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NOTICE

Eid Mubarak to all our readers! Kuwait Times will not publish its print edition from April 10-12, 2024. Readers can stay informed with breaking news and information via KuwaitTimes.com and our digital media channels on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, LinkedIn and Threads.



Ramadan Kareem

Fajr	: 04:08
Shrooq	: 05:29
Dhuhr	: 11:50
Asr	: 15:23
Maghrib	: 18:11
Isha	: 19:30

Amir sends Eid congratulations

Sheikh Mishal receives former premiers, appoints new governors



HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The Amiri Diwan conveyed on Monday the warmest congratulations to HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to citizens and residents in Kuwait on the occasion of Eid Al-Fitr, and prayed they would continue to live in love and harmony. The Amiri Diwan, on this occasion, congratulated HH the Amir and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. It also congratulated the Kuwaiti people and all residents in the country and prayed that the occasion would revisit the Arab and Muslim states as they enjoy greater security and peace.

HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal also received on Monday former prime ministers — HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, HH Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, HH Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and HH Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. The reception is part of current consultations for forming a new government.

An Amiri decree was also issued on Sunday appointing governors of Farwaniya, Capital, Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Ahmadi and Jahra governorates. The Amiri decree stipulated the appointment with a minister's degree of Sheikh Adhbi Nasser Al-Adhbi Al-Sabah as Farwaniya Governor, Sheikh Abdullah Salem Al-Ali

Al-Sabah as Capital Governor, Sheikh Sabah Badier Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah as Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governor, Sheikh Hamad Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah as Ahmadi Governor and Hamad Jassem Mohammad Mheisen Al-Habshi as Jahra Governor.

Meanwhile, local media reported on Monday caretaker Prime Minister HH Sheikh Dr. Mohammad has turned down an offer to form the new Cabinet, without citing any source. This means that a new prime minister must be appointed. Reports also said former prime minister HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled also declined an offer to form the new Cabinet.

HH Sheikh Dr. Mohammad was appointed prime minister only about three months ago. He succeeded former prime minister HH Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf. During his short tenure, Sheikh Dr. Mohammad proposed to HH the Amir to dissolve the National Assembly, which was followed by holding fresh polls in which Kuwaiti voters voted back a majority of the dissolved Assembly members.

Under Kuwaiti law, HH Sheikh Dr. Mohammad submitted the resignation of his Cabinet, which was accepted by HH the Amir, who asked him and the Cabinet to continue in a caretaker capacity. HH the Amir has started customary consultations to name a prime minister to form a new Cabinet and over the past two days met two former speakers and five former prime ministers. HH Sheikh Mishal can name a new figure to form the

next Cabinet, which must be ready before the Assembly holds its inaugural session on April 17.

Former Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem told reporters he has not taken a decision on whether to run for the speaker's post and will take it in due time. "I have not said that I will not run nor I have said I will run. I will make a decision on the matter in due time," Ghanem said. Two MPs have already announced they are running for the top position in the new Assembly — former speaker and veteran lawmaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun and MP Fahad Al-Azmi.

Ghanem called on new MPs to put aside personal differences and focus on important issues to serve the Kuwaiti people who voted them into parliament. He also said that he will accept any invitation to attend an informal meeting of new MPs only if it comes from a "free and uncontrolled person".

Meanwhile, the public prosecution has ordered the detention of a man suspected of buying votes from two women in favor of a candidate in the fifth constituency. The prosecution said in a statement the suspect confessed to the accusation and investigation is ongoing in the case. This is the second such case of vote buying being investigated by the public prosecution. In the first case, a suspect was detained and an order issued to arrest a second suspect over vote-buying allegations in the third constituency.

RAMADAN KAREEM

Eid Al-Fitr in Islam

By Hassan Twaha Bwambale

Celebrations in Islam are a blessing from Almighty Allah in that all of them come after accomplishing an act of worship. We have two main celebrations in Islam — Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha. When Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) arrived in Madinah, he found its inhabitants celebrating two occasions. Upon asking them, they said, "We used to celebrate these two occasions during the Ignorance Era (Jahiliyya)." He then informed them that The Loving Allah has substituted those two occasions with two better ones — Eid Al-Fitr (festival of breaking the fast) and Eid Al-Adha (festival of sacrifice). (This hadith is classified as authentic by Imam Ibn Hajar.)

Eid Al-Fitr is a very important festival for Muslims. It is vital in the Islamic calendar and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself celebrated it. People refer to it as 'The Feast of Breaking the Fast' and Muslims worldwide celebrate it to mark the end of the auspicious month of Ramadan.

Eid Al-Fitr traditionally starts with prayers, then a short sermon follows. In some countries, the prayers occur outside, while in others the prayers are hosted in mosques or large halls. After the prayers, Muslims wish everyone around them a Happy Eid. After that, they visit their relatives and friends to enjoy with each other and have a feast.

Muslims officially celebrate these two occasions, which occur after Ramadan and after the pilgrimage, or hajj. Once during Eid Al-Adha, the festival of sacrifice, Abu Bakr (RA) visited Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and found two girls singing and playing tambourines. He reprimanded them saying, "Do you play Satan's equipment in the house Allah's Messenger of Allah?" Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) woke up to Abu Bakr's voice and said, "Leave them alone Abu Bakr! Indeed every people have their own festival and this is our festival." (Reported by Imam Muslim)

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Nicaragua slams Germany in Gaza genocide case

THE HAGUE: Nicaragua and Germany crossed swords at the UN's top court on Monday, with Managua saying Berlin was "pathetic" to supply aid to Gazans while also providing the Zionist entity with weapons, a case the top German lawyer dismissed as "grossly biased". Nicaragua has hauled Germany before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to demand judges impose emergency measures to stop Berlin from providing the Zionist entity with weapons and other assistance.



THE HAGUE: People protest outside the International Court of Justice as lawyers gather for a case filed by Nicaragua against Germany to stop Berlin providing the Zionist entity with weapons and other assistance on April 8, 2024. — AFP

Jordanians keep up Ramadan rallies for Gaza ceasefire

AMMAN: Jordanian protesters have taken to Amman's streets nightly in their thousands during Ramadan, transforming the normally festive Muslim month into a solemn show of solidarity with Palestinians in war-battered Gaza. "I don't think we can celebrate," said Ahmed Al-Tubeigi, 32, ahead of the holiday of Eid Al-Fitr later this week, which marks the end of the fasting month. "It would be shameful," he said during a rally on Sunday. "There's no Eid atmosphere."

Lawyers for Nicaragua argued Germany is in breach of the 1948 United Nations Genocide Convention, set up in the wake of the Holocaust, by furnishing the Zionist entity with weapons. "It is indeed a pathetic excuse to the Palestinian children, women and men to provide humanitarian aid, including through airdrops, on the one hand and to furnish the military equipment that is used to kill and annihilate them... on the other hand," Daniel Mueller, a lawyer for Nicaragua, told the court.

Nicaragua's ambassador to the Netherlands, Carlos Jose Arguello Gomez, told the court: "Germany seems not to be able to differentiate between self-defense and genocide." Nicaragua asked the ICJ to decide "provisional measures" — emergency orders imposed while the court considers the broader case. "Germany was and is fully conscious of the

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KUWAIT: A vendor displays gold coins at a gold shop on April 8, 2024. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Gold prices hit record

KUWAIT: Gold prices spiked as high as \$2,353.95 per ounce on Monday to extend its record-busting streak, buoyed by its haven qualities amid ongoing Middle East turmoil. As the precious metal hits historic highs and is expected to rise further, women are seeking to find a balance between their desire to purchase gold for Eid and selling the gold they already own to benefit from the current prices, reaching over KD 20 per gram (for 21 karat gold). (See Page 2)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kuwaiti team returns from Gaza

KUWAIT: A team from Kuwait Society for Relief concluded its mission in Gaza Strip on Sunday. The relief and medical mission trip aimed at assisting medical staff at the European Hospital and the Kuwait Specialized Hospital. The team performed several surgical and emergency operations on wounded Palestinians due to the tragic devastation and war there. — KUNA (See Page 4)

Bahrain pardons hundreds

MANAMA: Bahrain's king has pardoned 1,584 people facing criminal and "riot" charges, state media said Monday. Bahrain News Agency (BNA) said "this royal decree reflects his majesty's keenness to maintain the cohesion and stability of the Bahraini society while protecting its social fabric". The pardons cover "those convicted for riot and criminal cases" and were announced as Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa marks 25 years since his ascension to the throne. The decree also comes ahead of Eid Al-Fitr. — AFP



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Local

Women contemplate buying gold for Eid or sell to capitalize

Gold prices hit record high

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: As gold hits historic highs and is expected to rise further, women are seeking to find a balance between their desire to purchase gold for Eid and selling the gold they already own to benefit from the current prices, reaching over KD 20 per gram (for 21 karat gold). Gold prices spiked as high as \$2,353.95 per ounce on Monday to extend its record-busting streak, buoyed by its haven qualities amid ongoing Middle East turmoil.

Gold holds significance among Arabs as it symbolizes fashion and status. It is often worn at social and religious occasions such as Eid and cherished for its beautiful appeal and conservation of wealth, making it an investment for many people. "This is the first time for gold to reach this price and we are not sure yet of the reason behind this jump. But we expect it to reach an even higher record," said Yousef Ali, a vendor at a gold shop. Hasan, another vendor at a gold shop, explained: "Ever since the pandemic, gold has been hitting record highs to reach its historical record today. Women constitute a significant share of gold buyers, especially during seasonal occasions such as the holy month of Ramadan, Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha."

Hasan also recommended that in the current market, women should consider selling to capitalize on the high prices instead of making new purchases. "Rather than buying, I recommend selling your gold during this time if you need some money, as it's at a very high record today in comparison to its record in the past years," he advised.

Khaznah, a Kuwaiti woman, told Kuwait Times there is a well-known saying about gold that sum-



Woman seen at a gold shop. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

marizes why women love to buy gold, "Zeena w khazeena," meaning gold is a beautifying accessory and an investment. "Gold is not only worn during Eid; women wear gold in almost every joyful event, whether a religious event or wedding. Many women also wear gold daily. However, we tend to buy a new piece of gold for Eid as a way to express our joy and celebration of this precious occasion," she elaborated.

Khaznah also emphasized that despite her assuredness that gold shops in Kuwait are under meticulous monitoring and sell authentic gold pieces, she still prefers to purchase her gold from the same gold shop that she always buys from. "I do not like to change the gold shop I buy from. I trust the purity and love the designs and craftsmanship of this store. I also trust the pricing, as despite gold being already expensive, some ven-



Yousef Ali



21 Carat gold bangles.

dors increase the price even more. Not to mention the record high it has reached with the arrival of Eid, which is making us hesitate to buy any new gold," she added.

In my view

Parliamentary life in a democratic system



Dr Khalid Al-Saleh

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Parliamentary life in democratic systems is governed by rules and conditions, with one of the most crucial being the ability of the people to choose their leaders for a set period. In some developing countries, including Kuwait, the journey toward full democratic functioning is ongoing. While Kuwait's parliamentary experience is over 50 years old, it still encounters occasional stumbling blocks due to various reasons.

Recently, Kuwait held transparent parliamentary elections, resulting in the selection of 50 members to legislate and oversee the government's performance on behalf of the people. Despite not fully adhering to democratic principles, this process represents a significant step forward. Kuwait, with its relatively small population and geographical size, hopes for a successful legislative term that can further the democratic process and ensure full representation of its citizens, governed by a leadership that garners unanimous support.

For many Kuwaitis, the Amiri system embodies success, emphasizing paternal guidance and tradition. It symbolizes a constructive relationship that they wish to perpetuate and enhance. While some countries operate under monarchy systems, successfully advancing development, others embrace full democracy, often leading to greater satisfaction and a sense of participation among the populace.

The diversity of ruling systems notwithstanding, the essence lies in the positive relationship between people and their leaders. In Kuwait, this relationship has predominantly been positive, and it is hoped that this continues to serve the country's developmental goals while combating the corruption that has emerged as a concern in recent decades.

The expectations for the new representatives of the Kuwaiti people are high; they are urged to fulfill the hopes of their constituents and cultivate a constructive relationship with the country's leadership. Similarly, there is a desire for the leaders to acknowledge and collaborate effectively with the elected representatives, thereby realizing the aspirations of the populace.



Minister inaugurates Fahaeel Health Center

KUWAIT: The Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi inaugurated the Fahaeel Health Center on Monday for the examination of expatriate workers in the Ahmadi health area as part of the ministry's plan to promote health and achieve excellent health care. The minister said in a statement to reporters after the inauguration that the center, which includes three floors, will provide primary health care services for workers under Article 18. The center includes nine clinics, including diabetes, diabetic foot, chronic diseases, and others.

He explained that the center is one of eight centers serving the Ahmadi area, pointing out that there is an integrated center for health services, which includes 10 clinics. In addition to that, the center includes two integrated laboratories to provide integrated laboratory services linked to the electronic system at Adan Hospital. The center for the examination of expat



workers will serve 300 to 500 expatriates a day and includes four radiological devices, in addition to a dental department for oral and dental health.

Minister Al-Awadhi stressed that all these services are under one roof at the Fahaeel Health Center, which is a qualitative leap for the ministry to relieve pressure on many of the services provided in the Ahmadi health area, pointing out that this center is intended for expatriates and citizens



Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, inaugurates Fahaeel Health Center on Monday. — KUNA photos

at the same time, while the Fahaeel specialized center provides its services for citizens.

For her part, the undersecretary of the Ministry of Health for Health Care Affairs, Dr. Nadia Jumaa, said that the expatriate workers examination center will receive male patients with Arti-

cle 18 and will operate all through the week from 7 am until midnight. The Fahaeel Health Center includes specialized clinics for diabetes, chronic diseases, diabetic foot, healthy children, involuntary urination, obesity, nose, ear, throat, eyes, skin, and internal medicine. — KUNA



Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, inaugurates Fahaeel Health Center on Monday. — KUNA photos



Minister visits schools

KUWAIT: The Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Dr. Adel Al-Adwani, inspected a number of schools on Monday morning as part of his tour to see the progress of the educational process before the holidays. Minister Al-Adwani expressed his thanks, appreciation, and pride in the students who are committed to school hours, as well as the school administrations that were keen to provide an attractive school environment for students. He noted that commitment to school hours, keenness, and follow-up are among the characteristics of a successful and outstanding student that the ministry seeks to strengthen. The minister's visit to schools came within the framework of providing moral support to students and school administrations. He stressed the importance of honoring committed students to promote a culture of commitment. — Agencies



Minister of Health inspects medical warehouses

KUWAIT: The Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, said that the medical warehouses for the strategic storage of medicines and medical consumables at the new Adan Hospital will enhance the strategic inventory and preserve the drugs. Minister Al-Awadhi added in a press statement after overseeing the receipt of the new building on Monday that the building is considered one of the main buildings

of the Adan Hospital project, explaining that work is within the plan designed to strengthen the strategic inventory and maintain drug security in the country.

He explained that these warehouses are being built on an area of about 12,000 square meters, including areas for storing medicines and other medical consumables. The warehouses are equipped with the best standards for the quality and safety of medicines and consumables. The storage systems used in these warehouses are high-density storage shelves, which is one of the storage systems used in modern warehouses and allows doubling storage and making use of space. These warehouses are characterized by high-quality multi-use shelves as well as refrigerated warehouses for the storage of medical materials that require low temperatures. — KUNA

Amir receives Eid greetings

King of Bahrain

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Monday a phone call from King of Bahrain Hamad bin Issa Al-Khalifa, congratulating him on the occasion of Eid Al-Fitr. The Bahraini King beseeched Almighty that this occasion will be repeated for the two countries and the Arab and Muslim nations, wishing His Highness good health and wellness. His Highness the Amir thanked the Bahraini king for the phone call, reciprocating with identical sentiments and wishes.

Sultan of Oman

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Monday received a phone call from the Sultan of Oman His Majesty Haitham bin Tariq on the occasion of Eid Al-Fitr. During the phone call, Sultan Haitham expressed to His Highness the Amir his sincere congratulations and best wishes on this blessed occasion. On his part, His Highness the Amir thanked him for his kind gesture, which is a part of the two countries' strong historical ties. —KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

FM reiterates Kuwait's solid backing to Palestinian people

KUWAIT: Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya reiterated on Sunday Kuwait's principled and firm support for the Palestinian people in their struggle to obtain their legitimate rights and establish their independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital. This came in a phone call with the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Palestine, Dr. Muhammad Mustafa, according to a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry. During the call, Minister Al-Yahya said he looks forward to working with the Palestinian counterpart to strengthen and consolidate bilateral relations in various fields and at all levels.

He expressed his full support for international efforts aiming to resolve the suffering of the brotherly Palestinian people. He congratulated Dr. Mustafa on assuming his position as the Prime

Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Palestine, wishing him good luck and success in his mission. For his part, Prime Minister Mustafa conveyed the greetings of his country's leadership and people to the State of Kuwait and its wise leadership and people.

He expressed gratitude and appreciation to the State of Kuwait for defending the Palestinian cause at the international forum and providing humanitarian and relief aid to the war-traumatized Palestinian people. The Ministry statement pointed out that both sides reviewed and exchanged views about the latest developments of common concern in the occupied Palestinian territories, the region, and the world.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah discussed via phone Sunday with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and

Expatriates of Jordan Ayman Al-Safadi the tragic situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and increasing coordination and consultation on dealing with the dangerous escalation in the Gaza Strip.

In a press statement, the Foreign Ministry said that both sides underlined the need to support international efforts seeking to accelerate humanitarian and relief aid delivery to the Palestinian people. They urged the international community to assume its responsibilities and intensify its efforts to help achieve a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian cause. Minister Al-Yahya appreciated Jordan's effective role in maintaining regional security and stability and enhancing joint Arab action.

He affirmed Kuwait's backing for the Hashemite Kingdom's efforts to stop the war in Gaza and limit its repercussions. He also voiced Kuwait's full support for the international efforts to find the most effective ways to end this dangerous deterioration that threatens the security of the region. — KUNA

Embassies send Eid greetings

Palestine Embassy

Rami Tahboub
Palestinian Ambassador

On behalf of myself, the Palestinian community in Kuwait and employees of the Palestine Embassy, I am honored to convey our heartfelt congratulations on the occasion of Eid Al-Fitr to HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, may Allah protect him, grant him good health, and continue to guide him as a great leader of the Kuwaiti people.

