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2 Kuwait grants honorary order to French Gulf War veterans



9 Al-Sager: NBK profits underscore successful strategic investments



11 'Haven of freedom' Tangiers hosts global jazz festival



16 Arsenal survive fightback by Spurs to boost title charge



Amir attends WEF in Riyadh

Saudi says world has failed Gaza • Abbas says only US can stop Rafah 'disaster'



RIYADH: HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, along with an accompanying official delegation, visited Saudi Arabia on Sunday to participate in the World Economic Forum special meeting hosted by Riyadh. On the sidelines of the summit, HH the Amir met Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman Al-Saud, Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Al-Sudani and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Saudi Arabia said the international community has failed Gaza and reiterated its call for a Palestinian state at the summit attended by a host of mediators.

"The situation in Gaza obviously is a catastrophe by every measure — humanitarian, but also a complete failing of the existing political system to deal with that crisis," Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan said during the first

day of the forum. Only "a credible, irreversible path to a Palestinian state" will prevent the world from confronting "this same situation two, three, four years down the line," he said. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Palestinian leaders and high-ranking officials from other countries trying to broker a ceasefire between the Zionist entity and Hamas are attending the summit in Riyadh, capital of the world's biggest crude oil exporter.

The Zionist entity's offensive has killed at least 34,454 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry. Speaking in Riyadh, Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas said the United States "is the only country capable" of preventing the Zionist entity's long-feared invasion of Rafah city in southern Gaza. "We appeal to the United States of America to ask (the Zionist entity) to stop the Rafah operation," he said, warning it would harm and displace civilians, and be "the biggest disaster in the history of the Palestinian people".

Earlier Sunday, Saudi Finance Minister Mohammed Al-Jadaan called for regional "stability," warning of the effects of the war on global economic sentiment. "I think cool-headed countries and leaders and people need to prevail," Jadaan said. Diplomatic efforts to reach a long sought-after truce and hostage-release deal in Gaza appeared to intensify, as Hamas said it would respond to the Zionist entity's latest proposal on Monday.

WEF president Borge Brende said Saturday there was "some new momentum now in the talks around the hostages, and also for... a possible way out of the impasse we are faced with in Gaza". The Zionist entity is not taking part in the summit. The US State Department said Blinken will "discuss ongoing efforts to achieve a ceasefire in Gaza that secures the release of hostages".

Prince Faisal said any reconstruction plan for Gaza would need to be accompanied by a durable political solution to the conflict. "This idea that we can talk about half measures and to discuss, 'Well where are the 2.5 million people of Gaza going to go?' without addressing

Continued on Page 6



RIYADH: HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman Al-Saud (left), Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Al-Sudani (center) and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif (right) on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum special meeting on April 28, 2024. — KUNA (See Page 2)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Expat teen orders macabre killing

CAIRO: Investigations by the Egyptian public prosecution revealed horrific details of the brutal murder of a 15-year-old boy in Qalyubia governorate in Egypt, allegedly done at the behest of an Egyptian teenager resident in Kuwait, who planned to sell the video of the killing on the Dark Web. The perpetrator allegedly lured the boy and killed him, then removed his organs and mutilated his body while filming the macabre killing. (See Page 4)

Dubai building largest terminal

DUBAI: Dubai announced on Sunday that work had begun on a new terminal at Al Maktoum International Airport, which the emirate's ruler said will become "the world's largest" at a cost of almost \$35 billion. Once fully operational, the airport will "handle a passenger capacity of 260 million annually", the government said in a statement. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates, said on X the airport will have "the world's largest capacity" and be "five times the size of the current Dubai International Airport", which is one of the world's busiest air hubs. — AFP

Zain harnessing AI to lead digital transformation

KUWAIT: Zain announced its Exclusive Sponsorship of the highly anticipated insightful talk with Mohammed (Mo) Gawdat dubbed AI: Scary Smart in partnership with the Kuwait Institute of Banking Studies (KIBS). During the session, the AI expert discussed

the massive potential of artificial intelligence and how it is set to reshape the business and economic landscapes.

The event was joined by Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) Vice Chairman and Group CEO Isam Al-Sager, Ahli Bank of Kuwait Chairman Talal Bebbhani, NBK Deputy Group CEO Shaikha Al-Bahar, Zain Kuwait CEO Nawaf Algharabally, KIBS Director General Rana Al-Nibari, along with top executives and leaders from the private sector. (See Page 3)



KUWAIT: Mo Gawdat with top executive leaders from the telecom and banking sector, including Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi.

Push for truce as Zionists pummel Gaza

GAZA: Diplomatic efforts intensified on Sunday to reach a long-sought truce and captive-release deal in Gaza, as Hamas said it would travel to mediator Egypt to deliver its response after the Zionist entity's latest proposal. The Zionist government has come under intense pressure from its global allies to reach a ceasefire, as well as from protesters within the Zionist entity demanding the release of hostages seized by Hamas fighters.

A delegation from the Islamist movement will arrive in Egypt on Monday to deliver the group's response to the Zionist entity's new hostage and truce counterproposal, a senior Hamas official told AFP. Egypt, Qatar and the United States have been trying to mediate a new truce ever since a one-week halt to the fighting in November saw 80 Zionist captives exchanged for 240 Palestinians held in Zionist prisons.

The Zionist entity's offensive against Hamas has killed at least 34,454 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry in the territory. Hamas has previously insisted on a permanent ceasefire — a condition that the Zionist entity has rejected. However, the Axios news website, citing two Zionist officials, reported that the Zionist entity's latest proposal includes a willingness to discuss the "restoration of sustainable calm" in Gaza after hostages are released.

Continued on Page 6



GAZA: A man writes a message of thanks to students in the US protesting in solidarity with the people of Gaza on a tent at a camp for displaced Palestinians in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on April 27, 2024. — AFP



Amir thanks Saudi leadership for hosting World Economic Forum

Sheikh Mishal receives dignitaries, discusses ties



RIYADH: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman Al-Saud. — KUNA photos



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah departs for Saudi Arabia on Sunday to attend the World Economic Forum.



HH the Amir receives Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammed Al-Sudani.



RIYADH: HH the Amir receives Pakistan's Prime Minister Mian Mohammad Shehbaz Sharif and his accompanying delegation on Sunday.

RIYADH: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah departed Saudi Arabia on Sunday after participating in the World Economic Forum hosted by Riyadh. His Highness the Amir was seen off at the airport by Prince Mohammad bin Abdulrahman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Deputy Governor of the Riyadh Region, GCC Secretary-General, Jassem Al-Budaiwi, the Ambassador of Kuwait to Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Sabah Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and members of embassy.

His Highness the Amir sent a cable of appreciation to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz. In the cable, HH the Amir thanked King Salman for hosting and organizing the World Economic Forum, which reflects the Kingdom's pioneering role to embody its keenness to enhance the prospects for international cooperation and stimulate all joint efforts to achieve sustainable economic growth in light of the current global challenges.

His Highness the Amir also thanked King Salman for the hospitality and warm welcome during his visit to the Kingdom, showing the deep-rooted brotherly ties between the two countries, wishing King Salman good health and his country more prosperity. HH the Amir sent a similar cable of appreciation to Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman Al-Saud.

Earlier, His Highness the Amir received the Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin



RIYADH: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah arrives in Saudi Arabia on Sunday.

Salman Al-Saud on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum. HH the Amir conveyed his greetings to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, wishing him good health. During the meeting, the bilateral ties between the two countries and the latest regional

and global developments were touched on. The meeting was attended by His Highness the Amir's official delegation.

During his visit to Saudi Arabia, HH the Amir received a number of dignitaries on Sunday including

Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammed Al-Sudani and his accompanying delegation on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum hosted by Riyadh. During the meeting, the bilateral ties between the two countries and the latest regional and global developments were touched on.

HH the Amir also received Pakistan's Prime Minister Mian Mohammad Shehbaz Sharif and his accompanying delegation. During the meeting, the bilateral ties between the two countries and the latest regional and global developments were discussed. The meeting was attended by His Highness the Amir's official delegation.

Earlier in the day, His Highness the Amir, along with an accompanying official delegation, arrived in Saudi Arabia to partake in the World Economic Forum hosted by Riyadh. HH the Amir was received at the airport by Prince Mohammad bin Abdulrahman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Deputy Governor of the Riyadh Region, GCC Secretary-General, Jassem Al-Budaiwi, the Ambassador of Kuwait to Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Sabah Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and members of Embassy.

HH the Amir was accompanied by a delegation of officials including Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investments Anwar Ali Al-Mudhaf, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya and ranking officials at the Amiri Diwan. —KUNA

PM receives UAE Minister of State for Foreign Trade



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah receives at Bayan Palace on Sunday, UAE Minister of State for Foreign Trade Dr Thani bin Ahmad Al-Zeyoudi and his accompanying delegation, on his visit to the country. — KUNA

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace on Sunday, UAE Minister of State for Foreign Trade Dr Thani bin Ahmad Al-Zeyoudi and his accompanying dele-

gation, on his visit to the country.

Minister of Commerce and Industry Abdullah Al-Jouan and Head of the Prime Minister's Diwan Abdulaziz Dakheel Al-Dakheel attended the meeting. — KUNA



PARIS: Kuwait has bestowed upon a group of French Gulf War veterans an honorary order in recognition of their contributions towards liberation from Iraqi invasion.

Kuwait grants French Gulf War veterans honorary order

PARIS: Kuwait has bestowed upon a group of French Gulf War veterans an honorary order in recognition of their contributions towards liberation from Iraqi invasion, its embassy in Paris said on Sunday.

Amid a lavish ceremony in France's northernmost region of Hauts-de-France, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Paris Mohammad Al-Judai attached an em-

blem of Kuwait's "Liberation Order" to the group's flag in a gesture of appreciation for France's "immense role" in liberating Kuwait, the statement underlined. The move is also emblematic of the "depth of bilateral relations," added the statement, in addition to France's unflinching support for Kuwaiti liberation and independence, it said. —KUNA

'Jahed' exercise to help hone National Guard's readiness

KUWAIT: The Assistant for Administrative Support in the National Guard, Major General Engineer Issam Nayef, confirmed on Sunday, that the "Jahed" exercise, which is carried out by the Administrative Support Units, aims to measure readiness, provide support to state agencies to the fullest extent, and deal with any emergency event.

The National Guard said in a press statement that Major General Nayef conveyed to the participants during the opening of the exercise the greetings and appreciation of the Guard leadership, represented by His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Chief of the National Guard, and Deputy Chief of the National Guard, Sheikh Faisal Nawaf

Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and followed by the Undersecretary of the Guard, Lieutenant General Engineer Hashem Al-Rifai.

He added that the exercise carried out by the administrative support units represented by the State Apparatus Support Center in cooperation with the units affiliated with the Assistant Command for Administrative Support is the first-of-its-kind to carry out the tasks assigned to it in providing support to state agencies. He explained that the exercise also shows the extent of benefiting from what the participants gained during the period of coexistence and training with the ministries and state institutions that signed cooperation protocols between them and the National Guard, in implementation of the leadership's directives and the objectives of the National Guard's 2025 guiding document 'Protection and Support'. He called on the participants in the exercise to cooperate and adhere to security and safety procedures, praising the great support provided by the National Guard leadership to the assistant units for administrative support. — KUNA



Administrative Support Assistant in the National Guard, Major General Engineer Issam Nayef, during his attendance at the "Ready" exercise.

Local

Zain: Harnessing AI potential to lead the digital transformation charge

Company is exclusive sponsor of Mo Gawdat's 'AI: Scary Smart talk' with KIBS

KUWAIT: Zain announced its Exclusive Sponsorship of the highly anticipated insightful talk with Mohamed (Mo) Gawdat, dubbed, AI: Scary Smart in partnership with the Kuwait Institute of Banking Studies (KIBS). During the session, the AI expert discussed the massive potential of artificial intelligence and how it is set to reshape the business and economic landscapes.

The event was joined by Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) Vice Chairman and Group CEO Isam Al-Sager, Ahli Bank of Kuwait Chairman Talal Behbehani, NBK Deputy Group CEO Shaikha Al-Bahar, Zain Kuwait CEO Nawaf Algharabally, KIBS Director General Rana Al-Nibari, along with top executives and

Insightful talk joined by top executive leaders from the local telecom and banking sectors



Mo Gawdat with top executive leaders from the telecom and banking sector, including Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi.

leaders from the private sector. During the talk, Mo Gawdat discussed the huge potential of AI innovations like Generative AI (GenAI), and how individuals and organizations can lead their futures by harnessing the power of this revolutionary technology. He also shed light on AI's imminent impact on technology, society, and economy, and how it will reshape the business and economic landscapes in ways previously unimaginable. After his keynote, Mo Gawdat was joined by Zain Kuwait Chief Technical Officer Daaj Al-Oud, Boubyan Bank Senior Manager for Advanced Data Analytics Jinan bin Salamah, and NBK Head of Global IT Operations and IBG Technology Yusef Al-Katifi. The three executives spoke with Mo Gawdat on the impact of AI across industries, especially on the telecom and banking sectors. They also discussed topics like ethics in AI and the significance of investing in building a strong data infrastructure with cloud computing and cybersecurity solutions to unleash the full potential of AI.

Mo Gawdat has a rich career in the tech industry, spanning 30 years of expertise. He is the former Chief Business Officer at Google X, bestselling author, and host of the popular podcast, Slo Mo. Gawdat has become a sought-after consultant on AI's impact, and he continues to share his experiences through books, podcasts and initiatives around the world.

As a leading digital service provider, Zain believes in the importance of harnessing AI's potential to lead the digital transformation journey and foster digital innovation. Recently, the company teamed up with global partner Huawei to establish an Artificial Intelligence (AI) Center of Excellence. The step aims to push both partners' plans for AI-enabled innovative

services and 5.5G network automation in the region. Zain continues to reinforce its efforts to further push AI-enabled innovative services and 5.5G network automation. The company strongly believes in the pivotal role AI tools and applications play in transforming networks, ultimately improving performance, efficiency, optimization, operations, and maintenance.



Zain joined the stage to shed light on AI's impact on the business landscape.



Gawdat is a leading expert on tech and AI.

Exhibition displays images of rich Kuwait-Belgian ties

KUWAIT: The exhibition on 'Kuwait-Belgian Relations in Pictures' which opened at the Kuwait National Library on Sunday, documented the 60th anniversary of the distinguished relations between Kuwait and the Kingdom of Belgium. The exhibition, which was held under the auspices of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature and Shaikha Hala Badr Al-Mohammed Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. It was attended by the Belgian Ambassador to the country, Christian Domes, and the Director of the Kuwait National Library, Siham Al-Azmi. The exhibition put on display more than 30 pictures from the personal collection of the Kuwaiti researcher Issa Dashti, of the most important Kuwaiti-Belgian historical relation.



Belgian Ambassador to Kuwait Christian Domes, and Director of the Kuwait National Library Siham Al-Azmi and other guests during the inauguration of the exhibition.



Guests take a tour of the exhibition.

The exhibition presented three booklets issued by the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters documenting various aspects of bilateral relations. They are considered the first of their kind in this field, as they constitute important sources for researchers and those interested in studying these bilateral relations. In this regard, researcher Issa Dashti told KUNA that Kuwait's relationship with Belgium has become clear that it is older than 60 years, especially after finding

some British documents that talk about the participation of the tenth ruler of Kuwait, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in offering condolences for the death of the former King of Belgium.

He stated that Kuwait was a stopover for some Belgian ambassadors to the countries of the region during their travel trips, noting that these documents give us an indication and proof of the strong relationship between the two friendly countries.

For her part, the patron of the exhibition, Shaikha Hala Badr Al-Mohammed Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, said in a similar statement to KUNA that Kuwait has friendships and relations with many countries, including the Kingdom of Belgium, indicating that this exhibition is a 'thank you' to Belgium for its support and honorable positions with Kuwait and an attempt to shed light on bilateral relations. In turn, Director of the Kuwait National Library Siham Al-Azmi said that the

exhibition contains beautiful pictures of cultural and diplomatic relations between the two friendly countries, indicating that the library seeks to activate a cooperation protocol with Belgium in the field of libraries in particular and in the field of culture and arts in general.

Al-Azmi added, "We are about to celebrate Kuwait as the Capital of Arab Culture in 2025, and accordingly we seek to have a set of cultural cooperation protocols with many sisterly and friendly countries." — KUNA

Forum highlights role of women in fighting corruption

KUWAIT: The Women Against Corruption Forum, which was launched Sunday in cooperation between the Public Authority for Anti-Corruption (Nazaha) and the Women's Cultural and Social Society highlighted the role of women in combating and preventing corruption. The forum was hosted by the Kuwait National Library jointly with its United Nations branch in Kuwait. A number of Kuwaiti public associations and faculty members from various educational institutions participated in the forum.



KUWAIT: The Women Against Corruption Forum being held in Kuwait. — KUNA

The discussion was initiated by Abrar Al-Hammad, assistant Secretary-General for the Prevention Sector at (Nazaha), who stressed the importance of preventing corruption compared to combating corruption, which "comes after the occurrence of the crime." Al-Hammad said that the forum comes within the goal of raising awareness about corruption issues and ways to combat it, strengthening the principles of integrity in society, particularly highlighting the role of women in promoting integrity and combating corruption from their various positions and clarifying everything that would protect

them from the scourge of corruption and its harms. She cited several international studies that showed that "the more women are present in decision-making circles and leadership positions, the less corruption, the more ethical behavior, and the more solid efforts to combat corruption become," in both the government and private sectors. She indicated that in Kuwait, women constitute 63 percent of workers in the government sector and 51 percent of the workforce, indicating the importance of focusing efforts on increasing their awareness and societal integrity because this will reflect its positive effects on the entire society.

Regarding the forum, she stated that it also aims to



Abrar Al-Hammad addresses the forum.

establish a network of women who supports efforts to combat and prevent corruption and enhance societal integrity, guided by international preventive measures and activating local legislation, and to involve women in comprehensive national efforts by reviewing the most important obstacles that may prevent them from exercising this important role in society.

For her part, chair of the board of directors of the Women's Cultural and Social Association, Lulwa Al-Mulla, said that corruption "has become a complex social, political and economic phenomenon that affects all countries, undermines democratic institutions and slows down economic development, which

contributes to 'governmental instability'. She stressed that women's greater contribution to decision-making positions and providing them with the 'necessary skills' enhances integrity and advances renaissance and progress in the country.

Al-Mulla pointed out the importance of the role of women in society in general and the importance of empowering them in various fields, especially in the field of enhancing societal integrity, combating corruption, and raising awareness of its dangers and ways to prevent it, hoping that this forum and its results will contribute to ways of addressing deficiencies and reaching safety.

