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IRAN ATTACKS ZIONIST ENTITY

Kuwait deeply concerned, urges restraint • Cabinet braces for all eventualities

Amir receives minister, new governors



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace on Sunday Deputy PM, Defense Minister and Acting Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah and newly-appointed Farwaniya Governor

Sheikh Athbi Al-Sabah, Capital Governor Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sabah, Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governor Sheikh Sabah Al-Sabah, Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Hamad Al-Sabah and Jahra Governor Hamad Al-Habshi — KUNA

JERUSALEM/KUWAIT: World leaders urged restraint on Sunday after the Zionist entity came under an unprecedented attack from Iranian drones and missiles that sparked fears of a broader conflict. Iran's overnight barrage from late Saturday was its first-ever direct assault on Zionist territory and came in retaliation for a deadly strike on Tehran's consulate in the Syrian capital.

Kuwait's foreign affairs ministry expressed on Sunday its deep concern over military escalation in the region, and the mounting detrimental ramifications on both regional and international stability and security. In a statement, Kuwait called for practicing self-restraint to avoid risks of such escalation and its ramifications.

It underlined the importance of UN Security Council adhering to its responsibilities of safeguarding international peace and security and avoiding wars by guaranteeing commitment by the international community. The ministry stressed the necessity of addressing the root cause of tensions and adopting diplomacy in conflict settlement to ensure regional stability.

The Kuwaiti Cabinet had convened an extraordinary meeting at Messila Palace on Saturday evening under the chairmanship of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. The Cabinet affirmed keenness on responding to all

regional incidents and conditions in a way that protects the security and stability of Kuwait amid accelerating developments in the region.

The meeting heard presentations by several ministers on the precautionary measures made by their respective ministries and competent state agencies to address any eventuality, particularly in the security domain, said Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sharida Al-Maousherji following the meeting. The Cabinet reaffirmed its commitment to protecting the security and stability of the country and ensuring the basic services and needs of citizens and expatriates.

It remained unclear how the Zionist entity would respond to this major escalation in the long-running covert war between the regional foes which has been further inflamed by the Gaza war raging since Oct 7. The Zionist entity's top ally the United States cautioned against an escalation after the attack that was largely foiled, with the Zionist army saying 99 percent of the launches had been intercepted.

White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said on NBC's "Meet the Press" Sunday: "We don't want to see this escalate. We're not looking for a wider war with Iran." However, Zionist Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said that "the campaign is not over yet — we must remain alert".

Continued on Page 6

41 MPs agree on key issues during informal meeting

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: As many as 41 of the 50 new MPs held an informal meeting on Sunday and agreed in principle on a number of key issues that must be approved in the shortened term, MP Saud Al-Asfour said. Asfour said five more lawmakers said they couldn't attend the meeting because they were outside the country.

Asfour said that lawmakers agreed to tackle during the shortened term issues like raising the cost of living allowance for Kuwaitis, amending the election commission law and extending the power of the judiciary to citizenship issues, in addition to amending the election law. The lawmaker said more meetings will be held by lawmakers and between MPs and the government to agree on these issues.

MP Saleh Ashour said he did not attend because not all MPs were invited to the meeting held inside the National Assembly. Local media reported MPs Marzouq Al-Ghanem, Obaid Al-Wasmi and Ahmad Al-Fadhli were not invited. The meeting came amid reports that caretaker Prime Minister HH Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah has dropped his rejection to forming a new government and is expected to be renamed as head of government. There has been no official comment on this development.

Before the Eid Al-Fitr break, it was reported that HH Sheikh Dr Mohammad, who was appointed as premier just three months ago, declined to form the next government following snap parliamentary polls which brought back an overwhelming majority of the opposition in the dissolved house.

Local media also quoted some MPs as saying that lawmakers have eased their opposition to a decree that postponed the opening session to May 14 after earlier setting it for April 17. MPs said the opening session should be held on April 21 and attendance is optional, which means an approval of the May 14 inaugural session.

Envoy says Iran does not seek to escalate war

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Toutouchi said the military operation conducted by the Islamic Republic against military centers in occupied Palestine is justified under the principle of self-defense as outlined in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. This response was prompted by the Zionist entity's armed attack on the Embassy of Iran, a diplomatic center protected by international law, adding that the Zionist aggression not only violates the UN Charter but also breaches international treaties safeguarding diplomatic immunity.

ties safeguarding diplomatic immunity.

During a discussion with local media, the Iranian ambassador stated that his country launched diplomatic efforts on the international stage, including submitting an official memorandum to the UN Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council urging an emergency meeting, noting that Iran has repeatedly announced its official positions in its diplomatic dealings within the framework of principles.

Toutouchi said it is not Iran's intent to expand the scope of the war in the region, but at the same time, self-restraint is not forever, as it seems that continuing self-restraint has led the Zionist entity to commit more crimes. "Since the Islamic Republic of Iran is not about to escalate the scope of the war in the region, it hopes that other countries will take effective and deterrent steps to prevent the expansion of the scope of the war by stopping the military operations of the Zionist entity against the defenseless Palestinian people and confronting wrong practices.



Mohammad Toutouchi

The Western protectors of the Zionist entity, led by the United States of America, must take practical positions in this regard," he said.

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Zionists bomb Gazans on road to north

GAZA: Thousands of Gazans flooded the coast road north on Sunday after hearing that several people managed to cross a closed checkpoint towards Gaza City, despite the Zionist entity denying it was open. Several Gazans said they came under attack on the route and AFP footage showed people ducking for cover.

The Palestinian official news agency Wafa said Zionist forces "bomb(ed) displaced Palestinians as they were

trying to return to the north of Gaza Strip through Al Rasheed street." Wafa shared a video on X showing people running away from a blast. Nour, a displaced Gazan, told AFP: "When we arrived at the (Zionist) checkpoint, they would let women pass or stop them, but they shot at men so we had to return, we didn't want to die."

An AFP journalist saw mothers holding their children's hands and families piling onto donkey carts with their luggage as they made the journey. They hoped to cross a military checkpoint on Al-Rasheed Road south of Gaza City, but the Zionist army told AFP that reports the route was open were "not true". On the other side, desperate families waited for their loved ones

Continued on Page 6



GAZA: Displaced Palestinians take the coastal Rasheed Road to return to Gaza City as they pass through Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip on April 14, 2024. — AFP

Zionist settlers kill 2 Palestinians in West Bank

BEITIN: A funeral was held Sunday for a boy killed by Zionist settlers in the occupied West Bank, where the death of a Zionist teenager sparked a wave of violence. After Benjamin Achimeir, a 14-year-old Zionist, was reported missing near Ramallah on Friday, hundreds of Jewish settlers backed by Zionist forces raided nearby Palestinian villages, torching cars and homes and leaving at least two villagers dead and

dozens wounded. The attacks escalated in multiple villages on Saturday after Achimeir's body was found near the Malachei Hashalom settlement outpost. The mayor of nearby Palestinian village Al-Mughayyir, Amin Abu Alyah, told AFP that "dozens of settlers" had attacked it and burnt "everything they find in front of them. They burnt a house, a bulldozer and a number of vehicles."

AFP journalists reported Zionist settlers, who were part of a search party for Achimeir, firing shots and torching homes and cars while residents responded by throwing stones. One Palestinian, Jihad Abu Alia, was killed in the violence, with his funeral held on Saturday, while 25 were wounded, the Palestinian health ministry said.

Continued on Page 6



BEITIN: Mourners carry the body of Omar Hamed, who was killed by Zionist settlers the day before, during his funeral in this village near Ramallah in the Zionist-occupied West Bank on April 14, 2024. — AFP



Local

Kuwait monitors developments as Middle East crisis escalates

Ambassador reviews conditions of Kuwaiti students in Jordan

KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi was briefed by the Ministry's Crisis Management Committee regarding preparations to monitor the current developments in the region and review the procedures followed by the ministry's departments in this regard. The ministry's official spokesman, Dr. Bader Al-Enezi, said in a statement to KUNA that the remarks were made during Minister Al-Mutairi's chair of the committee meeting, Saturday, in the presence of the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information, Dr. Nasser Muhaisen, and the ministry's senior leaders, where a special emergency plan has been setup and reviewed regarding monitoring developments in the region.

Al-Enezi stressed that the ministry is fully prepared to keep pace with events, take precautionary measures, provide all information to citizens and residents, and follow up on media coverage up to date with accuracy, professionalism, and transparency. The spokesman added that media coverage is currently taking place through bulletins, news summaries, news tape, radio stations, and the ministry's accounts on social media sites. Al-Enezi pointed out that the ministry has taken all necessary measures and that it will not hesitate to deliver information with complete transparency and accuracy to the Kuwaiti public, calling on everyone to acquire information from its official sources.

Flights on schedule

In a follow-up to a previous press release, Kuwait Airways said that all flights



Kuwait Ambassador to Jordan Hamad Al-Marri

bound for Kuwait International Airport are on time, except for flights coming from shutdown airports like Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan. The statement added that Kuwait Airways will reschedule those flights when airports in those countries reopen to ensure passenger safety. The statement noted that Kuwait Airways is in contact with relevant authorities and offices outside the country and monitoring developments and updates to take the necessary action.

Kuwaiti students in Jordan

Meanwhile, Kuwait Ambassador to Jordan Hamad Al-Marri said they have contacted universities in Jordan to review the conditions of Kuwaiti students following the temporary closure of Jordanian airspace. Al-Marri informed KUNA that the Kuwait Cultural Office in Jordan has reached out to university administrators to assist Kuwaiti students and reschedule

exams only upon providing proof of canceled flight tickets.

Al-Marri reassured parents of students and Kuwaiti citizens in Jordan that the embassy is in frequent communication with Jordanian authorities to stay updated on the latest developments regarding the airspace closure. Earlier, the Jordanian Civil Aviation Regulatory Authority (CARC) announced the temporary closure of Jordan's airspace to all incoming, outgoing, and transit flights, effective tonight for the next few hours.

GCC security and stability

In another development, the Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Jassem Al-Budaiwi, underlined on Saturday the importance of maintaining regional and global security and stability in light of the recent and accelerating developments in the Middle East. In a press statement, the Secretary-General stressed the role of the international community in supporting peace and stability efforts to avoid any repercussions that might lead to further escalation and urged all concerned parties to commit to maintaining regional and global security and peace.

Al-Budaiwi called on all parties to exercise the utmost restraint to prevent any further escalation that threatens the stability of the region and the safety of its people, stressing the need for all parties to make joint efforts and take the approach of diplomacy as an effective way to settle disputes and ensure the security and stability of the region. — KUNA



An image-grab from a video shows rocket trails in the sky above the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem. Iran launched its first-ever direct attack on Zionist territory late on April 13, marking a major escalation of the long-running covert war between the regional foes and sparking fears of a broader conflict breaking out. — AFP



Gaza relief ship

Second 'Gaza ship' departs

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Relief Society (KRS) said that the departure of the second "Gaza ship" is on its way from the Turkish port of Mersin towards the Egyptian port of Al-Arish, loaded with one thousand tons of aid and necessary relief supplies for Gaza. The society's director, General Abdul-Aziz Al-Obaid, informed

KUNA that the Kuwait Direct Aid Association funded the vessel.

He said it carried approximately 350 tons of ready-to-eat meals, flour, cooking essentials, and canned food with a shelf life of over a year, along with about 600 tons of shelter materials, including tents, blankets, mattresses, covers, and personal necessities for women, children, and the elderly. Director General of the Kuwait Direct Aid Association, Abdullah Al-Sumait, confirmed to KUNA that the second "Gaza ship" would unload



GAZA: Displaced Palestinians take the coastal Rashid road to return to Gaza City as they pass through Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip on April 14, 2024. — AFP

at Al-Arish Port within days. Afterward, it will be reloaded for delivery to Gaza through the Rafah southern border, Al-Sumait added.

Meanwhile, the Secretary General of the Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH), Durmus Aydin, told KUNA that the foundation has honored its commitment with KRS by managing a vessel filled with vital relief supplies for Gaza. The foundation adhered to the contract terms, which included purchasing goods with a

one-year shelf life, packaging them, and dispatching them from the port of Mersin in Turkey within the outlined timeframe, he said.

KRS has signed an executive contract with IHH on March 12, 2024, whereby KRS is responsible for covering 60 percent of the total cost for preparations, shipping, and dispatch. IHH is recognized as one of the foremost relief organizations globally, capable of reaching areas affected by wars, conflicts, and natural disasters to assist victims worldwide. — KUNA

Geopolitical tensions behind sharp rise in gold prices: Report

KUWAIT: Military and geopolitical tensions are the main factors in the sharp rises in gold prices since the beginning of last week, a report issued Sunday by Dar Al-Sabaek, a Kuwaiti company specialized in gold trading, has found.

The report added that the price of gold continued to break records when it reached \$2,431 per ounce by the end of Friday's trading session before it settled at \$2,345 per ounce. The price of gold remains at a historic record level because of the escalating risks of ongoing military operations in the Middle East and the seizure of commercial ships by Houthis.

The price will continue to increase "as long as the military escalation continues in the region, especially after Iran launched attacks against the (Zionist) occupation late yesterday," he said.

The report said that gold futures jumped to \$2,374 per ounce, the eighth highest price it reached in less than a month. "We are waiting for further increases when the market opens Monday, in light of the military escalation taking place," the report said.

It stressed that the factors that pushed gold to its highest level last Friday "are still strongly present," as the latest data indicates that central banks continue to buy the yellow metal, especially the People's Bank of China (Central Bank), which was the largest buyer of gold during the month of



KUWAIT: Kuwaitis look at gold jewelry displayed at a shop in downtown Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

February, as it increased its reserves by 12 tons to bring its stock to 2,257 tons of gold.

The report added that gold is currently the most important investment tool in the face of geopolitical risks, noting that investors around the world are closely following the rapid developments in the Middle East as well as the US and Chinese economic events, "and we will see the yellow met-

al at new peaks this week, especially if military risks increase in the Middle East in particular."

As for the local market, the report said that the price of 24-carat gold amounted to 23.5 dinars (about \$71) per gram, while 22-carat gold is sold for 21.55 dinars (about \$66) per gram. Silver, on the other hand, closed at 328 dinars (about \$1,000) per kilogram. — KUNA

National Guard reaffirms its commitment

KUWAIT: Deputy Chief of the National Guard Sheikh Faisal Al-Nawaf chaired a meeting with the Undersecretary of the National Guard, Lieutenant General Engineer Hashem Al-Rifai, and senior commanders to review the readiness of the National Guard in securing camps and positions of responsibility. Al-Nawaf stressed the need to exercise caution and to be vigilant and attentive in securing camps and vital sites. He stressed the important role of the National Guard in ensuring security and stability and preserving the capabilities of the country in cooperation with the ministries of Defense and Interior and the General Fire Force, and their constant readiness to maintain the security of the homeland under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



Ministry, PAAET, KU preparing for online education

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Education has urged its educational zones to prepare for any developments due to the regional repercussions and the exceptional circumstances in the region so as to continue the educational process until the end of the school year, whether in the traditional attendance system or the online education system. A source confirmed the ministry's readiness for online education in case the Middle East crisis escalates further.

This involves activating the accounts of students, teachers, and mentors in the "Teams" software. Meanwhile, the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) confirmed its readiness to switch to online education in order to ensure the safety of students and all its affiliates. The Authority is communicating directly with the Minister of Education and the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research to follow up on rapid developments.

For his part, the Acting Secretary-General of Kuwait University and the official spokesman for the university, Dr. Fayez Al-Dhafiri, also confirmed the university's readiness to complete the study remotely in case of any further escalation. He added that Kuwait University is following the situation in the region firsthand, in accordance with the instructions of the political leadership. The university will identify ways and mechanisms that ensure the safety of the university's employees, students, and faculty members. — Agencies

Local

Zain's campaign embodied Ramadan's values

Company's biggest social campaign reached out to entire community



Zain Kuwait CEO Nawaf Algharabally with Zain Alshuhoor volunteers.

KUWAIT: Every Ramadan, the Zain Alshuhoor campaign strives to embody the values of giving, compassion, and generosity. It's the company's major yearly effort to engage the entire community, reflecting cherished Kuwaiti traditions and promoting love, peace, and togetherness.

To create a bigger impact, Zain partnered this year with six strategic partners from the public and private sectors: the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Grand Mosque of Kuwait, the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), the Kuwait Food Bank, the Public Authority for Disability Affairs, and Suffix Events. Through these partnerships, the company presented a plethora of volunteer, humanitarian, charitable, social, religious, and sports programs that continued throughout the Holy Month.

- Nearly 1,000 'Machla' supplies delivered to underprivileged families.
- Total of 42,000 iftar meals served in partnership with Grand Mosque and Food Bank.
- Hundreds participated in Zain's Holy Quran Recitation Competition in Grand Mosque.
- Over 800 contestants joined the third Zain Ramadan Challenge at Shaheed Park.



Zain's competition encouraged young people to pursue Holy Quran recitation.



