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**Ramadan Kareem**

Fajr	: 04:41
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## 255 hopefuls in Assembly race

Candidates include 14 women • 47 members of dissolved Assembly contesting polls

### Amiri Diwan thanks well-wishers



**KUWAIT:** The Amiri Diwan expressed gratitude to citizens and residents for congratulating HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Al-Sabah family on the occasion of Ramadan. The Diwan congratulated all citizens and residents on this holy month, wishing

unity and blessings for Kuwait. On Tuesday, HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal and the Al-Sabah family received heads of diplomatic missions and senior leaders in the army, interior ministry, National Guard and Fire Department, as well as citizens and residents on the occasion of Ramadan. — KUNA (See Page 3)

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** At the close of registration of candidates for the April 4 snap parliamentary elections, 255 candidates including 14 women have filed their nominations to run in the polls, the fourth in as many years. Forty-seven members out of 50 of the National Assembly dissolved by HH the Amir in February are seeking re-election and have urged Kuwaiti voters to turn out in large numbers and not be frustrated because of repeated elections.

As many as 25 former MPs from previous assemblies are also in the race for seats in the house. Two former speakers are also in the fray and they appear to be leading two loose and unofficial coalitions fighting for seats in the Assembly. The number of candidates is almost the same as the 252 candidates who filed to run in the June 6, 2023 elections, but way down from the 376 hopefuls who registered to contest the September 2022 elections at the close of registration.

But only 207 candidates eventually contested the June 6 polls after 45 candidates withdrew. A number of candidates are also expected to pull out of this year's race. Withdrawals close on March 28. The three ex-MPs who are not running are all from



**KUWAIT:** An employee of the department of election affairs closes the doors on the last day of registration for the upcoming National Assembly polls on March 13, 2024. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

the first constituency. Kuwait is divided into five electoral districts with each electing 10 members to the Assembly. Forty-seven candidates are running in the first constituency, 53 in the second, 37 in the third and as many as 68 in the fourth and 50 hopefuls in the fifth electoral district. Eight of the 14 female candidates are contesting in the third district.

A majority of candidates have focused on the need to bring back stability to Kuwait, an OPEC member that pumps more than

2.5 million barrels a day and has amassed over \$800 billion of reserves being invested by the country's sovereign wealth fund. But public services and the overall standard of living have deteriorated because of non-stop political crises between the government and MPs, resulting in the dissolution of the Assembly nine times since 2016 and three times since August 2022. In the meantime, almost 20 Cabinets were formed and four heads of state were replaced.

### RAMADAN KAREEM

#### Humility for Allah's sake

By Hassan Twaha Bwambale

**H**umility makes a believer accept and believe in the Infinite Greatness of Almighty Allah and makes him turn to Him sincerely by submitting to His commands, and by taking care of His rights and those of His servants. When Almighty Allah raises him in worldly status, the virtue of humility protects a believer from self-praise, pride and feelings of superiority over others. It makes him an individual whose only concern is the pleasure of Almighty Allah.

Even though being humble and confident are characteristics that we should acquire, we must be careful not to cross the line and trip into the sins of arrogance and self-praise. Almighty Allah tells us in the Noble Quran, translated as: "And the true and sincere servants of the Most Merciful God (Allah) are those who walk humbly upon the earth, and when the ignorant people address them harshly, they say (words of) peace." (Al-Furqan – the Criterion 25: 63)

Among the lessons we learn from the verse above is that when faced with ignorance or inappropriate behavior from others, true believers in Almighty Allah respond with words of peace. They do not allow the ignorance of others to provoke them into unwise and impulsive reactions.

Almighty Allah warned Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that had he been harsh in dealing with his followers, they would have disbanded away from him. This indicates the significance of humility in dealing with human beings as it is one of the virtues that softens hearts by Almighty Allah's Will. Almighty Allah says what can be translated as: "So, by mercy from Allah (O Muhammad), you were lenient with them. And had you been rude (in speech), and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded away from you..." (Al-Imran – the Family of Imran 3: 159)

Continued on Page 6

### Minister warns zero tolerance against drugs

**KUWAIT:** Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Acting Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah stressed the fight against illicit drugs must continue unabated. During a field tour of the General Department of Anti-Drug Trafficking on Tuesday, Sheikh Fahad urged security personnel to remain vigilant and double efforts to expose and dismantle drug smuggling gangs.

### Work resumes at Darwaza Sq after yearslong delay

By Passant Hisham

**KUWAIT:** Work on the Darwaza Al-Abdulrazzaq Square project resumed on Wednesday following a nearly five-year suspension under the leadership of Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Dr Noura Al-Mashaan.

Mashaan said the ministry of public works is keen to pursue the completion of the project under the guidance and

He appreciated the efforts of dedicated security personnel to serve national interests and protect the security of the homeland, according to a statement from the general directorate of security relations and media. Sheikh Fahad urged the security services to pursue the policy of zero tolerance in combatting all forms of crimes, particularly the narcotic trade.

During the tour, he was apprised of the statistics of seizures and arrests made by the General Dept of Anti-Drug Trafficking, the statement noted. Sheikh Fahad was accompanied by Director General of the Department Brig Mohammad Qabazard and a number of senior officials of the interior ministry.— KUNA

approval of the Cabinet to streamline project operations, especially after its prolonged suspension. She highlighted the strategic significance of the Darwaza tunnel's central location in Kuwait's capital, underlining the ministry's urgency to finish working on it as soon as possible.

Nonetheless, she emphasized the ministry's meticulous approach to ensure the tunnel's safe opening, prioritizing structural integrity and longevity. The repairs on the project involve both the upper and lower sections of the tunnel to guarantee comprehensive safety of the junction and facilitate transportation on the road. According to Mashaan, the ministry of public works prioritizes road repairs, already started by signing two contracts in the Capital governorate along with 18 other initiatives.



**KUWAIT:** Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Acting Interior Minister visits the General Dept of Anti-Drug Trafficking on March 12, 2024. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Minister of Public Works Noura Al-Mashaan and PART Director General Khaled Al-Osaimi visit the Darwaza Al-Abdulrazzaq Square project on March 13, 2024. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

### Hunger 'weapon of war' in Gaza amid 'war on children'

**GAZA:** Donor nations, aid agencies and charities pushed on with efforts Wednesday to rush food to war-torn Gaza by land, air and sea after the EU top diplomat said starvation had become "a weapon of war". The Zionist assault has caused mass civil-

ian deaths, reduced vast areas to a rubble-strewn wasteland and sparked warnings of looming famine in the Palestinian territory of 2.4 million people.

A Spanish charity vessel, the Open Arms, was on its way to Gaza from Cyprus, where it had set sail early Tuesday towing a barge with 200 tons of aid, in a first voyage meant to open a maritime corridor. The flow of aid trucks from Egypt into Gaza has slowed recently — a trend blamed on the Zionist entity and its security checks of cargo. About half a dozen Arab and Western nations have airdropped food parcels on parachutes



**GAZA:** Palestinian medics attend to a wounded girl at Al-Najjar Hospital in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip following Zionist bombardment on March 13, 2024. — AFP

Continued on Page 6



## Local

## PM receives Kuwaiti doctors returning from Gaza



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah received on Wednesday members of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society's medical team which returned recently from Gaza where they had gone on a mission to support relief efforts. His Highness the Prime Minister praised the team of volunteers, saying that the Kuwaiti doctors' team's mission is a source of pride for Kuwait. — KUNA

# Ramadan dispels stereotypes and negative portrayals of Muslims

## 'Muslims are encouraged to uplift those in need'

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Muslims are often portrayed in the media with negative stereotypes. However, it is important to recognize the kindness and good morals that are deeply rooted in the culture and traditions of many Muslims. This is especially evident during the holy month of Ramadan, which manifests the acts of kindness and good values that Islam teaches people all around the globe. This month provides a platform for Muslims to show their values and demonstrate the essence of goodness.

Abdullah Al-Hajry, a writer and researcher specializing in the history of nations and people with an interest in cultural and social matters, highlights the ethical qualities possessed by Muslims and Arabs, considering the holy month of Ramadan as a reflection of these qualities. For instance, the practice of fasting fosters a sense of responsibility and empathy towards those facing hardships, which in turn sparks inner beauty, leading Muslims to acts of kindness and generosity, whether through financial contributions, free food distribution or other charitable endeavors driven by spiritual growth.

Through such acts, Muslims manifest Islam's role

in enhancing individuals' ethical and moral character, emphasizing humanity, compassion and integrity. Hence, this month serves as a genuine display of beauty that transcends stereotypes while upholding high values.

Saadiya, an Islamic teacher, further elaborated on Muslims' acts of kindness through giving zakat and sadaqa. She emphasized how Muslims are encouraged to uplift those in need, which shows Islam's promotion of harmony and social justice. "The spirit of helping others extends beyond fasting and charitable giving as religious acts of kindness — it digs deeper, fostering selflessness consistently, not just during this month, but throughout their lives," she explained. She added that while the goodness of Islam is not limited to the holy month of Ramadan, this month still serves as a powerful and wide representation of Islamic values.



Abdullah Al-Hajry



## Minister reaffirms state's interest to support the youth

KUWAIT: Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, Youth Affairs, and Communications Affairs Dawood Maarafi reaffirmed the state's commitment to creating the right conditions for young people to grow in confidence, support, and ability to achieve their goals and make them a reality that advances the country's progress and prosperity. Minister Maarafi emphasized the importance of Kuwaiti Youth Day, celebrated on March 13 each year, as an opportunity to renew the covenant with ambitious youth.

The government is committed to providing opportunities and resources for future leaders and innovators, with the support of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the active follow-up of His Highness Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah, Al-Salem Al-Sabah, the Prime Minister. The Youth Public Authority is dedicated to youth development, empowerment, and rehabilitation, aiming to achieve their social, economic, sports, cultural, scientific, and technical aspirations.

The Authority plans to improve work, enhance education and training opportunities, and foster a pioneering environment that encourages creativity, innovation, and leadership, ensuring a successful future for the youth. Maarafi expressed gratitude to all young individuals who diligently strive to achieve their goals and contribute to their country, encouraging them to continue achieving success and taking responsibility for a prosperous future for Kuwait.

He invited every Kuwaiti youth with achievements, contributions, and community projects to apply for the sixth edition of the Kuwait Award for Excellence and Youth Creativity, which is sponsored by His Highness the Prime Minister, in various fields such as entrepreneurship, culture, literature, science, technology, arts, media, volunteer work, forensic sciences, environment, and sustainability through the website of the Authority at [www.youth.gov.kw](http://www.youth.gov.kw). — KUNA



## US ambassador and KUNA chief discuss cooperation

KUWAIT: Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Dr. Fatma Al-Salem, held talks on Wednesday with the US Ambassador to Kuwait, Karen Sasahara, on boosting media cooperation. The KUNA director general held the discussions with the ambassador during a meeting at her office, where they also exchanged views on various media issues of common concern.

Dr. Al-Salem affirmed her keenness on seeking to enhance media cooperation with sisterly and friendly states for serving the state's external message. For her part, the American ambassador lauded the freedoms in Kuwait and its open society, namely the distinguished social gathering halls, the diwanis, where citizens hold substantial dialogue and conversations on public issues. KUNA plays a significant



KUNA's Director General Dr Fatma Al-Salem holds talks with the US Ambassador to Kuwait Karen Sasahara. — KUNA photos

daily role in broadcasting news, she said, noting that journalism plays a crucial role in cementing ties among states. — KUNA

## Campaign raises awareness, warns against smoking

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: In line with the approval of Faiha as a healthy city in Kuwait, the National Campaign for Cancer Awareness (CAN) and the Kuwait Society for Preventing Smoking and Cancer (KSPSC) launched the contest "Health Without Smoking" in Faiha under the patronage of Faiha Mayor Mohammad Al-Hawas. KSPSC Chairman Dr. Khalid Al-Saleh said that eight diwanis agreed to participate in the event. The contest is aimed at establishing healthy diwanis that are free from the harmful effects of smoking.

The World Health Organization (WHO) said the "smoking pandemic" is one of the major health threats to the public around the world, as it kills more than eight million people each year. Also, more than seven million deaths are due to direct smoking, while 1.3 million deaths are as a result of passive smoking, which places responsibility on all to prevent smoking in closed areas, including diwanis, which is an integral part of Kuwaiti society's tradition.

Dr. Khalid Al-Saleh said the initiatives will help in implementing the law banning smoking in closed areas. There are more than 30 elements in tobacco that cause cancer, and smokers are 22 times more likely to get cancer. "Lung cancer is linked to smoking," he said, adding that the initiative will continue through the year in other areas.



Dr. Khalid Al-Saleh

## KRCS distributes 33,000 iftar meals to needy families

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) announced on Wednesday the distribution of 33,000 fasting iftar meals to needy families during the holy month of Ramadan. The secretary general of the association, Maha Al-Barjas, told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that this contribution comes from the association's role in meeting the needs of needy families and alleviating their suffering in this holy month. She stressed that this initiative embodies the spirit of solidarity and social synergy and the

need to extend a helping hand to needy families, stressing the keenness of the association annually in consolidating these humanitarian initiatives and projects.

She explained that the association has distributed breakfasts since the first day, as it is working to dedicate the concept of social volunteering and contributing to charitable initiatives during the month of Ramadan, both inside and outside Kuwait. Maha Al-Barjas expressed her thanks to the private sector, banks, citizens, and residents who took the initiative to donate through the association, stressing the importance of continuing to give for the success of the Ramadan charitable assistance program. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society distributes 33,000 iftar meals to needy families. — KUNA photos



# Amir, Al-Sabah family receive dignitaries



**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Al-Sabah family received on Tuesday Heads of diplomatic missions and senior leaders in the Army, Interior Ministry, National Guard and Fire Department as well as citizens and residents on the occasion of Ramadan. The reception reflected unity of the Kuwaiti people during these occasions. — KUNA

# Kuwait News Agency analyzes videos generated by OpenAI

## Sora: AI revolutionary text-to-video tool



AI imaginary shot of Nigeria's Lagos city in 2056.



Image of an astronaut produced by artificial intelligence. — KUNA photos



This shot was not taken by a drone. It is not a real place, but was produced with artificial intelligence.

**KUWAIT:** OpenAI has finally unveiled Sora, an artificial intelligence tool that transforms text instructions into video—another step in the AI realm. The launch of Sora, which means sky in Japanese, created an uproar amongst the media industry and social media in the US, while the Washington Post commented that this move would pave the way for producing high-quality video clips from scratch. Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) analyzed videos generated by OpenAI and showed high-definition (HD) minute-long clips, only produced by inserting texts.

OpenAI, backed by Microsoft, said Sora could generate videos from still photos in addition to adding visual content. It said Sora was in a testing phase to assess critical areas for harm or risk but was grateful to have access to a number of visual artists, designers, and filmmakers to give feedback to help develop the model to be most helpful for creative professionals. OpenAI CEO Sam Altman urged users outside OpenAI to present proposals on how to produce videos and to give the public an idea of the capabilities of AI. OpenAI invented the ChatGPT, GPT-4, and Dall-E.

It took a further step and offered Sora, giving the company another leap towards AI. Although AI-generated videos were already produced by tech giants Meta and Google in the past year, videos produced by Sora in terms of quality, accuracy, and length were at another level and

generated within a minute of the request. Sora produced a clip on the following text: a girl walking in a Tokyo street filled with colorful and warm lights and moving signs. The girl wears a black leather jacket, covering a long red dress and wearing black shoes. The girl carries a black purse, wears sunglasses, wears lipstick, and walks in a confident way on a wet street, reflecting lights from above. Many people walk in this street.

One of the complicated descriptions that Sora produced was a scene of the gold frenzy in California, US, in 1848, as well as a clip of an old lady blowing candles and archeologists discovering a plastic chair in the desert and taking extra care in cleaning it. Another challenging text was: Beautiful, snowy Tokyo city is bustling. The camera moves through the bustling city street, following several people enjoying the beautiful snowy weather and shopping at nearby stalls. Gorgeous sakura petals are flying through the wind along with snowflakes.

The Tokyo scene showed how Sora believed that these scenes were real and depicted accurate camera movement. Sora is another breakthrough in AI, revolving around algorithms processing huge quantities of data through network engineering, enabling machines to break AI barriers to go beyond self-learning to thinking, imagining, analyzing, visualizing, and listening to voices and generating reactions. Rehab Ismail, a multimedia pro-



fessor at the American University in Cairo (AUC), predicted Sora would make quick steps to digital media and replace existing programs used to produce videos, documentaries, and videographics.

"Journalists in newsrooms always look for new ways to produce videos and attract the public. And they already started producing AI photos and now we have videos ... the future is open to all possibilities," she told KUNA in an interview. "We need lots of experiments to learn how to finess the new skill and use it in newsrooms. In a short time this technology will be the normal even for the regular user," she said. "The world is changing remarkably fast which adds ad-

ditional responsibilities on journalists to develop their skills in order to absorb this change," added Ismail.

Media organizations, she added, were worried about this expansion of technology, particularly regarding "intellectual property," one of the pressing questions about the spread of AI. Ismail said there "are no real laws organizing intellectual property rights when we talk about the content of AI products. "Training AI to use the work of others without compensating them is a big problem that needs intensive research by academic and media institutions," she added.

There are other challenges facing the public as well including misinforma-

tion and disinformation, facing a dilemma on what to believe. Ahmad Esmat, a professor of information technology at AUC, voiced concern that Sora would contribute to spread of "deepfake," especially during elections and conflicts. Speaking to KUNA, Esmat, a specialist in verifying digital information, warned media institutions because "flood of AI" lacked proper investments aimed at verifying the contents.

Experts said humanity has only seen a fraction of what AI could do. "I did not expect to see this level of ongoing video production in two or three years from now," Ted Underwood, an information technology professor at the University of Illinois, told the Washington Post, reacting to the capabilities of Sora. A new study, prepared by tens of researchers in workshops hosted by Chatham House, expected AI to dominate news production and digital content by 2026.

The study did not recommend a confrontation with AI but using it to make media more efficient, amidst regional and international conflicts affecting media jobs worldwide. The NBC News Channel expected Sora to affect around 25 percent of the video and movie industries in the US in 2026. Observers said it was hard to predict the influence of AI on the future of media but anticipate that this year will be decisive in the spread of AI applications, which a few years ago were only fantasies. — KUNA

## Ramadan health tips



## Limit caffeine

Reduce intake of caffeinated beverages to prevent dehydration and promote restful sleep. Caffeine is a diuretic, meaning it increases urine production and can lead to dehydration, especially during fasting hours. Limiting caffeine can help you stay hydrated and avoid disruptions to your sleep schedule.

## Don't skip suhoor

Eat a nutritious pre-dawn meal to provide sustained energy for the day ahead. Suhoor helps replenish your energy stores and provides essential nutrients to keep you feeling alert and focused throughout the fasting period.

## Choose lean proteins

Include lean meats, poultry, fish, and plant-based proteins to support muscle repair and growth. Protein is essential for maintaining muscle mass and promoting feelings of fullness, helping you stay satisfied and energized throughout the day.

## Listen to your body

Pay attention to hunger and fullness cues to avoid overeating or undereating during meals. Eating mindfully allows you to tune in to your body's signals and eat according to your body's needs, rather than external cues or emotions.

## KUWAIT HERITAGE



KUWAIT: Muslims prepare for the hajj season in this file photo. The half lorry is used to transport pilgrims' belongings from Fahaheel to the holy land. — Photo from the KOC archive, provided by Mahmoud Zakaria, heritage researcher at the ministry of information.

# Arabs urge int'l community to protect Palestinian women

## Kuwait's relief aid plane lands in Jordan

**NEW YORK:** The Arab League has urged the international community to support Palestinian women and provide protection to them in the face of the continued Zionist occupation violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. This came at a symposium co-organized by the League and the UN Women Regional Office for the Arab States (ROAS) on the sidelines of the 68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Speaking before the event, Arab League Assistant Secretary General Ambassador Haifa Abu Ghazaleh urged backing Palestinian women during their struggle.

