

RIDESAFE
RIDE SAFE

BOOK YOUR RIDE NOW

DOWNLOAD THE APP NOW

@ridesafe.app

2 Using diabetic shots for weight loss: Efficacy, risks and effects

5 Senegal's youngest president sworn in, names Sonko as PM

12 Taylor Swift declared a billionaire by Forbes

Ramadan Kareem

Fajr	: 04:14
Shrooq	: 05:35
Dhuhr	: 11:51
Asr	: 15:23
Maghrib	: 18:08
Isha	: 19:26

Kuwait heads to the polls

50 Assembly seats • 200 candidates • 835,000 eligible voters • 123 polling centers

By B Izzak

PM sponsors youth excellence awards ceremony



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah honors winners of the 6th edition of the Kuwait Award for Youth Excellence and Creativity on April 2, 2024. — KUNA (See Page 2)

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti voters head to the polls on Thursday to elect the fourth parliament in just under 40 months, seeking political stability that has remained elusive for two decades as bitter bickering and disputes took the front seat ahead of much-needed development to utilize abundant oil windfalls. Two hundred candidates, including 13 women, are in the fray for the 50 seats, up seven on the previous June 6, 2023 polls but way below the 320 hopefuls who contested the Sept 2022 elections.

The snap polls were called after HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah dissolved the parliament on Feb 15, less than two months after ascending to power, when some MPs made remarks deemed offensive to HH the Amir. Forty-six out of the 50 members of the dissolved Assembly, in addition to 20 former MPs

from previous assemblies, are seeking re-election. A number of fresh candidates have also figured prominently during the campaign.

Thursday's polls are the second in 10 months and the eighth since early 2012, reflecting a high state of instability due to disputes between MPs and the government. Since parliamentary democracy was introduced to Kuwait in 1962, the National Assembly was suspended twice in 1976 and 1986 for a total of 11 years, dissolved by the Amir on nine occasions and annulled by the constitutional court three times, barely leaving any time for stability and achievement.

Political turmoil intensified since 2006 when four prime ministers resigned and more than 20 Cabinets were formed. During the same period, no National Assembly completed its four-year term, except the 2016-2020 house, with some of them remaining

Continued on Page 6

RAMADAN KAREEM

Love is universal

By Hudhaifa Hassan Twaha

According to Islam, the idea of social welfare has been presented as one of its principal core values, and the practice of social service in its various forms has been instructed and encouraged. A Muslim's religious life remains incomplete if not attended by service to humanity. The following verse of the Noble Quran is often cited to encapsulate the Islamic idea of social welfare:

The Almighty Allah said in the Noble Quran, translated as: "It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards East or West; but it is righteousness to believe in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, and the Book and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity, to fulfill the contracts which you have concluded; and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God-fearing (ones)." (Al-Baqarah 2:177)

The actual purpose of the above-quoted verse is to emphasize that the observance of certain outward religious practices, the performance of certain formal religious acts out of conformism, and the manifestation of certain familiar forms of piety do not constitute that essential righteousness which alone carries weight with Almighty Allah and earns the sincere performers of those good deeds His recognition and approval.

Similarly, duties to parents, neighbors, relatives, sick people, the old and minority groups have been safeguarded and defined in Islam. The individual, the family, the state and the non-governmental organizations and the government — all are responsible for the performance of social responsibilities and for the promotion of social welfare.

Almighty Allah said in the Noble Quran, translated as: "And We have certainly honored

Continued on Page 6

Kuwaiti doctors conduct surgeries on injured Gazans

GAZA: Kuwaiti doctors on Tuesday conducted surgeries on several wounded Palestinians at hospitals in Gaza, just a day after they arrived in the enclave via Egypt's Rafah crossing point. "We have started carrying out surgeries at the European Hospital and Kuwait Specialized Hospital in the Gaza Strip, and

medical supplies have been distributed," head of the delegation and deputy general manager of Kuwait Society for Relief Omar Al-Thuwaini said to KUNA.

The Kuwaiti medical team is expected to keep conducting surgeries on wounded Palestinians for a week, he said, adding that Palestinians injured in Zionist occupation attacks are in dire need of surgeries.

The second Kuwaiti medical delegation entered Gaza on Monday through Rafah crossing point to support healthcare in Gaza by conducting surgical operations on injured Palestinians. The first Kuwaiti medical delegation entered Gaza last month and was the first of its kind, sent by Kuwait Red Crescent Society. — KUNA



GAZA: Kuwaiti medics conduct a surgery on April 2, 2024. — KUNA

Kuwait condemns Zionist starvation, genocide policies

CAIRO: Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the League of Arab States, Ambassador Talal Al-Mutairi, affirmed, Wednesday, the Kuwaiti condemnation of the starvation and genocide crimes that the Zionist occupation forces continue to commit against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. This came in a speech by Mutairi before the extraordinary session of the Arab League Council at the level of permanent

delegates to discuss the continuation of the crime of genocide and the policy of starvation committed by the occupying Zionist entity.

The ambassador warned of the Zionist occupation forces continuing their grave violations of international humanitarian law against the Palestinian people, considering this a threat to international peace and security. He made it clear that it is unacceptable to continue the international stagnation towards ending the Zionist war on the Gaza Strip and remain silent on the daily violations and official statements of officials in the Zionist occupation authorities, which confirm that they have flagrantly violated international laws and norms and all UN resolutions.

Further, he stressed the Zionist occupation authorities' disregard for the International Court of Justice's

provisional measures, which demanded that humanitarian aid routes be opened without delay, "is considered a crime against humanity and an insult to the dignity of individuals, as they have the right to obtain food".

He also pointed to the speech of the UN Rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhri, during the 55th session of the Human Rights Council, where he said, "(The Zionist entity) practices starvation as one of its tools to commit genocide, as we have never seen a civilian population suffering from hunger anywhere else in the world during modern history." Mutairi stressed that Kuwait supports all efforts made by the Palestinian Authority to alleviate the suffering of the brotherly Palestinian people," adding, "our position is firm and principled toward the Palestinian issue." — KUNA

Outrage over killing of aid workers; Palestine eyes UN membership

GAZA: The bodies of six foreign aid workers killed in a Gaza strike were being transported out of the war-torn Palestinian territory on Wednesday as the Zionist entity faced a chorus of outrage over their deaths. Zionist bombardment killed seven staff of the US-based food charity World Central Kitchen on Monday in an attack that UN chief Antonio Guterres labeled "unconscionable" and "an inevitable result of the way the war is being conducted".

The Palestinians, meanwhile, have revived their application to become a full member state in the United Nations. In a letter to Guterres that was seen by AFP, Palestinian UN envoy Riyad Mansour requested "upon instructions of the Palestinian leadership" that an application dating back to 2011 be reconsidered this month by the Security Council. Malta, which holds the rotating Security Council

Continued on Page 6



WASHINGTON: Pro-Palestinian demonstrators wave Palestinian flags as they call for a ceasefire in Gaza during a protest as part of the "People's White House Ceasefire Now Iftar" outside the White House on April 2, 2024. — AFP



9 780202 223841

Prime Minister sponsors youth excellence awards ceremony



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah



HH Prime Minister honors winners of the 6th edition of Kuwait Award for Youth Excellence and Creativity.



KUWAIT: Under the auspices and in the presence of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, the Youth Public Authority (YPA) held a ceremony on Tuesday to honor the winners of the sixth edition of the Kuwait Award for Youth Excellence and Creativity. Addressing the ceremony, His Highness the Prime Minister praised the creative youth as “real con-

tributors to the formulating and building of the future of Kuwait.” He expressed joy at joining the youth in this celebration, which coincided with the last ten nights of the holy month of Ramadan. The ceremony also gathered Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil Dr. Emad Mohammad Al-Atiqi, Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, Minister of State for Youth Affairs,

and Minister of State for Communication Affairs Dawood Suleiman Maarafi, as well as several Cabinet members, senior government officials, and heads of diplomatic missions based in Kuwait. In a similar speech, Maarafi explained the strategy and future projects of the Youth Public Authority for fostering the talents of creative youth. — KUNA

OPEC+ decisions ‘precautionary’

KUWAIT: Kuwait Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil Dr. Emad Al-Atiqi said on Wednesday OPEC+ decisions were “initiative-taking and precautionary” to protect oil markets’ balance, and Kuwait’s voluntary output cuts contributed to markets’ stability. “OPEC+ decisions are initiative-taking and precautionary to protect the oil markets’ balance,” Al-Atiqi said during a video conference meeting of the Joint Ministerial Production Monitoring Committee (JMPC).

Al-Atiqi, quoted in an Oil Ministry statement, praised the compliance of member countries with their quotas within OPEC+ and the need to adhere to OPEC+ decisions to achieve the balance of the oil market. Al-Atiqi, also Chairman of the Board of Directors of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), expressed optimism about all decisions that would contribute to strengthening OPEC+’s leading role in achieving the desired goals and aspirations of member countries.

He noted that OPEC+ was closely following and monitoring developments in oil markets and would take appropriate measures to ensure the balance of the markets. Kuwait’s decision to extend its voluntary reduction of 135,000 barrels per day until the end of the second quarter of this year contributed to the support and stabilization of oil markets in coordination and cooperation with countries participating in the coalition, he said. Following the production reduction, Kuwait’s production stabilized at 2.413 million bpd until the end of June 2024. Al-Atiqi was joined in the JMPC meeting by Kuwait’s Governor to OPEC, Mohammad Al-Shatti, and the National Representative to OPEC, Sheikh Abdullah Sabah Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Using diabetic shots for weight loss: Efficacy, risks and effects

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: In the relentless pursuit of rapid weight loss, many individuals have turned to using diabetic shots to shed pounds quickly. This trend has gained significant traction, with the practice becoming increasingly widespread. However, the safety and efficacy of such methods remain subjects of concern, as the risks and potential side effects associated with using diabetic shots for weight loss are not yet fully understood.

Kuwait Times spoke with several people who use diabetic shots as a weight loss strategy. Sahar Moussa, 46, embarked on her journey with Ozempic twice. The first time was two years ago, when she diligently adhered to a regimen of the medication for three consecutive months. Her decision to take Ozempic was influenced by its affordability, as it offered a viable solution to her weight management concerns.

“The dosage entailed a gradual escalation, starting with 0.5 milligrams administered once weekly for a month, followed by increments to 1.5 milligrams in the second month and up to 2 milligrams in the third,” she explained. Despite experiencing initial side effects such as nausea, headaches, and fatigue, Moussa persisted, driven by her determination to combat cravings, particular-

ly for sweets, leading to losing nine kilograms over three months.

However, the unavailability of Ozempic in Kuwait at the time and its resulting hefty price tag of KD 50 prompted her to discontinue its usage, confident in her ability to maintain her progress independently. But after two months, Moussa found herself grappling with the unwelcome return of weight, swiftly regaining 7 kg and reaching a weight of 78 kg.

The second usage of Ozempic was unplanned. It started when Moussa’s uncle lacked success with his medication (Ozempic) for his diabetes management, so he gave her his shot to try losing weight again. She is now re-embarking on her weight loss journey, determined to reclaim control over her eating habits and achieve her desired goals.

As for Nasser Hussain, 33, he used the Mounjaro diabetic shot 11 months ago, arguing the shot is certified by the World Health Organization for weight loss and he felt safe to use it in his weight loss journey. Hussein paid KD 150 per injection, affirming that it was worth it, as he lost 32 kg in five months. Regarding side effects, he had a mild headache and backache due to shrinking muscles, which he fixed with light exercise.

Hussain advised people to consult a doctor. “I consulted a doctor



before getting into the process. In addition, I did several tests such as CBC, LFT, RFT + serum electrolyte, lipid profile, TFT and vitamin D,” he detailed. He called on people to take care of their health during the process by taking vitamins and not exhaust themselves too much to not suffer dizziness from low blood sugar.

For his part, Khaled Al-Sharqawi used Saxenda, which he received as a gift from a friend who wanted to help him in his weight loss journey. “I started in January this year, and it was my first time to use diabetic medication for weight loss,” he said. Remarkably, within three months, Sharqawi successfully shed an impressive 15 kg, a testament to his dedication and the efficacy of the

medication. Unlike some users who experience adverse effects, Khaled was fortunate to remain unaffected by any notable side effects.

However, he did observe a decrease in his daily food intake, a positive indication of the medication’s impact on his appetite control. Despite this reduction, the craving for sweets, particularly during nighttime, posed a lingering challenge. Adhering diligently to the instructions provided on the medication packaging, Sharqawi ensured consistent administration by injecting Saxenda once daily at the same time each day. Additionally, he maintained discipline in scheduling his meals, aligning them with the designated times recommended for optimal results.

The Ramadan effect: Elections in month of spirituality

KUWAIT: Kuwaitis, on April 4, will be heading to the polls to cast their votes in the 2024 National Assembly elections, which coincided with the month of Ramadan this year amid an atmosphere of socializing and heightened spirituality. Candidates in this election decided to utilize their campaigns to boost their media presence, especially after breaking fast at a time when people become super active after a long day of fasting.

While that is the case, pundits and experts have

wondered if the holy month of Ramadan had an adverse effect on the voting process, pondering questions about turnout as voting begins at noon and concludes at midnight. The month of Ramadan is a chance for candidates and voters to meet during the holy occasion, exchanging views on how to better handle problems and face national challenges, assistant civil engineer professor Dr. Manal Al-Adwani at the American International University (AIU) told KUNA.

She stressed the importance of the upcoming period in the political scene of Kuwait, saying that voters must choose wisely when casting their ballot card to ensure that whoever reached the National Assembly represented the true will and aspirations of the people. Some voters might be hesitant to cast their vote, argued Dr. Al-Adwani, attributing

that to the political fatigue and disappointment of some in previous parliaments.

She said that voting counts, urging eligible voters to put those with clear intellect and political vision in the upcoming parliament formation. Dr. Abdullah Al-Harbi, assistant professor at the Arab Open University (AOU), predicted that the advent of Ramadan would not affect voters’ turnout due to what seemed to him to be a heavy involvement and interaction on the part of voters with the political scene. The socializing aspect of the month of Ramadan is bound to have an effect on elections, argued Dr. Al-Harbi, saying that this very aspect would be key in driving people to vote for their candidates of choice.

He went on to say that the urgent challenges facing the country would also bring people to voting

stations to cast their ballots, regardless of whether they were fasting during Ramadan. Ramadan would have a “positive” impact on the elections, said political analyst Dr. Saleh Al-Saeedi on his part. Most of the eligible voters are in the country and not on vacation or abroad, he added, noting that this very fact would help voters flock to polling stations across the country prior to breaking fast and beyond during the election eve. The spirituality of the month of Ramadan might also have an impact on candidates’ behavior since fasting involves not only abstaining from drinking water or eating food, but the spiritual practice also heightens good manners, he said. It remains to be seen whether the elections this year will yield a huge turnout, but what is for sure is that the “Ramadan effect” will have a say in whether it is negative or positive. — KUNA



KUWAIT: A picture shows the National Assembly building. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Constituent Assembly: A turning point in Kuwait's political history

The first-of-a-kind in the Gulf region



Late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah arrives to a session of the Constituent Assembly. — KUNA photos



Late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah inaugurates the Constituent Assembly



Members of the Constituent Assembly.

KUWAIT: January 20, 1962, marked the inauguration of Kuwait's Constituent Assembly, a turning point in the Gulf state's history and the first step towards a democratic state, the first-of-a-kind in the Gulf region. The late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah issued a decree in August 1961 forming a higher council tasked with working on a law organizing Constituent Assembly elections. The law divided the country into 10 electoral areas, from which two representatives would be elected via secret ballot. Members of the assembly would amount to 20 elected representatives as well as appointed ministers.

The law also specified that an elected representative must not be younger than 30 years of age and that he must master the Arabic language in reading and writing. On December 30 of the same year, elections were held, and 20 members were elected. They were joined by appointed members of government,

dubbed the transitional government, formed on January 17 by decree of Amir. The government included 14 ministers, 11 of whom were members of the royal family, and three were elected members.

In the morning of January 20, 1962, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem inaugurated the assembly in a speech declaring principles of democracy and describing it as a pillar of the modern state, and he affirmed that it was the duty of the assembly to propose modes of governance qualified for a democratic future. During that session, Abdulateef Thunayan Al-Ghanim was chosen as assembly speaker and Dr. Ahmad Alkhateeb as deputy. The assembly formed a committee of five personnel to draft the constitution, including all of Yaquob Al-Humaidhi, Humoud Al-Khaled, Abdulateef Al-Ghanim, and Saud Al-Abdulrazzaq, as well as the late Father Amir Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah.

The committee accomplished its task in 23 meetings between March of 1962 and October of the same year and handed in its report to the assembly, which discussed and voted on it. The Amir ratified and published the constitution on November 11, 1962. Assembly speaker at the time, Abdulatif Al-Ghanim, stated while handing in the constitution draft to the late Amir, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem, that it was a great honor for the committee to work on a constitution built on the principles of democracy and inspired by the reality of Kuwait in an effort to achieve the hopes of the Amir for his people.

On his part, the late Amir replied, thanking the assembly for its significant efforts in achieving the hopes and aspirations of the people for a democratic future that goes hand in hand with Kuwaiti culture and traditions. On January 15, 1963, the Constituent Assembly held its' final meeting with then-Acting

Prime Minister and later Amir of Kuwait, the late Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who delivered a speech commending the work of the Constituent Assembly on the constitution, which would be the bedrock of democracy in the country.

On January 23 of the following year, after concluding the works of the Constituent Assembly, the first National Assembly elections were held in accordance with the newly instated constitution, which remains the governing doctrine to this day. The first election saw the participation of 250 candidates for the 50 seats in parliament, while eligible voters reached 16,889 in ten constituencies. The constitution of Kuwait consists of 183 articles focusing on the state and the system of government, the fundamental constituents of the Kuwaiti society, public rights and duties, as well as the separation of powers. — KUNA



Information Minister Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi checking on the media center for the 2024 elections. — KUNA photos

Media center reflects professionalism and transparency

KUWAIT: The media center for the 2024 National Assembly elections reflected the Information Ministry's keenness on professionalism and transparency in covering Kuwaiti democracy, said Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mu-

tairi. The minister's statement to KUNA came at the opening of the media center late Tuesday to cover the elections due on Thursday, April 4. The center provides media coverage for media personnel from Kuwait and abroad.

Minister Al-Mutairi stressed that the opening of the center reflected the Ministry's constant professionalism and keenness on covering the upcoming democratic process. He affirmed that the Ministry of Information was eager to host media personnel from across the globe to showcase Kuwait's commitment to transparency and freedom of speech. On his part, undersecretary for external media at

the Information Ministry, Bader Al-Tararwah, said that the Ministry was leading the efforts to provide comprehensive and multi-language coverage of elections.

The media center is fully equipped with the necessary tools for some 57 media personnel and journalists from global outlets to cover the coveted event, affirmed the official, indicating that field trips to polling stations would be organized for the personnel to get a closer look into the inner workings of the elections. The center itself would provide coverage for the event as part of Kuwait's commitment to transparency, he concluded. — KUNA

Academic, diplomat commend Kuwait's parliamentary legacy

KUWAIT: Kuwait has a steep parliamentary legacy that is considered one of the oldest in the region, said an academic and diplomat. Speaking to KUNA, the two commended the history of democracy in Kuwait, which, prior to the independence of the country in 1961, was alive and well and continues to sparkle and shine until this day and age. Professor of Political Science at Kuwait University (KU), Dr. Issa Al-Ameeri, said that the Kuwaiti leadership had always encouraged democracy in the country, knowing it was the nucleus of progress and development for any nation.

