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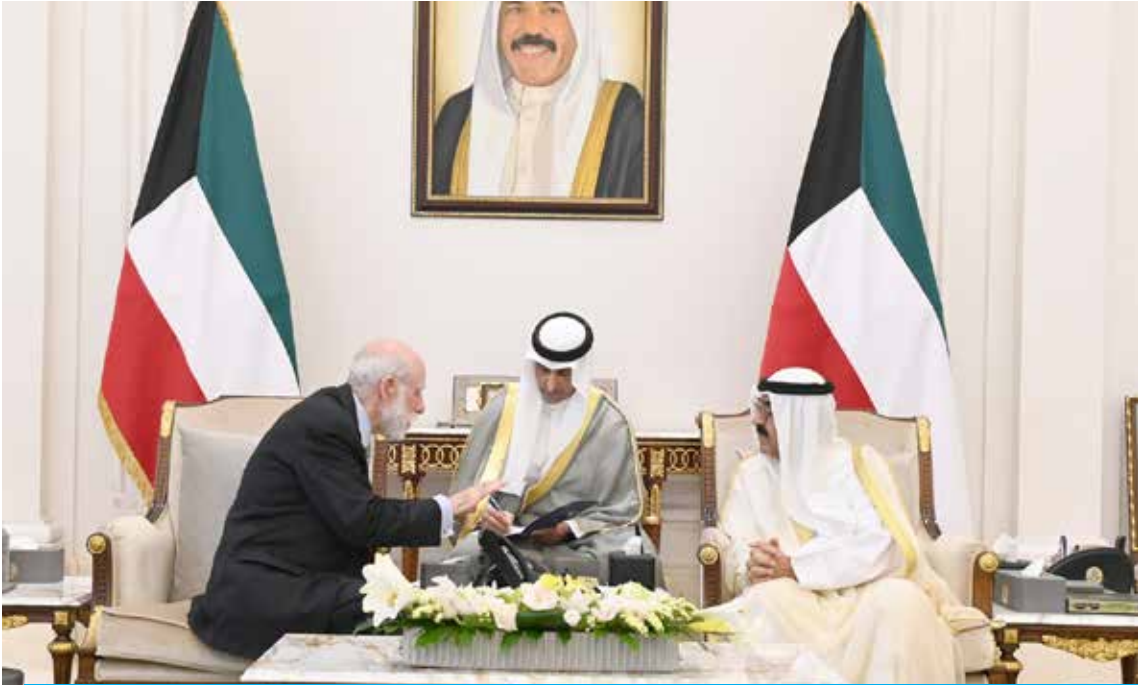

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Asian federation foresees Saudi bid for 2030 or 2034 World Cup



# Hey Kuwait! Google Cloud to open 3 data centers, train 3,000 people

## Crown Prince stresses technology core pillar of realizing national vision



By Ghadeer Ghloum & KUNA

**KUWAIT:** Three Google database and cloud service centers will be opened in different locations around Kuwait in support of the country's digital transformation efforts, Google Cloud Kuwait announced. During Google Cloud's media roundtable on Wednesday, the company also said a national training program will be launched to train 3,000 people from government organizations and higher education institutions in Kuwait on cloud computing. The program aims to train 1,000 government employees, 1,000 fresh graduates and 1,000 women in data analytics, machine learning, artificial intelligence and security solutions in the first year of its inception.

Earlier on Wednesday, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received visiting Vice President of Google Cloud Vinton G Cerf and his accompanying delegation at Bayan Palace. Welcoming the guests, HH the Crown Prince underlined Kuwait's efforts towards digital and technological transformation as being a core pillar of carrying out its national vision, launching development projects based on sophisticated technology, developing national skills in line with the best practices of specialized international companies and creating promising job opportunities.

HH the Crown Prince also stressed Kuwait's eagerness to forge partnerships in this regard in order to realize its ambitions of transformation into knowledge-based economy to build a more prosperous and sustainable future. He further pointed out the Kuwaiti political leadership's willingness to upgrade governmental services and cloud computing services, wishing the partnership with Google Cloud would be a starting point for digital openness and partnership with global companies concerned with digital, technological and communication advancement.

Cerf voiced thanks to Kuwait's leadership and government for trusting his company's technological services, while looking forward to a constructive partnership by offering the company's expertise in digital transformation and technology use. Cerf vowed Google Cloud would spare no effort to develop this field in Kuwait.

The media roundtable was held in the presence of Minister of State for Municipal Affairs and Communications Affairs Fahad Al-Shula, Deputy Director General of Central Agency for Information Technology Dr Ammar Al-Husaini, Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority Board Member Mohammad Al-Rashid, Managing Director, Public Sector, Google Cloud EMEA Ellen Van Essen, Managing Director MENA, Google Cloud

**Continued on Page 6**

### NEWS IN BRIEF

**Kuwait to host 2024 Gulf Cup**

**DOHA:** Kuwait has been selected to host the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup in December 2024, the Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation announced on Wednesday in Doha. Gulf federations were given one month to apply for being alternative hosts in case it is not possible to hold the tournament in Kuwait. Kuwait will host the championship for the fifth time after 1974, 1990, 2003 and 2017. Kuwait has won the Gulf Cup 10 times.

**Mol warns against GHB use**

**KUWAIT:** The ministry interior on Wednesday warned against the use of gamma-hydroxybutyrate (GHB), a psychoactive substance banned globally. The ministry said GHB is a colorless and odorless liquid used at hospitals for sedation before surgery, adding it can also be abused as a narcotic when mixed with other ingredients. It urged citizens to stay vigilant and report any use of the drug in Kuwait. — KUNA (See Page 3)

**Iran names ambassador to Saudi**

**TEHRAN:** Iran has named an ambassador to Saudi Arabia, state media reported Wednesday, sealing a thaw in relations more than seven years after the regional rivals severed ties. The new envoy, Alireza Enayati, previously served as Iran's ambassador to Kuwait, assistant to the foreign minister and director general of Gulf affairs at the foreign ministry, the English-language Iran Daily said. Meanwhile, Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq will embark on a two-day visit to Iran on Sunday, Omani state media said Wednesday— AFP

## Mol: Sovereignty of Kuwait a red line, ban on Filipinos to stay

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** Labor talks between Kuwait and a Philippine delegation ended without agreement, a statement said on Wednesday, as the interior ministry said a ban on visas for new Filipino workers will continue. First Deputy Premier, Interior Minister and Acting Defense Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah insisted the sovereignty of Kuwait and the dignity of its people is a red line.

## Top court upholds ruling scrapping 2022 Assembly

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** The constitutional court on Wednesday rejected a petition challenging its ruling on March 19 that annulled the 2022 elections, scrapping the 2022 National Assembly and reviving the 2020 house. The challenge

## Paralyzed man walks again via thought control

**PARIS:** A paralyzed man has regained the ability to walk smoothly using only his thoughts for the first time, researchers said on Wednesday, thanks to two implants that restored communication between brain and spinal cord. The patient Gert-Jan, who did not want to reveal his surname, said the breakthrough had given him "a freedom that I did not have" before.

The statement issued by the interior ministry said the Filipino delegation "refused to comply with conditions presented by Kuwait" to not repeat violations by the Philippine Embassy. "As a result, the interior ministry insists on its position rejecting any violation of the sovereignty of Kuwait and the dignity of its citizens," the statement said. The ministry said a ban on visas for new Filipino workers will continue indefinitely, adding renewal of residence permits of Filipino legal residents will continue as normal.

The conditions set by Kuwait include an admission by the Philippine Embassy that it violated laws, decisions and charters in Kuwait, which amount to a breach of diplomatic practices. Kuwait also demanded that the embassy pledge not to repeat such violations in the future. Concerned authorities in Kuwait will then have to issue an official warning against the violation of local

was filed by six members of the scrapped Assembly, who argued the constitutional court ruling violated the constitution and the law and illegally interfered in the powers entrusted to HH to the Amir.

The court's rejection means that the 2022 Assembly is scrapped forever and that the June 6 general elections will proceed without any delay. The appeal filed by the six former members claimed that the constitutional court exceeded its powers outlined in the constitution and even interfered with the powers of HH the Amir.

In its new ruling on Wednesday, the court reiterated that its original verdict was in line with the law and the constitution and that it had not surpassed its powers or went beyond its constitutional author-

laws and regulations. The statement said that if the Filipino side had accepted the conditions, the interior ministry would have reviewed the ban on visas.

The Public Authority of Manpower listed a number of violations committed by the Philippine Embassy. They include asking labor recruitment offices to remove domestic helpers from Kuwaiti homes under the pretext they have completed their work contract. It also charged the embassy pressurized recruitment offices to house

**Continued on Page 6**



Sheikh Talal Al-Sabah

ity, insisting the ruling was correct. Normally, rulings issued by the constitutional court are final and cannot be challenged, but the court sometimes accepts some challenges disputing that the law was violated.

The government had already accepted and implemented the March 19 ruling even after the former chief justice and head of the constitutional court Mohammad Bin Naji, who issued the March 19 ruling, retired one year ahead of time. After reinstating the 2020 Assembly, which was dissolved in August 2022, the government then approved a new decree by HH the Amir to dissolve the reinstated house and called for fresh polls.

**Continued on Page 6**



**LAUSANNE:** Gert-Jan from the Netherlands, victim of a spinal cord injury that left him paralyzed, poses with his implants that allows him to walk naturally on May 23, 2023. — AFP



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# Amir sponsors Informatics Award ceremony

## Vice president of Google Cloud among innovators honored



KUWAIT: Representative of His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (center), is seen during the honoring ceremony for award winners. — KUNA photos



Representative of His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (right), stands next to Head of the Board of Trustees Ayda Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah during the ceremony.



Head of the Board of Trustees Ayda Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah flanked by the honorees in this group photo.

KUWAIT: Under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and in the presence of the Amir's representative, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, a ceremony was held at Bayan Palace on Wednesday to honor Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah Informatics Award winners of its 22nd edition of 2022.

Addressing the event Head of the Award Board of Trustees Sheikh Ayda Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah said that the rapid digital revolution has created unprecedented civil anomalies and artificial intelligence comes bearing a number of challenges and principals

that humanity have never seen before. She voiced much appreciation and gratitude to the country's leaders for their farsightedness, wisdom and fervent efforts for the sake of national development and modernization.

Also speaking during the ceremony on the occasion of winning the prize, Vice President of Google Cloud Company Vinton Cerf said: "It was not likely that I receive this prize in recognition of my long work in the field of the Internet, but at the same time it is a great honor for me that I deeply appreciate."

"This 50-year journey began in 1973 in partnership with my colleague Robert Kahn and continues

to this day," he said. It is wonderful to see that Kuwait is aware of the importance and benefits of the Internet and the global network that supports it. I am very happy to receive this prize, and I look forward to interacting with Kuwaiti scholars, non-profit organizations, the government and the private sector who have shown creative interest in the continuous development of the Internet and its various applications. I look forward to their contributions in the coming years," he added.

His Highness the Amir's representative, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, handed the awards to the winners, and

was given a commemorative gift on this occasion.

The winners include Director of Information Systems Department at the Public Prosecution Maryam Haji representing Qatar's Public Prosecution, winner of the Digital Transformation Award in the judicial field. Executive Director of Tunisian company "Smart Mad" Essam Balaaj was given the Digital Transformation Award in the medical field. Faisal Abdulrahman Al-Shaiji, a pioneer in the technical field, received the Excellence Award for his digital career working in the civil registry systems sector. Dar Al-Qabas got an award for its excellence in the digital media field. — KUNA

## UN, Kuwait to collaborate on 3 climate projects

KUWAIT: Kuwait's environment authority is joining forces with United Nations' (UN) regional office over a trio of endeavors as part of the country's commitment towards the UN's climate change framework, the body said on Wednesday. Collectively, these endeavors comprise a national strategy aiming for carbon neutrality by the year 2050, said Environment Public Authority Acting Director General Samira Al-Kandari, underlining the significance Kuwait attaches to the critical global issue of climate change. The projects include preparing the second annual environmental report for Kuwait and a strategy to reduce carbon emissions. The country will also begin work on its third report detailing the concentration of green house gases and methods to combat their predicted increase. Kuwait's second report on the matter was submitted in 2019.

The projects are a testament to Kuwait's "commitment" towards the UN's Framework Convention on Climate Change, in addition to the Paris climate accord, according to Sami Dimassi, the director of the UN's Environment Programme's West Asia Office. Global measures aiming for carbon neutrality entail a slew of measures, including legislative reforms and a lucid "roadmap" to bring these goals to fruition, he added. — KUNA



KUWAIT: UN and Kuwaiti officials are seen during the launch of the climate collaboration Wednesday. — KUNA

## Kuwait urges more efforts to break armed conflict cycle

NEW YORK: Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Tareq Al-Bannai said late Tuesday that civilians always bear the brunt of the burden of conflicts worldwide. Bannai made the remark in a speech he delivered on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict at the Security Council Open Debate on "Ensuring the security and dignity of civilians in conflict: addressing food insecurity and protecting essential services" under the agenda item "Protection of civilians in armed conflict".

"Civilians are consistently shouldering the burden of conflicts around the world. Today, two billion people — a quarter of humanity — live in places affected by armed conflict. Record numbers of civilians are facing the humanitarian consequences of conflict, including displacement, and food and nutrition insecurity," he said. "Among all civilians who are affected in armed conflicts, those who require our particular attention are people in vulnerable situations that are disproportionately prone to suffering, especially children," he added.



(From left) Panelists Dr Lubna Al-Qadi, Dr Fatima Al-Hashem and Dr Esraa Al-Essa are seen during the event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Education must be developed to reflect women's role: Academic

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: On the occasion of Kuwaiti Women's Day, which is marked on May 16, the Soroptimist Society of Kuwait organized an awareness event titled "Women and Education", which was presented by a group of academics involved in the field of education and the development of curricula, which was held at Soup Box Hall at Promenade Mall in the presence of the President of the Society Dr Zainab Al-Musilekh, members of the board of directors and those interested in this field.

The event included discussing the importance of women's role in improving education in Kuwait, especially since it suffers from a lack of support, whether from men or higher managements that do

not trust women's leadership. The discussion was moderated by Dr Randa Bahman, faculty member at Kuwait Technical College.

Dr Lubna Al-Qadi, Head of the Center for Women's Studies and Research at Kuwait University, compared in her speech the differences between males and females who enter college to study difficult scientific courses. She said females are distinguished in courage, discipline and continuity, while males often withdraw during the semester. "Therefore, we find outputs are characterized by a higher percentage in females than in males," she said.

Qadi pointed out that Kuwait needs to change and reformulate the curricula and modify the image of women's jobs, as she can be a doctor, engineer or whatever she wants, in addition to the importance of changing the stereotype that a woman's job is to be in the kitchen and stay at home. Qadi also discussed reactivating school classes that encourage both genders of students to practice their hobbies in sports, drawing and cultural activities, wondering what led to discontinuing these classes in schools.

She concluded by saying "we lack in Kuwait the

cern, which is described in his report, about the humanitarian consequences resulting from armed conflicts involving the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

Protection of civilians must also be strengthened through the protection of objects indispensable to the survival of the population, which include the civilian infrastructure critical to the delivery of interconnected and essential basic services. Too often, the lack of electricity, water and other basic commodities, hamper the delivery of the most essential services such as education and medical care, placing the health and welfare of civilians at risk, he emphasized.

It is important to recall that this Council has adopted Resolution 2286, which strongly condemns attacks against medical facilities and personnel in conflict situations, Resolution 2573 on the protection of civilian infrastructure, and Resolution 2601, on the protection of schools, educational facilities, and civilians connected with schools, including children and teachers, Bannai added.

The Group of Friends calls on Member States and other relevant actors to advance the implementation of these important resolutions of the Council and the IHL obligations that underpin them, he said. Humanitarian organizations work tirelessly to preserve and re-establish access to essential services for the affected civilian population, he said, adding there is an urgent need to redouble efforts, including in this Council, to allow and facilitate full, safe, timely and unhindered humanitarian access, and the safety and security of all humanitarian personnel, in accordance with IHL.



The audience listens to the panelists discuss the relationship between women and education in Kuwait.

sense of responsibility towards education, as teachers at universities must seek development in presenting the curriculum in line with social and technological changes".

Dr Esraa Al-Essa, Faculty Member at Kuwait University and consultant to UNESCO, reported that studies praised the high level of Kuwaiti women's education, as the country achieved the second place after Tunisia among Arab countries that have women working in scientific fields and laboratories, at 53 percent. "Kuwait is considered having a high level of education, while in the matter of education outputs, we find women are always academically superior to men. But our problem lies in competence, and we do not have evaluations of teachers' performance," she said.

Dr Fatima Al-Hashem, Assistant Professor at Gulf University for Science and Technology and consultant to UNESCO, discussed the importance of women's education. "Women are distinguished in their management and leadership of schools, but they are absent from higher centers. How many assistant under-secretaries in education do we have?" she asked.



Ambassador Tareq Al-Bannai. — KUNA photo

The Group of Friends commends the Security Council on the adoption of Resolution 2664, regarding humanitarian exemption to asset freezes under UN sanctions regimes. This is a pivotal step for the facilitation of humanitarian assistance in some of the most complex circumstances, he pointed out.

"We are deeply concerned about the growing number of missing persons as a result of armed conflict. Efforts to prevent family separation and disappearances, to search and identify the missing and the dead, and to address the needs of affected families, should be an integral part of our response," he added. — KUNA



## Local

# Zain wins two distinguished awards in sustainability and women's empowerment

## UK-based think tank acknowledges Zain for positive, inclusive operations

**KUWAIT:** Zain, a leading provider of innovative technologies and digital lifestyle communications operating in seven markets across the Middle East and Africa, continues to be recognized for its pioneering endeavors in the areas of sustainability and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI).

Zain was presented with the Leadership in Sustainability Award 2023; and Championship Award in Women's Empowerment 2023 at the annual Global Good Governance Awards recently held in Dubai and organized by Cambridge IFA, a UK-based think tank. The Awards celebrate individuals, governments, public and private sector institutions and NGOs that exhibit governance and sustainability as their strategic priority.

Zain remains one of the most active organizations in the region with respect to delivering meaningful connectivity through its Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) initiatives, with the company playing a crucial role in empowering the markets in which it operates to reap the benefits of digital transformation for the benefit of the communities it serves and beyond.

The recognition of these prestigious awards is testament not only to how much Zain believes in its

purpose, but how relentless the company is in driving systemic change and providing meaningful connectivity to the communities it serves. Zain is among the most engaged organizations across the globe with respect to ensuring its operations are a positive, inclusive force for good, with a commitment to continuing to instill these principles at the heart of the organization.

### Sustainability

Recently, Zain joined the United Nations (UN) Global Compact initiative, a voluntary leadership platform for the development, implementation, and disclosure of responsible business practices. Annually, the company publishes its sustainability report, where it details the progress and strategic efforts undertaken across Zain's footprint as it continues to execute on its five-year, 2025 Corporate Sustainability strategy.

During the course of 2022, Zain cemented the four pillars of its sustainability strategy through a comprehensive engagement process with various stakeholders. This extended to climate change where the company plans to decarbonize the business and

transition towards net-zero by 2050.

It also includes operating responsibly, whereby Zain will embed ESG principles across the entire value chain, inclusion, whereby the company will reduce the digital gap, and generation youth, which involves building resilience across Zain communities by targeting 16 million children and youth.

### Women's empowerment (WE)

Within the WE gender initiatives under Zain's DEI activities, the company has been working on narrowing the gender divide in leadership roles at the company. With the development of a year-long middle management succession program, Zain is looking forward to drawing closer to 25 percent of its leadership consisting of women by 2025, against a background of just 14.5 percent when the program was first introduced in late 2017.

Zain firmly believes that the talent, creativity, and passion women bring to their roles is undeniable, and believes developing a WE program to initiate and measure actual progress achieved in this respect over time will reap benefits for the organization as a whole. Notably, Zain is focusing on addressing



headcount gaps in technical and revenue-generating divisions through the development of women from STEM backgrounds.

During 2022, women made up 42 percent of Zain's total recruitment, and the company recently revolutionized its staff-friendly family leave policy clauses, reinforcing its position as one of the most impactful DEI organizations in the region, if not the world.

## Six complex hernia surgeries performed at Jaber Hospital

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Doctors at Jaber Hospital performed six complex surgeries during a workshop featuring world renowned guest surgeon Dr Tim Tollins, Chief Surgeon Dr Suleiman Al-Mazidi said. "Hernia and abdominal wall diseases are among the most common around the world and require experienced doctors to handle complicated conditions," Dr Mazidi said. He explained that the hospital invited Dr Tollins to supervise local doctors' training on complex surgeries that can now be done on patients who in the past needed to be sent for treatment abroad.

"We decided to bring in one of the best hernia surgeons in the world in order to provide the best quality medical services to citizens at Jaber Hospital," he said in a press statement Wednesday, noting that local doctors and members of the Kuwait Surgery Board underwent training during the workshop on performing complex surgeries.

Dr Mazidi said that 30 surgeries are carried out daily at Jaber Hospital, which is among the highest rates in Kuwait. "Those surgeries require a team of different specialties including the surgeon, anesthetist, an internist and a radiologist," he said. Furthermore, he indicated that Jaber Hospital seeks to attract national competencies and host international experienced surgeons for complex surgeries "which helps offer the best



health services to citizens and reduce the need to send cases for treatment abroad."

Dr Mazidi appreciated the role of health ministry in bringing in the best doctors from around the world, in addition to the best techniques to serve patients. He thanked the health minister for the services it provides, including allowing patients to book appointments with visiting doctors online.

Meanwhile, General surgery, obesity and lapa-

roscopy specialist Dr Ali Larry said that they had a workshop at Jaber Hospital to repair complex hernia cases, highlighting the importance of such workshops in helping develop local expertise.

"The workshop allows for knowing how to conduct complex operations in various methods," he said, adding that simple surgeries are also included in the workshop to make trainees more accustomed to carrying them out.

## Ministry of Interior warns of GHB use

**KUWAIT:** The interior ministry warned against the spread of Gamma Hydroxybutyric (GHB) abuse, noting that the drug is legally used in hospitals as an anesthetic but has recently been used illegally around the world. GHB is a colorless and odorless liquid that looks like water and can be mixed with other liquids, the ministry's Directorate General of Drug Control said in a statement Wednesday. It added that the drug's effects include brain damage and memory loss, noting that its harmful effects can last even after sobriety. The drug is criminalized internationally and listed in Kuwait as a banned psychotropic substance, the ministry noted. The US FDA and United Nations have warned against manufacturing and trafficking this drug worldwide, it added. In the meantime, the Ministry of Interior announced Wednesday that police arrested a person in possession of 15 liters of GHB, along with containers and other tools. The suspect was sent to concerned authorities for further legal action, it added.

