

Polestar 2  
Why wait to go electric

\$10,000 trade-in support



**2** Educators lament decline in Kuwait's education level



**5** Thai opposition claims victory as voters reject army-backed parties



**8** Macron, Musk meet in Paris to discuss investing in France



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## Gulf railway project on track

Proposal to allow expats in Kuwait to own apartments

### Amir invited to Arab Summit



KUWAIT: Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait Prince Sultan Al-Saud hands HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah a letter of invitation from Saudi King Salman to HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to attend the 32nd Arab Summit in Jeddah on May 19. — KUNA

RIYADH/KUWAIT: Gulf Cooperation Council Secretary General Jassem Al-Budaiwi said the GCC Secretariat and Gulf Railways Authority are commencing efforts to complete their works to link the railway project between GCC countries to showcase the new innovation in the region. The Secretariat General on Monday said the statement came during Budaiwi's participation in the GCC Railway Conference in Abu Dhabi with the participation of a number of decision makers, along with chiefs and CEOs of major rail operators from across the region.

Budaiwi also assured GCC members are keen on joint effort works to accomplish the railway plan in all its active sectors, while also pointing out that willful paces have been accounted for to enable a cooperative endeavor for such a venture. Strategic planning is the aim of this preparation phase to facilitate a proper link between all nations involved in the railway project,

directing the outcomes to positively impact intertrade exchange and freedom of transportation for GCC citizens and residents, while also taking into consideration joint investments which should be contributing to the promotion of economic integration.

Budaiwi added the GCC will be looking forward to these ventures with promising tangible results, as some member states have already completed parts of the project within their territories. "It is in this context that I am pleased to congratulate and thank the UAE for accomplishing their construction of railway tracks with Saudi Arabia", said Budaiwi, who was delightfully pleased by these efforts.

Separately, a Kuwaiti ministerial committee has sent a proposal to the Cabinet to allow non-Kuwaitis to own investment residential properties, based on a decision by the justice minister and not by a Cabinet decree. The proposal will be discussed during deliberations and discussions of the

new government that will be formed two weeks after the National Assembly elections on June 6, alongside the mortgage bill, which the government hopes will be approved by the National Assembly to address the housing crisis.

The proposal for expatriate ownership of real estate in Kuwait stipulates that by a decision of the minister of justice, a non-Kuwaiti may be granted the right to own one residential apartment in an investment building, provided the applicant for ownership is a permanent and legal resident of Kuwait and that no judgments have been issued against him that violate honor or trust during the duration of his stay in Kuwait.

The project also stipulates the apartment be allocated for the residence of the applicant or his family, and that the area of this apartment does not exceed 350 square meters, and that he does not own another apartment in Kuwait.

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## Resurgent Erdogan heads for historic election runoff

ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Monday emerged from his toughest election test unbowed and in strong position to extend two decades of his Islamic-rooted rule by another five years in a historic May 28 runoff. The 69-year-old leader defied pollsters and his country's most dire economic crisis since the 1990s to come within a fraction of a percentage point of winning Sunday's presidential ballot.

His rightwing party also retained control of parliament through an alliance with ultranationalists on a drama-filled night that concluded with Erdogan delivering a victory

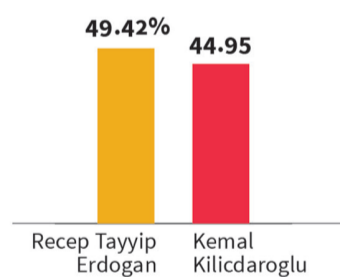
speech from a balcony to jubilant supporters. He even won in regions hit by a calamitous February quake that claimed more than 50,000 lives — and where anger at the government's slow response to Turkey's worst disaster of modern times was seething.

"A staggering win for Erdogan," emerging markets economist Timothy Ash said in a note to clients. "He has the magic dust at these times. And he just gets Turks — the nationalist, socially conservative and Muslim ones." The main opposition party led by Kemal Kilicdaroglu confronted the reality Monday that they were unable to beat Erdogan at one of his most vulnerable moments. "Don't despair," Kilicdaroglu told his supporters. "We will stand up and take this election together." Turkey's election officials Monday confirmed that there would be a second round because the remaining uncounted votes could not swing the outcome.

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### Turkey presidential vote, 1st round

Partial results with 99.38% of votes counted



Participation 88.84%

Source: Anadolu Agency



ANKARA: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, accompanied by his wife Ermine, waves to supporters at the AK Party headquarters on May 15, 2023. — AFP

## Syria back at Arab League as Assad invited to COP28

RIYADH: Syria ended over a decade of exile from the Arab League on Monday as its officials took part in a preparatory session ahead of Friday's summit in Saudi Arabia. "I... take this opportunity to welcome the Syrian Arab Republic to the League of Arab States," Saudi finance minister Mohammed Al-Jadaan told the meeting, which was broadcast live by state TV channel Al Ekhbariya. Jadaan added that he was "looking forward to working with everyone to achieve what we aspire to", as the camera panned to the Syrian delegation.

It was the first time Syrian officials participated in an Arab League meeting since the body suspended Damascus in Nov 2011 over its violent crackdown on protests which spiraled into a conflict that has killed more than 500,000 people and displaced millions. Earlier this month, the pan-Arab body officially welcomed back Syria's government, securing President Bashar Al-Assad's return to the Arab fold.

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## A month into Sudan conflict, no end in sight

KHARTOUM: One month since Sudan's conflict erupted, its capital is a desolate warzone where terrorized families huddle at home as gun battles rage, while the western Darfur region has descended into deadly chaos. Residents of Khartoum have endured weeks of desperate shortages of food and basic supplies, power blackouts, communications outages and runaway inflation.

The capital of five million, long a

place of relative stability, has become a shell of its former self. Charred aircraft lie on the airport tarmac, foreign embassies are shuttered and hospitals, banks, shops and wheat silos have been ransacked by looters. Violence also renewed in El Geneina, the capital of West Darfur state, leaving hundreds killed and the health system in "total collapse", medics said.

Fighting continued on Monday, with loud explosions heard across Khartoum and thick smoke billowing in the sky while warplanes drew anti-aircraft fire, according to witnesses. "The situation is becoming worse by the day," said a 37-year-old resident of southern Khartoum who did not

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KHARTOUM: People board a minibus as they evacuate southern Khartoum on May 14, 2023. — AFP

## Scientists sound alarm about new DNA tool

PARIS: The traces of genetic material that humans constantly shed wherever they go could soon be used to track individual people, or even whole ethnic groups, scientists said on Monday, warning of a looming "ethical quagmire". A recently developed technique can glean a huge amount of information from tiny samples of genetic material called environmental DNA, or eDNA, that humans and animals leave behind everywhere — including in the air.

The tool could lead to a range of medical and scientific advances, and could even help track down

criminals, according to the authors of a new study published in the journal Nature Ecology & Evolution. But it also poses a vast range of concerns around consent, privacy and surveillance, they added. Humans spread their DNA — which carries genetic information specific to each person — everywhere, by shedding skin or hair cells, coughing out droplets, or in wastewater flushed down toilets.

In recent years, scientists have been increasingly collecting the eDNA of wild animals, in the hopes of helping threatened species. For the new research, scientists at the University of Florida's Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience had been focused on collecting the eDNA of endangered sea turtles. But the international team of researchers inadvertently collected a massive amount of human eDNA, which they called "human genetic bycatch".

David Duffy, a wildlife disease genomic professor at the Whitney Laboratory who led the project, said they

were "consistently surprised" by the amount and quality of the human eDNA they collected. "In most cases the quality is almost equivalent to if you took a sample from a person," he said. The scientists collected human eDNA from nearby oceans, rivers and towns, as well as from areas far from human settlements.

Struggling to find a sample not tainted by humans, they went to a section of a remote Florida island inaccessible to the public. It was free of human DNA — at least until a member of the team walked barefoot along the beach. They were then able to detect eDNA from a single footprint in the sand. In Duffy's native Ireland, the team found human DNA all along a river, with the exception of the remote mountain stream at its source. Taking samples from the air of a veterinary hospital, the team captured eDNA that matched the staff, their animal patient and viruses common in animals.

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# Educators lament decline in the education level in Kuwait

## Interference in teachers' work worsens educational outcomes: Teacher

By Majid Othman

**KUWAIT:** Education in Kuwait has been subjected to many criticisms in recent years, while the COVID-19 pandemic revealed lots of flaws in the educational system, whether in private or public Arabic schools, which led to students graduating with a very weak level that has shocked the society.

Kuwait Times spoke to educational activist and teacher Abdullah Al-Sharif and discussed with him his point of view on the quality of education in Kuwait and outcomes over the years. Sharif said the main issue facing the educational system in Kuwait is that the ministry of education turned from an educational authority to a political entity that depends on hiring people with no experience and qualifications, who cannot develop the educational system.

He added there are many other reasons for the decline in educational outcomes in the country, including development of the educational system not being a priority and facilities that are in a bad condition. "When teachers teach students in a classroom that has no air-conditioners, how are they supposed to give their best?" he queried. "In addition to the abovementioned reasons, the school curricula are not in line with global developments in the field of education," Sharif added.

When Kuwait Times asked Sharif about the reasons

teachers are losing power over students' evaluation, he stressed the blame is mainly on parents who support their children to rebel against teachers. Also, there is external interference by some officials to support the misguided students despite their attitude just to please their parents, and this leads them to become rebellious, he pointed out.

"In public schools, parents cannot threaten the school administration with withdrawing their children and making the school suffer financial losses, as schooling is free of charge. Meanwhile, many parents refuse to accept their children's failure, while sometimes it is just a way to show their strength. So, they turn to finding external help from some official who forces the authorities to make a decision that is not in the school's favor most of the time," Sharif explained.

Many Kuwaiti teachers have posted on social media several times regarding students' level of education and performance. They complain that many students have reached high school, but they barely know how to write their names or spell basic Arabic words. The teachers' posts have met with no action by the ministry of education, despite these teachers being key witnesses of students' performance and development at schools.

According to a science teacher working in the public education system for more than 12 years, who

preferred to remain anonymous, a promising step was taken during the pandemic, when the ministry of education set up the online platform to teach students remotely. "Unfortunately, despite having many positive aspects, its effects were negative on students. The main issue was dropouts that happened in the online classes which we all know about — skipping classes, sleeping during class, turning cameras off, not doing homework or parents doing it instead, and cheating," she said.

She added the most important thing still facing the educational process, whether online or in class, is the weakness of teachers' control in evaluating their students. To a large extent, many school administrations have no power to make a free and independent evaluation due to the parents' interference in the teachers' work, as they don't accept their children's failure. In addition, some schools fear the parents' reactions for many other reasons.



Abdullah Al-Sharif



She concluded by saying the education ministry should play a realistic and active role, more than what is happening right now, pointing to the absenteeism that happened lately during the Eid holidays, where all students skipped classes for more than two days, with no serious accountability for students who were absent from school. Many citizens and educational activists are calling on the ministry of education to spend its budget on developing the educational system, methods and facilities, as the current teaching system has become out of date and far from the technological era that these students are living in.

## Seminar to discuss violence against women in MENA

**KUWAIT:** Head of the Kuwaiti Union of Women's Associations (KUWA) Sheikhha Fadiah Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Saleem Al-Sabah announced that the union will hold Tuesday a seminar in cooperation with the Geneva Institute for Human Rights and the United Nations on violence against women and girls in the Middle East and North Africa.

The conference will discuss the causes and consequences of the phenomenon in the presence of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, Reem Al-Saleem.

The seminar will witness the presence of representatives of non-governmental organizations working in the field of violence against women and girls, the resident representative of the United Nations Development Program in Kuwait, Hideko Hadzalic, the regional office of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Population Fund, and its activities will continue for three days.

"The workshop addresses experiences from various countries and the main challenges and obstacles facing women in the Middle East and North Africa region. It will also come up with recommendations which are expected to contribute to the global efforts of the United Nations in promoting and protecting the human rights of women and girls," Sheikhha Fadiah said on Monday.

She noted that the seminar will discuss three items that correspond to the main challenges faced by women who are subjected to violence, including an analysis of the root causes of violence against women in the Middle East and North Africa region and possible ways to address them.

The seminar also aims to provide participants with the necessary knowledge to involve them in monitoring the implementation of women's rights in national public policies and to submit the preliminary findings and recommendations of the future reports of the United Nations rapporteurs on violence against women and girls to the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. Sheikhha Fadiah pointed out that Arab women must ensure the protection of their rights and maintaining equality between the genders in accordance with our tolerant Islamic law, especially in those transitional periods that the Arab countries are witnessing.

She expected to come up with practical recommendations on the role of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls in the Middle East and North Africa in supporting the fight against violence against women and girls. The recommendations will also provide a roadmap for the United Nations, the United Nations Population Fund and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

At the end of the consultation, recommendations will be submitted to the government that they can use when legislating regulations and laws pertaining to issues related to women.

The seminar coincides with the celebrations of the Kuwaiti Federation of Women's Associations on Kuwaiti Women's Day, which falls on May 16 of each year, said Shaikha Fadiah, recalling the role of the honorary president of the Union, Sheikhha Latifa Al-Fahad Al-Saleem Al-Sabah, who worked to lay the foundations of this annual celebration. —KUNA



Sheikha Fadiah Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Saleem Al-Sabah



## US government holds program for legal education

**KUWAIT:** The United States Department of Justice's Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training (OPDAT) held a successful three-day continuing legal education program in cooperation with the Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies. Over 100 Kuwaiti professionals from the Kuwait Judiciary and Public Prosecutor's Office attended the program. The program, "Emerging Issues and the Judiciary," showcased United States Judges discussing subjects such as the American legal tradition and the power of judicial review, rules of evidence in a digital world, and judicial independence and principals of punishment.

Three United States Judges presented at the pro-

gram: United States District Judge Andrew S. Hanen (Southern District of Texas), Associate Judge James A. Crowell IV. (District of Columbia, Superior Court), and U.S. Magistrate Judge Mitchel Neurock (Southern District of Texas). This was the first time that U.S. Judges presented to the Kuwait judiciary. The program is part of successful ongoing cooperation efforts between the U.S. Department of Justice and the Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies.

In his opening remarks, Chargé d'Affaires at the United States Embassy to Kuwait Jim Holtsnider said that "collaboration on these important topics can be achieved at its highest level when professionals and officials who confront these topics can share their experience and grow from them together." CDA Holtsnider also offered his "sincere gratitude" to Hani Al-Hamdan, Director of the Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies, for "making this wonderful venue available and for hosting this ground-breaking program."

Councilor Hani Al-Hamdan, Director of the Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies, opened the



program by acknowledging the importance of the discussed topics and how the workshop further strengthened the relations between the United States and the State of Kuwait. He added that the Institute welcomes future cooperation with the U.S. Department of Justice.

## Sabah Hospital holds obesity surgery workshop

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** The surgery department at Sabah Hospital organized a surgery workshop in the presence of an expert from Cleveland hospital to carry out surgeries with recommendation from American and European Associations.

Chairman of the Workshop Organizing Committee Dr Mubarak Al-Kandary said the workshop deals with obesity procedures and advanced laparoscopy, adding that it will be carried out in the presence of a visitor from Cleveland Hospital. He said the department will carry out nine major and complicated operations as a service for patients. The goal is maintaining sustainable professional development, which is the modern method to transfer expertise from one place to another. Previously, several courses had to be held in order to improve physicians' expertise in obesity surgery but the hospital now has world-class experience in the field. Kandary thanked all those working at the health ministry for their continued support to hold such workshops.

Former Health Minister Dr Mohammad Al-Jarallah said the speedy development of obesity surgery



around the world demands that Kuwait be at par. The workshop being held at Sabah Hospital is one of the important steps to move forward with the level of knowledge that Kuwaiti doctors have, especially in obesity surgeries.

He said bringing in one of the experts from Cleve-

land Hospital to carry out operations using the most modern techniques and recommendations is a source of pride for the health ministry. The operations to be carried out, he said, are considered complicated. One delicate procedure to be carried out is aimed at treating the presence of a hernia in the diaphragm.

## Doctor, nurse arrested for practicing illegally

**KUWAIT:** A family residence permit holder who was providing nursing services, and an administrative employee posing as a doctor have been arrested at a medical center in Salmiya area.

The arrest was part of the intensive inspection campaigns conducted by Public Authority

for Manpower to ensure that employers and workers comply with the labor law, the authority conducted an inspection campaign on Sunday, May 14, in coordination with the tripartite committee (Medical Licensing Department, Drugs Inspection Administration of the Ministry of Health, and Residency Affairs Detectives of the Ministry of Interior).

The center had poor storage and lacked the necessary permits for keeping medications. The medications were confiscated by the Ministry of Health and necessary measures have been taken against the violators.





# Will lowering voting age to 18 have big impact on the results?

## 'Elections are determined by the silent majority'

By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

**KUWAIT:** Only people over the age of 21 are able to vote in Kuwait, while most countries around the world have their voting age set at 18 years. The question is — are young people in Kuwait interested in politics, and will they have an impact on the election results? Should the law be changed to allow suffrage for Kuwaitis under 21?

Kuwait Times spoke to political analyst and expert in election affairs Jaber Baqer on lowering the voting age. Baqer has been analyzing Kuwaiti politics for more than two decades and also participated in analyzing the recent elections in Qatar. "Naturally, lowering the voting age will have a great impact on election results. In the most recent elections, we witnessed great participation and voting by younger people. We measured this by the success rate of younger candidates," he said.

"Elections are determined by the silent majority. They are the people who do not have personal interests or much knowledge about politics. They are usually busy with their own social responsibilities and pressures. In any election, they are the biggest

influencer of results," Baqer said, pointing out the silent majority usually makes up around 65 percent of societies around the world.

"I would definitely be interested in participating in this year's campaign, but sadly I'm only 20 years old. I would love to vote and be a part of this privilege that our country offers, since we are the only democracy in the Gulf. If it were allowed, I would definitely vote, and many would agree with me," Abdulwahab Al-Jasmi, a 20-year-old finance student at Kuwait University, told Kuwait Times.

"I do not agree that people under the age of 21 are not mature enough to vote. It's not about the age; it's about your right, regardless of 'not being mature enough'. Eighteen is the age of being an adult, as people go to war at this age and drive cars, but they cannot vote. I know many people who have knowledge about the political scene in Kuwait but they can't vote. Meanwhile, many people older than 21 are not taking advantage of voting because they do not want to get involved or are simply too lazy to vote. I know when they lower the age limit to 18, there will be a difference," Jasmi said.



Jaber Baqer

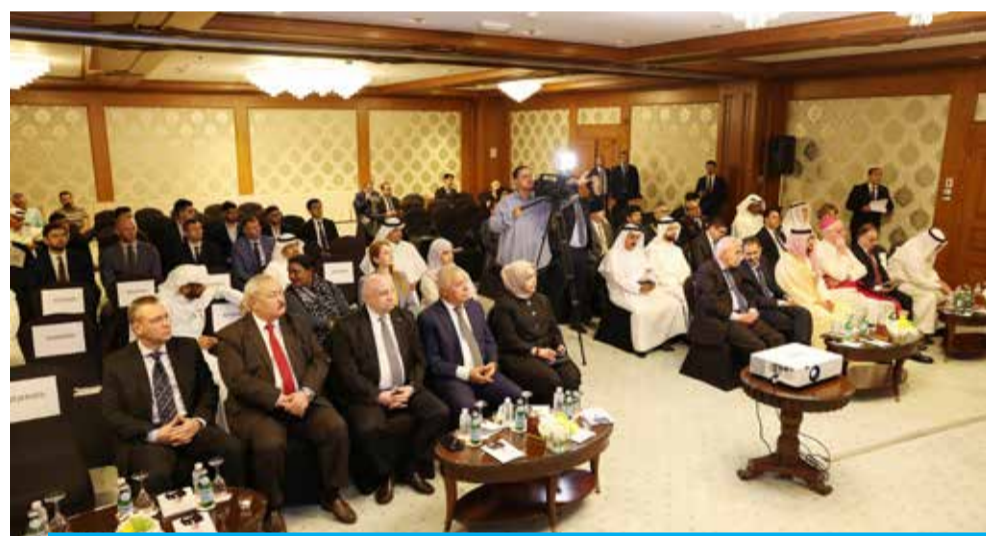
"My general perception about the political scene in Kuwait is that I feel like everyone who is involved is thinking about themselves and their own best interests. I would love to see a change in what they talk about. They are mostly focused on fundamental religious things more than real issues that are happening in the country. Also, I would love to see Kuwait become a full democracy rather than a semi-democratic country," he added.

