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## Hopes dim for Gaza truce

Kuwait condemns Zionist settlements • Zionists return 47 defiled bodies



GAZA: Mourners watch as medical personnel prepare the bodies of 47 Palestinians defiled by the Zionist entity during a mass funeral in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on March 7, 2024. — AFP

GAZA: Hopes dimmed on Thursday for a truce before Ramadan in the Zionist-Hamas war that entered its sixth month with dozens more killed in Gaza, according to the health ministry in the territory. The ministry said 83 more people had been killed over the previous day, adding to a toll that reached 30,800, mostly women and children, in a war that China called "a disgrace to civilization".

Kuwait's foreign ministry condemned the Zionist occupation's decision to build 3,500 new illegal settlement units in the West Bank, in addition to the continued attempts to Judaize large parts of the West Bank, including Jerusalem. In a statement on Thursday, a ministry statement renewed demands to the international community and the UN Security Council to stand firmly to stop these violations, calling on the world not to recognize the Zionist illegal decision, which eliminates any chance for peace in the region. It reaffirmed Kuwait's support to the Palestinian people to restore their legitimate rights clearly stipulated in international resolutions, stressing that all Palestinians have the right to enjoy a safe and stable life.

In the wasteland of Jabalia, northern Gaza, Pal-

estinians gathered to receive meals at a distribution point. "There is no gas to cook our food. There is no flour or rice," said Bassam Al-Hou, standing beside large, blackened cooking pots among the dusty rubble. He said children "are dying and fainting in the streets from hunger. What can we do?" In Deir al-Balah in central Gaza, the bodies of about 14 people lay in front of a hospital. The bare feet of some protruded from under colored cloths that covered them.

Gaza's government media office said on Thursday the Zionist entity had returned dozens of bodies that had been exhumed from graves in the besieged territory in recent weeks. The bodies were reburied on Thursday afternoon in the beach area near the southern Gaza Strip city of Rafah. Men in white hazmat suits aligned the bodies wrapped in blue plastic sheeting at the bottom of a trench, before a bulldozer covered them in sand as dozens of mourners looked on, an AFP correspondent reported.

"The bodies arrived through the Kerem Shalom crossing and were received by the ministry of health," Ihsan Al-Natour from the ministry of

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### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Fraudulent citizenships revoked

KUWAIT: The Supreme Committee for the Investigation of Kuwaiti Citizenship took decisions during a meeting chaired by Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Acting Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah to withdraw Kuwaiti citizenship from some people who obtained it illegally based on fraud, while some of them are currently incarcerated. The decision was based on the fact that these persons obtained foreign nationalities and became dual citizens in violation of Kuwaiti citizenship law, the committee explained. The citizenship is only withdrawn from the person who violated the law, while their dependents will not be affected, it noted.

#### Jaber Causeway closed on Sat

KUWAIT: Jaber Causeway will be closed to general traffic on Saturday during the Kuwait Sports Day events, which will be taking place there throughout the day, the interior ministry announced. The road leading to Subbiya will be closed starting from 2:00 am, while the road leading to Ghazali Road will be closed from 7:00 am, the ministry said. Jaber Causeway will reopen to traffic after the end of the Kuwait Sports Day events, it added.

#### 32 hopefuls register on Day 4

KUWAIT: Thirty-two new candidates, including one woman, filed their nomination papers on Thursday, the fourth day of candidate registration for the snap parliamentary elections. The new candidates included seven members of the dissolved Assembly, raising their number to 35 out of 50 members. Three former MPs of previous assemblies also registered to contest the polls. The number of candidates who registered for the polls has increased to 134, including four women. Most candidates continued to focus on political reforms, political stability and the need to improve the standard of living of Kuwaiti citizens.

### Dental care costs in Kuwait leave patients wincing

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Dental care costs in Kuwait have long been a burden, often necessitating individuals to seek treatment abroad or face financial strain. Because this has been a long-lasting and prevailing issue, Kuwait Times listened to complaints of both expats and locals about the high costs of dental care in Kuwait.

Abdullatif, an expat living in Kuwait, compared dental care costs between Kuwait and Jordan, pointing out that undergoing the same implant procedure

using the implants of the very same German company in Jordan could result in saving approximately 45 percent of the costs compared to Kuwait.

He shared his personal experience with Kuwait Times, saying getting six tooth implants in Jordan cost him around KD 1,000, whereas in Kuwait it would have cost him a minimum of KD 2,000. Besides the implants, Abdullatif underwent several additional dental procedures that would have been much more expensive if done in Kuwait. According to him, many people, especially expats, choose to seek dental care back home or in other countries due to the more affordable prices.

Abdullah, an Indian expat, concurred. He recently underwent a root canal in India, with the complete cost amounting to KD 10 per tooth, which would have been tenfold or even higher if done in Kuwait at a private clinic. Expats can access root canal treatment at public clinics in Kuwait, but the procedure requires a minimum of

three sittings and lengthy wait times, putting off many patients in need of urgent care.

Lama, a Kuwaiti, said even Kuwaitis face financial problems with dental care costs. Even though public hospitals are free of charge for citizens, sometimes these hospitals do not provide some services such as implants and braces, so patients have to resort to private clinics. "The free service in public hospitals covers the dentist's labor costs, but the materials are not always included," she pointed out. Lama also highlighted the long queues before seeing a dentist at public hospitals, which makes many people opt for private hospitals and clinics to save time, which then costs them an arm and a leg to pay the bills.

Dr Nour Esmail, a Kuwaiti orthodontist, told Kuwait Times that prices are not fixed but depend on multiple factors. "In many cases, prices are based on the name — whether the clinic's name or the dentist's, rather than the procedures needed for the patient's treatment," she pointed out.

### Kuwait breaks ground on Osaka Expo pavilion

TOKYO: Kuwait held a groundbreaking ceremony for its pavilion at World Expo 2025 in Osaka on Thursday, a major step in its participation in the upcoming event. The ceremony, held at the Expo site on the artificial island of Yumeshima, was attended by dignitaries from Kuwait and Japan, including Kuwait's Commissioner General for Expo 2025 Osaka Salem Al-Watyan, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Japan Sami Al-Zamanan and Supreme Council for Planning and Development Secretary-General Dr Khaled Mahdi.

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OSAKA: Officials take part in the groundbreaking ceremony of the Kuwaiti pavilion at Osaka Expo 2025 on March 7, 2024. — KUNA

### First NASA Arab woman graduate shoots for Moon

HOUSTON: Like her ancestors before her, Emirati astronaut Nora Al-Matrooshi has spent much of her life gazing up at the stars and dreaming of flying to the Moon. This week, she became the first Arab woman to graduate from NASA's training program, ready to blast off into the cosmos. Matrooshi, 30, remembers an elementary school lesson about space in which her teacher simulated a trip to the lunar surface, complete with arts-and-crafts spacesuits and a tent for a rocket ship.

"We got out of the tent, and we saw that she had turned off the lights in our classroom. She had everything covered in gray cloth, and she was telling us that we were on the surface of the Moon," Matrooshi told AFP. "That day resonated with me, and it stuck with me. And I remember thinking, 'This is amazing. I actually want to do this for real. I want to actually get to the surface of the Moon.' And that's when it all started," she recalled, dressed in a blue flight suit embroidered with her name and the UAE flag.

Matrooshi, a mechanical engineer by training who has worked in the oil industry, was one of two astronaut candidates chosen by the United Arab Emirates Space Agency (UAESA) in 2021 to enroll in a training program with US space



Nora Al-Matrooshi

agency NASA. Now, after two years of hard work — including practice spacewalks — Matrooshi, her fellow Emirati Mohammad Al-Mulla and 10 others in their training class are fully qualified astronauts.

The group, known as "The Flies", are now eligible for NASA missions to the International Space Station (ISS), Artemis launches to the Moon and, if all goes well, to even fly to Mars. The UAESA announced earlier this year plans to build the airlock — a specialized doorway — for Gateway, the space station in development to someday orbit the Moon. "I want to push humanity further than it's ever been before."

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## Local



**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, in presence of Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, received on Thursday at Seif Palace the visiting Saudi Minister of Information Salman Yousif Al-Dossary and his accompanying delegation. Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait Prince Sultan bin Saad bin Khaled Al-Saud attended the meeting. (Right) Kuwait News Agency and Saudi Press Agency officials sign the agreement. — KUNA photos

# Kuwait, Saudi news agencies ink agreement to enhance content

## Robust political relations mirrored in the media landscape

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Journalists Association held a panel discussion on Thursday with Saudi Minister of Information Salman bin Yousif Al-Dossary and local media at the National Library. During the discussion, the Saudi Minister revealed he signed an agreement between Saudi Press Agency (SPA) and Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) to enhance content. "We believe in official news agencies' ability, objectivity and importance, as they serve as the cornerstone for verifying news. Their role as a reliable source is paramount, providing a solid foundation upon which individuals can rely when seeking confirmation of information," Dossary said.

"I had a meeting with the Kuwaiti minister of information, followed by a significant discussion with the Prime Minister. Throughout these discussions, our dialogue centered on pressing media issues, and I'm pleased to report that consensus was reached on all topics discussed. These interactions underscore our commitment to fostering strong partnerships

and collaboration in addressing pertinent matters within the media landscape," he said.

Dossary emphasized the robust political relations between the two nations, which are mirrored in the media landscape. "Recognizing the vital role media plays in reflecting and shaping diplomatic ties, it was imperative to engage with Kuwaiti media representatives to reinforce the positive trajectory of our bilateral relations. Any attempts to distort or undermine these strong ties are swiftly addressed to maintain the integrity and stability of the relationship. These meetings serve as a platform to elucidate the genuine nature of our partnership and dispel any misconceptions. Despite occasional negative voices on social media, our focus remains steadfast on nurturing and preserving the flourishing relationship between our countries," he stressed.

"Media understanding and direct communication are more important than official meetings. We are keen to transfer successful experiences from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and vice versa to address challenges in order to confront them to-

gether," Dossary added.

The Saudi minister said he launched the strategy and identity of the General Authority of Media Regulation, seeking to focus on the economics of media. "Our efforts are geared towards enhancing the media's contribution to the economy, with a specific focus on job creation. In 2023, we successfully generated 56,000 jobs within the sector, and our aim for 2024 is to further elevate this number to approximately 67,000. We firmly believe that the media industry possesses the potential to attract a significant number of employment opportunities," Dossary said.

"The Saudi media has undergone positive transformations, and we believe that the private sector is a major contributor to development in the sector. The Saudi ministry of information has an enabling and supportive role for the private sector to play its role, and the next stage is a major stage of transformation. Any media outlet that adds to the system, we support it. Our standard is to promote positive content," he explained, adding that with the presence of social media, there are challenges, but there

are many opportunities too, where social media is faster than traditional media.

"It is possible to combine the power of traditional media and social communication to accelerate its spread, benefit from it and reduce risks as much as possible," Dossary pointed out. Regarding youth empowerment, he said: "Young people are the pillar in shaping Saudi media. All our current projects and media outlets depend on Saudi youth, and they have become creative in it. They have ideas that we are unable to pursue, and we must focus on this category."

Regarding the disappearance of print newspapers, the minister said: "In today's rapidly evolving landscape, adaptation to technological and technical advancements is imperative. The press faces significant challenges, with no clear global media model to guide its evolution. Success hinges on embracing fresh perspectives, staying agile amidst change and mitigating risks along the way. Those who navigate this transformation will emerge stronger from the challenging stage ahead."



## Burgan Bank sponsors National and Liberation days celebrations at AUS

**KUWAIT:** Burgan Bank recently partnered with the American United School (AUS) in helping sponsor the school's annual National and Liberation Day Carnival. The day-long carnival, held on the school's premises, hosted around 1,500 participants, including staff, students, and their families. This sponsorship comes as part of Burgan's comprehensive social responsibility program and its vital role as an active and engaged corporate citizen.

Commenting on the Bank's sponsorship, Hessa Hussain Al-Najadah, Senior Manager – Corporate & CSR Communications at Burgan Bank, said: "We were honored and delighted to sponsor

and participate in AUS's fun-packed National and Liberation Day carnival. Every year, the month of February marks an excellent opportunity to plant the seeds of national pride and love for our beloved Kuwait in the hearts of young students through fun and engaging games and activities.

There is no greater joy for us than to contribute to gathering young Kuwaitis around our shared love for our nation, ensuring that they grow into proactive citizens who spare no effort to develop their communities and country. The AUS carnival included a wide range of engaging games, activities, and art workshops, designed to engage all students and family members. The event also hosted several shows and traditional Kuwaiti performances."

It serves to note that Burgan Bank's National Day celebrations took various other forms, such as its sponsorship of the re-imagined edition of the iconic children's play "Al-Sindbad Al-Bahri" – in partnership with Trend Productions. The Bank's celebrations also included unveiling the "Beladona Helwa" song and video, which pays homage to Kuwait and the deep-rooted love for the homeland. Additionally, Burgan introduced a limited-edition National Day prepaid card, which was especially adorned with symbols of Kuwait and lyrics from the popular song "Beladona Helwa".



## Minister announces strategy for renewable, sustainable energy

By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Dr Salem Al-Hajraf on Thursday announced Kuwait's strategy for renewable and sustainable energy for the years 2030-50, stressing the ministry's effectiveness with the launch of the 'Hafez' app, which aims to support citizens by lowering their electricity bills while also lowering electricity consumption in residential areas.

"We would like to apply the instructions of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on assisting citizens as well as reducing the distance between the government and citizens through communication," the minister said. "Energy is the vein of life, and on this basis, Kuwait became one of the first (in 1954) to use the first desalination plant in the world,"

the minister explained. He added Kuwait always participates in international conferences.

"Costs have shrunk by 85 percent, and now renewable energy is reducing costs even more, which is not a luxury but a necessity," Hajraf added, stressing that Kuwait targets carbon neutrality by 2050. He stated that all countries in the world aim to increase the efficiency of renewable energy. "Kuwait pioneered the use of renewable energy in 1942 during the reign of the then-Amir Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who brought four windmills to Dasman Palace. It was used to care for camels. History is encouraging for the future. If we do not reduce energy spending, it will put us back in danger and will affect the state budget," he noted.

Hajraf also mentioned the idea of distributing energy generation. "We will allow people to build their own solar systems, and the government will buy the energy and exchange it as a repayment either by crediting their electricity account or by cash. This is currently under study," he said. He asserted the ministry wants to encourage citizens to save more energy, mentioning the success of the 'Hafez' application so far, stressing the app supports saving electricity while encouraging people to lower their electricity expenditure.



**KUWAIT:** The Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Minister Dr Salem Al-Hajraf on Thursday announced Kuwait's strategy for renewable and sustainable energy for the years 2030-50.— KUNA

## Linguist calls for diversifying languages

**KUWAIT:** A linguist at the Linguistics Studies Biennial Conference (LSBC) at Kuwait University has called for diversifying languages in the programming field to make room for other languages to flourish. Dr. Teresa Lynn of Mohammad bin Zayed University, UAE, was giving a lecture on "Safeguarding our languages in the AI Revolution," examining "the role of linguistic studies in ensuring that our languages are not forgotten" during the emergence of generative AI platforms.

Dr. Lynn pointed out English as being the predominant language used in programming systems, labeling them as "Anglo-centric." "In bilingual societies, the priority and preference go to digitally supported languages," English, she added. English would receive the most attention, while other languages would be threatened. Dr. Lynn championed the idea of diversity in programming fields. In order to safeguard other languages from the risk of neglect and underdevelopment, Dr. Lynn recommended "moving tech companies away" from English-majority-speaking countries. She championed the idea of diversity in computer programming.

Dr. Karim Ibrahim (Gulf University of Science and Technology, Kuwait) talked about "Using AI classifiers to Identify AI-assisted Plagiarism: The Terminator versus the Machines," a comparative study on the detection of AI-generated texts with plagiarism detection platforms. Plagiarism checker websites and programs cannot differentiate between what is written by humans and what is generated by AI, which "is becoming more humanlike in generating texts," according to Dr. Ibrahim. He mentioned the integration of AI-detection software into plagiarism checkers to "effectively discriminate between human-written texts and AI-generated texts."

Dr. Ibrahim stated that the use of generative AI in academia is a violation of academic integrity. AI cannot be rejected; therefore, proper training in generative AI is the key to ethical and responsible utilization in classrooms and other workspaces, concluded Dr. Ibrahim. AI-Detection software programs vary in detection accuracy, with the highest degree of accuracy being 89 percent (OpenAI), while other programs are as low as 40 percent accurate in detecting AI-generated texts. The two-day event was organized by Kuwait University and the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), featuring lectures and workshops by visiting professors and local researchers. — KUNA

Local

# Exploring residents' views of Kuwait public transit system

'Many drivers are careless and rude'

By Passant Hisham

**KUWAIT:** Getting from one destination to another in Kuwait is very challenging without a car, which increases reliance on public transport. Buses, extensively used for commuting to work, school, grocery shopping and beyond, remain the most widely used form of public transportation in the country. After gathering diverse views of residents regarding the current state of bus services, it became evident that despite significant improvements in recent years, there is still considerable room for development. "The majority of drivers are very careless on the road; they drive unsafely and are rude," remarked Shanavas, an Indian resident. "Most of them do not stop properly at all bus stops," he added.

Mariam, a Bangladeshi resident who has been riding the bus for over 16 years, echoed his words. Recounting multiple incidents, she mentioned that her ride back home from school would often be delayed by an hour, despite both locations being in the same area. The reason behind this, she claimed, is that "when bus drivers spot students waiting at the bus stop, they often choose to skip it entirely to avoid accommodating them and the noise they may make", which results in leaving even non-students stranded.



A woman using public transportation in Kuwait.

Safaa, an Egyptian resident, expressed frustration with the lack of scheduled timings for her bus route, often resulting in lengthy waits of 30 to 45 minutes at the bus stop. She suggested deploying mobile apps, like some public transportation companies have done, to provide real-time arrival information for all buses. On a positive note, she acknowledged: "However, the best thing about the bus is that its prices are very affordable, and it helps me save a lot of money."

Abdelrahman, a Jordanian resident who has been riding the bus for almost a year and a half, noted: "For me, the main difficulty is during summer, since I have to walk a long distance to reach the bus stop." He said sometimes he might need to walk two kilometers to reach the nearest bus stop. Therefore, he highlighted the need to consider increasing bus stops to cover all areas.

