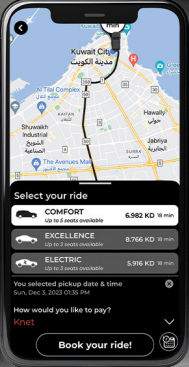



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Kuwait welcomes UNGA Islamophobia resolution




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Al-Safat Investment Co records KD 1.039 million profit in 2023




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Curry hot as Warriors beat Lakers, Davis hurt



Ramadan Kareem



Fajr	: 04:36
Shrooq	: 05:55
Dhuhr	: 11:56
Asr	: 15:23
Maghrib	: 17:58
Isha	: 19:15

# Genocidal Bibi vows Rafah assault

## Dozens killed as deadly Zionist strikes hit Gaza amid renewed truce efforts



GAZA: Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed Sunday to send ground forces into Gaza's southern Rafah city despite growing international concern over the fate of Palestinian civilians sheltering there. Netanyahu, whose security and war cabinets were later due to discuss latest international efforts towards a truce deal, stressed that "no amount of international pressure will stop us from realizing all the goals of the war".

"To do this, we will also operate in Rafah," he told a cabinet meeting, hours before he was set to meet visiting German Chancellor Olaf Scholz for talks on the war raging since Oct 7. The Zionist entity has repeatedly threatened to launch a ground offensive against Hamas fighters in Rafah, now home to nearly 1.5 million mostly displaced Gazans sheltering near the Egyptian border.

US President Joe Biden, whose country provides the Zionist entity with billions of dollars in military assistance, has said a Rafah invasion would be a "red line" without credible measures to protect civilians. UN World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus urged the Zionist entity "in the name of humanity" not to launch a Rafah assault, warning that "this humanitarian catastrophe must not be allowed to worsen".

Envoys were planning to meet in Qatar soon to revive stalled talks for a ceasefire and hostage release deal. A Hamas proposal calls for a Zionist withdrawal from "all cities and populated areas" in Gaza during a six-week truce and for more humanitarian aid, according to an official from the Palestinian group. The Zionist entity plans to attend the talks, with cabinet members due to "decide on the mandate of the delegation in charge of the negotiations before its departure for Doha", Netanyahu's office said, without giving a date for when they would leave.

The war meanwhile raged on, and overnight Zionist bombardment across the territory killed at least 61 Palestinians, the Gaza health ministry said. The dead included 12 members of the same family whose house was hit in Deir al-Balah, in central Gaza. Palestinian girl Leen Thabit, retrieving a white dress from under the rubble of their flattened house, cried as she told AFP her cousin was killed in the strike. "She's dead. Only her dress is left," Thabit said. "What do they want from us?"

The Zionist entity's genocidal war has killed at least 31,645 people in Gaza, most of them women and children, according to the health ministry. Shelling and clashes were reported in south Gaza's main city of Khan Yunis and elsewhere. More than five months of war and a Zionist siege have led to dire humanitarian conditions in Gaza, where the UN has repeatedly warned of looming famine for the coastal territory's 2.4 million people.

Continued on Page 6

RAMADAN KAREEM

Ramadan, the month of the Noble Quran

By Nadia Iblagh

It is very important to get back to the divine guidelines, the Holy Quran, for those who have neglected its teachings, because it would be difficult to predict future ethical standards. Practices that were considered unethical yesterday are considered ethical today, leaving the human in danger of meeting the fate of those who went against ethical codes.

Almighty Allah says what can be translated as: "So when they forgot of what they were reminded, We rescued those who prohibited evil and We took those who did wrong with a terrifying punishment because they had been disobeying." (Holy Quran 7 :165)

According to the Holy Quran, human beings are created for the purpose of worshipping the one God through the engagement of good things and avoidance of engaging in the wrong things. What is "right" and what is "wrong" is clearly defined, which is further explained by the sunnah (prophetic traditions) of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) who was sent to perfect the manners.

Ramadan comes as a reminder and opportunity to establish one's ethical frameworks as defined clearly by the Book sent by Almighty Allah. It is a chance to conduct a regular ethical assessment of oneself and one's society, and revise the definition of terms and practice them accordingly.

Allah says, translated as: "Piety is not to turn your faces towards the East and the West; piety is he who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book and the Prophets; who gives of his money, in spite of loving it, to the near of kin, the orphans, the needy, the wayfarers and the beggars, and for the freeing

Continued on Page 6

Election committee bars 14 candidates, some file petitions

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The election committee at the interior ministry has decided to bar 14 candidates from running in the April 4 snap polls, mostly over their criminal records, with some of the candidates challenging the decision in court. The barred candidates include four former MPs and Sheikh Mishal Malik Al-Sabah, the only ruling family member who filed to run in the polls. They also include three candidates who did not complete registration procedures.

Members of the Al-Sabah ruling family are not barred by the law from contesting elections, but it has become a norm that they do not take part in election races to protect them from the ills of politics. Former MPs Marzouq Al-Hubaini, a member of the dissolved 2023 National Assembly, Marzouq Al-Khalifa and Jaber Al-Azemi said they have filed petitions challenging the decision at the administrative court.

The three former lawmakers were previously

Trump hails election as 'most important date' in US history

VANDALIA, Ohio: Donald Trump told a rally in Ohio on Saturday that November's presidential election will be the "most important date" in US history, painting his campaign for the White House as a turning point for the country. Days after securing his position as the presumptive Republican nominee, the former president also warned of a "bloodbath" if he is not elected — though it was not clear what he was referring to, with the remark coming in the middle of comments about threats to the US auto industry.

"The date — remember this, November 5 — I believe it's going to be the most important date in the history of our country," the 77-year-old told rally-goers in Vandalia, Ohio, repeating well-worn criticisms that his rival, President Joe Biden, is the

Continued on Page 6

Volcano erupts again in Iceland

REYKJAVIK: Icelandic police declared a state of emergency Saturday as lava spewed from a new volcanic fissure on the Reykjanes peninsula, the fourth eruption to hit the area since December. A "volcanic eruption has started between stora Skogfell and Hagafell on the Reykjanes Peninsula," said a statement from the Icelandic Met Office (IMO). Live video images showed glowing lava and billowing smoke.

Iceland's Department of Civil Protection and Emergency Management announced it had sent a helicopter to narrow down the exact location of the new fissure. The authority also said the police had declared a state of emergency due to the eruption. According to the IMO, it occurred close to the same location as a previous eruption on February 8. Lava appeared to flow south towards the dykes built to protect the fishing village Grindavik, it said.

Just after 2200 GMT, "the southern lava front was just 200 metres from the barriers on the eastern side of Grindavik and moving at a rate of about

Continued on Page 6

Vandalia, Ohio: Former US President and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump gestures as he arrives for a Buckeye Values PAC rally on March 16, 2024. — AFP

Handout picture released on March 16, 2024 shows billowing smoke and flowing lava pouring out of a new fissure during a new volcanic eruption on the outskirts of the evacuated town of Grindavik in western Iceland. — AFP



## Local

# Zain's iftar initiative continues at Souq Al Mubarakiya in Ramadan

## In strategic partnership with Kuwait Food Bank



Nawaf Algharabally and Meshal Al Ansari with Zain and Food Bank officials and volunteers.

**KUWAIT:** Zain's iftar initiative to serve fasting individuals continues throughout the entirety of the Holy Month of Ramadan. The initiative comes back in its 17th year under the company's annual social campaign, Zain Alshuhoor, in collaboration with several of Zain's strategic partners, including the Kuwait Food Bank. This year, a total of 42,000 meals will be served throughout the entire month.

Zain recently held a special visit to Souq Al Mubarakiya, the traditional market located at the heart of Kuwait City, to share the blessings of the Holy Month with fasting individuals. The visit was joined by Zain Kuwait CEO Nawaf Algharabally, Kuwait Food Bank Vice-Chairman Meshal Al Ansari, Zain and Food Bank officials, and members of the Zain Alshuhoor volunteer team.

This initiative is a main pillar of Zain's annual social program during the Holy Month. The company serves iftar meals every day in collaboration with its strategic partner, the Kuwait Food Bank, through trucks that visit densely populated areas across Kuwait to secure iftar meals for underpriv-

ileged communities. Zain also serves daily meals at the Grand Mosque, another strategic partner, to reach a total of 42,000 meals throughout the entire month. The initiative is directly supervised and organized by Zain's team and joined by members of the Zain Alshuhoor volunteer team that consists of employees from across the company's divisions and departments.

This year, six of Zain's strategic community partners from both the public and private sectors join its annual Ramadan social campaign, Zain Alshuhoor. The campaign features a wide range of humanitarian, charitable, social, religious, health, and sports programs that continue throughout the Holy Month of Ramadan. Zain Alshuhoor is one of Kuwait's biggest and most successful community programs during the Holy Month. Every year, the company introduces a bigger, renewed version of the campaign that expands upon the previous year's initiatives and programs. The campaign strives to share the blessings of this much-cherished month with the entire Kuwaiti people.



Zain Alshuhoor volunteers during the initiative.

## Kuwait's total population hits 4.86 million

**KUWAIT:** The Public Authority for Civil Information issued the latest detailed data on population and employment statistics for the end of December 2023, showing that the total population in Kuwait reached 4,860,000 in the end of 2023, growing by 2.6 percent compared to the end of 2022 at 4,737,000 people (4.794 million people according to the Central Statistical Bureau), with an absolute increase during 2023 by 122,700 people.

The rise during 2022 at 351,200 people is at a growth rate of 8.0 percent compared to a decline 6.1 percent during 2021. The Kuwaiti population during 2023 increased by 28,600 people or a growth rate of 1.9 percent, bringing their total number to 1,546,000 people. While the percentage of Kuwaitis in the total population declined from 32.04 percent at the end of 2022 to 31.82 percent, according to the latest figures.

The number of Kuwaiti females totaled 787,300, exceeding the number of males at 758,900. The non-Kuwaiti population increased by 94,000 people (an increase rate of 2.9 percent) to reach 3,313,000 people with a compound annual growth rate during the years 2014–2023 at 1.8 percent. The total number of workers in Kuwait amounted to 3,005,000 workers or 61.8 percent of total population, while this percentage for Kuwaitis reached 32.3 percent of the total number of Kuwaitis.

It is noted that the percentage of non-Kuwaiti workers out of the total non Kuwaiti population amounted to 75.6 percent. When compared with the end of 2022, we find that the percentage of Kuwaiti workers out of total number of workers in Kuwait decreased from 16.8 percent to 16.1 percent as in December 2023, and the percentage of female workers out of total Kuwaiti workforce reached 51.3 percent at the end of 2023 versus 51.1 percent at the end of 2022, while the percentage of female employment out of total employment in Kuwait was 29.9 percent.

The number of Kuwaiti workers increased by

Governorate	Building Utilization at the end of December 2023					Total	In Governorate %	
	Residential	Commercial	Res. & Com.	Vacant	Other		Vacant	Occupancy
Kuwait	24,470	2,321	3,822	2,042	422	33,077	6.2%	93.8%
Hawalli	24,070	1,235	6,803	1,645	233	33,986	4.8%	95.2%
Ahmadi	29,433	3,218	9,007	7,784	1,052	50,494	15.4%	84.6%
Jahra	25,523	4,469	6,663	3,977	1,475	42,107	9.4%	90.6%
Farwanya	22,892	1,619	6,225	1,614	672	33,022	4.9%	95.1%
Mubarak Al-Kabeer	20,072	1,124	2,117	1,638	360	25,311	6.5%	93.5%
Total	146,460	13,986	34,637	18,700	4,214	217,997	8.6%	91.4%
% of Total	67.2%	6.4%	15.9%	8.6%	1.9%	100%		
Change versus end of 2022	355	(81)	2,016	(719)	1,464	3,035		
% of Growth	0.2%	-0.6%	6.2%	-3.7%	53.2%	1.4%		

Source: PACI – December 2023

18,900 workers to reach 500,000 workers, rising from 481,100 workers at the end of 2022. The number of workers in the government reached 397,600 workers or 79.5 percent of the total number of Kuwaiti workers. It is believed that the unemployment of Kuwaitis has increased to 29,800 workers or 6.0 percent of total number of Kuwaiti workers at the end of 2023, compared to 26,100 workers or 5.4 percent at the end of 2022.

The total number of workers (Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti) amounted to 509,500 workers in the government sector or approximately 10.5 percent of the total population, and the percentage of Kuwaitis working in the government sector is about 78.0 percent, according to the same source. It must be recalled that the two official sources (PACI & CSB) of these numbers are not compatible.

According to the latest issue of the Public Authority of Civil Information's Guide for Buildings and Units, total number of buildings in Kuwait reached 218,000 buildings at the end of December 2023, compared to 215,000 buildings at the end of December 2022, indicating that the number of buildings rose by 1.4 percent within 12 months, which is lower than the growth rate recorded at the end of December 2022 compared to the end of December 2021 of 1.7 percent. Buildings are divided into different units, the number of which

reached 783,800 Buildings and Real Estate Units December 2023 units at the end of December 2023 compared to 770,800 units at the end of December 2022, an increase by 1.7 percent.

The CAGR of the number of units during the period from the end of 2014 to December 2023 was 2.0 percent, while the CAGR of the number of buildings for the same period was lower and scored 1.4 percent, which confirms the continuity of reducing the area of units within each building, indicating that the change in the demand pattern continued in the same manner.

The majority of buildings in Kuwait are used for housing, as the percentage of residential buildings scored 67.2 percent of the total number of buildings, followed by those designated for living and working together, and those designated for work only. According to PACI data, apartments constitute the majority of the number of units at 45.5 percent of the total, followed by houses at 21.7 percent then shops at 20.1 percent.

The CAGR (2014-2023) for shops, apartments and houses was 3.5 percent, 1.8 percent and 1.5 percent respectively, while the CAGR for residential annexes decreased by 0.9 percent. The percentage of vacant units declined, according to the estimates of PACI, at the end of 2023 to 20.8 percent compared to 22.4 percent at the end of 2022. — Al-Shall report

## Kuwait, Philippines to resume talks on recruitment

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait and the Philippines are expected to reconvene meetings to discuss the recruitment of Filipino labor to Kuwait which is currently at a deadlock after the holy month of Ramadan. According to informed sources, meetings of labor officials from the Philippines and officials from Kuwait's ministry of Foreign Affairs and Kuwait's Public Authority for Manpower will take place in May.

The sources pointed out that the aim of the meeting is to resume discussions regarding the recruitment of Filipino workers to Kuwait, continue discussions on sensitive issues, and explore the possibility of thrashing out differences that cropped up during the previous meetings. "The most important of which is the insistence of the Philippines' side on shelters for its workers inside the embassy while the Kuwaiti side rejects this as it is against the interest of the sovereignty of the country.

The sources indicated that the issue of shelters could be sorted out as Kuwait is willing to improve the conditions of the labor shelters and increase the number of shelters to accommodate more workers who have disputes with their sponsors in Jahra and Ahmadi. It can be similar to that of the current labor shelter in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh. The Philippines does not currently mind sending its workers to Kuwait, be it domestic or professional, and the Kuwaiti side does not mind lifting the ban on recruitment of Filipino labor. There is an understanding on both sides to sign a new memorandum of understanding (MoU) on regulating the recruitment of workforce from the Philippines.

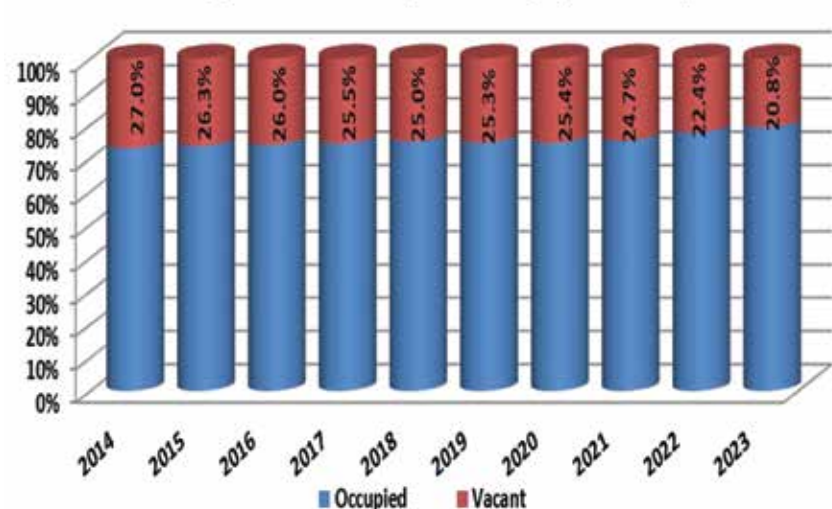
## KOTC launches 'Digital Employee' feature

**KUWAIT:** In an effort to keep pace with the digital transformation in the country and the rapidity of technological advancements, Kuwait Oil Tanker Company (KOTC) launched its "Digital Employee" feature on Sunday. The feature aims to promote efficiency and productivity, guarantee accuracy and quality, and lower expenses. Director of Information Technology and Communications at KOTC, Hani Bebbhani, told KUNA.

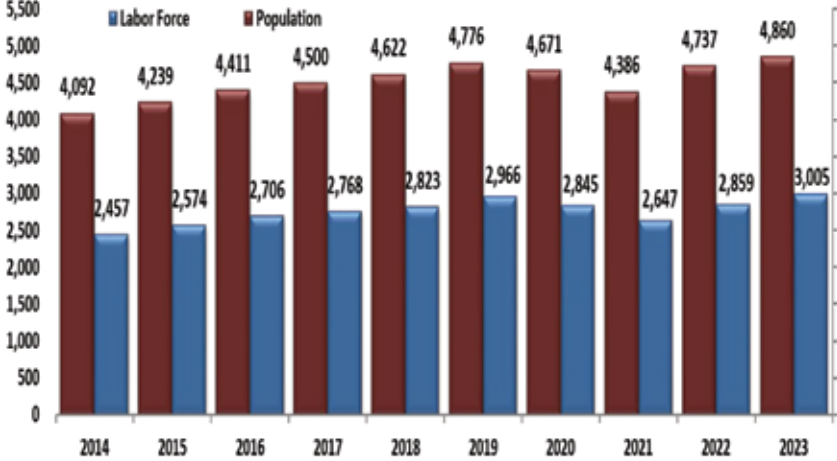
Bebbhani added that the feature had been tried and tested successfully, and it has proven to be time- and cost-efficient. The digital technology, he explained, could be put to use in employee data analysis, simplifying the work process and decreasing the error margin. Chief of Information Technology work team Bashar Al-Fenaini described the project as pioneering and exceptional in the oil sector, adding that it greatly contributes to work development.

The project commenced back in 2021, as Al-Fenaini mentioned, and was activated in 2023. The technology is meant to mimic human behavior and perform complex tasks. The digital employee can achieve simple duties, including paid or sick leaves, and can also attend to more intricate matters related to purchases, contracts, quotes, and approvals, as Al-Fenaini illustrated. — KUNA

Percentage of Vacant & Occupied Buildings (2014 - 2023)



Population and Labor Force in Kuwait 2014 - 2023



Source: PACI – December 2023



# Ministry plans to provide integrated medical services

Expanding Al-Bahar Eye Center part of plan to expand health sector



Hamad Al-Bahar honored.



KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi takes a group photo with number of Ministry's officials and representatives of the Al-Bahar family. — KUNA photos



Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi



Dr Ahmad Al-Fodari



Hamad Al-Bahar

KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi said on Sunday that the expansion of the Mohammad Al-Bahar Eye Center is part of the ministry's plan to expand the sector and provide integrated medical services. Minister Al-Awadhi was speaking during the inauguration of the center's expansion, with a donation from inheritors of the late Mohammad Al-Bahar, in Sabah Al-Salem health district. The minister indicated that the renovation includes the construction of three floors, each containing a small surgery room and emergency clinics.

