These qualities are the wisdom we need to overcome any challenges and difficulties in this fast changing world. This is the message we wish to convey today. And another message we also hope to deliver this evening is to fill ourselves up with positive energy and good vibes," the ambassador said.

He invited the Kukkiwon Taekwondo demonstration team. Kukkiwon refers to the world Taekwondo headquarters. Its demonstration team has enjoyed the global reputation for its mastery of skill and performance.



Rider of Kuwait Equestrian Club crowned

KUWAIT: Rider of Kuwait Equestrian Club Saad Al Sulaiman was crowned with the champion of the Kuwait Equestrian Center Championship, which was held at the Kuwait Equestrian Center track in Sabhan area with the participation of riders from the local clubs. 14 riders participated in the final fourth round at a height of 115 cm, where Al-Sulaiman succeeded in taking the lead with a time of 32.74 seconds, ahead of the riders, Salem Al-Wahaib and Suju Bibi.

Member of the Kuwait Equestrian Center Ahmed Al-Awadi distributed prizes to the winners. The championship is the seventh edition in the current season 2022-2023 organized by the Kuwait Equestrian Center. The judges' committee was chaired by international referee Dr Yahya Al-Hadban, and included both Ibtisam Al-Aroui, Lamy Abdulal and Nada Al-Awadi. The design of the route was carried out by the Rider Abdulaziz Al-Ajil, Ghadeer Nemati, and Bader Al-Heifi.

Sports

Al-Hilal boss tight-lipped as fans clamor for Messi move

Messi returns for PSG after Saudi trip ban

RIYADH: Al-Hilal president Fahd Bin Nafel refused to comment on the possibility of signing Lionel Messi, insisting his Saudi Arabian side is “more important than just one player”, as fans clamor for the World Cup winner. “Don’t ask me about Messi,” Bin Nafel told reporters when asked after Al-Hilal’s victory in the King’s Cup final in Jeddah on Friday about the Argentine superstar’s transfer rumors. “I will not tell you any news. If anything comes out from our media centre, you will get it.”

In another interview on the pitch, as the crowd shouted “Messi, Messi”, Bin Nafel said: “The group is more important to me than a player. Any star who comes to our club should know that we are a big club. We aim to improve (the team)... If you focus on one person, you lose the group.” Al-Hilal have been coached by former Argentinean international striker Ramon Diaz since February 2022, after a first stint at the Riyadh-based team between October 2016 and February 2018.

Carrick on the rise as Middlesbrough eye EPL return

LONDON: Former Manchester United star Michael Carrick is aiming to cap his remarkable first season as a manager by leading Middlesbrough into the Premier League. Carrick’s side travel to Coventry for the first leg of the Championship play-off semi-finals on Sunday. Reaching the play-offs as a managerial novice is an impressive achievement for the understated Carrick, who retired as a player in 2018 and worked as Manchester United’s assistant manager before accepting the Middlesbrough job in October.

When Carrick was hired following Chris Wilder’s sacking, Middlesbrough were languishing one point above the relegation zone after a poor start to the season. But the 41-year-old has made such a positive

After two unexceptional years at Paris Saint-Germain, the rich oil kingdom of the Gulf offers an “enormous” financial opportunity for the 35-year-old Messi, a source close to the negotiations told AFP on Tuesday in Riyadh. The deal would mean the record seven-time Ballon d’Or winner potentially joins his arch-rival Cristiano Ronaldo in the Saudi league as the Gulf state lavishes its oil wealth on sport.

Messi returns for PSG

Meanwhile, Paris Saint-Germain coach Christophe Galtier confirmed Lionel Messi “will start” Ligue 1 game against Ajaccio, marking the Argentinean superstar’s return from suspension. The 35-year-old World Cup winner was banned by the club after an unauthorized trip to Saudi Arabia. “Yes, Leo is going to start tomorrow,” Galtier told an eve of match press conference. “Obviously I’ve spoken to him, he’s very relaxed, really keen to play, and very determined to claim another French league title.”

impact during his seven months at the Riverside Stadium that former United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer believes he is certain to manage the Old Trafford club in the future. “Michael is a proper human being, a proper man who you want to be successful,” Solskjaer told The Athletic. “I am 100 percent sure that Michael will be the manager of Manchester United if he wants to be.”

