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Ramadan Kareem

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200 candidates remain in fray

Top court upholds barring 4 former MPs • Election campaign heats up

Prime Minister visits Grand Mosque



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah visits the Grand Mosque late March 30, 2024. — KUNA

KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah paid an inspection visit to the Grand Mosque on Saturday night on the start of the last 10 nights of the holy month of Ramadan. He was accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sharida Al-Maousherji and Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs

Faisal Al-Ghareeb. During the visit, HH the Prime Minister was apprised by the administrators of the mosque of the preparations for receiving and serving the large numbers of worshippers during these blissful nights. He was also briefed on the measures of coordination among various state agencies to ensure a tranquil spiritual atmosphere for worshippers. — KUNA (More pics on Page 3)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The court of cassation on Sunday upheld a decision to bar four top candidates, all former lawmakers, from contesting the April 4 parliamentary polls because they were convicted of taking part in the outlawed tribal primary elections. The verdict is final and cannot be challenged. This means that only 200 candidates will remain in the fray for the 50-seat National Assembly. These candidates include 46 members of the dissolved Assembly, in addition to 20 former MPs from previous assemblies. There are 13 women still in the race.

The four barred candidates — Marzouq Al-Hubaini, Jaber Al-Muhailbi, Ahmad Al-Azemi and Marzouq Al-Khalifa — were among 14 candidates

disqualified by the elections committee over their criminal records. Hubaini, Muhailbi and Azemi are all from the fifth constituency. Khalifa was running from the fourth constituency.

Meanwhile, another candidate who was disqualified over his criminal record, was tried in the criminal court on Sunday for allegedly insulting a prominent Kuwaiti bedouin tribe. The court then set April 14 to issue its verdict. The candidate is in jail serving a 21-day detention ordered by the public prosecution.

With only three days left for the snap parliamentary elections, nightly campaigns intensified with candidates calling for distributing Kuwait's huge wealth to citizens and for subjecting the issue of nationality under the jurisdiction of court.

Pope pleads for peace on Easter

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis urged the world to resist "the logic of weapons" in his Easter message at the Vatican on Sunday, easing growing health fears as he greeted thousands of Catholics. The 87-year-old's "Urbi et Orbi" (To the City and the World) blessing came after he led Easter Mass in front of 60,000 worshippers at Saint Peter's Square while appearing in good spirits.

In his traditional speech broadcasted worldwide, Francis condemned war as "always an absurdity and a defeat", raising conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, Myanmar and beyond. He renewed appeals for

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VATICAN CITY: The wind lifts Pope Francis' mantilla as he stands at the central loggia of St Peter's basilica during the Easter 'Urbi et Orbi' message on March 31, 2024. — AFP

RAMADAN KAREEM

The last 10 days and nights of Ramadan-II

By Hassan Twaha Bwambale

We are in a month of magnanimous goodness, great righteousness and abundant blessings. The blessed month of Ramadan is highly praised in the Noble Quran and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It is the month of the Holy Quran and goodness, and the month when people return to their Creator in a unique demonstration of faith.

Giving charity during the last 10 nights: The last 10 days and nights of Ramadan are an opportunity to gain multiple rewards by giving charity to those in need seeking the pleasure of Almighty Allah. Abdullah bin Abbas (RA) related, "The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) was the most generous of all the people, and he was even more generous in Ramadan when (archangel) Gabriel met him. He (angel Gabriel) would meet him every night of Ramadan to study the Noble Quran (with him). Thus, the Prophet (PBUH) would be more generous than a beneficial and refreshing wind (that comes with rain and mercy)." (Al-Bukhari # 3, 220 + Muslim # 2, 450)

Among the benefits of charity is that due to its virtue, Almighty Allah will provide shade to a believer who used to give charity: Uqbah bin Amir (RA) narrated that Allah's

Continued on Page 6

Zionists pummel Gaza as US OKs more bombs, jets

GAZA: Deadly airstrikes pounded the Gaza Strip as talks towards a truce between the Zionist entity and Hamas were set to resume in Cairo on Sunday, according to Egyptian state television. Heavy fighting raged on in the besieged Palestinian territory, including in or around several hospitals, in the nearly six-month-old war.

The fighting has raged on unabated despite a UN Security Council resolution last Monday that demanded an "immediate ceasefire" and the release of all hostages held by militants. Tensions have risen over the spiraling civilian death toll between the Zionist entity and its chief backer the United States, especially over Zionist threats to send ground forces into Gaza's crowded far-southern city of Rafah. Washington has nonetheless approved billions of dollars worth of bombs and fighter jets for

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GAZA: Palestinian boys ride a donkey cart near a building destroyed in Zionist bombardment in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on March 31, 2024. — AFP

Bulgaria, Romania take first steps into EU visa-free zone

BUCHAREST: Bulgaria and Romania joined Europe's vast Schengen area of free movement on Sunday, opening up travel by air and sea without border checks after a 13-year wait. A veto by Austria however means the new status will not apply to land routes, after Vienna expressed concerns over a potential influx of asylum seekers. Despite the partial membership, the lifting of controls at the two countries' air and sea borders is of significant symbolic value.

Admission to Schengen is an "important milestone" for Bulgaria and Romania, symbolizing a "question of dignity, of belonging to the European

Union", according to foreign policy analyst Stefan Popescu. "Any Romanian who had to walk down a lane separate from other European citizens felt being treated differently," he told AFP.

Ivan Petrov, a 35-year-old Bulgarian marketing executive who lives in France, said he was enthusiastic about less stressful traveling and the time he would be able to save. "This is a great success for both countries, and a historic moment for the Schengen area — the largest area of free movement in the world," EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said in a statement Saturday. "Together, we are building a stronger, more united Europe for all our citizens."

With Bulgaria and Romania arriving joining Sunday, the Schengen zone will comprise 29 members — 25 of the 27 European Union member states as well as Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. Romania's government said Schengen rules would apply to four seaports and 17 airports, with the country's Otopeni airport near the capital Bucharest serving as the biggest hub for Schengen flights.



SOFIA: Passengers arriving from Berlin receive EU and Bulgarian flags after Bulgaria's official partial entry into the Schengen area at Sofia airport on March 31, 2024. — AFP

More staff including border police and immigration officers will be deployed to airports to "support passengers and detect those who want to take

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Burgan Bank distributes iftar meals

Initiative in collaboration with Kuwait Food Bank as part of Burgan's social responsibility program

KUWAIT: In the spirit of giving that defines the holy month of Ramadan, Burgan Bank collaborated with the Kuwait Food Bank and Relief to distribute Ramadan iftar meals among the fasting community members in several prime locations across Kuwait. This initiative came as part of Burgan's expansive social responsibility program and its active role as an engaged corporate citizen and member of the community.

Hessa Hussain Al-Najadah, Corporate and CSR Communications senior manager at Burgan Bank said: "Ramadan is a reminder that unity and solidarity hold the key to a successful society where everyone is included and catered to. That is why it was very important to include Burgan employees and engage them in this valuable initiative that represents the Bank's culture and values of empathy, compassion, and proactivity. This Ramadan, we were delighted to collaborate with a successful civil society institution such as the Kuwait Food Bank, guaranteeing that our efforts made a real impact where needed."

Mishaal Al-Ansari, Deputy Chairman at Kuwait Food Bank, said: "When we talk about the community, it is very important to remember that it consists of more than individuals. A healthy and balanced community takes into account the impact of corporate citizens, civil society institutions, and government bodies; and it is



Hessa Al-Najadah



Mishaal Al-Ansari

only when all members of the community collaborate can we achieve welfare and prosperity for everyone. We are proud and honored to have collaborated with Burgan Bank, entwinning our resources and passion for positive change, to deliver sustenance, reassurance, and happiness to those in need across Kuwait in Ramadan."

It serves to note that the Ramadan Iftar meals distribution initiative is part of Burgan Bank's annual Ramadan program to give back to the wider community as well as involve its employees in charity and humanitarian work.



KUWAIT: A group photo of Burgan employees during their participation in the Ramadan iftar meals distribution initiative.

Schools grappling with mass absences

KUWAIT: Following the phenomenon of mass absence in many schools across Kuwait, particularly on Thursdays before any occasion, some school administrations have called their students and urged them to attend school. The students were informed that any unexcused absence will result in penalties and grade deductions.

As the last ten days of the holy month began, expectation of higher absence rate prompted sports affairs departments in schools to call students' guardians and asked them for help in ensuring the students to attend the classes and remain committed to school hours.

Sources said the education ministry has been unable to find a solution to this disturbing phenomenon, which students plan over WhatsApp groups. They added that grade deductions and penalties become nearly impossible in case of mass absences, as some schools record over 1,000 absences, and this requires an army of employees to record and keep track of.

Meanwhile, the education community was highly disappointed over the cancellation of online learning after the ministry had announced it would go ahead with the plan on April 1, 7, 8 and began training teachers.

Education activist and coordinator of teaching faculty Abdullah Al-Shareef told Arabic-language media that "teachers have no problem in attending in person, but (deciding on whether or not to hold online classes) was supposed to have been decided some time ago." He said he found it strange that the ministry wasn't able to make the decision sooner.

People with visual impairment face hurdles in political life

KUWAIT: The State of Kuwait is moving steadily towards prosperity, based on the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to honoring all needs of people with visual impairment towards growth, progress and active participation for development of their society. Following the speech delivered by His Highness the Amir during his visit to the Kuwait Blind Association on March 26, state institutions now face a great responsibility to play an important role in supporting people with strong determination to challenge disabilities in various domains, especially educational, cultural, sports, social and recreational.

The electoral process in Kuwait witnessed developments in the parliamentary process, including the candidacy of three visually impaired persons in 1999, a blind candidate in 2013 and another one in 2023 and lastly Ayedh Al-Ajmi, who is deaf-mute and is running in the Fifth Constituency in the upcoming National Assembly elections, to be held on April 4, 2024, before announcing his withdrawal.

Persons with special needs must overcome difficulties when running for the National Assembly elections and voting. They can be supported by providing electoral places equipped for people with special needs and raising awareness about their political rights, as well as the procedures provided to them for running and participating in the electoral process.

Constitutional expert and legal advisor at the Amiri Diwan, Dr Adel Al-Tabtabaie told KUNA that there is no article in the Constitution that prevents a person with disabilities from running in the National Assembly elections. He added that Article 82 of the Constitution indicates that "the conditions that must be met by a member of the National Assembly are that he must be Kuwaiti by origin, be qualified as an elector, not less



Arab Parliament to supervise coming election

KUWAIT: President of the Arab Parliament Adel Al-Asoumi has affirmed that Kuwait's democratic experience is both deep-rooted and inspiring. The State of Kuwait is a democratic example that should be followed in the Arab world, Asoumi said in an interview with Kuwait News Agency, alluding to the effective role of the Kuwaiti MPs during meetings of the Arab Parliament, which plays a pivotal and major role at the level of Arab parliamentary activities.

Asked on supervising the forthcoming parliamentary elections in Kuwait, he said the Arab Parliament

than 30 years of age on the day of the election and be able to read and write Arabic well."

Regarding secret voting on resolutions and draft laws in the National Assembly for the deaf, Dr Al-Tabtabaie said that this could be done by raising hands, in writing or on a computer with the help of a sign language interpreter. Kuwaiti sign language trainer and interpreter Bader Al-Dokhi expressed to KUNA his happiness that people with special needs are attempting to run for elections, hoping for their victory in the future.

As for the role played by the sign language interpreter in front of deaf voters in election campaigns, he said "this role falls on the candidate who must reach out to us to interpret his visions and present his electoral program, especially with regard to supporting the deaf and the special needs." He added "we have major responsibility to convey everything that is said to the deaf correctly and accurately as any error may have consequences for both sides."

He continued that among the ethics of the interpreter is not to express his opinion on any topic related to the deaf during the election campaign and his role is limited to helping express opinion and advice if he is asked to do so. Founder of the Kuwait Society for Hearing Disability, Hamad Al-Marri told KUNA that it is difficult for the deaf to read and write like their normal peers, saying a deaf person "cannot discuss issues during sessions, even in the presence of a sign language interpreter."

He added that each disability has its own characteristics, learning style, tasks, skills and abilities." Vice-President of the World Federation of Deaf Football Jaber Al-Kandari, who is also a coach and expert in Kuwaiti sign language, told KUNA that attempts of deaf-mute people to run for the National Assembly elections is satisfactory and urges others to pay attention to potential and capabilities of this group.

Raising awareness

After His Highness the Amir's instructions to the relevant state institutions to support people with special needs, build the nation and supporting its path to progress and prosperity, their focus in the next stage will be to follow up on the issues of this group, provide their needs, support their activities, provide devices, machines and tools that would help them and provide appropriate job opportunities.

Media also play an important role in encouraging distinguished people with special needs

has been keen on following up on parliamentary events in the Arab and friendly states. The parliament's participation is among its priorities and is in line with its keenness on activating Arab parliamentary diplomacy at various levels, in addition to bolstering partnership with the Arab parliaments.

He indicated that personnel of the Arab parliament, who would partake in observing the polls in Kuwait, would prepare a report about the balloting and refer it to the concerned authorities in the country. He affirmed special significance of the Arab Parliament's participation in supervising the elections in Kuwait, noting that the State of Kuwait is a pivotal and significant state in the joint Arab order.

Kuwait plays a major role in strengthening the Arab order under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, he said. Kuwait has succeeded in bolstering its status at the Arab, regional and international levels and has

"The company has completed many projects and events and achieved unprecedented successes during 2023, which gave us greater motivation to continue to provide various entertainment projects of high quality," he said, pointing out that the company succeeded in implementing several strategic partnerships that were lauded by the public.

Sheikh Mohammed listed Winter Wonderland Kuwait, the largest entertainment project in the country, and the South Sabahiya Park, an integrated recreational facility, as two of the company's achievements. He also pointed to the development and opening of Blajat Beach Phase I, which is the first public beach facility that includes all beach services for visitors.

For 2024, the company is planning several prominent projects, including: phase II of the waterfront, operation of Messila Beach, the development of the Ras Al Ardh Sea Club and the



Dr Adel Al-Tabtabaie



Bader Al-Dokhi



Hamad Al-Marri

through highlighting their success stories locally and regionally in various fields and their confrontation of challenges. The State of Kuwait has achieved many accomplishments on an international level in supporting the rights of persons with special needs, based on its firm approach and keenness for persons with special needs at the legislative and executive levels, and ensuring the active participation of institutions and persons with special needs to empower and integrate them into society.

At an international level, in 1992, the United Nations designated December 3 as International Day for Persons with Disabilities to better understand disability issues and protecting the rights of persons with special needs, in addition to raising awareness to include them in the political, economic and cultural fields. — KUNA

Fact box:

Six visually impaired people have run for a seat in the National Assembly since 1999.

Dr Adel Al-Tabtabaie: There is no article in the Constitution that prevents a person with disabilities from running in the National Assembly elections.

Hamad Al-Marri: A deaf person "cannot discuss issues during sessions, even in the presence of a sign language interpreter."

Bader Al-Dokhi: "(Interpreters) have major responsibility to convey everything that is said to the deaf correctly and accurately as any error may have consequences for both sides."



President of the Arab Parliament Adel Al-Asoumi

mapped out a rational and balanced external policy that has largely contributed to supporting its foreign ties, he added. He lauded Kuwait's parliamentary diplomacy and its effective role in bolstering regional security and stability, particularly through the parliament's effective participation in regional and international events. — KUNA

Hilton Mangaf Park, and working on developing the final concepts for the Khiran Park and the Jahra Entertainment Hall projects.

CEO of TEC, Fadel Al-Dosari, said that the company was able to create more than 600 job opportunities for national cadres, as they received training and qualification through international companies specialized in the field of entertainment, facilities management, security and safety, and more than 500 investment opportunities were provided for small and medium enterprises.

The company's facilities have received more than two million visitors for the year 2023. He added that the most important goals of the company for 2024 are Kuwaitization of all leadership positions in the company, the pursuit of digital transformation, the launch of the customer reward program, and the increase and intensification of training and qualification courses for project employees. — KUNA

News in Brief

No changes in KU seats

KUWAIT: The Supreme Council of Kuwait University has decided not to increase the number of seats allocated to new students in the next academic year. The council approved the allocation of 8,646 seats across all colleges for students enrolling in 2024-2025. Informed sources have revealed to local Arabic-language media that the council had been pushing towards increasing the number of seats in some colleges, especially in the Faculty of Medicine, to fill labor market gaps and give opportunities to high school students who excel academically. Sources added that the proposed increase was expected to go up to 15 seats. However, the council decided against the increase and approved the numbers proposed by the Deanship of Admission and Registration as they are.

New location for camel market

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior has asked Kuwait Municipality to remove the camel market in Kabd area. Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Lieutenant General Salem Al-Nawaf said in a letter addressed to the municipality that the current location of the camel market located had been chosen by the municipality without getting approval from the Ministry of Interior, according to local media with access to the letter. Nawaf said the large vehicles used to offload and onload camels has been disrupting traffic in the area. He added that police stations have many complaints regarding the placement of equipment needed for the market without prior approval. Nawaf said it was in the public's interest for the municipality to find a new location for the market in coordination with the interior ministry and other authorities.

Municipality urges people to vote

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality has launched a campaign Saturday to encourage people to vote in the coming election. The campaign called "Your Voice is the Future of a Nation" aims to invite citizens to actively participate in the National Assembly elections (Ummah 2024). The municipality added in a press release that the campaign came in cooperation with the Ministry of Information to urge citizens to participate in the polling day scheduled for Thursday, April 4, 2024. The municipality displayed the campaign announcement on the largest advertisement screen on its building, in addition to promoting it through billboards across all streets of the country's governorates. — KUNA

TEC achieves record success in 2024: Officials

KUWAIT: The Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Touristic Enterprises Company, Sheikh Mohammed Al-Sabah, said that the company has worked hard to achieve the vision of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in terms of developing the tourism and entertainment sector. The remarks came in a speech by Sheikh Mohammed on Sunday during the general assembly of the Touristic Enterprises Company for the fiscal year ending on December 31, 2023, with an attendance rate of 100 percent.



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah is seen with officials during his visit to the Grand Mosque on Saturday. — KUNA photos



KUWAIT: Waleed Al-Khashti and Meshal Al-Ansari are seen with Zain and Kuwait Food Bank teams.

Zain volunteers deliver iftar meals.