The first floor hosts three main operation rooms, equipped with state-of-the-art equipment, and the second floor includes the ward for sanitizing surgery tools. Indicating that the ministry is executing a 100-day ren-

ovation project, the minister affirmed that the expansion is proceeding in tandem with training the medical cadres and issuing regulations that serve the governance of the medical sector. He revealed that a new clinic would be opened in Al-Metlaa in the near future.

For his part, the head of the eyes divisions at the MoH, Dr. Ahmad Al-Fodari, said in a statement that Al-Bahar Center has been one of the pioneering medical centers in Kuwait since 1999, when it kicked off with four operation rooms. With the expansion, the number of operation rooms has reached 17 large rooms and six small ones. Building new operation rooms in addition to the emergency surgery ward will be helpful to shorten the waiting times for the patients, Dr. Fodari added. — KUNA



Operating rooms with the latest types of surgical microscopes and eye surgery devices.

## A guide to healthier eating in Ramadan

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: During Ramadan, the consumption of oriental sweets tends to increase, often leading to weight gain among individuals observing the fasting month. Recognizing this pattern, experts advise on strategies to navigate this dietary challenge, emphasizing moderation and healthier alternatives to traditional sweets.

Aiming to promote overall well-being and fitness while honoring cultural traditions, Abdullah Al-Mesbah, an expert in nutrition and sports nutrition, recently unveiled a comprehensive guide to healthier eating during Ramadan, shedding light on "permissible" sweets. Emphasizing the importance of maintaining balanced nutrition, he recommended incorporating moderate portions of sweets rich in natural sugars and nutrients.

Mesbah revealed that the calorie counts of luqaymat range between 60 to 70, with four servings deemed acceptable per day. Moreover, he suggested that substituting sugar with a sweetener could help mitigate the calorie intake. Meanwhile, he mentioned that a large baked qatayef contains 250 calories, while its fried counterpart had 350 calories.

He emphasized the potential for reducing calorie intake by opting for sweeteners, baking qatayef and substituting low-fat cheese for nuts or full-fat cheese to manage calorie consumption



while still enjoying traditional treats like qatayef during Ramadan. Mesbah said one cup of jelly provides 93 calories, rendering it a reasonable choice for those seeking lower-calorie options. Additionally, creme caramel, with 223 calories per serving, offers a slightly more indulgent but still acceptable treat for individuals managing their calorie intake during the fasting period.

Turning to more substantial desserts, he discussed the calorie content of kunafa and basbou-

sa, two beloved Middle Eastern sweets. According to him, 100 grams of kunafa typically contain 350-400 calories, while the same quantity of basbousa has 530 calories. Mesbah emphasized that the recommended daily intake of Ramadan sweets should generally fall within the range of 200-300 calories. He underscored the importance of consuming these treats in moderation, advising against excessive indulgence in sweets during the holy month.

## Platform 51: The information ministry's streaming gateway

KUWAIT: Platform 51 exceeds traditional broadcasting models by delivering content via wireless waves to smart devices globally, said a Kuwaiti official on Sunday. The platform, set to launch on May 12, is designed to keep pace with modern technologies in the field of media and to create a suitable option for Kuwaiti families within the ministry's guidelines. This can be done simply by using login credentials from their preferred subscription service, Assistant Undersecretary for Media Services Sector and New Media at the Ministry of Information Saad Al-Azmi told KUNA.

The decision to launch Platform 51 on the aforementioned date came to celebrate the establishment of Radio Kuwait on May 12, 1951, he pointed out. Al-Azmi emphasized that the world, including media, has transitioned into a digital era marked by significant technological advancements. The platform's launch was inspired by the guidance and support of Minister of Information and Culture Abdurrahman Al-Mutairi to create a digital platform for the ministry's TV channels, radio stations, and online content. — KUNA



Saad Al-Azmi

## Dermatology clinics receive about 50,000 cases annually

KUWAIT: The head of the Council of Dermatological Departments of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Health, Dr. Attal Al-Lafi, said on Saturday that specialized clinics affiliated with the Ministry receive about 50,000 cases annually. Al-Lafi, the president of the Kuwait dermatologists association, explained in a statement to journalists after the Ramadan ghabga organized by the association that the most common skin diseases in Kuwait are dry skin, allergies, and eczema, pointing to the Ministry's policy and strategy aimed at improving the services provided to keep pace with those in the developed world.

She pointed to the effectiveness of fasting in the treatment of many skin diseases, especially those associated with allergies, such as urticaria, as it contributes to the temporary reduction in the percentage of water in the blood

and the skin and then increases its immunity and resistance to microbes and infectious and bacterial diseases, as well as reducing the severity of psoriasis and allergies, which increase with frequent consumption of foods rich in salts, as well as acne, which increases with frequent consumption of fats and sweets.

She added that despite the great benefit of fasting on the health of the human body, people with some skin diseases, such as acute red lupus, severe psoriasis, skin cancer, and others, are prohibited from fasting, as some diseases require nutrients that may decrease with abstinence from eating food or water.

She stated that fasting and the subsequent change in dietary habits have to do with the skin and hair, which in turn are affected by the change in the level of certain nutrients such as vitamin A and D, which should be provided on the Iftar and Suhoor tables through green salad and lean protein. Al-Lafi stressed the importance of eating enough fresh vegetables and taking water to compensate for what the body loses during the fasting period with a reduction in foods rich in salts and spices. — KUNA

## Breast cancer early detection service added to Sahel

KUWAIT: The official spokesman of the Ministry of Health, Dr. Abdullah Al-Sanad, announced the addition of an early detection service for breast cancer for women through the unified government application (Sahel) as part of the ongoing efforts of the digital transformation of health services to facilitate citizens.

Dr Al-Sanad said in a press statement that this service came under the directives of the Minister of Health, Dr Ahmad Al-Awadi, and in cooperation between several sectors and departments in the Ministry of Health. This comes within the framework of the national program for early detection of breast diseases, which provides high-quality services for screening at the early stage.

The service targets women - encouraging them to participate in regular screening by booking a mammogram appointment. The service provides the option to select the most convenient appointment and center via the application. He said that the examination is provided to Kuwaiti citizens within the age group of 40 years and above.

Dr. Al-Sanad said the Ministry has allocated five primary health care centers: Al-Egaila Health Center in Al-Ahmadi health area; Al-Zahra Health Center in Mubarak Al-Kabeer health area; Al-Naeem Health Center in Jahra health area; Khaitan South Health from Farwaniya health area; Shaikh Al-Farsi and Sharifa Al-Awadi health in Al-Surah area. He stressed the keenness of the Ministry of Health to continue strengthening the capabilities of the health sector in the digital field in order to achieve the objectives of the Ministry's plan and the Vision (New Kuwait 2035), praising the efforts of workers in the digital health sector and medical cadres for their keenness to raise the quality of health services. — KUNA



## Ramadan health tips

## 5 unhealthy practices to avoid in Ramadan

By Passant Hisham

**KUWAIT:** Since fasting can increase cravings for more food, change normal meals' schedules, and disrupt typical eating habits, it often leads to unhealthy practices that have been inherited across generations. Nutritionist Dr. Ahmad Al-Haddad identifies common unhealthy habits during Ramadan and offers solutions to address them.



Dr. Ahmad Al-Haddad

## Breaking fast with high-fat foods

Haddad warned against immediately eating a large meal all at once after a long day of fasting, as this can strain the digestive system and reduce energy levels after eating. "Please don't eat large meal after fasting," he said. Instead, Haddad advised dividing meals into three phases: breaking the fast with a date, which serves as a natural source of energy to restart metabolism and prepare the stomach to receive food, followed by a small soup. After taking a short break to pray, one can then return to eat their main meal.



Family members gather at the table to have iftar during Ramadan.

## Excessive consumption of desserts

While Ramadan is popular for its wide variety of desserts, Haddad advised not to fall for their allure. "Having a few spoons is acceptable, but the issue arises when people treat desserts as an extra standalone meal, consuming entire plates of it," he remarked. Desserts are very high in fats and sugar, lacking any beneficial nutritional values. Therefore, their excessive amount of energy might exceed our needs, resulting in fat storage, weight gain, and laziness for the rest of the day, he added.

## Overdrinking water at suhoor

Contrary to popular belief, consuming large amounts of water all at once won't prevent thirst while fasting, as noted by Haddad. He clarified, "Our bodies cannot retain such excessive amounts of water. We are not camels." He cautioned against the potential risks of water intoxication (or water poisoning) - a condition that arises from overconsumption of water in a short period. To maintain hydration without experiencing thirst or risking health adverse effects, he advised drinking water steadily throughout the day, such as one cup every two hours, up to a maximum of eight cups daily. He also emphasized the significance of consuming fruits due to their essential fiber content, which aids in better water absorption.

## Eating junk food at suhoor

Ordering junk food for suhoor not only deprives our bodies from acquiring essential nutritional benefits, but also contributes to excessive salt intake, which can lead to increased thirst the following day, as noted by Haddad. "Your suhoor food choices should resemble your regular breakfast choices," he emphasized. He recommended opting for a light suhoor meal by incorporating dairy products such as cheese, milk, and yogurt, which are perfect choice for avoiding thirst and maintaining fullness for next day.

## Ignoring physical activity

Haddad emphasized the significance of participating in physical activity in Ramadan, particularly after Iftar, as it's a crucial time when our bodies greatly benefit from it. This helps safeguard us against potential issues stemming from overeating or making unhealthy food choices.

## Kuwait Heritage



KUWAIT: A picture shows houseware shops in Kuwait in the 1970s. - Photo from KOC archive, provided by Mahmoud Zakaria, heritage researcher at Ministry of Information.

NBK participates in AIU Career Fair  
As part of its endeavors to support Kuwaiti fresh graduates

**KUWAIT:** National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues its consistent support of young national talent by participating in career fairs that aim to open direct communication channels between private sector companies and fresh graduates. In this context, the bank participated in the Career Fair organized by American International University (AIU) at its headquarters in Saad Al-Abdullah, Jahra area.



Abdullah AlKhabbaz

The fair was held on March 5 with the participation of many reputable companies and institutions in Kuwait. A large number of participants visited NBK's booth, as Group Human Resources staff provided answers to all inquiries raised by the participants who filled out the job applications for available vacancies. This comes within the bank's endeavors to

encourage fresh graduates to join the banking sector, which plays an instrumental role in the development of the Kuwaiti economy.

Commenting on this, Abdullah AlKhabbaz Senior Talent Acquisition at National Bank of Kuwait said, "NBK is always keen to sponsor career fairs as they represent key platforms for selecting and attracting national talent, while, at the same time, offering fresh graduates a great opportunity to explore the job and training opportunities available at the bank." "NBK is a key supporter of all initiatives and events aiming to stimulate the ambitious Kuwaiti youth. Our participation in this fair comes as part of its endeavors to support Kuwaiti fresh graduates and to spread the culture of joining the private sector among Kuwaiti youth and attract qualified individuals to the vital banking and financial sector," he added.

"NBK also enjoys a unique robust work environment and culture promoting continuous development thanks to the exceptional career development opportunities to its employees on continuous basis. This includes professional training programs aligned with the highest international standards to

help develop their skills and expertise for a thriving and sustainable career," he noted.

NBK's recruitment strategy is based on attracting, training and developing the young national cadres through the best-in-class programs to help them build a successful career and rise to leadership positions in the bank in the future. This makes NBK the private sector employer of choice for Kuwaiti fresh graduates, while also having the highest national employee retention rate.

NBK's efforts in attracting national talent go in line with its development and training plans targeting investing in national cadres and preparing a promising banking generation. It is also keen to offer a series of training courses and professional academic programs, being one of the leading banking institutions in Kuwait in organizing training programs for the youth. It is worth mentioning that NBK annually sponsors many career fairs for the Kuwaiti youth to introduce to them suitable job opportunities that meet their aspirations, being one of the major private sector employers of national workforce.

Kuwait welcomes UNGA  
Islamophobia resolution

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait welcomed the UN General Assembly's adoption of a resolution on measures to combat Islamophobia and the appointment of a special UN envoy to combat the phenomenon. A statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterated the call for spreading awareness on a global scale when it comes to peaceful coexistence among people, based on the values of equality, tolerance, and respect for human rights, and not exploiting the principle of freedoms as an alibi to vilify Islam or any other faith for that matter.

Also, the Arab Parliament welcomed the UN General Assembly's adoption on Friday of a resolution on measures to combat Islamophobia and the appointment of a special UN envoy to combat this phenomenon. In a press statement, the Cairo-based legislature expressed support for all efforts aimed at dealing with Islamophobia and countering extremism and terrorism worldwide. The Arab Parliament confirmed its readiness to cooperate with all regional and international actors to promote peaceful coexistence and mutual respect among followers of different faiths. It reiterated an unequivocal rejection of all forms of violence and extremism.

In another development, the Arab Charter on Human Rights Committee, an affiliate of the Arab League, affirmed its resolve to continue boosting full adherence to the provisions of the charter. On the 16th anniversary of the charter's entry into force in 2008, the committee said in a statement that the charter reflects Arab countries' commitment to and respect for international human rights law by ensuring a wide range of economic, social, cultural, and

IFRC, KRCS  
launch charity  
work initiative

**KUWAIT:** The International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) and the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) announced on Sunday the initiative of the global Islamic charitable work of their associations. The secretary general of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Jagan Chapagain, expressed his deep appreciation at the press conference at the Red Crescent headquarters for the Kuwait Red Crescent's support for the Islamic charity initiative and many major humanitarian issues worldwide, especially in the Gaza Strip.

"Kuwait provided us with an immediate contribution to the Syria earthquake to support the response, and we are grateful for their trust in the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies,"



ROME: Muslim faithful hold placards as they pray during a gathering in central Rome against Islamophobia. — AFP

civil and political rights.

It added that the 16th anniversary comes at very tough times due to the ongoing Zionist occupation and genocide against Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. The charter has contributed to raising awareness about human rights and boosting mechanisms for protecting human rights in the Arab world, it stated. The theme of this year's commemoration of charter enforcement is "protecting families and strengthening their bonds." It comes in recognition of the important role of the family institution in society.

he said. "Our partnership is important to show how Islamic philanthropy can create a lasting impact on a large scale," he said, noting that it is a legacy of lasting goodness and dignity for crisis-affected communities while contributing to reducing humanitarian needs and building long-term resilience.

"We share a common goal of Islamic philanthropy because it is the common foundation of social and economic justice that can contribute to common prosperity through the principles of inclusive participation and risk sharing," he noted. He stated that Islamic finance has shown enormous potential in economic development, and its charitable dimension provides a great opportunity to bridge the financing gap in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

He said that the principles of Islamic philanthropy provide a common basis for social and economic justice, which can contribute to achieving prosperity through the principles of inclusive participation and risk sharing. "The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is working with leading national societies such as the Kuwait Red Crescent to explore and understand how we

The family is the cornerstone of society, the statement said, indicating that the committee realizes the challenges of complying with the provisions of this charter over the years. The committee has made strenuous efforts to ensure the implementation of the charter's provisions on the ground through serious talks held with state parties, according to the statement. The charter is an important document and a legal framework binding to enhance and protect human rights in the region, it said, adding that the number of signatory states rose to 18. — KUNA

can leverage Islamic philanthropy to make a beneficial impact on affected communities in need," added Chapagain.

He pointed out that since the beginning of this year, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and interested national societies have conducted an assessment of the conformity of the principles, processes, and institutional resources of the International Federation with the requirements of Zakat and charity. He said that in pursuit of this path, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have set high standards of transparency and governance and are ready to set a role model in dealing with Islamic finance.

"The union is proud to develop a platform dedicated to the charitable work of Islamic finance, which is our official means of communication with donors wishing to provide Zakat and charity with full transparency," he stressed. He said it is an opportunity to demonstrate the intentions and value of Islamic charity work in the field of meeting humanitarian and development needs and is an opportunity to lead the dialogue on responsible financing. — KUNA





Vote set to cement Putin's rule

EU, Egypt agree \$8 billion energy, migration deal



Palestinians search the rubble of the Tabatibi family home.— AFP photos

‘Bloody’ Ramadan weekend in Gaza  
Zionist strike kills 36 people from one family on first Friday night of holy month

**GAZA:** Displaced by Zionist bombardment, the Tabatibi family gathered in central Gaza to eat together during the first Friday night of Ramadan, a reunion that soon turned into a bloodbath.

An air strike hit the building where they were staying as women prepared the pre-fasting meal, killing 36 members of the family, witnesses told AFP on Saturday. The health ministry in Gaza, which provided the same death toll, blamed the Zionist entity for the strike in Nuseirat, as did survivors.

Asked about the strike on Saturday, the Zionist military said it targeted two “terror operatives” in Nuseirat “throughout the night”, without elaborating. “The circumstances of the incident are still being reviewed,” it said.

Mohammed Al-Tabatibi, 19, stood in the courtyard of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in nearby Deir al-Balah, where the bodies of his relatives were spread out. “This is my mother, this is my father, this is my aunt, and these are my brothers,” Tabatibi, whose left hand was injured in the strike, said through tears.

“They bombed the house while we were in it. My mother and my aunt were preparing the suhoor food. They were all martyred,” he added before the bodies were stacked on a truck to be driven to a cemetery.

Because there were not enough body bags, some of the dead — including at least two children — were wrapped in white cloth stained with blood, AFP TV footage showed.

The strike in Nuseirat was one of 60 “deadly air strikes” reported overnight by the press office of the Gaza government, from Gaza City in the north

to Rafah in the south. “This is a bloody night, a very bloody night,” said Salama Maarouf of the government’s media office.

**Air strike kills muezzin**

The Zionist military campaign in Gaza has killed at least 31,645 people, mostly women and children, according to the territory’s health ministry. The Zionist entity claims the assault is in response to an attack staged by Hamas in October 2023, which resulted in the deaths of about 1,160 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally.

In Rafah, where the majority of Gaza’s 2.4 million people have sought refuge, more bloodshed is feared after Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office said on Friday he had approved plans for a military operation there.

Yet even before any such operation begins, air strikes continue, including one early Saturday that witnesses said killed Issa Duhair, the muezzin of a mosque, along with his two sons.

Mahmoud Duhair, a 41-year-old relative who lives nearby, described the muezzin as “a good man” who, as usual, dutifully performed the call to

prayer before dawn on Saturday, then went to eat with his family “when his house was struck”.

Back in Nuseirat, in central Gaza, Yussef Tabatibi said the true toll of the strike that killed 36 members of his family could rise. “Some of the martyrs we are unable to retrieve. We lack equipment, bulldozers, machinery, or anything else,” he told AFP, his hands and sweatshirt covered with dust from trying to clear rubble. “We retrieve them only with our hands. We brought shovels and hammers, but to no avail. Look at the extent of the destruction.” — AFP



Palestinian women comfort each other in the aftermath of the Zionist bombardment of the Tabatibi family home.



DEIR AL-BALAH: Palestinians react at the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir Al-Balah where relatives pulled from the rubble of the Tabatibi family home were transported on March 16, 2024, following overnight Zionist bombardment.

21 dead after bus collides with Tanker in Afghanistan

**LASHKAR GAH:** At least 21 people were killed and 38 injured on Sunday when a bus collided with a fuel tanker truck and burst into flames in southern Afghanistan. Traffic accidents are common in Afghanistan, due in part to poor roads after decades of conflict, dangerous driving on highways and a lack of regulation.

“Twenty-one people were killed ... in a traffic accident between a passenger bus, a tanker and a motorbike” on a main highway through Grishk district in southern Helmand province, Mohammad Qasim Riyaz, a spokesman for the provincial governor, told AFP. Of the 38 people injured, 11 were seriously hurt, according to the provincial information department.