Over 85 countries in the world have the voting age set at 18 years old, while some countries such as Argentina and Austria have the age set at 16 years old.



Young people have a younger and fresher outlook on life. They have a futuristic perspective regarding Kuwait's future. Because their inclusion in politics will have a big impact, and since they are

interested in participating in politics as well as shaping their lives, many believe people under the age of 21 should have a right to be included in the political process in Kuwait.



**KUWAIT:** The Embassy of Azerbaijan held a conference to commemorate the 100th birthday of the national leader of Azerbaijan on May 15, 2023.

## Embassy celebrates 100th birthday of Azerbaijan leader

By Ghadeer Ghloom

**KUWAIT:** The Embassy of Azerbaijan held a conference to commemorate the 100th birthday of the national leader of Azerbaijan on May 15, 2023. During the conference, Azeri Ambassador Emil Karimov said May 10, 2023 marked the 100th birth anniversary of the national leader of Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev. Therefore, 2023 was named the "Year of Heydar Aliyev", as declared by Azeri President Ilham Aliyev.

Karimov then gave a brief about Heydar Aliyev's history — the year he was born, his education and positions he occupied, in addition to his achievements in developing Azerbaijan. Karimov said since the early days of his leadership, Heydar Aliyev renewed Azerbaijan's foreign policy and rebuilt it on the basis of the country's strategic interests. To ensure political and economic stability that would enable the country to develop, and as a result of negotiations conducted with the efforts of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and other mediators, the great leader reached a ceasefire agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan in May 1994.

Moreover, Karimov said that in the busy life journey of Heydar Aliyev and in his achievements, his faithful and affectionate spouse Zarifa Aliyeva played a significant role. "This year, in April 2023,

we celebrated the centenary of the birth of Mrs Zarifa Aziz gizi Aliyeva as well, who is a prominent scientist of Azerbaijan with a doctorate in medical sciences, a professor and full member of the Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences," he said.

Karimov added she made several brilliant contributions to the field of medicine in Azerbaijan through comprehensive scientific activities. Her valuable articles, which she achieved as a result of her long-term scientific research on issues related to ophthalmic medicine, have always been highly appreciated and awarded. Her scientific services to the state and the people have been highly regarded and many medals and honorary titles have been granted to her. She has been awarded the honorary title of 'Distinguished Scientist of Azerbaijan'.

Karimov concluded this ceremony is meant to commemorate the memory of both the national leader Heydar Aliyev and his loyal and prominent thinker wife Zarifa Aliyeva, in addition to wishing great success to their son, President Ilham Aliyev at his diligent work towards the prosperity of Azerbaijan. Former Kuwaiti MP Saleh Ashour highlighted the remarkable difference that Heydar Aliyev created by improving Azerbaijan.

Ashour said when he first visited Azerbaijan in 1992 after its liberation from the Soviet Union, it was a very simple country, as it lacked activities despite its rich nature, petroleum production and rich marine life, because it used to be managed by the Soviet Union. However, in a few years, Ashour said things have changes drastically at various levels — politically, socially, economically, educationally, etc due to Heydar Aliyev's efforts and clear vision for the Azerbaijani people.

Turkish Ambassador Tuba Nur Sonmez said Aliyev was a great leader who devoted his life to his country and nation. He changed the face of



Emil Karimov, Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the State of Kuwait. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Former Kuwaiti MP Saleh Ashour

Azerbaijan with development-oriented initiatives, international friendships and social reforms. Today, if Azerbaijan is a strong and stable state in the region, it undoubtedly owes this proud status to Heydar Aliyev's visionary leadership. Sonmez then mentioned the strong relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan. "Heydar Aliyev, regarded Turkiye and Azerbaijan inseparable as flesh and nail. He was also the pioneer of the 'two states, one nation' motto that defines Turkish-Azerbaijani brotherhood.

In a similar manner, Ilham Aliyev, who was elected president after the passing of General Heydar Aliyev, followed the same path, attaching great importance to the Turkey-Azerbaijan brotherhood. And, thank God, our relations, which started on January 14, 1992, have reached the level of strategic alliance today. The Turkiye-Azerbaijan brotherhood model, which is getting stronger day by day under the leadership of our Presidents Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Ilham Aliyev, is a unique friendship model that the whole world watches with envy and respect," she noted.

## National Guards Deputy Chief visits info center



**KUWAIT:** National Guards Deputy Chief Sheikh Faisal Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah is seen with National Guard officials. —KUNA

**KUWAIT:** The National Guards Deputy Chief Sheikh Faisal Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Monday affirmed that cyber security is key for safeguarding the military establishments against electronic hazards. Sheikh Faisal, in a statement on margins of his visit to the information security center, said that the National Guards Command provides all required support for bolstering the cyber security, through cooperation with international and local institutions. He lauded the potential of the center's personnel and their agility in executing the tasks. The deputy chief was briefed on state-of-art technologies to stop electronic hacking and piracy in their tracks. —KUNA

## Anxiety most common mental health disorder

**KUWAIT:** Sixty percent of patients at the Kuwait Center for Mental Health suffer from anxiety disorder, the Health Ministry said Monday.

The health ministry is raising awareness on mental health and the importance of ending the stigma surrounding it during the month of May, which is marked across the world as Mental Health Awareness Month.

The Kuwait Center for Mental Health's director Dr Khuloud Al-Ali said the COVID-19 pandemic and other world events have exacerbated anxiety and other psychological disorders.

Anxiety symptoms include panic attacks, difficulty breathing, a feeling of helplessness, exhaustion, fatigue, an increase in blood pressure, extremity numbness and blurred vision among others, said Ali on the sidelines of an event held to mark the month.

The efforts made during the past 20 years by governments around the world and psychological service centers have helped combat stigma and improved the perception of mental illnesses. She said the ministry had a circular aimed at organizing the work of psychological health clinics in both the government and private sectors. Recently, the ministry launched an online service which allows patients to make appointments at the 48 psychological clinics located in the primary health centers.

Psychiatry Consultant and Head of the Emergency Unit at the center, Dr Najah Al-Enezi said that anxiety disorder is one of the most common disorders around the world. It starts in childhood and may continue until after adolescence, potentially hindering academic performance.

She said the number of patients who visit the center annually is between 6,000 to 7,000 and the most common reasons for the visits are anxiety and depression. Genetic factors, she said, could contribute to a patient getting anxiety. However, a parent who suffers from anxiety will not necessarily give it to their children at the same degree. —KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Chamber of Industry and Commerce representatives hold talks with Swiss delegation. —KUNA photos

## Kuwait-Swiss trade reaches \$783 million

**KUWAIT:** Trade exchanges between Kuwait and Switzerland reached \$783 million in 2021, Deputy Chairman of the Chamber of Industry and Com-

merce Fahad Al-Joan declared on Monday. Joan, speaking during a reception of a Swiss delegation at the chamber headquarters, called for increasing the volume of commercial exchanges between the two countries, in light of the solid political ties between them.

He noted that such meetings could be helpful for expanding the economic cooperation, examining investment opportunities and establishing commercial partnerships particularly in the technology and clean energy sectors. Swiss Ambassador Tiziono Balemlli, who attended the meeting, affirmed that the Swiss

delegation's visit is partly aimed at presenting investment opportunities in the European nation and prospects of launching joint ventures.

The Swiss Consul General in Dubai Frank Eggmann — also the head of the Swiss Business Council for the Middle East — urged entrepreneurs in the two countries to cooperate for establishing common projects. The meeting included a presentation of the investors' services in the Direct Investment Authority and the incentives provided in Kuwait such as 100 percent ownership and pardon of taxation for ten years. —KUNA





## News in Brief

Voting information  
added to Sahel app

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Interior has added a service allowing people to inquire about their electoral registration and their assigned polling station on the "Sahel" application, in addition to the website of the Ministry of Interior. The move is meant to facilitate the voting process for citizens, the ministry announced on KUNA. Kuwaitis head to the polls to cast their vote in the parliamentary elections on June 6. At the close of candidate registration on Sunday, 252 candidates including 15 women filed nomination papers to run in the elections race.

MoI campaign busts  
hundreds of violators

**KUWAIT:** The General Directorate of Traffic and the General Directorate of Najda Police carried out a wide-ranging and sudden security campaign on several areas, including Shuwaikh Industrial, Hawally, Khaitan, Mahboula, Qurain Markets and Jahra Industrial. The campaign resulted in the seizure of 63 violators of the residence law, 40 people whose residency has expired, 91 found without proof of residency and 23 who were reported as absconding. Officials made two criminal arrests and four found in possession of drugs. They busted one solicitor, made two liquor seizure and issued 423 traffic violations.

School thieves  
caught in Ahmadi

**KUWAIT:** Continuous security activity and intensified investigations carried out by patrols with the Ahmadi Governorate Investigation Department have led to the arrest of two people who attempted to rob a school. The two men were caught entering a school in Sabah Al-Ahmad illegally by climbing the school door and were found to be in possession of a laptop and four projectors. The men, along with the stolen items, were then referred to authorities to take the necessary legal measures against them.

## Photo of the day



**KUWAIT:** Buildings stand tall against a partly cloudy sky in Salmiya. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

# Finances, education behind smaller family size in Kuwait

## Number of members in a household fell by nearly 30% since 1995

By Ghadeer Ghloum

**KUWAIT:** In the past, people used to have a great sense of pride and belonging in their large families and extended relatives. However, with the emergence of modern education and the increasing demands of work, this has drastically changed. Today, the priorities of people have shifted, and family size is no longer the sole source of pride and identity for individuals. Statistics from Kuwait's Public Authority for Civil Information have shown a notable decrease in the number of family members. The average number of Kuwaiti members in private households fell by nearly 30 percent from 6.44 in 1995 to 4.60 in 2020. There are several factors that may explain why the number of family members in Kuwait has been declining.

### Financial and educational reasons

Many Kuwaiti families prefer to have fewer children due to economic reasons. Raising a large family can be a costly burden and many families are simply unable to afford it. Moreover, with the development of technology and industries, people can pursue careers that were once not available before. The emphasis on higher education and achievement of professional goals in our contemporary life pushed people to become more concerned about securing a strong career.

This change in priorities inevitably had an impact on family size in Kuwait, hence people began to have



fewer children because parents want to provide their children with better educational and career opportunities to secure a bright future that is based on their educational qualities and work skills, as life's current circumstances demand.

In a previous statement, Kuwait University Professor Amthal Al-Huwailah said although Kuwait is a wealthy country and its citizens enjoy high salaries, the cost of living has become too high for many households, especially in terms of meeting their lifestyle needs. In addition, many small families prefer private and quality education over public education, which entails additional costs that families with large numbers of children may not be able to bear as before.

### Development of medicine

Another factor is greater access to birth control methods. Although large families were once the norm in Kuwait, birth control methods provided more options and flexibility in terms of childbearing, reducing



the pressure to have many children and allowing people to focus on other priorities such as education and career advancement.

Shahad, a newly married Kuwaiti woman, told Kuwait Times: "By allowing women and men to better control the timing and frequency of their pregnancies, birth control methods have enabled couples to have more control over their choices about when and how many children they want to have. This has resulted in smaller and more reasonable family sizes, as couples now can afford securing good education and better living conditions for their children, as having less children gives parents a better chance to focus on their healthy upbringing by giving them enough attention."

Thus, contemporary generations' pride has shifted from pride in large families to pride in attaining educational and career goals. This shows that people's perspectives and views have changed significantly.



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## ABK participates in Kuwait University admission exhibit

**KUWAIT:** Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently participated in the Ninth Annual Admission Exhibition for high school graduates, held in Kuwait University's Cultural Center in Al-Shadadiya from 2-5 May 2023, under the patronage of the Acting President of Kuwait University, Professor Fahad Al Dubais Al Rashidi. The fair was organized by Kuwait University and involved higher education institutions in the private sector.

The fair hosted more than 1,000 high school students on a daily basis from public and private education schools. Throughout the event, students were given the opportunity to understand the role and importance of choosing their educational future in line with their ambitions. Various seminars, workshops as well as field tours were conducted during the event period, allowing high school graduates to have a better understanding of the major that best suits their educational capabilities and preferences.

During the exhibition, ABK presented its A+ Student account, catered for the youth segment with a specific emphasis on students. Attendees were informed and presented with the benefits and features of the account of which includes an instant KD 50 cash gift upon transfer of student allowance; a free prepaid card, valid for two years, offering secure and convenient online shopping; in addition to a special array of discounts from restaurants and stores in Kuwait.

On this occasion, Johair Marafi, Acting General Manager of ABK's Retail Banking Division, stated: "Our participation in the event is a reflection of the great importance of youth and high school graduates. Understanding how to start their higher education journey is of utmost importance where we wanted to be a support in making the right decision. As such,

we decided to use this opportunity to educate attendees on the Bank's various products and services, particularly our A+ Student account."

Marafi emphasized that the A+ Student account offerings make it an ideal choice for high school graduates and university students alike. She said: "The Bank prioritizes providing ongoing customer satisfaction through the provision of valuable promotions with a wide range of business partners. I therefore encourage students to open an A+ Student account to avail the exciting benefits catered to meet their lifestyle. I have no doubt that it will be a positive first step to enjoying a unique banking journey with ABK."

ABK aspires to continue developing offers that meet the Bank's objectives of providing banking and financial products and services that cater to all segments of Kuwait's society. Furthermore, the Bank takes every opportunity to promote a culture of saving, which is especially important for younger audiences.

Marafi concluded by inviting everyone to follow the Bank's social media accounts to remain updated on the latest marketing initiatives, promotional campaigns, and offerings throughout the year.

Since its establishment in 1967, ABK has progressed to become one of the leading Kuwaiti banks in the region that is today known for offering a simpler banking experience. The Bank offers personal, corporate, and private banking of which includes a wide array of products and services. ABK also provides a broad range of local, regional, and global investment solutions and services through its subsidiary, ABK Capital. Enjoying equal stability and strength, the Bank also offers the convenience of banking across the region, servicing other markets in Egypt and the UAE.



Johair Marafi





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# Thai oppn leader Pita claims victory

MFP leader vows to be a prime minister for all



BANGKOK: Move Forward Party leader and prime ministerial candidate Pita Limjaroenrat leads a victory parade with fellow party members and supporters outside Bangkok City Hall on May 15, 2023. — AFP

**BANGKOK:** Thailand's progressive Move Forward Party (MFP) claimed victory in the country's election Monday after a result that decimated military-backed parties that have ruled the kingdom for nearly a decade. A stunning surge for the upstart MFP in Sunday's ballot left it on course to be the biggest party, followed by its rival opposition — the Pheu Thai movement of billionaire ex-premier Thaksin Shinawatra.

MFP leader Pita Limjaroenrat said he would seek to build a six-party coalition including Pheu Thai. "I am Pita Limjaroenrat, the next prime minister of Thailand," he told reporters at the MFP headquarters in Bangkok. "We are ready to form the government," he added, vowing to be a "prime minister for all".

The 42-year-old said he had called Paetongtarn Shinawatra, Pheu Thai's lead candidate to be prime minister, to congratulate her on her campaign and invite her to join the coalition. Thais turned out in record numbers to deliver a brutal verdict on former coup leader Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha, blamed for economic stagnation and a crackdown on rights.

Thai voters turned out in record numbers to deliver a brutal verdict on former coup leader Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha, who has been blamed for economic stagnation and a crackdown on rights. MFP leader Pita Limjaroenrat said he would seek

to build a six-party coalition including Pheu Thai, which said it was ready to join, though negotiations of the details have not yet begun.

Pita said he had called Paetongtarn Shinawatra, Pheu Thai's lead prime minister candidate, to congratulate her on her campaign and invite her to join the coalition. "The sentiment of the air has changed, it was right. It was the right timing, people have been through enough," he said in English.

"Today is a new day, and hopefully it is full of sunshine and hope." Between them, MFP and Pheu Thai are expected to take 292 out of 500 seats in the lower house, with the two main army-allied parties mustering just 76 seats in total.

But in a kingdom where coups and court orders have often trumped the ballot box, there are fears that the result may yet be thwarted. MFP has vowed to reform Thailand's strict royal insult laws, putting it on course for a collision with the kingdom's powerful royalist-military establishment. The newest force in Thai politics, MFP channelled the energy of youth-led pro-democracy protests in 2020 in an election campaign pitting a young generation yearning for change against the conservative old guard embodied by 69-year-old ex-general Prayut. "I feel like my country has (hope) for the future," Beam, 29, a personal assistant and MFP voter who took part in the

2020 protests, told AFP on Monday. "People have really opened their eyes."

With ballots counted from 99 percent of polling stations, Election Commission data showed MFP on 14.1 million in the popular vote followed by Pheu Thai on 10.8 million. The United Thai Nation party, led by Prayut — the former army chief who seized power in a 2014 coup — was a distant third on 4.7 million.

But in a sign of the potential flashpoints ahead, Pita on Monday repeated a promise to reform the lese majeste law that imposes harsh prison terms for insulting the monarchy. This was an issue once deemed untouchable in Thai politics, and which Pheu Thai shied from during the campaign.

### 'Work together'

Pheu Thai, which, including previous iterations, has been the most popular party for two decades, had hoped for a landslide win that would allow it to lead a coalition. The party congratulated MFP, saying it had won the right to lead the new government.

Paetongtarn, daughter of party patriarch and exiled billionaire Thaksin, said the two sides have not yet started negotiating the details of a coalition. Despite their success, MFP and Pheu Thai still face many hurdles to secure power, due to a junta-scripted 2017 constitution.

The new premier will be chosen jointly by the 500 elected MPs in the lower house, plus 250 senate members appointed by Prayut's junta. Adding to the uncertainty, rumors are already swirling that MFP could be dissolved by court order — the same fate that befell its predecessor Future Forward Party after it performed unexpectedly well in the 2019 elections. The Election Commission is not expected to officially confirm the final number of seats won by each party for several weeks. But on Monday it said MFP was on course for 151 seats and Pheu Thai 141.

### Protest legacy

This election was the first since 2020 protests that demanded curbs on the power and spending of Thailand's king. The demonstrations petered out as Covid-19 curbs were imposed and dozens of leaders were arrested, but their energy fuelled growing support for the more radical opposition MFP.

MFP sought millennial and Gen Z voters, who make up nearly half the 52 million-strong electorate, but early results indicated their inroads across all demographics. The party is predicted to take districts in the staunchly Pheu Thai northern territories — even flipping Thaksin Shinawatra's home district near the northern city of Chiang Mai. — AFP

## Zelensky targets 'jets coalition' on Britain visit

**LONDON:** Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on a visit to Britain Monday won the promise of "hundreds" more missiles and drones — and said his coveted goal of enlisting Western fighter jets was drawing nearer. The visit came as a Russian missile strike killed four people and hit a hospital in eastern Ukraine, but also as Zelensky's army readies a long-awaited counter-offensive against the Russian invaders with claimed gains around the flashpoint town of Bakhmut.

After meeting UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, Zelensky said he was "very positive" about creating a "jets coalition" in the war against Russia, with a decision expected "in the closest time". Western nations have balked so far at providing advanced jets to help Ukraine take command of the skies against Russia, although Sunak said the UK was readying to open a flight school to train its pilots.

And while Russia's ally China vies to act as peace broker, sending an envoy to Kyiv this week, Zelensky drummed up hefty new packages of military aid on weekend visits to France and Germany. He proceeded Monday to the UK prime minister's country estate of Chequers outside London. Sunak pledged air-defence missiles and long-range attack drones for Ukraine, both numbering in the hundreds.

Russia said the new UK weapons would only cause "further destruction", and claimed to have downed a Storm Shadow cruise missile that Britain said last week it was providing, in the West's first deployment of long-range rocketry for Ukraine.

### Spirit of Churchill

Sunak noted that the Chequers meeting was taking place in the buildup to a Council of Europe leaders' meeting in Iceland and a G7 summit in Japan, as



ELLESBOROUGH: Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak (R) talks with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky, as he walks with him to a waiting Chinook helicopter following their meeting at Chequers, the prime minister's official country residence, near Ellesborough. — AFP

he hit out at Russian President Vladimir Putin. "The front lines of Putin's war of aggression may be in Ukraine but the fault lines stretch all over the world," Sunak said, vowing: "We must not let them down."