Zain delivers meals, supplies to underprivileged communities

Zain partners with Kuwait food bank, Grand Mosque in Kuwait's biggest Ramadan community program

KUWAIT: Zain continues to serve underprivileged communities in the last 10 days of the Holy Month of Ramadan by delivering food supplies (Machla boxes) and iftar meals to fasting individuals. The ongoing initiatives came in strategic partnership with the Kuwait Food Bank under Zain's annual social campaign, Zain Alshuhoor.

Zain recently held a special visit to the Fish Market in Sharq to share the blessings of the Holy Month with fasting individuals by delivering iftar meals. The visit was joined by Zain Kuwait Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti, Kuwait Food Bank Vice-Chairman Meshal Al-Ansari, Zain and Food Bank officials, and members of the Zain Alshuhoor volunteer team.

Zain's team also paid a visit to the Kuwait Food Bank's Distribution Center in Sulaibiya to deliver Machla boxes (food supplies) to underprivileged families registered with the bank. The step was an extension to the initiative Zain launched before the arrival of the Holy Month of secure essential food needs for underprivileged communities.

The iftar meals initiative, which comes back in its 17th year, 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 underprivileged families and individuals.

Zain also serves daily meals at the Grand Mosque, another strategic partner during Ramadan, 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, including the Kuwait Food Bank, 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's team delivers food supplies to underprivileged families.



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah receives Saudi Ambassador Prince Sultan bin Saad bin Khaled Al-Saud. — KUNA photos



Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah receives UAE Ambassador Dr Matar Hamed Al-Neyadi.



Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah meets with Bahraini Ambassador Salah Ali Al-Malki.

Kuwaiti Defense Minister, GCC envoys discuss deeper cooperation

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Acting Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah received, Sunday, Ambassadors from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Bahrain to deepen Gulf col-

laborative efforts. In a press statement, the Ministry of Defense said Sheikh Fahad Al-Sabah met with Saudi Ambassador Prince Sultan bin Saad bin Khaled Al-Saud, UAE Ambassador Dr Matar Hamed Al-Neyadi, and Bahrain Ambassador Salah Ali Al-Malki at

Bayan Palace. During the meetings, the minister and the ambassadors discussed many topics including issues regarding ways to enrich relations between Gulf Cooperation countries, and other regional and global issues. — KUNA

Local

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Ramadan Health Tips

Healthier food and drink choices for diabetics

At suhoor (predawn meal)

It's important not to skip the suhoor meal, which is just before dawn. High fibre starchy foods like high fiber cereals or oats, buckwheat, bulgur wheat or brown or wild rice are more slowly absorbed and have a low glycaemic index. Also be mindful of portion sizes of carbohydrate containing foods. These will help you to manage your blood sugar levels in the healthy target range while you're fasting. Lentils (dal), chickpeas and beans are good sources of protein and are also high in fiber. Pair them with fruit and vegetables as this can help prevent constipation and keep your heart healthy. Before starting the day's fast, you should drink enough sugar-free and decaffeinated fluids to avoid being dehydrated during the day.

At iftar meal (breaking of fast)

Traditionally the fast may be broken with dates, these are high in fiber but are rich source of carbohydrates. Two large dates can provide around 20g of carbohydrates, which is about the same as a medium slice of bread. Try to limit the number of dates to one to open the fast or open the fast with a glass of water. Try to rehydrate with sugar-free fluids – water is the best option. Avoid sugary fizzy drinks or fruit juices as these will raise your blood sugar and could make you feel thirstier. Milk drinks such as lassi or laban are a good source of protein and calcium, but unsweetened versions are the healthier option.

It can be tempting to snack on sweet treats, especially if family or friends are sharing them. Treats such as baklava or barfi can be high in fat and sugar. Only a small amount can make quite an impact on pushing up your blood sugars. Try to only have fried and oily foods in moderation as eating them too frequently could lead to unintentional weight gain through Ramadan. These foods can also affect your heart health as they tend to be higher in certain saturated fats and salt which could increase your blood cholesterol and blood pressure above healthy levels.

Kuwait Heritage



KUWAIT: A man makes Arabic coffee as he sits inside a tent in 1930s Kuwait. — Photo provided by Mahmoud Zakaria, heritage researcher at the ministry of information.

Active lifestyle within reach in Kuwait

Malls, exercise rooms in workplaces provide opportunities to be active

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Due to the harsh hot climate of Kuwait that persists for most of the year, it's commonly assumed that opportunities for adopting an active lifestyle are very limited. However, Sarah Dashti, a fitness coach, argues against this point. With Kuwait now ranking 15th globally in obesity rates, according to the Global Obesity Observatory, Dashti highlighted that people in the country are increasingly recognizing the importance of regular sports participation. This awareness is reflected in the growing adoption of amenities such as public parks, gyms, walking areas, and even online fitness classes, she added.

Dashti stressed that engaging in sports is not just a luxury but is essential for our well-being and physical health. "We simply need to keep exercising to be able to move more easily in our daily lives, especially as we get older," she emphasized. Since our muscles age over time, enhanced mobility will improve flexibility, allowing us to gain greater independence in daily activities. "That's when we'll feel fortunate to go to the bathroom or get out of bed independently, without requiring help from anyone," she said.

Dashti advises exercising three times a week, for half an hour each session, as the ideal routine. She highlighted the diverse range of free exercise opportunities available in Kuwait to suit various interests and goals. For those who enjoy outdoor activities like

walking or running in the fresh air breeze, she suggests starting at 5 am along the walking areas spread across multiple areas of the country, before the sun becomes too intense. "I personally prefer this outdoor exercise because it boosts my mental well-being and promotes positive thinking," she noted.

Alternatively, she recommended the dedicated walking paths found in most indoor modern malls in the city, for those who cannot wake up so early. Since walking alone is not a good enough form of exercise, Dashti noted the importance of adopting resistance training for building strength, which can often be done in public parks equipped with fitness machines along walking paths. Examples include Boulevard and Mishref Oasis Walk and Playground, and most parks in Kuwait.

Additionally, she mentioned the variety of fitness gyms available at different price points to suit various budgets, along with the growth of online fitness classes for added convenience. Dashti even commended the government for proactive efforts in fostering change and advancing positive physical well-being. She cited the recent Kuwait Sports Day event, attended by HH the Prime Minister, Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. "Just having such examples there can certainly inspire and motivate people," she said.

For further progress, Dashti suggested extending this approach to workplaces, by integrating training



Fitness coach Sarah Dashti

rooms into them, particularly for those whose employees are required to stay for extended periods. A 20-minute break for exercise would be beneficial for their busy daily life routines.



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KUWAIT: Volunteers distribute meals to people at the banquet held in Souq Al-Mubarakiya. — KUNA photos



'Longest' iftar banquet connects Muslim communities

KUWAIT: Al-Najat Charity Society has collaborated with a Kuwaiti food blogger to provide iftar meals for 1,500 people at Souq Al-Mubarakiya on Saturday. The event was held in collaboration with the ministries of interior and social affairs, as well as Kuwait Municipality and several volunteers.

The blogger, who advertised the event on his social media, said it was the "longest iftar banquet to be held in Kuwait". Speaking to KUNA on the sidelines of the banquet, Abdullah Al-Shehab, Al-Najat official, said the society is keen on continuing its activities inside the country aiming to strengthen bonds among Muslim communities through the Islam Presentation Committee (IPC).

It is a chance to meet the needs of communities and show the country's civilized image in terms of embracing all expats, he said. The society has handed out 1.8 million iftar meals, including 46,000 inside Kuwait, since the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan, he noted.

Mohammad Al-Kandari, head of IPC public relations, said 382 people converted to Islam since the start of Ramadan, thanks to the committee's services presented in 14 languages. The aim of iftar campaign is to reach out to Muslim communities in Kuwait and help educate them about the teachings of Islam, he stated, referring to the distribution of pamphlets and publications with different languages during the iftar banquets.



People sit at the iftar table.



King Charles attends Easter Sunday church service

Istanbul top prize as Turkey votes in local polls

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A Christian priest joins Muslims to take part in a prayer during a rally marking the 48th anniversary of Land Day, in the town of Deir Hanna in the northern Galilee region on March 30, 2024.

Palestinians call for end to Gaza war on Land Day

Protestors denounce genocide: 'This flesh that burns in Gaza is ours'

DEIR HANNA: Hundreds of thousands of Palestinian citizens of the Zionist entity rallied Friday for an end to the Gaza war as they marked Land Day, an annual commemoration of a deadly 1976 crackdown on protests against Zionist land seizures. The protesters, led by Arab members of the Zionist entity's parliament, marched through the northern town of Deir Hanna waving Palestinian flags and carrying banners reading: "Stop the war on Gaza".

Most of the demonstrators were Arab citizens of the Zionist entity -- Palestinians who evaded displacement during the 1948 war that led to the Zionist entity's creation and who, with their descendants, now constitute around 21 percent of its population. A smaller contingent of Jewish citizens of the Zionist entity joined the rally, some carrying signs reading: "Jews and Arabs refuse to be enemies".

Land Day commemorates protests and a strike on March 30, 1976 against a decision by the Zionist authorities to seize large swathes of land in the northern Galilee region. Zionist police fired at demonstrators, killing six people, and the government plan was subsequently dropped.

"On this day 48 years ago, our people thwarted the project to confiscate our lands with their protests... and they embodied an important and prominent milestone in history," Deir Hanna town council chief Saeed Hussein said in a speech in its main square. "48 years have passed, yet the machine of death and displacement persists... the attempt to



A woman holding a placard chants slogans during a rally marking the 48th anniversary of Land Day, in the town of Deir Hanna in the northern Galilee region on March 30, 2024.

erase our national identity and seize our lands continues." The Zionist entity's Arab citizens suffer higher rates of unemployment, poverty and crime than their Jewish peers. Community leader and former lawmaker Mohammed Barakeh said Arabs were still facing "displacement and repression".

"This flesh that burns in Gaza is ours and the women murdered in Gaza are our sisters," he said, denouncing the genocide in the Palestinian territory. Since war broke out nearly six months ago, the Zionist entity's Arab citizens say they have experienced growing hostility from the



People deploy a banner and wave Palestinian national flags during a rally marking the 48th anniversary of Land Day, in the town of Deir Hanna in the northern Galilee region on March 30, 2024. -AFP photos

government and from other Zionists.

Eyal, a 33-year-old Jewish activist, said he joined the rally in solidarity with Arabs. "We demand an end to the massacres by the Zionist government in Gaza and an end to the war on Gaza," he said, asking to be identified by his first name only. — AFP



AMMAN: Jordanians chant slogans during a demonstration near the Embassy of the Zionist entity in Amman on March 28, 2024. — AFP photos

Calls for more Jordan protests against Gaza war

AMMAN: Activists in Jordan called for further protests after days of demonstrations against the Zionist military assault on Gaza and Jordan's peace treaty with the Zionist entity that has brought hundreds of thousands onto the streets. Jordan, where nearly half the population is of Palestinian origin, has seen regular rallies in Amman and elsewhere in solidarity

with Gaza since the Zionist military onslaught. Recent protests have seen rare clashes between demonstrators and security forces in the capital and in Jordan's largest Palestinian refugee camp. The group Jordanian Youth Gathering urged people to return later Sunday to the Zionist entity's embassy in Amman "to support the resistance in Gaza and demand the cancellation of the Jordanian Zionist peace treaty and cut all ties with the Zionist entity".

In 1994, Jordan became the second Arab country, after Egypt in 1979, to sign a peace treaty with the Zionist entity. "No to a Zionist embassy on Jordanian territory", read one banner at Saturday's embassy protest, where people have gathered every evening since the holy Muslim month of Ramadan began

more than two weeks ago.

Security forces said on Sunday they had arrested a number of protesters 20 kilometers (12 miles) north of Amman at the Beqaa refugee camp. Public security spokesman Amer Al-Sartaawi said in a statement a "number of rioters" were arrested after "acts of rioting and vandalism, setting fires, and hurling stones at vehicles on the public road".

Beqaa camp, home to more than 100,000 Palestinians, is one of six camps set up to house the influx of refugees fleeing the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the Naksa of 1967. Jordan has 2.2 million people who have been registered by UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees. Many have been granted Jordanian citizenship. — AFP



Hundreds of thousands gather for London pro-Palestine rally

LONDON: Hundreds of thousands of pro-Palestinian protesters rallied in London on Saturday, in the latest demonstration in the British capital demanding a ceasefire in Gaza and more aid for the war-ravaged territory.

The event, organized by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, began at Russell Square in the city center before attendees marched to Trafalgar Square for a mid-afternoon rally. A smaller number of demonstrators also turned out for a counter-protest in support of the Zionist entity, with lines of police separating the two gatherings. London has seen numerous large-scale pro-Palestine protests since the Zionist entity launched its assault on October 7, as well as smaller pro-Zionist counter-demonstrations. Sally Worgan, 65, a retired social worker, had travelled from Gloucestershire in western England to attend. "I think it's important for the Palestinian people to know that people do support them, that they're not just on their own," she told AFP.

"We will keep marching," Ben Jamal, one of the organizers, told Sky News on Saturday, adding attendees wanted "a permanent ceasefire" and more aid to be delivered to Palestinian in Gaza. "We already know that 70 percent of the British public according to opinion polls support the demands that we're making."

The Met said in the build-up to Saturday that it had "a robust policing plan in place", including requiring marchers to keep to a pre-approved route and disperse by 5:00 pm (1700 GMT). Deputy Assistant Commissioner Andy Valentine, who oversaw the policing operation, said it had been an "extremely busy" day, with several other events taking place across the capital. — AFP

International

Istanbul top prize as Turkey votes in local polls

This election is against the backdrop of raging inflation and massive devaluation

ISTANBUL: Turks were voting on Sunday in municipal elections, with all eyes on Istanbul, the national "jewel" that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan hopes to pry away from the opposition. The election is taking place against the backdrop of raging inflation and massive devaluation, with the uncertainty weighing down on many voters. AFP correspondents reported. "Everyone is worried about the day to day," said Guler Kaya at an Istanbul polling station.

"The crisis is swallowing up the middle class, we have had to change all our habits," said the 43-year-old. "If Erdogan wins, it will get even worse," she added. In the capital Ankara, Meliha Sonmez sounded a warning as she prepared to vote: "This election is not just municipal." "If Erdogan loses the ballot, he will be weakened," said the retired woman in her 60s who lost 32 relatives in the devastating February 2023 earthquake in Hatay.

Erdogan may not be a candidate in the municipal vote, but he has dominated the campaign. His road to power in Turkey began in Istanbul when he was elected mayor of the mythic city straddling Europe and Asia in 1994. His allies held the city until five years ago, when Ekrem Imamoglu of the secular Republican People's Party (CHP) wrested control.

As soon as Erdogan clinched re-election as president last May—he has held the position since 2014—he launched the battle to reclaim the city of 16 million people. "Istanbul is the jewel, the treasure and the apple of our country's eye," the 70-year-old leader said at a recent rally in the city. "Whoever wins Istanbul, wins Turkey," Erman Bakirci, a pollster from Konda Research and Consultancy, recalled Erdogan once saying.

After casting his vote with his wife and two sons in Istanbul around midday Sunday, Imamoglu emerged

to applauding chanting "Everything will be fine", his 2019 election slogan. "I hope that... the will of the ballot box will be expressed without harm to anyone, whatever the result is, whoever our citizens voted for," Imamoglu said in the garden of a school polling station. "Today is an emotional day for me," he said, adding that he was trying to ensure "equality without prioritizing partisanship". "We are doing our best to ensure that young people, women and mothers have the best possible life," he said. Armed clashes were reported from a village in Turkey's Kurdish-majority southeast, leaving one dead and 12 wounded, a local official told AFP.

More than a mayor's race

The Turkish president has named former environment minister Murat Kurum as his candidate for Istanbul mayor. The 2019 vote was controversially annulled, but Imamoglu won the re-run vote by an even greater margin, which turned him into an instant hero for Turkey's notoriously fractured opposition and a formidable foe for Erdogan. If Imamoglu manages to retain the Istanbul mayor's seat, he'll likely be the main challenger to the ruling party in the next presidential elections, set for 2028.

The election is being held with inflation at a whopping 67 percent and with a massive devaluation of the lira, which slid from 19 to a dollar to 31 to a dollar in one year. Analysts say this could work in favor of the opposition. Erdogan threw all his energy into campaigning for his candidate, repeatedly telling rallies that Imamoglu, whose name he never mentions, is a "part-time mayor" consumed by presidential ambitions. Imamoglu focused his campaign on local issues and defended his achievements in office. "Every vote you give to the CHP will mean more



ISTANBUL: Picture shows Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (center) and his wife Emine Erdogan (left) casting their ballots in Istanbul. — AFP

metros, creches, green spaces, social benefits and investment," he promised ahead of the vote.

Fractured opposition

Some 61 million voters are picking mayors across Turkey's 81 provinces, as well as provincial council members and other local officials. The opposition has

been fractured ahead of the polls, in contrast with the local elections five years ago. This time around the main opposition party, the social democrat CHP, has failed to rally support behind a single candidate. Polls opened at 0400 GMT in the east of the country and were due to close at 1400 GMT in the west, including Istanbul. The first estimates are expected to

Russia arrests three in Dagestan anti-terror operation

MOSCOW: Russian authorities on Sunday arrested three people in the North Caucasus republic of Dagestan on charges of planning terrorist attacks, following a deadly attack on a concert hall near Moscow. The arrests were made during an operation in Dagestan's capital Makhachkala and in the town of Kaspiysk, around 10 kilometers to the south, the Russian National Anti-Terrorist Committee said in a statement.

"Three criminals planning to commit a series of terrorist crimes have been arrested," the statement added. The announcement comes more than a week after an attack on the Crocus City Hall in Moscow's outskirts killed at least 144 people and injured 551.

The Islamic State group (IS) has claimed the attack, while Russian authorities insist Ukraine is responsible. An anonymous security source quoted by the RIA Novosti news agency said two suspects were "trapped" in their flat in Kaspiysk before being apprehended.

"An automatic weapon and its ammunition, as well as a ready-to-use improvised explosive device, were found during the search of the scene of the arrests,"



MOSCOW: Ambassadors and representatives of diplomatic missions accredited in Russia release white balloons as they attend a flower laying ceremony at the memorial in memory of the victims of the terrorist attack at the Crocus City Hall concert venue a week after the attack in Krasnogorsk. — AFP

the committee said, adding that the operation had not caused any casualties.

