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Four NGOs to monitor elections

Prosecution frees 3 vote-buying suspects • Candidate calls for controls on expat numbers

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The Cabinet on Monday agreed to allow four local civil societies to monitor the June 6 general elections, Minister of Social Affairs Mai Al-Baghli said after the council's weekly meeting. She said Kuwait Journalists Association, Kuwait Transparency Society, Kuwait Integration Society and the Society for Follow Up of Parliament Work have been allowed to take part in "supervising the election process". The minister said the approval came to allow the highest degree of transparency in the elections.

The public prosecution meanwhile freed three people, a Kuwaiti and two expats, but kept seven

others in detention as it continues to investigate a vote-buying network busted by the interior ministry. One of those in detention is a Pakistani national who has reportedly been buying votes for candidates for KD 400 each. The interior ministry said on Saturday that it had busted a 10-member network of people buying votes in favor of some candidates. The prosecution also summoned two candidates suspected of links to the network, one of them a former MP.

Candidates for the June 6 National Assembly election stepped up their campaigns with just seven days left for the polls. Basel Al-Bahrani, a candidate running from the first constituency, called on authorities to apply strict controls on the growth of expats,

especially large communities. Bahrani said the number of native Kuwaitis is still under 1.5 million people, while the number of expats is two-and-a-half times larger, or 3.7 million.

He added that five communities form the majority of expats and together they are twice the number of Kuwaitis, some three million people. Bahrani said the solution to this problem is in issuing legislation to prevent the number of any expat community from exceeding 40 percent of Kuwaitis, or under 600,000 in accordance with the current numbers.

The government is currently engaged in applying measures aimed at reducing the number

of foreigners, but it has not yet issued a well-defined plan for that. Former MP Abdullah Al-Mudhaf, running in the first constituency, said Kuwaiti people are upset and angry and the country needs lawmakers capable of confronting corruption.

Also, a number of female activists on Monday issued a joint statement demanding that children of Kuwaiti women married to foreigners should be granted citizenship. The statement rejected calls by civil societies and candidates urging the government to grant such children permanent residence in Kuwait, warning that they will not vote for any candidate who supports permanent residency at the expense of Kuwaiti citizenship.

Expats struggle to obtain driving licenses in Kuwait



By Ghadeer Ghloom & Faten Omar

KUWAIT: One of the biggest challenges that expats face in Kuwait is obtaining a driving license. Expats can only get a driving license if they adhere to a list of rules, including having a university degree, drawing a monthly salary of at least KD 600 and residing in Kuwait for at least two years. The process of obtaining a driving license in Kuwait is expensive and time-consuming. Besides the strict regulations, expats must take driving lessons from a certified driving school, which can be costly, especially since they may need to be tested more than once. Drivers must also pass a series of theoretical and practical tests before being able to apply for a driving license.

Kuwait Times spoke to a number of expats to get a closer look at their struggles in obtaining a Kuwaiti driving license. Abdul Wahab Hossam, 19, who is studying at a university in Kuwait, said he has been trying for a year to obtain a driving license to make his life easier, to no avail. "I have been trying to get a driver's license through the university, but this facility was suspended for non-Kuwaiti university students. Then I tried to get it through my job, and of course, it is necessary to wait for three months to have a work visa. Still, the requirements are difficult. A salary of KD 600 for a 19-year-old isn't an option," he told Kuwait Times.

"Even after graduating and maybe five years later, you will be destined not to have a driving license. There is no alternative, as public transportation in Kuwait is bad," he pointed out, adding he even looked for a driving job to get the license, but drivers must have a license from their country of origin. "And of course, even if you fulfill all the miraculous requirements, wasta is required to pass the driving test," Hossam rued.

Continued on Page 6

Erdogan calls for unity; Amir sends congratulations

ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Monday confronted the tough task of uniting his deeply divided country after winning a historic run-off election to extend his two-decade rule to 2028. Turkey's longest-serving leader brushed aside a powerful opposition coalition, an economic crisis and anger following a devastating February earthquake to beat secular challenger Kemal Kilicdaroglu in Sunday's vote.

But the four-point victory margin was Erdogan's narrowest of any past election, highlighting the sharp polarization the Islamic-rooted conservative will contend with in his final term. Erdogan, 69, called on Turks to "come together in unity and solidarity", whereas Kilicdaroglu vowed to "continue the struggle" against the president and his AKP party, which has dominated Turkish politics since 2002.

Continued on Page 6



ANKARA: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan and his party's allies greet supporters following his victory in the second round of the presidential election at the Presidential Palace on May 29, 2023. — AFP

Iran open to resuming ties with Egypt

TEHRAN: Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Monday he would welcome a resumption of diplomatic relations with Egypt, during a meeting with Oman's visiting Sultan Haitham bin Tariq. Ties between Tehran and Cairo soured following the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran and Egypt's recognition of the Zionist entity, the Islamic republic's sworn enemy. Khamenei said that the Omani leader had told him that Egypt would be willing to resume relations.

"We welcome the Omani Sultan's statement about Egypt's willingness to resume relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran and we have no problem in this regard," Khamenei said, according to his official website. AFP could not immediately reach the Egyptian foreign ministry for comment. Recent months have seen sweeping shifts in the Middle East, following a China-brokered rapprochement between regional heavyweights Saudi Arabia and Iran announced in March.

It has led to improved ties between Iran and other Arab states. Khamenei also called for a deepening of ties between Oman and Iran. "It is important to increase cooperation between Oman and Iran because the two countries share the very important waterway of the Strait of Hormuz," he said.



TEHRAN: Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei meets Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al-Said in the presence of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi on May 29, 2023. — AFP

Shanghai bakes in hottest May day in 100 years

SHANGHAI: Shanghai recorded its hottest May day in more than 100 years on Monday, the city's meteorological service announced, shattering the previous high by a full degree. Scientists say global warming is exacerbating adverse weather, with many countries experiencing deadly heatwaves and temperatures hitting records across Southeast and South Asia in recent weeks.

"At 13:09, the temperature at Xujiashui station hit 36.1 degrees Celsius, breaking a 100-year-old record for the highest temperature in May," a post on the service's official Weibo account read, referring to

a metro station in the center of China's largest city. The temperature at the bustling station climbed even higher to 36.7C later in the afternoon, the meteorological service said. That put it a full degree above the old record, 35.7C, which has been recorded four times previously, in 1876, 1903, 1915 and 2018, according to the service.

Shanghai residents sweltered under the early-afternoon sun, with some apps showing a "feels like" temperature estimate of more than 40C. "I almost got heatstroke, it's really hot enough to explode," read one post on Weibo. A man who gave his surname as Wu told AFP: "It's an environmental problem, the world is going to get hotter and hotter. I have the feeling that summers are becoming much hotter every year. I'm turning on the air conditioning sooner than before." Parts of India saw temperatures above 44C in mid-April, with at least 11 deaths near Mumbai attributed to heat stroke on a single day.

Continued on Page 6



SHANGHAI: Women wearing sun protective clothing commute on bicycles amid hot weather on May 29, 2023. — AFP



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Local

Zour refinery to propel growth of Kuwait's oil sector, economy

Refinery's petroleum products have been sent to 18 countries worldwide



KUWAIT: Participants pose for a photo during the Ministry of Oil seminar on Al-Zour refinery. — KUNA photos



Al-Zour refinery is one of the largest oil refineries in the world.

KUWAIT: Al-Zour refinery is one of the largest projects in the oil sector and a key pillar of Kuwait Petroleum Company's strategy for 2040, given the large and pivotal role assigned to it in shaping the future of the oil industry in the country, the Ministry of Oil said Monday.

The Director of Public Relations and Media at the Ministry of Oil Sheikhha Tamader Khalid Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, explained at a seminar organized by the ministry that the refinery enhances Kuwait's exports of high-quality oil derivatives that meet international specifications.

She added that the refinery guarantees a safe and stable supply of clean fuel supplies to power plants in Kuwait. The completion of construction operations of the refinery will make it one of the largest refineries in the world, with a capacity of 615,000 barrels per day.

She said that the refinery will provide the industry with great flexibility because it is designed to process various types of Kuwaiti crude oil.

Head of the planning team at the Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) Abdullah Al-Kandari said that the refinery will allow Kuwait to become self-sufficient and reduce

sulfur oxide emissions from power plants. The project will also enhance Kuwait's ability to refine heavy oil and produce high-quality petroleum products that meet the standards required in the global market. The refinery will also help create new job opportunities for Kuwaitis. Kandari added that the refinery contains the largest group of desulfurization units in the world, which purify residual oil to produce high-quality diesel with a very low sulfur content.

68 oil shipments

The refinery has had to get some petroleum products from KNPC to accel-

erate initial operations. It has also begun a trial run of a crude oil distillation unit as of May 11. The unit has already refined 2.5 million barrels of crude oil, thus securing an important and major stock of petroleum products which contributes to the smooth operation of the rest of the units.

The total production capacity of the Zour refinery increased to 410,000 barrels per day since the successful operation of the mini refinery in March 2023, said Kandari. Also in March 2023, the ministry received an oil carrier in preparation for exporting the first shipments of sulfur from the refinery. Work is cur-

rently underway to equip the third mini refinery for the pre-operation stage.

Senior Planning Engineer at KIPIC Rawaa Bouftain, said that the products of the refinery have been sent to 18 countries around the world through 68 oil shipments.

Bouftain stressed the importance of the human capital as a pillar of the oil industry and its renaissance in Kuwait and one of the most important elements of KPC's strategy for 2040. She pointed out that the Zour refinery has provided many career opportunities for national cadres, with Kuwaitization rates reaching 95 per cent.

News in Brief

872 fire force members to get Military Duty Medal

KUWAIT: Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah gave instructions to take the necessary administrative action to grant more than 872 military personnel in the Kuwait Fire Force of various ranks the Military Duty Medal of different grades after they fulfilled requirements for this purpose. The Army Command said instructions of Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled, who is also First Deputy Premier and Interior Minister, to grant this medal comes out of the political leadership's care for the affairs of the fire force members and its keenness to raise their morale and achieve justice and equality among them. — KUNA

Labor support approved for freelancers

KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah submitted a request to the Cabinet to pay national labor support allowances to local freelancers and citizens running micro-enterprises. The decision was made to support local entrepreneurs, the authority said in a statement Sunday, noting that applicants must be at least 21 years of age.

End-of-year exams going smoothly: MoE

KUWAIT: Procedures adopted by the education ministry to prevent cheating during end of year exams for high school and middle school students are going according to plan, the ministry said Monday. The official spokesman of the Ministry of Education, Ahmad Al-Wahaida, said in a press statement on Monday that the leadership and officials of the ministry are following up the situation on the ground on a daily basis to ensure the regulations against cheating are strictly followed. Reports from the exam committees are being submitted directly to the minister daily. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan Emil Karimov (left) and Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi cut the cake during the ceremony. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Azerbaijan Embassy celebrates 105th Independence Day

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Embassy of Azerbaijan held a reception on Sunday at Salwa Sabah Al-Ahmed Hall to mark the 105th Independence Day of the Republic of Azerbaijan. On the sidelines of the event, Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Mansour Al-Otaibi said the two countries aspire to develop and strengthen relations in all fields.

"Relations are developing and there is a desire on the part of the two countries to develop and improve them. Azerbaijan is a Muslim country and a country presiding over the Non-Aligned Summit. In March, Azerbaijan hosted a significant summit-level meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Contact Group, which was attended by the minister of foreign affairs. We have several agreements and diplomatic relations that began in 1994 after Azerbaijan emerged from the Soviet Union," he said.

Azeri Ambassador Emil Karimov said: "Azerbaijan is one of the ancient countries in the world with a rich history, culture and cuisine. Today,



Emil Karimov



Mansour Al-Otaibi

Azerbaijan is the leading country in the Caucasus." He noted that the first years of independence were very difficult and there was chaos, economic crisis, bad social situation and civil war, but this changed with the efforts of the national leader of the Azerbaijani people Heydar Aliyev.

Karimov said Azerbaijan-Kuwait relations was founded during the first meeting between Heydar Aliyev and Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at the OIC summit in Casablanca in 1994. Then the two leaders met in Copenhagen in 1995 and New York in 1996. "We have close and friendly relations with Kuwait, especially in the agriculture sector, light industry and education. We have big potential in the tourism sector. Last year, more than 22,000 Kuwaiti tourists visited



Ambassadors and officials were among those who attended the celebration of the 105th Independence Day of Azerbaijan.



Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan Emil Karimov is seen with Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi at the event.

Azerbaijan. We are very proud that Kuwaiti people like visiting Azerbaijan," he added.

The Azerbaijani ambassador said direct flights are operated by Azerbaijan Airlines, Kuwait Airways and Jazeera Airways between the two countries, with the flight duration being less than 2 hours, inviting guests to visit and enjoy Azerbaijan.

KUNA, ANSA renew media cooperation

KUWAIT: Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) and Italian News Agency (ANSA) renewed on Monday a media cooperation agreement between the two sides. KUNA Director-General Dr Fatima Al-Salem and ANSA Commissioner Director Stefano D'Alessandri signed the agreement via video conference in the presence of Kuwaiti Ambassador to Italy Nasser Al-Qahtani and Italian Ambassador to Kuwait Carlo Balducci.

Dr Salem praised the distinguished

ties between Kuwait and Italy, stressing joint keenness to strengthen them in various fields, including the media in all its aspects. She stressed KUNA's keenness to build a wide network of relations with ANSA in anticipation of an advanced future for the media sector and innovative means that advance it, while preserving its mission, values and goals.

Balducci affirmed that this agreement expresses the common desire to enhance understanding and mutual media cooperation, especially in the field of communication, information and exchange of journalistic and technical expertise between the two parties. The two agencies signed their first cooperation agreements in 1994, which were renewed in 2008 and 2015. — KUNA



KUWAIT: KUNA Director-General Dr Fatima Al-Salem and Italian Ambassador to Kuwait Carlo Balducci on the sidelines of signing the agreement. — KUNA photos



Kuwaiti and Italian officials are seen during their meeting.

Local

Social media replaces gatherings at candidates' election headquarters

Cost efficiency, wide reach make virtual campaigns attractive

By Ghadeer Ghloum

KUWAIT: Social media has drastically transformed the way Kuwaiti candidates interact with their constituents during elections. In the past, candidates would hold gatherings at their headquarters to spread their message and pick up support. However, candidates have now shifted their focus to social media to reach a wider audience due to the growing popularity of these platforms among Kuwaitis.

To learn more about the impact of social media on shaping the Kuwaiti parliament, Kuwait Times interviewed former MP and candidate Dr Abdulkarim Al-Kandari, candidate Dawood Marafie, Associate Professor of Communication and Culture at Kuwait University Dr Haneen Al-Ghabra, Associate Professor of Mass Communication at Kuwait University Dr Hussain Murad, Professor of Mass Communication at Kuwait University Dr Khaled Al-Qahs, Media Professor at Kuwait University Dr Fawaz Al-Ajmi and Assistant Professor at Kuwait University Dr Yousef Al-Daihani.

Reach and impact

Kandari said in all its forms, social media has helped candidates reach the largest possible number of voters. While in the past, interaction was limited to attending meetings and forums, a candidate can now address everyone from the comfort of their homes. Similarly, Marafie said as time advances, tools and methods evolve, and it has become easier to know the voter and reach them. Voters want to hear speeches at a place and time that suits them, whether at home, in the office or elsewhere. Marafie added he uses social media to express his opinions and hypotheses to enable people to know him.

"All you need is an effective video, some simple branding, a message and the Internet is your magic tool. I saw some have used it very effectively, but others didn't have a clear message and used a lot of money on billboards and advertising that was unnecessary," Ghabra said. The aspect of cost efficiency was emphasized



Dawood Marafie



Dr Fawaz Al-Ajmi



Dr Haneen Al-Ghabra



Dr Khaled Al-Qahs



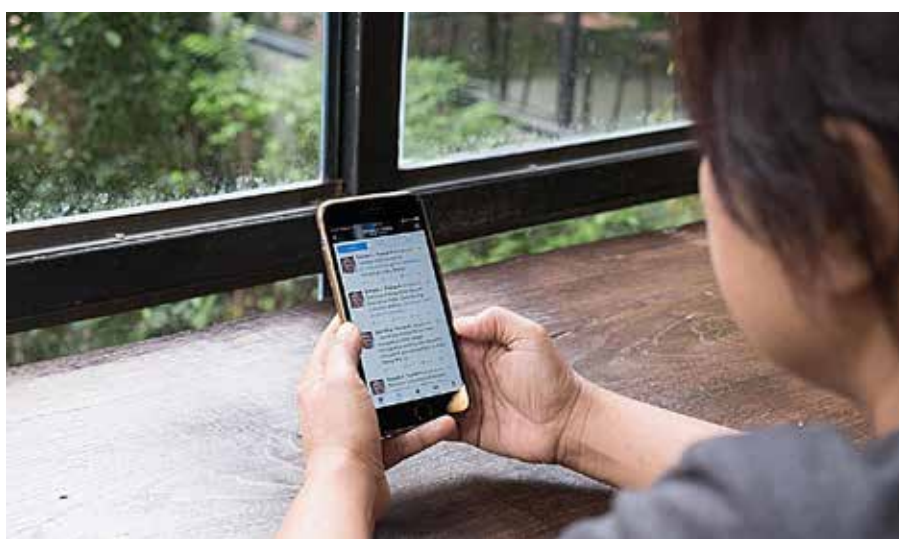
Dr Hussain Murad

sized by Murad, who said candidates head towards social media platforms for three main reasons: Cost efficiency, diversity and speed of spreading information. Ghabra added that beyond communicating their policy views, new candidates can humanize themselves through their social media accounts, and this helps voters feel more connected to them.

Daihani said Kuwait is one of the top four countries in terms of social media usage compared to population size. This forced candidates who prefer holding their election rallies at their headquarters to use social media. "We have recently seen a number of candidates launch their election campaigns and invite voters to digital rallies on social media," he said.

Qahs pointed out that using social media may not be as effective as it seems, but rather, it is influenced by other factors. He said it seems logical for political candidates to employ social media in their election campaigns to reach a large audience. However, while social media may provide access to these groups, their impact on them is another matter, as influencing them is not as easy as many people think.

Media literature distinguishes between the ease of communicating media messages to targeted audiences via social media and influencing their thoughts, beliefs and even behaviors. The influence of messages is subject to other factors such as voter



preferences, preconceptions about the candidate and elections in general, as well as personal, social and educational characteristics and life circumstances of voters. Ajmi concurred with Qahs, as he said social media delivers the candidates' messages, but does not necessarily influence their decision.

Ethical concerns

Kandari said the danger lies in social media's ability to easily spread rumors and fake news, but campaigns can counter these fears by preemptively posting

and immediately denying rumors. Marafie pointed out there are people who misuse social media or harm others through it, and a candidate is not an exception. The role of anyone affected is to respond, not ignore, and take legal action.

Murad said ethics is a high concern due to misunderstanding or miscommunication and the fact that candidates' messages can be edited and tampered. Unfortunately, most of the bashing and bad images of candidates come as a result of misusing social media, he said. Qahs agreed, saying ethical concerns

remain in the use of any media, whether traditional or new, because "we are dealing with information and news, and as a result, there will be individuals or entities that will exploit these channels to influence the beliefs of voters by broadcasting fake news or misinformation, or spreading rumors against other candidates in an effort to influence the electorate".

Daihani highlighted this issue escalates, especially during elections and with competition between candidates and their campaigns. Ajmi, however, sees that Kuwaiti society is conservative and is more likely to stick to its values, regardless of the presence of social media.

