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The social challenges



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Kuwait and Saudi warn as Zionists target Rafah

Zionists deploy new military AI in Gaza war

Qatar crowned Asian champions



LUSAIL: Qatar's players celebrate with the Qatar 2023 AFC Asian Cup trophy during the podium ceremony after the final football match between Jordan and Qatar on February 10, 2024. — AFP (See Page 16)

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Saturday voiced extreme concern over the plans of occupation forces to attack Rafah City in the Gaza Strip following the forced displacement of its civilian population. In a press statement, the ministry restated Kuwait's rejection of aggressive practices and displacement plans against the Palestinian people. It also echoed the country's call for the international community and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to live up to their responsibilities by protecting Palestinian civilians and put international accountability mechanisms in place in order to stop continued violations of international law.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia said on Saturday that Zionist entity's planned army operation in overcrowded Rafah would cause a "humanitarian catastrophe" and called for the United Nations Security Council to intervene. The kingdom "warned of the extremely dangerous repercussions of storming and targeting" Rafah and affirmed its "categorical rejection and strong condemnation of their forced deportation", in a foreign ministry statement carried by state media.

"This continued violation of international law and international humanitarian law confirms the necessity of convening the Security Council urgently to prevent Zionists from causing an imminent humanitarian catastrophe," the statement added. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Friday ordered the army to

prepare to evacuate civilians from Rafah ahead of a planned ground operation against Hamas in the city.

More than one million displaced Palestinians have taken refuge in the city in Gaza's far south, many sheltering in tents pushed up against the border with Egypt and the sea. Saudi Arabia, home to the holiest sites in Islam, has never recognized Zionist entity but had been considering to do so before the war broke out in October.

Vowing to eliminate Hamas, Zionists launched a massive military offensive in Gaza that the Hamas-run territory's health ministry says has killed at least 27,947 people, mostly women and children. Riyadh has repeatedly called for a ceasefire while criticizing "aggression" in Gaza. While US President Joe Biden's administration has voiced optimism that Saudi-Zionist normalization can be revived, Saudi Arabia said this week it had told Washington it would not establish ties with Zionist entity until an independent Palestinian state is "recognized" and Zionist forces leave Gaza.

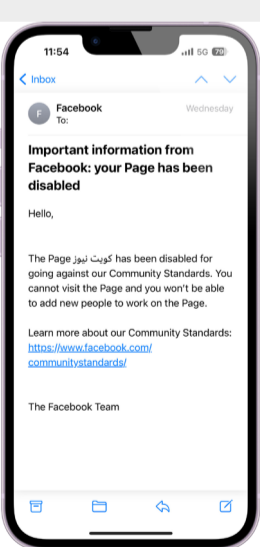
In another development, Zionist army has deployed some AI-enabled military technology in combat for the first time in Gaza, raising fears about the use of autonomous weapons in modern warfare. The army has hinted at what the new tech is being used for, with spokesman Daniel Hagari saying

Continued on Page 6

Facebook suspends Kuwait News page for reporting Zionist crimes

KUWAIT: Facebook has suspended the page of Kuwait Times' sister news agency Kuwait News, claiming that their posts reporting the Zionist entity's crimes in Gaza have violated their 'Community Standards'. This comes following reports stating that Meta will start aggressively censoring posts containing the word 'Zionist' on its social media platforms. Kuwait News has actively provided daily coverage of the Zionist military assault on Gaza since the start of the current aggression on October 7. It posted regular updates to millions of its followers on Instagram, Facebook, X and other social media platforms in Arabic, simultaneously with Kuwait Times' English news coverage online and in the print.

Various news agencies in Kuwait, where freedom of the press is protected under the constitution, have provided up-to-date coverage of the Zionist entity's military operation in Gaza over the past four months. The Washington Post had reported Friday that Meta was debating whether to more aggressively remove some social media posts containing the words 'Zionist', saying that the move would be made to counter a surge of anti-semitism online.



Minister visits Sabah Al-Salem Maritime Base

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Acting Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef is an integral part of Kuwait's comprehensive security system. The minister made the remarks while on a field tour of Sabah Al-Salem Maritime Base, the Interior Ministry's public relations and media department said in a press release. "It is necessary to keep cautious and vigilant to deal with various targets in territorial waters and to monitor and address any

violation, as well as to develop monitoring plans to confront infiltrators and smugglers in order to maintaining Kuwait's security and stability," the minister said in the press release.

During his visit, the minister was briefed on the tasks and duties assigned to the General Directorate of the Coast Guard. The minister examined how the radar system, operations room, and the search and rescue center work. He was also given a tour of some of French boats in possession of the ministry. The visit included a look into technical workshops and patrol vessels, including those that were reconstructed, some that were recently brought into service, and others that have been manufactured by the Coast Guard General Directorate workshops. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Acting Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef visits Sabah Al-Salem Maritime Base. — KUNA

KD 5,000 fine or jail term for throwing water balloons

KUWAIT: Throwing water balloons is considered a violation of the environment protection law in Kuwait, the environmental police said, noting that it is punishable by up to a KD 5,000 fine or three years in jail. The environmental police urged people to protect their children and follow the law during the

national celebrations.

National celebration is a joyful moment for kids and adults in Kuwait. People are used to going on parades - throwing water balloons and spraying white foam on each other. Few years ago, the government banned the use of foam spraying during celebrations; so many people added another item to their celebration gear: water balloons. Earlier, the Ministry of Electricity and Water launched an awareness campaign against wasting water during national celebrations. Several people have complained of being attacked with the water balloons by children in different neighborhoods.



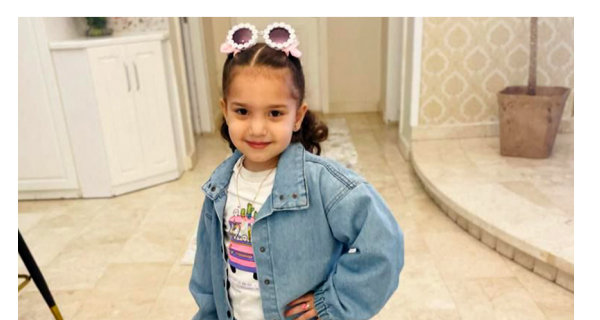
KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti youth holds a water balloon while riding a car during celebrations in this file photo. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

6-year-old Gazan found dead after pleading for help

GAZA: Six-year-old Hind Rajab pleaded to be rescued, after her family's car came under fire in war-ravaged Gaza City, leaving her alone, frightened and injured, surrounded by the bodies of her dead relatives. "I am so scared," she had said in a desperate phone call to the Palestine Red Crescent Society. "Call some-

one to come get me, please." But after more than two weeks of frantic efforts to reach her, Hind's body was recovered on Saturday, alongside relatives and two PRCS rescue workers sent to find her.

The aid agency and the health ministry in the Hamas-run Gaza Strip confirmed the grim discovery, and blamed Zionist forces. The Palestinian militant group Hamas urged human rights groups and the international community to document what it called a "horrific crime". Hind's highly publicized case comes as aid agencies warn that children and families are bearing the brunt of Zionist war. Children are dying "at an alarming rate" in Gaza, the UN



GAZA: This updated handset photo shows six-year-old Palestinian girl Hind Rajab. — AFP

Continued on Page 6



Kuwait commends UN on pivotal role in resolving missing persons

Solve this file in order to 'heal the wounds'

WASHINGTON: Kuwait has commended the UN Security Council (UNSC) and all concerned bodies for their important and balanced role in researching for and identifying the bodies of prisoners, missing Kuwaitis, and third-country nationals and returning Kuwaiti property stolen during the Iraqi occupation in 1990. Addressing the UN Security Council, Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Tareq Al-Bannai, urged Iraq to accelerate the pace of cooperation to completely resolve this humanitarian issue.

The issue of missing Kuwaitis and third-country nationals, as well as the return of Kuwaiti property, including the national archives, features high on the agenda of Kuwait's foreign policy, he said. The Kuwaiti diplomat noted that, during his country's non-permanent membership at the UNSC in 2019, Kuwait submitted the draft of the unanimously approved UNSC resolution No. 2474, which was the first of its kind on missing persons during armed conflicts.

Al-Bannai expressed Kuwait's permanent delegation's readiness to work with the Republic of Korea during its presidency of the UN Council, which will start next June, to implement the provisions of this resolution. He said that the resolution is a direct result of Kuwaitis' bitter experience during the brutal Iraqi aggression in 1990 and of their firm belief in the human nature of this issue. This is a humanitarian file that Kuwait did not politicize and will not do so at any time, the ambassador affirmed, adding that the UNSC has assumed its responsibilities perfectly in handling the situation between the Republic of Iraq and the State of Kuwait.

Since 1990, the Council has gradually undertaken all available means and powers, such as estab-

lishing a peacekeeping mission, setting mechanisms for compensation, and demarcating the borders between Kuwait and Iraq, in accordance with Resolution No. 833. He commended the Security Council in particular and the United Nations in general for their wonderful success in handling this sensitive file.

With regard to the issue of missing Kuwaiti prisoners and persons and third-country nationals as well as the return of Kuwaiti property, including the national archives, Al-Bannai said "the Security Council issued Resolutions No. 686 and 687 of 1991 and No. 1284 of 1999 to give a high-level coordinator the responsibility of following up on this file before transferring these competencies to the UNAMI, in accordance with Security Council Resolution No. 2107 of 2013.

He thanked Iraq for its cooperation and understanding of the importance and sensitivity of this file, urging Iraqis at the same time to complete this cooperation and accelerate its pace to solve this file in order to "heal the wounds" of Kuwaitis. Previously called by the former UN secretary general as a "Humanitarian Center," Kuwait is a small country in its size but big in terms of its giving, Ambassador Al-Bannai said, adding that "we have offered all our experiences and abilities to all countries, institutions, and organizations that have visited us, and we are fully prepared to serve this humanitarian cause inside and outside the Security Council."

The Ambassador pointed out that the UNAMI submits two separate reports to the Security Council: the first is concerned with its work and mandate, while the second is about missing Kuwaitis and the third country's nationals, in addition to the missing Kuwaiti national property. He emphasized that Kuwait's permanent delegation is fully prepared to work



Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Tareq Al-Bannai

with all members of the Security Council, including the five newly joined countries, on this dossier.

Ambassador Al-Bannai thanked and appreciated the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the UNAMI, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, and all members of her team for their hard work and tangible efforts in moving this file forward and carrying out their tasks in this regard. He called for the continued submission of periodic reports about the progress in this file to

the Security Council.

He warned "that any retreat from implementing these mechanisms, which proved successful and effective, will undermine and negatively affect all the strenuous efforts that have been made in this regard since 1991." He said that the Kuwaiti permanent delegation's participation for the first time as a speaker at the Security Council meetings concerned with the UNAMI mission showed that "we believe that this file is of a humanitarian, not political nature." — KUNA

NBK, KDT organize cleaning campaign

KUWAIT: As part of its corporate social responsibility and corporate sustainability strategy, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) sponsored a project by Kuwait Dive Team (KDT) to clean up Shuwaikh's beach. This sponsorship is part of renewing NBK's collaboration with the KDT for the second year in a row. NBK Public Relations Senior Manager, Talal Al Turki, said: "The environment is a major



Talal Al Turki

priority for NBK. Protecting and preserving the environment are pivotal elements of our social commitment for the aim of realizing overall sustainability in Kuwait." Al Turki added: "NBK is proud to join Kuwait Dive Team in their initiatives and activities to clean up beaches and preserve the marine environment, which is one of the main drivers of the national economy."

Al Turki noted that NBK posts its campaigns on its social media platforms to raise awareness on the importance of the environment and environmental conservation, especially amidst the growing interest



in environmental and climate change issues, locally and globally. On his part, Head of Kuwait Dive Team Waleed Al-Fadhel said, "We are thankful to NBK for its contribution and efforts to preserve the environment by being our partner in this national endeavor. This sponsorship will play a significant role in protecting and preserving the marine life and maintain cleanliness of Kuwait's beaches."

NBK is keen on supporting programs that serve the community and spread awareness in efforts

to keep the environment safe and clean. NBK is always leading the way in sponsoring all environmental conservation initiatives and campaigns, as part of the endeavors to promote sustainability as a fundamental part of all the bank's activities across different sectors. The Kuwait diving team has been participating in the protection and rehabilitation of Kuwait's aquatic world through a host of activities that runs the spectrum of positive interaction with the environment.

PADA offers services to disabled people

DOHA: Kuwait's Public Authority for Disability Affairs (PADA) provided services for over 65,000 people with disabilities, based on the latest statistics in January 2024, a senior PADA official said. The PADA's services are offered to people with physical, visual, developmental, psychological, and educational disabilities as part of international, Arab, and Gulf obligations, said the Supervisor of the PADA's Technical Office in the Administration, Zainab Al-Enezi, in a statement to KUNA.

The official made the remark on the sidelines of the two-day Arab High-Level Forum for Mul-

tidimensional Social Development in Qatar. Creating more opportunities in both the public and private sectors for people with disabilities is a real investment that comes within Kuwait's 2035 vision, in cooperation with the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, Kuwait Municipality, and Ministry of Public Works, she added.

Al-Enezi noted that PADA's portal aims at meeting international standards for cybersecurity and becoming a digitalized platform, adding that the digitization of PADA is a step forward for people with disabilities in order to facilitate their use of the government mobile application Sahel. Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Child Affairs Dr. Feras Al-Sabah attended the two-day Arab High-Level Forum for Multidimensional Social Development. — KUNA



Zainab Al-Enezi



Kuwait Dermatology Center selected as Center of Excellence

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health announced that the Global Allergy and Asthma European Network (GA2LEN) selected Asaad Al-Hamad Dermatology Center as "Center of Excellence" in the field of "Atopic Eczema" worldwide. Dermatology Consultant and Head of Dermatology at the Center Dr. Atfal Allafi said in a press statement that the selection of the center by a globally renowned

organization such as GA2LEN added to the accomplishments of the health system in Kuwait. The Asaad Al-Hamad Center became the first recognized government center in the Middle East, part of 37 international centers, aiming to cooperate, pursue research, participate in global studies, hold educational workshops and exchange experiences to improve quality of health care. — KUNA



Asaad Al-Hamad Dermatology Center

In my view

Is quiet luxury a trend or an investment?



By Dr Esraa Al-Shatti

local@kuwaittimes.com

The significant uptick in searches for "quiet luxury" and "old money style" is remarkable: an increase of 684 percent and 874 percent respectively on Google. This is likely influenced by economic challenges prompting individuals to reassess their spending habits, leading to a noticeable shift toward prioritizing quality over quantity in purchasing decisions. This tendency to prioritize quality-driven choices seems to be shared by generations X, Z, and Alpha.

Bain & Co suggests that luxury companies poised for success in the coming decade will be those that embrace circular business models, such as resale. The management consultancy emphasizes the importance of focusing on "product life-cycle value" through reselling products multiple times to different customers. With the rising popularity of resale, driven by sustainability concerns, it is now easier than ever to sell items you no longer use or desire, especially those with high resale value.

Brands like Rolex exemplify this shift, offering certified pre-owned pieces through their boutiques, contributing to sustainability. While iconic handbags from Chanel and Hermes are renowned for their investment potential, with certain styles retaining an average value of over 100 percent according to the Rebag 2023 Clair Report, other designer items are also poised to provide financial returns in 2024.

When it comes to aesthetics, "quiet luxury" embodies a refined approach that guarantees elevated and secure investments. For brands that epitomize this notion, I recommend considering Hermes, Loro Piana, Brunello Cucinelli, and Celine. The fashion industry tends to gravitate toward timeless and practical pieces during economic challenges. This trend has been dubbed the "recession core" by trend forecasters in light of the recent economic climate.

With increasing global awareness of sustainability issues and the drawbacks of fast fashion, the concept of quiet luxury is becoming even more relevant. According to Sophie Hersan, quiet luxury isn't just about aesthetics, it is also about adopting thoughtful shopping habits and prioritizing timeless investments that maintain or even increase in value over time. Let us champion enduring value over the transient fads of fast fashion and promote the adoption of investment pieces that can be treasured for years to come.

Local

Kuwait celebrates National Day in style



KUWAIT: A highlight of the country's national celebrations is the installation of the largest display screen on Kuwait Municipal Council building. The 1,200-square meter screen is located at the intersection of Nayef Palace (Al-Assimah Governorate Building). Kuwait Municipality said the display is operated by the (screen net) system, which enables content from phones, TVs, or satellite channels. The screen was designed to be transparent, ensuring it does not affect the exterior appearance of the building. — KUNA

MoH promotes digitalization

Government plans to develop primary health care, new clinics

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi said his ministry commits itself to applying the government work program involving primary medical care and service digitalization. The minister made the remark after opening the annual conference on diagnostic imaging updates, held in Kuwait from February 7-10. The minister said the government program embraces

a plan to develop primary health care, new clinics, and personnel training as part of the ministry's holistic development drive.

He underlined that the ministry is keen on drawing upon cutting-edge technology and promising opportunities so as to provide better health services to patients, adding that the conference will look into several challenges, including artificial

intelligence. The minister pointed out that such scientific gatherings offer significant opportunities for the conferees to share future views and expertise with a view to fostering scientific and professional cooperation.

For her part, Dr. Asma'a Al-Failakawi, Chairman of the Diagnostic Imaging Updates conference and Head of the Diagnostic Radiology De-

partment at Amiri Hospital, said the event hosts several world and national experts and consultants in the field of diagnostic radiology. The conference offers a comprehensive update in the fields of breast, cardiac, and gastrointestinal imaging through lectures and interactive sessions with an emphasis on artificial intelligence, she said. — KUNA

Aging without offspring: The social challenges

By Ghadeer Ghloum

KUWAIT: Some people age without having been blessed with children, either by personal choice, medical reasons or other factors. This is something that some individuals find difficult and somewhat concerning, especially with the nature of ageing and weakness. To examine more closely the psychological, social and economic aspects of ageing without children, Kuwait Times spoke to Behavior and human relations consultant Saad Al-Refaei and psychologist Latifah Al-Hadhoud.

Kuwait Times: What are the social challenges faced by elderly people who are not blessed with children in emotional and social terms?

Saad Al-Refaei: Logically, there are no real problems with society, except for cultural problems, in which these individuals believe that they are somehow lacking according to societal norms. It means that those who do not have children feel that their lives are incomplete, which is not true. They should believe in themselves and what they have chosen for their lives. If they have tried in the past and were not blessed with children, they should accept their fate and move forward to live their lives.

Kuwait Times: What are the social and cultural pressures these individuals face in society? How do they affect their daily lives and social relationships?

Refaei: The separation between what a person wants for themselves and what society expects from them has become inevitable and necessary, because a person does not live to please others. I don't believe that we live in a time where someone would judge a person based on their inability or even lack of desire to have children. We should accept each



Latifah Al-Hadhoud

Saad Al-Refaei

other without personal restrictions, only respect.

Latifah Al-Hadhoud: From a social perspective, seniors face some problems resulting from the inability to maintain a suitable level of adaptation in performing social roles and maintaining relationships with their community at this age. Social relationships become limited at this stage and are influenced by the individual's social status and the strength or weakness of their relationships.

Kuwait Times: How does the absence of children affect the economic stability of the elderly? What are the financial challenges they may face in old age?

Refaei: The need to secure a continuous extra income for later in life is important regardless of having children or not. Personally, I will not rely on my children to spend on me during my old age, and I will not ask them for anything. I understand that everyone has their own lives. I believe in constant preparation for all circumstances. I have secured my future. The biggest obstacle in a person's life is relying on others and forgetting oneself, ignoring precious time and their life until it passes.