She stressed the need to shed light on the Zionist crimes against humanity, women, and girls in the Gaza Strip, saying that disastrous consequences for women in the Strip caused by Zionist occupation should be investigated. Kirsi Madi, UN Assistant Secretary-General and UN Women Deputy Executive Director for Resource Management, Sustainability, and Partnerships, called on all to provide protection to women during the armed conflicts to help achieve an immediate ceasefire in the Strip to establish justice and preserve the rights of women to a life free from violence.

For her part, Amal Hamad, Palestinian Minister of Women Affairs, said the crimes in the Palestinian territories exposed the claims of the "civilized" world. Palestinian women have paid a heavy price due to the genocide committed by the Zionist occupation forces under the watchful eyes of the world and its human rights organizations. Director of ROAS of the UN Development Program Abdullah Al-Dardiri considered women in Gaza "the decisive cornerstone" of their families' ability to steadfastness, saying that they are primary caregivers and they maintain life in Gaza by providing food, caring for the sick, or supporting people with disabilities.

The ongoing war caused unlimited harm to women, although they still play a key role in economic and social recovery in the Strip, he noted. Greta Gunnarsdottir, Director of the UNRWA Representative Office in New York, highlighted the risks to women and called for an immediate ceasefire, which can only provide protection to civilians, including women.

Finally, the head of the AL mission to the UN, Ambassador Majid Abdelfattah, said the UN Security Council is paralyzed due to ongoing geopolitical shocks, which prevented reaching a ceasefire after five months of the start of the Zionist occupation. The event featured some dignitaries from the Arab states, representatives, and experts tasked with women's affairs across the globe.

Meanwhile, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Jordan, Hamad Al-Marri, discussed with the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Jordanian Hashemite Charitable Organization, Prince Rashid bin Al-Hassan, on Tuesday the mechanism for delivering Kuwaiti humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. In remarks to KUNA, the ambassador said that the two sides discussed the delivery of Kuwaiti humanitarian and relief aid into Gaza and ensuring its full and comprehensive access to the Strip. He stressed that the Jordanian Hashemite Charitable Organization is responsible for implementing the process of delivering humanitarian and relief aid to the Gaza Strip from the Jordanian side and is concerned with



Kuwaiti Ambassador to Jordan, Hamad Al-Marri meets Prince Rashid bin Al-Hassan.

coordination and cooperation in this regard.

## Relief aid plane

Kuwait's 48th plane, loaded with relief supplies for Palestinians, arrived at Jordan's Maraka International Airport, carrying 45 tons of food to be distributed in Gaza. Kuwait's Counsellor in Jordan, Nasser Al-Mutairi, Assistant Military Attache at Kuwait's Embassy in Jordan, Brigadier General Mutlaq Al-Jufaidan, and other top officials welcomed the plane at the airport. Deputy Director General of the Kuwait Society for Relief (KSR), Omar Al-Thuwaini, said in a statement to KUNA after the plane's arrival that this food aid comes within a campaign launched by KSR in cooperation with various humanitarian charities.

Various Kuwaiti organizations are participating in this campaign, under the supervision of the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defense, Health, Social Affairs, and the Kuwaiti Air Force, in cooperation with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, the Kuwait Society for Relief, the Al-Salam Society for Humanitarian and Charitable Works, and other humanitarian institutions. — KUNA



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Kuwait's Gaza relief aid plane lands in Jordan. — KUNA



Air pollution makes Thai pupils ill

## White House announces Ukraine aid



GEORGIA/NEW HAMPSHIRE: Former US President and 2024 presidential hopeful Donald Trump speaks during a campaign event in Rome, Georgia, on March 9, 2024. (Right) US President Joe Biden speaks during a campaign field office opening. — AFP photos

# Trump, Biden set for rematch

## Rivals clinch enough delegates to get party nominations in 2024 race

ATLANTA: Joe Biden and rival Donald Trump each won enough delegates Tuesday to clinch their party nominations in the 2024 presidential race, all but assuring a rematch and setting up one of the longest election campaigns in US history.

The results in four statewide elections Tuesday, the latest in the months-long march to determine the Democratic and Republican party flagbearers, were essentially a foregone conclusion as incumbent Biden and former president Trump had already seen off all primary challengers.

Biden crossed the threshold of 1,968 delegates needed when he won Georgia — a US swing state where Trump faces trial over an alleged conspiracy to steal the last election.

Trump's victory in Washington helped him secure the 1,215 delegates needed to earn the Republican nomination — and to propel him and his Make America Great Again movement back into the cauldron of a presidential race.

The delegates — members of party leadership and other loyalists — will attend the national conventions where they formally select their party's presidential nominee.

As the pair head for a rematch of their 2020 showdown, they both unleashed harsh words for one another to set the stage for what promises to be a bitter campaign.

"I am honored that the broad coalition of voters representing the rich diversity of the Democratic Party across the country have put their faith in me once again to lead our party — and our country — in a moment when the threat Trump poses is greater than ever," Biden said in a statement, assailing his rival's "campaign of resentment, revenge, and retribution."

Georgia, Mississippi, Washington and Hawaii — the Pacific island state where polls were to close hours later on Tuesday — were offering a combined 161 delegates on the Republican side, and unopposed Trump needed 137 of those to put the race mathematically beyond reach.

Trump's remarkable sweep of nearly all GOP state primaries to date led him to essentially secure the nomination far earlier than most candidates in previous campaigns, and it assures an extremely lengthy, nearly eight-month slog for the White House being contested by the two oldest men ever to begin their presidencies.

Trump, who faces multiple criminal indictments in cases that to date have failed to derail his 2024 campaign, insisted in a victory statement that the Republican Party is strong and united behind him. "Now we have to get back to work because we have the worst president in the history of our country — his name is Joe Biden, sometimes referred to as crooked Joe

Biden — and he must be defeated," Trump said in a video shared on social media platform X.

"Our nation is failing, we're a nation that is in serious decline ... we're considered almost a joke," Trump added. "We have to win an election and we should win it by a lot because there's never been anybody worse at doing that job than Joe Biden," he told his supporters.

### 'Horror show'

Trump is campaigning on sweeping reform of what he calls Biden's "horror show" immigration policies, despite successfully pressuring Republicans to block the toughest package of border security negotiated in Congress for decades.

The issue has become a flashpoint in Georgia — which was long reliably Republican but has become more competitive and is now seen as crucial to any candidate's White House ambitions — due to the recent murder of nursing student Laken Riley, allegedly by an undocumented migrant.

"We're looking at open borders and we're looking at inflation. Those two issues (have) already had people pretty agitated in Georgia," Republican Brad Raffensperger, the state's top elections official, told Fox News. "But that brutal murder ... just really took it to a whole different level. People are furious here in Georgia."

The contests have renewed scrutiny of Trump's effort to overturn the 2020 election in Georgia — a southern state he lost to Biden by fewer than 12,000 votes — as he gears up for a third White House run. The push led to one of the four indictments he faces, setting the stage for a year of unprecedented drama as the 77-year-old tries to juggle multiple court appearances and another election campaign.

The first Republican presidential candidate to lose Georgia in almost three decades, Trump claimed foul play but several recounts and numerous lawsuits failed to turn up any evidence of significant voter fraud anywhere in the country.

On the Democratic side, Biden, like most incumbents, has faced a relaxed primary season — easily seeing off two candidates who have consistently polled in single digits. But he faces concerns about his age and issues like inflation, as well as low approval ratings, elements Trump's team has sought to seize on during the campaign.

Biden essentially raised the curtain on his re-election campaign last week during his set-piece State of the Union speech in which he sought to reassure voters about his age and launched a scorching attack on his "dangerous" election rival. Polls show Americans are largely dreading a rematch between the two men. — AFP

## Famine stalks war-torn Sudan during Ramadan

PORT SUDAN: Sudan this week entered its second straight Ramadan in the throes of a deadly war that has left much of the country gripped by the specter of famine.

"Ramadan? We've been doing that for months!" said Khartoum resident Othman Idriss, referring to the daytime fast observed by the faithful during the Muslim holy month.

"We have been eating one meal a day for months and we no longer even have the means to prepare it ourselves," he told AFP in a phone call. "They serve it to us in a soup kitchen organized in a mosque."

Before the war erupted on April 15, towards the end of last year's Ramadan, Idriss ran a small food store. But since the fighting between rival generals turned the capital's streets into a bloody war zone, he has been unable to return to the shop or the neighborhood of the capital where it once stood.

The nearly 11-month war, which pits the regular army of General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan against the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) of his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, has killed tens of thousands, displaced millions and reduced much of the country's infrastructure to rubble.

In North Kordofan state, where the RSF holds sway, Mohammed Soleiman insists on keeping his shop in the city of Al-Rahad open even though customers are few and far between. The paramilitaries "charge taxes on all the trucks, so the prices go up and there are fewer and fewer products arriving," Soleiman told AFP.



GEDAREF: Muslim devotees wait to break their fast at a courtyard during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan in Gedaref on March 12, 2024. — AFP

Until recently, Imad Mohammed was able to use a banking app to receive cash transfers from relatives abroad to help feed his family. Despite a currency in freefall and triple-digit inflation even before the war broke out, the app had served as a lifeline to thousands, allowing them to make transfers and purchases and to receive cash.

But weeks ago, even that last financial safety net was lost, when telecommunications were suddenly cut in several states and cities. "For 11 months, I have received no salary," said Mohammed, a teacher from Wad Madani, south of Khartoum.

Some 95 percent of Rohingya households in Bangladesh are considered vulnerable and remain dependent on humanitarian assistance, the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) pointed out in a statement. "International solidarity with Bangladesh and refugee protection is needed more than ever as the conflict in Myanmar escalates," it said.

Last year, the UN and its partners asked countries to provide \$876 million to help those caught up in the Rohingya refugee crisis. But in the end, only \$440 million — barely half the requested amount — was provided.

With the humanitarian crisis largely out of the international spotlight, UNHCR warned that significant funding shortfalls in recent years had had "serious implications". Many of the refugees were struggling to meet their basic needs, it warned, insisting that "sustained assistance is critically and urgently needed".

More than 75 percent of the refugee population receiving aid are women and children, it said, cautioning that they are facing "heightened risks of abuse, exploitation and gender-based violence". "More than

half of the refugees in the camps are under 18, languishing amidst limited opportunities for education, skills-building and livelihoods," it said.

The UN-led joint response plan to the crisis brings together 117 partners, nearly half of them Bangladeshi organizations. It will aim to help around one million Rohingya refugees in the Cox's Bazar camps and on the island of Bhasan Char, along with nearly 350,000 people from host communities.

The money will be used to fund food, shelter, health care, drinking water access, protection services, education and other assistance, the UN said. Conditions in the overcrowded camps in Bangladesh, where lawlessness is rampant, have seen a growing number of Rohingya attempt dangerous and often deadly sea voyages headed for Malaysia and Indonesia.

There is, meanwhile, little progress towards repatriating the refugees to Myanmar, which is facing a UN genocide probe over the 2017 exodus. And since then, the country's military junta seized power in a 2021 coup that ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's democratically-elected government. — AFP

## New law to clear names of wronged UK postmasters

LONDON: Britain's government was set to unveil legislation Wednesday to exonerate hundreds of UK Post Office workers wrongly prosecuted over faulty computer software, in one of the country's worst miscarriages of justice.

Parliament is expected to pass into law the blanket exonerations for offences including theft and false accounting by the summer, with the wrongful convictions quashed shortly afterwards.

"We are overturning hundreds of convictions en bloc," Post Office minister Kevin Hollinrake told Sky News, describing the move as "completely unprecedented".

More than 700 people running small local post offices received criminal convictions between 1999 and 2015 after the faulty Horizon accounting software made it appear that money had gone missing from their branches.

Many ended up bankrupt and shunned by their communities. Some were jailed. At least four people took their own lives. Conservative Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said he understood nothing could "make up for what they've been through" but he hoped the legislation marked an "important step forward in finally clearing their names".

"We owe it to the victims of this scandal, who have had their lives and livelihoods callously torn apart, to deliver the justice they've fought so long and hard for," he said in a statement.

The government said it would also act to improve the compensation available to different groups of sub-postmasters.

Convicted sub-postmasters will receive up to £600,000 (£767,000), while those not actually convicted but still badly affected by the false accusations made by the Post Office will be entitled to a redress payment of £75,000. Kevan Jones, a main opposition Labour Party MP who campaigned for the sub-postmasters, welcomed the new Post Office Offences bill as "great news".

The government said it would push the bill through parliament quickly, with the aim of it becoming law "as soon as possible ahead of the summer recess in late July".

The legislation will cover England and Wales. The devolved governments in Scotland and Northern Ireland are expected to introduce their own plans.

A four-part television drama "Mr Bates vs the Post Office", shown in early January, created a public outcry and galvanized government over the long-running scandal. The series told the story of a group of sub-postmasters wrongly accused and their "David and Goliath" fightback led by one of them, Alan Bates. — AFP

## UN seeking more than \$850m for Rohingya refugees

GENEVA: The UN on Wednesday called for increased support for the many Rohingya refugees languishing in camps in Bangladesh, where funding shortfalls have left many without enough food or other aid.

In its annual response plan to the crisis, the United Nations appealed for \$852.4 million to provide desperately-needed assistance this year to the mostly Muslim Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and their host communities.

Bangladesh is home to around a million members of the mostly stateless minority, many of whom fled a 2017 military crackdown in Myanmar, where the conflict on the ground has continued to escalate.

## International

# White House announces Ukraine aid

## Biden bypasses Republican-controlled Congress using money saved on other purchases

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden announced on Tuesday a \$300 million emergency weapons package to prop up Ukraine while Congress blocks further aid, as Poland's leaders visited the White House to warn of the growing threat from Russia.

Biden said the stopgap shipment of missiles, shells and ammunition for Kyiv was "not nearly enough" and would run out in a couple of weeks, leaving Ukraine outgunned by Russian President Vladimir Putin's invading forces.

The Democrat urged Republicans to stop blocking his larger, \$60 billion aid package for Ukraine, which has been caught up in a bitter partisan fight ahead of a likely election rematch against Donald Trump in November. "We must act before it literally is too late," said Biden, 81, as he met Poland's President Andrzej Duda and Prime Minister Donald Tusk at the White House.

"Russia won't stop at Ukraine. Putin will keep going, putting Europe, the United States and the entire free world at risk," added Biden, backed by Polish and US flags and flanked by his top military and diplomatic officials.

The White House said the \$300 million package, the first since December, was made possible by using money that the Pentagon has saved on other purchases, thus allowing Biden to bypass the Republican-controlled House of Representatives.

### 'Out of time'

But White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said Ukraine's battle was now in one of its most perilous phases since Russia's February 2022 invasion. Moscow has made a series of recent gains in eastern Ukraine after months of stalemate, sparking growing Western fears that it could be nearing a breakthrough as the war enters its third year.

Sullivan said the \$300 million emergency package was "nowhere near enough to meet Ukraine's battlefield needs and it will not prevent Ukraine from running out of ammunition in the weeks to come." The shipment would include long-range US-made HIMARS rockets, anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons, artillery shells and small arms ammunition, the Pentagon said.

The head of the Central Intelligence Agency warned separately of the price of inaction. "Ukraine is not running out of courage and tenacity — they're running out of ammunition. And we're running out of



MAKIIVKA: Local residents clear rubble of ruined houses following shelling on the settlement of Hanzhenkova on the outskirts of Makiivka (Makeyevka), Russian-controlled Ukraine. — AFP

time to help them," CIA Director William Burns told Congress. Poland, which borders Ukraine and hosted around one million refugees from the war, is among the NATO allies that have been watching the paralysis in Washington with alarm.

### 'Russian imperialism'

Allies have also been concerned by recent threats by Trump to cut funding for Kyiv if elected in November. He has also encouraged Russia to invade NATO countries that fail to meet defense spending goals. The Polish leaders were visiting on the 25th

anniversary of the day that Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary joined NATO, less than a decade after emerging from Soviet control. "The only message we should send to Moscow is that the West is united more than ever before when it comes to Ukraine," Polish Premier Tusk told reporters.

During the Polish leaders' visit, the US State Department said it was approving nearly \$3.5 billion in missile sales to Poland. President Duda said that NATO members should increase their defense spending to three percent of GDP from the current target of two percent in response to Russia's war

in Ukraine. Poland spends the most of any nation in the Western defense alliance — around four percent — while the United States spends 3.5 percent. "Russian imperialism today must not be allowed to disrupt this stability and peaceful existence of Europe," Duda told reporters.

Pro-EU Premier Tusk meanwhile tried to ease fears that his running feud with the right-wing Polish president would affect Warsaw's commitment to Ukraine. "Poland will be a solid and lasting member of the transatlantic community no matter who wins the elections in our country," Tusk said. — AFP

## Japan space rocket explodes seconds after launch

TOKYO: A rocket made by a Japanese company exploded seconds after launch on Wednesday, in a spectacular failure for the start-up's bid to put a satellite into orbit. Tokyo-based Space One's 18-metre (60-foot) Kairos rocket blasted off in the coastal Wakayama region of western Japan, carrying a small government test satellite.

But around five seconds later, the solid-fuel rocket erupted in fire, sending white smoke billowing around the remote mountainous area as orange flames raged on the ground, live footage showed. Space One said it had taken the decision to "abort the flight" and details were being investigated.

"We want to accept this outcome in a forward-looking manner and embark on our next challenge," company president Masakazu Toyoda told reporters, asserting that Space One does not use the term "failure". The firm wishes to "contribute to the expansion of space-related services" through successful satellite launches by its rockets in the future, he added.

Burning debris fell onto the surrounding slopes as sprinklers began spraying water, in dramatic scenes watched by hundreds of spectators gathered at public viewing areas including a nearby waterfront.

Private companies like Space One are playing an increasingly important role in space exploration worldwide. Last month a Houston-based company landed America's first spaceship on the Moon in more than 50 years, and rockets made by Elon Musk's SpaceX have come to be heavily relied upon by NASA. But failures are rife, and last year another



KUSHIMOTO: Smoke and fire fill the horizon in this frame grab taken from online footage broadcast by Wakayama Telecasting Corp after a small rocket exploded after it was launched by Tokyo-based startup Space One. — AFP

Japanese start-up, ispace, tried in vain to become the first private company to land on the Moon. The company said it had lost communication with its craft in what it described as a "hard landing".

### 'Didn't even imagine'

Space One is hoping to become Japan's first private firm to put a satellite into orbit. The plan had been for Kairos — an ancient Greek word meaning "the right moment" — to do so around 51 minutes after take-off on Wednesday morning.

The launch had already reportedly been postponed five times due to parts shortages and other problems, most recently on Saturday. The mayor of Kushimoto, the district in Wakayama where Space One's launch site Spaceport Kii is located, voiced his surprise and disappointment. "I didn't even imagine an outcome like this," Katsumasa Tashima told reporters shortly after the explosion. The area and its 15,000 residents "will continue to support Space One," he said. "We want to continue to offer

our help so that the first rocket will have a successful launch." Space One was established in 2018 by a team of major Japanese tech businesses, including Canon Electronics, IHI Aerospace, construction firm Shimizu and the government-owned Development Bank of Japan. The failure fueled a sell-off of their shares, with Canon Electronics ending the day down 7.45 percent. Last July, another Japanese rocket engine, the solid-fuel Epsilon S, exploded during a test around 50 seconds after ignition. That was one in a string of failures for the country's space agency JAXA, including launch attempts for its next-generation H3 rocket.

JAXA eventually managed a successful blast-off last month for the H3, its new flagship rocket that has been mooted as a rival to SpaceX's Falcon 9. That followed Japan's successful landing in January of an unmanned probe on the Moon — albeit at a wacky angle — making it just the fifth country to achieve a "soft landing" on the lunar surface. — AFP

## Putin boasts nuclear weapons 'more advanced' than US

MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday lauded Moscow's nuclear arsenal and warned that he was ready to deploy the weapons if Russia's sovereignty was threatened.

