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Kuwait, Jordan urge regional peace

Amir concludes state visit to Amman, thanks King Abdullah



AMMAN: Jordan's King Abdullah II bids farewell to HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at the airport on April 24, 2024, at the conclusion of HH the Amir's two-day state visit. — KUNA photos (See Page 3)

AMMAN: HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Jordanian King Abdullah II reiterated on Wednesday support for regional security and stability, along with dialogue and diplomatic solutions for conflicts. This came in a joint statement issued by both sides following HH the Amir's two-day state visit to Amman. They also underlined the significance of opening communication channels for building bridges of partnership and cooperation, promoting values of solidarity, tolerance and peaceful coexistence, ensuring sustainable regional growth, stability and peace, and respecting states' sovereignty.

Both leaders also stressed that it is essential to work to reduce tensions in the Middle East, fend off military escalation and find fair, all-out and lasting peaceful solutions to regional conflicts. They called on the international community, particularly the UN Security Council, to adopt a resolution imposing an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, protecting civilians, delivering humanitarian aid to Gaza, staving off further escalation, and rejecting war spillover, incursions into Rafah and displacement.

The leaders of Kuwait and Jordan further reaffirmed that Palestine is a central cause and that a fair solution would fulfill all legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, based on the two-state approach

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Saudi King undergoes tests

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's King Salman entered hospital for "routine examinations" on Wednesday, the Royal Court said. The tests were taking place at King Faisal Specialist Hospital in Jeddah and were expected to last "a few hours", the Royal Court said, according to the official Saudi Press Agency. — AFP

Iran cuts Syria presence

BEIRUT: Iran has reduced its military footprint in Syria after a succession of strikes blamed on the Zionist entity, a source close to Hezbollah and a war monitor said Wednesday. "Iran withdrew its forces from southern Syria," including both Quneitra and Daraa provinces, the source said. Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Iranian forces had withdrawn from Damascus and southern Syria. — AFP

Vaccines have saved 154m lives

GENEVA: Global immunization efforts have saved at least 154 million lives in the past 50 years, the World Health Organization said Wednesday, adding most of those to benefit were infants. That is the equivalent of six lives saved every minute of every year of the half century, the UN health agency said. — AFP

Bird flu found in milk

WASHINGTON: US health authorities said Tuesday they had discovered fragments of bird flu virus in the nation's pasteurized cow milk supply during the course of a large study, but the samples likely posed no health risk to humans. An outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) has spread among dairy cattle herds throughout the country and infected one human, who had mild symptoms. The H5N1 strain of HPAI has killed millions of poultry during the current wave. — AFP

Zionists strike Gaza, Lebanon after US approves military aid

GAZA: The Zionist entity said Wednesday its forces were carrying out "offensive action" in Lebanon after launching cross-border strikes targeting Hamas ally Hezbollah as Zionist aircraft and tanks pounded the Gaza Strip. Since the Zionist-Hamas war erupted on Oct 7, Lebanon's powerful Iran-backed Hezbollah group and Zionist forces have traded near-daily fire, heightening fears of a wider conflict breaking out.

In war-battered Gaza, there has been mounting concern over Zionist plans to launch an assault on the southern Gaza city of Rafah, where 1.5 million people have sought refuge, many in makeshift encampments. Aid groups warn any invasion would create catastrophic conditions for civilians, but

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GAZA: A woman searches through the rubble of a collapsed building in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on April 24, 2024 following overnight Zionist air strikes. — AFP

UAE allots \$544m for rain repairs, says lessons 'learned'

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates announced \$544 million to repair the homes of Emirati families on Wednesday after last week's record rains caused widespread flooding and brought the oil-rich Gulf state to a standstill. "We learned great lessons in dealing with severe rains," said Prime Minister Sheikh

Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum after a cabinet meeting, adding that ministers approved "two billion dirhams to deal with damage to the homes of citizens". Wednesday's announcement comes more than a week after the unprecedented deluge lashed the desert country, turning streets into rivers and hobbling Dubai airport, the world's busiest for international passengers. "A ministerial committee was assigned to follow up on this file... and disburse compensation in cooperation with the rest of the federal and local authorities," said Sheikh Mohammed, who is also the ruler of Dubai, which was one of the worst hit of the UAE's seven sheikhdoms.

The rainfall, the UAE's heaviest since records be-

gan 75 years ago, killed at least four people, including three Filipino workers and one Emirati. UAE authorities have not released an official toll. Cabinet ministers also formed a second committee to log infrastructure damage and propose solutions. Sheikh Mohammed said in a post on X, formerly Twitter. "The situation was unprecedented in its severity but we are a country that learns from every experience," he said.

Climatologist Friederike Otto, a specialist in assessing the role of global warming on extreme weather events, told AFP it was "highly likely" that the rainfall "was made heavier by human-caused climate change".

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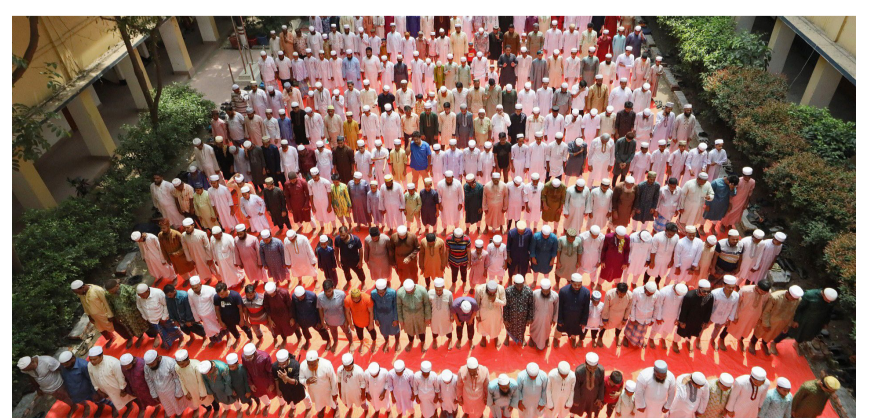
Southern Asia scorched by extreme heat

MANILA: Extreme heat scorched parts of South and Southeast Asia Wednesday, prompting schools across the Philippines to suspend classes, heat warnings in the Thai capital and worshippers in Bangladesh to pray for rain. The high temperatures were recorded just a day after the United Nations said Asia was the region

that suffered the most disasters from climate and weather hazards in 2023, with floods and storms the chief causes of casualties and economic losses.

Extensive scientific research has found climate change is causing heatwaves to become longer, more frequent and more intense. "It's so hot you can't breathe," said Erlin Tumaron, 60, who works at a Philippine seaside resort in Cavite province, south of Manila, where the heat index reached 47 degrees Celsius on Tuesday. "It's surprising our pools are still empty. You would expect people to come and take a swim, but it seems they're reluctant

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DHAKA: Muslims offer special prayers for rains in the Bangladeshi capital on April 24, 2024 as an extreme heatwave hit the country. — AFP



Local



Kilmitain opening panel discusses with Marketing Manager at Gulf Bank Najlaa Al-Essa. – Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Photo captures the audience during the event.

Khaleejesque launches Kilmitain event to empower local creative industries

Events aim to foster creativity, innovation and cultural exchange

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Khaleejesque is a platform dedicated to empowering and showcasing creative industries in the Gulf region, with a special focus on Kuwait. Through events like Kilmitain, Khaleejesque aims to foster creativity, innovation and cultural exchange, providing a space for artists, designers and entrepreneurs to thrive and connect with a larger audience. Emcee Fatimah Al-Yakoob welcomed the audience and expressed special thanks to media partners Kuwait Times and Kuwait News. Yakoob added that the program's schedule will be full, featuring engaging dialogues and workshops.

Founder and Editor-in-Chief of Khaleejesque Sheikhah Fouz Al-Sabah greeted the guests and explained the purpose of Kilmitain, stating that since 2009, Khaleejesque has been covering creativity in Kuwait and Gulf countries. She noted the recent unprecedented progress in the creative sector, prompting questions about Kuwait's current status and plans.

Therefore, they invited both private and public sectors, creative organizations, government bodies and freelancers to discuss Kuwait's plan and direction in creative in-



Najlaa Al-Rumaih



Sheikha Fouz Al-Sabah



Fatimah Al-Yakoob



Najlaa Al-Essa

dustries. They invited them to share their news, aiming to listen during the panel discussions and hoping the event would be a connecting point for collaboration and development in empowering creative industries in Kuwait. She concluded by thanking the attendees and partners, including Kuwait Times and Kuwait News, Zain Group and Gulf Bank.

The Kilmitain event started with panel discussions, beginning with Marketing Manager at Gulf Bank Najlaa Al-Essa, who talked about Gulf Bank's belief in and focus on enhancing creative and marketing thinking, as well as spotlighting investments in Kuwaiti youth. She mentioned Gulf Bank's presence at the event was to encourage Kuwaiti youth to present creative ideas.

Gulf Bank has set up a board inviting youth to share their ideas, which will be reviewed by the bank for suitable marketing needs.

She emphasized the idea owners would have the opportunity to implement their ideas with Gulf Bank's support, citing Gulf Bank's numerous success stories stemming from such seeds planted with creative youth at such events, where

the fruits were later harvested. Branding and Advertising Specialist at Zain Najlaa Al-Rumaih mentioned that one of the main reasons motivating Zain to support creativity is their investment in and collaboration with local talents to enhance creativity in Kuwait and encourage them to pursue their dreams, whether through material or moral support.



Chairman of the Board of Cancer Aware Nation Dr Khalid Al-Saleh addresses the medical practitioners.



CAN launches new specialized courses for dentists, nurses

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Board of Cancer Aware Nation (CAN), Dr. Khalid Al-Saleh, spoke about the launch of new specialized courses for dentists and

nurses during the month of April in cooperation with the Health Ministry. Al-Saleh said the courses aimed at training dentists and nurses on communication skills with patients and their families, particularly cancer patients.

Al-Saleh said 1,450 dentists have been trained on early detection of oral cancer, and 2,635 nurses were also trained. The courses are within the framework of carrying on with CAN's approach to achieve its goal of promoting cancer awareness, which includes specialized courses for dentists about visual detection of oral tumors.

Al-Saleh said CAN trains nurses on communication skills with cancer patients and their families,

in addition to having an integrated program presented by oncologists to the trainees that includes identification of cancer, its stages, and the rate of occurrence in Kuwait and around the world, as well as means of diagnosis, treatment, prevention, early detection and the rate of cure.

Al-Saleh said caring for training nurses is due to their proximity to the patient and his family, as well as doctors. Nurses are the ones who administer prescribed medicines, so they are the pillars of delivering treatment. Dr. Khalid Al-Saleh thanked the Health Ministry for its interest in training its employees to refresh their knowledge and give them the required skills they needed.

GCC, EU discuss security and ties

BRUSSELS: Kuwait Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah participated in a high-level forum on regional security convened by the European Union in the duchy of Luxembourg. The event witnessed the participation of member states from both the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the European Union (EU), which focused on enhancing regional security and stability through cooperation and coordination efforts. The Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Jassem Al-Budaiwi, explored with the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, the relations between the GCC and EU. The Secretariat General of the GCC said in a statement that the discussions were held by the two men in Luxembourg on the sidelines of the High-Level Forum on Regional Security and Cooperation between the EU and the GCC, where they addressed the forum's agenda.

Al-Budaiwi emphasized that the meeting also served as a platform to review the relations between the GCC and the EU and to discuss issues of mutual interest in addressing common challenges and strengthening dialogue and cooperation across various fields. Moreover, he noted that the meeting also witnessed an exchange of views on the situation in the Middle East, particularly in light of recent developments and escalations in the region. He stressed the agreement and commitment of both sides to the importance of supporting efforts to

achieve peace and stability in the region and to work on urging all parties concerned to de-escalate tensions. The meeting concluded with both sides reaffirming their commitment to continued communication and joint work between the GCC and the EU to elevate relations to levels that serve the common interests of both sides and contribute to enhancing regional and international stability.

Meanwhile, the EU Foreign Affairs Council discussed on Monday the situation in the Middle East, with particular attention to the ever-worsening humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and the risk of escalation in the wider region. The Council once again stressed that everyone in the region needs to exercise restraint and

take steps to de-escalate. Further steps were agreed in relation to Iran's destabilizing activities in the region.

Josep Borrell, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, said in the press conference at the end of the meeting that they "have reached a political agreement in order to enlarge and expand the existing drone regime to impose sanctions on Iran in order to cover missiles and their potential transfers to Russia; this includes missile production; second, to expand the geographical area of this framework to cover drone and missile deliveries not only to Russia but to the whole region of the Middle East and the Red Sea; and third, to expand the list of prohibited drone components."—KUNA



Kuwait Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah participated in a luncheon ceremony hosted by Luxembourg Foreign Minister Xavier Bettel on Monday.

News in Brief

KIPCO eyes investment boom

KUWAIT: Kuwait Projects Company (KIPCO) plans to focus on investment growth as the cornerstone of its future plans and endeavors, the chief executive of the country's largest listed investment firm, Sheikhah Adana Al-Sabah, said on Tuesday. KIPCO is hard at work in its efforts to keep investment growth steady and perpetual, the official said as she outlined some of the company's most recent accomplishments, saying the company's future plans will revolve around policies that promote "innovative investment." On revenue growth, she said the process has been on an upward trajectory, thanks in part to key mergers and other similar business decisions that allowed KIPCO's net asset value to reach KD 603 million (\$1.9 billion).—KUNA

Int'l Telecom conference

MANAMA: The International Telecommunication Institute conference in the Middle East and North Africa region kicked off Tuesday in Bahrain, with participation from Kuwait. The conference will discuss the importance of the digital economy and will be attended by members of the Kuwait Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA). The one-day conference, hosted by the Bahrain Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, aims to discuss the most challenging digital and technological issues in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. The conference included discussions with representatives on the digital economy, safety when using the Internet, protecting society, and finding a regulatory model for artificial intelligence (AI). They also discussed protecting data privacy in light of the constant use of the Internet and cybersecurity measures.—KUNA

Int'l Day of Multilateralism

KUWAIT: Kuwait affirmed on Wednesday the importance of group work in facing common challenges, especially in light of recent armed conflicts and humanitarian crises. This came in a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the occasion of the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace. "Kuwait appreciates the role of international organizations and groups, especially the United Nations, in leading the international movement to confront the unprecedented challenges that affect everyone, including international relief and humanitarian work to alleviate the suffering of people due to armed conflicts and natural disasters," said the statement. "Kuwait renews its firm commitment to the principle of multilateralism and diplomacy as basic tools for maintaining international peace and order, calling on all countries to cooperate closely with the United Nations and other organizations and groups to adhere to the principles of multilateralism in order to achieve a more peaceful and prosperous world for all," it added.—KUNA



AMMAN: Jordanian King Abdullah II greets Kuwait's Amir HH Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as he departs on Wednesday after a two-day state visit to Amman. — KUNA photos

Amir's visit 'key' for Arab action to end Gaza war

Jordanian press highlights Sheikh Mishal's state visit to Amman

AMMAN: The visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Jordan headlined Wednesday's news in the Hashemite Kingdom, welcoming him to the country. The headlines included extensive coverage of His Highness the Amir's visit, articles, and reports discussing the importance of his visit, which strengthens ties between Kuwait and Jordan. The Jordanian news posted a picture of His Highness the Amir and the Jordanian King Abdullah II, who bestowed Kuwait's Amir with the Order of Al-Hussain bin Ali, as an embodiment of the strong bilateral ties and on his first visit to Jordan.

Media hail Amir's trip

Meanwhile, Jordanian editors-in-chief have described His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's visit to Amman as an important step towards Arab coordination for pressing the Zionist occupation to end its aggression on the Gaza Strip. In separate statements to KUNA, they

noted that His Highness the Amir's visit would also strengthen economic cooperation between the two sisterly countries.

"His Highness the Amir's visit comes at a delicate time in the region, in light of the ongoing Zionist occupation's aggression on Gaza," Editor-in-Chief of the Jordanian Al-Rai newspaper Dr. Khaled Al-Shogran told KUNA. He pointed out that the leadership of the two sisterly countries share identical views of the recent regional developments. He noted that the balanced and moderate foreign policies of Kuwait and Jordan play an important role in international and regional politics.

Al-Shogran stressed that Jordan highly appreciates the historical stances of the Kuwaiti leaderships, which have always sided with the Palestinian rights. The stances of the two countries have also effectively contributed to enhancing joint Arab action and Arab economic cooperation, he said, pointing to Kuwait's hosting of the Arab Economic Summit in 2009, a turn-

ing point in the efforts to ameliorate Arab economic cooperation and trade exchange.

He highly appreciated Kuwait's support to Jordan's development and economy over the past decades. "This support embodied the deep historical relations between the two countries," he said. For his part, Editor-in-Chief of Al-Ghad newspaper Makram Tarawneh told KUNA that the visit of His Highness the Amir consolidates bilateral relations.

He commended Kuwaiti-Jordanian relations as a role model for Arab relations in political, economic, social and security fields. "This visit provides an opportunity for the leaderships of the two countries to continue their consultations and coordination on the current difficult regional developments," Tarawneh said. He affirmed that the talks in Amman would focus on restoring stability in the Middle East and ending the war on Gaza. Tarawneh added that the two leaders are also keen on upgrading the partnership between their countries.

Kuwait has the largest foreign investments in the Kingdom, he pointed out, adding that this is appreciated by the government and people of Jordan. Tarawneh said that Jordanians are hoping His Highness the Amir's visit would help further enhance cooperation in various domains to serve the interests of the two countries at this sensitive political and economic stage. Meanwhile, Editor-in-Chief of Alawal News website Usama Al-Rantisi said that the visit of His Highness the Amir to Jordan comes after about 200 days of Zionist occupation's genocidal war on the Palestinian people.