Moreover, Abdelrahman pointed out the inconvenience of buses being unavailable after 11 pm, affecting late-night workers and those who wish to enjoy their weekends late into the night. While he acknowledged the cleanliness and technological advancements of most buses, he emphasized the need for improved hygiene standards.

Mariam elaborated on this matter. "Some buses don't have good air conditioning, so when there are too many people, it gets very hot and smelly, making the ride uncomfortable." On the other hand, she ac-



General photo of a street in Kuwait.

knowledgeable significant developments in multiple aspects, including spacious interiors and improved seating. She highlighted technological advancements added to some buses as the most useful, including TV screens showing the live location on the routes and notifying riders at every stop. In addition, cameras have been introduced to make the ride safer for all.

Alaska, who chose not to disclose her nationality, voiced her perspective on enhancing Kuwait's transportation system. "I strongly believe Kuwait should draw inspiration from cities like Dubai and countries like the UK by introducing a subway or tram system," she suggested. She emphasized the need for greater focus on this matter, suggesting that change will only occur by shifting people's attitudes towards public transportation. This will only happen when people recognize that this mode of transportation

should be accessible to everyone, eliminating any class disparities or feelings of superiority, she added.

Despite their respective concerns, all the individuals expressed a preference for buses over taxis as their favorite mode of public transportation. "The problem with taxis is that there's not enough supervision over them, leading to a disregard for taximeters," Abdelrahman noted, explaining that taxi drivers determine the cost of a trip based on their own preferences.

Meanwhile, Shanavas observed, "Most of the cabbies do not keep their taxis clean; some eat, drink and smoke while driving." Mariam also emphasized that buses will always remain a more environmentally friendly choice for her. "The more buses are used, the fewer cars will be on the road, resulting in less harm to the environment," she noted.



A picture shows the interior of one of the busses.

## Integrity Society emphasizes on transparency

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Society of National Integrity (KSNI) Director Mohammad Al-Otaibi said on Thursday that KSNI's monitoring is a display of transparency among Parliament 2024 candidates and demonstrates equal chances in the election registration. In a statement to KUNA, Al-Otaibi said the KSNI's presence in the Election Affairs



Mohammad Al-Otaibi

Department of the Ministry of Interior during the fourth day of candidate registrations is to monitor and review the process of registration, prepare a report, and submit it to the appropriate authorities.

While urging media outlets to report the elections with credibility and objectivity, Al-Otaibi praised the Ministry of Interior's efforts in providing the necessary services and the Ministry of Information for covering the democratic electoral process. The Ministry of Interior's Electoral Affairs Department started accepting candidate applications for the 2024 National Assembly Elections on March 4 and will continue until March 31, with the elections taking place on April 4. — KUNA



Participants pose for a group photo after the event.

## UN praises role of Kuwaiti women in building societies

**KUWAIT:** Deputy Secretary General of the UN and Chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group, Amina Mohammad, praised the role of Kuwaiti women in building societies and advancing development progress. This came in a speech at a dinner banquet on Tuesday with a group of Kuwaiti women leaders on the occasion of the country's national day.

She stated that her visit was an opportunity to enhance dialogue and cooperation between senior UN officials and influential Kuwaiti women in their industries, expressing her aspiration to strengthen their relations with Kuwait. She also expressed her appreciation to the State of Kuwait for their continuous commitment to supporting and empowering women.

For her part, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Human Rights Affairs, Sheikha Jawaher Al-Sabah, said that the government's plan for this year emanates from the Kuwait 2035 Vision, which firmly believes in equal rights, affirming that the Constitution of Kuwait stipulates principles of equality, justice, and full observance of human rights. Al-Sabah stated that Kuwait's commitment to human rights reflects on the history of the country's fighting for humanitarian issues and their participation in the UN Human Rights Council. She ex-



Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Human Rights Affairs, Sheikha Jawaher Al-Sabah



Deputy Secretary General of the UN and Chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group Amina Mohammad

pressed her happiness at hosting distinguished women leaders in the fields of economics, investments, banking, education, social and other sectors. — KUNA

## NCCAL mourns renowned software pioneer Sharekh

**KUWAIT:** The National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL) mourned Wednesday Kuwaiti software entrepreneur Mohammad Abdulrahman Al-Sharekh, who introduced the first Arabic-language operating system into computers. Al-Sharekh died earlier today, at the age of 82. In a press statement issued by the NCCAL Secretariat, the NCCAL Chairman and Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi and the NCCAL officials and employees extended sincere condolences to Al-Sharekh's family.

Al-Sharekh was the founder and chairman emeritus of Sakhr Software Company. Through his company, he developed a new generation of Arabic Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques that were used in the development of automated morphology and automatic diacritizers. His company obtained three patents from the US Patent and Trademark Office in the field of Arabic language for automatic pronunciation, automatic translation, and optical character recognition. He won several Kuwaiti and international awards and prizes, including the Outstanding Achievement Award in the field of localization in 2005, the World Summit Award in 2007, Kuwait's State Prize in 2018, and the Saudi King Faisal International Prize in 2021. — KUNA



Mohammad Abdulrahman Al-Sharekh



## KU's Faculty of Science organizes Science Expo

**KUWAIT:** The Faculty of Science at Kuwait University held the exhibition "Science Expo 2024" with several participants from inside and outside the university. The acting dean of the college, Dr. Mohammed Bin Sabat, said in a press statement that the Science Exhibition is the largest annual exhibition held by the college with the participation of scientific

clubs affiliated with the departments.

The exhibition includes an introductory series on the specialties offered by the Faculty of Science and the areas of work available to each of them. It includes the participation of various scientific departments of chemistry, financial mathematics, applied chemistry, engineering physics, statistics, research and operations, applied statistics, fundamental physics, marine sciences, earth and environmental sciences, and biological sciences.

He praised the efforts made to introduce new students to the departments and programs of the college, which contribute to helping them determine their scientific path, and appreciated the participation of external parties. The exhibition included pa-

vilions from various disciplines. Students presented their experiences, applications, and some educational materials used in laboratories. — KUNA



# Kuwaiti medical team travels to Gaza to provide assistance



KUWAIT: The 45th relief plane from the Kuwaiti air bridge took off from the Abdullah Mubarak Air Base, heading to Amman airport in Jordan with 10 tons of relief materials on board. — KUNA photos



## Kuwait seeks food security



Director General Eng. Nasser Taqi

AMMAN: Kuwait Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resource (PAAAFR) Director General Eng. Nasser Taqi said that Kuwait aims to realize United Nations' strategic development goals for lasting food security and national agriculture. This came in a statement by Taqi to KUNA during the 37th session of the Regional Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for the Near East and North Africa in Amman, Jordan.

Taqi emphasized investment in regional food security using modern methods in science and technology to improve the region's agriculture and confront climate change, natural resource scarcity, and other challenges. Additionally, the ministerial statement focused on conflicts and crises in the region, especially the repercussions on regional food security as a result of the Zionist occupation's war on Gaza.

Taqi said he had met with FAO's Director General, Dr. Qu Dongy, to discuss humanitarian solutions to the crisis in Gaza and the importance of finding ways to deliver relief aid to the Palestinian people. He underscored FAO's evaluation of the effects of the war, including food security, agricultural, and fishery crises in Palestine, especially the Gaza Strip. Taqi called on FAO to expedite emergency action plans to revive destroyed agricultural areas in Gaza due to the Zionist occupation's bombardment of natural resources. The FAO conference included ways of cooperating between nations to develop food and agricultural plans and projects, Taqi added. — KUNA

CAIRO: A Kuwaiti medical team, comprising of surgeons and other health professionals, will enter the Gaza Strip to provide much-needed assistance, said the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), Thursday. Head of KRCS operations Dr. Musa'ad Al-Enezi told KUNA that the team would provide treatment to the Gazan people who face daily aggression by Zionist occupation forces. The team - currently in Al-Arish city, Egypt - would perform surgeries and give treatments to thousands of those injured in the ongoing onslaught, he added. The KRCS official affirmed that the society would be coordinating with the Egyptian and Palestinians Red Crescent societies to facilitate the four-member team's entry into Gaza through the Rafah border crossing until they reach those in need of medical care.

### 45th relief plane

The 45th relief plane from the Kuwaiti air bridge took off from the Abdullah Mubarak Air Base, heading to Amman airport in Jordan with 10 tons of relief materials on board. The relief materials will be transported to the Gaza Strip to support the Palestinians. The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) confirmed to the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) before takeoff, the continuation of the assistance of the society and the Kuwaiti air bridge to support the people in Gaza in accordance with the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

KRCS pointed to the great role played by Kuwait as a center for global humanitarian action and its standing beside Palestinians, especially those in the Gaza Strip, in the face of the aggres-

sion of the Zionist occupation forces. The humanitarian assistance comes within the framework of Kuwait's full support for Palestinians in the face of the difficult humanitarian conditions they are currently facing as a result of the continuation of the destructive Zionist aggression.

The relief planes are accompanied by volunteers to deliver humanitarian aid to the Jordanian Red Crescent. KRCS expressed thanks to the Kuwaiti ministries of foreign affairs and defense for their keenness to communicate constantly, provide for all the needs of the Palestinian people, and facilitate the transfer of aid. The campaign 'Save Palestine' aims to support Palestinians, especially those in the Gaza Strip, through the provision of food and medical supplies. — KUNA



## Kuwait Oil Company reduces gas flaring

KUWAIT: CEO of Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) Ahmed Al-Eidan said that the company has achieved many successes despite the challenges of expanding the number of facilities and drilling towers, most notably its initiatives to reach carbon neutrality as well as reducing the company's gas burning to less than half a percent, which reinforces its environmental commitment.

In his speech during the awards ceremony of the 25th edition of the Health, Safety, Security, and Environment CEO Award, held under the slogan

'Building a Safe Environment', Eidan added that the company has developed a roadmap for transformation in the field of energy. He pointed out that this roadmap depends on several initiatives to reduce carbon emissions and invest in alternative energy in oil and gas production processes, pointing out that the company has started making plans to start producing blue hydrogen to increase the share of clean energy in its operations.

He explained that environmental challenges prompted Kuwait to sign the Paris Climate Agreement to reduce carbon emissions — a goal and commitment that are at the forefront of the tasks of the oil sector. For his part, the chairman of the steering committee of the award and director of The Health, Safety, and Environment

Group, Shamlan Al-Roumi, stressed in a similar speech that a safe environment is one of the company's strategic goals and a priority for achieving sustainable development.

Al-Roumi added that the selection of the award logo for this year was an expression of the company's application of procedures that reflect its commitments, such as integrating car accidents with a system. The company provides geographic information to capture all incidents in Ahmadi City within a unified interface to ensure efficient analysis and take the necessary corrective actions. He explained that, as part of Kuwait's environmental reform program, the company has committed to using 10 percent of its energy from renewable sources and reusing 30 percent of its water. — KUNA



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## CAN organizes 'Your Health First' marathon

By Abdellatif Sharaa & KUNA

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Cancer Aware Nation (CAN) organized a sports marathon on Thursday, titled "Your Health First," at Jaber Al-Ahmad Stadium as part of the Colorectal Cancer Awareness Campaign, with participation from Health and Interior Ministries, the General Sports Authority, and the Patient Helping Fund Society. During the marathon, Chairman of the Board of Directors of CAN, Dr. Khaled Al-Saleh, emphasized that this collaboration with a specialized academy aims to embed sports concepts in the minds of citizens and residents, underscoring its crucial role in boosting immunity and battling chronic diseases, particularly cancer.

Al-Saleh underlined the pivotal role of sports in improving human life, citing its ability to strengthen muscles, improve circulation, boost metabolism, stimulate appetite for healthy food, reduce fat accumulation, ward off chronic diseases, and stave off aging symptoms. He clarified that colorectal cancer ranks first among men and second among women in Kuwait, according to recent statistics, mentioning that 89 Kuwaiti men and 78 Kuwaiti women are diagnosed with colorectal cancer annually, warning that these are large numbers that need awareness to prevent this disease.

Al-Saleh commended the Kuwait Sports Day initiative, scheduled for March 9 pointing out that participation is encouraged for all residents of Kuwait. He also spoke about the importance of sport in improving the quality of life of the human being, as it helps in strength-



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Cancer Aware Nation holds a sports marathon on Thursday, titled "Your Health First," at Jaber Al-Ahmad Stadium as part of the Colorectal Cancer Awareness Campaign. — KUNA photos

ening body muscles and improving blood circulation and metabolism, in addition to improving appetite and ingesting healthy food to get rid of accumulated fat.

On his side, Director of the Department of Prevention and Response to Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases at the Ministry of Health, Dr. Hammoud Al-Zoubi commended the department's partnership with CAN to combat chronic diseases through community engagement, stressing the need for awareness about risk factors like physical inactivity, unhealthy diets, and smoking. Dr. Al-Zoubi said cancer fighting is on top of the national strategy for fighting chronic diseases, and it includes early detection of such diseases through the ministry programs. The most important of which, is the national program to discover colon cancer and breast cancer in addition to primary care programs.



India's Modi working to 'win hearts' in Kashmir

## 'Rust' armorer found guilty

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PORTICCIO: A man tests a paraglider along the beach during a warm weekend, on the French Mediterranean island of Corsica, in Porticcio on February 18, 2024. — AFP

# Global heat smashes records

## February marks 9th straight month of historic high temperatures: Climate monitor

**PARIS:** Last month was the warmest February on record globally, the ninth straight month of historic high temperatures across the planet as climate change steers the world into "uncharted territory", Europe's climate monitor said Thursday.

The last year has seen an onslaught of storms, crop-withering drought and devastating fires, as human-caused climate change — intensified by the naturally-occurring El Nino weather phenomenon — stoked warming to likely the hottest levels in over 100,000 years.

Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) service last month said the period from February 2023 to January 2024 marked the first time Earth had endured 12 consecutive months of temperatures 1.5 degrees Celsius hotter than the pre-industrial era.

That trend has continued, it confirmed in its latest monthly update, with February as a whole 1.77C warmer than the monthly estimate for 1850-1900, the pre-industrial reference period.

Temperatures spiked across swathes of the planet in February, from Siberia to South America, with Europe also registering its second warmest winter on record. In the first half of the month, daily global temperatures were "exceptionally high", Copernicus said, with four consecutive days registering averages 2C higher than pre-industrial times — just months after the world registered its first single day above that limit.

This was the longest streak over 2C on record, said C3S director Carlo Buontempo, adding

the heat was "remarkable". But it does not mark a breach of the 2015 Paris climate deal limit of "well below" 2C and preferably 1.5C, which is measured over decades.

Copernicus' direct data from across the planet goes back to the 1940s, but Buontempo said that taking into account what scientists know about historical temperatures "our civilization has never had to cope with this climate". "In that sense, I think the definition of uncharted territory is appropriate," he told AFP, adding global warming posed an unprecedented challenge to "our cities, our culture, our transport system, our energy system".

### Ocean records

Sea surface temperatures were the highest for any month on record, Copernicus said, smashing the previous heat extremes seen in August 2023 with a new high of just over 21C at the end of the month. Oceans cover 70 percent of the planet and have kept the Earth's surface livable by absorbing 90 percent of the excess heat produced by the carbon pollution from human activity since the dawn of the industrial age.

Hotter oceans mean more moisture in the atmosphere, leading to increasingly erratic weather, like fierce winds and powerful rain. The cyclical El Nino, which warms the sea surface in the southern Pacific leading to hotter weather globally, is expected to fizzle out by early summer, Buontempo said.

He added that the transition to the cooling La Nina phenomenon may happen faster than expected, potentially decreasing the chances that 2024 will be another record-breaking year.

### Fossil fueled heat

While the El Nino and other effects have played a role in the unprecedented recent heat, scientists stressed that the greenhouse gas emissions that humans continue to pump into the atmosphere were the main culprit.

The UN's IPCC climate panel has warned that the world will likely crash through 1.5C in the early 2030s. Planet-heating emissions, mainly from the burning of fossil fuels, continue to rise when scientists say they need to fall by almost half this decade.

Countries at UN climate negotiations in Dubai last year agreed to triple global renewables capacity this decade and "transition away" from fossil fuels. But the deal lacked important details, with governments now under pressure to strengthen their climate commitments in the short term and for beyond 2030. "We know what to do — stop burning fossil fuels and replace them with more sustainable, renewable sources of energy," said Friederike Otto, of the Grantham Institute for Climate Change and the Environment, Imperial College London. "Until we do that, extreme weather events intensified by climate change will continue to destroy lives and livelihoods." — AFP



RAFAH: Palestinian girl Hala Hazem Hamada rests inside a hospital in Rafah on March 6, 2024. — AFP

## Gaza girl emerges from rubble days after Zionist raid

**RAFAH:** Tears in his eyes, Mohammed Al-Sabbagh shouts into a mobile phone, imploring his niece on the other end to "be strong" as she languishes under rubble in Gaza. The call was made near the start of a three-day ordeal for the girl, 15-year-old Hala Hazem Hamada, who was finally rescued on Tuesday after a deadly encounter with Zionist soldiers that claimed the lives of six relatives including her parents.

The bloodshed began on Saturday, when Zionist troops descended on the residential complex where Hala's family, originally from northern Gaza, had sought refuge outside the territory's southern city of Khan Yunis. The Zionist military had said it was raiding "terrorist infrastructure" in the area and taking suspected "terrorists" into custody. Hala told AFP that soldiers had called out on a loudspeaker asking residents to leave, but before she and her family could do so, "the house started collapsing on us", levelled by bulldozers. The Zionist military did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Wednesday. "Snipers targeted everyone in the family except my sister and me," she said.

"My sister Basant told me, 'I'm scared, save me. I can't move. The rubble is on my feet, and my father is on my leg. I can't move.'" Then Basant went silent, leaving Hala alone to wait out the long hours before her rescue. Basant, 19, was among the six dead.

The Zionist military campaign in Gaza has killed at least 30,717 people, mostly women and children, according to the territory's health ministry. The entity claims the offensive is in response to an attack staged by Hamas on the south of the entity, which resulted in the deaths of about 1,160 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally of Zionist figures.