In turn, the representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the resident coordinator of its bodies in Kuwait, Dr Ghada Al-Taher, referred to the fifth goal out of 17 within the United Nations Sustainable Development Plan by 2030, which stipulates gender equality, explaining that this goal is at the heart of reaching all the goals that were agreed upon.

It was approved by all members of the United Nations in September 2015 and adopted as a general plan for sustainable development in all countries of the world. Taher added, "Today we have moved beyond the fact that women's rights are human rights only to the awareness of the active and fundamental role of women in all areas of life," indicating that the world has become fully aware of the role of women and their importance in social, political, economic and other fields.—KUNA

Kuwait will attend OIC summit in Gambia: Official

JEDDAH: Kuwait will participate in the upcoming Islamic summit due to be organized by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Gambia, said Kuwait's Permanent Delegate at the OIC Mohammad Al-Mutairi.

Al-Mutairi, also Kuwait's Consul General in Jeddah, said in a statement to KUNA that Kuwait has always sought to activate resolutions of

the Islamic summits and ministerial meetings. He was speaking on holding the 15th OIC session of the Islamic Summit in the Gambian capital on May 4-5. The consul general has indicated that Muslim nations should focus on the Palestinian cause signaling that the forthcoming summit will send strong messages to the international community in defense of the Palestinian question. The Islamic summit will address a host of issues, namely Islamophobia, fanaticism, terrorism, boosting dialogue, climatic change and food security.

Mohammad Al-Mutairi

He lauded Gambia's efforts to host the Islamic summit's 15th session, and its efforts with the International Court of Justice in the Hague on behalf of the OIC for prosecuting perpetrators of the genocides against the Muslim Rohingya.

Touching on Kuwait's efforts to relieve Gaza, he alluded to the air bridge via which Kuwait has continuously dispatched relief supplies to the enclave and Kuwait's recent voluntary contribution, \$30 million, to the international relief agency, the UNRWA. He renewed the call upon the international community to accept Palestine as a member of the UN, affirmed the necessity that the international community abides by a ceasefire for Gaza, halt the indiscriminate bombardment on the densely populated strip, send relief supplies to the Gazans, stop coercive displacement and ethnic cleansing against the Palestinian people. — KUNA

Photo of the day



A honeybee draws nectar from a flower. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Expat teen orders macabre killing of boy to sell video

Officials bust organ racket, unravel gruesome murder of Egyptian boy

CAIRO: The investigations of the Egyptian public prosecution unraveled horrific details of the brutal murder of a 15-year-old boy in Qalyubia governorate in Egypt. The perpetrator allegedly lured the boy and killed him, then removed his organs and mutilated his body while filming the macabre killing and removal of organs.

Investigators of the public prosecution found the body of the boy in an apartment in Shubra Al-Khaimah, the scene of the crime. Some of his organs were extracted and placed in a bag close to the corpse. "The perpetrator of the incident was arrested, and upon interrogation he admitted to committing the crime, saying that it was done at the behest of an Egyptian resident in Kuwait, who met him through a Dark Web website used for trading in human organs," the prosecution said.

"He asked him to select a child to remove his organs for a price of five million Egyptian pounds. After choosing the victim via a video call, he asked him to murder him before stealing his organs, adding he will be informed of the next steps once the crime is committed," the officials said.

The statement further said: "However, the Egyptian resident in Kuwait asked the killer to kill yet another child to get the agreed amount. However, the perpetrator was arrested before the second crime and the public prosecution did not find any medical equipment to suggest that the crime was committed for organ trade."

The public prosecution continued in its statement: "The investigations resulted in the identification of the Egyptian defendant residing in Kuwait, who used a mobile phone with a SIM card owned by his father. Based on the instructions of the attorney general's counsel, the department of international cooperation at the attorney general's office contacted the competent authorities in Kuwait and Interpol, which resulted in the arrest of the accused and his father, in possession of electronic devices. They were deported to Egypt subsequently so that the public prosecution could interrogate them further to verify the motives for committing the crime."

It stated that the first defendant, who was over 15 years old, admitted that he was the one who instructed the perpetrator of the crime to commit it, as stated in his confession, with the intention of keeping the video clips of the killing of the child victim



and the mutilation of his body, so that he gets the opportunity to sell and publish them through Dark Web websites that broadcast them in exchange for large sums of money. His father, who was arrested with him, however, denied any connection with the incidents. He is currently being investigated.



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KU students during the visit.

KU holds trip to Hectare's factory for girl students

KUWAIT: Kuwait University organized a trip to the Hectare's factory for female dormitory students on Wednesday (24/4/2024) which aimed at introducing students to the various Kuwaiti industries under the slogan "Made in Kuwait".

In this regard, the monitoring of the department of Student Housing Mai Al-Osaimi stated that the activities department is keen to organize such trips, aiming to introduce students to national products, which

enjoy a great reputation due to their high quality.

"The quality was reflected in the great demand for them, in addition to informing students that the industry in Kuwait is not limited to oil production, but there are food industries such as meat, dairy, pastries, grains, sweets, fishing and canning fish, shrimp, mineral water, juices and drinks," the university announced.

Kuwait University is keen to establish such trips with the aim of promoting local industries, facilitating access to products and services, activating their role in industrial development in order to achieve the objectives of local produce. Moreover, they are keen on improving the government procurement process, considering that high demand raises the level of productivity and the rate of economic growth, due to its ability to diversify and innovate in industries, as well as use modern technological techniques.





Biden takes Trump to task at White House correspondents' dinner

Pope holds mass in Venice's St Mark's, first trip in months

Page 7

Page 6



WASHINGTON: A statue of George Washington is seen draped in a flag of Palestine and a keffiyeh as activists and students protest near an encampment at University Yard at George Washington University on April 27, 2024. — AFP

White House urges 'peaceful' protests

Police clear pro-Palestinian camps at three US universities, hundreds arrested

WASHINGTON: The White House insisted Sunday that pro-Palestinian protests that have rocked US universities in recent weeks must remain peaceful, after police arrested around 275 people on four separate campuses over the weekend. "We certainly respect the right of peaceful protests," National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told ABC's "This Week". But, he added, "we absolutely condemn the anti-Semitism language that we've heard of late and certainly condemn all the hate speech and the threats of violence out there."

The wave of demonstrations began at Columbia University in New York but they have since spread rapidly across the country. While peace has prevailed in many campuses, the number of protesters detained - at times by police in riot gear using chemical irritants and tasers - is rising fast. They include 100 at Northeastern University in Boston, 80 at Washington University in St Louis, 72 at Arizona State University and 23 at Indiana University.

Among those arrested at Washington University was

Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein, who faulted police for aggressive tactics she said provoked the sort of trouble they are meant to quell. "This is about freedom of speech... on a very critical issue," she told CNN shortly before her arrest Saturday. "And there they are, sending in the riot police and basically creating a riot."

College administrators have struggled to find the best response, caught between the need to respect free-speech rights and the imperative of containing inflammatory and sometimes violently anti-Semitic calls by protesters. At the University of Southern California, school officials late Saturday closed the main campus to the public after pro-Palestinian groups again set up an encampment that had been cleared earlier, the school announced on X.

With final exams coming in the next few weeks, some campuses - including the Humboldt campus of California State Polytechnic University, have closed and instructed students to complete their classes online. The activists behind the campus protests - not all of them students - are calling for a ceasefire in the

Zionist entity's war with Hamas, and want colleges to sever ties with the Zionist entity.

In a statement on X, Northeastern said the area on campus where the protests were held was now "fully secured" and "all campus operations have returned to normal." The school said it made the move after "what began as a student demonstration two days ago was infiltrated by professional organizers with no affiliation to Northeastern". It added that detained individuals who produced a valid school ID have been released and will face disciplinary proceedings, not legal action. "Those who refused to disclose their affiliation were arrested," the school said.

Dozens of students remained encamped Saturday at the University of Pennsylvania, despite the college president ordering disbandment after what he said were "credible reports of harassing and intimidating conduct". Canada saw its first campus protest camp spring up Saturday at McGill University. The school in Montreal said such encampments, which are not permitted, increase "the potential for escalation and confrontation, as we

have seen at some colleges throughout the US".

Meanwhile, Columbia University in New York was relatively calm. Officials there announced Friday that they would not be calling police back to campus after more than 100 people were arrested last week. "To bring back the NYPD at this time would be counterproductive, further inflaming what is happening on campus, and drawing thousands to our doorstep who would threaten our community," school leaders said in a statement, referring to the New York Police Department.

The decision was made even as Columbia signaled it had barred from campus Khymani James, a leader of the campus protests who had said in a video in January that "Zionists don't deserve to live," and "Be grateful that I'm not just going out and murdering Zionists." "Chants, signs, taunts and social media posts from our own students that mock and threaten to 'kill' Jewish people are totally unacceptable, and Columbia students who are involved in such incidents will be held accountable," the school said. — AFP

Houthi attacks no threat to Saudi resorts: Minister

RIYADH: Attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels on Red Sea shipping pose no threat to Saudi coastal resorts, the kingdom's tourism minister told AFP Sunday at a summit focused on regional instability. "What is happening is at the end of the Red Sea, at the very south of the Red Sea," Ahmed Al-Khateeb said on the sidelines of a two-day World Economic Forum special meeting in the Saudi capital.

He was referring to the Houthis' campaign of drone and missile attacks targeting ships in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden that the rebels say are linked to the Zionist entity. "All of our projects in the Red Sea or NEOM are in the middle and north of the Red Sea, far away from the conflict, and it is definitely not a target for the Houthis," Khateeb said.



RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's Minister of Tourism Ahmed Al-Khateeb speaks during an interview on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum Special Meeting on April 28, 2024. — AFP

Saudi Arabia mobilized an international military coalition against the Houthis in 2015, although a truce has largely held for the past two years. The kingdom has since been seeking to open up to international tourism,

the Washington-Riyadh security partnership.

However Prince Mohammed also said the Palestinian issue was "very important" for Riyadh, adding: "We need to ease the life of the Palestinians." As fighting drags on and mediators struggle to lock in a truce, Saudi officials have reiterated their insistence on recognition of an independent Palestinian state. Princess Reema bint Bandar Al-Saud, the Saudi ambassador to Washington, told the World Economic Forum in January that normalization would be impossible without an "irrevocable" pathway towards that state's creation.

While it is no surprise Saudi Arabia would link ties with the Zionist entity to a resolution of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict, "the price for normalization, especially on the Palestinian front, has certainly gone up," said Saudi analyst Aziz Alghashian. "What can be said is that there needs to be something more tangible than theoretical," he said. "In other words, more irreversible steps that are clear-cut, rather than just promises." The US State Department said that Blinken will discuss "a pathway to an independent Palestinian state with security guarantees for (the Zionist entity)", during talks in Riyadh on Monday and Tuesday.

which it sees as a vital engine of its Vision 2030 economic reform agenda meant to prepare the world's biggest crude exporter for a post-oil future.

In recent months Saudi Arabia has begun accepting guests at two resorts as part of its Red Sea Global coastal development, while the luxury yachting island Sindalah - part of the futuristic NEOM megacity - is expected to be completed by the end of this year. Saudi officials are also hoping to draw more tourists to the kingdom's mountainous southern region, a part of the country to which some diplomats were barred from flying because of the threat of Houthi attacks.

"The south is a very important product for us," Khateeb said on Sunday, adding that Asir province - which borders Yemen and is home to projects like the Soudah luxury mountain development - is "very safe, very stable". The Houthis, who seized Yemen's capital Sanaa in 2014, began targeting Red Sea shipping in November in what they say is solidarity with Palestinians.

Their campaign comes in response to the war between the Zionist entity and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Attacks by the Houthis have drawn reprisal strikes from the United States and Britain since January, and prompted

Progress disrupted

Saudi Arabia, home to Islam's holiest sites, has never recognized the Zionist entity and did not join the 2020 US-brokered Abraham Accords that saw its Gulf neighbors Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, as well as Morocco, establish formal ties with the Zionist entity. After Biden visited the Saudi city of Jeddah and fist-bumped the crown prince in 2022, his administration actively pursued a Saudi-Zionist deal that would build on the Abraham Accords, a foreign policy win for his predecessor Donald Trump.

The Saudis indicated they would want more than their Gulf peers got, bargaining hard for benefits like US security guarantees and assistance with a civilian nuclear program with uranium enrichment capacity. In the months that followed, Zionist and American officials issued bullish statements, while the Saudis said characteristically little. Their leverage, strengthened by their status as perceived leaders in the Muslim world, was never in doubt, said Elham Fakhro of the Chatham House think-tank. "Saudi Arabia is aware of how badly the Biden administration wants a deal," Fakhro said. "It is also aware that no other Arab country holds as much leverage as it does

Western naval forces to deploy in order to counter attacks on ships plying the busy commercial routes.

Despite regional tensions, Saudi Arabia recorded year-on-year growth of 10 percent in tourism visits in the first quarter of 2024, Khateeb said on Sunday. Last year it recorded 79 million domestic visits and 27 million international visits. The revised target for 2030 is 150 million total visits - up from an earlier target of 100 million - including 70 million international visits.

Saudi Arabia, long closed off to much of the world, inaugurated general tourism visas in 2019, just months before the coronavirus pandemic decimated the tourism industry globally. The kingdom is trying to shed its austere reputation by hosting major music and sporting events and developing other attractions.

In January, Saudi Arabia, home to the holiest shrines in Islam, opened its first alcohol shop, which serves only non-Muslim diplomats. Alcohol is banned for everyone else, and Khateeb said on Sunday that would continue to be the case. "There is no change in the policy," he said, adding there was plenty of room for growth even if alcohol was not available. "We believe we will continue to grow with the same policy." — AFP

Blinken visits Saudi as window shrinks on Mideast megadeal

RIYADH: Washington's top diplomat traveled to Saudi Arabia on Sunday as the deadline approaches on a landmark - and, analysts say, long-shot - deal that would see the kingdom recognize the Zionist entity. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to Riyadh comes nearly seven months after the eruption of war in Gaza put the brakes on what was intended as a signature foreign policy achievement for his boss, US President Joe Biden.

It also comes as Americans prepare to vote in November on whether to give the 81-year-old Biden a second term, an election process that could scramble what progress has been made on Saudi-Zionist normalization so far. In September, before Hamas' Oct 7 attack on the Zionist entity, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman told Fox News that "every day we get closer" to a deal that could also bolster



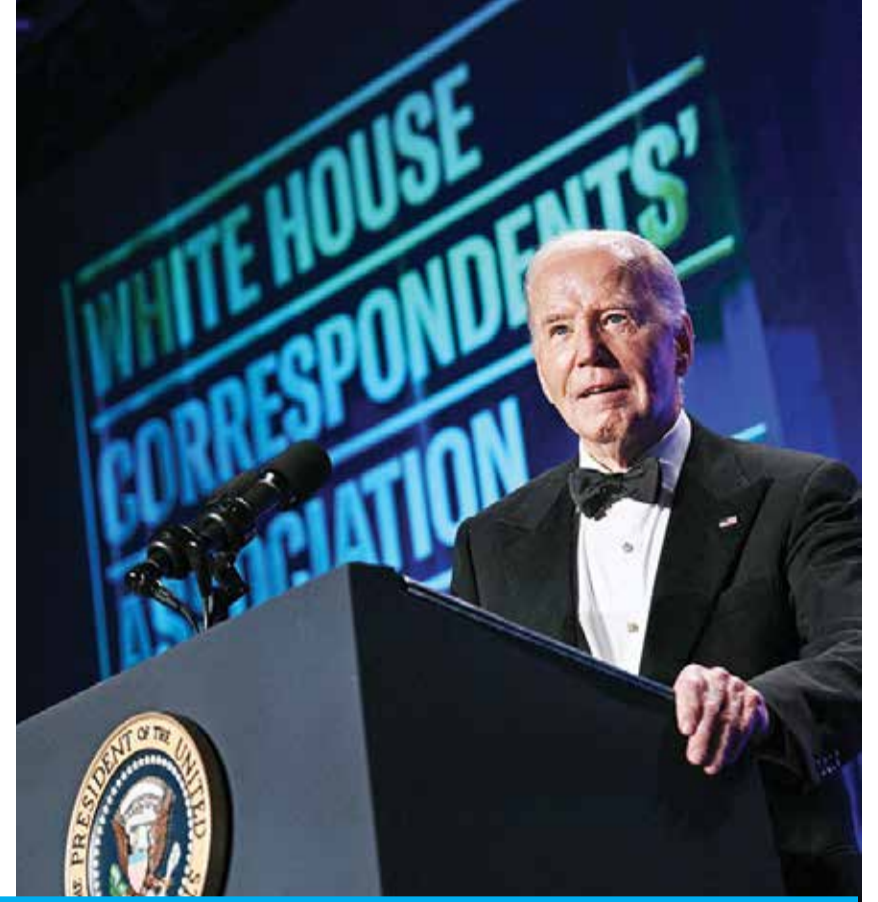
MARYLAND: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken gestures as he departs Joint Base Andrews for Saudi Arabia on April 28, 2024. — AFP

in lobbying for the Palestinians." Any momentum stalled abruptly with Hamas' Oct 7 attack. The Zionist entity's military campaign to destroy Hamas has killed more than 34,000 people, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry in Gaza. Riyadh has consistently denounced Zionist forces' conduct in Gaza, accusing them of "unchecked heinous war crimes" just this week. — AFP

International

At White House correspondents' dinner, Biden takes Trump to task

Gaza war casts shadow over event amid protests outside venue



WASHINGTON: (Left) Demonstrators hand a Palestinian flag from a room at the Washington Hilton, the site of the Annual White House Correspondents Dinner, on April 27, 2024. (Right) US President Joe Biden speaks during the WHCA dinner. — AFP photos

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden poked fun at himself but took sharp aim at his election rival Donald Trump Saturday at the annual White House Correspondents' Association dinner, as protesters outside demonstrated against the conflict in Gaza. A long list of VIP guests, including journalists and celebrities from Chris Pine to Molly Ringwald, arrived in black-tie attire as more than 100 protesters confronted attendees in front of the Washington Hilton hotel chanting "shame on you" and other slogans.

Inside, the topic of Gaza was far from the lips of Biden and the evening's comedian, Colin Jost of "Saturday Night Live," who roasted Biden for his age and occasional stumble on the Airforce One stairs. "I would like to point out it's after 10:00 pm, Sleepy Joe is still awake, while Donald Trump has spent the past week falling asleep in court every morning," Jost joked, referring to the former president's appearances at his New York hush money trial last week.

