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## Amir opens Abdullah Al-Salem University

Sheikh Mishal hopes institution raises educational output for national development



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attends the inauguration of Abdullah Al-Salem University at the late Sheikh Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Theater in Shuwaikh on March 6, 2024. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attended and patronized the inauguration ceremony of Abdullah Al-Salem University (AASU) at the late Sheikh Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Theater in Shuwaikh on Wednesday. The ceremony was attended by HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council and President of the Court of Cassation Dr Adel Bouresli and senior state officials.

Minister of Education and Scientific Research Dr Adel Al-Adwani said the ministries' strategy aimed at honoring the vision of HH the Amir for quality education, which honors the demand of the job market by investing in the "sons of daughters of the nation, who are Kuwait's sustainable wealth". Adwani said HH the Amir has always underlined the importance of investment in human resources, reforming education and training youth for a competitive market.

The political leadership's continuous support

contributed to the establishment of Kuwait University (KU), the nation's first university, during the reign of late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, he said. KU marked the beginning of higher education in Kuwait, Adwani added, becoming a beacon of science and knowledge. Then there was a need to establish a new government university, Abdullah Al-Salem University, he said, offering new majors to contribute alongside KU to the development of science, knowledge, progress and advancement, and

to produce generations helping in the development process. Addressing the students, Adwani said they would be responsible for building the nation. "You are the pillar and main driver of development, I urge you to exert efforts in your educational life, to contribute to boosting the process of the state's progress and sustainable development, participate in the building of a knowledge economy, which would be your gate for a bright world," he added.

Continued on Page 6

## Kuwait-Italy defense relations soar with Eurofighter program

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: Kuwait will receive 13 more Eurofighter jets from Italy over the next 18 months out of the 28 aircraft under the 'Eurofighter Kuwait' program, said Italian Defense Minister Guido Crosetto, who arrived in Kuwait on an official visit on Tuesday, leading a high-ranking delegation. In an exclusive interview with Kuwait Times, the visiting Italian minister spoke about a wide range of topics and elaborated on the growing bilateral cooperation between Kuwait and Italy, particularly in the field of defense.

"Our cooperation, that has been ongoing for over 60 years, has seen signif-



Italian Defense Minister Guido Crosetto

icant developments in crucial areas such as defense. Strengthening bilateral cooperation, especially in the context of defense, is a fundamental pillar to guarantee peace and regional stability, while offering mutual investment opportunities and boosting our economies," he said.

The minister said the defense ministries of Kuwait and Italy are working to renew the recently expired Memorandum of Intent on Cooperation on Defense Matters. Fifteen of the 28 Eurofighter jets have already been delivered and the rest will be delivered over the next 18 months, Crosetto said. (See Page 3)



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah meets Italian Defense Minister Guido Crosetto on March 6, 2024.



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah visits Kuwait University on March 6, 2024. — KUNA

## PM vows to keep fighting corruption

KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah said Wednesday the government has paid much attention to fight corruption and restore stolen money. HH the Premier made the statement during his visit to Kuwait University earlier in the day, saying the government has filed a corruption complaint regarding the army fund.

Sheikh Dr Mohammad added the complaint has been presented and its measures are before the court of the ministers. He affirmed a group of nationals have been tasked with filing law cases in some countries to restore stolen money. "The most important matter is not only to punish those who stole money, but also to restore those funds," HH Sheikh Dr Mohammad affirmed.

HH the Prime Minister reiterated that the message the government is keen to deliver to the public is that "we are serious in fighting corruption and there is none who is above the law". The premier highlighted achieving justice and equality on which the values of Kuwait's society were built throughout history. Kuwait's ranking in the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) rose about 17 points, thanks to the efforts of Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha).

HH Sheikh Dr Mohammad said resources could be everlasting when they are better exploited, referring to some countries that could not make use of their resources. The premier went on to say that Acting Director of Kuwait University Dr Mishari Al-Harbi is reviewing all academic certificates from the year 2000 until 2024 that were submitted to official authorities, noting that some of them were approved and were not fake. This is a practical, real and serious act in implementing law and combating administrative corruption, as opposed to financial corruption, HH Sheikh Dr Mohammad noted.

Continued on Page 6



Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi

## Zain 2023 revenue up 10% to \$6.2bn: Bader Al-Kharafi

KUWAIT: Zain Group, a leading provider of innovative technologies and digital lifestyle communications operating in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, serving a customer base of 50.6 million, announced its consolidated financial results for the full year 2023 and fourth quarter ended Dec 31, 2023.

For the full year 2023, Zain Group generated consolidated revenue of KD 1.9 billion (\$6.2 billion), a Y-o-Y increase of 10 percent. Consolidated net income reached KD 215 million (\$701 million), up 10 percent Y-o-Y and reflecting earnings per share of 50 fils (\$0.16).

Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi commented: "Our Group-wide efforts in monetizing innovative digital services and enterprise solutions on the back of our state-of-the-art networks and technologies, combined with cost optimization initiatives and passive tower infrastructure strategy, are driving strong operational and financial performance on all our KPIs." (See Page 9)



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# Amir's Gulf tour opens new era

## GCC partnership, integration strengthened

**KUWAIT:** The state visits, paid by His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the member countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council following his inauguration, laid the groundwork for a new era featuring a new national list of priorities and aspirations. The tour reflected a resolve to protect the rights and sovereignty of Kuwait, strengthen partnership and integration with sisterly GCC countries, and open new horizons of cooperation in such areas as economy, security, and defense.

Building on the efforts to materialize the slogan "Our Gulf is One" and the wise vision of His Highness the Amir for regional integration, the tour added a new dimension to Kuwaiti diplomacy in the political, economic, and humanitarian fields. His Highness the Amir started his first overseas trip with a visit to the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and then proceeded to Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.

During the trip, His Highness the Amir was given red carpet receptions by leaders of GCC states with air parades, 21-gun salutes, and camel and horse shows as an expression of high esteem for him and for the State of Kuwait. His Highness the Amir reaffirmed his commitment to Kuwait's long-standing foreign policy based on close relations with the sisterly GCC states and regional cooperation in the face of external challenges.

The trip materialized the content of

the speech by His Highness the Amir during the oath-taking at the National Assembly (parliament) on December 20, 2023, regarding continuing the trailblazing course of Kuwait in working with sisterly and friendly countries on regional and international issues of common concern. On their part, the foreign ministers of the GCC member states spoke highly of the outcomes of His Highness the Amir's trip during their meeting in Riyadh on March 3.

### Deep-rooted bonds

The visits reflected the strength of the deep-rooted bonds among the leaders and peoples of the GCC states, according to the final communiqué of the ministerial meeting. The ministers expressed confidence that His Highness the Amir, thanks to his wise leadership, would enhance Kuwait's effective role in promoting the GCC march towards realization of the noble objectives. GCC Secretary General Jassem Al-Budaiwi, in a statement to KUNA, said His Highness the Amir's Gulf tour reflected Kuwait's firm and active role in boosting GCC action and promoting cooperation.

The tour, he said, would contribute to the achievement of GCC objectives for the sake of the prosperity and stability of the member states and their people. On a similar note, Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for GCC Affairs, Salem Al-Zamanan, said the trips of

His Highness the Amir reflected the depth of amity between Kuwait and the other GCC states. "The trip highlighted the shared historical, language, and religious values among the GCC states, which formed exemplary relations among them," Ambassador Al-Zamanan said in a statement to KUNA.

### New horizons

The Kuwaiti diplomat thanked the GCC leaders and people for the warm reception offered to His Highness the Amir during the stops of his tour, starting with Saudi Arabia and ending with the UAE on Tuesday, March 5. "The outcomes of the visits will take to a new height the sisterly relations among the GCC states and open new horizons for cooperation in the political, economic, and cultural areas," he pointed out. The joint statements issued at the end of each visit underscored the significance of the strategic partnership between Kuwait and the sisterly GCC states, Al-Zamanan added.

Meanwhile, Chairman of Kuwait Journalists Association Adnan Al-Rashed said His Highness the Amir's tour of the GCC states proved the mettle of the GCC leaders to pursue joint action, "which reflects positively on the citizens of our countries." "The tour constitutes a new start for Kuwait's policy of opening up to regional and international spheres and preparation for the coming GCC leaders' summit," he said in a statement to KUNA.

The tour gave momentum to the coordi-

nation of the GCC's stances on regional and international issues. The joint statements issued at the end of each visit underpinned GCC economic integration, defense cooperation, and strategic partnership, as Al-Rashed pointed out. Regarding the Al-Durra oilfield, the GCC leaders reaffirmed that it is entirely located in Kuwait's territorial waters and that the natural resources in the adjacent submerged, divided area between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia belong solely to both countries.

### Territorial unity

They rejected categorically any claims by a third party of having any right to the divided zone, clearly delineated between the Kingdom and Kuwait. On regional issues, the GCC leaders stressed the importance of Iraq's respect for the sovereignty and territorial unity of Kuwait pursuant to the relevant bilateral agreements, international conventions, and UN Security Council resolutions. The UNSC Resolution 833/1993 clearly delineated the land and maritime boundaries between Kuwait and Iraq, the GCC leaders noted, reiterating the call for completing the demarcation of the maritime boundaries beyond Mark 162.

The GCC leaders renewed the call for Iraq to implement the agreement regulating shipping through the Khor Abdullah Waterway, which was signed with Kuwait in 2012, came into force on December 5, 2013, and was lodged with the UN in December 2013 after the legislatures of both countries en-

dorsed it. The Iraqi side unilaterally quit a protocol on security cooperation of 2008 and the arrangements for safety of navigation through the Khor Abdullah Waterway of December 2014, though both documents have clearly-cut provisions for negotiated amendments or cancellations.

As for the latest developments in Palestine, the GCC leaders expressed profound concern over the exacerbating humanitarian disaster in the Gaza Strip. They urged the international community, notably the UN Security Council, to shoulder responsibility for halting the hostilities in the occupied Palestinian territories and providing protection to civilians as per the provisions of international humanitarian law. They called for applying pressure on the Zionist entity, the occupying power, to stop the offensive on Gaza and back down on plans for forced displacement of the residents of the Gaza Strip, which constitute a stark violation of international laws.

Regarding Yemen, the GCC leaders renewed the call for a negotiated settlement to the political crisis there based on the three points of reference: the GCC initiative and its executive mechanisms; the outcomes of the inter-Yemeni national dialogue; and the UNSC resolutions, including Resolution 2216. They highlighted the importance of protecting the safety of shipping and free navigation through the Red Sea pursuant to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) of 1982. — KUNA

## Kuwait Pavilion at Expo Osaka 2025 unveiled

**TOKYO:** The architectural design and exhibition of the Kuwaiti Pavilion at the 2025 World Expo, hosted by the Japanese city of Osaka, were unveiled at a ceremony in Tokyo, highlighting the details of the ambitious project. The ceremony was held in the presence of political, media, social, and business officials, representatives of Kuwait, and partner companies involved in the project. In his speech during the ceremony, Kuwait Ambassador to Japan Sami Al-Zamanan said, "45 years ago, Kuwait was one of only four Arab countries that participated in the Expo 1970 in Osaka. Over the past years, we have witnessed significant milestones in bilateral cooperation, partnership, and solidarity between Kuwait and Japan."

"Our efforts aim to strengthen bilateral relations under the directives of our wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime

Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah," he noted.

On his part, Commissioner-General for Kuwait Pavilion at Expo Osaka 2025 and Assistant Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Information for Administrative and Financial Affairs Salem Al-Watyan said, "We are pleased and honored to unveil the State of Kuwait's pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka. It will serve as a bridge of friendship and solidarity between Kuwait and Japan, as well as among all nations around the world." "We eagerly anticipate the completion of our preparations to welcome visitors in 2025, with the aim of strengthening the close ties between the people of Kuwait and Japan, as well as fostering connections with people from around the world," he added.

He pointed out that the Kuwait Pavilion will showcase the country's endeavors to build a sustainable future for its people and strengthen its global standing through a diversified economy focused on national development. "Kuwait, which has always been described as a beacon of culture and tolerance for its contributions to Arab culture, arts, and social work, will present itself as a visionary lighthouse shining in the Gulf region and gain recognition globally," he said. The next World Expo in Osaka will take place from April 13 to October 13 next year in Osaka under the theme "Designing a Future Society for Our Lives." — KUNA



The architectural design of the Kuwaiti Pavilion at the 2025 World Expo.

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Exclusive interview

# Kuwait-Italy defense relations soar with Eurofighter program

- Kuwait to receive 13 more Eurofighter jets from Italy
- Kuwait, Italy to renew MoI on defense cooperation
- Eurofighter Town set up at Salem Al-Sabah Air Base

- Defense cooperation crucial for regional security
- Crosetto commends Kuwait's role in fighting terrorism
- Italy to train personnel to support Kuwait Typhoon fleet



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah receives Italian Defense Minister Guido Crosetto to discuss ways to enhance strategic cooperation. The ministry of defense said that the meeting also discussed issues of common interests in addition to the current developments in the regional and international arenas.



## Visiting Italian defense minister lauds strengthening bilateral ties with Kuwait

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: Kuwait will receive 13 more Eurofighter jets from Italy over the next 18 months out of the 28 aircraft under the 'Eurofighter Kuwait' program, said Italian Defense Minister Guido Crosetto, who arrived in Kuwait on an official visit on Tuesday, leading a high-ranking delegation. In an exclusive interview with Kuwait Times, the visiting Italian minister spoke about a wide range of topics and elaborated on the growing bilateral cooperation between Kuwait and Italy, particularly in the field of defense.

Crosetto said the close cooperation between Italy and Kuwait is an extraordinary example of how bilateral relations can evolve positively over time, embracing a wide range of sectors. "Our cooperation, that has been ongoing for over 60 years, has seen significant developments in crucial areas such as defense. Strengthening bilateral cooperation, especially in the context of defense, is a fundamental pillar to guarantee peace and regional stability, while offering mutual investment opportunities and boosting our economies," he pointed out.

The minister said the defense ministries of Kuwait and Italy are working to renew the recently expired Memorandum of Intent on Cooperation on Defense Matters. "Cooperation between our two countries is an example of how nations can work together to tackle common challenges and promote sustainable development. In this respect, Kuwait played a crucial role in the fight against terrorism and Daesh, offering valuable support at both the regional and international level, while further strengthening the bond between our two nations," he remarked.

### Deep cooperation

Crosetto highlighted the deep cooperation in the defense sector between Italy and Kuwait. "It is underscored, in particular, but not only, by the 'Eurofighter Kuwait' program, a pillar of our bilateral cooperation, presently at a very advanced stage of implementation," he said. Fifteen of the 28 fighter jets have already been delivered and the rest will be delivered over the next 18 months, he said.

"The Eurofighter program is part of a deeper, broader cooperation between our air forces, including operational activities and basic and advanced training for pilots and maintenance operators, besides supporting aircraft operational capabilities. The Italian air force will ensure basic training for the engineers and technicians supporting the Kuwaiti Typhoon fleet," he pointed out.



Italian Defense Minister Guido Crosetto

Crosetto said the Italian industry contributed to building the Eurofighter Town at Salem Al-Sabah Air Base during the aircraft acquisition stage. "Moreover, we have offered Kuwaiti air force pilots the opportunity to attend training courses at the International Flight Training School in Italy. Currently, the school hosts pilots from Austria, Canada, Germany, Japan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and the United Kingdom," he stated.

The project is part of a far-reaching initiative that sees the Italian defense ministry engaged in foreign and defense industrial policy operation, involving its industrial and administrative system and Italian aerospace company Leonardo.

### Flight academy

Speaking about the establishment of a flight academy to train Kuwaiti air force pilots, the minister said it is a project aimed to develop state-of-the-art competence, knowhow and technical capabilities. The objective of the initiative is the establishment of a center of excellence for military flight training that will enhance professional standards and contribute to regional security by sharing



knowledge and best practices, he said.

"Italy is ready to provide the necessary support, based on the experience accrued over various decades, in a sector where it is a leader both in the development of trainers and in providing training. Currently, seven Kuwaiti pilots are attending the first part of our international training program with Saudi, Qatari and UK pilots at the Air Force Flight School in Galatina, Apulia. At the end of the second phase, 4th and 5th generation fighter aircraft pilots will undergo a further specialization phase at the Decimomannu (Sardinia) International School. The latter is part of IFTS (International Flight School) Hub, where we will also offer training opportunities for pilot instructors and trainers, who may choose to train their national pilots in Italy or return to their countries to take advantage of the acquired competences," Crosetto explained.

### Maritime sector

Crosetto said there are other interesting, promising sectors of cooperation for Italy and Kuwait besides the Eurofighter program. "I refer in particular to the maritime sector, which recently has come to the forefront,

especially in this region. Italy is ready to provide its expertise together with our industrial sector to help keep Kuwait abreast of current and future challenges. Like every year, starting from 2005, last May our defense staffs met to define the 2023-2024 Cooperation Plan, which provided for 25 joint activities to be developed by the end of the year," he stated.

