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Why wait
to go electric

\$10,000 trade-in support



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In a first, top court orders govt to reinstate citizenship of 3 families

Ex-MP denies pulling out of election race • Tribesmen fined over primaries

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Kuwait's court of cassation, whose verdicts are final, ordered the government in a landmark ruling on Thursday to return the citizenship of three families whose nationality was revoked. Kuwaiti courts normally refuse to look into cases involving citizenship disputes under the pretext that such issues are sovereign cases and should not be debated in courts. But the cassation court decided on Wednesday to rule on such cases and ordered the government to return the revoked citizenships, setting a precedent for courts to follow in the future. Meanwhile, the court of first instance on Thursday

fined 20 tribesmen KD 5,000 each for taking part in outlawed tribal primaries. Also, former MP Ahmad Al-Ahmad denied in a statement that he had pulled out of the election race, describing such reports as rumors aimed at weakening his chances of winning a seat. Hamad was elected to the Assembly for the first time in 2020, but he failed to win in the 2022 elections that were annulled by the constitutional court. This time he is bidding again to retain his seat.

Former MP Ali Al-Saeed said continued disputes between two groups in the National Assembly have frustrated the Kuwaiti people, who are suffering as a result. He said Kuwait is experiencing a highly polluted atmosphere and instability, adding he could run

for the speaker's post if he wins a seat in the June 6 parliamentary polls.

Member of the 2022 scrapped Assembly Saud Al-Asfour blamed the government for not implementing laws, adding the constitutional court law must be amended to prevent dissolving assemblies easily. Candidate Mohammad Jawhar Hayat said if he wins a seat, he plans to submit a draft resolution calling for comprehensive political reforms for the sake of achieving the aspirations of the people. He added the Kuwaiti people now understand that sectarianism, tribalism and racism will not resolve their problems.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Actor Ahmad Jowhar passes away

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti actor Ahmad Jowhar passed away on Thursday after a long battle with illness. He was 65. Jowhar starred in various prominent dramas and TV shows in Kuwait and the Gulf during the 1990s.



Ship briefly grounded in Suez

ISMAILIA, Egypt: A cargo ship ran aground Thursday in Egypt's Suez Canal before it was quickly refloated without interrupting traffic. The Hong Kong-flagged Xin Hai Tong 23 bulk carrier was refloated after "a sudden malfunction of the machinery" while it was crossing on its way from Saudi Arabia to Egypt, the Suez Canal Authority said. It added that the Xin Hai Tong 23 measures 190 m in length and 32 m in width, with a loading capacity of 34,000 tons. — AFP

Dispute behind Dubai killing

DUBAI: Police in Dubai said Thursday a dispute between two families was behind the fatal assault of a citizen of the Zionist entity by eight other compatriots, who have been arrested in the emirate. Ghassan Shamsyeh, 33, died of wounds suffered in Wednesday's attack in the Business Bay area of Dubai. The eight suspects, all of whom are in police custody, "had arrived from a European country for tourism and shopping", Dubai police said in a statement. — AFP

Sudan rivals trade blame

KHARTOUM: Sudan's warring sides accused each other on Thursday of being behind breaches of the latest ceasefire that was negotiated by the US and Saudi Arabia, now in its third day. The one-week truce was violated only minutes after it came into effect on Monday night, with residents of the capital Khartoum reporting air strikes and artillery fire shaking the city. There have since been further breaches of the ceasefire agreement, the latest in a series of truces that have all been systematically violated. — AFP

Rainstorm destroys 'Cotton Tree'

FREETOWN: A centuries-old, towering tree that served as a historic symbol in Sierra Leone has been felled during a wind and rain storm in the capital Freetown, the government said on Thursday. The 70-metre Ceiba pentandra — lovingly known by Sierra Leoneans as "Cotton Tree" — lost all of its branches late Wednesday, with only the base of its enormous trunk still standing, a government statement said, citing "torrential rains and high winds". It estimated the tree to be around 400 years old. — AFP

Iran unveils its longest-range ballistic missile

TEHRAN: Iran's defense ministry on Thursday unveiled a new ballistic missile with a range of 2,000 km and a capacity to carry warheads weighing over a ton. The Kheibar missile — the latest version of the Khorramshahr which is Iran's longest-range missile to date — was unveiled alongside a replica of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, in a live broadcast on state television.

Iran's Defense Minister Mohammad-Reza Ashtiani said the missile was

unveiled as part of moves to "provide comprehensive support to our friends and countries that are on the path of fighting against the domination system". State news agency IRNA said the Kheibar is "a liquid fuel missile with a range of 2,000 kilometers and a 1,500 kilograms warhead".

Its name references the ancient town of Khaybar — located in modern-day Saudi Arabia — known for a decisive seventh-century battle in which the army of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) defeated its thousands of Jewish residents. According to state media, the speed of the high-mobility tactical missile "can reach Mach 16 outside the atmosphere and Mach 8 inside the atmosphere".

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A handout picture provided on May 25, 2023 shows the testing of Iran's fourth generation Khorramshahr ballistic missile, named Kheibar, at an undisclosed location. — AFP

World mourns 'simply the best' Tina Turner

LOS ANGELES: Tributes poured in on Thursday for Tina Turner, the trailblazing rocker whose powerful voice, electrifying stage presence, and personal story of triumph mesmerized global audiences for decades. Turner, an instantly recognizable performer whose popularity spanned generations, died on Wednesday at the age of 83 at her home in a plush Swiss suburb.

Presidents, fellow singers and fans paid tribute to an explosive performer, whose popularity spanned generations and whose story of overcoming domestic violence touched many around the world. Rolling Stones frontman Mick Jagger — who, legend has it, learned his dance moves from the diva, said the world had lost "an enormously

talented performer and singer".

Fans lined up to pay tribute at the wrought iron gates of her huge compound in Kusnacht, on Switzerland's Lake Zurich, many bearing candles and flowers. Chateau Algonquin had been the home Turner shared with her German husband Erwin Bach for almost three decades, including when she took Swiss citizenship in 2013, relinquishing her US passport.

"The world has lost an icon," Swiss President Alain Berset said. US President Joe Biden paid a pointed tribute to a "once-in-a-generation talent that changed American music forever". "Tina's personal strength was remarkable," Biden wrote. "Overcoming adversity, and even abuse, she built a career for the ages and a life and legacy that were entirely hers," he added, calling Turner "simply the best".

Biden's former boss, Barack Obama called her "a star whose light will never fade". "Tina Turner was raw. She was powerful. She was unstoppable. And she was unapologetically herself - speaking and singing her truth through joy and pain: triumph and tragedy," America's first black president wrote of the star held up as a black icon. — AFP (See Pages 12 & 13)



ANNECY, France: US singer Tina Turner performs in this July 9, 1987 file photo. — AFP

Syrian babies abandoned as war grinds on

HAZANO, Syria: One cold winter night, Syrian Ibrahim Othman went out to pray and came home cradling a baby girl, abandoned at the doorstep of the village mosque just hours after she was born. "I took her home and told my wife, 'I brought you a gift,'" said the 59-year-old resident of Hazano, in rebel-held northwest Syria. He named the baby Hibatullah, meaning "gift of God", and decided to raise her as one of the family. Officials say babies are being left

outside mosques, hospitals and even under olive trees in war-torn Syria as more than 12 years of grinding conflict fuel poverty and desperation. "Only a few cases of child abandonment" were officially documented before the war broke out in 2011, according to the Washington-based group Syrians for Truth and Justice, which records human rights abuses in the country.

But between early 2021 and late 2022, more than 100 children — 62 of them girls — were found abandoned across the country, it said in a March report, estimating the real figure to be much higher. "The numbers have increased dramatically" since the start of the conflict along with "the social and economic repercussions of the

Continued on Page 6



HAZANO, Syria: A picture taken on March 22, 2023 shows Ibrahim Othman and a relative playing with a girl he had found abandoned at the doorstep of the village mosque. — AFP



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Local

India seeks broader, more diverse bilateral ties with Kuwait: Dr Swaika

Indian ambassador eyes high-level visits between two countries

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: India and Kuwait enjoy deep-rooted and dynamic bilateral relations and the effort is to make the partnership more diverse and broad-based to include hitherto untouched areas of cooperation, Indian Ambassador Dr Adarsh Swaika said. "The India-Kuwait cooperation spans a vast number of areas as the countries share a longstanding, historical and time-tested relationship. High-level visits give an opportunity to arrive at mutual understandings and agreements on important issues," Dr Swaika said in an interview with Kuwait Times.

He spoke about his hopes and aspirations as the Indian ambassador to Kuwait, Kuwait-India bilateral relations, the embassy's consular services and diaspora issues, among other things during the interview. "We just had the foreign office consultations in New Delhi in the first week of May after a gap of over four years. We are looking forward to the visit of the foreign minister of Kuwait to India in due course. The last visits at foreign minister-level were of Kuwait's foreign minister to India in March 2021 and of India's external affairs minister to Kuwait in June 2021. We also look forward to highest-level visits from both sides at an opportune time," he said.

Talking about economic engagement between the countries, Swaika said it has grown over the years. "Just as Kuwait is central to India's energy security, India is crucial for Kuwait's food security. Our bilateral trade of \$12.5 billion is an all-time high, with a 95 percent jump in bilateral trade last year compared to the previous period," he pointed out. However, he

said that much of it is on account of hydrocarbon exports from Kuwait and exports of mainly food products from India.

"It is heartening to see exports of some other products from India like engineering goods, chemicals, 'Made in India' automobiles and spare parts, white goods, etc. It has a huge scope of diversification, particularly in view of the world-class products that Indian companies offer in a number of areas today. Clearly, there are very good possibilities in pharmaceuticals and medical devices, automobiles and related spares, electronic goods and components, high efficiency solar PV modules, textiles and apparel, white goods, ceramics and so on," Dr Swaika added.

Investments

The ambassador said the main potential area of cooperation is in the field of investments from Kuwait to India because of the attractive political and financial investment climate that the country provides. "The India-Kuwait investment seminar organized by the embassy earlier on May 8 in Kuwait presented the new India growth story. And we actually saw a lot of interest from our Kuwaiti partners in investing in India. There are some very positive experiences of Kuwaiti investments in India. KIA's investments in India are for that matter extremely significant and we are hopeful of further investments," Swaika said.

Elaborating on his aspirations and expectations as the ambassador of India, Dr Swaika said he would implement the priorities the Indian government has set for its relations with Kuwait. "And this is to fur-



Dr Adarsh Swaika

ther make our bilateral partnership with Kuwait strong and robust, which harnesses the potential of both sides. We are working closely with our Kuwaiti partners to achieve our shared objective of a much-strengthened partnership," he stated.

Diaspora matters

He said it is one of the priority foreign policy objectives of the government of India to ensure the welfare of its citizens abroad, and Kuwait, which has the Indian community as its largest expatriate community, is no exception. "We are grateful to the leadership and government of Kuwait for ensuring the welfare of the Indian community. The Indian community is a living bridge between our two countries. They have contributed immensely to the development of Kuwait and will continue to do so," Swaika said.

Asked about the recruitment of Indian nurses to Kuwait, the ambassador said: "Insofar as their recruitment is concerned, there are proper established mechanisms for their recruitment. And it is mostly working well." Indian nurses are by far the largest of the nursing community in Kuwait and they are known not only for their hard work, but for the empathy and care they bring along, he said.

Regarding the issue of Indian engineers, he said both sides are working seriously on this issue. "I will not go into further details. But I must admit that in my meetings with many senior Kuwaiti interlocutors including heads of various organizations, they have been extremely appreciative of the knowledge and skillsets that Indian engineers have been bringing to their organizations. In fact, a senior CEO said to the extent that one of the Indian engineers has been the guru of their organization," Swaika said.

Consular services

Being an embassy of a country whose citizens form the largest expatriate community in Kuwait, it is incumbent on the embassy to have very streamlined and robust consular processes and mechanisms, Dr Swaika said. "The embassy is constantly trying to improve the processes to make them more user-friendly, accessible and simple," he said.

Indian consular centers have been established since January 2022 in multiple locations in Kuwait so that applicants for passports, visas and other consular services avail of the services nearer to their home/workplace instead of coming to the embassy. A sound grievance redressal mechanism including 12 WhatsApp lines for various services is functional.

Dr Swaika explained open houses are being held almost every week in which he personally attends to tackle unresolved grievances of Indians. The embassy also commenced the new practice of consular camps to reach Indian nationals in far-flung areas. Three camps have already been held in Wafra, Jahra and Abdaly in the last three months.



KUWAIT: Ambassador of the Republic of Bulgaria Dimitar Dimitrov and Assistant Foreign Minister for Protocol Affairs Ambassador Nabil Al-Dakhil are seen during the celebration. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Bulgarian artists perform at the event.



Tens of people attended the event celebrating the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations with Kuwait and the Day of Bulgarian Enlightenment and Culture.

Kuwait, Bulgaria to build on fruitful cooperation: Envoy

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Bulgarian Embassy held a ceremony on Wednesday to mark the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations with Kuwait and the Day of Bulgarian Enlightenment and Culture. Bulgarian Ambassador Dimitar Dimitrov praised the depth of the historical and excellent Bulgarian-Kuwaiti relations. "Over the past 60 years, the two countries and peoples have succeeded in writing a wonderful history and build solid foundations of friendship, trust and mutual respect, until they became role models for relations between countries," he said.

Dimitrov described the political dialogue between the two countries as positive and constructive, pointing to the two countries' keenness to continue strengthening it. "We have achieved much through our bilateral cooperation in a large number of areas. The two countries have developed a reliable mechanism for trade and economic cooperation and will continue to develop them by working on projects, along with several new agreements," he said.

Ambassador Dimitrov pointed out common interest requires enhancing bilateral economic exchange, noting that Bulgaria has a stimulating investment environment and economic climate, a stable financial position, an easy tax system and a qualified workforce, in addition to easy access to European markets.

"The two countries can also build on our achievements in the field of education, as Kuwaiti graduates in the field of medicine from Bulgarian universities are among those who have contributed significantly to the advancement of the health sector in the country, and dozens of Bulgarian students have also developed their skills in the Arabic language at the

Language Center at Kuwait University," he said.

Regarding tourism, Dimitrov said: "Bulgaria is one of the popular and well-known tourist destinations for Kuwaitis. The Bulgarian Black Sea coast is very popular, and its mountain resorts provide excellent opportunities for tourism and recreation in all seasons. Bulgaria is also famous for its warm and mineral waters since ancient times and is a suitable environment for spa tourism."

The ambassador mentioned culture has a very important presence in bilateral relations with Kuwait and has a fundamental role in developing people-to-people relations. "The first bilateral document concluded between Bulgaria and Kuwait after the establishment of diplomatic relations was the cultural cooperation agreement, where a relatively small and active Bulgarian community was formed in Kuwait. It mostly includes medical staff, doctors, engineers, architects and teachers, where they are our ambassadors here and they have a fundamental role in developing our relationship and strengthening our close friendship," Dimitrov noted.

Fire force employee sentenced to 15 years for embezzlement

KUWAIT: The Court of Cassation sentenced Thursday an employee in Kuwait's fire force who embezzled KD 2 million over at least two years to 15 years in prison. The court has also ordered him to return the money, in addition to a KD 2 million fine.

The employee has allegedly sneaked increased his salary 15 times, of which he invested huge amounts in the purchase of prayer beads "mesbah" and rings. At one point, the man's salary reached KD 42,000, the highest wages paid to an employee in the public sector.

Authorities first learned of the man, who worked with the payroll department at the fire force, when detectives received a confidential tip alerting them to suspicions about his activities. The man's senior work colleague accidentally discovered a salary certificate with the employee's name on it that showed a sum higher than his KD 2,000 salary at the time.

Detectives investigated the claim and were able to uncover how the man could increase his salary without getting caught. The trick was to raise it gradually. He began by taking it from KD 4,000 to KD 9,000. Three months later, he was able to raise his salary to KD 17,000. Seeing that no one complained about his skyrocketing wages, the man finally raised it to KD 42,000.

Kuwait's envoy to UN warns of poor health conditions in Palestine

GENEVA: Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN and other international organizations in Geneva, Ambassador Nasser Al-Hain, warned of the health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, calling international community to shoulder its responsibility to protect the Palestinian people. This came in remarks to KUNA on the sidelines of the 76th session of the World Health Assembly, on the health conditions in the Arab lands occupied by the Zionist entity, including East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan. Ambassador Al-Hain said that Kuwait has strongly condemned Zionist practices against the Palestinians, especially since the report of the Director-General of the World Health Organization on the health situation in the Palestinian territories under Zionist occupation fully reveals massive amount of violations. He also called on the international community to work to protect the health services in the occupied Palestinian territories, while protecting the Palestinians from violations, including the denial of the right to health treatment, and to end the daily suffering of the Palestinians. The World Health Assembly is convening from May 21 to May 30, in the presence of representatives of ministries of health from various countries and international community organizations to discuss ways to strengthen health sectors and deal with related challenges. — KUNA

NBK marks International Museum Day

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) always shows commitment to supporting cultural activities, magnifying Kuwait's heritage, and highlighting its role, as a leading player in the private sector, in Kuwait's economic history. In this context, NBK Museum participated in the panel discussion and the exhibition organized by National Museum of Kuwait celebrating International Museum Day. As part of this participation, NBK exclusively showcased rare historical holdings dating back to 1952, when it was founded.

The exhibition is held at the Kuwait National Museum from May 18 until the end of the month, with the participation of Kuwait Heritage Society, International



Aeshah Al-Bader

Council of Museums (ICOM) – Kuwait and Quttainah Medical Museum.

Activities include displaying a variety of historical books and documents and valuable objects, which date back to 1952, when NBK was founded, which represent historical milestones in the bank's journey and the Kuwaiti economy.

Speaking on this, Aeshah Al-Bader, Museum Curator & Archivist, Public Relations and Event Management

at NBK said: "By participating in this kind of events, we aim to highlight the milestones of Kuwait's economic history through NBK Museum's archive collection including historical documents kept for decades."

"We seek to benefit from the expertise of Kuwait's museums as we are in the process of designing the NBK Museum. To this end, we communicated with several museums in Kuwait to learn from their expertise and engagements with local and international museum designers, as well as their experience in sustaining equipment quality and maintenance," she added.

"Sustainability is not limited to environmental issues, as we also have sustainability of knowledge, which we seek to accentuate through our participation in the exhibition. We aim to promote cooperation between different centers to maximize the benefit of all parties from the expertise and services of others," she noted.

The National Bank of Kuwait was



founded by virtue of Amiri Decree dated 19 May, 1952, as the first homegrown bank and first shareholding company in Kuwait and the Gulf region. Given that, NBK's history is closely connected to Ku-

wait's history and development, therefore the NBK story will not only chronicle the bank's development, rather the different stages of Kuwait's economic and social development.

Local

Constitution provides parliamentarians with freedoms to play prominent legislative role

MPs can supervise government programs, grill ministers

By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

KUWAIT: With recent opinions skeptical of the role of the legislative process in Kuwait and its actual effects on policymaking, we should look back to the constitution and the freedoms it provides to members of the parliament with regards to their role in interacting with the government.

In Kuwait, the constitution allows MPs a degree of freedom with regards to the legislative process and its supervision with the executive body. It also protects MPs and their views, as they are seen as representatives of the entire nation. Moreover, it necessitates that the Cabinet must provide a program that would be followed. Furthermore, MPs can question and force the resignation of a minister, in addition to their usual duties as legislators.

Constitutional rights and legal immunity

Article 108 states "A member of the Assembly represents the whole nation. He shall safeguard the public interest and shall not be subject to any authority in the discharge of his duties in the Assembly or in its committees."

Article 109 states "A member of the Assembly shall have the right to initiate bills. No bill initiated by a member and rejected by the National Assembly may be re-introduced during the same session."