Transparency and accountability

Kandari explained that unlike traditional media, social media's speed of transmission, explanation and refutation contributes to increasing awareness and transparency. The candidate has become very close to the voter and is forced to work with clarity and take positions with transparency. Marafie agreed, saying social media enhances the transparency of a parliament member and is a reference for people to know their opinions and positions. People can compare, discuss, hold accountable and evaluate MPs, while rejecting those who misuse social media with lies or deceit.



Ambassador Sami Al-Zamanan (left) is seen with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida.



KUWAIT: The Ambassador of Kuwait to Japan Sami Al-Zamanan is seen with Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi (right) at the reception. — KUNA photos

Japan Emperor affirms historical Kuwait-Japan ties

TOKYO: The Ambassador of Kuwait to Japan Sami Al-Zamanan participated in a ceremony hosted by Emperor Naruhito at the Imperial Palace in the Japanese capital, where the emperor affirmed historic friendship between Tokyo and Kuwait. During the ceremony, attended by senior officials of the Japanese government and members of the foreign dip-

lomatic corps accredited to Japan, Naruhito had a discussion with Zamanan, during which he conveyed his greetings to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, according to a statement by Kuwait Embassy. Naruhito, it said, affirmed the strength of the historical friendship between Kuwait and Japan, which is based on mutual trust, recalling his official visit to the Arab Gulf country in 1995 accompanied by his wife when he was crown prince, commending the hospitality and reception he received, which left him with a "unique impression" of the Kuwaiti people.

Naruhito also discussed the visit of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Japan

on March 2012, which had a "special place in the imperial family." Meanwhile, during a one-on-one conversation that Zamanan had with the Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, he stressed the importance of the strong friendship between both sides and the keenness of the leaderships of both countries to strengthen bilateral ties in various fields. This was also confirmed by Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi, who appreciated the vigorous exchange between officials and the strength of the distinguished ties between the two countries. In turn, Zamanan extolled the historical and distinguished Kuwaiti-Japanese relations, which witnessed continuous growth since their establishment in 1961, reiterating his keenness to exercise his utmost efforts to advance these relations. — KUNA

MoH seeks to attract more Kuwaiti nurses

KUWAIT: The health ministry launched a workshop titled "Practicing innovative leadership for nursing leaders" under the patronage of Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi and in the presence of Assistant Undersecretary for Technical Affairs Dr Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi. Director of Nursing Services Dr Eman Al-Awadhi said recruitment is ongoing at the health ministry, adding 2,358 Kuwaiti nursing graduates were appointed last year, while the door is also open for local and foreign contract workers. She said nursing cadres are being supported in the country through payments of incentives to attract Kuwaiti nurses.

Dr Awadhi told journalists on the sidelines of the workshop that there are 22,021 nurses in the

health ministry, 1,004 of whom are Kuwaiti (4.4 percent) and 21,017 expats (95.4 percent). She said an electronic database links the directorate with health zones and central departments, adding development plans are prepared on two levels — annual and for five years — to improve the nursing profession.

Chairman of Kuwait Nursing Association Mohammad Assaf lauded the efforts of the health ministry to advance the nursing profession by encouraging students to select this specialty and attract them by approving the 2020-2021 cadre, raising salaries and increase incentives, which contributed to having a large number of students studying nursing, in addition to having a complete program for nursing scholarships.

Assaf spoke about future plans to improve the nursing profession in the country through the opening of many colleges and include the nursing profession in the category of tough professions, along with Gulf and international cooperation to exchange expertise and prepare teams to face crises and catastrophes.

In my view

The beginning of collapse



Dr Khalid A Al-Saleh

Local@kuwaittimes.com

There is no doubt that the United States succeeded in spreading its culture, through military power, of which it has much, and through soft power such as cinema, fast food, journalism and media. The American civilization is not the first that has dominated the world's cultures and will not be the last, as many civilizations came around. History mentions some of them but not most.

American historians and intellectuals were occupied some time ago with the end of history, as they discussed how to make their civilization the final one. Many arguments were made during intellectuals' meetings, even at the level of Congress sessions in both houses about the reasons for the collapse of previous civilizations. American leaders were asked to avoid these reasons in order to maintain the sustainability of the American civilization and its control of the world.

I listened to a discussion at the US Senate during the trial of President Bill Clinton in 1999, which was presided over by Supreme Justice William Rehnquist. That trial was similar to litigations presented by senators about the importance of upholding values to maintain American dominance.

When I heard the litigations and arguments, I thought that a nation that is keen on justice and adopts values is very difficult to remove from the peak of dominance. Yet on Feb 12, Clinton was found innocent. Clinton's innocence was the first deviation of the senators' credibility, as the litigations and values were closer to hypocrisy that hit previous civilizations at the start of their decay.

It became clear since that date that the US will not end history, as the American philosopher and ideologist Francis Fukuyama presented the end of history theory in his book "The End of History and the Last Man" in 1992.

Following the fall of Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union and the publication of this book and theory, intellectual scientists were discussing the possibility of applying it to the American civilization, until the Clinton trial revealed weak points deep inside the new civilization. Then deviations in principles became wider, as well as the distortion of human rights at the hands of American politicians, be they inside the US or outside.

What we see today confirms that the end of history is not here yet and there are new civilizations in the East and West that will arrive after tens or hundreds of years. Power will change due to the change in values, and the inability of US leaders to maintain the conditions of power and dominance.

Central Banks eases burden on retirees

KUWAIT: Official sources at the Central Bank of Kuwait said the bank has introduced amendments to guidelines to grant loans/personal financing for consumption and housing purposes and issuance of credit cards. The sources said the Central Bank sent circulars to all local banks and investment companies, instructing that conditions of financing be reorganized for retired customers by extending the repayment period of loans given to them by two years to become seven years instead of the current five years.

They also said the housing loan repayment period for retirees has been extended by five years to become 20 instead of the current 15 years, adding this amendment aims at reducing the monthly payment. The sources said the definition of the net monthly salary will be the total amount mentioned in the official salary certificate issued by the employment entity or the social security certificate for pensioners and labor support without the deductions mentioned in the certificates, including the rent allowance according to the housing care system.

Kuwait Times
Established 1961THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher

YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief

ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432

ADVERTISING : 24833199 Extn. 301

CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 220

ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125

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KUWAIT: Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Adarsh Swaika and Head of Kuwait Society of Engineers Faisal Al-Atal are seen during their meeting this week.

Indian envoy urges removing obstacles faced by engineers

KUWAIT: Kuwait Society of Engineers (KSE) and the Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Adarsh Swaika agreed to expand the number of the India-based accreditation bodies recognized by Kuwait. KSE said it will be planning a future visit to India to look into organizations that conform with international standards for the engineering profession.

The agreement came following a meeting between the Head of KSE Faisal Al-Atal and the Indian Ambassador where they discussed issues of mutual interest, most notably approval of engineering qualifications and granting Indian engineers a "to whom it may concern" certificates to practice the profession in Kuwait. The meeting was in the presence of representatives from the Asia department at Kuwait Foreign Ministry and the Indian Embassy in Kuwait.

Ambassador Swaika said he hoped the society would facilitate issuing "to whom it may concern" certificates and remove the obstacles that thousands of Indian engineers face in Kuwait. He said India upholds its end of the deal when it comes to bilateral education and accreditation agreements. Indian engineers, he said, work at KNPC and other oil companies, as well as the infrastructure and construction sectors.

Atal promised to look into prioritizing Indians when it comes to getting the certificates, in a manner consistent with international standards. He explained that approving non-Kuwaiti engineers, particularly Indian engineers, is in line with international standards, including the Washington Accord in addition to the International Engineering Alliance and the Indian National Board Accreditation (NBA). He emphasized that the society favors programs accredited by non-profit international bodies as opposed to those only approved by the government where the program is offered.

Photo of the day



In this picture taken on May 28, 2023, the International Space Station (ISS) transits the waxing gibbous moon as seen from Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Installing parking shades on private property to cost one-time fee

Draft regulation passes after controversial run in Municipal Council



KUWAIT: People installing parking shades in private lots will soon have to pay the municipality a licensing fee. According to the new regulations, people have to pay a one-time fee of 500 fils for every square meter of shade installed, including on private property and empty lots. The rule is meant to legislate control over the installation of parking shades, especially that some people randomly gate empty lots in commercial areas and use them for private purposes without obtaining the required permits, leaving the area without public parking spots. But municipal council members have argued the regulation as it is proposed will cause more harm than good.

The decision on whether to stipulate fees on shades has been in discussion since at least April 2022, with a lot of back and forth between the Municipal Council and the municipal minister.

The Municipal Council has called for private property to be exempted from the rule since the beginning, rejecting the regulation when it was still a draft twice — in 2022 and 2023. But two successive municipal ministers have insisted on stipulating the fee for shades installed in home parking lots following the council's two rejections, leaving the regulation in limbo.

Most recently, Municipal Minister Fahad Al-Shula's opposition to the council's decision to reject the fee sparked debate within the council on whether or not to forward the regulation to the Council of Ministers for a final decision. Municipal Council members voted against sending it to the ministers on Monday, with eight votes for, four against, two absences and one abstention, thereby opting to stipulate fees on shades installed on private property.

Kuwait University's Laila Jaragh wins research award

KUWAIT: Member of the teaching faculty at Kuwait University at the Chemistry Department Dr Laila Jaragh has won the International Best Research Award for cancer research from the ISSN International Awards and IIRAC-2023 Congress. Dr Jaragh is being honored for her research paper titled: "Development of nimesulide analogs as a dual inhibitor targeting tublin and HSP27 for treatment of female cancers."

Dr Jaragh's research team, comprised of scientists from the Chemistry Department at the Science College at Kuwait University, in addition to Prof Jamal Hareesa and Prof Fares Al-Enezi from King Saud University in Saudi Arabia, developed chemical compounds similar in action and structure to the anti-inflammatory agent known as "nimesulide", which has recently become known as an anti-cancer agent.

The team said the compounds were completely

characterized at the general facilities laboratories at Kuwait University (RSPU). Their anti-cancer effects were then studied on breast cancer cell lines SKOV3 and SKBR3. The researchers targeted tubulin, which plays an important role in cell division, and heat shock protein 27 (HSP27). The two proteins are found on the surface of cells and are attractive targets for the discovery of anti-cancer therapy because both are regulated in cancer cells.

The team found that the synthesized compounds elicited cytotoxic effects against the cancer cell lines, meaning that they have potential as anti-cancer therapies. The research team thanked the scientific research department at Kuwait University for supporting and financing this project and supplying all the necessary equipment needed to help researchers produce excellent work.



Dr Laila Jaragh



The exhibition includes a number of old publications.



A collection of old currencies displayed at the exhibition within the summer camp.

Kuwait's Nazaha sets up youth summer program

KUWAIT: Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) launched on Monday its fifth summer club under the slogan (Youth for Integrity, Partnership and Learning). The club, held at the authority's headquarter, will present a number of activities and cultural programs, in cooperation with Kuwait Transparency Society, aims for highlighting the national role in fighting corruption and emphasizes Integrity. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Officials tour the caricature exhibit, which is part of the Nazaha summer camp launched on Monday. — KUNA photos



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No glory for bullies:
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Russia makes rare daytime strike on Kyiv

Russia targets settlement in Dnipropetrovsk, killing one man and wounding nine



KYIV: Local residents take shelter in a metro station in the center of Kyiv during a Russian missile strike. Russia fired a barrage of missiles at Kyiv on Monday sending panicked residents running for shelter in an unusual daytime attack on the Ukrainian capital following overnight strikes. — AFP

KYIV: Russia fired a barrage of missiles at Kyiv on Monday sending panicked residents running for shelter in an unusual daytime attack on the Ukrainian capital following overnight strikes. A series of explosions rang out in Kyiv on Monday as Russia targeted the city for the second time in 24 hours.

AFP journalists heard at least 10 explosions from around 11:10 am local time (0810 GMT) in Kyiv, starting just a few minutes after an air raid warning sounded. Authorities said Ukrainian air defences had downed every Russian missile launched against the Kyiv region.

"A total of 11 missiles were fired: 'Iskander-M' and 'Iskander-K' from a northerly direction," Ukraine's armed forces chief Valery Zaluzhny said. "All the targets were destroyed by air defences," he added. Sergiy Popko, head of Kyiv's city administration, said that Russians struck in the morning when "most residents were at work and on the streets".

"The Russians are clearly demonstrating that they are aiming to destroy the civilian population," he said on Telegram. "Debris was recorded falling in different parts of the city," Popko said, adding that information on casualties was currently being clarified. Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said earlier in the

day one person had been hospitalised.

Heavy barrage sparks panic

People ran to take shelter in a metro station in central Kyiv as volleys of loud explosions were heard, AFP journalists said. Many residents had become used to ignoring air raid sirens but the heavy barrage prompted a panicked reaction.

Down on the platform of the Khreshchatyk metro station, people stood and sat on steps checking their mobile phones. "I saw 6,7 or 8 -- a certain number of explosions in the sky. That's why I came here with my work colleagues," said Maksym, a plumber, sitting on the steps.

"I'm waiting for the air raid to end." The Kyiv city administration said air defences were at work during the air raid, which was the 16th attack on the city this month. AFP journalists also saw missile fragments scattered on the road in Kyiv's northern Obolonskiy district.

"At first, they started shooting down missiles as usual. Then one of them fell on the road, as you can see, just the tail of it. Some people said it set a car on fire," said Dmytro, a young man in a plaid shirt. "It was quite loud: there were several explosions.

While the missile was being shot down, there were about 6-5 explosions. Before that, you could hear a piece of debris falling."

Kyiv, which had been relatively spared from attacks since the beginning of the year, has faced nearly nightly aerial raids this month. Authorities said early Monday that Kyiv had overnight repelled another large number of overnight air strikes, with no casualties.

Zaluzhny said that a total of "up to 40 missiles" and "around 35 drones" had been launched, almost all of which were downed. This followed an overnight drone attack on Saturday that was the biggest on the capital since Russia's invasion began in February last year.

Children wounded

Russia on Monday also targeted a settlement in the eastern Dnipropetrovsk region, killing one man and wounding nine people including a 11-year-old child, local authorities said. A missile attack on a village in the eastern Kharkiv region left six people wounded, including a pregnant woman and children aged 10 and 14, the authorities said. In the western region of Khmelnytsky,

Russian forces struck a military facility overnight, officials said.

In a rare admission of the damage, they said "five aircraft have been put out of action." Work was underway to localise fires and repair a runway, official said. Russia's defence ministry said its forces had attacked Ukrainian airfields and "all the assigned targets have been destroyed".

Moscow has warned the West against escalating the conflict after the United States agreed to green-light deliveries of F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine.

Kyiv has been preparing an offensive although its timing and focus have been the subject of months of speculation. Ukrainian authorities have said almost nothing except that they need more weapons from Kyiv's backers.

Deputy Defence Minister Ganna Malyar said Monday that in the frontline hotspot of Bakhmut "the intensity of the enemy's offensive has significantly decreased" as Russian mercenary group Wagner was handing over its positions to Moscow's regular troops. "Our troops are making this process much more difficult for the enemy," she said. "At the same time, the intensity of enemy artillery shelling has not decreased." — AFP

World leaders congratulate Erdogan

ANKARA: Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin were among world leaders congratulating Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan after he won Sunday's historic run-off election to extend his two-decade rule.

• Biden: 'Global challenges'

US President Biden said he hoped to work with Erdogan on "shared global challenges". "I look forward to continuing to work together as NATO allies on bilateral issues and shared global challenges," Biden tweeted, making no mention of recent tensions in the bilateral relationship.

• Putin: 'Logical result'

Russia's President Putin, who has collaborated closely with Erdogan on key international issues despite some disagreements, told Turkey's leader his win was "the logical result of your dedicated work".

"Your victory in these elections is the logical result of your dedicated work as head of the Turkish Republic, a clear evidence of the Turkish people's support for your efforts to strengthen state sovereignty and pursue an independent foreign policy," Putin said, according to the Kremlin website.

Von der Leyen: 'Strategic importance'

Ursula von der Leyen, President of the Commission of the European Union, which Erdogan wants Turkey to join, said the bloc sought to strengthen ties. "I look forward to continue building the EU-Turkiye relationship," she wrote on Twitter, using an alternate spelling for Turkey.

"It is of strategic importance for both the EU and Turkiye to work on

advancing this relationship, for the benefit of our people."

Stoltenberg: 'Continuing our work together'

Jens Stoltenberg, secretary general of the NATO military alliance, of which Turkey is a member, also sent congratulations. "I look forward to continuing our work together and preparing for the NATO Summit in July," he tweeted.

Guterres: 'Strengthening the cooperation'

UN chief Antonio Guterres congratulated Erdogan on his re-election, the secretary-general's spokesman Stephane Dujarric said. "He looks forward to further strengthening the cooperation between Turkiye and the United Nations," Dujarric added.

China: 'Great importance'

Beijing also offered congratulations. "We support Turkey in taking a development path that suits its national conditions, and hope that Turkey will continue to make new achievements in its development under the leadership of President Erdogan," said foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning. Beijing, "attaches great importance to its relations with Turkey".

Macron: 'Immense challenges'

French leader Emmanuel Macron said the two nations had "immense challenges" to work on together. Writing on Twitter, Macron said these included the "return of peace to Europe". "With President Erdogan, who I congratulate, we will continue to move forward," he said.

Zelensky: 'Security and stability'

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky welcomed the win for Erdogan, who since Russia's invasion of Ukraine has positioned himself as a mediator in the conflict. "We count on the further strengthening of the strategic partnership for the good of our countries, as well as the strengthening of cooperation for the security and stability of Europe," Zelensky said on Twitter.



ANKARA: Supporters of the Turkish President celebrate following his victory in the second round of the presidential election in Ankara on May 29, 2023. — AFP

Greece: Seeking closer ties

Interim prime minister Ioannis Sar-mas wished "peace and prosperity to the Turkish people". Former PM Kyriakos Mitsotakis, who has had sometimes difficult ties with Ankara and hopes to be returned to office in elections expected on June 25, said he wanted to telephone Erdogan to "express my wish that the improvement in relations after the earthquakes carries on". But he added in a television interview with the private channel Mega: "I have no illusions about the fact that a country cannot easily change policy."

Scholz: 'fresh impetus'

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz hailed the countries as "close partners and allies" whose "people and economies are deeply intertwined". "Congratulations to President Erdogan—together we want to advance our common agenda with a fresh impetus," Scholz wrote on Twitter.

Modi: 'Ties will grow'

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted: "I am confident that our bilateral ties and cooperation on global issues will continue to grow in the coming times."

Sharif: 'Pillar of strength'

Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif said

Erdogan was "a pillar of strength for the oppressed Muslims & a fervent voice for their inalienable rights. "His presidential victory & that of AKP in parliamentary elections is significant in so many ways, reflecting the trust & confidence of the Turkish people in his dynamic leadership," he tweeted.

Taleban rulers: 'Service of religion'

Afghanistan's Taleban-appointed Prime Minister Al-Haj Mullah Muhammad Hassan Akhund said he was praying "to the Almighty Allah to grant Turkiye, that has a special regional and global status, further strength, stability and service of religion".

UAE: 'Enhance strategic partnership'

President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan said the UAE looked "forward to working together to further enhance the strategic partnership between our two countries".

South Africa: 'Consolidate relations'

President Cyril Ramaphosa said Pretoria anticipated working with Turkey under Erdogan "to consolidate existing strong relations at the bilateral and multilateral levels". — AFP

Bola Tinubu takes helm in Nigeria, Africa's troubled giant

ABUJA: Long-time political kingmaker Bola Tinubu was sworn in as president of Nigeria on Monday, succeeding Muhammadu Buhari, a former general who stepped down after two terms in office. The 71-year-old southerner took over from a 80-year-old northerner as Africa's most populous nation faces a sea of economic troubles and security challenges.