As Hala waited, an AFP journalist filmed Mohammed Al-Sabbagh offering words of support over the phone. "Stay safe and stay strong. If there is something around you, eat it to keep you steadfast until we reach you," he said. "I swear to God, we don't know how to reach you ... (but) we're trying to reach you. Don't worry, we will come to you." The updates from Hala were grim. "My father is covered in blood. He was breathing but not anymore," she said. On Wednesday, Hala described her rescue, speaking to AFP from a hospital bed in the southernmost city of Rafah. "They started removing the debris and cutting the iron bars until they pulled me out. When they pulled me out, they put me on a stretcher," she said. Though she suffered no major injuries, she was trying to recover physically after so much time without food or water, while also grappling with the massive trauma and loss she experienced. — AFP

## Sweden officially joins NATO after years of neutrality

**WASHINGTON:** Sweden on Thursday became the 32nd member of NATO in the shadow of the war in Ukraine, ending two centuries of official non-alignment and capping two years of torturous diplomacy.

Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson was visiting Washington, where Secretary of State Antony Blinken was to ceremonially receive the ratification documents after the hard-fought battle to secure the green lights needed from all NATO members.

"This is a historic day. Sweden will now take its rightful place at NATO's table, with an equal say in shaping NATO policies and decisions," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said in a statement. "After over 200 years of non-alignment Sweden now enjoys the protection granted under Article 5, the ultimate guarantee of allies' freedom and security," he said.

The Swedish government announced it was holding a special government meeting to approve accession. Later in the day, the Swedish prime minister is to attend the annual State of the Union address by President Joe Biden, who has been struggling to persuade the rival Republican Party to approve new aid to Ukraine.

Sweden's blue and golden-yellow flag is expected to be hoisted on Monday at the Brussels headquarters of the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance.

Russia has vowed "countermeasures" over Sweden's entry into NATO, especially if the alliance's troops and assets deploy in the country.

Sweden and Finland, while both militarily intertwined with the United States and members of the European Union, have historically steered clear of officially joining NATO, formed in the Cold War to unite against the Soviet Union.

### Turning page on non-alignment

Sweden has not been involved in a war, including World War II, since the Napoleonic conflicts of the early 19th century. But Finland and Sweden launched a joint bid after Russia in 2022 invaded Ukraine, which had unsuccessfully sought to join NATO — which considers an attack on one member an attack on all.

Finland successfully joined in April 2023. Sweden's candidacy stalled due to an assertive push by Turkey, which demanded that Stockholm, known for its liberal asylum policies, crack down on Kurdish militants who have campaigned against Ankara.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan later demanded action after protesters, enjoying Swedish laws on free speech, desecrated Islam's holy book the Koran. In a clear if unstated sweetener, the United States dangled the prospect of F-16 warplanes to



WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken receives the NATO ratification documents from Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson during a ceremony at the US State Department. — AFP

Turkey, which has faced the wrath of US sanctions over a major military purchase from Russia.

The Biden administration in January approved \$23 billion in F-16 warplanes to Turkey swiftly after it ratified Sweden's membership. The United States simultaneously pushed ahead with \$8.6 billion in more advanced F-35 jets for Greece, a fellow NATO member that has a historic rivalry and frequent tensions with Turkey.

Even with Turkey's blessing, Sweden faced another obstacle as it needed approval of a last country — Hungary, whose nationalist prime minister, Viktor Orban, has often

thumbed his nose at Western allies.

The Hungarian parliament ratified Sweden's membership on February 26. But in one last hiccup, Hungary could not formally sign the accession document due to a brief absence in the mostly ceremonial post of president, after an Orban ally resigned in a scandal over pardoning a convicted child abuser's accomplice.

A recent poll by Swedish broadcaster SR said that most Swedes believe the country made too many sacrifices to join NATO, although more than three-quarters believed NATO would strengthen the country's security. — AFP

## International

# 'Rust' armorer found guilty

## Woman who loaded deadly gun on film set faces up to 18 months jail time for involuntary manslaughter



SANTA FE: Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, the former armorer at the movie Rust, listens to closing arguments in her trial on March 6, 2024. — AFP photos

LOS ANGELES: The armorer who loaded the gun that killed a cinematographer on the set of the Alec Baldwin movie "Rust" was convicted Wednesday of involuntary manslaughter. A jury in New Mexico took just over two hours to find Hannah Gutierrez guilty over the death of Halyna Hutchins in October 2021 during filming of the budget Western.

A 10-day trial heard how Gutierrez had been ultimately responsible for the use of live rounds on set — a red line across the industry. The court had also heard how she had repeatedly failed to adhere to basic safety rules, leaving guns unattended, and allowing actors — including Baldwin — to wave weapons around.

"This is not a case where Hannah Gutierrez made one mistake and that one mistake was accidentally putting a live round into that gun," prosecutor Kari Morrissey told the jury in her closing argument Wednesday. "This case is about constant, never-ending safety failures that resulted in the death of a human being and nearly killed another."

Hutchins was hit by a live round fired from the Colt .45 that Baldwin was holding for a scene inside a wood-

en church on the New Mexico set. Director Joel Souza was wounded by the same bullet. Baldwin has repeatedly denied responsibility, insisting he did not pull the trigger. Ballistics experts have dismissed the claim, saying the gun could not have discharged any other way. His own involuntary manslaughter trial is expected in July.

The tragedy sent shockwaves through Hollywood and led to calls for a complete ban on the use of weapons on movie sets. Industry insiders, however, insisted that rules were already in place to prevent such incidents, and that those working on "Rust" had not followed them.

### 'Russian roulette'

Morrissey said on the day Hutchins was shot, the armorer, who is also known as Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, was characteristically haphazard with her supervision of the more than 20 guns the production was using, and was not present as Baldwin and the crew prepared the scene. "She left the gun in the church, contrary to all the industry standards for ar-



Stacy Reed, mother of Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, reacts after hearing the guilty verdict during her daughter's trial.

morers on movie sets," Morrissey said. "As you heard from many witnesses, she would leave guns unattended all the time. There was nothing unusual about October 21," the day of the fatal shooting.

Hutchins, who was 42 at the time of her death and the mother of a young child, was standing near the camera that would be used to film the scene. The bullet passed through her chest and hit Souza, the director. Hutchins was airlifted to a hospital but declared dead that day, having suffered massive bleeding. Investigators found a total of six live rounds on the set.

Gutierrez, Morrissey said, did not perform basic checks to ensure the dummy rounds she thought she was loading into guns were inert, including shaking them to hear their characteristic rattle. "Folks, if she's not checking the dummy ammunition ... to make sure that those rounds ... are in fact dummy rounds, this was a game of Russian roulette every time an actor had a gun," she told the jury.

Gutierrez, 26, showed no emotion as the verdict was read. The judge remanded her in custody ahead of her

sentencing, which is not expected before next month. She faces up to 18 months in prison. The jury found Gutierrez not guilty of a separate charge of evidence tampering, relating to the alleged disposal of cocaine in the immediate aftermath of the shooting.

Dave Halls, the film's safety coordinator and assistant director who handed Baldwin the loaded gun, agreed to a plea deal with prosecutors last year and was sentenced to six months' probation. Hutchins' parents welcomed the verdict against Gutierrez. "We look forward to the justice system continuing to make sure that everyone else who is responsible for Halyna's death is required to face the legal consequences for their actions," they said in a statement released through their Los Angeles-based lawyer.

Filming of "Rust" was halted by the tragedy but completed last year on location in Montana. The cinematographer's widower, Matthew Hutchins, who has already settled a wrongful death suit with "Rust" producers, served as an executive producer. No release date has been set for the movie. — AFP

## In Japan, 900 luxury watches 'go missing'

TOKYO: Around 900 luxury watches worth almost \$13 million are missing in Japan after a site renting them out folded and its owner fled to Dubai, local media reported.

The owners of the Rolex and other pricey timepieces earned monthly deposit fees by loaning them to Osaka-based Toke Match, which would then rent them to customers. Neo Reverse, the company that operated Toke Match, announced on January 31 the termination of its service and promised it would return all watches.

But the owners of around 900 watches worth 1.9 billion yen (\$12.6 million) have not been reunited with their property, the Asahi Shimbun daily and other media outlets reported, citing a group of about 190 owners. Some of the watches have even been spotted on an online auction site, prompting owners to file dozens of complaints to police around Japan.

The auction site's operator Valence Japan told AFP that at least 20 watches it handled had serial numbers matching those loaned to Toke Match. "We immediately stopped circulation of these watches to prevent further damages from happening" through reselling, a spokeswoman said last week.

Half of the watches were already on the auction site before the Toke Match service was terminated, she said. The Sharing Economy Association said in a statement that it had received reports that some of the watches were circulated in second-hand stores too. — AFP

## Afghan museum exhibits artefacts of Taliban victory

MAZAR-I-SHARIF, Afghanistan: Alongside antique Qurans and ancient Afghan coins, rocket launchers and homemade bombs are displayed in a Mazar-i-Sharif museum as a testament to the Taliban's victory over foreign soldiers. "It doesn't have any old history, but it all played an important role in the victory," says museum director Abdul Qayum Ansari. "This has exceptional meaning for the people."

Inside the one-room Balkh province museum in northern Mazar-i-Sharif city's famous Blue Mosque, twin display cases are devoted to mementos from the Taliban's two-decade insurgency ending in 2021. Ansari insists it's "forbidden to photograph or film" the displays, and says the AFP team visiting are the first journalists authorized to come "in more than two years".

Surrounded by fragments of pottery and porcelain, a yellow barrel of explosives stands out alongside a red Honda motorbike encased in a glass box, propping up a rocket-propelled grenade launcher. The bike "was for transportation of the Mujahideen (fighters) during the war and combat", while the weapon "was used against the war machines like tanks", explains the bearded curator. A handful of Afghan men browse the relics. Afghan women are barred from visiting, having been banned by authorities from entering the Blue Mosque complex after the Taliban returned to power.

### 'Our people must see it'

According to Ansari, the small portion of the museum given over to war objects "has the most visitors". Taliban



MAZAR-I-SHARIF, Afghanistan: An Afghan visitor looks at the antiques in a museum inside the Shrine of Hazrat Ali or Blue Mosque on March 4, 2024. — AFP

authorities "wanted this museum to be exceptional", he says. "Many more rooms" could be filled with other wartime curios of interest to the public, he insists.

Antiquities from previous eras are sparse, however. While Mazar-i-Sharif is a historic crossroads with Central Asia, much of its heritage was plundered in Afghanistan's cascading conflicts. Since surging back to power in August 2021, the Taliban government has commemorated the withdrawal of US forces and the rout of the foreign-backed government

with military parades and poetry readings.

At the same time, they have been hungry for foreign diplomatic ties, and official recognition by other states. It is unclear why authorities have been reluctant to show off the small exhibition, but Ansari said he thinks it deserves to be seen widely. "From my personal point of view, pictures should be taken of it," says Ansari. "All the world must see it, our people must see it." "I have personally requested that we must have a special museum for the conquest and the victory," he says. — AFP

## Hopes dim for Gaza truce...

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endowments told AFP at the funeral. "We do not know the names or any other information about them," he added. The 47 bodies sent back by the Zionist entity on Thursday were first "transferred to Al-Najjar Hospital" in Rafah in southern Gaza, the besieged territory's crossings and borders authority said in a separate statement.

"The bodies were seized and transferred to (the Zionist entity) under the pretext of examination and verification" to ensure they were not those of captives held in Gaza, the government statement said. Since the start of the war, Zionist officials have exhumed "hundreds" of bodies from graves at hospitals in the Palestinian territory, it said.

US President Joe Biden had urged Hamas to accept a ceasefire plan with the Zionist entity before the holy fasting month of Ramadan begins, as early as Sunday depending on the lunar calendar. The proposed deal would pause fighting for "at least six weeks", see the "release of sick, wounded, elderly and women hostages" and allow for "a surge of humanitarian assistance", the White House said.

But on Thursday, Hamas' delegation voiced dissatisfaction with Zionist responses so far and left Cairo for consultations with the movement's leadership in Qatar. Egypt's Al-Qahera News channel said the talks will now resume "next week". US Ambassador to the Zionist entity Jack Lew denied the talks had "broken down". "The differences are being narrowed. It's not yet an agreement. Everyone's looking towards Ramadan, which is coming close. I can't tell you that it will be successful, but it is not yet the case that it is broken down," Lew said.

Zionist war cabinet member Gadi Eisenkot said Hamas was under "very serious pressure" from mediators to make a "counter-offer". "Then it will be possible to advance it and take a position," he said. As talks drag

on, the United Nations has warned repeatedly that famine looms for Palestinians struggling to survive in the territory. "It is a tragedy for humankind and a disgrace for civilization that today, in the 21st century, this humanitarian disaster cannot be stopped," said Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

By late January the war had damaged around half of all buildings in Gaza and rendered the territory "uninhabitable" for its 2.4 million people, a UN agency said, warning the impact would only worsen if the war continued. The health ministry on Wednesday said 20 people had died of malnutrition and dehydration, at least half of them children. Only limited aid has reached Gaza's north.

James McGoldrick, interim UN humanitarian coordinator for the Palestinian Territories, said aid convoys would continue to be looted or ransacked unless assistance can "really flood" the north. He said Zionist authorities had "given the green light" for use of a military road on the eastern side of Gaza to reach the north. In a joint operation with Jordan, US C-130 cargo planes airdropped aid into Gaza on Thursday for a third time in less than a week, the US military said. Jordan's military said aircraft from Belgium, Egypt, France and the Netherlands had also taken part in the operation.

But the UN's World Food Program warned that the volume of aid that could be dropped from the air would do nothing to avert famine in Gaza. It appealed to the Zionist entity to allow aid to be delivered by sea through the Zionist port of Ashdod, less than 50 kilometers from Gaza City. "In order to avert a famine, we need huge volumes of assistance. We are talking about hundreds of thousands of people. Airdrops are not an option for averting famine," said WFP Deputy Executive Director Carl Skau.

In the grey ruins of Khan Yunis, southern Gaza's largest city, dozens of people went to inspect their homes and take what belongings they could recover after Zionist forces pulled out of the city center, an AFP correspondent said. Gaza's Civil Defense agency said Zionist forces "destroyed all water, sewage, electricity, communications, and road networks" in central Khan Yunis. — AFP

## Kuwait breaks ground on Osaka...

Continued from Page 1

"We celebrate the laying of the foundation stone to announce the actual implementation phase of Kuwait's pavilion at the Expo, which is the transition phase from theoretical planning to practical implementation," Watyan said. He added that as Kuwait

## First NASA Arab woman graduate...

Continued from Page 1

I want humanity to go back to the Moon, and I want humanity to go further beyond the Moon," Matrooshi said. "And I want to be part of that journey."

Though Matrooshi is the first to graduate from NASA, other Arab women have already participated in private space missions, including Saudi biomedical researcher Rayyanah Barnawi, who flew with Axiom Space to the ISS last year, and Egyptian-Lebanese engineer Sara Sabry, one of the crew on a 2022 Blue Origin suborbital flight.

Matrooshi, who wears a hijab as part of her Muslim faith, explained that NASA developed a strategy to allow her to keep her hair covered while donning the agency's iconic white space suit and helmet, known officially as the Extravehicular Mobility Unit, or EMU. "Once you get into the EMU you put on a (communications) cap (fitted with microphones and

lays the foundation stone for the Kuwait pavilion, "we look forward to completing everything we started in an effort to strengthen the close ties between Kuwait and Japan, as well as the rest of the world," as the Expo welcomes international visitors.

Under the theme of "Visionary Lighthouse", the Kuwait pavilion, opening in April 2025, will display Kuwait's history and culture. Watyan noted that visitors can experience a journey through the past, present and future in four exhibition rooms that combine tradition and cutting-edge technology. — KUNA

speakers), which... covers your hair," she said.

The challenge comes in the moment after Matrooshi takes off her regular hijab but before she puts on the communications cap. To complicate matters further, only specifically authorized materials can be worn inside the EMU. "The suit engineers ended up sewing a makeshift hijab for me, to where I could put it on, get into the suit, and then put on the comm cap, and then take it off and my hair would be covered. So I really, really appreciate them doing that for me," Matrooshi said.

With her customized suit, Matrooshi will be ready to step out into space with her fellow astronauts. NASA plans to return humans to the surface of the Moon in 2026 for the Artemis 3 mission. "I think becoming an astronaut is hard, regardless of what your religion or what your background is," she told AFP. "I don't think being a Muslim made it harder. But being a Muslim made me aware of the contributions of my ancestors, of the Muslim scholars and scientists who came before me who were studying the stars. Me becoming an astronaut is just building on that legacy of what they started thousands and thousands of years ago," Matrooshi said. — AFP

## International

# India's Modi working to 'win hearts' in Kashmir

## Visit comes ahead of coming election, India's first since it scrapped the region's special status

**SRINAGAR, India:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Thursday he was working to "win hearts" in Indian-administered Kashmir, on his first visit to the disputed region's main city since its semi-autonomy was cancelled in 2019.

Modi's government stripped the Muslim-majority territory of its special constitutional status nearly five years ago, splitting the former state into two territories directly ruled from New Delhi.

The move, widely welcomed across India, angered many in the densely militarized territory. "I am working hard to win your hearts, and my attempt to keep winning your hearts will continue," the Hindu nationalist leader said at a public rally in Srinagar.

Rebels in the Himalayan region have waged an insurgency since 1989, seeking independence or a merger with Pakistan — which controls a smaller part of the Kashmir region and, like India, claims it in full. "Jammu and Kashmir is not just a region, it is the crown of the country," Modi said at the rally in a stadium attended by thousands. Modi took pride in having cancelled the region's constitutional special status and inherited protections of land and jobs for its permanent residents. He said the former rules and "dynastic politics" had limited the region's potential.

### Heavy security

"Today, from Kashmir I extend my greeting for the coming Ramadan to the entire country," Modi said, ahead of the Muslim holy month of fasting, expected to begin in the coming days.

Thousands of armed police and paramilitary forces

were deployed, and checkpoints set up across Srinagar. Modi also remotely inaugurated a slew of development projects and government schemes for boosting agro-economy and tourism in Kashmir and other parts of India.

The rebellion has lost much of its former strength, and India has been heavily promoting domestic tourism in the region, home to spectacular mountain scenery. The projects included new infrastructure around the revered Muslim shrine of Hazratbal in the city.

The visit comes ahead of India's national elections due by May, the first since the region lost its autonomy. The last local elections in Kashmir were held in 2014.

Modi's government claims New Delhi's direct rule of Kashmir brought about a new era of "peace and development", but critics and many residents say it heralded a drastic curtailment of civil liberties and press freedom.

