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## Amir honors top teachers, schools

Education officials hail Sheikh Mishal's support • Amir heads to Egypt on state visit



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attends an honoring ceremony for distinguished schools and teachers at the late Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Theater in Abdullah Al-Salem University in Shuwaikh on April 29, 2024. — KUNA photos (See Page 3)

### Blinken promotes Gulf defense in sign to Zionists and Iran



RIYADH: (From left) Kuwait's Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya stands alongside Qatar's Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed Al-Thani and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken for a group photo on April 29, 2024. — AFP

RIYADH: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called Monday for tighter defense integration among Gulf Arabs in response to Iran, part of efforts to encourage moderation by the Zionist entity by dangling the prospect of better ties with the region. Blinken was starting his seventh visit to the Middle East since the Zionist entity's relentless military campaign in the Gaza Strip that has brought growing public pressure for a ceasefire.

It is Blinken's first trip to the region since the long shadow war between the Zionist entity and Iran broke out into the open, which included the Islamic republic firing missiles and armed drones at military sites in the Zionist entity. "This attack highlights the acute and growing threat from Iran but also the imperative that we work together on integrated defense," Blinken told Gulf Cooperation Council ministers meeting in Riyadh. Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya chaired Kuwait's delegation in the joint ministerial meeting.

Blinken said the United States would hold talks in the coming weeks with the six-nation bloc on integrating air and missile defense and

Continued on Page 6

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Monday sponsored and attended the honoring ceremony for distinguished schools and teachers, marking World Teachers' Day, at the late Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Theater in Abdullah Al-Salem University in Shuwaikh. HH the Amir arrived at the venue of the ceremony in a motorcade to a warm welcome by Minister of Education and Scientific Research Dr Adel Al-Adwani and the organizers of the event.

The ceremony was attended by Prime Minister-designate Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, HH the caretaker Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Mohammad

Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Head of the Supreme Judicial Council Dr Adel Majed Bouresli and senior state officials. The ceremony began with the national anthem and Quranic recitations.

Adwani then addressed a speech welcoming HH the Amir, lauding his substantial support for the educational sector and pledging to press ahead with the process of overhauling a sector, its systems and curricula. The education minister underscored the key role of the teacher for generations' development and implanting good ethics and values in the students' conscience.

Mohammad Nasser Al-Barrak addressed the

attendees with a statement on behalf of the teachers, warmly greeting HH the Amir and his gracious attendance of the ceremony, thanking him for his special care for the teachers and pledging to offer all available expertise for Kuwait's progress and promotion. He also thanked the minister and department leaders for the good management of the educational sector. HH the Amir awarded the attending teachers and representatives of the excellent schools before departing the venue. HH the Amir is scheduled to depart Kuwait for Egypt on Tuesday on a state visit. — KUNA

### Zain supports diversification in Kuwaiti market

KUWAIT: Zain sponsored the UAE Companies Investment Meet, titled Unlocking Kuwait's Potential, organized by the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in Kuwait. The event ran for two consecutive days at the Regency Hotel and was joined by 20 UAE-based companies from across the most vibrant industries.

The event was attended by the representative of HH the Prime Minister, Minister of Commerce and Industry Abdullah Al-Jouan, UAE Minister of State for Foreign Trade Dr Thani bin Ahmad Al-Zeyoudi, UAE Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Matar Al-Neyadi, Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, along with top executives and leaders from both the public and private sectors. (See Page 8)



KUWAIT: UAE Minister of State for Foreign Trade Dr Thani Al-Zeyoudi and Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi with top leaders at the event.

### KU holds Gaza sit-in, hails US campus protests

By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

KUWAIT: Kuwait University organized a sit-in protest on Monday in solidarity with Gaza, attended by faculty members and students, at the College of Science on the Sabah Al-Salem campus in Shadadiya. Professor of English at Kuwait University Dr Ibtihal Al-Khatib expressed her stance on Gaza. "Tell me your position on Gaza and I'll tell you who you are. In this fast-moving world where the truth cannot be concealed, as we are witnessing events in Gaza on live TV, there isn't an excuse for slacking," she stressed.

Dr Khatib emphasized the innate instinct of the human race for survival, defending against harm, particularly the protection of young ones for continuity and survival. She stressed that ignoring the ongoing atrocities in Gaza is a regression not only against the people of Palestine, but also against natural human inclinations and historical values, citing past instances of oppression such as the Nazi Holocaust.

"Gaza is still being exterminated; kids are still being buried under the rubble. What is left of schools and hospitals are still undergoing bombardment," Dr Khatib noted. She pointed out the number of children killed in Gaza over the past four months exceeds those killed in the past four years in all wars worldwide.

Asserting that silence about Gaza's plight is a grave sin, she stated that silence and indifference amount to

Continued on Page 6



KUWAIT: Faculty members and students of Kuwait University carry placards during a protest in solidarity with Gaza and Palestine on April 29, 2024. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 2)





# KU demands end to Gaza massacres



KUWAIT: Kuwait University organized a sit-in protest on Monday in solidarity with Gaza, attended by teaching faculty members at the College of Science on the Sabah Al-Salem campus in Shadadiya. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Turkish book section inaugurated at Kuwait National Library

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: In a collaborative effort between the Turkish Embassy and the Kuwait National Library, a special ceremony took place on Monday 29th of April, 2024 to inaugurate the Turkish Book Section within the library. The event was attended by the Library Director General, Siham Al-Azmi, ambassadors, members of the diplomatic corps, academics, and media representatives etc. The Turkish Embassy donated 250 books to the library, covering a wide array of topics such as literature, history, art, and science.

During the ceremony, the Ambassador of Turkey to Kuwait, Tuba Nur Sonmez, expressed her optimism for the future growth, and thanked those who are dedicated to fostering the cultural exchange. She also shed light on the significance of the occasion, coinciding with the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Turkey and Kuwait. "Events like this further solidify the enduring friendship and cooperation between the two nations, transcending geographical boundaries," she emphasized.

In her address to the guests, Ambassador Sonmez gave insights about Turkey's renowned National Library, the Millet Kutuphanesi - a symbol of the country's commitment to knowledge, education, and cultural preservation. Spanning an impressive 125,000 square meters, the Millet Kutuphanesi stands as Turkey's largest and most frequented library, housing rare manuscripts, historical documents, and contemporary works.

She added: "The Millet Kutuphanesi is a bustling center of intellectual activity, welcoming scholars, researchers, students, and inquisitive minds. President Erdogan's vision for the library was to create a space that fosters dialogue, understanding, and creativity, echoing Turkey's dedication to heritage preservation while embracing global exchange of ideas. The inauguration of the

take the second relief trip due to the popular support the first flight received from Kuwaiti, Gulf, and Arab people and the calls for repeating such experiences.

During the first flight, the Kuwaiti medical team managed to perform nearly 184 surgical operations, in addition to more than 1,000 medical examinations for wounded and sick people in hospitals in the Gaza Strip, Al-Nouri added. The team also signed an agreement to employ 313 Palestinian medical staff, in addition to opening a medical point that will benefit 4,000 affected people in the Gaza Strip, in addition to other food and shelter charitable projects.

### Humanitarian airdrops

Meanwhile, the US Central Command (Centcom) announced that it has conducted a joint airdrop with Jordan in northern Gaza to provide relief aid to Palestinians affected by the Zionist occupation's aggression. Centcom said in a press release late Sunday that the food provided by Jordan and four US C-130 aircraft included 25,000 meals in addition to 13,080 other food supplies. The statement added that the total number of airdrops rose to 1,110 tons so far as part of efforts to provide life-saving assistance to Palestinians in Gaza. The airdrop operations were part of the ongoing efforts to get more aid into the enclave. The US administration has repeatedly said that it wants more humanitarian aid in Gaza, but the Zionist occupation has been blocking aid from reaching the Palestinians, according to the United Nations. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Ambassador Tuba Nur Sonmez inaugurates the Turkish Book Section. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Turkish Book Section at the Kuwait National Library marks a significant moment in cultural exchange and mutual understanding. This new section serves as a gateway for readers to explore the richness of Turkish literature, history, and ideas, fostering dialogue and highlighting the universal nature of human expression."

Ambassador Sonmez concluded her address on a hopeful note, expressing her desire for the Turkish Book Section to ignite curiosity, spark conversations,

and further strengthen the bonds of friendship between Turkey and Kuwait. She emphasized the transformative power of the written word in transcending borders and uniting hearts.

The inauguration of the Turkish Book Collection represents a celebration of literature, diplomacy, and shared aspirations, adding another chapter to the ongoing story of Turkey and Kuwait, one that continues to unfold through the pages of books.

## 2nd Kuwait medical team heads to Gaza

KUWAIT: Kuwait Society for Relief (KSR) announced Monday the departure of the second medical relief team, consisting of 14 physicians and consultants from different medical and surgical fields, to Al-Arish Airport, heading to Gaza's hospitals. In a statement to KUNA, Head of the Medical Team Dr. Ibrahim Al-Saleh confirmed that sending the Kuwaiti Relief Medical Team to the Gaza Strip came within the framework of a donation campaign launched by Kuwait Relief and is still ongoing.

The team left with six tons of basic and necessary medical supplies and equipment to help the health system in the Gaza Strip and provide medical care and medications, especially for some critical cases and chronic diseases, he added. The team will perform important surgical operations in various surgical specialties in addition to implementing a number of other relief projects, most notably food and shelter projects, Dr. Al-Saleh noted.

He praised the efforts of the official and humanitarian agencies in Kuwait, Egypt, and Palestine and their Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs. In a similar statement, Treasurer of KSR Jamal Al-Nouri said in a similar statement to KUNA that the society decided to under-



KUWAIT: Kuwait Society for Relief announced the departure of the second medical relief team, consisting of 14 physicians and consultants from different medical and surgical fields. — KUNA photos



KUWAIT: Deputy Chief of the National Guard visits the Kabd relay station which is guarded by the National Guard. — KUNA photos

## Leadership supports National Guard

KUWAIT: Deputy Chief of the National Guard, Sheikh Faisal Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, affirmed Monday that Kuwait's leadership provides full support to the Kuwait National Guards for the role they play in the defense and security of the country. According to a press release issued by the National Guard, he said during a visit to the Kabd relay station, which is guarded by the National Guard, that the role of the squad, in cooperation with military police and fire forces, is vital for maintaining the stability of the homeland.

Sheikh Faisal extended greetings to the National Guard Chief, His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, wishing them success in their duties. The Deputy Chief praised the efforts of the National Guards in securing vital locations and invigorated them to be on full alert and committed to their obligations, thus giving an example model.

### Jahez exercises

Meanwhile, the Assistant for Administrative Support in the National Guard, Major General Engineer Essam Nayef, confirmed on Sunday that the Jahez exercise, which is carried out by the administrative support units,

aims to measure readiness, provide support to state agencies to the fullest, and deal with any emergency.

Major General Nayef conveyed to the participants the greetings and appreciation of the Guard Command. The exercise is the first of its kind to carry out the tasks entrusted to them in providing support to state agencies. It also shows the extent to which the affiliates benefited during the period of coexistence and training with ministries and state institutions. He called on the participants in the exercise to cooperate and adhere to the procedures for security and safety, praising the great support provided by the National Guard Command to the units. — KUNA



Kuwait National Guard holds Jahez exercise.





# Amir attends honoring ceremony for distinguished schools, teachers



**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sponsored and attended the scheduled honoring ceremony for distinguished schools and teachers on Monday, marking World Teachers' Day at the Theater of the late Sheikh Diwan Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Abdullah Al-Salem University in the district of Shuwaikh. His Highness the Amir arrived at the venue of the ceremony in a motorcade to a warm welcome by Minister of Education, Higher Education, and Scientific Research Dr Adel Mohammad Al-Adwani and the organizers of the event. — KUNA photos



## Kuwait, Egypt historic relations crowned by Amir's visit

**KUWAIT:** The official visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Egypt, due on Tuesday, is a culmination of the historic ties and joint coordination between the two countries. The visit of His Highness the Amir to Egypt is the first since His Highness assumed the office of the state last December. He paid other visits as the Crown Prince, representing His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, on October 21, 2023, at the Cairo Peace Summit, on November 7, 2022, at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and at the second edition of the Green Middle East Initiative Summit.

On December 17, 2023, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi visited Kuwait, where he offered his condolences on the death of the late Amir, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He met with His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah during his visit and wished His Highness success in leading Kuwait to a more prosperous and promising future. This visit was preceded by an official visit by the Egyptian President to Kuwait on February 22, 2022, where he met the late Amir and discussed several regional and international issues of common interest and ways to boost cooperation

## Egypt-Kuwait ties characterized by historical bonds

**CAIRO:** Kuwait's Ambassador to Egypt, Ghanim Al-Ghanim, underscored the significance of the upcoming historic visit by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Egypt on Tuesday, during which he would meet with President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi. Ambassador Al-Ghanim told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Monday that the upcoming visit would be the Amir's first since assuming office last December, coinciding with President El-Sisi's third term. This visit was welcomed both officially and among people.

Al-Ghanim emphasized that Egyptian-Kuwaiti relations were characterized by their close and enduring historical bonds, spanning decades and serving as a model for Arab-Arab relations. He explained that the historical and special relationships between Kuwait and Egypt,

between the two countries.

The historic ties between Kuwait and Egypt date back to the middle of the nineteenth century, but they were limited to trade relations. On diplomatic relations, Egypt was one of the first countries to recognize Kuwait's sovereignty and independence when the late President Gamal Abdel Nasser received the credentials of the late Ambassador Abdel Aziz Hussein on December 20, 1961, as the first Ambassador Plenipotentiary of Kuwait to Egypt.

On March 19, 1962, Ambassador Mohammad Abdel Aziz presented his credentials to the late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah as the first Egyptian ambassador to Kuwait. On political relations, bilateral relations have witnessed continuous development through the Supreme Joint Committee between the two countries to promote bilateral cooperation in various fields. Kuwait has always affirmed its full support for Egypt in various situations, including its full support for Egyptian-Syrian unity in 1958, standing by Egypt in the face of the June 1967 aggression, and in the October War of 1973.

Egypt was also one of the countries in the international coalition that contributed to the liberation of Kuwait in 1991 and played an effective role in restoring Kuwaiti sovereignty over its entire territory. On educational relations, after the establishment of the Knowledge Council in Kuwait in 1936, Kuwaiti missions abroad continued to raise the level of academic achievement for scholarship students.

In 1938, a delegation of five students was sent to Egypt, followed by four students in 1939 and 17 students in 1943, while Al-Azhar adopted supervision of the religious institute in Kuwait. In 1945, Kuwait

dating back to before Kuwait's independence in 1961, have been strengthened over the decades by the alignment of visions between their leaderships, contributing to their consolidation in various fields.

Ambassador Al-Ghanim added that the visit of His Highness the Amir would enhance the excellent relations between the two countries, expanding into broader areas under the leadership of His Highness the Amir and the Egyptian president. He also noted the alignment of positions between the leaderships of both countries regarding all regional and international issues, especially in Palestine, and the ongoing aggression against the people of Gaza, which exceeded seven months.

He stressed that the visit affirmed the Kuwaiti leadership's commitment to enhancing communication and consultation between Cairo and Kuwait regarding regional and international developments, which also involved discussing mutual interests and developing bilateral relations in various fields that would benefit both countries. He emphasized that the visit affirmed the Kuwaiti leadership's commitment to strengthening communication and consultation with Cairo on regional and international developments, as well as to discuss mutual

interests and enhance bilateral relations, benefiting both countries.

Al-Ghanim praised Egypt's longstanding support for Kuwait since its independence, emphasizing Egypt's stance in favor of Kuwait's security and stability. He also praised Egypt's efforts to improve its investment climate and welcome Arab and foreign investments, particularly those from Kuwait, as he noted Kuwait's private sector's confidence in Egypt's investment environment, particularly due to the economic reforms undertaken by the Egyptian government.

He told KUNA that Kuwait holds a prominent status among Arab investments in Egyptian markets, reflecting the Kuwaiti investor's confidence in the Egyptian economy and the available investment prospects. Al-Ghanim also pointed out the financing programs offered by the Kuwait Fund for Economic Development (KFAED), which support more than 50 strategic projects, significantly contributing to the Egyptian economy. He expressed confidence that the visit of His Highness the Amir to Cairo and his meeting with the Egyptian President would be successful on all fronts, given their wisdom, and benefit both countries and their peoples. — KUNA

opened the Kuwait House in Cairo for students' affairs before it was officially opened on October 1, 1958, in the presence of the late President Gamal Abdel Nasser and Sheikh Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, head of the Kuwaiti Council of Knowledge at the time. Kuwaiti students would continue their studies at Cairo University and similar higher institutes to pursue university and postgraduate studies.

On economic relations, Kuwaiti investments contributed effectively to the development of the Egyptian economy, being the third largest Arab trading partner after the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, with investments amounting to about \$20 billion and the fourth largest global trading partner among investing countries. On media relations, the two countries signed a joint media cooperation agreement in September 1998 in Cairo that aims to support cooperation in various media fields. Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) and the Middle East News Agency (MENA) signed an annex to the agreement in September 2017 to support and consolidate bilateral media relations and open new horizons for cooperation.

In parliamentary relations, cooperation between the Kuwaiti National Assembly and the Egyptian House of Representatives has been growing through the joint Friendship Committee, the exchange of visits, and continuous coordination in various forums on regional, Arab, and international issues. The cooperation between the two countries is extended to the military, security, cultural, sports, and scientific fields, strengthening the historical ties between the two countries and achieving goals of common interest. — KUNA

## Kuwait Red Crescent Society donates \$500,000 to ARCS

**DOHA:** The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) announced on Monday that they donated \$500,000 to help out the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS). This came in a statement to KUNA from the Deputy Chairman of KRCS Anwar Al-Hasawi, after being in a consultative meeting with ARCS partners and humanitarian organizations in Doha. The meeting was organized by the Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) with the help of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Al-Hasawi revealed that a separate meeting with the president of ARCS Mawlawi Matiul Haq took place, during which the dire need to help Afghans was explained, in view of the difficult humanitarian situation there regarding their health, relief and education. 13,000 children suffer from a septal defect and more than three million widows due to the wars Afghanistan has been through, not to mention the number of Afghan refugees coming in from Iran and Pakistan, who are estimated at more than six million people. The meeting is scheduled to conclude on Monday after hearing important recommendations from ambassadors and diplomatic representatives to examine the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and find the best way to deliver aid to those in need.

### Relief aid for Armenians

In another development, the Kuwait Red Crescent Society announced on Monday that it provided relief aid to 400 people in the city of Sevan, northern Armenia. The head of the association's field team, Khaled Al-Mutairi, told KUNA that the distribution of aid comes within the KRCS's relief campaign to help needy and displaced people from the Nagorno-Karabakh region. The food parcels, sufficient for one family of five, were distributed for a month, in addition to blankets, heaters, and cleaning supplies, he said.

He stressed the keenness of the KRCS to deliver humanitarian aid in various Armenian regions in cooperation with the Armenian Red Cross. Al-Mutairi expressed his hope that the association's campaign would contribute to alleviating the suffering of hundreds of needy and displaced people, especially since the campaign primarily targets the elderly and the most vulnerable groups. — AFP



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# Burgan Bank's 'Wain Al Ayadi' reinforces culture of saving

## TVC garners wide engagement and viewership

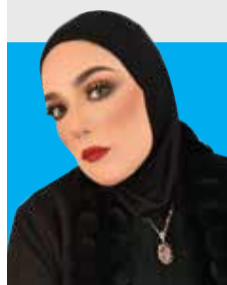


Burgan Bank's Eid TVC features artist Bader Al-Shuaibi and a group of children.