Amid some self-mockery and ribbing of the press,

the 81-year-old president took sharp-elbowed jabs at his 77-year-old presumptive November election rival, quipping that "age is the only thing we have in common. My vice president actually endorsed me." Both Jost and Biden struck a more serious tone in addressing what many Americans feel is a politically fraught moment, with Biden telling attendees Trump's rhetoric was a danger particularly after the Jan 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol, and that "the stakes couldn't be higher".

'Decency'

Comedian Jost, a longtime writer and actor with NBC's "Saturday Night Live" who is married to actress Scarlett Johansson, also in attendance, recalled fondly that his recently deceased grandfather had voted for Biden "because you are a decent man." "My grandpa voted for decency and decency is why we are all here tonight," he told the president.

Biden's appearance at the banquet is in keeping with longstanding tradition for the event, in which the

president and the national media gather for a roast of the US leader — an annual gala that was interrupted during the Trump administration. "The 2024 election is in full swing and yes age is an issue," Biden quipped. "I am a grown man, running against a six-year-old."

If it was all laughs inside, the scene outside the hotel remained serious, with protesters at one point unfurling an enormous, multi-story Palestinian flag from a top-floor window, as others congregated on the road below holding placards, chanting and shouting from bullhorns. Biden's every move has been shadowed for months by protesters angry over US support for the Zionist military offensive in Gaza. He has been met by shouts of "Genocide Joe" and noisy calls for an immediate ceasefire.

More than two dozen Palestinian journalists this week issued an open letter urging their American colleagues to boycott the dinner. "You have a unique responsibility to speak truth to power and uphold journalistic integrity," said the letter. "It is unacceptable to

stay silent out of fear or professional concern while journalists in Gaza continue to be detained, tortured and killed for doing our jobs." According to the New York-based Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ), at least 97 journalists — including 92 Palestinians — have been killed since war erupted on Oct 7. At least 16 others have been wounded.

The Washington Metropolitan Police Department told AFP it was "prepared to facilitate any safe and peaceful demonstration" but that guests would also be able to access the event. The gala dinner and a surrounding series of society events took place as the Gaza protest movement has been spreading to colleges across the country, and as police crackdowns on some campuses have led to hundreds of arrests. The annual dinner has been organized since 1920 by the influential White House Correspondents' Association, which honors top reporters and awards journalism scholarships. Last year, 2,600 people attended. — AFP

Arizona women race against clock of an archaic law

PHOENIX: Piper decided she needed an abortion almost as soon as Arizona judges ruled an 1864 law banning the procedure could be enforced. Having only just found out she was pregnant, what she had really wanted was time to think, but that was a luxury she felt she could not afford. "The laws in Arizona are really dicey right now, so I wasn't sure what would be available to me," said Piper, who wanted to use a pseudonym to discuss her choice about one of the most divisive issues in America.

Piper, 30, fell pregnant unexpectedly — her partner told her he had undergone a vasectomy, but he was keen to go through with the pregnancy. "I would have liked to hear him out more, but we just didn't have the time to think through it," she told AFP after taking pregnancy-ending pills at a clinic in Phoenix. Arizona's abortion laws are in flux.

In making its ruling this month, the state's Supreme Court said since the 2022 overturning of Roe vs. Wade — which had guaranteed abortion rights nationwide — Arizona's own arrangements had to revert to a 160-year-old statute, drafted before it was even a state and when women did not have the right to vote. After a national outcry, the state's

lower chamber last week passed a bill that would repeal the law — but only after three moderate Republican lawmakers abandoned the majority to vote with Democrats.

The initiative will now pass to the Republican-dominated Senate where its passage is far from certain, reflecting the willingness of elected conservatives to defy a popular desire throughout America to keep abortions safe and legal. Democratic Senator Eva Burch says her Republican opponents push the threat of severe bans by way of deterrent. "It creates a really hostile, inhospitable environment for women where we don't have any assurance that we're going to be able to get the care that we need if something goes wrong," she told AFP.

The 44-year-old became something of a figurehead for the abortion rights movement in Arizona after revealing on the floor of the Senate the difficulty she encountered securing the procedure when she learned her pregnancy was not viable. "I felt like it was really important... for people to see what that looks like in Arizona and what somebody has to go through in order to receive that kind of care."

Abortion looks set to be a key issue when Americans go to the polls in November to elect a president. Incumbent Joe Biden hopes to bolster his flaccid poll numbers by blaming challenger Donald Trump for the tightening restrictions. In Arizona, voters will likely be asked to decide if they want the right to abortion enshrined in the state's constitution. Democrats hope that will drive turnout in a state where Biden's 2020 margin of victory was just 10,000. For Gabrielle Goodrick,



PHOENIX: Pro-life activists place signs in front of Camelback Family Planning, an abortion clinic, on April 18, 2024. — AFP

head of the Camelback Family Planning clinic, the anxiety that bans are causing throughout the US will be a motivating factor in November. "These laws are so extreme that I think it will push people to the polls... to vote for choice and vote for abortion rights and bodily autonomy and reproductive freedom," she said.

Goodrick's clinic sees between 20 and 30 patients a day, who slip behind anonymous mirrored

glass walls into what looks from the outside like a shopping mall. Inside, the atmosphere is warm, and the colorful reception area is buzzing with friendliness. "I honestly just try to put on as happy as a face as I can and just be as sweet as possible," said receptionist Gelsey Normand. "Because regardless of how you feel about getting an abortion, it's still a difficult choice to make." — AFP

Amir attends WEF in Riyadh...

Continued from Page 1

how we make sure that something like this doesn't happen again, I think that's patently ridiculous," he said. "And anybody who tries to take that approach I think is sincerely misguided."

From the outset Saudi Arabia has worked with other regional and global powers to try to contain the war in Gaza and avoid the type of conflagration that could derail its ambitious economic reform agenda known as Vision 2030. The kingdom also remains in talks about a landmark deal under which it would recognize the Zionist entity for the first time while strengthening its security partnership with Washington, though analysts say the war has made it more difficult.

Saudi Arabia, home to the holiest shrines in Islam, is trying to open up to the world, luring business leaders and non-religious tourists. Hosting international events such as the WEF meeting allows it to showcase social changes such as reintroducing cinemas and lifting a ban on women driving. Saudi Arabia is projecting budget deficits through 2026, and GDP growth was nearly flat last year after several oil production cuts. Jadaan stressed Sunday that non-oil GDP growth was "very healthy" at 4.4 percent and that "Vision 2030 is about, actually, the non-oil GDP". — Agencies

Push for truce as Zionists...

Continued from Page 1

It is the first time in the nearly seven-month war that Zionist leaders have suggested they are open to discussing an end to the war, Axios said. A Hamas source close to the negotiations told AFP the group "is open to discussing the new proposal positively". The source added that Hamas is "keen to reach an agreement that guarantees a permanent ceasefire, the free return of displaced people, an acceptable deal for (prisoner) exchange and ensuring an end to the siege" in Gaza.

Gaza's health ministry on Sunday reported at least 66 deaths in the past 24 hours, down from a peak this month of at least 153 deaths on April 9. The Zionist entity carried out air strikes and shelling in Gaza overnight Saturday-Sunday, hitting three houses in the southern city of Khan Yunis, an AFP correspondent said, also reporting strikes on Gaza City and Rafah.

On the side of a tent in Rafah on the weekend, a Palestinian wrote a message to the thousands of pro-Palestinian protesters on US university campuses. "Thank you, students in solidarity with Gaza, your message has reached," it read. In the Zionist entity, protesters have regularly taken to the streets, including at a heated rally in Tel Aviv late Saturday demanding that Netanyahu strike a



GAZA: Palestinian children stand in a camp for displaced people in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip by the border with Egypt on April 28, 2024. — AFP

deal that would free the hostages.

Hours earlier, Hamas released a video featuring two hostages, Keith Siegel and Omri Miran. "Keep protesting, so that there will be a deal now," Miran said in the footage. "We are in danger here. There are bombs. It is stressful and scary," said Siegel, a 64-year-old US citizen.

United Nations humanitarian agency OCHA has warned that "famine thresholds in Gaza will be breached within the next six weeks" if a massive

amount of food aid does not reach the territory. At a market in Rafah, shoppers said fresh vegetables are selling at double or more their pre-war prices. Mohammed Sarhan, 48, said 100 shekels used to buy enough for a week, but now they "are not enough for one meal for my family," forcing them to rely on aid and canned goods. The White House said on Sunday that a US-made pier meant to boost aid to Gaza will become operational in two to three weeks but cannot replace land routes. — AFP

International

Sweltering Philippines suspends classes

Nationwide jeepney strike adds to heat woes

MANILA: The Philippines will suspend in-person classes in all public schools for two days due to extreme heat and a nationwide strike by jeepney drivers, the education department said Sunday. Extreme heat has scorched Southeast Asia in recent weeks, prompting thousands of schools to suspend in-person operations and authorities to issue health warnings.

Many schools in the Philippines have no air-conditioning, leaving students to swelter in crowded, poorly ventilated classrooms. "In view of the latest heat index forecast... and the announcement of a nationwide transport strike, all public schools nationwide shall implement asynchronous classes/distance learning on April 29 and 30, 2024," the department said on Facebook. The education department oversees more than 47,000 schools across the archipelago nation.

Some jeepney drivers also plan to hold a three-day nationwide strike starting Monday to protest the government's plan to phase out the smoke-belching vehicles used by many Filipinos to commute to work and school. The suspension of in-person classes comes after Manila recorded its highest ever temperature.

The temperature in the city hit a record high of 38.8 degrees Celsius on Saturday with the heat index reaching 45C, data from the state weather forecaster showed. The heat index measures what a temperature feels like, taking into account humidity. The hot weather persisted on Sunday with many people flocking to air-conditioned shopping malls and swimming pools for relief.

"This is the hottest I've ever experienced here," said Nancy Bautista, 65, whose resort in Cavite province near Manila was fully booked due to the hot weather. "Many of our guests are friends and families. They swim in the pool to fight the heat."

The months of March, April and May are typically the hottest and driest of the year, but this year's conditions have been exacerbated by the El Nino weather phenomenon. "All places in the country, not necessarily just Metro Manila, are expected to have hotter temperatures until the second week of May," Glaiza Escullar of the state weather forecaster told AFP. "There is a possibility that the areas will exceed those temperatures being measured today until the second week of May."

Camiling municipality in Tarlac province, north of Manila, recorded a temperature of 40.3C on Saturday — the country's highest this year. As the mercury rose, Gerise Reyes, 31, planned to take her two-year-old daughter to a shopping mall near Manila. "It's hot here at home. This is the hottest I've ever experienced especially between 10:00 am and 4:00 pm," she said. "We need a free aircon to cut our electricity bill."

Global temperatures hit record highs last year, and the United Nations' weather and climate agency said Tuesday that Asia was warming at a particularly rapid pace. The Philippines ranks among the countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. — AFP



MANILA: A vendor stands under a tree during hot weather on April 28, 2024. — AFP

Volcano erupts in eastern Indonesia, spews ash tower

JAKARTA: A volcano in eastern Indonesia erupted on Sunday morning, spewing an ash tower more than two miles into the sky and prompting officials to warn people to keep away. Mount Ibu, located on the island of Halmahera in North Maluku province, erupted at 12:37 am (15:37 GMT Saturday) and sent a thick column of dark smoke and ash west of the peak.

The eruption lasted more than three minutes and the ash towered 3.5 km above the peak, an official at Mount Ibu's monitoring post, Axl Romero, said in a statement on Sunday. "To residents and tourists near Mount Ibu, please do not conduct any activity within a two-kilometer radius (of the crater)," he said.

The alert level for the 1,325-m volcano remained at a two on the four-tiered system and there was no evacuation order after the eruption. But authorities urged people to wear face masks and glasses when doing outdoor activities and to anticipate falling volcanic ash.

Indonesia, a vast archipelago nation, experiences frequent seismic and volcanic activity due to its position on the Pacific "Ring of Fire". Earlier this month, Mount Ruang in North Sulawesi erupted, forcing thousands of people to evacuate. The Sam Ratulangi International Airport in the city of Manado, located more than 100 km from the crater, was also shut for days. — AFP

Pope holds mass in Venice's St Mark's, first trip in months

VENICE: Pope Francis presided over mass in St Mark's Square in Venice on Sunday while warning of environmental damage and over-tourism, in a closely watched visit marking the ageing pontiff's first outside Rome since last year. Fragile health has prevented the 87-year-old leader of the world's 1.3 billion Catholics from travelling in recent months, his last trip being a visit to the French city of Marseille in September.

But under sunny skies on Sunday, the pope appeared in high spirits as he addressed more than 10,000 faithful seated in the vast St. Mark's Square, following an earlier visit to a women's prison, and an address to young Venetians. Citing the "enchanting beauty" of Venice, Francis listed the many dangers facing it — climate change, mass tourism and "frayed social relations, individualism and loneliness".

"Venice is one with the waters upon which it sits. Without the care and safeguarding of this natural environment, it might even cease to exist," said the pope in his homily. "Similarly, our life is also immersed forever in the springs of God's love," he said. Venice, he said, "which has always been a place of encounter and cultural exchange, is called to be a sign of beauty available to all, starting with the last, a sign of fraternity and care for our common home."

The pope's visit came on the same weekend as Venice launched a new five-euro (\$5.35) entry fee for day-trip-

pers, aimed at easing the pressure of tourism on the UNESCO World Heritage site. Francis cited "the difficulty of creating an environment that is fit for human beings through adequate tourism management" as one of Venice's main challenges, along with "climate change... the fragility of constructions, of cultural heritage, but also of people". Tourists were prevented from accessing the square during the papal mass, which required a ticket to attend.

Suffering and rebirth

Earlier on Sunday, Francis arrived by helicopter to the island of Giudecca, which houses a women's prison. Greeting one by one the approximately 80 inmates, as well as staff and volunteers, the pope encouraged the women to reconstruct their lives "brick upon brick, together, with determination" during their time behind bars, while calling on administrators to offer reintegration programs.

"Prison is a harsh reality, and problems such as overcrowding, the lack of facilities and resources, and episodes of violence, give rise to a great deal of suffering there," he said, sitting in front of the prisoners. "But it can also become a place of moral and material rebirth," he added. The pope also toured the art exhibition housed at the prison that considers the daily lives of the inmates through the work of 10 different artists — the Vatican's entry for this year's Biennale festival of art.

It was the first time a pope had visit-



VENICE: Pope Francis is seen on a boat on April 28, 2024. — AFP

ed the prestigious festival, which began last weekend. Francis also addressed young people outside the Basilica di Santa Maria della Salute, arriving to the landmark church at the opening of the Grand Canal by speedboat. He encouraged them to become engaged in the world despite everyone being "on their own with their cell phone, glued to social media and video games".

"You must fearlessly go against the current: take life into your hands, get involved, turn off the TV and open the Gospel, leave the cell phone and encounter people!" he said. Last year in December, a bout of bronchitis forced the pope to cancel a trip to Dubai, where he was to have addressed UN climate talks. He also pulled out of an Easter event at the last minute in March, after suffering for several weeks from what

the Vatican called a "light flu".

The visit by Francis, who plans to depart in the early afternoon, is the fourth papal visit to Venice, after those of Paul VI (1972), Jean-Paul II (1985) and Benedict XVI (2011). The diocese of Venice is one of the largest in Italy, with 125 parishes, and has close ties with the papacy. Three Venice patriarchs became pope in the 20th century.

Francis, who uses a wheelchair, has suffered increasing health problems in recent years, from knee pain to surgery for a hernia and on his colon. Despite his health, the Vatican is planning an ambitious 12-day trip to Asia in September, taking in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, East Timor and Singapore. Before that, the pope is due to visit the Italian cities of Verona and Trieste in May and July, respectively. — AFP

China protests after Japan lawmakers visit disputed isles

TOKYO: Beijing has lodged a protest with Tokyo after a group of Japanese lawmakers visited a disputed island chain, with the Chinese embassy on Sunday denouncing the trip as "provocative". The five-member delegation led by former defense minister Tomomi Inada joined local government officials in conducting a maritime inspection on Saturday in the East China Sea around the Japan-administered Senkaku islands, known by Beijing as the Diaoyu.

"Diaoyu Dao and affiliated islands are China's inherent territory," a spokesman for the Chinese embassy in Tokyo said, according to a statement posted on its website Sunday. "In response to Japan's infringing and provocative actions, China has lodged solemn representations to the Japanese side."

The remote chain of islands has long fueled tensions and is the scene of regular confrontations between Japanese coast guard vessels and Chinese fishing boats. Beijing has grown more assertive about its claim to the islands in recent years, with Tokyo reporting the presence of Chinese coast guard vessels, a naval ship and even a nuclear-powered submarine. — AFP

Modest D-Day veterans keep history alive

LONDON: Donald, Ken and Henry wear their medals with pride, but reject the title of heroes even if they are among the last British veterans alive who took part in the D-Day landings in Normandy in June 1944. The trio, all pushing 100 years or beyond, told AFP that their job now was to bear witness to history and tell the story of World War II to younger generations, as the country prepares for the 80th anniversary of the key military operation.

Despite the passing of the decades, their memories of those events remain precise and vivid. Ken Hay, 98, set foot on Juno Beach in Courseulles-sur-Mer a few days after the first wave of soldiers landed on June 6. "I should have been frightened. I don't think we were. I'm no hero, I'm not trying to make myself one, but it was all part of the adventure," he told AFP in London.

Tasked with advancing towards an inland observation post, his unit was attacked from the rear by German soldiers and he was captured, along with four other mem-

bers of his regiment. He was then transported by train to Poland with dozens of other prisoners and sent to work in a coal mine. But Russian troops advancing from the east forced the Germans to empty the camps, with the prisoners having to walk hundreds of kilometers west.

Hay was finally liberated by American troops and was repatriated by aeroplane two days before Victory in Europe Day — May 8, 1945 — the date of the German surrender. Henry Rice, also 98 years old, was in charge of communications aboard the HMS Eastway landing ship, delivering equipment to the soldiers on shore at Normandy. "I was 50 percent excited, 50 percent not sure," he recalled of his mission. "For a young man, it was so big, so many ships."

But his gaze clouded over at the memory of the thousands of men killed on the French beaches, including nearly 1,500 British on the first day. "The mental picture I have of men in the water. I don't like to think of that," he said.

After participating in the Normandy landings, Rice served in the Mediterranean and in Asia, until the Japanese surrender that marked the end of the global conflict. "I feel lucky" to have returned alive, he said. Compared to other veterans, "particularly those soldiers who had landed



LONDON: D-Day veterans Alec Penstone, Richard Aldred, Henry Rice, Mervyn Kersh, Ken Hay, Gilbert Clark, Donald Howkins, Stan Ford and John Dennett pose for a group photo after attending an event to launch the 80th anniversary commemorations of Allied amphibious landing (D-Day landings) in France on April 26, 2024. — AFP

and survived, I feel 'petit'", he added. "I'm so proud of them. I was not in the face of danger like they were," he recalled, despite dodging several enemy torpedoes.