Food supplies initiative covered the needs of underprivileged families.

Ramadan 'Machla' initiative

Zain kicked off its Ramadan campaign with the food supplies (Machla) initiative, delivering nearly 1,000 boxes of essential food supplies to underprivileged communities through three strategic partners: the Social Care Centers of the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) and the Kuwait Food Bank - all official, recognized organizations.

In a step that showed the Zain family's commitment to bring about positive social impact in the community, members of the Zain Alshuhoor volunteer team - that consisted of Zain employees from across the company's divisions and departments - gathered at Zain's headquarters in Shuwaikh to prepare the food supplies. Foodstuffs were categorized and distributed into boxes ahead of their delivery to the three organizations.

The food supplies were delivered to the Social Care Centers of the Ministry of Social Affairs, where they were presented to residents of the centers, including foster care children, elderly individuals, and people with special needs. The supply boxes were also delivered to the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) and the Kuwait Food Bank, presented to underprivileged families and individuals across the nation. The initiative continued throughout the month.

Iftar meals initiative

This year, Zain's annual iftar initiative to serve fast-

ing individuals came back in its 17th year, this time in strategic partnership with the Grand Mosque of Kuwait and the Kuwait Food Bank. A total of 42,000 meals were served throughout the entire month. The iftar initiative is a main pillar of Zain's annual social program during the Holy Month. Meals were served daily at the Grand Mosque's main tent, along with meals distributed through trucks across Kuwait in strategic partnership with the Kuwait Food Bank. The initiative was directly supervised and organized by Zain's team to ensure the quality of all the meals delivered. In addition, members of the Zain Alshuhoor volunteer team supported the initiative.

Humanitarian and social visits

As it does every year, Zain was keen on organizing humanitarian and social visits to share the blessings and joys of the Holy Month with the entire community. The company hosted a special Ramadan iftar banquet at Abdali Border Port for Ministry of Interior (MoI) and Customs personnel. The step came to recognize the unwavering commitment demonstrated by the port's staff year-round, particularly during the Holy Month, to protect Kuwait and its people.

In addition, the Zain Alshuhoor volunteer team visited pediatric wards at the Zain Otolaryngology Specialized Hospital and Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital to celebrate the local Ramadan tradition of Gargian (candy distribution) with children, their families, and medical staff. The initiative reflected the deeply rooted spirit of giving during the Holy Month. The visits came in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, where members of the Zain Alshuhoor volunteer team distributed Gargian candy, gifts, and toys to the children, greatly uplifting not only the spirits of the young patients but also those of their families and the medical staff present.

Health and sports programs

For the third year running, the Zain Al Shaheed Park Ramadan Challenge kicked off in strategic partnership with Suffix Events. The health & sports

program was highly successful, drawing over 800 participants who competed and collected kilometers to top the leaderboard. The competition's third season was a great success, with over 800 participants joining in four different age groups each for males and females: 20 years and below, 20-34 years, 35-49 years, and 50+ years.

In addition, the Zain Kids Race was joined by over 280 children, and over 50 participants with special needs joined the Down Syndrome Day race. The challenge ran for 9 consecutive days at Al Shaheed Park and offered people of all ages a great opportunity to join by speed-walking or running at their own time and pace. Participants collected distance points based on how many kilometers they covered and competed to top the leaderboard. Those who wanted extra points joined the special workouts held at the park.

In addition, Zain hosted a thrilling Ramadan football tournament for its employees, with 16 teams competing for the championship title at Nazwa Football Fields in Bnaid Al-Gar. The competition encouraged the teamwork spirit between members of the Zain family and promoted a healthy and active lifestyle during the Holy Month. Sports competitions are a key part of Zain's internal communications strategy, which closely focuses on bringing engaging health and sports programs to employees. The company remains committed to the wellbeing of its staff by organizing competitions in various sports all year round, especially during Ramadan to promote an active and healthy lifestyle during the month of fasting.

Gargian celebrations

Gargian, the much cherished local tradition of distributing candy and sweets to children during Ramadan, is an integral part of Zain's campaign every year, where it shares the joys of this special time with everyone in the community. The company hosted its special Gargian celebration in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs' Social Care Centers and the Public Authority for Disability Affairs, bringing

joy to foster care children, people with special needs and elderly individuals.

Furthermore, Zain has brought back its highly anticipated drive-thru Gargian celebration in collaboration with Wainkoum for the second year running, where hundreds of vehicles drove towards Zain's headquarters in Shuwaikh to join the one-of-a-kind celebration. This event came under the umbrella of Zain's annual Ramadan social campaign, Zain Alshuhoor, which aimed at sharing the joys and blessings of the Holy Month with the entire community, especially with children and young people who shape its most vibrant segment. Ramadan brought a wonderful opportunity to experience local traditions like Gargian, which the company celebrated every year with a fresh and distinctive approach.

In addition, Zain continued to support the annual Gargian celebration organized by Al Kharafi Center for Special Needs Activities. The event featured fun and interactive programs that brought joy to children with special needs and their families. The joyful event featured many entertaining segments, like on-stage traditional acts performed by the center's children, engaging competitions and interactive programs designed to nurture their creative talents, and more. At the end of the event, Zain's team joined in giving out Gargian candy to the children and their families, bringing joy to everyone.

Quran recitation competition

Zain hosted its first Holy Quran Recitation Competition in strategic partnership with the Grand Mosque of Kuwait. The contest, which aimed to encourage the community to pursue recitation of the Holy Quran and embody its values, offered prizes for the first three winners in each of the six categories. The competition ran for two consecutive days at the Grand Mosque's Western Hall and featured three age groups each for males and females: 7-12, 13-18, and 19-25 years.

The contest was supervised by a certified judges panel from the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in collaboration with the Grand Mosque, and Zain presented incentive cash prizes to the first three winners in each category. In a step to engage its employees in its community programs and initiatives, Zain also held the fourth Holy Quran Recitation Competition for employees and their children. The competition was also held at the Grand Mosque, and the first three winners in each of the six categories were awarded with cash prizes as well.

Media partnerships

Every Ramadan, Zain diversifies the content of its campaign to include cultural and recreational programs on the biggest media channels to bring itself closer to customers and audiences alike. This year, Zain partnered with Kuwait TV for the highly popular 'Iftar Canon' daily program that received wide interaction and participation. The company also partnered with Al Rai TV to sponsor the popular talk show with Kuwaiti star Nabeel Shuaib for the third consecutive season, as well as the documentary program presented by media personality Omar Al Othman that shed light on Kuwait's humanitarian efforts.

In addition, Zain partnered with 360 FM to sponsor 'Mukhalat' program for the second consecutive year. The popular daily radio show, presented by radio host Khalid Al Ansari, offered prizes to listeners throughout the Holy Month. Zain also sponsored a special cooking show in partnership with Raha, the e-commerce grocery platform, which hosted social media influencers and professional chefs every day.



Zain's iftar hall at the Grand Mosque welcomed fasting individuals daily.



Hundreds of vehicles drove to Zain's HQ to celebrate Gargian.



The third Zain Ramadan Challenge at Shaheed Park promoted a healthy and active lifestyle.

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46th Islamic Book Fair kicks off with over 120 participants



KUWAIT: Government officials and guests attend the 46th Islamic Book Fair. — KUNA photos

In my view

Labor crisis needs quick resolution

By Azzah Al-Ghamdi

Not long ago, a crisis erupted in the relationship between Kuwait and the Philippines regarding work permits for Filipinos. This crisis stemmed from a tragic accident involving a Filipino woman. We ask for her forgiveness and mercy from God. Following this incident, there was understandable anger from the political leadership in the Philippines. Every official in their country is held accountable by the people for measures taken regarding their citizens abroad.

Subsequently, conditions were imposed that affected the agreement between Kuwait and the Philippines. Some were deemed by Kuwaiti officials to infringe upon their sovereignty. As a result, Kuwait halted the granting of work licenses to Filipinos, causing a significant crisis for both nations. Filipino workers have made invaluable contributions to Kuwait across various sectors, and their absence has been keenly felt.

The incident involving the Filipino citizen was a tragic occurrence, as determined by fate, and not indicative of typical behaviors. However, the Philippines government held the Kuwaiti government responsible for the incident and set conditions that Kuwait deemed unacceptable and contradictory to their agreements.

It's imperative for both sides to resolve this issue amicably. The Philippines' conditions were likely emotionally charged due to the incident, but it's essential to address them sensibly without compromising Kuwait's sovereignty. Kuwait has taken legal action against the perpetrators of the crime, demonstrating its commitment to justice. However, it's regrettable that the support Kuwait provided to the Philippines seems forgotten in this situation. Kuwait has a long-standing tradition of being open and welcoming to people from all over the world. It's crucial to maintain this reputation by resolving this crisis swiftly and respectfully.

Both Kuwait and the Philippines need to uphold the agreements established since 1979, ensuring that past cooperation and mutual respect continue to define their relationship. It's essential for the Philippines to reconsider their stance and review the agreements between the two countries, understanding that this crisis is an anomaly in their otherwise positive relationship.

KUWAIT: The 46th edition of the Islamic Book Fair launched on Sunday with the slogan (Emerging Consciousness) and the participation of over 120 local and global publishing houses under the auspices of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information until next Saturday. In a statement to KUNA, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Social Reform Society, Dr. Khaled Al-Mathkour, said that the Islamic Book Fair is constantly progressing in publication and technical fields.

Dr. Al-Mathkour mentioned that in the 46 years since the Islamic Book Fair's inception, publication and printing services have changed remarkably with the introduction of modern technology that observes the abilities of young readers. The fair includes numerous cultural and educational activities for student visitors. Dr. Al-Mathkour added, extending his gratitude towards the participating parties and the Ministry of Information for their continuous support.

Meanwhile, Assistant Secretary-General of Administrative and Financial Affairs at the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL) and Minister of Information representative Saad Al-Enezi affirmed, in a similar statement to KUNA, that the efforts in holding this fair for 46 years demonstrate the dedication of the Social Reform Society and Kuwait in spreading knowledge and culture locally and internationally.

Al-Enezi called for people to visit the fair to experience and cultivate Islamic culture. The Union of Kuwait Charity Organizations (UKCO) Chair Saad Al-Otaibi said to KUNA that the role the Social Reform Society plays in starting the Islamic Book Fair and maintaining it for years is a reflection of Kuwait's keenness for charities. On his part, the chair of communication and technology at Namaa Charity, Abdulaziz Al-Kandari, said that Namaa Charity's participation in the current fair with multiple scientific, historical, and humanitarian publications goes to show Namaa's eagerness for the development of people from all backgrounds. — KUNA



Saad Al-Otaibi



Saad Al-Enezi



Dr. Khaled Al-Mathkour



KUNA media center launches training program on AI

KUWAIT: The KUNA Media Capacity Development Center launched the training program (The Use of Artificial Intelligence in the Production of Social Media Content) on Sunday with the participation of a number of employees of the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Qatar News Agency (QNA), the Saudi Press Agency (SPA), and Kuwaiti entities in the public and private sectors.

The program, which runs until April 18, will be presented by Ahmed Al-Sheikh, a member of the New Media Council of the British Journalists Syndicate. The program will address the role of artificial intelligence algorithms in managing social networks and planning digital platforms in an artificial intelligence environment, as well as the basic tools for using artificial intelligence. It will address a variety of topics, including creating topics, producing and optimizing images, producing and optimizing videos using arti-



Ahmed Al-Sheikh

ficial intelligence, and integrating the production of artificial intelligence with other applications.

The program includes a practical application of social network planning as well as the production of social media content using artificial intelligence. KUNA Media Capacity Development Center, which was established in December 1995, is one of the oldest media training centers and has provided hundreds of training programs in various media fields. The center aims to develop personal media capabilities and promote professional media work. — KUNA



Participants are pictured during the training program.



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Hamas, Zionist entity exchange recriminations over stalled Gaza talks

Australia mourns Sydney mall stabbing victims

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TEHRAN: Demonstrators wave Iran and Palestinian flags as they gather at Palestine Square in Tehran after Iran launched a drone and missile attack on the Zionist entity. — AFP photos



JERUSALEM: People cross a street in Jerusalem on April 14, 2024.

Iranian retaliation stirs anxiety

Zionists, Iranians torn between pride, worry after overnight missile attack

TEHRAN/JERUSALEM: Zionists in Jerusalem said Iran's overnight missile and drone attack was "frightening", but they were confident in their country's defenses. Some called for retaliation as Iranians were torn between a fear of war and pride at their country's military capabilities.

On Sunday, Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) announced it had launched hundreds of drones as well as missiles towards military sites in the Zionist entity. Among the main targets were an intelligence center and an air base in the Negev desert, which Tehran says was used by the Zionist entity to strike Iran's consulate in Damascus on April 1. Iran had vowed to avenge the strike on its diplomatic mission, which killed seven Guards including two generals from the Quds Force, the foreign operations arm of the Guards.

Jerusalem awoke to no noticeable difference in the main market or at its main train and bus stations. The Zionist army said it had shot down 99 percent of the drones and missiles with the help of the United States and other allies, with the attack resulting in only minor

damage. "The situation is really frightening because we are afraid of what happens and all of the bombing and aircraft that are coming," said 48-year-old Ayala Salant, a resident of Jerusalem. "However, we are very, very happy with the alliance that helped us because most of the aircraft and missiles have not arrived to (the Zionist entity). We hope that there will be a stop to this ongoing escalation soon."

Yishai Levi, 67, said that the Zionist entity "once again proved technological ... superiority, and handled it in an impressive manner". Tehran, however, said it had "significantly destroyed" its targets. "We were extremely happy with this action of the IRGC and in fact, we felt better after a long time," said 65-year-old retiree Ali Erfanian. "This was a help and solidarity with the oppressed people of Gaza and the West Bank."

The attack which began late Saturday marks a major escalation in the long-running covert war between the regional foes and comes against the backdrop of the ongoing Zionist war on Gaza.

"Iran's attack should not go quietly," said Sharin

Avraham, 31. "We have to respond because Iran is a country. (The Zionist entity) needs to show it that we are strong and this is not something that can simply pass. We are not the world's punching bag."

'A war is no joke'

Several Iranian military figures have been killed in Syria since the Zionist war on Gaza began in strikes Iran has blamed on the Zionist entity. State television aired footage of Guards chief Hossein Salami ordering the start of the operation late on Saturday.

In the video, Salami said the operation was to "honor the memory" of Qasem Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force who was killed in a 2020 US strike in Baghdad, and Mohammad Reza Zahedi, one of the generals killed in the Damascus strike.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had warned in the aftermath of the April Damascus strike that the Zionist entity would "be slapped" in response. Golder, a judge in his late 50s who did not give his full name, said "we feel proud and honored that a tough ...

response was handed to the Zionist regime".

For Mahdi, a 35-year-old beekeeper, Iran's response was long overdue. "There has been sadness and anger in our hearts and we were always waiting for this revenge to be carried out and for the (Zionists) to be punished for their brutality," he said. "We couldn't believe it when the news came last night."

Others, like Milad, a private school teacher who also did not give her full name, hoped the "conflict will not continue" because it might lead to a "destructive war" for both the Zionist entity and Iran. "We have not yet completely rebuilt the ruins of the Iran-Iraq war in the country's southwest," said the 46-year-old. "A war is no joke."

Some in the north of the Zionist entity, near the restive border with Lebanon, told AFP they were afraid. "We are not on an island. There are people around us that we fear for," said Waheb Khalayla, 68, from the Galilee town of Majd al-Krum. "We are afraid of a war breaking out, it will affect daily life and economic livelihood," the retired nurse said. — AFP



NEW DELHI: India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi (right) releases the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) manifesto next to Defense Minister Rajnath Singh ahead of country's upcoming general elections. — AFP

Modi's BJP promises common civil code ahead of India polls

NEW DELHI: India's ruling party on Sunday pledged to introduce a new common civil code for the country, calling it a crucial step for gender equality, a week before a general election in the world's most populous nation.

Nearly a billion Indians will vote to elect a new government in six-week-long parliamentary polls starting on April 19, the largest democratic exercise in the world. Many analysts see Prime Minister Narendra Modi's re-election under his Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) banner as a foregone conclusion.

The BJP launched its manifesto Sunday, wading into a polarizing debate by reaffirming its stand on a uniform civil code (UCC), which would standardize laws for personal matters such as marriage, divorce and inheritance across faiths and religious communities.

The party "believes that there cannot be gender equality till such time Bharat adopts a uniform civil code, which protects the rights of all women", the manifesto said, using Modi's preferred name for the country. India's 1.4 billion people are subject to a common criminal law, but rules on personal matters such as marriage, divorce and inheritance vary based on the customary traditions of different communities and faiths.

Women's rights vary considerably depending on which code they fall under — Hindu sons and daugh-

ters theoretically enjoy equal inheritance rights, while Muslim daughters are only entitled to a fraction of any male heir's inheritance. Many right-wing politicians, jurists and reformists have described these custom-based codes as regressive and have lobbied for a code that would apply to all Indians equally.