### Date-rape drug

GHB is considered a date-rape drug by health organizations across the world. The drugs, which are not limited to GHB, are substances that make it easier

for someone to rape or sexually assault another person. At low doses, GHB relaxes the person. The person feels intoxicated, has more energy, feels happy, and is talkative. However, GHB can cause unwanted side effects, such as headache, drowsiness, dizziness,

and vomiting. It can lead to difficulty breathing, becoming unconscious but unable to move, and loss of consciousness. The effects start in 15 to 30 minutes and last 3 to 6 hours. GHB has been involved in overdoses, sexual assaults and death.

co-ordination and integration, to deepen and strengthen relations, links and areas of cooperation, to stimulate scientific and technological progress in the fields of industry, mining, agriculture, water and animal resources, to establish scientific research, to establish joint ventures and encourage cooperation by the private sector for the good of their peoples.

Over the past four decades, the GCC march has witnessed major achievements in various fields that have positively reflected on the people of the GCC member countries and have met their economic, political, military and security ambitions. Thanks to the wisdom and farsightedness of its leaders, the GCC has managed to prove itself as a strong framework for collective security and a fence for protecting and safeguarding its countries' gains and addressing all risks and perils.

In foreign policy, the member states have adopted single positions on a host of political issues based on good-neighborliness, non-interference in internal affairs and respect of countries' sovereignty as well as peaceful resolution of disputes.

Ending the Iraqi-Iranian war, liberating Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion, backing Iraq's unity, stability and sovereignty, supporting the cause of the occupied UAE three islands, achieving inter-Gulf

reconciliation and supporting the Palestinian issues are all prime paradigms in this regard. Militarily, the first meeting of the GCC army chiefs of staff, held in the Saudi capital of Riyadh in 1981, was a jump-off for forging inter-Gulf military cooperation, with numerous military strategies having been adopted over the past four decades.

As for security cooperation, the bloc's interior ministers met in Riyadh in February in 1982 in a maiden move on the right track for promoting security coordination and cooperation between the six member states, particularly in the fight against terrorism and illegal drugs as well as civilian defense. Economically, inter-Gulf economic integration has been achieved through the 1981 unified economic agreement, the 2001 economic agreement, the monetary fund, single currency, customs union, common Gulf market and economic citizenship.

In terms of media, several achievements have been made in this regard; mainly including a media code of ethics, a media strategy and cooperation in TV, press and news agencies. In relation to regional and international cooperation, the Gulf entity has played an effective role in promoting and strengthening its cooperative relations with Arab and foreign countries, along with regional and global groups and organizations. — KUNA

## Australian musician transcends borders with 'art of oud'

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** The Australian Embassy in Kuwait hosted a performance 'The Art of Oud' on Tuesday by Australian award-winning oud player Joseph Tawadros at Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre to strengthen bilateral cultural bonds and facilitate dialogue through the universal language of music. Speaking to Kuwait Times, the world-renowned oud player and composer Tawadros expressed his joy to play for the first time in Kuwait, noting his excitement to share 'The Art of Oud' with the people of Kuwait.

"I am here to perform original music that I composed. People may not be used to it, but I bring some colors to the oud. It is a mixture of Australian and Arabic music, since I was born in Egypt but live in Australia. I believe that through music, we can create a universal connection that transcends cultural boundaries," he said.

Tawadros noted that oud is a strong Arabic voice. "I was born to Arabic music, but in Australia, I was able to find similarities with other types of music, and that's what I implemented. It just happened to have a style like that," he said. Tawadros believes Kuwaiti audiences will walk away with something new, that oud can present differently, and there are other voices in oud not only Middle Eastern ones. He admitted that being in Kuwait, the land of oud, is a risky place to play, but audiences still can all benefit from because music is global. He indicated that during his two days in the country, he had the chance to explore the culture, historical souq in Kuwait City and traditional Kuwaiti cuisine.

"It is our privilege to host Joseph Tawadros as part of our cultural diplomacy program here in Kuwait," Chargé d'Affaires at the Australian Embassy Amanda McGregor said. "His unique talent and cross-cultural perspective make him an outstanding representative of Australia's diversity and our rich creative landscape. Joseph's visit will contribute significantly to the already strong cultural ties shared by Australia and Kuwait," she stressed.

"Australia's creative sector is as rich and diverse as our people and draws inspiration from every corner of the globe. Through cultural exchanges such as these, we hope to foster mutual understanding, appreciation and a shared love for the arts," McGregor added. The Australian Embassy in Kuwait thanked Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center and LAPA LOYAC for their support of this program. Following his performance, Tawadros held a special oud masterclass at LAPA LOYAC on May 24, an exceptional opportunity to allow local musicians to learn from one of the masters of the oud.



**KUWAIT:** World-renowned oud player and composer Joseph Tawadros shares his art with the Kuwaiti audience at Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



**Chargé d'Affaires at the Australian Embassy Amanda McGregor.**



## GCC marks 42 years of successful union

**KUWAIT:** Forty-two years have passed since the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was created, marking the most successful integration experiment in the region and constituting a core pillar of security and stability. Founded on May 25, 1981, the GCC remains to be the most significant regional entity that has managed to notch up numerous gains for the interest of its countries and peoples.

On May 25, 1981, the leaders of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Sultanate of Oman, Qatar and Kuwait met in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, where they reached a cooperative framework joining the six states to effect coordination, integration and inter-connection among the Member States in all fields in order to achieve unity. The decision was not a product of the moment but an institutional embodiment of a historical, social and cultural reality. Deep religious and cultural ties link the six states, and strong kin relations prevail among their citizens.

The GCC's basic objectives are to effect



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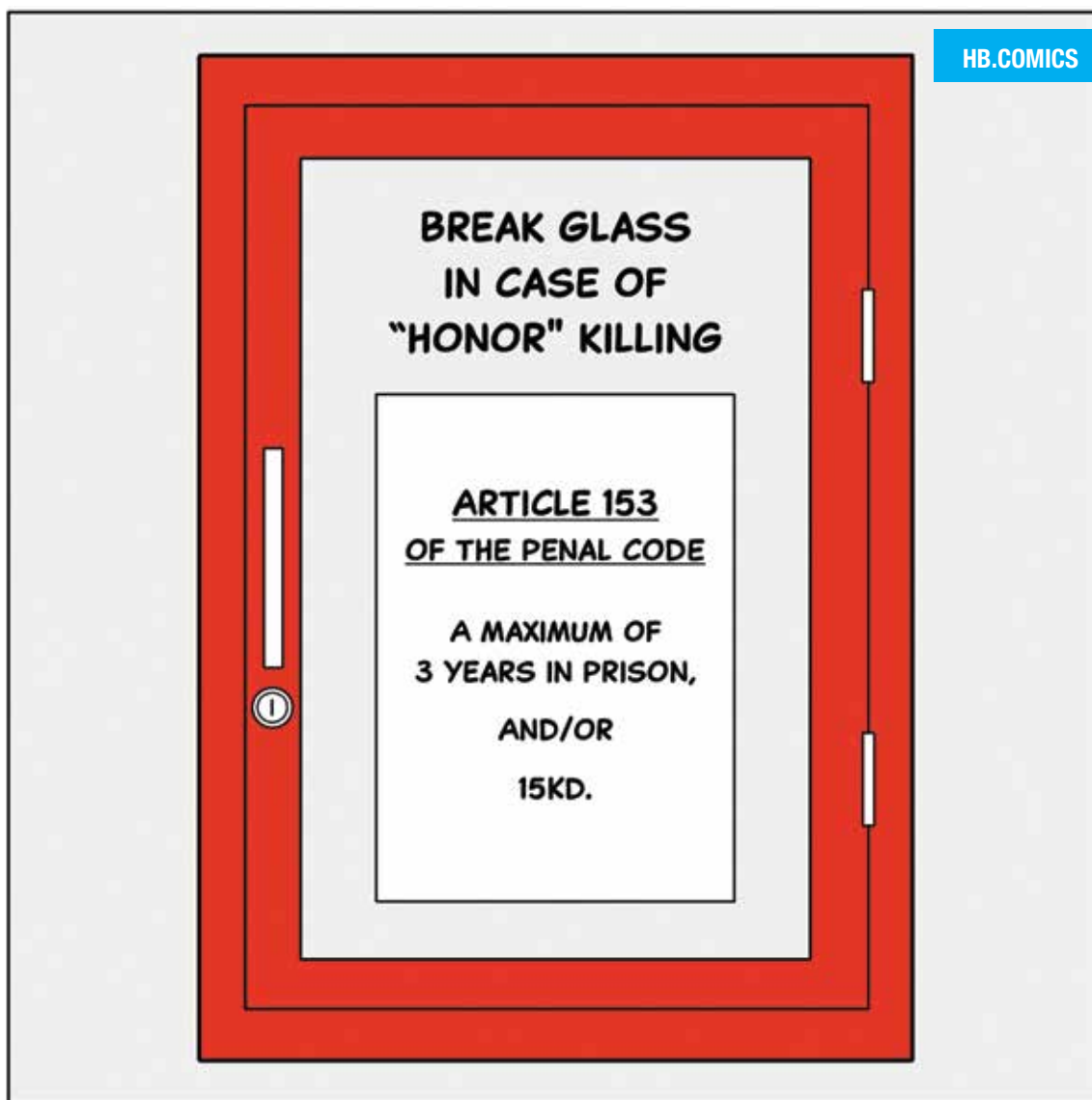
## News in Brief

Housing distributes 60  
Jaber Al-Ahmad units

**KUWAIT:** The Public Authority for Housing Welfare began distributing 60 residential apartments in Jaber Al-Ahmad area Wednesday. The apartments will be handed over to registered citizens on Wednesday, May 31, the authority said in a statement published by KUNA Tuesday. It seems that more apartment buildings will be built for government housing, with Minister of State for Housing Affairs Mutlaq Al-Otaibi directing the authority to utilize available land for this purpose. The minister also emphasized the importance of accelerating the distribution of residential lands to citizens. He also urged the facilitation of investment projects that would achieve growing returns for the authority and create investment opportunities for Kuwaiti youth. The minister hoped the projects would also foster healthy competition between the banking sector, private companies and real estate developers. Otaibi said one of the investment projects in the area, which includes a multi-purpose hall and cafes, is being developed without costing the authority any money.

Arab media to fight  
terrorism proactively

**KUWAIT:** A expert group made up of representatives of information ministries and media institutions in the Arab countries has reached a unified vision on the role of Arab media in fighting terrorism. The group has come to the conclusion that Arab media should be proactive, rather than reactive when it comes to initiating solutions for confronting terrorism, said Head of the Foreign Media Sector at the Ministry of Information Dr. Hadi Al-Ajmi Wednesday. The group's 25th meeting — which was held Wednesday — discussed the joint Arab strategy to fight terrorism, prepared by Naif University for Security Sciences and approved by the technical secretariat of the Council of Arab Information Ministers. The strategy will be submitted to the meeting of Arab information ministers scheduled to be held next month in Morocco. Workshops to qualify media persons and cadres of human resources will be held soon to benefit from the Arab experts in directing young generation and families to be aware of the danger of terrorism, Ajmi said. He added that Kuwaiti media is "open to all world countries especially Arab nations and keen to participate in the secretariat meeting to support efforts and exchange media views and expertise". — KUNA



# Abolishing article 153 must be priority for 2023 election candidates: Activist

## 'Archaic' article 'inspires' violence against women

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** Parliamentary candidates often make a variety of promises during election campaigns, aiming to garner support and demonstrate their commitment to addressing the needs and concerns of their constituents. But are there any candidates who will consider concerns regarding Kuwait's discriminatory provisions in the nationality law and articles 182 and 153 of the Kuwaiti penal code (impunity for rapists and "honor" killings).

Kuwait Times spoke with Alanoud Al-Sharekh, founding member of Abolish 153, to learn more about article 153 and her campaign that calls to end honor killings in Kuwait. Al-Sharekh, along with Sheikha Al Nafisi, Amira Behbehani, Sundus Hussein and Lulu Al-Sabah, launched the campaign in 2015. At first, the focus was on raising awareness around the existence of this disturbing article, but soon the conversation shifted to the issue of domestic violence — how it is normalized and the need to introduce legislation to protect survivors — and other basic resources. They also set up a sister organization as a registered volunteer group with the ministry of social affairs in 2016 and widened lobbying efforts to

include the needs of survivors as well.

**Kuwait Times:** What is article 153?

**Alanoud Al-Sharekh:** Article 153 is an archaic law in the penal code, which is in direct violation of Kuwait's constitution. It treats murder in the name of honor as a misdemeanor and justifies it with very sympathetic punishment. It has sadly inspired some foolish acts of violence against women over the years. We want to abolish it for many reasons, the most important among them is that it is not sharia-compliant, ignores the basic human right to a fair trial, and its continued existence poses a threat to family stability and safety.

**KT:** Have you met any officials regarding the subject?

**Al-Sharekh:** We have met many government officials, ministers, MPs and other heads of institutions and regional and international organizations working on protecting women from violence over the seven years we have been lobbying to abolish article 153. As a direct result of our efforts, five MPs submitted an urgent bill to abolish article 153 in 2017, and five MPs did the same in 2020 with two separate bills submitted to abolish this article. We are hopeful this will be accomplished soon, as more awareness is raised and the conversation about ending violence becomes more mainstream.

**KT:** Do you think the new parliament will help abolish article 153?

**Al-Sharekh:** We are always hopeful that the bill will be put through to a vote by incoming MPs. We had even begun that conversation with the 2022 parliament before it was dissolved. After many years of cooperating with MPs and government bodies, we were part of the movement that saw the family protection law passed in August 2020, even though its implementation is being impeded by groups that

## Health ministry could be first to get labor from new countries

**KUWAIT:** Official sources said the health ministry will be the first government entity to carry out the instructions of Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) to bring manpower from new countries whose citizens represent a minority in Kuwait's labor market.

The instructions were first issued by First Deputy Premier, Interior Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khalid Al-Sabah, who is also responsible for PAM and Chairman of the Higher Committee to Remedy the Population Structure.

Sources said the health ministry decided in its future plans to sign contracts with nursing and medical technical teams from Vietnam and Madagascar. Contacts with these countries in this regard will start soon, they added.

The workers will fill vacancies in hospitals and new healthcare centers and will end the need for nurses from other countries and open the door for the private sector to bring in labor from new countries. Contracts are likely to be between the health ministry and the workers or may be through specialized agencies. Vietnam and Madagascar are the only start, sources said. Countries like Nepal, Mongolia, and others will also be tapped for labor in the future. The sources said the same will apply for domestic help as there will be agreements signed with some Asian and African countries.

Ethiopia is the first country on Kuwait's list for sourcing domestic labor, said sources. The deal regarding that matter is ready and awaits signing by the two governments. Sources said this step will reduce bringing in domestic help from the Philippines, India and Sri Lanka.

sadly still feel that it's their right to physically discipline those weaker than them. We are sure that with enough momentum, we can get rid of all laws that hold us back.

**KT:** What are your demands from the new candidates?

**Al-Sharekh:** We saw an escalation in honor killings, harassment and violence against women in general during the COVID pandemic. These cases were highlighted in the news and caused much debate and distress. Promises were made by both MPs and candidates to remedy the situation that have yet to be fulfilled. Protecting women means better legislation and better resource allocation, and we want to see that to be a priority in their campaigns and in office.

**KT:** Can you tell us why it is important to abolish article 153? What are the benefits for the Kuwaiti society?

**Al-Sharekh:** A committee was set up within the ministry of justice in the past to review the penal code, because although article 153 is among the most problematic, there are other articles that need to change too. Many MPs have made arguments on why it is essential to abolish this article and how damaging its continued existence is, so the cause is now understood and adopted by many people outside of the campaign itself.

It's important for Kuwait, which is internationally recognized as a humanitarian and peaceful country, to have laws that reflect that. We don't need an exceptional honor killing law because legal alternatives exist for both adultery and murder. Articles similar to 153 have been abolished in neighboring countries in the GCC and across the Arab and Muslim world in recent years, so we are part of a global movement, and not just a local one, and we are sure that in time, it will be abolished in Kuwait as well.



**GAZA:** The Zakah Daraj organization representatives are seen after signing the deal to establish an ICU room with Kuwait funding. — KUNA

## Kuwait funds ICU project in damaged Gaza hospital

**KUWAIT/GAZA:** The Palestinian Zakah Daraj charity organization signed a memorandum of understanding on Wednesday for establishing and equipping the ICU room at the Mohammed Al-Durra Children's Hospital in the Gaza Strip with support from the State of Kuwait.

The chairman of the board of Directors of the committee, Abdulqader Shaaban, said in a statement to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the project was funded by the Kuwaiti Awqaf General Secretariat with supervision from the Kuwait Society for Relief.

Shaaban said the project comes to support the health sector and the development of the hospital so that the necessary services are available to patients in Gaza, who suffer from the effects of the blockade, deteriorating economic situation and poor living conditions.

Shaaban expressed his thanks to the embassy of the State of Kuwait to the state of Palestine, which is located in the Jordanian capital Amman, in particular the Charge d'Affaires Mubarak Al-Hajeri for his efforts to overcome obstacles for the success of Kuwaiti charitable projects in Palestine.

He praised the support given by the leadership, government, people and institutions of Kuwait to various sectors in Palestine, especially the health-care system in Gaza.

The hospital of the Martyr Mohammed Al-Durra for Children suffered material damage in early April as a result of a series of Zionist airstrikes on one of the houses next to it. — KUNA



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India PM says 'separatists' must not harm Australia ties

# Sudanese still await relief

Sporadic air strikes and artillery fire on day two of tense ceasefire



KHARTOUM: A man walks past a burnt out bank branch in southern Khartoum on May 24, 2023. — AFP

**KHARTOUM:** Fighting had eased but not stopped in Sudan on Wednesday, the second full day of a ceasefire that has raised cautious hopes among beleaguered civilians that aid corridors and escape routes will open soon. Sporadic air strikes and artillery fire have still echoed across the capital, residents told AFP, but US and Saudi observers said "fighting in Khartoum appeared to be less intense" since the one-week truce entered into force late Monday.

Washington and Riyadh, which brokered the ceasefire deal between the forces of two rival generals, however pointed to reports "indicating that both sides violated the agreement". Nonetheless, they stressed that preparations were underway "to deliver lifesaving assistance" to the people of Sudan, who have endured more than five weeks of fighting that has claimed more than 1,000 lives.

The war broke out on April 15, sparking frantic mass evacuations of thousands of foreigners and forcing more than 1.3 million Sudanese to flee their homes internally and across borders. The chaos has left millions hunkering down in their homes to hide from the combatants and roaming looters amid power blackouts and desperate shortages of water, food, medicines and other staples.

Khartoum resident Ali Mohammed said water

supply "still hasn't been restored" on Wednesday, "but at least I was able to go out and buy water for my family". Mohammed Taher, 55, was finally able to "go to Khartoum's central market five kilometers (three miles) away to buy food and return without incident", he said. The fighting pits Sudan's de facto leader, the army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, against his former deputy, Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, nicknamed "Hemeti", who commands the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

It has displaced more than a million people inside Sudan, the International Organization for Migration reported on Wednesday, with a further 319,000 people seeking refuge across borders.

Those unable to flee have run low on basic supplies, and more than half the population, 25 million people, are in need of humanitarian aid, according to the United Nations. "The whole country has been taken hostage", said the UN's expert on human rights in Sudan, Radhouane Nouicer. "People feel alone and abandoned."

**'Trajectory of collapse'**

Hopes for quick relief from the fighting and suffering were dimmed by the fact that a series of earlier ceasefires were all quickly broken, with both sides

trading blame for the violations.

Saudi and US mediators also voiced "concern" that the warring sides had sought to gain military advantage in the lead-up to the truce. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has warned that "if the ceasefire is violated, we'll know" and pledged to "hold violators accountable through our sanctions and other tools at our disposal".

A mass exodus of Sudanese has meanwhile continued into neighboring countries, including Chad, Egypt and South Sudan, sparking regional fears the conflict will spread across borders because of transnational ethnic ties. Fighting has been especially deadly in the western Darfur region, where Sudan's then dictator Omar Al-Bashir unleashed in the early 2000s the notorious Janjaweed militia, and some 300,000 people were killed.

The latest violence in El-Geneina, West Darfur state, has left all 86 reception centres for displaced people "completely burned down" and 85,000 people there on the move yet again, UN agencies have reported. Sudan expert Alex de Waal warned that the "trajectory of state collapse" is now threatening "to turn Sudan as a whole, including Khartoum, into something that resembles the Darfur of 10-15 years ago".

He pointed to Daglo's roots in the Janjaweed and

said that this "is the environment within which Hemeti thrived, where money and guns determine everything — this is the future of Sudan if this carries on".

**'Somali scenario'**

Medical aid workers meanwhile voiced alarm about dire shortages as fighting has left most hospitals destroyed, ransacked and even used as fire bases, particularly in Khartoum and Darfur. "After the looting of one of our medical warehouses in Khartoum, fridges were unplugged and medicines removed," said Jean-Nicolas Armstrong Dangelser of aid group Doctors Without Borders. "The entire cold chain was ruined so the medicines are spoiled and can't be used to treat anyone."

He added: "We are experiencing a violation of humanitarian principles and the space for humanitarians to work is shrinking on a scale I've rarely seen before." Like many Sudanese citizens, Yasser Abdelaziz, a civil servant in the northern town of Shendi, said he fears a war worse than other Middle East conflicts and more like the turmoil seen elsewhere in the Horn of Africa. "I'm afraid that the scenario to come will not be Syria, Libya or Yemen," he said, "but the Somali scenario, with people driven by racism and tribalism". — AFP

## Typhoon Mawar pounds Guam with destructive winds

**LOS ANGELES:** Typhoon Mawar roared over the US territory of Guam on Wednesday, bringing destructive winds to the Pacific military outpost.

The eye of the storm passed just north of the island, its governor said, after forecasters had warned that winds of up to 140 miles per hour (225 kilometers per hour) could cause major damage.