Sunak hosted Zelensky in the same Chequers room used by Britain's World War II leader Winston Churchill to broadcast defiant speeches vowing victory over the Nazis. "And the same way today, your leadership, your country's bravery and fortitude are an inspiration to us all," he told Zelensky. Dressed in his trademark fatigues, Zelensky gave a bear hug to Sunak after disembarking from a Royal Air Force Chinook helicopter, and thanked him for the latest UK aid. He said the crisis was a matter of "security not only for Ukraine, it is important for all of Europe".

The timing and focus of Ukraine's high-stakes counter-offensive are unclear, but Zelensky's tour of European capitals underscored the importance of securing Western heavy weapons and ammunition to press the fight. France offered dozens more light tanks and armored vehicles, while Germany said it was preparing a new military package worth 2.7 billion euros (\$3 billion) — its biggest yet for Ukraine. — AFP

## US challenger Pope elected new UN migration chief

**GENEVA:** White House veteran Amy Pope will become the first woman to head the UN's International Organization for Migration after beating her boss Antonio Vitorino in a leadership vote. "Humbled and honored to be chosen as the next Director General of (IOM)," Pope said in a tweet, minutes after member states elected her by acclamation after Portugal's former deputy prime minister Vitorino bowed to her lead and withdrew.

The IOM announced in a statement that she would become the organization's first woman chief on October 1. After an unusually acrimonious leadership battle that pitted the United States against its European allies, the IOM's 175 member were asked Monday to vote by secret ballot on who should steer the organization for the next five years.

After a first round of voting, Pope was clearly in the lead, missing just 12 votes to reach the two-thirds majority needed to declare victory. Instead of allowing the vote to go to a second round, Vitorino decided to bow out of the race.

"I am ready to work with ALL our member states and global partners to unleash the opportunities provided by effective, orderly and humane migration," Pope said in her tweet. The IOM was founded in 1951 to handle the displacements in Europe following World War II but the agency only joined the UN fold seven years ago.

The race for the top job at the organization comes at a critical time, as global numbers of migrants soar. The Geneva-based body is the leading international agency addressing the needs of some 281 million migrants throughout the world, according to a 2020 estimate.

The drawn-out campaign for the director general position has caused a rift between Washington —



GENEVA: International Organization for Migration (IOM) Deputy Director-General Amy Pope of the US delivers her acceptance speech next to former Director-General Antonio Vitorino (Far L) after being elected as new UN migration chief in Geneva, on May 15, 2023. — AFP

which invested heavily in ushering an American back into a traditionally US-held leadership role — and its European allies, observers said.

### Challenge shocked Europe

Within the UN system, agency chiefs who wish to take on a second term are typically shooed without challenge. When Pope announced her candidacy in October, "it was a bit of a shock", a European diplomat in Geneva acknowledged to AFP on condition of anonymity.

"It was not seen as a friendly move," Vitorino, a 66-year-old former Portuguese defence minister and deputy prime minister who became IOM chief in 2018, had appeared defiant before the vote.

"All my predecessors for 70 years made two mandates, and I don't see any reason for a successful first mandate not to be followed by a second mandate," he told AFP in March. Vitorino enjoyed particularly strong support from European countries and had been praised for effectively leading the rapidly expanding organization. — AFP



## International

# Top Swiss Islamic scholar Tariq Ramadan starts Geneva rape trial

## Trial is expected to last two to three days, verdict will be delivered on May 24

GENEVA: The Swiss Islamic scholar Tariq Ramadan went on trial at a Geneva criminal court Monday charged with "rape and sexual coercion", allegations which the former Oxford University professor denies. Ramadan arrived shortly after 8:30 am (0630 GMT) at the Geneva courthouse, where security had been visibly boosted as members of the public streamed in to watch the highly anticipated trial.

The Swiss complainant, who says she has faced threats and therefore wishes to be known under the assumed name of "Brigitte" during the trial, was in her 40s at the time of the alleged attack, which dates back almost 15 years. Ramadan, 60, is accused of having subjected her to brutal sexual acts accompanied by beatings and insults on the evening of October 28, 2008, in a Geneva hotel room. Brigitte filed a complaint with the Geneva courts in April 2018. The Swiss intellectual, a charismatic yet controversial figure in European Islam, could face two to 10 years in prison if convicted.

Contacted by AFP, one of his French lawyers, Philippe Ohayon, declined to comment ahead of the trial, which is expected to last two to three days. The verdict will be delivered on May 24, the Geneva courts told AFP, and Ramadan will be able to appeal if convicted.

Controversial among secularists who see him as a supporter of political Islam, Ramadan obtained his doctorate from the University of Geneva, with his thesis focused on his grandfather, who founded Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood movement. He was a professor of contemporary Islamic studies at Britain's prestigious Oxford University

until November 2017, and held visiting roles at universities in Qatar and Morocco.

He was forced to take a leave of absence when rape allegations surfaced in France at the height of the "Me Too" movement, over suspected attacks in France between 2009 and 2016. The Swiss investigation moved slowly, as Ramadan was initially in pre-trial detention in Paris and could not be questioned by the Swiss authorities.

After he was released in November 2018, he was put on probation and barred from leaving France. However, he has exceptional authorisation to cross the border and venture a few kilometres into Swiss territory for the Geneva trial. A convert to Islam, Brigitte told investigators she had met Ramadan at a book signing a few months before the night of October 28, 2008, and then again at a conference in September that year. They shared an increasingly intimate correspondence on social networks, and on the evening of the alleged events, she joined him at his hotel in Geneva.

According to the indictment, he is accused of committing rape three times during the night, and "sexual coercion" to the point of suffocation. Ramadan denies the allegations. "This trial is an ordeal for my client, not a therapy," the woman's French lawyer Francois Zimeray, a former diplomat and human rights specialist, told AFP.

"She is waiting for recognition of the suffering that has accompanied her for 15 years and which she has made it a painful duty to reveal." "She expects a difficult, painful confrontation but she is ready for it, convinced that this fight is a duty for her as much as an ordeal," he added. — AFP



GENEVA: Swiss leading Islamic scholar Tariq Ramadan arrives at the Geneva court house on May 15, 2023, at the opening of his trial for "rape and sexual coercion" in a case dating back 15 years. — AFP

## Zionist army kills Palestinian in West Bank: Ministry

RAMALLAH: Zionist soldiers killed a Palestinian man Monday in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry said, with the army saying it returned fire after being shot at.

"Saleh Mohamed Sabra, 22, was killed by live bullets during a Zionist attack in Nablus," the ministry said, adding that another Palestinian was wounded by gunfire. The Zionist army said it was conducting an operation in Nablus to prepare to demolish the house of a man suspected of an armed attack that killed two Jews in the area in February.

"During the operation, suspects threw stones and fired in the direction of soldiers who responded with live fire," the army said in a statement, adding that one suspect was hit. The incident comes after a ceasefire ended five days of fierce fighting between the Islamic Jihad militant group in Gaza and Zionist entity. The clashes killed 35 people, the vast majority Palestinians. The conflict has this year claimed the lives of



NABLUS: Mourners carry the body of Palestinian Saleh Sabra, 22, during his funeral procession in Askar refugee camp east of Nablus in the occupied West Bank on May 15, 2023. — AFP

at least 150 Palestinians, 20 Zionists, a Ukrainian and an Italian, according to an AFP tally based on official sources from both sides. These figures include combatants as well as civilians, and, on the Zionist side, three members of the Arab minority.

Palestinians on Monday mark the "Nakba", or catastrophe, when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced from their homes following the creation of Zionist state 75 years ago. — AFP

## At least 13 killed in Mexico highway crash

MATAMOROS: At least 13 people were killed when a passenger van and a semi-truck collided on a highway in northeastern Mexico on Sunday, local authorities said. The vehicles crashed on a road between the cities of Zaragoza and Hidalgo in the border state of Tamaulipas.

"Civil protection authorities are responding, and so far they are reporting 13 people deceased," Tamaulipas security officials said in a statement. Images shared by authorities showed the passenger van almost entirely destroyed by fire, with the semi-truck also severely burned.

The number of victims could increase, said an official from the prosecutor's office, who did not want to be identified, as there were indications that the truck driver's family was with him and may have died too. Early indications were that the driver may have fled.

Local media reported that more than 20 people may have died in the crash and resulting fire, but first re-



GUERMEZ: Handout picture released by the Mexican Army showing the site of an accident on the Zaragoza-Hidalgo highway between a truck and a van with passengers where at least 13 people died and several were injured, in the state of Tamaulipas, Mexico. — AFP

sponders were still working to fully understand the situation at the scene, the prosecutor's office official said.

The victims may have all been members of one family who had rented the van to drive to the northern city of Monterrey in Veracruz, local media reported. Road accidents have increased in recent years in Mexico, usually due to high speeds, poor vehicle conditions or driver fatigue. Civil organizations have demanded stricter regulations to curb the toll. — AFP

## Gulf railway project on...

Continued from Page 1

This proposal is a combination of a number of proposals submitted by various parties calling for expatriates to own real estate in Kuwait in order to revitalize the economy and attract money to Kuwait, instead of it leaving the country.

## Resurgent Erdogan heads for historic...

Continued from Page 1

Erdogan secured 49.5 percent of the vote and Kilicdaroglu picked up 44.9 percent. Nationalist candidate Sinan Ogan — a former member of a far-right party now allied with the government — had 5.2 percent. Official turnout reached a record 88.9 percent.

The markets were depressed and Erdogan's supporters ecstatic. The lira touched new lows against the dollar and stocks on the Istanbul exchange fell on a realization that the era of Erdogan's unconventional economics may not be over. "We think Turkey is now at very high risk of an increase in macroeconomic instability," the Capital Economics consultancy said. The view was far different in the more nationalist and conservative corners of Turkey. "The people won!" the right-wing Yeni Safak newspaper proclaimed in a banner headline. The pro-government Sabah daily called Erdogan's performance a "superb success".

"Erdogan is going to win. He is a real leader. The Turkish people trust him. He has a vision for Turkey," Kurumahmut told AFP in Istanbul. "There are things that need to be improved, on the economy, education

According to official data, the size of the investment property market in Kuwait is estimated at 13,000 buildings containing 320,000 apartments, and many of these buildings are mortgaged to banks. Allowing expatriates to own apartments would create liquidity to free these mortgages and inject these amounts in the national economy, creating economic growth and an active real estate sector that helps diversify the national economy and focuses on real estate development in the investment sector, reorienting it to mitigate the crisis in the housing sector. — Agencies

or the refugee policy. But we know he's the one who can sort all that out," the 40-year-old tourism sector worker added.

Some Kilicdaroglu supporters tried to stay positive. "I don't want to even think about a scenario in which Erdogan wins," Emin Serbest said as the last voted were being counted. "If Kilicdaroglu wins... a beautiful time awaits us," said the 33-year-old Istanbul municipality worker.

But most analysts feel that Kilicdaroglu and his six-party opposition alliance will have a difficult time halting Erdogan's momentum over the coming two weeks. "The president is likely to ride his strong approval rating, surprise win in parliament, and incumbency advantages to secure re-election," said Emre Peker of the Eurasia Group consultancy. His ruling alliance's similarly strong performance in the legislative polls suggests "identity, terrorism and security issues played well with Erdogan's broader conservative base and helped the president make up for his economic shortcomings", he added.

Political risk consultant Anthony Skinner said Sunday's result underscored the difficulty of trying to gauge public opinion in the strongly polarized nation of 85 million people. "Many pre-election public opinion poll results did not reflect Erdogan's resourcefulness and the degree of support he still enjoys in the country," the veteran Turkey watcher said. "It just goes to show how careful one needs to be when looking at public opinion polls prior to elections." — AFP

potential benefits of collecting human eDNA, such as tracking cancer mutations in wastewater, discovering long-hidden archaeological sites or revealing the true culprit of a crime using only the DNA they left in a room.

Natalie Ram, a law professor at the University of Maryland not involved in the research, said the findings "should raise serious concern about genetic privacy and the appropriate limits of policing". "Exploiting involuntarily shed genetic information for investigative aims risks putting all of us under perpetual genetic surveillance," she wrote in a commentary on the study.

The authors of the study shared her concerns. McCauley warned harvesting human eDNA without consent could be used to track individual people or even target "vulnerable populations or ethnic minorities". It is why the team decided to sound the alarm, they said in a statement, calling for policymakers and scientists to start working on regulation that could address the "ethical quagmire". — AFP

## Syria back at Arab League as Assad...

Continued from Page 1

Saudi King Salman has invited Assad to attend Friday's summit in the Red Sea coastal city of Jeddah, which would be his first since the 2010 meeting in Libya. Regional capitals have gradually been warming to Assad as he has held onto power and clawed back lost territory with crucial support from Iran and Russia. The United Arab Emirates re-established ties with Syria in 2018 and has been leading the recent charge to reintegrate Damascus.

Syrian state media said Monday the UAE has invited Assad to attend the United Nations climate summit in Dubai later this year, his first invitation to a global summit since the start of Syria's war in 2011. The Emirati charge d'affaires in Syria, Abdul Hakeem Al-Nuaimi, has handed Assad an invitation from UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan "to attend the COP28 climate conference", official news agency SANA reported.

Heads of Western states who have imposed sanctions on Syria over the civil war and oppose normalization with Damascus usually attend the COP summits. US President Joe Biden and France's Emmanuel Macron were among those who attended last year's talks in Egypt. In March last year, Assad visited the UAE on his first official trip

## A month into Sudan conflict...

Continued from Page 1

wish to be named because of safety concerns. "People are getting more and more scared because the two sides... are becoming more and more violent."

The fighting broke out on April 15 between army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who leads the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). What remains of the government has retreated to Port Sudan about 850 km away, the hub for mass evacuations. The United Nations says nearly 200,000 people have fled Sudan and another 700,000 have been internally displaced by the battles.

"We're left on the street, in the sun," complained Hamden Mohammed, who fled the Khartoum area for Port Sudan. "We want the organizations to evacuate us from Sudan, because the country is totally devastated. There's no food, no work... nothing." Around 1,000 people have been killed, mainly in and around Khartoum as well as the ravaged state of West Darfur, according to medics.

Violence on Friday and Saturday alone in El Geneina, the West Darfur capital, left at least 280 killed, according to the Sudanese doctors' union, which cited "difficulties in surveying all casualties". "There was still heavy shelling on Sunday that hit my home, damaging a part of it and injuring one of my sisters," said a resident of El Geneina. "Other houses around us were completely destroyed."

After a month of war, Burhan declared he was freezing the RSF's assets. He dismissed the central bank governor and the police director general, while Daglo threatened in an audio recording that the army chief would be "brought to justice and hanged" in a public

to an Arab country since the war erupted in 2011, and visited again this year.

The United States and Britain said last week they still opposed direct ties with Damascus. "We are not going to be in the business of normalizing relations with Assad and with that regime," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said. British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly, speaking alongside Blinken, said London was "very uncomfortable" with the Arab League decision.

Diplomatic activity picked up after a deadly earthquake struck Syria and Turkey on Feb 6. A decision in March by Saudi Arabia and Iran, a close ally of Damascus, to resume ties has also shifted the regional political landscape. Riyadh, which cut ties with Assad's government in 2012 and had long openly championed the Syrian leader's ouster, confirmed last week that work would resume at the two countries' respective diplomatic missions.

But while Syria's frontlines have mostly quietened, large parts of the north remain outside government control, and no political solution to the conflict is in sight. Top diplomats from nine Arab countries discussed the Syria crisis in Saudi Arabia last month, and five regional foreign ministers including Syria's met in Jordan on May 1. The Arab League's secretary-general, Ahmed Aboul Gheit, said on Monday that Syria's return could revive "the principle of Arab solidarity", according to a statement delivered by his deputy, Hossam Zaki. — AFP

square. Neither side has been able to establish dominance on the battlefield. The army, backed by Egypt, has the advantage of air power while Daglo is, according to experts, supported by the United Arab Emirates and foreign fighters.

Daglo commands troops that stemmed from the notorious Janjaweed militia, accused of atrocities in the Darfur war that began two decades ago. For now, "both sides believe that they can win militarily", US Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines told a recent Senate hearing. Multiple truce deals have been violated as hopes dimmed for an end to the fighting. Both sides "break ceasefires with a regularity that demonstrates a sense of impunity unprecedented even by Sudan's standards of civil conflict," said Alex Rondos, the European Union's former special representative to the Horn of Africa.

Sudan has a long history of military coups, but hopes had risen after mass protests led to the ouster of Islamist-backed strongman Omar al-Bashir in 2019, followed by a shaky transition toward civilian rule.

As Washington and other foreign powers lifted sanctions, Sudan was slowly reintegrating into the international community, before the generals derailed that transition with another coup in 2021. The security breakdown has broadened to the country's regions where ethnic violence last week left more than 50 killed in West Kordofan and White Nile states, according to the UN.

The fighting has deepened the humanitarian crisis in Sudan, where one in three people already relied on humanitarian assistance before the war. Since then, aid agencies have been looted and at least 18 of their workers killed. Across the Red Sea, in the Saudi city of Jeddah, envoys from both sides have been negotiating. By May 11 they had signed a commitment to respect humanitarian principles, including allowing in badly needed aid. — AFP

## Scientists sound alarm about...

Continued from Page 1

One of the study's authors, Mark McCauley of the Whitney Laboratory, said that by sequencing the DNA samples, the team was able to identify if a person had a greater risk of diseases such as autism and diabetes. "All of this very personal, ancestral and health-related data is freely available in the environment, and it's simply floating around us in the air right now," McCauley told an online press conference.

"We specifically did not examine our sequences in a way that we would be able to pick out specific individuals because of the ethical issues," he said. But that would "definitely" be possible in the future, he added. "The question is how long it takes until we're at that stage." The researchers emphasized the



## International

# China jails US citizen for life on espionage charges

## Jailing likely to further damage relations with Washington

BEIJING: China has sentenced a 78-year-old US citizen to life in prison for espionage, a court said Monday, but revealed few details about the previously unreported case. Such heavy terms are relatively rare for foreign citizens in China, and the jailing of American passport holder John Shing-wan Leung is likely to further strain already-damaged ties between Beijing and Washington.

Leung, who is also a Hong Kong permanent resident, "was found guilty of espionage, sentenced to life imprisonment, deprived of political rights for life", said a statement from the Intermediate People's Court in the eastern Chinese city of Suzhou.

Suzhou authorities "took compulsory measures according to the law" against Leung in April 2021, it said, without specifying when he had been taken into custody. It was unclear where Leung had been living at the time of his arrest.

A spokesperson for the US embassy in Beijing said they were aware of reports that a US citizen had been recently convicted and sentenced in Suzhou. "The Department of State has no greater priority than the safety and security of US citizens overseas," the spokesperson said. "Due to privacy considerations, we have no further comment." The court statement provided no further details on the charges, and closed-door trials are routine in China for sensitive cases. Foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin declined to comment further on the



HONG KONG: Hong Kong security minister Chris Tang speaks at a press conference at the Government Headquarters in Hong Kong on May 15, 2023. China has sentenced a 78-year-old US citizen to life in prison for espionage, a court said. — AFP

case at a regular press briefing on Monday. In Hong Kong, security minister Chris Tang told a news conference Monday the city's authorities were notified of Leung's arrest in 2021. "The Hong Kong police have carried out follow-up action according to the notification," Tang said, refusing to elaborate further.

### Rights activist jailed

The jailing is likely to further damage relations with Washington, which are already severely strained over issues such as trade, human rights and Taiwan. Washington and Beijing have just ended an unofficial

pause in high-level contacts over the United States' shooting down in February of a suspected Chinese surveillance balloon.

US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and top Chinese diplomat Wang Yi held eight hours of talks in Vienna in an apparent breakthrough last week, with both sides describing the meeting as "candid, substantive and constructive".

On Friday, Washington issued a statement condemning the reported sentencing of a Chinese human rights activist for "inciting subversion of state power". Guo Feixiong, also known as Yang Mao-dong, was jailed for eight years, according to rights groups. There has been no official confirmation of the sentencing from China.