Italy's armed forces are currently involved in developing joint activities in a number of sectors: Education, training and exchange of lessons learned from respective operational experiences, he said. "In the current complex geopolitical situation, especially in light of the Middle East crisis and continued Houthi attacks in the Red Sea, Italy and Kuwait will keep cooperating closely to counter all forms of terrorism and hybrid wars that may threaten the national and economic interests of our two countries," Crosetto concluded.

Chief of the General Staff of the Kuwait Army Maj Gen Bander Al-Muzain and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense Sheikh Dr Abdullah Mishal Al-Sabah received the Italian minister and the delegation, according to a MoD statement.



KUWAIT: Italian Defense Minister Guido Crosetto and his accompanying delegation arrived on Tuesday in Kuwait on an official visit. Chief of the General Staff of the Kuwait Army Maj Gen Bander Al-Muzain and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense Sheikh Dr Abdullah Mishal Al-Sabah received the Italian minister and his delegation.

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Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nasser Al-Sabah takes a group photo with Talal Al-Kharafi and the referees.

# Kuwait Science Club organizes its 10th Science and Engineering Competition



Sheikh Ahmad Al-Sabah and Tala Al-Kharafi greet the referees.



General picture of Kuwait Science Club Competition.

By Ghadeer Ghloom

**KUWAIT:** Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah opened the 10th Kuwait Science and Engineering Competition Exhibition, held under the patronage of HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and the participation of 83 scientific research and engineering designs under the slogan "Capable and More". The competition aims to promote scientific research and innovation amongst students before entering the

college. Public and private schools participated in showcasing the capabilities of their young researchers in this competition, which provides a sound competitive environment that satisfies young scientists' interest.

Upon cutting the ribbon at the exhibition's opening, Sheikh Ahmad, accompanied by Talal Jassem Al-Kharafi, Chairman of Kuwait Science Club, and board members, greeted the judges. They then toured the exhibition to learn about the science projects displayed. Kharafi said the competition is a tes-

tament to the vision and strategy of the board of Kuwait Science Club in activating the national program to support young researchers and innovators, adding the club has been organizing the Kuwait Science and Engineering Competition since 2012, besides holding workshops and free courses for both teachers and students in public schools to prepare them for participating and competing.

Kharafi added that a seven-month training program is provided to prepare Kuwaiti students to

participate in several Arab and international forums, such as the International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) held in the United States, which is the most important globally. He concluded by saying this work is not easy, as Kuwait Science Club faces several challenges, but it has been able to overcome them through determination, perseverance and teamwork. Kharafi thanked Sheikh Ahmad for honoring the event with his presence on behalf of HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah.

## Gulf Arab central bank chiefs meet

**DOHA:** Central bank governors from across the wider Gulf Arab region came together for talks in the Qatari capital, Doha, on Tuesday, aiming to ratchet up cooperation and agreeing that such a measure was necessary in the face of existential

economic challenges. These gatherings are crucial in a bid to ensure sustained financial stability, which largely hinges on policy interest rates, said Qatari central bank chief Sheikh Bander bin Mohammad, citing a "slew of achievements" seen in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states that have contributed to national prosperity and development.

On the council of central bank governors, he said the body has also contributed immensely to-

wards economic development and growth through implementing a vast array of financial and banking initiatives that proved beneficial to national economies in the region. Discussing plans to bolster financial and economic cooperation within the six-member bloc, he said more similar initiatives would follow suit in a bid to keep economic growth steady at a time of "unprecedented advancements" in financial technology.

Attending the talks, GCC secretary general Jassem

Al-Budaiwi said that the talks yielded plans to hold an annual international gathering to discuss the latest financial and banking developments, with Doha set to host the first installment in September of this year. Gulf Arab states will use an event of such magnitude as a platform to illustrate some of the most notable financial and banking services that region has churned out. The GCC chief said, citing financial and economic cooperation within the bloc as the primary goal for the foreseeable future. — KUNA



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## Ministry lauds blood donors

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Health said that 3,000 bags of blood were collected during the blood donation campaign. The director of the Blood Transfusion Services Department at the Ministry, Reem Al-Radwan, told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the campaign, which was launched on February 18, lasted for two weeks. The Central Blood Bank and its



donation centers recorded a large turnout of donors. It was an expression of love and loyalty to the homeland, and it was out of the spirit of giving.

Al-Radwan explained that 3,400 blood bags, 800 platelets, and 1,400 plasma bags were disbursed to cover the needs of hospitals during the campaign period and the national holidays. 16 blood donation campaigns were held with the participation of government institutions. Blood donation is not only a humanitarian duty but also a national duty that enhances the strategic bloodstock. She thanked the donors and all parties involved. — KUNA

## Conference underlines importance of digital solutions, cybersecurity

**LONDON:** The Kuwaiti Investment Conference held in London on Tuesday touched on the importance of building infrastructure for cybersecurity systems and digital solutions in banking, education, and health, said Kuwait's Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, Dr. Anwar Al-Mudhaf. In remarks to KUNA, Minister Al-Mudhaf noted that the conference also discussed investing in cybersecurity, adding that the shift to using digital solutions is accompanied by many security problems and risks, which require full awareness.

The minister praised the role of the Direct Investment Promotion Authority in organizing the conference, which witnessed the presence of two British ministers and representatives of prominent economic and investment bodies. He also stressed Kuwait's inter-



Kuwait's Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, Dr Anwar Al-Mudhaf, speaks during the conference.

est in enhancing the role of cybersecurity in protecting the government, individuals, and businesses from cybercrime. On Kuwaiti-British relations, the minister said that the conference is being held in conjunction with the 125th anniversary of the Kuwaiti-British partnership, stressing that the relations between the two countries are deep-rooted. — KUNA



Donkey carts lifeline for war-weary Sudanese

## ASEAN, Australia call for 'immediate' Gaza ceasefire

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RAFAH: A pregnant Palestinian woman displaced from northern Gaza hangs clothes in a warehouse where she is taking shelter in Rafah. — AFP

# Gaza pregnancy perils 'worse than hell'

## Pregnant women 'afraid of giving birth' as food scarcity, lack of safe space persist

GAZA: Forced to flee her home by Zionist bombardment, Asmaa Ahmed gave birth in the middle of the night in a Gaza City school that had no electricity. The doctor arrived just in time, working by the light of a mobile phone and clamping the umbilical cord with whatever medical staff could find.

"I was very, very afraid to lose the baby," 31-year-old Ahmed told AFP, recounting how her son Faraj came into the world four months ago. Baraa Jaber, the nurse who assisted in the delivery, said she was scared too. "It was very late and at this time the occupation could bomb anyone moving in the streets," she said.

Ahead of International Women's Day on March 8, aid workers and medics said Gaza's around 52,000 pregnant women — a World Health Organization estimate — are among those endangered by the collapse of the health system amid the ongoing war. And their

troubles don't end with a successful delivery.

New mothers confront the stark challenge of keeping infants alive in the besieged territory bereft of basics like food and water, to say nothing of heated tables for neonates and incubators. The fast-deteriorating conditions have struck fear into the hearts of pregnant women like 21-year-old Malak Shabat, who has sought refuge in the southern Gaza city of Rafah after moving several times to escape Zionist air strikes. "I'm so afraid of giving birth," said Shabat, whose due date is fast approaching.

### 'No doctors, no bed'

The Zionist entity's ongoing military campaign in Gaza has killed at least 30,631 people, mostly women and children, according to the territory's health ministry. The entity claims it's in response to an attack

staged by Palestinian group Hamas on the south of the entity on October 7 that resulted in the deaths of around 1,160 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official figures.

The health system has been devastated by the Zionist five-month assault, with the United Nations reporting last month that there were no fully functioning hospitals left, and just 12 of 36 working at some capacity. Restrictions that the UN blames on the Zionist military mean that most aid convoys are halted.

The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) says it has 62 pallets of material to assist childbirth blocked outside Rafah on the border with Egypt. There are only five rooms dedicated to childbirth at the Emirati maternity hospital in Rafah, a city where nearly 1.5 million Palestinians have sought refuge.

Among them is Samah al-Helou, who arrived in

Rafah in the last month of her pregnancy but struggled to get the care she needed. "They said that I would need a tiny surgery during childbirth. It was delayed for two weeks because there were no doctors, no bed and no operating room," she said. Finally, she was able to give birth to her son Mohammed, but the hospital discharged her the next day to make room for emergency patients, meaning she had to return to a tent for the displaced.

"It was very cold; the situation was severe. I felt I was going to lose my son," she said. "Our life here in the tent is harsh and worse than hell." Raphael Pitti, a French doctor who recently completed an aid mission in southern Gaza, said such quick discharges are routine. "When women give birth, they get back on their feet and their family comes to pick them up," he said.—AFP



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visits the site of a stampede during an ultra-Orthodox religious gathering in this file photo. — AFP

## Probe finds Zionist PM 'responsible' for 2021 stampede

JERUSALEM: A probe into the Zionist entity's worst civilian disaster found Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "bears personal responsibility" for the 2021 stampede which killed 45 Jewish pilgrims.

Tens of thousands of ultra-Orthodox Jews had converged on Mount Meron, near the entity's border with Lebanon, on April 30, 2021 for an annual pilgrimage to the tomb of a reputed second-century rabbi.

The stampede in the male section of the gender-segregated crowd is believed to have started as people moved through a narrow passageway that became a deadly choke-point. At least 16 children and teenagers were among the 45 dead.

"The prime minister is responsible for identifying proactively, by himself or through mechanisms on his behalf, issues that require the attention of his office and, if necessary, his intervention, in particular those related to a risk of human lives," said the commission of inquiry report into the stampede.

The inquiry found that from 2008 up to the day of the tragedy, the prime minister's office was notified on several occasions of the potential hazards caused by high traffic around the tomb of rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, also known by the Hebrew acronym Rashbi.

Netanyahu was in power for 12 of those years. "Netanyahu knew that the Rashbi's tomb site had been poorly cared for for years, and that this could create a risk for the multitudes of visitors to the place, especially in (the holiday of) Lag Ba'omer," the commission's report said.

"Netanyahu did not act as expected of a prime minister to correct this state of affairs," it said, without recommending any measures against him, citing the "unique" nature of his elected role. "The writing on the wall had been there for many years. The disaster could have been prevented and it was a duty to prevent it," the report added.

Opposition leader Yair Lapid called on Netanyahu to resign, warning on X, formerly Twitter, that "the next disaster is only a matter of time". "If Netanyahu stays in his position, then we're just sitting here and waiting for the next disaster," Lapid said.—AFP

## No side effects after man gets 217 COVID jabs

PARIS: A German man who deliberately got vaccinated for COVID-19 a whopping 217 times did not report any side effects from his many jabs, according to researchers studying possibly the "most vaccinated person in history". The immune system of the 62-year-old man from the central German city of Magdeburg — who has not been named — is still firing on all cylinders, the researchers said in The Lancet Infectious Diseases journal. They said the man voluntarily received so many shots against all medical advice and warned against jumping to far-reaching conclusions from this single case. The man first came to the attention of the German-led researchers due to news reports in 2022, when he had only received 90 jabs. Media reports at the time said the man was suspected of getting so many doses to collect the completed vaccination cards, which could then be forged and sold to people who did not want to be vaccinated.

A public prosecutor in Magdeburg opened an investigation into allegations of fraud over the case but no criminal charges were filed, according to the scientific paper published earlier this week. The prosecutor collected evidence of 130 vaccinations over nine months, it added. But the man claims to have received 217 vaccine doses of eight different COVID vaccines — including all mRNA versions — over 29 months. Kilian Schober, a virologist at Germany's University of Erlangen-Nuremberg and study co-author, said in a statement that when they contacted the man, he was "very interested" in undergoing a range of tests to examine the effect of so many vaccinations.


### Most vaccinated person ever?

The case allowed the researchers an extremely rare chance to study what is known as "hyper-vaccination". Some scientists have theorized that after being hit by so many vaccinations, a body's immune cells would become less effective as they became accustomed to the antigens. But that was not the case for the German man, the researchers found. In fact, he had "considerably higher concentrations" of immune cells and antibodies for the coronavirus than a control group of three people who received the recommended three vaccinations, the study said.


His body also showed no sign of fatigue from all those vaccinations — his 217th jab still boosted his number of antibodies against the coronavirus which causes COVID-19, the researchers found.

The man reported that he never had any vaccine-related side effects from any of the 217 jabs. He also never tested positive for COVID and showed no signs of past infection, the researchers said.


But they warned against taking away any wider lessons from the man's experience. "It should go without saying that we do not endorse hypervaccination," Schober wrote on X, formerly Twitter. Caitjan Gainty, an expert in the history of vaccines at King's College London not involved in the study, told AFP she had "never come across a historical discussion of someone who received more vaccinations than this". It is "relatively unlikely" that anyone has ever had more vaccinations than the man, she added.—AFP



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## International

# ASEAN, Australia call for 'immediate' Gaza ceasefire

## Leaders decry actions that 'endanger peace' in South China Sea

MELBOURNE: Southeast Asian and Australian leaders on Wednesday warned against actions that "endanger peace" in the South China Sea, following fresh confrontations between Beijing and the Philippines in contested waters.

Simmering tensions in the trade corridor threatened to boil over this week, when Chinese boats in the Spratly Islands were accused of hounding Philippines vessels. Beijing on Wednesday accused the United States of using the Philippines as a "pawn to stir up trouble in the South China Sea" as hostilities between the Asian nations escalate over their territorial dispute.

China claims almost the entirety of the South China Sea as its own, ignoring legal precedents and competing claims from a host of Southeast Asian nations. The festering dispute poses one of the region's most vexing security challenges, looming large during a three-day summit between Australia and the 10-nation ASEAN bloc.

"We encourage all countries to avoid any unilateral actions that endanger peace, security and stability in the region," read a joint declaration hammered out between ASEAN members and Australia. "We recognize the benefits of having the South China Sea as a sea of peace, stability and prosperity," the statement added. As the summit kicked off on Monday morning, Philippine foreign minister Enrique Manalo delivered a simple request to Beijing: "Stop harassing us". The following day, Chinese coast guard boats were accused of badgering a flotilla of Philippine ships sailing a resupply mission.

The Chinese vessels were involved in two separate collisions, the Philippines coast guard said, and blasted one of the resupply boats with a water cannon. Images taken in the aftermath showed the water cannon had shattered windows on the control bridge of one of the Philippine vessels.

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos said he viewed the Chinese actions with "great alarm" while a Filipino military commander described the confrontations as "the worst" in two years. Bound to act by consensus, the ASEAN forum has long struggled to make inroads on the overlapping claims staked throughout the South China Sea.

But the fraught atmosphere hanging over the region has some nations now pushing for the bloc to take a firmer stance. Close United States ally Australia has



MELBOURNE: This handout taken and released on March 5, 2024 by the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit 2024 shows leaders posing for the family photo during the summit. — AFP

proven increasingly willing to speak out against China. "I am very concerned and Australia is concerned about any unsafe and destabilizing behavior in the South China Sea," Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said on the summit's sidelines. "We need to make sure that activity in the South China Sea alleviates any tensions and doesn't add to it," he added.

### Gaza ceasefire

ASEAN and Australian leaders also threw their weight behind a renewed international push to secure a ceasefire in Gaza, a thorny issue that divided opinions behind closed doors. "We urge for an immediate and durable humanitarian ceasefire," said the leaders of 11 nations after days of diplomatic

wrangling over the text. With the Muslim holy month of Ramadan around the corner, the United States and a growing list of nations have been stepping up efforts to secure some kind of pause in fighting. Singapore had balked at an earlier suggestion the statement condemn "the use of starvation" in the Gaza Strip, language that would have infuriated the Zionist entity. Diplomats also argued over whether the statement should call for a total ceasefire — or a perhaps more temporary "humanitarian" pause.

### Myanmar crisis

The surging conflict in junta-ruled Myanmar also continued to frustrate ASEAN leaders, whose efforts to resolve the crisis remain largely fruitless. Junta lead-

ers have essentially ignored the bloc's five-point peace plan, painstakingly pulled together in 2021.

"We strongly condemn the continued acts of violence and call for immediate cessation," the joint declaration read, referencing what it termed Myanmar's ongoing "political crisis." "We call for effective humanitarian assistance, and inclusive national dialogue."

Laos, a communist state with ties to crucial Myanmar ally China, is chairing ASEAN for the first time since 2016. ASEAN's 10 member states are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and Myanmar. Although Myanmar remains a member, political representatives and military leaders from its ruling junta have been banned from high-level meetings. — AFP

## US president's annual address an exhausting 'Super Bowl': Writers

WASHINGTON: When US President Joe Biden gives his State of the Union speech on Thursday, it will be the culmination of three months' intensive work for his speechwriters. "The State of the Union is the speech that every speechwriter dreams of writing — and then once they've done it, they never want to do it again," says Terry Szuplat, a former speechwriter for Barack Obama. "It's arguably one of the highest profile speeches that a president gives all year. So it would seem to be a tremendous opportunity, and yet at the very same time, it rarely, if ever changes the fundamental dynamics of a presidency."