The keenness of the leadership in including the people in the decision-making process crystallized in the era of the late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sa-

lem Al-Sabah when the constitution was written, and therein were articles that boosted freedoms, equality, and social justice, he reiterated. In January of 1962, the Constituent Assembly was elected to write the Kuwaiti constitution, revealed Dr. Al-Ameeri, who added that the most coveted document in Kuwaiti democracy was ratified on November 3, 1962.

The first elections in Kuwait were held on January 23, 1963, pointed out Al-Ameeri, deeming that the kick-starting event of the history of National Assembly elections. The parliament since its inception has been guaranteed through the constitution to deliver the voice of the people concerning matters important to the people of the country, affirmed the academy. He noted that Kuwaiti democracy was very unique in the Gulf and Arab region, setting an example of cooperation between leadership and their people.

The academic touched on the history of democracy in Kuwait, saying that in the 1930s there was an election to establish the municipal council, noting that such an entity continued to exist until 1963. On hopes for the upcoming 2024 National Assembly

elections on April 4, Thursday, he expressed wishes that people would vote for MPs that were keen on the development of Kuwait in line with the leadership's guidelines and plans.

While the point of view of Kuwaitis is well regarded and important, those looking from the outside might provide a different perspective on the democratic process in Kuwait. Dean of the diplomatic corps and Tajikistan's Ambassador to Kuwait, Zubaydullo Zubaydzoda, commended the Kuwaiti leadership's supervisory role in Kuwaiti democracy, saying that the will of the people of Kuwait was highly regarded.

The Kuwaiti constitution is also unique in its approach, and it ensures the rights of the Kuwaiti people and their aspirations and dreams, he added. The diplomat commended the Kuwaiti democratic process, calling it unique and steeped in history. He also stressed the importance of the upcoming elections, saying that it was vital to bring about a National Assembly that meets the desires and ambitions of the people. — KUNA

Kuwait's parliament known for freedom and democracy

KUWAIT: The Arab media personnel affirmed that the Kuwaiti parliament was one of the most advanced democratic institutes in the region, carrying the banner of freedom and transparency since the 1960s. Speaking to KUNA at the Media Center for the 2024 National Assembly Elections, the personnel said that they were impressed with the level of freedom for the press in covering the elections due Thursday, April 4.

Editor-in-chief for the Egyptian Al-Akhar newspaper, Mohammad Hendawi, predicted the success of the upcoming elections, hoping that it would be followed by a period of compressive development for Kuwait under the keen eye of the country's leadership. Hendawi also noticed that Kuwaiti authorities prepared well for the approaching democratic process, saying that they took all preparatory measures to facilitate voting and also allow Arab and foreign media to cover the elections.

Georges Alam, a Lebanese political analyst and writer, said that the current elections were held in a different atmosphere as set by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who called for implementing steps to create real change in Kuwait's democratic discourse. Alam indicated that he was looking forward to being part of the media delegation monitoring elections tomorrow, which will hopefully have a good outcome for Kuwait and its people.

Similarly, the assistant chief editor of the Egyptian newspaper Al-Masri Yusri Badri said that the advent of elections during the holy month of Ramadan was very special, and viewing the decision to set Election Day as a day of rest would contribute to a huge turnout. He also affirmed that the presence of Arab and foreign media would reflect the transparency of Kuwaiti elections. — KUNA

Kuwait Heritage



KUWAIT: Using traditional ink, a salesman writes a letter to his co-worker in the seventies. - Photo from KOC archive, provided by Mahmoud Zakaria, heritage researcher at Ministry of Information.

Ramadan health tips



In addition to its spiritual rewards, fasting in Ramadan offers numerous health benefits for the body and mind. By giving the digestive system a break from constant processing, fasting allows the body to undergo detoxification and renewal, leading to enhanced energy levels. Furthermore, fasting has been associated with cognitive benefits, including improved focus, mental clarity and mood regulation. As individuals abstain from eating and drinking, they experience a sense of heightened awareness and mindfulness, which can facilitate introspection and self-reflection.

Additionally, Ramadan fasting has been linked to potential longevity benefits, with research suggesting that periodic fasting may promote cellular repair mechanisms and delay aging processes. Also, the practice of fasting encourages a shift in dietary habits, often leading to increased consumption of nutrient-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains during non-fasting hours. This dietary adjustment can contribute to overall better nutritional intake and support long-term health outcomes.

Furthermore, the communal aspect of Ramadan, where families and communities come together to break their fast, enhances social bonds and emotional well-being, promoting a sense of belonging and solidarity among everyone. Overall, the multifaceted benefits of fasting in Ramadan extend beyond the spiritual realm, encompassing aspects of physical health, mental well-being and social solidarity.

Fasting in Ramadan is a transformative practice that offers a wealth of spiritual, physical, and mental benefits. Through self-discipline, gratitude and spiritual reflection, Muslims embark on a journey of self-discovery and purification during this blessed month. As we strive to fulfill our religious obligations and draw closer to Allah, let us embrace the virtues of fasting and reap the abundant rewards it offers. May Ramadan 2024 be a time of renewal, healing, and spiritual growth for everyone.

Indians ambassador hosts ghabga



KUWAIT: Ambassador of India to Kuwait Dr. Adarsh Swaika hosted a 'Ramadan Ghabga' at India House on March 27, 2024 to celebrate the festive spirit of holy month of Ramadan with friends of India in Kuwait, including members of diplomatic corps and Indian community. On this occasion, the Ambassador of India conveyed heartfelt Ramadan Mubarak greetings to all attendees and well-wishers in Kuwait.

The event featured an exquisite blend of Indian culture, music and cuisine. While the musicians played Indian classical music on sitar, tabla and flute, the atmosphere was made more special through an eclectic menu of Indian dishes that are popular in Ramadan month in India, particularly biryani, sewai, jalebi etc.

Ramadan holds special significance in India, a country with rich tapestry of diverse religions and cultures, and home to the world's second-largest Muslim population. It is celebrated through-out India with streets decorated with lights, mouth-watering delicacies being sold and people of all faiths exchanging greetings with each other. The month of Ramadan showcases the vibrant mosaic of India, showcasing India's ethos of unity in diversity, where



individuals from varied socio-cultural and religious backgrounds coexist harmoniously.

In Kuwait, the tradition of hosting 'Ghabga' during Ramadan is also observed by a number Indian community associations - reflecting the deep cultural and people to people ties. The Ambassador's 'Ramadan Ghabga' was well attended by Kuwaiti dignitaries, including ministers, senior government officials, as well as ambassadors and high commissioners of various countries and distinguished members of the Indian community.

GCC condemns attack on Iranian consulate

RIYADH: Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassem Al-Budaiwi condemned and denounced the targeting of Iran's consulate in the Syrian capital Damascus. In a statement, the GCC chief underlined the importance of abiding by international law and treaties, including the protection and safety of diplomatic missions. Earlier, several casualties and injuries occurred after a Zionist missile attack that targeted the Iranian consulate building in the Mezzeh neighborhood of Damascus.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed Kuwait's strong condemnation of Zionist occupation's airstrike, which targeted the Iranian consulate in Damascus, Syria, causing many casualties and injuries. In a statement, the ministry said that such an attack is considered a clear violation of international law, which supposedly protects diplomatic missions around the world from such a blatant attack.

The ministry calls on the international community to bear responsibility and exert efforts to protect stability and safety in the region. Earlier, several casualties and injuries occurred because of Zionist missile attack that targeted the Iranian consulate building in the Mezzeh neighborhood of Damascus. — KUNA



Scan & Subscribe
KD 20 a year

For Individuals Only



Scan Now





Malnutrition threatens Afghanistan's future

Trump warns of 'bloodbath' at hands of illegal migrants

Page 6

Page 7



HUALIEN: This photo by Taiwan's Central News Agency shows the damaged Uranus Building in Hualien, after a major earthquake hit Taiwan's east. — AFP

9 dead in most powerful Taiwan quake in 25 years

Building regulations, widespread disaster awareness may have staved off major catastrophe

TAIPEI: At least nine people were killed and more than 900 injured Wednesday by a powerful earthquake in Taiwan that damaged dozens of buildings and prompted tsunami warnings that extended to Japan and the Philippines before being lifted. Dozens of people were believed safe but unreachable in areas cut off by massive landslides triggered by the quake — many in tunnels that cut through the mountains that bisect the island from north to south.

Officials said the quake was the strongest to shake the island in decades and warned of more tremors in the days ahead. Strict building regulations and widespread public disaster awareness appear to have staved off a major catastrophe for the earthquake-prone island, which lies near the junction of two tectonic plates.

"We were very lucky," said a woman surnamed Chang, who lived next door to a printing press warehouse near the capital that virtually pancaked in the quake, but all 50 inside at the time were plucked to safety. "Many of the decorations at home fell on the floor, but people were safe."

Wu Chien-fu, director of Taipei's Central Weather

Administration's Seismology Center, said the quake was the strongest since one of 7.6-magnitude struck in September 1999, killing around 2,400 people in the deadliest natural disaster in the island's history.

Wednesday's magnitude-7.4 quake hit just before 8:00 am local time (0000 GMT), with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) putting the epicenter 18 kilometers (11 miles) south of Taiwan's Hualien City, at a depth of 34.8 kilometers.

Three people among a group of seven on an early-morning hike through the hills that surround the city were crushed to death by boulders loosened by the earthquake, officials said. Separately, the drivers of a truck and a car died when their vehicles were hit by tumbling rocks, while another man died at a mine quarry.

The National Fire Agency did not immediately offer details on the other three deaths but said all the fatalities had been in Hualien county, adding that 946 people had been injured without specifying how seriously.

Social media was awash with shared video and images from around the island of buildings swaying as

the quake struck. "It was shaking violently, the paintings on the wall, my TV and liquor cabinet fell," one man in Hualien told broadcaster SET TV.

Dramatic images were shown on local TV of multi-story structures in Hualien and elsewhere tilting after the quake ended, while a printing warehouse in New Taipei City crumbled. The mayor there said more than 50 survivors had been successfully plucked from the ruins of the structure.

Local TV channels showed bulldozers clearing rocks along the main route to Hualien, a mountain-ringed coastal city of around 100,000 people that has been cut off by landslides. The main roads leading to the city pass through an extensive series of strongly built tunnels — some of them kilometers long — and officials said dozens of people could be trapped in vehicles inside.

Dozens of miners were also out of reach at a quarry in Hualien. "We must carefully check how many people are trapped and we must rescue them quickly," president-elect and current Vice-President Lai Ching-te told reporters in Hualien. Engineers were also working to repair the main railway track that runs

south from the capital down the eastern seaboard, which had been cut off in several places.

In Taiwan, Japan and the Philippines, authorities initially issued tsunami warnings but by around 10:00 am (0200 GMT), the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center said the threat had "largely passed". In the Taiwanese capital, the metro briefly stopped running but resumed within an hour, while residents received warnings from their local borough chiefs to check for any gas leaks.

Across the Taiwan Strait, social media users in China's eastern Fujian province and elsewhere said they also felt strong tremors. Residents of Hong Kong also reported feeling the earthquake. China, which claims self-ruled Taiwan as a renegade province, was "paying close attention" to the quake and "willing to provide disaster relief assistance", state news agency Xinhua said.

Fabrication at Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company — the world's biggest chip maker — was briefly interrupted at some plants, a company official told AFP, while work at construction sites for new plants was halted for the day. — AFP

Bye, Bye Bibi: Is the Game up for Netanyahu?

JERUSALEM: Benjamin Netanyahu, the Zionist entity's longest serving prime minister, has been written off many times before. But with thousands of protesters on the streets every night this week demanding he resign, and growing anger at his handling of the war in Gaza, many wonder how long the veteran political escapist can survive.

The usually bullish Netanyahu, 74, appears both physically and politically fragile. Deeply unpopular — no more than four percent of Zionists trust him, according to one poll late last year — the war in Gaza is taking its toll on the man Zionists call Bibi.

Visibly frail and sallow, he was short-tempered and distracted during a television speech Saturday which his former minister and Likud colleague Limor Livnat called "catastrophic". The left-wing daily Haaretz said he looked "like a frightened tyrant".

Netanyahu was even more gaunt when he left hospital in Jerusalem Tuesday after a hernia operation only to have to face the ire of the international community after a Zionist strike killed seven aid workers for a US-based group in Gaza. "It happens in war," Netanyahu said with a tact which may not have been appreciated in the White House, which said it was "heartbroken" at the deaths.

"Netanyahu has been buried politically many times before and bounced back," said Emmanuel Navon, a former Likud member and political science professor. "But this time is different because of October 7. It is not the same country. It's over for Bibi.

"He is 74, doesn't do any exercise, has a very hard job and he had a pacemaker put in six months ago."

Blamed for October 7 'disaster'

But Navon doubts Netanyahu will be forced from office by the new wave of mass street protests despite the fury of the hostages' families. Einav Zangauer, the mother of one of the 134 still held in Gaza, branded him a "pharaoh, a slayer of first-borns" at Tuesday night's rally outside parliament in Jerusalem, the fourth consecutive night of protests. They have seen hostage families uniting with anti-government demonstrators who spent nine months on the streets last year trying to stop controversial judicial reforms pushed by Netanyahu's far-right allies.

The "disaster" of October 7 would have killed off any other politician. But Navon compared Netanyahu's hold over the ruling Likud party to Donald Trump's over US Republicans. "Likud lawmakers are petrified to be penalized in the next primaries by the 'Trio' — Bibi, his wife and his son who decide everything," said the professor at Tel Aviv University. "Peoples' political lives depend on him. He has surfed populism, his candidates now tend to be conspiracy theory wackos. It is not the same party of 20 years ago."

"I don't think he will be replaced" from within Likud, "at least not right now", agreed Gideon Harat, a political scientist at Jerusalem's Hebrew University. "For early elections you need an alternative government and I don't think it will happen."

Yet, with his coalition reeling from crisis to crisis, enemies seem to be circling as never before around the leader of the Zionist entity's most right-wing government ever. Prosecutors are pushing ahead with a corruption trial against him despite the war, and protesters tried to break through police barriers to get to his home on Tuesday for the second time in four days. — AFP

Senegal's President Faye and ally Sonko to share top roles

DAKAR: Senegal's new President Bassirou Diomaye Faye looks set to share responsibilities with his appointed prime minister and former mentor Ousmane Sonko, who helped propel the political newcomer's rise to power.

Faye, 44, was sworn in Tuesday as Senegal's fifth and youngest president, after sweeping to a first-round election victory on a promise of radical reform just 10 days after being released from prison. The naming of opposition firebrand Sonko as prime minister seems a logical choice for the left-wing pan-Africanist, who has never before held an elected office.

A relative newcomer to the political sphere, Faye has spent years in the shadow of his popular and charismatic mentor. Sonko, 49, spearheaded Senegal's anti-establishment movement but endorsed Faye on the presidential ballot after he was barred from running himself due to a defamation conviction.

They were released from prison under an amnesty law on March 14, embarking on a joint campaign tour to the delight of crowds chanting "Sonko is Diomaye, Diomaye is Sonko".

Sonko received a standing ovation from his supporters and was seated in the front row during Tuesday's inauguration ceremony. After assuming the role of prime minister in the evening, he said he would submit a proposal of government appointments to Faye "within the next few hours".

It had seemed a given that Sonko would helm Faye's government after his resounding victory on



DAKAR: Bassirou Diomaye Faye (center) and his wives Marie Khone Faye (left) and Absa Faye (right) pose after his swearing in as Senegal's President. — AFP

March 24, where he garnered 54.3 percent of the vote. Sonko, who came third in the 2019 presidential election, had been embroiled in a series of legal cases since 2021 that he said were politically motivated and aimed to curtail his bid for the presidency.

The unrest linked to his legal woes left dozens dead and hundreds arrested. Following their release from jail, Faye and Sonko embarked on a whirlwind campaign tour with the aim of spreading their "project" for the people.

Sonko on Tuesday evening reiterated his programme "for a sovereign, just and prosperous Senegal" that "we drew up together, that we presented together to the Senegalese people and that we defended together".

He said it aimed to "bring about lasting and structural change" and sought to achieve "a break with the past, progress and definitive change". — AFP

International

Trump warns of 'bloodbath' at hands of illegal migrants

Trump says Biden brought 'carnage' from all over the world, 'dumped' it in America's backyard

GREEN BAY, United States: Donald Trump doubled down on his heavily criticized warning of a coming American "bloodbath" Tuesday as he told supporters US communities faced "plunder, rape and slaughter" at the hands of illegal immigrants. In some of his most inflammatory comments to date on border security, Trump accused President Joe Biden of unleashing "carnage, chaos and killing" in a country he said was flooded with drugs and besieged by foreign criminal gangs.

"I stand before you today to declare that Joe Biden's border bloodbath ... it's a bloodbath, and it's destroying our country and it's a very bad thing happening," he said in an apocalyptic campaign speech in Grand Rapids, Michigan. "It's going to end on the day that I take office." The former president — who faces a rematch against Biden in November's election — spoke out as the Republican National Committee launched BidenBloodbath.com, a website warning of an "invasion aided and abetted by Joe Biden."

While addressing the potential loss of auto manufacturing jobs to foreign countries last month in Ohio, Trump warned if he wasn't reelected, "it's going to be a bloodbath for the country." Hours after Grand Rapids, he repeated his fierce messaging at a rally in Wisconsin, where he savaged Biden for allowing what Trump called "an invasion of our country." "We will liberate this nation from crooked Joe and his migrant armies of dangerous criminals once and for all," he told supporters holding "Fire Biden" signs in Green Bay.

Biden's campaign and Democrats accused him of fomenting "political

violence," prompting an indignant response from Trump aides who said it was clear the tycoon was using the term to describe economic devastation. Trump is often criticized for using extreme language that experts fear increases the risk of violence, whether in social media posts about his multiple prosecutions or at his rallies.

