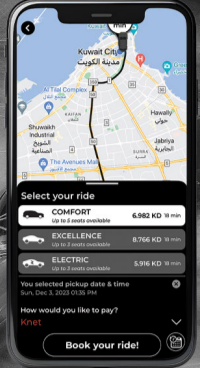




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4 Hidden dangers of dark web exposed after boy's killing



6 Istanbul police arrest 210 in clash with May Day protesters



8 Bursa Kuwait hosts Chinese firms keen on listing in Kuwait



16 Real Madrid eye final after snatching draw at Bayern



Kuwait, Egypt urge Gaza truce

Amir returns home after state visit to Egypt, thanks President Sisi



CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi bids farewell to HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on May 1, 2024 at the conclusion of HH the Amir's two-day state visit to Egypt. — KUNA photos (See Page 3)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kuwait protects workers' rights

KUWAIT: Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Sheikh Jawaher Al-Sabah affirmed on Wednesday Kuwait's endeavors to protect workers' rights and provide them with the best opportunities, during an event marking International Workers' Day. She added this annual global celebration shows Kuwait's efforts in fighting for human rights, noting the Kuwaiti constitution has regulations aimed at protecting the rights and well-being of workers. The government has signed 21 MoUs with various countries to fight for workers' rights in different fields, as well as 19 agreements with several international organizations. — KUNA

Immune, Shlonik apps suspended

KUWAIT: The vaccination status has been removed from the Kuwait Mobile ID app, which used to show a green-colored symbol for those who had taken their full doses of COVID vaccinations, after the health ministry suspended the 'Immune' and 'Shlonik' apps.

UK sends asylum seeker to Rwanda

LONDON: Britain has sent a first asylum seeker to Rwanda. British media reported on Tuesday, a week after adopting a controversial law allowing irregular migrants to be deported to the east African country. But the African national who left the UK on Monday on a commercial flight had agreed to be sent to Kigali following his asylum rejection at the end of last year as part of a separate and voluntary scheme. In exchange, he is due to receive up to £3,000. — AFP

Ukraine unveils AI-generated spox

KYIV: Ukraine on Wednesday presented an AI-generated spokeswoman called Victoria Shi who will make official statements on behalf of its foreign ministry. The ministry said it would "for the first time in history" use a digital spokeswoman to read its statements, which will still be written by humans. To avoid fakes, these will be accompanied by a QR code linking them to text versions on the ministry's website. — AFP

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his accompanying delegation returned to Kuwait on Wednesday after a state visit to Egypt. HH the Amir was seen off by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi and senior Egyptian and Kuwaiti officials. HH the Amir sent a cable of thanks to Sisi expressing his sincere thanks and appreciation for the warm welcome and hospitality during the state visit. HH the Amir said that the visit reflected deep and distinguished ties between the two countries and peoples, and aimed to strengthen

Man held for plotting attacks on US bases; Qraifa's trial begins

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The public prosecution said on Wednesday it has ordered the detention of a Kuwaiti citizen on charges of joining an outlawed group plotting

Police crack down on US univ protests

LOS ANGELES: Hundreds of people were arrested at pro-Palestinian protests on US campuses as police Wednesday extended a crackdown that included clearing out demonstrators occupying a building at Columbia University in New York. On the other side of the country, counter-protesters attacked a pro-Palestinian encampment at the University of California, Los Angeles as violent clashes erupted

'Torrential' rains flood roads, shut schools in Saudi

RIYADH: Saudi Arabian authorities shuttered schools in several regions on Wednesday as flash floods inundated roads, the latest instance of heavy rains disrupting life in the desert Gulf. AFP TV footage showed partially submerged cars struggling to drive through standing water in the central region of Qassim, one of the areas hit hardest overnight.

fruitful and constructive cooperation. HH the Amir also voiced his deepest gratitude to Sisi for awarding him the Order of the Nile.

During his first state visit to Egypt, HH the Amir held summit talks with President Sisi on Tuesday. Both leaders highlighted the importance of reaching an agreement between the Zionist occupation authorities and Palestinian groups on a durable ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and ensuring unhindered delivery of relief aid to the Palestinian people under UN Security Council Resolution 2720.

terrorist attacks inside the country. The prosecution said in a statement on its account on X that the man posted videos and audios on social media of actions of that group as a sign of support.

He also learned the manufacturing of explosives and instigated others to learn the same with the aim of carrying out bombings against US military bases, the statement said. The prosecution said the man confessed to the charges during questioning. The prosecution also ordered the arrest of others to complete investigations.

Meanwhile, the criminal court on Wednesday began the trial of Musaed Al-Qraifa, a former candi-

date who contested the recent parliamentary polls, on charges of insulting the political leadership during an election rally. The court decided to postpone the trial until May 8 but rejected requests by defense lawyers to free Qraifa and ordered that the concerned officer of the interior ministry should attend the next hearing.

Also, the constitutional court decided on Wednesday to issue its ruling over an election challenge on May 21. The challenge was filed by former MP Abdullah Fahhad, claiming that votes counted by his representatives showed he is one of the 10 winners. Fahhad had lost the elections.

They stated opposition to the ongoing Zionist military operations in Gaza and plans for expanding the operations to Rafah, according to a joint statement released following the talks. Both sides warned that Zionist malpractices risk expanding the scope of the conflict to other parts of the Middle East and jeopardizing the security of the region and world peace. They urged the international community to shoulder their responsibility for finding a fair settlement to the Palestine issue based on the two-state solution and

Continued on Page 6

in the dark before police intervened.

At Columbia, the center of nationwide protests, police were on standby Wednesday after their overnight operation dismantled a weeks-long encampment and forcibly removed people occupying an academic building. Demonstrators have gathered in at least 30 US universities to protest the soaring death toll from the Zionist entity's war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip, many demanding college authorities end investments in Zionist companies.

About 300 arrests were made at Columbia and another New York college on charges including trespass, criminal mischief and burglary, Police Commissioner Edward Caban told

Continued on Page 6



LOS ANGELES: Pro-Palestinian demonstrators regroup and rebuild the barricade surrounding the encampment set up on the campus of the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) as clashes erupt with counter-protesters on May 1, 2024. — AFP



RIYADH: Cars drive through rain water in the Saudi capital following strong winds and heavy rain overnight that flooded roads in different regions of the Kingdom on May 1, 2024. — AFP



Continued on Page 6

Local

Zain embraces young people, fosters their creative talents

Company awarded winners of 3rd season of 'SpeakUp Kuwait'



KUWAIT: Zain joined in awarding the winners of SpeakUp Kuwait, the training initiative that empowers young people to pursue their aspirations and fosters their creative talents. The company participated in the closing ceremony, held at Yarmouk Cultural Center, as part of its main sponsorship of the program for the third year running in collaboration with the Youth Public Authority.

The closing ceremony was attended by Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, Minister of State for Youth Affairs, and Minister of State for Communications Dawood Maara-

fi, Acting Director General of the Youth Public Authority Nasser Al-Shaikh, Zain Kuwait Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti, Zain Kuwait Corporate Relations Department Manager Hamad Al-Musaibeih, and SpeakUp Kuwait Founder Dina Al-Wuhaib.

During the event, Zain joined the judges panel that evaluated and selected the winners after hearing the finalists' presentations. The company's participation came as part of its ongoing support to SpeakUp Kuwait since its inception three years ago, as it believes in the program's mission to empower Kuwait's youth by develop-

ing their creative skills, offering them an environment that embraces their talents, and encouraging them to pursue their passions and aspirations.

Throughout the program's third season that started late last year, the Zain Innovation Campus (ZINC) hosted all of SpeakUp Kuwait's training sessions. The program targeted students and fresh graduates, and offered them the space to express themselves, promote their ideas, and engage in public speaking training sessions. SpeakUp Kuwait worked to enhance and develop a wide range of personal skills that are equally important to technical skills in any successful career.

The skills included public speaking, emotional intelligence, communication, along with social, management, business, and professional skills. The program featured mentors, experts, and influencers who shared their experiences with the students. In its previous seasons, SpeakUp Kuwait achieved great success, having featured many notable talented names from the local community to share their experiences and skills with the young participants. Zain also took the opportunity to sit down with the students, listen to their thoughts, and inspire them to pursue their passions.



The Belgium ambassador and officials attend the event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Embassy marks Belgian-Kuwaiti diplomatic ties

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Embassy of the Kingdom of Belgium to Kuwait held a reception on Tuesday, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of Belgian-Kuwaiti diplomatic relations. During his remarks, Ambassador of Belgium Christian Dooms stated "The diplomatic relations between Kuwait and Belgium officially began in 1963, and in 1964 Ambassador Willy Stevens presented his credentials to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, to become Belgium's first ambassador to Kuwait. In 1985, Kuwait opened its embassy in Belgium."

He noted that from the beginning, the two coun-



Ambassador of Belgium Christian Dooms speaks during the event.

tries supported and developed these relations in the best interest of their citizens and ensured their continuity. "The celebration of the 60th anniversary of our diplomatic relations is a festive event, which I am glad to share with you. Since Belgium is a founding member of the European Union, I am particularly proud to host this reception as part of the celebrations during Europe Month," the ambassador said, adding that both countries share a lot of common values, and are both keen to strengthen the multilateral environment, based on international law.

As Belgium assumes the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the ambassador pointed out that Belgium is committed to bolstering EU-GCC ties remain steadfast, continuing that they are dedicated to fostering diplomatic dialogue and seeking peaceful resolutions to the crises that impact the region, affirming that his team are prepared to work diligently to deepen ties with partners and laying the foundation for another six decades of friendship and cooperation to strive and build a future based on mutual respect, understanding, and prosperity for all involved.

The Belgian ambassador praised Kuwaiti history researcher Essa Dashti, saying "I would like to thank Dashti who devoted a big part of his time and energy to the publication of two insightful booklets, highlighting the Kuwaiti-Belgian relations in photos." He added, "Dashti has also been one of the driving forces in the setting up of the successful exhibition of Kuwaiti-Belgian relations at the National Library of Kuwait two days ago."

Elturk discusses Muslim women, fashion industry

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Melanie Elturk is currently participating in the Arts Envoy Program with the US Embassy. As a business owner specializing in designing hijabs primarily for the American market, she is now expanding her presence into the Kuwaiti market. Her presence in Kuwait aims to advocate for women who uphold values similar to those of Muslim women residing in the US. Alongside the US Embassy, Elturk has actively engaged with various entrepreneurial groups, businesswomen, and smaller entities within the fashion industry during her time in Kuwait. To gain more insights on the market and bridging between Western and Eastern Muslims, the Kuwait Times interviewed Elturk.

Kuwait Times: How has the mainstream fashion industry adapted to accommodate modest fashion trends over the past decade, and what are some key indicators of this evolution?

Elturk: Our sensibilities and the way we dress are different than those of indigenous communities within those western countries. If they want to make money, they have to make provisions for women who dress differently. When I was in high school, it was difficult to find something like a long sleeve in the summer. Now you will find more options, even within seasons that used to have shorter cuts.

For them, it is a business transaction, but for us, we get more options for clothes that are more modest and speak to our faith. Beyond the clothing, this also shows more representation in advertising, marketing, and the imagery on their website or magazines, catering to women who look like us. This is another indicator that they understand that this is an important market in which they need to invest in a sincere way — a way that is authentic.

Kuwait Times: In what ways have technological advancements and social media platforms contributed to the growth and visibility of

modest fashion globally, and what impact has this had on the industry?

Elturk: I think that is the catalyst. Social media and technology allowed us to globalize as a community and allowed the western market to see the huge community of women that exists, and online, they are all connecting with each other. This made the West understand that this is a market that is worth investing in and has a very strong voice.

Kuwait Times: What are the economic and social factors driving the increasing popularity and acceptance of modest fashion, and how are designers and brands responding to these shifts to ensure its continued relevance in the fashion world?

Elturk: By the year 2030, a quarter of the world's population is going to be Muslim women. That's huge and can no longer be ignored. If there are almost one billion Muslim women in the world today, let alone our growing demographic factor, that creates economic and social strategies from sheer numbers. So, the Muslim world is growing, and that is an indicator for them because, in the future, to continue to make our money, we have to go where there is growth.

Also, we are a very economically prosperous community. In the US alone, Muslim women have higher degrees than Muslim men. Muslim women, of all minority groups in America, are highly educated and high-income earners. Let alone the rest of the world, where there is a high purchasing power by Muslim women, especially in this region, and many brands know and understand that. This is why they cater for us in authentic ways.

Kuwait to host 3rd strategic dialogue

DOHA: The Doha Declaration issued by the third session of the Arab Economic and Cooperation Forum with the countries of Central Asia and the Republic of Azerbaijan welcomed on Tuesday the invitation by Kuwait to host the third ministerial meeting of the strategic dialogue between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the countries of Central Asia in 2025. In a statement, the declaration emphasized "the historical relations, religious and cultural ties between the two sides, and the prospects for economic cooperation, including the enormous natural resources and promising investment opportunities in the fields of energy, mining, petrochemical industries, tourism, and others."

The statement stressed the need to support consensual political solutions to resolve the crises faced by some countries in the Arab region by encouraging comprehensive dialogue and national reconciliation, rejecting any interference in the internal affairs of countries, and committing to respecting their sovereignty and independence and ensuring their unity and territorial integrity in accordance with the Charter and principles of the United Nations and international law.

The declaration condemned the continuation of Zionist crimes against the Palestinian people in all cities, villages, and camps, the deliberate targeting of more than 100,000 Palestinian civilians, including subjecting the Palestinian people to famine and the deadly siege that cuts off all means of life from the

Gaza Strip, and the systematic destruction of residential neighborhoods, hospitals, schools, universities, mosques, and churches.

The declaration called on the Security Council to adopt a binding resolution to stop the occupation's aggression, shooting, and forced displacement against the Palestinian people and to ensure the flow of relief aid to the entire Gaza Strip, enforce the temporary measures contained in the order of the International Court of Justice, implement the relevant Council decisions, and restore life to normal in the Gaza Strip.



Pan-Arab, Central Asia economic forum opens in Doha. The economic forum brings together countries from the wider Arab region, including Kuwait, and central Asia. — KUNA

The declaration also called for convening an international peace conference as soon as possible, from which a credible peace process would be launched based on approved international references within a specific time frame and with international guarantees that would lead to an end to Zionist occupation of the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, condemning the systematic attacks and campaigns carried out by the occupation against the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinians (UNRWA).

Earlier, an economic forum bringing together

countries from the wider Arab region, including Kuwait, and central Asia kicked off in the Qatari capital, Doha, in a bid to propel bilateral relations to greater levels. The gathering, in which Azerbaijan is also a participant, is tantamount to a message conveying the "solidity and depth" of relations between the two regions, Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulrahman said in a speech, cherishing the event as a platform to push forward more cooperation given their "joint economic interests." — KUNA

Local

Egypt newspapers hail Kuwait-Egypt solidarity and strategic partnership



CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi greets Kuwait's Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah before he departs from Cairo.

CAIRO: The visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Egypt was the main focus of prominent Egyptian daily newspapers, being his first visit since assuming office. The headline in the daily newspaper Al-Ahram highlighted the significance of the visit by His Highness the Amir to Egypt and his meeting with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi. Al-Ahram titled the meeting between His Highness the Amir and the Egyptian President, as a "Summit of Solidarity and Strategic Partnership between Egypt and Kuwait", held at the Presidential Palace, Al-Ittihadiya Palace.

On its front page, Al-Gomhuria newspaper stated, "President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi granted Amir of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Order of the Nile, the highest and most prestigious Egyptian Order" referring to the joint Kuwaiti-Egyptian statement issued following the talks between His Highness the Amir and President Al-Sisi. Al-Gomhuria added that His Highness's visit to Egypt affirmed the two nations' alignment on several key issues related to the developments in the region.

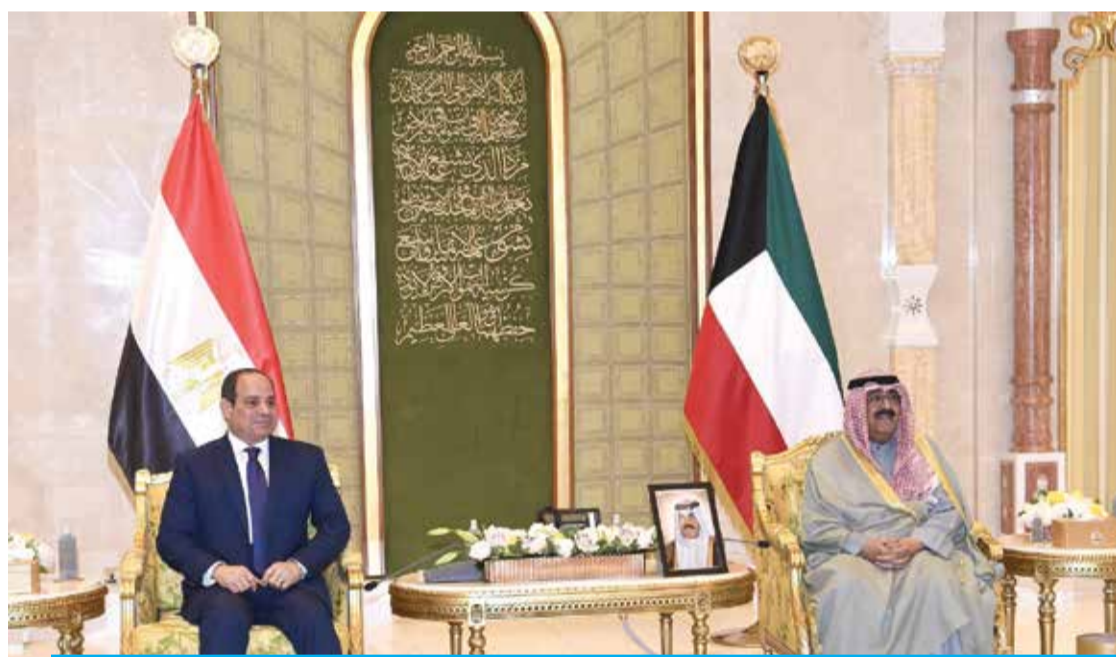
Al-Akhar newspaper featured photos of the meeting between His Highness the Amir and the Egyptian President on the front page, along with headlines, the most prominent of which was "Egyptian-Kuwaiti Summit in Cairo". It also focused on the summit's agenda, which discussed ways to enhance bilateral relations, regional issues, and common Arab work files. Al-Shorouk newspaper underscored the importance of His Highness's visit as his first to Egypt since assuming the



office, given the critical timing amidst regional developments, especially those in the Gaza Strip.