"What we are feeling right now is the eye going over the Rota Channel," Governor Lou Leon Guerrero said in a Facebook video, referring to the body of water between the islands of Guam and Rota. Local authorities earlier issued evacuation orders and opened temporary shelters, while US President Joe Biden declared a state of emergency for the island of 170,000 people, paving the way for federal aid.

"I am in a concrete-reinforced house and my windows are shattered. I did go outside briefly and winds are getting very gusty with intermittent rains," Beckie Merrill, a 46-year-old middle school teacher, told AFP from a southern area of the island. After predicting a "direct hit" on Guam, forecasters later said the typhoon had moved just north of the island.

"It looks like we are getting a near hit with the eye passing through the Rota Channel. The southern wall of the eye will pass over much of Guam. The worst



TUMON BAY, US: This video grab from the Twitter page of James Reynolds @EarthUncutTV shows tropical storm force winds blowing across Tumon Bay, Guam on May 24, 2023. — AFP

winds will be in the northern third of Guam," the US National Weather Service (NWS) told AFP. Warnings of extreme winds and flash floods have been issued for Guam, with the Office of Civil Defense cautioning that "widespread destructive winds of 115 to 140 mph" were moving over northern areas of the island. "I am worried for the safety of our people. This is the first storm of this magnitude for 20 years," Guerrero said.

Evacuations were ordered for low-lying coastal areas, especially in the flood-prone southern villages. The NWS warned of the "triple threats" of torrential rain, catastrophic winds and a life-threatening storm surge. Winds near the eye wall could bring major damage to buildings and homes made of light materials such as non-concrete roofs and walls not made of reinforced concrete. — AFP

## UK row deepens over COVID breach claims

**LONDON:** The head of a far-reaching UK inquiry into the government's handling of the COVID pandemic is threatening legal action to obtain former prime minister Boris Johnson's WhatsApp messages and diaries, according to correspondence released Wednesday. Heather Hallett's demand for the unredacted documentation came after Johnson was embroiled in new drama about alleged breaches of his own government's COVID lockdowns, which police are now investigating.

It emerged on Tuesday that the government's central Cabinet Office had handed two police forc-

es material about the alleged violations at the prime minister's country retreat of Chequers.

They came to light in diaries kept by Johnson which government lawyers have been reviewing for Baroness Hallett's official inquiry — although the ex-Conservative leader insists on his innocence.

The Cabinet Office stressed that its civil servants were legally bound to inform police of any apparent wrongdoing, but Johnson has condemned the handling of the allegations as "bizarre and unacceptable". In a letter to Hallett, he insisted he was complying with her disclosure demands — and announced that he had sacked the government-funded lawyers who were helping him with the inquiry. But Hallett said the Cabinet Office had only handed over redacted diaries and notebooks of Johnson, and WhatsApps sent by and to him, as she threatened a legal notice to obtain the full material.

"The entire contents of the specified documents are of potential relevance to the lines of investigation

being pursued by the inquiry," she said in a statement. Dismissing a Cabinet Office's bid to throw out her request, Hallett said she had extended a deadline for the unredacted material to be handed over to 4pm (1500 GMT) next Tuesday.

Johnson, 58, was ousted as prime minister last summer following a revolt within his ruling Conservative party after months of accusations of "Partygate" lockdown infringements and other scandals. He repeatedly denied in parliament, and elsewhere, that he or his staff had broken his own pandemic restrictions by holding boozy gatherings in Downing Street. But London's Metropolitan Police issued fines to dozens of aides after a criminal probe, and Johnson became the first serving UK prime minister found to have broken the law, over one of the gatherings. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak was also fined over one gathering in 10 Downing Street, when he was serving as Johnson's finance minister. — AFP

## 10,000 Russian recruits killed: Wagner boss

**MOSCOW:** The head of Russian mercenary group Wagner, Yevgeny Prigozhin, has said that around 10,000 prisoners he recruited to fight in Ukraine have been killed on the battlefield.

Last year, Prigozhin toured Russian prisons in a bid to convince inmates to fight with Wagner in Ukraine, in exchange for a promised amnesty upon their return should they survive. Convicts are believed to have been used as cannon fodder in Ukraine, accounting for most of Wagner's losses in the pro-Western country.

"I took 50,000 prisoners of which around 20 percent were killed," Prigozhin said in a video interview published late Tuesday. Prigozhin said a similar percentage were killed among those who had signed a contract with Wagner, but did not give a precise figure. Both the mercenary outfit and regular Russian troops said at the weekend that the flashpoint town of Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine had fallen, but Kyiv said Ukrainian forces continued to fight for it. Prigozhin, whose influence has risen hugely during the more than year-long offensive, has scathingly criticized Russia's top brass, accusing them of being responsible for huge losses.

He has accused Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov of being incompetent and causing excess losses. "There are now tens of thousands of relatives of those who were killed. Probably there will be hundreds of thousands. We cannot hide from this," he said. He called on Russia's military elite to send their own children to the front.

Prigozhin, a businessman close to President Vladimir Putin, has slammed the Russian elites, saying their children live comfortably while men from impoverished regions die in Ukraine.

Prigozhin said his fighters will pull out of the destroyed city by June 1 and transfer control to the Russian army. In early May, the White House said that more than 20,000 Russian troops have died and another 80,000 were wounded in five months of fighting in eastern Ukraine, particularly in Bakhmut. — AFP



## International

# India PM says ‘separatists’ must not harm Australia ties

## Modi, Albanese hold summit on Sydney Harbour

**SYDNEY:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi warned Wednesday that “separatist elements” should not be allowed to hurt India-Australia relations, after he was lavished with a rockstar welcome in Sydney.

Lured by the world's most populous market and the promise of a counterweight to a rising China, Australia has batted away questions about India's treatment of opponents and minorities, suggesting they are domestic issues. Modi appeared to have no such qualms.

The Indian leader hit out at recent “attacks” on Hindu temples in Australia — vandalism allegedly committed by Sikh separatists — after his summit with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese at Admiralty House on Sydney Harbour.

“We will not accept any elements that harm the friendly and warm ties between India and Australia by their actions or thoughts,” Modi told reporters, saying the pair had discussed “activities of separatist elements” in the past. “Prime Minister Albanese has once again assured me today that he will take strict actions against such elements in the future,” Modi said according to an official translator.

Anti-Modi graffiti has this year been painted on a half-dozen temples in Australia, allegedly by those seeking the creation of a Sikh homeland known as Khalistan, in incidents widely reported by Indian media. Protests by the Sikh diaspora erupted across the globe last month after a lengthy manhunt for a firebrand separatist that saw thousands of Indian police mobilized and mobile internet access cut for days across Sikh-majority Punjab state. Albanese, who has previously condemned the graffiti incidents

in Australia, made no mention of them in his remarks, instead hailing a new deal promoting the exchange of students, researchers, academics and business people with India. The centre-left leader said he had joined “a rather extraordinary event” the previous evening, referring to Modi's 12,000-strong, campaign-style rally at a Sydney arena.

### ‘Respectful’ relationship

“Prime Minister Modi is the boss!” Albanese had told the crowd of enthusiastic Modi supporters at the event, declaring the Indian leader a “dear friend”. Albanese has given short shrift to questions about his support for Modi — a nationalist leader who faces re-election next year and has been criticized for sustained democratic backsliding and discrimination against India's hundreds of millions of non-Hindus.

Asked if he was troubled by such accusations against Modi, Albanese told a radio interviewer: “Well, India is, of course, the world's largest democracy.” “Australia will always stand up for human rights, wherever it occurs anywhere in the world,” he added. But asked if he planned to raise those issues with Modi, the Australian leader said he engaged with people on a “one-on-one” basis and would not be leaking details of his “respectful” relationship.

Rights groups say India's 200 million Muslims have faced increased discrimination and violence since Modi and his Hindu nationalist BJP swept to power in 2014. Under Modi, “the world's largest democracy” has become much less free and more dangerous for his critics, according to Human Rights Watch's Elaine Pearson. But as Australia struggles



**SYDNEY:** India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi (left) and Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese pose in front of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, seen illuminated in the colors of the Indian flag, in Sydney on May 24, 2023. — AFP

with a more assertive China, it is looking for economic and political partners in an increasingly rough-and-tumble neighborhood.

India's economic performance has been mixed in the past decade, with missteps curbing growth. But hundreds of millions of people have been lifted out of poverty. It is now the second-fastest growing econo-

my in the G20 and a multi-trillion-dollar market. The Indian-Australian community is the second-largest in Australia after Britain, with 673,000 Indian-born citizens in a population of 26 million.

Almost 90,000 Indian students are enrolled at Australian universities, the largest overseas contingent after China. — AFP

## Algeria police detain leading opposition figure

**ALGIERS:** Algerian opposition figure Karim Tabbou has been taken into custody for unknown reasons, reports said Wednesday, with his brother saying plainclothes police officers had detained him at his home. Tabbou, 48, was one of the most recognizable faces during mass rallies, led by the Hirak pro-democracy movement, that began in February 2019.

The protests demanded a sweeping overhaul of the ruling system in place since the North African country's independence from France in 1962. Tabbou “was arrested in Dely Ibrahim”, a suburb of the capital Algiers, “by plainclothes police”, his brother Djaffar said in a Facebook post late Tuesday, citing lawyer Toufik Belala.

The brother added that Tabbou had not been informed of when he would appear before prosecutors or the charges he might face. Tabbou's lawyer Belala was unavailable for comment.

Tabbou leads a small, unregistered opposition party, the Democratic and Social Union (UDS).

He was sentenced in March 2020 to one year in jail for “undermining national security” over his criticism of the army's involvement in politics. After his release from prison, he was detained again in April 2022 for 24 hours for unknown reasons. The Hirak protests had forced longtime president Abdelaziz Bouteflika to step down. Demonstrations continued in a push for deep reforms but the movement waned when the coronavirus pandemic struck. — AFP

## Sri Lanka navy finds 14 bodies in capsized Chinese boat

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lanka's navy said Wednesday it had located 14 bodies inside a Chinese fishing boat that had capsized last week with 39 crew on board.

The grisly discovery came a day after a preliminary Chinese government probe concluded there were no survivors on the vessel that overturned on May 16. The Lu Peng Yuan Yu 028 had on board 17 Chinese, 17 Indonesians and five Filipinos and was within Australia's vast search-and-rescue region, 5,000 kilometers (2,700 nautical miles) west of Perth. The Philippine foreign ministry said the boat was located on May 18 about 1,000 kilometers south of Sri Lanka but that rescue efforts were hindered by bad weather. The Sri Lankan navy said its divers had recovered two bodies and spotted 12 more on Tuesday, releasing photos showing the upturned red hull of the vessel and bodies being hauled out of the water.

“Due to decomposition and the potential health haz-

## Families of Tunisia detainees go to Africa court to seek release

**NAIROBI:** The families of Tunisian opposition figures detained in a government crackdown filed a case with Africa's human rights court on Wednesday seeking the immediate release of their loved ones.

Since early February, the authorities in the North African country have arrested more than 20 political opponents and other personalities, sparking condem-

ards posed by operating in contaminated waters with limited protective gear, it was determined that retrieving those bodies would be exceedingly dangerous,” the navy said in a statement.

It said the locations of the 12 bodies inside the boat were mapped and handed to Chinese authorities. The nationalities of the located bodies were not immediately known. The Sri Lankan navy statement came a day after a preliminary probe by the Chinese transport ministry concluded that all those on board had died. Australia had sent three aeroplanes and four ships to help in the international search-and-rescue efforts.

Rescuers had trawled an area of around 64,000 square kilometers (18,700 square nautical miles), and “did not find any sign of survivors”, according to the Chinese transport ministry. The fishing vessel's distress beacon was first detected last week as Cyclone Fabian drove waves as high as seven meters (23 feet) and winds as strong as 120 kilometers per hour (75 miles per hour) through the area.

Rough weather held back rescue efforts, with the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre (JRCC) in Canberra warning of “challenging” survival conditions. The vessel was owned by the Penglai Jinglu Fishery Company, one of China's major state-run fishing firms. It was authorized

nations from the international community and rights groups. Those detained include Rached Ghannouchi, the former speaker of parliament and one of the highest profile critics of President Kais Saied, who dissolved the assembly in July 2021 as part of a power grab allowing him to rule by decree.

Ghannouchi, 81, the head of Tunisia's Islamist-inspired party Ennahdha, was arrested in April and sentenced on May 15 to one year in prison on terrorism-related charges. His daughter Yusra Ghannouchi said the charges against her father were “politically motivated and fabricated” and part of a bid by Saied to “eliminate the opposition”. Saied claims those detained in the crackdown were “terrorists” involved in a “conspiracy against state security”. Opponents have dubbed his ac-



**COLOMBO:** This handout photo shows a capsized Chinese fishing vessel (Lu Peng Yuan Yu 028) in the Indian Ocean. — AFP

to fish for neon flying squid and Pacific saury, according to the North Pacific Fisheries Commission. It left Cape Town in South Africa on May 5 for Busan in South Korea, according to the Marine Traffic tracking website, which last located the vessel on May 10 southeast of Reunion, a tiny French island in the Indian Ocean. Penglai Jinglu Fishery also runs squid and tuna fishing operations in international waters, including the Indian Ocean and seas surrounding Latin America. — AFP

tions a “coup” and a return to autocratic rule in the only democracy that emerged from the Arab Spring uprisings in the region more than a decade ago.

Yusra Ghannouchi and other relatives of the detainees filed the case in the African Court of Human and Peoples Rights in Arusha, Tanzania, as part of a global campaign for their freedom. “We hope this will lead to their release and to justice for them,” she told AFP in Nairobi on the eve of a trip to Arusha. “They are not silent and we will not be silent,” said Ghannouchi, a 45-year-old mother of three who lives in Britain.

She said the relatives were also calling for the US, the EU and Britain to impose targeted sanctions against Saied and several of his ministers who are “all implicated in human rights violations”. — AFP

## Hey Kuwait! Google Cloud to open...

**Continued from Page 1**

Tarek Khalil and Business Development Director EMEA, Public Sector Cloud Ellie Tabchouri. Shula said digital transformation has become an inevitable and tangible reality, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic and the period of recovery that followed. “This requires us to continuously strive to achieve the goals of the New Kuwait 2035 vision for a smart Kuwait to accomplish development projects and developmental programs through a national strategy to support and guide the country's digital transformation journey and maintain coordination between relevant government entities and institutions,” he said.

“This requires us to also establish profitable and effective companies with global information companies, leading local companies, startup companies and innovative entrepreneurs to accelerate the transition to the digital economy, and provide infrastructure, digital services and applications that improve the quality of public services for citizens

and residents. We emphasize our commitment to maximizing the benefits and opportunities of these developments, while at the same time confronting the challenges and risks that they may entail, within the framework of the directives of the wise leadership, the efforts of qualified young national competencies and accurately drawn accompanying policies,” Shula added.

Tabchouri highlighted the motives behind bringing Google Cloud for the Kuwaiti government's digital transformation. He said the plan is to support the plan of the Kuwaiti government by delivering its vision. “We have heard repeatedly from the leadership of Kuwait that there are a few things that are extremely important to Kuwait: The first priority is e-government, while the second is the importance of job creation in Kuwait, because whenever Google establishes a presence in a country, there has to be an effect on creating jobs,” he said.

“Consequently, a lot more companies will expand their operation in Kuwait or come to Kuwait, if they are not already here. The third is bringing foreign direct investments into Kuwait, as Google is going to be investing an extremely large amount of money for building data centers and infrastructure in Kuwait,” Tabchouri explained.

ambitions of young Kuwaitis in establishing their own projects. Former MP Saadoun Hammad said Kuwaitis are frustrated because their salaries have not been increased since 2008, blaming the 2022 Assembly for failing to defend the rights of citizens. He said that this led some Kuwaiti voters to abandon the election because they were disappointed with the previous Assembly.

Candidate Mubarak Al-Tasha said Kuwait is passing through a crucial and delicate period in its history, as some people are trying to distort and change the political scene to take the country back to the corruption era. Candidate Falah Al-Subaei said repeated political disputes in the Assembly made it forget the demands and rights of the people, who are suffering from deteriorating public services. He said only change in the Assembly members and fresh blood can achieve the aspirations of the people.

## MoI: Sovereignty of Kuwait a red line...

**Continued from Page 1**

domestic helpers at their residences, despite knowing this is banned in Kuwait. PAM said the embassy also forced recruitment offices to search for runaway maids, bypassing official agencies in the country. The embassy also forced recruitment offic-

## Paralyzed man walks again via...

**Continued from Page 1**

to decode brain recordings in real time, the researchers said. This allows the interface, which was designed by researchers at France's Atomic Energy Commission (CEA), to work out how the patient wants to move their legs at any moment.

The data is transmitted to the spinal cord implant via a portable device that fits in a walker or small backpack, allowing patients to get around without help from others. The two implants build what the researchers call a “digital bridge” to cross the disconnect between the spinal cord and brain that was created during Gert-Jan's accident. “Now I can just do what I want — when I decide to make a step the stimulation will kick in as soon as I think about it,” Gert-Jan said.

After undergoing invasive surgery twice to implant both devices, it has “been a long journey to get here,” he told a press conference in the Swiss city of Lausanne. But among other changes, he is now able to stand at a bar again with friends while having a beer. “This simple pleasure represents a significant change in my life,” he said in a statement.

Gregoire Courtine, a neuroscientist at Switzerland's Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne and a study co-author, said it was “radically different” from what had been accomplished before. “Previous patients walked with a lot of effort — now one just

es to include items in work contracts that employers don't want. PAM also charged mistreatment of Kuwaiti citizens when they visit the embassy. The embassy also accommodates workers in private housing or a shelter affiliated with it, despite some of these workers being in violation of the residency law or have absconding notices filed against them.

Sheikh Talal has directed PAM to coordinate with the foreign ministry to reach agreements with labor-exporting countries to supply the local market with necessary manpower.



**LAUSANNE:** Professor of neuroscience Gregoire Courtine speaks during a press conference on May 23, 2023. — AFP

needs to think about walking to take a step,” he told a press conference in the Swiss city of Lausanne.

There was another positive sign: following six months of training, Gert-Jan recovered some sensory perception and motor skills that he had lost in the accident. He was even able to walk with crutches when the “digital bridge” was turned off. Guillaume Charvet, a researcher at France's CEA, told AFP this suggests “that the establishment of a link between the brain and spinal cord would promote a reorganization of the neuronal networks” at the site of the injury.

So when could this technology be available to paralyzed people around the world? Charvet cautioned it will take “many more years of research” to get to that point. But the team are already preparing a trial to study whether this technology can restore function in arms and hands. They also hope it could apply to other problems such as paralysis caused by stroke. — AFP

## Top court upholds ruling scrapping...

**Continued from Page 1**

Meanwhile, candidates campaigning for the 2023 elections raised several issues during election speeches and statements and focused on calling on the government to take the necessary measures to improve the standard of living of Kuwaiti citizens and raise their pay. Former MP Muhannad Al-Sayer said 70-80 percent of Kuwaitis, or 94,000 families — almost half the population of native Kuwaitis — live in rental apartments in one of the richest countries of the world.

Candidate Jenan Bushehri, a former minister, said monopoly over state land is killing the hopes and



## International

# China's Xi offers Russia 'firm support' in 'core interests'

## Mishustin: Russia-China relations at an unprecedented high level

**BEIJING:** Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday offered Beijing's support on Moscow's "core interests", at a meeting with Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin. China and Russia have in recent years ramped up economic and diplomatic cooperation, growing even closer since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine despite Beijing's insistence that it is neutral in that conflict.

Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin arrived in China on Monday, attending a business forum in Shanghai on Tuesday before travelling to Beijing to meet Premier Li Qiang and President Xi Jinping.

It is the highest-level visit by a Russian official to China since last year's invasion. Xi told Mishustin on Wednesday that the two countries would continue to offer each other "firm support on issues concerning each other's core interests and strengthen collaboration in multilateral arenas", according to a readout by the official Xinhua news agency.

Mishustin had earlier told Li that "relations between Russia and China are at an unprecedented high level", after a grand welcoming ceremony outside Beijing's Great Hall of the People on Wednesday.

"They are characterized by mutual respect of each other's interests, the desire to jointly respond to challenges, which is associated with increased turbulence in the international arena and the pressure of illegitimate sanctions from the collective West," he said. Li, in turn, hailed the "comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership between China and Russia in the new era".

"I believe your trip to China this time will definitely leave a deep impression," he said. China is Russia's largest trading partner, with trade between the

nations reaching a record \$190 billion last year, according to Chinese customs data. Li noted Wednesday that bilateral trade had already reached \$70 billion so far this year.

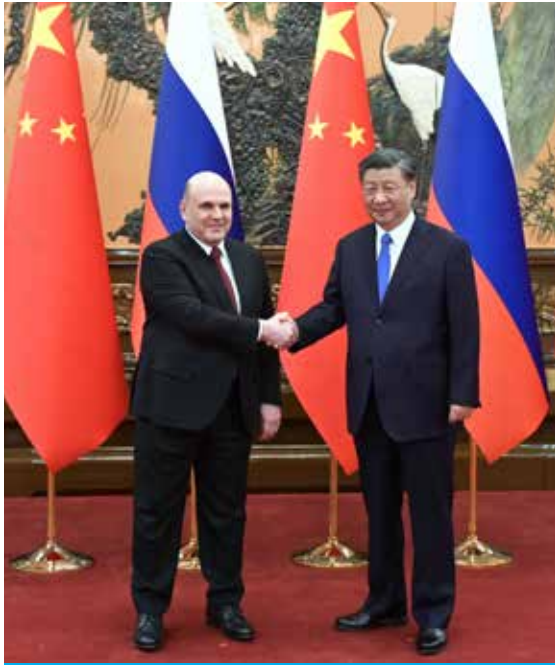
"This is a year-on-year increase of more than 40 percent," he said. "The scale of investment between the two countries is also continuously upgrading," Li added. "Strategic large-scale projects are steadily advancing." Following the talks, ministers from the two countries signed a series of agreements on service trade cooperation and sports, as well as on patents and Russian millet exports to China.

### China's upper hand

Mishustin is accompanied by top officials, including Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak, who handles energy policy. China last year became Russia's top energy customer as Moscow's gas exports otherwise plummeted due to a flurry of Western sanctions over the invasion of Ukraine.