"This visit demonstrates the depth of the Jordanian-Kuwaiti relations, which is characterized by coordination and understanding of the overall political and international situation," he said. He affirmed the similarity of their stances with regard to the occupation's aggression against the Gaza Strip and the regional developments. Al-Rantisi hoped that the visit of His Highness the Amir would help boost economic cooperation and increase Kuwaiti investments in Jordan. — KUNA

Embassy celebrates Bangladesh National Day, 50 years of ties

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: Celebrating the Independence and National Day of Bangladesh along with the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh-Kuwait relations, the Bangladesh Embassy in Kuwait hosted a reception program at the Crowne Plaza on Tuesday. The Independence of Bangladesh was achieved through a long political struggle for 23 years and ended with the country's glorious victory on December 16, 1971 - a remarkable milestone that changed the destiny of the nation forever. In his speech, Ambassador of Bangladesh Maj Gen Md Ashikuzzaman recalled with great reverence the greatest Bengali of all time, attributing to him the nation's cherished freedom. "At this moment, I remember with profound respect the architect of our independent Bangladesh, Father of our Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, under whose firm and far-sighted leadership, we got an independent state," expressed the Ambassador, reflecting on the profound significance of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's legacy.

Following this historic milestone, Kuwait emerged as the first Gulf nation to recognize Bangladesh immediately after its declaration of independence, a gesture for which the ambassador expressed deep gratitude. It was the beginning of what the ambassador liked to refer to as "deep and historic ties of friendship," between the two nations - a bond that has endured through the years. After the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1974, Bangladesh and Kuwait have enjoyed excellent bilateral cooperation in a wide range of areas, which further strengthened their relationship.

This collaboration spans political, economic, trade, investment, manpower, agriculture, education, tourism, and defense sectors. Furthermore, Ashikuzzaman underscored the special military cooperation between Bangladesh and Kuwait, which commenced following the Liberation of Kuwait in 1991 and continues to this day. Presently, he said that approximately 5,000 Bangladesh Armed Forces Personnel are deployed alongside the Kuwait Armed Forces.



Ambassador of Bangladesh, his wife, Sheikh Feras Al-Sabah, and the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan cut the cake.

He noted that both nations have vowed to identify new areas of mutual cooperation for their mutual benefit. These areas include food security, health security, climate change, renewable energy, green technology, ICT, and digitalization. Being a developing country, presently, Ashikuzzaman noted that Bangladesh is the second largest economy in South Asia. In continuation of this, comes Vision 2041 "Smart Bangladesh," a prosperous plan that has been announced to turn Bangladesh into a developed and knowledge-based prosperous country.

To materialize this vision, among many efforts, government of Bangladesh has established 100 Special Economic Zones to attract the potential investors, said Ashikuzzaman. Speaking of Bangladesh foreign policy "Friendship to all, malice towards none," the ambassador highlighted Bangladesh efforts in multiple humanitarian aspects such as sheltering millions of Rohingyas, displaced Myanmar nationals in Bangladesh.

The ambassador called upon the United Nations and the international community, to take early and effective measures for permanent solution to this problem as he strongly condemned the killing of innocent civilians, including women and children, and demanded an immediate halt to Zionist brutalities in Palestine. He added that Bangladesh reiterated its firm belief in a two-state solution as the sole path to achieve lasting peace in the region.



Ambassador of Bangladesh Maj Gen Md Ashikuzzaman and Sheikh Feras Al-Sabah, Minister for Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs and Acting Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs stand for the national anthems of both countries.

Foreign Ministry holds workshop to enhance capacity

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized a workshop to enhance the capacities of relevant entities in preparing international reports related to women's rights within the framework of implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The ministry said in a press statement that this two-day workshop is held in cooperation between the Human Rights Department of the Ministry — as the head of the Permanent National Committee for preparation and formulation of national reports on human rights — and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), with the participation of several government entities.

The workshop constitutes an important step in Kuwait's path towards achieving equality and enhancing women's rights on national and international levels in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Goal 5, which is related to achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls to realize their full potential.

The workshop aims to improve the quality and accuracy of national reports on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and provide an ideal opportunity for exchanging experiences and expertise among various relevant entities in Kuwait, ministries, and government institutions. The statement pointed out that Kuwait is one of the leading countries in fulfilling its international commitments by regularly submitting its national reports. — KUNA

GCC commerce officials discuss trade, investment

DOHA: Undersecretaries of the ministries of commerce of the GCC member countries convened their 58th meeting in Doha on Tuesday to prepare for the 66th ministerial meeting of the committee on trade cooperation. The delegation of Kuwait is led by Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Ziyad Al-Najem.

The preparatory meeting focused on the plan to set up an ad hoc committee on investment and the trade legislation in the GCC, including the law on consumer protection and the regulation of competition. Undersecretary of the Qatari Ministry of Commerce and Industry Mohammad Al-Maleli, the chair of the meeting, said the conferees continue their efforts to promote GCC joint action and realize their common aspirations for economic development.

He thanked the Sultanate of Oman for the efforts it made while chairing the GCC committees on trade and industry cooperation in the last year, which led to fruitful results. The meeting reviewed the blueprint for a framework for the GCC e-trade code and the GCC franchise code. The blueprint will be tabled at the 66th meeting of the committee on trade cooperation, to be held in Doha this May, for endorsement by the ministers of commerce and industry. — AFP



Ambassadors, diplomats, and officials pose for a picture at the event.

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Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Photos show parked cars in Kuwait City. Traffic jams returned to Kuwait's streets. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Arab committee condemns world's 'double standards'

CAIRO: The chief of a pan-Arab human rights committee has condemned on Tuesday what he called the "double standards" of the international community in dealing with the worsening humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. The international human rights system has been "shaken to its core" at the double standards of the international community given the "mass genocide" unfolding in the Palestinian enclave of Gaza, which includes impediments to aid delivery for the Palestinians, Talal Al-Mutairi told pan-Arab human rights committee talks in the Egyptian capital.

The Kuwaiti diplomat castigated Zionist occupation forces for "persistent transgressions" that aim to alter the "demographic landscape" of the Palestinian enclave while simultaneously lashing out at the United Nations for not recognizing a Palestinian state through membership. Given the existential conditions, Arab nations are left with no choice but to "work hand in hand," citing Bahrain and Egypt as countries whose human rights systems are tantamount to success stories given the institutionalized reforms seen in Manama and Cairo.

Some two decades after the Arab human rights charter, which has been approved by some 18 countries, was introduced, the Kuwaiti diplomat hailed it as a testament to the region's "unwavering commitment" to the principle of human rights, which represents a pillar of democracy and stability.

UN investigation

Meanwhile, Arab League Secretary General Ahmad Abul-Gheit welcomed the UN-appointed independent committee's findings on Zionist allegations against the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees' (UNRWA) neutrality and members' involvement in the October 7 attacks. Abul-Gheit stated in a Wednesday release by the Arab League that the report of the independent committee, led by former French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna, unequivocally proves the baselessness of Zionist allegations, which were made without any solid evidence.

The report clearly indicated that these allegations were merely part of a concerted campaign to undermine the agency and terminate its pivotal role in providing for and employing nearly six million Palestinians, as well as undermining its indispensable role in dealing with the humanitarian catastrophe caused by the Zionist occupation's crimes and atrocities in the Gaza Strip over the past months, he added. — KUNA

Kuwait Society for Human Rights receives EU's 2023 Chaillot Prize



KUWAIT: The EU Ambassador to Kuwait Anne Koistinen presented the 2023 Chaillot Prize for the Promotion of Human Rights in the GCC region to the Kuwait Society for Human Rights. The European Union awards the Chaillot Prize every year for actions, campaigns, projects and lifetime achievements that favor human rights promotion and awareness in the GCC region. The Prize is named after the Palais de Chaillot in Paris where the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948.

In her speech during the ceremony held at the EU residence in Kuwait, Ambassador Koistinen said: "I am honored to present the Chaillot Prize for the Promotion of Human Rights in the GCC region to the Kuwait Society for Human Rights for their unwavering dedication over the years to promoting and advancing human rights in Kuwait. I would like to highlight in particular their work in supporting and advocating for migrant workers' rights in Kuwait and raising awareness about their labor rights. Engagement with the civil society in Kuwait is a very important part of EU delegation's work, therefore I am looking forward to continuing our long-standing cooperation with the Kuwait Society for Human Rights."

Khaled Al-Humaidi, President of the Board of Directors of the Kuwait Society for Human Rights, said in his speech during the ceremony that "To be honored today by awarding us the Chaillot Prize for Human Rights is a great moral support for the

Kuwait Society for Human Rights. This Society has taken upon itself the responsibility of defending human rights and promoting them in the Kuwaiti society through concerted efforts at the government and community levels.

We are delighted that the Chaillot Prize was granted to us for our tireless efforts in protecting the rights of migrant workers in Kuwait through the 'Together Project', which aims at raising awareness and protecting the rights of migrant workers in Kuwait. This project was implemented by the Kuwait Society for Human Rights in cooperation with the European Union delegation in Kuwait, the Netherlands Embassy, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, in addition to the US-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI)."

For the EU, promoting and protecting human rights is at the heart of EU external policy as they are among the EU's founding values of human dignity, freedom and respect of human rights. Cooperation on human rights and engagement with the civil society are an integral part of the relations between the European Union and all countries, including Kuwait. The European Union and Kuwait held their fourth Human Rights Dialogue in Brussels on December 5, 2023, where the two sides exchanged about the latest developments on both sides and reiterated their commitment to an open and constructive dialogue to jointly address human rights challenges and share best practices.



EU Ambassador to Kuwait Anne Koistinen presents the 2023 Chaillot Prize to the Kuwait Society for Human Rights.



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10 dead as floods
wreak havoc in
Kenyan capital

China to send fresh crew to Tiangong space station

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NEW YORK: New York University (NYU) students and faculty participate in a protest against the Zionist entity's war in Gaza at Washington Square Park on April 23, 2024. — AFP

Anger spikes at US universities

Anti-Zionist Gaza protests intensify on campuses across the nation

Post-WWII order on 'brink of collapse': Amnesty head



Agnes Callamard

LONDON: Amnesty International said Wednesday that the post-World War II order was on the "brink of collapse", threatened by bitter conflict on multiple fronts to the rapid and unregulated rise of artificial intelligence. "Everything we're witnessing over the last 12 months is indicating that the international global system is on the brink of collapse," Amnesty's secretary general Agnes Callamard told AFP as the group released its annual "State of the World's Human Rights" report.

"In particular, over the last six months, the United States has shielded and protected the (Zionist) authorities against scrutiny for the multiple violations committed in Gaza," she said. "By using its veto against a much-needed ceasefire, the United States has emptied out the (United Nations) Security Council of what it should be doing."

The Zionist entity's offensive has killed at least 34,262 people in the Gaza Strip, mostly women and children, according to the territory's health ministry. The global rights monitor said that Hamas had carried out "horrific crimes" on Zionist communities bordering Gaza but that the Zionist entity had responded with "a campaign of collective punishment".

"It is a campaign of deliberate, indiscriminate bombings of civilians and civilian infrastructure, of denial of humanitarian assistance and an engineered famine," Callamard wrote in her foreword to the report. "For millions the world over, Gaza now symbolizes utter moral failure by many of the architects of the post-World War Two system," she said. The Zionist entity's allies, including those arming them, were complicit, she said, lamenting a lack of action by international institutions and questioning whether postwar ideals of "never again" were now at an end.

Other "powerful actors", including Russia and China, are also "demonstrating a willingness to put at risk the entirety of the 1948 rule-based order", Callamard warned. The report documented "flagrant rule-breaking by Russian forces during their continued full-scale invasion of Ukraine... and the use of torture or other ill-treatment against prisoners of war". — AFP

NEW YORK: Student anger with university officials and law enforcement fueled worsening tensions on several US campuses Tuesday after days of pro-Palestinian protests that have triggered mass arrests and shut down classes. Some of America's most prestigious universities have been rocked by protests in recent weeks as students and other agitators take over quads and disrupt campus activities, furious over the Zionist-Hamas war and ensuing humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

At Columbia University in New York, the core of the spreading protests, organizers are calling for the university to divest from companies "that profit from (Zionist) apartheid, genocide and occupation in Palestine". Pro-Zionist supporters and others worried about campus safety have pointed to anti-Semitic incidents and argue that campuses are encouraging intimidation and hate speech.

"Students have the right to protest, but they are not allowed to disrupt campus life or harass and intimidate," Columbia's vice president of public affairs Ben Chang told reporters Monday. "We are acting on concerns we are hearing from our Jewish students," he said, adding that university officials were meeting "in good

faith" with the demonstrators. Protesters meanwhile — including a number of Jewish students in the "Gaza Solidarity Encampment" — say they've disavowed instances of anti-Semitism and are there to support Palestinians. "My college administration, my representatives in Congress and my own president have continually acted as spokespeople for the Jewish community, equating anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism," Jewish student Sarah Borus, from Columbia's Barnard College, said at a news conference held by Jewish and Palestinian students. "They silence us, suspend us," she added.

Protesting students also said they had been called slurs by a pro-Zionist professor and that anti-Muslim incidents on campus were being ignored. But another Jewish student at Columbia, Nick Baum, told CNN he has felt "downright unsafe" on campus in recent days, saying anti-Semitism there has "reached a boiling point".

Professors have pushed back since Columbia President Minouche Shafik called in police last week to arrest students, with some announcing they would not enforce student suspensions. While there is a long history of campus activism around the Zionist entity and

the Palestinian cause, flaring tensions amid the war have attracted major media and political scrutiny. "Jewish students at Columbia University don't feel safe. It's become so dangerous that students were forced out of the classroom," Republican Speaker of the House Mike Johnson said Tuesday. "Let's be clear: These are not peaceful protests, these are anti-Semitic mobs."

Further downtown, 133 people were arrested at New York University (NYU) and released after being issued with court summons, the New York Police Department told AFP, as protests also intensify at other colleges. An NYU spokesman said the decision to call police to the campus came after additional demonstrators, many of whom were not thought to be affiliated with the university, breached the barriers erected around the protest encampment.

This "dramatically changed" the situation, the spokesman said in a statement on the school's website Monday, citing "disorderly, disruptive and antagonizing behavior" along with "intimidated chants and several anti-Semitic incidents". On the West Coast, California State Polytechnic University announced it would be closed until at least Wednesday after pro-Palestinian demonstrators occupied an administrative building. — AFP

Gaza doctors process war from hospital rubble

GAZA: Emergency doctor Amjad Alewah once saved lives at Al-Shifa Hospital, the largest medical facility in the Gaza Strip. But after 200 days of war between the Zionist entity and Hamas fighters, he now stands in its ruins. "We are now in the middle of the rubble of this great hospital," Alewah, who returned to inspect the now charred emergency reception room, told AFP.

Following the outbreak of war, Al-Shifa became a safe haven for the thousands injured or fleeing the Zionist onslaught on the Palestinian territory. "Every day, we received thousands of wounded," he said, recalling having to work without enough medical equipment or fuel for electric generators. "We had picked up the habit of spending all our time here, as if it was our main residence."

But war came to Al-Shifa, with the Zionist entity launching multiple raids on the medical facility after accusing militants of operating a command center from tunnels below. Footage of the complex filmed by AFP after two weeks of siege between March 18 and early April shows a site laid to waste. UN Human Rights Chief Volker Turk said he was horrified by the hospital's destruction and demanded an independent investigation. "Hospitals are entitled to very special protection under international humanitarian law," he said.

Alewah said he was saddened by the destruction of a "cornerstone of health for the whole north of the Gaza Strip," calling on the international community and World Health Organization (WHO), which visited Al-Shifa to assess damages, to help rebuild. "We're lacking operating theatres to treat patients, particularly patients on dialysis or those with heart conditions."

A rehabilitation medical committee has already been put in place, its head, Marwan Abu Saada told AFP, adding that they were working on building an emergency department in another part of the hospital com-



GAZA: Palestinian forensic experts inspect the body of a dead person uncovered in the vicinity of Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City on April 17, 2024 after the recent Zionist military operation there. — AFP

plex. "We will not lose hope," he repeated, despite acknowledging the difficulty of the task at hand.

As many as 32 hospitals and 53 dispensaries are out of commission due to the war, according to the latest figures from the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza, while

77,100 people are wounded across the territory. "We want the war to end," said Adham Qneita, a resident of Rimal, a neighborhood adjacent to the hospital. Speaking in front of the devastation of flattened apartment buildings, he said he wished "only for death". "Nobody cares about us." — AFP

Nearly 282m people faced acute hunger in 2023: UN-led report

PARIS: Food insecurity worsened around the world in 2023, with some 282 million people suffering from acute hunger due to conflicts, particularly in Gaza and Sudan, UN agencies and development groups said Wednesday. Extreme weather events and economic shocks also added to the number of those facing acute food insecurity, which grew by 24 million people compared with 2022,

according to the latest global report on food crises from the Food Security Information Network (FSIN).

The report, which called the global outlook "bleak" for this year, is produced for an international alliance bringing together UN agencies, the European Union and governmental and non-governmental bodies. 2023 was the fifth consecutive year of rises in the number of people suffering acute food insecurity — defined as when populations face food deprivation that threatens lives or livelihoods, regardless of the causes or length of time.

Much of last year's increase was due to report's expanded geographic coverage, as well as deteriorating conditions in 12 countries. More geographical areas experienced "new or intensified shocks" while there was a "marked deterioration in key food crisis contexts such

as Sudan and the Gaza Strip", Fleur Wouterse, deputy director of the emergencies office within the UN's Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), told AFP. Some 700,000 people, including 600,000 in Gaza, were on the brink of starvation last year, a figure that has since climbed yet higher to 1.1 million in the war-ridden Palestinian territory.

