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Gaza devastation unseen since WWII

Colombia cuts ties with Zionist entity • Hamas studying truce proposal



GAZA: A Palestinian man pulls a cart on a road lined with destroyed buildings in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on May 2, 2024. — AFP

GAZA: The United Nations said Thursday that the post-war reconstruction of Gaza would require an international effort unseen since the aftermath of World War II, estimating it could cost up to \$40 billion. It came as Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh struck an optimistic tone over a possible truce and captive release deal for Gaza, after weeks of largely stalled negotiations.

There have been reports of sticking points between the militant group and the Zionist entity nearly seven months into the war that has devastated the Palestinian territory. But Haniyeh, head of the militant group's Qatar-based political bureau, said in calls to Egyptian and Qatari mediators that Hamas was studying the latest proposal with a "positive spirit".

Much of Gaza has been reduced to a grey landscape of rubble and the United Nations estimated the cost of reconstruction at between \$30 billion and \$40 billion. "The scale of the destruction is huge and unprecedented... this is a mission that the global community has not dealt with since World War II," UN assistant secretary-general Abdallah Al-Dardari told a briefing in the Jordanian capital Amman. The UN official said "72 percent

of all residential buildings have been completely or partially destroyed". Reconstruction is made more difficult by the presence of large quantities of unexploded ordnance in the debris that Gaza's Civil Defense agency says triggers "more than 10 explosions every week".

President Gustavo Petro said Wednesday Colombia will sever diplomatic ties with the Zionist entity, whose government led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu he described as genocidal in its war in Gaza. "Tomorrow (Thursday) diplomatic relations with (the Zionist entity) will be severed... for having a government, for having a president that is genocidal," Petro, a harsh critic of the devastating war against Hamas, told a May Day rally in Bogota. (See Page 5)

The Zionist entity's offensive has killed at least 34,596 people in Gaza — mostly women and children — including 28 over the past day, according to the health ministry in the territory. Mediators have proposed a deal that would halt fighting for 40 days and exchange Zionist captives for potentially thousands of Palestinian prisoners, according to details released by Britain. **Continued on Page 6**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kuwaiti students discover asteroids

KUWAIT: Female students from Kuwait University have achieved a scientific milestone by making two astronomical discoveries in the name of Kuwait, with support from the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS). These discoveries consist of two asteroids located in the main asteroid belt situated between Mars and Jupiter. The team, comprised of Mariam Jamal, Noora Al-Musairea and Marahab Al-Azmi, first observed these asteroids in Feb 2021, with their discoveries confirmed by relevant authorities in June 2024. Currently, the new asteroids are undergoing study to determine their orbits and to be included in internationally recognized catalogs of asteroids. Additionally, the International Astronomical Union, supported by NASA, will provide the opportunity for the students to name the discovered asteroids, along with issuing certificates for each asteroid.

No unusual side effects detected

KUWAIT: The ministry of health said Wednesday that no side effects of COVID-19 vaccines other than previously expected ones have been detected in Kuwait. The vaccines available in Kuwait have been approved and recommended by international specialized medical organizations and are flexible in countering new variants of the coronavirus, a press release from the ministry said, adding no cases of a causal relationship between blood clotting and thrombocytopenia have been observed. The benefits of vaccination are far greater than the rare side effects, particularly when it comes to times of pandemic peaks and most vulnerable cases, such as the elderly and those with a weak immune system, the statement explained.

Biden says 'order must prevail' amid campus protests

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden insisted Thursday that "order must prevail" on college campuses after weeks of turmoil, clashes with police and mass arrests involving student protests against the Zionist war in Gaza. Biden, who until now had remained tight-lipped on the student unrest, spoke just hours after hundreds of police moved in to forcibly clear a sprawling encampment at the University of California, Los Angeles, tearing down barriers and detaining dozens of protesters.

For weeks, authorities on campuses from New York to California have tried to thread the needle between the right to protest and complaints of violence and hate speech, resulting in hundreds of arrests and chaos as university terms end. **Continued on Page 6**

EU vows \$1bn for Lebanon, urges migration curbs

BEIRUT: EU chief Ursula von der Leyen Thursday announced \$1 billion in aid to Lebanon to help tackle illegal migration, as rights groups warned against forced returns to Syria. The European Union has already agreed deals with Egypt, Tunisia, Mauritania and others aimed at helping stem flows of irregular migrants. "I can announce a financial package of \$1 billion for Lebanon that would be available from this year until 2027," the European Commission chief said, adding that "we want to contribute to Lebanon's socio-economic stability".

She said the aid was designed to strengthen basic services such as education and health amid a severe economic crisis. Europe will also support Lebanon's army, with the aid "mainly focused on providing equipment and training for border management". The EU Commission's spokesman said in Brussels the aid will be disbursed "in grants", with 736 million euros earmarked to support Lebanon "in response to the Syrian crisis". He said "264 million euros will be for bilateral cooperation", notably to support the security services, including with border management.



LOS ANGELES: Police clash with pro-Palestinian students after destroying part of the encampment barricade on the campus of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) on May 2, 2024. — AFP



BEIRUT: Lebanon's Prime Minister Najib Mikati poses for a picture with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides during their meeting at the Grand Serail government headquarters on May 2, 2024. — AFP

Schools, offices shut as heavy rain returns to UAE

DUBAI: Schools and many offices were closed across the United Arab Emirates on Thursday as heavy rains returned to the desert country just two weeks after record downpours that experts linked to climate change. A lightning storm with high winds swept across the oil-rich monarchy overnight, with more than 50 mm of rain falling before 8:00 am in some areas, the National Center of Meteorology said.

Flooding was seen in some parts of financial hub Dubai, and the city's airport, the world's busiest by international passenger traffic, canceled 13 flights and diverted five, a spokesperson said. State-owned, Dubai-based Emirates and sister airline flydubai both warned passengers of delays, as schools switched to remote learning and public-sector offices closed.

But the rains were not on the scale of April 16, when a record 259.5 mm of rain left four people. **Continued on Page 6**



Local

Kuwait marks Press Freedom Day

'Journalism for the Planet: Journalism Confronting the Environmental Crisis'

KUWAIT: Kuwait will join the world and international organizations to celebrate World Press Freedom Day, which will be held this year under the slogan - "Journalism for the Planet: Journalism Confronting the Environmental Crisis". The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted World Press Freedom Day on May 3 every year, which was declared by the UN General Assembly in 1993 following the recommendation adopted at the 26th session of the General Conference of UNESCO in 1991.

Freedom of the press is the basic wheel on which the democratic system in the world is based, and it plays a vital role in advancing human dignity, promoting social progress, and achieving comprehensive development. On this occasion, some Kuwaiti media professionals stressed, in remarks to KUNA on Thursday, Kuwait's leadership in press freedom in the region over the past decades.

Al-Qabas newspaper editor-in-chief, Waleed Al-Nisf, said that more than 30 years after the UN General Assembly declared World Press Freedom Day, the historical connection between the freedom to request and transmit information and the freedom to receive it from the recipient remains the main goal of journalism. Al-Nisf stressed the need to adhere to and respect press freedom as an opportunity to restore and evaluate the basic principles of press

freedom and defend the media from attacks targeting its independence, recalling the journalists who lost their lives while on duty, especially in hot spots around the world, specifically Gaza.

He stated that Kuwait is considered to be in the advanced ranks in the Gulf region in terms of freedom of the press. Al-Nisf said that no country in the world is devoid of press restrictions. In Kuwait, for example, the print press is governed by the Publications Law, adding that the amendments to it have now been reduced to five prohibitions that may not be published, up from 11 prohibitions. For his part, the editor-in-chief of Al-Rai newspaper, Walid Al-Jassem, said that World Press Freedom Day comes to remind the world as a whole and governments in particular of the importance of a free press.

Al-Jassem affirmed that every freedom has limits, indicating that the definition of freedom is that you can do things that are not criminalized by the law. He stated that one of the basics of the press is the expression of opinion on public and private issues through freedom governed by law, indicating that the articles of the Constitution emphasize the importance of freedom. He also pointed out that Kuwait enjoys a large margin of freedom of the press.

Al-Jassem noted that there are many restrictions on the Kuwaiti press, some of which are desirable restrictions, such as professional, social, moral, and religious commitment, which

is extremely important, and some of which may be undesirable, such as blackmail, pressure, and threats by the law. Khaled Al-Mutairi, Chief Editor of Al-Jarida newspaper, said Kuwait and its people have been enjoying a great margin of freedom for hundreds of years, noting the constitution has maintained and deepened this freedom.

He described this freedom of expression as a "blessing" that should be preserved in a responsible manner that avoids offending people and their dignities. Al-Mutairi said any scoop would be "worthless" if it violated the freedoms of people or was at the expense of the nation. Yousuf Al-Marzouq, Chief Editor of Al-Anbaa newspaper, said the Kuwaiti press was an integral part of the vitality of political, economic, social, and sporting life in the nation.

"Our press contributed through history to many issues that raised awareness, so it became a major pillar in the advancement of Kuwait," he said. The Kuwaiti press, according to Al-Marzouq, represented all segments of society, covering all issues of interest to them. He said the press was keen on maintaining a balance between responsible freedom and respect for professional criteria.

Message from KJA

May 3rd, every year, coincides with World Press Freedom Day. On this occasion,



KUWAIT: The Al Jazeera office in Kuwait organized a solidarity protest with the participation of a number of representatives of Kuwaiti newspapers and journalists. The participants recalled the sacrifices made by the victims of the war on Gaza. They pointed out that more than 140 journalists have been martyred since last October. The participants called on the international community and the United Nations to protect journalists.

the Kuwait Journalists Association (KJA) emphasizes respect for press freedom and the need to create the appropriate atmosphere for a free press that carries out its duties towards society. We need to provide all possible facilities for journalists to perform their work without any harassment from any party, especially since we are in a

country that enjoys an atmosphere of freedom and democracy. The Board of Directors of the Kuwait Journalists Association affirms that this occasion is an opportunity to stand by the various media outlets and colleagues of the profession and support them in practicing their work and performing their roles responsibly. — Agencies

News in Brief

Kuwait condoles UAE leader

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable to UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan on Wednesday, voicing sincere and heartfelt condolences over the passing of Sheikh Tahnoun bin Mohammad Al-Nahyan, Abu Dhabi Ruler's Representative in Al-Ain Region. In the cable, His Highness the Amir prayed to Allah Almighty to shower the deceased with His vast mercy, dwell him in paradise, and grant the Al-Nahyan family patience and solace. Also, His Highness the Caretaker Prime Minister Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah sent a cable to UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, voicing sincere and heartfelt condolences over the passing of Sheikh Tahnoun bin Mohammad Al-Nahyan. — KUNA

Digitalizing KPC, subsidiaries

KUWAIT: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) CEO Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah said on Wednesday that the Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) exhibition aligns with the strategic aim of digitalizing the KPC and its subsidiaries. This came in Sheikh Nawaf Al-Sabah's speech during the opening of the KNPC's exhibition, which took place at the company's main building in Al-Ahmedi City in the presence of the KNPC's CEO, Wadhwa Al-Khateeb, and the CEOs and managing directors of the corporation and its subsidiaries. The exhibition reflects the KPC and its subsidiaries' focus on fostering talent and motivating the workforce in the oil sector. The KNPC's Deputy CEO, Khulood Al-Mutairi, told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that this exhibition is the first of its kind in the company's history. The exhibition comprises eight aspects, mainly the company's history and vision for the development of its refineries. Al-Mutairi said.

'Moderately hot' weather

KUWAIT: Kuwait is forecast to witness moderately hot weather over the weekend, along with some humidity in coastal regions and sporadic rainfall. Kuwait Meteorological Center Director General Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi said that the weather would incline toward hotness, with relative humidity in coastal regions amid unsteady southeasterly blows. The temperature will range between 34 and 36 degrees. The weather tonight will be moderate amid moisture in seaside areas, while the temperature will drop to 19–21 degrees. Friday will be hot and damp, as the heat is forecast to be 35–37 degrees, but at night the heat will settle at 20–22 degrees. On Saturday, it would be hot and partially cloudy, along with the dampness, while the heat would wobble between 36 and 28 degrees. At night, it will be moderate, and the temperature will range between 22 and 24 degrees. — KUNA

Kuwait's press enjoys substantial freedoms

KUWAIT: Top Kuwaiti journalists have affirmed that the national press enjoys substantial freedoms, noted that national personnel observe self-censorship, and cautioned against misuse of the freedoms in the profession. The journalists expressed their opinions in an interview with KUNA on World Press Freedom Day, falling on Friday, under the motto, "A press for the planet: journalism in the face of the environmental crisis." UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, had adopted May 3 as the day for observing international press freedom.