"As president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria I will discharge my duties and perform my functions honestly to the best of my ability, faithfully and in accordance with the constitution," Tinubu said in a live broadcast from the capital Abuja's Eagle Square. Foreign leaders and representatives present at the ceremony included presidents Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa, Paul Kagame of Rwanda and Nana Akufo-Ado of Ghana as well as delegations from the US, Britain and China.

Kashim Shettima was sworn in as vice president, taking over from Yemi Osinbajo. The ruling party duo were declared winners of the February 25 election, gaining the highest number of votes -- 8.8 million -- and picking up the required number of ballots across two-thirds of Nigeria's states.

But Tinubu only garnered just over a third of the total vote, leaving him with a weak mandate, some analysts say. The poor showing reflects "widespread disenchantment with his party's record... along with misgivings about his personal eligibility for the office," the International Crisis Group (ICG) think tank said in a note.

Dubbed a political "godfather," Tinubu campaigned on the slogan "it's my turn" to govern the country, Africa's biggest economy. He has touted his experience as Lagos governor from 1999 to 2007 -- a period that, supporters say, modernised Lagos, Nigeria's commercial hub.

But the new president also faces corruption allegations, which he denies, and questions over his health. Opposition leaders Atiku Abubakar, who came second, and Peter Obi, who was third, are contesting election results in court, claiming fraud. The electoral commission acknowledged "glitches" during the vote but dismissed claims that the process was not free and fair. — AFP

Fighting rages in Sudan capital ahead of breached ceasefire

Sudan has become one of the highest alert areas for food insecurity: UN

KHARTOUM: Gunshots and artillery fire rocked the Sudanese capital Monday, the last day of a frequently breached ceasefire, as calls to arms stoked fears the six-week war will intensify. Residents told AFP they could hear street battles in northern Khartoum, as well as artillery fire in the south of the capital of over five million people which has been turned into a deadly war zone.

Since the truce began a week ago, frightened residents have ventured out to try and get food or water, the costs of which have doubled since the start of the war. But thousands of families continue to shelter in place, rationing water and electricity while trying desperately to avoid stray gunfire.

In Darfur, on the western border with Chad, continued fighting “blatantly disregards ceasefire commitments”, according to Toby Harward, of the United Nations refugee agency. “Intermittent fighting between Sudanese armed forces and Rapid Support Forces in El Fasher, North Darfur over the last few days” has seen civilians killed, homes looted and tens of thousands newly displaced in the already war-ravaged region, Harward said.

Newborns dead in hospital
The persistent fighting has impeded the delivery of essential humanitarian aid, upon which 25 million people — over half the population — now rely to survive, according to the UN. A week ago, representatives of army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the paramilitary RSF, pledged to pause the incessant air strikes, artillery fire and street battles in order to allow in much-needed aid and civilians to flee. But by the

seventh day of the truce — due to expire at 9:45 pm (1945 GMT) on Monday — no humanitarian corridors had been secured, and aid had only trickled in to replenish the few hospitals that are still functioning in the capital.

In East Darfur state, more than 30 infants have died in a single hospital since fighting began, including “six newborn babies who reportedly died in one week alone due to problems including lack of oxygen amid electricity blackouts”, according to the World Health Organization.

Since April 15, at least 1,800 people have been killed, with more than a million others displaced within Sudan and nearly 350,000 fleeing to other countries. Sudan’s neighboring states — many already facing economic crises or mired in instability — fear regional spillover and have pleaded for aid from the UN, itself reporting severe financing gaps.

‘Civil war’
The UN sounded the alarm again Monday, saying Sudan has become one of the highest alert areas for food insecurity, requiring “urgent” action from the international community. Aid agencies have also warned that with the rainy season approaching in June, parts of the country will become inaccessible, while the risk of cholera, malaria and water-born diseases will rise.

Sudan’s already fragile health sector faces compounded challenges, with three quarters of hospitals in combat zones out of service, according to the doctors’ union. Even health facilities in areas largely untouched by fighting and looting are unable to replenish supplies as they scramble to serve an influx



KHARTOUM: Destroyed vehicles are pictured outside the burnt-down headquarters of Sudan’s Central Bureau of Statistics, on Al-Sittin (sixty) road in the south of Khartoum. – AFP

of those displaced by the war. Both the army and the RSF have said they are willing to discuss extending the ceasefire, which US and Saudi mediators called for. But Riyadh and Washington warn that “both parties are posturing for further escalation”.

The governor of Darfur — a former rebel leader allied with the military — on Sunday called on civilians to take up arms. This came after calls from the army for reservists and pensioners to arm themselves, while

tribes in the country’s east earlier demanded to be given weapons. The Umma party, one of Sudan’s main civilian groups, cautioned “against calls to arm citizens under the pretext of protecting themselves”, which it said were “attempts to drag the country into civil war”. Even with a potential extension of the truce, the UN warned there is a new latent danger amid “growing reports of unexploded ordnances” in the capital and other densely-populated areas. – AFP

Trial begins for journalists on Amini’s death
TEHRAN: Iran on Monday held the first trial session for one of the two detained female journalists who reported on Mahsa Amini’s death in custody last year, her lawyer said. Months of nationwide protests erupted after Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurd, died on September 16 following her arrest for allegedly violating the country’s strict dress code for women.
The journalists, Niloufar Hamed, 30, and Elahheh Mohammadi, 36, could face the death penalty after they were detained for covering Amini’s death and its aftermath. The pair are being tried separately by the revolutionary courts behind closed doors in Tehran.
Mohammadi’s trial began on Monday and Hamed’s is scheduled to start the following day, according to judiciary spokesman Massoud Setayeshi.
Mohammadi’s lawyer, Shahab Mirlohi, described the session as “good and positive”, telling AFP that the next court date would be confirmed later. Mohammadi, a journalist at reformist publication Ham Miham, was taken into custody on September 29 after she travelled to Amini’s hometown of Saeq in Kurdistan province to report on her funeral ceremony which turned into a protest. — AFP

AI political fakery sparks fears for US race
WASHINGTON: A fake image of Donald Trump’s arrest. A dystopian video of a dark future in the event of Joe Biden’s reelection. An audio deepfake of both men slinging insults. Fast-evolving AI technology could turbocharge misinformation in US political campaigns, observers say. The 2024 presidential race is expected to be the first American election that will see the widespread use of advanced tools powered by artificial intelligence that have increasingly blurred the boundaries between fact and fiction.
Campaigns on both sides of the political divide are likely to harness this technology — which is cheap, easily accessible and whose advances have vastly outpaced regulatory responses — for voter outreach and to churn out fundraising newsletters within seconds. But technologists also warn of bad actors exploiting AI to sow chaos at a moment when the political climate is already hyperpolarized in the United States and many voters dispute verified facts including that Trump lost the 2020 election.
In a sobering bellwether of what may become widespread ahead of the 2024 race, fake images of Trump being hauled away by New York police officers — created by an AI art generator — went viral in March. Last month, in response to Biden’s announcement that he will run for reelection in 2024, the Republican National Committee almost instantly released a video made of AI-produced images of a dystopian future if he wins.

It showed photo-realistic images of panic on Wall Street, China invading Taiwan, immigrants overrunning border agents, and a military takeover of San Francisco amid dire crime. And earlier this year, a lifelike but utterly fake AI audio of Biden and Trump — expected to square off next year in a rematch of the 2020 election — hurling insults at each other made the rounds on TikTok.
“The impact of AI will reflect the values of those using it — bad actors in particular have new tools to supercharge their efforts to fuel hate and suspicion, or to falsify images, sound, or video in an effort to bamboozle the press and public,” Joe Rospars, founder of left-leaning political consultancy Blue State, told AFP. “Combating those efforts will require vigilance by the media and tech companies, and by voters themselves,” added Rospars.
‘AI lies’
The efficiency of AI is obvious, no matter a user’s intentions. When AFP directed ChatGPT to create a campaign newsletter in favor of Trump, feeding it the former president’s false statements debunked by US fact-checkers, it produced — within seconds — a slick campaign document with those falsehoods.
When AFP further prompted the chatbot to make the newsletter “angrier,” it regurgitated those falsehoods in a more apocalyptic tone. “The current level of AI lies a lot,” Dan Woods, the former chief technology officer for Biden’s 2020 campaign, told AFP.
“If our foreign adversaries just need to convince an already hallucinating robot to spread misinformation, well then we should be prepared for a much bigger misinformation campaign than we saw in 2016.”
At the same time, AI advancements will become a “game changing” tool for understanding voters, said Vance Reavie, chief executive of Junction AI. “There

is a large portion of the population who simply don’t vote at all or vote irregularly,” Reavie told AFP.
“With AI we can learn about what these potential voters care about and why at a very granular level, and from this we can understand how to engage them and what policies will motivate them.”
‘Deny reality’
Campaign staff previously spent hours on voter outreach with speech-writing and prepping talking points, tweets and questionnaires, but AI has made the same job possible within a fraction of that time.
“Creating content is time-consuming and costly, now imagine being able to do 10 times as much with no extra staff effort,” said Reavie. “There will also be a lot of generated content that will be false... It will be fast and easy to flood channels with content and difficult for the average person to know otherwise.”
The ability of Americans to agree on objective truths will also be challenged, with a huge swath of the US population already deeply distrustful of establishment media. “The concern is that as it becomes easier to manipulate media, it will become easier to deny reality,” Hany Farid, a professor at the UC Berkeley School of Information, told AFP. “If, for example, a presidential candidate says something inappropriate or illegal, he or she can simply claim the recording is fake. This is particularly dangerous.” Betsy Hoover, a partner at Higher Ground Labs told AFP her company was developing an AI project called “Quiller” designed to write, send and evaluate the effectiveness of fundraising emails. “Bad actors will use whatever tools at their disposal to accomplish their goals — and AI is no exception,” Hoover, the former digital director for Barack Obama’s 2012 campaign, told AFP. “But I don’t think we can let this fear keep us from using AI to our advantage.” – AFP

Expats struggle to obtain driving...

Continued from Page 1
Another college student said obtaining a Kuwait driving license can be frustrating due to the ambiguity and lack of transparency in the regulations and procedures. “Expats who study at university used to be granted a driving license until they graduated, but recently, the rule was changed,” he said.
Another student said that an expat has to have a certain job title such as doctor, engineer or businessperson to obtain a driving license, which means this option is not available for everyone. He said he goes to university by taxi, which is very expensive for him, as it costs him around KD 3 daily. “I hope to get a driving license when I graduate so I can go to work and save money and time,” he said.
In 2022, more than 10,000 expatriates were informed about the cancellation of their driving licenses after they were deemed to have failed to meet the requirements for obtaining a driving license. Like many other countries in the world, Kuwait experiences traffic congestion during peak hours due to several reasons, which has led to continuous cancellations and placing a “block” on thousands of licenses of expats. Hassan Adli, 29, whose license was revoked after he changed his job title, said: “Life is not fair. You leave your old job for a reason and are forced to get another one that is not as good as the old one just to feed your family, then you lose your driving license. No good salary, no driving license and extra

expenses on taxis.” Adli noted that in other countries, when they think about dealing with traffic jams, they do not consider the possibility of reducing the number of drivers as much as look for radical solutions, including improving roads, constructing bridges and tunnels and improving public transport. “The withdrawal of licenses is another hasty decision taken without a study of its dimensions and the resulting negative effects. We are tired of these decisions,” he said.
“Obtaining a driving license in Kuwait is extremely difficult. The list of requirements is very hard for expats to meet. Some people are not allowed to hold a driving license despite drawing a salary of KD 1,000 monthly because of their job title, such as being a hairdresser. Others may have a degree and a job, but have lived in Kuwait for less than two years or their salary is less than KD 600,” said an expat, who like many interviewed for this story, preferred to remain anonymous.
A young expat woman told Kuwait Times she does not have a driving license because expats need to follow cumbersome procedures to get one. She said due to not having a driving license, she faces transportation struggles not only with regards to costs, but also in terms of safety and security.
Citizen Huda Al-Saleh, 26, empathized with the plight of expats. “I lived outside Kuwait to study, and I was wasting time and money on transportation and taxis and was always exhausted. When I decided to obtain a license, the procedures were difficult, because I had a study visa, but when I got it, I felt a lot of relief. So I feel the suffering of expats who are struggling to get a driving license. A driving license is a right for everyone,” she said.

multiple and concurrent hazards”. In May, the United Nations warned it is near-certain that 2023-2027 will be the warmest five-year period ever recorded, as greenhouse gases and El Nino combine to send temperatures soaring.
There is a two-thirds chance that at least one of the next five years will see global temperatures exceed the more ambitious target set out in the Paris accords on limiting climate change, the UN’s World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said. The 2015 Paris Agreement saw countries agree to cap global warming at “well below” two degrees Celsius above average levels measured between 1850 and 1900 -- and 1.5C if possible. The global mean temperature in 2022 was 1.15C above the 1850-1900 average. — AFP

Erdogan calls for unity; Amir sends...

Continued from Page 1
HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent Sunday a cable to Erdogan to congratulate him on his re-election and winning a third term in office. HH the Amir wished Erdogan success and everlasting well-being as well as further development and prosperity to the two friendly countries. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah also sent congratulatory cables to Erdogan.
“God granted our wishes. Erdogan is a great leader, he has brought Turkey a long way,” Burak Durmus, 24, said in Istanbul’s conservative stronghold of Uskudar. Bugra Iyimaya, a 28-year-old academic, said the opposition would “resist and fight until the end” after Erdogan won Turkey’s first run-off. “Our elders taught us to struggle... we will not lose or give up on this country with one election,” he told AFP.
International observers led by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) said media bias and restrictions to freedom of expression created “an unlevel playing field” and “an unjustified advantage” for Erdogan. Some opposition supporters faced intimidation and harassment while both sides used “inflammatory

and discriminatory language” by accusing each other of collaborating with “terrorist organizations”, exacerbating tensions, they added.
Having harnessed a coalition of nationalist, conservative and religious voters, Erdogan “will double down on his brand of populist policies... political polarization is here to stay”, said Emre Peker of the Eurasia Group consultancy. Relieving Turks of the country’s worst economic crisis since the 1990s is an urgent priority. Inflation is running at more than 40 percent, partly exacerbated by Erdogan’s unorthodox policy of cutting interest rates to try to cool spiraling prices.
Analysts say Erdogan’s lavish campaign spending pledges and unwavering attachment to lower interest rates will further strain banks’ currency reserves and the lira, which edged down against the dollar on Monday. Hopes for “an abandonment of the crazy, unconventional economic model and a return to the favor of international investors are finally dashed”, said Bartosz Sawicki, market analyst at Conotoxia fintech.
“The current set-up is just not sustainable,” added Timothy Ash of BlueBay Asset Management, pointing to the tens of billions of dollars the central bank has blown to prop up the lira. If Erdogan refuses to perform a U-turn on interest rates and abandon the lira, “it could get ugly”, he warned. A colossal reconstruction effort in Turkey’s south-east is still at an early stage after February’s earthquake that killed more than 50,000 people and destroyed infrastructure and livelihoods. Official figures estimated the damage at more than \$100 billion. — AFP

Iran open to resuming ties...

Continued from Page 1
The sultan’s trip comes just days after a prisoner swap between Iran and Belgium that was facilitated by Oman, a long-time mediator between Iran and the West.
Teheran freed Belgian aid worker Olivier Vande-castele after almost 15 months in custody in exchange for diplomat Assadollah Assadi, who was held in Belgium over accusations of involvement in a 2018 plot to bomb an Iranian opposition rally outside Paris. The sultan on Sunday met Iran’s President Ebrahim Raisi who said bilateral relations could improve in areas

including industry and “defense and security affairs”, the presidency’s website said.
“Teheran and Muscat have common views on regional cooperation, strengthening and stabilizing the security, peace and prosperity of the nations of the region,” Raisi was quoted as saying. Four memorandums of understanding and agreements on promoting investment were signed during the sultan’s two-day visit that came a year after Raisi visited Muscat, according to Iranian and Omani official media.
Oman has close ties with Iran and also played a mediating role between Teheran and the United States in the build-up to a nuclear deal Iran and world powers reached in 2015. The last visit by an Omani sultan to Iran was in 2013 when Qaboos bin Said Al Said visited Teheran during the presidency of Hassan Rouhani, who was in office when the 2015 nuclear deal was sealed in Vienna. – AFP

Shanghai bakes in hottest May...

Continued from Page 1
In Bangladesh, Dhaka suffered its hottest day in almost 60 years. The city of Tak in Thailand recorded its highest-ever temperature of 45.4C, while Sainyabuli province in Laos hit 42.9C (109F), an all-time national temperature record, the study by the World Weather Attribution group said.
A recent report from the United Nation’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned that “every increment of global warming will intensify

International

No glory for bullies: South Korea's school violence epidemic

‘There was only one thing I wished for, I wished someone could help me’

BUSAN: Pins hidden in her shoes, head forced down a toilet, kicked in the stomach: Korean hairdresser Pyo Ye-rim suffered a litany of abuse from school bullies, but now she's speaking out. The 26-year-old is part of a phenomenon sweeping South Korea known as “Hakpok #MeToo”, where people who were bullied publicly name and shame the perpetrators of school violence — “hakpok” in Korean — decades after the alleged crimes.

Made famous globally by Netflix's gory revenge series “The Glory”, the movement has ensnared everyone from K-pop stars to baseball players, and accusations — often anonymous — can be career-ending, with widespread public sympathy for victims. As a schoolgirl, Pyo says she suffered alone. Teachers told her “to be friendlier” to her bullies and the abuse went unchecked for years, eventually forcing her to give up her dreams of higher education and quit school for vocational training.

“There was only one thing I wished for. I wished someone could help me,” she told AFP, adding that no one came to her aid and eventually she “escaped and struggled to survive on my own.” In education-obsessed South Korea, where children can spend up to 16 hours a day studying at schools and in private academies, bullying is widespread, experts say, despite official efforts to stamp it out.

The problem, activists say, is that bullying often goes unpunished in real-time at schools, and the statute of limitations on such crimes makes it hard for victims to bring charges years later.

Pyo said she suffered from years of insomnia and depression as a result of her treatment at school, before deciding to stop hiding and go public with her accusations — resulting in one of her bullies being

fired from their job. But Pyo is lobbying for real legal change, demanding South Korea suspend the statute of limitations affecting school violence and change the defamation law to better protect victims. Hakpok #MeToo — Netflix's “The Glory” — which follows a woman's meticulously planned revenge scheme after suffering years of brutal abuse from high school bullies — helped amplify South Korea's national discussion about bullying. In an ironic sign of how pervasive the issue is, after the show became a hit, the director Ahn Gil-ho was himself accused of teenage bullying and forced to apologize. Even South Korea's presidential office was recently forced to withdraw a top police appointment after it emerged the candidate's son had bullied classmates, sparking public backlash.

School violence is endemic in South Korean schools, Noh Yoon-ho, a Seoul-based attorney who specializes in bullying cases told AFP, adding it is a “collective trauma” the country needs to process.

“Any South Korean who has gone to school has been a victim or witnessed other students being bullied and not helped — we all have memories of this,” Noh said. The “Hakpok #MeToo” movement has helped many victims to shed the shame of their experience, and realize they were not bullied “because they were lacking something”, she added. But the problem is that there is still no system in place at school level where victims can “approach without hesitation for an immediate and adequate response when incidents occur”, Jihoon Kim, a criminology professor who has researched bullying in South Korea, told AFP.

Punish the bullies?

Pyo and other victims say South Korea should re-



SEOUL: Picture shows Noh Yoon-ho, a Seoul-based attorney who specializes in bullying cases, speaking during an interview with AFP at her office in Seoul. – AFP

move the statute of limitations on school violence so bullies can be held accountable even decades later. But there are huge practical issues with legally punishing adults for crimes committed as a juvenile, Noh said, which could give people lasting criminal records for teenage misdeeds.