In neighbouring Pakistan, foreign ministry spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch criticized what she called "India's effort to portray normalcy" in the region. "Tourism can't be promoted in a situation where local people are being intimidated and rights and freedoms are being denied," Baloch said.

Security forces on Thursday patrolled the streets, as well as in motorboats along the river that runs through Srinagar. Most schools in the city were shut for the day, and the authorities had called on government employees to attend the rally.

Omar Abdullah, a former chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, accused the government of organizing buses to bring in crowds, alleging that "almost none" would be attending willingly. — AFP



**SRINAGAR, India:** This handout photograph by the Indian Press Information Bureau shows India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi (left) during an exhibition in Srinagar. — AFP

## Realpolitik may affect Dalai Lama's succession dilemma



**DHARAMSALA, India:** The Dalai Lama speaks at a public gathering in this screenshot of an AFP video taken on February 24, 2024. — AFP

**MCLEOD GANJ, India:** Esoteric questions of reincarnation rarely have real-world political consequences, but many fear the search for a successor to Tibet's Dalai Lama could inflame regional rivalries.

The 88-year-old spiritual leader, Tenzin Gyatso, has shown no indication of serious health issues, and has said that his dreams suggest he could live until he is 113. But as Tibetans mark on Sunday the 65th anniversary of the failed uprising against Chinese forces that led to him fleeing into exile in India, the question of who will succeed their ageing leader is in sharp focus.

Tibetan activists are keenly aware that his death will mark a major setback in his push for more autonomy for the Himalayan region. It would deprive the cause of a Nobel Prize winner whose moral teachings and idiosyncratic humor have made him one of the world's most popular religious leaders. Many expect China will name a successor.

That raises the likelihood of rival nominations for the six-century-old post, including one chosen by exiled Tibetans based in India, a regional rival of China. Tensions between the world's two most populous countries have already flared after a deadly Himalayan border clash in 2020. Here, AFP explains how realpolitik may impact the question of reincarnation.

### Reincarnation or emanation?

While the bodies of previous Dalai Lamas have been entombed in stupa burial mounds, Tibetans believe their soul carries on, living in a new being. Tibetan monks traditionally choose the Dalai Lama through a ritualistic search that can take years, seeking telltale signs a child is the reincarnation of a spiritual leader first born in 1391.

The 14th Dalai Lama, who has lived in exile in the northern Indian town of Dharamsala since the failed uprising in 1959, has floated the possibility of a non-traditional succession. He already ended the post's political powers in 2011 in favor of an elected Tibetan government-in-exile.

Keeping Beijing on its toes, he has alternatively suggested that his reincarnation could be a girl for the first time, or that he might be the last Dalai Lama. Instead of reincarnation — whereby the soul returns in a newborn — there is also the intriguing possibility of "emanation before death".

In that case, Tibetans believe the Dalai Lama's spirit could transfer to an adult successor. "It is possible for the Lama to appoint a successor who is either his disciple or someone young who is to be recognized as his emanation," the Dalai Lama said in 2011.

The Dalai Lama has promised to write a "predictive letter" for monks to follow around his 90th birthday in July 2025. He has said responsibility for choosing any successor will "rest primarily" on his Gaden Phodrang Trust, a Zurich-headquartered foundation. But he has also suggested he may be the last Dalai Lama. "If I die before Tibetans regain their freedom, it is only logical to assume that I will be born outside Tibet," he wrote in his autobiography, "Freedom in Exile". — AFP

## Chinese FM blasts US 'suppression', says Gaza war 'a disgrace'

**BEIJING:** China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi lashed out against the United States and praised his country's partnership with Russia on Thursday, in a wide-ranging press conference where he called the war in Gaza a "disgrace for civilization".

Wang hit out at what he called efforts by Washington "to suppress China", telling reporters that "the desire to heap blame under any pretext has reached an unbelievable level". Beijing's top diplomat met the press Thursday on the sidelines of China's largest annual political gathering, which opened in the capital earlier this week.

The "Two Sessions"—parallel meetings of China's rubber-stamp parliament and political consultative body—offer a rare glimpse into the strategy of President Xi Jinping's Communist Party-led government for the year ahead. This year's gathering is being closely watched for signals as to Chinese leaders' confidence in current geopolitical conditions, as tensions persist across the Taiwan Strait and Russia's war in Ukraine enters its third year.

China's expanding political reach has sparked friction on multiple fronts, with Wang's press conference coming after Southeast Asian and Australian leaders warned this week against Chinese actions that "endanger peace" in the South China Sea.

Beijing has increasingly flexed its muscles in the South China Sea, which it claims in almost its entirety despite an international arbitration ruling that declared its stance baseless. Chinese coast guard boats

were accused on Tuesday of badgering a flotilla of Philippine ships on a resupply mission, with Beijing in turn saying Manila was acting as Washington's pawn.

"We resolutely oppose all acts of hegemony and bullying and will strongly uphold national sovereignty and security as well as development interests," Wang said Thursday. "The methods used to suppress China are constantly being renewed, and the list of unilateral sanctions is constantly being extended," he said at a press conference in Beijing, referring to US actions. And the veteran diplomat warned that people seeking independence for self-ruled Taiwan, which Beijing claims as its territory, would be "liquidated by history".

### Maritime tensions

Wang insisted on Thursday that China's actions in the South China Sea were reasonable, saying Beijing had "always maintained a high degree of restraint". Manila has accused China of harassing Philippine vessels in the contested waters, including blasting a resupply boat with a water cannon on Tuesday.

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. Wang told journalists that Beijing "advocates the spirit of essential good neighborliness ... but we will not allow goodwill to be abused". "We will legitimately defend our rights in accordance with the law," he said, urging "certain countries outside the region not to stir up trouble or pick sides, and not to become disruptors or troublemakers in the South China Sea". "In the face of complex turmoil in the international environment, China will persist in being a force for peace, a force for stability, and a force for progress in the world," Wang told reporters.



Wang Yi

### 'New paradigm'

Wang reiterated China's support for Palestinians when asked about the ongoing conflict in Gaza, saying Beijing supports full United Nations membership for a Palestinian state. "The catastrophe in Gaza once again reminded the world that the fact that the Palestinian territories have been occupied for a long time can no longer be ignored," Wang said.

"The long-cherished wish of the Palestinian people to establish an independent country can no longer be evaded, and the historical injustice suffered by the Palestinian people cannot continue for generations without being corrected," he added. He called the conflict "a tragedy for humankind and a disgrace for civilization".

Wang on Thursday also defended Beijing's close relationship with Moscow, saying that "China and Russia have set a new paradigm for major power relations that is completely different from the old Cold War era." The foreign minister said that bilateral ties rested on "the basis of non-alignment, non-confrontation and non-tar-geting of third parties". — AFP



**JAKARTA:** Bajaj driver and single mother Ekawati, who plies her three-wheeled taxi in a profession overwhelmingly dominated by men comforts her three-year-old daughter Debi after she threw up while on their rounds. (Right) Ekawati washes dishes at her small rented home in Jakarta. — AFP Photos

## Indonesian mom makes ends meet on autorickshaw

**JAKARTA:** Her three-year-old daughter at her side, single mother Ekawati plies Jakarta's notorious traffic in her three-wheeled autorickshaw, making ends meet as one of a growing number of Indonesian women seeking informal employment outside the home.

Not that Ekawati has much choice — after her first husband died and she divorced her second, it's on her to pay rent and support her four kids, pulling in around 150,000 rupiah (\$10) a day picking up fares outside the bustling textile hub of Tanah Abang Market.

"Driving a three-wheeled taxi is the fastest way to get money. I have tried various jobs but this is the most convenient one," said the 42-year-old, who has been driving her rented vehicle for about 15 years.

Her eldest son, now 20, dropped out of school and works as a courier to help out, but Ekawati says she still lives hand to mouth, as covering her 800,000-rupiah rent and feeding her kids takes up all of her earnings.

According to data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS), 12.72 percent of Indonesian households in 2022 had women breadwinners, mostly in urban areas. The number of women homemakers, meanwhile, began to decline during the pandemic.

At the same time, many Indonesian women have moved into informal employment in the service and agriculture sectors to support their families following a major reduction in official job prospects during the Covid years, accord-

ing to the World Bank. Ekawati's second child passed away due to an illness, but she managed to send her son to an elementary school with assistance from the local government.

Now she is attempting to get similar aid for her other son who is in junior high. "I have to drive this three-wheeler so I can give my children proper food, clothes and a house," Ekawati said, tears in her eyes. "I hope God gives me good health. I also hope my children will be successful, unlike myself."

Working in a male-dominated environment, Ekawati said she had to be tough to make it on the streets, where sexual harassment and extortion by thugs are prevalent. "Once a passenger asked me to sleep with him for 500,000 rupiah. I immediately asked him to get out of the vehicle," she said. "As a woman, I don't want to be weak. I must be strong because I make a living on and from the street. No one will help me, except myself." — AFP



## Business

FRIDAY, MARCH 8, 2024

## Nawaf Al-Gharabally new Zain Kuwait CEO

A 25-year veteran at Zain, Al-Gharabally played key role in launching 5G in region

KUWAIT: Zain Group, a leading provider of innovative technologies and digital lifestyle communications operating in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, announced the appointment of Kuwaiti national, Nawaf Hisham Al-Gharabally to the position of CEO of Zain Kuwait, effective immediately. With an impressive 25-year track record of success within Zain and the telecom industry across the Middle East and Africa, Al-Gharabally held roles as Zain Group and Zain Kuwait Chief Technology Officer prior to his latest appointment.

Al-Gharabally joined the Zain family in 1998, and over the years has developed to become a key member of the organization's executive management team. He possesses extensive experience across a number of disciplines covering mobile technologies, digital transformation, strategy, and management with multiple career highlights notably Zain Kuwait emerging as the first company to successfully launch 5G services in the Gulf region, under his leadership in 2019.

Al-Gharabally also led the development and modernization of Zain Kuwait's networks in recent years, playing a key role in

Zain's 5G expansion in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Jordan; and 4G expansions in Iraq, Sudan, and South Sudan. He also played key technology-related senior roles during Zain's presence across 15 countries in Africa between 2005 and 2011.

A statement from Zain said, "Promoting an existing Zain leader with such an impressive track record fulfills the company's Group-wide IIR policy of capitalizing on and promoting talent from within. The appointment of Nawaf Al-Gharabally reflects the continuous investment in and development of Zainers, and the confidence in the capabilities of existing talents as leaders. The company is confident that his deep understanding of the Zain brand, solid operational and digital innovation expertise, and a strong history of working within the telecommunications sector across the region will prove invaluable in driving Zain Kuwait to new heights."

Commenting on his appointment, Al-Gharabally said, "I am honored to assume the leadership of Zain Kuwait, a company which has played an instrumental national role in the telecom, economic

and social landscape, pioneering numerous innovations regionally. I'm thankful of the Zain Group Board of Directors and leadership for their trust and confidence, and look forward to continue working with them and the many talented people we have in Kuwait and across the Group, particularly at this point-in-time when digital transformation is accelerating and changing the way we live and work."

Zain Kuwait remains the market leader with an active customer base of approximately 2.7 million. The company recently entered a marketing partnership with Red Bull aimed at appealing to the youth market, while Zain Kuwait's nationwide 5G network has continued to grow having the largest market share of 5G subscribers in the country. The operator continues to expand its offering in the B2B corporate segment, as well as to innovate in digital entertainment and digital services for consumers and businesses alike.

Al-Gharabally graduated from Kuwait University in 1998 with a Bachelor's degree in Engineering, and went on to attain an MBA from London Business School in 2021.



Zain Kuwait CEO Nawaf Hisham Al-Gharabally

## EU faces uphill battle to rein in big tech

BRUSSELS: The EU's landmark curbs on how tech titans do business online kick in from Thursday, but just how far Brussels succeeds in bringing the giants to heel will hinge on bitter battles that still lie ahead. Wielding a tough new legal arsenal, Brussels is determined to force a change in behavior by the world's biggest tech firms, to create a more competitive online field that allows smaller players to flourish. The bloc's new Digital Markets Act (DMA) will usher in a long list of do's and don'ts for six so-called "gatekeepers" designated by the European Union: Apple, Amazon, Google owner Alphabet, TikTok parent ByteDance, Meta and Microsoft.

"What we need right here from gatekeepers is changing behavior," the bloc's competition commissioner Margrethe Vestager told AFP in an interview on the eve of the law coming into force.

The big six will have to tell Brussels about any buy-out, large or small, as well as provide European users with more choices when they pick web browsers or search engines. Users should also soon be able to send messages between apps, for example from Meta's WhatsApp to services such as Signal or Telegram.

But experts warn enforcement represents a mighty challenge, and the EU already faces legal challenges, including from Apple, Meta and TikTok. "Getting big tech to comply with these new rules will be an enormous task," Bram Vranken, researcher at Corporate Europe Observatory, told AFP.

"Even now, almost eight years after the adoption of the GDPR—the EU's mammoth data protection law—"the EU is still struggling in getting Facebook to respect the privacy of millions of people in Europe," Vranken added. Brussels slapped a 1.2-billion-euro (\$1.3 billion) fine on Meta over data privacy violations last year. Separately, the EU on Monday hit Apple with a more than 1.8-billion-euro fine for violating the bloc's antitrust rules by preventing European users from accessing information about alternative, cheaper music streaming services.

When it comes to DMA enforcement, an EU official admitted to AFP that because of limited resources the European Commission, the bloc's powerful competition regulator would have to "pick and choose" which cases to pursue. The commission would not comment on the claim.

Senior officials acknowledge it may not be realistic to expect total and instant compliance. "We will see some compliance, full compliance by some companies. But I do think that there will be non-compliance cases," Vestager told AFP, adding that Brussels would not shy away from tougher action if necessary.

"If you look at our history, we have sort of made it credible that we will use the tools that we have," she said. The EU's 27 states are pushing the commission to focus resources on enforcement—with at least nine major laws covering the digital space created since 2019. Belgium, which holds the rotating EU presidency, "stresses" to member states in a leaked document dated Feb 19 that there is a "need to prioritize in the coming years effective and efficient implementation" of digital laws. European tech businesses share this concern: industry sources said they want Brussels to make sure big tech follows the rules, not just propose new ones.

Analysts urge the EU to be realistic about the resources that will require. "EU lawmakers are vastly underestimating the challenge of implementing and enforcing the recent swathe of digital laws," Zach Meyers, of the Centre for European Reform think tank, wrote in a February report.

The sheer volume of new laws, Meyers argued, "creates a risk that the Commission and national enforcers will lack the resources to implement them properly." Vestager has said the commission is "building up" its capacity to tackle non-compliance—but also acknowledges officials would need to prioritize between cases. — AFP

## Saudi: 8% Aramco stake transferred to PIF portfolio

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia on Thursday said it transferred an additional eight percent stake from oil giant Aramco to firms owned by the kingdom's sovereign wealth fund, according to state media. This brings the state's ownership to 82.186 percent of Aramco shares, according to the official Saudi Press Agency, with a cumulative 16 percent transferred to the kingdom's Public Investment Fund (PIF) and its subsidiaries.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom's de facto ruler, announced "the completion of the transfer of 8 percent of Saudi Aramco's total is-

sued shares from the State's ownership to" companies fully owned by the PIF, SPA said. The transfer is "a continuation of Saudi Arabia's long-term initiatives to boost and diversify the national economy and expand investment opportunities," SPA said.

Last year, four percent of Aramco's shares, worth tens of billions of dollars, were transferred to Sanabil Investments, a firm controlled by the PIF, one of the world's biggest sovereign wealth funds.

In 2022, another four percent of Aramco shares, estimated at the time to be worth \$80 billion, were transferred directly to PIF. Aramco and its assets were once kept under strict government control, completely off-limits to outside investment. But under Prince Mohammed, the kingdom has slowly begun to cede some of that control. The oil giant sold 1.7 percent of its shares on the Saudi stock market in December 2019, generating \$29.4 billion in the world's biggest initial public offering.



The PIF has made high-profile investments in firms including Uber and Disney. Its so-called mega-projects—centerpieces of Prince Mohammed's reform agenda—include Neom, a \$500 billion futuristic megacity under construction in the Saudi desert. The crown prince has said he wants the fund to have assets worth \$1 trillion by the end of 2025. — AFP

## New German strike snarls rail, air traffic

BERLIN: Hundreds of thousands of passengers in Germany faced travel misery Thursday as rail and airport workers staged new strikes to back demands for higher wages. Europe's top economy has been troubled by industrial action for months as workers and management across numerous sectors wrestle over terms amid high inflation and weak business activity.

Work stoppages have hit transport, supermarkets and the civil service, among other areas of public life. For the fifth time since November 2023, rail workers downed their tools, beginning a 35-hour strike on freight services at 1700 GMT on Wednesday and on passenger services at 0100 GMT on Thursday morning.

The length of the strike is intended to underline a key demand of the GDL train drivers' union to reduce the working week to 35 hours from 38. Reinhard Ligocki, who finally arrived at Berlin's main station on a train from the Ruhr Valley, said that average Germans kept getting caught in the middle of an increasingly bitter conflict. "Negotiators for the two sides shouldn't take out their long-running dispute on the passengers," he said.

Rail employees have been staging repeated strikes to demand a pay rise to

help members manage the higher cost of living in light of inflation. A walkout by train drivers in January caused travel disruption for thousands of passengers over several days. That more limited walkout was the beginning of a "wave of strikes", GDL boss Claus Weselsky said this week.

Future action would be announced "when we think the time is right" and no longer 48 hours in advance as has been the case in the past, Weselsky said. "Rail is no longer a reliable means of transport", with strikes due to drag on, he warned. Rail operator Deutsche Bahn has condemned the walkout, saying it has made concessions amounting to a 13-percent pay increase.

Company spokesman Achim Stauss told public broadcaster ZDF that only about 20 percent of its long-distance trains were running, with "big differences between regions".

Weselsky's hard line has come in for criticism, with Transport Minister Volker Wissing saying he was losing patience with the industrial action. "Those who exercise their right to strike also have to take responsibility and that means negotiating constructively," he told ARD public television.

Meanwhile Lufthansa ground staff held a nationwide strike from 0300 GMT on Thursday due to last until 0610 GMT Saturday. The company said it was only able to maintain about "10 to 20 percent of the flight schedule". Frankfurt, Germany's biggest aviation hub, would see "major disruptions and flight cancellations through-



FRANKFURT: Train passengers are seen on a platform at the main railway station in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany, as German train drivers stage a strike. — AFP

out the day", the airport said in a statement, adding it would be closed to all outbound passengers.