Biden will emerge this week after three days secluded at the Camp David presidential retreat in the hills of Maryland working on the final draft of the primetime televised speech. This year could be his most important yet. Seeking reelection in November in a likely rematch against Donald Trump, he will seek to convince voters worried about his age and wars in Gaza and Ukraine, while touting his achievements on the economy. The speechwriters' work likely began in October or November of 2023, when they started harvesting ideas from across government departments and holding budget meetings, says Sarada Peri, another former Obama writer.

A first draft normally emerges before Christmas "but then they would really start in earnest again once we came back from the holidays and it's incredibly stressful" she said. The task, she added was to "try to weave them into some kind of narrative with an arc, some kind of story that will be compelling to the American people."



WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden speaks during a meeting of his Competition Council in the State Dining Room of the White House in Washington, DC, on March 5, 2024. — AFP

### 'Regal moment'

For Peri, the State of the Union is simultaneously a career pinnacle and an endurance test. "It's sort of a speechwriters' Super Bowl and yet, the outcome is never exactly what you want it," she said, referring to the championship game of the American Football season. The speech itself has its roots in the US Constitution, which says that the president shall "from time to time give to the Congress information of the State of the Union." George Washington, the first US president, got away with the shortest speech to date, at 1,000 words — a contrast with Biden's 9,000 words last year.

Washington's successors were usually content to give Congress written messages and it wasn't until Woodrow Wilson in 1913 that the current ritual began of the president making his way from the White House

to the Capitol to make an annual speech. "We don't have a king, but in that moment, when the president enters and the president's name is called, it is a very regal moment," said Szuplat, whose book on speechwriting, "Say It Well," is due to be published in September. "There's also the dynamic of half of the room applauding and standing up, while the other half of the room stays seated with their hands in their laps and it can make for compelling television," he said.

### 'Moments that stay'

Barack Obama tried to keep his speech down to 30 minutes but to no avail, said Szuplat, noting "the pressures are just so great." The challenge is always to cover the endless list of policy areas, from health to education to foreign policy and beyond.

"Every year, we would say, 'okay, this is a year we're going to make it shorter,'" said Sarada Peri. "And of course, inevitably, by the end it has become a speech that was at least an hour long." Last year Biden spoke for 70 minutes. The record was set in 2000 by former president Bill Clinton, at one hour and 28 minutes.

Writers admit that often it's the unscripted moments that stick in people's memory. In 2020, then-House speaker Nancy Pelosi, a Democrat, famously ripped up a copy of Republican president Donald Trump's State of the Union speech.

Peri recalls Biden's off the cuff ripostes last year to opposition lawmakers who interrupted his speeches. "I think he did a great job of really turning it into a moment for himself." Szuplat meanwhile recalls the long standing ovation that Congress gave in January 2014 to a service member who was gravely injured in Afghanistan. "Those are the moments that tend to stay with people, that they're talking about the next day at work, with their families," said Szuplat. Come Thursday when Biden gives his State of the Union, the two writers say they will watch the speech without a tinge of nostalgia for their old jobs. "I am happy to be a spectator," quips Peri. — AFP

## Top Haitian gang leader warns of civil war, genocide

PORT-AU-PRINCE: A powerful Haitian gang leader warned Tuesday that the chaos engulfing the capital Port-au-Prince will lead to civil war and "genocide" unless Prime Minister Ariel Henry steps down. The stark comments from Jimmy Cherizier, known as "Barbecue," came as Henry appeared to be struggling to fly home, with the main airport under attack and neighboring Dominican Republic refusing permission for him to land.

Henry — who was supposed to step down last month — was out of the country last week when armed criminal gangs, who control large swaths of the country, launched a coordinated assault to oust him.

"If Ariel Henry doesn't resign, if the international community continues to support him, we'll be heading straight for a civil war that will lead to genocide," Cherizier, a former police officer who is under UN sanctions for human rights abuses, told reporters in the capital.

"Either Haiti becomes a paradise or a hell for all of us. It's out of the question for a small group of rich people living in big hotels to decide the fate of people living in working-class neighborhoods," the 46-year-old added.

As the latest crisis in the violence-wracked Caribbean nation spiraled, gunfire shut down some flights at Toussaint Louverture International Airport in Haiti's capital. Henry was denied entry into the neighboring Dominican Republic, according to Dominican news group CDN.

On Tuesday evening a spokesperson for the governor's office in nearby Puerto Rico confirmed his plane had landed there, at least briefly. "I don't know if he's still in Puerto Rico," Sheila Anglero told AFP by telephone. — AFP

## Amir opens Abdullah Al-Salem...

Continued from Page 1

Chairperson of the board of the Constituent Council of ASSU Dr Moudhi Al-Humoud said ASSU received the first batch of students for 2023-24. Humoud expressed gratitude to HH the Amir for paying close attention to the establishment process of the university, addressing challenges and giving the council enough time to assess and follow-up. "We hope this university will be amongst distinguished universities offering high-quality academic level to match the scientific and technical level of renowned universities, regionally and internationally," she added.

Humoud recalled late Amirs Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, who began this journey when a decree was published in 2019 to establish government universities, and another decree to create the constituent assembly in 2021. "This shows how our wise leadership has always supported education, science and knowledge," she said. Humoud said the ASSU was named after Kuwait's 11th ruler, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, who set the foundation for a modern education. Humoud, who thanked all those who contributed to the establishment of

ASSU, said members of the constituent council collaborated with Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, economic institutions and international universities to have a firsthand account of the most important majors to be offered by ASSU. She said ASSU has three colleges: Business and Entrepreneurship, Computing and Systems, and Engineering and Energy, in addition to integration studies.

Humoud said these specialties would match the fourth industrial revolution which revolves around data, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, energy resources, innovation and business administration. She said the relevant committees were studying requirements to establish the College of Health and Medicine, and launch a post-graduate program and scientific center. A documentary clip was displayed about the identity of ASSU, then HH the Amir unveiled the curtain to mark the official opening of ASSU.

HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal later sent messages of thanks to Adwani and Humoud. In the messages, he praised the efforts of all those involved in the founding of Abdullah Al-Salem University, hoping that this prominent academic institution would enhance the country's educational system and raise the level of national educational output by providing its members with a broad spectrum of scientific and knowledge to support the country's renaissance and development. HH the Amir also wished the country everlasting security and safety and wished everyone the best of luck in efforts for broader horizons of progress and prosperity. — KUNA

## PM vows to keep fighting...

Continued from Page 1

The premier elaborated that administrative corruption has much more harm than financial corruption, as the former creates a great state of unrest. Since the first day in office, the government has been keen on restoring confidence in its institutions and constitution, he said. HH the Amir Sheikh Dr Mohammad also affirmed that the vision of HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is based on turning Kuwait into a robust economy in parallel with the oil economy and in line with Kuwait's 2035 vision. He voiced confidence in Kuwaitis to build a new economy based on human resources and innovation and not on oil. HH the Amir said there is a serious desire in regaining the glory of Kuwait, given the country's potential, such as the distinguished geographical location closer to the centers of economic weight like Iraq, Iran and Gulf states, referring to the "Silk Road" project among GCC members that will be launch toward East Asia and India.

Kuwait seeks to better use its location starting from Kuwait Bay to establish an outstanding lo-

gistics center to offer banking and financial services to neighboring countries, in addition to attracting global universities and medical centers to Kuwait, the premier noted. This is the vision of HH the Amir, with which he tasked the government, HH the Amir said. During his state visits to GCC countries, HH the Amir highlighted the economy during his talks, the premier noted.

HH the Prime Minister said the government is considering carrying out the high-speed train project to transport passengers and goods between Riyadh and Kuwait, adding that its cost is reasonable and takes into account environmental safety. HH the Amir's visit to the Sultanate of Oman witnessed the inauguration of Al-Duqm Refinery, overlooking the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea, the premier said, noting it is one of the pioneering projects that could be expanded in the future, pointing out that it links Kuwait's oil exports to the world. HH the Amir also held talks with brothers in Bahrain, Qatar and the UAE on enhancing security, political and economic bonds and ties for wider horizons, the premier concluded.

HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad, during his visit to Kuwait University, was accompanied by Minister of Education, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr Adel Al-Adwani and Acting Director of Kuwait University Mishari Al-Harbi, as various departments and facilities were reviewed and briefed about. — KUNA

International

# Trump, Biden storm towards rematch

## Republican rival Nikki Haley 'wishes Trump well' after dropping out of presidential race

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump marched Wednesday towards a bitter rematch against President Joe Biden in November as his final Republican rival Nikki Haley threw in the towel after a thumping defeat in the "Super Tuesday" primaries.

Pointedly declining to endorse the man she has portrayed as chaotic and mentally incompetent, former UN ambassador Haley said Trump would have to earn the support of moderates who backed her longshot campaign.

Her withdrawal leaves America facing a battle for the White House between two elderly men that many voters say they don't want, with Trump brushing aside multiple criminal indictments and the scandal over his attempt to overthrow the 2020 election in his pursuit of a comeback.

"We must turn away from the darkness of hatred and division," the 52-year-old Haley said in Charleston in her home state of South Carolina. About Trump, she said only that "I wish him well" as he seeks a return to the world's most powerful office. She also lamented the US "retreat" on world issues including Ukraine, as Trump and his hard-right Republican allies block aid for Kyiv's fight against the Russian invasion.

Biden meanwhile swept his Democratic "Super Tuesday" primaries but he must now gear up for Thursday's State of the Union address, a defining moment as the unpopular 81-year-old seeks to allay voter concerns over his age, the economy and the war in Gaza.

Both men swiftly made their pitch for Haley's bloc of mainly affluent, moderate Republican voters. After proclaiming that he had "TRUNCED" Haley, Trump invited them to "join the greatest movement in the history of our nation." Biden hailed her courage for telling the "truth about Trump" and said there was a place for her supporters in his campaign.

### 'So conclusive'

This year's Super Tuesday was sapped of suspense as Biden and Trump had effectively secured their parties' nominations before a ballot was cast. Former president Trump, 77, swept 14 out of 15 states up for grabs on the biggest day of the 2024 race so far, with Haley denying him only in the northeastern state of Vermont.

"They call it 'Super Tuesday' for a reason," Trump told cheering supporters at his Mar-a-Lago beach club in Florida. "They tell me, the pundits and otherwise, that there has never been one like this,

never been anything so conclusive."

Impeached twice, beaten by seven million votes in 2020 and facing 91 felony charges in four trials, Trump has a profile unlike any US presidential election candidate in history. Yet his appeal among working-class, rural and white voters on issues like immigration and the economy has propelled him toward the nomination in one of the most lopsided primary seasons ever seen.

"This means the campaign will continue to be Trump's tour of personal grievance," Todd Belt, a politics professor at George Washington University, told AFP. He also finally received the backing of Senate Republican Minority leader Mitch McConnell, who had fallen out with Trump over his baseless claims to have won the 2020 election.

### Warning signs

Biden meanwhile raced to clear wins — minus a loss in tiny Pacific Ocean territory American Samoa — and warned that Trump was "determined to destroy" US democracy. Biden is now expected to use his State of the Union speech in less than 48 hours to paint the election as a stark choice between himself and an existential threat to the country. But while the election is set to be a rematch, recent



Donald Trump

Joe Biden

polls give Trump a narrow lead, unlike four years ago when Biden was largely ahead of the vote.

There are also warning signs from a protest vote over Biden's support for the Zionist entity's attack on Gaza, with some voters filling out ballots saying "uncommitted" in Minnesota and other states. Red lights are flashing for Trump too despite his dominant Super Tues-

day performance, with signs that traditional voters in key swing states could be turned off by the chaos and scandal swirling around him.

Stephanie Perini-Hegarty voted for Biden in Quincy, Massachusetts. "I think we need a leader who is not involved in any corruption, and who is going to look out for the best interests of the people," the 55-year-old told AFP. — AFP



GEDAREF: Donkey-drawn carriages, the preferred mode of transport for people and goods, are parked at a market in Gedaref state in this file photo. — AFP photos



Children displaced from Sudan's Jazira state transport water on a donkey-pulled cart.

## Without fuel, people turn to donkey carts in war-torn Sudan

PORT SUDAN: In war-torn Sudan, where chaos and fuel shortages have ground normal motor traffic to a halt, people once more rely on donkey carts — even for urgent trips to the hospital. In a small town south of the capital Khartoum, Hussein Ali has been busy carting patients to a clinic on a rickety wooden carriage that now serves as an ambulance.

"Just an hour ago, I brought a woman who went into labor in a village 15 kilometers (nine miles) away," Ali told AFP near a clinic in Tamboul, Al-Jazira state. "The carriage is the only way to get patients from villages to the hospital," he said of his vehicle, called a "caro" in Sudanese Arabic and now once more a common sight in many states.

Sudan has been rocked by a brutal war that has killed thousands — including up to 15,000 in a single Darfur town, according to UN experts — and displaced millions since last April. The conflict has pitted the regular army of de facto leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan against the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) of his former deputy, Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

Burhan's government has retreated east to Port Sudan, while the RSF now controls much of Khartoum, nearly the entire western Darfur region and much of the country's south. When the RSF in December overran central Al-Jazira state, until then a relative safe haven, nearly half a million people fled, many for the second or third time. But millions more, who were unable or unwilling to leave, remain trapped there, enduring insecurity, dire shortages and a deepening health crisis.

### Roadblocks and no petrol

Civilians have also been left stranded without regular road transport as the RSF has set up checkpoints and petrol stations have run dry. Since the RSF rolled

in, fuel suppliers from army-controlled areas "have not resupplied petrol stations in Al-Jazira", said a petrol station worker who requested anonymity.

The price for scarce fuel rose 20-fold to 25,000 Sudanese pounds or about \$20 a liter. When the RSF conquers new territory, its fighters are known to commandeer homes, businesses and vehicles.

A local bus driver, Al-Taher, said that "when the RSF took over the area, I hid my bus so it wouldn't be stolen". Taher said he too has shifted to driving a donkey cart. He was speaking on condition of being identified by one name only for fear of retaliation. He now mostly takes passengers on a six-kilometer trip between his village and Rufaa, a town 40 kilometers north of the state capital Wad Madani. — AFP

## India's 'drone sisters' steer social change

PATAUDI, India: Once a housewife in rural India, Sharmila Yadav always wanted to be a pilot and is now living her dream remotely, flying a heavy-duty drone across the skies to cultivate the country's picturesque farmlands.

Yadav, 35, is among hundreds of women trained to fly fertilizer-spraying aircraft under the government-backed "Drone Sister" program. The scheme aims to help modernize Indian farming by reducing labor costs, as well as saving time and water in an industry hamstrung by its reliance on outdated technology and growing climate change challenges. It is also a portent of rural India's changing attitudes towards working women, who have traditionally found few opportunities to join the labor force and are often stigmatized for doing so.

"Earlier, it was difficult for women to step out of the house. They were supposed to do only household chores and look after the children," mother-of-two Yadav told AFP, after a day's work crisscrossing a drone through the clear blue sky above a lush green field of young wheat stalks.

"Women who went out for work were looked down upon. They were taunted for neglecting their motherly duties. But now mindsets are changing gradually." Yadav was a homemaker for 16 years after marrying her farmer husband, with few job opportunities for women in her small rural hamlet near the town of Pataudi, a few hours' drive from the capital New Delhi.

She will pocket 50,000 rupees (\$600) after spraying 150 acres (66 hectares) of farmland twice over five weeks, a little over double the average monthly income in her native Haryana state. But she said her new occupation was not just a "source of income" for her. "I feel very proud when someone calls me a pilot. I have never sat in a plane, but I feel like I am flying one now," she said.

Yadav is among the first batch of 300 women trained by the Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO), the largest manufacturer of chemical fertiliz-



PATAUDI, India: Women aspiring to be remote pilots attend a class under the government-backed "Drone Sister" program. — AFP photos



Himanshi, a certified remote pilot trained under the government-backed "Drone Sister" program, operates a drone to spray liquid fertilizer over a farm.

ers in the country.

The women trained as pilots are given the 30-kilogram (66-pound) drones for free, along with battery-run vehicles to transport them. Other fertilizer companies have also joined the program, which aims to train 15,000 "drone sisters" across the country. "This scheme is not just about employment but also empowerment and rural entrepreneurship," Yogendra Kumar, the marketing director of IFFCO, told AFP.

"Women, who earlier could not step out of their houses owing to deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes and lack of opportunities,

are coming forward with enthusiasm to take part," he told AFP. "They are now able to meet the household expenses on their own without depending on others."