The US State Department said in its statement its diplomats had been barred from attending the trial in southern China. "We urge the PRC to live up to its international commitments, give its citizens due process, respect their human rights and fundamental freedoms including freedom of speech, and end the use of arbitrary detentions and exit bans," said US State Department spokesman Matthew Miller.

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said on Monday the country's "judicial authorities act in accordance with the law, and their actions brook no interference". US President Joe Biden is due to head to Hiroshima for a meeting of leaders of the G7 group of major developed economies.

The G7's relationship with China is expected to be high on the agenda at the May 19-21 summit. Other high-profile espionage cases in recent years include the arrest in 2019 of Chinese-born Australian writer Yang Jun.

Australia called last week for another of its nationals, jailed journalist Cheng Lei, to be reunited with her family after 1,000 days in detention over "supplying state secrets overseas". In April, authorities formally charged a prominent Chinese journalist with spying, more than a year after he was detained while having lunch at a Beijing restaurant with a Japanese diplomat, a media rights group said.

### Revised anti-espionage law

Also in April, China approved an amendment to its anti-espionage law, broadening its scope by widening the definition of spying and banning the transfer of any data related to what the authorities define as national security.

The changes to the law will come into force on July 1. "Chinese authorities have long had an essentially free hand in addressing national security concerns," Chinese law expert Jeremy Daum wrote. "The laws involved are sometimes amorphous and vague, leading to selective, or even arbitrary, enforcement," he said, adding that the definition of "espionage" was already so broad "it isn't immediately clear what the impact of the expanded definition will be". — AFP



PONNAGYUN: People wait for a car near Ponnagyun Township in Sittwe district Myanmar's Rakhine state on May 15, 2023, as they plan to return to Sittwe after cyclone Mocha made landfall. — AFP

## Myanmar port city cut off in Cyclone Mocha aftermath

KYAUKTAW: Contact was slowly being restored on Monday with tens of thousands of people cut off in a major Myanmar port city as the death toll from a cyclone that tore through the west of the country and neighboring Bangladesh rose to at least five.

Cyclone Mocha made landfall between Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh and Myanmar's Sittwe carrying winds of up to 195 kilometres (120 miles) per hour, the biggest storm to hit the Bay of Bengal in more than a decade.

The storm had largely passed by late Sunday, sparing the refugee camps housing almost a million Rohingya in Bangladesh, where officials said there had been no deaths. At least five people were killed in Myanmar and "some residents" were injured, the military junta said in a statement, without giving details.

More than 860 houses and 14 hospitals or clinics had been damaged across the country, it said. Communications were still mostly down on Monday with Rakhine state's capital Sittwe, home to around 150,000 people and which bore the brunt of the storm according to cyclone trackers. Hundreds of people who had sheltered on higher ground were returning to the city along a road littered with trees, pylons and power cables, AFP correspondents said. A military checkpoint around 10 kilometres (six miles) outside the city barred cars and vans from entering, forcing people to continue their journeys on motorbike or foot.

In Sittwe, power pylons hung low over deserted streets and trees still standing were stripped of leaves. At least five people had died in the city and around

25 had been injured, local rescue worker Ko Lin Lin told AFP. It was not clear whether any of them were included in the death toll in the junta's statement. Mocha made landfall on Sunday, bringing a storm surge and high winds that toppled a communications tower in Sittwe, according to images published on social media. "I was in a Buddhist monastery when the storm came," one resident told AFP.

"The prayer hall and monk dining hall have collapsed. We had to move from this building and that building. Now roads are blocked as trees and pylons are fallen." Junta-affiliated media reported that the storm had put hundreds of base stations, which connect mobile phones to networks, out of action in Rakhine. Junta chief Min Aung Hlaing had "instructed officials to make preparations for Sittwe Airport transport relief", state media reported, without giving details on when relief was expected to arrive.

### 'Extensive damage'

The United Nations said communications problems meant it had not yet been able to assess the damage in Rakhine, which has been ravaged by ethnic conflict for years. "Early reports suggest the damage is extensive," the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said late on Sunday. On Bangladesh's Shah Porir Dwp island, residents began repairing damaged homes, searching through debris and retrieving scattered possessions. Bangladesh officials said they had evacuated 750,000 people.

Secretary of the disaster management ministry, Kamrul Hasan, told AFP on Monday no one had died in the cyclone. The damage was also minimal in the Rohingya camps, where about a million people live in 190,000 bamboo and tarpaulin shelters, officials said. "About 300 shelters were destroyed by the cyclone," deputy refugee commissioner Shamsud Douza told AFP. The chances of landslides in the camps were also low "due to lack of rain". — AFP

together on security, improving information sharing and mechanisms for cross-border collaboration. "Kenya and Somalia are continuously experiencing both inter and intra-security challenges emanating from Al-Shabaab," he added. Kenya is a major contributor of troops to the African Union military operation against the Al-Qaeda-linked Al-Shabaab, which has been waging a violent insurgency in Somalia for more than 15 years. Rela-

## Protests against Pakistan's judge as Khan back in court

LAHORE: Hundreds of pro-government protestors demanded Monday the resignation of Pakistan's top judge for releasing Imran Khan from arrest last week, as the former prime minister went back to court facing yet more legal cases.

Khan, who was ousted from power last April, was arrested on Tuesday following months of simmering political crisis, prompting his voters to rampage through cities. His arrest was declared unlawful by the Supreme Court's chief justice and Khan was later released and granted various bail applications.

"The chief justice and a few of his cronies are disgracing the judiciary like never before. Their justice seems to be serving one leader only," said Malik Hassam Mehmood, a 36-year-old trader and supporter of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's party.

"We are here to protest for the rule of law and a non-partisan judiciary." There was a heavy security presence in the capital on Monday as protesters gathered outside the court in the capital's so-called red zone. The Supreme Court order said Khan's arrest as he arrived at Islamabad High Court to file a bail application in the case "violated the petitioner's right of access to justice" But "people want to come in very large numbers because of a deep sense of anger and anguish", Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah said of the protest on Sunday.

Meanwhile, former international cricket star Khan returned to the Lahore High Court on Monday where his lawyers said they were seeking information on fresh cases linking him to the violence that followed his arrest. The case will continue Tuesday. Khan was accompanied by his wife, Bushra Bibi, who is tangled up in the same corruption case that led to the former leader's arrest. Khan's team erected a white curtain between his vehicle and the courtroom to shield the couple from the media. — AFP



LAHORE: Former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan (right) with his wife Bushra Bibi (left) arrive to appear at a high court in Lahore on May 15, 2023. — AFP

tions between the two nations have been dogged by a maritime border row as well as Somali accusations of Kenyan meddling in its affairs, while Nairobi has accused Mogadishu of using it as a scapegoat for its own political and security problems. Somalia severed diplomatic ties in December 2020 after Nairobi hosted the political leadership of Somaliland, a breakaway region not recognized by the central government in Mogadishu. — AFP

### News in Brief

#### Girl wounded in Belgrade dies

BELGRADE: A girl that was wounded in an elementary school shooting in Serbia earlier this month died on Monday, state television said, becoming the tenth victim of the unprecedented massacre. On May 3, a 13-year-old allegedly brought his father's gun to school and murdered eight of his fellow classmates and a security guard at an elementary school in downtown Belgrade. Seven people were wounded — six students and one teacher — including the girl who was rushed to a Belgrade hospital and operated by a team of brain surgeons, according to local media. Serbian ministry of health said the patient sustained "severe head injuries" and died despite doctors' best efforts, state-run broadcaster RTS reported. Her age was not disclosed. All other children shot in the massacre were in their early teens. Minister of health Danica Grujicic expressed her "deepest condolences" to the family. — AFP

#### Norway naval officer guilty

OSLO: A Norway court ruled Monday that the watch officer of a Norwegian frigate that sank after a 2018 collision was at fault and handed down a 60-day suspended sentence. Returning from a NATO exercise, the KHM Helge Ingstad frigate sank after crashing into the Maltese oil tanker Sola TS in the early hours of November 8, in a fjord near the western Norwegian town of Bergen. Eight of the 137 people aboard the frigate received minor injuries. A 33-year-old officer who had taken over the controls eight minutes before the collision was accused of negligence. "He considers it unfair that he is the only one held responsible for the accident, since there was a combination of factors," his lawyer Christian Lundin said after the Bergen court announced its verdict. The prosecution had called for a 120-day suspended sentence. Norway's Accident Investigation Board had concluded the collision was largely due to human error. — AFP

#### China envoy will arrive in Kyiv

KYIV: A Chinese special envoy will arrive in Kyiv for a two-day visit on Tuesday, as part of a European tour to promote Beijing-led peace negotiations on the war in Ukraine. China, which has close ties with Russia, has tried to position itself as a mediator in the war in Ukraine. A Ukrainian government official told AFP that China's high-ranking diplomat Li Hui "will be in Kyiv May 16 and 17." Beijing had announced his visit last week, saying Li would also visit Russia and other European nations. The trip comes three weeks after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky spoke by telephone to his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping. Li will be the highest-ranking Chinese diplomat to visit the war-torn country since Moscow's invasion last year. He served as China's ambassador to Russia from 2009 to 2019. — AFP

#### Nurse gets life for killing

MUNICH: A Munich court sentenced a 27-year-old male nurse to life in prison Monday for murdering two patients by deliberately administering unapproved drugs so he could be "left in peace". The nurse, identified only as Mario G., was also found guilty on six counts of attempted murder, a spokesman for the Munich district court in southern Germany said. During his trial, Mario G. admitted to injecting patients with sedatives and other drug cocktails while working in the recovery room at a Munich hospital. "I wanted to be left in peace," Mario G. told the court. Three of the attempts targeted the German intellectual and writer Hans Magnus Enzensberger in November 2020, but he survived. Enzensberger died two years later of natural causes, at the age of 93. The two patients who died as a result of Mario G.'s actions were 80 and 89 years old. — AFP

## Kenya, Somalia agree to phased border reopening

NAIROBI: Kenya and Somalia have agreed to a phased reopening of their common border after more than a decade, Kenya's interior minister said on Monday as ties warm between the two neighbors following years of tensions. The announcement came after a high-level ministerial meeting in Nairobi on cooperation including on security, as well as trade and the movement of people. The frontier had been officially closed in 2011 because of attacks on Kenyan soil by Somalia's Al-Shabaab Islamist militant group.

"We have resolved that the border between Kenya and Somalia will be reopened in a phased manner within the next 90 days, effective today," Interior Minister Kithure Kindiki said, adding that a first crossing should be opened in 30 days.

The two nations had announced plans in July last year to reopen the frontier at talks between then Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta and his Somali counterpart Hassan Sheikh Mohamud but it never materialized. Kindiki said they would work



NAIROBI: Kenyan minister of Interior Kithure Kindiki (left) and Somali Internal Security Minister Mohamed Ahmed Sheikh Ali attend a joint press conference on re-opening the border between Kenya and Somali at Harambee House in Nairobi on May 15, 2023. — AFP



## Business

TUESDAY, MAY 16, 2023

# Macron and Musk meet in Paris on investing in France

## Talks focus on investments in electric vehicles and energy sectors

**PARIS:** President Emmanuel Macron met billionaire businessman Elon Musk on Monday to discuss future investment projects, as the French leader hosts a conference aimed at persuading business leaders to put their money in France.

Macron hosted the world's second richest man, who is the chief executive of electric car firm Tesla, social media company Twitter and cosmic exploration outfit SpaceX, six months after their last encounter in the United States, his office said. They met at the Elysee Palace before heading to Versailles for the latest edition of the president's Choose France conference where Macron seeks to drum up investment in the country.

"We talked about the attractiveness of France and the significant progress in the electric vehicle and energy sectors," Macron wrote on Twitter afterwards.

"We have so much to do together," he added. Musk smiled and waved at reporters as the meeting got underway but made no comment. Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire told the BFMTV broadcaster that "negotiations are ongoing" with the magnate. Le Maire gave no details of Monday's talks with Musk, saying simply that "all of today's investments are the fruit of months or even years of negotiations".

### 'Choose France'

Macron said in another tweet that some 13 billion euros of investment would be announced at the summit, equating to the creation of some 8,000 jobs. "When a foreign investor chooses France, it's good

for jobs and for our regions," he said. Some 200 foreign business bosses are expected at the summit, including Sunil Bharti Mittal of Indian conglomerate Bharti Enterprises, ArcelorMittal chief Lakshmi Mittal and Nokia chief executive Pekka Lundmark.

The meeting is being hosted at the Palace of Versailles, the former residence of France's monarchs, around which a tight security perimeter has been erected. Macron remains the target of angry protests after signing into law his controversial pension reform last month, leading to new accusations from the opposition he was only a president for the rich.

Already confirmed last week was the investment of over five billion euros by Taiwanese battery maker ProLogium in building a new factory in northern France for its first European plant. Among other projects, the Swedish furniture giant Ikea is announcing over 900 million euros of investment in France by 2026, including the creation of a logistics centre near Toulouse.

In pharmaceuticals, Pfizer is injecting an additional 500 million euros and Britain's GSK nearly 400 million in France. During a US trip in December, Macron held an unannounced face-to-face meeting with Musk, saying later the two had had a "clear and honest" discussion during an hour-long meeting, including on electric cars and batteries. He had also conveyed to Musk his — and Europe's — concerns about content moderation on Twitter since Musk bought the influential platform. Macron confirmed the pair "also talked about digital regulation" in their Paris meeting. — AFP



**VERSAILLES:** France's President Emmanuel Macron (second left) meets with businessmen, including SpaceX, Twitter and electric car maker Tesla CEO Elon Musk (second right) and ArcelorMittal's CEO Lakshmi Mittal (right) during the 6th edition of the "Choose France" Summit at the Chateau de Versailles, outside Paris on May 15, 2023. — AFP

## Al-Ghais: Global energy demand to grow by 23%

**KUWAIT:** OPEC Secretary General Haitham Al-Ghais said, "as populations and economies grow, the world will need more energy in the decades to come. In our world oil forecast for 2022, we expect global energy demand to grow by 23 percent through 2045. Achieving this growth requires ensuring energy security, affordable access and global emissions reductions in line with the Paris Agreement, investment and unprecedented collaboration," Al-Ghais said in a press release.

Al-Ghais added that for the oil industry alone, which will account for almost 29 percent of the world's energy needs by 2045, the total global investment needs amount to \$12.1 trillion from time to time. This equates to more than \$500 billion each year, noting that recent annual levels have been well below this amount due to the industrial downturn, the "corona pandemic" and the growing attention to environmental, social and health issues, he said.

The OPEC Secretary General said: "There is not enough investment in all energies, and therefore the sustainability of the global energy system is at

stake, and we need a long-term climate and investment-friendly that works with producers and consumers, because under-investment needs to be corrected. It's not about waiting for tomorrow, it's about getting there today," the release added.

Al-Ghais affirmed the willingness, will and ability of OPEC member states to play a major role in helping to supply energy to the world and reduce carbon emissions. "We are investing in upstream and downstream capacity. We are mobilizing cleaner technologies and a wide range of our human expertise to help decarbonize our industry. We are making significant investments in renewable energy, hydrogen capacity, carbon utilization and storage and other technologies, as well as promoting the circular economy to improve overall environmental performance," he added.

He said: "History has shown us that energy transitions develop slowly and have many pathways. He pointed out that more than 700 million people still do not have access to electricity and that 2.4 billion people use inefficient and polluting systems.

Al-Ghais pointed out that what can be seen in the turmoil in the energy market over the past 18 or so months is what could happen if the intertwined complexities of energy are not addressed. He added that the focus should be on reducing emissions and using all fuels globally.

"In this regard, there is no single solution for the future of sustainable energy. The right path for one



Haitham Al-Ghais

may not be the right path for another," said Al-Ghais. Al-Ghais stressed the need for joint cooperation and global work to find realistic and appropriate solutions for the future of energy sustainable and to achieve a logical, fair and sustainable transition in the energy sector.

Oil prices were steady on Monday as prospects of tight crude supply outweighed concerns about weakening fuel demand in the US and China. Brent, the benchmark for two thirds of the world's oil, was trading 0.76 per cent higher at \$74.73 a barrel at 3.29pm Kuwait time. West Texas Intermediate, the gauge that tracks US crude, was up 0.80 per cent at \$70.60 a barrel.

## CBK, KDIPA sign MoU

**KUWAIT:** The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) announced in a press release the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on May 15, 2023, regarding the coordination mechanisms between both sides.

The MoU is an outcome of the cooperation and coordination framework between both sides to encourage direct investment in the State of Kuwait, develop and streamline the investment environment, eliminating barriers to investors, in addition to depicting all the technical and procedural aspects relating to the licensing of the investment entities, and their renewal, amendment, and cancellation, for the purpose of facilitating these procedures, and ensuring a timely and accurate delivery, as well as performing the mandated roles of both the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority.

The MoU reiterates the resolve of the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority to attain synergy and integration in performing work operations within the government apparatus, avoiding duplication of tasks or overlapping of duties and main responsibilities for both sides, to ensure performing the work optimally.

## Lebanon banking chief set to miss Paris hearing

**BEIRUT:** Lebanon's central bank governor Riad Salameh is expected to miss an upcoming hearing in a French probe after Lebanese police had failed to deliver a summons, a judicial official said Monday.

Salameh, 72, has been the target of a series of judicial investigations both at home and abroad on allegations including fraud, money laundering and illicit enrichment. European investigators looking into the fortune he has amassed during three decades in the job had scheduled a hearing in Paris for Tuesday. Lebanese "police officers visited the central bank four times last week to hand Riad Salameh an official summons" on behalf of the French authorities, the judicial official told AFP.

"But they could not find him anywhere" and the summons was returned to Lebanon's judiciary, which was to notify French authorities, the official said. The official, who requested anonymity as they were not authorized to discuss the matter with the press, said Salameh will likely be absent from the hearing in Paris given the failure to deliver the summons.

In March 2022, France, Germany and Luxembourg seized assets worth 120 million euros (\$130 million) in a move linked to a French probe into Salameh's wealth. This year, European investigators have questioned Salameh in Beirut, also hearing from a Lebanese minister, Salameh's brother Raja, and central bank audit firms.

A visiting French judge had told Salameh in March that he was expected to appear in Paris, but a Lebanese judge attending the session said any summons needed to adhere to official procedures.



Riad Salameh

And last month, a Lebanese judge lifted a travel ban imposed on the embattled central bank chief ahead of the planned hearing abroad. "He will have no excuse not to go to France," a judicial official told AFP at the time. The first judicial source said on Monday a security officer at the central bank had given different reasons for Salameh's absence, telling police he had just left the building, was in a meeting or could not come to his workplace for "security reasons".

Salameh has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing. He is part of a political class widely blamed for a crushing economic crisis that began in Lebanon in late 2019 and which the World Bank has dubbed one of the worst in recent history. In February, Lebanon charged Salameh with embezzlement, money laundering and tax evasion as part of its own investigations.

The domestic probe was opened following a request for assistance from Switzerland's public prosecutor looking into more than \$300 million in fund movements of the Salameh and his brother. — AFP

## Biden 'optimistic' on debt talks as default looms

**REHOBOTH BEACH, US:** President Joe Biden said he remains "optimistic" about finding an agreement with his Republican opponents to raise the US debt limit and avoid a default, which his administration warned would cause "catastrophic" consequences.

Congressional Republicans are demanding budget cuts in exchange for lifting the US borrowing limit, while the White House has insisted for months that the nation's credit should not be up for negotiation. Alarm bells are meanwhile ringing over the possibility of a first-ever US default, with uncertainty over the actual date the government would stop being able to pay its bills. The two sides have remained at an impasse despite weeks of warnings from government officials and bankers that a default could unleash drastic consequences, including a possible recession and likely global financial contagion. Nonetheless, Biden said Sunday he thinks he will eventually be able to reach a deal.

"I remain optimistic because I'm a congenial optimist, but I really think there's a desire on their part as well as ours to reach agreement. I think we'll be able to do it," Biden told reporters while out on a bike ride near his beach home in Delaware. A much-anticipated new round of debt-ceiling talks between Biden and Republican leaders, including House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, was postponed from Friday until the coming week. Asked if the Tuesday meeting was still on, Biden said: "I think so."