Middlesbrough chairman Steve Gibson described Carrick as the “perfect fit” for a club in desperate need of rejuvenation after a disappointing period since their relegation from the Premier League in 2017. Gibson’s belief in the untested Carrick might have been fuelled by memories of another occasion when he hired a former United midfielder to breathe new life into his team. Bryan Robson left Old Trafford in 1994 when lifelong Middlesbrough fan Gibson convinced him to become player-manager of the second-tier club.

Middlesbrough were promoted to the Premier League in Robson’s first season, with unglamorous Teesside suddenly becoming a desirable destina-

With PSG out of the Champions League and only four Ligue 1 matches remaining as they target a record 11th title, this is likely to be Messi’s penultimate appearance at the Parc des Princes. After an uninspiring two years in France, the seven-time Ballon d’Or winner is reported to be lining up a blockbuster deal to play in Saudi Arabia next season where he would join his old sparring partner Cristiano Ronaldo.

His move to Saudi or even his departure at the end of his contract in June, however, have yet to be confirmed by the club or his agent father Jorge. But all the signs are that he is on his way out. “Messi is a done deal. He will play in Saudi Arabia next season,” a source close the negotiations speaking on condition of anonymity told AFP this week. Galtier said he did not want to go into the six-day suspension which forced Messi to miss last weekend’s 3-1 win over Troyes that left PSG six points clear of Lens. — AFP



Middlesbrough’s English manager Michael Carrick

tion for stars such as Juninho and Fabrizio Ravanelli. Carrick is on course to emulate Robson’s success after Middlesbrough climbed away from the relegation zone and surged to a fourth-place finish in the Championship. The former midfielder, who won 12 major trophies at United, including the Premier League and Champions League, had immediate respect from the Middlesbrough squad. — AFP



CHRISTCHURCH: Blues’ Kurt Eklund (center) gets tackled by the Crusaders’ defense during the round 12 Super Rugby Pacific match between Crusaders and Blues at Orangetheory Stadium on May 13, 2023. — AFP

was off the back of a lot of carrying the ball,” Robertson said. “We didn’t want to do too much defending, we wanted to make them tackle and they did.”

Blues fly-half Beauden Barrett conceded the home side were more clinical. “They took their opportunities, there weren’t many in that game.

The title race pauses for this weekend as United bid to win the first major trophy in their short history, while Emma Hayes’ Chelsea aim to make it three successive FA Cup triumphs. Underlining the surge in popularity enjoyed by the women’s game in recent years, an expected 90,000 crowd - a record for a women’s domestic club match - will flock to Wembley to witness the latest installment of the growing rivalry between Chelsea and United. The Blues came from behind for a title-clinching 4-2 win against United on the final day of last season and have won both league meetings this term.

Having spent the last five years battling with Manchester City and Arsenal for supremacy in the domestic women’s game, Chelsea could be facing their greatest threat yet. United have had a remarkable rise since their formation in May 2018. They were promoted from the Championship in their

inaugural season and have finished fourth in three successive WSL campaigns. They train at Carrington, where the United’s male team is based, and their matches at Old Trafford have attracted crowds of over 20,000.

United manager Marc Skinner, who took charge in 2021, admits there is extra pressure on his team on Sunday as they look to validate their rapid ascent with a first piece of silverware. “I even think there’s more pressure on us than Chelsea, Arsenal or Manchester City because we are Manchester United,” he said. “I feel that because every Manchester United fan will want us to win and we are huge around the world. “I’m sure there will be some nerves, but I’m fuelling my focus and attention to maximize this because, if we win, it will be massive.” Standing in the way of United’s uprising is Chelsea’s Australian striker Sam Kerr. — AFP

Today's Matches

English Premier League

Everton v Manchester City 16:00
beIN Sports 1 HD Premium
beIN Sports HD 1 English
beIN Sports HD 3 TR
beIN Sports Connect
Brentford v West Ham United 16:00
beIN Sports HD 2 TR
beIN Sports Connect
beIN Sports 2 HD Premium
Arsenal v Brighton & Hove Albion 18:30
beIN Sports 1 HD Premium
beIN Sports HD 1 English
beIN Sports HD 3 TR
beIN 4K HDR
beIN Sports Connect