We fondly recall the honorable stance of Kuwait and its successive rulers towards Palestine, its people and its just cause. Kuwait, a country proud of its Arab heritage, has consistently supported Palestine, particularly during these challenging times and the ongoing tragedy faced by our people in Gaza and throughout occupied Palestine.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all medical and relief teams



and Kuwaiti charitable organizations who tirelessly work day and night to alleviate the suffering and pain experienced by our people. Special thanks are extended to the two medical teams who have selflessly dedicated themselves to healing the wounds of their Palestinian brothers. The Palestinian leadership and people deeply appreciate and value their efforts.

Sierra Leone Embassy

Haja Ishata Thomas
Sierra Leonean Ambassador

On the glorious occasion of the blessed Eid Al-Fitr, I would like to extend my warmest felicitations to Kuwait's Amir His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, (May Allah protect him), the government and the friendly people of Kuwait. Eid celebrations help reaffirm the long-standing and ever-growing friendship between our nations. It further provides us with the opportunity to reflect on the values of kindness and altruism with a view to fostering mutual understanding among peoples and countries.



Mexico Embassy

Eduardo Patricio Haller
Mexican Ambassador

The Embassy of Mexico to Kuwait has the honor to extend sincere congratulations and best wishes to Kuwait's Amir His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the PM Sheikh Dr. Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, the government and the people of Kuwait, on the occasion of the advent of "Eid Al-Fitr", wishing the friendly people of Kuwait further prosperity and stability.

Kuwait stands as a beacon of compassion and philanthropy in the global community, extending its hands in generosity to approximately 150 countries around the world without seeking anything in return. This noble nation's humanitarian and charitable endeavors which have noble origin in the code of honor of the inhabitants of the desert have spanned decades, embodying the spirit of selflessness and mutual support.

Kuwait's contributions are diverse and impactful, ranging from disaster relief and health care projects to educational programs and infrastructure development, benefiting millions of lives across continents. This unparalleled commitment to aiding those in need, regardless of geographical borders or cultural differences, reflects Kuwait's profound dedication to fostering global solidarity and peace. As the world faces ever-increasing challenges, Kuwait's philanthropic efforts shine as a testament to what can be achieved when nations prioritize compassion and cooperation over reciprocity. Kuwaiti solidarity has its origin in the code of the desert practiced by the Arab people since ancient times.

Kuwait's international humanitarian efforts, marked by an un-



wavering commitment to charity and assistance, serve as a cornerstone of its foreign relations, reflecting a profound dedication to fostering global welfare. This commitment is vividly illustrated in its engagement with nations like Mexico, where Kuwait's philanthropic initiatives have made significant impacts. Beyond bilateral support, Kuwait's broad spectrum of humanitarian endeavors extends across so many countries, addressing diverse challenges from disaster relief to sustainable development projects.

Kuwait's approach is characterized by a deep-seated belief in the principles of humanity and generosity, prioritizing the provision of aid without expectations of reciprocity. Its contributions, ranging from health care and education to emergency response and infrastructure development, not only alleviate immediate distress but also lay the groundwork for long-term resilience and prosperity. In doing so, Kuwait not only reinforces its stature as a leading humanitarian benefactor on the global stage but also inspires a vision of a world where solidarity and compassion transcend boundaries.



KUWAIT: People receive iftar meals as Muslim devotees break their fast in Souq Mubarakia. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Benefits of fasting

Ramadan, the holiest month in the Islamic calendar, is a time of spiritual reflection, self-discipline, and strengthening our connection with God. Central to this sacred month is the act of fasting, observed by millions of Muslims around the globe. In this blog, we delve into the overall benefits of fasting in Ramadan, including spiritual benefits and health advantages.

Fasting during Ramadan is not merely an act of abstaining from food and drink; it is a deeply spiritual practice that holds profound significance in Islam. Through fasting, individuals are reminded of the blessings they have been bestowed with and are encouraged to show gratitude for them. Additionally, fasting serves as a way to empathize with those who are less fortunate, promoting compassion and solidarity with those in need.

Spiritual significance

Many question the purpose of Ramadan and fasting, and the reasoning is quite clear in Islam. Ramadan fasting is more than just refraining from consuming food and drink; rather, it is a transformative journey towards attaining Taqwa (God-consciousness). As stated in the Holy Quran, "O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous" (Quran 2:183). This verse emphasizes that fasting is a means of spiritual purification and moral elevation. By refraining from worldly desires, Muslims aim to strengthen their relationship with Allah and increase their awareness of His presence in their lives.

Virtues of self-discipline

Fasting instills a sense of self-discipline and control over one's desires, which are essential virtues in Islam. By refraining from food, drink and other physical comforts during daylight hours, Muslims learn to harness their inner strength and resist temptation. This practice of self-discipline extends beyond abstaining from food; it encompasses refraining from negative behaviours such as gossip, anger, and dishonesty, in addition to encouraging self-control too. Through fasting, individuals cultivate a heightened awareness of their actions and strive to align them with the teachings of Islam.

Moreover, fasting creates a profound sense of gratitude for the blessings bestowed upon us by Allah. As we experience hunger and thirst, we become acutely aware of the privileges we often take for granted, such as access to food, clean water, and shelter. The act of fasting reminds us of the struggles and challenges of the less fortunate and encourages us to share our blessings with those in need. In the words of Imam Ali (AS), "Blessed is he whose own faults preoccupy him from noticing the faults of others and whose own hunger preoccupies him from envying the plenty of others."

Kuwait Heritage



KUWAIT: A group of Kuwait Oil Company employees hold a meeting to follow up on the implementation of some recreational activities for employees in the seventies. - Photo from KOC archive, provided by Mahmoud Zakaria, heritage researcher at Ministry of Information.

Kuwait Medical Relief Society concludes its mission in Gaza

US, Jordanian militaries continue aid airdrops into Gaza



Kuwait Medical Relief Society team.



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KUWAIT: A team from the Kuwait Medical Relief Society concluded its mission in the Gaza Strip on Sunday after a relief and medical mission trip aimed at assisting the medical staff in the European Hospital and the Kuwait Specialized Hospital, performing several surgical and emergency operations for wounded Palestinians due to the tragic devastation and war there. Deputy Director General of the Society and team official Omar Al-Thuwaini told KUNA that the team completed its relief activities inside the Gaza Strip, which varied between performing a number of delicate surgical operations and the distribution of food, shelter, and social projects and supporting a wide number of relief sectors.

Al-Thuwaini called on volunteer medical and relief teams around the world to go to the Strip with their equipment to provide support to a large number of wounded Palestinians and to support the medical sector, which is on the verge of collapse and is struggling to survive with raw materials and a severe shortage of basic and necessary medical supplies.

He also praised the efforts of Kuwait's ministries that facilitated the travel of the relief medical team, which in turn led to the completion of their mission, namely the ministry of foreign affairs and the health ministry, which facilitated the departure of the medical team on an official mission, in addition to the Ministry of Defense, which was responsible for transportation.

For his part, the head of the relief and projects sector at the association and coordinator of the administrative team, Mahmoud Al-Misbah, said in a similar statement to KUNA that the doctors accompanying the society's team performed around 184 surgical operations at the Kuwait Specialized Hospital and the European Hospital during the seven days they spent inside Gaza, in addition to conducting a medical examination of more than 1,000 sick Gazans, using the medical equipment and supplies they brought on their journey to the besieged Strip.

Al-Misbah also noted that the society had signed an agreement with the Rahma Around the World Association in Gaza to employ a medical staff consisting of 313 individuals, revealing that before departure they had begun procedures for establishing a field hospital to support the health sector and provide care for 790 families inside Gaza.

Military airdrops

Meanwhile, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) and the Royal Jordanian Air Force conduct-



Kuwait Relief Society team returns after completing its mission in Gaza. — KUNA photos

ed a combined humanitarian assistance airdrop into Northern Gaza on April 7, said CENTCOM late Sunday. In a statement, CENTCOM indicated that it would provide essential relief to civilians in Gaza affected by the ongoing conflict. "The combined joint operation included Jordanian-provided food and three U.S. Air Force C-130 aircraft. The US C-130s dropped over 38,000 meal equivalents, providing life-saving humanitarian assistance in northern Gaza. To date, the US has dropped 739 tons of humanitarian assistance."

It went on to say that the Department of Defense humanitarian airdrops contribute to ongoing US and partner-nation government efforts to alleviate human suffering. "These airdrops are part of a sustained effort, and we continue to plan follow-on aerial deliveries," it concluded. The US administration continues to reiterate its commitment to humanitarian aid for Gaza, a step continuously thwarted by Zionist occupation by preventing aid from entering. The UN said that aid obstruction will cause a famine in Gaza. — KUNA



Muslims in Modi's India face dwindling representation

Swapping of the Guard: French, British troops mark Entente Cordiale

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Palestinians return to destroyed buildings in Khan Yunis on April 8, 2024 after the Zionist entity pulled its ground forces out of the southern Gaza Strip. - AFP photos



'Smells like death' in Khan Yunis

Gazans return to devastated southern city after Zionist pullout

GAZA: "It smells like death," said Maha Thaer, a mother of four, as she returned to the devastated southern Gaza city of Khan Yunis on Sunday, after Zionist troops withdrew. "We don't have a city anymore — only rubble. There is absolutely nothing left. I could not stop myself crying as I walked through the streets," the 38-year-old told AFP. "All the streets have been bulldozed. And the smell... I watched people digging and bringing out the bodies," said Thaer, whose home was partially destroyed.

Soon after the Zionist army said its troops were pulling out, people began to emerge into the devastated landscape — the residents of Khan Yunis returning to find what remained of their homes. Nearly 400,000 people lived in Khan Yunis and its environs before Oct 7. Much of the area is now in ruins after months of bombardment and heavy fighting between Zionist troops and Palestinian fighters.

A straggle of men and boys riding donkey carts, bicycles and the odd pickup truck headed north out of Rafah in the far south of the Gaza Strip, where more than 1.5 million Palestinians had taken refuge from the relentless Zionist ground invasion and bombardment. They passed the burned-out shell of the Al-Salam hospital, with almost all of the buildings around it razed to the ground.

Thaer, from the upmarket Hamad City district in the

west of Khan Yunis, said she was "very shocked and sad". "There were no walls or windows. Most of the towers were completely blown up," she said. Thaer said she would move back into her badly damaged apartment, "even though it is not suitable for living, but it is better than tents." Her neighbors suffered a greater misfortune. "They found their homes destroyed and they don't know where they will go," she said.

Other Gazans carried a mattress on their heads in the hope they would still have four walls to put it in. One of those who left Rafah on Sunday climbed on the top of a heap of rubble in Khan Yunis which once had been a home. With everything around him in ruins, AFP photographs showed the man standing among smashed concrete and corrugated iron roofing. Not a single structure within sight appeared untouched by the war.

Other images showed large swathes of the city flattened. The Zionist army told AFP that it had pulled its 98th division of ground troops out of the southern city on Sunday to "recuperate", with one official telling Zionist media it had killed thousands of Hamas fighters there. "There's no need for us to remain... We did everything we could there," an army official told Haaretz newspaper. The Zionist offensive has killed at least 33,207 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry in the territory. — AFP



Mozambique ferry disaster kills 97

MAPUTO: Rescuers carried out search operations off the northern coast of Mozambique on Monday after a makeshift ferry boat carrying people fleeing a cholera outbreak capsized, killing at least 97. The converted fishing boat, with about 130 people on board, ran into trouble late on Sunday as it was headed for an island off Nampula province, officials said.

Most of those on board were trying to escape the mainland after disinformation about cholera caused a panic, according to Nampula's secretary of state Jaime Neto. Many children were among the victims, he added. On Sunday, authorities said the boat was believed to have sunk as it was overcrowded and unsuited to carrying passengers. It was later clarified that the vessel capsized after taking on water.

"Water filled the boat... and the tragedy happened," Menque Amade, a crew member who survived the accident, told national broadcaster TVM. Silverio Nauaito, the island's administrator, told AFP that six bodies were pulled from the waters on Monday, bringing the death toll to 97. Rescuers have found 12 survivors and search operations are continuing, the official said. The southern African country, one of the world's poorest, has recorded almost 15,000 cases of cholera and 32 deaths since October, according to government data. Nampula is the worst affected region, accounting for a third of all cases. Locals told AFP that health authorities recently stepped up outreach and prevention efforts. But the increased medical presence caused a scare among some residents, pushing a number of them to flee, they said. In recent months, the province has also received a large influx of people fleeing a wave of jihadist attacks in its northern neighbor of Cabo Delgado.

Missing at sea

The boat was headed to the Island of Mozam-

bique, a small coral islet that used to serve as the capital of Portuguese East Africa and gave its name to the country. Nauaito said it was not clear how many people were missing at sea as authorities were yet to determine the exact number of passengers. Television footage showed locals gathered around the red and green wooden boat, which had been pulled onto a beach.

Some looked out at the windy sea. Others stood next to bodies lying on the ground covered by blankets. A trading post on the route to India, initially used by Arab merchants, the Island of Mozambique was claimed for Portugal by famed explorer Vasco da Gama. Hosting a fortified city and linked to the mainland by a bridge built in the 1960s, the island is

listed as a World Heritage Site by the UN's culture agency, UNESCO.

Mozambique, which has a long Indian Ocean coastline, was a Portuguese colony until independence in 1975. Home to more than 30 million people, it is regularly hit by destructive cyclones. In March, at least one person died as an illegal fishing vessel foundered near a southern beach. With almost two thirds of the population living in poverty, Mozambique has set high hopes on vast natural gas deposits discovered in Cabo Delgado in 2010. But an insurgency since 2017 waged by militants linked to the Islamic State group has stalled progress. More than 5,000 people have been killed and almost a million forced to flee their homes since fighting began. — AFP



This video grab obtained on April 8, 2024 shows the boat that sunk off the north coast of Mozambique killing nearly 100 people, on the island of Mozambique. - AFP

Aid agencies decry 'shocking' Gaza toll six months into war

GENEVA: The United Nations and other international aid organizations on Sunday decried the devastating toll of six months of war in Gaza, warning that the Palestinian territory had become "beyond catastrophic". "Six months is an awful milestone," the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) said, warning that "humanity has been all but abandoned" in the severity of the conflict.

World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus made a new condemnation of the "barbaric act of violence" that unleashed the war, and demanded "the release of remaining hostages". But, he stressed that "this atrocity does not justify the horrific ongoing bombardment, siege and health system demolition by (the Zionist entity) in Gaza, killing, injuring and starving hundreds of thousands of civilians, including aid workers. "The denial of basic needs — food, fuel, sanitation, shelter, security and healthcare — is inhumane and intolerable," he wrote on X. Of Gaza's 36 main hospitals, only 10 remain even partially functional, according to the WHO.

Tedros voiced particular outrage at "the deaths and grievous injuries of thousands of children in Gaza", which he said would "remain a stain on all of humanity". "This assault on present and future generations must end." Philippe Lazzarini, head of the UN agency supporting Palestinian refugees known as UNRWA, said the "hellhole in Gaza is deepening by the day". "All lines — including the red lines — were crossed. This war is made far worse through technologies misused by humans to harm other humans: en-masse," he said on X. "It is made worse by the famine born from an (Zionist)-imposed siege, one would think it's from a different era. As a result, a man-made famine is eating up bodies of babies and young children," Lazzarini added. — AFP

International

French, UK troops mark Entente Cordiale

Swapping of the Guard: Unprecedented move celebrates 120 years of accord

PARIS: French and British troops on Monday swapped roles to take part in the changing of the guard ceremonies outside the palaces of the other country's head of state, in an unprecedented move to celebrate 120 years since the Entente Cordiale. Signed in 1904, the Entente Cordiale accord cemented an improvement in relations after the Napoleonic Wars and is seen as the foundation of the two NATO members' alliance to this day.

"Even after Brexit and with war back in Europe, 'this entente cordiale is somehow the cornerstone... that allows us to maintain the bilateral relationship,'" French President Emmanuel Macron said in a video address on X, formerly Twitter. "Long live the entente cordiale and long live the Franco-British friendship," he said, switching to English.

Macron and British ambassador to France Menna Rawlings on Monday morning watched British guards taking part in the changing of the guard outside his Elysee Palace. French guards were to do the same in London outside Buckingham Palace, the official residence of King Charles III. At the Elysee, 16 members of the Number 7 Company Coldstream Guards of the UK embassy, wearing their traditional bearskin hats, relieved French counterparts from the first infantry regiment. The French army choir then sang the two national anthems — God Save the King and La Marseillaise.

'More to defeat Russia'

British Foreign Minister David Cameron and his French counterpart, Stephane Sejourne, celebrated their countries' "close friendship" in a joint op-ed published late on Sunday. They said it was key at a time when NATO is mobilized to ensure Ukraine does not lose its fight to repel the Russian invasion. "Britain and France, two founding members and Europe's



(Left) British Ambassador to France Menna Rawlings and French President Emmanuel Macron walk past members of the Number 7 Company Coldstream Guards and the Gendarmerie Garde Republicaine in the courtyard of the Elysee Palace in Paris on April 8, 2024. (Right) Britain's Prince Edward, Duke of Edinburgh, inspects a Guard of Honour formed by members of France's Gendarmerie Garde Republicaine at Buckingham Palace in London on April 8, 2024. — AFP photos

nuclear powers, have a responsibility in driving the alliance to deal with the challenges before it," the diplomats wrote in Britain's The Telegraph newspaper. "We must do even more to ensure we defeat Russia. The world is watching — and will judge us if we fail."

A French presidential official said it was "the first time in the history of the Elysee" that foreign troops had been invited to participate in the military ritual. At the end of 2023, Macron made the changing of the Republican Guard public again, on the first Tuesday of each month, although the ceremony is much less spectacular than its counterpart outside Buckingham Palace.

Two sections of the 1st and 2nd Infantry Regiment

of France's Republican Guard were to participate in the London ceremony alongside guards from F Company Scots Guards and other British forces, the French presidential official said. It would be watched by the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh — Prince Edward and his wife Sophie — accompanied by the UK chief of the general staff, General Patrick Sanders, and French chief of the army staff Pierre Schill. The event on the forecourt of Buckingham Palace was to mark the first time a country from outside the Commonwealth — which mostly includes English-speaking former British colonies and possessions — has taken part in the changing of the guard.

The signing of the Entente Cordiale on April

8, 1904, is widely seen as preparing the way for France and Britain joining forces against Germany in World War I. While the accord is often used as shorthand to describe the Franco-British relationship, ties have been bedeviled by tensions in recent years, particularly since the United Kingdom left the European Union.