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has warned a default could occur by June 1, while the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office forecast on Friday the date of June 15. "We shouldn't be here," Deputy



**WASHINGTON:** People walk and ride bicycles past the US Capitol in Washington, DC, on May 11, 2023. — AFP

Treasury Secretary Wally Adeyemo said Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union." "If Congress failed to raise the debt limit by the time of default, we would go into a recession and it'd be catastrophic," he warned. "The United States of America has never defaulted on its debt — and we can't."

Biden has stated he wants a "clean" hike of the debt ceiling, but Republicans are insisting any extension of the country's borrowing authority, currently capped at \$31.4 trillion, come with substantial curbs on spending. "It's time to bring spending levels back to pre-COVID, and then we can talk about raising the debt ceiling," Byron Donalds, a Republican representative from Florida, told FOX News on Sunday.

"If Joe Biden brings nothing to the table, if all he does is sit there with his hands in his pockets... then he's the one leading our nation into default." Former president Donald Trump on Sunday again encouraged his party to not give in, saying on Truth Social that "unless the Republicans get EVERYTHING they are asking for in terms of Cost Cutting," a default should be allowed to occur. — AFP



## Business

# Eaman Al-Roudhan among region's 50 most inspiring women leaders

## Arabian Business lists Zain Kuwait CEO for second consecutive year

**KUWAIT:** Zain, Kuwait's leading digital service provider, announced that Chief Executive Officer Eaman Al-Roudhan was featured among the region's 50 most inspiring women leaders' list for the second consecutive year. The listing was announced by Arabian Business, the region's premier business magazine, to highlight Al-Roudhan's pivotal role in cementing Zain's position as one of the most leading and innovate digital enablers in the Kuwaiti market.

Arabian Business, one of the region's most reputable business magazines, presents this annual list to shed light on the top female leaders whose efforts contribute to the progress and growth of the most vital industries in the Middle East and North Africa markets.

Eaman Al-Roudhan was featured in this list for the second consecutive year to shed light on the pivotal role she played in putting forth and executing Zain's comprehensive digital transformation strategy, entering the 5G era, empowering business sectors, strategically partnering with the public sector under the New Kuwait 2035 vision, enabling SMEs, and other strategic roadmaps that cemented the company's position as one of the Kuwaiti private sector's biggest leaders in the past years. Every year, Arabian Business recognizes the Middle East's most inspiring female



Eaman Al-Roudhan

businesswomen who create an impact, use their influence and experience, and show ambition to make their mark in the region's markets. The magazine selects 50 business leaders from tens of thousands of deserving individuals, including entrepreneurs, NGO directors, and top executives from across industries and sectors.

Al-Roudhan was appointed CEO of Zain Kuwait in December 2015. A results-focused telecommunications executive, Al-Roudhan has over 26 years of experience spent in various executive management

and leadership roles within Zain Kuwait as well as several Zain Group affiliates. Prior to her appointment as CEO, Al-Roudhan was the Chief Regulatory Officer of Zain Group.

Al-Roudhan's successful career at Zain started in the Kuwait operation, where she launched the first mobile prepaid service in the country and the region, which went on to dominate the country's mobile services customer base. As Zain expanded across the region, Al-Roudhan's responsibilities also grew from 2003 onwards as she was an active participant in the start-up teams in several Zain operations across the Middle East, namely Bahrain, Iraq, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia.

Al-Roudhan continued to play a key role in the transformation of Zain, building operational teams and establishing solid foundations for business units across all major telecommunications sectors including Intelligent Networks, product & service development, strategy and business planning, roaming, wholesale and carrier business, as well as regulatory affairs. After assuming the role of CEO in December 2015, Al-Roudhan led a number of vital projects that shaped a new period in Zain's history, most notably the commercial launch of fifth generation wireless

technology (5G) in June 2019, where Zain became the first operator to offer 5G technology in the GCC region via the Kuwaiti market with nationwide coverage. In addition, Al-Roudhan led the signing of the smart meters project with the Ministry of Electricity and Water, which is considered one of the largest projects in Kuwait's ICT sector and proved to be a testament to the country's efforts to catalyze the uptake of e-government services and digital transformation. Throughout her years at Zain, she has also orchestrated numerous strategic alliances with international and regional operators, lead teams and developed resources across technology, commercial, strategy, wholesale, and regulatory affairs.

Al-Roudhan is a member in a number of international standards and regulatory affairs bodies such as the GSMA Arab World regional interest group and the GSMA Chief Regulatory Officer Group (CROG). She holds a BSc in Electronics and Telecommunications Engineering from Kuwait University and has attended programs at Tokyo Institute of Technology (TIT) and executive programs at Harvard Business School. Al-Roudhan is also currently a member of the Advisory Board at the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS).

### NBK ECONOMIC REPORT

## Kuwait's real estate sales weaken in Q1 on uncertainty

**KUWAIT:** Real estate sales slipped to KD 714 million in 1Q23, their lowest level since 3Q20, as demand moderated amid high valuations in the residential sector, rising borrowing costs and uncertainty over the prospects for reforming utility subsidies and the distribution of plots and residential units during the current year. Overall real estate prices, as measured by our real estate price index, eased as residential sector prices edged lower. Residential sales activity took a sharp downward turn in 1Q23, falling to its lowest level since 2Q20 at KD 363 million, mainly on lower transaction volumes (-23 percent q/q; -42 percent y/y).

Sales (homes and plots) concentrated in Hawally and Ahmadi governorates accounted for 54 percent of total residential sales. The decline in sales could be due to a combination of lower speculation in residential areas, higher returns on deposits and a cloudier outlook regarding the path of government reforms in the sector.

Meanwhile, our residential price index (based on MoJ data) eased for the second consecutive quarter in 1Q23, with growth moderating to 8.4 percent

### Chart 1: Real estate sales

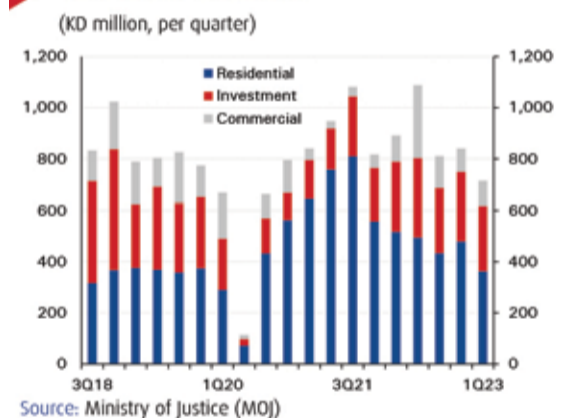


Table 1: Real estate sales

Source: Ministry of Justice

y/y. In year-on-year terms, home (as opposed to land) prices were still up strongly, reflecting higher recorded valuations especially in the Kuwait City and Hawally governorates. Higher prices could be dissuading buyers from pursuing real estate ventures. Mirroring the residential sector, sales in the investment (i.e. apartment and apartment buildings) segment also fell, to KD 254 million, while the volume of transactions saw a slight uptick on a year-on-year basis. Lower sales could be related to rising borrowing costs and the sluggish recovery in the rental market, despite the rise in the number of expats in 2022, historically a key driver of the rental market. Expatriate numbers are still 3.7 percent (125,000) below 2019 levels. Prices in the investment sector continue to trend downwards, on lower building prices, especially in Al-Farwaniya and Al-Ahmadi governorates, and are now more or less flat year-on-year.

Commercial sector sales declined by 5.8 percent y/y to KD 96 million in 1Q23, though activity was up on the previous quarter (+5.5 percent q/q). The concentration of sales in Jibla-Kuwait city supported the value of commercial sales, though transaction volumes saw a quarterly decline of 13.6 percent.

Separately, disbursed loans from Kuwait Credit Bank (KCB), the entity responsible for granting housing loans to citizens, increased by 49 percent m/m (+36 percent y/y) to KD 49.8 million in March. Strong recent performance is in line with increased plot disbursement by the government. KCB loans totaled KD 127 million in 1Q23, which could auger well

for the potential supply of homes over the medium to long-term.

The KCB recently requested from the government additional and urgent financing worth KD 275 million for the Mutla's new suburbs (N1-4) project that commenced in late April. The capital increase, if approved, could enhance access to home financing and help reduce the backlog in housing applications, though at a reported 90,915 as of March 2023 and with 6-8 thousand new applications every year, bringing this number down significantly is a considerable challenge. The Public Authority for Housing Welfare has the East Sabah Al-Ahmed Township next in its pipeline. This is due to be completed in 2024.

Looking ahead, we expect real estate sales to remain relatively soft through this year especially within the residential segment (April data shows sales fell by 68 percent y/y on the lowest transaction volume in almost three years), given elevated valuations in that sector, higher interest rates versus 2022, and only a gradual further recovery in the rental market. Any increase in government housing distributions or KCB loan disbursements will help boost supply over time, but is expected to have little impact on existing home prices (especially in inner areas) in the short run. In addition, still elevated construction costs and the current unsettled political climate are also adversely affecting investor sentiment. These factors, along with global recession fears, could continue to weigh on the market outlook in the near term.

## Russia looks to investors from Gulf states

**ABU DHABI:** Grappling with sanctions and an exodus of foreign firms, Moscow is looking to investors from oil-rich Arab Gulf states as the West locks it out over the war in Ukraine. At the Annual Investment Meeting in the United Arab Emirates this week, the Russian government touted investment opportunities, while Russian companies exhibiting in a special pavilion hunted for Arab funds. "We are here to try to attract any investors, among them Arabs," said Pavel Kalmychek, an official with Russia's ministry of economic development. Saudi Arabia and the UAE have maintained a neutral stance towards Russia's war in Ukraine, which has isolated President Vladimir Putin in the eyes of many Western states.

Fleeing the impact of Western sanctions, rich Russian emigres have flocked to the UAE where they have set up businesses and are now among the top buyers of property. Cooperation with the Middle East and North Africa is "one of Russia's foreign economic policy priorities", Maksim Reshetnikov, Russian minister of economic development, said in a speech to the forum.

"Now is the time to develop joint projects," he added, lauding countries in the region for their "independent foreign policy" and calling them "reliable partners for Russia". To further boost trade, the minister called for the creation of a "financial and banking system independent" of the West which would help businesses evade the impact of sanctions. Trade between Russia and Arab Gulf states increased by 40 percent in 2021 compared to the previous year, reaching \$8.6 billion, according to Russian officials.

Last year, trade between Russia and the UAE alone rose 68 percent to \$9 billion, according to Russian Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov.

### 'Competitive advantages'

At the investment meeting in the UAE capital, Abu Dhabi, Russian representatives touted Moscow as one of the largest metropolitan economies in the world and a key destination for investment, despite the Western sanctions. "Even in these not-easy times during which we are suppressed by the sanctions... Moscow offers a number of competitive advantages," said Sergey Cheremyn, who heads Moscow city's department for foreign economic relations.

"It is a point of entry into the market of Russia," he said in a speech to foreign investors.

At Russia's pavilion, entrepreneur Maksim Anisimov displayed 3D-printing technology designed and manufactured in Russia. "We are here to attract Arab partners," he told AFP. "In this region there's a lot of development and a lot of opportunities for business."

Studying the displays at the conference, Emirati engineer Adnan Al-Nimr Al-Zarouni said he would consider investing in Russian firms. "It is a big country and has many great opportunities," he told AFP. "It is rich in minerals, livestock, energy, agriculture, technology, and has high-level programmers."

According to Justin Alexander, director of the

Khalij Economics consulting firm, the region's big sovereign wealth funds have increased their investments in Russia over the past decade. "But these investments were tiny relative to their holdings in the West," he said.

### Cost of war

The International Monetary Fund raised its 2023 economic growth forecast for Russia last month on the "very strong source of revenues" for the economy from high energy prices in 2022 and during the first half of this year. But the Russian invasion is expected to have a significant impact over the medium term, with the IMF predicting the Russian economy will be about seven percent smaller than pre-war forecasts would have indicated. "The Russian economy has demonstrated its resilience and its ability to grow under the difficult circumstances," said Alexander Stuglev, chief executive officer of the Ros-congress Foundation that organizes the Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum. Despite major foreign firms suspending operations in Russia due to Western sanctions and the war in Ukraine, "Russia is wide open" for business, he said. — AFP

## Grand Hyatt Kuwait wins 'Best Business Hotel in Kuwait'

**KUWAIT:** Grand Hyatt Kuwait is pleased to announce that it has been recognized as the Best Business Hotel in Kuwait at the prestigious Business Traveller Awards 2023, an award widely recognized as one of the most prestigious in the travel industry.

The awards ceremony, held on May 1, 2023 in Dubai, celebrates the finest in the global travel and hospitality industry, and honors exceptional hotels and businesses that provide outstanding service and experiences to business travelers.



## US gold miner snaps up Australian rival in \$19 billion deal

**SYDNEY:** Australian mining company Newcrest said Monday it had agreed to a takeover by US rival Newmont, creating a world-leading gold producer in a deal worth Aus\$28.8 billion (\$19 billion). By swallowing up Newcrest, the US mining giant will cement its position as the world's biggest gold producer, with operations extending across North and South America, Africa, Australia and Papua New Guinea. Melbourne-based Newcrest's shareholders will receive 0.4 of the US firm's shares for each Newcrest share, giving them 31 percent of the combined group, the Australian firm said.

The takeover, expected to be completed by the end of 2023, has an implied value of Aus\$28.8 billion, it said. "The combined group will set a new benchmark in gold production while benefiting from a material and growing exposure to copper and a market-leading position in safety and sustainability," Newcrest chairman Peter Tomsett said in a statement.

Newcrest had "unanimously" recommended the takeover offer to shareholders, he said, three months after its board rejected an earlier \$17 billion approach as too cheap.

"It's a fantastic opportunity for Newmont because they're going to be acquiring some very good assets at what I consider to be an attractive price," said Daniel Morgan, mining equity analyst at financial services firm Barrenjoey. The takeover still needs approval from Newcrest shareholders at a meeting expected in September or October, and agreement from competition authorities in Australia, Canada and Papua New Guinea.

It is unlikely to face serious competition challenges, Morgan said. "Even though it is going to create the world's largest gold miner, it is not going to lead to consolidation in any sense that is going to be harmful for consumers," he told AFP. Newmont chief executive Tom Palmer said the combined group would have an industry-leading portfolio with a "multi-decade gold and copper production profile" in the world's most favorable mining jurisdictions. — AFP



ABU DHABI: Russian Minister of Economic Development Maksim Reshetnikov (center) attends the 12th Annual Investment Meeting (Aim Global 2023) at Abu Dhabi national Exhibition centre on May 8, 2023. — AFP



## Business

# Huawei shares future vision for 5.5G, ICT green development

## WSIS discusses enhancing digital trust at SAMENA Leaders' Summit 2023

DUBAI: Huawei Middle East and Central Asia will be participating in SAMENA Telecommunications Council Leaders' Summit 2023, the leading telecommunications industry event in the region.

Taking place on May 15 in Dubai, SAMENA Leaders' Summit 2023 is organized under the "Sustainable Connectivity and Emerging Ecosystems in Digital Economy" theme. The annual international industry leaders' congregation will delve into clustered discussions centered on ICT Infrastructure requirements in the region, Digital Services Landscape & New Digital Enablers: Multi-Dimensional Approaches in Cybersecurity; Evolution of 5G Digital Technologies and much more.

Through its participation in the event, Huawei will highlight the immense socio-economic benefits digital transformation brings to the region. With partners, the company will map the way forward for digital economies through digitalization driven by advanced connectivity and solutions.

Huawei is the event's lead sponsor for the 10th consecutive year. Its key contributions to the upcoming 2023 edition of the event include organizing the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in collaboration with the ITU and SAMENA, hosting the 5.5G forum, shedding light on ICT green development, Giga City, and raising awareness of digital resilience and cyber security requirements in the accelerated digital world.

Bocar BA, CEO & Board Member of SAMENA Council, said, "The Leaders' Summit 2023 advances

SAMENA Council's aim to address the complex, sustainability aspects of connectivity and associated impact on digital ecosystems and digital economy to the next level. This includes addressing the evolution of 5G, business and societal needs for digital competence and choice in emerging markets, secure as well as sustainable cyberspace while greening our ICT development. This year's Summit has attracted exceptional participation of stakeholders and privileged patronage and participation from UAE government bodies, as well as collaboration from the industry's leading regional and international ICT bodies, including the ITU, GSMA, GCC governments, the United Nations Broadband Commission, Telecom Operators, Digital Platforms, and leading Technology Providers like Huawei. We anticipate achieving new milestones in industry collaboration and multi-stakeholder cooperation-building in pursuit of advocacy on behalf of the industry."

Steven Yi, President of Huawei Middle East and Central Asia, said, "Digital transformation brings immense socio-economic benefits to society. However, continuous progress can only be achieved through digital trust, which must be based on facts and standards. Global standards increase trust, allowing digital ecosystems to take root and grow. We remain focused on contributing to the ICT ecosystem, standards organizations and working with customers and industry partners to drive industry upgrade and help create an environment where ICT development is set through openness, collaboration, and innovation for shared success."

WSIS' theme is Enhance Digital Trust for a Sustainable, Connected, Intelligent World. Digital transformation and connectivity yield undeniable benefits, including improved productivity, innovation and modernization, accelerated economic growth and advanced human development, but this can only be achieved with appropriate measures taken and trust being built among stakeholders. A panel discussion at WSIS will explore how to maximize the potential that accelerated digital transformation can bring to emerging markets and how best to foster and entrench multi-stakeholder digital trust.

The 5.5G forum will preview the imminent 5.5G era, where all things are connected through intelligence. The 5.5G era includes five major features: 10 Gbit/s experience, full-scene IoT, communication perception integration, L4 autonomous driving network, and green ICT. In the 5.5G era, technological innovation will improve network performance ten times compared to current 5G capabilities. In addition, the new era will empower operators to open new business frontiers and leverage 100 times new business opportunities.

Huawei will also shed light on ongoing progress in Green Development. As the global economy recovers, industrial digitalization is accelerating, as does ICT systems' energy consumption. As carbon emission reduction strategies gain global prominence, calls are growing for the ICT industry to adopt greener practices and shoulder its burden of reducing CO2 emissions. Huawei will work with all

parties to help the region move to a greener world.

Huawei will discuss its vision for the Giga City. In sessions with customers and partners, experts will explore the importance of optical fiber as a national digital transformation infrastructure and spotlight national success stories in the Giga era. These countries defined advanced strategies for building gigabit societies and have continuously improved the relevant policies and investments to stimulate Giga development. With the powerful advantages of fiber in terms of capacity, sustainability and green development, gigabit optical networks can further promote the development of the digital society. These success stories will further drive 10 Giga society development.

"Together with our ecosystem partners, we will continue to provide innovative technologies, products, and solutions that help our customers build open, secure, flexible, and easy-to-use digital platforms. With our digital platform, Huawei assists customers in crafting their own intelligent solutions and enables industries to navigate digital transformation and intelligent upgrade, injecting new momentum into the digital economy," Steven Yi concluded.



Steven Yi



DUNKIRK, France: ProLogium CEO Vincent Yang (second left) and French President Emmanuel Macron (third left) pose for a group photo at the Dunkirk Urban Community offices in Dunkerque, the city picked by Taiwanese company ProLogium to build a battery gigafactory plant, northern France. — AFP

## Battery makers turn French region into 'electric valley'

DUNKIRK, France: Global battery makers are turning a formerly depressed northern French region into a 21st-century manufacturing hub and a key European source of new energy technology. Taiwanese battery maker Prologium became the latest group on Friday to announce a plant in the Hauts de France region, home to many struggling towns that have spent decades in the doldrums after the collapse of the local steel and mining industries.

The 5.2-billion-euro (\$5.7-billion) investment in the port of Dunkirk follows similar moves from rival power cell producers in the area, which borders Belgium and boasts good road and port connectivity.

European producer ACC — a tie up between Stellantis, TotalEnergies and Mercedes — has chosen the town of Billy-Berclau for its plant, while Chinese-Japanese group Envision opted for Douai, around 30 kilometers (20 miles) to the south of regional hub Lille. France-based Verkor also picked Dunkirk, a deep-sea port famous for being the scene of a chaotic Allied retreat in the early stages of World War II.