Since the first report by the Global Food Crisis Network covering 2016, the number of food-insecure people has risen from 108 million to 282 million, Wouterse said. Meanwhile, the share of the population affected within the areas concerned has doubled 11 percent to 22 percent, she added. Protracted major food crises are ongoing in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Syria and Yemen. — AFP

International

Floods wreak havoc in Nairobi

At least 4 killed as homes swamped by muddy waters

NAIROBI: Roads turned into gushing rivers and homes swamped by waist-high muddy waters: storms and flash floods wreaked devastation across the Kenyan capital Nairobi on Wednesday, claiming at least four lives. The East Africa region has been lashed by relentless downpours in recent weeks, as the El Nino weather pattern exacerbates the seasonal rainfall. Across Nairobi, images posted by Kenyan media showed trucks, cars and motorbikes stuck in the deluge and people wading through floodwaters in slum areas of the city to try to reach safety. An estimated 60,000 people, mostly women and children, have been "severely affected" by the flash floods, according to the Nairobi county governor's office. "Unfortunately we have lost four lives, and the search is on to locate six others who have been reported missing," it said in a statement.

In one incident, police fired tear gas to try to disperse angry residents who had blocked a main highway with long queues of cars calling for government action over the floods. Kenya Railways announced it was temporarily suspending commuter train services as a precautionary measure, while the roads authority said four roads in the capital had been partly closed. "The city is at a standstill because most roads are flooded," said Uber driver Kelvin Mwangi. "We are having to use longer routes and in some cases we can't get to our destination."

Marooned boy rescued

Homes were engulfed in the sprawling Nairobi slum of Mathare, where local media reports said residents were forced to sleep on rooftops overnight.

Under stress of war, gambling grips Ukrainian soldiers

KYIV: Last month Pavlo Petrychenko, a junior sergeant in the Ukrainian army, issued a stark warning to President Volodymyr Zelensky about a dangerous vice sweeping the military. A surge in online gambling among serving soldiers has seen many lose their entire salaries, he said, pushing them and their families into debt. Some were even selling off army drones and thermal imaging cameras to feed addictions, compromising their own safety for a long-shot chance to strike it rich.

Exhausted by more than two years of war, campaigners say online gambling is rife in the Ukrainian armed forces, a coping mechanism and dopamine hit for fighters under constant fire and far from home, their families and loved ones. "For many, gambling has become the only way to deal with the stress," Petrychenko said in a petition to Zelensky that called for a ban on soldiers gambling.

His appeal received 26,000 backers within a few days — enough to require a formal response from the president. On April 20, Zelensky obliged, signing a decree banning military personnel from online gambling during wartime, restricting advertising, launching a nationwide campaign on the damage of gambling addiction and blocking all illegal sites. The health ministry will also create a treatment strategy to combat severe gambling addiction.

'Lost everything'

Petrychenko, the soldier who had sounded the alarm, was killed in action in the eastern Donetsk region just five days before. But his petition triggered a nationwide debate on one way the psychological pressure of war is hitting Ukraine's stretched forces. Lawmaker Oleksiy Goncharenko claimed that nine in ten frontline soldiers were gambling addicts.

"This is a problem that is right now destroying morale in the military," he said in a post on Telegram. "There are many complaints from parents and wives that the guys get paid quite well for being on the front line, and they lose this money," Ukraine's deputy minister of veterans' affairs, Oksana Syvak, told AFP.

Assessing the scale of the problem is tricky, with

The Kenya Red Cross said it had rescued 18 people including seven children who were stranded in Mathare. It posted a picture on X showing its workers, some waist-high in water, engaged in rescue efforts, as a man carried a young child on his shoulder.

In a dramatic rescue on Tuesday, Kenyan police said they had saved a five-year-old boy who had been marooned alone by floods in Machakos County south of the capital. The youngster had been left behind by his father as the waters rose and was airlifted to safety by chopper, the National Police Service said on X.

The Red Cross said the Athi River, the second longest in Kenya that runs south of Nairobi to the Indian Ocean, had burst its banks, blocking roads and leaving residents stranded. "Our response teams are on the ground in most of these areas, evacuating families to safety and providing other life-saving interventions," it added.

'Extreme' situation

Prominent opposition senator Edwin Sifuna said the situation in Nairobi had "escalated to extreme levels" and that the county authorities were "clearly overwhelmed". "We need all national emergency services mobilized to save lives," he said on X. UN humanitarian response agency OCHA had said on Friday that rains and floods had claimed the lives of at least 32 people in Kenya and forced more than 40,000 from their homes in almost half the country's counties. Elsewhere in the region, nearly 100,000 people have been displaced in Burundi, while at least 58 people have died in Tanzania and several thousand made homeless. El Nino often has devastating

no official statistics, she said. But personal testimonies point to the sums at stake. Ivan Zadontsev, a press officer for the Aidar battalion, told AFP one soldier in his unit won 2.5 million hryvnias (\$63,000) — only to immediately gamble it away. "He believed he could win even more — and that's why he lost everything, down to 400 hryvnias," he said.

Another soldier won a 60 million hryvnia (\$1.5 million) jackpot and then deserted. Zadontsev said relatively high salaries for soldiers — six-times the national average at 120,000 hryvnias (\$3,000) a month — were likely a cause. "This may be a factor that makes people's heads spin," he said. For Syvak, it is the psychological impact of the conflict, now in its third year. "During such hostilities, very often people use alcohol, drugs, smoke weed or ... abuse gambling. This is a consequence of war ... gambling is a break from reality, a secondary reaction to a severe trauma," she said.

Security risk

Online gambling is a rare boom industry at a time when the war has wrecked swathes of the Ukrainian economy. Billboards for major firms pepper the city center of Kyiv. But there are also security concerns, including from within the industry, about the growth of illegal companies. Anton Kuchukhidze, chairman of the Ukrainian Gambling Council, estimated there are 1,200 illegal sites, of which 300 to 400 are Russian companies.

But he said there was no research to support claims of widespread addiction among Ukrainian soldiers. "When a person is in a trench, they can't gamble because there is simply no Internet, and the Starlinks that are available are used for drones, for reconnaissance — definitely not for online gambling," he said.

There is no mobile Internet in frontline areas, but soldiers often use their phones when Starlink satellite dishes are online. Gambling firms paid 12 billion hryvnias (\$300 million) in taxes last year, Kuchukhidze said, adding that the number of players at online casinos was only just approaching prewar levels. Gambling control advocates nevertheless say the industry is deliberately targeting soldiers, preying on their psychological vulnerabilities and bumper salaries.

In his petition, Petrychenko also accused the sector of "whitewashing" by making small, highly public donations to the army. "We all understand what 20 pickup trucks mean, when they are earning real money," Zadontsev said. — AFP

Kuwait, Jordan urge regional peace...

Continued from Page 1

involving an independent Palestinian state on the June 4, 1967 border with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with relevant international legitimacy resolutions. In this context, they underlined that the Arab Peace Initiative is the sole way to achieve just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East region.

Furthermore, both sides called for maintaining the existing historical and legal status of Islamic and Christian holy sites, with HHH the Amir emphasizing the role of Jordan in protecting religious sanctuaries and their Islamic and Christian identity. They stressed that regional shipping routes should be protected in line with international law and the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to maintain the interests of all world countries and that agreements concluded by the region's countries be respected.

The Khor Abdullah agreement reached by Kuwait and Iraq on April 29, 2012, which became effective as of Dec 18, 2013, should be observed, calling for protecting Khor Abdullah from any transnational terrorist and criminal activities, according to the joint statement. In this context, both leaders called for commitment to the security exchange protocol, calling on Iraq to recon-

sider the protocol signed with Kuwait in 2008, which includes a specific revision and cancellation mechanism. The Kuwait-Iraqi sea border demarcation should be completed to be beyond the mark 162 as per relevant UN conventions and treaties, urging the respect of Kuwait's sea and land sovereignty in line with UNSC Resolution 833/1993.

They also underscored that Durra offshore oilfield falls within the maritime boundaries of Kuwait and that natural resources in the divided zone between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, including Durra field, only belong to both Kuwait and Saudi Arabia as per international law and bilateral accords. HHH the Amir Sheikh Mishal and his accompanying delegation arrived on Tuesday in Jordan on a state visit. HHH the Amir was received by Jordanian King Abdullah II and the Crown Prince Al-Hussein bin Abdullah.

At the conclusion of his visit on Wednesday, HHH the Amir voiced his deepest gratitude and thanks to the King of Jordan for awarding him the Order of Al-Hussein ibn Ali. HHH the Amir expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation to the King of Jordan for the warm welcome and hospitality during the visit. He said that the visit reflected deep and distinguished relations between the two countries and peoples, and aimed to strengthen fruitful and constructive cooperation between the two countries in a way that serves common interests and realizes their peoples' aspirations. HHH the Amir also invited the King of Jordan to visit Kuwait at a date to be determined later through bilateral diplomatic channels. — KUNA

later, with water-clogged roads and flooded homes. Dubai airport canceled 2,155 flights, diverted 115 and did not return to full capacity until Tuesday.

"We must acknowledge... that there has been an unreasonable and unacceptable deficiency and collapse in services and crisis management," prominent Emirati analyst Abdulkhaleq Abdulla said on X. "We hope that this will not be repeated in the future," he added.

Dubai is now mostly back to its normal pace, with public transport fully functioning and all major roads open to traffic. But for Matthew Faddy, a 56-year-old Brit who lives in the UAE's business hub, total recovery is still days away. His ground-floor apartment located near a lake was flooded last week, with the water breaching a half-meter wall in his garden. — AFP

UAE allots \$544m for rain repairs...

Continued from Page 1

The storm first landed in Oman on April 14, where it killed at least 21 people, according to the official Oman News Agency. It then battered the UAE, dumping up to two years' worth of rain on the federal monarchy with a 90 percent expatriate population before subsiding last Wednesday. But the glam-hub of Dubai, touted as a picture-perfect city, faced severe disruption for days



NAIROBI: Pedestrians hang off the back of a matatu (public transport bus) to avoid having to wade across a flooded section of road after a stream burst its banks overnight following heavy seasonal rain in the Kenyan capital on April 24, 2024. — AFP

consequences in East Africa, where late last year more than 300 people died in torrential rains and floods in Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia after the region suffered its worst drought in four decades.

From October 1997 to January 1998, massive

floods caused more than 6,000 deaths in five countries in the region. The Horn of Africa is one of the regions most vulnerable to climate change — even though the continent's contribution to global carbon emissions is a fraction of the total. — AFP

Armenia marks WWI mass killings

YEREVAN: Armenia on Wednesday said it had faced modern-day "ethnic cleansing" as it commemorated Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day, a national holiday marking the World War I-era mass killings of ethnic Armenians by Ottoman forces. The exodus of more than 100,000 ethnic Armenians from the Nagorno-Karabakh region last autumn following a lightning Azerbaijani offensive hung over this year's events in the capital Yerevan.

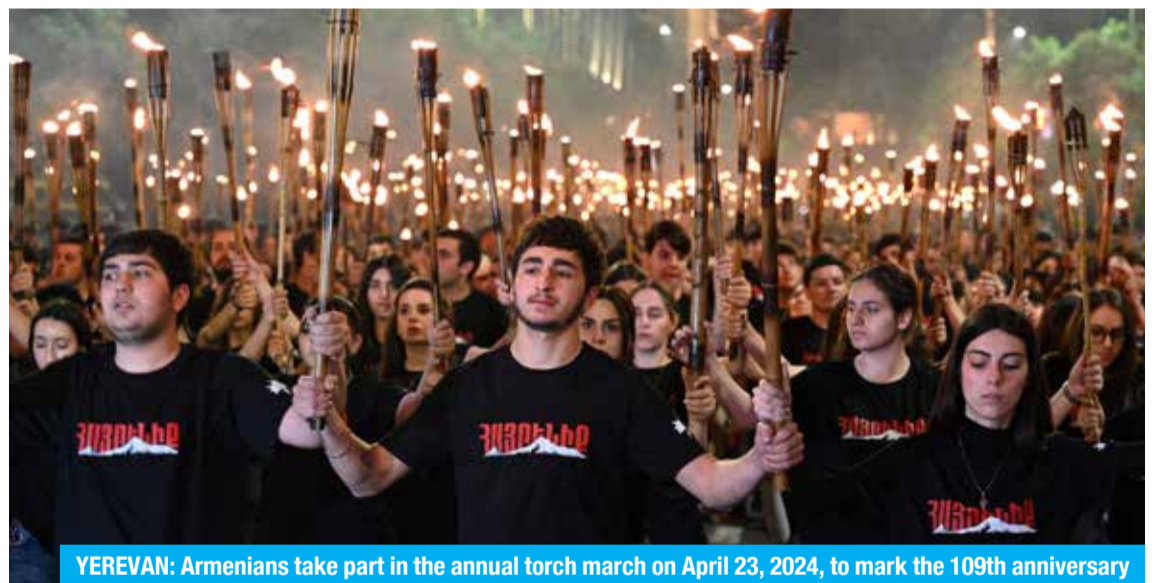
"In 2020-2023, we faced new manifestations and consequences of the policy of ethnic cleansing," Armenia's foreign ministry said in a statement. "More than 150,000 Armenians were... forced to leave their historical homeland because of war, xenophobia, crimes based on identity," it said, referring to the conflict with Azerbaijan for control of Nagorno-Karabakh.

On Tuesday night, thousands had carried torches through the streets of Yerevan to commemorate victims of the 1915-1918 killings by Ottoman authorities — seen as a genocide by Armenia and several other

countries, but fiercely rejected by Turkey. They wore black t-shirts with a printed picture of Mount Ararat on them — the country's main national symbol which lies in modern-day Turkey.

Up to 1.5 million Armenians were killed when Ottoman authorities rounded them up en masse and either massacred them or sent them on death marches into the desert, deprived of food and water. Turkey says around 300,000-500,000 Armenians died, and just as many ethnic Turks, in civil strife after Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire rose up and sided with invading Russian forces. Russia, the United States and several European countries recognize the killings as a genocide.

In Armenia, the modern-day conflict with Azerbaijan — a close ally of Ankara that shares cultural ties with Turkey — is often tied into a historical narrative dating back to the Ottoman period. In a statement on Wednesday, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan called on his country to focus on building a "competitive and legitimate" nation today, instead of being haunted by historical trauma. "The commemoration of martyrs must symbolize to Armenians not a lost Motherland, but the one we have found — the Republic of Armenia," Pashinyan said Wednesday in a statement. — AFP



YEREVAN: Armenians take part in the annual torch march on April 23, 2024, to mark the 109th anniversary of the World War I-era mass killings of Armenians in 1915. — AFP

Zionists strike Gaza, Lebanon after US...

Continued from Page 1

government spokesman David Mencer said the Zionist entity was "moving ahead" with its operation in Rafah, which Zionist officials have described as the "last" major Hamas stronghold where fighters may be holding captives.

Hamas on Wednesday released a video showing a man it said was one of the 129 captives the Zionist entity estimates remain in Gaza, a number that includes 34 presumed dead. Also on Wednesday, US President Joe Biden signed a bill authorizing \$13 billion in military aid to close ally the Zionist entity. The bill also included \$1 billion in humanitarian aid for Gaza, which Biden demanded the Zionist entity allow reach Palestinians "without delay".

Regional tensions remain high more than 200 days into the devastating war. Zionist Defense Minister Yoav

Gallant said that "many forces are deployed" along the northern border, claiming the military has eliminated "half of Hezbollah's commanders in southern Lebanon" in months of violence. The Zionist entity has struck increasingly deeper into Lebanon, while Hezbollah has stepped up rocket fire and drone attacks on the Zionist military bases across the border.

"IDF (military) forces are currently carrying out offensive action throughout southern Lebanon", Gallant said, without specifying whether ground troops had crossed the border. Early Wednesday, hospital and security sources in Gaza reported Zionist air strikes in Rafah as well as the central Nuseirat refugee camp. An AFP correspondent and witnesses reported heavy bombardment in northern Gaza overnight.

Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has repeatedly insisted the assault on Rafah will go ahead, despite opposition from humanitarian groups and countries including the US. Citing Egyptian officials briefed on Zionist plans, the Wall Street Journal has said the Zionist entity was planning to move civilians to nearby Khan Yunis over a period of two to three weeks, before gradually sending in troops. — AFP

Southern Asia scorched by...

Continued from Page 1

to leave their homes because of the heat." March, April and May are typically the hottest and driest months in the archipelago but conditions this year have been exacerbated by the El Nino weather phenomenon. The heat index was expected to reach the "danger" level of 42C or higher in at least 30 cities and municipalities on Wednesday, the state weather forecaster said. The heat index measures what a temperature feels like, taking into account humidity.

The Philippine Department of Education, which oversees more than 47,600 schools, said nearly 6,700 schools suspended in-person classes on Wednesday. There was also a 50 percent chance of the heat intensifying in the coming days, Ana Solis,

chief climatologist at the state weather forecaster, told AFP. She said people needed to limit the time they spent outdoors, drink plenty of water and take umbrellas and hats when going outdoors to guard against the "extreme heat".

Global temperatures hit record highs last year and the UN's World Meteorological Organization said Asia was warming at a particularly rapid pace, with the impact of heatwaves in the region becoming more severe. The WMO's State of the Climate in Asia 2023 report found Asia was warming faster than the global average, with temperatures last year nearly two degrees Celsius above the 1961 to 1990 average.

"Many countries in the region experienced their hottest year on record in 2023, along with a barrage of extreme conditions, from droughts and heatwaves to floods and storms," said WMO chief Celeste Saulo, who described the report as "sobering". WMO Deputy Secretary-General Ko Barrett said: "Extreme heat is increasingly becoming the big silent killer". — AFP

International

Raisi opens power project in Lanka

Argentina seeks arrest of Iran minister over 1994 Jewish center bombing

COLOMBO: Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi arrived in Sri Lanka on Wednesday to inaugurate a power and irrigation project, unaccompanied by his interior minister who is being sought for arrest over a deadly 1994 bombing. Raisi traveled to the island nation after concluding a state visit to Pakistan alongside Ahmad Vahidi, accused by Argentina of orchestrating the 1994 attack on a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires that killed 85 people.