## Workplace evaluations

In my view



By Azzah Al-Ghamdi

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Administrative law governs all state institutions, including ministries, agencies and institutions operating under administrative law frameworks. Similarly, in the private sector, the labor law ensures the protection of workers' rights. The Kuwaiti government has prioritized preserving workers' rights and regulating workflows. Kuwait's labor laws are regarded as exemplary in the region for their comprehensive coverage of workers' rights. However, there's an oversight in the law regarding the rare but existing issue of abuse and mistreatment of public sector employees by some officials.

These officials wield influence due to their interactions with agents and ministries. Some misuse this influence, treating employees poorly and subjecting them to crises, leading to confusion in workflow. Such mistreatment can lead to employees developing a fear of work, exacerbating health issues, including heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure, which may not be known to their managers.

To address this, there should be an annual evaluation of direct officials by employees, akin to the evaluation system used in universities where students assess their professors. This evaluation would provide valuable feedback to ministers and business owners about the leadership in their respective institutions, resulting in a more conducive work environment.

Implementing such evaluations under the supervision of the Civil Service Commission and the Public Authority of Manpower would prevent institutional harm caused by manager-employee mistreatment. Ignoring these issues poses risks to employee health and work organization. Moreover, it could exacerbate the burden on the judiciary due to potential legal disputes arising from workplace grievances.

While some may argue for drafting new laws to implement these evaluations, existing regulations may suffice, as evaluations are typically permissible where not explicitly prohibited by law. The responsibility for implementing these evaluations falls on the Civil Service Bureau and Public Authority of Manpower. Addressing these issues would alleviate employees' fear of work and safeguard their mental health, benefiting both employees and employers.



Snapshots from the "Abracadabra 2" play.



KUWAIT: Burgan Bank released its "Wain Al Ayadi, Mido Al 'Ayadi" Eid TVC, recorded and performed by the notable multi-disciplinary artist Bader Al-Shuaibi along with a group of talented children. "Wain Al Ayadi" comes as part of the "Abracadabra 2" show performances, whereby the cheerful song was adapted into a commercial (TVC). The TVC was received with enthusiasm, garnering impressive numbers in views across the different social networks.

"Wain Al Ayadi" captured one of the warmest and most significant Eid moments that family and friends share, further underscoring the importance of preserving the values and traditions that define this joyous celebration. Despite its name, the TVC serves as a reminder that Eid isn't solely about giving out Eidiya, but that its real value lies in the opportunity to forge meaningful connections with family and loved ones through sharing Eid greetings amongst the festivities.

Commenting on the Bank's latest campaign, Hessa Hussain Al-Najadah, Senior Manager - Corporate and CSR Communications at Burgan Bank, said: "We are delighted by the resounding success and far-reaching viewership of the "Wain Al Aya-

di, Mido Al 'Ayadi" TVC, which we built around the real meaning of Eid, which touches on the pleasure of gathering with family and friends to enjoy the traditional Eid celebrations. Furthermore, the TVC is designed to encourage children and parents to adopt the savings culture and reinforce financial literacy across society, in adherence to the banking awareness campaign, Diraya."

Al-Najadah added: "Stemming from its comprehensive social responsibility program, Burgan Bank continues to support the young, aspiring talents of Kuwait through its sponsorship of the 'Abracadabra 2' show, which has been received with a great turnout and public enthusiasm, resonating the massive success of the show's first edition across more than 104 performances. The 'Abracadabra 2' shows, which debuted in Eid Al-Fitr, are set to extend until Eid Al-Adha. Today, Trend Production, the team and cast behind the production of both 'Abracadabra' editions, have become core partners in the success of numerous popular shows."

On his part, Bader Al-Shuaibi, Director of "Abracadabra 2", said: "I am very proud of the consistent success

that marks a series of shows that we executed in partnership with Burgan Bank. On behalf of the entire 'Abracadabra 2' cast and crew, we extend our sincere thanks to Burgan Bank for the unbounded trust and the massive support that they continue to offer to the Kuwaiti youth, a testament to the great faith that they have in our talent and abilities. I am also delighted by the success that the 'Wain Al Ayadi' Eid Al-Fitr TVC achieved and how audiences of all ages warmly received it. This is owed to its valuable message and carefully curated lyrics, which are easy to recite and reflective of the true festive spirit of Eid."

"As for 'Abracadabra 2', it is considered the biggest theatre production of 2024 so far, thanks to its meticulous preparations and massive-scale production, beginning with the idea and execution, the quality of promotional marketing material, the novel theatre design, and the overall experience design that mimics the experience delivered by world-class theatres and performances," added Al-Shuaibi. "It's a great pleasure to share this wonderful show with a number of phenomenal young artists and deliver it at Al-Daiya Theatre. And for the first time, the show is

supported in English as well as sign language captioning, guaranteeing a fully immersive experience for everyone in the audience."

It is worth noting that Burgan Bank continues to sponsor and oversee the production of unique works of art that present unique entertainment experiences as well as valuable messages. This comes as part of the Bank's expansive social responsibility program and its goal to advance the domestic arts and entertainment industry through its support of Kuwait's aspiring talents and high-potential youth.



Hessa Hussain Al-Najadah



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Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) holds a workshop under the slogan "Towards a Safe Work Environment."

## PAM marks World Day of Occupational Health and Safety

KUWAIT: The Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) held a workshop to mark the World Day of Occupational Health and Safety under the slogan "Towards a Safe Work Environment." The Acting Deputy Director General of Planning and Administrative Development, Eng. Rabab Al-Osaimi, welcomed the attendees in a speech and thanked them for their cooperation and keenness to ensure safety for workers in various sectors by providing a safe and healthy working environment.

She stressed the importance of occupational health and safety and its impact on industry and economic growth, stressing that public safety is no less important than increasing productivity and quality and reducing costs. Al-Osaimi pointed out that the Authority is advanced in the use of technology, as most of the current services have been converted to electronic services. She advised business owners to follow the latest technological developments in the field of health and safety systems.

The Chairman of the Standing Committee for the Link and Coordination between the Public Authority of Manpower, civil society institutions, and public benefit associations, Aseel Al-Mazyad, praised the fruitful cooperation between the Authority, the Committee, the government, and private associations. She stated that the main objective of this celebration is to reach the largest possible number of stakeholders and professionals in the field of occupational health and safety. "We aim to share experiences on the concept of

occupational safety and health and provide opportunities to exchange ideas and successful experiences in this field," she added.

On the sidelines of the event, workshops consisting of seven points were held and presented by several entities, namely: the Public Authority of Manpower, the Fire Force, the Ministry of Health, the Kuwait Oil Company, the Federation of Kuwait Industries, the Kuwait Human Rights Society, and Takween Training and Consulting Company. The workshops are aimed at demonstrating the role of the authorities in the field of occupational safety and health.

And also the establishment of an exhibition specializing in occupational safety and health. Each of the Ministry of Health, the Kuwait Society for Human Rights, the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, Kuwait Insurance Company, Jawad Al-Saffar Store, Al-Qatami Fire Station, Alghanim International Company, Munad Flowers, and government agencies, private companies, and public benefit associations were invited, and the number of attendees was more than a hundred government and private agencies.

The Public Authority of Manpower plans to hold a celebration at The Avenues on the occasion of International Labor Day, which falls on May 1 of each year, in cooperation with the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the General Federation of Kuwait Workers.

In another development, Public Authority of Manpower held another seminar themed "Evacuation and sheltering plan of critical crises, under ordinary and emergency conditions." The program was held on Monday at the Authority's theater. The seminar is aimed at training participants on how to prepare evacuation and sheltering plan and to take action during emergency events as well as ordinary and urgent crises. The Authority thanked those responsible for the training course.





More than 45 people killed as dam bursts in flood-hit Kenya

## India is not sliding towards autocracy, insists PM Modi

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RIYADH: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken attends the US-Arab Quint Meeting with representatives from Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and the Palestinian Authority, at the Four Seasons Hotel in Riyadh, on April 29, 2024. — AFP

# Hopes rise for Gaza truce deal

## Forty-day ceasefire offered to Hamas as envoys meet in Cairo

**JERUSALEM:** Hopes rose Monday for a long-sought truce and hostage release deal after almost seven months of war between Hamas soldiers and Zionist entity in Gaza.

Washington's top diplomat said he was "hopeful" Hamas would accept the offer, which his British counterpart said could see the release of thousands of Palestinian prisoners.

Negotiators from Hamas were due in Egypt, a mediator in the process along with the United States and Qatar. For months they have been trying to broker a new agreement between the combatants, the first since a one-week truce in November saw 80 Zionist entity captives exchanged for 240 Palestinians held in Zionist entity prisons.

Diplomacy in the past few days appeared to suggest a new push to halt the fighting. The war has brought Gaza to the brink of famine, United Nations and humanitarian aid groups say, while reducing much of the territory to rubble and raising fears of a wider regional conflict.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told a World Economic Forum special meeting in Riyadh that the proposal before Hamas is "extraordinarily, extraordinarily generous on the part of Zionist entity."

He urged the group to "decide quickly", saying: "I'm hopeful that they will make the right decision."

Blinken is on his seventh visit to the region since the Oct 7 Hamas attack on Zionist entity

that sparked the war. Talks "are taking place in Cairo today", said Al-Qahera News, which is linked to Egyptian intelligence services. A senior Hamas official said Sunday the group had no "major issues" with the latest truce plan.

Speaking at the WEF meeting, Egypt's Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry said "the proposal has taken into account the positions of both sides." While there was no "final decision" yet, Shoukry said: "We are hopeful... I hope that all will rise to the occasion."

British Foreign Secretary David Cameron told the same gathering that Hamas has been offered a "sustained 40 days' ceasefire, the release of potentially thousands of Palestinian prisoners, in return for the release of these hostages."

Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan meanwhile said a new deal would "be very, very positive... But it's absolutely necessary that any ceasefire be permanent, not temporary."

In their attack, militants seized hostages, 129 of whom Zionist entity estimates to remain in Gaza including 34 the military says are dead.

Hamas's attack resulted in the deaths of about 1,170 people in Zionist entity, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Zionist entity official figures. Zionist entity's retaliatory offensive has killed at least 34,488 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory. The tally includes at least 34 deaths in the past

24 hours, the ministry said. That is down from a peak this month of at least 153 deaths on April 9.

Away from the chandeliered WEF meeting hall, southern Gaza's Rafah city was pounded by air strikes overnight, an AFP correspondent, witnesses and rescuers reported. The majority of Gaza's 2.4 million people have sought refuge in Rafah near the border with Egypt.

Medics and the Civil Defense agency said at least 22 people were killed in the city. Witnesses told AFP at least three houses had been hit.

A crowd of grief-stricken relatives jostled over the dead, shrouded in white, at the city's Al-Najjar hospital. Some women gently stroked the body bags holding the remains of their loved ones.

"We demand the entire world to call for a lasting truce. This is enough," a grey-haired relative who gave his name only as Abu Taha said at the hospital.

A Hamas source close to the talks has told AFP the group is keen for a deal that "guarantees a permanent ceasefire, the free return of displaced people, an acceptable deal for (a prisoner-captive) exchange and an end to the siege" in Gaza.

In Zionist entity, protesters have demanded that the government reach an agreement to secure the release of the hostages still held in Gaza. Zionist entity has pledged to pursue Hamas battalions in Rafah despite mounting global concern for civilians there, but Foreign Minister Zionist entity Katz said the

government may "suspend" the invasion if an agreement is reached. High temperatures in crowded Rafah have turned makeshift shelters made from plastic tarps into sweltering ovens. The UN has warned of diseases spreading. "We're living in hell," said displaced Palestinian Hanan Saber, 41.

On Sunday, White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said on ABC News that Zionist entity is letting more aid trucks into Gaza, in line with "commitments that President Biden asked them to meet". According to the Hamas source, the latest plan proposes a Zionist entity withdrawal from two main roads to allow Gazans to return to the heavily impacted north. Hamas negotiator Zaher Jabareen told AFP that "success or failure" will be determined by "the ability to reach a permanent ceasefire decision" -- a condition Zionist entity has rejected before -- and to agree "clear" plans for reconstruction.

The Axios news website, citing Zionist entity officials, reported that Zionist entity's latest proposal includes a willingness to discuss the "restoration of sustainable calm" after hostages are released. It is the first time Zionist entity leaders have suggested they are open to discussing an end to the war, Axios said.

Biden spoke with Netanyahu by phone Sunday about the truce negotiations and "increases in the delivery of humanitarian assistance into Gaza", the White House said. — AFP

## EU slaps tougher visa regime on Ethiopia

**BRUSSELS:** The EU on Monday said it is now imposing a tougher visa process on Ethiopia because of the African country's "insufficient" cooperation in taking back rejected asylum-seekers and irregular migrants.

The move means Ethiopians will no longer get leeway on the sort of documentation they provide to meet requirements for EU visits, they can no longer obtain multiple-entry visas, and diplomats will now have to pay to get visas. The processing time for standard EU visas for Ethiopians was also extended to 45 days, from the current 15 days. The stricter rules are part of the European Union's carrot-and-stick approach to managing irregular immigration.

The bloc this month adopted a reform of its asylum and migration rules, which come into effect from 2026 and aim to harden border procedures and speed up returns of irregular migrants ineligible for asylum. In parallel, Brussels is using its trade levers and desire for EU visas as leverage to get reluctant outside countries to take back rejected irregular migrants.

The EU has already imposed similar tougher visa processes on Gambia. The latest move against Ethiopia follows a European Commission assessment that "cooperation by Ethiopia in the field of readmission of its nationals illegally staying in the EU is insufficient," the Council of the EU, representing EU member countries, said in a statement. "There is a lack of response from the Ethiopian authorities with regard to readmission requests and difficulties persist with the issuance of emergency travel documents and with the organization of both voluntary and non-voluntary return operations," it said. It said that, while the tougher visa conditions were "temporary", Brussels would continue to assess Ethiopia's cooperation on this issue. — AFP

## Spain PM Sanchez walks back from resignation threat

**MADRID, Spain:** Spain's Pedro Sanchez said Monday he would stay on as prime minister after threatening to stand down over what he denounced as a campaign of political harassment by the right. "I have decided to stay," the 52-year-old Socialist leader said in a highly-anticipated public address that drew a line under uncertainty that had gripped Spain for five days.

In office since 2018, Sanchez on Wednesday dropped a political bombshell saying he would consider resignation after a court confirmed a preliminary probe into his wife Begona Gomez for suspected influence peddling and corruption. The complaint was triggered by an anti-graft NGO with ties to the

## 'Butcher' ex-warlord Hekmatyar rankles Taliban rulers

**KABUL:** In Afghanistan, where dissent is muzzled, one figure has emerged as an unlikely critic of the Taliban authorities: Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a sidelined ex-warlord who is increasingly drawing official ire. The onetime anti-Soviet commander, and prime minister in 1996 and 1997, has made public calls for elections and girls' education—taboo demands under the current administration.

Hekmatyar, 76, left Afghanistan when the Taliban rose to power the first time but returned to Kabul in 2017 and remained even as legions of prominent

far right. The right-wing opposition Popular Party (PP) also demanded answers.

Sanchez's response, outlined in a letter published on X, the former Twitter, immediately switched the focus onto toxic political practices targeting politicians' families, and to Spain's political future.

Denying his move was a "political calculation", Sanchez called for a public reflection on a growing political polarization which he said was increasingly being driven by "deliberate disinformation".

"For too long we've let this filth corrupt our political and public life with toxic methods that were unimaginable just a few years ago... Do we really want this for Spain?" he asked.

"I have acted out of a clear conviction: either we say 'enough is enough' or this degradation of public life will define our future and condemn us as a country." His decision to stay, he said, was "decisively influenced" by the mass show of support outside the Madrid headquarters of his Socialist party, where thousands of emotional supporters had chanted:

figures fled the 2021 Taliban takeover. As chief of his Hezb-e-Islami radical party, he commands crowds, but analysts doubt the sincerity of his speeches and say there is little chance he can rally nationwide popular resistance.

Nonetheless, his criticism has triggered a crackdown by the Taliban authorities, who have banned him from speaking at his mosque on Fridays, evicted him from his home, and pulled his party TV channel from the airwaves. "You stayed after the victory," Taliban government Justice Minister Abdul Hakim Sharai told him at a public event in early April.

"If you didn't like it, you should have left. 'Parties have no place in this system. According to law, talking the name of any party is a crime.' Hekmatyar's willingness to flout authorities makes him a unique figure in today's Afghanistan, one of the only politicians still speaking out against Taliban officials when nearly all opposition has been muted.



MADRID: Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez attends a plenary session at the Spanish parliament's lower house, in Madrid in this file photo. — AFP

"Pedro, stay!" The public prosecutor's office on Thursday asked that the investigation into Begona Gomez be closed but Sanchez, an expert in political survival who has made a career out of taking political gambles, kept his silence. — AFP



Gulbuddin Hekmatyar

With his long white beard, black turban and thin glasses, Hekmatyar broadcast a daring speech on his party channel Barya TV in March. "In every political decision, people's presence is necessary, either directly or through their elected and trusted representatives," he said. — AFP



## International

# More than 45 people killed as dam bursts in flood-hit Kenya

## Torrential rains and floods batter East Africa, compounded by El Nino

**MAI MAHIU, Kenya:** At least 45 people died when a makeshift dam burst its banks near a town in Kenya's Rift Valley in the early hours of Monday, police said, as torrential rains and floods battered the country. The disaster raises the total death toll over the March-May wet season in Kenya to more than 120 as heavier than usual rainfall pounds East Africa, compounded by the El Nino weather pattern.

Residents said the accident occurred in the dead of night near Mai Mahiu, in Nakuru county, sending water gushing down a hill and engulfing everything in its path. The deluge cut off a road, uprooted trees, washed away homes and sent vehicles flying. "We heard what sounded like an earthquake and roars like a moving train," said Margaret Wangechi, a 52-year-old teacher.

A senior officer at Nakuru County police headquarters told AFP by phone that 45 bodies had been recovered so far, while Nakuru governor Susan Kihika said 110 people were being treated in hospital.

Rescuers were digging through the debris, using hoes and in some cases just their bare hands in a desperate search for survivors. "We collected some of the bodies held by trees and we don't know how many are under the mud," Stephen Njihia Njoroge, a local resident involved in the emergency efforts, told AFP. The disaster occurred at Old Kijabe dam, a hillside barrier formed naturally over decades after railway construction work by Kenya's former British colonial rulers.

The Red Cross has set up a desk at a local school to help families find lost relatives. Interior Minister Kithure Kindiki said the government had directed security and intelligence officials to "inspect all public and private dams and water reservoirs in their jurisdictions within 24 hours... (and) recommend cases (for) compulsory evacuation and temporary resettlement".

He also said on X that the authorities would arrest people engaging in "risky behavior", including motorists attempting dangerous crossings and anyone seeking to transport "passengers across flooded rivers or storm water by unsafe canoes or boats".

His comments came after a boat packed with people capsized at the weekend in flooded Tana River county in eastern Kenya, with the Kenya Red Cross saying it had retrieved two bodies and rescued 23 others. The government said Monday that search and rescue efforts there were ongoing.

Video footage shared online and on television showed the crowded boat sinking, with people screaming as onlookers watched in horror.

On Saturday, officials said 76 people had lost their lives in Kenya since March, with more than 130,000 displaced. Schools have been forced to remain shut following mid-term holidays, after the education ministry announced Monday it would postpone their reopening to May 6 because of the rains.

The monsoons have also wreaked havoc in neighboring Tanzania, where at least 155 people have been killed in flooding and landslides. In Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa, flooding claimed the lives of four people on Monday, according to the Fire and Disaster Risk Management Commission.

