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Kuwait marks 60 years at UN

FM, diplomats hail partnership • Anniversary celebrated with music, exhibitions



NEW YORK: Kuwait's Permanent Representative at the UN Tareq Al-Bannai, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Washington Sheikhha Al-Zain Sabah Nasser Al-Saud Al-Sabah, Kuwait's General Consul in New York Azzam Al-Asfoor and other officials pose for a photo with a Kuwaiti national music band during an event marking Kuwait's 60th anniversary of membership at the UN headquarters. — KUNA

NEW YORK: The Kuwaiti mission at the UN headquarters in New York marked the country's 60th anniversary of membership of the international organization. The event saw the participation of a Kuwaiti national music band, in addition to exhibitions displaying the history and culture of Kuwait. In a televised message, broadcast at the UN General Assembly's hall, Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah affirmed that Kuwait, since joining the UN, has worked diligently to boost cooperation and understanding amongst all members of the international organization.

Kuwait's Permanent Representative at the UN Tareq Al-Bannai commended the strong ties between Kuwait and the UN. UN General Assembly President Csaba Korosi said that since joining the UN in 1963, Kuwait has been an active and valuable member of the UN through its commitment to its charter and efforts. Deputy UN Secretary General Amina Mohammad, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Washington Sheikhha Al-Zain Al-Sabah, Kuwait's General Consul in New York Azzam Al-Asfoor and a huge number of Arab, Islamic and foreign diplomats attended the celebrations. — KUNA (See Page 2)

Court upholds barring candidate as ex-MP detained

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The administrative court on Sunday upheld a decision by the interior ministry to bar candidate Hani Hussein from running in the June 6 elections because he was previously convicted over a criminal

offense. A special commission at the election department of the interior ministry last week decided to bar a number of candidates from running in the elections over a variety of reasons. They included former controversial MP Mohammad Al-Juwaihel and Hussein.

Hussein and other candidates barred by the ministry have the right to appeal against the decision before the administrative court and challenge their decisions before the appeals and cassation courts. Meanwhile, the public prosecution on Sunday decided to detain a former MP and several other tribesmen suspected of taking part in outlawed tribal primaries in the fourth constituency.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

MoCI eases licenses for SMEs

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Mohammad Al-Aiban issued a decision allowing business owners in certain business categories to obtain a license without the need to provide a rent contract or receipt, with the goal of promoting an easier business environment. The new decision helps small businesses that do not require an office or staff to operate to obtain a license. Instead, the license holder can be accessed through their home address or via the Sahel app.

Kuwait taps biometric tech

KUWAIT: The interior ministry has clarified that all arrivals, citizens or expats, who are over 18 years of age, will be subjected to biometric scans before entering the country via all border crossings. This includes fingerprint, facial and iris scans, it pointed out, adding the process is for entrants only. The ministry said it has opened four centers in Jahra, Ali Sabah Al-Salem, West Mishref and Farwaniya for those who want to register their biometric data before traveling. — KUNA

Iran calls for Gulf cooperation

TEHRAN: Iran said on Sunday it is capable of ensuring the safety of the vital Gulf waters in cooperation with neighboring countries, following maritime tensions with the United States. "The Islamic Republic of Iran and the countries south of the...Gulf are capable of cooperating to ensure the security of the...Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz and the Sea of Oman," Iran's Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces Mohammad Bagheri said. — AFP

Outrage after Zionist minister storms Al-Aqsa

JERUSALEM: Zionist National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir stormed the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound Sunday, a controversial move by the extreme-right politician amid heightened tensions in annexed east Jerusalem. The move came three days after Ben-Gvir and tens of thousands of Zionist nationalists marched through the Old City and just over a week into a fragile Gaza ceasefire.

Al-Aqsa Mosque is the third holiest site in Islam and is administered by Jordan. Non-Muslims are permitted to visit the site, but not pray there. Hamas, the group that rules the blockaded Gaza Strip, denounced Ben-Gvir's last visit to the site in January and again slammed his action on Sunday. The Zionist entity will "bear responsibility for the barbaric incursions of its ministers and herds of settlers", the group wrote on Telegram.

The move "confirms the depths of danger looming over Al-Aqsa, under this Zionist fascist government and the arrogance of its ministers from the extreme right", said Hamas. Zionist police confirmed Ben-Gvir's visit in a statement, adding that it passed without incident. Later on Sunday, the Zionist entity's top politicians held a rare cabinet meeting in the tunnels

beneath the Western Wall. Palestinians fear their use as a vast museum threatens the foundations of Al-Aqsa Mosque. The Jordanian Waqf Islamic affairs council, which administers the mosque compound, described Ben-Gvir's visit as a "blatant storming and desecration of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque". "No less dangerous is the call by the occupation government to hold its meeting this morning in the Western Wall area," a Waqf statement said.

Jordan decried Ben-Gvir's actions as a "provocative step" and a "dangerous and unacceptable escalation". It "represents a flagrant and unacceptable violation of international law, and of the historical and legal status quo in Jerusalem and its holy sites", said foreign ministry spokesman Sinan Majali.

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Saudi astronauts heading to ISS

CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida: A private mission to the International Space Station (ISS) organized by Axiom Space is due to blast off from Florida on Sunday, carrying the first two Saudi astronauts to go to the orbiting laboratory. Rayyanah Barnawi, a breast cancer researcher, will become the first Saudi woman to voyage into space and will be joined on the mission by fellow Saudi Ali Al-Qarni, a fighter pilot.

The Axiom Mission 2 (Ax-2) crew was to take off aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from the Kennedy Space

Center at Cape Canaveral in the southern state of Florida at 5:37 pm (21:37 GMT). The team also includes Peggy Whitson, a former NASA astronaut who will be making her fourth flight to the ISS, and John Shoffner, a businessman from Tennessee who will serve as pilot.

They are due to spend around 10 days on board the ISS, where they should arrive around 1:30 pm on Monday. "Being the first Saudi woman astronaut, representing the region, it's a great pleasure and honor that I'm very happy to carry," said Barnawi at a recent press conference. She added that, aside from excitement for the research she will carry out on board,

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This handout photo released on May 20, 2023 shows the Ax-2 crew (from left) Rayyanah Barnawi, John Shoffner, Peggy Whitson and Ali Al-Qarni. — AFP

Gulf giants turn to start-ups for carbon capture

ABU DHABI: Faced with mounting pressure over planet-heating pollution, Gulf Arab energy giants are turning to humble tech start-ups as they search for ways to remove emissions while keeping oil flowing. Oil producers have for years touted capturing carbon before it goes into the atmosphere as a potential global warming solution, against criticism from climate experts who say it

risks distracting from the urgent goal of slashing fossil fuel pollution.

With little investment and few projects in operation around the world so far, the technology is currently nowhere near the scale needed to make a difference to global emissions. Now major players from Saudi Aramco to the United Arab Emirates' ADNOC say that is about to change, as the UAE hosts climate negotiations this year with a message of cutting emissions rather than fossil fuels. "For the industry and for countries as well to achieve net-zero by 2050, I don't see us achieving this without embracing carbon capture," Musabbah

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ABU DHABI: People attend the UAE Climate Tech Forum on May 10, 2023. — AFP



Kuwaiti mission marks 60th anniversary of UN membership

Delegation shared Kuwait's heritage through musical performances, cultural exhibition



NEW YORK: Kuwait Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah speaking at the UN General Assembly's Hall. — KUNA photos



Ambassador Tareq Al-Bannai (center right) and Kuwaiti Ambassador to Washington Sheikha Al-Zain Sabah Nasser Al-Saud Al-Sabah (center left) with other officials.

NEW YORK: The Kuwaiti mission at the UN headquarters in New York marked its country's 60th anniversary of membership at the international organization. The event saw the participation of a Kuwaiti national music band in addition to exhibitions displaying the history and culture of Kuwait. In a televised message, broadcasted at the UN General Assembly's Hall, Kuwait Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah affirmed that Kuwait, since joining the UN, had worked diligently to boost cooperation and understanding amongst all members of the international organization.

He affirmed that he was proud of Kuwait's 60 years of accomplishments on the regional and the international levels, saying that his country had called for boosting security, sustainable development and human rights during its membership. Sheikh Salem reflected Kuwait's keenness on continuing its efforts at the UN, affirming that his country was a reliable partner for the UN when it came to bolstering justice and moderation on a global scale.

Kuwait's Permanent Representative at the UN Ambassador Tareq Al-Bannai delivered a speech during the occasion, which commended the strong ties between Kuwait and the UN. Wherever the UN would seek virtue in the world, Kuwait would be there to support the international organization through commitment to the noble

tenets of the UN charter, he affirmed.

He added that "what binds the two parties is a close partnership and cooperation extending over the last six decades in various fields, most notably peace, security, humanitarian, development and economic spheres".

He touched upon the historical role of Kuwaiti women in the advancement of the country and their active participation in its development process. "The achievements, sacrifices and courage of Kuwaiti women is an integral part of the story of our country," he said.

In a statement to KUNA after the conclusion of the ceremony, Ambassador Al-Bannai praised the distinguished efforts, high professionalism and dedication of all members of the participating delegation from the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters. He explained that these efforts contributed to the success of this celebration and the transfer of the bright cultural image of the State of Kuwait and its people to the senior officials of the United Nations, the United States and the diplomatic corps in New York.

Speaking during the occasion, United Nations General Assembly President Csaba Korosi said that since joining the UN in 1963, Kuwait had been an active and valuable member of the UN through its commitment to its charter and efforts. Despite its small size, Kuwait is working



Al-Mass group performs during the Kuwaiti mission's celebration of the county's 60-year anniversary as a UN member.



(From left) General Assembly President Csaba Korosi, Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations Amina J. Mohammed and Kuwait's Permanent Representative at the UN Ambassador Tareq Al-Bannai.

strongly to realize plans of the UN including the 2035 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

He asserted that the international community depended on the rational voice of the State of Kuwait in issues pertaining to regional and international security including issues connected with the Middle East. Kuwait's humanitarian role also reflected its deep care regarding the plight of fellow human beings affected by conflict or natural disaster and the country plays an important role in reducing suffering worldwide, he said.

He stressed that the role played by the State of Kuwait proves that it is aware of

what is needed to overcome adversity, as it was able to rise to become a beacon of stability. Kuwait's understanding of what it means to re-build after disasters is what makes it a stable presence in the humanitarian field.

"The United Nations needs reliable partners more than ever to promote peace and dialogue. Every country has a role to play and Kuwait has a very special role, which is pivotal and very important," he said. Korosi stressed that "the State of Kuwait will remain the land of friendship and peace over time".

Along with Korosi, Deputy UN Secretary General Amina Mohammed, Kuwait

Ambassador to Washington Sheikha Al-Zain Sabah Nasser Al-Saud Al-Sabah, Kuwait's General Consulate in New York City Azzam Al-Asfoor, and a huge number of Arab, Islamic, and foreign diplomats attended the celebrations. A performance was presented by the Kuwaiti National Band led by Maestro Dr Ayoub Khader, which included a collection of timeless songs from Kuwait's heritage.

The ceremony included an exhibition of photographs, fine art paintings, books, stamps, folders, maps, newspapers and rare magazines that reflected the culture, civilization and history of Kuwait. — KUNA

54 Kuwaiti families have registered property in Palestine

KUWAIT: The Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub during a press conference at the embassy's premises said Kuwait-Palestine ties are very strong and distinguished, as he revealed that 70 Palestinian teachers will arrive in the country soon which confirms Kuwait's confidence in the Palestinian teachers.

He said during the press conference that was held on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Palestinian nakba that the total number of Palestinian teachers who had contracts with the education ministry is 1,250 teachers since 2017 including the new batch that will arrive in a few days. He said that around 500 Kuwaitis visited Palestine during the past five years, in addition to official and private entities.

Tahboub said there are properties belonging to around 54 Kuwaiti families in Palestine and are officially registered in their names, adding that there are strict instructions by the Palestinian President to protect Kuwaiti property. Those who wish to go to Palestine in order to claim their property can do so without any difficulty. Palestinian officials are ready to make immediate arrangements to facilitate their entry into Palestine, he said.

He said Kuwait is one of the countries in which Palestinians have the most confidence and its leadership in fighting for the Palestinian cause can't be denied. "We resort to Kuwait in anything Palestine needs. Kuwait enjoys major respect and appreciation by the Palestinian leadership," he said.

Tahboub added that Kuwait does not wait for Palestinians to ask for support, as the coordination is continuous between the two sides and the country plays an important integral part at the international and regional levels when it comes to the Palestinian cause. "We are always ready for peace, and what distinguishes the Palestinian people is the permanent optimism and hope," he said.

Tahboub asked the international community to "wake up" and refrain from the "double-standard policy" towards the Palestinian cause. It must instead take a stand to provide Palestinians with international protection.

The Palestinian cause, he said, remains a central cause and remains the axis of peace and war, so peace will only come from Palestine. He affirmed that and there will be no security or stability, neither for the Zionist entity nor the world, without finding a solution to the Palestinian people's plight. "The Arab peace initiative remains the foundation for solving the Palestinian-Zionist conflict in our view, in addition to the Security Council resolutions regarding the Palestinian cause," he said.



NEW YORK: Dr Hassan Ashkanani shows visitors the exhibition collection on the 60th anniversary of Kuwait's accession to the United Nations. — KUNA photos



NCCAL official urges more presence in global events

NEW YORK: Assistant Secretary General for the Arts Sector in the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) Musaad Al-Zamil affirmed the importance of increasing Kuwaiti cultural participation in international forums especially the ones organized by the UN. This came in a statement by Zamil to KUNA, on the sidelines of the celebration organized by Kuwait's permanent delegation at the UN in the General Secretariat HQ in NYC, on the 60th anniversary of Kuwait's membership at the UN. Zamil said that he was honored to lead the Kuwaiti delegation, as assistant secretary for the arts sector in National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters in this historic and important event, at the invitation of the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Zamil added that a specific scenario has been created for the celebration held by the Kuwaiti delegation to the United Nations, headed by Kuwait's permanent representative at the United Nations, Ambassador Tareq Al-Bannai, that includes an art exhibition of private possessions and paintings of pioneering artists in expressive art in Kuwait. Professor of Anthropology and Archaeology in the Department of Sociology and Social Work at the College of Social Sciences, Dr Hassan Ashkanani shared his valuable possessions of pictures, books and stamps, especially the ones related to Kuwait's membership in the United Nations, noted Zamil. The exhibition included many publications of the cultural sector, including books, Al-Arabi magazine, and all the publications of the NCCAL, as well as a documentary film and a concert led by a group of academic musicians from the Higher Institute of Musical Arts and a show about Kuwaiti folk heritage, he explained. The ceremony had a great success and concluded with a song about Kuwait and the Arab Gulf states, stated Zamil. — KUNA



An old newspaper displayed at the exhibition.

Kuwait welcomes truce in Sudan

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Ministry welcomed on Sunday the ceasefire pact between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces for seven days. The ministry expressed hope that this agreement might pave the way for reaching a permanent and comprehensive cessation of hostilities, which would pave the way for ending the armed conflict in Sudan.

It also reaffirmed Kuwait's support towards all diplomatic efforts to resolve the Sudanese issue by facilitating talks between the two sides and avoid conflicts in order to reach peace. Moreover, it praised the pivotal and continuous role played by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States of America in reaching this agreement and

urging all parties to continue the dialogue. The ceasefire is set to take effect at 9:45 pm (19:45 GMT) on Monday, the United States and Saudi Arabia said in a joint statement after talks in the Saudi city of Jeddah. It "shall remain in effect for seven days and may be extended with the agreement of both parties", the statement added.

In a statement published Sunday by the official Saudi Press Agency, Riyadh acknowledged multiple truces have been violated since fighting broke out on April 15. "Unlike previous ceasefires, the agreement reached in Jeddah was signed by the parties and will be supported by a US-Saudi and international-supported ceasefire monitoring mechanism," the foreign ministry said.

More aid

Kuwait's tenth planeload of relief supplies for Sudan flew from Abdullah Al-Mubarak Air Base on Saturday toward the afflicted African nation. The aircraft is boarding ten tons of relief and medical supplies and tents, said

Khaled Al-Zaid, the director of public relations and information at Kuwait Red Crescent Society in remarks to KUNA. He affirmed determination to send further aid to the Sudanese people, currently suffering shortage of necessities and hard difficult conditions due to infighting.

Urgent need

In Khartoum, doctors have repeatedly condemned bombardments on hospitals which have come under attack by both the air force's fighter jets and the RSF's artillery. Residents of densely-populated neighborhoods have accused RSF fighters of widespread break-ins and looting. Civilians and aid agencies have for weeks pleaded for both sides to secure humanitarian corridors to let in urgently needed assistance.

In the Vatican on Sunday, Pope Francis welcomed "the partial agreements reached so far" but called "on the international community to spare no effort ... to ease the suffering of the population". — Agencies

Local

Selling blood to expats in Kuwait a violation of human rights: Lawyer

Citizens split between supporting, abhorring new regulation

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Recently, the health ministry announced it will start charging expats KD 20 per unit of blood, which caused a huge controversy not only among expats, who were shocked by the decision, especially since they are major blood donors, but also among citizens, who consider it as discriminatory. Kuwait Times asked Lawyer Thamer Al-Sanea about the legal point of view on this issue, and whether someone can submit a grievance to stop this decision.

Sanea said this decision is legal and does not violate any legislations according to Kuwaiti law, but at the same time it violates international human rights standards which Kuwait has signed on. He added according to the laws in Kuwait, this issue is considered a ministerial decision. Therefore, it is seen as an independent decision that the government does not interfere in. But Sanea said the ministry of health has no logical or acceptable reason for applying this decision, as it is considered inhumane, adding anyone can file a grievance to try to stop this decision.

Kuwait Times also asked the opinion of citizens regarding this issue — some rejected this decision, but others think this is the best way to reduce crowding caused by expats. Journalist Dahem Al-Qahtani tweeted his objection. "Regarding the MoH decision to sell blood bags to expats for KD 20, what if the patient undergoes urgent surgery or faces a shortage of blood? What if they cannot pay? Will they let them die?" he asked. "This is a very offensive decision for Kuwait and who suggested and approved it damaged the country's

reputation inside and outside," he added.

"Raising the fees for dispensing blood bags in this way may make us face a process of selling blood for cash, which is prohibited by the country's laws and Islamic legislations. Forcing a patient to provide a donor to the blood bank in exchange for blood bags, from a legal point of view, means the country is forcing a barter process, which is also prohibited," lawyer Riyadh Al-Fadhli tweeted.

"In the name of the great Hippocratic oath, I hope officials at the ministry of health completely cancel blood transfusion fees for patients without any restrictions or conditions. And I call on everyone to donate quickly to the blood bank so that the strategic stock does not run out," consultant cardiologist Farida Al-Habib tweeted.

On the other hand, a Kuwaiti woman commented on other citizens' position on this decision. "Why those people who defend expats don't talk about the price of a blood bag that is sold to citizens at private hospitals for KD 50, and the citizen is forced to buy it due to need," she tweeted, adding, "expats are the reason private hospitals in Kuwait are asking mon-



Thamer Al-Sanea



ey for blood bags. They are using all the stock," she claimed. Another female citizen thinks this decision is due to visitors who come to Kuwait to undergo major surgeries and use most of the blood stock, alleging they don't pay anything, although they pay thousands in their countries without any questions.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Society for Human Rights (KSHR) issued a statement denouncing the decision, saying the ministry has disregarded international ob-

ligations that Kuwait has to uphold with regards to respect for human rights, including health rights, pursuing the highest level of healthcare and seeking to implement the right to healthcare through a non-discriminatory approach. The KSHR statement affirmed its rejection of discriminatory treatment between citizens and resident patients, as these decisions represent violations of health rights stipulated in international conventions and treaties.



VENICE: Ambassador Nasser Al-Qahtani and NCCAL's Mohammad Al-Jassar welcome guests and curators of Kuwait pavilion at Biennale Architettura 2023. — KUNA

Kuwait 'rethinks' its urban design at Venice exhibition

ROME: Kuwait's pavilion opened Saturday at the Biennale Architettura 2023 — the 18th International Architecture Exhibition held in Venice, Italy. Stressing significance of Kuwaiti presence in the venue, Ambassador in Rome Nasser Al-Qahtani said in a key note speech that the Biennale mirrors modern creativity within the global cultural movement, as

it attracts a mix of architects to discuss visions and solutions for contemporary urban dilemmas, according to an embassy copy to KUNA.

Dr Mohammad Al-Jassar, Assistant Secretary General of National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), was also present at the event. Curators of "Rethinking Rethinking Kuwait" pavilion for La Biennale di Venezia say it explores new methods for architectural and urban design that emerges from the intersections of space and time.

The project is an ongoing investigation attempting to rectify the effects of modernist urban planning that led to the erasure of most of Kuwait's historic-built fabric. The NCCAL-sponsored pavilion also delves into the ideas of "decolonization and decar-

bonization" by rethinking means of transportation and accessibility. It looks at Kuwait on a national scale with a focused study on Kuwait City as a prototypical condition.