Muslim fears

But many communities, particularly Muslims, fear a UCC would encroach on their religious laws and see it as an attack on their identity and against India's secular constitution. The 76-page manifesto did not refer to either Hinduism or Islam by name, but the BJP pitched to Muslim women voters by pointing out it had protected them from the "barbaric" practice of "instant divorce".

Over the last decade, India's opposition parties have struggled to compete with the BJP's Hindu nationalist appeal, and the manifesto cover was emblazoned with a tagline of "Modi ki Guarantee" or "Modi's guarantee". The party's sweeping popularity has also been driven by economic growth — India is the world's fastest-growing major economy, with its GDP overtaking that of former colonizer Britain under the BJP's watch — and a raft of targeted welfare programs.

The party said it would maintain its focus on those if voted back for the next five years, reiterating its commitment to free ration and electricity initiatives, while promising continued funding for a popular cash handout program for the country's farmers. It also vowed to expand a free government-backed healthcare scheme for senior citizens and build more affordable houses. "In the next five years, we will take our nation into the top 3 economies of the world," Modi said, adding it would "launch a final and decisive assault against poverty". — AFP

Unpopular Sunak in 'doom loop' as defeat looms

LONDON: He's failed to meet key pledges, hit an opinion poll low, and even cramped the style of a popular Adidas shoe: Britain's beleaguered Conservative leader Rishi Sunak appears destined to lose a looming general election. Two tax cuts and a slightly improving economy have failed to boost Sunak's political fortunes, while criticism from ex-prime minister Boris Johnson and speculation over Brexit figurehead Nigel Farage's intentions are adding to his woes. Political scientist Rob Ford reckoned Sunak has been left looking "hapless" in the face of seemingly unstoppable political momentum away from his ruling Tories. "When the herd moves, it moves. There's not much you can do," he told AFP.

Sunak, 43, has yet to announce the date of the election. He is expected to call it for October or November but is legally allowed to wait until January at the latest. Surveys overwhelmingly show that Britons want an end to 14 years of Tory rule, and nothing that Sunak has done since he became PM 18 months ago appears to be changing their minds.

A YouGov poll released this month found that the Conservatives would win just 155 seats in the UK parliament, down from the 365 that they won under Johnson at the last election in December 2019.

Keir Starmer's opposition Labour Party would win 403 seats, the same survey found, leading to a whopping 154-seat majority. "Right now, it's very difficult to see how the Conservatives remain in government after the next election simply because of the scale of shift they need," said Keiran Pedley, director of politics at polling firm Ipsos.

'Moving the dial'

Sunak succeeded Liz Truss in October 2022 after Tory MPs forced her out following a disastrous 49 days in office, during which her mini-budget spooked financial markets, sank the pound and sent mortgage payments skywards.

She had followed Johnson, who himself had been defenestrated by colleagues following a series of scandals, including over illegal parties in Downing Street during COVID-19 lockdowns. While the turmoil of the two previous administrations has hamstrung Sunak, political analysts say he has also contributed to his own plight by falling short on promises and failing to connect with voters.

Despite promising to, he has not stopped migrants arriving from France on small boats. National Health Service waiting lists are higher than when he took office. Economic growth is stagnant, although inflation has more than halved. Sunak has also tried a number of leadership and policy resets that have fallen flat, including watering down carbon net zero

commitments in a pitch to motorists and recently talking about extremism. The rightward tilt comes as the fringe Reform UK party threatens to deprive the Conservatives of key seats, particularly if Farage stands for them as he has teased. "(Sunak has) been trying to find this magic wand or silver bullet to turn things around but at the moment none of it seems to be moving the dial," Pedley told AFP.

An Ipsos poll published in March found that 58 percent of voters view the Conservatives unfavorably, the highest percentage this parliament. Only 19 percent view them favorably. The survey gave Sunak a net favorability rating of minus 38, the lowest of any politician included.



LONDON: Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak records a statement inside 10 Downing Street in central London on April 14, 2024. — AFP

'Rather awkward'

Critics often accuse the wealthy ex-financier of being out of touch with average Britons. "He is a combination of being rather awkward and nerdy, and then if challenged he always sounds really irritable," Ford, politics professor at Manchester University, said. Sunak is striving to revive his party's fortunes, traversing the country to meet voters as rumors swirl that a disastrous showing in local elections on May 2 could spark a leadership challenge. He can't seem to catch a break, though.

This week, Johnson slammed Sunak's proposed comprehensive smoking ban as "nuts", while Sunak's spokesperson had to deny that the PM was preparing to run an AI fund in the event of election defeat. Sunak even offered a "fulsome apology to the Samba community" after photographs of him wearing the Adidas trainers sparked headlines like: "Eight trainers to wear now that Rishi has killed Sambas."

"There's a kind of a doom loop that politicians can get into where they're unpopular," explained Ford. "The media know they're unpopular so everything they do is reported negatively, which further reinforces their unpopularity." Political observers say polls usually narrow as voting day nears and suspect liberal Conservatives might ultimately stick with the party to reduce the size of a Labour win and ensure the Tories are an effective opposition. "Everything at this point really is becoming about damage limitation," said Ford. — AFP

International

Australia mourns Sydney mall stabbing victims

Police yet to identify clear motive behind attack despite naming suspect

SYDNEY: A small evening vigil was held Sunday for the six people killed in a knife attack at a busy Sydney shopping center, which police said was carried out by a local man with a history of mental illness. Mourners gathered in silent reflection outside the Westfield mall in Bondi Junction, which had been packed with weekend shoppers when 40-year-old itinerant Joel Cauchi went on a stabbing rampage on Saturday.

Police said five women and a Pakistani security guard were killed in the attack, which lasted for about half an hour, until a solo policewoman tracked down Cauchi and shot him dead. Inspector Amy Scott was hailed by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese as a "hero" who "no doubt" had "saved lives through her action".

Among Cauchi's victims were a designer, a volunteer surf lifesaver, the daughter of an entrepreneur, and a new mother whose nine-month-old baby is still in hospital with serious stab wounds. As night fell Sunday, a group of about 40 people from a local Muslim association placed flowers on the ever-growing pile outside the shopping center.

They remembered 30-year-old Faraz Tahir, who had been working as a security guard when he was stabbed. They stood for a minute of silence with their hands clasped, heads bowed and eyes fixated on the flowers. The mourners then raised their hands in a moment of prayer. Many wiped away tears.

Australians, largely unaccustomed to violent crime, are still coming to terms with an attack that shattered a city better known for its famed beaches and laid-back bars and restaurants. On any given weekend the Westfield shopping center is packed with people shopping for clothes or groceries, with families

grabbing a bite to eat or a movie.

Health officials said it would take many eyewitnesses a lifetime to come to terms with what they saw and felt. "The sound of people screaming was horrific," said one eyewitness, Daphi Kiselstein, who was shopping at the time of the attack and took refuge in a store with other terrified shoppers.

Despite early social media reports falsely linking the attack to events in the Middle East, New South Wales police Assistant Commissioner Anthony Cooke said there was no evidence that Cauchi was "driven by any particular motivation, ideology or otherwise". Police said he was diagnosed with a mental health issue at age 17.

'Only doing her job'

In a pained statement, Cauchi's parents offered thoughts for the victims and said their son's actions were "truly horrific". "We are still trying to comprehend what has happened. He has battled with mental health issues since he was a teenager."

The parents also sent a message to the officer who shot their son dead. "She was only doing her job to protect others and we hope she is coping alright," they said. Cauchi is believed to have travelled to Sydney about a month ago and hired a small storage unit in the city, according to police. It contained personal belongings, including a boogie board.

He had been living in a vehicle and hostels, and was only in sporadic contact with his family via text messages, his parents said. A Facebook profile said Cauchi came from Toowoomba, near Brisbane, and had attended a local high school and university. A distinctive grey, red and yellow dragon tattoo on



SYDNEY: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese (center) stands with other officials as they prepare to leave flowers outside the Westfield Bondi Junction shopping mall in Sydney on April 14, 2024. — AFP

his right arm was used to help identify him. One victim, 38-year-old mother Ashlee Good, succumbed to her injuries after desperately passing her bleeding baby to two strangers in the hope they could save the child's life. Good's family described her as "a beautiful mother, daughter, sister, partner, friend, all round outstanding human and so much more". "To the two men who held and cared for our baby when Ashlee could not — words cannot express our gratitude," they said in a statement to Australian media. The

baby, named Harriet, was said to be recovering well after lengthy surgery.

Prime Minister Albanese said Australians were struggling to understand an "unspeakable" attack that is "really just beyond comprehension". "People going about their Saturday afternoon shopping should be safe, shouldn't be at risk. But tragically, we saw a loss of life, and people will be grieving for loved ones today," he said.

"We also know there are many people still in hospital dealing with recovery, and

our thoughts and prayers are with them." Albanese said he had received messages from US President Joe Biden, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, and New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon, among others.

New South Wales premier Chris Minns flew back from Japan on news of the attack. He said it had been "incredible to see complete strangers jump in, run towards the danger for their own lives in harm's way to save someone that they've never met before". "We've got some wonderful people in our city," he said. — AFP

Somali pirates free Bangladeshi ship after ransom paid

CHITTAGONG: Somali pirates freed a Bangladesh-flagged cargo vessel and its 23 crew early Sunday after sackloads of US dollars were air-dropped to them in ransom, the company and relatives said. The bulk carrier MV Abdullah was transporting more than 55,000 tons of coal from Maputo to the United Arab Emirates when it was seized by dozens of pirates around 550 nautical miles (1,000 kilometers) off the Somali coast a month ago.

The seizure came amid a surge in Somali pirate activity, with international naval forces diverted from the Gulf of Aden into the Red Sea to guard against attacks on shipping by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthis rebels. Negotiations for the ship's release were led by Meherul Karim, CEO of its owners KSRM.

"The pirates called us when they reached near the Somalia coast" and one of them spoke English, he told reporters in Chittagong on Sunday. "He communicated with us till we finalized the negotiation," he added. "We will not discuss or reveal the amount of ransom money."

Video footage had been provided to show all the crew were safe, and early Sunday around 65 pirates left the ship on nine boats, he said. The MV Abdullah was on its way to its original destination escorted by two European Union ships, he said, and the pirates

had given the crew a letter of safe passage in Somali promising "the ship would not come under any more attacks by pirates until it reached Dubai port".

Fahmida Akter Anny, wife of the ship's master Mohammed Abdur Rashid, said her husband told her an airplane dropped three sacks filled with US dollars to the pirates before circling the vessel three times. "After receiving the money, they released all crew," she said. "My husband was happy."

The vessel's capture came after the first successful case of Somali piracy since 2017 was recorded in December. A series of incidents since then has fueled concerns about a resurgence of Indian Ocean raids by opportunistic pirates exploiting a security gap after the redeployment of international forces.

Houthi gunmen have launched scores of attacks in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden targeting what they

deem to be Zionist-linked vessels in response to the Zionist entity's war on Gaza. Naval forces — including from India, Sri Lanka and the Seychelles — have since freed fishing boats seized by gunmen and thwarted other attempted attacks.

Last month, Indian commandos boarded and recaptured the vessel seized in December, the Maltese-flagged MV Ruen, around 260 nautical miles (480 kilometers) off the Somali coast. All 17 hostages were rescued and 35 alleged pirates were brought to Mumbai to face prosecution. Analysts say that the Somali pirate threat remains well below its 2011 peak, when gunmen launched attacks as far as 3,655 kilometers from the Somali coast in the Indian Ocean. It fell off sharply after international navies sent warships and commercial shipping deployed armed guards. — AFP

IRAN ATTACKS ZIONIST...

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Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi warned the Zionist entity against a "reckless" retaliation, saying it would face "a decisive and much stronger response".

Raisi said its drone and missile attack came in response to the April 1 air strike on Tehran's consulate building in Damascus, an attack widely blamed on the Zionist entity. Syria said Sunday Iran had exercised its "right to self-defense". Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said Tehran had notified neighboring states ahead of Saturday's attack, stressing its aim was "to punish the (Zionist) regime".

US President Joe Biden reaffirmed Washington's "ironclad" support for the Zionist entity, while appearing to guide its staunch ally away from a military response. Other world leaders also urged restraint, ahead of a United Nations Security Council emergency meeting requested by the Zionist entity. G7 nations were also holding a video conference to discuss the attack.

Iran launched more than 300 drones and missiles towards the Zionist entity late Saturday, injuring 12 people, the Zionist's military said. One of those wounded was a seven-year-old girl near the southern town of Arad who was in intensive care. Most of the drones and missiles were intercepted before reaching the Zionist entity, the army said, with help from the United States, Jordan, Britain and other allies.

The attack came as fighting between the Zionist entity and Hamas raged in Gaza, and the latest attempt to reach a ceasefire in the war appeared to falter. News outlet Axios said Biden told Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that Washington would oppose a Zionist counterattack and that he should "take the win".

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak called for "calm heads to prevail", adding that UK warplanes had also shot down Iranian attack drones. NATO said it was "vital that the conflict in the Middle East does not spiral out of control". And Pope Francis called for "an end to any action which could fuel a spiral of violence".

Turkey's foreign minister called on Iran to avoid a "new escalation", a diplomatic source said, and France urged its citizens in Iran to leave "temporarily". President Abdel Latif Rashid of Iraq, Iran's neighbor, called for a "reduction of tensions" and warned against the "spread of conflict". Indonesia, the Muslim world's most populous country, said it was "deeply concerned" and urged "all parties to exercise restraint".

Zionist military spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said that 99 percent of the launches were intercepted, declaring that "the Iranian attack was foiled". While 170 drones and 30 cruise missiles were shot down before reaching the Zionist entity, a few of the 110 ballistic missiles did get through, the Zionist army said. Iran's proxies and allies also carried out coordinated attacks on Zionist positions.

AFP correspondents heard blasts in the skies above Jerusalem early Sunday, and overnight people sought cover. On Sunday morning, people began returning tentatively to the streets. "The situation is really frightening because we are afraid of what happens and all of the bombing and aircraft that are coming," said 48-year-old Jerusalem resident Ayala Salant.

The Iranian army declared that its attack was "completed successfully", and that it was in "self-defense" after the Damascus strike which killed seven of Iran's Revolutionary Guards including two generals. Iran's "Operation Honest Promise... achieved all its objectives", armed forces chief of staff Mohammad Bagheri said.

Bagheri said the attack targeted an intelligence center and the air base from which Tehran says the Zionist F-35 jets took off to strike the Damascus consulate. "Both these centers were significantly destroyed," he said, although the Zionist entity said there was only minor damage. Analyst Nick Heras of the New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy told AFP Saturday's attack was "all about satisfying the honor of Iran". "This recent escalation in the Middle East is about the treacherous state of US and Iran relations, in which (the Zionist entity) is just one arena of conflict," he said.

Hundreds of Iranians in Tehran's Palestine Square waved Iranian and Palestinian flags in support of Iran's military action. The Zionist entity, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon all said they had reopened their airspace after suspending air traffic during the attack. Jordan said it intercepted "flying objects" in its airspace during the attack.

Iran's allies in the region joined the attack, with Yemen's Tehran-backed Houthi rebels also launching drones at the Zionist entity, security agency Ambrey said. Lebanon's Hezbollah movement said it had fired rockets at Zionist positions in the annexed Golan Heights around the same time, and another barrage hours later. A Zionist strike destroyed a building used by Hezbollah in east Lebanon on Sunday, Zionist and Lebanese sources said.

Iran's mission to the United Nations warned Washington to keep out of its conflict with the Zionist entity. It added on X that "the matter can be deemed concluded". "However, should the (Zionist) regime make another mistake, Iran's response will be considerably more severe." — Agencies

Envoy says Iran does not seek...

Continued from Page 1

The ambassador indicated that Iran has made it clear that any aggressive actions by the Zionist entity or its Western allies will be met with a firm and severe response. "The responsibility for any consequences or serious repercussions resulting from such actions lies squarely with the (Zionist) regime and its backers. The Islamic Republic of Iran remains steadfast in its commitment to defending its legitimate interests and will not hesitate to take further defensive measures if necessary," he vowed.

Following its legitimate response to Zionist aggression, Toutouchi revealed that his country promptly communicated to the American government through the

Zionists bomb Gazans on...

Continued from Page 1

in the rubble of the battered main city in the Palestinian territory. Mahmoud Awdeh said he was waiting for his wife, who has been in the southern city of Khan Yunis since the start of the war on Oct 7. "She told me over the phone that people are leaving the southern part and heading to the north," Awdeh said. "She told me she's waiting at the checkpoint until the army agrees to let her head to the north," he said, hoping she would be able to cross safely.

During the day rumors also spread that the Zionist army was allowing women, children and men over 50 to go to the north, a claim denied by the army. Since the Zionist assault on Gaza, the army has besieged the terri-

Zionist settlers kill 2 Palestinians...