A woman and her baby died in the Rwandan capital Kigali on Sunday when heavy rainfall caused their house to collapse, police said. In neighboring Burundi, one of the world's poorest countries, about 96,000 people have been displaced by months of relentless rains, according to the United Nations and the government. Uganda has also suffered heavy storms that have caused riverbanks to burst, with two deaths confirmed and several hundred villagers displaced.

Monday's dam tragedy comes six years after



A girl looks on next to a damaged car buried in mud in an area heavily affected by torrential rains and flash floods in the village of Kamuchiri, near Mai Mahiu, on April 29, 2024. — AFP

a similar accident at Solai, also in Nakuru county, killed 48 people, sending millions of liters of muddy waters raging through homes and destroying power lines.

The May 2018 disaster involving a private reservoir on a coffee estate also followed weeks of torrential rains that sparked deadly floods and mudslides. El Nino is a naturally occurring climate pattern typically associated with increased heat

worldwide, leading to drought in some parts of the world and heavy rains elsewhere. Late last year, more than 300 people died in rains and floods in Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia, just as the region was trying to recover from its worst drought in four decades that left millions of people hungry. The UN's World Meteorological Organization said in March that the latest El Nino is one of the five strongest ever recorded. — AFP

## Scotland's first minister and Muslim leader Yousaf quits

**EDINBURGH, United Kingdom:** Humza Yousaf announced his resignation as Scotland's first minister on Monday, before he was due to face two confidence votes this week sparked by his ditching of junior coalition partners in a row over climate policy. The 39-year-old quit following a turbulent year as head of the devolved administration in Edinburgh, during which support for his pro-independence Scottish National Party (SNP) has fallen.

Yousaf said he had "underestimated" the hurt he had caused by unceremoniously ending the SNP's power-sharing deal with the Scottish Greens in the Scottish parliament last week. His government had earlier abandoned ambitious targets for the transition to net-zero carbon emissions, angering the Greens.

The opposition Scottish Conservatives then lodged a vote of no-confidence in Yousaf, which was set for Wednesday and which the first minister was at risk of losing. Scottish Labour also lodged another no-confidence vote in his government.

The Tories, Labour, Liberal Democrats and Greens all said they would vote against Yousaf in the personal vote, forcing him to seek the backing of the sole lawmaker from the pro-independence Alba party. Yousaf - the first Muslim leader of a major UK political party - told reporters at his official residence that he thought winning was "absolutely possible".



GLASGOW: Scotland's First Minister Humza Yousaf joins a march in support of Scottish independence in Glasgow on April 20, 2024. — AFP

But he added that he was "not willing to trade in my values or principles or do deals with whomever simply for retaining power". "I have concluded that repairing our relationships across the political divide can only be done with someone else at the helm," Yousaf said.

Yousaf only became Scotland's leader 13 months ago, after Nicola Sturgeon announced her surprise resignation, citing tiredness after eight years in charge. He defeated Kate Forbes and Ash Regan, who later defected to Alba, in a bruising contest that exposed splits in the party between those on the left wing and others closer to the right.

Parliament now has 28 days to choose a new first minister. Yousaf said he would continue as first minister until his successor was elected "in order to ensure a smooth and orderly transition".

He told the SNP leadership that the contest should start "as soon as possible". Forbes is the early favor-

headquarters for a do-or-die round of negotiations after a two-year effort to seal a landmark accord on prevention, preparedness and response hit a deadline last month with no concrete wording agreed.

The goal of the talks, which run until May 10, is to get an agreement ready for adoption at the WHO's annual assembly of member states, which starts May 27. In December 2021, the raw sting of Covid-19 - which shredded economies, crippled health systems and killed millions - motivated countries to seek a binding framework of commitments aimed at preventing another such disaster.

But big gaps remain between countries on how to go about it. What was meant to be the ninth and final round

ite but former SNP head and ex-deputy first minister John Swinney is also being touted as an interim leader. Yousaf's leadership was quickly plunged into turmoil when Sturgeon was arrested with her husband, Peter Murrell, over claims of mismanagement of SNP finances.

Murrell was charged in the case earlier this month. Sturgeon has not been charged. She oversaw a surge in support for the SNP, particularly after Brexit - in which Scotland opposed leaving the European Union - and during the COVID pandemic. But the SNP, which has run the Scottish government since 2007, has suffered a drop in popularity under Yousaf.

He has come under pressure over controversial new laws which made it an offence to stir up hatred against a number of groups, including transgender people. The law has been heavily criticized, including most prominently by "Harry Potter" author J K Rowling, who lives in Edinburgh.

Relations between the SNP and the Greens were also strained by the recent pause in prescribing puberty blockers in Scotland. Some within the SNP wanted Yousaf to end the coalition with the Greens because they felt the deal was pulling the party further leftwards.

The SNP has 63 members in the 129-seat Scottish parliament - two short of a majority - and now runs a minority administration. The next election is due in 2026. Critics have accused the SNP, in power in Edinburgh for 17 years, of focusing on pursuing independence at the expense of issues like the cost-of-living crisis and health.

The party has struggled to build momentum for another independence vote since Scotland voted against leaving the UK in a referendum in 2014. That is despite Scotland having since been taken out of the European Union, even though it voted to remain part of the bloc in a separate 2016 vote. — AFP

of talks last month saw a 29-page draft swell to more than 100 as countries added proposed amendments. The Inter-governmental Negotiating Body (INB) bureau conducting the talks issued a streamlined, 23-page new version on April 22 and wants to bar countries from proposing edits.

"The bureau is of the opinion that the text as presented in the proposal for a WHO Pandemic Agreement is consensus-ready. It was drafted on the basis of our many rounds of negotiations," it insisted. The INB will present all 37 articles of the draft agreement, and if any countries object, they will be asked to explain their reasons.

If no quick fix can be found in the room, member states will dash off for informal talks to find a solution.

The main disputes revolve around access and equity:

## 15-year-old boy faces French judge over teen's fatal stabbing

**ORLEANS, France:** A 15-year-old suspected of fatally stabbing another teenager was expected to appear before a judge on Monday, sources close to the investigation said, in the latest case of teenage violence in France. France has seen a series of attacks on adolescents by their peers in recent weeks, notably the fatal beating of another 15-year-old called Shemseddine near Paris earlier this month.

The suspect in the latest attack is a boy of "Afghan origin", according to a source close to the investigation. Far-right and conservative politicians used the latest attack to slam the government's immigration policies, weeks before European Parliament elections.

The 15-year-old victim of the most recent incident was killed in a brawl in the central French town of Chateauroux late on Saturday and died in hospital the same evening, regional prosecutor Agnes Auboin said on Sunday.

The alleged attacker and his mother have been detained. Although the motive for the street fight was not immediately clear on Monday, the source close to the investigation told AFP, adding that it "had nothing to do with Islamism". — AFP

## Last chance for global pandemic agreement talks

**GENEVA:** Countries returned to the negotiating table Monday for one last push to conclude an international agreement on how to handle future pandemics, with the most likely outcome being a slimmed-down accord that shelves some of the thorniest issues. The 194 countries in the World Health Organization have come to its Geneva

access to pathogens detected within countries, access to pandemic-fighting products such as vaccines produced from that knowledge, and equitable distribution of not only counter-pandemic tests, treatments and jabs but the means to produce them.

The new draft focuses on setting up the basic framework, and parks some of the trickier detail in further talks planned over the next two years - notably on how a planned WHO Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing System will work in practice.

A group of 22 NGOs, including Health Action International, urged countries not to bow to pressure to compromise, postpone or give up on equitable access to counter-pandemic tools and technology. — AFP

## KU holds Gaza sit-in, hails US...

Continued from Page 1

complicity, constituting a crime. Dr Khatib expressed solidarity with universities worldwide, condemning Zionist massacres and commending the courage of American students and faculty for their stance.

"We salute you, our fellow American students and faculty. Thank you for rising to the catastrophic situation and answering the trying occasion, and for taking this courageous and costly stance, through which we are witnessing on a daily basis that you are paying a hefty price. This is a new era and a new world, as the voice of justice and freedom is arising from under the most stifling imperialist regimes. Thank you students and people of the world for the awakening," she added.

Dr Khaled Al-Saifi, Head of the PAAET Teachers Faculty Association, underscored the significance of the epic Al-Aqsa Flood operation in bringing global attention to the Palestinian cause. He praised the consciousness of students and teachers in the West defending Palestinian rights, affirming fairness as a universal value. Al-Saifi highlighted the formation of student parties and teacher committees in response to these moments, noting universities' historical role in addressing major global issues.

## Blinken promotes Gulf defense in...

Continued from Page 1

boosting maritime security. The United States already has strong military relations with all the Gulf Arab states, but relations among the six have seen their ups and downs. Blinken said that the region had a choice on its future, including "one ridden with divisions and destruction and violence and permanent instability". Gulf Arabs, through their meeting with the United States, were choosing "greater integration" and "greater peace", he said.

The Zionist entity, which has long warned against Iran, on April 1 carried out a purported strike in Syria that leveled an Iranian diplomatic building, killing members of the elite Revolutionary Guards including two generals. Iran responded with its attack and the Zionist entity in turn was suspected to have carried out a subsequent strike inside central Iran.

US officials privately say that they expect the escalatory cycle to be over for now, with both adversaries making their points without inflicting major damage or casualties. Two Gulf Arab nations - the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain - have recognized the Zionist entity, but the United States has been pushing a bigger prize: Saudi Arabia, the guardian of Islam's two holiest sites.

Blinken later Monday met Saudi Crown Prince



RIYADH: Gulf and US officials pose for a group picture during a Joint Ministerial Meeting of the GCC-US Strategic Partnership at the GCC Secretariat on April 29, 2024. — AFP

Mohammed bin Salman to seek to push forward normalization. Washington has hoped to use the prospect of Saudi ties to encourage compromise by Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a longtime foe of a Palestinian state who has also sought to highlight his role in building relations with the Arab world.

Qatar has played a key role in talks that aim to halt the fighting between the Zionist entity and Hamas and release captives. Opening the meeting, Qatar's prime minister and foreign minister, Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, said the "international community's failure to find a solution to the Palestinian cause" presents one of the "most significant" challenges to regional security.

Blinken told the Gulf Arab nations that he would press for a Palestinian state and more humanitarian access into Gaza. "The most effective way to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, to alleviate the suffering," Blinken said, "and to create space for a more just and durable solution, is to get a ceasefire and the hostages home."

Blinken, who will later head to Jordan and the Zionist entity, arrived hours after US President Joe Biden and Netanyahu spoke by telephone about ceasefire talks. Biden also reiterated concerns about the Zionist entity launching an operation in Rafah, the southern Gaza city where more than one million Palestinians have taken shelter. — Agencies



## International

# India is not sliding towards autocracy, insists PM Modi

## Govt accused of orchestrating criminal probes against rivals on eve of elections

**NEW DELHI:** Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi denied Monday that his country was sliding towards autocracy, following accusations that his government orchestrated criminal probes to weaken rivals ahead of an ongoing general election. Modi, 73, remains resoundingly popular after a decade in office, and he is widely expected to win a third term when the six-week-long national polls conclude in June.

His prospects have been further bolstered by several criminal investigations into opponents, including a tax probe that in February froze the bank accounts of Congress, India's largest opposition party. But Modi said the suggestion India was becoming "an electoral autocracy" under his rule was a fiction spread by his disgruntled rivals. "Because the opposition is not able to get power, they start defaming India on the world stage," he told the Times of India newspaper in an interview published Monday.

"They spread canards about our people, our democracy and our institutions." India's press freedom rankings have declined markedly since Modi took office in 2014, while restrictions on civil society have seen rights groups such as Amnesty International severely curtail their local operations.

This year Modi is being challenged by a motley alliance of more than two dozen political parties, several of whom have leaders either under investigation or in jail facing criminal charges. Modi's chief opponent Rahul Gandhi, the son, grandson and

great-grandson of past Indian prime ministers, was briefly disqualified from parliament last year after being convicted of criminal libel.

The 53-year-old faces numerous other active criminal cases, several of which were brought by members of Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Gandhi and his Congress party already lost two prior landslide elections to Modi, who told the newspaper that his opponent's unpopularity had no bearing on the robustness of India's democratic institutions.

"India does not become an electoral autocracy if the 'Yuvraj' cannot automatically get power," Modi said, using the Hindi word for "prince" to disparage Gandhi's upbringing as a political dynast.

Turnout in India's election has so far been several percentage points lower than the last poll in 2019. Indian media outlets have speculated that higher-than-average temperatures were to blame, with parts of the country remaining subject to a heatwave alert.

Analysts also say voter enthusiasm has been dampened because of the widespread expectations that Modi's party will easily win the vote. Modi told the newspaper he remained confident that the BJP and its allies would secure more than 400 seats in India's 543-seat parliament, its best-ever total.

"Everywhere I have gone, I have seen an unprecedented display of love, affection and support," he said. — AFP



**BENGALURU, India:** Joseph, a 54-old-year man, poses for a picture in front of a mural of India's freedom icon Mahatma Gandhi as he shows his inked finger after casting his ballot during the second phase of voting in India's general election, in Bengaluru on April 26, 2024. — AFP

## Bangladesh again closes schools due to heatwave

**DHAKA:** A Bangladeshi court ordered a nationwide shutdown of schools on Monday due to an ongoing heatwave, the day after the government sent millions of children back to class despite searing temperatures. Extensive scientific research has found climate change is causing heat waves to become longer, more frequent and more intense.

Average temperatures in the capital Dhaka over the past week have been 4-5 degrees Celsius (7.2-9 degrees Fahrenheit) higher than the 30-year average for the same period. The government said at least seven people had died as a result of the extreme heat since the start of April, with maximum temperatures in the capital forecast to remain above 40 degrees until Thursday. A two judge bench of the High Court passed an order "closing all primary and secondary schools and madrasas... due to the heatwave," deputy attorney general Sheikh Saifuzzaman told AFP. Saifuzzaman said the court passed the order after it was told by lawyers that several teachers had died in the heatwave, without giving further details.

Bangladesh follows the Sunday-Thursday Islamic work week. The order directs schools to remain closed for an estimated 32 million students until the coming Sunday. The government had imposed a



**DHAKA, Bangladesh:** Students leaving their school compound carry umbrellas on a hot summer day in Dhaka on April 28, 2024, amid the ongoing heatwave. — AFP

weeklong national school closure beginning April 21 as the heatwave persisted, but lifted the order over the weekend.

Classes had resumed in Dhaka on Sunday with anxious relatives accompanying their children to the school gates. "Keeping schools shut is difficult because the children don't want to study at home," mother Fatema Tuz Zohor told AFP on Sunday. "But how can they come to the schools in this heat?"

Bangladesh's weather bureau has said that temperatures would not recede until Thursday at the earliest. Meteorologist Muhammad Abul Kalam Mallik told AFP on Sunday that Bangladesh had not seen such an intense heatwave since records began in 1948. "It is a record as far as the duration and the coverage area in the country are concerned," he said, adding that the searing temperatures were affecting about three-quarters of the country. — AFP

## With motorbikes banned, Yangon riders struggle

**YANGON:** Delivery rider Than Toe Aung pedals his bicycle through a punishing heatwave in Myanmar's commercial capital Yangon, where scooters and motorbikes are banned. He can't afford a car, and a previous junta outlawed two-wheeled motorized vehicles for "security reasons", so the employee of the delivery app FoodPanda has no choice but to sweat his way through the streets under his own power.

Myanmar recorded its hottest ever April temperature of 48.2 degrees Celsius (118.76 Fahrenheit), authorities said Monday, as the Southeast Asian nation bakes in a heatwave. The mercury hit 48.2C in the town of Chauk in central Myanmar's Magway region on Sunday, according to a statement from the country's weather office, the highest temperature seen anywhere in Myanmar in April since records began 56 years ago. The same day temperatures hit 40C



**YANGON, Myanmar:** A delivery man rides his bicycle during a heatwave in Yangon on April 29, 2024. — AFP

in commercial hub Yangon and 44C in the second city of Mandalay, the weather office said. "It was too hot here, and all of us just stayed at home," said one resident of Chauk, which is located in Myanmar's arid central plains.

"We can do nothing when it's like this," he told AFP, asking not to be named. Across swathes of Myanmar's arid heartland daytime temperatures last Thursday were 3-4C higher than

the April average, according to the country's weather monitor.

Global temperatures hit record highs last year and the UN's World Meteorological Organization said Asia was warming at a particularly rapid pace, with the impact of heatwaves in the region becoming more severe.

Scientific research has shown climate change is causing heatwaves to be longer, more frequent and more in-

tense. In some places, authorities have advised citizens to stay at home, but there is no rest for workers like Than Toe Aung, who relies on his bicycle for income. "I sweat a lot when I am out working," the 27-year-old told AFP after leaving his room for another scorching shift in the city of around eight million people.

The heat is unrelenting, but also good for business, Than Toe Aung said, as many other drivers choose to take a break, offering those ready to brave the temperatures a chance to make more. After several deliveries to offices and homes, he has a meal of rice and vegetables on the shaded steps of a shop. At every pick-up spot he searches for a shady patch.

"Sometimes we have to wait outside for 30 minutes while they prepare the food," he said. For slogging through the energy-sapping heat, an average rider will make between 20,000 and 30,000 Myanmar kyat (\$10-15) per day, he said. FoodPanda did not respond to an AFP request for comment on whether it gives guidance to its riders in Yangon on coping with extreme weather. — AFP

## Solomon Island's pro-China PM not standing again

**HONIARA, Solomon Islands:** Solomon Islands' incumbent prime minister Manasseh Sogavare said Monday he would not stand for a new term, ending a seismic pro-China reign of more than four years.

His withdrawal followed inconclusive April 17 elections that led his party to choose foreign minister Jeremiah Manele as its parliamentary leader—in effect its candidate for the premiership.

Solomon Islands MPs will choose a new prime minister in a secret ballot on Thursday. During four spasmodic spells as the Pacific nation's leader, the 69-year-old Sogavare has maneuvered through armed coups, riots and the rise of China. Sogavare took a parting shot at his critics, saying his family and children had been subjected to "unprecedented verbal abuse".

"I've been accused of many things. But not a

single one of these accusations have been proven," Sogavare told a news conference. "I have been continuously vilified in the media," he said. "But that did not waver my resolve. It has not been easy."

His latest term in office began in 2019, when he abruptly switched diplomatic relations from Taiwan to China, unleashing a wave of investment and aid from Beijing. Sogavare signed a security pact with Beijing in 2022, and has overseen the rapid expansion of Chinese interests across the archipelago, ringing alarm bells in Western capitals. In the April 17 poll, the prime minister only retained his seat by a narrow margin and his party fell short of an outright majority.

But Sogavare's withdrawal from the leadership does not necessarily spell the end of his party's embrace of China. As foreign minister, it was Manele who travelled to Beijing in 2019 to formalise diplomatic relations.