Donald Howkins, 103, landed two days after D-Day, and recalled being "very frightened". "The sea was pretty rough,

the barge was going up and down. But when I was on the beach I was OK. You just carried on with what you've got to do." When asked about how he feels ahead of the 80th anniversary commemorations, which many heads of state are expected to attend, he joked: "too bloody old". — AFP

Cicada-palooza! Billions of bugs to blanket America

WASHINGTON: They're loud. They're sexually aroused. And for one special, cacophonous month up to a trillion of them will engulf suburbs and woodlands across America. Two cicada "broods" are set for a rare double emergence that last occurred in 1803, when Thomas Jefferson was president and the United States purchased Louisiana from France. The prospect of another natural wonder just weeks after a total solar eclipse across much of the country has gripped scientists and the public alike.

Cicadas comprise a diverse family of over 3,000 insect species found globally, with the majority of their lives spent underground in a larval state. They emerge as adults to transform and mate, with some species appearing annually

and others, known as periodical cicadas, synchronizing their emergence every 13 or 17 years. Mathematicians have long been intrigued by the question of why periodical cicadas follow prime number cycles, despite the lack of a clear evolutionary explanation.

This year's event involves the 13-year Brood XIX, currently emerging in the Carolinas, followed by the 17-year Brood XIII in the Midwest. There could be a small area of overlap in central Illinois. "When they do come out, they come out in big numbers, parents get excited, the kids get excited," said entomologist Gene Kritsky of Mount St Joseph University, who developed the Cicada Safari app for citizen-scientists to gather data, explaining the appeal of the harmless red-eyed bugs.

They're also "creatures of history": People vividly recall where they were when the cicadas last appeared in their area, and these personal stories become embedded in family lore, passed down to the next generation. Just like witnessing a rare eclipse, Kritsky notes that there's a unique value in seeing scientific predictions come to life. "That's what science does: you come up with

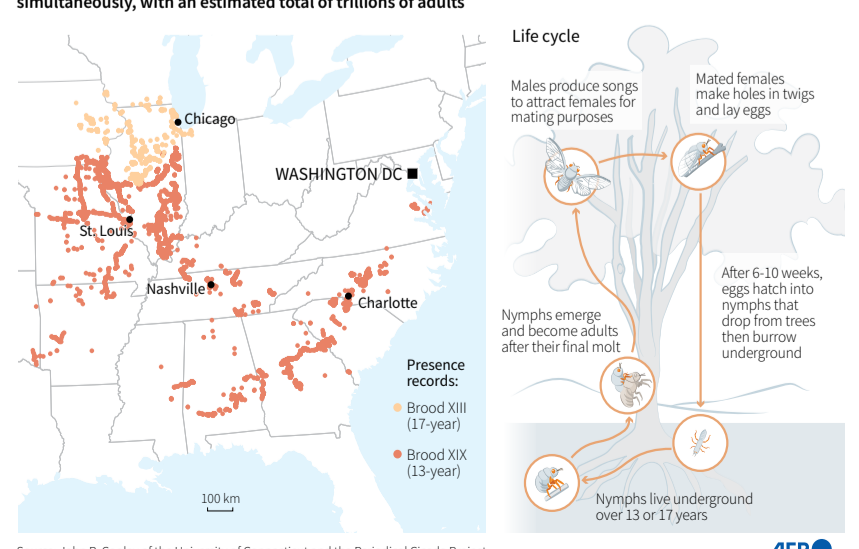
hypotheses that lead to predictions, the predictions are verified...and there's something valuable about this in a time when some people have thought to disregard science."

Relatively defenseless, periodical cicadas' strength lies in their sheer numbers that satiates the appetites of the birds, foxes, raccoons, turtles and other predators, John Lill, a professor of biology at the George Washington University told AFP. In a recent paper published in Science, Lill and colleagues revealed a number of broader impacts on the wider ecosystem. They found the 2021 emergence of Brood X in the capital Washington proved a windfall for insectivorous birds, leading to a surge in caterpillar populations as the birds focused on feasting on the cicadas.

This reprieve allowed caterpillars to thrive, resulting in increased consumption of oak saplings. Other new research showed that "mast years" — when oak trees produce an abundance of acorns — follow like clockwork two years after cicada emergence. More acorns support larger populations of the mammals that feed on them, ultimately leading to more Lyme disease risk for humans. — AFP

Two broods of periodical cicadas set to co-emerge in US

First time since 1803 that two specific broods of periodical cicadas are expected to emerge simultaneously, with an estimated total of trillions of adults



MONDAY, APRIL 29, 2024

Tesla CEO Musk meets China's number two official in Beijing

Qiang promises China would 'always' be open to foreign firms

BEIJING: Tech billionaire and Tesla CEO Elon Musk met in Beijing on Sunday with China's number two official, Premier Li Qiang, who promised the country would "always" be open to foreign firms. Musk - one of the world's richest people - arrived in China earlier the same day on his second trip in less than a year to the world's biggest market for electric vehicles.

Chinese state broadcaster CCTV said that during their meeting, Li had promised the country would do more to help foreign firms. "China's very large-scale market will always be open to foreign-funded firms," Li was quoted as saying.

"China will stick to its word and will continue working hard to expand market access and strengthen service guarantees," Beijing would also provide foreign companies with "a better business environment" so "that firms from all over the world can have peace of mind while investing in China", Li added.

Musk later said on X, which he also owns, that he was honored to meet with Li, adding the pair "have known each other now for many years". Musk has extensive business interests in China and his most recent visit was in May and June of last year. Tesla has not shared his itinerary for the current trip.

CCTV quoted him as praising the "hardworking and intelligent Chinese team" at his Tesla Gigafactory in Shanghai during his meeting with Li. "Tesla



LOS ANGELES: Tesla CEO Elon Musk arrives at the Tenth Breakthrough Prize Ceremony at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

is willing to take the next step in deepening cooperation with China to achieve more win-win results," Musk reportedly added.

Earlier in the day, the billionaire met with the head of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, Ren Hongbin, "to discuss next steps in cooperation and other topics", CCTV said.

The mercurial magnate is a controversial figure in the West, but in China, Tesla's electric vehicles have become a staple of middle-class urban life.

Having once derided Chinese EVs, Musk described their manufacturers this year as being "the most competitive car companies in the world".

"It's good to see electric vehicles making progress in China," he was quoted as saying by a state-backed media outlet on Sunday.

"All cars will be electric in the future." Musk's own company has run into trouble in the world's second-largest economy: in January, Tesla recalled more than 1.6 million electric vehicles in China to fix their steering software. His arrival in China coincides with a cut-throat price war between firms desperate to get ahead in the fiercely competitive EV market.

China's local car giant BYD - "Build Your Dreams" - beat out Tesla in last year's fourth quarter to become the world's top seller of EVs.

Tesla reclaimed that title in the first quarter of this year, but BYD remains firmly on top in its home market. An analysis by Wedbush Securities called the visit "a watershed moment for Musk as well as Beijing", given the level of domestic competition and recent "softer demand" for Tesla.

The trip also comes as Beijing hosts a massive auto show, which held press events from Thursday and opened to the public over the weekend.

Comments under posts about Musk's arrival on the social media site Weibo were full of specula-

tion that the celebrity tycoon would attend Auto China while in Beijing. One user suggested Musk's visit was motivated by a desire to test drive an SU7, the first car model released earlier this year by Chinese consumer tech giant Xiaomi. Xiaomi's entrance into the competitive EV sector appears to be off to a positive start, with CEO Lei Jun saying this month that pre-orders had outpaced expectations by three to five times.

Other commenters responded to reports that Musk's trip was intended to give him an opportunity to talk with Chinese officials about the possibility of bringing Tesla's Full Self-Driving (FSD) technology to the local market. "FSD is Tesla's last hope for saving its domestic sales," one Weibo user said.

"While the long term valuation story at Tesla hinges on FSD and autonomous, a key missing piece in that puzzle is Tesla making FSD available in China which now appears on the doorstep," the Wedbush analysis said. Musk's interests in China have long raised eyebrows in Washington, with President Joe Biden saying in November 2022 that his links to foreign countries were "worthy" of scrutiny.

The tycoon has also caused controversy by suggesting the self-ruled island of Taiwan should become part of China - a stance that was welcomed by Chinese officials but deeply angered Taipei. — AFP

IMF ready to open \$8.1bn credit line for Colombia

WASHINGTON: The International Monetary Fund said Friday it will open a \$8.1 billion credit line for the government of Colombia, part of a program to help states avoid crisis situations. Unlike a traditional aid program, Colombia will not receive the sum but can access it if necessary for 24 months.

"The new arrangement under the Flexible Credit Line will provide added insurance against downside external risks and maintain market confidence. The authorities intend to continue to treat this new arrangement as precautionary," IMF Deputy Managing Director Antoinette Sayeh was quoted as saying in a statement. Colombia's economy slowed last year, growing just 0.3 percent with an increase in public spending. The country is expecting 1.1 percent growth this year, according to the IMF, still well below average growth expected for Latin America as a whole.

Colombia earlier this month told the IMF it wanted to renegotiate repayments on the remainder of a \$6 billion loan it was granted during the COVID-19 pandemic, but which is now "asphyxiating" the country's finances. Colombia's total debt amounted to nearly \$224 billion by the end of 2023, about 52 percent of GDP, according to the finance ministry. — AFP



Gulf Bank launches educational video for deaf, mute audiences

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has released an educational video for individuals with special needs to protect them from the risks of online fraud. This initiative is part of the bank's ongoing efforts to support the "Diraya" campaign, overseen by the Central Bank of Kuwait in collaboration with the Kuwait Banking Association.

The video has received many views due to its meaningful educational content aimed at the deaf and mute community - warning them against sharing their personal information with others, and not engaging with anonymous messages that aim to steal data and banking details. In related efforts to embed sustainability principles in the community and to meet the requirements of the Central Bank of Kuwait, Gulf Bank offers immediate translation services into sign language at its branches for customers with special needs.

IMF director lauds 'Saudi Vision 2030'

RIYADH: International Monetary Fund Director Kristalina Georgieva said on Sunday that the success of Vision 2030 in Saudi Arabia is a clear example of the country's ability to transform.

Georgieva stated during a session entitled "A New Vision for Global Development" within the framework of the World Economic Forum currently held in Riyadh that "the fruits of economic growth must be distributed to all countries, as there is a huge discrepancy in economic "performance between countries.

She pointed out that there are 800 million people around the world currently suffering from famine, explaining that "we have failed to share the benefits of growth with other regions of the world."

Georgieva explained that the global economy has proven its resilience in dealing with crises in the face of repeated shocks, which is due to countries taking seriously after the global financial crisis in 2008 and the Asian crisis the existence of sound tax policies while managing public finances responsibly and creating appropriate conditions for growth in the private sector.

She pointed out that the world faces two challenges. The first is that despite economic growth of 3.2 percent last year, it is weak compared to historical standards. The second challenge lies in the large rift between the countries of the world, as some of them are achieving good growth and others are lagging

banned in the United States.

US lawmakers argued that TikTok can be used by the Chinese government for espionage and propaganda as long as it is owned by ByteDance. "Everybody who's involved in deciding whether or not this platform is going to get banned is turning a blind eye to how it's going to affect all of the small businesses," said Bilal Rehman of Texas. His @bilalrehmanstudio TikTok account, which playfully promotes his company's interior design projects, has some 500,000 followers. "They don't really understand social media and how it works," the 24-year-old added. TikTok has gone from a novelty to a necessity for many US small businesses, according to an Oxford Economics study backed by the platform.

TikTok fuels growth for more than seven million businesses in the United States, helping generate billions of dollars and supporting more than 224,000 jobs, the study determined.

"It's become such a huge part of our economy that taking that away is going to be devastating to millions of people," Rehman said of TikTok. Chaudhary took to TikTok to share her passion for reading in early 2020 while enduring COVID-19 lockdowns. "I made a handful

of videos and, long story short, one went viral," Chaudhary said. Opportunities to make money from sponsors or advertising came as her audience grew, and posting on her @aymansbooks TikTok account became a job.

She saw books she extolled snapped up by readers, as she shined attention on titles banned from schools or libraries in parts of the country.

A TikTok ban would be a particularly hard blow to businesses just starting out, according to eMarketer analyst Jasmine Enberg. "Social media has democratized the commerce landscape, and TikTok really supercharged that," Enberg told AFP. "It's become a crucial platform for many small businesses, especially those that are in niche industries or sell quirky products." One factor setting TikTok apart from rival platforms is the potential for videos to be spread quickly by a highly engaged audience, according to Enberg. "The potential to be discovered on TikTok is really unparalleled, and that's largely thanks to its algorithm as well as the entertaining kind of content that it hosts," she said.

A young generation is using TikTok as a search engine of sorts, making queries as they might on Google and seeing what the algorithm serves up, said SOCi di-



RIYADH: Director of the International Monetary Fund Kristalina Georgieva during the World Economic Forum sessions. — KUNA

behind. Georgieva said that if these two challenges are not resolved, "we will face great difficulties in the future, and history may remind us that this decade is unstable and we need to describe it historically as a decade of transformations.

She stressed the need to continue building the strength of the economy and responsibility towards public finance and monetary policies, and there is no alternative to that. The Director of the International

fulfilling its role in supporting the "Diraya" campaign, which aims to enhance financial literacy, raise awareness of the banking sector's role, and educate customers on the best ways to utilize the varied services banks offer. To achieve this, the bank distributes educational materials through multiple media and communication channels such as social media, newspapers, radio, and television, with the goal of reaching a wide audience.

The bank actively engages in several themes highlighted by the campaign, emphasizing customer rights in banking transactions according to the Central Bank of Kuwait's guidelines, data and account security, and the safe usage of banking cards. This focus is crucial given the rapid evolution of financial and banking services and the growing number of fraud incidents. Additionally, the bank remains committed to promoting the fundamental principles detailed in the Central Bank of Kuwait's Customer Protection Guide. This effort helps enhance the security of banking customers and supports the development of a balanced relationship between banks and their clients, according to the best international practices.



People walk past an advertisement featuring the TikTok logo at a train station in Zhengzhou, in China's central Henan province on January 21, 2024. — AFP

Monetary Fund stressed the necessity and importance of unleashing the power of technology and linking it to human capital, which can move between different opportunities and jobs more flexibly. The special meeting of the World Economic Forum held in Riyadh will witness many dialogues and discussion sessions aimed at strengthening international cooperation efforts and stimulating joint efforts to innovate sustainable solutions. — KUNA



People walk past an advertisement featuring the TikTok logo at a train station in Zhengzhou, in China's central Henan province on January 21, 2024. — AFP

sector of market insights Damian Rollison. "It feels like it has been created by your peers, so they're telling you the real deal about whatever the topic might be," Rollison said of the trend. TikTok lovers say it has a unique style that will be missed in the case of a ban. — AFP

TikTok creators fear economic blow of US ban

SAN FRANCISCO: Ayman Chaudhary turned her love for reading into a living on TikTok, posting video snippets about books like those banned in schools in ultra-conservative parts of the United States. Now the online platform she relies on to support her family is poised to be banned in what entrepreneurs using TikTok condemn as an attack on their livelihoods.

"It's so essential to small businesses and creators: it's my full-time job," the 23-year-old Chicago resident told AFP. "It makes me really worried that I live in a country that would pass bans like these instead of focusing on what's actually important, like gun control and health-care and education." A new US law put TikTok's parent, Chinese tech giant ByteDance, on a nine-month deadline to divest the hugely popular video platform or have it

Business

Al-Sager: Our profits underscore our successful strategic investments

NBK Group Vice Chairman and CEO on the sidelines of the Analyst Conference for 1Q 2024

KUWAIT: Isam Al-Sager, the Vice Chairman and Group CEO of National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), said, "NBK continued recording solid performance and building on past year's momentum as we advance in executing our diverse strategy and leveraging our flexible business model throughout the challenging macroeconomic landscape."

On the sidelines of the Analyst Conference for the results of 1Q24, Al-Sager added, "We reported net profits of KD 146.6 million in the first quarter of the year, growing by 9.2 percent. Driven mainly by growth in core banking income, our revenue stream stems from a diverse operational mix that proved successful in mitigating risks and optimizing performance. We achieved a growth of 11.2 percent year on year in net operating income to reach KD 309 million."

Strategic investments

"Our success is underscored by the strategic investments that are aimed at achieving sustainable growth, enhancing customer experience, and creating long-term value to shareholders which is evident in our performance measures. Our return on average assets for the reporting period reached 1.55 percent whereas our return on average equity reached 15.2 percent," Al-Sager highlighted.

"The ongoing investments by the Group in innovation and technology will support our ability to meet the evolving needs and expectations of our clients. By such, we will further strengthen our leading franchise across all business sectors and continue to build on our trust-based relationship with stakeholders," he continued.

Local market

Speaking on NBK's performance in the local market, Al-Sager stated, "Our approach in Kuwait remains centered on strengthening our market position in key segments, growing our clientele through digital products, and providing exceptional customer service. From a corporate banking standpoint, we continue to lead Kuwait's infrastructure program and are well-positioned for any revival of infrastructure spend."

"Furthermore, our Islamic banking arm, Boubyan Bank, along with our international operations both continue to expand their contribution to the Group aiding in our diversification strategy. Notably, our international operations maintain a robust contribution to the Group's operating income and net profit." "Also, and notably in wealth management, we will endorse our position and brand presence through a



NBK Vice Chairman and Group CEO Isam Al-Sager

Isam Al-Sager

- Investments aimed at achieving sustainable growth and maximizing revenues for shareholders
- Our international operations continue to expand their strong contribution to the Group's operating income and net profit
- We are well-positioned for any revival of infrastructure spend in Kuwait
- Our solid performance for 1Q builds on past year's momentum

global network of operations with the launch of NBK Wealth. We will further solidify our value proposition in providing innovative solutions and services towards a best-in-class wealth management experience," Al-Sager noted.

"Similarly, as a frontrunner in the ESG space, we will continue to play a role in fostering sustainable advancement in the communities where we operate and in being a key partner in the sustainable financing endeavors of our clients," he affirmed.

Egyptian market

On a question about the Group's operations in



Egypt, Al-Sager replied, "On Egypt, we witnessed recently signals of economic stability which is considered one of the largest economies in the region and enjoys big potential for growth. As soon as the confidence in the Egyptian economy is regained, we believe that there are substantial growth opportunities within Egypt, and we will continue to be optimistic in this regard." "Speaking of our operations in Egypt, it is a main growth market for us, and we are committed to grow our operations in the Egyptian market, as one of our most profitable markets."