"It's fair to say that there is a developing ecosystem for batteries in northern France," the vice president for international development at Prologium said in a statement announcing the new factory on Friday. News of the investment led French President Emmanuel Macron to travel to Dunkirk on Friday, giving him an opportunity to stress his ambitions to re-industrialize France after decades of the country shedding jobs to China and other lower cost countries.

The pro-business former investment banker, 45, has cut taxes, loosened labor law and offered investment incentives since coming to power in 2017 in a bid to cut unemployment and attract companies. "I'm proud to say here, in an employment market that has known closing factories for decades, that we are in the process of re-opening them, to industrialize," Macron said as he visited an aluminum factory.

He also announced a new 1.5-billion-euro investment in Dunkirk from French nuclear group Orano and Chinese firm XTC to produce cathode components used in lithium batteries. Over the last 40 years, France has lost 50,000 industrial jobs every year on average, according to Macron's office.

### Car-making cluster

The Hauts de France region was once one of the industrial heartlands of France, a key source of textiles, coal, steel and then vehicles as car manufacturing took off in the middle of the last century. Despite suffering a string of plant closures, this latter industry has survived, with the region the biggest source of vehicles in France today, according to the local investment body Nord France Invest.

It is home to seven car production sites including Toyota, Renault and Stellantis as well as a dense network of component suppliers — a key reason why battery manufacturers are keen to position themselves nearby. "It's strategic to have all of the sector," the head of the region, Xavier Bertrand, was quoted as saying by Le Monde newspaper. "We're in a decade of transformation."

The investments could be a boon for the ambitious conservative politician, a failed presidential candidate for the Republicans party last year who is still thought to harbor ambitions of winning the country's top political office. Macron is also from the Hauts de France, having been born in Amiens. Far-right leader Marine Le Pen has been elected to parliament twice from a local constituency in the former mining town of Henin-Beaumont. — AFP

## NBK provides cash withdrawal through digital wallet

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) always seeks to enrich customers' banking experience by introducing innovative, top-notch products and services that give them a comprehensive and exceptional banking experience. In this context, the bank announced providing cash withdrawal service using the digital wallet on smartphones or smartwatches.

Through the new service, all NBK and non-NBK Customers can now withdraw cash from NBK ATMs in an easy and secure way using the digital wallets on their smartphones or smartwatches, without the need for debit cards. The new service reflects the integration of premium digital services with the most advanced payment solutions provided by NBK to its customers, which contributes to enriching their banking experience and offering comprehensive and integrated digital services that give them more convenience and peace of mind.

Speaking on introducing this service, Maitham Al-Salem, Digital Transformations Channel Manager at National Bank of Kuwait said: "NBK is

committed to provide all digital services and payment solutions that meet customers' needs and allow them quick, easy and secure banking."

"We are always seeking to strengthen our leading position as the leading banking institution in Kuwait by integrating digital innovation at all levels of our operations, which enables us to provide a comprehensive experience to our customers through innovative products and services," he added. "With customers' growing reliance on digital wallets on smartphones and smartwatches in payments, we have acted promptly to fulfill their expectations to provide more banking transactions through these wallets, basically ATM cash withdrawal," he mentioned.

Al-Salem emphasized that NBK will continue providing all new digital banking services, advanced payment solutions and mobile banking transactions, within its consistent endeavors to meet the needs of its customers and reinforce its leadership in providing the latest banking services



Maitham Al-Salem



relevant to their various lifestyles and ever-evolving needs. The advanced technologies and upgraded services provided by NBK to its customers is a key focus in its strategy. Moreover, the extensive experience gained over long decades enables it to understand customers' needs, evaluate their goals, and even exceed their expectations. NBK continues to cement its leading position in the banking sector through the largest domestic banking network in Kuwait, with 69 branches. In addition, it boasts the biggest owned ATM network with 450 onsite and offsite ATMs/CDMs.

## Gulf Bank hosts 2 workshops jointly with INJAZ Kuwait

KUWAIT: As part of its various initiatives to embed the principles of sustainability in society, and as part of its strategic partnership with INJAZ Kuwait, Gulf Bank concluded two workshops for high school and university students, with the aim of supporting youth and preparing them for the future work environment.

Kuwait English School (KES) hosted an Innovation Camp workshop for beginners, with the participation of about 100 students, in an atmosphere full of enthusiasm to find innovative solutions to challenges using analysis, creativity and teamwork. The trainers, who were volunteers from Gulf Bank, guided these students to complete their assignments and encouraged them to think about achieving their career goals. As for the second, Kuwait College of Science and Technology (KCST) hosted a workshop entitled "How do I start?," where about 40 students participated in three different training courses. The courses were led by volunteers from Gulf Bank, covering various topics such as: Writing CVs, the art of conducting interviews, and all they need to know about the internship period.

On this occasion, Assistant Manager of Corporate Communications, Maysoun Sabah Al-Attar, said: "The various workshops organized by INJAZ Kuwait with Gulf Bank staff volunteers, contribute to supporting and developing the skills of young people at high school and university levels. We do this to ensure the preparation of these students for



Maysoun Al-Attar



Gulf Bank employees.

the post-graduation stage of their lives, making them more confident to enter the labor market."

Al-Attar mentioned that this is part of Gulf Bank's continuous efforts to implement the principles of social sustainability. As such workshops give great importance to youth empowerment and help achieve the Bank's 2025 strategy and Kuwait Vision 2035 objectives — youth are considered to be the pillar of creative human capital.

Gulf Bank's successful partnership with INJAZ has led to a variety of successes in 2022 — where the Bank contributed to training 8,830 local high school and university students from both genders, through 14 international training programs. More than 50 volunteers from Gulf Bank also participated in the various training activities provided by INJAZ Kuwait.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti

declared little faith in the economic management of incumbent Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha, rejecting almost a decade of military-backed rule.

Southeast Asia's second-largest economy has suffered a patchy pandemic recovery but the National Economic and Social Development Council expects the Thai economy to grow between 2.7 and 3.7 percent this year.

The January-March expansion marked a pick-up from 1.4 percent in the previous quarter, the council said. "Our domestic economy does not have any major problems. Consumption and the tourism sector continue growing," Council secretary Danucha Pichayanan told reporters.

## Thai economy grows 2.7% in the first quarter

BANGKOK: Thailand's economy grew 2.7 percent in the first quarter thanks to a steady tourism recovery and strong consumer confidence that offset sluggish exports, officials said Monday. The reading came a day after the country went to the polls and

Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience. Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining robust developments in sustainability at environmental, social and governance levels through diverse sustainability initiatives, strategically selected to also benefit the Bank both internally and externally. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.

Border restrictions during the pandemic battered the kingdom's key tourism industry, which previously accounted for around a fifth of national income. So far this year, there have been 6.5 million international tourist arrivals, the council said. Danucha acknowledged that many Thai households were struggling with high energy costs. Ahead of the election major parties were locked in a financial bidding war to secure votes from low-income households struggling for survival as the cost of living soared.

An incoming government must prioritize boosting exports and finding new potential markets by speeding up free trade negotiations, the council said. — AFP



Lifestyle

# Sri Lankan baker 'cried' when he won best baguette in Paris



A member of the jury inspects a baguette during the annual "Grand prix de la baguette de tradition française de la Ville de Paris," aka the best baguette in Paris competition in Paris. — AFP photos



Photograph shows baguettes during the annual "Grand prix de la baguette de tradition française de la Ville de Paris," aka the best baguette in Paris competition in Paris.



Photograph shows baguettes during the annual "Grand prix de la baguette de tradition française de la Ville de Paris," aka the best baguette in Paris competition in Paris.

A Paris baker of Sri Lankan origin said he "cried" when he heard he had won best baguette in the French capital this week and would be delivering the bread to the presidential palace. "I cried because we are foreigners and we came here to learn how to make traditional French bread," Tharshan Selvarajah told AFP on Thursday. "I am very happy to have won the prize."



Sri Lankan baker Tharshan Selvarajah.

Fifteen baguette connoisseurs on Wednesday selected Selvarajah's version of the iconic French bread as the best among 175 anonymous contenders. Members of the jury, including six ordinary Parisians, had to rate dozens of baguette on their taste, crust, crumb, air bubbles, and overall aspect.

"Don't drink at the start or you won't be able to make it to the end of the tasting," Paris official Olivia Polski warned judges before they started. A video she shared on Twitter shows her then ringing up the baker based in eastern Paris to tell him the good news. "Noooo," he can be heard saying on the other end of the line.

Selvarajah told AFP he always makes his long loaves "with love", while "smiling, laughing and singing", and the result is well-cooked, delicious and crusty. He has won 4,000 euros (more than \$4,300) and the opportunity to supply baguettes to the presidential palace. "I'm so happy that the president will taste my bread. Just taking it to the palace is exciting," he told AFP. UN cultural body UNESCO awarded the baguette world heritage status in November last year. — AFP



A member of the jury inspects a baguette during the annual "Grand prix de la baguette de tradition française de la Ville de Paris," aka the best baguette in Paris competition in Paris.



A member of the jury smells a baguette during the annual "Grand prix de la baguette de tradition française de la Ville de Paris," aka the best baguette in Paris competition in Paris.



Photograph shows baguettes during the annual "Grand prix de la baguette de tradition française de la Ville de Paris," aka the best baguette in Paris competition in Paris.

## Top French museum flips the Roma narrative

The faces of the Roma community's best and brightest beam down at visitors from a multicolored wall inside one of France's top museums. There is world-famous British comic Charlie Chaplin, Belgian jazz great Django Reinhardt and Alfreda Markowska, a Polish woman who during World War II saved dozens of Jewish and Roma children from a Nazi death camp. "It's very moving," said Romani-Romanian academic Cristian Padure, admiring the exhibits inside the MUCEM museum in France's second city Marseille.



This photograph shows the artworks "Gypsy warriors I, II, VII" by Kalman Varady at the exhibition "Barvalo, Roms, Sinti, Manouches, Gitans, Voyageurs" at the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilizations (Mucem).

The show, whose title "Barvalo" means spiritually or materially rich in the Romani language, is the first such exhibition to draw together contributions from so many artists and curators within Europe's Roma minority of 12 million. Padure said it was "recognition" of the community's contributions to European culture and history after centuries of discrimination. In Romania, where the linguist grew up, Roma were slaves for five centuries until the 19th century. Among the show's exhibits is an antique ad drawn from the country's archives that advertises "a young gypsy" for sale for 29 coins.

On another wall are so-called "anthropometric cards" of Roma living in France in the early 20th century, complete with racist measurements, mugshots and fingerprints. All French Roma - who call themselves Sinti, "gitans" or travellers - were required to carry the identity documents, which were designed to limit their movement and paved the way for their deportation during World War II.

### 'Shape the narrative'

The Nazis and their allies killed up to 500,000 Roma during that period, according to the US-based Holocaust Museum. The exhibition highlights the work of late Romani-Austrian writer and artist Ceija Stojka, who wrote about and painted the horrific ordeal after surviving three separate death camps. It also shines a light on Romani members of the French Resistance during the Nazi occupation.

"We too had forefathers who fought in all the wars," said Sylvie Debart, whose French Sinti grandfather Marius Janel was part of the underground army fighting the Germans. But "travelers sadly are only ever in the news when they stop their caravan somewhere," she said. US anthropologist Jonah Steinberg spent years lobbying to hold the exhibition.

"It's one of the first times that Roma history, art and culture has been presented at such a scale," said the professor at the University of Vermont. "But most of all, it's unique because it is driven by Roma community voice, vision, experts, advisors, artists and guides." Anna Mirga-Kruszelnicka was one of 19 people - mostly Roma - to help organize the exhibition.

"For once, in this way, we could shape the narrative about us," said deputy head of the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture. Romani artist Emanuel Barica sketched all the black and white portraits of famous Romani people on the museum wall. "Perhaps people who are racist - who discriminate - really like Charlie Chaplin and didn't realize he was Romani," said the 28-year-old, who was bullied at school in Romania before moving to Germany. "Perhaps they'll change their point of view." Chaplin in his autobiography said his grandmother was "half gypsy".



This photograph shows Romanian carnival costumes parodying gypsy women at the exhibition "Barvalo, Roms, Sinti, Manouches, Gitans, Voyageurs" at the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilizations (Mucem).

### 'See our humanity'

Earlier this week, AFP saw a group of Romani teenagers who had at least partly grown up in Marseille's slums tour the exhibition with stars in their eyes. On Barica's wall of fame are also Pierre-Andre Gignac, who has played on the French national football team, and Alina Serban, the first Romani playwright to see one of her plays added to the repertoire of a Romanian state theatre after growing up in a shack and orphanage.

"For me, for my community, this exhibition is like achieving the impossible," said 35-year-old Serban, who has won awards

for her lead role as a boxer in 2019 German-Austrian film "Gypsy Queen". "It's essential to show contributions not stereotypes so that others can see our humanity," she said. Romani-Italian artist Luna de Rosa, 31, said she hoped the show would help bring about social change. "Sometimes, when society has so much prejudice against an identity, you start yourself to believe in this prejudice," said the artist, who is exhibiting a collage in Marseille. "This exhibition can give self-confidence to young Roma who often go to school and are ashamed of their identity." — AFP



A visitor looks at the work of Romanian artist Emanuel Barica as part of the exhibition "Barvalo, Roms, Sinti, Manouches, Gitans, Voyageurs" at the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilizations (Mucem) in Marseille, southern France.



A visitor looks at enlarged identity documents at the exhibition "Barvalo, Roms, Sinti, Manouches, Gitans, Voyageurs" at the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilizations (Mucem) in Marseille, southern France.



## Lifestyle



This photo shows lead singer Yuetu of punk band Xiaowang performing during a rehearsal ahead of a performance at a club in Beijing.



This photo shows Breezy, a Scandal music label member who is a legal professional by day, showing her DJ skills at a club in Shanghai.



This photo shows lead singer Yuetu of punk band Xiaowang performing at a club in Beijing. — AFP photos

## WOMEN DANCE TO THEIR OWN BEAT IN CHINA'S NIGHTCLUBS

Tired of Shanghai club nights dominated by men, where a woman's appearance often matters as much as her musical skills, Eloise Fan has created an underground space where women DJs are free to shine. On a chilly spring evening, dozens of young women in a packed basement bar crowded around music producer Fan as she stood at the mixer, demonstrating how to transition between tracks.

The 30-year-old advertising professional is the co-founder of a label called "Scandal" that champions women producers and runs workshops teaching electronic dance music fun-

them," she told AFP. "Perhaps we can jump-start everyone's inspiration."

Scandal began as a series of club nights, then released its first album in 2022. In "Shanghai Dreams", the label's all-women compilation released this year, ticking, whirring beats meld with the sounds of roaring waves and blurred vocals to express what the group calls an "alluring and deceiving" mood.

### T-shirts vs make-up

In the bar, one of the featured artists gave the group pointers on developing an ear for music composition. Eva, who performs under the stage name Em-

press CC, said the underground electronic music scene is in some ways a refuge for women. The 31-year-old said that in mainstream clubs, some men perceive "paying to have women drink with you" as a status symbol.

Still, her experience as a professional music producer has shown her that even in underground circles, women must work harder than their male peers to make their mark. "For talented female DJs to be able to make a name for themselves, it's much harder than

for male DJs who started at the same time and are at the same level," Eva said. More broadly, women in China must also contend with negative stereotypes of promiscuity and immorality that persist around women who frequent clubs and bars.

In 2020, when a young woman's visits to multiple bars were publicized by COVID tracers in the city of Chengdu, the flood of online vitriol and misogyny showed how widespread those perceptions can still be.

In recent years, conservative attitudes valuing women primarily for their appearance and childbearing have been increasingly reinforced by state media and popular culture. Even in more liberal circles, Fan often felt objectified in the clubs where she and her friends cut their teeth as DJs.

"Men can put on a t-shirt, sweatshirt and shorts and be a DJ, but women (are expected to) put on thick make-up, and dress up so they look sexy and beautiful," she told AFP. "One of the artists from our label told me she had previously been asked for her body measurements for a show." She pointed to other factors behind the relatively lower number of women in music. Parents often feel that it's normal for boys to be "naughty or cause trouble and play", but encourage girls to "make safer decisions", Fan said.

### Labeled

Breezy, a 27-year-old legal professional from southern Guangdong province who has contributed to a Scandal album, told AFP she was proud of the project's overtly feminist aims. "Scandal can help women in China realize that female musicians can also do well," she said. But the feminist label can be a minefield for women trying to gain recognition as artists.

In China, women in the public eye often explicitly disavow feminism to avoid angering fans. Multiple people working on feminist projects involving nightlife venues in China told AFP

they had attracted negative attention from authorities for their activities, and that speaking openly to foreign media about feminism would be too risky.

Under President Xi Jinping, authorities have cracked down on almost every kind of feminist activism, restricting NGOs, arresting high-profile figures, and suspending social media accounts. In capital Beijing, the all-female rock band Xiaowang said a reductive view of women's role in music can get in the way of their passion for loud sounds and rhythm.



This photo shows Eva, a Scandal music label member who performs under the stage name EmpressCC, teaching DJ skills at a club in Shanghai.

The band's lead singer, Yuetu, has campaigned against sexual harassment at nightlife venues and is a firm believer in fighting for women's rights—but she takes pains to emphasize that her music is about much more. "I'm not in a band just to promote feminism," Yuetu told AFP. Nevertheless, she said she felt "a little bit of responsibility as a female musician." "I hope some young girls can hear the true voice of female musicians."—AFP



This photo shows Breezy, a Scandal music label member who is a legal professional by day, showing her DJ skills at a club in Shanghai.

damentals. She and her team are part of a small number of women working to make China's nightlife safer and more welcoming.

In doing so, they are actively resisting conservative social norms—and, sometimes inadvertently, pushing up against a backdrop where anything seen as feminist is increasingly considered a challenge to authority. Fan's motive is simple. "I want to raise the visibility of women in the underground music scene, and let more people see

press CC, said the underground electronic music scene is in some ways a refuge for women. The 31-year-old said that in mainstream clubs, some men perceive "paying to have women drink with you" as a status symbol.

Still, her experience as a professional music producer has shown her that even in underground circles, women must work harder than their male peers to make their mark. "For talented female DJs to be able to make a name for themselves, it's much harder than



This photo shows lead singer Yuetu (right) of punk band Xiaowang chatting with her bandmates, guitarist Qiuqiu (left) and drummer Zaozao (center), before a performance at a club in Beijing.



This photo shows members of punk band Xiaowang (from left to right); guitarist Qiuqiu, bass player Tongtong, lead singer Yuetu, and drummer Zaozao rehearsing in Beijing.

## Architects don't need AI, says high-tech pioneer Norman Foster

British architect Norman Foster has spent six decades pushing the boundaries of technology with awe-inspiring modernist structures from California to Hong Kong, but he is yet to be convinced by the craze for artificial intelligence. "Artificial intelligence at the moment has the ability to cheat, to invent," he told AFP in a recent interview in Paris, which is hosting a retrospective of his work. "We live in a world which is physical, we inhabit buildings, streets, squares. That physicality, you can't replicate by artificial intelligence." Foster has been shaping urban landscapes since the 1960s and won the Pritzker Prize, the equivalent of the Nobel Prize in architecture, in 1999.

His statement projects include Apple's giant ring-shaped headquarters in California, London's Wembley Stadium and Millennium Bridge, and Berlin's Reichstag. Experts describe his practice, Foster and Partners, as possibly the most prolific in history, and the most adept at navigating changing trends and technologies.



British architect Norman Robert Foster poses during a photo session in Paris. — AFP

"He conceives architecture almost as an organism balancing itself with the air, the sun, life," said Frederic Migayrou, curator of the Norman Foster exhibition at the Pompidou Centre in the French capital. Yet he has not swerved controversy, irking climate campaigners with his keenness to build airports and his views on the environment.

### 'Hard facts'

He is a champion of urban living—"people live longer in cities"—but his vision for sustaining urban lifestyles has courted some criticism. He supports nuclear power, saying it had not caused a single death and the world would only be able to tackle climate change "with hard facts, not emotion". He sees it as a vital part of the solution to the deprivation and poverty seen in megacities and overpopulated slums across the world. "Many people gravitated to those cities because there are more opportunities," he said.