An unannounced strike by security staff at Duesseldorf airport triggered further chaos, with passengers stuck in massive queues and a rash of flights cancelled. The Lufthansa strike is expected to cause further problems for the airline's services at other airports.

A previous one-day strike affected some 100,000 passengers, with between 80 and 90 percent of flights grounded. Workers' representatives and management have blamed each

other for the travel disruption. The Verdi union is seeking pay rises of 12.5 percent for workers, a minimum of 500 euros (\$542) more a month.

Lufthansa has offered pay increases over an extended period but not enough to meet Verdi's demands, the union has said. The carrier reported record 2023 profits on Thursday but warned about the "damaging" impact of the wave of industrial action at the start of this year. Following ground staff, cabin crews were expected to stage their own strike in the coming weeks after pay talks broke down on Wednesday. — AFP

## ECB keeps rates on hold with inflation sticky

FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank froze interest rates again on Thursday as it held off from starting to cut borrowing costs amid concerns that sticky inflation is not easing as fast as hoped. The Frankfurt-based institution's governing council held the benchmark deposit rate steady at a record four percent for a fourth straight meeting, as widely expected.

"Although most measures of underlying inflation have eased further, domestic price pressures remain high, in part owing to strong growth in wages," said the ECB in a statement. The ECB embarked on a historic rate hiking cycle after the costs of everyday goods surged following Russia's invasion of Ukraine and amid pandemic-related supply chain woes. Inflation, which peaked at over 10 percent in late 2022, has been steadily easing, hitting 2.6 percent in February, heading towards the ECB's two-percent target.

At the same time the outlook is bleak, with the euro-

zone narrowly dodging a technical recession in the second half of 2023, weighed down by a poor performance in its biggest economy, Germany.

On Thursday, the central bank released updated forecasts, with inflation expected to fall faster than previously thought and returning to two percent in 2025. It also predicted the 20-nation eurozone's economy would turn in weaker growth this year than previously thought. Nevertheless, the ECB remains worried about completing the "last mile" to reach its inflation target, prompting it to keep rates at the same level they have been since October. Announcing its latest decision, the bank reiterated that it was "determined to ensure that inflation returns to its two-percent medium-term target in a timely manner."

Based on its current assessment, the governing council considers that the key ECB interest rates are at levels that, maintained for a sufficiently long duration, will make a substantial contribution to this goal. Thursday's monetary policy decision, and press conference later by president Christine Lagarde, is being closely watched for clues on when the ECB will start cutting borrowing costs, with most investors now betting on a first move in June.

Analysts believe the drivers of inflation have shifted from energy costs, which surged after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, to inflation in the services sector and wage growth. "Wage growth remains elevated with little



SAO PAULO: European Central Bank (ECB) President Christine Lagarde gestures during the G20 finance ministers meeting in Sao Paulo. — AFP

sign of a rapid turnaround yet, fuelling the stickiness in services inflation," said Frederik Ducrozet, chief economist at Pictet Wealth Management.

Heightened geopolitical tensions in the Middle East have also added to worries that inflation could rebound. Yemeni rebel attacks on Red Sea shipping have prompted shipping companies to avoid the vital trade route, while a spillover of the Zionist-Hamas war could impact oil prices. — AFP



# Despite oil riches, Libyans hit by plummeting purchasing power

## CB measures exacerbate cost of living crisis and foreign cash crunch

TRIPOLI: Libya may sit on Africa's biggest oil reserves, but many families are struggling with rapidly rising consumer prices as the festive Muslim holy month of Ramadan nears. Since a currency depreciation has driven up the cost of imported food and other goods, said self-employed Mohamad Al-Wehshi, 29, "we have to make do with the minimum". With a monthly income of around \$150 at the official exchange rate, he said, "we will soon have to do without meat".

Libya's dinar currency—which officially trades at 4.8 to the US dollar—has recently dropped on the parallel market from around five dinar to the greenback to 7.5 now. Economic analyst Abubakr Al-Tur said "Libya is experiencing a critical situation with rising prices and a currency devaluation".

This, he told AFP, has had "a major impact on the purchasing power of citizens, who are increasingly unable to obtain basic products". Pointing to recent business closures and lay-offs, the analyst said "it's difficult and impacting all classes, except the richest".

Interim Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah, who leads a UN-recognized government in Tripoli, said Tuesday that his government "shared the concerns of the Libyans". He said he is "determined to bring the dinar back to the level of before", evoking "plots hatched to exploit people's difficulties" and to "maintain instability" in Libya.

Libya is still struggling to recover from years of war and chaos since the 2011 overthrow of long-time dictator Muammar Gaddafi and remains split between two rival administrations. The north African country of seven million people is plagued by instability and corruption. Dbeibah's government in Tripoli uneasily shares power and funds in Libya with a rival administration in the oil-rich east backed by military strongman Khalifa Haftar.

Libya earns around \$20 billion per year in net revenues from oil and gas exports, which accounts for around 95 percent of state revenue. Much of this wealth pays for a bloated public sector that employs almost one third of the population, as well as for state subsidies meant to guarantee low prices for fuel and, until recently, basic foodstuffs. Dbeibah has launched major infrastructure projects, with construction cranes now dotting the capital, under an economic program called "Return to Life".

The analyst Tur said "the government has indeed carried out reforms and reconstruction projects", but that these programs remain "insufficient".



TRIPOLI: Libyans shop at a supermarket in Tripoli. Libya may be sitting on Africa's biggest oil reserves, but many families are struggling with rapidly rising consumer prices as the festive Muslim holy month of Ramadan nears. — AFP

The cost of living crisis and foreign cash crunch come after the Central Bank of Libya announced steps it said were aimed at ensuring greater financial stability. It restricted import letters of credit—the only legal means for an importer to buy products in foreign currencies—to the purchase abroad of medicines and food products.

This forced importers of cars, machine tools and construction equipment to turn to the parallel market

to find foreign currency. Citizens' foreign currency purchases have meanwhile been capped at \$4,000 per person per year, down from \$10,000.

The purchasing power of households has been further hit because the prices of basic foodstuffs such as pasta, rice, sugar and flour, previously largely subsidized, are now indexed to the level of the dollar on the parallel market. Meanwhile, recent months also saw delays in the payment of

state salaries for Libya's 2.3 million civil servants and in pension payments.

So, as prices surge, it is "the retirees who suffer the most", said Mohamad Al-Werfalli, 65, who was shopping with his wife in a Tripoli supermarket. "Our pensions have fallen in value, especially for civil servants," he said, adding that the elderly now "spend their time waiting for pensions to be paid". — AFP



شركة الصفاء للاستثمار  
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## KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 7 MARCH 2024

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No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	978	964	980	964	16	10,610,510	-16	-1.63%	7.83%	958	974	14.2	1.78	3.6%	1.02
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	294	294	298	291	7	29,812,846	-1	-0.34%	4.63%	294	303	14.0	1.29	4.1%	1.28
104	Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait	Banking	260	260	265	259	6	5,323,541	27	11.59%	11.59%	260	292	14.1	0.99	3.4%	0.93
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	165	170	171	164	7	41,339,546	5	3.03%	13.33%	167	173	17.1	0.61	2.2%	1.09
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	207	207	209	207	2	8,180,271	0	0.00%	20.35%	202	212	20.9	0.71	3.6%	1.31
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	809	805	815	800	15	43,182,909	-5	-0.62%	10.88%	799	814	20.9	2.01	2.5%	1.15
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	643	624	643	621	22	8,087,017	-19	-2.95%	4.00%	616	644	33.4	2.47	1.3%	1.16
201	Kuwait Investment	Financial Services	196	193	196	187	9	7,482,949	-3	-1.53%	51.97%	178	200	14.6	0.88	2.6%	2.06
204	National Investments	Financial Services	285	271	286	266	20	20,166,616	-14	-4.91%	13.39%	267	274	88.7	1.26	10.2%	2.09
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	126	129	131	122	9	32,714,660	3	2.38%	22.86%	126	132	31.1	0.71	0.0%	0.97
212	Arzan Financial Group	Financial Services	223	213	224	211	13	30,451,388	-11	-4.91%	1.43%	208	228	32.6	1.52	1.8%	1.23
222	Aayan Leasing and Investment	Financial Services	180	178	181	177	4	10,998,971	0	0.00%	2.30%	171	180	9.6	1.21	4.2%	1.62
252	Al Imtiaz Investment	Financial Services	56	57.2	58.5	56.0	2.5	6,494,494	0.8	1.42%	1.24%	57.1	59.1	NM	0.39	0.0%	1.35
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	230	227	234	224	10	18,197,857	-3	-1.30%	10.73%	220	237	18.3	1.52	1.3%	1.13
404	Salhia Real Estate	Real Estate	462	467	468	456	12	4,463,356	38	8.86%	8.86%	460	480	15.7	1.40	3.1%	0.56
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	807	840	853	807	46	14,113,509	22	2.69%	-0.36%	838	856	17.0	1.78	1.6%	1.00
418	The Commercial Real Estate	Real Estate	120	131	133	120	13	111,034,197	11	9.17%	28.43%	125	133	26.0	0.80	2.2%	0.64
501	National Industries	Financial Services	238	231	241	229	12	15,048,458	-8	-3.35%	13.24%	226	232	21.2	1.10	2.1%	1.62
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,499	1,494	1,500	1,420	80	1,817,938	1	0.07%	14.05%	1,490	1,513	15.7	1.38	4.0%	1.07
506	HEISCO	Industrials	846	842	852	827	25	2,573,549	-9	-1.06%	2.68%	832	846	23.5	2.14	2.4%	0.96
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	609	612	613	603	10	3,210,583	3	0.49%	4.62%	604	633	13.2	1.28	9.8%	0.97
603	Agility	Industrials	605	601	610	597	13	9,519,558	0	0.00%	18.07%	598	618	18.2	0.86	0.0%	1.57
605	Zain	Telecommunications	507	509	511	503	8	12,311,923	6	1.19%	0.39%	503	512	10.1	1.75	6.9%	0.60
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,370	3,381	3,449	3,333	116	770,791	11	0.33%	-0.53%	3,350	3,400	10.3	3.39	10.4%	0.64
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	213	207	213	207	6	1,609,154	-5	-2.36%	15.00%	206	210	NM	0.92	0.0%	1.27
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,135	1,116	1,148	1,116	32	1,473,297	-13	-1.15%	-19.65%	1,100	1,204	40.2	9.66	2.5%	1.31
813	GFH Financial Group	Financial Services	79.9	80.2	80.3	79.5	0.8	9,488,846	0.8	1.01%	5.11%	79.0	80.2	8.7	0.91	6.4%	1.36
821	Warba Bank	Banking	187	188	189	186	3	11,086,693	0	0.00%	1.08%	188	192	23.2	0.98	1.6%	1.10
822	Kuwait Telecommunications	Telecommunications	599	599	604	594	10	2,818,600	36	6.39%	6.39%	595	608	18.3	2.46	5.8%	0.69
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	615	621	622	597	25	3,470,757	1	0.16%	8.00%	618	625	15.2	1.80	1.9%	0.47
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	500	511	517	491	26	4,680,919	21	4.29%	0.20%	505	520	35.5	2.06	3.0%	0.76
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,020	2,106	2,123	2,020	103	1,076,014	66	3.24%	22.16%	2,094	2,125	26.6	6.53	3.5%	1.38
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	1,122	1,132	1,175	1,105	70	1,752,243	-43	-3.66%	7.20%	1,123	1,140	10.9	3.75	6.2%	0.74

\* As of end of week closing

Business

# NBK honors outstanding employees of 2023 at Annual Elite Awards Ceremony

Event held at JACC for Consumer Banking Group



Honoring employees.

**KUWAIT:** National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) honored the outstanding employees of Consumer Banking Group in its Annual Elite Awards Ceremony, which was held at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre (JACC) and attended by the executive management. This annual recognition aims to recognize employees' performance throughout the year and to promote them to maintain excellence and accomplishment in a way that helps bolster NBK's leading position.

The ceremony was attended by the bank's executive leaders headed by Isam Al-Sager, NBK Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Shaikha Al-Bahar, Deputy Group CEO of NBK, Salah Al-Fulaij, CEO of NBK - Kuwait, Sulaiman Al-Marzouq, Deputy CEO of NBK - Kuwait, Mohammed Al-Othman, CEO-Consumer and Digital Banking and Emad Al-Ablani, GM - Group Human Resources.

During the ceremony, the executive management distributed certificates of appreciation to the CBG outstanding employees, who showed exceptional performance during the year 2023, in recognition of their efforts in providing top-notch products and services that achieved a high level of customer satisfaction. Through this recognition held every year, NBK aims to show appreciation to employees who demonstrated outstanding performance throughout the year and to motivate them to exert more effort to strengthen the bank's leading position, locally and regionally.

It also shows NBK's commitment towards its hu-



Isam Al-Sager delivers his speech during the ceremony.



Mohammed Al-Othman delivers a speech during the Annual Elite Ceremony.

**Mohammed Al-Othman**

- Our employees are our most valuable resource, and we always seek to motivate them and appreciate their efforts and contributions
- Employees' adherence to highest quality customer service gives NBK the edge over its competitors
- Improving service quality and introducing new products that gain customers' satisfaction are the results of employees' dedicated efforts
- Honoring high achievers is instrumental in our strategy

- We will continue our employee stimulation initiatives to sustain long-term excellence
- NBK provides a unique work environment and a sustainable performance culture that promotes high performance and innovation among employees
- The achievements seen today are the fruits of successful strategies that fostered our digital excellence
- We bolster our leading position by providing market-leading digital banking services in Kuwait



Salah Al-Fulaij honoring employees.



Shaikha Al-Bahar honoring employees.



The annual elite party for National Bank of Kuwait employees.

man resources and keenness to provide them with all support, which translates in better performance and contributes to improving the quality of products and services provided to customers. The ceremony featured various engaging activities, surprises, competitions, and distributing valuable prizes to employees.

Commenting on this, Mohammed Al-Othman, CEO-Consumer and Digital Banking at National Bank of Kuwait said, "The Elite Awards Ceremony is one of the key events organized by NBK annually to recognize employees for their exceptional efforts and performance during the year. This goes in line with our appreciation of employees' vital contributions in the bank's ongoing achievements at all levels." "Improving service quality and introducing new products that gain customer satisfaction are the results of the dedicated efforts of our employees. Therefore, we are keen to appreciate their efforts, high performance, and adherence to quality standards and high-level and advanced customer service, which gives NBK the edge over its competitors," he added.

"Consumer Banking Group team strives to provide top-notch services, in order to maintain the bank's leadership, and to sustain its excellence in providing market-leading digital banking services in Kuwait," he noted. "At NBK, we believe that our employees are our most valuable resource, so we are always keen to invest in human capital by developing and improving the skills of our employees at all levels, which reflects positively on the quality of our products and services," he emphasized.

Al-Othman stressed that the bank will continue its initiatives seeking to stimulate employees, in line with its belief that sustaining long-term excellence is conditioned by retaining highly qualified and professional employees. "NBK enjoys a unique work culture and environment that promotes innovation, achieves job satisfaction and development and encourages employees to go the extra mile. It also offers them continuous career development through world-class training programs, in cooperation with globally renowned educational institutions," he mentioned.

"The achievements seen today are the fruits of successful strategies that fostered our excellence in cutting-edge digital banking services and payment solutions, as well as our tireless efforts to understand customers' needs and expectations and accordingly tailor innovative banking products and services to meet their needs and even exceed their expectations," he explained. At the end of the ceremony, Al-Othman extended thanks and appreciation to all

CBG employees praising their efforts and expressing his pride with this highly efficient and dedicated team resembling NBK's leadership, locally and regionally. NBK is keen on organizing regular events to honor its employees, within its endeavors to support and encourage their career and professional growth. It also seeks to strengthen the principle of long-term relationships with employees, which stimulates positive behavior and teamwork spirit, and promotes

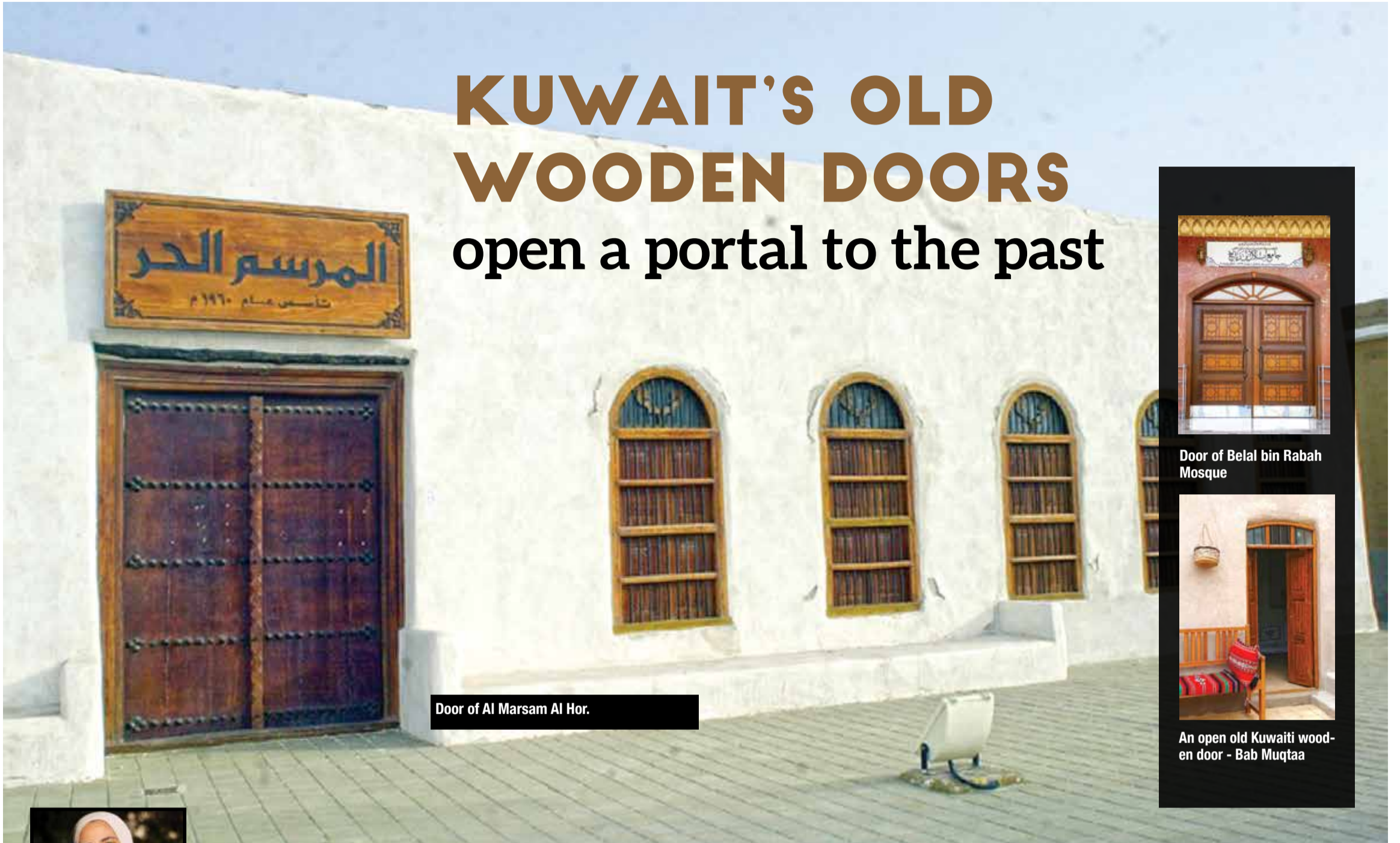
ideal work atmosphere and employee satisfaction. Over the past year, NBK's Consumer Banking Group succeeded in developing many top-notch banking products and services that are tailored to customers' needs. This included revamping NBK Mobile Banking App by introducing more than 30 enhancements to improve both user interface and user experience, for a more customized and personalized experience.