Manele was a career diplomat before entering politics in 2014, according to a biography posted by the World Trade Organization, and previously served at the United Nations in New York. He has in the past lauded China for its generous aid and infrastructure funding, and has stressed Solomon Islands' firm commitment to relations with Beijing. Sogavare said he



**BEIJING:** Solomon Islands' Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare speaks during a bilateral meeting with China's Premier Li Qiang at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on July 10, 2023. -- AFP

was confident his Ownership Unity and Responsibility Party had secured enough support from coalition partners to give it a slim majority of 28 MPs in the new 50-seat parliament. Nominations for the top job will close Tuesday afternoon, Governor General David Vunagi said in a written notice on Monday. — AFP

### News in Brief

#### Turkey to back Rutte's NATO bid

**ISTANBUL:** Turkey on Monday informed Brussels it supported outgoing Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte's bid to become the next secretary general of NATO, foreign ministry spokesman Oncu Keceli said. Rutte met President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Istanbul on Friday to rally Turkey's support for his candidacy. The Dutch politician is the frontrunner to replace Norwegian Jens Stoltenberg at the helm of the military alliance after Britain, Germany and the United States voiced their support for his candidacy. "Today we informed Brussels," Keceli told AFP of the government's support for Rutte. Romanian President Klaus Iohannis is also a candidate for the NATO post. — AFP

#### Russia captures another village

**MOSCOW:** Russia said Monday it had advanced further in eastern Ukraine, capturing another village—Semenivka—near the Moscow-held town of Avdiivka after a series of recent territorial gains. The announcement came a day after Moscow claimed another nearby village with Kyiv saying the situation for its forces was worsening. Russia's defense ministry said it had "liberated" Semenivka, as its forces press their advantage in manpower and ammunition on the battlefield. The tiny village lies south of Novobakhmutivka, which fell to Russian troops over the weekend. — AFP

#### 6 convicted over Greece's wildfire

**ATHENS:** Nearly six years after Greece's deadliest wildfire in the seaside resort of Mati, six people have been convicted of involuntary manslaughter and criminal negligence, the Athens criminal court said on Monday. None of the politicians among the 21 people prosecuted over the disaster were convicted, sparking fury and dismay among relatives of the victims present in court, radio Skai reported. Six people—including the then head of the fire service—received suspended sentences of up to 11 years each for the fire on July 23, 2018, which killed more than 100 people. They were permitted by the court to buy off their sentences for up to 40,000 euros (\$43,000) each. — AFP

#### Czech police shelve blast case

**PRAGUE:** Czech police said Monday they had shelved the case of two ammunition depot blasts in 2014 involving the Russian secret service, citing Moscow's unwillingness to cooperate. The explosions near the eastern Czech village of Vrbečice killed two workers and caused extensive damage. "The police considers it a proven fact that the explosions of both depots in Vrbečice were carried out by officers of the Russian military intelligence service... GRU," Czech police said on its website. "Their motivation was to prevent arms and ammunition supplies to areas where the Russian army was conducting its operations," it added. — AFP

#### Burkina Faso blocks more media

**OUAGADOUGOU, Burkina Faso:** Burkina Faso has suspended a swathe of international news organizations, some indefinitely, for airing accusations of an army massacre of civilians, with the communications regulator CSC adding more outlets over the weekend. Among those named are French newspaper Le Monde, British publication The Guardian, German broadcaster Deutsche Welle and French broadcaster TV5 Monde. — AFP



TUESDAY, APRIL 30, 2024

# Zain supports economic diversification in Kuwaiti market across industries

## Company sponsors UAE Companies Investment Meet in collaboration with UAE Embassy

**KUWAIT:** Zain has sponsored the UAE Companies Investment Meet, entitled 'Unlocking Kuwait's Potential', organized by the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in Kuwait. The event ran for two consecutive days at the Regency Hotel and was joined by 20 UAE-based companies from across the most vibrant industries.

The event was attended by the representative of HH the Prime Minister; Minister of Commerce and Industry Abdullah Al-Jouan, UAE Minister of State for Foreign Trade Dr Thani bin Ahmad Al-Zeyoudi, UAE Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Matar Al-Neyadi, Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, Vice Chairman and CEO of International Financial Advisors (IFA) & Chairman of the Union of Investment Companies Saleh Al-Selmi, Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Industry Mohammed Al-Adwani, along with top executives and leaders from both the public and private sectors. The UAE Companies Investment Meet was organized by the Embassy of the UAE in Kuwait in partnership with the Union of Investment Companies, the UAE Chambers, the UAE International Investors Council, the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotions Authority (KDIPA), the Public Authority of Manpower, the Public Authority for Industry, and the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP).

During the event, Zain's Kuwait Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti affirmed Zain's support to this influential gathering that contributed to fostering sustainable growth in the Kuwaiti market across industries. He explained that Zain believes such platforms play a significant role in enhancing the business landscape, achieving economic diversification, promoting competitiveness, and positioning Kuwait on the regional map as an investment hub.

Al-Khashti also noted that Kuwait's private sector is a key strategic partner to local developmental goals and remains a main pillar of success, as it plays a prominent role in leading the economic landscape, promoting diversification, enhancing productivity, and fostering long-term sustainable growth. This has led Zain to support this event



UAE Minister of State for Foreign Trade Dr Thani Al-Zeyoudi and Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi with top leaders at the event.

that has contributed to achieving these goals.

The UAE Companies Investment Meet aimed to enhance Kuwaiti-Emirati bilateral relations, diversify commercial partnerships in the Kuwaiti market and support their growth, explore promising investment opportunities to achieve sustainable growth, and offer space for exchanging ideas and expertise. 20 UAE-based companies joined the event, representing vibrant industries like food security, infrastructure, health, technology, transportation, shipbuilding, aircraft maintenance, and more. The companies demonstrated their offerings and strategic efforts to the local business community, with many presentations held to introduce investors and potential business partners to opportunities for collaboration, investment, and strategic partnership.



Zain affirmed its support to efforts promoting economic diversification locally.

## Tesla wins key China clearance during Musk visit

**BEIJING:** Tesla received a key security clearance from China during Elon Musk's whistlestop visit to the world's biggest electric car market, which wrapped up on Monday. The tech billionaire arrived on Sunday for his second trip to China in less than a year, meeting top officials including Premier Li Qiang as he worked to boost his electric car company's fortunes in the face of intense competition from local challengers such as BYD.

On the same day, Tesla's locally produced models were listed among the EVs that meet China's data security requirements for smart cars, clearing a key regulatory hurdle.

Musk boarded his private jet at Beijing Capital Airport just before 1:00 pm (0500 GMT), and a Chinese flight tracking app said it was bound for Anchorage, Alaska. Despite the growing market share of domestic automakers, Teslas remain among the best-selling EVs in China.

The firm has been working to boost sales through its "Full Self Driving" (FSD) features, which need to be compliant with strict data and privacy laws. It appeared to inch closer to that approval by teaming up with Chinese tech titan Baidu for maps and navigation, Bloomberg reported Monday.

These advanced assisted driving features do not make its cars fully autonomous, and Tesla says its autopilot and FSD capabilities are meant to be used under driver supervision.



BEIJING: Tesla CEO Elon Musk gets off a minibus before boarding his private plane at Beijing airport on April 29, 2024.— AFP

It sells FSD to Tesla owners for \$8,000 in the United States, or for a \$99 monthly subscription.

Tesla did not immediately respond to AFP queries about FSD in China and the reported partnership with Baidu. Earlier this month, in response to a question on his social media platform X, Musk said FSD availability in China "may be possible very soon".

That report came a day after the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers (CAAM) said Tesla's Model 3 and Model Y were compliant with data security laws. CAAM, which tested vehicles with a national computer security regulator, said in a statement that the approved models satisfied rules on the collection and processing of personal data, including the recordings of faces outside the car.

FSD could help Tesla cars stand out in a Chinese market awash with models that offer customers a wide variety of connected and smart features, analysts said.

Tesla's Model 3 and Model Y "have become uncompetitive", said Tu Le, the founder and managing director of Sino Auto Insights.

"There's still no guarantee of additional sales but without FSD, Tesla has nothing new to offer consumers who are now used to seeing refreshes on EVs every 6-9 months." The cost of FSD on top of Tesla cars' retail price may prove to be another hurdle for consumers.

"Tesla's FSD is not free... There doesn't seem to be much willingness among current Chinese Tesla owners to pay for and use it," Zhong Shi, an analyst with the China Automobile Dealers Association, told AFP. "Many Chinese car companies offer similar features for free or at discounted prices, so users are willing to try it because it doesn't add to their financial burden."

China has led the electric car revolution. "Based on today's policy settings, almost 1 in 3 cars on the roads in China by 2030 is set to be electric," the International Energy Agency said last week in its annual Global EV Outlook. Musk and Tesla's China efforts reflect the importance of this hugely lucrative market for foreign automakers.

Two Japanese car giants last week said they would team up with Chinese tech firms to enhance their artificial intelligence capabilities. Toyota said it would join hands with gaming giant Tencent on AI to try and capitalize on Chinese consumers' growing appetite for advanced smart features in the cars it sells in China. Like other foreign manufacturers, Toyota has struggled to keep up in the ultra-competitive Chinese market, especially as it shifts to electric.

Toyota competitor Nissan also said it would work with Baidu in the same field, cooperating on AI research and to use the Chinese search engine giant's AI tech in cars for the local market. — AFP

## EU says Apple iPad operating system to face stricter rules

**BRUSSELS:** The EU on Monday said Apple's operating system for iPads must comply with tougher new rules that Brussels is imposing to rein in the world's biggest digital companies. The European Commission designated Apple's iPadOS system as a "core" service under the landmark Digital Markets Act (DMA), which forces companies to modify their business ways to encourage competition between online platforms.

It joins other Apple products that were already in the DMA net since September: iOS for iPhones, the App Store, and the Safari browser. Under the DMA, digital firms designated as "gatekeepers" have to abide by a list of rules including allowing interoperability with rivals' communication services and limiting how data is shared between products put out by the same parent company.

Apple is on the gatekeepers list, alongside the likes of Google parent Alphabet, Amazon, TikTok owner ByteDance, Meta and Microsoft.

The inclusion of iPadOS as a core service adds to a long tussle between the European Union and Apple over the bloc's new digital laws. Apple has been one of the DMA's most vocal public critics. It claims the law ushers in privacy and security threats for users.

The commission, the EU's powerful competition regulator, said it named the iPadOS system because it locked users into the iPad operating system. "Apple leverages its large ecosystem to disincentivize end users from switching to other operating systems for tablets," it said. The operating system also "locked-in" Apple's business users, it said, "because of its large and commercially attractive user base, and its importance for certain use cases, such as gaming apps". Apple has six months to comply with the DMA gatekeeper rules, the commission said in a statement.

"Today's decision will ensure that fairness and contestability are preserved also on this platform, in addition to the 22 other services we designated last September," the EU's competition commissioner, Margrethe Vestager, said. Apple said in a statement to comply with the DMA, across all designated services". It added: "Our focus will remain on delivering the very best products and services to our European customers, while mitigating the new privacy and data security risks the DMA poses for our users." Apple already faces a commission investigation under the DMA.

In March, Brussels said it would probe whether Apple's App Store allows developers to present users with offers outside of its app marketplace, free of charge. — AFP

## QatarEnergy signs \$6bn deal with China shipbuilder

**DOHA:** A Chinese ship-building giant will construct 18 huge gas carriers for QatarEnergy under a \$6 billion deal the Gulf firm announced on Monday, hailing it as the largest ever such contract. The China State Shipbuilding Corporation (CSSC) is set to deliver eight Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) vessels in 2028 and 2029, and the others in 2030 and 2031, the energy company said.

The LNG carriers will be built at China's Hudong-Zhonghua shipyard and measure 271,000 cubic metres each, the emirate's state-owned company said in a statement following a signing ceremony in Beijing.

"With a total value of almost \$6 billion for these ultra-modern, largest ever LNG vessels by size, the agreement we signed today is the industry's largest single shipbuilding contract ever," said Energy Minister Saad al-Kaabi, who is also QatarEnergy's CEO. Qatar is one of the world's top LNG producers alongside the United States, Australia and Russia. Asian economies led by China, Japan and South Korea have been the main market for Qatari gas, but demand has also grown from European countries since Russia's war on Ukraine threw supplies into doubt.

Last month, QatarEnergy announced it had signed deals for a total of 104 smaller, conventional-size vessels which the state-owned firm called "the largest shipbuilding and leasing program ever in the history of the industry". The fleet expansion plans come after a flurry of announcements for long-term Qatari gas supply deals.

In recent months, Qatar has inked LNG deals with France's Total, Britain's Shell, India's Petronet and Italy's Eni among others. In November, Qatar agreed to supply Sinopec with three million tons of gas a year for 27 years, its second such deal with the Chinese firm granting it a further share of Qatar's North Field gas expansion project. The expansion, which broke ground last year, contains the world's biggest natural gas reserves and extends under the Gulf into Iranian territory. — AFP



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deal with the Chinese firm granting it a further share of Qatar's North Field gas expansion project. The expansion, which broke ground last year, contains the world's biggest natural gas reserves and extends under the Gulf into Iranian territory. — AFP



Business

# Filipino farmers struggle as drought and heatwave hit

## El Nino weather phenomenon brings drier conditions and baking temperatures

**SAN ANTONIO, Philippines:** Filipino farmer Daniel Velasco pumps water from a well in a desperate attempt to save his wilting vegetables, as a scorching heatwave and the worst drought in years hits crops.

It has hardly rained on Velasco's plot of gourds and tomatoes since November, as the El Nino weather phenomenon brings drier conditions and baking temperatures. "I'm losing a lot of money," Velasco, 57, told AFP, standing barefoot on the cracked ground in the northern province of Nueva Ecija.

His gourds "died before I could even sell them", pushing him deeper into debt. El Nino is a naturally occurring climate pattern typically associated with increased heat worldwide, leading to drought in some parts of the world and heavy rains elsewhere. Unusually hot weather has blasted South and Southeast Asia for the past week, forcing schools to send children home and the authorities to issue health warnings.

Global temperatures hit record highs last year, and the United Nations' weather and climate agency said last week that Asia was warming at a particularly rapid pace. More than half of the Philippines' provinces, including Nueva Ecija, are in drought as El Nino exacerbates hot and dry conditions typical for March, April and May.

Temperatures have sizzled around 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) in parts of the country in recent days, with the heat index - what the temperature feels like, taking into account humidity - in one area hitting 53C.

In the Philippines, which ranks among the countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, the upcoming harvest is likely to be "below average", the UN has warned. Crop losses are estimated at more than four billion pesos (\$69 million) and farmers face further hardship if the drought doesn't break soon. It is hoped rain in mid-May will bring some relief, but drier than normal conditions could persist until August, Ana Solis, chief climatologist at the state weather forecaster, told AFP.

Joey Villarama, spokesman for the government's Task Force El Nino, said the current conditions were comparable to the drought during the 1997-1998 El Nino, the country's worst-ever dry spell.



**SAN ANTONIO, The Philippines:** In this photo taken on April 25, 2024 Filipino farmer Daniel Velasco (left) waters the drought-stricken crops at a farm in San Antonio, Nueva Ecija. — AFP

"We are up against nature," Villarama said. "It's very difficult because it's unpredictable." Like Velasco, many farmers in Nueva Ecija normally count on the Pantabangan Dam for irrigation, but levels have fallen nearly 50 meters (164 feet) and it no longer reaches their fields. The receding water forced two hydropower plants to shut earlier than usual - worsening already strained electricity supplies, as people crank up air conditioners and fans to cool off.

Some farmers like Velasco switched from rice to vegetables, which need less water, but even those are dying. Velasco said his January harvest was halved by insufficient rain, and those that he did pick were too small to sell at the market. Now, the groundwater is drying up. It takes Velasco three times as long to draw water from the well as it did before.

He worries how he will cope if the rains do not come soon and his well dries up - as others around have done. "Farming is my only way to earn a living," Velasco said, fearing he would slip deeper into debt and be unable to send his youngest child to school. "If there's no water, how can I continue?"

His neighbor Eddie Balagtas, 69, is also struggling. "I just wasted my effort," Balagtas said, removing his shrivelled watermelon vines on his one-hectare (2.5-acre) farm. "If you don't have other sources of income, there's no choice but to borrow money," Balagtas said, praying for rain so that he could plant a crop of rice. "It's hard."

Rice farmers in drought-stricken Occidental Mindoro province, south of the main island of Luzon, have started to receive financial assistance. "You could push your fist through the cracks, that's how severe it is for the rice farms," said Daisy Leano, information officer for San Jose municipality. As dam levels drop, some urban areas have been left without water.

More than 100 cities and municipalities have declared the drought a state of calamity to access emergency funds. Fire trucks have been deployed in neighborhoods of Bacolod city in the central province of Negros Occidental to deliver water to residents. "I ask myself, 'Why is this happening to us?'" said Dolores Bauya, 54, who lines up at least once a week to receive the free water. — AFP

## Loay Jassim Al-Kharafi: Mohammed bin Rashid is a marvel of his time

**KUWAIT:** The UAE Companies Exhibition and Forum held in Kuwait on April 28 and 29, graced by esteemed leaders and officials from the economic sectors of both nations, featured the participation of 20 prominent Emirati companies spanning the public and private domains. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum's announcement of the approval of designs for a new passenger terminal at Al Maktoum International Airport sets the stage for Dubai to spearhead the global aviation sector for the forthcoming four decades.

Loay Jassim Al-Kharafi, CEO of Mohamed Abdul Mohsen Al-Kharafi and Sons Company, expressed profound admiration, stating: "Mohammed bin Rashid is a marvel of his time — a shining example of rare excellence. His dreams and endeavors, executed with quiet determination, continually impress the world and bring prosperity, not only to his country, but to the whole region. Congratulations to the Emirates and beyond. He stands as the visionary architect, builder and financial expert of the region, navigating through a world full of conflicts and divisions. Yet, we witness the fruition of stability and robust economic growth."

The forum presented a significant opportunity to strengthen exports and industrial integration between the UAE and Kuwait. It facilitates discussions on tenders and investment prospects for Emirati companies in Kuwait's market. Non-oil trade between the two countries grew by 2 percent in 2023, reaching 45 billion dirhams, a notable increase from previous years. The UAE serves as the primary destination for Kuwait's non-oil exports, accounting



Loay Jassim Al-Kharafi

for 22 percent of its global exports. These figures underscore the UAE's pivotal role as a gateway for Kuwaiti exports and re-exports worldwide. The forum offers numerous avenues to boost trade cooperation between the UAE and Kuwait and reinforce their strategic economic partnership.

The exhibition and forum reflect the shared commitment of both countries to enhance collaboration across various sectors. The inaugural Emirati Companies Exhibition and Forum brought together local, regional, and international companies and investment institutions, providing an ideal platform to explore promising sectors, industries, and key investment and commercial opportunities for Emirati companies in the Kuwaiti market.

Dr Matar Al-Neyadi, UAE Ambassador to Kuwait, inaugurated the exhibition and forum, with the presence of Dr Thani bin Ahmad Al-Zeyoudi - UAE Minister of State for Foreign Trade, Abdullah Al-Jouan - Minister of Trade and Industry in Kuwait, Abdullah Al-Mazrui - President of UAE Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and other prominent economic figures from both countries.



Awareness workshop for students of American International University, Kuwait.

## CMA conducts workshop for AIU students

**KUWAIT:** An awareness workshop for students of American International University, Kuwait (AIU) was held on Monday in line with the initiatives of the Capital Markets Authority (CMA) aimed at bolstering financial inclusion and investment awareness within the university education sector. The workshop, a collaborative effort between AIU and CMA, featured presentations by Saud bin Ghaith, Specialist at the Market Operations Department; Nasser Al-Terkait, Senior Analyst at the Markets Operations Follow-up; and Basma Akbar, Chief Financial Analyst at the Awareness Office.

The session commenced with a comprehensive overview presented by Basma Akbar, detailing the establishment of the authority and its objectives as outlined in its governing laws. These objectives include organizing market activities, developing financial markets, diversifying investment tools, ensuring trader protection and mitigating inherent risks. Akbar emphasized the importance of public awareness regarding these activities, along with the associated

benefits, risks, and responsibilities. Subsequently, the workshop tackled the theme "Behaviors and Dealing Practices that are in Violation and are Illegal" through various approaches. It began with a detailed presentation on stock exchange principles, types of traded stocks and trading mechanisms, before focusing on Boursa Kuwait, including its indicators, mechanisms, trading hours and electronic trading platforms.