"The answer has to be an abundance of clean energy, and the cleanest, safest form of energy is nuclear." Hong Kong's Chek Lap Kok airport, opened in 1998, made a huge splash for his firm, and he has worked on several airports since—much to the annoyance of climate activists, who see air travel as part of the problem. Yet when he talks of his broader philosophy, the 87-year-old could easily make common cause with climate activists.

### End of the sprawl

Surrounded by models of his greatest creations, he talked breezily about the development of cleaner, greener cities. The pandemic accelerated a growing need for people to have access to outdoor spaces for eating and strolling, and for services within walking distance of their homes, he argued. "The cities which are most popular... they fit that model, essentially it's a European model born before the ascendancy of the automobile," he said. And the transformation of our relationship with cars is central to the reshaping of modern cities, he said.

"You have younger generations who are less interested in ownership, who will move towards ride-sharing and mobility more as a service," he said. This was pushing us away from sprawling car-centric cities with rigid work-home zones to ones where buildings were multipurpose, reducing the need for commuting.

Despite his storied history, Foster, still a central figure in all these threads of modern design, is not keen to dwell on his achievements. The Pompidou exhibition, which displays models of his buildings alongside exhibits that inspired their design, has allowed him to see hidden connections.—AFP

## Adidas says to sell part of Yeezy gear for charity

Adidas will sell at least part of its huge inventory of Kanye West's Yeezy products and donate the proceeds, the German sportswear group's boss said Thursday.

The merchandise has been in limbo since Adidas ended its partnership with the controversial rapper. The company's CEO Bjorn Gudén told shareholders at an annual general meeting that "burning the goods is not the solution."

"What we will try to do over time is to sell part of these goods and to donate the money to organisations that help us and which also have been hurt by Kanye's statements," he said.

"When we will do that and how we will do that is not clear but we're working on it," he added. Adidas halted its tie-up with West -- now known formally as Ye -- in October after he made a series of anti-Semitic outbursts.

As a result, the group ended production of the highly successful Yeezy line designed together with West.

Potentially not selling the apparel and shoes linked to West would lead to a revenue loss of 1.2 billion euros (\$1.3 billion), the group said when it announced its 2022 full-year results earlier this week.—AFP

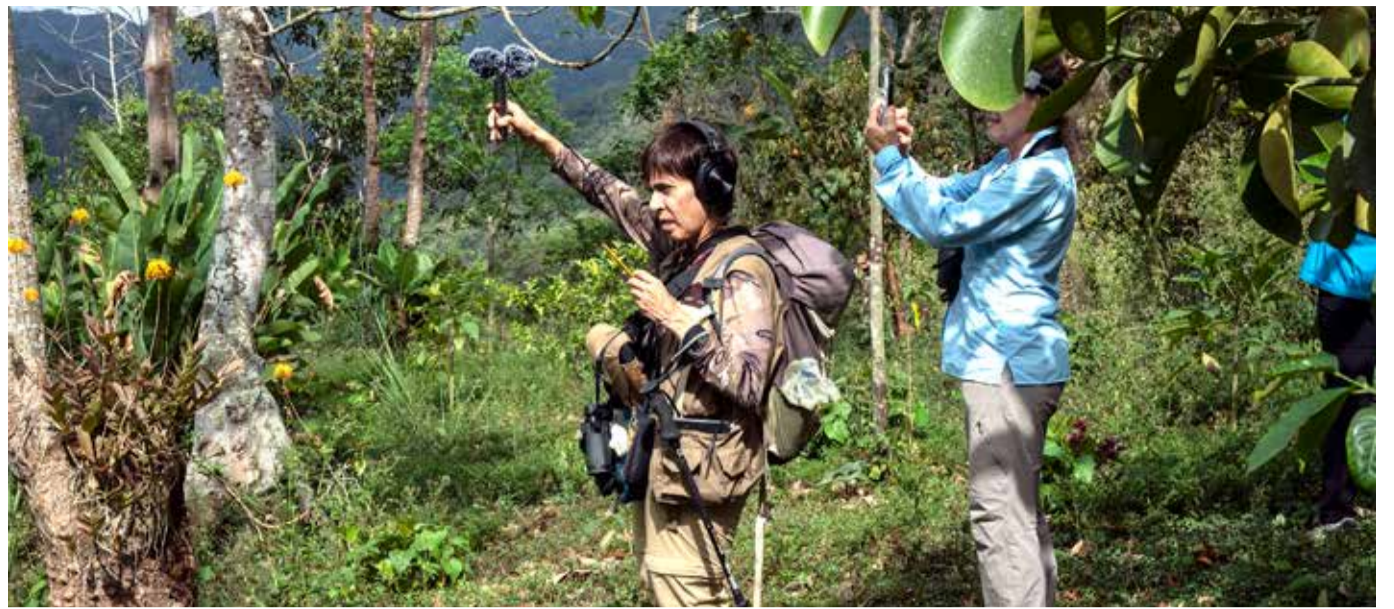




Lifestyle



A woman uses binoculars to watch birds during a birdwatching mission that visits the natural forest at the Amaranta Casa de Colibries sanctuary in San Jose de Los Altos, Miranda State, Venezuela. - AFP photos



Rosaelena Albornoz (left) uses recording equipment to record bird songs in the natural forest of the Amaranta Casa de Colibries sanctuary.



A green-eared hummingbird (*Colibri cyano-tus*) alights on an artificial feeder with honey water at the Amaranta Casa de Colibries sanctuary.



A striped woodpecker (*Dryocopus lineatus*) perches on a tree in the natural forest of the Amaranta Casa de Colibries sanctuary.



# BIRDWATCHERS'

## HEARTS FLUTTER FOR GLOBAL BIG DAY

A brown-eared hummingbird (*Colibri delphinae*) perches on the branch of a bush at the Amaranta Casa de Colibries sanctuary.

**W**ith excitement in their voices, six birdwatchers raise binoculars and scan the treetops in a private sanctuary not far from Venezuela's capital Caracas. Look, one says, there's a blue-gray tanager. Another spots a warbler. At the break of dawn, the birdwatchers left Caracas to take part in Global Big Day, an annual worldwide celebration in which birders observe as many species as they can in a 24-hour period. Leading the group was Rosaelena Albornoz, a 61-year-old bird guide who has studied birds in Venezuela for nearly three decades.

Emotions were high as the group arrived at Amaranta Hummingbird House, a private sanctuary in San Jose de los Altos in the state of Miranda where some 170 species of birds have

been spotted. "Birds are an indicator of the health of an ecosystem," Albornoz tells AFP as she tallies the species they spot to upload on Ebird, the platform to register bird sightings worldwide. "With Global Big Day... the public comes out to have fun with the birds by counting them," says Albornoz, who left a job as an executive to study birds.

Hummingbirds fly over flowers and feeders set up by retired physician Cecilia Martinez, owner of Amaranta Hummingbird House. A large hummingbird known as a brown violetear (*Colibri delphinae*) flies to Martinez to sip from a cup containing sugar water. "Where have you been? Did you forget all about me?" she coos to the bird. The fluttering hummingbird returns time and again to sip from the cup, as if she were a longtime friend of Martinez.



Retired doctor Cecilia Martinez, 73, feeds a brown-eared hummingbird (*Colibri delphinae*) at the Amaranta Casa de Colibries sanctuary.

**'Light pollution'**  
Serenity envelops this mountain reserve—except for the squawking of the Rufous-vented Chachalaca, a ground-dwelling bird with a squeaky shrill call. Yet Martinez and other keen birdwatchers worry. They say human encroachment and light pollution are affecting birds and the insects they need for nourishment. "The idea would be to study light pollution and the grave effect it has had on the loss of insects," says Albornoz. "If white light does in the insects, it will diminish the number of pollinators and birds." She says the impact on birds and insects might be akin to how disrupted a human would feel if he or she had to sleep each night with a bright light on nearby. —AFP

"Hummingbirds are capable of recognizing one," says Martinez, 73, a pathologist who retired in 2012 and now spends her time preserving the cloud forest tract near her home.



A striped woodpecker (*Dryocopus lineatus*) perches on a tree in the natural forest of the Amaranta Casa de Colibries sanctuary.



A brown-eared hummingbird (*Colibri delphinae*) alights on a twig at the Amaranta Casa de Colibries sanctuary.

### On Galapagos Islands, Darwin's flycatcher makes a tiny comeback

**D**arwin's flycatcher, a small bird with striking vermilion plumage, is making modest but noticeable headway on the Galapagos Islands in its battle back from near extinction, the remote archipelago's national park said. The only 15 remaining pairs of the charismatic birds on the island of Santa Cruz have produced 12 chicks this year, the park said. The species is endemic to the Galapagos, and is considered vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Darwin's flycatchers reside on other islands in the chain, like Pinzon, but their population was particularly threatened on Santa Cruz Island.

An experimental management program there "permitted 12 new chicks to add to the population" in a forest at higher elevation on Santa Cruz, where only 15 pairs exist, the Galapagos National Park said. The reserve's director, Danny Rueda, said that "each chick that is born

is a new hope to save this species that is vulnerable and on the red list." "These 12 new birds constitute a veritable success since initiating the program in 2018 and finally getting results, never more so than this year," the park said.



Handout photo released by the Galapagos National Park showing a Little Vermilion Flycatcher on Santa Cruz Island, in the Galapagos Islands. — AFP

The program, a joint project with the Charles Darwin Foundation, the University of Vienna and the nonprofit Galapagos Conservancy, has seen 21 chicks arrive on Santa Cruz between 2020 and 2022, it said. The Galapagos archipelago, some 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) off the coast of Ecuador, has flora and fauna found nowhere else in the world. Observing its wonders led British scientist Charles Darwin to develop his theory of evolution in the 19th century. — AFP

### Japan boyband agency apologizes over sex abuse allegations

**J**apan's top boyband agency has issued an apology over sexual assault allegations against its late founder Johnny Kitagawa, with fans demanding Monday that the firm "fully investigate" the matter. Last month, Japanese-Brazilian singer Kauan Okamoto said he was repeatedly molested by Kitagawa, who established the entertainment empire Johnny and Associates.

Okamoto alleged that Kitagawa, who died of a stroke aged 87 in 2019, assaulted him during his four-year stint with the agency until 2016, starting when he was 15 years old. He is one of the few to publicly address the star-maker's long-alleged history of sexual abuse against young boys, a controversy that resurfaced after a recent BBC documentary.

Kitagawa was never criminally charged over the accusations. Julie Fujishima, Kitagawa's niece and the current president of Johnny and Associates, addressed the matter in a video and written statement published Sunday evening.



In the video, she apologized "sincerely" for trouble caused in connection to the allegations, and to the accusers. "Obviously, we do not believe there was no problem. As a business and as an individual, I absolutely do not tolerate these acts," her written statement said, referring to the documentary and Okamoto's testimony.

"On the other hand, it is not easy for us to simply declare by ourselves whether individual allegations can be recognized as facts or not, when we cannot confirm with the individual di-

rectly concerned, Johnny Kitagawa," she wrote. "This is not the kind of occasion where you can be forgiven by saying 'I did not know'. But the truth is that I did not," added Fujishima, a long-term executive at the agency. A fan group called Penlight said Monday that the company's decision to issue online statements, rather than holding a press conference, had left many questions unanswered.

"We ask for the company to fully investigate and recognize the facts of the matter, to take responsibility as a corporation and apologize to the victims of sexual violence," it said.

Kitagawa launched his talent agency in the 1960s and engineered J-pop mega-groups including SMAP, TOKIO and Arashi. His young recruits were known collectively as "Johnny's Jrs", and flocked to Kitagawa in the hopes of making it big in the lucrative industry. — AFP



## Sports

# Johnson lifts LIV Tulsa trophy on eve of PGA Championship

## Day gets first PGA Tour win in 5 years

## News in Brief

### Ko defeats Lee in playoff

NEW YORK: South Korean Ko Jin-young won the LPGA's Founders Cup for the third time on Sunday, clinching a playoff victory over Australia's Minjee Lee in Clifton, New Jersey. Ko, who triumphed on different courses in 2021 and 2019, defeated defending champion Lee with a par on the first playoff hole where the Australian, who had a two stroke lead with three holes to go, three-putted for bogey. Lee went into Sunday's final round at the Upper Montclair Country Club with a three stroke lead but suffered a setback with a double bogey on the par-3 sixth, where she found the water. She then made bogey on the par-4 16th allowing Ko to come into contention. The 27-year-old Korean, who was bogey-free in her final round, was able to force a playoff when she birdied the last hole. It was the fourth straight LPGA tournament that has been decided by a playoff and Ko said she hadn't overcomplicated her approach to the final round. — AFP

### Japan on top of the world

DOHA: Japan defeated France in the mixed team event at the world judo championships on Sunday to finish the tournament on top of the medals table with six golds. Victory also allowed the Japanese to maintain their perfect record in the mixed final - winning all six times the event has featured at the worlds. First to appear on the tatami, France's Joan-Benjamin Gaba stunned Soichi Hashimoto, the bronze medalist in -73kg division this week, inside 21 seconds. "I had already lost twice to Hashimoto, so I said to myself: 'This time I won't lose'," said Gaba. Margaux Pinot then looked impressive, beating new -70kg world champion Saki Niizoe with a golden score, but Japan came back to 2-1 after Goki Tajima's win over Maxime-Gael Ngayap Hambou (-90 kg) in overtime. Coralie Hayme won on penalties after 6min 20sec to defeat Maya Segawa as France led 3-1 to stand just one point from the title. — AFP

### Anderson suffers groin injury

LONDON: James Anderson has suffered a "mild strain to his right groin" just a month before the Ashes get underway, the England and Wales Cricket Board announced late Sunday. The 40-year-old Anderson, the most successful fast bowler in Test history with 685 wickets, sustained the injury on Thursday's opening day of Lancashire's County Championship match against Somerset at Old Trafford and took no further part in a match that ended in a draw on Sunday. The ECB added Anderson's fitness will be assessed nearer the time of the lone Test against Ireland at Lord's starting on June 1. England are due to name a squad for the Ireland game, which precedes a five-match Ashes series against arch-rivals Australia commencing on June 16, later this week. Anderson had a scan on the injury on Saturday, with Lancashire coach Glen Chapple telling the BBC it was not "anything too serious". — AFP

### Bangladesh beat Ireland

LONDON: Mustafizur Rahman took four wickets before Hasan Mahmud held his nerve as Bangladesh beat Ireland by just five runs in the third one-day international at Chelmsford on Sunday. Victory gave Bangladesh a 2-0 win, with one washout, in the three-match series. Mustafizur, a 27-year-old left-arm quick, finished with fine figures of 4-44 from 10 overs, including several top-order batsman, as Ireland were held to 269-9 in reply to Bangladesh's 274 all out. Ireland needed 10 off the final over only for Hasan to take two wickets. Then, with six required off the last ball, Hasan's fine yorker hit tailender Craig Young on the boot to the delight of the Tigers' vocal fans at the headquarters of English county Essex. Ireland were well-placed when needing 51 off nine overs with seven wickets in hand. — AFP

### Forsstrom wins Tour title

ANTWERP: Sweden's Simon Forsstrom overcame late nerves to capture a maiden European Tour title with a one-shot victory over compatriot Jens Dantorp at the Soudal Open on Sunday. The 34-year-old built up a three-shot lead by the turn before a double bogey at the 10th was followed by another dropped shot on the 12th. However, he recovered with birdie putts at the 14th, 16th and 17th to take a one-shot lead down the last. He then parred the 18th to sign for a closing 69 and 17 under par for the tournament. Dantorp finished alone in second on 16 under following his closing 67 with Denmark's Thorbjorn Olesen two shots further back in third. "I think the course suits me very well, it's pretty tight and short," said Forsstrom. "I won on the Challenge Tour in Belgium. It's pretty similar to Sweden, the trees and the grass, so I think I feel very at home here. I hope to keep proving myself, this wasn't one time." — AFP

LOS ANGELES: Two-time major champion Dustin Johnson nabbed his second LIV Golf title Sunday, edging Cameron Smith and Branden Grace in a playoff at Cedar Ridge Country Club near Tulsa, Oklahoma. Johnson birdied his final hole in regulation to get into the playoff then birdied the par-four 18th with a putt from off the green. South Africa's Grace had putted first in the playoff, also from the fringe, narrowly missing.

Australia's British Open champion Smith was closest to the hole, but his putt was never on track. Johnson scooped the \$4 million first prize from the \$25 million purse and joined Talor Gooch - winner of the previous two events - and Brooks Koepka as two-time winners in the Saudi-backed breakaway circuit's first 14 events. The former world number one had claimed his first LIV title at Boston last year. Atop the leaderboard going into the third and final round, Johnson shook off triple-bogey on the 10th hole to card a three-under 67 to join Grace and Smith on 17-under.

"Obviously after I made seven on 10 - everything I could do wrong I did wrong on the hole - but to fight back and birdie 18 two times in a row, I'm really happy with that," Johnson said. Smith, five back with nine to play, carded a bogey-free nine-under par 61 while Grace - who shot 61 in the first round - closed with a five-under 65. Grace helped South Africa's Stinger team, headed by Louis Oosthuizen, to capture the team title with a 40-under par total.

The next LIV tournament is at Trump National in Washington in two weeks. But next week Johnson and Smith will be among 18 LIV rebels teeing it up in the second major of the season, the PGA Championship at Oak Hill in Rochester, New York.

LIV, bankrolled by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, split the sport last year by luring away top stars from the US PGA Tour and the DP World Tour with lucrative contracts.

### Day gets first win

In another development, Australian Jason Day clinched his first PGA Tour victory in over five years on Sunday, winning the Byron Nelson tournament



**BROKEN ARROW:** Dustin Johnson of Aces GC celebrates after winning the LIV Golf-Tulsa individual championship during Day Three of the LIV Golf Invitational - Tulsa at Cedar Ridge Country Club on May 14, 2023. — AFP

with a nine-under-par 62 at TPC Craig Ranch in McKinney, Texas. The 35-year-old had not won since the Wells Fargo Championship in May of 2018 but his birdie on the par-5 final hole earned him a one stroke win over South Korea's Kim Si-woo and American Austin Eckroat.

Day's first ever win on the PGA Tour had come in the same tournament 13 years ago, albeit at a different venue in suburban Dallas. "It's been a struggling few years, five years since our last win. The way I played today was really special. I'm very pleased and happy with how things have progressed over the last couple of years - 1,835 days to be exact," he said. Day finished 23-under for the week as he ended a run of 105 starts without a win. Day said battling against a back injury had hampered his form but that his determination had helped him get back to his best.

"Just non-stop grinding and non-stop wanting to improve and to try and get better. A lot of

injuries with my back... just trying to get through those three years, just trying to get through a tournament was difficult," he said. "So, to be on the other side of it, to be healthy...really winning again. It's so good to be on the other side," he said. Day found his momentum with three straight birdies from the third hole onwards and the highlight of his round was chipping in from 37 feet for a birdie on the par-4 12th.

With Kim having taken a share of the lead, one hole in front of him, with a birdie on the 18th, Day knew that a par would only be enough for a playoff with the Korean. The Australian rose to the challenge with a superb 80-yard approach shot on the final hole landing two feet from the hole for a simple birdie and the win. Eckroat, in the final group, was left needing an eagle to force a playoff with Day, but his approach went over the back of the green and he had to settle for birdie and a round of 65. — AFP



## Kuwait Tennis Federation concludes sports season

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Tennis Federation concluded its 2022-2023 sports season at Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Tennis Complex in the presence of sports personalities and representatives of sports club along with a large number of fans. Activities began with the final match as Bader Antar won the singles title - defeating Essa Qabazard 6-4/7-5. Yarmouk Sports Club won the Overall Excellence Cup with 31 points, followed by Khaitan Club with 29 points while third place went to Kuwait Club (with 18 points).

Deputy Director General of Public Authority for Sport for Competitive Sport Bashar Abdullah was

## Marseille win; Troyes relegated in Ligue 1

PARIS: Marseille won and Troyes' relegation fate was sealed in Ligue 1 on Sunday as Rennes paid tribute to former youth player Arman Soldin, the AFP video reporter killed in Ukraine. Marseille came from behind at home to beat bottom club Angers 3-1 to move to within two points of second-placed Lens. Goals from Alexis Sanchez, Dimitri Payet and Jordan Veretout's penalty proved the perfect riposte to last week's defeat to Lens after Abdallah Sima's goal had given the visitors early hope of an upset at the Velodrome.