It features various studies that explore transitional spaces in the city that ranges in scope and scale. Meanwhile, Roberto Cicutto, President of Exhibition expressed belief that Biennale's true task is as an institution, and not only for architecture. The Biennale's "Laboratory of the Future" program is enriched by Carnival — a six-month-long cycle of events, lectures, panel discussions, films, and performances. It will be open to the public until Sunday, November 26, 2023 at the Giardini and the Arsenal and at Forte Marghera. It's curated by renowned architect Lesley Lokko. — KUNA



MUSCAT: Health care professionals and officials attend the Middle East Federation of Medical Physics (MEFOMP) conference. — KUNA photos



People tour one of the booths at the conference.

Kuwaiti medical physicist leads Oman conference

KUWAIT: Head of Middle East Federation of Medical Physics (MEFOMP) Dr Meshari Al-Nuaimi stressed the importance of the role medical physicists play in the health care system. Nuaimi who

is head of Kuwait Cancer Control Center (KCCC) told KUNA, Sunday, on presiding over the presidency of the MEFOMP Conference in Muscat that the conference was launched with the participation of 40 international speakers in the field of radiation therapy, nuclear medicine and diagnostic radiology. The event also hosted experts and legislators in radiation protection from International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the International Organization for Medical Physics, he added.

The conference discusses the latest developments in medical imaging and radiotherapy, such as artificial

intelligence, in addition to providing professionals and scientists with an in-depth vision of future innovations and technologies in this field, he said. More than 100 scientific papers have been received in various fields of medical physics, which will be presented at the conference, he added. An award will be allocated for the best research for an academic student, in order to encourage students. The conference is an opportunity to exchange experiences on recent developments and technological breakthroughs, build networks to communicate with experts and academics from all over the world to raise the level of job performance. — KUNA

News in Brief

Labor strike won't affect travel: Kuwait Airways

KUWAIT: A strike planned by the Kuwait Airways labor union on Monday will not affect travel, the airline said in a statement on Sunday. Travelers are urged to follow flight timings as normal, Kuwait Airways said. Head of Kuwait Airways Workers Syndicate Talal Al-Hajeri confirmed that the strike is scheduled for Monday from 8:00 am to 10:00 am will not cause a halt to air traffic or delay passengers boarding at T4 building. He said employees will deliver their message in a civilized manner and explain their demands that includes low salaries and lack of allowances for all company employees. He criticized the alleged lack of clarity in the company's stance towards deciding whether the company belongs to the government or private sectors, "which caused the lack of approving the national labor support allowance for company employees".

Kuwait to hold Pan-Arab talks on disaster reduction

NEW YORK: The chief of Kuwait's fire department Khaled Al-Mekrad held talks on Sunday with the United Nations' (UN) Secretary General's Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction Mami Mizutori, focusing efforts to reduce the likelihood of global disasters. Praising bilateral cooperation over disaster risk management, the Kuwaiti official said in a statement that his country has agreed to host pan-Arab talks on the matter in the coming year. The UN official acknowledged Kuwait's contributions towards keeping global disasters at bay, saying she appreciated the country's initiative to host the aforementioned talks slated for 2024. — KUNA

Coast Guard cautions of shooting drills in the north

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior said on Sunday that the General Directorate of the Coast Guard will carry out shooting with live ammunition at the Alfa Naval Shooting Range tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, from 8 am until 3 pm. The ministry said in a press release that the shooting area is located southeast of Boubyan Island and northeast of Failaka Island. The ministry warned all seafarers not to approach the shooting site during the mentioned period of time, stressing that all maritime patrols will prevent anyone who tries to approach for the sake of everyone's safety. — KUNA

French Embassy suspends French visa application

KUWAIT: The French Embassy in Kuwait announced the suspension of the official visa application "France-visa", during the period from May 26-30, for technical reasons and to improve the processing of applications. The embassy called for visa applications to be submitted before May 26.

Detectives catch man who shot father

KUWAIT: Farwaniya detectives have arrested the man who made headlines Sunday for murdering his father in Ferdous. The detectives were also able to find the weapon used in the crime, a Kalashnikov. The suspect is now under interrogation. Preliminary investigation has revealed that the man, who was reported as stateless, had obtained citizenship of another country. He has been referred to the Public Prosecution for further legal action.



KUWAIT: Turkish nationals living in Kuwait vote for the presidential elections at the Turkish embassy in Kuwait City, on May 20, 2023. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

News in Brief

Police impersonator targeting expats caught by patrols

KUWAIT: Patrol police were able to arrest a citizen with previous convictions, who was found to be involved in several cases of robbery against expatriates. The man was able to trick his victims by impersonating a police officer, the interior ministry said. At the time of arrest, he was found in possession of narcotic substances and an air weapon that he used to threaten his expat targets. According to a security source: "During the wandering of one of the patrols supporting the Ahmadi Security Directorate in Mahboula, a car was suspected of stopping between a gathering of expatriates of Asian nationality. The driver tried to escape after being spotted, but he was caught. It was found that he does not carry personal identification documents." The man was referred to the authorities for further legal action.

Juveniles, residency violators arrested

KUWAIT: Five juveniles have been arrested for driving vehicles without a driving license in Ahmadi Governorate as they were sent to the Juvenile Prosecution. "They carried out acts of recklessness endangering their lives and the lives of others. Officers referred them to the Juvenile Prosecution and impounded their vehicles, and a number of violations were released against them," the public relations department at the interior ministry announced. In other news, the General Directorate of Residency Affairs Investigations, represented by the Violators Follow-up Department was able to arrest 53 violators of the residency and work law in Wafra Farms, Salhiya and Sulabiya. They were all referred to the competent authorities in order to take all necessary legal measures against them.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Two fishermen prepare their equipment on a fishing pier overlooking the Arabian Gulf. Kuwait City's skyline is seen in the background. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Ministry of Education to open six schools with hybrid teaching system

Schools to use international curriculum for science subjects

KUWAIT: Minister of Education Dr Hamad Al-Adwani said the ministry is working towards opening six schools as part of "Al-Aufuq", which is the Arabic word for horizon, schools project.

The project was recommended by HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as part of plans to upgrade the educational system and improve its output.

First announced by the Council of Ministers in August 2022, the "Al-Aufuq" schools project aims to establish schools using a hybrid system, whereby international curricula will be used for science, technology and mathematics. The local curriculum will still be used for Arabic, Islamic education and social studies, according to 2022 news reports.

"The ministry has a specialized team to develop a new structure and arrange the relationship between



Dr Hamad Al-Adwani

the Ministry of Education and related institutions such as the Supreme Education Council and the National Center for Education Development, in addition to reviewing curricula by specialists to reach the best educational level," said Adwani, who is also Minister of Higher Education.

The educational system at these new schools will reportedly conform to modern international educational trends, while preserving Kuwait's national character and Islamic values. The schools are expected to be administratively independent, but will still be subject to legal controls under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education. The curriculum taught at the schools must also be approved by the ministry.

All administrative and financial aspects of the "Aufuq" schools will be organized through the Supreme Committee formed by the Council of Ministers. The plan, according to sources, is for teachers to be 70 percent Kuwaitis registered with the Ministry of Education.

The project was expected to be launched gradually as of September of the 2023-2024 academic year. Schools for kindergarten students and grades one to four will start operating in the initial stages, with each educa-



tional district reportedly getting six schools.

Schools to open in new areas

Adwani also announced the opening of 16 new schools, most of which will be in new residential areas. He stated that under the directives of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah to provide the best services to residents of the new cities, work has been done to ensure the readiness of these schools for providing educational services in these areas.



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Members of the Kuwaiti-Iranian Friendship Organization pose for a photo.

New administration for Kuwaiti-Iranian friendship group

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti-Iranian Friendship Organization (KIFO) has appointed Sheikh Ali Al-Khalid Al-Sabah as its president and Dr Khadija Al-Mahmeed and Ibrahim Al-Baghli as vice presidents. During its most recent meeting, the organization formed its administrative body and decided on a vision for its activities. It also made cultural, social and economic plans, and outlined programs it hoped to carry out in the coming period. At the end of the meeting, KIFO honored the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the State of Kuwait Mohammad Irani, on the occasion of the end of his diplomatic duties in the country.

KIFO was established in 2013 by a group of public figures interested in the affairs of Kuwaiti-Iranian relations. It aims at strengthening the bonds of friendship between the two friendly peoples of Kuwait and Iran.

Since its establishment, the organization has been chaired by the late former Minister Dr Abdulrahman Al-Awadhi and the late former Minister Dr Muhammad Al-Sanousi, where several visits were made to Iran to meet with Iranian presidents, officials and popular, cultural and economic figures.



KUWAIT: Chairman of the Kuwaiti-Iranian Friendship Organization Sheikh Ali Al-Khalid Al-Sabah (left) presents a souvenir to the Ambassador of Iran to Kuwait Mohammad Irani on the occasion of the end of his diplomatic duties in the country. — KUNA photos

The organization's goal is to have representatives in both countries, who develop joint plans and programs. It also holds joint seminars, scientific conferences, art exhibitions, concerts, as well as mutual meetings between scientists, academics, specialists, thinkers and opinion makers from both parties to enhance consensus and intellectual rapprochement between the two peoples.

Diplomatic Women's Committee thanks Kuwait Times

The Diplomatic Women's Committee has shared its gratitude with Kuwait Times through a letter, which read:

The Diplomatic Women's Committee would like to extend its special thanks and apprecia-

tion for your continuous follow-up of the committee's thematic events, and series of distinguished social and cultural activities during its cultural season 2022-2023. We consider your support and interest in our programs and publishing them in your esteemed newspaper as one of the reasons for our success and the spread of this committee and its performance in Kuwait society as well as diplomats accredited to the State of Kuwait. We wish your newspaper a continuous progress & prosperity. Without print media, the committee's activities aimed at serving the community would not have spread.



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Heavy clashes as Sudan truce agreed

Battle-weary Sudanese skeptical about one-week ceasefire



JEDDAH: Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan (center), flanked by representatives of the Sudanese army and the rival Paramilitary Rapid Support forces, posing for a photograph after the signing of a ceasefire agreement on May 21, 2023. — AFP

KHARTOUM: Heavy clashes again rocked Sudan's capital on Sunday hours after rival generals agreed to an upcoming one-week ceasefire, the latest in a series of truces that have been systematically violated. The ceasefire is set to take effect at 9.45 pm (1945 GMT) on Monday, the United States and Saudi Arabia said in a joint statement after talks in the Saudi city of Jeddah.

It "shall remain in effect for seven days and may be extended with the agreement of both parties", the statement added. In a statement published Sunday by the official Saudi Press Agency, Riyadh acknowledged multiple truces have been violated since fighting broke out on April 15.

"Unlike previous ceasefires, the agreement reached in Jeddah was signed by the parties and will be supported by a US-Saudi and international-supported ceasefire monitoring mechanism," the foreign

ministry said. But Khartoum residents—who for weeks have been sheltering from brutal urban warfare amid desperately low supplies of food and vital resources—were skeptical that this time would be any different. "They have announced truces that they have not held to before," said Hussein Mohammed, who remains in Khartoum North, sheltering in place with his sick mother even as their neighborhood became deserted. "We hope that this time mediators can monitor that the ceasefire is implemented," he told AFP. The fighting pits the Sudanese army, led by General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, against the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led by Burhan's former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

The intense battles have killed around 1,000 people and displaced over one million, with millions more trapped with sporadic access to water, electricity or medicine. Many have been separated from

their families, just a few kilometers away, by unrelenting gunfire. For Sawzan Mohammed, who lives in the capital's south, the ceasefire—if implemented—"will be my first chance to see my mother and father in Omdurman", just a bridge across the Nile River, she told AFP.

'No trust'

Along with the capital, the war-scarred western region of Darfur has seen some of the worst of the fighting. "We do not trust the warring sides," said Adam Issa, a shop owner in El-Geneina, West Darfur. "Every time they announce a truce and they go back to fighting. We want a permanent ceasefire, not a temporary truce."

The region is still reeling from a conflict that erupted in 2003 when former autocrat Omar al-Bashir unleashed the feared Janjaweed militia—which formed

the basis for the RSF—to crush a rebellion by ethnic minority groups. In October 2021, the two warring generals collaborated to oust a civilian government, derailing a transition to democracy following Bashir's ouster in 2019. They installed a ruling council with Burhan at its head and Daglo as his deputy, but their marriage of convenience later disintegrated, and their power struggle came to blows.

Burhan on Friday officially sacked Daglo from his position on the council, giving the vice presidency to former rebel leader Malik Agar. In a statement Saturday, Agar said he was determined to try to "end the war" and press for negotiations.

He also directly addressed Daglo—whose most recent bone of contention with Burhan was over the RSF's integration into the regular army—saying "Sudan's stability can only be re-established by a professional and unified army". —AFP



AARAMTA, Lebanon: Lebanese Hezbollah fighters take part in a large-scale military exercise on May 21, 2023. — AFP

Hezbollah carries out mock raids into Zionist territory

AARAMTA: Lebanon's Hezbollah movement simulated cross-border raids into Zionist territory Sunday in a show of its military might, using live ammunition and an attack drone, AFP correspondents said.

Around 200 Hezbollah fighters took part in the raids, part of large-scale military exercise in Aaramta, around 20 kilometers (12 miles) north of the Zionist entity's border. Dozens of journalists were invited to the event which took place ahead of the anniversary next week of Zionist entity's withdrawal from south-

ern Lebanon in 2000. One simulated raid involved a drone attack against a target inside Zionist region, while in another, fighters attacked vehicles across a mock border, retrieved a dummy's body from one of the cars and whisked it back across the "frontier".

Snipers shot at targets adorned with the Star of David while other fighters jumped through flaming hoops, during the largest demonstration of the group's military muscle in years in southern Lebanon. Hezbollah also put on display heavy and light arms, including anti-aircraft weapons and rocket launchers as well as rocket-propelled grenades.

"If some people in the Zionist entity (Zionist entity) dream of doing something foolish... we will rain down our precision missiles and all the weapons at our disposal," senior Hezbollah official Hashem Saifeddine said at the event. Hezbollah, founded in 1982 to fight Zionist occupation of southern Lebanon, is Iran's main regional proxy. — AFP

Iran hangs three convicted drug traffickers

TEHRAN: Iran on Sunday executed three men convicted on drug trafficking charges, the judiciary said, the latest of hundreds of people hanged in the country since the start of the year. The three men, described as members of a "drug cartel", were hanged after being convicted of "corruption on earth" for producing nearly 40 kilograms (88 pounds) of heroin, the judiciary's Mizan Online news website said.

The executions come one day after a man was hanged following a conviction over leading a human trafficking and prostitution ring.

On Friday three other men were executed for killing members of the security forces in November during protests triggered by the death in custody of Mahsa Amini.

Iran saw waves of nationwide protests following

the September 16 death of 22-year-old Amini, an Iranian Kurd who had been arrested for an alleged breach of the Islamic republic's strict dress rules for women. During the protests, which Tehran described as foreign-instigated "riots", thousands of Iranians were arrested and hundreds killed, including dozens of security personnel.

Friday's executions were denounced by Western countries and human rights groups based outside Iran. Iran executes more people a year than any other nation except China, according to human rights groups including Amnesty International.

The country hanged 75 percent more people in 2022 than the previous year, the Norway-based group Iran Human Rights (IHR) and Paris-based Together Against the Death Penalty (ECPM) said in a joint report in April.

At least 582 people were executed in Iran last year, the highest number of executions in the country since 2015 and well above the 333 recorded in 2021, the two groups said. But the pace of executions this year has been even higher so far, with IHR now counting at least 260 executions since the start of the year. — AFP

Ukraine denies fall of Bakhmut

KYIV: Ukraine on Sunday denied Bakhmut had fallen to Russian troops in the longest battle of the war and said it was instead advancing around the suburbs, making it "very difficult" for Russian troops to stay in the devastated city. A day after President Vladimir Putin congratulated his troops and private mercenary group Wagner who claimed to have taken the city in eastern Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelensky suggested it would be a pyrrhic victory for Moscow.

"You have to understand there is nothing" there in Bakhmut, he said, sat next to US President Joe Biden on the sidelines of the G7 summit in Hiroshima, Japan. "For today, Bakhmut is only in our hearts." Zelensky's spokesman later clarified that the Ukrainian president was not confirming the loss of Bakhmut to Russian troops.

"The president denied the capture of Bakhmut," spokesman Sergiy Nykyforov said on Facebook. Deputy Defence Minister Ganna Malyar then said Ukrainian troops "have semi-encircled the city".

"The advance of our troops in the suburbs on the flanks, which is still ongoing, makes it very difficult for the enemy to be in Bakhmut." She said Ukrainian troops were still in control of a residential area and some industrial facilities. The loss of Bakhmut would be hugely symbolic for the Ukrainians, who had held on for months, ignoring US advice behind the scenes to focus elsewhere.

But some analysts have said Ukraine has inflicted heavy losses on Russia in Bakhmut and forced it to commit large resources, potentially weakening its defenses in other parts of the front line.

Bakhmut, a salt-mining town that once had a population of 70,000 people, has been the scene



BAKHMUT, Ukraine: Members of Wagner group waving a Russian national flag and Wagner Group's flag on the rooftop of a damaged building in Bakhmut, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

of some of the bloodiest fighting in Moscow's more than year-long Ukraine offensive. The fall of Bakhmut, where both Moscow and Kyiv are believed to have suffered huge losses, would allow Moscow to bring home a key victory after a series of humiliating defeats. It would also come before a major counteroffensive that Kyiv has been preparing for months. Zelensky himself has warned that the city's loss would open the way for Russian troops to capture more of the Donbas region.

"As a result of offensive actions of the Wagner assault units, with the support of artillery and aviation of the 'Southern' unit, the liberation of the city of Artemovsk was completed," Russia's defence ministry said, using the Soviet-era name of Bakhmut. "Vladimir Putin congratulated the assault units of Wagner as well as all servicemen of units of the Russian armed forces who provided them with the necessary support and flank cover, on the completion of the operation to liberate" the city, TASS news agency quoted a Kremlin statement as saying. — AFP

Bahrain to resume diplomatic relations with Lebanon

DUBAI: Bahrain said Saturday it would restore full diplomatic relations with Lebanon after a year and a half, following a row over the Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen. Bahrain and other Gulf countries followed Saudi Arabia in recalling their diplomats towards the end of 2021 after a Lebanese minister criticized Riyadh's military intervention in the war in Yemen.

Manama — a staunch ally of Riyadh — also called on its citizens in Lebanon to leave the country. But the tiny Gulf kingdom said Saturday that it was bringing an end to the impasse, a move welcomed by Beirut. "The Kingdom of Bahrain has decided to restore diplomatic representation" at ambassador level in Lebanon, the Bahraini foreign ministry said, adding that this would "strengthen

the fraternal relations between the two countries".

Lebanon's prime minister Najib Mikati said the country "appreciated this decision and welcomes it". A diplomatic crisis erupted in Oct 2021 after the then-information minister was quoted criticizing the Saudi role in Yemen, where a grinding war has produced what the UN describes as the world's worst humanitarian crisis. George Kordahi, who has since resigned, said in a television interview that the Houthi rebels fighting Yemen's internationally recognized government were "defending themselves... against an external aggression".

In response, Riyadh recalled its ambassador and ordered Lebanon's envoy to leave the kingdom. Its Gulf allies the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Kuwait followed suit, expelling Lebanon's envoys. Saudi Arabia returned its envoy to Lebanon in April last year. The Bahraini decision comes the day after the Arab League summit in Saudi Arabia against a backdrop of unexpected rapprochement between Riyadh and Tehran, brokered by Beijing. The warming of relations between the region's two great rivals has paved the way for a major diplomatic reshuffle in the Arab world. — AFP

International

Erdogan eyes third decade of rule in historic runoff

Turkish president defends 'special relationship with Putin'

ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan cruises on Sunday into the final week before an historic runoff election as the big favorite to extend two decades of his Islamic-rooted rule until 2028. Secular leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu gave the opposition's best performance of Erdogan's dominant era in May 14 parliament and presidential polls. The retired bureaucrat of Kurdish Alevi descent broke ethnic barriers and Erdogan's stranglehold on the media and state institutions to win almost 45 percent of the vote. But Erdogan still came within a fraction of a point of topping the 50-percent threshold needed to win in the first round.

The 69-year-old leader did it despite Turkey's worst economic crisis since the 1990s and opinion surveys showing him headed for his first national election defeat. Kilicdaroglu will now need to rally his deflated troops and beat the odds yet again to wrest back power for the secular party that ruled Turkey for most of the 20th century.

The Eurasia Group consultancy put Erdogan's chances of winning next Sunday at 80 percent.

"It will be an uphill struggle for Kilicdaroglu in the second round," Hamish Kinnear of the Verisk Maplecroft consulting firm agreed.