Twelve people were arrested following the concert hall attack, including the four alleged assailants, who were originally from Tajikistan, a former

Soviet republic in Central Asia. On Friday evening, the Russian security services also announced that they had arrested three "nationals of a Central Asian country" who were planning a bomb attack in southwestern Russia.—AFP

Russian strikes kill one in Ukraine's Lviv region: Governor

KYIV: Overnight Russian strikes on Ukraine's Lviv region killed a man, its governor said on Sunday, as President Volodymyr Zelensky urged his people to endure during their third Easter at war. Ukraine is on the back foot as the Russian invasion grinds into its third year, suffering ammunition shortages on the front line and pleading for Western support to fend off relentless aerial attacks. Russian cruise missiles targeted critical infrastructure in the western Lviv region and "one man died as a result of the attack", governor Maksym Kozytsky wrote on Telegram.

"There may still be people under the rubble" that rescuers were combing through, he said, adding that firefighters had extinguished a blaze that broke out at an administrative building damaged in the raid. National energy operator Ukrenergo said Russia also targeted high-voltage facilities in the south, forcing emergency shutdowns in the Black Sea city of Odesa and nearby areas.

"There is no night or day when Russian terror does not try to break our lives," Zelensky wrote in an Easter Sunday message to Ukrainians on social media, after the air force reported downing nine missiles and nine drones overnight.—AFP

Pope pleads for peace on Easter...

Continued from Page 1

a ceasefire in Gaza, calling for greater aid deliveries to the devastated territory and the release of captives. The civilian population is "now at the limit of its endurance", he said, lamenting the impact on children especially. "Let us not allow the strengthening winds of war to blow on Europe and the Mediterranean. Let us not yield to the logic of weapons and rearmament," he added. The pope proposed a "general exchange of all prisoners between Russia and Ukraine" as the war between the two countries grinds through its third year.

Francis also urged world leaders to "spare no efforts in combatting the scourge of human trafficking" to free its victims. Moments before the blessing, Francis passed through the adoring crowd on his "popemobile" as pilgrims shouted "Long live the pope!", waved flags and

strained to take pictures.

The pope on Saturday presided over the Easter Vigil at the Vatican in front of some 6,000 people from around the world, a day after his last-minute cancellation at a major Good Friday procession revived questions about his health. He delivered a 10-minute homily in Italian, speaking without any undue difficulty and condemning "the walls of selfishness and indifference" in the world. At the end of the two-and-a-half-hour service he showed little sign of fatigue, taking time to greet and bless some of the worshippers.

In a brief statement Friday, the Vatican had said that "to preserve his health ahead of tomorrow's vigil and the Easter Sunday mass, Pope Francis will this evening follow the Way of the Cross at the Colosseum from the Santa Marta Residence", where he lives. The last-minute decision raised questions about how long Francis can continue to lead the Catholic Church. A Vatican source told AFP on Friday there was "no particular concern" about his health and the decision to pull out had been "simply a measure of caution". — AFP

last 10 days and nights of Ramadan, especially during the nights in which Laylatul-Qadr, or the Night of Power or the Night of (Empowering) Decree, is anticipated to occur.

Aisha (RA) narrated, "I asked the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) 'O Messenger of Allah, if I know which night is Laylatul-Qadr, what should I say (in supplication) in it?'" The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) replied, "Say: 'O Allah, You are Pardon, You love to pardon, so pardon me.'" (Ibn Al-Qayyim rated it as authentic in A'laam Al-Muwaqqiqeen 4/ 249)

In conclusion, the last 10 days and nights of Ramadan hold immense spiritual significance, and Muslims are encouraged to make the most of this time. It is an opportunity to seek forgiveness and increase spiritual connection with the Majestic Allah. The Night of Power or (Empowering) Decree, which is anticipated in any of the odd nights that fall in the last 10 nights of Ramadan, is a particularly significant event, and worshipping Almighty Allah on this night can earn a person rewards equivalent to worshipping for more than 83 years.

Al-Hasan Al-Basry (may Allah have mercy on him) said, translated as: "Faith or belief is not by wishful thinking, nor by outward appearance, but rather, it is what settles in the heart and is proven by action." (Mutafarriqaat by Al-Albani # 272) — Courtesy of Kuwaiti Society for Cultural Dialogue

Zionists pummel Gaza as US OKs...

Continued from Page 1

the Zionist entity in recent days. The Wall Street Journal reported, citing unnamed officials.

As a Zionist siege has deepened the humanitarian crisis, an aid delivery inside Gaza descended into deadly chaos with shots fired and a stampede before dawn on Saturday. At least five people were killed and dozens wounded, according to a Red Crescent paramedic. To help alleviate the suffering of Gaza's 2.4 million people, another aid ship was sailing from the Mediterranean island-nation of Cyprus to bring 400 tons of food relief, as part of a small flotilla.

Foreign powers have ramped up aid airdrops, although UN agencies and charities warn this falls far short of the dire need. Several people have died in stampedes or drowned trying to retrieve packages from the sea. At least 75 people were killed overnight in new Zionist bombardment and ground combat, most of them women and children, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-ruled territory.

The Zionist entity has killed at least 32,782 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the Gaza health ministry. Under intense pressure to bring captives home, Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Net-

anyahu on Friday approved a new round of ceasefire talks to take place in Doha and Cairo. Egyptian TV station Al-Qahera, which is close to the country's intelligence services, said that the talks would resume in Cairo on Sunday.

An anchor said on Saturday that "an Egyptian security source confirmed to Al-Qahera News the resumption of negotiations on a truce between (the Zionist entity) and Hamas in the Egyptian capital Cairo tomorrow". Netanyahu is under pressure from the captives' relatives and supporters, including at mass rallies Saturday night in Tel Aviv, where police used water cannons against protesters who lit fires and blocked highways.

In Gaza, vast areas of which have been reduced to a rubble-strewn wasteland, heavy fighting has rocked areas around several Gaza hospitals. The Gaza health ministry said 107 patients remained inside Al-Shifa Hospital, including 30 with disabilities, and that the army had stopped attempts to evacuate them.

Zionist military operations were also ongoing at two hospitals in the southern city of Khan Yunis — at Nasser Hospital, according to the Hamas government press office, and at Al-Amal Hospital, according to the Red Crescent. The UN World Health Organization warned that Gaza now has just 10 "minimally functioning" hospitals, down from 36 before the war. WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that 9,000 patients need to leave Gaza for "lifesaving health services, including treatment for cancer, injuries from bombardments, kidney dialysis and other chronic conditions". — AFP

their European neighbors, feel left out. Earlier this month, one of Romania's main road transport unions the UNTRR called for "urgent measures" to get full Schengen integration, deploring the huge financial losses caused by the long waits. "Romanian hauliers have lost billions of euros every year, just because of long waiting times at borders," secretary general Radu Dinescu said.

According to the union, truckers usually wait eight to 16 hours at the border with Hungary, and from 20 to 30 hours at the Bulgarian border, with peaks of three days. Bulgarian businesses have also voiced their anger over the slow progress. "Only three percent of Bulgarian goods are transported by air and sea, the remaining 97 percent by land," said Vasil Velev, president of the Bulgarian Industrial Capital Association (BICA). "So we're at three percent in Schengen and we don't know when we'll be there with the other 97 percent," he told AFP.—AFP

The last 10 days and nights of...

Continued from Page 1

Messenger (PBUH) said, "Every person will be in the shade of his charity until judgment is executed between the people." (Al-Albani rated it as authentic in Sahih At-Targheeb # 872). It should be borne in mind that among the harrowing and terrible events that will unfold on Judgment Day is the sun drawing closer to the people until it is a mile's distance away.

Charity is among the things that will help wipe away your sins. Muadh bin Jabal (RA) narrated that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said in a long hadith: "Charity extinguishes sin as water extinguishes fire." (Al-Albani rated it as authentic in Sahih At-Tirmidhi # 2, 616) To give generously before Ramadan comes to an end will help provide relief to people suffering in various ways. This is one of the reasons as to why for one's fast to be accepted, he has to give zakat al-fitr.

As dua (supplication) is the essence of worship, true and sincere believers should always supplicate to Almighty Allah to accept their good deeds. Dua becomes more essential and meritorious during the

International

King Charles attends Easter Sunday church service

Most high-profile public appearance since revealing cancer diagnosis

WINDSOR: Britain's King Charles III attended an Easter church service on Sunday, in his most high-profile public appearance since revealing a cancer diagnosis earlier this year. Charles and his wife, Queen Camilla, arrived by car for the hour-long late morning service at St George's Chapel within the grounds of Windsor Castle, west of London.

The 75-year-old, dressed in a suit and light blue tie, smiled and waved to crowds -- who had queued up for hours for a glimpse of the ailing monarch -- before he entered the chapel. Leaving the service, Charles and Camilla greeted some of the well-wishers lined up outside, shaking hands and briefly chatting to some in the crowds. Attending the annual religious ceremony is a long-standing annual tradition for the royals, with other family members in attendance Sunday.

But heir-to-the-throne Prince William and his wife Catherine were notable absentees this year, as the 42-year-old Princess of Wales receives treatment following her own cancer diagnosis which was revealed just last week. The situation represents an unprecedented crisis in modern times for the monarchy, as two of its most senior members simultaneously fight serious illness.

Charles was just 17 months into his long-awaited reign when Buckingham Palace announced in early February that he had cancer and would be pausing all public-facing engagements as he commenced

treatment. He had been admitted for surgery for a benign prostate condition in January but was subsequently diagnosed with an unrelated cancer. The type of cancer has not been disclosed.

The king has been continuing with behind-the-scenes work and holding some in-person meetings and increasingly attending official events. This week he released a pre-recorded Easter audio message -- broadcast in his absence at a Maundy Thursday service in Worcester Cathedral, central England -- stressing the importance of acts of friendship.

The monarch was also photographed receiving community and faith leaders at Buckingham Palace in central London on Tuesday. Meanwhile last week, photos showed him meeting diplomats at the palace, as well as veterans of the Korean War, at two separate engagements.

Charles said in a statement earlier this month that he would continue to serve "to the best of my ability", and he had been "deeply touched" by people's wishes for his health. He praised Kate, as she is widely known, for her bravery last week by revealing in a video message that she was undergoing chemotherapy.

She was last seen at a public engagement on December 25, then underwent abdominal surgery in January, after which cancer was found. Her Kensington Palace office said at the time that she was not expected to be ready to return to public duties until after Easter. — AFP



WINDSOR: Britain's King Charles III (2nd R) and Britain's Queen Camilla (R) arrive at St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, to attend the Easter Matins Service, on March 31, 2024. — AFP

News in Brief

Bones of missing toddler found in France

PARIS: French investigators have found and identified the "bones" of a toddler whose disappearance last summer in a tiny village in the French Alps shocked the nation, a prosecutor said Sunday. Emile, two-and-a-half years old, was staying with his grandparents for the first day of the summer holidays when he vanished on July 8 last year. Two neighbors last saw him in the late afternoon walking alone on a street in Le Vernet, at an altitude of 1,200 meters (4,000 feet). "On Saturday, the police was informed of the discovery of bones near the hamlet of Le Vernet," prosecutor Jean-Luc Blachon said. Genetic testing allowed them "to conclude on Sunday that they were the bones of the child Emile," he added. — AFP

Boar head outside French mosque

STRASBOURG: France's Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin has slammed "unacceptable acts" against the Muslim community after a boar head was found near a mosque in the east of the country. A prosecutor said a probe into "incitement to racial hatred" had been opened after worshippers at a mosque in the village of Contrexeville in the Vosges region discovered the animal's head on Friday. Darmanin late Saturday said that two other mosques in northern France had also been "degraded". "This weekend mosques in Valenciennes and Fresnes-sur-Escaut were degraded. A mosque in the Vosges was also targeted. I firmly condemn these unacceptable acts against our Muslim compatriots," he said on X. — AFP

France protects thousands of churches

PARIS: France's Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin on Sunday said 13,500 police and anti-terror soldiers had been deployed outside 4,350 churches to protect them against any "terrorism" as they celebrated Easter. "Law enforcement forces are present everywhere nationwide from Good Friday to Easter Monday to protect services in an extremely difficult context in which terrorism could hit," he said. "There are 13,500 police officers, gendarmes and (anti-terror) military personnel at 4,350 Christian places of worship, Catholic and Protestant," he added. France has raised its security alert to the highest level after an attack claimed by the Islamic State jihadist group at a concert hall in the Russian capital on March 22 claimed 144 lives. — AFP



NEW YORK: People walk past a pile of garbage bags in the Williamsburg neighborhood of the Brooklyn borough of New York on March 26, 2024.



A woman walks past a pile of garbage bags in the Manhattan borough of New York on March 19, 2024. — AFP Photos

NY 'trash revolution' targets waste, rats feasting on it

NEW YORK: New York City is iconic for its yellow taxis, pizza slices, bright lights on Broadway and its rats. Mountains of black garbage bags line cramped city sidewalks, a feast for the millions of rodents who call New York home. But such unsanitary eyesores could soon be a remnant of the city's past, with local authorities launching a "trash revolution" to clean up the streets.

Since the beginning of March more than 200,000 food-selling businesses have been required to use hard-lidded bins to store the millions of tons of garbage they produce annually. By 2026 residential buildings will also be required to use such containers, a plan inspired by the approach used in cities including Barcelona, Madrid and Buenos Aires. A pilot program is underway in Manhattan's northern Harlem neighborhood. The city will eventually lose some 150,000 parking spaces — an eternal sore spot for many New Yorkers — as a result of the new container rollout, but advocates say any protest might be diluted by the pleasing results of the clean-up.

"It's a change for me," said Ron James, a Harlem resident. "I come in at night, and a lot of times I have to walk in the streets to avoid the rats walking on the sidewalk. Now, he added, "I'm barely seeing rats on the streets."

Another resident, Maxwell Rodriguez, said he's grateful his community has stopped getting fined when garbage bags end up in the street. The hard-lidded containers should also dissuade human scavengers, who often rip open plastic bags

while searching for bottles or cans to sell for cash. The city of 8.5 million people and the millions of tourists who visit each year produce some 20 million tons of trash a day, more than half of it from businesses, according to City Council figures.

27 miles of trash

If a day's trash bags were lined up, they would reach 27 miles (43 kilometers), five miles more than the perimeter of Manhattan island, the council said. Businesses use a private waste-collection system, while the nearly 10,000 employees of the city's sanitation department deal with trash from residences, schools and hospitals.

New York is one of the most densely occupied cities on the planet — particularly Manhattan, whose 1.7 million inhabitants mostly live in high-rise buildings with no space in between. Finding room for large containers that can accommodate the buying habits of a consumption-crazed society, accustomed to using and then quickly discarding what they buy, is a complex challenge.

It is a "big problem," said Steven Cohen, a professor of environmental and public affairs at Columbia University. Practically, the only place containers can be placed is on sidewalks, intruding on the space used by pedestrians, or in streets, further complicating traffic. In some blocks, the containers will take up a full one-fourth of sidewalk space, experts estimate.

The city will have to introduce specially adapted trucks to lift and remove



A man walks past containers dedicated to garbage bags in the Manhattan borough of New York on March 19, 2024.

the new containers. At present, that work is done by hand, one bag at a time — a demanding physical job that takes a toll on sanitation employees. "These workers "deserve a solution that protects their bodies," said city sanitation commissioner Jessica Tisch, just as "every New Yorker deserves a solution that cleans their streets."

Limited recycling

Since the closure of the world's largest landfill — in the New York borough of Staten Island, in 2001 — the city's trash has ended up in a network of waste-to-energy facilities or landfills in other states as far distant as South Carolina, more than 700 miles away. "Nobody likes to be near a waste transfer station," said Columbia's Cohen, a specialist in sustainability.

But he sees hope in the mountains of trash. He believes a paradigm shift, aided by artificial intelligence, can turn waste into a major new energy source. At present, he adds, less than 10 percent of all trash is recycled.

With less than three percent of organic waste currently being recycled, the city has begun a plan to provide special compost containers — which will become mandatory starting next year. Cohen said all food waste will be recycled, either turned into compost or converted by a so-called anaerobic digester into methane or nitrogen fertilizer.

It will take time for people to get used to the new approach, he said. "Any change this big, with a city of this size, will take several years before it's really seen," he said. "But I think it's going to happen." — AFP

Mayor killed in Mexico region plagued by organized crime

MEXICO CITY: A mayor was shot dead at a restaurant in Mexico on Saturday, the regional prosecutor's office said, the latest politically related killing in the country plagued by violence and organized crime.

Guillermo Torres, 39, and his 14-year-old son were attacked at a restaurant in Morelia, the capital of western Michoacan state, the prosecutor's office said in a statement. His son survived. He was elected mayor of Michoacan's Churumuco municipality as a member of the Institutional Revolutionary Party in 2022, but recently quit the party and publicly voiced sympathy for the ruling Morena, according to local media.

Torres is the latest politician to be murdered in Mexico in the run-up to the presidential elections on June 2, in which 20,000 local and federal positions and the entire Congress will be voted on. Two mayoral candidates were murdered on February 26: Miguel Angel Zavala Reyes and Armando Perez Luna of the

Morena and National Action Party, respectively.

Between June 4, 2023, and March 26 this year, 50 people have been murdered in "episodes of electoral violence", 26 of them aiming for popular seats, according to a report by the Laboratorio Electoral think tank. Michoacan state, Mexico's main avocado-producing region, is the scene of constant fighting between organized crime groups, including the powerful Jalisco New Generation Cartel.

In February, four military personnel were killed and nine others injured when their military patrol came under attack with explosives while tracking down a criminal group. Killings and abductions are daily occurrences in Mexico, where nearly 450,000 people have been murdered since 2006 in a spiral of drug-related violence, according to official data.

Three arrested

Meanwhile, Mexican authorities have arrested three suspects in the murder of an eight-year-old girl, after an outraged mob in the tourist town of Taxco lynched a woman accused in the crime. A man and a minor were arrested on Saturday "for the crime of femicide", Guerrero state prosecutors said in a press statement, along with another

man the day before on similar charges.

The girl's family had received anonymous telephone calls demanding a ransom after she disappeared on Wednesday, Mexican media reported, quoting a relative. Residents on Thursday blocked one of the main streets of Taxco, which has been plagued by organized crime, after the child's body was found on a highway.

Security camera footage had circulated earlier showing suspects allegedly putting a black bag in the trunk of a car, prompting suspicions that it contained the girl's body. A mob gathered outside a house where a woman and two men were located, demanding justice. They dragged out the trio, doused them in gasoline, and beat them with sticks. The woman died and the two men were hospitalized.

The prosecutor's office did not clarify whether the men attacked by the angry mob were among those arrested. "My solidarity is with the family (of the minor), the future is not understood without justice," the governor of Guerrero, Evelyn Salgado, said Friday on X, formerly Twitter.