Earlier, Clermont also came from a goal down to beat Lyon 2-1. Alexandre Lacazette gave Lyon the lead after 22 minutes but Grejohn Kyei leveled from the penalty spot three minutes later. Kyei netted his second after 65 minutes to lift Clermont up to eighth, just three points behind Lyon whose hopes of European football next season appear to be over. "It's a big disappointment," said Lyon coach Laurent Blanc. "As for Europe, it's all over."

At Rennes there was an emotional homage to Soldin, who was killed covering the Ukraine war for AFP on Tuesday. Soldin's mother and brother live in the western city and Rennes held the tribute to his memory before the Breton club's home match with Troyes.

Rennes invited around 30 of Soldin's friends and family—including a sister living in the Bosnian city of Mostar—to pay tribute to his sacrifice. Fans joined them in warmly applauding as images of the slain reporter were shown on giant screens at the stadium while the announcer saluted Soldin's courage and commitment to "informing as many as possible about the realities of a conflict". Bosnian-born French citizen Soldin, 32, was on assignment with an AFP team



pleased to be in attendance. Bashar Abdullah said the authority will continue supporting all national teams and talented Kuwaitis. "It is our duty to serve the athletes and present them with all types of support," he added.

Chairman of the Board of the Kuwait Tennis Federation Ali Hayat said the board of directors pre-

pared an integrated plan to bring back the game to the right path and develop the national teams through participation in foreign championships. Treasurer of KTF Fouad Al-Mishari said there will be two international championships in Kuwait in addition to participating in foreign championships to give players more experience.



**RENNES:** Rennes' French midfielder Flavien Tait (left) fights for the ball with Troyes' Ecuadorian defender Jackson Porozo during the French L1 football match between Stade Rennais FC and ES Troyes on May 14, 2023. — AFP

as the global news agency's video coordinator in Ukraine when they came under fire from Grad rockets while with Ukrainian soldiers near Bakhmut.

Before becoming a journalist Soldin, who as a toddler left war-torn Bosnia with his mother on a humanitarian flight to France, had been a keen footballer as a teenager. Growing up in the western region of Brittany he earned a place on the Rennes youth team between 2006 and 2008 in his mid-teens—only giving up on a professional career due to knee injuries. Rennes went on to win 4-0, consigning Troyes to life in the second division next term, joining already relegated Ajaccio and Angers. Nantes occupy the fourth drop spot after a goalless draw at Toulouse which left them one point behind Auxerre, who lost 1-0 at Brest. — AFP

## Tatum propels Celtics to game seven victory

LOS ANGELES: Jayson Tatum poured in an historic 51 points on Sunday to lead the Boston Celtics to a 112-88 game-seven victory over the Philadelphia 76ers and into the NBA Eastern Conference finals. Tatum added 13 rebounds five assists and a couple of steals and the Celtics' suffocating defense neutralized newly minted NBA Most Valuable Player Joel Embiid as Boston booked a return date with the Miami Heat—the team they beat in seven games in last year's conference finals.

Jaylen Brown added 25 points for Boston, who broke open a close game in the third quarter as they out-scored the 76ers 33-10. Philadelphia went six minutes of the period without a basket and trailed by 26 heading into the fourth, when Boston pushed the lead to 30 with less than four minutes to play.

His 51 points eclipsed the game-seven record of 50 set by Golden State's Stephen Curry against the Sacramento Kings in the first round this month. It was a bounce-back performance for Tatum, who struggled for long stretches in the series and endured a horrific shooting night until drilling four crucial three-pointers in the fourth quarter of the Celtics' series-extending game-six win on Thursday. He began fashioning his game-seven masterpiece in the opening minutes.

The 76ers turned an early six-point deficit into a 29-23 lead through one quarter, while a nip-and-tuck second period saw the Celtics up 55-52 at half-time. Then the Celtics blew it wide open in the third. Tatum scored 17 points in the period, draining four of his six three-pointers as the shell-shocked 76ers struggled, and failed, to find a response. — AFP



## Sports

# Juventus see off Cremonese as Pogba injury misery continues

## Monza overpower newly-crowned champions Napoli

ROME: Juventus consolidated second place in Serie A with Sunday's 2-0 win over sinking Cremonese, while yet another injury forced Paul Pogba out of his first competitive start in over a year. Nicolò Fagioli and Gleison Bremer netted the crucial goals which moved Juve three points ahead of third-placed Inter Milan and strengthened their hopes of Champions League football next season. Massimiliano Allegri's side are eight points ahead of AC Milan in fifth but their top four ambitions hinge on a tribunal ruling on alleged illicit transfer activity later this month.

Last month Juve had a 15-point deduction inflicted in January revoked, with Italy's top sporting court asking the Italian Football Federation's court of appeal to revise their original decision. There is the serious risk of a new points punishment which could knock them out of the top four. It has been a turbulent season for Juve and no-one has more personi-

fied that more than Pogba, who was substituted 23 minutes into Sunday's match in Turin and left the field with his jersey covering his face to hide his dismay.

He had pulled up in agony after putting in a routine cross before sinking to the turf and getting on-pitch treatment on his left thigh. "We're all disappointed, not least because he was playing quite well. It's said because he's made a lot of sacrifices to come back," said Allegri to DAZN. "Paul is a man... he has big enough shoulders. There's always a risk when you've gone a year without playing, more so when you start the match."

Pogba has missed a huge chunk of the season following his return from Manchester United last summer after suffering a serious injury to his right knee pre-season. He initially elected to not to go under the knife in a bid to make the World Cup in Qatar. However, despite later changing his mind, Pogba didn't re-

cover in time to play for France who lost their crown as world champions in a thrilling final with Argentina.

### Poor Pogba

He returned to action at the end of February and has made a series of appearances as a substitute as he tried to recover full fitness, with a right thigh injury in March slowing his progress. Pogba's previous competitive start had been in United's 4-0 hammering at the hands of Liverpool in April last year, when he went off injured early in the first half and did not play again that season. Cremonese have three games to earn survival but have their work cut out as they are six points behind Spezia who are just outside the drop zone.

Monza claimed another big scalp in their dream debut Serie A season with their 2-0 win over newly-crowned champions Napoli. Goals in each half from Dany Mota and former Napoli striker Andrea

Petagna were enough for Monza to add Luciano Spalletti's side to a list of beaten teams which also includes Juve and Inter Milan. Their fourth win in an unbeaten run of seven matches has Monza ninth, level on 49 points with Fiorentina who beat Udinese 2-0. Defeat makes little difference to Napoli as they already sealed their first league title since 1990 earlier this month.

Torino are also on 49 points in 10th after beating Verona 1-0 in the day's early match and sending their opponents into the relegation zone. Earlier Roma's chances of Champions League football faded with a 0-0 draw at Bologna ahead of their Europa League semi-final return with Leverkusen on Thursday. Roma, who are six points off the top four in Italy, lead 1-0 from the first leg as Jose Mourinho aims to reach his second straight European final after winning the Europa Conference League last season. — AFP



KUWAIT: Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Kuwait Chung Byung-ha honored officials and participants who participated at the Kuwait Taekwondo Spectacle 2023. He expressed his sincere gratitude to Kuwait Taekwondo Federation and Korean Community in Kuwait for all their support.

## Kuwait Taekwondo Spectacle ends in style, participants honored

KUWAIT: Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Kuwait Chung Byung-ha honored officials and participants at the Kuwait Taekwondo Spectacle 2023. He expressed his sincere gratitude to Kuwait Taekwondo Federation and Korean Community in Kuwait for all their support. The ambassador also thanked all the players who have competed in Ambassador's Cup Championship for the last couple of days.

"Taekwondo is a well-known traditional martial art of Korea. As we speak, around 100 million Taekwondo practitioners worldwide are strengthening their body and mind through this wonderful sport. As such, few other things can be referred to as a better example than Taekwondo for becoming global from being local. In Kuwait,



Korean Taekwondo masters have set out to instruct Taekwondo since the 1980s. Now we assume more than 4,000 people are practicing this martial art in Kuwait," he said.

Taekwondo has held a special place in the sport history of Kuwait. The very first medal Kuwait won at the Olympics was by Mohammad Al-Qaimi's bronze medal in Taekwondo in 1992



in Barcelona. From then on, Kuwait has been one of the active countries in this Olympic sport, winning medals in various competitions. Kukkiwon Taekwondo demonstration team performed during the event. Kukkiwon refers to the world Taekwondo headquarter. Its demonstration team has enjoyed the global reputation for its mastery of skill and performance.



## German Bundesliga: Leipzig move to 3rd

BERLIN: RB Leipzig forward Christopher Nkunku set up two late goals as his side came from behind to defeat Werder Bremen 2-1 at home on Sunday, lifting them to third. With Bremen winning 1-0 thanks to a controversial goal from Leipzig-born Leonardo Bittencourt, Nkunku curled in a cross for captain Willi Orban to head in an equalizer with three minutes remaining, before setting up another for Dominik Szoboszlai in the sixth minute of injury time for a crucial win.

The win takes Leipzig one point clear of Union Berlin into third with two games remaining, ahead of next week's trip to league leaders Bayern Munich. "It was a difficult win against a good Bremen team. We made some bad decisions but we were always in the game" said Leipzig manager Marco Rose, toasting his side's "deserved victory."

His Bremen counterpart Ole Werner said "Leipzig's quality off the bench was the difference", blaming his side's inability to play consistently over 90 minutes. The victory soothed the complaints of the frustrated home side, who looked set for a controversial loss after a VAR decision. Nkunku tapped in a Timo Werner cross midway through the second half, but VAR struck the goal off for a soft foul in the lead up against Bittencourt.

Just four minutes later, Bittencourt had the ball in the back of the net, completing a silky team move by slamming in a chipped Jens Stage cross. With the clock winding down, Orban headed in the equalizer, his first league goal since October, latching onto a perfect cross from Nkunku. The France forward,

who remains the side's top scorer with 13 goals despite missing a third of their league matches this season, then cut the ball back for Szoboszlai to secure a vital three points for the home side.

### Stuttgart hold Leverkusen

Earlier on Sunday, Bayer Leverkusen were held to a 1-1 draw at Stuttgart, just days before their second leg Europa League semi-final clash with Roma. Leverkusen narrowly lost the first leg in Rome 1-0 and will host Jose Mourinho's Roma, the Europa Conference League holders, on Thursday. In Stuttgart, both sides traded penalties in the second half, home forward Serhou Guirassy opening the scoring before Argentinian World Cup winner Exequiel Palacios leveled. Leverkusen end the round in seventh on goal difference, with sixth place qualifying for the Europa Conference League.

A "very satisfied" visiting manager Xabi Alonso said "the team showed the will to win until the end." "We want to make sixth place, but first we can achieve another big goal on Thursday." Leverkusen had strung together a 14-game unbeaten run under Alonso, but have now lost two and drawn one of their past three. After a goalless and risk averse first half, Stuttgart took the lead shortly into the second stanza, Guirassy gliding in an elegant Panenka style spotkick from the spot after Palacios fouled Wataru Endo in the box.

The visitors hit back quickly with a penalty of their own, Palacios making up for his earlier mistake to convert after goalie Fabian Bredlow collided with Edmond Tapsoba. Stuttgart's Joshua Vagnoman had a chance to put the home side back in the lead just a minute later, but he headed wide when presented with an empty net. The draw leaves 2006 champions Stuttgart in the automatic relegation places, two points from safety with two matches remaining. — AFP

## Chelsea secure record-breaking Women's FA Cup

LONDON: Sam Kerr's second-half goal proved the difference as Chelsea beat Manchester United 1-0 to win a third successive English Women's FA Cup final before a record-breaking crowd at Wembley on Sunday. But it needed a desperate block from Chelsea goalkeeper Ann-Katrin Berger in the seventh minute of added-on time to deny United an equalizer in front of 77,390 spectators - a world-record attendance for a domestic women's football match.

Chelsea manager Emma Hayes's decision to bring on Pernille Harder, who has been injured for much of the season, just before the hour proved a turning point in a match where United had the better of the early exchanges. "I think it's the sign of a great team, we didn't have our best game but we pushed through," Australia striker Kerr told the BBC.

### Wembley 'home' for Chelsea

Hayes said her team's experience of big-match occasions at Wembley had served them well. "We've played here more times than Stamford Bridge. Yes it's home." Hayes added: "We know how to stay in a game and even if we weren't at our best we have to work out how to change it." It took United, in their first women's FA Cup final, just 20 seconds after kick-off to put the ball into the Chelsea net only for the goal to be disallowed for offside.

Chelsea, the reigning English women's Super League champions, failed to clear Ella Toone's cross from the

right and Leah Galton swept the ball in. But the flag had gone up, with VAR confirming Toone had moved a fraction too early. United, who only established a women's team in 2018, dominated the first half. They almost broke the deadlock just after the half-hour when Millie Turner's deflected effort was well saved by Berger. United went close again when Galton poked the ball over from six yards out from an Alessia Russo cross.

But three minutes before half-time, Chelsea almost punished United's failure to take their chances when Lauren James' looping header was brilliantly clawed away one-handed by United goalkeeper Mary Earps, one of the heroines of England's European Championship final-winning team at Wembley last year. Goalless at the interval, the match turned in Chelsea's favor soon after Harder came on. Maya Le Tissier failed to deal with a long ball and Kerr raced on to it down the left wing. The ensuing cross found Harder, but her first touch saw the ball trapped under her foot, and a weak shot proved no problem for Earps.

Harder, however, was instrumental in Chelsea going 1-0 up in the 68th minute when her excellent low cross from out on the right found Kerr, who didn't have to break stride as she turned the ball in at the back post. Kerr's goal meant the forward, who celebrated with her trademark back flip, had scored in three consecutive FA Cup finals. "Sam Kerr is priceless but let's credit Pernille," said Hayes. "We know we needed more stretching runs," added the Blues boss, who has now won 12 major trophies since taking charge of Chelsea in 2012. United almost made it 1-1 in the very closing stages when Berger flapped at a cross, only to block Galton's shot before Chelsea cleared the danger to stay on course for another league and cup 'double'. Afterwards, rueful United manager Marc Skinner said: "Chelsea have done hardly anything in the game, but they are winners for a reason, they find that tiny little gap." — AFP

## Lukaku back to best; Inter eye CL final

MILAN: Romelu Lukaku's return to sparking form has given Inter Milan an extra weapon ahead of Tuesday's Champions League (CL) semi-final decider with AC Milan. Out for much of the season with injuries and with a damaged reputation following a disastrous World Cup, Lukaku has slowly worked his way back to his best. The Belgian striker has scored five times and set up three more in his last six matches and his double in Saturday's 4-2 win over Sassuolo highlighted his new-found confidence.

Lukaku celebrated his 30th birthday by beginning and ending the scoring at the San Siro, spinning and lashing home the opener from the edge of the box shortly before half-time and drilling in his eighth league goal of the season just before the end. A striker in his sort of form should probably expect to be starting such a huge match on Tuesday, where Inter defend a 2-0 first leg lead in a bid to reach their first Champions League final since the last time they won it under Jose Mourinho 13 years ago.

However it will likely be veteran Edin Dzeko who partners Lautaro Martinez up front for the second of two huge derbies with Milan, with Lukaku set to come on as an impact substitute. "Of course every player wants to start, but the coach has to make his choices for the team," said Lukaku. "As I have always said, the most important thing is Inter and that's why I give my all for the team."

Inter CEO Beppe Marotta said on Saturday that there was a chance of loanee Lukaku staying at Inter next season but with parent club Chelsea yet to announce their new manager his future remains uncertain. What is sure is that the San Siro will again be a riot of color and noise as two of Italy's standard bearers recreate the days when they were among Europe's elite. Inter fans have good reason to be confident about their side's chances, as they have a healthy lead from the first leg and are bang in form.

Simone Inzaghi's side have won seven matches in a row, scoring 20 goals in the process and playing with a confidence which has been lacking for most of an odd league season in which they have lost 11 times, more than any other team in Serie A's European places.

Milan meanwhile come into Tuesday's match in disarray after an embarrassing defeat at lowly Spezia which ended with team and coach Stefano Pioli having a post-match discussion with their away support. Pioli and his players had their heads bowed in remorse while Milan's hardcore ultras bellowed encouragement in the hope that their words might add something which was missing in the first leg. However seeing as the big miss in the first leg was Rafael Leao, the Portugal winger's probable return on Tuesday from a thigh injury will be much more of a boost to Milan. — AFP



## Barcelona earn La Liga title

Relegated Elche surprise Atletico with rare win



CATALONIA: Barcelona's players celebrate winning their 27th Spanish league championship after the Spanish league football match between RCD Espanyol and FC Barcelona on May 14, 2023. — AFP

**BARCELONA:** Barcelona won La Liga for the first time since 2019 by thrashing Espanyol 4-2 on Sunday, wresting the title back from rivals Real Madrid. The Catalan giants clinched their 27th Spanish championship at the home of their neighbours, with scenes turning ugly at full time as celebrating Barcelona players were chased from the field by pitch invaders.

Robert Lewandowski struck twice for Barcelona, along with goals for Alejandro Balde and Jules Kounde, while Javi Puado and Joselu pulled two back late on for the hosts. Barcelona have endured a troubled period on and off the pitch in recent years but their triumph signals significant improvement, with coach Xavi Hernandez winning his first major trophy since taking over in November 2021. President Joan Laporta's rebuild was widely criticized last summer in light of the club's perilous financial situation.

Early Champions League elimination was a blow, but the club won the Spanish Super Cup in January, before sealing La Liga glory with four games to spare. "It was a very emotional moment, a moment

very hard not to celebrate after so many months of work," said Xavi. "We didn't celebrate just because it was Espanyol's stadium." The coach said that the victory was proof that the club was heading in the right direction. "(It brings) a lot of calm, a lot of hope for the future," said Xavi. "I am very happy. We did a great job, a league won with four games remaining, that's to the absolute merit of the team."

Xavi did not spring any surprises with his line-up and Barcelona's first team took to the pitch with one goal firmly in mind, the end finally in sight. They conjured an electric display, one of their finest this season, to seal their triumph and leave their city rivals 19th, four points from safety with four matches remaining. Barcelona took the lead through Lewandowski, finishing from close range after a fine Alejandro Balde assist.

The left-back scored the second himself, with Pedri scooping a cross to the back post for him to pounce. Barca grabbed the third before half-time when Raphinha put the ball on a plate for Lewandowski to roll home. The Polish striker's arrival from Bayern

Munich was a key part of last summer's rebuild and despite a dip in the second half of the season, has paid the Catalans back in goals.

Raphinha, who joined from Leeds, played superbly against Espanyol and has been an important figure in the second half of the season with Ousmane Dembele sidelined for a long stretch. "I am very happy and not just for myself, the whole team worked so hard," said Raphinha. "Only a few of us had won the league, it's the first for a lot of players, it's special. We worked so hard for this."

### Angry fans

Kounde headed home the fourth early in the second half from Frenkie de Jong's perfect chipped pass as Espanyol's defense crumbled yet again. Some Espanyol fans headed for the exits early while others demanded the board resign, including aiming one unsavoury chant at the club's Chinese owners.

Barcelona goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen denied Puado when through on goal, determined to earn a

La Liga record-equaling 26th clean sheet of the season in the top flight. However moments later the Espanyol forward found himself through on goal once more and this time scored with a sublime lob -- small consolation in the face of Espanyol's defeat and Barcelona's glory.

Joselu pulled another goal back in stoppage time, but it was too little, too late. Xavi's side celebrated at full-time, to the anger of Espanyol fans, who invaded the pitch, with Barcelona players sprinting down the tunnel to escape. "I haven't seen the images, I always go in at the end of a game and from what I've been told, it's something that should not happen and should be condemned," said Espanyol coach Luis Garcia. "Measures were in place to avoid it, but it was not possible."

Earlier Atletico Madrid fell to a surprise 1-0 defeat at relegated Elche. Atletico Madrid fell to a surprise 1-0 defeat at relegated Elche on Sunday, confirming that Diego Simeone's side are no longer mathematically in contention to win La Liga. Valencia snatched an important late victory at Celta Vigo to climb provisionally to 14th, three points above the relegation zone. — AFP



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