According to Russian state media, Novak told Tuesday's forum in Shanghai that Russian energy supplies to China would increase by 40 percent year-on-year in 2023. Analysts say China holds the upper hand in the relationship with Russia, and that its sway is growing as Moscow's international isolation deepens. The leaders of both countries are "brought together more by shared grievances and insecurities than by shared goals", Ryan Hass, a senior fellow at Washington's Brookings Institution and a former White House official, told AFP.

"They both resent and feel threatened by Western leadership in the international system and believe their countries should be given greater deference on



**BEIJING:** Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin meets with China's President Xi Jinping in Beijing on May 24, 2023. — AFP

issues implicating their own interests." In February, Beijing released a paper calling for a "political settlement" to the Ukraine conflict, but Western countries said it could enable Russia to hold much of the territory it has seized. During their March summit in Moscow, Xi invited Putin to visit Beijing. — AFP

## 'Unusual' level of aircraft maintenance in N Korea: Report

**SEOUL:** Recent satellite imagery shows an "unusual" level of aircraft maintenance at North Korea's main airport, a monitoring group said, a possible sign Pyongyang is moving to resume international flights. North Korea has effectively sealed its borders since early 2020 as part of its drive to deal with the coronavirus pandemic, with all flights cancelled. It has resumed some cross-border trade with China by train, and recently allowed Beijing's new ambassador to Pyongyang into the country, but has not yet resumed regular international travel.

Several passenger jets operated by North Korea's Air Koryo have "cycled through maintenance hangars" at Sunan International Airport since early May, the respected North Korea-monitoring 38North website said, citing satellite images. Such aircraft have only very infrequently undergone such maintenance over the past three years, so the recent level of activity is "notable", it said. 38North said no cross-border air travel service is "believed to have taken place" throughout the entire pandemic period. "It is unusual that such a large number have been serviced in such a short period of time," 38 North said, warning that the flurry of activity did not guarantee any immediate or near-term resumption of air travel.

Speculation over Pyongyang's possible reopening spiked after China's new ambassador arrived in Pyongyang to begin his official duties last month, more than two years after he was appointed. One Chinese tourist agency has also been reportedly preparing to re-launch tours to North Korea in mid-June, according to the Seoul-based specialist site NK News. It added, however, that "false rumors of reopening have circulated near border for months". Other diplomats from countries with presences in North Korea told NK News they had not had any news about being able to rotate staff in or out of Pyongyang. — AFP



**NEW DELHI:** In this file photo taken on July 12, 2022, workers stand next to the newly inaugurated 'National Emblem' installed on the roof of the new Indian parliament building in New Delhi. — AFP

## Indian opposition to boycott opening of new parliament

**NEW DELHI:** India's opposition parties on Wednesday said they would boycott the inauguration of a glitzy new parliament building, accusing Prime Minister Narendra Modi of a "grave insult" to democracy by excluding the president.

Construction of the building is part of a Central Vista project aimed at revamping or replacing British colonial-era government facilities, including a new residence for the prime minister. Work on the parliament building began in January 2021 and is estimated to have cost around 12 billion rupees (\$145 million), according to media reports. Since the project was announced, it has faced criticism over

a lack of transparency and high costs. It has also been hit by allegations it violated environmental and land laws. On Wednesday, 19 opposition parties criticized the government's decision to exclude Indian President Droupadi Murmu — the head of state — from an inauguration event set for Sunday in New Delhi. "Prime Minister Modi's decision to inaugurate the new parliament building by himself, completely sidelining President Murmu, is not only a grave insult but a direct assault on our democracy which demands a commensurate response," the parties said in a joint statement.

"When the soul of democracy has been sucked out from the parliament, we find no value in a new building. We announce our collective decision to boycott the inauguration," they added. The government has defended construction of the building, saying it was necessary and a matter of pride for Indians. The current parliament, designed by British architects Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker, was opened in 1927. — AFP

## S Korea postpones third launch of homegrown rocket

**SEOUL:** South Korea on Wednesday postponed the launch of its homegrown Nuri rocket after a technical glitch was detected just hours before lift-off, officials said. It was the third planned launch of Nuri, following a failed first attempt and a successful second mission last year. A communication error between the launch control computer and another computer managing the launch pad was detected during preparation, forcing officials to postpone, said Oh Tae-seog, vice minister of science and ICT.

"It's currently believed there is no problem with the projectile itself, so it will remain erected" while scientists and software engineers try to resolve the issue, Oh said in a briefing.

If they find a solution by Thursday morning, they will hold a meeting to decide whether to carry out the launch that day, he added. In previous tests the rocket carried payloads mainly designed for verifying the performance of the launch vehicle.

This time, the rocket was set to be topped with eight working satellites, including a "commercial-grade satellite", according to the country's science ministry. The three-stage rocket, more than 47 meters (155 feet) long and weighing 200 tons, was supposed to be launched from the Naro Space Center in South Korea's southern coastal region at 6:24 pm local time (0924 GMT).

Nuri was transferred and erected at the launch pad on Tuesday. "The third launch is aimed at putting a domestically developed satellite with observa-



**GOHEUNG, South Korea:** South Korea's homegrown space rocket Nuri moving to its launch pad at the Naro Space Centre in the southern coastal village of Goheung, a day before its third attempt to put satellites into orbit. — AFP

tion missions into the target orbit," Ko Jeong-hwan, director of the Nuri rocket project at the Korea Aerospace Research Institute (KARI), told reporters earlier. The 180-kilogram NEXTSat 2 satellite, developed by the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology, is the first and main payload meant to be placed into orbit at an altitude of 550 kilometers, KARI said. The satellite has a small synthetic aperture radar that can capture high-resolution images regardless of weather conditions.

Success in launching a third time will depend on whether the eight satellites are properly placed into their target orbits. The three-stage Nuri rocket has been a decade in development at a cost of two trillion won (\$1.5 billion).

### Mixed record

The South Korean space program has a mixed record — its first two launches in 2009 and 2010, which in part used Russian technology, both ended in failure. The second one exploded two minutes into flight, with Seoul and Moscow blaming each other. Eventually a 2013 launch succeeded, but still relied on a Russian-developed engine for its first stage.

Last June, South Korea became the seventh nation to successfully launch a one-ton payload on their own rockets. Two months later, it launched its first lunar orbiter on a year-long mission to observe the Moon. The country has laid out ambitious plans for outer space, including landing spacecraft on the Moon by 2032 and Mars by 2045. — AFP

### News in Brief

#### UK minister in the clear: Sunak

**LONDON:** UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman will not face a potentially career-ending ethics investigation into her handling of a speeding ticket received last summer, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced Wednesday. Sunak said he had consulted his ethics adviser over the case and concluded that the allegations "do not amount to a breach of the ministerial code". Braverman — a Brexit hardliner criticized for her tough stance on immigration — faced calls to be investigated after asking civil servants to set up a one-to-one driving awareness course, instead of taking penalty points on her license. Opposition politicians claimed she may have breached the ministerial code of conduct by requesting non-political civil servants to help deal with a private matter. — AFP

#### Congo fever kills one in Namibia

**WINDHOEK, Namibia:** A man in Namibia has died of Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever, prompting the country to declare an outbreak of the viral tick-borne disease, the government said on Wednesday. Also known as Congo fever, the disease has a high fatality rate of up to 40 percent, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). "One case is considered an outbreak," the health ministry's executive director, Ben Nangombe, told AFP. "The disease is tick-borne, so it can be considered localized." The infected man was taken to a clinic in the eastern city of Gobabis last week with symptoms of the disease, which include fever, muscle ache, dizziness, sensitivity to light and nausea. — AFP

#### Abducted sailors in Gabon freed

**TBILISI, Georgia:** Two Georgian sailors kidnapped by pirates in Gabonese territorial waters in early May have been released from captivity, officials in Georgia said Wednesday. "Two Georgian sailors abducted in Gabon were freed on May 21 thanks to the efforts of Georgia's foreign ministry, the Georgian embassy in South Africa, and Georgia's maritime transport agency," ministry spokeswoman, Mari Narchemashvili, told AFP. Georgia's maritime transport agency had said that three sailors, including two Georgian citizens, were abducted on May 2 when pirates attacked their ship, the Grebe Bulker. — AFP

#### Bolivian lawmakers clash in parliament

**LA PAZ, Bolivia:** Rival Bolivian lawmakers clashed on the floor of parliament on Tuesday as a presentation by a minister of leftist President Luis Arce descended into a flurry of kicks, punches and hair-pulling. Minister of Government Eduardo del Castillo had been summoned by parliament to give a report on the December imprisonment of Luis Fernando Camacho, the conservative governor of the Santa Cruz region and a leading opposition figure. While defending the legality of the arrest, Del Castillo criticized parliamentarians from Creemos, Camacho's party, branding them "radical, thieving, violent groups that came to steal the wallets of

## Suicide bomber kills 4 people at Pakistan checkpoint

**PESHAWAR:** A suicide bomber killed four people when he detonated a car bomb at a police checkpoint in a marketplace in northwest Pakistan on Wednesday, officials said. Pakistan is grappling with an up-tick in militancy since the Taleban returned to power in neighboring Afghanistan, although the latest attack has not yet been claimed by any group.

Local police official Rasool Daraz told AFP two soldiers, a policeman and a civilian were killed when the bomber blew himself up in Liaquat Bazar of the Datta Khel sub-division of North Waziristan. "The bomber blew up his vehicle while he was being searched at the check post," he said. "It seems the bomber wanted to reach another destination but blew himself up after he was stopped by police for a routine search." Another five people were wounded in the blast.

A second police official, Tariq Dawar, confirmed the incident and casualties. Officials said on Tuesday six security personnel had been killed in a militant siege on a Hungarian-owned oil and gas exploration site around 70 kilometers (44 miles) northeast of Wednesday's blast. The attack on Tuesday was claimed by the Pakistan Taleban, a chapter of the Afghan movement that splintered off in 2007 to focus its fight against Islamabad. On Monday, officials said unidentified militants detonated explosives in two empty girls' schools in North Waziristan, destroying nine classrooms but leaving no casualties. North Waziristan has historically been a hive of militancy and was the target of a long-running Pakistani military offensive and US drone strikes during the post-9/11 occupation of Afghanistan. — AFP



THURSDAY, MAY 25, 2023

## Business

US debt battle ‘unnecessary’  
for world economy: IMF chief

## Russia sanctions would ‘devastate’ Georgia economy: Garbashvili

**DOHA:** International Monetary Fund chief Kristalina Georgieva said Wednesday that protracted domestic wrangling over the US debt ceiling was “unnecessary” for the world economy but should be settled. Georgieva also told the Qatar Economic Forum that central banks must keep interest rates high to tame inflation but there should be improvement in 2024.

International markets have been unnerved by the battle between US President Joe Biden and opposition Republicans on US borrowing limits with an early June deadline looming. Some Republicans have questioned whether a quick agreement with the US administration is necessary to avert a painful default. “History tells us that the US wrestles with this notional default,” Georgieva said referring to past US showdowns over spending limits.

“At the 11th hour, it gets resolved and I have confidence we will see this play.”

But she added that the Washington drama was “unnecessary for a world economy that is in such high uncertainty”. “We always have to be mindful that the risk is there.”

Georgieva said headline inflation in many countries was “peaking” because of central banks raising interest rates but “core inflation, primarily because of very stubborn food prices, is still not trimming down the way it should”. “Central banks have to stay the course, because, if they move back on interest rates prematurely, then tension may become a problem for growth for a longer period of time,” she said. “Interest rates are high, they will stay high for longer, but we are expecting 2024, early 2025, the picture to change.”

Meanwhile, Georgia’s prime minister told the forum Wednesday that his government cannot afford to impose sanctions on Russia over the Ukraine war as they would “devastate” the economy. Facing international criticism, Irakli Garbashvili strongly defended his country’s reluctance to take action against its giant neighbor that occupied about 20 percent of Georgian territory in a 2008 war.

Garbashvili’s government has refused to impose economic sanctions and direct flights from Russia to Georgia resumed last week sparking opposition

protests at Tblisi airport. “Not only would we harm Georgia, but we would also devastate our economy and jeopardize the interests of our country and our people if we were to impose any form of economic sanctions on Russia,” Garbashvili told the Qatar Economic Forum. He estimated bilateral trade with Russia is worth about \$1 billion a year.

Garbashvili criticized the international community for not taking action, including sanctions, during the 2008 conflict between his country and Russia. “Where’s the logic? Our war was not a war and the Ukrainian war is a war. Well, I have to say that we were quite disappointed that business as usual continued with Russia after the 2008 war.

“The result of that war, a devastating war, is that 20 percent of our territory was taken over by Russia. Russia built two military bases on our historic lands.”

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has been a key issue at the Qatar forum. Hungary’s right-wing Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who has refused to condemn Russian President Vladimir Putin, said on Monday that Ukraine could not beat Russia. — AFP



**DOHA:** International Monetary Fund chief Kristalina Georgieva said Wednesday that protracted domestic wrangling over the US debt ceiling was “unnecessary” for the world economy but should be settled.

Inflation crashes  
the party as ECB  
marks 25 years

**FRANKFURT:** The European Central Bank celebrated its 25th anniversary Wednesday but soaring inflation in the eurozone threatened to put a damper on festivities at the Frankfurt-based financial institution. To mark the occasion, around 200 guests will descend in the evening on the ECB’s imposing steel-and-glass tower on the banks of the Main river in Germany’s financial capital.

With music from French composer Claude Debussy playing, ECB president Christine Lagarde will cut a cake as she is joined by two of her predecessors, Jean-Claude Trichet and Mario Draghi.

But against a challenging economic backdrop, the mood may not be as jubilant as ECB bosses hoped. Inflation in the eurozone surged to record highs over the past 12 months, as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine drove up energy prices and the recovery from the Covid pandemic caused widespread supply chain woes.

The closely watched indicator sat at seven percent in April — down from a peak of 10.6 percent in October, but still well above the ECB’s two-percent target. Nevertheless, Lagarde sought to use the anniversary to highlight the achievements of monetary union. The euro — used by nearly 350 million people across 20 countries with diverse economies — was “more than a currency”, she wrote in a blog post.

“It is the strongest form of European integration and stands for a united Europe that works together, protecting and benefiting all its citizens,” Lagarde added. “And the ECB will always be a cornerstone of that effort.”

## Quarter century

The ECB came into being in 1998, a few months before the introduction of the euro the following year. Since the single currency was established, the eurozone’s GDP per capita has more than doubled



**COLOGNE:** Former German Chancellor Angela Merkel talks to European Central Bank (ECB) President Christine Lagarde after being awarded the “Staatspreis des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen” (State Prize of the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia) on May 16, 2023 in Cologne. — AFP

and unemployment has fallen to record lows. And despite recent highs, inflation has averaged 2.05 percent over the ECB’s quarter of a century in existence — not far off the central bank’s target.

But some critics may be more focused on what they see as the bank’s latest missteps, namely, that it was too slow to start hiking interest rates, believing high inflation was temporary. Ultimately, policymakers were forced to embark on an unprecedented campaign of monetary tightening — lifting key rates 3.75 percentage points since July last year, with more increases expected.

In her blog post, Lagarde reiterated that “inflation is now too high and is set to remain so for too long.”

But the ECB would act “with the same determination to bring inflation down”, as it had when faced with other “serious challenges”, she said. The central

bank has battled myriad challenges over the years — from the eurozone’s sovereign debt crisis, which rumbled through the 2010s, to a long phase of inflation that was well below its target.

The latter prompted the central bank to expand its monetary policy arsenal beyond interest rates, and it reached for exceptional measures such as massive purchase of government and private debt.

There have also been some widely criticized mistakes. With the eurozone in a rough patch in 2011, Trichet hiked rates — a move his successor, Draghi, was forced to undo as soon as he assumed the presidency that year. Draghi also faced reproach, in his case for his management style during the debt crisis, which critics said led to divisions in the ECB’s governing council, whose membership is made up mostly of national central bank governors. — AFP

Oil gains after  
Saudi warns  
short-sellers

**LONDON:** Oil prices gained on Wednesday after US oil and fuel supplies tightened and as a warning from the Saudi energy minister to speculators raised the prospect of further OPEC output cuts. Brent crude futures rose 86 cents, or 1.1 percent, to \$77.70 a barrel by 0007 GMT, while the US West Texas Intermediate crude (WTI) gained 88 cents, or 1.2 percent, to \$73.79 a barrel.

Saudi Arabia’s Energy Minister, Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, warned traders, again, against shorting oil futures, less than two weeks before the OPEC+ panel on production policy meets on June 4.

Industry data late Tuesday showed US crude oil and fuel inventories fell sharply. Crude inventories fell by about 6.8 million barrels in the week ended May 19, according to market sources citing American Petroleum Institute figures on Tuesday.

Gasoline inventories dropped by about 6.4 million, while distillate inventories declined by about 1.8 million. If data from the Energy Information Administration, due on Wednesday, confirm the API figures, US gasoline inventories would have declined for the third straight week to their lowest pre-Memorial Day levels since 2014.

Meanwhile, production cuts by some OPEC members take effect this month. Fears of a supply squeeze mounted after Saudi Arabia’s energy minister said he would keep short sellers — those betting that prices will fall — “ouching” and told them to “watch out.” Some investors took that as a signal that the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies including Russia could consider further output cuts at a meeting on June 4. Equity markets were still wary about US debt ceiling discussions which in turn tempered oil price gains. Another round of debt ceiling talks ended on Tuesday with no signs of progress as the deadline to raise the government’s \$31.4 trillion borrowing limit or risk default ticked closer. — Agencies

Apple to spend  
billions of dollars  
on US-made 5G tech

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Apple on Tuesday announced a multi-billion-dollar collaboration with US tech firm Broadcom to make “cutting edge” components for wirelessly connecting to high-speed 5G telecom networks. The iPhone maker did not specify exactly how many billions of dollars it would put into the Broadcom alliance, but said it is part of a commitment to invest in the US economy.

“We’re thrilled to make commitments that harness the ingenuity, creativity, and innovative spirit of American manufacturing,” Apple chief executive Tim Cook said in a statement.

“All of Apple’s products depend on technology engineered and built here in the United States, and we’ll continue to deepen our investments in the US economy because we have an unshakable belief in America’s future.” The alliance will include designing and manufacturing sophisticated radio frequency components and other “cutting-edge wireless connectivity” parts in the United States, according to Apple. “5G technology is shaping the future of next-generation consumer electronics — and Apple is spending tens of billions of dollars to develop this field in the United States,” the company said. Apple is on pace to meet a commitment it made in 2021 to invest \$430 billion in the US economy over the course of five years, according to the Silicon Valley technology titan. It said those investments include money put into data centers, capital projects and suppliers. — AFP

Climate scientists  
flee Twitter as  
hostility surges

**PARIS:** Scientists suffering insults and mass-spam are abandoning Twitter for alternative social networks as hostile climate-change denialism surges on the platform following Elon Musk’s takeover. Researchers have documented an explosion of hate and misinformation on Twitter since the Tesla billionaire took over in October 2022 — and now experts say communicating about climate science on the social network on which many of them rely is getting harder.

Policies aimed at curbing the deadly effects of climate change are accelerating, prompting a rise in what experts identify as organized resistance by opponents of climate reform.

Peter Gleick, a climate and water specialist with nearly 99,000 followers, announced on May 21 he would no longer post on the platform because it was amplifying racism and sexism. While he is accustomed to “offensive, personal, ad hominem attacks, up to and including direct physical threats”, he told AFP, “in the past few months, since the takeover and changes at Twitter, the amount, vituperativeness, and intensity of abuse has skyrocketed”.

## Climate tweets decline

Robert Rohde, a physicist and lead scientist at the non-profit environmental data analysis group Berkeley Earth, analyzed activity on hundreds of accounts

of widely followed specialists posting about climate science before and after the takeover. He found climate scientists’ tweets were losing impact. The average number of likes they received was down 38 percent and average retweets fell 40 percent. Twitter has not commented directly about what changes it has made to the algorithms that drive traffic and visibility.

Contacted at its email address for comment, its press department returned its now customary reply, an automated email with a “poop” emoji. But in a tweet seen as an acknowledgement of a deliberate change, Musk wrote in January: “People on the right should see more ‘left-wing’ stuff and people on the left should see more ‘right-wing’ stuff. But you can just block it if you want to stay in an echo chamber.”

## Climate denial bots

In another analysis, prominent climatologist Katharine Hayhoe monitored responses to a tweet on climate change which she published twice, as an experiment, on separate dates before and after the takeover. She counted the hostile comments and examined them for signs that they came from bots — automated accounts that researchers say are pushing mass misinformation.

Inauthentic accounts can be identified by analysis tools such as Bot Sentinel. Replies from apparent trolls or bots increased 15 to 30 times over a two-month period compared to the previous two years, Hayhoe tweeted in January 2023. “Before October, my account was growing steadily at a rate of at least several thousand new followers a month. Since then, it has not changed,” she told AFP.

Andrew Dessler, professor of atmospheric sciences at Texas A&M University, said he was mov-



**Scientists rely on social media to communicate about climate and other areas.**

ing most of his climate communication to Substack, a newsletter platform. “Climate communications on Twitter are less useful (now) given that I can see that my tweets are getting less engagement,” he said.

“In response to almost any tweet concerning climate change, I find my notifications inundated with replies from verified accounts making misleading or misguided claims.” Others have abandoned Twitter altogether. Hayhoe said that of a Twitter list of 3,000 climate scientists that she keeps, 100 disappeared after the takeover. Glaciologist Ruth Mottram had more than 10,000 followers on Twitter but left in February and joined an alternative scientists’ forum powered by Mastodon — a crowdfunded, decentralized grouping of social networks founded in 2016. “It’s really been a revelation in many ways. — AFP





This announcement is prepared for promotional purposes and does not omit any essential information related to the investment in the financial security subject of this announcement

## Invitation to Participate in the Increase of the Share Capital of Kuwait International Bank K.S.C.P.

The Board of Directors of Kuwait International Bank K.S.C.P. (the "**Issuer**" or the "**Bank**" or the "**Group**") would like to invite the shareholders who are registered on the share register of the Issuer at the end of trading on 29 May 2023 ("**Record Date**") and the holders of the pre-emption rights who received the pre-emption rights ("**Pre-Emption Rights**") during the Pre-Emption Rights Trading Period to subscribe in the increase of the Issuer's share capital by 428,571,429 new ordinary shares (the "**Issue Shares**") with a nominal value of KWD 42,857,142.900 and at an Offer Price of 140 Kuwaiti fils per Issue Share (including the nominal value of 100 Kuwaiti fils and the issuance premium of 40 Kuwaiti fils) during the Offering Period commencing on 30 May 2023 (inclusive) and closing on 13 June 2023 (inclusive).