The Kremlin has touted its nuclear prowess throughout its two-year offensive in Ukraine, last month warning Western countries there was a "real" risk of nuclear catastrophe if they escalated the conflict. Putin's browbeating rhetoric comes just days ahead of elections in Russia that are all but guaranteed to hand him another six years in power and as his military posts gains in Ukraine. "Our triad, the nuclear triad, it is more modern than any other triad. Only we and the Americans actually have such triads. And we have advanced much more here," Putin said in a wide-ranging interview with state media.

The "triad" refers to Russia's three-pronged arsenal of weapons launched from land, sea and air. "We are ready to use weapons, including any weapons — including the weapons you mentioned — if it is a question of the existence of the Russian state or damage to our sovereignty and independence," Putin added in the interview that aired on Wednesday.

The Russian leader also dismissed recent comments by French leader Emmanuel Macron, who last month declined to rule out putting boots on the ground, a significant shift in rhetoric as Ukraine struggles on the battlefield. "The fact is that the militaries of Western countries have been present in Ukraine for a long time," the Russian leader claimed, referring to what the Kremlin says are mercenaries. — AFP

## Humility for Allah's sake...

Continued from Page 1

Once Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) noticed that one of his Companions who was fearlessly brave at war and used to kill many enemy invaders, had started feeling superior to those of lesser achievements than him. The Prophet (PBUH) told him: "You are not blessed with victory nor ample sustenance except by treating well the weak (and the poor) among you who, in turn, pray for you and their supplication is accepted (by Allah) directly." (Al-Bukhari # 2, 896) On the same note, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) used to urge his Companions to seek for him the poor and the weak and to treat them well because that was one of the reasons for them to enjoy victory from Almighty Allah and to be blessed with abundant means of livelihood. (Sahih Al-Targheeb # 3, 206 + Sahih At-Tirmidhi # 1, 702)

Arrogance is among the characteristics of the people of Hell: Ha'ritha bin Wahb Al-Khuzai (RA) narrated that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) asked his Companions: "May I tell you of the people of Paradise?" They replied, "Yes, O Allah's Messenger." He said, "Every weak, poor and humble person whom people look down upon, but if he swears on something, (Almighty) Allah would fulfill his oath." Then (conversely), he asked them: "Shall I tell you of the (miserable) dwellers of the Hellfire?" They replied in the affirmative. He said, "Every cruel, greedy and stingy person who is arrogant, immoral, argumentative, and saunters proudly." (Al-Bukhari # 2, 853)

A rare event that exemplified Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) humility: Anas bin Ma'lik (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) used

to have a she-camel called Al-Adh'ba'a, which was never surpassed by any camel or according to a sub-narrator, it would hardly be surpassed in a race. Once a bedouin came riding a young camel that surpassed it (ie, Al-Adh'ba'a) in a race. The Muslims were very upset to see that happen. Noticing how upset they were, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, translated as: "It is Allah's Law that nothing rises high in this world except that He brings it down." (Al-Bukhari # 2, 872)

In the above incident, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) exhibited the highest degree of sportsmanship. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was really the epitome of virtues, good morals and manners, among them humility. Taking time to stop and remember what you have to be grateful for is among the good ways to cultivate a humble and positive frame of mind.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) comforts a man: Abu Masoud (RA) narrated that a man approached Allah's Messenger (PBUH) and started talking to him while trembling with awe and fear. The Prophet (PBUH) told him, translated as: "Take it easy; I am just a man whose mother used to eat dried meat." (Al-Albani rated it as sahih in Sahih Ibn Ma'jah # 2, 693)

It's normal that some people, when they talk to a high-ranking official or a person of high caliber, feel uneasy and start to tremble. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) wanted to send a message across that he is not like some people who enjoy when those deemed inferior to them talk to them while trembling. Indeed, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) came as a mercy to all Allah's creatures.

In conclusion, humility begins with accepting who we are and what makes us human. As a result of this, you gain control over your attitude and outlook on life. Being humble is an important life skill and an important Islamic value as well. — Courtesy of Kuwaiti Society for Cultural Dialogue

## Hunger 'weapon of war' in Gaza amid...

Continued from Page 1

into Gaza, and Morocco has sent a planeload of relief supplies via the Zionist entity's Ben Gurion airport. The UN World Food Programme, trying an alternative land route from the Zionist entity, sent an initial six aid trucks Tuesday into worst-hit northern Gaza, through a gate in the security fence, the Zionist army said.

The WFP said it had "delivered enough food for 25,000 people" and demanded that, "with people in northern Gaza on the brink of famine, we need deliveries every day. We need entry points directly into the north." The European Union's foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell told the UN Security Council on Tuesday that the humanitarian crisis "is man-made." "If we look at alternative ways to provide support, it's because the land crossings have been artificially closed," he said, charging that "starvation is being used as a weapon of war".

More children have been reported killed in the war raging in Gaza than in four years of conflict around the world, the head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees said Tuesday. "Staggering. The number of children reported killed in just over 4 months in #Gaza is higher than the number of children killed in 4 years of wars around the world combined," Philippe Lazzarini said on X, formerly Twitter.

His post referenced United Nations numbers showing that 12,193 children had been killed in conflicts worldwide between 2019 and 2022. It compared that to reports from the health ministry in Gaza indicating that more than 12,300 children died in the Palestinian

territory between last October and the end of February. "This war is a war on children. It is a war on their childhood and their future," Lazzarini said.

The Zionist entity's retaliatory bombardment and ground offensive have killed 31,272 Palestinians in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry. At least 88 people were killed over the past 24 hours, it said, adding that "dozens of missing persons are still under the rubble".

The United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees said one of its aid warehouses in Gaza was "hit" on Wednesday, wounding scores of people. "We can confirm that an UNRWA warehouse/distribution center in Rafah (southern Gaza) has been hit," agency spokeswoman Juliette Touma told AFP, adding there were "scores injured". The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said four people were killed in the "bombing of the warehouse".

Weeks of talks involving US, Qatari and Egyptian mediators had aimed to bring a truce and hostage release deal before the start of the holy month of Ramadan, but missed the Monday deadline. Qatari foreign ministry spokesman Majed Al-Ansari said that, although talks continued, "we are not near a deal".

Gaza's dire food shortages after more than five months of war and siege have killed 27 people through malnutrition and dehydration, most of them children, according to the Gaza health ministry. As aid agencies warn the truck deliveries and airdrops fall far short of meeting the desperate need, European nations and the United States have announced plans to send more relief goods by sea.

US President Joe Biden last week announced plans for the military to build a pier on Gaza's coast, and four US Army vessels left a base in Virginia on Tuesday carrying about 100 soldiers and equipment. The offshore platform and pier are expected to be up and running "at the 60-day mark", US Army Brigadier General Brad Hinson told journalists. — AFP

## International

# Air pollution make Thai pupils ill

## Children face greatest long-term damage risk from pollution but not all suffer equally

**BANGKOK:** Hundreds of Thai children strain to sing the national anthem, reedy voices and fragile lungs competing against eight lanes of belching traffic next to their school's open atrium in central Bangkok. Pupils at Suan Lumphini School assemble each morning under a colored flag indicating the day's air quality — red for worst, yellow for second worst, blue for best.

Thailand registers dire air pollution levels annually — its cities topping the world's most polluted for days last year — and children face the greatest risk of long-term damage to their respiratory systems.

Laliphat Prakhom, who works as a maid, said it has already made her eight-year-old daughter sick. "I always try to make her wear a mask. I tell her to keep the mask on at all times and to avoid going outside," she told AFP while waiting for her child outside Suan Lumphini. Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin has promised to tackle the issue, with his cabinet in January approving a bill aimed at tackling dangerous levels of PM2.5 — particles so tiny they can enter the bloodstream. But in the meantime, residents must endure.

Nanthan Hajjub said his 11-year-old son has developed a sporadic cough. "I'm worried about the pollution, and the effect it is having on his respiratory system," the 45-year-old business owner said. "I want the people in charge to take better care of the situation."

### 'Clean Room'

Not all children suffer equally. Bangkok's elite private international schools enjoy air purifiers and filtration systems in classrooms, but public establishments like Suan Lumphini must do without them. The school is now part of a pollution study by Chulalongkorn Univer-

sity which has fitted out a single classroom with a purifying air-conditioning unit, known as a "clean room".

The program — one of four rolled out at schools in highly polluted areas — monitors the air and filters some of the harmful microscopic particles. School head Suphatpong Anuchitsopapan is concerned that not enough is being done to address the issue, saying "pollution makes students weaker". "If children have good health during their studies, then they will give back to society in the future," he said.

Children are at higher risk from air pollution due to several factors, according to Teerachai Annuaylojaroen from the University of Phayao's School of Energy and Environment. Not only are their still-developing bodies more susceptible to damage, but they also breathe faster than adults — inhaling "more pollutants", he said.

The World Health Organization warns that as well as damaging children's respiratory systems, air pollution also puts them at higher risk of cancer and can stunt the development of their brains. Teerachai said while "clean rooms" provided a safe space inside schools, they were only a "preliminary solution to the issue."

While there are no statistics on children hospitalized from pollution, the National Economic and Social Development Council warned this month that PM2.5 was a significant public health threat. Between January and February this year some 910,000 people were registered unwell thanks to pollution, said the council, which advises the government.

### 'All I can do'

Back at the school, teacher Jiraporn Sukprasert



**BANGKOK:** This photo taken on January 22, 2024 shows pupils wearing face masks walking past a poster about PM2.5 pollution particles. — AFP photos

has embraced her 'clean room'. The 51-year-old has been teaching for almost a decade, most recently the youngest kindergarten class which is equipped with the school's purifying AC system. "Last week, (the air quality) was ranked in red and orange all week," she said, worried for the health of her students, mostly kids under four. Her pupils overheat if they keep the windows sealed shut, she said, so they have to let in a breeze — as well as the polluted air. With the air purifier running, pollution levels drop after 30 min-

utes. "I want every classroom to be like this. It helps prevent children (from) getting sick," said Jiraporn. But business owner Bounleua Boriham, whose eight-year-old daughter is not taught in the "clean room", is worried about what to do when fog engulfs the Thai capital. "The children don't really understand what's happening — they just wonder why their throats are sore and why they are coughing," he told AFP. "I always try to have her wear a mask," he said. "That's all I can do." — AFP

## Poo bags, trackers: Nepal orders new Everest rules

**KATHMANDU, Nepal:** Nepal has ordered Everest mountaineers to carry mandatory trackers after one of the deadliest seasons last year — and remove their excrement using compostable bags similar to those used for dog waste.

Eighteen climbers were killed last year, including at least five bodies unrecovered on the highest mountain in the world, where authorities are keen to improve safety as well as clean up a sacred peak where tons of trash have been dumped.

GPS trackers are already used by many professional climbers, helping people monitor their progress on the peak, which is important for both security and the sponsors following the climb.

For the spring climbing season, which begins this month and runs to May, Nepal is expected to require less powerful but smaller passive trackers, which can be easily sewn into a jacket and require no power to function. They can be tracked by a handheld detector around 20 meters (66 feet) through packed snow, and several times that in the air.

Enforcing their use will help locate people in case of an accident, officials said. "The trackers are mandatory for climbers this year, so that if there is an accident their location can be accurately identified," Rakesh Gurung, director of mountaineering at Nepal's Tourism Department, told AFP on Tuesday.

The rapid growth of the climbing industry has created fierce competition among companies for business, and also raised fears that some are cutting corners on safety. With around 600 climbers and guides reaching the top in 2023, the local rural municipality of Everest has also introduced a slew of new regulations, including mandatory poo bags to be used above base camp.

Tons of rubbish — including empty cans, bottles and gas canisters, discarded climbing gear, and plastic and human waste — litter the mountain, which has been dubbed the "highest dumpster in the world".

### 'Polluted'

"Our mountains are getting polluted as well as our water sources," said Mingma Chiri Sherpa, the chairman of Khumbu Pasang Lhamu rural municipality. "The climbers must use biodegradable bags above the base camp for their waste so it can be properly disposed of on their return," he said.

At base camp, climbers use toilets with barrels to collect waste. But at higher levels, in the freezing conditions where ice and rock make it difficult to bury, excrement has previously been simply abandoned. That poses a health risk, especially with climbers using melted snow for drinking water. Poo bags can contain chemicals that help dry and solidify waste, removing the stench, and have been used in other extreme conditions, including in Antarctica and on Denali in the US state of Alaska. —AFP

## Weeks of intense snow, rain kill at least 60 Afghans

**KABUL:** At least 60 people have been killed by heavy rain and snow in Afghanistan over the past three weeks, the government's disaster ministry said Wednesday.

Afghanistan has been parched by an unusually dry winter, but the end of the season is normally a time when deadly bad weather — particularly floods — batter communities. "Because of the snow and rains unfortunately sixty compatriots have been martyred and 23 people injured" since February 20, ministry spokesman Janan Sayeq said in a video statement.

About 1,645 houses have been totally or partially ruined and nearly 178,000 livestock killed, he added.



**SANHE:** People gather as they watch rescue operations at the scene of a suspected gas explosion in Sanhe, in China's northern Hebei province on March 13, 2024. — AFP

## Huge blast kills 2, injures 26 in northern China

**SANHE, China:** A huge suspected gas explosion at a restaurant in northern China killed two people and injured 26 more on Wednesday, state media reported, causing severe damage to buildings. The blast occurred just before 8:00 am (0000 GMT), state broadcaster CCTV said, in a residential area in the city of Sanhe, Hebei province, less than 50 kilometers (30 miles) east of the center of Beijing.

Footage online circulated by state media showed a huge explosion that sent plumes of smoke and fire across a busy road. CCTV reported Wednesday afternoon that two people had since died, 26 were injured and the fire had been extinguished.

The explosion was suspected to have been caused by a gas leak at a fried chicken shop, state media reported. Two large buildings were completely destroyed in the blast, footage shared by the broadcaster showed, with rescue teams seen hauling away a car hit by the explosion. Rescue workers can also be seen carrying away a large gas canister.

Residents told AFP journalists they had heard a loud explosion before rushing outside to see a plume of smoke rising into the morning air. "I heard a great big bang ... which scared me stiff," a seller at a local market told AFP. "Outside, I saw clouds of black smoke," they added.

Another seller said they also heard a "huge bang" from the blast site, in a bustling area of squat apartment blocks about six or seven floors high. "The noise was too loud," a vendor surnamed Wang told AFP, adding she had heard a "second explosion".

A local man said he did not see the explosion, but when he reached the scene, there was still thick smoke. Near the scene of the blast, an AFP team observed police waving oncoming traffic away from an entrance to the neighborhood where the explosion

occurred. From a police cordon of the blast zone, journalists could see a tower of grey smoke a few hundred meters (yards) away.

### 'Destroyed'

The blast blew out shop facades, footage shared on video-sharing site Douyin showed. The uploader told AFP the explosion took place 200 meters from her home. Another social media video verified by AFP showed what appeared to be a building that had completely collapsed as well as several destroyed cars and debris strewn across the street.

The local Langfang fire department said 36 emergency vehicles and 154 personnel were dispatched to the scene. A merchant working at a nearby store told state-run Jimu News she had been in her shop when she heard a bang. She ran out of her store and saw a fire, she said, adding that the whole building had been "virtually destroyed".

In a bid to prevent further accidents, a local company temporarily halted the provision of gas to 50 residential compounds and businesses in the area, state-run news outlet China National Radio said. Explosions and other deadly accidents are common in China due to lax safety standards and poor enforcement.

A recent spate of such accidents has prompted calls from President Xi Jinping for "deep reflection" and greater efforts to stop them. Last month, at least 15 people were killed and 44 injured in a fire at a residential building in the eastern city of Nanjing.

In January, dozens died after a fire broke out at a store in the central city of Xinyu, with state news agency Xinhua reporting the blaze had been caused by the "illegal" use of fire by workers in the store's basement.

That fire came just days after a late-evening blaze at a school in central Henan province killed 13 schoolchildren as they slept in a dormitory. Domestic media reports suggested the fire was caused by an electric heating device. Last June, an explosion at a barbecue restaurant in the northwest of the country left 31 dead and prompted official pledges of a nationwide campaign to promote workplace safety. — AFP



**HERAT:** Afghan workers cover themselves with the plastic sheets during the rainfall as they sit on their hand carts along a road in Herat on March 12, 2024. — AFP

## Miami Beach cracks down on Spring Break party excess

**MIAMI BEACH:** College students usually turn Miami Beach's main drag into a huge street party at this time of year — blocking traffic as they drink and dance to thumping reggaeton music. But strict new measures mean the American ritual, known as Spring Break, is a much quieter affair this year. The city in south Florida is enacting rules to stamp out partying which has gotten out of control — and even violent — in recent years, with two killed in shootings last March.

As the sun went down on the weekend, Ocean Drive — typically the party hub for the thousands who descend on Miami Beach — looked much calmer than normal. The booming music, crowds of scantily-clad youngsters and occasional whiff of marijuana smoke were all gone from the city's iconic avenue with its distinctive Art Deco buildings.

Like Miami Beach, many seaside cities in south Florida are magnets for students keen to let off steam during their Easter break. But now, to keep things under control, Miami Beach officials have deployed more police, set up extra drink-driving checkpoints and shut down all public parking lots except one which charges \$100 on the busiest weekends of the Spring Break period.



**MIAMI BEACH:** Police guard Española Way in Miami Beach, Florida, during Spring Break on March 8, 2024. — AFP

Bars and restaurants cannot open sidewalk cafe areas, while liquor stores must close at 8:00 pm. And the city has made its message loud and clear in a video shared on social media. "Hey, We need to talk," a young woman sitting by the ocean says as the ad begins. "Our idea of a good time is relaxing on the beach."

"Hitting up the spa," says another girl. "Or checking out a new restaurant," says a young man. "You just want to get drunk in public and ignore laws," says the first woman, after which yet another young woman says: "so we're breaking up with you."

### Not so thrilled

A student named Shannon McKinney has just found out about the new rules and is furious. She cannot go to the beach after 6:00 pm — a closing time four hours earlier than other times of the year. "It's kind of wack because we just want to have fun. We're not here to promote violence. We came a long way and we spent money," said McKinney, who lives in New Orleans and traveled to Miami Beach with her sister and some friends. Conae Rhodes, a 25-year-old woman from Virginia, was more understanding of the new restrictions. "I kind of understand where they're coming from because of the Spring Break being here every year. There are always people who don't know how to act or don't know how to control their liquor," she said.

The city's crackdown has also drawn mixed responses from people who live year-round in Miami Beach. Musician Joel Hernandez, 54, said he understands the need for safety as Spring Break has become more chaotic in recent years — though he blames troublemakers rather than students for the problems. Still, he says the new measures go too far. "I live a few blocks from downtown and this complicates things for me. It is like we are going into a war zone, with everything closed down," he said. "In the end you don't feel safer but rather you are afraid something is going to happen," said Hernandez. Janet Alvarado, who manages a restaurant one block from Ocean Drive, complained that the new rules are hurting businesses like hers. "Now we have a lot of safety but we don't have customers," said Alvarado. "They've gone too far for small businesses that are trying to make ends meet." — AFP

## Business

THURSDAY, MARCH 14, 2024

## ABK-Egypt achieves breakthrough results for the financial year 2023

## Bank records a net profit of EGP 2.803 billion

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait – Egypt (ABK-Egypt) recently announced strong financial results for the fiscal year 2023, reporting a record increase in the Bank's Net Profit by 67 percent, which stood at EGP 2.803 billion compared to EGP 1.682 billion in 2022. Net Operating Profit reached EGP 3.924 billion, representing an 82 percent year-on-year increase compared to EGP 2.162 billion in 2022. As for ABK-Egypt's financial position, Total Assets stood at EGP 97.606 billion, recording a 29 percent growth compared to EGP 75.603 billion in December 2022.

According to the Bank's announced results, Net Interest Income reached EGP 4.088 billion, an increase of 49 percent compared to EGP 2.749 billion in 2022. This remarkable increase in profitability is attributed to the significant growth in the bank's total gross loans portfolio, which increased by 39 percent to reach EGP 49.480 billion compared to EGP 35.610 billion, while customer deposits increased by 26 percent to reach EGP 83.064 billion compared to EGP 66.153 billion in December 2022.