Kuwaiti economy

On the other side, Al-Sager said that the Kuwaiti economy ended the quarter on a relatively soft note indicating that in terms of historical trends, credit growth stood low while real estate activity weakened. Inflation has also eased and is trending lower on the back of cooling private demand.

"Likewise, project activity declined significantly following an improved 2023. This could be partly explained by seasonal effects in addition to the unexpected downturn in domestic politics. The project awards outlook for the remainder of 2024 should be better with a pipeline of KD 6.3 billion worth of projects to be awarded," he added.

Underlying drivers

On his part, Sujit Ronghe, Group CFO of National Bank of Kuwait commented on 1Q24 financial results saying, "Underlying drivers for the robust bottom-line performance are a combination of y-o-y growth in business volumes, higher interest rates, and a stronger operating performance. Group loans and advances grew by 5.7 percent year on year. Investment securities also contributed strongly to Group assets with a growth of 15.6 percent compared to March 2023."

"The Group's Balance Sheet remains strong with a stable credit quality, solid capital base along with the ability to generate healthy operating profits. Total credit provisions and impairment losses for 1Q 24 amounted to KD 25.5 million, a decrease of KD 2.6 million over 1Q 23.

"NBK Group continues to benefit from its unique position amongst Kuwaiti banks in terms of geographical spread through International Banking and the ability to conduct business in both Conventional and Islamic Banking," he remarked.

Loans and deposits

On the loan outlook, Ronghe mentioned, "Corporate loan growth has been promising in the past twelve months both in our domestic and international locations. For that, growth in loans for the upcoming quarters will mainly stem from the growth anticipated in corporate loans. At the same time, as a nature of the Group's international network, we remain well positioned to attract deposits at competitive rates while the local competition doesn't impact NBK's to the extent it does to other local banks."

Lower cost of risk

"As a result of the marked growth in operating income and controlled cost growth, the 1Q 24 cost to income ratio was at 36.1 percent compared to 36.5 percent, one year ago. The cost of risk for 1Q24 decreased to 44bps compared to 53bps in 1Q23. Considering the declining interest rate scenario as we go ahead into the further quarters of 2024, we do expect the cost to income ratio to increase slightly, but it should be below the 40 percent mark," Ronghe explained.

"The Group's NIM increased from 2.48 percent in 1Q23 to 2.64 percent in 1Q24, backed by a strong year-on-year growth in volumes and interest rates. Benchmark interest rates are expected to remain at current levels for a longer period, with rate cuts being forecasted in later quarters of 2024," he added.

Cautious optimism

"Looking forward, ongoing regional and international geo-politics, prospects of 'higher for longer' interest rates are likely to result in a macroeconomic environment which is less conducive to growth. We, however, remain cautiously optimistic that the overall operating environment, although challenging, will remain generally stable during 2024."

NBK Economic Report

US Fed's fight against inflation lacks progress

KUWAIT: Business activity in the US cooled in April to a four-month low while remaining in expansion territory, with the composite PMI output index dropping to 50.9 for the month, below March's 52.1 figure. The drop is mainly attributed to weaker demand, suggesting that the economy has lost some momentum in the second quarter compared to the first. The drop in PMI figures was accompanied by a slight drop in employment for the month, with unemployment claims reaching 207k down from 212k the previous month.

US GDP dips in April

The US economy grew at the slowest pace in almost two years, as seen in the last quarter GDP figure of 1.6 percent. The figure was well below expectations of a 2.5 percent growth, as well as below the previous quarter figure of 3.4 percent. The slowdown reflected a mix of lower growth in consumer spending, as well as lower exports and outlays by the government.

Core personal consumption expenditure rose at a rate of 2.8 percent year-over-year in March, above expectations of a 2.7 percent rise. Meanwhile the m/m figure rose by 0.3 percent, similar to the previous month's figure and in line with expectations. Markets showed little movements following the data, where the US dollar index showed

minimal movements, meanwhile the 2-year and 10-year notes dropped slightly. Personal income rose 0.5 percent for the month, slightly higher than the 0.3 percent increase seen the previous month. While the personal saving rate fell 0.4 percent from February, reaching 3.2 percent. As core PCE remains above the Fed's target, markets are starting to anticipate less cuts in 2024, with the CME Group's Fed Watch Gauge showing a 45.6 percent probability of a potential cut in September. The Federal Reserve is scheduled to meet in the first of May, where they will be discussing their outlook on the economy and inflation.

Canada retail sales drop

Retail sales in Canada missed expectations after the reading came in at -0.1 percent in February versus estimates of a 0.1 percent rise. This marks the second straight month of retail sales contraction following January's decline of 0.3 percent, reflecting the continued squeeze on Canadian households as a result of elevated inflation and high interest rates. Lower sales were recorded for building materials, home furnishings, furniture, electronics, and clothing, while motor vehicle sales rose by 0.5 percent. The Bank of Canada kept interest rates at 5 percent earlier in the month, leaving it near 23-year highs, while annual inflation ticked up to 2.9 percent in March, still away from the BoC's ideal target of 2 percent.

Manufacturing and services PMI

UK businesses recorded rapid growth in April, with the PMI composite output index at an 11-month high of 54.0, above March's 52.8 figure. Services PMI recorded 54.9, up

from 53.1 the previous month. Meanwhile, manufacturing was at 48.7 for the month, below March's 50.3 figure. The recovery in the services sector offset the decline in manufacturing, marking the sixth consecutive expansion in the UK's private sector, and marking a rebound from the shallow recession that was expected last year. Business' costs also rose at the fastest pace in nearly a year, mainly due to a rise in wages as well as higher prices for transport and raw materials, factors that may affect how the BoE proceeds with its rate cut plans.

Business activity in the eurozone expanded in April at the fastest pace in nearly a year, with the composite PMI figure expanding to 51.4 for the month, above March's 50.3 figure, and above expectations of a 50.7 print. The expansion is supported by an increase in activity in the services sector in several eurozone countries, where the flash services PMI increased to 52.9 for the month. Meanwhile Manufacturing PMI dropped to 45.6 from the previous 46.1 figure.

Australia's inflation increased more than expected in the latest figure published in April, where the q/q figure increased by 1.0 percent, above the previous 0.6 percent figure and expectations of 0.8 percent. The y/y figure was up 3.5 percent, slightly higher than the previous figure at 3.4 percent. Despite inflation easing in the first quarter of 2024, the recent figure suggests that inflation is still trending above the RBA's target, which might prompt officials to delay rate cuts, or to result in further rate hikes.

The Bank of Japan has decided to keep short term interest rates steady at 0.0 percent to 0.10 percent in its latest meeting, as it anticipates inflation to be on track to reach

the BoJ's target of 2.0 percent. While markets were anticipating no changes in the BoJ's monetary policy, markets took the move to indicate that only small and slow steps will be taken in the coming days. Kazuo Ueda, BoJ's governor stated in a speech following the meeting that a significant move on the Yen might call for an intervention from the BoJ if it proves to have an effect on the economy and prices. The dollar-yen pair rose to record highs following the meeting, with the yen reaching a low of 158.33 against the US dollar, its weakest value since 1990.

China's one- and five-year loan prime rate were left unchanged at 3.45 percent and 3.95 percent respectively, in line with market expectations amid signs of economic recovery for the world's sec-

ond largest economy. The five-year loan prime rate acts as a benchmark for mortgage rates, a sector that faced severe downturn over the past two years due to various factors including the COVID lockdown. However, recent data showed strong exports and faster than expected GDP growth at 5.3 percent from 5.2 percent in the previous quarter. Premier Li Qiang, in an address to the National People's Congress, targeted a 5 percent growth rate for 2024, and so far, the country is on track to surpass that goal. The USD/CNY currency pair closed the week at 7.2464.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30775

Daimler Truck, US workers reach wage agreement

NEW YORK: Union leaders for some 7,200 autoworkers said they reached a last-minute wage agreement with Daimler Truck in three southern US states, averting a strike. The tentative agreement between the United Auto Workers and Daimler Truck was forged late Friday just minutes before a contract was to expire at midnight for workers who build long-haul trucks and buses. The UAW, led by President Shawn Fain, said the four-year agreement includes raises of more than 25 percent, the end of wage tiers and regular cost-of-living adjustments.

A strike would have affected four industrial sites in North Carolina and one each in Tennessee and Georgia. The plants make Freightliner and Western Star trucks



WASHINGTON: A tentative agreement between the United Auto Workers and Daimler Truck was forged just minutes before a contract was to expire at midnight for workers who build long-haul trucks and buses. — AFP

and Thomas Built buses.

"We said we needed protection against inflation," Fain said in a late-night Facebook live broadcast, surrounded by autoworkers, from Charlotte, North Carolina. "We won cost of living allowance for the first time in Daimler

history." The wage agreement still must be ratified by the workers.

Fain said workers would hold a "victory rally" on Saturday in Charlotte. In a webcast earlier this week, Fain hit out at Chairman Martin Daum over lofty executive pay and for steering extra cash to shareholder payouts instead of adequately compensating workers. "In the new UAW, we don't take concessions. We raise standards for everyone and we fight for what we deserve," Fain said. "And we're not afraid to strike to get it." The UAW won a landmark unionization drive at Volkswagen's Tennessee factory a week ago, adding to momentum after simultaneous strikes of Detroit's "Big Three" carmakers resulted in wage gains. — AFP

Jon Greene, a forklift driver at Daimler Truck's Cleveland, North Carolina manufacturing plant, characterized achieving a livable wage increase in light of inflation as a priority, along with job security and standardizing pay throughout the six facilities. In December 2021, Daimler Truck was spun off from Mercedes-Benz, which retains about a 30 percent stake in the truck company. — AFP

كيبكو
KIPCO

CONDOLENCES

The Management and Staff of
Kuwait Projects Company (Holding)
wish to offer their heartfelt condolences to

Ms. Nancy Rebello

on the sad demise of her

Father

May his soul rest in peace and may
God grant comfort and strength to the
bereaved family members

Business

KFH supports local and regional development plans: Al-Rushood

KFH participates in 'UAE Companies Investment Meet: Unlocking Kuwait's Potential'

KUWAIT: At the "UAE Companies Investment Meet: Unlocking Kuwait's Potential," KFH Acting Group Chief Executive Officer, Abdulwahab Iesa Al-Rushood, expressed his honor to be participating. He said: "This event presents a valuable opportunity for Kuwaiti and Emirati companies to collaborate on joint projects. Such collaborations can not only support economic development plans in Kuwait but also strengthen the historical ties within the GCC countries."

Al-Rushood added "Kuwait boasts rich investment opportunities across diverse sectors. It also benefits from a long-established private sector that has achieved numerous successes. The Kuwaiti banking system consistently supports local companies through financing, advisory services, and expertise. This strong support stems from the sector's high creditworthiness and extensive presence in key regional and global markets, where it collaborates with major international partners."

He emphasized that Kuwait 2035 Vision prioritizes streamlining and attracting investments. The economy is a top priority for the government. "Leveraging its strong financial resources, Kuwait is well-positioned for a major development driven by the private sector," he added. Al-Rushood further stated, "KFH is committed to offering



Abdulwahab Iesa Al-Rushood addresses the forum.

various forms of assistance to help advance the development process and enhance the economic landscape at both the local and regional levels."

"I want to express my gratitude to the organizers and wish the forum success. I hope this event will play a vital role in attracting new investments, fostering growth in various sectors of Kuwait's economy, and ultimately realizing the hopes and aspirations of its people," he concluded.



Al-Rushood, Minister of Trade and Industry Abdullah Al-Jouan, Emirati Ambassador Dr Matar Al-Neyadi and UAE Minister of Foreign Trade Dr Thani Al-Zeyoudi on the sidelines of the forum.

US Fed to meet amid dwindling hopes of rate cuts

WASHINGTON: The US Federal Reserve is highly likely to keep interest rates unchanged later this week, as policymakers contend with a recent uptick in inflation that has sharply cut the chance of a summer start to interest rate cuts.

The Fed's decision to hike interest rates and then hold them at a 23-year high has helped to significantly lower elevated inflation, although it remains stuck firmly above the US central bank's long-term target of two percent.

Since the start of this year, the Fed's favored inflation measure has actually accelerated, hitting an annual rate of 2.7 percent in March, while economic growth has slowed, and the labor market has re-

mained robust. The current environment, analysts say, is likely to lead the rate-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) to hold rates at their current level of between 5.25 and 5.50 percent for longer than previously thought.

"Another round of elevated inflation data is likely to lead to a more hawkish-leaning message at the May FOMC meeting," economists at Deutsche Bank wrote in a recent note to clients. At the most recent FOMC meeting in March, policymakers penciled in three quarter percentage-point rate cuts this year, although Fed Chair Jerome Powell also warned that inflation was "still too high." The data since the March 20 decision has only reinforced that message, pushing policymakers - including Powell - to dial back their optimism over rate cuts.

Fed Governor Christopher Waller told a conference in New York last month that it is "appropriate to reduce the overall number of rate cuts or push them further into the future in response to the recent data." Richmond Fed President Tom Barkin, who is a voting member of the FOMC this year, told

AFP earlier this month that the recent inflation data had not been "supportive" of the case for cuts.

And in mid-April, Powell said the recent data "have clearly not given us greater confidence, and instead indicate that it's likely to take longer than expected to achieve that confidence." The markets are almost certain that the Fed will leave its key lending rate unchanged this week: Futures traders assigned a probability of less than three percent on Friday that it would announce a rate cut after its two-day meeting concludes on Wednesday, according to CME Group data. In light of the recent data, traders do not see a greater-than-50-percent chance of an interest rate cut until the Fed's decision mid-September, according to CME Group.

A September cut could prove awkward for the Fed as the independent US central bank, since it would come shortly before the November presidential election, which will likely see the Democrat incumbent Joe Biden face former Republican president Donald Trump. Analysts are deeply divided on both the size and timing of rate cuts this year, with

estimates by leading economists ranging from zero cuts in 2024 to as many as four. "Stubborn inflation and resilient economic activity through the first few months of the year have left the FOMC little reason to ease policy in the near term," Wells Fargo economists wrote in a recent note to clients.

The Fed is not publishing updated economic forecasts this week, and so analysts will instead have to parse FOMC policymakers' public comments in the coming weeks for signs of their thinking on interest rate cuts. But it could provide some clarity on Wednesday about its policy allowing assets it purchased to help the US economy weather the Covid-19 pandemic "run off" - or expire without being replaced. This ongoing policy reduces the overall size of its balance sheet and is also meant to tighten monetary policy somewhat. The Fed, which currently holds around \$7.4 trillion in assets, is currently debating when to start slowing down the current pace of runoff, which allows up to \$95 billion in assets to mature each month without being replaced. — AFP

AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 25 APRIL 2024

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Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	34,899	7,663.14	0.3%	-4.6%	2.5%	603,233,587	219,761,041	50,168	16.7	1.3	81.8%
Main Market	7,754	5,902.92	1.2%	-1.4%	6.0%	364,143,539	41,197,837	22,872	12.3	0.8	18.2%
All Share	42,653	7,026.05	0.4%	-4.1%	3.1%	967,377,126	260,958,878	73,040	13.6	0.9	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Banking	25,877	1,727.85	0.2%	-2.5%	4.9%	224,090,087	106,418,101	19,829	17.1	1.3	60.67%
Basic Materials	475	841.70	7.9%	6.6%	12.8%	11,607,232	7,661,883	2,605	9.6	2.2	1.11%
Consumer Discretionary	1,135	1,651.48	0.8%	-5.7%	3.0%	74,029,412	8,904,413	5,037	12.3	1.2	2.66%
Consumer Staples	255	840.13	2.6%	8.7%	27.6%	2,276,605	1,420,213	269	106.5	1.4	0.60%
Energy	217	1,037.26	2.4%	-0.5%	9.3%	10,543,166	1,035,172	661	9.6	0.8	0.51%
Financial Services	4,784	1,334.76	2.9%	-1.4%	10.1%	239,185,624	35,244,178	13,062	14.8	0.8	11.22%
Health Care	216	450.12	-4.2%	31.0%	-6.6%	3,445,856	2,639,081,080	483	12.6	1.5	0.51%
Industrials	2,560	754.66	-3.9%	-27.8%	-16.9%	170,810,918	58,221,155	16,129	12.6	0.9	6.00%
Insurance	1,045	2,557.00	0.1%	-0.4%	11.5%	16,546,913	2,470,717	3,031	10.4	1.1	2.45%
Real Estate	2,724	1,280.71	0.6%	-1.2%	5.6%	196,008,784	28,422,287	8,569	15.1	0.7	6.39%
Technology	26	1,906.05	0.0%	0.0%	229.6%	0	0.00	0	NM	2.2	0.06%
Telecommunications	3,168	1,036.87	-0.7%	-2.6%	-6.2%	15,947,083	8,081,702	2,984	9.7	1.3	7.43%
Utilities	171	407.89	0.6%	-8.3%	-10.4%	2,885,446	439,974	381	13.5	1.4	0.40%

Top Gainers					
Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
MIDAN	711	82.31%	3,444,856	2,638,602.077	482
FTI	204	71.43%	9,424,225	2,033,485	2,384
PAPCO	185	19.35%	2,087,792	393,194	702
KPPC	38	17.28%	3,061,825	105,014	147
TAHSSILAT	43.4	16.35%	4,143,189	190,134	436

Top Losers					
Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
MADAR	82	-9.29%	75,000	6,207	15
HUMANSOFT	2,900	-9.08%	1,491,541	4,494,464	2,374
AMAR	64	-8.57%	150,541	9,758	9
TIJARA	57	-7.92%	3,747,145	222,340	225
PCEM	839	-7.09%	187,720	164,754	112

Top Volume					
Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
AGLTY	303	-7.06%	146,957,927	46,390,547	10,713
NRE	96	-5.88%	86,532,119	8,619,128	1,532
KFH	723	-0.55%	74,156,975	54,173,243	8,565
JIYAD	19.2	5.49%	50,426,550	1,061,341	1,421
GBK	257	-1.91%	49,176,321	12,716,142	1,650

Top Value					
Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	723	-0.55%	74,156,975	54,173,243	8,565
AGLTY	303	-7.06%	146,957,927	46,390,547	10,713
NBK	863	1.65%	24,554,676	21,175,084	3,908
GBK	257	-1.91%	49,176,321	12,716,142	1,650
NRE	96	-5.88%	86,532,119	8,619,128	1,532

Market Summary:

- Premier volume and value dropped 27% and 29%, while the Main market rose 13% and 11%, respectively.
- The Premier index retreated out of the resistance level, while the Main index showed stability.
- Technically, the All Share index closed at 7026, with support levels at 7000, 6981, and 6959, while resistance at 7041. The Premier index closed at 7663, with support levels at 7657, 7591, and 7555, while resistance at 7716. The Main index closed at 5902, with support levels at 5902, 5881, and 5865, while resistance was at 5925.