It was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 1993 upon a recommendation forwarded by the UNESCO General Assembly in 1991. The freedom of the press is a foundation for democracies worldwide and plays a crucial role in social progress and full-scale development. Waleed Abdulatif Al-Nisf, the chief editor of the mass circulation Al-Qabas, said the press' main goal, 30 years after the UNGA declaration, has remained freedom of information dissemination.

Al-Nisf affirmed the necessity of safeguarding the freedom of the profession and noted the dedication of personnel who have sacrificed their souls while serving the profession. Kuwait is at the forefront in the Gulf with respect to the freedom of the press, he said, touting the Kuwaiti press for adhering to objectivity throughout the years. He affirmed the necessity of adherence to the freedom of the press and resisting "attacks" against some media outlets aimed at jeopardizing their independence and paid tribute to the profession martyrs who have fallen in various hot spots across the globe, including Gaza.

The press in Kuwait has been solid for a long time and has taken forefront positions in tackling major local, national, and internal issues, Al-Nisf said. It is distinguished by the self-consciousness of the red-line matters or is-

FM receives credentials of new Ambassadors

KUWAIT: Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya on Thursday received a copy of the credentials of the new Ambassador of Mexico to Kuwait, Edward Haller. Minister Al-Yahya received the envoy's credentials during a meeting that took place at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where he wished the new ambassador the best of success and praised the bilateral relations between Kuwait and Mexico. Minister of Foreign Affairs also received credentials of the newly assigned Ambassador of Vietnam to Kuwait Nguyen Dok Thang. During a meeting at the Foreign Ministry, Minister Al-Yahya wished the new ambassador success and development of bilateral relations. — KUNA photos



Al-Qabas Chief Editor
Waleed Al-Nisf



Al-Anbaa Chief Editor
Yousuf Al-Marzouq



Al-Jarida Chief Editor
Khaled Al-Mutairi

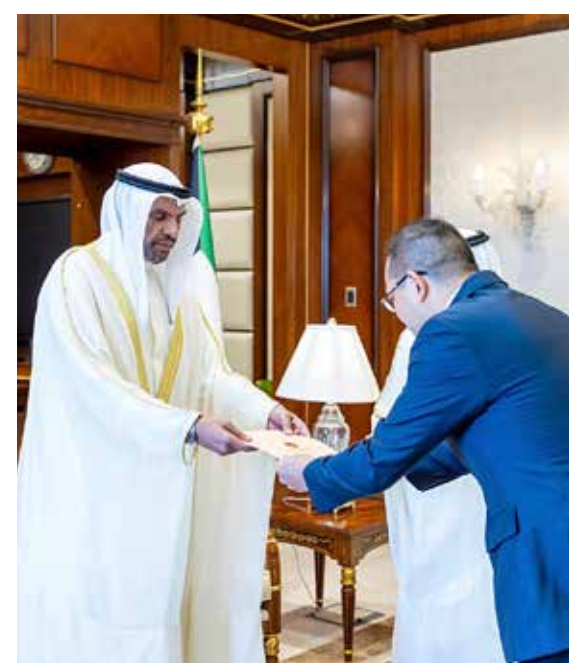
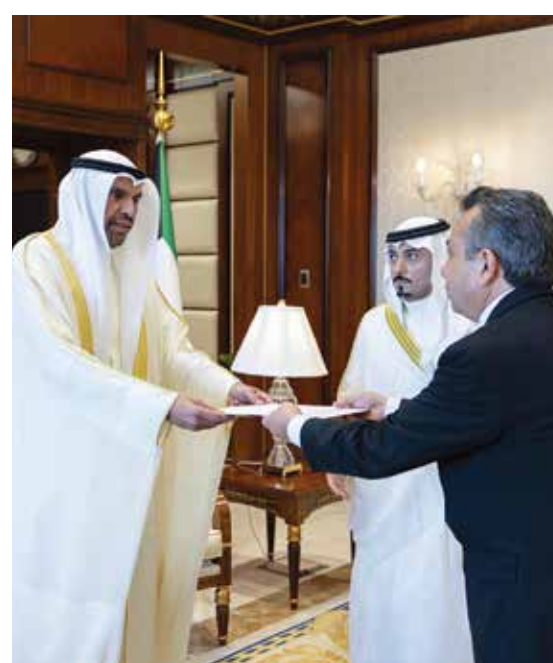


Al-Rai Chief Editor
Walid Al-Jassem

issues that legally cannot be published or contradict the principles of the Constitution. He also affirmed the media personnel's right to freedom of expression, freedom of research, and free access to information, in addition to the necessity of combating false and misleading information, according to the criteria set by the Kuwaiti constitution and laws based on international human rights principles.

On the standards of the freedom of the press, Al-Nisf has said that they are not constant, indicating that the World Press Freedom Index depends on records of specialized organizations that monitor freedoms in this sector worldwide and authorities' respect for the profession. Al-Nisf added that there are certain restraints on the press in all countries of the world. As for Kuwait, the number of topics that cannot be published has been lowered from 11 to five.

Media personnel cannot be creative without sufficient freedom and an adequate work environment, he said. "The quest for the truth is an avenue to enrich knowledge and constitutes a moralistic basis to refresh the free, critical thinking, expressing the opinion, and discussing public affairs. The chief editor of Al-Jarida daily newspaper, Khaled Hilal Al-Mutairi, has said that Kuwait, since hundreds of years ago, has enjoyed wide margins of freedom of expression.



Kuwait women's union to join Asian forum in Uzbekistan city

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Union of Women's Associations is set to partake in the Asian Women's Forum due in Samarkand City, Uzbekistan, between May 13 and 14. After welcoming Uzbekistan Ambassador to Kuwait Ayoub Khan Younosof, the union's chairwoman, Sheikha Fadiyah Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, said in a press statement that participation in the forum came at the invitation of Uzbekistan's Chief Senator Tanzila Narbayeva.

She elaborated that the gathering would explore women's involvement in science, education, creative activities, digital technologies, and the fight against poverty by enabling women to join the global economy, entrepreneurship, leadership, and innovation. For his part, Uzbekistan Ambassador to Kuwait Ayoub Khan Younosof said he is

so pleased to see bilateral relations remarkably growing in all domains. He added that this year coincides with Kuwaiti-Uzbekistani celebrations, marking 25 years since their diplomatic relations were forged.

On May 13–14 of this year, the Asian Women's Forum will be held in the city of Samarkand on the topic "Regional approach to issues of economic, social, and political rights of women and empowerment." The aim is to harness the creative potential of women leaders across the region and facilitate the exchange of experiences to enhance their involvement in government, society, and the economy. The forum is expected to welcome women parliamentarians, heads of government, representatives from government bodies and civil society institutions, businesswomen, political scientists,



Sheikha Fadiyah Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah welcomes Uzbekistan Ambassador

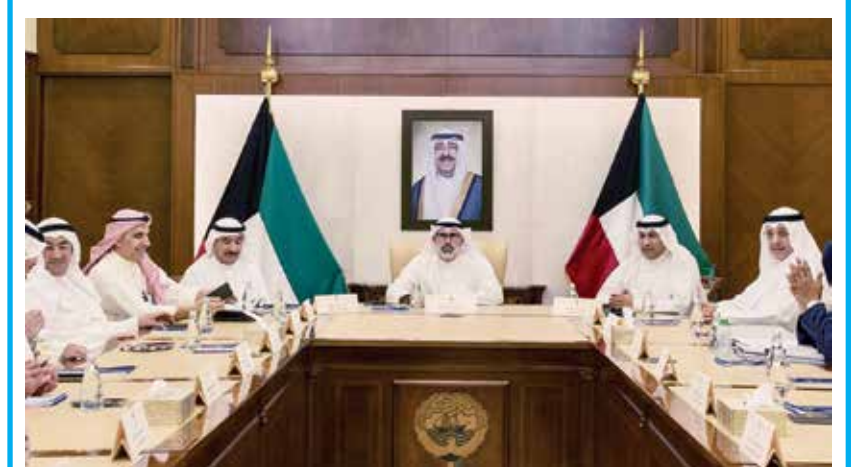
social activists, scientists, and representatives from various economic sectors.

Participants will hail from East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Central Asia. They will discuss issues of women's participation in science, education, and innovation, as well as the use of digital technologies, poverty reduction through women's economic empowerment, involving them in entrepreneurship and innovation, and ensuring their leadership in the modern global economy. — KUNA



Uzbekistan Ambassador honors Sheikha Fadiyah Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah.

Deputy FM and diplomatic consular corps hold talks



KUWAIT: Kuwait Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah headed a meeting for the council of the diplomatic and consular corps on Wednesday. The meeting took

place at the headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the participation of Assistant Foreign Ministers and members of the council, discussing issues on the session agenda. — KUNA

Local

KRCS sets up fully-equipped makeshift hospital in Gaza

26 Kuwaiti aid trucks enter Jordan, heading to Gaza

GAZA: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) announced on Thursday that a fully equipped hospital has been installed in the Al-Mawasi region of Gaza to offer medical care to the Gazans in cooperation with the Palestinian and Egyptian Red Crescent associations. KRCS Chairperson Dr. Hilal Al-Sayer said in a telephone conversation with KUNA that the makeshift field hospital was erected in the coastal region of Gaza as part of the State of Kuwait's efforts to soothe the hardships of the Palestinians.



Maha Al-Barjas

The makeshift hospital, set up on a 750-square-meter plot of land, contains operation rooms, intensive care wards, and sections for patients' admission. It also includes baby incubators, X-ray units, a pharmacy, and a laboratory. Kuwait will carry on with the humanitarian missions and will spare no effort in offering help to paint a bright picture of the country under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Dr. Al-Sayer stated.

For his part, the director general of the Palestinian Red Crescent in Gaza, Bashar Murad, said it was crucial to build the hospital in the Strip due to the difficult conditions and the severe shortage of medical supplies and medications. He expressed gratitude to the State of Kuwait, His Highness the Amir, the government, and the people for helping to soften the suffering in Gaza and praised the KRCS for



Kuwaiti Relief Society's medical team launched a campaign to fund and support Nasser Medical Complex and the Palestinian health care system in Gaza. — KUNA photos



presenting assistance to them. Last month, the KRCS sent the first Kuwaiti medical team to Gaza, where the doctors conducted surgeries and provided treatment to the ill.

Kuwaiti aid trucks

In another development, around 26 trucks laden with Kuwaiti aid arrived in the Jordanian capital Amman en route to the Gaza Strip, the country's Red Crescent Society (KRCS) chief Maha Al-Barjas said on Thursday. The aid, delivered in conjunction with the Kuwaiti charity's counterparts in the Hashemite Kingdom, runs the gamut from healthcare equipment to food supplies, she told KUNA after a relief program for Palestinian and Syrian refugees in Jordan. The latest batch of

aid comes after Kuwait launched a humanitarian "air bridge" to allow the urgent delivery of aid to the Gaza Strip in light of the catastrophic conditions there, she underlined.

Gaza health system

Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti Relief Society's medical team launched a campaign to fund and support Nasser Medical Complex and the Palestinian health care system in Gaza. This came during Kuwait's second medical team's trip around the city of Khan Yunis, which was completely destroyed by the Zionist occupation forces. Deputy Chairman of the Society, Omar Al-Thuwaini said that the campaign started at the Nasser Medical Complex as residents attempted to rehabilitate the medical facility in or-

der to make it functional again.

The medical complex, which served hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in southern Gaza, was subjected to a Zionist military offensive that has caused significant damage. He added that the medical team distributed tons of medical equipment and supplies and provided the necessary tools for surgical operations, medical care, and medications, especially for some critical cases and chronic diseases.