Continued from Page 1

Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Mustafa condemned the attacks and urged the authorities to help the people of Al-Mughayyir. The violence spread to other parts of the West Bank, with Suleiman Dawabsha, the mayor of Duma near Nablus, telling AFP that Zionist troops and settlers had set fire to more than 15 houses and 10 farms in his village. In Beitin, a village east of Ramallah, a Palestinian teenager, aged 17, was killed, the health ministry said. The funeral was held on Sunday.

Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sat-

urday that Zionist forces were pursuing Achmeir's killers "and all those who collaborated with them". Zionist Defense Minister Yoav Gallant had warned against "revenge" attacks, saying they would make the security forces' jobs more difficult. "The law must not be taken into one's own hands," Gallant posted on social media.

Meanwhile, Zionist opposition leader Yair Lapid also criticized the violence, saying "violent riots of the settlers are a dangerous violation of the law and interfere with the security forces". Hundreds of thousands of Zionists live in West Bank settlements considered illegal under international law. The West Bank, which the Zionist entity has occupied since 1967, has seen a surge in violence since early last year, which has intensified since the Zionist-Hamas war erupted on Oct 7. At least 463 Palestinians have been killed by Zionist troops or settlers in the West Bank, according to Palestinian official figures. — AFP

Swiss ambassador in Tehran, emphasizing that while its response could have been harsher, it was deliberately restrained given the sensitive regional circumstances and a desire to avoid escalating the conflict. This demonstrates Iran's commitment to maintaining stability in the region while still defending its sovereignty and interests.

"The primary objective is to send a warning to the Zionist entity and deter any future occurrences of such unlawful acts. Should the Zionist entity engage in aggressive operations against the Islamic Republic or its interests, the response will be significantly more forceful and severe," Toutouchi warned. "It is evident that the Zionist entity seeks to entangle America in a broad and protracted conflict in the region. We strongly advise the United States against falling into the trap of this perilous game. By heeding this advice, America can avoid being drawn into a potentially devastating and protracted conflict orchestrated by the Zionist regime," he added.

Walid Al Kurdi, a displaced Palestinian living in Rafah, said that "Iran's attack on (the Zionist entity) is not really our business". "They only thing we care about is going back to our homes," he said. "We are waiting for the coming 48 hours to see if (the Zionist entity) responds to Iran, or if they are playing with us and want to distract attention away from Rafah." The Zionist entity has said it plans to send ground forces into Rafah to eradicate remaining Hamas fighters there. — AFP

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International

Hamas and Zionist entity exchange recriminations over stalled Gaza talks

Palestinian group reiterates demands for permanent ceasefire, full withdrawal of Zionist forces

JERUSALEM: The Zionist entity and Hamas have accused each other of undermining negotiations for a truce in Gaza and a hostage release deal, although the talks have not collapsed. On Saturday, while Hamas-backer Iran was preparing to launch hundreds of drones and missiles at the Zionist entity in retaliation for a deadly Damascus strike, the Palestinian group announced that it had delivered its response to the latest ceasefire proposal. Without explicitly rejecting the draft deal, Hamas reiterated its long-standing demands for a permanent ceasefire and the full withdrawal of Zionist forces from the Gaza Strip, which Zionist officials have repeatedly opposed. Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has instead reiterated his determination to launch a ground invasion of Rafah, the last city in Gaza yet to face such a fate and which the Zionist entity insists is Hamas' last major holdout. On Saturday, Netanyahu accused Hamas of being the "only obstacle" to a deal that would free the hostages still held by Gaza militants. "The cabinet and the security forces are united in their opposition to these unfounded demands," he said, adding that Hamas "has refused any deal and any compromise proposal".

On Sunday, the Zionist entity's Mossad spy agency said in a statement released by Netanyahu's office that Hamas had rejected the proposal, and said it "proves" that Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar "does not want a humanitarian deal and the return of the hostages". Sinwar was "continuing to exploit the tension with Iran", Mossad said, and was aiming for "a general escalation in the region". The comments came just hours before Iran launched more than 300 drones and missiles at the Zionist entity, the vast majority of which were intercepted, according to the Zionist entity.

Mossad said the Zionist entity would "continue to work to achieve the objectives of the war against Hamas with all its might, and will turn every stone to bring back the hostages from Gaza". De-



GAZA: Displaced Palestinians take the coastal Rashid road to return to Gaza City as they pass through Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip on April 14, 2024. — AFP

spite the apparent gulf between the two sides, the talks, mediated by Egypt, the United States and Qatar, are ongoing in the Egyptian capital. "The negotiations are not at a standstill" but the mediators will have to go back to the drawing board, said Hasni Abidi of CERAM, a Geneva-based think tank specializing in the Mediterranean and the Arab world.

A framework being circulated in Cairo would halt fighting for six weeks and see the exchange of about 40 captives for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, as well

as more aid deliveries into the besieged Gaza Strip. A Hamas source told AFP that, ultimately, later stages of the ceasefire would see all hostages released, the Zionist entity withdrawing all its forces from Gaza, the lifting of the siege and the reconstruction of the territory.

However, so far every attempt to negotiate a durable ceasefire in the six-month-long war has failed. In November, a seven-day truce enabled the exchange of 80 captives for 240 Palestinian prisoners, as well as 25 captives freed outside of the truce mechanism. The Zionist

entity has killed at least 33,729 people, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry in Gaza. The Zionist entity withdrew most of its troops from the Gaza Strip on the six-month anniversary of the war, leaving only a single brigade in central Gaza, while continuing to launch air strikes and bombardments. Netanyahu has repeated his determination to launch a ground invasion of Rafah, where around 1.5 million Gazans are sheltering from the war, despite opposition from the Zionist entity's top ally the United States.—AFP



Former US president and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks at the campaign rally.

Fans brave chill to hear Trump speak before trial

SCHNECKSVILLE, United States: Donald Trump's mounting legal woes are just more reason to stick behind the former president, his ardent supporters told AFP on Saturday, just days before the Republican leader's historic criminal trial gets underway in New York.

Gathered in the small Pennsylvania town of Schnecksville, his impassioned backers said Saturday they believe Trump will come out of the proceedings stronger than ever. The crowd, braving a chilly wind and some light rain, started gathering Saturday morning to hear the former president speak at night as he campaign once again for the White House.



SCHNECKSVILLE: Supporters of former US President and 2024 presidential candidate Donald Trump arrive to hear him speak at a campaign rally on April 13, 2024. — AFP photos

"I've been indicted more than Al Capone, the great gangster," Trump said to the cheering audience. "There is absolutely nothing here. There is no misdemeanor, there is no felony, there's no federal crime," he claimed.

On Monday, Trump will appear in court in New York City to face accusations of falsifying business records in a scheme to cover up an alleged sexual encounter with porn star Stormy Daniels so as not to doom his 2016 election. To his fans, who huddled under fluttering American flags and "Trump 2024" banners, Trump's proclamations of innocence rang true.

"They are crucifying Donald Trump. He's being turned into a martyr. And the Democrats think they're winning. All they're doing is making us really, really angry," says Edward Young, a 64-year-old from Point Pleasant, New Jersey.



Young, an actor who also works in finance, said that he once was a centrist casting ballots on the merits of each candidate. But the barrage of legal cases against Trump has changed everything for him.

Whether Trump is convicted won't make any difference to Randy Thomas, 57, who also drove from New Jersey to attend the rally. "It's a bunch of hate from the Democrats, they're scared of him," Thomas told AFP. Thomas says he'll take to the streets if Trump is sentenced to prison. "But it ain't gonna happen, it's not gonna happen." Pennsylvania is a key swing state that Trump won in 2016 but lost to Joe Biden in 2020.

'Corrupt justice'

Another supporter, who gave his name only as Ted, came to the rally with his daughter, the first time they had been to a Trump event. "It's important to show support to him, but also to show that the justice system is corrupt and we see it and we're not going to let anyone fool us about it," says Ted, a corporate executive.

Hours before the rally, Trump used similar language on his Truth Social platform, attacking the judge who will oversee his trial in New York as "totally conflicted and corrupt." Trump's other criminal cases — centered on his alleged hoarding of top-secret documents in Florida after he left the White House and his involvement in attempts to overturn the 2020 election — all face multiple delays.

Thomas, repeating a message Trump consistently voices online and at his rallies, said the legal troubles arise from politics — and his enemies' desire to keep him away from the White House. "You know, he loves the country. He doesn't need to do this job. He can live the rest of his life comfortable. He's a rich man," Thomas says. — AFP

A year into Sudan war, refugees try to survive in Chad

KOUFROUN, Chad: A year after civil war erupted again in Sudan, 24-year-old Alabaki Abbas Ishag has been surviving in a makeshift border refugee camp in Chad for a month. Ishag is one of 8.5 million people displaced by fighting between Sudan's regular army and paramilitaries. He managed to reach the Chadian border village of Koufroun after going into hiding for almost a year — escaping the massacres in Sudan's western region of Darfur, the scene of violence since the 2000s. He went from the ruins of one house to another in El-Geneina, West Darfur's capital 20 kilometers (12 miles) from the border. War broke out on April 15, 2023 between the regular army of Sudan's de facto leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) of his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo. In El-Geneina alone, 10,000 to 15,000 people were killed during the first nine months of the war, according to the United Nations.

'Buried alive'

The RSF "tried to recruit me to take part in the massacres, but when I refused they put me on a list of people to be executed", said Ishag. "I saw them throw people I knew into mass graves and bury them alive. "When there were a lot of bodies, the RSF would pile them up like rubbish before setting fire to them."

Now in Koufroun, the young man can sometimes earn some money on the local market. He eats one meal every other day. But the looming rainy season is another cause for worry. "I have nothing to build myself a shelter with," Ishag said, pointing to the straw mats used as a roof for him and the more than 9,100 refugees in Koufroun, according to UN figures.

One million refugees

Today Chad is home to almost a million Sudanese refugees — more than any other country. In the past year, more than 571,000 Sudanese refugees have rushed to Chad on foot or by mule, adding to the more than 400,000 others who fled the previous war in Darfur in 2003. More than 160,000 new refugees are crammed in a camp in the border town of Adre, the main entry point for those fleeing across the border. Hada Ishag Fadallah arrived in Adre with her seven children in early November.

"RSF came into our house and shot my husband before stealing everything they could, while others beat us," the 56-year-old mother said, echoing scenes reported by other survivors in Adre. Women and children account for almost 90 percent of the

Sudanese refugees who have arrived over the past year, according to the UN.

'Total catastrophe'

A month ago, the UN World Food Program (WFP) warned that it would suspend its aid to Sudanese refugees in Chad in April due to a lack of funds, appealing for donations to "avoid a total catastrophe". "The rations they give us for a month last 20 days at most," Fadallah said. "I have to take my two eldest children, aged nine and 14, to work with me whenever I can find a way to make a bit of money, washing clothes or making bricks." For months her family has been eating a bowl of sorghum-based porridge once a day.



A young Sudanese refugee prepares a meal next to her shelter.

But 15 kilometers from Adre in Tongori, Asha Mohamat Mousa, who fled El-Geneina 10 months ago, can no longer rely on WFP rations. "I have only received three since I arrived, and none since February," said the 23-year-old woman. Mousa has had no news of her husband who stayed behind and joined the militias fighting with Burhan's army.

'We feel forgotten'

The area where Mousa's straw and reed shelter stands is virtually deserted. Many abandoned huts have been blown apart by the wind, while others have been reduced to sand and ashes. "In the last two months, 210 shelters have been burnt down," said Mousa.

Other camps also face growing insecurity. In Farchana, some 40 kilometers from the border, 42,000 refugees are crammed together. Young farmer Hamra Adam Mohammed proudly shows off a small house made of brick and earth that she built on her own in two months. Thieves had cut away her tarpaulin and stolen the belongings from her first shelter.

She warns of growing tensions with Chadian residents of Farchana. "There isn't enough water or food for everyone," she said. The region's governor complains of a lack of international action. "There are more and more outbursts, and we've asked for more gendarmes," Bachar Ali Souleymane told AFP. "When we see the humanitarian attention in Ukraine or Palestine, we feel like we've been forgotten." — AFP



FARCHANA: Sudanese refugees gather to fill cans with water from a water point in the Farchana refugee camp, on April 8, 2024. — AFP photos

Business

MONDAY, APRIL 15, 2024

Sweet lessons: Taiwan urban beekeeping gets positive buzz

Temperature, weather fluctuations impact honey output



NEW TAIPEI CITY: In this picture, student Hsia Wei-yun holds a frame from a hive box during an urban beekeeping class of Yonghe community college in New Taipei City. — AFP photos



Tsai Ming-hsien (right), instructor of an urban beekeeping class of Yonghe community college, shows students how to set up a smoker during a class in New Taipei City.

TAIPEI: Under mulberry trees at a bee farm in Taipei's suburbs, students watched intently as instructor Tsai Ming-hsien wafted smoke over a hive box, explaining to aspiring apiarists how to keep the insects happy in an urban setting. His audience included entrepreneurs, retirees and even a six-year-old who reached eagerly for a frame pulled from the box, as Tsai demonstrated how bees can be kept calm with a smoker.

"Many join my class out of curiosity," said the 43-year-old instructor who also heads the Bee and Wasp Conservation Association of Taiwan. "They want to learn more about this insect, which has important economic values and a crucial role in agriculture." Bee populations around the world are facing disaster from overuse of pesticides, predatory mites and extreme temperatures due to climate change. That also spells catastrophe for humans, as three-quarters of the world's main crops depend on bees to act as key pollinators.

Temperature and weather fluctuations in Taiwan have impacted honey output in recent years. From 2020 to 2021, it jumped nearly 60 percent to 13,260 tons, before dropping to 9,332 tons the following year. Tsai said recreational beekeeping in Taiwan has

grown steadily over the past decade, with people tending about a dozen to up to 60 hive boxes in their yards or rooftop gardens. "The city is overdeveloped with less green space and declining biodiversity," he told AFP. "We hope this creature will act as a key to open more knowledge about nature and ecosystems."

Money for honey?

Six-year-old Hsia Wei-yun, who attended a class in March, was thrilled to watch bees flitting on a box frame. "I think it's a lot of fun keeping bees. I got to hold a bee frame," she said excitedly. Her mother, Hsia Cho-hui—who also brought along her son—said she had been concerned about whether there was enough nectar in the city, and fretted after one class that beekeeping seems "very complicated". But the class has fuelled her children's interest in getting their own hive box, and "it'd be a little difficult to dissuade them", she said.

Some, like Edwin Huang, see Tsai's class as a chance to make money while taking part in the "under-forest economy"—a practice of developing and selling eco-friendly products that give back to the environment. "I think keeping bees can help im-



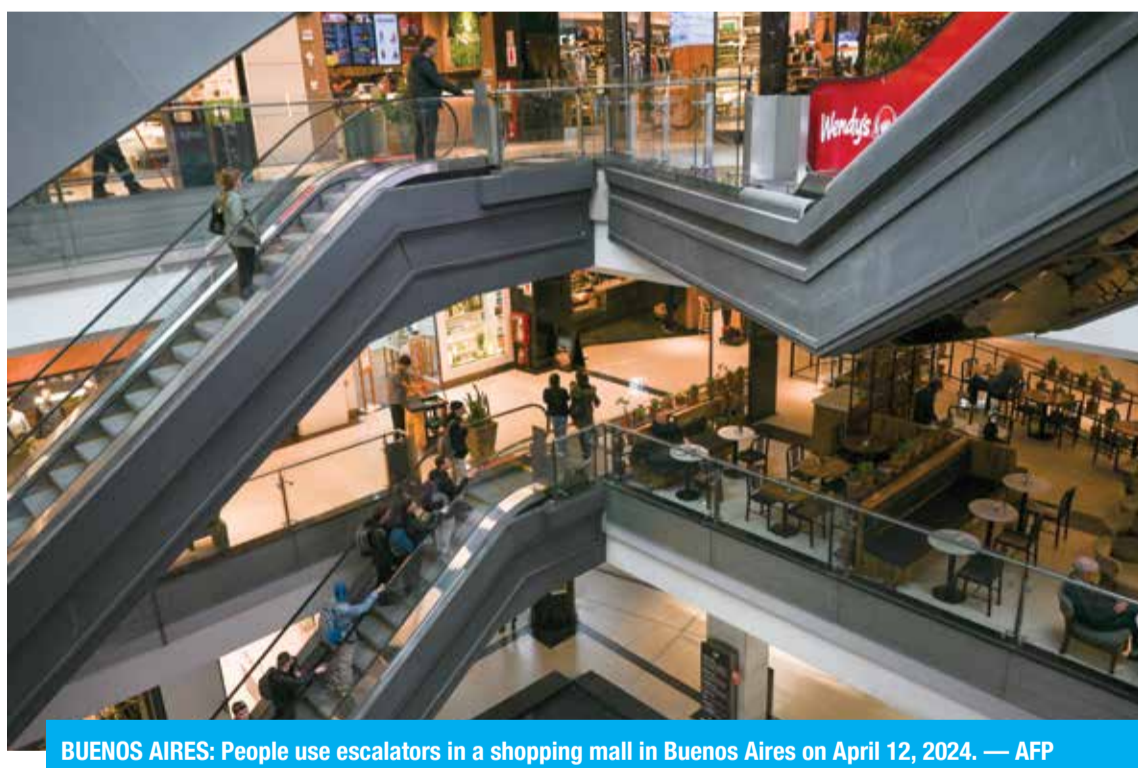
This picture shows a frame full of bees during an urban beekeeping class of Yonghe community college in New Taipei City.

prove the overall ecosystem... it is a very positive activity for both personal and public reasons," he said. The 40-year-old currently produces colored dyes from aster, a flowering plant, that he grows on a hillside in New Taipei City, and plans to one day open a diner where he could serve the honey he produces. "I'm learning the techniques while researching my menu," he said.