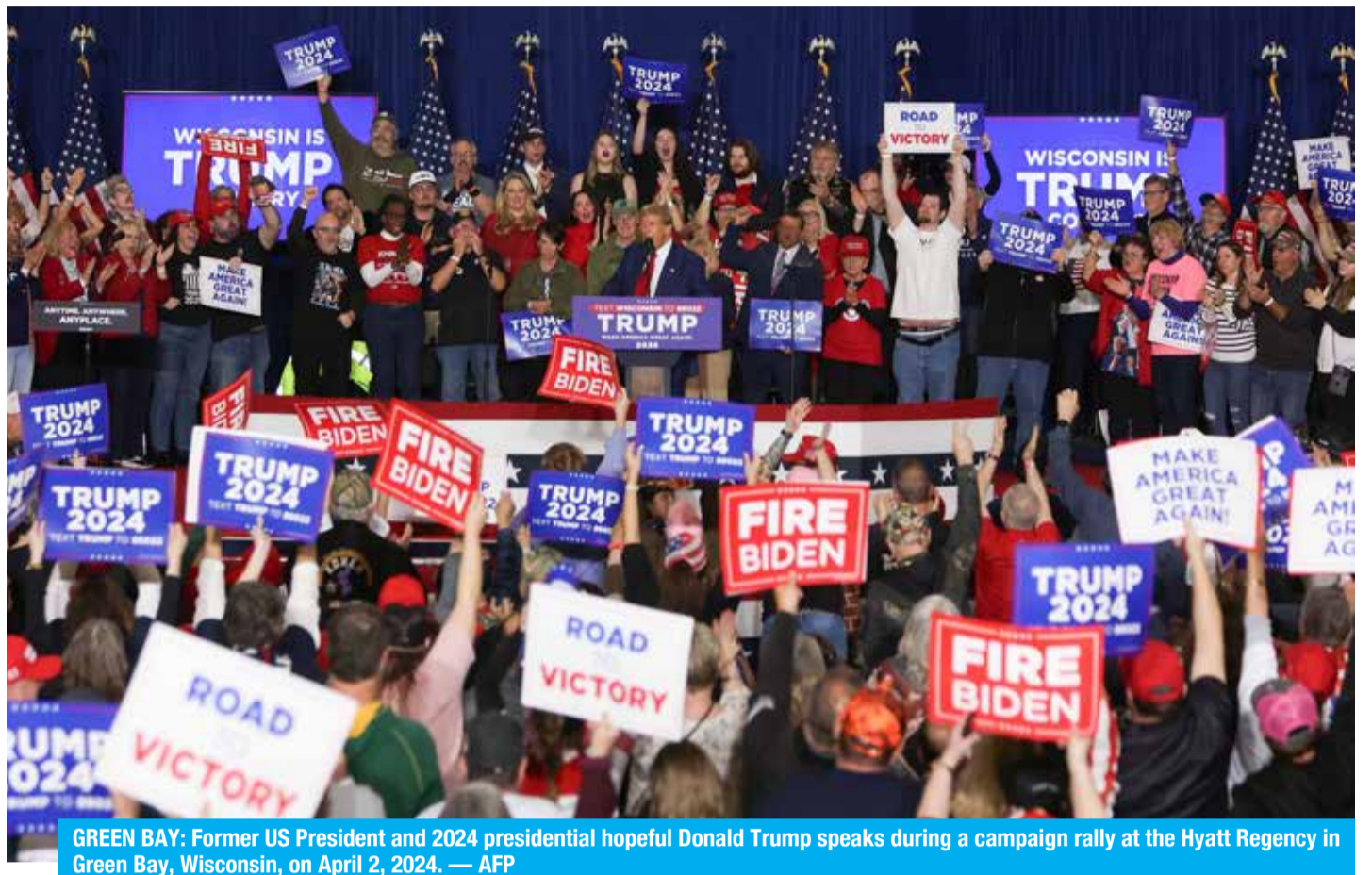
Violent crime dropping

He referred to illegal immigrants accused of criminality as "animals" in his fire-and-brimstone Michigan speech, highlighting the killings of several young women, allegedly by foreign nationals. "Under crooked Joe Biden every state is now a border state. Every town is now a border town," Trump thundered. "Because Joe Biden has brought the carnage, chaos and killing from all over the world and dumped it straight into our backyards."

He vowed to stop the "plunder, rape, slaughter and destruction of our American suburbs, cities and towns," comments he reiterated in Wisconsin. While illegal border crossings hit record highs during Biden's presidency, violent crime — in Michigan and nationwide — has been dropping since it spiked under Trump during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.

The billionaire was aiming to jumpstart his campaign with back-to-back rallies in Michigan and Wisconsin, two swing states crucial to his bid to defeat Biden. The Republican who faces more than 80 felony counts and has been in and out of court for much of the campaign, has pledged retribution against political enemies, and quipped he would be a dictator "on day one."

But in his Green Bay speech Trump



GREEN BAY: Former US President and 2024 presidential hopeful Donald Trump speaks during a campaign rally at the Hyatt Regency in Green Bay, Wisconsin, on April 2, 2024. — AFP

said it was Biden who imperils the democratic system. "I'm not the threat to democracy. Joe Biden and the fascists that control him — and they do control him — are the real threat to democracy," Trump said.

The Democratic National Committee accused Trump of hypocrisy on immigration, pointing to his pressure on Republicans in Congress to tank a recent cross-party deal that would have secured the most stringent

border security measures in a generation.

Tuesday's first address was something of a homecoming for Trump, who closed out his successful 2016 campaign in Grand Rapids, winning Michigan on the way to claiming the White House. Biden flipped the state back to Democratic in 2020, but polls currently have Trump leading, and the election is likely coming down to the wire. It is also predicted to

be tight in neighboring Wisconsin.

Biden has been on a blitz through the swing states in recent weeks, visiting Wisconsin and Michigan as well as Arizona, Nevada, North Carolina and Pennsylvania. He holds a widening lead over his Republican rival in the fundraising stakes, while Trump is burning through money as he pays legal bills to battle multiple criminal and civil court cases. — AFP

Guerrillas in Colombia lure youth on TikTok

BOGOTÁ: With promises of wealth and images glorifying fighters among vast fields of coca leaves, Colombia's modern-day guerrillas are urging young people to join their ranks via TikTok. "The Jaime Martinez Front welcomes you, youngster," reads one post by a faction of the EMC — rebels who broke away from the Marxist FARC guerrilla group when they signed a peace pact with the government in 2016.

The EMC has been holding stop-start peace talks with the government of President Gustavo Petro since the end of 2023, all while spreading propaganda promising new recruits a better life. The social media posts resonate in a country roiled by half a century of armed conflict and where poverty affects

46 percent of the rural population, according to the most recent national statistics.

On TikTok, and to a lesser extent Facebook, AFP found dozens of accounts and hundreds of publications and communities spreading propaganda for the EMC. The guerrilla group counts among 3,500 members and is mainly financed through narco-trafficking, according to military intelligence statements. "I want to join" a young woman commented on a TikTok video set to Mexican corrido drug ballads.

The user who posted the video replies that she should contact him via "private" message, one of a dozen such interactions. "I served in the military ... and now I would like to pick up a rifle again," commented a man on a post where uniformed men are seen training in the middle of a misty forest.

Guerrillas and narcos in the country recruited 110 minors last year, and this year 23 have already signed up, according to the Ombudsman's office. For rural youth with few opportunities, the armed groups offer a prospect of financial stability, but many also "end up stuck there escaping domestic violence" or

other armed groups, Alejandro Jaramillo, a researcher at New York University, told AFP. "The narrative has always been that the guerrilla (group) is going to become your family," he adds.

There is a network of profiles associated with the EMC who follow each other online and share posts with each other. With thousands of followers, they share images of men in fatigues on horseback or crossing rivers, accompanied by motivational and revolutionary messages.

The use of emojis reveals a common language: a green leaf refers to coca crops, according to experts, in the world's biggest cocaine producer. The accounts share photos and videos of the vast areas of bright green coca crops. Various users also employ emojis of the Colombian flag, or the covered face of a ninja, a "symbol of secrecy", said Jaramillo.

Clement Roux, a researcher at the Center for Media Analysis (CARISM) at the Paris-Panthéon-Assas University, said the posts draw from classic FARC propaganda, using their logos, mentioning historic commanders, and "glorifying the guerrilla lifestyle."

But they are made for social media: slick, aesthetic and targeted at young people, with uniformed, armed influencers who snap selfies in the middle of conflict. Today "every fighter has a cellphone" with which to produce content, said Roux.

Juana Cabezas, a researcher with the Indepaz thinktank, said the fighters are "seducing" young people by talking about "jewelry, money, women, cars," and a coca economy that "guarantees a fixed income." Adding to the flashy narco aesthetic associated with notorious drug lord Pablo Escobar are messages alluding to ideas of social mobility and revenge, in one of the most unequal countries in Latin America.

The content presents "a way of life where money, drinks and women are trophies" and, at the same time, "it is combined in a very curious way" with the old FARC's "collective imagination of the class struggle," said Roux. Social media propaganda serves as both a recruitment tool and a form of creating "internal cohesion" among fighters who may be spread out, making them "feel part of a bigger organization", said the expert. — AFP

Kuwait heads to the polls...

Continued from Page 1

for as little as six months. The last Assembly lasted for just over eight months.

The country went into election silence on Wednesday, with no candidate allowed to issue any election-related statement, but most of the candidates invited the public to nightly Ramadan meals later in the day. Voting is due to start at midday on Thursday and continue until midnight, when ballots close. Counting of votes begins immediately after that and the first results are expected in the early hours on Friday. The government has declared the election day a public holiday to allow more voters to turn out. Banks are also closing doors to allow their employees to participate.

Voters

Kuwait, with a total native population of 1.5 million, has 835,000 eligible voters, of whom 429,000 or 51.4 percent are women and 406,000 are men. Voting age is at 21 and servicemen in the military and the police force are barred from voting or contesting the polls.

The country is divided into five electoral districts, with each electing 10 MPs to the Assembly, but the number of voters varies wildly between constituencies, as there are only 95,000 voters in

the second constituency compared to 271,000 voters in the fifth district.

The election department of the interior ministry has allocated 123 polling centers with over 700 booths to cast ballots. There are separate centers for males and females in accordance with Kuwaiti law. HH the Amir spearheaded calls for voters to turn out in large numbers to elect their representatives. HH the Amir also called on voters to vote for candidates who would serve the country and not their own selfish interests.

Campaigns

Election campaigns were held at night because of the holy fasting month of Ramadan, but the duration was short and the intensity was lacking. But issues like Kuwaiti citizenship, national economy and fighting corruption dominated the election rallies. Experts have repeatedly said that most political crises in Kuwait take place because of the unique type of Kuwaiti democracy, mainly because Cabinet members are appointed from outside parliament and become members of parliament, enjoying powers like elected members.

During the campaign, the interior ministry revoked the citizenship of over 50 Kuwaitis on the grounds that they were obtained through illegal means and forgery. The government has repeatedly rejected moves to subject the issue of citizenship to the jurisdiction of court, saying citizenship is a sovereign issue and must be handled by the government. Political parties are barred in Kuwait but political groupings are used to effectively participate in the elections. This time, their participation has been very low.

killed at least 60 more people, the ministry said. The remains of the six international staff, who were killed alongside one Palestinian colleague, were set to be taken out of Gaza through the Rafah crossing with Egypt, said Marwan Al-Hams, director of the city's Abu Youssef Al-Najjar Hospital.

The Zionist armed forces chief Herzi Halevi called the attack a "grave mistake", which he blamed on nighttime "misidentification", adding in a video message that "we are sorry for the unintentional harm to the members of WCK". The seven deaths piled more pressure on the Zionist entity, whose war has brought devastation and mass civilian casualties to Gaza, where the UN warns the population of 2.4 million is on the brink of famine.

US President Joe Biden said he was "outraged and heartbroken" by the deaths and charged that the Zionist entity "has not done enough to protect aid workers trying to deliver desperately needed help to civilians".

Love is universal...

Continued from Page 1

the children of Adam, provided them with the means of transportation on land and sea, and provided them with good, pure (and wholesome) things, and gave them preference over many of Our other creatures." (Al-Isra'a 17: 70)

According to the teachings of Islam, no individual's honor should be compromised, and no harm should be meted out to him. It is an obvious fact that humans are superior to other creatures on Earth. Therefore, human beings should be grateful for this honor and execute the duties enjoined upon them. No person should feel superior to another.

Abdullah bin Masoud (RA) narrated that a man approached the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) and asked him, "How can I know when I have done well and when I have done something bad?" The Prophet (PBUH) said, "If you hear your neighbors say that you have done well, then you have done well, and if you hear them say that you have done something bad, then you have done something bad." (Al-Albani rated it as authentic in Sahih Ibn Ma'jah # 3, 421)

Some characteristics of the people of Paradise: Abu Zuhair Ath-Thaqafi (RA) narrated that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said, translated as: "Soon you will be able to distinguish the people of Paradise from the people of Hell. They asked, 'How O Messenger of Allah?' He replied, 'By praise and dispraise; you are Allah's witnesses over one another.'" (Al-Albani rated it as Hasan (authentic) in Sahih Ibn Ma'jah # 3, 419)

In Islam, there is much emphasis on the necessity

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said he had voiced his "anger and concern" in a phone call with Netanyahu, while Britain summoned the Zionist ambassador and demanded "full accountability". Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk wrote on X to Netanyahu and the Zionist entity's ambassador, saying the deaths were straining ties and that "the tragic attack against volunteers and your reaction are generating an understandable anger".

Kuwait's ministry of foreign affairs expressed on Tuesday Kuwait's condemnation of the raid. In a statement, the foreign ministry said Kuwait deplores the Zionist occupation forces' continued attacks on relief institutions and humanitarian organizations and their disregard for the demands of the international community to stop these massacres. The ministry stressed the need for the Security Council to assume the responsibilities entrusted to it towards maintaining and protecting international peace and security and ensuring that relief aid reaches

of promoting brotherhood and friendship with the people of other faiths as well as the people of goodwill, and at the same time, combating evil, corruption and oppression, among others. Of course, in Islam, love is universal and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was not sent except as a mercy to all creatures.

Almighty Allah said in the Noble Quran, translated as: "And We did not send you (O Muhammad) except as a mercy to the worlds." (Al-An'biya'a 21: 107) The above-quote verse (107) can also be translated as: "We have sent you only as a blessing and mercy for the people of the world". In both cases, it means that the appointment of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as a Messenger of the Majestic Allah was indeed a blessing and mercy from the Omnipotent Allah to the whole world.

A rational and intelligent love is the one that involves the good and interest of the entire mankind and not a limited number of people. One can do many things to bring good to individuals or groups while promoting the spread of evil among mankind. For example, if a judge releases a guilty and remorseful criminal, he might have done something good to that person, but a great harm will have been inflicted upon the society and the ideal of justice.

One should not let his affections hide the truth. If our beloved child needs an injection or operation, we should not let our love and passion for him prevent us from getting him the treatment he badly needs. Therefore, we should consider the immediate and eventual effect of our goodness to others and do our level best to be beneficial to most people for the longest term. — Courtesy of Kuwaiti Society for Cultural Dialogue

the Gaza Strip without obstacles or restrictions.

Pope Francis expressed his "deep sorrow" and renewed his appeal for access to aid for the "exhausted and suffering civilian population" of Gaza, and for hostages taken by Hamas to be released. The charity said it was mourning the loss of its seven "heroes" and "beautiful souls". It said they had been killed in a "targeted attack" that was launched despite the group having coordinated its movements with Zionist forces.

It named those killed as Palestinian Saifeddin Issam Ayad Abutaha, 25; Australian Lalzawmi (Zomi) Frankcom, 43; Britons John Chapman, 57, James (Jim) Henderson, 33, and James Kirby, 47; Pole Damian Sobol, 35; and US-Canadian Jacob Flickinger, 33. After their deaths, the charity suspended operations and a ship that had carried food aid from Cyprus to Gaza turned back towards the Mediterranean island with around 240 tons of supplies that had not been unloaded. — Agencies

Outrage over killing of aid workers...

Continued from Page 1

presidency, said Mansour's letter was "received and circulated" to council members, adding that talks would be held "on a way forward". The League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement sent a letter to Guterres on Tuesday, supporting the bid by the Palestinians. "We wish to bring to your attention that, as of this date, 140 Member States have recognized the state of Palestine," said the joint letter, which included a list of those countries.

The Zionist entity's campaign in Gaza has killed at least 32,916 people, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry. Overnight, Zionist strikes

International

Malnutrition threatens Afghanistan's future

10% of children under 5 in Afghanistan are malnourished, 45% are stunted



GANDANCHUSMA: (Left) An Afghan woman carrying a child to a health post to inoculate him during a routine immunization program. (Right) Hasina, a member of the Community Health Workers (CHW), weighing an Afghan child to assess malnutrition at a health post in Gandanchusma. — AFP photos

BAHARAK: Roya carefully spoon-feeds her daughter fortified milk in a ward for malnourished children, praying the tiny infant will avoid a condition that stalks one in ten young children in Afghanistan after decades of conflict.

The nine-month-old had been hospitalized three times already in remote Badakhshan province because her mother had trouble breastfeeding. "She has gained a bit of weight, she has a bit of a glow," said 35-year-old Roya, cradling baby Bibi Aseyah at the Baharak district hospital. "She drinks milk as well but she still doesn't smile," she added. "I would stay awake day and night, now I can sleep."

Poor nutrition is rife in a country plagued by economic, humanitarian and climate crises two and a half years since the Taliban returned to power. Ten percent of children under five in Afghanistan are malnourished and 45 percent are stunted — meaning they are small for their age in part due to poor nutrition — according to the United Nations.

Afghanistan has one of the world's highest rates of stunting in children under five, said Daniel Timme, communications head for the UN children's agency, UNICEF. "If not detected and treated within the first

two years of a child's life the condition (stunting) becomes irreversible and the affected child will never be able to develop mentally and physically to its full potential," he said. "This is not only tragic for the individual child but must have a severe negative impact on the development of the whole country when more than two out of five children are affected," he told AFP.

Two patients per bed

Malnutrition has been exacerbated by the upheaval sparked by the Taliban's sweep to power in 2021. A plunge in international aid and a drain of medical professionals from the country have weakened an already vulnerable health system, with women and children particularly impacted, NGOs say.

Hasina, 22, and her husband Nureddin are volunteers at one of the hundreds of community-based health posts supported by UNICEF in Badakhshan, a mountainous region that borders Pakistan, Tajikistan and China.

The couple is a first lifeline for the more than 1,000 residents of Gandanchusma village. A map of the village dominates the mud wall of a room in their home they use as a clinic, plastered with

educational posters. On a February day, women from the village trickled in, many with babies in tow whom Hasina screened for malnutrition. The babies squirmed in the cold air as their mothers pulled their sleeves off so Hasina could wrap a multi-colored measuring band around their small arms and lift them into hanging scales.

"We gather women and children and weigh the babies. If they are malnourished, we support them and refer them to the clinic," a 30-minute walk away, Hasina said. In warmer weather, she added, she sees more cases of malnutrition due to water-borne illnesses. Baharak hospital nurse Samira said in summer the ward was typically full. "Sometimes, we even have two patients in one bed," she told AFP, adding that training, including on how to support mothers' breastfeeding, had improved malnutrition rates. Seventy-nine percent of people in Afghanistan lack sufficient access to clean water, according to the UN development agency.

Web of challenges

Aisha, who asked that her real name not be used, had a clean water pump installed at her home in the

Badakhshan town of Khairabad through a UNICEF project. But she said the women around her still lacked access to information.

"The women who had some education could boil water, provide medicine or make homemade medicines, but the women who did not have any education were less capable," she said.

Under Taliban authorities, women have borne the brunt of restrictions the UN has labelled "gender apartheid" that have pushed them from public life. In a recent report warning of the frailty of the Afghan health sector, Human Rights Watch underscored the outsized impact on women because of restrictions on their movement, education and employment.