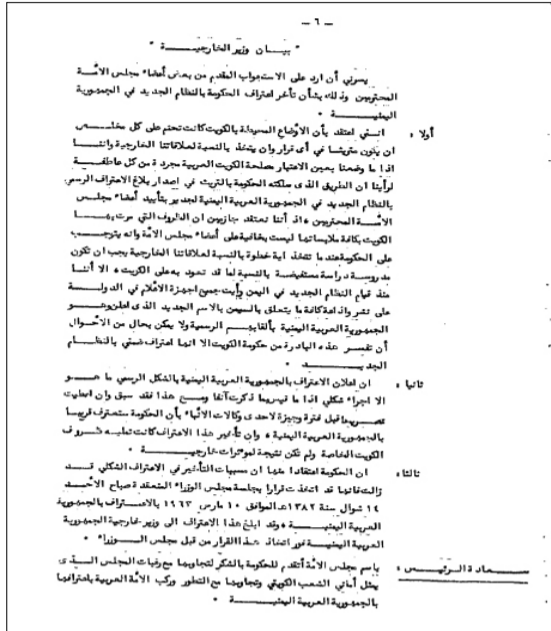
Article 110 states "A member of the National Assembly shall be free to express, any views or opinions in the Assembly or in its committees. Under no circumstances shall he be held liable in respect thereof", meaning no legal action can be taken against an MP.

Supervising the government program

Article 98 states that immediately upon the formation of a Cabinet, it shall present its program to the Assembly, and the Assembly may make comments with regards to the program. This program is then set as a basis for the supervision work of the parliament. If any issue is found, article 114 gives MPs the right to form investigation committees in any matter they see fit, with the ministry obliged to produce a reply.

Questioning

Article 99 states clearly, "Every member of the



KUWAIT: This photo shows Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's answer to the first question asked to a minister in the National Assembly.

National Assembly may put to the prime minister and to ministers questions with a view to clarifying matters falling within their competence." There are 34,324 questions listed in the official Assembly database to date, with the first question addressed by a number of MPs to then foreign minister, the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Feb 20, 1963, asking about the delay in recognizing the then newly formed Yemeni revolutionary government. Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad replied the recognition of a state is a mere formality, as the recognition has already been agreed upon, but the ministry felt for Kuwait's best interest to delay the recognition, stressing that no foreign pressure has been a reason for the case.

Interpellation

Article 100 gives the right to members to address the Cabinet in an interpellation (grilling), which is a prolonged debate on an issue as long as it falls within



the ministry's competence, with an 8-day brief period given before the interpellation takes place. Usually, members request an interpellation should they believe a previously requested question was not adequately answered.

Subject to the provisions of articles 101 and 102 of the constitution, an interpellation may lead to a motion of no-confidence being put to the Assembly. Article 101 states "Every minister shall be responsible to the National Assembly for the affairs of his ministry", and if a no-confidence vote is passed after an interpellation, the minister must submit a formal resignation. Ministers cannot participate in a vote of no-confidence, which passes by a majority vote by MPs.

As for article 102, it allows for the ability to file a non-cooperation request that would be delivered to HH the Amir, who would then decide to either dissolve the parliament or appoint a new prime minister. It states: "(If the new Assembly) cannot co-operate with the said prime minister, he shall be considered to have resigned as from the date of the decision of the Assembly in this respect, and a new Cabinet shall be formed."

There have been 135 interpellations listed in the

Assembly's database to date, the first of which was an interpellation addressed to the social affairs and labor minister by late MP Mohammed Al-Rushaid regarding the distribution of 30 1,000 sq m plots in Adaliya.

The Kuwaiti parliament is clearly a harbor of freedom that should be exercised responsibly. If the constitution allows this much freedom for the monitoring of the executive body, it should be seen as a privilege that would accelerate the development of society and not hinder its progress for the sake of personal interests.

From the first interpellation in 1963 until 2006, there were a total of 35 interpellations, averaging 0.81 interpellations per year. In the period from 2007 to date, there have been 100 interpellations recorded, averaging 6.67 interpellations per year. The excessive increase in the number of interpellations points out there might be some misuse of this constitutional tool, with some grillings deemed personal rather than constructive. Interpellation is an effective tool rightfully granted by the constitution and its misuse can only result in the harm of the nation for the benefit of a few.

Experts warn election candidates against exploiting family issues

KUWAIT: Those eager to secure a seat at the National Assembly during the June 6 elections must highlight issues pertaining to family welfare during the campaigns, said experts on Wednesday. Issues such as housing, education, employment and the welfare of families in Kuwait are a key component that have the power to determine the success or failure of a campaign if not provided adequate attention during the election.

Speaking on the issue, Professor of Psychology at Kuwait University Saud Al-Ghanim said that family matters were sort of a bridge that would



Saud Al-Ghanim

Ghannam Al-Ghannam

enable candidates to possibly win a seat in parliament. The issue is not individualistic by nature, it is a matter that concerns every household in Kuwait, affirmed Ghanim. However, Ghanim warned that some candidates might hijack this important matter for political gains, saying that voters must choose wisely those who would bring benefits to

all families in Kuwait. In a similar fashion, Professor of Social Science at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) Ghannam Al-Ghannam affirmed that the welfare of families was an issue of great importance. Most candidates focus on social justice issues including providing more social security to all families in Kuwait, he affirmed, saying that in order to elevate the financial stability of families in Kuwait, salary increases must be on top of the priorities for candidates vying for a seat at the parliament's Abdullah Al-Salem Hall.

Safeguarding the family structure against hardships such as divorce and boosting education material that propagates and calls for family rights are also important matters that should be on the mind of any candidate. He also warned candidates not to exploit the matter for their own gains, saying that such a political step would backfire against any parliamentary hopeful. — KUNA

Diwanias have power to shape election results

KUWAIT: Diwanias, where men usually gather to socialize and discuss social and political issues, are very famous in Kuwait for bringing people together. During elections, they play an important role in shaping public opinions and even influencing voters.

Diwanias, experts said, will once again play a pivotal role in the upcoming 2023 National Assembly election by encouraging the democratic process in the country and boosting the importance of political awareness.

Political discourse at diwanias helps educate the masses on the vitality of partaking in the political and democratic process that help shape the future of the country, said Kuwait University psychology professor Kamal Al-Farraj. He indicated that issues pertaining to society, the economy and other important aspects of life are usually discussed during diwaniya gatherings. Diwanias, he said, also provided a place for people to network, share opinions, and collaborate on a multitude of matters.

Hussein Ibrahim, professor of public relations and media at Kuwait University, said that diwanias sometimes have a stronger voice than media outlets. Diwanias help move the proverbial democratic wheel in Kuwait, steering individuals — through dialogue and arguments — towards certain candidates and ideals, he added. He argued that diwanias could also be digitized in a sense that candidates could hold virtual diwaniya gatherings on any social media platform to connect with more people and get their opinions.

Yaqub Al-Kandari, professor of social studies and services at Kuwait University, said that such venues could plant the initial political seeds of individuals and groups. Diwanias, he said, are sometimes referred to as "miniature parliaments" due to the vast political opinions and discussions on how to deal with social and economic problems facing Kuwait. While diwanias in the past were gathering places to the well-known figures in society prior to the discovery of oil, nowadays any normal citizen could establish his diwaniya and all were welcomed to attend, he added.

Diwanias in Kuwait, since the 1920s, were venues dedicated to gatherings amongst people to discuss life in general and find solutions to problems facing society as a whole, he pointed out. He noted that currently, diwanias play a part in monitoring MPs and letting them know what the people are really thinking about them and their efforts at parliament. Speaking thoroughly on the history of diwanias, Historian Yaqub Al-Ghunaim revealed that diwanias existed in Kuwait for some 300 years. The modern version of the diwaniya as we know today began around 1921 with the establishment of the Shura (consultation) Council, he indicated, adding that diwanias continued to develop as the political scene between 1961-63 after independence and the first National Assembly elections. — KUNA

Headquarters still preferred by many election candidates

KUWAIT: While some candidates in the 2023 Kuwaiti National Assembly elections announced that they would not set up campaigns at headquarters and go with social media, others still prefer direct communication with voters to present their programs and goals. Kuwait Municipality has licensed over 100 campaign headquarters across all governorates since the 2023 elections were called. The majority of headquarters are located in the Capital. On Wednesday alone, the municipality announced issuing 48 — 22 in the Capital, 18 in Hawally, three in Ahmadi and five in Farwaniya. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Spread across the country, headquarters allow candidates to directly communicate with voters. — KUNA photos

Kuwaiti artist launches new exhibition

KUWAIT: In the fourth edition of his "Grace" exhibition, Kuwaiti artist Abdullah Al-Zeid showed 35 paintings that highlighted issues related to men and women and showed different civilizations. The paintings were produced using modern and experimental methods.

Zeid has been active as an artist since the early 2000s. He has participated in many art festivals and exhibitions across the world, including in Russia, Tunisia and Bahrain. His paintings are displayed in several government buildings in Kuwait and some Kuwaiti embassies.

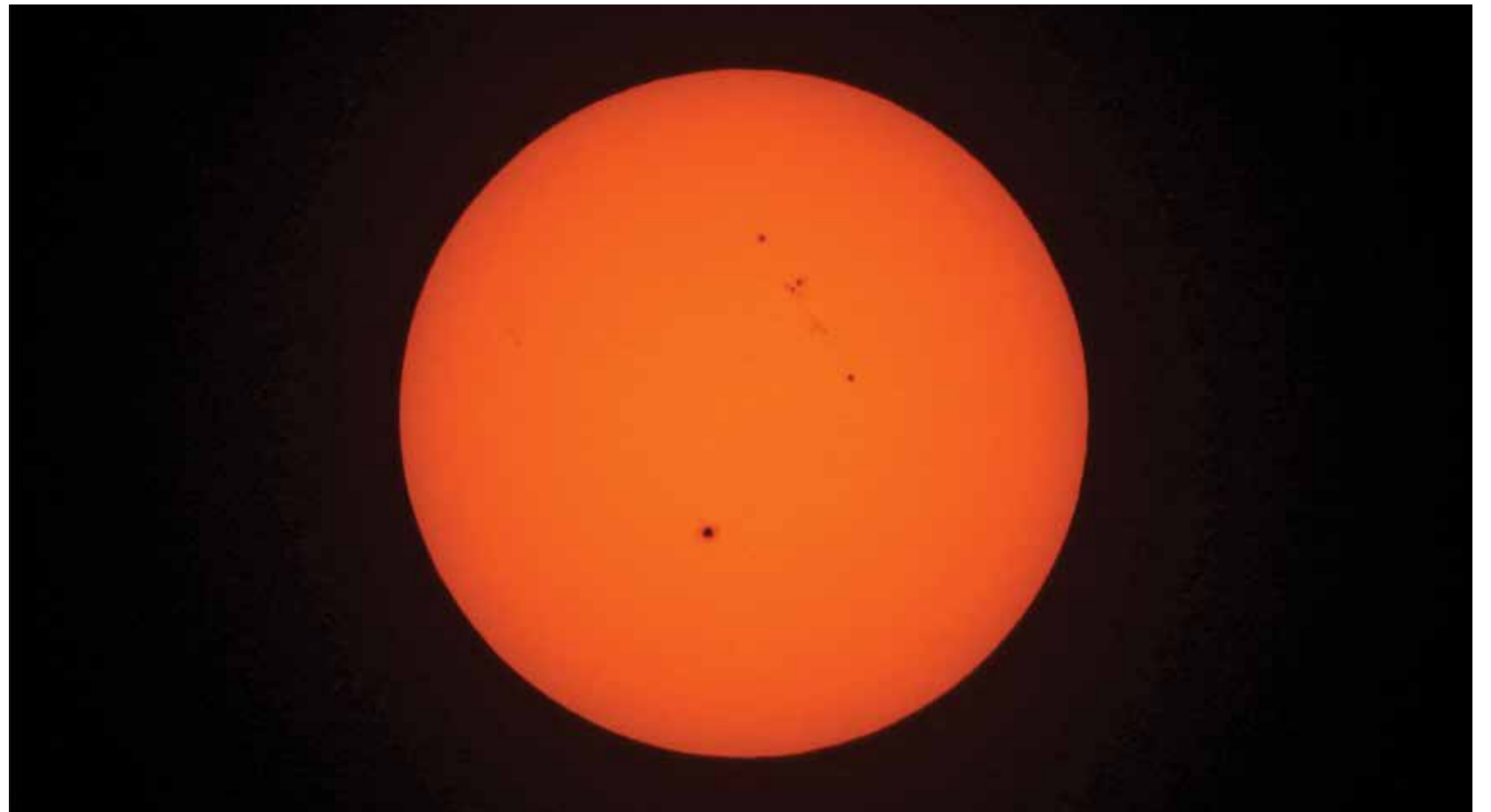
His latest exhibition, held at Den Gallery in Crystal Tower, was crowded with visitors who interacted with the paintings distinguished by a diversity of expressions and the showcase of diverse cultures. —KUNA



Kuwaiti artist Abdullah Al-Zeid



Photo of the day



The sun and its sunspot regions AR3313, AR3311, AR3310 and AR3315 as seen from Kuwait City on May 24, 2023. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

One person makes a difference: Volunteer leads the way to making Kuwait better

Bu Jarrah hopes to foster culture of change, not complaints

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Helping the community is a noble endeavor that has the power to bring about positive change. Yousef Al-Omran, known as Bu Jarrah, believes participating in community initiatives and supporting social causes by dedicating his time, skills and resources will contribute to making Kuwait better. "Small change will change the country; there are numerous ways to make a difference and create a collective impact that fosters a stronger and more harmonious country. One individual can impact society. Small things count," he told Kuwait Times.

Bu Jarrah's voluntary initiatives have gone viral on social media, attracting citizens and residents to get more involved in the community. "The idea started when I saw the number of complaints on social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat. I found that there was a negative vibe, and was affected by the amount of negative thoughts, making me depressed. People were complaining and recording the negatives of Kuwait for views, which is not acceptable," he said.

The idea of "change" came to Bu Jarrah four years ago, but actual implementation began in February, when he saw a flag of Kuwait in faded colors on a



The faded mural before Bu Jarrah repainted it.



Bu Jarrah's first initiative was repainting a faded mural of Kuwait's flag on a Mahboula bridge.

bridge in Mahboula. "The people of Kuwait are tired and hopeless. They have been waiting for change for years, and there was no hope. When they saw a simple citizen like me who wanted to change the thinking of a society to not complain, but be the cause of change and be positive — that attracted them. I am convinced that one person can influence 10 people, and 10 can influence over 100, and the 100 can impact the entire population," he explained.

The community has interacted well with Bu Jarrah's initiatives. "I do not want to tarnish the image of Kuwait or the government, and all activities are carried out with permits. This is what I did with the first initiative to repaint the flag of Kuwait on the bridge. I obtained a permit from the municipality and the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources, while the interior ministry provided a police patrol," he said.

Bu Jarrah indicated he started his initiative individually, but after he uploaded the video of repainting the flag on National Day, there was great interaction from the Kuwaiti people. In his next initiative, more than 500 volunteers — elderly, children and people with disabilities — joined and supported him. "There were even private companies on the waitlist, waiting for my ideas to contribute to implement them on the ground," he told Kuwait Times.

In his latest initiative to fill potholes, nearly 1,000 people came at midnight to help. Bu Jarrah had not expected this much effort by citizens and residents from all segments of society, seeking to help and serve Kuwait. "A company from the private sector even provided us with high-quality materials to help fill the potholes with the best materials. There is great hope that Kuwait will be the most beautiful country," he said. "Filling potholes is one of the initiatives that people interacted with the most, because it is one of the issues that they are most affected by. The number of views of the video reached 1.2 million on TikTok and 300,000 on Instagram," he added.

In another initiative, Bu Jarrah tore down a 10-year-old bus station and built a new one for riders. "I will work on establishing an institution to coordinate and secure a complete team. I am currently working with my family, where my mother does the praying part for luck, my brothers for the administration, my father for logistics and my sisters to help distribute water during



KUWAIT: Volunteer initiatives led by Yousef Al-Omran, known as Bu Jarrah, have gone viral on social media. He is seen giving a talk at an event.

the initiatives," he said.

"I will organize fun and competitive initiatives in the future. I will work on championships between residents of various areas to make them compete in beautifying their area with a given budget, to deliver a message that everyone can change their surroundings. I will launch this initiative in winter," he revealed.

Bu Jarrah called on people to change rather than complain, because Kuwait deserves it. "The change starts with you. With a simple act like removing the trash off the road, a child may see this and do the same. People should experience the pleasure of giving. The pleasure of achievement can replace depression with inner peace. We must deliver a positive message to the young generation to give and change," he concluded.



Bu Jarrah takes a photo with young volunteers who came to help him fill potholes.



Volunteers help Bu Jarrah fill potholes.



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South Korea hails successful launch of homegrown rocket

Top US official warns on child social media use

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DeSantis announces White House bid

Launch plagued by Twitter meltdown • Trump, Biden mock glitches



MIAMI: Demonstrators gather outside the Four Seasons Hotel on May 24, 2023 as Florida Governor Ron DeSantis holds fundraising events ahead of his presidential candidacy announcement. — AFP

WASHINGTON: Florida governor Ron DeSantis's long-awaited entry into the 2024 presidential campaign descended into a fiasco on Wednesday as the opening of the live Twitter event intended to announce his candidacy was derailed by glitches. The conversation repeatedly crashed as the platform's servers were apparently overwhelmed, and many of the 400,000-plus users who were hoping to listen in missed the 44-year-old conservative throwing down the gauntlet to Republican primary front-runner Donald Trump.

DeSantis finally began speaking after almost half an hour of confusion and chaos — although what should have been an exultant launch had been thoroughly overshadowed by the time he was able to make his case for the Republican nomination. "I am running for president of the United States to lead our great American comeback," he told the listeners, although tens of thousands had abandoned Twitter by that point.

As the website struggled to get the event back on track, its owner Elon Musk, performing hosting duties, could be heard noting the "massive number of people online" who had caused the servers to begin "straining somewhat". While organizers sought to highlight the event's populari-

ty — the DeSantis camp said it had raised \$1 million online in one hour — Biden's team was quick to capitalize on the glitches, tweeting a link to a fundraising page and stating: "This link works." Trump joked on his Truth Social platform that "My Red Button is bigger, better, stronger, and is working" — an oblique reference to a war of words he once had with North Korea's Kim Jong Un. The conversation eventually went on for more than an hour, but technical gremlins persisted — a setback mocked as encapsulating the downward turn the governor's image has taken of late.

'War on woke'

Long viewed as the most formidable challenger to twice-impeached Trump, DeSantis boasts deep midwestern roots, a large campaign fund, a list of ultra-conservative legislative wins and an unblemished record of election victories. While Trump has dominated headlines with his legal woes, DeSantis has presented himself as the tip of the spear in the struggle of ordinary Americans against progressive values he sees as authoritarian and divisive.

The governor gave a more traditional interview — minus the setbacks — on conservative TV network Fox News after the Twitter event, and tried to reclaim his rep-

utation for order and competence. "If you nominate me, I pledge to you that on January 20, 2025, at high noon, I'll be the guy on the west side of the Capitol with the left hand on the Bible and the right hand in the air, taking the oath of office as the 47th president of the United States," he said. "No more excuses — we've got to get this one done."

DeSantis has used his position as Florida's chief executive to stack up a litany of conservative accomplishments, signing off on some 80 state laws targeting "woke indoctrination" in schools and other public institutions. They include a ban on discussing gender identity and sexual orientation in schools, a block on funding efforts to promote diversity at public universities and one of the most restrictive abortion laws in the country. "The woke mind virus is basically a form of Cultural Marxism. At the end of the day, it's an attack on the truth, and because it's a war on truth, I think we have no choice but to wage a war on woke," he told Fox News.

Trump on the attack

Refraining from explicitly criticizing Trump, the governor used the event to draw a distinction between his record of getting policy initiatives into the statute books and the

former president's reputation for legislative inertia and chaos in his personal and professional life. But DeSantis lacks the frontrunner's national profile and the launch comes with his ratings in decline, as a number of policy missteps have prompted disquiet about his readiness to take on Trump. He now faces the daunting task of closing an enormous polling gap, with Trump posting leads of close to 40 percentage points, despite being indicted on felony financial charges and being found liable for sexual abuse in a New York civil trial. Behind the scenes, the Trump and DeSantis camps have been jostling to secure endorsements from state lawmakers while, at the national level, Florida's congressional delegation has broken heavily for Trump.

But DeSantis is seen as lacking the natural charm needed to peel away some of the 14 million voters who backed Trump in the last competitive Republican primary, in 2016. Trump has not posted on Twitter since his two-year ban over the 2021 US Capitol riot ended in November, but has been using his own social network to attack DeSantis almost daily. In a Wednesday morning post, Trump said the governor "desperately needs a personality transplant and, to the best of my knowledge, they are not medically available yet". — AFP

Sunak vows to cut immigration as UK figures hit new high

LONDON: Net migration in the UK hit a record 606,000 in 2022, official figures showed on Thursday, heaping pressure on the government, which has pledged to cut dependency on foreign labor. Responding to the figures, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak described legal immigration levels as "too high". "It's as simple as that and I want to bring them down," he told ITV in an interview.