Al-Thuwaini also said that they performed a number of surgeries in the European hospital and the Kuwaiti hospital and carried out tests on hundreds of Palestinians. The medical team consisted of 17 people, including a consultant, a specialist, and a nurse in different specialties, in addition to a team leader and two relief coordinators. — KUNA



Spanish Ambassador Miguel Moro Aguilar inaugurates the new visa center.



Aguilar poses for a group photo with the new visa center's team.

Spain ambassador launches new visa application center

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Ambassador of Spain to Kuwait Miguel Moro Aguilar revealed that until April 2024, the Spanish visa section has received more than 9,000 visa applications, with almost 5,000 from Kuwaitis. In his statement during the inauguration of the new premises of the Spain visa application center, he noted that this figure anticipates a hectic summer, boosted by the latest European Union approval of a 5-year visa for all Kuwaiti nationals, provided that their passport validity allows for such a long period on their Schengen visas.

"Spain is one of the preferred and well-known destinations for Kuwaitis. To improve and render more comfortable the services provided to the more than 30,000 annual applicants for Spanish visas, the new visa application center opening has taken place on a timely occasion, right before the start of the summer season, which continues to be the peak period in terms of consular activity at the Spanish Embassy, despite the fact that Kuwaitis and residents in Kuwait have reoriented more and more their traditional choice for Spain to any peri-

od of the year whatsoever, and not only during their summer holidays," Aguilar said.

"This coming summer, Spain expects to receive between 65,000 and 80,000 Kuwaiti tourists only in the province of Malaga in the south of Spain, which is a top well-known destination among Kuwaiti travelers in the summertime," he added. The large number of Kuwaiti tourists being so important in that region, the ambassador revealed that his country opens a temporary office every year in the city of Torremolinos between June and September to provide consular services to the Kuwaiti population residing in the area of Malaga.

Aguilar pointed out that in February, the Embassy of Spain organized a successful promotional event in Kuwait, in collaboration with the Municipality of Marbella and the Luxury Association of Spain, at which "we were honored to enjoy the presence of the Major of Marbella, along with a few representatives of some of the best resorts in the Costa del Sol".

"We sincerely wish and hope that the new visa center location we open today will offer a more favorable impact on the experience offered to visa applicants to Spain. That has been indeed the objective of the effort made by the embassy and our agent BLS, taking into consideration the growing interest and high expectations among Kuwaitis with regards to our country," he said.

The ambassador indicated that every year, anticipating the complicated summer period in terms of the high numbers of requests, the embassy advises applicants to plan for their holi-

days adequately and avoid last-minute complications for a smoother visa process by applying as early as possible, considering that it is possible to do it up to six months in advance.

"On another note, and with the aim to avoid unexpected difficulties when traveling, let us remind applicants to apply for their visa at the embassy or the consulate of the country that they intend to travel to and check that the required documents are all correct and according to the planned trip, so that the visa application is not delayed," Aguilar pointed out.

The ambassador said health tourism is a significant aspect of Spain's global reputation, particularly renowned for its excellence in eyecare. "Many citizens from Kuwait and other Gulf countries choose to visit Spain for medical treatment in this field," Aguilar noted. He highlighted the existing agreement between Spanish hospitals and private institutions in Kuwait, further enhance cooperation in healthcare services.

In an effort to facilitate travel and strengthen ties between the two countries, the ambassador revealed that there are plans to increase the number of direct flights between Kuwait and Spain, especially in the summer, and there are promises that from October, there will be three to four flights per week connecting Kuwait to Madrid as well as direct flights to Spanish cities like Barcelona and Malaga. This initiative aims to promote tourism, business and cultural exchange. Aguilar added that his country is excited as it prepares to host the Formula One Grand Prix in 2026, hoping to attract motorsport enthusiasts from around the world.

Military drill 'Jahez' achieves its goals

KUWAIT: The military drill (Jahez or Ready) has achieved its goals in terms of the preparedness of administrative support units to offer backing to the state's vital agencies perfectly, Undersecretary of National Guard Lieut. Gen. Hashem Al-Refaie said. In a news statement following attending the drill's activities, Al-Refaie said the National Guard is the first support apparatus for all state agencies, under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces.

The drill achieved the goals perfectly in terms of dealing with any emergencies and evaluating the benefits gained by the trainees, he added. The drill came in line with a cooperation protocol signed between the state's institutions and ministries and the National Guard in the implementation of the directives of the political leadership and in accordance with the goals of the 2025 guidance document, he noted. He commended those tasked with the drill and conveyed greetings and appreciation to His Highness the Chief of the National Guard, Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, and the Deputy Chief of the National Guard, Sheikh Faisal Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Artist's work imitated by female students at 'Naqsh Exhibition'

KUWAIT: Students of Bayan High School for Girls, Wednesday, imitated the artistic works of distinguished Kuwaiti artist Sami Mohammad in honor of him, with their own touches to the pieces under their teachers' guidance, to create paintings and murals hung in Al-Sadu House in the Naqsh Exhibition. In this regard, artist Sami expressed to KUNA his gratitude for the students and teachers' efforts in creating this exhibition, which was the result of two years of work and guidance, and commended the role of Al-Sadu House for hosting the event.

He stated that he submitted a book from his eight publications to Bayan High School so that his work could be viewed by the students and teachers to help them derive from it, noting that he collects pictures of his various artistic works, including Sadu, sculpture, painting, and other forms of art, in eight volumes that were the result of 65 years. Mohammad stressed the need to embrace talent and hold an annual exhibition for the efforts students make to encourage them and help hone their artistic talents.

In a similar statement to KUNA, the principal of Bayan High School, Aalya Dashti, said that this exhibition is the second of its kind, as the first edition was three years ago, where the inspiration was the works of Kuwaiti artist Thuraya Al-Baqsam. Dashti explained that the idea of the exhibition was recommended by the head of the Art Education Department at Bayan High School, Khadija Al-Sayegh, who suggested that one of Kuwait's pioneer artists be chosen to inspire the female students.

She commended the efforts of the President of Kuwait Sadu Society, Sheikha Altaf Al-Salem Al-Sabah, and the Chairman of the Society's Board of Directors, Sheikha Bibi Duaij Al-Sabah, for their sponsorship of the exhibition and the Ministry of Education's efforts and constant support of students' talents. Exhibition coordinator and head of the Art Education Department at Bayan High School, Khadija Al-Sayegh, told KUNA that the students created 12 art pieces, noting that Mohammad oversaw those works and directed the students and their teachers.

For her part, high school art education teacher Hajjar Al-Abdulraouf told KUNA that some Sadu decorations were added to the inspired artworks to better suit the Sadu House, while student Fatima Al-Zahraa said that she and her classmates created an artwork consisting of wood pieces designed to form one of Sami's pieces. — KUNA



Principal of Bayan High School Aalya Dashti takes a group photo with participants.



Some artworks on display.



KRCS team takes a group photo with the Armenian Red Cross team. — KUNA photos



KRCS wraps up aid mission in Armenia

ANKARA: The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) wrapped up its humanitarian aid mission in Armenia on Thursday, distributing relief materials to 1,500 individuals in need. In a phone call with KUNA, Khaled Al-Mutairi, head of KRCS' field team, reported that aid was distributed in the areas of Shirak, Sevan, and Ye-

revan in collaboration with the Armenian Red Cross Society (ARCS).

The relief efforts targeted the elderly and vulnerable, providing essential items like food, blankets, heaters, and cleaning supplies to ease their hardship, he mentioned. Al-Mutairi expressed gratitude to the ARCS for their support and underscored the significance of collective humanitarian endeavors in extending assistance to those affected, reflecting Kuwait's solidarity with Armenia. Last week, KRCS initiated a humanitarian aid campaign in Armenia to help the displaced and in need in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. — KUNA

University team win best robot award in VEX competition

WASHINGTON: Kuwait University's team won the best robot award on Wednesday as part of the VEX Robotics World Championship held in Texas, becoming the first Arab and Mideast university team to get this international award. Speaking to KUNA, Nada Al-Daihani, head of the Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity, said, "We have a promising Kuwaiti generation." He expressed his delight as the team of the Faculty of Science's Computer Department managed to snatch this award, one of 15 awards given by the competition in which 120 teams are participating from across the world.

Meanwhile, Dr. Noura Al-Jarri, supervisor of the team, said building a scientific approach to training for international competitions has proven successful, saying that she looks forward to preparing several students to take part in the coming year's contests. The Kuwaiti team's design was professional and paid great attention to details to withstand the intense competition, she added. The competition is organized by the World Robot Olympiad Association in cooperation with Kuwait University, the Ministry of Education, the Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity, and Zain. The contest is being organized in Texas from April 25 until May 4 and aims to encourage youth to pay attention to science and technology through training workshops and competitions between school and university teams to design robots able to carry out complicated challenges. — KUNA

Kuwait-based Dhaman, Poland's KUKE ink MoU

KUWAIT: Arab Investment & Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (Dhaman) and Poland's National Export Guarantee Agency (KUKE) signed a memorandum of understanding to promote bilateral cooperation in insuring trade, investment, and finance and develop Arab-Polish trade, economic, and investment ties. Dhaman's Director-General Abdullah Ahmad Al-Sabeeh said in a press statement Thursday that under the agreement, Dhaman and KUKE would work together to provide trade and finance insurance against political and trade risks as part of a comprehensive system that targets increasing trade exchange between Arab, Polish, and other markets in the region and the world.

He underlined the shared commitment to boosting cooperation and exerting efforts to enhance growth opportunities for trade and investment ties, pointing to Dhaman's keenness to promote member states' economies by backing trade and investment exchange and economic cooperation between Arab states and countries in the region and the world. — KUNA

Burgan Bank concludes sponsorship of 'Macintosh' by Free Jabriya Productions

Cementing its role as active contributor to development of arts, entertainment



KUWAIT: After two nights of resounding success, Burgan Bank concluded its sponsorship of "Macintosh", the two-day musical madness experience by Free Jabriya Productions. The show took place at The Arena on April 26-27 and was attended by a multi-generational crowd of 10,000 attendees. The bank's sponsorship of the show sits at the intersection between its one-year sponsorship of Free Jabriya Productions, its far-reaching social responsibility program, and its steadfast commitment to the overall development of the domestic arts and entertainment sector.

Commenting on the show's massive success, Hessa Hussain Al-Najadah, Senior Manager - Corporate and CSR Communications at Burgan Bank, said: "We are delighted to be part of the massive and memorable success that 'Macintosh' achieved over its two-day span, and we are particularly proud of our partnership with Free Jabriya Productions who continue to amaze us with their creativity and artistic vision with every new show."

Like their previous shows, Free Jabriya presented the crowd with an unforgettable experience of a musical concert that completely re-imagined some of the most popular and iconic songs and presented them in a modern, electronic style that appealed to members of the crowd of all ages, uniting them over their shared passion for Kuwaiti music. "Everything evolves fast today, and music is no exception. However, the change of popular taste and modern preferences doesn't necessarily mean abandoning the old and replacing it with something else, something new."

At Free Jabriya, we wanted to remind our audience that Kuwaiti art is timeless and that all generations should be able to have access to it and enjoy it despite their differences – and 'Macintosh' did exactly that," said Ali Al-Nusif, Executive Producer and Co-Founder at Free Jabriya Productions. "From beginning to end, the show was all about partnership and sharing success, from our fruitful collaboration with Burgan Bank, who continue to show us unwavering support, to the iconic artists and talented musicians who shared the stage and delivered two nights of musical madness, and of course, the diverse crowd that came together and proved that music is a language of unity and oneness."