*Note: Please refer to the Prospectus for the definition of all capitalized terms*

### Overview of the Offering

**Issuer:**  
Kuwait International Bank K.S.C.P.

**Commercial Registration No:**  
19634

**Total Value of the Offering:**  
KWD 60,000,000/-

**Offering Price:**  
140 Kuwaiti fils per share (including the nominal value of 100 Kuwaiti fils and the issuance premium of 40 Kuwaiti fils).

#### Shareholders with Pre-Emption Rights eligible to subscribe for Issue Shares:

Eligible Shareholders are the holders of the Existing Shares registered at the end of the Record Date preceding the Subscription Period, i.e., the shareholders whose names are registered in the Bank's shareholders register with the Clearing and Depository Agent on the Record Date. For clarity, any trades made on the Bank's shares prior to the Record Date that have not completed the trade settlement process of Boursa Kuwait as of the Record Date (Ex Rights Date), and as a result have not yet been registered on the Bank's shareholder register, will not be considered in determining the Eligible Shareholders of record as of the Record Date. Owners of Pre-Emption Rights include persons that acquired, by assignment or purchase, the Pre-Emption Rights during the trading period of such rights.

#### Issue Shares Entitlement:

Eligible Shareholders will be entitled to 3,886 Issue Shares for every 10,000 existing shares that they hold on the Record Date.

#### Minimum Subscription:

One (1) Issue Share.

#### Maximum Subscription:

There is no maximum subscription amount. Subscribers may subscribe to any number of Issue Shares.

#### Rights Issue Offering Period:

Commences on Tuesday 30th of May, 2023 and will remain open for a period of fifteen (15) calendar days up to and including Tuesday 13th of June, 2023 unless full subscription has been covered before such date. In the event subscription has not been covered, the Board of Directors of the Issuer may extend the Subscription Period at its absolute discretion for similar or lesser terms so that the original Subscription Period and its extension in total do not exceed three (3) months, provided that the approval of the Capital Markets Authority is obtained.

#### Consequences of non-Subscription of Eligible Shareholders:

Eligible Shareholders who choose not to subscribe to the Offer Shares will be subject to a reduction in their percentage of ownership in the Issuer's capital in addition to what they may face from a change in the value of their Existing Shares.

#### Means of Disposal of Pre-Emption Rights:

Pre-Emption Rights may be disposed of, traded or assigned, without any charge, and without any restrictions and in accordance with the applicable rules of Boursa Kuwait and the Clearing and Depository Agent.

#### Eligible Shareholders shall have the following options in respect of the Issue Shares:

- Exercise their Pre-Emption Rights to subscribe for the Issue Shares wholly or partially;
- Exercise their Pre-Emption Rights to subscribe for the Issue Shares and subscribe for Additional Issue Shares;
- Assigning their Pre-Emption Right for subscription in the Issue Shares as per the approved mechanism at least five (5) business days before the Offering is closed in accordance with the relevant rules applied by Boursa Kuwait;
- Subscribers may waive, free of charge, their Pre-emption Right to subscribe to the Issue Shares (and to subscribe to additional Issue Shares, as the case may be, or part thereof) according to the approved mechanism for this during the Subscription Period, at least five (5) business days before close of subscription, in accordance with the relevant rules applied by Boursa Kuwait and the Clearing and Depository Agent; or,
- Subscribers may refrain from resorting to any of the above options, whether by trading, waiving, or exercising the Pre-Emption Right to subscribe to the Offering Shares and leaving the right to subscribe to the unsubscribed shares to the rest of the Eligible Shareholders.

#### Pre-Emptive Rights Trading Period:

Commences on Tuesday 30th of May, 2023 (inclusive) and ends on Monday 5th of June, 2023 (inclusive)

#### Subscription for Additional Issue Shares:

Eligible Shareholders have the right to subscribe for additional Issue Shares ("Additional Issue Shares") in addition to their entitlement to Issue Shares. Such subscription shall be made at the Offering Price of 140 Fils per Additional Issue Share. Subscriber's failure to subscribe, sell or assign the Pre-Emption Right in the Subscription, is considered a waiver of such right to the Subscription in the share capital increase shares in favor of the subscribers who wish to subscribe to a number of shares exceeding the percentage allotted to each of them. If the Eligible Shareholders have not fully subscribed to their entitlement to the Issue Shares, such unsubscribed Issue Shares will be allocated to those Eligible Shareholders who apply for more than their entitlement to the Issue Shares. If the aggregate number of the Additional Issue Shares exceeds the number of available unsubscribed Issue Shares, such shares will be allocated to those Eligible Shareholders applying for such Additional Issue Shares pro rata to their subscription for the Additional Issue Shares. The allocation of the Additional Issue Shares shall be final without any recourse or liability against the Issuer and/or the Issuance Advisor and Subscription Agent.

**Pre-Emption Rights ISIN Code:**  
KW0000160109

**Issuance Advisor and Subscription Agent:**  
Kamco Investment Company K.S.C. (Public) - "Kamco Invest"

**Clearing and Depository Agent:**  
Kuwait Clearing Company K.S.C.

### Subscription Process

Subscriptions and all required documents must be submitted through the Subscription Website.

#### General subscription procedures:

##### The Subscriber shall:

1. Login to the Subscription Website via the link: <https://www.ipo.com.kw>
2. In the event the Subscriber is an individual, he/she shall register the Civil ID number or Trading Number, and the system shall verify whether the Subscriber is eligible for Subscription or not.
3. In the event the Subscriber is a legal entity or a company, the Subscriber must enter the commercial registration number or Trading Number, and then the system shall verify whether the Subscriber is eligible for Subscription or not.
4. Record the number of shares to be subscribed for.
5. The Subscriber must make the payment through either K-NET service or Bank wire transfer as follows:

##### For Subscribers paying through K-NET service, the Subscriber shall:

- Pay from their own account (no other person may pay on behalf of the Subscriber except in the cases provided for under the law).

Or,

##### For Subscribers paying through bank wire transfer, the Subscriber shall:

- Print the Subscription Application Form and visit their own bank and submit a copy of the Subscription Application Form printed from the above link and transfer the amount required to the Subscription Bank Account (net amount without any charges by the transferring bank and the receiving Bank) stated below:

<b>Name of Bank:</b>	Kuwait International Bank
<b>Account number:</b>	01010216104
<b>IBAN:</b>	KW07 KWIB 0000 0000 0001 1010 2161 04
<b>SWIFT:</b>	KWIBKWKW
<b>Beneficiary:</b>	Kuwait International Bank – Increase Capital
<b>Reference/Description:</b>	Kuwait International Bank capital increase + shareholder civil identification (for residents and citizens)/ passport (for non-residents and non-citizens)/ commercial registration number (for corporates) + shareholder contact number

- The subscriber shall upload the copy of the original deposit voucher of the amount transferred from his own bank in addition to the documents listed below under "Documents required to be submitted with applications to subscribe" through the electronic link that will be sent from the Subscription Website to the subscriber via his/her e-mail and a text message on the registered phone.

The Clearing and Depository Agent shall send an email confirmation to the Subscriber in case of a successful Subscription. Failure of any Subscriber to submit a duly completed Subscription Application Form (together with all applicable supporting documentation thereto) to the Subscription Website, after the transfer or deposit of the Subscription Monies as required in the Prospectus, shall render the Subscription Application Form of a Subscriber null and void. Subscription Monies shall not be accepted in cash.

#### Documents required to be submitted with applications to subscribe

The Subscription Application Form must be submitted through the Subscription Website along with the following documentation, as applicable to the nature of and payment method chosen by the Subscriber:

##### a) Individual Subscribers

- Signed Subscription Application Form;
- Copy of personal civil identification card;
- Copy of passport to verify the signature;
- Copy of the bank transfer receipt;
- Copy of the IBAN number;
- Copy of special legal proxy for subscribing in shares (for proxy subscriber);
- Copy of Certificate of Guardianship for orphans;
- Copy of Certificate of Guardianship for minors;
- Copy of a Limitation of Succession Deed for beneficiaries.
- Copy of Guardianship Judgement

##### b) Corporate Subscribers

- Signed Subscription Application Form;
- Copy of the bank transfer receipt;
- Copy of the IBAN number;
- Copy of the Authorized Signatories Certificate or the Extract of the Commercial Register; as the case requires; and
- Copy of the personal identification card of the authorized signatory;

##### c) Non-Kuwaiti Subscribers

- Non-Kuwaiti subscribers (whether corporates or individuals, as the case may be) are required to provide the equivalent of the aforementioned documentation as issued by their jurisdictional authorities if they do not have Kuwaiti issued documentation as highlighted further above.

Cash will not be accepted. The Subscription Monies must be paid in full upon submitting the Subscription Application Form on the Subscription Website by authorizing a debit of the appropriate amount from the subscriber's account with the Bank, or by bank transfer. Subscription amounts will be deposited in full in the Issuer's bank account designated by the Issuer. The Eligible Shareholder must, in any event relating to the Issue Shares or the Additional Issue Shares, ensure that the bank debit or the bank transfer has been processed from their respective bank account and that the subscription account with the Issuer has been credited with the appropriate amount at the time of the submission of the Subscription Application Form to the Clearing and Depository Agent.

There are some risks related to investing in the Issue Shares, including commercial and legal risk factors such as:

#### Risks Related to the Bank:

The Group could be materially adversely affected by any deterioration in economic conditions in Kuwait, which is largely dependent on developments in international oil and gas prices - The Group could also be affected by any future material adverse changes in regional and global financial markets and economic conditions - The Group's business, results of operations and financial condition may be adversely affected by the impact of any resurgence of Covid-19 or similar pandemic, if any - Security interests or guarantees in respect of financing receivables provided in favour of the Group may not be sufficient to cover any losses and may not be legally enforceable - The Group's financial assets and depositors' accounts are concentrated in Kuwait - The Group has significant customer and sector concentrations - The Group is subject to the risk that liquidity may not always be readily available or may only be available at costs which may adversely affect its business - The Group could be adversely affected by the soundness or the perceived soundness of other financial institutions and counterparties - The Group could be adversely affected if it is unable to effectively monitor and control the level of or, where required, successfully restructure its impaired financing with customers in financial distress, or if its impairment allowances are insufficient to cover its financing losses - The Group has significant credit-related contingent liabilities and commitments that may lead to potential losses - A negative change in the Bank's credit rating could limit its ability to raise funding and may increase its funding costs - The Bank may not be able to raise capital as and when needed on commercially attractive terms - The Group could be adversely affected by market risks - The banking industry is competitive and the Group is exposed to significant competition in Kuwait - The Group's risk management policies and procedures may not be effective in all circumstances and may leave it exposed to unidentified or unanticipated risks - The Group's internal compliance systems might not be fully effective in all circumstances - The Group's accounting policies and methods are critical to how it reports its financial condition and results of operations and require management to make estimates about matters that are uncertain - Risks relating to the State of Kuwait - Emerging markets are exposed to greater risks than more developed markets, including significant political, social and economic risks - The Issuer is exposed to the risks associated with expanding into new markets, newly established businesses, businesses that are in the initial stages of operation, and acquiring new companies and business activities - The Issuer's cash receipts are mostly limited to dividends or proceeds from the sale of assets - The Issuer may not be able to effectively re-invest the amounts resulting from the sale of the investments - Credit risks related to the parties contracting with the Issuer - profit rate and stock price risk - Risks associated with the foreign exchange rate - The Issuer may be affected by any disruption in the financial markets - The Issuer's growth may not continue at its known level, which may affect its profits - Competition from global competitors - Risks related to Kuwait and the Middle East and North Africa region - Risks related to changes in significant accounting standards and new standards - Reducing the credit ratings of the Issuer - The Issuer is at risk associated with the loss of its core staff - Operational risks - Internet Security Risks (Cyber Security) - The Bank is exposed to reputational risk in relation to its operations and business sector - The Bank has contingent liabilities and credit related commitments which may result in potential losses - The Bank is exposed to various risks arising from fluctuations in profit rates and the exchange rate - Investment Suitability - Liquidity and stock price change - Dividend distribution.

#### Legal Risks:

Risks relating to Legal, Regulatory, Compliance, Accounting and Corporate Governance Issues - The Group is subject to extensive regulation and changes in this regulation, or the interpretation and enforcement of this regulation, or any failure by the Group to comply with this regulation could have a material adverse effect on the Group - Kuwait and other GCC legal systems continue to develop and this may create an uncertain environment for investment and business activity - Legal and regulatory systems may create a volatile environment for investment and business activities - Kuwait and other GCC legal systems continue to evolve, and this may create an uncertain environment for investment and business activity - Regulatory risks related to the Bank - Bankruptcy under Kuwaiti law - Force Majeure Events.

#### Risks Related to the Offer Shares:

Investing in securities in developing and emerging markets generally involves a high level of risk - A decrease in the current ownership percentage - Risks Associated with Non-Profitability and Disposal of Pre-emption Rights - Risks of lack of demand for Pre-emption Rights and shares of the Bank, or forfeit of Subscription - Speculative Risks associated with Pre-emption Rights - Taxes on payments for Issue Shares - Income Tax can be applied to Companies and other entities in Kuwait and Value Added Tax is applied - Change in Law - Risks of Taxation of Dividends - The GCC Countries may enter into a Monetary Union.

For further details on any such risk factors, please refer to the downloadable/printable version of the Prospectus relating to the offering on the Issuer's website ([www.kib.com.kw](http://www.kib.com.kw)), the Issuance Advisor and Subscription Agent's website ([www.kamcoinvest.com](http://www.kamcoinvest.com)), the Clearing and Depository Agent's website ([www.ipo.com.kw](http://www.ipo.com.kw)), or Boursa Kuwait's website ([www.boursakuwait.com.kw](http://www.boursakuwait.com.kw)) or obtain a physical copy from the offices of the Issuer, Issuance Advisor and Subscription Agent, or Boursa Kuwait.

Prior to investing in any Issue Shares, prospective investors should carefully consider, together with all other information contained in the Prospectus relating to the Offering, the risk factors highlighted above and seek professional advice before investing (for further details on any information related to the Offering, please refer to the downloadable/printable version of the Prospectus relating to the offering found in the above websites). This announcement does not contain all the information that prospective investors should consider before deciding to invest in the Issue Shares and does not purport to be complete.

#### Subscription Information

The necessary information regarding the investment in the Issue Shares is included in the Prospectus.

**The terms and conditions in the Prospectus and the Subscription Application Forms shall apply. You are hereby advised to seek the advice of an advisor licensed by law and which specializes in advising on the subscription prior to making a decision to subscribe.**

**The Kuwait Capital Markets Authority or any regulatory organization in the State of Kuwait shall not bear any liability for the contents of this announcement or its accuracy, and not for any loss arising from reliance on any part of this announcement.**



To access the prospectus and other related documents

For more information: [kibci@kamcoinvest.com](mailto:kibci@kamcoinvest.com) - (965) 2233 6648 - (965) 2233 6976

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## Business

# NBK partners with Visa to launch ‘She’s Next’ program for first time in Kuwait

## Al-Awadhi: NBK has many programs to support women empowerment

**KUWAIT:** In its ongoing efforts to empower women and promote their social contributions, especially in business, NBK has collaborated with Visa on ‘She’s Next’ initiative, a global advocacy program that aims to support women-owned small businesses which is brought for the first time to Kuwait. Until June 23, women entrepreneurs from the owners of small businesses in Kuwait can apply to ‘She’s Next’ to receive support in the form of funding, training and mentorship.

One winner will receive a grant of \$50,000, a tailored training program, and access to She’s Next Club resources such as a workshop library and community of entrepreneurs. Grand prize winner will be chosen through a jury that will evaluate participants’ work based on certain criteria including but not limited to Compelling Story of Entrepreneurship, Strength of Business Metrics, Compelling Digital Presence and other.

Commenting on this partnership, Ghadeer Al-Awadhi, Assistant General Manager – Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait, , at Na-

tional Bank of Kuwait said: “Supporting and empowering women is firmly embedded in NBK’s corporate culture, strategies and commitment to deliver on its CSR responsibilities to ensure that no segment of society is marginalized and that equality is achieved among all.” “NBK has many programs in place that support women’s empowerment. Starting from equal pay to inclusion and career development opportunities, the latest of which was ‘NBK RISE’ which has been a huge success in its first batch organized this year,” she noted.

“We recognize the critical role that women entrepreneurs play in driving economic growth and innovation. With the rapid pace of digital transformation in our country, it is more important than ever to support the success of women-owned businesses. That is why NBK is proud to partner with Visa for the inaugural edition of ‘She’s Next’ in Kuwait,” she added.

“Through this partnership with Visa, the global leader in payment sector, we will empower women entrepreneurs with the tools and resources they need to thrive in today’s digital economy and be-

yond,” she continued. On his part, Ankush Devadason, Visa’s Head of Financial Institutions for Kuwait, said: “We are proud to partner with National Bank of Kuwait to bring our global ‘She’s Next’ initiative for the first time to Kuwait. Women entrepreneurs face unique challenges, including limited access to capital, heightened security concerns, and societal pressures, which are further compounded by the shift towards digitalization.”

‘NBK Rise’ is an inspiring experience that is not exclusive for NBK, but brings together a number of leading corporations in Kuwait, who signed a pledge to increase the representation of women in leadership positions, reflecting their firm commitment to work jointly to achieve the goals of this global program. The 9-month program is divided into various modules, each tackling a different area of leadership. The participants work closely with world-renowned universities, which provide them with the required training to acquire best-in-class leadership tools and techniques.

NBK recently unveiled one-of-a-kind commercial credit cards that provide financial solutions for



Ghadeer Al-Awadhi



Ankush Devadason

businesses. NBK Commercial Cards offer unlimited cashback of 1.5 percent (for the credit card) and 1% (for the prepaid card). Other unique advantages include offering customers virtual cards that facilitate easy fund access while safeguarding their actual card number.

## Taiwan’s Quanta Computer confirms investment in Mexico

**TAIPEI:** Taiwan’s Quanta Computer confirmed it had “investment plans” in Mexico on Wednesday after the governor of Nuevo Leon announced the company would pump an additional \$1 billion into his state.

A Tesla supplier and Macbook maker, Quanta is one of the world’s leading electronics and contract manufacturers, and is best known for making the “brains” that go inside electric cars.

“Quanta has investment plans in Mexico and will gradually advance based on customer demands and (its) business development plan,” it announced in a filing to the Taiwan Stock Exchange on Wednesday.

It declined to provide financial details, saying only that “the investment in Mexico does not involve equity investment”. Quanta’s statement comes a day after the governor of the northern Mexican state of Nuevo Leon announced an investment of “\$1 billion more” from the company after a successful pilot project. “Because they liked it so much, they gave us the news that of the \$250 million (already invested), they are going to invest \$1 billion more,” Garcia said in a video he shared on Twitter Tuesday.

He added the investment was “just for equipment and technology transfer” in the first phase, and that land and construction would still need to be factored in. Quanta has already recruited a workforce of 2,500 people since starting operations in Nuevo Leon.

The state is home to Monterrey city, where Elon Musk’s Tesla is currently building a \$5 billion new “gigafactory”. The investments in Nuevo Leon are part of the “nearshoring” trend among American companies and their suppliers, in which production sites are established closer to the US market.

In an interview with AFP in March, Garcia said production of Tesla electric vehicles could begin next January at the giant plant. He added that he hoped the investment would create 7,000 direct jobs in Monterrey — and 40-50,000 indirect ones, as Tesla was expected to bring with it many of the companies that make parts for its vehicles. Between November and February, around 30 Tesla suppliers arrived in the region, Garcia said. — AFP

## Iran-China non-oil trade value hits \$5.23bn in 4 months

**TEHRAN:** The value of non-oil trade exchanges between Iran and China has reached \$5.23 billion in January-April, 2023, according to figures by the Chinese customs office.

Trade between Iran and China had increased by 4 percent in value terms in January-April compared to the same period last year, the figures showed. The rise in trade were mostly due to an increase in Chinese exports to Iran, showed the customs figures which indicated that shipments had risen by 46% to \$3.71 billion in the four months to April. The customs figures showed that Iran’s exports to China reached \$1.52 billion in January-April.

Iran-China trade in April reached some \$1.183 billion, said the report, adding that Chinese exports to Iran had increased by 30 percent to reach \$797 million while imports from Iran fell by 30 percent to \$386 million over the period. Iranian customs figure show China was Iran’s largest trading partner in the calendar year to late March. The East Asian country imported some \$14.584 billion worth of goods from Iran while its exports to Iran reached \$15.744 billion over the same period. — Agencies

## IMF staff agree to expand credit for Kenya by \$1bn

**NAIROBI:** The International Monetary Fund said it has reached a staff-level agreement with Kenya that would provide the cash-strapped government with access to another \$1 billion in credit. Kenya is laboring under a public debt

## German chip charge could short-circuit on myriad challenges

**FRANKFURT:** Germany is seeking to lead a European charge to boost chip production with a series of mega-investments but the drive faces challenges ranging from high energy prices to subsidy rows and worker shortages.

When the pandemic sent semiconductor demand surging and snarled global supply chains, Western nations long reliant on Asia to produce their chips cheaply got a nasty shock as they faced sudden shortages. The European Union was jolted into action, and is rolling out a plan to double the bloc’s share of global chip production to 20 percent by 2030, and mobilize billions of euros in investment.

Industrial powerhouse Germany — whose carmakers were among firms hit hard by the shortages — is hoping to lead the European renaissance, with major investments announced in recent times, including from Intel, Infineon, Bosch and Wolfspeed. Taiwanese tech giant TSMC, one of the world’s leading chip companies, is also considering to build its first European plant in the eastern city of Dresden.

At the groundbreaking this month for a new Infineon chip factory in Dresden, Chancellor Olaf Scholz said semiconductors were “often referred to as the petroleum of the 21st century”.

Chips, used to power everything from smartphones to fighter jets, were the one component “on which almost everything else depends,” he added. Infineon plans to invest about five billion euros (\$5.4 billion) in the plant. It is due to open in 2026, and create up to 1,000 jobs in

## UK inflation slides to 13-month low, stays elevated

**LONDON:** Britain’s annual inflation rate struck a 13-month low in April, official data showed Wednesday, but remains elevated at 8.7 percent as soaring food prices offset weaker energy costs, prolonging a cost-of-living crisis.