Worsening crime in Taxco led the United States in January to ban its government employees from visiting the city, located about 170 kilometers (105 miles) from Mexico City. Kidnappings and murders are dai-



MEXICO CITY: Forensic personnel and investigators from the prosecutor's office are guarded by police while carrying out investigations in a typical Mexican food restaurant where Guillermo Torres, municipal president of Churumuco, municipality of Tierra Caliente in Morelia, Michoacan state, Mexico, was murdered on March 30, 2024. — AFP

ly occurrences in Mexico, although adult men are the most common victims, making the young girl's death particularly shocking. — AFP

Business

MONDAY, APRIL 1, 2024

The fully electric Volvo EX30 named 2024 World Urban Car

EX30 named one of the world's top three cars out of 38 nominees

NEW YORK: Small and mighty indeed – we are celebrating today, because our fully electric Volvo EX30 has landed a big accolade at the prestigious World Car Awards!

Beating out a competitive field of nominees, the EX30 was awarded the title of 2024 World Urban Car in a presentation held today at the New York International Auto Show. Our smallest ever SUV was also named as one of the top three cars in the world out of a list of 38 nominees.

“Winning this award with the EX30 is incredibly gratifying and a firm validation of our ambitious electrification strategy,” says Jim Rowan, our chief executive. “Customer response to the EX30 has exceeded our expectations, and it has proven to be a perfect car for today’s marketplace as a growing number of car buyers switch to fully electric cars. I’m convinced the EX30 will strongly contribute to our growth this year and beyond.”

The EX30 was revealed last summer to almost universal acclaim and has already won several major awards, including The Sun Car of the Year, the Small SUV/Crossover of the Year award from the Sunday Times, and the Eco Warrior of the Year award from Top Gear magazine.

As such the EX30 is a strong addition to our product portfolio, which also contains several very attractive plug-in and mild hybrid models in multiple segments. Those cars are an important bridge towards the way to Volvo Cars’ ambition to only sell electric cars by 2030. Since its reveal, the EX30 has rapidly proven to be a very popular car with customers – based on our orderbook, we expect it to be one of our best-selling models this year.

It is the smallest SUV we’ve ever launched and it’s built on a purpose-designed electric car platform. In addition to producing zero tailpipe emissions, it has been developed with a focus on keeping its carbon footprint to a minimum across the car’s complete lifecycle.

EX30 buyers have a choice of three electric powertrains: a Single Motor version with 200kW (272hp) and a 51kWh battery; a Single Motor Extended Range with battery capacity increased to 69kWh; and a Twin Motor Performance model with 315kW (428hp) and a 69kWh battery. The EX30 offers a driving range of up to 476km and its battery can be recharged from 10 to 80 per cent capacity in a little over 25 minutes.



Volvo EX30 exterior

Maintenance staff shortage could clip aviation industry’s wings

NEW YORK: The United States is grappling with a shortage of maintenance workers in the aviation industry, with baby boomers retiring and others changing jobs during the pandemic. This comes as the global fleet of commercial aircraft is set to balloon a third by 2034, involving more than 36,400 vessels, according to a recent study by consulting firm Oliver Wyman.

In its wake, spending in the maintenance, repair and overhaul market is projected to grow almost 20 percent by 2034. But the sector suffers from a shortfall of qualified manpower -- and an inadequate pipeline of talent.

It lacks some 24,000 aviation maintenance technicians in North America, a figure due to reach nearly 40,000 by 2028, Oliver Wyman notes. This gap is not one that the renowned Aviation High School in Long Island will be able to fill with its cohorts totaling 2,000 students.

“I don’t think the Aviation High Schools have enough capacity to train enough people,” said Steven Jackson, principal of the Aviation High School in Long Island City. “We are one of the largest high schools and it would be hard to scale it up further,” he added.

Growth impact

The school is one of 28 certified by the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and trains future aviation maintenance technicians who can either enter the workforce after high school or further their studies in universities. “The job market is good and there is more money so, at the moment, more go straight to work than before,” Jackson told AFP.

In the United States, around 4,000 maintenance,

repair and overhaul companies employ some 185,000 aviation maintenance technicians and engineers. This forms around 44 percent of the global total, according to the Aeronautical Repair Station Association.

“Working as a mechanic opens so many opportunities,” said Fariha Rahman, 17, speaking to AFP at a JetBlue maintenance hangar during a Career Discovery Week. “I want to start in maintenance, and work my way up,” the high school student added. Another student, 15-year-old Gaby Moreno, added: “It’s such a great industry.”

“There are so many different jobs, so many benefits, and discounts for flights and other things, like insurance,” she added. AlixPartners specialist Pascal Fabre stresses that the training of maintenance technicians will need to be accelerated.

To boost the attractiveness of aviation maintenance, Congress passed legislation in 2018 enabling the FAA to provide ad hoc grants. As a result, \$13.5 million was awarded in March to 32 schools, 20 of which would especially help with training maintenance professionals.

“Because so many aviation jobs are critical to operations, any ongoing shortage can eventually result in the industry’s growth being limited,” Oliver Wyman noted in an earlier report.

Quality issues

In a 2023-2042 outlook, aviation giant Boeing forecasts “strong” long-term demand for newly qualified aviation personnel. There is a need for some 690,000 new maintenance technicians to help maintain the global commercial fleet over the next 20 years, according to Boeing.

The maintenance, repair and overhaul sector is “under-capacity, and hangar maintenance slots are in high demand, especially as aircraft manufacturers’ delivery delays mean that older aircrafts are being flown for longer periods, requiring more maintenance,” Fabre added. The two major aircraft manufacturers, Boeing and Airbus, are fully booked until almost the end of the decade, and are accumulating delays.



NEW YORK: Employees of Jet Blue airlines work on an engine of an Airbus A320 passenger aircraft in a maintenance hangar of the company at JFK International Airport in New York on March 4, 2024, prior of a Career Discovery Week event. — AFP

Meanwhile, airlines are stepping up orders as they seek to capitalize on strong demand from travelers and build fuel-efficient fleets. “The pressure to produce and the retirement of many skilled baby boomers during COVID may also be contributing to some of the quality-control issues plaguing the industry,” the recent Oliver Wyman report added.

According to experts, departures have led to the disruption of a transfer of know-how between experienced and new technicians. Since 2023, Boeing has suffered production problems and numerous incidents on its 737 MAX series, which prompted the

FAA to launch an audit into its quality control.

In early January, an Alaska Airlines 737 MAX 9 suffered a blowout of a door plug while in flight. Boeing CEO Dave Calhoun recently announced that he would step down by year-end, in a leadership shake-up as the company faces heavy scrutiny.

Previously, two fatal 737 MAX crashes -- one in 2018 and one in 2019 -- led to a nearly two-year grounding of the aircraft. Beyond manufacturers, United Airlines is also in the crosshairs of the FAA, which is reviewing its safety procedures after several recent incidents. — AFP

Baltimore bridge highlights migrants’ role in US workforce

LOS ANGELES: The death of six Latino workers who were fixing potholes when a Baltimore bridge collapsed highlights the crucial role immigrants play in keeping America running, say advocates. And it stands in stark contrast to the rhetoric of populists like Donald Trump, who cast them as criminal invaders ruining the country.

“Migrants come and do the jobs that Americans don’t want to do,” said Luis Vega, an activist and former construction worker. The work is too hard, the hours are too long, or the conditions too difficult. “Who here wants to clean hotel rooms? Who wants to work under the hot sun? Who wants to be in the fields?” said Vega.

A team of eight men were doing road maintenance overnight Monday into Tuesday on the Francis Scott Key Bridge when a huge container ship smashed into a support pillar, sending almost the entire span crashing into the Patapsco River.

Two were pulled alive from the water, but six died; brothers, husbands and fathers from Mexico,



BALTIMORE: CASA Executive Director Gustavo Torres places his hand on a makeshift memorial as Baltimore workers attend a press conference to honor families and victims of the March 26 collapsed Francis Scott Key Bridge after it was struck by the container ship Dali, in Baltimore, Maryland, on March 29, 2024. — AFP

Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. “Immigrants -- we get the job done,” said senior White House adviser Tom Perez, himself a Latino. “The six people who perished, the two others who survived... this is America, the immigrants (were) repairing potholes.”

The tragedy comes at a time many Latinos feel they are under assault from sections of the political class, as the United States ramps up for a bitter presidential election in November between Trump and incumbent Joe Biden.

Trump’s stridently anti-immigrant campaign includes suggestions that, if elected, he will embark on a mass expulsion of people he blames for crime and drug addiction he says are wracking America. “The former president doesn’t see how much damage he does with his poison,” said Vega. “Terrorists don’t sneak over the US-Mexico border; they fly in on a visa.”

The people who pay traffickers to smuggle them across the hostile deserts of the US southwest are the people who end up doing the dirty and difficult jobs that Americans depend on. “In 2020, when we had the Covid pandemic... no one wanted to work closely with another person,” said Vega. “So who did the work? The cleaning in the hospitals? Harvesting the food? It was the immigrants who risked their lives.”

High risk

Those risks, even if they are not always fatal, as they were for the Baltimore bridge workers, are all too real. In Arizona the legal minimum wage is \$14.35 an hour, but, says Javier Galindo, a contractor in Tucson, immigrant workers will earn only \$80 to \$100 per day, sometimes for 10 or 12 hours work. “You know what time you come in, but not what time you will leave,” he says.

Poverty and desperation force migrants to accept these wages, and to work in conditions that can be

fatal, such as high temperatures. According to official numbers, Latino immigrants comprised 8.2 percent of the United States workforce in 2020-2021 but accounted for 14 percent of workplace deaths.

The total number of deaths has also risen, up 42 percent over the decade to 2021, with 727 Latinos dying on the job that year. Root-and-branch reform of migration into the United States, including regularizing pathways to work, would help to reduce this toll, say activists.

But it would also alleviate what many say is a desperate shortage of labor. “There is a lack of manpower,” says Galindo, whose business was badly hit by border closures during the Covid pandemic.

The 48-year-old began his working life at just 14 years old, clambering over rooftops. “You’ll never see a white person doing that job,” he said. In the two decades since he started his company, only one white American ever knocked on his door asking for a job as a driver. “He didn’t last long,” laughs Galindo. “He walked off the job.”

In his region, he says, the construction sector depends almost entirely on immigrants, with the undocumented playing a key role. It is a feeling shared widely. “If we only hired people with the proper papers, things would go very badly for us,” one Arizona contractor told AFP. “We wouldn’t be able to build what is being built in this city if it weren’t for undocumented workers.” — AFP

Business

NBK weekly money market report

Inflation levels continue to stabilize

US CB consumer confidence declines slightly to 104.7

KUWAIT: US consumer confidence drops slightly in March, with the figure coming in below expectations and marking a 0.1 decline from the February figure at 104.7. The figure highlights that while fears of a recession are fading, consumers are concerned about the inflation outlook for the US economy in the upcoming days. Meanwhile, consumer's inflation expectations ticked up to 5.3 percent, higher than the 5.2 percent figure seen in February.

FOMC Member Waller Speaks

Federal Reserve governor Christopher Waller signaled on Wednesday night that the Fed is in "no rush to cut the policy rate." Regarding the latest economic data, particularly when it comes to inflation and employment, Waller said that "it is prudent to hold this rate at its current restrictive stance perhaps for longer than previously thought to help keep inflation on a sustainable trajectory toward 2 percent." Furthermore, Waller said that he was looking at the three-and six-month measures of core inflation, and that the readings show that progress on getting inflation to their 2 percent target is slowing down. "The risk of waiting a little longer to cut rates is significantly lower than acting too soon" added Waller. "Cutting the policy rate too soon and risking a sustained rebound in inflation is something I want to avoid." Waller's remarks were significantly more hawkish than Fed Chair Jerome Powell's comments recently, and on par with Atlanta Fed president Raphael Bostic. Despite the latest dot plot showing a majority of FOMC members favoring three rate cuts this year, Bostic said that he expects only one rate cut to occur later in the year. Meanwhile, markets are pricing in three rate cuts by year-end, in line with the Fed dot plot.

Core PCE index m/m in line with expectations

The core personal consumption expenditure, which is considered the Federal Reserve's preferred measure of inflation rose by 0.3 percent in February, down from a 0.4 percent increase in January. The data comes as the US economy continues to show resilience, with hotter than expected inflation remaining sticky, and a robust labor market continues to pressure Fed officials into revising the interest rate forecasts for the year. The greenback ended the week closing at 104.487.

Canada

Canada's m/m GDP exceeds expectations

Canada's January GDP was up by 0.6 percent, beating forecasts of 0.4 percent. The growth was described by Statistics Canada as a broad-based expansion in the economy, led by a bounce back in education services. The Canadian Dollar was last seen trading at 1.3540.

German retail sales decline in February

The latest publication by the Federal Statistical Office of Germany shows a sharp decline in retail sales in February. Where sales volume declined by 1.9 percent m/m. The drop was well below expectations of a 0.4 percent rise in the figure, as well as the previous month's figure of a 0.3 percent decline. Declines were seen in products like food which fell by 1.7 percent, as well as online sales which dropped by 2.8 percent for the month. As lower industrial production weighed on GDP, the retail sales news release further lowered hopes for the economy to register growth in the first quarter. The Euro ended the week last trading at 1.0767.

Asia-Pacific

Japan's Tokyo Core CPI in Line with Expectations in March

Core inflation in Japan Softened slightly in March while remaining in line with markets expectations. The Tokyo core CPI figure eased slightly to 2.4 percent, from the previous February figure of 2.5 percent. Meanwhile, overall inflation was seen rising slightly to 2.6 percent from 2.5 percent in the previous month. The figure supports the narrative that the BoJ will not tighten monetary policy further to control inflation. Where earlier in the month the BoJ raised its interest rates for the first time since 2007 to around 0 percent to 0.1 percent. The USD/JPY pair closed the week trading at 151.34.

Australia CPI unchanged in March

Inflation has held steady in the latest CPI figure published by the Australian bureau of Statistics, where the year-over-year figure showed no change from the previous figure at 3.4 percent. Meanwhile, core CPI which excludes food and energy prices fell from 4.1 percent in January to 3.9 percent in March. The fall in the figure was attributed to a fall in holiday and accommodation prices, dropping by 1.3 percent, offsetting price rises in other categories. Reserve Bank of Australia's governor, Michele Bullock, said the central bank needed "greater confidence that inflation will return to the target band in a reasonable timeframe and will stay there" before it would cut its cash rate.

Retail Sales in Australia rises slightly in February

Retail sales in Australia rose 0.3 percent month-over-month in February, slightly below expectations of a 0.4 percent increase. The increase was supported by increased consumer spending for the month. Meanwhile, inflation remained above the RBA's target of 2 percent despite easing in 2023, with the latest CPI report showing the figure at 3.4 percent in February.

NBK provides access to RMs on the 'Go with Contact Your RM' feature on MoB

KUWAIT: NBK always strives to elevate Privilege Banking services for a standout customer experience, the new service provides customers with seamless interaction with their Relationship Manager. This innovative service puts customers directly in touch with their Dedicated Relationship Manager, offering seamless and personalized banking experience on the go.



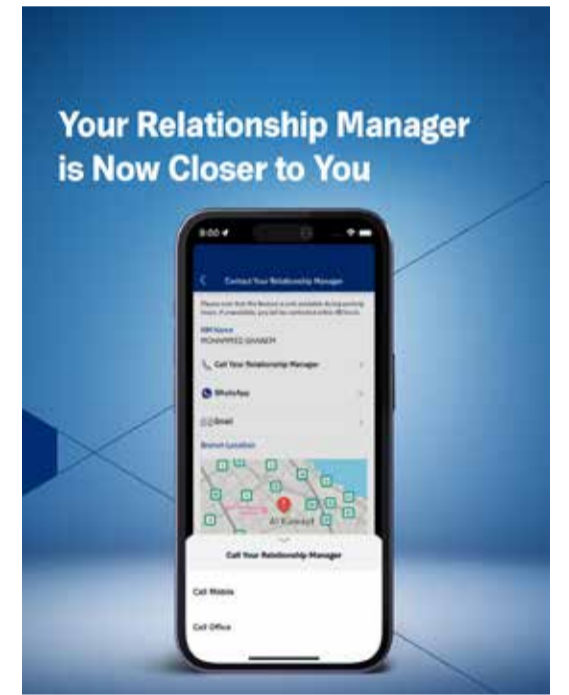
Syed Intekhab Abbas

On this occasion, Intekhab Abbas Head of Premium segment, Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait said: "This new service will allow Privilege Package customers easily access their Relationship Manager's contact information, including Relationship Manager name, phone number, and email address directly within NBK Mobile Banking App, along with ability to call, e-mail and WhatsApp them through the app as well. The NBK Mobile App will also facilitate easy appointment booking with their Relationship Manager. The feature will also allow the customer to conveniently displays their Relationship Manager's branch location, and working hours, keeping them informed and empowered. This service can be accessed under Premium Banking section specially created in the application".

NBK offers Privilege Banking Customers an exclusive array of services that has been strengthened to ensure a quality customer experience. These services include: a Dedicated Global Relationship Manager taking care of all their local and global banking needs, as well as a wide range of preferential services and financial products, Premium Services Lounges and Premium Concierge Service. Furthermore, Privilege Customers can avail the advantages of Family Banking Services, Global Banking, NBK Home Banking and Multi-currency cash delivery in Kuwait.

Our Premium Banking Customers also benefit from the Premium Banking Teller Services, priority in making their transactions in a quick and easy way, card home delivery service, priority status when contacting NBK Call Center on 1801801 that's available 24/7.

In addition to "Know Your Relationship Manager" NBK has recently enhanced Privilege Banking benefits by introducing a new travel experience that redefines the travel experience for our Privilege Customers. Customers can now enjoy exclusive services such as Fast Track check-in, Extra luggage, Seasonal free Limousine ride during travel season, Exclusive Hotel Offers, Free Luggage Delivery, Discounted Umrah Packages, Visa Assistance, and discounts on luggage at Samsonite. As NBK maintains its dedication to top-notch Privilege Banking services, we continue to innovate and provide customers with unparalleled banking experience.