On his part, Jassem Al-Qames, Creative Director



Ali Al-Nusif



Hessa Al-Najadah



Jassem Al-Qames

Al-Shuaibi, Daffy, Rahaf, Hamad Al-Amari, and Khaled Al-Mulla, who performed first-time duets on the "Macintosh" stage and sang some of the most popular Kuwaiti songs in an all-new electronic remake. The show also featured an orchestra of 50 remarkable musicians who were led by Maestro Ahmad Al-Oud, the esteemed Kuwaiti conductor. Weaving all of

the show's elements together were creative directors Maryam Al-Khatrash and Jassem Al-Qames.

of "Macintosh", said: "To say that we enjoyed working on 'Macintosh' is an understatement of the overwhelming joy and fulfillment that colored the whole experience. With Free Jabriya's curiosity and eagerness to present the audience with a fresh, unprecedented experience, and of course Burgan Bank's unbundled support throughout the entire journey, every step of the 'Macintosh' ride was an inspiration to go beyond the obvious and to explore new, uncharted territories of mixed styles and media of art."

The event was notable for its cross-generational line-up of beloved artists, including Ayed, Bader

"Macintosh" marks the third successful collaboration between Burgan Bank and Free Jabriya Productions, following the two previous hit shows "Feykom Tarab: A Night with Miami" and "Graish". In line with its dedicated social responsibility strategy, Burgan Bank continues to spare no effort to support local artists and other key players in the art and entertainment sector, ensuring that all generations of Kuwaitis continue to cherish their authentic culture through traditional and modern performances alike.



Commerce minister underlines importance of intra-GCC talks

DOHA: Kuwait Minister of Commerce and Industry Abdullah Al-Jouan has underlined the significance of gatherings that join him with his Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) counterparts, saying such talks are instrumental in pushing forward economic cooperation within the bloc. Efforts to bolster "economic cooperation and integration" in the Gulf Arab region are supported by Kuwait, given their significance in bringing common visions and aspirations to fruition, the minister told KUNA after a trio of meetings he had with his GCC counterparts.

Hailing the "positive outcome" of these talks, Kuwait Public Authority for Industry acting chief Mohammad Al-Adwani cited a number of initiatives recently approved, chief among them a plan to establish a pan-Gulf Arab industrial center. The Kuwaiti commerce minister led his country's delegation to three separate ministerial-level talks, all of which aimed to ratchet up economic cooperation within the six-member GCC bloc.

GCCAC records success

In another development, the Gulf Cooperation

Council Commercial Arbitration Center (GCCAC) has made outstanding successes in providing a legal environment based on moral values since it was established in 1993, Secretary General of the Center Dr. Kamal Bin Abdulla Al Hamad said on Wednesday. The Manama-based center offers effective solutions to commercial disputes that help support the growth of the commercial sector of the GCC economies, he told reporters ahead of the 30th anniversary of the center, to be celebrated this Tuesday.

Dr. Al Hamad noted that this year's celebration coincides with a crucial stage in the history of the center, which started implementing a new strategy aiming to turn the center into one of the world's top 10 centers. "The GCCAC has made headway in building an integrated system for commercial arbitration in the region thanks to the highly qualified and experienced cadres and specialized training programs," he pointed out.

Dr. Al Hamad appreciated the support given to the center by the host Kingdom of Bahrain, which helped make the center a favored and credible destination for the settlement of commercial disputes. Bahrain enjoys a highly advanced legal environment that is suitable for attracting investment and commercial arbitration, he added. Under the auspices of Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad, the center will celebrate three decades of achievements in its quest to realize the aspirations of the GCC leaders for economic development. — KUNA



GCC ministers of commerce and industry meet in Doha. — KUNA



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Protesters try to stop UK migrant removals from temporary shelter

Manila summons China envoy over water cannon incident



MANILA: Jalian Mangampo (right) does homework while her younger brother Sherwin browses his phone at their house in Manila on April 30, 2024. — AFP photos



NAKHON SI THAMMARAT, Thailand: A worker spraying water on railway tracks warped by the heat between Ron Phibun district and Khao Chum in the southern Thai province of Nakhon Si Thammarat.

Kids study in overheated slum as Philippines shuts schools

Heat-struck Thai village hoists cartoon cat in desperate bid for rain

Catherine, Princess of Wales, releases new birthday snap



The photograph of Princess Charlotte shared by Princess of Wales Catherine.

LONDON: Catherine, Princess of Wales, on Thursday shared the second photograph of her children in as many weeks, as she stays out of the public eye while battling cancer. The 42-year-old future queen was credited with taking the photograph of Princess Charlotte to mark her ninth birthday, which was shared on royal social media platforms. On April 23, she was also said to have been behind the camera for a snap of her younger son Prince Louis on his sixth birthday. Charlotte is currently third in line to the throne behind her elder brother Prince George, 10, and their father, Prince William, 41.

Both photographs follow a furor in March over a Mother's Day snap of Catherine and her three children that she later admitted to have digitally altered. The image, said to have been taken by William, was designed to put to bed speculation about her health and whereabouts after she underwent abdominal surgery in January. But the edits, which saw leading news agencies including AFP pull the image, only fuelled rumors and she later admitted in a video that she was being treated for cancer. The British royal family has been hit by the enforced withdrawal from public life of Kate, as she is widely known, and her father-in-law King Charles III due to cancer treatment.

Neither the king's Buckingham Palace office or William and Kate's at Kensington Palace have disclosed what type of cancer each royal has. Charles, 75, on Tuesday made his first official public engagement, visiting a cancer treatment and support centre in central London. His return was prompted by doctors who said they were "very encouraged" by the progress of his treatment. — AFP

Bogota cuts ties with Zionist entity over Gaza genocide

BOGOTA: President Gustavo Petro said Wednesday Colombia will sever diplomatic ties with Zionist entity, whose government led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu he described as "genocidal" in its war in Gaza. "Tomorrow (Thursday) diplomatic relations with the state of Zionist entity will be severed... for having a government, for having a president that is genocidal," Petro, a harsh critic of the devastating war against Hamas, told a May Day rally in Bogota.

Netanyahu is Zionist entity's head of gov-

ernment, while the country's president—a role which is largely ceremonial—is Isaac Herzog. On Wednesday, Petro told thousands of supporters that the world cannot accept "genocide, the extermination of an entire people." "If Palestine dies, humanity dies," he said to loud applause from the crowd, some of whom flew pro-Palestinian banners.

"We greatly appreciate the position of Colombian President Gustavo Petro... which we consider a victory for the sacrifices of our people and their just cause," the Islamist group said in a statement, urging other Latin American countries to follow suit. The Confederation of Jewish Communities of Colombia issued a statement mindful of the "brotherly" relations the country has had with Zionist entity dating back to 1953. In October, days after the start of the war, Zionist entity announced it was "halting security exports"

(\$148) mobile phone. A stranger earlier gifted the siblings another phone. "The heat is terrible because the ceiling is so low," the mother said, pointing to the corrugated iron roofing that she has partly covered with a scrap of plywood to keep the heat at bay. "We have to step outside from time to time just to be able to breathe."

But she does not allow her children to stay out too long because the blazing sun is not the only danger in Baseco. "Out of nowhere youths armed with broken bottles would be going at each other after getting high sniffing glue," she said. The state weather service has warned the extreme heat will persist for the next two weeks at least, meaning the students could be mostly stuck at home before the school year ends on May 31. Mangampo said she has her children bathe twice daily, once in the morning and a second before bedtime. "It's so hot they have difficulty falling asleep," Mangampo said.

Iraq students rally for Gaza and US campus protests

BAGHDAD: Dozens of Iraqi university students and professors rallied Thursday at a Baghdad campus in solidarity with Gaza and pro-Palestinian protests at US universities, AFP correspondents said. Iraqi Education Minister Naeem Al-Aboudi earlier this week expressed his support for the "free voices in universities" around the world, and called for protests in solidarity with the embattled Gaza Strip. Students at Al-Nahrain University waved the Palestinian and Iraqi flags.

"With all that is happening to our people in Gaza... of course I must be among the first to come to raise our voice," student Aya Kader, 20, said. "It is very positive to see the Palestinian flag being waved at American universities," she said.

Weeks-long pro-Palestinian protests that have swept campuses across

the United States have "encouraged us", she added. Students and professors also carried banners calling for a "free Palestine", with some wearing the keffiyeh scarf that has long been a symbol of the Palestinian cause.

"We are here to tell them to stop the killing and to thank the free voices around the world," said Professor Jomaa Salman, head of the engineering faculty. "If the storming of Columbia University had happened in another country, especially in a third world country, they would have moved heaven on earth." The Iraqi embassy in Washington called Wednesday for "restraint, calm, respect for human rights and peaceful expression" as unrest over Zionist entity's war in Gaza simmered on US campuses.

Iraq does not recognize Zionist entity while all Iraqi political factions support the Palestinian people. In 2019, popular protests broke out in Iraq against the ruling establishment, and a security crackdown left more than 600 people killed.

The United States is Zionist entity's largest military supplier. Student

to Colombia after Petro accused Zionist entity Defense Minister Yoav Gallant of using language about the people of Gaza similar to what the "Nazis said of the Jews."P

Bogota subsequently demanded that Zionist entity's envoy leave the South American country. Petro, Colombia's first leftist president has also asserted that "democratic peoples cannot allow Nazism to reestablish itself in international politics."

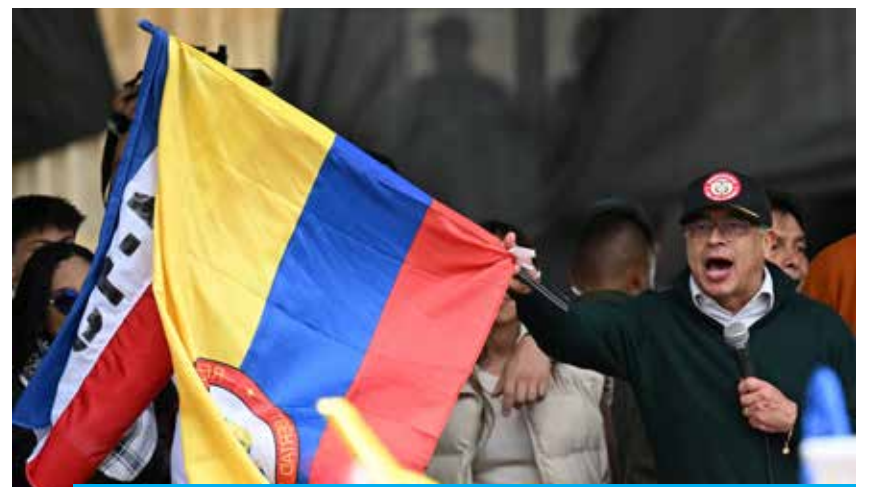
In February, he suspended Zionist entity weapons purchases after dozens of people died in a scramble for food aid in the war-torn Gaza Strip—an event he said was "called genocide and recalls the Holocaust." Colombia's armed forces, engaged in a decades-long conflict with leftist guerrillas, right-wing paramilitaries and drug cartels, use Zionist entity-made weapons and aircraft. The country has a history of strong diplomatic and military relations with Zionist entity and the United States. — AFP



BAGHDAD: Iraqi university students and professors carrying Palestinian flags rally at Al-Nahrain University in Baghdad on May 2, 2024 in solidarity with Gaza and pro-Palestinian protests at US universities. — AFP

protesters on American campuses say they are expressing solidarity with Palestinians in the war-devastated Gaza Strip, prompting large-scale police arrests. Zionist

entity's massive offensive on Gaza has killed at least 34,596 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory. — AFP



BOGOTA: Colombian President Gustavo Petro waves a national flag as he delivers a speech during a May Day (Labor Day) rally in Bogota on May 1, 2024.— AFP

International

Protesters try to stop UK migrant removals from temporary shelter

Govt begins detaining people before controversial deportation to Rwanda

LONDON: Protesters in London tried Thursday to prevent the removal of migrants from their temporary accommodation, as the UK government began detaining people before controversial deportation flights to Rwanda start. Dozens of people surrounded a bus believed to be taking asylum seekers from a hotel in the Peckham area of the British capital to an accommodation barge moored off the south coast of England.

Several other protests have been held or are planned around the country to stop immigration officers detaining migrants. The UK interior ministry this week confirmed that it has begun detaining asylum seekers before planned deportation to Rwanda, after parliament passed a law declaring it a safe country. Several migrants were seen in photos and video footage released by the ministry being taken away in handcuffs by immigration officers.