Migration has been a particular sticking point, with London pressuring Paris to halt the flow of migrants across the Channel. But a state visit by King Charles last autumn — one of his last big foreign engagements before his cancer diagnosis — was widely seen as a resounding success that showed the fundamental strength of the relationship. — AFP

Cities in Russian Urals, west Siberia brace for worst floods in decades

MOSCOW: The Russian city of Orenburg, near the Kazakh border, braced on Monday for flooding not seen in decades, as officials evacuated locals to escape rising rivers in the Urals and western Siberia. Moscow declared a federal emergency on Sunday over floods in the Orenburg region, where the Ural river left much of the city of Orsk covered in water, forcing thousands to leave their homes.

The river is now reaching dangerous levels in the regional capital of Orenburg, a city of 550,000 people. The Kremlin spoke of a "critical" situation on Monday, warning that the floods had "possibly not reached their peak". Over the weekend, it said floods were also "inevitable" in western Siberia's Kurgan and Tyumen regions. Thousands of people have already been evacuated.

Emergency services said on Monday that over 10,000 residential buildings had been flooded, mostly in the Urals, the Volga area and western Siberia. They warned of a "rise in air temperature, active snow melting and the overflow of rivers". Much of the city of Orsk was under water after torrential rain caused a nearby dam to burst.

Orenburg region authorities said that while the Ural river "went down by nine centimeters" in Orsk, water levels in the city of Orenburg were rising fast. "In Orenburg, in a day there was a rise by 16 centimeters to 872 centimeters" for the water level, the regional government said. The mayor of Orenburg, Sergei Salmin, called on residents in flood-risk zones to leave immediately. "The water can come at night. Do not risk your lives," he said on social media, warning that water levels would surpass danger marks. "Do not wait for that. Leave right now."

Salmin told Russian television that Orenburg had not "seen so much water" in decades. "The highest mark was in 1942. That was 946 centimetres," Salmin said. "Since then there have been no floods. This is unprecedented." President Vladimir Putin ordered a government commission to be established on the floods. His spokesman said that Putin did not plan on visiting the flooded zone but that he is being briefed on "nature anomalies" in real time.



ORSK, Russia: A picture taken on April 8, 2024 shows rescuers evacuating residents from the flooded part of this city in Orenburg region. — AFP

'No time for convincing'

Salmin said authorities had evacuated 736 people in Orenburg as they expect the water to rise further. Over the weekend he warned of forced evacuations if people did not cooperate, saying: "There is no time for convincing." Russia's weather monitor Rosgidromet said it did not expect the flood in Orenburg to peak until Wednesday and warned that many districts of the city would be affected.

The Ural river flows through Orenburg and into Kazakhstan, where President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev said the floods were one of the worst natural disasters to affect the area in decades.

Aerial images of the city of Orsk showed just the top floors and colorful roofs of houses visible over brown water. In the city center water reached the first floor of buildings. After evacuating over 6,000 people in the Orenburg region, authorities also began relocating some residents of the Siberian city of Kurgan near northern Kazakhstan, home to around 300,000 people, where the Tobol river is expected to rise.

Emergency services in Kurgan said 571 people were moved away from areas expected to be flooded. Local authorities said around 100 rescuers had arrived as reinforcements in the western Siberian region from the Urals to prepare for the floods. Emergency authorities also warned that the Irtysh river was "very likely" to flood parts of Tobolsk, one of Russia's oldest Siberian cities. Putin, who has been a vocal climate skeptic for much of his rule, has in recent years ordered his government to do more to prepare Russia for extreme weather events. The country has seen severe floods and fires in recent springs and summers. — AFP

From Bulgaria to English Channel: Tracing dinghies

KAPITAN-ANDREEVO, Bulgaria: The Kapitan Andreevo border post, one of the busiest in Europe, is more than 150 km from the nearest sea, but Bulgarian customs officer Georgi Gospodinov is on the lookout for dinghies. The crossing between Turkey and Bulgaria is also more than 2,500 km from the English Channel, where Britain has sought to halt a record number of undocumented migrants crossing in small boats.

Gospodinov and other customs officers at the Kapitan Andreevo post have made a key contribution to that campaign. In a little over a year, 52 motors, 49 rubber boats, 755 hand pumps and 110 life jackets have been seized mostly on Turkish trucks travelling to western Europe. British authorities reached out to the Balkan country in late 2022 to stem the entry into the European Union of small boats used for the perilous journeys.

Bulgarian customs officers first set out to prove that the boats they find are intended for the French coast where the crossings to Britain are launched. "We left specific marks on the outboard motors and notified our British partners, who were then able to identify abandoned motors on the British shores," he told AFP. Once it was proven that the same boats were later used by smugglers organizing the Channel crossings, imports into the EU of small inflatable boats, motors and life jackets were restricted.

Smell of rubber

Customs officers with sniffer dogs inspect hundreds of westbound trucks at the Kapitan Andreevo checkpoint each day after they pass through an x-ray scanner. According to the officers, the special shape of the engines is easy to detect, and with time they have become better at recognizing the bags containing the carefully folded dinghies. A sniffer dog specifically trained to detect the smell of rubber was sent by British authorities.

London has provided a total of £1.2 million to train personnel and provide equipment, including surveillance drones. During a visit to Sofia in February, British Foreign Secretary David Cameron said the partnership with Bulgaria was vital to stop the "illegal... terrible trade in human beings" as "many people lose their lives". Britain has launched a similar cooperation with France.

"Politically, it is a big problem," especially since Britain voted in 2016 to leave the European Union, said



Bulgarian customs officers unpack a dinghy found at the Kapitan Andreevo border checkpoint between Bulgaria and Turkey on February 28, 2024. — AFP

Nando Sigona, an international migration expert at the University of Birmingham. "One of the Brexit promises was to 'take back control' of UK borders," he told AFP, so the "failure to stop arrivals... can be politically lethal". The situation has weakened Britain's ruling Conservative party. The opposition Labour party is widely predicted to regain power for the first time since 2010 at an election expected this year.

'Resilient smuggling networks'

In the first quarter of 2024, British officials processed 5,373 migrants landing on the shores of southern England after crossing the Channel in small vessels. It is a nearly 42 percent rise from last year, according to Britain's interior ministry. Since the beginning of the year, at least seven migrants, including a seven-year-old girl and a 14-year-old boy, have lost their lives trying to reach England.

In 2023, there were nearly 30,000 cross-Channel arrivals in total. Afghans, Iranians, Turks, Eritreans and Iraqis make up the majority of migrants. The British government's agreements with several European countries, in particular with Albania — which resulted in a sharp reduction in arrivals from the Balkan country — are "producing some effects", Sigona said. However, "smuggling networks are very resilient and other sources of boats are continuously being identified and pursued," he said.

"You can't solve a problem by tackling the consequences," said Nikolai Posner, a spokesperson for the French aid group Utopia 56, noting that these boats first appeared in 2018 when controls at road crossings were tightened. "The more barriers, the greater the police presence, the more risks the smugglers take," he said. — AFP

Eid Al-Fitr in...

Continued from Page 1

The religious festival of breaking the fast (Eid Al-Fitr) is an auspicious occasion during which Muslims perform different acts of worship. This Eid (festival) commemorates the end of fasting during the bountiful month of Ramadan. It is an occasion for special prayers, family visits, gift-giving and charity. It takes place over one to three days, beginning on the first day of Shawwal, the 10th month in the Islamic lunar calendar.

It is highly recommended and meritorious that Muslims give zakat al-fitr (compulsory charity for ending the worship of the obligatory fast) to the poor and needy so that they too enjoy themselves on Eid. Therefore, its purpose is to purify those who fasted from any indecent act or speech and to help the poor and the needy enjoy the Eid festival without fear and worry.

Abdullah bin Abbas (RA) narrated that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) prescribed zakat al-fitr as a means of purifying the fasting person from shortcomings in his fast, and as a means of providing food for the poor and the needy.

Jordanians keep up Ramadan rallies...

Continued from Page 1

Protests began in Jordan, which neighbors the Zionist entity and the occupied West Bank, in October but have seen a spike during Ramadan. In 1994 Jordan became the second Arab country, after Egypt, to recognize the Zionist entity and establish ties with it. In the capital, demonstrators have been gathering near Al-Kalouti mosque, a short distance from the Zionist embassy, sometimes staying out until dawn before resuming their daily fast.

"It's better for me to be here and express my feel-

"Whoever pays it before the Eid prayer will have it accepted from him as zakat (al-fitr). And if anyone pays it after the prayer, then it will be regarded as any optional charity." (Al-Albani rated it as hasan (authentic) in Sahih Abi Dawud # 1,609)

Cause for celebration: The main reason for the Muslims to celebrate Eid Al-Fitr is their conviction that Almighty Allah has forgiven their sins. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "Whoever fasts Ramadan out of pure faith and hoping for reward from (Almighty) Allah, he will be forgiven his previous sins. And whoever stands in prayer and devotion during the Night of Power, his previous sins will be forgiven." (Al-Bukhari # 1901)

Being the festival of joy and celebration, Eid brings about a lot of happiness in everyone's lives. It serves as a reward to people who fasted the whole month. Celebrating and enjoying this meritorious festival will not accrue us rewards until we intend doing so first for Almighty Allah's sake, and then seek our happiness as well as helping all those in need so that they wholeheartedly join us in our guided celebration. — Courtesy of Kuwaiti Society for Cultural Dialogue.

ings, because I have a lot of anger in me," said Youmna Al-Saadi, 13, who joined a recent protest with her sister Miral, 16, and their father Ibrahim. "I can't just stay at home," added the teenager, wearing a Jordanian shemagh, a traditional red-and-white patterned cloth akin to the black-and-white Palestinian keffiyeh that her sister wore.

Carrying Jordanian and Palestinian flags, demonstrators chanted slogans denouncing US support for the Zionist entity and backing Hamas and its Gaza chief Yahya Sinwar. On Oct 17 dozens of demonstrators tried to storm the Zionist embassy before security forces fired tear gas at them and dispersed them. Saleh Muhammad, 58, said Jordanians protesting in support of Gaza were "exercising our constitutional right to demonstrate to convey a message peacefully". — AFP

Nicaragua slams Germany in Gaza...

Continued from Page 1

risk that the arms it has furnished and continues to furnish to (the Zionist entity)" could be used to commit a genocide, said Alain Pellet, a lawyer for Nicaragua. "It is extremely urgent that Germany finally suspend" such aid, he added.

Germany will respond fully in court on Tuesday but has already hit back at the allegations. Its top lawyer, Tania von Uslar-Gleichen, said Nicaragua's case was "grossly biased". "Germany completely rejects the accusations. We never did violate the Genocide Convention nor international humanitarian law either directly nor indirectly," she told reporters. "On the contrary, Germany is committed to the upholding of international law and this is what we work for internationally."

The ICJ was set up to rule in disputes between nations and has become a key player in the war between the Zionist entity and Hamas that erupted after Oct 7. In a separate case, South Africa has accused the Zionist entity of perpetrating genocide in the Gaza Strip, charges the Zionist entity vehemently denies. In that case, the court ordered the Zionist entity to do everything in its power to prevent genocidal acts and recently toughened its stance, ordering additional measures obliging the Zionist entity to step up access to humanitarian aid.

The court's rulings are binding but it lacks an enforcement mechanism. For example it has ordered Russia to stop its invasion of Ukraine, to no avail. Nicaragua has requested five provisional measures, including that Germany "immediately suspend its aid to (the Zionist entity), in particular its military assis-



THE HAGUE: A woman holds a placard as people protest outside the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on April 8, 2024. — AFP

tance including military equipment". It also calls on the court to order Germany to "reverse its decision to suspend the funding of UNRWA".

Germany said in January it was halting funding pending an investigation into Zionist accusations that several staff at the UN's agency for Palestinian refugees took part in the Oct 7 attack. "This unjustified decision contributes to the suffering in Gaza where children women and men are starving," Mueller told the court.

Nicaragua said in its submission that "it could be comprehensible" that Germany would support an "appropriate reaction" by ally the Zionist entity to the Oct 7 Hamas attack. "But this cannot be an excuse for acting in violation of international law," it said. Mueller explained that Nicaragua was going after Germany instead of the Zionist entity's main ally, the United States, because Washington does not recognize the court's jurisdiction. On Friday, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said the Zionist entity had "no more excuse" to delay aid getting into Gaza. — AFP

International

Muslims in Modi's India face dwindling representation

'It's not just intimidation...It's also elimination'



RAMPUR: (Left) In this picture taken on March 13, 2024, Muslims offer prayers at the Jama Masjid. (Right) Muslim girls take a selfie in front of the Raza Library. — AFP photos

RAMPUR, India: More than half the voters in the Indian city of Rampur are Muslim, but its member of parliament is a staunch supporter of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's muscular Hindu-first agenda. It is a situation repeated across Hindu-majority India, where many consider victory for Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in upcoming general elections a near certainty — and see Muslim candidates as a recipe for defeat at the ballot box.

While India's 220 million Muslims make up a little under a fifth of its 1.4 billion population, Muslim representatives in parliament have almost halved to less than five percent since the 1970s. "Everyone wants a connect with BJP," said Ghanshyam Singh Lodhi, who is confident of re-election as MP for Rampur in Uttar Pradesh state when the six-week-long elections begin on April 19.

Lodhi, a Hindu, replaced Rampur's Muslim MP in a 2022 by-election, jumping ship from the last lawmaker's party to become a BJP loyalist. Muslim leaders worry at the lack of representation. There were just 27 Muslim MPs in the 543-seat lower house in parliament — and

none of them were among the BJP's 310 lawmakers.

Ziya Us Salam, author of a book on Muslims in India, says members of the faith had for decades placed their trust in secular parties, a process that created an "acute absence of Muslim leadership". Today, an overtly Muslim leader would be challenged as stoking sectarian divisions, yet few question when Modi champions constitutionally secular India as a "Hindu Rashtra", or Hindu state. "Nobody talks of (Modi) being the leader of only Hindus," Salam said. He also argues that successive gerrymandering policies since independence in 1947 have redrawn electoral boundaries to split areas with substantial Muslim populations.

'Not able to vote'

Rampur has elected Muslim MPs 15 out of 18 times since 1952. But Kanwal Bharti, a 71-year-old activist and writer from the city, said the BJP's dominance means that it "doesn't seem possible anymore" for a Muslim candidate to win Rampur. Rampur's last Muslim MP was veteran politician Mohammad Azam Khan — but he quit after more than 80 legal cases

were brought against him, ranging from land grabbing to intimidating government officials.

His supporters said many of the accusations were years old and that charges had only been belatedly brought after the BJP won state elections in 2017. Khan was jailed for three years in 2023 for hate speech against BJP rivals.

Past elections were marred by allegations that security forces blocked Muslims from voting. A legal challenge that a 2022 parliamentary by-election vote was manipulated "by using every unconstitutional means" to stop voters from Muslim-dominated areas was dismissed on a technicality. Some Muslim voters in Rampur worry about casting a ballot later this month. "If the conditions during the last election are repeated, I will again not be able to vote," said 75-year-old Mohammad Salam Khan, reading a newspaper in his son's electrical repair shop.

'Intimidation' and 'elimination'

It is part of a wider shift, said Asaduddin Owaisi, one of two lawmakers in the last parliament from the

All India Council for Unity of Muslims. Owaisi believes even secular parties avoid selecting Muslim candidates because they fear they would not appeal to Hindu voters. "They are afraid to even give a ticket to a Muslim candidate," Owaisi said, accusing the ruling party of stoking fear against Muslims. "It is very difficult for the Muslim candidates from any political party to win".

The BJP denies "active discrimination" based on religion, pointing out that representation depends on candidates winning elections. A handful of Muslim candidates the BJP fielded in the last two national elections all lost, with critics accusing the party of showing disinterest in their campaign. "We have this aspiration, ideally, to have people from every community," BJP national spokesperson Mhmonlumo Kikon told AFP.

But Salam, the author, believes Muslims are being squeezed out of the democratic process. "So, you don't give tickets to Muslims at one place, you redraw constituencies at another place... or you don't allow Muslims to vote," Salam said. "It's not just intimidation," he added. "It's also elimination." — AFP

Indonesia road crash kills 12

JAKARTA: At least 12 people were killed in Indonesia on Monday when a car crashed into a bus and another car on a busy highway as people travel to celebrate Eid Al-Fitr with families, a minister said. "It was confirmed that there were 12 passengers," in the car that crashed into the coach, chief development minister Muhadjir Effendy told reporters. "And all of them died," he said.

Two people — a coach attendant and a passenger in the bus were injured in the crash, Effendy said. The accident occurred on a highway in Karawang town of West Java province at around 7am (00:00 GMT) when a car heading east from Jakarta swerved and crashed into the bus and another vehicle travelling in the opposite direction.

Television footage broadcast earlier on Monday showed two wrecked cars that were completely burnt in the aftermath of the accident. The accident occurred as millions of Indonesians are traveling back to their hometowns to celebrate the end of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan with their families. More than 800,000 vehicles were recorded leaving Greater Jakarta between April 3 and 6, local media reported.

Indonesia's transportation ministry projected up to 193.6 million people will travel during the Eid holiday this year, with some 28.4 million people projected to leave from Greater Jakarta area. The figure was higher than the 123 million people estimated to have made the trip last year. Transport accidents are common in Indonesia, a vast archipelago nation where buses, trains and even planes are often old and poorly maintained. — AFP

Second S Korea spy satellite placed in orbit

SEOUL: South Korea put its second domestically made spy satellite into orbit, Seoul's defense ministry said Monday, after it launched from an American space center on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket. The satellite successfully communicated with an overseas ground station shortly afterwards, the ministry said. "Our military's second reconnaissance satellite successfully separated from the launch vehicle at around 09:02 (1202 GMT) and entered the target orbit," the defense ministry said in a statement.

The satellite "successfully established contact with an overseas ground station at approximately 10:57 (0157 GMT)", it added. Seoul's military said its "independent intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities have been further strengthened," by the successful launch. "We will proceed with future satellite launches without a hitch," it added.

Seoul launched its first military spy satellite in December, which was also carried by one of Elon Musk's SpaceX Falcon 9 rockets. The latest developments intensify a space race on the Korean peninsula after North Korea launched its first

military eye in the sky last November. Seoul's defense minister said the military was closely monitoring the North for further satellite launches, which it had originally expected in March.