The visit strengthened Arab effort to restore stability in the Middle East, coinciding with preparations for the 33rd Arab Summit scheduled to be held in Manama in May, Al-Shorouk

added. Al-Masry Al-Youm emphasized the importance of the talks between His Highness the Amir and the Egyptian President, particularly regarding the historical bilateral relations between the two nations, especially in economic, commercial and investment aspects. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi. — KUNA photos



Late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi.

Amir's trip mirrors harmonious stances toward regional affairs

CAIRO: The visit by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Egypt embodies the strength and solidity of the close relations between Kuwait and Egypt and their harmonious stances regarding various regional and international issues. His Highness the Amir's state visit coincides with manifestations of unprecedented official and popular interest, for it is the first of its kind since His Highness took the helm of power last December, succeeding the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal met Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi and discussed means of elevating the level of bilateral relations, issues of common concern, namely the blatant aggression on the Gaza Strip, regional jitters, namely those in the Red Sea region, and containing the military escalation in the Middle East. Kuwait and Egypt have been bonded with distinctive and deep-rooted relations at the official and grass-roots levels since 1961, when Egypt was among the first states to recognize the independence of Kuwait.

Ever since, these relations have been evolving continuously, with ambassadors' exchanges and close political coordination at the highest levels, amid recurring re-affirmations by Cairo of its support for Kuwait's security and stability. Egypt, in 1990, declared support for Kuwait in the face of the Iraqi invasion, while Kuwait had sided with Egypt against the 1956 three-state aggression and the 1967 and 1973 wars with Zionist entity.

It dispatched the Al-Yarmouk brigade, accounting for a third of the armed forces at the time in Egypt, when Egypt was engaged in a war with Zionist entity in 1973 and slapped an embargo on oil exports to nations that supported Zionists. Kuwait continued to stand by Egypt's side on various issues and challenges, namely its rights in the Nile waters after Ethiopia built the Al-Nahda dam. Currently, in the era of President Al-Sisi and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal, Cairo and Kuwait have been taking harmonious stances on diverse issues, namely the crises in Libya, Yemen, and Sudan, as well as the Arabs' central issue, the

Palestinian cause.

They campaigned at the international level to push for implementing UN resolutions concerning the Palestinian cause and the two states' settlement according to the Arab initiative that called for establishing the Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. At the international level, the two countries have coordinated to support nominations for international and regional posts. In 1998, Kuwait and Egypt established the joint commission to enhance coordination and cooperation, in addition to the bonds and a large number of cooperation protocols.

Cairo and Kuwait had worked out and signed a chain of treaties and accords for cooperation in the economic, trade, and investment sectors, notably the accord for encouraging and protecting mutual investments and the cooperation agreement between the two countries' chambers of commerce. In 2014, they established the Kuwait-Egypt Cooperation Council, grouping businessmen from the two countries, as a step aimed at speeding up economic, business, and trade cooperation.

They had signed 105 cooperation agreements and memoranda of understanding in the political, economic, and security fields. The volume of trade exchanges between Kuwait and Egypt reached three billion dollars per year, while Kuwaiti businesses in Egypt reached a value of \$15 billion, while those of Egypt in the Gulf country reached a value of \$1.1 billion.

According to the latest statistics, the number of Egyptians working in Kuwait reached some 640,000, the largest Arab community in the country. Their remittances to Egypt have amounted to four billion dollars per year. The number of Kuwaiti students in Egypt has reached 23,000, in addition to the 160,000 Kuwaitis who visit Egypt as tourists annually. Kuwait is Egypt's third commercial partner after the UAE and Saudi Arabia and the fifth-top investor in Egypt. The number of joint enterprises has reached 1,305, worth \$4.27 billion.

Investments by the Kuwaiti private sector in Egypt have exceeded \$10 billion in value, while the



Late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and late Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak.

number of Egyptian companies operating in Kuwait reached 1,337, according to official Egyptian statistics released in 2021. Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development had lent Egypt \$3.75 million, and Kuwait aid sent to Egypt was estimated

at \$13.27 million, in addition to grants valued at \$16 million. At the cultural level, the two countries swap visits by Kuwaiti and Egyptian officials and troupes, and Cairo participates in Kuwait's annual Al-Gurain cultural festival. — KUNA



Late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah and late Egyptian president Anwar Al-Sadat.

Arab League criticizes Western media bias

CAIRO: The Arab League criticized the blatant bias of Western media, often citing legitimate rights to self-defense while overlooking the horrendous criminal acts of Zionist occupation forces. The league, in a statement issued on Wednesday on occasion of World Press Freedom Day falling on May 3, commented on the flagrant violation of international law stipulations, asserting the necessity of ensuring the safety of reports in aggravated areas.

The statement proposed that this is an occasion to reflect on the humanitarian and moral ramifications of the devastating war in Gaza and the questions it poses about the integrity and transparency of western outlets. Western media, often hailing itself as a paragon of universal morals and principles, did not hesitate to adopt a false Zionist occupation narrative, stated the league.

The statement also indicated that media outlets and digital platforms are effective instruments in building trust between governments and democratizing the right to communication and access to data. Media outlets also play an influential role in forming public opinion, spreading principles of peace, and renouncing violence and extremism, all of which contribute to sustainable development.

The Arab bloc underlined the necessity of creating a suitable atmosphere for the practice of freedoms, including freedom of press and media, to generate Arab media that corresponds to the interests of citizens and is also in favor of principles of peace, justice, and gender equality. Furthermore, it called for seizing the opportunity to establish true and honest journalism, with its message and practices inspired by international charters and professional guidelines, to create a more independent, open, and multifaceted platform.

The statement mentioned that, as per the initiative of Arab League Secretary General Ahmad Abulghheit, Arab information ministers are set to examine including the electoral dimension within the Arab Charter during the upcoming session by the end of the month. This is to reinforce the vital role of media, guaranteeing freedom of expression, committing to principles of transparency and neutrality, steering away from false news, and seeking information from sources specifically in times of crisis. — KUNA

Hidden dangers of dark web

Brutal murder of 15-year-old boy shocks Egypt, Kuwait

By Passant Hisham

KUWAIT: The horrific stories about the dark web are not new to us — we've all watched them multiple times in thriller movies and TV shows. But, this time, it's not a fictional story that we are talking about — it's reality, and it's closer to the Arab world than we ever imagined. The brutal murder of a 15-year-old Egyptian boy, allegedly ordered by a teenager residing in Kuwait to film the incident and sell the video through the dark web, won't be the last if society doesn't develop awareness about the dangers of visiting this nefarious universe.

Certified in ethical hacking, Saleh Al-Saleh, a cybersecurity consultant, explained the dark web is a hidden part of the Internet that cannot be indexed by usual search engines such as Google, Chrome or Safari. Individuals can only access it through specialized software that can keep their identities and locations anonymous, making it a "safe" place for practicing illegal actions without the fear of being traced or caught.

Arms trafficking, drug dealing, unauthorized cryptocurrency mining, sharing of exploitative content — often involving children — such as pornography and images of violence and other types of abuse, are all types of what Saleh called "malevolent activities" practiced within the dark web. Despite the different means of crimes, he noted that they all share a common objective: Financial gain. It's the same motive that probably drove the young boy to order the murder. "The dark web is for people who admire watching horror mov-

ies taking place in real life," Saleh remarked, explaining that these sick individuals pay any amount of money to watch such videos, which help the video creator generate more profit.

Saleh asserted that anyone browsing the dark web is prone to joining a large network of crimes taking place on this platform. By easily having access to any electronic device worldwide, proficient unethical hackers on the dark web usually lure visitors into becoming involved in brutal crimes under the threat of sharing sensitive information about their personal or professional lives.

So, whether you get into it out of curiosity, interest in cryptocurrencies, adult content or drugs, if you neglect taking necessary security precautions, those hackers might hunt you down, using you as a puppet to achieve their criminal ends, warned Saleh. "Once you step into the dark web, you probably won't exit it unless you are dead or arrested."

To safeguard oneself against information breaches, Saleh advised every Internet or smart device user to always be equipped with necessary security precautions, because the threats of dark web hackers



Saleh Al-Saleh



can go far beyond its boundaries. He advised implementing practices such as using strong passwords, checking websites' safety and security before accessing them and keeping antivirus software up to date. Not to mention the importance of tracking your children's behaviors and making sure they don't pursue any unusual interests.

However, Saleh noted that no matter what, achieving complete security is impossible in the world of the Internet. Taking all the security precautions is meaningless without awareness. He firmly believes in the concept that a "human firewall is better than a million technical firewalls", which is why he advocates for reforming educational curricula to teach cybersecurity, and for individuals to take responsibility for self-education on the subject.



Kuwait's second medical team arrives in Gaza.



Kuwait Red Crescent Society provided 75,000 hot meals to Palestinians in Gaza. — KUNA photos

KRCS provides 75,000 hot meals to Gazans

GAZA: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) provided 75,000 hot meals to the Gaza healthcare sector on Tuesday, including food parcels and meats to all areas, in support of the steadfastness of the Palestinian people and in cooperation with the Wafa Foundation for Development in Palestine. Muhaisen Atawneh, Wafa Director General and the relief project implementer, told KUNA that several meals were distributed in the Gaza Strip, including provisions for doctors and healthcare workers at various hospitals.

These included the Kuwaiti Hospital in Rafah, the Nasser Complex, the European Hospital in Khan Yunis, and Shuhada Al-Aqsa Hospital in the central area of the strip. Atawneh also confirmed that hot meals will continue to be distributed to doctors for a full month due to food shortages resulting from the ongoing war in Gaza, extending support to the northern areas of the strip as well. Atawneh also reported that 22 tons of meat were distributed to North Gaza, along with 10,000 food parcels distributed to all governorates, in addition to tons of medicines and medical devices delivered to hospitals. Wafa, also in cooperation with KRCS, has provided "iflax meals" throughout the holy month of Ramadan.

Medical team arrives

Meanwhile, the second medical delegation of the Kuwait Relief Society arrived in Gaza on Tuesday via the Rafah crossing, carrying seven tons of aid to support the Palestinian health system in the Strip. The Vice President of the Society, Omar Al-Thuwaini, said that the medical team arrived at the Rafah land crossing and consisted of 17 people, including 14 of the Kuwaiti national medical staff, including a consultant, specialist, and nurse in several delicate and urgent medical and surgical specialties, in addition to the person in charge of the team and two relief coordinators.

Myanmar envoy applauds KRCS' humanitarian efforts

KUWAIT: Myanmar Ambassador to Kuwait, U Chan Aye, acclaimed on Wednesday the Kuwait Red Crescent Society's (KRCS) efforts in supporting humanity and relief work around the world. This came in a statement for KUNA after his meeting with Deputy Chairman of KRCS Anwar Al-Hasawi, who said that KRCS is a pioneer in providing relief services for many parts of the world, expressing his appreciation for these exceptional efforts to relieve those affected by natural disasters and humanitarian crises.

He added that the meeting discussed ways of enhancing cooperation with KRCS and coordination with the Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) that would benefit both countries. On his part, Al-Hasawi welcomed the Ambassador's visit to KRCS headquarters to be briefed on its efforts, mechanisms, and achievements. He expressed his willingness to strengthen the partnership between the two sides in order to achieve



Al-Thuwaini noted that the Kuwait Relief Society team arrived with seven tons of necessary medical equipment and supplies to contribute to supporting the health system in the Gaza Strip and to provide the necessary tools for surgical operations, medical care, and medications, especially for some critical cases and chronic diseases. He also affirmed that the Kuwaiti team is to perform a number of important surgical operations in some surgical specialties, in addition to implementing some other relief projects, most notably food and shelter projects. Since the beginning of the aggression on the Gaza Strip, various Kuwaiti delegations and aid have arrived via air bridges to support the Palestinian people. — KUNA

the goals of KRCS in providing support and aid to those in need. He pointed out that both sides discussed ways of reinforcing cooperation between the KRCS and all humanitarian authorities in Myanmar in all fields.

Campaign in Sudan

Meanwhile, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Sudan Fahad Al-Thafeeri launched on Wednesday a humanitarian campaign in partnership with Kuwait's Patient Helping Fund Society and Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRC), aimed at helping displaced people in Sudan's eastern Red Sea State. Al-Thafeeri said in his remarks to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that this is part of Kuwait's responsibility towards assisting Sudan and its people in the bigger campaign which was launched after the war and successfully sent 18 aid planes carrying hundreds of tons of medical supplies and essential human aid.

The aid will flow in accordance with priorities and needs that were designated by Sudan's authorities after holding meetings with the Kuwaiti embassy, said Al-Thafeeri. SRC president Khalil Serebal voiced his appreciation on behalf of the Sudanese people for the efforts and aid that Kuwait provided, saying that Kuwait is no stranger to this internationally commended humanitarian role. — KUNA



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Nepalis fight TikTok ban in court, or ignore it entirely

The Moroccans who fought for France and settled in Vietnam

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RAFAH, Palestinian Territories: A Palestinian man walks past the rubble of buildings destroyed in previous Zionist bombardments, in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, on April 30, 2024. — AFP

More debris in Gaza than Ukraine: UN

UNMAS needs \$40 million more to continue its work in Gaza over next 12 months

GENEVA: Gaza is filled with more debris and rubble than Ukraine, the UN said Wednesday, with the mammoth task of clearing it made all the more costly and dangerous by the sheer amount of asbestos and unexploded ordnance. Six months into the war between Zionist entity and Hamas, the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) estimated the amount of debris in the Gaza Strip at 37 million tons in mid-April, or 300 kilograms per square meter.

"Gaza has more rubble than Ukraine, and to put that in perspective, the Ukrainian front line is 600 miles (nearly 1,000 kilometers) long, and Gaza is 25 miles (40 km) long," said Mungo Birch, head of the UNMAS program in the Palestinian territories. But the volume of rubble is not the only problem, said UNMAS. "This rubble is

likely heavily contaminated with UXO (unexploded ordnance), but its clearance will be further complicated by other hazards in the rubble," Birch told journalists in Geneva.

"There's estimated to be over 800,000 tons of asbestos, for instance, alone in the Gaza rubble." The cancer-causing mineral used in construction requires special precautions when handling. It is generally estimated that 10 to 15 percent of the munitions fired do not explode on impact and therefore represent a lasting danger for civilian populations.

Birch said he hoped UNMAS, which works to mitigate the threats posed by all types of explosive ordnance, would become the coordination body for mine action in Gaza.

It has secured \$5 million of funding but needs a further \$40 million to

continue its work in Gaza over the next 12 months. However, "the sector as a whole will need hundreds of millions of US dollars over multiple years in order to make Gaza safe again for the population", Birch added. A meeting of the main players in these future operations was held two weeks ago in Amman, under the leadership of the United Nations Development Programme.

The UNDP is piloting the clearance plan and the participants went through the likely means and methods required when the time comes. "Because the level of rubble is so unprecedented, it's going to take new thinking on how we proceed with the clearance," said Birch.

UNMAS has said that 65 percent of the buildings destroyed in Gaza were residential, and it would take 100 trucks 14 years to clear the rubble so

far. Birch said clearance operations were still in the planning phase but would require a significant amount of heavy installations.

"The methodology on how we're going to do that—it's still something that's being discussed because of the sheer scale," he said.

However, a precise assessment for Gaza remains impossible due to the violence of the fighting, bombings and difficulties of access. "Until we've been able to get access to the north and can conduct an assessment we're not certain about the level of contamination," said Birch.

"Anecdotal stories suggest that it's exceptionally heavy in northern Gaza. Our teams have encountered unexploded ordnance on their missions to the north, and we believe that it will be a huge issue going forward." —AFP

UK local polls could determine PM's fate

LONDON: Britain's ruling Conservative party is expected to suffer heavy losses in crunch local elections this week that are likely to increase pressure on beleaguered Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. The polls are the last major electoral test before a general election that Sunak's party, in power since 2010, seems destined to lose to the Labour opposition. Sunak has said he wants to hold the nationwide vote in the second half of the year, but bruising defeats in Thursday's votes could force his hand earlier.

"These elections form a vital examination for the Sunak premiership - road-testing its claim that the plan is working and the degree to which voters still lend that notion any degree of credibility," political scientist Richard Carr told AFP. Incumbent governments tend to suffer losses in local contests and the Conservatives are forecast by pollsters to lose about half of the council seats they are defending.

Sunak's immediate political future is said to rest on whether two high-profile Tory regional mayors get re-elected in the West Midlands and Tees Valley areas of central and northeast England. Wins for the Conservative mayors, Andy Street and Ben Houchen, would boost hopes among Tory MPs that Sunak can turn around their party's fortunes in time for the general election. But speculation is rife in the UK parliament that a bad showing could lead some restive Conservative lawmakers to try to replace Sunak before the nationwide poll.

"If Andy Street and Ben Houchen both lose, any idea



LONDON: Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak speaks during the weekly session of Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) in the House of Commons, in central London, on May 1, 2024. — AFP

that Sunak can carry on is surely done," said Carr, a politics lecturer at Anglia Ruskin University. "Whether that means he rolls the dice on a general election or gets toppled remains to be seen."

Factional infighting has plagued the Tories in recent years, serving up five prime ministers since the 2016 Brexit vote, including three in four months from July to October 2022. A group of restive Conservative MPs have drawn up a "policy blitz" for a potential successor to Sunak in the event of massive losses this week, British media have reported.

Some observers say it would be madness for the Conservatives to topple another leader when Sunak has provided some stability since succeeding Liz Truss in October 2022. Others say the party's credibility is already shot so why not try one last desperate throw of the dice to try to stop a predicted Labour landslide. Some 52 MPs would need to submit letters of no confidence in Sunak to trigger an internal party vote to replace him - a tall task. — AFP

ment spokesperson Xochitl Hinojosa said in a statement. It comes after Biden became the first president to initiate a federal review into the matter, in 2022.

The issue is seen as a potential vote winner for Biden as he faces Republican Donald Trump in a tough election rematch this November, especially among younger people whom the Democratic incumbent is struggling to court. Marijuana has been classified since 1970 as a so-called "Schedule I" drug along with heroin, ecstasy and LSD, meaning it is deemed to have no accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse.

But it would be downgraded to a Schedule III drug under the proposal, along with drugs like ketamine and painkillers containing codeine, with a moderate to low

Khamenei criticizes Arab-Zionist entity normalization bids

TEHRAN: Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Wednesday efforts underway to forge a normalization of ties between Zionist entity and Arab countries will not resolve the crisis in the Middle East.

"Some people think that by forcing neighboring countries to normalize their ties (with Zionist entity) the problem will be solved," said Khamenei. "They are wrong."

Khamenei's remarks came after US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Monday said Washington is nearly ready with a security package to offer Saudi Arabia if it normalizes relations with Zionist entity. Saudi Arabia had been in talks over a potential normalization with Zionist entity but they were paused when the Gaza war broke out.