The ministry has not confirmed how many people have been held so far, but the government says it expects Rwanda to take 5,700 migrants this year. The protests come after official figures published on Thursday showed that 711 people were brought ashore the previous day after trying to cross the Channel in small boats from northern France. The number is the highest on a single day so far this year and comes even as London insists that its plan

to "stop the boats" is working, notably through the controversial Rwanda deportation scheme. The new high is more than the previous 2024 single-day record of 534 on April 14.

It takes the total number of migrants who have made the Channel crossing so far this year to 8,278 -- up more than a quarter on the same period in 2023. The highest-ever single-day arrivals figure was 1,295 and recorded on August 22, 2022.

French police on Wednesday said they had rescued 66 people after their boat ran into trouble off the coastal town of Dieppe. UK police have made a number of arrests as part of an investigation into the deaths of five people whose boat got into difficulties off the French coast on April 23.

Migration—both regular and irregular—has been a major political issue in the UK, given the government's promise to tighten the country's borders after leaving the European Union.

But doing so has proved harder to implement, with the Conservative government desperate to trumpet successes as it goes into local elections on Thursday and a general election later this year.

Some 122,600 people have been intercepted in British waters and brought ashore since the UK began recording arrivals in 2018. — AFP



BEIRUT, Lebanon: Lebanon's Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri (right) meets with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen (L) and Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides (center) in Beirut on May 2, 2024. — AFP

Court orders suspect to be held over London sword attack

LONDON: A Spanish-Brazilian national was remanded in custody on Thursday by a London magistrates' court on murder and other charges, following a sword attack in the city which killed a 14-year-old boy. Marcus Arduini Monzo is accused of a violent rampage in a northeastern suburb of the British capital on Tuesday using a Samurai-type sword which left teenager Daniel Anjorin dead and wounded four others.

Monzo, 36, allegedly attacked Anjorin while the teen walked to school, in a crime that has caused shock in the nation. He is also accused of seriously injuring two police officers, both of whom required surgery and remain in hospital. One, a woman, suffered severe injuries to her arm and nearly lost a hand, London's Metropolitan Police said.

It charged Monzo, of east London, on Wednesday with murder, two counts of attempted murder and several other charges. He appeared at Westminster Magistrates' Court on Thursday morning wearing a grey sweatshirt and grey tracksuit bottoms, and holding his left arm across his chest.

Chief Magistrate Paul Goldspring remanded him in custody to appear at London's Old Bailey court on Tuesday if a hearing is not available on Friday. The horror rampage unfolded just before 7 am (0600 GMT) on Tuesday when the accused is alleged to have crashed a van into a house fence, hitting a 33-year-old man before allegedly stabbing him in the neck. He is then alleged to have attacked a 35-year-old man inside a nearby property, causing lacerations to his arm, before Anjorin was killed. — AFP

US accuses Russia of using 'chemical weapon' in Ukraine

WASHINGTON: The US State Department accused Russia Wednesday of having used a chemical weapon against Ukrainian forces in violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, while also announcing fresh sanctions against Moscow.

In addition to the chemical agent chloropicrin, Russia also used "riot control agents (tear gas) as a method of warfare in Ukraine, also in violation of the CWC," the department said in a factsheet.

"The use of such chemicals is not an isolated incident, and is probably driven by Russian forces' desire to dislodge Ukrainian forces from fortified positions and achieve tactical gains on the battlefield," the State Department said. Meanwhile the US Treasury Department announced sweeping sanctions aimed at crippling Russia's military and industrial capabilities—including targeting nearly 300 entities in Russia, China and other countries accused of supporting President Vladimir Putin's invasion.

The sanctions are meant to punish companies that help Moscow acquire weapons for its war in Ukraine. They also target Russian government entities and companies involved in the country's chemical and biological weapons programs.

Russia said Thursday it had captured another village in eastern Ukraine, where Moscow's forces have been making advances for days. Russia is rushing to advance against struggling Ukrainian forces ahead of the long-awaited arrival of the bulk of US weapons to the front for Kyiv's outgunned troops.

Moscow's defense ministry said troops had "fully



LVIV, Ukraine: A local resident visits the Lychakiv cemetery in Lviv on May 2, 2024, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

liberated the settlement of Berdychi."

Kyiv said it had retreated from the village, northwest of the Moscow-held town of Avdiivka, over the weekend. Berdychi—which lies some 12 kilometers (7 miles) from Avdiivka—is the latest in a string of tiny eastern villages Russia has claimed in recent weeks. Moscow has made some gains in the area since capturing Avdiivka in February after some of the most brutal battles in its more than two-year offensive. Ukraine said in February it had established defensive lines in Berdychi after the fall of the nearby village of Lastochkyne.

Russia has said it no longer possesses a military

chemical arsenal, but the country faces pressure for more transparency over the alleged use of toxic weapons. According to the US National Institutes of Health, the chemical chloropicrin is used both as a warfare agent and pesticide. If inhaled, it poses a health risk.

"Today's actions will further disrupt and degrade Russia's war efforts by going after its military industrial base and the evasion networks that help supply it," Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in a statement. The accusations and sanctions come a week after US President Joe Biden signed a much-delayed bill to provide new funding for Ukraine as Kyiv's military struggles to hold back Russian advances. — AFP

Gaza devastation unseen since...

Continued from Page 1

Before Haniyeh's comments on Thursday, Hamas officials had given it a generally negative reception. Senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan told AFP late Wednesday that the movement's position on the proposal was "negative" for the time being. Another senior Hamas official, Suhail Al-Hindi, said the group's aim remained an "end to this war" — a goal at odds with the stated position of Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. But the group has come under intense pressure from mediators to accept the latest offer.

Regardless of whether a truce is reached, Netanyahu has vowed to send Zionist ground troops into Rafah, despite US opposition to any operation that fails to provide protection for the 1.5 million civilians sheltering in Gaza's southernmost city. "We will do what is necessary to win and overcome our enemy, including in Rafah," he pledged at the start of cabinet meeting Thursday.

Separately, Netanyahu told a delegation of Holocaust survivors that Jews should welcome but not expect non-Jewish support and should be ready to "stand alone" if necessary. "If it is possible to recruit

Gentiles, that's good. But if we don't protect ourselves, no one will protect us," he told the group at his office.

In response to US pressure, the Zionist entity has allowed increased aid deliveries into Gaza in recent days, including through a reopened crossing. But UN aid chief Martin Griffiths said that "improvements in bringing more aid into Gaza" cannot be used "to prepare for or justify a full-blown military assault on Rafah".

In south Gaza's largest city Khan Yunis, foreign aid and borrowed equipment helped to "almost completely" restore the emergency department at Nasser Medical Complex, said its director Atef Al-Hout. Intense fighting raged in mid-February around the hospital, which Zionist tanks and armored vehicles later surrounded. Witnesses and an AFP correspondent reported air strikes on Khan Yunis Thursday and shelling in the Rafah area, while fighters and Zionist troops battled in Gaza City to the north.

In north Gaza, workers unloaded aid at Kamal Adwan Hospital where Alaa Al-Nadi's son lay motionless in the intensive care unit, his head almost completely swathed in bandages. Nadi, who was also wounded in the strike, said she feared the hospital's power might go out, cutting the boy's oxygen and killing him. "I call on the world to transfer my son for treatment abroad. He is in a very bad condition," she said, breaking down in tears. — AFP

EU aid bolstering Lebanese security agencies so they can curb migration to Europe "could result in Syrians resorting to even longer and more dangerous routes", they added. Lebanon has also faced nearly seven months of border clashes between its powerful, Iran-backed movement Hezbollah and the Zionist entity that flared after the Zionist-Hamas war began in October.

Lebanon remains essentially leaderless, without a president and headed by a caretaker government with limited powers amid deadlock between entrenched political barons. Von der Leyen was accompanied by Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides. Cyprus, the EU's easternmost member, is less than 200 km from Lebanon and Syria, and wants to curb migrant boat departures from Lebanon towards its shores.

Nicosia says the Zionist-Hamas war has weakened Beirut's efforts to monitor its territorial waters. "I am very confident that this package announced today will enhance the capacity of Lebanese authority to handle various challenges including controlling land and maritime borders, ensuring the safety of its citizens, fight against people smuggling and continue their fight against terrorism," Christodoulides said. — AFP

Biden says 'order must prevail' amid...

Continued from Page 1

"We are not an authoritarian nation where we silence people or squash dissent," Biden, who has faced criticism from all sides of the political spectrum over the demonstrations, said in a televised statement from the White House. "But neither are we a lawless country. We're a civil society, and order must prevail," he added.

Earlier, UCLA students clad in white helmets linked arms and formed a line facing off against officers, who were detaining protesters and leading them away. Police used flashbangs to disperse the crowds gathered outside the encampment who chanted "Let them go!" as helicopters hovered overhead.

Officers blocked stairs accessing the site, with students dressed in yellow jackets and serving as medics telling AFP they were being largely prevented from reaching the area. In another part of the encampment, students carrying umbrellas, helmets and plastic shields squared off against police in mostly tense silence, with sporadic chants of "Free Palestine!" and "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free!"

The large police presence, including LAPD and California Highway Patrol officers, came after law enforcement were criticized for being slow to act during violent clashes late Tuesday when counter-protesters attacked an encampment of pro-Palestinian students. UCLA said classes would be remote on Thursday and Friday due to the "emergency on campus", and warned students to avoid the protest area.

Demonstrators have gathered on at least 40 US university campuses since last month, often erecting tent camps to protest the soaring death

toll in the Gaza Strip. Officers detained several people at Fordham University in New York and cleared a protest set up inside a school building, officials said. At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, protesters dug in, blocking an avenue near the center of the campus in Cambridge during the height of Wednesday afternoon's rush hour commute.

The University of Texas at Dallas saw police remove an encampment and arrest at least 17 people for "criminal trespass," the school said. Police said about 300 arrests were made at Columbia and another New York university. New York Mayor Eric Adams blamed "outside agitators" for ratcheting up tensions. Columbia students have denied outsiders were involved.

Like university leaders, Biden's administration has also tried to walk the fine line between free speech and complaints of intimidation. Republicans have accused him of being soft on what they say is "anti-Semitic" sentiment among the protesters, while he faces widespread opposition in his own party for his strong support for the Zionist entity's war on Gaza.

"There should be no place on any campus, no place in America for anti-Semitism, or threats of violence against Jewish students," Biden said Thursday. "There is no place for hate speech or violence of any kind, whether it's anti-Semitism, Islamophobia or discrimination against Arab Americans or Palestinian Americans," he said. "It's simply wrong."

Biden's Republican election rival Donald Trump, meanwhile, has repeatedly praised the police response and called for a full crackdown, denouncing "radical left lunatics" in comments from the New York courthouse where he is on trial over a hush money scheme. "To every college president, I say remove the encampments immediately, vanquish the radicals and take back our campuses for all of the normal students," he told a rally in Wisconsin on Wednesday. — AFP

EU vows \$1bn for Lebanon, urges...

Continued from Page 1

Lebanon says it currently hosts around two million people from neighboring Syria — the world's highest number of refugees per capita — with almost 785,000 registered with the United Nations. "We understand the challenges that Lebanon faces with hosting Syrian refugees and other displaced persons," said von der Leyen, adding the EU had supported Lebanon with 2.6 billion euros to host them.

The Syria war erupted in 2011 after the government repressed peaceful pro-democracy protests and has killed more than half a million people and displaced around half of the pre-war population. Eight rights groups including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch warned before von der Leyen's Beirut visit that Syria was not safe for returns. EU assistance "geared to enabling or incentivizing returns to Syria risks resulting in forced returns of refugees", a statement said.

Schools, offices shut as heavy...

Continued from Page 1

dead, blocked major roads for days and forced the cancellation of more than 2,000 flights. On Thursday, little traffic was seen on Dubai's normally heavy, six-lane highways, and cars were abandoned on

flooded roads near the sprawling Ibn Battuta mall.