"It seems they are taking additional supplementary measures," Defense Minister Shin Won-sik said after the launch, adding that an April launch by Pyongyang seemed likely. "If these measures proceed without issue, a mid-April launch is highly possible. April 15 holds special significance for North Korea, so they might attempt a launch then," he said.

April 15 is the birthday of the North's founding leader Kim Il Sung, and is celebrated as Day of the Sun in the country, typically marked with military parades or other mass events. "It's also reasonable to extend the window to late April to ensure all supplementary measures are fully implemented," Shin said.

Five more

South Korea's first satellite has transmitted high-resolution images of central Pyongyang to Seoul and is expected to commence its full mission stages as early as June, according to Yonhap news agency. Seoul plans to launch a total of five military spy satellites by 2025 to better monitor the North. Once all five enter orbit and commence their missions, the South Korean military will have the capability



SEOUL: This handout photo taken on April 8, 2024 shows South Korean Defence Minister Shin Won-sik cheering with officers at the Defence Ministry as they watch monitors broadcasting live footage of South Korea's second spy satellite launching from an American space centre on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket. — AFP

to monitor key facilities in North Korea using imagery sent around every two hours, according to a report by Seoul's government-run broadcaster KTV.

North Korea has claimed its spy satellite has sent images of a US naval base at Hawaii's Pearl Harbor and "major target" sites across South Korea. The North's launch of the "Malligyong-1" was Pyongyang's third attempt at putting such a satellite into

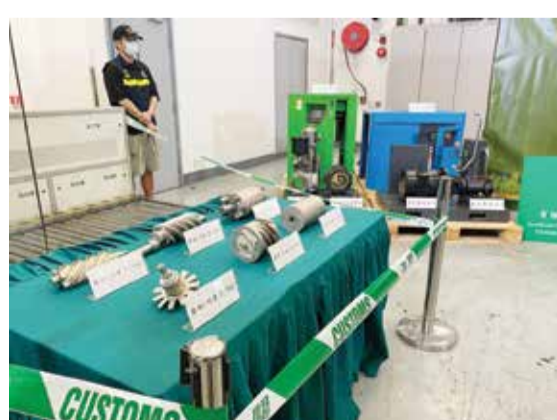
orbit, after two failures in May and August last year. Seoul has said the North received technical help from Russia for the launch in return for weapons for use in the war in Ukraine. Experts have said putting a working reconnaissance satellite into orbit would improve North Korea's intelligence-gathering capabilities, particularly over South Korea, and provide crucial data in any military conflict. — AFP

Hong Kong customs makes largest-ever gold smuggling bust

HONG KONG: Hong Kong customs said Monday it has made the biggest gold smuggling bust in its history, seizing 146 kg of the precious metal disguised as air compressor parts at the city's international airport. Melted and molded into parts like motor cores, screws, and gears, the smuggled gold was intercepted last month in two air compressors that were sent by air from Hong Kong to Japan and estimated to be worth HK\$84 million (\$10.7 million), the customs department said at a press conference.

"This is the largest gold smuggling case in our Hong Kong Customs record," said Lau Yuk-lung, the customs' syndicate crimes bureau acting chief. Hong Kong is one of the largest gold trade hubs in the world and prices have recently been on the rise as investors seek asset security against geopolitical uncertainties and inflation.

Smuggled gold in Hong Kong used to be detected mostly at land checkpoints along the border of Hong Kong and mainland China, where inspections of cross-border trucks could lead to the discovery of gold slabs — and the arrest of truck drivers. Lau said in this latest case the syndicate "racked their brains" to make use of the space and structure of the air compressors to hide the gold.



HONG KONG: Hong Kong customs officers display smuggled gold after seizing 146 kg of the precious metal disguised as air compressor parts at the city's international airport on April 8, 2024. — AFP

But the texture and the extraordinary heaviness of the compressors roused the suspicions of the customs department's inspectors, Lau said. "Our investigation showed that the syndicate tried to smuggle the gold in order to evade taxes in Japan, which, if successful, would be equivalent to around HK\$8.4 million," Lau added. One man aged 31 and reported to be a company director was arrested and released on bail, Lau said, adding that more arrests could be made. Smuggling carries up to seven years in jail and a maximum fine of HK\$2 million under Hong Kong laws. — AFP

Taiwan search dogs win hearts in search for quake victims

HUALIEN, Taiwan: A former drug-sniffing dog who lost his job for being too friendly has emerged as the unlikely MVP of the Taiwan rescue teams searching for survivors of the island's strongest earthquake in 25 years. At least 13 people were killed and more than 1,140 injured by the magnitude-7.4 quake that struck the island on Wednesday, with strict building codes and widespread disaster readiness credited with averting an even bigger catastrophe.

But landslides around epicenter Hualien still blocked tunnels and roads, making the mountainous terrain around the county difficult for rescuers to access survivors and victims. Footage released by the county fire department on Saturday showed Roger, an eight-year-old Labrador, mounting a boulder that had fallen across a hiking trail near Hualien's Taroko National Park.

"Have you found something? Let's go over there," said a rescuer to Roger, who did not budge. The mayor of southern Kaohsiung — which sent a rescue team and dogs including Roger — said the Labrador specializes in "rubble pile search and rescue" and that he is trained to search for survivors. "Roger must have found some clues, and his confused look made the handler feel



HUALIEN, Taiwan: A handout photo taken on April 6, 2024 and released on April 8, 2024 shows Roger, an eight-year-old Labrador, playing before heading out for a search and rescue mission. — AFP

something was up, and then they found the victim," said Mayor Chen Chi-mai in a Facebook post titled "The Paw Paw Team's feat".

Handler Lee Hsin-hung said Roger located a victim "just five minutes after setting off", and praised the dog's confidence in an unfamiliar terrain. Originally trained as a drug-sniffing dog as a pup, Roger was given his walking papers from that role because he was too friendly, which led to his switch to search-and-rescue missions. "He's very agile," Lee told reporters. "Like this time when he went to Shakadang Trail, it's not a rescue site we can simulate (in training) but he's not scared." — AFP

TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 2024

Malaysian state converts Ramadan food waste into organic fertilizer

Government initiative aims to reduce wastage



KUANTAN: Zulyna Nordin adds compost fertilizer to her crops at her organic garden in Kuantan, Malaysia's Pahang state. After breaking their Ramadan fast outside a mosque in Malaysia, people throw their leftovers into a machine that converts the food scraps into organic fertilizer for crops. — AFP photos

KUANTAN: After breaking their Ramadan fast outside a mosque in Malaysia, people throw their leftovers into a machine that converts the food scraps into organic fertilizer for crops. The modest government initiative in the central state of Pahang aims to reduce wastage, especially during the Muslim holy month when huge amounts of food are thrown away daily.

The mobile machine has been deployed at a park in the heart of state capital Kuantan during Ramadan where many families gather every evening to feast on cheap local dishes after a day of fasting. It processes 25 kilograms (55 pounds) of scraps a day, said Sharudin Hamid, the state director of Solid Waste and Public Cleansing Management Corporation, which started the pilot project last year.

The amount is a tiny fraction of the more than 13,000 tons of food sent to landfills around the Muslim-majority country every day, even more during Ramadan, but Sharudin said it was helping to increase awareness about food wastage. "The main objective is to ensure that the waste is not sent to landfills," Sharudin told AFP. "This has had a significant impact on us, as people

are becoming more aware of environmental conservation, especially in terms of food waste reduction."

Food scraps are thrown into the machine where they are slowly mixed with rice husks and sawdust for 48 hours. The brownish-colored waste is then packaged and given to farmers to use as fertilizer on their crops.

"Things that grow from that fertilizer can also become food, which again can be composted into fertilizer. So there's a natural cycle," said Abdul Shukur Mohamad Salleh, 27, as he bought local delicacies at a Ramadan food market in Kuantan, one of many across the country.

On her small plot near the city, Zulyna Mohamed Nordin, 53, sprays organic liquid fertilizer derived from the recycled food waste on her vegetable, banana and pineapple crops. She receives 30 kilograms of the fertilizer every month and slightly more during Ramadan. "I have done away from using expensive chemical inputs since June last year. This is natural, organic, and boosts productivity," Zulyna told AFP. "My leafy vegetables are bigger and greener." — AFP



KUANTAN: Two members of the Pahang Solid Waste and Public Cleansing Management Corporation inspecting organic fertilizer, processed by a composting machine in Kuantan, Malaysia's Pahang state.

ECB tipped to pause one last time before June rate cut

FRANKFURT: Buoyed by falling inflation, the European Central Bank is expected to keep borrowing costs on hold one last time Thursday while laying the ground for a first interest rate cut in June. The Frankfurt-based institution has left its key rates unchanged since October 2023, following an unprecedented streak of hikes to tame red-hot inflation. ECB president Christine Lagarde said after last month's meeting that governing council members were not "sufficiently confident" yet on inflation to consider loosening the reins. The case for rate reductions has strengthened since then, with euro-zone inflation slowing more than expected in March to 2.4 percent - bringing the ECB's two-percent goal within reach.

A change of course as early as this week seems highly unlikely however, after ECB officials repeatedly said they were awaiting data that won't be available until their meeting on June 6. "We will know a bit more by April and a lot more by June," Lagarde reiterated in late March, referring in particular to data on euro-zone wage growth. In June, the ECB will also have its own updated forecasts on inflation and economic growth. Thursday's ECB meeting therefore "looks like the prelude to yet another turning point for monetary policy in the euro-zone: final stop before the cut", said ING bank economist Carsten Brzeski.

The ECB's benchmark deposit rate currently sits at a record four percent, following an aggressive hiking campaign to rein in consumer prices driven higher by Russia's war in Ukraine and pandemic-related supply disruptions. Euro-zone inflation, which peaked at over 10 percent in late 2022, has steadily declined in recent months and is now expected by the ECB to return to target in 2025. — AFP

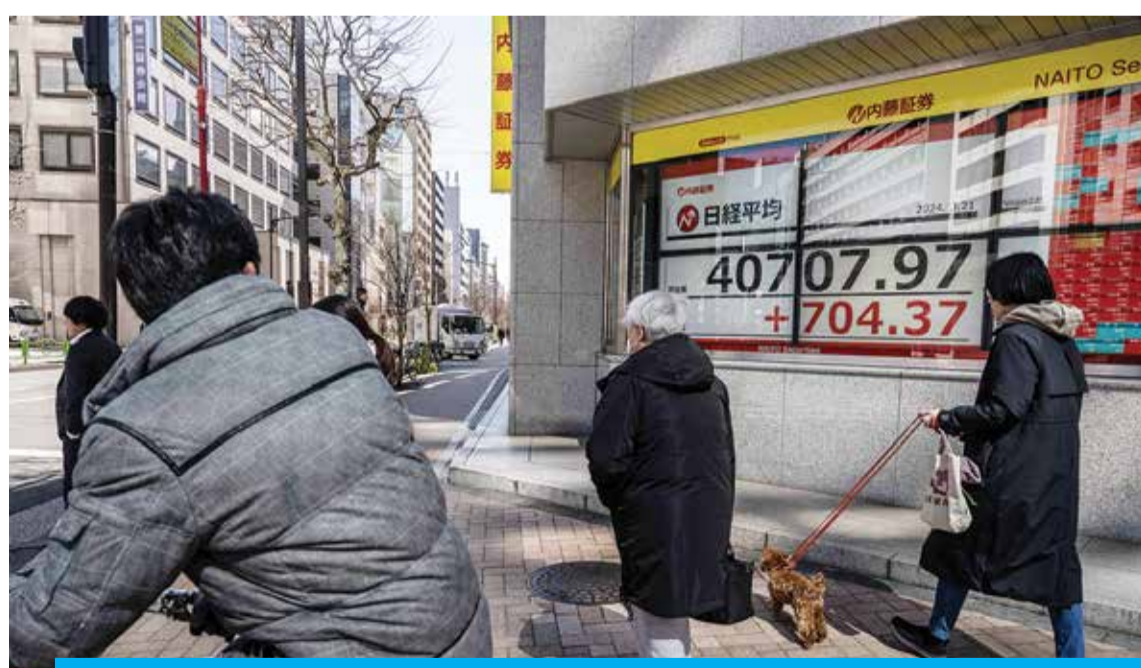
Asian markets mostly rise as traders weigh rates outlook

HONG KONG: Most Asian markets squeezed out gains Monday as traders weighed the chances of the Federal Reserve cutting interest rates this year after a forecast-busting US jobs report dented hopes for a first move in June. Wall Street's three main indexes rallied Friday on news that 303,000 jobs were created in the United States in March, with investors focusing on the positives for the economy instead of the monetary policy implications.

However, observers warned that the figures - which also showed unemployment falling and wage growth still strong - could prevent the Fed from cutting rates three times in 2024, as it has previously indicated. Traders are now awaiting the release this week of minutes from the central bank's most recent meeting, as well as the latest consumer price index reading. The CPI "will be a bigger test of whether the recent inflation bump is a trend or not", said Saxo's Redmond Wong, referring to bigger-than-expected inflation figures at the start of the year. Still, Marc Chandler at Bannockburn Global Forex warned that "reasons to dismiss the employment data are becoming thinner".

"The economy is still growing faster than what the Fed regards as the long-term non-inflation pace." There is now growing talk that the Fed will not even be able to cut rates three times this year, with some suggesting that if data continued to come in strong then officials could face pressure to hold off until 2025. Erik F. Nielsen at UniCredit Group added: "Based on existing economic data, i.e. if purely 'data-dependent', the Fed could easily end up cutting rates only once this year, if at all."

Asian investors battled to take the baton from Wall



TOKYO: People walk past an electronic board showing a share price of the Nikkei index of the Tokyo Stock Exchange in Tokyo. — AFP

Street with most markets ticking higher. Hong Kong, Tokyo, Sydney, Seoul, Singapore, Mumbai and Taipei rose, but Shanghai, Manila and Wellington were down. London, Frankfurt and Paris all rose in the morning. Investors are also keeping tabs on geopolitics, with state-linked Egyptian outlet Al-Qahera saying Monday that talks in Cairo aimed at brokering a truce between the Zionist entity and Hamas had been positive.

The report said there was "significant progress being made on several contentious points of agreement", citing a high-ranking Egyptian source. However, the Zionist entity said Sunday it was still preparing for military operations in Gaza's southernmost city of Rafah, even after announcing a partial withdrawal from the territory. Eyes are also on Iran, which has threat-

ened to retaliate against the Zionist entity after blaming it for a deadly attack on its embassy in the Syrian capital Damascus. Revolutionary Guards chief General Hossein Salami warned the Zionist entity "cannot escape the consequences" of last week's strike.

The sliver of hope for a halt to fighting weighed on oil prices Monday, with both main contracts down more than one percent. Still, they remain around five-month highs on supply worries in the event of the Middle East crisis morphing into a war between the Zionist entity and Iran, while the strong US economy and Ukraine war were also lending support. Gold retreated after hitting a fresh record of \$2,330.50 on Friday, having surged on the back of rate-cut bets and geopolitical worries. — AFP

US 'will not accept' flood of below-cost Chinese goods

US Treasury Secretary wraps up high-level talks in China

BEIJING: The United States "will not accept" a situation where underpriced Chinese goods flood the global market, battering industries elsewhere, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Monday as she wrapped up high-level talks in China. Yellen has repeatedly warned about the risks of China's excess industrial capacity during four days of meetings with officials and business leaders in the southern city of Guangzhou and capital Beijing.

Washington is concerned that Chinese government support is leading to more production capacity than global markets can absorb, resulting in a surge of cheap exports in sectors such as solar and electric vehicles and stifling the growth of those industries elsewhere. Yellen on Monday said massive Chinese government support more than a decade ago had led to below-cost steel flooding the global market, which "decimated industries across the world and in the United States".

"I've made clear that President Biden and I will not accept that reality again," she told a news conference at the US ambassador's residence, adding that America's allies and partners shared similar concerns. She said some change in Chinese policy would be "necessary and appropriate", but did not commit to specific actions Washington might take otherwise, while underscoring the United States did not "seek to decouple" from China.

After 11 hours of meetings with her counterpart Vice Premier He Lifeng, she raised the issue with Premier Li Qiang as well - moves Washington hopes will bring the concerns to the highest levels of Chinese policymaking. Yellen said she was especially worried about China's weak household consumption and business overinvestment, "imbalances" she said were "aggravated by large-scale government support in specific industrial sectors". But Beijing has pushed back, with China's Commerce Minister

Wang Wentao this week calling fears of overcapacity "groundless", according to state media.

Steadying ties

Yellen's push on overcapacity comes even as bilateral ties have stabilized in other areas, with both sides willing to cooperate on issues including climate change, debt restructuring and money laundering. "I do not want to see the US economic relationship or overall relationship with China deteriorate and fray," Yellen told reporters, adding that she believes China shares a similar desire to steady relations.

The two countries have also agreed to open channels for further talks on excess capacity. But Li earlier told Yellen that Washington should view the matter of production capacity "objectively" and from a "market-oriented" perspective, the state-run Xinhua news agency said. Yellen noted that excess capacity concerns would not be addressed in a week or month, but stressed that doing so would be positive for China's long-term productivity and growth.

'No surprises'

Yellen said she also had "difficult conversations about national security", warning Chinese officials of the consequences of supporting Russia's military procurement efforts and using economic tools to address national security concerns. In particular, she said Washington was committed to having "no surprises" in the use of such tools. She said the United States has laid out its principles and policymaking process.

But she added: "We would welcome transparency from (China) on its national security actions and greater clarity on where it sees the line between national security and economic issues." China has been accused in recent years of slapping import bans on certain products from countries, notably Australia, over political disagreements. Yellen also



BEIJING: A worker unloads sharing bicycles along a road in Beijing. — AFP

said she discussed the issue of TikTok "briefly" with Chinese counterparts, saying Washington had legitimate concerns when it comes to protecting sensitive personal data.

The United States Congress is threatening to ban the wildly popular video app unless it changes hands. She noted that China also shares worries over data protection, with many US social apps blocked from the country. "We would like to find a way forward," she said. Yun Sun, senior fellow at think tank the Stimson Center, said that overall, Yellen's ability to meet with senior Chinese officials to

convey US concerns and "probe" China's reactions is a positive development.