MONDAY, APRIL 29, 2024

Music 'haven of freedom'

Tangiers hosts global jazz festival

The Moroccan city of Tangiers, which has a long history as a haven of inspiration for American jazz musicians, will host UNESCO's International Jazz Day for the first time on Tuesday. Over the last century, jazz greats such as Randy Weston, Idrees Sulieman and Max Roach all crossed the Atlantic to play and record music in the North African port city, perched on the edge of the Strait of Gibraltar. "The city has had a fascinating power of attraction on a wave of intellectuals and musicians," Philippe Lorin, the founder of an annual Tangiers jazz festival, told AFP. "It's not for nothing that a writer once said there was always a cruise liner in New York preparing to sail for Tangiers."

This year's Jazz Day will be held over four days starting on Saturday, during which talks and open-air performances will be held in Tangiers. The festivities will culminate in an "All-Star Global Concert" on Tuesday led by jazz icon Herbie Hancock, also featuring bassists Marcus Miller and Richard Bona, as well as guitarist Romero Lubambo.

The city's cosmopolitan artistic reputation stems from its location between Africa and Europe as well as its history, having been administered by several colonial powers from 1923 to 1956, the year Morocco gained independence. This melting pot of influences prompted visits from international writers and poets, notably from the Beat Generation movement, as well as African American musicians seeking to find "their African roots," Moroccan historian Farid Bahri told AFP. Lorin said that Tangiers "was a haven of freedom -- just like jazz music".



Abdellah El Gourd, a 77-year-old Moroccan legend of gnawa music, poses for a picture in the old city of Tangiers. — AFP

'He gave a lot to the city'

A pivotal moment in the city's musical history came in 1959, when Tangiers jazz promoter Jacques Muyal -- then just a teenager -- recorded a session with trumpeter Idrees Sulieman, pianist Oscar Dennard, bassist Jamil Nasser and drummer Buster Smith at the Radio Tanger International studio. The recording gained renown in jazz circles decades before its

distribution as "The 4 American Jazzmen In Tangier" album in 2017.

Bahri, the author of "Tangiers, a world history of Morocco", said "the presence of American musicians in Tangiers was also linked to a very active American diplomacy". Famous US pianist Randy Weston settled in Tangiers for five years after visiting 14 African countries in 1967 during a tour organized by the US State Department.

The Brooklynite virtuoso would play a key role in building the musical reputation of the city, to which he dedicated his 1973 album "Tanjah".

"Randy was an exceptional, kind and respectful man," said Abdellah El Gourd, a 77-year-old Moroccan legend of gnawa music, a centuries-old style played with a three-stringed lute and steel castanets, rooted in West African rituals and Sufi tra-

ditions. "He gave a lot to the city and its musicians," added the friend and collaborator of Weston, who died in 2018.

'Our language was music'

Together, El Gourd and Weston blurred the lines of their respective genres, creating the beginnings of jazz-gnawa fusion, which remains a key part of Tangiers' musical legacy. "The language barrier was never a problem because our communication was through (musical) scales," El Gourd recalled in a rehearsal room lined with old photos and memorabilia from the years he toured with Weston and jazz saxophonist Archie Shepp. "Our language was music." The two men's collaborative work would years later yield the acclaimed 1992 album "The Splendid Master Gnawa Musicians of Morocco". Two years after settling in the city, Weston opened the African Rhythms jazz club, above the iconic Cinema Mauritania in downtown Tangiers.

"We used to rehearse there," El Gourd recalled. "Randy would invite his musician friends. It was a beautiful time." With El Gourd's help, Weston launched Tangiers' first-ever jazz festival in 1972, featuring big names such as drummer Max Roach, flautist Hubert Laws, double-bassist Ahmed Abdul-Malik, and saxophonist Dexter Gordon. "It was quite a unique experience, because it was the first time we played in front of such a large audience," said El Gourd, who was then used to small crowds for gnawa performances. Weston and El Gourd's festival was only held once. But three decades later it inspired Lorin to create the Tanjazz festival, which is held in the port city every September. —AFP

Disgraced Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein hospitalized

Disgraced Hollywood movie mogul Harvey Weinstein was hospitalized on Saturday upon his return to New York after the city's highest court overturned his 2020 conviction on sex crime charges. The 4-3 decision was a shock reversal of one of the defining cases of the #MeToo movement, but Weinstein will remain jailed on a separate 16-year rape sentence handed down in California. "The NYC Department of Corrections determined that Mr Weinstein needed immediate medical attention," his lawyer Arthur L Aidala told AFP in a statement. "A myriad of tests are being performed

on Harvey and he is being kept for observation."

Police told US media that Weinstein had been taken to New York's Bellevue Hospital. On Thursday, the city's Court of Appeals found the trial judge erred in admitting the testimony of additional women who were allegedly abused by Weinstein but who were not named in the charges brought against him, and ordered a new trial.

Bombshell allegations broke against the Oscar-winning producer in 2017, launching the #MeToo movement that paved the way for women to fight back against sexual violence



Harvey Weinstein leaves the Manhattan Criminal Court, as a jury continues with deliberations on February 21, 2020, in New York City. —AFP

in the workplace. Weinstein, 72, was convicted in a New York court in 2020 of the rape and sexual assault of ex-actress Jessica Mann in 2013, and of forcibly

performing oral sex on former production assistant Mimi Haley in 2006. He was later sentenced to 23 years in prison. —AFP



Abel (left), Ismael Mohammed (center), Ibrahim Chibou (second right) and Klevina Morigi, members of the Phosphoros Theatre, take part in a rehearsal of the play 'Tender' at the Rich Mix arts center in London. — AFP photos



Members of the Phosphoros Theatre, gather during a break at the Rich Mix arts center in London.

Refugee voices take center stage at UK theatre company

In a darkly lit arts studio in London, five young actors highlight their scripts and go over their lines: the latest cast of "Phosphoros Theatre", a company that empowers refugees and asylum seekers to tell their story on stage. "Nobody knows the story like you, the way you lived or the way you came here, you're the only one who

knows", said Ismael Mohammed. Mohammed was just 16 when he made his way to the UK unaccompanied from east Africa. Now 20, he said joining Phosphoros has helped build his self-confidence.

He remembers being shy in college in the UK, and unable to speak in front of the class but he now performs on stage in venues up and down the country. The latest Phosphoros production, "Tender", tells the story of a group of refugee friends in London. It focuses on the financial pressures faced by people in their situation, and the importance of friendship in overcoming that and other challenges. Co-artistic director and former refugee case worker Kate Duffy-Syedi said the company aims to change widespread perceptions in the UK.

"Refugee young people are viewed as criminalized and kind of brutalized, or as vulnerable victims that do not have their own agency", she added. By putting the refugees at the heart of the creative process, Phosphoros give them back their voice, she said. "I really shared my experience and thoughts onto the stories", said Abel, a young Ethiopian refugee.

"It was also therapeutic for me to show others and be a voice for myself." Phosphoros Theatre was co-founded by Duffy-Syedi and her TV and playwright mother Dawn Harrison in 2015, after drama workshops in a housing project hosting refugees gained momentum. Fast-forward eight years, their rehearsals are taking place against an increasingly divisive political backdrop.

Understanding

The UK parliament recently passed the government's controversial "Safety of Rwanda" bill, intended to expedite plans to send asylum seekers who "illegally" reach



Klevina Morigi poses for a portrait during a rehearsal of the play 'Tender'.

UK soil to the African nation. The legislation is British leader Rishi Sunak's answer to a Supreme Court ruling last year that sending migrants to Rwanda contravened international law. It compels judges to treat Rwanda as a safe third country and gives UK ministers powers to disregard sections of international and British human rights legislation.

The evolving situation has not gone unnoticed by the young actors. "They are saying they are going to send refugees to Rwanda, which is very sad", said Ismael Mohammed. "A lot of people, when they came to this country, it's not for a good life, it's for safety. So they should accept them." For Abel, it's not just politics, but large parts of the UK media that are to blame. "The media only pictures negative things or only gives negative thoughts to the public" regarding refugees and asylum seekers, he added. —AFP

Aaron Sorkin working on new Facebook movie tied to Jan 6 riots

Aaron Sorkin, Oscar-winning writer of "The Social Network", is working on a follow-up movie about Facebook that will explore the company's role in the January 6, 2021, assault on the US Capitol. Sorkin, who depicted the creation and early years of Facebook in 2010's "The Social Network", said the tech giant has since then played a major role in the United States' sharp political polarization. "I'll be writing about this. I blame Facebook for January 6," he said.

Sorkin, who also created TV's "The West Wing" and movie "The Trial of the Chicago 7", revealed the nascent project during a live recording of "The Town" podcast this week. He accused Mark Zuckerberg—co-founder, and chief executive of Facebook parent company Meta—of prioritizing growth at the expense of integrity, despite his already enormous personal wealth. "Facebook has been, among other things, tuning its algorithm to promote the most divisive material possible because that is what will increase engagement," he said. "That is what will get you to what they call in-



US playwright Aaron Sorkin attends Showtime's NYC event and premiere for "The First Lady" at the DGA Theater Complex in Los Angeles, April 14, 2022. —AFP

side the hallways of Facebook, the 'infinite scroll.'"

Asked exactly why Facebook was responsible for January 6, he responded: "You're going to need to buy a movie ticket." Many Americans rely on social media platforms like Facebook for their news. Tech companies stand accused both of failing to verify widely shared news stories—including viral conspiracy theories—and of excessively censoring what they show. Hundreds of people who invaded the Capitol on January 6, 2021, were motivated by the then-president Donald Trump's false claim that the election had been "stolen" from him. Some cited conspiracy theories such as QAnon.

"The Social Network", directed by David Fincher, was a huge commercial and critical hit. It grossed some \$225 million at the global box office and was nominated for eight Oscars including best picture. It won three Academy Awards, including best adapted screenplay for Sorkin. Sorkin has previously floated the idea of a "follow up," telling the "Happy Sad Confused" podcast that he would be interested, so long as Fincher agreed to return as director. Fincher last year told the Guardian he has discussed the project with Sorkin but warned that delving back into Facebook would be "a can of worms." —AFP



Abel and Klevina Morigi take part in a rehearsal of the play 'Tender'.

'Feel like a beautiful bird': Hundreds do yoga on Thai airport runway



Yoga enthusiasts perform yoga during a sunrise "Brew Yoga" event on a runway at Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok. — AFP photos

Stretching their fingertips to the reddening sky, hundreds of yoga devotees rolled out their mats on the runway of Bangkok's main airport Saturday, practicing their downward dog as early morning flights rumbled overhead. The unusual event on the airport's third runway - which is still under construction - saw the workout paired with beverages as participants were offered coconuts, iced teas and water to incorporate into their routines. Some 500 yoga-goers and camera-ready influencers began arriving at 5:00 am, making their way in the dark to their mats on the runway.

As the sun rose, yoga instructors guided the group through two workouts, cheerily enthusiastic despite the pollution, industrial setting, and occasional flight roar. "Today is going to be very special," an instructor blared, before urging participants to "put your coconut in the air!" "Feel like a beautiful bird," she said, as a plane rumbled along the concrete and lifted into the air behind the participants.

While many present were influencers - and perhaps more focused on getting the perfect shot than the perfect lunge - most seemed to have come for a laugh. "This was something fun, this was a nice event," said lawyer Rugeradh Tungsupakul, attending with a friend. "Right now, because

of our jobs, we are too busy to go to a yoga studio," she told AFP. Although Rugeradh was worried about pollution - a perennial issue in smoggy Bangkok, which regularly ranks among the world's most polluted cities - she said they had checked the air quality before arriving. "Right now, it's not too bad," she explained. Although there were a few men scattered in the crowd, the workout was dominated by women. Most were clad in the ubiquitous yoga uniform of black leggings and cropped white t-shirts - in this instance emblazoned with the word "BREW" for Brew Yoga which organized the event.

'Why not?'

"This is a very special event for me," said instructor Pavadee Komchokpaisan, 30, adding it was the first time yoga had been done on the runway. "We have so many people come here to just join the yoga class, and take a picture on a runway," she told AFP, praising Bangkok's yoga community. One of those receiving instruction was Precious, who has lived in Bangkok for the past four years, and said she was invited thanks to her Instagram-famous cat Ernest. "He's been to Switzerland, Botswana, South Africa, so obviously this seemed kind of appropriate," she told AFP. She figured she was unlikely to ever be asked to do yoga on an airport runway again. "Why not?" she asked. — AFP



A darts player of the De Sloopkogels visiting team throws a dart during the Dutch Darts Sports West Netherlands (DSWN) regional darts match against the 188 Euroknallers team at the Bar Club 188 in The Hague. — AFP photos

Game on! Dutch darts world hits the bullseye

The packed stadium shudders as thousands of orange-clad Dutch fans bounce around, chanting the name of their favorite player. But they're not watching Ajax or the Netherlands football team. This is darts. Sometimes derided as a game played over a pint in British pubs, darts is a huge deal in the Netherlands. Boards can be found in every pub, the grassroots game is massive and growing, TV coverage extensive, and the exploits of top "darters" make national headline news. The latest Dutch hero is Michael van Gerwen (or "MvG") and more than 12,000 fans sold out the Rotterdam Ahoy arena Thursday to see him compete in the Premier League, which pits the world's top eight players against each other.

Well-oiled fans, many in orange fancy dress, went crazy every time players hit the maximum 180, punctuating their screams with regular chants of "Stand up if you love the darts" which brought everyone to their feet. But the roof really came off when Van Gerwen strode to the stage in his trademark bright green shirt. The fans cheered every dart MvG threw, but to no avail - he lost to world number one Luke Humphries.

'Like the Beatles'

Why is darts so popular in the Netherlands? Three words: Raymond van Barneveld. A former postman from The Hague, Van Barneveld, now 57, has a decent claim to be the best player ever to throw a dart. In 1998, "Barney" was the first Dutchman to win a world championship, the first of five in a career that included his 7-6 win over Phil "The Power" Taylor in the 2007 final many consider the best match of all time. That 1998 win at the iconic Lakeside venue catapulted darts into

the Dutch consciousness and broke the monopoly of British champions, paving the way for it to be the more global sport it is today.

"It was unbelievable," he told AFP in his office, a treasure trove of darts memorabilia, with trophies and championship photos lining every wall - except the one with his three practice boards. "The television viewing figures were insane. Some people said to me over five million viewers. Back then we had only 15 million people in Holland," he told AFP. "I got a tulip named after me... When I came through (Amsterdam's) Schiphol Airport, it was like the Beatles were arriving at Schiphol. I was shocked."

After a brief retirement, Van Barneveld is fighting his way back up the rankings. The "Barney Army" that supported him around the world was still in evidence in Rotterdam, periodically chanting his name even though he's now far from the top eight.

'Darts and drinks'

Away from the professional oche, at Bar Club 188 in The Hague, the players from the 188 Euroknallers are warming up for their tricky division 3 clash against the "Half Moon Cafe Wrecking Balls." Bar Club 188, which has been hosting darts for 50 years, recently jettisoned its pool table to squeeze in another oche, such is the demand.

Nikki Schenkeveld-Siemons was born upstairs, her parents owned the pub and passed it down to her. She has been playing darts since her early teens. "Around the time Raymond van Barneveld got big in the Netherlands, darts just exploded. Everybody wanted to play



A darts player of the De Sloopkogels visiting team takes off a dart from the board.



A darts player of the De Sloopkogels visiting team throws a dart.



A darts player of the De Sloopkogels visiting team takes off a dart from the board.

darts, play in a darts team," the 35-year-old told AFP. "I think we started with two teams. We have 14 right now and a couple of the teams have a waiting list," she added. Competitive darts is played almost every night at Bar Club 188. Players warm up to the strains of Survivor's "Eye of the Tiger" to get the juices flowing. — AFP

New York returns 30 pillaged relics to Cambodia, Indonesia

New York prosecutors said they had returned to Cambodia and Indonesia 30 antiquities that were looted, sold or illegally transferred by networks of American dealers and traffickers. The antiquities were valued at a total of \$3 million, Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg said. Bragg said in a statement that he had returned 27 pieces to Phnom Penh and three to Jakarta in two recent repatriation ceremonies, including a bronze of the Hindu deity Shiva ("Shiva Triad") looted from Cambodia and a stone bas-relief of two royal figures from the Majapahit empire (13th-16th century) stolen from Indonesia.

Bragg accused art dealers Subhash Kapoor, an Indian-American, and American Nancy Wiener in the illegal trafficking of the antiquities. Kapoor, accused of running a network trafficking in items stolen in Southeast Asia for sale in his Manhattan gallery, has been the target of a US justice investigation dubbed "Hidden Idol" for more than a decade. Arrested in 2011 in Germany, Kapoor was sent back to India where he was tried and sentenced in November 2022 to 13 years in prison. Responding to a US indictment for conspiracy to traffic in stolen works of art, Kapoor denied the charges.

"We are continuing to investigate the wide-ranging trafficking networks that... target Southeast Asian antiquities," Bragg said in the statement. "There is clearly still much more work to do." Wiener, sentenced in 2021 for trafficking in stolen works of art, sought to sell the bronze Shiva but eventually donated the piece to the Denver (Colorado) Museum of Art in 2007. The antiquity was seized by the New York courts in 2023. During Bragg's tenure, the Antiquities Trafficking Unit has recovered nearly 1,200 items stolen from more than 25 countries and valued at more than \$250 million. New York is a major trafficking hub, and several works have been seized in recent years from museums, including the prestigious Metropolitan Museum of Art, and from collectors. — AFP

Lifestyle

Kenyan rugby player turned TikTok star cooks to fight depression

"Done!" -- the catchphrase punctuating former rugby player Dennis Ombachi's cooking videos is as famous as the balcony of the Nairobi apartment where he films himself in action. A former Rugby Sevens international, Ombachi reinvented himself to become a social media star with a global fanbase in just a few years. He has 2.3 million followers on TikTok and 1.4 million on Instagram. Known as "The Roaming Chef", Ombachi produces dynamically edited videos -- shot against the backdrop of the Kenyan capital's skyline and featuring his trademark monosyllabic commentary -- that have earned him the 2022 TikTok award for best African content creator.