Measures announced earlier this week to tighten the number of international students allowed to bring their families with them would have a significant impact, he added. Immigration has long been a key political issue in the UK and was one of the main battlegrounds of the Brexit referendum in 2016, which saw the country leave the European Union. In 2021, net migration — the difference between the number of people leaving the UK and those arriving — was 488,000.

Jay Lindop, director of the center for international migration at the Office for National Statistics (ONS), said world events such as the end of the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine played a part in the increase. China's squeeze on civil rights in Hong Kong, which led to the UK relaxing entry rules for holders of British overseas passports, also had an impact. "A series of unprecedented world events throughout 2022 and the lifting of restrictions following the coronavirus pandemic led to record levels of international immigration to the UK," said Lindop.

Skills shortage

Brexit brought an end to the policy of free movement of people from EU member states, which many businesses have since blamed for a shortage of workers. Among those hardest hit have been agriculture, and the health and social care sector, prompting the government to relax immigration rules to try to plug the gap.

The main opposition Labour party's home affairs spokeswoman, Yvette Cooper, called the latest figures "extraordinary" and said it showed the government had "no plan and no grip" on the issue. "Ministers have completely failed to tackle skills shortages or help peo-

The Turkish leader is now the strong favorite, capping a remarkable turnaround. Seething anger at the government's stuttering response to the February disaster, in which more than 50,000 died, put Erdogan in the unfamiliar position of issuing public apologies.

But Berk Esen, an associate professor at Istanbul's Sabanci University, called Erdogan's election rebound "not very surprising". Esen argued that the region is filled with pious voters who trusted Erdogan's explanation that the massive toll resulted from an unavoidable act of nature — not state negligence over lax building standards. In addition, "the opposition did not campaign heavily in the area and could not offer an alternative, credible message," Esen told AFP.

'Depot for migrants'

Instead of giving up, Kilicdaroglu is radically changing course. Ditching his embracing vows to heal Turkey's social divisions, Kilicdaroglu has struck a stridently nationalist tone, pledging to expel millions of Syrians and other migrants. The message resonates in Syria-border cities such as Antakya, a mountain-rimmed cradle of civilizations once known as Antioch.

Kilicdaroglu has plastered Antakya with posters declaring: "The Syrians will go". "We will not turn Turkey into a depot for migrants," the 74-year-old said on a visit to Antakya on Tuesday. The tough talk



LONDON: Pedestrians walk past Union flags at Oxford Circus on May 25, 2023. — AFP

ple back into work after COVID," she added.

Sunak is under pressure from within his own Conservative ranks to restrict immigration, with right-wingers arguing that the current numbers are unsustainable. Adding to his woes is a growing backlog in the Home Office's processing of asylum claims, particularly of migrants crossing the Channel from northern Europe in small boats. Attempts to send failed asylum seekers to Rwanda, prompted by an unprecedented 45,000 arrivals last year, have been stuck in the courts. — AFP



HATAY, Turkey: Women walk past the ruins of buildings on May 22, 2023 in one of the cities worst affected by the devastating earthquakes that hit southern Turkey earlier in the year. — AFP

pleased Mehmet Aynaci, 20, who blames Syrians for local housing problems. "Before the earthquake, if you looked for a flat, there were a lot of Syrians," Aynaci said. "Of course they must go," added Atilla Celtik, who like Aynaci is one of the few who has not left the almost completely deserted city. "They will be asking for our land in the future," he said. "We are worried." — AFP

Wagner says handing Bakhmut to army, Japan scrambles jets

MOSCOW: The head of Russia's Wagner mercenary group said on Thursday his troops had started transferring their positions in the flashpoint eastern Ukraine city of Bakhmut to the Russian military. Japan said it had scrambled fighter jets after detecting Russian "intelligence gathering" planes off its coastline, while Moscow announced China's special envoy would discuss Ukraine with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Friday.

In Bakhmut, Wagner said it began pulling out its fighters after claiming to have fully captured the destroyed city at the weekend. Ukraine, which denies that Bakhmut has fallen to Russia, insisted it still controlled a "micro district" of the ruined city and said it was still advancing on the flanks. The battle for Bakhmut has raged for nearly a year, leveling the city and decimating waves of Wagner recruits who have led Russia's assault on the industrial hub.

"We are withdrawing units from Bakhmut today. We are handing over positions to the military, ammunition and everything," Wagner boss Yevgeny Prigozhin said in a video. "We pull back, we rest, we prepare and then we will get new tasks," added Prigozhin, who was dressed in tactical body armor and a military helmet. Earlier this week, he conceded that around 10,000 prisoners he had recruited to fight in Ukraine had been killed on the battlefield. The 61-year-old Kremlin ally toured Russian prisons last year to persuade inmates to fight with Wagner in exchange for a promised amnesty on their return — should they survive.

Wagner's announcement came days after Moscow's military said it had deployed jets and artillery on Russian soil against a "sabotage" group that crossed from Ukraine. In Kyiv, President Volodymyr Zelensky accused Russia of terrorizing Ukrainians by launching a new wave of Iranian-made attack drones at targets across his country. "The enemy continued to terrorize Ukraine by launching 36 Shaheds. None reached their target," Zelensky said on social media. "I'm grateful to our air defense forces for the 100-percent result."

The Ukrainian military said Russia was probably targeting key infrastructure and military facilities in western Ukraine. Russia subjected Ukraine to a campaign of aerial bombardments on infrastructure including energy facilities during the winter months but these attacks recently diminished. Kyiv has become increasingly adept at taking down waves of Russian cruise missiles and drones after appealing to Western allies for greater air defense capabilities. — AFP

Turkey quake victims rally around Erdogan

ANTAKYA: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan stares down from a campaign poster at the earthquake ruins of Antakya, inspiring confidence in Ahmet Gulyildizoglu ahead of Sunday's election runoff. Millions across the ravaged region defied expectation and voted for the man who has ruled Turkey for two decades and fell just short of securing another five-year term on May 14.

Erdogan's secular rival, Kemal Kilicdaroglu, "does not fill you with hope", Gulyildizoglu said in front of a debris-strewn expanse once occupied by his six-floor apartment building. "On the other hand, you have an alliance that keeps their promises," the pensioner added, referring to Erdogan's Islamic-rooted party and its far-right allies.

Erdogan's ability to maintain support across Turkey's southeastern disaster zone contributed to Kilicdaroglu's disappointing showing in the first round, which he ended trailing by nearly five points.

International

Libya watchers observe signs of progress toward reconciliation

Political rupture in the east has reversed fortunes of Bashagha

TRIPOLI: Oil-rich but war-scarred Libya has for years been ruled by two rival governments, but now some analysts see faint signs of progress toward reconciliation between them. They point to discord within one of the camps, based in the east and backed by military strongman Khalifa Haftar, where the parliament last week suspended its former premier Fathi Bashagha.

Paradoxically, the observers say, Bashagha's political demise could signal that the Haftar camp is moving towards rapprochement with the internationally recognized government in the capital Tripoli. Some observers even suggest this could aid United Nations-led efforts urging new elections this year in the country that has been torn by bloody chaos since the 2011 overthrow of dictator Muammar Gaddafi.

The political rupture in the east has reversed the fortunes of Bashagha, who a year ago launched an attack on Tripoli that was repelled after a day of deadly street fighting. Bashagha was suspended on May 16 by the eastern-based parliament, which also announced an investigation against him for unspecified reasons.

The move against Bashagha "sealed the end of the political life of this former strongman," said analyst Hasni Abidi of the Geneva-based Institute for Arab and Mediterranean Cultures. His "humiliating departure ... reflects the differences in the eastern camp, in particular between the Haftar clan represented by his children and the parliament," Abidi said. Tripoli-based interim Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah has meanwhile used the "paralysis of the eastern government to consolidate his grip on political and economic life in Libya", he said.

The North African country was plunged into more than a decade of bloody violence following Gaddafi's

ouster in a NATO-backed popular uprising in which the veteran dictator was killed. The ensuing chaos drew in warlords, jihadists and foreign mercenaries and claimed countless lives while leaving the country awash with guns. Haftar, a Gaddafi-era soldier turned exile, and since backed by Egypt and other foreign powers, launched an assault on Tripoli in 2019 that left thousands more dead but ultimately failed.

The warring parties reached a formal ceasefire in October 2020. Since then, the United Nations has resumed its efforts for new elections, to bring stability to the troubled country, but these have been repeatedly delayed. Bashagha, from the port city of Misrata and formerly a political heavyweight in the western camp, had sought Haftar's support in late 2021, vowing to work for "national reconciliation". Bashagha's suspension comes ahead of a mid-June deadline declared by the United Nations for the rival political forces to agree on a framework to hold elections before the end of the year.

Bashagha "always had an expiry date", said Emadeddin Badi of the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, a Switzerland-based research body. "His usefulness ended the day he lost the possibility of establishing himself in Tripoli," the analyst said. Libyan media have meanwhile reported that talks have been held between representatives of Haftar and Dbeibah.

Dbeibah's nephew and one of Haftar's sons "have been in almost continuous talks for months", researcher Jalel Harchaoui told AFP. "The desire of these two Libyan personalities to accommodate one another is one of the reasons for Bashagha's fall," he said. Badi said Haftar had offered to suspend Bashagha, a move that had the "blessing" of Egypt.



TRIPOLI: People use pedalboats in the Saraya Lake outside the capital's Red Castle on May 21, 2023. — AFP

The head of the UN Support Mission in Libya, Abdoulaye Bathily, has said he hopes for an agreement "by mid-June" to hold elections before the end of this year. He told the UN Security Council last month that "intensive consultations have taken place amongst security actors" and said "there has been a new dynamic in Libya".

Libyan political analyst Abdallah Al-Rayes said

the rival camps' new understandings are the culmination of "discreet negotiations in Cairo" with a view to "forming a new coalition government". "This is a step that precedes any agreement on the polls," he added. Harchaoui, however, was less optimistic and said "the elites already well in place today ... have absolutely no intention of leaving power in order to allow credible and authentic elections". — AFP

Islamic scholar acquitted in Swiss rape trial

GENEVA: A Swiss court on Wednesday found Islamic scholar Tariq Ramadan not guilty of rape and sexual coercion in a Geneva hotel 15 years ago, with his accuser immediately indicating she would appeal. The court also decided to compensate the former Oxford University professor for his legal costs, awarding him up to 151,000 Swiss francs (\$167,000), but rejecting his claim for moral damages.

"The accused must have the benefit of the doubt," Yves Maurer-Cecchini, the president of the Geneva Criminal Court, said, citing a lack of evidence, contradictory testimonies and "love messages" sent by the plaintiff after the alleged assault. "Tariq Ramadan must be acquitted." Following the verdict, the 60-year-old Swiss academic — a charismatic yet controversial figure in European Islam — smiled and hugged one of his daughters.

Ramadan's 57-year-old accuser —

identified only under the assumed name of "Brigitte" due to her concerns for her safety — left the courtroom before the end of the verdict was read out. Her lawyers said they would appeal against the ruling. "This deeply unfair decision is the reflection of a caricatural hearing from which dignity was absent and where the word of my client was neither heard nor respected," lawyer Francois Zimeray told AFP.

Ramadan left the court surrounded by his relatives, smiling but without commenting. "It is a verdict inspired by reason," said his Swiss lawyer Yael Hayat. His French lawyer Philippe Ohayon told AFP: "Too many implausibilities and contradictions led to a perfectly logical acquittal in fact and in law." Prosecutors had been seeking a three-year sentence for Ramadan, half of which would have been served behind bars.

Brigitte was in her forties at the time of the alleged assault. She filed a complaint 10 years later, telling the court she felt emboldened to come forward following similar complaints filed against Ramadan in France. In its ruling, the Geneva court found Brigitte's account was "generally constant and detailed". However, it was not corroborated. "There is no doubt that the complainant felt like she had a bad experience that eve-



GENEVA: Leading Swiss Islamic scholar Tariq Ramadan reacts as he leaves Geneva's courthouse after he was acquitted on May 24, 2023. — AFP

ning," the president of the court said, but "the existence of this stress (...) does not make it possible to confirm the materiality of the alleged facts."

Controversial among secularists who see him as a supporter of political Islam, Ramadan obtained a doctorate from the University of Geneva, with a thesis focused on his grandfather, who founded Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood movement. He was a professor of contemporary Islamic studies at Oxford and held visiting roles at universities in Qatar and Morocco. He was forced to take a leave of absence in 2017 when rape allegations surfaced in France at the height of the "Me Too" movement. — AFP

Top US official warns on child social media use

WASHINGTON: The top US health official on Tuesday issued a stark warning to parents, tech companies and regulators, saying the evidence is growing that social media use may seriously harm children. In a lengthy advisory, US surgeon general Vivek Murthy said that while not without benefits, "there are ample indicators that social media can also have a profound risk of harm to the mental health and well-being of children and adolescents".

Social media use by young people in the United States is nearly universal, with up to 95 percent of adolescents reporting using a social platform and more than a third saying they do so "almost constantly", according to the Department of Health and Human Services. Murthy's report said social media can help children and adolescents find a community to connect, but that it also contains "extreme, inappropriate, and harmful content," which can "normalize" self-harm and suicide.

It can perpetuate body dissatisfaction, eating disorders and depression and expose children to online bullying while they are undergoing a critical stage in brain development, the report warned. Murthy called on policymakers to strengthen safety standards around social media and urged tech companies to responsibly assess the impact of their products on children and share data with researchers.

He also advised parents to establish tech-free zones at home in order to promote in-person communication, and to educate children by modelling healthy, responsible online behavior. The report comes at a time when authorities across the United States are searching for ways to regulate social media use, and curb its ill-effects on young people in particular.

Earlier this month, the US state of Montana banned the use of TikTok on its territory. The Chinese-owned video sharing giant is challenging the decision in court. And in March, Utah became the first US state to require social media sites to get parental consent for accounts used by minors. "We are in the middle of a national youth mental health crisis, and I am concerned that social media is an important driver of that crisis — one that we must urgently address," Murthy said. — AFP

World's biggest warship visits Oslo, angering Russia

OSLO: The world's biggest warship, the USS Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier, arrived in Oslo on Wednesday for a stopover criticized by neighboring Russia as an "illogical and harmful" show of force. The 337-metre (1,106-foot) nuclear-powered ship sailed into the Oslo Fjord under escort, where it will stay for several days before heading to the Arctic for military exercises, according to Norwegian media.

"Norway is a strategic partner in the continued efforts to maintain a secure and stable Arctic and North Atlantic region that benefits global order," Erik J Eslich, commander of US Carrier Strike Group 12, said in a statement. The Norwegian military said in a statement "the aircraft carrier's visit and presence provides... a unique opportunity to develop our cooperation and work closely together with our most important ally, the United States".

Norwegian Defense Minister Bjorn Arild Gram said "this is the concrete expression of our close relationship with the United States and demonstrates the will for collective defense and deterrence". The highly publicized visit, which comes amid heightened tensions between the West and Russia over the war in Ukraine, was denounced by the Russian embassy.

"There are no issues in the North that require a military solution, nor issues that require outside intervention," Russian embassy spokesman Timur Chekanov told AFP by email. "Considering that Oslo



MOSS, Norway: The 337-m USS Gerald R Ford aircraft carrier of the US Navy is seen on its way into the Oslo Fjord on May 24, 2023. — AFP

admits that Russia poses no direct military threat to Norway, such shows of force seem illogical and harmful," he added.

NATO member Norway shares a land border with Russia as well as a maritime border in the Barents Sea. The USS Gerald R. Ford, which can transport up to 90 aircraft and helicopters, is expected to remain moored in the Norwegian capital for several days. A vast airspace and sea ban has been implemented around the vessel. According to online daily Barents Observer, the ship is expected to head for the Arctic in several days ahead of the May 29 start of the Arctic Challenge Exercise, gathering 150 aircraft from 14 Western countries. — AFP

nuclear deal clinched with Iran would survive.

The 2015 deal formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, gave Iran relief from international sanctions in return for curbs on its nuclear program. But the deal collapsed in 2018 after the United States unilaterally withdrew from it and reimposed sanctions, prompting Iran to suspend the implementation of its own commitments to curb nuclear activity including uranium enrichment.

In Jan 2020, Iran launched a missile attack on US forces at the Ain Al-Assad military base in Iraq's Anbar province, days after a US drone strike at Baghdad airport killed revered Revolutionary Guard commander Qasem Soleimani and his Iraqi lieutenant Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis. — AFP

Syrian babies abandoned as...

Continued from Page 1

war" affecting both government-controlled and rebel-held areas, the group said.

It pointed to factors including poverty, instability, insecurity and child marriage, along with sexual abuse and pregnancy out of wedlock. While adoption is forbidden across Syria, Othman has asked the local authorities for permission to raise Hibatullah. "I told my children that if I die, she should have part of my inheritance," even though she can never officially be part of the family, he said, breaking into tears. The three-year-old, her hair pulled back loosely into pig-tails and tottering around in shiny pink sandals, now calls him "grandpa". "She is just an innocent child," Othman said.

Syria's war has killed more than 500,000 people, displaced millions and ravaged the country's infrastructure. Health department official Zaher Hajjo told AFP that 53 abandoned newborn babies had been registered in government-controlled areas in the first 10 months of last year — 28 boys and 25 girls. Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad this year issued a

decree creating dedicated facilities for the children, who would be automatically registered as Arab, Syrian and Muslim, with the place of birth as the location they were found.

In rebel-held Idlib province, social workers at the main center for abandoned children tended to tiny babies wrapped tightly in blankets in basic cradles, some spruced up with purple paint or ribbons. In the bare-walled room with a brown-and-beige carpet, one woman rocked a baby to sleep with one hand while feeding another milk with the other.

Faisal Al-Hammoud, head of programs at the center, said one baby girl they took in was found under an olive tree after being mauled by a cat. "Blood was dripping down her face," he said, adding that the orphanage had since entrusted her to a family. Workers follow up to make sure such babies are well treated and "that there is no child trafficking", Hammoud added.

The center has taken in 26 babies — 14 girls and 12 boys—since it opened in 2019, and nine this year alone, said Abdullah Abdullah, a civil affairs official with Idlib's rebel authorities. More than four million people live in areas controlled by militants and Turkish-backed groups in Syria's north and northwest, 90 percent of whom depend on aid to survive. "The war is to blame and families too" for child abandonments, Abdullah said. "These children are victims," he added. — AFP



IDLIB: A picture taken on April 30, 2023 shows a nurse caring for babies at a center which shelters Syrian unaccompanied children and those of unknown parentage. — AFP

Iran unveils its longest-range...

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The unveiling comes amid heightened tensions in the Zionist-Palestinian conflict and just over 10 days into a fragile Gaza ceasefire that ended five days of cross border conflict between the Zionist entity and the Iran-backed Palestinian group Islamic Jihad. Days after the Khorramshahr was unveiled in 2017, then US president Donald Trump issued a stark warning at Tehran, casting growing uncertainty over whether a

International

And now the weather: Cloudy with scattered showers of plastic

High stakes talks to end plastic pollution to resume in Paris

PARIS: Diplomats from 175 countries gathering in Paris for plastics treaty talks on Monday may want to pack an umbrella, but not just because there's a chance of rain. France's capital will also be showered during the five-day talks by billions of microplastic particles falling from the sky, according to the first-ever plastics pollution weather forecast.

The predicted downpour will range between 40 and 48 kg of free-floating plastic bits blanketing greater Paris every 24 hours, the scientists involved told AFP. If the weather delivers heavy rain, the "plastic fall" is likely to increase up to tenfold. "This should sharpen the focus of negotiators," said Marcus Gover, head of plastics research at the Minderoo Foundation based in Perth, Australia. "Plastic particles break down into the environment and this toxic cocktail ends up in our bodies, where it does unimaginable damage to our health."

Concern over the impact of plastics on the environment and human wellbeing has surged in recent years along with a crescendo of research documenting its omnipresence and persistence. In nature, multicolored microplastics — by definition less than five millimeters in diameter — have been found in ice near the North Pole and inside fish navigating the oceans' deepest, darkest recesses. Plastic debris is estimated to kill more than a million seabirds and 100,000 marine mammals each year, according to the United Nations Environment Program, and filter-feeding blue whales consume up to 10 million pieces of microplastic every day.