Your Relationship Manager is Now Closer to You



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 28 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	36,858	8,081.99	-0.4%	-0.9%	8.1%	486,362,407	172,497,086	33,135	17.8	1.3	82.3%
Main Market	7,941	6,046.55	-1.2%	-0.6%	8.6%	299,975,586	39,093,260	17,799	12.9	0.8	17.7%
All Share	44,799	7,374.02	-0.6%	-0.9%	8.2%	786,337,993	211,590,347	50,934	14.2	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	26,693	1,782.24	-0.7%	-1.5%	8.2%	130,876,375	73,755,481	12,038	17.3	1.3	59.58%
Basic Materials	443	785.50	0.4%	0.7%	5.3%	3,672,622	2,208,981	1,115	9.6	2.2	0.99%
Consumer Discretionary	1,203	1,750.01	1.1%	5.0%	9.1%	28,282,944	10,583,900	3,685	12.8	1.5	2.69%
Consumer Staples	227	747.30	1.6%	4.5%	13.5%	4,752,164	2,187,744	408	100.9	1.3	0.51%
Energy	219	1,045.88	0.9%	1.1%	10.2%	2,295,267	321,705	345	10.6	0.8	0.49%
Financial Services	4,893	1,359.18	-1.8%	-2.0%	12.1%	353,159,902	45,629,415	13,003	15.8	0.9	10.92%
Health Care	233	485.91	3.5%	-0.1%	0.8%	0	0.000	0	13.1	1.6	0.52%
Industrials	3,620	1,059.98	4.8%	4.4%	16.8%	82,903,824	44,213,513	8,245	14.0	1.0	8.08%
Insurance	1,029	2,519.24	-1.4%	-0.1%	9.9%	3,390,893	424,188	436	10.3	1.2	2.30%
Real Estate	2,759	1,297.23	-0.3%	1.4%	7.0%	151,713,102	19,552,148	6,888	15.8	0.7	6.16%
Technology	26	1,906.05	-1.5%	-6.1%	229.6%	113,673	28,962.97	50	NM	2.2	0.06%
Telecommunications	3,266	1,068.64	-4.0%	-4.3%	-3.3%	22,047,883	12,152,327	4,349	9.9	1.3	7.29%
Utilities	186	444.74	0.0%	-0.6%	-2.3%	3,129,344	531,982	372	14.8	1.5	0.41%

Top Gainers

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
NRE	97	22.63%	72,703,988	6,655,464	1,985
AGLTY	666	11.19%	48,218,821	30,802,940	4,583
NAPESCO	842.0	10.07%	200,190	163,662	37
OSOS	103	7.29%	1,556	156	3
FTI	197	5.91%	80,851	15,067	24

Top Losers

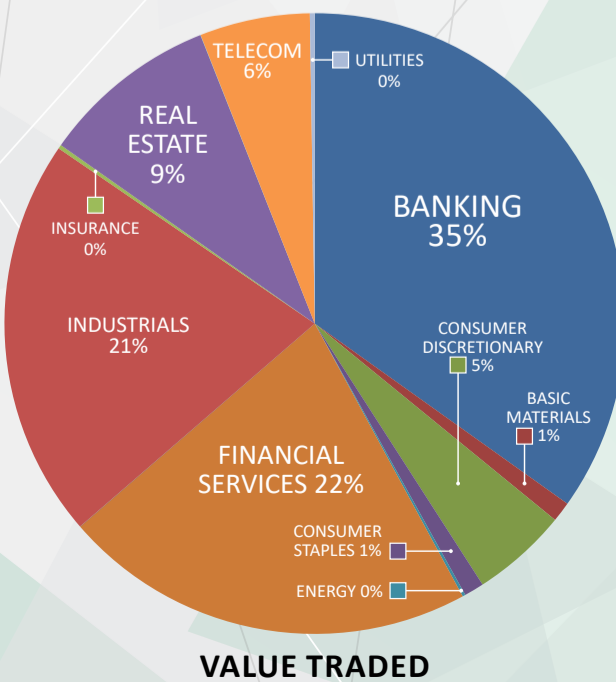
Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
ENERGYH	118.0	-19.18%	107,897	13,080	94
OOREDOO	1,070.0	-14.94%	1,209,703	1,461,252	808
TAHSSILAT	43.5	-14.71%	2,079,230	95,713	291
ALMANAR	63	-11.60%	2,430,533	165,896	155
CATTL	103	-8.85%	1,632,007	174,320	133

Top Volume

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KPROJ	122	-7.58%	88,959,742	11,377,204	1,400
GFH	88.4	0.57%	80,644,807	7,134,576	1,095
NRE	97	22.63%	72,703,988	6,655,464	1,985
AGLTY	666	11.19%	48,218,821	30,802,940	4,583
KFH	800	-0.87%	44,563,746	35,771,658	4,694

Top Value

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	800	-0.87%	44,563,746	35,771,658	4,694
AGLTY	666	11.19%	48,218,821	30,802,940	4,583
NBK	960	-1.13%	22,138,557	21,369,311	2,565
KPROJ	122	-7.58%	88,959,742	11,377,204	1,400
ZAIN	491	-2.00%	17,583,372	8,759,116	2,791



Market Summary:

- Premier and Main Markets volume and value increased by 20%, 35%, 34%, and 26%, respectively.
- Premier and Main indexes are moving below support levels, after which both failed to overcome resistance levels.
- Technically, the All Share index closed at 7374, with support levels at 7350, 7318, and 7286, and resistance at 7379. The Premier index closed at 8081, with support levels at 8044, 7997, and 7945, and resistance at 8083. The Main index closed at 6046, support levels at 6023, 5990, and 5970, and resistance at 6059.

Gulf Bank's annual Ramadan Ghabga: Fostering unity and cultural connection

Amidst a significant turnout of bank employees, including executive management



KUWAIT: Group picture featuring Salma Al-Hajjaj, Human Resources Manager.



Gulf Bank officials in a group photo.



The NEO account present at the event.



A heritage performance during the event.



A view of the audience.

KUWAIT: Celebrating the spirit of connection and unity during the holy month of Ramadan, Gulf Bank held its annual Ramadan Ghabga at Grand Hyatt Hotel, 360 Mall – in the presence of a large number of the bank's employees from various departments and branches, including the Bank's executive management.

The gathering showcased various activities and events aimed at enriching the Ramadan spirit, and cultivating stronger bonds among the employees, while also

allowing them to engage with Kuwait's diverse cultural heritage.

Gulf Bank's annual Ramadan Ghabga provides a perfect occasion for employees from different divisions and branches to connect, stepping away from their daily work routines, and mingle with executive management in a cheerful, familial setting.

Gulf Bank recognizes that its employees are fundamental to its success and the key to its excellence. Therefore, the bank is committed to empow-

ering them to achieve professional excellence and fostering a collaborative work environment.

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.



Mohammad Al-Oattan and Salma Al-Hajjaj during the event.



KUWAIT: ABK officials attend the General Assembly meeting.

ABK holds General Assembly Meetings

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) held its Ordinary and Extraordinary General Assembly Meetings for the financial year ended 31 December 2023, attended by 90.58 percent of the shareholders. Talal Behbehani, Chairman of the Board of Directors (BOD), presided over the meeting with the participation of Abdulla Al Sumait, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer, and members of the BOD and Executive Management. This is in addition to representatives of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Kuwait Clearing Company, and external auditors.

The General Assembly approved all items on the agenda, including the directors' and financial auditors' reports. Furthermore, the BOD's recommendation to distribute 9 percent cash dividends (9 fils per share), and 5 percent bonus shares (5 shares for every 100 shares) to ABK's shareholders for the 2023 financial year was approved.

Significant Growth

Commenting on this occasion, Behbehani announced, "The ABK Group has achieved significant growth in most financial indicators in 2023. Profits increased by 40 percent to KD 45.2 million, earnings per share (EPS) rose by 46 percent to 19 fils, and Operating Profit grew by 7 percent to reach KD 97.1 million."

He added that the Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) stood at 16.74 percent, and Non-Performing Loans (NPL) ratio at 1.33 percent with NPL coverage at 445 percent.

In addition, Total Assets stood at KD 6.3 billion, indicating ABK's healthy financial position and robust balance sheet. ABK also maintained steady growth in Loans and Advances, which amounted to KD 4.3 billion, a growth of 5 percent.

In his speech, Behbehani highlighted that, thanks to its strategic plans, the ABK Group has succeeded in overcoming economic challenges locally and regionally. This has contributed to successfully enhancing its competitive position in the banking sector within Kuwait and in the regional markets in which it operates in Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Added Value

Behbehani added that the Group is keen on enhanc-

ing and protecting shareholder value through its prudent balance sheet management and providing healthy returns to the shareholders. Furthermore, the Group continues to explore opportunities to enhance operations with several initiatives taken during 2023.

ABK Group's current international operations in Egypt and the UAE experienced significant growth in 2023. The Group opened four modern branches in Egypt with cutting-edge digital technologies while the DIFC branch played a key role in facilitating several syndicated loans covering the GCC, Europe, and Asia.

The Chairman emphasized that in 2023, the Group also focused on meeting the standards set by Bursa Kuwait and the Capital Market Authority (CMA), leading to its upgrade to Bursa Kuwait's Premier Market, effective since 11 February 2024. This is expected to boost trading of ABK's shares among international institutions, global funds, and market index followers.

Behbehani affirmed that the ABK Group remains committed to enhancing its transformation strategy by innovating digital banking solutions, products, and services. He said, "The goal is to increase market share across all sectors and cater to the evolving needs of customers."

Confidence

Behbehani stated that the Group is prepared to contribute to financing development and infrastructure projects in alignment with Kuwait Vision 2035. He expressed confidence in the enhancement of economic activity in the future due to various reforms and economic decisions by authorities. This is in line with the International Monetary Fund's projection of a 3.6 percent GDP growth this year, which surpasses the expected growth both in the GCC and globally.

On the topic of global strength, Behbehani highlighted that the ABK Group maintains solid credit ratings with A from Fitch and A2 from Moody's. These signify the high level of trust the Group has garnered from both local and international institutions.

Finally, the Chairman expressed gratitude to the Central Bank of Kuwait, the Capital Market Authority, Bursa Kuwait, Kuwait Clearing Company, the Central Bank of Egypt, and the Central Bank of the UAE for their dedicated efforts and support to the banking sector. He said, "Their contributions have played a significant role in ensuring the sector's stability. I would like to emphasize the Group's ongoing commitment to collaborate with and adhere to all regulatory requirements set by these institutions."

Romania center explores world's most powerful laser

MAGURELE: "Ready? Signal sent!" In the control room of a research center in Romania, engineer Antonia Toma activates the world's most powerful laser, which promises revolutionary advances in everything from the health sector to space. The laser at the center, near the Romanian capital Bucharest, is operated by French company Thales, using Nobel prize-winning inventions.

France's Gerard Mourou and Donna Strickland of Canada won the 2018 Nobel Physics Prize for harnessing the power of lasers for advanced precision instruments in corrective eye surgery and in industry. "The sharp beams of laser light have given us new opportunities for deepening our knowledge about the world and shaping it," said the Nobel Academy's citation.

At the center, in front of a wall of screens displaying light beams, Toma checks a series of indicators before starting the countdown. On the other side of the glass, long rows of red and black boxes house two laser systems. "I will not lie. From time to time, things can get a little stressful," 29-year-old Toma told AFP during a recent on-site press visit. "But it's also very joyful to work here. And we are very happy that we have results" as teams of international researchers come to the center, she added.

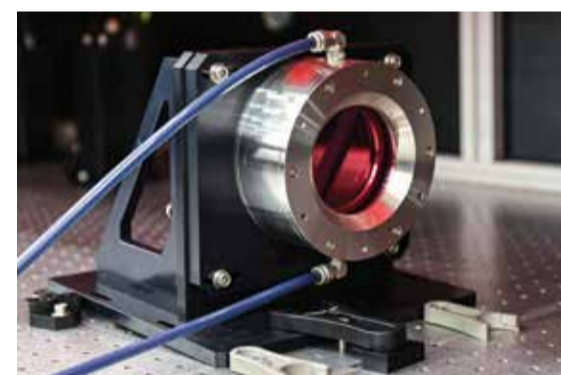
'Incredible odyssey'

Nobel prize winner Mourou confessed he was "very moved" by his "incredible odyssey" -- from the United States where he spent 30 years, to bringing this project to fruition in Europe. It was born in the 2000s out of the European Union's Infrastructure ELI project.

"We start from a small luminous seed with very, very little energy, which will be amplified millions and millions of times," said Mourou, 79, trying to give a sense of the "huge step taken", the "phenomenal powers" achieved. Scientists have always pushed to create more powerful lasers.

By the mid-1980s however, they had hit a wall, as they could not increase the power without destroying what was amplifying the beam. That was when Mourou and his then-student Strickland invented a technique called Chirped-Pulse Amplification (CPA), which managed to boost power while keeping the intensity safe.

It works by stretching an ultra-short laser pulse in time, amplifying it, and squeezing it together again, creating the shortest and most intense laser pulses the world has ever seen. Already it has been applied in corrective eye surgery, but it has also opened the way for scientists to continue pushing the boundaries of laser power. "We will use these ultra-intense pulses to produce much more compact and less ex-



MAGURELE: One of the water-cooled Titan-Sapphire (Ti:Sa) crystal used for laser's light amplification at the "Extreme Light Infrastructure-Nuclear Physics"-ELI-NP laser is pictured in Magurele city nearby Bucharest March 26, 2024. - AFP photos



Gerard Mourou, Nobel Prize in Physics 2018 laureate is pictured inside the "Extreme Light Infrastructure-Nuclear Physics"-ELI-NP laser in Magurele city nearby Bucharest March 26, 2024.

pensive particle accelerators" to destroy cancer cells, said Mourou.

Age of the laser

Other possible applications include treating nuclear waste by reducing the duration of its radioactivity, or cleaning up the debris accumulating out in space, he added. For Mourou, just as the last century was that of the electron, the 21st century will be that of the laser. The scale of the operation at the research center is dizzying.

The system is capable of reaching a peak of 10 petawatts (10 to the power of 15 watts) for an ultra-short time, in the order of a femtosecond (one millionth of a billionth of a second). It took "450 tons of equipment" -- carefully installed -- to get an "exceptional level of performance", said Franck Leibreich, laser solution managing director at Thales.

The high-tech building housing the center cost 320 million euros (\$350 million), mainly financed by the EU. Thales bills it as the largest investment ever made in scientific research in Romania. Meanwhile, countries including France, China and the United States are already advancing their own projects to manufacture even more powerful lasers. — AFP

MONDAY, APRIL 1, 2024

Parents find solace at Hong Kong's 'Forever Love' crematorium

Behind the doors of a terracotta-pink building with sloping arches is a facility unlike any other in Hong Kong—the city's sole crematorium where bereaved parents can say goodbye to their unborn babies. Launched in 2022, the Home of Forever Love provides free cremations for foetuses of less than 24 weeks' gestation.

Greenery fans across the facility's curved, geometric architecture—a stark contrast to the rocky cemetery located next door—while a trail leads to a garden where the ashes can be scattered. "The first mission... is to ease the pain" of families for the farewell ceremony, said Benny Lee, co-founding director of BREADstudio, which designed the building that houses the crematorium. The cremation process mimics a familiar bedtime ritual, he said.

After placing a box holding the foetus's remains into the inner chamber of a small altar, parents can switch off the light and close the wooden doors "like they are putting the baby to sleep", Lee told AFP. "We want the families to feel that their loved one is not going into a wasteland, but going back into nature," added co-founder Paul Mui.

While the Home of Forever Love is the only crematorium in the city providing these services, government-maintained gardens also offer parents a resting place for their lost loved ones. One, the Garden of Forever Love in east Hong Kong, is where Lok found a resting place for her unborn baby after she had an abortion at 20 weeks.

The garden floor of the cemetery is divided into small plots, each marked by a toy or an item. For Lok, a stone with a sleeping elephant painted on it marks her unborn baby's resting place with the words: "In loving memory of our precious son Luka."

Lok, who spoke to AFP using a pseudonym to guarantee her privacy, carries a replica of the stone with her as well. "Having a funeral arrangement



This photo shows Tse Mei-ye holding scale models of babies at 24 weeks as she talks to AFP about the disposal of abortuses in Hong Kong. — AFP photos



Tse Mei-ye speaking to AFP during an interview about the disposal of abortuses in Hong Kong.



Lok, who uses a pseudonym, holds a stone representing her unborn son Luka during an interview with AFP.



Toys left by relatives of unborn children who are buried at the Garden of Forever Love at the Chai Wan Cape Collision Crematorium.

helped me to feel relief. When everything was settled, it felt like closure for me," Lok said. "You wouldn't want the body of your family members to be treated like waste to be thrown away."

'Social taboo'

Cremations or burials for foetuses have not always been an option in Hong Kong. For years, the city's regulations stipulated that the remains of foetuses under 24 weeks should be treated as "clinical waste" and discarded in landfills. The issue received public attention in 2017, when a couple was denied their request to take back the remains of their 16-week foetus for a burial or cremation. Tse Mei-ye, who had two miscarriages, said that watching the news of the couple brought back memories.

"It's a social taboo—no one talks about it, and



Paul Mui co-founding director of BREADstudio, which designed the Home of Forever Love, reading notes left by the families of still-born babies.



Paul Mui (left) and Benny Lee (right), founding directors of BREADstudio, which designed the Home of Forever Love, reenact a cremation ceremony.



The Home For Forever Love, a funeral home which provides free cremations for foetuses of less than 24 weeks gestation in Hong Kong.



The Garden of Forever Love the at Chai Wan Cape Collision Crematorium.



The Garden of Forever Love at Chai Wan Cape Collision Crematorium.

no one knows this rule. They (hospital staff) say to the parents, 'We will handle your baby properly,'" Tse told AFP. "But for the hospitals, it means to handle it properly as clinical waste," she said.

Tse created the "Little Baby Concern Group" to offer bereavement counseling services and support for parents trying to retrieve the foetuses. She also lobbied the government with a proposal signed by more than 10,000 doctors, nurses and religious leaders, which led to change.

In 2018, the government amended the regulations on the handling of foetuses under 24 weeks, allowing for all—including those unclaimed by families—to receive free cremation. "It's important," said Lok. If she had to experience her foetus being treated like clinical waste "it would be like hurting me twice—making it an even more traumatic experience".