The accident occurred in the early hours of the morning on a key highway that sees traffic between the western city of Herat through southern provinces to the capital Kabul, provincial officials said. The passenger bus was travelling from Herat to Kabul when it first collided with a motorbike carrying two people, killing both riders, Helmand traffic management officials said, according to the information department.

The bus driver lost control and crashed with a tanker truck travelling in the opposite direction, sparking a fire. The accident killed three people on the tanker and 16 bus passengers. “When the bus hit the tanker, it pierced the tank, which burst into flames,” said one of the survivors, Ghulam Sarwar, speaking to AFP at a hospital in provincial capital Lashkar Gah. “The flames got bigger and bigger and all the passengers in the front were burned. But at the back a window was broken and people were able to escape by jumping out,” he added. “If the window hadn’t been broken, every passenger would have been killed.”

**‘A horrible moment’**

Images shared by the information department showed charred, twisted metal scattered across the highway and the crushed cabin of the tanker. Clean-up crews arrived on site quickly to remove the debris, according to officials.

Sarwar said the bus was full of people recently deported from Iran, with many Afghans sent back across the border through the Islam Qala crossing near Herat. “Among them were children and women,” said Sarwar, who hurt his foot leaping from the bus. “They were screaming when they were burning. It was a horrible moment, my heart is broken.”

Another survivor, Mohammad Reza, said many of the passengers had been asleep when the accident happened around 3:00 am (2230 GMT Saturday). “There were screams and cries when the bus caught fire,” he said, adding that some passengers in the last seven or eight rows were able to jump out the window, some injuring themselves. —AFP



GRISHK: Security personnel and volunteers standing near the wreckage of burned passenger bus and oil tanker after they and a motorbike collided on the Herat-Kandahar highway in Grishk district of Helmand province.— AFP

India recaptures ship MV Ruen from Somali pirates

**NEW DELHI:** India’s navy recaptured a ship from Somali pirates off the Indian coast Saturday, the military said, rescuing the crew and ending a three-month takeover of the Maltese-flagged bulk carrier MV Ruen. The December hijacking of the ship was the first time since 2017 that any cargo vessel had been successfully boarded by Somali pirates. “#IndianNavy thwarts designs of Somali pirates to hijack ships plying through the region by intercepting ex-MV Ruen,” the navy posted on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter.

The Indian warship Kolkata “in the last 40 hours, through concerted actions successfully cornered and coerced all 35 Pirates to surrender & ensured safe evacuation of 17 crew members,” the navy posted late Saturday.

**‘Major success’**

Indian forces first intercepted the MV Ruen on Friday, the navy said. “The vessel opened fire on the warship, which is taking actions (in accordance with) international law, in self-defence & to counter piracy, with minimal force necessary to neutralise the pirates’ threat to shipping and seafarers,” they said.

None of the rescued crew members were injured in the multi-day operation, which was carried out in conjunction with several naval vessels along with helicopters and other aircraft, the navy said.

Bulgarian owner Navibulgar hailed the Ruen’s release as “a major success not only for us, but for the entire global maritime community.” “The resolution of this case proves that the security of commercial shipping will not be compromised,” Navibulgar said in a statement. Bulgaria’s Foreign

Ministry said it was seeking the “speedy return” of seven rescued Bulgarian crew members. The other crew were nine Myanmar and one Angolan national. The pirated ship was recaptured nearly 1,400 nautical miles, or 2,600 kilometers, from the Indian coast, according to the military.

The Indian navy has kept tabs on the MV Ruen since it was seized by Somali pirates 380 nautical miles east of the Yemeni island of Socotra in December. The pirates, who at the time released one injured Bulgarian sailor into the care of the Indian navy, had taken the MV Ruen and its remaining 17 crew members to Somalia’s semi-autonomous state of Puntland, where the Indian navy said it was moored off the city of Bosaso.

India’s military has stepped up anti-piracy efforts in recent months following an uptick in maritime assaults, including in the Arabian Sea and by Yemen’s Iran-backed Houthi rebels in the Red Sea. Pirate attacks off the Somali coast peaked in 2011 — with gunmen launching attacks as far as 3,655 kilometers (2,271 miles) from the Somali coast in the Indian Ocean — before falling off sharply in recent years.

**Recent upswing in piracy**

But December’s attack followed a spike in armed seaborne attacks around the Horn of Africa not seen in years. Analysts caution Somali piracy poses nowhere near the threat it did in 2011, when navies around the world had to deploy warships to beat back the scourge. But this recent upswing in pirate activity has raised further concerns about marine security and shipping at a time when crucial trade corridors off Yemen have come under siege.

Somali pirates have traditionally sought to capture a “mother ship” — a motorized dhow or fishing trawler — capable of sailing greater distances where they can target larger vessels. Since the Houthi attacks, many cargo ships have slowed down far out at sea to await instructions on whether to proceed to the Red Sea, which experts say can make them vulnerable to attack. — AFP



## International

# EU, Egypt agree \$8 billion energy, migration deal

## Agreement follows other controversial deals sealed in North Africa to stem irregular migration

**CAIRO:** The European Union, which seeks to stem irregular migrant arrivals, and cash-strapped Egypt were Sunday due to sign a 7.4 billion euro (\$8 billion) package of loans, grants and energy cooperation deals.

It will include billions in credit over coming years and deals to step up Egyptian energy imports to help Europe “move further away from Russian gas” amid the Ukraine war, a senior European Commission official told reporters.

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen — who was to be joined in Cairo by the government leaders of Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Greece and Italy — was to sign the package later in the day with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

The agreements includes five billion euros in loans over four years, 1.8 billion euros in investment and hundreds of millions for bilateral projects including on migration, the official said on condition of anonymity.

Egypt, mired in a painful economic crisis, borders war-battered Libya and two ongoing conflicts — the Zionist attack on Gaza, and Sudan’s war between the regular armed forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. “Egypt is a critical country for Europe today and for the days to come”, said the commission official.

The official pointed to Egypt’s “important position in a very difficult neighborhood, bordering Libya, Sudan and the Gaza Strip”. Egypt already hosts around nine million migrants and refugees, including four million Sudanese and 1.5 million Syrians, according to the UN’s International Organization for Migration.

The EU official said the deal includes steps to co-operate on “security, counter-terrorism cooperation and protection of borders, in particular the southern one” with Sudan. The Gaza Strip “will not be the main focus but will be part of the discussion” in Cairo, the official added.

The high-powered delegation was to include three Mediterranean leaders — Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, her Greek counterpart Kyriakos Mitsotakis and Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides. They were to be joined by Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer and Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo.

### ‘Cash-for-migration-control’

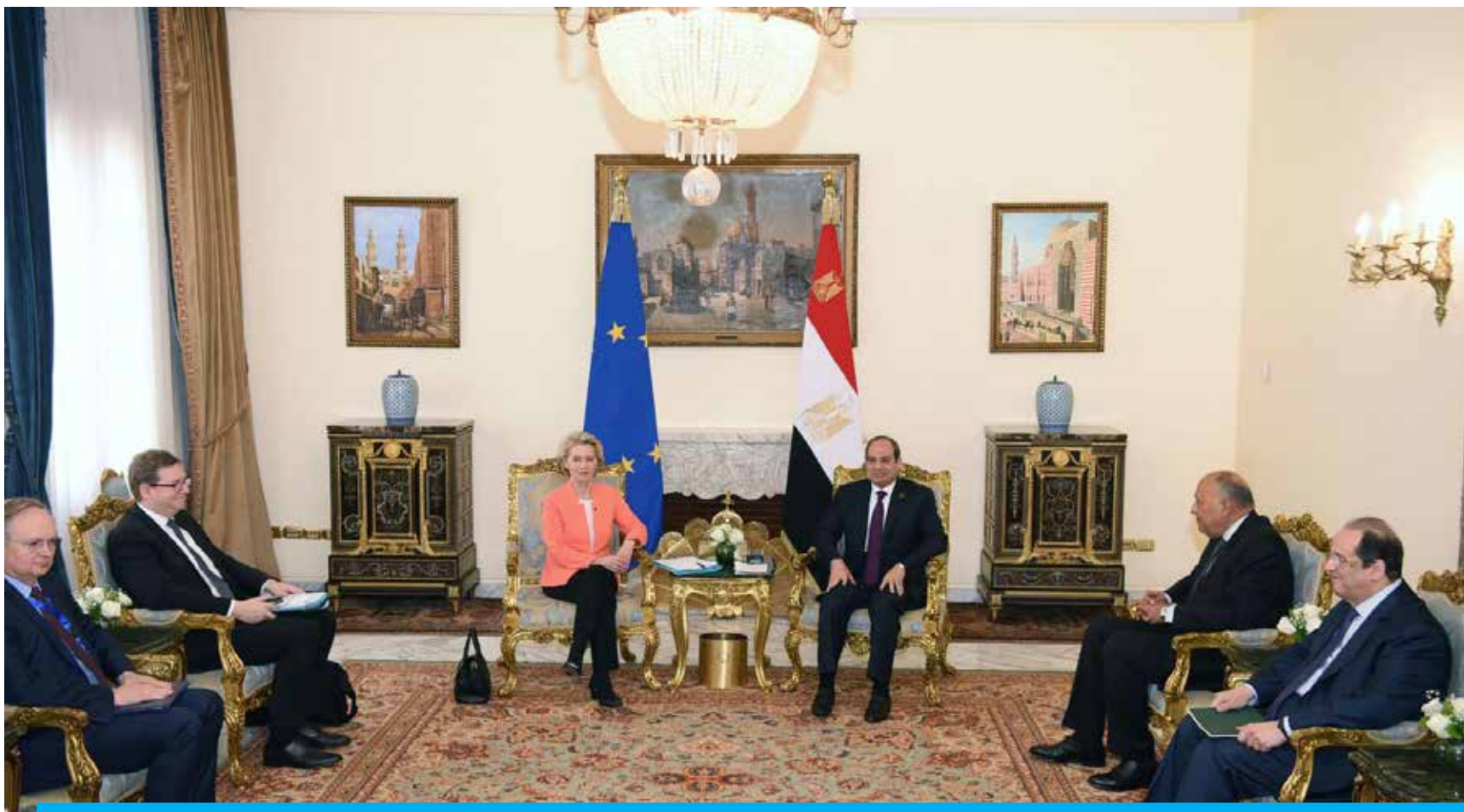
The agreement follows other controversial deals

## Balkan nations’ long slog toward EU admission

**BELGRADE:** Bosnia has trodden a long and winding road to eventual European Union membership after years of seeing the bloc blow hot and cold on the issue, but its patience could be rewarded as accession talks finally loom.

Like other Balkan nations, Bosnia has surfed a wave of hope for years, if not decades. The country became an official candidate for membership in December 2022, having embarked on a series of major reforms to position itself for entry to the 27-member political bloc.

“We have opened the main door of the EU and there is no turning back,” Nermin Niksic, prime minister of the country’s Bosnian-Croat entity, said Tuesday when the European Commission officially recommended the opening of accession negotiations. But more treading water is likely to follow for Bosnia and its neighbors.



CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi (right) meets with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in this handout photo by the Egyptian Presidency. — AFP

the EU has sealed in northern Africa — with Libya, Tunisia and Mauritania — to stem the flow of irregular migrants across the Mediterranean Sea.

The EU’s border agency Frontex last year recorded nearly 158,000 migrant arrivals in Europe via the dangerous sea route, up by 50 percent on the previous year. The aim is to limit arrivals at a time of rising anti-immigrant rhetoric in Europe and of right-wing populist political parties in several EU nations. Human rights groups have strongly condemned past deals with authoritarian governments. US-based Human Rights Watch said it had documented “arbitrary arrests and mistreatment of migrants, asylum seekers and

refugees by Egyptian authorities”.

HRW again criticized what it labelled “the EU’s cash-for-migration-control approach” which it said “strengthens authoritarian rulers while betraying human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers and activists whose work involves great personal risk”.

Egypt stresses that migrant boats have not sailed from its coast in recent years. But Egyptians still arrive in Europe by sea, mostly via Libya or Tunisia to Italy. Highly indebted Egypt, the Arab world’s most populous nation, is in dire need of financial help as it weathers a severe economic crisis marked by rapid inflation.

The International Monetary Fund this month

process and a drop in confidence in the EU”. “This, of course, has created an opening to hostile influences, to Russia first and foremost,” Hasani told a conference in Budapest on Wednesday.

Tomanic said the Balkans became “a geopolitical playground again a few years ago,” not just for the EU but also for Turkey, the United States and other global powers. Serbia, for example, signed in October a free-trade agreement with China, which has become its second-largest trading partner.

To counter those influences the EU recently put six billion euros (\$6.5 billion) on the table in the form of a growth plan for the Western Balkans to boost economic growth and accelerate socio-economic convergence with the bloc. “The commission wants to move quickly as it is important to give a sign of our willingness to move forward with the Balkans,” Emanuele Giaufret, EU ambassador to Serbia, told AFP.

### Trust issues

The growth plan comprises four pillars: enhanced integration to the Single Market, economic integration in the Western Balkans through the Common Regional Market, speeding up fundamental reforms and bolstering financial aid to support those reforms.

But “the payments will be subject to strict con-

ditions as to the implementation of the reforms,” EU ambassadors have warned, as well as “the alignment of partners with the common foreign and security policy”. That could be viewed as insisting on loosening Balkan ties to Russia.

Serbia, largely dependent on Moscow for gas imports, has notably refused to apply sanctions against its traditional ally since Russia invaded Ukraine. “From an economic point of view, there are Russian interests in the energy sector, even if we have opened up an alternative via the inter-connection with Bulgaria, financed by European funds,” Giaufret said.

Last month, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, a populist known for anti-Brussels sallies as well as regular meetings with Russia’s ambassador, took care to call for greater integration with the EU. “I reiterated Serbia’s commitment to continue the process of reform and European integration,” Vucic posted on Instagram.

“We have also discussed the EU’s growth plan for the Western Balkans, which should strengthen and bring our economies and societies closer together,” he added. Even so, recent opinion polls suggest only 32 percent of Serbs trust the EU — a figure that soars to 77 percent in Albania. The figure is 57 percent for Bosnia and 54 for Montenegro. — AFP

## Genocidal Bibi vows Rafah...

### Continued from Page 1

As the flow of aid trucks into Gaza has slowed, a second ship was due to depart from Cyprus along a new maritime corridor to bring food and relief goods, said officials of the island nation. On Saturday the US charity World Central Kitchen said its team had finished unloading supplies from a barge towed by Spanish aid vessel Open Arms which had pioneered the sea route. Jordan on Sunday announced the latest aid airdrop over northern Gaza together

with German, US and Egyptian aircraft.

The United Nations has reported particular difficulty in accessing the north, where residents say they have resorted to eating animal fodder, and where some have stormed the few aid trucks that have made it through.

In Rafah, the crisis has only grown worse, said medical staff at a clinic run by Palestinian volunteers that offers treatment for displaced Gazans. “We’re facing shortages of medications,” said Dr Samar Gregea, herself displaced from Gaza City in the north. “There are a lot of patients in the camp, with all children suffering from malnutrition” and a spike in hepatitis A cases, she told AFP. “Children require foods high in sugars, like dates, which are currently unavailable.” — AFP

started campaigning for the elections, many of them opening their headquarters in tents or at home. This year’s campaign is different because of the holy fasting month of Ramadan, as campaigning takes place only at night after people break their dawn-to-dusk fast.

The snap polls were called after HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah dissolved the National Assembly on Feb 15 following remarks made by some MPs deemed offensive to HH the Amir. This will be Kuwait’s fourth parliamentary polls in as many years, reflecting a high degree of instability due to continued disputes between MPs and the government.

who are conscious of God.” (Holy Quran 2:177.)

Ramadan comes to give us once again another chance to read and reflect upon the verses of the Noble Quran and try to implement the teachings as much as possible. This will help us not only to navigate current ethical challenges effectively but also help us to be able to combat the pitfalls of shifts in ethics, and identify potential areas of concern in our societies before they grow into serious problems.

## Election committee bars 14 candidates...

### Continued from Page 1

barred from taking part in the election because he is not registered as a voter, which disqualifies him from running as a candidate. Azemi said he will challenge the decision. Candidate Hani Hussein was barred from the race because of his criminal record. He was previously barred from several elections on similar grounds.

Meanwhile, a large number of candidates have

## Ramadan, the month of the Noble Quran...

### Continued from Page 1

of slaves. [And truly pious] are those who keep their word whenever they promise, and are patient in misfortune and hardship and in times of peril: it is they that have proved themselves true, and it is they

## Trump hails election as ‘most important...

### Continued from Page 1

“worst” president. Criticizing what he said were Chinese plans to build cars in Mexico and sell them to Americans, he stated: “We’re going to put a 100 percent tariff on every single car that comes across the line, and you’re not going to be able to sell those cars if I get elected.”

“Now if I don’t get elected it’s going to be a bloodbath for the whole — that’s going to be the least of it, it’s going to be a bloodbath for the country. That’ll be the least of it. But they’re not going to sell those cars.” As Trump’s comment gained traction on social media, Biden’s campaign released a statement calling the Republican a “loser” at the ballot box in 2020 who then “doubles down on his threats of political violence”.

“He wants another January 6 but the American people are going to give him another electoral defeat this November because they continue to reject

## Volcano erupts again in Iceland...

### Continued from Page 1

one km per hour,” it added. Lava was also flowing west, as it had on Feb 8, and the length of the fissure was estimated to be 2.9 km, said the IMO.

“From initial assessments of web camera imagery and aerial photographs from the helicopter flight, the eruption is thought to be the largest (in terms of magma discharge) of the three previous fissure eruptions from the Sundhnukur crater row,” IMO said, stressing the assessment was based on the first hour of “eruptive activity”.

Minutes before the eruption, the agency had issued

his extremism, his affection for violence, and his thirst for revenge,” the campaign said, referring to the deadly attack on the US Capitol by Trump supporters in 2021.

Later, Biden spoke at a dinner in Washington, where he also warned of “an unprecedented moment in history”. “Freedom is under assault... The lies about the 2020 election, the plot to overturn it, to embrace the Jan. 6 insurrection pose the greatest threat to our democracy since the American Civil War,” he said. “In 2020, they failed, but ... the threat remains.”

The 81-year-old, who has waved off concerns that he is too old for a second term, leavened his rhetoric with humor. “One candidate’s too old and mentally unfit to be president,” he said of the presidential race. “The other guy’s me.”

Earlier this month Trump and Biden each won enough delegates 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. Among the issues Trump is campaigning on is sweeping reform of what he calls Biden’s “horror show” immigration policies, despite the ex-president successfully pressuring Republicans to block a bill in Congress that included the toughest border security measures in decades. — AFP

a statement saying that seismic activity indicated that there was an increased chance of an eruption. “The pre-eruptive warning phase was very short,” the IMO said. On Friday, the IMO said that magma was accumulating under the ground in the area “which could end with a new magma intrusion and possibly an eruption”. That could happen “with very little warning”, it said.

Local media reported that Iceland’s famed Blue Lagoon geothermal spa had been evacuated as well as Grindavik. The roughly 4,000 residents of Grindavik were only cleared to return to their homes on February 19 after having been evacuated on Nov 11, though only around a hundred chose to do so. On that occasion, hundreds of tremors damaged buildings and opened up huge cracks in roads. The quakes were followed by a volcanic fissure on Dec 18 that spared the village. — AFP



## International

# Vote set to cement Putin's rule

## Navalny supporters spoil ballots in his memory at polling stations, cemetery



MOSCOW: A mock-up election ballot paper bearing the name of late Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny is seen left on his grave on the final day of voting in Russia's election. — AFP photos



People queue outside a polling station during Russia's presidential election on March 17, 2024.