'A pleasure'

Retiree Sherry Liu, who took a class seven years ago and is now an avid apiarist, said she is "not in this to make money". She started with three hive boxes for bees that had flown into her rooftop garden and has expanded to 12. "It's very healing to watch bees fly. They look very cute when they fly... It's a pleasure for me," she told AFP, dressed in protective headgear and jacket as a swarm of bees flew around her. Liu usually harvests honey three to four times a year, sharing the fruits of her labor with relatives, friends and neighbors.

But she lamented that this year's rainy and cold conditions have hit her production. "I couldn't collect any winter honey because the weather was really bad and the bees ate all the honey (in their hives)," she said, adding that it can be "quite troublesome to tend" to her boxes. "You need to be loving—you can't just keep them but not look after them." Tsai said that he does not expect everyone who attends his class to become a bee farmer or keeper. "But we hope at least (people) can get to know and understand them, and won't rush to destroy them when they appear," he said. — AFP



BUENOS AIRES: People use escalators in a shopping mall in Buenos Aires on April 12, 2024. — AFP

Argentina's inflation slows, nearing 290% year-on-year

BUENOS AIRES: Consumer price increases in Argentina slowed for a third consecutive month in March to 11 percent, data showed, but annual inflation still remains sky-high at more than 287 percent. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) increase for March was lower than the 13.2 percent rise registered in February and 20.6 percent the month before, according to the INDEC statistics agency.

For the first quarter of 2024, inflation came in at 51.6 percent. Self-described "anarcho-capitalist" President Javier Milei had said this week any rise of around 10 percent for the month of May would be "a hell of a goal." In December, the month he took office, the CPI leapt by 25.5 percent, provoked by Milei's devaluation of the peso by more than 50 percent.

Milei, vowing to halt Argentina's economic decline, has taken a number of steps to slash public spending, winning the approval of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and securing a budget surplus for the first time in 12 years. He halted state subsidies for fuel and transport, cut tens of thousands of public service jobs and scrapped hundreds of rules in a bid to deregulate the economy. His efforts have hit Argentines hard, with the price of bus tickets almost tripling and aid cut to thousands of soup kitchens as poverty hit a level of nearly 60 percent and disposable income shrunk.

Experts say the slowdown in CPI does not translate into good news for Argentines, as it is linked to a sharp drop in consumption. "The inflation rate is falling in step with a sharp decline in economic activity and an increase in prices measured in dollars," former Economy Minister Domingo Cavallo wrote on his blog. While the IMF - which has a \$44 billion credit program with Argentina - has praised Milei's efforts to balance the books, it has warned about the impacts on the poor. — AFP

After long peace, Big Tech faces US antitrust reckoning

WASHINGTON: After more than a decade of leaving Big Tech largely to itself, US antitrust enforcers have cranked up the heat, with several high-profile cases underway that could radically change the way the industry's giants do business. Launched under both the Trump and Biden administrations, five major cases from the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) are moving forward against major US technology companies - including two against Google that could see the company split up. The most recent came in March against Apple by the FTC, which alleges the iPhone maker abuses its dominance of the premium smartphone sector.

Washington had largely remained silent on Big Tech cases since its wars with Microsoft that began in the 1990s and ended in a settlement in the early 2000s, after a bruising battle with the DOJ. Inspired by moves in Europe and elsewhere, the new generation of cases allege that the practices of tech giants including Amazon and Meta stifle competition, harm consumers, and warrant significant changes in business operations. The cases are on different timelines, before different federal judges and are based on a wide variety of allegations. With appeals, the lawsuits could drag on as long as a decade.

The first case in the campaign, launched in 2020 against Google over its search engine, could have an initial decision as early as the end of this year. In the second Google case, also brought by the DOJ, the company is targeted for its dominance of the digital advertising sector. Amazon and Meta meanwhile face cases with the FTC. The suits have drawn applause from lawmakers, with frustration over the power of big tech companies running high with the public.

But many in the business community and legal profession have balked, seeing the lawsuits as legally thin or politically motivated. The heads of the FTC and the DOJ's antitrust section adamantly stand by their cases, seeing their mission as a

means to protect consumers. "It's always good to kind of look at the actual facts rather than go off of the vibes," FTC chair Lina Khan told a conference in Washington, organized by the American Bar Association, in response to her critics.

"We're really addressing the pain points that affect people's lives including health care and digital (tech), but way, way beyond that," she said. Instead of getting bogged down in legal theory, Khan said the FTC's cases were "fit for purpose in the year 2024." "That means... not relying on outdated assumptions and theories that are clearly contravened with what we're seeing with our own eyes," she added.

Legally creative?

In an informal survey of 19 top antitrust scholars by University of Michigan Law professor Daniel Crane, a majority of respondents believed the cases would be difficult to prosecute. "Gathering the overall sense, it's fair to say that there is an expectation that more of the cases will lose than win," Crane wrote, with the Google cases seen as the government's strongest and Amazon as the weakest. Khan's critics point to widespread opinions in the legal community that the Biden administration's cases walk on thin legal ground.

"I'm kind of exasperated by these lawsuits, because they seem highly motivated, rather than based on sober legal and economic analysis," said Michael Santoro, a professor of management at Santa Clara University, who was not part of the survey. A senior executive from a tech giant, on condition of anonymity, said that "ultimately they are turning antitrust law upside down." Speaking in Washington with her US counterparts, the EU's competition czar Margrethe Vestager said she wished she had been more on the offensive in her earlier antitrust decisions.

"If I were to redo it, I would have been bolder, because we don't have a lot of time. Concentration is increasing in every jurisdiction," she said. Vestager, in office for almost a decade, has pursued her own wave of cases against tech companies that have been accused of being far-fetched or legally creative. In its latest tech-related decision, last month the EU hit Apple with a 1.8-billion-euro fine (\$1.9 billion) for preventing music streaming services from offering subscription options outside of its App Store. — AFP

Business

1 in 5 Japanese households will be elderly people living alone by 2050

Japan scrambling with its greying population

TOKYO: One in five Japanese households by 2050 will be elderly people living alone, a new study said, as Japan scrambles to find how to effectively care for its greying population. By 2050, 10.8 million elderly people will be living alone, making up 20.6 percent of all households, the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research said in a projection that it issues every five years. It marks an increase since 2020, when 7.37 million elderly, or 13.2 percent of all households, lived alone. The projection came as young Japanese people delay marriage or choose not to have children partly because they cannot afford to do so.

Japan is facing a steadily worsening population crisis, as its expanding elderly population leads to soaring medical and welfare costs and a shrinking labor force to pay for it. Many elderly people currently have children or siblings who can look after them, even if they live alone, the institute said. "However, 30 years from now, the proportion of elderly single-person households with no children - whether married, bereaved, or separated - is expected to increase, and the number of siblings of the individual will also decrease," the study warned.

Japan's overall population shrank by



TOKYO: People walk in the shopping area of Tokyo's Akihabara district. — AFP

595,000 to 124 million in 2023, marking the 13th straight annual fall, according to government data released Friday. The scale of the decrease was offset by an inflow of foreigners, the data showed, while

the population of Japanese nationals dropped by 837,000 to 121 million. The Japanese government has attempted to slow the decline and ageing of its population without meaningful success. — AFP

Gulf Bank announces 10 winners of AlDanah monthly draw

KUWAIT: As part of its ongoing commitment to reward its customers, Gulf Bank has announced the 10 monthly winners of the AlDanah account draw for March 2024. The lucky winners who will be taking home a prize of KD 1,000 each, are: Hasan Mahmoud Sayed Qasem Sayed Mostafa; Hamad Ahmed Aayed Al-Rasheedi (Minor); Heyad Saud Abdulaziz Al-Zamel; Basma Abdulla Mohammed Sarkhouh; Ahmad Ali Ibrahim Al-Bahrani (Minor); Yousef Abdullateef Hussain Ali; Moahmed Ali Mejbel Al-Ajeel; Emad Ali Ghuloum Askar Hasan; Waleed Mohamed Radiah; Ali Mohammad Jawad Al-Sarraf (Minor).

The deadline for depositing and participating in the semiannual AlDanah Millionaire's draw is March 31, 2024. The draw is scheduled for July 18, 2024, with representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and Ernst & Young in attendance. Gulf Bank announced the grand prize winner of the annual draw

for the Al-Danah Millionaire account on February 1 2024, for the first time, following the increase in the prize's value to KD 2 million in 2023. This is part of the bank's continuous endeavors to reward its customers and foster a culture of savings within the community.

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

Gulf Bank's AlDanah account is the only account in Kuwait, that rewards customers for their loyalty by providing loyalty chances, and transfers their chances of winning from the previous year to the next year. In order to increase one's chances of winning, customers must maintain a minimum of KD 200 in their accounts, or deposit continuously to increase their chances of winning. AlDanah account holders are eligible to win Gulf Bank's upcoming monthly, quarterly, and annual Al-Danah draws.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and



diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience.

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

IMF validates a fresh tranche of aid for Ghana

ACCRA: The International Monetary Fund said it had validated a fresh tranche of aid of \$360 million for Ghana as the country seeks to exit an economic crisis. The latest aid comes as part of a second review of the IMF's \$3 billion assistance package to Accra, which was approved in May last year, to help Ghana shore up its public finances and better manage its heavy debt load.

"IMF staff and the Ghanaian authorities have reached a staff-level agreement on the second review of Ghana's economic program under the Extended Credit Facility," said IMF mission head for Ghana Stephane Roudet, referring to an aid program for political services and economic reforms. The latest package means total IMF financial support released under the agreement since May 2023 is worth about \$1.5 billion, the IMF stated. In 2022, Ghana endured its worst economic crisis in decades, with inflation racing past 50 percent which forced Ghana - a major gold, oil and cocoa producer - to take out a loan and also restructure its debts.

The country has, along with other African states, also been hard hit by economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic as well as the Russia-Ukraine war. According to the IMF, the aid provided to Ghana has already borne fruit in enabling Accra to set in train reforms aimed at restoring macroeconomic stability and debt sustainability while laying the groundwork for stronger and more inclusive growth. Last year Ghana successfully carried out a restructuring of its domestic debt. — AFP



ACCRA: A buyer looks at secondhand clothes at the Kantamanto market in Accra, Ghana. — AFP



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 8 APRIL 2024

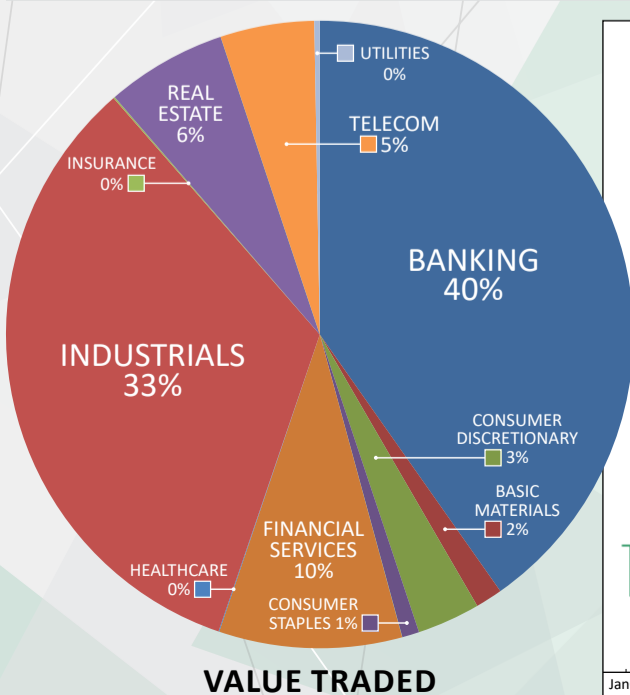
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Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	35,788	7,859.43	-1.5%	-2.2%	5.1%	135,471,671	66,998,518	18,695	17.0	1.3	82.0%
Main Market	7,846	5,960.30	0.4%	-0.4%	7.0%	61,353,479	8,167,241	4,739	12.3	0.8	18.0%
All Share	43,634	7,187.13	-1.2%	-1.9%	5.4%	196,825,150	75,165,759	23,434	13.8	0.9	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Banking	26,132	1,744.77	-0.9%	-1.5%	5.9%	50,987,071	30,247,658	7,832	16.8	1.3	59.89%
Basic Materials	447	791.78	0.6%	0.2%	6.1%	1,676,259	1,044,504	504	9.6	2.2	1.02%
Consumer Discretionary	1,200	1,745.71	-1.1%	-0.3%	8.8%	4,715,375	2,442,127	894	12.3	1.2	2.75%
Consumer Staples	241	793.53	-1.0%	2.7%	20.5%	1,003,214	661,313	146	101.5	1.3	0.55%
Energy	218	1,043.78	-0.2%	0.1%	10.0%	36,328	9,184	37	9.9	0.7	0.50%
Financial Services	4,721	1,316.70	-2.0%	-2.7%	8.6%	48,767,101	7,082,112	3,097	15.1	0.9	10.82%
Health Care	152	316.56	-32.6%	-7.9%	-34.3%	78,036	30,411,252	134	10.2	1.1	0.35%
Industrials	3,311	971.20	-4.4%	-7.1%	7.0%	44,300,597	25,067,418	6,065	13.9	0.9	7.59%
Insurance	1,045	2,557.49	-0.3%	-0.4%	11.5%	571,527	56,542	87	10.4	1.1	2.40%
Real Estate	2,770	1,302.18	0.1%	0.5%	7.4%	36,247,007	4,675,362	2,361	15.4	0.7	6.35%
Technology	26	1,906.05	0.0%	0.0%	229.6%	0	0.00	0	NM	2.2	0.06%
Telecommunications	3,197	1,046.07	-0.3%	-1.8%	-5.3%	7,114,163	3,637,441	2,083	9.6	1.3	7.33%
Utilities	174	415.79	-2.5%	-6.5%	-8.7%	1,328,472	211,687	194	13.8	1.4	0.40%

Top Gainers						Top Losers					
Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades	Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
MRC	94.2	7.66%	1,001	91	3	AGLTY	556	-8.70%	37,404,470	21,507,066	4,971
ARKAN	85.5	6.88%	678,100	54,321	10	UPAC	150	-7.98%	79,278	12,271	63
FTI	185.00	5.11%	21	4	5	OSOS	94.1	-7.75%	51,503	4,979	12
EMIRATES	40.9	4.87%	3,540	144	3	AMAR	61.8	-7.35%	62,751	4,026	8
DALQAN	151	4.86%	832,959	121,216	38	WETHAQ	38.3	-6.36%	295,336	11,277	51

Top Volume						Top Value					
Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades	Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
AGLTY	556	-8.70%	37,404,470	21,507,066	4,971	AGLTY	556	-8.70%	37,404,470	21,507,066	4,971
KFH	731	0.35%	29,009,176	20,857,954	4,388	KFH	731	0.35%	29,009,176	20,857,954	4,388
NRE	100	-0.99%	20,119,111	2,031,464	943	NBK	872	-3.01%	5,449,718	4,783,086	1,220
KPROJ	122	-3.94%	8,234,281	1,018,682	281	ZAIN	479	-1.03%	6,118,639	2,953,260	1,769
ZAIN	479	-1.03%	6,118,639	2,953,260	1,769	NRE	100	-0.99%	20,119,111	2,031,464	943



Market Summary:

- Premier and Main Markets volume and value dropped 22%, 5%, 62%, and 58%, respectively. Note that we had only two trading days due to the Eid holiday.
- The Premier and Main indexes are both moving on a downtrend.
- Technically, the All Share index closed at 7187, with support levels at 7178, 7162, and 7105, and resistance at 7214. The Premier index closed at 7859, with support levels at 7828, 7767, and 7730, and resistance at 7899. The Main index closed at 5960, support levels at 5959, 5925, 5902, and 5881, and resistance at 5970.

NBK earns 'Best Bank for ESG-Related Loans Award'

A regional winner in Global Finance's Sustainable Finance Awards for 2024

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) was named the Best Bank in the Middle East for ESG-Related Loans in 2024, as announced by Global Finance in its fourth annual Sustainable Finance Awards. This annual survey conducted by Global Finance recognizes global and regional leadership in Sustainable Finance-funding for initiatives designed in 2023 to mitigate the negative impacts of climate change and help build a more sustainable future for humanity.