The bulk of the discussion centered on identifying violating trading behaviors and practices, encompassing their types, forms and means. Lecturers highlighted behaviors outlined in the authority's laws and implementation regulations. Special attention was given to notable behaviors such as insider trading, fraud and manipulation during trading, along with the detrimental effects of such misleading practices on traders. The workshop emphasized the potential for wrongful investment decisions resulting from false impressions created by these activities.

Practical examples were provided to illustrate the distinctions between normal and misleading trading practices. The final segment of the workshop outlined the authority's procedures for detecting and addressing wrongful and violating trading behaviors. This included the adoption of an automated supervision system (SMARTS) to identify suspicious trading activities and refer violators to legal authorities.

## Philips settles US sleep machine cases for \$1.1bn

**THE HAGUE, Netherlands:** Dutch medical device maker Philips said Monday it had reached a \$1.1 billion deal to settle US lawsuits over faulty sleep machines that have dogged the company. The company's shares soared more than 45 percent on news of the settlement, which was less onerous than feared by some shareholders. Philips has been battling a series of crises since 2021 over its DreamStation machines for sleep apnea, a disorder in which breathing intermittently stops during sleep. Millions of devices were recalled over concerns that users were at risk of inhaling pieces of noise-cancelling foams and fears it could potentially cause cancer.

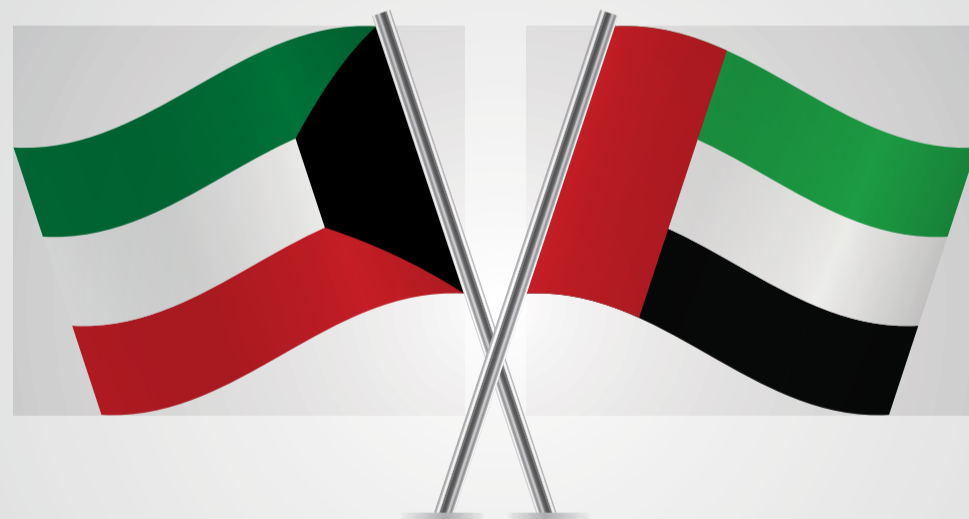
Earlier this year, the company decided to halt new sales in the United States of the machines made by subsidiary Philips Respironics. Philips said in a statement Monday that it had reached an agreement with the plaintiffs "to resolve the personal injury litigation and the medical monitoring class action to end the un-



certainty associated with litigation in the US." It added that it did not "admit any fault or liability, or that any injuries were caused by Respironics' devices." The agreement addresses claims filed in US courts and other potential cases, it said.

"Patient safety and quality is our highest priority, and we have taken important steps in further resolving the consequences of the Respironics recall," Philips chief executive Roy Jacobs said in the statement. "The remediation of the sleep therapy devices for patients is almost complete, and the test results to date show the use of these devices is not expected to result in appreciable harm to health," he said. "We do regret the concern that patients may have experienced," he said, adding that the settlements were "significant milestones and provide further clarity on the way forward for Philips." — AFP

## Kuwait and United Arab Emirates



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# Saudi non-oil private sector growth to accelerate in 2025

## Inflation to ease further, unemployment at a record low

**KUWAIT:** Despite higher interest rates, non-oil economic growth remained robust in 2023, softening to 3.8 percent from 5.3 percent in 2022. The private sector continued to be the growth driver, although its expansion moderated to 4.4 percent in 2023 from a strong 5.6 percent in 2022. Sector-wise, trade, restaurants, and hotels contributed the most to GDP growth, expanding by 7 percent in 2023, supported by the strong focus on boosting tourism, both inbound as well as domestic. In terms of expenditure on GDP, private-sector investment continued to be the fastest growing, although it decelerated sharply to 6.2 percent in 2023 from a very strong 22 percent average in 2021-2022.

We expect the constructive macro-economic dynamics to be sustained in 2024 and potentially accelerate in 2025 as the impact of lower interest rates starts to kick in. Consumer spending remains resilient, with the value of POS transactions up around 10 percent y/y through mid-April, in line with the increase recorded in 2023. Despite ongoing tight liquidity in the banking sector, credit growth (+11 percent y/y through February) remains buoyant, even showing signs of strengthening in the first months of 2024, driven by corporate credit (+15 percent). The PMI continues to be favorable (averaging 56.5 in Q1), and while it hit a recent low in January, has improved driven by the important sub-indices of output and new orders. We forecast the non-oil sector to grow by a broadly steady 3.7 percent in 2024 and then by 4.2 percent in 2025, driven by private sector gains of 4.5 percent and 5 percent, respectively.

This positive outlook is supported by the government's effective policy-making and the upgrade to the projected spending levels for 2024-2025 in the latest budget. There are challenges

**Table 1: Key economic indicators**

		2022	2023	2024f	2025f
Nominal GDP	\$ bn	1,109	1,068	1,102	1,164
Real GDP	% y/y	7.5	-0.8	1.2	4.2
- Oil	% y/y	15.0	-9.0	-5.2	3.7
- Non-oil	% y/y	5.3	3.8	3.7	4.2
Inflation (average)	% y/y	2.5	2.3	1.8	2.0
Fiscal balance	% of GDP	2.5	-2.0	-1.7	-2.0
Government debt	% of GDP	23.8	26.2	27.0	26.9
Current account	% of GDP	13.7	3.2	2.4	2.4

Source: Official sources, NBK forecasts

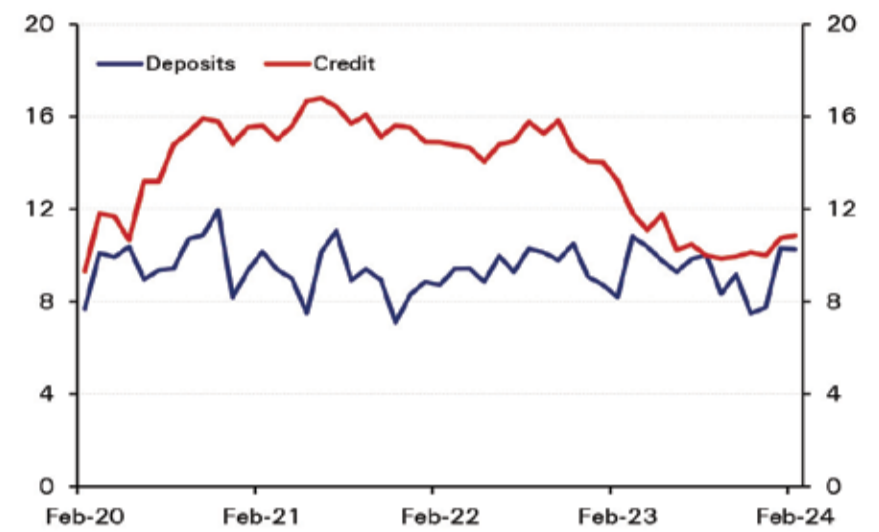
along the way, however. For example, given that government spending soared by an average of 12 percent in each of the past two years, the spending intensity is set to slow in 2024-2025, which could weigh on non-oil activity. In addition, given some stalling in the US disinflation progress so far this year, the cut in interest rates is being pushed out to late 2024, keeping Saudi interbank rates, and hence the cost of borrowing elevated, which is not supportive for non-oil activity this year. Consequently, the tailwind of lower interest rates (Saudi policy rates usually move together with US rates) will be mostly a story for 2025. Another key metric to monitor is foreign direct investment (given that higher investment levels are crucial to achieve Vision 2030 targets), which, after rising strongly in 2021-2022, dropped in 2023

to stand at 1.8 percent of GDP compared with a 5.7 percent target for 2030.

As for the oil sector, growth was negative in 2023 (-9 percent) given the production cuts, which deepened around the middle of that year. Given our house view on oil market dynamics, Saudi oil production is expected to remain at current levels throughout 2024 and increase only gradually next year, translating into oil GDP growth of -5.2 percent and +3.7 percent, respectively. However, KSA will likely continue to take a very proactive and nimble role in managing global oil supply, which could result in a steep deviation from our oil production assumptions for 2024-2025. All in all, total GDP is forecast to increase by a limited 1.2 percent in 2024, pressured by the oil sector, then grow by a stronger 4.2 percent in 2025 as oil GDP growth turns

positive and non-oil growth strengthens.

**Chart 2: Credit and deposit growth (% y/y)**



Source: SAMA

### Inflation softens

Inflation (which remained relatively low, driven by subsidies, price caps, and strong competition) continued to soften, standing at 1.6 percent y/y through March, with housing rentals (+10.5 percent y/y) almost the sole driver of price pressures over the past year. Despite ongoing hot housing rentals, we project average inflation to continue softening, standing at 1.8 percent and 2 percent in 2024-2025, down from 2.3 percent in 2023. Solid non-oil growth and ongoing Saudization initiatives dropped the unemployment rate among Saudis to an all-time low of 7.7 percent at the end of 2023, down from 8 percent one year before, and a stone's throw from the 7 percent target set for 2030.

### Manageable fiscal deficits

An 11 percent increase in spending in 2023, a 12 percent drop in oil revenues but a 11 percent rise in non-oil revenues resulted in a fiscal deficit of 2 percent of GDP. We project limited deficits of 1.7 percent-2 percent of GDP in 2024-2025, as government spending (which will likely continue to exceed budget) rises modestly, oil revenues increase on higher dividends from Aramco, and non-oil revenues continue growing, fueled by an expanding non-oil sector. Hence, debt levels should remain contained, below 27 percent of GDP by 2025. The main upside risk is higher-than-forecast oil production, leading to stronger GDP growth. The major downside risk is a weaker-than-expected non-oil expansion that may be triggered by the projected deceleration in government spending growth and/or pressure from ongoing elevated interest rates.

## US stocks rise on tech outlook as yen rebounds

**LONDON:** The yen rebounded Monday from a 34-year low against the dollar after what some traders speculate could have been the first intervention by Japanese authorities to support the weakening currency since late 2022. Meanwhile, US shares opened higher as last week's tech rally continued, led by Tesla after its founder Elon Musk won key security clearances during a trip to China.

In Asia, the yen sank to 160.17 to the dollar in choppy but thin holiday trading, before suddenly bouncing back as high as 154.54. The yen's initial drop "was met by a wave of dollar sellers," said David Morrison, senior market analyst at Trade Nation. "It's unclear whether the BoJ (Bank of Japan) has intervened directly or not, but the dollar is down this morning, while there has been little movement in crosses outside of those including either US dollars or Japanese yen." Masato Kanda, Japan's vice minister of finance for international affairs, made no comment to reporters on Monday.

The Japanese currency had come under pressure again after the Bank of Japan refused to tighten monetary policy further at its meeting last week. At the same time, forecast-topping US inflation reports have dented hopes for the US Federal Reserve to cut its interest rates this year. Japanese officials have repeatedly said they are ready to step in if there were wild speculative movements. On Wall Street, all the main equity indexes rose as the prospect of continued strong earnings from tech companies outweighed repeated delays in when the Fed could start cutting interest rate cuts.

Tesla jumped 11 percent after its locally produced models were listed among electric vehicles that meet China's data security requirements for smart cars during Musk's whistlestop visit to the world's biggest car market. Late last week, Microsoft and Google owner Alphabet released forecast-beating earnings, soothing worries that this year's tech-fueled global markets rally might have been overdone.

The US Federal Reserve's policymaking committee begins a two-day meeting on Tuesday, and will announce its decision Wednesday, with hardly anyone expecting a rate cut given a succession of stubbornly high inflation reports. "The signals of the Fed speakers into this meeting were uniform - high for longer until they have confidence from inflation data dropping," said Bob Savage, head of market strategy at BNY Mellon.

Most Asian equity markets closed higher Monday, following through from last week's rally on Wall Street. Eurozone stocks diverged, but London struck another record peak with mining giant Anglo-American up 1.5 percent after rejecting a bid from Australia's BHP, which is expected to come back with a higher offer. In Amsterdam, Philips was up 38 percent after it reached a settlement to put an end to litigation in the United States over recalled sleep machines. — AFP

## Weyay Bank launches cashback campaign for allowed students

**KUWAIT:** Weyay Bank, the first digital bank in Kuwait, unveils its latest initiative tailored exclusively for students receiving allowances. With a steadfast commitment to understanding and addressing the unique needs of young consumers, Weyay Bank's newest campaign is set to redefine the banking experience for this demographic.



Mohammad Al-Hunaidi

In a bold move to empower students, Weyay Bank introduces an unparalleled opportunity: transfer your allowance to Weyay Bank and unlock tailored benefits. By simply using their Weyay Prepaid card, students gain access to an array of exclusive rewards, including:

- 30 percent cashback on Cari and Jahez: Recognizing the importance of convenience in today's fast-paced world, Weyay Bank partners with Cari and Jahez to provide students with unbeatable cashback rewards on their online orders, empowering them to save while savoring their favorite meals. Terms and conditions apply.
- 1 percent cashback on all spends: Every transaction counts, and with Weyay Bank, students can earn rewards effortlessly. From textbooks to transporta-

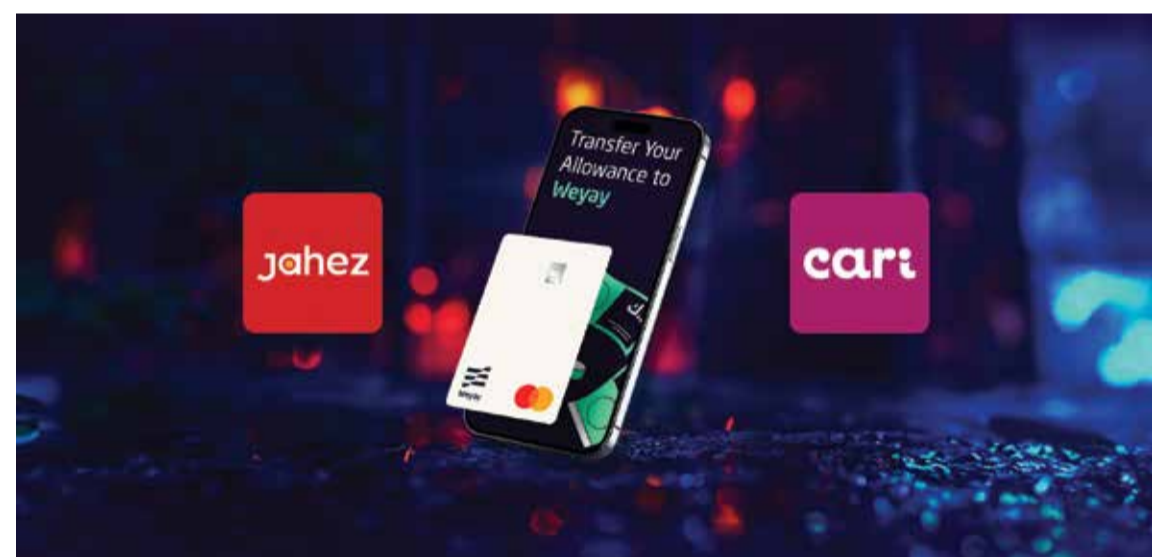
## Kenya's Ruto seeks boost to WB fund for developing nations

**NAIROBI:** Kenyan President William Ruto called on richer countries Monday to boost contributions to a World Bank fund to help African development and the fight against climate change. His comments came at a summit of African leaders and the World Bank in the Kenyan capital Nairobi to discuss building financial support for the continent of 1.2 billion people.

Ruto urged donors to the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) to raise their

## China's EV giant BYD misses Q1 revenue estimates

**SHANGHAI:** Major Chinese electric carmaker BYD reported lower-than-expected revenue for the first quarter of 2024 on Monday, as an aggressive domestic price war and Western regulatory pressure weighed on the company's growth. BYD posted an operating revenue of 124.94 billion yuan (\$17.25 billion) for the first three months of the year, up 3.97 percent from a year ago, according to a stock exchange filing.



tion, every purchase contributes to their savings, with 1 percent cashback on all spendings. Terms and conditions apply.

Moreover, this campaign marks just the beginning of Weyay Bank's ongoing dedication to creating tailored offers for allowed students. With a proactive approach to understanding and meeting the evolving needs of students, Weyay Bank promises even more thrilling opportunities on the horizon.

"Weyay Bank is not just a financial institution; it's a lifestyle partner for today's dynamic students," remarked Mohammad Al-Hunaidi, Product Owner at Weyay Bank. "Our latest campaign is a testament to our unwavering commitment to empowering students and enhancing their banking experience. We're thrilled to kickstart this journey and look forward to launch more exciting offers designed specifically for

contributions to at least \$120 billion in 2024, from \$93 billion raised in 2021. "As many African and other developing nations face severe debt crises, this financial strain hampers our efforts to combat climate change, transition to a low-carbon economy, and adequately fund essential sectors like education, health, and social protection," he said.

The leaders were discussing how the IDA could help improve services such as energy and health care across Africa. "The rising cost of living, increasing commodity prices, and supply chain disruptions severely impact our food security, healthcare systems, and overall preparedness for and response to crises," Ruto said. The summit comes as Kenya and other East African countries are battling heavy rains and flooding that have claimed the lives of scores of

Bloomberg analysts had predicted a quarterly revenue of 132.53 billion yuan. The Shenzhen-based company is moving quickly overseas - including into Southeast Asian countries but also further afield in Latin America and Europe - as a price war continues to be waged in China, the world's largest automotive market. BYD overtook Elon Musk's Tesla in the fourth quarter of 2023 to become the world's top seller of electric vehicles. Tesla reclaimed that title in the first quarter of this year, but BYD remains firmly on top in its home market.

The Chinese automaker recorded a record annual profit of 30 billion yuan last year. Its profit in the first quarter was 4.57 billion yuan, up 10.62 percent from a year ago, BYD said on Monday. BYD said its research and development and marketing expenses

allowance recipients."

Furthermore, Weyay Bank offers a comprehensive suite of digital products and services that complement and enrich the student lifestyle. From Digital Allowance and Salary Transfer to Budgeting and Tracking, Saving Pots, Peer-to-Peer Money Requests, stc Digital Store, and more, Weyay Bank continues to lead the digital banking landscape in Kuwait. Moreover, with Weyay's streamlined account opening process, customers can open an account in under 3 minutes, ensuring hassle-free access to their innovative banking solutions.

As Weyay Bank continues to revolutionize the banking landscape in Kuwait, students are encouraged to stay tuned for forthcoming announcements and discover how Weyay Bank is shaping the future of student banking.

people in recent weeks.

Africa is responsible for the smallest amount of carbon emissions but is hit disproportionately hard by droughts, flooding, storms and heatwaves. Donors to the IDA fund meet every three years to "to replenish IDA's resources and review its policy framework," the World Bank says on its website.

The IDA helps developing nations in Africa and other parts of the world through grants and loans with low interest rates. World Bank president Ajay Banga told the meeting there was a need to act "with urgency" and said that the IDA, the World Bank, governments and the private sector should do more.

"We are working to make IDA more efficient and able to deliver faster by cutting burdensome rules, requirements, and redundancies," he added. — AFP

had shot up in the first quarter due to an "increase in advertising and exhibition expenses and depreciation and amortization", as well as higher "material consumption".