Commenting on the results, Ali Marafi, Chairman of ABK-Egypt, stated, "The outstanding performance achieved last year demonstrates our unwavering commitment to our progressive strategy and long-term vision that focuses on sustainable growth in the Egyptian market, which holds promising investment opportunities."

Furthermore, Marafi affirmed that ABK-Egypt has taken steady steps towards adapting to the changes in the economic landscape, reflecting its resilience in facing the consequential challenges on local, regional, and global levels. He also commended the professional performance of the Executive Management team, which ensured profitability whilst maintaining a vigilant focus on the quality of the Bank's credit portfolio. Finally, he expressed his gratitude to the



• **Ali Marafi:** The outstanding performance achieved last year demonstrates our unwavering commitment to our progressive strategy and long-term vision that focuses on sustainable growth

Bank's Board of Directors, shareholders and clients for their constant trust and commitment to ABK-Egypt.

#### Digital transformation

Marafi emphasized that ABK-Egypt is dedicated to intensifying its digital transformation strategy in order to consistently meet customer needs. This involves offering top-notch digital services that prioritize speed, comfort, and accuracy to expand the Bank's customer base. Additionally, ABK-Egypt is committed to delivering a high standard of service through a seamless and flexible experience to maintain ongoing customer satisfaction.

#### 45 branches

Marafi disclosed that in 2023, ABK-Egypt continues to work on its ambitious expansion plan. With its 45 branches in different governorates across Egypt, this demonstrates the Bank's commitment to reaching diverse customer segments and expanding its customer base.

He further stated that ABK-Egypt strives to consistently meet and surpass customer expectations. This initiative is among several efforts that reinforce its standing as a preferred partner in the local marketing, continuously offering new products and services.

#### Growth indicators

Reaffirming the strength of the bank's

financial position, Khaled El Salawy, CEO & Managing Director of ABK-Egypt said, "The bank succeeded in achieving breakthrough performance in terms of growth and profitability during a very exceptional year. With profit before tax recording a 72 percent year-on-year increase to reach EGP 3.8 billion, I am proud to say that 2023 did not slow us down. We have managed to progress at a steady pace in an extraordinary year, demonstrating the agility of our business model and prudence of our decisions that allowed us to best navigate the unprecedented changes and seize business opportunities that strengthened our position in the face of competition."

El Salawy praised the efforts of the robust, prudent, and committed team, who are the Bank's primary catalyst of success. He also commended the leading role played by the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) in supporting the entire banking sector to navigate the turbulent economic conditions.

Finally, El Salawy affirmed that ABK-Egypt maintains a positive outlook regarding the stabilization of economic conditions thanks to the efforts and measures taken by the government in overcoming challenges and leading the economic recovery.

The bank's strategy continues to focus on achieving robust growth rates on all financial performance indicators through enhancing its competitive advantages



• **Khaled El Salawy:** The Bank succeeded in achieving breakthrough performance in terms of growth and profitability

across all business sectors, investing in the development of its human capital, taking further steps towards strengthening its relationship with customers, and delivering innovative banking services that provide ease and convenience to various customer segments. This is all to ensure that ABK-Egypt continues to achieve its ambitious goals and maintains its strong position in the Egyptian market.

El Salawy emphasized ABK-Egypt's commitment to supporting the small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) sector by streamlining procedures and eliminating obstacles for young entrepreneurs. He underlined the pivotal role of the banking sector in fostering the growth and development of these projects. He also mentioned that the Bank is dedicated to adhering to advanced standards that ensure the delivery of efficient, fast, and valuable banking services to customers. This is applicable to all customer segments, including the youth who seek digital banking solutions, as well as the elite customer segment, whose needs will be met through Wealth Management that offers a range of banking and non-banking services, along with exclusive benefits.

#### Fastest growing bank

ABK-Egypt has recently been honored with the 'Fastest Growing Bank – Egypt 2023' award by International Business Magazine. This accolade rec-

ognizes the Bank's accomplishments and the substantial growth it has experienced since ABK Group's acquisition of Piraeus Bank - Egypt in 2015.

This award represents a significant accomplishment, reflecting the Bank's strategic vision and unwavering commitment to excellence. It showcases the bank's capacity to adapt to the ever-evolving needs of its customers, while also demonstrating its ongoing ability to achieve sustainable growth and offer unique banking solutions for individuals and businesses in Egypt.

#### Corporate social responsibility

Over the course of 2023, ABK-Egypt continued its CSR efforts through launching initiatives and activities that focus on supporting underprivileged segments of society and empowering Egypt's future generations. The bank continued to affirm its dedication to the wider communities through extending full support to those in need and with an array of social initiatives ranging from the provision of financial relief, outreach to the underprivileged with shelter, healthcare, and food supplies, and exploring opportunities to help children, youth, women, and individuals with disabilities.

In addition, the bank has taken an active part in all financial inclusion initiatives launched by CBE to raise awareness among all segments on financial literacy and banking services.

## EU parliament adopts 'historic' rules on AI

BRUSSELS: The European Parliament on Wednesday gave the final nod to far-reaching rules on artificial intelligence that the EU hopes will both harness innovation and defend against harms. The law, known as the "AI Act", was first proposed in April 2021 by the European Commission, the EU's executive arm. But it was only after Microsoft-funded ChatGPT burst onto the scene in late 2022 that the real AI contest began—and also the race to regulate. China and the United States last year introduced regulation on AI but the European Union's law is the most comprehensive.

The EU will take a staggered approach to applying the law. Outright bans on forms of AI considered highest-risk will kick in later this year, while rules on systems like ChatGPT will apply 12 months after the law enters into force, and the rest of the provisions in 2026. As EU negotiators debated the text, tensions within and lobbying from outside were at their highest over how to regulate general-purpose AI models, like chatbots. Developers of such models will have to give details about what content they used—such as text or images—to train their systems and comply with EU copyright law.

There are a greater set of requirements for models, for example OpenAI's latest ChatGPT-4 and Google's Gemini, that the EU says pose "systemic



STRASBOURG: Members of the European Parliament take part in a voting session during a plenary session at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, eastern France, on March 13, 2024. — AFP

risks." Those risks could include causing serious accidents, being misused for far-reaching cyberattacks, or to propagate harmful biases online. Companies offering these technologies must assess and

mitigate the threats, track and report serious incidents—like deaths—to the commission, take action to ensure cybersecurity and give details about their models' energy consumption. — AFP

## Musk visits Tesla's sabotage-hit German factory

GRUNHEIDE, Germany: Elon Musk travelled Wednesday to Tesla's factory near Berlin to lend his workers "support" after the plant was forced to halt production by a suspected arson attack on nearby power lines. The Tesla CEO addressed thousands of employees on arrival at the site, accusing "eco-terrorists" of the sabotage as he defended his company's green credentials.

With his son X Æ A-XII in his arms, Musk said: "I am here to support you." The billionaire's visit came a week after power lines supplying the electric carmaker's only European plant were set on fire in an act of sabotage claimed by a far-left group called the Vulkangruppe (Volcano Group).

Musk had said then that the attack was "extremely dumb", while the company said it would cost it several hundred million euros. A week on, the lights have come back on at the site, but Andre Thierig, who heads the site, said on LinkedIn that it would "take a bit of time" before production is back to full speed. Industry experts have warned that the reputational impact caused by the sabotage on the region could be more severe than the losses suffered by Tesla.

Tesla's German plant started production in 2022 following an arduous two-year approval and construction process dogged by administrative and legal obstacles. Tesla wants to expand the site by 170 hectares (420 acres) and boost production by up to one million vehicles annually to feed Europe's growing demand for electric cars and take on rivals who are shifting away from combustion engine vehicles. But the plans have annoyed local residents, who voted against the project in a non-binding ballot last month. After the vote, Tesla said it might have to rethink the plans. Environmental activists opposed to the expansion of the factory have recently also set up a camp in a wooded area near the plant. — AFP



GRUNHEIDE: Tesla CEO Elon Musk carries on his shoulders his son X Æ A-XII as he addresses employees during a visit at the company's electric car plant in Grunheide near Berlin, eastern Germany, on March 13, 2024. — AFP

## Methane emissions from energy sector rose in 2023: IEA

PARIS: Planet-heating methane released by the fossil fuel industry rose to near record highs in 2023 despite technology available to curb this pollution at virtually no cost, the International Energy Agency said Wednesday. Slashing emissions of methane—second only to carbon dioxide for its contribution to global warming—is essential to meeting international targets on climate change, the IEA said.

The Paris-based agency said failing to curb methane leaks from oil and gas projects was a "massive missed opportunity" to prevent losses and reduce emissions of the potent greenhouse gas.

"Emissions of methane from fossil fuel operations remain unacceptably high... There is no reason for emissions to remain as high as they are," IEA chief energy economist Tim Gould told reporters ahead of the release of the agency's annual Global Methane Tracker report. But he expressed hope that this year "could mark a turning point"—if countries and fossil fuel firms turn their pollution-cutting promises into concrete policies. Methane is responsible for around 30 percent of the global warming experienced today, according to the UN Environment Programme. While some 40 percent of methane is released from natural sources, mainly wetlands, human activities are responsible for the rest.

Agriculture is the main source—methane is burned out by livestock such as cows and sheep and emitted during rice cultivation. That is followed by the energy sector where the methane leaks from energy infrastructure—such as gas pipelines—and from deliberate releases during maintenance.

This fossil fuel methane pollution has risen three years in a row, the IEA report said, adding that two thirds of the emissions were from just 10 countries—including China for its methane linked to coal, and the United States for gas, with Russia shortly behind.

Overall, the IEA said the production and burning of fossil fuels resulted in close to 120 million tons of methane emissions in 2023, a small rise compared with 2022 and close to the record high in 2019. Last year also witnessed a surge in large-scale methane leaks, it said, including a well blowout in Kazakhstan that lasted more than 200 days. Some 40 percent of the emissions recorded in 2023 "could have been avoided at no net cost" using tried and tested methods to prevent such leakages, said IEA energy expert Christophe McGlade. "It still represents a massive missed opportunity," he said. — AFP



# March 31, 2024 is deadline for Gulf Bank's Al-Danah semi-annual draw

## On July 18, 2024, the winner of KD 1 million prize will be announced

KUWAIT: By the end of this month, March 31, 2024, the deposit and participation in the semi-annual draw for the Al-Danah Millionaire account, qualifying for the KD 1 million prize, will be open. The draw and announcement of the winner will take place on July 18, 2024, with representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and Ernst & Young in attendance. Gulf Bank announced the grand prize winner of the annual draw for the Al-Danah Millionaire account on Feb 1, 2024, for the first time, following the increase in the prize's value to KD 2 million in 2023. This is part of the bank's continuous endeavors to reward its customers and foster a culture of savings within the community.

Renowned as one of the top savings accounts in Kuwait, the Al-Danah account offers numerous benefits, including periodic draws with substantial prizes. Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account offers monthly opportunities to win KD 1,000 to ten lucky winners, in addition to two quarterly draws with KD 100,000 prizes each, a semi-annual draw prize of KD 1 million and a grand draw prize of KD 2 million.

For the second time in its history, the grand prize of the Al-Danah millionaire account has earned a place in the Guinness Book of Records. This recognition marks it as the largest cash prize linked to a bank account worldwide. Mohammad Al-Qattan, Consumer Banking General Manager at Gulf Bank,



received the award from the Guinness representative during the ceremony for the grand prize winner.

### Participation conditions

The Al-Danah Millionaire account is accessible to both Kuwaiti citizens and expatriates. To open the account, customers need to maintain a minimum balance of KD 200, ensuring they retain the same amount to qualify automatically for the upcoming Al-Danah Millionaire draws. If the balance falls below KD 200 at any point, KD 2 will be deducted monthly until the minimum balance is reinstated. Customers who open a new Al-Danah Millionaire account or add more funds, will be automatically entered into the Al-Danah draws.

Gulf Bank encourages Al-Danah customers to enhance their winning prospects by increasing their

deposited amounts through the online payment service, accessible via the bank's website and mobile application. Al-Danah Millionaire stands as one of Kuwait's oldest savings accounts, crafted to instill a culture of saving within the community and reward regular savers for their commitment. We urge everyone to open an Al-Danah account, save consistently, and enjoy the array of benefits it offers to customers.

### Key features

Among the many advantages provided to Al-Danah Millionaire account holders, it distinguishes itself as Kuwait's exclusive account that carries over the winning chances from the previous year to the next, highlighting Gulf Bank's unwavering commitment to acknowledging and rewarding customer loyalty. All the winning chances of existing Al-Danah customers in 2023 (from Jan 1 to Dec 31, 2023) have been extended to the 2024 draws, in strict adherence to the specified terms and conditions.

Additionally, the Al-Danah Millionaire Account provides unique services, including the Al-Danah Exclusive Deposit Card service, enabling customers to deposit cash at their convenience. The Calculator service, available on the Bank's website (e-gulfbank.com/Al-Danah) and mobile app, allows customers to assess their winning probabilities in the Al-Danah Millionaire monthly, quarterly, and annual draws.

state subsidies for fuel and transport, cut tens of thousands of public service jobs, and scrapped hundreds of rules in his bid to deregulate the economy. However, his efforts to slash state spending have hit Argentines hard, with the price of bus tickets almost tripling, and aid cut to thousands of soup kitchens.

And the economy is also experiencing a significant slowdown, with consumption slowing 13.4 percent year-on-year, according to the Focus Market firm. "Argentina has been in recession for 14 months, but the last four were the most intense. The price increase was very strong and consumption has collapsed," independent economist Federico Glustein told AFP.

While the IMF—which has a \$44 billion credit program with Argentina—has praised Milei's efforts to balance the books, it warned last month about the impacts on the poor. IMF deputy managing director Gita Gopinath told La Nacion newspaper that austerity measures must be "calibrated to ensure that social assistance continues to be provided and that the burden does not fall entirely on the poorest groups." Gopinath estimated that Argentina's inflation would drop to single digits by the middle of 2024. — AFP

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Adidas reports 2023 loss

FRANKFURT: German sportswear giant Adidas reported an annual loss for 2023 on Wednesday, still weighed down by the fallout from the end of its tie-up with controversial rapper Kanye West. The loss of 75 million euros (\$82 million) followed a profit of 612 million euros the previous year. Sales fell by five percent to 21.4 billion euros, and were hit particularly hard in the United States due to the discontinuation of sales of Yeezy trainers that were designed with West. Sales slipped slightly in the fourth quarter, with a particularly heavy fall in North America as Adidas sold less to wholesalers as it sought to reduce excess inventory. — AFP

#### PwC Australia cuts jobs

SYDNEY: Consulting giant PwC Australia said Wednesday it would slash more than 300 roles as part of a restructuring following a tax leak scandal that plunged the company into turmoil. The firm was rocked in January last year when it emerged staff had shared information from a confidential government tax briefing to drum up new business. The scandal sparked a slew of official investigations, forced a string of executives out of the company, and prompted a nationwide crackdown on tax advisors. PwC Australia—one of the Big Four accounting firms—said 329 staff would be made redundant in the next nine months, while 37 partners would be retiring. — AFP

#### China probes another top banker

BEIJING: China has launched an investigation into another former top banker for suspected corruption, state media reported Wednesday, as President Xi Jinping's flagship anti-graft drive rages through the financial sector. Li Jiping, the onetime vice-chief of the state-owned China Development Bank (CDB), is "suspected of serious violations of discipline and law", state broadcaster CCTV reported. Xi has waged a sweeping campaign against deep-rooted official corruption since coming to power a decade ago. Proponents say the drive promotes clean governance, but critics argue it also serves as a way for Xi to purge political rivals. — AFP

## Argentine inflation slows for second month in a row

BUENOS AIRES: Argentine inflation slowed for a second month in a row, statistics showed Tuesday, amid a series of belt-tightening measures under President Javier Milei, who has vowed to halt the country's economic decline. Monthly inflation stood at 13.2 percent in February, down from 20.6 percent in January and 25.5 percent in December, according to the INDEC statistics agency.

This figure is "the result of the national government's work to impose strong fiscal discipline," said Milei's office in a statement. The president said earlier this week that any figure less than "15 percent would be a great number." Milei said he was hoping that by April there would be a "sharp drop in inflation." Nevertheless, annual inflation continued to rise and hit 276 percent in



A woman walks between signs with food prices on a street in Buenos Aires. — AFP

February as Latin America's third-largest economy reels under Milei's economic "shock" treatment.

Since he took office in December, Milei has slashed public spending, winning the approval of the International Monetary Fund and securing a budget surplus for the first time in 12 years in a country whose previous governments oversaw rampant inflation and multiple fiscal crises.

He devalued the peso by more than 50 percent, halted

# Invitation Reminder

Gulf Bank K.S.C.P is pleased to invite its esteemed shareholders to its sixty-fifth meeting of the Ordinary General Assembly and the forty-third meeting of the Extraordinary General Assembly, to be held at the Bank's Head Office located in Sharq, Mubarak Al-Kabeer Street, at 2:00 pm on Saturday, 23 March 2024, to discuss the items listed on the two below agendas.

Esteemed shareholders wishing to attend are kindly requested to contact the Shares Unit - Head Office on the following numbers: 22082246 - 99509132, to receive their invitation cards, Powers of Attorney, a copy of the Bank's financial statements for the financial year ending 31 December 2023 and the meetings' agendas during the official working hours.

Based on the instructions of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the invitation cards delivered by hand will be given only to the shareholder in person or his representative by means of a written letter from the respective shareholder. In the event that the shareholder is a company, the invitation shall be delivered to the company's representative by means of an official letter signed by one of the company's authorized signatories and stamped with the company's seal.

Esteemed shareholders wishing to participate through the electronic system - as per policies and procedures manual of the eAGM Platform - are kindly requested to visit the website of Kuwait Clearing Company (www.maqasa.com) and carry out the necessary actions to subscribe to the eAGM in preparation for their participation and electronic voting on the two agendas' items.

AGM Right of Attendance and Corporate Action Schedules	
Attendees' Cum Date	Tuesday 05 March 2024
Right of Attendance Date	Sunday 10 March 2024
AGM Date	Saturday 23 March 2024
Cum- Date (The final trading day of a stock loaded with dues)	Wednesday 03 April 2024
Ex-Date	Thursday 04 April 2024
Record Date	Monday 08 April 2024
Distribution date	Thursday 18 April 2024

### Agenda of the Ordinary Annual General Assembly Meeting No. 65 of Gulf Bank (KSCP) Shareholders for the Financial Year Ended 31/12/2023:

- Presenting & ratifying the Board of Directors Report for the FY ended on 31/12/2023.
- Presenting & ratifying the Auditors Report for the FY ended on 31/12/2023.
- Presenting the violations report and penalties imposed by regulatory authorities on Gulf Bank during the FY ended on 31/12/2023.
- Discussing & approving the Financial Statements for the FY ended on 31/12/2023.
- Approving the deduction of 10% to be transferred to the Statutory Reserve in the total amount of KD 7,486,000
- Discussing the Board of Directors' recommendation to distribute dividends for the FY ended on 31/12/2023 as follows:

- Cash dividends at 12% (twelve percent) i.e., 12 (twelve Fils) per share after excluding the treasury shares. The shareholders registered in the company's records as of the end of the record day, set as 08/04/2024 are entitled to these cash dividends.
- 5% free bonus shares (five percent) of issued and paid-up capital, by issuing 181,071,528 new shares to be distributed as bonus shares to the shareholders registered in the company's records as of the end of the record day, set as 08/04/2024, each according to their percentage of ownership (by five shares per each 100 shares), this is based on the Board of Directors' resolution dated 24/01/2024 to increase the bank's issued and paid-up capital from KD 362,143,057.100 (Three Hundred and Sixty-Two Million, One Hundred and Forty-Three Thousand, Fifty-Seven Kuwaiti Dinars and 100 Fils), to KD 380,250,209.900 (Three Hundred and Eighty Million, Two Hundred Fifty Thousand, Two Hundred and Nine Kuwaiti Dinars and 900 Fils) and cover the amount of increase resulting from the issued and paid-up capital amounting to KD 18,107,152.800 (Eighteen Millions and One Hundred Seven Thousand and One Hundred Fifty-Two Kuwaiti Dinars and 800 Fils) from the retained earnings account as of 31/12/2023, then registering the increase in the issued and paid-up capital in the commercial registry and completing the registration procedures by amending article (4) of the Memorandum of Association (MOA) and Article (5) of the Articles of Association (AOA) of the Bank, and authorize the Board of Directors to dispose of the remaining fractional shares after distribution as well as to dispose of any fractional shares and/or fractional earnings which could have been distributed in previous financial years to the favor of the Bank.
- Cash dividends to be distributed and bonus shares distribution to be included in the bank's shareholders records based on the following timetable:

Cum Date (The final trading day of a stock loaded with dues)	03/04/2024
Ex Date	04/04/2024
Record Date	08/04/2024
Distribution Date	18/04/2024

- Authorizing the Board of Directors to amend these foregoing dates in case they are not confirmed at least eight working days prior to the record date.
- Discussing the authorization of the Board of Directors to distribute Semi-Annual dividends for the FY ending 31/12/2024, according to the same applicable standards in the annual dividend distributions, determining their amount and percentage, taking all procedures and obtaining all other necessary approvals from regulatory authorities or others, and determining the timetable for this distribution whenever it deems appropriate, provided that this distribution is based on real profits and in accordance with the generally accepted accounting principles, and that it has no effect on the company's paid-up capital. Authorizing the Board of Directors to amend this timetable in case it wasn't confirmed at least eight working days prior to the record date.
- Discussing the disbursement of the Board Members' remuneration (Independent and Non- Independent) of KD 295,000 (Two Hundred and Ninety-Five Thousand Kuwaiti Dinars Only) for the FY ended on 31/12/2023.
- Discussing the authorization of the Board of Directors, for a period of 18 months, to buy, sell or dispose of a maximum of 10% (ten percent) of the Bank's total shares, in accordance with the controls and terms stipulated by the relevant law, regulations, resolutions and instructions of regulators in this respect.