Criteria for evaluation included governance policies and goals as well as measurable achievements in environmental and social sustainability financing. Winners have been chosen in areas such as overall sustainability financing, excellence in bond issues, community support, resource management, transparency & reporting, infrastructure, and emerging-markets sustainability funding. In recent years, NBK Group has undertaken significant measures to embed ESG standards into the core of its business, operational procedures, and corporate culture.

The Group has also streamlined its ESG strategy, transitioning from a six-pillar approach to a more integrated framework consisting of four interconnected pillars: Governance for Resilience, Responsible Banking, Capitalizing on our Capabilities, and Investing in our Communities. Furthermore, NBK spearheaded initiatives to capitalize on the growing trend towards sustainable financing, launching services and products geared towards the green transition process across all its locations. These include offerings such as green mortgage loans, consumer loans for electric vehicles, financ-



ing options related to sustainability and low-emission housing loans.

Additionally, the Bank has established a target to decrease gross operational emissions by 25% by 2025 compared to the levels recorded in the reference year of 2021. Moreover, NBK's head-



quarters achieved the prestigious gold certification in the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED Gold) accreditation, underscoring its commitment to environmental sustainability and energy efficiency.

NBK's sustainability endeavors form a crucial

component of its overarching strategy aimed at becoming carbon neutral by 2060 and its ambitious goal of achieving net-zero operationally by 2035. For additional information about Global Finance's Awards, including the Best Bank for ESG-Related Loans 2024, please visit: <https://www.gfmag.com/>.

NBK Weekly Report

US inflation and unemployment dim expectations

KUWAIT: According to the Consumer Price Index data released in March, US consumer prices increased again. The year-over-year inflation rate reached 3.5 percent for the twelve months ending in March. This is a significant jump from February's 3.2 percent and the highest annual increase in the past half year. This report highlights the challenges in reducing inflation, which continues to strain household budgets. It also suggests that any easing of monetary policy, like lowering interest rates, is unlikely to happen soon.

Inflation has been a major concern during Biden's presidency, with many voters disapproving of his handling of the economy. The data significantly impacted expectations for Federal Reserve interest rate adjustments. Analysts predict that a rate cut in June is highly unlikely. Following the report, the probability of a June rate cut dropped to 21 percent in the markets, compared to 53 percent the previous day and 73 percent the prior month.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that on a monthly basis, prices remained unchanged from February's 0.4 percent increase. Gas and housing costs were the biggest contributors to this increase, but price hikes were widespread across most categories. In fact, prices rose in almost every major category last month, with only

a few exceptions like used and new cars, fuel oil, and grocery store food prices which either fell or remained flat. Economists' predictions were for a 0.3 percent monthly increase and an annual rate of 3.4 percent. When excluding volatile categories like food and gas prices, core inflation rose 0.4 percent from the previous month, keeping the annual rate at 3.8 percent, the same as February's reading.

US Producer Price Index

The latest data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates a slowdown in price increases for producers. The Producer Price Index (PPI), which tracks changes in wholesale prices before goods reach consumers, rose by 0.2 percent last month. This comes after a larger increase of 0.6% in February. It's important to note that the Federal Reserve has been actively working to combat inflation by raising interest rates. Since March 2022, they've increased rates by a significant amount, bringing them to the current range of 5.25 percent to 5.50 percent. These higher interest rates are intended to slow down economic activity and ultimately bring down inflation. The recent slowdown in producer price increases could be an early sign that the Fed's efforts are starting to have an impact.

Unemployment claims

Data released last Thursday by the Labor Department showed a better-than-expected picture for the US job market. The number of people filing new unemployment claims dropped significantly, reaching 211,000 for the week ending April 6th. This is 11,000 fewer claims than economists predicted. It's important to note that these numbers can fluctuate slightly around springtime due to holidays like Easter and spring break, which fall

Rates - April 14th, 2024

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.0841	1.0621	1.0885	1.0642	1.0450	1.0725	1.0685
GBP	1.2636	1.2423	1.2709	1.2450	1.2265	1.2540	1.2461
JPY	151.56	151.55	153.38	153.28	151.95	155.00	151.21
CHF	0.9012	0.9006	0.9147	0.9140	0.9040	0.9345	0.9051

on different weeks each year.

Despite these recent interest rate hikes by the Federal Reserve intended to slow inflation, the job market seems to be holding strong. In fact, job growth increased in March, and the unemployment rate even dipped slightly. There's a bit of a double-edged sword here, though. While a strong job market is positive news, it can also contribute to keeping inflation high because it leads to increased spending on services.

ECB press conference

The European Central Bank (ECB) decided to hold interest rates at their current record highs for now, but signaled a possible change in direction soon. This decision comes after a year and a half of raising rates to combat inflation in the euro-zone. Inflation has indeed been falling and is now nearing the ECB's target of 2 percent. However, this slowdown has also caused concern about the health of the euro-zone economy, with bank lending stalling and growth stagnating. In light of these mixed signals, the ECB indicated that it might be ready to reduce interest rates at its next

meeting, if certain data points confirm the continued decline in inflation and stabilize economic indicators like wage growth and underlying inflation. This suggests a potential shift in the ECB's monetary policy from fighting inflation to stimulating the economy.

UK GDP m/m

The UK economy showed signs of picking up steam in early 2024. While the overall growth in February was modest at 0.1%, it came on the back of a revision that showed January's growth to be slightly stronger than previously estimated. This positive trend seems to have continued into March, leading economists to believe that the first quarter could see a solid rebound in GDP. Further good news lies in the expectation of falling inflation, which should help put more money back in people's pockets and boost consumer spending. However, the road to recovery might not be entirely smooth. The government's tightening grip on spending and the delayed effect of recent interest rate hikes could dampen the pace of this consumer-driven upswing.



Hala fiesta winners drive off with their dreams

KUWAIT: LuLu Hypermarket, the region's leading retailer, hosted a prize distribution ceremony on 13 April at its Al Rai outlet for winners of its 'Hala Shop and Win' promotion, which was held from 1 February to 16 March at all outlets of the hypermarket. The lucky winners of the raffle draw, a highlight of the Hala Shop and Win promotion, were presented with incredible prizes by top LuLu management.

Top LuLu management personally handed over the keys to a gleaming Nissan Patrol SUV to one winner and two stylish Nissan X-Trail crossover SUVs to two lucky winners. In addition, 30 lucky

winners also received the latest iPhone 15 Pro. Every winner walked away beaming at having won such magnificent prizes, and expressed their heartfelt thanks to LuLu for making their dreams a reality. The exciting raffle draw was not limited to just high rollers, every KD 5 worth of purchase entitled any shopper to participate in the raffle draw and win one of the 33 grand prizes.

The official raffle draw was held on 31 March at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in front of ministry officials and top LuLu management. The 'Shop & Win' promotion is a shining example of LuLu Hypermarket's dedication to customers, and a reminder that shopping at the hypermarket is more than just purchasing products, it is an experience filled with exciting rewards and a chance for everyone to win. With its commitment to creating enriching experiences, LuLu Hypermarket continues to reign supreme as the shopping destination of choice for all in Kuwait.



Lifestyle

MONDAY, APRIL 15, 2024

Philippines trains pet dogs for search and rescue



A handler patting her dog during a search and rescue program.

With her owner holding her leash, Philippine pooch Hazel sniffs through rubble in a simulated search for survivors of a major earthquake in the capital Manila.

Hazel is taking part in a programme training pet dogs and their owners in search and rescue so they can be deployed in the aftermath of a disaster.

some of her classmates.

But she shows plenty of enthusiasm as she follows instructions to search rubble, overturned water drums and small wooden huts.

The three-year-old barks and wags her tail when she finds a person hiding in a drum, drawing cheers from trainers and back rubs from Chua.

"My end goal with Hazel is just to be



This photo shows participants and their dogs taking part in a search and rescue program in Taguig, metro Manila. — AFP photos



This photo shows handlers and their dogs taking part in a search and rescue program in Taguig, metro Manila.



This photo shows Nathalia Chua playing with her dogs after taking part in a search and rescue program, in Makati, metro Manila.



This photo shows participants and their dogs taking part in a search and rescue program in Taguig, metro Manila.



A trainer guiding a dog during a search and rescue program.

Every Sunday, around 46 mongrels and purebreds of all sizes are put through their paces by volunteer trainers at a facility in suburban Manila where they learn to find people, scale ladders, and bound over wooden structures. Philippine disaster agencies already have search and rescue dogs that are deployed when disasters strike the archipelago nation.

But there are concerns that there might not be enough of them if a major earthquake were to hit the sprawling metropolis of Manila.

Hazel, who was a skinny street mutt before she was adopted by her owner Nathalia Chua, lacks the pedigree of

as prepared as possible if the 'big one' comes," Chua, 17, told AFP, referring to a major earthquake seismologists predict could strike the city one day.

Manila is vulnerable to quakes due to its location on the West Valley Fault and its proximity to the Manila Trench off the main island of Luzon. Seismologists believe the movement of either one could trigger a major earthquake in the city of more than 13 million people that could kill tens of thousands.

The MMDA K-9 Corps volunteer group has trained around 700 pet dogs since it began the programme in 2016.

It aims to train at least 3,400 pet dogs in search and rescue across the city. "We



A dog carrying a reward toy during a search and rescue program.



Dog owner Nathalia Chua holding a reward toy during a search and rescue program.



Participants and their dogs taking part in a search and rescue program in Taguig, metro Manila.



This photo shows dogs taking part in a search and rescue program in Taguig, metro Manila.



Nathalia Chua cleaning her dog Hazel after taking part in a search and rescue program.

all know that for the 'big one'... we really need to be prepared," said trainer Katrina Florece, 25, at the training facility owned by the government's Metropolitan Manila Development Authority.

Hazel was malnourished and fearful when Chua found her in 2021 during a family holiday on the western island of Palawan.

The search and rescue training has helped her become calmer and more confident.

"She loves it," Chua said. "I think even if the dog doesn't end up enjoying search and rescue, joining this is a great opportunity to learn and bond with your dog." Dogs have to complete at least 12 training sessions before they can be deployed in real-life disaster response operations. American chef Jon Hrinjak, 40, regularly brings his German Shepherd Oly to the training in the hope that they might be able to save someone's life one day.

"You hope that when something happens... we can be there to assist someone," Hrinjak said. "A single life that we can help is worth it." — AFP



Participants and their dogs taking part in a search and rescue program in Taguig, metro Manila.



Participants and their dogs taking part in a search and rescue program.



A handler commanding her dog during a search and rescue program.

Lifestyle



This photograph shows watches of Swiss luxury watchmakers Parmigiani during the opening day of the "Watches and Wonders Geneva" luxury watch fair in Geneva.



This photograph shows a showcase of Swiss watch designer and manufacturer Rolex.

Geneva watch fair ticking over after sales boom years



The 2024 Geneva watch fair opened on Tuesday amid slower demand in China for fancy Swiss timepieces and timid consumer spending across the board on luxury items.

The Watches and Wonders salon, which runs until April 15, sees 54 major watch brands display their latest creations, including Rolex, Patek Philippe, Cartier, Chopard, Hermes and Chanel.

Brazilian supermodel Gisele Bundchen and Chinese actor Wang Yang were among the stars checking out the timepieces on show at Swiss watchmaking's landmark event.

Last year, Swiss watch exports broke records for the third straight year, hitting 26.7 billion Swiss francs (\$29.5 billion). The 2020 downturn caused by the Covid-19 pandemic was quickly reversed by what financial analysts called revenge buying, with consumers splashing out with savings accumulated during lockdowns. However, the growth in Swiss watch exports has slowed, with exports up 7.6 percent in 2023, having risen 11 percent in 2022 and 31 percent in 2021.

'Back to reality'

"I don't want to say it's a bad time; it's a little calmer," Thierry Stern, president of luxury watchmaker Patek Philippe, told AFP. "Maybe we're coming back to reality." Stern says he remains confident about the prospects for his own brand, which remains ev-

er-popular with auction room collectors. Per year, "I make 72,000 watches and they will almost all be sold here in one week," he added, with the salon being an opportunity for retailers to stock up their boutiques.

Formerly reserved for industry players, the salon is trying to seduce

'More steel, less bling'

Jon Cox, an industry analyst with Kepler Cheuvreux financial services, told AFP the mood at the salon might be "subdued" this year rather than "despondent". "Given the environment, you may see a back-to-basics approach by watchmakers: more steel,

stuff but lots of very beautiful things," he told AFP.

This slowdown is not affecting all brands equally. The most high-end names, like Patek Philippe, rely on a very wealthy clientele who are not particularly exposed to the vagaries of the economy, meaning those brands have

uation is tougher than anticipated for a certain number of players in watchmaking," she told AFP. "The clientele is more cautious," she said, with consumption in China and Hong Kong having "not returned to pre-Covid levels".

She said revenge buying has peaked and inflation, rising interest rates



This photograph shows a watch displayed at the stand of Swiss luxury watch and clock manufacturer Patek Philippe.



Brazilian model Gisele Bundchen poses during the opening day of the "Watches and Wonders Geneva" luxury watch fair in Geneva.

a new generation of buyers by allowing in the public on the last three days, with guided tours and an interactive zone focusing on watchmaking of the future. The average age of visitors during previous open days was 35, "which is extremely encouraging", said Matthieu Humair, chief executive of the foundation that runs the salon.

less bling," he said. Cox is forecasting a "soft landing" for manufacturers this year with four percent market growth.

However, after touring the displays, Oliver Muller, founder of the watchmaking consultancy company LuxeConsult, said: "I've been positively surprised by the new innovations. I expected a lot more caution." "I didn't see any crazy

continued to grow.

According to a study by US bank Morgan Stanley, models with price tags above 25,000 francs account for 69 percent of growth in the Swiss watch industry. "We are seeing an overall slowdown," said Karine Szegedi, the consumer industry lead in Switzerland at the auditing firm Deloitte. "The sit-

and even layoffs in the technology sector are affecting the consumer base for luxury goods. In an early sign of the slowdown, subcontractors who supply watch components saw orders reduced or postponed, said Szegedi. —AFP



These photos show one of the World's thinnest watches that include a tourbillon movement, the two millimetres thick "Altiplano Ultimate Concept Tourbillon 150th Anniversary" by Swiss luxury watchmaker Piaget.



This photograph shows a general view next to Swiss luxury watch and clock manufacturer Patek Philippe.



a watch by German manufacturer of luxury and prestige watches A Lange & Sohne.



A watch displayed at the stand of Swiss luxury watch and clock manufacturer Patek Philippe. —AFP photos



Egyptian rapper Dareen performs during a concert at the American University (AUC), in downtown Cairo. — AFP photos



Egyptian rapper Hala performs during a concert at the American University (AUC).



Egyptian rapper Dareen performs during a concert at the American University (AUC).



Egyptian rapper Phaty performs during a concert at the American University (AUC).

EGYPT'S WOMEN RAPPERS FIGHT FOR PLACE IN RISING SCENE

Egyptian rapper Dareen is a whirlwind of sharp verses and curly hair on stage, bringing the Cairo crowd to its feet and a fresh perspective to Egypt's male-dominated rap scene. Her raps flow over eclectic beats inspired by her childhood in Alexandria, the coastal city home to many of Egypt's biggest rap stars, including the massively popular Wegz, a male rapper on a rapid rise after a 2022 World Cup performance in Qatar. In Alexandria "we make art, but in Cairo, it's a whole industry", Dareen, 21, told AFP, her bright pink nails protruding from fingerless leather gloves.

And the industry is booming. In 2022, Wegz was the most streamed Arab artist in the Middle East and North Africa on the music platform Spotify.

"The impact of rap can be seen in our charts, our wrapped data and in all key cultural events," said Mark Abou Jaoude, Spotify's Head of Music for the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia. Last year, 60 percent of Spotify's most-streamed Arab artists were in the hip-hop genre, which includes rap.

"We're also witnessing an increasing number of rap artists touring Europe and the United States, which serves as evidence of how fans worldwide, including diaspora communities, are connecting with the genre," Abou Jaoude said.

For a long time, Egyptian rap had "an underground status", according to music researcher Amr Abdelrahim. But now party boats on the Nile River in Cairo



Egyptian rapper Hala performs during a concert at the American University (AUC).

blast Wegz through the Egyptian capital, and rappers are getting multinational advertising deals. "The professionalisation of their craft has impacted how they make music and the verses they write, but also their dreams," said Abdelrahim. "This is the first generation that's seeing their elders make big money from rapping." And the genre's women performers - out of the spotlight for years - are vying for a piece of that success.

Dareen's own song Leila - which

talks about her disappointment with fellow artists - has close to 180,000 views on YouTube. Although Cairo's line-ups increasingly feature women rappers donning stylish streetwear for larger-than-life performances, there is still a class divide for them to cross.