The rate of price increases slowed from 10.1 percent in March to below double digits for the first time since August last year, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement. At 8.7 percent, UK inflation is at the lowest level since March last year when the rate stood at 7.0 percent, the ONS added.

“However, prices in general remain substantially higher than they were this time last year, with annual food price inflation near historic highs,” noted ONS chief economist Grant Fitzner. While energy prices have slumped on easing supply concerns thanks to warmer weather in Europe and as nations become less dependent on Russian oil and gas, food costs continue to soar. UK food price inflation stood at 19 percent in April, around the highest level in more than 45 years.

“Droughts and floods in Europe and elsewhere have been disrupting supply chains and pushing up prices of food stuffs,” said Tom Lancaster, analyst at the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit.

The price of gas, which is used to make fertilizer, remains high compared to before the COVID pandemic. “Fertilizers applied to crops now will be adding to costs for food harvested later in the year,” Lancaster added.

Central banks are battling elevated inflation by hiking interest rates.

Economists on Wednesday said the Bank of England was likely to raise borrowing costs again at its next meeting as the latest inflation figure was above the BoE’s 8.4-percent prediction.

### Economy boost

Britain’s annual inflation rate is the highest among countries in the Group of Seven rich econo-

mountain of \$70 billion but its loan repayments have jumped as the local shilling slumped to all-time lows against the dollar.

In a bid to ease the pressure on its finances, the government of President William Ruto has drawn up a 3.6-trillion-shilling (\$26.2 billion) budget for 2023/24 with proposed new taxes expected to generate 289 billion shillings. The IMF deal, which is subject to approval by its board in July, follows a mission by a team from the international lender to the country earlier this month.

The IMF said in a statement issued on Tues-

Dresden, the state capital of Saxony, already home to a dense network of chip companies.

### Soaring costs

Not every project has been running so smoothly, however. Intel announced with great fanfare in March last year plans to build a massive chip plant in the city of Magdeburg, with initial investment of 17 billion euros, the centerpiece of the US firm’s European investment drive.

But after inflation surged following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the project has been delayed, with construction — originally supposed to start in the first half of 2023 — not yet under way. The company is reportedly pushing for higher government subsidies to cover the impact of higher costs.

Asked about the reports, Intel said that “much has changed” since the project was announced.

“Geopolitical challenges have become greater, semiconductor demand has declined, and disruptions in the global economy have resulted in increased costs, from construction materials to energy,” the company said in a statement. Germany’s economy ministry said the government was currently discussing measures to “close the cost gap of the planned project, which has increased significantly in recent months”. For Germany’s chip ecosystem, another major challenge is finding enough workers.

In occupations that are particularly key for the chip industry, there is currently a shortage of 62,000 skilled workers, according to a study from the German Economic Institute in December.

Europe’s “Chips Act”, agreed on by the European Parliament and EU member states last month, aims to mobilize more than 43 billion euros in public and private investments.

As well as Germany, investments have been announced elsewhere in the bloc, including a new plant in France built by French-Italian chipmaker STMicroelectronics and US-based GlobalFoundries.



Britain’s annual inflation rate struck a 13-month low in April, official data showed Wednesday but remains elevated at 8.7 percent as soaring food prices offset weaker energy costs, prolonging a cost-of-living crisis.

mies featuring also Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States. The BoE’s target inflation rate of 2.0 percent remains very far off, while the UK government has said it sees the level dropping to about 5.0 percent by year-end. In April, “the rate of inflation fell notably as the large energy price rises seen last year (following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine) were not repeated”, said Fitzner.

The data comes one day after the International Monetary Fund delivered a major U-turn on its forecast for the UK economy, saying it expected growth this year just one month after predicting a contraction.

Britain’s economy is expected to expand 0.4 percent in 2023, the IMF said in its latest outlook document, which cited weaker energy prices.

The IMF ripped up its previous forecast in April for a 0.3-percent contraction. “The IMF said yesterday we’ve acted decisively to tackle inflation but although it is positive that it is now in single digits, food prices are still rising too fast,” finance minister Jeremy Hunt

day that its total commitments to Kenya would increase to \$3.52 billion from \$2.43 billion previously agreed in April 2021. If approved in July, Kenya would have immediate access to \$410 million, it said. Kenya has been grappling with a cost-of-living crisis, a punishing drought and the decline in the value of the shilling, and saw economic growth slow to 4.8 percent last year from 7.6 percent in 2021.

“The government budget has been under pressure from shortfalls in revenue collection and challenging financing conditions,” the IMF said. The agency urged the government

said following Wednesday’s data and after meeting food producers this week over the issue.

### Strikes and rate hikes

Capital Economics chief UK economist Paul Dales said that “with inflation proving stickier than” BoE expectations, “it now seems all-but certain” the central bank will raise interest rates again in June, to 4.75 percent. The BoE earlier this month lifted its key interest rate to the highest level since the 2008 financial crisis, noting inflation remained stubbornly high.

It hiked the rate by a quarter-point to 4.5 percent — its 12th increase in a row — fuelling the cost-of-living crisis across Britain. UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak’s Conservative government recently suffered a drubbing in local elections, as voters gave their verdict over rampant living costs despite state efforts to partly subsidize energy bills. Over the past year, the nation has been plagued by strikes, staged mainly by railway and postal staff but also by teachers and health workers, as high inflation erodes the value of wages. — AFP

to reform state-owned enterprises such as loss-making national carrier Kenya Airways and utility company Kenya Power. Ruto’s government is aiming to reduce its budget deficit in part by introducing taxes on a range of goods including beauty products, gambling and various foodstuffs and fuel, measures criticized by the opposition for punishing ordinary Kenyans. While the IMF said it had a favorable medium-term outlook for the Kenyan economy, “significant challenges remain against the backdrop of slow global economic growth and tight financial conditions”. — AFP



Lifestyle



(From 2nd left) US screenwriter and actor Jason Schwartzman, US actor Jeffrey Wright, British actor Rupert Friend, US actress Rita Wilson, US actor Tom Hanks, French film composer Alexandre Desplat, US actor Bryan Cranston, actress Maya Hawke, US screenwriter Wes Anderson, US actor Adrien Brody, US actress Scarlett Johansson, US actor Matt Dillon, US actor Steve Carell, US actor Stephen Park, US actor Jake Ryan and US actress Hope Davis pose with the Director of the Cannes film festival Iris Knobloch (left) and the General Delegate of the Cannes Film Festival Thierry Fremaux as they arrive for the screening of the film “Asteroid City”.

Wes Anderson says lockdown helped inspire ‘Asteroid City’

Wes Anderson’s new film puts Westerns, theatre, 1950s Americana and an alien into a blender for another of his atypical — and star-packed — concoctions that he says is about “reckoning with forces beyond your control”. As always, “Asteroid City”, which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival on Tuesday, features a roster of actors that reads like a Hollywood phonebook.

man and Tilda Swinton in the film. The one-of-a-kind director never seems too influenced by events in the real world, but he told AFP the Covid-19 pandemic did have an impact. “This movie is certainly informed by the most bizarre viral moment in recent history,” he said. “Writing it during this pandemic, in the middle of the most locked-down lockdown, we were not sure we would ever go out again — so I think that’s sorta in it.



(From left) US actress Maya Hawke, US actor Steve Carell, British actor Rupert Friend, US actor Stephen Park, US screenwriter and actor Jason Schwartzman, US actor Jeffrey Wright, US film director Wes Anderson, US actress Scarlett Johansson, US actor Bryan Cranston, US actor Matt Dillon and US actor Jake Ryan pose during a photocall for the film “Asteroid City” at the 76th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes.



(From left) US actor Tom Hanks, US actress Scarlett Johansson, US film director Wes Anderson and US actor Jason Schwartzman wave as they arrive for the screening of the film “Asteroid City”. — AFP photos

Tom Hanks, Steve Carell and Margot Robbie — newcomers to the Anderson family — join past collaborators Scarlett Johansson and Edward Norton and regulars like Adrien Brody, Jason Schwartz-

**Hanks is ‘intimidating’**  
“Asteroid City” is a bizarre and knotty tale set in a remote desert town where a group of child geniuses are gathered for a science competition that is interrupted by an alien visitor, leaving them locked up in quarantine. But in typically convoluted Anderson form, the desert story is presented as a play being performed in New York. Anderson says he wanted to pay homage to actors, who remain something of a mystery to him, even after working with the biggest names in the business. “Many of the actors are my friends now, but nevertheless they are different on set,” Anderson said. “Actors recognize something in each other that normal people don’t go through — this thing of being the one who everyone is going to watch. It has this interesting strange effect. It became part of what the movie is about.” Working with Hanks was a joy, he told AFP, though he was initially nervous. “He’s a wonderful actor but also a huge

movie star... it’s intimidating. “But his manner on set is: you suggest something and he says ‘Sorry, I should have thought of that.’ That encourages you to be better because you’re empowered by this person with such an aura.”

**Scarlett’s smokey voice**  
One person who is glaringly absent is Bill Murray, who has appeared in all Anderson’s films since “Rushmore” in 1998. “Bill was cast in a part but then he got Covid three days before we were supposed to shoot,” said Anderson. “We replaced him very quickly

with the wonderful Steve Carell who was great.” Luckily, Murray’s health improved to come hang out on set for the last of the shoot, he added, and Carell turns in a hilarious cameo as a hotel owner. What Anderson often loves most about his actors is their voice, something he discovered when he cast George Clooney as the lead in animated film “Fantastic Mr Fox”. “Only when I recorded George did I realize how much it’s about his voice. And that kinda applies to the majority of actors — so much depends on the voice.”

Johansson, who did voiceover for Anderson’s “Isle of Dogs” (2018) “has this wonderful, slightly smokey voice,” he said. Arguably, no director has ever had a style that is so immediately recognizable as Anderson: the symmetrical playhouse-like sets, bright colors, deadpan irony. He can’t help it. “There’s a way I do scenes that is just me,” he said. “It’s more like a condition than a choice.” — AFP

More women than men are competing for medals at the Chelsea Flower Show this year — a first after more than a century of competition at the flagship London event. The highlight of the British horticultural year opened to the public on Tuesday, with some 145,000 people expected to attend by Saturday’s close. King Charles III and Queen Camilla visited on Monday, as did Catherine, Princess of Wales, whose husband William is heir to the throne. A decade ago, women made up just 27 percent of medal candidates for their show gardens. This year, that has shot up to 58 percent. In the “balconies and pots” section, created in 2021 to allow new talent to emerge through less expensive projects, all the contenders are women. “There is much work to be done around increasing diversity in horticulture,” said Helena Pettit, the Royal Horticultural Society’s (RHS) director of shows and gardens. “But it is an encouraging step forward to have a garden category at RHS Chelsea with so many women.” Fiona Davison, head of libraries and exhibitions at the society, explained that for a long time gardening was seen as a male preserve. At best, it was considered a “delightful hobby” for more well-to-do women but certainly not a career, she noted.

**‘Resentment’**  
Back in the 19th century, the only way to learn was as an apprentice gardener from the age of 12 or 14 in single-sex



lodgings, which barred girls from entering the profession. It was not until 1893 and the creation of an official RHS diploma that gardening opened up to young women. At the time, women outnumbered men in Britain and “respectable” professions needed to be found for those in the middle class. But progress was piecemeal. When the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew allowed its first female gardeners to wear loose-fitting breeches like the men in the

late 1890s, the shock was so great that the experiment was swiftly abandoned. Meanwhile after Olive Harrison topped the horticultural exams a few years later, she was refused a scholarship to work in the garden on the grounds that she was female. “There was a lot of resentment from male gardeners and it was really tough for a lot of the women,” said Davison, who has penned a forthcoming book on Britain’s pre-World War I forward-think-

ing female gardeners. “But some did make it through.” This year’s Chelsea Flower Show celebrates eight of these often-overlooked pioneers, with a “yin and yang” inspired flower installation symbolizing “how women can embody both softness and strength,” show manager Pollyanna Wilkinson told AFP. The floral exhibits are in the traditional English cottage garden style, and were all produced by women.

**‘Social purpose’**  
Among the pioneers honored are global garden designer Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932) and the novelist, poet and gardener Vita Sackville-West (1892-1962), who was also a lover of Virginia Woolf. The Indian botanist Janaki Ammal (1897-1984) and the English gardener Beth Chatto (1923-2018) also feature. “They were very often gardening to make the world a better place with a social purpose behind them,” explained Davison. “They were gardening in the cities, creating public parks and working in garden squares,” she said, adding they were “looking for spaces that they could do that because they didn’t have political power”. More recently, Chatto in particular blazed a trail. She won 10 consecutive gold medals at Chelsea, starting in the late 1970s, but a judge once wanted to disqualify her on the basis that her plants were all weeds. “She was way ahead of her time because she was very conscious of plants in their environment, and had a much more flexible view of what a garden could be,” said Davison. “She was prepared to use wild plants or plants that would be deemed non-garden plants or weeds, because they did well,” she added, in an era when manicured gardens dominated horticulture. “That was her driving philosophy and now that’s very much the direction, even in the setting of the Chelsea Flower Show.” — AFP



Britain's Queen Camilla views David Austin roses with David JC Austin during a visit to the 2023 RHS Chelsea Flower Show in London. - AFP photos



Britain's Queen Camilla looks at flowers during a visit to the 2023 RHS Chelsea Flower Show.



Britain's Queen Camilla smells roses during a visit to the 2023 RHS Chelsea Flower Show in London.



Britain's Queen Camilla views a bee house with beekeeper Paula Carnell during a visit to the 2023 RHS Chelsea Flower Show.

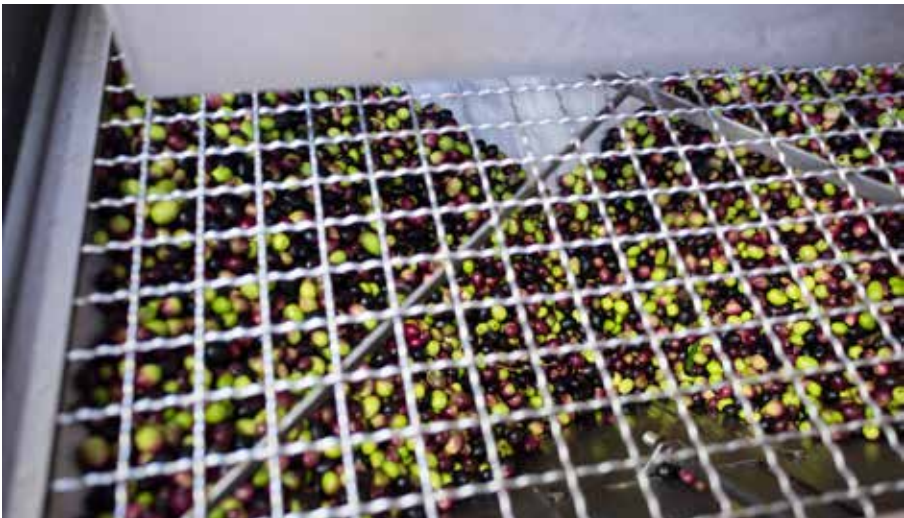


A display of daffodils is pictured, exhibited by Taylors Bulbs on the press day ahead of the 2023 RHS Chelsea Flower Show.





A worker picks Frantoio olives using a rake to pull the fruit off the trees where it is collected on nets at Tokara and Olive Estate near Stellenbosch. — AFP photos



Recently picked Frantoio olives are fed into the press.



A general view of some of the estate's olive oil, with bread and butter on a table at the Vine Bistro.



Workers load Frantoio olives at Tokara and Olive Estate near Stellenbosch.



Workers collect recently picked Frantoio olives on nets.

South Africa is famous for many things but not necessarily for olive oil, where Greece, Italy and Spain are the undisputed kings. But the country's farmers are undeterred, eyeing a potential share of the lucrative market for top-quality extra virgin oils.

At Tokara, a farm about an hour's drive from Cape Town, workers pull rakes through branches to make the ripening olives tumble to the ground.

Harvesting the green treasure is under full swing in this popular region at the southern tip of Africa, where the landscape is reminiscent of Tuscany. "Can you smell" the aroma, asks Gert van Dyk, 49, the farm's operations manager, holding a glass of freshly-pressed extra virgin olive oil that clinched an award in the United States earlier this year.



people used olive oil, he recalls.

"But now a lot of farms have been planting olives... there's really no reason to buy an olive oil coming from Europe 10,000 kilometres (6,200 miles) away," said Dehosse who owns four restaurants in the region. "We really get artisanal, fantastic products."

#### 'Very fashionable'

At his table, he offers an Italian-style appetizer of simple bread dipped in olive oil, which has become "very fashionable". He always goes for locally-produced oil. "I know what I buy hasn't been cut with anything. It's 100 percent extra virgin olive oil". The first South African olives were grown in the early 20th century by an Italian immigrant, Fernando Costa, says SA Olive, an association of grower and producers.

Then in 1998, Giulio Bertrand, a retired Italian in South Africa, imported 17 varieties of olive trees and planted them on his farm in Stellenbosch. Today, the Morgenster farm grows olive trees on 42

hectares, and millions of trees across the country descended from Bertrand's first olive trees. "My grandfather was known as the father of olive oil in South Africa as he paved the way to the olive oil industry as we know it today," says Bertrand's 29-year-old granddaughter, Vittoria Castagnetta, who works for the family's still-active business.

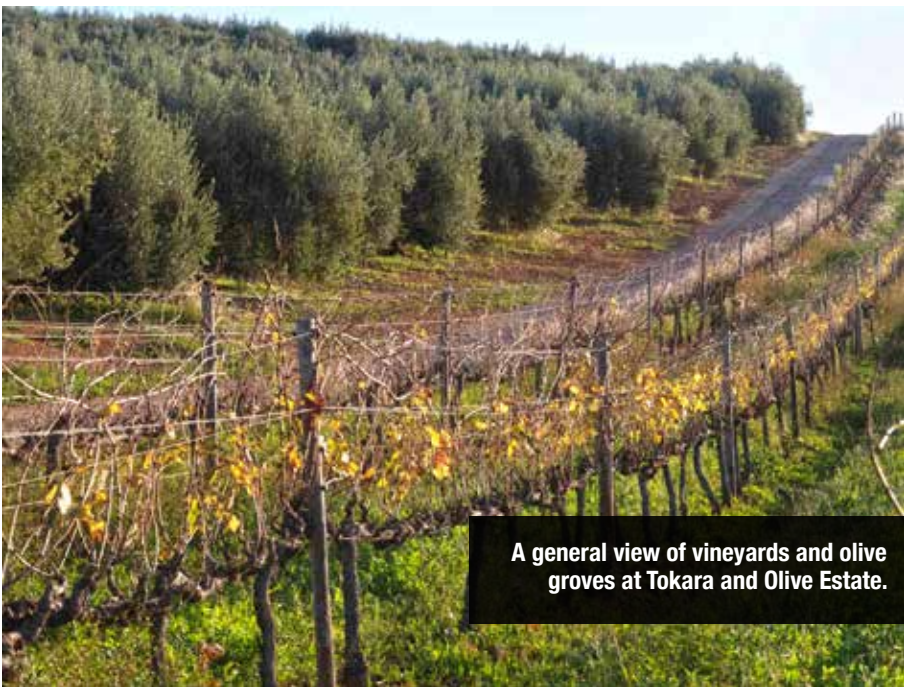
Since then, the idyllic hills of the Cape region, with their Mediterranean climate and rolling vineyards, have produced olives recognized beyond the country's borders for their quality.

A South African oil was in May awarded the "Absolute Best Olive Oil" in the world title at the prestigious EVOLEUM awards in Spain. The winning farm, De Rustica, 400 kilometres from Stellenbosch, enjoys the same Mediterranean climate. While olive oil remains a luxury product for many South Africans, producers like Van Dyk have in recent years noticed "an increase in demand from the local market" as part of the quest for healthier diets.

Producing up to two million litres of olive oil annually, against global output of over three million tons, means it may take time for South Africa to compete with big global brands. Yet making inroads into the luxury oil industry, is "one of the things South Africa can really be proud of. Same thing as our wine, it just needs to be discovered," said the chef.

But South Africa may well start to position itself for the export market as some of the world's traditional producers in Europe are facing headwinds in the face of droughts and recurrent heatwaves. Low output caused by climatic disasters have drastically hiked global olive oil prices in recent months.

In January 2022, oil sold at 3,500 euros (\$3,700) per tonne, a year later it was up at 5,300 euros, and this month it had shot to 5,800 euros, according to international oil broking firm Baillon Interco. — AFP



A general view of vineyards and olive groves at Tokara and Olive Estate.



A general view of Frantoio olives on trees at Tokara and Olive Estate.



Christophe Dehosse, Chef Patron of the Vine Bistro prepares Bouillabaisse, starting with frying fish in olive oil from the estate in Stellenbosch.

## New York's landmark 'Flatiron' sold — hopefully for real this time

New York's iconic Flatiron Building was auctioned off Tuesday for \$161 million to a group of investors led by real estate developer Jeffrey Gural, after the previous bidding's winner failed to complete the transaction, organizers said. The sale of the world-famous skyscraper took place outdoors in lower Manhattan with seven bidders registered and about a hundred people present, Mannion Auctions told AFP.

The property - on a wedge-shaped lot at the intersections of Fifth Avenue, Broadway and 22nd Street - went to Gural, 80, one of its five current owners, who was the second highest bidder during the highly contested previous auction.

On March 22, little-known bidder Jacob Garlick, founder of the Abraham Trust equity venture fund, obtained rights to the Flatiron with a pricey offer

of \$190 million but missed a deadline to pony up 10 percent of the money to lock in purchase. The 121-year-old property - one of the first skyscrapers in Manhattan, designed by renowned Chicago architect Daniel Burnham - has been empty since its last tenant left in 2019. Its five owners could not agree on what to do with the building, and a judge ordered its auction.

After Garlick pulled out of the deal, the building could have automatically gone to Gural, who had offered \$189.5 million in March, but he opted for a new auction to be held. The 22-storey triangular edifice completed in 1902 was revolutionary for its time, built on a steel skeleton and clad in limestone and terra cotta with touches of both beaux arts and Renaissance revival architecture. — AFP



People march past the Flatiron Building in Union Square in the Manhattan borough of New York City. — AFP



## Lifestyle

## Filmmakers at Cannes grapple with ‘tectonic’ AI shift

At an AI talk on a Cannes beach, a presenter's voice is cloned and used to say a random phrase in three languages, while another's face is replaced live on screen as they speak.