Aisha and her peers share information but worry that doing so is not enough to combat the web of challenges — both social and economic — that contribute to poor nutrition and stunting. "At the village level, it is difficult for us because we have many illiterate mothers," said another Khairabad resident, Amina. "We need more health and community workers to raise awareness among the people, distribute medicines for malnourished children and provide family planning and healthcare advice." — AFP

Rahul Gandhi: India's struggling opposition leader

NEW DELHI: The son, grandson and great-grandson of former prime ministers, Rahul Gandhi was India's next leader in waiting when he made his first foray into politics in 2004. But two decades on, as India readies to launch marathon general elections this month, the 53-year-old opposition Congress party leader has failed miserably to live up to his family legacy.

The once-dominant Congress has withered under his stewardship, and he has already suffered two landslide election defeats against Modi. He has also been hamstrung by several criminal cases lodged against him by members of Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), including a defamation conviction that saw him briefly disqualified from parliament last year. The prospects of a turnaround anytime soon, analysts believe, are bleak.

Rahul has struggled to shed his image of an entitled princeling, while his often lacklustre oratory skills are overshadowed by the populist appeal of his politically battle-hardened rival Modi. "Young India does not want a fifth-generation dynast," historian Ramachandra Guha, an ardent critic of Modi, said of Rahul after his party was drubbed in 2019 elections.

Last year, Rahul sought to change his public reputation, presenting what he said was his real self by embarking on a cross-country trek to hear the concerns of ordinary voters.

Rahul, a bachelor, argued India's media had expended time and money in portraying him in a manner "which is just untruthful and wrong" and insisting that his "truth is different." But while his journey captured some initial attention, it rapidly fizzled out. "People still find Modi more credible," Rahul Verma, of the Centre for Policy Research think-tank in New Delhi, told AFP last month.

Cambridge to Delhi

No relation to independence hero Mahatma Gandhi, Rahul was born in 1970 when his grandmother Indira Gandhi — daughter of India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru — was prime minister. In 1991, when he was 20, his father Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated by a Tamil suicide bomber, seven years after Indira was shot dead by her bodyguards.

Rahul, who was then at Harvard University, dropped out. He later graduated from Rollins College in Florida, before going on to earn a master's degree from Cambridge. After a stint as a management consultant in London, he returned to India to join the Congress party — then helmed by his Italian-born mother Sonia — and was subsequently elected to parliament.

Despite once comparing power to poison, Rahul formally took over the reins of the party from his mother in 2017. But he has had little to show by way of achievement. Regularly fumbling while delivering speeches in Hindi, Rahul was dubbed "pappu", or witless, by Modi.

The Congress party, which dominated politics for decades after independence, was repeatedly humbled. In the 2019 general elections, Rahul lost his formerly safe seat of Amethi in Uttar Pradesh to rising BJP star Smriti Irani. He blamed the defeat on Modi's BJP using "the entire machinery of the Indian state" against the opposition. — AFP

Rahul Gandhi files nomination for India election

NEW DELHI: Thousands of supporters thronged India's most prominent opposition leader Rahul Gandhi during a campaign procession Wednesday ahead of his formal nomination for national elections starting this month. Gandhi is the son, grandson, and great-grandson of former prime ministers, but has already suffered two landslide defeats against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He is the leading figure in an opposition alliance fighting an uphill battle in this year's polls against Modi, who remains broadly popular after a decade in power and is widely expected to comfortably retain office. But Gandhi was given a rousing reception in Wayanad, a picturesque town in the southern state of Kerala, with a huge crowd gathering to cheer his arrival.

"I don't think of you as my electorate but as my family," he told the large gathering from atop a truck, flanked by his younger sister Priyanka and cadres from his Congress party.

The 53-year-old formally filed his nomination to recontest Wayanad with the local election office after the rally. Gandhi was first elected to the constituency in 2019 but was briefly disqualified from parliament last year after his conviction for criminal libel in a case filed by a member of Modi's party.

He was reinstated pending a Supreme Court appeal but his decision to recontest the seat has caused

Iran consulate strike revives war memories

DAMASCUS: Stunned residents of Damascus' upscale Mazzeh district watched Tuesday as rescuers combed through the rubble of the Iranian consulate, destroyed in a strike blamed on the Zionist entity that has revived memories of the darkest days of Syria's civil war.

The strike on Monday afternoon killed at least 13 people when it hit the consular annex of Iran's embassy, Iranian state media reported. Two generals and five other personnel from the Iranian Revolutionary Guards were among the dead, the reports said. Damascus has been spared the worst of the civil conflict, which began with anti-government protests in 2011 before drawing in international jihadists and foreign armies, and laying waste to parts of the country.

Mahmud Badawi, 42, who lives in the building next to the consulate, said he heard an "enormous explosion" and was thrown against the wall as the blast blew out his windows. "I couldn't see anything. The house was full of dust and we started to hear calls for help," he told AFP.

The Zionist entity has launched hundreds of air strikes in Syria since

civil war broke out, targeting Iran-backed forces including Lebanon's Hezbollah movement as well as Syrian army positions and weapons depots.

But the strikes have increased since the Zionist entity waged war on Gaza in October 2023. Badawi said that over 13 years of war he had always held out hope that the situation would improve. "But after this, I have no hope," he said. "I am going to leave to find a better future and ensure my family's security."

'Worst memories'

The Zionist entity has stepped up operations against Iranian and Iran-backed commanders in Syria and neighboring Lebanon, where the entity and Hezbollah have been exchanging near-daily cross border attacks.

An Iranian flag was draped near the remains of the consulate building in Damascus after the strike, which carved out a crater some five meters (16 feet) deep. Residents nearby cleared away shattered glass and removed damaged cars, while shops were closed around the embassy, in an area also home to other diplomatic missions and UN offices.

Mazeh resident Rasha Saleh, 33, an NGO worker, said she lived through the war in Aleppo, a city in northern Syria that saw heavy fighting. "When I moved to Damascus in 2022, I thought the war was over. But it seems that's not the case," she told AFP.

After Monday's strikes, "the worst



WAYANAD: India's Congress party leader Rahul Gandhi (center) waves to his supporters during a roadshow, before filing his nomination papers for the upcoming general elections. — AFP

some friction within the opposition alliance. His main challenger is firebrand leftist Annie Raja of the Communist Party of India, a fellow member of the bloc.

Her allies have criticized Gandhi for not choosing to fight in another seat against an established candidate from Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

"The entire country should discuss the inappropriateness of this," Kerala's chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan, a member of Raja's party, told reporters on Tuesday. Nearly a billion Indians will vote to elect a new government in six-week-long parliamentary elections starting on April 19. — AFP



DAMASCUS: Rescue workers search in the rubble of a building annexed to the Iranian embassy a day after an air strike in Damascus on April 2, 2024. — AFP

memories flooded back to me," she said. "I cried all night." The war has killed more than 507,000 people and millions have been forced to flee their homes.

'All afraid'

The caretaker of a nearby building, who asked to be identified as Abu Mohammed, said his granddaughter was wounded in the strike. "I didn't know what happened. One moment I was standing on the sidewalk, and the next I found myself" on another part of the street, he said. "I thought the war was over, but it seems like it's started again," he said.

Emergency teams worked through the night and on Tuesday pulled two bodies from the building, including a woman in her fifties. A civil defense source said a security guard from a nearby building and a passerby were among the wounded.

"There is at least one other body under the rubble," the source told AFP, requesting anonymity as they were not authorized to speak to the media. People peered at the wreck of the consulate from nearby balconies in shock, some taking photos, while police dispersed onlookers who tried to gather near the site. — AFP

Business

THURSDAY, APRIL 4, 2024

Kuwait's business confidence soars in non-oil sector: S&P

PMI shows rise in job creation amid signs of inflationary pressures

KUWAIT: Business confidence in Kuwait's non-oil sector reached record-high levels in March with a notable expansion in output and new orders, according to S&P Global Kuwait Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI). The inaugural S&P Global Kuwait Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) paints a promising picture for the nation's non-oil private sector, indicating a significant strengthening of growth momentum in March.

The index revealed a marginal increase in job creation and signs of increased inflationary pressures. Kuwait recorded the sharpest increase in staff costs on record and the sharpest rise in selling prices for almost two-and-a-half years. Kuwait's PMI increased from 52.7 in February to 53.2 in March, reflecting the most prominent improvement in business conditions since July 2020.

Advertising efforts and competitive pricing strategies played pivotal roles in driving further increases in both business activity and new orders in Kuwait's non-oil sector in March.

The rates of expansion in these areas were the fastest since July 2020, underscoring the robust growth momentum. "Kuwaiti non-oil firms are in a strong growth phase at present, with competitive pricing really paying off and attracting customers in increasing numbers," stated Andrew Harker, economics direc-



tor at S&P Global Market Intelligence.

Despite strong growth in new orders, employment levels in Kuwait's non-oil sector saw only fractional increases, resulting in the accumulation of outstanding

business for the 14th consecutive month. Efforts to meet customer demands led to marked increases in purchasing activity and stocks of inputs, supporting continued growth. Meanwhile, suppliers' deliv-

ery times continued to decline, albeit to the least extent since July 2022.

"If new orders continue to flow in as they have been doing, firms will likely need to take on additional staff to pre-

vent delays in the completion of projects," added Harker.

Inflationary pressures were notable in March, with the steepest increase in staff costs on record and the sharpest rise in selling prices in almost two-and-a-half years in Kuwait's non-oil sector. Rapid increases in purchase prices, particularly in computers and printing-related costs, contributed to heightened inflation concerns.

Despite inflationary pressures, business confidence strengthened in March, with around one-third of respondents expressing optimism about future activity over the next 12 months. Moreover, the offer of quality products at competitive prices is expected to sustain output growth in the coming year.

The new Kuwait PMI provides a leading indicator with which policymakers, investors and businesses can gauge the health of the Kuwaiti business environment outside of the oil sector. The Kuwait survey data have been collected monthly since 2018, allowing the current business situation to be analyzed in the context of recent historical trends, including over the COVID-19 pandemic.

Based on survey responses from approximately 350 private sector companies, the Index covers contributions to non-oil GDP across manufacturing, construction, wholesale, retail and services sectors.

Yellen to press China on 'unfair' trade practices

WASHINGTON: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen leaves Wednesday for China, for the second time in less than a year to manage ties as Washington maintains a tough stance on Beijing ahead of November's election. Yellen's trip from April 3-9 will begin in the southern Guangzhou city where she will speak with representatives of US firms as well meet with Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng and Guangdong province governor Wang Weizhong. She will then head north to Beijing for talks with Premier Li Qiang, Finance Minister Lan Fo'an and central bank governor Pan Gongsheng, said the Treasury Department.

Yellen's trip comes just eight months since she first visited China as US Treasury chief seeking to stabilize turbulent relations between the world's two biggest economies.

That trip in July 2023 helped restart dialogue after a period of heightened tensions and culminated in the launching of bilateral working groups on economic and financial policy.

This time, Yellen intends to press counterparts on "unfair trade practices" and highlight the "global economic consequences of Chinese industrial overcapacity," said the Treasury.

Washington is especially concerned about any surge of cheap exports in areas like electric vehicles, lithium-ion batteries and solar energy hurting US industries. A flood of Chinese goods has pre-

viously impacted US firms and workers. Treasury Under Secretary for international affairs Jay Shambaugh told AFP. "It is not something we intend to just watch," he said in an interview.

"We'd like to see shifts across a number of things, whether it's macro policy, industrial support, setting production targets that kind of exceed what the global market can bear," Shambaugh added. Yellen warned in December that China is "too large to export its way to growth."

Tremors in China's property market or problems with local government debt can also threaten spillovers. "With China and an economy of its size and its scale, it is not just a price-taker on world markets," a Treasury official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

But the US-China economic relationship is "unquestionably now on firmer footing than it was two years ago," the official added. Treasury Deputy Under Secretary for international finance Brent Neiman said the two countries have successfully conducted an exercise to see "what would happen if there was a failure of a global systemically important bank in either of our jurisdictions."

Both countries' central banks have also compared approaches to climate risk modeling. Neiman told AFP. "We know our counterparts, we know their system, they know ours and frankly, if something were to go wrong, we know who to call," he said.

The "downward trajectory" in US-China relations has stabilized since last year, said Bill Bishop, who publishes the Sinocism newsletter. "But there's nothing that would indicate sort of a more sustainable or structural shift in that trajectory," he added. China is especially upset with US efforts to restrict its access to higher ends of the semiconductor supply chain.

With US elections approaching, "neither side is



Janet Yellen

looking to launch major negotiations or bilateral initiatives," said Brookings fellow Patricia Kim.

"Beijing, like many foreign capitals, is likely in wait-and-see mode," she added. But maintaining communication allows both countries to discuss issues like debt challenges in developing countries, which the Treasury also intends to address. Yun Sun, senior fellow at the Stimson Center, said concessions to China are impossible in an election year.

Yet both sides are willing to present the optics of close consultation, bringing a message of stabilization, she added. Yellen's last Beijing visit was met with fanfare, with her appearance at a local restaurant generating social media buzz.

The state-owned China Daily wrote in a recent editorial that Yellen is known for her "often pragmatic and relatively positive tone" in managing US-China ties. Contrasting Yellen with "anti-China hawks in Washington," the report said she is well-suited for a "bridging role" as she has built trust with counterparts. — AFP

Chinese-owned solar panel firms face EU probe over subsidies

BRUSSELS: The European Union on Wednesday announced investigations against two Chinese-owned solar panel manufacturers suspected of receiving subsidies that Brussels worries are undercutting the bloc's firms. The probes are under new rules that came into force in July last year which seek to prevent foreign subsidies undermining fair competition in the 27-nation EU.

"The (European) Commission will assess whether the economic operators concerned did benefit from an unfair advantage to win public contracts in the EU," the bloc's powerful antitrust regulator said. Under investigation are two consortiums, one of which includes the Enevo group in Romania, and the other a German subsidiary of Chinese parent company Longi Green Energy Technology. Longi is the world's biggest solar panel manufacturer.

The second consortium is made up of two subsidiaries both fully owned and controlled by Chinese state-owned firm, Shanghai Electric group. The new rules demand firms tell the commission when their public procurement tenders in the EU are worth more than 250 million euros (\$270 million) and when the company has been granted at least four million euros in foreign financial contributions in the three previous years. "The commission considered it justified to open an in-depth investigation for two bidders, since there are sufficient indications that both have been granted foreign subsidies that distort the internal market," said a statement. — AFP

Turks left scrimping as costs for food and fuel skyrocket

PARIS: As the euphoria of a municipal election drubbing for President Recep Tayyip Erdogan ebbs, Turks are left watching their wallets with inflation that has sapped the longtime leader's appeal driving up costs for everyday basics.

Even as the government vows austerity measures and the central bank hikes rates, price growth "is not stopping, it's going up," said economist Murat Sagman, founder of Sagam Strategy Advisory.

Official data released Wednesday put year-on-year price growth at 68.5 percent in March, up from 67.07 the previous month. ENAG, a group of independent economists, said their own calculations put the annual figure at almost 125 percent and rising. "In the market, (it's) one price in the morning, another price in the evening. I can't make a living if I sell this corn at a cheaper price," said Osman Karakoc, 64, selling grilled cobs for 30 lira (\$0.93) apiece from a small cart outside a mosque at Istanbul's Egyptian Market.

"It's the product of our country, but we can hardly buy it," he added. Erdogan, in power since 2003, was once feted for Turkey's economic success story, but in recent years it has become his Achilles heel.

Some of the surge in price growth over recent years was down to Erdogan's unorthodox views on monetary policy. The Islamic conservative president

long blamed inflation on high interest rates, whereas mainstream economists see increasing the cost of borrowing as a way to brake activity and thereby ease pressure on prices. More recently, Erdogan has allowed Turkey's central bank to hike its main policy rate from just 8.5 percent before his re-election last May to 50 percent last month.

But the monetary authority lists other factors still feeding inflation, including a weak lira currency—down 40 percent against the dollar in a year -- a massive jump in the minimum wage in January and surging costs for food and fuel. The government must follow through on its promises to slash spending to flank the central bank's efforts to slow price growth, Sagman said.

"It's the only way to lower inflation, to make the whole policy tight for a certain period of time," he said. Nicholas Farr of Capital Economics commented that "further monetary tightening lies in store... a more concerted effort to tighten fiscal policy will be needed too".

"We will do whatever is necessary until we reach our goal of price stability, which is our top priority," Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek said Wednesday. Shoppers at Istanbul's Egyptian Market were emphatic about feeling the pinch. Many browsing the stalls piled high with olives, fish, cheese and spices were pensioners living on incomes of around 10,000 lira per month.

"I have been voting for Erdogan for as long as I can remember... we trusted Tayyip and turned a blind eye to everything, but enough is enough," said Leyla Duman, a housewife in her 60s wearing an Islamic headscarf with sunglasses and a long coat. "They give 10,000 lira to pensioners: should people pay



ISTANBUL: Food is one of the items weighing heaviest on Turks' pockets. — AFP

their rent or pay their bills with it?" she asked. Her husband Serif, a 63-year-old working at the highways authority, said that he "cannot retire out of fear" as the basic pension "is not enough".

The couple showed off two small plastic bags of shopping they said had cost them 3,000 lira, with items including 100 grams (3.5 ounces) of coffee and toys for their granddaughter. "Our money is melting every day," Serif said.

One factor in Erdogan's favor is the lack of elections until Turks next vote for their president in 2028,

offering a window for potentially painful steps to restrain price growth. "We have a lot of time to make all the structural reforms" but "I think we're going to see a slowdown in the economy" with high rates and tight spending, economist Sagman said. The challenge for the central bank and finance ministry is "to go to a soft landing (rather) than go to a hard landing," he added. Such terms draw a distinction between clamping down on price growth without completely slamming the brakes on activity, versus inflation-fighting measures triggering a severe recession. — AFP

NBK ECONOMIC REPORT

Oil prices rise in March on OPEC+ cuts and resilient global economy

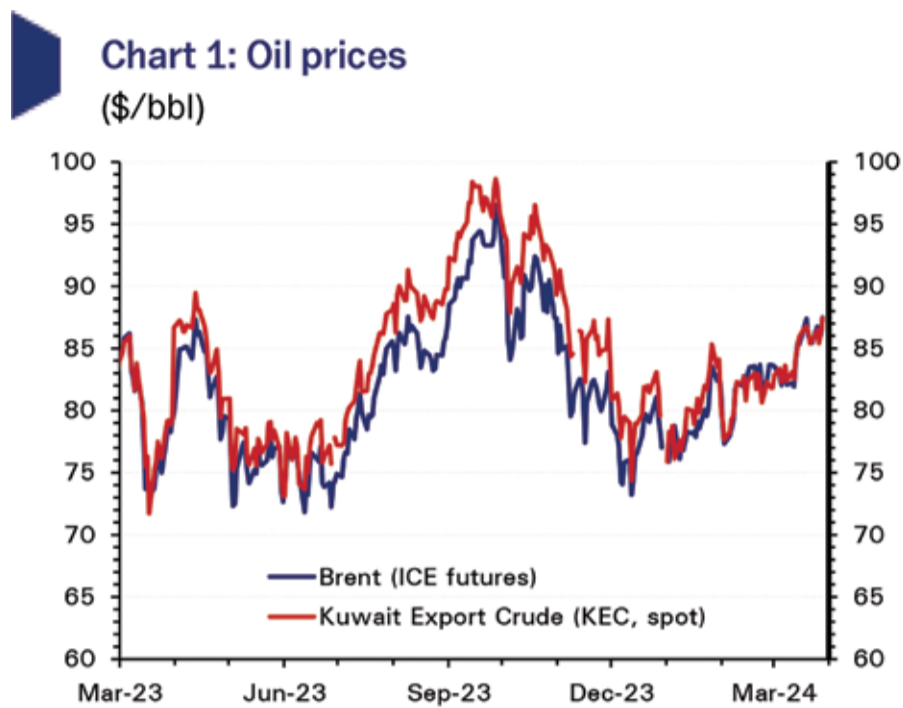
Demand growth forecasts for 2024 remain solid

KUWAIT: Oil prices rallied for a third straight month in March, supported by tighter supplies, a resilient global economy and continued geopolitical uncertainty. Brent futures closed up 4.6 percent in March to \$87.5/bbl (+13.6 percent ytd). Backwardation in the forward curve (where near-term prices exceed those for later deliveries) began widening again mid-month, a sign that markets perceived increased near-term supply tightness. Meanwhile, local marker Kuwait Export Crude (KEC) gained 5.5 percent in March to \$86.3/bbl (+8.5 percent ytd).