It was fitting recognition of his quest to recover his footing after a battle with mental illness. Feted in his East African homeland for scoring the winning try that took Kenya's Rugby Sevens team to the Rio 2016 Olympics, Ombachi played the global circuit for a decade, also participating in two World Cups in 2013 and 2018. But a leg-ankle fracture in 2017 was a turning point. "It took a toll physically and mentally," the 33-year-old father-of-two said in an interview with AFP. "... made up my mind that this is not something I wanted to do for the rest of my life."

Demons

It was then that his demons confronted him. "The depression is something that has always been there, even before I started playing rugby," he said. "But it manifested itself more... (during the) later years of my career," he explained. He rattled off a list of symptoms -- "being socially withdrawn", "drinking a lot", "self-harm" -- the evidence still visible on his



Kenya national 7's rugby squad to the Rio Olympics' former winger, Dennis Ombachi (right), now turned social media cooking sensation shops for groceries that he prepares in his famous short culinary videos in Nairobi. — AFP photos



Dennis Ombachi is pictured on the set of his famous short culinary videos at his residence in Nairobi.



Dennis Ombachi prepares his set for one of his famous short culinary videos at his residence

forearm -- and "two suicide attempts". He was hospitalized several times, before being diagnosed with bipolar disorder in 2018.

The diagnosis was initially hard to take but proved to be "a blessing" in retrospect. "It was able to answer a lot of questions about my life, my personality, my actions, my behaviors, my reactions." Cooking has been Ombachi's constant companion, ever since his trips to Hong Kong, Dubai and Las Vegas for rugby. "I was good in sports. I was successful," he said. But away from the stadium, he felt "a bit empty". "Cooking sort of kept me sane, kept me (going) through my depressive periods."

Inspired by the food he ate during his travels and the videos of British celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay, he experimented with recipes, ran a culinary blog and offered his services at parties -- giving rise to his "Roaming Chef" nickname.

'Don't outshine the food'

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the decline of his sporting career and the birth of his first child, the self-taught chef turned his full attention to creating videos. Success, initially on TikTok, came in 2021. His videos now garner up to 54.6 million views and his balcony has assumed iconic status, playing host to the African 100-metres record holder Ferdinand Omanyala and Afrobeats star Davido. Ombachi's secret is to keep the videos "short (and) snappy". "No background story like 'My grandmother taught me this, when I travelled to here,'" he said. "Make the food the story. Don't try and outshine the food."

In 90 seconds, Ombachi strives to show every step of a recipe, whether Kenyan or foreign, by applying Ramsay's principles: "Use your eyes, nose, taste. Understand the different flavors, how they work together, how they combine together." Even his trademark catchphrase "done!" comes from a phrase he heard Ramsay use, which he "unconsciously" picked up.

'Walked the journey'

In 2021, Ombachi went public with his diagnosis on what was then Twitter (now X), in a bid to "end the stigma" surrounding mental illness in Kenya. The country ranks sixth among African nations affected



Dennis Ombachi (right) poses with an attendant as he shops for groceries that he prepares in his famous short culinary videos.



Dennis Ombachi (right) shops for groceries that he prepares in his famous short culinary videos.



Dennis Ombachi is pictured on the set of his famous short culinary videos at his residence in Nairobi.



by depressive disorders, the World Health Organization said in 2017. "I had already walked the journey... I thought 'It's time to tell my story. And maybe I can help one or two people,'" he said. Today, Ombachi, who continues to see a therapist, plays down his struggle,

saying: "I've never been more happy and productive in my life."

Besides filming videos, he stages culinary events with food brands, supermarkets, embassies and others. His dream is to host Gordon Ramsay -- a man he

has never met but who he regards as his "mentor", celebrity chef Wolfgang Puck or former US president Barack Obama on his balcony. He also hopes to open a restaurant as a "legacy" for his children. "Not now. But it's the end goal." —AFP

In a first, 60-year-old wins Miss Universe Buenos Aires beauty Pageant

Alejandra Marisa Rodriguez, a 60-year-old Argentine, shattered stereotypes and carved her name into the history books by clinching the coveted title of Miss Universe for the province of Buenos Aires. Her victory, announced on Wednesday, not only celebrates her remarkable journey but also underscores the Miss Universe beauty pageant's dedication to embracing diversity and inclusivity.

Hailing from La Plata, the capital city of Ar-



Alejandra Marisa Rodriguez

gentina's Buenos Aires Province, Rodriguez is not just a beauty queen; she's a seasoned lawyer and journalist, showcasing the multifaceted nature of contemporary beauty. Her triumph stands as a testament to her resilience, breaking barriers and redefining conventional standards of beauty and age.

She becomes the first woman of her age cohort to clinch such a prestigious beauty accolade. Her elegance, grace, and infectious smile captivated both judges and audiences alike, resonating with individuals worldwide. Videos shared on social media reveal her determination as she prepares to represent Buenos Aires in the upcoming national selection for Miss Universe Argentina, slated for May 2024.

Should she emerge victorious, Rodriguez will hoist the Argentine flag on the global stage at the Miss Universe World contest, scheduled for September 28, 2024, in Mexico. "I am thrilled to

be representing this new paradigm in beauty pageants because we are inaugurating a new stage in which women are not only physical beauty but another set of values," she told the media after her win.

The Miss Universe organization last year announced that it would no longer have age limits for pageant contestants. Beginning this year, any woman over the age of 18 is eligible to compete. Previously, only women ages 18-28 could enter the pageant. Another beauty pageant contestant who is making waves is 47-year-old Haidy Cruz, who will represent Dominican Republic in Miss Universe 2024.

Sports

Azam, Afridi help Pakistan down New Zealand to draw T20I series

Series gave both teams a kickstart to their preparations for Twenty20 WCup

LAHORE: Skipper Babar Azam hit a solid half-century while spearhead Shaheen Shah Afridi grabbed four wickets as Pakistan overcame New Zealand by nine runs in the fifth and final Twenty20 international in Lahore on Saturday.

Azam's 44-ball 69 and Fakhar Zaman's 33-ball 43 took Pakistan to 178-5 in their 20 overs before Shaheen claimed 4-30 to restrict New Zealand to 169 in 19.2 overs, squaring the series at 2-2. But Pakistan's win only came in the final over with 12 needed as Josh Clarkson 38 not out threatened to pull off a heist, but two run outs in Mohammad Amir's over sealed the home win much to the delight of a full house at Gaddafi Stadium.

The first match of the series was abandoned while Pakistan clinched the second and New Zealand the third by identical seven-wicket margins—all in Rawalpindi. New Zealand took the fourth match, also in Lahore, by four runs. The series gave both teams a kickstart to their preparations for the Twenty20 World Cup to be held in the United States and the West Indies in June.

While Pakistan would be disappointed not to have won a series against a depleted New Zealand side missing a host of players due to Indian Premier League, unavailability and injuries, the visitors got a boost from their bench strength.

Shaheen gave Pakistan an ideal start by dismissing Tom Blundell for four in his first over—his 15th wicket in his opening over of a Twenty20 international—and 50th in all T20 matches. Tim Seifert put New Zealand back on track with an aggressive 33-ball 52 -- his ninth T20I half century containing sev-

en boundaries and two sixes.

He added 76 for the second wicket with skipper Micheal Bracewell (23) but from 81-1 New Zealand lost four wickets in the space of 25 balls for the addition of just 22 runs. Leg-spinner Usama Mir (2-21) had Seifert and Mark Chapman (12) while fellow spinner Shadab Khan accounted for Bracewell as New Zealand's chase was derailed.

Shaheen returned for a second spell to dismiss James Neesham (16), Zak Foulkes (nought) and Ish Sodhi (three) in successive overs. Azam said he used different combinations to test the squad strength ahead of the World Cup. "Look, throughout the series we tried different combinations and we wanted to see where our bench strength stands," said Azam. "There are many good signs but we won't be complacent and will focus on improvement which is crucial in international cricket."

Bracewell was delighted that his team came out all-square. "Pretty fair reflection of the series, pretty happy with coming over here and learning how to play in these conditions," said Bracewell who captained New Zealand for the first time. "Credit to Pakistan, they played really well today."

Earlier, Azam saw his opening partner Saim Ayub fall in the second over for just one but that did not deter him as he added 73 for the second wicket with Usman Khan who made a brisk 24-ball 31.

Azam hit six boundaries and two sixes in his 34th T20I half-century before he was bowled by pacer Ben Sears in the 15th over. Zaman hit four boundaries and a six before he was smartly caught by Chapman on the boundary off Foulkes as Pakistan



LAHORE: Pakistan's captain Babar Azam (R) and New Zealand's captain Michael Bracewell pose with the trophy after draw T20I series at the end of fifth and last Twenty20 international cricket match between Pakistan and New Zealand at the Gaddafi Cricket Stadium in Lahore. — AFP

managed 55 in the last five overs.

Shadab Khan hit a six and a four in his five-ball 15 not out. New Zealand made three changes as

they brought back Seifert, Cole McConchie and Foulkes while pace spearhead Shaheen returned for the home team. — AFP

Al-Awadhi wins seventh round of Equestrian Federation League

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Masayel Club and National Show-jumping team rider Abdullah Al-Awadhi won the title of the seventh round of Kuwait Equestrian Federation League that was held at Kuwait Riding Center in Subhan area.

Al-Awadhi entered a differentiation run during the ninth heat which is the grand prize event at the height of 145 cm, along with riders Ghazi Al-Jraawi and Madhi Al-Khamis without faults in 37.13 seconds. Ali Al-Kharafi was fourth, followed by Enaz Al-Enaz and Fawaz Al-Subaia.

The awards were given to the winners by Zain's Telecommunications corporate relations department manager Hamad Al-Musaibeh. Rider Al-Awadhi was happy with his win, adding that the horse he rode was young, as he is pre-



Kuwait's national showjumping team

paring it for the next season.

Meanwhile in the 8th heat at the height of 135 cm rider Ali Jasim Al-Kharafi was first, while rid-

er Hussein Al-Kharafi won the seventh heat at 125 cm and Abdulaziz Al-Athains won the sixth heat at 115 cm.

Anderson won the women's 400 in 52.48 seconds, edging Ashley Williams by .22 of a second. American Jada Griffin was third in 52.92, edging Tovea Jenkins by .04 to deny Jamaica a podium sweep.

Powered by a strong anchor leg from Sandy Dawson, Jamaica won the men's 4x100 relay in 39.59 seconds with Ghana second in 39.71. Spain, anchored by Maribel Perez, edged Jamaica for the women's 4x100 relay title in 43.97 to 44.11 for the Caribbean squad.

Anchor runner Okar Elkhatib ran a 45.27 final leg to rally Portugal to victory in the men's 4x400 relay in 3:05.97 with Spain second in 3:06.68 and Jamaica third in 3:07.54.

Kenya's Festus Lagat won the men's 800 in 1:46.76 with Spain's Mario Garcia Romo second in 1:47.18 and Jamaica's Navasky Anderson third in 1:47.58.

Kenya's Dorcus Ewoi won the women's 800 in 2:02.49, defeating 2022 world indoor cham-

pion Aje Wilson of the United States by .39 of a second. Vashti Cunningham, a 14-time US high jump champion, won her specialty over compatriot Sanaa Barnes on fewer misses after both cleared 1.84m.

Cunningham, 26, hopes to make her third Olympic start in Paris after placing sixth at Tokyo. American Yared Nuguse won the men's mile in 3:51.06, edging Australian Oliver Hoare, reigning Commonwealth Games 1,500m champion, by .22 of a second.

Reigning Millrose Games mile champion Nuguse missed the Tokyo Olympics in the 1,500 due to a quad injury but was second in last month's world indoors at 3,000. American Kyle Rollins won the men's high jump by clearing 2.23m with Germany's Jonas Wagner second at 2.20.

American Sage Huerta Klecker won the women's 1,500 in 4:07.10, edging compatriot Helen Schlachtenhaufen by .63 of a second with Japan's Nozomi Tanaka third in 4:08.32. — AFP

Kirsten, Gillespie named as cricket coaches for Pakistan

LAHORE: Pakistan Sunday announced former South African opener Gary Kirsten and ex-Australian paceman Jason Gillespie as head coaches for different formats ahead of the T20 World Cup in June this year.

World Cup-winning coach Kirsten will take over the white-ball teams while Gillespie will look after the Test side on a two-year contract—the first time Pakistan has employed separate coaches for different formats. "Both Kirsten and Gillespie are famous and experienced coaches and their appointment confirms the trust the international community has in our team," Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Mohsin Naqvi told reporters in Lahore.

Kirsten played 101 Tests and 185 one-day internationals for South Africa between 1993 to 2004 before coaching India to win the 50-over World Cup in 2011. The 56-year-old is currently coaching Gujarat Titans in the Indian Premier League.

He will join the team on the England tour next month where Pakistan will play four Twenty20 internationals. "Understanding the current state of the team and charting a path towards our desired goals is paramount," said Kirsten.

"Winning global events, while challenging, remains a significant objective. "Whether it's the upcoming tournament in June or events in the future, achieving success in these competitions would be a remarkable feat." Gillespie, 49, played 71 Tests and 97 one-day internationals in a glorious career for Australia.

He coached Yorkshire to win the English County Championship in 2014 and 2015. "Leading the Pakistan cricket team is a big achievement for any coach, given its rich legacy and passionate fan base," said Gillespie. "I understand there will be expectation and that comes with the role. All I can do is to take it in my stride and I would not have taken on the job if I did not think I could deal with it." Former Pakistan all-rounder Azhar Mahmood will serve as assistant coach to both Kirsten and Gillespie. — AFP

and put on 114 runs with opening partner Abishek Porel, who hit 36. Leg-spinner Piyush Chawla finally denied Fraser-McGurk, who went unsold in the auction before Delhi signed him as injury replacement, his century.

Samson power

There was no stopping Delhi as Shai Hope hit a 17-ball 41, skipper Rishabh Pant made 29 off 19 deliveries and Tristan Stubbs smashed an unbeaten 48 to pummel the opposition attack. Mumbai, who have endured a tough season after Hardik Pandya replaced veteran Rohit Sharma as captain and has been booed across a number of venues, lost regular wickets.

Pandya hit 46 off 16 balls but it was a 70-run partnership between Varma and Tim David, who hit 37 off 17 balls that raised Mumbai's hopes, but Delhi kept calm. David fell lbw to Mukesh Kumar after a four and a six and Varma was run out at the start of the final over as Mumbai remained ninth. Kumar and fellow medium-pace bowler and impact substitute Rasikh Salam took three wickets each.

In the evening match in Lucknow, the hosts posted 196-5 courtesy a 76 by skipper KL Rahul and his 115 run stand with Deepak Hooda, who made 50. Lucknow lost two early wickets after New Zealand's left-arm quick Trent Boult bowled Quinton de Kock for eight and Sandeep Sharma bowled Marcus Stoinis for a duck.

Rahul and Hooda steadied the innings and then hit back but the effort was not enough as Dhruv Jurel, who hit 52, and Samson steered table-toppers Rajasthan home with one over to spare for their eighth win in nine matches. Top four teams will qualify for the play-offs. — AFP

Jamaicans sweep 400 crowns, win men's Penn Relays title

WASHINGTON: Karayme Bartley and Leah Anderson gave Jamaica a sweep of 400-meter titles on Saturday as global talent spread out the victories at the 128th Penn Relays.

The Jamaicans also won the men's 4x100m relay and reached the podium in two other elite Paris Olympic tuneup relays in the meeting at Philadelphia's Franklin Field.

Bartley, a Tokyo Olympic relay runner, won the men's 400 in 46.43, holding off a late charge by reigning US 400m champion and Olympic and world 4x400 relay gold medalist Bryce Deadmon to win by .07 of a second.

Steele stays strong to win maiden LIV Golf title in Adelaide

ADELAIDE: Former PGA Tour stalwart Brendan Steele captured his maiden LIV Golf title Sunday in Adelaide, keeping his cool to hold off a chasing pack led by Louis Oosthuizen and Jon Rahm to win by a shot. The 41-year-old American led overnight by one and after an early bogey refocused to reel off five straight birdies on the front nine in a four-under-par 68 to finish 54 holes at the Grange Golf Club at 18-under.

In front of bumper crowds and a carnival atmosphere, South Africa's 11-time European Tour winner and 2010 British Open champion Oosthuizen came second after seven birdies in his 65. Spanish two-time major winner Rahm was among a group of five to finish a further shot back after firing 64 to bank his sixth consecutive top-10 finish since defecting to the Saudi-backed league this year.

Alongside him tied for third were Charl Schwartzel, Andy Ogletree, Joaquin Niemann and Dean Burmester, who won the previous event in Miami. It was Steele's first LIV win since joining Phil Mickelson's "Hyflyers" team last year following 12 years on the PGA Tour that garnered three titles.

He credited Mickelson for a breakthrough victory that earned him US\$4 million. "I had a good talk with him yesterday, sat just the two of us for about an hour and he was telling me there is no reason I can't be one of the best players in the world," he said.

"He went through every part of my game and said 'you just need to start believing in it.' "And I thought



ADELAIDE: Brendan Steele of the US celebrates with the winner's trophy after the final round of LIV Golf Adelaide at the Grange Golf Club in Adelaide on April 28, 2024. — AFP

okay, if one of the best players ever in the game is telling me that, I better start believing it."

Steele began with a one stroke advantage, but dropped a shot on the third as Oosthuizen picked up three birdies in his opening five holes for a four-way share of the lead. Undeterred, Steele bounced back by rolling in five straight birdies between the fifth and ninth holes to rebuild a three-shot buffer at the turn. But another bogey at the 11th opened the door again and Jinichiro Kozuma and Ogletree jumped through with well-taken birdies to narrow the gap to one. — AFP

Fraser-McGurk shines as Delhi down Mumbai in IPL

NEW DELHI: Australia's Jake Fraser-McGurk smashed 84 off 27 deliveries to fire Delhi Capitals to 257-4 and a 10-run win over Mumbai Indians in another IPL high-scorer on Saturday. In the second match of the day, skipper Sanju Samson hit an unbeaten 71 as Rajasthan Royals all but confirmed their play-off spot with a seven-wicket hammering of Lucknow Super Giants.

Delhi, at their home Arun Jaitley Stadium, posted their best-ever total in the T20 tournament, a day after Punjab Kings chased down a record target of 262. Delhi's previous best was 231-4 in 2011 against Punjab Kings. This edition Sunrisers Hyderabad have twice smashed IPL records with totals of 277 and 287.

Bowlers kept five-time champions Mumbai down to 247-9 despite a valiant 32-ball 63 by Tilak Varma as Delhi boosted their play-off hopes with five wins in 10 matches. Fraser-McGurk, a 22-year-old Australian batsman who has taken his IPL debut season by storm with three half-centuries in five matches, started with two fours and a six off England pace bowler Luke Wood in a 19-run first over.