Pyo is also calling for an overhaul of South Korea's criminal defamation laws, which currently allow bullies to sue their accusers for damages and win — even if their victims are telling the truth. Most accusations are anonymous but have resulted in bullies being fired or, in the case of one of South Korea's most successful baseball players, excluded from the national team.

the target of sporadic violence, were regularly targeted during the three-decade-long conflict over British rule, which claimed more than 3,000 lives and ended in 1998.

‘Conspiracy’

In court a Police Service Northern Ireland (PSNI) chief detective outlined evidence including the discovery of residue from cartridges found on items, including a hat, allegedly associated with the accused. The officer also said police believe there was a “wide-ranging conspiracy” behind the attack and a “personal element”, as Caldwell had been “intimately involved” in investigations into several of the defendants. He characterized a grudge against the prominent officer, who was aware of many threats to his life over the years, as a “golden thread” linking many of the accused. In March, the UK government raised the Northern Ireland terror threat level in response to Caldwell's shooting, citing a continuing threat of political violence. Tensions have run high in Northern Ireland since the UK's departure from the European Union, with the province's largest pro-UK party collapsing its power-sharing institutions over post-Brexit trading rules. The New IRA, a dissident republican splinter group, has been linked to two attacks in recent years, including the planting of a bomb under a police-woman's car in April 2021. The group also admitted responsibility for the death of Lyra McKee, a journalist killed in April 2019 while covering clashes in the city of Londonderry, which is known to nationalists who want a united Ireland as Derry. – AFP



Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

his rhetoric on the subject, last week declaring the Voice would “re-racialize our nation”. “It will have an Orwellian effect where all Australians are equal, but some Australians are more equal than others,” he said. On Monday, Dutton accused Voice supporters of using race to attack the “no” side. “The prime minister out there name-calling people and others suggesting that people are racist because they don't support the Voice — it's completely unacceptable,” he said. By way of response, Albanese hit out Monday at “galling” opposition “scare campaigns” that, he said, underestimated Australians' ability to rise above division. Australians would not be lured by “ludicrous invitations to jump at our own shadows”, the prime minister said.

“Australians have a healthy scepticism of doom-sayers, a scepticism kept in good health by memories of all the predictions offered by the Chicken Littles of the past,” he said. Australia's race discrimination commissioner, Chin Tan, urged politicians to avoid a “racial bun fight”, in an interview published Monday in the Nine media group's newspapers.

The political battle over Indigenous recognition is already leaving a mark on the community. One of Australia's top television journalists, Stan Grant, quit his current affairs show with national broadcaster ABC this month citing “relentless” racial attacks he faced as an Indigenous person in the spotlight.

But the stakes are now higher, he said in a departure announcement. “There is a referendum on an Indigenous Voice to Parliament and I am not alone in feeling judged. This is an Australian judgement on us. Such is politics,” Grant wrote. “But racism is a crime. Racism is violence. And I have had enough.” The vote is expected to take place in the last three months of the year. – AFP

Seven charged with N Ireland police shooting in court

BELFAST: Seven men charged with the attempted murder of a senior off-duty police officer earlier this year appeared in a Northern Ireland court on Monday where they were remanded in custody. Detective Chief Inspector John Caldwell was shot several times as he left a sports complex in Omagh, some 70 miles (112 kilometres) west of Belfast, with his son in February. The high-profile officer had been coaching a youth football group at the time of the attack, which was later claimed by dissident republicans. The men appeared before Dungannon Magistrates' Court via videolink charged with attempted murder and included a father and two sons, according to Irish broadcaster RTE.

Three of the men face additional terror charges, while two others have been charged with membership of the IRA, a proscribed paramilitary group. District judge Steven Keown refused three bail requests, saying the individuals posed risk of further offending and potential interference with the police investigation. All seven are next due to appear in court in Omagh by videolink on June 27. Caldwell was released from hospital in April following the shooting, which recalled some of the worst violence in the period of sectarian unrest known as “The Troubles”. Police, who remain

Australia PM condemns fear tactics in Indigenous vote

SYDNEY: Australia's prime minister took a swipe Monday at conservative “doomsayers” using fear tactics ahead of a referendum to give Indigenous people a voice on laws that affect them. Debate on the so-called Voice has turned increasingly acrimonious, with supporters decrying deliberate disinformation and opponents saying it risks opening a racial divide.

If passed, Indigenous Australians — whose ancestors have lived on the continent for at least 60,000 years — would have a constitutionally enshrined right to be consulted by the government on laws that impact their community. More than 200 years since British colonization and the ensuing persecution of Indigenous people, they remain greatly disadvantaged with higher incarceration and jobless rates, and a life expectancy about eight years shorter than that of other Australians.

In a keynote speech in Adelaide on Monday, Prime Minister Albanese said Australian voters face a “profound choice” when they go to the polls sometime later this year. A yes vote, he said, would allow Australians to proclaim to themselves, and to the world, “we are a mature nation coming to terms with our history, assured of our values, and shaping our own destiny.”

It will be, he said, a “once in a lifetime opportunity” to change the country for the better. “We sometimes speak of ourselves as a young nation, but the truth is we are one of the world's oldest democracies. “Our continent is home to the world's oldest continuing culture, which we are at last coming to recognize as the great source of pride that it must be.”

‘Orwellian effect’

The “yes” vote is still ahead in a two-way fight, polls show, despite indications of an erosion in support since the conservative opposition decided to campaign for a “no”. An Essential Research survey published mid-May gave put support for the Voice at 59-41 percent.

Australia's conservative opposition Liberal Party leader Peter Dutton has hardened his opposition and



Japanese PM Fumio Kishida

North Korea informs Japan of upcoming ‘satellite launch’

TOKYO: North Korea has informed Japan that it is preparing to launch a satellite as early as this week, Tokyo announced Monday but warned it may actually be a sanctions-defying ballistic missile test.

North Korea informed Japan that it will launch a rocket between May 31 and June 11, identifying waters near the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea and to the east of Luzon Island in the Philippines as warning areas, a Japanese coast guard spokesman told AFP.

Such zones are usually designated for falling debris or rocket stages. Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told officials to gather intelligence “on North Korea's notification about the launch of a ballistic missile that it describes as a satellite”, his office said in a tweet. “Even if it's described as a satellite, a launch using ballistic missile technology would be a violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions” and would threaten people's safety, Kishida told reporters.

In 2012 and 2016, Pyongyang tested ballistic missiles that it called satellite launches. Both flew over Japan's southern Okinawa region. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un this month inspected the country's first military spy satellite as it was prepared for launch, and gave the green light for its “future action plan”. In 2021, Kim had identified the development of such satellites as a key defence project for the North Korean military. Because long-range rockets and space launchers share the same technology, analysts say developing the ability to put a satellite in orbit would provide Pyongyang with cover for testing banned intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).

Japan's defence ministry issued an order to shoot down any ballistic missile confirmed to be on course to fall into its territory. South Korea's foreign ministry condemned the launch plan, but officials did not confirm to AFP if Seoul had been directly notified too.

“North Korea's so-called ‘satellite launch’ is a serious violation of UN Security Council resolutions banning all launches using ballistic missile technology, and is a clearly illegal act that cannot be justified under any pretext,” the ministry said. South Korea and Japan have been working to mend long-frayed ties, including with greater cooperation on North Korea's military threats.

Meanwhile, Kishida on Monday reiterated that Tokyo is open to talks with Pyongyang. North Korean state media on Monday published a statement from the country's vice-minister of foreign affairs, appearing to endorse a conciliatory approach to relations with Japan — an unusual stance from Pyongyang. If Japan avoids “being shackled by the past, and seeks a way out for improving the relations, there is no reason for the DPRK and Japan not to meet”, said the statement from Pak Sang Gil, using the initials of North Korea's official name.

Pak said, however, that Japan needs to move on from sticking points such as the “abduction issue” for ties to improve. Japan suspects dozens of people who are still missing were abducted by North Korean agents in the 1970s and 1980s to train spies in the Japanese language and culture. – AFP

Despite widespread public support for victims, some have questioned the fairness of such punishments. It would be far better to work with schools — where such crimes have typically been ignored — to ensure that bullying is addressed as it happens, experts say.

Unless this is done, the public naming and shaming will continue. “It's gotten this bad because no victims have done it before now,” said Pyo, adding that unless the defamation law changes, bullies can still threaten victims with lawsuits. “This is why no one is able to talk,” except anonymously, she said. “If this law disappears, countless victims will start speaking out.” – AFP

News in Brief

Japan PM's son dismissed

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Monday he will remove his son from the position of his secretary due to “inappropriate behavior” at the official residence. The decision comes after a magazine reported last week that Shotaro Kishida had invited relatives to the official residence for a party last year, with photos of some pretending to hold a press conference and one lying down on red-carpeted stairs. “His behavior last year at the public space was inappropriate for a political secretary, and we have decided to replace him,” Kishida told reporters. Shotaro will resign on June 1, he added. Kishida had reprimanded his 32-year-old son, but criticism erupted from opposition parties, which called for his removal. – AFP

Migrant group stuck at border

WARSAW: A group of migrants, including women and children, are stuck at the border with Belarus, Poland's border guard said Monday as activists accused the officers of not letting migrants plead for asylum. The group has been forced to camp for four days in the forest near Bialowieza, at the border fence erected by the nationalist government in Warsaw to prevent irregular crossings. In a statement sent to AFP, the border guard said the group of “around 20-30 people” was “outside the jurisdiction” of Poland. “Therefore any administrative activities, including the possible acceptance of an application for international protection, if the intention of these people is to obtain protection in Poland, is not possible,” it added. According to the activists, the group at the border include people from Syria, Iraq, and Congo, with 11 children. – AFP

Thirteen in court over 2019 storming of HK legislature

HONG KONG: A Hong Kong court on Monday began the trial of 13 people over the storming and ransacking of the city's legislature in 2019, which was an unprecedented challenge to the Beijing-backed government.

It was the most violent episode in the initial phase of huge democracy protests that shook Hong Kong that year, with millions marching and staging sit-ins for weeks. Hundreds of protesters broke into the legislature on the night of July 1, 2019 — the 22nd anniversary of Hong Kong's handover from Britain to China — smashing windows and spraying graffiti.

The 13 defendants who went on trial on Monday over the episode were charged with rioting, an offence punishable by up to 10 years in jail. Seven pleaded guilty to that charge when proceedings began at a Hong Kong district court on Monday. The six who pleaded not guilty for rioting are facing additional charges of unlawful entry to the legislature and “criminal damage”, which carry a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison. Their trial is expected to run for 44 days.

“I have never regretted my fight for freedom, justice and democracy... my thoughts will remain free when I am in jail,” Althea Suen, who pleaded guilty, wrote on Facebook as the trial began. Gregory Wong said he pleaded not guilty to the rioting charge because “I know how much I took part in and I am just telling the facts”. He added that he hoped the defendants who pleaded guilty and have been remanded would not lose heart despite the recent tough years. “We are still in this together,” Wong said. More than 10,000 people were arrested as authorities sought to snuff out the 2019 protests. — AFP

TUESDAY, MAY 30, 2023

Business

US debt deal faces tough sell in Congress to avoid default

Default would likely trigger recession - risking global meltdown



WASHINGTON: Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) (left) and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) talk to reporters outside the West Wing after meeting with US President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris about raising the debt limit. — AFP

WASHINGTON: A day after securing a tentative deal to prevent a cataclysmic US debt default, Republican and Democrat leaders began the hard task of winning over skeptics in both their parties in order to shepherd the legislation through Congress before the government runs out of money. The agreement announced by President Joe Biden and Republican leader Kevin McCarthy after weeks of crisis talks offers a path back from the default precipice, but it is far from certain that the compromises it contains can garner the support it requires from both sides of the aisle.

And all the while the clock is still ticking down to the June 5 “X-date” when the Treasury estimates the government will start to run out of cash to pay its bills and debts. A default would likely have catastrophic consequences, triggering a US recession and risking a global economic meltdown. The basic framework of the deal suspends the federal debt ceiling, which is currently \$31.4 trillion, for two years - enough to get past the next presidential election in 2024 and allow the government to keep borrowing money and remain solvent. In return, the Republicans secured some limits on federal spending over the same period.

Unhappy right, and left

Congressional opposition to the bill comes from an unlikely union of hard-right Republicans who wanted deeper spending cuts and progressive Democrats who wanted no reductions at all. McCarthy has called for a vote Wednesday in the House where his party’s wafer thin majority means passing the bill will require significant Democrat

backing to balance out Republican dissent.

The speaker was on Fox News Sunday in the morning, arguing that the spending limits were a significant victory and insisting that 95 percent of House Republicans were “very excited.” “Maybe it doesn’t do everything for everyone, but this is a step in the right direction no one thought we would be at today,” McCarthy said. But the strident tone of the Republican opposition was set by Representative Dan Bishop - a member of the ultra-conservative House Freedom Caucus - who tweeted a vomit emoji and slammed McCarthy for securing “almost zippo.”

‘Scorched Earth’

Nicholas Creel, a political analyst and business law professor at Georgia College and State University said the deal was “ultimately likely” to pass through Congress, but he warned that “Freedom Caucus Republicans have the potential to play spoiler if they decide to go scorched Earth on McCarthy.” McCarthy and Biden were scheduled to speak Sunday to finalize the deal, after which a text of the bill will be released and party whips will go into overdrive to ensure it has enough votes.

The tentative agreement represents a climb down of sorts by both sides. Biden had initially refused to negotiate over spending issues as a condition for raising the debt ceiling, accusing the Republicans of taking the economy hostage. And the big cuts that Republicans wanted are not there, although non-defense spending will remain effectively flat next year, and only rise nominally in 2025.

Biden said “the agreement represents a compromise, which means not everyone gets what they want. That’s the responsibility of governing.” “Overall, the deal is probably best viewed as a win for Biden and Democrats given that it contains fairly modest spending cuts and would prevent another debt ceiling showdown or a government shutdown during the remainder of Biden’s presidency,” Creel said. “Nobody has enough power to get too much of what they want right now, so a compromise like this that makes everyone a little unhappy is probably the best anyone could have hoped for,” he added.

Speed of the essence

The countdown to the June 5 “X-date” means the legislation will still have to clear Congress much more quickly than the normal timetable for even the most uncontroversial bills. McCarthy is hoping to bring the narrow House majority of 222 Republicans with him, but opposition will come from 35 far-right lawmakers who told him to “hold the line” for more sweeping spending cuts.

That means a large number of Democrats will have to be persuaded to vote with a reduced number of Republicans - something that rarely happens on big bills. If a default still occurs, the government would not miss loan repayments until mid-June but in the meantime it would likely have to halt \$25 billion in social security checks and federal salaries. The battle has been monitored closely by the major ratings agencies, with Morningstar and Fitch both warning that they could opt for a downgrade, even if the crisis is averted. — AFP

US debt ceiling deal: The key takeaways

NEW YORK: President Joe Biden and House Republicans have reached a deal to raise the government’s debt ceiling and avert a devastating default. Here, AFP details the key takeaways from the agreement, which still needs to be approved by a divided Congress in a vote on Wednesday.

Did either side win?

After days of long, difficult talks, the deal allows both sides to claim a victory of sorts. Biden called it a “compromise” while Republican House speaker Kevin McCarthy described it as “worthy of the American people.” The 99-page text was released Sunday night and the agreement will be subject to scrutiny and debate in the coming days. Some demands from both camps were not accepted, such as the elimination of certain tax loopholes requested by Democrats, and the repeal of clean energy tax credits sought by Republicans.

The crux of it

Formally known as the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023, the bill provides for an increase to the debt ceiling of \$31.4 trillion for two years, meaning Biden will crucially not need to negotiate it again before the November 2024 presidential election. The deal also places limited curbs on federal spending that will please some Republicans, but it does not deliver the big cuts that right-wingers wanted and which progressive Democrats would have balked at.

Spending

The deal holds nonmilitary spending roughly flat for the 2024 fiscal year from this year. It also limits the increase by one percent for 2025, according to the proposed bill. The agreement preserves plans by the Biden administration to increase spending for the military and veterans in line with inflation as well.

IRS clawback

The deal also pares back funds allocated for the expansion of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Last year, Congress approved \$80 billion for the IRS to boost tax enforcement. The debt ceiling agreement pulls back \$10 billion to spend in other areas.

Unspent COVID money

The deal would also take back some funding that Congress allocated for the coronavirus pandemic but did not spend. A statement from McCarthy’s office said the deal would rescind “billions in unspent Covid funds” but offered no further specificity. No changes will be made to Medicaid, the government’s health insurance program for the most disadvantaged Americans.

Work requirements

The deal establishes work requirements for people who are receiving federal food assistance or on family welfare, in a victory for the Republican side. It is set to raise the age at which childless adults will be required to work to receive food stamps from 49 to 54. As a concession to Democrats, the deal relaxes the requirements for veterans and the homeless. — AFP

In Sudan capital, risking death in search of water

KHARTOUM: Fighting in Sudan has left hundreds of thousands of Khartoum residents without running water, with some forced to risk their lives and seek it out during brief lulls in violence. After nearly six weeks of street battles between forces loyal to rival generals and with temperatures regularly topping 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit), many inhabitants of the capital’s northern suburbs are in desperate need of drinking water.

On April 15, when fighting broke out between Sudan’s army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), the station supplying several districts of North Khartoum with running water was damaged. Since then, about 300,000 of its inhabitants have not seen a drop of water run from their taps. Some have reopened wells or used pots to draw water from the Nile River.

“At the start of the war, we took water from the wells of the factories in the industrial zone, but after a week, the paramilitaries captured it,” resident Adel Mohammed told AFP. As clashes engulfed the area and battles were taking place in residential buildings and hospitals, Mohammed had to wait days before being able to venture out and fetch water. Now, he and his neighbors wait for the clashes to momentarily subside to take an assortment of pots, basins and jugs to the banks of the Nile, which winds through Khartoum’s suburbs.

Together, they fill a van and return to distribute a few liters each to families remaining in the neighborhood. But many others have left. “It was the lack of water and not the bombardments and the fighting that forced me to abandon my house,” said Rashed



KHARTOUM: People fill barrels with water in southern Khartoum amid water shortages caused by ongoing battles between the forces of two rival Sudanese generals. — AFP

Hussein, who fled with his family to Madani, some 200 kilometers south of Khartoum. Hussein, one of more than a million Sudanese displaced during the conflict, said he could not bear seeing his children without clean water to drink or shower.

Even before the war, 17.3 million Sudanese lacked access to safe drinking water, according to the United Nations children’s agency UNICEF. Waterborne diseases and poor hygiene are leading causes of death in children under five, the agency said.

Salah Mohammed, another resident of North Khartoum, stayed despite the fighting and found access to water by using a well at a nearby hospital, which treated its water for patients on dialysis. But after a week RSF paramilitaries took over the hospital, and he was no longer able to access the facility. Rashida Al-Tijani lives near another hospital, where she is able to find water. She waits “for the shooting to stop to go to the hospital... as quickly as possible”, she said, taking as much water as she can for her family.

“I haven’t been able to wash a single item of clothing since the start of the war.” Daily life and the economy have ground to a standstill since the conflict erupted, depleting Sudan’s already inadequate infrastructure and public services. Civil servants are on indefinite leave and fighters occupy hospitals, factories and public buildings. Informal networks of neighborhood groups, known as resistance committees, have mobilized to set up field hospitals and food distribution stations, and deliver water.