Few of the film buffs attending the premiere industry festival are shocked.

Ever since the artificial intelligence chatbot ChatGPT took the world by storm six months ago, spurring an AI race among tech giants, the technology has shaken up the film industry.



US actor Tom Hanks poses after the screening of the film “Asteroid City” during the 76th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France.

The use of AI to write scripts is one of the leading concerns among Hollywood movie and TV writers who are in their third week of a strike that has upended productions. However the technology is revolutionizing everything from voice acting, to analyzing scripts and coming up with a budget, to creating mock-ups of scenes before you even pick up a camera.

“New things are created every single day,” says Quinn Halleck, a 25-year-old filmmaker who is about to release a three-part short movie called “./ Sigma\_001” which is about a sentient AI being, and uses AI from conception to marketing and distribution. “It’s not just one tool, it’s sort of sprinkled throughout the workflow process,” he tells AFP on the sidelines of a panel on AI.

This ranges from asking ChatGPT what a character could be like, what her backstory is, and “riffing” off that to create ideas. Telling an anecdote about a showrunner who hires writers by giving them the same prompt as he gives ChatGPT and seeing if they perform better, he argues the “bar has been raised” to come up with great ideas. But while some assistant roles may disappear, he believes a human director remains essential. “You still have to come up with the ideas, you have to create the prompts and curate the answers.”

## Deepfake technology

The world’s leading film festival, taking place on the French Riviera, got a hefty dose of AI with a lengthy scene de-aging Harrison Ford, 80, in “Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny”.

While producers have ruled out using AI to keep the role going, actors like Tom Hanks believe it will allow him to keep acting long after his death. Hanks is currently being de-aged in his upcoming movie “Here”, with help from deepfake, face-swapping technology from AI firm Metaphysic.

The company’s co-founder Tom Graham says technology has bridged the



US actor Harrison Ford poses with his Honorary Palme d’Or during a photocall for the film “Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny” at the 76th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes. — AFP photos

so-called “uncanny valley” - the visceral human rejection of less-than-realistic androids - and is now creating deepfakes where you “absolutely can’t tell the difference”. The company is behind Deepfake Tom Cruise, a TikTok account that perfectly imitates the actor, and also created a hyper-real Elvis Presley who morphed into Simon Cowell and his

co-judges on an episode of “America’s Got Talent”.

While filmmakers are brimming with excitement over the technology’s potential, questions of its abuse hang over the session. “This set of technologies represents, you know, a set of tectonic social shifts like the industrial revolution, which will play out over the next 20-50

years and people should be worried about what happens,” Graham tells AFP.

“Unfortunately, I don’t believe that you can stop the advancement of the technology because a lot of it is open source. There’s not really anything to turn off.” His advice: “You should try to own and control the rights to your biometric data, how you sound, how you look, and really kind of lock that down.”

## Voice cloning

Magdalena Zielinska of ElevenLabs in Poland which claims to have created the “most expressive” AI voices available, says tools to check if a voice is synthetic will be essential. Unlike the robotic AI voices of the past, models have learned to replicate the pace and intonation of human voices.

She says the tool allows directors to see how a scene will sound, or advertisers to see what kind of voice resonates most with clients. It can also be used to fix problems in post-production. Zielinska says the technology could allow an actor to license their voice and do more projects at the same time.

A voice actor who fled the war in Ukraine was struggling to find work in Poland, and is “now making money”, she says, after using the technology to clean up his English accent. French director Mathias Chelebourg foresees that 90 percent of overall production will eventually be done by AI on movie sets.

“Hire right now an AI specialist in your team, whatever your job is, and hire it now, because in one year you will regret it,” he warns. — AFP

## Netflix expands password-sharing crackdown worldwide

Netflix on Tuesday expanded its crackdown on users sharing passwords with people beyond their immediate family as it seeks to shore up revenue at the leading streaming television service. “A Netflix account is for use by one household,” the company said in a statement. Netflix said early this year that more than 100 million households were sharing accounts at the service, “impacting our ability to invest in great new TV and films.”

Netflix has experimented in a few markets with “borrower” or “shared” accounts, in which subscribers can add extra users for a higher price or transfer viewing profiles to separate accounts. On Tuesday, it announced it was expanding the policy to more than 100 countries.

As growth at Netflix cooled last year, the Silicon Valley-based streaming giant set out to nudge people watching for free with shared passwords to begin paying for the service without alienating subscribers. “This account sharing initiative helps us have a larger base of potential paying members and grow Netflix long term,” co-chief executive Ted Sarandos said on an earnings call.



The Netflix logo at the Netflix Tudum Theater in Los Angeles, California. - AFP

## Enticed by ads?

The company told financial analysts recently that it had delayed a broad crackdown on password sharing “to improve the experience for members.” Netflix said it made sure subscribers have seamless access to the service away from home or on various devices such as tablets, TVs or smartphones.

“They are just trying to reduce theft of their service,” independent tech analyst Rob Enderle of Enderle Group said. He reasoned that Netflix likely pays royalties when subscribers watch some shows or films on the platform, so non-paying viewers could add to the service’s expenses while not contributing to revenue. “In theory, Netflix loses money because they are paying royalties and people are getting the shows for free,” Enderle said. “It makes no sense for Netflix to allow that to continue.” Netflix in April said its subscriber numbers hit a record high 232.5 million in the first quarter of the year and that its nascent ad-supported tier was faring well. The company said in a recent presentation to advertisers that it had more than five million subscribers to its ad-support tier. The launch of an ad-subsidized offering around the same time as a crackdown on password sharing is no coincidence, reasoned Insider Intelligence senior analyst Ross Benes. — AFP



(From left) Spanish author Eva Baltasar, Brazilian literary translator Julia Sanches, US literary translator Kim Chi-Young, South Korean author Cheon Myeong-kwan, US literary translator Angela Rodel, Bulgarian author Georgi Gospodinov, Literary translator Richard Philcox, Guadeloupe author Maryse Condé (front), Irish writer and translator Frank Wynne, Ivorian author Gauz, British literary translator Rosalind Harvey and Mexican author Guadalupe Nettel pose on the red carpet upon arrival for the International Booker Prize award ceremony. — AFP

## Bulgaria’s ‘Time Shelter’ wins International Booker Prize

Bulgarian writer Georgi Gospodinov and translator Angela Rodel were named Tuesday winners of the International Booker Prize with the novel “Time Shelter” - a first for a book in Bulgarian. The prestigious award recognizes works of fiction from around the world that have been translated into English and the £50,000 (\$62,000) prize is split equally between the author and the translator.

The winning novel focuses on a “clinic for the past” that offers experimental Alzheimer’s treatment. To trigger patients’

memories, it recreates the atmosphere of past decades down to the smallest detail. But with time healthy people start coming to the clinic, seeking an escape from the horrors of modern life.

“It is a novel that invites reflection and vigilance as much as it moves us, because the language - sensitive and precise - manages to capture, in a Proustian vein, the extreme fragility of the past,” Franco-Moroccan writer and judges panel chair Leila Slimani said. Born in 1968, novelist and poet Gospodinov is the most internationally acclaimed modern Bulgarian author. His works are translated into 25 languages.

Speaking about the book’s nomination, Gospodinov said “this encourages writers not only from my country, but also from the Balkans, who often feel themselves outside the sphere of English-speaking attention”. Rodel is originally from the US state of Minnesota but lives and works in Bulgaria. Her poetry and prose translations have been pub-

lished across literary magazines and anthologies.

In 2014, she was granted Bulgarian citizenship for her work and contribution to Bulgarian culture. “We need not only to recognize the translators, but also put them on an equal footing with the authors,” Rodel told journalists. “It was really trying to decide with Georgi how we were going to not just translate the text but translate the atmosphere, the context... all of those socialist sort of ghosts that were haunting the text itself.”

Gospodinov agreed that “It was not easy at all to translate this kind of book, because the book is dealing with different decades in the 20th century and with different languages that we have in this decade.” Last year the International Booker Prize was awarded to the Hindi novel “Tomb of Sand” by Indian author Geetanjali Shree, and translated by Daisy Rockwell. — AFP

## Murakami wins top Spain books prize

Japanese author Haruki Murakami, whose surreal works peppered with references to pop culture have earned him a cult following, won one of Spain’s top literary prizes Wednesday. The 74-year-old bestselling author of “Norwegian Wood” and “Kafka on the Shore” is known for his intricate tales of the absurdity and loneliness of modern life, which have been translated into about 50 languages.

The foundation that organizes the Princess of Asturias award hailed “the uniqueness of his literature, its universal scope and ability to reconcile Japanese tradition and the legacy of Western culture in an ambitious and innovative narrative.”

The 50,000-euro (\$55,000) award is one of eight prizes for the arts, sport and scientific research handed out yearly by a foundation named for Crown Princess Leonor. Perennially tipped for a Nobel prize, Murakami is a reclusive figure. Readers are drawn into the so-called “Murakami world” where giant frogs challenge salarymen in battle and mackerel rain down from the sky. — AFP



Japanese writer Haruki Murakami attends a press conference during a media preview of The Waseda International House of Literature, also known as Haruki Murakami Library, which is designed by Japanese architect Kengo Kuma, at Waseda University in Tokyo. — AFP

## \$6 million raised to preserve Nina Simone’s childhood home



People look at Julie Mehretu’s “New Dawn, Sing (for Nina)” displayed as part of the Nina Simone Childhood Home Auction Exhibition, at the Pace Gallery in New York.

An art auction and New York gala have raised nearly \$6 million to preserve and restore the childhood home of soul music legend and civil rights activist Nina Simone, organizers said Tuesday. The twin events brought in some \$5.88 million — far more than the original \$2 million organizers hoped to raise to restore the rural North Carolina abode. “The new funding will meaningfully advance our project goals to complete the full restoration of the house and landscape,” said Brent Leggs, executive director of the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund.

“With this investment, we are well on our way to opening the doors to visitors in 2024.” Four US artists — Julie Mehretu, Ellen Gallagher, Rashid Johnson and Adam Pendleton — bought the dilapidated rural home in 2017 for \$95,000. They’ve since worked with Leggs’ organization, as well as tennis star Venus Williams, to raise money to turn the house into a cultural and historic site. The online auction, with



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

works donated by British painter Cecily Brown and American artist Sarah Sze, was organized by Pace and Sotheby’s.

Among the 11 works for sale, Mehretu’s ink-and-acrylic “New Dawn, Sing (for Nina)” fetched \$1.6 million. Simone, whose songs found renewed resonance during the Black Lives Matter protests of recent years, 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, in the rural southeastern state of North Carolina, 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, including through rousing speeches and 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. — AFP



# All-round Jadeja leads Chennai into IPL final

## Chennai Super Kings beat holders Gujarat Titans by 15 runs

### News in Brief

#### Knights thrash Stars 4-0

**LOS ANGELES:** The Vegas Golden Knights thrashed the Dallas Stars 4-0 on Tuesday to move within one win of ice hockey's Stanley Cup Final. Right wing Jonathan Marchessault launched a flurry of early scoring that saw the Knights sprint into a four goal lead midway through the second period. That proved to be enough to seal victory against an outclassed Dallas side, whose fans vented their frustration in the second period forcing a halt in play as objects were thrown onto the ice at the American Airlines Center. Marchessault's early strike was followed by goals from left wings Ivan Barbashev and William Carrier to put the Knights 3-0 up in the first period before defenseman Alex Pietrangolo made it 4-0 in the second. The early onslaught led to Dallas goaltender Jake Oettinger being pulled before the end of the first period. He was replaced by Scott Wedgewood, who made 10 saves in relief. — AFP

#### Olympian slams 'toxic' culture

**KUALA LUMPUR:** A former Olympian says there is a "toxic and negative" team culture in Malaysian swimming, following a poor showing at the Southeast Asian Games. Marilyn Chua, who competed at the 2000 Olympics, spoke out ahead of the Asian Games this year in China. Now the Selangor state coach, Chua was quoted by Wednesday's Star newspaper as saying: "Regrettably, many of my swimmers upon joining the national team recounted with tears how toxic and negative the team culture is. 'How can athletes perform their best when the environment they are in is not conducive for growth?'" she added. At this month's SEA Games in Phnom Penh, Malaysia won only one of the 39 gold medals up for grabs. Chua said the national swimming team lacked unity, leadership, fairness and transparency in its selection process. The team has been in a downward spiral over the past two decades, she said. — AFP

#### Selles to leave Southampton

**LONDON:** Southampton announced on Wednesday that interim manager Ruben Selles would leave the relegated Premier League club at the end of the season. The Spaniard, 39, was appointed until the end of the campaign in February following the sacking of Nathan Jones but was unable to save them from the drop after 11 seasons in the top flight. Southampton, with just one game remaining this season, are bottom of the Premier League with just 24 points from 37 matches. "Southampton Football Club can confirm that it has held conversations with men's first team manager Ruben Selles and decided that his contract will not be renewed when it expires at the end of the season," the club said in a statement. "The club wants to place on record its thanks to Ruben for taking on the managerial position at a difficult time for the club and for giving his all as we attempted to stay in the Premier League." — AFP

#### Barcelona veteran Alba quits

**BARCELONA:** Jordi Alba will leave Barcelona at the end of the season after 11 years at the club, the Catalan side said Wednesday. "Barcelona and Alba have reached an agreement to release the player from the contract that he had until the end of the 2023-24 season," said Barcelona in a statement. "Barcelona publicly expresses its gratitude to Jordi Alba for the professionalism, commitment, dedication and always positive and warm treatment he has always shown towards everything that makes up the Barcelona family." Alba joined Barcelona from Valencia in 2012 and won six La Liga titles and one Champions League among 19 trophies with the Catalan giants. The 34-year-old veteran Spanish left-back lost his place in the team to teenager Alejandro Balde this season. Alba had one more year left on his contract, which expires in 2024, and Spanish reports say he will waive a significant percentage of the money due to help the club amid financial struggles. — AFP

#### Tsitsipas, Philippoussis splits

**SYDNEY:** Mark Philippoussis is no longer helping to coach world number five Stefanos Tsitsipas, the Australian former tennis star said, calling it the end of "a great ride". Philippoussis joined Tsitsipas' father Apostolos in the coaches box in the second half of last season and helped guide the Greek player to the Australian Open final. Tsitsipas, who was beaten in the final in January by Novak Djokovic, previously hailed the impact of "wise man" Philippoussis. But the 46-year-old Philippoussis, a former Wimbledon and US Open finalist of Greek heritage, wrote on Instagram that the partnership is over, days before the French Open. He did not say why. "Thanks for the opportunity of being a part of your team," Philippoussis said on Tuesday. — AFP

**CHENNAI:** Ravindra Jadeja starred with bat and ball as Chennai Super Kings beat holders Gujarat Titans by 15 runs on Tuesday to enter the IPL final that could be skipper MS Dhoni's farewell. Four-time winners Chennai posted 172-7, a total their bowlers defended as they bowled out Gujarat for 157 in a play-off believed to be the last home match at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium for the 41-year-old Dhoni. The left-handed Jadeja returned figures of 2-18 with his spin bowling following his 22 runs, which boosted the Chennai total after Ruturaj Gaikwad's 60 on an awkward pitch for batting.

Fireworks lit up the sky as Chennai made their 10th Indian Premier League final. "IPL is too big to say it's just another final," the captain said on presenter Harsha Bhogle's question on the Sunday final being "just another final" for Dhoni's team. "Used to be top eight teams to compete with the best players available in the world, but now it's 10 teams, so now it's tougher. It's hard work of two months because of which we are standing over here. Lot of character showed by the individuals."

Dhoni also stalled suggestions that he was about to retire, saying he will take "eight, nine months" to decide on his IPL future. "The small auction will be around December, so why to take the headache right now. I have ample time to decide," he said. Gujarat, led by Hardik Pandya, will have another shot at making the final, which is on Sunday in Ahmedabad, when they take on the winner of the second play-off between Lucknow Super Giants and five-time champions Mumbai Indians.

The spotlight remained on Dhoni, who is India's most decorated player, leading his country to two World Cup triumphs including the inaugural T20 crown in 2007 and has played mentor to younger heroes including Virat Kohli. Dhoni has attracted

## Le Mans: 100 years of man, machine, and midnight oil

**PARIS:** The Le Mans 24 Hours celebrates its centenary on Friday - the mythic race's history marked by triumph and tragedy, and a hefty sprinkling of Hollywood stardust. Since 33 cars set off in the rain for the very first edition on May 26, 1923, Le Mans has gone on to earn an exalted place in motorsport's calendar alongside Formula One's Monaco Grand Prix and the Indy 500. Only one driver - the late Graham Hill - has succeeded in taking the chequered flag in all three of motor racing's 'triple crown'.

While Toyota have proved unstoppable during the recent Hybrid era, the early Le Mans years were dominated by Bentley. The British marque's five wins between 1924 and 1930 came from a team of mechanics and millionaire Woolf Barnato - the legendary 'Bentley boys'. A Bugatti took seventh in 1930 with Odette Siko and Marguerite Marcuse sharing the driving - the best placing for an all-female crew to this day.

World War Two forced Le Mans into hibernation but on its return, in 1949, a newish Italian constructor by the name of Ferrari, took the first of its nine



**CHENNAI:** Gujarat Titans' Shubman Gill (right) plays a shot as Chennai Super Kings' Mahendra Singh Dhoni gestures during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 first qualifier cricket match between Chennai Super Kings and Gujarat Titans on May 23, 2023. — AFP

## Dhoni seeking to end with a bang in IPL final

**CHENNAI:** MS Dhoni is looking to bow out in style by winning the Indian Premier League with Chennai Super Kings for the fifth time - unless the 41-year-old cricket superstar stuns everyone and keeps going. On Tuesday, skipper Dhoni's tactical nous - at times controversial - again sealed the deal as CSK overcame the fancied Gujarat Titans by 15 runs to book a slot in Sunday's final at the world's biggest stadium in Ahmedabad.

With his finishing skills on the wane, a dodgy knee and his place in the batting order increasingly hard to justify, Dhoni has suggested on several occasions his retirement is imminent. He again kept fans guessing, saying on Tuesday he would take until the auctions for the 2024 IPL in December to make his final decision. "I will always be there for CSK whether in playing form or sitting somewhere," he said. "I don't really know. But frankly, it takes a heavy toll."

Victory on Sunday against either Mumbai, Lucknow or Gujarat - depending on the remaining play-offs - would be a fitting final achievement for a player



**CHENNAI:** Chennai Super Kings' Ravindra Jadeja plays a shot during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 first qualifier cricket match between Chennai Super Kings and Gujarat Titans at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on May 23, 2023. — AFP

huge crowds across venues with fans turning up in Chennai's yellow as a tribute to the cricketing great. His home venue was nearly packed to capacity as fans cheered every move of their hero, who raised the noise when he came into bat.

#### Gaikwad reprieve

But the crowd soon fell silent as the superstar, who has been troubled with a knee injury in this season but has not explicitly said he is retiring, fell to Mohit Sharma for one off two balls. Earlier Gaikwad

wins. Withdrawing from the main category in 1973 the now iconic 'prancing horse' stable is making its return for the 100th anniversary party when the cars line up again for this year's event on June 10. The 1950s delivered up a fierce rivalry between Jaguar, Mercedes, Ferrari and Aston Martin. It was also during this decade that disaster struck Le Mans.

In 1955 the Mercedes, with France's Pierre Levegh at the wheel, crashed in front of the stands on the main straight. Levegh's car was ripped to shreds, its engine exploding, killing him and 80 spectators. Ferrari stacked up six wins in the first half of the Swinging Sixties. US car tycoon Henry Ford II, irked by Enzo Ferrari's attitude in a failed bid to buy the Italian constructor, set out to build a machine capable of putting the brakes on Ferrari's Le Mans run. His sense of injustice proved a powerful motivator, and Ford duly constructed a car to win the 1966 edition.

#### 'Terrified'

One driver who remembers that race vividly is four-time winner Henri Pescarolo. Called up at the last minute by Matra he recalled a stint during the night with "headlamps that didn't shine much light, bends that weren't lit up, at the wheel of a car not easy to drive and surrounded by much faster Ferraris and Fords in full battle. "I was completely terrified! There were cars from every angle going at scary speeds," he said. "Even when I was involved in serious enough accidents later on, I can't say I

registered his fourth half-century of the season as he capitalized on a reprieve on two when he was dismissed in the second over only for the delivery to called no-ball. He hit back with a six and four and soon converted Chennai's modest start to a strong opening stand of 87 with New Zealand's Devon Conway, who made 40. Chennai wobbled after Gaikwad's departure but Jadeja's 16-ball cameo, which included two sixes, and one hit over the fence by England's Moeen Ali in the final over fired Chennai to what turned out to be a winning total. — AFP



**MONACO:** Winner of the 24 Hours of Le Mans' endurance race and Belgian former racing driver Jacky Ickx poses for a picture in Monaco on May 22, 2023. — AFP

was ever as scared as I was then."

That famous duel of man's ego and machine was immortalized in the 2019 film "Ford v Ferrari" starring Matt Damon and Christian Bale. The 24 Hour classic has ignited the imagination of numerous Hollywood A-listers over the years. Paul Newman famously finished second in 1979 aged 54, Patrick Dempsey raced it four times, Steve McQueen used the 1970 edition to shoot scenes of his film 'Le Mans', and in 2016 Brad Pitt gave the celebrated command 'Gentlemen, start your engines'. — AFP

## 'I am not a robot': Evenepoel says Giro criticism hurt

**PARIS:** Belgian cycling star Remco Evenepoel took a swing at his critics on Tuesday as he announced he was back in training nine days after abandoning the Giro d'Italia with Covid even though he was in the lead. "Ups & downs are part of our job and I can accept that," the 23-year-old, who held a narrow lead when he dropped out, posted on Facebook. "What is hard to accept is all the fake and negative comments I got after having to leave the race."

"I just want to ask everyone to remember I am not a robot, but also a normal human being, husband, son, teammate etc. with normal feelings," he wrote adding that he would use it as motivation. "After today's check-ups and medical screenings, I got the green light to start training again." Evenepoel, the Giro favourite, left the race on May 14 after testing positive. He returned to Belgium the next day, "sick as a dog," according to the boss of his Soudal-Quick Step team, Patrick Lefevere. The rider, who won the world championship and the Spanish Vuelta last season, said leaving the race was tough.