Kumar said that spraying fertilizer by drone was cost-effective, used less water and took a fraction of the time of manual spraying. "One acre can be sprayed in just five to six minutes," he said. A little over 41 percent of rural Indian women are in the formal workforce compared to 80 percent of rural men, according to a government survey last year. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has championed the scheme and mentioned it in his annual Independence Day address last August, said he was pleased to see women at the forefront of a revolutionary new farming practice.

"Who would have thought until a few years ago that in our country women living in villages too would fly drones? But today this is becoming possible," he said in a radio program last month. Women have to pass an interview before they are enrolled in the program. They then sit a written test after a weeklong theory course before another week of practical training. In one of the classrooms welcoming a fresh batch of pilots, 23-year-old Rifat Ara said she was initially apprehensive about enrolling. But once she learned the ropes, she said there was no looking back. — AFP

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# Business

THURSDAY, MARCH 7, 2024

## Egypt pound loses over third of value as bank signals float

Move aimed at unlocking emergency loans from IMF



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The Board of Directors recommended a cash dividend of **25** fils per share for the second half of 2023, subject to Annual General Assembly and statutory approvals. This dividend follows the semi-annual dividend of **10** fils distributed in 2023, totaling **35** fils per share for the year 2023

CAIRO: Egypt's central bank announced Wednesday it was floating the pound in a move to unlock emergency loans from the IMF that saw the currency lose more than a third of its value.

The bank also hiked its key deposit rate to a record 27.25 percent as it moved to rein in inflation in the import-dependent economy which has been hit by sharp falls in its hard currency earnings.

It was not immediately clear whether the bank would continue efforts to manage the pound's depreciation or market forces would be entirely free to set a new unified exchange rate. The bank was expected to announce further details at a news conference scheduled for Wednesday evening.

By 3 pm (1300 GMT), the Egyptian pound was trading at a record low of 50.6 pounds to the US dollar, after more than a year of a stabilized official exchange rate of around 30.9. At a surprise monetary policy meeting Wednesday, the central bank committed to "allowing the exchange rate to be determined by market forces," saying in a statement that "the unification of the exchange rate is crucial." Egypt has been in talks with the International Monetary Fund over increasing the value of a \$3 billion loan facility already agreed with the lender.

A fully flexible exchange rate and a tighter monetary policy were among the conditions attached by the IMF and loan tranches have been repeatedly delayed until the reforms go ahead. State-linked media Extra News cited a "high-level source" as saying that a new agreement with the IMF "will be signed within hours." Before Wednesday's announcements, Egypt had already devalued its currency three times in recent years. But it had previously held back from fully floating the pound, citing concerns for the impact on Egyptians, two-thirds of whom live below or on the poverty line.

Analysts say Cairo has been emboldened to bite the bullet on exchange rate reform by the announcement late last month of \$35 billion in foreign direct investment by the United Arab Emirates. Months of dire foreign currency shortages had caused the parallel market rate to surge to 70 pounds to the dollar earlier this year, before dropping closer to the official rate after a first tranche of \$15 billion was deposited by the UAE. Since the most recent crisis began in early 2022, Egypt's economy — almost entirely reliant on imported products or inputs — has been buckling under rampant inflation, which reached a record high of nearly 40 percent last August. The central bank described its move to hike interest rates Wednesday as an attempt to "accelerate the monetary tightening process in order to fast-track the disinflation path and ensure a decline in underlying inflation". — AFP



CAIRO: Egyptian pound banknotes lie on a table on March 6, 2024 in Cairo, after Egypt's central bank announced it will allow the exchange rate to be set by the market. — AFP

## UK govt woos voters with more pre-poll tax cuts

LONDON: Britain's embattled Conservative government on Wednesday announced a fresh tax cut for millions of workers before a general election expected this year. In a budget update, finance minister Jeremy Hunt said the government would cut national insurance — a payrolls tax paid by employees and employers — by two percentage points from April, matching action he took in November.

It remains to be seen whether the latest move, reportedly worth a total of £10 billion (\$12.7 billion), would win over voters. The right-wing Conservatives, led by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, have been in power since 2010 but were well behind the main opposition Labour party in opinion polls ahead of Wednesday's budget. Analysts said Hunt's latest tax cut was far from being a huge giveaway, as elevated inflation forces up repayments on state borrowing, undermining the government's ability to stimulate the recession-mired UK economy.

"Keeping taxes down matters to Conservatives in a way it never can for Labour," Chancellor of the Exchequer Hunt told parliament. "Of course interest rates remain high as we bring down inflation, but because of the progress we have made... we can now help families not just with temporary cost-of-living support, but with permanent cuts in taxation," he added. The budget featured also plans for better value-for-money in public services, notably the National Health Service, and improved benefits for families with children. — AFP



Business

# Zain Group 2023 revenue up 10% to reach \$6.2bn: Bader Al-Kharafi

Net profit soars to \$701m in 2023 • Board recommends cash dividend of 25 fils for H2 2023

**KUWAIT:** Zain Group, a leading provider of innovative technologies and digital lifestyle communications operating in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, serving a customer base of 50.6 million, announced its consolidated financial results for the full-year 2023, and fourth quarter ended Dec 31, 2023.

For the full-year 2023, Zain Group generated consolidated revenue of KD 1.9 billion (\$6.2 billion), a Y-o-Y increase of 10 percent. Consolidated EBITDA for the period increased by 5 percent Y-o-Y, to reach KD 705 million (\$2.3 billion), reflecting an EBITDA margin of 37 percent. Consolidated net income reached KD 215 million (\$701 million), up 10 percent Y-o-Y and reflecting earnings per share of 50 fils (\$0.16).

**Board H2 2023 dividend recommendation**

The Board of Directors of Zain Group recommended a cash dividend of 25 fils per share for the second half (H2) of 2023. This dividend follows the semi-annual dividend of 10 fils distributed earlier in 2023, totaling 35 fils per share for the year and reflecting a 70 percent payout ratio, one of the highest among listed entities in the region and in line with the Board's previously committed minimum cash dividend policy of 35 fils in total, for three years that commenced in 2023.

For the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2023, Zain Group generated consolidated revenue of KD 494 million (\$1.6 billion), up 8 percent Y-o-Y. EBITDA for the quarter amounted to KD 174 million (\$565 million), reflecting an EBITDA margin of 35 percent. Net income for the period amounted to KD 43 million (\$140 million), representing earnings per share of 10 fils (\$0.03).

Key operational notes for Q4 and 12 months ended Dec 31, 2023

1. Throughout 2023, Zain Group invested \$994 million in CAPEX representing 16 percent of revenue, mainly on 4G and 5G rollouts, and expansion of FTTH infrastructure and spectrum license fees

2. Consolidated data revenue grew 8 percent to reach \$2.4 billion, representing 39 percent of the Group's revenue for the year.

3. Agreement with Ooredoo Group and TASC Towers to create the largest tower company in MENA region valued at \$2.2 billion with nearly 30,000 towers across six countries.

4. Tower sales and leaseback in KSA, Kuwait, Jordan and Iraq boosting efficiencies and net profit.

5. Zain Jordan launches 5G services, making it the fourth Zain operation offering 5G.

6. Zain KSA launched the world's 1st zero-carbon 5G network in the Red Sea.

7. ZainTECH acquires STS, a leading regional digital transformation solutions provider.

8. Group wide B2B revenues inclusive of ZainTech grew 20 percent as a result of dynamic ICT services.

9. Zain Omantel International established a unique PAN Middle Eastern network, complemented by extensive global assets including AFRICA ONE, PEACE, and Blue Raman subsea cables.

10. Group wide FinTech customers grew 40 percent Y-o-Y, with revenue up 195 percent Y-o-Y, and total transaction volume tripling to reach \$11 billion.

11. Launch of new FinTech brand 'Bede' in Bahrain offering microfinance services.

12. Digital services group wide witness revenue growth of 9 percent Y-o-Y, inclusive of Dizlee (API) platform offering 81 live services, and counting over 275 million API transactions since launch in mid-2018.

13. 'Best Telecom and Corporate Governance' company in Kuwait by International Finance Magazine.

14. Zain's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) program acknowledged with two awards at the SAMENA Council endorsed MEA Business Achievement Awards.

15. Zain maintains region's highest A-rating on the 'CDP Score Report—Climate Change 2023', among the leaders globally; commits to Science-Based Targets initiative emission guidance.

16. Zain brand valuation grows 11 percent to \$3 billion according to Brand Finance 2024 rankings.

Commenting on the 2023 full year results, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Zain Group, Osamah Al-Furaih said, "It was a momentous year for Zain on multiple levels as the Board worked together with the executive management team on increasing shareholder value by evolving the business and implementing noteworthy ESG initiatives. Our focus on operational efficiency, network upgrades, driving enterprise revenues and the development of new lucrative business verticals were instrumental in achieving these 2023 impressive results."

The Chairman continued, "The Board is confident of the company's readiness to



**Zain Group Chairman  
Osamah Al-Furaih**

- Another momentous year for Zain in increasing shareholder value by evolving the business and implementing noteworthy ESG initiatives



**Vice-Chairman & Group CEO  
Bader Al-Kharafi**

- Our strong balance sheet and operational performance allows us to reward shareholders with an attractive 70 percent payout ratio

exploit the next phase of growth of the numerous technologies and digital services we provide across our footprint. I would like to recognize the government bodies in Kuwait and across our markets for supporting the telecom sector and empowering Zain to provide meaningful connectivity to the communities, businesses, and governments we serve."

Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi commented, "Our Group-wide efforts in monetizing innovative digital services and enterprise solutions on the back of our state-of-the-art networks and technologies, combined with cost optimization initiatives and

pressive results for the year on all levels and the marketing partnership with digital operator Red Bull Mobile is experiencing impressive growth, successfully targeting the youth offering appealing options for prepaid voice and internet services. Likewise, our other digital operators in KSA (Yaqoot) and Iraq (oodi) are witnessing robust growth offering the latest innovative technologies and services to customers."

"We are very pleased with the impressive operational performance of our operations in KSA, Iraq, Sudan, Jordan and Bahrain, all delivering year on year growth in their financials. The completion

"Throughout the year, we continued to invest heavily in network expansions, upgrades and technologies that drove data and B2B related revenues. Notably, Zain Jordan became the first operator in the country to launch 5G commercial services in December 2023, becoming the fourth Zain operation to offer 5G technology, firmly placing Zain as the region's leading provider of this exclusive high-speed and reliable service."

"ZainTECH witnessed several milestones during the year, growing both organically and through acquisitions, notably that of STS in October 2023, a leading regional digital transformation solutions

firmly established these FinTech entities as market leaders in the unbanked and underbanked in their respective markets. We will continue to foster their growth through innovation."

"Across our footprint, Zain is guided by the four pillars of our five-year corporate sustainability strategy, centered on Climate Change, Social Business, Inclusion, and Generation Youth. Notably, the A- score that Zain maintained in the latest 'CDP Score Report—Climate Change 2023', positioned us first in the region and among leaders globally with respect to climate control initiatives. Our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) program continues to be a conducive force within, boosting the company's productivity and overall morale and much more. It's rewarding to see this initiative being recognized through various awards from organizations."

"On a final note, BrandFinance's recent valuation of the Zain brand that saw it increase 11 percent from \$2.7 billion to \$3 billion is a testament to the investment Zain has placed in establishing its name and identity over the past 17 years. The successful media campaigns, having 23 million social media fans and over 250 million video views annually, the many corporate sustainability, DEI initiatives we have introduced over the years, combined with our ongoing innovation and investment in network upgrades that result in quality mobile and digital services and exceptional customer experience, has made Zain one of the most inspirational and recognized corporate brands in the region and beyond."

**Highlights**

- Q4 2023 revenue KD 494 million (\$1.6 billion), net profit KD 43 million (\$140 million)
- Key operations in Kuwait, KSA, Iraq and Jordan deliver impressive net profit growth
- Jordan becomes the 4th Zain operation to offer 5G services
- Data revenue grew 8 percent, represents 39 percent of total revenue
- Digital services revenue up 9 percent; Fintech customer growth of 40 percent, revenue soared 195 percent
- Enterprise revenues up 20 percent as ZainTECH and local B2B teams target strategic clients
- Tower sales and leaseback in KSA, Kuwait, Jordan and Iraq creating value and efficiencies
- Zain maintains region's highest A- rating on the 'CDP Score Report—Climate Change 2023'
- Zain brand valuation reaches a milestone \$3 billion, up 11 percent year over year

**Group Key Performance Indicators (KD and USD) for the Full-Year 2023**

Total Active Customers	50.6 million
Consolidated Revenue	KD 1.9 billion - (USD 6.2 billion)
EBITDA	KD 705 million - (USD 2.3 billion)
EBITDA Margin	37%
Net Income	KD 215 million - (USD 701 million)
EPS	50 fils - USD 0.16

**Group Key Performance Indicators (KD and USD) for the Fourth Quarter of 2023**

Consolidated Revenue	KD 494 million - (USD 1.6 billion)
EBITDA	KD 174 million - (USD 565 million)
EBITDA Margin	35%
Net Income	KD 43 million - (USD 140 million)
EPS	10 fils - USD 0.03

**Financial KPIs of key markets for 12 months ended Dec 31, 2023**

**KUWAIT:** Maintaining its market leadership, the flagship operation saw its customer base increase by 4 percent to serve 2.7 million customers. The Group's most profitable operation saw its full year 2023 revenue grow by 5 percent Y-o-Y to reach KD 360 million (\$1.2 billion), with EBITDA increasing by 18 percent to KD 156 million (\$509 million), reflecting an EBITDA margin of 43 percent. For the full year, the operator recorded net income of KD 104 million (\$339 million) reflecting a 26 percent increase. Data revenue represented 37 percent of total revenue.

**SAUDI ARABIA:** The operator generated revenue of \$2.6 billion up 9 percent Y-o-Y, with EBITDA amounting to \$794 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 30 percent. Net income for the year soared 131 percent to reach \$338 million. With its dynamic 5G network covering 54 cities, data revenue represented 40 percent of total revenue and customers served stood at 8.9 million, up 3 percent.

**SUDAN:** Despite the ongoing conflict, the operator generated revenue of \$558 million, up 14 percent, with EBITDA amounting to \$269 million, up 7 percent and reflecting an EBITDA margin of 48 percent. Net income for the period reached \$216 million. Data revenue grew by 22 percent, representing 35 percent of total revenue, while the operator's customer base stood at 14.2 million, maintaining its market leadership.

**IRAQ:** Revenue reached \$974 million up 20 percent, and EBITDA amounted to \$375 million up 16 percent Y-o-Y, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 39 percent. Net profit reached \$88 million compared to \$15 million last year. The operator's customer base reached 17.9 million customers.

**JORDAN:** Zain Jordan revenue increased 3 percent to reach \$525 million, EBITDA reached \$217 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 41 percent. Net income for the year increased 10 percent to reach \$76 million. With the expansion of 4G and launch of 5G services across the country, data revenue grew 1 percent representing 50 percent of total revenue. Zain Jordan customer base grew by 3 percent to reach 3.9 million customers, maintaining its market leading position.

**BAHRAIN:** The operator generated revenue of \$192 million, up 7 percent Y-o-Y. EBITDA increased 2 percent to reach \$60 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 31 percent. Net income grew 2 percent to reach \$15.4 million, with data revenue growing 6 percent to represent 47 percent of total revenue.

passive Tower infrastructure strategy, are driving strong operational and financial performance on all our KPIs."

"Accordingly, we are in a solid position to recommend a H2 dividend of 25 fils (following the 10 fils earlier in H1) that will result in the second consecutive total annual dividend of 35 fils, reaffirming the commitment we made at the beginning of 2023. This reflects an annual 70 percent payout ratio, one of the highest in the region providing a strong indication of our healthy balance sheet and financial solvency as the Board and management cooperate to grow the business in a sustainable manner."

"Across all our markets, our management teams are being very agile in dealing with the many socio-economic and competitive challenges and this is reflected in the overall financial results. In Kuwait, the operation delivered im-

pressive results for the year on all levels and the marketing partnership with digital operator Red Bull Mobile is experiencing impressive growth, successfully targeting the youth offering appealing options for prepaid voice and internet services. Likewise, our other digital operators in KSA (Yaqoot) and Iraq (oodi) are witnessing robust growth offering the latest innovative technologies and services to customers."

"In late 2023, Zain further solidified its position as the regional leader in the tower arena, with a pioneering agreement with Qatar's Ooredoo Group and TASC Towers, which aims to incorporate nearly 30,000 towers across six countries, combining our respective passive infrastructure portfolios with a combined estimated current enterprise value of \$2.2 billion. This value creative agreement for all parties is progressing in stages, and we are very appreciative of Ooredoo's management for raising the notion of collaboration and regionalization to an entirely new level."

provider. This acquisition will further boost the 20 percent annual growth witnessed in B2B revenues across our footprint reflecting the sound cooperative business model between ZainTECH and our local operations' B2B teams in making Zain the connectivity and enterprise partner of choice.