China has led the global transition to electric vehicles, with almost 1 in 3 cars on Chinese roads set to be electric by 2030, according to the International Energy Agency's annual Global EV Outlook published last week. There are a staggering 129 EV brands in China, but just 20 have managed to achieve a domestic market share of one percent or more, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

Rival brands have sought in recent months to undercut each other's prices, offering customers built-in gadgets and trendy customization options at lower and lower price tags. — AFP



TUESDAY, APRIL 30, 2024



## Marmalade fest celebrates quintessential British breakfast treat

The Japanese ambassador raved about the daffodils and the glorious spring sunshine. The Australian envoy joked about beating the "Poms" at their own game. A life-sized Paddington waved and clapped. On the steps of a centuries-old country house in northwest England, one of the nation's most eccentric cultural events - the Dalemain World Marmalade Awards - was in full swing. Inside, in an oak-paneled room lined with portraits of family ancestors, winning jars of the quintessential British fruit preserve covered every surface. "Excellent marmalade, just cloudy," read one judge's report card. "Good color and set," said another. "Jar should be filled to the top," said a third.

Every January and February, when bitter Seville oranges from Spain are available for a few short weeks, marmalade makers shut themselves away in their kitchens to chop, pulp and boil. Many of those homemade marmalades - along with other non-Seville marmalades from as far afield as Hawaii, Japan, Taiwan and Australia - wind their way to Dalemain, which this year received just under 3,000 pots of the sweet, sticky condiment. The 2024 competition featured 17 categories, including entries from a Taiwanese orphanage in the children's section and a US women's correctional facility in the newly introduced prison's class.

### 'We got silver!'

Made by boiling together the juice and peel of citrus fruits, sugar and water, marmalade as we know it now was pioneered commercially in the late 18th century by the Keiller family of Dundee in Scotland. Spread generously on buttered toast, it is traditionally a staple of British breakfast tables as well as the favored sandwich filling of children's character Paddington, a small bear from "deepest, darkest Peru". "We got a silver, which we're delighted about!" said James Stoddart, a prison rehabilitation worker in northeast England, spotting his

jail's entry adorned with a silver star. Two prisoners had lobbied to take part, inspired by one of their daughters who loved Paddington, he said, even though neither of them had a clue how to make marmalade. "You're not allowed glass inside prisons so we had to really fight



A screenshot taken from an AFP TV video, shows people browsing jars of marmalade entered into the annual Dalemain world marmalade awards, in Penrith, north west England. — AFP photos

to get it in and get it done," he said, adding that 12 jars were eventually produced, including one that was sent to the little girl.

Founded by Dalemain chatelaine Jane Hasell-McCosh, the awards are held annually at the family's

historic house in the Lake District National Park and have raised more than £250,000 (\$310,000) for charity. From just 60 jars from the local area in 2005, there are now spin-off events also taking place in Japan and Australia.

was "a very English thing" which he had happily adopted since living in the UK. But he said getting it right was not an exact science and the results could be unpredictable.

The clarity could be wrong, the peel might be a bit tough, the texture could be too runny, he said. "That's the charm of it." Marmalade received an unexpected boost during the 2022 celebrations for Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee, when the late monarch took part in a televised comedy sketch with Paddington.

### 'Broad church'

The skit was a welcome reminder of marmalade's qualities at a time when homemade has never been more popular, said Caroline Hodge, winner of the dark and chunky category. Mass-produced marmalade had "got sugary and that's not flavor", she said, explaining that she had reduced the sugar content of a recipe handed down to her by an aunt and added ginger, turmeric and all spice. "It's very emotional because my aunt is no longer here and I'm a bit blown away," she said. "It's not quite Wimbledon but it's definitely the Oscars," she added.

Entries for the 2024 competition included a host of unusual ingredients from chillies and seaweed to caviar and smoked pineapple. Retiring head judge Dan Lepard said the awards were a "broad church" happy to embrace "all the citrus fruits in the world" - not just Seville oranges - as well as unusual flavorings. For the overall 2024 winner, Stephen Snead, the honor comes with the added bonus of having his marmalade commercially produced for a year and sold in luxury London department store Fortnum & Mason.

The 52-year-old English accountant who won with two jars - orange and lime marmalade with red chillies and a lime marmalade with creme de cacao - said he was overwhelmed to be at Dalemain and see "just how far the marmalade family reaches across the world." "It's just an absolute thrill," he said. — AFP



## Mould-breaking Miss Germany defies wave of online hatred



Iranian-born German architect and Miss Germany 2024 Apameh Schoenauer smiles during an interview with AFP in her office in Berlin, Germany. - AFP photos

As a mother who is almost 40 and who was born in Iran, the new Miss Germany Apameh Schoenauer stood out at the beauty pageant. But those traits also exposed her to a wave of online abuse. "I knew I would get a bit of blowback, but not like this," Schoenauer, 39, told AFP. Many of the hateful messages aimed at her over her looks and ethnicity after her coronation in February were "superficial," she said. But it was also her unconventional profile that drove her to sign up for the contest. "I took part in Miss Germany because I wanted to change something," said Schoenauer, an architect and mother of a toddler, who moved to Germany aged six.

It was after the birth of her daughter that Schoenauer decided she wanted

to do something to be more of a "role model" for young girls. Schoenauer's own roots were a source of inspiration. The images of "strong Iranian women, taking to the streets every day to fight for their freedom" after the death of Mahsa Amini in 2022 moved her to do something, Schoenauer said. A wave of protest erupted in Iran after the death in custody of the 22-year-old, who was arrested by the morality police for an alleged breach of the country's strict dress code for women.

Besides being an architect, Schoenauer is the founder of the Shirzan network - "lion woman" in Farsi - which campaigns for women's rights. Most Iranians, she said, were "proud" to see her crowned Miss Germany. "They gain hope from the fact that,



Iranian-born German architect and Miss Germany 2024 Apameh Schoenauer poses for a photo.

as an Iranian woman, you can make a difference in a different country where you grew up and have lived for more than 30 years."

### 'Assert yourself'

Since being overhauled in 2019, the Miss Germany pageant is less about waist measurements and looks, and more about the character and achievements of the contestants. The most recent edition of the competition, which is not linked to the Miss Universe contest, also lifted the upper age limit, opening up to older women. The angry response online to Schoenauer's coronation showed that her campaign "could not be more important than it is right now".

Attacking her for the way she looks or her background was "very sad", Schoenauer

said. "If they have the courage, they should sit down at a table and talk to me constructively," she said. "But when someone hides behind their screen, behind an anonymous name... I don't waste my energy on this." After getting a degree, Schoenauer said she had a shock when she stepped into the male-dominated world of architecture.

"I learned what it means to assert yourself, to battle through as a woman in a man's job and then also as an Iranian woman, as a migrant," Schoenauer said her mission as Miss Germany was to "inspire young women to become the best version of themselves" whatever their story. "You can never forget about your origins, but you have to look now to your future to do the best you can," she said. — AFP

## Palestinian prisoner in Zionist entity wins top fiction prize

Palestinian writer Basim Khandaqji, jailed 20 years ago in the Zionist entity, won a prestigious prize for Arabic fiction on Sunday for his novel 'A Mask, the Color of the Sky'. The award of the 2024 International Prize for Arabic Fiction was announced at a ceremony in Abu Dhabi. The prize was accepted on Khandaqji's behalf by Rana Idriss, owner of Dar Al-Adab, the book's Lebanon-based publisher. Khandaqji was born in the Zionist-occupied West Bank city of Nablus in 1983, and wrote short stories until his arrest in 2004 at the age of 21.

He was convicted and jailed in Tel Aviv, and completed his university education while imprisoned via the Internet. The mask in the novel's title refers to the blue identity card that Nur, an archaeologist living in a refugee camp in Ramallah, finds in the pocket of an old coat belonging to a Zionist. Khandaqji's book was chosen from 133 works submitted to the competition.

Nabil Suleiman, who chaired the jury, said the novel "dissects a complex, bitter reality of family fragmentation, displacement, genocide, and racism". Since being jailed Khandaqji has written poetry collections including "Rituals of the First Time" and "The Breath of a Nocturnal Poem". He has also written three earlier novels. — AFP







An exhibition visitor uses a mobile phone during the press show before the opening of the exhibition.



An exhibition visitor looks at the paintings by the late Ukrainian folk artist Maria Prymachenko.

## Poland shows colorful Ukraine art of hope and resistance

Days after invading Ukraine, Russian forces fired rockets at a museum housing colorful paintings by the late Ukrainian folk artist Maria Prymachenko, admired by Pablo Picasso and Marc Chagall. The building burned down but her joyful work survived. Residents of the northern town of Ivankiv managed to rescue the pictures, turning the imaginative painter into a symbol of endurance and hope. Prymachenko's light through darkness approach despite a lifetime of hardships can be appreciated starting Friday in Poland's capital, now home to thousands of refugees from neighboring Ukraine.

The exhibition features dozens of gouache paintings of rural life and fantastical creatures in a childlike style and a palette resplendent with flamboyant tones of highlighter pink, sunflower yellow and blood orange.

"Beyond being a famous painter, Maria Prymachenko is also a great symbol of Russia's failure to erase Ukrainian identity and culture," said Vitalii Bilyi, counsellor at the Ukrainian embassy in Warsaw. "And thanks to this exhibition we can spread the word," he told AFP at a press preview of the show entitled "A tiger came into the garden", which runs until June at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw.

### 'Bouquet to the Unknown Soldier'

Prymachenko was born in the village of Bolotnya in 1909 and over nearly nine decades survived polio, the Ukrainian famine, both world wars—losing her husband to the

second—and the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. "She showed strength of spirit and painted all her life. The paintings, while colorful, show different aspects of life and the Ukrainian

tragedy," said Myroslava Keryk, head of the Ukrainian House Foundation which promotes the country's culture in Poland. "And they provide hope of victory, that we will persevere and

the war will end," she told AFP.

Prymachenko produced her commentary on everyday life by pairing images of animals or nature with little poems, often with grammati-

cal mistakes because of her lack of education, Keryk said. An example from the exhibition is a meditation on hunger featuring a cheery yellow and pink depiction of a billy goat and the title "Dear little goat, have you eaten, have you drunk?" Another shows bright pink ornamental tulips against a sombre background with a caption that begins: "A bouquet to the Unknown Soldier. Honor and glory to you, dear warriors!"

### 'Live like flowers bloom'

The war widow painted a whole series dedicated to fighting men, which several decades later "has an incredible topical anti-war message", said co-curator Szymon Maliborski. "These are works that allow Prymachenko to, on the one hand, avoid having to directly depict war, but on the other hand show a grappling with loss, the death of a loved one," he told AFP.

A sunny painting of exotic blue birds is offset by the poem, "Four parrots sit in a cherry tree humming. The boys go to the army and the girls see them off—wishing them luck". This contrast between optimism and trauma was typical for the painter who had wished for "people to live like flowers bloom", according to Maliborski. She often "mixed the solemn with the comical, adding a dash of humor or acceptance to her criticism," he said. "There's a kind of coming to terms with the world and wanting to change it simultaneously. The awareness that human nature is what it is yet fighting for it to be better." — AFP



An exhibition visitor photographs work by the late Ukrainian folk artist Maria Prymachenko, during the press show before the opening of her exhibition, "A Tiger Came into the Garden: Art of Maria Prymachenko", at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw. — AFP photos



An exhibition visitor walks past the paintings by the late Ukrainian folk artist Maria Prymachenko.



Paintings, by the late Ukrainian folk artist Maria Prymachenko, are seen.



An exhibition visitor looks at the paintings by the late Ukrainian folk artist Maria Prymachenko.

## Sadler's Wells announce shortlist for 'dance Oscars'

Britain's internationally renowned Sadler's Wells theatre on Monday announced the shortlist for the first global dance prize, aimed at raising the profile of contemporary dance just as the Turner prize did for contemporary art. The first biennial Rose international dance prize will be awarded next year, said Alistair Spalding, artistic director of the London theatre. He said the seven shortlisted works explored themes that have dominated the world agenda in recent years -- Covid, post Covid, climate change, identity politics and conflict.

They include Brazilian choreographer Lia Rodrigues' "Encantado", inspired by "notions of enchantment" and performed by dancers trained in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. Another, "An Untitled Love" by the American Kyle Abraham, depicts black love and community in the United States. Greece's Christos Papadopoulos is nominated for his work "Larsen C", named after the vast Antarctic ice sheet which broke away in 2017. Other countries included on the shortlist are France, the Zionist entity, Portugal and Taiwan.

"We would like the Rose Prize to do what the Turner prize has done for visual arts, what the Booker has done for publishing," Spalding said. The prize will be divided into two categories -- the Rose category for established choreographers with a prize of £40,000 (\$50,000), and the Bloom category for emerging choreographers with a prize of £15,000. Eligible works must be more than 50 minutes long and have staged their premiere between



Brazilian choreographer Lia Rodrigues poses during a photo session at the Theatre National de Chaillot in Paris on November 29, 2021. — AFP

October 2021 and February 2023.

A jury will judge the entries at Sadler's Wells in January and February 2025. The winners of the two categories will be announced on February 10. British dancer and choreographer Akram Khan, whose dance company

created a section of the London Olympics opening ceremony in 2012, hailed the creation of an award specifically for choreographers. He said it was a "rare" opportunity to "put a spotlight on the importance of storytelling through movement". — AFP

## Russian band arrested mid-concert over 'Nazi symbols'

Three members of a well-known Russian metal band were arrested in the middle of a concert and charged with displaying "Nazi symbols", authorities said. The members of Korrozia Metalla, aged 19, 42 and 57, have been accused of "propaganda or public display of Nazi accessories or symbols", said regional police in the western city of Nizhny Novgorod following the arrests late Saturday. "Police officers with the support of the national guard arrested three members of a music band in one of Nizhny Novgorod's clubs," police added in a statement. The offence is usually punishable by a fine or a short period of administrative detention.

Police said they seized T-shirts and books "displaying banned symbols". Band manager Maria Rounova told state news agency TASS the motifs in question are "old Slavic symbols". Frontman Sergey Troitsky said in a post on social media Sunday that the band's drummer was in a coma after being attacked by "three bullies". In images shared on social media, security forces can be seen bursting into the concert hall and forcing spectators to lie down on the floor. Since Russia sparked the conflict in Ukraine more than two years ago, Moscow has cracked down on dissent with free expression increasingly under pressure. — AFP



Lifestyle



# Climate change, Brexit threaten to wilt Dutch tulips

This photograph near Egmond, Noord Holland province, shows tulip flowers blooming in a field.



This photograph in Spierdijk shows a field of blooming tulip flowers.



This photograph near Egmond, Noord Holland province, shows different varieties of tulips growing in a field..

Arjan Smit gazes out over his tulip fields, a riot of red and pink flowers he has cultivated all his adult life and part of a family business his grandfather started in 1940. The 55-year-old has seen many changes over a long career but he says climate change is making an all-consuming profession even harder. "The climate has changed. We can feel that. We have more wet periods. Last year, it was just raining, raining, raining and you can see the result," he told AFP. From a distance, the fields of Smit-flowers are a picture-perfect row of flowers, the type found on Dutch tourist brochures that attract visitors from around the world. But he also pointed to muddy gaps, where tulips have fallen victim to the rain.

"It's sometimes hard. Last winter, it was very wet. In total in our sector, we lost around eight to nine percent of the bulbs in the field. They were killed by water," said Smit. "And we planted

four percent fewer. That means we are now starting to harvest our bulbs but we have lost a minimum of 13 percent of the new bulbs for next year." As the world heats up, the atmosphere contains more water vapor, meaning wetter winters. And rising temperatures mean hotter spring and summer periods in the Netherlands—a deadly combination for tulip farmers.

"When I started this work around 30 years ago, we had to water (the fields) two to four times in a (spring) season," said Smit. "In the last 10 years, sometimes we have to water every week. That means 10 times... It's much more expensive. That's sometimes hard," he said.

**'Difficult situation'**

Smit produces 11 million tulips of all different varieties in a year-round operation combining natural cultivation with a huge greenhouse and cool room system in the winter. Lining his

office walls are pictures of Smit flowers in famous hands, including him offering a bouquet to Queen Maxima. "King Willem-Alexander was really jealous," he grinned.

But the challenges for Smit and his trade were laid bare on the late April day AFP visited, which featured sun, biting wind, torrential rain and even hail—all in one day. This all adds up to a "difficult situation" for the tulips at the moment, explained Smit. As the winter was so wet, the roots did not grow down far enough in search of water, with a knock-on effect for the summer. "I'm very afraid now... that in a warm period they will not have enough roots to drink all the water they need and they will die again and we will have a very bad harvest period." The answer for Smit and his 18 staff is constant vigilance. "All we can do to adapt (to climate change) is to be awake 24/7, to see what is happening with your products on the field, what they need," he said.

**'Catastrophic'**

If climate change is a longer-term challenge, Dutch tulip farmers are fretting about an even more imminent threat—increased Brexit border controls. From April 30, physical checks will be required for many plants and flowers entering Britain. Traders on both sides are worried about delays and damaged produce. Tim Rozendaal, from Dutch Flower Association VGB, told AFP there was still "uncertainty about waiting times" and "not yet sufficient" capacity to carry out the checks.

"Companies say they are considering not sending plants during the first week of border controls," said Rozendaal, amid reports from Britain of garden centers stockpiling. Smit estimates around 80 percent of his crop ends up abroad—he sells directly to an exporter—and any delay during border checks would be "catastrophic" for the flowers.

Despite the challenges, the genial farmer is upbeat about the prospects for his son, 22-year-old Tim, who will be the fourth generation Smit running the family business. "It's hard but when you control this in a good way, you can have a good profit in the bulbs industry, in the flower industry... We have to not stay still, not sleep," he said. He believes strongly in the positive impact of flowers and donates to cities in war-torn Ukraine, including Bucha, the site of the infamous massacre by Russian troops. Proudly showing AFP pictures of a Smitflowers display in Ukraine, his emotions come to the surface.

"I was silent there. People came to me with tears in their eyes and their voices breaking, saying 'Thank you for the flowers. It helps with our mental health'." "People can say what they want. We need flowers!"—AFP



This photograph in Spierdijk shows a field of blooming tulip flowers.



Owner of Smit Flowers, Arjan Smit, inspects tulips in one of his fields, in Spierdijk.



A worker heads tulips in a field near Egmond, Noord Holland province.--AFP photos



This photograph shows different varieties of tulips growing in a field.

## French actor Depardieu held for questioning over alleged sexual assault

French police on Monday detained screen legend Gerard Depardieu for questioning after two women accused him of sexual assault, a source close to the case said. The 75-year-old actor, who has made more than 200 films and television series, was charged with rape in 2020 and was forced to put his career on hold last autumn as allegations of sexual harassment and assault mounted against him. He denies any wrongdoing. Police were to question Depardieu over allegations from two women that he assaulted them on film sets, one in 2021 and the other in 2014, a police source said, confirming a report by the BFMTV television channel.

The actor's lawyers, Christian Saint-Palais and Beatrice Geissmann Achille, did not immediately reply to a request from AFP for comment. The first woman accuses him of having assaulted her when she was a member of the crew on the 2022 feature film "The Green Shutters". The set designer, who filed a formal complaint in February, told investigative website Mediapart that Depardieu grabbed her as she left the set in a private hotel in Paris.

She alleged he groped her "waist and stomach, moving up to (her) breasts" and made obscene comments before his bodyguards removed him. The woman's lawyer, Carine Durrieu-Diebolt, declined to provide AFP with further details. The second woman has alleged Depardieu groped her "all over" and made "inappropriate" remarks while she was an assistant on the set of 2015 film "Le magicien et le Siamois" ("The Magician and the Siamese"), she told regional newspaper Le Courrier de l'Ouest.