These committees had organized before the war to oppose the military’s grip on political life. “Since the beginning of the war, we have been providing the inhabitants with water,” said one committee member, requesting anonymity for fear of repercussions from the army or RSF. On one journey to find water, “our friend Yassine was killed by a bullet”, he said. Even in death, the lack of water pervaded. “We were forced to bury him without being able to wash his body,” the committee member said. — AFP

Business

Plastic pollution: Treaty talks get into nitty-gritty

Global plastics pollution ‘time bomb,’ Macron warns

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday warned that global plastics pollution was a “time bomb”, as diplomats began five days of talks in Paris to make progress on a treaty to end plastic waste. Representatives of 175 nations with divergent ambitions met at the UNESCO headquarters with the aim of making progress towards reaching, by next year, a historic agreement covering the entire plastics life cycle.

As the talks opened, the head of the negotiations Gustavo Meza-Cuadra Velazquez said the challenge was “immense, as we are all aware here, but it is not insurmountable.” “The world’s eyes are on us,” he said. Macron urged participating nations to put an end to today’s “globalized and unsustainable” production model, where richer countries export plastic waste to poorer ones. “Plastic pollution is a time-bomb and at the same time already a scourge today,” he said in a video message, adding that the fossil-fuel based material posed a risk to global warming goals, as well as biodiversity and human health.

He added that the first priorities of the negotiations should be to reduce production of plastics and to ban “as soon as possible” the most polluting products like single use plastics. The stakes are high, given that annual plastics production has more than doubled in 20 years to 460 million tons, and is on track to triple within four decades. Two-thirds of this output is discarded after being used once or a few times, and winds up as waste. More than a fifth is dumped or burned illegally, and less than 10 percent is recycled.

The head of the UN Environment Program Inger Andersen told the delegates that a throwaway plastic culture was “gushing pollution galore, choking our ecosystems, warming the climate, damaging our health” and that the most vulnerable were the hardest hit. “Only elimination, reduction of, a full lifecycle

approach, transparency and a just transition, only those can bring success because the truth is that we cannot recycle our way out of this mess,” she told delegates to loud applause.

‘More plastic than fish’

In February 2022, nations agreed in principle on the need for a legally binding UN treaty to end plastic pollution around the world, setting an ambitious 2024 deadline. The Paris meeting, which runs to June 2, is the second of five sessions in the process. Policy actions to be debated during the talks include a global ban on single-use plastic items, “polluter pays” schemes, and a tax on new plastic production. Environmental groups are encouraged that global plastics pollution is finally being tackled, but are concerned the treaty may not include targets to reduce overall plastic production.

“There is a consensus on the issues at stake and the will to act”, Diane Beaumenay-Joannet, an advocate at the Surfrider Foundation, told AFP. Environmentalists have also raised concerns about the influence of industry lobbying on the talks. Plastics are everywhere: packaging, clothing, construction materials, medical tools, even diapers. In nature, microplastics have been found in ice near the North Pole and inside fish navigating the oceans’ deepest, darkest recesses.

In humans, microscopic bits of plastic have been detected in blood, breast milk and placentas. Plastic also contributes to global warming: it accounted for 1.8 billion tons of greenhouse gases in 2019, 3.4 percent of global emissions, a figure that could more than double by 2060 according to the OECD. Host country France organized a ministerial summit on Saturday with 60 countries to kick-start the talks. “If we don’t act now, by 2050 there will be more plastic than fish in the oceans”, said French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna.



PARIS: Guests stand next to Canadian artist and activist Benjamin Von Wong’s 5-meter tall art installation the “Perpetual Plastic Machine” during its unveiling ceremony on the banks of the Seine River in Paris for the Global Plastics Treaty to stop runaway plastic and use. – AFP

Reluctance

Velazquez called on delegates to put aside differences to work towards an agreement that is fair “by essence, and effective by necessity”. There are already concerns about divisions among the countries. A so-called High Ambition Coalition of 50 nations led by Rwanda and Norway, includes the European Union, Canada, Chile and – as of a few days ago – Japan. But many countries are reluctant to aim for absolute cuts in production, insisting that recycling and better waste management is the answer.

Inflation accelerated

Meanwhile, US inflation measure most closely watched by the Federal Reserve accelerated in April, official figures showed, reversing a recent slowdown and raising the chance of another interest rate hike in June. Fed Chair Jerome Powell has said the US central bank is taking a “data-dependent approach” to its next decision, where it will mull if another rate hike is needed to bring inflation back down to its long-term target of two percent. The personal consumption expenditures (PCE) index rose 4.4 percent year-on-year in April, up from 4.2 percent a month earlier, the Commerce Department said in a statement. It was the first rise in the annual figure since January, and came as a result of sharp annual increases in prices for services, food and goods. Price rises also accelerated on a monthly basis, the Commerce Department said. Inflation excluding volatile food and energy prices also accelerated last month to 4.7 percent. Analysts have been closely watching speeches by members of the Fed’s rate-setting committee for clues on how they are interpreting the most recent economic data. Some members of the Federal Open Markets Committee (FOMC), including Powell, have suggested rates may have risen far enough to bring inflation down, while others, like Dallas Fed president Lorie Logan, have indicated their preference for another rate hike at the next meeting in June. Futures traders now see the most likely scenario being another interest-rate hike from the Fed on June 14, according to data from CME Group. — AFP

US manufactured goods orders rise

WASHINGTON: Orders of big-ticket manufactured items defied expectations to rise again in April, fueled by a sharp rise in orders for defense aircraft, according to US government data released. Manufactured durable goods rose by 1.1 percent in April from a month earlier to \$283.0 billion, the Commerce Department announced in a statement. April’s figure built on a revised monthly increase of 3.3 percent in March, and was far stronger than the median forecast of a 0.8 percent decline in a MarketWatch survey of economists.

The largest factor behind the surprise rise in durable goods orders was defense spending, with new orders of defense aircraft and parts increasing by almost a third from a month earlier. Orders for transportation equipment also increased, while those for nondefense aircraft and computers posted monthly declines. While the April data for durable goods orders was better than expected, downside risks remain going forward “given the hurdles companies are facing not only from higher borrowing costs, but also a further tightening in credit conditions going forward,” High Frequency Economics chief US economist Rubeeela Farooqi wrote in a note to clients.



DUNDEE: Jamell Harris loads raw casting heads to be manufactured at the Stellantis Dundee Engine Complex in Dundee, Michigan. – AFP

France in ‘very close talks’ over debt rating

PARIS: France is in “very close talks” with debt rating agency Standard and Poor’s, Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne said, after a downgrade from rival Fitch reignited government finance concerns in the EU’s second-largest economy. Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire had offered “detailed explanations to Standard and Poor’s of everything we’re doing to get our public finances under control” ahead of their rating decision in early June, Borne told Jewish community broadcaster Radio J.

Citing “relatively large fiscal deficits and only modest progress with fiscal consolidation,” Fitch last month downgraded France’s debt rating to AA-, several notches below the top AAA class awarded to countries including Germany and the Netherlands. Such ratings help determine borrowing conditions when governments go to financial markets to raise money.

France’s debt hit almost 112 percent of annual output by the end of last year, driven by a “whatever-it-takes” response to the coronavirus crisis and generous support to households and firms through the energy price crunch provoked by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.



NBK launches new ‘Plus Package’ with exceptional benefits

KUWAIT: Pursing its endeavors to offer customers a comprehensive and exceptional banking experience that suits their various needs and expectations, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has launched “Plus Package” which provides exceptional benefits and exclusive offers tailored to customers’ lifestyle and needs. This includes NBK Plus Debit Card and NBK KWT Visa Infinite Credit Card, the most popular credit card in the country.



Hisham Al-Nusif

Plus Customers can get up to KD 1,900 discount on Volkswagen cars, exclusive discount on talabat orders every Friday, 100% cashback on Netflix, global airport lounge access with a guest, 10% cashback on retail shopping, instant discounts, and NBK Rewards Points at 900+ partner outlets. The new Plus Package is for new and existing salaried customers having a monthly salary ranging from KD 800 to KD 1,499.

Commenting on this new launch, Hisham Al-Nusif, Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait said: “We always seek to provide are levant and superior banking service that resonates with our customers. Plus Package is intended to enhance customer delight in a meaningful and value driven experience.

“NBK is always working on introducing new banking products and services, based on its close monitoring of the ever-changing behavior and preferences of customers, coping with these changes to ensure offering them top-notch banking services,” he emphasized. “Plus is the only salary package in Kuwait creating value to the customer that encapsulates their lifestyle needs. In addition, first jobbers can begin their career journey with NBK as a preferred banking partner,” he remarked.

NBK Cards are globally accepted at millions of POS in-store and online, offering cardholders instant discounts. It also offers cardholders utmost convenience and security wherever they are around the world, as they can easily monitor their bank accounts and manage their funds through NBK Mobile or Online Banking. Additional benefits for Plus Customers - Up to 10% cashback at IKEA and booking.com - Up to 10% cashback and instant discount on FARFETCH and EUREKA; Buy one get one free ticket with VOX CINEMAS; Up to 30% off on THOUQI, BAZMA, SHEIN, VOGA CLOSET, and JUST CLEAN; Free dental treatment at Bayan Dental.

News in Brief

CBK announces bonds; US dollar stabilizes

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the most recent issues of CBK bonds and related Tawarruq at a total value of KWD (240) million for 6 months with Rate of Return (4.375%). Meanwhile, US dollar exchange rate against the Kuwaiti dinar stabilized on Monday. The Central Bank of Kuwait said in its daily bulletin on its website that the exchange rate of the pound sterling has stabilized at the level of 0.379 dinars, the Swiss franc at the level of 0.339 dinars and the Japanese yen at 0.002 dinars. It is noteworthy that the exchange rates announced by the Central Bank of Kuwait are for the average currency rates for the day and do not reflect the actual buying and selling prices. — KUNA

Singapore investment fund slashes staff compensation

SINGAPORE: Singapore state investment fund Temasek said Monday it had slashed compensation for the team and senior management responsible for its investment in collapsed cryptocurrency exchange FTX. FTX and its sister trading house Alameda Research went bankrupt in November, dissolving a virtual trading business that at one point had been valued at \$32 billion. Prosecutors allege that then-chief Sam Bankman-Fried cheated investors and misused funds that belonged to FTX and Alameda Research customers. Bankman-Fried is due to go on trial in New York in October. Temasek wrote down \$275 million of investments in FTX and launched an internal review. “Although there was no misconduct by the investment team in reaching their investment recommendation, the investment team and senior management, who are ultimately responsible for investment decisions made, took collective accountability and had their compensation reduced,” Temasek chairman Lim Boon Heng said in a statement posted on the firm’s website. — AFP

are not simple spectators waiting to see what economic conditions will be like,” she added.

In its April note, Fitch did praise a stronger labor market in France thanks to reforms introduced since President Emmanuel Macron took office in 2017, with historically stubborn unemployment now down to 7.1 percent. Macron’s widely contested pension reform raising the retirement age to 64 — resulting in mass demonstrations and intense opposition in parliament — “could further support the labor market and possibly improve growth prospects in the medium to long term,” Fitch added at the time. — AFP



GADELOUPE: French Minister of Economy, Finance and Industrial and Digital Sovereignty Bruno Le Maire (center) and Henry Joseph (right), founder of Phytobokaz, sit in the gardens during a meeting at the pharmaceutical company which makes its products from local plants at Gourbeyre. — AFP

Business

Hong Kong treads fine line on regulating retail crypto trade

Authorities not deterred by 'crypto winter'

Gulf Bank AlDanah Grand Prize is now KD 2 million

KUWAIT: As part of its keenness to reward its customers, and in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the AlDanah account, Gulf Bank announced an increase in the annual grand prize value of the AlDanah account – from KD 1.5 million to KD 2 million – making it the world's largest cash prize linked to a bank account. Gulf Bank will announce the first multimillionaire at the annual grand draw on January 18, 2024, under the supervision and in the presence of representatives from both the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and Ernst & Young.



Mohammad Al-Qattan,
General Manager
Consumer Banking

The last chance to deposit and participate in this draw is September 30, 2023. The AlDanah Millionaire account is one of the most rewarding and prestigious savings accounts in Kuwait, with periodic draws that have been creating millionaires since its launch in 1998 – now offering an annual grand draw prize worth KD 2,000,000, monthly opportunities for ten lucky winners to win KD 1,000, in addition to quarterly draws with KD 100,000 prizes each.

On this occasion, Gulf Bank's General Manager of Consumer Banking, Mohammed Al-Qattan, said: "This decision comes as part of Gulf Bank's continuous efforts to encourage a culture of savings – rewarding savers with monthly, quarterly, semi-annual and annual draws – which motivates them to maintain the habit of saving and encouraging to follow through."

Al-Qattan also stated that "AlDanah account is one of the best savings accounts in Kuwait, with periodic valuable prizes and advantages for account holders," noting that Gulf Bank will continue to launch many events and activities in 2023, to keep pace with the Central Bank of Kuwait's directions aimed at promoting a culture of savings across society.

He continued: "As part of Gulf Bank's 2025 strategy, we are working to provide the best services and products to raise customer satisfaction levels; by launching simple, sophisticated and innovative products and services that meet the requirements and needs of various groups. We are also aiming to consolidate Gulf Bank's position as Kuwait's leading bank of the future."

Participation Conditions

Gulf Bank's AlDanah account is open to both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents in Kuwait. A minimum of KD 200 is required to open an account, and the same amount must be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming AlDanah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 monthly fee will be charged to the account, until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the daily draw within two days.

Gulf Bank encourages AlDanah customers to raise their chances of winning by increasing their depositing amount, using the electronic payment service available through the bank's website and mobile application. The AlDanah Millionaire account is one of the oldest and most prestigious savings accounts in Kuwait and was designed to encourage a culture of savings in society, and reward customers for their commitment to saving on a regular basis. Hence, Gulf Bank encourages everyone to open an AlDanah Millionaire account to start saving and to enjoy the multitude of benefits the account has to offer.

Numerous features

Amongst the many advantages enjoyed by AlDanah Millionaire account, is that it is the only account that rewards customers for their loyalty, by providing loyalty chances. The loyalty chances are the total chances gained in the previous year, which are then transferred to the current year to reward customers for their loyalty to the bank. All chances gained by existing AlDanah clients in 2021 (from January 1 to December 31, 2021), have been transferred and added to the 2022 chances – taking into consideration the terms and conditions.

The AlDanah account provides a multitude of valuable services to its customers, including access to an exclusive AlDanah ATM card, that is ideal for depositing money into their accounts at any time. Account holders can also calculate their chances of winning the monthly, quarterly, and annual draws using the AlDanah calculator, available on Gulf Bank's online website and mobile application.

To participate in the upcoming quarterly and annual AlDanah draws this year, customers can visit one of Gulf Bank's branches or transfer directly through Gulf Bank's Online/Mobile Banking services. They can also direct their queries via WhatsApp on 1805805 for round-the-clock assistance from Gulf Bank representatives or call the Customer Contact Center on the same number. Additionally, customers can visit the dedicated AlDanah account website to learn more about the account and its winners.



HONG KONG: Retail investors in Hong Kong may soon be able to buy popular cryptocurrencies like bitcoin at government-licensed exchanges, thanks to new rules meant to bolster the city's standing as a digital asset hub. Global crypto markets have yet to recover from a string of high-profile failures in recent months, including the spectacular downfall of trading platform FTX and crypto-friendly US banks Signature and Silvergate.

But the so-called "crypto winter" has not deterred Hong Kong authorities from embracing the sector, a pivot that began last October and culminated with new laws for crypto exchanges starting June 1. Officials are also hoping the shift will be a boon for the city's economy, which continues to struggle in the wake of the pandemic, social unrest and the impact on business confidence from a Beijing-imposed national security law.

Crucially, observers say it will cement Hong Kong as a key route for mainland Chinese investors looking to trade crypto, which is outlawed in the country. Regulators are hoping to woo firms with favorable business conditions, but must balance that against the need for investor protections – a well-developed area in traditional finance but less so in the virtual-asset space. "There is an explicit acknowledgement that these products are becoming more and more part of our economy," Giuliano Castellano, a law professor at the University of Hong Kong, told AFP.

The city has had a voluntary licensing system for crypto trading platforms since 2019, but licensees could only service professional clients with portfolios of at least HK\$8 million (\$1 million). Without licensed local options, Hong Kong's retail crypto traders are relegated to offshore websites such as Binance and Coinbase, or a raft of brick-and-mortar shops that buy and sell tokens for cash. The client-base restriction was unpopular with Hong Kong's crypto businesses, and officials eventually dropped it when designing the incoming rules. "The genie's out of the bottle," said Kristi Swartz, a fintech lawyer at DLA Piper, referring to retail crypto trading. "(They) just have to face reality... If it's already there, let's try to regulate it."

Lulu's Shop and Win Promo ends with Grand Prize

KUWAIT: Lulu Hypermarket and Black and Decker delighted customers with their recent Shop and Win promotion, which ran from February 8th to March 21st, 2023. Customers who made a purchase of 20 KD or more of Black and Decker products were eligible to enter a draw for the chance to win two Chery Tiggo 4 Pro and 2 Pro cars, as well as 600 KD Lulu gift vouchers. The promotion received an overwhelming response, and the prize distribution ceremony was held on May 29 at the Lulu Hypermarket AlRai outlet.

The electronic draw for the promotion was conducted on April 2nd at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and Lulu Hypermarket and Black and Decker management were thrilled to present the prizes to the lucky winners. The ceremony was a joyous occasion, with three winners walking away with fantastic prizes. The partnership between Lulu Hypermarket and Black and Decker was instrumental in the success of the Shop and Win promotion. The two brands share a commitment to providing high-quality products and excellent customer service, and the promotion was a testament to this shared vision.

Lulu Hypermarket is proud to offer innovative and

Asian, European markets diverge after debt deal

PARIS: Asian and European stock markets wobbled Monday after President Joe Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy reached a deal on lifting the US debt ceiling to avoid a disastrous default. Among major Asian markets, Tokyo and Shanghai finished in the green but Hong Kong was unable to maintain their early gains and turned lower.

Paris and Frankfurt rose at the open but were down in early afternoon deals. Wall Street and London were closed for a holiday. After weeks of wrangling, the two announced that an agreement had finally been reached and urged lawmakers on both sides of the aisle to vote for it before the government runs out of cash on June 5.

However, there is some nervousness on trading floors as the bill contains plenty of elements that are likely to anger Democrats and Republicans alike. "We should not expect a smooth passage," said Clifford Bennett, chief economist at ACY Securities. "There is a slight risk of this being a giant case of the devil in the details." "A default can most probably be avoided at this stage. Such default avoidance is still not a complete certainty; however it is now much less of a risk," Bennett added.

The breakthrough lifts the threat of a debt default by the United States that economists warn could hammer the global economy and cause market turmoil. The bill will suspend the debt ceiling until January 1,

2025, and place curbs on federal spending that will please some Republicans, but it does not deliver the big cuts right-wingers wanted and progressive Democrats would have balked at. "The agreement prevents the worst possible crisis," Biden said at the White House on Sunday. "I strongly urge both chambers to pass that agreement."

Weaker lira

"The obvious positive interpretation is that a negative tail risk is close to being taken off the table," said Dan Suzuki of Richard Bernstein Advisors. "With the distraction of the debt ceiling fading into the background, investors can now refocus their attention on the underlying fundamentals. One concern, though, is that the fundamental picture remains precarious." Data on Friday showed the US Federal Reserve's preferred measure of inflation – the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) index – rose 4.4 percent year-on-year in April, up from 4.2 percent a month earlier. The core index, excluding volatile food and energy prices, also rose, as did personal income and spending.