MOSCOW: Russia voted Sunday on the final day of an election to extend Vladimir Putin's rule to three decades, as Ukraine launched fresh drone attacks and some Russians spoiled their ballots in protest. The three-day vote had already been marred by a surge in fatal Ukrainian bombardment, incursions into Russian territory by pro-Kyiv sabotage groups and vandalism at polling stations.

The Kremlin has cast the election as an opportunity for Russians to show they are behind the assault on Ukraine, where voting is also being staged in Russian-held areas. Ukraine has repeatedly denounced the vote as illegitimate and asked its Western allies not to recognize Putin's inevitable new six-year mandate.

Supporters of the late Alexei Navalny, Putin's most prominent rival who died in an Arctic prison last month, urged voters to crowd into polling stations at noon and spoil their ballots for a "Midday Against Putin" protest. At least some voters appeared to heed that call at Moscow polling stations, telling AFP they had come to

honor Navalny's memory and show their opposition in the only legal way possible.

But other voters expressed their support for Putin, saying that casting their ballots for him was the only way to guarantee peace. "What we want today, first of all, is peace," said 70-year-old pensioner Lyubov Pyankova.

She was standing in front of a polling station in Putin's native city of St Petersburg decorated with the red, white and blue 'V' logo — a symbol associated with the military offensive — that Moscow has also used to promote the vote. Russia simply wanted "not to be disturbed, not to be told what to do", Pyankova said.

### Tributes to Navalny

At Navalny's grave in a Moscow cemetery, AFP reporters saw spoiled ballot papers with his name written on them left on a pile of flowers. Navalny, who galvanized mass protests, tried to run against Putin in the 2018 presidential election but his candidacy was rejected.

"I came to give my farewell to him.

He is a hero to me," said Natalya, a 65-year-old pensioner, who came to spoil her ballot together with her friend Elena, a 38-year-old engineer. "This is our only opportunity to express our opinion," Elena said, speaking at the Moscow polling station where Navalny used to vote.

There were repeated acts of protest in the first days of polling, with a spate of arrests of Russians accused of pouring dye into ballot boxes or arson attacks. Any public dissent in Russia has been harshly punished since the start of Moscow's offensive in Ukraine on February 24, 2022 and there have been repeated warnings from the authorities against election protests.

Meanwhile, a surge in Ukrainian strikes on Russia continued unabated with the Russian defense ministry reporting at least eight regions attacked overnight and on Sunday morning. Three airports serving the capital briefly suspended operations following the barrage, while a drone attack in the south

sparked a fire at an oil refinery.

In Russia's border city of Belgorod, Ukrainian shelling killed a 16-year-old girl and wounded her father, the region's governor said Sunday. The governor has ordered the closure of shopping centers and schools in Belgorod and the surrounding area for two days because of the strikes. In the Russian-controlled part of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia region, where voting is also taking place, "kamikaze drones" set a polling station ablaze, according to Moscow-installed authorities.

### 'Difficult period'

The 71-year-old Putin, a former KGB agent, has been in power since the last day of 1999 and is set to extend his grip over the country until at least 2030. If he completes another Kremlin term, he will have stayed in power longer than any Russian leader since Catherine the Great in the 18th century.

He is running without any real opponents, having barred two candidates who opposed the conflict in Ukraine.

In a pre-election address on Thursday, Putin said Russia was going through a "difficult period". "We need to continue to be united and self-confident," he said, describing the election as a way for Russians to demonstrate their "patriotic feelings".

The voting will wrap up in Kaliningrad, Russia's westernmost time zone, at 1800 GMT and an exit poll is expected to be announced shortly afterwards. A concert on Red Square is being staged on Monday to mark 10 years since Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea peninsula — an event that is also expected to serve as a victory celebration for Putin.

Ahead of the election, Russian state media have played up recent gains on the front and portrayed the conflict as a fight for survival against attacks from the West. Moscow has also sought to press its advantage on the front line as divisions over Western military support for Ukraine have led to ammunition shortages, although Kyiv says it has managed to stop the Russian advance for now. — AFP

## True Italians: The children waiting for citizenship

ROME: When rapper Ghali sang "I'm a true Italian" to 10 million television viewers last month, he spoke for hundreds of thousands of people born to immigrants in Italy who struggle to obtain citizenship. The 30-year-old musician, born in Milan to Tunisian parents, sang a version of Toto Cutugno's global hit "L'Italiano" (The Italian) at the Sanremo music festival, one of the biggest cultural events in Italy.

In doing so, Ghali — who was naturalized only at 18 — put the issue of the so-called "New Italians", as second-generation immigrants are often known, center stage. Italy has one of the toughest citizenship regimes in Europe, with children born in the country to foreign parents unable to apply for an Italian passport until they are 18.

They have only one year to apply under a streamlined system, otherwise they must enter a costly and lengthy process, during which time they are left in limbo. "I feel Italian, I went to school here, Italian is the language I speak every day but I wasn't a true Italian by law until I was 24, when I obtained citizenship," said Daniela Ionita.

Now a spokeswoman for campaign group Italians Without Citizenship, she describes the failure to allow children to become citizens as "psychological violence". But she has little hope of a change in the law under the current hard-right government of Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, whose deputy, Matteo Salvini, regularly rails against immigration.

## Could menthol cigarette ban sway US election?

WASHINGTON: In a quintessentially American tale of race and politics, the lowly menthol cigarette is playing a curiously large role in the US presidential election this year. A proposed ban from President Joe Biden's administration on the mint-flavored smokes has miffed some African Americans, a key Democratic Party base. To complicate matters, narratives linked to the tobacco lobby have gained up fears that the ban could lead to over policing and racism.

Those are normally left-wing concerns, but in an election year, anything goes — and Republicans are using the issue to try to appeal to black



Italian-Tunisian rapper Ghali

### Blood ties

Italy has long been a country of emigration, not immigration, and has taken an approach to citizenship that helps maintain ties with this wide diaspora. Nationality is based on blood ties, granted to those born to or adopted by Italian citizens.

Foreigners can obtain citizenship, most easily if they have Italian relatives or marry an Italian, but for most it is a long and difficult path. "The law on access to citizenship in Italy is one of the toughest in Europe," notes demographer Salvatore Strozza.

Children born and raised in Italy have no innate right to citizenship, except in rare cases where their parents are unknown or stateless. They must wait until they become adults to apply, and then submit their application for citizenship between the ages of 18 and 19, with proof of uninterrupted residency in Italy.

If they miss that window, it becomes a complex bureaucratic process, which can take at least three years. "It's the longest administrative procedure in Italy," said immigration lawyer Anton-



ROME: Children hold a banner reading "All citizens of an Italy without borders" on October 13, 2017 in front of the Italian Parliament in Rome. — AFP photos

ello Ciervo. "An Argentine who has an Italian grandfather will be naturalized faster than a person born in Italy to foreign parents," he told AFP.

For children who arrived in Italy at a young age, they must also wait until they are adults to secure citizenship, in the same way as other "foreigners". Someone born in a non-EU country must show 10 years of residency — compared with four for those born inside the bloc — and prove they have the means to support themselves. At least 860,000 people born in Italy to foreign parents are currently eligible for naturalization, of whom 95 percent are aged under 18, according to national statistics agency Istat.

### Failed reform

Previous attempts to reform the current system, which dates to 1992, have failed — the most recent in 2022, just before Meloni took office. Her far-right Brothers of Italy party is opposed to granting citizenship to those born here to foreign parents — and some members have raised the spec-

ter of "ethnic replacement" of Italians by migrants, a concept promoted by white supremacists.

Meloni has focused instead on raising the birth rate in Italy, which has an ageing population. Since her coalition came to power, several groups agitating for reform have paused their efforts. "We are afraid that our efforts will be in vain or worse, that the naturalization process will be lengthened" by the introduction of stricter checks, said Ionita. "While waiting for a change in government, we are trying to change mentalities at a cultural and community level," she added.

Some progress has been made on this front — Bologna, a bastion of the political left, in 2022 became the first commune to grant symbolic citizenship to all those born or raised in the northern Italian city. "First we need to change the concept of who is an Italian within society, and then we can look to a change at the political level," added Deepika Salhan, a member of another campaign group. "On the right side of history". — AFP

thol ban would exacerbate existing, simmering issues around racial profiling, discrimination and policing."

He pushed against a state-level ban proposed last year in New York, according to news outlet Politico. And with the presidential election approaching, Republican groups are looking to poach crucial African American votes.

In South Carolina, conservative group Building America's Future sent letters to around 75,000 Democrat voters in February listing Biden's proposed menthol cigarette ban as a reason not to vote for him in that month's primary vote.

An ad from the group says Biden should focus on bigger priorities, rather than "telling adults what they can and can't do." Tobacco giant Altria, which owns Marlboro and other brands, sponsored a poll last year which found a menthol ban would sway minority voters against Biden, though other polls have found a majority of black voters support a ban. — AFP

## Maduro accepts party nomination, to seek third term

CARACAS: Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro will seek a third term in July 28 elections after 11 years in office marked by sanctions, economic collapse and accusations of widespread repression. "We'll go to a new victory," the 61-year-old said as he accepted his ruling PSUV party's official nomination to be its candidate in elections from which the state apparatus has excluded his main rival — the favorite in opinion polls.

There was no challenger from within the "Chavista" movement, in power for 25 years and named for Maduro's popular predecessor Hugo Chavez. "I am here for the people, that is why today, March 16 of this year, 2024, I accept the presidential candidacy for the elections of July 28," the incumbent said.

Maduro will have served 18 years as president of the once-prosperous South American country at the end of a third, successive term. Since 2013, he has presided over a severe economic crisis, worsened by US sanctions, that has seen seven million people flee the country as GDP plummeted by 80 percent in a decade. With backing from a system of political patronage and the military — as well as Cuba, Russia and China — he has consolidated power over parliament, the judiciary and other state institutions, and jailed and neutralized critics and challengers.

Opposition leader Maria Corina Machado, who polls show would beat the incumbent in a fair race, has been disqualified by Maduro-aligned courts on charges of corruption widely dismissed as spurious, and for supporting Western sanctions against the regime. She cannot hold public office for 15 years, nor can the man widely seen as her natural replacement, two-time presidential candidate Henrique Capriles.

### 'One day at a time'

Maduro's re-election to a second six-year term in 2018 — widely considered fraudulent — was not recognized by the United States and dozens of other nations, and was met with a string of sanctions. Many countries instead recognized parliamentary leader Juan Guaido as interim president.

Yet Maduro remains firmly in charge of oil-rich Venezuela after his rival government imploded, and the war in Ukraine choked energy supplies and shifted global priorities. After the government and the opposition agreed in Barbados last year to hold a free and fair vote in 2024 with international observers present, the United States eased sanctions to allow Chevron to resume limited crude extraction.

But Washington is mulling reinstating penalties since the Maduro-aligned Supreme Court upheld Machado's disqualification. In January, Maduro said the Barbados agreement was "mortally wounded" after government authorities claimed to have foiled numerous US-backed plots to assassinate him. — AFP



President Nicolas Maduro



MONDAY, MARCH 18, 2024

## Business

# Al-Safat Investment Co records KD 1.039 million profit in 2023

## Al-Terkait: Al-Safat achieves profits of KD 5.7 million after merger with Cap Corp

**KUWAIT:** The board of directors of Al-Safat Investment Company approved the annual financial statements for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2023, which included the company's results achieving profits of KD 1,039,772, equivalent to 3.55 fils per share. The company's total assets amounted to KD 43,837,606, while liabilities amounted to KD 10,123,948, and shareholders' equity amounted to KD 29,446,821.

Chairman of the Board of Directors Abdullah Hamad Al-Terkait reviewed the achievements made according to the annual strategy for the past year and the steps taken by the company in implementing the board's vision for the current year.

### Merger

Al-Terkait explained that the board discussed the achievement of the merger process with Cap Corp and transferred all assets and clients to Safat, indicating the execution of the stock exchange where Safat issued 100,000,000 shares in exchange for 200,000,000 shares in

Cap Corp on October 19, 2023.

He added that the process was carried out according to the exchange ratio of 0.5 shares of Safat for each share in Cap Corp, where the acquisition was made by issuing new shares of Safat against a purchase of KD 10,200,000, which is the listed price of the company's shares on the date of acquisition.

### Asset ownership

Regarding the consideration paid and the fair values of the assets acquired and estimated liabilities, Al-Terkait explained that the assets acquired by Safat in the process amounted to KD 16,283,245, with minimal liabilities estimated at only KD 396,191, making the net assets acquired by Safat Investment in the process KD 15,887,054.

### Merger profits

Considering the cost paid by the company for acquiring Cap Corp amounted to KD 10,200,000, Safat Investment achieved net profits of KD 5,687,054 following the merger. Al-Terkait added



Al-Safat Investment Company Chairman Abdullah Hamad Al-Terkait

in a press statement issued by the company that "the merger was accomplished during an excellent period, during which all licenses and approvals were obtained from the Capital Markets Authority and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to complete the merger process with Cap Corp".

### Asset transfer

Al-Terkait also highlighted the completion of transferring all assets from Cap Corp to Safat Investment quickly and professionally according to the procedures followed, where clients were notified of the merger and transferred to Safat, in addition to Cap Corp's investment fund and IT infrastructure, which were successfully integrated between the two companies. In a related context, Al-Terkait revealed Safat's intention to conduct qualitative operations within the framework of agreements currently being worked on, including settling and signing the sale of the Middle East Chemical Manufacturing Company, expecting the deal to be completed by the end of 2024.

### Final settlements

Al-Terkait stated that the company is in the final negotiations stage for settlement and completion of the sale of the Carpet Manufacturing Company, with preliminary approval of the sale contract, expecting to complete the process

during the third quarter of 2024. Al-Terkait affirmed that Safat is in the process of renewing and developing its organizational structure fully, as the recent period witnessed the transfer of all information, tasks and responsibilities from the former CEO to the new CEO successfully, noting a low turnover rate regarding employees with significant success in integrating the two teams and retaining the most important human resources in the company.

Regarding the Al Ahmadi project, Al-Terkait mentioned that the Blue Crafts Complex has been leased and occupied by 65 percent.

### Market maker

Regarding the financial and investment activities of the company, Al-Terkait explained that Safat Investment has reached the final stages of obtaining a market maker license in the stock market, expecting to proceed with activating the service in the near future after reaching full readiness according to the rules followed in the market.

## Global economy grows at 3%, lacks dynamism: IMF

**WASHINGTON:** The global economy is growing faster compared to the difficult pandemic period when global output contracted and slowly recovered thereafter although it still lacks dynamism, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in a report.

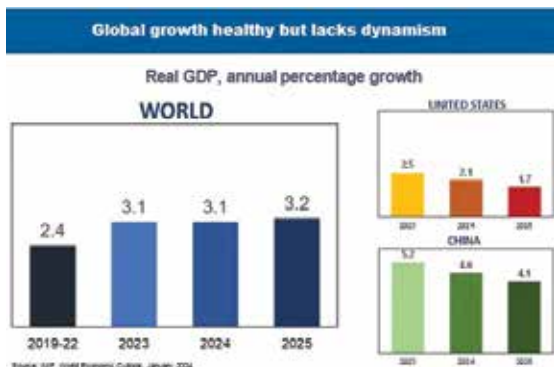
"At around 3 percent, global growth is well below the historical average of 3.8 percent, which was recorded during 2000 to 2019 and, hence, provides little positive spillovers to Europe. We expect the US economy to slow as its post-pandemic recovery runs its course", it said. Similarly, activity in China is cooling as weaknesses in the property sector are expected to persist.

For Europe, after suffering an exceptionally large energy price shock in 2022, the IMF projects a gradual recovery. "Compared to dire predictions of a recession at that time, this outcome would be a remarkable accomplishment," the report said.

The IMF expects growth in the euro area overall to rise from below 1 percent this year to 1.7 percent in 2025. In the CESEE region, it expects the economies to grow close to 3 percent this year and 3.5 percent next year. "Our forecast constitutes what has been called a "soft landing." By this we mean that the decline of inflation in 2024-25 to previous levels is accompanied by only a mild growth slowdown. The fact that the economic costs of the energy price shock and higher interest rates—which have been raised to slow down price increases—have so far been mild is quite remarkable," it said.

### The disinflation

According to the IMF, core inflation, a measure of underlying price dynamics which excludes volatile food and energy price components, is higher



in emerging European economies than in advanced European economies. In both country groupings, core inflation is coming down only slowly.

The decline of the inflation rate is progressing more slowly in Romania, Moldova, Montenegro, Hungary, and Serbia than elsewhere in the CESEE region. One important factor especially in emerging European economies is that labor markets need to cool at just the right pace.

Overall, given current levels of inflation and price and wage dynamics, our forecast suggests that achieving price stability targets will take one year longer in the CESEE region compared to advanced European economies. In general, the underlying inflationary pressures in the region remain stronger than in advanced economies. Many central banks in the region should therefore maintain a tight monetary stance for longer than for example the ECB.

Achieving a soft landing will not be easy, but it is critical, also because it will help policymakers getting ready for what will be an even more difficult task ahead: raising CESEE's growth prospects in a durable manner. Growth prospects in advanced and emerging European economies have dimmed.

### Technology

Another area that deserves the attention of policymakers is the promise of growth from technological progress. The advances of artificial intelligence

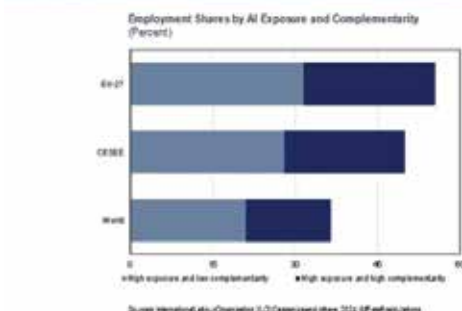


AUSTIN: Niki Smit, co-director of Soul Paint, a VR experience that let users draw their emotions on their body, poses next to the drawing of a user, at SXSW in Austin.—AFP

Google quickly corrected its errors, but the underlying problem remains, said Charlie Burgoyne, chief executive of the Valkyrie applied science lab in Texas. He equated Google's fix of Gemini to putting a Band-Aid on a bullet wound. While Google long had the luxury of having time to refine its products, it is now scrambling in an AI race with Microsoft, OpenAI, Anthropic and others, Weaver noted, adding, "They are moving faster than they know how to move."

Mistakes made in an effort at cultural sensitivity are flashpoints, particularly given the tense political divisions in the United States, a situation exacerbated by Elon Musk's X platform, the former Twitter. "People on Twitter are very gleeful to celebrate any embarrassing thing that happens

### New technologies and AI will affect productivity and workers



are captivating the world. Its applications could jumpstart productivity, boost global growth, and raise incomes around the world. Yet, AI could also replace jobs and deepen inequality, it mentioned in the report.

"And at this stage, it is difficult to foresee the economic effects, as AI will ripple through economies in complex ways. Nonetheless, we can and should start assessing which types of occupations AI will likely affect; which activities it will complement, and which ones it may replace," it said.

Recent work by the IMF shows that close to 60 percent of all workers in the EU will likely be affected by AI in one way or another. For the CESEE region, the share is close to 50 percent.

Among those affected, for about half of the AI will complement their work and raise their productivity. For the other half, AI will be less complementary and replace some tasks or activities. In most scenarios, AI will likely worsen overall inequality.

It will be more advantageous to the higher-skilled and reduce the need for medium and low-skilled workers alike. This is a troubling prospect that policymakers should assess and respond to as needed.

The availability of social safety nets and retraining programs mentioned earlier are of even more importance from this perspective. They will help make the AI transition more inclusive and curb inequality, the report added.

in tech," Weaver said, adding that reaction to the Nazi gaffe was "overblown."