Lok had bought two plush egg toys during her pregnancy. After saying a final goodbye to her "little egg", she opened an Instagram account dedicated to Luka. It features a smiling plush egg toy in different locations—in front of cherry blossom trees in Japan, taking a train in Taiwan, crossing a bridge in Korea. "One is buried with him, the other is travelling the world with us," she said. — AFP

Sound of the Underground: The busker aiming to play every London Tube stop

Strumming his acoustic steel string guitar on a busy street in east London, 27-year-old Australian singer-songwriter Dan Tredget is a man on a mission. Tredget, originally from Perth, Western Australia, is aiming to become the first person to busk at every London Underground station. With 272 stops on the network, it is a daunting task. "It's pretty overwhelming when I look at the map sometimes, seeing how many stations I've got left to complete", he told AFP shortly after ticking off his 124th stop, Upton Park.

"But it's also quite uplifting to know that I'm pretty close to the halfway mark." Tredget's journey began in April 2023, after a guitar student of his cancelled a lesson.

Wondering what to do with the free time, Tredget made a first foray into London busking. Self-filmed clips of the session did well on social media and he decided to take the online "content game" more seriously, devising a way to boost his profile as a musician. The initial plan was to play at "iconic" spots in the British capital, such as the London Eye and Big Ben. But he soon realized that "the Underground itself is pretty iconic. And it'd be a great way to just get out to all corners of the city."

Charity fundraiser

Busking inside stations is not as simple as many would imagine, with an official licensing system and fierce competition for official "pitches" to perform at. Because of that, Tredget mainly busks on the street immediately outside the stations, playing songs by the likes of Oasis, Coldplay and Ed Sheeran. Twenty to 30 stops in, and with earnings steadily building, he decided to turn the endeavor into a fundraiser for London homelessness charity Glass Door.

He expected the footfall around central stations like Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus would make "Zone 1" stops the most lucrative. But in reality, he has had more luck at stops further from the centre. "People are a

bit more relaxed, maybe. They're not rushing around in the outer zones and they've got a bit more time to hang around and watch for a bit, have a chat," he said.

The most successful stop was south London's Tooting Broadway, on the Northern Line, generating £52 (\$66). But that has since been overtaken by Highbury and Islington on the Victoria Line, where Tredget made £57.29.

On the day AFP caught up with him, he was busy making his way along the District Line, the network's largest by number of stops. A slow trickle of passers-by paused to offer a coin or tap a bank card outside Upton Park and Plaistow stations. Many were curious about the task of the easy-going Australian, who admits there is still a long way to go to meet his goal of raising £10,000 (\$12,600).

With a combination of street and online donations, he recently broke the £1,000 mark. "It'll be quite a push to get to the 10k mark but I'll still make that the goal. And we'll see how far we can get," he said. Tredget is already envisioning future challenges, including the possibility of extending beyond the Underground to include the Overground and the Docklands Light Railway in east London. That would add a further 158 stations to his playlist.—AFP



Australia's Dan Tredget, 27 years old, plays his guitar while busking in the street outside of a metro station, in London. — AFP

Lifestyle

Fans in Beyoncé's native Houston fete new country album

In Beyoncé's hometown of Houston, fans turned out in full force at a roller rink listening party celebrating the megastar's new country album. The scene Friday night was a jubilant display of support for the 42-year-old Texan, who faced some bigoted criticism when she announced her new project "Cowboy Carter," which was released in full on Friday. Despite the long lineage of Black artists in country music, overwhelmingly white and male gatekeepers of the genre have long vied to rigidly dictate its boundaries.

But they were no match for Beyoncé, who pressed on and dropped a 27-track epic to great fanfare. "I think Beyoncé's new album is awesome simply because in my opinion she's bringing back awareness as to where country music started—a lot of people don't know that country music started with us as Black Americans," said Lashria Hadley, a nurse. "I think it's a beautiful thing. A lot of things were appropriated from us and taken from us," she continued. "So she's just bringing back that awareness as to where it all started, and she's doing it so effortlessly because she's Beyoncé."

"Cowboy Carter" is the second installment of her "Renaissance" trilogy, a rollicking, history-rich honky tonk of an album that quickly soared to the top of the streaming rankings. It's rife with country elements but also draws across the genres, including rap, dance, soul, rock, gospel and funk.

"This I think is probably her best album yet. I think it is so thoughtful, it is so new, it is so different really than anything else that she's done before," said Austin Davis Ruiz, a civil servant. He noted that Beyoncé both pays homage to groundbreaking Black country artists like Linda Martell—who features on the album—and also makes a point of "uplifting newer Black country artists that maybe haven't also gotten their due."

'Proud of her'

And for anyone who says Beyoncé isn't country enough to sing country? "She's from the south, she's from Texas," said Valeria Pasquel, who works in mar-



A woman gets ready to roller skate during a listening party for Beyoncé's new album "Cowboy Carter".

keting. "She's always been a country girl, but it was just a matter of time before she actually did a whole country album." Lindsey Cooksen agrees: "She's always repped Houston, she always talks about how she's a country girl at the bottom of her heart."

"It makes perfect sense to me. I don't know why anybody was confused," she continued. "We're very proud of her." That the listening party was held at a roller rink was also in line with Beyoncé's roots; she used to skate as a child, and even filmed her 2013 music video for the track "Blow" at a Houston roller rink.

Teacher Candice Williams said that "being from Houston and from Texas, we've always sang country music." "Black women have always sung country music, this is nothing new, it's just the fact that she's such a worldwide known artist," Williams said. "So she's bringing country music like out there to pop artists and people who don't know the background."—AFP



Fans roller skate during a listening party for Beyoncé's new album "Cowboy Carter" at Discovery Green's outdoor roller skating rink in Houston, Texas. — AFP photos



Fans get ready to roller skate during a listening party for Beyoncé's new album "Cowboy Carter".



A man tries to roller-skate for the first time during a listening party for Beyoncé's new album "Cowboy Carter".



A woman watches roller skaters during a listening party for Beyoncé's new album "Cowboy Carter".



A girl skates during a listening party for Beyoncé's new album "Cowboy Carter".

Welcome to the Beyoncé rodeo: New country album drops to praise

Fans and critics alike are lavishing praise on "Cowboy Carter," Beyoncé's rhinestone-studded, history-rich honky tonk of an album that's rising in the charts after Friday's hotly anticipated release. A rowdy, wide-ranging homage to her southern heritage, the 27-track second act to her "Renaissance" trilogy is a genre-bending triumph that vaults Black country culture. "No one will mistake this sprawling set for ever following a straight path, or having a remotely dull moment," wrote the critic at entertainment trade publication Variety.

"It's almost as if Beyoncé was watching some of the evolutionary leaps and hiccups country has been experiencing as it redefines its boundaries — as the music always has — and said, 'Hold my Armand de Brignac. I've got this.'" "But it's not just a matter of what Beyoncé can do for country music; it's what her concept of country can do for her, in expanding her musical empire and even her already well-honed sense of self. It's a lot."

It's too early to say where "Cowboy Carter" and its voluminous tracklist will land on the charts, but streaming service Spotify said that as of Friday evening it was the platform's "most-streamed album in a single day in 2024 so far."

The Houston-born 42-year-old pioneered and mastered the surprise online album drop, but for the first two "Renaissance" acts, she turned to a more traditional marketing strategy, with calculated promos and deluxe physical editions for purchase. Her ode to dance "Renaissance" soared to Billboard's number one spot when it was released in 2022, and "Cowboy Carter" appears primed for a repeat.

Add in another blockbuster tour like she did for Act 1 — the "Beyoncé bump" literally was blamed for raising Sweden's inflation rate, and bolstered local economies



This combination of file pictures shows (from left) US singer Miley Cyrus and singer Beyoncé. — AFP photos

wherever it rolled into town — and Queen Bey will do-si-do straight to the bank.

Hoedown throwdown

"Cowboy Carter" is a full-color display of just how rich music can grow outside dusty strictures of genre. Beyoncé deftly skewers the critics — Nashville's gatekeepers have long tried to promote a rigid view of country music that's overwhelmingly white and male — lyrically and sonically. She ushers listeners through country's evolution from African American spirituals and fiddle tunes to its pioneering women, like collaborator Linda Martell, and a vision of its future.

Vice President Kamala Harris, who is Black and South Asian, lauded Beyoncé for "reminding us to never feel confined to other people's perspective of what our lane is. You have redefined a genre and reclaimed country music's Black roots." But while it delivers a history lesson, "Cowboy Carter" is at its core a party. Amid the hoopla, Beyoncé offers touching portraits of motherhood, celebrations of sex and love, and even a murder revenge fantasy.

She also drafted a mix of youthful stars — Miley Cyrus,

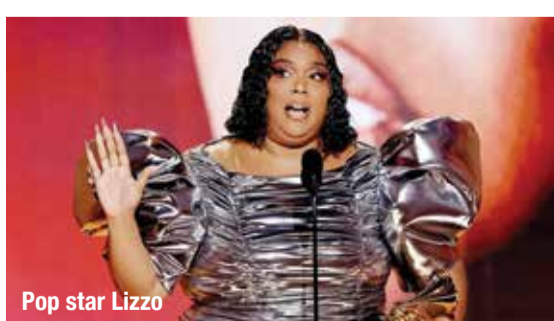


This combination of pictures shows US singer/songwriter Beyoncé and US singer-songwriter Dolly Parton.

Post Malone and Tanner Adell included — and old guard icons for her revue, including none other than Willie Nelson and Dolly Parton. "My admiration runs so much deeper now that I've created along side of her," Cyrus said on social media.

The elders appear on the album in the form of radio hosts of a fictional broadcast, with Nelson telling listeners: "Now for this next tune, I want y'all to sit back, inhale and to the good place your mind likes to wander off to." And Parton introduces the album's take on "Jolene," drawing parallels between her own original tale of a lover fearing betrayal with Beyoncé's personalized version that calls back to her 2016 track "Sorry" about her husband Jay-Z's infidelity.

"Hey, Miss Honey B, it's Dolly P," croons Parton in her interlude. "You know, that hussy with the good hair you sang about reminded me of someone I knew back when. Except she has flaming locks of auburn hair. Bless her heart." "Just a hair of a different color, but it hurts just the same." Then there's "Ya Ya," a boisterous, psychedelic soul dance mash-up that manages to sample both Nancy Sinatra's "These Boots Are Made For Walkin'" and The Beach Boys. —AFP



Pop star Lizzo

the world doesn't want me in it." "I didn't sign up for this shit," she wrote, adding in all capital letters: "I QUIT!"

Lizzo, whose self-love message has resonated around the globe, was sued by three of her former dancers last year after they alleged sexual, religious and racial harassment, among other accusations. Last month a judge dismissed some of the claims, but denied Lizzo's motion to toss out the lawsuit, according to Billboard.

Earlier this month she appeared to be enthusiastic about her career, posting: "I'm writing some of

the best music and I'm so excited for y'all to hear." On Thursday night she helped warm up the crowd before Biden, along with former Democratic presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, appeared at a fundraiser in New York City that raised a record \$25 million.

"It's shameful that Lizzo would be chosen to headline an event like this amid such egregious allegations," a lawyer for her former dancers, Ron Zambrano, was quoted as telling NewsNation. In her Instagram post, Lizzo said she was "constantly up against lies being told about me for clout & views," and that she was "the butt of the joke every single time because of how I look." Her character was "being picked apart by people who don't know me," the singer said.

Many of the responses were cruel jibes epitomizing what the singer was complaining about. But many were supportive—including from fans who also know a thing or two about being in the public eye. "We love you Queen," reality star and businesswoman Paris Hilton wrote. —AFP

Sean Combs, the rap mogul facing a web of sex crime allegations

Once hip hop's flashy impresario credited with commercializing the genre, Sean "Diddy" Combs has seen his star plunge as federal authorities raid his homes amid sex trafficking accusations and assault lawsuits. The legal pressure and heavily publicized bicoastal operation, which saw armed agents enter his sprawling luxury properties in Miami and Los Angeles, mark a rapid downfall for the powerful mogul who in recent years has vied to rebrand as "Brother Love."

The 54-year-old founded the Bad Boy record label in 1993, with proteges including the late Notorious B.I.G. and Mary J. Blige, ushering hip hop into the global lifestyle brand it is today. The artist, who's gone by various monikers including Puff Daddy and P Diddy, was widely credited as key to hip hop's journey from the streets to the bottle-service club.



US producer-musician Sean "Diddy" Combs poses with the Global Icon award in the press room during the MTV Video Music Awards at the Prudential Center in Newark, New Jersey, on September 12, 2023. — AFP

Over the decades he's amassed vast wealth not least due to his ventures in the liquor industry. But despite his efforts to cultivate an image of a smooth party kingpin and business magnate, multiple lawsuits describe Combs as a violent man who used his celebrity to prey on his victims.

He has no major convictions but has long been trailed by allegations of physical assault, dating back well into the 1990s. Late last year the floodgates opened after singer Cassie, whose real name is Casandra Ventura, alleged Combs subjected her to more than a decade of coercion by physical force and drugs as well as a 2018 rape. The pair met when Ventura was 19 and he was 37, after which he signed her to his label and they began a romantic relationship. —AFP

Lizzo says 'I quit' after 'lies' told about her

Pop star Lizzo, who built her brand on being a poster girl for self-love but has been hit by employee harassment suits, said she is quitting, tired of being targeted for her looks and character. It was not immediately clear if the 35-year-old Grammy-winner meant the music industry, social media, or something else. Her statement came in an Instagram post on Friday, a day after she appeared at a Democratic campaign event for President Joe Biden. "I'm getting tired of putting up with being dragged by everyone in my life and on the internet," Lizzo, born Melissa Viviane Jefferson, wrote.

"All I want is to make music and make people happy and help the world be a little better than how I found it," she continued. "But I'm starting to feel like



Werner Stechbarth shows a clock as part of his collection in his living room.



Werner Stechbarth poses inmid his collection of clocks in his living room.



Werner Stechbarth poses inmid his collection of clocks in his living room in Munich, southern Germany.— AFP photos

German collector turns back time as clocks go forward

Some 366 clocks cover the walls in the living room of 76-year-old Werner Stechbarth's apartment in Munich, the haul from a life spent criss-crossing the globe. The yearly move to daylight saving time is a busy period for the pensioner, who has to manually adjust every one of his timepieces. Work started well ahead of the beginning of European summer time early Sunday morning, when the continent's clocks will skip forward an hour.

"I start one or two weeks before and I continue after the clocks change, stress free," Stechbarth told AFP, sitting in his lounge. His collection includes not just classic mechanical clocks but a few digital models with LED displays. Each timepiece is set to a slightly different time to avoid them striking in unison at the top of every hour.

All the same, the room is filled with the sound of ticking and the intermittent whistle of a cuckoo. As a chef for the German national carrier Lufthansa, Stechbarth had access to cheap airline tickets, which he used to travel the globe collecting clocks. "The first is from Mexico, I brought it back in 1975. It was my mother's idea," he said, picking out a Coca-Cola branded piece in pride of place by the window.

For every clock, a story

Every clock comes with its own story. Stechbarth recalled how he forgot to



Werner Stechbarth sets a clock in his living room.

take the batteries out of a souvenir he was bringing back from Tunisia. "I will let you guess what the people at airport security thought when they heard the ticking in my suitcase," he said with a laugh. Stechbarth missed his flight but was eventually allowed to return to Munich with his timepiece in tow.

The retiree travels less now but still shops for clocks online or in the local antiques shops. His initial goal to have a clock for every day of the year—a target of 366 for leap years like 2024 -- was reached long ago. Excess items in his collection are kept in the basement.

The collector himself carries a watch on each wrist and another round his neck, but still manages to be late. "I used to be punctual when I was working. Now if it is six or seven o'clock—it's all the same to me," he said. As the day fades, "I sit in my armchair, turn off the television and listen to the ticking of



Werner Stechbarth shows two clocks as part of his collection.



Werner Stechbarth (76) poses with a clock in his living room.



Clocks as part of the collection of Werner Stechbarth are pictured.

the clocks." After an evening's entertainment, Stechbarth usually retreats to his bedroom, which he has furnished modestly with two pieces from his collection.—AFP



A Bavarian themed clock as part of the collection of Werner Stechbarth is pictured in his living room.



Werner Stechbarth's collection of clocks in his living room.

YOUNG NIGERIAN LIVES DREAM OF BEING A BALLET DANCER



A student of the Leap of Dance Academy, Anthony Madu (right), performs a ballet dance routine in front of his mother's shop in Okelola street in Ajangbadi, Lagos.— AFP photos



A student of the Leap of Dance Academy, Anthony Madu (right), performs a ballet dance routine in front of his mother's shop.



A student of the Leap of Dance Academy, Anthony Madu (left), performs a ballet dance routine in front of his mother's shop in Okelola street in Ajangbadi, Lagos.

After one viral video in 2020, Nigerian Anthony Madu went from pirouetting on the dusty streets of Lagos to dancing in the corridors of a prestigious British dance school. Madu's extraordinary story, which has seen him become a celebrity and even receive a handshake from Queen Camila, has been documented for the silver screen and was to be released on Disney+ on Friday.

The documentary follows the teenager over a year, between 2021 and 2022, when he leaves Nigeria for Birmingham's Elmhurst Ballet School. "I really feel really proud of myself, but it's also surreal at the same time to see yourself in a movie as to me it's just my life," Madu told AFP.

"I often think why me and what if the video of me dancing hadn't gone viral? I think it must have been faith," he added. Madu was spotted by Elmhurst Ballet School after a video of him pirouetting in a disadvantaged area in Lagos, a city of 20 million people, went viral. He has since been nicknamed the "Nigerian Billy Elliot" in reference to the 2000 film of the same name in which a working-class British boy develops a passion for ballet. "I feel a sense of freedom and that I am where I am meant to be at this point in my life," Madu told AFP.



Omodiagbe Beauty (left) and Anthony Madu (right) prepare for rehearsals at the Leap of Dance Academy in Ajangbadi, Lagos.

'I have a lot of dreams'

However, Madu's journey to success has come with some bumps along the way, especially as the cultural gap widens between him and his family at home in Nigeria. "You talk like a white man," Madu's mother told him over the phone—referring to a change in accent after a few months in Britain. After she offers to take him to church when he goes on vacation back home to Lagos, Madu tells his mother angrily: "I need a therapist, not a prophet".

At the age of just 14, Madu has no limit to his dreams. "I don't know what the future holds for me... I have a lot of dreams... that I want to experience in my life. What I do know is that Nigeria will always be my home. I hold Nigeria and my family close to my heart," Madu told AFP.