Trucks pumping water were stationed in several flooded areas, as Dubai's drainage is often unable to cope with large-scale rainfall. Last month's downpour, which also killed 21 people in neighboring Oman, was the heaviest in the UAE, since records began in 1949. World Weather Attribution, a network of scientists that assesses the role of climate change in extreme weather events, found the deluge was "most likely" exacerbated by global warming caused by burning fossil fuels. — AFP

International

Manila summons China envoy over water cannon incident

Two Philippine vessels were hit during a patrol in South China Sea

MANILA: Manila summoned a senior Chinese envoy on Thursday to protest a water cannon incident that damaged two Philippine vessels during a patrol in the South China Sea. A coast guard vessel and another government boat were damaged in the April 30 incident near the disputed Scarborough Shoal, according to the Philippines' foreign ministry.

Manila and Beijing have a long history of territorial disputes in the South China Sea, and the neighbors have been involved in several maritime incidents in recent months as they assert their rival claims in the strategic waterway. The latest, near the China-controlled Scarborough Shoal, occurred during a mission to resupply Filipino fishermen.

Zhou Zhiyong, the number two official at the Chinese embassy, was summoned by Manila over "the harassment, ramming, swarming, shadowing and blocking, dangerous manoeuvres, use of water cannons, and other aggressive actions of China Coast Guard and Chinese Maritime Militia vessels", according to a statement from the foreign ministry. "China's aggressive actions, particularly its water cannon use, caused damage" to the Philippines' vessels, the ministry added, demanding that the Chinese boats immediately leave the shoal and its vicinity.

The Philippines said the pressure in Tuesday's water cannon incident was far more powerful than

anything previously used, and that it tore or bent metal sections and equipment on the Philippine vessels. Thursday's diplomatic protest was the 20th lodged by Manila this year, and 153rd since President Ferdinand Marcos came to power in mid-2022, the foreign ministry said.

The Chinese embassy did not immediately respond to a request for comment. China's coast guard had previously said it "expelled" the two Philippine ships from its waters near Huangyan Island, the Chinese name for Scarborough Shoal. The shoal has been a flashpoint between the two countries since China seized it from the Philippines in 2012.

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. The triangular chain of reefs and rocks that make up Scarborough Shoal lies 240 kilometers (150 miles) west of the Philippines' main island of Luzon and nearly 900 kilometers from Hainan, the nearest major Chinese land mass. Since seizing the shoal, Beijing has deployed its coast guard and other vessels that Manila says harass Philippine ships and prevent its fishermen from accessing the rich lagoon.

The latest incident came as the Philippines and the United States held a major annual military ex-



AT SEA, Undefined: The Philippines Coast Guard ship BRP Bagacay (center) being hit by water cannon from Chinese coast guard vessels near the Chinese-controlled Scarborough shoal in disputed waters of the South China Sea. - AFP

ercise that has infuriated Beijing. Manila and Washington have a mutual defense treaty and recent confrontations between Philippine and Chinese vessels have fuelled speculation of what would trigger it.

President Marcos said last month that US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin had given assurances that the treaty would be invoked if another "foreign power" killed a Filipino soldier. - AFP

Death toll from south China road crash rises to 48

BEIJING: The death toll from a highway collapse in southern China's Guangdong province has risen to 48, local officials said Thursday, as adverse conditions complicated rescue efforts. Heavy rains caused a stretch of road running from Meizhou city towards Dabu county to cave in at around 2:10 am on Wednesday (18:10 GMT Tuesday), according to state news agency Xinhua.

Over 20 vehicles careened into the nearly 18-metre-long (60-foot) gash in the tarmac and plummeted down the steep slope below. Guangdong, a densely populated industrial powerhouse, has been hit by a string of disasters attributed to extreme weather events in recent weeks.

The storms have been much heavier than expected this time of year and have been linked to climate change. China is the biggest emitter of the greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change but has pledged to reduce emissions to net zero by 2060.

The highway collapse had caused the deaths of 48 people as of 2 pm on Thursday. Ma Zhengyong, the secretary of Meizhou's Communist Party committee, said at a press briefing. The toll was up from 36 people on Thursday morning. "In addition, there are three people whose DNA is undergoing further comparison and confirmation," Ma said. It was not immediately clear whether those three victims were included in the toll of 48. A further 30 people were injured, with one in a

"severe" condition and the rest stable, said Liu Lebin, the deputy party secretary of Meizhou's health bureau.

Footage by state broadcaster CCTV showed excavators digging through the muddy hillside below the collapsed road. Nearby, a crane lifted charred, wrecked vehicles onto a lorry as people watched from behind a cordon. State media called the road collapse a "natural geological disaster" caused by the "impact of persistent heavy rain". President Xi Jinping ordered officials to "go all-out in on-site rescue work and treatment of the injured, and arrange for the management of risks and hidden dangers in a timely manner", CCTV said on Thursday. A city official said adverse weather conditions, the risk of secondary disasters and the large number of trapped, burned and buried vehicles were complicating rescue and recovery efforts.

Over 570 people have been dispatched to help with the rescue operation, the official added. The provincial government has "mobilized elite specialized forces and gone all out to carry out... search and rescue", according to Xinhua. An official notice on Wednesday advised that part of the S12 highway was closed in both directions, requiring detours.

Parts of central and eastern Guangdong have received up to 600 millimetres of rain in the last 10 days, three times the amount normally expected at this time of year, the national weather office said Thursday. Up to 120 millimetres more rain was forecast for the province's southwestern areas on Thursday, alongside further downpours across southern China until Sunday. The conditions "raise the risk of disasters, especially geological disasters, which have a certain lag time", the weather office said. The emergency management ministry also warned that persistent rain would make such disasters more likely. - AFP



MEIZHOU, China: This photo taken on May 1, 2024 shows an aerial view of a collapsed section of a highway near Meizhou, in southern China's Guangdong province. - AFP

itary technology like drones, artificial intelligence and hypersonic missiles.

Participation would be a sea change for New Zealand, which although a member of the US-led Five Eyes intelligence sharing network, has pursued an independent foreign policy and depends heavily on China for trade. Peters on Wednesday ruled out New Zealand quickly joining the AUKUS pact but argued his country should consider taking part when the time comes.

"It would be utterly irresponsible for any government of any stripe to not consider whether collaborating with like-minded partners on advances in technology is in our national interest," he said.

Canberra, London and Washington have also held talks with Japan and South Korea on taking part in AUKUS pillar two, and appear further along in the process than New Zealand.

Carr is known as a vocal supporter of close political and trade ties with China, the world's second-largest economy after the United States. After leaving office he was director of the Australia-China Relations Institute, a part of the University of Technology Sydney which today takes funding from a range of companies that do business with or in China, including Beijing's state-owned China Construction Bank. Carr, like the Chinese government, has also been a fierce critic of

AUKUS, particularly pillar one of the agreement, which is focused on supplying Australia with nuclear-powered conventionally armed submarines.

Last month, Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi said the three-way agreement "runs counter" to a South Pacific treaty banning nuclear weapons in the region. Carr claimed in a statement Thursday that "Peters is trying to sell New Zealanders a reversal of their non-nuclear principles" by wanting to take part in the AUKUS pact. New Zealand has a firm no-nuclear policy dating back to the 1980s.

However, no one in the New Zealand government, Canberra, London or Washington has suggested Wellington would play any part in the nuclear submarine project. Peters later said in parliament - where he enjoys legal privileges - that he stood by the remarks.

His office said late Thursday that "the Minister will respond if he receives formal notification of any such (legal) action". New Zealand opposition leader and former prime minister Chris Hipkins called on Peters to resign. "Winston Peters has once again embarrassed New Zealand by making potentially defamatory allegations about a senior and respected leader from our closest ally," Hipkins said. "The Prime Minister needs to show some leadership and stand him down immediately." - AFP



MAI MAHIU, Kenya: A woman walks in an area full of damaged trees, mud and debris carried by water following flash floods and landslides in Mai Mahiu. - AFP

Kenya floods death toll rises to 188 as rains persist

NAIROBI: The number of people who have lost their lives in devastating floods in Kenya since March has risen to 188, with dozens still missing, the interior ministry said on Thursday. Torrential rains in Kenya and other countries in East Africa have caused deadly havoc, with floods and landslides forcing people from their homes, destroying roads, bridges and other infrastructure.

"As a result, the country has regrettably recorded 188 fatalities due to severe weather conditions," the ministry said in a statement. It added that 125 people had been reported injured and 90 people were currently missing, while 165,000 have been displaced.

On Wednesday, nearly 100 tourists were among people marooned after a river overflowed in Kenya's famed Maasai Mara wildlife reserve following a heavy downpour. The ministry said rescuers had successfully evacuated 90 people by ground and air in the Masai Mara, where lodges and safari camps were flooded after the River Talek overflowed.

The area is currently inaccessible with bridges washed away. Narok West sub-county administrator Stephen Nakola told AFP, adding that about 50 camps in the reserve have been affected, putting more than 500 locals temporarily out of work. There are no fatalities but communities living around the area have been forced to move away. "Accessing the Mara is now a nightmare and the people stuck there are really worried, they don't have an exit route," Nakola said, adding that waterborne diseases were likely to emerge.

"I am worried that the situation could get worse because the rains are still on." In the deadliest single incident in Kenya, dozens of villagers were killed when a dam burst on Monday near Mai Mahiu in the Rift Valley, about 60 kilometers (40 miles) north of the capital, Nairobi. The interior ministry said 52 bodies had been recovered and 51 people were still missing after the dam disaster. - AFP

Australia's former top diplomat to sue N Zealand FM

WELLINGTON: Australia's former top diplomat Bob Carr will sue New Zealand's foreign minister over incendiary allegations about the closeness of his ties to China, his office said Thursday. New Zealand Foreign Minister Winston Peters made several allegations against Carr in a radio interview, which the Australian ex-diplomat alleged were defamatory.

"He is indeed taking legal action," an aide to Carr told AFP. Due to Australia and New Zealand's punitive defamation laws, media outlets that had published or broadcasted Peters' remarks have since removed them from their websites and social media feeds. His verbal volley came amid an increasingly fractious debate over New Zealand's potential participation in a defense technology pact with Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. Wellington is studying whether to take part in the so-called "pillar two" of the AUKUS agreement, which focuses on developing advanced mil-

News in Brief

Kenya names new defense chief

NAIROBI: Kenyan President William Ruto on Thursday named Charles Muriu Kahariri as defence chief after the death of his predecessor in a helicopter crash. Kahariri replaces Francis Omondi Ogolla who was among 10 military officers killed when their chopper went down in a remote area of northwestern Kenya on April 18. Kahariri had previously served as deputy to Ogolla, 62, who had been Chief of Defense Forces for a year and was about to mark 40 years of military service. The promotion of Kahariri to the defense chief post and the rank of general was among several appointments Ruto announced. - AFP

29 killed in Burundi floods: UN

NAIROBI: At least 29 people have died and tens of thousands displaced in Burundi since the start of the rainy season in September last year, the United Nations said. Burundi, which the UN says is one of the 20 countries most vulnerable to climate change, has been pelted by almost nonstop rains for months, exacerbated by the El Nino weather pattern. East Africa has been experiencing torrential downpours in recent weeks that have devastated parts of the region, particularly Kenya and Tanzania, and cost several hundred lives. Burundi's main city of Bujumbura, on the northeastern shore of Lake Tanganyika, has seen several neighborhoods flooded and roads and bridges destroyed. - AFP

Germany busts scam call center

FRANKFURT: Germany said Thursday that police had busted what was probably Europe's largest network of fraudulent call centers, responsible for thousands of calls a day trying to scam people. An international police operation involving officers from Germany, Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo and Lebanon raided 12 call centers and detained 21 people on April 18. Europol said in a separate statement. Searches also took place in Serbia, German authorities said. The complex investigation dubbed Operation Pandora "successfully uncovered what is probably the largest call centre fraud scheme in Europe," said Thomas Strobl, the interior minister of the German state of Baden-Wuerttemberg.