'Heads in the sand'

The equivalent of a garbage truck's worth of plastic refuse is dumped into the ocean every minute. In hu-

mans, microscopic bits of plastic have been detected in blood, breast milk and placentas. Animal tests have linked chemicals in microplastics to increased risks of cancer, reproductive problems and DNA mutations but data on human impact is still lacking.

"In our bodies, the plastics we need to be most worried about are probably those between 10 nanometers and one micrometer," said pediatrician Christos Symeonides, a researcher at Murdoch Children's Research Hospital and the Minderoo Foundation. "They're the ones most likely to get through our biological membranes into tissues, including the blood-brain barrier," he told AFP. "We're just now pulling our heads out of the sand when it comes to the health hazards of microplastics."

The forecast for Paris next week only covers significantly larger particles, mostly synthetic fibers at least 50 microns in length. For reference, a human hair is about 80 microns (or 80,000 nanometers) across. The method developed by Minderoo Foundation researchers does not measure plastic falling through the atmosphere in real time. Rather, it is based on research done in Paris starting in 2015 that collected samples from multiple locations year round and sifted through them in the laboratory.

'Virgin' plastic

This pioneering work by French scientists found that most plastic particles falling across Paris' 2,500-sq-km catchment area were nylon and polyester, probably from clothing. Other bits were cast off by tyres, which shed them especially when vehicles brake. Over an entire year up to 10 tons of microplastic fibers settle over the Paris area, they estimated.



BANDA ACEH, Indonesia: University students clean up plastics and other debris washed ashore at a port on May 21, 2023. — AFP

The density of "plastic fall" can increase by an order of magnitude during heavy rain. Measurements taken by other teams have replicated these findings in half a dozen cities around the world. Microplastics that hit the ground can still be ingested or inhaled when stirred up, for example, on a windy day. Last year, 175 nations agreed to forge a legally binding treaty to curb plastic pollution, aiming to complete negotiations by 2024.

No major breakthroughs are expected at the technical talks starting on Monday, but major policy de-

ated will include a global ban on single-use plastic items, a "polluter pays" scheme and a tax on new or "virgin" plastic production. These policies — even if fully implemented — may not be enough to cut consumption, according to experts and green groups calling for an outright cap on plastic production.

On current trends, annual production of fossil-fuel-based plastics will nearly triple by 2060 to 1.2 billion tons, while waste will exceed one billion tons, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). — AFP

South Korea hails successful launch of homegrown rocket

SEOUL: South Korea said Thursday it had successfully launched its homegrown Nuri rocket and placed working satellites into orbit, hailing a key step forward for the country's burgeoning space program. It was the third launch of the Nuri, which successfully put test satellites into orbit last year after a failed 2021 attempt saw the rocket's third-stage engine burn out too early.

The three-stage rocket, more than 47 m long and weighing 200 tons, soared into the sky at 6:24 pm (0924 GMT) from the Naro Space Center in South Korea's southern coastal region, leaving a huge trail of white smoke. "We report to the public that the third launch of Nuri, which was independently developed to secure domestic space transportation capacity, has been successfully completed," said Lee Jong-ho, minister of science and technology.

The main satellite made communication with South Korea's King Sejong Station in Antarctica, he said, adding that the launch confirmed "our potential for launch services for various satellite operations and space exploration". South Korea will carry out three more launches of Nuri by 2027, Lee added. South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol hailed Nuri's launch, saying it will give the country a competitive edge in the global space race.

"The success of Nuri's third launch is a splendid achievement that declares South Korea has joined the G7 space powers," he said in a statement. The launch came a day after initial plans were called off over a computer communication error which was resolved by Thursday. In previous tests, the rocket carried payloads mainly designed for verifying the performance of the launch vehicle.

This time, the rocket was topped with eight working satellites, including a "commercial-grade satellite", according to the science ministry. More than 200,000 viewers were watching the livestream of the launch on YouTube, with one commenting: "Fly high Nuri! Let's go to space!"

South Korea has laid out ambitious plans for outer space, including landing spacecraft on the Moon by 2032 and Mars by 2045. In Asia, China, Japan and India all have advanced space programs, and the South's nuclear-armed neighbor North Korea was the most recent entrant to the club of countries with their own satellite launch capability. Ballistic missiles and space rockets use similar technology and Pyongyang claimed to have put a 300-kilogram satellite into orbit in 2012 in what Washington condemned as a disguised missile test. — AFP



SYDNEY: This screen grab from a video shows people watching a fire on May 25, 2023. — AFP

Dramatic Sydney blaze consumes 7-storey building

SYDNEY: More than 130 firefighters battled towering flames and thick smoke Thursday as a huge blaze consumed an unoccupied seven-storey building in central Sydney. The flames appeared to be dying down as firefighters poured in water from multiple hoses two hours after the fire took hold in the vacant building near the Central Station railway hub.

"We're on top of the fire but it's still burning," NSW Fire and Rescue superintendent Adam Dewberry told AFP, explaining that a "significant structural collapse" made it too dangerous for firefighters to enter. More than 130 firefighters and 30 fire trucks were at the scene, he said, dousing the blaze from the ground, ladder trucks and crane-like aerial ladder trucks.

"It looks like we have stopped the fire spreading to adjoining occupied buildings, which is good news," Dewberry said. "But the main fire building is destroyed," he said. The fire had also spread into another "abandoned and derelict" three-storey building, he said. Shortly after the blaze erupted, flames almost

as high as the building itself could be seen shooting into the sky. The entire top floor wall leaned over and crashed in pieces into the street below, fire service video showed, as the building glowed orange with flames. The carcass of a burning van was parked in front. One firefighter suffered a minor burn on his right arm but did not need hospital treatment, the fire service said. Firefighting would extend throughout the night, it said.

'Heat on your face'

There were no other reports of injuries from the blaze, which broke out in the afternoon in a building described by Australian media as a heritage-listed, unoccupied former hat factory. "The public is urged to avoid the area as firefighting operations continue," the fire service said earlier, as the sound of emergency vehicle sirens echoed through the city streets.

One commuter, Corrin Ellis, told the national broadcaster ABC he was going to catch a tram when he noticed the fire. "All you could feel when standing here was heat on your face from the flames," Ellis told the ABC. "And when they started to move us back, a car just in front of the building caught fire," he added. "The front of the building collapsed and flames just spewed from the top of the building." New South Wales Premier Chris Minns urged people to "stay safe". "The public are advised to avoid the area as firefighting operations continue," he said on social media. — AFP

Myanmar team visits Rohingya camps for repatriation scheme

TEKNAF, Bangladesh: A Myanmar government team visited Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh on Thursday as part of a mooted pilot repatriation scheme. Most of the refugees have been stuck in ramshackle camps in southeastern Bangladesh since fleeing a 2017 crackdown by the Myanmar military that is now subject to a United Nations genocide investigation. Several previous repatriation attempts have failed but Bangladesh and Myanmar are looking to return around 1,100 people to the violence-wracked state of Rakhine in the coming weeks. Twenty Rohingya visited two resettlement camps this month in Rakhine, where the Myanmar junta plans to house them in what experts say is land that for generations belonged to the Rohingyas before being confiscated.

The team of 14 Myanmar officials, all in civilian clothes, arrived by boat in the Bangladeshi border town of Teknaf on Thursday morning, went to the camps and talked to around 200 people. But Mohammad Selim, one of the Rohingyas who met the Myanmar

delegation, told AFP by phone that their demands were being ignored. "We said that we have to return to our own ancestral house... We told them they should give us citizenship. But they said they will give us NVC (national verification card), which is not citizenship," Selim said. "They repeatedly said so. There is no way we can trust them." "We have no permanent representative in this repatriation process," Khin Maung, a prominent Rohingya leader, told AFP before the meeting. "This repatriation process is just an eyewash. If they didn't ensure our dignity, there is no point returning to IDPs (internally displaced people)," he said. — AFP



TEKNAF, Bangladesh: A Myanmar delegation arrives in Teknaf on May 25, 2023 to meet Bangladeshi officials. — AFP

flights to be canceled over the weekend out of Mexico City. Shelters have been opened near Popocatepetl in case the situation escalates, while troops have been deployed and are helping to sweep up ash in the streets.

Roughly 25 million people live within a 100-km radius of Popocatepetl, the second-tallest volcano in Mexico, rising nearly 5,500 m above sea level. On Sunday, authorities increased their warning level to one step below red alert, which, if reached, would mean evacuation for thousands like Atenco living near the volcano, whose name means "smoking mountain" in the indigenous Nahuatl language. — AFP



XALITZINTLA, Mexico: Ash and smoke billow from the Popocatepetl volcano on May 25, 2023. — AFP

Shaking roofs, frayed nerves as 'Popo' rumbles

SAN NICOLAS DE LOS RANCHOS, Mexico: Miguel Angel Atenco tries to ignore the vibrations, falling ash and fiery night-time shows from the volcano towering over his Mexican town, and carry on selling tacos as usual. Like others living in the shadow of Popocatepetl, located just 70 kilometers (about 45 miles) southeast of Mexico City, he is used to its periodic tantrums.

"We keep on working, just waiting to see what the volcano does," Atenco told AFP in his restaurant, in the ash-covered community of San Nicolas de los Ranchos, in the foothills of rumbling "El Popo". "We have to clean up. We have to work, and everything's dirty," he added, after sweeping the ash from the sidewalk in front of his business again.

Since Friday, "Don Goyo" as the volcano is also known locally, has rattled nerves with several explosions and repeated emissions of ash, gasses and molten rock. The increased activity caused dozens of

Three killed in Japan gun and knife attack

TOKYO: A woman and two male police officers were killed in a shooting and stabbing attack at a farm in central Japan on Thursday, media reported. A suspect, believed to be a farmer in his 30s, was holed up inside a building after the incident, which also left a fourth person injured, the reports said. Residents were urged by authorities to stay indoors in the semi-rural area around the city of Nakano in Nagano region, where the attack took place.

It was a rare instance of violent crime in Japan, which has a low murder rate and some of the world's toughest gun laws. Public broadcaster NHK and other major outlets said the woman was stabbed and the two police officers were shot in the afternoon attack. Police did not immediately confirm details when contacted by AFP. A witness told NHK he had been working at a farm nearby when "a woman came running from the road saying 'help me', and she fell down".

"Behind her came a man wearing camouflage and carrying a large knife, who stabbed her in the back," the 72-year-old witness said. He said he called emergency services while neighbors tried to resuscitate the woman. NHK, citing police, said the attacker then fired what appeared to be a shotgun at the police officers who arrived at the scene.

The officers were inside a patrol car and the attacker placed the weapon against a window of the vehicle and fired twice, NHK reported. Another man was injured in the attack but could not be rescued because he was too close to the building where the suspect has taken shelter, Kyodo News said.

Japan was left reeling in July last year when former prime minister Shinzo Abe was shot dead in broad daylight with an apparently homemade gun. Abe's accused assassin, Tetsuya Yamagami, reportedly targeted the politician over his links to the Unification Church. And last month, a man was arrested for allegedly hurling a pipe bomb-like explosive towards current Prime Minister Fumio Kishida as he campaigned in the western city of Wakayama.

Kishida was unharmed and a man arrested on the scene will undergo a three-month psychiatric examination, a regional court said this week. The suspect has reportedly remained tight-lipped about his motive for that failed attack. — AFP



GOHEUNG, South Korea: This handout photo taken on May 25, 2023 shows South Korea's homegrown space rocket Nuri launching from the Naro Space Centre. — AFP

Business

FRIDAY, MAY 26, 2023

Volvo Cars Kuwait celebrates launch of first phase of sustainability initiative

Sustainability 'as important to Volvo Cars as safety'



Achraf Tamim, General Manager at BNK Automotive



KUWAIT: (From left) Achraf Tamim, Hanan Zubaid, Sama Al Wasm, Hawazen Al Buaijan, Yousef Al Zahar, Fahad Al Mutairi, Shahad Al Barjas, Sandra Draskovic, Farah Asaad and Ahmad Abdulmohsen take a group photo. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Fahad Al Mutairi, Member of EVOLVE Team BNK Automotive

KUWAIT: Volvo Cars Kuwait celebrates the launch of first phase of its sustainability initiative in their Retail Spaces. Sustainability is as important to Volvo Cars as safety. By working towards climate-neutrality, embracing the circular economy, and conducting business operations responsibly, Volvo is continuously working on protecting the planet and contributing to a fairer society.

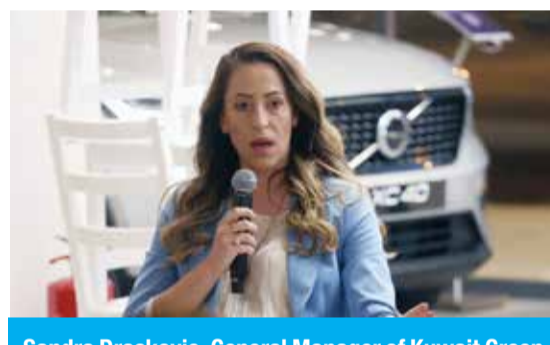
Volvo's global retailers play a crucial role in projecting and visibly demonstrating the company's commitment to sustainability, including reducing emissions, directly to existing and prospective customers. "We at BNKA are very proud of the work done by our Evolve team members on the Sustainability initiative from assessment, presenting transformation solutions, sourcing, budgeting to implementation. Amidst the commercial pressures, we believe that we have a social duty to reduce our levels of consumption and be accountable for our actions," Achraf Tamim, General Manager at BNK Automotive said. In compliance with Volvo Cars' code of conduct, BNK Automotive supports and shares the same values as Volvo on their commitment to sustainability and limiting the overall environmental impact, hence taking on the challenge of introducing sustainability in the automotive industry in Kuwait.

Achieving sustainable practices is more challenging locally as there are fewer green services available compared to Europe. Despite the challenges, and with the help and support of management, the Evolve team at Volvo introduced new practices within the dealership as the first step towards being the first sustainable dealership in Kuwait.

"We're very proud that we are working with BNK Automotive on a project that focuses on such an important topic. Climate change is a serious problem especially within the GCC and we are proud to be part of what will be the first sustainable dealership in Kuwait." Evolve Team at BNK Automotive. The Evolve team consists of 3 Kuwaiti engineers currently undergoing management training with BNK Automotive. The sustainability project they are leading is separated into two phases, the first of which already concluded. Phase 1 focused on reducing plastic waste in the Volvo showrooms, and recycling their paper, plastic, and cardboard waste.



Sama Al Wasm, Founder of Quinn Hop



Sandra Draskovic, General Manager of Kuwait Green Building Council



Shahad Al Barjas, Member of EVOLVE Team BNK Automotive

As for Phase 2, it will be a continuation of phase 1 which will comprise of the service center recyclables. The goal is to recycle all workshop waste, switching to ecofriendly products, and significantly reducing the dealership's energy and water consumption. To achieve phase 1, Volvo collaborated with 2 companies: Mai Water, and Beatouna Recycling Center. With the help of Mai Water, they have significantly reduced their plastic waste by switching from plastic bottles to recycled cardboard boxed water. Beatouna recycles the rest of the plastic waste, in addition to paper and cardboard.

"Volvo Cars is committed to minimizing its global environmental footprint worldwide by implementing a clear and well-planned sustainability strategy, therefore at BNK Automotive, we find it crucial and a part of our environmental and social responsibility to carry out and lead a sustainability strategy in Kuwait, through the implementation of sustainable retail spaces and service centers, which follow a clear mandate and standards guided by Volvo Cars. Having said that, we are grateful to have found some great local and forward-thinking suppliers such as Mai and Beatouna when it comes to clean packaging and recycling, it makes the whole process continuous and smooth," Hanan Zubaid, Head of Marketing at BNK Automotive said.

To showcase their project and present their achievements with BNK Automotive, the EVOLVE team hosted an event at Volvo Studio. Eco Talks was held in collaboration with Mai, Kuwait Green Building Council, Basta, LOYAC, Quinn Hop, and Sus-

tainable Living Kuwait. It consisted of a panel with all the collaborators mentioned above, where they shared their mission, experience, strategies, and vision for a greener Kuwait.

About Volvo Car Group
Volvo Cars was founded in 1927. Today, it is one of the most well-known and respected car brands in the world with sales to customers in more than 100 countries. Volvo Cars is listed on the Nasdaq Stockholm exchange, where it is traded under the ticker "VOLCAR B".

Volvo Cars aims to provide customers with the Freedom to Move in a personal, sustainable and safe way. This is reflected in its ambition to become a fully electric car maker by 2030 and in its commitment to an ongoing reduction of its carbon footprint, with the ambition to be a climate-neutral company by 2040. As of December 2021, Volvo Cars employed approximately 41,000 full-time employees.

Volvo Cars' head office, product development, marketing and administration functions are mainly located in Gothenburg, Sweden. Volvo Cars' production plants are located in Gothenburg, Ghent (Belgium), South Carolina (US), Chengdu, Daqing and Taizhou (China). The company also has R&D and design centres in Gothenburg, Camarillo (US) and Shanghai (China). About BNK Automotive, BNK Automotive is the exclusive distributor of Volvo Cars in Kuwait, owned by Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi and falls under the portfolio of BNK Holding KSCC - a 'closed' shareholding company.

ECB pledges to reduce inflation

FRANKFURT: European Central Bank president Christine Lagarde pledged to reduce high inflation in the eurozone as the institution that safeguards the euro marked its 25th anniversary. "For the ECB, our immediate and overriding priority is to bring inflation back down to our two percent medium-term target in a timely manner," Lagarde told around 200 guests at an event to mark the occasion. "And we will do so," she said, while warning that "there will be more challenges ahead which the ECB will need to address. We must continue to provide stability in a world that is anything but stable".

The ECB laid out a blue carpet for the birthday party at its imposing steel-and-glass tower in Frankfurt, Germany's financial capital. The event featured renditions of music by French composer Claude Debussy and a mango-flavored cake cut by Lagarde and two of her predecessors, Jean-Claude Trichet and Mario Draghi. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz was also among the guests. "Last year we have seen the highest inflation rates since the creation of the euro. The consequences are being felt by citizens all over Europe," Scholz said.

"It is good to know that when we are celebrating this special occasion here tonight, the ECB is actively fighting inflation." Inflation in the eurozone surged to record highs over the past year as Russia's invasion of Ukraine drove up energy prices, and as the recovery from the COVID pandemic caused widespread supply chain woes. The closely watched indicator stood 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.



FRANKFURT: European Central Bank (ECB) President Christine Lagarde (right) and her predecessors, former ECB presidents Mario Draghi and Jean-Claude Trichet (center), cut a cake during celebrations of the ECB to mark its 25th anniversary at the ECB headquarters in Frankfurt am Main. — AFP

Success and challenges

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 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 are focusing on what they see as the bank's latest missteps, namely that it was too slow to start raising interest rates since last year, believing that high inflation was temporary.

Ultimately, policymakers were forced to embark on an unprecedented campaign of monetary tightening, lifting key rates by 3.75 percentage points since July last year, with more increases expected. 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 huge purchases of government and private debt. — AFP

News in Brief

IMF, I Coast seal loan deal

WASHINGTON: International Monetary Fund executives have approved a \$3.5 billion loan agreement for Ivory Coast to help the country tackle financial challenges and assist with its economic transformation, the fund announced Wednesday. Getting the loan in full will be contingent on the West African nation making structural changes to its economy, which is squeezed by a global downturn and the ripple effects of the war in Ukraine. The 40-month arrangement will "help support the country's transformation towards upper-middle income status" over the medium term while preserving macroeconomic stability, the IMF said in a statement. — AFP

Embracer's share tumbles

STOCKHOLM: Shares in Sweden's Embracer has plunged after the publisher of hit video games said a major strategic partnership had fallen through and that it was lowering its outlook. "Late last night, we were informed that one major strategic partnership that has been negotiated for seven months will not materialize," Embracer CEO Lars Wingefors said in a comment. Wingefors added that the decision by the unnamed prospective partner to pull out was "unexpected". According to Embracer, which owns the "Borderlands" franchise and the licence for popular game "Tomb Raider", the deal included more than \$2 billion in "contracted development revenue over a period of six years". — AFP

Jaguar to pick UK over Spain

LONDON: The Indian owner of carmaker Jaguar Land Rover is set to select Britain over Spain for a giant battery plant employing up to 9,000 people, the BBC reported Wednesday. The broadcaster, citing sources familiar with the matter, added that the boss of JLR owner Tata Motors was expected to fly into Britain next week to finalize the deal and meet with Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. The factory will be built in Somerset, southwest England, after the site beat off competition from Spain, according to the report. The deal has not yet been signed but preparations are underway over how to present the agreement, the sources told the BBC. — AFP

Nvidia shares soars over 25%

SAN FRANCISCO: Shares in US chip company Nvidia soared more than 25 percent Wednesday after an earnings report showed the artificial intelligence trend is fueling demand for its sophisticated chips. Net income for the fiscal quarter that closed at the end of April was \$2.04 billion, up 26 percent from \$1.68 billion in the same period a year earlier, Nvidia reported. More than half of Nvidia's revenue, some \$4.28 billion, came from its data center business setting a new record high, according to the chip maker. "The computer industry is going through two simultaneous transitions - accelerated computing and generative AI," Nvidia founder and chief Jensen Huang said in an earnings release. — AFP

Business

Ratings agency Fitch put United States on notice

Debt standoff could hit credit rating, US warns

WASHINGTON: Ratings agency Fitch has put the United States on notice that its perfect credit rating could be jeopardized if the White House and Republican opposition fail to overcome their impasse on raising the nation's borrowing limit, a week before a key deadline. Fitch placed the country's AAA-ranked credit on "rating watch negative" - a move it said "reflects increased political partisanship that is hindering reaching a resolution to raise or suspend the debt limit" before June 1.