Kuwait Times: What advice do you have for those who suffer from loneliness or fear of challenges due to the absence of children in their lives?

Refaei: Reconcile with everything in life, even loneliness, as it may be inevitable. Reconcile with ev-



everything and accept everything in life. Fill your time up and adapt to the changing times, and you will not feel lonely. If you can reconcile with your loneliness and adapt to it, you will automatically become attractive to those around you, as people tend to be attracted to the strong. Be one of them.

Hadhoud: The elderly stage is considered one of the vital stages of growth that involves many physiological, biological, social and psychological changes. These changes lead to the emergence of many problems that hinder the elderly's adaptation and affect their mental and social well-being. Social isolation and feelings of loneliness are major risk factors for mental health problems that affect the elderly in advanced ages of life.

Some seniors are at risk of developing depression and anxiety due to the lack of support, care and appropriate services that suit their age and health condition. In this case, we recommend the elderly expressing their feelings freely and honestly, occupying their free time and engaging in group activities such as social and sports activities. It is also important to take care of both physical and mental health, as they have a significant impact on stability in this stage.

MoI pledges topnotch service for travelers

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior will facilitate procedures at Kuwait International Airport, providing topnotch services possible for all travelers, said a senior government official. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Saud Yousef Al-Sabah affirmed that all of the ministry's capabilities and services would be dedicated to facilitate travel procedures. Security and safety of travelers would be of highest priority, added the minister after an inspection tour terminals (T1), (T4), and (T5) as well as other facilities. — KUNA



Participants take a group photo after the lecture.

Expert emphasizes on patience and patient's psychological health

KUWAIT: A member of the Board of CAN Campaign, Dr. Hessa Majid Al-Shaheen, said a lecture was held within the activities of the ninth joint Gulf Cancer Awareness Week themed "We are with You" under the patronage of Health Minister Dr. Ahmad Abdulwahab Al-Awadhi. The lecture titled "And give good news to the patient" was held at the CAN premises in Qadisiya by a member of the teaching faculty at Kuwait University's Islamic Studies College, Sheikh Dr. Khalid Shujaa Al-Otaibi, in the presence of several women who survived cancer.

Sheikh Dr. Al-Otaibi emphasized the importance of patience from the religious aspect and its role in strengthening the patient's psychological health, and he concentrated on the meaning of patience and its pillars. He said there are three pillars without which patience will not exist. The first is refraining from anger against the inevitable, not complaining, and not taking actions that may anger God. So if you are tested, be patient and do not complain against your Lord for his creation because He is more merciful than them.

He said patience is bitter, but its results are sweeter than "honey," as it has been said. Among the benefits of patience are God's help for the patients,



Dr. Khalid Shujaa Al-Otaibi

unlimited rewards, the removal of all sins, and the blessings of God, as mentioned in the holy Quran: "And give good news to the patient. Who, when a misfortune befalls them, says, Surely we are Allah's, and to Him we shall surely return. Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord, and those are the followers of the right course."

The lecture was characterized by interaction by the audience, which benefited from the information Dr. Sheikh had given them. It is worth mentioning that the lecture is part of many activities the Cancer Aware Nation organizes on the occasion of the 9th Gulf Cancer Awareness Week. CAN earlier opened a clinic for awareness and early detection: it held an exhibition on February 2nd that aimed at raising awareness of the initial symptoms and prevention of many cancer types.

Obstetrics, gynecology conference kicks off

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Health Ministry Assistant Undersecretary for Foreign Services Hisham Kalendar (representing the Health Minister Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi) opened the 26th Kuwait Obstetrics and Gynecology Conference, organized by the OBGYN department of Jahra Hospital. Kalendar said the ministry is working on expanding the field of diagnostics and treatment in obstetrics and gynecology according to the most modern protocols so as to improve services and achieve advancements in the field of women's health, in addition to increasing the number of maternity and children's health clinics.

He pointed to the vital role of the obstetrics and gynecology departments in Kuwait, including the department in Jahra Hospital, which carried out 150 successful procedures using 3D technology. Meanwhile, the head of the gynecology and obstetrics department at Jahra Hospital and chairwoman of the conference, Dr. Hanan Al-Hussaini, said the conference is considered the largest scientific training venue in the field of women in the OBGYN field. The topics are in agreement with the ministry's vision and its keenness to keep up with the latest world developments.

She said the conference sheds light on many topics, particularly those related to women's medicine,



Health Ministry Assistant Undersecretary for Foreign Services Hisham Kalendar inaugurates the 26th Kuwait Obstetrics and Gynecology Conference. The summit was organized by the OBGYN department of Jahra Hospital.

as it directs its focus on the latest scientific developments. She said the three-day conference will tackle important topics about encouraging scientific research and enhancing communications and knowledge exchange between doctors and researchers.

Experts will share their experience on vital topics about the future of OBGYN as well as infertility in women and men and the fetal future, in addition to the future of robot surgeries and AI in fetal ultrasound. She said there were 1,672 natural births and 828 emergency caesarean births carried out in 2023 at the Jahra OBGYN department. Dr. Hanan Al-Hussaini said the fertility diseases unit is proud of having the men fertility laboratory, which carries out advanced fertility procedures, including micro-TC operations.



Kuwait, Tunisia officials discuss cooperation

TUNIS: Kuwait's Ambassador to Tunisia, Mansour Al-Omar, discussed with Tunisia's Minister of Culture, Hayet Guettat on upgrading cultural cooperation, including the possibility of holding a Kuwaiti cultural week in the North African country. The meeting tackled expanding cooperation in maintaining and preserving heritage, holding music and puppets performances, and organization of cultural and artistic events, the Tunisian Ministry of Cultural unveiled in a press statement. It added that the Kuwait envoy Al-Omar and Minister Guettat mulled a number of plans and proposals to materialize this goal, including the organization of a Kuwaiti cultural week in Tunisia, exchanging expertise in restoring historical manuscripts, and signing a cooperation agreement between Tunisia's National Heritage Institute (INP) and Kuwait's Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah. — KUNA

Gulf research center urges unifying education goals

DUBAI: The Gulf Arab States Educational Research Center has affirmed the importance of unifying goals of education among the GCC states and their peoples in light of joint bonds. This came in a statement made by the head of the center, Dr. Mohammad Al-Sharija, to KUNA on launching a non-governmental educational body for national and private education at the GCC Ministries of Education. He noted that the body featuring officials for teaching subjects tasked with enhancing cultural identity and national belonging came to carry out the activities of scientific reports on certain educational issues and topics. It aims to inform non-government education officials at the GCC education ministries about the results of studies made by the center on the reality of developing cultural identity at private schools in the member states, he noted.

He said that the center works on forming educational policies by providing data based on education research. He indicated that the center has made more than 380 strategic decisions since its establishment. On the center's most prominent research projects for the 2023-2024 plan, Al-Sharija said that it includes several research papers, including 'education during crises', 'blended learning', and governance of school performance', in addition to 'green schools'. — KUNA

Feeling unfocused and unproductive? Poor nutrition might be the reason

'Every organ needs fuel to operate properly'

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Lack of concentration while completing tasks, an inability to meet deadlines and easily forgetting things are common issues that people often complain about without understanding the underlying reasons behind them. According to nutritionist Dr Ahmad Al-Haddad, our bodies function like machines, and every organ needs fuel to operate properly. The brain, being a crucial organ, is strongly influenced by the type and amount of nutrients our bodies consume, significantly impacting our focus and overall performance.

Dr Haddad stated that depriving the body of essential nutrients is one of the leading factors behind these problems, especially if practiced in the long term. "God hasn't created all these nutrients for no purpose. Every single nutrient carries a specific benefit for our bodies that we cannot ignore," he noted. To enhance memory,

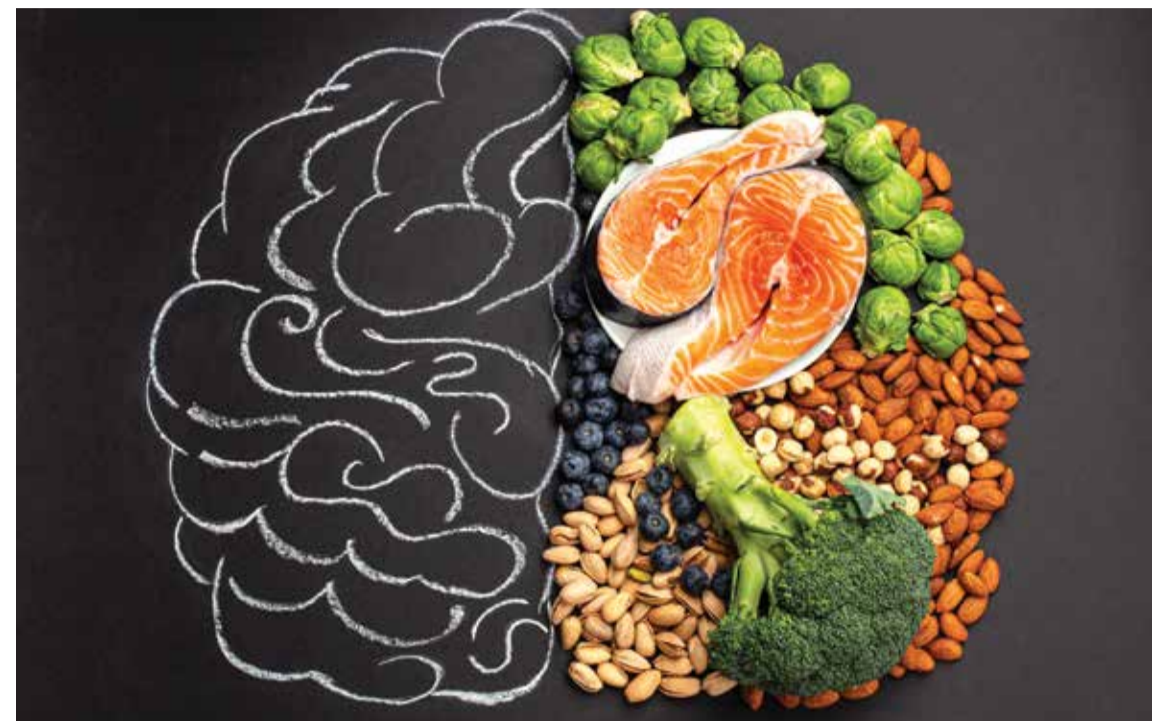


Dr Ahmad Al-Haddad

attention span and brain function, he suggested the intake of essential nutrients through the consumption of specific foods and drinks.

Salmon and fatty fish

Salmon and fatty fish are highly rich in omega-3 fatty acids, making them the best choice for increasing the intake of this vitamin, according to Dr Haddad. He emphasized the importance of omega-3 because 60 percent of the brain is made up of fats, with more than half of these fats consisting of omega-3, playing a critical role in enhancing brain function. Another reason why omega-3 intake is essential is that our bodies can't produce it, so there's no way it can be compensated for without consuming foods that contain it. He also mentioned nuts as a non-animal source of omega-3, although of lower quality than the animal source in terms of absorption and efficiency levels.



Caffeine

Caffeine, a go-to option for those feeling lazy or sleepy, has a positive and healthy impact on the brain, according to Dr Haddad. By stimulating the release of dopamine, a neurochemical known for increasing focus and maintaining concentration, caffeine can make a person feel more energized. However, he explained it also works on blocking adenosine, which is a chemical that is naturally produced in the body to increase one's desire to sleep. Dr Haddad warned that proper consumption of caffeine is crucial, with an ideal limit of 200 mg of coffee, equal to two cups a day, to increase focus levels without affecting sleep patterns or causing sleep deficiencies.

Berries

Dr Haddad said berries, highly concentrated with

antioxidants, have a distinctive ability to cross the brain barrier, promoting the wellness of brain cells by supporting their function. The benefits of antioxidants extend to protecting the body and reducing the risk of many diseases. As Dr Haddad listed these options, he highlighted the importance of following a balanced diet that includes all nutrients. Neglecting certain foods in favor of others means focusing on some benefits while neglecting others. He also emphasized the importance of fulfilling the exact needs of the body, not exceeding or falling short. Exceeding the body's nutrient requirements leads to the storage of nutrients as fats, increasing obesity, affecting brain function and causing other related health problems. To avoid such issues, he advised consulting a nutrition expert before following any diet, running tests to determine specific nutritional needs and adjusting the eating pattern accordingly.

Kuwait Science Club announces winners of 14th IIFME

KUWAIT: Kuwait Science Club announced the winners of the 14th International Invention Fair in the Middle East (IIFME), held in Kuwait under His Highness the Amir's patronage, drawing 200 participants from 40 countries. The IIFME's grand prize was given to the Egyptian inventor Dr. Ibrahim Al-Sherbini for his first invention in nanotechnology for continuous vasodilation, registered in his name, and his second invention for an environment-friendly, long-lasting, biodegradable urea fertilizer.

Kuwaiti inventors Hussain Al-Sayegh, Hussain Bahzad, and Nawaf Al-Juwaihel received the Kuwait Science Club Award for effervescent tablets capable of producing nano-fluids once placed in water, while



Chairman of the Kuwait Science Club and the Organizing Committee of IIFME Talal Al-Kharafi



The IIFME's grand prize winner was given to the Egyptian inventor Dr. Ibrahim Al-Sherbini. — KUNA photos

Jordanian inventor Sahar Javal seized the award of the International Exhibition of Inventions Geneva for her invention of a small incubator box.

Emirati inventor Yousef Al-Burei won first place in the Gulf Cooperation Council Patent Office (GCCPO) awards for his invention of a water leak detector, while Kuwaiti inventor Sara Al-Ghareeb won second place for a multifunctional agricultural machine, and Omani inventor Hajar Al-Azaria won third place for biofuels produced from animal waste. Other participants from Iraq, China, Tajikistan, and Kuwait received awards for their inventions in various fields.

Chairman of the Kuwait Science Club and the Organizing Committee of IIFME, Talal Al-Kharafi, said

during the winners announcement ceremony that His Highness the Amir's patronage reflects the leadership's support for creativity and invention. Al-Kharafi added that holding the fair in Kuwait showed the important role Kuwait plays in spreading the culture of invention and innovation, affirming that the event has become one of the most important international exhibitions, especially in the Middle East, since its launch in 2007. He noted that the increasing number of participating countries indicated the influence of the IIFME as a platform for economic opportunities to exchange ideas on inventions with potential investors to turn into marketable products that benefit society and contribute to their development. — KUNA



Gold winners of Kuwait Science Club's 14th IIFME.

Minister affirms Doha forum's importance

DOHA: It is important to participate in the high-level Arab Forum for Multidimensional Social Development in Doha to improve the values and structure of Arab families, said a top Kuwaiti government official. Kuwaiti Minister of Social Affairs and Family and Childhood Affairs Sheikh Feras Saud Al-Malik Al-Sabah said in a statement to KUNA that the two-day forum contributed to strengthening collective Arab social developmental efforts.

He added that the forum would contribute to realizing the desired sustainable development, fostering peace and security, and advancing prosperity and social justice in the region. Al-Sabah mentioned that the Ministry of Social Affairs was one of the most prominent ministries and institutions in Kuwait, playing a significant role in social protection. Al-Sabah



Minister of Social Affairs, and Family and Childhood Affairs Sheikh Feras Saud Al-Malik Al-Sabah

said that he, along with other Arab social ministers as well as the Arab League, signed the Doha Declaration for the Resilient Arab Family, which builds on Qatar's efforts to uphold the principles and identity of the Arab family by safeguarding it from threats to its unity and structure. — KUNA



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Pakistan army chief tells leaders to show 'maturity'

Quake halts search at Philippines landslide site

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GAZA CITY: People walk along a street ravaged by Zionist strikes in the Rimal neighborhood of Gaza City on Feb 10, 2024. --AFP

Hamas warns against Rafah push

Biden hardens tone on Zionist entity • Overnight strikes kill 110 including 25 in Rafah

GAZA CITY: Gaza's Hamas rulers warned on Saturday that Zionist entity's planned army operation in overcrowded Rafah could cause "tens of thousands" of casualties in the city that has become the last refuge for displaced Palestinians.

Zionist entity Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has ordered the army to set its sights on Rafah, telling military and security officials late Friday to "submit to the cabinet a combined plan for evacuating the population and destroying the battalions" of Hamas in the southern city. Hamas said in a statement that any military action would have catastrophic repercussions that "may lead to tens of thousands of martyrs and injured if Rafah... is invaded".

Netanyahu's announcement, coming only hours after US President Joe Biden had issued his strongest criticism of Zionist entity's response to the Oct 7 attack, sparked concern among world leaders and the United Nations. "The Zionist entity attack on 1.5 million Palestinians already facing inhumane conditions in Rafah will cause a massacre of innocent people," he wrote, urging the "whole world" to prevent it. Spain and Germany joined Saudi Arabia in warning of a "humanitarian catastrophe" if the plan went ahead. "We call for a ceasefire, the release of hostages, respect for international humanitarian law and the entry of aid," Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares posted on X.

Biden frustration

Joe Biden's tone on Zionist entity has been hardening in recent days, but when he called the country's response in the Gaza Strip "over the top" this week, the US president crossed into new territory.

The United States is Zionist entity's main international backer, providing it with billions of dollars in military aid. The US State Department has said it does not support a ground offensive in Rafah, warning that, if not properly planned, such an operation risks "disaster". In a sign of growing frustration, Biden issued his strongest criticism of Zionist entity yet describing the retaliation for Hamas's Oct 7 attack as "over the top".

Biden said there are "a lot of innocent people who are starving... in trouble and dying, and it's got to stop." But Netanyahu's office said it would be "impossible" to achieve the war's objective of eliminating Hamas while leaving four of its battalions in Rafah. The Zionist entity leader, whose coalition

government includes far-right ministers, faces calls for an early election and mounting protests over his failure to bring home hostages seized in the attack.

Fears are mounting over the fate of more than one million displaced Palestinians who have taken shelter in Rafah, many of them in plastic tents pushed up against the border with Egypt and also hemmed in by the sea. "We are between life and death," said one of them, Bassel Matar. "We don't know if there will be hope tomorrow for a truce or there will be changes on the ground."

Witnesses reported new strikes on Rafah on Saturday. The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said Zionist entity bombardment killed at least 110 people overnight, including 25 in Rafah. At the city's Al-Najjar hospital, AFP TV images showed a family gathering around the shrouded bodies of relatives.

Rafah is the last major population centre in the Gaza Strip that Zionist entity troops have yet to enter and also the main point of entry for desperately needed relief supplies. Humanitarian organizations have sounded alarm at the prospect of a ground incursion. The UN children's fund, UNICEF, warned this week against a military escalation in Rafah, saying "thousands more could die in the violence or lack of essential services".

Netanyahu announced the plan for a ground operation in Rafah only days after US Secretary of

State Antony Blinken visited Zionist entity seeking a ceasefire and hostage-prisoner exchange. Hamas negotiators departed Cairo on Friday after what a Hamas source described as "positive and good discussions" with Egyptian and Qatari mediators. The delegation "is awaiting Zionist entity's response," a Hamas official told AFP on condition of anonymity as he was not authorized to speak on the issue.

Citing US and Egyptian officials, the US news outlet Axios said late Friday that Biden is sending CIA director William Burns to Cairo next week to push for a deal to secure the release of more hostages. The impact of the war has been felt widely, with violence involving Iran-backed allies of Hamas surging across the Middle East and drawing in US forces, among others.