The mishap did, however, call into question the degree of control those using AI tools have over information, he maintained. In the coming decade, the amount of information—or misinformation—created by AI could dwarf that generated by people, meaning those controlling AI safeguards will have huge influence on the world, Weaver said.

Karen Palmer, an award-winning mixed-reality creator with Interactive Films Ltd., said she could imagine a future in which someone gets into a robo-taxi and, "if the AI scans you and thinks that there are any outstanding violations against you... you'll be taken into the local police station," not your intended destination. AI is trained on mountains of data and can be put to work on a growing range of tasks, from image or audio generation to determining who gets a loan or whether a medical scan detects cancer. But that data comes from a world rife with cultural bias, misinformation and social inequity—not to mention online content that can include casual chats between friends or intentionally exaggerated and provocative posts—and AI models can echo those flaws.

With Gemini, Google engineers tried to rebalance the algorithms to provide results better reflecting human diversity. The effort backfired. "It can really be tricky, nuanced and subtle to figure out where bias is and how it's included," said technology lawyer Alex Shahrestani, a managing partner at Promise Legal law firm for tech companies.

Even well-intentioned engineers involved with training AI can't help but bring their own life experience and subconscious bias to the process, he and others believe. —AFP

## Fed to provide fresh clues on US rate cuts

**WASHINGTON:** The US Federal Reserve is widely expected to keep its key lending rate unchanged again on Wednesday, as policymakers continue discussions over when to start rate cuts and launch the next phase in their long-running battle against inflation. The Fed has raised interest rates to a 23-year high of between 5.25 and 5.50 percent as it looks to return inflation firmly to its long-term target of two percent.

After making significant progress against rising prices last year, 2024 has been more challenging, with the US seeing a small uptick in the pace of monthly inflation. At the same time, the unemployment rate has remained low, wage growth has eased, and economic growth for the final quarter of 2023 came in above expectations—all indications that the US economy remains in good health despite higher rates.

After two days of discussions, the Fed will publish an updated summary of economic projections (SEP) alongside its rate decision on Wednesday, which will include policymakers' views of where they expect interest rates to be at the end of this year. "The pace of disinflation, the slowdown in employment growth, [is] not happening as fast as we thought it did a few months ago," Wells Fargo senior economist Michael Pugliese told AFP. "And so they're gonna fine-tune their policy outlook accordingly."

In December's SEP, policymakers penciled in three interest rate cuts for 2024, as the Fed moves to ease monetary policy while continuing to push inflation down towards its long-run target. The March update published Wednesday is unlikely to show a significant shift, although some analysts see a chance that the policymakers could reduce the number of cuts they expect to see this year.

Wells Fargo still expects the Fed to pencil in three interest rate cuts for 2024, Pugliese said. This is one less than the bank's own prediction of four rate cuts this year. However, policymakers are more likely to lower their expectations for rate cuts on Wednesday than they are to raise them, he added.

"Looking at the projections, we do think there is a risk that we see two rate cuts instead of three," EY Senior Economist Lydia Boussour told AFP. "We've got a lot of noise in the inflation data and some upside surprises," she said. "So there may be some Fed officials that are inclined to adopt a bit more of a hawkish posture."

In recent weeks, officials at the US central bank—led by Fed chair Jerome Powell—have urged caution about cutting interest rates too quickly, and have instead said they will follow a "data-dependent" path. "The economic outlook is uncertain, and ongoing progress toward our two percent inflation objective is not assured," Powell told lawmakers in Washington earlier this month. He later confirmed that he still expects cuts to begin this year. —AFP



Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell

## Gemini's flawed AI racial images seen as warning

**AUSTIN, US:** For people at the trend-setting tech festival here, the scandal that erupted after Google's Gemini chatbot cranked out images of Black and Asian Nazi soldiers was seen as a warning about the power artificial intelligence can give tech titans.

Google CEO Sundar Pichai last month slammed as "completely unacceptable" errors by his company's Gemini AI app, after gaffes such as the images of ethnically diverse Nazi troops forced it to temporarily stop users from creating pictures of people. Social media users mocked and criticized Google for the historically inaccurate images, like those showing a female black US senator from the 1800s—when the first such senator was not elected until 1992.

"We definitely messed up on the image generation," Google co-founder Sergey Brin said at a recent AI "hackathon," adding that the company should have tested Gemini more thoroughly.

Folks have interviewed at the popular South by Southwest arts and tech festival in Austin said the Gemini stumble highlights the inordinate power a handful of companies have over the artificial intelligence platforms that are poised to change the way people live and work. "Essentially, it was too 'woke,'" said Joshua Weaver, a lawyer and tech entrepreneur, meaning Google had gone overboard in its effort to project inclusion and diversity.



# Unexpected rise in US producer price index puts pressure on Fed

**KUWAIT:** February spending in the US recovered slightly (0.6 percent) after a January dip (revised -1.1 percent). It is likely that cold weather deterred January purchases, while the ever so resilient job market and wage growth support spending. By category, sales have increased in home improvement, cars, electronics and restaurants, while sales have decreased in furniture, groceries, clothing and online sales. Potential dampeners on the future outlook of the US economy are rising interest rates and dwindling savings, while low unemployment and improved consumer sentiment give a sense of positivity. All in all, Consumers still have some financial buffer, but inflation and job market changes might influence future spending.

have hinted at potential rate cuts later this year, they remain cautious about stopping inflation's momentum too early. Chairman Powell indicated the Fed is nearing the point where it can ease monetary policy, but wants more confidence that inflation is truly under control.

The number of payroll employees increased slightly in the last month (0.1 percent) but has grown steadily over the past year (1.3 percent). This growth rate, however, is slowing down. The overall employment level is higher than last year but lower than the previous quarter. Additionally, the employment rate stands at 75 percent, which is lower than both the previous year and the previous quarter. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate remains at 3.9 percent, slightly higher than last year but unchanged in the past quarter. The number of job vacancies has decreased for the 20th consecutive quarter but remains above pre-pandemic levels. Wages (including bonuses) have increased by 5.6 percent year-on-year, while regular pay (excluding bonuses) has grown by 6.1 percent. However, adjusting for inflation, real wage growth is much lower, at around 1.4 percent to 1.8 percent.

Official figures show that the British economy grew 0.2 percent in January, reversing a brief recession. The services sector, a major part of the UK economy, led the growth with a 0.2 percent increase. Retail trade bounced back significantly,

**LONDON:** Major UK plans for gas-fired power stations that capture carbon took a key step forward Friday with the award of building contracts worth £4 billion (\$5 billion). The joint-venture scheme, led by British

energy giant BP plus French and Norwegian peers TotalEnergies and Equinor, forms part of UK government plans for a net zero carbon economy by 2050.

The facilities, to be built in northern England by a date yet to be specified, come under the Net Zero Teesside Power and Northern Endurance Partnership banners.

The pair on Friday said they had "selected contractors for engineering, procurement, and construction contracts with a combined value of around £4 billion".

The selection of nine leading specialist contractors across eight contract packages is a major milestone for the Teesside-based projects, which would contrib-

	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month
Currencies	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	Forward
EUR	1.0943	1.0871	1.0963	1.0887	1.0700	1.1000	1.0930
GBP	1.2860	1.2722	1.2863	1.2739	1.2700	1.3000	1.2747
JPY	147.06	146.47	149.17	149.02	147.00	151.00	146.92
CHF	0.8775	0.8745	0.8852	0.8835	0.8700	0.9000	0.8749

with a 3.4 percent jump. Construction also performed well, growing by 1.1 percent, driven by a strong month for house-builders. However, manufacturing output dipped by 0.2 percent. Despite the positive signs, the past three months still saw a slight economic contraction. Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt acknowledged the progress the economy has seen while highlighting the need for further measures to boost long term economic expansion.

The GBP/USD currency pair ended the week at 1.2739.

Japan avoids going into a technical recession as seen in the latest revised final GDP figure published Tuesday. The figure, while still being lower than expectations of a 0.3 percent growth, was revised up from -0.4 percent initially to 0.1 per-

Up to two million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> would be captured annually before being transported and securely stored in subsea sites beneath the North Sea.

Companies awarded contracts included energy group Shell, infrastructure specialists Balfour Beatty and oil-services firm TechnipFMC. “The selection of contractors is a major step forward for Net Zero Teesside Power,” said Ian Hunter, managing director at Net Zero Teesside Power.

“We have selected world-class partners who have


cent growth for the fourth quarter of 2023. The growth was mainly thanks to companies' stronger than expected spending on plants and equipments. Capital expenditures increased by 0.2 percent quarter-over-quarter, significantly higher than the 0.1 percent decrease initially announced by the government. Meanwhile, private consumption, which makes up 60 percent of Japan's economy, decreased by 0.3 percent for the quarter. Markets are anticipating the next BOJ meeting in mid-March as recent data has signaled that Japan could put an end to negative interest rates in as early as this week's upcoming meeting.

The USD/JPY currency pair ended the week at 149.02.

Kuwaiti dinar  
USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30690.

Chris Daykin of Northern Endurance Partnership added that "selection of contractors is a clear signal of momentum". Friday's announcement comes after British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's government this week pledged to build new gas-fired power stations to boost energy security.

At the same time, the UK is rolling out low-carbon energies such as nuclear, solar and wind power in a strategy to combat sky-high domestic electricity and gas bills, which rocketed after key producer Russia invaded Ukraine in early 2022. — AFP



AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

# KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 14 MARCH 2024

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Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	37,151	8,149.40	0.5%	-0.1%	9.0%	542,759,332	196,369,993	36,961	18.2	1.3	81.2%
Main Market	8,614	6,135.21	0.2%	0.8%	10.2%	350,305,868	52,839,822	21,870	13.5	0.8	18.8%
All Share	45,765	7,443.22	0.4%	0.0%	9.2%	893,065,200	249,209,814	58,831	14.8	1.0	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Banking	27,723	1,802.76	0.4%	-0.4%	9.4%	203,345,356	96,592,965	12,693	17.4	1.3	60.58%
Basic Materials	441	781.54	-0.2%	0.2%	4.8%	3,915,101	2,385,364	1,126	10.4	2.3	0.96%
Consumer Discretionary	1,149	1,671.90	0.8%	0.3%	4.2%	36,262,470	12,601,914	4,483	13.4	1.3	2.51%
Consumer Staples	217	715.20	-0.5%	0.0%	8.6%	8,304,582	2,696,105	732	109.3	1.3	0.48%
Energy	216	1,033.58	-1.0%	-0.1%	8.9%	5,654,301	598,538	580	10.3	0.8	0.47%
Financial Services	4,741	1,389.00	0.2%	0.1%	14.6%	296,017,986	44,853,202	13,641	21.2	0.9	10.36%
Health Care	237	478.71	1.9%	-1.5%	-0.7%	0	0.000	0	12.8	1.6	0.52%
Industrials	3,538	1,023.54	0.7%	0.8%	12.7%	112,641,988	42,271,666	9,041	14.1	0.9	7.73%
Insurance	1,046	2,557.62	1.0%	1.5%	11.6%	32,750,436	3,149,464	2,475	10.4	1.2	2.28%
Real Estate	2,809	1,306.93	0.6%	2.1%	7.8%	170,584,784	32,026,394	9,856	16.3	0.7	6.14%
Technology	27	1,949.70	-1.1%	-3.9%	237.1%	221,410	59,370.28	27	NM	2.3	0.06%
Telecommunications	3,434	1,123.67	0.2%	0.6%	1.7%	21,263,490	11,620,495	3,852	10.2	1.4	7.50%
Utilities	187	447.37	1.2%	0.0%	-1.7%	2,103,296	354,336	325	14.8	1.6	0.41%

**Top Gainers**

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KCEM	210	17.98%	70,901,609	14,339,579	2,882
WINSRE	129	17.27%	9,069,917	1,104,391	553
GFC	80.8	10.53%	201,067	15,063	70
ENERGYH	152	10.14%	249,117	29,221	170
GFH	87	8.48%	92,094,902	7,887,863	1,989

**Top Losers**

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
ALDEERA	375	-11.14%	65,980	25,526	118
ARKAN	80	-8.57%	338,011	27,652	42
ALIMTIAZ	52.3	-8.57%	13,531,549	701,674	906
ALOLA	41.6	-7.96%	7,108,478	298,713	373
MARAKEZ	52.5	-7.57%	880,178	47,092	76

**Top Volume**

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
GFH	87	8.48%	92,094,902	7,887,863	1,989
KCEM	210	17.98%	70,901,609	14,339,579	2,882
KFH	811	0.75%	48,528,154	39,416,365	3,557
KIB	171	0.59%	47,613,678	8,184,758	859
ALTJARIA	127	-3.05%	33,771,654	4,463,641	891

**Top Value**

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	811	0.75%	48,528,154	39,416,365	3,557
NBK	967	0.31%	23,925,751	23,202,863	3,023
KCEM	210	17.98%	70,901,609	14,339,579	2,882



# Gulf Bank warns against fraudulent donation links during Ramadan

## Bank continues to support ‘Diraya’ campaign

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank is committed to its social responsibilities, prioritizing the protection and education of customers and the community. Through active involvement in the “Diraya” campaign, it continuously raises awareness among customers and banking users about the dangers of electronic crimes targeting their personal information and bank accounts.

Abdulmohsen Al-Nassar, Corporate Communications Officer at Gulf Bank, emphasized the importance of bank customers verifying the legitimacy of links requesting donations to charitable organizations. He warned about the increase in fake links, especially noticeable during the holy month of Ramadan, taking advantage of individuals’ intentions to engage in charitable activities and support those in need.

He pointed out that scammers replicate electronic payment websites that closely resemble those used by customers when making online payments, emphasizing the importance for customers to verify the authenticity of the payment site and ensure that payment links are from a known and legitimate source. Customers were advised to exercise caution when dealing with emails, text messages, and phone calls from unfamiliar sources, which could impersonate bank employees.



**Abdulmohsen Al-Nassar:**  
It is crucial to verify the legitimacy of links requesting donations to charitable organizations

Al-Nassar emphasized the importance of refraining from interacting with such messages or calls and ensuring the security of their account information and data to prevent falling victim to theft without their knowledge.

He highlighted that banks never request personal information via email, text messages, or phone calls. Therefore, customers should re-

frain from responding to such messages as they are fraudulent attempts to obtain their banking details and commit theft or data breaches. He cautioned that simply clicking on the link could potentially expose their confidential banking information to theft.

Al-Nassar advised bank customers to do the following:

- To avoid saving confidential information such as debit card, credit card or PIN numbers on the mobile phone.
- To avoid writing the PIN on the credit card, and to avoid sharing the one-time passport (OTP) number with anyone.
- To ensure logging out of the Bank’s mobile application or website immediately upon completion of transactions.
- To ensure that the antivirus software and associated files are updated.
- To type the URL into the browser instead of directly clicking or opening links in emails.
- To be careful when opening attachments and links within emails.
- To download software from known and legitimate sources only.
- To keep all systems such as security systems,

applications, and operating systems updated with the latest security updates.

Al-Nassar further indicated that customer awareness is vital in preserving banking data, especially with the significant increase and usage of electronic services lately. He advises customers to always deal with the verified, authentic websites and licensed institutions when making donations.

Gulf Bank’s vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee’s role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience.

Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining robust developments in sustainability at environmental, social and governance levels through diverse sustainability initiatives, strategically selected to benefit the Bank both internally and externally. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 “New Kuwait” and works with various parties to achieve it.

## Germany ‘on course’ to reach 2030 climate goals

FRANKFURT: Germany on Friday said that it was on track to meet its 2030 climate goals for the first time, after a sharp drop in greenhouse gas emissions last year.

An increase in the use of renewables and a weaker economy weighed down by higher energy costs had contributed to a 10.1-percent plunge in carbon emissions year-on-year, the economy ministry said.

Germany, Europe’s biggest economy, aims to reduce CO2 emissions by 65 percent by 2030 and achieve climate neutrality by 2045. The latest report from Germany’s federal environment agency (UBA) showed that emissions were now projected to fall by almost 64 percent by 2030, compared with 1990 levels. In a 2021 report, that figure was estimated at just 49 percent.

“The projection shows for the first time that we are on course and that we can achieve the 2030 climate protection goals,” Economy Minister Robert Habeck said at a Berlin press conference.

The optimism comes after Germany lowered its CO2 emissions by 76 million tons last year to 673 million tons — the biggest reduction since German reunification.

The drop was in large part driven by an industrial downturn, as companies in energy-intensive sectors such as aluminum, steel and chemical production were battered by higher energy prices and lower demand. Coal use also declined as Germany became a net importer of electricity in 2023. Around 60 percent of those energy imports — mainly from Scandinavian countries — came from renewable sources.

Habeck said 2023 had been a year of “light and shadow”, with the German economy shrinking by 0.3 percent and forecast to grow only moderately this year. He said the government was counting on a “full economic recovery” and that the right instruments were in place to keep up the momentum on climate protection.

Renewables, which for the first time generated more than half of Germany’s electricity supply in 2023, now formed “the backbone” of the nation’s energy supply, Habeck said. The government has also launched several schemes to incentivize green technology projects, he said, including investments in hydrogen and a recently unveiled subsidy program to decarbonize industrial production.

Legislation aimed at phasing out gas and oil heating in buildings is forecast to lead to a shift towards more environmentally-friendly heat pumps in the coming years.

The “price shock” triggered by the end of cheap Russian energy imports, meanwhile, had led to a shift in behavior, Habeck said, with consumers more aware of the benefits of conserving energy.

Habeck acknowledged that the transport sector, which has consistently failed to meet its carbon reduction targets, remained the “problem child” of Germany’s climate efforts. Emissions savings in other sectors would have to “overcompensate” for the expected shortcomings in transport, he said. — AFP

## Vietnam faces \$3bn annual crop losses from rising water

HANOI: Vietnam faces nearly \$3 billion a year in crop losses as more saltwater seeps into arable land, state media reported Sunday, citing new research. The damage would likely centre on the Mekong Delta region, known as “Vietnam’s rice bowl” because it provides food and livelihoods for tens of millions of people, research from the country’s environment ministry showed. Saltwater levels are often higher in the dry season but they are intensifying due to rising sea levels, droughts, tidal fluctuations, and a lack of upstream freshwater.

The resulting crop losses could amount to 70 trillion dong (\$2.94 billion), state media VnExpress reported, citing new research from the Water Resources Science Institute, which is under the environment ministry. The research found among the most impacted parts of the region would be the southernmost Ca Mau province, which could lose an estimated \$665 million.

Ben Tre province could face roughly \$472 million in losses, according to the study, which was presented Friday at a conference on water resource management.

“With the current scenario, fruit trees account for 29 percent of the damage in Mekong Delta, while crops account for 27 percent, and



**CA MAU, Vietnam:** This photo taken on Feb 23, 2024 shows a farmer looking at his crop in a dry rice field amid a long heatwave in southern Vietnam’s Ca Mau province in the Mekong Delta region, known as “Vietnam’s rice bowl”. — AFP

rice accounts for nearly 14 percent,” according to the findings.

“The fisheries industry accounts for 30 percent, equivalent to more than 21,000 billion dong (\$840 million),” it added. Greater losses were forecast for the region in the future, rising over \$3.1 billion, the study said. Earlier this month, the Department of Water Resources warned saline intrusion could

impact around 80,000 hectares of rice and fruit farms in the Mekong Delta.

Salt intrusion in the area between 2023-2024 was higher than the average, according to the National Center for Hydro-Meteorological Forecasting. The delta suffered an unusually long heatwave in February, leading to drought in several areas and low water levels in the region’s canals. — AFP

## UN: In Sudan, 5 million at risk of starvation

UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations appealed Friday for Sudan’s battling factions to allow delivery of humanitarian relief to fend off looming “catastrophic” hunger.