Interpol issued a red notice requesting police agencies worldwide to take Vahidi into custody, and Argentina had asked both Pakistan and Sri Lanka to arrest him. But the minister was not seen accompanying Raisi, who had arrived in Sri Lanka to inaugurate an Iran-backed power and irrigation project.

Raisi's official news agency IRNA reported that Vahidi was back in Iran on Tuesday, where he attended a ceremony to induct a new provincial governor. An official from Sri Lanka's foreign ministry told AFP that the interior minister was not listed as part of the Iranian delegation.

The 1994 assault has never been claimed or solved, but Argentina and the Zionist entity have long suspected the Iran-backed group Hezbollah carried it out at Iran's request. Prosecutors have charged top Iranian officials with ordering the attack, though Tehran has denied any involvement. The court also implicated Hezbollah and called the attack against the AMIA — the deadliest in Argentina's history — a "crime against humanity."

Tuesday's statement from the foreign ministry said: "Argentina seeks the international arrest of those re-

sponsible for the AMIA attack of 1994, which killed 85 people, and who remain in their positions with total impunity." "One of them is Ahmad Vahidi, sought by Argentine justice as one of those responsible for the attack against AMIA," said the statement, which was co-signed by the security ministry.

Dam project

Raisi arrived at an airport in southern Sri Lanka on Wednesday morning to inaugurate the Iran-backed \$514 million Uma Oya irrigation and hydroelectricity project. It was due to be commissioned in March 2014 but sanctions against the Islamic Republic saw the project mired in a decade of delays, Sri Lanka has said. Raisi told a public rally at the Uma Oya site that Western countries tried to convince others that they were the sole source of knowledge and technology, but "skillful Iranian experts" had developed their own capacities. "Our enemies did not favor development and progress for Iran, but the Iranian people were determined in order to realize it," he said. Sri Lanka funded most of the \$514 million project after an initial investment of \$50 million from the Export Development Bank of Iran in 2010, while construction was carried out by Iranian firm Farab.

Raisi then flew to the capital Colombo and was accorded a 21-gun salute before talks with Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe, whose office said the visit symbolized "the cooperation between the two nations in this significant infrastructure endeavor". The Uma Oya's two reservoirs are slated to irrigate 4,500 hectares of new land, while the hydro dam generators



BADULLA, Sri Lanka: Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe inaugurate the Uma Oya irrigation and hydroelectricity project on April 24, 2024. — AFP

have a capacity of 120 megawatts.

Iran is a key buyer of Sri Lanka's tea, the island's main export commodity. Sri Lanka is currently repaying a legacy debt of \$215 million for Iranian oil by exporting tea. The country's only oil refinery was built by Iran in 1969. Raisi arrived in Sri Lanka after a three-day visit to Pakistan that followed tit-for-tat missile strikes

in January in the region of Balochistan, which straddles the two nations' porous border.

Tehran carried out the first strikes against an anti-Iran group inside Pakistan, with Islamabad retaliating by hitting "militant targets" inside Iran. Both nations have previously accused each other of harboring militants on their respective sides of the border. — AFP

Victims of China floods race to salvage property



SHATANG, China: Chairs are submerged as workers collect items after torrential rains flooded the area in this village in Qingyuan in northern Guangdong province on April 24, 2024. — AFP

QINGYUAN, China: Victims of severe floods in southern China raced on Wednesday to salvage property from the muddy waters as authorities warned of more heavy rains to come. Massive downpours have struck Guangdong province in recent days, triggering deluges that have claimed the lives of four people and forced the evacuation of more than 100,000.

The severe floods are virtually unheard of so early in the year even in lush, subtropical Guangdong, with one senior official linking them to worsening climate change. AFP reporters in Shatang village on Wednesday saw staff and officials at a tourist resort taking advantage of a break in the rain to clear mud from the streets. "The water has really risen over the last few days," said Liu Yongqi, 25, a general manager of a local homestay.

"The road was flooded and for five days we could only get to the rest of the village by small motorboat," she told AFP. "Luckily we had enough supplies here anyway," she said, adding that the cleanup operation would take "another two or three days".

Chairs, toilet bowls and pieces of sheet metal lay strewn across a meadow nearby. Some employees worked to fix a wooden yurt used for group meals, while others armed with brooms and wearing waterproof boots moved between holiday bungalows to clean up the mess. "The damage is extensive," said Liu Shaofei, 53, Liu Yongqi's father and the other general manager. "We're still making an estimate. But fortunately, we're insured," he told AFP.

Stranded islanders

In Qingyuan, around 600 residents of an island in the river were stranded after high water levels prompted the temporary cancellation of a regular ferry route. Sanitation workers made the most of receding floodwaters to spray mud and silt off the area around the ferry pier. "We're clearing it up little by little, but there's still a risk of rain tonight and tomorrow, and we don't know what the situation is upstream, so the water level could still rise," a city official who wished to remain anonymous told AFP.

Nearby, islander Wang Zhi cut a dispirited figure as he clutched a bag of fresh lettuce. "I saw that the water level had dropped. So I did some shopping," he told AFP ruefully. "I'd like to go home." The central government has earmarked 110 million yuan in emergency relief for flood-hit areas in Guangdong as well as the adjacent Jiangxi province and Guangxi region, state broadcaster CCTV reported Wednesday. The funds will mainly go towards "properly rescuing and relocating affected people (and) emergency management such as eliminating hazards," CCTV said.

More rain forecast

Authorities have warned of more downpours across Guangdong from Wednesday evening until Friday. Up to 240 mm of rain is expected in many areas, rising to as much as 300 mm in some places. Officials also issued a warning over "rumors" that the deluges were causing supply shortages and price spikes for basic goods.

"In order to strengthen management of market prices during flood season... do not fabricate or spread information about price rises, tight supply lines or dramatic increases in market demand," Guangdong's market regulator said in a notice on Tuesday evening. Guangdong is China's manufacturing heartland, home to around 127 million people. — AFP

Blinken in China, seeking pressure but also stability

SHANGHAI: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken returned Wednesday to China on his second visit in a year, as the United States ramps up pressure on its rival over its support for Russia while also seeking to manage tensions with Beijing. The US diplomat will meet China's top brass on Friday in Beijing, where he is also expected to plead for restraint as Taiwan inaugurates a new leader, and to raise US concerns on Chinese trade practices — a vital issue for President Joe Biden in an election year.

But Blinken is also seeking to stabilize ties, with tensions between the world's two largest economies palpably easing since his last visit in June. At the time, he was the highest-ranking US official to visit China in five years, and the trip was followed by a meeting between the countries' presidents in November. At that summit in California, Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed to a US wish list including restoring contact between militaries and cracking down on precursor chemicals to fentanyl, the powerful painkiller behind an addiction epidemic in the United States.

Blinken arrived in Shanghai, where he will kick off his visit by attending a Chinese basketball play-off match be-

tween two teams with American players on their rosters. The friendly side trip — the first visit by a US secretary of state to the bustling metropolis since Hillary Clinton in 2010 — would have been unthinkable until recently, with hawks on both sides previously speaking of a new Cold War between the two powers.

Pressing on Russia

A senior US official previewing Blinken's trip said the relationship between the countries was at a "different place" to a year ago, when it was at "an historic low point". However, "responsibly managing competition does not mean we will pull back from measures to protect US national interests", he added. The Biden administration's eagerness to engage China stands in stark contrast to its efforts to isolate Russia since its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

The United States has accused China in recent weeks of lavishing industrial material and technology on Moscow. Washington has encouraged European leaders to stand firm on China not backing Russia, believing Beijing wants stable ties with the West as it focuses on addressing economic headwinds at home. "If China purports on the one hand to want good relations with Europe and other countries, it can't on the other hand be fueling what is the biggest threat to European security since the end of the Cold War," Blinken said Friday.

Progress on fentanyl

The Biden administration has trumpet-

China to send fresh crew to Tiangong space station

JIUQUAN, China: China will send a fresh crew to its Tiangong space station on Thursday, Beijing's Manned Space Agency announced the latest mission in a program that aims to send astronauts to the Moon by 2030. The Shenzhou-18 mission — crewed by three astronauts — is scheduled to take off at 8:59 pm (1259 GMT) Thursday from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwest China, Beijing announced Wednesday.

It will be led by Ye Guangfu, a fighter pilot and astronaut who was previously part of the Shenzhou-13 crew in 2021. He will be joined by astronauts Li Cong and Li Guangsu, who are heading into space for the first time. Commander Ye described the launch as a "new beginning". "Facing the challenge, my two teammates and I are fully prepared. We are full of confidence in completing this mission!" he said at a press conference on Wednesday.

Li Guangsu said he wanted to take a "good look at the beautiful blue planet, the splendid mountains and rivers of the motherland, and find the places that have nurtured me along the way". "I also want to see for my lovely child if the stars in the sky can really twinkle or not," he added. The latest batch of Tiangong astronauts will stay in orbit for six months, carrying out experiments in gravity and physics, as well as in life sciences.

They will also carry out a "project on high-resolution global greenhouse gas detection", Deputy Director General of the CMSA Lin Xiqiang said,

Seven arrested in Australian 'terrorism' raids

SYDNEY: Australian police arrested seven teenagers in a wave of anti-terror raids Wednesday, with top officers claiming the network may have been plotting an attack and posed an "unacceptable risk" to the public. More than 400 officers were involved in searches at 13 locations across Sydney following the non-fatal stabbing of an Assyrian bishop last week.



SHANGHAI: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and US Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns walk through the Yu Gardens on April 24, 2024. — AFP

ed the agreement with Xi on fentanyl as a success. A State Department official said that since the November summit, China appears to have taken its first law enforcement measures on the matter since 2017, and that Blinken would be asking for further implementation. More regular law enforcement action from Beijing against China-based companies involved in fentanyl supply chains "would send a strong signal of China's commitment to address this issue", the official said.

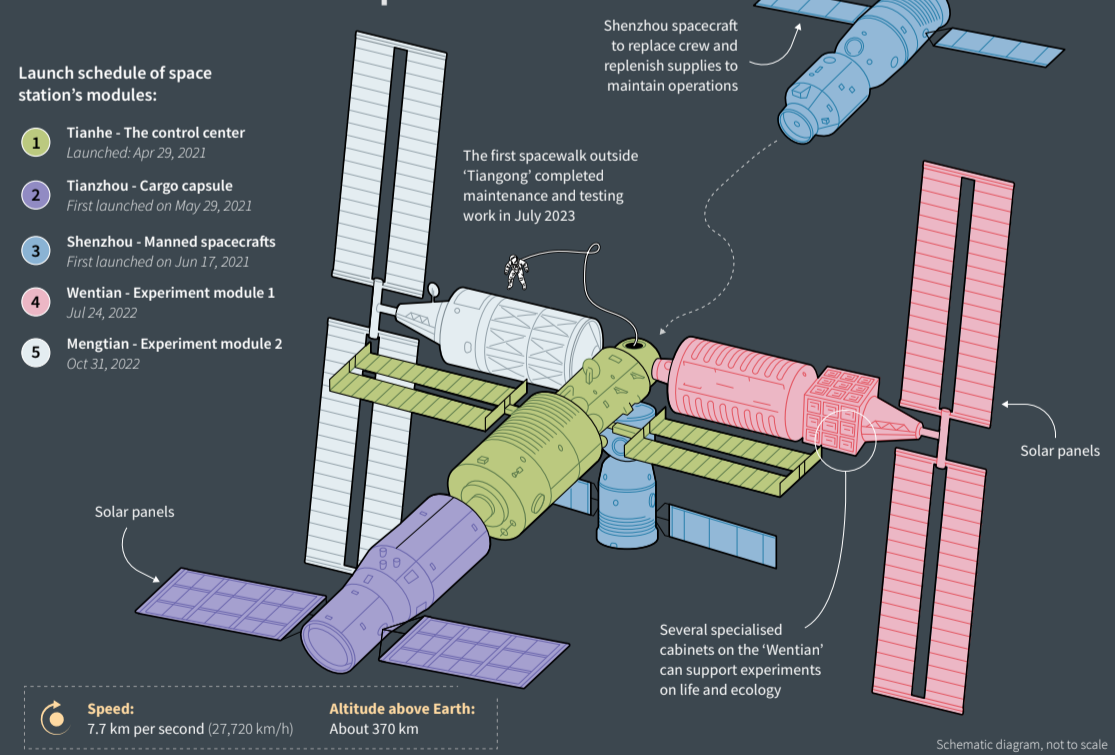
Other issues likely to come up will be more fraught. The US Congress gave final approval on Tuesday night to a \$95 billion package of assistance to allies including self-ruled Taiwan, which Beijing claims as part of its territory. In response, China said Wednesday that US military support for the island only increased the "risk of conflict", and warned it would

take "resolute and effective measures to safeguard its sovereignty, security and territorial integrity".

The US Congress also approved legislation on Tuesday requiring the wildly popular social media app TikTok to be divested from its Chinese parent company ByteDance, or be shut out of the American market. Asked about the development, a spokesman for China's foreign ministry declined to respond, referring journalists to China's "previously explained... principled position".

Beijing has furiously denounced the plans, urging Washington to "truly respect the principles of market economy and fair competition". Biden faces a rematch in November against former president Donald Trump, who has vowed a more confrontational approach against China. — AFP

Shenzhou and China's space station



according to state news agency Xinhua. "All pre-launch preparations are on schedule," he said. "They will work with other active astronauts to carry out the follow-up space station missions and to realize the country's manned lunar landing."

The Tiangong, which means "heavenly palace", is the crown jewel of a space programme that has landed robotic rovers on Mars and the Moon, and

made China the third country to independently put humans in orbit. It is constantly crewed by rotating teams of three astronauts, with construction completed in 2022. The Tiangong is expected to remain in low Earth orbit at between 400 and 450 km above the planet for at least 10 years. The new crew will replace the Shenzhou-17 team, who were sent to the station in October. — AFP

A 16-year-old boy was already in custody for that attack but police said seven more "religiously motivated" juveniles that were part of a "wider network of associates and peers" have now been arrested. Deputy police commissioner Dave Hudson said "intense" surveillance of the network painted an alarming picture that demanded immediate action.

"Their behavior, whilst under surveillance, led us to believe that, if they were to commit any act, we would not be able to prevent that," he told reporters after the raids. "And we believed, through the investigation, that it was likely that an attack might ensue. We considered that the risk was too great," he said. Police said the offenders were all juveniles aged from 15 to 17.

"The terrorism landscape and the radicalization of youth online is a continuing problem for us," Hudson

said. Australian Federal Police counter-terror specialist Krissy Barrett said the network "shared a similar violent extremist ideology". Although police believed an attack was possible, Barrett said they had so far failed to turn up any evidence "of specific locations, times or targets". Assyrian Bishop Mar Mari Emmanuel was slashed in the head and chest by a 16-year-old suspect during a live-streamed sermon last week.

Police were quick to describe the teen's actions as a "terrorist" act, fueled by religiously motivated extremism. Hundreds of congregants and members of the community rushed to the site on the night of the attack. Some hurled rocks and other projectiles that allegedly wounded about 50 police officers, including one who suffered a broken jaw, and damaged several police cars. — AFP

KFH records net profit of KD 162.8m

KUWAIT: Chairman of Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Hamad Abdulmohsen Al Marzouq announced that KFH achieved a net profit of KD 162.8 million for the first quarter of 2024 for shareholders, representing an increase of 0.5 percent compared to the same period last year, while the comparative period last year included revenues and profits from sale of investments amounted to KD 74.3 million, most of which were non-recurring and were not realized during the current period, and an increase of 32.4 percent compared to three months period ended Q4 2023.

Earnings per share for the first quarter of 2024 reached 10.24 fils; an increase of 1 percent compared to the same period last year. Net financing income for the first quarter of the year reached KD 263.4 million; an increase of 17 percent compared to the same period last year. Total operating income for the first quarter of the year increased, supported by the increase in all core activities to reach KD 392.4 million; an increase of 3.5 percent compared to the same period last year, and an increase of 14 percent compared to Q4 2023.

Financing receivables as of the end of the first quarter of 2024 reached KD 18.9 billion, affected by the classification of Kuwait Finance House - Bahrain as assets held for sale, as well as the impact of foreign currency fluctuations during the current period. Total assets for the first quarter of the year amounted to KD 37 billion. Shareholders' equity amounted to KD 5.3 billion at the end of the first quarter of 2024. Depositors' accounts as of the end of the first quarter of 2024 amounted to KD 20 billion. In addition, the capital adequacy ratio reached 17.77 percent which is above the limit required by regulators. This ratio confirms the solid capital base of KFH.

High profitability

Al Marzouq highlighted KFH's successful achievement of its Group strategy's key goals, further solidifying its leading position. Strong financial performance, evident in high liquidity ratios, a solid capital base, and robust operating performance, drove growth in operating income, profits, the financing portfolio, and all key financial indicators. The acqui-



Al Marzouq:

- KFH is focused on achieving sustainable profitability
- Net financing income reached KD 263.4 million, an increase of 17%

sition of Ahli United Bank-Bahrain further bolstered these positive trends, propelling KFH to its highest ever profit rates in the Kuwaiti banking sector.

Largest market cap

Al Marzouq revealed that KFH holds the top spot in Kuwait and ranked fourth in the Middle East in terms of market capitalization which exceeded KD 12 billion.

Unprecedented deal

Al Marzouq noted that KFH is focused on achieving sustainable profitability by pursuing a strategy of innovation and digital transformation to create added value. The bank also expands its customer base and promotes harmony among its Group subsidiaries across 12 geographies, including Kuwait, Bahrain, Turkiye, Egypt, the UK, Germany. This network is supported by approximately 630 branches and nearly 2,250 ATMs, contributing to further profitability and strengthening its financial position, in addition to ongoing talent acquisition and retention.

He emphasized that the acquisition of AUB - Bahrain represents an unprecedented deal in Kuwait's banking sector. This will bolster Kuwait's financial standing, establishing it as the headquarters of one of the leading and dominant banks in the Middle East and world-leading Islamic bank. Additionally, it is expected to increase the national employment rate and create new job opportunities within the local market.