Regional tensions have soared since the start of the Zionist entity-Hamas war, drawing in Iran-backed militant groups in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen. The Islamic republic backs Hamas, but has denied any direct involvement in the group's attack on arch-foe Zionist entity. Iran does not recognize Zionist entity and has made support for the Palestinian cause a centerpiece of its foreign policy since the 1979 Islamic revolution. "Palestine should be returned to them (Palestinians)," said Khamenei.

"They should form their own regime, their own system, then that system should decide how to deal with the Zionists." —AFP

likelihood of dependence, Hinojosa's statement said. "This is the next step in the formal rescheduling process," a source familiar with the issue told AFP. The process would still require a long period for public comments and finalization. Commenting on the impending move, Paul Armentano, deputy director of the advocacy group NORML, said: "It is significant for these federal agencies... to acknowledge publicly for the first time what many patients and advocates have known for decades: that cannabis is a safe and effective therapeutic agent for tens of millions of Americans." But he added that reclassifying the substance did not go far enough and it should be removed from the Controlled Substances Act altogether, a move that would require legislation. — AFP



NEW YORK: Former US President Donald Trump looks on in the courtroom, during his trial in New York City, on April 30, 2024. — AFP

Judge threatens Trump with jail over gag order violations

NEW YORK: The New York judge presiding over Donald Trump's hush money trial fined the former president on Tuesday for defying a gag order and warned that further violations could see him thrown in jail. Trump, 77, is accused of falsifying business records to reimburse his lawyer, Michael Cohen, for a \$130,000 payment made to porn star Stormy Daniels just days ahead of the 2016 election, in which Trump ran against Hillary Clinton.

Keith Davidson, Daniels' former lawyer, spent several hours on the witness stand on Tuesday testifying about the negotiations he held with Cohen to secure the X-rated movie star's silence about an alleged 2006 sexual encounter with Trump. Before Davidson's testimony, Judge Juan Merchan held Trump in contempt of court for multiple violations of a gag order he imposed on the former president ahead of the trial prohibiting him from publicly attacking witnesses, jurors or court staff and their relatives.

He fined Trump \$1,000 each for nine specific violations of the gag order, and instructed him to remove seven "offending posts" from his Truth Social account and two from a campaign website. The posts were removed Tuesday afternoon. Lamenting that he could not impose a fine "more commensurate with the wealth of the contemnor," the judge warned Trump, -- the first former president to face criminal charges -- that he could be jailed if he continues to violate the gag order.

"Defendant is hereby warned that the Court will not tolerate continued willful violations of its lawful orders and that if necessary and appropriate under the circumstances, it will impose an incarceration punishment," Merchan said.

Prosecutors allege that Trump made the hush money payment to Daniels to silence her about a 2006 tryst at a celebrity golf tournament that could have potentially derailed his 2016 White House bid. Trump denies having sex with Daniels and has used appearances outside the Manhattan courtroom to rail against the case, claiming it is a "witch hunt" by Democrats to torpedo his campaign to recapture the White House. — AFP

US to reclassify cannabis as low-risk drug

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden's administration is set to reclassify marijuana as a less dangerous drug, an official said Tuesday—a historic shift that would bring federal policy more in line with public opinion. The US attorney general sent a proposal to the White House on Tuesday to "reclassify marijuana," Justice Depart-

International

The Moroccans who fought for France and settled in Vietnam

More than 120,000 North Africans served in French army in Indochina

PHU THO, Vietnam: Le Tuan Binh keeps his Moroccan soldier father's tombstone at his village home north of Hanoi, a treasured reminder of a man whose community in Vietnam has been largely forgotten. Mzid Ben Ali, or "Mohammed" as Binh calls him, was one of tens of thousands of North Africans who served in the French army as it battled to maintain its colonial rule of Indochina.

He fought for France against the Viet Minh independence movement in the 1950s, before leaving the military - as either a defector or a captive - and making a life for himself in Vietnam. "It's very emotional for me," says Binh, 64, holding the tombstone. There was no funeral when his father died in 1968, as the war with the United States was in full swing, and his body has since disappeared, but Binh has kept the stone slab, engraved with his father's nationality: "Moroccan".

Between 1947 and 1954, more than 120,000 North Africans served in the French army in Indochina. Half were from Morocco - which was then a protectorate of France - and of those, around 150 remained in Vietnam after the armistice in 1954, either as defectors or prisoners, including Binh's father. His story offers a little-known perspective on the First Indochina War as Vietnam and France prepare to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Dien Bien Phu on May 7.

The bloody eight-week struggle in the country's northwestern hills - won decisively by the Viet Minh - was the climactic confrontation that ultimately brought an end to the French empire in Indochina. In France, "the history of heroism at Dien Bien Phu was for a long time the preserve of white people, who represented the majority of commanders", said Pierre Journoud, professor of contemporary history at Paul Valery-Montpellier University. "But after 1947, the war effort relied on colonial riflemen, and they represented the majority of troops," he told AFP. "We've lost part of their story."

'The foreigner'

At his home in the northern province of Phu Tho, 80 kilometers northwest of Hanoi, Binh makes a pot of black tea spiked with mint leaves from his garden - "Moroccan style, but without the sugar," he jokes. In the village, he is nicknamed "the foreigner", but those close to him call him Ali, the name given to him by his father. The war with the United States and economic development have dispersed the Moroccan-Vietnamese families who lived in the country several decades ago. Some returned to Morocco in the 1970s, but Binh wanted to stay with his Vietnamese mother and two brothers, Bou-jamaa and Abdallah. Binh says his father rarely spoke about his experiences in the

war - leaving his story shrouded in mystery - but he likely defected towards the end of the conflict, in 1953 or 1954. "He was a man of few words," Binh said. Vietnamese propaganda presented foreign deserters as pioneers in the struggle of oppressed peoples against imperialism, but according to French researchers, their motives were usually linked to better pay or fear of punishment for misconduct. After 1954, Hanoi says some 300 "African and European surrendered soldiers" settled in a farming village in the Ba Vi district, around 50 kilometers from Hanoi.

Recognition

It was in Ba Vi that Binh's father met his Vietnamese wife and Binh was born in 1959. The farm was dismantled in the 1970s, during the tumult of the war against the Americans, but today, a Moorish-inspired gateway remains, built by Moroccan workers as a tribute to their country of origin. The monument stands in the garden of a family that welcomes a handful of visitors every month, and who have ensured its survival over the years. During the extreme poverty of the 1990s, "scrap metal dealers asked if they could take parts of the gate", said one family member, who declined to give their name.

But the gate was preserved, and later re-



PHU THO, Vietnam: This photo taken on April 11, 2024 shows Le Tuan Binh (El Mekki Ali) (left) checking his documents at his home in Vietnam's northern Phu Tho province. — AFP

stored with renovation work by Hanoi authorities and the Moroccan embassy in 2009, and then again in 2018 - at a time when research was beginning to shed light on the role of soldiers from French colonies in Indochina. Binh has struggled for recognition of his past for many years. In 2016, he finally obtained a Moroccan passport, as did

his two children, born to a Vietnamese mother, under a surname chosen by the embassy: El Mekki. His daughter Leila, aged 36, now lives in Casablanca, but Binh has never set foot in Morocco. "Now I'm too old. I gave the opportunity to my daughter," he said. "I'm happy now that some of my dreams have come true." — AFP

'Nightmare' abortion ban takes effect in Florida state

WASHINGTON: Florida introduced one of the strictest abortion bans in the United States Wednesday in what President Joe Biden called a "nightmare" triggered by his election rival and predecessor Donald Trump. US Vice President Kamala Harris was visiting Republican-led Florida to deliver a speech condemning Trump as the harsh ban on abortions after six weeks of pregnancy took effect. Republican Trump has bragged about how justices he nominated allowed the conservative-leaning US Supreme Court to revoke the national right to abortion in 2022, in turn paving the way for 21 states to bring in total or partial bans.

"Today, an extreme abortion ban takes effect in Florida, banning reproductive health care before many women even know they are pregnant," Biden said in a statement. "There is one person responsible for this nightmare: Donald Trump." Biden himself visited Florida last week as Democrats seek to make abortion one of the core issues of the 2024 election, seeing it as a vote-winner against Trump.

Florida's strict new law replaces a 15-week ban and has left women and clinics across the southern United States scrambling for options. One of the most populous states in the country, Florida was one of the few in the region where the time limit for abortion was still relatively high, leading many women to travel there to terminate their pregnancies. Harris, the first female, black and South Asian vice president in US history, has become the campaign's leading voice on abortion rights and will speak in the city of Jacksonville. — AFP

Istanbul police arrest 210 May Day protesters

ISTANBUL: Turkish police on Wednesday fired tear gas and rubber bullets and detained more than 200 protesters after authorities banned May 1 rallies at Istanbul's historic Taksim Square. More than 40,000 police were deployed across Istanbul, blocking even small side streets with metal barriers in an attempt to prevent protesters gathering.

Police clashed with demonstrators near city hall in the Sarachane district, firing tear gas and rubber bullets to stop protesters breaching barricades, AFP reporters said. "210 people were detained in Istanbul after failure to heed our warnings and attempting to walk to the Taksim Square and attack our police officers on May 1 Labor and Solidarity Day," Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya posted on X, formerly Twitter.

Tall metal barriers were put up around the square, where authorities have banned rallies since 2013, when it was the focus of demonstrations against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government.

"We have demonstrated our will to celebrate May Day at Taksim Square. We have legal grounds," Arzu Cerkezoglu, secretary general of the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DISK) told AFP. "Taksim is an important symbol for us. Taksim means May Day, Taksim means labor," she said. In 2023, Turkey's top constitutional court ruled that the closure of Taksim Square for protests was a violation of rights.

The square was a rallying ground for May Day celebrations until 1977, when at least 34 people were killed during demonstrations. Authorities opened it up again in 2010, but it was shut again after the 2013



ISTANBUL: Protesters scuffle with riot police as they attempt to defy a ban and march on Taksim Square during a May Day (Labor Day) rally, marking International Workers' Day, at the Sarachane Park aqueduct in Istanbul, on May 1, 2024. — AFP

protests. In the Besiktas district, police detained at least 30 left-wing protesters who were shouting "Taksim cannot be banned", an AFP journalist reported. One protester was dragged along the ground by police and his group detained.

Another 30 people were detained in the Sisli district. The MLSA rights group said several journalists were pushed to the ground during the troubles.

Main roads across Istanbul were closed to traffic while public transport including ferries and subway trains was halted because of the security clampdown. Landmarks such as the Topkapi palace were cordoned off. On Monday, Yerlikaya said Taksim would be out of bounds for rallies to stop "terrorist

organizations" using it for "propaganda". Turkey's main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) and unions had pressed the government to open the square for labor rallies but Erdogan warned on Tuesday against any provocation. CHP leader Ozgur Ozel, accompanied by Istanbul's mayor Ekrem Imamoğlu and labor unions, gathered in the Sarachane neighborhood.

"We will keep on fighting until Taksim is free," Ozel said. "Taksim belongs to the workers." Addressing the police, Ozel declared: "These workers are not your enemies. Our only desire is for the day to be celebrated as a festival. We do not want conflict." — AFP

Kuwait, Egypt urge Gaza truce...

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establishing the State of Palestine within the borders of June 4, 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital. They stated unequivocal rejection of Zionist attempts to liquidate the Palestine cause and serious violations of international humanitarian law through forced displacement of the Palestinian people from their own land in Gaza and the West Bank. They reaffirmed support of the legitimate right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland, pursuant to UN General Assembly Resolution 194. Both sides reiterated the vital role of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), called for supporting its budget and rejected the cynical witch-hunt targeting the aid agency.

HH the Amir and Sisi hailed the growing, deep-rooted and historical relationship between their two sisterly countries on the state-to-state and people-to-people levels, noting that this relationship featured reciprocal obligations, exchange of support and full solidarity at critical moments, which materialized shared commitment to protection of each other's interests and joint Arab security. The Kuwaiti side applauded the unprecedented development of Egypt in all areas, and commended Egyptian efforts to improve the investment atmosphere.

The Egyptian president appreciated the care for the Egyptian community in Kuwait. Based on a shared desire to enhance trade ties and joint investment, both sides tasked competent agencies to arrange for the 13th session of the Higher Joint Commission on Cooperation, according to the joint statement. Both sides commended coordination and reciprocal support in international arenas, which gives momentum to the common interests, recalling Kuwait's backing of Dr Khaled Al-Anani - the Egyptian candidate for UNESCO Director General, and Egypt's support to Kuwait's membership at the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) in 2024-2026.

Both sides hailed the close political coordination between them regarding regional and international issues of common concern, highlight-

ing the importance of promoting the culture of peace, dialogue, development and coexistence, and favoring diplomacy as a means of resolution of conflicts in the Middle East.

Regarding Libya, the Egyptian and Kuwaiti leaders underscored the importance of respect for the sovereignty, territorial safety and unity of the Arab country, and stated opposition to all forms of foreign interference in its domestic affairs. They reiterated support to inter-Libyan dialogue aiming to reach a political settlement and arrange for presidential and parliamentary elections as early as possible in keeping with the provisions of the 2015 Skhirat political accord, the constitutional declaration and relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

On the civil strife in Sudan, both sides rejected foreign interferences and stressed the need of Sudanese-led political settlement to the dispute, away from any external diktats or pressures. They urged protecting the national state institutions of Sudan from collapse in collaboration with regional actors such as the African Union and the Arab League. They recognized the need of supporting the neighbors of Sudan, including Egypt, which were affected by the conflict and the ensuing influx of refugees, the joint statement noted.

HH the Amir reaffirmed full support to Egypt's right to water security as an integral part of Arab water security, renewing solidarity with Egypt in whatever measures it might take to protect its interests against any unilateral moves to plunder the Nile waters. Highlighting the importance of protecting the security and stability of maritime navigation under the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, both sides urged finalizing the delineation of the Kuwait-Iraqi maritime borders beyond Mark 162 in keeping with the UNSC Resolution 833 (1993).

The talks also dealt with the Kuwait-Iraq agreement regulation navigation through Khor Abdullah waterway, which was signed on April 29, 2012 and came into force on Dec 5, 2013. After being endorsed by Kuwait and Iraq, the document as well as the appended security protocol of 2008 and map were lodged to the UN on Dec 18, 2013. Regarding Durra field, Kuwait and Egypt affirmed that the field lies entirely in the territorial waters of Kuwait and the hydrocarbon wealth in the adjacent submerged area is shared by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia away from any third party, based on signed agreements. — KUNA

Police crack down on US...

Continued from Page 1

a news conference Wednesday. "Public safety was a real concern, especially after the protesters escalated the situation by breaking and entering into a university building, and the NYPD was called in to do their job," he said.

Mayor Eric Adams blamed "outside agitators" who entered Columbia's campus for ratcheting up tensions. "These external actors (have) a history of escalating situations and trying to create chaos, not to peacefully protest," he said. The unrest has swept through US higher education institutions, with student protesters erecting tent encampments on campuses from coast to coast.

The protests have posed a challenge to university administrators trying to balance free speech rights with complaints that the rallies have veered into criminal activity, "anti-Semitism" and "hate". At Columbia, police climbed into the barricaded Hamilton Hall via a second-floor window before leading people in handcuffs out of the building into vans.

In Los Angeles, fireworks were hurled as count-

er-protesters sprayed chemical substances onto a pro-Palestinian encampment and attempted to tear down wooden boards and metal barricades. AFP journalists saw. Several protesters were also beaten on the ground. Los Angeles police eventually arrived to restore calm, with a large presence remaining on Wednesday.

One protester, UCLA doctoral student Vincent Doehr, voiced outrage at the university for not preventing the violence, saying it had been warned about the counter-protesters, whom he described as being pro-Zionist. "They still allowed them onto campus and to attack us using weapons such as pepper spray, mace, boards, bricks, fireworks," he told CNN. LA mayor Karen Bass said the violence was "absolutely abhorrent and inexcusable".

Elsewhere, police moved in Wednesday at the University of Wisconsin at Madison and arrested several protesters. TV footage showed. Earlier at the University of Arizona, police said they were "deploying chemical irritant munitions" to disperse "an unlawful assembly". In contrast, Brown University reached an agreement in which student protesters will remove their encampment in exchange for the institution holding a vote on divesting from the Zionist entity — a major concession from an elite American university. The Zionist entity's offensive has killed at least 34,535 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the territory's health ministry. — AFP

'Torrential' rains flood roads, shut...

Continued from Page 1

visibility, hail, torrential rains, and thunderbolts". Schools in Eastern Province and Riyadh also canceled in-person instruction and moved classes online. The Madinah education department posted on X pictures of maintenance workers repairing electricity and air-conditioning units and removing standing water from schools. There was some standing water on Riyadh's roads on Wednesday but traffic was not significantly disrupted. Rainstorms and flooding are not unheard of in Saudi Arabia, especially in winter, and larger, more densely populated cities can struggle with drainage.

Such problems are an annual occurrence in Jeddah, the port city on the Red Sea coast. Floods killed 123 people in the city in 2009 and 10 more two years later. This week's heavy rainfall in Saudi Arabia follows the intense rains that lashed the region in mid-April, killing 21 people in Oman and four in the United Arab Emirates, which received the heaviest rainfall since records began 75 years ago. Global warming caused by fossil fuel emissions "most likely" exacerbated those rains, an expert group of scientists said in a study published last week.

Meanwhile, the Dubai government announced that all private schools in the emirate will transfer to remote learning on Thursday and Friday due to weather conditions. The decision was taken during the meeting of Dubai's supreme committee of crisis and disaster management which reviewed the plan to address the potential impact of the upcoming weather forecast. — Agencies

International

Nepalis fight TikTok ban in court, or ignore it entirely

Ban torpedoed a market worth \$5m each year for advertisers, content creators

KATHMANDU: When Nepal suddenly announced a ban on TikTok last year, lawyer Sunil Rajan Singh was determined to fight what he said was a government effort to hide its wrongdoings. The hugely popular video-sharing platform has faced restrictions in several countries for allegedly breaking data rules and for its supposed harmful impact on youth.

Last week the United States became the latest nation poised to ban the app outright, unless Chinese parent company ByteDance agrees to divest it. Efforts to restrict access to TikTok have prompted vocal opposition wherever they have been attempted but especially so in Nepal, where the platform had been used to mobilize anti-government demonstrations.

Some Nepalis have skirted the ban entirely by accessing TikTok via virtual private networks (VPNs), which use a remote connection that obscures their location. Others like Singh are determined to fight.