Manhood, power, money

Far from the working-class African American communities where rap was born half a century ago, the Egyptian

version and its audience are still "on the margins, because they're middle and upper class, while 'Mahraganat' is much more popular", said Abdelrahim.

Mahraganat, which is widely popular in Egypt where it is known as 'electro-shaabi', has become musical shorthand for Egyptian youth expression.

"You need only walk around Cairo" to hear it, Abdelrahim said. In "all the tuktuks, all the stores, what you hear" is Mahraganat, with its mix of synthesized beats, traditional instruments and blunt lyrics celebrating manhood, power and money. An easy creative choice for rap's rising women is to try to imitate that same machismo, but their lyrics seem to cast a wider net.

In her latest album "Kawabes", or nightmares in Arabic, Dareen raps about "the depression and mood swings" that "follow break-ups". Stepping off stage to raucous applause, she says she wants to talk about "everything", uncensored, even her most vulnerable moments. But rapping as a woman is an uphill battle on multiple fronts.

'Not taken seriously'

"Claiming our freedom as rappers is hard, whether from our families or from society," Dareen said, adding that the industry is "far from peaceful" and harsh on women. "We're not taken seriously, they think we don't have problems when it's the exact opposite, especially here in Egypt where we're forced to deal with

harassment and constant obstacles."

Egypt's conservative, deeply patriarchal society causes most women to shy away from professions in the public eye. And in the macho world of rap, "to evolve, you have to frequent the same places, to integrate into the networks of artists and producers, an exclusively male world," Abdelrahim said.

While more women are stepping into the genre's spotlight, they have come mostly from more well-to-do echelons of Egyptian society. According to Abdelrahim, almost all women rappers come from the upper class, where girls and women generally enjoy more freedom with less fear of social stigma.

"You can see more social diversity in the male rap scene," Abdelrahim said, where artists fire insults at those from privileged upbringings versus their own working-class backgrounds.

Their women counterparts, meanwhile, walk a tightrope between rap's boastfulness and the modesty demanded by society, side-stepping American hip-hop's brand of sexuality entirely. "Assuming an overtly sexual femininity" - like women rap stars Cardi B or Megan Thee Stallion - "is not possible" if the performers want to be seen as worthy of respect, said Abdelrahim. "Because ultimately they're judged by both society and their families." — AFP



Grand National 2024 racegoers steal spotlight in eye-catching outfits

Warmer weather has blessed Aintree this year, and spectators have dressed for the April sunshine during the three-day Merseyside race meet... with many determined to show off their pins.

High splits, plunging necklines and barely there skirts were the sartorial

choice for the thousands of ladies who attended, with many hoping that their bold fashion choices would bag them the £5,000 Best Dressed prize traditionally given out on the penultimate day of the Grand National Festival.



Racegoers pose for a photograph as they attend on Ladies Day, the second day of the Grand National Festival horse race meeting at Aintree Racecourse in Liverpool, north-west England. — AFP photos



Leinster take revenge on La Rochelle to reach semis

Harlequins reach their first Champions Cup semi-final

PARIS: Leinster director of rugby Leo Cullen said he was "delighted" after his side hammered holders La Rochelle 40-13 on Saturday to claim revenge for two Champions Cup final defeats and reach the last four of this season's competition. The Irish province crossed for five tries in Dublin, including two for winger James Lowe, in a dominant display to set up a semi-final, on the weekend of May 3-5, against Northampton who defeated the Bulls 59-22.

Two-time holders La Rochelle beat Leinster in classic finals in 2022 and 2023 but Cullen's four-time winners won earlier in the season in the group stages. "There was a fair bit of hype around the game," Cullen told RTE. "Two good teams going hard at it and our guys were delighted to get the win. It's job done and onto the next one," he added.

La Rochelle, coached by former Ireland and Munster fly-half Ronan O'Gara, had spent the week training in Cork following last Saturday's last-16 victory at the Stormers. Leinster, who eased past Leicester to reach the quarter-finals, started youngster Ciaran Frawley at full-back after Hugo Keenan withdrew injured hours before kick-off.

The late change had little impact on Cullen's team as they led 10-0 after 19 minutes as Lowe scored his first try and Ross Byrne added a conversion and a penalty. Leinster extended their lead to 23-6 with scrum-half Jamison Gibson-Park following Lowe over the white-wash. Byrne slotted a conversion and two penalties.

Fly-half Antoine Hastoy kicked two penalties for the visitors, who were a shadow of the side who won at the same ground in last May's final. O'Gara's side kept slim hopes alive at a packed Lansdowne Road as

prop Louis Penverne crashed over and Hastoy converted to make it 23-13 at half-time.

La Rochelle's chances of victory were dashed by the 56th minute as the Irish side's flanker Ryan Baird and hooker Dan Sheehan scored. Lowe added his second with a quarter of an hour to play as Leinster eased into the next round as the tournament favourites.

'Swing the bat'

Harlequins reached their first Champions Cup semi-final, edging a highly-fancied Bordeaux-Begles 42-41 in a breathtaking game in France. Both sides scored six tries before France scrum-half Maxime Lucu missed a relatively straightforward late conversion which would have claimed victory for the hosts, who had thrashed three-time winners Saracens in the previous round. Quins, in their 13th campaign in the tournament, will next play record five-time champions Toulouse or Exeter, who meet in France on Sunday.

"We knew we had to dig deep and we knew we had to swing the bat, we knew we had to play," Quins director of rugby Billy Millard told reporters, using a cricket reference. "The one thing you know about this competition is that each game you progress it gets tougher, whoever comes up will be another step up," he added.

Northampton ran in nine tries at Franklin Gardens to rout the Bulls of South Africa to make the semi-finals for the first time since 2011. The under-strength Bulls left out big names such as Willie le Roux, Canan Moodie and Kurt-Lee Arendse while blaming injuries and an epic journey from Pretoria via eight different airlines for the omissions. — AFP



DUBLIN: La Rochelle's Australian lock Will Skelton (C) is tackled during the European Rugby Champions Cup quarter-final rugby union match between Leinster and Stade Rochelais at Aviva stadium in Dublin. — AFP

Hetmyer powers Rajasthan win in IPL thriller

MULLANPUR: Shimron Hetmyer's explosive 27 runs off 10 balls helped Rajasthan Royals edge out Punjab Kings with a three-wicket IPL win on Saturday. Hetmyer's spell at the crease, laced with three sixes, brought Rajasthan past Punjab's 147-8 with only one ball to spare, cementing the side's place at the top of the table with only one loss from the season so far.

"Sometimes it happens, sometimes it doesn't," Hetmyer said. "Happy I could help my team win tonight." Punjab got off to a decent start with Atharva Taide and Jonny Bairstow making 26 runs for no loss

at the end of three overs. But Avesh Khan dismissed Taide soon after while Bairstow fell in the eighth over—both making 15. Rajasthan's clinical bowling choked the innings, with Keshav Maharaj sending back acting captain Sam Curran for six.

Impact sub Ashutosh Sharma top-scored from the bottom order with 31 from 16 balls before he was caught on the last ball of the innings off Trent Boult. Rajasthan opens Yashasvi Jaiswal and Tanush Kotian set up the chase with a 56-run partnership before Liam Livingstone bowled the latter for 24 in the ninth over.

Fast bowler Kagiso Rabada removed Jaiswal (39) and Sanju Samson (18), with Hetmyer coming in at the end of the 17th over when the visitors were still 35 behind. He slammed two boundaries in the 18th over and powered through even as partners Rovman Powell (11) and Maharaj (one) fell. "A little disappointed and we will bounce back in the next game," Curran said. — AFP



MOHALI: Rajasthan Royals' Shimron Hetmyer and Trent Boult (R) run between the wickets during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Punjab Kings and Rajasthan Royals at the Maharaja Yadavindra Singh International Cricket Stadium in Mohali. — AFP

Vinales cruises to win MotoGP Grand Prix

AUSTIN: Maverick Vinales leapt away from pole position and cruised to victory in the MotoGP sprint race at the Grand Prix of the Americas in Austin on Saturday. The Spaniard, who smashed the lap record in qualifying, built a lead of more than a second on his Aprilia and rode serenely to the line as behind him three compatriots fought for the other podium places.

"I want to keep going. The level was amazing," said Vinales, punching the air, before stepping up to the podium. Vinales completed the 10 laps in 20 minutes 27.825 seconds, 2.294sec ahead of seven-times winner at the Circuit of the Americas, Marc Marquez on a Gresini Ducati.

Jorge Martin increased his championship lead with third on a Pramac Ducati. 4.399sec behind the winner while teenage rookie Pedro Acosta, on a GasGas, was fourth. Marquez said he was not entirely happy with his performance.

"Was a bit harder than I expected," he said. "In

the first lap I was quite strong but then I start to feel not so good. Then I decide to wait for my moment. I was in front of the group. When Pedro attacked me, I said 'OK, now is the time'. I was half a second faster in the next lap and then I opened a gap."

Martin crashed twice in morning qualifying and started from the second row of the grid. "This morning we took crashes," he said, adding that he too had had problems during the race. "Today was a tough race. I struggled quite a lot in the middle of the race with some issues but to finish on the podium is amazing. We are super-constant. This is the most important thing."

The other Aprilia rider, Spaniard Aleix Espargaro, was fifth with Italian Enea Bastianini sixth for factory Ducati. Italian double reigning world champion Francesco Bagnaia, who performed an unintended wheelie at the start and lost momentum, was eighth.

Martin moved to 67 points in the championship, 24 ahead of Bastianini. South African Brad Binder, who was 12th on a KTM, is another point behind. The battle resumes on Sunday in the 20-lap main race Marquez said he needed to handle some of the corners better.

"Let's see that turn one where we can improve to keep up with Vinales," he said. Martin was also trying to work out how to keep pace with Vinales. "Tomorrow let's go for a better race," he said. — AFP

Scheffler grabs Masters lead while Woods fires nightmare 82

AUGUSTA: Top-ranked Scottie Scheffler battled through a back-nine shootout to seize a one-stroke lead over Collin Morikawa after Saturday's third round of the Masters while Tiger Woods endured a nightmare collapse. Scheffler's remarkable shot-making under pressure, including a clutch eight-foot birdie putt at the 18th hole to shoot a one-under par 71 and stand on seven-under 209, capped a wild round at Augusta National. Scheffler, the 2022 Masters winner, lost the lead with a double-bogey at 10, recaptured it with an eagle at 13 and birdied two of the last four holes, success prompting fist-pumps from the typically mellow Texan.

"The putts were important to me. I try to feed off the positive energy of seeing the ball go in," Scheffler said. "Did a good job of staying patient, had the eagle at 13 and finished well." Scheffler made four birdies, three bogeys, an eagle and a double-bogey to hold off US compatriot Morikawa, a two-time major winner who fired a 69 to stand on 210.

"You give yourself a chance with 18 holes left, that's all you can really do and everything that you practice for," Morikawa said. "It's going to be a grind, and I'm looking forward to that. American Max Homa was third on 211 after a 73 with Sweden's Ludvig Åberg, making his first major appearance, fourth on 212.

Bryson DeChambeau, the 2020 US Open champion, holed out from 77 yards at the 18th for birdie to shoot 75 and stand fifth on 213, four shots back. "Gave myself a chance," DeChambeau said. "If I can make some putts tomorrow, I think I can have a good opportunity." Woods, a 15-time major winner, fired his worst-ever Masters round, a 10-over 82, to stand on 11-over 227 and stumble out of contention for a record-tying sixth green jacket and record top prize of \$3.6 million.

"I was not hitting it very good or putting well," Woods said. "Just hit the ball in all the places that I know I shouldn't hit it." Oddsmakers' darling Scheffler, the 2022 Masters champion, could join Woods as the only players to win the Masters twice while world number one. Scheffler, holed out for a 32-yard birdie chip at the first hole, sank a 34-foot birdie putt at the third before a bogey at the par-3 fourth.

He went over the 10th green with his approach and three-putted for double-bogey then missed a five-foot par putt at 11. Scheffler bounced back with a stunning 31-foot eagle putt at the par-5 13th and an 11-foot birdie putt at the par-5 15th to seize the lead and answered a bogey at 17 with his closing birdie.

Morikawa, the 2020 PGA Championship and 2021 British Open champion, sank a 27-foot birdie putt at the first hole, a six-foot birdie putt at the par-45 second then birdied from 11 feet at the third. After a bogey at the par-3 sixth and birdie at the par-5 eighth, he parred his way to the clubhouse, hitting every fairway for the first time in any major.

Aberg embraces pressure

Åberg, a member of Europe's triumphant 2023 Ryder Cup squad, fired a 70 in his bid to become the first rookie to win the green jacket since Fuzzy Zoeller in 1979. "I think about it all the time," Åberg said of what might happen. "I don't think you should shy away from it. I try to embrace it and be OK with all that comes with it." Woods, who a day earlier made the Masters cut for a record 24th consecutive time, had bogeys on four of his last five holes to soar past his prior worst Masters total -- 78s in the third and fourth rounds in 2022.

"I was not hitting it very good or putting well," Woods said. "I missed a lot of putts. Easy, makable putts." His six-over 42 on the front nine was another Masters career worst. Second-ranked Rory McIlroy, who needed a Masters win for a career grand slam, shot 71 to stand on 219. "I've just got to keep showing up and try to do the right thing," McIlroy said. — AFP

Christie takes Asia badminton crown

SHANGHAI: Indonesia's Jonatan Christie clinched the Badminton Asia Championships crown on Sunday, seeing off Li Shi Feng in two sets in China. Christie defeated home favourite Li 21-15, 21-16 in the tournament finale in the Chinese city of Ningbo.

Earlier China's Wang Zhi Yi swatted aside compatriot Chen Yu Fei 21-19, 21-7 to claim the women's singles title. Wang's victory came after world number one, South Korean An Se-young, was dumped out in the quarter-finals on Friday by China's He Bingjiao.

An, the top seed in Ningbo, will still be favourite to win gold at this summer's Paris Olympics but she has been struggling with a knee injury. The men's doubles title was claimed on Sunday by Chinese pair Liang Wei Keng and Wang Chang, who dispatched Malaysian duo Goh Sze Fei and Nur Izzuddin 21-17, 15-21, 21-10. South Korean partners Baek Ha-na and Lee So-hee took the women's doubles title by beating China's Zhang Shu Xian and Zheng Yu 23-21, 21-12. The prestigious annual tournament was the final chance for Asian players to seal a spot at the Olympics. — AFP



NINGBO: Indonesia's Jonatan Christie poses on the podium after winning the men's singles final match against China's Li Shifeng at the Badminton Asia Championships in Ningbo, in eastern China's Zhejiang province on April 14. — AFP

Nadal returns to action in Barcelona

BARCELONA: Rafael Nadal said it will be "a joy" to return to action for the first time since January when he takes part in the Barcelona Open next week where he is a 12-time champion. The 22-time Grand Slam winner has played just once, in an exhibition match, since he felt a hip injury flare-up during a quarter-final defeat by Jordan Thompson in Brisbane on the eve of the Australian Open.

"I'm happy to be here, of course, Barcelona is a place that has brought me a great deal of joy, and where I have spent periods of my life," said Nadal at Saturday's draw ceremony. Nadal will play 63rd-ranked Flavio Cobolli of Italy in his opening match.

Nadal, who turns 38 in June, will be looking for a problem-free return as he builds towards seeking a record-extending 15th French Open title. The former world number one has seen his ranking slip to 646 after missing all of the 2023 season following the Australian Open. "Over the last two years I've had very few days on tour, so spending days here, seeing people, being able to practise with players is a joy," added Nadal. "I'm keen to carry on. The tournament has some incredible players."

The 2022 and 2023 Barcelona champion Carlos Alcaraz will begin his clay-court campaign after missing the Monte Carlo Masters due to a right arm injury. World number three Alcaraz is top seed and has a bye in the first round before facing either China's Zhang Zhizhen or Luca Van Assche of France. Nadal has never played Cobolli, 16 years his junior. If he gets past him, he will face the tougher task of 11th-ranked Australian Alex de Minaur in the second round. There is the prospect of a tantalising semi-final meeting with Alcaraz on the centre court which now bears Nadal's name. — AFP

Sports

Champions League chasers Juve and Bologna held to bore draws

Torino stay ninth after Saturday's stalemate

TURIN: Juventus and Bologna were both held to goalless draws on Saturday as the Serie A clubs' bids for Champions League football were slowed by Torino and Monza. A Turin derby stalemate and Bologna dropping points for the second straight week left third-placed Juve four points ahead of Bologna on an uneventful evening in Italy's top flight.

Italian clubs' good performances in Europe this season means Serie A is almost guaranteed an extra place in next year's revamped version of the continent's top club competition. That should ensure that Juve will return to the European elite come September. They are 13 points ahead of Atalanta who are sixth and face Verona on Monday night.

However, Massimiliano Allegri's side have won just twice in their last 11 matches and are 19 points behind champions-elect Inter Milan after being title challengers in January. "We haven't obtained our goals yet... it's a football goal for those of us involved with the team but an economic one for the club," said Allegri, whose team missed out on European football due to a points deduction last year.