A Palestinian security source said a Zionist entity strike targeting a senior Hamas member in the village of Jadra, in central Lebanon, had failed but killed two other people on Saturday. It came after the Iran-backed Lebanese militant group Hezbollah said Friday it had fired dozens of rockets at an army position in the Zionist entity-occupied Golan Heights, hours after launching a salvo at northern Zionist entity. And in Syria, Zionist entity strikes near Damascus killed three people on Saturday, a war monitor said, adding the targeted neighborhood hosted villas for top military and civilian officials. — AFP

White House slams age comments in Biden probe

WASHINGTON: The White House launched a fierce pushback Friday against a brutal special counsel report portraying Joe Biden as elderly and forgetful, describing it as a political hit-job on the president in an election year. US Vice President Kamala Harris called the stinging report "politically motivated" while White House spokesman Ian Sams branded it "gratuitous and inappropriate" as they sought to call its impartiality into question.

Biden refused to answer questions on the report as he hosted German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in the Oval Office for talks on Ukraine Friday, but the night before he responded furiously to the report's findings.

The investigation cleared the 81-year-old Democrat of illegally retaining classified documents in his home and garage—but damningly branded him as a "well-meaning, elderly man with a poor memory."

Biden's supporters and aides rushed to defend him on Friday on an issue he's long been vulnerable on as he bids for reelection in November, most likely against Republican Donald Trump. "The way that the president's demeanor in that report was characterized could not be more wrong on the facts and (was) clearly politically motivated," Harris said when asked about the report. In a rambling address Friday to a National Rifle Association event, the 77-year-old Trump said of Biden's mental state: "I don't think he knows he's alive."

With questions swirling about Biden's mental acuity, the spotlight is also on Harris as she would be first in line to succeed as president should he resign or be incapacitated. Both Biden and Harris are suffering from low approval ratings as they campaign

for another four years in the White House. The White House strategy appeared to be to start directly targeting special counsel Robert Hur, a Republican who was appointed by then-president Trump to be US attorney for the District of Maryland in 2017.

But it was Biden's own attorney general Merrick Garland who named Hur as special counsel in the documents case. Democratic Senator John Fetterman, who won a high-profile victory in the key swing state of Pennsylvania in the 2022 midterms, nevertheless said Hur had an agenda as a "Trump appointee."

"It was just a smear and cheap shot," he said of the report. Facing a barrage of questions from reporters, Sams, spokesman for the White House Counsel's Office, said that the report contained "gratuitous and inappropriate criticisms." He stopped short of saying Hur was partisan but suggested the investigator felt under pressure to "go beyond his remit" because of the polarized US political scene. — AFP

Russian attack on Kharkiv sparks 'river of fire', kills 7

KHARKIV, Ukraine: An overnight Russian drone attack on a petrol station in Ukraine's second city Kharkiv killed seven people, including three children, local authorities said Saturday. Fuel from the petrol station quickly spread through the neighboring street, burning some residents alive and injuring others.

"In five minutes we had a river of fire. We had to run away from home, just run away," said Oleskandr Lagutin, who was injured in the attack. Local authorities said the fire killed a couple and a family of five.

"My mother-in-law called and said it was burning," said Natalia, a relative of the deceased couple. "She called back and started screaming that it had spread to the house. We heard the last screams and that was it, she didn't get in touch anymore," she said. The Kharkiv regional governor Oleg Syneubov said the family included the



KHARKIV: Ukrainian emergency personnel douse water to extinguish flames after a fire erupted at the site of a drone attack in Kharkiv, on Feb 10, 2024. — AFP

parents and their seven-year-old, four-year-old and seven-month-old boys.

The woman and boys had sought shelter in the bathroom while the man's body was found in a passage of the house, he said. "These children had not yet seen life, but were killed as a result of Russian madness," Ukrainian

President Volodymyr Zelensky said. He sent his condolences to all the victims of the attack. "Our anger is absolute. These people will pay," presidential aide Andriy Yermak added. The head of the investigation of the Kharkiv police, Sergiy Bolvinov, said the victims were all "burned alive". — AFP

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International

Pakistan army chief tells leaders to show 'maturity' after indecisive poll

AI-generated party video has Khan claiming victory amid rigging charges

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's army chief told feuding politicians Saturday to show "maturity and unity" after an election failed to produce a clear winner, leaving the military's favored party having to cobble together a coalition in order to rule.

The country faces days of political horse-trading after a strong performance by independent candidates loyal to jailed former prime minister Imran Khan scuppered the chances of the army-backed Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) from winning a ruling majority.

Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) defied a months-long crackdown that crippled campaigning and forced candidates to run as independents with a combined showing that still challenged their rivals. The military looms large over Pakistan's political landscape, with generals having run the country for nearly half its history since partition from India in 1947.

"Elections are not a zero-sum competition of winning and losing but an exercise to determine the mandate of the people," army chief General Syed Asim Munir said in a statement released by the military. "As the people of Pakistan have reposed their combined trust in the Constitution of Pakistan, it is now incumbent upon all political parties to reciprocate the same with political maturity and unity."

"The nation needs stable hands and a healing touch to move on from the politics of anarchy and polarization which does not suit a progressive country of 250 million people."

Forced to cut deals

After long delays in results that prompted further allegations that the military establishment had engaged in vote-rigging, PML-N declared victory Friday as the party with the largest number of seats.

However, to form a government, the party founded by three-time former prime minister Nawaz Sharif will be forced to cut deals with rivals and independents. There were reports late Friday of leaders from several parties arriving in PML-N's power base of Lahore for talks. "We don't have enough of a majority to run the government ourselves, therefore we invite the other parties and candidates who have been successful to work with us," Sharif said at his party headquarters in the city.

In an AI-generated video produced by PTI, Khan was credited as claiming victory for the party.

"According to independent sources, we were winning 150 national assembly seats before the rigging started," said the message posted on his X account, which featured a genuine video clip of him from a year ago and an AI-generated voice-over.

A slow counting process showed independents had won at least 100 seats - 89 of them loyal to Khan - by Saturday morning. PML-N took 71 and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) snapped up 54, with 13 of the elected 266-seat National Assembly still to be announced. Minor parties shared 27 seats between them - including the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), which took 17 - which are likely to be of great interest to PTI in the coming days.

If PTI's independents join one of them, they can take a share of the further 70 unelected seats reserved for women and religious minorities, which are allocated according to party performance in the contested vote.

'Recount our votes'

Most of the seats won by Khan loyalists were in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where police said at least 20 PTI supporters were killed Friday and more than 20



KARACHI: Supporters of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) protest outside an election commission office in Karachi on February 10, 2024, amid claims the election result delay is allowing authorities to rig the vote-counting. — AFP

wounded when they protested against alleged vote-rigging in Shangla district - the first serious post-election violence reported. "Our results have been changed," claimed 28-year-old shopkeeper Muhammad Saleem, who joined around 2,000 PTI supporters marching in Peshawar.

"The government should recount all of our votes," Khan was barred from contesting the election after being handed several lengthy prison sentences in the days leading up to the vote.

A nationwide election day mobile telephone blackout and the slow counting of results led to suspicions the military establishment was influencing the process to ensure Sharif's success.

"PTI as a party and political group, despite significant efforts by the civilian and military establishment, has held on to its vote bank," said Bilal Gilani, executive director of polling group Gallup Pakistan. "It shows that the military does not always get their way—that is the silver lining," he told AFP. — AFP

A car-free Eiffel Tower zone? Paris mayor faces pushback

PARIS: Removing cars from an expanse around the Eiffel Tower to create a green pathway sounds pretty good on paper, but the mayor of Paris is struggling to win over residents and above all the police force to revamp one of the city's most celebrated views. Thousands of tourists jostle every day to snap the Eiffel Tower from across the River Seine on the hill at Trocadero, with its magnificent gardens and a modernist palace housing museums.

Walking to Trocadero is less romantic, however, requiring the crossing of two major intersections and the often traffic-clogged Pont d'Iena bridge.

Mayor Anne Hidalgo said to general surprise this week that she wants to push ahead with a project to kick out the cars and create a continuous garden between the Eiffel Tower and the Trocadero esplanade. But while she hopes to take advantage of the 2024 Summer Olympics to begin the project as soon as the Games end, her critics — and most importantly the Paris police chief — are resisting the plan. The proposal is in keeping with other efforts by the Socialist mayor to squeeze cars out of Paris and make the city greener, a push that has divided residents and political opponents who say her policies go too far.



PARIS: A local resident drives his sport utility vehicle (SUV) in the center of Paris, with the Eiffel Tower seen in the background, on January 30, 2024. — AFP

A trio of Japanese tourists taking photos next to the busy Pont d'Iena bridge agreed that the plan would make a difference. The view was "disappointing", Mahiro told AFP, saying the vista would be "more beautiful with less cars". Hidalgo launched the project in 2019 but soon clashed with the city's police chief at the time, Didier Lallement, and right-wing mayors of three of the city's districts over concerns about traffic disruptions. But Hidalgo, who announced a similar plan in January to ban cars on half of the central Place de la Concorde, site of the iconic Luxor Obelisk, is hoping the fervour of the Olympics will garner support for the ambitious project. — AFP

Trump strolls to easy victory in Nevada caucus

LAS VEGAS: Donald Trump strolled to victory in the Nevada caucus on Thursday, adding more delegates in his seemingly unstoppable march to the Republican Party's presidential nomination.

Trump was the only major candidate on the ballot when party members gathered in public buildings across the southwestern US state to cast their in-person votes. Early results showed the former president had massively out-poled his long-shot challenger, a businessman from Texas, and major US networks said Trump would scoop the state's available delegates. It was the second go around in presidential preference voting for Nevada this week.

State-organized primary polls were held on Tuesday in which Nikki Haley was beaten into second place on the Republican ballot by "None of these candidates" — widely seen as a proxy vote for Trump. That result, however, was meaningless, with Nevada's GOP declaring months ago it would award its delegates from Thursday's rival caucus, a format that strongly favors Trump.

Haley badly trails Trump in the overall race for the nomination, and is on course for another drubbing



LAS VEGAS, United States: Former US President and 2024 presidential hopeful Donald Trump gestures during a Caucus Night watch party in Las Vegas, Nevada, on February 8, 2024. — AFP

in her home state of South Carolina later this month. The former UN ambassador insisted Wednesday that she was not dropping out. "I'm in this for the long haul," she told supporters at a campaign event in California on Wednesday night, according to The New York Times.

"This is going to be messy, and this going to hurt, and it's going to leave some bruises, but at the end of the day, I don't mind taking them, if you will go right along with me." Trump on Thursday said he thought her continued candidacy was not a good idea, but it didn't bother him. "I don't know why she continues but let her continue," he said. "I don't really care." — AFP

Kuwait and Saudi warns...

Continued from Page 1

last month that Zionist forces were operating "above and underground simultaneously". A senior defense official told AFP the tech was destroying enemy drones and mapping Hamas's vast tunnel network in Gaza.

New defense technologies including artificial intelligence-powered gunsights and robotic drones form a bright spot in an otherwise dire period for Zionist tech industry. The sector accounted for 18 percent of GDP in 2022, but the war in Gaza has wreaked havoc with an estimated eight percent of its workforce called up to fight. "In general the war in Gaza presents threats, but also opportunities to test emerging technologies in the field," said Avi Hasson, chief executive of Startup Nation Central, a tech incubator. "Both on the battlefield and in the hospitals there are technologies that have been used in this war that have not been used in the past."

But the rising civilian death toll shows that much greater oversight is needed over the use of new forms of defense tech, Mary Wareham, an arms expert at Human Rights Watch, told AFP. "Now we're facing the worst possible situation of death and suffering that we're seeing today - some of that is being brought about by the new tech," she said. More than 150 countries in December backed a UN resolution identifying "serious challenges and concerns" in new military tech, including "artificial

intelligence and autonomy in weapons systems."

Zionist military has killed nearly 28,000 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the Hamas-ruled territory's health ministry. Like many other modern conflicts, the war has been shaped by a proliferation of inexpensive unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), also known as drones, which have made attacks from the air easier and cheaper.

In a first, the army has used an AI-enabled optic sight, made by Zionist startup Smart Shooter, which is attached to weapons such as rifles and machine guns. "It helps our soldiers to intercept drones because Hamas uses a lot of drones," said the senior defense official. "It makes every regular soldier - even a blind soldier - a sniper." Another system to neutralize drones involves deploying a friendly drone with a net that it can throw around the enemy craft to neutralize it. "It's drone versus drone - we call it Angry Birds," the official said.

A pillar of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's vow to "destroy" Hamas is quickly mapping the underground tunnel network where Zionist entity says the group's fighters are hiding and holding hostages. The network is so vast that the army has dubbed it the "Gaza Metro" and a recent study by US military academy West Point said there were 1,300 tunnels stretching over 500 kilometers.

To map the tunnels the army has turned to drones that use AI to learn to detect humans and can operate underground, including one made by Zionist startup Robotcan that encases a drone inside a robotic case. It is being used in Gaza "to enter into tunnels and to see as far as the communication lets you," the senior defense official said. — Agencies

added Hamada, one of the last people to speak to the girl on the telephone. "She was killed by occupation forces with all those who were with her in the car outside the petrol station in Tel Al-Hawa," the ministry said in a statement. The Palestine Red Crescent said that the Zionist military "deliberately targeted the ambulance upon its arrival at the scene" despite "prior coordination" allowing it through. Earlier this week, family members had said the group found their way in the path of tanks and were fired on as they tried to flee.

Hind initially survived the shooting and managed to talk to her family by telephone and make an emergency call, which the PRCS published on February 3. "For over three hours, Hind desperately pleaded for rescue from the occupation tanks surrounding her, enduring gunfire and the horror of being alone, trapped among the bodies of her relatives shot by the Zionist forces in front of her eyes," it added. — AFP

6-year-old Gazan found dead after...

Continued from Page 1

children's agency UNICEF said. Thousands have been killed and many more injured, with others at risk because of lack of food, water and medicine, the UN children's agency UNICEF said.

Hind was last heard from after becoming trapped in the family's vehicle with other relatives as they tried to flee Gaza City. "Hind and everyone else in the car is martyred," the girl's grandfather, Baha Hamada, told AFP on Saturday. A number of family members found them when they went to Gaza City's Tel Al-Hawa area looking for the car near a petrol station where it had last been spotted, he said. "They were able to reach the area because Zionist forces withdrew early at dawn today,"



TUNIS: Volunteers at the 'Restaurant of Love', a charitable initiative launched three years ago to help feed the growing number of Tunisia's homeless, work in the kitchen of the NGO, in Tunisia. — AFP

'Restaurant of Love' helps feed the homeless in Tunisia

TUNIS: On a corner by the entrance to Tunis zoo, Leila waits for a hot meal from the Tunisian capital's "Restaurant of Love" in a cardboard shelter where she and her dogs sleep. The 50-year-old says she has been living on the streets for more than 27 years. "I don't want to go to the shelter centers," and feels safer in her makeshift abode, despite the dangers of robbery and violence on the street, she says as she fixes a plastic cover over her bed for the cold winter night.

Leila is always happy to see the volunteers from the NGOs Universelle and Samu Social when they bring her food and clothing every Friday night. For the rest of the week, she often has to make do with no more than a tin of sardines. The Friday night meal is from the kitchen of the "Restaurant of Love", a charitable initiative launched by Universelle three years ago to help feed the growing number of Tunisia's homeless. There are no official data on the exact number of people living on the streets in the capital, but it is estimated to be in the hundreds.

The "Restaurant of Love" is the "first of its kind"

in Tunisia, says Nizar Khadhari, the 39-year-old head of Universelle. The idea is simple - a regular eatery affordable for everyone, with a plate of pasta costing just 4.5 dinars or \$1.40. Homeless people can eat there for free - accounting for around 30 percent of the 400-450 meals served there every day. But paying customers can also make donations in a tin by the cash register to help cover the costs.

"All profits go to the homeless, and we also employ some of them... We try to motivate them to return and integrate into society," says Khadhari. "The economic situation is hitting this vulnerable group of people particularly hard," says Khadhari, who predicts that the number of rough sleepers in the capital will continue to grow "due to rising prices and a lack of job opportunities".

According to World Bank data, growth of the North African country's highly indebted economy stood at just 1.2 percent in 2023, while inflation stood at 8.3 percent in 2022. And with the economic woes exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and soaring food prices in the wake of the war in Ukraine, poverty rates are on the rise in the population of 12 million. According to official statistics, the poverty rate in Tunisia stood at 16.6 percent nationwide in 2021 but was nearer 25 percent in rural areas. — AFP

International

Strong earthquake halts search at Philippines landslide disaster site

'Miracle' rescue of girl nearly 60 hours after landslide

MANILA: A strong earthquake in the southern Philippines on Saturday halted a search for scores of people believed buried in a deadly landslide, forcing rescuers to vacate the area, officials said. There were no immediate reports of injuries or damage from the magnitude 5.8 quake that shook the Mindanao region at 11:22 am (0322 GMT), but rescuers were ordered to stop their search in the remote gold-mining village of Masara.

A massive landslide buried a bus terminal and 55 houses near an Apex Mining Co gold mine on Tuesday night, killing 28 people, mostly miners, and leaving 32 injured, according to an updated official tally. Hundreds of rescuers are searching for at least 77 people who remain missing and believed buried under the rubble spread over 8.9 hectares (22 acres) at the bottom of a wooded mountain valley.

"We ordered them (rescuers) to go up to a safer area," Apex Mines official Ferdinand Doble told a news conference. Rescue efforts had not resumed more than 30 minutes later as drones were flown to check for signs of potential secondary landslides that could endanger the lives of the rescuers, he added. The quake epicenter is about 150 kilometers (90 miles) north of the landslide site.

On Friday rescuers found a three-year-old girl alive after nearly 60 hours under the rubble, but mostly they have only been finding bodies. "We're still hoping to save more people even after four days," Davao de Oro provincial disaster chief Randy Loy told the news conference. However "we can't really guarantee their chances of survival" after 48 hours, he said, adding 474 rescuers were deployed at the Masara landslide.

Military rescuers were set to employ specialized equipment, their commander, Brigadier-General Ronnie Babac, told the news conference. These include thermal scanners that can detect signs of life beneath the rubble as well as specialized "snake cameras", also known as borescopes designed to peek into confined spaces.

Landslides are a frequent hazard across much of the archipelago nation due to the mountainous terrain, heavy rainfall, and widespread deforestation from mining, slash-and-burn farming and illegal logging. Rain has pounded parts of Mindanao on and off for weeks, triggering dozens of landslides and flooding that have forced tens of thousands of people into emergency shelters.

The rescue of a child on Friday nearly 60 hours after a landslide hit a gold-mining village in the southern Philippines has been hailed as a "miracle" after searchers had given up hope of finding more survivors. The girl, who the Philippine Red Cross said was three years old, had been among scores of people missing after the rain-induced landslide hit the village. Officials said later on Friday the death toll had almost doubled to 27. The girl was earlier found as rescuers used their bare hands and shovels to look for survivors in Masara village on southern Mindanao island, disaster agency official Edward Macapili of Davao de Oro province told AFP.

"It's a miracle," Macapili said, adding that searchers had believed those missing were probably dead. "That gives hope to the rescuers. A child's resilience is usually less than that of adults, yet the child survived." Video of a rescuer carrying the crying, mud-caked child in his arms was shared on Facebook.

"We can see in the social media posts that the child did not have any visible injuries," Macapili said. He said the girl's father saw his child before she was taken to a medical facility for a check-up. The Philippine Red Cross posted photos on Facebook of their workers carrying the girl, wrapped in an emergency blanket and hooked up to an oxygen tank, into a hospital in nearby Mawab municipality.