Financing mega projects

Al Marzouq emphasized that KFH is committed to providing financing to companies and mega projects locally and regionally, as well as supporting SMEs and micro-enterprises. This commitment is re-

flected in their diversified and solid financing portfolio. He pointed out that during the first quarter of the year, KFH successfully implemented a number of financing projects. Notably, KFH acted as the lead financier for the Beyout Plus project, a KD 100 million complex with a commercial area of 250,000 square meters in Mutlaa Residential City.

API Technology

Al Marzouq mentioned that KFH is leveraging cutting-edge technologies in the banking industry such as robotics and AI to streamline back-office operations, utilizing big data analytics for innovating products and services that meet customers aspirations. He highlighted KFH's keenness to cooperate with fintech companies, utilize emerging technologies in its digital transformation journey according to the best and latest global standards and in compliance with the regulatory controls and guidelines.

KD 38 million contribution

Al Marzouq highlighted KFH's prominent role in society, emphasizing its policies and goals that reinforce strategic social initiatives with significant added value. These initiatives include contributing KD 8 million to the reconstruction of Al Mubarakiya. KFH further demonstrated its commitment by participating in the national campaign to help defaulting debtors. Their contribution consisted additional funds amounting to KD 7 million, bringing the total to KD 38 million since 2019. Additionally, KFH partnered with the Kuwait Food Bank, pledging KD 1 million to support underprivileged families in Kuwait. These are just a few examples of KFH's many social responsibility initiatives. In recognition of its leadership in this area, EMEA Finance awarded KFH the Corporate Social Responsibility - Middle East Award.



Al Rushood:

- Strong financial soundness is reflected in Q1 financial indicators
- The Sukuk market is particularly important as it is a prominent financing instrument in global markets

Financial soundness

KFH Acting Group Chief Executive Officer, Abdulwahab Iesa Al Rushood, confirmed that KFH's Q1 2024 financial statements demonstrate financial soundness and growth. This is evident in several indicators, such as profitability, value and quality of assets, capital adequacy, and liquidity ratios, all of which have improved compared to the same period in 2023. KFH also saw an increase in operating profits and diversification of its revenue streams. Furthermore, KFH has successfully maintained a healthy coverage ratio for non-performing debts and a favorable cost-to-income ratio.

USS1 billion Sukuk

"As one of the most important financing tools in global markets, Sukuk is a key focus for KFH. Demonstrating this commitment, KFH successfully issued a 5-year Senior Unsecured Sukuk of \$1 billion. This is the first issue under KFH \$4 billion Sukuk Program," Al Rushood said. Meanwhile, KFH maintained its leading position in the primary and secondary markets for the Sukuk issuance of the International Islamic Liquidity Management (IILM) Sukuk Program. KFH achieved the top rank amongst the IILM primary dealers.

Convenient banking experience

Al Rushood emphasized that KFH maintains its excellence in digital transformation strategy and leadership in offering innovative digital services and financial solutions. These solutions are available through the KFH Online app (mobile and website), XTMs, and KFH-GO branches. He added that KFH recently launched TAM, the first Islamic digital bank in Kuwait, and Zahab, the digital payment platform. These are just a few examples of KFH's commitment to providing a convenient and exceptional

banking experience for its customers.

Sustainability and green finance

"KFH strengthens its leadership position by prioritizing sustainability within its core business in Kuwait and its subsidiaries. The bank has a proven track record in leading and arranging green Sukuk issuances. It has also financed and participated in numerous environmentally friendly projects and deals. These actions align with KFH's vision of providing sustainable financial solutions and creating positive social and economic impacts," Al Rushood explained.

Renowned achievements

Highlighting KFH's achievements, Al Rushood announced the bank's win of several prestigious awards during the first quarter. These included Best Islamic Bank - Middle East, Best Bank in Kuwait, and Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait from EMEA Finance magazine. The awards serve as a testament to KFH's leadership in the banking industry, geographic expansion, and strong brand reputation. They further recognize the bank's successful strategic relationships, creditworthiness, and its commitment to delivering innovative solutions and exceptional financial products and services.

Trusted partner

In conclusion, Al Rushood expressed confidence in sustaining the bank's strong and positive results. He thanked shareholders, customers, and the Board of Directors for their trust and support. He acknowledged the important role of the Central Bank of Kuwait and regulatory authorities, and praised the efforts of employees, partners, and all stakeholders. Al Rushood emphasized KFH's commitment to strengthening its position as a leading Islamic bank and a trusted partner for its customers and the community.

Highest in
Kuwait
Banking
Sector

Praise be to Allah

Net Profit for Shareholders Q1 of 2024

162.8

"KD Million"

بيت التمويل الكويتي
Kuwait Finance House

Net Profit for Shareholders "KD Million"		Total Operating Income "KD Million"	
31/03/2024	31/03/2023	31/03/2024	31/03/2023
162.8	162.1	392.4	379.1
0.5	%	3.5	%
Earnings per Share "Fils"		Total Assets "KD Million"	
31/03/2024	31/03/2023	31/03/2024	31/12/2023
10.24	10.15	37,023	38,010
0.9	%	(2.6)	%
Total Financing Income "KD Million"		Financing Receivables* "KD Million"	
31/03/2024	31/03/2023	31/03/2024	31/12/2023
677.8	495.5	18,889	19,425
36.8	%	(2.8)	%
Net Financing Income "KD Million"		Depositors' Accounts* "KD Million"	
31/03/2024	31/03/2023	31/03/2024	31/12/2023
263.4	226.0	20,008	21,813
16.6	%	(8.3)	%

* Financing receivable and depositors accounts decreased due to the effect of Kuwait Finance House - Bahrain assets and liabilities classification as held for sale as well as the impact of foreign currency fluctuations during the current period.

kfh.com 180 3333

Business

NBK Executive Management continues school visits to monitor 'Bankee' program

Program designed to improve financial literacy among students



KUWAIT: The Executive Management of National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continued their school visits across Kuwait to monitor the implementation of the "Bankee" program, which was officially initiated in the current academic year through a partnership with the Ministry of Education, Kuwait Authority for Anti-Corruption "Nazaha," and Creative Confidence Company.

The bank arranged an exclusive visit to Husain Al Asousi School, featuring participation from Salah Al-Fulaij, CEO of NBK Kuwait accompanied by representatives from Ministry of Education and Nazaha and Sumayah Al-Jasem, Founder, Managing Director at Creative Confidence, as part of the event. The purpose of the visit was to update attendees on the latest advancements in the "Bankee" program's implementation in schools, aiming to enhance financial literacy and awareness among students across public and private schools.

Al-Fulaij toured several classrooms within the school to observe firsthand how the program has been integrated into the students' daily classroom activities, and to see the manner in which awards are given for exceptional performance and behavior. Al-Fulaij observed the comprehensive implementation of the Bankee program, including the experience with the virtual bank that enables students to manage a financial account trading in the virtual "Bankoz" currency, and how students are rewarded based on the accumulation of the program's currency in their accounts.

During the visit, there was notable student engagement with the program's features, and parents expressed their delight over the positive shifts in their children's behaviors and financial understanding. Conversations also took place with teachers regarding the program's impact on student development. Commenting on this visit, Al-Fulaij said, "We, at NBK, take great pride in the significant accomplishments of this key initiative. It serves as a foundational element in fostering financial inclusion and enhancing financial literacy among our students during this pivotal stage of their lives. Its goal is to



Al-Fulaij:

- Bankee plays a pivotal role in our mission to enhance financial literacy among students
- It is essential that financial education becomes a priority in schools, assisting students in cultivating sound financial habits

establish the essential knowledge required for managing their financial affairs in the future."

"It's crucial for our students to understand the significance of saving, budgeting, and prudent spending right from a young age. The sooner they start, the more profound the effect will be," Al-Fulaij emphasized. Al-Fulaij further mentioned that NBK is a bank with a strong community orientation, acknowledging the value of financial education for the youth. The bank has initiated efforts to nurture a financial culture within society, driven by the conviction that

financial literacy is not only crucial but also contributes significantly to economic enrichment, fostering both growth and development.

Al-Fulaij highlighted the importance of making financial education a priority in schools, as it equips students with sound financial habits that will benefit them for a lifetime. Moreover, he noted that when the younger generation is knowledgeable about managing their finances, it will also positively impact the economy over the long term. He also emphasized that enhancing financial literacy among children and

young people is a long-term endeavor, which might involve offering financial education both within schools and beyond.

He pointed out that initiatives aimed at boosting financial literacy are crucial for private sector institutions to support financial inclusion efforts and enhance measures of financial socialization. Having achieved a remarkable success in its pilot phase, Bankee encouraged more schools and students to join it. Out of 150 applicants, 30 schools have been enrolled in the program so far, in addition to a special needs school for learning difficulties (Joan Al-Kuwait Elementary School), with a total of 15,000 students and more than 3,000 teachers.

Bankee also launched its website in Arabic and English, as well as social media pages on Instagram, TikTok and YouTube, to enable all participants to benefit from the provided content, activities and events held at different schools all year round. NBK has recently been honored with the Bronze Award from Qorus in the Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance (ESG) category for Bankee program. This recognition signifies the bank's commitment to incorporating innovations that integrate sustainability and environmental, social, and governance standards into its activities.

"Bankee" stands as the pioneering program launched by NBK, designed to contribute to financial inclusion within the community. Specifically tailored for students in schools, the program seeks to enhance levels of financial literacy, ensuring sustainable improvement for the future. NBK officially inaugurated the program in October in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Nazaha. The program's objective is to familiarize students with fundamental economic concepts and practices, including earning, spending, saving, and financial responsibilities. This is achieved through the implementation of a classroom system that mirrors the real economic environment, employing practical methods within an interactive setting.

Indonesia hikes interest rates to seven-year high

JAKARTA: Indonesia's central bank hiked interest rates Wednesday to their highest for seven years, an unexpected move to boost the rupiah, which continues to weaken against the dollar despite several interventions in currency markets. Economists had predicted Bank Indonesia to hold the seven-day reverse repurchase rate at six percent but it instead raised it 25 basis points to 6.25 percent, a level not seen since 2016.

Its two other main rates were also raised by 25 basis points. "The interest rate increase is to strengthen the rupiah's exchange rate stability against the possibility of worsening global risks," Bank Indonesia governor Perry Warjiyo told a news conference Wednesday. Since exiting the COVID-19 pandemic, Bank Indonesia has joined other global central banks in tightening monetary policy to fight soaring inflation.

The surge in prices has been driven in part by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which stoked worldwide energy and food price rises, as well as supply chain snarls and pandemic-related economic issues. Perry said the move was a "pre-emptive and forward-looking step" to ensure inflation remains within the bank's 1.5-3.5 percent target range. It is currently at 3.05 percent. The rupiah has outper-



JAKARTA: An Indonesian woman chooses clothes to purchase from a street vendor at a traditional market in Jakarta. — AFP

formed regional peers against a strengthening US dollar, but it has still weakened more than five percent since the start of the year, Perry said, even after a string of interventions to support the unit.

The greenback has been boosted by fading expectations about how many times the Federal Reserve will cut borrowing costs this year as US inflation remains stubbornly above its target. Economists said if

the rupiah continued to slide, Bank Indonesia would likely tighten further. "The central bank has been intervening in foreign exchange markets to support the currency, and we thought it would continue with this strategy rather than resume its tightening cycle," said Gareth Leather, senior Asia economist from Capital Economics. "In the event of further weakness in the rupiah, then more hikes are likely." — AFP

targeting China over the past few months, looking into green tech subsidies. The EU provoked Beijing's ire earlier in April after announcing an investigation into Chinese wind turbine suppliers. Other probes have focused on Chinese subsidies for solar panels, electric cars and trains as Brussels seeks to move away from excessive reliance on cheaper Chinese technology. On Tuesday, the commission announced surprise raids were carried out in the EU offices of an unidentified company that makes and sells "security equipment" as part of a probe into foreign subsidies. The Chinese chamber of commerce in the EU denounced the raids in the Netherlands and Poland.

EU officials have repeatedly said they want to "derisk" their economic ties to China after Moscow's assault on Ukraine exposed the Europe's energy dependence on Russia. The EU has also adopted laws that often have China in their sights. The European Parliament on Tuesday approved a ban on products made using forced labor. Supporters hope it will be used to block goods from China's Xinjiang region where the Uyghur Muslim minority is said to endure many rights abuses. The latest investigation was announced after German authorities arrested an aide to a far-right German MEP, Maximilian Krah, on suspicion of spying for China. — AFP

China's medical devices market is the second largest after the United States, worth around 135 billion euros in 2022 (\$145 billion), according to a 2023 report by China-focused think tank MERICS. The EU probe is the first under the bloc's International Procurement Instrument which seeks to promote reciprocity in access to international public procurement markets. "The... restrictive measures and practices put at a significant and systemic disadvantage (European) Union economic operators, goods and services as they systematically favor the procurement of domestic products to the detriment of imported ones," the official journal said.

If the investigation finds unfair behavior by China, the EU can limit Chinese companies' access to the 27-nation bloc's public procurement market. The journal said the investigation is to conclude within nine months, although the European Commission can extend this by another extra five months. Beijing is "invited to submit its views and to provide relevant information" and can hold consultations with the European Commission - the EU's trade authority - "to eliminate or remedy the alleged measures and practices," the text said.

Brussels has launched a wave of investigations

EU launches probe into China's medical device market

BRUSSELS: The European Union on Wednesday announced a probe into China's medical devices market, prompting an immediate accusation from Beijing that the bloc was engaging in "protectionism". Brussels fears China is favoring its own suppliers when it comes to the procurement of medical devices. The EU's official administrative journal, announcing the probe, set out ways that could be happening, including through a "Buy China" policy.

The EU also has concerns that China may have restrictions on imports as well as imposing conditions "leading to abnormally low bids that cannot be sustained by profit-oriented companies," the notice in the journal said. Beijing lashed out at the investigation, with a foreign ministry spokesman saying it would "damage the EU's image". "All the outside world sees is it (the EU) gradually moving towards protectionism," said the ministry spokesman, Wang Wenbin, calling on Brussels to "stop using any ex-

North Korean economic delegation visits Iran

SEOUL: A North Korean economic delegation has departed Pyongyang for Iran, the nuclear-armed country's official media reported Wednesday, on a rare visit that analysts said raises concerns of cooperation between the two states. The delegation, led by external economic relations minister Yun Jong Ho, flew to Iran on Monday, the state-run Korean Central News Agency said in a one-sentence dispatch that offered no further details.

The visit comes after Pyongyang bolstered military ties with Moscow in recent months. Seoul claims the North has sent around 7,000 containers of weapons to Russia for use in Ukraine, possibly in exchange for Moscow's technical assistance for its budding spy satellite program. Russia also recently used its Security Council veto power to upend UN sanctions monitoring on North Korea amid a probe into the alleged arms transfers, with Kim Jong Un's regime expressing its thanks after the vote.

Iran and Russia are also close military and political allies, with Moscow purportedly using Iranian drones in its war against Ukraine. North Korea's visit comes after Iran launched its first-ever direct drone and missile attack on the Zionist territory. The barrage was in response to an April 1 air strike, widely blamed on the Zionist entity, that levelled an Iranian consular building in Damascus and killed seven Revolutionary Guards, two of them generals.

The trip signals Pyongyang's intention to expand and deepen its ties with Tehran, possibly by providing it with arms that could be needed in its confrontation with the Zionist entity, said Hong Min, a senior analyst at the Korea Institute for National Unification. "This visit deserves much attention given the ongoing situation involving Tehran and Jerusalem," he told AFP, adding that Tehran and Pyongyang were long-time allies who have cooperated on weapons programs dating back to the 1980s. In the same way that Pyongyang has provided Moscow with weapons, it could also do so for Tehran "in exchange for rewards such as oil and financial assistance", he added. — AFP

German forecast to offer signs if ailing economy on the mend

Business morale improves again

FRANKFURT: The German government is expected to raise its latest growth forecasts on Wednesday as Europe's crisis-hit top economy shows tentative signs it is finally turning a corner. Improvements in key indicators, from industrial output to business activity, in recent months suggest that a hoped-for recovery may be slowly under way. The German economy shrank slightly last year, hit by soaring inflation, a manufacturing slowdown and weakness in trading partners, and has acted as a major drag on the 20-nation euro-zone.

Initial hopes for a strong rebound this year were dialled back as the economy languished, with Berlin in February slashing its growth forecast to just 0.2 percent. The International Monetary Fund followed suit last week and is now expecting the same figure. But improving signs have fuelled hopes the lumbering economy - while not about to break into a sprint - may at least be getting back on its feet. On Wednesday, a closely-watched survey from the Ifo institute showed business sentiment rising for a third consecutive month in April, and more strongly than expected.

ING economist Carsten Brzeski said the survey pointed to "the return of optimism", and "strengthens the view that the German economy has left the trough behind". Last week the central bank, the Bundesbank, forecast the economy would expand slightly in the first quarter, dodging a recession, after earlier predicting a contraction. And on Tuesday a survey showed that business activity in Germany had picked up.

The HCOB Flash Germany purchasing managers' index published by S&P Global registered a figure of 50.5 in April, up from 47.7 in March, returning to growth for the first time in 10 months. Any reading above 50 indicates growth, while a figure below 50 shows contraction. But slight improvements in indicators do not mean the government will make any big changes to its forecasts, with analysts still expecting tepid growth this year. Economy Minister Robert Habeck will present the new projections at 2:15 pm.

Denmark launches its biggest offshore wind farm tender

COPENHAGEN: The Danish Energy Agency on Monday launched its biggest tender for the construction of offshore wind farms, aimed at producing six gigawatts by 2030 - more than double Denmark's current capacity. Offshore wind is one of the major sources of green energy that Europe is counting on to decarbonize electricity production and reach its 2050 target of net zero carbon production, but it remains far off the pace needed to hit its targets.