"The government's move is against freedom of speech and expression guaranteed by Nepal's constitution," said the attorney, who is leading a legal challenge to the ban in the Himalayan republic's top court. "On TikTok the public would learn about corruption, financial embezzlement and other immoral activities of leaders," he told AFP. "That was not helpful for the government." Nepal's communications minister justified last November's ban by accusing the platform of spreading content that damaged the country's "social harmony". The announcement came days before a huge rally called by a prominent businessman who was using TikTok to organize a campaign demanding the re-

instatement of Nepal's monarchy. The case before the Supreme Court is due to be heard next week with a decision expected later this year.

TikTok is one of the most popular social media platforms on the planet with more than one billion users. Its explosive growth has given its content creators and influencers an immense audience, and its editing features and AI-powered algorithm have proved particularly attractive. But the platform has also been blamed for spreading disinformation, and ByteDance's alleged ties to the Chinese government have prompted alarm in foreign capitals.

Multiple countries have sought to tighten controls on TikTok, and it was banned about four years ago in neighboring India. AFP, along with more than a dozen fact-checking organizations, is paid by TikTok to verify videos that potentially contain false information.

Nepal's ban was condemned not just by free speech advocates like Singh but the owners of popular accounts whose lives were transformed by the platform, which had about 2.2 million users in the country. Sangmo Bomjan, 28, was running a lucrative business reselling children's clothes on the platform that began when the COVID-19 pandemic put her husband out of work, saving her household from financial ruin.

"We were worried, but TikTok gave us hope," she told AFP. Orders kept the couple busy packing clothes even at night to deliver across the country, and they were able to earn more than \$2,000 every month. After the ban, Bomjan used a VPN to keep posting videos to her account, circumventing the block on TikTok im-



KATHMANDU: In this photograph taken on April 29, 2024, TikTok influencers twin sisters Prisma (left) and Princy Khatiwada (right) speak during an interview. - AFP

posed by local internet service providers.

But her orders have shrunk to less than half of what they were before the ban and her videos get a fraction of their earlier viewers. "They do not reach my customers in remote areas. They don't know how to use VPNs," she said. The collapse in her earnings prompted her husband to migrate to South Korea, sending back money to support Bomjan and their two children.

Industry workers told AFP last year that Nepal's \$5-million each year for advertisers and content creators, and which was set to grow rapidly. After joining the

platform in 2018, twin sisters Prisma and Princy Khatiwada built a following of nearly eight million on TikTok with videos of their synchronized dance routines.

Their popularity has netted them endorsement deals and modeling contracts in music videos and advertisements. Both sisters still post to their individual accounts but their recent videos have been watched just tens of thousands of times on average - minuscule compared to the 70 million views one of their biggest viral hits got before the ban. "Where we stand today is because of TikTok... so many people were earning and getting opportunities through it," Prisma told AFP. — AFP

China Coast Guard becoming 'more aggressive': Manila

MANILA: China's coast guard has become more aggressive towards Philippine vessels in the South China Sea and its water cannon attacks could threaten the lives of crew, a government spokesman in Manila warned Wednesday.

A series of high-seas incidents involving the two countries have injured a number of Philippine troops in recent months as the neighbors asserted rival claims over waters, reefs and rocks in the strategic waterway. In the latest incident on Tuesday, the Philippines said one of its coast guard vessels and another government boat sustained damage from water cannon fired by the China Coast Guard near Scarborough Shoal.

The water pressure was far more powerful than in previous incidents, and tore or bent metal sections and equipment on the Philippine vessels, said coast guard Commodore Jay Tarriela, Manila's spokesman on the South China Sea. "Obviously that would be very fatal," the official said, describing the water pressure as 200 pounds per square inch (14 kilograms per square centimeter). However he said there were no casualties this time as the crew were ordered to take shelter inside.

"The Chinese coast guard now has elevated the tension and the level of their aggression as well towards the Philippine Coast Guard," Tarriela said. China claims almost the entire South China Sea, brushing off rival claims from other countries, including the Philippines, and an international ruling that its assertion has no legal basis. — AFP



MANILA: Commodore Jay Tarriela, spokesperson of the Philippine Coast Guard on the South China Sea, speaks during a press conference in Manila on May 1, 2024. — AFP

Indonesia volcano shuts more airports, ash reaches Malaysia

JAKARTA: Eruptions at a remote Indonesian volcano forced more than half a dozen airports to close with ash spreading as far as Malaysia, officials said Wednesday, while authorities rushed to evacuate thousands due to tsunami fears. Mount Ruang erupted three times on Tuesday, spewing lava and ash more than five kilometers (three miles) into the sky and forcing authorities to issue evacuation orders for 12,000 locals. A rescue ship and a warship were dispatched to help move thousands from neighboring Tagulandang island north to Siau island because of a warning about parts of the volcano falling into the sea potentially causing a tsunami.

Rosalin Salindeho, a 95-year-old resident of Tagulandang in Indonesia's outermost region of North Sulawesi province, spoke of her fears when Ruang erupted after arriving in Siau.

"The mountain exploded. Wow, it was horrible. There were rains of rocks. Twice. The second one was really heavy, even the houses far away were also hit," she said. The country's meteorological agency (BMKG) shared a map on Wednesday morning that showed volcanic ash had reached as far as eastern Malaysia on Borneo island, which the country shares with Indonesia and Brunei.



DONG NAI, Vietnam: Workers collect dead fish caused by renovation works and the ongoing hot weather conditions onto a truck from a reservoir in southern Vietnam's Dong Nai province on April 30, 2024. - AFP

Mass fish die-off in Vietnam as heatwave roasts Southeast Asia

DONG NAI, Vietnam: Hundreds of thousands of fish have died in a reservoir in southern Vietnam's Dong Nai province, with locals and media reports suggesting a brutal heatwave and the lake's management are to blame. Like much of Southeast Asia - where schools have recently been forced to close early and electricity usage has surged - southern and central Vietnam have been scorched by devastating heat.

"All the fish in the Song May reservoir died for lack of water," a local resident in Trang Bom district, who identified himself only as Nghia, told AFP. "Our life has been turned upside down over the past 10 days because of the smell." Pictures show residents wading and boating through the 300-hectare Song May reservoir, with the water barely visible under a blanket of dead marine life. According to media reports, the area has seen no rain for weeks, and the water in the reservoir is too low for the creatures to survive. Reservoir management had previously discharged water to try to save crops downstream, Nghia said.

"They then tried to renovate the reservoir, bringing in a pump to take the mud out so that the fish would have more space and water," he said. However, the efforts did not work, and shortly afterwards many of the fish died, with local media reports suggesting as many as two hundred tons' worth may have perished.

The spread of volcanic ash forced seven airports to close, the biggest in provincial capital Manado and the city of Gorontalo, according to a notice from state-run air traffic control provider AirNav Indonesia. Julius Ramopolli, head of Mount Ruang monitoring post, said the volcano was still billowing ash and smoke above the crater on Wednesday morning.

"The volcano is visibly seen, the plume of smoke is visible, grey and thick, and reached 500-700 metres (2,300 feet) above the crater," he said in a statement. He said the alert level remained at its highest of

a four-tiered system and called on locals to remain outside of a seven-kilometer exclusion zone.

The tsunami fears were informed by recent experience. The crater of Mount Anak Krakatoa, between Java and Sumatra islands, also partly collapsed in 2018 when a major eruption sent huge chunks of the volcano sliding into the ocean, triggering a tsunami that killed more than 400 people and injured thousands. Indonesia, a vast archipelago nation, experiences frequent seismic and volcanic activity due to its position on the Pacific "Ring of Fire". — AFP



JAKARTA: Evacuees board an Indonesian naval vessel on Tagulandang Island in Sitaro, North Sulawesi on May 1, 2024, as Mount Ruang volcano spews smoke in the background. - AFP

News in Brief

UK policeman charged over allegedly pro-Hamas image

LONDON: A police officer in northern England is set to appear in court this week to face terror charges after allegedly sharing an image supporting Palestinian militant group Hamas, a watchdog said Wednesday. West Yorkshire Police constable Mohammed Adil, 26, is due at Westminster Magistrates' Court in London Thursday after being charged with two offences under the Terrorism Act, the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) said. He was charged Monday with two counts of publishing an image in support of Hamas, which is a proscribed organization in the UK, after allegedly sharing the image on WhatsApp, it added.

HK lashed with nearly 10,000 lightning strikes overnight

HONG KONG: Hong Kong was lashed by nearly 10,000 cloud-to-ground lightning strikes from Tuesday night to Wednesday morning, according to data from the city's weather observatory. The Chinese city is accustomed to high humidity levels during April leading up to monsoon season, with residents prepared for sudden downpours during their workday commutes. Beginning 9 pm Tuesday evening, Hong Kong skies put on a flashy display, with the observatory recording 5,914 lightning bolts in a single hour as rain bucketed down. — AFP

Six dead in Vietnam timber plant blast

HANOI: Six people were killed and seven injured in an explosion at a timber factory in southern Vietnam on Wednesday, local reports said. The incident occurred around 8:00 am at the Binh Minh Wood Production Company in Dong Nai province, with Vietnamese media reporting it was caused by a malfunctioning boiler. "Arriving the site, I saw a horrifying scene: debris scattered everywhere and several bodies lying in the yard," according to a witness quoted by news site VN-Express. State media photos of the site - where some 30 employees were working at the time - showed part of the building had collapsed, with the corrugated iron roofing flung to the ground. — AFP

Abandoned homes in Japan surge to almost 4 million

TOKYO: The number of abandoned homes in Japan has soared to almost four million over the last 20 years, government data showed, as a shrinking population guts rural communities. About 3.85 million homes were vacant nationwide in 2023, around 80 percent more than in 2003, according to a government survey released Tuesday. The internal affairs ministry's review, conducted every five years, showed that the number of abandoned homes increased by about 360,000 from 2018. With the world's second-oldest population and chronically low birth rates, the phenomenon of empty homes is particularly rampant in rural areas of Japan. — AFP

Trudeau rival ejected from Commons for 'wacko PM' insult

OTTAWA: Canada's main opposition leader Pierre Poilievre was ejected from the House of Commons on Tuesday after he called Justin Trudeau a "wacko prime minister." During a heated exchange, Poilievre called Trudeau an extremist and a radical over his liberal government's support for the decriminalization of the possession of small amounts of cocaine, heroin, fentanyl and other hard drugs in British Columbia. The province said last week it would dial back the pilot project after an outcry over soaring drug use in public spaces and mounting overdoses. — AFP

THURSDAY, MAY 2, 2024

Boursa Kuwait hosts Chinese firms keen on listing in Kuwait

Visit organized in collaboration with ARTE Capital Group



KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait officials with the executives of the visiting Chinese delegation.

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait welcomed a distinguished delegation of senior executives from three prominent Chinese enterprises listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange (HKEX), alongside one company formerly listed on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE). These companies represent robust sectors such as education, basic materials, pharmaceuticals, and industrials. The visit to the Kuwaiti exchange was organized in collaboration with ARTE Capital Group, an Asia-based asset management firm with headquarters in Hong Kong and offices in Abu Dhabi and Shenzhen.

The Chinese delegation showed keen interest in listing on the exchange for their respected companies or the subsidiaries. The company representatives also hailed the Kuwaiti capital market as an efficient market operating according to internationally accredited best-in-class standards and practices with a reputation as a leader in the region. The companies, who are interested in expanding their business operations into the region, visited the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) and the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) as well as Boursa Kuwait.

Throughout the visit, the delegates were acquainted with the advantages of Kuwaiti capital market listing opportunities provided by Boursa Kuwait. Additionally, they were briefed on the solutions tailored for international companies, enabling them to list on the Kuwaiti exchange without prior listing requirements in their home countries.

Representatives from Boursa Kuwait underscored the exchange's stringent standards, operational practices, and the comprehensive range of products and services available to investors and issuers. Moreover, the company consistently advocates for the Kuwaiti capital market through its Corporate Days, Roadshows, and site visits to entities expressing interest in listing.

"As part of its commitment to contribute to the diversification and growth of the national economy, Boursa Kuwait continuously seeks to enhance cooperation with international companies and highlight the opportunities provided by the Kuwaiti capital market for both issuers and investors. We were delighted to host representatives of Chinese companies, and we will continue to engage with

these companies to encourage their listing," said Boursa Kuwait's Head of Markets Noura Al-Abdulkareem.

The visit follows similar such visits ARTE Capital organized for Chinese delegations to the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia over the past few years. The company plans to raise a \$1 billion ARTE China-Arab Strategic Fund for investment in Chinese companies planning to expand to the Middle East, which ARTE Capital investors will back.

Chairman of ARTE Capital Group Ethan Chan also commented on the visit, saying, "The visit to Boursa Kuwait was very informative, allowing Chinese enterprises to learn more about the regulatory framework, market dynamics, and investment opportunities within Kuwait's capital market. We look forward to the results of this fruitful collaboration and hope to see more Chinese companies establish themselves in the GCC. Kuwait's capital market is undoubtedly an attractive one, and we will continue promoting it to our clients."

ARTE Capital Group is an established investment group with multibillion US dollar asset under management headquartered in Hong Kong. Its affiliates operate under entities regulated by Hong Kong Securities and Futures Commission (HK SFC) and the Financial Services Regulatory Authority (FSRA) of Abu Dhabi Global Market (ADGM). The company's mission is to foster positive interconnections between the Middle East and China, cultivating strong and lasting partnerships through the principles of sharing resources and mutual growth.

Key driver

Boursa Kuwait has been a key driver in the development of the Kuwaiti capital market and the diversification of the national economy, in line with the goals of the "New Kuwait" vision. Since its incep-



Noura Al-Abdulkareem



KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait team with a delegation of senior executives from three prominent Chinese enterprises at the Boursa Kuwait during the visit.

The Chinese delegation includes three companies listed on the Stock Exchange of Hong Kong and one company previously listed on New York Stock Exchange

tion, the company has worked diligently to create a thriving capital market that attracts local and foreign investors through a broad spectrum of new products and services, infrastructure upgrades, and market reform initiatives, as part of its multi-phase market development plans.

Boursa Kuwait was fully privatized in 2019, the first government entity in the country to successfully undergo the process, bringing about greater levels of efficiency. It has also been self-listed since September 2020 and has made great strides in sustaining its operations and business continuity in the face of uncertainties and challenges.

The company has rolled out numerous market reforms and new initiatives as part of its comprehensive multi-phase market development (MD) plans and showcases some of the standout listed companies and the investment opportunities that reside in the Kuwaiti capital market through its series of roadshows and corporate days, putting these companies in touch with some of the world's leading investment firms and financial institutions and highlighting their financial health and business strategies and outlooks, to help investors gain an in-depth understanding of the benefits and opportunities of investing in Kuwaiti companies.

It serves to note that Boursa Kuwait seeks to remain an employer of choice within Kuwait's banking sector, sparing no effort to develop its human capital by consistently launching and maintaining initiatives that aim to hone employees' personal and professional skills and abilities. The Bank's Bursan Talk series is set to continue well into 2024 with an agenda of topics that respond directly to the employees' needs and aspirations for personal and career growth, confirming Bursan's commitment to fostering an environment of development and innovation.

Burgan Bank resumes Burgan Talk series featuring Dr Ross

KUWAIT: In a sustained effort to uphold its committed human capital development strategy, Burgan Bank continued its Burgan Talk series of events with a new talk, entitled "A Guide for Working Professionals to Nurturing Healthy Teenagers". This latest edition was delivered by guest speaker, Dr Angela Ross from Anara Center, a licensed clinical psychology specialist with over 15 years of experience and holder of a PhD in Counseling Psychology from Auburn University, USA. The event took place under the umbrella of Burgan's ongoing initiatives designed to promote its employees' emotional, and psychological health and well-being, both inside the workplace and outside of it.

Commenting on the engaging and fruitful talk, Zah-



Dr Angela Ross



Zahra Boarki

ra Boarki, Senior Manager – Culture and Employee Engagement at Burgan Bank, said: "At the Human Resources Department, we aim to utilize our collective expertise to create a healthy and positive work environment for Burgan's staff, whom we consider to be one of our top priorities. We are proud of the diverse program of initiatives that we continue to offer our employees, with the aim of supporting them along their journeys of professional development and personal growth. We also firmly believe in the importance of investing in our people's welfare and holistic

wellbeing, ensuring that they are able to enjoy their time at the workplace and outside it and that they are also able to contribute creatively and efficiently to the workplace, which ultimately reflects on the overall success of our institution."

"Among the primary challenges that face many of the working Burgan parents and their ability to maintain optimal overall health is balancing between their responsibilities as parents and as professionals. These challenges can be especially accentuated in the case of parenting teenagers who may require more attention, patience, and presence than other age groups," added Boarki. "We understand that these challenges call for additional effort from the parents to guarantee meeting their teenage children's needs and comprehending their emotional swings and changing social behaviors. That's why we continue to do all that is in our power to support Burgan parents in their efforts to remain psychologically healthy."

During the Burgan Talk, Dr Ross presented valuable information on the most effective self-care means for working parents, especially with regard to mental health, as well as acquiring advanced skills that enable

Business

Gulf Bank introduces HR Hub

Bank advancing employee experience in the digital era

KUWAIT: To keep pace with the successful digital transformation journey, which has encompassed all services within and beyond the bank, Gulf Bank has launched HR Hub, a Human Resources system, aiming to provide its employees with an advanced and user-friendly platform.

On this occasion, Salma Al-Hajjaj, the General Manager of Human Resources at Gulf Bank, stated, "HR Hub stands out as a centralized system for all services, equipped with extensive features to streamline workflow and improve efficiency across all employee transactions. This saves time and effort, which positively influences the quality of services they provide to customers. Additionally, it is available in both Arabic and English to promote inclusivity and ensure that employees of various nationalities can access the necessary services."

She emphasized that the new system offers considerable flexibility and customization options, allowing employees to adapt features according



Salma Al-Hajjaj:
We are committed to providing an ideal work environment for our employees and helping them develop and achieve.

to their preferences for a more personalized and efficient experience. Furthermore, it supports the bank's efforts to promote environmental sustainability principles by reducing paper usage, and eventually eliminating it altogether.

Al-Hajjaj noted, "The system allows for uninterrupted access to vital Human Resources services at any time, and from any place, whether employees are in the office or working remotely; ensuring they

are always well informed and connected to all updates. We are committed to providing an ideal work environment for our employees and helping them develop and achieve."

She noted that the new system provides employees with immediate access to essential HR documents and resources, as well as the latest bank announcements and news. Additionally, it offers self-service options, including viewing salary details and making

leave requests, along with managerial services like approving leaves, reviewing team details, and assigning tasks to other employees.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience. Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining robust developments in sustainability at environmental, social and governance levels through diverse sustainability initiatives, strategically selected to benefit the Bank both internally and externally. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.