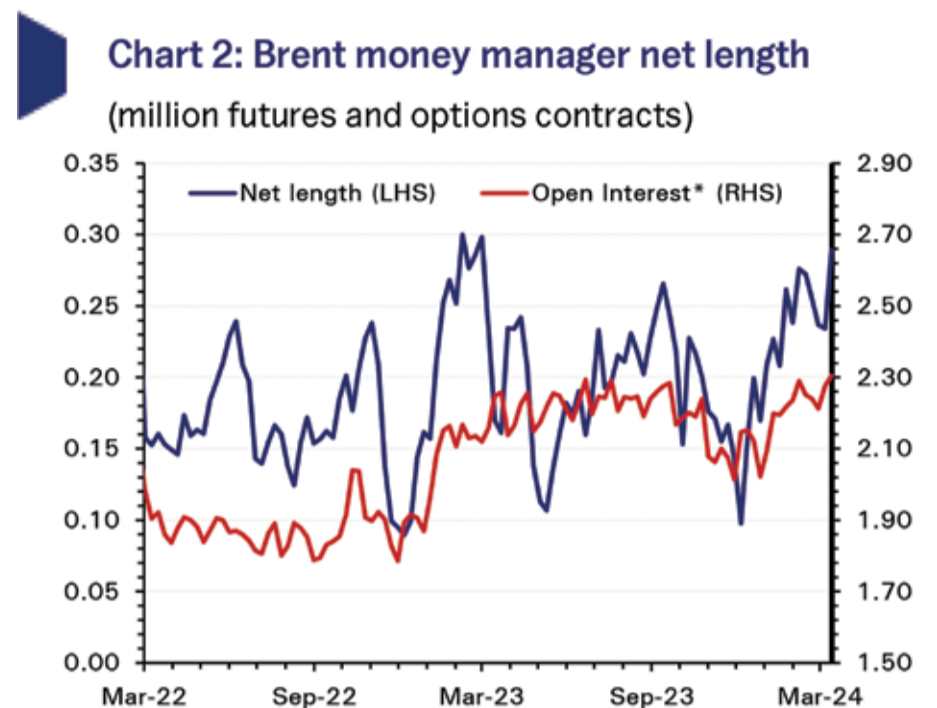
Trading in Brent futures and options increased substantially in Q1, with 'open interest' rising to 2.3 million contracts as of March 19, its highest level in two and a half years. Sparked by OPEC's extension and deepening of 2023's production cuts, bullish positions have increased markedly, propelling net length—the difference between the number of 'long' contracts (speculating on oil prices rising) and the number of 'short' contracts (prices falling)—to its highest in almost a year (289k).

Oil demand growth forecasts for 2024 remain solid, albeit slowing from 2023. The International Energy Agency (IEA) in March again revised up its projection for oil demand growth, by 110 kb/d to 1.3 mb/d. The IEA cited an improved US economic outlook including a resilient labor market as the basis for its revision. Its forecast is still some way below OPEC's bullish estimate of 2.25 mb/d, which the latter has maintained since mid-2023. OPEC has stood by its belief that oil demand will be robust on the back of growth momentum in non-OECD economies, while potential interest rate cuts by central banks later in the year should also support an improved global macroeconomic outlook.

On the supply side, combined data from OPEC secondary sources and S&P Global show aggregate OPEC+ crude production (quota members) largely unchanged in February at 34.42 mb/d (+10 kb/d m/m). Among OPEC-9 members, Nigeria recorded the largest monthly increase (+47 kb/d to 1.48 mb/d), followed by Saudi Arabia (+18 kb/d to 8.98 mb/d). OPEC-9 output gains were largely offset by declines among non-OPEC-9 countries, primarily South Sudan, which experienced an almost 50 percent re-



Source: Refinitiv, KPC



Source: Bloomberg. *Futures contracts only

duction in output (-70 kb/d) due to a pipeline blockage. Compliance with the latest round of OPEC+ cuts was weakest in Kazakhstan, which has yet to effect any cuts at all, and Iraq, whose crude output of 4.20 mb/d remained more than 200 kb/d above its quota. Among quota-exempt members, both Libya and Venezuela notched up output gains in February, of 144 kb/d to 1.17 mb/d and 16 kb/d to 0.82 mb/d, respectively. For Libya, this large increase came after production at the Sharara field was restarted, and for Venezuela, February's gain was the fifth consecutive. Production in Iran, however, fell for the second month in a row (-15 kb/d to 3.15 mb/d).

In terms of the impact of OPEC's production cuts on oil market balances, the effect has been to flip the market from a surplus in Q4 2023 to a deficit in Q1 2024. Aggregate OPEC-12 output in Q1 has so far averaged 26.47 mb/d, well below the 26.92 mb/d the IEA estimates the group needs to supply to

balance the market. Using the IEA's oil demand and non-OPEC supply estimates, a supply deficit of 0.45 mb/d opened up in Q1. For the rest of the year, the IEA has extrapolated the impact on market balances of a base case scenario in which OPEC+ cuts are extended beyond Q2 to end-2024. It sees deficits in every quarter of the year and by as much as 0.72 mb/d in Q3. OPEC+ will decide on any extension or unwinding of its 2.1 mb/d of cuts in June.

In Kuwait, a record volume of refined petroleum products was produced in January. According to official data released through the Joint Organizations Data Initiative (JODI), this reached 1.20 mb/d, helped by the ramping up of operations at the Al-Zour refinery. Product exports, the largest of which by volume consist of gasoil/diesel, kerosene and naphtha, surged to their highest level, 1.02 mb/d, since 2009. At this rate, average product export volumes in 2024 should surpass

last year's high of 0.96 mb/d and translate into export revenues in excess of the record \$25 billion generated in 2023. That said, these refined product gains have come at the expense of crude exports, which according to January's figure of 1.24 mb/d, look to have fallen to their lowest level in more than twenty years. With Kuwait's crude production capped by OPEC+ policy, to tap into the higher value product exports, such as distillates, KPC has had to divert crude volumes destined for exports to the local refinery for processing into products. The trade-off has been worth it in terms of export revenues.

In the US, crude oil output fell slightly to 13.1 mb/d in March from the record 13.3 mb/d seen in Jan/Feb—but in line with the US Energy Information Administration's (EIA) average output projection for 2024. Crude stocks in the US Strategic Petroleum Reserves continued to increase in March: by the 21st of the month, they were up more than 8.6 mb in

2024 to 363.05 mb, reflecting the Department of Energy's aggressive crude repurchase program, which has been helped by its decision to raise its target price to +\$79/bbl from \$65-72/bbl last year.

The outlook for oil prices has improved compared to the start of the year. While the global economy has demonstrated resilience, carrying with it better-than-expected oil consumption, it is largely due to OPEC+ supply cuts that the market has tightened—and looks likely to remain tight throughout 2024. Speculator interest has turned more bullish, with the balance of price risks shifting to the upside while OPEC+ restrains output. Downside risks, from robust non-OPEC/US supply and a de-escalation in global geopolitical tensions to a potentially underperforming global economy or an aggressive unwinding of the OPEC+ cuts in July, remain present, however. We see Brent averaging around \$85/bbl in 2024.



KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 28 MARCH 2024

(965) 22 675 140
Al-Safat Tower, Hawalli, Beirut St.
alsafatinvest.com
research@alsafatinvest.com
alsafatinvestment
al-safat-investment-company

No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	975	960	980	959	21	22,138,557	-11	-1.13%	7.38%	958	974	14.2	1.77	3.6%	1.02
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	294	294	296	292	4	19,542,117	0	0.00%	4.63%	294	298	14.1	1.30	4.1%	1.28
104	Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait	Banking	258	254	259	254	5	2,166,679	21	9.01%	9.01%	244	260	13.8	0.97	3.5%	0.93
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	169	170	170	167	3	11,646,767	1	0.59%	13.33%	167	173	17.0	0.60	3.0%	1.09
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	209	207	210	205	5	10,533,922	-2	-0.96%	20.35%	202	212	20.9	0.71	2.9%	1.30
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	809	800	810	791	19	44,563,746	-7	-0.87%	10.19%	799	814	20.9	2.01	2.5%	1.16
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	615	620	622	614	8	5,484,961	6	0.98%	3.33%	616	627	32.8	2.43	1.3%	1.16
201	Kuwait Investment	Financial Services	191	191	196	188	8	3,711,317	-2	-1.04%	50.39%	178	200	14.3	0.86	2.6%	2.06
204	National Investments	Financial Services	267	265	275	262	13	5,910,973	0	0.00%	10.88%	257	267	51.7	1.24	10.4%	2.09
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	132	122	134	120	14	88,959,742	-10	-7.58%	16.19%	122	126	65.4	0.71	0.0%	0.97
212	Arzan Financial Group	Financial Services	202	195	202	188	14	15,015,702	-8	-3.94%	-7.14%	195	202	28.6	1.34	2.0%	1.25
222	Aayan Leasing and Investment	Financial Services	183	182	187	182	5	12,764,897	-2	-1.09%	4.60%	180	184	9.9	1.25	4.1%	1.62
252	Al Imtiaz Investment	Financial Services	49	47.3	49.7	47	2.6	5,895,911	-1.8	-3.67%	-16.28%	47.0	47.7	NM	0.33	0.0%	1.36
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	228	225	228	223	5	8,521,769	-3	-1.32%	9.76%	220	237	18.1	1.50	1.3%	1.13
404	Salhia Real Estate	Real Estate	485	469	489	466	23	2,904,078	40	9.32%	9.32%	460	480	16.2	1.44	3.2%	0.55
413	Mabaneeh	Real Estate	788	791	818	781	37	5,399,934	-11	-1.36%	-0.54%	778	799	16.8	1.76	1.7%	1.00
418	The Commercial Real Estate	Real Estate	129	127	130	124	6	21,444,078	-1	-0.78%	24.51%	125	133	15.6	0.76	2.3%	0.64
501	National Industries	Financial Services	222	220	225	218	7	15,781,880	-3	-1.35%	7.84%	217	226	20.5	0.99	2.2%	1.63
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,372	1,340	1,372	1,280	92	1,587,894	-36	-2.62%	2.29%	1,319	1,350	13.3	1.21	4.9%	1.08
506	HEISCO	Industrials	809	784	809	775	34	2,515,564	-20	-2.49%	-4.39%	769	793	19.7	1.90	3.9%	0.97
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	611	618	620	606	14	3,074,972	9	1.48%	5.64%	604	633	12.8	1.26	9.8%	0.96
603	Agility	Industrials	601	666	682	601	81	48,218,821	67	11.19%	30.84%	654	672	18.8	0.89	0.0%	1.57
605	Zain	Telecommunications	501	491	506	491	15	17,583,372	-10	-2.00%	-3.16%	487	495	9.9	1.72	7.1%	0.60
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,324	3,333	3,349	3,302	47	479,831	12	0.36%	-1.94%	3,315	3,350	10.2	3.36	10.5%	0.64
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	208	213	215	208	7	2,200,990	5	2.40%	18.33%	210	213	NM	0.93	0.0%	1.27
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,158	1,180	1,190	1,150	40	1,469,202	25	2.16%	-15.05%	1,100	1,204	42.2	10.16	2.4%	1.31
813	GFH Financial Group	Financial Services	88.5	88.4	89.7	86.9	2.8	80,644,807	0.5	0.57%	15.86%	86.3	90.0	10.5	1.10	5.2%	1.43
821	Warba Bank	Banking	189	186	190	185	5	14,759,504	-3	-1.59%	0.00%	181	188	23.1	0.98	1.6%	1.10
822	Kuwait Telecommunications	Telecommunications	595	594	598	590	8	3,254,258	31	5.51%	5.51%	586	595	18.1	2.42	5.9%	0.69
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	640	658	663	629	34	3,120,157	18	2.81%	14.43%	650	660	17.5	1.82	1.9%	0.47
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	530	531	543	528	15	2,843,963	-12	-2.21%	4.12%	520	535	38.0	2.21	2.8%	0.75
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,113	2,099	2,118	1,990	128	956,414	-14	-0.66%	21.75%	2,094	2,125	26.5	6.52	3.5%	1.38
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	1,180	1,165	1,218	1,150	68	1,464,062	-33	-2.75%	10.32%	1,140	1,175	11.4	3.93	5.9%	0.75

* As of end of week closing

Business

NBK Mobile Banking App: Your mobile branch during travel

The ideal companion in travel and holiday seasons

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues to provide a rich digital experience to its customers through the NBK Mobile Banking App, enabling them to manage their accounts and make their banking transactions easily and securely 24/7, anytime, anywhere, without the hassle of visiting branches.

With the wide range of services, useful features, and regular enhancements, NBK Mobile Banking App is considered the ideal companion for customers during the travel and holiday seasons.

Managing accounts and cards

The NBK Mobile Banking App allows customers to view their accounts and manage their debit, credit, and prepaid cards while traveling. They can also inform the bank by selecting the cards they would like to use while being abroad. Users can report/lost stolen cards with a click of a button via the App. Once the card has been reported, a replacement card will be issued automatically. In addition, they can easily block or unblock their credit cards using the App with just a few simple steps.

Local and international transfers

Transfers, whether local or international, are made easier with the NBK Mobile Banking App, as customers do not need an OTP. Instead, they can authenticate with their password or biometrics (Face ID). Once the transfer is done, users will get a transfer receipt, and can also refer to account statement and go to the transfer transaction.

Customers can also use the App to increase their monthly transfer limit up to KD 30,000 without the hassle of calling the call center or going to the branch.

Quick and easy payments

The NBK Mobile Banking App enables users to make easy payments to credit cards, Ministry of Communications, and e-Payments that includes local and international telecoms, TV channels, in addition to buying online shopping cards, digital games, and much more. FlexiPay is also available on the App providing eligible NBK Credit Cardholders with the flexibility to make payments for their in-store or online purchases, whether made



Mohammed Al-Dakheel

- We strive to deliver a top-notch banking experience to our customers wherever they are
- The App allows managing accounts and cards, making local and international transfers, and quick payments

locally or internationally.

The App also offers customers the enhanced service of Quick Pay to send links and receive money, anytime, even during the weekends and official holidays, and choose the preferred method of sharing the link. Additionally, they can view exchange rates and use the currency calculator for currency conversion.

Push notifications

The NBK Mobile Banking App allows customers to use the Push Notifications instead of SMS to receive the alerts in the

app conveniently instead of changing the SIM Card to receive the SMS on the Kuwait line. This gives you faster updates on your account activities. Commenting on this, Mohammed Al-Dakheel, Head of Mobile Banking, Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait said: "NBK provides regular updates and enhancements to its Mobile Banking App to provide customers with new and innovative banking methods, as part of its endeavors to deliver a top-notch banking experience by enabling them to make their different banking transactions anytime, anywhere."

"During the official holidays and travel seasons, we seek to facilitate our customers' transactions while being abroad so that they can conduct them digitally in a very easy and secure way. NBK is committed to introduce more innovative digital services tailored to customers' needs via the NBK Mobile Banking App, which helps enhance their banking experience and give them more luxury," he added.

Through the NBK Mobile Banking App, NBK aims to offer customers a secure platform to conveniently manage their finances at any given moment. This service facilitates a wide range of banking activities, including opening new accounts, monitoring transactions on accounts and credit cards, accessing accumulated NBK Miles and NBK Rewards Program points, settling credit card dues, making payments for electronic bills, updating personal information, and much more services. Customers can easily download the NBK Mobile Banking App, which is currently available on various platforms including the App Store, Google Play, and Huawei AppGallery.

Tesla reports drop in auto sales, while Toyota sees US surge

NEW YORK: Tesla reported sharply lower first-quarter auto sales on Tuesday amid an underwhelming demand outlook for electric vehicles, while legacy players including Toyota rode improved US inventories to higher sales. Elon Musk's auto giant reported 386,810 global deliveries over the period, down 8.5 percent, reflecting in part a weak sales market in China, where it faces heavy competition from local electric vehicle (EV) makers.

Tesla also cited the drag from an apparent arson attack on power lines in Germany that dented output at the company's lone European factory. Among other automakers, General Motors reported a slight dip in sales—while Toyota enjoyed a surge compared with a year-ago period, when it was constrained by severe inventory issues due to COVID-19 supply chain problems.

Analysts have been expecting about a six percent rise in overall sales in the quarter, reflecting a still strong US labor market and an improved supply picture that has eased pricing pressures.

However, market watchers caution that many consumers still feel the pinch from higher interest rates. In explaining the drop, Tesla pointed to a hit from the production ramp-up of an updated Model 3 at its California factory and plant shutdowns due to shipping diversions caused by the Red Sea conflict, as well as the attack on Gigafactory Berlin. Financial services firm Morningstar said the decline also "points to a slowdown in demand for Tesla's vehicles, as the company's competitors, particularly in China, may have cut prices more than Tesla to win consumers."

Analysts have been girding for a tough first quarter for the high-flying Tesla, which has reportedly cut production in China in the face of the rise of BYD and other Chinese automakers.

At the same time, an increase in EVs in other markets including the United States has led Tesla to enact price cuts, dimming the company's profit out-



FALLS CHURCH, US: A Tesla Model S sedan is plugged into a Tesla Supercharger electrical vehicle charging station in Falls Church, Virginia. — AFP

look. "While we were anticipating a bad IQ, this was an unmitigated disaster," said Wedbush analyst Dan Ives. "We view this as a seminal moment in the Tesla story for Musk to either turn this around and reverse the black eye IQ performance," he added. "Otherwise, some darker days could clearly be ahead that could disrupt the long-term Tesla narrative."

Elsewhere, GM reported a 1.5 percent dip in first-quarter US deliveries. But the US giant pointed to continued strong customer demand for its vehicles, with its incentives trending below the industry average. While overall EV sales fell compared with the year-ago period, GM described its ramp-up as "on track," with deliveries of its Equinox EV beginning to ship to dealers in the first half of 2024.

Targeted at middle- and working-class consumers, the Equinox is being closely watched as a barometer of mainstream US demand for EVs.