Some five million Sudanese could face calamitous food insecurity in coming months as a nearly yearlong war between rival generals continues to tear the country apart, according to a UN document seen Friday by AFP. The war between army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan and his former deputy, Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, has since April last year killed tens of thousands, destroyed infrastructure and crippled the economy.

It has also triggered a dire humanitarian crisis and acute food shortages, with the country teetering on the brink of famine. Noting that some 18 million Sudanese are already facing acute food insecurity — a record during harvest season — UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths warned in a letter to the Security Council that “almost 5 million people could slip into catastrophic food insecurity in some parts

of the country in the coming months.”

He noted that nearly 730,000 Sudanese children — including more than 240,000 in Darfur — are thought to suffer from “severe” malnutrition. “Aid organizations require safe, rapid, sustained and unimpeded access — including across conflict lines within Sudan,” said UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres’s spokesman Stephane Dujarric.

“A massive mobilization of resources from the international community is also critical,” he added.

The UN’s World Food Programme has warned that the war risks “triggering the world’s largest hunger crisis.” Jill Lawler, the emergency chief in Sudan for the UN children’s agency UNICEF, said there were enough aid stocks in Port Sudan, but the problem was getting the aid from there to the people in need.

Lawler said she last week had led the first UN mission to reach Khartoum state since war erupted 11 months ago. They had seen first-hand that “the scale and magnitude of needs for children across the country are simply staggering,” she told reporters in Geneva via video link from New York.

The war “is pushing the country towards a famine” with hunger “the number one concern people expressed.”

Mandeep O’Brien, UNICEF representative in Sudan, said 14 million children



**GEDAREF, Sudan:** Internally displaced Muslim devotees wait to break their fast at a courtyard during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan in Gedaref. — AFP

needed humanitarian aid and four million were displaced. There was only a “small window left to prevent mass loss of children’s lives and future,” she warned on X, formerly Twitter. World Health Organization regional director Hanan Balkhy, who recently returned from a trip to Sudan, underlined the acute needs in Darfur, saying most health facilities were looted, damaged or destroyed.

Griffiths, the UN aid chief, lamented that fighting continued to rage during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan despite a Security Council resolution

calling for a cessation of hostilities.

“This is a moment of truth,” he wrote on X, formerly Twitter. “The parties must silence the guns, protect civilians and ensure humanitarian access.” The UN on Friday called for more financial support for aid operations in Sudan.

UN spokeswoman Alessandra Velucci told reporters in Geneva that the world body had appealed for \$2.7 billion to provide aid this year, but had received just five percent of that amount so far. — AFP

## Carbon capture tech is booming, and confusing

PARIS: Humanity’s failure to reduce planet-heating carbon pollution – at record levels in 2023 – has thrust once-marginal options for capping or reducing CO2 in the atmosphere to centre stage. Carbon capture and storage (CCS) and direct air capture (DAC) are both complex industrial processes that isolate CO2, but these newly-booming technologies are fundamentally different and often conflated.

Thursday, a group of major energy companies including Britain’s BP and France’s TotalEnergies said they have awarded \$4 billion (\$5.1 billion) worth of contracts for a gas power plant in Britain to be equipped with CCS.

Here’s a primer on what they are and how they differ. CCS siphons off CO2 from the exhaust, or flue gas, of

fossil fuel-fired power plants as well as heavy industry. CO2 makes up about 12 percent of these emissions from a coal-fired power plant, while in steel and cement production it is typically double that.

CCS by itself only prevents additional carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere.

On the other hand, DAC extracts CO2 molecules already there, making it a “negative emissions” technology. DAC can therefore generate credits for companies seeking to offset their greenhouse gas output — but only if the captured CO2 is permanently stored, such as in depleted oil and gas reservoirs or in saline aquifers.

The concentration of carbon dioxide in ambient air is only 420 parts per million (about 0.04 percent), so coralling CO2 with DAC is very energy intensive.

Once isolated using either CCS or DAC, CO2 can be used to make products such as building materials or “green” aviation fuel. But some of that CO2 will inevitably seep back into the air. “If the CO2 is utilized, then it is not removal,” said Oliver Geden, a senior fellow at the German Institute for International Security Affairs.

The fossil fuel industry has been using CCS since the 1970s, but not to prevent CO2 from leaching into the at-

mosphere. Rather, oil and gas companies inject CO2 into mature oil fields to extract crude that would otherwise remain inaccessible.

So far, bolting CCS facilities onto existing coal- and gas-fired power plants and then storing the captured CO2 underground has proven technically feasible but uneconomical.

The world’s largest CCS plant, the Petra Nova facility in Texas, was mothballed three years after opening in 2017. But the looming climate crisis and generous government subsidies have revived interest in CCS for the power sector and beyond.

In the fall of 2023, there were some 40 commercial-scale facilities worldwide applying carbon capture technology to industry, fuel transformation or power generation, isolating a total of 45 million tonnes (Mt) of CO2, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA). If all projects in the pipeline were realized, CO2 capture capacity would expand eight-fold by 2030, but so far only five percent of announced projects have reached the final investment decision stage.

DAC, by comparison, is brand new. Less than 30 DAC plants have been commissioned worldwide, and those in

operation only capture about as much CO2 in a year – 10,000 tons – as the world emits in about 10 seconds.

Both CCS and DAC must be massively scaled up if they are to play a significant role in decarbonizing the global economy. To keep the mid-century net-zero target in play, CCS will need to divert 1.3 billion tons a year from power and industry – 30 times more than last year – by 2030, according to the IEA.

DAC must remove 60 Mt CO2 per year by that date, several thousand-fold more than today.

But the nascent industry is burgeoning with new actors. The first million-ton-per-year plant — developed by Occidental Petroleum in Texas — is scheduled to come online in the United States next year. Plans for at least 130 DAC facilities are now at various stages of development, according to the IEA.

“It’s a huge challenge but it’s not unprecedented,” University of Wisconsin – Madison professor Gregory Nemet told AFP, citing other technologies, including solar panels, that have scaled up dramatically in a matter of decades. Preparing a site to stock CO2 can take up to 10 years, so storage could become a serious bottleneck for both CCS and DAC development. — AFP





A group of divers swim with a sandbar shark off Jupiter, Florida. — AFP photos



Lemon sharks swim close to a group of divers off Jupiter, Florida.

# WITH BITES RARE, EXPERTS WANT SHARKS TO SHED SCARY REPUTATION

As the northern hemisphere edges toward spring and millions flock to the beach, headlines have dubbed the southeastern US state of Florida the world's most likely place to be bitten by a shark. They're right, but, at the same time, shark bites are exceedingly rare overall—a fact scientists wish more people knew, especially amid declining shark populations des-

And yet that only amounts to 16 unprovoked attacks, out of 69 total worldwide—and millions of swimmers flocking to Florida's coast each year. If sharks wanted to attack us, "people are very easy to target. They are a bit like floating sausages," Naylor told AFP. "So we know that they must be avoiding them."

about killer sharks like "Jaws" and the decades-long US cable television phenomenon known as "Shark Week."

New Smyrna Beach, located in Volusia County—home to half of Florida's shark bites last year—is inauspiciously known as the "shark bite capital of the world." Surfers often flock to its coast, where the murky waters reduce sharks' visibility, and increase

we just didn't know it, said report co-author Joe Miguez. "They don't really want anything to do with us," he told AFP. Some humans meanwhile are seeking out sharks.

In Jupiter, some 90 miles (150 kilometers) north of Miami, Jonathan Campbell has done more than 500 dives with a coterie of enthusiasts, all there to swim with sharks. "You see



Jonathan Campbell, Shark Diving Guide, prepares bait inside a basket to be submerged to attract sharks off Jupiter, Florida.



Jonathan Campbell, Shark Diving Guide, places his hand on a Lemon Shark's nose, off Jupiter, Florida.



Lemon sharks swim close to a group of divers off Jupiter, Florida.



Joe Miguez, Shark Researcher at the University of Florida in Gainesville, observes a stingray specimen.

perately in need of conservation.

"When the sharks in the water are targeting the fishes that they normally feed on, once in a while, people get in the way and the sharks make a mistake," said Gavin Naylor, coauthor of a recent report tallying last year's shark attacks. According to data he gathered for the University of Florida's International Shark Attack File, Florida was home to a quarter of last year's shark attacks—a scary statistic, if taken on its own.

### Shark attack 'capital'

Florida's subtropical latitude means many sharks move through the waters of its continental shelf, which are rich in nutrients and therefore in fish to feed them. And miles of beaches attract huge numbers of tourists to the Sunshine State -- 135 million last year, according to Florida statistics. Yet despite the long odds of a shark bite, the predators still carry an outsized reputation—one probably not helped by their rows of razor sharp teeth, or fictional movies

the chance they will bite a human by mistake. Bites are like an "airplane crash"—shocking but rare, said New Smyrna Beach resident Bruce Adams, who remembers close encounters with sharks of his own during his surfing days. "It's sensational, it sells a lot of T-shirts," he told AFP, lamenting the creatures' bad reputations.

### Swimming with sharks

In fact, most of us have probably been in the water alongside sharks—

sharks in movies and they are scary monsters. But in the water, they are actually shy puppy dogs," he said.

In fact, amid crashing shark populations—there has been a 70 percent worldwide decline since 1970, according to a recent study—what the world might need is more sharks. "We should be more focused on conserving these animals than just going out and saying that they're out to get us," said Miguez. —AFP



Gavin Naylor, Director of the Florida Program for Shark Research at the University of Florida, observes a stingray specimen.



The tail of a Humpback whale is seen at the Gerlache Strait, which separates the Palmer Archipelago from the Antarctic Peninsula, in Antarctica.--AFP photos



Colombian researcher Andrea Bonilla Garzon of Cornell University (US) works aboard the ARC Simon Bolivar during the X Antarctic Expedition of the Colombian Navy at the Gerlache Strait, which separates the Palmer Archipelago from the Antarctic Peninsula, in Antarctica.

# Whale of a tail: Scientists track unique humpback 'fingerprint'

In Antarctica, a scientist waits patiently for two frolicking humpback whales to poke their tails out of the icy waters so she can take a photographic "fingerprint" of the unique colors and patterns that allow researchers to identify individuals of the species. Andrea Bonilla, a Colombian scientist at Cornell University in the United States, has been working with a team of researchers since 2014 to catalog humpback whales from a visual analysis of their tails—or flukes.

"What we are doing is tracking the history of each individual," Bonilla told AFP onboard the ARC Simon Bolivar during a scientific expedition by the Colombian navy. Over the years, the team has identified 70 whales, and hopes to see some of them again to record any physical changes that could provide clues to their migratory patterns, population sizes, health and sexual maturity.

On the tail, "the coloration and patterns that each whale has is unique, it is like a fingerprint, so what we do is look at the different marks they have, the different scars" to identify an individual, said Bonilla. Global populations of humpbacks have bounced back after once being decimated by commercial whaling, but the ocean giants remain under threat from vessel strikes, illegal fishing, pollution and underwater noise.

Today there are about 84,000 adult specimens in the world, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature. The importance of tail identification was highlighted in a

study published last month in the Royal Society Open Science journal which showed the number of humpback whales in the North Pacific had plummeted 20 percent in less than a decade. Tracking some 33,000 whales through photos of their flukes, scientists noted the steep decline which they speculate was due to starvation because of marine heat waves.

### 'Accumulating energy'

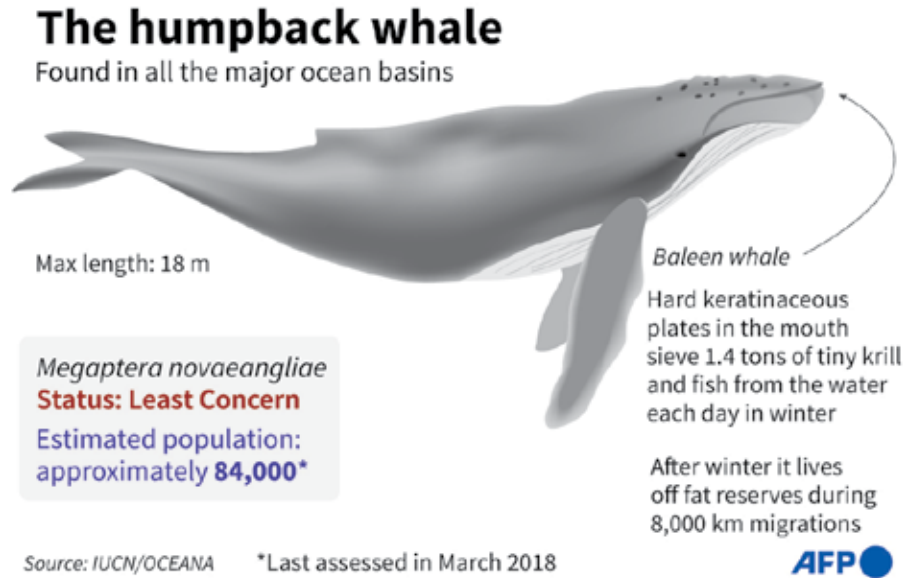
Photo identification is common in the study of marine mammals, although the use of fluke identification is most used

with humpbacks both because of their unique markings, and their habit of raising their tails off the water while diving. Different populations of humpback whales live across the world's oceans, carrying out mammoth migrations from warmer breeding spots to feeding grounds in polar waters.

"They take advantage of this great biomass of food that is here (in Antarctica) and for several months they are simply accumulating energy," said Bonilla. Using photographs, the scientist draws reproductions of the details of the tails of the enormous marine mam-



Colombian researcher Andrea Bonilla Garzon (left) and Colombian scientist Diego Mojica of Malpelo foundation work during whale watching at the Gerlache Strait.



mals, which can reach up to 18 meters (59 feet) long and weigh about 40 tons. On a computer, she zooms in on the details of the flukes, which can reveal attacks from other animals, "if there is some type of skin disease" or information about their diet.

The inventory allows scientists to track the movement of specific whales, which is crucial for conservation initiatives. "If a whale always comes to the same area to reproduce, it is important to protect those areas. If they cease to exist or are disturbed, that whale will have nowhere to go," warned Bonilla. —AFP



# UK brass band keeps miners' legacy burning, 40 years after strike



Members of the Carlton Main Frickley Colliery Band take part in a rehearsal in their band room prior to performing at an event to mark the 40th anniversary of start of the Miners' Strike.



A photograph shows mine workers' communal showers displayed at the National Coal Mining Museum for England, located on the site of Caphouse Colliery which closed in 1985, near Wakefield, England. — AFP photos

Memories of the UK's once-mighty mining industry are fading but 40 years after an epoch-defining strike, Carlton Main Frickley Colliery Band still embodies the close ties that once bound the community. "It's like the band, when times are hard, we stick together," said Ray Sykes, chairman of the year-long 1984-85 strike, from the practice hall that has been his second home for 70 years. Miners at Frickley Colliery, in the Yorkshire town of South Elmsall in northern England, prided themselves on being "second to none" during the action against planned pit closures. Very few broke the strike, which was once described as "the decisive social and economic confrontation of Britain's



A photograph shows a calendar from March 1984 owned by Silverwood miner Bruce Wilson displayed during an exhibition on the Miners' Strike of 1984.



A photograph shows strike badges during an exhibition on the Miners' Strike of 1984.



Members of the Carlton Main Frickley Colliery Band take part in a rehearsal in their band room.



A photograph shows Kellingley Colliery Miners Memorial at the National Coal Mining Museum for England.

post-war era" that hastened the demise of heavy industry. The mine, which employed 3,000 workers at its height, eventually succumbed and shut in 1993. Pete Wordsworth, a miner from the age of 16 who was only in the job nine months when the strike began, said most miners had fared well since the closures. "People who've worked in a coal mine can go into that big wide world and they can put their hand to anything," he added. "They want to work, they want to work hard." However, the mines were the foundation of the regional economy, and without them, communities are still suffering economically. South Elmsall is still among the top 10 percent

of England's most deprived neighborhoods. But the brass band marches on—consistently still ranking in the world's top 10 — and keeps Frickley on the international map.

### 'Really bitter'

Sykes, 77, said the heaviest toll had been the gradual fracturing of the community bond, forged in the unforgiving and often dangerous subterranean world of heat and dust. Camaraderie spread through the community above, he said. "Sadly we're losing it, and you can see it happening in the village," he told AFP. He likened the pit closure's effect on the community to "a son losing his father". The community's social life largely revolved around the mine—including not only the band but local football club Frickley Athletic, which is still plying its trade four leagues below professional level. On Saturday the club marked the anniversary by wearing the same shirt as the team wore in 1984. On the back was written "The Miners United will never be defeated". Hundreds packed the club's 100-year-old main stand,

which was decorated with a flag depicting firebrand union boss Arthur Scargill being arrested during the strike. But wounds opened during the miners' strike are not yet fully healed. "The violence in the village was quite nasty, really nasty, and I wouldn't like to see that ever, ever again," said Sykes, whose father and grandfather both worked at the pit.

Wordsworth, who stopped working as a miner in 2015, said the most ardent strikers "are still saying that they would not speak to a miner who went back to work. They are really, really bitter." He is now deputy mine manager at the National Coal Mining Museum in Wakefield, which has special exhibitions marking the strike's anniversary. "All the small villages had really good communities and everybody pulled together," he said, in the shadow of the old mine's winding gear. But pit closures "fragmented" those communities, he said. Miners moved to find work and more educated people left.

### Love and legacy

Even the celebrated band came close to shutting

during the strike, as financial hardship whittled its numbers down to just eight. Its reputation for excellence was its saving grace, helping it to attract talented players from hours away with no links to the pit. They are now trumpeting the area's heritage and identity. "That's what keeps this band going, the name," said a visibly emotional Sykes, beating his hand on the 119-year-old band's logo, over his heart.

"We've been told many times to lose the word colliery. We'll not. It's pride." One such newcomer is cornet player Tabby Kerwin, who makes a two-hour round trip for each of the twice-weekly practices. "Everyone does it for the love of it and for the legacy, for the history. We all know we're custodians for the next generation," she said before practice. "The colliery is so closely interwoven into the band's history and everyone that comes into the band, however young they are.. wherever they are from, have that awareness of it."—AFP



Members of the Carlton Main Frickley Colliery Band take part in a rehearsal in their band room.



A photograph shows different items displayed during an exhibition on the Miners' Strike of 1984.



Members of the Carlton Main Frickley Colliery Band take part in a rehearsal in their band room.

## Dissident Russian band returns to stage after Thai detention

A Russian-Belarusian rock band that denounces Moscow's Ukraine invasion returned to the stage this week, voicing defiance after being detained in Thailand in January and threatened with deportation to Russia. The band, Bi-2, formed in the 1980s in Belarus when it was part of the Soviet Union, left Russia in protest over the offensive and has been touring ever since in countries with large Russian-speaking communities.



This handout photograph shows the founder of the Bi-2 rock band Egor Bortnik known as Leva Bi-2 (right) giving his fingerprints at the immigration detention centre in Phuket.

Ahead of a concert in Vilnius on Thursday, band members met with exiled Belarusian opposition leader Svetlana Tikhonovskaya and supporters of late Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny who died in an Arc-



This handout photograph shows members of the Bi-2 rock band Alexander Uman known as Shura Bi-2 (left), Boris Livshits (second left), Yan Nikolenko (center), Egor Bortnik known as Leva Bi-2 (third right), Andrei Zvonkov (second right) and Maxim Andryushchenko (right) posing for a photo with exiled Belarusian opposition leader Svetlana Tikhonovskaya (third left) prior to their show at the Avia Solutions Group Arena in Vilnius.—AFP photos

tic prison last month. "We have become hostages to Russian history," Egor Bortnik, one of the well-known band's two founders, told AFP ahead of another concert in Warsaw on Saturday.