The figures will put fresh pressure on the central bank to continue lifting interest rates to bring inflation under control and deal a blow to hopes it will pause next month after more than a year of hikes. Elsewhere, the Turkish lira weakened to 20.08 per dollar after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan won another term in office to extend his two-decade rule. Morgan Stanley warned the currency could suffer further pain, tipping it to hit 28 if Erdogan sticks to his ultra-loose monetary policy despite rampant inflation, which is sitting at more than 40 percent. — AFP

China's 'petri dish'

Hong Kong is racing regulators around the world to figure out ground rules for crypto, which despite its crashes still has a global market capitalization of more than \$1 trillion. The European Union earlier this month approved the world's first comprehensive rules on the sector and international securities watchdog IOSCO proposed its recommendations shortly afterwards. In contrast to evolving attitudes on crypto worldwide, China has maintained a strict ban since 2021.

Hong Kong – a Chinese city with financial regulations separate from the mainland – holds special appeal for China's crypto businesses and investors, according to Leo Weese, co-founder of the Bitcoin Association of Hong Kong. "There is a huge appetite from... (Chinese) cryptocurrency ventures to have any kind of legal presence on Chinese soil," he said, adding that firms see it as a gateway to the lucrative mainland market. In both traditional finance and crypto, it is common for mainland Chinese investors to be recognized as Hong Kong clients if they have a bank account and address in the city.

"Once you have a Hong Kong licence, you are going to be able to convince a lot of your mainland clients... that it's safe for them to interact with you through their Hong Kong bank account," Weese told AFP. Major crypto exchanges like Huobi and OKX, both founded in China, have announced plans to apply for a Hong Kong licence. While Beijing's anti-crypto stance remains unchanged on paper, senior economy officials have publicly backed Hong Kong's ambitions. "You can see that China says, 'Look, if it happens in Hong Kong, population circa seven, eight million, that's fine. We can use it as our petri dish,'" Swartz told AFP.

Protecting investors

Unlike the outgoing system, the retail-friendly rules taking effect in June will be mandatory, meaning all exchanges doing business in Hong Kong will eventually need to get licensed. Hong Kong regulators said they hope to move quickly on issuing the first licences. Some crypto businesses say the switch is not expected to disrupt day-to-day operations as authorities allow a one-year transition pe-



This photo taken on May 27, 2023 shows a woman in a cryptocurrency exchange office in Hong Kong. Retail investors in Hong Kong may soon be able to buy popular cryptocurrencies like bitcoin at government-licensed exchanges, thanks to new rules meant to bolster the city's standing as a digital asset hub. — AFP

riod. HashKey and OSL, the two existing licensees, told AFP they will apply for fresh licences and grow their retail presence.

"There's a very significant need in the market to have platforms that are easily accessible... but are also properly managed and properly regulated," said Michel Lee, HashKey Group's executive president. "This new regime adds a lot more clarity as to what you're getting, what's the safety standard you will be provided with." With the memory of FTX's collapse still fresh, Hong Kong regulators said the new rules aim to "provide robust investor protection and manage key risks".

One safeguard is that exchanges can only provide "large-cap virtual assets" – such as bitcoin and ethereum – to retail investors, and must set up internal committees to decide which cryptocurrencies to offer. Retail clients also have to undergo knowledge tests and risk profiling before they can trade – though it remains unclear what level of knowledge is deemed enough. Meanwhile, products like stablecoins and crypto derivatives are off-limits for retail investors for the time being. "The new regulations are meant to protect investors better," said Castellano, the legal scholar. "It's wise to have a cautionary approach." — AFP



exciting promotions to its customers, and the Shop and Win promotion was no exception. The company provides its customers with the best possible shopping experience, and this promotion was a fantastic way to reward their loyalty. The success of the Shop

and Win promotion is a testament to the strong relationship between Lulu Hypermarket and Black and Decker. The two companies will continue to work together to offer customers more exciting promotions in the future.

N Korean ruling party to review economic policies

SEOUL: North Korea's ruling party will hold a high-level meeting in June to review its economic policies, state media said Monday. The nuclear-armed country has a fragile economy and its government has long been criticized for prioritizing the military and its banned nuclear weapons programs over adequately providing for its people. The upcoming meeting of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) will assess how national economic plans were carried out in the first half of 2023, the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said.

The meeting will also discuss "policy issues of weighty significance in the development of our revolution", KCNA added, without providing further details including the dates. North Korea imposed a rigid blockade in early 2020 to keep out the coronavirus, and only resumed some trade with China last year. The WPK held a high-level party meeting in February to specifically address food shortages and agricultural problems. At that

meeting, leader Kim Jong Un urged officials to ensure that grain production goals were met "without fail".

North Korea has periodically suffered famines, one of which killed hundreds of thousands of people in the 1990s. Some estimates of the deaths from that famine stretch into the millions. Despite its difficult economic situation, North Korea has conducted a record-breaking series of weapons tests this year, including its first solid-fuel ballistic missile – a major technological breakthrough. Tokyo said Monday that it was notified by Pyongyang of a plan to launch a satellite in the coming weeks, though the Japanese government said it believes this to be a ballistic missile.

It did not mention what type of satellite would be launched. North Korea said in April that it had finished the construction of its first spy satellite, and Kim gave the green light for its launch. Pyongyang has said its weapons are meant to defend against what it describes as aggression by the United States and South Korea. The two allies have ramped up military cooperation, including joint drills in the face of the growing threat from North Korea. Pyongyang describes such exercises as rehearsals for an invasion. — AFP

Lifestyle



This picture shows a team photograph of the 1953 Mount Everest expedition which placed Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary on the summit of the world's highest mountain, on the eve of International Everest Day, at Namche Bazar in Solukhumbu district, northeast of Kathmandu. - AFP photos



Double-amputee climber Hari Budha Magar poses for pictures in front of the statues of Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary to mark the 16th International Everest Day.



Nepali people take part in a procession to mark the 16th International Everest Day.

70 YEARS AFTER FIRST SUMMIT, EVEREST KEEPS GIVING

When Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay Sherpa first climbed Everest 70 years ago, they paved the way for thousands of foreign climbers to try to follow in their footsteps. The eight-day trek to the Everest base camp is among the most popular multi-day hikes in Nepal, with tens of thousands of tourists making the journey every year. What were small agrarian villages when the British expedition passed through in 1953 have since been transformed into tourist hubs with hotels, tea houses and equipment shops, boosting the livelihoods of local communities.

In many homes, three generations have found employment in mountaineering — a far more lucrative occupation than farming or yak-herding. The work is hazardous by definition, but in a climbing

in the 1920s, Nepali climbers — mostly from the Sherpa ethnic group — have been by their side.

"Sherpa" became synonymous with high-altitude guiding as they became the backbone of the multimillion-dollar industry, bearing huge risks to carry equipment and food, fix ropes and repair ladders. Now local expedition groups — instead of playing second fiddle to foreign climbing agencies — bring the bulk of paying clients into Nepal. And a younger generation of Nepali climbers is slowly being recognized in their own right. Renowned Italian climber Reinhold Messner told AFP in a 2021 interview that it was a well-deserved climb up the ladder. "It is an evolution," he said. "And this is also important for the future economy of the country."



Nepali guide Kami Rita Sherpa who reached the top of Mount Everest on May 23, 2023, for a record 28th time looks on after his arrival at the Tribhuvan airport in Kathmandu.

worked with, Hillary funded the region's first school in Khumjung and is said to have hauled timber himself to help build it. One of its first students, Ang Tsering Sherpa, now owns an expedition company. "It is because of mountaineering that the young Sherpas today have higher education," he said. "It has brought a wave of economic prosperity." More than 10 percent of Nepalis are employed in tourism and the government this year collected over \$5 million in Everest permit fees alone as a record number of summit hopefuls arrived. Tenzing Chogyal Sherpa, 30, whose grandfather Kancha Sherpa was part of the 1953 expedition, is a glaciologist and said that education had opened up options for Sherpa youths. "A Sherpa can now be a doctor, engineer or a businessman, anything they want to be. That is very good," he said. "And if they want to be a mountaineer, they can." — AFP



Phurba Tashi Sherpa, head of an expedition operator and guide, posing with his wife during an interview with AFP at the village of Khumjung.



Phurba Tashi Sherpa (left), head of an expedition operator and guide, and his wife as they prepare his horse for a ride during an interview with AFP at the village of Khumjung.



Students rehearsing martial arts for demonstration at the Khumjung School which was established by Edmund Hillary, ahead of the upcoming Everest Day celebrations in the village of Khumjung.

Then and now: 70 years of Everest

Seventy years ago, New Zealander Edmund Hillary and Nepali Tenzing Norgay Sherpa became the first humans to summit Everest on May 29, 1953. The British expedition made the two men household names around the world and changed mountaineering forever. Hundreds now climb the 8,849-metre (29,032-foot) peak every year, fuelling concerns of overcrowding and pollution on the mountain. AFP looks at the evolution of the Everest phenomenon.

What is the mountain called?

Initially known only to British mapmakers as Peak XV, the mountain was identified as the world's highest point in the 1850s and renamed in 1865 after Sir George Everest, a former Surveyor General of India. On the border of Nepal and China and climbable from both sides, it is called Chomolungma or Qomolangma in Sherpa and Tibetan — "goddess mother of the world" — and Sagarmatha in Nepali, meaning "peak of the sky".

How has climbing Everest changed?

The 1953 expedition was the ninth attempt on the summit and it took 20 years for the first 600 people to climb it. Now that number can be expected in a single season, with climbers catered to by experienced guides and commercial expedition companies. The months-long journey to the base camp was cut to eight days with the construction of a small mountain airstrip in 1964 in the town of Lukla, the gateway to the Everest region. Gear is lighter, oxygen supplies are more readily available, and tracking devices make expeditions safer. Climbers today can summon a helicopter in case of emergency. Every season, experienced Nepali guides set the route all the way to the summit for paying clients to follow. But Billi Bierling of Himalayan Database, an archive of mountaineering expeditions, said some things remain similar: "They didn't go to the mountains much different than we do now. The Sherpas carried everything. The expedition style itself hasn't changed."

What is base camp like?

The starting point for climbs proper, Everest Base Camp was once little more than a collection of tents at 5,364 meters (17,598 feet), where climbers lived off canned foods. Now fresh salads, baked goods and trendy coffee are available, with crackly conversations over bulky satellite phones replaced by wifi and Instagram posts.

How does the news of a summit travel?

Hillary and Tenzing summited Everest on May 29 but it only appeared in newspapers on June 2, the day of Queen Elizabeth's coronation: the news had to be brought down the mountain on foot to a telegraph station in the town of Namche Bazaar, to be relayed to the British Embassy in Kathmandu. In 2011, British climber Kenton Cool tweeted from the summit with a 3G signal after his ninth successful ascent. More usually, walkie-talkie radios are standard expedition equipment and summiters contact their base camp teams, who swiftly post on social media. In 2020, China announced 5G connectivity at the Everest summit.

What are the effects of climate change?

Warming temperatures are slowly widening crevasses on the mountain

and bringing running water to previously snowy slopes. A 2018 study of Everest's Khumbu glacier indicated it was vulnerable to even minor atmospheric warming, with the temperature of shallow ice already close to melting point. "The future of the Khumbu icefall is bleak," its principal investigator, glaciologist Duncan Quincey, told AFP. "The striking difference is the meltwater on the surface of the glaciers." Three Nepali guides were killed on the formation this year when a chunk of falling glacial ice swept them into a deep crevasse. It has become a popular cause for climbers to highlight, and expedition companies are starting to implement eco-friendly practices at their camps, such as solar power.



Golden statues of New Zealander mountaineer Sir Edmund Hillary and Nepali-Indian mountaineer Tenzing Norgay Sherpa, at Tenzig-Hillary airport, in Lukla, Nepal.

What is the impact of social media?

Click, post, repeat — the climbing season plays out on social media as excited mountaineers document their journey to Everest on Facebook, Instagram and other social media platforms. Hashtags keep their sponsors happy and the posts can catch the eyes of potential funders. That applies to both foreign climbers and their now tech-savvy Nepali guides. "Everyone posts nowadays, it is part of how we share and build our profile," said Lakpa Dendi Sherpa, who has summited Everest multiple times and has 62,000 Instagram followers.

Mountain of records?

Veteran Nepali guides Kami Rita Sherpa and Pasang Dawa Sherpa both scaled Everest twice this season, with the latter twice summiting the former's record number of summits before Kami Rita reclaimed pole position with 28. There are multiple Everest record categories for first and fastest feats of endurance. But some precedents are more quixotic: in 2018, a team of British climbers, an Australian and a Nepali dressed in tuxedos and gowns for the world's highest dinner party at 7,056 meters on the mountain's Chinese side. — AFP



A tourist walks past a sculpture of British surveyor and geographer, late Sir George Everest at the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute museum, in Darjeeling.



Photo shows gears used by late mountaineer Sherpa Tenzing Norgay in the 1953 Everest summit are showcased at the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute museum, in Darjeeling.

'Gift of the mountains'

The first ascent of Everest brought Nepal to the world's attention and its mountains have since captivated adventurers and tourists alike. That has played a crucial role for Nepal's branding as a destination, according to tourism writer Lisa Choegyal.

"Through COVID and earthquakes and all the other setbacks, the insurgency even, that Nepal has suffered over the decades, mountaineering has really endured," she said. The Khumbu region welcomes more than 50,000 trekkers a year. "It is a gift of the mountains and we have to thank the first summit for opening this region to tourism," said Mingma Chhiri Sherpa, chairman of the local municipality. "Education and modern amenities have come here because of it."

Driven to help the community he



Phurba Tashi Sherpa (right), head of an expedition operator and guide, watching his yaks during an interview with AFP at the village of Khumjung.



Lipizzan horses run as they are put out to meadows for pasture in Lipica, Slovenia. — AFP photos



Lipizzan horses pull the carriage through the meadows near the Lipica stud farm in Lipica.



Lipizzan horses are seen in the meadows during pasture in Lipica, Slovenia.



Riders attend an official training with Lipizzan horses in Lipica, Slovenia.

People watched in awe as the world-renowned Lipizzan horses put on a dazzling show this month in the village of Lipica in the small Alpine state of Slovenia.

The home of one of the world's most distinguished horse breeds - and seven countries in the region that once were part of the Habsburg Empire - have reason to celebrate.

Their shared tradition of Lipizzan breeding recently made UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

The noble Lipizzans, also known as Lipizzaners, are descendants of long stallion lines crossing Spanish, Arabic and Berber horses and were first bred by the Habsburg court in the 16th century.



Lipizzan horses pull the carriage through the meadows near the Lipica stud farm.



Lipizzan horses run as they are put out to meadows for pasture in Lipica.



A mare and a foal of a Lipizzan horse breed are seen outside the stable in Lipica.

They are famous for their "airs above the ground" classical dressage jumps - a series of difficult movements requiring strength and precision, in which the horse's feet leave the ground.

This rare breed - featuring white hair but grey skin - is also famed as a carriage horse. The name derives from tiny Lipica, nestled among Slovenia's verdant hills and lush forests.

The picturesque village is home to one of the world's oldest stud farms, which dates back to 1580 and currently stables more than 400 blue-blooded horses.

"This is the Lipizzan's home," said Slovenian culture minister Asta Vrecko, ahead of the UNESCO ceremony last weekend.

The event was attended by the eight countries that jointly applied for recognition of their shared breeding heritage - Austria, Bosnia, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

For a moment, time stood still as horses and riders from the eight nations performed their dressage and driving exhibition.

"They are phenomenal animals. The way that they've been trained and the level of skill of the riders is incredible," said 42-year-old horse farm owner Laura Highlander, who travelled all the way from the United States to see the horses.

"I was super excited to be able to come... and see them in their training," she added after visiting the Lipica stud farm.

Equine ballet

Dark at birth, the Lipizzan horses' coat turns white by the time they are about four years old, which is also when their demanding training starts and the most promising stallions are selected.

"Lipizzans can have a strong temperament. They are usually serene, sometimes shy. They are kind and it is up to us to recognize the quality of each horse," Miro Dragic, head of the Lipica stud farm riders' team, told AFP.

If health permits, these athletic equine stars, can be worth up to several hundred thousand euros (dollars) each, and can remain active well into their mid-20s.

Only the best stallions will be trained in the elitist "haute ecole" of classical dressage to eventually master an equine ballet of cantering, caprioles and pirouettes.

The riders, who sport tailcoats and Napoleonic bicorne hats, must also be at the top of their game to get the best from their sensitive partners.

"With horses it's like with people. There are many external elements - weather included - that can affect them," stableman Amadej Cej told AFP while grooming one of his elegant stallions.

It's stablemen like Cej who spend quality time with these beautiful creatures, attending to their every need "from birth until their end". — AFP

Live-action 'Little Mermaid' debut makes box office waves

Disney's live-action version of "The Little Mermaid" netted the top spot at North American box offices on its opening weekend, over the United States' Memorial Day holiday, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported Sunday.

The remake of the 1989 animated tale of an underwater princess who gives up her voice in pursuit of true love on land, starring pop singer Halle Bailey and Melissa McCarthy, raked in \$117.5 million in US and Canadian box offices and another \$68 million internationally, Exhibitor Relations said.

Despite the number one spot, analyst David A. Gross pointed out that the aquatic adventure's debut does not represent the biggest opening weekend for a live-action Disney adaptation.

He recalled that 2019's "The Lion King" and 2017's "Beauty and the Beast" earned \$191.8 million and \$174.8 million respectively, over their opening weekends.

"During the last dozen years, Disney has built live-action remakes into a powerhouse phenomenon," Gross wrote in the FranchiseRe newsletter. Still, Ariel and friends were able to bump last

week's number one feature "Fast-X" down to a distant number two, with Universal's action film pulling in only \$29.5 million in the Friday to Monday period.

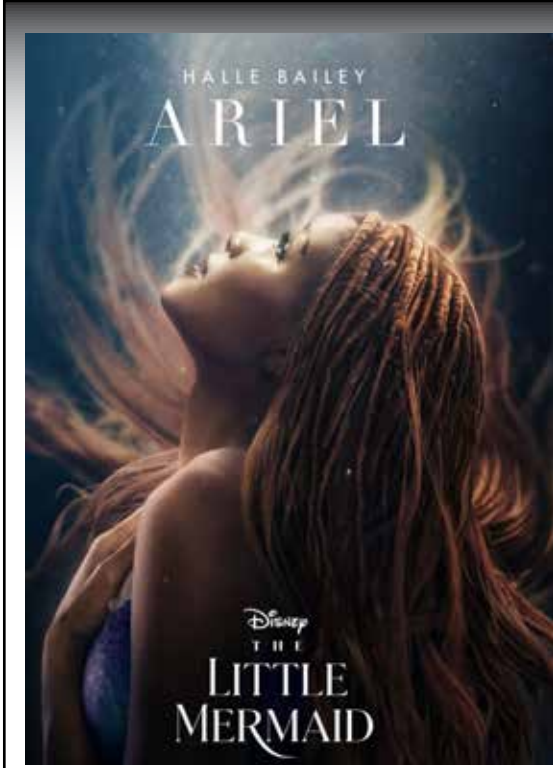
That's less than half of what the movie, part of the "Fast & Furious" franchise starring Vin Diesel, made during its opening weekend last week.

Disney's "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3" and Universal's "The Super Mario Bros Movie" were also knocked down one spot each from last weekend to take third and fourth places, making \$25.3 million and \$7.7 million.

In fifth place was Sony's new action comedy "The Machine," which earned \$5.8 million and is based on US comedian Bert Kreischer's stand-up routine. Rounding out the top 10 were:

- "About My Father" (\$5.3 million)
- "Kandahar" (\$3 million)
- "You Hurt My Feelings" (\$1.8 million)
- "Evil Dead Rise" (\$1.2 million)
- "Book Club: The Next Chapter" (\$1.2 million).