The first available versions of the model will start at \$43,295, with the lowest priced option around

\$35,000 available later in 2024, according to Chevy. The average EV was priced at \$52,314 in February, according to Kelley Blue Book. The Equinox will also qualify for a federal \$7,500 US tax credit.

At Toyota, US auto sales for the quarter jumped 20.3 percent to 565,098. The Japanese automaker scored broad-based gains across its nameplate and Lexus luxury brand thanks to a much-improved inventory situation. Similarly, Honda, which also experienced vehicle shortages in the 2023 period, won a 17.3 percent increase in US quarterly sales to 333,824.

Cox Automotive Chief Economist Jonathan Smoke described the macro environment as "mixed," noting that some potential car consumers may hold off on purchases if they expect the US Federal Reserve to cut interest rates later this year. "It's not bleak, but it's not trending positively for consumer spending to improve in the near term," Smoke said on a conference call last week. Tesla shares fell 4.9 percent, while GM lost 1.1 percent and Toyota slid 0.9 percent. — AFP

Fitch says France likely needs more spending cuts

PARIS: Fitch Ratings said Tuesday that France probably needs additional spending cuts to meet deficit targets after data released last week showed the figure blew by estimates. The warning by Fitch is the second by a major ratings agency after Moody's said last week that France was unlikely to meet its pledge to bring its deficit level back under the EU's target level of three percent of gross domestic product by 2027.

French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal on Wednesday reaffirmed the 2027 target, a day after the national statistics agency said public deficit jumped to 5.5 percent of GDP last year, above government estimates of 4.9 percent. He also reaffirmed plans to reach a balanced budget by 2032.

Fitch Ratings said "even these unambitious goals look increasingly out of reach".

While the French government has announced 10 billion euros (\$10.8 billion) in emergency spending cuts for 2024, Fitch Ratings said "additional fiscal measures would likely be required to stick to government targets of 4.4 percent in 2024 and to bring the deficit to 2.7 percent by 2027."

Fitch Ratings said France's investment grade AA- rating remains stable with a downgrade currently not foreseen as government indebtedness isn't expected to rise considerably. — AFP

Fed official predicts higher long-term interest rates

WASHINGTON: A senior Federal Reserve official confirmed Tuesday that she recently raised her prediction for interest rates over the longer term due to the enduring strength of the US economy. Higher long-term rates would raise borrowing costs for consumers and businesses alike, making it more challenging for Americans to afford repayments on mortgages and car loans. The Fed has lifted its key lending rate to a 23-year high of between 5.25 and 5.50 percent, as it seeks to bring runaway inflation firmly back to its long-term target of two percent.

At the most recent rate meeting in March, Fed policymakers voted to hold interest rates at their current elevated levels, while penciling in three rate cuts this year and lifting their expectation for where rates will settle over the long run to 2.6 percent. Cleveland Fed president Loretta Mester, who is one of 12 policymakers with a vote on US monetary policy this year, said Tuesday that she had hiked her own forecast, from 2.5 percent to 3.0 percent.

"I raised my estimate to reflect the continued resilience in the economy despite high nominal interest rates and higher model-based estimates of the equilibrium interest rate," she told an event in Ohio, referring to the long-run rate. The equilibrium or neutral rate of interest, also known as "R-star", is a hotly debated economic topic, which refers to the interest rate needed to keep the economy chugging along at full employment with an inflation rate of around two percent.

If R-star does settle at this higher level, it would mark a substantial change from the long period between the 2008 global financial crisis and 2017, when the Fed's interest rates mostly hovered close to zero. "My instinct would be that rates will not go back down to the very low levels that we saw," Fed chair Jerome Powell told reporters after the most recent interest rate decision in March.

"I don't see rates going back down to that level, but I think there's tremendous uncertainty around that," he added. — AFP

German family businesses seeking buyers

BREMEN: The Scharringhausen deli has been selling fine foods and wines in northern Germany for 160 years, but its future is in doubt as it struggles to find a buyer to take over the business.

Juergen Scharringhausen, who is in his 70s, has been trying to sell the family business in Bremen on the banks of the river Weser for almost two years, but has yet to receive a serious offer.

Many owners of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Germany are in a similar position, thanks to the double burden of an ageing population and a stagnating economy. "Anyone with ideas and a love of food would be welcome," Scharringhausen told AFP. "If nothing comes of it, I'll have to close down," said Scharringhausen, wearing a black apron embroidered with a champagne label, alongside his wife Simone.

The shop, founded by his great-great-grandfather, offers fine products from around the world, with two fish and deli counters, a wine cellar and a 25-seat bistro area. Including catering services and online sales, the business generates half a million euros (\$540,000) in annual sales, with four employees and occasional reinforcements.

According to a recent study by Commerzbank, one in three German companies with annual sales of up to 15 million euros are currently struggling to find buyers. Up to 250,000 businesses could be forced to shut down over the next five years, said Christian Erbe, president of the local chamber of commerce in Baden-Wuerttemberg state. There is currently an average of only one candidate for every three businesses in need of new owners, according to the national association for the German chambers of commerce (DIHK). In the hotel and catering sector, it's one candidate for every seven businesses.

"The problem of business succession has become much worse," said Karsten Nowak, director of the Bremen chamber of commerce.



BREMEN, Germany: Juergen Scharringhausen and his wife Simone, greeting a neighbor, stand in front of their delicatessen shop in Bremen-Vegesack, northern Germany. — AFP

In the small German city-state, 59 out of every 1,000 businesses will be looking for a new owner between 2022 and 2026 -- the highest proportion of any of Germany's 16 states, according to IFM research institute for SMEs in Bonn.

The problem is the same demographic trend that is currently leading to a shortage of skilled workers in Germany: with the baby boomer generation entering retirement, there are "not enough candidates between the ages of 18 and 40 to take over established businesses", Nowak said. Another issue is that younger workers tend to prefer salaried jobs with "flexible working hours and a good work-life balance", according to Erbe.

Juergen Scharringhausen took over the family business in 1987, the year his daughter was born. Now a buyer in a large commercial group, she will not be taking over. Entrepreneurial culture is still "rarely taught in schools, except from a critical angle", Nowak believes.

The volatility of the economy is also putting off potential buyers, who are reluctant to take on the long-term debt needed for an acquisition in an uncertain climate, he said.

Entrepreneurs struggling to sell their businesses blame "over-regulation, the future of the economy and energy costs" for the lack of candidates, said Detlef Schmidt-Schoele, in charge of successions at the Thuringia chamber of commerce. The government has attempted to address the problem by launching a website to link businesses with potential new owners, overseen by the economy ministry.

There are thousands of adverts on the site from all over Germany: a car parts manufacturer in Baden-Wuerttemberg, a mechanical engineering company in Lower Saxony, a timber merchant in Thuringia. Many of them are family-run businesses. A survey of German family-run SMEs published by Ifo last year found that 42 percent of respondents had not yet found a family member to take over. — AFP

THURSDAY, APRIL 4, 2024

Young Rwandan artists keep the memory of genocide victims alive



A member of "Art for Memories" team draws portraits of victims of the Rwandan genocide in Kigali. — AFP photos



A member of "Art for Memories" team draws portraits of victims of the Rwandan genocide.



A member of "Art for Memories" team draws a portrait of a victim of the Rwandan genocide.



Founder and Artistic Director for "Art for Memories", King Ngabo, 28, poses for a portrait in his studio in Kigali.

On sketch pads or computer tablets, a group of young Rwandan artists painstakingly recreate portraits of victims of the 1994 genocide for their loved ones. The illustrators — like the majority of Rwanda's population — were not even born when the 100-day killing spree by Hutu extremists was unleashed against the Tutsi minority 30 years ago this month. Their work has not only helped preserve the memories of some of the 800,000 victims of the vicious bloodletting, but also given the artists themselves a new insight into their country's deeply painful past.

The project — to create new portraits of the dead and missing copied from old and often damaged photographs — was the inspiration of Kigali artist King Ngabo. The 28-year-old founded the Art for Memories initiative a year ago, during the last Kwibuka or remembrance commemorations for the genocide. Since then, the collective says it has produced about 450 portraits of genocide victims, all for free. Members of the team work together on a long wooden paint-smeared table in his Kigali gallery, the walls adorned with an eclectic mix of artworks.

'Bring back to life'

"We invite people to send pictures of their beloved ones, on emails, on social media, on WhatsApp," says Ngabo, his charcoal-colored overalls spattered with paint. "And then for those damaged pictures, we bring back in the studio... and bring it back to life." Ngabo said that before starting the project, he thought he knew a lot about the genocide, having visited many memorial sites. But he says he never before had the "privilege" of being able to talk to survivors of the mass slaughter that still haunts the tiny nation. "So I have learned a lot, the memories..."

Genocide survivor Nyirahabimana Aliette, 41, could not hold back the tears after she handed over old photographs of her parents and older sister, all murdered in 1994. "I would like someone to draw these pictures for me so I can keep them with me," she said, her voice breaking. "(My children) ask me a lot of questions about what happened with the family," she added. "Being able to see these drawings at home will allow them to have an image (of their lost relatives)."

The murderous rampage saw families and friends turn against each other, the killings fueled by vicious anti-Tutsi propaganda broadcast on TV and radio. "During the genocide against Tutsi, artists of that day used illustrations to spread the



Members of "Art for Memories" team works on portraits of victims of the Rwandan genocide in Kigali.



A member of "Art for Memories" team, Manzi Yvan Bryan, 19, works on a portrait of a victim of the Rwandan genocide.



A member of "Art for Memories" team draws a portrait of a victim of the Rwandan genocide.



This picture shows the signature by one of the members of "Art for Memories" team in Kigali.



Rwandan Genocide survivor Nyirahabimana Aliette, 41, holds photographs of her family members that were killed in the 1994 Rwanda Genocide, for them to be drawn in Kigali.



Rwandan Genocide survivor Nyirahabimana Aliette, 41, poses for a portrait, with photographs of her family members that were killed in the 1994 Rwanda Genocide, for them to be drawn in Kigali.



A member of "Art for Memories" team draws a portrait of a victim of the Rwandan genocide in Kigali.

ideology of genocide against Tutsi," said Mucyo Martin, a 20-year-old independent illustrator. "So now there is us young artists who make illustrations too, we decided to correct that."

Art student Manzi Yvan Bryan, 19, said the experience was invaluable in finding out more about the

events of 1994. "When I was a child we learned about the genocide at school, and sometimes at home, my parents talk about it." But when I joined this initiative I learned more... some things that I didn't know." — AFP

Lifestyle

Taylor Swift officially declared a billionaire by Forbes

Taylor Swift was officially named a member of the three-comma-club Tuesday, as Forbes confirmed rumors estimating her wealth exceeds a billion dollars. The financial news outlet said she is the first artist to achieve billionaire status solely on the basis of her music, and estimated she has a \$1.1 billion fortune. Other industry heavyweights who've hit the mark - Rihanna and Jay-Z among them - have earned their massive wealth in part via fashion brands, alcohol companies or entertainment holdings, among other interests.

Along with her vast songwriting catalog, Swift staged the first billion-dollar tour ever - the ongoing Eras Tour has boosted economies and delighted fans around the world. Swift, 34, also has a significant real estate portfolio, with homes in New York, Beverly Hills, Nashville and a coastal mansion in Rhode Island. Her touring milestone was one of many records Swift shattered over the past year, including winning a fourth Grammy for Best Album, the most of any artist. She received wall-to-wall attention throughout 2023, which closed with Time Magazine honoring Swift as Person of the Year, calling her a "rare person who is both the writer and hero of her own story." And in mere weeks fans have a brand-new album to look forward to: Swift is set to drop "The Tortured Poets Department" on April 19.

New record

The frenzy around Swift was augmented last year by her dating life, as the pop culture icon began a very public romantic relationship with tight end Travis Kelce of the Kansas City Chiefs, who ultimately won the Super Bowl championship. Chiefs games - where Swift has been a regular in a private box - smashed a series of ratings records this past season. It was yet more evidence of her vast influence: with hundreds of millions of social media followers and a staunchly loyal fan base, she can



In this file photo US singer-songwriter Taylor Swift arrives for the 66th Annual Grammy Awards at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles on February 4, 2024. — AFP

move any dial with the tiniest of efforts. Even politicians - and conspiracy theorists - for months have been opining on her potential impact on the upcoming presidential election. Swift was born in Pennsylvania on December 13, 1989. She began writing songs professionally as a teenager, signing with Nashville's Big Machine Records as a country artist. Years after she went full pop and, as she moved on to a major deal with Universal, Swift became embroiled in very public feud with Big Machine.

The sale of her song catalog to a private equity

firm triggered a massive dispute over musicians' rights - and a bold new era of Swift's career. She vowed to re-record her first six albums in order to own their rights, and began making good on the promise, urging her fans to listen to "Taylor's Version" instead of previous releases.

In the meantime, she's released several more original studio albums, with her 11th due later this month. And her conversation-commanding Eras tour is due to continue until the end of 2024, with estimates anticipating she will surpass the \$2-billion threshold, a staggering sum. — AFP

Venezuelan man, world's oldest, dies at 114

Venezuelan Juan Vicente Perez Mora, certified in 2022 by Guinness World Records as the oldest man in the world, died on Tuesday at the age of 114, officials and relatives said. "Juan Vicente Perez Mora has transcended into eternity at 114 years of age," Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said on social media platform X. Perez was officially confirmed as the oldest man alive on February 4, 2022, when he was 112 years and 253 days old, according to Guinness.

A father of 11, as of 2022 he had 41 grandchildren, 18 great-grandchildren and 12 great-great-grandchildren. The farmer known as Tio Vicente was born in the town of El Cobre, in the Andean state of Tachira on May 27, 1909, and was the ninth of 10 children. "At the age of five years old, he started working with his dad and brothers in agriculture and assisted with sugar cane and coffee harvesting," a Guinness statement from 2022 said. Perez went on to become a sheriff and was responsible for resolving land and family disputes, while still working in agriculture. — AFP



112-year-old Venezuelan farmer Juan Vicente Pérez gestures at his home in San Jose de Bolivar, Tachira state, Venezuela, on January 24, 2022. — AFP



Panda fans wait for giant panda Fu Bao during a farewell ceremony at Everland amusement park in Yongin. — AFP photos



Zookeepers pose for photos in front of a vibration-free special vehicle carrying giant panda Fu Bao during a farewell ceremony at Everland amusement park.

S Korean fans bid farewell to Internet-famous panda Fu Bao

Thousands of well-wishers gathered Wednesday to bid farewell to the first giant panda born in South Korea, Fu Bao, who left for China in a high-tech non-vibrating vehicle typically used for transporting semi-conductors. Beijing has long used "panda diplomacy" as a form of soft power, and Fu Bao's parents - Ai Bao and Le Bao - were gifted to South Korea in 2016 by Chinese President Xi Jinping. Fu Bao - which means "treasure that gives happiness" - was born in 2020 and is a celebrity in South Korea, with her videos on the zoo's YouTube channel attracting around 500 million views.

The Everland amusement park, where Fu Bao lived, says approximately 5.5 million people - around one-tenth of the entire South Korean population - have visited the park to see her. Thanks to her popularity, the number of visitors to Everland's Panda World doubled last year to 2.15 million, compared to 1.07 million in 2020 before Fu Bao's arrival, the theme park said. Fu Bao welcomed her younger twin sisters last year, named Rui Bao and Hui Bao, whose births also triggered an outpouring of excitement online in South Korea.

Beijing only loans pandas to foreign zoos,

which must usually return any offspring within a few years of their birth to join the country's breeding program. Under an agreement between Seoul and Beijing, Fu Bao's parents can stay in South Korea until 2031, but her twin sisters, like Fu Bao herself, must return to China before they turn four years old. "Fu Bao left Everland at around 11 am," the zoo said in a statement, adding the panda will leave for China via the Incheon International Airport on a chartered plane.

Before leaving Everland, the panda bid farewell to some 6,000 South Korean fans at a brief ceremony. She was moved on a special non-vibrating vehicle typically used for semiconductor transportation, the facility added. Zookeeper Kang Cheol-won, who is famous in the South for his bonding with Everland's pandas and is widely referred to as their "grandpa," read out a letter at the ceremony, the park said.

Kang is accompanying the panda on the journey to China until Fu Bao arrives at the country's Shenshuping Panda Base in Sichuan Province, Everland said. "You will be forever (my) baby panda, even after 10 or 100 years. Thank you for coming to grandpa. I love you Fu Bao," Kang said in his letter, referring to himself as her grandpa. — AFP



Panda fans wait for giant panda Fu Bao during a farewell ceremony at Everland amusement park.



Panda fans wait for giant panda Fu Bao during a farewell ceremony at Everland amusement park.



South Korean zookeeper Kang Cheol-won speaks during a farewell ceremony for giant panda Fu Bao at Everland amusement park.



Panda fans wait for giant panda Fu Bao during a farewell ceremony at Everland amusement park.



Panda fans gather near a vibration-free special vehicle (left top) carrying giant panda Fu Bao during a farewell ceremony at Everland amusement park.



Panda fans react as a vibration-free special vehicle carrying giant panda Fu Bao passes through fans during a farewell ceremony at Everland amusement park.

Clean Girl Aesthetic

Embracing simplicity: 'The clean girl aesthetic' hairstyle guide

In a world where the maximalist echo of the past decades slowly fades into the background, a new protagonist takes center stage in the beauty and fashion arena: 'The clean girl aesthetic'. This minimalist trend, a whisper of elegance and simplicity, redefines contemporary beauty standards by celebrating the natural, the understated, and the effortlessly chic. Among its hallmarks, hairstyles stand out as a testament to the movement's core philosophy: less is indeed more.

At the heart of 'the clean girl aesthetic' is an appreciation for hairstyles that exude an effortless grace, a seemingly paradoxical blend of simplicity and sophistication. The trend champions looks that accentuate one's natural hair texture and color, advocating for styles that require minimal styling yet offer maximum impact. The low bun, a quintessential representation of this aesthetic, epitomizes elegance with its neat finish and understated placement. It's a style that speaks volumes of the wearer's refined taste, a subtle nod to the sophisticated woman who thrives on the principles of minimalism.

Yet, the aesthetic doesn't shy away from slightly more dynamic looks, such as the carefree, loose waves that cap-



ture the essence of casual elegance. Achievable with minimal effort, these waves are not about perfection but about embracing the natural flow and beauty of the hair. This approach to hairstyling is liberating, offering a gentle departure from the overly styled looks of previous years and encouraging a celebration of one's inherent beauty.

The high ponytail, reimagined

through the lens of 'the clean girl aesthetic', transforms a traditionally casual hairstyle into a statement of chic simplicity. Paired with a precise middle part, it acquires an almost sculptural quality that frames the face beautifully, proving that elegance can be achieved with just a few well-considered touches.

This movement is more than just a

trend; it's a philosophy that challenges the conventional norms of beauty and styling. It invites individuals to rethink their approach to hairstyling, encouraging them to find beauty in simplicity and confidence in natural allure. As we navigate through the ever-changing landscape of fashion and beauty, 'the clean girl aesthetic' serves as a refreshing reminder that true style lies in

the understated, in the natural, and in the effortlessly elegant.