"Early in 2024, we launched the Bede fintech brand in Bahrain which is set to be rolled out across our footprint. Bede stems from Arabic meaning of "in my hand", catering to consumers' lifestyles and emerging demands beyond basic telecom services. In Bahrain, this Shariah-compliant AI powered platform offers consumer micro-finance in minutes over a mobile app and will be developed in the future to offer a variety of financial services and products. The impressive and profitable growth of Tamam in Saudi Arabia, and Zain Cash in Iraq and Jordan has



Zain headquarters

# Gulf Bank renews its strategic partnership with INJAZ Kuwait

## As part of Bank's efforts to support and empower youth

**KUWAIT:** Gulf Bank has renewed its strategic partnership with the INJAZ, gearing up for another year of supporting and empowering youth, who play a central role in the bank's 2025 strategy and Kuwait Vision 2035. Ahmad Al-Amir, Gulf Bank's Deputy General Manager of Corporate Communications, expressed pride in the continued partnership with INJAZ, spanning over 18 years. This partnership aims to support youth and the next generation of young entrepreneurs by equipping them with the skills needed for today's rapidly evolving job market across various economic sectors.

Al-Amir reaffirmed Gulf Bank's commitment to its social responsibilities towards youth, particularly those in secondary schools, universities, and recent graduates. This dedication includes offering fundamental business concepts, exploring interests, providing professional opportunities, and nurturing their professional skills through practical training. He highlighted the successful partnership between Gulf Bank and INJAZ, resulting in the training of around 26,000 students throughout the academic year 2022/2023, focusing on various educational levels. Volunteers from Gulf Bank actively engaged in diverse activities organized by INJAZ to support youth development.

- Ahmad Al-Amir: Our successful partnership has resulted in training approximately 26,000 students in 2022/2023
- Laila Hilal Al-Mutairi: Gulf Bank is a key supporter of the organization's activities, notably the Company Program

Laila Hilal Al-Mutairi, CEO of INJAZ, Kuwait, emphasized the importance of private sector support for the organization's continuity and success. She highlighted the longstanding partnership with Gulf Bank, which provides vital support for the organization's activities by offering volunteers, and actively participating in student training programs, notably the Company Program. This program offers youth the chance to establish and run a real company. Al-Mutairi pointed out that INJAZ has provided training to more than 120,000 students since its establishment, emphasizing the refinement of youth skills for the workplace, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy. The organization remains dedicated to equipping young individuals with the necessary tools for future success.

It is noteworthy that INJAZ Kuwait is part of the global network of Junior Achievement worldwide, a non-profit (NPO), non-governmental or-

ganization (NGO) driven by Kuwait's private sector. Through strategic partnerships with Kuwait's business and education sectors, and with the help of qualified and dedicated volunteers, INJAZ delivers both Arabic and English language educational programs on entrepreneurial and leadership skills, to build successful careers.

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 devel-



Ahmad Al-Amir and Laila Hilal Al-Mutairi after renewing the partnership contract.

opments 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.



MUNICH: German Minister of Economics and Climate Protection Robert Habeck holds a dryer as a weapon at the booth "Makers wanted!" (Macher gesucht!), the young talent campaign of the Bavarian Craft Day at the "International Craft Fair 2024" (IHM) in Munich, southern Germany. — AFP

## Far-right threatens to scare off German industry's new talent

**DRESDEN, Germany:** In its search for sorely needed talent, German chipmaker Infineon is looking as far as Guatemala, but the rise of the far-right at home risks making the move unappealing and harming the industry.

The semiconductor group has plans for a new five-billion-euro (\$5.4-billion) factory in eastern Germany — and it is not the only one.

Backed by huge government subsidies, US chipmaker Intel is planning a plant in the city of Magdeburg, while the Taiwanese giant TSMC will put down roots in Dresden. For all the region's advantages — a good position in the heart of Europe and an established industrial base — its politics could yet be a drag.

In Saxony, which already hosts the biggest concentration of chipmakers in Europe, the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party is polling over 30 percent ahead of European and regional elections later this year. Success for the AfD risks "holding back our growth potential", Frank Boesenberg, the head of regional industry lobby group "Silicon Saxony", told AFP.

According to the group's estimates, chipmakers in Saxony will have 25,000 jobs to fill by 2030, while the local working-age population will shrink by 300,000.

"There are too few young people in the region," said Boesenberg. "We need immigration." However, the anti-immigration politics of the AfD could put off potential recruits and damage the industry.

"A policy of isolation is a threat to prosperity," Infineon's CEO Jochen Hanebeck warned on professional social network LinkedIn. As it stands, the large majority of the industrial capacity to produce semiconductors — used in everything from electric cars to smartphones — is in Asia. But recent supply disruptions and rising geopolitical tensions in the region have prompted a rethink in the United States and Europe about depending on imported chips.

The result has been a concerted effort to relocate supply closer to home, leading to a flood of investments into areas like Saxony. About 68 percent of German managers fear the country could become less attractive to foreign workers if the far-right gains in strength, according to a poll by the IW Koeln think tank. January's revelations by investigative outfit Correctiv that AfD members discussed a mass deportation plan at a meeting of extremists sparked a wave of protest in Germany.

But companies had been warning well before the controversy that the AfD poses a risk to business. Stefan Traeger, the head of Jenoptik, a producer of optical components for chipmakers, told German weekly Spiegel in December that if the industry was no longer able to find "the right people", the impact could be felt on the bottom line.

A lack of suitable workers was "the biggest challenge" facing Germany's industry, according to Economy Minister Robert Habeck. The country will need a total of five million extra workers by 2030 to cover the shortfall in all sectors, according to IW Koeln.

At Infineon's new factory in Dresden, which should begin production in 2026, the group expects to hire 1,000 new workers. Foreign workers will be an important "building block" on the way to achieving that target, Tom Geyer, Infineon's local head of human resources, told AFP. — AFP

## KIB showcases benefits of its Multicurrency Prepaid Visa Card

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait International Bank (KIB) held a press conference to unveil the array of benefits offered by its innovative digital product, the Multicurrency Prepaid Visa Card. The launch of the new product aligns with the bank's overarching strategy to deliver innovative banking solutions and products designed to ensure convenience and ease for all its customers.

It aims to enhance the quality of services provided, guaranteeing a secure and comfortable payment and shopping experience during travels and upon conducting international transactions. Commenting on KIB's newest product, Othman Tawfeq, General Manager of the Retail Banking Department, said: "We are thrilled to introduce the Multicurrency Prepaid Visa Card, a digital payment product designed to simplify international transactions like never before. The card is designed to cater to the evolving needs of today's travelers, online shoppers, study abroad students, and others, offering an array of features that are set to transform the way people manage their finances across borders in a manner that fits their modern lifestyles. More importantly, KIB customers will be able to digitally issue the card and start using it within minutes through the App."

Mohamed Atef El-Shareef, General Manager of the Digital Innovation and Data Intelligence Department at KIB, said, "At KIB, we persist in our efforts to pioneer new and contemporary solutions in the realm of digital banking. This progressive initiative underscores our dedication to offering products and services that are not only flexible and secure but also efficient and in line with the highest international standards."

He highlighted that this card would be a significant addition to customers' travel experiences by saving time and effort in online payment transactions. Additionally, the card offers security and peace of mind as it is supported with a 3D Secure feature, ensuring the trustworthiness of online purchasing processes. Moreover, cardholders can add their cards to their digital wallets, such as Apple and Samsung Pay, and use the card instantly

## China hails 'favorable' economic conditions, despite trade woes

**BEIJING:** China's top economic policymakers expressed confidence Wednesday that the country could achieve a strong recovery this year, despite persistent headwinds that continue to hinder growth. Thousands of delegates are convening this week in Beijing for the "Two Sessions" — the annual meetings of China's parliament and a political consultative body — to discuss official strategy for the year ahead.

During a press event on Wednesday on the sidelines of the major gathering, China's economic planning chief Zheng Shanjie said "favorable conditions for China's economic development will outweigh unfavorable factors" in 2024.

"The trend of economic recovery will be further consolidated and strengthened," Zheng said at the media conference, which saw the rare assembly of five powerful officials overseeing

the economy. This year's edition of the Two Sessions is being closely watched for signs of further state support to help the world's second-largest economy, which is currently ailing from a range of issues including a protracted crisis in the property market, flagging exports and high youth unemployment.

But Zheng, head of the National Development and Reform Commission, admitted that 2024 would also see challenges, including "hidden risks" and a "complex and severe" external environment. Commerce Minister Wang Wentao elaborated on such challenges at the media conference, predicting continued "downward pressure" on global growth. Chinese exports, historically a key growth driver, fell last year for the first time since 2016, reflecting how tensions with the United States and a stuttering global economic recovery are compounding Beijing's struggles to



(Left to right) Ali Hinnawi, Mohamed El-Shareef, Othman Tawfeq and Laila Naserallah.

without the need to request a plastic card.

Discussing the new card's details, Laila Naserallah, Products Manager of the Digital Innovation and Data Intelligence Department at KIB, said: "A single prepaid card with multiple currencies, this card is a game-changer. It can hold up to six wallets and allows customers to choose from 12 different currencies. With the main wallet holding Kuwaiti dinar, customers can choose five different currencies for the remaining wallets. The card offers the choice of USD, EUR, GBP, TRY, SAR, AED, BHD, QAR, OMR, EGP, and JOD."

With highly competitive rates, customers can easily exchange from the KD wallet to a foreign currency wallet, and vice versa." Naserallah added: "Offering a daily top-up limit of up to KD 3,000, customers can reload the card quickly and efficiently, with accessibility and support offered through all KIB's physical and online channels. Even more, customers can secure their exchange rate before traveling to ensure their peace of mind, then pay in any country with no additional fees from the selected currencies, making international travel hassle-free."

From his side, Ali Hinnawi, Visa's Business Development Lead in Kuwait, said: "This innovative solution leverages Visa's global network of 130 million

merchant partners, providing KIB's Visa cardholders unparalleled access and convenience when abroad. Moreover, cardholders can transact with the peace of mind that their payments are secured by VisaNet, our advanced global processing network. This is a testament to our commitment to enhancing cardholders' travel experience, and we're delighted to partner with KIB to launch this new multicurrency prepaid Visa card."

Issuing the Multicurrency Prepaid Card is a smooth process. At a small annual fee of KD 12, anyone aged 18 and older with an active KIB account, and who is a registered user of the Bank's Mobile App, can easily apply, issue and start using the card within minutes. They also receive 50 Reward Points from KIB Rewards for the first card issued. Moreover, the card is accessible at all of KIB's branches, ATMs and ITMs, as well as through the IVR service and OnlineBanking.

It is worth noting that KIB constantly strives to meet the requirements of its customers and enhance their modern lifestyles by providing them with high-quality services and products. Also, as part of its digital banking vision and in line with its slogan "Bank for Life", KIB remains committed to delivering excellence and convenience to its customers.



SHANGHAI: People visit the Bund promenade along the Huangpu river in Shanghai on March 6, 2024. — AFP

kickstart growth at home.

Wang said Wednesday that, despite a resurgence in Chinese exports in the first two months of this year, March would likely see a decline. "But, the overall trend is upward," added Wang.

Beijing's leadership on Tuesday laid out an objective of "around five percent" GDP growth this year — a dream of many developed Western nations but for China a far cry from the breakneck expansion that powered its rise. — AFP

## German exports unexpectedly soar in January

**FRANKFURT:** German exports jumped more than expected in January, official data showed Wednesday, thanks to a rebound in demand from EU countries and key market China. Exports totaled 135.6 billion euros

(\$147 billion), a 6.3-percent increase on the previous month when shipments fell sharply, federal statistics agency Destatis said.

Analysts surveyed by Factset had expected a smaller increase of 1.5 percent. The spike marked a rare spot of good news for Europe's largest economy which shrank last year after being battered by headwinds including high interest rates, fragile global trade and a manufacturing slump.

Imports to Germany meanwhile rose by 3.6 percent to 108 billion euros in January, widening the trade surplus to 27.5 billion euros. The export bounce was driven by an 8.9-percent rise in shipments to fellow Europe-

an Union countries, Destatis said, while those to China climbed by 7.8 percent.

The United States remained the most popular destination for "made in Germany" goods but demand fell by 1.7 percent month-on-month. "Despite all the swan songs, Germany's foreign trade is off to a strong start in 2024," said Deutsche Bank economist Robin Winkler.

The stronger-than-expected rise in exports to China especially brought "a ray of hope" to the ailing German economy, Winkler added. The German economy contracted by 0.3 percent last year but is expected to stage a modest recovery in 2024 as inflation eases and demand picks up. — AFP



A group photo taken during the NBK RISE program's graduation ceremony.

# NBK marks inaugural graduation ceremony of NBK RISE initiative

## Bank hosts interactive exhibition showcasing women's leadership attributes

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) hosted a prestigious ceremony at its headquarters, graced by prominent guests, CEOs, and representatives from various companies and banks. The event marked the inaugural graduation ceremony for participants of the groundbreaking NBK RISE initiative. This initiative, the first of its kind, is dedicated to empowering and supporting women by equipping them with the essential skills to realize their full leadership capabilities.

Representatives from prominent organizations such as Alshaya Group, Commercial Bank of Kuwait, Burgan Bank, EQUATE Petrochemical Company, and Kuwait Telecommunications Company - STC were among the attendees. These organizations are partners in an agreement sponsored by NBK, aiming to enhance women's representation in regional and global leadership roles.

Representatives from participating universities in the initiative, such as IE Business School, INSEAD, and Franklin Covey, were also in attendance, alongside 21 program participants. The event featured NBK's executive management honoring the participants with inspiring words, success stories, and acknowledgment of their hard work and dedication demonstrated throughout the program.

On the sidelines of the ceremony, the NBK RISE Leadership Exhibition was held, featuring an innovative interactive showcase inspired by the trainees' projects. It highlighted the varied attributes that women bring to leadership roles and underscored their potential to excel as leaders in various countries, organizations, institutions, and companies.

The exhibition utilized interactive models and inspirational messages to underscore the significant leadership qualities of women and shed light on the gender disparity in leadership positions. It also presented ideas and solutions aimed at bridging this gap.

The program emphasized the importance of diversity in leadership teams, recognizing that diverse perspectives lead to more robust decision-making, foster innovation, and enhance overall performance. Addressing the underrepresentation of women in executive roles, the program aimed to cultivate a more inclusive corporate environment where every individual can thrive and contribute to the organization's success.

The program was managed by Najla Al-Sager, Head of Talent Management at National Bank of Kuwait, in cooperation with Alia Abou Al-Fath, Head of Corporate Communications at NBK Wealth. Leveraging their expertise in communication and drawing from their extensive professional backgrounds, they spearheaded the development of a distinguished leadership program. Their efforts involved partnering with leading educational institutions and sector experts to train and nurture female candidates for leadership roles.

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Special visit to Spain

The inaugural edition of the program featured a visit by the participants to IE Business School headquarters in Spain. Additionally, NBK Deputy Group CEO visited IE Business School in Spain during the final phase of the 9-month training journey for the first cohort of the NBK RISE program.

During her visit, Al-Bahar met with the President of IE University, Santiago Iniguez, and toured the campus. Shaikha Al-Bahar also hosted a dinner attended by members of the university administration, Kuwait's Ambassador to Spain Khalifa Al-Kharafi, Kuwaiti students at IE University, and NBK RISE participants. The visit also featured a panel discussion with the IE Women in Business Club and Kuwait's Women in Business Club.

The bank boasts a workforce where females constitute 44.3 percent of total employees and hold 29.7 percent of senior management positions and above as of 2023. Furthermore, NBK upholds pay equity, ensuring parity between male and female employees' salaries. In collaboration with leading international universities and training centers, NBK consistently offers tailored programs and workshops aimed at nurturing women leaders and fostering understanding of gender disparities. These initiatives focus on leveraging diversity to enhance productivity and foster innovation. Furthermore, we are extending our dedication to diversity and inclusion within our client base. By in-

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Shaikha Al-Bahar speaks during the ceremony.

- NBK RISE marks the initial step in our journey to empower future female leaders.
- The initiative sets the groundwork for a future where women take center stage in shaping the business arena.
- The program has instilled a culture that fosters a supportive environment for nurturing women leaders and equipping them for leadership roles.
- The inaugural edition of the program yielded significant success in advancing women towards senior leadership roles.

inclusive and dynamic future, striving to ensure the presence of female leaders who leave a lasting impact on the growth trajectory of their respective institutions," Al-Bahar added.

Al-Bahar extended her gratitude to the program's organizers, mentors, trainers, and collaborating educational institutions for their collective efforts in ensuring the success of this groundbreaking initiative. She emphasized that the program has effectively disrupted traditional norms, paving the way for women's empowerment, and fostering a culture of equality.

In a relatively short span, the program has significantly bolstered and advocated for women's leadership in Kuwait, the region, and globally. By engaging, inspiring, and motivating women across various regions, sectors, and fields of expertise, the program has made substantial strides. Additionally, it aimed to establish a community of women leaders to sustain the initiative's advancement and evolution in the long term.