Spanish League

Celta de Vigo v Valencia 15:00
beIN Sports HD 1
beIN Sports Connect
Elche v Atletico de Madrid 17:15
beIN Sports HD 1
beIN Sports Connect
Real Valladolid v Sevilla 19:30
beIN Sports HD 1
beIN Sports HD 2 English
beIN Sports Fr 4 HD max
beIN Sports Connect
Espanyol v Barcelona 22:00
beIN Sports HD 1
beIN Sports 1 HD Premium
beIN Sports HD 1 English
beIN Sports Connect

Italian League Serie A

Hellas Verona v Torino 13:30
AD SPORTS Premium 1
Fiorentina v Udinese 16:00
AD SPORTS Premium 2
AC Monza v Napoli 16:00
AD SPORTS Premium 1
Bologna v Roma 19:00
AD SPORTS Premium 1
Juventus v US Cremonese 21:45
AD SPORTS Premium 1

German Bundesliga

Stuttgart v Bayer 04 Leverkusen 16:30
beIN Sports HD 3
beIN SPORTS
Leipzig v Werder Bremen 18:30
beIN Sports HD 3
beIN SPORTS

French League

Clermont Foot v Olympique Lyonnais 14:00
beIN Sports HD 2
beIN Sports Connect
Stade Rennais v ES Troyes 16:00
beIN Sports HD 2
beIN Sports Connect
Stade brestois 29 v Auxerre 16:00
beIN Sports HD 4
beIN Sports Connect
Montpellier v Lorient 16:00
beIN Sports Connect
beIN Sports 3 HD Premium
Toulouse v Nantes 16:00
beIN Sports Connect
beIN Sports Max 1 HD
beIN Sports HD Xtra 1
Monaco v Lille 18:05
beIN Sports HD 2
beIN Sports Connect
Olympique de Marseille v Angers 21:45
beIN Sports HD 2
beIN Sports HD 4 TR
beIN Sports Connect

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital 24812000
Amiri Hospital 22450005
Maternity Hospital 24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital 25312700
Chest Hospital 24849400
Farwaniya Hospital 24892010

Adan Hospital 23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital 24840300
Al-Razi Hospital 24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital 24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center 25716707

Rawda 22517733
Adaliya 22517144
Khaldiya 24848075
Kaifan 24849807
Shamiya 24848913
Shuwaikh 24814507
Abdullah Salem 22549134
Nuzha 22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh 24814764

Qadsiya 22515088
Dasmah 22532265
Bneid Al-Gar 22531908
Shaab 22518752
Qibla 22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla 22451082
Mirqab 22456536
Sharq 22465401
Salmiya 25746401

Change of Name

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

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

For labor-related inquiries and complaints: Call MSAL hotline 128

Man United eye Champions League

Southampton relegated; Leeds dent Newcastle's bid



LEEDS: Leeds United's US midfielder Weston McKennie (right) pulls Newcastle United's English striker Callum Wilson during the English Premier League football match between Leeds United and Newcastle United on May 13, 2023. — AFP

MANCHESTER: Manchester United edged closer to a return to the Champions League next season with a 2-0 win over Wolves as Southampton were relegated from the Premier League on Saturday. Newcastle remain ahead of United on goal difference in third after being held 2-2 in a pulsating game as Sam Allardyce picked up his first point at Leeds manager. Rasmus Kristensen kept Leeds in contention to avoid relegation as his late leveler secured a dramatic 2-2 draw that dented Newcastle's bid to finish in the top four on Saturday. United have stumbled towards a top-four finish in recent weeks after an exhausting season that will stretch to 62 games. Erik ten Hag's men had won just two of their previous eight games from open play in all competitions. But they shrugged off the absence of Marcus Rashford due to injury for a vital three points. Wolves were welcome visitors at Old Trafford as the Premier League's lowest scorers

rarely troubled the under-fire David de Gea. Scoring goals has also been a problem for the Red Devils of late but Antony squared for Anthony Martial to slam home on 32 minutes. Alejandro Garnacho then came off the bench to secure the points deep into stoppage time. Newcastle and Manchester United are now four points clear of fifth-placed Liverpool with three games to go. There was far more action at Elland Road where Leeds got a point but did not do enough to move out of the relegation zone. Luke Ayling gave Allardyce's men a flying start, but they shot themselves in the foot three times. Firstly, Patrick Bamford saw a penalty saved by Nick Pope. Three minutes later, Newcastle did level from the spot through Callum Wilson after Alexander Isak was fouled. Wilson converted a second penalty midway through the second half when Junior Firpo handled inside his own box. Rasmus Kristensen's deflected effort brought Leeds level again 11 minutes

from time. But they were forced to see out stoppage time with 10 men after Firpo was shown his second yellow card. "We missed a penalty, gave two away and drew 2-2," said Allardyce. "I think we'd be saying what a great three points if we scored that penalty for 2-0."