**Rape charge**

Depardieu already faces a rape charge, as well as claims of assault from more than a dozen women—all of which he has strongly denied. "Never ever have I abused a woman," Depardieu wrote in Le Figaro newspaper in October. Police in 2020 charged Depardieu with rape and sexual assault after actor Charlotte Arnould alleged he raped her in 2018 when she was 22 and anorexic. Another sexual assault complaint filed last year by actor Helene Darras, who said Depardieu groped and propositioned her during a 2007 film shoot, has been dropped for being past the statute of limitations.

Spanish journalist and author Ruth Baza said in December she had filed a criminal complaint in her home country against Depardieu, alleging he raped her in 1995



French actor Gerard Depardieu talks on the phone during a Master Class in Buenos Aires. — AFP

in Paris. Despite the events having passed the statute of limitations, she said she decided to file her complaint in the hope that it would "help other people" to do the same.

Depardieu had long made headlines for antics such as socializing with the leaders of Russia and Belarus, obtaining a Russian passport to protest against a planned tax hike in France, and delaying a 2011 flight after urinating into a bottle that overflowed. But debate over whether to show his films intensified at the end of last year after a television report showed the actor repeatedly making obscene comments in the presence of a female interpreter during a 2018 trip to North Korea. His wax sculpture was hurriedly removed from the Musee Grevin waxwork museum in Paris and Canada's Quebec region stripped him of its top honor.

**'Salacious nonsense'**

Actor Anouk Grinberg, a co-star to Depardieu on "The Green Shutters", has described how she and others on set were "treated to his salacious nonsense from morning to night". "When film producers hire Depardieu on a film, they know they are hiring an aggressor," she told AFP. Grinberg said producers of "The Green Shutters" had supposedly appointed someone to deal with harassment issues but that she did nothing. French cinema has in recent months been rocked by allegations that it has shrugged off sexism and sexual abuse for decades. — AFP

## Zendaya helps 'Challengers' net top spot in North America box office

MGM's tennis-based romance "Challengers" opened this weekend atop the North American box office, taking in an estimated \$15 million behind positive reviews and the powerful net game of actor/singer Zendaya, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported Sunday. "This is a strong opening for a romance and sports drama," said analyst David A. Gross, crediting Zendaya's star power and the directorial talents of Luca Guadagnino (he of "Call Me By Your Name"). "This is the right material with the right director, featuring the right star at the right time," Gross said.

Zendaya plays a tennis prodigy who retires after an injury, then later helps her husband (Mike Faist) prepare for a key match against a player (Josh O'Connor) who, awkwardly enough, is both her former lover and his one-time best friend. By the way, yes, Zendaya can play tennis. She trained for three months with tennis pro Brad Gilbert, and Guadagnino told Variety that she was so good he rarely had to use film of her double. In second spot for the Friday-through-Sunday period was another new release, Lionsgate and Kingdom Story Company's faith-based drama "Unsung Hero," at \$7.8 million.

The partly fact-based film follows a man who moves his music-loving family from Australia to the United States after his concert promotion business collapses. Friendly fellow churchgoers and the power of prayer (spoiler alert) just might help him and his seven kids turn things around. In third, for the second straight weekend, was Warner Bros.' "Godzilla x Kong: The New Empire," at \$7.2 million. The humongous gorilla and giant reptile, not natural buddies, team up this time to save their species -- and ours.

Meantime, A24's "Civil War," a disturbing saga about a dystopian America in the near future, dropped three places from last weekend's top spot, earning \$7 million. Kirsten



Dunst plays a veteran photojournalist who finds herself increasingly tormented as she travels through a blood-soaked country in hopes of interviewing a besieged third-term president. And in fifth, down two spots, was Universal's horror film "Abigail" at \$5.3 million. Alisha Weir plays 12-year-old Abigail, whose kidnappers learn too late that she is a killer vampire. Rounding out the top 10 were: "The Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare" (\$3.9 million) "Kung Fu Panda 4" (\$3.6 million) "Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire" (\$3.3 million) "Dune: Part Two" (\$1.9 million) "Boy Kills World" (\$1.7 million)—AFP



## Sports

# Timberwolves sweep Suns out of playoffs as Clippers, Knicks win

## Clippers survive epic Mavericks comeback bid

## News in Brief

### Sevilla frustrate Betis 1-1

BARCELONA: Sevilla held rivals Real Betis to a 1-1 derby draw on Sunday in La Liga to dent their European ambitions. Hosts Betis, seventh, trail Real Sociedad in sixth by two points in the battle to reach next season's Europa League, with Valencia close in pursuit behind. Sevilla are enduring a disappointing campaign, languishing 13th, but snatching a draw at the Benito Villamarín against their neighbors will offer them some pleasure. Manuel Pellegrini's side had the better of the clash, befitting their respective league positions. Sevilla's Lucas Ocampos had a goal ruled out for offside and veteran defender Sergio Ramos cleared off his own line before Betis took the lead. Isco beat Orjan Nyland from the penalty spot after Dodi Lukebakio was harshly penalized for handball as he turned to block a shot. Nyland made a fine save to deny Ayoze Perez early in the second half before Sevilla levelled through Kike Salas' powerful header. — AFP

### Rubiales denies 'irregularities'

MADRID: Disgraced former Spanish football federation chief Luis Rubiales denied any financial "irregularities" on Monday after testifying in court in a corruption probe into his time in charge. "What I maintain, and will always maintain, and I am convinced that justice will (demonstrate), is there has never been any money received in an irregular way," Rubiales told reporters after leaving the Madrid court. Rubiales, 46, who resigned following global outrage after he forcibly kissed Women's World Cup star Jenni Hermoso last summer after the final, testified at length. "I have answered all the questions I was asked, if I have to come here again I will be here, collaborating - I am the one most interested in clearing everything up," said Rubiales. Rubiales must appear in court every month and ask permission from the judge before making any trips outside of Spain, a court source said. — AFP

### All-female referee team

MILAN: An all-female referee team took charge of a Serie A game for the first time on Sunday with the landmark occasion coming as newly-crowned champions Inter Milan defeated Torino 2-0 at the San Siro. Maria Sole Ferrieri Caputi was assisted by Tiziana Trasciatti and Francesca Di Monte and she was kept busy. Ferrieri Caputi sent off Torino's Adrien Tameze in the 49th minute for a foul on Henrikh Mkhitaryan after a check at the pitch-side monitor. She then had a much easier decision to make when Matteo Lovato brought down Marcus Thuram, allowing Hakan Calhanoglu to slam home from the penalty spot for his and Inter's second goal. Ferrieri Caputi, 33, was in control of her 10th Serie A match after making her debut in 2022 in a game between Sassuolo and Salernitana. The three officials had already worked together at a second division match in 2022 as well as the Coppa Italia last 16 game between Napoli and Cremonese in January 2023. — AFP

### NBA star Parker retires

LOS ANGELES: Candace Parker, a three-time Women's NBA champion and two-time Olympic champion for the United States, announced her retirement on Sunday after 16 WNBA seasons. The 38-year-old power forward, who posted her decision on Instagram, was a two-time WNBA Most Valuable Player who averaged 16.0 points, 8.5 rebounds, 4.0 assists, 1.5 blocked shot and 1.3 steals a game for her career. "I'm retiring," Parker wrote. "I promised I'd never cheat the game & that I'd leave it in a better place than I came into it. The competitor in me always wants 1 more, but it's time. My HEART & body knew, but I needed to give my mind time to accept it." Parker won WNBA titles in 2016 with the Los Angeles Sparks, 2021 with the Chicago Sky and last year with the Las Vegas Aces. She underwent surgery for a fractured foot last July and struggled with the injury as a new campaign loomed next month. — AFP

### Sale and Exeter win away

LONDON: Sale and Exeter kept alive their slim hopes of forcing their way into the English Premiership playoffs with away bonus-points wins on Sunday. Sale won 35-14 at winless Newcastle, responding with three tries after the home team drew level at 14-14 in the 53rd minute. It was Sale's first victory at Newcastle in eight years. "We got one, just when we needed it as we need all the points we can get," Sale's director of rugby Alex Sanderson told the BBC. Exeter were always in control as they won 38-17 at Gloucester, who are sure to finish ninth in the 10-team league and have a European Challenge Cup semi-final next weekend. Jacques Vermeulen scored two of the Chiefs tries. The top four teams qualify for the playoffs. With two rounds to go, Northampton lead Saracens by four points, despite losing to Harlequins on Saturday. — AFP

WASHINGTON: The Minnesota Timberwolves, powered by 40 points from Anthony Edwards, swept Kevin Durant and the Phoenix Suns out of the NBA playoffs on Sunday, reaching the second round for the first time in 20 years with a 122-116 game-four victory. The Timberwolves withstood a combined 72 points from Devin Booker and Durant to become the first team to reach the second round. They will face either the Denver Nuggets or Los Angeles Lakers, with the reigning champion Nuggets leading that series 3-1.

With a chance to reach the second round for just the second time in franchise history, 22-year-old Edwards shook off a slow start that saw him score nine points in the first half. "I knew what was at stake," Edwards told broadcaster TNT. "I came out, like, man, I got nine points, there's no way we can win this game if I don't get myself going and put my team on my back. And we came out with the win." Booker scored 49 points and two-time NBA champion Durant added 33 in a game that featured 23 lead changes - with neither team leading by more than six points. It was a bitter end to the season for Phoenix, who had high hopes of a deep playoff run after bringing in Bradley Beal to join Durant and Booker in a "Big Three" in Arizona.

### Clippers avert catastrophe

In Dallas, the Los Angeles Clippers survived an epic Mavericks comeback bid, squandering a 31-point lead but holding on for a 116-111 victory that knotted their Western Conference series at 2-2. Paul George scored 26 of his 33 points in the first half to help the Clippers build their big advantage despite the injury absence of Kawhi Leonard. James Harden scored 15 of his 33 in the fourth quarter, when Dallas - led by the star duo of Kyrie Irving and Luka Doncic - threatened to match the biggest comeback win in NBA playoff history.

Irving scored 40 points for Dallas, including a driving layup through traffic with 2:14 to play that gave the Mavs their first lead since the first quarter at 104-103. Doncic delivered a triple-double of 29 points plus 10 rebounds and 10 assists, but in the waning minutes it was George, Harden and the Clippers who came through. George made his first basket of the second half, a three-pointer, to put the Clippers back to 107-105 ahead with 1:55 to play.

## Jabeur wants 'more respect' for women

MADRID: Tunisian tennis star Ons Jabeur on Monday called out to organizers of European tournaments for failing to "respect" women players by giving preferential treatment to men at combined events after she swept into the quarter-finals of the Madrid Open. Jabeur dismissed ninth-seeded Jelena Ostapenko 6-0, 6-4 to reach the last eight along with top seed Iga Swiatek who eased past home favorite Sara Sorribes Tormo 6-1, 6-0. But Jabeur, the 2022 Madrid champion, later took a swipe at tournament organizers, telling reporters she believes tennis still has a way to go to achieve gender equality, despite it being the leader in women's sport.

"Definitely tennis is a sport that I'm proud to play in as a woman," said the world number nine, who next plays either Coco Gauff or Madison Keys for a place in the semi-finals. "But I feel like we have a long way, especially here in Madrid and in Rome, in Europe in general. I feel like they need to respect women more and they need to respect how we are



PHOENIX: Devin Booker #1 of the Phoenix Suns puts up a shot over Rudy Gobert #27 and Nickeil Alexander-Walker #9 of the Minnesota Timberwolves during the second half of game four of the Western Conference First Round Playoffs at Footprint Center on April 28, 2024. — AFP

Harden converted a three-point play and the Clippers held on. "We can't go home down 3-1," Harden said of the Clippers' resolve.

### Knicks find a way

In Philadelphia, Jalen Brunson's 47 points broke the New York franchise record for a playoff game as the Knicks took a 3-1 lead over the Sixers. Brunson added 10 assists in a 97-92 victory as reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Joel Embiid and the Sixers were pushed to the brink of elimination. OG Anunoby had 16 points and 14 rebounds while putting in an impressive defensive effort against Embiid, who led the Sixers with 27 points and 10 rebounds. With a chance to clinch the series at home on Tuesday, Brunson wasn't interested in reflecting on his record. "I'll look back when I retire," he said. "Seriously, it's great right now, helped us get a win. But it's not go-

playing." Sharing examples from her personal experiences at events, Jabeur said women players were not given the same access to practice courts as the men, and noted how WTA matches were not shown on TV as frequently as ATP matches.

"The way they treat women here and men, they're completely different. Maybe people from outside, they don't see it. I'm definitely one of the people that I want to speak up," she added. "Here in Spain, I would love to go to the hotel and open the TV and see a woman's tennis match. I haven't seen once one tennis match of a woman. Obviously, I understand there are a lot of Spanish (male players) playing, but asking for one match? Even the female Spanish (players) they are not even showing." For me it's really frustrating to see that. How can you inspire young girls without showing any match in that?"

Meanwhile, Swiatek dropped her opening game before sweeping the next 12 against her Spanish opponent to book a quarter-final meeting with Brazilian left-hander Beatriz Haddad Maia. "We played many tough matches against each other so it's not going to be easy," said the Polish world number one of her upcoming opponent. "She's always a very intense player and knows how to play on clay." In the men's com-

petition, American Ben Shelton saw his unbeaten 5-0 start to the clay season come to an end at the hands of Kazakhstan's Alexander Bublik, who won 3-6, 7-6 (7/2), 6-4 to reach the fourth round, where he awaits Daniil Medvedev or Sebastian Korda. — AFP

### Pacers barrage

In Indianapolis, the Indiana Pacers drilled 22 three-pointers in a 126-113 victory over the short-handed Milwaukee Bucks to take a 3-1 series lead. Myles Turner hit a playoff career high of seven three-pointers on the way to 29 points and Tyrese Haliburton added 24 points for the Pacers, who had six players in double figures. The Bucks, with superstar Giannis Antetokounmpo still sidelined by a calf injury, were also without injured Damian Lillard and saw Bobby Portis ejected in the first quarter after a scuffle with Andrew Nembhard. Brook Lopez scored 27 points and Khristian Middleton, who tweaked an ankle in the third quarter but stayed in the game, had 25 for the Bucks, who will try to stay alive when they host game five on Tuesday. — AFP



MADRID: Tunisia's Ons Jabeur returns a ball to Latvia's Jelena Ostapenko during the 2024 WTA Tour Madrid Open tournament last sixteen tennis match in Madrid on April 29, 2024. — AFP

## Alcaraz passes 'test of fire' as Sabalenka survives in Madrid

MADRID: Carlos Alcaraz passed a "test of fire" to breeze into the Madrid Open last 16 with a straight sets victory over Thiago Seyboth Wild on Sunday, while Aryna Sabalenka staved off teenager Robin Montgomery to progress in three sets. Double defending champion Alcaraz came through 6-3, 6-3 and will face last year's runner-up Jan-Lennard Struff in the next round after another impressive showing before adoring fans on home soil.

World number three Alcaraz, 20, missed a month prior to Madrid with a forearm issue but returned to crush Alexander Shevchenko in the second round and looks in fine shape ahead of the French Open, the second Grand Slam event of the season. Still wearing a protective sleeve on his right arm, he had far too much for Seyboth Wild, who had ousted 28th seed Lorenzo Musetti. "Maybe today I was a bit nervous about how it would be, Thiago hits the ball so hard, I didn't know how the forearm would hold up," said Alcaraz on court. "Today was the test of fire, no discomfort, feeling spectacular... from here, we'll be getting better."

After taking two breaks in a solid first set, Alcaraz stepped up a gear in the second, breaking in the second and fourth games as he raced into a 5-0 lead. Seyboth Wild battled to a hold and a break to salvage some pride but Alcaraz triumphed on serve when the Brazilian went long. "I was very comfortable on the court, moving, hitting the ball, as I always say finishing the game isn't easy, it's nerves," added Alcaraz.

German fourth seed Alexander Zverev, the 2018 and 2021 Madrid champion, made the last 16 with a 6-4, 7-5 win over Canada's Denis Shapovalov. Andrey Rublev came back from 5-0 down in a first set tie-break to beat Alejandro Davidovich Fokina 7-6 (12/10), 6-4 in a tense affair. The world number eight saved five set points to stun his opponent, before a similarly hard-fought second set. Rublev broke for a 5-4 lead with a shot which the Spaniard chose to leave as he thought it was long, but Hawk-Eye showed it was in by a whisker. — AFP



LOS ANGELES: Hannah Green of Australia poses with the trophy after winning the JM Eagle LA Championship presented by Plastpro at Wilshire Country Club on April 28, 2024. — AFP

## Green retains title at LPGA Championship

LOS ANGELES: Australia's Hannah Green defended her title at the LPGA's Los Angeles Championship with a three stroke victory on Sunday at Wilshire Country Club for her second win of the season. Green shot a 5-under-par round of 66 to end 12-under for the tournament, as she followed up her win at the HSBC Women's World Championship in Singapore last month with another impressive performance. The 27-year-old began the day sharing the lead with compatriot Grace Kim, who endured a nightmare final round, shooting a six-over 77 without a single birdie.

Kim was 12-under through two rounds but shot a five-over third round 76 on Saturday before a similarly disappointing display in the final round. With Kim out of the picture, the biggest threat to Green came from Sweden's Maja Stark, who shot 68 to end nine-under for the week. World number one Nelly

Korda, who has won her last five tournaments, did not compete in the event and is scheduled to return for the Cognizant Founders Cup, which runs from May 9-12, seeking a record sixth consecutive win.

Green had made a slow start, reaching the turn even, after her birdie on the opening hole was cancelled out by a bogey on the par-3 fourth. But she hit her stride with birdies on the par-3 12th and the par-5 13th before pulling well clear with an eagle on the par-5 15th and a birdie on the 16th. Green has a remarkable record at Wilshire. As well as her victory last year she was second in 2022 and tied for third in 2021.

The event will skip a year next season while renovations are carried out at the course, but Green said she almost feels like it is her home club. "It's really kind to me. I felt like a couple times today (I) almost got like a member bounce. I obviously really am fond of the golf club and joked that they didn't approve it with me that they were making alterations," she said. "I love it here. Such a great atmosphere. Really good crowds this year. Kind of sad we're not returning next year, but looking forward to 2026," she added. — AFP



Sports

# Madrid wary of 'bestia negra' Bayern in 'European Clasico'

## Real eye Liga and Champions League double

MADRID: Real Madrid have their sights set on a Liga and Champions League double, but to lift the latter they must find a way past Bayern Munich, their "bestia negra" - "black beast". Carlo Ancelotti's side travel to Bavaria for the semi-final first leg clash on Tuesday, in a fixture dubbed the 'European Clasico', the most repeated in the competition's history. Despite Madrid's forbidding nickname for Bayern, they have shaded the Bundesliga side across their 26 encounters, with 12 wins to Bayern's 11. In the last decade Madrid clearly have the edge on the German giants.

The record 14-time winners knocked out Bayern in each of their three most recent tangles, in the semi-finals in 2014 and 2018, and the quarter-finals in 2017. Real went on to win the Champions League every time. Ancelotti was on the receiving end in 2017, when Cristiano Ronaldo's hat-trick knocked his Bayern side out in extra-time at the Santiago Bernabeu. A few months later Bayern sacked the Italian, with Madrid's return to the Allianz Arena a chance for the competition's most decorated coach to prove a point to his former employers. With Bayern losing their grip on the Bundesliga title to up-

starts Bayer Leverkusen this season, the relative quality of Ancelotti's all-too-brief era is missed.