Aston Martin shares sink as losses accelerate

LONDON: Shares in Aston Martin Lagonda sank Wednesday after the British luxury car-maker posted accelerating losses on falling sales and rising costs in an update that forecast a brighter outlook. Loss after tax ballooned 88 percent to £138.9 million (\$173.4 million) in the first quarter from a year earlier, Aston said in an earnings release.

Beloved by fictional British spy James Bond, the brand's share price slid five percent in reaction. Revenue sank 10 percent to £267.7 million, but the group predicted an improved performance in the second half of this year on rollout of new models. "2024 is a year of immense product transformation at Aston Martin, with the introduction of four new models to the market before the end of the year," said executive chairman Lawrence Stroll. "Our first quarter performance reflects this expected period of transition, as we ceased production and delivery of our outgoing core models ahead of the ramp up in production of the new Vantage, upgraded DBX707 and our upcoming V12 flagship sports car."

Aston Martin recently pledged to keep producing combustion-engine vehicles for as long as legally possible, after postponing its push into electrification. The group in February delayed the launch of its first electric vehicle by one year until 2026, and with deliveries due in 2027.

The news came after Britain last year pushed back its planned ban on the sale of high-polluting petrol and diesel cars from 2030 to 2035, but the government remains committed to net zero carbon emissions by 2050 in order to help tackle climate change. Wednesday's results are the first since Aston appointed Adrian Hallmark as its new chief executive, poaching him from German-owned peer Bentley where he stepped down as CEO. Hallmark will take the wheel at Aston Martin by Oct 1, replacing Italian national Amedeo Felisa. The Briton will be the fourth chief executive in as many years. — AFP

Pfizer profits drop on lower COVID product sales

NEW YORK: Pfizer reported a drop in profits on lower sales of COVID-19 related products Wednesday as it steers investments to other pharmaceutical areas and implements previously announced cost cuts. Much lower sales of COVID-19 vaccine Comirnaty and therapeutic Paxlovid accounted for a 20 percent drop in first-quarter revenues to \$14.9 billion compared with the year-ago period.

Profits were \$3.1 billion, down 44 percent. The drugmaker pointed to increased sales of oncology products, in part driven by the acquisition of Seagen, which was completed in December. Other products with significant growth included Vyndaquel, which is used to treat nerve disease; Eliquis, which treats blood clots; and Prevnar, a vaccine for pneumonia.

"I am very pleased by the strong 11 percent operational revenues growth of our non-COVID products in the first quarter," said Chief Financial Officer David Denton. "We continue to progress our cost realignment program and remain on track to deliver on our targeted goal by the end of the year."

Pfizer said it will deliver "at least" \$4 billion in savings by the end of 2024.

The company, which raised its earnings per share projection, has maintained a shareholder dividend. However, it plans no share repurchases in 2024 in favor of pumping funds back into research and development to support the drug pipeline. Shares of Pfizer rose 1.3 percent in pre-market trading.

Meanwhile, British drugmaker GlaxoSmithKline on Wednesday said its net profit sank in the first quarter on higher exceptional costs compared with a year earlier, but that underlying earnings jumped. Profit after tax dropped 23 percent to £1.08 billion (\$1.35 billion), GSK said in an earnings statement.

However core operating profit excluding exceptional items rallied 27 percent to £2.4 billion, while revenues swelled 10 percent to £7.4 billion. GSK chief executive Emma Walmsley said the quarter saw further progress in final trials of new drugs. "We have made a strong start to 2024, with another quarter of excellent performance and continued pipeline progress," she said in the statement. — AFP

Microsoft announces Thai data center region, AI training

BANGKOK: Microsoft said Wednesday it would create Thailand's first data centre region to boost cloud and artificial intelligence infrastructure, promising AI training to more than 100,000 Thais to develop tech.

Bangkok is a key economic player in Southeast Asia, but it has lagged behind Indonesia and Singapore when it comes to the tech industry. Thailand had an "incredible opportunity to build a digital-first, AI-powered future", Microsoft chairman and CEO Satya Nadella said in Bangkok.

Data centre regions are physical locations that store computing infrastructure, allowing secure and reliable access to cloud platforms. "Our new datacenter region, along with the investments we are making in cloud and AI infrastructure, as well as AI skilling, build on our long-standing commitment to the country," Nadella said. Microsoft added in a statement

that their investment would provide AI training "to benefit more than 100,000 individuals in Thailand", supporting the country's growing developer community.

The global embrace of AI has boosted sales of Microsoft's key cloud services such as Azure, which have become the core of its business under Nadella's leadership. Nadella said that the "full Azure region" was going to come to Thailand. Nadella is due to meet with Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin, who has pushed digital infrastructure and cloud investments.

Thailand's Office of the National Digital Economy and Society Commission has said the digital economy could contribute as much as 30 percent of GDP by 2027.

Srettha has undertaken numerous international tours in the past year as he attempts to woo investors, meeting with Microsoft, Google, and Tesla boss Elon Musk. Thai-



BANGKOK: This handout from the Royal Thai Government taken and released on May 1, 2024 shows Thailand's Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin (right) and Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella (left) posing for a photo during an event named 'Microsoft Build AI Day' in Bangkok on May 1, 2024. — AFP

land is the latest stop on Nadella's high-profile regional tour. He was in Indonesia on Tuesday, where he pledged to invest \$1.7 billion around AI and cloud computing, and will later jet to Malaysia. Microsoft has been rewarded by

investors since it aggressively rolled out generative AI, starting with its \$13 billion partnership with OpenAI, the creator of ChatGPT, in 2023. The partnership propelled it past Apple as the world's biggest company by market capitalization. — AFP

Weak yen boosts tourist wallets in Japan

TOKYO: Foreign tourists are flocking to Japan in record numbers and thanks to a sliding yen many are living like kings, splashing out on everything from kimonos to knives and slap-up meals. "I bought three pairs of shoes, which is something I would never normally do," French tourist Katia Lelievre, 36, said with a laugh in the bustling Asakusa area of Tokyo famous for its Buddhist temple and souvenir shops.

The brands available in Japan are the same as in Europe - Converse, Nike and Adidas - but because of the exchange rate "it was really worth it" to buy, she told AFP. "The food is really cheap. (I spent a lot) especially on food. I tried everything I wanted," Dominique Stabile, 31, visiting from Italy, told AFP. "I had a budget set and I didn't exceed it, so I'm happy. Local businesses are also benefitting, happy."

"A lot of people do the math and when they see the equivalent in their country's currency they say: 'Wow, I'm going to buy that too,'" said Saori Iida, who works in a shop selling traditional second-hand Japanese clothes. "Yesterday, we had someone who bought 15 kimonos," she said.

"Thanks to the weak yen, foreign customers are buying a lot of handmade knives, even as prices rise," said Yuki Suzuki, 21, who works in a shop selling knives, another tourist favorite. "I feel like there are now more customers who want to own sets and buy a little more, for example several blades made by the same craftsman," she told AFP.

In March the monthly number of foreign visitors surpassed three million for the first time, up 11.6 percent from March 2019 before the COVID pandemic torpedoed tourism. Spending per head soared 52 percent over the first three months compared to the same year. Currency movements help explain why. In 2019 a dollar bought 112 yen, compared to almost 158 on Wednesday, a 34-year low. On Monday it briefly hit 160.

A bowl of ramen noodles costs around 1,000 yen,

Amazon triples quarterly profit as cloud surges

SAN FRANCISCO: E-commerce titan Amazon on Tuesday said profit in the first three months of 2024 tripled as its cloud, ads, and retail businesses thrived. Amazon shares were up about one percent in after-market trades that followed release of the earnings figures, with Wall Street keeping a close eye on the impact of AI as well as costs involved.

"It was a good start to the year across the business," Amazon chief executive Andy Jassy said in an earnings release. The Seattle-based company reported \$10.4 billion in profit on revenue of \$143.3 billion, compared with a profit of \$3.2 billion on \$127.4 billion in sales in the same period a year earlier.

"Amazon opens its new fiscal year with a robust set of numbers that show it has mostly brushed off pressures in the consumer economy," GlobalData managing director Neil Saunders said in a note to investors. Sales at Amazon online stores grew by seven percent in the quarter despite competitive pressure from rivals such as Shein and Temu, according to Saunders.



TOKYO: Visitors eat seafood during lunchtime at the popular tourist area of Tsukiji fish market in central Tokyo as the country marks the "Golden Week" holidays on April 30, 2024. — AFP

which in 2019 was around \$8.90 and is now \$6.30.

A luxury watch or handbag labeled at 700,000 yen in Tokyo now costs the equivalent \$4,430, a snip compared to \$6,250 five years ago. Many shops exempt tourists from Japan's 10-percent sales tax if they show their passport. The biggest spenders per capita are Australians followed by visitors from Britain and Spain, according to the Japanese tourism agency.

The slide in the currency is blamed in part on the Bank of Japan's maverick policy of ultra-low interest rates while other central banks have hiked theirs. Japanese household consumption has been in constant decline since March 2023, due to inflation - the weak yen makes imports pricier - weakening purchasing power. Some Japanese are also unhappy about the invasion of big-spending tour-

"Our customer data still shows that Amazon is a focal point for those consumers wanting value for money and convenience," Saunders said.

"We also believe that Prime members are leaning more heavily into Amazon to maximize value from their subscriptions." Growth in online store sales indicated last year's turnaround at Amazon's e-commerce business is continuing, according to Emarket senior analyst Blake Drosch.

"While the core e-commerce business is no longer the biggest growth driver, it remains an essential component of the Amazon flywheel, particularly in propelling its ad business," Drosch said.

Jassy said the allure of AI capabilities was getting companies to bring infrastructures up to date relying on Amazon's AWS cloud computing division, which is on track to bring in a hundred billion dollars over the course of the year. "We've seen considerable momentum on the AI front," Jassy said on an earnings call. "Companies are pursuing this relatively low hanging fruit of modernizing their infrastructure."

AWS revenue in the recently ended quarter was \$25 billion compared with \$21.4 billion in the same period last year, the earnings figures showed.

Jassy also pointed to Amazon's young ad business that was gaining momentum at its online shop and Prime streaming television service. Ad sales brought in \$11.8 billion in an increase of 24 percent from the same quarter a year earlier, Amazon reported. The

ists, thronging stores and clogging up their favourite restaurants. One town plans to put up a barrier blocking the view of Mount Fuji.

Visitors are "getting great value for money," said Akiko Kohsaka, an economist at the Japan Research Institute and an expert on tourism. "It may mean tourists may choose to stay at better hotels than usual, or stay in Japan for an extra day or buy brand items," she told AFP.

"Even with sandwiches or hamburgers - things that visitors can buy at home - they can sense that they would not get that kind of value for their money at home," Kohsaka added. "I think Japan can have confidence in itself as a tourism destination. Even if the yen reverses its trend, I do not think it would lead to sharp falls of spending by tourists." — AFP

tech giant has also been driving down costs, he added, eliminating some 27,000 jobs last year. Amazon's shares have risen by nearly 75 percent in the past 12 months as investors applauded its aggressive cost-cutting, an increase in sales and the potential of its cloud computing platform in the coming AI era.

The company founded by Jeff Bezos is also testing an AI chatbot named Rufus that provides shopping tips to US mobile app customers. Meanwhile, generative AI features for sellers help them create product listings.

The company plans to invest billions of dollars in AWS datacenters in Mexico, Saudi Arabia and the US in coming years, according to the earnings release. Amazon capital expenditures are expected to "meaningfully increase" this year, driven by investing in AWS and AI, chief financial officer Brian Olshavsky said on the earnings call. Amazon's exceeding of market expectations comes after Microsoft last week reported solid earnings as it continued its aggressive push into artificial intelligence.

The embrace of AI has boosted sales of its key cloud services, such as Azure, a rival of AWS.

Like most tech titans, Amazon faces increased regulatory scrutiny.

It is being sued by the top US antitrust regulator, that accuses the online retail giant of running an illegal monopoly by strong-arming independent sellers on its platform and stifling potential rivals. — AFP

Business

NBK executive management honors its Digital Communications team

NBK named first by CBK in promoting 'Let's Be Aware' campaign in 2023

Farah Bastaki

- Engagement with the campaign reached 15 million views and over 250,000 interactions from customers
- The "Let's Be Aware" NBK implemented monthly social experiments all year round at various locations across all areas in Kuwait
- The team conducted field tours and presented various innovative ideas to spread financial awareness and familiarize the public with fraud techniques

- NBK posted 60+ video clips across its different platforms to ensure the widest exposure for the campaign
- NBK is a key supporter and partner in all CBK's initiatives that aim to promote financial awareness among different segments of society
- CBK's recognition of NBK demonstrates the bank's leading role in enhancing confidence in the Kuwaiti banking sector and the economy

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK)'s executive management honored Digital Communications team in appreciation of its efforts to promote the "Let's Be Aware" banking awareness campaign, after NBK was named first in promoting the campaign in 2023 by the Central Bank of Kuwait, outperforming all other local banks.

CBK's recognition demonstrates NBK's leading role in promoting financial literacy and inclusion and raising awareness among different segments of society, thus enhancing confidence in the Kuwaiti banking sector and economy. The honoring was presented by Isam J Al-Sager, Vice Chairman and Group CEO of National Bank of Kuwait to Digital Communications team, in a ceremony held at NBK HQ.

Through this recognition, NBK aims to appreciate employees and motivate them to go the extra mile and promote cooperation, as the executive management commended the dedicated efforts and commitment of the "Let's Be Aware" team, praising their one-team spirit, which is always the main driver of the bank's successes, and continued leadership, locally and regionally.

Commenting on this recognition, Farah Bastaki, Manager at Digital Communications, said: "Over the past year, NBK has intensified its efforts to promote and develop the content of the "Let's Be Aware" campaign, by publishing educational material and awareness content related to the campaign across all its social media platforms as well as other digital channels. The bank was able to achieve 15 million views for the campaign's posts in 2023, and more than 250,000 interactions by customers."

"NBK implemented monthly social experiments throughout the year at various locations across all areas in Kuwait, targeting a wide range of audience and touching on various topics that helped



Farah Bastaki

spread financial culture among different segments, in order to educate them on the latest fraud techniques and required precautions," she added.

Bastaki mentioned that the activities included field tours at cooperative societies, shopping malls, the American University of Kuwait (AUK), and parking lots, where the bank's team presented various innovative ideas to promote financial awareness and familiarize the public with fraud techniques and required precautions. This included placing a QR code at a parking lot advertising a free car wash to advise the public to never scan unverified QR codes offering suspicious deals.

The team also approached shoppers and asked them to deposit cash for other people, aiming to highlight that they should never deposit cash for others without verifying their identity. It also warned shoppers against sharing personal banking information with anyone, especially sensitive information such as debit/credit card numbers, PINs or OTPs.

The "Let's Be Aware" team was also present at cinemas and reached out to customers via SMS and newsletters to



The Digital Communication Management team was honored by the Vice Chairman and CEO of the National Bank of Kuwait Group Isam Al-Sager.

educate them on fraud techniques and methods, protection of passwords and banking information. It also warned against using public Wi-Fi whether in cinemas, coffee shops or restaurants, or using these networks in any banking transactions, being unsafe, while emphasizing the necessity to adhere to the campaign's instructions and bulletins published on all the bank's channels.

NBK also had multiple radio presences throughout the year representing NBK and KBA. These included guests and experts in anti-fraud techniques and legal consultants giving advice to customers on how to act quickly and effectively should they fall victim to fraud. Furthermore, the

bank organized competitions to educate people on the latest fraud techniques both online on social media and offline in our various events and sponsorships giving away prizes of up to KD 500.

NBK also posted over 60 awareness videos throughout the year on all its digital platforms, which are the most popular among all Kuwaiti banks, to ensure the widest exposure of the campaign. The videos touched on a variety of key topics including (fraudulent apps, e-mail phishing, multifactor authentication, website addresses, investment fraud, online shopping, AI phishing, loans, credit card security, password strength & security, cyber security, fake links & QR codes, and security tips).

As the leading financial institution in Kuwait, the bank frequently organizes various activities to raise people's awareness on all topics related to the banking sector, as well as many training courses to educate them on combating fraud and financial crime. It is worth mentioning that NBK is a key promoter and participant in all CBK's campaigns and initiatives to increase financial and banking awareness among different segments of society. The bank also employs its strong customer communication capabilities as well as all its digital channels, to support the Central Bank's endeavors to protect customers and the national economy.

Ex-Binance chief jailed for four months in US

SAN FRANCISCO: The founder of cryptocurrency firm Binance was sentenced to four months in US prison on Tuesday after pleading guilty to money laundering charges, in the most high-profile crypto case since Sam Bankman-Fried was jailed.

Changpeng Zhao, a Canadian, resigned from his post at the world's largest cryptocurrency exchange platform late last year as part of a deal with US authorities. According to investigations by two Treasury agencies, Binance failed to prevent transactions by movements such as the Islamic State group, al-Qaeda or the armed wing of Hamas.

Zhao pleaded guilty to violating US anti-money laundering laws and Binance agreed in February to pay \$4.3 billion to settle charges. Prosecutors had asked the judge to impose three years behind bars for a crime that typically results in probation, according to a court filing.

"He made a business decision that violating US law was the best way to attract users, build his company, and line his pockets," Justice Department lawyers said of Zhao in a sentencing memorandum. "The sentence in this case will not just send a message to Zhao but also to the world."

Attorneys for Zhao countered in a filing that being punished with probation is just, appropriate, and in line with legal precedent. They cited Zhao's acceptance of responsibility along with what they called his philanthropic track record.

"I made mistakes, and I must take responsibility," Zhao, who lives in the United Arab Emirates, said in a post on X, formerly Twitter, in November. He has been in the United States since that time.

Binance was created in 2017 and cornered much of the crypto-trading market, turning its founder and chief executive Zhao into a billionaire. While Binance was founded in China, Zhao moved its operations to other locations internationally after a crackdown on the crypto sector by Beijing. — AFP



SEATTLE, US: Former Binance CEO Changpeng "CZ" Zhao (center) departs federal court in Seattle, Washington, on April 30, 2024. — AFP



RIYADH: A group photo during the 49th annual ministerial meeting of the Board of Governors of the Islamic Development Bank Group in Riyadh. - KUNA

Kuwait participates in Islamic Development Bank's meeting

RIYADH: Kuwait participated in the 49th annual ministerial meeting of the Board of Governors of the Islamic Development Bank Group, held in Riyadh. During the meeting, the forty-ninth annual report for the fiscal year 2023 of the Islamic Development Bank was approved, which includes the bank's financing operations and its various

Wall St mixed, dollar steady ahead of Fed

LONDON: Wall Street shares opened mixed and the dollar steadied Wednesday as investors waited to hear the US Federal Reserve's latest thinking on interest rates. Meanwhile, shares in London were little changed after giving up earlier gains, with almost all European continental markets closed for the May Day holiday. The Fed later Wednesday winds up a two-day regular policy meeting, with analysts agreed it will keep borrowing costs unchanged.