The documentary, "Madu", was directed by Nigerian director Joel Kachi Benson and American director Matthew Ogens. "This story is like a miracle, no one saw it coming. To the kids: don't be afraid to dream, your aspirations are very valid, don't let anyone say it's impossible," Benson told AFP.—AFP

Sports

Brentford hold Man U in dramatic finale

Tottenham, Villa win in top four chase, more pain for Chelsea

LONDON: Manchester United lost more ground in the battle for a place in next season's Champions League after a dramatic finale in a 1-1 draw at Brentford on Saturday, as Son Heung-min fired Tottenham to a 2-1 win over Luton. Aston Villa remain in fourth after a 2-0 win over Wolves, three points ahead of Tottenham, but now enjoy an 11-point cushion over United, who were lucky to escape west London with a point.

Mason Mount's first goal for the Red Devils in the 96th minute looked set to snatch victory for Erik ten Hag's men despite being thoroughly outplayed. However, Brentford hit back three minutes later through Kristoffer Ajer to register just their second point in seven games. "We were winning in the end, maybe it wasn't deserved, but then you have to take the three points," said Ten Hag. "It is very disappointing to draw the game."

Spurs have now come from behind to win in four of their last five home games and needed another second-half turnaround after Tahith Chong's strike put Luton into a shock lead after just three minutes. An Ange Postecoglou half-time substitution again made an impact for Tottenham as Brennan Johnson's cross was turned into his own net by Issa Kabore just six minutes after the Welsh international's introduction.

Son had missed a number of chances earlier in the game but finally got some fortune when his deflected effort trickled past Thomas Kaminski for his 15th goal of the season. "Until the end I was getting frustrated

but I wanted to stay calm as captain," said Son. "We don't want it to always end like this, it could be nicer when we have it (won) earlier." Tottenham's victory briefly took them into fourth, but Villa responded as goals from Moussa Diaby and Ezri Konsa gave them the bragging rights from a Midlands derby.

Chelsea 'upset' Pochettino

Chelsea boss Mauricio Pochettino was met with another backlash at Stamford Bridge after his side failed to make the most of an extra man for the entire second half and drew 2-2 against second-bottom Burnley. The Blues appeared on course to cruise to victory after Lorenz Assignon was harshly sent off for pulling down Mykhailo Mudryk inside the area. Burnley boss Vincent Kompany was also shown a red card for taking his protests too far.

Cole Palmer coolly chipped in the resulting penalty, but the 10 men leveled two minutes into the second half thanks to Josh Cullen's super finish from outside the box. Raheem Sterling had been booed off in Chelsea's FA Cup quarter-final win over Leicester a fortnight ago but thought he had set up the winner in style with a flick that Palmer stroked into the far corner. Chelsea, though, failed to hold out again as Dara O'Shea headed in a corner nine minutes from time. "Today we didn't show the capacity, the energy, the hunger that is the minimum to compete in the Premier League," said Pochettino. "In the defensive phase we conceded too much. That is why I am so upset and disappointed."



LONDON: Manchester United's English midfielder Mason Mount shoots and scores his team's first goal against Brentford at the Gtech Community Stadium on March 30, 2024. — AFP

Newcastle closed to within one point of West Ham in seventh after a remarkable fightback to win 4-3 at St. James' Park. Goals from Michail Antonio, Mohammed Kudus and Jarrod Bowen wiped out the advantage given to Newcastle by Alexander Isak's early penalty. However, a second Isak spot-kick 13

minutes from time sparked the turnaround before substitute Harvey Barnes struck twice to send Eddie Howe scurrying down the touchline in celebration. "A lot of emotions in that game, we were swinging all over the place," said Howe. "The last 10 minutes was amazing to be part of." — AFP

Raphinha guides Barca past Las Palmas to pressure Madrid

BARCELONA: Spanish champions Barcelona cut the gap on Real Madrid at the top of La Liga to five points with a 1-0 win over 10-man Las Palmas on Saturday. Raphinha headed home in the second half to clinch Barcelona's victory after the visitors had goalkeeper Alvaro Valles dismissed after 24 minutes for a rash foul. Barcelona warmed up for their Champions League quarter-final clash against Paris Saint-Germain, their next match in 11 days' time, with a straight-forward victory, albeit by a tight scoreline.

Xavi Hernandez's side are unbeaten in 11 games since the coach said he would leave at the end of the season and their recent form has given them some faint hope of retaining their title. "We could have scored more, we had many chances to kill the game off," said Xavi. "It's a summary of our season, we're finding it hard to close out matches."

Real Madrid face Athletic Bilbao on Sunday at the Santiago Bernabeu, aiming to restore their eight-point advantage on the Catalans in second. "They're three important points, we know they will be important at the end of the season," Raphinha told Movistar. "We'll keep fighting until the end and we won't give up until the league is over."



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Brazilian forward Raphinha fights for the ball with Las Palmas' Spanish goalkeeper Alvaro Valles at the Estadi Olimpic Lluis Companys on March 30, 2024. — AFP

Barcelona dominated the opening stages against Las Palmas with Robert Lewandowski and Raphinha both having goals ruled out for offside. Polish striker Lewandowski hit the bar on another occasion as Xavi's side strolled, although former Barca forward Sandro Ramirez threatened at the other end before taking a weak shot. Las Palmas goalkeeper Valles was sent off after 24 minutes for rushing out of his goal and clattering into the busy Raphinha. Lewandowski struck the bar again from Joao Cancelo's cross and Raphinha fired narrowly wide when he might have scored as Barcelona continued to press for the opener.

Bayern defender Joshua Kimmich was livid and publicly criticized his team. "I wonder how we can put in such a performance in a game like this. It's completely incomprehensible. In the second half you had the feeling that nothing was at stake, it was like a friendly. We need to go home and question ourselves."

Dortmund's first league win in Munich in 3,641 days, dating back to 2014 when Jurgen Klopp was in the dugout, took them three points clear of RB Leipzig and back into fourth place with the battle for the Champions League intensifying. The win in Munich "took too long," said Dortmund coach Edin Terzic. "We had a bit of luck, but we worked hard for it," Terzic told Sky.

Earlier on Saturday, Maximilian Baier gave Hoffenheim a 1-0 lead at Leverkusen. But with this season's unbeaten record in serious danger a day after Xabi Alonso pledged to stay on as coach for another year, the league leaders hit back. Robert Andrich levelled in the 88th minute before an injury-time Patrik Schick volley sealed another remarkable comeback win.

Leverkusen's late win continued their record of victories in the dying moments this season. Alon-

Breakthrough

With 10 men Las Palmas set up in a more defensive fashion and tried to frustrate the Catalans, although they again came close when defender Saul Coco smashed a vicious free-kick into the side-netting. Winger Marvin Park, on loan at Las Palmas from Real Madrid, forced a smart low save by Marc-Andre ter Stegen a minute before Barcelona took the lead. Joao Felix, on as a substitute, produced a glorious scooped pass into the area for Raphinha to head home his fifth La Liga goal of the season.

The Brazilian winger drew a VAR television screen in a sarcastic celebration, in reference to his earlier disallowed strike. Felix should have doubled Barcelona's lead when Jules Kouunde rolled the ball across the face of goal for him but the Portuguese forward struck the crossbar when it seemed easier to score. "There's no need to talk about whether he's starting for us or not, Joao Felix is important for us and he was again," said Xavi, of the mercurial on-loan Atletico Madrid forward.

Ferran Torres made his return from a hamstring injury in the final stages, replacing teen starlet Lamine Yamal, who had a quiet night relative to his heroics for Spain against Brazil on Tuesday. Lewandowski, booked for walking off slowly as he was replaced by Vitor Roque, will miss Barcelona's next league match, against Cadiz — and return for the key Clasico battle against Real Madrid on April 21. Earlier Saturday Sevilla beat Getafe 1-0 thanks to an early Sergio Ramos goal on his 38th birthday, while Valencia drew 0-0 with Real Mallorca and Osasuna thrashed Almeria 3-0. — AFP



MUNICH: Bayern Munich's English forward Harry Kane swings from the goal post after missing a chance to score past Dortmund's German goalkeeper Alexander Meyer on March 30, 2024. — AFP

so's side have scored late to beat Augsburg, Leipzig, Stuttgart in the German Cup and Qarabag twice against in the Europa League. "I was always optimistic," Alonso told reporters. "We said at half-time that one goal is important. Everything can change in one moment. We have a winner's mentality — we built that for ourselves this season." — AFP

Bayern defeat sends Leverkusen 13 points clear

LEVERKUSEN, Germany: Bayern Munich lost 2-0 to Borussia Dortmund on Saturday, their first home "Der Klassiker" loss in a decade, allowing Bayer Leverkusen, who came back to win 2-1 over Hoffenheim, to go 13 points clear with seven games remaining. Leverkusen's victory put the onus on Bayern in Saturday's late match, but the German champions lost at home with Dortmund scoring goals in each half through Munich-born Karim Adeyemi and defender Julian Ryerson.

Harry Kane had the ball in the net in the dying stages to give Bayern hope of a comeback, but the England captain's goal was struck off for offside. Bayern coach Thomas Tuchel sent "congratulations to Leverkusen". Asked if the title race was over, Tuchel replied "of course", saying "it's self-evident, clear".

Sundowns, Petro closer to semifinals after away draws

JOHANNESBURG: Mamelodi Sundowns of South Africa and Petro Luanda of Angola confirmed their status as favorites to win CAF Champions League quarter-finals with 0-0 first-leg away draws on Saturday. The manner in which the clubs achieved parity differed, however, with former title-holders Sundowns comfortably containing knockout-stage debutants Young Africans of Tanzania.

Petro, whose best Champions League showing was reaching the 2022 semi-finals, had a much tougher time, surviving constant pressure to hold TP Mazembe from the Democratic Republic of Congo. The matches also differed in style as Young Africans and Sundowns often operated at near walking pace with the heat and humidity in the Indian Ocean city of Dar es Salaam a factor. Mazembe constantly attacked at speed, using the wings to good effect on a big pitch in the southern mining city of Lubumbashi, but were let down by poor finishing.

The quarterfinals cried out for clinical forwards with the first three producing just one goal, scored by title-holders Al Ahly of Egypt against Simba of Tanzania in Dar es Salaam on Friday. Despite boasting a line-up stacked with South African and South American stars, Sundowns hit the target with just two of 10 goal attempts, and neither troubled Mali goalkeeper Djigui Diarra. When Young Africans opted for route-one attacks down the middle they caused a few anxious moments for Sundowns, with Zambian Kennedy Musonda prominent in front of a 60,000 crowd. — AFP



FORT LAUDERDALE: Luis Suarez of Inter Miami CF and Tayvon Gray of New York City FC compete for the ball during the second half at DRV PNK Stadium on March 30, 2024. — AFP

Suarez on target but Miami held; Cincinnati draw

FORT LAUDERDALE: Luis Suarez bagged his fifth goal of the season as Inter Miami were held to a 1-1 draw against New York City FC in Major League Soccer on Saturday. Former Barcelona and Liverpool star Suarez glanced in a Julian Gressel free kick in the 15th minute to fire Miami into the lead at the Chase Stadium in Fort Lauderdale. But Miami's hopes of securing all three points were thwarted by a dogged New York performance, which got its reward when Costa Rica international Alonso Martinez

equalised on 34 minutes.

Miami, thrashed 4-0 against New York Red Bulls in their last outing, created a string of clear chances after the City leveller, but were frustrated by a superb performance from goalkeeper Matthew Freese. Freese pulled off several fine saves, including a brilliant one-handed block from Suarez in the 80th minute as Miami pressed for an equalizer.

Cincinnati preserved their unbeaten start to the season after Aaron-Salem Boupendza jabbed home a 92nd-minute equaliser to snatch a 1-1 draw on the road against Charlotte. In other games on Saturday, MLS champions Columbus battled to a 2-2 draw with Nashville on the road, Marino Hinestroza's 79th-minute equaliser securing a point for Crew. Elsewhere, Toronto FC slumped to a 3-1 defeat at home against Sporting Kansas City. — AFP



ROME: Lazio's Italian defender Nicolo Casale fights for the ball with Juventus' Turkish forward Kenan Yildiz at the Olympic stadium on March 30, 2024. — AFP

Milan consolidate second in Serie A with Fiorentina win

MILAN: AC Milan strengthened their grip on second place in Serie A on Saturday with a hard-fought 2-1 win at Fiorentina after an Adam Marusic header sunk Juventus in the final seconds at Lazio. Stefano Pioli's side closed the yawning gap separating them from runaway league leaders Inter Milan, who host Empoli on Easter Monday, to 11 points with well-taken goals early in the second half from Ruben Loftus-Cheek and Rafael Leao.

But more importantly a sixth straight win in all competitions meant Milan took advantage of Juve's single-goal defeat in Rome to move six points clear of their old rivals with eight games remaining. "It's more important how you finish the season than how you start it," said Leao to DAZN. "We want to finish the season well and we have important matches to play."

Milan prevailed in Florence also thanks to a decisive display from Mike Maignan, who pulled off a series of good stops before and after Leao had dived past Fiorentina goalkeeper Pietro Terracciano and rolled in the winner in the 53rd minute. Leao's fifth league goal of his inconsistent campaign came in a breathless start to the second half in which Loftus-Cheek put Milan ahead in the 47th minute by tucking home the Portugal winger's backheeled pass.

Alfred Duncan then drew Fiorentina level three minutes later with a brilliant low finish which beat the outstretched Maignan, only for Leao to quickly hit back and secure a big win for Milan. Fiorentina, who said goodbye to deceased former general manager Giuseppe "Joe" Barone, drop down to 10th following defeat and Torino's 1-0 win over Monza earlier in the day. — AFP

Quick-fire Monaco breeze past Metz to go second in Ligue 1

PARIS: Monaco flew out of the traps at Metz on Saturday, scoring three goals in the opening quarter-hour as they moved up to second in Ligue 1 with a 5-2 victory. Adi Huetter's side brushed aside their lowly hosts courtesy of three goals in quick succession from Takumi Minamino, Maghnes Akliouche and Vanderson before Folarin Balogun added a second-half brace either side of Pape Amadou Diallo and Ibou Sane strikes for Metz.

"We managed to put in a very good first half, both in front of goal and defensively. We need to keep up the momentum and repeat that half (of football)," said Akliouche. "We've got seven games left in the race for Europe, so we're going to try and win as many as we can." The win lifts Monaco to second place with 49 points, 10 behind leaders Paris Saint-Germain who travel to Marseille for Le Classique on Sunday.

Japan's Minamino gave Monaco the perfect start after four minutes when he turned on Eliesse Ben Seghir's pass near the six-yard box and rifled a shot past Alexandre Oukidja in the Metz goal. Akliouche doubled the lead on 10 minutes, pouncing on Kevin Van Den Kerckhof's lax touch in the centre circle before driving through the middle of the pitch and rolling a composed left-footed finish past the keeper. The match was effectively over just six minutes later when Vanderson guided a stretching volley into the far corner from an Aleksandr Golovin cross. — AFP

Sports

Celtics beat Pelicans to snap skid

Giannis sparks Bucks to victory in Atlanta, ends Hawks' four-game win streak

WASHINGTON: Jayson Tatum scored 23 points to lead a balanced Boston attack in a 104-92 victory at New Orleans on Saturday, snapping a two-game losing skid for the NBA-best Celtics. Latvian forward Kristaps Porzingis contributed 19 points, 10 rebounds, four blocked shots, three assists and two steals while Jaylen Brown added 17 points for the Celtics.

Jrue Holiday had 13 points, eight rebounds and seven assists for Boston, which avoided a first three-game losing streak this season after back-to-back losses in Atlanta. "We want to be a hungry team no matter what," Porzingis said. "We haven't done anything and back-to-back losses to Atlanta is not in our DNA. It just didn't sit right with us, so we came out here tonight and got us a W."

The Celtics, who have clinched the Eastern Conference crown, improved to 58-16, moving closer to securing a home-court edge throughout the NBA playoffs. New Orleans, fifth in the Western Conference, fell to 45-29, a half-game ahead of Dallas and two atop Phoenix in a fight for the last two guaranteed West playoff spots. "We just knew we couldn't be in cruise control," Porzingis said. "These teams are hungry. They need these wins. Maybe we at this point of the season don't need them as much, but still we want to come out here and compete at a high level every night."

Porzingis was unhappy at shooting only 6-of-14

from the floor, and just 1-of-6 from 3-point range but pleased with his all-around effort. "There are so many ways we can impact a game if things are not going perfect for us," Porzingis said. "That's what I did tonight. I turned up another notch and that's what we're going to need the rest of this regular season and then even more in the post-season."

Boston began the third quarter on a 15-7 run to open a 74-64 advantage on the way to an 83-68 lead entering the fourth quarter and the Celtics kept the Pelicans at bay over the final minutes. "Once we hit another gear, the game just flipped," Porzingis said. Derrick White, who scored 15 points, sank a 3-point shot at the second quarter buzzer to cap an 8-1 Celtics run for a 59-57 half-time Boston lead.

Tatum had 13 first-half points for Boston while Brown and Porzingis each scored 11. Zion Williamson led New Orleans with a game-high 25 points, 12 in the first quarter, and nine rebounds while CJ McCollum added 24 points for the Pelicans.

Big night for Giannis

Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 36 points, grabbed 16 rebounds and added seven assists, three steals and a blocked shot to spark the Bucks to a 122-113 victory in Atlanta. The Bucks snapped the Hawks' four-game win streak — which included two wins over the Celtics — and improved to 47-27, stretching their lead over Cleveland for



NEW ORLEANS: Trey Murphy III of the New Orleans Pelicans steals the ball from Jaylen Brown of the Boston Celtics during the second quarter of an NBA game at Smoothie King Center on March 30, 2024. — AFP

second in the East to two games.

Atlanta, led by Bogdan Bogdanovic's game-high 38 points, fell to 34-40, clinging to 10th in the East and the last play-in spot, a game behind Chicago. Orlando's Wendell Carter had 15 points and

13 rebounds on a night when seven Magic players scored in double figures, none more than 15 points, in a 118-88 home victory over Memphis. Orlando improved to 43-31, 1.5 games behind fourth-place New York in the East. — AFP



Babar Azam

Struggling Pakistan reappoint Babar Azam ahead of World Cup

KARACHI: The Pakistan Cricket Board reappointed Babar Azam as white-ball captain on Sunday, the latest in a series of changes to get the team back on track for this year's Twenty20 World Cup. Azam stepped down as skipper in all formats in November after Pakistan crashed out of the 50-over World Cup in the first round in India. "Following unanimous recommendation from the PCB's selection committee, chairman PCB (Mohsin) Naqvi has appointed Azam as white-ball (T20Is and ODIs) captain of the Pakistan cricket team," the board announced on social media platform X.