The landslide struck Tuesday night, destroying houses and engulfing three buses and a jeepney waiting to pick up workers from a gold mine. While the death toll increased to 27 from 15, the number of



MAWAB, Philippines: This handout photo taken and released on February 9, 2024 by the Philippine Red Cross shows rescuers provide medical attention to a child at the Doctors Community Hospital in Mawab, Davao de Oro.—AFP

missing fell to 89 from more than 100, official figures showed, as searchers retrieved more bodies. The number of injured also rose to 32.

Rescuers were racing to find anyone else alive in the thick mud as rain fell on Friday. While they were using heavy earth-moving equipment in places, they had to rely on their bare hands and shovels in areas where they believed there were bodies. Sniffer dogs were also used to detect those buried in the mud and rubble.

Three buses and a jeepney buried by the landslide had been found "at ground zero", Apex Mining, the operator of the mine, said in a statement Friday. Initial

reports said at least 20 workers were trapped inside the vehicles. Company spokeswoman Teresa Pacis told AFP that no bodies were found inside the vehicles but several bodies were nearby.

Landslides are a frequent hazard across much of the archipelago nation due to the mountainous terrain, heavy rainfall, and widespread deforestation from mining, slash-and-burn farming and illegal logging. Rain has pounded parts of Mindanao on and off for weeks, triggering dozens of landslides and flooding that have forced tens of thousands of people into emergency shelters. -- AFP



JAKARTA: Presidential candidate and Indonesia's Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto (center) reacts during a campaign rally at the Gelora Bung Karno Stadium in Jakarta on February 10, 2024. -- AFP

Indonesians pack out stadiums for final election rallies

JAKARTA: Around 100,000 people filled a Jakarta stadium Saturday for a huge rally in support of Indonesian presidential election front runner Prabowo Subianto, just days ahead of one of the world's biggest one-day votes. Supporters also turned out in their tens of thousands for the final rallies of his rival candidates—former provincial governors Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo—in the battle to lead the massive, Muslim-majority nation.

Third-time candidate Subianto, the current defense minister, is leading Baswedan and Pranowo by double digits in polls ahead of Wednesday's vote. "Me, my father and mother have supported Prabowo continuously since 2014," said Novita Agustina, a 24-year-old first-time voter who travelled four hours to see the ex-general speak.

She lauded his work as defense minister and shrugged off rights groups' concerns about his track record, saying criticism was "just attacks from opponents... I don't want to hear anything bad".

Others praised his tenacity in running a third time for the presidency. The crowd at the national stadium cheered as the 72-year-old Subianto launched into a characteristically fiery address.

"We will fight to bring prosperity for all people of Indonesia," he said. "We will continue what was already being built by previous presidents."

Many Subianto supporters wore blue shirts, some emblazoned with an AI cartoon image of his face that has become synonymous with his campaign. Subianto has campaigned on a pledge to eradicate extreme poverty, provide free school meals to children and milk to pregnant women, and continue President Joko Widodo's development drive. The capital's streets were brought to a standstill by throngs of scooters and cars heading to the rallies.

The entrances to the stadium in north Jakarta where Baswedan addressed supporters became so packed that several people fainted, according to an AFP journalist there. Many had camped overnight for the event. "We want to witness change," said Endang Pujati, a retired school teacher who drove hours to attend Baswedan's rally.

"Anies is a trustworthy person, that's why he could be a good leader." Pranowo was holding two events on Saturday in the cities of Semarang and Surakarta, Central Java province, which he used to govern. More than 204 million Indonesians will choose their next president, parliamentarians and thousands of local officials on Feb 14. They will cast their ballots at more than 800,000 polling booths across the volcano-dotted archipelago. After Saturday's rallies the candidates will observe three quiet campaign days before the vote. -- AFP

5 dead after India madrassa demolition sparks violence

DEHRADUN: Five people were killed in India and dozens more injured after religious clashes sparked by the destruction of a madrassa, officials said Friday, the latest in a spate of demolitions targeting Islamic structures. Hindu nationalist groups have been emboldened in their campaign against Muslim religious structures since Prime Minister Narendra Modi took office a decade ago.

Authorities in the northern state of Uttarakhand bulldozed the Islamic school and an adjoining prayer site on Thursday, claiming they had been built without permission. Police said protesters threw stones at them in the protests that followed, prompting them to fire tear gas in response. Five people had been killed in the clashes in Haldwani district, local official Vandana Singh told AFP. Singh earlier told reporters that dozens of others were being treated at "various hospitals". "Orders have been given to shoot the rioters on sight," she said.

Authorities in Haldwani suspended internet services, closed schools, imposed a curfew and banned large gatherings after the violence broke out. Security forces were also rushed into the area from other parts of the state to contain the unrest, officials said. Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said the government would punish anyone found

to have participated in the unrest. "Anyone who attempts to disturb the peace will not be spared," he said in a Friday social media post.

Calls for India to enshrine Hindu supremacy in law have rapidly grown louder since Modi took office in 2014, making the country's roughly 210-million-strong Muslim minority increasingly anxious about their future. Thursday's violence comes at an especially sensitive time, with nationalist activists stepping up a long campaign to replace several prominent mosques with Hindu temples.

Modi inaugurated a grand new temple last month in the northern city of Ayodhya, built on the site of a centuries-old mosque that was destroyed by zealots. That demolition in 1992 sparked sectarian riots that killed 2,000 people nationwide, most of them Muslims. The clashes also come days after Uttarakhand's legislature passed a polarizing common civil code to replace existing religious laws governing marriage, divorce and inheritance. Muslim groups across India have objected to the new law, saying it is a violation of their religious freedoms. Authorities in various Indian states governed by Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have also been accused by rights groups of selectively targeting Muslim homes, businesses and worship sites for demolition.

A centuries-old mosque was knocked down in the capital New Delhi last month, with city authorities claiming it had been illegally constructed in a forest reserve. Authorities in India's financial capital Mumbai tore down several makeshift shopfronts of Muslim-owned businesses in the city days after minor religious clashes that broke out on the eve of the Ayodhya temple's inauguration. -- AFP



HALDWANI, India: Police personnel in riot gear stand guard along a road, a day after the religious clashes sparked following the destruction of a madrassa (an Islamic school) in Haldwani district of the northern state of Uttarakhand on February 9, 2024. -- AFP

S Korea's Yoon tells Marines to 'act first, report later' if provoked

SEOUL: South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol told his Marine Corps on Saturday to "act first, report later" if provoked, following an escalation of threats from North Korea. Nuclear-armed North Korea has this year declared South Korea its "principal enemy", closed agencies dedicated to reunification and outreach, and threatened war over "even 0.001 millimeters" of territorial infringement.

Leader Kim Jong Un repeated on Friday that Pyongyang would not hesitate to "put an end" to South Korea if attacked, calling Seoul the North's "most dangerous and first enemy state and invariable arch-enemy". The hawkish Yoon has bolstered defense cooperation with the United States and Japan since coming to office in 2022, including expanding joint drills, to counter Pyongyang's growing threats. "If the enemy provokes

us, adhere to the principle of 'act first, report later' and respond decisively and overwhelmingly without hesitation to completely shatter the enemy's will," Yoon said during a visit to a front-line Republic of Korea Marines Corps unit, according to his office.

Yoon made similar remarks last month and during a visit to a frontline army unit in December. He also inspected a multiple-launch strike system on Saturday, Lunar New Year, and stressed the need to be "fully prepared to respond immediately in case of enemy provocation". As well as an increase in rhetoric, both sides have ramped up frontier security in recent months and conducted live-fire drills along their shared border.

In January, North Korea fired an artillery barrage near two South Korean border islands, prompting a live-fire drill by the South and evacuation orders for residents. Yoon said last week the "irrational" North Korean government was likely to carry out multiple provocations, including cyberattacks and drone intrusions, ahead of the South's election on April 10. Yoon, who came to office vowing to get tough on Pyongyang, and his conservative party are aiming to regain a parliamentary majority for the first time since 2016.—AFP

News in brief

Malawi waives visa for 79 countries

LILONGWE: In a bid to boost tourism, Malawi has lifted visa requirements for visitors from 79 countries, President Lazarus Chakwera told Parliament on Friday. Tourism is the third-largest source of foreign currency in the impoverished southern African nation, after tobacco and tea -- but the sector is underperforming, Chakwera said. "Chief among the factors contributing to this is our country's accessibility, which is why we have implemented the visa waiver program," he added. The United States, Britain, France, China, Russia, and members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), a regional bloc, are among the countries benefiting from the exemption. -- AFP

Spain arrests 5 in drug chase

MADRID: Spain's civil guard on Saturday announced five arrests after a drug-traffickers' boat hit a patrol vessel and killed two officers during a chase. The civil guard arrested three of the boat's passengers following Friday's incident in the southern port of Barbate near Cadiz that also saw two officers injured. Two others who travelled by vehicle to pick up the passengers were also detained, the civil guard said. The AUGC, an association representing the paramilitary police, and Spanish media shared a video showing a night-time chase in the port involving several vessels.—AFP

Bukele re-elected in El Salvador

SAN SALVADOR: El Salvador's Supreme Electoral Tribunal has confirmed the landslide re-election of President Nayib Bukele with nearly 83 percent of the votes, after completing the final tally of the poll results. Bukele, 42, claimed this week to have won more than 85 percent of the presidential vote. He garnered 2.7 million votes of the 3.2 million cast, or 82.66 percent, after ballots at all polling stations were counted, electoral tribunal president Dora Martinez said in a statement on Friday. --AFP

Taiwan detects 8 Chinese balloons

TAIPEI: A record eight Chinese balloons have been detected around Taiwan, with two directly flying over the island, Taipei's defence ministry said Saturday. The ministry said the balloons were spotted on Friday, the day before the start of the Lunar New Year holiday, at an altitude of 15,000 feet (4,572 meters) to 38,000 feet. It was the highest number detected since the ministry started regularly releasing data on balloon sightings in December. China claims democratic Taiwan as its own territory and has never renounced the use of force to bring the self-ruled island under its control. -- AFP

2 dead in jet crash in Florida

MIAMI: Two people were killed Friday when a private jet lost its engines and crashed onto a highway in Florida, authorities said. Five people were aboard the Bombardier Challenger 600 when it went down about 3.15 pm (2015 GMT) on Interstate 75 near the small city of Naples, the Federal Aviation Administration said on X, formerly Twitter. Two minutes before the plane was scheduled to land at Naples Municipal Airport, the pilot radioed air traffic control to say "he had lost both engines and requested an emergency landing," airport spokesperson Robin King told AFP in a statement. --AFP

Business

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2024

EU reaches deal on spending rules

New rules aimed at boosting investment and keeping spending under control

BRUSSELS: The European Parliament and member states reached an agreement early Saturday on reforms to EU budgetary rules aimed at boosting investment while keeping spending under control.

The text modernizes the current rules, known as the Stability and Growth Pact, created in the late 1990s, which limit countries' debt to 60 percent of gross domestic product and public deficits to three percent. "Deal," the Belgian presidency of the Council of the EU said on social media platform X, formerly Twitter, after 16 hours of talks.

"I welcome the political agreement on our ambitious reform of the EU's economic governance," EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said. "The new rules will enable EU countries to invest in their strengths while consolidating their public finances. This is our common growth path," she added.

The European Union spent two years making an intensive effort to develop reforms supported by the more frugal member states like Germany and other countries, such as France and Italy, which seek more flexibility. After much wrangling between Berlin and Paris, the 27 member states struck a deal in December, then began talks with negotiators from the European Parliament.

The text was criticized for its great complexity and derided by left-wing officials as a tool for imposing austerity on Europe. The negotiators finally reached an agreement early Saturday, in time for the text to be voted on in Strasbourg this spring before the parliamentary break ahead of European elections. The reforms will be formally adopted after agreement between lawmakers and states.

The deal will allow member states to apply the new rules to their 2025 budgets. "The new rules will help achieve balanced & sustainable public finances,

structural reforms, foster investments, growth & jobs creation in the EU," the Belgian presidency said.

The former budgetary framework was considered too drastic and was never really respected. The rules had, however, been suspended since the coronavirus pandemic to give member states wiggle room to spend more during a period of great economic upheaval. During the initial debates between countries, the battle was fierce over how much those old limits should be relaxed to give more room for investment.

With war raging in Europe and the EU making a green transition push, states led by France argued for allowing more space to finance these key areas, including, for example, supplying critical arms to Ukraine. While confirming the previous limits on debt and budget deficits, the new agreement allows more flexibility in the event of excessive deficits.

The text provides looser fiscal rules more adapted to the particular situation of each state, allowing big spenders a slower route back to frugality. The tailor-made approach means each country presents their own adjustment trajectory to ensure their debt's sustainability, giving them more time if they undertake reforms and investments and allowing a less painful return to fiscal health.

Monitoring would focus on expenditure trends, an economic indicator considered more relevant than deficits, which can fluctuate depending on the level of growth. But Germany and its "frugal" allies managed to tighten this budgetary framework by imposing a quantifiable minimum effort to reduce debt and deficits for all EU countries, despite the reluctance of France and Italy.

These modifications have greatly complicated the text. The reforms are supported by the centre-right European People's Party group, the EU's



BRUSSELS: European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen (center) and European Council President Charles Michel (left) arrive to hold a press conference during a European Council meeting at the European headquarters in Brussels. — AFP

Renew liberals and a large majority of Socialist and Democrat groupings. The Greens and some S&D elected officials, however, reject it, as does the radical left.

These elected officials have denounced a return to austerity after three years of suspended

budgetary rules due to the pandemic and war in Ukraine. "We need investments in industry, in defense, in the ecological transition, that's the urgency today, it is not to bring economically absurd rules up to date," economist and S&D MEP Aurore Lalucq of France said. — AFP

Gulf Bank concludes second edition of Fekrety competition

KUWAIT: In its ongoing commitment to foster innovative and creative thinking, Gulf Bank successfully concluded the second edition of the Fekrety Innovation competition in 2024. The competition aimed to stimulate innovation among employees, providing them with a platform to voice and implement their ideas. The organizing committee received numerous innovative proposals that combined digital transformation and creativity to improve the interior design of Gulf Bank branches, all aimed at enhancing the customer experience. These ideas underwent thorough filtering and organization, and participants were trained to present their ideas to the judging panel. The panel consisted of several bank officials, including Ali Abulhasan, Co-founder and CEO of Tap Payments.

Mai Al-Owaish, Chief Data and Innovation Officer at Gulf Bank, stressed, "We are committed to empowering our employees and cultivating a culture of participation, acknowledging each employee's contribution to achieving excellence in performance. This aligns with the bank's 2025 strategy and Kuwait's Vision 2035, which prioritize the adoption of smart and digital technologies, as well as innovative services, to propel economic growth and improve quality of life."

She emphasized that the competition provided employees from various departments throughout the bank the chance to enhance the customer experience. Delivering exceptional services and products to customers is a shared objective for all departments, employees, and officials. Hence, the bank aims to stimulate innovation among its employees, encouraging them to think outside the box, even if their ideas are ahead of their time.

Furthermore, Al-Owaish emphasized Gulf



Mai Al-Owaish (center) poses for a photo with the innovators and the jury members.

Bank's human resources and its reservoir of talent and expertise across diverse fields, known for their efficiency and professionalism. Harnessing these capabilities is crucial to support employees in unleashing their ideas and innovations. She further noted that all bank managers are eager to motivate their teams to propose innovative ideas that improve customer service, aligning with the 2025 strategy's emphasis on prioritizing the customer experience.

Al-Owaish reaffirmed Gulf Bank's commitment to leading a successful digital transformation journey, offering technological solutions to customers, and enhancing employee performance through engagement and involvement, all while adhering to the highest global standards in risk management practices. Furthermore, Gulf Bank undertakes the responsibility of contributing to Kuwait's digital transformation and Vision 2035 by fostering talent within the community and among its employees. This dedication is evident through various competitions aimed at providing the community with new skills and challenges.

Future generations will utilize data to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), strengthen the economy, and contribute to collective benefits through enhanced data and digital services.

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

Economy is a gamble for Biden in election year

LAS VEGAS: Anger over rising prices and wages that don't stretch far enough brought thousands of casino workers onto the streets of Las Vegas in recent months, part of a wave of labor discontent in the United States. Yet President Joe Biden is gambling that if he keeps explaining how well the economy is doing, voters will reward him in November's election.

In America's gaming capital, that seems like a risky bet. "The economy is horrible. Inflation has hurt everyone," Jennine Minervini of the Culinary Workers Union told AFP at a protest outside the Golden Nugget casino.

The union, which represents some 60,000 workers in Sin City, reached a last-minute agreement with casinos last week to avert a large-scale walk-out, securing pay raises for their members. But the discontent felt among bartenders, wait staff and food servers in Las Vegas echoes that found across America where conversation frequently turns to the price of weekly shopping, or the cost of a tank of gas.

That is despite economic figures that look rather good. Inflation, which hit a 40-year high in 2022, is trending back toward policymakers' goal of 2 percent, while the economy as a whole is growing at a decent clip, expanding 3.1 percent in 2023. Unemployment is at near-historic lows.

"This is a good economy," Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell recently declared. But that's not how most Americans see it. Strikes rippled through much of the country last year, paralyzing industries that produce everything from the movies to motors with one common refrain: we need a raise. Only a third of voters approve of Biden's handling of the economy, according to a new poll released on Monday by NBC News. — AFP

India's CB holds rates, vows to cut inflation

NEW DELHI: India's central bank kept interest rates unchanged for a sixth time in a row Thursday, as both inflation and economic growth remain high in the world's fifth-largest economy. The Reserve Bank of India said its benchmark "repo rate", the level at which the central bank lends to commercial banks, would stay unchanged at 6.50 percent.

Interest rates were hiked by 2.5 percentage points between May 2022 and February 2023, but have stayed constant since then. India's economy—which is projected to grow at a brisk 7.3 percent in the financial year ending March 31 -- has performed "remarkably well", central bank governor Shaktikanta Das said. Last week, India announced a smaller-than-expected fiscal deficit for this financial year, while shunning populist spending in the last budget before national elections expected to begin in April.

Retail inflation in India hit 5.69 percent in December 2023, higher than November's 5.55 percent, and well above the central bank's target of four percent. India's "core" inflation, which excludes food and fuel costs, stood at 3.8 percent in December. Das, speaking in the financial capital Mumbai, said the central bank was "resolute" in its commitment to pursue an "actively disinflationary" monetary policy. The RBI's monetary policy committee "will carefully monitor any signs of generalization of food price pressures, which can fritter away the gains in easing core inflation", Das said. — AFP

Tech surge lifts S&P 500 to close above 5,000 points

NEW YORK: The S&P 500 surged Friday to finish above 5,000 points for the first time following the latest upward jump by large tech companies after months of gains. The outsized gains by Google parent Alphabet, Amazon and other US tech icons also lifted the Nasdaq, despite a lackluster day in many overseas bourses. A month-long rally in a series of large-capitalization tech stocks - also including Apple, Microsoft and Nvidia - has led to repeat records on Wall Street.

"This is an environment that emphasizes the importance of following the leaders," said Adam Sarhan of 50 Park Investments. "When you look at the leading stocks in Wall Street, clearly you can see technology continues to lead time and time again." The broad-based index finished at 5,026.61, up 0.6 percent, notching its 10th closing record of 2024. "While several US stock indices are trading in new record highs, their European peers find it difficult to keep up," said Axel Rudolph, Senior Market Analyst at online trading platform IG. Recent labor and price data in the United States have underscored the resilience of the world's largest economy.