Erdogan rode a nationalist wave that saw smaller right-wing parties pick up nearly 25 percent of the parallel parliamentary vote. Kilicdaroglu is courting these voters in the second presidential round.

The 74-year-old revamped his campaign team and tore up his old playbook for the most fateful week of his political career. He has replaced chatty clips that he used to record from his kitchen with desk-thumping speeches and pledges to immediately rid Turkey of millions of migrants. "As soon as I come to power, I will send all the refugees home," he said in his first post-election address. He has chased the endorsement of a little-known ultra-nationalist, whose tiny vote share pushed Turkey into its first presidential runoff.

Iraqi, Syrian Kurds divided over Erdogan's battle

ARBIL, Iraq: Turkey's presidential election is being anxiously watched by Kurds in Syria and Iraq as economic interests compete with fears of a regional military escalation against some Kurdish groups.

The long-running and deadly conflict between Ankara and militant groups from the ethnic Kurdish minority has spilled across the borders of both Iraq and Syria. But Turkey is also a major economic partner, especially for northern Iraq's autonomous Kurdish province which has long exported oil through a pipeline that runs through Turkey and has trade ties worth billions. "Economically, there are mutual benefits," said Iraqi political scientist Mohamed Ezzedine.

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, having governed for 20 years, has fostered key strategic links with Iraqi Kurdistan's President Nechirvan Barzani who has been in power for three decades. After the first round of elections, as votes were still being counted, Barzani called Erdogan, the Turkish "reis" (chief), to express "confidence and optimism" he would defeat challenger Kemal Kilicdaroglu.

But some Kurds in Iraq and across the border in Syria fear an Erdogan victory will see a military escalation in their home regions. Fighting between Ankara's army and Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) militants from Turkey has for decades spilled over into Iraqi Kurdistan, a rugged mountain region where

And he has punched back against Erdogan's claims that he was associating with "terrorists" — a code word for Kurdish groups fighting for broader autonomy in Turkey's southeast. "We have millions of patriots to reach," Kilicdaroglu said. But Kilicdaroglu's sharp right turn could prove costly with voters from Kurdish regions that overwhelmingly backed him in the first round.

Kurds embraced Erdogan during his first decade in power because he worked to lift many of their social restrictions. They turned against him when Erdogan formed his own alliance with Turkey's nationalist forces and began to unleash purges after surviving a failed coup attempt in 2016. Kilicdaroglu's new and more overtly nationalist tone echoes a secular era during which Kurds — who make up nearly a fifth of Turkey's population — were stripped of basic rights.

'Severe currency crisis'

The political battles are being accompanied by market turmoil that set in once it became apparent that Erdogan was on course to keep his grip on power. Turkey's recent years have been roiled by economic upheaval that erased many of the gains of Erdogan's more prosperous early rule. Most of the problems stem from Erdogan's fervent fight against interest rates — an approach some analysts link to his adherence to Islamic rules against usury. "I have a thesis that interest rates and inflation are positively correlated," he told CNN this week. "The lower the interest rates, the lower inflation will be." The markets' trust in more conventional economics have put massive pressure on the lira.

Government data showed Turkey's foreign currency reserves — topped up by aid from Arab allies — dropping by \$9 billion and reaching their lowest levels in 21 years in the week running up to the first-round vote. Analysts think most of the money was spent on efforts to prop up the lira against sharp and politically sensitive falls. "There is now a

both sides operate military bases — with civilians often caught in the crossfire.

In northeast Syria, the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) have established a semi-autonomous administration amid the chaos of the long-running civil war, and the group is backed by the United States as part of an anti-jihadist coalition. Ankara, however, considers them an extension of the PKK, which is labeled a terrorist group by Turkey and its key Western allies, and has waged successive military campaigns against them.

Despite the conflict's impact in Iraqi Kurdistan, the region also benefits from its neighbor, with trade ties worth an estimated \$12 billion in 2022. Many local businesses would like to keep things the way they are. "Since Erdogan became president, we have been satisfied," said Ahmed Krouanji, who runs a shop in Arbil's market. "There is a lot of trade with Turkey, the economic situation has improved." Others express views reflecting solidarity with Kurds across the border.

An Erdogan victory "is not in the interests of the Kurds of Turkey," said Ali Khodr, a man aged in his thirties. Turkey's leading pro-Kurdish party, the People's Democratic Party, denounces Ankara's persecution of its Kurdish minority and backs Kilicdaroglu. But the only consolation for the president's opponents after first-round voting that delivered the incumbent a comfortable lead, was that for the first time, Erdogan has been forced into a runoff. Over two decades, Arbil's leaders have forged close ties with the Turkish president, who receives Nechirvan Barzani and his cousin, Prime Minister Masrour Barzani, on their regular visits to Ankara. — AFP

Outrage after Zionist minister...

Continued from Page 1

Tours of the site by Zionist nationalists have long been criticized by Palestinians and Arab nations, while Ben-Gvir's visits have taken on added weight

since he took office in December. The office of Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas said "harming Al-Aqsa Mosque is playing with fire". "(It) will push the region into a religious war with unimaginable consequences that will affect everyone," said Abbas's spokesman, Nabil Abu Rudeineh, in a statement published by the Palestinian news agency Wafa.

lished by the Palestinian news agency Wafa.

The timing of Sunday's visit also holds significance, coming days after extremists marched through the Old City to celebrate east Jerusalem's capture by Zionist forces in the 1967 Six-Day War. Thursday's event was marred by incidents of violence against Palestinians and journalists, while the United States condemned "the hateful chants such as 'Death to Arabs'" during the rally.

Ben-Gvir's visit also follows a Cairo-brokered truce reached on May 13 between the Zionist entity and Islamic Jihad in Gaza, ending five days of cross-border fighting. Egypt's foreign ministry on Sunday pressed the Zionist entity to "immediately stop the escalatory practices which inflame the pre-existing state of tension in the occupied (Palestinian) territories". — AFP

Saudi astronauts heading...

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she is looking forward to sharing her experience with kids while on the ISS.

"Being able to see their faces when they see astronauts from their own region for the first time is very thrilling," she said. A career fighter pilot, Al-Qarni said he has "always had the passion of exploring the unknown and just admiring the sky and the stars". "It is a great opportunity for me to pursue this kind of passion that I have, and now maybe just fly among the stars."

The mission is not Saudi Arabia's first foray into space. In 1985, Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, an air force pilot, took part in a US-organized space voyage. But the space mission involving a Saudi woman is the latest move by the oil-rich Gulf kingdom, where women only gained the right to drive a few years ago, to revamp its ultraconservative image. The kingdom established the Saudi Space Commission in 2018 and launched a program last year to send astronauts into space.

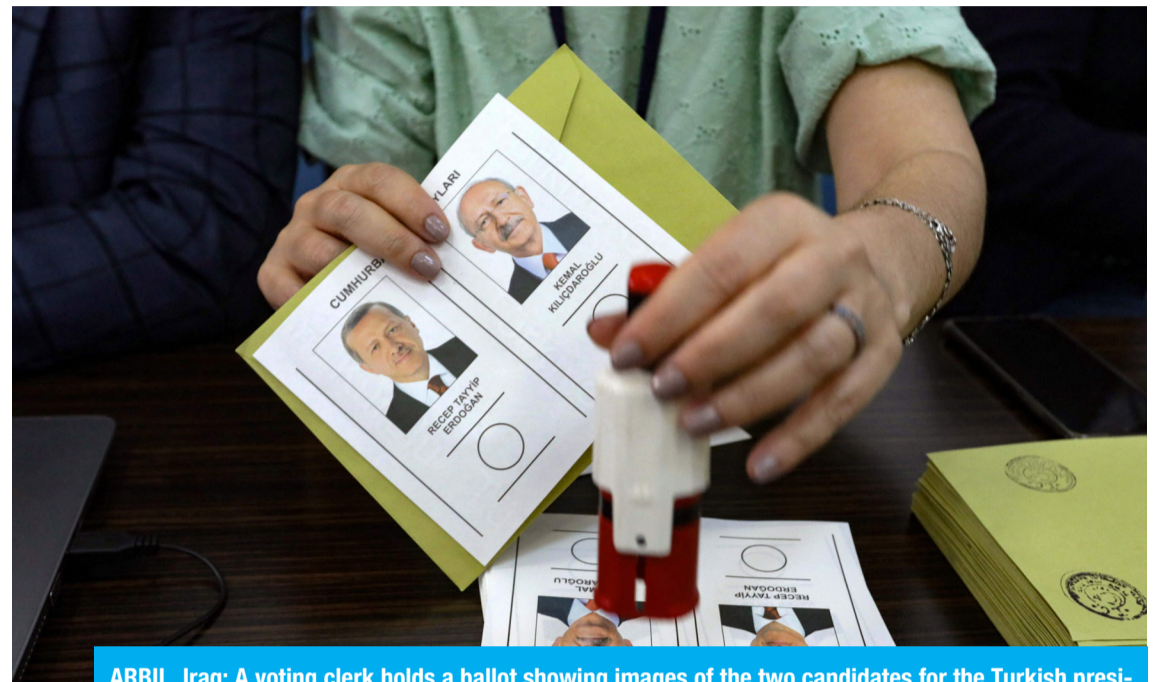
The four-member team is set to carry out some 20 experiments while on the ISS. One of them involves studying the behavior of stem cells in zero gravity. They will join seven others already on board the ISS: three Russians, three Americans and Emirati astronaut Sultan Al-Neyadi, who was the first Arab national to go on a spacewalk last month.

The mission to the ISS will be the second in partnership with ISS-key holder NASA by Axiom Space, a private space company, which offers the rare voyages for sums that run into the millions of dollars. The company oversees training the astronauts, chartering their means of transport and ensuring the smooth management of their stay.

Axiom Space carried out its first private astronaut mission to the ISS in April 2022, sending three businessmen and former astronaut Michael Lopez-Alegria to spend 17 days in orbit as part of Ax-I. Some astronauts on the ISS at the time said they had to take time out of their day — precious in zero gravity — to take care of the space tourists. "My time is actually a lot less constrained than Mike Lopez-Alegria's time was on the first mission," said Whitson. "I'll be available to help the crew members a lot more as they need assistance."

For Axiom Space, these missions are a first step toward an ambitious goal: The construction of its own space station, with the first module expected to launch in 2025. The station would at first be attached to the ISS before separating and orbiting independently. NASA plans to retire the ISS around 2030 and to instead send astronauts to private stations, which will also host their own clients, leading the US space agency to encourage the development of programs by several companies.

Russia recently agreed to extend its use of the ISS until 2028, having threatened an earlier pullout last year as ties unraveled between the Kremlin and the West over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. The other international partners — Japan, Canada and the European Space Agency — have committed themselves, like the United States, to continue operations until 2030. — AFP



ARBIL, Iraq: A voting clerk holds a ballot showing images of the two candidates for the Turkish presidency on May 20, 2023, at her country's consulate in Erbil. — AFP

very real risk that an Erdogan victory could lead to macroeconomic instability in Turkey, including the threat of a severe currency crisis," Capital Economic warned.

But Erdogan has exuded confidence since the first round. He has ridiculed his rival's nationalist overtures and stuck by some of his more controversial policies — including an increasingly strong relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Erdogan's turn towards Russia has helped secure billions of dollars of relief on Turkey's huge energy bill. "Russia and Turkey need each

other in every field possible," Erdogan told CNN. He also argued that his more "balanced" stance towards Putin helped him negotiate a UN-backed deal with Russia under which Ukraine was allowed to resume exporting grain. "This was possible because of our special relationship with President Putin," Erdogan said. He also scoffed at remarks from 2019 by US President Joe Biden — recalled by Erdogan's allies throughout the campaign — calling Erdogan an "autocrat". "Would a dictator ever enter a runoff election?" Erdogan asked. — AFP

France's Macron arrives on first visit to Mongolia

ULAANBAATAR, Mongolia: Emmanuel Macron arrived Sunday in Mongolia for a brief yet symbolic visit, the first by a French president to the country nestled between China and Russia that is of growing strategic interest in the West.

The French head of state landed in the capital Ulaanbaatar at around 6:30 pm, according to an AFP photographer travelling with his delegation, after participating at the G7 summit in Hiroshima, Japan.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was the star guest at the G7, where he addressed key Western allies but also leaders of non-aligned nations like Brazil and India.

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, France has stepped up its efforts to speak with countries who have not explicitly condemned it — of which Mongolia is one. In Ulaanbaatar, where he will only spend an evening, Macron will dine with President Khurelsukh Ukhnaa, the Elysee said.

He will also visit the museum of Genghis Khan, named for the 13th-century Mongol conqueror, which will lend part of its collection to the Nantes History Museum in western France for an exhibition scheduled for October.

Macron will then depart for Paris at the end of the evening. "The fact that Mongolia will be on the route back allows us to make this historic first (visit) and



ULAANBAATAR: France's President Emmanuel Macron (left) receives a traditional welcome upon arrival at the Chinggis Khaan International Airport in Ulaanbaatar on May 21, 2023. — AFP

gives it a special meaning," a source in the Elysee's entourage said. "Mongolia is landlocked between Russia and China, but is also a country which has a liberal model of government," they said, adding it is trying to "diversify its partnerships in order to be more robust and able to deal with its large Russian and Chinese neighbors". The French presidency is seeking to "loosen the constraint exerted on Russia's neighbors and open up to them the choice of their options", they added.

On the bilateral level, France has considered that there are "very significant possibilities for cooperation" with Mongolia, particularly in energy, with the country struggling to decarbonize its coal-dependent economy. The vast north Asian country has been the subject of growing interest in recent years from the United States as part of a strategy to thwart the rise of China. — AFP

Court upholds barring candidate...

Continued from Page 1

Candidates running in the general elections launched their campaigns for the decisive polls by raising a number of issues. Former MP Saad Al-Khanfour called on the government to find and implement fundamental solutions to the housing problem that has been hounding every Kuwaiti family. He also called for improving the standard of living through a clear short-term plan.

Candidate Hamad Al-Alyan said that if voters do not

turn out in big numbers on election day, "bad elements will be elected to the next Assembly", adding voters should turn out in a big way to ensure that reformist members are elected.

Candidate Fawaz Al-Dhafiri said the establishment of a high commission for election is the gateway for political reforms, adding that the amendment of the electoral constituencies is a major step for reforms. He said it is not logical that a constituency with 200,000 voters elects the same number of lawmakers as a constituency with just 60,000 voters.

Member of the 2022 Assembly Abdullah Al-Anbaei said he hosted a number of former MPs and candidates to discuss an initiative to unify election programs. He said that they reached a joint draft for launching programs that are capable of implementation.

Gulf giants turn to start-ups for...

Continued from Page 1

Al-Kaabi, ADNOC's executive director of low-carbon solutions, told AFP. "I would love to see more wind and solar energy, but to be practical and transparent, it's not going to solve the problem." Carbon capture was a hot topic at a recent climate tech conference in the UAE capital Abu Dhabi, home of ADNOC. Start-ups displayed their advances in carbon capture and storage (CCS) which removes carbon dioxide as it is pumped from power plants and heavy industry. There were also firms presenting their plans for direct air capture (DAC), a newer technology that extracts CO2 directly from the atmosphere.

The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) says the existing fossil fuel infrastructure — without the use of carbon capture — will push the world beyond the Paris deal's safer global warming limit of 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The debate between whether to primarily target fossil fuels or emissions is shaping up as a key battleground at the COP28 climate talks, which will be held in UAE financial hub Dubai.

Citing the IPCC, the COP28 president-designate Sultan Al-Jaber — ADNOC's CEO and his country's climate envoy — last week said it was time to "get serious about carbon capture". But environmentalists are skeptical about the central role that big energy firms are seeking in climate solutions, saying they have a vested interest in maintaining fossil fuel sales. Julien Jreissati, program director at Green-

peace MENA, labelled it a "distraction". ADNOC's Kaabi, however, argued that the oil giant's engineering capabilities and deep pockets make them best placed to propel climate tech. "The world has two options: We could leave it to the small players or have the big players accelerating this decarbonization," Kaabi said.

In 2016, ADNOC launched the region's first commercial-scale CCS project, Al-Reyadah, which has the capacity to capture 800,000 tons of CO2 per year. Globally, there are only around 35 commercial facilities using carbon capture utilization and storage globally, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA), which says even those planned until 2030 would capture only a fraction of the emissions needed.

The entrepreneurs at the UAE conference included Omani company 44.01, a winner of the UK's Earthshot Prize for its technology that permanently removes carbon dioxide from the air by mineralizing it in peridotite rock. "Climate change is an urgent challenge and for us to be able to tackle that challenge we need to move quicker," said CEO Talal Hasan. "The oil and gas partnerships help us move quickly," he told AFP.

Hasan's 44.01 has partnered with ADNOC to develop a carbon capture and mineralization site in Fujairah, one of the UAE's seven emirates — the first such project by an energy company in the Middle East. "In one ton of peridotite, you could probably mineralize 500 to 600 kilos of CO2... this means that with the rocks just in this region, you could potentially mineralize trillions of tons," Hasan said. For Hasan, energy firms are good partners because "we use a lot of the same equipment, infrastructure, people and resources". "That will help us accelerate scaling," he said. — AFP

International

Zelensky wins diplomatic, military support from G7

US to provide yet more 'ammunition, artillery, armored vehicles'

HIROSHIMA: President Volodymyr Zelensky secured more arms, munitions and "unwavering" diplomatic support from G7 allies in Hiroshima Sunday, as Russia claimed victory in the battle for a devastated eastern city. Meeting leaders from a bloc of rich democracies, Zelensky won a commitment from US President Joe Biden to provide yet more "ammunition, artillery, armored vehicles" on top of access to F-16 jets. Top Zelensky aide Andriy Yermak said the US package included additional ammunition for HIMAR rocket launchers, artillery shells, anti-tank guided missiles and thermal imaging systems worth \$375 million. Zelensky's surprise trip to Japan has been a major diplomatic coup, putting his country and Russia's 15-month-long invasion firmly at the top of the agenda.

But success in the negotiating rooms contrasted sharply with difficulties on the ground, as he reflected on the months-long battle for Bakhmut and new Russian claims to have taken control of the eastern city. Asked about the fate of the former salt-mining town of 70,000 people, Zelensky was notably downbeat, saying "you have to understand there is nothing" there.

"For today, Bakhmut is only in our hearts," he said. Ukrainian forces have tried for months to keep a toe-hold on the town, forcing Moscow to commit significant numbers of troops there in the process.

On Saturday, Russian President Vladimir Putin congratulated mercenaries from the Wagner organization and regular units for the operation to "liberate" the town. Zelensky's invitation to visit Hiroshima, a city synonymous with the horrors of nuclear war, was a "deeply meaningful" symbol of support,



HIROSHIMA: Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky (center) joins G7 leaders at a working session during the G7 Leaders' Summit in Hiroshima on May 21, 2023. — AFP

according to host Fumio Kishida, Japan's prime minister. "By inviting President Zelensky to Japan, we demonstrated the unwavering solidarity of G7 with Ukraine," he said.

As well as securing backing from allies, the visit afforded Zelensky a rare opportunity to win over a handful of nations who have pointedly offered little or no condemnation of Russia's invasion. Leaders from India, Brazil, Vietnam and Indonesia were among those invited to attend the summit as non-members.

'I understand your pain'

Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has accused the West of "encouraging the war" and is yet to confirm he will even meet his Ukrainian counterpart. The reception was warmer however from India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who told Zelensky: "I understand your pain and the pain of Ukrainian citizens very well." "I can assure you that to resolve this India and, me personally, will do whatever we can do." Zelensky offered an upbeat assessment of the encounter,

bomb. He was then joined by Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who comes from Hiroshima, and the pair placed bouquets of white flowers before the graceful concrete arch of the Cenotaph, through which an eternal flame is visible. Zelensky wore a solemn expression as he laid the flowers, tied with ribbons in the blue and yellow of Ukraine's flag.

Hiroshima's mayor joined the leaders to explain elements of the memorial park and monument, adorned with a plaque reading: "Let all the souls here rest in peace, for we shall not repeat the evil." The visit has particular significance for Zelensky, who has faced thinly veiled threats by Russian leader Vladimir Putin to deploy nuclear weapons as he prosecutes his devastating war. But it is also deeply meaningful for Kishida, who has declared achieving a "world free of nuclear weapons" his life's work.

The trip also brings Kishida full circle after his trip to Ukraine in March, where he made a surprise stop in the town of Bucha, site of an alleged massacre by Russian troops. A visibly shaken Kishida spoke then of his "indignation" at the "brutality" witnessed by the town. Kishida broke with Japan's traditionally cautious approach on foreign policy to take a strong early position alongside Western allies against Moscow's invasion. His government has offered aid and diplomatic support in the form of sanctions against Russia, though it is constitutionally limited in its ability to offer weaponry. Zelensky made his surprise arrival at the G7 summit on Saturday, and he is due to make a speech later in the evening after talks with Kishida. — AFP

Japan, S Korea leaders in historic Hiroshima visit

HIROSHIMA: Japan and South Korea's leaders made a historic visit Sunday to a memorial for Koreans killed in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, as long-frosty ties between the neighbors warm. Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and his South Korean counterpart Yoon Suk Yeol, joined by their wives, laid white bouquets at the stone memorial and bowed side-by-side at the site.