— AFP





The walls of a newly discovered ancient tomb are decorated with paintings in the Saqqara necropolis south of Cairo, where archaeologists unearthed two human and animal embalming workshops, as well as two tombs.



Newly discovered ancient objects are displayed in the Saqqara necropolis south of Cairo. —AFP photos



A basket filled with doum fruit (zuriat) is displayed among other objects at the Saqqara necropolis.

Egypt unveils ancient mummification workshops and tombs



Visitors observe a sarcophagus in the Saqqara necropolis.



A small mummified animal is displayed at the Saqqara necropolis.



Small mummified animals are displayed among other objects at the Saqqara necropolis.

Archaeologists in Egypt have unearthed two human and animal embalming workshops, as well as two tombs, discovered in the Saqqara necropolis south of Cairo, the government said on Saturday. The vast burial site, at the ancient Egyptian capital Memphis, is a UNESCO World Heritage site and home to more than a dozen pyramids, animal graves and old Coptic Christian monasteries.

Mostafa Waziri, head of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, told reporters the embalming workshops, where humans and animals were mummified, "date back to the 30th dynasty" which reigned around 2,400 years ago. Researchers "found several rooms equipped with stony beds where the deceased lay down for mummification", Egypt's tourism and antiquities ministry said.

Each bed ended in gutters to facilitate the mummification process, with a collection of clay pots nearby to hold entrails and organs, as well as a collection of instruments and ritual vessels. Early studies of the other workshop suggest it was used for the "mummification of sacred animals".

The discovery also includes the tombs of two priests dating back to the 24th and 14th centuries BC, respectively. The first belonged to Ne Hesut Ba, who served the fifth dynasty as the head of scribes and priest of the gods Horus and Maat. The tomb walls are decorated with depictions of "daily life, agriculture and hunting scenes", said Mohamed Youssef, director of the Saqqara archaeological site.

The second tomb, that of a priest named Men Kheber, was carved in rock and features depictions of the deceased himself on the tomb walls, as well as in a one-meter-long (three foot) alabaster statue, Youssef told reporters. Egypt has unveiled a string of major archaeological discoveries in recent years.



Clay pots and ritual vessels are placed near stony beds used for mummification in the Saqqara necropolis.



People visit an ancient tomb in the Saqqara necropolis.

Critics say the flurry of excavations has prioritized finds shown to grab media attention over hard academic research. The discoveries have been a key component of Egypt's attempts to revive its vital tourism industry amid a severe economic crisis. The government recently launched a strategy "aiming for a rapid increase in inbound tourism" at a rate of 25-30 percent a year, Tourism and Antiquities Minister Ahmed Issa said at the site on Saturday. Egypt aims to draw in 30 million tourists a year by 2028, up from 13 million before the Covid pandemic. The crowning jewel of the government's strategy is the long-delayed inauguration of the Grand Egyptian Museum at the foot of the pyramids in Giza. — AFP



Newly discovered ancient objects are displayed at the Saqqara necropolis.



Newly discovered ancient statuettes are displayed at the Saqqara necropolis.



Chinese comedy group punishment sends chills through arts sphere

China's recent punishment of a comedy studio has sent a chill through the country's cultural sphere — a striking reminder of the increasingly limited public space for artistic expression under President Xi Jinping. Authorities last week fined Xiaoguo Culture Media millions of dollars and suspended their performances indefinitely after a comic made an oblique joke about the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Stand-up comedian Li Haoshi referenced a well-known PLA slogan when joking about watching his dogs chase a squirrel — which officials subsequently announced had "caused a bad social impact" and broken the law.

The Chinese arts scene has always been heavily censored by the ruling Communist Party, and under Xi's decade-long rule, authorities have tightened that oversight. But the swift retribution meted out to Xiaoguo represents "a sad, 'new low' in Chinese official tolerance for unorthodox speech", the University of Oxford's Vivienne Shue told AFP. In the past, "it would have been more common to let such public transgressors off with just a stern private warning", she said. Instead, officials fined the company 14.7 million yuan (\$2.13 million) and opened an investigation into Li.

'Scare the monkeys'

The penalty "was clearly issued in line with the old Chinese practice of 'killing a chicken to scare the monkeys'", said Steve Tsang, director of the SOAS



A notice showing the cancelation of a show is seen outside a theatre of Xiaoguo Comedy in Shanghai. — AFP photos

China Institute. "Most cultural workers and comedians are likely to act on the deterrence effect," he added. The days after the announcement saw a spate of last-minute cancellations of musical and comedy performances nationwide. In some cases "force majeure" was blamed, but others gave no reason and did not say whether the performances would take place in the future.

Japanese musician Kanho Yakushiji, whose Buddhist choral group's shows in Hangzhou, Shanghai and Beijing were nixed, said on Instagram he didn't understand the cancellations.

A staff member at a venue in the southern city of Shantou said a rock show had been postponed while "a new application was made for (official

approval" but that they did not know the exact reason why. Multiple performers contacted by AFP would not comment on the current climate, fearing it would worsen the backlash. Stand-up may be particularly risky as it is a relatively new form of comedy in China and "it is difficult to know the appropriate boundaries", SOAS' Xiaoning Lu told AFP. It is also seen by some nationalists as a Western import undermining Chinese "cultural confidence", she said.

'Appropriate laughter'

The Communist Party has historically kept a tight rein on the arts — coopting them for political propaganda and quashing anything verging on dissent. Leader Mao Zedong once said there

was "no such thing as... art that is detached from or independent of politics". "Censorship and self-censorship have always been present, although the intensity may vary from time to time," said Hong Kong Baptist University's Sheng Zou.

In recent years the government has published new "moral guidelines" demanding that performers embody positivity and patriotism. It has also taken aim at "abnormal aesthetics" in media, including "sissy men" — a pejorative term for men with an effeminate look. Xi last week wrote to staff at the National Art Museum of China, urging them to "adhere to the correct political orientation", according to state media.

Announcing the comedy studio's fine, authorities said they hoped "all literary and artistic workers (would) comply with laws and regulations, correct their creative thinking, (and) strengthen moral cultivation". "The boundaries of appropriate laughter have always been elastic in China, contingent upon political climate," said SOAS' Lu. With the Xiaoguo incident, a new red line has been set, said Oxford's Shue. "The military establishment is to be regarded as 'sacred' — there is to be no public laughter whatsoever, even tangentially, at the expense of the PLA," she explained.

Public nationalism

The new boundaries are an extension of the muscular, hardline nationalism Xi has personally promoted since coming to power. He has frequently



A logo of Xiaoguo Comedy is seen outside a theatre in Shanghai.

used the slogan referenced in Li's joke, and extolled the strength of the armed forces in domestic information campaigns. That fierce nationalism has trickled down — Li was investigated after a complaint from a member of the public, authorities said.

His transgression was the topic of heated discussion, with hundreds of millions of hits on social media platform Weibo. The widespread attention had created "mounting pressure... demanding serious treatment", said Zou. Many online comments supported Li's punishment, although Weibo is heavily censored. "In China, anything that involves insults to national dignity and pride is no trivial matter," Baptist University's Zou said. "It is where the state's interest and public opinion most likely converge." — AFP

Real Sociedad secure Champions League place; Espanyol relegated

La Liga champions Barca enjoy series of emotional goodbyes

News in Brief

Kerley wins Diamond League

RABAT: Reigning world champion Fred Kerley won the 100 meters at the Diamond League meeting in Rabat on Sunday in 9.94 seconds in the absence of Olympic champion Marcell Jacobs. South Africa's Akani Simbine finished second behind Kerley in 9.99sec with Kenyan sprinter Ferdinand Omanyala third (10.05). Trayvon Bromell, a world bronze medalist last year in Oregon, could only manage fifth in a time of 10.10sec. "I can't describe my happiness for winning this race and hitting the meeting record today," said Kerley. "This is the result I was expecting and I will keep up to achieve and reach the world championship in the best shape ever." Jacobs, who beat Kerley to gold at the 2020 Olympics, pulled out of their much-anticipated showdown earlier in the week due to a back nerve problem. The pair have not faced each other since Tokyo but could meet on June 2 in the next Diamond League event in Florence. — AFP

Lyon qualify for play-offs

PARIS: Lyon beat Bayonne 53-19 to qualify for the Top 14 play-offs after Sunday's final round of matches in the regular season. Leaders Toulouse, who crushed relegated Brive 54-10, were already through to the semi-finals, along with second-placed La Rochelle who edged Stade Francais 14-10 at home. Stade Francais will host Racing 92 with Lyon welcoming Bordeaux-Begles in the play-offs. At the bottom of the table Pau assured their survival with a 35-10 win at home against defending champions Montpellier, who end the campaign in 11th place. La Rochelle fielded a heavily rotated side a week after their thrilling Champions Cup victory over Leinster in Dublin, but it was still enough to get past Stade Francais. Despite the defeat, Gonzalo Quesada's Stade Francais will host their neighbors next Saturday in a derby that promises to be heated. — AFP

Ireland hammer Essex

LONDON: Ireland prepared for their lone Test against England at Lord's next week with a 10-wicket thrashing of Essex courtesy of unbeaten centuries from James McCollum and Peter Moor. The openers shared Ireland's highest stand for the first wicket in first-class cricket after they were set 232 to win in 50 overs on the final day of three Sunday. McCollum struck the winning runs in the 43rd over and brought up his century – finishing on 100 not out – by smashing Essex captain Nick Browne for six, while Moor's 118 not out came off just 126 balls. In what is Ireland's only red-ball game before they face Ben Stokes's men in a four-day Test at Lord's starting on Thursday, Moor struck five sixes and 12 fours in Chelmsford. Four of Moor's sixes came off Ireland team-mate George Dockrell – one of a quartet of Ireland players loaned to Essex for this fixture alongside Curtis Campher, Mark Adair and Matthew Foster. — AFP

Nashville keep up chase

MIAMI: Nashville kept up the chase for top spot in Major League Soccer's Eastern Conference with a 3-1 home win over the Columbus Crew on Sunday. FC Cincinnati head the standings on 33 points but Nashville are just five points behind after picking up their eighth win of the campaign. The Crew took a stunning second-minute lead with a magnificent 25-yard drive from Ghanaian winger Yaw Yeboah but Nashville responded strongly after the break. Fafa Picault turned in a corner from close range to level in the 56th minute. Teal Bunbury then put the hosts ahead 10 minutes from the end, heading in a perfectly delivered in-swinging corner from Daniel Lovitz. German midfielder Hany Mukhtar wrapped up the win in the seventh minute of stoppage time, ending a winding run with a fierce blast into the near post. With the defeat Columbus slip to 10th place, outside the playoff spots, on goal difference from Montreal. — AFP

Varner secures LIV title

WASHINGTON: American Harold Varner III beat South African Branden Grace by a shot to win the LIV Golf Invitational – DC tournament and claim the \$4 million prize on Sunday. Varner, who ended 12-under for the three-round week, made birdie on his final hole, the par-5 18th, at the Trump National course in Sterling, Virginia, to avoid a playoff after Grace had also birdied his final hole, the par-4 second. The win was the first, as a professional, on American soil for the 32-year-old Varner with his previous victories coming at the Australian PGA in 2016 and the Asian Tour's PIF Saudi International last February. Varner shot a four-under 68 in his final round after setting the early pace with his superb eight-under 64 on Friday. Grace had put himself in contention with a fine, bogey-free round of 66, including two birdies on the final three holes. — AFP

BARCELONA: Real Sociedad fell to a 2-1 defeat at Atletico Madrid on Sunday but still sealed qualification for next season's Champions League after Villarreal were beaten 2-1 at Rayo Vallecano. Imanol Alguacil's Basque outfit finished fourth in La Liga despite defeat only thanks to Villarreal losing too. Espanyol were relegated from the top flight after Valencia's Samuel Lino struck a stoppage-time equalizer in a gripping 2-2 draw.

One other side will go down along with already-relegated Elche on the final day of the season, with Real Valladolid currently 18th, a point from safety, after they drew 0-0 at Almeria. Celta Vigo lost 1-0 at Cadiz and are 17th, a point from safety, along with Almeria. "To get to this situation we have done many things wrong, but I think sincerely, from the most self-critical position personally and as a group, that we don't deserve this in this way," Espanyol midfielder Sergi Darder told Movistar. "Above all, we want to say sorry. We have such a big club badge that in many moments, we haven't represented. I'm the first to be angry, but have no doubt we will be back."

Antoine Griezmann and Nahuel Molina struck for Atletico in their win over Real Sociedad, who struggled to create much of note, perhaps aware of Villarreal's struggles. Eventually Alexander Sorloth pulled one back for the visitors at the Metropolitano to give them something to celebrate as they achieved their European goal. "I would have liked to be able to celebrate qualifying another way, but we have had a great season and are very happy," Real Sociedad striker Mikel Oyarzabal told Movistar. "We have to celebrate, the fans should enjoy it, and next Sunday we can have a party at home, a celebration - we'll do all we can to win that game and end things well."

Victory leaves Atletico third, a point behind Real Madrid. Villarreal will play in the Europa League next season, along with Real Betis, sixth, who beat Girona 2-1. Osasuna, who fell to a late 2-1 defeat by Getafe which took the Madrid side two points clear of the relegation zone, are seventh and currently in line to qualify for the Conference League. However Athletic Bilbao, Girona, Rayo and Sevilla remain in contention for the spot.

Pajaree beats Furue in LPGA Match-Play final

LOS ANGELES: Thailand's Pajaree Anannarukarn defeated Japan's Ayaka Furue 3&1 in Sunday's LPGA Match-Play final to capture her second career tour title. World number 97 Pajaree improved to 6-1 for the week at Shadow Creek in Las Vegas, Nevada, while 18th-ranked Furue settled for a second consecutive runner-up finish in the event.

"It was a great week and I'm definitely happy for everything," Pajaree said. "I just try every possible way to improve on my game and just keep believing. "I tried really hard to focus on myself. I missed a couple putts, I'm glad I was able to play decent enough." Pajaree, a four-time winner on the Thailand tour, took her only prior LPGA victory at the 2021 Handa World Invitational in Northern Ireland.

"Definitely a different feeling compared to the stroke play," she said. "Match play is taking a lot of energy out throughout the week. "When I won in Northern Ireland I continued playing great golf until early 2022. I'm trying to figure it out. Golf, sometimes it's hard." In the morning semi-finals, Pajaree won four of the last eight holes to defeat Sweden's Linn

Newgarden wins crash-filled 107th Indianapolis 500

LOS ANGELES: Josef Newgarden won the 107th Indianapolis 500 on Sunday, diving past Marcus Ericsson in the dramatic last sprint of a race that saw heavy crashes bring out three late red flags. The American Penske Racing driver, a two-time IndyCar series champion, won the showpiece event for the first time as he denied Ericsson a repeat. American Santino Ferrucci was third. "Everyone kept asking me why I haven't won this race," an emotional Newgarden said. "They look at you like a failure if you don't win it. I wanted to win it so bad."

He had to survive a chaotic final 14 laps that saw the race halted three times before he finally took the checkered flag. American Kyle Kirkwood escaped serious injury in a crash that had his AJ Foyt Racing car skidding upside down against the wall with sparks flying and brought out the red flag with 14 laps remaining. "All I know is I was up in the fence, which is

Grillo wins PGA Colonial crown

HOUSTON: Argentina's Emiliano Grillo birdied the second playoff hole to defeat American Adam Schenk on Sunday to win the PGA Tour's Charles Schwab Challenge for his first triumph in eight years. The 30-year-old South American fired a two-under par 68 and despite a closing double bogey finished level with Schenk on eight-under 272 for 72 holes at Colonial Country Club in Fort Worth, Texas. After both parred 18 to begin the playoff, they went to the par-3 16th and Grillo's tee shot landed just inside five feet.

Schenk, seeking his first PGA title, missed the green but chipped within three feet only for Grillo to make his putt for the long-sought title. "It has been



MADRID: Real Sociedad's Spanish forward Carlos Fernandez (center) vies with Atletico Madrid's Spanish midfielder Pablo Barrios (left) and Atletico Madrid's Spanish midfielder Koke during the Spanish league football match between Club Atletico de Madrid and Real Sociedad on May 28, 2023. —AFP

Camp Nou bows out

La Liga champions Barcelona enjoyed a series of emotional goodbyes in their final match at Camp Nou before the stadium is rebuilt, thrashing Real Mallorca 3-0. Captain Sergio Busquets and defender Jordi Alba also played at home for the last time, in the club's penultimate league match of the season, and were awarded warm farewells by the sell-out crowd.

Ansu Fati struck twice in the first half and Gavi added one after the break as the Catalans triumphed in style. Marc-Andre ter Stegen earned his 26th clean sheet of the season, equaling the all-time record in the division, set by Deportivo La Coruna's Francisco Liano in the 1993-94 campaign. The only bad news for Barcelona came when defender Alejandro Balde was taken off injured in the first half - he will be out for at least six weeks and miss Spain's Nations League final four games in June.

Camp Nou, inaugurated in September 1957, has

Grant 3&1 while Furue ousted Ireland's Leona Maguire 2&1. Pajaree, traveling without her father for the first time, made 12 birdies in 34 holes on the final day, eight of them in the semi-final. "I used all my birdies and all my focus on the first 18," Pajaree said.

Furue gains confidence

Furue, who lost 3&2 to South Korea's Ji Eun-hee in last year's final, is an eight-time Japan Tour winner who took her only LPGA title at last year's Women's Scottish Open. "In match play, I gain more confidence above my play," Furue said through a translator after her only loss in seven matches. "That will be this week's gain." In the final, Furue won the second and Pajaree took the third with pars.

Pajaree parred to win the par-3 fifth and, after Furue won the sixth with a birdie, the Thai standout birdied the par-5 seventh for a 1-up edge. Pajaree birdied the par-4 12th for a 2-up advantage but Furue answered by dropping her approach inches from the hole to win the par-3 13th and pull back within one.

Pajaree responded by putting her second shot inches from the hole for a birdie concession at 14 to restore her 2-up edge, then tied 15 with a bogey and 16 with a par. At the par-3 17th, Pajaree reached the green and Furue found a bunker. She blasted out

never a good thing in IndyCar," said Kirkwood, whose on-board camera showed a remarkable in-cockpit angle on his slide.

Sweden's Felix Rosenqvist had hit the wall and careened across the track and Kirkwood was unable to avoid contact, but, after his frightening ride, emergency workers righted the car and helped him climb out. "Thank God these cars are so safe," he said. "I saw sparks flying everywhere. That's the scary part. You're upside-down and you're kind of stuck at that point." Miraculously, the tire that went flying over the catch-fencing missed the grandstand, landing in a parking lot with no reported injuries.

Shortly after the restart, Mexico's Pato O'Ward lost control as he challenged to regain the lead and crashed into the wall. Augustin Canapino and Simon Pagenaud were caught up in the aftermath, bringing out another red flag with six laps remaining. O'Ward had just been overtaken by Newgarden for the lead and was under Ericsson entering turn two when he spun. "I was way too nice, I got onto the apron to give (Ericsson) room and I got squeezed," O'Ward said. "I'll remember that one." A chaotic restart saw five cars caught up in a mid-pack crash that brought out first the yellow and then the red flag. Ericsson was in front when the caution came out, but he couldn't hold

such a ride," Grillo said. "It makes me think of where I am coming from. It makes me think of my family...They say the second is harder than the first. It definitely was. "I'm on top of the world right now. Hopefully I can stay there for at least one more week." Grillo won his only prior PGA title at the 2015 Frys.com Open, beating American Kevin Na with a birdie on the second playoff hole in his debut as a PGA member.

The only other Argentine winner of the event was Roberto De Vincenzo in 1957, the first Colonial champion from outside the United States. World number one Scottie Scheffler, who made a hole-in-one in shooting 67, shared third on 273 with England's Harry Hall, who shot 73 after a bogey on 18 to miss the playoff. "Winning on the PGA Tour is a lot closer than I thought it was," Hall said. "Coming down the stretch there you don't need amazing golf to get it done."