## Invitation to the 65<sup>th</sup> Ordinary and 43<sup>rd</sup> Extraordinary General Assembly Meetings of Gulf Bank (KSCP) Shareholders

10. Discussing the authorization of the Board of Directors to:

- issue bonds of all types (whether directly, or indirectly via a special purpose vehicle(s) established inside or outside Kuwait) in Kuwaiti Dinars or any other foreign currency as they deem appropriate, including, without limitation, the issuance of perpetual bonds, in and/or outside the State of Kuwait, without exceeding the maximum limit permitted by law, or the equivalent in foreign currencies, in accordance with all applicable instructions, directives and/or regulations of the Central Bank of Kuwait, b) enter into any relevant transaction documentation related to the issuance of the bonds (including, where applicable, the granting of guarantees to support issuance of the bonds or assume any obligations thereunder), c) determine the type of those bonds to be issued, their currency, duration, nominal value, rate of interest thereon, repayment maturity, means of coverage, rules of offering and depreciation, and all terms and conditions thereof, d) obtain any and all relevant approvals from the competent regulators (whether located in or outside of Kuwait, as applicable), and e) agree to the choice of arbitration as a method of dispute resolution in any of the transaction documentation in relation to the issuance of the bonds and any other documents ancillary thereto. The Board of Directors may delegate their authority to any third party, as they deem appropriate, to implement all the above or part thereof.
- Discussing the authorization to grant loans or advances in the current account, or providing facilities, letters of guarantee and all banking transactions to the Board Members - in accordance with the same terms and conditions applied by the Bank for other customers - subject to the provisions of Article (69) of Law No. 32 of 1968 concerning Currency, the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Organization of the Banking Business.
- Reviewing the transactions concluded with the related parties during the FY ended on 31/12/2023 and authorize the Board of Directors to deal with related parties during the FY ending 31/12/2024, up to the date of convening the annual ordinary general assembly of the Bank's shareholders that will review the ordinary agenda for the FY ending on 31/12/2024.
- Discussing the release of the Board of Directors with respect to their financial, legal, and administrative behaviours during the FY ended on 31/12/2023.
- Elect the Independent and Non- Independent Members of the Bank's new Board of Directors for the next tenor of three years' period.
- Appoint/re-appoint the auditors of the Bank for the FY ending 31/12/2024 and authorize the Board to determine their fees.

### Agenda of Gulf Bank (KSCP) Shareholders' Extraordinary General Assembly Meeting No. 43:

#### 1. Approval to amend Article (70) of the Articles of Association (AOA), as follows:

##### Prior to amendment:

"A percentage of no less than 10% (Ten Percent) shall be deducted annually from the net profits in accordance with a resolution issued by the Ordinary General Assembly based on a proposition by the Board of Directors, to be allocated to the statutory reserve.

The statutory reserve may only be utilized to cover the company's losses or to secure the distribution of dividends to shareholders of up to 5% (Five Percent) of the paid-up capital in the years in which the company's profits do not allow the distribution of this percentage, due to the absence of a voluntary reserve that allows the distribution of this percentage of dividends.

The amount which was deducted from the statutory reserve shall be returned to it when the following year's profit is permissible unless this reserve exceeds half of the issued capital.

The General Assembly may suspend this deduction if the statutory reserve exceeds half of the issued capital of the company. It may also approve the use of the amount that exceeded this limit in whichever ways it deems appropriate to the favor of the company and its shareholders.

The Ordinary General Assembly may, upon the proposal of the Board of Directors, distribute dividends to shareholders at the end of the financial year, or semi-annually. It is also permissible, upon a decision from the Ordinary General Assembly, to be renewed annually, to authorize the Board of Directors in advance to distribute dividends on a semi-annual basis and to determine the timetable for this distribution. In order for this distribution to be valid and in accordance with the generally accepted accounting principles, it must be made from actual profits provided this distribution shall have no effect on the paid-up capital of the company."

##### After amendment:

"A percentage of no less than 10% (Ten Percent) shall be deducted annually from the net profits in accordance with a resolution issued by the Ordinary General Assembly based on a proposition by the Board of Directors, to be allocated to the statutory reserve.

The statutory reserve may only be utilized to cover the company's losses or to secure the distribution of dividends to shareholders of up to 5% (Five Percent) of the paid-up capital in the years in which the company's profits do not allow the distribution of this percentage, due to the absence of a voluntary reserve that allows the distribution of this percentage of dividends.

The amount which was deducted from the statutory reserve shall be returned to it when the following year's profit is permissible unless this reserve exceeds half of the issued capital.

The General Assembly may suspend this deduction if the statutory reserve exceeds half of the issued capital of the company. It may also approve the use of the amount that exceeded this limit in whichever ways it deems appropriate to the favor of the company and its shareholders.

In addition, (1%) of the company's net profit shall be deducted to the favor of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences.

The Ordinary General Assembly may, upon the proposal of the Board of Directors, distribute dividends to shareholders at the end of the financial year, or semi-annually. It is also permissible, upon a decision from the Ordinary General Assembly, to be renewed annually, to authorize the Board of Directors in advance to distribute dividends on a semi-annual basis and to determine the timetable for this distribution. In order for this distribution to be valid and in accordance with the generally accepted accounting principles, it must be made from actual profits provided this distribution shall have no effect on the paid-up capital of the company."

**In the event where quorum for any of the ordinary or extraordinary general assembly meetings could not be achieved, the meeting(s) (as the case may be) shall be postponed for a period of one week whereby such postponed meeting(s) is/are held on 30 March 2024 at the same place mentioned above at 2:00 pm and after. This Announcement shall be considered an invitation to the postponed meeting(s) without the need for any new invitation, in accordance with Article (143) of Law No. (1) of 2016 promulgating the Companies Law.**

Chairman of the Board



# Burgan Bank celebrates graduation of 34 employees from IBS certification programs

Bank continues efforts to develop its human capital and enhance Kuwaiti talents



A group photo of the IBS graduates with Burgan Bank executives.

**KUWAIT:** Burgan Bank recently celebrated 34 of its distinguished employees for completing various certification programs from the Kuwait Institute for Banking Studies (KIBS) carrying on the Bank's continuous efforts aimed at developing its human capital and enhancing Kuwaiti talents.

The graduation ceremony was attended by Fadel Abdullah, Chief Executive Officer – Kuwait at Burgan Bank, Naqeb Amin, General Manager – Human Resources and Development Group at Burgan Bank, alongside Rana Al-Nibari, Director General at KIBS, and several other Burgan executive managers.

This graduation marks yet another accomplishment that highlights Burgan Bank's strong commitment to fostering continuous learning and professional growth within its workforce, further solidifying its leading position as an employer of choice in the banking industry.

Commenting on this significant achievement, Naqeb Amin, General Manager – Human Resources and Development Group at Burgan Bank said: "On behalf of all Burgan management and staff, I would like to congratulate our 34 exceptional graduates on this achievement, and I commend them on their dedication and commitment throughout their studies at IBS. Over the decades, Burgan Bank was able to accomplish distinguished



Naqeb Amin

leaps to success thanks to the unbounded talent of our staff over the years. As the Bank maintained throughout the years a keen investment in its caliber and developing their skills on both professional and personal levels."

The 34 employees completed eight different programs, earning certifications that include Certified Credit Manager (CCM); Advanced Certified Credit Manager (ACCM); Risk Management Cer-

tification (RMC); Certified Bank Wealth Manager (CBWM); Certified Bank Branch Operation Manager (CBBOM); Certified Bank Branch Manager (CBBM); Certified Assistant Bank Branch Manager (CABBMM); and Certified Bank Relationship Manager for High-Net-Worth Customers (CBRM). Within these programs, Burgan employees achieved the highest scores in CCM and RMC programs among other bank participants.

It is noteworthy that Burgan Bank adopts a robust learning and development strategy that focuses on supporting its employees' personal and professional growth and development to ensure a brighter future for the staff members and the Bank in an ever-competitive market. Alongside Burgan's participation in KIBS' ongoing initiatives aiming at upskilling the banking workforce such as the Kuwaiti Graduate Development Program (KGDP), the Bank also offers its staff several platforms for development that they can benefit from, including Burgan's Retail Academy that features specialized training courses on career development. In addition, Burgan launched a personal development platform powered by vast learning resources that endorses the bank's strategy and values in order to empower its staff to aspire and grow based on their career needs and personal interests.

## Zara owner Inditex posts record profit

**ARTEIXO, Spain:** Zara owner Inditex, the world's biggest fashion retailer, promised shareholders a record dividend on Wednesday after posting its highest-ever profits last year despite a complicated global backdrop. The fashion giant, which has seen a strong performance on Spain's stock market over the past year, posted net profits of 5.4 billion euros (\$5.9 billion), up 30 percent from 4.1 billion euros in 2022 which was also a record. The figure, which follows a solid fourth quarter, was in line with the expectations of analysts polled by financial data firm FactSet, who predicted profits of 5.36 billion euros.

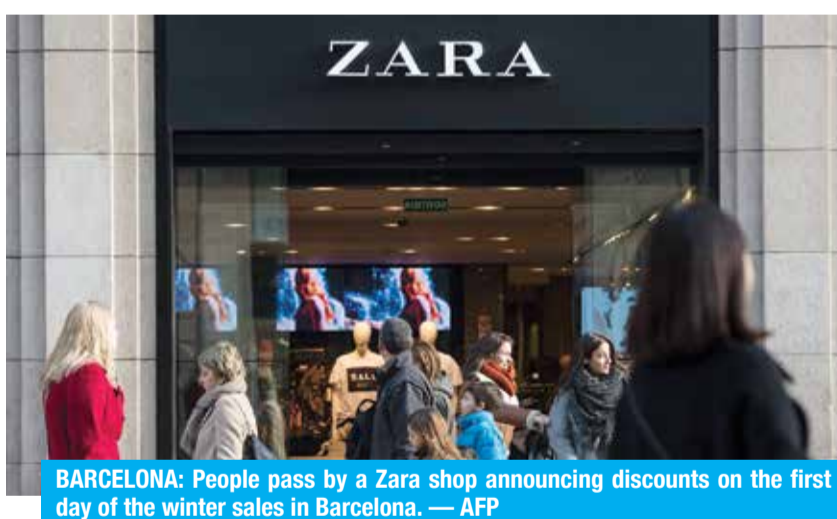
Inditex has been able "to take advantage of the opportunities to keep growing profitably," said Oscar Garcia Maceiras, chief executive of the company which is based in the northwestern Galicia region. The group, which since early 2022 has been headed by Marta Ortega, daughter of multi-billionaire founder Amancio Or-

tega, pointed to dynamic sales which hit a record 35.9 billion euros in 2023, a 10.4 percent increase from the previous year.

Inditex, whose eight brands include Pull&Bear and upmarket label Massimo Dutti, notably benefited from consumers' taste for shopping online which rose by 16 percent to reach 9.1 billion euros.

Given the results, the retail giant said it would pay shareholders a dividend of 1.54 euros, a 28 percent increase from 2022, and the highest in the group's history. It also expressed optimism about 2024, given that sales have continued to grow in recent weeks, up 11 percent year-on-year for the period from February 1 to March 11.

Inditex's results are at odds with the difficulties experienced by many other fast fashion retailers, some of which have been forced to close or lay off staff in recent months, notably in France, like Kookai and Paris fashion brand Naf Naf. The sector is facing heightened competition from the rise of ultra-low-cost brands like Chinese platform Shein and Ireland's Primark which have unsettled traditional low-cost clothing chains. It has also been hit by geopolitical tensions, notably in the Red Sea where global shipping has been disrupted by Houthi rebel attacks and by persistent-



BARCELONA: People pass by a Zara shop announcing discounts on the first day of the winter sales in Barcelona. — AFP

ly high inflation, which has weighed on purchasing power. But such pressures seem to have had little impact on Inditex which has posted a string of records and performed well on Madrid's Ibex 35 stock exchange. The fashion giant — which launched its "Pre-Owned" second-hand clothes platform in around 15 countries in December — has seen its share value grow by more than 40 percent to reach 40 euros over the past year.

That has raised its market capital-

ization to more than 127 billion euros, confirming its position as global leader ahead of Japan's Fast Retailing, owner of Uniqlo, and Sweden's H&M, currently in a rocky period after a disappointing 2023. "The group's domination of the apparel retail market is more visible than ever," Bank of America analysts said late last year, saying retailer had entered "a virtuous cycle fuelling significant market share gain at industry leading margins". — AFP

## Cathay Pacific 'back' with first annual profit since 2019

**HONG KONG:** Hong Kong carrier Cathay Pacific on Wednesday reported its first annual net profit in four years, citing a surge in demand as it emerges from the impact of the financial hub's COVID isolation.

Hong Kong's aviation sector has struggled to fully recover from the impact of pandemic-era policies, which imposed strict rules on travelers and kept the city internationally isolated before they began to be lifted in late 2022. "In 2023, we finally left the Covid-19 pandemic behind us," Cathay chair Patrick Healy said, adding that it was "our first profitable year since 2019".

"The year was characterized by a notable surge in

travel demand following three years of pandemic-related restrictions." And CEO Ronald Lam said in the statement: "To our stakeholders, thank you for standing by us and motivating us to be the company of choice. We are ready to unleash the potential and innovation of our next exciting phase of development — Cathay is back!"

While airlines around the world had been hit by the impact of travel restrictions, Cathay's recovery has been slower than regional rivals such as Singapore Airlines. The airline said profit surged to US\$1.25 billion last year, compared with a loss of US\$847 million in 2022, after hitting its target of operating at 70 percent of pre-pandemic passenger flights.

It carried 18 million passengers in the 12 months, up from 2.8 million in 2022. Cathay also posted an operating profit of US\$1.9 billion in 2023, the highest on record, according to Bloomberg News, and announced its first dividend payment since 2019, at HK\$0.43 per ordinary share.

"In 2023, we finally left the Covid-19 pandemic be-

hind us," Healy said. The firm's share price jumped 5.5 percent on the news in Hong Kong afternoon trade. Total revenue surged 85 percent to US\$12 billion, though cargo revenue fell 16.2 percent to US\$3.3 billion.

Cathay earlier vowed to return to 100 percent pre-pandemic passenger flight levels by the end of 2024, but on Wednesday pushed back the target by up to three months. The company said it was working to address the effects of "truly significant" challenges facing the aviation industry, in areas including "recruitment, training and supply chain shortages". It added that it planned to expand its workforce this year by around 20 percent, or 5,000 people. Cathay saw a spate of flight cancellations during the Christmas and New Year holidays, which the company attributed to underestimating the pilot levels needed during the seasonal flu peak in Hong Kong. "This incident has negatively impacted our brand reputation and the confidence that Hong Kong people and our customers have in Cathay," Lam said in an internal memo at the time. — AFP

## Boeing: Employees must take action on safety measures

**NEW YORK:** US aeronautics giant Boeing, facing increased scrutiny after a series of safety incidents and manufacturing issues, is directing employees to take "immediate actions" to improve operations, according to a message the company sent to its workforce Tuesday. The guidance, from Boeing's head of commercial aviation Stan Deal, comes after an audit by the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) — undertaken after a close call on an Alaska Airlines flight in January — found instances of non-compliance at the manufacturer.

"We have used your feedback, and those from our regulator and customers, to take immediate actions to strengthen our safety and quality," Deal said. "These actions are central to a comprehensive plan we will soon deliver to the FAA," he added, referring to the US regulator's order earlier this month that Boeing come up with a framework to address quality control within 90 days.

According to Deal, "the vast majority of our audit non-compliances involved not following our approved processes and procedures." To address the issues, management will set up additional training for relevant employees, establish weekly compliance checks and dedicate a portion of each shift to review procedures and check tools.

These new measures are in addition to the others put in place in recent weeks, including additional inspections. The FAA audit came in response to a near-catastrophic incident in January, when a fuselage panel on a Boeing 737 MAX 9 Alaska Airlines jet blew off mid-flight. No one was seriously injured, but the plane was forced to make an emergency landing with a gaping hole in the cabin.

Of the 89 production process audits conducted by the FAA, Boeing failed 33 of them, the New York Times reported Tuesday, with 97 instances of non-compliance identified.

The concerns included one use of a hotel key card to check a door seal and the use of liquid dish soap as a mechanical lubricant, according to the Times.

Deal's letter also addressed the findings of an independent expert commission appointed by the FAA, which found shortcomings with Boeing's safety standards — notably, that they may be too complex and cause confusion among employees.

"Our teams are working to simplify and streamline our processes and address the panel's recommendations," Deal said, while meanwhile calling on employees to implement certain changes immediately. "Precisely follow every step of our manufacturing procedures and processes," he urged.

"We can and should update procedures and processes, but until then, we must adhere to the existing ones." Employees should also "always be on the lookout for a potential safety hazard or quality escape," Deal added, encouraging them to use the company's internal reporting system to flag concerns when necessary.

Boeing is still facing investigations from the FAA and the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), while US media has reported the Justice Department has opened a criminal investigation.

The company has faced questions following several other potentially dangerous episodes in addition to the Alaska incident, including an engine fire on a Boeing 747 shortly after takeoff from Florida in January. Last week, a Boeing 777 jetliner bound for Japan had to make an emergency landing shortly after takeoff from San Francisco when a wheel fell off and plunged into an airport parking lot, damaging several cars. — AFP

THURSDAY, MARCH 14, 2024



## 'Sacred job': Iraq Kurds digitize books to save threatened culture

A member of the Kurdistan Centre for Arts and Culture (KCAC), retrieves old books from the shelves before making digital copies, as part of an effort to digitize historic Kurdish volumes and manuscripts, in the northern Iraqi city of Dohuk. — AFP photos

Huddled in the back of a van, Rebin Pishtiwan carefully scans one yellowed page after another, as part of his mission to digitize historic Kurdish books at risk of disappearing. Seen as the world's largest stateless people, the Kurds are an ethnic group of between 25 and 35 million mostly spread across modern day Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey.

Kurdistan region. "We aim to digitize old books that are rare and vulnerable, so they don't vanish," the 23-year-old added, a torn memoir of a Kurdish teacher published in 1960 in hand. In Iraq, the Kurdish language was mostly marginalized until the Kurds' autonomous region in the north won greater freedom after Saddam Hussein's defeat in the 1990-

texts that offer insights into Kurdish life, spanning centuries and dialects.