The program was a remarkable initiative that went beyond the Bank's individual efforts. It involved collaboration with several leading institutions in Kuwait, who collectively signed a pledge to enhance the representation of women in leadership positions. This collective commitment underscores their dedication to working together towards the objectives of this global program.

**Inspiration and motivation**

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Sulaiman Al-Marzouq delivers his speech during the ceremony.

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(From right) Sulaiman Al-Marzouq, Eng Mazid Al-Harbi, Salah Al-Fulaj and Saleh Alshaya.



NBK Rise program graduates.





This combination of pictures show models presenting creations by Chanel for the Women Ready-to-wear Fall-Winter 2024/2025 collection as part of the Paris Fashion Week, in Paris.--AFP photos



This combination of pictures shows models presenting creations by Chanel.

# SEASIDE CHANEL, LOUIS VUITTON SHINE AT PARIS FASHION WEEK



**T**he last day of Paris Fashion Week on Tuesday saw Chanel take a trip back to its seaside origins, while Louis Vuitton looked to a space-age future that also included a luxury take on the "pussyhat". Chanel's show was dedicated to the northern French seaside town of Deauville where its founder Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel opened her first boutique in 1912. It began with a short film starring Brad Pitt and Penelope Cruz—a tribute to classic 1960s French classic "A Man and a Woman"—set in Deauville.

On the catwalk, the stars of the show were, fittingly, some huge-brimmed beach hats. The collection had a palette of bright pastel tones across a range designed for winter walks on the beach, including pea coats, tweed suits, 1920s-style pant suits and turtlenecks. Creative director Virginie Viard, who took over from Karl Lagerfeld when he died in 2019, has occasionally faced criticism for a lack of daring. But that

has "the merit of not losing people along the way," said actress and model Arielle Dombasle, a regular muse for Lagerfeld, speaking on the sidelines of the show.

"It's not gratuitously spectacular, it's graceful and always successful," she told AFP. The ninth and final day of Paris Fashion Week's women's ready-to-wear shows also included big names such as Miu Miu and Lacoste. Lacoste, known for its ties to tennis, finally held a catwalk show at the sport's French home of Roland Garros.

The brand is seeking to expand into a broader luxury sportswear market, and offered new takes on its familiar preppy vibe with more hip-hop-inspired items such as big puffer jackets. The final show was Louis Vuitton, whose creative director Nicolas Ghesquieres marked 10 years at the helm by having a giant Death Star-like globe of lights and wires suspended over the Louvre courtyard.

There were extravagant space-age costumes that have been his marker. Padded white jackets with big furry gloves, dresses that looked like they were made out of the brand's well-known luggage, and sculpted female suits that looked like the uniform of some inter-planetary stewardess. The collection also included a number of jewelled gold, silver and midnight blue jackets—no "quiet luxury" here—as well as coats with huge fur shoulders.

These were topped with luxury versions of the "pussyhat"—the makeshift headwear that became a symbol of women-led protests against Donald Trump and the anti-abortion movement in the United States a few years ago. Though that marked the end of the official line-up, Saint Laurent was set to hold a surprise last-minute menswear show later in the evening.—AFP



Argentinian model Mica Arganaraz presents a creation by Louis Vuitton for the Women Ready-to-wear Fall-Winter 2024/2025 collection.



This combination of pictures show models presenting creations by Louis Vuitton.

Al Hamra All Around category



## Al Hamra Real Estate announces winners of its second professional photography competition

Celebrating the creativity and artistic skills of Kuwait's talents, Al Hamra Real Estate celebrated the successful conclusion of its second Professional Photography Competition, at an honorary ceremony held on 22 February, 2024 at Al Hamra, where the winners of the competition were announced.

The Al Hamra Professional Photography Competition is designed to highlight the splendor of the Al Hamra Tower and the vibrant culture of Kuwait through two distinct categories: 'Al Hamra All Around' and 'Kuwait'. Participants were invited to submit their captures, offering a fresh perspective on the nation's architectural marvel and its cultural essence.

The competition's integrity and excellence were safeguarded by an esteemed panel of judges comprising Majed Al Zaabi, Dr Mohammed Al Kandari, and Mohammed Al Sultan. Their expertise in the field of photography and art played a pivotal role in selecting the winners from a pool of highly talented participants.

The competition saw an overwhelming response from photographers across the nation, with more than 330 participants



and 850 photos, each bringing their unique narrative and style to the forefront. The 'Al Hamra All Around' category celebrated the architectural elegance and symbolic significance of the Al Hamra Business Tower. Winners in this category managed to encapsulate the essence of this landmark with breathtaking clarity and creativity.

The 'Kuwait' category was a vivid celebration of the nation's heritage, culture, and dynamic modernity. Entries

showcased the beauty of Kuwait through various lenses, from its bustling markets to serene landscapes, highlighting the diverse fabric of Kuwaiti life.

Commenting on the competition Abdulaziz Al Dhuwaih Al Hamra Real Estates Marketing & PR manager said: "Al Hamra Real Estate remains committed to fostering the local artistic talent and providing a platform for creative expression. This competition not only celebrates the achievements of its winners

but also inspires a new generation of artists to explore their surroundings through photography".

He added: "Al Hamra Real Estate not only manages Kuwait's most iconic tower, but strives towards inspiring the same level of art, creativity, and excellence within the members of the communities in which it operates. This competition is an extension of that effort, and it gives us great pride to offer such great talents a platform where they can express their art

and brilliance."

The winners have demonstrated exceptional skill and vision. In the 'Al Hamra All Around' category, Khaled Al Shatti emerged victorious, capturing the architectural elegance and symbolic grandeur of the Al Hamra Business Tower with unparalleled skill. Following closely were Ahmed Alqallaf and Mohammed Awadh, whose works also offered breathtaking perspectives of this iconic structure. Similarly, the 'Kuwait' category celebrated Mahmoud Ali Mohammed for his vivid portrayal of one of Kuwait's iconic structures, with Mohammed AlSane and Ahmed Almutairi providing compelling narratives of our nation's heritage and dynamic modernity through their lenses.

The winning entries, along with 24 other distinguished images are currently displayed in a special photo gallery, illustrating the rich tapestry of life and architecture in Kuwait, is open to visitors in Al Hamra Shopping Center's Lower Ground Floor.

Kuwait category



## Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya prepares for a radiant Ramadan in collaboration with Genesis

Glistening memory-making awaits at Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya this Ramadan as the city's art-filled sanctuary unveils its celebrations for the holy month: dazzling iftar and ghabga feasting in the opulent surrounds of the Jawaher tent, kids' activities, spa treatments, room offers, and more.

"It's always a privilege to celebrate the holy month of Ramadan with our guests in Kuwait City," says General Manager Martin Kipping. "Whether it's creating culinary magic for a ghabga spread, decorating the opulent Jawaher Tent, or entertaining the little ones at Kids' Corner, our dedicated team consider it a great honor to help make special memories for guests of all ages."

"We are also excited this year about our cooperation with Genesis Cars and its authorized dealer in Kuwait, Northern Gulf Trading Co.," added Kipping. Northern Gulf Trading Group, the exclusive authorized dealer for the Genesis brand in Kuwait is the exclusive sponsor of Jawaher Ramadan tent this year. "We are glad about this partnership with

Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait to showcase Genesis luxury cars to the elite Kuwaiti market", commented Raed Turjuman, CEO, Northern Gulf Trading Co.

**Divine Dining, Decadent Setting**

The combined vision of a global team of interior designers, the Hotel's Jawaher Tent is the ultimate location for Ramadan dining. Up to 600 guests can savor its sparkling, gold-hued ambience and Arabian elegance, while six private majlis and VIP Lounges seating allow for exclusive evenings.

Executive Chef Thierry Papillier and his team of culinary artists pour heart and soul into abundant iftar and ghabga feasts. Traditional Kuwaiti and Arabic fare such as jareesh, harees and machboos are joined by Asian delights from Sintofo and Italian creativity from Dai Forni. The tent features a brand new section of Indian food, featuring all the favorite classics of this loved cuisine.

Concluding each celebratory meal, an artful selection of desserts and bite-size treats includes a free-flowing chocolate fountain, while the Hotel's Al

Soor Lounge offers boxes of handcrafted chocolates for take-home treats and Ramadan gift giving.

Live performances from traditional musicians set the auditory scene for joyful connection, while an elegant shisha area continues the festivities well into the night.

**Fun for all the Family**

Ensuring adults get some well-deserved downtime, a dedicated Kids' Corner showcases plenty of inspiring activities to keep younger guests entertained. During iftar and ghabga, children aged six to eleven dine for just half the price, while kids aged five and under are welcomed free of charge.

On Ramadan 13 and 15, special girgian celebrations channel the sweet and jubilant warmth of the occasion, inviting families to savor time together.

Available for the first three days of Eid, the 21st floor brunch — available for lunch and dinner — unites flavors from the East and West as Sintofo and Dai Forni join hands to create a dazzling feast, complete with live music and DJ,

interactive cooking stations and spectacular 21st floor views.

**Ramadan stay, your way!**

For the first time in Kuwait, embrace the spirit of Ramadan with our 24-hour stay offer. Check in at your convenience and savor a full day and night of luxury, with your departure a full 24 hours after arrival. Room offers start at KD 80 with the option to include a decadent iftar dining at Jawaher tent, with prices from KD 95.

**Elevate your wellness at our five-star retreat**

Dive into relaxation with our Moroccan hammam and Recovery Experience, a 90-minute journey for KD 110. Enhance your well-being with membership access to our Forbes five-star spa and wellness center, featuring state-of-the-art equipment, diverse fitness classes, personalized training, and luxurious pools. Discover the pinnacle of tranquility and health in one elite destination.



### Karl Lagerfeld's Paris home up for auction

Karl Lagerfeld's Paris apartment will go up for auction with a guide price of 5.3 million euros (\$5.8 million), the notary responsible for the sale said Tuesday. Located in a 17th century building on Quai Voltaire, the three-room apartment has a view overlooking the Seine and the Louvre Museum.

It will go under the hammer at Paris Chamber of Commerce and Industry on March 26. The apartment of 260 m2 has a 50 m2 dressing room and was completely redone by Lagerfeld "in a futuristic style with a concrete floor and sections of sandblasted glass," the notary, Thomas Jouselin, told AFP. Lagerfeld, whose spectacular creations and shows for Chanel, Fendi and his own brand, had a profound impact on the world of fashion, lived there for some 10 years until his death in 2019, the notary said. — AFP



## Sports

## Cavaliers stun Celtics 105-104

## Suns hold off Nuggets as Durant shines

LOS ANGELES: The Cleveland Cavaliers overturned a 22-point fourth-quarter deficit to snap the Boston Celtics' 11-game winning streak with a 105-104 victory on Tuesday. A week after coming back from 10 points down in the fourth quarter to defeat Dallas, Cleveland conjured an even more remarkable late show to stun Boston, the Eastern Conference leaders. Boston looked to be cruising to a 12th straight win after a clinical display left them leading 93-71 early in the fourth quarter in Cleveland. But Dean Wade erupted for 20 points in the final frame, draining a string of three-pointers to haul Cleveland back into the contest.

Wade, who finished with 23 points, made the winning layup with 19 seconds remaining to put Cleveland ahead after Kristaps Porzingis's free throw had helped the Celtics take a 104-103 lead. Boston thought they had been thrown a lifeline when Jayson Tatum appeared to be fouled as he went for a late shot. But the call was overturned in Cleveland's favor and time ran out to give the Cavaliers a victory made all the more impressive given the absence of key starters Donovan Mitchell and Max Strus.

"It feels good, my team-mates had the trust in me to make those shots," Wade said afterwards. "Them just having that belief in me gave me the confidence and motivated me, and luckily they went in," added Wade, who was congratulated at courtside by Cleveland native and Kansas City Chiefs NFL star Travis Kelce following the win. Wade finished with 23 points, including six-of-nine from three-point range, with eight rebounds. Jarrett Allen had 21 points while Darius Garland and Isaac Okoro added 16 points apiece.

Boston were left wondering where it had all gone

wrong after an extraordinary late collapse. "We just went cold," Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla said. "I thought we had some good possessions where we didn't make the shot. But credit to them - Wade played really well and they made plays down the stretch." Tatum led Boston's scorers with 26 points while Porzingis added 24 and Jaylen Brown 21. The Celtics remain comfortably on top of the Eastern Conference despite the loss with a 48-13 record. Milwaukee are second in the standings at 41-21 while Cleveland are third after improving to 40-21.

## Durant shines in Suns win

The drama in Cleveland was rivaled by a thrilling battle in Denver later Tuesday, where the Phoenix Suns recovered from blowing a 22-point third-quarter lead to defeat the Nuggets 117-107 in overtime. Kevin Durant poured in 35 points for Phoenix while Grayson Allen added 28 including eight three-pointers to help the Suns over the line. But the Suns almost blew their chances of victory after a dismal fourth quarter display which saw them shoot just five-of-24 from the field. Phoenix rediscovered their shooting touch in overtime however, outscoring Denver 15-5 to close out the win. "We missed like 10 straight shots in the fourth quarter...but that's the name of the game, you just stick with it," Durant said afterwards. "In overtime we were able to get stops, rebound and get easy shots."

Jamal Murray topped the Denver scorers with 28 points while Nikola Jokic had 25 points, 16 rebounds and five assists. In other games on Tuesday, Luka Doncic put up a 39-point triple-double with 10 rebounds and 11 assists, but it was not enough to prevent the Dallas Mavericks falling 137-120 to the Indiana Pacers. The Pacers spread the scor-



CLEVELAND: Dean Wade #32 of the Cleveland Cavaliers guards Luke Kornet #40 of the Boston Celtics during the fourth quarter at Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse in Cleveland, Ohio. — AFP

ing around in devastating fashion to overwhelm the Mavericks defense, with nine Indiana players reaching double figures.

In New York, the Philadelphia 76ers stumbled to a 112-107 defeat to the Brooklyn Nets. In Toronto, the New Orleans Pelicans dished out a humiliating 41-point drubbing of the Raptors, winning 139-98.

Trey Murphy led the Pelicans scoring with 34 points on a night when no fewer than seven New Orleans players made double figures. "I'm extremely proud of this group - it's a great step in the right direction," said New Orleans head coach Willie Green. The Pelicans improved to 37-25 to remain in fifth place in the West. — AFP

## In historic first, US college basketball votes to unionize

WASHINGTON: Men's basketball players at Dartmouth College voted 13-2 to join a union Tuesday, an unprecedented move that could signal major changes in the multi-billion-dollar world of American college sports. The National Labor Relations Board supervised the vote, which saw the players join Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 560, which represents other Dartmouth workers. An NLRB regional director ruled last month that players were school employees, although Dartmouth officials said they filed an appeal of that decision Tuesday.

The vote represents their first action as college employees and first negotiating step, striking at the amateurism rules of the National Collegiate Athletic Association with the potential to reshape the financial landscape of US college football and basketball. "Today is a big day for our team," players Cade Haskins and Romeo Myrthil said in a statement to reporters. "We stuck together all season and won this election. It is self-evident that we, as students, can also be both campus workers and union members. Dartmouth seems to be stuck in the past. It's time for the age of amateurism to end."

The first steps in that direction have come in recent years with legal victories allowing players to profit beyond scholarships from use of their name, image or likeness. But players remain unpaid for games that produce huge television revenues for schools and often play under coaches who make millions of dollars. "These players are our members and we welcome them warmly into not only Local 560, but the entire Dartmouth labor coalition," said union local president Chris Peck. "We're all looking forward to standing in solidarity as they begin to negotiate their historic first contract."

Dartmouth officials could press their objection to calling athletes employees into federal court, a lengthy fight likely to delay collective bargaining agreement talks until long after current players have graduated. Dartmouth said the college has been proud to build productive relationships with the five unions that are part of the campus community, noting its "deep respect" for the school's 1,500 union colleagues. "In this isolated circumstance, however, the students on the men's basketball team are not in any way employed by Dartmouth. For Ivy League students who are varsity athletes, academics are of primary importance, and athletic pursuit is part of the educational experience," the school said in a statement. "Classifying these students as employees simply because they play basketball is as unprecedented as it is inaccurate. We, therefore, do not believe unionization is appropriate."

The vote came hours before the Dartmouth Big Green were set to host Harvard in their final regular-season game. Haskins and Myrthil said they intend to press their unionization cause to Ivy League rivals. "Let's work together to create a less exploitative business model for college sports," they said.

"Over the next few months, we will continue to talk to other athletes at Dartmouth and throughout the Ivy League about forming unions and working together to advocate for athletes' rights and well-being," Mary Kay Henry, international president of the SEIU, declared. "These young men will go down as one of the greatest basketball teams in all of history. The Ivy League is where the whole scandalous model of nearly free labor in college sports was born and that's where it's going to die."