But investors will be closely listening to Fed Chair Jerome Powell's accompanying statements about whether cuts may begin any time soon. "Inflation has surpassed expectations in recent months and

activities, in addition to economic and global developments and their effects on member states. The audit accounts of the bank and its affiliated institutions for the fiscal year 2023 were also approved, and the president and two vice presidents of the Board of Governors were elected for 2025.

The nomination of Qatar as a member of the Board of Directors of the Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector for the ninth session 2025/2027, representing the Arab Group C (non-African Arab countries), was also supported. The Republic of Algeria was also chosen to host the next meeting of the Board of Governors of the Islamic Bank Group 2025. Kuwaiti Minister

throughout the first quarter," said Fawad Razaqada, an analyst at City Index.

"The market is now expecting a more hawkish-leaning FOMC meeting. But any inclination towards a rate cut before the end of the summer would now provide a dovish surprise." Tuesday saw a sharp sell-off on Wall Street after fresh US data, this time about wages, dealt another blow to hopes the Fed would reduce borrowing costs this year. Wednesday morning, a report on private sector hiring came in higher than expected.

They were the latest in a string of reports showing that the Fed's higher rates have yet to cool the economy and bring inflation fully under control. Wednesday the three major US indexes were narrowly mixed, with the Dow and the tech-heavy Nasdaq little changed and the wider S&P 500 down slightly.

Powell's "main message is going to be that the Fed needs to see more data before it is comfortable with lessening its restrictive policy," said Patrick O'Hare, an analyst at Briefing.com. "Translation: the Fed will

of Finance, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, and Kuwait's Governor at the Islamic Development Bank, Dr Anwar Al-Mudhaf participated in the meeting.

Since its founding in 1975, the Islamic Development Bank has contributed to supporting joint Islamic action in economic and social development, strengthening the bonds of trade cooperation, and moving forward with Islamic solidarity among Islamic countries. The Bank has also achieved distinguished success during the past fifty years at various levels, as the number of member states increased from 22 states upon its founding, to 57 member states in Asia, Africa, Europe and South America. — KUNA

keep rates higher for longer." Markets could see deeper losses should the Fed assert "a high probability of no cuts this year, or even the open possibility of another hike", said Capital.com analyst Kyle Rodda. With most continental European stock markets shut for May Day, London was the only major European exchange open, and the benchmark FTSE 100 stocks index was flat in mid-afternoon trading.

Drugmaker GlaxoSmithKline was up 2.3 percent after it announced progress in final trials of promising new drugs, even as profit fell 23 percent in the first quarter.

The dollar, which has gained in recent days against other currencies on interest rate differentials, was little changed Wednesday as many investors were either away for the May Day holidays or on hold ahead of the Fed's announcements. In commodities, oil prices slid on easing tensions in the Middle East as top US diplomat Antony Blinken on Tuesday urged Hamas to accept the latest truce proposals. — AFP

THURSDAY, MAY 2, 2024

Crocodile hunting wanes but legends live on in DR Congo

The fearsome slender-snouted crocodile can make torch lights explode just with its eyes — so the legend goes in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Along the Congo River, such myths stay with the Banunu fishermen, even if their traditions and livelihoods are not what they once were. Michel Koko, known as Lebe, 52, has been a fisherman for 10 years following in his father's footsteps. His hunting successes include crocodiles of all sizes, caimans, monitor lizards which can grow to more than three meters (yards) long, as well as all kinds of fish.

At 4,700 kilometers (2,920 miles) long, the Congo is the second longest river in Africa after the Nile. Koko is Libinza, a tribe related to the Banunu-Bobangi, who since the 18th century have lived on the banks of the river in northwestern Equateur province and Mai-Ndombe province near the capital Kinshasa. The tribe is known for its extraordinary fishing and hunting superstitions. "My father left me his spear," Koko said, convinced it is why he almost never misses his target. Banunu fishermen often inherit spears and ancestral totems believed to have spiritual significance. But their elders also bequeath them their "clairvoyance".

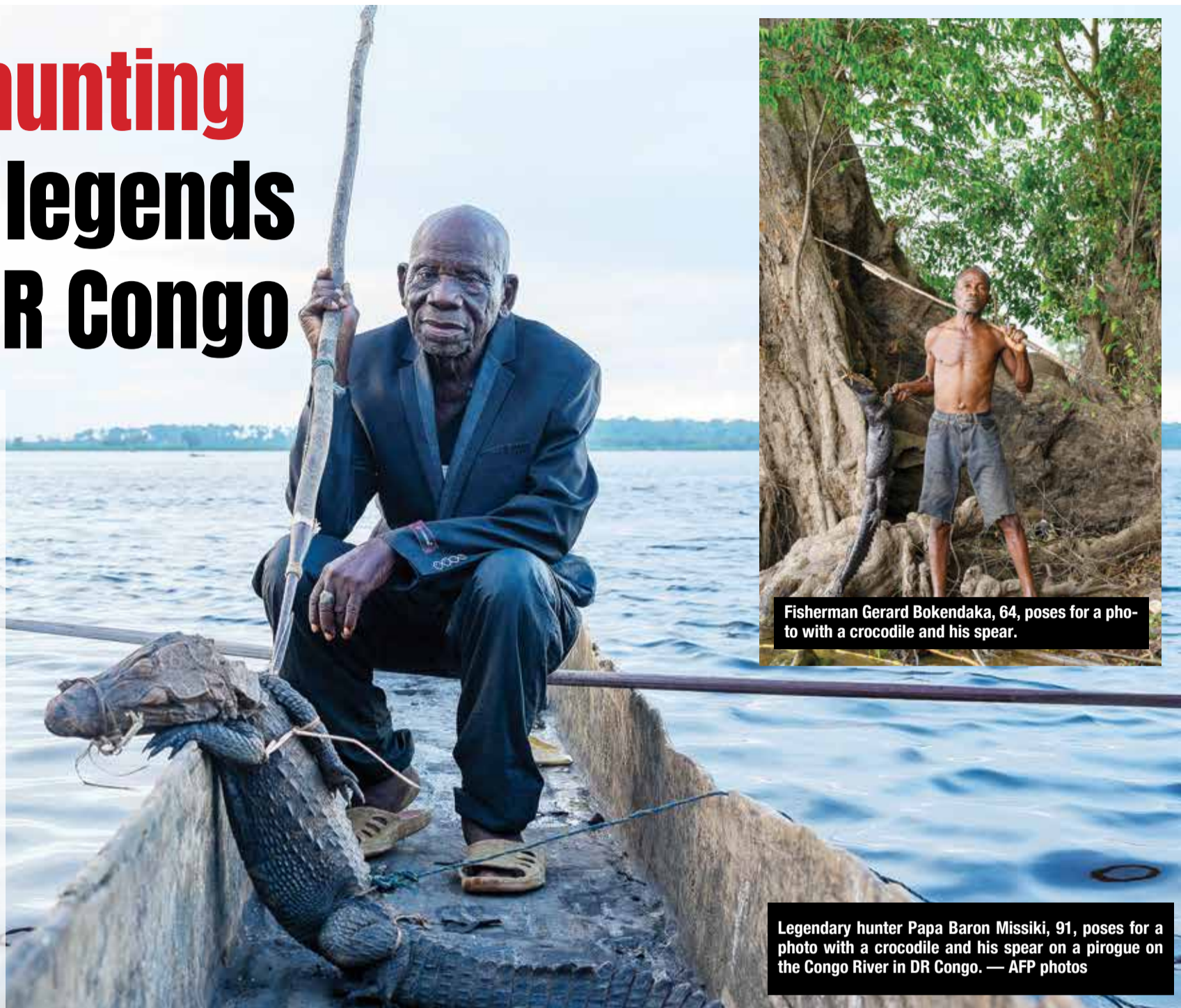
With the help of palm wine, makasu kola nuts or mondongo bush fruits, they claim to be able to see into the future. "If they see only death, they won't hunt that day," Koko says, in Mbandaka, the capital of Equateur province and about 700 kilometers (435 miles) upstream from Kinshasa. He has a deep knowledge of crocodiles. He knows how to communicate with them, attracting them by imitating their cries, he said. The "mbama" crocodile with a long snout responds by pouring water out of his mouth. "That's the moment to deliver him the fatal blow," Koko said. But, with the short-snouted "ngando", it is more complicated. "You have to position yourself in the middle of the pirogue (dugout canoe) because he can appear from anywhere," the hunter continued. The animal possesses "infrared vision" and can deliver an electric shock, he said. "If a crocodile bites you, it is important not to scream," Koko warned. "If you say nothing, he will think you are a tree trunk and let go."

Like gold in bygone days

At the age of 91, Papa Baron Missiki reminisces on his days hunting crocodiles, as well as buffalos, antelopes, elephants and hippopotamuses. He is now retired but his son, also called Missiki, keeps up the tradition. With pride for their community and their experience, the fishermen become nostalgic recounting their tales from years gone by. Koko remembers a time when crocodile hunting was lucrative, back when the DRC was known as Zaire between 1971 and 1997.

President Mobutu Sese Seko was in power and crocodile skin was sought after for its supposed miraculous qualities such as protecting families against evil spirits, but also for use in the fashion industry. "We would leave to go hunting with bags of salt in the pirogue to ensure the conservation of their skin," Koko said. "It was (like) gold at the time, we didn't care about their flesh." Nowadays, the selling of wild crocodile skin "is forbidden" to preserve the species, adds the fisherman.

He says animal numbers have dwindled on the river, which he puts down to overfishing, climate change and increased numbers of motorized boats on the waterway. "We can only hunt the dwarf crocodile called 'ngokia' (locally) and sometimes the 'monitor lizard' known as the mbambi," Koko said. "Seeing how easily dwarf crocodiles reproduce, it is impossible this species will disappear," he commented. To keep their heads above water financially, the fishermen take up jobs in local businesses, trade or invest in fish farming. "How do we live without selling wild animals?" asked Lucie, a vendor at Lingunda market in Mbandaka. "It enables us to pay for the children's school, the rent, everyday life." —AFP



Fisherman Gerard Bokendaka, 64, poses for a photo with a crocodile and his spear.

Legendary hunter Papa Baron Missiki, 91, poses for a photo with a crocodile and his spear on a pirogue on the Congo River in DR Congo. — AFP photos



A crocodile is seen at the Lingunda market.



Two crocodiles are seen in the vicinity of Mbandaka airport.



Siska Bodjomwani (right), a vendor, places a crocodile on a table at the Lingunda market.



A vendor sells smoked fish and smoked monkey at the Bolojwa market.



Fisherman Molembe Yonga-Yonga, 74, poses for a photo with a crocodile and his spear.



Pauline, a Nile crocodile captured in 1953 and brought to the Eala botanical garden in 1978, rests between vegetation in Mbandaka, DR Congo.



Fisherman Andre Boka, 45, poses for a photo with a crocodile and his spear.



Fisherman Bango Jules, 16, poses for a portrait with a crocodile.



A trader holds a large fish at Mbandaka airport in Mbandaka.



This image shows a table with smoked antelope meat and a crocodile on the ground that are for sale at the Lingunda market.

Lifestyle



This picture shows Japanese shiba inu dog Kabosu, best known as the logo of cryptocurrency Dogecoin, resting at the home of her owner Atsuko Sato in Sakura, Chiba prefecture, east of Tokyo.



Atsuko Sato (right) visiting a park with Japanese shiba inu dog Kabosu where the park installed a statue of the dog, in the city of Sakura, Chiba prefecture.



Japanese shiba inu dog Kabosu taking a rest at the office of her owner Atsuko Sato after playing with children at a kindergarten in Narita.

Rescue pup to meme star: The real-life 'Dogecoin' dog



Photo shows Atsuko Sato with Japanese shiba inu dog Kabosu as they visit a park which installed a statue of the dog. — AFP photos



Japanese shiba inu dog Kabosu sitting in front of a manhole cover featuring her image, at a park in the city of Sakura.



Photo shows a sticker of Japanese shiba inu dog Kabosu pictured on the car of her owner Atsuko Sato as they go to her office in Sakura.

Her fluffy face now frail, Kabosu still flashes the enigmatic smile that made her the go-to meme dog for millennials and inspired a \$23 billion cryptocurrency beloved by Elon Musk. She's best known as the logo of Dogecoin, but to Atsuko Sato, Kabosu is the elderly former rescue puppy who accompanies her every day to work at a kindergarten. "It felt so strange" to discover her dog was an internet celebrity, Sato told AFP in Sakura, where Tokyo's eastern sprawl gives way to fields of rice and solar panels.

In 2010, two years after adopting the shiba inu, Sato posted a picture on her blog of Kabosu crossing her paws on the sofa and giving the camera a beguiling look. That image became the "Doge" meme—and later an NFT digital artwork that sold for \$4 million. "She's pulling a weird face," Sato laughed. "Now I think she looks really nice" in the famous photo but "at first I thought it could be trashed".

The meme grew from an online forum post into an anarchic in-joke that bounced from college bedrooms to office emails. "One of my friends messaged me: 'Isn't this picture Kabosu?' Then I searched for it and found all sorts of memes, like Kabosu turning into a doughnut," Sato said. The 62-year-old is now so used to "unbelievable" events that when Tesla boss Musk changed the icon for Twitter, now X, to Kabosu's face last year, she "wasn't even that surprised". "In the last few years I've been able to connect the online version of Kabosu, all these unexpected things seen from a distance, with our real lives."

'Mona Lisa of the internet'

Kabosu spends most days resting in a cart at the kindergarten or on a big cushion at home, where fan-made Doge tributes adorn the walls. The memes typically use goofy broken English to reveal the inner thoughts of Kabosu and other shiba inu "doge"—usually pronounced like pizza "dough" but with a "j" at the end. "Very love. Such star OMG. So heart. Much drawing," says one framed print using this signature "doge speak".

Kabosu fell ill with leukaemia and liver disease at the end of 2022, and Sato is sure the "invisible power" of prayers from fans worldwide helped her pull through. Then in November last year, a \$100,000 statue of Kabosu and her sofa crowd-funded by Own The Doge, a crypto organization dedicated to the meme, was unveiled in a park in Sakura. Sato and Own The Doge have also donated large sums to international charities, including more than \$1 million to Save the Children. The NGO says it is "the single largest crypto contribution" it has ever received. "The Doge is the most popular dog of the modern era," said Tridog, a pseudonymous member of Own The Doge, describing Kabosu as "the Mona Lisa of the internet".

'People's crypto'

Dogecoin was started as a joke by two software engineers and is now the world's eighth most valuable cryptocurrency with a market cap of \$23 billion. "The Doge meme was pretty big on the internet in 2013 and I spent a lot of time on Reddit and other forums back then," Dogecoin co-founder Billy Markus told AFP. Markus, who is no longer affiliated with Dogecoin, was amused by the "silliness and innocence" of the memes.

Fellow founder Jackson Palmer "drank a beverage and saw the doge meme and Bitcoin in the news and thought saying he was gonna invest in Dogecoin would make a funny tweet", he said. Markus found the idea "hilarious" and created the coin in "a few hours" before contacting Palmer and taking it live. "Lots of weird stuff happened after that," he said.



Tridog, a member of Own the Doge, wearing a Doge mask during an interview in Los Angeles, California.



Tridog, a member of Own the Doge, wearing a Doge mask as he poses for photos during an interview.

Since then, Dogecoin has been backed by stoner hip-hop king Snoop Dogg, "Shark Tank" entrepreneur Mark Cuban and Kiss bassist Gene Simmons, who once tweeted: "I bought Dogecoin... six figures." But its most keen supporter is probably the billionaire Musk, who jokes about the currency on X—sending its value soaring—and hails it as "the people's crypto". Dogecoin has also inspired a plethora of other cheap and highly volatile "memecoins", including spin-off Shiba Inu and others based on dogs, cats or Donald Trump.

'Legend lives on'

A solitary figure wearing a Doge mask looks out over the Los Angeles skyline—this is Tridog, who says he has "worked for a dog photograph for almost three years". Own The Doge is his full-time job, and he preaches their motto D.O.G.E. or "Do Only Good Every Day". In 2021, Sato sold the viral photo of Kabosu as a non-fungible token (NFT), a digital ownership certificate that can be traded online, to a group of crypto art collectors called PleasrDAO for \$4.2 million.

That makes it "a top-five most expensive photo ever sold", Tridog told AFP. PleasrDAO split the NFT's value into a brand-new memecoin called \$DOG, allowing many people to collectively "own" the meme. Own The Doge has brought fans and other meme stars to Japan to meet Kabosu and Sato, and it recently secured the intellectual property rights to the famous



Pictures and products of Japanese shiba inu dog Kabosu on display at the home of her owner Atsuko Sato.



Atsuko Sato and her Japanese shiba inu dog Kabosu playing with a student at a kindergarten in Narita.

photo, paving the way to make Doge toys, films and other products.

As a rescue dog, Kabosu's real birthday is unknown, but Sato estimates her age at 18 — past the average lifespan for a shiba inu. When Kabosu dies, "the world will mourn", Tridog said, but "a legend always lives on". He hopes people will remember "the deeper values" behind the Doge meme: "the wholesomeness, the silliness, the not taking yourself too seriously." —AFP



Japanese shiba inu dog Kabosu taking a rest in a playground after playing with students at a kindergarten in Narita.



Photo shows Atsuko Sato with Japanese shiba inu dog Kabosu as they visit a park which installed a statue of the dog.



Atsuko Sato (left) with her Japanese shiba inu dog Kabosu playing with students at a kindergarten in Narita.

Lifestyle



A man poses for a selfie with an ad for a free concert by US pop star Madonna displayed at a metro station in the Copacabana neighborhood of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.—AFP photos



Merchandise of US pop star Madonna is offered at a shop of the traditional Uruguiana street in Rio de Janeiro.



The stage for the show of US pop star Madonna is set by workers in Copacabana beach, Rio de Janeiro.

'Operation Madonna': Rio readies for singer's free mega-concert

Madonna's long-awaited free concert on Rio de Janeiro's Copacabana Beach has upended the neighborhood, with over a million fans expected—but for retired resident Mario Renato Borges, it's the least the singer deserves. "Welcome, Queen," read some posters near the huge stage erected on the Brazilian beach, where Madonna will on Saturday give the biggest show of her 40-year career and the last of her "Celebration Tour." The 65-year-old American singer arrived in the coastal city on Monday after more than 80 shows in Europe, the United States and Mexico. This will be her only stop in South America.