### 'Property of all Kurds'

In Dohuk's library, the archiving team scours the wooden bookshelves for hidden gems. With the help of the library's manager, they carefully gather an assortment of more than 35 books of poet-

small team starts the hours-long scanning process before returning the books to the library. In the absence of an online archive, the Kurdistan Center for Arts and Culture, a non-profit founded by the nephew of regional president Nechirvan Barzani, launched the digitization project in July.

They hope to make the texts avail-

Fatih said. "This archive will be the property of all Kurds to use and to help advance our understanding of ourselves."

### Out of print

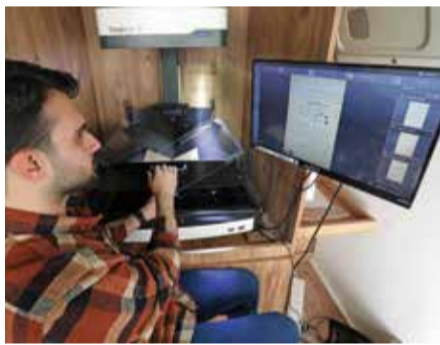
Dohuk library manager Masoud Khalid gave the KCAC team access to the manuscripts and documents gathering dust on its shelves, but the team was unable to secure permission from the owners of some of the documents to digitize them immediately. "We have books that were printed a long time ago — their owners or writers passed away — and publishing houses will not reprint them," Khalid said.

Digitizing the collection means that "if we want to open an electronic library, our books will be ready", the 55-year-old added. Hana Kaki Hirane, imam at a mosque in the town of Hiran, unveiled a treasure to the KCAC team — several generations-old manuscripts from a religious school established in the 1700s.

Since its founding, the school has collected manuscripts but many were destroyed during the first war pitting the Kurds against the Iraqi state between 1961 and 1970, said Hirane. "Only 20 manuscripts remain today," including centuries-old poems, said the imam. He is now waiting for the KCAC website launch in April to refer people to view the manuscripts. "It is time to take them out and make them available for everyone." — AFP



A member of the Kurdistan Centre for Arts and Culture (KCAC), inspects an old book before making a digital copy.



A member of the Kurdistan Centre for Arts and Culture (KCAC), scans the pages of an old book.



A member of the Kurdistan Centre for Arts and Culture (KCAC), registers an old book before making a digital copy.



Members of the Kurdistan Centre for Arts and Culture (KCAC), inspect old books before making digital copies.

In Iraq, the Kurds are a sizeable minority who have been persecuted, with thousands killed under the rule of late dictator Saddam Hussein and many of their historic documents lost or destroyed. "Preserving the culture and history of Kurdistan is a sacred job," said Pishtiwan, perusing volumes and manuscripts from Dohuk city's public library in Iraq's northern autonomous

1991 Gulf War.

After the US-led invasion of 2003 toppled the dictator, remaining documents were scattered among libraries and universities or held in private collections. Once a week, Pishtiwan and his two colleagues journey in their small white van from the regional capital Arbil to other Kurdish towns and cities to find "rare and old" books. They seek

ry, politics, language and history, written in several Kurdish dialects and some in Arabic. Pishtiwan holds up a book of old Kurdish folk stories named after 16th-century Kurdish princess Xanzad, before gently flipping through the fragile pages of another religious volume, tracing the calligraphy with his fingers.

Back in the van, equipped with two devices connected to a screen, the

able to the public for free on the KCAC's new website in April.

More than 950 items have been archived so far, including a collection of manuscripts from the Kurdish Baban principality in today's Sulaimaniyah region that dates back to the 1800s. "The aim is to provide primary sources for Kurdish readers and researchers," KCAC executive director Mohammed

It was the setting of the chilling graveyard scene in "Amadeus", may have held the bones of Gavrilo Princip — the man who started World War I — and Margaret Thatcher paid a mysterious visit there when she was British prime minister. An overgrown "lunatic graveyard" on the outskirts of Prague has become the Czech capital's strangest attraction, drawing ghost hunters, scandal seekers and Satanists and other less than welcome visitors lured by the supposedly strange energy of "Europe's scariest cemetery".

Around 4,200 people were laid to rest in the graveyard of the immense Bohnice psychiatric hospital, many without headstones. "It's a different kind of cemetery," said Jiri Vitek, a former firefighter and deputy mayor of the local area who had become its de facto caretaker.

"The graveyard served standard psychiatric patients — schizophrenics, alcoholics, addicts, but also people you would not want to meet — arsonists, paedophiles, murderers," he told AFP. Vitek said Gavrilo Princip, the Bosnian-Serb student who shot Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife in Sarajevo in 1914, triggering the Great War, may have been interred there before a shrine was created for him in his homeland.

Princip was the only prisoner in the Theresienstadt fortress north of Prague. A secret funeral took place in the cemetery supervised by prison guards three days after his death. Vitek said the re-



## The many chilling myths of Prague's 'lunatic graveyard'

mote graveyard was the perfect place for Princip: "Where else would Austria bury its worst criminal?"

### Mozart burial

The first person to be buried in Bohnice was an 11-year-old boy who died of tuberculosis in September 1909. At that time, the hospital was the largest of its kind in the sprawling Austro-Hungarian empire — a veritable village with a church, laundry and

a bakery. "The patients worked in the fields, grew vegetables and worked in workshops," hospital spokeswoman Alzbeta Remrova told AFP.

When World War I hit, the burials included Austrian soldiers hospitalized with mental illnesses and psychiatric patients from Italy, evacuated to Prague. Most died during a typhoid epidemic between 1916 and 1918, said Vitek. The graveyard closed in 1951 and was left to looters and neglect for six decades, with

its chapel bowing to time and ivy.

But its haunting atmosphere drew director Milos Forman there to film the heartbreaking burial scene in his Oscar-winning 1984 movie "Amadeus", with the great composer Mozart thrown into a pauper's grave, his body covered in quicklime.

### Thatcher's pilot

Vitek said that British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher paid a mysterious vis-

it to the graveyard in 1990 to reportedly bring home the remains of a British pilot shot down at the end of World War II. Nobody knew where the grave was, Vitek said, until a local vagrant identified it in exchange for a crate of rum.

Over the years the graveyard has become a focus of dark fantasy — a place where local youths tried to scare each other and test their courage — especially its southwestern corner, which was reserved for criminals. Some say it feels colder there than in the rest of the graveyard, blaming all that negative energy. But Vitek laughs this off.

"Non-believers were not buried in coffins, but in bags sanitized with lime. It's the hardened lime that generates the cold," he said. In the 1980s, police busted a Satanic ritual in the cemetery. More down-to-earth locals used it as a rubbish dump, and this is how Jiri Vitek found it in 2011 as he walked his dog.

"It was full of old fridges, washing machines, sofas and debris. So I started to clean it up," Vitek said. He has gradually started to organize guided tours of the cemetery, has been working on a book and plans a revamp of the local chapel and memorial. "As a firefighter I saved the living for 15 years. Now for the past 12 years, I've been saving the dead." — AFP



Jiri Vitek, a voluntary caretaker of the cemetery, walks across the so-called 'lunatic graveyard' near Bohnice mental hospital in Prague.



A photo shows a ruin at the so-called 'lunatic graveyard' near Bohnice mental hospital in Prague, Czech Republic.

## Lifestyle



Britain's Queen Camilla holds a Barbie doll in her image during a reception to celebrate International Women's Day and mark the end of the Women of the World (WOW) Girls Festival Bus tour at Buckingham Palace, central London.--AFP photos



## Queen Camilla immortalized as Barbie

**B**arbie may not have won at the Oscars, but she made a new friend Tuesday: Queen Camilla, who was immortalized as one of the iconic dolls. "You've taken about 50 years off (me)... we should all have a Barbie," the queen joked as she was presented with the doll modeled closely on her own image.

Camilla, 76, whose cancer-stricken husband King Charles III has currently stepped back from royal duties, was presented with the gift in recognition of her work as president of the Women of the World (WOW) Foundation. She was joined by Mathilde, Queen of Belgium and actor Helen Mirren, the narrator of last year's blockbuster "Barbie" starring Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling.

The film, released last year, has been a box office success but missed out on all but one of the nine Oscars it was nominated for at last week's Academy Awards. Mirren, 78, won her own best actress Oscar in 2007 for "The Queen" in which she played the late Queen Elizabeth II.

Last week she also received her own Barbie doll, dressed just like her and complete with a tiny Oscar statu-



Britain's Queen Camilla (left) speaks with British actress Helen Mirren during a reception to celebrate International Women's Day.

ette. Camilla's doll was dressed in a scaled down version of the her outfit -- a blue Fiona Clare dress, black cape by Amanda Wakeley and Eliot Zed black boots. It was presented to her on board the WOW Girls Festival Bus which has

toured the country promoting gender equality and made a final stop at the royal family's Buckingham Palace residence in central London.--AFP

## Le Freak's Nile Rodgers wins Swedish music prize

**U**S disco legend Nile Rodgers, whose hits include "Le Freak" and "Good Times", won Sweden's 2024 Polar Music Prize with Finnish conductor and composer Esa-Pekka Salonen, the jury said on Tuesday. Marie Ledin, managing director of the prize, called Rodgers "a ground-breaking pioneer". Rodgers, 71, and Bernard Edwards, who made up the band Chic, co-wrote "Le Freak" about not getting into a 1977 New Year's Eve party at New York City's hip disco Club 54, despite a special invitation from legendary singer-supermodel Grace Jones.

The song went on to become the biggest selling single in the history of the iconic Atlantic Records label. Rodgers has also collaborated with, and produced songs for, some of the biggest stars in the music industry.

They include Sister Sledge's "We Are Family", Diana Ross' "Upside Down", David Bowie's "Let's Dance", Madonna's "Like A Virgin" and Daft Punk's "Get Lucky". "Nile's impact in pop culture is incomparable and his timeless songs will continue to delight, uplift and inspire for many years to come," Ledin said. His songs are "so well-crafted that they will outlive us all", the jury said in its citation.

### Perfectly balanced

The prize jury hailed Salonen--



This combination of file pictures shows Finnish conductor and composer Esa-Pekka Salonen (left) and US disco legend Nile Rodgers.--AFP photos

whose titles include music director of the San Francisco Symphony and Conductor Laureate of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Philharmonia Orchestra in London--as "an innovator". "His artistic curiosity, creativity and forward-thinking approach to composing and conducting paves the way in classical music. "He is a master of tone, perfectly balancing sound and emotion to produce and lead music that deeply moves the listener," Ledin said.

Salonen's compositions range from large-scale works for orchestra to virtuoso works for solo instrumentalists and chamber ensembles, as well as film scores. The laureates will receive their award, which includes a cash prize of



Jamaican singer, model and actress Grace Jones arrives on May 21, 1989 at the opening gala ceremony of the 42nd edition of the Cannes Film Festival.

one million kronor (\$98,000), at a ceremony in Stockholm on May 21. The Polar Prize was established in 1989 by the late Stig Anderson, manager of Swedish pop superstars ABBA, and selects two or three laureates each year.

Last year, it honoured singer Angélique Kidjo from Benin, along with Britain's Chris Blackwell, founder of Island Records, and Estonian composer Arvo Part. Past winners have included Iggy Pop, Paul McCartney, Grandmaster Flash, Metallica, the Afghan National Institute of Music, Sting, Bob Dylan, Ravi Shankar and Dizzy Gillespie.--AFP



French-Polish director Roman Polanski arrives for the '70th Anniversary' ceremony of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. -- AFP

## Polanski to face civil trial over alleged rape

**F**rench-Polish director Roman Polanski, who fled the US more than four decades ago after being convicted of sexually assaulting a child, will face a civil trial over the alleged rape of another minor years earlier, the woman's lawyer said Tuesday. The case against the director of "The Pianist" will be heard in Los Angeles in August 2025, said Gloria Allred, a Hollywood lawyer who has represented victims of rapist Harvey Weinstein and others who emerged in the #MeToo era.

While Polanski cannot be forced to attend the trial, said Allred, the civil hearing will be a chance for her client, named in the suit as Jane Doe, to seek justice for the alleged attack in 1973. The suit, filed last year, claims Polanski took the then-teenager to dinner in 1973 at a restaurant in Los Angeles.

He allegedly gave her tequila, and when she began to feel dizzy, drove her to his home in the tony Benedict Canyon, where he forced himself on her. "She told him: 'please don't do this,'" Allred told reporters.--AFP

## 'Shen Yun' slides anti-Beijing message into colorful dance

**A**n image of a dancer balancing on the words "China Before Communism" looms over Parisian commuters catching the morning metro, signaling the annual return of Shen Yun, a controversial spectacle of traditional Chinese dance mixed with vehement criticism of Beijing and conservative rhetoric. The Shen Yun Performing Arts company has slipped the beliefs of a spiritual movement called Falun Gong in between its technicolored visuals and leaping dancers since 2006, with advertising for the show so ubiquitous that it has become an internet meme in recent years.

Founded in 1992, Falun Gong claims nearly 100 million followers and has been subject to "persistent persecution" in China, according to a January 2024 European Parliament resolution. Shen Yun aims to "revive 5,000 years of traditional Chinese culture", which the group says Beijing has nearly succeeded in destroying.

Atheism, evolution, and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) are just some of the topics targeted during the show's roughly two-hour run time. China banned Falun Gong, which it calls an "evil cult", in 1999 after 10,000 members peacefully demonstrated outside a government building in Beijing. But the movement has found a global audience, performing Shen Yun in cities across the world every year and generating revenues of \$46 million in 2022 alone, according to the Pro-Publica investigative news site.

### 'Greater forces at work'

In front of some 2,000 spectators in the French city of Tours, a soprano sings to a divine power, castigating "modern thoughts" that are "corrupting" humanity. The audience then watches as Chinese police chase peaceful demonstrators before one of the officers has a change of heart, becoming "aware that greater forces may be at work", according to the program. The demonstrators portrayed in the scene are members of Falun Gong--but adverts for the performance do not spell this out. "Shen Yun is obviously a facade to promote Li Hongzhi's ideas and recruit new members," said Marc Lebranchu, a researcher in traditional Chinese practices at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in Paris.

Li Hongzhi, the founder of Falun Gong, is a controversial figure who fled China in 1998, seeking political asylum. In a 1991 Time magazine interview, Hongzhi portrayed himself as the savior of humanity and claimed aliens were trying to replace humans.

French anti-cult association Unadfi said the movement's leader has made racist remarks about those with multiracial backgrounds and in a 2017 report accused Falun Gong of having "less than tolerant views of homosexuality". However, Unadfi spokesperson Pascale Duval said no similar accusations have been levelled in France "for at least five or six years".

The group has also been criticized for its proximity to the ultra-conservative movement in the United States. Between 2018 and 2019 a Falun Gong-affiliated media outlet called The Epoch Times paid more than \$1.5 million for around 11,000 pro-Trump ads on Facebook over a six-month period, some of which peddled conspiracy theories, according to NBC News. AFP made several attempts to contact Falun Gong's French-based branch but did not receive a response.

### 'Systematic persecution'

Beijing initially saw the movement's promotion of qi gong--a gentle exercise from traditional Chinese medicine--as a low-cost way to maintain public health, but the Chinese regime banned the group when it started to threaten the CCP's dominance. Since then, "tens of thousands of Falun Gong practitioners have been arbitrarily detained, many of them tortured", according to Amnesty International.

In January 2024, the European Parliament accused the CCP of engaging in "systematic persecution to eradicate the Falun Gong religious movement". China has repeatedly faced accusations of forced organ harvesting from prisoners and in particular, members of Falun Gong.

The Chinese consulate in France's southern city of Marseille called these claims "fabricated" and urged French audiences to "stay away" from Shen Yun last year, calling it a "political tool". Chinese authorities have made several attempts--some successful--to force the cities to cancel Shen Yun performances.

In 2008, the Chinese Embassy in Sweden lobbied the city of Stockholm to ban the show, but the city told AFP that the attempt was unsuccessful. They had more luck in South Korea in 2016 when a court issued an order cancelling shows over financial threats from the Chinese embassy.--AFP



This photograph shows a woman walking past posters of the Shen Yun dance show in a metro station in Paris. --AFP

## Aya Nakamura faces 'racist' backlash over rumored Olympics show

**O**lympic organizers said Monday that they were shocked by the "racist attacks" against France's biggest music star Aya Nakamura over rumors she might perform an Edith Piaf song during the opening ceremony for the Games. It began with local media reports that the French-Malian singer had discussed the possibility of performing a song by 20th-century icon Piaf when she met President Emmanuel Macron last month, though neither party has confirmed the rumor.



French singer Aya Coco Danioko aka Aya Nakamura performs on stage during the 36th Victoires de la Musique, the annual French music awards ceremony, at the Seine Musicale concert hall in Boulogne-Billancourt, on the outskirts of Paris. -- AFP

That was enough to become an issue at a campaign rally on Sunday for the Reconquest party, led by far-right ex-presidential candidate Eric Zemmour, where Nakamura's name drew boos from the crowd. The 28-year-old singer has become a pop superstar around the world for hits like "Djadja", which has close to a billion streams on YouTube alone.

A small extremist group, the Natives, hung a banner by the River Seine that read: "There's no way Aya; this is Paris, not the Bamako market". Nakamura re-

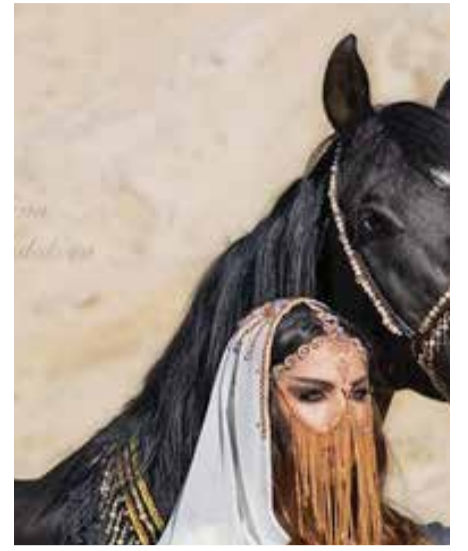
sponded on social media: "You can be racist but not deaf... That's what hurts you! I'm becoming a number 1 state subject in debates... but what do I really owe you? Nada." The Olympics organizing committee told AFP: "We have been very shocked by the racist attacks against Aya Nakamura in recent days. (We offer our) total support to the most listened-to French artist in the world."

### Backlash

Nakamura also received support from Sports Minister Amélie Oudea-Castera who addressed her on X, saying: "It doesn't matter, people love you. Don't worry about anything." Antoine Leument, an MP from the left-wing France Unbowed party, hit out at the Natives, posting: "They claim to love their country but they want to exclude the most listened-to French-speaking singer in the world since Edith Piaf. We cannot be both racist and patriotic in France."

Nakamura has faced right-wing criticism in the past for the liberties she takes with the French language using the familiar argot of hip-hop. "I can understand why some people say: 'Who does she think she is, mocking us in our French language?'" Nakamura told AFP in a recent interview. "But it's important to accept the culture of others, and, me, I have two cultures."

Carole Boinet of culture magazine Les Inroductibles said the far right had, ironically, made it more vital that Nakamura perform at the Olympics. "Aya Nakamura invented this language which is fantastic. She has crazy hits--France should be proud to have an artist like her known internationally," said Boinet.--AFP



Ramadan Aesthetic

# EMBRACING RAMADAN STYLE: ELEGANCE IN DRESS, BEAUTY, AND GRACE

As the crescent moon heralds the arrival of Ramadan, the fashion and beauty landscapes undergo a transformative shift, mirroring the sacredness and festivity of this holy month. This holy month is a time for spiritual reflection and an opportunity to embrace a unique style that reflects the season's richness. The Ramadan style is a harmonious blend of traditional values and contemporary fashion, where modesty meets modernity, and elegance is the key theme. From the serene flow of fabrics to the subtle shimmer of makeup, the Ramadan style is a testament to the beauty of modesty, creating a unique aesthetic that resonates across the Muslim world. This style evolution reflects a deep respect for cultural heritage while embracing contemporary trends, making it a perfect theme for Dashe Beauty's discerning clientele in Kuwait.