"If you have three or four chances in the first half and don't take them, in particular against a Torino side that has the fourth best defensive record in Serie A, it becomes difficult." Juve did not do enough to win their city derby but Dusan Vlahovic should have scored in the sixth minute when he struck the post from point-blank range after great work down the right from Federico Chiesa. Vlahovic was also denied by a smart stop from Vanja Milinkovic-Savic just after the hour mark, while Duvan Zapata netted seconds after half-time for Torino only for his



TURIN: Torino's Serbian goalkeeper #32 Vanja Milinkovic-Savic (R) fights for the ball with Juventus' French midfielder #25 Adrien Rabiot (C) during the Italian Serie A football match between Torino and Juventus at the Grande Torino Stadium in Turin. — AFP

goal to be ruled out for Raoul Bellanova's foul on Filip Kostic.

Torino stay ninth after Saturday's stalemate, five points behind Atalanta and the Europa Conference League place. Bologna are trying for a first-ever spot in the Champions League, although they played one round in the old European Cup in 1964, the same year that they most recently won Serie A.

a differentiation heat. He was followed by riders Enaz Al-Enaz, Ghazi Al-Jraiwi, Ali Al-Kharafi and Fahad Al-Faleh. Fawaz Al-Subaie was happy with his win following the tough competition he faced. He said Kuwait Equestrian sport is on the rise and improving from one season to another due to the support of KEF and the major role of the private sector in addition to the government role.

Kuwait club rider Ali Jassim Al-Kharafi won the minor prize heat at the height of 145 cm, while rider Nadia Al-Mutawa won the sixth heat at 125 cm, during the second day competition. First day competition saw rider Abdullah Al-Awadhi winning the fifth heat at 140 cm, while Abdullah Al-Roudhan won the fourth at 130 cm. The league competitions will be concluded with the seventh round on May 4th.

Fawaz Al-Subaie wins sixth round of the Equestrian League

KUWAIT: Subhan Club Rider Fawaz Al-Subaie won the sixth round of Kuwait Equestrian Federation League, following tough competition with other riders during the championship that was held on Friday and Saturday. The league is sponsored by Zain, KGL and KIB. Al-Subaie was able to go through the grand prize heat at a height of 145 cm in 35.45 seconds following



Vos grabs Amstel Gold women's race

VALKENBURG: Marianne Vos grabbed victory on the line in a shortened Amstel Gold women's race on Sunday as Lorena Wiebes sat up, raising her arms in victory, just before the finish. The race was held up for an hour, after an accident involving a police motorbike escorting the peloton. A policeman "was injured following a collision with a car on the Bergseweg while supervising the Amstel Gold Race", tweeted the Limburg police on X. The riders held an improvised picnic before setting off again on a shortened route that avoided the crash site. Vos, who rides for Visma-Lease a Bike, exploited the error by her Dutch compatriot Wiebes of SD Worx to win the sprint. — AFP

Today's Matches		
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE		
Chelsea v FC Everton		22:00
beIN Sports HD 1		
SPANISH LEAGUE		
Osasuna v Valencia C.F		22:00
beIN Sports HD 3		
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE SERIE A		
ACF Fiorentina v Genoa CFC		19:30
beIN Sports 2		
Atalanta BC v Hellas Verona		21:45
beIN Sports		

Madrid see off Mallorca to stay on title course

MADRID: Aurelien Tchouameni's long-range strike earned Real Madrid a 1-0 victory over Mallorca on Saturday that kept them eight points clear of Barcelona at the top of La Liga ahead of the upcoming Clasico. The France midfielder, who is suspended for the second leg of Madrid's Champions League quarter-final away to Manchester City next week, scored three minutes into the second half with a deflected 25-metre drive.

Jude Bellingham rattled the crossbar in the first half with a rasping effort from just outside the area as coach Carlo Ancelotti reshuffled his attack with Wednesday's trip to England in mind, leaving out Vinicius Junior and Rodrygo. Tchouameni's third goal of the season put Madrid ahead, with Brahim Diaz denied a second by the legs of Mallorca goalkeeper Predrag Rajkovic and Fede Valverde's attempt cleared off the line. Vinicius appeared off the bench for the last 30 minutes but Rodrygo and Toni Kroos were unused substitutes after a thrilling 3-3 draw with City in Tuesday's first leg.

Sergi Darder's spectacular dipping shot forced a flying stop from Andriy Lunin as Madrid extended their unbeaten league run to 25 games, keeping Barcelona a safe distance behind ahead of next week's Clasico in the Spanish capital.

"It's a very important victory, which brings us closer to the title. We're on a good run and now we're going to think about Wednesday, that we have time to recover well and try to do our best," said Ancelotti. "Having an advantage before (next) Sunday's game is very important and that was the goal." Copa del Rey runners-up Mallorca stay in 15th, six points above the relegation zone.

'Game on' says Mullins after National glory

AINTREE: Irish trainer Willie Mullins' win in the Grand National sets him up nicely to be crowned British champion jumps trainer and emulate legendary compatriot Vincent O'Brien 70 years ago. I Am Maximus' impressive victory on Saturday at Aintree resulted in Mullins rising to the top of the standings, over £50,000 (\$62,000) ahead of Dan Skelton with three-time defending champion Paul Nicholls close behind. The British season reaches its climax with Finals Day at Sandown on Saturday week. Whilst Mullins views I Am Maximus as good enough to win him a third successive Cheltenham Gold Cup next year — though his two-time champion Galopin des Champs might have other ideas — his immediate goal is more modest fare as he seeks to tick another box in his lengthening list of achievements.

"It's game on I think, isn't it?" said a hoarse-voiced Mullins, who added he needed "some celebratory lubrication" to put it right. "Sandown, Ayr, Perth, wherever we can see a prize — I think we have to go for it now.

"I'm getting as much fun out of having a go at it now as anyone." The 67-year-old is in the box seat for an 18th Irish trainers title — he leads perennial runner-up Gordon Elliott by over 1.5 million euros (\$1.6 million) — but he said the British crown had not been a target. However, nine winners at the Cheltenham Festival — including the Gold Cup and Champion Hurdle — and the National puts him on course to become only the second foreign-based trainer to land the coveted prize.

O'Brien, who was to go on to become one of the greatest trainers of all time on the flat, won back to back titles in 1953 and 1954. Mullins also broke a career century of winners landmark at the Cheltenham Festival "Fantastic. We never set out to have 100 winners at the festival," he said. "No one thought it was possible. We're gobsmacked it happened. "I would love to win the trainers' championship. "I didn't set out at the start of the season to win the championship. "Vincent O'Brien did it in the 50s, and it's something different to do, and I would like to win it."

Mullins, who remains humble and is prone to praising his "wonderful staff for the success", said he had been encouraged by I Am Maximus' owner JP McManus to go for the title in the past three years. However, he said ensuring he did not take the eye off the ball back in Ireland had been his priority. "I always think, just mind how things go on at home rather than spread yourself too thin and come to England every second weekend, and maybe leaving yourself wide open to have a bad season. — AFP

Barcelona, who are desperately trying to force their way back into the title race, matched Madrid's result with a 1-0 win of their own at third-bottom Cadiz. Joao Felix's clever overhead late in the first half secured the points as coach Xavi Hernandez made sweeping changes to the team that beat Paris Saint-Germain 3-2 in the first leg of their Champions League quarter-final.

The Portugal international led the attack in the absence of the suspended Robert Lewandowski, acrobatically hooking in the only goal after a Cadiz defender's looping header from a corner fell directly to him. Fermin Lopez had an effort scrambled off the line and Marc-Andre ter Stegen's sprawling save to claw away a Diadie Samassekou piledriver preserved a sixth successive clean sheet in the league for the visitors. Atletico Madrid completed a good four days as they followed their midweek Champions League victory over Borussia Dortmund with a 3-1 win over third-placed Girona. Antoine Griezmann scored twice as Diego Simeone's men moved to within four points of their opponents and pulled five clear of fifth-placed Athletic Bilbao in the race for Champions League qualification. — AFP

Palma: Real Mallorca's Spanish midfielder #5 Omar Mascarell (L) vies with Real Madrid's Uruguayan midfielder #15 Federico Valverde during the Spanish league football match between RCD Mallorca and Real Madrid CF at the Mallorca Son Moix stadium in Palma de Mallorca. — AFP

Palma: Real Mallorca's Spanish midfielder #5 Omar Mascarell (L) vies with Real Madrid's Uruguayan midfielder #15 Federico Valverde during the Spanish league football match between RCD Mallorca and Real Madrid CF at the Mallorca Son Moix stadium in Palma de Mallorca. — AFP

Palma: Real Mallorca's Spanish midfielder #5 Omar Mascarell (L) vies with Real Madrid's Uruguayan midfielder #15 Federico Valverde during the Spanish league football match between RCD Mallorca and Real Madrid CF at the Mallorca Son Moix stadium in Palma de Mallorca. — AFP



PALMA: Real Mallorca's Spanish midfielder #5 Omar Mascarell (L) vies with Real Madrid's Uruguayan midfielder #15 Federico Valverde during the Spanish league football match between RCD Mallorca and Real Madrid CF at the Mallorca Son Moix stadium in Palma de Mallorca. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

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

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

Hospitals

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

Change of Name

I, KADAPA BABAI AH (old name), resident of D.No.26, Nallaguttapalli, Ramapuram, Annamaya District, Andhra Pradesh. Henceforth be known as **KADAPA ABDULLA** (new name). (#5194 – 15-4-2024)

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

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 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

Liverpool's title challenge in tatters after Crystal Palace defeat

Pereira at the double as Fulham down West Ham



LIVERPOOL: Crystal Palace's French striker #14 Jean-Philippe Mateta (C) shoots past Liverpool's Brazilian goalkeeper #01 Alisson Becker (R) but Liverpool's Scottish defender #26 Andrew Robertson (L) clears off the line during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Crystal Palace at Anfield in Liverpool. — AFP

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's Premier League title challenge suffered a potentially fatal blow as Crystal Palace won 1-0 at Anfield on Sunday. A first home league defeat in 29 games for the Reds leaves Jurgen Klopp's men two points behind Manchester City and level with Arsenal, who can go top with victory over Aston Villa later on Sunday.

Eberechi Eze's early goal handed the Eagles a vital win in their battle for survival as they move eight points clear of the drop zone. However, Liverpool's final season under Klopp is unravelling. The League Cup winners were on course for a quadruple just a few weeks ago.

But after crashing out of the FA Cup to Manchester United, Liverpool succumbed to a first home defeat in any competition for 14 months when Atalanta stormed Anfield on Thursday to take a 3-0 first leg lead in their Europa League quarter-final tie.

Klopp's men have now won just three of their last eight games in all competitions and are showing clear signs of fatigue after already having played 51 games this season. Slow starts have been a recurring theme of Liverpool's struggles of late and they were again forced to come from behind.

Alisson Becker made his long-awaited return in goal for the home side but he had no chance when

Eze was left with a simple finish from Tyrick Mitchell's cross. Palace were millimetres away from a second moments later when Andy Robertson produced a remarkable goalline clearance to deny Jean-Philippe Mateta after Virgil van Dijk's slip let the French striker through.

Liverpool had to resort to set-pieces to put the Palace defence under pressure in the first half. Wataru Endo's scuffed effort came back off the crossbar. Dean Henderson then produced a stunning save to prevent Luis Diaz levelling at the back post with an acrobatic effort.

Klopp reacted at half-time with the introduction of Dominik Szoboszlai and Trent Alexander-Arnold's return after two months out quickly followed when Conor Bradley went down injured. Diogo Jota and Cody Gakpo were also sent on for the rescue mission from the bench.

Jota looked certain to equalise when picked out by Szoboszlai but the Portuguese forward's finish hit Nathaniel Clyne on the line with the goal gaping. At the other end, Alisson showed why he is one of the world's best goalkeepers with a remarkable stop to turn Mateta's strike over from point-blank range.

Liverpool galloped immediately up the other end and Curtis Jones slotted wide with just Henderson to

beat. Mohamed Salah had one final chance to at least snatch a point, but his goalbound effort was brilliantly blocked by Mitchell in stoppage time.

Unless Liverpool produce a stunning fightback against Atalanta in midweek, Klopp will have just two more games at Anfield before his momentous reign comes to an end. But what looked like it could be a glorious goodbye is now at danger of turning into a damp squib.

Meanwhile, Andreas Pereira scored twice as Fulham won 2-0 away to West Ham in the Premier League on Sunday to inflict fresh damage on their London rivals' hopes of European football.

This defeat for West Ham came hot on the heels of a 2-0 loss to Bundesliga leaders Bayer Leverkusen in the first leg of their Europa League quarter-final on Thursday, leaving them with a tough task in the return tie.

And Sunday's reverse meant the Hammers missed the chance to go up to sixth in the Premier League and into contention for a European place next season. For Fulham, having won the reverse fixture 5-0 at Craven Cottage in December, victory gave them a first league double over West Ham since 1966.

West Ham should have gone ahead in the opening moments when full-back Vladimir Coufal burst into

the area and latched onto Lucas Paqueta's ball over the top. Coufal's initial effort was blocked by Bernd Leno and when the ball rebounded to Michail Antonio, the striker blazed over from eight yards.

West Ham looked the more threatening side early on, but it was Fulham who opened the scoring in the ninth minute with their first attack of the game. The Hammers' Konstantinos Mavropanos tried to bring down a deep cross from Alex Iwobi but succeeded only in gifting the ball to Pereira, who was given a free run by Nayef Aguerd.

That left the Brazilian with the simple task of taking the ball past Hammers keeper Lukasz Fabianski and shooting into an empty net. In the second half, Fabianski did well to tip Alex Iwobi's shot wide but he could do nothing to stop Pereira doubling Fulham's lead in the 72nd minute.

Paqueta was dispossessed in midfield by Joao Palhinha and Pereira laid the ball off to Rodrigo Muniz. He played in Iwobi, and his cross found Pereira, who made no mistake with a simple finish. Defeat for West Ham was made worse when teenage substitute George Eardley was carried off on a stretcher after suffering a serious head injury in a collision with team-mate Edson Alvarez, just two minutes into his Premier League debut. — AFP



Kuwait Juniors Football team

Kuwait participates in Doha AFC U23

DOHA: The AFC U23 Asian Cup, the biennial continental championship for men under 23, is set to launch Monday in Qatari capital, Doha. Competing for the title will be 16 teams, including Kuwait. The tournament, organized by the Asian Football Confederation Games is scheduled to last until May 3. Participating teams have been split into four groups, with the top two

qualifying for quarterfinals. Kuwait was grouped with Uzbekistan, Vietnam and Malaysia. The top three teams qualify for the 2024 summer Olympics in Paris, while the fourth team has an opportunity to qualify after facing off with African fourth place winners. Six Arab teams will be competing for the chance to qualify to the Olympics: Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Iraq. The first edition of the games took place in Oman in 2013 where Iraq was crowned champion, while the Saudi Arabia national team was champion of the latest edition, 2022 Uzbekistan. — KUNA

Man Utd draw at Bournemouth

BOURNEMOUTH: Manchester United's chances of Champions League football next season took another battering as Bruno Fernandes' double could only salvage a 2-2 draw at Bournemouth on Saturday.

Twice the Cherries led through Dominic Solanke and Justin Kluivert and Bournemouth were denied the opportunity to win the game at the death after a controversial VAR review overturned the decision to award the home side a penalty. A point leaves United still 10 adrift of Aston Villa and Tottenham in the race for a top-four finish with six games to go.

The Red Devils have now won just once in their last seven Premier League games to leave Erik ten Hag's future as United boss next season in doubt. "We have to win our games and we have dropped too many unnecessary points in the last few games," said Ten Hag.

"The opponent was struggling because they gave so much energy in the first half and there were so many gaps but we didn't benefit from it." Once again it was United's defensive deficiencies that were exploited as Bournemouth just missed out on a famous double after winning 3-0 at Old Trafford earlier in the season.

French teenager Willy Kambwala kept his place at centre-back with Raphael Varane, Lisandro Martinez and Victor Lindelof among those absent due to injury. But Kambwala had a moment to forget for the



BOURNEMOUTH: Bournemouth's Ukrainian defender #27 Illia Zabarnyi (R) vies with Manchester United's English striker #10 Marcus Rashford (C) during the English Premier League football match between Bournemouth and Manchester United at the Vitality Stadium in Bournemouth, southern England. — AFP

opening goal as his slip allowed Solanke to pick his spot and fire home his 19th goal of the season.

United had barely threatened as an attacking force before they levelled against the run of play on 31 minutes. Alejandro Garnacho's deflected cross fell perfectly into the path of Fernandes to volley into the roof of the net.

Bournemouth were back in front within five minutes as this time Kluivert took advantage of the acres of space offered by the United defence inside the box to drill low past Andre Onana. Ten Hag's future as United boss becomes more unsure with every passing week and poor performance. — AFP