But she cautioned that China is unlikely to give up or change its current growth model and areas of focus because of the United States, unless there are significant consequences, given its economy is "not in the best shape". But both sides agreeing to cooperate in technical areas such as tackling money laundering would be helpful to boost confidence in their relations, Sun said. Among areas of cooperation, Yellen said she has seen progress in recent months over specific debt cases such as Zambia's. — AFP

Reform or barriers: What next after Yellen's China visit?

BEIJING: From her down-to-earth demeanor to chopstick skills, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has been under scrutiny on her China visit, where she delivered a serious message — a call to action to avoid the pitfalls of excess factory capacity. Washington and others are worried that overcapacity, fuelled by Chinese government support, could unleash a surge of Chinese exports at artificially low prices, disadvantaging firms elsewhere in new industries like electric vehicles and solar energy. But Beijing has pushed back against such warnings, with a minister calling them "groundless".

Business leaders see Yellen's visit as one aimed at exploring solutions with counterparts, while analysts warn it could pave the way towards action like tariffs. For now, Yellen said the concerns "will not be resolved in a week or a month". Her arrival in Guangzhou generated buzz, with social media users taking note of how she carried her own bags down from the plane to greet Chinese officials. Attention then turned to her meals, with US policymaker spotted at a popular Guangzhou dimsum eatery, and a restaurant featuring food from the southwestern Sichuan province. But beyond quipping about her chopstick use, her meetings struck a sombre tone as she warned that China's industrial subsidies could risk "global economic dislocation".

Avoiding a spiral

"It's important that governments have these discussions before they take on a life of their own, spin out of control and things get into a negative spiral," said Jens Eskelund, president of the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China. But he told AFP it



BEIJING: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen (center) visits the Imperial College at Guozijian in Beijing on April 8, 2024. — AFP

may be "too optimistic" to hope for a quick solution. Politically encouraged growth in industrial output can become a "zero-sum game" with low demand growth in China and around the world, if this replaces domestic production and jobs in other economies, he said.

Washington and Beijing have agreed to talks on "macroeconomic imbalances" to discuss overcapacity, and Eskelund said similar discussions should also take place in an EU-China context. It is also important to let Beijing know that the US and allies recognize excess capacity could be a problem, said Sean Stein, chair of the American Chamber of Commerce in China. "If it later becomes necessary to take actions to blunt a surge of Chinese exports, the Chinese can't say they weren't warned," Stein said.

Personal ties

Stein called Yellen the best bet in helping to

move the needle on China's policy and persuasively make the argument for reform — particularly on business and economic issues. "The Chinese see Yellen approaching issues as an economist, not a politician," he said. The cultivation of personal ties between Yellen and her counterpart He Lifeng, China's top official overseeing economic and financial policy, is another factor.

By far, her longest engagements on the trip were with He. From group meetings to a boat tour, they spent over 11 hours discussing everything from their respective economies to concerns about national security actions. Every major US-China problem to be solved or effectively managed over the past 45 years has been handled by senior officials who "built personal relationships and developed understanding of each other's requirements and limitations", said Brookings senior fellow Ryan Hass. — AFP

Farmers dump sheep killed by wolves in front of Swiss govt building

GENEVA: Swiss sheep farmers dumped the bodies of animals killed by wolves in front of a regional government building, demanding more action against the predators, Swiss media reported. Around a dozen breeders came from the Saint-Barthelemy area in the western Swiss canton of Vaud to lay out the carcasses of 12 sheep in front of the regional government headquarters in Lausanne, the Chateau Saint-Maire.

"These sheep were killed last night," Eric Herb, a member of a Swiss association demanding the regulation of big predators, was quoted as saying by the Keystone-ATS news agency. "It is really time to act." "We are sick of this. We want the wolf killed," agreed Patrick Perroud, a farmer and butcher from the nearby municipality of Oulens. "Cohabitation is not possible. Our territory is too small," he told Keystone-ATS.

The protesters told the news agency that wolves had killed 17 sheep in the same area late last month, two earlier this week and 13 overnight to Saturday. "The breeders have played nice until now, but this time it was too much," Herb said. The protesters were planning to increase the pressure on the Vaud government environment minister, Vassilis Venizelos of the Green Party, he said. One of the protesters' banners read: "Vassilis step down", Keystone-ATS reported.

The breeders had briefly negotiated with regional police before being allowed to lay down the animal carcasses on tarpaulin in front of the Chateau. Participants in the protest, which was supported by the regional chapter of the far-right Swiss People's Party - Switzerland's largest party - lamented that they were losing sleep. "We have to check on our animals every night," one was quoted as saying. After being wiped out more than a century ago, wolves have in recent decades begun returning to Switzerland and to several other European countries. — AFP



MARIUPOL: Construction workers clean the wall of a house to be restored in Mariupol, Russian-controlled Ukraine. — AFP

German firms help 'rebuild' Mariupol

BERLIN: Two German construction companies are taking part in rebuilding Russian-occupied Mariupol, the Ukrainian city that fell to Moscow's invading forces two years ago, a German press investigation claimed. The industrial Knauf group, which manufactures plasterboard, and WKB Systems, which produces aerated concrete, have been providing materials for construction in the city that was almost entirely flattened during the early months of the war, according to the investigation by Monitor magazine and shown on the public ARD television channel.

Monitor says it has analyzed numerous images from construction sites where the Knauf logo ap-

pears, as well as detailed activity reports demonstrating the German company's presence in the port city. Mariupol fell to Russian forces after a two-month siege that cost the lives of thousands and left the city in rubble. The magazine also quotes an "official distributor" of Knauf's that is promoting a housing project in Mariupol, built with Knauf products on behalf of the Russian defense ministry.

Products from WKB Systems, which is majority-owned by Russian businessman Viktor Budarin, can also be seen at construction sites in Mariupol, the magazine said. Knauf, in a statement sent to AFP, insisted it "respects all the EU, UK and American sanctions against Russia". The Bavarian group runs 14 production sites in Russia where it employs 4,000 people. It said its decision not to pull out of Russia - as many major German groups did following the invasion - was out of "responsibility" to its employees. — AFP

France funds effort to deploy 10,000 EV chargers

PARIS: A unit of France's national development bank said on Monday it had teamed up with an operator of electric vehicle rechargers to finance the deployment of nearly 10,000 points at businesses switching their fleets of vehicles. The Banque des Territoires, a subsidiary of France's Caisse des Depots, said it would create a joint venture with Bump that would receive 100 million euros (\$108 million) in investments to help companies shift to electric vehicles. Installing charging stations requires a considerable investment for companies considering switching their vehicle fleets to electric. The joint venture would finance the installation of Bump charging stations at company

premises with the firms paying just for their use.

The first beneficiaries of the financing of EV chargers will be DPD logistics firm, as well as supermarket chains U and Monoprix. Bump also provides companies with access to over 100,000 charging points across France, along with badges for tolls and parking garages. "This collaboration with the Caisse des Depots represents a significant advance in our mission to assist companies in sustainable transitions of their fleets of professional vehicles," Bump's chief executive Francois Oudot said.

Bump aims to become the leader in corporate charging stations, as well as those deployed by retail chains for use by their clients, by installing 25,000 by 2030. France's state-owned electricity company EDF announced in February it had teamed up with infrastructure firm Morrison to build nearly 8,000 rapid charging stations in public parking lots between now and 2030. That would nearly double the estimated 9,500 rapid charging points currently in operation in France. — AFP



TRUCKEE: A Rivian truck recharges at a Rivian electric vehicle (EV) charging station during a snowstorm in Truckee, California. — AFP

Business

Bad food, rising prices: Serbian students weather tough times

Rising inflation, crumbling facilities rock Serbia

BELGRADE: Hit with soaring tuition fees, crumbling facilities and dreadful food, university students across Serbia are taking to social media and relying on a black market meal trade to fight back against conditions some have compared to a "horror movie". For Slobodan Todosijevic, a civil engineering student in Belgrade, the declining quality in services offered by universities grates all the harder as costs continue to rise. Just last year, fees in his program jumped from 108,000 dinars to 130,000 per year (\$1000 to \$1,200) - a considerable sum in the Balkan nation where the median monthly wage is just 73,700 dinars.

Tuition fees do not cover textbooks or housing costs at Serbian universities, with some students also forced to pay an additional fee out of pocket to sit for exams. "The windows are in such a terrible state that when the wind blows a bit stronger, you can't hear the lecturer. The facilities resemble a setting of a horror movie," Todosijevic told AFP. "I think the tuition fee increase is unjustified, especially considering the studying conditions," he said, adding that most textbooks available to students were decades old.

In the last month alone, tuition fees have been hiked at more than a dozen different programs at universities across Serbia, according to public records. Like countries across the globe, Serbia has been slammed by rising inflation, where prices averaged 12 percent higher in 2023 compared with the previous year. With little to no income, students are feeling the squeeze. "I don't see any significant improvements at any level. I don't know on what basis tuition fees were increased," said Dorotea Antic, a member of the student organization STAV at the University of Novi Sad in northern Serbia.

Skipping meals

Earlier this year, STAV conducted a survey calling attention to the university's lacklustre cafeteria system. Beseet by substandard food and a limited number of facilities, the system doesn't have enough capacity

to serve the existing student body. Of the 1,356 students surveyed, 81 percent said they had skipped meals due to overcrowding. In a city with an estimated 50,000 students, more than 12,000 are eligible to eat at the university's cafeterias, yet only one facility is operational.

"We first published the survey results on social media and then printed posters and put them up around the campus where students who eat in the cafeteria pass by, so that as many people as possible could see it," Antic told AFP. The criticism and study published by STAV has not been warmly received by all. "When we put up the posters, there was a big commotion. There is even a video where an activist from the ruling party came to tear down our posters and insult us," Antic added.

The Student Centre Novi Sad - an arm of the university charged with overseeing student welfare - also panned the survey. The group "rejects, as a mere fabrication and falsehood, the results of the alleged research on student dissatisfaction with the quality of food and hygiene in the student cafeteria, which was made public by a certain organization called STAV," the centre said in a statement. To protest, students have also taken to social media, using Tiktok to describe in comedic detail the poor quality of the meals served at university cafeterias.

In the short clips, Serbian students sample the day's fare and rate the food, with most receiving very low scores. Comments on the videos range from outright disgust to ridicule of the students expecting higher-quality meals for low prices. "I decided to start recording myself because I was following trends on Tik Tok and thought it would be interesting," said Teodora Slavkovic, whose food review clips have received more than 20,000 views.

Fatigue

A black market on social media where students buy each other's student cards to pay less for



BELGRADE: A photograph taken in Belgrade shows terraces of a dormitory. Hit with soaring tuition fees, crumbling facilities and dreadful food, university students across Serbia are taking to social media and relying on a black market meal trade to fight back against conditions some have compared to a "horror movie", as in the last month alone, tuition prices have been increased at more than a dozen different programs at universities across Serbia, according to public records. — AFP

meals has also flourished, due to the lower prices for students on government-backed scholarships. To add to their woes, rents in Serbia's two major cities Belgrade and Novi Sad have become increasingly unaffordable for students, after an influx of Russian immigrants to the Balkan country following the invasion of Ukraine. Emilija Milenkovic, a member of the student group Borba, said young people coming from other cities often have difficulty finding housing, especially with a shortage of space in dormitories.

"I'm living with my parents again and I commute almost every day depending on my university commitments, which doesn't make me happy at all," said Anja Gvozdenovic, a student at the University of Belgrade who moved back home last year due to the surge in rent prices. Gvozdenovic now commutes nearly 200 kilometers every day by train from her parents' home near Novi Sad to the capital and back. "It's the mental fatigue that becomes decisive," she said. "I rarely manage to truly study and gather strength and concentration." — AFP



Burgan Bank to serve customers during Eid

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced that it will be closing all branches starting Tuesday April 9, 2024, on the occasion of the Eid Al Fitr holiday. The Bank will resume normal operating hours at all branches on Sunday, April 14, 2024. However, to accommodate Burgan Bank customers, the Airport Branch will continue to operate around the clock during the holidays, with only a short break every day between 11:00 pm and 12:30 am.

For more information about Burgan Bank's products and services during the Eid holiday, customers can contact the customer service center at 1804080, via phone or WhatsApp. Customers can also continue to conduct their financial transactions easily and securely using the Burgan Bank mobile app or the online banking platform (online.burgan.com). On this blessed occasion, Burgan Bank extends its warmest congratulations and best wishes to all its customers and the people of Kuwait.

Weyay Bank elevates Eid celebrations, introduces Eidiya requests

KUWAIT: Weyay Bank, the first digital bank in Kuwait, announces the Eidiya feature for both Weyay and Jeel cardholders just in time for Eid. Powered by the esteemed National Bank of Kuwait, this innovative addition brings the cherished tradition of Eidiya into the digital age, catering specifically to children aged 8 to 14 through the intuitive Weyay app.

"At Weyay Bank, we're committed to empowering the younger generation to embrace the Eidiya tradition with confidence," remarked Amal Al-Duwaisan, Head

of Weyay Bank. "Extending our Eidiya feature to Jeel Weyay users not only digitizes the Eidiya process but also adds an element of fun, empowering children to personalize their Eidiya gifts and participate actively in this cherished tradition."

The newly introduced Eidiya feature empowers young users to seamlessly send personalized Eid greetings and effortlessly request Eidiya from friends and family. Recipients can conveniently specify the desired



Amal Al-Duwaisan

amount and complete transactions securely through the K-net portal, ensuring a hassle-free experience for all involved. It provides a tailored banking experience designed to empower them on their financial journey. Exclusive to the Weyay App, the Eidiya feature will be accessible during the final days of Ramadan and throughout Eid, offering families a secure and convenient way to honor this cherished tradition.

Key Highlights of Weyay Eidiya Feature: Countdown within the app



goes live a few days before Eid to ensure customers have enough time to request their Eidiyas. Users can send a quick pay link and the payer decides on the amount they will give as an Eidiya. Users can add a written message to personalize their Eidiya. Key High-

lights of Jeel Weyay Eidiya Feature: Users can send a quick pay link and the payer decides on the amount they will give as an Eidiya. Users can add a written message to personalize their Eidiya. For further details, please visit weyaybank.com.



MUNICH: A production line is pictured at German carmaker company's plant in Munich. — AFP

German industrial output rises for 2nd straight month

FRANKFURT: German industrial production rose strongly in February for the second straight month, official data showed Monday, offering hope for the beleaguered manufacturing sector in Europe's biggest economy. Output climbed 2.1 percent month-on-month, federal statistics agency Destatis said. It follows a revised 1.3 percent increase in January, which had been the first increase in nearly a year. Analysts surveyed by financial data firm FactSet had forecast an increase of 0.4 percent for February. "There are increasing signs that the economy is gradually bottoming out," the German economy ministry said in a statement.

The output increase was driven by a surge in the construction sector, Destatis said, while there were also improvements in chemicals, pharmaceuticals and auto manufacturing. In contrast, there were falls in energy production, mechanical engineering and electrical equipment, it said. High inflation, costly energy and weaker demand from the key Chinese market have all contributed to a slowdown in Germany's manufacturing sector in recent months.

Monday's figures confirm that German manufacturing "has started the year on a better note," analysts at Capital Economics said in a note. But they added that "some rebound was always likely after the big falls last year. And the outlook for the sector still looks poor... We expect German industrial production to stagnate this year at best." Faced with myriad headwinds, the Germany economy contracted last year. While a rebound is expected this year, there are signs the recovery will be slower than initially hoped, with the government and think-tanks scaling back their growth forecasts recently. — AFP

Cubans defy odds to release first video game abroad

HAVANA: Cuba's first independent video game launched internationally this week after its creators leveled up from an epic real-world quest: battling sanctions, wrestling with internet connection demons, and forging through economic turmoil. "Saviorless" is a 2D game with hand-drawn illustrations that invites players into a dark fantasy world to unravel the mystery of the "Islands of Smiles" by fighting monsters and solving puzzles.

Much like their characters, creators Josuhe Pagliery and David Darias had to overcome a multitude of obstacles to achieve what at times appeared impossible on the Communist island. "The project arose at a historic moment," said Pagliery, 43, a graphic artist who first dreamed up the idea in 2016, at a time when Cuba and the United States saw a thaw in relations under the presidency of Barack Obama.

The endeavor got support from an American foundation and crowdfunding, and Pagliery even traveled to the United States where his dream of creating an independent Cuban video game was covered by the media. At the same time, in Cuba, where it had only been available in public places at high prices, the internet became available on cell phones in 2018, and the cost of connecting dramatically lowered. But after this "bright period" came "the perfect storm to cancel the project," said Pagliery.

Sanctioned shores

Political tensions returned under the US presidency of Donald Trump, who reinforced economic sanctions. The initial programmer tasked with developing the game emigrated, and Cuba plunged into its worst economic crisis in decades after the COVID pandemic, marked by shortages and electricity blackouts.

"Instability is what characterized this project throughout its development," said Darias, 35, a former professor at the University of Havana who now works from home as an independent programmer. Financial constraints, a spat over the name of the game,



HAVANA: Cuban video game reviewers check the release of 'Saviorless', the first Cuban game on international video game platforms in Havana. — AFP

doubts, and technological challenges all provided obstacles along the way on the island which has been under US embargo since 1962. Their software did not always work on a slow internet connection, they had to connect via a VPN (virtual private network) to use programs banned due to sanctions, and backups were complicated by power outages.

"The worst thing, which happened twice, was when we lost not only the work we had just done, but also that from the whole week," when the electricity cut during a backup, said Darias. After four years of work, their finances bled dry, and hundreds of letters to international publishers that went unanswered, the two friends decided to do a "free demo so that there was at least a trace of all our efforts", said Pagliery.

It was then that Dear Villagers, a game publisher based in the south of France, spotted the Cubans' work and decided to support them so that they may "accomplish their dream", company founder Francis Ingrand told AFP. "We have always had this appetite for original projects, we loved the artistic touch and the game spoke to us," he added, praising the tenacity of the two developers who "accomplished something crazy." Among the community of gamers on the island, the project became somewhat of a "legend" due to how long it took to realize, said Luis Antonio Noa, 27, who runs a YouTube channel dedicated to gaming. — AFP

TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 2024



Visitors attend the media preview of the exhibition "From the heart to the hands: Dolce & Gabbana" at the Palazzo Reale in Milan. — AFP photos



DOLCE & GABBANA AND THE ARTISANS WHO INSPIRED THEM ON SHOW IN MILAN



From a crystal gown glittering in a room of ornate mirrors to the color clashes of Sicilian ceramics, a new exhibition of Dolce & Gabbana's fashion highlights the Italian craftsmanship that inspired them. Spread across several floors in Milan's opulent Palazzo Reale, "From the Heart to the Hands: Dolce & Gabbana" is the first exhibition dedicated to one of fashion's most successful partnerships. Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana met in Milan in the early 1980s before launching a design consulting studio and then

their own label in 1985.