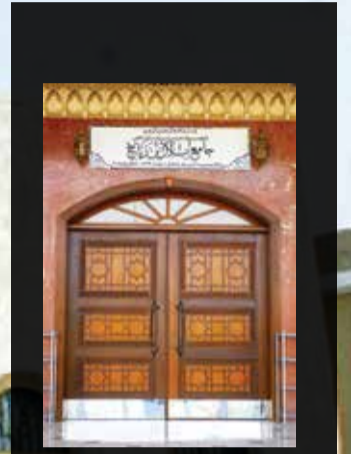
Isam Al-Sager honoring employees.

# Weekender

## KUWAIT'S OLD WOODEN DOORS open a portal to the past



Door of Al Marsam Al Hor.



Door of Belal bin Rabah Mosque



An open old Kuwaiti wooden door - Bab Muqtaa



By Passant Hisham

Adorned with intricate ornate detailing, rich textures and unique aroma, the old wooden doors of Kuwait have long caught the attention and admiration of traditional craftsman, and Kuwaiti heritage researcher Saleh Al-Mithen. "Gazing at these doors has always sparked my curiosity about what lies beyond them – how they were crafted, the materials used, how people entered them and how they transported their belongings through them. That's where it all started," he passionately said.

Mithen transported Kuwait Times to a different era and location, back in time when the most-widely used type of wood to craft these doors was teak, known as "saj". According to him, this wood was sourced from forests along the eastern coasts of India and transported by sea until it reached wood sellers in Kuwait.



Saleh Al-Mithen

The doors were crafted by local carpenters and exported to several Gulf countries, including Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia, Mithen noted. "While this craft has become extinct, it used to be very popular in the past, as it traditionally passed down from father to son, especially the making of doors and windows," he added.

“Some doors have been carefully preserved by individuals as remarkable treasures of history”

Describing the crafting process, he detailed how carpenters would cut the teakwood into sheets of desired thickness, then attach the sheets together using domed nails that also serve as decorative elements. Crafting these doors was an incredibly tedious task, as noted by Mithen, who emphasized that the hardness of the wood required carpenters to exert immense physical effort during sawing.

from its resemblance to an old hairstyle known as the 'toilet'. Bab Muqtaa was characterized by wooden panels cut into squares or rectangles, including an upper opening for air passage. This type of door was utilized both indoors and outdoors, particularly in bathrooms, swimming pools and kitchens, he remarked. Derwaza, meanwhile, was a large door consisting of large nails without a domed head.

"Saj is considered one of the thickest and most durable types of wood, which once provided a genuine sense of security for people in their homes," he said. Mithen mentioned these doors were very popular in Kuwait and the Gulf, before old buildings were demolished. Every country's doors stood out uniquely, displaying their distinctive fingerprints. A few of them have been carefully preserved by individuals as remarkable treasures of history, he noted.



Al-Manaee Mosque - Bab Muqtaa. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

In his book "The Making of Doors and Windows in Kuwaiti Heritage", Mithen listed the various types of doors that were prevalent in Kuwait during that era, each distinguished by a specific term. Bab Bukhokha was the most popular, often used for entrances of houses and mosques. He described it as a grand structure covering the front entrance of buildings, with a smaller door cut into it (known as khokha or hole) for everyday use.

Though these terms may have faded from history, the designs of these doors themselves have endured through the ages, scattered across the country, adorning the entrances of numerous buildings and captivating the attention of passersby.

Bou Safaqtin, on the other hand, was a double-sided door used for entry. Bab Bu Toilet Muqtaa earned its name



Old doors at Kuwait National Museum.



Door of Sadu House - Bab Bukhokha.



Husseiniya Ali Al-Mousawae - Bab Muqtaa.



Nour Al-Huda in the film 'Areata'.



A senior Indian journalist in Kuwait, Sajeev K Peter boasts an impressive career spanning over 36 years. As the Business Editor of Kuwait Times, Sajeev is responsible for both writing and editing stories. He holds a master's degree in English language and literature.

# Resurgent KUWAITI CINEMA signals a promising new era

By Sajeev K Peter

The history of film both as an art form and an industry in Kuwait has been characterized by resilience amidst turbulence. Since the groundbreaking release of "Bas Ya Bahar" (The Cruel Sea) in 1972, which catapulted Kuwaiti

become an accessible medium today. So many young Kuwaitis are able to find their expressions in the medium of cinema," says Aldagher. "It took a lot of time dealing with the societal taboos until we reached 'Bas Ya Bahar'," he said, recalling how culture and tradition stood in the way of mak-

today," Aldagher noted. It was a glorious era for Kuwaiti cinema post-"Bas Ya Bahar". Kuwait was the only country in the GCC that was engaged in filmmaking, adapting to the cultural changes that were taking place across the world. Kuwait produced amazing movies during the period with

(computer-generated imagery), he stressed. "The response was amazing and overwhelming after the Al-Ain Festival. Many people are now offering scripts for new films and looking for collaboration in filmmaking. The film brought back nostalgic memories of the good old days of Kuwaiti cinema. 'Cocoon' is a genuine Kuwaiti movie and not an adaptation of any foreign language film. The audience was amazed by the script, its craft, acting and coloring. It shows that people admire original Kuwaiti movies and want them back," he added.

"There were good movies at the Al-Ain Festival. Some Saudi movies made an impact at the festival. For instance, the Saudi film 'Naga', meaning a female camel, is a woman-centric movie that defies the gender stereotypes existing in the regional film industry. 'Naga' is currently streaming on Netflix. "We thought we were competing with Saudi movies. There were also some bold Emirati films that generated interest at the Al-Ain Festival," he said.

ie," he said. "Areata" won the first prize in the first Kuwaiti film festival in 2017. Later, the BBC bought the film. It was a major forward leap for Kuwaiti cinema, he noted. Another film, "A Stranger", was also well-received by movie buffs, in which Aldagher played a key role. Kuwaiti filmmakers have made several movies distinguished for their diverse content and innovative narration over the last two decades. Feature films like "The Sniper" (2008), "The Waves Will Carry Us" (2011), "Tora Bora" (2011), "Sneeze"(2011), "Alisa Khatafha Jamil" (2014) and "Victor" (2015) are a few among the productions that helped



Ali Aldagher

Young Kuwaiti actor-writer Ali Aldagher speaks about a revival in Kuwait's film industry and provides some insights into how technology is revolutionizing the way movies are made and experienced in the country today.

cinema into the limelight, the industry experienced steady growth until the brutal Iraqi invasion in 1990. However, today, emerging from the long shadow of the invasion, Kuwait's film industry is experiencing a renaissance. Filmmakers are venturing into the field armed with the power of imagination, creativity, original content and new technology, signaling a promising era of revival.

Ali Aldagher, a firefighter by profession, is a young Kuwaiti actor, writer and producer deeply passionate about cinema. He is delighted to witness the gradual resurgence of the Kuwaiti film industry, reclaiming its former glory. Aldagher recently returned from the UAE after attending the Al-Ain International Film Festival 2024. He participated in the screening of the Kuwaiti feature film "The Boy Inside a Cocoon", directed by Ahmed Al-Terkait, in which he not only plays a pivotal role but serves as the co-scriptwriter and co-producer.

ing films before 1972. Making films was treated as taboo as cinema was thought to be 'magic' then. However, the cultural mix influenced by neighboring countries helped bold Kuwaiti artists overcome the societal inertia towards cinema.

"Kuwaiti culture has many things in common with our neighbors Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia. We also have adopted a lot from Indian culture and tradition. This culture mix has helped create a forward-looking generation of youngsters," Aldagher added.

varied perspectives, like "The Silence" (1976), "The Wedding of Zein" (1976), "My Aunt Qumasha" (1983) and "Ruqaia and Sabecha" (1986), among others.

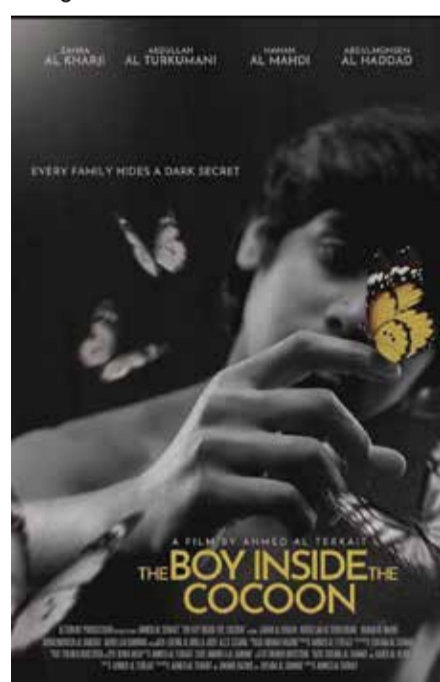
### The invasion

"The invasion changed everything for the Kuwaiti cinema. Plenty of movies were destroyed and archives were burned. It didn't happen by accident — it was done deliberately. Because when you invade a country, you need to destroy the culture and the heritage of the country so that you can build whatever you want to build," Aldagher pointed out.

The destruction not only had a material impact on filmmakers, but it also affected their morale and creative thinking. The psychological impact was enormous. Barring a few efforts in the field of theatre, Kuwait's artistic domains remained largely inactive for more than a decade. "Probably, a revival began to happen only after 2010 or perhaps even after 2015 with the advent of new technological advancements in the film industry. It took a long time for Kuwaiti filmmakers to come out of the shock," Aldagher said, recalling the painful period that followed the Iraqi invasion.

### Al-Ain Festival

"The Boy Inside the Cocoon" tries to explain the psychological effect of solitary life on children in modern society. "Here, one won't know where reality merges with imagination. So every viewer may have a different take on the movie and it is sure to haunt each one of us," Aldagher said. "Cocoon" is not a typical horror movie pitting a single victim against impossible odds. It is a 100 percent Kuwaiti movie with original Kuwaiti music and C G I



Although culture put a lot of restrictions on filmmaking, "Bas Ya Bahar" turned out to be an original Kuwaiti movie that delved into the country's struggles and financial hardships in the '70s. "The movie doesn't celebrate Kuwait, but it depicts the struggles Kuwaitis waged to build the Kuwait of



Making of the first Kuwaiti film 'Bas Ya Bahar'.

### The firefighter

"The Last Call" (2019) is movie about a firefighter who receives a call on the last day of his retirement, and he goes on a dangerous mission. "The movie was executed by the Kuwait Fire Force and I directed the vision in a way that it appears realistic and acceptable to the audience," Aldagher said, narrating how his career helps him in his artistic endeavors.

The Kuwaiti movie "Alopecia Areata", directed by Ahmed Al-Terkait, deals with the condition of spot baldness. "None of us were professional filmmakers. We came together with one vision — to make a mov-

Kuwait make an imprint on the film industry. These are in addition to scores of documentaries and short films.

Asked about his future projects, Aldagher struck an optimistic note. "A new movie currently being planned deals with a romantic theme. It examines the hardships of a bride and bridegroom to get married because they belong to two different branches of a religion. The film will narrate the battle one has to wage or the hurdle one has to cross to marry the person you love. It will portray two different cultural perspectives."

### A chequered history

"The compass of cinema is shifting today", Aldagher said in an interview with Kuwait Times. He spoke about a chequered history of Kuwait's film industry and provided some insights into how technology is revolutionizing the way movies are made and experienced today.

"Technology has reshaped every aspect of moviemaking today. Filmmaking has become less cumbersome both financially and artistically. From the rise of digital effects and remote filmmaking to advancements in post-production, software and the widespread popularity of online streaming services, the cinema industry has



A scene from 'Bas Ya Bahar'.



A still from the movie 'The Boy Inside the Cocoon'.



Ali Aldagher in the movie 'Areata'.



A still from 'Areata'

# Meet four Kuwaiti female authors publishing in English



By Nebal Snan

Kuwaiti women have always been pioneers across many fields. Their bravery and passion to make a difference has helped make Kuwait what it is today and their courageous efforts have enabled them to obtain leadership roles regionally and internationally. Over the years, Kuwaiti women have established themselves as a force to be reckoned with in the

literary world, with many achieving outstanding successes. Although some have had their work translated into English, few are Anglophone writers. On International Women's Day, we present to you four of these women (in no particular order), who are paving the way for the next generation of Kuwaiti female writers publishing in English.



Shahd Alshammari

Shahd Alshammari is a Kuwaiti-Palestinian author and academic. She teaches literature at the Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) in Kuwait and is the author of four books and numerous short stories and creative non-fiction pieces. In her acclaimed book, "Head Above Water" Alshammari takes the reader on a thoughtful journey as she reflects on being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS) in Kuwait at the age of 18 and how that has shaped her life.

"What makes Head Above Water a must-read is not only the fact that it engages with MS in a broader sense, but that it teaches you that while you may have to grapple with your own disabilities and

illnesses, you are often still able to do the things you intend to do," Tugrul Mende writes in a review of her book for The Markaz Review.



Throughout, Alshammari explores themes of exile and ableism through family members' stories and those of her own. "Head Above Water" was shortlisted for The Barbellion Prize for Literature, a British literary award dedicated to the furtherance of ill and disabled voices in writing.



Chelsea Abdullah

Chelsea Abdullah is an American-Kuwaiti writer born and raised in Kuwait. Abdullah earned her MA in English in the United States, where she currently lives. She is the author of "The Stardust Thief", the first installment of an epic fantasy series Abdullah is penning called "The Sandsea Trilogy".

Inspired by "One Thousand and One Nights", the book weaves together the gripping tale of a legendary smuggler, a cowardly prince and a dangerous quest across the desert to find a legendary, magical lamp. Although the book's world features plural deities, its culture is rich

as a retelling of the Middle Eastern folktales which Abdullah says she was surrounded by during her childhood. In an interview with Publishers Weekly, she describes the book



as an ode to the power of oral storytelling, which she's come to value through her father's vivid stories about life on Failaka Island before it was depopulated.



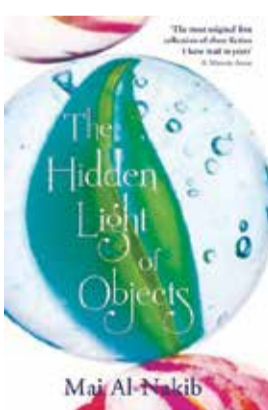
Layla AlAmmar

Layla AlAmmar is a Kuwaiti writer and academic. She has a PhD in Arab women's fiction and literary trauma theory and an MSc in Creative Writing. Her debut novel, "The Pact We Made", was longlisted for the Authors' Club Best First Novel Award. "The Pact We Made" follows the story of Dahlia, a young woman who straddles two cultures, being born to an American mother and a Kuwaiti father. Dahlia's worlds collide as she struggles to contend between her own aspirations and her family's traditional expectations of marriage before the age of thirty.

Ammar is praised in several reviews for her understanding of trauma, which influences her second novel "Silence is a Sense", an



insightful novel about a Syrian refugee who has been so traumatized by conflict and her perilous journey across Europe that she no longer speaks. It was shortlisted for the William Saroyan International Prize for Writing.



Mai Al-Nakib

Mai Al-Nakib was born in Kuwait and spent the first six years of her life in London, Edinburgh and St Louis, Missouri. Her award-winning short story collection, "The Hidden Light of Objects", was published in 2014 to great praise. It won the Edinburgh International Book Festival's 2014 First Book Award, the first collection of short stories to do so. Nakib tells Bazaar magazine that the 10 short stories were inspired by feelings of dislocation and unfamiliarity upon her return to Kuwait in a post-invasion and, more precisely, a post-9/11 era. The stories take the readers to Kuwait, Lebanon, Greece, Japan and beyond, and tackles a wide range of issues that have affected Arab life over the last 60 years.



Nakib holds a PhD in English literature and teaches English and comparative literature at Kuwait University. Her academic research focuses on cultural politics in the Middle East, with a special emphasis on gender, cosmopolitanism, and postcolonial issues. Her debut novel, "An Unlasting Home", was published in April 2022.



## Kuwait holds GRAISH tradition dear

By Faten Omar

Kuwaitis are deeply committed to preserving their rich heritage by reviving age-old customs and traditions. One such tradition is the celebration of "Graish", observed on the final day of the month of Shaaban, just before the commencement of Ramadan fasting. This day holds special significance, as families come together to prepare for the spiritual journey ahead, marking the transition into the holy month with anticipation and reverence. The tradition of celebrating Graish traces back to the 19th century, when families would gather and bring an assortment of foods from their homes to the house of the family patriarch.



Faten Omar, a Jordanian journalist, is passionate about journalism, particularly exploring the realms of politics. She works for Kuwait Times as Deputy Managing Editor.