NEW YORK: A New York Community Bank, under the name Roosevelt Bank, stands in Brooklyn on Feb 8, 2024 in New York City. — AFP

December's consumer price index was revised downward Friday to 0.2 percent on a monthly basis from 0.3 percent previously. Traders now turn their attention to the January CPI next week.

London fell for the third day in a row ahead of a slew of UK economic data next week, and AstraZeneca continued its slide on what the market interpreted as disappointing results.

Paris closed slightly lower as cosmetics company

L'Oreal fell more than seven percent after it reported disappointing fourth quarter earnings. But luxury giant Hermes bucked the trend, rising almost five percent after posting record annual sales and net profit, propelling it above L'Oreal as France's second biggest company in terms of market value. Stock markets in Milan, Brussels and Amsterdam inched higher. Oil prices climbed for a fifth straight day amid continued geopolitical worries. — AFP

Business

Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait upgraded to Boursa Kuwait's Premier Market

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) Group is pleased to announce the upgrade of its shares from the Main Market to the Premier Market of Boursa Kuwait, effective today. This achievement is a testament to the Group's success in meeting the criteria required for the up-

unwavering adherence to technical standards and regulations."

He clarified that the upgrade signifies shareholders' confidence in ABK's stock, as evidenced by the trading rates aligning with stipulated requirements. Behbehani also highlighted the potential

challenges. He attributed this success to the sophisticated plans devised by the Bank's Board of Directors, Executive Management, and staff members, all of whom have been instrumental in establishing efficient operational processes across the organization.

cal and foreign financial and investment communities, ensuring a secure environment for shareholders." He underscored the successful investments which have positively impacted the bank's share and the traded liquidity rates.

Jawad clarified that the ABK Group



Talal Behbehani

This milestone underscores the strength of our financial position and our unwavering adherence to technical standards and regulations



Abdulaziz Jawad

The upgrade reaffirms the Bank's consistent alignment with the expectations of local and foreign financial and investment communities



grade, including the daily trading volume of the Bank's stock and its nominal share and capital value.

Talal Behbehani, Chairman of ABK, expressed his satisfaction with the Bank's qualification to Boursa Kuwait's Premier Market, emphasizing "This milestone underscores the strength of the Group's financial position and our

for increased trading in ABK's stock by international institutions and funds following Boursa Kuwait's Premier Market index as a result of this development.

Behbehani conveyed his pride in this achievement, citing the Bank's fruitful culmination of years of dedicated work, successful strategies, and the ability to overcome diverse chal-

At the end of his statement, Behbehani expressed gratitude to the shareholders for their invaluable trust and emphasized his eagerness for the continued success of the ABK Group in the forthcoming period. On his part, Abdulaziz Jawad, Chief Strategy Officer at ABK, stated, "This upgrade reaffirms the Bank's consistent alignment with the expectations of lo-

planted a seed two years ago as part of its strategy. Today, that seed has blossomed into a remarkable achievement of being upgraded to Boursa Kuwait's Premier Market. He said, "This is a reflection of our growth, stability, and success and is testament to the Group's vision and dedication, paving the way for continued excellence in the financial market."

Attracting investors

Jawad highlighted, "ABK Group is dedicated to strengthening its competitive position in the Kuwaiti banking sector and bolstering its impact on the country's economic landscape through the development of diverse banking and financing solutions and products. This effort aims to attract a greater number of local and foreign investors to engage in trading its shares."

Chinese consumer prices suffer quickest drop in 14 years

BEIJING: Chinese consumer prices fell in January at their quickest rate in more than 14 years, data showed Thursday, piling pressure on the government for more aggressive moves to revive the country's battered economy. Officials have struggled for months to kickstart economic growth as they battle a range of headwinds, including a prolonged property-sector crisis, soaring youth unemployment and a global slowdown that is hampering demand for Chinese goods.

Policymakers have in recent months announced a series of targeted measures as well as a major issuance of billions of dollars in sovereign bonds, aimed at boosting infrastructure spending and spurring consumption. But that, and recent announcements including central bank interest rate cuts and measures to boost lending, have had little impact so far.

And analysts warn a "bazooka" stimulus plan is needed to restore confidence. "China needs to take actions quickly and aggressively to avoid the risk of deflationary expectation to be entrenched among consumers," Zhiwei Zhang, president and chief economist at Pinpoint Asset Management, said.

January's 0.8 percent drop in the consumer price index, announced by the National Bureau of Statistics, marked the fourth straight month of deflation and was much bigger than the 0.5 percent fall forecast in a survey by Bloomberg News. The reading was the worst since the second half of 2009, during the global financial crisis. And a 2.5 percent plunge in the producer price index—

which measures the cost of goods leaving factories — signaled continued weakness.

China slipped into deflation in July for the first time since 2021 and, apart from a brief rebound in August, have been in constant decline since. "The primary drag on inflation continued to be food prices, which fell by 5.9 percent year-on-year, the lowest level on record," said Lynn Song, Chief Economist for Greater China at bank ING.

However, he pointed to figures showing costs rising month-on-month. "While a far cry from the above-target inflation levels seen in many other economies, these numbers do not imply China is stuck in a deflationary spiral," Song said in a note. "We see a high likelihood that January's data could mark the low point for (year-on-year) inflation in the current cycle."

China's sinking prices are in stark contrast with the rest of the world, where inflation remains a persistent bugbear, forcing central banks to ramp up interest rates. While deflation suggests goods were cheaper, it poses a threat to the broader economy as consumers tend to postpone purchases, hoping for further reductions. A lack of demand can then force companies to cut production, freeze hiring or lay off workers, while potentially also having to discount existing stocks — dampening profitability even as costs remain the same. In reaction to the woes in the world's number two economy, markets have been among the worst-performing globally in recent months.

On Wednesday, the chairman of China's securities regulator, Yi Huiman, was replaced after overseeing a sell-off that has wiped trillions off companies' valuations. The losses have prompted pledges of support, with Xi Jinping also becoming more involved, though observers say the moves would not solve the country's deeper economic problems, which needed to be addressed to fully restore optimism. — AFP



Maersk's profit sinks, warns of Red Sea risk

COPENHAGEN: Shares in shipping giant Maersk dived on Thursday after it warned of an uncertain 2024 earnings outlook linked to an oversupply of container vessels and Yemeni rebel attacks in the Red Sea. The downbeat forecast came after its 2023 earnings were hit by overcapacity in the shipping sector, which caused a drop in freight rates. The group reported a more than sevenfold drop in its net profit last year to \$3.8 billion, compared to \$29.2 billion in 2022.

Its revenue fell to \$51 billion from \$81.5 billion the previous year. Maersk's stock price closed almost 15 percent lower on the Copenhagen stock exchange Thursday, also hurt by the company's announcement it was suspending its share buy-back plan. Freight rates had soared in 2022 due to capacity shortages amid high demand following the end of COVID pandemic restrictions.

"The high demand eventually started to normalize as congestions eased and consumer demand declined leading to an inventory overhang," Maersk said in its earnings report. This "correction" resulted "in rapid and steep declines in shipped volumes and rates" starting at the end of the third quarter of 2022, it added. The "oversupply challenges" in the maritime shipping industry are expected to "materialize fully" over the course of 2024, Maersk said. The group lowered its 2024 forecast for its core profit — earnings before in-

terest, tax, depreciation and amortization — to a range of between \$1.0 billion and \$6.0 billion.

"High uncertainty remains around the duration and degree of the Red Sea disruption, with the duration from one quarter to full year reflected in the guidance range," Maersk said. Chairman Robert Maersk Uggla and CEO Vincent Clerc said in the earnings report that "2023 ended with multiple distressing attacks on cargo ships in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden".

They noted that two of the company's ships had been targeted. "We are horrified by the escalation of this unfortunate conflict," they said. Maersk and other shipping companies have redirected ships away from the Red Sea, taking the longer and costlier route around the southern tip of Africa.

The Red Sea usually carries about 12 percent of global maritime trade. Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels have harassed ships travelling through the Red Sea since November. They say they are targeting vessels linked to Zionist entity, the United States and Britain, to show support for Palestinians in the war in Gaza. Their attacks have triggered reprisals by US and British forces.

The Houthis have either attacked or threatened commercial vessels more than 40 times since November 19, according to the Pentagon. Maersk reported a loss of \$456 million in the last three months of 2023, with sales dropping 34 percent to \$17.8 billion compared to the same period in 2022.

In a separate statement, Clerc said: "While the Red Sea crisis has caused immediate capacity constraints and a temporary increase in rates, eventually the oversupply in shipping capacity will lead to price pressure and impact our results." Maersk also announced it would spin off its towage business, Svitzer, as a separate listed company. — AFP



FUYANG, China: A customer shops for vegetables and fruit at a supermarket in Fuyang, in eastern China's Anhui province on February 8, 2024. — AFP

US gap to rise over 60% on interest and health costs

WASHINGTON: The US budget deficit is projected to expand over 60 percent in the coming decade, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) said Wednesday, citing rising interest costs and health care spending as key factors. The deficit is expected to grow from \$1.6 trillion in 2024 to \$2.6 trillion in 2034, CBO director Phillip Swagel said in a statement.

Measured relative to economic output, deficits are expected to be significantly larger than the historical average in recent decades, he said. Similarly, debt held by the public is expected to rise from 99 percent of gross domestic product to 116 percent — the highest on record.

The CBO, a nonpartisan office in Congress, released its report as US lawmakers struggle to reach an agreement on full-year government funding. Swagel said that net interest costs are projected to make

up some three-quarters of the increased deficit between 2024 and 2034.

A greying population and uptick in federal health care costs will also add to deficits, given that these trends boost spending needs. But the Fiscal Responsibility Act, signed last year by President Joe Biden as lawmakers moved to avert a default, is a key reason behind a slightly smaller than projected deficit from 2024 to 2033, said the CBO.

Besides suspending the limit on federal debt, the act made changes impacting federal spending and revenues. Immigration is expected to be another mitigating factor, bolstering labor force numbers and economic output. "The labor force in 2033 is larger by 5.2 million people, mostly because of higher net immigration," said Swagel of the CBO's projections.

But higher interest rates and greater than estimated costs of "energy-related tax provisions" offset some of these effects. Deficits as a percentage of GDP are set to climb after 2028, hitting 6.1 percent in 2034, according to the CBO. "Since the Great Depression, deficits have exceeded that level only during and shortly after World War II, the 2007–2009 financial crisis, and the coronavirus pandemic," the report added. — AFP

US Fed officials urge patience on rate cuts

WASHINGTON: Two US Federal Reserve officials indicated that the nation's central bank is on track to tackle inflation, but that it is still too soon to begin lowering interest rates. Fed policymakers have said in recent months that they are making good progress in bringing inflation down towards its long-run target of two percent, and signaled in December that they expect to cut interest rates three times this year. That's because high interest rates have pushed the Fed's favored inflation gauge down from a high of more than seven percent in 2022 to an annual rate of less than two percent over the last six months.

At the same time, hiring and economic growth have remained robust, raising hopes of an end to high interest rates. But speaking at events in Washington on Wednesday, two voting members of the Fed's rate-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) indicated that the time had not yet arrived to do so.

"We have a labor market that is at historic levels of strength," Richmond Fed President Tom Barkin told an event in the city. "Job gains, unemployment, job openings, initial jobless claims, all of these metrics are very strong and inflation is coming down," he said. "So I'm very supportive of being patient, you know, to get to where we need to get."

Speaking earlier the same day, Fed Governor Adriana Kugler also indicated she believed the US central bank should pause for a little longer before acting on interest rates.

"At some point, the continued cooling of inflation and labor markets may make it appropriate to reduce the target range for the federal funds rate," she said. "I am pleased by the progress on inflation, and optimistic it will continue, but I will be watching the economic data closely to verify the continuation of this progress," she added. Futures traders appear to have taken recent comments by Fed officials to heart, dialing back their expectations of a March rate cut over the last month, according to an AFP analysis of data from CME Group.

They have assigned a probability of more than 65 percent that the US central bank will have begun lowering interest rates by the time of its following meeting in May. — AFP

Business

Al-Ablani: Passion, perseverance and patience keys to a successful career

GM-GHR at NBK in an inspiring and highly engaging discussion with 'Tamakan' trainees

- Our mission is to build professional and dynamic human resources at all levels
- Group Human Resources is the beating heart of NBK's system
- The private sector is more agile and dynamic and gives you more room for creativity and innovation

- The one-team spirit is a key characteristic of work environment in NBK
- Choosing the right job requires research and study to make the right decision in deciding your path
- Attracting and retaining high-caliber talent is crucial to achieve the bank's long-term ambitions

KUWAIT: In the program's sixth panel discussion, "Tamakan" hosted Emad Al-Ablani, GM – Head of Group Human Resources at National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), who shared his extensive experience gained through a long career, highlighting the key milestones in his journey until assuming this leading position at the largest banking institution in Kuwait.

In a highly engaging open discussion with "Tamakan" trainees, Al-Ablani shared the key challenges he faced throughout his long journey. He also gave them some tips to help them navigate their way towards a thriving career, and the best ways to develop personal skills and capabilities to successfully make their way into the labor market and ensure career development. At the end of the discussion, he answered participants' questions about various aspects of work inside NBK.

The keys to success

Al-Ablani started his speech by urging "Tamakan" trainees to be patient and work hard to achieve their desired career development, and to cooperate with co-workers, as working in one-team spirit is a key success factor for large institutions, and this is a main characteristic of the work environment in a reputable organization like NBK, as everyone has different qualities and abilities, which makes success a guaranteed result of integration between the members of one team.

"Attaining a leading position in a prestigious institution like NBK requires three basic skills: passion, perseverance and patience, which are the keys to success and moving forward in achieving a thriving and sustainable career and rising to the highest positions," he mentioned. "It takes careful research and sufficient study to make the right decision in choosing your job, whether regarding the sector or even the workplace, as building a career requires ambitious young people who have unwavering desire and passion. Therefore, I always advise the youth to join the private sector because it is more agile and dynamic, and there is more room for innovation, development and creativity," he added.

The beating heart

In response to a question from one of the participants about the role of GHR, Al-Ablani said, "GHR is the beating heart of NBK's system through its various arms

including Training and Development, Talent Management, and Business Partners. Our mission is to attract and build professional and dynamic human resources at all levels, from new recruits joining the organization until reaching the highest positions, as well as providing an atmosphere that ensures utmost employee well-being."

"NBK's strategy is to build an agile and dynamic workforce by focusing on 4 pillars: First: placing the right competencies in the right roles at the right time; Second: preparing future leaders by developing leaders inspiring and driving employees towards innovation; Third: acquisition of high-caliber talent by attracting, retaining and developing qualified employees; Fourth: creating a sustainable performance environment and a culture promoting diversity, inclusion, clear results management principles, and protection of employees," he explained.

Calculated risk

On a question by one of the participants about choosing the ideal job and work environment, Al-Ablani said, "First, you have to set your goals according to your desires and skills, then work to develop clear plans to implement these goals, but the key factors are passion, perseverance, and patience, and developing the skills to help you achieve your goals."

Al-Ablani called on the young people to develop and learn by addressing questions all the time and benefiting from the work team and their expertise. Every question is important, and you must get a sufficient answer when you ask so that you have a broad knowledge of your job duties and the function of your department, especially that NBK's work environment encourages learning and development and always seeks to motivate employees and appreciate their efforts and contributions.

Al-Ablani went on to advise the youth saying, "Always make sure to know the negative comments from your managers, and work to address them to improve your performance, and do not think about moving from one department to another or one job to another just because of some negative comments or poor appraisal. Every employee must calculate the risks in every step he takes, as there is no "zero risk," but there are calculated and uncalculated risk. So, I advise all em-



KUWAIT: Emad Al-Ablani shares his experience during a "Tamakan" discussion.



ployees at the beginning of their career to always talk to their manager and discuss with him their performance and what aspects that can be developed and learned to avoid negative comments and obtain a higher appraisal going forward."

"NBK's work environment always encourages discussion and exchange of ideas and opinions. There are also other communication channels that help all employees express their opinions, and the bank listens to their feedback and suggestions, and their satisfaction with the work environment," he noted.

Don't fear job interviews

Al-Ablani touched on job interviews saying, "When we conduct job interviews, we always look for young people who are capable of learning, innovating, and communicating, by addressing some questions and evaluating the answers, reactions, and extent of response. The best answers during job interviews are honest ones, even if they do not serve the job applied for, so do not try to beautify or provide incorrect information as this may backfire."

"At NBK, we believe that attracting, retaining and developing high-caliber talent is instrumental to achieving our long-term ambitions, as well as advance the bank's efforts to build sustainable human resources, especially that we always seek to attract young talent that have the passion, ambition and desire for continued development and building a thriving career," he added.

Al-Ablani called on new graduates

not to fear job interviews, because fear may be an obstacle to highlighting all your skills during the interview, advising them to be responsive with the interviewer and not just give brief answers. He also called on the interviewers to stay away from personal matters that may embarrass applicants, such as social and political questions, as well as to simplify the interview and not touch on complicated topics to display their experience, as most applicants are fresh graduates who do not have that broad experience, and the tasks of the jobs they are applying for may not require such deep knowledge.

Employee development

Continuing his responses to participants' questions, Al-Ablani answered a question about employee development: "Once employees join the bank, they receive training courses relevant to each stage of their career, as learning is a deeply rooted culture in NBK that contributes to developing and increasing the efficiency of our human resources, which translates in improving our service quality."

"NBK training programs do not end at a certain level and are not limited to a specific stage in the career, stressing that all employees in the bank receive training programs to develop their skills, starting from new recruits to leaders, and from day one in the job and continuing throughout their career with the bank. After an employee is promoted and transferred from one job level to another, they receive specific training programs commensurate with the skills required

for the new job and qualifying him for the next level until they reach the highest leadership roles in the bank. There is also monitoring to follow up the training and development process to see the results of employee development," he elaborated.

Al-Ablani mentioned that all the training programs provided by NBK are carefully designed by specialized experts to suit all job levels, noting that "Tamakan" program provides an exceptional opportunity to enhance the skills necessary to navigate the labor market in general, not only working at NBK," he mentioned.

"NBK is firmly committed to investing in human capital with the support of the executive management, by attracting training and upskilling national talent. We boast an ideal and unique work environment providing exceptional opportunities for continuous career development through high-quality training programs delivered to its employees as well as fresh graduates, which helps them build a sustainable career," he added.

Golden tips

Al-Ablani shared with the trainees the following important tips to help them navigate their way towards a thriving career:

- Search for the jobs that suit your skills and ambitions
- Always seek to benefit from the expertise of your team members
- Always ask questions and ensure you get adequate answers to develop your expertise
- Work hard and be patient to achieve your desired career development



EU waters down law on app gig workers' conditions

BRUSSELS: EU officials said negotiators struck an agreement on Thursday on rules that seek to improve conditions for those working through apps, but member states could still reject the deal. The European Union wants to approve the world's first law covering the gig economy in a bid to give clarity to the status of millions of workers. The draft text had already been agreed in December. But days later a France-led resistance blocked the deal during a meeting of member states' ambassadors. EU states and lawmakers returned to talks and over several weeks held many painstaking negotiations to reach an agreement, which officials announced on Thursday.

Negotiators "just found a provisional agreement," Belgium, which holds the rotating EU presidency, said on social media. "We hope that this can be a first step towards better protection of platform workers."

The issue is not out of the woods yet. Multiple sources including EU diplomats poured cold water on any assumption that the deal would be approved by member states. "It has to be voted on by EU countries and it's unlikely to pass. If they don't get approval by February 16, the directive is postponed until after the European elections" later this year, a source close to the matter told AFP.