Awoniyi fires for Forest

Leeds close to within one point of safety, but that gap could grow if Everton shock leaders Manchester City on Sunday. Nottingham Forest remain three points clear of the relegation zone after their own four-goal thriller at Chelsea ended 2-2. Taiwo Awoniyi's bullet header opened the scoring for the visitors. Raheem Sterling's quickfire double turned the game around in seven second-half minutes.

But Awoniyi had the final say as he headed in once more from a long throw for his fourth goal in a week that could prove vital to keeping Forest up on their return to the top flight for the first time in

23 years. Southampton's 11-year stay in the Premier League, though, is over after a meek 2-0 home defeat by Fulham summed up the Saints' season. Carlos Vinicius and Aleksandar Mitrovic, on his return from an eight-game ban for pushing a referee, got the goals which moved Fulham up to ninth. Defeat leaves Southampton still eight points adrift of safety with just two games remaining.

In the battle for a place in the Europa League next season, Aston Villa beat Tottenham 2-1 to move level on points with Spurs in sixth. Jacob Ramsey gave Unai Emery's men an early lead and they were cruising to victory when Douglas Luiz curled home a free-kick 18 minutes from time. Harry Kane's late penalty halved Tottenham's arrears, but their hopes of Champions League football next season are now mathematically over. Eberechi Eze scored twice as Crystal Palace continued their revival under Roy Hodgson with a 2-0 win over Bournemouth. — AFP

Bagnaia takes MotoGP pole

LE MANS: Reigning world champion Francesco Bagnaia grabbed pole from the returning Marc Marquez for this weekend's French MotoGP in qualifying at Le Mans on Saturday. Six-time world champion Marquez was heading for the front of the grid on his return from injury sustained in a first lap crash in the season-opener in Portugal. But the 30-year-old Spaniard was bettered by just 0.058sec by Bagnaia's final flying lap to leave the Ducati rider heading the grid for both Saturday's sprint and Sunday's main event.

"It wasn't easy, everything went well, I'm very happy, it was a great lap time," said Bagnaia, seeking his third sprint win of the campaign. Honda's Marquez was thrilled to be back in the heart of the action after claiming pole position in Portugal only to then break his hand in the crash on race day. A fifth surgery in three years followed and he sat out the following rounds in Argentina, United States and Jerez. He commented: "My target today was really to be on the third row, but I'm on the front so I did something amazing. I had a better feeling with my bike than yesterday."

He added: "Starting from the front row is much easier, but the main aim this weekend is to try to show speed and put together a series of fast laps in a row against the Ducatis." Joining this pair on the front row of the grid for the fifth round of the season is Luca Marini for Valentino Rossi's Ducati-VR46 team. Marini did well after having to come through the first qualifying repechage session where only the first two riders go through to the shoot out for the first four rows of the grid. Missing out though was 2021 world champion Fabio Quartararo.

The Frenchman failed to make his struggling Yamaha fire and he will start both the sprint and the



LE MANS: Repsol Honda Team's Spanish rider Marc Marquez (left) competes ahead of Ducati Lenovo Team's Italian rider Francesco Bagnaia during the MotoGP Sprint race on May 13, 2023. — AFP

race back on the fifth row in front of his home fans. Aleix Espargaro had a lucky escape when walking away unharmed from a near 300kph crash, his Aprilia bike bouncing to a rest in the gravel safety pit.

Bagnaia leads the MotoGP standings by 22 points over fellow Ducati rider Marco Bezzecchi after two sprint and two race wins. But the Italian has a poor record in France, with his best showing a fourth from four appearances. Last year he crashed after setting off from pole.