That is the "X-date" when the US Treasury Department says that - short of an agreement - the government will run out of money, triggering a default with likely devastating economic consequences for the United States and potentially worldwide. "Fitch still expects a resolution to the debt limit before the X-date," Fitch said in a statement. "However, we believe risks have risen that the debt limit will not be raised or suspended before the X-date and consequently that the government could begin to miss payments on some of its obligations."

The Treasury stressed that Fitch's move should serve as a wakeup call. "Tonight's warning underscores the need for swift bipartisan action by Congress to raise or suspend the debt limit and avoid a manufactured crisis for our economy," Treasury spokesperson Lily Adams said in a statement. And the White House urged Repub-

licans to come to their senses. "This is one more piece of evidence that default is not an option and all responsible lawmakers understand that," it said in a statement. "It reinforces the need for Congress to quickly pass a reasonable, bipartisan agreement to prevent default."

Catastrophic impacts

President Joe Biden's administration said earlier Wednesday that it still sees a path to a deal, but there were few concrete signs that the two sides were finding agreement on how to raise the so-called debt ceiling, authorizing the government to borrow more money and keep paying its bills beyond June 1. White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said, however, that a "bipartisan, reasonable agreement" is still possible. The alternative, she warned, is "catastrophic impacts in every single part of this country." "We're talking about millions of jobs lost, devastating retirement accounts, and a recession," she said.

The two sides are divided by fundamentally different visions of how to manage the country's more than \$30 trillion debt. Biden's Democrats say Congress needs to approve automatically what is known as a "clean" debt ceiling raise - that is, to authorize more government borrowing to cover expenses already committed to, but not funded, in the budget. It's essentially an ac-

counting maneuver that Congress performs every year to adjust funding levels.

Republicans, increasingly dominated by a hard right faction loyal to ex-president Donald Trump, have decided to use this generally mundane procedure as leverage to force Biden into accepting severe spending cuts, notably targeting social programs. Republicans say the cuts are needed to rein in out-of-control government spending. Biden's negotiators say they are ready to discuss taming the budget, but not when Republicans are holding the debt ceiling "hostage."

Deficit reduction

In the latest negotiating offer, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen proposed to freeze government spending at current levels, something that she said would reduce the deficit by \$1 trillion. "The president's budget that he put forward actually proposes \$3 trillion worth of deficit reduction over 10 years," Yellen said at a Wall Street Journal event on Wednesday.

"In this negotiation, the President has already offered changes that would result in an additional trillion dollars of deficit reduction," she added. Other areas of compromise from the president include proposals to rescind unspent COVID-19 relief funds, a person familiar with the talks said, speaking on condition of anonymity. However, Republicans have ruled out accepting White



WASHINGTON: US Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy, Republican of California, speaks to the media about debt ceiling negotiations as he arrives at the US Capitol in Washington, DC, May 25, 2023. — AFP

House plans to further tackle the deficit through tax increases on the most wealthy Americans and corporations.

House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, the top Republican in Congress, again ruled out passing a "clean" debt ceiling hike, but also said he thought progress would be possible. "But let's be honest about this: We have

to spend less than we spent last year. It is not my fault that the Democrats cannot give up on their spending." The Republicans say their proposals would cut the deficit by \$4.8 trillion over a decade but the White House described their plan as slashing assistance for the poorest while reinforcing tax cuts for the wealthy passed under Trump. — AFP

Italy battles EU over green car transition

MILAN: Italy's nationalist government is leading the revolt against EU plans to tighten vehicle emissions limits, vowing to defend the automotive industry in a country still attached to the combustion engine. Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's hard-right coalition, which came into office last October, tried and failed to block EU plans to ban the sale of new cars running on fossil fuels by 2035, which her predecessor Mario Draghi had supported.

But this week the government took the fight to planned "Euro 7" standards on pollutants, joining with seven other EU member states - including France and Poland - to demand Brussels scrap limits due to come into force in July 2025. "Italy is showing the way, our positions are more and more widely shared," said En-

terprise Minister Adolfo Urso, a fervent defender of national industry in the face of what he has called an "ideological vision" of climate change. The EU plan "is clearly wrong and not even useful from an environmental point of view", added Transport Minister Matteo Salvini, leader of the far-right League party, which shares power with Meloni's post-fascist Brothers of Italy. Salvini led the failed charge against the ban on internal combustion engines, branding it "madness" that would "destroy thousands of jobs for Italian workers" while benefiting China, a leader in electric vehicles.

Federico Spadini from Greenpeace Italy lamented that "environmental and climate questions are always relegated to second place", blaming a "strong industrial lobby in Italy" in the automobile and energy sectors. "None of the governments in recent years have been up to the environmental challenge," he told AFP. "Unfortunately, Italy is not known in Europe as climate champion. And it's clear that with Meloni's government, the situation has deteriorated," he said. — AFP


Most markets down as US debt impasse sparks Fitch warning

HONG KONG: Most Asian equities sank Thursday on fears of a US default as the struggle to hammer out a debt deal led Fitch to warn the country's gold-plated credit rating was at risk. Nerves have been rattled across global markets owing to a lack of real headway in the standoff on Capitol Hill to increase the US borrowing limit so it can meet its debt obligations.

Talks earlier this week between President Joe Biden and Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy were described as "productive" but the two sides

have made little progress since, with Republicans demanding spending cuts but Democrats calling for a "clean" increase. And analysts said that while there is a broad expectation an agreement will finally be reached - likely at the last minute following a period of brinkmanship - investors were growing increasingly agitated and risk-averse. On Wednesday, the uncertainty led Fitch to put the country's AAA-ranked credit on "rating watch negative".

The firm said the move "reflects increased political partisanship that is hindering reaching a resolution to raise or suspend the debt limit" before June 1, when the US Treasury Department warned the government will run out of money, triggering a default. Most economists warn that the failure of the United States to pay its bills would likely have devastating economic consequences for markets and the global economy. "Fitch still expects a resolution to the debt limit before the X-date," the ratings agency said in a statement. — AFP



AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 25 MAY 2023

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No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	929	923	948	921	27	18,107,338	-10	-1.07%	-10.10%	916	932	14.5	1.86	3.6%	1.03
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	260	257	264	254	10	10,503,506	-2	-0.77%	-14.06%	256	261	13.4	1.23	3.7%	1.30
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	167	169	169	163	6	31,297,499	3	1.59%	-5.66%	164	173	21.3	0.58	2.2%	1.17
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	186	185	189	184	5	9,251,306	0	0.00%	-11.30%	184	191	17.0	0.69	4.1%	1.31
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	721	709	725	701	24	64,774,969	-7	-0.98%	-5.24%	704	715	20.9	1.80	1.9%	1.15
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	589	596	603	585	18	94,683,305	14	2.41%	-20.83%	579	620	43.5	2.66	0.9%	1.21
201	Kuwait Investment	Financial Services	114	115	116	112	4	5,043,200	0	0.00%	-24.34%	113	119	-	0.54	4.3%	1.82
204	National Investments	Financial Services	214	188	214	183	31	23,676,335	-37	-16.44%	-20.68%	188	195	-	0.79	14.7%	1.92
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	117	117	118	112	6	16,505,941	1	0.86%	4.46%	116	122	20.5	0.69	0.0%	0.98
212	Arzan Financial Group	Financial Services	102	103	105	101	4	14,014,951	0	0.00%	-8.64%	101	106	9.7	0.74	3.9%	1.15
222	Aayan Leasing and Investment	Financial Services	145	148	150	143	7	28,971,163	2	1.37%	11.28%	146	151	10.1	1.09	5.1%	1.63
252	Al Intiaz Investment	Financial Services	57.5	60.4	61	57	4	2,945,411	3.2	5.59%	-19.36%	60.1	62	-	0.37	15.4%	1.26
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	105	106	107	103	4	22,425,256	1	0.95%	1.09%	103	106	10.0	0.75	2.8%	1.09
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	712	730	750	712	38	2,097,062	18	2.53%	-8.75%	725	745	15.6	1.70	1.8%	1.03
418	The Commercial Real Estate	Real Estate	94	94.5	95.2	92.8	2.4	16,829,031	0.9	0.96%	-1.58%	94.2	96	15.4	0.58	3.1%	0.58
501	National Industries	Financial Services	200	200	203	195	8	7,678,999	2	1.01%	-7.83%	190	202	-	0.87	2.5%	1.56
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,165	1,175	1,195	1,132	63	731,213	0	0.00%	-3.29%	1,171	1,226	12.6	1.08	5.2%	1.03
506	HEISCO	Industrials	601	611	619	601	18	229,288	-5	-0.81%	-0.33%	590	611	21.1	1.53	3.3%	1.01
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	775	801	802	775	27	1,295,563	27	3.49%	0.13%	790	813	11.8	1.51	7.6%	0.97
603	Agility	Industrials	612	605	623	603	20	12,515,104	-7	-1.14%	-15.97%	598	618	21.9	0.85	0.0%	1.53
605	Zain	Telecommunications	517	506	523	502	21	20,478,553	-10	-1.94%	-10.12%	503	512	10.7	1.70	6.9%	0.74
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,280	3,356	3,381	3,275	106	737,481	81	2.47%	0.11%	3,350	3,400	9.1	2.95	11.4%	0.65
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	190	191	192	186	6	716,081	3	1.60%	-5.91%	188	195	-	0.82	0.0%	1.14
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,865	1,834	1,865	1,825	40	1,396,920	-8	-0.43%	-3.47%	1,820	1,880	21.7	14.72	4.4%	1.41
813	GFH Financial Group	Financial Services	77.3	80.3	81.2	76.6	4.6	74,232,049	3.2	4.15%	5.66%	79.0	80.9	9.6	0.96	5.9%	1.34
821	Warba Bank	Banking	216	204	218	203	15	28,383,308	-11	-5.12%	-10.59%	203	212	30.5	1.12	1.4%	1.14
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	442	439	454	420	34	2,582,347	-2	-0.45%	11.70%	432	453	-	1.27	2.7%	0.38
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	374	370	374	365	9	3,795,684	-7	-1.86%	0.00%	362	371	34.4	1.46	4.1%	0.71
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	184	182	185	180	5	2,545,999	-2	-1.09%	-3.19%	182	186	14.9	1.83	9.3%	0.44
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	1,796	1,792	1,819	1,781	38	1,672,250	-6	-0.33%	-12.67%	1,770	1,840	21.1	6.82	4.7%	0.97
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	930	940	950	923	27	1,931,182	12	1.29%	16.77%	900	950	11.8	3.60	6.2%	0.32

* As of end of week closing

Business

UN conference pledges \$2.4 billion to head off famine in Horn of Africa

Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia reeling from worst drought in decades

UNITED NATIONS: A United Nations-backed conference has raised \$2.4 billion to prevent famine in the Horn of Africa, which is reeling from its worst drought in decades as global temperatures rise. The money will provide life-saving assistance for nearly 32 million people across Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, the world's humanitarian agency OCHA said in a statement.

"Famine has been averted, thanks in part to the tremendous efforts of local communities, humanitarian organizations and authorities, as well as the support of donors," OCHA said. But the sum is considerably less than the \$7 billion the United Nations says is needed to provide help to people affected by drought and conflict in the region. "The emergency is far from over, and additional resources are urgently required to prevent a return to the worst-case scenario," OCHA added.

Years of drought

Since late 2020, countries in the Horn of Africa - Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan - have been suffering the region's worst drought in 40 years. Five failed rainy seasons have left millions of people in need, decimated crops and killed millions of livestock. More than 23.5 million people are enduring high levels of acute food insecurity in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, according to OCHA.

In Somalia alone, which is also in the throes of an Islamist insurgency, the number of people displaced from their homes by armed conflict, drought or floods now stands at 3.8 million, with 6.7 million people struggling to find food, according to figures from the UN and the Norwegian Refugee Council. More than half a million children are severely malnourished, the two organizations added. Deaths from

hunger are on the rise in Africa because of droughts worsened by climate change and conflict, UN officials and scientists say.

The devastating drought in the Horn of Africa could not have occurred without the effects of greenhouse gas emissions, the World Weather Attribution group, an international team of climate scientists, said in a report released in April. "We can be anything but complacent," said Andrew Mitchell, the United Kingdom's Minister of State for development and Africa. "The clear and present threat remains, and we must act now to prevent further suffering."

"Funding pledged today will help millions, but we must work together to break the cycle of crisis afflicting so many states." Earlier this week, a group of NGOs, including Islamic Relief Worldwide and Save the Children, called on donors to fully fund the humanitarian response required for "one of the biggest climate injustices of our time." Citing UN numbers, the organizations pointed out that despite funding mobilized to aid the region last year, an estimated 43,000 people died from the drought in Somalia alone in 2022.

'Epicenter' of climate emergency

At the opening of the donors' conference - organized in conjunction with Italy, Qatar, the UK, and the United States - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres appealed for "an immediate and major injection of funding" to stop people from dying. "We must act now to prevent crisis from turning into catastrophe," he added, recalling that last year donor countries delivered vital help to 20 million people in the region and helped avert a famine.

Guterres said people in the region - which he described as "the epicenter of one of the world's worst climate emergencies" - were "paying an unconscio-



DOLOW: This aerial view shows makeshift structures of people displaced by drought at the Ladan internally displaced people (IDP) camp in Dolow. More than a million Somalis have been displaced within their own country due to a 'toxic' mix of drought, conflict and floods, the UN and a charity said on May 24, 2023. — AFP

nable price for a climate crisis they did nothing to cause." "We owe them solidarity. We owe them assistance. And we owe them a measure of hope for the future. This means immediate action to secure their survival. And it means sustained action to help communities across the Horn adapt and build resilience to climate change," he added.

OCHA said the funds pledged Wednesday

would allow humanitarian agencies to sustain aid pipelines of food, water, health care, nutrition and protection services. Joyce Msuya, the UN's deputy emergency relief coordinator, welcomed the pledge but added: "We must persist in pushing for stepped-up investments, especially to bolster the resilience of people already bearing the brunt of climate change." — AFP

Australia police probe PwC tax leak scandal

SYDNEY: Australian police have opened a criminal investigation into the leaking of secret government tax plans by accounting giant PwC to help clients "act early" ahead of a tax crackdown on multinationals. PwC Australia has been embroiled in scandal since one of its partners was found to have made "unauthorized disclosures" about the planned tax reforms, which he learned about in confidential government briefings.

More than 140 pages of internal PwC Australia emails released by a Senate committee this month showed the international tax partner, Peter Collins, had divulged the sensitive information to other staff. Australian Federal Police confirmed in a statement late Wednesday that they had launched a criminal investigation, after the affair was referred to them by the Treasury Department.

"We note the statement from the Treasury Secretary and will continue to cooperate fully with any investigations into this matter," a PwC spokesman said Thursday. The Treasury's confidential tax plans included new rules, which came into effect in 2015, to stop multinationals avoiding tax by shifting profits from Australia to tax and secrecy havens, the Tax Practitioners Board said. Finance Secretary Jenny Wilkinson told parliament that PwC had been asked to stop all staff linked to the leaks from working on current government contracts.

The request was made after it was revealed a "wide range of individuals" at the firm, beyond Collins, were aware of the confidential information. "I consider PwC's abuse of confidence and trust with the Treasury and PwC's subsequent handling of this breach to be a very serious issue," Wilkinson told a Senate estimates hearing. In the redacted PwC emails, an internal message from 2016 lauded the company's success in urging companies to "act early" on the tax changes, "heavily helped by the accuracy of the intelligence that Peter Collins was able to supply us".

Officials said current government contracts with PwC totalled Aus\$255.2 million (US\$167 million) this financial year. Collins was deregistered as a tax agent in November last year and barred from reapplying for two years for sharing the confidential details, Australia's Tax Practitioners Board said in January. PwC Australia's former chief executive Tom Seymour stood down on May 9 over the scandal. The global PwC network said at the time that the affair represented a clear violation of its code of ethics. — AFP

Lebanon slaps travel ban on central bank chief Salameh

BEIRUT: A Lebanese judge has banned the country's central bank governor Riad Salameh from travelling, days after Beirut received an Interpol Red Notice following a French arrest warrant, a judicial official said Wednesday. Salameh has been the target of a series of judicial investigations both at home and abroad on allegations including embezzlement, money laundering, fraud and illicit enrichment, which he denies.

French investigators suspect that during his three decades as central bank chief, Salameh misused public funds to accumulate real estate and banking assets concealed through a complex and fraudulent financial network. On Wednesday, judge Imad Qabalan questioned Salameh and "decided to release him pending investigation, ban him from travelling, and confiscate his Lebanese and French passports", the official told AFP, requesting anonymity as they were not authorized to speak to the media.

Activists say the travel ban on the central bank chief helps shield him from being brought to justice abroad - and from potentially bringing down others in Lebanon's entrenched political class. "The Lebanese judiciary, with the exception of a few judges, has shown that it is not independent. It is biased for politicians who steer it the way they want," charged lawyer and activist Karim Daher.

"The corrupt Lebanese regime... has no interest in

Singapore economy beats estimates but govt warns of risks

SINGAPORE: Singapore's economy posted better-than-expected results in the first quarter of 2023, official data showed Thursday, but the government warned that the global outlook remains gloomy. The Southeast Asian city-state's economic performance is often seen as a barometer of the global environment because of its reliance on international trade.

Its economy expanded by 0.4 on-year in the quarter starting January, slower than the 2.1 percent on-year growth in the previous quarter but better than an advance estimate released last month, according to figures released by the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI). Quarter-on-quarter, the economy shrank 0.4 percent, though that too was better than expected. The

any time for an investigation, to collect evidence and conduct testing."

It added pointedly that "the testing vehicles were purchased, stored, and arranged for inspection by Great Wall Motors", instead of a third party as required under national rules. Analysts say China is leading the way worldwide when it comes to electric vehicle development. BYD saw its profits jump fivefold in the first quarter thanks to global demand for its cars and buses. But competition within the domestic market is fierce, with around 100 brands offering more than 300 models, according to Counterpoint Research. The complaint by Great Wall, which was filed last month according to The Paper, comes weeks before China's tough new vehicle emissions standards kick in.

BYD and Great Wall did not reply to AFP's request for comment, and the environment ministry did not reply to queries on whether it was investigating the complaint. BYD, whose investors include US investment titan Warren Buffet, was embroiled in another pollution accusation earlier this month. An environmental inspection team visited one of the company's biggest factories in the central Chinese city of Changsha to inspect "gas emissions", according to a brief statement by the city government published on May 8. — AFP

Salameh being tried abroad and spilling the beans" about the political class's financial activities, he told AFP. Interpol circulated a Red Notice last week after a French magistrate issued a warrant for Salameh, who failed to appear for questioning in Paris before investigators probing his sizeable assets across Europe. An Interpol Red Notice is not an international arrest warrant but asks authorities worldwide to provisionally detain people pending possible extradition or other legal actions.

Lebanon does not extradite its nationals but Salameh could go on trial in Lebanon if local judicial authorities decide the accusations against him are founded, an official previously told AFP. Qabalan asked the French judiciary to refer Salameh's file to Beirut in order to "determine whether the Lebanese judiciary will prosecute him for the crimes he is accused of in France or not", the official added. Salameh "asked the judge to try him in Lebanon and not to extradite him to France", the official said.