The victory, she said, "is about way more than sports, it's about people who need a union getting one." Professional athlete unions offered support as well, including Major League Baseball Players Association executive director Tony Clark. — AFP

## LIV ends quest for World Golf Ranking points

NEW YORK: The Saudi-backed LIV Golf League has withdrawn its application for Official World Golf Ranking (OWGR) points, according to multiple US reports on Tuesday. Sports Illustrated, ESPN and The Golf Channel reported LIV Golf commissioner Greg Norman told players in a letter on Tuesday the effort for recognition that began in July 2022 has ended. "It's now clear that the best way forward for LIV as a league and you as LIV golfers is not through the current ranking system," Norman said. "A resolution which protects the accuracy, credibility and integrity of the OWGR rankings no longer exists."

The OWGR, whose points system is used to decide invitations and exemptions into golf's four major championships, denied LIV Golf's bid last October, citing concerns about limited paths to joining LIV, a lack of turnover among players and the aspect of simultaneous team and individual competition. LIV made adjustments to create more spots and a relegation system but, Norman wrote, "the OWGR has shown little willingness to productively work with us." With LIV Golf players getting no points from the circuit's 54-hole events, many of the big-names that defected from the US PGA Tour have fallen out of the top placings.

Only four LIV golfers are in this week's world rankings top 50, led by third-ranked Jon Rahm, the reigning Masters champion from Spain who made the switch last December. Others include Britain's 17th-ranked Tyrrell Hatton, who made the jump in



LAS VEGAS: A general view of the ninth hole during day three of the LIV Golf Invitational at Las Vegas Country Club. — AFP

January; five-time major winner Brooks Koepka, an American ranked 30th who won last year's PGA Championship, and 50th-ranked Cameron Smith of Australia, the 2022 British Open champion. Norman said LIV players have been snubbed for so long that it would be difficult for them to be properly rated even if OWGR began assigning points now for LIV events.

"The rankings are structured to penalize anyone who has not played regularly on an 'Eligible Tour' with the field ratings disproportionately rewarding play on the PGA Tour," Norman said. "Even if LIV Golf events were immediately awarded points, the OWGR system is designed such that it would be functionally impossible for you to regain positions

close to the summit of the ranking, where so many of you belong," he added. LIV and PGA Tour players can compete against each other at majors, with many LIV players having earned their way into the fields at golf's four top events based on achievements before LIV began in 2022.

But keeping those spots or earning them are tougher without ranking points. A notable exception to the rule this year is Chile's Joaquin Niemann, who won last year's Australian Open to earn a spot in this year's British Open and he was given a special invitation into next month's Masters. Niemann, who won his second LIV title of the season last weekend at Jeddah, said on Monday he also has received a special invitation to play in May's PGA Championship. — AFP

## Halep free to return after 4-year doping ban reduced

LAUSANNE: Former world number one Simona Halep was cleared to resume her tennis career on Tuesday after her four-year doping ban was reduced to nine months by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). The 32-year-old, who was suspended last September by the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) after two separate doping infractions the previous year, is free to return immediately having last played at the 2022 US Open.

"Throughout this long and difficult process, I have maintained my belief that the truth would eventually come out, and that a just decision would be reached, because I am and always have been a clean athlete," Halep said in a statement. "My faith in the process was tested by the scandalous accusations that were leveled against me, and

by the seemingly unlimited resources that were aligned against me. But in the end, the truth prevailed, even if it took much longer than I wish it had." "I cannot wait to return to the tour," she added. The two-time Grand Slam singles champion appealed to CAS in February, arguing that the positive test was the result of a "contaminated product" and anomalies in her biological passport could be linked to surgery she had undergone.

"The CAS Panel has unanimously determined that the four-year period of ineligibility imposed by the ITF Independent Tribunal is to be reduced to a period of ineligibility of nine months starting on 7 October 2022, which period expired on 6 July 2023," CAS said in a statement Tuesday. Halep's career has been on hold since October 7, 2022, the date of the start of her provi-



LAUSANNE: Former world number one tennis player Romania's Simona Halep (right) arrives at the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne. — AFP

sional suspension after testing positive for Roxadustat at the US Open.

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 winner of the 2018 French Open and 2019 Wimbledon singles titles was then caught up in a second affair, this time "irregularities" in the data of her biological passport, a long-term monitoring tool of an athlete's blood indicators that could indicate doping. — AFP

## 'Wokism' row overshadows launch of Olympics poster

PARIS: French conservatives and far-right figures fumed Tuesday at the official poster for this summer's Paris Olympics, complaining that a Christian cross and the French flag were missing due to "wokism". Those responsible for the image were "ready to deny France, going so far as to distort reality to cancel its history", Francois-Xavier Bellamy of the right-wing Republicans party wrote on X. Top of the list of complaints about the poster, which depicts a stylised panorama of Paris, is the absence of the cross that sits atop the Dome des Invalides, the historic military complex in central Paris where Napoleon is buried.

"What is the point of holding the Olympic Games in France if we then hide who we are?" Marion Marechal of the far-right Reconquete (Reconquest) party

posted on X. National Rally (RN) lawmaker Nicolas Meizonnet wrote that the omissions must be the result of "wokism" - a bugbear of France's far right. Artist Ugo Gattoni's design, unveiled on Monday, features a cartoonish Paris cityscape with major landmarks such as the Eiffel Tower and a wealth of tiny details, including all 54 Olympic and Paralympic sports.

In reaction to being pulled into France's culture wars, Gattoni said he had rendered buildings "in the way they come to my mind, without any ulterior motive". "I am not aiming to make them accurate to the originals but rather to make them recognizable at a glance, placing them within a surrealist and celebratory universe," he added in a statement sent to AFP by the organizing committee.

The committee said that the posters were a "light-hearted interpretation of a reinvented stadium-city", adding that there was no obligation to include the French flag. A surfing wave is seen "offshore of the Marseille Marina; the Eiffel Tower is pink; the Metro is passing through the Arc de Triomphe - none of which should be the object of politically motivated interpretations," it added. The colors of the French flag - blue, white and red - are present in the mascots' rosettes, it added, and other



VAL-DE-MARNE: French artist Ugo Gattoni poses with the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games official posters in his workshop in Ivry sur seine. — AFP

national symbols such as Marianne are also visible.

The Paris Olympics are set to take place from July 26-August 11, followed by the Paralympics from August 28-September 8. With every decision scrutinized and discussed on social media, organizers have faced criticism before over their choices for the Games' aesthetics and merchandise in the past. — AFP

Sports

# Leicester end losing run

## Vardy puts Leicester's promotion bid back on track

LONDON: Jamie Vardy put Leicester's promotion bid back on track as the former England striker fired the Championship leaders to a 1-0 win at Sunderland on Tuesday. Vardy's first-half header was followed by a crucial save from Mads Hermansen to deny Trai Hume a spectacular equaliser. Beaten in their previous three games, Enzo Maresca's side are back on course for an immediate return to the Premier League following last season's relegation. That losing run had allowed the chasing pack to close the gap on Leicester and put their hopes of automatic promotion via a top two finish in jeopardy. But Maresca's response to Saturday's 2-1 home defeat by QPR was to restore Vardy to the starting line-up.

And it proved an inspired move as the 37-year-old's 13th goal this season condemned Sunderland to a fifth successive defeat. "A very important victory, especially after three defeats. We won the game in an ugly way," Maresca said. "It is important, winning games in this way. It is part of the process to improve as a team. In the second half, we were a little

bit tired. Day by day, I am more in love with the team." Leicester are three points ahead of second-placed Ipswich, who staged a thrilling fightback to beat Bristol City 3-2 at Portman Road.

All five goals came in a frantic second half, with City taking the lead through Anis Mehmeti only for substitute Ali Al-Hamadi to equalize. Tommy Conway's header put City back in front but Conor Chaplin drew the teams level with a header from a free-kick by Leif Davis. Al-Hamadi had a penalty saved by Max O'Leary in the final minutes, but Ipswich still made it six successive league wins when Davis's strike deflected home in stoppage time. "Nothing surprises me, that was the best bit of the comeback," Ipswich manager Kieran McKenna said. "They missed the penalty and you think it's not going to be our night. Our players don't think like that."

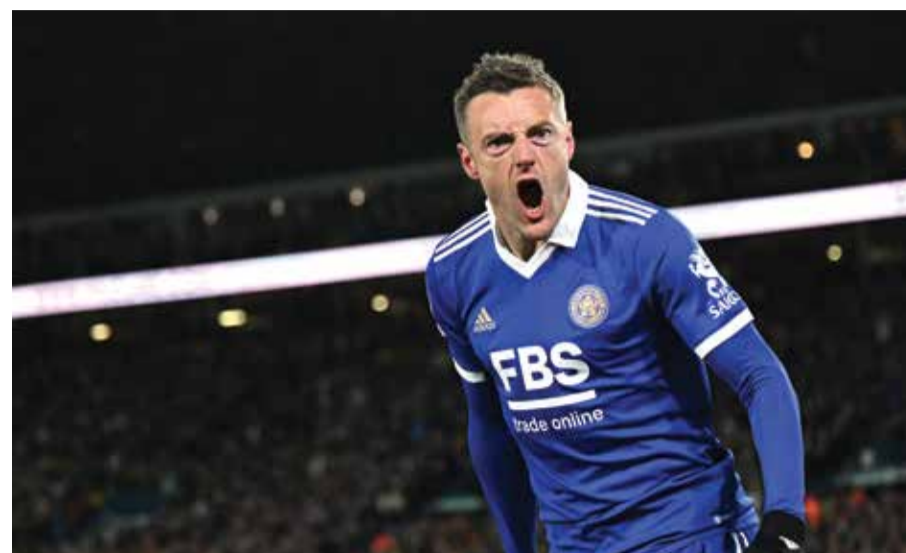
### Leeds in promotion chase

Dan James' first-half strike gave third-placed Leeds a 1-0 victory over lowly Stoke at Elland Road. After for-

mer Manchester United winger James bagged his 11th goal of the season, Illan Meslier had to make good saves from Lewis Baker, Tyrese Campbell and Josh Laurent to preserve the hosts' advantage. Daniel Farke's team are two points behind Ipswich with 10 games left in the promotion race.

Ellis Simms blasted a first-half hat-trick as Coventry routed bottom of the table Rotherham 5-0 at the CBS Arena. Joel Latibeaudiere and Fabio Tavares also scored for eight-placed Coventry, who bounced back from successive defeats against Preston and West Brom. Struggling Birmingham rescued a 1-1 draw at Hull thanks to Lukas Jutkiewicz's 82nd-minute header. Ozan Tufan had headed sixth-placed Hull into the lead in the first half. Birmingham, still without unwell manager Tony Mowbray, sit one point above the relegation zone.

Sammie Szmodics salvaged a point for Blackburn with his 20th league goal of the season in a 1-1 draw against fellow strugglers Millwall at Ewood Park. Szmodics pounced on a defensive error to equalize



Leicester City's English striker Jamie Vardy

after Millwall substitute Michael Obafemi had lashed the Lions in front early in the second half. Sheffield Wednesday's survival bid gathered momentum as Djeidi Gassama's second-half strike clinched a

1-0 home win over Plymouth. Third-bottom Wednesday have won five of their last six league matches, with eight teams now separated by just two points in the fight for survival. — AFP

## Xabi Alonso: Rising star catches eye of Bayern and Liverpool

LIVERPOOL: Xabi Alonso has taken Bayer Leverkusen to the brink of their first Bundesliga title, but the rising star of European coaching could soon be on the move to Liverpool or Bayern Munich. The 42-year-old played for both European giants either side of a five-year spell at Real Madrid during a glittering career in which he also won two European Championships and a World Cup with Spain.

On top of hoovering up medals with three of Europe's top clubs, the midfielder picked up plenty of knowledge that has shaped his coaching philosophy. Pep Guardiola, Jose Mourinho, Carlo Ancelotti, Rafael Benitez and Vicente del Bosque are among the stellar array of coaches under whom Alonso played. His shock departure from Madrid for Bayern in 2014 was largely motivated by the chance to witness Guardiola's methods at first hand.

Guardiola's purist principles are most evident in the eye-catching way Alonso's Leverkusen have taken Germany by storm. But he credits Ancelotti's supreme man-management as having the biggest

impact on his coaching style. "I've always tried to be close to them, to understand how and why they make decisions," Alonso told the BBC, speaking about his former managers. "You learn from that but you need to build your own personality—it's not a copy and paste thing, this manager's job. You need to build your own ideas and believe in them to be able to transmit that idea and that's what I'm trying to do."

Alonso, whose team face Qarabag in the last 16 of the Europa League on Thursday, took his time before going into management after hanging up his boots in 2017. He began coaching in the youth ranks at Real Madrid and Real Sociedad before the call came from Leverkusen in October 2022, with the club sitting second bottom of the Bundesliga. They recovered to finish sixth and reach the semi-finals of the Europa League, losing narrowly to Roma over two legs.

But few could have imagined the leap forward in Alonso's first full season in charge, with Bayern's 11-year reign as German champions seemingly coming to an end. Leverkusen are 10 points clear of Bayern at the top of the table with 10 games to go and unbeaten in 34 matches in all competitions this season as they eye a Bundesliga, German Cup and Europa League treble. Jurgen Klopp was the last manager to dethrone the Bavarian giants, during his time at Borussia Dortmund, and it is his impending departure that has cleared the path for Alonso to poten-



Bayer Leverkusen's Spanish head coach Xabi Alonso

tially return to Anfield.

"The dinosaurs if you want—Ancelotti, Mourinho, Guardiola, maybe me—we will not do it for the next 20 years," said Klopp. "The next generation is already there and I would say Xabi is the standout in that department." Guardiola is not surprised by Alonso's success, having seen his understanding of the game up close. "Wow," Guardiola said when asked for a summary of Leverkusen's season. "I was incredibly fortunate to have him two years. He was such an intelligent player. There are holding midfielders that ask you questions, they are curious, they ask about the game, you realise this guy (will be a manager)." — AFP

## Liverpool, Leverkusen aim to play up to favorites tag

PARIS: Liverpool and Xabi Alonso's Bayer Leverkusen are the standout contenders to go all the way in this season's Europa League with both teams this week heading east for last-16 ties they will be expected to win comfortably. Jurgen Klopp's side are one of four British teams still alive in the competition and hoping to go all the way to this season's final, which will be played in Dublin on May 22.

However, while Brighton and Hove Albion, West Ham United and Rangers all face difficult last-16 ties, it would be a major surprise if Liverpool slipped up against Sparta Prague and missed out on the quarter-finals. Sparta are top of the Czech league and have had some fine results in Europe this season, qualifying from their group ahead of Real Betis and then eliminating Galatasaray in the knockout round play-offs.

Yet Liverpool are in fantastic form and still in contention to win a remarkable quadruple in Klopp's final season as manager at Anfield. Having won the League Cup, the Reds are top of the Premier League and also through to the last eight of the FA Cup. The biggest danger for them heading to the Stadion Letna in Prague is that their minds may be on Sunday's huge meeting with Manchester City, who sit a single point behind Klopp's men at the top of the Premier League.

They lost their last two away games in the group stage, at Toulouse and in Belgium to Union Saint-Gilloise, and Klopp may again choose the Europa League to give an opportunity to some of his exciting youngsters. Meanwhile, Mohamed Salah has played just once since returning injured from the Africa Cup of Nations and this game could also come too soon for the Egyptian. Liverpool are aiming to secure a place in the March 15 draw for the quarter-finals, which would also reveal the identity of their potential semi-final opponents.

There is the prospect that they could yet cross paths with Leverkusen, who are enjoying a stunning campaign under former Liverpool midfielder Alonso. Unbeaten all season, the 1988 UEFA Cup winners are 10 points clear at the top of the Bundesliga with 10 games left. A first German title is their priority, but they remain in the German Cup and will be fully expected to see off Qarabag of Azerbaijan to reach the quarter-finals in Europe. The Werksell head to Baku for the second time this season for Thursday's first leg, having beaten Qarabag home and away in the group stage with a 6-1 aggregate scoreline.

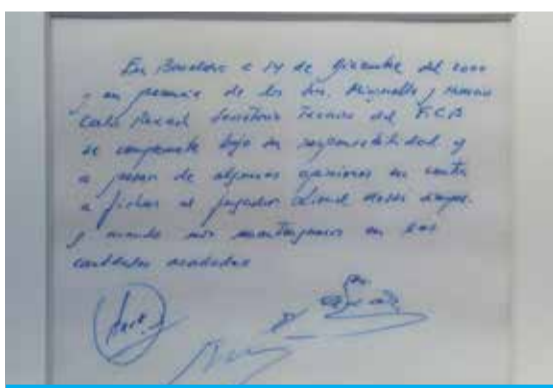
Through to the knockout phase in their first ever European campaign, Brighton are in Italy to play a Roma side enjoying a revival under Daniele De Rossi. Thursday's first leg at the Stadio Olimpico will see De Rossi come up against his friend, the Brighton boss Roberto De Zerbi. "I have big respect for him. I knew he could be a great coach because as a player he showed an incredible personality," De Zerbi said recently of his counterpart. "He thinks the same as me about football. He is a passionate person and we are friends, but I hope to win." — AFP

## Messi's promised Barca contract, on a napkin, up for auction

NEW YORK: To the untrained eye, it might look like just another used napkin. But the serviette, expected to fetch up to \$635,000, was actually soccer legend Lionel Messi's springboard to greatness at FC Barcelona, and records the promise of a contract made to him at the tender age of 13. The napkin has gone on show in New York to drum up interest, ahead of the start of bidding on March 18, against a backdrop of soaring interest in soccer memorabilia. Though officially estimated to go for between \$380,000 and \$635,000, Ian Ehling, the head of fine books and manuscripts at Bonhams New York, said "I do expect it to sell for much more."