"That's my role, go out there and score as many as I can and get the team off to a nice start," Fraser-McGurk, who has a strike-rate of 237.50, said after his blitz. The Australian kept up the charge to reach his fifty in 15 balls with a hit over the fence

Sports

Depleted AC Milan hold Juve to close in on Champions League

Milan are 15 points ahead of Lazio who are sixth after their 1-0 win over Verona

TURIN: AC Milan took another step towards Champions League qualification after Saturday's goalless draw at Serie A rivals Juventus. Stefano Pioli is close to securing Milan, in second, a spot in Europe's top club competition in what will almost certainly be his final season at the club.

Pioli is reportedly set to be replaced by Julen Lopetegui after a campaign which has ended in disaster, with a Europa League exit at the hands of Roma and a humiliating city derby defeat which gave the league title to Inter Milan. However, with a top-five finish guaranteeing Champions League football Milan are 15 points ahead Lazio who are sixth after their 1-0 win over Verona with four rounds of the season remaining after this weekend.

Atalanta, who have six games left to play starting with Sunday's home clash with struggling Empoli, are a further point back in seventh. "I'm pleased with what the players showed today... they kept fighting to the end," said Pioli to DAZN after his team failed to register a single shot on target.

"I'm happy with the spirit. They carried out our plan with a great attitude in a difficult period in the season for us." A place in the Champions League basically assured before kick-off, Milan had little to play for and a host of absences following a stormy end to their painful loss in Monday's derby with Inter.

Pioli had a threadbare defence with Theo Hernandez, Davide Calabria—both sent off late on in the derby—and Fikayo Tomori all suspended, while Simon Kjær and Pierre Kalulu were also unavailable. To make matters worse Milan then lost France goalkeeper Mike Maignan to a hamstring problem suffered during the pre-match warm-up.

"A lot of the noise has been caused by Inter win-

ning the league. If it had been Juve or Napoli there wouldn't have been so much chaos," said replacement goalkeeper Marco Sportiello, who ended up being crucial to Milan getting a point. "The Europa League was the biggest disappointment, but we've had a good league season. We've had so many injuries... but we go again and now we're going to try and secure second place."

Under-fire Allegri

Juve meanwhile are in dismal form, winning two league matches since the end of January, and even with Milan severely depleted Massimiliano Allegri's team struggled to create clear chances. The best opportunities of the game nonetheless came for the hosts.

Five minutes after the break Sportiello kept out Filip Kostic's snap shot and then pounced to stop Danilo scoring on the rebound. And as Juve pushed in the final minutes Adrien Rabiot looked on in horror as he was denied a certain goal by Malick Thiaw's goalline block after another important Sportiello stop.

However the draw means Bologna can move level on 65 points with third-placed Juve with a home win over Udinese which would put more pressure on under-fire Allegri. "Right now all I'm thinking about is how we end the season," said Allegri of his future at Juve.

"In my experience nothing is guaranteed. All I can say is that I'm happy with the effort that the boys have put in. "We had two objectives at the start of the season (a trophy and Champions League qualification) and we're close to both of them."

Earlier Matteo Pessina's 96th minute penalty



TURIN: AC Milan's Portuguese forward #10 Rafael Leao fights for the ball with Juventus' Italian defender #04 Federico Gatti (L) during the Italian Serie A football match between Juventus and AC Milan at The Allianz Stadium in Turin.— AFP

earned mid-table Monza a 1-1 draw at Lecce, who were denied a potentially huge win for their survival bid in an incident-packed finale. A packed Stadio Via del Mare erupted when Nikola Krstovic smashed home what delirious fans thought was the winner in the second minute of stoppage time.

But the celebrations were still bubbling in the stands when Lorenzo Venuti was penalised for handball and Pessina casually slotted home the leveller. Lecce should still be safe from the drop as they sit eight points above the relegation zone in 13th position.— AFP

Atletico, Girona close in on top four Liga finish

BARCELONA: Atletico Madrid earned a vital 3-1 win over Athletic Bilbao on Saturday in La Liga, striking a significant blow in the race to secure Champions League football. Girona secured a 2-0 victory at Las Palmas which virtually guarantees they will play in the competition for the first time next season, after Athletic's defeat.

Diego Simeone's Atletico, fourth, moved six points clear of their Basque opponents, fifth, with five matches remaining. After European elimination and then a woeful loss at Alaves last weekend in the top flight, Atletico got back on track with strikes from Rodrigo De Paul and Angel Correa, as well as an Unai Simon own goal.

Nico Williams had levelled De Paul's opener in the first half for Athletic, minutes after suffering alleged racial abuse as he went to take a corner. Defeat leaves Copa del Rey winners Athletic unlikely to return to the Champions League for the first time in a decade.

"We were really excited for this game, we went for the three points but it was not to be," Nico Williams told DAZN. "It's been a good season and we'll keep going until the end." The Spain winger explained he heard "monkey noises" from one area of Atletico's stadium. "There weren't many of them. There are



MADRID: Atletico Madrid's Argentinian midfielder #05 Rodrigo De Paul vies with Athletic Bilbao's Spanish midfielder #24 Benat Prados during the Spanish league football match between Club Atletico de Madrid and Athletic Club Bilbao at the Metropolitan stadium in Madrid.— AFP

stupid people everywhere... I hope this changes bit by bit," he added. Atletico fans greeted visiting Los Leones forward Raul Garcia, retiring at the end of the season, with a tribute. He was part of their squad that won La Liga in 2014.

Inaki Williams hammered an early effort off target for the visitors before Atletico took the lead against the team which has beaten them three times already this season. A poor clearance fell to the feet of De Paul on the edge of the box and the Argentine fired home with the help of a significant deflection

off Ruiz de Galarreta.

The game was paused momentarily after the apparent racial abuse was levelled at Nico Williams when he went to take a corner in the 36th minute. Moments before half-time, he responded with a goal, finishing calmly after Antoine Griezmann gave the ball away to spark an Athletic counter-attack.

Nico Williams celebrated by tapping his arm in celebration, an apparent reference to his skin colour after the abuse. "(The celebration) was with a bit of anger, it's not normal to be insulted for the

colour of your skin," he added.

Atletico pulled back ahead in the second half when Correa controlled Koke's chipped ball over the top well and then stayed composed to beat Simon. The hosts made the game safe when Samuel Lino hit the post with a low shot and the ball ricocheted in via the back of goalkeeper Simon. "We'll try to continue in the same way, game by game, as the season is not over," pledged Atletico coach Simeone.

'Make history'

Earlier David Lopez and top scorer Artem Dovybyk's goals helped Catalan minnows Girona climb provisionally second, above champions Barcelona. Girona trail league leaders Real Madrid by 13 points, having fallen away in the title race, but now are the same distance ahead of Athletic.

Michel Sanchez's side can secure Champions League qualification if they beat illustrious neighbours Barca next weekend at home, among other scenarios. Remarkably Girona are only in the Spanish top flight for the fourth season in the club's history.

"(Reaching the Champions League would be historic) not just for the club, but for Spanish football in general," said Lopez. "What we are doing is insane... we're trying to enjoy it, to do the best we can to make history." Girona goalkeeper Paulo Gazzaniga saved an early penalty from Sandro Ramirez before his team took the lead after 26 minutes following a penalty of their own for a foul on Eric Garcia.— AFP



Sheikh Khalid Al-Bader Al-Sabah

Sheikh Khalid Al-Bader re-elected president of Asia Aquatics

KUWAIT: Sheikh Khalid Al-Bader Al-Sabah was re-elected President of Asia Aquatics Federation on Friday during the general assembly that was held in Bangkok, Thailand. All those in attendance were unanimous in agreement that Sheikh Khalid Bader Al-Sabah should remain President of Asia Aquatics due to his major efforts that took the Asia Aquatic to new levels in Asia.

Sheikh Khalid congratulated the political leadership of Kuwait headed by HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Kuwait people for winning this post, expressed pleasure towards the confidence of the general assembly in him. He said his re-election affirms the major status of Kuwait's sports in Asia, and that Kuwait youth are able to present the honorable example through their sincere efforts. Al-Bader thanked all those who gave him the confidence, adding that he will work hard to fulfill this confidence and present all that improves the aquatic games to take it to new heights in the coming period.

Barcelona reach Women's Champions League final

LONDON: Holders Barcelona booked their place in the Women's Champions League final with a controversial 2-0 win against Chelsea in the semi-final second leg on Saturday. Trailing 1-0 from the first leg, Jonatan Giraldez's side took the lead through Ballon d'Or winner Aitana Bonmati at Stamford Bridge.

Chelsea's Kadeisha Buchanan was sent off in the second half for a contentious second booking. And Fridolina Rolfö wrapped up Barcelona's 2-1 aggregate victory with a debatable penalty. In the final in Bilbao on May 25, Barca will face either Paris Saint-Germain or Lyon, who meet in the second leg of their semi-final on Sunday with Lyon holding a 3-2 lead. It will be Barca's fourth successive final berth as they look to lift the trophy for the third time. "We are very happy. We deserved the victory. The first

leg we were not better than the opponent. Today we created more clear chances," Giraldez said.

"The connection with the players is amazing. I'm proud of them. I'm really happy to get another final. It's special." Chelsea's first-leg victory last week is the only defeat Barca have suffered this season, ending the club's five-year unbeaten record on home turf.

But Blues boss Emma Hayes, who leaves to take charge of the USA women's national team at the of this season, said Chelsea would have to produce a perfect display to overcome "the best team in the world" again in the rematch. Chelsea were unable to rise to the challenge and their wait for a first Champions League crown goes on.

They have now lost to Barca in successive Champions League semi-finals after being beaten by the Spanish club in the 2021 final. In another sign of the hugely increased popularity of the women's game in England, Stamford Bridge was sold out to its 39,398 capacity for the first time for a female fixture. But the Chelsea fans were destined to go home disappointed, with Bonmati firing an early

warning shot that Hannah Hampton dived to her right to save. It was a threat that Chelsea failed to heed and Bonmati punished them to open the scoring in the 25th minute.

Conceding possession in sloppy fashion, Chelsea were unable to stop Bonmati, who cleverly side-stepped Niamh Charles on the edge of the area before unloading a fierce strike that deflected in off Buchanan.

Hayes' side should have levelled when Sjoekie Nusken lunged for a shot that cannoned back off the post early in the second half. To her intense frustration, Buchanan received her marching orders in the 59th minute after a challenge on Patri Guijarro that appeared to take the ball but was deemed worthy of a second yellow card.

Barca delivered the knockout blow in the 75th minute when Bonmati was fouled in the area by Jess Carter and Ashley Lawrence. Once again Chelsea complained vehemently but Rolfö stepped up to send Hampton the wrong way with a composed spot-kick as Barca wrapped up another final appearance.— AFP

Today's matches	
SPANISH LEAGUE	
FC Barcelona v Valencia C.F	22:00
beIN Sports	
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE SERIE A	
Genoa CFC v Cagliari Calcio	21:45
beIN Sports	

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804

Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Hospitals

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

Change of Name

I, Aboobakkar Izan Iqbal Patte, holder of Indian Passport No. U0610168 having permanent address Karnataka, India 574231 residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (Given name) Aboobaker Izaan and (Surname) Iqbal. (#5199, 29/04/2024)

Emergency call 112

Arsenal survive archrivals Spurs fightback to boost title charge

Bournemouth beat Brighton 3-0



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's Dutch defender #37 Micky van de Ven (2nd R) heads the ball during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Arsenal at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London. — AFP

LONDON: Arsenal held on for a pulsating 3-2 win over arch rivals Tottenham in the north London derby to keep their grip on top spot in the Premier League on Sunday. Bidding to stay one step ahead of Manchester City in the title race, Mikel Arteta's side silenced the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium with a three-goal blast before half-time.

Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg's own goal put Arsenal ahead before Bukayo Saka and Kai Havertz netted to leave Arsenal in complete control. Cristian Romero and Son Heung-min struck for Tottenham after the interval to set up a nervous finish, but Arsenal clung on by their finger tips.

Arsenal sit four points clear of second placed City, who face struggling Nottingham Forest later on Sunday in the first of two games in hand over the Gunners. City will clinch an unprecedented fourth successive English title if they win their last five matches. But Arsenal are doing all they can to make Pep Guardiola's team sweat as they try to make amends for blowing an eight-point lead in last season's title race.

After the despair of a damaging home defeat against Aston Villa and a Champions League quarter-final exit to Bayern Munich, the Gunners have bounced back impressively.

Aware they have little margin for error with City chasing them, Arteta had called on his players to show their hunger for success and they responded to his challenge. Thrashing old foes Chelsea 5-0 on Tuesday was merely the appetizer ahead of the main course Arsenal served up for 3,000 of their jubilant fans packed into one corner of the stadium.

Arsenal famously won the league twice at Tottenham's old White Hart Lane stadium, in 1971 and 2004. The Gunners could not clinch silverware on enemy territory this time, but their fifth win in the last seven north London derbies kept them in the hunt to win the title for the first time in 20 years. Defeat was a bitter blow for fifth-placed Tottenham, who are seven points behind fourth-placed Aston Villa with two games in hand to keep alive their fading hopes of qualifying for the Champions League.

Playing for the first time since a 4-0 defeat at

Newcastle 15 days ago, Tottenham should have been fresher than an Arsenal team in action four times over that period. But it was Arsenal who emerged from the frenzied fray to snatch the lead thanks to a welcome gift from Hojbjerg.

Arsenal survive

Saka's corner curled into the six-yard box, where Hojbjerg tried to head clear in front of Arsenal's Takehiro Tomiyasu but instead diverted the ball into his own net.

Romero should have equalized when Arsenal keeper David Raya misjudged James Maddison's free-kick, allowing the defender to rise for a close-range header that he somehow guided against the post rather than into the empty net.

Mickey van de Ven thought he had drawn Tottenham level when he slammed home after Pedro Porro's shot deflected into his path, but VAR intervened to rule the centre-back was marginally offside.

Arteta's men celebrated the decision as though they had scored themselves and they were doing ex-

actly that in the 27th minute.

Havertz floated a superb long pass to Saka on the right flank and the winger drove at Ben Davies before cutting inside to beat Guglielmo Vicario with a clinical low strike from 12 yards.

Arsenal were ruthless in front of goal and Havertz grabbed their third with a well-worked corner routine in the 38th minute. As Tottenham adopted zone-marking positions, a group of Arsenal players including Havertz were unmarked as they made late runs into the area, giving the German space to finish off Rice's corner with a close-range header.

But Tottenham refused to throw in the towel and Romero reduced the deficit in the 64th minute, seizing on Raya's comically bad pass to fire home from the edge of the area.

Rice set up the needlessly tense finale for Arsenal with a rash foul on Davies, conceding a penalty that Son drilled past Raya in the 87th minute. In Sunday's other early kick-off, Bournemouth beat Brighton 3-0 through goals from Marcos Senesi, Enes Unai and Justin Kluivert. — AFP



WASHINGTON: Officials seen during the signing agreement.

Chile to host World Summer Olympics

WASHINGTON: The agreement of Chile hosting the World Summer Special Olympics games in 2027 was signed in the presence of 170 countries including Kuwait. The agreement was signed Friday in Washington DC at the premises of the Organization of American States (OAS).

The games will be held under the patronage of Chile's President Gabriel Boric. The signing was

attended by President of the Special Olympics Timothy Shriver, Secretary General of OAS Luis Almagro, Chile's Ambassador to OAS Sebastian Kraljevic and Chile's Sports Minister Jaime Pizarro Herrar.

It was announced that 6,000 athletes of both genders from over 170 countries will compete in 22 Olympic Games. More than 200 coaches and thousands of volunteers will participate. Middle East and North Africa will participate in the games specially those who made outstanding results during the latest games that were held in Berlin recently.

Milan beat 10-man Torino to continue Serie A title party

MILAN: Inter Milan celebrated the Serie A title in front of their home fans on Sunday with a straightforward 2-0 win over 10-man Torino which will be followed by a parade and city centre party. Hakan Calhanoglu's second-half double secured the three points at the San Siro, where on Monday Inter won their 20th league championship as the away team in a thrilling Milan derby.

The 75,000 fans present at Sunday's on-pitch procession will be able to follow their team around Milan as Inter go on an open-topped bus parade which will finish in front of thousands at the Italian city's iconic Piazza del Duomo.

Calhanoglu sealing a 28th league win of the season was appropriate as the Turkey captain has been key to Inter's charge to the title, becoming one of Europe's best deep-lying playmakers since being signed from AC Milan three years ago.

"I didn't think I would score twice today, play well in a packed stadium and enjoy it so much," said Calhanoglu to DAZN. The 30-year-old is a hate figure for Milan supporters but he has rubbed his former fans' faces in it this season. With Euro 2024 looming on the horizon it has probably been the best of his career. His brace, a fine first-time strike in the 56th minute and a penalty four minutes later, took his all-competitions goal tally for the season to 15 and extended Inter's lead on second-placed Milan to a whopping 19 points.

Calhanoglu has not scored that many goals in a single season since netting 17 as a teenager playing

for Karlsruher in Germany's third tier. "Today is a wonderful day, I don't want to talk about that other lot (AC Milan). Today I'm going to have fun," added Calhanoglu. Inter were however helped by Adrián Tameze being sent off in the 49th minute for bundling over Henrikh Mkhitaryan, referee Maria Sole Ferrieri Caputi overturning her original decision to book Tameze after a check at the pitch-side monitor.

And Ferrieri Caputi had a much easier decision to make when Matteo Lovato brought down Marcus Thuram, allowing Calhanoglu to slam home from the spot and turn attentions to the post-match festivities.

Champions League scrap

Sunday is also a big day in the fight for a spot in the Champions League as Bologna follow Inter with a home clash against Udinese which could ensure European football for the first time in 22 years. Bologna, whose last continental adventure was a run to the 2002 Intertoto Cup final, will be guaranteed at least the Conference League if they beat Udinese who are four points from safety.

Thiago Motta's side have loftier aims though and a home success on Sunday will move Bologna level on 65 points with third-placed Juventus and practically guarantee a first-ever spot in the modern Champions League. Bologna, who played one round in the old European Cup in 1964, are seven points ahead of sixth-placed Lazio who beat Verona on Saturday evening. Currently in the final Champions League spot are Roma, in fifth and three points in front of Lazio ahead of their huge fixture at fierce rivals and outgoing champions Napoli.

Daniele De Rossi's Roma have a fiendishly tough end to the season with the first leg of their Europa League semi-final with German champions Bayer Leverkusen coming up on Thursday and clashes with Juve and Atalanta among their last five league fixtures of the campaign. — AFP