Denmark's offshore wind parks currently generate 2.7 gigawatts of electricity, with another one GW due in 2027. The tender covers six sites in four zones in Danish waters: North Sea I, Kattgat, Kriegers Flak II and Hesselø. "We are pleased that we can now offer the largest offshore wind tender in Denmark to date. This is a massive investment in the green transition," Kristoffer Boltzauw, head of the Danish Energy Agency, said in a statement. Investment in offshore wind plummeted in Europe in 2022 due to supply chain problems, high interest rates and a jump in prices of raw materials, before bouncing back in 2023.

A record 4.2 gigawatts was installed in Europe last year, when a record 30 billion euros in new projects were approved, the trade association WindEurope said in January. It said it was optimistic about the future of offshore wind in Europe, expecting new offshore wind capacity of around five gigawatts per year for the next three years. However, it noted that it was still far short of what is needed if Europe wants to hit its 2030 target of 111 gigawatts of offshore wind installed capacity, with less than 20 gigawatts installed at the end of 2023. — AFP

China, future HQ: ASML boss faces bulging in-tray

THE HAGUE: Frenchman Christophe Fouquet takes the reins of Dutch chip giant ASML, on Wednesday with a daunting to-do list, top of which will be steering business with China as semiconductors become a geopolitical battleground. ASML's strategic importance in manufacturing machines to make ultra-thin microchips that power much of the world's advanced technology has given it a role far beyond the commercial.

Fouquet will have to navigate choppy political waters as Western powers led by the United States want to crimp Chinese access to such technology fearing it could be used for weapons. Analysts do not expect a radical shift for ASML under Fouquet - after a 16-year career at the firm, he was the continuity candidate to replace current CEO Peter Wennink. "There should be no expectations that I will be turning the tables. I think that what we have been working on for many, many years is still what we want to achieve with ASML," said Fouquet when appointed.

Patting him affectionately on the arm in a corporate video, Wennink said of his 50-year-old successor: "He's been with the company for so long and he knows all our customers, suppliers, people, shareholders." "He's a known entity." Born in 1973, Fouquet studied physics in the southeastern French city of Grenoble, giving him the strong theoretical skills required to run a tech company of ASML's stature. After stints at semiconductor firms KLA Tencor and Applied Materials, he joined ASML in 2008, holding various positions in marketing and product management.

Fouquet spent years running the firm's EUV (extreme

'Recovery not assured'

Already facing turbulence from pandemic-related supply chain woes, the German economy's problems deepened dramatically when Russia invaded Ukraine in early 2022 and slashed supplies of gas to Europe. This was a heavy blow for the country's manufacturers - which still play a central role in the German economy, unlike in many other developed economies - which had come to rely on cheap Russian energy. While the energy shock has faded, continued weakness in key trading partners such as China has prolonged the pain.

Strikes in many sectors this year as workers pushed for better pay to combat inflation acted as a drag, as did higher interest rates as the European Central Bank has sought to tame runaway prices. Higher wages and other costs have also prompted some major companies to scale down production in Germany, fuelling fears of layoffs and manufacturing moving abroad. More long-term issues, such as an ageing population and a shortage of skilled labor, are also headaches for policymakers. Business groups complain they face hurdles in improving their prospects, from red tape to a failure to enact much-needed reforms.

Disagreements in Chancellor Olaf Scholz's three-party ruling coalition are also hindering efforts to reignite growth, and bolster the greener industries of the future, critics say. This week the pro-business FDP party, a coalition partner, faced an angry backlash from Scholz's SPD when it presented a 12-point plan for an "economic turnaround", which included deep cuts to state benefits. While the economy's prospects may be starting to improve, a bumpy path ahead is still seen by some. A "far-reaching recovery is not yet assured", said the Bundesbank in its latest monthly report.

Business morale

Meanwhile, German business sentiment rose for a third consecutive month in April, a key survey showed Wednesday, as hopes grow that a re-



FRANKFURT: Brokers are pictured at the stock exchange in Frankfurt, western Germany. — AFP

covery is getting under way in Europe's stuttering top economy. The Ifo institute's closely-watched confidence barometer, based on a survey of around 9,000 companies, rose to 89.4 points, up from 87.9 points in March. The increase was slightly higher than analysts surveyed by FactSet had expected. The business climate reading rose across all sectors surveyed by Ifo - manufacturing, services, trade and construction.

"Sentiment has improved at companies in Germany," Ifo president Clemens Fuest said in a statement. "The economy is stabilizing," he added. The German economy shrank by 0.3 percent last year as it grappled with costly energy, high interest rates and weak demand from key trading partners. But signs are growing that a modest rebound has begun, partly

thanks to improvements in industrial output and exports. The Bundesbank central bank last week said it now expected the economy to expand slightly in the first quarter of 2024, dodging a recession, after earlier predicting a contraction.

The latest Ifo reading "looks like a trend reversal", said LBBW economist Jens-Oliver Niklasch. "One must remain cautious in difficult times, but at least there is now some evidence to suggest we saw the bottoming out of the economy in the winter," he said. If the European Central Bank's expected interest rate cuts "also provide a boost" in the months ahead, he added, then the German economy "should see a small increase in GDP this year". The German economy ministry will unveil its updated growth forecasts later on Wednesday. — AFP



Group photo of bank employees participating in the initiative.

Gulf Bank takes part in Earth Day beach cleanup initiative

KUWAIT: As part of its ongoing efforts to promote environmental sustainability, Gulf Bank participated in a beach cleaning campaign in collaboration with TrashTag Kuwait and Trolley, coinciding with Earth Day celebrations. TrashTag Kuwait is a popular non-governmental organization dedicated to serving the environment and the community. It originated from a global social media challenge and gained popularity in 2019. This year's Earth Day marks the fifth anniversary of the organization's five-year commitment to cleaning Kuwait's coasts and deserts, in

collaboration with the community to strengthen its connection to the environment.

The global challenge seeks to highlight the environmental impact of waste by capturing images of litter in recreational spaces and documenting cleanup efforts. Participants share "before and after" photos on social media using the challenge's hashtag to increase awareness.

Many volunteers from Gulf Bank actively took part in the beach cleaning campaign, with the goal of raising environmental awareness and emphasizing the importance of environmental preservation. This initiative aligns with Gulf Bank's strategy aimed at promoting sustainability principles within the community. This participation reflects Gulf Bank's commitment to raising awareness about the importance of supporting environmental initiatives. Annually, the bank participates in Earth Day initiatives, which aim to shed light on environmental is-

ssues and inspire millions around the world to adopt more sustainable practices.

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.



VELDHOVEN: An employee makes his way in a laboratory at ASML, a Dutch company which is the largest supplier in the world of semiconductor manufacturing machines via photolithography systems in Veldhoven. — AFP

ultraviolet) program of cutting-edge machines that print ultra-thin chips critical for the development of artificial intelligence. And since 2022, he has been a key right-hand man for Wennink as vice-president and chief business officer. "Insider Christophe Fouquet is continuity in the flesh," said specialist publication Bits&Chips. "The Frenchman knows both the company and the industry like the back of his hand." Simon Coles, ASML analyst at Barclays, told AFP: "I would not expect a change in direction. The new CEO helped set and plan the current strategy, so we'd expect to see a continuation."

Top of Fouquet's concerns will be China. In January, the Dutch government revoked licenses for some of ASML's advanced machines, sparking fury in Beijing. ASML's latest quarterly results showed China accounted for 49 percent of sales but overall orders were weaker than expected, sparking a slump in shares. Fouquet has previously said it is "extremely difficult and extremely expensive" to decouple the industry's supply chain. — AFP

London's stock market zoom to another record

LONDON: London's stock market zoomed to another record peak Wednesday, in a broad-based global rally fuelled by easing Middle East tensions, bright earnings and hopes of falling interest rates as inflation slows. The British capital's benchmark FTSE 100 index of top blue-chip companies hit 8,092.12 points, extending this week's record-breaking run that began on Tuesday.

London this week became the latest global bourse to scale historic heights, following recent records in Frankfurt, Paris, Tokyo and Wall Street, propelled also by the prospect of global interest rates cuts owing to easing price rises. Asian and Europe pushed higher after a strong US rally as investors also cheered news of US carmaker Tesla's plans to develop a more affordable electric vehicle, and digested the latest corporate results. "Risk is back on in a broad way," XTB analyst Kathleen Brooks told AFP. "Earnings reports are doing the talking this week, and so far the results are generally good."

Frankfurt stocks rose as traders drew further comfort from a key survey which showed that German business sentiment rose for a third consecutive month in April, underlining hopes of a recovery in Europe's biggest economy. The Ifo institute's closely-watched confidence barometer, based on a survey of around 9,000 companies, rose to 89.4 points, up from 87.9 points in March, in an increase that beat expectations. Paris stocks grew, although Kering shares dived eight percent one day after the French luxury giant issued a profit warning following slumping sales at its flagship Gucci brand.



LONDON: Price tags are seen on racks of clothes in a street market in Portobello road in west London. — AFP

Sentiment was also buoyed as many investors fished for bargains following a recent pullback, while easing Middle East tensions provided additional support. Oil prices meanwhile receded after jumping Tuesday on a report pointing to another build-up in US inventories that raised questions about demand in the world's top economy. Wall Street had bumped higher Tuesday with the Nasdaq and S&P 500 each piling on more than one percent. General Electric, Spotify, and diaper and paper product brand Kimberly-Clark were among the companies posting strong gains after releasing quarterly reports.

Tesla announced late Tuesday a big profits miss - but said it would speed up the launch of cheaper vehicles, which saw its share price soar in after-hours trade. Microsoft and Alphabet are among the other top firms set to announce their results this week. Hopes for a strong batch of earnings - particularly from the crucial tech titans - has been a key driver of the rally in stocks, helping to offset disappointment that the Federal Reserve will not cut interest rates as much as hoped this year. — AFP

THURSDAY, APRIL 25, 2024

Top price predicted for long-lost Klimt portrait at Vienna auction

A painting by symbolist icon Gustav Klimt that reappeared after nearly a century will be sold at auction in Vienna on Wednesday despite questions surrounding its provenance. "Bildnis Fraeulein Lieser" (Portrait of Miss Lieser) was commissioned by a wealthy Jewish industrialist's family and painted by Klimt in 1917 shortly before he died.

The unfinished portrait of a dark-haired woman was likely last seen at a Viennese exhibition in 1925. It re-emerged this year when auction house im Kinsky announced its sale.

"No one expected that a painting of this importance, which had disappeared for 100 years, would resurface," said im Kinsky expert Claudia Moerth-Gasse. Portraits by the Austrian great rarely come onto the open market.

The auction house estimates its value at 30-50 million euros (\$32-53 million), but Klimt works have sold for higher prices at recent auctions.

Last June, Klimt's "Dame mit Fächer" (Lady with a Fan) was sold in London for £74 million (\$94.3 million at the time), a European art auction record. The highest price paid at auction in Austria is a work by Flemish painter Frans Francken II, which fetched seven million euros in 2010.



A visitor takes a picture of the rediscovered painting of a young female "Portrait of Miss Lieser" by the Austrian painter Gustav Klimt on a display at the im Kinsky auction house in Vienna, Austria.—AFP

Helene, Annie or Margarethe?

Wednesday's auction will begin at 1500 GMT. Besides "Portrait of Miss Lieser", sketches by Klimt and works by his contemporaries such as Egon Schiele will be on sale.

Ahead of the auction, the well-

served painting has been put on show in Vienna, but also in Switzerland, Germany, Britain and Hong Kong. The unsigned painting shows a young woman adorned with a large cape richly decorated with flowers on a bright red background. Mystery surrounds the identity

of the model, who visited Klimt's studio nine times for the portrait. She is known to be from the Lieser family, a Jewish industrial dynasty.

She could be one of the two daughters, named Helene and Annie, of Henriette (Lilly) Lieser, an art patron. But the first catalogue dedicated to Klimt, dating from the 1960s, said it was Lieser's niece, Margarethe. Lilly Lieser remained in Vienna despite the Nazi takeover, was deported in 1942 and murdered in the Auschwitz internment camp in 1943.

Nazi trader?

Before her death, Lieser seems to have entrusted the painting to a member of her staff, Austrian daily Der Standard found based on correspondence in an Austrian museum.

It then turned up in the possession of a Nazi trader, whose daughter inherited it and who in turn left it to distant relatives after her death. Im Kinsky, which specializes in restitution procedures, insists it has found no evidence that the work was stolen or unlawfully seized.

The back of the painting is "completely untouched" and has "no stamps, no stickers, nothing," which would indicate it was seized or left Austria, according to the auction house. Moreover,

none of the Lieser descendants who survived the war claimed the painting. Moerth-Gasser told AFP the current owners, who wish to remain anonymous, contacted im Kinsky two years ago for legal advice. Im Kinsky then informed the Lieser families, who are largely US-based.

Some travelled to see the painting, before signing an agreement with the owners, thus removing any obstacle to its sale. Some experts have called for a more in-depth investigation of the work's provenance however.

"Several points should be questioned more critically, as the provenance of the picture has not yet been completely clarified," Monika Mayer, head of archives at the Belvedere museum, which houses Klimt's famous "Kiss", was quoted as saying by Austria's Profil magazine.

Moreover, the painting was not presented in the United States, for fear it could be held there, as has happened before with Austrian works under dispute. Austrian museums have returned a number of Austrian art works to descendants of Jewish art collectors, including an American claimant who sought five Klimt masterpieces.—AFP



Mexican anthropologist and textile expert Marta Turok shows and informs about the garments of indigenous origin used by presidential candidates Claudia Sheinbaum and Xochitl Galvez.

Hnahnu Indigenous woman Trinidad Gonzalez, from the Otomi area, explains the embroidery of the garment called "Quex-quemeth".

INDIGENOUS FASHION CENTER STAGE IN MEXICO PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION



Marta Turok shows and informs about the garments of indigenous origin used by presidential candidates Claudia Sheinbaum and Xochitl Galvez.



View of traditional "Huipils" made by Mexican indigenous from Chiapas, on a "Ciudadela" handicrafts market.



Hnahnu Indigenous woman Martina Cruz weaves a traditional garment.

After years of fighting for greater recognition, Mexico's Indigenous weavers have seen their creations thrust into the spotlight by the two women leading the country's presidential race. The brightly colored, elaborately embroidered garments handcrafted by generations of artisans have long enchanted visitors to Mexico -- including international designers whose use of the motifs have sparked accusations of plagiarism.

Now an aficionado of the Indigenous designs is almost certain to become Mexico's first woman president, although the prominence of the traditional garments on the campaign trail has generated mixed feelings among their creators. "It's important that they don't just wear them as a costume or to attract attention," said Trinidad Gonzalez, 55, a weaver in the community of El Mejay in Hidalgo state in central Mexico.

Opposition candidate Xochitl Galvez, an outspoken businesswoman and senator of Indigenous origin, has worn the traditional garments since entering politics more than two decades ago. Claudia Sheinbaum, the former Mexico City mayor who is representing the ruling party and is leading the election race, has also worn Indigenous designs during her campaign, including at its launch. "It's very positive that Mexican textiles are center stage in the political arena," said anthropologist Marta Turok.

But according to Andres Vidal, a doctor in social anthropology at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, the choice of clothing is also part of the "electoral game."

From racism to prestige

Martina Cruz -- Gonzalez's mother -- is 83 years old, but she still weaves using techniques passed down through generations. She is happy to see traditional clothing worn by the presidential candidates, especially Galvez, who also hails from Hidalgo.

"I like it a lot," Cruz said, while weaving a garment that can take up to eight months to make and is sold for the equivalent of \$1,000. The painter Frida Kahlo was the first internationally prominent Mexican personality to wear Indigenous clothing, said Turok, an expert in

popular art. In politics, the pioneer was Maria Esther Zuno, wife of Luis Echeverria, who was president from 1970 to 1976. "Mexican politics is a reflection of society," Turok said. At one time, politicians "were ashamed" to wear Indigenous clothing, a reluctance that mirrored

the wider problem of "discrimination and racism," she recalled. But gradually Indigenous designs gained popularity and prestige. Now they can be worth thousands of dollars.

Cultural appropriation?

As a senator, Galvez promoted the adoption of the Day of the Huipil, held on March 7 in recognition of the traditional embroidered blouse. "Never haggle over the price of a huipil with an In-

igenous woman," the politician said in one of her videos, in which she showed her traditional blouses, some made of silk that according to Turok would cost up to \$5,000.

Sheinbaum, the granddaughter of Bulgarian and Lithuanian migrants, also

to start saying who can and can't wear them, it's going to be a never-ending story," Turok added. Vidal sees the use of Indigenous clothing as a way for politicians to connect with voters. "One way to reach them is by creating symbiosis through the use of a certain type of



Hnahnu Indigenous woman Martina Cruz, 83, from the Otomi area, weaves a traditional garment in the town of El Mejay in Hidalgo State, Mexico.—AFP photos



View of traditional "Huipils" made by Mexican indigenous from Chiapas, on a "Ciudadela" handicrafts market.



has a collection of Indigenous clothing given to her on tour, according to a source from her campaign.

While several major foreign clothing brands have been accused by Mexico of cultural appropriation for their Indigenous-inspired designs, Turok said she did not view the candidates' use of the huipil in the same way. "Improper cultural appropriation is taking a textile to another country to reproduce it," she said. "If we're going

clothing," he said.

The election fashion parade has brought new customers into Alfonso Giron's store in Mexico City. "They say, 'Hey, I'm looking for the garment I saw the candidate wearing on television,'" he said. But in reality, every huipil is unique, Giron added.—AFP

Clean Girl Aesthetic

THE CLEAN GIRL AESTHETIC: REVOLUTIONIZING MAKEUP WITH SUBTLE ELEGANCE

In the realm of beauty, a quiet revolution unfolds, steering away from the high-drama looks of yesteryears and towards a celebration of the inherent beauty that lies in simplicity. 'The clean girl aesthetic' emerges as a beacon of this transformative movement, championing a minimalist approach to makeup that emphasizes enhancing rather than masking. It's a trend that redefines beauty, making it accessible, attainable, and authentically natural.