Last December, a set of six shirts worn by the number 10 during Argentina's victorious Qatar World Cup campaign in 2022 sold for \$7.8 million at auction at Sotheby's, exceeding estimates. The story of the napkin has already been told many times in profiles of "Leo" Messi, one of the greatest players in soccer history, who now plays for Inter Miami. Born in 1987 into a working class family in Rosario, about 300 kilometers (186 miles) north of Buenos Aires, Messi was 13 when he was spotted by Barca.

But not everyone there was convinced, and the deal dragged on and on, making Messi's father impatient. That was until a fateful meeting on December 14, 2000, at a Barcelona tennis club, between the club's sporting director Carles Rexach and agents



NEW YORK: A napkin on which was written the first promise of a contract to secure 13-year-old Lionel Messi for FC Barcelona, is on display at Bonhams, New York, on March 5, 2024. — AFP

Josep Minguela and Horacio Gaggioli. To confirm the club's interest, Rexach reached for the napkin and wrote on it in blue ink that he agreed "under his responsibility and regardless of any dissenting opinions, to sign the player Lionel Messi, provided that we keep to the amounts agreed upon."

A formal contract would later be drawn up, but Argentine agent Gaggioli kept the placeholder agreement for almost 25 years, until deciding to sell. Messi won the Spanish league 10 times with Barca, playing there until 2021, becoming its all-time top scorer with 474 goals. "The inception of Messi's career is documented here. It's just incredible," said Ehling. After New York, it will be exhibited in Paris and London until the auction which will run until March 27. — AFP

## English team jerseys weave anti-fascism with history

LONDON: Two children in red, yellow and violet shirts ran along the perimeter of one of the oldest football pitches in London, cheering on their team. The pair were too young to understand the historical significance of non-league Clapton CFC's vibrant attire, but their parents, seated in the stands, their eyes fixed on the game, knew all too well. The east London club, established in 1918, designed the shirt as a tribute to the Second Spanish Republic and the International Brigades of volunteers who fought the Nazi Germany-backed Nationalists in the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s.

As support for right-wing movements has increased across Europe, the shirts have become a symbol of the club's left-leaning ideals and opposition to fascism, racism, homophobia and misogyny. At the Clapton CFC ground, known as "The Old Spotted Dog", fans watching their team take on Hutton FC in the Eastern Counties Football League Division One South wore scarves bearing the phrase "Antifascist". "Wearing this shirt is a way to show respect for them," one supporter told AFP, referring to those who joined the Spanish Civil War after an attempted military coup against the democratically elected government in 1936. Sukhdev Johal, a spokesperson for the club, said more than 20,000 jerseys had been sold since the shirts were designed in 2018, with 8,000 bought by people living in Spain. "We have sold jerseys in more than 60 countries," he said, adding that there were also plans to erect a monument at the stadium in honor of the International Brigades. — AFP

# Classifieds

### Clinics

#### Clinics

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

### Change of Name

I, **Thadathil Kuttappan Anand**, holder of Indian Passport number M5458621 having permanent address Thadathil house, Monipally Post, Pin code 686636, Kerala, India and residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that my Minor's name Given name Arshia Anand and Surname Thadathil will be changed to (given name) Arshia and (surname) Anand for all future purposes. (#5176 7/3/2024)

I, **JANASCO**, holder of Indian Passport No. V3750473 having permanent address Goa, India, Pin Code 403706 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) JANESCO and (surname) TRAVASSO. (#5174 7/3/2024)

I, **Husain**, Passport No. U0461410 do hereby change my name to Husain (as given name) Kothari (as surname) for all purpose I will henceforth be known as in the name of Husain Kothari and I also undertake to carryout this name change in all documents V/P Nazampura Mohalla Sagwara. (#5172 6/3/2024)

I, **Husaini Najmuddin Bohra**, holder of Indian Passport No. L8353356 having permanent address 12/6 Akab Makbara, Jaora Dist, Ratlam, Madhya Pradesh, India, Pin Code 45226, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) Husain Susnerwala and (surname) Najmuddin. (#5173 6/3/2024)

I, **Nubla Fasil**, holder of Indian Passport No. N0419170 having permanent address Thaikandy House, Vellimadukunnu, Post Marikunnu, Kozhikode, Kerala, India, Pin Code: 673012, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) Nubla and (surname) Kummancheery. (#5170 5/3/2024)

I, **Siddesh Fatarpekar** Holder of Indian Passport No. V9396775 Having my permanent Address H. No. 417. Voilem Bhat Mercedes Murda Tiswadi Goa Pin 403005. State Goa, Country India. Residing in Kuwait a present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) Siddesh and (surname) Pereira. (#5171 5/3/2024)

Notice under 0.5V Rule 20(1-A) of C.P.C.

IN THE COURT OF THE CIVIL JUDGE SENIOR DIVISION AT VASCO DA GAMA

Regular Inventory Proceeding No.18/2023/A Paulina Fernandes. Applicant V/s Late Jose Antonio Fernandes. Deceased To. INTERESTED PARTIES 7. Mrs. Concealosa Jean Nataline Barretto 8. Mr. Sebastin F. D'Souza 9. Ms. Succorosa Liza Barretto, All R/o Farwaniya, Block 3, ST-108 Airport Road, Kuwait WHEREAS the above Inventario Proceedings filed upon death of late Mr. Jose Antonio Fernandes alias Santan Fernandes, aged 91 year, who hailed from Cansaulim, Mormugao, Goa and Mrs Paulina Fernandes, W/o. Late Mr. Domingos Tome Fernandes, of about 82 years of age, widow. R/o. House No 219, Cottar Waddo, Cansaulim, Goa, has been appointed as Cabeza de Casal (Head of the Family).

AND WHEREAS the notice sent to you through Speed Post on the above address, is returned with "unserved" there is no clear endorsement made as regard the reason for non service. And whereas the applicant has made an application before this Court praying for substitute servie of notice by way of publication in local, daily newspaper circulating in Kuwait and also one English Newspaper circulating in State of Goa and this Court is satisfied that this is a fit case for ordering such a service.

YOU ARE hereby given notice to take part in the proceedings and file objections if any, on the date of hearing and defend a your rights.

YOU ARE further required to constitute your advocate having office within jurisdictions of this Court, to choose your place of domicile within the jurisdictions of this Court, to receive any other notice which may be required under the law to be issued to you, failing which, the matter will be heard and determined in your absence. The matter fixed for hearing on 06<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2024 at 10.00a.m. Given under my hand and the seal of the Court this 26<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2024

Sd/- Superintendent  
By Order of the Court



MUNICH: Bayern Munich's English forward #09 Harry Kane (right) scores the 3-0 past Lazio's Italian goalkeeper #94 Ivan Provedel during the UEFA Champions League round of 16, second-leg football match between FC Bayern Munich and Lazio in Munich. — AFP

## Kane's double powers Bayern into Champions League last 8

### Bayern Munich overwhelm Lazio 3-0

MUNICH: Harry Kane scored a goal in each half as Bayern Munich beat Lazio 3-0 on Tuesday to reach the Champions League quarter-finals 3-1 on aggregate. Kane headed Bayern level in the tie in the 38th minute, cancelling out Lazio's lead from the first leg with his first Champions League knockout goal in five years. Thomas Mueller doubled the hosts' lead with a clever header before half-time and Kane doubled up in the 66th minute, tapping in the rebound from a Leroy Sane shot to seal Bayern's progress to the next round.

"It was a perfect night for us," Kane told Amazon Prime. "Everyone with energy, all around the pitch, the way we played and created chances and pressed without the ball - it was a top, top performance." Bayern

kept their slim hopes of silverware this season alive while likely giving outgoing coach Thomas Tuchel a stay of execution until the quarter-finals in April. "It's the most difficult trophy to win in Europe, probably the world," Tuchel, who won the Champions League with Chelsea in 2021, told reporters. "But it doesn't get any easier or more difficult if you have a long contract or if you're leaving at the end of the season."

Kane recognized the manner of Tuchel's exit was "unusual" but said "nights like this can change the season. I'm proud of the boys - we just have to keep this momentum up." Mueller, a two-time Champions League winner, said: "We're going to make sure everyone enjoys this feeling, nevermind what is in

the newspaper yesterday or tomorrow." "We're very happy because we know the importance of progressing further today." The loss snuffed out Lazio's chance of a first Champions League quarter-final appearance since 1999-2000. Six-time European champions Bayern came into Tuesday's match staring down the barrel of a last-16 elimination for just the second time in the past 13 seasons.

Three straight losses including the 1-0 defeat in the first leg in Rome amounted to Bayern's worst run since 2015, costing Tuchel his job less than a year after arriving in Munich. With Tuchel allowed to keep the seat warm until the summer, the coach promised to be more "ruthless". On Tuesday, he benched big-money signing Kim

Min-jae for Eric Dier, while moving Joshua Kimmich - a fixture in midfield for Bayern and Germany - to right-back. Bayern pushed Lazio back early with the fit-again Sane and Jamal Musiala going close.

#### Immobile regret

Scorer of the first leg's only goal, Ciro Immobile had a golden chance to extend Lazio's lead after a Matthijs de Ligt mistake on 36 minutes but dragged his header just wide. The miss would prove costly with Kane breaking through moments later, heading in a scuffed Raphael Guerreiro shot to even up the tie. Mueller, another to see more game time after the announcement of Tuchel's impending departure, doubled Bayern's lead in first-half stoppage time,

heading in a De Ligt shot in trademark poacher fashion. Despite a prolific run in front of goal since arriving from Spurs, the German media joked the famously trophyless Kane had cursed Bayern, in danger of a first season without silverware since 2012.

The England captain made sure Bayern stayed in Europe though, turning in from close range after Sane forced a save from Lazio keeper Ivan Provedel, his 33rd goal in as many appearances this season. With Lazio striker Immobile taken off with a knee injury, the visitors looked toothless in attack as Bayern gently controlled proceedings to take the sting out of the game. Bayern kept their first clean sheet in eight games with captain Manuel Neuer equaling the Champions League record of 57 set by Real Madrid legend Iker Casillas. — AFP

### Four Kuwaiti students win first place in GCC Robots Olympics



MUSCAT: Four Kuwaiti students won the first place in the GCC Robots Olympics' 'Installation-Programming-Application' challenge which was held in the Omani capital Muscat. In a press release, the ministry of education expressed their appreciation and pride in the achievement of their students, wishing them further success.

The Ministry added that the GCC Robots Olympics aims to exchange experiences in the robotic educational field and stimulate the enthusiasm of the participants towards creativity. The Ministry also added that the preparation of the competition started on December 10, 2023 and ended on March 5, 2024. — KUNA

### Mbappe fires PSG past Real Sociedad



SAN SEBASTIAN: Paris Saint-Germain's French forward #07 Kylian Mbappe is challenged by Real Sociedad's Malian defender #18 Hamari Traore during the UEFA Champions League last 16 second leg football match between Real Sociedad and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG). — AFP

SAN SEBASTIAN: Kylian Mbappe lethally fired Paris Saint-Germain into the Champions League quarter-finals with a brace in a 2-1 win at Real Sociedad on Tuesday, his team cruising through 4-1 on aggregate. Coach Luis Enrique has slashed Mbappe's minutes in recent weeks after the player told the club he would leave at the end of the season, but the France captain proved he will be vital if PSG are to finally win the competition for the first time.

The electric Mbappe was impossible for Real Sociedad to shackle and his strikes after 15 and 56 minutes led the Ligue 1 leaders with a simple night in the north of Spain. "We are very happy, it was the objective," Mbappe told Canal Plus. "We wanted to qualify but today we also wanted to win and give ourselves a bit of an easier game. That is what we did." "We had a clear game plan. We managed to score early and, above all, we managed to avoid getting into any major difficulty."

Heavily linked to Real Madrid, the determined Mbappe gave La Liga's defences a glimpse of what horrors may await them next season. The forward, who also netted in the first leg, fired over in the opening stages and then blazed past Hamari Traore to set up Bradley Barcola, but Alex Remiro denied him from point-blank range. It was not so much that Real Sociedad did not heed the warning but simply could not stop the 25-year-old. Played into the box but wide of goal, Mbappe produced the opener from thin air.

With a couple of clever touches he sent Igor Zubeldia scrambling and opened up enough space for a shot,

which he whipped into the far corner from a tight angle. Mbappe's vicious strike pulled part of the netting away from the post and players had to wait until it was fixed for play to resume. They might not have bothered — the contest was effectively over.

Mbappe stretched PSG's lead 11 minutes into the second half, racing in behind the defence from the halfway line. The striker shaped another shot to the far post but then tricked Remiro by sweeping home at the near for his sixth goal in eight Champions League matches this season. Real Sociedad began to throw all they had at PSG, but it was too little, too late. Substitute Ander Barrenetxea had a goal ruled out for a tight offside moments after coming on. — AFP

### Al Hilal sink Al Ittihad in Champions League quarter-final opener

RIYADH: Al Hilal will take a commanding lead into next week's Asian Champions League quarter-final second leg after defeating Al Ittihad 2-0 at Kingdom Arena in Riyadh on Tuesday. The record four-time continental champions, runners-up last year, were comfortable winners in the all-Saudi Arabian encounter in the capital. Former Fulham striker Aleksandar Mitrovic and reigning Asian Player of the Year Salem Al Dawasari scored within two minutes of one another late in the first half to seal a comfortable first-leg victory.

World Cup winner N'Golo Kante was sent off for Ittihad midway through the second half and will be suspended for the return match in Jeddah next Tuesday. Ittihad, the current Saudi champions and themselves two-time Champions League winners, were already without captain Karim Benzema for the first leg. The 2022 Ballon d'Or winner, signed last summer from Real Madrid, was missing through injury. Hilal, who top the 2023/24 Saudi Pro League by nine points, opened the scoring five minutes before half-time.

Captain Salman Al Faraj curled in a cross from the right, Madallah Al Olayan tussled with Mitrovic, and the referee judged the Ittihad defender had hauled down his Serbian rival. Mitrovic converted from the spot, taking his tally for Hilal to 30 goals in 31 matches since his summer move from the Premier League. Two minutes later, Hilal doubled their advantage. Ruben Neves sent Malcom down the right with a superb ball, before the Brazilian squared to Al Dawasari. The Saudi Arabian winger swept home past Ittihad goalkeeper

Abdullah Al Mayouf. Ittihad's miserable night was complete just after the hour, when Kante was given a straight red for a late challenge on Kalidou Koulibaly, another former Chelsea player. Kante had initially been booked, only for the referee to overturn the decision following a VAR review. The winner of the tie will contest the semi-final against either fellow Saudi side Al Nassr or Al Ain of the UAE. Al Ain, 2003 Asian champions, defeated Cristiano Ronaldo's Nassr 1-0 at home in their first leg on Monday.

#### Ulsan leave it late

Earlier on Tuesday, Ulsan fought back in the second half to claim a 1-1 draw with South Korean rivals Jeonbuk Motors in the first leg of their last-eight tie. Song Min-kyu gave Jeonbuk a fourth-minute lead at their Jeonju World Cup Stadium before Brazilian Tiago Orobó fluffed a chance to double their lead when he crashed a penalty against the crossbar.

Ulsan, domestic K-League champions for the past two

seasons, looked out of ideas in the first half but they came roaring back after the break and Lee Myung-jae grabbed an equalizer in the 77th minute. The two teams will meet again in next week's second leg, with the winner going on to face either China's Shandong Taishan or Japan's Yokohama F-Marininos in the semi-finals. Ulsan and Jeonbuk have shared the last seven K-League titles but it was Jeonbuk who dominated the first half.

Dan Petrescu's side took advantage of some sloppy defending to open the scoring with the game just minutes old. Lee Dong-jun raced down the wing before delivering a cross that Song tucked home with minimal resistance from the Ulsan defense. Jeonbuk had the chance to add a second midway through the first half when the referee pointed to the penalty spot after Lee Myung-jae had brought down Lee Dong-jun charging into the box. But Orobó smashed his kick against the crossbar with South Korean international goalkeeper Jo Hyeon-woo beaten. — AFP