German warrant

Also Wednesday, Germany notified Lebanon's general prosecutor that it too had issued an arrest warrant for Salameh, the judicial official said, adding that Munich's public prosecutor would submit the warrant to Interpol shortly. Salameh has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing and continues to serve as central bank governor. His mandate ends in July.

In March 2022, France, Germany and Luxembourg seized assets worth 120 million euros (\$130 million) in a move linked to a probe into Salameh's wealth. In February, Lebanon charged Salameh with embezzlement, money laundering and tax evasion as part of its own investigations. The domestic probe was opened

MTI maintained its growth forecast for 2023 at between 0.5 and 2.5 percent, saying the figure was likely to be in the middle of that range. It warned, however: "Downside risks in the global economy have risen."

In its statement, it cited a "sharper-than-expected tightening in global financial conditions" and "escalations in the war in Ukraine and geopolitical tensions among major global powers". Singapore's trade is three times its GDP, and a slowdown in global demand is quickly reflected in its trade and production data, said Song Seng Wun, a regional economist with CIMB Private Banking. "Singapore is like the canary in the coal mine," he said. There was a weak reading from the manufacturing sector, which shrank 5.6 percent on-year in the first quarter, worsening from the 2.6 percent shrinkage in the fourth quarter last year.

That sector includes semiconductors, a key export. "Singapore's external demand outlook for the rest of the year has weakened," the MTI said. "Apart from the expected slowdown in the advanced economies, the electronics downcycle is likely to be deeper and more prolonged than earlier projected."

China steps up response to US chip moves

BEIJING: Beijing's restrictions on American chip-maker Micron in retaliation to sweeping US chip curbs marks a major step up in its response to Washington's pressure and could open the door for further measures in the geopolitical standoff, analysts say. But they warned President Xi Jinping's ability to raise the stakes will be limited as he battles to re-energize the world's number two economy while it struggles to recover from years of zero-COVID-imposed inertia.

China on Sunday banned the use of Micron's chips in critical infrastructure projects, which Beijing said posed "major network security risks" that could affect "national security". Washington expressed "serious concerns" over the ruling that came just as leaders of the world's seven richest nations (G7) signed a statement urging Beijing to end "economic coercion".



BEIRUT: This picture shows a view of the Justice Ministry in Beirut. A Lebanese judge banned the country's central bank chief Riad Salameh from travelling, days after Beirut received an Interpol red notice following a French arrest warrant, a judicial official said. — AFP

following a request for assistance from Switzerland's public prosecutor looking into more than \$300 million in fund movements by Salameh and his brother.

This year, European investigators have questioned Salameh in Beirut, also hearing from his assistant Marianne Hoayek, his brother Raja, a Lebanese minister and central bank audit firms. The judicial official said Wednesday that a judge had notified Raja Salameh and Hoayek that they were due to appear before the French judiciary respectively on May 31 and June 13. Since 2019, Lebanon has plunged into an economic crisis deemed by the World Bank as one of the planet's worst since the mid-19th century. — AFP



SINGAPORE: People walk across Jubilee Bridge on Marina Bay in Singapore on May 25, 2023. — AFP

It provided an optimistic outlook for the aviation and tourism sectors, however. And while it estimated China's economic recovery following the end of COVID restrictions to be strong, it cautioned that the spillover effects on Singapore are "expected to remain weak". — AFP

The move marked a significant shift in China's response to US measures that have targeted the country's technology sector, with Gary Ng, a senior economist at Natixis who specializes in the global chip trade, calling it "a landmark case". He emphasized it was China's first cybersecurity probe into a foreign company since tighter rules were announced in 2021, and a rare instance when the scope of such reviews was expanded to include national security concerns. "I wouldn't be surprised if regulators used these reviews as a tool for retaliation in future" when faced with other geopolitical issues, he said.

Emily Weinstein, a research fellow at Georgetown University specializing in the US-China tech rivalry, added that the definition of what fell under "critical information infrastructure" was very broad - ranging from online government services and defense to healthcare and water conservation. "Technically that could mean that anything qualifies," she said. "China has consistently found national security or other reasons to create protectionist barriers" including mandatory technology transfer agreements, which require companies to store all data locally and requirements for foreign entities to have joint ventures with local partners in several sectors. — AFP

China auto giant denies 'cars fail emissions test'

BEIJING: Electric auto giant BYD on Thursday denied accusations leveled by a rival carmaker that two of its models failed China's strict emissions standards. BYD is the world's second-largest maker of electric vehicles after Tesla, and is number one in China's vibrant but fiercely competitive domestic sector. On Thursday it hit back at allegations that two of its hybrid car models were "suspected of violating standards for evaporative pollutants", after a complaint to China's environment ministry by rival Great Wall Motors was published by state-backed news outlet The Paper.

Evaporative pollutants refer to gasoline vapor from fuel tanks and are a source of harmful air pollution. "Our products and related testing comply with national standards and have been certified by authoritative national institutions," BYD said in a statement. "We welcome relevant departments to come

Lifestyle



A view of colored pencils displayed at the shop of Iranian merchant Mohammad Rafi at the Grand Bazaar in Tehran.



Mohammad Rafi, a seller of colored pencils at the Grand Bazaar in Tehran, reaches for a pencil at his shop.



Mohammad Rafi, a seller of colored pencils at the Grand Bazaar in Tehran, sits at his shop.

In a dimly lit corner of Tehran's Grand Bazaar, Mohammad Rafi is surrounded by all colors of the rainbow in his tiny shop that sells nothing but art pencils. The world may have gone digital, but Rafi has stayed true to his passion of the past 35 years, surrounded by thousands of pencils in every hue and shade imaginable.

meter (30 square feet) shop in the market's arts and crafts section where he has welcomed generations of customers.

"Every time a customer shows up, I enjoy it, even if they don't buy anything," smiled Rafi. He then spent 10 minutes advising a schoolgirl in search of two pencils, one blue, one orange, who tried



Mohammad Rafi, a seller of colored pencils at the Grand Bazaar in Tehran, assists customers at his shop.



With the pencils stacked from floor to ceiling, his tiny cubicle has become a photogenic splash of color, hidden deep in the market known as a "city within a city". "I don't know how many pencils there are but I have about 200 colors available," said the proud 50-year-old owner of the Medad Rafi (Rafi's pencils) shop.

Finding his shop requires a veritable treasure hunt through the maze of alleys and passages of the storied market in the heart of the Iranian capital. Rafi himself takes up much of the three square

out different types, doodling on a drawing pad on the counter.

Colors and textures

"Depending on what they want to do with it, I advise customers on the color, the texture or the brand," said Rafi, who only sells the pencils individually, not by the box. He is proud to cater to all budgets, offering domestically made pencils and ones imported from Europe and America.

"The most expensive pencil costs 100,000 toman (around two euros)," he



Splash of color: Tehran bazaar's pencil seller

said, "but it is one of the best." A drawing lover since childhood, Rafi has always adored pencils and, after his technical studies in the 1980s, began his professional life in a pencil manufacturing company before opening his shop.

He knows that, in the days of high-tech and touch-screens, the humble colored pencil has had its golden age, look-

ing back nostalgically at the past century when all children carried them in their school bags. Unlike many other shop owners in the bazaar, he will not pass on the business to his son, a trained physician who "is not interested in this work".

Until he retires, however, Rafi plans to keep serving his loyal customers, meeting their every creative need, including

even "some pencils that are no longer produced". "Fortunately, I have a large stock" accumulated over the years, Rafi said, proudly brandishing the oldest pencil he has, "made 72 years ago". — AFP



(From left) Iranian actor Hossein Soleimani Golijan, Iranian actor Farzin Mohaddes, Iranian director Alireza Khatami, Iranian actor Majid Salehi, Iranian director Ali Asgari, Iranian actress Faezeh Rad and Iranian actress Sadaf Asgari pose during a photocall for the film "Ayeh Haye Zamini" (Terrestrial Verses) at the 76th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP

The invisible face of Iranian power comes to Cannes

A new film at Cannes, showing the everyday maddening frustration of dealing with Iranian authorities, reflects the "absurdity" of life in that country, say the makers. "Terrestrial Verses" is a unique look inside daily life in Iran — short snapshots of people arguing with authority figures who are never shown on-camera.

The vignettes are both horrible and darkly comic — a man forced to strip down and explain his tattoos while applying for a driving license, or a poor worker made to recite Quranic verses to get a construction job. Co-directors Ali Asgari and Alireza Khatami told AFP they are all drawn from the real-life experiences of friends and family, and will be instantly familiar to their fellow Iranians.

Indeed, the idea came together after Khatami was refused permission to make

a previous version of the script — reflecting another scene in the movie where a director must hack his screenplay to pieces to placate the censors. "We were walking one night after my film was shut down and we were talking about some of the absurd conversations we have had with the authorities," Khatami told AFP in Cannes, where the film was playing in the Un Certain Regard section.

The directors insist it is not a direct attack on Iran's political system in particular. "We are interested in the way the system functions. But you pick any negotiation of any individual with the authority in any country and put it on a camera, it becomes absurd," Khatami said. "France, Switzerland, Lebanon, America — every country has ridiculous ways it exerts power over its citizens and we individuals find a way to negotiate it."

Hopeful for first time

The shoot was interrupted midway through by the outbreak of mass protests following the killing of a young woman in police custody last September. "We stopped everything for a couple of months because of what was going on," said Khatami. "It was very sad to see this prophecy of the film coming to the streets."

At the same time, it has given them hope for the country's future — even if they are currently staying abroad. "This is the first time in my life I'm hopeful. Because this generation is aware," Khatami said. The protests are "definitely a tipping point," he added. "We saw a society come together. There was a sense of unity and with that comes a lot of hope." — AFP

'Waterloo' at Eurovision 2024? ABBA stars say 'no way'

Two members of ABBA have insisted in an interview to air in Britain on Thursday that the Swedish pop icons won't perform at next year's Eurovision Song Contest in their homeland. Bjorn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson, one half of ABBA, downplayed the prospect despite Sweden hosting Eurovision on the 50th anniversary of the band's win — the country's first — with their breakthrough hit "Waterloo". The Nordic nation is set to stage the world's biggest live music event for the seventh time after Swedish singer Loreen won this year's contest, hosted by Britain on behalf of war-torn Ukraine.

Her victory at the eccentric, much-loved competition in Liverpool this month prompted immediate speculation that ABBA could take to the stage next year. However, in an interview with the BBC's Newsnight program, Andersson said there is "no way" the group will make a celebratory performance or even appearance.

"I don't want to. And if I don't want to, the others won't. It's the same for all four of us. Someone says no — it's a no," he explained. Ulvaeus added: "We can celebrate 50 years of ABBA without us being on stage." ABBA — which also comprised Agnetha Faltskog and Anni-Frid Lyngstad, and is an acronym of their first names — shot to international fame after their 1974 Eurovision success.

The band went on to sell hundreds of millions of records and top the charts worldwide, including in the United States in 1977 with "Dancing Queen" —

their only stateside number one. Other global hits include "Super Trouper", "Money, Money, Money" and "Knowing Me, Knowing You". In 1981, the group released what they said would be a final album and split up the following year. But their success continued, notably with the compilation "ABBA Gold" released in 1992, and in 2021 they made a comeback, releasing their first new album in nearly 40 years.



Eurovision Song Contest winner Swedish singer Loreen holds the ESC trophy on stage to celebrate with fans at the Kungstradgarden park in Stockholm, Sweden.

'Surpassing every expectation'

They also launched a new concert format featuring de-aged digital avatars — dubbed "ABBA-tars" — in London who perform their hits and resemble their 1979 selves. Ulvaeus and Andersson said the show's success was "surpassing every expectation". "We achieved more than we could ever hope for... seeing this happening after four or five years of work... and realizing that the audience actually connected to what was on stage," Andersson told the BBC. He added that he would like to take the show to Australia in the future. "It would feel good to go back there and say thank-you to Australians for supporting us from day one." — AFP



US rapper Fetty Wap poses in the press room during the 2015 MTV Movie Awards in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

US rapper Fetty Wap sentenced to six years for drug trafficking

American rapper Fetty Wap was sentenced to six years in prison on Wednesday for trafficking drugs across the United States. The "Trap Queen" rapper born Willie Junior Maxwell II had pleaded guilty last year to distributing and possessing cocaine. New York prosecutors said he was part of a ring of six men that distributed more than 100 kilograms of cocaine, heroin, fentanyl and crack cocaine across Long Island and New Jersey between June 2019 and June 2020.

The men obtained the drugs on America's west coast and used the United States Postal Service and drivers with hidden vehicle compartments to transport the narcotics to New York. The substances were then distributed to dealers who sold them on Long Island and in New Jersey. The Justice Department described Maxwell, 31, as "a kilogram-level redistributor for the trafficking organization." — AFP



Swedish supergroup ABBA.

Lifestyle



Singer Tina Turner performs in Groningen, Netherlands, on July 18, 2000. — AFP photos



US singer Tina Turner performs on July 9, 1987 in Ancey, during the concert of her new tour, the first one in six years.



Singer Tina Turner (right) performs with Nominee for Record Of The Year Beyonce (left) at the 50th Grammy Awards in Los Angeles on February 10, 2008.

World mourns 'simply the best'

TINA TURNER

Tributes poured in on Thursday for Tina Turner, the trailblazing rocker whose powerful voice, electrifying stage presence, and personal story of triumph mesmerized global audiences for decades. Turner, an instantly recognizable performer whose popularity spanned generations, died on Wednesday at the age of 83 at her home in a plush Swiss suburb. Presidents, fellow singers and fans paid tribute to an explosive performer, whose popularity spanned generations and whose story of overcoming domestic violence touched many around the world.

Rolling Stones frontman Mick Jagger — who, legend has it, learned his dance moves from the diva, said the world had lost “an enormously talented performer and singer.” “She was inspiring, warm, funny and generous. She helped me so much when I was young and I will never forget her.” Bandmate Ronnie Wood called Turner “the Queen Of Rock And Soul and a dear friend.” Fans lined up to pay tribute at the wrought iron gates of her huge compound in Kusnacht, on Switzerland’s Lake Zurich, many bearing candles and flowers. “Some-



US singer Tina Turner poses prior to the Emporio Armani Fall-Winter 2011-2012 ready-to-wear collection on February 26, 2011 during the Women's fashion week in Milan.

zenship in 2013, relinquishing her US passport.

'Will never fade'

“The world has lost an icon,” Swiss President Alain Berset said. US President Joe Biden paid a pointed trib-

he added, calling Turner “simply the best.” Biden’s former boss, Barack Obama called her “a star whose light will never fade.”

“Tina Turner was raw. She was powerful. She was unstoppable. And she was unapologetically herself - speaking and singing her truth through joy and pain; triumph and tragedy,” America’s first Black president wrote of the star held up as a Black icon. Turner’s Britain-based publicist Bernard Doherty said her death came after a long illness, and had robbed the world of “a music legend and a role model.” He gave no details of the illness.

'The Best'

A career that would go on to net eight Grammy Awards began in the 1960s in a partnership with husband Ike Turner. The pair recorded a number of hits together throughout the 1960s and 1970s, and while he was credited as being the brains behind the operation, she was always clearly the more talented. After their troubled and violent marriage collapsed — she fled in 1976 mid-tour — Tina Turner forged a wildly successful solo career. The following decades gifted the world instantly recognizable hits like “What’s Love Got to Do With It?”, “Private Dancer” and the anthemic “The Best”. Her “We Don’t Need Another Hero” featured on the soundtrack to “Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome,” the 1985 post-apocalyptic thriller starring Mel Gibson. A decade later she oozed her way through “Goldeneye,” joining the select ranks of artists who have sung on the James Bond franchise. Reaction to Turner’s death came from across the worlds of music, entertainment and sport.

'An inspiration'

Mariah Carey called Turner the embodiment of a legendary superstar. She was “an incredible performer, musician and trailblazer.” “To me, she will always be a survivor and an inspiration to women everywhere,” she wrote. Angela Bassett, who played the singer in the 1993 biopic “What’s Love Got to Do With It” opposite Laurence Fishburne as Ike, paid emotional tribute to “a woman who owned her pain and trauma and used it as a means to help change the world.” “Tina Turner showed others who lived in fear what a beautiful future filled with love, compassion and freedom should look like,” Bassett said.



Flowers and a pair of sunglasses are placed on the Hollywood Walk of Fame star of US-Swiss singer Tina Turner, in Hollywood, California.

one like this should live forever,” said Barbara Burkhalter, who came to pay her respects on Thursday. Chateau Algonquin had been the home Turner shared with her German husband Erwin Bach for almost three decades, including when she took Swiss citi-

ute to a “once-in-a-generation talent that changed American music forever.” “Tina’s personal strength was remarkable,” Biden wrote. “Overcoming adversity, and even abuse, she built a career for the ages and a life and legacy that were entirely hers,”



A person carrying a Tina Turner's album with his dog pays his respects at the Hollywood Walk of Fame star of US-Swiss singer Tina Turner, in Hollywood, California.



US singer Tina Turner sings during her performance at the Macy's Passport '97 fund raiser and fashion show 18 September in San Francisco, CA.

Tina Turner: A life in dates

November 26, 1939: Born Anna Mae Bullock in Tennessee into a poor farming family. Develops an early love of singing at her church choir.

1956: Meets rhythm and blues group musician Ike Turner in St Louis, Missouri, and later joins his band Kings of Rhythm.

1960: Ike changes her name to Tina Turner and they form the musical duo the Ike & Tina Turner Revue. Over the next 15 years, the couple will have 25 records on the charts.

1962: She marries Ike Turner in Tijuana, Mexico.

1978: The couple divorce.

1984: Releases first solo album, “Private Dancer”, which includes “What’s Love Got To Do With It”, Turner’s most successful single and winner of two of her eight Grammy Awards.



Tina Turner speaks during the “Tina - The Tina Turner Musical” opening night at Lunt-Fontanne Theatre on November 07, 2019, in New York City.

1985: Stars opposite Mel Gibson in “Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome” as the fearsome community ruler in a post-apocalyptic world.

1986: Bestselling autobiography “I, Tina” reveals bombshell details about domestic abuse during her marriage to Ike Turner.

1993: Release of “What’s Love Got To Do With It” based on Turner’s life, starring Angela Bassett as Tina Turner.

2013: Becomes a Swiss citizen and marries German music producer Erwin Bach.

2017: Undergoes a kidney transplant. Bach was the donor.

2018: Death of her eldest son Craig from an apparent suicide aged 59.

2022: Death of her son Ronnie of complications from colon cancer aged 62. Turner has two other children. — AFP

Lifestyle



US singer Tina Turner receives the Golden record award from Pathe Marconi chairman Guy Deluz (left) on October 8, 1986, in Paris.



Tina Turner and Oprah Winfrey during O, The Oprah Magazine Launch Party at The Metropolitan Pavilion in New York, New York, United States.



Tina Turner The raw power of rock and roll

Tina Turner, the growling songstress whose explosive stage presence electrified fans the world over, left an indelible mark on 20th-century rock with five decades of hits — first with husband Ike Turner, but most memorably as a wildly successful solo act. The Black eight-time Grammy winner lit up the stage from the 1960s onwards — and won a new generation of fans in a stunning comeback after escaping her violent marriage, making her popular music's ultimate survivor.

Abandoned by her parents, Turner emerged from Tennessee's cotton fields to become the "Queen of Rock and Roll" who, according to music lore, taught Mick Jagger how to dance — and the Rolling Stones frontman led the flood of tributes Wednesday, following the superstar's death at the age of 83. The singer of "The Best" died in Switzerland, where she lived her final years with husband Erwin Bach, a former record label executive who was her romantic partner for three decades before they wed in 2013.

Long before she snowballed into a global phenomenon, Turner's early career — originally as a soul and R&B siren — was a roller coaster for the singer, who admitted attempting suicide at the height of Ike's physical and emotional abuse. Tina fled Ike in 1976, dashing across a highway to escape during a concert tour. Her divorce was finalized in 1978, and she was left with nothing but her stage name. But the rock star dream still gnawed at her. "How can I fill stadiums?" Turner wondered, in comments played during her 2021 Rock & Roll Hall of Fame induction.