EU officials hope the EU's 27 states will discuss the text on Friday, before a vote next week, and that there will be no further obstacles to formal adoption.

"Hopeful for a positive outcome... next week," said the EU's jobs and social rights commissioner, Nicolas Schmit, referring to a meeting of ambassadors on February 16 where the agreement will be on the agenda. The text will only become law after formal adoption by states and the parliament. The legislation has faced an uphill battle since last year. Under the original deal in December, many platform workers in Europe could be reclassified as employees if they met two out of five criteria. — AFP

MARKAZ'S REAL ESTATE MARKET REPORT

Kuwait real estate sector to remain stable in H1 2024

KUWAIT: In line with its commitment to empowering investors with the latest and most reliable information on market trends and opportunities, Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" published a series of reports on the real estate markets in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE recently.

Prepared by Marmore MENA Intelligence, of the research arm of Markaz, the reports review the real estate sector's performance for H2 2023 and provide a detailed outlook report of H1 2024 based on critical macroeconomic indicators like oil and non-oil GDP growth, fiscal position, investments, money supply, inflation, interest rate, population growth, and job creation.

According to the projections for H1 2024, the real estate sector in the GCC region is expected to witness steady to accelerated growth trends, powered by anticipated stability in oil prices, rise in real estate demand, strong economic growth, and supportive government policies. The Markaz Real Estate Macro Index Scores for Kuwait, UAE, and Saudi Arabia for H1 2024 are 2.9, 3.8, and 3.55, compared to the H2 2023 scores of 2.8, 3.8, and 3.55, respectively.

Kuwait real estate report

The Markaz Real Estate Report for Kuwait forecasts a stable real estate market in the country in H1 2024, buoyed by several favorable factors. The country's economic growth is expected to be positive at 3.6 percent year-on-year, compared to -0.6 percent in 2023, supported mainly by the projected non-oil sector growth rate of 3.5 percent supported by an expected stabilization of interest rates and the recent boost in project activity. Also of significant impact are the IMF forecasts of oil prices, set to average at USD 79.92 per barrel in 2024 compared to USD 80.49 per barrel last year, ensuring stability in prices, as well as Kuwait's decision to continue its voluntary oil output reduction.

Kuwait witnessed relatively stable inflation (CPI) trends during H2 2023 enabled by the country's easing of food prices as well as the decline in global food prices. During the same period, housing rents increased by 3.4 percent year-on-year while the credit to the private sector underwent a significant slowdown from 9.1 percent to 2.5 percent year-on-year in October 2023. The report

states that the likelihood of the peaking of interest rates, the continued momentum in project activity, and the ongoing job gains for citizens could support credit growth through H1 2024, although elevated interest rates and extension of oil production cuts to end-2024 could cap credit growth.

The report notes that the real estate sector remained largely stable in 2023, with prices and rent holding steady and the normalization of the pent-up post-pandemic demand beginning to normalize. It also highlights the decline in residential sales, transaction volumes, Isthmari segment, and commercial sector sales in 9M 2023. However, based on its assessment of various macroeconomic indicators, the report reflects confidence in the stability of the Kuwaiti real estate sector in 2024. The outlook suggests promising prospects for increased activity in the latter part of the year, as evidenced by the country's Markaz Real Estate Macro Index score of 2.9 out of 5.0.

KSA real estate report

Markaz's KSA Real Estate Report estimates improved economic growth for the Kingdom in 2024 as opposed to the slow growth experienced in 2023. This is primarily expected to be driven by Saudi Arabia's robust performances across the oil and non-oil sectors, with real GDP growth expected to improve by 4 percent year-on-year. The Kingdom's economic performance is expected to improve due to the stronger demand for oil, moderate inflation levels, and low unemployment levels. The contribution of non-oil activities, along with active government spending, is expected to further accelerate the performance.

Saudi Arabia's oil prices are expected to average at \$93 per barrel in 2024, according to IEA's estimates, as opposed to the IMF forecasted breakeven price of \$79.7 per barrel. The Kingdom's fiscal position is anticipated to be secured by ongoing government investments and the stability of oil prices.

According to the report, the value of Saudi Arabia's real estate transactions decreased by 11.3 percent year-on-year until September 2023, with a corresponding volume drop of 7 percent. Driven by a 1.2 percent increase in residential land prices, the KSA real estate price index rose by 0.7 percent year-on-year in Q3 2023, although residential transactions continued to decline due to higher interest rates on mortgages and rigid property prices. However, the strong performance of the office sector witnessed during 2023 is expected to continue into 2024, especially due to the demand driven by multinational companies looking to set up their regional headquarters.



The report predicts an accelerated phase for the real estate sector in Saudi Arabia in H1 2024 based on its assessment of the various macroeconomic factors in the Kingdom. The sector's favorable position is expected to be supported by a stable growth in non-oil activities, a robust hospitality sector, and increased government spending on infrastructure projects.

UAE real estate report

Markaz's Real Estate Report for the United Arab Emirates predicts sustained growth for the country's economy in 2024, with real GDP growth of 4 percent year-on-year as compared to 3.4 percent in 2023, which is backed by IMF projections. This growth is expected to be primarily driven by the country's higher oil GDP, non-oil sector growth, investor-friendly government policies, stable fiscal position, and current account surplus.

The report anticipates that inflation in the UAE will average 2.3 percent in 2024, a projection in line with the estimates provided by the IMF. This expectation is reinforced by the moderation of price levels across significant segments, along with the presence of high rates of interest. It adds that higher interest rates in H1 2024 are likely to impact consumer spending and demand for mortgages.

According to the report, the UAE economy is expected to grow at a steady pace, supported by the increasing oil output and the expanding non-oil sector, despite fears of a mild recession in the USA and the Euro Zone, alongside the high global inflation levels anticipated in 2024. The real estate sector in the country witnessed strong growth in Q3 2023 with a continued surge despite macroeconomic headwinds, which is expected to continue in H1 2024 due to the ongoing high growth of key real estate segments like residential, office, and hospitality as well as the rising demand from ultra-high net worth individuals and the limited projects in the pipeline. Furthermore, the country's flexible visa policies, as well as its business-supportive and investor-friendly policies and tax laws, could drive real estate demand further. The report expects the UAE's real estate demand to accelerate in the first half of 2024, though at a slower pace compared to 2023.

Business

KIB wins CFI.co's 'Best Banking Vision in MENA' award for third year in a row

International award solidifies bank's leading position across MENA region

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) is delighted to announce that it has won the "Best Banking Vision – MENA 2023" award from Capital Finance International (CFI.co) magazine, affirming the Bank's long-running winning streak in this category. This

esteemed award, which has been presented to KIB for the third consecutive year, underscores the bank's unwavering dedication to shaping the future of Islamic banking with adaptive strategies and innovative solutions.

Demonstrating exceptional foresight and a clear vision for the ever-evolving landscape of banking, KIB was chosen as the recipient of the title from a group of nominated banking and financial institutions, following the decision of the CFI.co judging panel. The evaluation process factored in several

aspects, including the Bank's value creation and innovation, customer service level, corporate governance and executive leadership, use of technology, regulatory compliance, and risk management practices. Other key criteria included KIB's financial stability and performance, in addition to its active role when it comes to social responsibility and environmental sustainability.

Commenting on KIB's latest prestigious award, Raed Jawad Bukhamseen, KIB's Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, said: "We are deeply honored to receive CFI.co's 'Best Banking Vision' award for the Middle East region. This award reflects our steadfast commitment to revolutionizing the banking industry through innovation, technological advancement, and a relentless focus on our customers' evolving needs. Driven by a comprehensive vision, which encompasses digital transformation, sustainable banking practices, responsible innovation, and safe and convenient banking, we remain dedicated to pushing the boundaries of banking."

Bukhamseen added: "Thanks to its insightful vi-



sion, KIB's exemplary achievements have not only elevated its own products and services but have also had a positive ripple effect on the broader financial ecosystem within the region. The Bank's visionary approach has set new standards for innovation and customer service excellence, inspiring positive change in the industry. The Bank remains a pioneering force in providing cutting-edge financial

solutions and shaping the future of banking in the Middle East."

Concluding his statement, Bukhamseen said: "I extend my thanks to all the regulatory authorities, especially the Central Bank of Kuwait for its supportive role and the rational policies that it applies to the banking sector. I also extend my appreciation to the Chairman and members of the Board of Directors of KIB and the executive management for their continuous support towards achieving further success." He also thanked all KIB employees for their dedication and cooperation to ensure the Bank's development to continue meeting the aspirations of customers and shareholders. It serves to note that CFI.co is considered one of the most prominent media platforms in London that specializes in covering business, economy, and finance news, while its awards program stands as one of the largest international forums to evaluate and honor individuals and institutions that have contributed to providing the highest standards of innovation and excellence in the economic and financial sector worldwide.

Ramaphosa pledges jobs, end to power cuts in key speech

CAPE TOWN: South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said that an end to crippling power cuts was "within reach" and pledged thousands of new jobs in a key speech ahead of knife-edge elections this year. With his historically dominant African National Congress (ANC) party struggling in the polls, Ramaphosa used a state of the nation address to highlight steps taken to address the prolonged energy crisis that has vexed businesses and families alike.

"We are confident that the worst is behind us and the end of load shedding is finally within reach," he said, referring to the blackouts, in his speech to lawmakers at Cape Town City Hall.

"But we are not stopping there," he added, touting new reforms and investments including more than 14,000 kilometers (8,700 miles) of new transmission lines to accommodate renewable energy to be rolled out in the coming years. "With our abundance of solar, wind and mineral resources, we are going to create thousands of jobs in renewable energy, green hydrogen, green steel, electric vehicles and other green products," Ramaphosa said.

Ramaphosa, 71, is facing an uphill battle to rally support behind the scandal-tainted ANC, which polls suggest risks losing its parliamentary majority for the first time. In power since the advent of democracy in 1994, the party of late anti-apartheid icon Nelson Mandela has been tainted by graft and mismanagement amid high unemployment and a slumbering economy.

Ramaphosa defended his record, saying his government "made significant progress on measures to grow the economy, create jobs and reduce poverty." "While we have set in motion the process of renewal and reform, there is more work to be done to see these reforms through to the end," he said.

But John Steenhuisen, head of the Democratic Alliance (DA), the leading opposition party, said the President was "living in a wonderland", adding that under his tenure the country had regressed across every single metric. "It is not the lived reality of ordinary South Africans. Our country is desperate and I think those South Africans are very keen for the election," he told AFP outside the City Hall after the speech. — AFP

Canada's BCE planning to cut 4,800 jobs

MONTREAL: Canada's largest communications conglomerate BCE Inc announced Thursday it plans to cut 4,800 jobs, or nine percent of its workforce, and sell off 45 radio stations across the country.

Bell Canada Enterprises Inc, the parent of Bell Media, said in financial filings that "traditional radio faces accelerated substitution from new music players and alternative streaming services."

The sale of the dozens of stations—nearly half of its total holdings—to seven buyers will be subject to regulatory approvals. The broad-based job cuts are part of the company's largest workforce restructuring in nearly three decades, and come after it reported a more than 20 percent drop in its fourth-quarter profit to Can\$435 million (US\$322 million).

This is despite a slight uptick in revenues to Can\$6.47 billion. It marks the second round of layoffs in less than a year, after 1,300 positions—mostly in management—were cut in June 2023 as a result of declining legacy phone revenues and losses in its news and radio divisions.

Back then, it also announced the closure or sale of nine radio stations, and a consolidation of its news operations. Many media outlets in Canada—as in other parts of the world—are currently in dire financial straits. Canada's struggling news sector has seen a flight of advertising dollars to internet giants Google and Meta, and hundreds of publications closed in the last decade. — AFP

Hermes celebrates record profit with staff bonuses

PARIS: French luxury giant Hermes posted on Friday record annual sales and net profit, with plans to reward all employees worldwide with a bonus following strong growth in every region last year. The group reported a better-than-expected profit of 4.3 billion euros (\$4.6 billion), up 28 percent from 2022, on sales that surged 16 percent at current exchange rates to 13.4 billion euros.

"In 2023, Hermes has once again cultivated its singularity and achieved an outstanding performance in all métiers (businesses) and across all regions against a high base," executive chairman Axel Dumas said in an earnings statement. The group said its 22,000 employees worldwide would get a 4,000-euro bonus early this year as part of "its policy of sharing the fruits of growth with all those who contribute to it on a daily basis".

It will also propose an increase in dividends for shareholders. Hermes shares rose by almost five per-

stc concludes cleaning campaign

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced the completion of a significant cleaning campaign, in line with the company's sustainability program titled "Small Move, Big Impact", and in collaboration with the Ministry of Municipality. The initiative marks an additional milestone under stc's ongoing commitment to environmental preservation, especially through its extensive corporate social responsibility (CSR) framework and the recently launched sustainability program.

This initiative was organized for the stc family in the presence of stc's Corporate Communications team represented by Abdullah Al-Najdi and Mariam Al-Kandari, with the focus area being in the Al-Mutlaa desert, a popular area today for camping. With a spirit of environmental consciousness and community service, employees were invited to participate in the clean-up, providing them with an opportunity to actively contribute to the preservation of the local ecosystem. The event was met with great enthusiasm as employees eagerly signed up, demonstrating their commitment to environmental stewardship and community engagement. stc's dedicated ambassadors selected by the company known



PARIS: This picture taken on December 20, 2017 shows the logo of the French fashion main house and luxury goods Hermes outside a shop in the fashionable and luxurious street "rue du faubourg Saint-Honore" in Paris. — AFP

cent on the Paris stock exchange Friday to 2,174.50 euros, propelling its market capitalization above cosmetics giant L'Oreal, making it France's second largest company behind luxury goods rival LVMH.

L'Oreal's stock price fell more than seven percent to 418.80 euros after posting lower-than-expected results for the fourth quarter. Shares in LVMH, the world's



for their commitment to stc's values and community initiatives, were also present to help clean the area and motivate the participants.

The involvement of stc's employees demonstrates the ingrained values and culture of social responsibility and sustainable practices within the organization, reinforcing the importance of community engagement in environmental stewardship. Such initiatives have been consistently implemented by the Company to set a certain standard when it comes to environmental responsibility within the local community. In a statement, stc expressed that such initiatives, as well as others,

highlight the active engagement and deep commitment of its employees towards environmental and community welfare. The successful cleanup campaign serves as a reflection of the organization's culture, where such values are embodied in the actions of its workplace. The enthusiastic participation of employees in the campaign is a testament to their dedication to making a positive change in the community and the environment. In this regard, stc recognizes and appreciates the efforts of every employee who contributed to this initiative, demonstrating that collective action can lead to significant environmental benefits.

Sunak paid more than \$630,000 in taxes in 2023

LONDON: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, a former banker, paid more than 500,000 pounds (\$630,000) in taxes in 2023, his office revealed on Friday.

The 43-year-old, who has been prime minister since October 2022, had revenues of 2.2 million pounds in the 2022-23 tax year, a 13-percent increase on the previous year, according to documents released by Downing Street. About 140,000 pounds was earned as prime minister and a member of parliament. Another 2.1 million pounds came from capital gains, share dividends and interest.

The figures indicate that Sunak paid an overall rate of 23 percent in tax, with capital gains taxed at a lower rate than employment income. The capital gains come mainly from an investment fund based in the United States. Sunak is married to Akshata Murty, daughter of N.R. Narayana Murthy, founder of the Indian tech giant Infosys.

The couple's personal wealth has landed them in controversy and been used by opponents to criticise the prime minister as being out of touch with the concerns of ordinary Britons. After media revealed that Murty had used a non-domiciled status to pay less tax on money earned outside Britain, Murty said she would declare all revenue earned around the world. A parliamentary inquiry highlighted how Sunak had failed to disclose interests that his wife had in a child care company, but did not impose sanctions. — AFP



LONDON: Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak arrives to host the Help To Grow campaign launch panel event with business leaders from small and medium enterprises (SMEs) at 10 Downing Street in central London. — AFP

Egypt's Sisi orders minimum wage hike as prices soar

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi ordered a 50 percent raise to the minimum wage on Wednesday, as prices soar two years into an economic crisis. "Based on the state's duty to support the citizen under the current circumstances, I have directed the government to enact a package of social protection measures that include raising the minimum wage by 50 percent, to reach 6,000 pounds (\$194) a month," Sisi said in a statement.

The move includes salary increases for public sector doctors, teachers and nurses, and will see the tax exemption ceiling raised by 33 percent for both public and private sector workers, his spokesman Ahmed Fahmy said. Fahmy said it was introduced to "lighten the cost of living burden on citizens"—buckling under the weight of an economic crisis that began in March 2022, and shows no signs of easing. A delegation from the International Monetary Fund, which has agreed to a \$3 billion loan facility for Egypt, recently emphasized the "critical importance of strengthening social spending to protect vulnerable groups" and "ensure adequate living conditions for low and middle-income households" in the country. But loan tranches and program reviews have been repeatedly delayed until Cairo moves forward on economic reforms—including a "fully flexible exchange rate", the IMF says. In a single year, the Egyptian pound lost half its value against the US dollar in successive devaluations. But, according to analysts, the government has propped up the currency since early last year to stem runaway consumer prices. — AFP

Lifestyle



People watch dragon dancing in front of Kuan Yim shrine in Bangkok's Chinatown.



People buy dragon puppets.



A laughing monk and lion dancers perform on Yaowarat Road in Chinatown in Bangkok on February 9, 2024, on the eve of the Lunar New Year of the Dragon which falls on February 10.

'Buzzing' Bangkok celebrates Lunar New Year

A riot of scarlet lanterns hung over the red-clothed crowds offering candles as they murmured prayers at a traditional temple in Bangkok to celebrate Lunar New Year. Millions of Thai-Chinese marked the occasion with parties, family meals and visits to many of the shrines dotted around Chinatown.

he told AFP outside Wat Mongkorn, among the city's largest. "I like to make merits, wash away bad deeds. Today, it's refreshing because it's raining."

There is a long history of Chinese migration to Thailand, with Thai-Chinese people accounting for roughly 10 percent of the population — including some of the kingdom's most prominent business families. Temple-goers found a moment for quiet reflection as they lit candles and made traditional offerings in Wat Mongkorn — sometimes referred to as the "Dragon Temple" — before returning to the bustle outside.

Chawanakorn Arunthanachotikul, 31, had travelled with his family and friends to be there. "Today is a good day for Thai-Chinese people," he told AFP. "I pray for luck and ask for this year to end smoothly." While many in downtown Bangkok were from the kingdom, the celebrations are a busy and highly lucrative time for tourism in Thailand as well.

Between January 1 and February 8 Thailand welcomed more than 730,000 Chinese visitors, a Thai government spokesperson told local media on Saturday. It follows last month's visa waiver agreement between Bangkok and Beijing, which Thai officials hope will boost the kingdom's vital tourism sector, which is struggling to bounce back from the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Chinatown, tourists were perusing



People shop for Chinese-style dresses on Yaowarat Road.

the many stalls that had set out vibrant merchandise, with vendors often dressed in red cheongsams. Among those visiting was American-Chinese tourist Cassandra Branson, 22, who had travelled from Beijing. "I wanted to come to Chinatown during Chinese New Year because it feels

like home," she told AFP, saying she usually celebrated in New York. "I spend it with family at home and it's like more quiet, less buzzing. It's very festive here," she said. "It's a lot more lively." — AFP



A man lights incense at Kuan Yim shrine.