The "Like A Virgin" and "Material Girl" performer traveled to Brazil with three planes and 270 tons of equipment, according to her production company. She has set up camp at the luxurious

Copacabana Palace hotel, connected to the stage by a suspended catwalk that dozens of fans crowded under this week, hoping to catch a glimpse of the pop star.

The biggest dance floor

Thanks to free admission, organizers expect Madonna's concert to produce the "world's biggest dance floor" of up to 1.5 million people—a figure only reached on the same beach by the Rolling Stones in 2006. "The traffic is chaos but the concert will be great, especially because it's Madonna, the queen of pop," says resident Borges, who lives in Leme, a neighborhood at the end of Copacabana Beach.

Madonna's fourth performance in Rio will contribute some 293 million reais (US\$57 million) to the local economy, an income 30 times higher than

what city authorities invested, according to the mayor's office. Around 150,000 foreigners are expected to swarm the city, with most hotels already fully booked. "This will undoubtedly be one of Rio's biggest international events. It will boost our economy and attract tourists from Brazil, Latin American and all over the world," said the city's Tourism Secretary Daniela Maia.

Return of the conical corset

Madonna fever is clear to see in Rio—the so-called "Marvelous City"—as the hours tick down to her performance. At the Lix printing shop in the popular downtown Saara shopping district, the songs of the "Material Girl" are playing on loop to inspire devotees who can choose from personalized fans, hats or mugs.

Manager Livia Reis, 23, tells AFP

that her store went viral on social media shortly after the concert was announced thanks to an influencer who visited the Madonna-inspired shop. "A guy came in, took a photo and a video, and sent them to a fan club with 150,000 followers in Portugal. From there, it jumped to TikTok and Instagram," she says.

One particularly popular item is a replica of the conical corset created by French designer Jean Paul Gaultier, which Madonna famously wore on stage in 1990. Sold as a bra or a top, the item is "doing very well," says Reis, who expects there will be "queues out of the door" in the days ahead of the concert.

Patrols on the corners

"All this activity is good for tourism, hotels and restaurants. But let's hope the security is up to the task," says 68-year-old Rio local Borges. The may-

or's office has prepared an operation equivalent to New Year's Eve celebrations in Copacabana, one of the most famous in the world that typically brings down some one million people. "Operation Madonna" will see some 4,500 agents deployed, working with drones and facial recognition cameras. There will be police patrols on almost every street corner in the neighborhood.

Nagila Alves, 54, who works for a pest control company, was on her way to a client's home when she stopped to take a photo of the impressive stage set up for Madonna. "I will always love her. Madonna is timeless," she tells AFP, adding she plans to delay her arrival on Saturday to dodge the crowds swarming to the front of the stage. —AFP



This file photo taken on February 25, 2015 shows Japanese fashion designer Yumi Katsura (center) thanking guests during the finale of the 2015 Yumi Katsura Grand Collection in Tokyo.

Japan bridal wear pioneer Yumi Katsura dies at 94

Fashion designer Yumi Katsura, who helped popularize Western bridal wear in Japan and who made a golden cape for Pope John Paul II, has died aged 94, her office said Tuesday. Having studied haute couture in Paris, Katsura opened Japan's first bridal salon in 1964 at a time when traditional kimonos still dominated in wedding ceremonies and Western-style dresses were worn by only three percent of brides. Starting in New York in 1981 with the "Yumi Line" silhouette dress, she opened stores worldwide including in Italy and France, "influencing brides not only in Japan but also around the world," her office said on its website.

In 1993, she made a vestment -- a robe for religious services -- for John Paul II that took two years to make and showcased Hakata-ori weaving, a technique used for making kimonos. The same year the pontiff, who died in 2005, wore the cape and matching golden mitre to an Easter service that was broadcast worldwide. "Tears rolled down my cheeks when I received the pope's thank you



This file photo taken on February 25, 2015 shows Japanese fashion designer Yumi Katsura (center) greeting guests during the finale of the 2015 Yumi Katsura Grand Collection in Tokyo.

note," Katsura recalled, adding that it reinforced her sense of mission to "transmit Japanese beauty to the world."

Katsura, whose real name was Yumi Yuki, also set a Guinness World Record in 2012 for the highest number -- 13,262 -- of pearls on a wedding dress. She admitted not wearing a wedding dress for

her own nuptials, however. "White isn't a good color for me," Katsura said in an interview in 2018. "I wore a dark green velvet dress." "My mission is to make women happy all over the world," she told another interviewer. —AFP

Webb telescope takes stunning images of Horsehead Nebula's 'mane'

NASA's James Webb telescope has captured the most detailed infrared images ever taken of the Horsehead Nebula, one of the most majestic and recognizable objects in the night sky, the space agency said Monday. The new observations show the top of the "horse's mane," revealing for the first time the small scale structures on the edge of the giant cloud of dust and gas. Located roughly 1,300 light years away in the constellation Orion ("The Hunter"), the iconic silhouette of a horse's head and neck rises from what look like churning waves of interstellar foam.

Webb, the most powerful space observatory ever built, is able to detect infrared light at unprecedented resolutions, revealing objects that cannot be seen using the visible spectrum in optical telescopes. "An international team of astronomers has revealed for the first time the small-scale structures of the illuminated edge of the Horsehead," a NASA statement said. As ultraviolet light evaporates

the dust cloud, particles are swept away by the outflow of heated gas -- a process Webb has now shown in action.

The observations have also given astronomers new insights into how dust blocks and emits light, and a better idea of the nebula's multidimensional shape. The work was the result of a study led by Karl Misselt of the University of Arizona, and published Monday in *Astronomy & Astrophysics*. The Horsehead Nebula has fascinated space enthusiasts since its discovery in 1888 by the renowned Scottish astronomer Williamina Fleming. While it appears shadowy in optical light, the nebula comes to life when viewed through infrared wavelengths, taking on transparent and ethereal hues. This delicate pillar of hydrogen gas infused with dust is being steadily worn away by the radiation of a nearby star. Astronomers estimate the Horsehead will disappear in another five million years. —AFP



This handout image shows the "mane" of the Horsehead Nebula imaged by Webb's MIRI instrument.—AFP

US novelist Paul Auster dies aged 77

Paul Auster, the prolific American novelist whose works included "The New York Trilogy," has died of complications from lung cancer, a friend of the novelist told AFP. He was 77. Auster died on Tuesday evening at his home in Brooklyn surrounded by family, including his wife Siri Hustvedt and daughter Sophie Auster, his friend and fellow author Jacki Lyden said in a statement sent to AFP. He made his name with noirish, existentialist novels about lonely writers, outsiders and down-and-outers that were a huge hit in Europe particularly.

The author with the soulful, sunken eyes gained cult status in the 1980s and 1990s with his "New York Trilogy" of metaphysical mysteries and his hip film "Smoke," about the lost souls who frequent a Brooklyn tobacco shop. Hustvedt, also an author, announced in March 2023 that he had been diagnosed with cancer. In a long moving post on Instagram in August 2023, she wrote about their life in "Cancerland" next to photos of them as a younger couple.

"The patient, and I with him, have traveled straight ahead on the road, been delayed, and turned in circles," she wrote. "We haven't reached the sign that marks the country's boundary: You are now leaving Cancerland. The UK's Booker Prize said Wednesday in a statement on X that Auster's "work touched readers and influenced writers all over the world." Auster's work straddles the divide between the middlebrow and the highbrow. His more than 30 books are as likely to be found in airports as on university reading lists and have been translated into more than 40 languages.

His life was marred by tragedy in later years, with his 10-month-old granddaughter dying after ingesting heroin and his son Daniel, the child's father, dying of an overdose 10 months later. Daniel's mother was Auster's first wife, the writer Lydia Davis. Lyden called Auster a "writer's writer" who covered "every facet of loss, loneliness, and the joys and sorrows of a life in words." "He never lost touch with human suffering, and connectedness, and it made him the beloved writer he has become," she said.

New York Trilogy

Auster was born in 1947 and grew up in Newark, New Jersey, the son of Jewish Polish immigrants. He moved to New York to attend Columbia University where he studied French, Italian and British literature. After graduating, he spent four years in France, where he made a living off translating French poetry while honing his craft as a writer. His fluent French later made him a popular guest on French television culture shows.

After returning to America in 1975 he held a number of jobs before his father's death in 1979 left him with an inheritance allowing him to concentrate full time on writing. He first gained notice in 1982 with "The Invention of Solitude" -- an autobiographical novel that dealt



US writer Paul Auster (center) gives an autograph prior to a press conference, 18 October 2006 in the northern Spanish city of Oviedo, where he will receive the 2006 Prince of Asturias Award for Letters on October 20th. — AFP photos

with the memory of his father -- but his big breakthrough came with "The New York Trilogy," a philosophical twist on the detective genre featuring a shady quartet of private investigators named Blue, Brown, Black, and White. The three books in the series were "City of Glass" in 1985, followed by "Ghosts" and "The Locked Room" in 1986. Many of his novels deal with the role of chance and coincidence in shaping his characters' destiny. His gift for sharp dialogue -- Auster mercilessly edited himself for sentence rhythm -- was key to the success of "Smoke," which he wrote and co-directed, about a Brooklyn tobacco-ist played by Harvey Keitel.



US writer Paul Auster takes part in a press conference, 18 October 2006 in the northern Spanish city of Oviedo, where he will receive the 2006 Prince of Asturias Award for Letters, on October 20.

He also wrote and co-directed "Blue in the Face" -- another Brooklyn-based story -- with the same director, Wayne Wang. In 2017 he broke with his concise style to deliver a 866-page tome, "4 3 2 1", charting American society through the life of an everyman, Archie Ferguson. Auster presented it as his masterpiece. But while America's National Public Radio found it "dazzling", others were less positive, with the Irish Times deeming it "the last fat novel of a collapsed American pride". A committed supporter of the Democratic Party, he denounced the years of President George W. Bush in his writings. —AFP

All-round Stoinis helps Lucknow beat Mumbai in IPL

Lucknow move to third spot in 10-team table led by Rajasthan Royals

LUCKNOW: All-rounder Marcus Stoinis smashed 62 after he took a wicket on Tuesday to guide Lucknow Super Giants to an IPL win on the eve of Australia's T20 World Cup team announcement. Stoinis top-scored in Lucknow's modest chase of 145 against Mumbai Indians as the home team achieved their target with four wickets and four balls to spare.

Lucknow moved to third spot in the 10-team table led by Rajasthan Royals. Five-time winners Mumbai remained ninth above wooden spooners Royal Challengers Bengaluru.

Lucknow skipper KL Rahul fell for 28, hours after being snubbed by India's selectors, who on Tuesday afternoon named the team for the T20 World Cup in June. Mumbai skipper Hardik Pandya was named deputy to India captain Rohit Sharma for the World Cup in the West Indies and the U.S., but the star all-rounder fell for a duck and his team to their seventh loss in 10 matches. "Sometimes you will be down, sometimes you will be up, just that you got to give it your all," Pandya said. "Looks difficult but a lot of things that you can learn from this game."

Birth day boy Rohit, who turned 37, Japsrit Bum-

rah, Suryakumar Yadav are three of the four players from Mumbai to make the Indian team for the World Cup starting June 2. Mumbai managed 144-7 courtesy Nehal Wadhwa's 46 and an unbeaten 18-ball 35 by Tim David after being invited to bat first. Pandya said Wadhwa will "play a lot of IPL and (represent) India eventually".

Lucknow left-arm quick Mohsin Khan took two wickets after he struck first with the wicket of Rohit, who was caught out for four by Stoinis at extra cover. Stoinis got the key wicket of Yadav for 10 and Mumbai were soon 27-4 when Naveen-ul-Haq got Pandya for a first-ball duck.

But Pandya returned to take two wickets with his pace bowling. Stoinis turned up with the bat to raise his second fifty—he has also hit a century—of the season with hours left for the Australian selectors to announce the T20 team on Wednesday. He fell to Afghanistan spinner Mohammad Nabi after his 45-ball knock laced with seven fours and two sixes. Lucknow lost two more wickets to raise Mumbai's hopes of a turnaround, but Nicholas Pooran steered the team home in the final over.—AFP



LUCKNOW: Mumbai Indians' Nehal Wadhwa (R) plays a shot as Lucknow Super Giants' wicketkeeper and captain KL Rahul fields the ball during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Lucknow Super Giants and Mumbai Indians at the Ekana Cricket Stadium in Lucknow. — AFP



Special Olympics launches young players' program

By Abellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Special Olympics launched the young players' program with the participation of 75

players from eight educational institutions. The program is a sports one to train and educate sports skills for the mentally challenged children and normal ones aged 2 to 7 years to enable them to participate in the Special Olympics events when they reach the age of 8 years.

The program is supervised by sports in charge Mustafa Hassouna and the initiatives official Linda Jaber who said the importance of the program is to guide children at this early age to practice sport due to its positive returns in regards to physical and psychological health. She said the program enables children to learn basic sport skills such as running, kick-

ing, and throwing. It also supports the development of important motor, social and educational skills and gives them physical fitness and how to play with others and gives families, teachers and care providers an opportunity to join children's fun.

She said the program is important for children's sports raising and expanding the base of sports practitioners in addition to creating the opportunity to discover talents in all games to supply teams with promising players to continue making achievements by the mentally challenged individuals. Linda Jaber thanked the schools and establishments for participating in the program.



Red Bull design chief Newey to leave F1 team

LONDON: Red Bull confirmed on Wednesday that celebrated chief technical officer Adrian Newey will leave the Formula One team in early 2025 after 19 years. It was widely reported last week that the 65-year-old, regarded as the greatest designer in the sport's history, was set to quit following a controversy involving allegations about team principal Christian Horner.

The British-based Red Bull team have won six constructors' titles and seven drivers' titles, split between Sebastian Vettel and Max Verstappen, with Newey-designed cars to date. They are on course to do the double again in 2024, with Dutch driver Verstappen the dominant force in the sport.



SAKHIR: (FILES) Red Bull Racing team principal Christian Horner (R) and technical chief Adrian Newey arrive at the Bahrain International Circuit ahead of the first practice session of the Bahrain Formula One Grand Prix in Sakhir. — AFP

Ferrari, soon to be joined by Lewis Hamilton, appear to be in pole position to sign up Newey. The British designer, a chief architect of Red Bull's dominance, is set to end his stay in the "first quarter" of next year, according to a statement from the team.

"Ever since I was a young boy, I wanted to be a designer of fast cars. My dream was to be an engineer in Formula One, and I've been lucky enough to make that dream a reality," Newey said. "For almost two decades it has been my great honour to have played a key role in Red Bull Racing's progress from upstart newcomer to multiple title-winning team."

Horner lavished praise on Newey, saying "all of our greatest moments from the past 20 years have come with Adrian's hand on the technical tiller". "His vision and brilliance have helped us to 13 titles in 20 seasons," he said. "His exceptional ability to conceptualise beyond F1 and bring wider inspiration to bear on the design of Grand Prix cars, his remarkable talent for embracing change and finding the most rewarding areas of the rules to focus on, and his relentless will to win have helped Red Bull Racing to become a greater force than I think even the late (founder) Dietrich Mateschitz might have imagined." Red Bull said Newey would step back from design duties to focus on final development and delivery of Red Bull's first hypercar, the RB17.

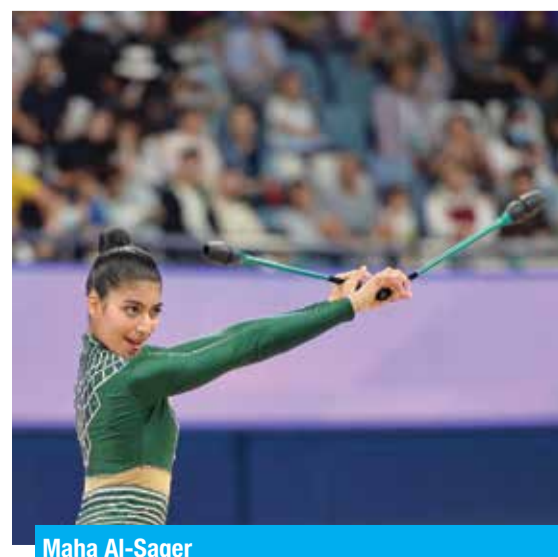
He will continue to attend specific races to support the team until the end of the current season. Newey, expected to be in Miami for this weekend's race, has also worked with championship-winning teams at Williams and McLaren in his long career.

It was reported that he became unsettled after Horner was accused of sexual harassment and inappropriate behaviour by a female employee. The team principal was cleared in February of wrongdoing by an internal investigation carried out by Red Bull's parent company before the employee was then suspended. She is appealing that decision. Former Formula One supreme Bernie Ecclestone told AFP that Newey's legacy to the team would take a while to assess. "Teams have been trying to poach him for a long time," Ecclestone, 93, told AFP by phone in Portugal.—AFP

Kuwait's gymnastics team to participate at Asian championship

KUWAIT: Kuwait national rhythmic gymnastics team will participate in the 20th Asian championship hosted by Uzbekistan on Friday. Kuwait is represented by players Maha Al-Saqer and Nour Al-Ruzaihan who arrived in Tashkent with Salah Al-Askar heading the delegation along with coach Hana Sabotina and the players who are competing for the first time in the continental championship.

Al-Saqer prepared well for this tournament following her participation in the latest world championship in Azerbaijan, while Nour Al-Ruzaihan will compete in the juniors category. Kuwait Gymnastics Federations wished the players all success in this continental event.



Maha Al-Saqer

Cricket WCup 'stepping stone' to building US fanbase for Olympics

NEW DELHI: Next month's T20 World Cup will help build cricket's profile and popularity in the United States ahead of its appearance at the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles, the sport's world body said. The showpiece 20-over event will be co-hosted by the West Indies and the United States in June with New York, Florida and Dallas as venues.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) said it was confident the tournament would help the sport leave a mark in a land where baseball rules. "The fact that a World Cup has come to the US—the largest sports market in the world—that in itself has generated a lot of interest," Chris Tetley, the ICC's head of events, told reporters in a media roundtable on Tuesday. "This is a key stepping stone for the promotion of the game towards 2028 and beyond in terms of providing world-class cricket for the massive existing fanbase that the sport already has in the US," he added.

"We are trying to give them something they haven't had on their doorstep before and maybe pique the interest of the American sports community by telling them that cricket's actually an older sport in the US than baseball." T20 Cricket will feature as one of five new sports at the Los Angeles Olympics. Cricket's only previous appearance at an Olympics was in 1900 in Paris, where a team from Great Britain defeated France.

'Exceeded expectations'

Nassau County's Eisenhower Park, near New York, has seen a 34,000-seater temporary stadium, with a drop-in cricket pitch, constructed. It will host the hotly-anticipated India-Pakistan clash on June 9 among its eight scheduled World Cup games.