But 51-year-old Bortnik, who is better known by his stage name "Lyova", said he was "not against the war". "On the contrary, I'm for the war. I just want Ukraine to liberate its own territory. "Putin has to gather his orcs and get out of Ukraine," Bortnik said, using a disparaging term for Russian soldiers frequently used by Ukrainians.

The band was held in Phuket, Thailand in January on immigration charges in a case that has alarmed Russians critical of President Vladimir Putin living abroad. The organizers of their concerts said all the necessary permits

had been obtained, but the band was issued with tourist visas in error and they accused the Russian consulate of waging a campaign to cancel the concerts.

After a week in detention, the band were released and travelled to the Zionist entity, where they met with Foreign Minister Israel Katz who said in a statement that the episode showed that "music will win". Several of their concerts in Russia were cancelled in 2022 after they refused to play at a venue with banners supporting the war in Ukraine, after which they left the country.

"I put my prosperity on the line when the war began and I had to leave Russia. It was unexpected, it was not a process we had prepared for," Bortnik said. Bortnik said he was more used to emigration than some of his peers



Musicians of the Bi-2 rock band perform at the Arena COS Torwar in Warsaw.

who have left in the wake of the war since he moved to the Zionist entity while still a teenager. "I understand how difficult it is," he said. Bortnik said he was no "geopolitician" and does not write explicitly "political songs" although their lyrics can "hit a nerve that is constantly vibrating".

He said Putin's demise could be sudden and violent and would also bring down Belarusian strongman Alexander Lukashenko, who has been in power for three decades. "If something happens to Putin then there could be a civil war—the finale for any tyranny," he said.—AFP



## Lifestyle



The deaf brothers and former Nicaraguan bodybuilding champions Arturo (left) and Walter Perez train at their gym — AFP photos



The deaf brothers and former Nicaraguan bodybuilding champions Walter (left) and Arturo Perez pose for a picture at their gym in Santa Teresa, Carazo department, Nicaragua.

# Nicaragua's 'Bodybuilding Grandfathers': Local (and TikTok) legends

A half-century ago, two skinny brothers named Walter and Arturo Perez started lifting stones in their rural Nicaraguan town; now they are local legends and TikTok sensations known as the "Hercules brothers" and the "Bodybuilding Grandfathers." Because both are deaf, Walter, who is

us young people to come here to the gym, because... at their age they look magnificent," 33-year-old Ana Saborio told AFP. Added 28-year-old Porfirio Cortes: "They have long served as an inspiration to me. I was super skinny, but they started training me and telling me what I needed to do."

it while still a child.

Their mother taught them to read and write at home, because there were no special schools at the time, Walter told AFP, using a combination of words and gestures that Yahir helped translate. In their youth, the boys sold newspapers in the street, and suffered harassment — even physical attacks — because they could not talk.

That changed when, after seeing a burly new neighbor lifting weights, the brothers began exercising, Walter said. Lacking money to buy weights, they fabricated them from stones, concrete and tubes. Hernan Flores, a well-known Nicaraguan weightlifter, heard about them and invited them to train in his Managua gym. And in 1988, Arturo won his first national prize, while Walter placed second.

## \$2 a week

When they first competed, in their twenties, the brothers had to learn to time themselves because they couldn't hear the music indicating when it was time to change poses. But with hard work, they ultimately won 16 medals and around 20 trophies in Nicaragua and neighboring countries between 1988 and 2010.

The awards never paid much, however, and in order to survive in one of the poorest Latin American countries they now supplement the income from their gym with modest jobs — Arturo works part-time as a barber and Walter does welding and repairs bicycles. The gym occupies an old house, its green and white walls covered with old photos of the brothers in competition. Wal-



A man lifts weights at the Perez brothers' gym in Santa Teresa.



Deaf Nicaraguan former bodybuilding champion Walter Perez trains at his gym.



A man lifts weights at the Perez brothers' gym in Santa Teresa, Carazo department, Nicaragua.



Deaf Nicaraguan former bodybuilding champion Walter Perez is pictured during an interview with AFP.

61, and Arturo, a year older, have not always had it easy. But their bodybuilding achievements have earned them admirers and drawn dozens of young people to train with them in their small gym in Santa Teresa, about 50 kilometers (30 miles) south of Managua.

The brothers' audience has exploded since they began five months ago to post videos on TikTok, where they now have 175,000 followers. "They are a legend here in Santa Teresa, and I think that motivates all of

Although they no longer take part in bodybuilding competitions, the brothers have become hugely popular online since Walter's son Yahir created online profiles and posted images for them. Their TikTok videos, including exercise routines and recipes for organic smoothies — which family members and friends help produce — have drawn 5.3 million likes. Coming from an impoverished family of five children, Arturo and a sister were both born deaf, while Walter had some hearing but lost

ter used his welding skills to build many of the exercise machines.

Gym users pay just \$2 a week, an amount barely sufficient to keep the place going. Still, the brothers are enjoying their newfound fame. Juan Solis, an 82-year-old friend of the family, recalled that when the brothers were

young and in "a pitiable state" he worried about what they would become when they grew up. "But now," he told AFP with a smile, "they have it better than anyone else." — AFP



Deaf Nicaraguan former bodybuilding champion Walter Perez poses for a picture at his gym.



The deaf brothers and former Nicaraguan bodybuilding champions Walter (left) and Arturo Perez pose for a picture.



The deaf brothers and former Nicaraguan bodybuilding champions Arturo (left) and Walter Perez train at their gym.

## Dutch art fair reports 'record' prices for Van Gogh, Picasso

Europe's largest art fair closed its doors last Friday with organizers saying that sales, including a rare Van Gogh and works by Picasso and Kees van Dongen, fetched "record prices". Although a total figure of sale for some of the world's most sought-after artworks could not be given, organizers of The European Fine Art Fair (TEFAF) said that sales ran up to "tens-of-millions of euros". "It's impossible to tally the total sales as many are not made public," TEFAF organizer Noepky Testa said. "But we have had record sales, running into tens-of-millions of euros," she told AFP.

Top ticket items for sale this year included a rare early Van Gogh, painted when the artist was living in southern Netherlands around 1884, and a multi-million-euro work by abstract art pioneer Wassily Kandinsky. The US-based gallery selling the Van Gogh, titled "Tete de paysanne a la

coiffe blanche" confirmed a buyer, with Dutch media saying the asking price of 4.5 million euros (\$4.9 million) was reached.

Kandinsky's 1910 "Murnau mit Kirche II" was put up for sale by art dealer Robert Landau, who bought the work last year for \$45 million at auction at Sotheby's. It was not known whether a new buyer had been found, but Landau at the fair told AFP that the painting was recently valued at "100 million euros". Other big ticket names also fetched top prices.

A work on paper by Pablo Picasso called "Femme au tablier" sold for almost two million euros, while a painting by Dutch-French artist Kees van Dongen titled "Femme au Chapeau" sold for a "seven-figure sum to a private European collector". But it was not just paintings fetching top prices.

A 17th-century Safavid mirror was sold to the Aga Khan Foundation in Toronto for around 200,000 euros, organizers said. A Delftware porcelain work previously owned by British fashion photographer Cecil Beaton fetched around 300,000 euros. Over the eight-day fair, close to 50,000 visitors flocked to view artwork presented by 270 exhibitors from 22 countries, the organizers said. — AFP

## Despite illness, Celine Dion still keen to get back onstage



Canadian singer Celine Dion presents the Album Of The Year award on stage during the 66th Annual Grammy Awards at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles. - AFP

Pop megastar Celine Dion, who is suffering from a rare neurological disorder, said in an Instagram post she looks forward to her return to the stage. Dion, 55, first disclosed in December 2022 that she had been diagnosed with Stiff Person Syndrome, which causes stiff muscles in the torso, arms and legs, with noise or emotional distress known to trigger spasms. "Trying to overcome this autoimmune disorder has been one of the hardest experiences of my life, but I remain determined to one day get back onto the stage and to live as normal of a life as possible," Dion said in a post late Friday to mark International SPS Awareness Day.

"I want to send my encouragement and support to all those around the world that have been affected by SPS. I want you to know you can do it! We can do it!" added the Grammy-winning singer of such hits as "My Heart Will Go On" and "Because You Loved Me." "I am deeply grateful for the love and support from my kids, family, team and all of you!" she added in the post,

accompanied by a photo of her smiling broadly and posing with her three sons.

There is no cure for Stiff Person Syndrome, which is progressive, but treatment can help control symptoms. According to the US National Institutes of Health, SPS affects twice as many women as men. In May last year, Dion was forced to cancel a string of shows scheduled for 2023 and 2024, saying she was not strong enough to tour.

The last time Dion was seen in public was at the Grammy Awards in February, when she made a surprise appearance to present the Album of the Year award to Taylor Swift. In January, Dion announced she would make a feature-length documentary, to stream on Amazon Prime Video, about her condition to help increase public awareness. Dion has sold more than 250 million albums during her decades-long career. The Quebec-born star's "Courage World Tour" began in 2019, and Dion had completed 52 shows before the Covid-19 pandemic put the remainder on hold. — AFP



## Sports

# Farrell's humble style brings more glory for Irish rugby

## Farrell bids a temporary farewell to the Six Nations

**PARIS:** Andy Farrell has raised Irish rugby's profile in the same way fellow Englishman Jack Charlton did for Irish football, based on a concoction of grittiness, humility and panache, according to former Ireland fly-half Tony Ward. That first quality carried the Irish to a 17-13 victory over Scotland on Saturday to retain the Six Nations title and emulate Farrell's predecessor Joe Schmidt's side of 2014/15. Farrell bids a temporary farewell to the Six Nations — he is British and Irish Lions head coach for the 2025 tour of Australia — on the back of a Triple Crown in 2022, the Grand Slam in 2023 and the title in this edition.

Ward was among those who doubted Farrell's suitability as head coach after a series of disappointing performances early into his tenure after taking over following the 2019 Rugby World Cup. He gleefully concedes he was wrong and sees 48-year-old Farrell as being as much a guiding light for rugby in Ireland as Charlton was for the Irish football team.

The 1966 World Cup-winning centreback earned the nickname 'Saint Jack' as he guided the Irish to the 1990 World Cup quarter-finals, losing to hosts Italy, and to the last 16 in 1994. "People go on about Jack Charlton and what he did for Irish football," Ward, who won 19 caps for Ireland, told AFP.

"They were not great to watch but he delivered results and raised interest in the game. "Farrell has been Charlton but with style and panache and the greatest rugby coach we have had," Ward, though, says what is wonderful about Farrell is his "humility in victory and defeat". "There is an air of decency about him that feeds through and every player buys into the system."

### 'Everyone is trustworthy'

Ward says it is no coincidence under the more relaxed Farrell there is a freedom to Ireland's play and less fear of the repercussions of making mistakes than under the disciplinarian Schmidt. "Andy takes a different approach to previous management that I've worked under, which I think is the right way to do it," explained Ireland's then-captain Johnny Sexton as to what had changed under Farrell after the Irish won the 2022 Triple Crown. Indeed Farrell has engendered such a sense of trust among the players — he likes their families to spend matchday mornings with them — ebullient wing Mack Hansen has a tattoo of the former British rugby league legend's face on his leg. It is hard to imagine a similar gesture by players playing under fellow head



**DUBLIN:** Ireland's flanker Peter O'Mahony lifts the Six Nations trophy after winning the Six Nations international rugby union match between Ireland and Scotland at the Aviva Stadium in Dublin. — AFP

coaches Warren Gatland, Fabien Galthie or Schmidt.

"Andy's done great stuff for this team and for Irish rugby, on and off the pitch," Hansen said last year. Farrell said he was just 21 when he was attracted by the idea of coaching. "I was always a team player. I was always a captain. It was always about how teams gelled together." The Irish have been the beneficiaries of his desire to coach but it would not have worked had the father of four — becoming father for the first

time aged 16 to England rugby great Owen — not identified with Ireland.

"Everyone from the north-west of England is from Ireland anyway," Farrell told The Irish Times in 2016, the year he hooked up with the Ireland team as defence coach. "I've got (Dublin) ancestry that goes back three or four generations (one of his brothers Phil played a rugby league Test for Ireland), and so has my wife (Colleen). "It's a big city is Dublin, but it still seems as if

everyone knows each other, gets along really well and is very gracious and friendly. "It reminds me of home really. I suppose when you're a northern lad these things are important to you."

It is however another Irish quality Farrell, who is under contract until 2027, identifies with that reflects why they are the perfect fit. "We are what we are; you don't need to beat about the bush," he told The Irish Times. "I think everyone is trustworthy. — AFP

## Steelers acquire QB Fields in NFL trade with Bears

**MIAMI:** The Pittsburgh Steelers have acquired quarterback Justin Fields in a trade with the Chicago Bears, the NFL teams announced on Saturday. The move from the Steelers comes just days after they signed free agent quarterback Russell Wilson, who was released by the Denver Broncos.

The 35-year-old Wilson is expected to begin next season as the starter with Fields having to wait for his chance after three seasons, mainly as a starter, for the Bears. Wilson was a Super Bowl winner in 2013 with the Seattle Seahawks before a disappointing two seasons with Denver.

Chicago will receive a 2025 sixth-round draft pick that could become a fourth-round selection, in return for Fields. "We have engaged in multiple trade conversations in recent weeks and believe trading Justin at this time to Pittsburgh is what is best for both Justin and the Bears," Chicago general manager Ryan Poles said.

"Today we spoke to Justin to inform him of the trade and the rationale behind it for us as a club. We want to thank him for his tireless dedication, leadership and all he poured into our franchise and community the last three years and wish him the best towards a long and successful NFL career." Fields was selected by the Bears in the first round of the 2021 NFL Draft, the 11th overall pick. In his three seasons, Fields has played in 40 games, starting 38 of them. He has completed 578 of 958 pass attempts (60.3%) for 6,674 yards, a seven-yard average per pass, and has thrown 40 touchdowns in three seasons. — AFP

## Resurgent Catlin wins International Series Macau

**MACAU:** John Catlin held off David Puig to win the International Series Macau with a birdie at the end of a tense playoff on Sunday and seal his comeback from "a rough last two years". On a day of low scoring, American Catlin missed a five-foot birdie putt at the 18th hole in regulation that would have given him a six-under par round of 64 and the title by one stroke.

Instead his 65 left him in a tie at 23-under at the top of the leaderboard with the LIV golfer Puig, who had a blistering 10-under final round of 60 containing nine birdies and an eagle. "We made that a little more interesting than we needed to, didn't we," Catlin said to caddie Barry Cornwall after his birdie at the second playoff hole secured the \$360,000 first prize and a fifth Asian Tour win, but first since 2019.

"Still hasn't quite sunk in and that was one heck of a battle," the 33-year-old Catlin told reporters. "If you had told me I would finish minus 23 on the tournament and I still have to be in a playoff, I'd be like: You're kidding."

The 22-year-old Spaniard Puig began the day five shots behind history-maker Catlin, who shot to the top of the leaderboard on Saturday with the Asian Tour's first-ever 59. The pair went back



**CHITTAGONG:** Sri Lanka's captain Kusal Mendis (2R) attends a practice session on the eve of their third and final one-day international (ODI) cricket match against Bangladesh at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong on March 17, 2024. — AFP

## S Lanka, Bangladesh hit by key injuries for ODI decider

**CHITTAGONG:** Sri Lanka fast bowler Dilshan Madushanka will miss the rest of the tour of Bangladesh while home paceman Tanzim Hasan Sakib is also out of the decisive third and final ODI on Monday after both suffered hamstring injuries.

Both players have been vital for their respective sides in a one-day series dominated by pace bowlers, picking up four wickets each in the first two matches. The series is tied 1-1 after hosts Bangladesh

won the opener by six wickets, with Sri Lanka taking the second by three wickets. Sri Lanka Cricket said Madushanka suffered a hamstring problem during the second ODI on Friday. "Madushanka will not take part in the ongoing tour as the bowler will return to start rehabilitation work," SLC said.

Tanzim had similarly injured his hamstring, while bowling in the nets on Sunday. "He will be sent to Dhaka today for his scan," Bangladesh Cricket Board doctor Monzur Hussain said. Bangladesh have dropped opener Liton Das for Monday's decider in Chittagong after he was dismissed for consecutive ducks in the first two matches.

Uncapped Jaker Ali Anik took his place in the Bangladesh squad for the match. Sri Lanka won the earlier Twenty20 series 2-1. The two sides are also set to play two Tests. — AFP

## Some reluctance to Saudi deal, LIV players return, says Malnati

**MIAMI:** Reuniting the world's top golfers is a priority, US PGA Tour policy maker Peter Malnati said Saturday, but some PGA players have issues with Saudi backing and how defectors would return. Malnati, who spoke after his third round at The Players Championship, is among six players on the PGA Tour Policy Board being urged to meet on Monday with Saudi Arabia Public Investment Fund (PIF) governor Yasir Al-Rumayyan, according to multiple reports.

The meeting with the backers of the upstart LIV Golf League, which has lured reigning Masters champion Jon Rahm and other big names away from the PGA, is planned for Ponte Vedra Beach a day after the Players ends.

"It would be even better if we had Jon Rahm here. I'll just say it. It would be an even better win," Malnati said. "That's something that we as a membership and leaders of the membership, we need to figure that out."

"How do we make this happen for people to come back and do it in a way that has some semblance of fairness... that can at least somewhat pass the sniff test and get us to a place where... we have all of the best players in the world? "Something needs to happen for our sport."

The policy board, which must approve any final deal on the PGA-PIF merger framework unveiled last June to controversy, includes Americans Malnati, Tiger Woods, Patrick Cantlay, Jordan Spieth and Webb Simpson plus Australian Adam Scott.

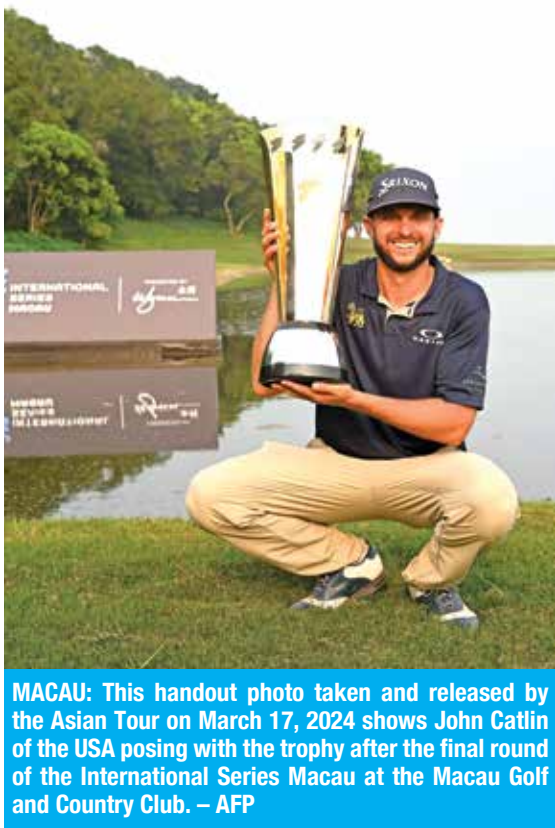
"I don't know the details," Malnati said. "I don't know where it is or how I'm getting there." "The next step is to have Yasir meet with players of the PGA Tour. That's essential because, at its core, players have no business running the PGA Tour. But this is a members' organization. We should have input in the direction it goes."

Malnati also said the players aren't even sure what they want when it comes to player reluctance to Saudi backing over human rights issues, a concern used to help keep members from jumping to LIV in past years. "That's obviously something we've got to understand better as a membership," Malnati said. "Like, what is our stance? The announcement of June 6, I felt massive resistance to that personally."