"Definitely one of the hardest setbacks in my still very short career," he wrote. "A very brutal end of what could have been a beautiful story. 6 months of full preparation for only this race. Sacrifices, long days in the rain, long periods away from home. Everything was going according to plan but that is how sport goes." Cycling no longer obliges cyclists to stop racing after testing positive for Covid-19 and in Italy, several former champions, including Francesco Moser, criticized Evenepoel's decision to leave the Giro on the eve of the rest day.

Gazetta dello Sport, a sports daily which belongs to the RCS group that organizes the Giro, accused Evenepoel of failing to respect the organizers by announcing his withdrawal before warning them. While Evenepoel won the time trial, an event he dominates, on the day he quit, it was only by one second from Geraint Thomas. The Belgian had struggled and lost time in the mountains the previous day. He led the overall classification, but three rivals were within a minute. Gazetta said Evenepoel "would have found it hard to accept a defeat and preferred to leave the race with the pink jersey and two wins in the two time trials." — AFP



## Sports

# Asian federation foresees Saudi bid for 2030 or 2034 World Cup

## ‘Saudi Arabia is coming in force’

**BEIRUT:** Asian Football Confederation (AFC) president, Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al-Khalifa, said the body wanted to host another World Cup, in 2030 or 2034, and that “Saudi Arabia is coming in force”. Asia has staged the World Cup twice: in South Korea and Japan in 2002 and in 2022 in Qatar. “I think Saudi Arabia is a country capable of organizing a similar tournament,” Sheikh Salman, who is from Bahrain, told journalists in Beirut on Monday during a visit to Syria and Lebanon.

“But we have to choose the right time: 2030 or 2034? If our chance of hosting the tournament is better in 2034, we are looking into that, and if our conditions in 2030 are better, why not?” In 2026, when the World Cup increases to 48 teams, it will split three ways for the first time with United States, Canada and Mexico as hosts.

There are two proposed multi-nation bids for 2030, one from Spain, Portugal and Morocco, and one by Argentina,

Chile, Uruguay and Paraguay, which would return the centenary World Cup to the site of the first final, in Montevideo. Last September, a spokesman for the Egyptian Ministry of Youth and Sports, Muhammad Fawzi, said his country was studying a joint bid with Saudi Arabia and Greece. The Saudi Minister of Sports, Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki Al-Faisal, told AFP in February that his country had not submitted a candidacy file, but added that “anything is possible.”

Sheikh Salman said he wanted to make sure the AFC was united behind any bid and had support from elsewhere. “We are coordinating with the continental federations and FIFA on the basis that we will host the 2030 or 2034 World Cup in agreement with everyone, so that when the file is presented, we must ensure that it succeeds by at least 90 percent,” he said. “We have 47 votes, while you need more than 110 votes to host the World Cup. We must have support from other continents.

We are coordinating the appropriate time to host this championship.”

Emulating neighbors Qatar and United Emirates, Saudi Arabia has been investing heavily in sport as part of the “Vision 2030” strategy to diversify an oil-dependent economy. The kingdom will host the AFC’s Women’s Cup in 2026, its Asian Cup for the first time in 2027, the multisport Asian Games in 2034, and is scheduled to stage the 2029 Asian Winter Games on artificial snow in the planned giant futuristic city of Neom.

It already hosts a Formula One race in Jeddah, the annual Spanish Super Cup, golf tournaments and boxing title bouts. Cristiano Ronaldo joined Saudi club Al Nassr in January and the country’s sovereign wealth fund finances the break-away LIV golf tour and owns Newcastle United in the English Premier League, although these investments draw accusations that it is “sportswashing” its human rights record. — AFP



MANAMA: FIFA President Gianni Infantino (left) greets AFC President Salman bin Ibrahim Al-Khalifa during the 33rd Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Congress. — AFP

## In Brazil, Vinicius’ hometown shares his pain

**SAO GONCALO:** Taking a break from training beneath a giant poster of Vinicius Junior, on the same pitch where the Real Madrid star got his professional start, Pierry Amaro Ricardo has a word for the racism his idol endures. “It’s inhuman,” says the 18-year-old Brazilian football prospect. Like all the boys chasing the ball around the rectangle of green artificial turf at the Flamengo youth academy in Sao Goncalo, a poor city outside Rio de Janeiro, Ricardo dreams of following the same meteoric path as Vinicius, who started out here before signing with Real Madrid at age 16.

But the young midfielder fears black players like him will only continue to face the kind of treatment Vinicius received Sunday at Valencia, where the 22-year-old superstar was targeted with shouts of “monkey” from the stands – the latest in a series of racist attacks against him. “It’s getting worse and worse,” says Ricardo, who plays in the youth system of Flamengo, Brazil’s most popular football club. “Some people think it’s normal. We’re judged by the color of our skin. My mom’s always told me since I was small, ‘black people have to be twice as good,’” he told AFP.

“That’s just the way it is. I’m going to come out on top anyway.” Staff at the youth academy, Escola Flamengo, speak of their heartbreak at seeing the treatment endured by Vinicius, whom they remember as a sweet boy and model student who captured everyone’s hearts. “He was just a sensational boy, very respectful and dedicated. He was our stand-out, on the pitch and off,” says Monique Monteiro, 32, who works at the academy’s front desk.

She speaks almost in awe of watching “Vini” escape a childhood of poverty and the rough streets of Sao Goncalo – a working-class city across the bay from Rio – to make it to the pinnacle of professional football. “It wasn’t easy for him. He did it all with his own sweat... and a lot of support from his family,” she told AFP. “For people like me who have watched his whole career, all he went through to get where he is, it’s very sad.



RIO DE JANEIRO: A graffiti depicting Brazilian football player Vinicius Junior is pictured next to his grandparents’ house in his hometown neighborhood of Sao Goncalo in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AFP

Seeing him suffer like this is so infuriating.”

### ‘Our support and solidarity’

The footballer whose full name is Vinicius Jose Paixao de Oliveira Junior grew up in a small house at the end of a dead-end street in an impoverished Sao Goncalo neighborhood that butts up against the BR-101 highway. Even after becoming one of the world’s biggest football stars, he has maintained a strong connection with his hometown. His family still lives in the same house – now expanded and lavishly renovated – at the end of a run-down street whose graffiti includes a mural of Vinicius in his Brazilian national team jersey, dreaming of winning the World Cup.

Locals say the footballer has given back to his community extensively, including through his Vini Jr. Institute, a charity that seeks to help kids do better in school with innovative programs that tap both technology and Brazilians’ national passion for football.

cruciate ligament while playing for French side Lyon. US coach Vlatko Andonovski had been hoping that Macario might be able to recover in time for their title defence in Australia and New Zealand in July-August. “While I’m excited and super-optimistic about my future as a footballer, I’m sad to share that I won’t be physically ready for selection to our US World Cup team,” Macario wrote on social media.

“The desire to return to play for my country has driven my training and fueled my everyday life. However, what’s most important right now is my mental health and getting fit and ready for my

The city government posted a message for its hometown hero on social media. “Sao Goncalo and Brazil are proud of you,” it said. “All our support and solidarity to you.” A flood of Brazilians from President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva to music icon Gilberto Gil and fellow national team stars Neymar and Richarlison have also sent their support.

In downtown Sao Goncalo, residents are animated as they talk about their disgust at the latest episode. “It’s just absurd, calling the boy a monkey. It just defies logic,” says 62-year-old Marcia Maria da Costa, selling football gear at a local street market, where vendors say demand for Vinicius jerseys is huge. Phone vendor Victor Gabriel Ferreira, who grew up in Vinicius’s neighborhood, voiced outrage at the succession of racist scandals engulfing him. “Brazil and the world can’t stand to see a black man from the favela rise to the top of the best players in the world,” he said. “And that’s what he is.” — AFP

next club season,” she added. Macario, who had become a key figure in the US midfield before her injury, thanked Andonovski and US Soccer for putting her “long-term health over any individual and collective ambitions.”

“I’ll be cheering hard for my teammates at the World Cup and I look forward to dedicating myself to fight to earn a spot for what I hope will be a long future on the US national team,” she said. Macario’s absence is another blow to the holders after striker Mallory Swanson tore a patella tendon in her left knee during last month’s friendly against Ireland. No timeline for Swanson’s recovery

## Deal with ‘shadow side’ of sports: UN

**GENEVA:** The United Nations rights chief decried Wednesday the racist attacks on Brazilian footballer Vinicius Junior during a match in Spain, urging concerted efforts to root racism out of sports. “We are calling on all those organized sport events everywhere in the world to counter and combat and prevent racism,” Volker Turk told reporters in Geneva. His comments came after 22-year-old Real Madrid forward Vinicius was targeted with shouts of “monkey” from the stands during a match in Valencia on Sunday – the latest in a series of racist attacks against him.

Turk said it was “a stark reminder of the prevalence of racism in sport”. He hailed the “very strong reaction from the authorities”, pointing out that “they started arresting people very quickly afterwards”. “An investigation has to happen. It’s clear that it’s an affair that will preoccupy the judiciary.” He stressed, though, that “those who organize sports events take that issue very seriously”. Turk highlighted the many positive aspects of sports, for instance in building communities.

But, he said, “we need to deal with the shadow side as well.” The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said he had asked his office to prepare a policy brief looking into the issue of racism in sports. “We need to have a hard look at human rights and sports from a wide range of perspectives,” he said. “We want to put forward a number of clear ideas of human rights standards in sport events,” he said, pointing to issues around participation, inclusion and “fighting stigmatization, racism”.

“We have seen discrimination on a wide range of issues, including gender discrimination and discrimination against LGBTI people as well who participate in sports events,” Turk said. It must be made absolutely clear, he said, that “racism is totally unacceptable”. He said everyone in society should think about how they act. “Do I have bias?... How do I react when I see someone else making a racist slur?... Do I deal with it, do I respond to it?” “We need to find ways and means to eradicate it entirely in the 21st century. It requires everyone to be onboard.” — AFP

ery was given, but a torn patella tendon can often take at least six months to recover from.

The US are seeking a third straight World Cup title and will start their bid in Group E against the Netherlands, Portugal and Vietnam. Several leading women’s players have now pulled out of the World Cup with knee injuries, including England captain Leah Williamson. England could also be without forward Beth Mead, who won the Golden Boot at Euro 2022, after she too suffered a torn ACL. Canadian forward Janine Beckie is another who will not feature after a knee injury, as is Dutch star Vivianne Miedema. — AFP

# Classifieds

## Change of Name

**I, Geja,** holder of Indian Passport No. P7110431, having permanent address Punjab, India – 144620, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Gurmej (given name) and Singh (surname). **(#3541) 25/05/2023**

**I, Aji,** S/o Saifuddin, Civil ID No. 281061504679, Passport No. Z3828425, hereby declare that I have changed my name as Aziz Arif S/o Saifuddin Arif. So from now in future I will be known by my new name: Aziz Arif, S/o Saifuddin Arif, Address: 107, Ward No.18, Saket Residency, Barwani, (M.P) - 451551, India. **(#3542) 25/05/2023**

**I, Taher,** holder of Indian Passport No. U9301842, issued in Jaipur on 04/03/2021 and Civil ID No. 306020902089, have changed my name Taher to Taher Companywala in all dealings and documents. I will be known by name of Taher (given name) and Companywala (surname) **(#3539) 24/05/2023**

**I, Inus,** S/o Mohammed Amin, holder of Indian Passport No. L-1434907, issued in Kuwait on 11-09-2013, permanent resident of B-sector, V-1-line, room no. 05, Cheeta Camp, Mumbai-400088, presently residing in Khaitan, Block-09, Street-30, Unit-1, Build-

ing No.10, Kuwait will henceforth be known as Mohammed Yunus Mohammed Amin (given name) Shaikh (surname) as per documents. Objection(s), if any, may be forwarded to Embassy of India, State of Kuwait. **(#3540) 24/05/2023**

**I, Rashida,** holder of Indian Passport No. P5031442, issued in Jaipur on 27/09/2016 and Civil ID No. 281022207276, have changed my name Rashida to Rashida Companywala in all dealings and documents. I will be known by name of Rashida (given name) and Companywala (surname). **(#3539) 24/05/2023**

**I, Mohammed** Khalid Noor Mohamed, holder of Passport No. R2315837 do hereby change my name to Mohammed Khalid Noor Mohamed Sheikh for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Mohammed Khalid Noor Mohamed Sheikh and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. **(#3538) 23/05/2023**

**I, Athi** Muralidaran, holder of Indian passport No. L4538347 issued at Embassy of India, Kuwait. I am a permanent resident of Shree Murugan Kudil, Plot No. 41, Brindavan street, Indra Nagar Trichy-620021, India. And presently residing in Kuwait hereby declare

my given name is Muralidaran and surname is Athi. **(#3537) 23/05/2023**

**I, Mohammad** Shahabuddin s/o Mohammad Aleeh Khan, holder of Indian passport No. L7923811 resident of Vill & post Bahadurpur Dist. Sultanpur Uttar Pradesh, India. And recently residence at Adiliya, Block 2, Street 23, House 15 Kuwait. And has change my name Mohammad Shahabuddin to Mohammad Shahabuddin Khan as Mohammad Shahabuddin (Given name) and Khan (surname) here in after in all my dealing and documents. I will be known by name of Mohammad Shahabuddin Khan. **(#3536) 23/05/2023**



## Valladolid boost survival hopes

Real Valladolid beat champions Barcelona



VALLADOLID: Barcelona's Spanish midfielder Pablo Torre (left) fights for the ball with Real Valladolid's Spanish defender Ivan Fresneda during the Spanish league football match between Real Valladolid FC and FC Barcelona on May 23, 2023. — AFP

**BARCELONA:** Real Valladolid earned an important 3-1 victory over champions Barcelona to boost their La Liga survival hopes on Tuesday. The hosts were good value for their victory and climbed to 17th, moving provisionally three points clear of the relegation zone. Barcelona defender Andreas Christensen sent Valladolid on their way by heading into his own net in the second minute.

Canadian striker Cyle Larin added the second from the penalty spot after Eric Garcia tripped Gonzalo Plata in the area, with the Ecuadorian winger scoring the third on the break. La Liga's top goal-scorer Robert Lewandowski pulled one back for the Catalans in the final stages. Barcelona winger Raphinha revealed a message of support for Real Madrid winger and Brazil compatriot Vinicius Junior

in the second half when he was substituted. Vinicius was racially abused by Valencia fans on Sunday at their Mestalla stadium.

"I didn't know he was going to do it but I think it's a good message, because racism has to end," Barcelona midfielder Frenkie de Jong told DAZN, after Raphinha took his shirt off to show the message after being substituted. Players from both sides held up a banner reading "racists out of football" before the game, as part of a La Liga and Spanish football federation initiative following the abuse on Sunday. Young playmaker Pablo Torre started for the first time in La Liga for Barcelona and put in a bright performance but his team were sluggish as a whole and fell to a second consecutive defeat.

"Pablo had a good game, he was good in his po-

sition, he played through a lot of good passes and linked up well with Robert," Xavi told reporters. Goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen is still chasing the La Liga clean sheet record of 26 - he has 25 with two matches remaining. "In the first half we were not good, we let in two goals because of our own mistakes. We had an objective, we completed it, and that has caused a dip in concentration," said Xavi. "We have had a great season, but for our fans, and to say goodbye to (Sergio) Busquets, we have to do better."

### Closing in

Real Sociedad put one foot into next season's Champions League with a 1-0 win over 10-man Almeria. Takefusa Kubo's first-half strike gave Imanol Alguacil's side, fourth, an eight-point lead on fifth-

place Villarreal, who face Cadiz on Wednesday. Almeria striker Luis Suarez was dismissed after 36 minutes for a rough tackle on defender Robin Le Normand.

Japanese winger Kubo took his goal brilliantly, cutting in from the right and curling into the top left corner in first-half stoppage time. Alexander Sorloth could have doubled La Real's lead late on but fired narrowly wide. Ander Barrenetxea hit the post. Real Sociedad have not played in Europe's premier competition since the 2013-14 season and can qualify if Villarreal fail to win any of their last three matches or by earning two more points themselves. Defeat leaves Almeria provisionally 15th, four points above the relegation zone. Celta Vigo, 14th, were held to a 1-1 home draw by Girona and are five points above the relegation zone. — AFP

## Will 'King James' give up throne?

**LOS ANGELES:** A weary, honest admission that one of the greatest careers in NBA history could be over? Or a calculated move designed to spur the Los Angeles Lakers into bolstering their roster? One day after LeBron James sent shockwaves rippling through basketball by revealing he was considering retirement, analysts are divided over whether the "King" is truly ready to give up his throne.

The 38-year-old delivered a vintage 40-point performance in a losing effort for the Los Angeles Lakers on Monday as Denver completed a 4-0 series sweep of the 17-time champions to reach the NBA Finals. The defeat drew an unusually cryptic response from James in his postgame press conference as he reflected on a roller-coaster season that saw the Lakers emerge as title contenders despite a dismal 2-10 start.

"I don't like to say it's a successful year because I don't play for anything besides winning championships at this point in my career," said James. "We'll see what happens going forward. I don't know. I've got a lot to think about to be honest." In remarks to an ESPN reporter after the press conference, James made it clear that retirement was under serious consideration. Asked what he planned to "think about" in the offseason, James replied: "If I want to continue to play." That startling admission marked a sharp departure from James' previous public statements about how he sees the remainder of his career playing career. He inked a lucrative two-year contract extension with the Lakers last August that takes him through to the end of the 2024-2025 NBA season. That would potentially provide him with the opportunity to play in the NBA with his eldest son Bronny James - something James has repeatedly said is his dream.



LeBron James

Monday's dazzling game-four display came at the end of an injury-disrupted regular season in which he averaged an impressive 28.9 points per game across 55 games. Nevertheless, James hinted at the punishing nature of the NBA season, citing the "bus rides and plane rides" might be losing its appeal after two decades. "It's challenging," he said. Former NBA player and ESPN pundit JJ Redick said the comments might be designed to signal to the Lakers front office that the team needed strengthening.

"I think as an athlete there's always a moment when you sort of begin to question your own athletic mortality," Redick said. "Maybe in some ways LeBron is at that stage. Am I buying that he's going to retire? No, absolutely not. LeBron is one of the most calculated athletes in the history of professional sports. Everything he does is for a reason. And whether this is to put a little bit of pressure on the Lakers to improve the roster...whatever it is, there's a reason he did this." ESPN reporter Brian Windhorst said James was "essentially sending a message" to the Lakers by inviting speculation about his future.

"There is something for the Lakers to consider here," Windhorst told ESPN's First Take discussion show. "The Lakers have four or five weeks to consider the direction they are going with this team. They've got to make a decision about whether they want to hold this team together." Analyst Stephen A Smith meanwhile is convinced that James will stay in the NBA to realize his dream of playing with his son. However, Smith said James' intended to signal his dissatisfaction with the Lakers roster. "He put on a show and received minimal help," Smith said of James' game four performance. "No-one is going to convince me that that doesn't play a role in what he disseminated to everybody last night. Now, do I think he will retire? I don't. He wants to hang around long enough to be in a uniform

on a basketball court with his son, that is his dream. "But it hurts that much to put in all that work and come up short. I think we heard what we heard last night because LeBron James has serious questions as to what the Lakers can truly accomplish. "For him it's about championships or bust." — AFP

## Celtics overcome the Miami Heat

**MIAMI:** The Boston Celtics kept their Eastern Conference finals hopes alive with a 116-99 victory over the Miami Heat on Tuesday to reduce the series deficit to 3-1. Jayson Tatum inspired the Celtics with 33 points, 11 rebounds and assists, while five other players reached double figures in what was a determined team display from Joe Mazzulla's side. After the Heat's 128-102 win on Sunday, the Celtics were facing the possibility of a humiliating 4-0 exit but they will now be looking to put further pressure on Miami in Thursday's clash back in Boston.

While no team in NBA history has ever come back from 3-0 down to win a best-of-seven play-off series, Boston will have drawn belief that they can now deliver a comeback and reach the Finals where the Denver Nuggets await. "We weren't thinking about winning four in a row tonight, we were just trying to save our season and win tonight and we did that," said Tatum.

Jaylen Brown, who put up 16 points, said the Celtics had faced up to their predicament and united ahead of the game. "We wanted to make sure that we stayed together, we looked each other in the eye and we came out together and I am proud of the group. You see (some) teams, with their backs against the wall, they just collapse, we didn't do that, we came together. I think that showed our character," he said.

The Heat, looking to reach the NBA finals for the seventh time as they search for their first NBA Championship since 2013, started strongly and took a 22-15 lead with four minutes left in the first quarter. With Gabe Vincent in inspired form, the Miami crowd sensed another convincing win for Erik Spoelstra but Boston kept themselves in the game and went in just 56-50 down at half-time. But Miami never recovered from allowing a rapid 18-0 Celtics run in the third quarter with Tatum claiming half of those points as the visitors went from nine points down to nine up.

Miami ran out of ideas against a strong Boston defense, who had 16 steals, and the Celtics never looked in danger from that point on. Jimmy Butler put up 29 points for Miami but managed only one of four three-pointers and his team made only eight-



MIAMI: Bam Adebayo #13 of the Miami Heat drives ahead of Al Horford #42 of the Boston Celtics during the fourth quarter in game four of the Eastern Conference Finals at Kaseya Center on May 23, 2023. — AFP

of-32 attempts from that range. "I think it's probably pretty easy to keep our three-point shooting down," said Spoelstra. "We just weren't doing things with a lot of oomph to it offensively".

Boston in contrast made 19-of-45 three-pointers. The Celtics are 30-6 when they make 18 or more three-pointers in a game. Butler, who has led eighth-seeded Miami's unexpected playoff surge, said they wouldn't allow the Celtics to gain momentum from the win. "No, if anything it will build momentum for us, knowing that we have to play with a lot more energy. Knowing that we have to play with our backs against the wall. I think all year long we've been better when we had to do things our way," he said.

Butler said he wouldn't be taking a different approach in the wake of the loss. "(I'll) do the same thing that I do after every game. Listen to some music, drink some beers back there go and have some wine. I don't think that you can just focus on basketball. You have to be able to get away from the game. We're going to smile and be in this thing together like we always are and go and win one on the road," he said. — AFP