"We are really happy with the pitch," said stadium manager Damian Hough. "Everything that we have done has exceeded expectations. I can't predict scores, that's for the batters. We hope that we have got a typical T20 pitch where there is good bounce, good pace and value for shots. Obviously you want batters to play shots all around the ground."

Hough and his team introduced drop-in pitches more than a decade ago at Adelaide Oval, where he is head curator. But creating the stadium in Nassau County has seen different challenges, including growing the pitch in the sub-tropics of Florida before transporting it 2,000 kilometres (1,250 miles) north through multiple climatic zones. Tetley said the stadium would be dismantled after the T20 extravaganza, but the "world-class facilities" would leave a lasting legacy for cricket in the United States.—AFP



LAHORE: An employee of Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) places the trophy of ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 during the trophy tour at the Pakistan Cricket Academy in Lahore on April 27, 2024. The 2024 tournament will be hosted by the West Indies and the US from June 1 to 29, 2024. — AFP

Sports

Bayer Leverkusen looking for Roma revenge in Europa League last four

'We have a desire for revenge, and a great hunger to win'

MILAN: Bayer Leverkusen are gunning for revenge on Thursday when they travel to a second Europa League semi-final against Roma in as many years after yet another late escape kept their remarkable unbeaten run intact. Xabi Alonso's Leverkusen staff were filmed celebrating Roma's passage past AC Milan in the last eight, and Thursday's first leg at the Stadio Olimpico is a chance to purge the memory of being 'Mourinhoed' in last season's last four.

Already a formidable proposition last term, Leverkusen's astonishing run of 46 matches without defeat and a first-ever Bundesliga title has them favorites to reach the final in Dublin. And the team which broke Bayern Munich's dominance of German football wants payback for the 1-0 aggregate loss which led to Roma's agonizing penalty shoot-out defeat to Sevilla in last season's final.

"We have a desire for revenge, and a great hunger to win and get ourselves into the final," said Leverkusen CEO Fernando Corro to Radio Marca. "We want to get to the final at all costs." Leverkusen have scored 16 goals in stoppage time this season in all competitions, the latest coming in the 96th minute of Saturday's 2-2 draw with Stuttgart.

And it's been their habit for late strikes which has got them back to the Europa League semis, with former Roma man Patrik Schick scoring three times in added time over their 5-4 last-16 win against Qarabag and two more late goals helping them past West Ham in the quarter-finals.

Coach Alonso said his team's ability to claw back results at the death was "hard to explain" after Robert Andrich snatched a point at Stuttgart but is hoping it holds out for the rest of the campaign. "Our main objective was to become champions, but now

we don't want to stop," added Alonso to Sky. "The goal is clear. We want to stay undefeated until the end of the season."

'Unbeaten, not unbeatable'

Roma salvaged a late point of their own at Napoli on Sunday thanks to a late goal from Tammy Abraham, the England international striker's first in a year after a long knee injury lay-off. While Leverkusen can concentrate on Europe, Daniele De Rossi's team have had a frantic last few weeks as they scramble to take advantage of Serie A getting an extra spot in next year's Champions League and aim for a third continental final in as many years.

Roma are undoubtedly tired after winning an Italian derby with Milan to reach the last four, a tie which was preceded by the Rome derby and followed by clashes with direct top-five rivals Bologna and Napoli, as well as their win at Udinese which had to be played over two acts after Evan Ndicka's on-pitch collapse. And their next two league fixtures are with Juventus and Atalanta - who are two points behind Roma - making the next fortnight crucial for De Rossi, who has turned his boyhood club around since replacing Jose Mourinho in January.

"I've got players who are trying to get something from this season," said De Rossi to DAZN after the Napoli draw. "We know it's going to be difficult, we have to find the results we need to get into the Champions League or win the Europa League."

De Rossi will be boosted by the return of Romelu Lukaku alongside Paulo Dybala after the Belgium striker shook off a thigh problem. Also back are Chris Smalling who missed Napoli with a groin injury and midfield lynchpin Leandro Paredes, suspended for



LEVERKUSEN: Stuttgart's Japanese defender #21 Hiroki Ito (L) and Bayer Leverkusen's Czech forward #14 Patrik Schick vie for the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match Bayer 04 Leverkusen v VfL Stuttgart in Leverkusen, western Germany. — AFP

the hard-fought draw at the weekend.

"We have to be perfect, because if they don't ever lose and have the heart to score in the final seconds

so often it means that they have something special," said De Rossi. "They're unbeaten, but they're not unbeatable." — AFP

Emery's transformation allows Aston Villa to dream in Europe again

MANCHESTER: Aston Villa head into a first European semi-final for 42 years against Olympiakos on Thursday but have the experience of a proven winner at this stage of continental competition in manager Unai Emery.

The Spaniard is a four-time Europa League champion from his spells at Sevilla and Villarreal and is now targeting a first Europa Conference League success to cap his transformation of a sleeping giant. Villa sat just outside the Premier League relegation zone with just 12 points from their opening 12 games under the sacked Steven Gerrard when Emery took charge for the first time in November 2022.

Despite that handicap, he still managed to qualify Villa for Europe for the first time since 2010 thanks to a seventh-placed finish. "He does not miss a trick. He's obsessed with football and he wants us to be obsessed with football," said the club's captain John McGinn.

"He's completely transformed this place and it's a pleasure to work under him." Even more glamorous nights for Villa Park await next season with the side from Birmingham closing in on a first ever taste of the Champions League since it was rebranded from the European Cup.

Villa are fourth in the Premier League, seven points clear of Tottenham, who have just five more games to overhaul that gap. Champions of Europe in



BIRMINGHAM: (FILES) Aston Villa's Spanish head coach Unai Emery reacts during the English Premier League football match between Aston Villa and Chelsea at Villa Park in Birmingham, central England. — AFP

1982, Villa have not been back at that elite level since the season they defended the trophy 41 years ago.

Yet, Emery has still referenced the images of the club's European Cup triumph on the walls of the training ground as a source of inspiration for a new era of success that he is building. "Everyday when I go to the training ground there is the '82 European Cup (picture). It's good to have that memory," said Emery at the start of Villa's European adventure this season. "This is the history for Aston Villa and it's amazing. Of course we want to write a new history now, doing it our way and hopefully we can do something important here."

Gennaro Gattuso, but he didn't fare much better, lasting five months before being dismissed in February.

The current man in charge is Jean-Louis Gasset, the veteran 70-year-old who was available after leaving the Ivory Coast job during the Africa Cup of Nations. Gasset has not been able to make Marseille more consistent domestically, but he has led them to victories in the Europa League against Shakhtar Donetsk, Villarreal - two former winners of the competition - and Benfica.

That run, including beating former European Cup winners Benfica on penalties in the quarter-finals, has led OM to a last-four showdown with Atalanta. "We dream of evenings like these. This is a competition that suits us," Gasset said after beating Benfica. "We have got to the semi-finals of a European competition having beaten three clubs who have won (European) trophies. "It is an epic tale. A season can only be judged at the end, but we want to go as far as possible."

All-time top scorer

That would mean getting to the final in Dublin on May 22 against either Roma or German champions Bayer Leverkusen. Marseille, who lost the Europa League final in 2018 and the UEFA Cup finals of 1999 and 2004, would not be favorites in the final and are also probably the underdogs against Atalanta, conquerors of Liverpool in the last round. But Aubameyang could be the man to make the difference. After all, the forward who was on the books at AC Milan as a youth and who made his name at Saint-Etienne, is the all-time top scorer in the Europa League.

He has 34 goals in the competition, a tally that leaves him four ahead of Radamel Falcao, the next best marksman. "It's my competition," he remarked with a smile when speaking to UEFA after starring in the 4-0 win over Villarreal in the last-16 first leg. — AFP

Ajax, Martinez memories

A 4-0 win over Ajax in the last 16 is a memory most Villa fans will cling to for decades to come. Emiliano Martinez's antics to beat Lille in a tense penalty shootout in the quarter-finals will also go down in the club's folklore, particularly if they deliver on the tags of favorites to win the competition.

The toll of playing 51 games already this season began to show in a tired second half showing to blow a two-goal lead in a 2-2 draw against Chelsea on Saturday. But an Olympiakos side that sits fourth in the Greek top flight ought to hold no fears with Fiorentina or Club Brugge awaiting the winners in the final.

The best news of all for Villa fans arguably came last week when Emery extended his contract until 2027. "We are enjoying our way together with Villa fans, the club owners, management and this great group of players that we are proud of," said the 52-year-old.

Emery's achievements at Villa mirror his career path of success at clubs striving to make a leap and compete with the European elite. He overcame financial difficulties to lead Valencia to three consecutive third-placed finishes in La Liga.

Three straight Europa Leagues followed at Sevilla between 2014 and 2016 and he won Villarreal's first ever major trophy by beating Manchester United in the 2021 Europa League final. In between times he struggled to match higher expectations and deal with inflated egos at Arsenal and Paris Saint-Germain.

But his detail-oriented approach has been welcomed with opening arms by a Villa squad desperate for their time to shine on the European stage. — AFP

Madrid stars keen on Kroos stay after Munich masterclass

MUNICH: Toni Kroos has not decided where his future lies but his team-mates are hoping he chooses to stay at Real Madrid after his Champions League masterclass against Bayern Munich. The experienced 34-year-old German midfielder shone for Real in their 2-2 semi-final first leg draw at his former stomping ground in Bavaria on a gripping Tuesday night.

Kroos' contract expires in the summer after a decade with the record 14-time Champions League winners. "I want to win as much as possible this season - I don't think about the future," he said after the game.

Looking beyond obvious standout Vinicius Junior, who netted both of Madrid's goals against Bayern, Kroos was Madrid's finest player in a match where Los Blancos could have been beaten. Thomas Tuchel's Bayern created more chances and Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said they were at their best, compared to his side which only showed their top level in flashes.

Kroos was by contrast supremely consistent and his superb ball for Vinicius helped Madrid take the lead. The former Germany international was a step ahead of everyone else on the pitch, pointing to Vinicius where he planned to play the ball, a pass which didn't seem to be on. — AFP



Sheikh Mubarak with Hamza Behbehani

Sheikh Mubarak lauds achievements of Kuwait players

KUWAIT: Deputy Chairman of the Board of Kuwait Olympic Committee Sheikh Mubarak Faisal Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said he is keen on supporting all athletes in all sports and remove obstacles facing them in order to reach the best levels.

Sheikh Faisal spoke during his reception of martial arts player Hamza Behbehani who is preparing for competing for the WBC heavy weight championship in June in Bangkok, Thailand.

Sheikh Mubarak lauded the outstanding achievements Kuwait players are making in various sports as individual or teams adding "we are proud with what Kuwait athletes are achieving at the Gulf, Arab and international levels and we will always be with them and Behbehani is one of the distinguished martial arts players and wish him all success".

Behbehani said he was happy with the support he is receiving from Kuwait Olympic Committee adding that "I started preparations early with hopes of winning the Asian Championship that is presented by the WBC, and will continue training to be at the best level of readiness".

Today's Matches

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Chelsea v Tottenham Hotspur 21:30
beIN Sports

UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE

Olympique de Marseille v Atalanta 22:00
beIN Sports HD 3

AS Roma v Bayer 04 Leverkusen 22:00
beIN Sports HD 4

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

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

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

Hospitals

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

Change of Name

I, **Munwar Khan**, holder of Indian Passport number P9483719 issued at Kuwait, India, Pin: 505001 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) Munawar and (surname) Khan.
(# 02/05/2024)

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

Vinicius hits two as Real Madrid eye final after snatching draw at Bayern

Madrid favourite to progress in next week's return leg



MUNICH: Bayern Munich's Moroccan defender #40 Noussair Mazraoui and Real Madrid's Brazilian forward #11 Rodrygo vie for the ball during the UEFA Champions League semi-final first leg football match between FC Bayern Munich and Real Madrid CF in Munich. — AFP

MUNICH: Real Madrid forward Vinicius Junior scored a double, including an 83rd-minute equalising penalty, to snatch a 2-2 draw at Bayern Munich on Tuesday that puts the Spanish side in the driving seat for the return leg of the Champions League semi-final.

Vinicius gave Real the lead after 24 minutes of the first leg but Bayern scored twice in four second-half minutes to wrestle back control. Leroy Sane with a stunning opener and Harry Kane converting a penalty. Kim Min-jae fouled Rodrygo in the box with eight minutes remaining and Vinicius stepped up, drowning out a chorus of boos and whistles to blast home. "In this competition it's important not to lose, and we're here because we haven't lost yet," said Vinicius.

"I'm very happy that I was able to score two goals, and now we need to have a magical night at home," he added. The draw makes Madrid favourite to progress in next week's return leg at the Santiago Bernabeu but Bayern, who dominated large parts of the match, will still have hope of making it to the final at Wembley in June.

"It's a good result for the second leg," Madrid

coach Carlo Ancelotti said. "But nothing has been decided yet. Bayern have high quality. They have players like Musiala or Sane who can hurt us." "It feels a bit strange," said Bayern manager Thomas Tuchel. "But the situation is very clear. Win in Madrid, then off to Wembley. The winner takes it all. We will be ready and we accept the fight. We will go to Madrid with self-confidence. We have to be brave."

Familiar opponents

Before the match, the Bayern fans unveiled a giant banner depicting Franz Beckenbauer which spanned from the grass to the rafters. It was a fitting tribute on a night featuring the most-played fixture in European Cup history.

Famed for their composure on the biggest of stages in this competition, 14-time winners Real struggled early on as Bayern dominated possession while spurred on by a ferocious home crowd. Sane had a chance after just 40 seconds and another minutes later, while Kane chipped a shot from halfway just over the bar as the visitors struggled to cope.

Madrid's success in this competition this season, including in their quarter-final win over Manchester City, has been built on absorbing pressure before striking. The visitors repeated the trick for the opener, breaking Bayern's dominance in ruthlessly simple fashion while showing the hosts how easy scoring goals can be. Toni Kroos collected the ball from a corner and drilled a defence-splitting pass along the ground which found Vinicius galloping in acres of space on the edge of the area. Without a Bayern player in range, Vinicius calmly slotted the opener past a helpless Manuel Neuer, changing the complexion of the match completely.

Bayern, who have six European Cups of their own, were not awed and continued to push but could not break through; their best chance of the remainder of the half came through a free kick, with Kane finding a huge gap in the wall but blasting wide. With Real seemingly in cruise control, Bayern grabbed hold of the match early in the second-half, scoring twice in four minutes. Eric Dier found Sane down the right flank. — AFP

Ipswich on brink of EPL return after 24 years

LONDON: Ipswich took a huge step towards a return to the Premier League for the first time since 2002 after a 2-1 win at Coventry on Tuesday. The Tractor Boys move three points clear of Leeds in second place in the Championship with just one match for both sides remaining.

Ipswich need just a point to guarantee promotion when they host Huddersfield, who are already practically relegated, on Saturday. Leeds, who do boast a better goal difference than Ipswich, must beat Southampton at Elland Road to have any chance of finishing in the top two.

Under the guidance of former Manchester United coach Kieran McKenna, Ipswich are on the brink of back-to-back promotions. "It's another emotional night and we have had a few of them," said McKenna.

"It's a great night to enjoy in front of the supporters. We know the significance of tonight will not be determined until Saturday. To be on 93 points with a game to go is an incredible tally and credit to the boys. I never thought this could unfold so quickly. I came here because of the ambition of the club. The journey has accelerated, I have to say."

McKenna's men had not won in their previous four games as they failed to take full advantage of Leeds' faltering form at the business end of the season. But they righted the ship just in time with a precious victory over the FA Cup semi-finalists. Kieffer Moore fired the visitors into the lead after just eight minutes. However, Ipswich's nerves showed during a tense second half and Haji Wright's powerful effort flew through the grasp of Vaclav Hladky.

Coventry were only level for five minutes as Cameron Burgess fired in at the near post to spark jubilant scenes among a packed out away end. Those celebrations were repeated at full-time with Ipswich closing in on a £200 million bounty (\$251 million) by making it back to the English top flight. Leicester have already booked their place back in the Premier League as Championship winners after a 3-0 win at Preston on Monday. — AFP

Maxey magic fires Sixers past Knicks, Bucks stay alive

NEW YORK: Tyrese Maxey produced a 46-point gem as the Philadelphia 76ers stunned the New York Knicks 112-106 in overtime to keep their NBA Eastern Conference playoff hopes alive on Tuesday. Maxey led the Sixers back from the brink of defeat in the fourth quarter with a late burst of scoring before dominating in overtime to ensure a game six back in Philadelphia.

The Knicks, leading the best-of-seven series 3-1 heading into Tuesday's game, had looked poised to clinch after Jalen Brunson helped the second seeds take a six-point lead with 29 seconds remaining in the fourth quarter. But Maxey drained a three-pointer from 24 feet and then hit a stunning 34-footer from the logo with nine seconds left to send a pulsating duel into overtime. It looked as if the Knicks had reclaimed the initiative after Brunson scored five points to give New York a five-point lead before a raucous Madison Square Garden.

Yet Maxey and NBA MVP Joel Embiid had other ideas, launching a 9-0 run to give the Sixers a 106-102 advantage. New York pegged it back to 106-106 but the Sixers regrouped and pulled clear again to seal victory.

"Season on the line, we fought for 53 minutes and never gave up," Maxey said. "Even when we were down late guys still went out there and made plays—that was big time." A pumped-up Maxey could be seen roaring in defiance after helping the Sixers take the game to overtime in the fourth quarter.

"I was saying some things that my grandma probably wouldn't like," he said. "I'm a happy guy but I absolutely hate losing." Maxey's 46-point haul included seven three-pointers while Embiid posted a triple-double of 19 points, 16 rebounds and 10 rebounds. Tobias Harris added 19 points for the Sixers while Kelly Oubre Jr. finished with 14. Brunson led New York, scoring with



NEW YORK: Jalen Brunson #11 of the New York Knicks passes the ball as Nicolas Batum #40 of the Philadelphia 76ers defends during the overtime period at Madison Square Garden in New York City. The Philadelphia 76ers defeated the New York Knicks 112-106 in overtime. — AFP

40 points while Josh Hart had 18 and O.G. Anunoby 17. Game six is in Philadelphia on Thursday.

In other games, the injury-hit Milwaukee Bucks stayed afloat by beating the Indiana Pacers, winning 115-92 to extend their series to game six. Milwaukee, trailing 3-1 and missing injured stars Giannis Antetokounmpo and Damian Lillard, looked to be heading for an early postseason exit after Indiana raced into a 31-23 first-quarter lead. But the Bucks cut loose though in the second and third, outscoring Indiana 64-36 to take control. Khris Middleton and Bobby Portis led Milwaukee with 29 points apiece while Malike Beasley added 18. — AFP