Saleh Al-Misbah

Speaking to Kuwait Times, Saleh Al-Misbah, a Kuwaiti heritage researcher, highlighted the significance of Graish day as a beloved tradition deeply rooted in Kuwaiti culture. This annual observance holds a special place among the customs and traditions of the state, serving as both a festive occasion and a solemn preparation for the upcoming Ramadan fasting period. As he explained, Graish revolves around the symbolic act of family members sharing a final meal before embarking on the spiritual journey of Ramadan, underscoring the importance of unity, familial bonds and spiritual reflection within Kuwaiti society.

"Back in the day, families brought their surplus food for fear of it spoiling, especially with the high temperatures and the lack of food preservation appliances at that time. The tradition of celebrating Graish typically involves gathering at the residence of the eldest family member, continuing a long-standing custom aimed at imparting important values to the younger generation. Women and children gather at home to stay up until the morning hours, and men donate money to help needy families, as food

preparation for the month of Ramadan begins," Misbah explained.

Misbah revealed the etymology of the word "Graish", highlighting its significance in Arabic as denoting generosity. He further elaborated that a person described as "Qarqash" is someone who has loose change in his pocket and people can hear it. Additionally, he mentioned an alternate interpretation, suggesting that "Quraysh" signifies the modesty of a meal or its material worth.

The genesis of this custom, as explained by Misbah, stemmed from the practical concern of preventing food spoilage, particularly in regions characterized by high temperatures and humidity without the convenience of refrigeration. With leftover food being typically consumed the following morning, women devised a tradition to utilize all available foods before the onset of fasting during Ramadan, thereby ensuring nothing went to waste while also facilitating family gatherings.

This practice of convening at the household of the family patriarch on the day of Graish, as well as the first day of Ramadan, persists in some families to this day, reflecting a cherished tradition passed down through generations.

Speaking on the culinary aspect of these gatherings, he noted that fish often served as the centerpiece of the banquet. This choice was strategic, as abstaining from fish during the holy month was common, where the consumption of fish was thought to intensify thirst. This encapsulated both the significance of the day and the anticipation of partaking in the traditional meal, emphasizing its cultural importance and culinary symbolism within the context of Ramadan festivities.

### WHAT'S ON IN KUWAIT

- **Event: Kuwait Sports Day**  
Place: Jaber Causeway  
Date: March 9, 2024  
Time: 8 am
- **Event: Graish**  
Place: Murooj  
Date: March 7-9, 2024

- **Event: Rooftop Al-Assima**  
Place: Assima Mall  
Date: March 7-9, 2024
- **Event: Kuwait Inspire Drag Race Championship**  
Place: Kuwait Inspire Sports Club  
Date: March 7-8, 2024
- **Event: Desert Cleanup & Kashta**  
Place: Metlaa by Trash Tag

- **Date:** March 8, 2024  
**Time:** 12:30 pm to 8:30 pm
- **Event: K Tour**  
Place: Hawally Sports and Equestrian Club - Sulaihiya  
Date: March 8-9, 2024
- **Event: Shakshoka Market**  
Place: Al-Andalus Complex  
Date: March 9, 2024  
Time: 4 pm to 8 pm

- **Event: Spring Bazaar**  
Place: Sadu House  
Date: March 8, 2024  
Time: 10 am to 6 pm
- **Event: Art Festival**  
Place: Mirror House  
Date: March 9, 2024  
Time: 10 am to 7 pm

## Sports

# Australia out to ruin Williamson and Southee's 100-Test milestone

## Aussies plan to spoil New Zealand party

**CHRISTCHURCH:** Australia plan to spoil the party for New Zealand centurions Kane Williamson and Tim Southee when the second Test starts on Friday as they bid to sweep the series. Fast bowler Southee and batsman Williamson will both make their 100th appearances at Hagley Oval in Christchurch with hosts New Zealand chasing a first Test win over Australia since 2011 to mark the occasion. But they have their work cut out after a 172-run defeat in the first on the two-Test series last week in Wellington.

Australia named an unchanged team, meaning their four key bowlers - Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood, Pat Cummins and Nathan Lyon - have played all seven Tests this summer. "It's been a long summer, but we all feel like we've got a bit of freshness about us," said Cummins, the Australian captain. "We're not limping over the line, and we feel like we're in a great position than I thought we'd be in a couple of months ago. We know this is one last big push for a while," he added ahead of a lengthy Test break, with Australia keen for another win to earn points for the World Test Championship.

They currently sit third in the table, just behind New Zealand with India on top. "Not that you need extra motivation for a Test match, but it does have a lot of context this week," Cummins added of the points at stake. Southee and Williamson follow in the footsteps of New Zealand's other Test centurions - Stephen Fleming, Daniel Vettori, Brendon McCullum and Ross Taylor. Williamson has scored more than

8,600 runs since his debut in 2010 while Southee has 378 wickets, having made his bow in 2008.

### 'Prize wicket'

Cummins said he had "huge admiration" for both men, who he described as "stalwarts of New Zealand cricket." "It's a huge feat to not only keep your form for a dozen or so years that you need to play 100 Test matches, but also to keep your body in that kind of shape," he said of Southee, while praising the consistency of Williamson. "Kane has always been fantastic to play against, whatever the format. He always seems like the prize wicket (to take)."

Southee said it was special to reach the milestone alongside "good mate" Williamson, who he called "one of our greatest players". With New Zealand speedster Will O'Rourke ruled out injured, Ben Sears is set to make his debut. Veteran paceman Neil Wagner announced his retirement after being dropped for the first Test, and there were suggestions that he might be recalled. Earlier this week, his former teammate Taylor sparked controversy by claiming Wagner had been forced into retirement and that Australia's batters would be "sleeping easy".

But New Zealand coach Gary Stead resisted the urge to bring him back and refuted the claim, as did Southee. "I don't think anyone is forced to retire. He's been a warrior for us for so many years and seemed at peace with his decision," said Blacks Caps skipper Southee, who has taken



New Zealand's Tim Southee

just four wickets in three Tests this year. "I haven't got the wickets I would have liked. I've probably not been where I should be as the most experi-

enced seamer in the side," he said. "I hope to finish strong this summer. Hopefully there are some (wickets) to come." — AFP

### News in Brief

#### Last-gasp Crew sink Houston

**LOS ANGELES:** Columbus Crew defeated Houston Dynamo 1-0 in their CONCACAF Champions Cup round of 16 first-leg clash on Wednesday after a 96th-minute own goal from Adalberto Carrasquilla. An entertaining tussle at Houston's Shell Energy Stadium looked set to end in a stalemate after Crew failed to break down a resilient Dynamo line-up. But with time running out, Romanian substitute Alexandru Matan curled a low shot from just inside the area that took a wicked deflection off Carrasquilla to beat Houston goalkeeper Steve Clark. The win leaves MLS champions Columbus in pole position to advance to the quarter-finals when the teams meet again in next Tuesday's return leg in Ohio. Columbus will head into that contest confident of progressing after carving out a series of goalscoring chances against Houston in Wednesday's away leg. — AFP

#### Russians, Belarusians barred

**PARIS:** Athletes from Russia and Belarusia who are competing under a neutral banner at the Paralympics in Paris will not be permitted to take part in the opening or closing ceremonies, according to guidelines issued by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) on Wednesday. The Russian and Belarusian NPCs were both suspended following the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 but their sportspeople are permitted to compete as neutrals providing they have not shown any support for the war. However, the IPC has stopped short of allowing the Neutral Paralympic Athletes (NPA) to participate in the two ceremonies. "As the athletes will participate in an individual and neutral capacity, they will not march in the opening ceremony on 28 August or have a flagbearer at the closing ceremony on 8 September," the IPC said in a press release. — AFP

#### MLS fines LAFC coach

**LOS ANGELES:** Major League Soccer took a cold view of Los Angeles FC coach Steve Cherundolo's assertion that the snowy conditions for his club's 3-0 loss at Real Salt Lake were an "absolute joke." MLS fined Cherundolo \$10,000 on Wednesday for comments after the Saturday contest, saying in a statement they violated the league's public criticism policy. Cherundolo was fuming after Saturday's match, saying the contest should not have gone ahead on the snow-covered pitch. "It was an absolute joke we had to play today," he said. "It was one of the worst professional sporting events I've ever seen in my life." The field had to be shoveled at halftime to make the pitch markings visible. To improve visibility officials introduced an orange ball in the second half. "In my opinion, it was an absolute disgrace we had to play today," Cherundolo said. — AFP

#### Brighton fans robbed in Rome

**ROME:** Two Brighton supporters were injured during a knife-point robbery in Rome while visiting the Italian capital for their side's Europa League last-16 tie, police said Thursday. The two men aged 28 and 29 were taken to hospital for "minor knife wounds" in their thighs, a spokesman told AFP. Police were called to the historic Monti district of Rome after a restaurant waiter raised the alarm around midnight on Wednesday evening. The two football fans had been attacked in the street by "six or seven people wearing masks", the police spokesman said. The pair were robbed of a belt bag containing their identity documents and wallets. An investigation is underway. — AFP

## 'Sad' Nadal abandons ATP Tour comeback

**INDIAN WELLS:** Rafael Nadal abandoned his planned ATP Tour comeback at the Indian Wells Masters on Wednesday, saying he was not ready for the demands of tournament tennis on the eve of his opening match in California. The Spanish icon's bombshell decision came four days after the 37-year-old lost a Las Vegas exhibition to compatriot and world number two Carlos Alcaraz.

Nadal missed almost all of the 2023 season with abdominal and other injuries and has played only the Brisbane International this season, where he suffered a flare-up of a hip injury. The 22-time Grand Slam champion had been due to open at Indian Wells on Thursday against Canada's former Wimbledon finalist Milos Ranic. "It is with great sadness that I have to withdraw from this amazing tournament at Indian Wells," Nadal said in a statement.

"I have been working hard ... but I don't find myself ready to play at the highest level at such an important



Rafael Nadal

event. "It is not an easy decision, it's a tough one as a matter of fact but I can't lie to myself and lie to the thousands of fans. I will miss you all and I am sure the tournament will be a great success." Indian Wells tournament director Tommy Haas expressed disappointment at Nadal's withdrawal.

"We wish him continued healing and hope he can be back in action again soon," Haas said. "He is one of the all-time fan favorites here, and we hope to see him back in Indian Wells again in the future." On Sunday, Nadal had given an encouraging performance

in his Las Vegas clash with Alcaraz. After suffering a muscle tear in Brisbane in January, Nadal withdrew from the Australian Open, the first Grand Slam of the season.

### Dogged by injuries

He then scrapped plans to return to action at the Qatar Open in February, saying he was "not ready to compete." Injuries have been a recurring theme of Nadal's record-breaking career, a by-product of his all-action, brutal-hitting style that has led to serious knee, wrist and foot problems. During

his career, Nadal dominated the French Open, where he won 14 of his majors, his first arriving just days after his 19th birthday in 2005, his last in 2022 making him the event's oldest champion.

He is a four-time champion at the US Open, won Wimbledon in 2008 and 2010, and is a two-time winner at the Australian Open—with 13 years spanning his first triumph at Melbourne Park in 2009 and his second in 2022. Wednesday's withdrawal at Indian Wells will stoke inevitable speculation about the Spaniard's retirement date. In January however Nadal declined to confirm that 2024 will be his last season, backing away from earlier hints he may quit the sport this year.

"The problem about saying that's going to be my last season is I can't predict what's going on 100 percent in the future," he said in Brisbane in January. "You never know what's going on, you know? I can't predict how I'm going to be in the next six months. I can't predict if my body will allow me to enjoy tennis as much as I enjoyed the past 20 years." He admitted though that he had contemplated retirement during his lengthy injury absence from the sport last year. "Of course I was asking myself that (about retirement), but at some point I decided to keep going. I had the determination to keep going," Nadal said. — AFP

## Verstappen defends father after criticism of Red Bull boss

**JEDDAH:** Max Verstappen did his best to calm Red Bull's troubled waters and defend his father Jos's integrity on Wednesday, saying "he is not a liar". Speaking to reporters ahead of this weekend's Saudi Arabian Grand Prix, the three-time world champion was asked if his father had regrets about his comments suggesting Red Bull might explode if troubled team boss Christian Horner remained. "I have not asked him that, but my dad, from how I know him in go-karting, is very outspoken and he is not a liar. That's for sure," said Verstappen. "My dad and I are very close. We call every day."

He also attempted to calm the strife around Red Bull amid speculation linking him with a move to Mercedes for 2025, claiming he was focused on his racing and not any team divisions. "I'm the driver. I don't know what's happening higher up," he said. "But from my side, I'm contracted to focus on the performance side of things and that's what I'll focus on this weekend. What has been said in Bahrain from everyone is to just leave that behind and



JEDDAH: Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen arrives to the paddocks at the Jeddah Corniche Circuit in Jeddah on March 6, 2024, ahead of the Saudi Arabian Formula One Grand Prix. — AFP

hopefully have a quieter weekend here." Verstappen's close personal team consists of his father Jos, a former F1 driver, and long-time associate Raymond Vermeulen, a duo he has great faith and trust in.

"I don't see myself in F1 without them by my side," he said, adding that he hoped Horner and his father could iron out their differences for the sake of the team. "I guess he (Jos) clearly felt like that, but from my side, it doesn't matter being on one side or the

other side," he said, in relation to the explosive comments from Jos about Horner last weekend. "As a son of my dad's, it would be weird to be on a different side, but I just want to focus on the performance side of things and have less talk of what we are doing outside of the track than actual performance. We have a great car and look forward to a great year.

"Everyone in general, even if you have arguments or not, there are always things that can be worked out," Horner said he was "absolutely confident" he would remain boss of Red Bull following Verstappen's crushing victory in last Saturday's season-opening Bahrain Grand Prix, brushing aside persistent speculation about his behavior after he was cleared of any misconduct. An internal investigation into Horner's conduct had been carried out after claims of alleged inappropriate behavior towards a female team member.

Jos Verstappen was unimpressed by the probe and the outcome. "There is tension here while he remains in position," he said. "The team is in danger of being torn apart. It can't go on the way it is. It will explode. He is playing the victim, when he is the one causing the problems." Asked about the impact of the stories last weekend, Max Verstappen said: "I saw a lot of stories about that, which was a bit weird to read, but from my side, what I want - and it doesn't matter who is involved in the team or not - is to have a quiet environment where everyone is happy to work." — AFP

## Murray launches Indian Wells with win over Goffin

**INDIAN WELLS:** Andy Murray launched his 16th appearance at the ATP-WTA Indian Wells Masters on Wednesday with a 6-3, 6-2 defeat of qualifier David Goffin. Britain's 2009 finalist in the California desert took 80 minutes to produce a satisfying win to improve to 8-0 against the former top-10 Belgian. Murray, a three-time Grand Slam champion who acknowledged in Dubai last month that he is unlikely to keep playing beyond this season, swept the final 10 points of the opening set and went up a double break for 5-2 before polishing off the win.

"I was striking the ball well from the back of the court, it was a solid performance," the 36-year-old Murray, ranked 61st, said. "This could be the best I've ever served here. I've struggled serving here for at least 10 years. Today felt much better." The Scot noted he has always had his troubles at the desert

venue over the years, trying various preparation strategies with limited success.

"I've tried everything here: I've arrived later. I've come a week early to get used to conditions and then lost in the first round. But conditions seem different this year," he added. "The balls are quicker and the court seems a bit smaller at the back." Defending champion Carlos Alcaraz, who will benefit from a first-round bye, learned the name of his first opponent as Italy's Matteo Arnaldi defeated Frenchman Luca van Assche 7-6 (8/6), 7-6 (7/3).

Australian Open winner Jannik Sinner, who followed up his Grand Slam trophy with a title in Rotterdam last month, will start his tournament against Thanasi Kokkinakis after the Australian defeated Marcus Giron 6-3, 7-5. In the women's draw, the back injury nightmare for 2021 tournament champion Paula Badosa continued, with the Spaniard withdrawing from her opening match against fellow wild card Ashlyn Krueger.

Lucky loser Nadia Podoroska will take the place of the 73rd-ranked Badosa, who did not compete after Wimbledon last season due to her injury. Tennis mother Angelique Kerber, a finalist here five years ago, booked a second-round match with a fellow



INDIAN WELLS: Andy Murray of Great Britain serves during a match against David Goffin of Belgium during Day 4 of the BNP Paribas Open 2024 at Indian Wells Tennis Garden on March 06, 2024. — AFP

Grand Slam champion. The 36-year-old German with three titles at the majors beat her first top 100 opponent since returning from maternity leave as she defeated Petra Martic 6-3, 6-4. Kerber now takes on 2017 Roland Garros Jelena Ostapenko. Briton Katie Boulter, who won the WTA 500 San Diego title at the weekend, crashed out in the first round, falling 6-3, 6-2 to Italian Camila Giorgi. — AFP

Sports

# West Brom held by QPR

## 10-man Norwich lose to Middlesbrough

LONDON: Sam Field netted a late equalizer to boost QPR's Championship survival hopes and dent West Brom's play-off push on Wednesday, while Norwich failed to move into the top six after a 3-1 defeat at Middlesbrough. The Baggies looked on course for victory at Loftus Road after Mikey Johnston's stunning strike and a goal from

Grady Diangana cancelled out Field's opener. Michael Frey had a second-half penalty for QPR saved, but they found an equalizer with nine minutes left when Field nodded home to move the hosts a point above the relegation zone. West Brom remain in fifth and opened up a five-point cushion over seventh-placed Norwich in the

race for the playoffs. Norwich were left to rue Borja Sainz's red card after just 30 minutes at the Riverside.

Ashley Barnes had given the Canaries the lead, but Boro hit back against the 10 men thanks to goals from Marcus Forss, Emmanuel Latte Lath and Lukas Engel. Cardiff moved up to 10th as

Famara Diedhiou's first-half strike earned a 1-0 win over Huddersfield. Watford and Swansea remain rooted in mid-table after a 1-1 draw at Vicarage Road. Promotion-chasing Southampton's clash at home to Preston was postponed earlier on Wednesday due to a major fire next to St Mary's Stadium. — AFP

## Drama after deluge as USA set up Gold Cup final with Brazil

LOS ANGELES: The United States beat Canada 3-1 on penalties after their CONCACAF women's Gold Cup semi-final ended 2-2 after extra-time, to reach the final of the CONCACAF women's Gold Cup where they will face Brazil. USA goalkeeper Alyssa Naeher went from villain to hero in minutes after giving away a penalty in the last minute of extra-time but then saving three spot kicks in the shoot-out. The dramatic finale came at the end of a game which had been played in farcical conditions for the opening 45 minutes.