"I wanted it. I wanted to do what Jagger and all the other guys at the time was doing." Those dreams were fulfilled, and then some, when she struck crossover gold with her 1984 album



"Private Dancer," whose Grammy-winning smash single "What's Love Got to Do With It" propelled her to superstardom at age 44. Four years later, she set the record for largest paying attendance of a performance by a solo artist when her Rio concert crowd topped 180,000.

As a Black woman who embraced rock over 1950s doo-wop and 1960s Motown, Turner was a double outsider. But she wrote — and then rewrote — the rule book for women in the genre. "A Black woman owning the stage all by herself: that's the dream right there," singer and rapper Lizzo said of Turner. Turner sold more than 100 million records worldwide, according to Billboard, and paved the way for performers like Janet Jackson, Madonna and Beyonce. "I never in my life saw a woman so powerful, so fearless, so fabulous," Beyonce told Turner from the Kennedy Center stage in a 2005 Tina tribute. "And those legs!"

'Pain in your heart'

Anna Mae Bullock was born on November 26, 1939, in Brownsville,

Tennessee. She and her sister grew up in a family of modest means but conditions worsened when they were abandoned by their father, and then their mother. When the grandmother who helped raise them died, Anna Mae moved in with relatives in St Louis, Missouri at age 16. There she met Ike Turner, a guitarist and bandleader eight years her senior who had already tasted fame, having written and recorded what was arguably the first rock and roll record, "Rocket 88," in 1951. She convinced Ike to let her sing with him.

When he scored a 1960 hit with her lead vocals on "A Fool in Love," he gave her the stage name Tina Turner, and the pair performed as the Ike & Tina Turner Revue. By 1962, they were married. From early on, Tina was the fiery, dominant presence, stealing the limelight with a blend of thick, textured vocals, haunting howls and mesmerizing dance moves. The Turner oeuvre reflected their personal tensions: it included "I Idolize You," "It's Gonna Work Out Fine," and their most famous number, a 1970 cover of "Proud Mary," in which Tina purrs about starting the song "nice and easy," but finishing it "nice and rough." Even as she exuded raw sexual power as a performer, her singing was tinged with a palpable vulnerability.

"You sing with those emotions because you've had pain in your heart," Turner told Rolling Stone magazine in 1986. After leaving Ike, she toiled in Las Vegas shows, released modestly selling solo records and toured heavily in Europe. But with the success of 1984's "Private Dancer," her metamorphosis from manipulated co-star to resurrected rock goddess was complete.

The next year, she was onstage at Live Aid in Philadelphia for a memorable encounter with Jagger, who ripped off Turner's black leather miniskirt mid-per-



US singer Tina Turner performs during the TV show "Champs-Elysées" on Channel Antenne 2 on November 24, 1989.

formance, revealing her in fishnet stockings and a leotard. Turner grinned and ran fingers through her lion's mane of hair. "I know, it's only rock and roll but I like it!" she belted out. She starred opposite Mel Gibson in a Hollywood blockbuster, "Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome," co-wrote a best-selling autobiography, "I, Tina," and was the subject of a feature film, "What's Love Got To Do With It" starring Angela Bassett.

'A way out'

In the revealing 2021 HBO documentary "Tina," an uncomfortable reality emerges: her past trauma had become a focus for interviewers, with the star repeatedly asked to recount her life's worst moments. Turner, who

had embraced Buddhism and saw it as "a way out" of her dangerous first marriage, pointed to the faith as a catalyst for rejuvenation and stability. She often swatted away probing questions, once saying reliving the past was like a "curse." But personal hardships were impossible to ignore, including the violence from Ike.

"He used my nose as a punching bag so many times that I could taste blood running down my throat when I sang," she wrote in her 2018 memoir, "My Love Story." In life after Ike, her concerts became glitzy spectacles — and she kept the high-octane rock flowing for decades.

A Wembley Stadium concert in 2000 saw a 60-year-old Turner holding nothing back, grinding across the stage in stiletto heels and her trademark leather miniskirt. In 2008, she embarked on her Tina! - 50th Anniversary Tour, which grossed some \$130 million. The grande dame enjoyed her later years with Bach in their Zurich home and a vacation mansion near the French Riviera, although tragedy struck in 2018 when Turner's eldest son Craig, from her early union with saxophonist Raymond Hill, committed suicide at 59.

Ike Turner died in 2007, and his one child with Tina, Ronnie, died last year at 62 of complications from colon cancer. In 2013, after marrying Bach and taking Swiss nationality, Turner relinquished her US citizenship — but the former president Barack Obama was among those who paid the most poignant tributes. "Tina Turner was raw. She was powerful. She was unstoppable," he wrote. "And she was unapologetically herself — speaking and singing her truth through joy and pain; triumph and tragedy." — AFP



A mourner lays flowers outside the estate of late singer Tina Turner following the announcement of her death in Kusunacht.



The entrance of the estate of late singer Tina Turner following the announcement of her death in Kusunacht.



Flowers and messages are seen laid outside the estate of late singer Tina Turner following the announcement of her death in Kusunacht.

Simply the best neighbor: Swiss suburb mourns Tina Turner

"Someone like this should live forever," said one of Tina Turner's neighbors who laid flowers outside the rock legend's home in Switzerland on Thursday. Barbara Burkhalter was among a steady stream of people who came to pay tribute outside her chateau on Lake Zurich, where the 83-year-old queen of rock had lived for nearly three decades. Turner's death on Wednesday sparked tributes from world leaders and fellow rock icons — but also from her neighbors in the plush Zurich suburb of Kusunacht where the star paid for the Christmas decorations. "I brought flowers and a little card. I really had to come," said Burkhalter, 69.

"We don't hear your voice any more but it's still inside my heart. "On Tuesday, I saw the garden had no lights on, which is very unusual," the neighbor added. "It was completely dark. "She was my favorite of all the ladies. I live only four minutes from here. I saw her many times when she went shopping. We loved that she was here but we would never have bothered her."

'Rest in power'

Multiple bunches of flowers had been left by the chateau gates, along with around 40 candles, cards and handwritten messages to the US-born superstar including one saying "Rest in power..." Besides her music and magnetic stage presence, Turner's overcoming of domestic violence touched many women around the world. Well-wisher Guia Greaves said she was known locally as a kind person and a good neighbor, discreet and unassuming, who made efforts to learn German and contribute to the community.

"She paid for all the Christmas decorations," Greaves told AFP. "I don't know how many times I passed here while listening to her songs and said 'Hey, Tina!' And I really admire what she symbolized for domestic violence: the way she blossomed with no hate. "We have now the

treasure of her music and we have to keep listening to it."

Tina Turner played 'unique' part in Australian rugby league

Tina Turner is best known as a trailblazing rocker but Australia also remembered her on Thursday for her "unique" role in the history of rugby league in the country. As tributes poured in from around the world to one of music's biggest names, who died Wednesday aged 83 in Switzerland, many Australians fondly recalled her influential love affair with the sport. "She played a unique role in probably the most iconic sports marketing campaign in our history," said National Rugby League chief executive Andrew

Quayle on the beach and the pitch as Turner belted out the song. "There was a lot of opposition to it because we were using at the time — and it was stated — 'a black American grandmother' to promote the game of rugby league and that was very controversial," Quayle told national broadcaster ABC on Thursday.

"It was controversial until such time that people heard it. And when they heard it and people saw that commercial, they acknowledged across the nation that it was one of the greatest sporting advertisements ever." An overwhelming success, it was quickly followed with another promo featuring her power ballad "Simply The Best," which is credited with sending rugby league to unprecedented levels of



This aerial photograph shows the estate of late singer Tina Turner following the announcement of her death in Kusunacht. — AFP photos

Abdo. "It was inspirational and it got people thinking about rugby league differently. The thing that made that campaign so successful was Tina — what a wonderful person she was." Australian rugby league is now massively popular and a business behemoth, but it was a different story in the late 1980s, when it was derided by some as working-class and macho. The sport's top brass decided it needed a revamp to attract a new audience, particularly women and families, and that's where the American "Queen of Rock 'n' Roll" came in.

Then-general manager John Quayle's assistant happened to be friends with Roger Davies, an Australian rugby league fan living in America and Turner's manager. It led to her hit "What You Get Is What You See" being used in a risqué 1989 marketing campaign featuring montages of sometimes shirtless play-

ers in Australia. In an even bigger coup, Turner was then brought to Australia to perform live at the 1993 grand final in Sydney, joining the celebrations at full-time to entrench herself into rugby league folklore.

Quayle recounted that although Turner knew "nothing" about the sport initially, she "warmed to it." "She loved the players. She understood after a little while how fit they were, how good looking they were," he said. "Simply The Best" was re-used ahead of the 2020 season, with Turner saying she was "thrilled." "Thirty years on, to see the song being celebrated and the campaign relaunched is very humbling," ABC cited her as saying then. "The (1993) grand final was my first rugby league game and I've never forgotten it." — AFP

Sports

Homeless to be moved out of Paris ahead of 2024 Olympics

Govt plan sparks criticism from some mayors

PARIS: The French government plans to move homeless people out of Paris ahead of the 2024 Olympic Games in the capital, sparking criticism from some mayors of regional towns and villages which are expected to house them. From mid-March, the government began asking officials around France to create "temporary regional accommodation facilities" that can handle an outflow of homeless people from the capital, many of them migrants. Housing Minister Olivier Klein explained to parliament earlier this month that the changes were necessary because of an expected accommodation crunch in the City of Light during the Rugby World Cup from September and the Olympics next July and August.

Many low-end hotels that authorities use to provide emergency accommodation to homeless people plan to rent their rooms at market rates to sports fans and holiday makers. The government estimates that hotel capacity available to accommodate the homeless "will fall by 3,000-4,000 places due to these

events," Klein told MPs on May 5. He said the expected fall "obliges us to ask questions and prepare for the situation... It's about opening accommodation spaces in provincial areas for people who require emergency accommodation."

But some of the proposed locations are already sparking concern among local elected figures. The mayor of Bruz in northwest Brittany, Philippe Salmon, voiced his opposition on Tuesday to the idea of a new centre in his town of 18,000 people near regional capital Rennes. "We are not in favor of the creation of a facility in our area, in conditions that we consider unacceptable," he said. The proposed site was next to a railway line and "polluted by hydrocarbons and heavy metals," he said.

'Positive in principle'

Pascal Brice, the head of the Federation for Solidarity Workers, a homelessness charity, said that "putting people up in good conditions all over France

rather than in the streets of the Paris region is positive in principle. "But will they put in the necessary resources?" He said there was danger of "putting people on buses" then failing to look after them.

Hadrien Clouet, an MP from the hard-left France Unbowed party, accused the government of adopting "the method of all authoritarian regimes: moving the homeless by force to hide them from sight of those taking part in the 2024 Olympics." Authorities in China cleared an unknown number of beggars, hawkers and the homeless from the streets of China before the 2008 Beijing Olympics, with many shipped back to their home regions, reports said at the time. Brazilian campaign groups also said Rio de Janeiro's homeless were being forced out of tourist areas in the middle of the night as the city hosted the games in 2016.

The French initiative to create emergency housing capacity in small towns around the country fits a pattern under President Emmanuel Macron of trying

to disperse migrants and others requiring social support from the densely populated Paris region. Efforts to create housing facilities for asylum seekers in provincial areas have already proved an explosive issue, sparking fierce resistance from some local people, far-right activists and mayors. A French mayor who supported a migrant centre in his area of northwest France had part of his house burned down in an arson attack, leading him to resign earlier this month.

Housing Minister Klein said the fight against homelessness was "a priority" of the president and that funds allotted to solving the problem had "increased by five between 2012 and 2022." After coming to power in 2017, Macron gave himself to the end of the year to end rough sleeping once and for all. He later admitted that he had failed, citing an influx of migrants from Africa and South Asia as the reason. Many of Paris's bridges and parks are used for shelter by the homeless, with camps and tents regularly cleared away by security forces. — AFP

News in Brief

Chelsea struggles 'a warning'

MANCHESTER: Erik ten Hag says Chelsea's struggles are a stark warning of how difficult life can be after a change of ownership as Manchester United's takeover process drags on. As the Glazers continue to consider a full or partial sale of United, Chelsea will visit Old Trafford on Thursday limping to the end of a hugely disappointing first campaign under their new regime. The London club have spent about \$600 million (\$740 million) since a group headed by Todd Boehly bought the club last year but are languishing in 12th place in the Premier League under interim boss Frank Lampard, their third manager of the season. Chelsea have been criticized for a scattergun approach in the transfer market and United boss Ten Hag said their experience showed money is not the answer if spent unwisely. — AFP

Dainese takes stage 17 win

CAORLE: Italian rider Alberto Dainese edged the sprint on Wednesday's stage 17 of the Giro d'Italia as Geraint Thomas finished in the pack to keep the leader's pink jersey. Mark Cavendish, who announced on Tuesday that he would be retiring at the end of the season, made an error a kilometer out from the finish of the flat 197km ride from Pergine Valsugana. The 38-year-old lost his lead-in man and finished well back, most probably ending his record of winning a stage at every Giro he has ridden unless he can survive the mountains over the next three days and take Sunday's finale in Rome. Dainese's DSM team led the peloton around the last bend with 400m to go but it was Michael Matthews (Jayco-AlUla) who then came to the front. Dainese, 25, caught the Australian while Jonathan Milan (Bahrain Victorious) put in a fierce burst that meant the three of them crossed the line together. — AFP

Olympic Committee in turmoil

PARIS: Sports Minister Amelie Oudea Castera on Thursday called on the French National Olympic Committee (CNOSF) to rally together after their president Brigitte Henriques quit her post only 14 months before Paris hosts the Olympic Games. Henriques' dramatic resignation at the committee's general assembly comes after a year-and-a-half of internal squabbling and a very public disagreement with her predecessor Denis Masseglia. Her resignation will not affect the organizing of the Games which is handled by the Paris Olympics organizing committee headed by France's three-time canoeing gold medalist Tony Estanguet. Henriques had insisted prior to the assembly she had no intention of resigning but to the astonishment of the attendees she said she would step down on June 29. She had taken a few weeks off at the end of 2022 to recover after her right hand man Didier Seminet had been cast aside in September but the atmosphere had not improved when she returned to her post. — AFP

Iniesta to leave Japan's Kobe

KOBE: Barcelona legend Andres Iniesta said Thursday he will make an early exit from Japanese side Vissel Kobe but intends to keep playing aged 39. The Spanish World Cup winner's contract with Vissel runs until the end of the year but a tearful Iniesta said he will leave in July after seeing little action this season. Iniesta has made only three substitute appearances totaling 38 minutes this term for Vissel, who are three points clear at the top of the table. The midfield maestro said he did not know where his next move would be, but ruled out retiring. Widely considered one of the greatest players of his generation, he has been linked with a non-playing role at Barcelona. "First I want to finish my time here properly and then see what options are available to me," he told reporters, pausing to wipe away tears at times. "I want to keep playing and then retire while I'm still active. That's difficult for me to do here, so I want to find a place where I can eventually retire." — AFP

Players, fans support Vinicius

MADRID: Vinicius Junior's Real Madrid team-mates showed him support after he was racially abused, by wearing his number 20 shirt before their La Liga match against Rayo Vallecano on Wednesday. The 22-year-old Brazilian winger was present at the Santiago Bernabeu although not part of the squad for the game because of a knee problem, and his colleagues applauded him as he watched from the side of the pitch. Vinicius faced off with a supporter at Valencia's Mestalla stadium on Sunday after being abused during the match, and was later sent off for hitting Hugo Duro. However the Spanish football federation's Competition Committee revoked his red card late Tuesday because some images from the VAR video were not shown to the referee who sent him off. — AFP

Madhwal - Tennis-ball cricketer who entered IPL record books

CHENNAI: Akash Madhwal was working as an engineer and playing tennis-ball cricket just a few years ago — now he is in the Indian Premier League record books. The 29-year-old fast bowler returned stunning figures of 5-5 in the playoffs to lead five-time champions Mumbai Indians to victory over Lucknow Super Giants on Wednesday. Mumbai will face Gujarat Titans on Friday for a place in Sunday's final against Chennai Super Kings.

With Jasprit Bumrah and Jofra Archer both injured, the previously unheralded Madhwal has grabbed his chance to shine. He joined Mumbai last year as an injury replacement but remained confined to playing practice matches, before skipper Rohit Sharma introduced him to the big stage this season. "The team has given me the responsibility so I am trying to do it," Madhwal told reporters after his man-of-the-match performance. "It's not that I can take his (Bumrah's) place, but whatever I can do in my capacity, I am doing."

Madhwal's route into IPL folklore — the first to take a five-wicket haul in the playoffs — came by way of an unusual path. He was working as a civil engineer when he quit a steady job and joined his

Mumbai knock Lucknow Super Giants out of IPL

CHENNAI: Akash Madhwal took five wickets for as many runs to lead Mumbai Indians to a crushing 81-run win in the second IPL playoff game and knock Lucknow Super Giants out of the tournament on Wednesday. Australia's Cameron Green (41) and Suryakumar Yadav (33) put on 66 to help guide five-time champions Mumbai to 182-8 after they elected to bat first in the knockout contest in Chennai. Madhwal then returned figures of 5-5 in 3.3 overs to dismiss Lucknow for 101 as Mumbai booked a meeting with holders and regular season table-toppers Gujarat Titans in the next play-off encounter on Friday in Ahmedabad.

The winners of that clash will meet Chennai Super Kings in the final on Sunday. "It's nice that it's going well at the moment," Green said. "Our batting's been really good. Madhwal has been the game changer for us: five today, and got four for the other day." Green, who was the second-most expensive player bought in the auction at \$2.11 million, added: "Gujarat are the best team. It's going to be a tough challenge, especially on their home turf." Lucknow's innings imploded as they collapsed from 69-2 to be bowled out in 16.3 overs, losing three key wickets to run outs.

Green, who hit his maiden T20 century in Mumbai's previous win, looked in control during a 23-ball knock laced with six fours and one six until his departure. Naveen-ul-Haq, who took four wickets for Lucknow, sent back Suryakumar and Green, bowled by a slower off-cutter from the Afghanistan pace bowler, in the space of three deliveries to push Mumbai onto the back foot. Tilak Varma hit back with a quickfire 26 and a 43-run stand with Tim David, who

Alonso seeking to end Red Bull winning streak

MONACO: Fernando Alonso will seek to break Max Verstappen and Red Bull's winning streak and claim his first win since 2013 as Formula One resumes this weekend with the 80th running of the classic Monaco Grand Prix. After floods forced the cancellation of last week's European 'season opener', the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix at Imola, the F1 circus was happy to be greeted by blue skies and warm sunshine in the Mediterranean principality on Wednesday.

As visitors sought shade, Alonso and his Aston Martin team contemplated how to gamble on delivering his third win on the old, but glamorized street circuit, where he triumphed with Renault in 2006 and McLaren in 2007. After four third-place finishes from five races, the 41-year-old Spaniard has emerged as not only the biggest threat to double champion Verstappen and his team-mate Sergio Perez, but also this year's box-office attraction, a wily wolf with unrivalled experience.

"We have a car that maybe isn't the fastest on the straights, but very good in the corners," he explained

state team, before the IPL came calling. "Cricket is my passion and not a burden," he said. "So I am enjoying cricket after leaving engineering and a job to follow my passion without having much at home." Madhwal is also a product of tennis-ball cricket, a variant of the sport using tennis balls.

It is popular among budding cricketers across India and Madhwal said it played a part in his breakout display. "I have learnt to bowl yorkers in tennis-ball cricket and I try to implement that (here) because that's the only ball to save yourself (from getting hit for runs)," said Madhwal, who hails from the north Indian state of Uttarakhand. "My strength is my yorker and bhaiyya ('brother') Rohit used me where my strength lies and where the team needs me." His feat on Wednesday came on the back of 4-37 against Sunrisers Hyderabad — eclipsed only by Mumbai big-buy Cameron Green's match-winning 100 not out.

'Grab your opportunity'

Standing at 1.75 meters, Madhwal is not your usual tall and burly fast bowler, but his accuracy and grit more than makes up for the lack of size. "We knew what he had, and we needed somebody to bowl at the back end," said Rohit. "Having seen him, I was confident he could get the job done for us." The bearded and often-smiling Madhwal struck twice in two balls, including getting the dangerous Nicholas Pooran out, caught behind for a duck to break Lucknow's back.