But the brand's identity stemmed not from the stylish fashion capital—Gabbana's birthplace—but the heritage of Dolce's Sicily, which set it apart from other luxury rivals. One room of the Palazzo Reale is a riot of color, the patterns and prints of Sicily's majolica ceramics and brightly painted carts adorning walls, the floors and the folds of a tasselled dress in the middle. But the exhibition also pays tribute to other Italian traditions, from church mosaics to the opera.

In one room dedicated to the art of Venetian glass work, dresses and headdresses draped in crystals, or seemingly spun in silver, sparkle between the finely crafted mirrors and gorgeous chandeliers. The exhibition "is a declaration of love to Italian culture, (a) source of inspiration and muse behind the spirit of the brand", its organizers said in a statement. It "traces the extraordinary creative process of its founders—from the heart, where ideas are born, to the hands, the means through which they take shape".

The craftsmanship involved is on display in real-time in a pop-up workshop, where tailors, seamstresses and artisans will work every day in a space that recreates the fashion house's real laboratories. The exhibition runs from April 7 to July 31 in Milan—the first stop on what is intended to be an international tour.—AFP



Lifestyle



Clean Girl Aesthetic

THE RISE OF 'THE CLEAN GIRL AESTHETIC':
A NEW ERA OF BEAUTY AND SIMPLICITY

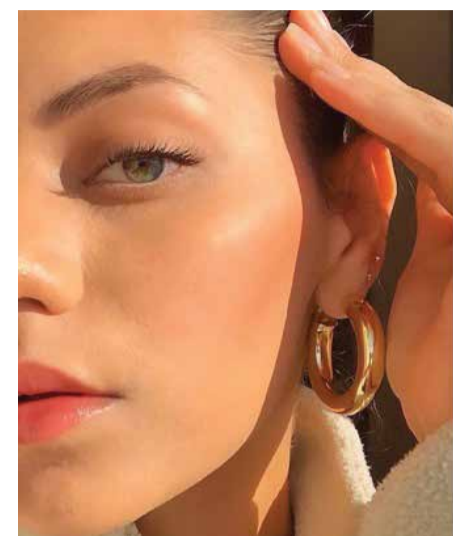
In recent years, a transformative trend has swept across the global beauty landscape, making a significant impact with its refreshing embrace of simplicity, authenticity, and natural elegance. Known as 'the clean girl aesthetic', this movement has captivated individuals worldwide, including in Kuwait, where it aligns harmoniously with local values of modesty, sophistication, and a growing consciousness towards sustainability and environmental care. As a herald of minimalist beauty, 'the clean girl aesthetic' marks a departure from the elaborate and often excessive beauty routines of the past, championing instead a return to the basics of natural allure and understated grace.

The essence of natural beauty

At the core of 'the clean girl aesthetic' is a philosophy that reveres natural beauty, advocating for a pared-down approach to personal care that highlights rather than obscures one's innate features. This trend is a celebration of health and simplicity, encouraging individuals to adopt beauty practices that enhance their natural complexion and hair texture with minimal intervention. It's a call to embrace products and routines that are not only kind to the skin and hair but also mindful of the environment, emphasizing sustainability and the use of cruelty-free ingredients.

Simplified beauty routines for hair and makeup

'The clean girl aesthetic' espouses effortless chic in hair styling, favoring looks that exude health and vitality without the need for complex



styling techniques or harmful chemical treatments. From smooth, glossy locks to soft, natural waves, the emphasis is on care and nourishment, ensuring that hair is not just beautiful but healthy and strong.

In makeup, this aesthetic champions the 'less is more' ethos, focusing on lightly enhancing features to achieve a glow that's both radiant and seemingly effortless. The trend advocates for the use of subtle, skin-friendly products, from light foundations and tinted moisturizers to natural blushes and lip colors, promoting a radiant, dewy complexion that shines with or without makeup.

Accessories and style: Elegance in simplicity

True to its minimalist roots, the Clean Girl Aesthetic extends to the

choice of accessories, favoring pieces that are both functional and stylish, yet understated in their elegance. Sustainable and minimalist designs are preferred, with delicate jewelry and eco-conscious fashion choices complementing the overall clean and natural look.

Cultural impact and global resonance

In Kuwait and beyond, 'the clean girl aesthetic' resonates deeply, reflecting a broader cultural shift towards beauty that embodies simplicity, sophistication, and environmental responsibility. This trend offers a contemporary take on beauty that remains deeply connected to traditional values, appealing to a wide audience who seek to balance elegance with mindful living.

As we introduce this inspiring beauty movement through a series of weekly articles, we'll explore in-depth the clean girl approach to hair, makeup, and nail styles. Each piece will delve into practical advice, product recommendations, and styling tips that embody the clean girl philosophy, providing readers with everything they need to embrace this elegant, health-focused, and environmentally conscious aesthetic.

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://dashebeauty.com> or follow up on our beauty blog. — Dashe Beauty Kuwait

JK Rowling: 'Harry Potter' author criticized for gender views

British author JK Rowling, who scored stellar success with her series about the boy wizard Harry Potter, has courted controversy online and even death threats because of her outspoken views on gender identity. Her position that biological sex is immutable has made her a darling of some feminists over the years, but incurred the wrath of transgender rights activists, who have called for her to be "cancelled". Rowling, 58, denies charges of transphobia that have tarnished the global success of the Harry Potter books, which have sold a staggering 600 million copies worldwide.



The writer liked a post on Twitter — the forerunner to X — by a woman who described transgender women as "men in dresses". She apologized after attracting criticism. Then in 2019, she publicly defended a woman who was sacked from her job after posting what were deemed to be transphobic tweets.

In 2020, Rowling also sarcastically replied to a description of "people who menstruate", writing: "I'm sure there used to be a word for those people. 'Someone help me out. Wumben? Wimpund? Woomud?'" The comment earned her the rebuke of her Harry Potter prodigies, including Daniel Radcliffe who played the boy wizard in the film franchise of the books, who publicly disassociated himself from her.

Two years later, Rowling spoke out again when Scotland, which has some devolved legislative powers, proposed making it simpler for people to change their legal gender. The UK government stepped in to block the bill going through at the devolved Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh.

Rowling calls herself a militant feminist, and has revealed how she had been a victim of domestic violence. Women's rights, she argued, could be threatened by some supporters of transgender rights and has spoken out about allowing transgender women to use changing rooms, toilets or prisons designated for women only.

Outspoken

Born on July 31, 1965 in the town of Chipping Sodbury in western England, Joanne Rowling began writing at an early age, telling stories she had dreamt up in her imagination. After studying French, she became a translator at Amnesty International in London, then on a train trip to Manchester came up with the story of Harry Potter and his adventures at the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. She taught English in Portugal where she married her first husband and had a daughter.

She worked on the Potter books every morning before work, continuing after she returned home in 1995, and moved to Scotland following her divorce. Rowling struggled and was receiving welfare payments when the publishing house Bloomsbury finally accepted her fantastical creation. Within a few years she and Harry Potter were a global phenomenon, shifting more than 600 million copies in over 80 languages.

The eight films based on the books have raked in some \$8 billion, making Rowling a millionaire several times over. Despite the furor about her views on gender identity, she admitted in the podcast "The Witch Trials of JK Rowling" that she was "not uncomfortable about getting off (her) pedestal" and speaking her mind. — AFP

The latest row on social media blew up last week after the Scottish government in Edinburgh, where Rowling lives, passed a law criminalizing hate speech, including against transgender people. Rowling, who lives in the city with her second husband, on April 1 published a volley of messages about transgender women on the social media platform X, formerly Twitter, including several convicted of sexual offences. "Obviously, the people mentioned in the above tweets aren't women at all, but men, every last one of them," she wrote. The new legislation, she added, was "wide open" to abuse those wanting to silence advocates of women and girls' single-sex spaces, and predatory men identifying as women. "Freedom of speech and belief are at an end in Scotland if the accurate description of biological sex is deemed criminal," she added, saying she welcomed arrest.

Police said complaints about the post were not criminal as the comments predictably triggered a firestorm, including from those for whom gender identity has become a "culture war" issue, such as Britain's right-wing media and politicians. The right-wing Daily Mail newspaper called Rowling a "hero".

Criticism

Rowling's transformation from almost universally popular children's author to a hate figure for supporters of gender identity began back in 2018.



(From left to right) Keith Prue, Marcy Cohen and John Bills test their camera equipment on the eve of a total solar eclipse across North America, in Cape Vincent, New York. — AFP photos



A sign welcomes visitors on the eve of a total solar eclipse across North America, in Cape Vincent, New York.

Totality insanity: Eclipse frenzy hits North America

Eclipse mania is sweeping across North America as a breathtaking celestial event on Monday promises a rare blend of commerce, science — and celebration. The Moon's shadow will land on Mexico's Pacific coast at 2:07 pm ET, then speed northeast across a 15-state swath of the United States and on to Canada, exiting the continent over Newfoundland just under an hour and a half later. Festivals, viewing parties, and even a mass wedding are planned along the eclipse "path of totality," where the Moon will completely obscure the Sun's light for up to a few minutes — if rain clouds don't play spoilsport, which could be the case in the southern and central US.

"Eclipses have a special power," NASA administrator Bill Nelson said recently. "They move people to feel a kind of reverence for the beauty of our universe." This year's path of totality is 115 miles (185 kilometers) wide and home to nearly 32 million Americans, with an additional 150 million living less than 200 miles from the strip. Those further away can still enjoy a partial eclipse, or follow a webcast provided by US space agency NASA. The next total solar eclipse that can be seen from a large part of North America won't come around until 2044.

Festivals, flights, romance

Businesses are capitalizing on the excitement with special events, while hotels and short-term rentals in prime viewing locations have been booked solid for months. At the Stonehenge II park in Ingram, Texas, a replica of the prehistoric structure in England, eclipse watchers had gathered from across the world. "This is our third solar eclipse," 62-year-old Jim Saltgerald, who was attending with his wife and two children, told AFP. "We're all praying and hoping that we have a good break in the clouds and get to see it."

In Cleveland, where local officials expect some 200,000 visitors, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame plans a four-day "Solarfest" of live music. And in Rus-

sellville, Arkansas, 300 couples are set to exchange vows at "A Total Eclipse of the Heart" mass wedding ceremony, with the "thin circle of light around the moon resembling a huge wedding ring in the sky!" the event's website boasts. Many schools along the path will be closed or letting students out early.

Several airlines have advertised flights scheduled to pass under the eclipse, while Delta has even planned two special trips along the path of totality. The Perryman Group, a Texas-based research firm, estimates direct and indirect economic impacts of this year's eclipse could reach \$6 billion.



A camper at Stonehenge II practices with his camera equipment ahead of Monday's total solar eclipse across North America, in Ingram, Texas.

11-year cycle. Startling animal behavior has been noted during past eclipses: giraffes have been seen galloping, while roosters and crickets can start crowing and chirping. NASA has invited the public to contribute to research through its citizen-science project Eclipse Soundscapes, by recording the sounds of nature and submitting their multisensory observations. In humans, eclipses trigger feelings of awe and "prosocial" tendencies towards others, research has found.

Safety first

Safety is paramount, with authorities stressing people must use certified



John Bills tests his camera equipment on the eve of a total solar eclipse across North America, in Cape Vincent, New York.

eclipse glasses to prevent retinal injury. Past eclipses have been followed by increases in hospital visits by people with complaints of blurry vision, changes in color perception, and blind spots, with the outlook for recovery far from certain.

Only those within the path of totality can safely remove their eye protection and admire the corona peeking out from behind the silhouette of the Moon for a few precious moments. But they must be certain of when it begins and ends and don their glasses in time, say health professionals. — AFP

Scientific windfall

Then there's the science. NASA plans to launch a trio of sounding rockets before, during and just after the eclipse to measure changes caused by the sudden darkness to the ionosphere, an upper layer of the atmosphere important for long-distance radio communication. The eclipse also offers a golden opportunity to study the Sun's corona, the outer layer of our star's atmosphere which is normally hidden by the blinding light of the surface.

Researchers are particularly thrilled about the Sun being near the peak of its

Lifestyle



Afghan youth (front) sew clothes ahead of Eid Al-Fitr, which marks the end of the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan at a tailor workshop in Kabul.



Afghan boys sew clothes ahead of Eid Al-Fitr, which marks the end of the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan at a tailor workshop in Kabul.



An Afghan youth (left) irons clothes ahead of Eid Al-Fitr, which marks the end of the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan at a tailor workshop in Kabul.--AFP photos

Afghan tailors outfit Eid celebrations with gleaming garb

In a frenzy of needlework, a den of Afghan tailors fashion customized suits for upcoming Eid Al-Fitr, with bejeweled outfits adding vital sparkle to muted celebrations of the Muslim holiday. At the Crystal Siddiqui shop in northern Kabul, tailors have worked 19-hour days in the holy month of Ramadan, creating 5,000 shalwar kameez -- loose-fitting men's ensembles with a long flowing shirt. "It is Ramadan -- a month full of blessings," said Shayeq Siddiqui, who helps run the family business. "When someone wears new things, whether they are clothes or shoes, they give a new spirit and energy to that person," the 23-year-old told AFP.



Afghan tailors sew clothes ahead of Eid Al-Fitr, which marks the end of the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan at a workshop in Kabul.

While the end of the two-decade Taliban insurgency has lifted the burden of war, allowing families to reunite across the country, Afghanistan remains one of the worst humanitarian disasters in the world, according to the United Nations (UN). And Afghan culture, already deeply conservative, has been subject to government decrees that have effectively banned music and seen women relegated from many public spaces in-

cluding parks. But women's tailors still do brisk business selling bright dresses to be worn behind closed doors -- contrasting with the dour all-covering burqa encouraged by Taliban authorities in public. Markets are also abuzz with trade of food and presents, and at Crystal Sid-

diqui dozens of crisp, ironed shalwar kameez are stacked and waiting for new owners to parade them for friends and family on Eid, expected this week.

Fine embroidery
Costing from 1,500 to 30,000 Af-

ghanis (\$420), a small fortune in a country where some 85 percent live on less than a dollar a day according to the UN, the men's suits come in infinite variations. This year, fine embroidery from southern Kandahar -- giving shirts the undulating texture of snake-skin -- is particularly popular. Less subtle, gold fabrics with gleaming fake precious stones are also stacked in abundance and favored by shoppers who have swollen the store's order book to twice its usual monthly size.

Upstairs, patterns are chalked out under the expert eye of tailors with measuring tape draped over their necks. Others squint over sewing machines and shear reams of fabric with hefty scissors. In the final hours of Ramadan the pace will not let up -- no Eid celebration can be complete without special clothing for the occasion. "Obviously, it's difficult, but it is our job and a must-have for people," said senior tailor 28-year-old Abdul Ferooz Azimi, salvaging a moment's rest on a workshop stool. "We feel fortunate to see our compatriots wearing new



An Afghan tailor (center) sews clothes ahead of Eid Al-Fitr, which marks the end of the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan at a tailor workshop in Kabul.

clothes on Eid, it gives us happiness," he said. "We are serving our people in this holy month."--AFP



A customer looks at bangles displayed in a shop in Hyderabad.



Workers add decorative elements to glass bangles at a home workshop in Hyderabad.



Pakistan's delicate Eid bangles go from furnace to forearms



In these above pictures worker Talat Zahid adds decorative elements to bangles at a home workshop in Hyderabad.

Layers of intricately decorated bangles are a staple fashion accessory for women in Pakistan, a carefully considered part of their Islamic Eid Al-Fitr celebrations. More than a dozen people can be involved in the making of a single bangle, from sweltering factories to the homes of designers who skillfully decorate them by hand. "Whatever the fashion trends, when we attend any event and wear any outfit it feels incomplete without bangles," said 42-year-old Talat Zahid, who uses beads, stitching and embroidery to embellish bangles. "Even if you don't wear jewelry but wear bangles or a bracelet with your outfit, the outfit looks complete."

In the lead-up to this week's Eid Al-Fitr festivities that mark the end of Ramadan, market stalls are adorned with a glittering array of colorful bangles, each turned over and inspected for their beauty and imperfections by women who haggle for a good price. They are often sold by the dozen, starting at around 150 rupees (about 50 cents) and rising to 1,000 rupees as stones and silk are added. Hyderabad is home to the delicate "churi" glass bangle, where a single furnace can produce up to 100 bangles



Customers buy bangles at a shop in Hyderabad.

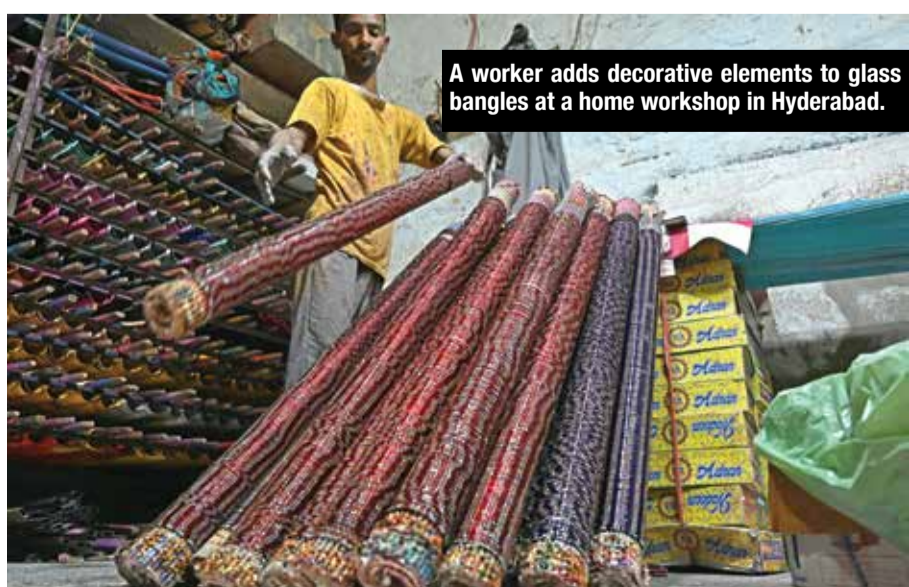
an hour from molten glass wire shaped around an iron rod.