The visit came on the sidelines of the G7 summit, to which Japan has invited several non-member nations, including South Korea. It is the first time leaders of the two countries have jointly visited the memorial, and only the second time a Japanese prime minister has done so.

"This will be remembered as a courageous action by Prime Minister Kishida that paves the way for a peaceful future while expressing grief for the Korean victims of the atomic bombing," Yoon said at the top of a bilateral meeting after the memorial visit. It is the latest step in their careful diplomatic dance to achieve a long-awaited thaw in ties. Tokyo and Seoul, both key US allies, have long been at odds over issues related to Japan's brutal 1910-1945 colonial rule of Korea, including sexual slavery and forced labor.

But Yoon and Kishida have made active efforts to restore soured ties since Seoul announced a plan to compensate those affected by wartime forced labor, without Tokyo's involvement.

They have resumed regular high-level talks, with Yoon in Tokyo in April and Kishida travelling to Seoul earlier this month, where he said his "heart aches" for Koreans who suffered under colonialism.

The two leaders have faced criticism and skepticism from conservatives at home for their engagements. But Kishida's remark in Seoul "significantly resonated among the public" in South Korea, Yoon said on Sunday. His "courage and decision to show a genuine and heartfelt attitude is very important," he added.

Kishida also welcomed the thaw in ties and said the stepped-up pace of meetings "demonstrates the progress of the Japan-South Korea relationship." — AFP

Zelensky compares Bakhmut destruction to Hiroshima in 1945

HIROSHIMA: President Volodymyr Zelensky on Sunday compared the "total destruction" of the Ukrainian city of Bakhmut to the 1945 devastation of Hiroshima, now hosting the G7 summit, after it was hit by a US atomic bomb. Bakhmut, which had a pre-war population of 70,000 people, has been the scene of the longest and bloodiest battle in Russia's invasion. Occasional footage from Bakhmut during months of heavy fighting have shown a city of ruins.

"The photos of Hiroshima remind me of Bakhmut. There is absolutely nothing alive. All the buildings are destroyed," Zelensky said. "Absolute total destruction. There is nothing. There are no people."

Zelensky laid flowers on Sunday at a memorial in Hiroshima to victims of the 1945 US atomic bomb attack, in a sombre and highly symbolic moment. Curious crowds lined the streets as the wartime leader's motorcade weaved its way towards the park complex that houses several memorials commemorating the approximately 140,000 people killed by the bomb. Zelensky, who has stolen the spotlight with a surprise appearance at the G7 summit, stopped first at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, which houses evidence of the horrors wrought by the

loves this country," said 27-year-old student Renaldo de Andrade. CNRT won a presidential election last year after capturing 62 percent of the vote in a runoff, with Nobel Peace laureate and Gusmao ally Jose Ramos Horta assuming the post. Gusmao is hoping to build on that momentum by taking over the legislature, but he may need to forge an alliance with smaller parties. "I believe that I will win an absolute (majority) and I'm ready to assume the prime minister's mandate... to build this country better than before", Gusmao told journalists at a polling station.

Alkatiri's Fretilin, meanwhile, has vowed to secure a clear victory and retain its lead in parliament. "If Fretilin wins for this period, the important thing that we have to do is combat corruption and invest more in education, health and agriculture," Alkatiri said on Sunday after casting his ballot. As counting started in polling stations, leaders called for peace. "I have asked all political parties to have the discipline and maturity to respect the people", said President Jose Ramos Horta. Some major political events in East Timor have been marred by violence and conflicts in the past.

In 2018, more than a dozen people were injured and several cars torched after clashes between Fretilin and CNRT. 21 years after independence, East Timor is still struggling with poverty, the aftermath of the COVID pandemic and devastating natural disasters, including a 2021 cyclone that killed at least 40 people. East Timor's budget is heavily dependent on oil revenues, but revenues from existing fossil fuel projects are soon expected to run dry. The next government will need to decide on allowing the development of the Greater Sunrise project, which aims to tap trillions of cubic feet of natural gas. — AFP



DILI, East Timor: East Timorese Prime Minister Taur Matan Ruak casts his ballot paper during the general election in Dili on May 21, 2023. — AFP



HIROSHIMA: Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (left) and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky bow as they prepare to lay wreaths at the Cenotaph for the Victims of the Atomic Bomb at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, following the G7 Summit Leaders' Meeting in Hiroshima on May 21, 2023. — AFP

East Timor polls close as voters hope for end to deadlock

DILI, East Timor: Voters in East Timor flocked to polling stations on Sunday to cast their ballots in parliamentary elections, hoping for an end to years of political deadlock in Asia's youngest country. This is the fifth parliamentary poll since East Timor gained independence from Indonesia in 2002 after a 24-year occupation, with 65 national lawmakers to be elected to a five-year mandate.

Voters formed long queues, carrying umbrellas for shade as they patiently waited for their turn until polling stations closed at 3 pm (0600 GMT). "All people came to give their voices, because one voice can make a change," 61-year-old Cesar dos Santos de Carvalho told AFP at a polling station in the capital Dili. "I hope the political party that I chose can put attention on health, education, infrastructure and agriculture, because these are the priority sectors." Nazario Gregorio Guterres, another voter, stressed the need to improve infrastructure in East Timor, one of the world's poorest countries. "Just (look at) our capital city, Dili. It's difficult to get electricity and clean water. The party I chose must fix roads, electricity, and provide clean water," said Guterres.

The young democracy, a former Portuguese colony, has 890,000 registered voters, and a total of 17 parties are vying for seats, but the election is expected to mainly be a showdown between the two largest. The Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor, also known as Fretilin, leads the coalition currently in power, while the National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction (CNRT) is hoping to make a comeback. CNRT is led by Xanana Gusmao, East Timor's first president who was in office until 2007, while Fretilin's leader is former prime minister Mari Alkatiri. Both are considered independence-era icons and are veterans of East Timor politics, but they have been locked in a bitter feud for decades.

'Respect the people'

Younger voters make up a large part of the electorate in the country of 1.3 million people, 65 percent of whom are under 30. "I voted for CNRT. I support Xanana (Gusmao). He is... an influential character (who) leads with responsibility. He has integrity and

saying he believed India "will participate in the restoration of the rules-based international order that all free nations clearly need."

Zelensky is also looking for support for a 10-point peace plan, centred on the demand that Russia retreat from Ukrainian territory. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said the message from Ukraine and its allies was clear: "Russia must withdraw troops".

Any peace plan, he said, "can't simply be linked to a freeze of the conflict". "Russia should not bet that if it holds out long enough, it will end up weakening support for Ukraine." Zelensky had previously been scheduled to attend the G7 summit remotely but arrived on the back of a major breakthrough in his battle to wrest advanced weaponry from the West.

The White House dropped its longstanding reluctance to allow allies to supply Kyiv with F-16 fighter jets, opening the way for Ukraine to receive its most sophisticated material yet. Washington insisted the aircraft were part of a US strategy to support Ukraine "in a way that avoids World War III", and deflected criticism that their decision was too long coming. Zelensky acknowledged the jets would not help the war effort immediately but hailed the decision as "a great result". Mick Ryan, a strategist and retired Australian major general, called the decision "very significant". "F-16s have the sensors and weapon systems that are either equal to, or overmatch, Russian fighters," he told AFP. It insisted however that it still seeks "constructive and stable relations" with China. China hit back late Saturday, expressing its "strong dissatisfaction" with the G7's final communique, and Russia too lashed out at the group's efforts to "contain" Beijing and Moscow. — AFP

News in brief

5 arrested in Greece for trying to buy votes

ATHENS: Five people have been arrested in northern Greece on accusations of electoral fraud ahead of the country's national elections, Athens News Agency reported Sunday. According to the General Regional Police Directorate of Thessaly, the arrests occurred late Saturday, with officers seizing 197 ID cards, passports, two photocopies of ID cards and a bag with 114 closed envelopes, each containing a card of a parliamentary candidate and five ballot papers with the name of the candidate already ticked. They were found in a car owned by one of the suspects. A total amount of 6,060 euros was also found in the possession of two of those arrested. — AFP

UK's interior minister under fire over speeding claims

LONDON: UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Sunday faced questions over interior minister Suella Braverman after reports she asked civil servants to arrange for her penalty driving course for speeding to be done in private. Sunak said he did not know the "full details" of the case but a spokeswoman for his Downing Street office later said he "of course" had confidence in his controversial minister. The Sunday Times reported that Braverman asked Home Office officials to help set up a one-to-one driving awareness course after she was caught speeding last year. Her request was refused. — AFP

Attack on rally drivers leaves 10 dead in Mexico

TIJUANA, Mexico: At least 10 people were killed and nine wounded on Saturday when gunmen attacked a group of amateur rally drivers in the northern Mexican town of Ensenada, near the US border, authorities said. The motorists, who were participating in a race, were parked on the side of a highway when a group of men got out of a pickup truck and opened fire. The attack "left nine wounded and 10 people dead," Ensenada authorities said in a statement. The prosecutor's office of the state of Baja California, where Ensenada is located and which has been hard hit by drug violence, announced the formation of a "special investigation group" to identify the killers and determine the motives behind the shooting, the statement said. — AFP

Paraguay confirms bird flu cases

ASUNCION, Paraguay: Cases of bird flu have been detected in backyard chickens in Paraguay, authorities said Saturday. The disease was found in the domesticated birds from the towns of Mariscal Estigarribia and Neuland in Mennonite farming areas, the National Animal Health and Quality Service (Senasca) reported. The potential cause being investigated is chickens having contact with infected migratory birds, the office said. "The birds will be slaughtered to eliminate the source of infection," Senasca said. The disease has spread in Latin America in recent months and has triggered phytosanitary alerts. — AFP

Business

MONDAY, MAY 22, 2023

Dark cloud over ChatGPT revolution

OpenAI needs \$100 billion more to meet its ambitions

WASHINGTON: The explosion of generative AI has taken the world by storm, but one question all too rarely comes up: Who can afford it? OpenAI bled around \$540 million last year as it developed ChatGPT and says it needs \$100 billion to meet its ambitions, according to industry media The Information.

"We're going to be the most capital-intensive startup in Silicon Valley history," OpenAI's founder Sam Altman told a panel recently. And when Microsoft, which poured billions of dollars in investment into OpenAI, is asked about how much its AI adventure will cost, the company answers with assurances that it is keeping an eye on its bottom line.

Building something even near the scale of what OpenAI, Microsoft or Google have on offer would require an eye-watering investment on state-of-the-art chips and recruiting prize-winning researchers.

"People don't realize that to do a significant amount of AI things like ChatGPT takes huge amounts of processing power. And training those models can cost tens of millions of dollars," said Jack Gold, an independent analyst. "How many companies can actually afford to go out and buy 10,000 Nvidia H100 systems that go for tens of thousands of dollars a piece?" asked Gold.

The answer is pretty much no one and in tech, if you can't build the infrastructure, you rent it and that is what companies already do massively by outsourcing their computing needs to Microsoft, Google and Amazon's AWS. And with the advent of generative AI, this dependency on cloud computing and tech giants deepens, leaving the same players in the driver's seat, experts warned.

'Heavily underestimated'

The unpredictable costs of cloud computing, "is a heavily underestimated problem for many companies," said Stefan Sigg, Chief Product Officer at Software AG, which develops software for businesses. Sigg compares cloud costs to electricity bills and says companies that don't know better are in for "a big surprise" if they let their engineers run up bills in the mad rush to build tech, including AI.

Microsoft's signature cloud offer is Azure and some observers believe the giant's all-in bet on AI is really about protecting Azure success and guaranteeing the cash cow's future. Azure has been the giant's unsexy bread-winner for years, bringing in huge profits but without attracting the headlines of an iPhone or social media that go straight to the con-

sumer. For Microsoft, "the golden goose is monetizing cloud with Azure because we're talking about what could be a \$20, \$30, \$40 billion opportunity annually down the road if the AI bet is successful," said Dan Ives of Wedbush Securities.

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella insists that generative AI is "moving fast in the right direction."

Deeply respected on Wall Street, Nadella will have a six- or nine-month grace period to show his bet is a winner, Ives predicted. Microsoft acknowledges the risk, but insists that on AI, it must "lead this wave." CFO Amy Hood told analysts this month.

"We will charge for those AI capabilities, and then ultimately, we'll deliver operating profit," she said.

'Squashed out'

Piling up profit at the company founded by Bill Gates can only mean passing on the cost of AI to customers. From Main Street to Fortune 500, the dependency on the AI-amped will be an expensive one and companies and investors are drumming up alternatives to at least reduce the bill.

"AI training, GPT training will become a very important cloud service going forward," said Spectro Cloud CEO Tenry Fu.



His company, like many others in the sector, helps companies optimize cloud technology to reduce expenses. "But after training, a company will be able to get their model back for real AI application" and the dependence on the cloud giants will hopefully be reduced, he added.

Regulators are hoping that they can keep up, and not leave the giants in charge, imposing their terms on smaller companies. "Law enforcers (must) ensure that... opportunities and openings for competition... are not getting squashed

out by the incumbents," FTC chairwoman Lina Khan told CNBC.

But it might be too late, at least when it comes to which companies have the means to provide the groundwork of generative AI. "It is absolutely true that the number of companies that can train the true frontier models is going to be small just because of the resources required," OpenAI's Altman told a US Senate panel on Tuesday. "And so I think there needs to be incredible scrutiny on us and our competitors," he added. — AFP

Fake nails, fuel and influencers in Kenya taxman's sights

NAIROBI: What do artificial nails, crypto currencies, spaghetti and social media influencers have in common? They are all being targeted by Kenya's taxman in a raft of new proposals aimed at filling the coffers of President William Ruto's cash-strapped government.

Ruto is seeking to repair a heavily-indebted economy inherited from his predecessor Uhuru Kenyatta, who ramped up borrowing to fund a splurge on costly infrastructure projects.

Despite pledging to improve the lot of impoverished Kenyans during last year's election campaign, Ruto is now taking the politically unpopular step of raising taxes. Ruto's government has drawn up a 3.6-trillion shilling (\$26.2 billion) budget for 2023/24 with the proposed new taxes expected to generate 289 billion shillings.

Opponents have warned the measures will hit small businesses at the very heart of the economy as well as households struggling to make ends meet in the face of soaring prices and deep-seated poverty. "It will affect our livelihood because life is already difficult," said Rebecca Nyalesa, 45, who has been a hairdresser for 30 years. "Every time you go to the shop, you find prices have gone up. But our earnings haven't increased. Life is very difficult."

She said her Nairobi salon was already suffering from a drop in customers and feared worse was to come with plans for taxes on all manner of beauty products including wigs, false beards, fake eyelashes and nails.

"Back in the day, I could braid six people in a day, but now it's down to two or three."

Mother-of-two Rose Achieng, 29, said she used to get her hair done three or four times a month but now it's just once. "We are headed to the stage where you have to decide if you have to do your hair or buy food."



NAIROBI: A client has her hair plaited in Nairobi May 12, 2023. Kenyan President William Ruto is seeking to repair a heavily-indebted economy inherited from his predecessor Uhuru Kenyatta, who ramped up borrowing to fund a splurge on costly infrastructure projects. — AFP

Debt mountain

East Africa's most dynamic economy has been hit hard by a regional drought and the fallout from the Ukraine war that sent inflation soaring and GDP growth sliding.

The central bank in March trimmed its 2023 GDP forecast to 5.8 percent, slower than the 6.1 percent predicted earlier. Kenya is also laboring under a \$70 billion debt mountain, spooking credit ratings agencies including Moody's which last week downgraded the country's sovereign debt rating further into junk territory. Ruto insists he is making the "right decisions" to get the economy and government finances back on track in the face of pressure for reforms from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

"Many people are saying you can't tax yourself into prosperity and that is correct, but you cannot accumulate debt into bankruptcy as an option," he told reporters Sunday. "We are not overtaxing ourselves."

'IMF playbook'

Kenyan economist Reginald Kadzutu told AFP the finance bill appeared to have come from the "IMF playbook". "When you are near debt default, and you might have to negotiate, you have to prove that you

have enough revenue-generating capacity and the only way is to tax anything that has a figure on it."

One of the more controversial provisions is a three percent deduction on the salaries of all tax-paying Kenyans to fund an affordable housing program. Among foodstuffs, imported fish, locally manufactured sugar confectionery, powdered juice and locally produced pasta will attract new excise duty. The government also plans to double value-added tax on most petroleum products to 16 percent.

Retail prices of fuel already jumped this week by up to nine percent after the government scrapped kerosene and diesel subsidies. Other proposals include a three-percent tax on the transfer of digital assets such as crypto currencies and an increase in tax on gambling to almost 20 percent of the amount wagered. Social media influencers and content providers have not been spared either, with their earnings facing a 15 percent tax.

'Tsunami of taxes'

Veteran opposition leader Raila Odinga is threatening to call Kenyans back onto the streets over what he has branded a "tsunami of taxes". Earlier this year, he led a series of sometimes deadly anti-government demonstrations over the cost-of-living crisis, claiming that victory was stolen from him in last year's election.

"We will have no option but to mobilize all the social sectors and take all the necessary political actions to stop this blow and burden," Odinga said. There had been speculation of a rapprochement between Ruto and his arch rival after the two men were spotted together at three events at the weekend.

But Odinga has dismissed talk of any "handshake" with the president, referring to a surprise alliance he forged with Ruto's predecessor Kenyatta in 2018 that changed the political landscape. The public has until May 20 to comment on the finance bill before it is debated by lawmakers. If passed, it will need presidential approval to become law.

For 52-year-old motorbike courier Josiah Burudi, Ruto has reneged on his promise to improve the lives of ordinary Kenyans or so called "hustlers". "It's like we are being taken for a ride. Life is becoming worse." — AFP



China: Chipmaker Micron failed security review

BEIJING: China's cybersecurity watchdog said Sunday US chipmaker Micron had failed a national security probe and told "operators of critical information infrastructure" to stop purchasing its products. The probe was the latest escalation in the on-going chip war between the United States and China, with Washington looking to cut off Beijing's access to the most advanced semiconductors.

It also came as China tightened the enforcement of its national security and anti-espionage laws.

Micron's products "have relatively serious potential network security issues, which pose a major security risk to China's critical information infrastructure supply chain and affect China's national security", the cybersecurity administration said in a statement. "Operators of critical information infrastructure in China should stop purchasing Micron products." Beijing launched a cybersecurity review in March of products sold in the country by Micron, one of the world's major chip manufacturers.

The chip war between Beijing and Washington escalated last year when the United States imposed restrictions on China's access to high-end chips, chipmaking equipment and software used to design semiconductors. Washington cited national security concerns, and said it wanted to prevent "sensitive technologies with military applications" from being acquired by China's armed forces and intelligence services.

The United States imposed targeted controls on the ability of domestic industry leaders to sell their products overseas. It has also sought to persuade key allies to follow suit.

The Netherlands and Japan — both leading manufacturers of specialized semiconductor technology equipment — have recently announced new restrictions on exporting certain products, but without naming China. Beijing has slammed the moves as "US bullying tactics" and accused Washington of "technological terrorism", vowing that such controls will only strengthen its resolve to achieve self-reliance in the sector.

The development of a robust domestic semiconductor industry has been a longstanding goal of the Chinese government, which has invested billions of dollars in domestic chip firms. Chips are the lifeblood of the modern global economy, powering everything from cars to smartphones, and they are forecast to become a \$1 trillion industry globally by 2030. Nowhere is their essential nature more visible than in China, the world's second-largest economy, which relies on a steady supply of foreign chips for its huge electronics manufacturing base.

In 2021, China imported semiconductors worth \$430 billion—more than it spent on oil. — AFP

Lost luggage rate soars at airports

LONDON: The problem of lost, damaged or delayed luggage increased last year as the air travel sector struggled to deal with the surge in flights after the pandemic, a study found on Tuesday. The report said 26 million bags — or 7.6 per 1,000 passengers — were mishandled in 2022, up from 4.35 per 1,000 the previous year.

Last year was marked by a return to air travel by passengers eager to fly again after the COVID lockdowns. But problems were seen in airport queues and baggage claim areas as hiring by airports and airlines sometimes lagged behind demand, said SITA, an IT provider for the industry.

Europe had the highest rate of mishandled luggage, the report said. "After a decade where the mishandling rate more than halved between 2007 and 2021, it is disheartening to see this rate climbing again," said SITA chief executive David Lavorel.