Central to 'the clean girl aesthetic' is the pursuit of a radiant, dewy complexion that glows from within. This is not about concealing but revealing, with skincare taking precedence over heavy makeup. The trend favors lightweight, hydrating foundations and tinted moisturizers that offer a sheer cover, allowing the skin's natural texture and tone to shine through. This approach to base makeup is refreshing, advocating for a luminous finish that's as healthy-looking as it is beautiful.

Highlighting and blush become tools of subtle transformation, used sparingly to enhance the face's natural contours and colors. The strategic application of highlighter on the high points of the face



brings forth a soft, ethereal glow, while a touch of cream blush adds a hint of natural warmth, mimicking a gentle flush. These techniques refine the features gently, ensuring that the makeup enhances rather than overwhelms.

The aesthetic extends to the eyebrows and lips, promoting a groomed yet natural look. Eyebrows are filled in

lightly, respecting their natural shape and fullness, while lips are given a wash of color with tinted balms and sheer lipsticks. This approach to makeup is emblematic of 'the clean girl aesthetic's' core philosophy: beauty in simplicity, elegance in minimalism.

This minimalist makeup trend is not just a fleeting style but a shift towards

a more conscious and authentic form of beauty. It celebrates the individual, encouraging a form of self-expression that is both empowering and inclusive. As 'the clean girl aesthetic' continues to influence the beauty landscape, it offers a new vision of elegance, one that finds profound beauty in the subtleties of simplicity.

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

A women's prison is the site of an immersive art show from the Vatican at the 60th Venice Biennale, an unlikely venue that its curator says is a "message in itself". Away from the spotlight and the crowds of the prestigious international art fair, the former convent on the island of Giudecca in the Venetian lagoon now houses women serving long sentences.

But during this year's Biennale it is home to the exhibit "With my Eyes", which considers the daily lives of the prisoners through the work of 10 different artists. Setting the tone on the exterior facade of the prison is an imposing painting of the soles of two bare feet with rough skin by the Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan.

"It was not a matter of turning the prison into a mundane exhibition space, but of engaging artists in artistic and relational work with female inmates," said Bruno Racine, the curator.

The invited artists were "united by a conscience of the context and a willingness to participate in a unique artistic and human experience", he said.

"We had to find a concept, a place that was a message in itself" for the Vatican's show. Pope Francis, who has repeatedly championed the cause of prisoners and others on society's margins, plans to tour the exhibition during a visit to Venice on Sunday.

'No armour'

Even gaining access to the show is part of the experience as visitors must comply with stringent security measures, including reserving in advance and leaving mobile phones in lockers during the visit.

Photography is not allowed.

Twenty prisoners out of the institution's 80 are taking part in the show as guides, including Pascale and Marcella at a recent press day. In a decrepit outdoor brick corridor topped with barbed wire, poems and messages have been transcribed onto lava slabs by the Leb-



A mural by artist Maurizio Cattelan is seen outside Giudecca Women's Prison hosting the Holy See pavilion during the pre-opening of the 60th Venice Biennale art show.

Women's prison hosts Vatican's Venice Biennale show

anese artist Simone Fattal.

"I would like to isolate myself, to roll up in a ball in my chest, here there is no armour", one of them reads. At the end of the corridor is a work by the Claire Fontaine collective - a neon eye that has been crossed out, symbolizing invisibility and inmates' inability to access the outside world.

Nearby, rows of lettuce are planted in a large garden with greenhouses, a rare glimpse into the daily life

of the prisoners. "This is the part I call home. This is where we grow the fruit and vegetables that are sold outside," Marcella said.

In the courtyard, a blue neon message hanging on the wall calls out to visitors: "Siamo con voi nella notte" ("We are with you in the night"), a slogan born in Florence and used in 1970s Italy in support of political prisoners.

Illuminated 24 hours a day, it can be seen from the cells. It's "a way of show-

ing women that they're not alone", said a guard who was supervising the visit.

'Intimate stories'

A black-and-white short film by the Italian director Marco Perego features some of the inmates as well as his wife, the American actor Zoe Saldana, telling the story of a woman's last day in prison. In another room are paintings of the prisoners and their loved ones by the French artist Claire Tabouret, re-

produced from family photos.

"She has collected pieces of intimate stories, of life. Here, there's my son," said Marcella, pointing to one of the paintings. At the end of the visit, Marcella recited a poem she had written and expressed enthusiasm about the pope's visit. "We can't wait to see him. This whole project is a message of hope." — AFP



People visit the Giudecca Women's Prison.



People watch a video at the Giudecca Women's Prison



Picture taken at the Giudecca Women's Prison.



Picture taken at the Giudecca Women's Prison.



People look at artworks by Claire Tabouret at the Giudecca Women's Prison.



Norway women bring seaweed to culinary heights in Europe



This photograph shows a dish made of fish cod and seaweed, in Ballstad, in Lofoten Islands.



This photograph shows a mix of seaweeds after being dehydrated before delivery.



This photograph shows Nori seaweeds attached to a rock at low tide of Atlantic Ocean.

In the glacial waters of the Lofoten archipelago in Norway's far north, Angelita Eriksen uses a knife to cut a handful of seaweed that will soon end up in a fancy European eatery.

"We have the cleanest and clearest waters in the world. We're very lucky that we have this really important resource growing right outside our doorstep," Eriksen told AFP in a cabin on the shores of the northern Atlantic Ocean where the seaweed is laid out to dry.

"We want to show that to the world." The daughter of a Norwegian fisherman, Eriksen joined forces with New Zealand-born Tamara Singer, whose Japanese mother served seaweed with almost every meal, to start the company Lofoten Seaweed -- specialising in harvesting and preparing seaweed for the food industry.

With the help of six others, they hand-pick 11 tonnes of seaweed a year, the snow-capped mountains plummeting into the sea behind them in a dramatic tableau. It's a demanding and "physical job", said Eriksen. The peak season runs from late April until June, but "we harvest the dulse, the nori and the sea truffle in the winter and fall".

"It can be quite cold, as we can stay out for about an hour along the shore", with lower legs and hands submerged in the chilly water. By "late May, I'm actually sweating in my suit".

One time, she said, "I took my glove off and the steam was just rising up".

"It's physically hard but at the same time it's very meditative, or therapeutic in a way, to harvest," she says.

'Delicate'
Truffle seaweed, winged kelp, nori, dulse, sugar kelp, oarweed kelp: the pair focus on about 10 types of seaweed, long eaten in Japan and increasingly popular in Europe for their nutritional qualities. The seaweed is sold locally or shipped to gourmet restaurants in Norway and the rest of Europe.

The two women organise workshops to teach chefs about the different varieties and the qualities of each type. "Seaweeds are like vegetables, they have their own texture, taste and



Japan-New Zealand Co-Founder of "Lofoten Seaweed" Tamara Singer picks up Nori Fingertare seaweeds and Winged kelp at low tide in a fjord surrounded by Atlantic ocean and snowy fjords in Vareid.



US Chef Josh Haner picks up a rehydrated seaweed to prepare a dish based on seaweed condiments, surrounded by algae containers.



This photograph shows Winged kelp after being dehydrated and before delivery.



This photograph shows Fingertare seaweeds (left) and Knotted Wrack seaweeds after being picked up at low tide of Atlantic ocean.



This photograph shows Fingertare seaweeds at high tide in a fjord surrounded by Atlantic ocean.

colours," says Singer.

She said it was a "huge surprise" how many European chefs had little or no knowledge of the different flavours and ways of preparing seaweed. The duo have worked with Japanese chefs "who know exactly what to do, you don't have to tell them anything".

"It's just so natural for them. It's like giving a piece of fish to a North Norwegian," says Singer. Some 20 kilometres (12 miles) away, chef Josh Wing has

been serving the pair's products in his high-end restaurant Hattvika Lodge for about five years.

He is well versed and does not need to take part in their workshops anymore. Wing is particularly fond of the dulse, a "very delicate purple seaweed", which he serves with local fish dishes or bread. It "can provide a physical texture in a dish that you can't get from other products", he tells AFP.

To ensure that their business is

sustainable, Eriksen and Singer have mapped and dated their harvest sites, as well as the volumes of each species, for the past four years.

"Our results show that the regrowth in recently-harvested patches is actually faster than anticipated, almost as if a harvest actually stimulates growth," says Singer. —AFP



Japanese-New Zealand Co-Founder of "Lofoten Seaweed" Tamara Singer checks packages of dehydrated seaweed before delivery in Napp.



Japanese-New Zealand and Norwegian Co-Founders of "Lofoten Seaweed" Tamara Singer and Angelita Eriksen (right) pick up seaweed in the cold water.—AFP photos

Sports

Unbeaten Stoinis ton helps Lucknow chase 211 to beat CSK

Stoinis 'knew long ago' about Australia contract axe

CHENNAI: Australia's Marcus Stoinis hit an unbeaten 124 as Lucknow Super Giants chased down a target of 211 with six wickets and three balls to spare against Chennai Super Kings on Tuesday. It was Stoinis' first IPL century and his second in T20 cricket, trouncing an unbeaten 108 by Chennai skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad at his home M.A. Chidambaram Stadium.

Lucknow looked in trouble at 88-3 after 11 overs but Stoinis put on 70 runs with Nicholas Pooran, who hit 34 off 15 balls, and an unbeaten 65-run stand with Deepak Hooda to achieve victory in 19.3 overs. Stoinis reached his hundred in 56 balls as he and Hooda, who made 17 not out off six balls, secured Lucknow's second straight win over Chennai, replacing the five-time winners in fourth spot. Needing 17 to win in the final over, Stoinis smashed Mustafizur Rahman for a six and three fours, including one off a no ball.

"Tough pill to swallow, but good game of cricket," said Gaikwad. "LSG played really well in the back end. We had the game in control till 13-14 overs, but Stoinis played a great innings." Stoinis walked in in the first over after Quinton de Kock's departure for a duck and paced his innings to perfection as he hit 13 fours and six sixes in his 63-ball knock.

It was the highest score by a batsman while chasing in the IPL. Hooda

said Stoinis "played like a warrior, he is a kind of motivation to us". Sri Lanka pace bowler Matheesha Pathirana took two wickets including the dangerous Pooran.

Chennai posted 210-4 courtesy of Gaikwad's second IPL ton and a 104-run stand between the captain and Shivam Dube, who smashed 66, after the hosts were invited to bat first. Gaikwad took on the opposition attack despite losing Ajinkya Rahane and Daryl Mitchell and raised his hundred from 56 balls with a six and four.

Gaikwad became only the third Chennai player after India's Murali Vijay and Australia's Shane Watson to hit two IPL tons and moved to second in this season's batting chart with 349 runs. Royal Challengers Bengaluru star Virat Kohli tops the chart with 379 runs. Dube got to his fifty with a four and a six before being run out in the final over, which saw veteran M.S. Dhoni walk out to a rousing reception and hit a four off the final ball.

Meanwhile, Marcus Stoinis on Tuesday said he knew in advance about his omission from the Cricket Australia contract list, but will be keen to play the T20 World Cup in June. The all-rounder, along with Ashton Agar, was left out of the new list of contracts for 2024-25 after 23 players were awarded deals by the country's cricket board last month.

"I've got a great relationship with the coach, me not getting a contract, I



CHENNAI: Lucknow Super Giants' Marcus Stoinis (C) celebrates with teammates after his team's win at the end of the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Chennai Super Kings and Lucknow Super Giants at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai. — AFP

knew that long ago," Stoinis said after he hit a match-winning unbeaten 124 for Lucknow Super Giants against Chennai Super Kings in the IPL. "It's great to let the kids come in and get an opportunity, I'm happy to let them take my spot."

Up and coming fast bowler Xavier Bartlett was rewarded with a contract for the first time after playing just one T20 international and two ODI matches for Australia in February. However Stoinis remains hopeful of going to the West

Indies and the United States for T20's showpiece event starting June 1. "But on the playing front, I'd like to play and contribute," said Stoinis after being named man of the match in his team's six-wicket victory over Chennai. — AFP

Fraser-McGurk bonds with Warner to light up IPL

NEW DELHI: Jake Fraser-McGurk went unsold at auction but the young Australian was snapped up by Delhi Capitals as an injury replacement and has become one of the stories of the current IPL.

The fearless 22-year-old batsman still has plenty to learn though and told AFP he is soaking up every bit of information he can from David Warner, his idol and now a team-mate in the Indian capital.

"Having him here and knowing him quite well, we have got a nice connection, got a beautiful friendship," Fraser-McGurk said of the 37-year-old opener, one of Australia's finest-ever batsmen. Delhi head coach and Australia great Ricky Ponting this week described Fraser-McGurk as "a serious talent", and there are flashes of the young Warner with his attacking approach and ease at which he hits sixes.

Last year Fraser-McGurk shattered AB de Villiers' record for the fastest century in List A (50-over) matches, taking just 29 balls for South Australia. None of the 10 IPL teams came in for him at December's player auction so he joined Delhi as an injury replacement for South African paceman Lungi Ngidi — and has not looked back.

Fraser-McGurk's 35-ball 55 on his debut brought instant fame in India, even if Australian cricket has long known about his potential. "I met Davey a while back in the BBL," said Fraser-McGurk, referring to the Big Bash League, Australia's domestic Twenty20 tournament.

"Then ran some drinks for the Australian one-day team a couple of years back and then played with him in Dubai." Fraser-McGurk cannot talk highly enough of Warner. "When the talk is about the game, then you understand how much experience he has and what he's done," he said. "He has time for everyone, he is very unselfish and does what his team needs."

'Serious talent'

Fraser-McGurk has played two one-day internationals for Australia this year, hitting an 18-ball 41 in his second ODI against the West Indies. Despite that and his IPL form, which included a 15-ball half-century against Sunrisers Hyderabad, Fraser-McGurk is not anticipating a call-up for the T20 World Cup in June in the United States and West Indies.

He admits he forgot that the World Cup was taking place almost straight after the IPL. "Mitch Marsh was obviously with Delhi and he said we are going to Barbados and America and all that stuff," said Fraser-McGurk. "I was like, 'Are you playing there?' and he was like, 'No, the World Cup'."

"Obviously it's not on the forefront of my mind." Ponting expects Fraser-McGurk to have a bright international future, but cautioned: "So far he is not anywhere near the finished product yet. I would love to be able to spend more time with him one-on-one and work on his batting," he added. "I think he can be a three-format player for Australia." — AFP

Norman says McIlroy welcome on LIV Tour, but denies any offer

ADELAIDE: LIV Golf boss Greg Norman denied Wednesday making any financial offer for Rory McIlroy to jump ship from the PGA Tour, but said he was happy to "have a conversation". A report in Britain last week said McIlroy — a long-time critic of the upstart Saudi circuit — was poised to switch to LIV in a staggering deal worth \$850 million.

But the four-time major winner from Northern Ireland swiftly debunked the rumours in an interview with NBC's Golf Central. "LIV never put an offer to him," Norman said when asked by AFP on the sidelines of LIV's latest stop in Adelaide.

"This is just typical white noise that gets out there in the industry." LIV has signed a slew of golf's elite since its formation, with Spanish star Jon Rahm the last big name to make the switch last December in a move reported to be worth around \$500 million.

McIlroy has been increasingly conciliatory towards LIV professionals in recent months amid ne-

gotiations with the PGA Tour over a merger, but insisted to NBC he planned to remain on the PGA Tour "for the rest of my career." Norman said he would always be welcome should he change his mind. "If Rory was willing to sit down with us and have a conversation with us, would we be happy to sit down with him - 100 percent," he said.

"No different to any other player who would be interested in coming over to play with us." Norman revealed he recently sat down with another "top, top PGA player" to lay out the facts of what LIV represented and what it could deliver on a global basis.

'Strong' Masters fan support

"I mean I've sat down with one top, top PGA player in his house with another member of my team and walked him through the whole process," he said. "And he was so impressed and he said, 'that's not what we're told in the locker room', and that was really impressive. "He made the decision and he called me up two days later and said 'I'm deciding to stay where I'm at.' I said, 'happy days, you made the decision on facts. The door is always open if you want to come back and have a conversation.'"

Norman was at the Augusta Masters earlier this month, primarily to "support the (LIV) boys". After



Greg Norman

being snubbed from the official guest list last year, he bought his ticket this time and spent three days walking a golf course with the public for the first time in his life.

He admitted to being nervous about the reception he might get, but said the support from fans for LIV Golf's mission was "very, very strong". "To see it and to hear the comments they made about what's happening to the game of golf and what LIV has brought to the game of golf, it was very, very strong for me," he said. "It was a very powerful three days." — AFP

Ski great Hirscher to make comeback under Dutch flag

VIENNA: Austria's two-time Olympic ski champion Marcel Hirscher is coming out of retirement to compete under the flag of the Netherlands, the Austrian ski federation announced on Wednesday. The Netherlands may not be known as a go-to ski destination — the country's highest mountain measures just 322 metres (1,056 feet) above sea level.

But Hirscher, 35, plans to return to the World Cup circuit next season under the Dutch flag for the first time since his retirement in 2019. The eight-time overall World Cup champion's decision to switch nationality has been greeted with a certain reluctance by the Austrian ski authorities.

"Over the past few days we have learned that Marcel Hirscher plans to return to the international circuit," Austrian ski chief Christian Scherer noted in a statement. "Of course we regret enormously his



Marcel Hirscher

decision to ask for a change of nationality to join the Dutch Ski Federation but we have finally given it our support...by respect to him," Scherer added.

Hirscher, the son of an Austrian father and Dutch mother, explained his reasoning in switching to represent a different country. "I have an excellent relationship with the OSV (Austrian Ski Federation) and am grateful to them for everything we have achieved. This new project is best realized as a Dutch citizen,"

due diligence and according to the agreed process and rules of the World Anti-Doping Code," WADA said Tuesday. "WADA reviewed this case professionally and thoroughly, both from a scientific and legal perspective.