Jack Miller, who had cut a dash on his KTM in both practice sessions on Friday, came fourth to occupy the second row with Spanish duo Jorge Martin (Ducati-Pramac) and Maverick Vinales (Aprilia). Bezzecchi posted the seventh best time and keeping the Italian company on the third row are Marquez's younger brother Alex (Ducati-Gresini) and France's Johann Zarco (Ducati-Pramac). South Africa's Brad Binder, third in the overall standings, starts from the fourth row alongside crash-victim Espargaro and Augusto Fernandez. Saturday's sprint was staged over half the distance of Sunday's grand prix with half points awarded. — AFP

Lakers topple Warriors; Heat reach East finals

LOS ANGELES: The Los Angeles Lakers ran defending champions Golden State out of the NBA playoffs in dominant style on Friday, beating the Warriors 122-101 to advance to the Western Conference finals. LeBron James delivered a masterful 30-point performance as the Lakers won the semi-final series four games to two and booked a clash with Nikola Jokic and the top-seeded Denver Nuggets for a place in the NBA Finals.

"It's going to be a great series," James told broadcaster ESPN. "They've been the number one seed in the West all season long. We give them a lot of respect." That series tips off on Tuesday. A day later, the Miami Heat will open in the Eastern Conference finals against either the Philadelphia 76ers or the Boston Celtics. The Heat advanced Friday with a hard-fought 96-92 victory over the New York Knicks to win their Eastern Conference semi-final four games to two.

The Celtics will host Philadelphia in a decisive game seven on Sunday. In Los Angeles, the Lakers led wire-to-wire, with James adding nine rebounds and nine assists as the Lakers closed out the Warriors in their second attempt after dropping game five in San Francisco. "Not many (members) of our team have been in close-out games," James said. "So after game five up in the Bay, I knew I had to come in with a lot of aggression but be very efficient and very strategic in how I played this game."

Anthony Davis scored 17 points and pulled down 20 rebounds for Los Angeles and Austin Reaves scored 23 points - including a half-court shot at the halftime buzzer that put the Lakers up 56-46 at the break. Since clawing their way into the play-in tournament, the Lakers have won seven straight home games. Their victory marked the first time that the current Warriors dynasty led by Stephen Curry and coached by Steve Kerr has lost a Western Conference playoff series. The Warriors had reached the NBA Finals in six of the last eight seasons, winning four titles, missing the post-season in 2020 and 2021.

Curry scored 32 points but made just four of his 10 three-point shots. Sharpshooter Klay Thompson made just two of his twelve three-point attempts. "(We) just

tried to make it tough on them," Davis said of the Lakers' defensive strategy against the prolific Warriors offense. "They're the defending champion, they're not going to go away. Their ability to score the ball, shoot the ball is unreal, unmatched. "We just wanted to keep the pressure up, the intensity up, and be the hardest-playing team for 48 minutes."

Things weren't so clear cut in Miami, where Jimmy Butler scored 24 points and Bam Adebayo added 23 to lead the Heat to a narrow victory that put them into the Eastern Conference finals for the third time in four years. They're the first eighth-seeded team to reach the conference finals since the 1999 Knicks, dispatching the top-seeded Milwaukee Bucks in the first round before battling past the Knicks in a series epitomized by the hard-fought game six.

"I like it," Butler told broadcaster ESPN. "That's what we do better than anything is grind these wins out. "We've been in games like this all year long. We're prepared for it, we stay with it til the end." Butler said. The Heat withstood another stellar performance from Knicks guard Jalen Brunson, who scored 41 points but was harried into a crucial turnover with 16.4 seconds remaining and the Heat up by just two.

The Heat were finally rolling, up 92-86 with less than a minute to play, when Miami guard Gabe Vincent was assessed a flagrant foul after catching Brunson in the face with an elbow as they jockeyed for the ball on an inbound play. Brunson hit both free throws and Josh Hart drove for a layup that pulled New York within two, but Brunson, under pressure from Butler and Max Strus, committed a turnover and Butler made two free throws to again extend Miami's lead. Facing elimination, the Knicks came out strong and led 31-24 after the first quarter.

Brunson scored 22 points in the first half, but the Heat had edged ahead 51-50 at the break and the Knicks never regained the lead. Adebayo scored 17 points in the first half, his 11 points in the second quarter helping turn the tide. He pulled down nine rebounds with two steals and a block, with his dunk putting Miami up by six with 1:05 to play. Kyle Lowry added 11 points with nine assists and two steals for the Heat, who made just seven three-pointers but were 23-of-25 from the free-throw line. Julius Randle added 15 points for the Knicks, who haven't made it to the conference finals since 2000. — AFP