"As an industry, we need to work hard to ensure passengers are once again confident to check in their bags." In total, 26 million bags were mishandled last year, compared to 9.9 million in 2021, SITA said. The region with the highest rate of mishan-



dled bags in 2022 was Europe, with 15.7 per 1,000 passengers, a threefold increase from the previous year. This compared to 6.35 per 1,000 passengers in North America and three per 1,000 in Asia. Part of the problem was that airports and airlines had fewer

staff to handle the surge after laying off thousands when the pandemic brought the sector to its knees. For the study, SITA relied on data from its luggage tracking software, used by 500 customers at 2,800 airports around the world. — Agencies

NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

US debt talks enter crucial phase

Dollar index soars, crude oil futures gain

KUWAIT: The US dollar index soared to an eight-week peak reaching a monthly high of 103.624, before closing the week at 103.198. Furthermore, the EUR/USD currency pair fell by 0.48 percent for the week, ending the week at 1.0802, while GBP/USD closed slightly lower at 1.2444.

week's reading was played down by the state Department of Unemployment Assistance as they linked the sudden increase to an abnormal jump in applications in Massachusetts. According to the department, unemployment insurance in the state witnessed "fraudulent claim activities in which people attempted to gain access to active UI accounts or file new UI claims using stolen personal information so they can fraudulently obtain unemployment benefits."

US debt ceiling talks The US debt ceiling negotiations have entered its critical stages, as President Biden and his government hope that a deal can be struck with Republicans before the June 1st deadline. The current debt ceiling of \$31.4 trillion was reached on January 2023, and needs to be raised in order to fund payment obligations and budget deficits.

US retail sales Retail sales in the United States increased by 0.4 percent m/m in April following two consecutive months of declines. However, the print was less than the forecasted figure of 0.8 percent. The increase on the month was driven by growth in online sales (1.2 percent) as well as food and drink sales (0.6 percent).

US unemployment claims The latest weekly unemployment claims reading to come out of the US showed a 22K decline from last week's reading of 264K, which was the highest since the week of October 30, 2021.

Inflation in Canada CPI in Canada rose by 4.4 percent in April, greater than market expectations of 4.1 percent and marking the first acceleration in headline figures since June 2022. On a monthly basis, this represents an increase of 0.7 percent versus a forecast and previous figure of 0.5 percent.

Europe Eurozone GDP and employment growth The Eurozone economy expanded by a modest 0.1 percent q/q for the first quarter of the year, in line with expectations, according to preliminary figures published by Eurostat. In the fourth quarter, GDP in the European Union eased 0.1 percent, while Eurozone GDP was flat.

According to Eurostat, annual inflation in the Eurozone accelerated to 7.0 percent in April from 6.9 percent in March, matching consensus and in line with expectations. Eliminating volatile elements of energy and food, core inflation eased to 5.6 percent from 5.7 percent a month earlier, similarly in line with consensus.

UK unemployment rate In the UK, unemployment surprisingly increased to 3.9 percent versus a consensus of 3.8 percent. Meanwhile, payrolls fell by 136,000 from March, marking the first fall in more than two years, while vacancies dropped for the 10th time in a row reaching its lowest level since mid-2021.

Bank of England governor Andrew Bailey warned that there is significant uncertainty over when inflation will drop back to the central bank's target of 2 percent. Speaking at the British Chambers of Commerce's annual conference, Bailey said that the risk of inflation staying higher for longer is "skewed significantly to the upside."

Minutes of the Reserve Bank of Australia's policy meeting earlier this month revealed that members discussed whether to pause or raise the cash rate by 25 basis points. Ultimately, policymakers opted to raise rates to reduce risks of deep-rooted inflation in the economy.

Australia's jobless rate rises Australia's unemployment rate unexpectedly rose to 3.7 percent in April compared with the consensus and nearly 50-year low of 3.5 percent in March, indicating that higher interest rates have started to affect the job market, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

Kuwait Kuwait dinar USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30705.

News in Brief

BoE to stop Revolut's UK bid

LONDON: The Bank of England is preparing to reject a bid by digital bank Revolut for a UK banking license, citing balance sheet issues. The Daily Telegraph newspaper reported Friday. Revolut, Britain's most valuable fintech company, told the paper the issue in fact surrounded auditor concerns over revenues.

UK unveils semiconductor strategy

LONDON: The British government unveiled a new £1 billion semiconductor strategy to invest in infrastructure, research and security as the UK tries to diversify its chip supply chain. The plan would "safeguard supply chains from disruption and protect tech against national security risks", the UK government's department for business, energy and industrial strategy said in a statement.

WestJet reaches deal to avert strike

MONTREAL: Canadian airline WestJet on Friday announced it had reached a tentative deal with its pilots union, a day after it canceled nearly 100 flights in anticipation of a strike. With the country beginning a long holiday weekend, Canada's second-largest airline said in a statement it was "ramping up its operations as quickly and efficiently as possible," but that "full resumption of operations will take time."



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT WEEK ENDED ON 18 MAY 2023

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Market summary table with columns: Market, M. Cap (KD ml), Last Close, WTD %, MTD %, YTD %, Quantity Traded, Value Traded, No. of Trades, P/E, P/B, % of Total M. Cap

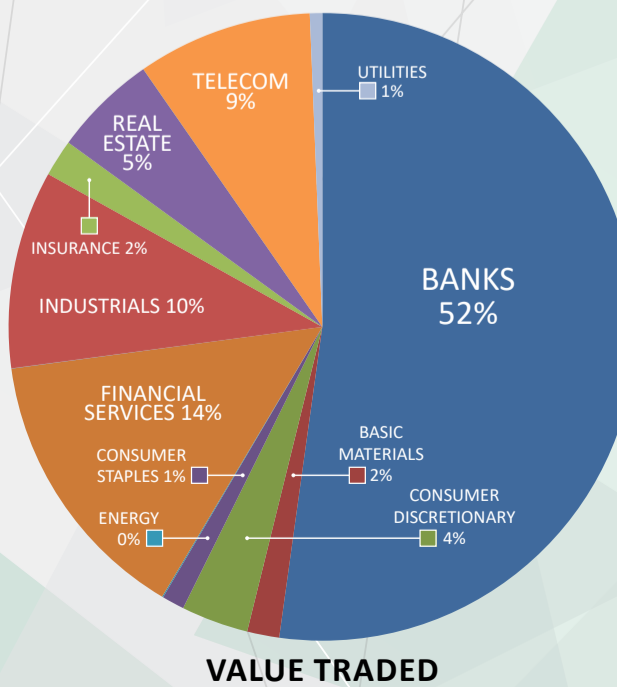
Sector summary table with columns: Sector, M. Cap (KD ml), Last Close, WTD %, MTD %, YTD %, Quantity Traded, Value Traded, No. of Trades, P/E, P/B, % of Total M. Cap

Top Gainers table with columns: Stock, last Close, Change %, Volume, Value, Trades

Top Losers table with columns: Stock, last Close, Change %, Volume, Value, Trades

Top Volume table with columns: Stock, Last, Change %, Volume, Value, Trades

Top Value table with columns: Stock, Last, Change %, Volume, Value, Trades



Market Summary:

- Premier market volume and value increased by 11% and 7%, respectively. The Main Market volume dropped by 3% while value increased by 13%. Premier and Main indexes are in a downtrend, except for the Premier index which shows some positivity on Thursday. Technically, the All Share index closed at 6800, with support levels at 6787 and 6759...

Business

Biden says Republican demands on debt ceiling 'unacceptable'

Govt not to do anything outrageous to avert a default

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden on Sunday slammed Republican demands in negotiations to resolve the US debt ceiling standoff as "unacceptable" but said a solution can still be found before a disastrous default. Speaking at a press conference just before leaving to return to Washington from the G7 summit in Hiroshima, Japan, Biden said Republicans' latest demands for spending cuts as a condition for raising the US government borrowing authority were "frankly unacceptable."

"It's time for the other side to move from their extreme positions," he said. Biden said he would talk directly with Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy during his Air Force One flight on Sunday back to Washington and said "we can reach an agreement." However, he cautioned that he could not "guarantee that they wouldn't force a default by doing something outrageous." Biden said that he was looking into an obscure constitutional clause in the 14th Amendment, which states that the validity of public debt "shall not be questioned"—and potentially authorizing the president to circumvent Congress and raise the debt ceiling himself.

"I think we have the authority. The question is could it be done and invoked in time," he said, noting the likelihood of legal challenges to this and the rapidly approaching debt deadline. The Treasury Department says that the government could run out of money and default on its \$31 trillion debt as early as June 1 if Congress, where Republicans control the House of Representa-

tives, does not authorize more borrowing. Biden had planned to travel from Japan to Papua New Guinea and Australia but cut short the Asia trip due to the debt talks.

'Hostage' accusation

The debt ceiling raise is usually an uncontroversial annual procedure but this year the increasingly hard-right Republican Party has turned the threat of default into a powerful lever to try and force Biden to accept spending cuts. Biden accuses his opponents of putting the US economy at risk for political point scoring. Discussions were at an impasse over the weekend in Washington, as both sides traded accusations.

"We're making 0 demands to avoid default. You're the only ones with a hostage," tweeted White House spokesperson Andrew Bates, accusing Republicans of seeking to trigger a recession in the world's leading economy.

White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said that McCarthy was being strong-armed by his party's pro-Donald Trump wing, which is "threatening to put our nation into default for the first time in our history unless extreme partisan demands are met," McCarthy, however, tweeted Saturday to say the White House was the one "moving backward."

"Unfortunately, the socialist wing of the Democrat Party appears to be in control—especially with Presi-

dent Biden out of the country," he said. Biden said that McCarthy was likely waiting for him to join in before the talks could be revived. "My guess is he's going to want to deal directly with me," Biden said.

Spending and taxing

More borrowing is required imminently by the US government just to meet expenditures already agreed to in the current budget. Failure to strike a deal to lift the debt ceiling would leave Washington unable to pay its bills and trigger an array of economic shockwaves worldwide—including, the White House says, a US recession. With the 2024 election campaign underway and Biden potentially facing Trump again, Republicans have seized the opportunity to paint the Democrats as responsible for the country's gargantuan debt—which in reality has built up over decades.

Republicans say the debt ceiling can no longer be raised without harsh measures to reduce the deficit. These include slashing social spending and restricting access to Medicaid, the subsidized program providing health care for the poor. Biden has countered with a plan to reduce some spending but also to raise new revenue by increasing taxes on the richest Americans and corporations which currently enjoy huge tax breaks. Republicans are refusing to accept any tax increase as part of a deal.



WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden speaks about debt negotiations in the Roosevelt Room of the White House in Washington, DC. — AFP

"That's what we continue to have a significant disagreement on, on the revenue side," Biden said in his press conference. He cautioned that the 14th Amendment was not a magic bullet, since he could not be sure about his ability to invoke it before the government ran out of money.

"We have not come up with unilateral action that could succeed in a matter of two weeks or three weeks. That's the issue. So it's up to lawmakers," he said. — AFP

KFH announces winners of Al-Rabeh draw

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) announced the winners of the Al-Rabeh draw with 20 customers winning cash prizes worth KD 1,500 each for the 17th and 18th week of 2023. KFH announced Mohamed Amer as the monthly winner of 1 kilo gram of KFH gold for the month of April 2023.

The winners of KD 1,500 are: Abdullah Al-Mutairi, Abdulaziz Al-Sulaili, Abdullah Al-Fraji, Faleh Al-Abdali, Marwan Raheel, Mubarak Al-Dousari, Abeer Khattab, Saud Al-Metlaqem, Hanea Marzouk, Mansour Al-Aslawi, Marram Al-Shemmari, Mohamed Othman, Yousef Al-Barood, Tariq Al-Azmi, Zarina Zaher, Abdulhadi Al-Rashidi, MUSAAD AL-MUTAIRI, Abdullah Al-Hashemi, Mohamed Khan, Mohamed Al-Muheemeed.

The Al-Rabeh campaign provides prizes and draws that offer customers several chances of winning "weekly, monthly and quarterly". The campaign crowns 536 winners throughout the year. The draw took place under the supervision of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The campaign is part of KFH's ongoing efforts to offer exceptional products and services that meet customers' aspirations, enhance the Bank's leadership in the local and global markets, as well as reflect its excellence in offering innovative banking solutions as per the highest quality standards.

The Al-Rabeh account is a salary account available to customers wishing to transfer their salaries and manage their personal accounts. Customers can open Al-Rabeh account in any of KFH branches in Kuwait, or through the bank's online channels. The account can be opened in the Kuwaiti dinar and is targeted for customers wishing to transfer their salaries and manage their personal accounts. Salary transfer is a prerequisite for customers to enter the draw provided that the transfer of salary to Al-Rabeh account is constant.

Regarding the terms and conditions of the prizes and draws, a customer is able to deposit 3 salaries during the 3 months prior to the draw, and the minimum balance of the account should not be less than KD 50 at the end of each month during the 3 months prior to the draw. Ten draws take place on a weekly basis for amount of KD 1,500 for 10 winners each, 1kg of KFH gold will be drawn monthly for one winner and KD 25,000 for one winner every quarter, reaching a total number of 536 winners during the year. KFH is keen to further meet customers' requirements and aspirations and their increasing needs as well as offer innovative and modern services, therefore achieving customer satisfaction, which is one of the fundamentals at KFH. The bank has achieved a qualitative shift in the level of financial services by utilizing technology.

Aston Martin says China's Geely doubles stake

LONDON: Aston Martin Lagonda revealed that Chinese automotive giant Geely has more than doubled its stake to become the British luxury carmaker's third largest investor. Aston said in a statement that Geely will invest £234 million (\$291 million) under a new partnership lifting its holding to 17 percent, up



A group photo of industry leaders participating in the summit.

stc Kuwait joins 'Leaders' Summit 2023'

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced its participation in the "Leaders' Summit 2023", which is SAMENA Council's premier annual congregation for Public and Private sector Leaders from South Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, Asia, Europe and beyond. Through its participation, stc Kuwait showcased the 4 key pillars behind its future corporate strategy which aims to assist the Company in leading the Kuwaiti telecommunications and ICT market.

The theme of the Leaders' Summit this year focused on 'Sustainable Connectivity and Emerging Ecosystems in Digital Economy', where key players including high level executives and industry leaders joined together at the Atlantis Hotel in Dubai, UAE on 15 of May 2023 to discuss key subjects related to the telecom and digital solutions market in the MENA region.

The event this year focused on ICT Infrastructure Requirements in Emerging Markets, SA-ME-NA Digital Services Landscape & New Digital Enablers:

US home sales fell in April

WASHINGTON: Sales of existing homes in the United States slowed again in April, the National Association of Realtors (NAR) said, marking the second straight month of declines amid higher interest rates.

Year-on-year, existing home prices saw their largest decline since 2012. But sales "remain above recent cyclical lows," NAR chief economist Lawrence Yun said in a statement, adding: "The combination of job gains, limited inventory and fluctuating mortgage rates over the last several months have created an environment of push-pull housing demand."

Homes sales in the United States have slowed markedly over the last year as buyers contend with rising mortgage repayment costs due to the US

Multi-Dimensional Approaches in Cybersecurity; Evolution of 5G Digital Technologies, Future Mobile and Metaverse based Life and Business, a need for New Frequency Allocations for Telecom Operators, Non-Terrestrial Network Integration, and overall Value-Creation, among other important matters that Public-sector and Private-sector leaders have identified to the Council for dialogue.

Engineer Mazyad Alharbi, CEO of stc Kuwait and Member of the Board of Directors at SAMENA Telecommunications Council, attended the summit alongside other representatives from stc.

Through its role as an industry leader in the local and regional telecom markets, stc showcased the various milestones the Company managed to achieve to enhance its position as a digital pioneer building on its initiatives aimed at enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait. In this regard, the acquisition of E-Portal in Q2-2022 has been a key milestone in achieving this leadership position, and is expected to support stc's future business expansion strategy.

By completing a transformation journey that started in 2019, stc has defined its future Corporate Strategy in order to enhance the company's aspiration and goals to LEAD the Kuwait telco and ICT market by offering innovative services, growing priority segments, and deploying an efficient and digital operating model.

Underscoring the Company's commitment to digital transformation, stc emphasized in a statement the importance of its participation in industry-leading

Federal Reserve's aggressive cycle of hikes. The US central bank has raised interest rates by five percentage points since it began its hikes last year to try and bring inflation back down to its long-run target of two percent.

Total existing home sales fell by 3.4 percent month-on-month to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4.28 million in April. This was slightly higher than the median forecast of economists surveyed by MarketWatch. Year-on-year, sales have declined by almost 25 percent, according to the NAR, underscoring the impact of the Fed's actions.

"While resilient demand will provide some support, we think home sales will come under increasing pressure as the year progresses, with sales weighed down by a weakening economy and labor market and a persistent shortage of inventory," Oxford Economics lead US economist Nancy Vanden Houten wrote in a note to clients. The median price for existing homes declined by 1.7 percent in April from a year ago to \$388,800, the sharpest such decline in more than a decade, fueled by



Eng Mazyad Alharbi on the sidelines of the summit.

events like the Leaders' Summit. Such platforms provide invaluable opportunities to engage with industry experts, exchange ideas, and acquire knowledge that can be harnessed to seize market opportunities. With its strategic investments in 5G infrastructure, stc has evolved into a trailblazer offering digital, cloud, IoT, and data center services, alongside cutting-edge ICT solutions and services. Now, more than ever, the Company is well positioned to support the vision of enterprises, government entities, and SMEs in line with Kuwait Vision 2035 through innovative solutions tailored to their diverse needs and requirements. This is the embodiment of stc's commitment to enabling digital transformation and enriching the customer journey experience.



WASHINGTON: Sales of existing homes in the United States slowed again in April, the National Association of Realtors (NAR) said.

retreating prices in the South and West. The NAR said figures show the 30-year fixed-rate mortgage averaged 6.35 percent as of May 11, down slightly from a week earlier, but up significantly from 5.30 percent one year ago. —AFP

from a 7.6 percent stake it bought in September.

The deal, aimed at tapping into the giant Chinese market, makes Geely the third largest investor after number one Canadian businessman Lawrence Stroll and number two Saudi Arabia.

Saudi became the second-biggest investor last year following a capital injection from its sovereign wealth fund. The "substantial investment from Geely" was "part of a new relationship agreement that seeks to support Aston Martin's growth and vision to be the world's most desirable ultra-luxury British performance brand," Aston added.

Thursday's news sent its share price racing 14.5 percent higher to 264.80 pence on London's rising

stock market. The carmaker, beloved by fictional British spy James Bond, has seen its shares rocket 72 percent since the start of this year in a remarkable turnaround.

Aston Martin had suffered vast losses in 2019 as it crashed spectacularly on weak global demand linked to China's economic slowdown and Brexit. Losses then deepened further on fallout from the coronavirus pandemic. But the automaker was saved from bankruptcy in early 2020 by Canadian billionaire Stroll. The luxury brand is now looking to shift gear into fully electric vehicles from 2025.

"This (Geely) announcement is a further significant step towards delivering our ambition for Aston

Martin," added executive chairman Stroll in Thursday's statement. "Geely Holding... sees tremendous potential for Aston Martin's long-term growth and success." Stroll added: "They offer us a deep understanding of the key strategic growth market that China represents, as well as the opportunity to access their range of technologies and components."

The Chinese giant will also gain a board seat and has agreed not to raise its stake above 22 percent until August 2024. "Our decision to increase our shareholding in Aston Martin reflects our confidence in the company's growth prospects, its technologies and its management team," added Geely Holding Group Chairman Eric Li. —AFP

Lifestyle



Brent Leggs, Executive Director of the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, looks at Anicka Yi's "The Mother Tongue" (left) and Adam Pendleton's "Untitled (Days for Nina)" (right) displayed as part of the Nina Simone Childhood Home Auction Exhibition.



People look at paintings as part of the Nina Simone Childhood Home Auction Exhibition.



People look at Julie Mehretu's "New Dawn, Sing (for Nina)" displayed as part of the Nina Simone Childhood Home Auction Exhibition.

US ARTISTS LEAD EFFORT TO RESTORE NINA SIMONE'S CHILDHOOD HOME

A group of US artists have spearheaded efforts to preserve musical great and civil rights activist Nina Simone's childhood home as a cultural site, auctioning artworks and organizing a gala on Saturday in New York to raise funds.



A file photo taken on October 22, 1991, shows US jazz and blues singer Nina Simone in concert at the Olympia music hall in Paris.—AFP photos



Brent Leggs, Executive Director of the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, poses next to Rashid Johnson's Bruise Painting "Nina's Blues" displayed as part of the Nina Simone Childhood Home Auction Exhibition.

Organizers hope the funding drive, also supported by tennis champion Venus Williams, will raise some \$2 million to restore the property where the genre-defying musician first started playing piano. The modest wooden house is perched on a grassy hill in the small town of Tryon in rural North Carolina, in the southeastern United States. It had fallen into disrepair when, in 2017, four African American artists, Julie Mehretu, Ellen Gallagher, Rashid Johnson and Adam Pendleton, purchased it and launched a crowdfunding campaign to turn the property into a cultural site suitable for visitors.