**The Ramadan aesthetic:**

**A symphony of modesty and style**

The essence of Ramadan clothing lies in its elegance and respect for tradition with modern flair. The choices range from flowing abayas and elegant kaftans to maxi dresses adorned with intricate embroidery or delicate prints. The clothing is imbued with cultural significance, featuring luxurious fabrics, intricate designs, and a palette that ranges from serene whites and pastels to vibrant jewel tones. These outfits are not just about covering; they're about celebrating the beauty of modesty with fabrics that whisper tales of heritage and designs that mirror the tranquility of the month. Color plays a pivotal role, with pastels, whites, and deep jewel tones offering a palette that complements the solemnity and festivity of Ramadan nights. Whether it's an abaya's flowing silhouette or a kaftan's

sophisticated cut, each piece is a nod to the modesty that Ramadan represents, elevated with contemporary touches that appeal to the modern woman.

**Makeup: Beauty and grace, the Ramadan look**

Ramadan beauty looks to embrace a more defined style, albeit in a subtler manner. Makeup during Ramadan is about enhancing natural beauty with a focus on radiant, glowing skin



and eyes that captivate with understated yet impactful looks. Think luminous foundations, a soft wash of colour on the cheeks and eyes, and lips tinted in muted shades that speak of elegance and grace. This approach to makeup ensures that the look is appropriate for the month's solemnity and reflective of individual style. The overall look is polished and refined, mirroring the inner purity that Ramadan celebrates.

**Hairstyles: Grace underneath**

While the focus might be on modest attire, hairstyles during Ramadan

are about simplicity and sophistication and lean towards graceful, understated elegance. Whether hidden under a hijab or showcased, the preference leans towards easy, manageable styles that speak volumes of understated elegance. Soft waves, sleek ponytails, low buns, or simple braids are favored, ensuring the hair is beautifully styled yet not the centrepiece of attention. Elegant updos are the styles of choice, offering versatility under hijabs or as



standalone statements. It's about enhancing natural beauty without overshadowing the modesty that the month symbolizes. These hairstyles complement the overall aesthetic, being both manageable and chic, ensuring that the focus remains on the holistic beauty and spirituality of the month.

**Nails: Understated elegance and subtle sophistication**

Nail style during Ramadan takes a turn towards understated elegance, embracing simplicity. The trend is towards soft minimalist design, neutral colors,

classic French manicures, or a clear gloss, maintaining the theme of modesty and simplicity. It's an opportunity to embrace natural beauty with well-manicured but adorned nails. For those seeking a bit more, geometric patterns or minimalistic designs in muted tones can add a touch of personal style without detracting from the overall modest aesthetic. This approach reflects the understated luxury of Ramadan style, focusing on neatness and subtlety rather than overt



glamour, perfectly aligning with the modesty and spirituality of the season.

**A celebration of style and spirituality**

As Ramadan brings together families and communities in a month-long celebration of faith, reflection, and togetherness, the unique Ramadan style offers a way to express personal identity while honoring cultural and religious traditions. Ramadan style is a beautiful amalgamation of tradition, modesty, and contemporary fashion. It's a time when

personal style meets spiritual reflection, creating an aura of elegance and grace. It's a time when the beauty of modesty is celebrated through fashion, makeup, and style, creating a timeless and timely aesthetic. As we embrace the holy month, let our choice of clothes, hairstyles, makeup, and nails reflect the profound beauty of Ramadan. It's a period for introspection, piety, and celebrating the timeless beauty of modesty and elegance that transcends mere fashion to



reflect the soul's purity. For those looking to embrace this beautiful fusion of tradition and contemporary style, Dashe Beauty in Kuwait is your go-to destination, where the spirit of Ramadan is celebrated through every service and product we offer. Get more inspiration by visiting our website [dashebeauty.com](https://dashebeauty.com) or follow up on our beauty blog. — Dashe Beauty Kuwait



## Cirque du Soleil's extravagant fire and ice show 'CRYSTAL' will be gliding into The Arena Kuwait

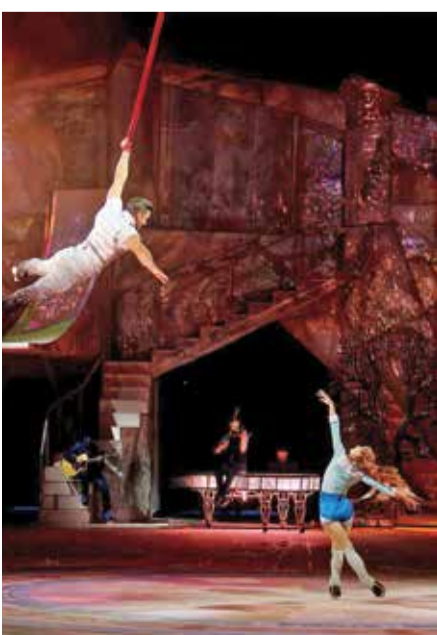
Brace yourselves for an unprecedented fusion of ice skating and acrobatics brilliance as Cirque du Soleil Crystal arrives for its inaugural showcase at The Arena Kuwait from May 22 to May 27, 2024. This ground-breaking production, organized by SES Live in association with Live Nation Middle East, pledges to redefine the limits of circus arts, offering a breath-taking spectacle that pushes the boundaries of imagination.

Cirque du Soleil Crystal seamlessly integrates the mesmerizing artistry of ice skating with gravity-defying acrobatics, marking a pivotal moment in the company's illustrious 40-year history. This unparalleled production guarantees an immersive encounter that harmonizes the elegance of the talented performers with the exhilaration of aerial stunts and mind-bending feats.

Witness acrobats and skaters deliver seamless acts while gliding on ice and balancing in mid-air, combining multiple disciplines to craft a world-class entertainment experience. Audiences will be enthralled by synchronized skating, free-style figures, and extreme acts of daring

alongside traditional circus acts such as the swinging trapeze, aerial straps, and enthralling hand-to-hand performances.

Cirque du Soleil tickets are on sale from March 14 starting at 1:00 pm, with a range of seating categories. The



Royal category is the most expensive at KD 125, offering premium seats with spectacular views of the performance. VIP tickets are priced at KD 105, followed by Diamond and Platinum tickets at KD 90 and KD 75, respectively, which offer good views and comfortable seating. For those looking for more affordable options, the gold, silver, and bronze tickets are available at KD 45, KD 35, and KD 25, respectively. To ensure that the show is accessible to all guests, special needs tickets are also available for KD 25.

The dates and respective timings of the shows are as follows:

**Wednesday, May 22, 2024**  
Doors open at 6:30 pm - Show starts at 7:30 pm

**Thursday, May 23, 2024**  
Doors open at 6:30 pm - Show starts at 7:30 pm

**Friday, May 24, 2024**  
Doors open at 6:30 pm - Show starts at 7:30 pm

**Saturday, May 25, 2024**  
Doors open at 11:00 am - Show starts at 12:00 pm  
Doors open at 6:30 pm - Show starts at 7:30 pm

**Sunday, May 26, 2024**  
Doors open at 2:30 pm - Show starts at 3:00 pm  
Doors open at 6:30 pm - Show starts at 7:30 pm

**Monday, May 27, 2024**  
Doors open at 3:00 pm - Show starts at 4:00 pm  
Doors open at 7:00 pm - Show starts at 8:00 pm

Be part of this mesmerizing event by securing your tickets and experiencing the enchantment of Cirque du Soleil Crystal as it makes its grand debut in The Arena Kuwait. For more information and tickets, visit [thearenakuwait.com](https://thearenakuwait.com).

## New throat patch can turn muscle movements into speech

A new adhesive patch could one day help people with voice disorders speak again by using artificial intelligence to read the movements of their throat muscles and turn them into speech, researchers said Tuesday. The small, stretchy patch is powered solely by the muscle movements, the US-based researchers revealed in a study in Nature Communications.

Attached to the skin, the patch converts the movements of the larynx muscles into electrical signals, which are in turn translated into speech by a machine learning algorithm, a form of AI. Then a speaker plays the sentences the person intended to say aloud — though the prototype can currently only relay certain pre-recorded phrases.

Crucially, the patch works without needing to pick up on the vibrations of a person's vocal cords, meaning it would help restore the speech of people with damaged vocal cords, lead study author Ziyuan Che of the University of California, Los Angeles told AFP. Nearly a third of people suffer at least one voice disorder in their lifetime, according to the study. Existing treatments for serious voice problems, such as handheld devices like an electrolarynx, can be "inconvenient, uncomfortable, or invasive," the researchers said.

The waterproof patch is roughly the size of a large coin and weighs just seven grams. Che compared its texture to that of a rubber glove. To test the device, eight volunteers without voice disorders were asked to both speak and whisper five sentences including "Merry Christmas", "I love you" or "I don't trust you". — AFP

## Sports

# India's Pant says doctors considered leg amputation after serious car crash

## 'When my accident happened I felt something spiritual saved me'

**NEW DELHI:** Star Indian wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant says that doctors raised the prospect of amputating his leg after the serious car crash that threatened to end his cricket career. The 26-year-old is set to play for the Delhi Capitals in the Indian Premier League starting this month after a 14-month absence following the accident.

He is also in contention for the T20 World Cup in the West Indies and United States in June if all goes well on his comeback in the IPL. Pant said his long layoff had taken a toll on him physically and mentally, but knows it could have been far worse.

"When my accident happened I felt something spiritual saved me," Pant, who missed the last season of the IPL, told Wednesday's Times of India. "With the kind of accident I had, I only got my knee injured, but I can't even imagine how much worse it could have been. Doctors even spoke to me about amputation."

Pant crashed his Mercedes SUV north of New Delhi in December 2022, suffering multiple injuries when the car ramed into a crash barrier, flipped over and caught fire. He was rushed to hospital before being airlifted to Mumbai for further treatment and surgery. An intensive rehabilitation programme followed with the National Cricket Academy (NCA) as he recovered from a damaged ligament in his right knee, a hurt wrist

and ankle, and abrasions to his back.

Pant said he had been "anxiously waiting" to be declared fit and had been distressed to sit out last year's ODI World Cup at home. "It was very upsetting. We discussed with the NCA team that we will take a shot at the World Cup. All of us tried 200 percent, but my knee couldn't take the load," he said.

Pant had also hoped to be fit for India's 4-1 Test series win over England which concluded on the weekend, but said the cricket board had not wanted to rush him back into the gruelling format. The swashbuckling player said the accident had changed his whole outlook. "Gratitude towards life has increased a lot. You start appreciating small things about life."

Pant has played for India 129 times across all three formats since making his international debut in 2017. He was replaced as skipper of Delhi Capitals by David Warner last year. — AFP



Rishabh Pant



**DEHRADUN:** (FILES) Members of hospital staff push a stretcher carrying Indian cricketer Rishabh Pant to an ambulance in Dehradun on January 4, 2023. Star Indian wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant has said that doctors raised the prospect of amputating his leg after the car crash that threatened to end his cricket career. — AFP

## Asian Tour to add event to help players qualify for Olympics

**MACAU:** The Asian Tour wants to add a lucrative event before June to help its players qualify for this summer's Paris Olympics, the head of the tour's International Series told AFP on Wednesday. Rahul Singh was speaking ahead of this week's International Series Macau, where players are chasing a \$2 million prize fund and all-important ranking points.

Only 60 players will reach Paris 2024 and with most countries having a maximum of two places, competition is fierce before the Olympic Golf Rankings (OGR) are finalised in June. Saudi-bankrolled LIV Golf has invested \$300 million in the Asian Tour—which unlike LIV receives world-ranking points—leading to the creation of the International Series.

More than 20 LIV golfers have made the short trip over from Hong Kong for this week's event at the Macau Golf and Country Club, and Singh agreed many have ranking points on their minds. "We're seeing that with some of the LIV boys who sit on the cusp of Olympic qualification and the Asian Tour players who want to work their way into the top 60," he said.

"And therefore we're looking actively right now at adding another International Series tournament before the cut-off, which is June 17." Singh declined to say where and when the event will be "because we haven't finalised it", but added: "We're actively trying to make that happen and the Olympics is one of the driving forces." The Asian Tour has only two events scheduled between now and June, in Saudi Arabia and South Korea, leaving ample room for more.

### Paris goal

Hong Kong's Asian Games gold medalist Tai-chi Kho is one player who has stated his goal this year is to qualify for Paris. The 23-year-old, the 2023 Asian Tour young player of the year, is just outside the top 60 on the Olympic Golf Rankings.

"I think International Series events, with how strong the fields are, is a great opportunity for me to crack the top-60 benchmark," Kho said. "It's an opportunity this week to progress my game and (get) a little bit closer to that vision of playing the Olympics."

LIV players such as Anirban Lahiri are battling with Asian Tour golfers such as Gaganjeet Bhullar for one of the India places. Two-time Macau Open winner Bhullar, currently 50th on the OGR, can rise up the rankings with a good result on one of his favourite courses this week.

Lahiri will play in the DP World Tour's Indian Open at the end of the month, one of the few tournaments outside LIV available to him. He had been due to tee up in Macau but pulled out after getting the flu in Hong Kong. Other LIV stars such as major-winner Cameron Smith and Joaquin Niemann have been playing in Australia before Christmas and in Asian Tour events to keep in the frame for Paris. — AFP

## Jones says 'best to come' from Marcus Smith

**TOKYO:** Marcus Smith's "best time is to come", former England head coach Eddie Jones said on Wednesday, following the fly-half's Twickenham heroics. Smith's last-ditch drop-goal on Saturday saw England end Six Nations champions Ireland's hopes of successive Grand Slams.

The 25-year-old came off the bench to make his first appearance of the tournament after recovering from a calf injury. Smith has yet to cement his place as England's regular fly-half since making his debut under Jones in July 2021 and has been criticised for a perceived lack of consistency.

## NBK sponsors Rafa Nadal Academy Kuwait junior program

**KUWAIT:** As part of its commitment to its social responsibilities and its endeavors to achieve sustainable development, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) is keen to promote public health and the practice of sports activities. In this context, the bank signed a sponsorship agreement with Rafa Nadal Academy Kuwait (RNAK), the leading sports institution specializing in tennis and fitness, to sponsor 7 players from the junior program at the academy.

The signing ceremony was attended by Mohammed Mustafa Al Marzouq, CEO of Tamdeen Sports and Mrs Manal Al Mattar, Head of Corporate Communications at National Bank of Kuwait. On this occasion, Mohammed Mustafa Al Marzouq, CEO of Tamdeen Sports said: "We are always pleased to collaborate with a leading institution like National Bank of Kuwait, and as a continuation of this fruitful cooperation, NBK has provided support to the junior tennis team with the aim of nurturing a distinguished generation of athletes and elevating the sport of tennis."

"The Academy's vision is to lead the way for tennis in the Middle East, and develop a unique, high-end sports facility with the highest level of service and care. Our greatest asset in achieving this is our partners, and we are thrilled that NBK leadership is playing an important role in helping us become the leading tennis Academy in the Middle East and re-define sport, fitness, health and leisure across the region," he added.

On her part, Al Mattar said: "NBK seeks to establish partnerships with leading institutions in all fields, in a way that contributes to support its community needs and expectations." "Our commitment to supporting youth reflects our dedication to empowering the next generation. By investing in sports and education, we aim to cultivate not just tennis skills but also resilience, discipline, and a healthier future for our youth", she pointed out.

Al Mattar emphasized that NBK encourages people to do sports and follow a healthy lifestyle in line with its leading strategy to achieve sustainability. "At NBK, we believe in the transformative

## PGA Tour, Saudi talks 'accelerating'

**MIAMI:** PGA Tour chief Jay Monahan said Tuesday talks with the Saudi Arabian backers of LIV Golf were "accelerating" but was tight-lipped on how the proposed joint venture between the two bodies would work.

Speaking to reporters ahead of this week's Players Championship, Monahan said negotiations with Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) were progressing. However Monahan said several "key issues" remained to be resolved and that hammering out a deal would "take time".

"As I've said on a number of occasions, you can't negotiate a deal like this in public, so I will be brief," Monahan said. "I recently met with the governor of the PIF, Yasir Al-Rumayyan, and our negotiations are accelerating as we spend time together."

"While we have several key issues that we still need to

But Jones, who began his second stint as Japan head coach in January and will face England in June, said "it takes time to mature" as a fly-half and that Smith will be "reaping the benefits of the experience he's had".

"Look at most American quarterbacks now—they can play until they're 40," the Australian told reporters in Tokyo. "We're seeing the same thing in rugby. Marcus Smith's best time is to come." Smith had been expected to start England's Six Nations opener against Italy until he was ruled out with an injury he picked up in their training camp.

He was hoping to step out of Owen Farrell's shadow after his rival for the number 10 jersey ruled himself out of the Six Nations for mental wellbeing reasons. Farrell was first choice in the position at last year's World Cup, with Smith converted to full-back.

Jones, sacked by England in late 2022, said fast-tracking Smith into his team was "one of the things that still I don't know whether it was a mistake or not". "I wanted



power of sports, especially for our youth. Partnering with the Rafael Nadal Tennis Academy in Kuwait is not just about tennis; it's about shaping character, fostering teamwork, and instilling life-long values. Through this sponsorship, we aspire to build a legacy of excellence, where the energy of our youth translates into a brighter, more vibrant future for Kuwait," she added.

Members of the "Rafa Nadal" Academy have access to 15 tennis courts, including both outdoor and indoor courts equipped with the latest international

technologies. Additionally, the academy hosts courts for paddle tennis and squash, along with an indoor swimming pool and separate fitness facilities for both women and men.

NBK is deeply committed to social responsibility, recognizing its role in creating a positive impact in society. Through its initiatives, NBK prioritizes youth development, education, health, women's empowerment, and environmental sustainability. NBK strives to be a catalyst for positive change, fostering a brighter future for generations to come.

work through, we have a shared vision to quiet the noise and unlock golf's worldwide potential." The emergence of the Saudi-funded LIV Golf, which has lured top PGA Tour players with huge signing on fees and lucrative limited field tournaments, plunged golf into a bitter civil war.

Monahan however shocked the sporting world last June by announcing that the PGA Tour had agreed a tie-up with LIV's backers, the PIF, in a stunning U-turn that followed secret negotiations. The precise detail of how the new venture between the PGA Tour and PIF will work remains shrouded in mystery. An initial December 2023 deadline to agree a deal came and went as negotiations continue. Since then more players have left the PGA Tour to join LIV, most notably Spanish star Jon Rahm, the reigning Masters champion who opted to join the upstart circuit in December.

### 'Real progress' made

Monahan, who has faced criticism for his handling of the crisis, declined to comment on the question of whether players who left for LIV would be welcomed back to the PGA Tour. "We've made and continue to make real progress in our negotiations and our discussions with the PIF,"

Monahan said. "But it really is not in the best interest of the PGA Tour and our membership and for PIF for me to be talking about where we are with specific elements of our discussions." Monahan added however that the eventual goal was to unify the sport so that all of the world's best players were participating on one circuit.

"As a board and as an organization, we're committed to trying to get to a place where there is unification," Monahan said. World number one Scottie Scheffler, who will attempt to attend his Players title this week, meanwhile said he had no plans to join the exodus to LIV Golf.

"I'm not going to sit here and tell guys not to take hundreds of millions of dollars," Scheffler said. "If that's what they think is best for their life, then go do it ... But at the end of the day, this is where I want to be, and what they're doing is not really a concern to me." Monahan also declined to say whether the new joint PGA Tour-PIF venture would feature LIV's team golf concept. "There are a lot of things that we're talking about, team golf being one of them, but I'm not at liberty to talk about the specifics," Monahan said. "I just don't think that's helpful for what we're trying to accomplish together." — AFP



Eddie Jones

Sports

# Barca edge past Napoli to make Champions League quarters return

We played a great game, the team gave everything, we dominated in many moments: Xavi

**BARCELONA:** Barcelona survived a nervy second half to beat Napoli 3-1 on Tuesday and reach the Champions League quarter-finals 4-2 on aggregate. Xavi Hernandez's side came flying out of the blocks with goals from Fermin Lopez and Joao Cancelo but after Amir Rrahmani pulled one back, the Catalans started to sweat.