Join us at Dashe Beauty on this journey to discover the essence of 'the clean girl aesthetic', a testament to the beauty of simplicity and the power of natural elegance. Get more inspiration by visiting our website <https://dashe-beauty.com> or follow up on our beauty blog. — Dashe Beauty Kuwait

EX-GUCCI STAR MICHELE NAMED VALENTINO CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Italian luxury fashion brand Valentino named Alessandro Michele, the former high-flier at Gucci, as its new creative director. Speculation had been rife over where the 51-year-old designer would land after departing in November 2022 from Gucci, where he oversaw a period of strong growth. Last week, Valentino said its 25-year collaboration with creative director Pierpaolo Piccioli had ended, and on Monday it said it would cancel its upcoming Men's and Haute Couture fashion shows planned for June.

Valentino, which is controlled by Qatar investment fund Mayhoola For Investments, was founded in Rome in 1960 by designer Valentino Garavani and his business and life partner Giancarlo Giammetti. Last year, French luxury group Kering paid 1.7 billion euros for a 30-percent stake, with an option to acquire all share capital.

"Michele is an exceptional talent and his ap-

pointment underlines our great ambitions for Maison Valentino," Valentino Chairman Rachid Mohamed Rachid said in a statement. Francois-Henri Pinault, the chair and chief executive of Kering, said he looked forward to Michele's "passion, imagination and dedication at play in this new chapter for Valentino".

At Gucci, Kering's flagship brand, Michele ushered in a wildly successful colorful and bohemian 1970s aesthetic to the brand with its world famous stripe logo in green and red. A darling of Hollywood, he dressed pop and film stars such as Harry Styles and Jared Leto while attracting new fans to the fashion house with collaborations with major brands like Adidas, Disney and X Box. Revenue nearly tripled under his watch, but sales flagged in his final few seasons. Gucci is still struggling, its sales having dropped six percent to 9.9 billion euros in 2023. —AFP



Italian fashion designer Alessandro Michele acknowledges applause following the presentation of Gucci's Women Fall - Winter 2020 collection on February 19, 2020 in Milan. — AFP

KANYE WEST ACCUSED OF RACISM AND ANTISEMITISM IN NEW LAWSUIT

Controversial rapper Kanye West repeatedly yelled at Black employees and praised Adolf Hitler as an "innovator" according to a new lawsuit filed in California on Tuesday. The creative brains behind the Yeezy designer brand, whose music and fashion ventures have made him fabulously wealthy, has repeatedly courted controversy in recent years with racist or antisemitic language and some odd historical revisionism. Now a former employee is claiming the author of the hit "Stronger" told schoolchildren he was being persecuted by Jewish people.

Trevor Phillips, who like West is Black and worked for two of West's ventures for nearly a year, claims in a Los Angeles lawsuit that he suffered



Rapper Kanye West

severe discrimination, harassment and retaliation from West, who is also known as Ye. Phillips said West would never "berate a white person, but on countless occasions he saw and/or personally experienced Kanye frenziedly yell at Black people."

Phillips was hired in November 2022 by Yeezy, the rapper's clothing brand, and immediately began working at the Donda Academy, a school West founded outside Los Angeles. "Phillips, on several occasions, witnessed Kanye preach to his staff obscenities such as 'the Jews are out to get me' and 'the Jews are stealing all my money'," the suit says. Clothing giants GAP and Adidas parted ways with West after previous antisemitic remarks. The suit also claims that West praised Hitler, calling the Nazi leader "great" at a dinner at an up-market restaurant in Los Angeles. "Hitler was an innovator. He invented so many things. He's the reason we have cars," the suit alleges West to have said.

A number of people are credited with the development of the car, including Karl Benz and Gottlieb Daimler, but the Austrian-born dictator was not one of them. In the suit Phillips also alleges that the rapper once told two children at the Donda Academy to shave their heads and threatened to lock them in cages. "Kanye also told the employees... that no staff could be fat—otherwise he would fire them."

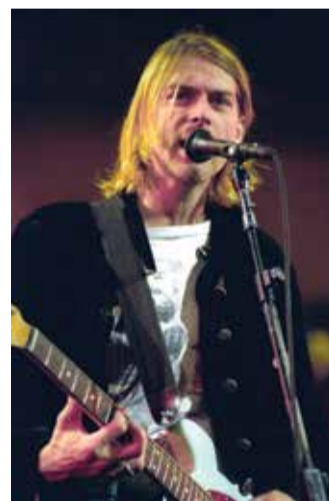
Phillips, who stopped working for West's ventures in August 2023, is seeking \$35,000 in compensation. His lawyer, Carney R. Shegerian, said the suit was aimed at righting the wrongs his client had suffered and sending a broader message. "We hope... that the famous artist Mr West will understand that his messages, which we allege preach discrimination, anti-Semitism and love for Hitler, have no place in the world."

West, who split from celebrity entrepreneur Kim Kardashian in 2022 after a decade together, apologized to Jewish people on social media last year over previous antisemitic outbursts. The rapper has spoken openly about his struggles with mental health, and Kardashian has called for understanding as he works through issues. —AFP

Kurt Cobain, style icon



Kurt Cobain of Nirvana (Photo by Jeff Kravitz/FilmMagic)



The oversized cardigans, those bug-eye shades, the ripped jeans and flannel shirts — 30 years on from his death, Kurt Cobain's style lives on as much as his music. It may have disturbed the anti-corporate icon to see how his thrift-store outfits have been repurposed into ultra-expensive garments. But from the moment Nirvana's breakout single "Smells Like Teen Spirit" took over MTV—with Cobain wearing two second-hand T-shirts one over the other, his unkempt hair hanging down his face—a style was born that has never really died.

"He grew up in poverty and doubled up his clothes to mask how thin he was, which he was always self-conscious about, despite being a good-looking guy," said Charlotte Blum, author of a book on grunge culture. The band recruited extras for the "Teen Spirit" video with a flyer that read: "No clothing with name brands or logos please!" But the brands found him anyway.

In 1992, designer Marc Jacobs paid homage to the Seattle grunge scene with a catwalk show in which cheap flannel shirts and lumberjack coats were reimagined in silk and

cashmere. He sent samples to Cobain as a tribute. "Do you know what we did with it?" his wife Courtney Love later told fashion site WWD. "We burned it. We were punkers—we didn't like that kind of thing."

'Anti-look'

The style was partly accidental—the clothes were the natural cheap workwear of poor youngsters in the chilly Pacific Northwest. But Cobain also understood the importance of image and authenticity. "It was an anti-look, ramshackle, but the guy was a paradox—he paid a lot of attention to it," said Marc Dufaud, author of a recent book on the singer. Mirroring the rejection of societal norms in Nirvana's music, the ripped-and-patched look of Cobain's clothes became the uniform of a generation.

Jacobs told The Telegraph in 2011 that the grunge show was his favorite, even though it got him fired from the label Perry Ellis. "It was about... a dismissal of everything that one was told was beautiful, correct, glamorous, sexy," he said. "I think that moment hasn't passed. It's morphed into different things but it really hasn't passed."



Cobain might be horrified to see the money now involved. Paris label Vetements recently issued a \$1,150 version of the cardigan he wore at Nirvana's famous MTV Unplugged performance in 1993. The real thing sold at auction in 2019 for \$334,000. Saint Laurent and Dries Van Noten have run versions of his favorite bug-eyed shades that have shown up on popstars including Jay-Z, Harry Styles, Migos.

Fashion statements

But Cobain would no doubt welcome the way some of his fashion statements still reverberate. An early critic of misogyny and homophobia, he wore women's clothes on stage—recently replicated by rappers (and avowed Nirvana fans) Kid Cudi and Post Malone. For the cover of Rolling Stone, Cobain's T-shirt read "Corporate magazines still suck". He popularized the wearing of band tees, promoting outsider artists like Daniel Johnson (today, of course, the most popular is Nirvana's).

Then, when grunge took over the world, he couldn't resist subverting his own image, sporting a sparkly top by French designer Jean-Paul Gaultier in the video for 1993's "Heart-Shaped Box" and opting for suits, white shirts and ties in later performances and photo shoots. It could have all devolved into parody. But by then, the pressure of being the icon of a generation was taking its toll. "Cobain wanted to become a star but he was overtaken by the speed of it—he intended it to be gradual, but that album (Nevermind) wasn't just successful, it defined a genre," said Dufaud. Cobain died by suicide on April 5, 1994, aged 27. — AFP

Sports

Sri Lanka sweep Bangladesh Test series with crushing win

Lahiru Kumara finish with 4-50 to help S Lanka thump Bangladesh by 192 runs

CHITTAGONG: Lahiru Kumara finished with 4-50 to help Sri Lanka thump Bangladesh by 192 runs in the second Test and sweep the two-match series 2-0 on Wednesday. The fast bowler dismissed last man Khaled Ahmed to wrap up a one-sided contest before lunch on the fifth day in Chittagong.

Hosts Bangladesh, chasing a mammoth 511 in their second innings, added just 50 after resuming on 268-7. Mehidy Hasan Miraz staged a lone fight to stay unbeaten on 81 after completing his sixth Test half-century.

With a Sri Lankan triumph all but inevitable when the day began, Mehidy played some positive strokes to bring up his fifty off 68 balls. He lost overnight partner Taijul Islam for 14 when the batsman drove off-spinner Kamindu Mendis to Nishan Madushka at gully.

Kamindu finished with 3-32 to go with his unbeaten 92 with the bat in the first innings, earning him the man of the match award. He was also named player of the series after scoring a hundred in both innings of the first Test.

"The bowlers did their basics on this wicket and the batters did their job as

well," Sri Lankan captain Dhananjaya de Silva said. "The batters were a bit disappointed about not getting runs in the first Test, but we have experienced players. I was confident they would get runs," he added.

"There wasn't a lot of spin on offer. So I thought about reverse swing as a way to get wickets. The pacers were really on the spot." Sri Lankan pacers accounted for 33 of the 40 Bangladesh wickets to fall, a rare feat on Bangladesh's generally spin-friendly pitches.

Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto said the home side's poor showing for the red-ball series would provoke some soul-searching. "If you look at our batting, everyone got set but didn't get a big score. That's something to think about," he said.

"If you get set, you have to make a score. We have to play more first-class cricket." Sri Lanka won the first Test in Sylhet by 328 runs. They also triumphed in the three-match T20 series 2-1 but lost the one-day international series by the same margin.

Bangladesh will host Zimbabwe for five T20s in May in their next international engagement, ahead of the T20 World Cup starting in June. — AFP



CHITTAGONG: Sri Lanka's players pose with the series trophy after winning the second and last Test cricket match between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong on April 3, 2024. — AFP

News in Brief

Norwich agree deal with ISL

LONDON: Norwich have agreed a three-year strategic partnership with Indian Super League side Chennaiyin FC, it was announced Wednesday. The English second-tier side hope their link-up with the former Indian top-flight champions can "create a platform for the exchange of knowledge, technical expertise, coaching methodologies and player development strategies". Championship club Norwich's commercial director Sam Jeffery said: "This is an extremely exciting moment for Norwich City as we enter into our partnership with Chennaiyin FC, and with it the Indian football market. "India has the fastest growing sports economy in the world, and football is the fastest growing participation sport here too. "We believe there's significant commercial opportunity in this fantastic part of the world, and we're really excited to build a mutually beneficial and culturally authentic collaboration with our friends at Chennaiyin FC." Norwich are currently sixth in the Championship table, with the Canaries pushing for a play-off place as they look to gain promotion to the lucrative Premier League. — AFP

Vettel hints at F1 return

LONDON: Four-time world champion Sebastian Vettel has suggested he could return to Formula One following talks with Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff. Mercedes are in search of a new driver after Lewis Hamilton announced in February he was leaving the team for Ferrari following 11 years with the Silver Arrows. Vettel won his four world championship titles with Red Bull from 2010-13. He retired from Formula One at the end of the 2022 season after six years at Ferrari and two with Aston Martin. But he has now hinted at a return to Grand Prix racing following talks with Wolff and several other team bosses. "I am speaking to Toto. I don't know if that qualifies as Mercedes, but about other things," Vettel told Sky Sports News on Wednesday. "I'm talking to a lot of people because I know them, but not very specific. I mean obviously it does cross my mind, I do think about it, but it's not the main thought," the 36-year-old German added. — AFP

India football executive suspended

NEW DELHI: India's football governing body has suspended a senior executive member after his arrest for allegedly hitting two women players while drunk. Deepak Sharma, executive committee member of the All India Football Federation (AIFF), was arrested and bailed by police over last week's incident in the coastal state of Goa. "The AIFF Executive Committee has decided to suspend Mr. Deepak Sharma from participating in any football-related activities until further notice," a statement read Tuesday. AIFF president Kalyan Chaubey said that the federation "was determined to promote women's football in a safe and enabling environment and will take all necessary steps to ensure this. "The incident in Goa during IWL 2, should not be amplified to undermine the AIFF's developmental efforts in women's football," he added. "The particular case has now been referred to the Disciplinary Committee and will be taken up emergently." According to Indian media reports, Sharma barged into the room of the two footballers and assaulted them. He has denied the charges. — AFP

Yadav races into India T20 reckoning

NEW DELHI: Mayank Yadav was hailed as India's new pace bowling sensation Wednesday after the tearaway youngster became the first player to win man-of-the-match awards in each of his first two IPL games.

Yadav bowled the fastest ball of the Indian Premier League season at 156.7kph (97.4mph) in a match-winning spell of 3-14 for Lucknow Super Giants against Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Tuesday. It followed a blistering debut at the weekend when he sent down a 155.8kph thunderbolt on his way to figures of 3-27 in the victory over Punjab Kings.

Former West Indies fast bowler Ian Bishop called him a "kid bowling like a child of the wind" on social media platform X. The 21-year-old from Delhi's explosive performances have ignited calls for him to be selected for this year's T20 World Cup beginning on June 1, five days after the IPL final.

"My aim is to play for India as much as possible. So I feel this is just the start and my main goal is what I am focused on," said Yadav. Former India quick bowler Irfan Pathan called him

a "bloody exciting talent", while former Australia speed demon Brett Lee said Yadav was the "talk of the town".

On Tuesday, Yadav's express deliveries accounted for Bengaluru's Australian dangermen Glenn Maxwell and Cameron Green in the space of seven balls. "Stop what you are doing and watch Mayank Yadav bowl," veteran commentator Harsha Bhogle wrote on X, telling Lucknow they had "unearthed a gem."

Yadav dug in a length ball at 151kph which Maxwell could only top edge to mid-on before a length delivery crashed into Green's off stump. "He has been an X factor in both the matches," former India opener Virender Sehwag said on Cricbuzz.

"He gets the top batsmen out — it is Mayank's accurate line and length that impressed me," Sehwag added. "And because of that you can get him to play international cricket after the IPL." Lucknow picked up Yadav for his base price of \$24,000 at the 2022 IPL auction but he only warmed the bench that season and missed the 2023 edition because of injury.

With just one first-class appearance, for Delhi in December 2022, Yadav's elevation from frail 15-year-old to a lightning quick match-winner is like a fairytale — but his club coach said he had expected it. "I was not surprised at all," Davendra Sharma told Indian outlet Sportstar.

"He belonged to the big league because of his speed and the gift of bringing the ball in. "It was only a matter of time for Mayank to make an impression nationally." — AFP



BENGALURU: Lucknow Super Giants' Mayank Yadav bowls during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Lucknow Super Giants at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru. — AFP

Bracewell back from injury to captain NZ on Pakistan tour

WELLINGTON: Michael Bracewell will captain New Zealand for the first time on their Twenty20 tour of Pakistan this month, with a host of top names missing because they are playing in the Indian Premier League.

Pakistan host New Zealand for five Twenty20 internationals, starting in Rawalpindi on April 18, as both teams warm up for June's T20 World Cup in the United States and the West Indies. All-rounder Bracewell was named captain Wednesday on his return from more than a year out with a ruptured Achilles and broken finger in the absence of regular skipper Kane Williamson, who is playing for Gujarat Titans in the IPL.

The 33-year-old said that being informed he would captain New Zealand had capped a "golden three

days" last month when he also took eight wickets for his club Wellington and had a hole-in-one playing golf. "It's three days that I'll never forget," Bracewell said.

"I'm very excited, it's a huge honour just to be picked again for New Zealand and then on top of that selected as captain. I wasn't expecting that." IPL contracted players Trent Boult, Devon Conway, Lockie Ferguson, Matt Henry, Daryl Mitchell, Glenn Phillips, Rachin Ravindra, Mitch Santner and Williamson are all missing.

New Zealand Test captain Tim Southee is being rested after a busy summer of cricket across all formats while Will Young, Tom Latham and Colin Munro are also unavailable. Big-hitting batsman Tim Robinson



Michael Bracewell

and fast bowler Will O'Rourke received their first T20 squad call-ups.

"We have picked a squad with a lot of power and exciting bowling options," said New Zealand selector Sam Wells. New Zealand won 4-1 in a home five-match Twenty20 series against Pakistan in January.

New Zealand squad:

Michael Bracewell (capt), Finn Allen, Mark Chapman, Josh Clarkson, Jacob Duffy, Dean Foxcroft, Ben Lister, Cole McCool, Adam Milne, Jimmy Neesham, Will O'Rourke, Tim Robinson, Ben Sears, Tim Seifert, Ish Sodhi. — AFP

ECB chief slams county cricket conspiracy theory

LONDON: England and Wales Cricket Board chief executive Richard Gould has dismissed suggestions the governing body wants to cut any of the 18 first-class counties adrift as a "totally mad conspiracy theory".

With the global growth of lucrative franchise leagues and their knock-on effects on the domestic schedule, fears have been raised that the ECB would prefer a streamlined and more cost-effective county set-up.

But Gould, speaking at the ECB's domestic season launch at The Oval on Tuesday, said there were no plans to reduce the number of first-class counties, which has stood at 18 since Durham joined the Coun-

ty Championship in 1992.

"It's a totally mad conspiracy theory," said Gould, who contrasted how English football and rugby union had seen clubs go out of business in recent years with the relative stability of county cricket.

"I've been in the game 20-odd years and that conversation has always been around, but we're the one professional sport that hasn't lost a club," he said. "You look at rugby and football, we've done extremely well as a sport to maintain that 100 percent record and that's where our intent lies."

The majority of the first-class counties are member-owned clubs and Durham chief executive Tim Bostock caused widespread anger by suggesting members were "Luddites" holding back the progress of the English game.

But former Surrey chief executive Gould said: "They are not comments that I would recognize or agree with. "The depth of our talent pool, both in terms of men and women, is our superpower at the moment." Gould

said the ECB were open to private investment in the Hundred, the board's eight-team, 100-balls-per-side competition.

"We will work that one through — our interests won't just be with IPL franchises," he said. "We have got a lot of interesting sports owners from the States and from this country." However, Gould does not expect the Board of Control for Cricket in India to lift its ban on Indian players appearing in the Hundred and other overseas leagues.