Grillo, who had four birdies and two bogeys in the

been one of football's most iconic stadiums since then. Alba departed in tears when he was substituted in the final stages with the crowd chanting his name, while Busquets followed and was given an ovation of his own. The duo could yet appear in Barcelona's final game of the season at Celta Vigo next weekend, but for nearly 90,000 supporters, this is the end of an era.

Busquets has won La Liga nine times and the Champions League on three occasions, making over 700 appearances for the club. Alba departs with six La Liga trophies and one Champions League triumph among other silverware. The duo both gave speeches on the pitch after the game. "Since I was little I've dreamed of playing a game in this stadium that we're saying goodbye to temporarily," said Busquets. "We're already the best club in the world, with the best players, and now we'll have a stadium on that level." — AFP

LAS VEGAS: Pajaree Anannarukarn of Thailand poses for a photo with the winner's trophy after winning on day five of the Bank of Hope LPGA Match-Play presented on May 28, 2023. — AFP

with a shot that struck the hole and rolled well beyond, then surrendered the hole and the triumph to Pajaree. In the semis, 19th-ranked Maguire and Furue each won two of the first five holes with pars. Birdies at six and seven lifted Maguire 2-up but Furue answered with an eagle at the par-5 ninth and a birdie at the par-4 10th to pull level. — AFP

INDIANAPOLIS: Josef Newgarden, driver of the #2 PPG Team Penske Chevrolet, kisses the bricks with wife Ashley Newgarden, after winning The 107th Running of the Indianapolis 500 at Indianapolis Motor Speedway on May 28, 2023. — AFP

off Newgarden after the green flag flew to set off the final shootout. "I just thought it was a very unfair and dangerous end to the race," Ericsson said of restarting on cold tires with just two laps remaining. "Congratulations to Josef, he's a worthy champion, but I'm very disappointed with the way it ended." — AFP

first seven holes, made a 17-foot birdie putt at the 12th and curled in a birdie putt from just inside 20 feet at the par-3 16th, little knowing he'd win with another birdie on the same hole after a double bogey at 18. "I made a double on 18 and honestly I didn't care," Grillo said. "I'd have liked to get it on the 72nd but I closed with some great swings at 18 and two great birdies at 16."

Hall missed a 16-foot par putt to slip two adrift of Grillo, while Schenk made an eight-footer to birdie 16 and reach eight-under. But Grillo went way right off the 18th tee, took a penalty drop, needed two more to reach the green and two-putted for double bogey to create a three-way tie for the lead. Hall, ranked 197th, found water off the 18th tee and made bogey. Schenk missed a 15-foot birdie putt and tapped in for a playoff. "The last was a little bit funky," Hall said. "I hit a great shot. It overdrove on the went and went really far. I didn't think I could reach that. It went 340 (yards)." — AFP

Sports

Kuwait crowned Champions of the Zain Premier League

Company congratulates club on second consecutive win and 18th overall title



Al Shaheen, Al Khashti, Al Ghanim, and Al Enzi crown the Champions.

KUWAIT: Zain recently joined in officially crowning Kuwait SC as Champions of the Zain Premier League (Dawri Zain) during the special ceremony held at Kuwait Stadium in Kaifan during the closing round of the 2022/2023 season. The event was attended by scores of Kuwait SC fans who were eager to see their favorite team lift the top tier's trophy. Zain took to the field to join in crowning the Champions during the ceremony that was attended by Kuwait Football Association Chairman Abdullah Al Shaheen, Zain Kuwait Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti, KFA Vice Chairman for Financial Affairs Ahmad Al Enzi, Kuwait SC Chairman Khalid Al Ghanim, and the club's board members.

The company congratulated Kuwait SC players and officials on attaining the championship title for the second consecutive year, finishing on top with a total of 55 points. In addition, the team recorded a historic achievement by becoming the club with the most Kuwait Premier League titles with 18 titles in its history. Kuwait SC secured the title two weeks before the season's last match, and the official crowning and trophy presentation came in the last match of the closing round.

Zain joined in crowning the Champions as part of its official sponsorship of the KFA's competitions for the 2022-2026 seasons, including the Kuwait 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). As the Official Sponsor, Zain offers KD 50,000 worth 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 role centered around three main areas: supporting athletes with cash prizes, launching social events and interacting with fans at stadiums, and the first-ever Fantasy Football League in Kuwaiti football's history. These contributions and more went 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.



Kuwait SC players celebrate their historic title.



Bellingham named Bundesliga player of the year

BERLIN: Two days after the heartbreak of watching his team lose the German title in the last match, Dortmund's teenage midfielder Jude Bellingham was on Monday named Bundesliga player of the season. The 19-year-old England international collected most votes in a 'Team of the Season' poll. Bellingham, who suffered a late-season knee injury, was an unused substitute as Dortmund drew 2-2 at home to Mainz on Saturday to allow Bayern Munich to take top spot on goal difference.

Bellingham appeared in 31 of his team's 34 games starting in 30, 2,693 league minutes, the most of any player at the club, scoring eight goals and providing four assists. "Every year or half year that I've played at the club, my responsibility in the team has increased," he was quoted as saying on the Bundesliga site. "I came to the club as a talented lad, but I have added elements to my game that have taken it to the next level."

"I have to continue to be everywhere on the pitch and try my best to contribute going forwards and backwards and try and control games, try to dominate the midfield," he said. "I want my teammates to see that I'm always doing everything I can to make sure we win. If we lose a game, I'm the worst person." The midfielder, who signed for Dortmund at 17 from English Championship team Birmingham City



Dortmund's English midfielder Jude Bellingham

for 29 million euros (\$32 million), had a starring role in England's midfield at the World Cup last year, and has been heavily linked with a move to Real Madrid or Manchester City in the summer.

When he led his team out at Cologne in October, Bellingham became the youngest match captain since the Bundesliga started recording the data in 1995. His coach Edin Terzic called Bellingham "the oldest 19-year-old in the world". According to Bundesliga statistics, over the season, Bellingham, also covered more distance (322 km) than any of his teammates and won 482 'duels', a league high. Bellingham was one of four Dortmund players in the team of the season selected by a vote of 'fans, clubs and experts'. — AFP

London Irish on the brink as Premiership risks losing 3rd club

LONDON: London Irish could join Wasps and Worcester in being suspended from the Premiership on Tuesday following a season of unprecedented financial turmoil in English club rugby. Earlier this month, the Rugby Football Union set a May 30 deadline for London Irish to prove a proposed takeover by an American consortium is a genuine going concern, with the Exiles having reported debts of £30 million (35 million euros, \$37 million).

The RFU, the English game's governing body, stressed the Exiles had to satisfy several conditions in order to compete in the Premiership next season. These included a takeover completed by May 30, which would also require RFU approval, with the buyers undertaking to provide all required working capital to meet the club's obligations for at least next season, or the club showing that it will continue to be funded to operate throughout that campaign.

The RFU added: "If the club fails to meet these conditions, it will be suspended from participating in the Premiership (and other competitions) in season 2023/24 to avoid a scenario where the club enters insolvency mid-season, with the corresponding and substantial impact that has on players, staff and fans, as well as on the remainder of the league." But the takeover, let alone one that satisfies the RFU's conditions, looks increasingly unlikely to go

through by Tuesday's deadline.

The Daily Mail reported that during a virtual meeting on Friday, players were told they were free to talk to other clubs amid the ongoing uncertainty. But with a salary cap in place and the market for players already flooded after Wasps and Worcester were expelled from the Premiership after entering administration earlier this season, finding a new club may be difficult. Significantly, London Irish do not own their own ground, with the club now playing its home games at Brentford football club's Gtech Community Stadium.

That makes it all the more difficult to generate revenue, with the Exiles' long-term owner Mick Crossan saying in September he was ready to sell up. London Irish lock Api Ratuniarawa, speaking before Friday's meeting, told the Mail: "We've got families. We've got bills to pay. It's quite stressful thinking about — hopefully it goes through. We are just hoping for the best." A top-flight campaign that started with 13 clubs ended with Saracens' the best of the surviving 11 following their 35-25 win over Sale in the Premiership final at Twickenham on Saturday.

London Irish, coached by former Ireland boss Declan Kidney, narrowly missed out on the title-deciding play-offs with the side featuring several rising stars, including England wing Henry Arundell. But the off-field picture remains troubling, with Saracens supremo Mark McCall, a former Exiles and Ireland centre, saying after Saturday's final: "It's hard to be jubilant when these things are happening. 'I love London Irish and it would be awful if that (the club going out of business) happens.' He added: "It's a shame because it feels like the on-field product is good. Hopefully we can get it right off the field." — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Change of Name

I, AWA SINGH, holder of Indian Passport No. U0747355 Indian permanent address Vill. Taluwal, PO Naushera, Tehsil Mukerian, Distt. Hoshiarpur-144211, Indian residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name AVAV and surname SINGH. **(#3546) 29/05/2023**

I, MANSUR, holder of Indian Passport No. T4007957, do hereby change my name to MANSUR (as given name) LOKHANDWALA (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known

in the name MANSUR LOKHANDWALA and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. **(#3545) 29/05/2023**

I, KHOZEMA, holder of Indian Passport No. Z5708356, do hereby change my name to KHOZEMA (as given name) MUKADAM (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name KHOZEMA MUKADAM and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. **(#3545) 29/05/2023**

Automated enquiry about the CivilID card is 1889988

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



Embassy of India
Kuwait

TENDER No. - KUW/ADM/872/01/2023

DATED-30th MAY 2023

TENDER NOTICE FOR REFURBISHMENT OF AUDITORIUM

Embassy of India, Kuwait invites bids from interested companies for refurbishment of its Auditorium including upgradation of acoustics, lighting, audio video equipment and all other technical requirements with other required minor civil work.

Prospective / Interested companies are advised to inspect the area and present their offers in a sealed cover marked "Offer for refurbishment of Auditorium- to be opened by addressee only" and addressed to the "Head of Chancery, Embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Arabian Gulf Street, Safat 13015, Kuwait." The bid must be submitted at the Embassy on or before 26th June 2023.

A pre bid meeting with all prospective/interested bidders will be held at 1430 hrs on 11th June 2023 in the Embassy of India, Kuwait.

The detailed tender document along with its annexure may be downloaded from Central Procurement Portal <https://eprocure.gov.in/cpppl/> and also the official website of the Embassy of India, Kuwait from <https://indembkwat.gov.in/tender-kuwait-in-india.php>. (please scan QR)

For any other clarification please contact Mr. S. James Jacob, Attache (Administration) on any working day (Sunday - Thursday) between 0800 hrs 1630 hrs on +96522513498 or email to: adminkuwait@mea.gov.in.



Leicester, Leeds relegated from EPL

Arsenal end season on high, thrash Wolves 5-0



LEICESTER: A Leicester City's fan is consoled at the end of the English Premier League football match between Leicester City and West Ham United at King Power Stadium in Leicester. Leicester City wins 2 - 1 against West Ham United, but gets relegated from the Premier League. — AFP

LIVERPOOL: Leicester were relegated from the Premier League just seven years after a spectacular title triumph as Everton prolonged their 69-year stay in the English top flight by beating Bournemouth 1-0 on Sunday. Leeds will also return to the Championship after three seasons in the Premier League as their relegation was confirmed by a 4-1 defeat to Tottenham. Abdoulaye Doucoure was Everton's hero after the Mali midfielder smashed home from the edge of the box on 57 minutes to spark jubilant celebrations around Goodison Park.

In contrast, Leicester were crestfallen as they went down, despite their 2-1 win over West Ham. Everton began the afternoon in control of their own fate but put a raucous support of 40,000 fans at Goodison Park through the mill before securing survival. "There's cracks here but it's not broken and we've shown that. We've shown the fighting spirit," said Everton manager Sean Dyche. "We shouldn't be in this position and we've got to learn from this."

Scoring goals has been a problem for Dyche's men and they badly missed the presence of talismanic striker Dominic Calvert-Lewin. Even when Everton did open up the visitors, Bournemouth goalkeeper Mark Travers produced stunning saves to deny Idrissa Gueye and Demarai Gray either side of half-time. Conceding first would likely have been fatal for the Toffees, who have not scored more than once at home since October.

The relief around Goodison was palpable when Doucoure's sweet strike finally got the better of Travers. Everton still had an anxious half hour to see out and Jordan Pickford had to make a fine save to deny Matias Vina an equalizer during 10 minutes of added time to get over the line.

Too late for Leicester

Leicester did what they had to do on the day as the Foxes won for just the second time in 17 games. But it was too little, too late for a talented squad that badly underperformed this season. In contrast to Everton, Leicester have an array of attacking weapons and they showed the quality they possess with the opening goal as Harvey Barnes exchanged a

one-two with Kelechi Iheanacho and slotted calmly into the far corner.

Wout Faes headed in Leicester's second just after the hour, but by that point the home crowd at the King Power knew Everton led and they needed a favor from Bournemouth that never arrived. "Every manager will think I could have done this or that but hindsight is a wonderful thing. You finish where you deserve to over a season," said Leicester interim boss Dean Smith. "Mine was a remit to come in for seven weeks and eight games and try to keep the club in the Premier League. Unfortunately I've fallen a little bit short."

'Professional suicide'

Leeds required a series of results to go in their favor and never gave themselves a chance as Harry Kane opened the scoring after just two minutes at Elland Road. "It's professional suicide," said Leeds boss Sam Allardyce of his side's start. "We made critical errors at the wrong period of time." Pedro Porro doubled Spurs' lead early in the second half

and Kane reached 30 Premier League goals for the season after Jack Harrison had pulled one back for Leeds. Lucas Moura rounded off the scoring with virtually his final kick of a five-year Tottenham career. Victory for Spurs was not enough to secure a place in next season's Europa Conference League as Aston Villa beat Brighton 2-1 to seal seventh place. Manchester City had long since sealed a fifth title in six years, but the champions' 25-game unbeaten run in all competitions came to an end as Brentford beat Pep Guardiola's men 1-0.

Ethan Pinnock scored the only goal five minutes from time as the Bees completed a memorable double over City this season. Arsenal put the disappointment of their demise in the title race behind them to round off their season on a high as Granit Xhaka scored twice in a 5-0 thrashing of Wolves. Manchester United made sure of third with a 2-1 win over Fulham as fourth-placed Newcastle were held 1-1 at Chelsea. But the game of the day came at St Mary's where already-relegated Southampton and Liverpool played out a 4-4 draw. — AFP

AC Milan secure CL qualification

ROME: Olivier Giroud secured Champions League (CL) qualification for AC Milan with the only goal in Sunday's 1-0 win at troubled Juventus. Giroud guided home a brilliant header from Davide Calabria's cross in the 40th minute to guarantee Milan at least fourth place and complete Italy's line-up in Europe's top club competition next season. It was the one moment of quality in an otherwise drab match in Turin in which little of consequence happened apart from Giroud's 12th league goal of the season.

Stefano Pioli's side, who were knocked out of this year's Champions League in the semi-finals by Inter Milan, join their local rivals, Lazio and champions Napoli on the continent's big stage. They are six points ahead of fifth-placed Atalanta with one match left in what has been a long season and one in which their title defence collapsed after the World Cup. "This was the first time we truly tried to be competitive in two tournaments and we were lacking something," said Pioli. "We can enjoy the win and qualification, but it was a strange season for many reasons."

Juve meanwhile stay seventh and in the Europa Conference League spot after being deducted 10 points for illicit transfer activity by the Italian Football Federation on Monday. Massimiliano Allegri's side can still reach the Europa League spots as they are one point behind Roma in sixth, although the spectre of more punishment for financial irregularities hangs over the Turin giants.

Lecce ensured Serie A survival after late penalty drama gave them a 1-0 win over Monza, while a crushing late draw with Empoli took Verona's survival battle to the final day. Lorenzo Colombo rammed home the spot-kick which maintained Lecce's Serie A status in the 11th minute of stop-



AC Milan's French forward Olivier Giroud

page time after Christian Gytkjaer was penalized for handball following a VAR check. Former Denmark forward Gytkjaer had a penalty of his own saved by Wladimiro Falcone with six minutes of regular time remaining.

That allowed Colombo to fire Lecce five points clear of the drop zone and cause coach Marco Baroni to sink to his knees in joy and grief for his recently deceased father. "I thought about my father because I lost him recently... I felt him by my side in that moment," Baroni told DAZN. Verona sit in the final relegation spot after a gut-wrenching Giangiacomo Magnani own goal in the sixth minute of injury time which snatched a 1-1 draw for safe Empoli. They are level on 31 points with 17th-placed Spezia, whom they might have to face in a play-off devised this season to decide who ends up in 18th place between teams who finish on the same points. — AFP

Mbappe named best player for 4th time in a row

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe was voted the Ligue 1 player of the season for the fourth successive time Sunday after helping Paris Saint-Germain win a record 11th French title. The France star has scored 28 goals in the league this term and is on course to finish as the division's top scorer for the fifth season running. "It's a pleasure, I always wanted to win, to write my name into the league's history. But even with all the ambition I have I didn't expect to win so quickly," said Mbappe on receiving his award.

Mbappe, scorer of 40 goals this campaign, snubbed Real Madrid at the end of last season and signed a new three-year contract to stay with PSG. According to reports, the 24-year-old's contract will run out next year unless he exercises an option to stay until 2025. Asked about his future at the awards ceremony, Mbappe replied: "I will be here again next season."

He is the first four-time winner of a prize first awarded in 1994, surpassing Zlatan Ibrahimovic who won the accolade on three occasions with PSG. Franck Haise of Lens was named coach of the season after leading the club to second place and a return to Champions League football for the first time in two decades. Lens goalkeeper Brice Samba was also honored while Paris Saint-Germain left-back Nuno Mendes earned the best young player award. He was one of four PSG players in the team of the season alongside Mbappe, Lionel Messi and Achraf Hakimi.

Meanwhile, Paris Saint-Germain back-up goalkeeper Sergio Rico is in "serious" condition after a horse-riding accident, the French club confirmed Sunday. The 29-year-old Spaniard was on the bench for PSG as they won the Ligue 1 title on Saturday before heading to Spain, where the accident happened in El Rocio in Andalusia.

A member of Rico's entourage told Spanish media that the player was kicked in the neck. "He is in serious condition," said a PSG spokesperson, while Spanish



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe gives thumbs up after receiving the Best Ligue 1 Player award during the 31th edition of the UNFP (French National Professional Football players Union) trophy ceremony on May 28, 2023. — AFP

newspaper Marca reported he is "stable". "Sergio is in good hands and is battling to pull through," the player's family said in a statement late Sunday. "He is receiving the best care, we must tread with caution, especially for the next 48 hours." Rico was taken by helicopter to Seville's Virgen del Rocío hospital, where he was placed on life support, according to local TV channel Canal Sur, citing medical sources.

According to his family's statement, the accident happened when the horse Rico was riding "became uncontrollable" after passing a cart being pulled by mules. News agency EFE quoted the player's entourage as indicating that Rico did not fall off his horse but that he received a hoof in the neck. "Lots of strength and a speedy recovery," wrote Sevilla, whom he played for previously, on Twitter. PSG tweeted their support for Rico and said they were "staying in contact with his family. The entire Red and Blue community offer them their support."

Rico, born in Seville, won two Europa Leagues with his hometown side before moving on loan to Premier League side Fulham in 2019. The goalkeeper then moved to PSG on loan in 2019 before making the move permanent in 2020. Rico was loaned by the French side to Mallorca in January 2022, before returning to PSG for the current campaign. He has made 24 appearances for PSG and has been capped once by the Spanish national team. — AFP