The work is arduous and frustrating -- laborers are exposed to oppressive temperatures in unregulated factories prone to frequent power cuts, while the fragile glass threads can snap easily.

"The work is done without a fan. If we turn on the fan the fire is extinguished. So the heat intensity is high. As it becomes hotter our work slows down," said 24-year-old Sameer, who followed his father into the industry and earns less than the minimum wage of 32,000

rupees (\$115) a month. After the partition of British-ruled India in 1947, migrating Muslims who had produced bangles in the Indian city of Firozabad took their trade to Hyderabad -- where hundreds of thousands of people rely on the industry. But soaring gas prices after the government slashed subsidies have forced many factories to close or to operate at reduced hours.

"The speed at which the government has increased the gas prices and taxes, (means) the work in this area has started to shrink instead of expand," said 50-year-old factory owner Muhammad Nafees. Most bangles leave the factory as plain loops, sent off to be embellished to different degrees by women who work from home, before they're finally passed on to traders to be sold in markets. The production is often a family affair. Saima Bibi, 25, works from home, carefully adding stones to bangles with the help of her three children when they return from school, while her husband works at the furnaces. "They go through a lot of hands to be prepared," she said. --AFP



A worker adds decorative elements to glass bangles at a home workshop in Hyderabad.



A woman works on glass bangles at a home workshop in Hyderabad. --AFP photos



Workers unload broken glass from a truck at a glass bangle factory in Hyderabad.

Sports

Shepherd blasts 32 in final over as Mumbai take first IPL win

Thakur claims first five-wicket haul of IPL season as Lucknow win

MUMBAI: Romario Shepherd smashed 32 runs off the 20th over for Mumbai Indians to set up their first victory of this Indian Premier League season as they beat Delhi Capitals by 29 runs on Sunday. In the second match of the day, seam bowler Yash Thakur took the first five-wicket haul of the IPL campaign to lead Lucknow Super Giants to a 33-run win over Gujarat Titans on home turf.

In match one, Shepherd crashed a 10-ball 39 in an unbeaten stand of 53 off 13 deliveries with Tim David, who struck 45, to steer Mumbai to 234-5 at their home Wankhede Stadium. Delhi finished on 205-8, despite Tristan Stubbs' unbeaten 25-ball 71. They slumped to the bottom of the 10-team table.

Five-time IPL winners Mumbai bounced back from losing their first three games to reduce the pressure on skipper Hardik Pandya, who has been booed by fans after replacing Rohit Sharma as captain ahead of this edition.

"I would like to have this feeling more often than not," said Pandya after the victory. "Lot of hard work, hard to clear our minds, and everything clicked." "There was a lot of love and care going around, everyone knows we lost three games but the belief and backing was there, everyone believes we needed just one win and today was the start," Pandya said.

David smashed a six and four at the end of the 19th over before Shepherd walloped Anrich Nortje for four sixes and two fours in the last over as Mumbai took 42 runs from the final eight balls. Ro-

hit (49) and Ishan Kishan (42) laid the foundations for the total in an 80-run opening stand before Axar Patel sent the two back in the pavilion with his left-arm spin.

Returning batsman Suryakumar Yadav, who missed the first three losses injured, survived a toe-crushing yorker by Nortje on his first ball but then miscued the next delivery to mid-on for a two-ball duck. Mumbai lost another wicket before Pandya and David put on 60 to steady the innings ahead of Shepherd's explosive knock.

Thakur effect

In reply, Prithvi Shaw hit 66 after losing opening partner David Warner for 10 off Shepherd's seam bowling. Shaw and the left-handed Abhishek Porel, who hit 41, put on 88 for the second wicket before Jasprit Bumrah removed both.

South Africa's Stubbs raised a fifty in 19 balls but the asking rate kept climbing and Gerald Coetzee took three wickets in the final over to return figures of 4-34. In the day's second match in Lucknow, Marcus Stoinis hit 58 to guide Lucknow to a total, which looked below par but the bowlers made sure it was enough.

Leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi took a stunning return catch off his own leg-spin to send Gujarat's impact substitute Kane Williamson out for one. Left-arm spinner Krunal Pandya, elder brother of Mumbai's Hardik, struck three times, including twice in one over when he took the wicket of Sai Sudar-



MUMBAI: Mumbai Indians' Romario Shepherd bowls during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Mumbai Indians and Delhi Capitals at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai. — AFP

shan for 31 to derail the opposition chase.

Thakur, who bowled skipper Shubman Gill for 19 as his first wicket, then sent down a double-wicket maiden to flatten the batting. He took two more

wicket in the 19th over for his first-ever five wicket haul - 5-30 - in T20 cricket. New pace sensation Mayank Yadav picked up an injury after he bowled just one over for 13 runs. — AFP

Bhatia wins PGA Texas Open after playoff drama

MIAMI: Akshay Bhatia beat Denny McCarthy in a sudden-death playoff at the end of a dramatic final round of the PGA Tour's Texas Open in San Antonio on Sunday. Bhatia, who is now the last qualifier to the Masters, went into the final round with a four-shot lead but a remarkable back nine from McCarthy forced a playoff.

McCarthy made eight birdies after the turn, finishing with seven in a row as he carded a nine-under 63. His 12-foot birdie putt on the 18th left Bhatia needing to sink his own 11 footer to avoid defeat and head to a playoff and the 22-year-old Californian did not flinch.

He did wince however, after celebrating the putt with his fist pump causing him a shoulder injury that needed treatment on the playoff hole. Bhatia called for his trainer but while he was clearly in discomfort he was solid off the tee and made his lay-up shot before he was able to have his shoulder popped back into position and he strapped up.

But before that happened McCarthy, looking for his first win on the PGA Tour, had produced his worst shot of the week at the most crucial moment. With a 99-yard wedge shot to the green, the 31-year-old shanked his shot and watched in disbelief as it landed in the stream in front of the green.

Bhatia kept his cool and secured the win and his first trip to the Masters. The left-hander has however played at Augusta National, back in 2013 when he finished sixth in the junior Drive, Chip and Putt competition held in the days before the main event.

"Every kid dreams about going to Augusta National whether you're a patron, whether you're a player, caddie, whatever it may be. Just being able to go there and feel the aura of the place at such a young age was awesome. I'm looking forward to going back," said Bhatia.



SAN ANTONIO: Akshay Bhatia of the United States, Akshay Bhatia's cousin, Thomas Riehle and his fiancée Presleigh Schultz pose with the trophy after winning the Valero Texas Open on the 18th hole of the first playoff during the final round of the Valero Texas Open at TPC San Antonio. — AFP

"It's a dream come true. I wrote on my wrist today 'W-T-W,' which is wire-to-wire. Just kind of pictured a straight wire from the first hole to the 72nd hole and I just tried to really stick to that," he added.

Bhatia shot a five-under 67 with his only blemish a bogey on the par-4 10th but he said he could feel his lead fading away as his playing partner made his charge. "It was hard. You feel like you're kind of losing. You're losing the golf tournament. This guy's making a ton of birdies, I'm not making any mistakes and yet, you know, I was tied for the lead going into the last," he said.

After a round of such outstanding putting, McCarthy, who had already qualified for the Masters, was left reflecting on one bad shot. "Wish I could have had that wedge shot back there. I backed off a

couple times. There was a bug on my ball and some noise in the stands and a bug jumped back on my ball," he said.

"I probably should have backed away again, but I thought I could kind of not let it distract me and maybe it did a little," he added. Rory McIlroy will head to Augusta in positive mood after a final round 66 left him in third place.

The Northern Irishman, looking to complete the career grand slam of majors with a first title at Augusta, was bogey-free through his round. "I'm in a better spot than I was a few weeks ago," McIlroy said. "I played pretty solid in some tough conditions and then when the course opened up for us a little bit today, I was able to take advantage of it. Feeling good." — AFP

and public, but distrusted by the selectors," wrote rugby paper Midi-Olympique. He also guided his local club Mont-de-Marsan to their only French league title in 1963, kicking a penalty and a drop in the tight 9-6 win over his old team Dax.

Guy was alongside him for club and country and his death in a car accident when he was just 30 was to leave Andre with "the only scar of my life". "When Guy died, the pair became mythical, emblems of lost talent and rugby martyrdom," wrote veteran French rugby writer Daniel Herrero.

Born on August 14, 1934, Andre Boniface grew up in the rugby mad south-west of France, firstly playing for Dax and then joining their bitter rivals Mont-de-Marsan aged just 17. He made his France debut as a 19-year-old in 1954 as France shared the Five Nations title with England and Wales.

A month later, his second cap marked France's first ever victory over New Zealand, before they captured a maiden outright Five Nations crown in 1959. Boniface was joined by his sibling Guy in the international squad in 1960. Over the next six years, they played in 24 of France's 26 Five Nations matches, partnering at centre in 10 of them.

minutes in his first appearance after eight months out injured, were outstanding as they stretched Racing from the start at the Stade Ernest-Wallon. "It didn't feel as though we hadn't played together for months which is a good sign," said Dupont.

"Romain has prepared for his comeback very well so that he can get his bearings and get back to playing the way we know he can. He put in a very complete and solid performance. We hope that will continue." The visitors lost South African World Cup-winning captain Siya Kolisi, also making a comeback after a month out with a finger injury, after just 22 minutes when the flanker hobbled off with what appeared to be an ankle injury.

France hooker Peato Mauvaka opened the scoring after just five minutes with wing Matthis Lebel adding the second try six minutes before the break. With Blair Kinghorn, preferred as kicker to Ntamack, missing both conversions, Toulouse only led

10-0 at the break but quickly asserted themselves with a third try after 55 minutes when Dupont teed up centre Paul Costes, a first-half replacement for Pierre-Louis Barassi.

"(To lead) 10-0 at half-time playing into the wind was a very good performance," said Dupont. "We knew the conditions were going to be complicated." Pita Akhi added a fourth 10 minutes from time and, after Eddy Ben Arous touched down for the Parisians, Alexandre Roumat completed the scoring with the fifth Toulouse try in the last minute. Toulouse coach Ugo Mola said his team would need to focus on the quarter-final against Exeter, especially after the English side's 28-18 win in 2020.

"I remember the semi-final," he said. "They're a good English team. They're up to European Cup standards, strong up front, good goalkicker, and they're good at taking their chances when they come along." — AFP

'Pianist's scales'

Their spell together at Test level was best remembered for 'The Boni Brothers' combining with intricate passing moves as they captured the essence of French champagne rugby. Andre insisted that "style came from hard work, not chance". He said passing was "a daily preoccupation, like a pianist's scales".

Their finest display came in Paris in 1965 when they played in the centre against Wales, who had already won the Triple Crown, in the final match of the campaign. Andre had the game of his life while Guy scored two of the six tries as France swept to a 22-13 victory.

"The most beautiful switch passes we did with my brother were not planned," Andre Boniface said in 2016. "They were done on instinct. There was a lot of improvisation. Our spirit came from that. It displeased some people who wanted to close us into preconceived ideas," he added. The pair played their final France game together in 1966 when they unfairly took the blame for a 9-8 defeat. Tragedy then hit the Boniface family and the wider French rugby public when the car that Guy was travelling in hit a tree on January 1, 1968. In 2011, Andre was inducted into World Rugby's Hall of Fame. — AFP

Korda wins LPGA match play to seal awesome foursome

LOS ANGELES: World number one Nelly Korda sealed her fourth consecutive tournament victory on Sunday, producing a dominant performance to defeat Ireland's Leona Maguire 4&3 at the LPGA Match Play in Las Vegas. The in-form American star was always in control in perfect conditions at Shadow Creek golf course, building an early lead to go four up through seven holes. Although Maguire pulled a hole back at the ninth, Korda kept the pressure up with a par at the 10th while Maguire made a bogey five.

Another birdie at the 12th left Korda cruising at five up with six to play. There was a brief wobble by Korda as Maguire rattled in birdies at the 13th and 14th to cut the American's lead to three up with four to play. But Korda sealed victory on the par-four 15th with a birdie to clinch a 4&3 win. "It's just been a whirlwind," Korda said of her four-tournament win streak, which has included victories at the Drive On Championship, the Los Angeles Open and Arizona Championship.

"It's been an amazing time and to do it here at the match play has been so much fun. Going down the stretch there's a different type of adrenaline but in match play you have that from the first hole. "It was a great day playing against such a great competitor as Leona; but happy to get my fourth win."

Maguire has a proven track record in match play having starred for Europe in their Solheim Cup victory over the United States last year. The Irishwoman had been in blistering form in Las Vegas all week, but was unable to reproduce it when it counted in Sunday's final.

"Obviously Nelly's probably the best player in the world right now, male or female," Maguire said after her defeat. "She's playing unbelievable golf and I knew I was going to have to bring my A+ game if I was going to have a chance. "But I just didn't putt well enough. Hats off to Nelly — she really didn't give me much of a chance. It's very impressive what she's doing." — AFP

French charity sounds alarm about Seine ahead of Olympics

PARIS: A French water charity sounded the alarm Monday about pollution in the river Seine, which is set to be used for swimming during the Olympic Games. Surfrider Foundation said it had analyzed six months of tests undertaken by a laboratory and had concluded that the river water remained polluted and potentially dangerous.

In an open letter, the Biarritz-based charity said it "wanted to share with stakeholders its rising concerns about the quality of the Seine but also the risks faced by athletes moving in contaminated water." Paris authorities are in a race against time to clean up the Seine before the start of the Olympics on July 26, with the famed waterway set to play a starring role during the Games.

It is set to be the host of the opening ceremony and will then be used for the marathon swimming events and the triathlon — pollution permitting. Around 1.4 billion euros (\$1.5 billion) has been spent upgrading sewage and storm water treatment facilities in the Paris region over the last decade to improve the quality of the Seine as well as its main tributary, the Marne.

A major new storm water facility is expected to be inaugurated later this month, while new sewage connections for river boats are continuing to be built. Surfrider said tests had been carried out by the laboratory Eau de Paris and environmental analysis group Analy-Co from September to March underneath the bridges Alexandre-III and l'Alma, where the Olympics sports are set to take place.

European water quality standards and the international triathlon and open-water swimming federations set limits on the concentration of two bacteria — E. Coli and enterococci — which are indicators of the presence of faecal matter. Surfrider said its measurements had shown levels often double and sometimes three-times higher than the maximum permitted amounts. The main source of hope for Olympic organizers and Paris authorities is that these levels were recorded over the winter period — and one of the wettest winters in 30 years. — AFP

French rugby great Andre Boniface dead

PARIS: Andre Boniface, one of French rugby's greatest players in the 1950s and 1960s, died in Bayonne on Monday at the age of 89, his family told AFP. The epitome of French flair, Boniface's career was inextricably linked with that of his younger brother and often centre partner Guy: together they epitomized the notion of 'French flair'.

Andre made the first of his 48 international appearances in 1954 with the last of those coming 12 years later in 1966, by which time he had helped France to the Five Nations title on four occasions. France, in fact, played 90 times during his span as an international player, showing how Andre had a knack for rubbing officialdom up the wrong way.

"It was as if he were chosen by fate to crystallize the conflicts of French rugby, beloved by the press

Northampton, Toulouse into Champions quarters

PARIS: Toulouse ran in five tries in a 31-7 demolition of fellow French club Racing 92 to book their place in the last eight of the Champions Cup on Sunday while Northampton came through 24-14 in a see-saw battle with Munster.

Five-time champions Toulouse face a home quarter-final next weekend against English side Exeter while Northampton will host the Pretoria-based Bulls. Toulouse, who were bolstered by the presence of France's preferred half-back pairing of Antoine Dupont and Romain Ntamack, the latter playing 72

Sports

Juventus scrape past Fiorentina, Napoli win with stunners at Monza

Bologna aiming to reach modern Champions League for the first time

MILAN: Juventus consolidated third place in Serie A with Sunday's hard-fought 1-0 win over Fiorentina while a trio of fantastic goals helped Napoli to a thrilling 4-2 win at Monza. Federico Gatti prodded home the only goal of the game in the 21st minute at the Allianz Stadium in Turin, the Italy defender in the right place at the right time after Gleison Bremer's header came back out off the post.

"Yeah we tried that one in training this morning... You need a bit of luck every now and again," joked Gatti about his goal. Gatti's goal pushed Juve four points ahead of Bologna who stayed fourth following their goalless draw at relegation-threatened Frosinone in the day's first kick-off.

Bologna are aiming to reach the modern Champions League for the first time—they played one round in the old European Cup in 1964 -- and are a good bet to do so thanks to eight wins from their last 10 matches. Juve had picked up just seven points from their previous nine league fixtures, but Sunday's win came days after comfortably beating Lazio in the first leg of their Italian Cup semi-final.

"It's a really big win, we came into the game off the back of two really difficult months," said Gatti. "We've got a month and a half left where we have a lot to play for." It wasn't an easy three points however as Juve had three goals chalked off for offside, including a tap-in from former Fiorentina man Dusan Vlahovic, in the opening 45 minutes before sitting on their slender lead for almost the entire second half.

In the end, Juve had Wojciech Szczesny to thank for the win as the Poland goalkeeper tipped Nico-

las Gonzalez's curling strike onto the crossbar with a magnificent save in the 74th minute. Fiorentina, who dominated the second half without finding the breakthrough, stay 10th after failing to win for a fourth consecutive league match.

Napoli entertain

Trailing at half-time to Milan Djuric's early header and loudly barracked by protesting away fans, champions Napoli roared back to win at Monza following sumptuous strikes from Victor Osimhen, Matteo Politano and Piotr Zielinski in six second-half minutes.

Andrea Colpani's deflected shot closed the gap to one, seconds after Zielinski's first goal since October, but Giacomo Raspadori added the fourth in the 69th minute to ensure Napoli went seventh. "Today we showed our true worth, but we need to understand that we're a good team and always play like the first 15 minutes of the second half because this year we've been too inconsistent... We're a good team and today we showed it," said Politano.

"We all need to try and give something extra, because we have seven games left and we can still get a lot of points." Francesco Calzona's side will hand over their league title, almost certainly to Inter Milan, at the end of the season and are 10 points behind Bologna who currently sit in the last Champions League spot.

However, Serie A is leading the race for an extra berth in next year's revamped tournament, meaning fifth could be good enough. Roma are three points behind Bologna in fifth after beating local rivals Lazio 1-0 for the first time in over two years on Saturday.