"As I've learned more, I understand better and I'm very open minded to learning what involvement they want, what they want out of this and how they think they can help. "But, yeah, on the surface, there are players who have resistance to that relationship, for sure. So that's why I do think it's important that maybe our next step is to meet at some point."

Malnati also said the issue of penalties for players who left for LIV and want to return to a unified series is a concern for many members. "That might be the thing that's most top of mind for people," Malnati said. "You would find opinions that ran the gamut, from guys that just have a line in the sand that say never and — I think Rory has been pretty outspoken that he wants to see the best players playing on the PGA Tour."

"So we're going to have to net out somewhere in the middle." "They're coming back to the PGA Tour as guys (who) are going to have to earn their way back here." One way would be a ban on equity in the new PGA Tour Enterprises for-profit entity created earlier this year. — AFP



**MACAU:** This handout photo taken and released by the Asian Tour on March 17, 2024 shows John Catlin of the USA posing with the trophy after the final round of the International Series Macau at the Macau Golf and Country Club. — AFP



## Sports

# ‘Extraordinary’ Vinicius hits brace as Real Madrid distance Girona

## Third-place Barcelona, 11 points behind Madrid, travel to face Atletico Madrid

**PAMPLONA:** Vinicius Junior struck twice to earn Real Madrid a commanding 10 point lead at the top of La Liga in a 4-2 rout of Osasuna on Saturday, with fading title rivals Girona falling to a 1-0 defeat at Getafe. The Brazilian forward mesmerized for Los Blancos and reached 18 goals across all competitions this season, while Dani Carvajal and Brahim Diaz also found the net in an entertaining romp for Carlo Ancelotti's side.

Girona, second, were undone by Yellu Santiago's first half strike and have now suffered four consecutive away defeats — started by a demoralizing 4-0 thrashing at Madrid. Third-place Barcelona, 11 points behind Madrid, travel to face Atletico Madrid, fifth, and can overtake Girona with a victory on Sunday.

Athletic Bilbao rose above Atletico to fourth with a 2-0 win over Alaves thanks to a brace from Gorka Guruzeta. Madrid were without top goalscorer Jude Bellingham, completing a two-match suspension but, with Vinicius in full flow, barely missed the England international at El Sadar in Pamplona.

"I congratulated him, he had an extraordinary game, he made good decisions, he moved very well without the ball, that's where's he's improved the most," Ancelotti told reporters. "With the ball he's always efficient and without it he's spectacular at the moment, he's so fast." Vinicius' name made headlines this week after Real Madrid filed a legal complaint over alleged racist insults aimed at the Brazilian by Atletico Madrid and Barcelona fans, but on the pitch the forward's quality continues to speak for itself.

The 23-year-old dispossessed Alejandro Catenena, ran through and calmly rolled the ball past Sergio Herrera to break the deadlock after four

minutes. Osasuna were quickly back level through Ante Budimir, who finished from close range at a corner. Madrid captain Carvajal put his side in front again in the 18th minute, finishing sublimely with the outside of his boot after Fede Valverde cleverly hooked the ball into his path in the box. Vinicius was booked just before half-time for dissent, his fifth yellow card of the season in La Liga — meaning he is now banned for Athletic Bilbao's visit to the Santiago Bernabeu at the end of March. Diaz stretched Madrid's lead after an hour with a clinical finish after running on to a long ball, flicked on by Valverde.

### ‘Pressure’

Vinicius grabbed his second a few minutes later with a subtle poked finish after Valverde sent him hurtling in on goal to complete a hat-trick of assists — it was the striker's 12th league goal of the season. He started the campaign slowly by his high standards but has six goals in his last four league matches.

The Brazilian could have completed his hat-trick just a couple of minutes later but fired wide after another dart into the box past Osasuna's crumbling back line. Home fans whistled Vinicius as he was substituted in the final stages but Ancelotti gave the forward a hug as thanks for taking Madrid one step closer to the Spanish title.

"The pressure that he has in terms of the atmosphere, he has to control that a bit more," added Ancelotti, after Vinicius' booking, his third yellow in three league games. Iker Munoz pulled one back for Osasuna in stoppage time before Madrid almost wrapped up the win in spectacular fashion, but youngster Arda Guler hit the bar with an effort from just inside Osasuna's half.



**PAMPLONA:** Real Madrid's Brazilian forward #07 Vinicius Junior is challenged by Osasuna's Spanish midfielder #06 Lucas Torro (L) and Osasuna's Spanish midfielder #07 Jon Moncayola (R) during the Spanish league football match between CA Osasuna and Real Madrid CF at El Sadar stadium in Pamplona. — AFP

### ‘No words’

Getafe, despite the absence of top goalscorer Borja Mayoral, were able to inflict a fourth consecutive away defeat on Michel Sanchez's slumping Girona. "Every defeat worries us, we want to fight to get into the Champions League," Michel told reporters. "We have a historic

chance to do it and if we don't, for me, it would be very tough to take." The Catalan minnows' top goalscorer Artem Dovbyk missed two good chances after Santiago fired Getafe ahead following good work by Ilaix Moriba. "I have no words to describe this defeat," said Girona winger Savinho. — AFP

## Spurs’ top four bid rocked by Fulham, Luton draw with Forest

**LONDON:** Tottenham wasted a chance to move into the Premier League's top four as they slumped to a shock 3-0 defeat at Fulham, while Luton salvaged a crucial 1-1 draw with relegation rivals Nottingham Forest on Saturday.

Ange Postecoglou's side would have climbed above Aston Villa into fourth place with a win, but instead they handed the initiative back to their top-four rivals. Fifth-placed Tottenham were punished for a sloppy performance as the in-form Rodrigo Muniz netted twice either side of Sasa Lukic's first goal for Fulham.

A 4-0 win at Villa last weekend was expected to act as Tottenham's springboard to finish above Unai Emery's team in the battle to qualify for next season's Champions League. Instead, the north Londoners crashed to a first league defeat at Craven Cottage since 2008 and failed to score for the first time in 40 games.

They sit two points behind Villa, who can extend that lead to five if they win at West Ham on Sunday. "We were careless on the ball. It goes down as a bad day at the office but we don't accept it. It wasn't our normal levels. We didn't have the same intensity," Postecoglou said.

"We're two points behind Villa. There's so much football left. It's about how we play." With Micky van de Ven sidelined by a hamstring injury, Radu Dragusin made his first Tottenham start. Worryingly for Postecoglou, Romania centre-back Dragusin, signed from Genoa in January, was often exposed in a rocky display.

Fulham took the lead in the 42nd minute when Muniz cleverly drifted away from Dragusin as the Brazilian forward found space to meet Antonee Robinson's low cross with a clinical finish from 10 yards.



**LONDON:** Fulham's Mexican striker #07 Raul Jimenez (2L) vies with Tottenham Hotspur's Argentinian defender #17 Cristian Romero (C) during the English Premier League football match between Fulham and Tottenham Hotspur at Craven Cottage in London. — AFP

Tottenham's defensive deficiencies were exposed again four minutes after half-time.

Ivobi was allowed to advance unchecked and he slipped a pass to Timothy Castagne, whose cross hit Lukic and deflected into the net. Tottenham were in tatters and Muniz struck again in the 61st minute.

Joao Palhinha's header reached Calvin Bassey and when his shot was saved by Guglielmo Vicario, Muniz reacted quicker than Dragusin to stab home.

### ‘We’ve got to fight’

As the fight to avoid relegation comes to a head, Luton and Forest met in a vital showdown

each-other after six hours 14min 44sec of racing.

The Belgian was swift to praise his team-mate Mathieu van der Poel, who made the early sprint running for him and who will be a favourite at the upcoming Tour of Flanders and Paris-Roubaix Monuments.

"What Mathieu did in the final was incredible. I'm really proud and happy that we managed to play it out as a team," he said. Philipsen has won six stages of the Tour de France and claimed the points jersey in last year's edition of cycling's most important Grand Tour with constant service from the prodigious Van der Poel.

"It's one of the dreams of any cyclist," said Philipsen. "Milan-San Remo may be one of the only Monuments I can win. "I had really good legs from the start... but everything needs to fall in place. Mathieu was there and did a really big team job."

He is the first sprinter to win Milan San-Remo since Arnaud Demare's victory in 2016, while Mark

at Kenilworth Road. Forest, beaten in their previous three games, took the lead through Chris Wood's 34th minute strike. But Luke Berry came off the bench to equalize from close-range in the 89th minute.

Third-bottom Luton, who blew a three-goal lead in Wednesday's disastrous 4-3 defeat at Bournemouth, are without a win in their last nine games in all competitions. They lie three points behind fourth-bottom Forest and boss Rob Edwards said: "You get knocked down on Wednesday and it was very tough for us all. We performed really well today in difficult circumstances. — AFP

Cavendish also won in 2009. Fringe contender Britain's Tom Pidcock was in the final shake-up as were three world champions in Dane Mads Pedersen, Van der Poel and Frenchman Julian Alaphilippe.

Alaphilippe was in a position to escape but had a mechanical problem at the wrong moment as a run of bad luck continues. "I just need to keep pushing and my luck will change," he said.

Pre-race favorites Pogacar and Van der Poel tried and failed to pull away in the final kilometres of the longest of the one-day races at over 280km. Pogacar was again disappointed after starting the season with a crushing win at Strade Bianche earlier this month. "I really want to win this race, I'll be back next year and I hope to do better, and I'm not talking about second," said the Slovene. "I had incredible legs but this year was not hard enough to be a climber's race so I think I did everything I could to get third place. In this situation I couldn't do much better. — AFP

## Suarez comes off bench for brace as Miami beat DC

**WASHINGTON:** Luis Suarez came off the bench and scored twice as Inter Miami, without the injured Lionel Messi, won 3-1 at D.C. United in Major League Soccer on Saturday. Suarez continued his prolific start to life in MLS with his sixth goal in seven games in all competitions for the South Florida club.

Miami had failed to win their last seven games without Messi, a run dating to September, but despite that record, coach Gerardo Martino left Suarez and Jordi Alba on the bench. Jared Stroud put for D.C. United ahead, latching onto a Mateusz Kilch pass and firing a first-time shot past Drake Callender.

The lead lasted only for 10 minutes, however, with Leonardo Campana leading the Miami attacking in place of Suarez, seeing a header saved by Alex Bono but then, after D.C. failed to clear, turning in after the ball was scooped to him by Federico Redondo.

Busquets delivered a superb cross-field pass to set Robert Taylor in down the left but his low drive clipped the outside of the post on the stroke of half-time. Uruguayan Suarez was brought on in the 62nd minute and the 37-year-old was to settle the contest.

Just 10 minutes after coming on Suarez finished off a fine move, turning in a low cross from Campana at the back post. Then Diego Gomez, Miami's powerful Paraguayan midfielder, won the ball in the center of the field and broke forward, finding Suarez, whose route to goal was initially blocked.

But Suarez was able to find space for a chip that Bono clawed at but was unable to stop crossing the line. D.C. United had Pedro Santos sent off after he brought down substitute Shanyder Borgelin in the final minute. — AFP



**SANREMO:** (From L) Second placed Team Jayco Alula's Australian rider Michael Matthews, first placed Alpecin-Deceuninck's Belgian rider Jasper Philipsen and third placed UAE Team Emirates' Slovenian rider Tadej Pogacar celebrate on the podium after the 115th Milan-SanRemo one-day classic cycling race, between Pavia and SanRemo. — AFP

# Classifieds

## Clinics & Hospitals

### Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	22814507
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, Bayanaboyina Sumalatha, W/o. Bayanaboyina Lakshmi Narasaiah, D.No.2/65, Upparapalli, Asramam, Kadappa, A.P-516247, have changed my name from Binaboena Sumalatha (old name) to Bayanaboyina Sumalatha (new name), Passport No. S7633005. (#5185) 17/03/2024**

**I, Nazneen Shakeel Ahmeed Khan of Indian Passport No. U0744172 having permanent address: B 20 403 Vaishali Nagar, S V Road Jogeshwari, Mumbai, Pin: 400102, Maharashtra, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under (Given name) nazneen shakeel ahmed and (surname) Khan. (#5184) 15/03/2024**





MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Belgian midfielder #11 Jeremy Doku (L) passes the ball past Newcastle United's English midfielder #23 Jacob Murphy during the English FA Cup Quarter Final football match between Manchester City and Newcastle United at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester. — AFP

## Silva fires Man City into FA Cup semi-finals, Coventry stun Wolves

Holdings City remain on course to repeat their treble triumph of last season

MANCHESTER: Bernardo Silva scored twice as Manchester City beat Newcastle 2-0 to reach the FA Cup semi-finals on Saturday, while Coventry struck twice in stoppage time to stun Wolves 3-2. Holders City remain on course to repeat their treble triumph of Premier League, Champions League and FA Cup last season as Pep Guardiola's men stretched their unbeaten run in all competitions to 22 games.

Fortune favoured the English champions, though, as twice Silva's shots took deflections to wrong-foot Newcastle goalkeeper Martin Dubravka. The Portuguese international opened the scoring on 13 minutes when his effort looped in off Dan Burn.

Silva's second deflected off Sven Botman, but Dubravka should still have done better as the ball trickled underneath him. At the other end, City's number one goalkeeper Ederson was not missed as Stefan Ortega produced a brilliant save to deny Alexander

Isak pulling a goal back for Newcastle.

Dubravka made amends for his earlier error with fine saves from Jeremy Doku either side of half-time to keep the score down. But it was too little, too late for Newcastle's hopes of silverware this season as the Magpies remain without a major trophy since 1969. City are the first side to ever reach the FA Cup semi-finals in six consecutive seasons. "I know we play to win the finals, but to win it, you have to win the earlier rounds," said Guardiola. "To run and play the way they did is incredible. Congratulations to the team, no one has done that before."

### Coventry's rise under Robins

By contrast, Coventry reached their first semi-final since they won the competition for the only time in 1987 in a five-goal thriller at Molineux. The Sky Blues led early in the second half through Ellis Simms' contro-

versial opener after a VAR check for potential handball by the Coventry striker.

But the Championship side looked to have blown their chance to reach Wembley when Wolves themselves scored twice in the final seven minutes of the 90. Rayan Ait-Nouri pounced on an error from Joel Latibeaudiere to smash home the equaliser and then set up his fellow left-back Hugo Bueno to fire into the bottom corner for his first senior goal. However, Simms' second goal of the match levelled in the 97th minute before he teed up American international Haji Wright to fire into the corner three minutes later. The drama did not end there as Wolves boss Gary O'Neil labelled Coventry manager Mark Robins' celebrations in the face of a teenage ball boy "disgusting".

Robins apologised after being riled by the ball boy's attempts to waste time late in the game. "I apologise to him, I don't show emotion very often but that is what the FA

Cup does to you," said Robins. A founder member of the Premier League, Coventry sank from the top down to the fourth tier of English football as recently as the 2017/18 season. But they have achieved two promotions under Robins and narrowly missed out on a return to the Premier League last season, losing the Championship playoff final to Luton on penalties.

Wembley awaits once more in the last four, but Robins is realistic of his side's chances of glory with the likes of City or Liverpool potentially waiting in the semis. "We have got a small chance. We are going to Wembley and we are going to enjoy that game," added Robins.

"I don't want to go there and just make the numbers up. We are not stupid, we know the levels go up all of the time." Liverpool travel to Manchester United in the pick of Sunday's quarter-final ties, while Chelsea host Leicester. — AFP

## Kuwait padel team rank second at 'Nad Al Sheba' tourney

ABU DHABI: Kuwait's national padel team secured the second place at the "Nad Al Sheba (NAS) Sports Tournament" in Dubai after losing the final game to their Dutch peers 0-2 on Saturday. Speaking to KUNA following the podium ceremony, Ali Hayat, director of Kuwait Padel Club, appreciated the performance of the team throughout the championship.

He attributed the achievement of reaching the final to the efforts of the players and the technical staff during the previous training camps. Hayat promised that the team will make greater achievements in the coming competitions.

Organized by the Dubai Sports Council (DSC), the eleventh edition of NAS opened on March 11 and will continue until March 31. The annual gala features nine different sports disciplines, including Volleyball, Padel, Jiu-Jitsu, Fencing, Wheelchair Basketball, Road Race, Cycling, Tug-of-War, and an Obstacle Challenge. The Padel championship started on Tuesday, March 12 and was concluded today. — KUNA

## Curry scores 31 points to beat Lakers

LOS ANGELES: Stephen Curry returned from a sprained ankle to score 31 points and reserve Klay Thompson added 26 to spark Golden State over the Los Angeles Lakers 128-121 in an NBA showdown on Saturday. The Lakers, who lost forward Anthony Davis after the first quarter to a poke in the left eye, squandered a 40-point performance by LeBron James in falling to the Warriors.



Kuwait's national Padel team.

"A big win for us," Curry said. "I don't know the last time we won in here against them. Big deal." Two-time NBA Most Valuable Player Curry missed Golden State's past three games and the Warriors are only 1-5 this season without him.

The 36-year-old guard and four-time NBA champion returned in spectacular fashion, adding six rebounds and five assists while hitting 12-of-24 shots from the floor, and 3-of-10 from 3-point range. James, who hit 15-of-23 shots, added eight points and nine assists and filled in after Davis went to the locker room after the first quarter and did not play again.

"They always going to talk about me and him," Curry said of James. "It was about our total group

tonight. For us, it takes a whole team to win and we needed it—we needed it bad." Draymond Green contributed 12 rebounds and 13 assists and Jonathan Kuminga added 23 points for Golden State.

The game was halted for several minutes near the end by a malfunctioning shot clock. "I've never seen that in my career. Usually they have a back-up clock or something," Curry said. "That's the worst thing that could happen, especially this age. You build up all pre-game, you get going and when the engine shuts off it's hard to get it going again." The Warriors are a percentage point ahead of the Lakers in the last two play-in positions in the Western Conference. — AFP



INDIAN WELLS: Russia's Daniil Medvedev returns the ball to USA's Tommy Paul during the ATP-ITF Indian Wells Masters men's semifinal tennis match at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden in Indian Wells, California. — AFP

## Carlos Alcaraz faces Medvedev for Indian Wells title

INDIAN WELLS: Defending champion Carlos Alcaraz handed Australian Open winner Jannik Sinner his first defeat of 2024 on Saturday to set up an Indian Wells final against Daniil Medvedev. Alcaraz's 1-6, 6-3, 6-2 victory ended Sinner's 19-match winning streak, including a 16-0 start to the year, and ensures Alcaraz will remain No. 2 in the world rankings next week. "To be able to end something like this, it's incredible for me," Spain's Alcaraz said of busting the Italian's streak. Sunday's final against fourth-seeded Russian Medvedev is a repeat of last year's championship decider.

Medvedev also had to fight back in a 1-6, 7-6 (7/3), 6-2 victory over 17th-ranked American Tommy Paul. In the final he'll be out to thwart Alcaraz's bid to become the first repeat Indian Wells ATP champion since Novak Djokovic won three straight titles from 2014-2016.

Alcaraz and Sinner's semi-final was disrupted by a three-hour rain delay at 2-1 in the first set but proved worth the wait as the 20-something stars put on a show. "Matches with Jannik are always special," Alcaraz said. "We know we have to play at our highest level to win. We have to put magic on the court, unbelievable points and for the crowd it is also wonderful."

Sinner quickly seized the initiative when play resumed, winning four straight games to pocket the first set. He saved the only break point he faced, and gained the insurance break for a 5-1 lead, pouncing on a short ball for a stinging cross-court passing winner on break point. Alcaraz turned it around in the second set with a savvy change of style, backing up to give himself more time on the returns and gradually working his way into the match. — AFP