Brazil comfortably beat Mexico 3-0 in the earlier semi-final in San Diego before a torrential downpour brought the USA-Canada clash into doubt. There were large patches of standing water across the field at Snapdragon Stadium and once the game got underway it was almost impossible to play normal football on the surface. With the ball stopping in the water and players sliding around, Mexican referee Katia Garcia went to the sideline for discussions with officials but the game continued in monsoon-like conditions.

USA captain Lindsey Horan and her Canadian counterpart Jessie Fleming both spoke to the referee and appeared to argue for the game to stop. "It was a little bit of frustration, it's not a day that you can play football and it's really unfortunate. But at the end of the day, me and Jesse were like, 'OK well we have got to move forward and play,'" said Horan. Inevitably when the opening goal came, the conditions had a major influence on it - Vanessa Gilles' ill-advised back-pass stopped dead in a puddle and Jaedyn Shaw pounced on it and slotted home.

At half-time ground staff did their best to push the water off the field but there was a delay to the start of the second half with the rain having caused problems with the referees communication equipment. As the half progressed, the surface did improve but the quality of the game did not with the USA continuing to play route one direct football. Canada had a big appeal for a penalty turned down after Fleming went down under challenge from Tierna Davidson.

### Penalty drama

But eight minutes from the end of normal time, Canada drew level thanks to a powerful header from Jordyn Huitema who rose superbly to angle home a



SAN DIEGO: Emily Fox #23 of the United States kicks the ball while being chased by Olivia Smith #23 of Canada in extra time during the 2024 CONCACAF W Gold Cup semifinals at Snapdragon Stadium on March 06, 2024. — AFP

cross from Ashley Lawrence. The game went into extra-time and the USA got themselves in front with Rose Lavelle's glancing header falling into the path of Sophia Smith who confidently slotted home.

With almost the final kick, Canada lumped the ball into the box and Naeher's attempted punch clear turned into a punch into the head of Gilles and after a VAR review a penalty was given. A trembling Adriana Leon kept her nerves in check enough to slot home the penalty and take the game to a shoot-out. But then it was all about Naeher who saved three of the Canadian spot-kicks and scored one herself before wild celebrations at the end of a long and wet night.

The USA had been eliminated on penalties to Sweden in the round of 16 at the World Cup and had lost to Mexico in their final group stage game last week but Horan said their win had shown their spirit was intact. "That was back to the US mentality that we have talked about and we needed and it is in us. That was not a game where you are going to play football. I don't think there's more than a few completed passes on the ground. But yeah, the grit," she said.

Brazil proved too much for Mexico as they cruised into the final in the earlier semi-final. The eight-times women's Copa America champion went ahead in the 21st minute when Mexico goalkeeper Stephany Barrera made a mess of a cross from Rafaelle and Adriana reacted sharply to turn in the loose ball. Eight minutes later, an already difficult task got even tougher when defender Nicolette Hernandez was sent off for denial of a goalscoring opportunity.

Bia Zaneratto was breaking goalwards when Hernandez slid in on the edge of the box and although there was initially no foul awarded, a VAR review led to a straight red for Hernandez. Mexico's players were in disbelief at the decision and four minutes later their night got worse when Antonia collected a clearance on the edge of the box, cut inside and then buried a perfect left-foot shot into the far corner. The contest was over three minutes into the second half when substitute Gabi Portillo fired in a low cross which was superbly turned in with a back-heeled flick from Yasmim. — AFP

## Warriors bounce back, rout Bucks

LOS ANGELES: Stephen Curry scored 29 points as the Golden State Warriors bounced back from their catastrophic defeat in Boston to rout the Milwaukee Bucks 125-90 on Wednesday. The Warriors suffered one of the most humiliating defeats in franchise history on Sunday, losing by a staggering 52-point margin in a 140-88 loss to the Celtics.

But the seven-time NBA champions came roaring back with a vengeance to blow past the in-form Bucks with an emphatic win at San Francisco's Chase Center. A revitalized Milwaukee had been unbeaten since the All-Star break, with an improved defense helping Doc Rivers' team record six-straight victories. Yet the Warriors conjured a sublime all-round performance to keep the Bucks on the back foot almost from the start.

The Warriors poured in 40 points in the first quarter alone and then added 38 in the second to lead 78-58 at half-time. Although Milwaukee rallied in the third quarter, outscoring Golden State 23-15, the Warriors dropped the hammer in the final frame to cruise home. "The nature of the NBA, you can get hit by a bus like we did in Boston and there's a temptation to forget the body of work that we've put in over the last month-and-a-half and the identity we're trying to create," Curry said afterwards.

"For us to respond the way we did coming home was big. For us to be able to turn the page, play with conviction and confidence after a beatdown like that, it shows what we're trying to build and who we are," Curry added. Curry received scoring support from Jonathan Kuminga with 20 points, while Trayce Jackson-Davis impressed with 15 points from the bench. Giannis Antetokounmpo led Milwaukee's scorers with 23 points, while Damian Lillard and Bobby Portis had 20 apiece. The Warriors improved to 33-28 with the win to move into ninth place in the Western Conference.

### Magic, Clippers rally

The Bucks remain second in the East with a 41-22 record, eight games adrift of leaders Boston. In other games around the NBA on Wednesday, the Orlando Magic extended their unbeaten streak to five games with a 119-109 defeat of the Washington Wizards on the road. Franz Wagner (28 points) and Paolo Banchero (25) led the way for the Magic, who trailed by 21 points at one stage in the second quarter to snatch victory. The Wizards meanwhile were left reflecting on their 16th-straight defeat—equalling the franchise record. The Wizards remain rooted to the foot of the Eastern Conference with a league-worst 9-53 record.

There was another big rally in Houston, where the Los Angeles Clippers recovered after trailing by 20 in the second quarter to down the Rockets 122-116. Kawhi Leonard led the Clippers scoring with 28 points, Paul George and James Harden bagging 21 each as Los Angeles grabbed a win which leaves them on 40-21 in fourth spot in the West. While the Clippers celebrated victory, the Los Angeles Lakers were left licking their wounds after another defeat, going down 130-120 to the Sacramento Kings. De'Aaron Fox shredded the Lakers' defense with 44 points for Sacramento, while Malik Monk had 26 from the bench. — AFP



SAN FRANCISCO: Jonathan Kuminga #00 of the Golden State Warriors goes up for a shot on Pat Connaughton #24 of the Milwaukee Bucks in the second half at Chase Center on March 06, 2024. — AFP

## Buitrago edges mountain battle to win stage four

NICE: Colombian Santiago Buitrago took the first mountain stage of Paris-Nice on Wednesday after an exhilarating finish in the Beaujolais wine-growing region that went down to the last kilometer. The 183km fourth stage from Chalon-sur-Saone to Mont Brouilly featured six category two climbs and a category one in the shape of the 7.3 percent Col du Fut d'Avenas, 20km before the finishing line.

"I really did not expect this... To win a World Tour race here in France is exceptional for me," said Buitrago. "I had good legs and a good breakaway companion with (Luke) Plapp who helped me into the finale. I'm also well placed in the GC (general ranking) so it's great." Going pedal to pedal with Luke Plapp of Jayco AlUla, Team Bahrain's Buitrago claimed the imposing 3km final ascent of Mont Brouilly to take his first ever Paris-Nice stage victory.

Mathieu Burgaudeau and Christian Scaroni broke away from the leading pack on the ascent of Col de Durbize, with just over 50km left to race, before the Italian showed the Frenchman a clean set of wheels to streak out on his own as the summit approached. Scaroni sat out just in front until the stage's daunting Col du Fut d'Avenas climb on the 161km mark, where Buitrago and Plapp attacked to take the lead.

The pair battled it out neck-and-neck over the stage's last 20 kilometres until the Colombian found a final burst on the last ascent to leave his Australian competitor behind and claim the win. Despite coming second, Plapp claims the overall leader's jersey from Brandon McNulty, who drops



PARIS: Team Jayco Alula's Australian cyclist Lucas Plapp (left) and Bahrain Victorious' Colombian cyclist Santiago Buitrago ride in the lead during the 4th stage of the Paris-Nice cycling race on March 6, 2024. — AFP

into third just behind stage-winner Buitrago. Frenchman Burgaudeau of TotalEnergies held on to the polka dot jersey as the race's best climber and increased his tally to 28 points, seven ahead of Scaroni in second place.

Remco Evenepoel of Quick-Step, one of the favorites to win the race, attacked twice in the last kilometre to finish fourth in the stage and move up to fifth in the general ranking.

Evenepoel went head-to-head with rival Primoz Roglic in the stage's intermediate sprint and the Belgian emerged victorious, picking up six seconds to the Slovenian's four. Egan Bernal of Ineos and Bora's Roglic finished fifth and seventh respectively on the day. Former Tour de France and Giro winner Bernal is sixth overall, 40 seconds behind Plapp, with Roglic another 30 seconds back in 15th. — AFP

# Classifieds

## Hospitals & 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
Salmiya	25746401

### Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300

## Change of Name

I, **Shubam Chigari** holder of Indian Passport No. M7464652 having permanent address H.No. 10 B Dando, Sanguem, Goa, South Goa. 403704 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: Shubam Oliveira. (#5177 8/3/2024)

I, **Thadathil Kuttappan Anand**, holder of Indian Passport number M5458621 having permanent address Thadathil house, Monippally 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 Nazamipura Mohalla Sagwara. (#5172 6/3/2024)

I, **Husaini Najmuddin Bohra**, holder of Indian Passport No.- L8353356 issued at Kuwait on 20/05/2014 and Permanent Resident of 12/6, Ward No 1, Akab Makbara Jaora Dist. Ratlam, pin code 457226, Madhya Pradesh. Presently residing in Kuwait do hereby declare that my name will be read as Husain (as given name) Susnerwala (as surname) with immediate effect. (#5173 6/3/2024)

## Real limp into quarters

Madrid 'suffer' in Leipzig draw



MADRID: Leipzig's Dutch midfielder #20 Xavi Simons is tackled by Real Madrid's German midfielder #08 Toni Kroos during the UEFA Champions League last 16 second leg football match between Real Madrid CF and RB Leipzig on March 6, 2024. — AFP

MADRID: Real Madrid scraped through into the Champions League quarter-finals with a 1-1 second-leg draw against RB Leipzig on Wednesday, progressing 2-1 on aggregate. The record 14-time champions were far below their best but did just enough over the two legs of the last-16 clash to edge out their Bundesliga opponents. Despite Leipzig shading the game, Vinicius Junior opened the scoring in the 65th minute after being set up well by Jude Bellingham. Willi Orban quickly leveled for the visitors but they could not find a second goal to force extra-time at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said his team suffered and did not approach the game well mentally. "We played badly, with little intensity, with worries ... the psychological aspect conditioned our game a lot," Ancelotti told Movistar. "We played against an opponent with quality, who had nothing to lose, and we had the

brakes on from start to finish - we suffered, but the important thing was to get to the quarter-finals." Ancelotti warned his players before the game they needed to be at their best to progress and showed his cautious side by playing four midfielders behind Bellingham and Vinicius.

The Italian brought Aurelien Tchouameni forward into defensive midfield, also deploying Eduardo Camavinga, Fede Valverde and Toni Kroos, as he looked to protect the 1-0 first-leg lead. However Ancelotti's gameplan stunted Madrid's own attacking game without completely stifling Leipzig's. "It was not our best day, but we have to be happy because the objective is complete," Madrid captain Nacho Fernandez told Movistar. "When things don't go as you want, you have to battle, to fight, to play games like today's that make you grow and learn."

The German side had the better of the first half, albeit without carving

out clear chances until just before the break. Andriy Lunin palmed away a strike from Xavi Simons, on loan from Paris Saint-Germain, while Lois Openda rifled a shot into the side netting. Ancelotti shifted back to a more typical set-up for the second half, introducing Rodrygo at half-time for Camavinga. It opened up the game at both ends and Vinicius began to have more influence after a quiet first half - albeit not always for good. The Brazilian was booked for barging Orban in the back and then shoving the Leipzig captain.

### 'So tough'

Vinicius' frustration quickly turned to joy though when Bellingham burst forward, showing superb timing to release the forward, who fired into the top corner at the end of a smart counter-attack. Toni Kroos started the break and despite being outnumbered, Bellingham and Vinicius showed their

decisive quality to send the hosts ahead. Madrid's delight was short-lived though, with Orban leveling just three minutes later. The Hungarian defender's excellent diving header from David Raum's cross set up a gripping denouement. Madrid striker Joselu, on as a substitute, sent a tame effort at Leipzig goalkeeper Peter Gulacsi before Dani Olmo hit the woodwork.

The former Barcelona youth player's lob dropped on to the crossbar and out of play as thousands of Madrid fans held their breath. Europe's most crowned side were taken to the wire on a nervy night by Marco Rose's side, only founded in 2009, but steeled themselves and held on to progress. "If you add the 180 minutes up, we clearly had the better chances - I don't know how they scored today," Leipzig defender Benjamin Henrichs told DAZN. "We played so well and it's so tough that we're out." — AFP

## Rags-to-riches, Ngannou eyes heavyweight shock



French-Cameroonian boxer Francis Ngannou

RIYADH: Francis Ngannou once toiled in a sand mine, scavenged for food to avoid starvation and slept rough in a car park, so facing former two-time world heavyweight champion Anthony Joshua on Friday is just another stop on his epic rags-to-riches journey. "I've had a lot of experience in life," the softly-spoken Cameroon-born fighter says with characteristic understatement. "I've built my fighting spirit as high as anyone else."

Ngannou has crammed a lot into his 37 years. The child of a single mother, he had to walk six miles to school and from the age of 10 he shoveled sand from open quarries, his meagre income helping to buy food and books. "It was work meant for adults, but we didn't have any options," said Ngannou of his back-breaking labors which paid less than \$2 a day. "Sometimes I didn't have a pen or a notebook. Sometimes no shoes, my uniform was torn. I looked crappy. I didn't like my life, I felt like I missed my childhood."

In 2012, at the age of 26 and fired by dreams of becoming a professional boxer, Ngannou, now boasting a towering physique carved from his brutal work in the sand pits, made a break for Europe and a better life. Crammed with others into the back of a pick-up truck, he crossed the unforgiving Sahara, travelled through Nigeria, Niger and Algeria before reaching Morocco.

Then, after half a dozen failed attempts, he finally made it over the Mediterranean to Spain where he was promptly jailed for two months for making an illegal crossing. Completing a trip of around 5,000km, he took a train to Paris, lived in a car park before local boxing coach Didier Carmonat found him a place to live and a gym in which to train. Despite an early fascination with Mike Tyson, Ngannou graduated towards Mixed Martial Arts and in 2021 became the UFC world heavyweight champion.

Many scoffed when he opted to make his boxing debut against world champion Tyson Fury in the so-called "Battle of the Baddest" in October last year. The doubters were silenced, however, when Ngannou sent Fury to the canvas in the third round before losing only on a controversial split decision. His reputation and bank balance soared. He was paid \$10 million for his night's work, a windfall which has helped the once shoeless Cameroonian purchase a luxurious home in Las Vegas. — AFP

## 'Respected' City 'among' European heavyweights

MANCHESTER: Pep Guardiola said Manchester City have earned their place among the perennial contenders for Champions League glory after reaching the quarter-finals for a seventh consecutive season on Wednesday. Guardiola could even afford the luxury of resting a host of star names in a 3-1 victory over FC Copenhagen at the Etihad that completed a 6-2 aggregate rout. Goals from Manuel Akanji and Julian Alvarez killed the tie as a contest inside 10 minutes before Erling Haaland drilled in his 29th goal of the season.

Mohamed Elyounoussi briefly reduced the Danish champions' deficit to 2-1 on the night, but Copenhagen were outclassed over two legs as the European champions remain on course for another treble. City conquered Europe for the first time in the club's history last season, but Guardiola acknowledged his side are now seen as favorites for the competition ahead of the likes of Real Madrid and Bayern Munich.

The English champions have not lost a Champions League game at the Etihad since 2018 and became the first side in the competition's history to score three or more goals in nine consecutive home games. "The important thing is being there (in the quarter-finals) seven years in a row, it's quite impressive," said Guardiola. "We are well-respected from our opponents. The numbers are there - our consistency. I remember when I arrived, we didn't believe, the club didn't believe we could do it because we didn't have the hierarchy in Europe like teams in Spain or Germany. It was a question of time, a process."

"The problem is the managers in modern football don't have time. They gave me time, our hierarchy, so credit to them to accept the process. Now we are a team that believe we can do it." Guardiola showed he had one eye on Sunday's top-of-the-table Premier League clash at Liverpool as he made seven changes from the side that beat Manchester United at the weekend.

Kevin De Bruyne, Phil Foden and Bernardo Sil-



MANCHESTER: FC Copenhagen's Scottish defender #26 Scott McKenna (centre right) heads clear during the UEFA Champions League round of 16, second-leg, football match between Manchester City and FC Copenhagen on March 6, 2024. — AFP

va were among those to spend the 90 minutes on the bench to rest up ahead of the trip to Anfield. But City were still a class apart and aided on their way into the last eight by some comical Copenhagen defending.

Akanji made a sweet connection with Alvarez's outswinging corner but was given far too much room in the centre of the box to find the top corner. Worse was to come for the visitors as former Liverpool goalkeeper Kamil Grabara let a simple shot from Alvarez slip through his grasp. The 2,500 strong visiting support from Copenhagen refused to be downhearted as they kept a flat atmosphere at the Etihad going, and they had something to cheer on the half-hour mark.

Former Southampton and Celtic winger Elyounoussi drove forward with purpose and exchanged a slick one-two with Orri Oskarsson before firing into the far corner.

Haaland had been having a quiet night until he sprang into action in first-half stoppage time. The Norwegian was picked out by Rodri before chopping onto his favoured left foot and firing in at Grabara's near post. That took Haaland's total to 41 Champions League goals, matching the tally of City's all-time leading goalscorer Sergio Agueiro, but in just 37 appearances for three different clubs.

City took their foot off the gas in the second period and could have been punished but for some smart goalkeeping from Ederson to deny Magnus Mattsson. But Guardiola's men are rounding ominously into form for those trying to dethrone them in England and in Europe. City have won 18 and drawn two of their last 20 games in all competitions and remain the side to beat when the draw for the Champions League quarters and semi-finals takes place on March 15. — AFP