But the 660-square-foot (60-square-meter) house still needs work to become a permanent site open for visitors and cultural events. According to Leggs, the house could be open to the public as early as 2024. To make that happen, the team is auctioning off 11 items, including works donated by British painter Cecily Brown and American artist Sarah Sze. The auction, administered by Pace and Sotheby's, has been taking place online since May 12 and will run through Monday. Williams hopes the Saturday gala will help raise the re-

maining necessary funds. "Nina Simone's legacy is what has put people like me on the map today," said Williams, the first Black tennis player to become the world's number one.

Black Lives Matter

Simone, whose songs were popular during Black Lives Matter protests, had a complex, often difficult relationship with the United States, where she was born in 1933, during the era of racial segregation. Born Eunice Waymon, she spent the first years of her life in the three-room house in Tryon with her parents and siblings and began playing the piano at age three. But her dream of becoming a classical concert performer was shattered when she was rejected by Philadelphia's prestigious Curtis Institute of Music, an ordeal she attributed to racism. In the 1960s, Simone was active in the civil rights movement, at times through rousing speeches, sometimes through song. Her "Mississippi Goddam," was a response to a 1963 fire in an Alabama church started by members of the Ku Klux Klan. Three days after the assassination of Martin Luther King in 1968, she performed "Why? (The king of love is dead)."

Simone eventually left the United States and lived her last years in the south of France, where she died in 2003. "Our country is beginning to understand the need to preserve all of our history, and recognize and celebrate the diversity of our country," said Leggs. "This is an exciting time in historic preservation."—AFP



A work by artist Sarah Sze entitled "Spell" (left) is displayed next to a work by Anicka Yi entitled "The Mother Tongue" (right) as part of the Nina Simone Childhood Home Auction Exhibition.



Ellen Gallagher's "Abu Simbel, 2005" is displayed as part of the Nina Simone Childhood Home Auction Exhibition.

Mick Jagger's daughter fined after Ibiza police incident

Jade Jagger, daughter of Rolling Stones legend Mick Jagger, was ordered to pay a 1,400-euro (\$1,500) fine after her arrest for allegedly assaulting a Spanish policewoman, court documents and police said. The incident occurred on Wednesday evening when police were called to investigate an incident at a restaurant in Ibiza Town, the island's capital, a statement from the Balearic Islands branch of the SUP police union said.

Following a confrontation, police arrested Jagger, 51, and her male companion, the union said. At a hearing on Friday, the judge ordered Jagger to pay "a four-month daily fine of 10 euros per day for resisting arrest, and a 20-day fine of 10 euros for causing minor injury," a court statement said. It also said she must "pay the victim 800 euros" in compensation. The court handed her companion "four months of prison for assaulting a figure of authority". According to the union, restaurant staff had called the police to report a male customer "insulting and threatening customers and staff" who appeared to be either "drunk or under the influence of drugs".—AFP



File photo shows Jade Jagger poses during the "Don't take it personally" party at Studio 57 on July 6, 2017 in Paris, a showcase of her works of art and photographs in benefit of Project Zero, a global movement working on restoring and protect the ocean.—AFP



A combo picture shows (left) French film star Alain Delon and (right) Ari Boulogne.

French man who claimed to be son of Alain Delon found dead

A man who long claimed to be the son of French film star Alain Delon through his relationship with the iconic German singer Nico was found dead in Paris on Saturday, prosecutors said. The body of Ari Boulogne, a 60-year-old photographer, was discovered at his home in the capital, authorities said, and an investigation into the cause of death is underway.

Another person is in police custody on charges of failing to assist a person in danger, the prosecutor said, confirming earlier reports in a local newspaper.

The Parisien newspaper reported that the person in police custody is Boulogne's companion. French authorities also said that Boulogne was hemiplegic, a condition that can leave a person partly paralysed.

Boulogne, also known as Christian Boulogne, insisted he was the son of Delon and Nico, who notably gained fame as a singer with the avant-garde American rock group The Velvet Underground.

Delon, who had a brief affair with the German singer in the sixties, denied he was the father, though Ari was raised by Delon's mother Edith Boulogne, who officially adopted him together with her husband.

Boulogne described his chaotic life in a 2001 book, "Love Never Forgets".

He joined his mother Nico on music tours and made appearances in several films as a teenager, plunging into a world of drug use and what he called an "artistic wonderland" that took him around the world.—AFP

Ukrainian actors tell tales of war onstage

Devastated villages, separated families and hardened soldiers -- stories of Russia's invasion of Ukraine are being taken to the stage in a play performed by actors who have fled their homeland. "Special Operation", named after Russian President Vladimir Putin's so-called "special military operation" in Ukraine, opened in Denmark's second-largest city Aarhus on Saturday evening. The hour-long performance was written by Anatoli Zinovenko, a well-known actor back in his homeland. He and his wife Tetyana -- who also stars in the play -- were forced to flee Ukraine ten days into Russia's invasion, after seeing "rockets and helicopters swirling" above their Kyiv home.

"It was impossible to understand, no one believed that there would be a war, but it happened," said 62-year-old Zinovenko, who has starred in several Ukrainian films, series and performances. The actor had not written a play before, but when he and his family found safety in Denmark, he said that "everything that was in my heart, it all came out on paper". "Everything I heard, saw and understood. I wanted to put it all on paper," he said. The play tells the story of two Ukrainian women who become the sole survivors of a Russian attack on their village. A Russian soldier, injured and abandoned by his platoon, breaks into their home, forcing the women to decide whether to offer him help or exact revenge. Zinovenko, who plays the Russian soldier, calls it



(From right to left) Ukrainian Actress Tetyana Zinovenko, Ukrainian Actress Oksana Achiam and Ukrainian Actor Anatoli Zinovenko perform during a rehearsal of the play 'Special Operation' at Katapult Theatre in Aarhus, Denmark.—AFP photos

a tale of "heroism, humanity and spirituality". "The women, who have switched places with this occupier, have the opportunity to kill him, but they do not kill him. Why? Because they are not capable of it," he said.

'Cultural bridge'

Organisers described the play as building a "cultural bridge" between Ukraine and Denmark, which has welcomed some 30,000 Ukrainian refugees since the war began in February 2022. The Aarhus show marks the sixteenth performance of "Special Operation" in

Denmark. Profits will be donated to humanitarian organisations working in Ukraine.

"We in Denmark only know about this war from the media, from high electricity prices or high food prices," said the head of the Katapult Theatre, Torben Dahl. "What we can do is make people in Denmark aware of this situation on a more human level." According to the UN cultural agency UNESCO, over 250 cultural sites have been damaged in the war including the Mariupol Theatre, destroyed by an airstrike while sheltering civilians.—AFP



Ukrainian Actress Tetyana Zinovenko (left) and Ukrainian Actor and playwright Anatoli Zinovenko perform during a rehearsal of the play 'Special Operation' at Katapult Theatre.



Ukrainian Actor and playwright Anatoli Zinovenko poses during a rehearsal of his play 'Special Operation' at Katapult Theatre.

Lifestyle

Imagination's Lee John: Shining a light on UK black music

Young people of colour in the UK don't know enough about the history of British black music, according to Lee John, the former lead singer of 1980s soul funk group Imagination.

The band struck it big in the early 1980s with hits such as "Body Talk" and "Just an Illusion", going on to sell 30 million albums worldwide.

Now, three decades after Imagination was part of a wave of new black artists, John says he is on a journey to "uplift and bring a positive message" to young black people beset by negative headlines about everything from the economy to stabbings and gangs.

The singer, now 65, has spent the past 10 years working on a history of British black music which he describes as his "life's passion" and believes can offer young people knowledge to help unlock their potential.

"I think the issue with black music is that a lot of the kids don't even know who, how, what or where things came from," he told AFP. "They feel like things may have started from the 90s and that's it!" John's soon-to-be completed Flashback documentary project includes 400 hours of film edited into chapters going right back through the decades to the turn of last century.

It features over 100 interviews with a "kaleidoscope" of musicians, artists and



British musician Lee John practises in a music studio in north west London.—AFP photos

others who have shaped black music in the UK. They include Jaki Graham, Labi Siffre, Billy Ocean and Patti Boulaye as well as Pauline Black of The Selecter, Neville Staple of The Specials and Maizie Williams of Boney M.

'Our time'

John, who grew up in London and briefly in New York during the 1960s and 70s in a family of St Lucian descent, says he was struck by the number of black British artists coming up after he returned from the United States.

"I thought, 'Wow this is really interest-

ing. So we can do it here too'," he said. Signed by a record company at the age of 15, he failed to score the hit record he wanted -- something he describes as a painful experience that eventually made him "stronger".

"That taught me a great deal and I had to learn my trade. I had to learn the industry and doing that made me stronger, wiser and more educated in the music scene and in how to survive," he said.

John's initial focus for the Flashback project was the late 1970s and 1980s, when he says there were many changes

that "really changed the pathway for British black music on a global level".

"I felt there was an organic-ness that we all had but what we didn't have is support in distribution and marketing."

As the new wave of black artists such as Sade, Trevor Walters, Maxi Priest and The Cool Notes started to make an impact, he says, record companies started to take note of the international interest they were generating and finally decided to invest in them.

"I think basically we found that we could do our own thing. We emulated the Americans but I felt that we found our voice. "We'd studied, we'd learned and it was our time to create our own," he said.

'Positive message'

Imagination, a three-piece that also included Ashley Ingram and Errol Kennedy, had hits in 28 countries garnering them four platinum discs and nine gold discs. Ingram and Kennedy left the band in 1987 and John and a new line-up continued until 1992 when they split.

John, also an ambassador for the SOS Children Village charity, has continued to perform both internationally and in the UK. As some of those he interviewed for the project have since died, he said he was pleased to be able to help ensure their legacies.



British musician Lee John practises in a music studio in north west London.

"I think it's taken for granted (but) you wouldn't have half the artists doing what they do now if it wasn't for these other artists," he said. "I think music is a universal language. That's why they (young people) need to learn a little about Flashback and about the history of British black music.

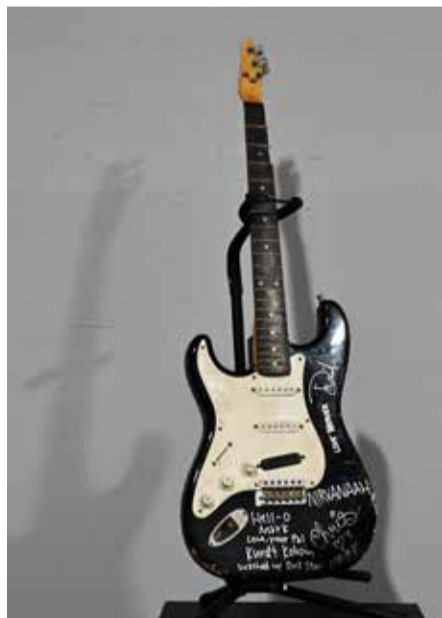
"I think the more they learn about that, it will give them the incentive to understand what was, what is and what can still be," he said. "That's my journey in life right now -- to uplift and bring a positive message to the youth."—AFP



File photos show US musician Kurt Cobain's smashed Fender Stratocaster is displayed at Julien's Auctions in Gardena, California on May 2, 2023, ahead of Julien's "Music Icons" auction of over 1,200 items from Rock And Roll history and exclusive artist collections.—AFP photos

Guitar smashed by Nirvana's Kurt Cobain sells for nearly \$600,000

A guitar smashed on stage by Nirvana front man Kurt Cobain sold for nearly \$600,000, several times its original estimate, an auction house said Saturday. The busted black Fender Stratocaster has been put back together, but is no longer playable, Kody Frederick of Julien's Auctions told AFP earlier this month.



It was signed by all three members of the Seattle grunge outfit as they rocketed to global fame. The auction house said it had expected the instrument to sell for \$60,000 at the event

in front of a live audience at the Hard Rock Cafe in New York City.

Instead, it went for \$595,000, Julien's said in a statement, calling the total "astounding." "You can see here the break that took place as he slammed down the guitar, where the neck here kind of connects, as well as down here on the bottom where he slammed the guitar down," Frederick told AFP earlier in May.

"Kurt Cobain, when he was on stage, when he played, he was a machine. The man was angry, and you could feel that on stage. And you would feel that by the way he would treat his instruments. "This broken element, in a strange way, from this broken musician, that really defined this rough and tumble era of music."

Nirvana's hits, many of which were penned by Cobain, included "Come As You Are," "Lithium" and the 1991 breakout "Smells Like Teen Spirit" -- a track that became anthemic for a generation of alienated teenagers. Cobain struggled with substance addiction and depression, and had a tumultuous relationship with his wife, Courtney Love. He took his own life in April 1994.

The three-day auction, which concludes Sunday, also includes memorabilia from the careers of Eddie Van Halen, Elvis Presley, Freddie Mercury, Bill Wyman and Janet Jackson.—AFP

British writer Martin Amis dies aged 73

Renowned and influential British writer Martin Amis has died aged 73 at his home in Lake Worth, Florida, the Booker Prizes said Saturday. Amis was "one of the most acclaimed and discussed writers of the past 50 years and the author of 14 novels," said the website of Booker Prizes, the leading literary awards for fiction in the United Kingdom.

His wife, Isabel Fonseca, told media that the author of searing and insightful works such as "Money: A Suicide Note," "London Fields" and "Time's Arrow" died on Friday after a bout with esophageal cancer. His death was announced on the same day as the Cannes festival showing of a film based on his 2014 book "The Zone of Interest".

Set in Auschwitz, the novel tells the story of a Nazi officer who fell in love with the wife of the extermination camp commander. Amis, the son of renowned comic novelist Kingsley Amis, equaled and even surpassed his father in fame with novels filled with savage humor.

"The novel is an incredibly intimate portrait of a writer," the younger Amis once told the BBC, reflecting on his career. "Although I don't write autobiography, I am everywhere in my books."



Martin Amis

In 2008, the Times of London named him one of the 50 greatest British writers since 1945. Born in 1949 in Wales, Amis rose to literary celebrity amid the hip 1980s British fiction boom that included fellow novelists Salman Rushdie, Julian Barnes, Kazuo Ishiguro and Ian McEwan.

Amis graduated from Oxford University in 1971 with a degree in English and worked as an editor before publishing his first novel, "The Rachel Papers," in 1973. It was with "Money," published in 1984 with a comic take on consumerism, that Amis burst more broadly onto the literary scene.—AFP

Martin Amis, a second-generation literary lion

One of the burdens of having a famous father is trying to measure up to him in the same field. British writer Martin Amis, who has died at the age of 73, not only matched his illustrious father, Kingsley, but for a while rose beyond him.

The influential author's 1984 novel "Money" became one of the books that summed up a generation. "Money doesn't mind if we say it's evil, it goes from strength to strength. It's a fiction, an addiction, and a tacit conspiracy," he said, in the "Novelists in Interview" publication, a year after his book came out.

Depicting self-serving greed in Thatcherite Britain and the US under Ronald Reagan, "Money: A Suicide Note", to give it its full title, is regarded as one of the most searing, insightful and bitingly funny English-language novels of the 20th century.

It follows "a semi-literate alcoholic", John Self, an advertising executive with an appetite for pornography, drugs and fast food, as he dices between London and New York in a bid to make a movie. The characters border on cartoonish but the language is sharp and vivid and the comedy is as darkly acerbic as anything his father wrote.

Arguably, it is the tour de force in the Amis canon, although some might argue for his 1989 novel "London Fields" or for 1991's "Time's Arrow" which has a backwards narrative -- including dialogue in reverse -- as it purports to be the autobiography of a Nazi concentration camp doctor.

"Time's Arrow" was short-listed for the Booker Prize, an award which eluded Amis throughout his career.

British director Jonathan Glazer's adaption of his novel "The Zone of Interest", set in a Nazi death camp, is currently receiving plaudits at the Cannes Film Festival. "The novel is an incredibly intimate portrait of a writer," Amis once told the BBC, looking back at his career.

"Although I am not an autobiographical writer, I am all over my books."

Literary roots

Martin Louis Amis was born in Oxford on August 25, 1949, the second of three children that Kingsley Amis had with his first wife, Hilary Bardwell.

Kingsley was a huge figure in the literary world when Martin was growing up, riding high on the success of his 1954 novel "Lucky Jim". That took the family to Princeton in the US where he taught, where he lived up to the image of the acerbic curmudgeon that he carefully nurtured.

After graduating from Oxford University, Martin Amis published his first novel, "The Rachel Papers", in 1973. He followed up with "Dead Babies" two years later, which marked his first dalliance with morbid humour. In the years that followed, he enjoyed some success with "Success" and "Other People", before hitting the big time with "Money", "London Fields" and "Time's Arrow".

It was the third of his "London" novels, "The Information", published in 1995, which launched him into the gossip columns. The reason was money.

Amis was handed a £500,000 advance, which coincided with him leaving his agent, Pat Kavanagh, the wife of one of his best friends, fellow novelist Julian Barnes. It caused a rift between the two writers.

By that stage Amis had already left his first wife Antonia Phillips, an American academic, with whom he had two sons, to begin a relationship with Isabel Fonseca, an heiress who had interviewed him for a British literary review. They married in 1996.

Divided opinions

The 1990s were the peak of Amis' literary powers, even when he was being accused of misogyny and, later, Islamophobia -- claims he firmly rejected.

"I not only think of myself as a feminist but as a gynocrat," he said in 2018. "I look forward to a utopia where women are in charge."

His 2003 novel "Yellow Dog" made the Booker Prize longlist but was largely derided, memorably by another British novelist Tibor Fischer, who said in a newspaper review that it was so bad it was "like your favourite uncle being caught in a school playground".—AFP

DiCaprio-Scorsese epic scores rave reviews at Cannes

The Hollywood cavalcade descended on Cannes Saturday for the premiere of Leonardo DiCaprio and Martin Scorsese's Native American crime epic, "Killers of the Flower Moon" which received rave reviews.

The three-and-a-half-hour movie sees DiCaprio play alongside Scorsese's other long-time muse Robert De Niro, and charts a wave of murders among oil-rich Osage Indians in the 1920s and the birth of the FBI. After hours of waiting in the rain that has drenched the French Riviera town all week, fans went wild as the trio arrived for the premiere alongside several native Americans in traditional outfits.

Co-star Jesse Plemons arrived with his wife Kirsten Dunst, while Salma Hayek, Cate Blanchett, and Tobey Maguire were also present.

Based on a nonfiction bestseller, the film sees DiCaprio play a weak-willed man who marries a wealthy Osage Indian and is drawn into the deadly

schemes of his kingpin uncle (De Niro). Words like "searing", "triumph" and "masterpiece" were bandied about by critics who managed to get their hands on a ticket. IndieWire said DiCaprio gives "his best-ever performance", while The Guardian awarded five stars for a "remarkable epic about the bloody birth of America".

There were some dissenting notes, with The Times calling it "a damp squib" and Little White Lies saying Scorsese "guts the story of anything that might sully the high seriousness of the subject matter".

Frontrunners

"Killers of the Flower Moon", funded by Apple, was screening out-of-competition in Cannes. It is the first time the 80-year-old Scorsese, who won the Palme in 1976 for "Taxi Driver", has presented a film here since 1985's lesser-known "After Hours", though he served as jury president in 1998.

Elsewhere, the race for the festival's top prize Palme d'Or was heating up.

More Hollywood royalty walked the red carpet for Natalie Portman and Julianne Moore's new film "May De-

ember," which looks at the relationship between an older woman and a schoolboy, still married years after their relationship became a tabloid scandal.

An early front-runner is British direc-

tor Jonathan Glazer's "The Zone of Interest", a unique and horrifying look at the private life of a Nazi officer working at the Auschwitz concentration camp.

Critics were near-unanimous in their praise, Variety calling it "chilling and profound, meditative and immersive, a movie that holds human darkness up to the light and examines it as if under a microscope". It was partly inspired by a book of the same name by British novelist Martin Amis, who died on Saturday at 73.

Also well received was "Four Daughters", a heartbreaking documentary about radicalisation within a Tunisian family that is both inventive and engaging. That may go down well with jury president Ruben Ostlund, last year's winner for "Triangle of Sadness", who likes his arthouse films with some lighter touches.—AFP



(From left) US actor Leonardo DiCaprio, US director Martin Scorsese and US actor Robert De Niro arrive for the screening of the film "Killers of the Flower Moon" during the 76th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France.—AFP photos

Lifestyle



(From left) British producer Simon Emanuel, US actress Shaunette Renee Wilson, US actor Boyd Holbrook, Danish actor Mads Mikkelsen, US actor Harrison Ford, US director James Mangold, British actor Ethann Isidore, US producer Kathleen Kennedy and US producer Frank Marshall arrive for the screening of the film "Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny" during the 76th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France.—AFP photos

Cannes honors Ford at Indiana Jones premiere



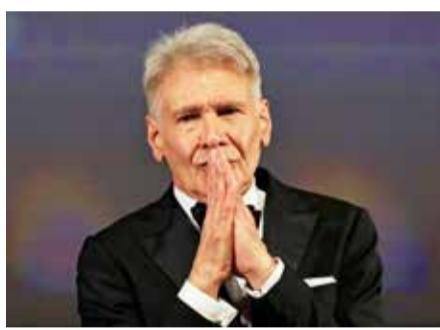
US actor Harrison Ford (left) poses on stage with French Director of the Cannes film festival Iris Knobloch after he was awarded with an Honorary Palme d'or prior to the screening of the film "Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny".

"Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny" saw Harrison Ford defy age and crack the whip one last time as one of the most anticipated blockbusters of the year got its world premiere in Cannes on Thursday.

The star, who has vowed this will be the last time he dons the famous fedora, showed a rare bit of emotion as the Cannes Film Festival presented him with an honorary Palme d'Or on stage ahead of the screening. "I'm very moved by this," he said following a collage of clips from his many hit movies. "I just saw my life flash before my eyes."

The fifth outing for the world's favourite adventuring archaeologist, due for general release in late June, sees the 80-year-old de-aged by several decades using special effects that ate up a large chunk of its \$294 million budget.

The extended flashback, that takes up the first chunk of the film, sees a younger Indy in World War II in an action scene on a Nazi train. The film then flashes forward to 1969 with the professor on the brink of retirement



US actor Harrison Ford thanks the audience before being awarded with an Honorary Palme d'or prior to the screening of the film "Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny".

and needing a fresh adventure. He finds himself racing across Tangiers, Sicily and New York in pursuit of a former Nazi scientist, played with relish by Mads Mikkelsen, and a treasure that would allow him to travel through time.

British actress Phoebe Waller-Bridge plays Jones's goddaughter, and joined the cast on the red carpet in Cannes. It is the first of the five films -- which began back in 1981 with "Raiders of the Lost Ark" -- not to be directed by Steven Spielberg.

Spielberg passed the reins to James Mangold, known for "Logan" and the Johnny Cash biopic "Walk The Line".

He told AFP that Ford was still "pretty fit" for his age, but it was important to have a story that was "honest, and addressed time, aging and regret".

The first reviews, however, were middling, with the Irish Times saying "nobody with a brain in their heads will compare (it) favourably to the first three films". But Britain's Radio Times gave it four stars, saying it was "a little safe, but it's an enjoyable, old-school action-adventure".

Long docs

Oscar-winning "Twelve Years a Slave" director Steve McQueen was on the red carpet, having arrived in Cannes for his four-hour documentary about wartime Amsterdam, "Occupied City". Playing out-of-competition on Wednesday, McQueen's doc wowed some critics while boring others.

Premiering at the festival just after Indiana Jones was "Black Flies", a tense drama about New York paramedics starring Sean Penn, with an unlikely

supporting role for ex-boxer Mike Tyson as his station chief. There was another lengthy documentary showing on Thursday from a master of the genre, Wang Bing, who offers rarely seen insights into daily life in China.

His 210-minute film, "Youth (Spring)", came from five years of footage of migrant textile workers around Shanghai and is a rare documentary in the main competition for the Palme d'Or at Cannes.

Documentaries have done well on the festival circuit recently, with "All the Beauty and the Bloodshed" (Laura Poitras's film about big pharma) winning Venice last year, and "On the Adamant" (about a daycare centre for mentally ill patients) winning in Berlin in February.

There are 21 films competing for the top prize at Cannes -- the Palme d'Or -- including several previous winners such as Japan's Hirokazu Kore-eda, Germany's Wim Wenders and two-time British winner Ken Loach.—AFP

Cannes moved by film exploring girls' decision to join IS

How do two girls go from being typical teenagers, dying their hair blue and entertaining a gothic phase -- to joining the Islamic State?

"Four Daughters", which premiered on Friday at the Cannes Film Festival, explores the true story of how a mother comes to terms with the decision by two of her children to flee to Libya and join the extremist organisation, and her responsibility for it. Not quite a feature film and not quite a documentary, Oscar-nominated Tunisian filmmaker Kaouther Ben Hania uses the mother, Olfa Hamrouni, and her two remaining daughters alongside actresses to recreate scenes from their life.



Tunisian actress Hend Sabri (left) and Tunisian director Kaouther Ben Hania arrive for the screening of the film "Les Filles D'Ifa" (Four Daughters) during the 76th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France.—AFP photos

Olfa recounts her own upbringing, with devastating tales of trying to protect a house of women from predatory men, and the brutality of her wedding

night. Initially a sympathetic character, complexities emerge as she is forced to confront how her desire to keep her daughters safe led her to repeat generational violence and trauma.

Viewers see Hamrouni as for the first time she hears her daughters recount their experiences of her as a mother, and her shock when she catches them giggling about growing breasts or exploring their bodies. "It's clear she absorbed the conservative, male-oriented point of view that innocent girls are but one misstep away... from instant transformation into 'whores,'" wrote Deadline magazine.

The violence of men, and Tunisia's politics throughout the Arab Spring are constantly in the background. Even after losing two daughters to the Islamic State, and despite the fact she doesn't wear the hijab, she said she loved her daughters wearing it as it made her feel they were safer.

"Four Daughters is an enthralling narrative about memory, motherhood and the inherited traumas of a patriarchal society," said The Hollywood Reporter.

Deadline said it would be "a deserving winner" of the Palme D'Or, to be announced on May 27. "I wanted to explore the violence that we transmit from mother to daughter that is not unique to Tunisian society," Ben Hania told AFP, calling it a "curse". "The new world has yet to arrive," she said of Tunisia after the 2011 revolution and the rise of Islamists in the country.—AFP



(From left) Tunisian actress Hend Sabri, Tunisian actress Ichraq Matar, Tunisian actress Nour Karoui, Tunisian actress Tayssir Chikhaoui, Tunisian director Kaouther Ben Hania, actress Eya Chikahoui, Tunisian actress Olfa Hamrouni and Tunisian actor Majd Mastoura pose during a photocall for the film "Les Filles D'Ifa" (Four Daughters) at the 76th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes.



(From left) Producer Sonia Buchman, French producer Nicolas De La Mothe, Pascale Wei-Guinot, Chinese director Bing Wang, Cameraman Maeda Yoshitaka, Producer Vincent Wang, Cameraman Xianhui Liu and French film editor Dominique Auvray attend a press conference for the film "Qing Chun" (Youth - Spring) during the 76th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes.—AFP photos

Cannes gets rare look at real life in Chinese factories

Chinese filmmaker Wang Bing got incredible access to the inner workings of his country's textile industry by spending five years with its employees, but he fears it may be more difficult for him to work there in future.

Wang, who has delivered some of the most important and immersive documentaries about China, made "Youth (Spring)" from 2,600 hours of footage.

The unflinching but tender portrait of young workers in textile factories premiered at the Cannes Film Festival on Thursday -- a rare documentary to be included in the main competition for the Palme d'Or.

The factory managers are filmed openly as they negotiate dirt-cheap wages and tell workers to leave if they aren't happy -- footage gained thanks to Wang's many years on the ground. "Bit by bit as I got to know all these managers from the factories, I was really able to get total freedom from them and even very strong support on their part," he told AFP. But now Wang worries he may not have such access to film in China again.

"It will be more and more difficult to shoot there because China is entering a phase in its history where denunciation is becoming the heart of society", he said. China has seen a tightening of its authoritarian rule in recent years under Premier Xi Jinping. "The concrete changes that are happening, that we can see and are real, are totally unexpected and surprise me. I must say it is totally incomprehensible to me," Wang said.

Patient observer

Filmed in Zhili, the Chinese garment capital on the Yangtze River, the movie shows the small textile factories in bleak grey concrete high-rises strewn

with garbage. Wang's camera patiently observes the daily lives of young people who have come from rural regions to join the sprawling workforce.

In long takes we see their rapid mechanical movements hunched over sewing machines, often against a background of banter and blaring music.

But it also shows its young subjects as they relax, joking with each other, flirting, drinking and talking about everything from abortion to marriage.

The filmmaker knows the 212-minute running time will put off many viewers but he said his priority was staying true to his subject. "What's essential for the director is to feel that the length corresponds with the true length of the subject being treated," he said.

Nine hours

And he is not done yet. Since 2021, Wang has been editing in Paris and plans two more parts of "Youth", to create a trilogy of more than nine hours. The premiere in Cannes on Thursday

received a standing ovation, and early reviews were broadly positive.

Deadline hailed an "exceptional" documentary that paints a "grim picture of life for young Chinese workers". For The Guardian it was a "giant, immersive documentary" full of "heart-stopping stories". Variety magazine was less enthusiastic, calling it "a deflating, even dehumanising, experience".

Wang was nominated in 2018 at Cannes for his eight-hour-plus documentary, "Dead Souls", on re-education camp survivors. His first epic documentary, "West of the Tracks", about migrant workers, ran for over nine hours.

Other films include "Til Madness Do Us Part" (2013), set in an asylum where mentally ill patients are locked up with political prisoners, and "Three Sisters" (2012), which won a prize in Venice, about three young girls left to fend for themselves in the Yunan mountains while their parents work in the city.—AFP



(From left) Cameraman Liu Xianhui, cameraman Maeda Yoshitaka, Chinese director Wang Bing, French film editor Dominique Auvray, Chinese assistant director Bingyuan Xu and Chinese film editor Liyo Gong pose during a photocall for the film "Qing Chun" (Youth - Spring).

Sports

Lucknow edge Kolkata to enter IPL play-offs, top-two finish for Chennai

Chennai will take on holders Gujarat Titan in the first qualifier next week

KOLKATA: Lucknow Super Kings survived an unbeaten blitz of 67 by Rinku Singh to edge Kolkata Knight Riders by one run and qualify for the Indian Premier League play-offs on Saturday. Nicholas Pooran's 58 guided Lucknow to 176-8, a total that was threatened by Rinku, a left-hand batsman, who smashed four sixes in his 33-ball knock but Kolkata ended on 175-7. "First reaction is satisfaction," Lucknow skipper Krunal Pandya said after the win.

"We never gave up, we were put under a lot of pressure but credit to the boys. At one stage, they were 61-1 but I've seen it before that at this level, two-three tight overs and we're in the game." The result ensured a top-two finish for Chennai Super Kings, who hammered hosts Delhi Capitals by 77 runs in their march to the play-offs in the first match of the day.

Four-time champions Chennai, led by M.S. Dhoni, will take on holders Gujarat Titans, who top the 10-team table, in the first qualifier next week. The winner will head straight to the final in Ahmedabad on May 28 and the loser playing the winner of the "eliminator" between teams three and four in the second qualifier.

"There is no recipe as such," Dhoni said on his team's success in the T20 tournament. "You try to pick the best players and try to give them the best slot. You use them in the manner where they have most chances of succeeding and groom them in the areas where they are not as strong."

Two-time champions Kolkata bowed out of the race for the top four, leaving five-time champions Mumbai

Indians, Royal Challengers Bangalore—both the teams play their respective matches on Sunday—and Rajasthan Royals fighting for the remaining spot.

Conway-Ruturaj show

Kolkata began strongly to put Lucknow in trouble at 73-5 before the left-handed Pooran hit back in his 30-ball blitz to guide his team to 176-8 at Eden Gardens and was named man of the match. In reply, England's Jason Roy, who hit 45, and Venkatesh Iyer gave Kolkata a brisk start in their stand of 61 in 5.5 overs before the Lucknow spinners hit back. Kolkata lost track after Roy's wicket but Rinku, who became an IPL sensation with his five sixes off five balls last month, made Kolkata dream again even when they needed 41 off the last two overs.

In the opening match, New Zealand's Devon Conway (87) and Gaikwad (79) set up Chennai's win with an opening stand of 141 to steer the team to 223-3. Skipper David Warner hit a valiant 86 but Chennai kept down Delhi, who are coached by Ricky Ponting, to 146-9 and finish the group stage with eight wins. The season remains special for Dhoni, who is believed to be playing his last season and has attracted huge crowds wearing the teams' yellow as a tribute to the legendary cricketer.

Dhoni, 41, though has kept the fans guessing and still not clarified on his swansong. The wicketkeeper-batsman and former India captain walked in to bat amid thunderous applause at Delhi's Feroz Shah Kotla ground and stood unbeaten with Ravindra Jadeja, who hit a seven-ball 20. — AFP



KOLKATA: Kolkata Knight Riders' Rinku Singh plays a shot during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Lucknow Super Giants and Kolkata Knight Riders at the Eden Gardens Stadium in Kolkata. — AFP

Haney retains undisputed crown

LOS ANGELES: American Devin Haney retained his undisputed lightweight world title on Saturday, defeating Ukrainian former champion Vasiliy Lomachenko by a unanimous points decision in Las Vegas. A bruising 12-round battle that featured several close rounds finished with Haney shading it on all three scorecards, with judges scoring it 116-112, 115-113, 115-113 in his favor.

The unbeaten 24-year-old Haney, who improves to 30-0 with 15 knockouts, started the fight aggressively to win the opening round. But veteran Lomachenko, 35, battled back brilliantly to land several hard shots in the second and third rounds, wobbling Haney with a solid uppercut in the third.

Haney appeared to just gain the edge in the mid-

dle rounds of the fight before Lomachenko finished strongly with the crowd in the MGM Grand Garden Arena roaring the former champion on.

Haney though rocked Lomachenko with a left hook in the seventh round and continued to find his target with crisp counter-punching even though the Ukrainian eventually landed more punches throughout the fight, 124 to the American's 110.

The win means Haney retains his World Boxing Association, World Boxing Council, International Boxing Federation and World Boxing Organization belts. He became the first undisputed lightweight world champion since Pernell Whitaker in 1990 with a lopsided decision over George Kambosos in Melbourne in June 2022.

Lomachenko returned to the ring in October last year after enrolling in a territorial defense unit for Ukraine after the invasion of the country by Russia. The veteran's record fell to 17-3 with 11 knockouts after Saturday's defeat. — AFP



MELBOURNE: Devin Haney of the US (C) celebrates defeating George Kambosos of Australia to become the undisputed lightweight boxing world champion in Melbourne. — AFP

Rybakina sets sights on Roland Garros

ROME: Elena Rybakina won the Italian Open on Saturday and promptly turned her attention to Roland Garros and the pursuit of a second career Grand Slam title. Kazakhstan's Rybakina captured her second WTA 1000 title of the season at Foro Italico when Ukrainian opponent Anhelina Kalinina retired with a thigh injury which she had been carrying all week.

Rybakina hugged her friend and rival at the net as the tearful loser explained how the physical problem had finally caught up with her. World number six Rybakina, the reigning Wimbledon champion, was leading 6-4, 1-0 when Kalinina called it quits shortly after midnight in a final long-delayed by rain.

Rybakina, 23, became the first woman to capture two WTA 1000 titles this season, having already won the prestigious Indian Wells hard court tournament in March. She was also runner-up at the Australian Open and in Miami and now she is eyeing up the French Open.

"Hopefully I can go far at the French Open," she said. "I have good memories playing there. Now that I've got more matches on clay, it's a bit easier and (gives) a bit more confidence definitely. It's always important to be healthy, be ready physically, then hopefully I can go far there."

She offered wishes for a speedy recovery to Kalinina. "She has done an amazing job. I hope she is fit for Roland Garros," Rybakina said. The 68-minute match didn't get underway until 11 pm, Rybakina telling the hardy fans in the stadium who sat through more than four hours of delays that she knew it wasn't easy for them.

Rybakina, who will rise to four in the world ahead of Roland Garros, is only the third woman to have reached the finals at the Australian Open, Indian Wells, Miami and Rome in the same season. The others were Monica Seles in 1991 and Maria Sharapova in 2012.

The Russian-born Rybakina has now won 28 matches this season—only world number two and Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka has won more, with 29. "I'm proud that I can maintain this level, it's not easy with all the scheduling, traveling."

"I think we're doing a good job with the team," Rybakina said. "I can see improvements on the court, physically also. I think we're on a right way." But she added: "There is still a lot of room to improve. But for



ROME: Ukraine's Anhelina Kalinina (2ndL) and Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina (R) pose with trophies after Kalinina forfeited due to injury during the final match of the Women's WTA Rome Open tennis tournament at Foro Italico in Rome. — AFP

now it's going well, and hopefully I can continue like this till the end of the season."

Kalinina, 26, said that her physio had kept her fit enough to compete until the end in Rome. "I tried my best but I just could not play," Kalinina said, apologizing to spectators. — AFP

but pulled it back in a tense point-for-point second game to eventually triumph 18-21, 22-20, 21-8.

A jubilant Zheng jumped up and down in excitement, ripped off his shirt and threw it into the crowd. His partner Huang threw her racket to a delighted spectator. In the men's singles, Lee Yun Gyu was easily outmatched by Shi Yuqi, unable to deal with Shi's powerful smashes and laser focus.

The long rallies between Chen and An, who looked increasingly frustrated as the match wore on, drew gasps from the crowd. Virtually all international sports events ground to a halt in China after the coronavirus pandemic emerged there in late 2019, with a notable exception being last year's Beijing Winter Olympics that were held in a virus-secure "bubble". — AFP

that I have in other races, not having won this one was definitely (something) missing," Velazquez said. Blazing Sevens, trained by Chad Brown and ridden by Irad Ortiz, nearly denied Velazquez again.

Velazquez had his horse in the lead early and heading into the stretch. When Blazing Sevens made his move—even poking a nose in front—National Treasure dug in and won by a head. Kentucky Derby winner Mage, whose challenge from the middle of the seven-horse field came too late, finished third to end the chance that a 14th Triple Crown champion could be celebrated at the Belmont Stakes next month. Baffert, who trained the most recent Triple Crown winner, Justify, in 2018, saddled his first Triple Crown race runner since 2021.

He'd been suspended for a medication violation that disqualified Medina Spirit from his 2021 Kentucky Derby victory. But it was far from a celebratory day after the death of Havnameltdown again put horse safety in racing under scrutiny. — AFP

China claim record Sudirman Cup badminton title

SUZHOU: China claimed a record 13th Sudirman Cup title on Sunday, defeating South Korea on home soil at the first major sporting event in the country since the lifting of pandemic restrictions. Cheered on by a raucous crowd brandishing red and white thundersticks and loud horns in the eastern city of Suzhou, China made short work of the Korean side, beating them 3-0.

National Treasure gives Bob Baffert Preakness win

WASHINGTON: National Treasure fought off Blazing Sevens in the final strides to win the Preakness Stakes on Saturday, taking trainer Bob Baffert from grief to glory hours after one of his horses was euthanized. Baffert claimed his eighth Preakness win, breaking a tie with 19th-century trainer Robert Wyndham Walden for most by a trainer, but that seemed far from his mind as he contemplated the day's earlier grim events in the 148th running of the middle jewel in US flat racing's Triple Crown.

Baffert-trained Havnameltdown suffered a catastrophic front left leg injury during the sixth race

of the day and had to be euthanized on the track at Pimlico Race Course in Baltimore. Jockey Luis Saez was thrown when the horse stumbled forward and taken to hospital with leg pain, but was released after X-rays were negative.

"We've been totally wiped out after that horse got hurt," Baffert said of his team, that still had to prepare National Treasure for the 1 1/16-mile Preakness. "There's so many responsibilities a trainer has: employees, horses, jockey safety," Baffert said, his voice breaking in a post-race television interview. "And then to win this... losing that horse today really hurt."

Baffert paid tribute to his staff for making sure National Treasure got his chance. "This horse deserved it," he said. And he was delighted for jockey John Velazquez, who filled a hole in his Hall of Fame resume with a first Preakness win to go with three Kentucky Derby victories and two Belmont Stakes triumphs.

"All the blessings that I have and all the success

Koepka turns boos to roars in grabbing PGA lead at rainy Oak Hill

ROCHESTER: Four-time major winner Brooks Koepka shrugged off rain-soaked conditions and boos from spectators Saturday to fire a second straight four-under par 66 and grab a one-stroke lead at the PGA Championship.

Koepka, among US stars who jumped to the Saudi-financed LIV Golf League from the PGA Tour, sank a 47-foot putt at the par-4 17th hole for his fifth birdie to finish on six-under 204 at soggy Oak Hill. "I putted pretty well and I was pretty happy with my game," Koepka said. "It was tough with the rain, moisture on the greens slowing them up. But I felt like I was a lot more aggressive than I was the two previous days on the greens."

That was good enough for a one-stroke ahead over Norway's Viktor Hovland and Canadian Corey Conners, with LIV's Bryson DeChambeau fourth on 207. All three shot 70 on Saturday. Koepka and DeChambeau, high-profile players in the PGA Tour-LIV split, were booed by the crowd when they were introduced on the first tee. But both turned jeers into roars with spectacular shotmaking.