TURIN: Juventus' Serbian forward #09 Dusan Vlahovic (C) fights for the ball with Fiorentina's Czech midfielder #72 Antonin Barak during the Italian Serie A football match between Juventus and Fiorentina, at The Allianz Stadium, in Turin. — AFP

Two points ahead of Napoli, in sixth, are Atalanta who fell to a surprise 2-1 defeat at Cagliari but have a game in hand, against Fiorentina. Frosinone, who

won Serie B last season, are a point behind Verona who sit just outside the relegation zone after losing 2-1 to mid-table Genoa. — AFP



MUNICH: Bayern Munich's team attend a training session on April 8, 2024 in Munich, southern Germany, prior to the UEFA Champions League quarter-final first leg football match Arsenal FC v FC Bayern Munich. — AFP

Arsenal's 'good energy' fuels double bid as Bayern test looms

LONDON: Mikel Arteta believes Arsenal are primed to avenge their wretched Champions League record against Bayern Munich as the Gunners set their sights on a remarkable double. Arteta's side host Bayern in the Champions League quarter-final first leg on Tuesday looking to transfer the momentum from their Premier League title charge onto the European stage.

With seven games left in a gripping title race, the north Londoners sit top of the table—ahead of second-placed Liverpool on goal difference and third-placed Manchester City by one point. Arsenal have won 10 of their 11 top-flight matches in 2024 as they chase a first Premier League crown for 20 years. But Arteta's attention will turn to the Champions League this week as Arsenal aim to make amends for nearly two decades of trauma against Bayern. Beaten 5-1 in each of their last three meetings with Bayern, Arsenal were eliminated from the Champions League by the German club in the last 16 in 2017, 2014, 2013 and 2005.

Arteta was not in charge for any of those chastening exits, although he did play for Arsenal in the 2013 and 2014 losses to the six-time European champions. Arsenal's fine domestic form suggests they are poised to enjoy a reversal of fortune this time. Bayern will arrive at the Emirates Stadium in turmoil, lagging 16 points

behind leaders Bayer Leverkusen after Saturday's embarrassing defeat at Heidenheim. Even the presence of Bayern striker Harry Kane, who scored a north London derby record 14 goals against Arsenal during his time with Tottenham, is unlikely to rattle the Gunners.

The bad vibes at Bayern are a stark contrast to the positivity flowing through Arteta's vibrant young side. Arteta has made it his mission to provide his players with the freedom to express themselves within his tactical structure and the results have been transformative for a club in free-fall prior to his appointment in 2019.

"We are in a really good moment. We have the squad healthy, with a really good energy, with a lot of confidence individually and collectively," Arteta said after Saturday's win at Brighton. "They are performing really well and we are winning a lot of matches. We just have to carry on doing what we're doing."

Arsenal have only reached the Champions League final once, losing to Barcelona in the 2006 showpiece. Back in the Champions League for the first time since 2017, Arsenal are making up for lost time. They breezed past Lens, PSV Eindhoven and Sevilla to win their group and survived a penalty shoot-out against Porto to reach the quarter-finals for the first time since 2010. Arsenal have not made the semi-finals since 2009 but the confident mood among Arteta's squad points towards a long-awaited return to the last four.

Nothing encapsulates Arteta's ability to improve his players more than Kai Havertz's gradual emergence as a key figure this season. Havertz's confidence was at rock bottom when he signed from Chelsea last year after a troubled spell with the Blues.—AFP

Briton completes epic run the full length of Africa

CAPE ANGELA: Russ Cook on Sunday completed a mammoth quest to run the length of Africa having overcome health scares, visa troubles and even an armed robbery. The Briton arrived late in the afternoon at Cape Angela in Tunisia, where a sculpture marks the "northernmost point of the African continent". The epic endeavour saw him live up to his "hardest geezer (man)" nickname to complete the more than 16,000-kilometre (9,900-mile) journey. Cook believes he is the first person ever to run the entire length of the continent.

The 27-year-old set off from South Africa's most southerly point on April 22 last year. By the time he crossed the finish line in Tunisia, he had taken more than 19 million steps in 16 countries, running the equivalent of 385 marathons in 351 days. He crossed mountains, tropical forests and deserts, including the mighty Sahara. Cook's efforts have raised over £550,000 (\$695,000) for the Running Charity and for Sandblast, which raises awareness for the indigenous Saharawis of Western Sahara.



DOUAR FERDOUJINE: Britain's Russ Cook (C-L) runs, with supporters who joined him for the final leg of the 16,000km challenge to run the length of Africa from South Africa's Cape Agulhas to Tunisia's Cape Angela to raise money for charity, in town of Ghazela, north east of Tunis. — AFP

For the final leg of his run, the endurance athlete from Worthing in southern England was joined by supporters. "Wanted to open up the last day of this project to anyone and everyone who has been watching and supporting," he said on X, formerly Twitter. "Come and run the last marathon, the last half, 10km, five kilometres, one kilometre. Whatever you fancy," he added. The end of the challenge was set to be celebrated with a

party at a hotel in Bizerte, Africa's northernmost city.

A performance by the rock band Soft Play, formerly known as Slaves, was planned. "Can't quite believe it but we've managed to pull off Soft Play playing the finish line party in Tunisia," he said.

"Get your daiquiris ready girls and boys this is gonna be mega," he added. Cook joked throughout his journey that he craved a strawberry daiquiri. It was not only the running that challenged the extreme runner. In Angola, he and his team were robbed at gunpoint, while Cook's difficulties in obtaining a visa for Algeria nearly derailed the entire project. In the Sahara, he ran at night to escape the searing heat and scorching sun. In Nigeria, doctors told him to cut back on his daily mileage because of pains he was suffering. Cook still kept going.

Before setting off last year he said his approach to life was to throw "everything and the kitchen sink" at it. "I'm a totally normal bloke, so if I can do this, hopefully people can apply this to their own lives in whichever way they choose," he said.

"For 99 percent of people, it's not going to be running across Africa, but it might look like chasing their dreams a little bit more," he added. Last week he described the past year as "the toughest in my life but an immense honour". "We have met incredible people in every single country we've been to that have welcomed us with love and kindness. The human spirit is a beautiful thing," he said.—AFP

S Carolina down Iowa to win US college crown

LOS ANGELES: Caitlin Clark's dream of a fairy-tale ending to her record-breaking women's college basketball career ended in disappointment on Sunday as South Carolina overpowered Iowa 87-75 to win the US collegiate crown. In her final game in college basketball before she heads to the professional ranks of the WNBA, Clark finished with 30 points, eight rebounds and five assists at Cleveland's Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse arena. But it was not enough to stop the University of South Carolina's all-conquering line-up from crowning their undefeated season with a deserved victory. Clark had no complaints at the result, describing South Carolina as "just so good."

"There's only so much you can do," Clark said. "I'm proud of our group. We never backed down and gave it everything we've got." Clark had led from the front in a blistering start by Iowa that saw the Hawkeyes rattle off 10 unanswered points following the opening tip-off. A trademark three-point jumper from Clark put Iowa into an 18-7 lead and then two free-throws helped her team into a 20-9 lead shortly afterwards. But after regrouping following the early onslaught, South Carolina came roaring back to get within two points at 22-20 after Tessa Johnson's layup.

South Carolina moved into the lead for the first time in the game midway through the second quarter after a layup from the 6ft 7in Brazilian center Kamilla Cardoso. Although Iowa hit back soon afterwards with another Clark three-point jump shot which put her team 44-40 up, South Carolina refused to roll over, and took the lead after Te-Hina Paopao's third three of the first half made it 47-46. A rare blunder by Clark then gifted a steal to Raven Johnson, who raced to the basket unopposed for a layup that made it 49-46 at half-time.

South Carolina kept their foot down at the start of the second half, jumping out to a nine-point lead at 55-46. Clark led a stirring Iowa rally to make it a two-point game at 57-55, but the Gamecocks responded with an 8-0 run that took the game away from Iowa once more.

South Carolina stretched their lead to 14 points at 76-62 with just over seven minutes remaining, exploiting their advantages in height to never let Iowa back into the contest. Back-to-back three-pointers from Clark and Gabbie Marshall helped claw the score back to 76-70, but South Carolina would not be denied, their defense slamming the door to keep Iowa at arm's reach down the stretch.—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
Qadsia	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752

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

Hospitals

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

Change of Name

I, the undersigned **John De Cruz**, holder of Indian Passport number S2393254, having permanent address house No. 0863/T, ward No.VIII, Santemol, Raia, Salcete, South Goa-403720, India, residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as John Da Cruz. Hereafter, in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by the name John Da Cruz
(#5193) 09/04/2024

Goa-403720, India, has changed my name from Maura Jude De Sa Da Cruz to Maura Jude De Sa. Hereafter, in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by the name Maura Jude De Sa.
(#5193) 09/04/2024

I, the undersigned **Maura Jude De Sa**, holder of Indian Passport number W7982808, having permanent address house No. 0863/T, ward No.VIII, Santemol, Raia, Salcete, South

I, **Muzaffar**, holder of Passport No. V3754266 do hereby change my name to Mufaddal (as given name) Karachiwala (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Mufaddal Karachiwala and I also undertake to carry out this name changes in all my documents.
(#5192) 07/04/2024



MANCHESTER: Liverpool's Dutch striker #18 Cody Gakpo (C) vies with Manchester United's English defender #29 Aaron Wan-Bissaka (L) during the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Liverpool at Old Trafford in Manchester. – AFP

Liverpool's title bid dented by Man Utd draw, Spurs go fourth

Tottenham are now above fifth placed Aston Villa on goal difference

LONDON: Liverpool were held to a damaging 2-2 draw by Manchester United as they handed the initiative to Arsenal in the Premier League title race, while Tottenham moved into fourth place with a 3-1 win over Nottingham Forest on Sunday. Jurgen Klopp's side would have gone top with a victory against their bitter rivals at Old Trafford.

But despite taking the lead through Luis Diaz's 23rd minute strike, Liverpool couldn't deliver the knockout blow. They wasted several chances to increase their advantage before Bruno Fernandes alertly pounced on Jarell Quansah's wayward pass to score from just inside the Liverpool half in the 50th minute.

To Klopp's visible fury, Kobbie Mainoo found space to net United's second with an eye-catching curler in the 67th minute. Liverpool avoided a repeat of their FA Cup quarter-final defeat at United earlier this season as Mohamed Salah equalised with an 84th minute penalty after Aaron Wan-Bissaka chopped down Harvey Elliott. But it was still a frustrating final visit to Old Trafford

for Klopp before his departure at the end of the season, with Liverpool stuck behind Arsenal, who hold a nine-goal advantage on goal difference. Klopp's team, who are one point ahead of third placed Manchester City, have seven games left to overhaul Arsenal as they chase a record-equalling 20th English title.

"We should have won the game, that is clear. We should have had other goals in the first half. We dropped too deep," Klopp said. "The whole Liverpool community just stay calm. We are where we are and we keep giving it a proper go. "Do I wish we had 10 points difference? Of course. We are in the race and I'm absolutely fine with it." United boss Erik ten Hag added: "Very mixed emotions. We have to blame ourselves for making stupid mistakes. "On the other side I'm very proud. You see how we are improving and the potential of this squad is amazing."

Slick Spurs

At the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, the game went

ahead despite a fatal stabbing just yards from the ground earlier on Sunday. Ange Postecoglou's side took the lead thanks to an own goal from Forest defender Murillo in the 15th minute.

Timo Werner's low cross into the six-yard box caused panic and Murillo's stretching attempt to clear diverted the ball into his own net. Chris Wood equalised in the 27th minute with a clinical strike from just inside the area. And six minutes later Pedro Porro produced a powerful half-volley from 14 yards to put the result beyond doubt. Tottenham are now above fifth placed Aston Villa on goal difference and also hold a game in hand in the race to qualify for the Champions League via a top four finish. "Everyone has been banging on about us getting fourth. We're fourth now but it doesn't stop, we'll keep going. We're in a good shape to finish the season strong," Postecoglou said.

Fourth bottom Forest are outside the relegation zone by the slenderest of margins, above Luton only on goal difference. In Sunday's other game, Ole McBurnie's last-gasp equaliser forced Chelsea to settle for a 2-2 draw at bottom of the table Sheffield United.

Fresh from scoring twice in the final seconds of stoppage-time to beat Manchester United on Thursday, Chelsea took the lead after 11 minutes as Thiago Silva finished off Conor Gallagher's corner at the far post.

The Blades equalised in the 32nd minute as Gustavo Hamer's pass sent Jayden Bogle through on goal and the right wing-back slotted home. Noni Madueke put Chelsea back in front in the 66th minute, cutting in from the right to drive his shot into the far corner.

Yet mid-table Chelsea's troubled season suffered another setback when McBurnie levelled with a close-range finish three minutes into stoppage-time. "We feel really bad in the way we conceded. We need to be more clinical," Chelsea boss Mauricio Pochettino said. – AFP



SUZUKA: Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen celebrates on the podium with second-placed Red Bull Racing's Mexican driver Sergio Perez (L) and third-placed Ferrari's Spanish driver Carlos Sainz Jr (R) after winning the Formula One Japanese Grand Prix race at the Suzuka circuit in Suzuka. – AFP

Max Verstappen bounces back, more Mercedes misery

SUZUKA: Max Verstappen cruised to victory ahead of Sergio Perez as Red Bull claimed a one-two finish for the third time in four races. The triple world champion has taken an early stranglehold on the world championship, ahead of the fifth race in China in two weeks.

AFP Sport looks at things we learned from Sunday's Japanese Grand Prix:

Verstappen ominous

Verstappen said after his win at Suzuka that it was "a very long season" and he wanted to "approach it race by race". But Mercedes boss Toto Wolff had already seen enough to declare that "no one is going to catch Max this year". Wolff said the other drivers are competing to be "the best of the rest", and the dominant nature of Verstappen's victory made it easy to understand why. The Dutchman never looked troubled in controlling the race from start to finish, and crossed

the line 12.5sec ahead of team-mate Perez. "Whenever I needed to go faster I could, whenever I needed to look after my tyres I could," said Verstappen.

"That's always a nice feeling to have when you're driving." Red Bull's early season success has been overshadowed by team disunity and allegations against team boss Christian Horner.

There was no outward sign of turmoil at Suzuka, with Verstappen saying he was "very happy" with the team. The triple world champion appears to be building an ominous head of steam.

Mercedes stuck in neutral

Wolff was not even scheduled to travel to Japan but his Mercedes team's lacklustre start to the season forced him to change his mind. He may have wished he didn't bother after another disappointing weekend for the once-mighty Silver Arrows. George Russell finished seventh, two places ahead of Lewis Hamilton, who had problems with tyres and steering. Wolff tried to put a positive spin on the weekend, saying it had been "better than the final results suggest". "From what we've seen here, we can say that the car is becoming quicker," he said. Hamilton did not appear convinced: "If we want to move up the grid, then we will need to add more performance to the car."—AFP

George late show sparks Clippers over Cleveland

LOS ANGELES: Paul George led a remarkable comeback Sunday as the Los Angeles Clippers overturned a 26-point deficit to defeat the Cleveland Cavaliers 120-118 in the NBA. George erupted for 23 points in a fourth-quarter charge, including the go-ahead shot with seven seconds remaining, and then made a crucial block to preserve the Clippers' lead just before the buzzer. It was the final act of an incredible individual display by George who finished with 39 points, 11 rebounds and seven assists and who was a perfect 16-of-16 from the free throw line. James Harden added 22 points, while Ivica Zubac, Terance Mann and Norman Powell all had 14 points apiece. "It was a collective team win," George said. "I can't take credit for none of it without them. It couldn't have happened without those guys chipping in and doing what they do." The Clippers had looked to be heading for a monumental beatdown after a disastrous first-half performance that saw Cleveland rack up back-to-back 40-point quarters to lead 80-59 at half-time. "I knew we weren't ourselves," George said of his team's first half. "At that point I was locked in and committed to do whatever it takes to win." The victory boosts the Clippers' chances of securing the fourth seed in the Western Conference. Los Angeles improved to 50-28 to remain fourth in the standings, ahead of the fifth-placed Dallas Mavericks, who are 48-30.

Both teams have four regular season games remaining. The Mavericks kept up their late-season charge with a third straight victory in a 147-136 overtime win over the Houston Rockets. Kyrie Irving led the way with 48 points, while Luka Doncic had 37 points, 12 assists and nine rebounds as the Mavericks came back from 22 points down to prevail.

'No one caved'

The defeat ensured Houston's elimination from post-

season contention. "It's just about the trust and understanding that we have each other's back," coach Jason Kidd said of the Mavericks' never-say-die approach. "No matter what's happening, there's an understanding that we're playing for one another. Houston gave us their best shot, we took it and found a way to win. "That's the beauty of our locker room—no one caved, no one let go of the rope, no one quit."

Houston's loss also guaranteed the Golden State Warriors are assured of at least a top 10 finish. The Warriors defeated the Utah Jazz 118-110 in San Francisco later on Sunday, with Klay Thompson scoring 32 points including six three-pointers. The Warriors are on track to face LeBron James' Los Angeles Lakers in the play-in tournament. The Lakers dropped to ninth after a 127-117 loss to the Minnesota Timberwolves. In other games Sunday, the Miami Heat stumbled to a 117-115 defeat in a crucial battle against the Indiana Pacers in Indianapolis. The Pacers improved to 45-34 and they remain in pole position to clinch the sixth automatic playoff place in the Eastern Conference. The Pacers led from virtually start to finish, with all of their starters finishing in double figures led by Myles Turner with 22 points. Miami fell to 43-35 and dropped to eighth place in the East after Philadelphia's late-season recovery continued with a 133-126 double-overtime defeat of the San Antonio Spurs. The Sixers' fifth straight win saw Tyrese Maxey drop 52 points while rookie Victor Wembanyama scored 33 points and bagged 18 rebounds and six assists for eliminated San Antonio.

Phoenix's hopes of securing an automatic playoff spot from the Western Conference are also hanging in the balance after they slumped to a 113-105 loss at home to the New Orleans Pelicans. C.J. McCollum scored 31 points while Zion Williamson added 29 as the Pelicans snatched a victory that leaves both sides locked on 46-32 with four games remaining. Phoenix occupy the sixth and final play-off place in the West by virtue of their season record against New Orleans, who are seventh. Elsewhere, the New York Knicks sent the Milwaukee Bucks spinning to a fourth straight loss, with Jalen Brunson posting 43 points in a 122-109 win on the road. Eastern Conference top seeds Boston meanwhile sailed past the Portland Trail Blazers 124-107. – AFP