France to probe sexual abuse

PARIS: The French parliament on Thursday agreed to create a commission of inquiry to investigate sexual and gender-based violence in cinema and other cultural sectors after several recent allegations. The National Assembly, or lower house, unanimously agreed to set up the commission demanded by actor Judith Godrèche in a speech to the upper house, the Senate, in February. The 52-year-old actor and director has become a key figure in France's MeToo movement since accusing directors Benoit Jacquot and Jacques Doillon of sexually assaulting her when she was a teenager. Both have denied the allegations. - AFP

Japan navy choppers collided

TOKYO: Two military helicopters with eight people on board that crashed last month collided with one another, Japanese officials said Thursday citing analysis of flight recorder data. Seven of the crew members on the Japanese navy choppers remain unaccounted for since the April 20 crash, with one confirmed dead. "Analysis of flight recorders show that...the two helicopters recorded the same things at the same time at the same place - same latitude and longitude - which means it was a collision." Defence Minister Minoru Kihara told reporters. "We didn't find data that show any abnormality of the aircrafts," he said, adding that training flights using the same type of helicopter would resume on Friday. - AFP

FRIDAY, MAY 3, 2024

OECD lifts 2024 growth forecasts

US, emerging economies drive growth as Europe lags behind

PARIS: The OECD raised its global economic growth forecast for 2024 on Thursday, driven by strong performances in the United States and emerging countries while Europe lags behind. The world economy is expected to expand by 3.1 percent this year, up from a previous projection in February of 2.9 percent, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

"Cautious optimism has begun to take hold in the global economy, despite modest growth and the persistent shadow of geopolitical risks," OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann said in the quarterly report. But Lombardelli noted that "this recovery is unfolding differently across regions." The US economy—the world's biggest—is now expected to expand 2.6 percent in 2024, up from the 2.1 percent previously expected, and faster than last year's 2.5 percent.

The OECD also raised its forecast for the second biggest economy, China, to 4.9 percent from 4.7 percent previously, thanks notably to an expansionary budgetary policy. But the OECD expects timid growth of 0.7 percent in the eurozone, slightly better than the 0.6 percent previously expected.

It anticipates a slight recovery to 1.5 percent in 2025, compared to the 1.3 percent expected in February, thanks to a recovery in domestic demand. "The global economy has proved resilient, inflation has declined within sight of central bank targets, and risks to the outlook are becoming more balanced," said OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann.

Central banks worldwide raised interest rates in efforts to combat inflation, which rose after countries emerged from COVID lockdowns and soared further following Russia's assault on Ukraine in 2022.

The US Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank have frozen their rates and markets are hoping to see cuts in the coming months as inflation has eased. But the Fed is expected to make its cuts later than previously thought due to the resilience of the US economy and an uptick in consumer prices.

The US central bank held its interest rate at a 23-year high on Wednesday, with Fed chairman Jerome Powell saying that it will "take longer than previously expected" to have confidence that inflation is on track to meet the institution's two-percent target.

The OECD warned that "high geopolitical tensions, particularly in the Middle East, could disrupt energy and financial markets, causing inflation to



NEW YORK: A UPS truck driver maneuvers his delivery truck through Times Square in the Manhattan borough of New York on May 1, 2024. — AFP

spike and growth to falter." "Policy action needs to ensure macroeconomic stability and improve medium-term growth prospects," Cormann said.

"Monetary policy should remain prudent, with scope to lower policy interest rates as inflation declines," he said. He added that "fiscal policy needs to address rising pressures to debt sustainability, and policy reforms should boost innovation, investment and opportunities in the labor market particularly

for women, young people and older workers."

The OECD report said a recovery in household incomes, tight labor markets and the expected interest rate cuts will help to "generate a gradual rebound." But it warned that "the mixed macroeconomic landscape is expected to persist, with inflation and interest rates declining at differing paces, and differing needs for fiscal consolidation." The OECD cut its 2024 growth forecast for Germany,

Europe's largest economy, to 0.2 percent from 0.3 percent previously.

France, the eurozone's second biggest economy, is expected to post 0.7 percent growth, up from 0.6 percent in a previous forecast, lifted by consumer spending. In Britain, the economy is seen growing 0.4 percent in 2024 and 1.0 percent in 2025, slower than what was expected in February, which the OECD blamed on persistent inflation. — AFP

France to 'fight' TotalEnergies' New York listing

PARIS: France will "fight" to keep oil and gas giant TotalEnergies from shifting its main stock market listing to New York, French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said Thursday.

"I'm here to make sure that doesn't happen," Le Maire told news channel BFM. "Is the overriding interest of the nation to keep Total's headquarters in France and its main stock market listing in France? Yes, and so I will fight for that," he added. TotalEnergies CEO Patrick Pouyanne told Bloomberg last week he was thinking about moving the listing across the Atlantic, as North American institutional investors come close to making up a majority of shareholders.

He said Europe's reticence at his strategy of



French energy group TotalEnergies CEO Patrick Pouyanne attends a panel during the World Economic Forum Special Meeting in Riyadh on April 28, 2024. — AFP

continuing to invest in fossil fuels to finance a transition to lower-carbon forms of energy was one reason for the potential move. "We need Total. I've had the opportunity several times to say how

much of an advantage it is for France to have a major oil company like Total" domiciled on its soil, Le Maire said Thursday.

He recalled that the group had set a ceiling of two euros (\$2.14) per litre on petrol when energy prices soared in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. "The best way" to meet TotalEnergies' financing needs would be to finally move forward with a long-discussed harmonization of capital markets across the European Union, Le Maire added.

President Emmanuel Macron called for the same thing last week in a landmark European policy speech, saying it would be the best way to direct Europeans' massive savings pot into financing for the continent's green and digital transitions. TotalEnergies shares already trade in London and New York with secondary listings. Its North American institutional shareholder base held 48 percent of the stock in 2023, compared with just 34 percent for Europe when counting out Britain—inverting the proportions seen a decade ago. Around 78 percent of the group's shares are held by institutional investors. — AFP

Shell logs 'strong' Q1 as earnings fall but top expectations

LONDON: British oil and gas giant Shell announced Thursday that first-quarter earnings fell but beat expectations in a "strong" performance, and unveiled another bumper stock buyback. Adjusted earnings sank almost a fifth to \$7.7 billion from a year earlier but this smashed market expectations of \$6.5 billion, while cash flow from operating activities hit \$13.3 billion. Adjusted profit stood at \$9.6 billion a year earlier when Shell saw a derivative inflow that was not repeated in the first quarter of 2024 due to lower prices in commodity derivatives, according to the company.

The energy major, which is investing heavily in renewables, insisted it remained on track to become a net zero emissions company by 2050, but its results sparked fresh anger from the green lobby.

Shell also unveiled a fresh \$3.5-billion stock buyback and forecast capital expenditure this year would reach between \$22 billion and \$24 billion, it added in a results statement. "Shell delivered another quarter of strong operational and financial performance, demonstrating our continued focus on delivering more value with less emissions," said chief executive Wael Sawan.

"We continue to deliver on our... targets, giving us the confidence to commence another \$3.5-billion buyback program for the next three months," Thursday's news sent its share price one percent higher in late morning deals on the rising London stock market. Shell added that net profit, or profit after taxation, declined about 15 percent to \$7.4 billion in the reporting period. Revenues slid 16 percent to \$74.7 billion following a sharp drop in gas prices, which had spiked following key producer Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Shell had already warned last month that it expected lower natural gas sales in the first quarter after a particularly strong performance in the final three months of 2023.

"Shell's produced yet another quarter of staggering cash flows," said Derren Nathan, head of equity research at stockbroker Hargreaves Lansdown, in response to the results.

"Higher margins and uptime at its refineries more than offset lower earnings in the upstream and integrated gas divisions. "The strong cash generation is enabling Shell to reduce debt, reward shareholders and continue investing into the business."

The company was, however, slammed by climate campaigners over its huge profit from fossil fuels.

"On a day where climate leaders are negotiating in Abu Dhabi how to help the world's poorest meet the skyrocketing costs of climate loss and damage, Shell continues to bank billions from flogging the fuels that are driving the crisis," said Charlie Kronick, senior climate advisor at Greenpeace UK.

"With countries experiencing the worst impacts of climate change among those least responsible for it, the case for making polluters pay for the damage their industry is causing could not be clearer." — AFP

UNDP: Palestinian GDP falling 27% on 7 months of war

WASHINGTON: The Palestinian economy is estimated to shrink by 26.9 percent after seven months of war, with the poverty rate surging, said a new United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) assessment released Thursday.

The estimates, released with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, also found that the Palestinian poverty rate will continue climbing to 58.4 percent.

Much of Gaza has been reduced to a grey landscape of rubble. "Every additional day that this war continues is exacting huge and compounding costs to Gazans and all Palestinians," said UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner in a statement. "These new figures warn that the suffering in Gaza will not end when the war does," he added. He warned of a "serious development crisis" stemming from the massive losses over a short span of time. Should the war continue for nine months, poverty is expected to more than double from pre-war levels, while the drop in gross domestic product would reach 29 percent, the UNDP said. A World Bank report published early April said the Zionist entity war has caused damage of around \$18.5 billion to Gaza's critical infrastructure.

This was equivalent to 97 percent of the combined economic output of the West Bank and Gaza in 2022. The interim damage report covers the period from the onset of conflict on Oct 7 to end-January. — AFP

US trade gap wider than anticipated

WASHINGTON: The US trade deficit was wider than analysts anticipated in March—hovering close to the biggest in nearly a year—with exports and imports both declining, according to government data published Thursday. The trade gap came in at \$69.4 billion, narrowing slightly from February's \$69.5 billion figure—which had been revised larger, said the Commerce Department. Analysts had expected a figure of \$69.0 billion, according to Briefing.com.

While consumption has helped to support US trade, economists see trade flows easing ahead with cooler global demand and growth. Elevated interest rates in the United States could also weigh on demand in the country. On Wednesday, the US central bank held rates at a 23-year high to stamp out stubborn inflation. But for now, the "widening of the deficit in the first few months of the year is pointing to ongoing resilient domestic demand" alongside a backdrop of weaker global demand, said economist Rubeeela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics.

She noted a "jump in imports" in the first quarter. For March, exports and imports were both lower.

Exports fell by \$5.3 billion to \$257.6 billion, and imports reced-



WASHINGTON: The US trade deficit was wider than analysts anticipated in March—hovering close to the biggest in nearly a year—with exports and imports both declining, according to government data published Thursday.

ed \$5.4 billion to \$327.0 billion.

In particular, goods exports dropped by \$5.1 billion with a decline seen in capital goods like civilian aircraft, as well as industrial supplies and materials. Meanwhile, imports of goods declined on the back of lower shipments for passenger cars and other consumer goods, data showed.

The slightly smaller deficit between February and March, however, came as an uptick in the services surplus outweighed a larger goods deficit, said the Commerce Department. The goods deficit with China was up \$2.2 billion to \$24.1 billion in March.

Meanwhile, Canada in March posted the largest trade deficit in almost one year—since June 2023 -- as both exports and imports declined, the government statis-

tical agency said Thursday. The Can\$2.3 billion (US\$1.7 billion) deficit follows a downward revised surplus of Can\$476 million the previous month, Statistics Canada said in a news release. Exports declined 5.3 percent, erasing almost all of the gains made in February, while imports were down 1.2 percent, the agency said.

Exports of unwrought gold plunged following a large number of shipments in February, while crude oil exports decreased for the fifth time in the past six months. The latter coincided with unplanned shutdowns at refineries in the US Midwest—an important destination for Canadian crude oil. Marine shipments of crude oil to Britain were also lower in March compared with the previous month. — AFP

Business

NBK unveils a new package of services, enhancements on mobile banking app

New features elevate customers' digital experience

KUWAIT: As a trailblazer of digital banking, and keeping with its unwavering dedication to addressing customer feedback and meeting their requirements, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) focuses on adding new products and services to its Mobile Banking App, which accounts for the major share of customers' banking transactions, thanks to the rich digital experience enabling them to manage their accounts, and conveniently and securely conduct their transactions anytime, anywhere, 24/7 without the hassle of visiting branches.

In this context, responding to market trends and customers' needs, NBK has introduced new services as well as enhancements to existing ones on its Mobile Banking App, which included the following:

Prepaid cashback card

NBK has launched the new NBK 247 Cashback Visa Platinum Prepaid Card offering customers up to 24 percent cashback on their daily purchases, allowing users to turn their daily purchases into a new way of savings.