Azam replaces Shaheen Shah Afridi after the decision by the seven-member selection committee, which was reorganized a week ago. He had been replaced by Shan Masood as Test captain after stepping down, as well as by Shaheen in T20Is. Shaheen's only T20I series in charge was the 4-1 loss in New Zealand in January.

Former head coach Mickey Arthur was also replaced after the World Cup disaster by team director Mohammad Hafeez, under whom Pakistan suffered a 3-0 Test whitewash in Australia and the T20I series loss in New Zealand. Pakistan will play five T20Is against New Zealand at home, followed by two in Ireland and four in England, before the World Cup in the United States and the West Indies.

Naqvi, the new PCB chairman, announced changes to the board's selection process this month in an effort to improve results before the tournament, making the captain and head coach part of the process. "We have reorganized the selection committee with seven members but the different thing is that there will be no chairman," Naqvi told a news conference, with each member to have "equal powers".

Fast bowler Mohammad Amir has announced he will come out of retirement and all-rounder Imad Wasim has also reversed his decision to retire four months ago. Amir's stop-start career was halted in 2010 after he, former Test captain Salman Butt and fellow pacer Mohammad Asif were banned for five years over a spot-fixing scandal. The team are currently on a two-week training camp at an army base in Kakul. — AFP

Laurel River romps to 'surreal' Dubai World Cup success

DUBAI: Irish-born jockey Tadhg O'Shea was in dreamland after breezing to victory on board Laurel River in the Dubai World Cup on Saturday. "When am I going to wake up," the Cork-born O'Shea said after routing an international field to scoop the near seven million dollar first prize at Meydan racecourse. Trained locally by Bhupat Seemar, O'Shea's mount was up against more lauded rivals from America and Japan.

But the six-year-old American-bred Laurel River belied his generous odds of 17-2 to lead virtually all the way and romp to an eight and a half length victory in the second most valuable race for thoroughbreds in the world after the Saudi Cup. Japanese-trained Ushba Tesoro headed the distant chasing pack in second with US challenger Senor Buscador a neck away in third.

After by far the biggest win of his career O'Shea, an 11-time champion jockey in the UAE, said: "It was a little bit surreal, what do you do — you're in front in a Dubai World Cup. He was starting to gear down, he was flicking his ears and it's a huge stadium out there. "He's had an easy race, I've kept him up to his work. I'm thinking, 'when am I going to wake up?'" — AFP

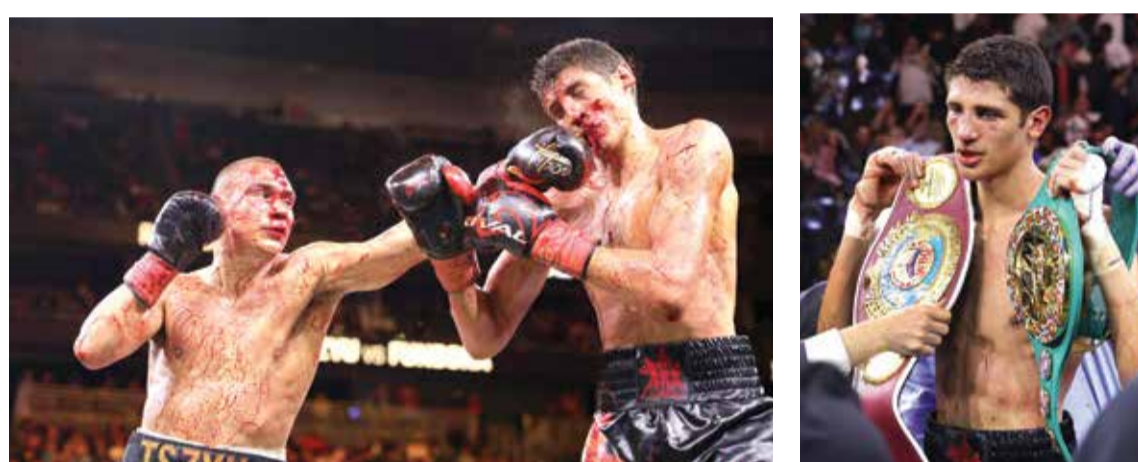
Southpaw Fundora beats Tszyu for world titles

LOS ANGELES: Tall American southpaw Sebastian Fundora stunned previously unbeaten Australian Tim Tszyu on Saturday to unify two world junior middleweight boxing titles in a bout that became a bloody spectacle. After a strong start, Tszyu struck his head accidentally on the left elbow of the 6-foot-5 (1.97m) challenger in the second round, a deep bleeding gash opened above his forehead turning the Aussie's face crimson round after round, blood blinding him for much of the fight.

Judges scored the fight 116-112 and 115-113 for Fundora and 116-112 for Tszyu, giving the US fighter a split decision victory for Tszyu's World Boxing Organization junior middleweight title and the vacant World Boxing Council crown. "I'm just happy Tim Tszyu gave me the opportunity and I made it a dream come true," Fundora said. "The way I won my belt, it was an honor to share my belt and make history with him."

Fundora, 26, improved to 21-1 with one draw in becoming the tallest 154-pound champion in history while Tszyu fell to 24-1. Tszyu, a 29-year-old from Sydney and the son of former light-welterweight world champion Kostya Tszyu, admitted the blood that turned his face crimson most of the night impacted his effort. "I couldn't see," Tszyu said. "But all credit belongs to the man who won. These things happen. The momentum was rolling. I was swinging hard. Then boom, you're blinded. Congratulations to Sebastian. He's the king at 154. We'll bounce back."

In three other world title fights on the Las Vegas card, Mexico's Julio Cesar Martinez retained his



LAS VEGAS: WBO junior middleweight champion Tim Tszyu connects with a punch on Sebastian Fundora during the ninth round of a title fight at T-Mobile Arena on March 30, 2024. Fundora won Tszyu's title and a vacant WBC title by split decision. — AFP photos

WBC flyweight title. Cuban Erislandy Lara kept his World Boxing Association middleweight crown and Mexico's Isaac Cruz took the WBA super lightweight title from American Rolando Romero. Meanwhile, Mexico's Gilberto Ramirez captured the World Boxing Association world cruiserweight title on Saturday with a unanimous-decision victory over France's previously unbeaten Arsen Goulamirian. Ramirez, a 32-year-old southpaw and former world super middleweight champion, improved to 46-1 while Goulamirian, 36, who had not fought since November 2022, fell to 27-1. Armenian-born Goulamirian had been champion since 2018 and had defended his belt four times.

Tszyu was to have faced former welterweight world champion Keith Thurman, but the American was hurt in training and replaced two weeks ago by Fundora, who moved up from a planned undercard bout. "I was given one week. No excuses," Tszyu said of the opponent switch.

Tszyu landed a hard right to Fundora's head in round one, the champion quickly finding his timing and range, but once his head struck Fundora's elbow while making a movie inside, the bleeding began and the fight changed. Tszyu was examined by a doctor after the second and sixth rounds and each time was allowed to continue.

The Aussie, wiping blood out of his eyes at times, tried to press the attack to his towering rival, who used his huge reach advantage to frustrate Tszyu.

Lara, who turns 41 in April, knocked out Australian Michael Zerafa at 2:59 of the second round to keep the WBA middleweight crown, improving to 30-3 and three drawn with his 18th knockout victory. Lara landed a right jab that set up his lightning-quick left to the chin that sent Zerafa onto his rear, ending the Aussie's first world title fight. Zerafa, 32, fell to 31-5 with his second knockout defeat, the first coming in 2015 in his only prior US fight. — AFP

Lanka rule B'desh with 531; Mendis misses rare feat

CHITTAGONG: Sri Lanka made a record 531 runs in their first innings against Bangladesh Sunday, but Kamindu Mendis narrowly missed the feat of a third Test century in consecutive innings. Sri Lanka's total, on the second day of the second Test in Chittagong, was the highest scored in Tests without any batsman scoring a century.

Mendis was 92 not out when last man Asitha Fernando was run out for a duck, leaving him eight short of what would have made him only the fourth Sri Lankan to score three centuries in consecutive innings. Mendis, who scored 102 and 164 in the first Test, struck Tajjul Islam for two sixes in an over to come close to the feat. But Fernando fell short of his



CHITTAGONG: Sri Lanka's Kamindu Mendis plays a shot during the second day of the second Test cricket match against Bangladesh at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium on March 31, 2024. — AFP

crease in a desperate attempt to change the strike. Apart from Mendis, who was playing only his third Test, Dhananjaya de Silva (70), Dinesh Chandimal (59), Kusal Mendis (93), Dimuth Karunaratne

(86) and Nishan Madhuska (57) also scored a fifty each. Shakib Al Hasan finished with 3-110 as Sri Lanka made Bangladesh toil for nearly two days after electing to bat first. Sri Lanka resumed the second day with 314-4.

De Silva, like Mendis, who also scored 102 and 108 in the first Test, raised the prospect of scoring 300 on the trot before he was dismissed in the post-lunch session. Chandimal was the only batsman to be dismissed in the first session, edging Shakib behind the stumps after making 59 runs. Khaled Ahmed trapped De Silva leg before in the first over after the lunch break.

Khaled could have taken another wicket in his next if Prabath Jayasuriya was not comically dropped by three slip fielders on six. Mendis was declared caught behind on 35 off Mehidy Hasan Miraz, but the decision was reversed after review. Shakib hit Jayasuriya plumb in front to end his 65-run seventh wicket stand with Mendis, who was dropped by Hasan Mahmud on 60 at deep square leg. Sri Lanka won the first Test in Sylhet by 328 runs. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
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Shamiya	24848913
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Abdullah Salem	22549134
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Cambridge do Boat Race double

Oxford men hit by E.coli virus • Police prevent disruption to race, make arrests



LONDON: Cambridge University women's team president Jenna Armstrong and men's team president Sebastian Benzecry pose with their trophies after winning the boat race against Oxford University on the River Thames on March 30, 2024. — AFP

LONDON: Cambridge won both the men's and women's University Boat Races on Saturday, with a member of the losing Oxford men's crew revealing afterwards that he and some of his crewmates had been struck down by the E.coli virus just hours before taking the water. The Light Blues were dominant in both events on a flat River Thames course in sunny conditions, the men winning for the fifth time in six editions and the women recording their seventh victory in a row.

The build-up to this year's races, featuring competing crews from England's two oldest universities, was overshadowed by the publication of research revealing high levels of E.coli, a bacteria found in human waste, in the Thames. Meanwhile, London's Metropolitan Police said officers had acted "to prevent what could have resulted in serious disruption" to the races, arresting four people.

The force said it learned in the build-up to the annual showpiece of plans by protesters to potentially disrupt

it, and officers then took "swift action... to intervene". Two people were arrested for being equipped to lock on to an object near the race while two men were also detained for glueing themselves to Chiswick Bridge. The races passed off without any interruption. They have been previously targeted. In 2012 demonstrator Trenton Oldfield swam in front of both teams' boats, and was ultimately jailed for six months.

'Go down badly'

And after the men's race, some of the focus remained on the E.coli issue. Oxford's Lenny Jenkins said he and several of his crewmates had gone down with E.coli on the morning of the event. "This is in no way to take away from Cambridge — we've had a few guys go down pretty badly with the E.coli strain," he said. "This morning I was throwing up and I wasn't sure if there was going to be a chance of me being in the boat, but I ultimately kept that quiet and that's on my shoulders."

He added: "That's not to take it away from Cambridge. They are a talented crew and I don't know if we would have had a chance to get them even if we were on form. So it's in no way to make excuses." The crews came close to clashing blades early on before the smoother rhythm of Cambridge saw them start to pull clear and they were more than 10 seconds ahead going into the closing stages.

But they did begin to slow as stroke Matt Edge, a former lightweight rower, started to show signs of physical exhaustion towards the end of the race. Although he was clearly struggling to get his blade in the water, Edge kept going and Oxford were too far back to capitalize on his collapse.

'Bump' warning

"Credit to Matt to go that deep," Cambridge president (captain) Seb Benzecry told the BBC after a win that have the Light Blues an overall lead of 87 victories to 81, with one dead heat, in a race first

staged in 1829. "I'm sure a lot of that margin we took early in the race was him. He was putting down such a dynamic rhythm and that takes a lot out of you in the stroke seat. So proud of him."

Earlier, Cambridge's women overcame a blistering start by Oxford. The Dark Blues tried to 'bump' Cambridge 12 minutes into the race, thinking the Light Blues were in their water. Oxford were warned after almost colliding with their opponents and went on to lose their appeal after the race was finished. Their unsuccessful move on the river disrupted Oxford's rhythm, with the use of the rudder slowing progress.

Suddenly, what had been a close contest saw Cambridge pulling clear by several lengths. Oxford made a post-race protest but umpire Richard Phelps, following several minutes' discussion with losing cox Joe Gellert, ruled the Dark Blues had moved out of their station and refused the appeal. This was the 78th edition of the women's race, with Cambridge now leading Oxford by 48 wins to 30. — AFP

Collins beats Rybakina to win Miami Open

MIAMI: American Danielle Collins upset the odds to win the Miami Open title on Saturday, beating Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan 7-5, 6-3 to claim her first WTA 1000 title in her final season on the tour. The 30-year-old Collins, number 53 in the world, is the lowest-ranked woman ever to win the tournament, clinching her biggest career title in a two-hour triumph. Collins announced in January that she will be retiring from the sport at the end of this year and her unexpected run to the final and victory over the world number four delighted the home crowd.

"I couldn't think of a better way to win my first 1,000 title. It means the world to me," Collins said. "The encouragement and support that I got, it was hard to hide the emotion because I think these are the moments that we live for and we don't always get to have them. It was really special," she said. While she insists that her recent run of form won't lead her to reconsider her departure from the sport, Collins will rise to 22 in Monday's WTA rankings.

It was a disappointing second straight loss in a Miami final for Rybakina, who missed out to Petra Kvitová last year. Both players looked strong on their serve in the early exchanges but Floridan Collins had to work hardest to hold her serve. She saved four break points as she hung on for 4-3 and showed resistance again to deny a break point at 5-5 with a brilliant backhand winner after a long rally.

Collins broke at the end of the first set, capitalizing on a third break point to win the set when Rybakina went long. Then the momentum shifted heavily in Collins's direction when she broke Rybakina's first service game of the second set. The 24-year-old Rybakina, the 2022 Wimbledon champion, responded, breaking back at the first opportunity.



MIAMI GARDENS: Danielle Collins of the United States poses with the trophy after she defeated Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan during the Women's Final at Hard Rock Stadium on March 30, 2024. — AFP

Neither player was able to truly dominate, but Collins struck the decisive blow when she broke to go 5-3 up as Rybakina at full stretch on the baseline went long. The American had not defeated a top five player since a win over then world number two Paula Badosa at San Diego in October of 2022. Perhaps it was inevitable then that Collins showed nerves at the end as she struggled to serve out, denying two break points and finally clinching on her fourth championship point.

"It's hard," Collins said. "You've got the crowd supporting you and pushing you to close it out and they wanted me to win so bad. It was like playing in front of my best friends and I didn't want to let the crowd down and it was tough. "Elena does not give up and she just kept slinging those shots right and left, I just had to hang in there." Rybakina had missed out on Indian Wells due to a gastrointestinal illness and said that with four of her five matches in Miami en route to the final having gone to three sets, she was not in peak condition. "I was feeling the body, of course. Also, it was not easy tournament, because the first matches I was playing quite late, finishing, and then I was going to sleep around 2:00, 3:00. — AFP

Racist abuse stains Liga and third-tier games in Spain

BARCELONA: A Spanish third-tier side refused to finish a match on Saturday after their goalkeeper faced off with fans who were allegedly racially abusing him, hours after La Liga club Sevilla complained of insults directed at their coach and a player. The incidents came a few days after Spain faced Brazil in a friendly match arranged to combat racism, following numerous instances of abuse aimed at Real Madrid forward Vinicius Junior over recent seasons.

Rayo Majadahonda goalkeeper Cheikh Kane Sarr was sent off in the 84th minute of his team's match at Sestao River, near Bilbao, after remonstrating with one supporter behind his goal. His team decided not to keep playing after the Senegalese goalkeeper, 23, was dismissed and eventually walked off, with the game then suspended.

Earlier La Liga side Sevilla condemned "racist and xenophobic abuse" aimed at coach Quique Sanchez Flores and defender Marcos Acuna during a game at Getafe. "We had three despicable cases of racism in Spain this Saturday alone," wrote Vinicius on social media platform X, offering his support to Acuna and Sanchez Flores.

"To Sarr and Rayo Majadahonda, may your bravery inspire others, racists must be exposed and the games cannot continue with them in the stands," added the Madrid forward. "We will only have victory when the racists leave the stadiums and go straight to jail, a place they deserve." Vinicius notably suffered racial abuse away at Valencia in May last season and received worldwide support after squaring off with a supporter in the stands, as Sarr did at Sestao.

"Our team will not come out to restart the game after our player received unacceptable racist in-

sults," wrote Sarr's team Rayo Majadahonda on X. "It's an absolute disgrace what happened today... a section of the stadium spitting out racist insults at our teammate Cheikh Sarr, for the colour of his skin," said their captain Jorge Casado on Instagram. "In addition, the RFEF (Spanish football federation) trying to oblige us to go out and finish the game. "How shameful, it seems crazy that it's the year 2024 and we have brainless people in the stadiums running amok — we are all Cheikh, no to racism."

'Abhorrent'

The Spanish federation said their competition committee would decide on issues arising from the incident. "The match was suspended after an incident between fans... and Cheikh Sarr... who reported having received racist insults without any member of the referee team, given their position on the field, being able to hear them," said the Spanish federation in a statement.

"Francisco Garcia Riesgo, the referee, suspended the match when the visiting team's players decided to leave the field of play due to the aforementioned events, without the referee being able to put the anti-racism protocol into practice since the Madrid team refused to continue playing."

Rayo Majadahonda, losing 2-1 at the time, had already been reduced to 10 men earlier in the second half before Sarr was then dismissed. It was the second match tainted by alleged racism of the day in Spain, following two incidents in Sevilla's 1-0 win at Getafe. Referee Javier Iglesias Villanueva wrote in his report home fans yelled "Acuna monkey" and "Acuna, you come from monkeys" at the Argentina international, leading the official to briefly pause the match.

Sevilla coach Quique Sanchez Flores said he was called a "gypsy" by some home fans, and that he was proud of his background but opposed it being used as abuse. "I am proud of every pore in my veins that can breathe 'gypsy'," said the coach. "It is one thing to be a gypsy or partly, and another to use it as a racist insult — I find it abhorrent." — AFP