"It's not something that we are working into our proceedings," he said. "They (the BCCI) have got a dominant global position there, and they want to try and make sure they can retain that. "Indian broadcast money generally follows Indian players. The BCCI and the IPL have just said, 'No, we want the IPL to be the number one global tournament. "In order to do that, we need to make sure that we rely on our strengths which is the size of our market and the quality of our players.'" — AFP

Sports

Guardiola backs 'world's best striker' Haaland in Keane row

Haaland is Premier League's leading scorer this term with 18 goals

LONDON: Pep Guardiola said Erling Haaland should be respected as the "best striker in the world" after the Manchester City star was subjected to scathing criticism by Roy Keane. Former Manchester United captain Keane, speaking on Sky Sports, said Haaland's "general play" was "so poor" and "almost like a League Two player". Haaland came under fire from Keane for his lacklustre performance in City's goalless draw against Premier League title rivals Arsenal on Sunday.

Haaland is the Premier League's leading scorer this term with 18 goals after winning last season's Golden Boot during a remarkable first season with City. He netted 52 times in all competitions as Guardiola's men lifted the Premier League, Champions League and FA Cup. Keane conceded the 23-year-old Norwegian is in a class of his own in front of goal.

But City boss Guardiola was unimpressed by Keane's remarks, insisting any blame for the scoreless display against Arsenal should be shared by the team. "I don't agree with him, absolutely not. He's the best striker in the world and he helped us to win what we won last season. Erling is exceptional," Guardiola told reporters on Tuesday. "The reason we don't create chances is not because of Erling. The standards that Erling has are unbelievable and everyone expects other things.

"There are games where he could be better but I knew during the game against Arsenal that the reason why we were not creating chances was not because of Erling. "We needed more presence in the box. If we had that Erling would have more space. It happens sometimes. If you want to score goals, bring a lot of players to the opponent keeper, it is as simple as that." City's failure to beat Arsenal has damaged their bid to win an unprecedented fourth successive English title. They are three points behind leaders Liverpool ahead of Aston Villa's visit to the Etihad Stadium on Wednesday.

Guardiola will need Haaland at his predatory best if City are to extend their reign as champions. And the Spaniard accepts that criticism comes with the territory of being a high-profile player. "If you don't want to accept that as a football player, you have to dedicate yourself to another job," Guardiola said. "When you are a public figure, you have to accept it. That's why when you are in contract talks, you have to ask for a lot of money to accept those moments. "I'm surprised it comes from former players. With journalists I can understand because they have never been on the pitch but the former players is always a surprise (when they are critical)." — AFP



MANCHESTER: Arsenal's Brazilian defender #06 Gabriel Magalhaes (L) fights for the ball with Manchester City's Norwegian striker #09 Erling Haaland during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Arsenal at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester. — AFP

Rubiales arrested at airport over alleged graft scandal

MADRID: Spanish police on Wednesday briefly arrested disgraced ex-football chief Luis Rubiales Wednesday in connection with an alleged graft scandal at the RFEF football federation when he was president. The 46-year-old was detained at Madrid's Barajas airport shortly after flying in from the Dominican Republic but released shortly afterwards, a Guardia Civil police spokesman said.

Sources close to the probe said he disembarked from the plane under a police escort before being questioned inside the airport. His arrest came two weeks after investigators searched 11 locations, including the RFEF's Madrid headquarters and Rubiales' house in the southern city of Granada, as part of a probe into alleged corruption and other crimes.

The March 20 raids were part of "an investigation linked to presumed crimes linked with corruption in business, fraudulent administration and money laundering", judicial sources said. Spanish media reports said investigators were looking into RFEF contracts signed since 2018, including one signed by Rubiales to take the Spanish Super Cup to Saudi Arabia. The Super Cup contracts are worth 40 million euros a year (\$43.3 million) with the deal brokered by Kosmos, a company owned by former Barcelona and Spain defender Gerard Pique.

Dominican Republic house raid

According to Cadena Ser radio, Guardia Civil police flew to the Dominican Republic and on Monday searched the premises where Rubiales has been staying, seizing a laptop and a mobile phone following an order by the investigating judge. Contacted by AFP, the Guardia Civil refused to comment on the report. A day after the March 20 raids, the RFEF sacked its legal director Pedro Gonzalez Segura, head of human resources Jose Javier Jimenez and terminated its contract with GC Legal, the law firm of Tomas Gonzalez Cueto. All three had been arrested by police during the raids.

Rubiales was forced to step down as RFEF boss in September after forcibly kissing Women's World Cup star Jenni Hermoso following Spain's triumph in the Sydney final in August. The move sparked global outrage, with Rubiales set to be tried for the non-consensual kiss which under Spanish law can be classed as sexual assault. Prosecutors had in 2022 opened an investigation into the Super Cup deal after audio recordings between Rubiales and Pique were leaked in which they spoke of multi-million value commissions.

Rubiales has always defended the legality of the deal to take the Super Cup to the oil-rich Gulf state, and in April 2022, Pique insisted that everything was "legal", saying he was "proud" of the deal. The Spanish Super Cup took place for the first time in Saudi Arabia in 2020. It returned to Spain a year later due to the Covid-19 pandemic but the subsequent three competitions have taken place in Saudi. Pique had played twice with Barcelona in Spanish Super Cups in Saudi Arabia before retiring from football in November 2022. — AFP

Lingard's Seoul switch threatens to fall flat after a slow start

SEOUL: Jesse Lingard said he wanted to enjoy his football again after moving to South Korea, but the former Manchester United ace has struggled for form and fitness and been publicly criticized by his new coach. It is early days, the 31-year-old attacking midfielder having made the surprise decision to sign for FC Seoul in early February on a free transfer. But the former England international is yet to start a game and failed so far to justify his side's billing as "a player with the biggest name value in the 41-year history of the K League".

Lingard has been restricted to three substitute appearances for his new club and missed last weekend's game with a knee injury. Fans and media are beginning to wonder when Lingard, who won 32 caps for his country and played at the 2018 World Cup, will make an impact. "Fans are happy with him so far - he's got a big name, positive on ticket sales," Korean football writer Hong Jae-min told AFP. "But I'm not sure (how long) he can enjoy his honeymoon." Lingard had been without a club since leaving Nottingham Forest last summer and said joining Seoul on a two-year deal was "a new beginning" after a difficult spell. He was given an early wake-up call by coach Kim Gi-dong after making his third appearance for Seoul last month.

Kim said he had considered hauling Lingard off again after bringing him on as a 58th-minute substitute. "If someone who plays for only a few minutes doesn't give their all and avoids tussles and runs less than a player who's on for the full 90 minutes, I don't consider that player to be a real footballer," he said. Kim later said his comment was "somewhat exaggerated" and that he had told Lingard he was "a special player and should take on a leadership role in the squad". Seoul are mid-table with one win, one defeat and two draws.

'Much bigger than Lingard'

Lingard played down reports of a rift with the coach, saying the incident had been "blown out of proportion". "I always work hard, I check my stats after the game and my stats were fairly high for the minutes that I played," he said. "It's just his choice of words, and obviously the media are going to twist it more than what it is." Lingard's move to Seoul surprised observers in both England and South Korea.

He explained that he had "multiple offers" but they were "all verbal" and he chose Seoul because they were committed to signing him. Lingard came through the youth system at Manchester United and scored the winner in the 2016 FA Cup final, but struggled to consistently hold down a regular place at Old Trafford. He starred during a loan spell at West Ham in the second half of the 2020/21 season, only to find himself on the fringes again when he returned to Manchester. Lingard played only 20 times in all competitions for Forest and featured just four times in 2023.



SEOUL: FC Seoul's forward Jesse Lingard attends a welcome event for FC Seoul's new players prior to the South Korean K-League football match between FC Seoul and Incheon United FC at Seoul World Cup Stadium in Seoul on March 10, 2024. — AFP

All Blacks great Sam Whitelock to retire this year

WELLINGTON: Sam Whitelock, the most capped player in the illustrious history of New Zealand rugby, will retire from the professional game at the end of the French club season in June, his country's federation announced on Tuesday. The 35-year-old played 153 times for the All Blacks and won back-to-back Rugby World Cups in 2011 and 2015. He narrowly missed out on becoming the first player to win three World Cups when New Zealand were beaten by a single point by South Africa in the final in Paris last year.

Whitelock had come on in the 55th minute of the final, extending his own record for World Cup appearances to 26. After the final, he joined Pau in

France's Top 14 on a two-year contract. The announcement he is retiring will put an end to speculation that he was set to make a return to Test rugby this year, following a reported approach by new All Blacks head coach Scott Robertson. "It's time to finish the playing chapter of rugby," Whitelock said in an All Blacks statement.

"I've been having a few conversations with my wife Hannah and the kids around what the future looks like for us. "I think if you talk to anyone who has played for a long time, that desire (to compete) never leaves, it's just that stage of life when you move on. "It's not a decision that we have come to lightly, but it's the right thing for myself and it's the right thing for my wife and our three kids - Fred, Iris and Penelope.

"And I think that is what excites me the most - spending more time with my kids and my wife, and actually watching them play sport. Being able to go to the cross-country at school and those things." Whitelock won his first Test cap in 2010 against Ireland and was the youngest All Black to play in 100



AUCKLAND: New Zealand's Sam Whitelock holds up the Bledisloe Cup after the second rugby union match between the New Zealand and Australia in this file photo. — AFP

Tests and the quickest in the world to achieve the milestone. His overall appearance record places him second only to Alun Wyn Jones of Wales on the all-time list of most-capped internationals. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

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

Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Hospitals

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

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988

For labor-related inquiries and complaints: Call MSAL hotline 128

Today's Matches

English Premier League
Liverpool v Sheffield United 21:30
beIN Sports HD 2
beIN Sports HD 2 English

Chelsea v Manchester United 22:15
beIN Sports HD 1
beIN Sports HD 1 English

Spanish League
Granada v Valencia 21:00
beIN Sports HD 3

BHASIN...

THE UNIFORM PEOPLE

We specialize in superior-quality uniforms for hotels & catering companies; industrial & business establishments; security & service agencies; Also for police & army personnel; hospitals & medical facilities; and standard uniforms for schools, boy-scouts & girl-guides.

We supply cricket, golf and badminton equipments; also all types of flags of every country.

High Quality

We also do re-stringing of Badminton, Squash and Tennis rackets

SHARQ: Omar Bin Al Khattab St., Bldg. No. 1122, Bk. 12 Tel.: 22435552 / 22435301 Fax: 22407940
FARWANIYA: Galleria Complex (Dajeej) Shop No.2 & 15 Tel.: 24314839 / 24318720

TIMINGS: SHARQ & FARWANIYA SHOWROOMS: 9:30AM - 2:00PM & 8:00 PM - 10:30 PM

www.bhasinuniforms.com bhasin@bhasinuniforms.com @bhasin.co

Tottenham held by West Ham

Everton hit back at Newcastle



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's Italian goalkeeper #13 Guglielmo Vicario jumps to stop the ball during the English Premier League football match between West Ham United and Tottenham Hotspur at the London Stadium, in London. — AFP

LONDON: Tottenham missed the chance to move into the Premier League's top four after a 1-1 draw at West Ham, while Newcastle were also held 1-1 by Everton on Tuesday.

Spurs have made a habit of recovering from slow starts to win in recent months, but this time they failed to capitalise on scoring after just five minutes.

Brennan Johnson was left with the simple task of tapping into an empty net from Timo Werner's cross. West Ham were under pressure to respond after collapsing from 3-1 up to lose 4-3 at Newcastle on Saturday. The Hammers were quickly level as Jarrod Bowen's corner flew in off the back of Kurt Zouma.

A draw kept West Ham one point ahead of Newcastle in seventh, but they missed the best chance to take all three points when Michail Antonio fired straight at Guglielmo Vicario. Tottenham close to within two points of Aston Villa in fourth and extend their lead over sixth-placed Manchester United to nine points.

"Disappointed not to get a better outcome, but a tough game," said Spurs boss Ange Postecoglou. "There's a lot of games to go still. I will be very surprised if all games aren't tight. Everyone is fighting for something. We have to maintain our levels."

Everton's unwanted record

Injury-hit Newcastle's hopes of European football

next season were dented by Dominic Calvert-Lewin's late equaliser for Everton from the penalty spot. Alexander Isak netted for the fifth consecutive game at St James' Park to open the scoring.

The Swede took his tally for the season to 19 as he cut inside Jarrad Branthwaite and slotted into the far corner on 15 minutes.

"Alexander Isak is an outstanding technician," said Newcastle manager Eddie Howe. "He looks like he will score in every game at the moment."

How Sean Dyche longs for a striker of Isak's quality. But Calvert-Lewin ended a near six-month goal drought from the spot after Ashley Young was hauled down inside the box by Paul Dummett.

Everton set a new club record wireless run of 13 Premier League games to leave their 70-year stay in the top flight still at risk. The Toffees edge four points above the relegation zone but have the threat of a second points deduction for breaches of financial rules hanging over them.

Forest blitz

Nottingham Forest pulled three points clear of the relegation zone with a first-half blitz of Fulham to win 3-1. The home side sped out of the blocks at the City Ground as Callum Hudson-Odoi and Chris Wood smashed home inside the first 19 minutes.

Fulham boss Marco Silva showed his disgust by making a triple substitution after just half an hour. However, even that did not halt Forest's momentum as Morgan Gibbs-White made it 3-0 in first-half stoppage time.

"It's important but it can not distract us because we have a long way to go," said Forest boss Nuno Espirito Santo. "We've had good performances before and not been able to sustain them so let's take that into this game and try to sustain the performance."

Fulham pulled one back through Tosin Adarabioyo in the second half but it was too little, too late for the Cottagers. Second-bottom Burnley are now unbeaten in four but slip six points adrift of safety after a 1-1 draw at home to Wolves.

Jacob Bruun Larsen put the Claret in front, but Rayan Ait-Nouri's header secured Wolves a point. Bournemouth climbed above Chelsea into 11th thanks to Justin Kluivert's winner as they beat Crystal Palace 1-0.

Arsenal can leapfrog Liverpool to go top of the table when they host Luton, while Manchester City take on Aston Villa in the pick of Wednesday's action. Liverpool are expected to ease past bottom-of-the-table Sheffield United when they visit Anfield on Thursday. — AFP

Embiid makes a dazzling return

LOS ANGELES: Joel Embiid made a dazzling return from a two-month injury layoff to inspire the Philadelphia 76ers to an upset 109-105 victory over the Oklahoma City Thunder on Tuesday. The NBA's reigning Most Valuable Player was a surprise late inclusion in the Sixers' starting line-up at the Wells Fargo Center, returning to the hardwood after suffering a knee injury in a defeat to Golden State on January 30.

In Embiid's absence the Sixers' season has been in freefall, plunging into the play-in positions in the Eastern Conference rather than the automatic post-season spots. The 30-year-old's return Tuesday suggested the Sixers may yet be capable of upsetting the form book heading into the playoffs after battling past the Thunder, who went into the game as Western Conference leaders.

Embiid, who finished with 24 points, seven assists and six rebounds after logging nearly 30 minutes of game time, was visibly exhausted after dragging the Sixers over the line. "Not good," Embiid replied when asked how he felt following the victory. "But I'm glad we got through it and we got the win." Embiid said his rehabilitation from a torn left meniscus had been one of the most challenging injury layoffs of his career. "This one took a toll mentally," said Embiid, who wore a large brace on his heavily strapped left knee. "I just wanted to come back. I'm only going to get better but this one has been the hardest by far, especially mentally," he added.

Oklahoma City led for most of the game and looked to be on course for victory after opening up a 13-point lead early in the second half. However a fourth-quarter rally from the Sixers - outscoring their short-handed opponents 36-25 - swung the game decisively back in favor of the home team. Two Embiid free throws put Philadelphia ahead 106-105 with 38 seconds remaining, and Embiid then made a crucial steal before drawing a foul which sent him back to the free throw line to put the Sixers up 108-105. Tobias Harris then made a late free throw to seal the win.

Bucks stumble

The Milwaukee Bucks were stunned 117-113 on the road by the lowly Washington Wizards. Corey Kispert was the hero for Washington, finishing with 27 points from 10-of-18 shooting from the field to secure only the 15th win of the season for the Wizards. Giannis Antetokounmpo led Milwaukee with 35 points but it was not enough to prevent the Bucks sliding to a defeat that left coach Doc Rivers questioning his team's durability away from home.

"I've been sitting back and watching everything - not just our players, but our travel crew, everything," Rivers said. "We don't bring the necessary professionalism and seriousness on the road. That's something we can fix, and it's something we're going to have to fix," Rivers added. "We've got to be a better road team." The Wizards' next opponents will be the Los Angeles Lakers, who continued their successful road trip with a 128-111 defeat of the Toronto Raptors. LeBron James finished with 23 points while Anthony Davis had 21. — AFP

Verstappen poised to bounce back in Japan

SUZUKA: Max Verstappen is hot favorite for this weekend's Japanese Grand Prix after failing to finish in Australia, but Ferrari are primed to exploit any slip-ups. Triple world champion Verstappen retired from a race for the first time in two years after a brake issue in Melbourne caused smoke to billow from his Red Bull. Carlos Sainz took the chequered flag and team-mate Charles Leclerc followed to claim a one-two finish for Ferrari a fortnight ago.

Verstappen had started the season in typically dominant form, winning emphatically in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia while Ferrari toiled behind. The tables turned in Australia but the Dutchman has won in Japan for the past two years and Suzuka is one of his favorite circuits. The sweeping bends and dramatic elevation changes allow Verstappen to make the most of his Red Bull's superior speed, although rain is forecast for Sunday's race.

"We knew a day like this could come at some point," Verstappen said of his premature Melbourne exit. "So we need to be proud that we have had a great run with nine races (wins) in a row and we can come back stronger for Suzuka." Verstappen's troubles in Australia compounded a turbulent start to the season for Red Bull, whose grands prix wins were overshadowed by team disunity and allegations against boss Christian Horner.

Verstappen, who said in Australia that he intends to see out his contract with the all-conquering team, will be hoping to find calm at Suzuka. He has frequently spoken of his love for the "old school" circuit, where he clinched his second world title in 2022 and helped Red Bull seal the constructor's crown last year. Verstappen romped home by almost 20 seconds from second-placed Lando Norris last year.



TOKYO: Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen (left) and Mexican teammate Sergio Perez (2nd right) attend a talk session as part of the 2024 FIA Formula One World Championship official promotion event hosted by Honda Motor in Tokyo on April 3, 2024, ahead of the weekend's Formula One Japanese Grand Prix in Suzuka. — AFP

This year's race has been shifted forward in the calendar from its traditional late-season slot.

Ferrari resurgent

The reigning world champion could face a stiffer challenge this time round if Sainz's victory in Melbourne is anything to go by. The Spaniard, who will be replaced at Ferrari by Lewis Hamilton next season, returned from an appendicitis operation that caused him to miss the previous race in Saudi Arabia. He finished 2.3 seconds ahead of team-mate Leclerc, who now trails Verstappen by only four points in the

drivers' standings after three races.

"The team deserves this one-two, we did a fantastic job all weekend," said Sainz, who is fourth overall, 11 points behind Verstappen. "We executed a perfect race, nailed the strategy and the mechanics were incredible, delivering precise and quick pit stops every single time." Sainz and Leclerc finished ahead of Norris, whose McLaren team-mate Oscar Piastri was fourth. McLaren will be looking in Japan to build on that strong showing, especially with once-mighty Mercedes looking a shadow of their former selves early in the season. — AFP