The old streets in the capital's downtown came alive on Saturday afternoon, with thousands of curious tourists and happy devotees such as Watcharin Parichatwuttikoon, 70, enjoying the occasion. "It's very sacred. I have attended since I was young,"



People walk along and take pictures on Yaowarat Road.



Lion dancers perform at Kuan Yim shrine.



People eat seafood on Yaowarat Road.



People give offerings at Wat Mangkon temple.

Lifestyle

Star Japanese conductor Seiji Ozawa dies at 88

Charismatic Japanese conductor Seiji Ozawa, who led the Boston Symphony Orchestra for nearly 30 years and delighted audiences with his energetic style, died at his home in Tokyo aged 88, his management team announced on Friday.

Ozawa conquered the world of Western classical music, bringing an East Asian sensibility to his work with some of the world's most celebrated or-

chestras, from Chicago to Boston to Vienna.

But he broke two fingers as a teenager while playing rugby — another passion — and switched to conducting. He moved abroad in 1959 and met some of the greatest luminaries of the classical music world, including the composer and conductor Leonard Bernstein, becoming his assistant at the New York Philharmonic in the 1961-1962 season.



This file photo taken on Sept 5, 2010 shows Japanese conductor Seiji Ozawa (right) directing an orchestra during the Saito Kinen Festival in Matsumoto, central Japan.

Ozawa went on to lead orchestras in Chicago, Toronto and San Francisco. He was the longest-serving conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO) with a 29-year stint as musical director. A concert hall was named for him at Tanglewood, the group's summer home in western Massachusetts. He left in 2002 to become chief conductor at the Vienna State Opera until 2010.

He died of heart failure and the funeral was attended by close relatives according to his wishes, the statement read. Ozawa was born in 1935 in the Chinese province of Manchuria, then a Jap-

anese colony, and started learning piano at elementary school.

'A musical genius'

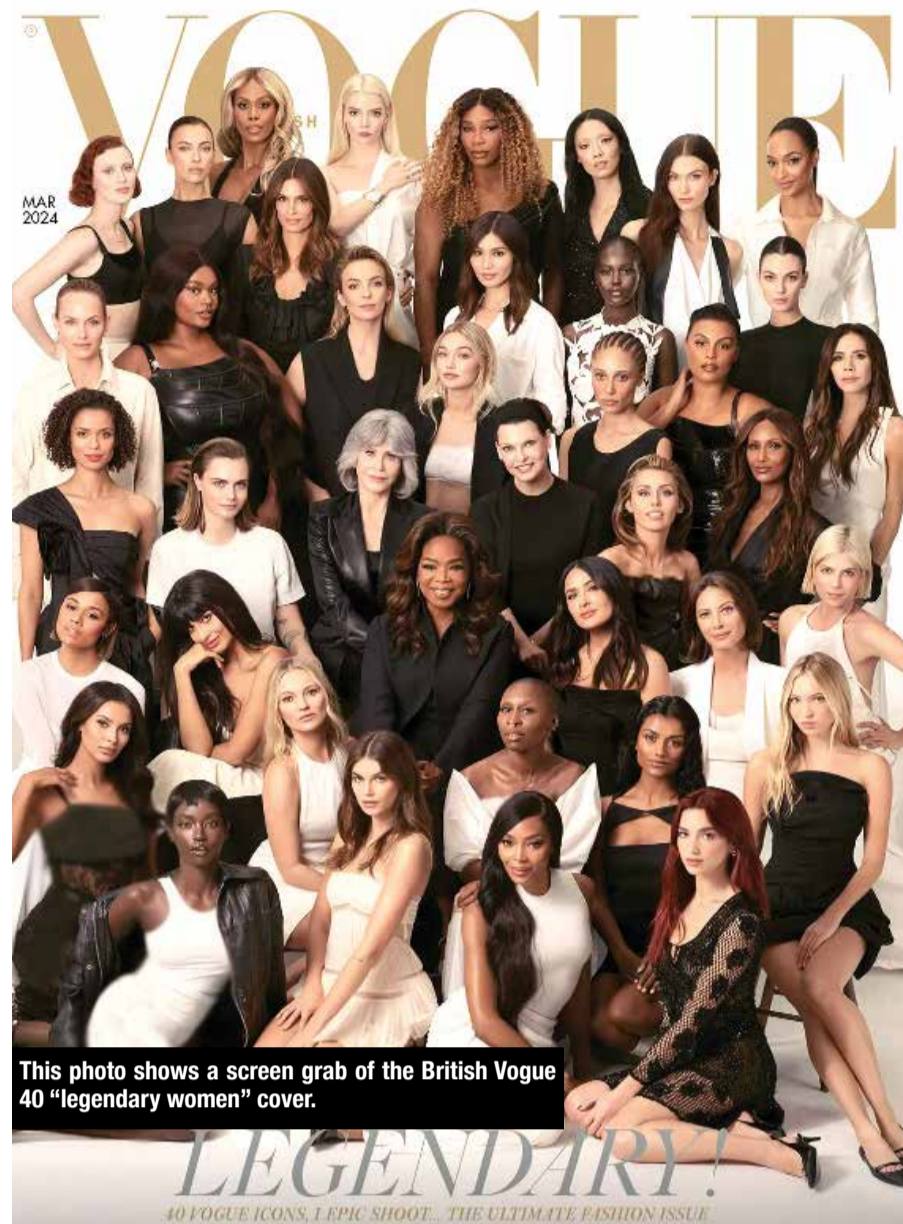
The Vienna Philharmonic, with which Ozawa first collaborated at the 1966 Salzburg Festival, paid tribute to his "loving interaction with his colleagues and his charisma". "It was a gift to be able to go a long way with this artist, who was characterized by the highest musical standards and at the same time humility towards the treasures of musical culture," Professor Daniel Froschauer, chairman of the Vienna Philharmonic, said in a statement.

Current BSO conductor Andris Nelsons called Ozawa "a great friend, a brilliant role model, and an exemplary musician and leader" in a tribute on X, formerly Twitter, accompanied by a photo of the pair. "He has been an inspiration to me all my life and I will miss him dearly."

In a separate statement from the orchestra, he recalled Ozawa's "enthusiasm for the city and people of Boston, Tanglewood — and the Boston Red Sox!" Marin Alsop, one of the few celebrated women conductors, said Ozawa had been a "great mentor" to her at Tanglewood.

Chad Smith, the chief executive officer of the BSO, called Ozawa "a force of nature on and off stage". He was "a musical genius who combined a balletic grace at the podium with a prodigious memory", Smith said in a statement.

In-demand operatic soprano Christine Goerke said the opportunity "to make music and experience such joy and belly aching laughter with this extraordinary human being has been one of the greatest gifts of my life". "I am in tears this morning, but am beyond grateful for you, Seiji Ozawa. Safe home, Maestro, and thank you," Goerke wrote on X. — AFP



This photo shows a screen grab of the British Vogue 40 "legendary women" cover.

British Vogue editor bows out with 40 'legendary women' cover

The pathbreaking editor of British Vogue Edward Enninful on Friday said 40 "legendary women" ranging from Serena Williams to Miley Cyrus had gathered to grace the cover of his last issue of the fashion bible.

Enninful took over at British Vogue in 2017, becoming the magazine's first male and first black editor, and vowed to reinvigorate it with a new focus on diversity and inclusion. Enninful writes in his final edition that "non-white cover stars had been viewed for so long as commercial nonstarters (this magazine had been a key offender, in fact)". "How ridiculous, I thought. And so it proved," he added.

He said he searched out his past collaborators — including Laverne Cox, Vogue's first trans cover star — after realizing that "no one woman could or should encapsulate these past few years for the magazine". The 40 cover stars — each of whom has individually graced the cover of Vogue during Enninful's tenure — were drawn from the worlds of film, television, fashion and sport. They include tennis player Serena Williams, actress Jane Fonda, chat show host Oprah Winfrey and singer Dua Lipa.

Nineties supermodels Naomi Campbell, Cindy Crawford, Christy Turlington, Linda Evangelista and Iman all feature along with two mother and daughter pairs — Cindy Crawford and Kaia Gerber and Kate and Lila Moss. Among those representing the younger generation are models Cara Delevingne, Gigi Hadid and the plus-size Paloma Elsesser, singer Miley Cyrus and actress Jodie Comer.

'Unseen visible'

Model Adwoa Aboah, who appeared on the cover of Enninful's debut edition in 2017, also features. "What we needed was a group, to lean into the power of the collective to bring to life what I hope has been a daring, disruptive and evolutionary period in Vogue's history", Enninful added.



Edward Enninful

He said he held his breath for weeks before the shoot. "Would 40 of the most booked and blessed women on earth actually make it to one studio in New York on one day in December to take one image together?"

The shot, by photographer Steven Meisel, is the largest number of women ever photographed together for a Vogue cover. Campbell praised her friend Enninful for his groundbreaking editorship. "He's shown us fashion is more than clothing, it's a powerful tool for social change," she wrote in The Daily Telegraph newspaper. — AFP



Crew of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) DC-8 airborne science laboratory disembark from their aircraft.

World's biggest flying lab comes to Asia on air pollution mission

NASA has kicked off a series of marathon flights in Asia with the world's biggest flying laboratory, in an ambitious mission to improve the models that help to forecast and fight air pollution. Millions of deaths each year are linked to air pollution, and improving the ability to identify its sources and behavior can lead to more accurate warning systems for the public.

much pollution is coming from different sources. And that's one of the primary inputs to the air quality forecasting models," NASA's Barry Lefler told reporters Thursday at Clark International Airport, around 80 km (50 miles) north of Manila.

Air quality forecasting relies on readings from ground stations as well as satellites, but both methods are limited in their ability to see how pollutants

readings is necessary for policies "regarding public health, regarding industrial compliance, regarding ... ecosystem preservation and conservation", said Maria Antonia Lozaga, secretary of the Philippines Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Packed with dozens of highly sensitive instruments, the NASA lab has flown twice so far this week in a figure-eight pattern over some of the most densely populated areas of the Philippines, including the capital region, according to the tracking site FlightAware.

It has been accompanied by a smaller NASA Gulfstream jet whose instruments can create three-dimensional maps of pollutants in the air. In the coming weeks, the jets will also conduct research flights over South Korea, Malaysia and Thailand.

Results from the study will be shared with the public after a year, NASA program officials said. The project, named ASIA-AQ, is a collaboration between the US agency and governments in a region with some of the highest air pollution-linked death rates in the world.

Manila Observatory scientist Maria Cambaliza told reporters Thursday that about a third of global air pollution-linked deaths are recorded in Asia. In the Philippines, she added, there are 100 such deaths per 100,000 people. — AFP



Andy Barry (left) and Greg Slover, pilots of the NASA DC-8 airborne science laboratory, pose for a photo in the cockpit. — AFP photos

Starting this week in the Philippines, the US agency's DC-8 is flying for up to eight hours at a time — sometimes just 15 meters (50 feet) from the ground — to swoop up air particles for study. "We can provide direct measurements of how

are spread in the air, according to experts. Readings from aircraft can help fill that gap, improve the interpretation of satellite data, and lead to more accurate models.

Combining the air, space and ground



A NASA scientist gestures as she explains the function of a machine inside the aircraft.



Nicki Reid, mission director of the airborne science laboratory checks the aircraft's equipment at Clark International Airport in Angeles City, north of Manila, on February 8, 2024.



An auctioneer gestures behind a costume used in the filming of "The Crown".

'The Crown' props prove popular at London auction

The UK sale of sets, costumes and props from the hit Netflix drama "The Crown" was due to end Thursday after several showpiece items smashed estimates and netted tens of thousands of pounds. Hundreds of items — from a signed script to a sports car — featured in the award-winning show went under the hammer in a two-day London auction that included a live sale Wednesday.

That saw a 1987 green Jaguar XJ-SC Cabriolet, used in "The Crown" to portray a similar model owned by Princess Diana, fetch £70,250 (\$88,600) — the highest-priced sale at the auction staged by Bonhams. It was more than four times the low estimate price set by the auctioneers.

A reproduction of the Gold State Coach, used for British royal coronations, jubilees and other events, which featured in seasons three and six of

the show, sold for £56,280. Meanwhile a reproduction of Saint Edward's Chair, known as the "Coronation Chair" and used in season one, went for £25,600.

But a replica of the front of 10 Downing Street, the British prime minister's office and residence, underperformed on its £20,000-£30,000 estimate, selling for £10,880. Some of the array of costumes worn on-screen by "The Crown" cast members also attracted sizeable bids, with Princess Diana's clothes and jewelry drawing particular interest.

A custom-made replica of the ceremonial Coronation garments donned by Claire Foy, who portrays Queen Elizabeth II at her 1953 crowning, fetched nearly £20,000. A version of Diana's so-called "revenge" dress — a daring off-the-shoulder cocktail dress worn by actress Elizabeth Debicki in the fifth season — sold for £12,800. — AFP

Sports

Warner, Zampa star as Australia beat West Indies in 1st T20

Visitors put up a valiant fight but they could only manage 202-8

HOBART: David Warner slammed 70 off 36 balls in his 100th Twenty20 international and Adam Zampa grabbed three wickets as Australia beat the West Indies by 11 runs in the opening clash of their three-match series on Friday. The hosts crunched 213-7 after being sent in to bat on a windy and cold Hobart evening.

The visitors put up a valiant fight but they could only manage 202-8, with Zampa taking 3-26. Warner, who became only the third man after New Zealand's Ross Taylor and India's Virat Kohli to play 100 internationals in each format, hit 12 fours and a six in his explosive knock to anchor the Australia innings.

"Pleasing to get the win on the board. I feel refreshed and a lot of energy," said Warner. "I said I want to play the Twenty20 World Cup and finish there and I'm excited and it's a good journey we've got going through the next six months." The West Indies hammered 16 off the opening over from Jason Behrendorff in a perfect start to the chase and put on 72 without loss in the six-over powerplay, just five shy of what Australia managed.

But when Johnson Charles fell for 42 to Zampa and Brandon King for 53 to Marcus Stoinis after an 89-run stand, the wheels began coming off. Stoinis accounted for Shai Hope (16) and Glenn Maxwell removed Rovman Powell (14). It

left the West Indies needing 72 from the final five overs, but when Zampa snared two more wickets in four balls it blunted the charge and the win proved out of reach.

"We struggled to get partnerships, but it was a good game of cricket," said West Indies skipper Powell. "We just have to back ourselves a little bit more." Warner smacked five boundaries from his first 10 balls, including four in Jason Holder's opening over.

The 37-year-old brought up his 25th T20 half-century off just 22 balls to send a clear message to selectors that he plans to be in contention for the World Cup later this year. He was eventually out to a slower Alzarri Joseph delivery, gloving to Nicolas Pooran behind the stumps.

With Travis Head and Steve Smith rested, Josh Inglis opened with Warner and was equally aggressive in thumping 39 off 25 balls until removed by Holder, offering Powell a simple catch at mid-off. Mitchell Marsh was dealing with Covid in the lead-up but showed few ill effects in hitting a giant six off Andre Russell to help Australia reach 110-1 at the halfway mark before being caught behind off Joseph for 16.

The run rate eased when Warner departed before Tim David took up the mantle with an explosive unbeaten 37 off 17 balls. — AFP



HOBART: Australia's Adam Zampa bowls during a cricket match between Australia and West Indies. — AFP

Kohli to miss remaining three England Tests

NEW DELHI: Star batsman Virat Kohli's absence from the India squad for undisclosed "personal reasons" will extend to the remaining three Tests against England, the country's cricket board said Saturday. The series is level at 1-1 after two matches that Kohli also missed, and will resume without him in Rajkot for the third Test starting Thursday.

Both he and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)

have given scant details on the reasons for his absence. "Virat Kohli will remain unavailable for selection for the remainder of the series due to personal reasons," the BCCI said in a statement. "The Board fully respects and supports Mr. Kohli's decision."

The same explanation was given for Kohli being left out of the squad for the first two Tests, which saw him replaced by debutant Rajat Patidar. Kohli, who amassed 765 runs in 11 ODI World Cup matches for runners-up India last year, missed the white-ball leg of the South African tour in 2023 and the opening T20 match against Afghanistan at home earlier this year. The 35-year-old remains the backbone

of India's batting with 8,848 runs including 29 centuries and an average of over 49 in 113 Tests.

Top order batsman Shreyas Iyer was another notable absence from the 17-man squad named for the remainder of the series by the board on Saturday. Iyer, who was in the XI for the first two Tests but struggled to find his form in any of his four innings, had back surgery for a slipped disc last year. ESPNcricinfo reported he had told team management that he suffered a flare-up of back spasms after the second Test in Visakhapatnam this month.

Ravindra Jadeja and K.L. Rahul were both included but their participation was "subject to fitness

clearance from the BCCI medical team", the board said. England, led by Ben Stokes, won the opener to hand the hosts just their fourth loss at home since 2013 but Rohit Sharma's team bounced back in the next match with a 106-run victory. The series concludes with Tests in Ranchi starting February 23 and Dharamsala from March 7.

India squad: Rohit Sharma (capt), Jasprit Bumrah, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, K.L. Rahul, Rajat Patidar, Sarfaraz Khan, Dhruv Jurel (wk), K.S. Bharat (wk), Ravichandran Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Siraj, Mukesh Kumar, Akash Deep. — AFP



LAUSANNE: Former world number one tennis player Romania's Simona Halep (L) and her lawyer Howard Jacobs (C) arrive at the Court of Arbitration for Sport, for her appeal against a four-year doping ban. — AFP

Halep 'confident' of overturning doping ban after CAS hearing

LAUSANNE: Former world number one Simona Halep said Friday she was confident her appeal against a four-year doping ban would be successful after a three-day hearing before the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Switzerland. "This hearing provided me with the opportunity to present my position and defend my innocence," the two-time Grand Slam winner said in a statement after the final day of the hearing.

"My confidence in the prevalence of the truth remains intact. I look forward to reclaiming my place on the tennis courts." Accompanied by her lawyers, the 32-year-old began pleading her case behind closed doors at CAS headquarters in Lausanne on Wednesday.

The hearing concluded on Friday at 1430GMT "with the final pleadings of the parties", CAS said in a separate statement. "The parties have been informed that the CAS Panel in charge of the matter will now deliberate and prepare the Arbitral Award containing its decision and grounds," the statement added.

The CAS ruling will be delivered at a date yet to be announced. The Romanian was suspended last September by the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) after two separate doping infractions. She tested positive for roxadustat after the US Open in 2022 and was charged with a second anti-doping breach last year relating to irregularities in her athlete biological passport.

Halep has protested her innocence and refused to accept the ITIA decision which will keep her from playing professional tennis again until October 6, 2026. The winner of the 2018 French Open and 2019 Wimbledon singles titles says she wants to "clear her name" and has claimed experts found she had accidentally taken a contaminated supplement.

Roxadustat is a substance that can be used legitimately to treat anaemia. But it is also on the World Anti-Doping Agency banned list as it is considered a blood-doping agent, which increases haemoglobin and the production of red blood cells.

The biological passport system is designed for the long-term monitoring of an athlete's blood indicators with the aim of identifying irregularities that could indicate doping. Halep is the first leading women's tennis player to be caught in the anti-doping net since the suspension of Russian Maria Sharapova in 2016. — AFP

Sri Lanka defeat Afghanistan after Nissanka's 210

KANDY: Pathum Nissanka's record-breaking double century steered Sri Lanka to a comfortable 42-run win over Afghanistan Friday in the opener of their three-match one-day international series at Pallekele.