Former India quick Zaheer Khan tweeted:



CHENNAI: Lucknow Super Giants' Marcus Stoinis (left) plays a shot during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 eliminator cricket match between Lucknow Super Giants and Mumbai Indians at the MA Chidambaram Stadium on May 24, 2023. — AFP

was out caught for 13 after unsuccessfully reviewing a full toss for being over waist-height.

Run-outs and more

Naveen finished with 4-38 and Yash Thakur took three wickets but despite their efforts Mumbai's impact sub Nehal Wadhwa boosted the total with his 12-ball 23. Lucknow lost their openers early including impact player Kyle Mayers for 18 before Australia's Marcus Stoinis attempted to

pull the chase together in his 27-ball 40. But Madhwal struck with successive balls, including getting the dangerous Nicholas Pooran caught behind for a golden duck. An engineer by profession, Madhwal learned the game while playing tennis-ball cricket in the north Indian state of Uttarakhand but is filling in for Mumbai's injured pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah. "Bumrah bhai (brother) has his own place, and I'm just trying to play the role assigned to me," said the 29-year-old Madhwal. — AFP

'Anything possible for Leclerc'

Local hero Charles Leclerc of Ferrari, who has never tasted success at his home event, on what was once his bus-route to school, will hope for a change of fortune as he bids for a third consecutive Monaco pole position. Since 2017, he has accumulated only 12 points — for finishing fourth in 2022 — and is long overdue a result that reflects his precious talent, Ferrari's form and reliability notwithstanding. "Unfortunately, we have had problems from the first three races," he conceded, reflecting on his meagre total of 34 points and seventh place in the title standings. "But here, anything is possible."

He conceded that he will face a ferocious battle with the Red Bulls—"cars that are operating on another planet"—in Saturday's qualifying session and warned of the threat from Alonso's sleek green machine. "Aston Martin are capable of making a splash," he added. De-



CHENNAI: Mumbai Indians' Akash Madhwal prepares to catch a ball during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 eliminator cricket match between Lucknow Super Giants and Mumbai Indians at the MA Chidambaram Stadium on May 24, 2023. — AFP

"Looking forward to a lot more from the young lad." Opportunity has not come easy for Madhwal. He played as a net bowler for Royal Challengers Bangalore in 2019 before joining Mumbai in the same capacity. But Madhwal, who has led his state team in the 50-overs format, said he never lost hope. "When a scouting team picks you as a net bowler, they give you a chance as well as one has to showcase your skills in the practice matches and show your potential," he said. "It's just about grabbing your opportunity." — AFP



MONACO: Aston Martin's Spanish driver Fernando Alonso speaks during the drivers press conference of the Monaco Formula One Grand Prix in Monaco on May 25, 2023. The race will take place on May 28, 2023. — AFP

spite the introduction of a major package of upgrades on their car, Mercedes are expected to remain in pursuit of their rivals with seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton unlikely to add to his three Monaco triumphs and record 103 overall. "We have the first step in a new direction," said team chief Toto Wolff, who is in talks with Hamilton on renewing his contract. "It won't be a silver bullet... But it may give the drivers a little more stability." — AFP

Sports

Zain recognizes top players of Kuwait Premier League

'Best Player' award to Daham, Al Harbi, Al Khaldi, Ashkanani, Al Feneni, Al Hajri



The recognition ceremony was attended by Zain and KFA officials and members of the technical committee.

KUWAIT: Zain has awarded the winners of its 'Best Player' award in the third section's rounds of the Kuwait Premier League (Dawri Zain) in recognition of their outstanding performance on the pitch. The company dedicates the award to players who contribute to adding elegance to the league and ultimately elevating Kuwaiti football. The awardees are Al Naser's Mohammed Daham (winner in three rounds), Kazima's Hamad Al Harbi and Shibeeb Al Khaldi, Al Arabi's Hussain Ashkanani, Al Salmiya's Mubarak Al Feneni, and Al Kuwait's Fahad Al Hajri.

The recognition took place at Zain's HQ, attended by members of the technical committee, Kuwait Football Association officials, and Zain executives.

Zain offers KD 50,000 of prizes for athletes and fans per season, which is the biggest prize pool ever to be distributed in the Kuwaiti League's history. By dedicating cash prizes for athletes, the company seeks to encourage players to pursue excellence and elevate the league's performance.

Zain's cash prizes for athletes are as follows: Player of the Season Prize: KD 10,000, Player of the Round Prize: KD 500, Season's Top Scorer Prize: KD 5,000, Season's Best Goalkeeper Prize: KD 5,000, Season's Best Coach KD 3,000, and Season's Rising Star Prize: KD 2,000. A special committee has been formed in coordination with the Kuwait Football Association to outline the stan-

dards and criteria on which the winners are selected. The committee is membered by former Kuwaiti international players Saad Al Houti (as the committee's head), Wael Sulaiman, Osama Hussain, and Mohammed Benyaan.

Zain is the Official Partner and Sponsor of the KFA's competitions for the 2022-2026 seasons, including the Kuwaiti Premier League (Dawri Zain), the Zain First Division League, HH the Amir's Cup, HH the Crown Prince's Cup, and the KFA Cup (Zain Cup). Zain's role centers around three main areas: supporting athletes with cash prizes, launching social events and interacting with fans at stadiums, and an all-new surprise: the first-ever Fantasy

Football League in Kuwaiti football's history. These contributions and more go in line with the KFA's vision to further enrich the local football scene, given that it is the most beloved sports among Kuwaitis.

Zain firmly believes that the private sector has a vital and active role in developing the local sports and youth sectors, and it makes this belief a reality by sponsoring and supporting some of the biggest sports programs in the nation. This partnership with Kuwait's top football competition comes to strengthen the leadership role Zain plays in the local sports scene and is perfectly in line with the company's sustainability and social responsibility strategy towards the sports and youth sectors.

Panthers secure Stanley Cup final

MIAMI: Matthew Tkachuk scored a dramatic last-gasp goal to fire the Florida Panthers into the Stanley Cup final for only the second time in franchise history with a 4-3 win over the Carolina Hurricanes on Wednesday. Tkachuk ensured the Panthers will advance to the National Hockey League's championship series for the first time since 1996 after rifling home with just 4.3 seconds remaining to seal a 4-0 Eastern Conference finals sweep. Tkachuk's goal - his third game-winner of the series - was the final act of a pulsating contest at the FLA Live Arena in Sunrise.

Carolina, who had trailed 2-0 in the first period, thought they had done enough to force overtime after Jesper Fast leveled it at 3-3 with just over three minutes remaining. But Florida launched a furious late onslaught and deft play by Tkachuk led to his late winner amid incredible scenes. Earlier, Anthony Duclair got the Panthers' off to a dream start, firing the home side into a 1-0 lead after just 41 seconds following a goalmouth scramble. Carolina's problems went from bad to worse moments later when key defenseman Jacob Slavin was knocked out of the contest after a hit from Panthers forward Sam Bennett.

Slavin was attempting to play out from behind his own net when Bennett poleaxed him with a check that flattened the Carolina player. Slavin, whose head struck the boards as he crashed to the ice, attempted to get up but fell over before being helped off. He was subsequently ruled out of the remainder of the game with an upper body injury. Tkachuk then made it



FLORIDA: Sergei Bobrovsky #72 of the Florida Panthers celebrates with his teammates after defeating the Carolina Hurricanes in Game Four to win the Eastern Conference Final of the 2023 Stanley Cup Playoffs on May 24, 2023. - AFP

2-0 to the Panthers after 10min 23sec of the first period with a power play goal.

Carolina responded superbly and were thrown a lifeline after 13 minutes when Paul Stastny pulled a goal back, bundling a rebound after a long range effort from Brady Skjei. Teuvo Teravainen then put Carolina on level terms early in the second period,

guiding the puck past Sergei Bobrovsky for 2-2. Ryan Lomberg but the Panthers back in front and it looked as if the lead would hold until Fast's equalizer stunned the hosts before Tchapuk's sensational late winner. Florida will play either the Vegas Golden Knights or the Dallas Stars in the Stanley Cup final. The Golden Knights lead their series against Dallas 3-0. — AFP

Champions League final chaos leaves scars, one year on

PARIS: As Paris steps up preparations for the 2024 Olympics, memories of the chaos that marred last year's Champions League final in the French capital remain raw for supporters of the clubs involved. The game between Liverpool and Real Madrid at the Stade de France, in the northern Paris suburb of Saint-Denis, on May 28, 2022, was won 1-0 by the Spanish team. Yet the occasion was overshadowed by the fiasco outside, with kick-off delayed by 37 minutes as fans struggled to get into France's na-

tional stadium after police funneled them into overcrowded bottlenecks as they approached. They then fired tear gas towards thousands of supporters locked behind metal fences on the perimeter to the stadium. One year on, fans who were there remain traumatized by the experience. John Marquis, a Liverpool fan from Guernsey who had tickets to attend the match with his daughter, never made it inside the stadium. "It was after half-time when it really turned nasty," said Marquis, adding that he felt "the whoosh of a baton that missed my skull by millimeters".

'Life-changing'

He says he has not watched Liverpool since, and struggles with panic attacks and in crowded environments. "It has literally been life-changing," he said. "I have been diagnosed as suffering from PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). "I no longer have the strength or ability to follow Liverpool FC. I have and will never watch Liverpool

FC again." Like many Liverpool fans, the experience at the Stade de France brought back memories for Marquis of the 1989 Hillsborough disaster, which cost the lives of 97 of the club's supporters. "Of course a lot of the people who were there (in Paris) were already at Hillsborough in '89 and it re-triggers obviously," Peter Scarfe, who survived that disaster but watched the Stade de France final on television, told AFP.

Scarfe called for people to be held responsible for the Paris chaos and said it was "frightening" that the same stadium will be the centrepiece of this year's Rugby World Cup and the upcoming Olympics. "What we didn't get 34 years ago was accountability," he said. "This time that's what people are pushing for. They want accountability. They want the world to recognize that there were huge mistakes made." The French authorities initially tried to blame Liverpool supporters and claimed an "industrial scale fraud" of fake tickets was the problem. — AFP

Wu, Zhang end China's 86-year French Open wait

PARIS: Twelve months ago, a despondent Wu Yibing was retiring with injury from a low-level clay court tournament in Italy, earning a meagre 530 euros (\$570) for his troubles. Fast-forward a year and 23-year-old Wu is his country's highest-ranked male player at 59 in the world and about to spearhead a landmark assault at the French Open where it has been 86 years since a Chinese man last played in the main draw. Wu will not be alone when the season's second major gets underway on Sunday as Zhang Zhizhen is also guaranteed a spot.

Shang Juncheng can make it three Chinese men in the tournament if he gets through the final qualifying round on Thursday. "The excitement in China around the top Chinese male players is palpable now and there is strong media interest linked to the breakthrough of these players on tour," ATP executive vice-president Alison Lee told AFP. Kho Sin-Khie and Choy Wai-Chuen were the last men to represent China in the French capital back in 1937. Long overshadowed by their female counterparts, Wu and Zhang have been racking up an impressive series of 'firsts'.

Wu was the first Chinese man to make the third round of the US Open in 2022 where it took world number one and defending champion Daniil Medvedev to stop him. He took his new-found celebrity status with good humor. "I'm a good-looking guy, I guess," he replied when told he was the hottest topic on Chinese social media. Earlier this year, Wu became the first Chinese player to win an ATP Tour title in Dallas. Unlike the small change he pocketed at Francavilla al Mare in Italy this time last year, Wu is guaranteed at least 69,000 euros (\$74,300) just by playing his first round at Roland Garros.

A US Open junior champion in 2017, Wu, the son of a boxer, was sidelined for the best part of three years from March 2019 to January 2022 with elbow, back, shoulder and wrist injuries. Covid lockdown deepened his gloom. However, he rapidly made up for lost time. In March 2022, he was 1,869 in the world; in April this year, he reached a career high of 55. Wu won his first ATP Tour-level match on clay in Rome last week and has already added two more in Geneva this week on his way to the quarter-finals. Zhang, 26, is currently ranked at 70 and has yet to win a main draw match in three attempts at the Slams. — AFP

Classifieds

Change of Name

We, Firoz Ahmed, holder of Indian Passport No. M3188091, issued in Kuwait on 22/11/2014 and Fathima Khatoon, holder of Indian Passport No. S9923284, issued in Kuwait on 08/11/2018, permanent address, No. 4089, 2nd cross, 2nd stage, Kumarswamy Layout, Bangalore - 5960078, Karnataka, India, declare that we have changed our minor son's name from Khidash Firoz Ahamed to Muhammad Omar, holding Indian Passport No. T6756273, issued in Kuwait on 20/08/2019 and Civil ID No. 315012501706, presently residing in block 11, street Yatrib Bldg. No. 14, Al Salmiya, Kuwait and permanent address in India, No. 4089, 2nd cross,

2nd stage, Kumarswamy Layout, Bangalore - 5960078, Karnataka, India. In all his dealings and documents, he will be known by the name of Muhammad Omar. (#3543) 26/05/2023

I, Md Forhad Hossain, holder of valid Bangladeshi Passport No. EK0911221, do hereby change my son's name to Sajid (given name) Forhad (surname), holder of valid Bangladeshi Passport No. EL0446996 for all future purposes. He will henceforth be known in the name Sajid Forhad and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all his documents (#3544) 26/05/2023

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, Ajjj, 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,

Building 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

Brighton end City's winning run

Brighton secure EPL top-six finish



BRIGHTON: Manchester City's Norwegian striker Erling Haaland (right) heads the ball next to Brighton's Argentinian midfielder Facundo Buonanotte (left) and Brighton's Dutch defender Jan Paul van Hecke (center) during the English Premier League football match on May 24, 2023. — AFP

BRIGHTON: Pep Guardiola praised his Manchester City players for shrugging off their hangovers after clinching the Premier League title with a 1-1 draw at Brighton on Wednesday to stretch an unbeaten run to 25 matches. A point was also enough for the Seagulls to guarantee they will finish sixth in the table and secure a place in the Europa League next season.

Phil Foden fired the English champions in front, but Brighton were well worthy of the point given to them by Julio Enciso's stunning long-range strike. "Only 48 hours before they drank all the alcohol in Manchester," said Guardiola. "Today they showed why they are the champions." We

were humble and run a lot. That is why we are the champions for many years, these players showed something special."

Guardiola heaped praise on Brighton boss Roberto De Zerbi pre-match, hailing the Italian as one of the most influential managers of the last 20 years. The City coach showed his respect by restoring a number of star names to his side that missed Sunday's 1-0 win over Chelsea to toast a fourth league title in five years. Erling Haaland returned among six changes and could have had a seventh hat-trick of the season inside half an hour.

The towering Norwegian headed over Foden's inviting cross on five minutes.

Haaland then had a poor touch to blame for not beating Jason Steele when clean through on goal. At the third time of asking he took no chances as Haaland unselfishly squared with just Steele to beat for Foden to convert his 15th goal of the season. But after a slow start, Brighton soon began to live up to Guardiola's billing as the champions were rocked back on their heels. "In every situation, even when the situation was difficult, we didn't lose our style," said De Zerbi.

Danny Welbeck's free-kick came crashing off the bar and Facundo Buonanotte should have done better with his finish after sauntering through the City defense.

Kaoru Mitoma also saw an equalizer ruled out for handball. But there was no stopping Enciso's leveler when it did come as the Paraguayan picked up Levi Colwill's pass and smashed an effort into the top corner for his first goal at the Amex.

Brighton had the ball in the net for a third time in the first 45 minutes moments later only for Welbeck to be flagged off-side from Mitoma's pass. The second period was less filled with goalmouth action despite the electric pace of the game. Haaland thought he finally had his 53rd goal of the season when he headed home Cole Palmer's cross 15 minutes from time. But a VAR review caught out City's prolific

number nine as he had pulled Colwill's shirt to create the space for a free header.

Tempers briefly flared on the touchline after that decision with Guardiola shown a yellow card by the referee. There were also minor injury concerns for City ahead of the FA Cup and Champions League finals next month as Phil Foden, John Stones and Bernardo Silva were not moving freely as they were replaced in the second half. "We have to be careful for the players to arrive to the finals as best as possible," added Guardiola. But it was all smiles at the end as Guardiola and De Zerbi shared a warm embrace of mutual admiration after the full-time whistle. — AFP

Hibs humble Celtic as Hearts hold Rangers

GLASGOW: Celtic slumped to just a third domestic defeat of the season as Hibernian beat Ange Postecoglou's 10 men 4-2, while Rangers were held 2-2 by Hearts on Wednesday. Either side of retaining their Scottish Premiership title, Celtic have won just two of their last six games as the newly-crowned champions have come off the boil. Postecoglou gave some of his fringe players the chance to shine at Easter Road and they led 2-1 through Reo Hatate's penalty and Oh Hyeon-gyu with 20 minutes to go. But Daizen Maeda's dismissal for a second yellow card changed the game as Elie Youan, Kevin Nisbet's penalty and Alexandro Bernabe's own goal gave Hibs hope of pipping Edinburgh rivals Hearts into fourth on the final day of the season.

"This is on me, I'm making lots of changes and playing guys who haven't played in a long time and in many ways, that's unfair on them but that's just my way of doing things," said Postecoglou. Hearts cannot catch Aberdeen in the race for third and guaranteed group stage European football next season despite taking a point at Ibrox. Australian teenager Garang Kuol scored a stoppage-time equalizer for the visitors after goals from Todd Cantwell and Fashion Sakala cancelled out Lawrence Shankland's first-minute opener for Hearts. Graeme Shinnie scored twice as Aberdeen beat St Mirren 3-0 to secure third. At the bottom of the table, Dundee United were all but condemned to relegation after a 3-0 home defeat to Kilmarnock. Last-placed United are three points adrift of Ross County, but must also overturn an eight-goal deficit on goal difference on the final day. County were pegged back by a late St Johnstone equalizer in a 3-3 draw at Dingwall, having come from 2-0 down to lead 3-2. However, they can still avoid the relegation playoff with victory at Kilmarnock on Sunday. Motherwell's Kevin van Veen equalized the post-war record of scoring in 10 consecutive Scottish top-flight games in a 1-1 draw at Livingston. — AFP



Ange Postecoglou



ROME: Inter Milan players celebrate with the trophy after winning the Italian Cup (Coppa Italia) final football match between Fiorentina and Inter Milan on May 24, 2023. — AFP

Inter Milan retain Italian Cup title

ROME: Lautaro Martinez scored twice as Champions League finalists Inter Milan came from behind to beat Fiorentina 2-1 and retain their Italian Cup title on Wednesday. Nicolas Gonzalez gave Fiorentina an early lead at the Stadio Olimpico, but Martinez drilled Inter level and then volleyed in the winner before half-time for Simone Inzaghi's team.

Inter's ninth Italian Cup triumph moved them level with Roma. Only Juventus, with 14 titles, have lifted the trophy more often. "I'm so happy because we've been winning trophies with this great club the past two years," Martinez, who

also helped Inter win Serie A in 2021 and last year's Italian Cup, told Mediaset. "We have to keep going like that. We really wanted to lift another cup tonight. We started badly in the first 15 minutes but then we did what we should have done from the beginning."

Six-time winners Fiorentina were denied a first trophy since 2001, but the club could still end the season with silverware having reached the final of the Europa Conference League. They face West Ham in Prague on June 7, three days before Inter take on Premier League champions Manchester City in the Champions League final in Istanbul. "We want to play everything in the best way possible. We have two matches left in the league and then afterwards there'll be Istanbul," said Inzaghi.

Fiorentina, the first club to reach the final of four different major European competitions, made a dream start in Rome as Gonzalez turned in Jonathan Ikoné's threaded cross at the far post. Sofyan Amra-

bat rolled an effort wide from the edge of the area as Fiorentina threatened a second, with Inter striker Edin Dzeko scooping over after he was played in by Martinez. The Argentine forward made no such mistake after Marcelo Brozovic slipped him through on 29 minutes, hammering low into the corner past Pietro Terracciano for his 100th goal in Inter colors.

Martinez struck again eight minutes later as he lashed in Nicolo Barella's hooked delivery from the right. Fiorentina, who overcame Basel in the final seconds of extra time last week in Europe, pushed until the end with Luka Jovic twice going close. The Serbian striker was denied by a fantastic stop from veteran Inter goalkeeper Samir Handanovic before heading another chance narrowly wide. Gonzalez nearly forced extra time after bursting into the box and looping a header over Handanovic after his shot was blocked, but Matteo Darmian headed to safety as Inter clung on for victory. — AFP