Back then, Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso was a key part of Bayern's spine - how times change. Ancelotti argued the refereeing was bad on that night, with Bayern midfielder Arturo Vidal harshly dismissed, and one of Ronaldo's goals offside. It was another example of Madrid somehow finding a way to win in Europe from tricky situations. Bayern, six-time Champions League winners, have only lifted the trophy once since their 2013 triumph over Borussia Dortmund at Wembley.

By contrast, Los Blancos have won it five times in that period. Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez said last week Madrid's success breeds more success, after they showed steel to overcome champions Manchester City on penalties in the quarter-finals. "When you have won so much, you play with more calm, less desperation, more confidence," said the Barcelona coach. Those qualities are what Ancelotti will encourage his team to show in Munich on Tuesday. No team from outside of Spain has beaten Madrid on more occasions than Bayern's 11 wins.

### 'Best moment'

Needing Champions League glory to avoid a miserable season, Thomas Tuchel's side's main threat is England striker Harry Kane. The former Tottenham striker has 35 goals this season, a personal record. "They've had a tough season but right now they are probably in their best moment and they have Kane, who scores a lot of goals," said Ancelotti. "It will be an even tie, hard-fought, and we will have to battle, but we're delighted to play it, and with a lot of confidence." Madrid goalkeeper Andriy Lunin was the hero in the shoot-out win over City as he saved two penalties, but will feel the pressure of Thibaut Courtois breathing down his neck as he prepares to keep Kane at bay.

Ancelotti said the Belgian is fit again and will play next weekend in La Liga, meaning Lunin may face a fight for his place for the second leg or potential final. The Ukrainian made a mistake in the Clasico on April 21 against Barcelona to hand the Catalans a goal but his side won 3-2 to take a dominant lead in La Liga. Bayern goalkeeper Sven Ulreich's horrendous mistake the last time the teams met may play on his mind. Depu-



MUNICH: Bayern Munich's German head coach Thomas Tuchel speaks during a press conference on April 29, 2024 in Munich on the eve of the UEFA Champions League semi-final first leg football match between Bayern Munich and Real Madrid. — AFP

ting for the injured Manuel Neuer, Ulreich went to collect a backpass before realizing he could not handle the ball.

The reserve goalkeeper let it slide past him, to the delight of Karim Benzema who pounced, sending Madrid through to the final. Jude Bellingham has stepped into Benzema's shoes as Madrid's top scorer, and he has deliv-

ered on the big occasion this season, with three goals in three games against Barcelona. The England international was injured and did not play on the final day last season as Dortmund lost out to Bayern in the German title race and Bellingham would love to get one over his former rivals in the 'European Clasico'. — AFP

## Darmstadt relegated to German second tier

BERLIN: Darmstadt's relegation to Germany's second tier was confirmed on Sunday evening with a 1-0 home defeat to Heidenheim. Nikola Dovedan's injury time winner sealed Darmstadt's fate, leaving Torsten Lieberknecht's team 11 points adrift of possible safety with three games to play. Darmstadt, who were relegated from the Bundesliga in 2017 and sealed a return to the top-flight last year, have won just three games all season and needed a victory on Sunday to keep their hopes of survival alive.

"It will take some time to process but we knew this day would come," Lieberknecht told DAZN. "It's part of life as a sportsman, part of life as a footballer. The decisive factor is how we spend the next few days and weeks. "The fans are naturally disappointed but they have shown that despite the disappointment everyone here is standing together and working together."

Earlier on Sunday, Cologne's Florian Kainz came off the bench to score a 95th

minute penalty and salvage a 1-1 draw in Mainz. Cologne remain second bottom and five points from the relegation play-off place that Mainz currently occupy but the last-gasp strike keeps Cologne's hopes of a miraculous escape alive and prevented Mainz climbing two places. Mainz had appeared on course for a precious 1-0 win after Leandro Barreiro capped a swift counter-attack, scoring on a rebound after Cologne goalkeeper Marvin Schwabe had thwarted Karim Onisiwo's initial effort.

Cologne spurned a golden opportunity to draw level 55 seconds after the restart when they were awarded a penalty for Frenchman Anthony Caci's clumsy challenge on Faride Alidou - but Luca Waldschmidt put the spot-kick wide. But Cologne won a second penalty four minutes into stoppage time after a VAR check confirmed a foul by the Mainz goalkeeper Robin Zentner. Kainz kept his cool, sending Zentner the wrong way.



DARMSTADT: (File photo) Darmstadt's German goalkeeper #01 Marcel Schuhen reacts after conceding during the German first division Bundesliga football match. — AFP

A late straight red card for Mainz's Philipp Mwene soured things further for the hosts, who are now points behind Bochum and Union Berlin. Union had played out a 0-0 draw at Borussia Moenchengladbach earlier on Sunday, collecting only their second point since their last league win, on March 30. Union have

scored only once in their last five games and face back-to-back six-pointers, first next Sunday against Bochum and then against Cologne. Moenchengladbach are still in danger, with only a two-point cushion on the two teams below them. The Foals have won just one of their last eight league games. — AFP

## Kuwait judo team clinch 1 gold and silver medals

ABU DHABI: The Kuwait national Judo team clinched a gold medal along with three silvers at the Gulf Youth Games 2024, held in UAE, and will continue until May 2nd. Abdullah Al-Daihani secured the gold medal in the 90kg weight category, while Hussein Mahawis (95kg), Ali Al-Shammari (66kg), Ali Al-Jadi (73kg), and Qasem Mishal (81kg) all secured silver medals.

In past few days, in the 55kg weight category, Sultan Al-Otaibi captured the gold medal, while Khaled Al-Kindi, Ali Al-Shammari (66kg), and Saud Al-Enezi (60kg) secured bronze medals. The competition commenced on April 16th with the participation of 3,500 male and female athletes competing in 24 individual and team events.

### Handball youth team

In another development, Kuwait handball youth team qualified for the finals of the Arab Youth Handball tournament, after defeating Saudi Arabia 30-29 on Sunday. The Kuwaiti team will face the winner between the Moroccan team and Tunisia in the semi-final. The tournament is currently being held in the city of Casablanca. — KUNA

## Zamalek create record, cruise to CAF Cup final

JOHANNESBURG: Zamalek of Egypt won a CAF Confederation Cup semi-final away leg by a record margin as they defeated Dreams of Ghana 3-0 in Kumasi on Sunday. The White Knights won the tie 3-0 on aggregate after a goalless first leg in the Egyptian capital last Sunday. Zamalek bettered the previous best away result in the penultimate stage -- a 3-1 victory by SuperSport United of South Africa against Club Africain of Tunisia seven seasons ago.

The Cairo club are likely to face Renaissance Berkane of Morocco in the two-leg final on May 12 and 19 in what would be a repeat of the 2019 title decider won by Zamalek on penalties. USM Alger of Algeria refused to enter the pitch in the northeastern Moroccan city of Berkane for the second leg of the semi-final, which has been dogged by off-field drama. Berkane were awarded a 3-0 win in the first leg, which was not played last Sunday because Algerian authorities confiscated the shirts of the Moroccan team and refused to return them.

The shirts had a map of Morocco that included the Western Sahara, a mineral-rich territory largely controlled by Morocco, whose claim for independence is backed by Algeria. Algeria broke off diplomatic relations with Morocco in 2021, partly over the issue. The Algerian football federation has

lodged an appeal against the CAF sanction with the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne, arguing that the Cairo-based body had "validated the request of the Moroccan club, RS Berkane, to wear a shirt with a political message".

Having dominated the first leg at home only to be let down by poor finishing, Zamalek were far more clinical in Ghana in the African equivalent of the UEFA Europa League. Tunisian Hamza Mathlouthi and Nigerian Samson Akinyoola scored in the first half and any hopes of a dramatic Dreams comeback were dashed when Mostafa Shalaby netted after half-time. Mathlouthi poked the ball into the net off a 12th-minute corner and Akinyoola struck after 27 minutes with a superbly placed shot past goalkeeper Solomon Aghasi. Shalaby notched his first goal of the CAF campaign on 59 minutes, running on to a pass from Tunisian Seifeddine Jaziri and scoring with a low shot. Veteran John Antwi came close to finding the net several times for African debutants Dreams and Abdul Aziz Issah blazed wide from a favourable position just before the break.

### Dispute over shirts

For the second straight week, an African Confederation Cup match between Renaissance Berkane and Algerian side USM Alger was cancelled in a dispute over a map on the Moroccan team's shirts. The Confederation of African Football (CAF) awarded Berkane a 3-0 victory in the first leg of their semi-final, cancelled last Sunday when the Moroccan club refused to take the field after Algerian officials confiscated their shirts. On Sunday in Berkane, only the home players

took the field and they saluted their fans as the stadium announcer told the crowd the match had been cancelled.

Moroccan television reported that the USM team left the stadium just before the scheduled 1900 GMT kickoff. The row began when the Moroccan squad arrived in Algeria last week ahead of the first-leg tie. Customs officers confiscated Berkane's shirts on the grounds that they carried a map of Morocco that included the disputed Western Sahara. Shortly before the first leg kick-off, USM Alger sporting director Toufik Korichi told Algerian radio that the match would not be played because Berkane refused to take to the pitch in any other shirts.

The former Spanish colony of Western Sahara is largely controlled by Morocco but claimed by the Algeria-backed Polisario Front, which seeks the territory's independence. Algeria broke off diplomatic relations with Morocco in 2021, partly over the issue. Before kick-off on Sunday, Renaissance supporters held up a banner with a map of Morocco showing the disputed territory. Many fans waved Moroccan flags.

On Saturday, business was brisk in the official shop selling Berkane shirts. "There's a huge demand," said Soufiane Al Korchi, a representative of the official distributor of the Moroccan team shirt, adding that the "map has been part of the official design for three years". The Algerian football federation has lodged an appeal against the CAF sanction with the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne, arguing that the Cairo-based body had "validated the request of the Moroccan club, RS Berkane, to wear a shirt with a political message". — AFP

## Shirt shrift: Disputes over football jerseys

PARIS: For the second week in succession, the African Confederation Cup semi-final between Renaissance Berkane and Algerian side USM Alger was cancelled in a dispute over a map on the Moroccan team's shirts. AFP Sport looks at three other disputes to arise from controversial choices over playing kit:

### 'Nazi' comparisons

The German football association (DFB) changed the typeface used on its shirts after one of the kit numbers drew comparisons to a Nazi symbol. The problem was the digit four on the national team shirts. The number 44 was at the centre of the controversy, it was said to look like the insignia of the Nazis' SS corps. "None of the parties involved saw any proximity to Nazi symbolism in the creation process," the DFB said when the matter came to a head earlier in April. Nonetheless, the sporting body added it did not want to "provide a platform for discussion". Kit provider Adidas then removed shirt personalization options for the strip from its website, the German daily Bild reported.

### England's flag flak

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak waded into a row in March over a new England foot-

ball shirt designed by Nike that changed the colors of the St George's Cross, saying "we shouldn't mess" with national flags. The US sportswear giant altered the appearance of the Cross - the flag of England - using purple and blue horizontal stripes in what it called a "playful update" to the shirt ahead of Euro 2024.

Nike and the Football Association said the colors on the back of the collar - different from the traditional red cross on a white background - were inspired by the training kit worn by England's 1966 World Cup winners. But the decision led to a furious backlash. "My general view is that when it comes to our national flags, we shouldn't mess with them. Because they are a source of pride, identity, who we are, and they're perfect as they are," said Sunak. Nike said it "was never its intention to offend" but did not indicate any plans to change the design.

### Over the rainbow

In 2023, several players in France refused to take part in an initiative organized by the country's two top divisions aimed at support for the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. The plan was for playing jerseys to carry rainbow-colored numbers. The National Union of Professional Footballers said it was not up to the players to convey "collective messages". Toulouse left out the players who did not want to wear the shirts. The club's Moroccan defender Zakaria Aboukhal tweet-ed: "Respect is a value that I hold in great esteem. It extends to others, but it also encompasses respect for my own personal beliefs. Hence, I don't believe I am the most suitable person to participate in this campaign." — AFP

# Classifieds

### Clinics & Hospitals

#### Clinics

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

Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoum 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 Izzan 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) Aboobakkar Izzan and (Surname) Iqbal.  
(#5199, 29/04/2024)

permanent address B-904, 9th Floor, Plot-103, 2, Infinity Tower, B Wing, Shivdas Champs Marg, Near Chaitya Tower Jain Mandir, Mazgaon, Mumbai, PO Mazgaon, Dist Mumbai, Maharashtra-400010, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (Given Name) HAKIMUDDIN IMDADHUSSAIN and Surname KAGZI.  
(#5200, 30/04/2024)

I, HAKIMUDDIN, holder of Indian Passport No. T6755069 having





PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's Portuguese midfielder #15 Danilo Pereira (left) heads the ball during the French L1 football match between Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and Le Havre AC at the Parc des Princes Stadium in Paris. — AFP

## PSG secure Ligue 1 title

### After title win, Mbappe and PSG target treble

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) were confirmed as Ligue 1 champions on Sunday without playing after closest challengers Monaco lost 3-2 away to Lyon. Monaco's defeat gave PSG an unassailable 12-point lead at the top of the table with three games remaining and means they are champions for a French record-extending 12th time. PSG could have clinched the title on Saturday with a win at home to struggling Le Havre, but in the end they needed a 95th-minute equaliser to snatch a 3-3 draw.

PSG are hoping their latest Ligue 1 title, secured on Sunday with three games to spare, will be just the first leg of a historic treble with a Champions League semi-final to come and the French Cup final to look forward to as well. It is PSG's 12th French title, at least two more than any other team, and it is also their 10th in 12 seasons, which goes to show how the footballing landscape in the country has been transformed since

the Qatari takeover of the club in 2011.

The extent of PSG's financial advantage over the rest of French football is crushing and means ending each season as champions is effectively a minimum requirement. When analysts Deloitte published their list of the top-earning football clubs in the world for last year, PSG were third with revenue of just over 800 million euros (\$855m). The only other French team in the top 20 was Marseille, with 258 million euros.

UEFA's own European Club Finance report, published in February, revealed PSG as having the second highest wage bill on the continent behind only Barcelona, at over 600 million euros. Those wage costs will have changed significantly this season, following the departures of Lionel Messi and Neymar, but a recent study by sports daily L'Equipe claimed that the 10 highest-paid players in Ligue 1 just now all play in Paris.

In that context, it is almost impossible

for anyone to compete with Luis Enrique's team domestically, but the Spanish coach still deserves credit. "Given our history and our squad, we are the favorites, although not everybody manages to do it, especially with so many games still to play," he said last week. "But I have said since the very first day that we are the favorites, that we have the best squad and the biggest budget. It is almost an obligation."

#### Transition from Messi, Neymar

He took over a team set for a period of transition in the post-Messi and Neymar era. PSG did not convince in winning the league last season, losing seven games and only pipping Lens by a point. This campaign has, to borrow a French expression, not always been like a long, peaceful river. Luis Enrique had to incorporate a raft of new signings and has had to deal with the awkward situation surrounding Kylian Mbappe's future. Mbappe was frozen out at the start of the campaign with the club

putting pressure on him to sign a new deal or agree to be sold rather than simply run down the last year of his contract.

That partly explains why PSG won just three of their first seven Ligue 1 games. However, they have since picked up the pace and their only league loss so far remains a 3-2 home defeat against Nice in September. Ousmane Dembele has been excellent since arriving from Barcelona, playing mainly on the right wing, and Bradley Barcola has starred on the other side. Teenager Warren Zaire-Emery has been a fixture in midfield and earned a call-up to the full France squad, while Portuguese creator Vitinha has arguably been PSG's best player.

But then there is Mbappe, who has 43 goals in all competitions, and that despite being used sparingly in the league over the last two months since informing the club of his decision to leave on a free at the end of the season. Mbappe has completed 90 minutes just twice in PSG's last 11 league

games. Luis Enrique has justified that by saying he needs to prepare for a future without his star player and try alternatives. But in the meantime, PSG must make the most of having the France captain in their ranks. That they are now a better, more balanced team without having to accommodate Messi and Neymar is no surprise.

Although they wobbled in the Champions League group stage, they qualified for the knockout phase and took four points against Borussia Dortmund along the way. They must now be favorites to beat the Germans in the upcoming semi-final. That would allow them to finish the Mbappe era with a French Cup final against Lyon on May 25 and the Champions League final a week later, with the prospect of a clean sweep of trophies in sight. "Of course that's something we are talking about. It's a source of motivation for us," Luis Enrique said. "It will be a long, winding road to get there. We will need to stay fully focused until the end of the season." — AFP



Kuwait's powerboat team.

### Kuwait's powerboat team shine in Spain

MADRID: The Kuwaiti powerboat team made two achievements in the first round of the 2024 World Championship Endurance, organized by the International Powerboat Federation in the Spanish city of Sanxenxo, which concluded its competitions on Sunday. Head of the Kuwaiti delegation and head of the speedboat, wakeboard, and free-diving committee at the Kuwaiti Marine Sports Club, Ali Al-Shamali, said that world champions Bader Al-Dosari and his assistant, Mohammed Al-Essayie, won second place

in the "Production Boat Class" category (B) for single-engine boats with a power of 300 horsepower.

He added that world champion Khaled Karam and his assistant Adel Al-Sharidah won third place in the Promotion Class category (P) for single-engine boats with a power of 150 horsepower in the two-day tournament in the Galicia region in northeastern Spain. Al-Shamali expressed his joy for the two wins, which witnessed great competition, a distinguished presence from all the contestants, and wide public attention. The Kuwaiti team competed with others from several countries, including Belgium, the United Kingdom, Malta, Italy, and Spain, in the first round of the 2024 tournament, which consists of three rounds, with the second round scheduled to take place in Belgium next June. — KUNA

### Tearful Thiago Silva to leave Chelsea at end of season

LONDON: Brazilian defender Thiago Silva will leave Chelsea at the end of the season after a "dream" four-year spell at Stamford Bridge. Silva announced his farewell on Monday in an emotional video message on Chelsea's website. The 39-year-old centre-back arrived at the Premier League club on a free transfer in August 2020 after leaving Paris Saint-Germain. He has made 151 appearances in all competitions for the Blues, winning the Champions League, FIFA Club World Cup and the UEFA Super Cup.

"Chelsea means a lot to me. I came here with the intention of only staying for a year and it ended up being four years. Not just for me but for my family, too," Silva said during a tearful goodbye speech. "My sons play for Chelsea so it's a source of great pride to be a part of the Chelsea family. I hope they can continue their careers here at this victorious club that many players wish to be part of."

"I think in everything I did here over the four years, I always gave my all. But unfortunately, everything has a start, a middle and an end." Silva was a popular figure among Chelsea fans after making an immediate impact in their 2020-21 Champions League-winning campaign, which climaxed with victory over Manchester City in the final in Porto. The fond feelings are clearly mutual as Silva saluted the fanbase and revealed his intention to return to Chelsea in a different capacity in the future.



Chelsea's Brazilian defender Thiago Silva

"It's an indescribable love. I can only say thank you," he said. "Definitely a dream. Not even in my wildest dreams did I imagine that I could achieve such great things and win one of the best professional titles, the Champions League, at one of the biggest clubs in the world. 'Goodbyes are for those that leave and don't come back. I intend on coming back one day. I hope to leave the door open so that in the near future I can return, albeit in another role here.'" Capped 113 times by Brazil, Silva has made 34 appearances in all competitions for Chelsea this season.

But the former AC Milan star suffered a groin problem in Chelsea's 2-2 draw at Aston Villa on Saturday, raising the possibility that he has made his last appearance in the blue shirt. Mauricio Pochettino's side have five games left this season as they look to salvage a disappointing season by securing European qualification. Chelsea, languishing in ninth place in the Premier League, lost in the FA Cup semi-finals to Manchester City recently and were beaten by Liverpool in the League Cup final in February. — AFP