Set a stiff target of 382, Afghanistan reached 339 for six as Mohammad Nabi and Azmatullah Omarzai scored centuries after their team were reduced to 55-5. Nissanka's unbeaten 210 was Sri Lanka's first ODI double hundred, breaking the island nation's longstanding record highest score of 189 by Sanath Jayasuriya against India in 2000.

It was also the joint fifth-highest individual score in ODIs. "We are absolutely thrilled with that performance," Sri Lankan seamer Pramod Madushan told reporters. "Great to be part of the dressing room in such an historic moment."

"It was tough out there but Pathum did well to soak up all the pressure and put us on top." Sri Lanka's 381-3 was also their biggest total at the ground and the team's fourth-highest overall. The unstoppable Nissanka's knock included 20 fours and eight sixes from the 139 balls he faced in his first ODI since the World Cup.

Afghanistan stumbled early in their daunting chase, with the tourists losing five wickets inside nine overs. Madushan cut through the top order for match figures of 4-75. Dushantha Chameera took the other two wickets to fall but walked off the field halfway through his eighth over, ap-



KANDY: Sri Lanka's Dushantha Chameera (R) bowls during the first one-day international (ODI) cricket match between Sri Lanka and Afghanistan at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium in Kandy on February 9, 2024. — AFP

pearing to be suffering from back pain.

Omarzai (149 not out) and Nabi (136) fought back aggressively with a 242-run stand for the sixth wicket. Afghanistan's second-highest for any wicket in ODIs, to briefly give Sri Lanka a fright. Omarzai's maiden hundred came from a flicked six off pacer Janith Liyanage.

Sri Lanka's innings saw Avishka Fernando score 88 from as many deliveries before he was caught by Ibrahim Zadran at backward point in the 27th over. Skipper Kusal Mendis was next in but failed to make an impact and fell for a 31-ball 16. Sadeera Samarawickrama hit 44 off 36 deliveries in his 120-run partnership with Nissanka. — AFP

Qadsiya crush UAE's Bani Yas in volleyball

MUSCAT: Kuwait's Qadsiya on Saturday beat the UAE team Bani Yas 3-1 in the 2nd West Asia volleyball championship for men, currently proceeding in Sohar. The match was held at Sohar Sports Stadium as part of the competitions for the 8-5 rankings of the championship, involving ten teams—due to conclude on Monday. In addition to Qadsiya and Bani Yas, the championship includes the Omani Sohar and Al-Seeb teams.

Results of the 9th and 10th ranks had been determined when the Saudi Al-Ibtisam beat the Jordanian team Shabab Al-Hussein 3-1, last night. The Kuwaiti team Al-Kuwait is due to play against the Qatari Al-Arabi later today to determine winners of the group that also includes the Bahraini Al-Ahli and the Qatari Al-Rayyan—the latter was champion of the 2023 tournament. — KUNA



Sports

Goals galore at 2024 AFCON, but trend may not continue in final

Record prize money at stake with winners receiving \$7 million

ABIDJAN: The Africa Cup of Nations has produced a record 116 goals with two matches to go, but history suggests the final between hosts Ivory Coast and Nigeria on Sunday could be a low-scoring affair. There have been only 10 goals in the past 10 finals of the African football showpiece, and six of those came in just two title deciders.

Hosts Tunisia defeated Morocco 2-1 in 2004 and Cameroon came from behind against Mohamed Salah-inspired Egypt 13 years later to succeed by the same score. Of the other eight finals, four were won by a solitary goal and another four were decided by penalty shootouts after 120 goalless minutes in each. Football is the dominant sport in Africa and, with so much pride and pressure on the line, it is not surprising that AFCON finals tend to be tense, defence-dominated struggles for supremacy. This year, there is record prize money at stake with the winners receiving \$7 million -- \$2 million more than Senegal pocketed for becoming champions two years ago.

Apart from the prize money, AFCON-winning squads can score from additional money offered by national governments and football federations, and stars may reap advertising rewards. Ivory Coast and Nigeria have already met in 2024, in the second round of group matches, and the match delivered only one goal, a penalty converted by Super Eagles captain William Troost-Ekong. The Ivorian Elephants have reached the final—ex-

pected to draw a capacity 60,000 crowd to the Ebimpe Olympic Stadium in Abidjan—by scoring just six goals in six matches.

Challenging

No Ivorian has managed to net more than once with the goals coming from Simon Adingra, Oumar Diakite, Seko Fofana, Sebastien Haller, Franck Kessie and Jean-Philippe Krasso. Nigeria have also found scoring challenging. The statistics show they got seven in six outings, but one of them was a spectacular own goal from Opa Sangante of Guinea-Bissau.

Ademola Lookman has notched three, Troost-Ekong two from penalties, and Napoli star and reigning African Player of the Year Victor Osimhen one. In the race for the Golden Boot, Lookman, with three goals, is best placed to overtake the long-time chart-topper, five-goal Emilio Nsue of Equatorial Guinea. However, no player has scored more than once in a final since South African Mark Williams bagged a brace in 1996. There has only ever been one hat-trick in 31 finals—Egyptian Mohamed Diab Al-Attar scored four times in 1957.

Deceased Ivory Coast football legend Laurent Pokou, who had one of the six 2024 AFCON stadiums named after him, holds the record for a match at the tournament with five goals. They came in a 6-1 hammering of Ethiopia at the 1970 group stage, but Ivory Coast bowed out in the semi-finals. — AFP



ABIDJAN: Nigeria's Portuguese coach Jose Peseiro (L) arrives for a press conference at the palais de la Culture in Abidjan on February 10, 2024 on the eve of the 2024 Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) final football match between Ivory Coast and Nigeria. — AFP



DORTMUND: Dortmund's Dutch defender #22 Ian Maatsen (C) and Freiburg's Japanese forward #42 Ritsu Doan (R) vie for the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match between BVB Borussia Dortmund and SC Freiburg in Dortmund. — AFP

Malen double fires Dortmund past Freiburg

DORTMUND: Donyell Malen scored a first-half brace as Borussia Dortmund eased to a 3-0 home victory over Freiburg in the Bundesliga on Friday. Striker Niclas Füllkrug, celebrating his 31st birthday, laid on both goals for the Netherlands winger, before grabbing one of his own in the dying stages.

The win sends Dortmund four points clear of fifth-placed RB Leipzig, with the Saxons playing at Augsburg on Saturday. Malen, who was linked with a move away from Dortmund in the winter transfer window, has now scored four goals in his last four games.

"From the start we had the right intensity and scored at the right moments," Malen told DAZN. "We've made some good steps since (the) winter (break)." Dortmund have taken 13 points from five league games to boost their bid for a Champions League place.

"I wished for a win for my birthday—and maybe a bit of birthday cake as well," Füllkrug told DAZN. Coach Edin Terzic could call on the services of several returning first-team players, including Marco Reus, Julian Brandt and Julian Ryerson, along with Englishman Jadon Sancho, who started on the bench.

In the 16th minute, Malen was teed up by Füllkrug, who held up the ball with his back to goal and found the Dutchman, who spun on the spot before

unleashing a rocket into the roof of the net. Füllkrug was again the provider for Dortmund's second, holding up the ball on the counter-attack before passing to Malen, who blasted across the face of goal and in.

The goal came deep into first-half injury time. The match was delayed by 12 minutes due to fans throwing tennis balls onto the pitch as part of ongoing league-wide protests against foreign investment in German football.

"I can understand the fans, it's their stage and they want to use it to make themselves heard," Füllkrug said. "But from a sporting perspective it's not so great when you're frequently interrupted and have to keep warm—it's not like it's 25 degrees at the moment."

Füllkrug scored a goal of his own late in the game, heading in a cross from Chelsea loanee Ian Maatsen with three minutes remaining. Brought on with the clock winding down, Sancho—who missed last week's draw with Heidenheim with a muscle injury—had two chances to score but fired his efforts wide. With nine Bundesliga goals so far this campaign, Malen has already equalled his total from last season.

The loss continued seventh-placed Freiburg's poor record in Dortmund. They have not won at the Westfalenstadion since 2001, having lost 15 and drawn one of their past 16 games there. Third-placed Stuttgart can restore the gap to Dortmund to three points with a win over struggling Mainz on Sunday.

On Saturday, league leaders Bayer Leverkusen host second-placed Bayern Munich. Xabi Alonso's Leverkusen, still yet to lose a match after 30 games in all competitions this year, sit two points ahead of Bayern. — AFP

Iran asks FIFA to ban Zionist entity over Gaza

TEHRAN: Iran's football federation said Saturday it has asked world football's governing body, FIFA, to suspend Zionist entity's football federation over the country's war in Gaza. In an announcement posted on the Iranian football federation's website, Iran asked FIFA to "completely suspend" the Zionist federation "from all activities related to football".

The request also asks for "immediate and serious measures" by FIFA and its member associations "to prevent the continuation" of Zionist "crimes and provide food, drinking water, medicinal and medical supplies to innocent people and civilians".

The war in Gaza began on October 7 with an unprecedented attack by Hamas militants against Zionist entity. It resulted in the deaths of about 1,160 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official Zionist figures.

In response, Zionist entity vowed to eradicate Hamas. It launched air strikes and a ground offensive that have killed at least 27,947 people, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run Gaza Strip.

Iran has hailed Hamas's October 7 attack as a "success" but has denied any direct involvement. The Islamic republic does not recognise Zionist entity, its sworn enemy, and prohibits all contact between Iranian and Zionist athletes.

The Iranian authorities last August gave a lifetime ban to Mostafa Rajaei, a weightlifter, after he shook hands with a Zionist competitor at an event in Poland, state media reported at the time. The Iranian weightlifting federation also dismissed the head of the delegation for the competition, Hamid Salehinia.

In 2021, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei urged athletes "not to shake hands with a representative of the (Zionist) criminal regime to obtain a medal". A group of Middle Eastern football associations, including Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, have also "asked world football chiefs to ban Zionist entity over the war on Hamas in Gaza," Sky News reported on Thursday. — AFP

Kasatkina slams 'terrible' WTA scheduling

ABU DHABI: Daria Kasatkina called out the WTA and organisers of the tour's member tournaments for "terrible scheduling" after she booked her place in the Abu Dhabi Open final with a gruelling three-hour victory over Beatriz Haddad Maia on Saturday.

Kasatkina will face top-seeded Elena Rybakina in the title decider on Sunday and is due on court the following day in Doha for her opening-round clash with fellow Russian Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova at the Qatar Open. It is a situation Kasatkina described as "unfair" to the players, noting that it could result in an increased risk of injury.

"It's terrible scheduling, honestly," said Kasatkina, who is through to her second final of the season after a 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (7/2) win over Brazil's Haddad Maia. "I don't know how you can schedule the finals of the tournament on Sunday, wanting to finish the next tournament on Saturday, so you start it on Sunday, and like this, the player, if like me, you don't have a bye in Doha, I have to play on Monday. And I play finals tomorrow at 5pm."

"We don't have yet this technology that I can just do like this (snaps her fingers) and be in Doha in five seconds." Kasatkina is unsure whether she will be able to catch a flight on Sunday night from Abu Dhabi to Doha and has urged the tour and tournament organisers to consider adjusting the schedule moving forward. "I have a question, I don't know to who, to WTA or the tournaments, like, are you guys trying to make players die, or to get injured often?"



ABU DHABI: Russia's Daria Kasatkina hits a return against Sorana Cirstea of Romania during the women's singles quarter-final match at the Mubadala Abu Dhabi Open tennis tournament in Abu Dhabi. — AFP

asked Kasatkina. "I might have to fly Monday and step on the court the same day, after playing five matches here at the highest level. So I'm sorry but that's something we have to talk about and consider."

Kasatkina, who will be targeting the seventh title of her career on Sunday, and first since 2022, acknowledges there is nothing that can be done for this year's scheduling, given the first-round byes have already been set for the Qatar Open, with no chance for a performance bye to be added for her.

"We're players, we're humans and we're trying to do our job the best we can. But under the circumstances it's not very easy," added the 26-year-old. "I hope this question will be addressed to the right people. And I'm not crying, I'm just saying the facts and the facts are saying that it's impossible, it cannot be like that." — AFP

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I, Bohra Shabbir Husain s/o Haider Ali Here by Declare That I have changed my name as Shabbir Hussain Asif s/o Haider Ali so, from now and in future i will be known by my new name Shabbir Hussain Asif s/o Haider Ali Add: 5, Saifee Nagar Khatiwala Tank Indore (MP) 452014 (#5157 8/2/2024)

I, Manal Sayed Maqbool, holder of Indian Passport No. V6131787 having permanent address in Tamil Nadu, India, 600030, residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) Kristina Lillian and (surname) Vijay. (#5156 7-02-2024)

I, Reuel Chanan Vijay Kumar, holder of Indian Passport No. V7779497, having permanent address in Tamil Nadu, India, 600030, residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) Reuel Shawn and (surname) Vijay. (#5156 7-02-2024)

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Qatar beat Jordan to retain Asian Cup with Afif hat-trick

Fifth team to lift back-to-back Asian titles



LUSAIL: Qatar's forward #10 Hassan Al-Haydos lifts the Qatar 2023 AFC Asian Cup trophy as his team celebrates during the podium ceremony after the final football match between Jordan and Qatar at the Lusail Stadium in Lusail, north of Doha on February 10, 2024. — AFP

DOHA: Hosts Qatar retained the Asian Cup with a 3-1 win on Saturday against surprise packages Jordan with Akram Afif the home hero with a hat-trick of penalties. It was a fitting final act to a month of football that began with 24 teams and witnessed a series of dramatic games. It will also help dispel the memories of Qatar's World Cup, when they lost all three games, the worst record of any host in the competition's history.

Playing in front of 86,492 spectators at Lusail Stadium, which staged the World Cup final 14 months ago, Jordan were in their first Asian Cup final and contesting the biggest game in their history. Ranked 87th in FIFA's world rankings, 29 places below their opponents, they fell behind midway through the first half when forward Afif held his nerve with a penalty for his sixth goal of the tournament.

Qatar fully deserved their half-time lead but Jordan roared back to equalize through Yazan Al-Naimat's smart finish. The underdogs were level however for just six minutes, Afif slotting home once again from the penalty spot after the referee was advised by VAR to go to his pitch-side monitor.

This time there was to be no Jordan comeback and Afif scored again from the spot for his hat-trick in injury time, again after a VAR intervention. At the final whistle the triumphant Qatari substitutes raced from the bench and threw Afif in the air.

Afif holds nerve

Qatar came into the final attempting to become the fifth team to lift back-to-back Asian titles and hoping to erase the bitter memories of their home World Cup. Qatar parachuted in the Spaniard Tintin

Marquez to replace former Real Madrid coach Carlos Queiroz just a month before the Asian Cup, in a major gamble that paid off handsomely.

His side started the final the better and had a couple of early sniffs at goal through danger man Afif, before Jordan's centre-forward Naimat stung the palms of home goalkeeper Meshaal Barsham. Qatar went ahead on 22 minutes when the livewire Afif, playing off the left, was clipped in the box by Abdallah Nasib. Afif brushed himself down to plant his spotkick into the bottom corner, just beating the outstretched arms of Yazeed Abulaila, to join Iraq's Aymen Hussein as the joint leading scorer in the competition. In an unusual celebration, the 27-year-old Afif did a card trick, produced a playing card with his picture on it before the image flipped to an "S".

Jordan, who defeated Son Heung-min's South

Korea 2-0 to reach the final, had their best chance in first-half injury time but Mousa Al-Tamari's first-time effort was blocked by Mohammed Waad. Hussein Ammouta's Jordan were disappointing in the first half but they cranked up the pressure in the second, Montpellier's Tamari, captain Ehsan Haddad and Yazan Al-Arab all forcing Barsham into saves.

The goal was coming and in the 67th minute it duly arrived, Naimat bringing the ball down with his right foot and then thrashing in with his left on the half-volley for his fourth of the tournament. Qatar and Afif responded almost immediately however, and he produced the card trick once more after beating Abulaila from the spot for a second time, this time in even more convincing fashion. It was Afif, inevitably, who won the third penalty and he did the business once again for his eighth goal of the tournament. — AFP

Liverpool leapfrog Man City to reclaim Premier League summit

LONDON: Liverpool earned a vital 3-1 win against relegation-threatened Burnley on Saturday to return to the Premier League summit after being briefly unseated by champions Manchester City. The Anfield side are hunting a record-equalling 20th English top-flight title in Jurgen Klopp's final season in charge but once again have relentless City snapping at their heels. Liverpool were not at their fluent best against Vincent Kompany's men but did enough to get over the line on what Klopp called a "super difficult" day. City, who beat Everton 2-0 at home in the early kick-off, are two points behind Liverpool with a game in hand as they chase an unprecedented fourth consecutive English top-flight title.

The Reds were gifted the lead when Burnley goalkeeper James Trafford failed to claim the ball from a Trent Alexander-Arnold corner and Diogo Jota headed home his ninth Premier League goal of the season. But they were pegged back minutes before half-time when Dara O'Shea powered a bullet header past Liverpool goalkeeper Caoimhin Kelleher, replacing Alisson Becker, who was out of action with an illness. Liverpool were a different proposition after the break and Luis Diaz put them back in front in the 52nd minute with a header from close range.

The visitors had several inviting chances to equalise before Darwin Nunez's header from Harvey Elliott's cross secured the three points. "It's not only the three points," Klopp told the BBC. "You cannot have momentum guaranteed all the time. "Nine days ago we played incredible against Chelsea then we lost to Arsenal. It's always a different challenge. If it's

not clicking straight away, fight through it. "It was really tough today but the boys fought through and got three points."

Haaland double

Earlier, Erling Haaland scored his first goals since November as Manchester City reached the top of the table for the first time since November. Pep Guardiola's team laboured to break down the stubborn visitors at a nervous Etihad Stadium but Haaland struck twice late in the second half. They are his first goals since returning from an absence of nearly two months due to a foot injury. Guardiola's men have won their past 10 games in all competitions but the Spaniard might be a little concerned with the way they labored against struggling Everton, who remain in the relegation zone.

"In the first half our body language was not good," said the City boss. "You cannot play good football if you are not positive. You do your best when you are positive. When you start to complain and are sad it does not work. "We talked at half time and I told them, 'what do you expect, to come here and win 5-0? Come on. Life is tough and football is tough.'" Brennan Johnson struck a dramatic winner in the sixth minute of stoppage time to fire Tottenham back into the top four with a dramatic 2-1 win against Brighton.

The teams looked set to share the points after Pape Sarr cancelled out Pascal Gross's early penalty in the 61st minute. But South Korean star Son Heung-min, back from Asian Cup duty, teed up fellow substitute Johnson in the dying seconds to earn a vital victory. "It's fair to say that we are still a work in progress but we had a world-class player in Son, who makes the most difficult ball look simple to set up Brennan," said Spurs boss Ange Postecoglou. "Going into the game we looked at the squad and knew we had the ability to change it up. It's fair to say that helped us." — AFP



Kuwait's swimming team

Kuwait to partake in Qatar's World Aquatics tourney

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti swim team is participating in World Aquatics Championship 2024 in Doha with five swimmers. The Championship commenced on

February 2 and is to last until the 18th. Chief of participating delegation and member of the Kuwaiti Federation, Faisal Abu Al-Hasan, told KUNA prior to their departure on Saturday, that team members are Rashed Al-Tarmoum, Mohammad Zubaid, Khaled Al-Otaibi, Mohammad Al-Otaibi, and Lara Dashti, coached by Italian trainer Simone Testasca. The team is slated to compete on Sunday under Aspire Dome in the Qatari capital, explained Abu Al-Hasan adding that such events grant participants expertise through contact with other skilled athletes. — KUNA