"I love when the fans are on you, cheering for you, or giving you crap if you screw up," Koepka said. "That's the beauty of it. I want that atmosphere." After a day-long deluge, Koepka birdied the par-5 fourth and par-3 fifth, took his lone bogey at seven, then sank birdie putts of 15 feet at 12 and 18 feet at the par-5 13th before his penultimate-hole bomb.

Koepka could join Tiger Woods and LIV's Phil Mickelson as the only players since 1990 to win five majors by capturing a third career PGA crown. Hovland, ranked 11th, was set to share the lead in quest of his first major title but found a greenside bunker and made bogey at 18.

"I'm playing really solid tee to green, giving myself a lot of easy pars," Hovland said. "Haven't quite made enough putts to get the most out of my game. Hopefully that will change tomorrow." In his slog across the water-logged layout, Conners made clutch par saves and birdie putts from inside four feet at the eighth and nine feet at the par-3 15th, but was undone by a double bogey six at 16.

"It was a really challenging day with the conditions," Conners said. "I kept it out of trouble and played a lot of good shots." Conners, ranked 29th, is trying to join 2003 Masters winner Mike Weir as his homeland's only men's major champions. He won last month's PGA Tour Texas Open and had his best major finish, a share of sixth, at last year's Masters. DeChambeau was two-over on the day after a bogey at 13 but nearly drove the 14th green to set up a birdie and made an eight-foot birdie putt at 15.

He wasn't thrown off by his poor reception at the start. "I don't care. It's not a big deal," DeChambeau said. "They're going to do that no matter what. I appreciate the fans, them doing that to me. I've got no problem, either way. It still was fun today."

Justin Rose, the 2013 US Open champion trying to become the first Englishman to win the PGA Championship since Jim Barnes in 1916 and 1919, shot 69 to share fifth with second-ranked American Scottie Scheffler on 208, four adrift.

Scheffler, last year's Masters champion, would overtake Jon Rahm atop the world rankings with a victory. He could become the first man to win the PGA and Players Championship in the same year since Hal Sutton in 1983.

McIlroy five back

Four-time major winner Rory McIlroy fired a 69 to stand seventh on 209 with five birdies and four bogeys in a roller-coaster round. "It hasn't been great. I can play a lot better," said the world number three from Northern Ireland, who seeks his first major title since 2014.

"It's just tough to play in. It's tough to execute in those sort of conditions." Rahm, last month's Masters winner, fired a 72 to join Jordan Spieth on 216. Three-time major winner Spieth, who hoped to complete a career Grand Slam with a victory, fired a 71, his low round this week. — AFP

Sports

Murray sinks Lakers to put Nuggets on brink of reaching first NBA finals

Davis led Lakers' scoring with 28 points while James, Reaves added 23 apiece

LOS ANGELES: Jamal Murray scored 37 points as the Denver Nuggets routed the Los Angeles Lakers 119-108 on Saturday to move within one win of reaching the NBA finals for the first time in the team's history.

A dazzling first-half shooting performance from Denver point guard Murray laid the foundation for a deserved road win that leaves the Nuggets with a commanding 3-0 lead in the best-of-seven Western Conference finals series.

After claiming back-to-back victories at home in games one and two, Denver delivered a performance of ruthless precision to dispatch LeBron James and the 17-time champion Lakers at the Crypto.com Arena. Murray finished with 37 points, seven rebounds and six assists while Nikola Jokic added 24 points—including 15 in the fourth quarter—to steer Denver to victory.

"We stayed with it," Murray told ESPN afterwards. "We just had a hit first mentality that we've had through the playoffs. We kept them at a distance for most of the game. "I just felt like we executed throughout the game and hit first."

Anthony Davis led the Lakers' scoring with 28 points while James and Austin Reaves added 23 points apiece. Lakers coach Darvin Ham admitted his team had been unable to handle Murray early on. "He got off scorching," Ham said of Murray. "He's one of those players, man, once he starts to see them go in, it's just he catches fire, and he rolls them off pretty quickly, which he did in that first half."

"Basically carried them offensively through that half," the Lakers coach added, paying tribute to top-seeded Denver's all-round potency. "They have been at the top of the food chain for a reason and

have a plethora of guys that can hurt you, as was on full display tonight," Ham said, refusing to concede defeat in the series.

"Circumstances are what they are. Difficult but not impossible." A typically star-studded crowd with the likes of Hollywood actors Jack Nicholson and Denzel Washington sitting at courtside were unable to inspire the Lakers, who now must win game four on Monday to avoid a clean sweep.

The Nuggets took control with a dominant first quarter performance that saw Murray pick up where he had left off in game two with another devastating shooting clinic. Murray, who scored 23 points in the fourth quarter of Denver's game two win on Thursday, rattled in 17 points in the first on Saturday in a dream start for the Nuggets.

While Los Angeles managed to contain Jokic effectively, the Lakers had no answer to Murray, who was eight-of-10 from the field as the Nuggets surged into a double-digit lead. Murray's early success rate was more than the entire Lakers line-up combined, with the hosts shooting only 7-of-23 in the first quarter.

The Lakers however came roaring back in the second, opening with a 10-4 run that cut the Denver lead to six points. While Murray continued to threaten, draining a three-pointer to restore Denver's double-digit advantage at 51-41, the Lakers refused to roll over.

Reaves got the hosts to within five with a superb driving layup that made it 55-50 and shortly afterwards drew a foul from Jokic that sent him to the free throw line to tie it at 55-55. The Nuggets however restored their advantage in the final seconds of the first half, with Kentavious Caldwell-Pope draining a



LOS ANGELES: Jamal Murray #27 of the Denver Nuggets drives to the basket against the Los Angeles Lakers during Game Three of the Western Conference Finals. — AFP

corner three to make it 58-55 at the break.

An attritional third quarter saw Denver struggling to generate the offensive fluency that marked their first half display, and an out-of-sorts Jokic was subbed out after picking up his fourth foul with seven minutes remaining in the quarter.

The Lakers were unable to cash in on the absence of the two-time NBA Most Valuable Player however, and Denver led 84-82 heading into the final frame. Jokic returned at the start of the fourth and the Nuggets asserted their dominance once more, scoring with regularity to pull away for a convincing victory. — AFP

El Salvador soccer stadium stampede kills twelve

SAN SALVADOR: Twelve people were killed and hundreds injured Saturday in a stampede at an El Salvador soccer stadium, police and emergency services said. Authorities said initial reports pointed to a crush of fans who tried to enter Cuscatlan Stadium in the Central American country's capital San Salvador to watch a local tournament match between teams Alianza and FAS.

The match was suspended as emergency personnel evacuated people from the stadium, where hundreds of police officers and soldiers gathered as ambulance sirens wailed. "Salvadoran soccer is in mourning," National Civil Police (PNC) director Mauricio Arriaza told reporters as he confirmed the death toll of 12.

In a statement Sunday, FIFA president Gianni Infantino offered his condolences to the families and friends of the victims, calling the stampede "tragic." Among the survivors, Sandra Guzman, 40, left a capital hospital early Sunday with a bandage on her left knee, walking with difficulty alongside her

friend, Javier Ramirez, 31. Both said this was the "first and last time" they would experience such a misfortune because they would not return to the stadium. "A large crowd of people fell on me. I couldn't even breathe, they were choking me," Guzman told AFP.

When she was in front of a stadium gate, she said "people were pushing me to get in, they didn't give me a chance to go back. When I came to see, I panicked, I had a lot of people on top of me. "I fainted, and when I woke up I was in the hospital." Health Minister Francisco Alabi said earlier that the country's hospital network was "providing medical care to all patients." Carlos Fuentes, spokesman for the emergency services group Comandos de Salvamento, said they were treating more than 500 people.

About 100 people in serious condition were taken to hospital, with some showing signs of asphyxia and other types of trauma, Fuentes said. The stampede apparently started after a stadium gate fell, causing people to crowd together, he said. At least two of the injured were in critical condition, according to police.

'Everyone will be investigated'

El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele said the PNC and the Attorney General's Office would investigate the incident and those responsible would be punished. "Everyone will be investigated: teams, managers, stadium, box office, league, federation," Bukele said on Twitter.

many's largest city and playing at the 75,000-seat Olympic Stadium, Hertha have the ingredients to be a powerhouse.

However, other than two wins in the now defunct pre-season League Cup in 2002 and 2003, Hertha's last piece of major silverware came in 1931, when the club won the second of their two German titles. In 2019, German tech millionaire Lars Windhorst bought a 37.5 percent stake in the club.

Hertha adopted 'Big City Club' as a slogan and brought in sporting director Fredi Bobic. In January, after losing 2-0 at home to Union, the club fired Bobic. Former ultra and now club president Kay Bernstein said Hertha would go back to their roots by embracing local juniors, while declaring "it's a good day to bury the 'Big City Club' label."

Bernstein declared manager Sandro Schwarz safe in January, but the coach was fired in April, Hertha bringing back club legend Pal Dardai with six games remaining. Dardai, who joined Hertha as a player in 1997 before becoming manager, saved the club from relegation in 2020-21 but was unable to do so this season.

Before Hertha's clash with Bochum, Dardai criticised the club for signing "players who are satisfied



SAN SALVADOR: Supporters are helped by others following a stampede during a football match between Alianza and FAS at Cuscatlan stadium in San Salvador. — AFP

He warned that "whoever the culprits are, they will not go unpunished." Arriaza of the PNC said the investigation would determine responsibility "either by action or omission of some of those in charge." Police also aim to learn "why the fans made the decision to break through one of the gates on the south side" of the stadium. — AFP



BERLIN: Hertha Berlin's French midfielder Lucas Tousart (R) and Bochum's German forward Philipp Hofmann vie for the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match between Hertha Berlin and VfL Bochum in Berlin, Germany. — AFP

with their life, their car and their chic looks" rather than those with "imagination and development potential." In total, the club has spent an estimated 374 million euros (\$412 million) under Windhorst. — AFP

Waratahs 'stay in fight' to enter quarter-finals

SYDNEY: NSW Waratahs coach Darren Coleman says his team have learned to "stay in the fight" after a late-season surge ensured an appearance in the Super Rugby Pacific quarter-finals.

The Sydney-based club overcame the threat from Fijian Drua 32-18 on Saturday to make it four straight wins for the first time since 2018, with Wallaby Mark Nawaqanitawase bagging two tries. The victory propelled them to sixth on the ladder after round 13, guaranteeing they will play in the eight-team final series with the ninth-placed club, Otago Highlanders, unable to catch up with two games left.

It has been a remarkable turnaround for Coleman's side, who were in a "hole of confidence and form" after winning just one of their first six matches but are now unbeaten since crashing 55-21 to the Auckland Blues in round nine.

"There's definitely some things we could have done a little better around our breakdown or a couple of kicks that didn't go out, but we just stayed in the fight and the effort was good throughout," said Coleman.

"We're not there yet, but we're getting to a point where we're relatively consistent and not too many things are fazing us." Winger Nawaqanitawase, who made his Wallabies debut last year, scored twice with young fullback Max Jorgensen instrumental as he too makes a case to be in Eddie Jones' Australian World Cup squad.

Dylan Pietsch, Langi Gleeson and Mahe Vailanu also dotted down to leave the Fijians in 10th place on the 12-team ladder. They can still make the finals, with a must-win home clash next week against bottom-placed Moana Pasifika.

The 'Tah's travel to Christchurch to play reigning champions Canterbury Crusaders, which Coleman said would be a real test of how far they have come. "I'm content. I wouldn't say I'm stoked. Obviously the start we had, it takes a while to make up for that," he said of their early-season struggles.

"I know we haven't played many of the top teams again, but we've now set ourselves up to go to Christchurch and really test where we're at, which we're excited about." — AFP

Relegated Hertha cast envious eyes at Union

BERLIN: Hertha Berlin's 10-season stay in the German Bundesliga ended Saturday and as they slipped through the relegation trapdoor, they were left to cast envious glances at upwardly-mobile city rivals Union.

Hertha only escaped relegation last season by winning a two-legged playoff against Hamburg. They had finished 10th or lower in the four previous seasons. On Saturday, Hertha's luck ran out when a 1-1 draw with Bochum condemned them to the drop and their future could be even bleaker if they fall foul of financial regulations. Unlike other Bundesliga sides at the lower end of the table who have punched above their weight despite a lack of resources and support, the 'Old Dame' have in recent seasons boasted enviable riches.

Rubbing salt into the wounds is the rise of Union Berlin, who are on the cusp of an unlikely maiden Champions League appearance after just four years in the top division. As the most popular club in Ger-

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Hospitals

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

Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

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

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

Change of Name

I, MURTAJA, holder of Indian Passport No: S9914200 having permanent address VP Mohammedipura, near Fakri Well Sagwara Distt: Durgapur, Rajasthan, Pin: 314025, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under given name: **MURTAJA** and surname: **LALJIWALA**. (#3535) 22/5/2023.

I, Khan Nazia Nurulla, holder of Indian Passport No. T2418372 having permanent address H.No. 81/3, near Ameeniyah High School, Islampur, Baina Vasco-Da-Gama, South Goa, India- 403802. Residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under: Nazia Can. (#3534) 19/5/2023.

Man City celebrate title glory

Newly crowned champions celebrate third straight Premier League trophy



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's German midfielder Ilkay Gundogan lifts the trophy as Manchester City players celebrate winning the English Premier League title following a match against Chelsea at the Etihad Stadium on May 21, 2023. — AFP

LONDON: Manchester City celebrated their Premier League title triumph with a 1-0 win against Chelsea, while the champions kept the party in full swing at the Etihad Stadium, Leeds slipped closer to relegation on Sunday.

City clinched a fifth title in six seasons on Saturday when second placed Arsenal crashed 1-0 at Nottingham Forest. Pep Guardiola's side marked their third successive title by winning a 12th consecutive league game as Julian Alvarez's first-half goal extended their unbeaten run in all competitions to 24 matches.

That blistering streak has left Arsenal trailing as the Gunners failed to end City's reign despite leading the table for much of the season. "Every Premier League is special. And of course when you are three in a row it means the consistency that we had," Guardiola said just before kick-off.

"Especially against the opponents, in the past it was Liverpool, and this year against an incredible Ar-

senal. That's why you give credit to the quality of your opponents. Both teams bring us to our limits." City could afford to start with Erling Haaland, Kevin De Bruyne and Ruben Dias on the bench against Chelsea after starting their title party on Saturday evening.

The fans' celebrations were going strong as well by the time the City team bus arrived at the Etihad, which was surrounded by flag-waving supporters who set off blue smoke flares as they hailed their dynastic team. City, seven points clear of Arsenal with two games left, would cement their status as one of English football's greatest ever teams if they can add the FA Cup and Champions League to their latest Premier League conquest.

Guardiola's treble chasers face Manchester United in the FA Cup final at Wembley on June 3, then take on Inter Milan in Istanbul seven days later as they look to win the Champions League for the first time. United were the last English club to win the treble in 1999 and City would relish the chance to

emulate their rivals' feat.

Chelsea players lined up for a pre-match guard of honor for their City counterparts, who walked out onto the pitch with their children while club anthem 'Blue Moon' rang around the Etihad.

Leeds in danger

With City's players and fans in festive mood, Alvarez ensured Chelsea wouldn't spoil the party. The Argentine forward produced a clinical finish from Cole Palmer's 12th minute pass. At the other end of the table, struggling Leeds lost 3-1 at West Ham as Rodrigo's opener was erased by goals from Declan Rice, Jarrod Bowen and Manuel Lanzini.

Sam Allardyce's side remain third bottom and are two points adrift of fourth bottom Everton, with both teams having just one game left. Even if Leeds beat Tottenham at home on the final day of the season, the Yorkshire club would still be relegated if Everton win their last game against Bournemouth at Goodison Park.

Allardyce's team, whose goal difference is three worse than Everton's, are likely to need the Toffees to lose to have a chance of staying up. Leeds, who last played in the Championship in 2020, have lost twice and drawn once in three games since Allardyce replaced the sacked Javi Gracia earlier this month.

"We haven't shown the quality when needed. So next week has to be much better to beat Tottenham. That's all we can do," Allardyce said. Brighton secured European football for the first time in their history with a 3-1 win against Southampton.

Evan Ferguson netted twice in the first half and although Mohamed Elyounoussi got one back for already-relegated Southampton, Pascal Gross wrapped up Brighton's victory. Roberto De Zerbi's sixth-placed side will ensure they play in the Europa League if they take a point from their last two games. Brighton's vastly superior goal difference to seventh placed Aston Villa should guarantee they don't drop into the Europa Conference League. — AFP

McNulty wins tight Giro sprint

BERGAMO, Italy: Brandon McNulty of the United States won stage 15 of the Giro d'Italia in Bergamo on Sunday in a three-up sprint following a long breakaway. It was a first win on a Grand Tour for the 25-year-old from Phoenix, who took advantage of his powerful build to clinch the sprint. Team UAE rider McNulty, Irish EF rider Ben Healy and Marco Frigo of the Zionist entity Premier-Tech dropped the peloton on the last of four climbs before a tearaway run to the finish.

"It all came together today. I'm so happy. In the end it came down to that last kick and then the sprint. At 150 or 200m I just went for it," said McNulty, on his fourth Grand Tour. The 195km stage culminated in a steep climb into the old town where the main peloton raced across the line almost seven minutes adrift. French rider Bruno Armirail kept the leader's pink jersey despite losing 25 seconds of his lead.

He leads Ineos veteran Geraint Thomas in second place by 1min 08sec. Thomas, meanwhile, has a two-second edge on Primož Roglič in third. Thymen Arensman of Ineos said the British team, down to six riders, had a peaceful day. "G (Thomas) showed he is in good shape and we were there to support him. Today was a good day," said the 23-year-old Dutchman who sits ninth in the overall. "We are looking forwards to this hard finish they have planned for us."

So far 45 riders have already pulled out of this year's Giro either through illness or falls with just 132 still in line to finish on Sunday. Monday is a rest day for the peloton with much of the attention currently focused on a press conference from Mark Cavendish, 38 on Sunday, and thought to be on the verge of announcing his retirement.

The prickly Manxman will almost certainly ride one last Tour de France in July. The remainder of the peloton resume Tuesday with a medium mountain stage 16 run to Monte Bondone. Wednesday should be the last opportunity for the remaining sprint specialists before two mountainous stages and the decisive individual time trial on a mountainside next Saturday. — AFP

Lens win forces PSG to wait for Ligue 1 title

PARIS: Lens came from behind to win 3-1 at Lorient on Sunday to all but secure a place in next season's Champions League group stage and deny Paris Saint-Germain the chance to wrap up the French title this weekend. PSG started the day six points clear at the top of Ligue 1 and needed Lens to drop points in Brittany to be able to be crowned champions at Auxerre later.

It was looking good for Paris when Romain Faivre put Lorient ahead inside six minutes, pouncing to score after Lens goalkeeper Brice Samba was put under pressure at a throw-in. Yet Lens have enjoyed a fantastic campaign and came roaring back to record a fifth straight victory, equalizing when a Florian Sotoca shot deflected in on 20 minutes.

Adrien Thomasson pounced on poor defending to put Lens in front five minutes later. Captain Seko Fofana wrapped up the points on the counterattack late on. Lens have won nine of their last 10 games, the exception being a 3-1 defeat away to PSG last month.

The Qatar-owned club's celebration champagne will therefore have to remain on ice in Auxerre, although a win for Christophe Galtier's side will mean they are champions in all but name. PSG would be once again six points ahead with two games left, and with a far superior goal difference, as they eye a ninth title in the last 11 seasons and a record 11th French crown overall.

Lens, however, are chiefly focused on securing second place and direct qualification for next season's Champions League group stage, a level the club last appeared in two decades ago. They are five points ahead of third-placed Marseille with two games to go. Third place enters the Champions League in the third qualifying round.



LORIENT: Lorient's French defender Vincent Le Goff (L) fights for the ball during the French L1 football match between FC Lorient and RC Lens at Stade du Moustoir in Lorient, western France on May 21, 2023. — AFP

Elsewhere on Sunday, Rennes kept alive their hopes of qualifying for Europe for a sixth consecutive season as Amine Gouiri scored a hat-trick in their 5-0 win away at already-relegated Ajaccio. Baptiste Santamaria and Belgian international Jeremy Doku also scored for Rennes, who remain sixth with two games left, and with only the top five qualifying for Europe.

However, they are just a point adrift of Lille and three points behind fourth-placed Monaco, who they face next weekend. Fourth place goes into the Europa League while fifth qualifies for the Europa Conference League.

Folarin Balogun completed the week in which he switched international allegiance from England to the United States by scoring his 20th Ligue 1 goal this season for Reims as they drew 2-2 with Angers. Brest secured top-flight survival by coming from behind to win 2-1 at home to Clermont, while Strasbourg's 1-1 draw away at Troyes means they are all but safe, sitting six points clear of the bottom four with six points to play for. — AFP



BERGAMO: UAE Team Emirates' US rider Brandon McNulty celebrates on the podium after winning the fifteenth stage of the Giro d'Italia 2023 cycling race on May 21, 2023. — AFP