Italian champions Napoli, who salvaged a 1-1 draw in the last-16 first leg, were finally beaten when Robert Lewandowski swept home from close range. It is the first time five-time winners Barcelona have reached the last eight of the competition since 2020, and they did so without injured midfield trio Pedri, Gavi and Frenkie de Jong.

"We're in the quarter-finals of the Champions League after four years, it's the moment to enjoy that," Barca coach Xavi told Movistar. "We played a great game, the team gave everything, we dominated in many moments ... (I'm) very proud."

Xavi said he was leaving at the end of the season in January and his team have gone on a run of nine games without defeat after that decision. Teenage stars Lamine Yamal and Pau Cubarsi have been key to that form, and both excelled against Napoli on a night which offered some relief to Barcelona amid a bleak season.

Centre-back Cubarsi, 17, got the better of Napoli forward Victor Osimhen. "He's incredible, he was the game's best player," Sergi Roberto told Movistar. "He doesn't stop surprising us, in the last 16 and playing this way, he's a player who can be here for his whole life."

Barcelona became the first team in the competition's history to start two players 17 or under in a knock-out stage game. Xavi demanded the fans

turn their temporary Olympic Stadium home on the city's Montjuic hill into a pressure cooker, and they duly obliged. Over 50,000 spectators marked the club's largest attendance this season. Francesco Calzona's Napoli wilted as the Spanish champions came out of the blocks flying.

**Fast start**

Electric 16-year-old winger Yamal made strong inroads down the right before the bright Lopez opened the scoring after 15 minutes. Cancelo fed Raphinha who cut the ball back into the area for Lopez, who tucked home.

While he may lack the metronomic precision of Pedri, the midfielder provides thrust and an insatiable desire to shoot. Two minutes later and the Catalans doubled their lead against the shellshocked visitors, with Yamal starting the move by breaking loose in his own half on the counter-attack.

The winger played in Raphinha and although the Brazilian hit the post Cancelo was running in to roll home the rebound. Napoli battled their way back in when Matteo Politano slipped in down the right, with Ronald Araujo playing him inside. The Italy winger crossed for Rrahmani who slotted home cleanly to pull Napoli back into the tie. Napoli were almost level moments later but Barcelona goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen made a superb save, tipping over Giovanni Di Lorenzo's header.

The Italians started the second half strongly, with Barcelona forced back into their own half, aimlessly clearing the ball. Xavi took action by bringing on Sergi Roberto and Oriol Romeu for Lopez and Andreas Christensen, aiming to freshen up the midfield and give his team new impetus.



**BARCELONA:** Barcelona's Polish forward #09 Robert Lewandowski wins a header against Napoli's Italian defender #22 Giovanni Di Lorenzo during the UEFA Champions League last 16 second leg football match between FC Barcelona and SSC Napoli at the Estadi Olimpic Lluis Companys in Barcelona. — AFP

Raphinha and Lewandowski drew saves from Alex Meret before Yamal struck from close range, but he was offside. Danish winger Jesper Lindstrom headed narrowly wide for Napoli, before Lewandowski settled the tie after Ilkay Gundogan and Sergi Roberto combined to set him up.

"We did well at times and almost equalized," Calzona told Italy's Sky Sport. "Of course, if you lose,

it means something didn't work." Second-half jitters showed Barcelona are far from their former glory but in the dynamic Yamal, Raphinha and Cancelo they have the quality going forward to trouble any prospective quarter-final opponent.

"It was an incredible night, (it's been) four years without getting where we belong, where the club deserves to be," added Sergi Roberto. — AFP



## Zain sponsors Fakhar Al Arab Arabian horse show

**KUWAIT:** Zain has sponsored Fakhar Al Arab, the exceptional show and competition for Arabian horses. The event, held early March at the Arena Kuwait, 360 Mall, celebrated the beauty of pure-bred Arabian horses and the talent of their breeders and owners. The event came under the supervision from ECAHO, the European Conference of Arab Horse Organizations.

During the closing ceremony, Zain awarded the

owners of the winning horses in the gold category. In attendance were Chairman of Tamdeen Group Mohammed Jassim Al Marzuq, Zain Kuwait Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti, Head of the Organizing Committee Dhari Al Mejhem, Zain Kuwait Corporate Relations Department Manager Hamad Al Musaiibeh, and the competition's Managing Director Mohammed Al Khamees.

Zain is proud to extend its support to this competition that celebrated the beauty of the pure bred Arabian horse, a cultural symbol deeply rooted in the Kuwaiti, Arab, and Islamic identities. Arabian horses are one of the oldest and finest breeds, distinctive for their beauty, elegance, and intelligence, with thousands of years of history. Zain was keen to join this event to reflect the private sector's support to cul-



tural and sports programs in the community. The Fakhar Al Arab competition featured several categories for straight Egyptian horses of all ages. An international team of referees supervised the competition and judged the participants, awarding points for criteria like Arab identity, head and neck, body, legs, and movement. Winners were selected for gold, silver, and bronze awards. The competition was organized under the S classification of the European Conference of Arab Horse Organizations (ECAHO).

Zain is always eager to support the biggest cultural and sports programs and competitions in Kuwait with the aim of elevating the Kuwaiti sports scene. The company strongly believes that the private sector has a vital role in progressing sports and cultural initiatives, and it makes this belief a reality by shouldering world-class competitions like Fakhar Al Arab.

## Al Hilal set world record to reach Asian League semis

**JEDDAH:** Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal set a world record for consecutive victories with their 28th win in a row to reach the Asian Champions League semi-finals on Tuesday. A 2-0 victory at fellow Saudi side Al Ittihad saw them surpass the previous record of 27 straight wins by a top-flight team, set by Welsh team The New Saints in 2016.

Riyadh-based Hilal, already the most successful team in AFC Champions League history with four titles, went through 4-0 on aggregate in Jeddah. Runners-up last year, Hilal triumphed in the quarter-final second leg at King Abdullah Sports City Stadium with second-half goals from Yasser Al Shahrani and the Brazilian Malcom.

Hilal will meet Al Ain of the UAE in the last four next month following the 2003 champions' penalty shootout win against Cristiano Ronaldo's Al Nassr on Monday. Ittihad's miserable night was summed up in the final minute of normal time when striker Abderrazak Hamdallah was given a second booking for grabbing Hilal defender Ali Al Bulaihi by the throat.

The confrontation sparked a number of clashes between the opposing sets of players. Ittihad, Champions League winners in 2004 and 2005, were missing a number of key players. Karim Benzema, the 2022 Ballon d'Or winner signed last summer from Real Madrid, was once more missing through injury, while 2018 World Cup winner N'Golo Kante was suspended after being sent off in the first leg.

However, it was the current Saudi Pro League champions who carried the greater threat for the majority of the encounter. Ittihad almost opened the scoring in the 17th minute when Romarinho's left-foot strike from the edge of the Hilal penalty area cannoned back off the post. — AFP



**ULSAN:** Ulsan Hyundai FC's Lee Myung-Jae (top) fights for the ball with Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors FC's Lee Dong-Jun (bottom) during the AFC Champions League quarter-final second leg football match between Ulsan Hyundai FC and Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors FC in Ulsan. — AFP

Today's Matches	
<b>UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE</b>	
Villarreal CF v Olympique de Marseille	20:45
beIN Sports	
Glasgow Rangers v SL Benfica	20:45
beIN Sports HD 8	
SK Slavia Prague v AC Milan	20:45
beIN Sports	
West Ham United v SC Freiburg	20:45
beIN Sports HD 5	
Liverpool v AC Sparta Prague	23:00
beIN Sports HD 1	
Brighton & Hove Albion v AS Roma	23:00
beIN Sports HD 2	
Atalanta BC v Sporting CP	23:00
beIN Sports HD 3	
Bayer 04 Leverkusen v Qarabag Agdam FK	23:00
beIN Sports	

## Pachuca thrash Union, Crew into CONCACAF Champions Cup quarters

**LOS ANGELES:** Salomon Rondon scored a hat-trick as Mexican side Pachuca thrashed the Philadelphia Union 6-0 to surge into the quarter-finals of the CONCACAF Champions Cup. After a goalless first leg in Philadelphia last week, Pachuca tore into the Major League Soccer outfit in Tuesday's return in Mexico. Veteran Venezuelan international striker Rondon fired Pachuca into the lead from the penalty spot after seven minutes and the Mexican club kept up the pressure with a dominant display. Rondon made it 2-0 in first-half stoppage time and then completed his hat-trick in the 53rd minute.

A brutal mauling of Union continued with Nelson Deossa, Oussama Idrissi and Alan Bautista all getting on the scoresheet to complete a 6-0 aggregate victory. Tuesday's scoreline equalled the worst defeat by an MLS team against Mexican opposition in the Champions Cup, matching the 6-0 drubbing suffered by Columbus Crew against Atletico Morelia in the 2003 tournament. Elsewhere Tuesday, another of the MLS's representatives were given a torrid time as Orlando City exited 4-2 against Mexico's 2020 CONCACAF Champions League winners Tigres UANL. — 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 Arif Inayathulla** holder of Indian Passport No. T8759963 having permanent address 50/249, Ravindra Nagar, Kadapa, YSR Dist., Andhra Pradesh, India - 516003 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (Given name) Arif Inayathulla and (Surname) Shaik. (#5182) 14/03/2024

**I, Mohammad holder of Indian Passport No. M7063789, having permanent address Lal Ghati, Ratan Garh, Neemuch, Madhya Pradesh, Pin code: 458226 residing in Kuwait at present,**

hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (Given name) **Mohammad** and (Surname) **Jaat Wala.** (#5183) 14/03/2024

**I, Sivakumar** son of Thiru Nadarajan, born on 26th June 1990 (District of Birth: Kanyakumari, Address: 4/93A Chemponkarai, Puthenthurai PO, Nagercoil-629501), residing in Kuwait at present, holder of Indian Passport No. W0770771 & Aadhaar No. 4021 8173 5852, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under: Given Name: Yoseph & Sur-

name: Nadarajan. (#5181) 13/03/2024

**I, Zakaria Ane Kallu,** holder of Indian Passport No. T8762998 having permanent address 3-180/2, Anekallu house, Kudupallathadka Post, Karopady Village, Bantwal Taluk, Dakshina Karnataka, Karnataka - India, Pin: 574279, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (Given name) Zakaria and (Surname) Bin Hameed. (#5180) 13/03/2024

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988



LONDON: Porto's Brazilian striker #30 Evanilson (L) shoots the ball during the UEFA Champions League last 16 second leg football match between Arsenal and Porto FC at the Arsenal Stadium in north London. — AFP

## Raya is shootout hero as Arsenal reach Champions League quarters

### 'I'm lucky to be playing for Arsenal and get through to the quarter-finals'

LONDON: David Raya was the hero as Arsenal beat Porto 4-2 on penalties on Tuesday to reach the Champions League quarter-finals for the first time since 2010. The teams were locked at 1-1 on aggregate after an absorbing second leg at the Emirates but Raya saved twice in the shootout to break the hearts of the two-time champions. The goalkeeper dived full stretch to deny Wendell and repeated the feat against Galeno, while the home side converted all four of their penalties as the decibel count soared.

It is the first time a Champions League match has been decided by penalties since the 2016 final between Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid. "You are very nervous, you are hoping for the best but you know that it (the shootout) is a bit of a lottery," Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta told TNT Sports. "So happy. It has been 14 years (without reaching quarter-finals), which is a long time for a club like Arsenal and it shows how difficult it was. We really had to dig in to find the magic moment at the end."

"We've been patient, worked so hard and a lot of people have made good deci-

sions and showed courage in difficult moments and this is where you want to be," he added. Raya, on loan from Brentford, said it was a "great moment personally and collectively". "This means everything. You play football for these kind of things and I'm lucky to be playing for Arsenal, to be in the Champions League and to get through to the quarter-finals."

Trailing 1-0 from the first leg, Arteta's Premier League leaders — with 33 goals in their past eight league games — were not at their fluent best against a disciplined Porto side. Leandro Trossard pulled Arsenal the home team for long spells during the opening period, fashioning enough chances of their own make it a nervy night for the expectant fans.

Both sides struggled to settle in a scrappy opening period, with Porto doing their best to slow the game down by taking their time with throw-ins and goal kicks, to the audible frustration of the home crowd. Arsenal defender Ben

White headed over in the fourth minute after the home side's first sustained attack while captain Martin Odegaard hit the side netting 10 minutes later.

But Porto, who were last crowned European champions under Jose Mourinho in 2004, had a number of openings. Evanilson whipped a shot at goal from distance that bounced wide and minutes later struck a rising strike that Raya palmed away.

Declan Rice headed just wide and Pepe — the first 41-year-old to play outfield in the Champions League — got the deftest of touches with his head to prevent Kai Havertz from connecting with a White cross at the back post.

#### Breakthrough

The breakthrough finally came in the 41st minute following good work from Odegaard, who jinked past an opponent and fed Trossard with a perfectly weighted low pass into the box. Trossard calmly hit a right-footed shot past goalkeeper Diogo Costa and into the far corner of the net to ease the tension.

The visitors, who had never won

a match in England in 22 previous attempts, started the second half brightly as Arsenal struggled to impose themselves. Arsenal thought they had doubled their lead midway through the second half when Odegaard dinked the ball into an empty net but the goal was ruled out for a foul by Havertz on Pepe.

Moments later Porto streamed forward and Raya blocked Francisco Conceicao's shot from the edge of the penalty area. Arteta threw on Gabriel Jesus in the 83rd minute and the former Manchester City man nearly scored with his first touch.

As Arsenal pushed for a winner, Bukayo Saka produced a trademark curling effort that was punched back into the middle and Odegaard steered the rebound wide when well-placed. The home side looked the more dangerous in the early stages of extra-time but Porto remained a threat on the break, with substitute Mehdi Taremi curling wide.

Arteta brought on Eddie Nketiah and Oleksandr Zinchenko for the second period of extra time but neither side could find a winner and it went to penalties. — AFP

## Alcaraz, Sinner cruise into Indian Wells quarters

INDIAN WELLS: Defending champion Carlos Alcaraz and Italian rival Jannik Sinner remained on course for a semi-final showdown after cruising into the last eight of the ATP-WTA Indian Wells Masters on Tuesday. Alcaraz sailed into the last eight as he took revenge on Hungary's Fabian Marozsan with a 6-3, 6-3 victory.

In-form Sinner meanwhile booked his last eight berth with a 7-6 (7/4), 6-1 defeat of Ben Shelton. Sinner's win was his 18th straight victory dating to late last season, leaving him three wins away from his third title of the season after winning the Australian Open and Rotterdam.

"I played really well in the tight moments," the 22-year-old world number three said as he lined up against Czech Jiri Lehecka in the quarters. "I knew I would not get much rhythm from him. I can be proud of how I played. The wind didn't make it easier but I tried to stay positive and it worked out."

Sinner could face Spain's reigning Wimbledon champion Alcaraz in the semi-finals in California in what would be the latest instalment of a burgeoning rivalry. The duo fought an epic US Open quarter-final in 2022 and met in the semi-finals at Indian Wells and Miami Masters events last season.

Alcaraz must navigate a quarter-final against sixth seed Alexander Zverev before any meeting with Sinner. Zverev reached the last eight after defeating Alex de Minaur 5-7, 6-2, 6-3 in two and three-quarter hours.

Alcaraz had a score to settle with the 58th-ranked Marozsan after losing their only other meeting at last year's Rome Masters. Alcaraz never let his opponent into the fourth-round match, breaking twice in the opening set and winning 12 of the first 13 points of the second.

The top seed reeled off 22 winners in 75 minutes to race into the quarter-finals. After a slow start this season and an ankle roll several weeks ago in Brazil, the 20-year-old appeared on course to continue his chase to a possible second title here.

#### 'Almost perfect'

"I was nervous before the match, I'm not going to lie," Alcaraz said. "I was playing someone who beat me when I had no chances in the Rome match." But he walked off a winner completely pleased with his performance. "Let's say (it was) almost perfect. I can play better. "But I'm really happy with the way I approached the match, the way that I played, and my feelings." Elsewhere Tuesday, Greek Stefanos Tsitsipas failed to reach a second career quarter-final here, with the 11th seed losing 6-2, 6-4 to rising Czech youngster Lehecka. The upset was the youngster's second in succession after dispatching fifth seed Andrey Rublev in the previous round.

Tsitsipas, whose form has been modest so far this season, achieved the last eight during his 2018 debut at the Tennis Garden but has yet to duplicate that effort. In the women's fourth round, top seed Iga Swiatek beat Yulia Putintseva 6-1, 6-2 to set up a quarter-final with Caroline Wozniacki.

Swiatek has beaten Putintseva in all three of their matches without the loss of a set. She dominated the 79th-ranked Kazakh by sweeping the opening set in 29 minutes but was forced to battle in a second set marred by six breaks of serve.

"I had to keep focus in the second set," Swiatek



INDIAN WELLS: Fabian Marozsan of Hungary plays a forehand against Carlos Alcaraz of Spain in their fourth round match during the BNP Paribas Open at Indian Wells Tennis Garden. — AFP

said. "She was trying some different stuff. "I just wanted to play my game and I'm glad I did." Swiatek faces Wozniacki for a place in the semi-final. Wozniacki won a battle of returning tennis mothers, defeating Anelique Kerber 6-4, 6-2.

Both of the over-30 pair of former number one players and Grand Slam champions are back competing on the Tour after giving birth. "Things were going a bit my way and she was struggling a bit with her back," Wozniacki said. "I'm just happy I won."

"This will be my first quarter-final since my three-and-a-half year (maternity) break. "To be back playing is a special feeling." Dubai champion Jasmine Paolini lost 7-5, 0-6, 6-3 to Anastasia Potapova while Ukrainian Marta Kostyuk beat Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 6-4, 6-1 to reach the last eight. — AFP

## Pacers roll Thunder, Celtics march on

LOS ANGELES: Myles Turner scored 24 points as the Indiana Pacers snapped the Oklahoma City Thunder's three-game winning streak with a 121-111 victory on the road Tuesday. Turner led a balanced offensive effort for Indiana that saw six players post double-digit points tallies against the Western Conference-leading Thunder.

The Pacers shrugged off a fiercely partisan Oklahoma City crowd to take control early on, opening up a 16-point lead near the end of the first half. Although the Thunder rallied with a 41-point third quarter to take a fleeting one-point lead, Indiana regrouped to pull away again and close out victory.

Turner was backed with 18 points and nine assists from Tyrese Haliburton while Pascal Siakam added 18 points and 11 rebounds for the visitors. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander led the Thunder scorers with 30 points, 10 rebounds and five assists.

"We got off to a great start and we were able to lock in. It was a team effort," said Turner, adding that Indiana had reveled in the intimidating atmosphere at Oklahoma City's 18,000-seat Paycom Center. "It's one of the loudest places to play historically," Turner said. "It's a hostile environment, a playoff-like atmosphere. But we enjoy that." Indiana improved to 37-29 to move into sixth place in the Eastern Conference. Oklahoma City's defeat leaves them level on 45-20 with the Denver Nuggets at the top of the Western Conference.

#### Celtics sink Jazz

The Eastern Conference-leading Boston Celtics shrugged off the absence of Kristaps Porzingis, Jaylen Brown and Al Horford to wrap up their gruelling West Coast road trip with an emphatic 123-107 win over the Utah Jazz.

Jayson Tatum was once again the focal point of the Celtics offense, finishing with 38 points from 13-of-25 shooting as Boston swept to their 51st win of the season. Utah led briefly early in the first quarter but were ultimately dominated by the short-handed Boston line-up. Derrick White backed Tatum with 24 points while four other Boston players finished in double figures.

Keyonte George was the pick of the Utah scorers with 26 points. Boston coach Joe Mazzulla praised his understrength team's ability to deliver. "The fact that the last couple of games everybody is stepping up — it's just what we're trying to build. A culture, an environment in the locker room where it doesn't matter who's in, everybody is ready to play at any time," Mazzulla said. — AFP