"WADA had no evidence to challenge the environmental contamination scenario that led to CHINADA closing these cases in June 2021." Several of the swimmers won medals at Tokyo with some set to compete at this summer's Paris Olympics.

WADA could have taken the case to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) but WADA president Witold Banka said there was no credible evidence to dispute the CHINADA finding. "Indeed, WADA was advised by external counsel that it would lose any appeal at (CAS) based on such a challenge," WADA said Tuesday.

"So far, despite all the attention created around this story, nobody has been able to produce any evidence that would allow a successful prosecution of these cases." USADA, however, called WADA's inaction a "failure" of the entire anti-doping system.

"We urgently call on governments and sport leaders to step up and immediately undertake action to ensure that real independence, oversight and accountability are created in the global anti-doping system so that the world can have trust and confidence in the system and those who lead it," USADA said.

"Given we're on the eve of the 2024 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games, athletes and the public desperately need and deserve confidence in the global anti-doping system headed into these Games. "An immediate first step to repairing the damage

he said. Hirscher added: "I retired five years ago, I am now 35 years old." My comeback must therefore also be seen in that light. "I especially want the opportunity to participate in competitions again, just because I enjoy it."

The Dutch are thrilled at the prospect of Hirscher competing in their colours. "The fact that Marcel Hirscher plans to work for the Netherlands and to ski for the NSKiV is an absolute honour," said Dutch ski federation general director Fritz Avis.

"Marcel is a global icon and an inspiration for all skiers and winter sports enthusiasts in the Netherlands," he continued. "We hope that this will stimulate interest and that enthusiasm for winter sports will get a boost in our already winter sports crazy country."

Hirscher is one of the greats of the sport and his collection of eight consecutive overall World Cup crystal globes from 2012 to 2019 remains a record. He retired with 67 World Cup wins, claimed Olympic gold in slalom and combined at the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Games, and has seven world titles to his name. Since retirement Hirscher, who has rock star status in ski-addicted Austria, set up his own ski company. — AFP



LAUSANNE: (FILES) World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) Polish President Witold Banka delivers a speech at the opening of the two-day annual WADA symposium in Lausanne. — AFP

of this cover-up is for governments to appoint an Independent Prosecutor to review the entire case file of the 23 positive tests and ensure that justice is delivered.

"The effort to achieve whatever justice possible at this time must happen before the 2024 Paris Games, as it is unfair for all athletes competing in these Games to possibly compete against those who tested positive and whose results were kept secret until now."

USADA objected to not pushing the case to CAS, saying: "WADA's willingness to blindfold and handcuff itself and to maintain that it would do the same thing all over again is yet another stab in the back to clean athletes." — AFP

Sports

A splash into Kuwait's history

Mohammad Burbayea and Dominik Guhrs unveil Kuwait's maritime heritage



Dominik Guhrs and Mohammed Burbayea performing in Kuwait.

KUWAIT: A groundbreaking collaboration between two Red Bull athletes and extreme sports icons is now live: Mohammad Burbayea, Kuwait's very own JetSki champion, and Dominik Guhrs, the German wakeboarding sensation. Through a captivating video shot in Kuwait's Nag'at Al Kout, their joint endeavor takes audiences on an exciting voyage, breaking new ground in the realm of thrill-seeking sportsmanship, all while paying homage to Kuwait's vibrant maritime legacy.

The project was filmed in Nag'at Al Kout, a location renowned for its legacy, with the aim of blending athleticism and cultural exploration. It combined wakeboarding and jet skiing in Kuwait's historic docks, inspired by the country's maritime legacy. Navigating obstacles that paid homage to Kuwait's seafaring traditions, the duo created an electrifying spectacle unlike anything seen before.

Commenting on the project, Burbayea said: "I'm immensely proud to have accomplished this feat within the intense timeframe of just one week – a first for me! A huge shoutout to the incredible Red Bull team for making it all possible."

He added: "Filming in this setting was a departure from the usual championship atmosphere; it's a whole different



ball game. This isn't your run-of-the-mill stunt, you see. Speedy races call for precision and velocity. Navigating a closed course, with buoy markers guiding our every move, while racing against the clock adds an extra layer of challenge. This time, I had to adapt, towing Dominik with his unique wakeboarding style, requiring a more measured approach."

Boasting an impressive tally of 25 global gold medals in jet skiing over a span of 15 exhilarating years, Burbayea stands as a testament to unparalleled

athleticism and determination. Remarkably, between 2007 and 2017, Burbayea clinched an astounding 21 championships from the International Jet Sports Boating Association, achieving this remarkable feat all before reaching the age of thirty.

Dominik Guhrs, renowned for his outstanding wakeboarding abilities, boasts an impressive array of accomplishments, including numerous German Championship titles, European Championship titles, a second-place finish at the World Championships in the WWA, and even securing



a People's Choice Ride of the Year award. Reflecting on the project, Guhrs said: "Despite the challenges posed by navigating through bustling boat traffic, the project was an incredible experience. The unwavering support from all involved made it not only manageable but also enjoyable. Embracing the novelty of utilizing a Jet ski and winch instead of my customary Cable Park setup injected a refreshing change into the mix. He added: "Being towed by a Jet ski on a wakeboard for the first time boosted the excitement,

moreover, Burbayea's invaluable assistance ensured smooth sailing throughout, leaving me eagerly anticipating future adventures in Kuwait!"

As Dominik Guhrs and Mohammad Burbayea pushed the boundaries of wakeboarding and jet skiing, their collaboration epitomized the spirit of adventure and exploration. This idea was brought to life in partnership with Red Bull MOBILE by Zain. Stay tuned to witness Red Bull's captivating footage capturing their thrilling exploits on the water!

Badosa 'fighting' for tennis career despite fracture

MADRID: Former world number two Paula Badosa on Tuesday vowed to "keep fighting" for her career despite doctors telling her "it would be complicated" to continue playing professional tennis due to a stress fracture she sustained in her back last year.

The Spaniard was told she might have to manage her pain using cortisone shots in order to stay competing and admits she has had many low moments as she tries to come to terms with the medical advice she is being given.

"I cried a lot and I'm still crying sometimes when I hear that and when I have talks with the doctors," Badosa told reporters at the Madrid Open ahead of her first-round match. "But at the same time, I have this personality, this character that it's like, 'I will still get through it, I will still keep fighting'. I'm like that, I'm a little bit stubborn. But I think maybe that in this case can help."

Besides consulting with doctors, Badosa has turned to many of her colleagues—including Andrey Rublev, Karen Khachanov and Bianca Andreescu—who had suffered similar injuries, seeking encouragement. "Sometimes you just don't want to accept what the doctor says and you're like, 'For sure they're making a mistake'. I just try to stay positive," added the 26-year-old.

"There are some days that I wake up and I'm not feeling that well and I ask myself, 'Is this worth



Paula Badosa

it?'" Badosa, who did not play last year after exiting Wimbledon in July due to the injury, was forced to retire from her second-round clash with Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka in Stuttgart last week with a minor adductor tear.

But she had pushed the world number two before that moment, with the players level in a deciding set. "It's the level that you want to be at, that fighter again. So even though I didn't win in that moment, for moments like that I will keep fighting," she said. Badosa is undergoing four hours of treatment every day to be ready for the action in Madrid.

Zheng facing race to be fit

Meanwhile, Chinese world number eight Zheng Qinwen revealed she sustained a leg injury in Stuttgart and is hoping she recovers in time for her opener at the Caja Magica. Unlike most of her compatriots, Zheng enjoys competing on clay, thanks to her years

of training in Spain, where she developed a heavy top-spin on the red dirt.

Her first breakthrough at the Grand Slams came at Roland Garros, when she made the fourth round in 2022, and the 21-year-old will have many eyes on her at the French Open next month after reaching this year's Australian Open final.

"I'm always excited when the clay season is coming but I don't want to be over-excited, because when you get over-excited, the injury comes. Maybe that's why (I got injured)," Zheng said. "I didn't have a good preparation. So now I have to think, whether I like or I don't like, I have to do the things correct."

Elsewhere, defending champion Sabalenka believes she has to step up her game in order to get back into the 'big three' conversation, alongside her main tour rivals Iga Swiatek and Elena Rybakina. Sabalenka has won back-to-back matches just once since she successfully defended her Australian Open title in January.

Swiatek has picked up two WTA 1000 titles in Doha and Indian Wells within that period, while Rybakina has lifted trophies in Abu Dhabi and Stuttgart, along with runner-up showings in Doha and Miami.

"I feel like I kind of dropped my level a little bit (to be part of) the 'big three', I feel like it's been a 'big two' in the last month," confessed Sabalenka. The second-ranked Sabalenka feels she has proven to be a force on clay and is ready for the tour's most demanding surface. "I would say that I'm pretty sure that I'll be there and I'll be fighting for every point and if I have an opportunity, I'm sure I'm going to take it. That's my mentality going into the clay season this year," she said. The Madrid Open kicked off on Tuesday, with the women's final scheduled for Saturday, May 4. —AFP

Milik fires Juventus into Italy Cup final

ROME: Arkadiusz Milik's late strike helped Juventus reach the Italian Cup final on Tuesday with a 3-2 aggregate win over Lazio despite losing a tense second leg 2-1. Nursing a 2-0 first-leg win, Juventus found themselves 2-0 down on the night and completely dominated as Lazio made a fight of it with a brace of goals from Valentin Castellanos.

But late Juventus substitute Milik scored with his first touch on 83 minutes to settle Juve's nerves and the two-legged semi with a prod-in. The Turin side will play either Atalanta or Fiorentina in the May 15 final, with the Florence outfit leading 1-0 before Wednesday's return leg.

"We suffered against a good side, so we're happy to be in the final," said the Polish striker Milik. "We know we have to play better in the final, and we know we can play better." Mattia Perin was in the Juventus goal as their Cup 'keeper, and suffered a torrid time with regular starter Wojciech Szczesny watching on from the bench.

Castellanos headed Lazio in front with a thunderous header from a corner on 12 minutes and the Argentinian ran from deep to fire a low shot into the bottom corner shortly after the restart. Juve coach Massimiliano Allegri brought on forwards Timothy Weah and Milik with the clock ticking down and both were involved as the double change paid immediate dividends. — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	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

Change of Name

I, **Kutbuddin** holder of Indian Passport No. M0404244, do hereby change my name to Kutbuddin (as given name) Bagidorawala (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Kutbuddin Bagidorawala and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents.

(#5198, 24/04/2024)

Emergency call 112



LONDON: Arsenal's German midfielder #29 Kai Havertz (R) shoots past Chelsea's Spanish defender #03 Marc Cucurella (C) to score their third goal during the English Premier League football match between Arsenal and Chelsea at the Emirates Stadium in London. — AFP

Arsenal thrash Chelsea 5-0 to open up Premier League lead

Destiny of the title remains in Manchester City's hands

LONDON: Kai Havertz and Ben White scored twice as Arsenal thrashed Chelsea 5-0 on Tuesday to surge ahead in the Premier League title race and ramp up the pressure on Liverpool and Manchester City. Leandro Trossard was also on target in a record win over Chelsea for the Gunners, who move three points clear of Liverpool and four of Manchester City. The destiny of the title remains in City's hands as the defending champions have two games in hand. Liverpool have also played one fewer game than Arsenal and are in action at Everton in the Merseyside derby on Wednesday.

However, Mikel Arteta's men's goal difference advantage now looks unassailable should it become decisive in the title race. "We have made our people very proud, it is a big derby for us and I know what it means," said Arteta. "We started the game really well but didn't convert all our chances - we were a bit sloppy in certain areas of the pitch. "In the second half we

were much more disciplined and created chances and were ruthless in front of goal."

Chelsea and Arsenal's title rivals were dealt a huge blow before kick-off as the Blues' danger man Cole Palmer was ruled out due to illness. Palmer has scored or assisted nearly 50 percent of Chelsea's Premier League goals this season and his presence was badly missed by the visitors.

Despite enduring a disappointing first season under Mauricio Pochettino, Chelsea had been unbeaten in eight consecutive league games prior to their FA Cup semi-final defeat to Manchester City on Saturday.

But they were blown away by an Arsenal side keen to reaffirm their title credentials after losing their last home game to Aston Villa. "So difficult (a) result and performance (to accept) because it is not nice to see your team playing like this from the beginning of the game," said Pochettino.

"Today we didn't compete against a team fighting

for the Premier League. We need to be aware we need to compete in a different way." The hosts flew out of the blocks and were in front inside five minutes. Trossard only ended up at the Emirates after Arsenal were gazumped by Chelsea in the battle to sign Mykhailo Mudryk in January 2023. The Belgian has proved to be a far more productive signing and smashed in his 15th goal of the season at Djordje Petrovic's near post.

Havertz haunts Chelsea

Petrovic redeemed himself for a mistake at the opening goal with two brilliant saves to turn away Havertz's low effort and a deflected shot by Trossard to keep his side in the game before half-time. The Serbian briefly held Arsenal at bay early in the second period with saves from Declan Rice and Havertz.

However, the floodgates opened once White curled in Arsenal's second after Chelsea failed to clear a corner on 52 minutes. Havertz scored the

winning goal in a Champions League final for Chelsea during his three years in west London, but he never performed consistently to the level he has found in recent months under Arteta. Martin Odegaard's stunning through ball was met with the finish it deserved as Havertz smashed high past Petrovic. His next finish was more subtle as the German international fired in off the post from Bukayo Saka's pass for his seventh goal in his last 14 club games.

A night for forget for Chelsea was summed up when White's attempted cross flew into the top corner from another sensational Odegaard pass. Defeat leaves Chelsea still in ninth, three points adrift of the European places. Next up for Arsenal is what appears their toughest hurdle remaining away to Tottenham in Sunday's north London derby. Should Arteta's side prevail at the home of their fiercest rivals, City will likely need to be perfect in their final six games to retain the title. — AFP

Doncic shines as Mavs sink Clippers; Wolves down Suns

LOS ANGELES: Luka Doncic scored 32 points as the Dallas Mavericks battled to a series-tying 96-93 road victory over the Los Angeles Clippers on Tuesday in a tense NBA Western Conference playoff duel. Slovenian star Doncic combined with Kyrie Irving for 55 points to ensure that Dallas will head back to Texas with honors even at 1-1 in the best-of-seven series.

Doncic and Irving formed a sublime double act in a hard-fought fourth quarter, orchestrating a crucial 14-0 run that effectively took the game away from the Clippers, who had downed Dallas in a 109-97 win in game one on Sunday. After trailing for most of the game, the Clippers threatened to snaffle another precious home victory after opening up a six-point lead early in the fourth quarter. But the Doncic-Irving axis helped the Mavs regain control to set up a deserved win.

Doncic finished with 32 points, nine assists and six rebounds while Irving contributed 23 points, six rebounds, three assists and three steals. "We had to make some noise in the second game, you know, first game wasn't our best game," Doncic said.

"So we had to come out here and prove that we can play with them," Doncic added, before saluting the contribution of Irving. "It's amazing having him on our team," Doncic said. "It just helps me a lot. A great guy and just happy that he's here." James Harden and Paul George led the Clippers scoring with 22 points each. In



LOS ANGELES: P.J. Washington #25 of the Dallas Mavericks attempts a shot in front of Ivica Zubac #40, Paul George #13, Kawhi Leonard #2 and James Harden #1 of the LA Clippers during a 96-93 Mavericks win in game two of the Western Conference First Round Playoffs at Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

other playoff action. Jaden McDaniels scored 25 points as the Minnesota Timberwolves dominated the Phoenix Suns 105-93 to take a 2-0 series lead. Indiana roared back to beat Milwaukee 125-108 and square their best-of-seven duel at 1-1.

McDaniels led a balanced Minnesota offensive effort that saw all five starters finish in double digits as the Western Conference third seeds moved to within two wins of a series victory. But it was the Timberwolves' defense who turned the game in the home side's favor, shutting down Phoenix in the second half to frustrate Suns stars Kevin Durant and Devin Booker. A torrid

night for Phoenix ended with Booker fouling out in the fourth quarter while the Suns also were handed an injury scare, with Grayson Allen hobbling off in the third quarter after rolling an ankle. The Timberwolves will go into Friday's game three brimming with confidence after restricting Phoenix's offense to 42 second-half points. Minnesota scored 31 points off 20 Phoenix turnovers while the Suns took just two points from the Wolves' 14 turnovers throughout the game. "We've had issues with that throughout the course of the year, taking care of the basketball and it reared its head again tonight," Phoenix coach Frank Vogel said.—AFP

Al Ain knock out Al Hilal to reach Asian League final

RIYADH: Al Ain reached the Asian Champions League final for the first time since 2016 with a 5-4 aggregate victory over four-time winners Al Hilal, despite a 2-1 second-leg defeat in Riyadh on Tuesday.

Trailing 4-2 after their record 34-match winning run was ended in last week's first leg, Al Hilal quickly cut the deficit through Ruben Neves' fourth-minute penalty.

Brazilian Erik drew Al Ain level on the night, though, to leave runaway Saudi Pro League leaders Al Hilal with a mountain to climb in the second half.

But Salem Al Dawsari scored a rebound less than six minutes after the restart to give the hosts renewed hope. Brazilian Michael and former Lazio star Sergei Milinkovic-Savic both went close as Al Hilal piled on the pressure, the latter seeing his effort cleared off the line. Al Ain goalkeeper Khalid Eisa enjoyed a fine evening, making six saves, including from Michael and Mohamed Kanno late on.

The Emirati visitors clung on desperately through nine minutes of added time, with Eisa keeping out a Michael header in the 98th minute.

Herman Crespo's Al Ain will face either Yokohama F-Marininos or Koreans Ulsan Hyundai in the final in May as they bid for a second triumph in the competition and first since 2003. Japanese club Yokohama trail 1-0 on aggregate heading into their semi-final second leg on Wednesday. — AFP