By transferring their daily spends from their debit card to the new prepaid card, customers get a cashback of 24 percent on streaming services (payment should be done through the streaming app or website and not through any other service provider), 7 percent on Food delivery (only on food delivery apps, not direct orders from restaurants), 4 percent on Bill payments (telecom bills that are paid through the app or website of the telecom companies or through any of their branches, and not through any service provider), 2 percent at hospitals, clinics and pharmacies, as well as 2 percent on Grocery, and 0.7 percent on digital payments (made using digital wallets). Customers can apply for the card through NBK Mobile Banking App and once they register the card in the digital wallet, they will be able to use the card immediately.

Quick Send

The Quick Send feature offered by NBK enables customers to send money directly via NBK MOB to receive from any local bank by entering the receiver's name,

mobile number, and the amount to be sent. The receiver gets a link via (SMS) on the mobile. When clicking the link, the receiver has the option to proceed with NBK Mobile Banking App (for NBK customers) or via K-Net and the money will be received immediately. For the first time in Kuwait, customers can send money from the app to multiple recipients.

Load account

The ability to load NBK account using K-Net portal. The amount can be loaded anytime, anywhere, even on weekends and official holidays. If customers would like to load money into their accounts, they can now do so on the K-Net payment gateway through NBK mobile banking application. Customers are only required to choose the desired account in which they would like to top up funds to, along with the desired amount. From there they will be directed to the K-Net portal where they will enter their card details and their account will be loaded successfully.

Contact your relationship manager

NBK Mobile Banking Privilege users will be able to view the name of their Relationship Manager (RM), contact details, and book appointments with them via NBK's mobile banking app. Customers can book appointments by selecting the date and time, during the branch's working hours with few easy taps.

Update Civil ID by PACI

The ability to provide a service where customers are able to update their Civil ID expiry date through Mobile Banking App by the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI). Simply, when their Civil IDs are about to expire or have expired, a banner will be displayed informing the customer that they need to do the update. This will be done after customers allow NBK to get their information from PACI. A Notification will be sent to customers to confirm the transaction is accepted or rejected.

Product nickname

The ability for users to rename NBK



Mohammad Al-Dakheel

- We align with market trends by introducing digital services that exceed customers' expectations.
- For the first time in Kuwait, customers can send money from the app to multiple recipients.
- Adding a new option allowing customers to renew their civil ID quickly and easily.

products including accounts, cards, loans and even beneficiaries. Users can edit the product name at any time or delete it. This enables users to access the product quickly and conduct transactions while on the move. In addition, it makes it easier for them to recognize and refer to the product they renamed as per their preference.

Submit a suggestion

As part of its ongoing efforts to foster continuous communication with customers and engage with their feedback regarding the bank's services, the bank now allows users to submit their suggestions directly through the NBK mobile banking app. This update enables customers to provide input on various aspects such as accounts, cards, loans, payments, and transfers, enhancing the bank's responsiveness to customer needs and preferences.

Secondary prepaid card ordering

Through the NBK Mobile Banking App, NBK customers can request a secondary prepaid card linked to their account. This service enables the primary cardholder to extend credit card benefits to other family members while maintaining full control over spending limits.

National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) remains committed to enriching its customers' digital experience through the NBK Mobile Banking App, by introducing additional

services and implementing features and enhancements designed to meet customer preferences and fulfill their needs. In keeping with its unwavering dedication to addressing customer feedback and meeting their requirements, NBK has introduced a number of enhancements and additions to its NBK Mobile Banking App. These enhancements empower customers to conveniently and securely conduct electronic transactions anytime, anywhere. The following are the new features and services included in the update.

Various enhancements

In addition to these new services, and keeping with the bank's constant endeavors to improve the existing services available on the NBK Mobile Banking App to exceed customers' expectations, users can now view the remaining monthly transfer limit on the form itself. This makes it easy to the users to know how much they have transferred money during the month and how much is remaining to better manage their accounts and transfers on monthly basis.

Enhancements also included 3D Shortcuts, offering a faster way for the users to access their favorite services on the App. In addition to introducing new services, NBK has implemented several enhancements to the NBK Mobile Banking App, further enhancing the electronic experience for its customers. Among these improvements,

customers can now easily add the prepaid cards they issue via the NBK Mobile Banking App to their Apple Wallet at the time of issuance.

Commenting on the launch of the new services and enhancements, Mohammad Al-Dakheel, Head of Mobile Banking, Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait, said, "Our consistent efforts to introduce new features and ongoing enhancements to the NBK Mobile Banking App underscores our dedication to enhancing a banking experience tailored to the genuine needs and aspirations of our customers. This endeavor aligns with our goal of reshaping their lifestyles through a meticulously crafted range of digital services and products, designed with precision and care."

Al-Dakheel added that the enhancements and new services stand as a testament to the bank's deep understanding and awareness of its customers' aspirations. This understanding is reflected in the rising satisfaction rates among customers and the notable increase in the utilization of the NBK Mobile Banking App. "Through the NBK Mobile Banking App, we provide a comprehensive banking experience that empowers our customers digitally and provides them with the latest and most advanced banking services," he noted. "These enhancements come in response to market trends and requirements on the one hand, and to fulfill customers' needs on the other hand, as we strive to elevate our digital services beyond their expectations," he explained.

Through the NBK Mobile Banking App, NBK aims to offer customers a secure platform to conveniently manage their finances at any given moment. This service facilitates a wide range of banking activities, including opening new accounts, monitoring transactions on accounts and credit cards, accessing accumulated NBK Miles and NBK Rewards Program points, settling credit card dues, making payments for electronic bills, updating personal information, and more. Customers can easily download the NBK Mobile Banking App, which is currently available on various platforms including the Apple App Store, Google Play, and Huawei AppGallery.

No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	867	858	868	854	14	23,326,215	-5	-0.58%	0.77%	846	860	13.5	1.70	3.9%	1.03
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	256	254	260	252	8	25,227,417	-3	-1.17%	-5.09%	253	256	14.4	1.22	4.5%	1.29
104	Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait	Banking	235	240	243	231	12	3,024,495	18	8.15%	8.15%	233	244	13.6	0.96	3.6%	0.94
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	163	161	164	160	4	32,258,932	-2	-1.23%	10.55%	160	164	17.0	0.60	3.0%	1.07
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	178	181	181	176	5	8,468,149	3	1.69%	10.49%	176	185	19.0	0.65	3.2%	1.31
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	723	717	728	713	15	51,336,758	-6	-0.83%	7.65%	715	725	21.1	2.10	2.6%	1.15
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	587	588	590	578	12	6,773,393	5	8.58E-03	3.88%	579	593	31.3	2.47	1.3%	1.15
201	Kuwait Investment	Financial Services	178	179	183	176	7	4,323,231	1	0.56%	40.94%	178	287	13.3	0.81	5.6%	2.05
204	National Investments	Financial Services	243	252	257	240	17	6,799,871	7	2.86%	5.44%	248	257	48.5	1.16	11.1%	2.10
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	128	127	131	124	7	27,328,789	-2	-1.55%	20.95%	126	132	NM	0.71	0.0%	0.94
212	Arzan Financial Group	Financial Services	202	203	206	201	5	11,905,465	1	0.50%	-3.33%	202	208	23.2	1.25	1.0%	1.24
222	Aayan Leasing and Investment	Financial Services	172	171	172	168	4	7,194,072	-1	-0.58%	-1.72%	166	171	9.1	1.14	4.4%	1.62
252	Al Imtiaj Investment	Financial Services	49.2	47.0	50.7	46.8	3.9	11,921,305	-2.1	-4.28%	-16.81%	47.0	49.1	NM	0.32	0.0%	1.34
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	218	217	223	216	7	28,109,805	-2	-0.91%	5.85%	214	220	17.8	1.36	1.3%	1.14
404	Salhia Real Estate	Real Estate	434	432	439	430	9	4,773,756	23	5.73%	5.73%	424	444	15.5	1.38	3.3%	0.55
413	Mabaneeh	Real Estate	794	786	794	777	17	7,889,146	2	0.26%	-1.17%	778	799	16.7	1.75	1.7%	0.99
418	The Commercial Real Estate	Real Estate	129	133	137	129	8	22,281,306	3	2.31%	30.39%	129	133	16.4	0.80	3.0%	0.62
501	National Industries	Financial Services	218	214	219	212	7	13,145,757	-4	-1.83%	4.90%	206	217	20.1	0.97	2.2%	1.62
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,269	1,254	1,269	1,240	29	2,466,666	4	0.32%	-4.27%	1,245	1,270	12.4	1.14	5.2%	1.09
506	HEISCO	Industrials	842	847	849	838	11	167,353	5	0.59%	3.29%	846	858	21.4	2.05	3.6%	0.94
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	676	672	692	671	21	6,274,363	-4	-0.59%	14.87%	655	677	14.4	1.41	8.8%	0.91
603	Agility	Industrials	307	316	328	304	24	143,793,661	13	4.29%	-37.92%	298	330	9.8	0.46	3.1%	1.59
605	Zain	Telecommunications	488	488	494	487	7	14,041,621	3	0.62%	-3.75%	487	495	9.8	1.69	7.2%	0.60
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	2,905	2,896	2,910	2,885	25	976,469	-4	-0.14%	-10.54%	2,866	2,964	9.3	3.06	11.5%	0.66
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	209	211	212	208	4	1,082,565	1	0.48%	17.22%	210	213	NM	0.93	0.0%	1.25
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,178	1,118	1,194	1,111	83	1,582,119	-32	-2.78%	-19.51%	1,100	1,204	40.2	9.66	2.5%	1.30
813	GFH Financial Group	Financial Services	84.6	86.1	88.4	84.5	3.9	89,096,666	3.1	3.73%	12.84%	84.0	86.3	10.2	1.06	5.4%	1.42
821	Warba Bank	Banking	184	186	190	183	7	15,762,739	2	1.09%	0.00%	181	188	22.6	0.98	1.6%	1.08
822	Kuwait Telecommunications	Telecommunications	543	545	549	534	15	2,429,606	-18	-3.20%	-3.20%	530	548	16.7	2.24	6.4%	0.71
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	740	735	745	730	15	2,548,344	-10	-1.34%	27.83%	718	735	20.1	2.09	2.7%	0.42
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	513	505	515	500	15	3,084,899	3	0.60%	-0.98%	499	510	31.2	2.03	3.0%	0.75
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	1,975	1,998	2,000	1,940	60	1,206,667	13	0.65%	15.89%	1,971	2,005	25.4	6.24	3.7%	1.37
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	1,119	1,100	1,119	1,080	39	1,986,859	5	0.46%	4.17%	1,069	1,123	10.5	3.63	6.4%	0.78

* As of end of week closing

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KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 2 MAY 2024



Business

Microsoft announces \$2.2bn AI, cloud investment in Malaysia

Nadella on a three-nation tour of Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR: Microsoft pledged a \$2.2 billion investment in artificial intelligence and cloud computing in Malaysia on Thursday to help develop the country's AI infrastructure. The tech giant's chief executive Satya Nadella is on a three-nation tour of Southeast Asia - Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia - to announce a range of investments in data centers, AI and cloud services. "Today, Microsoft announced it will invest \$2.2 billion over the next four years to support Malaysia's digital transformation - the single largest investment in its 32-year history in the country," it said in a statement released as Nadella gave a keynote speech in Kuala Lumpur.

It said the cash would help to build AI and cloud infrastructure in Malaysia, creating an AI centre of excellence and giving AI training to as many as 200,000 Malaysians. "We are committed to supporting Malaysia's AI transformation and ensure it benefits all Malaysians," Nadella said in the statement.

"Our investments in digital infrastructure and skilling will help Malaysian businesses, communities, and developers apply the latest technology to drive inclusive economic growth and innovation across the country." He also confirmed the investment in his keynote speech, saying he was "really pleased" to announce the expansion.

"We really want to make sure that we have world-class infrastructure right here in the country so that every organization, every software developer, every start-up, can use it to really not only

to build for this country, but for the world and the region," he told the crowd. Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim welcomed the pledge, calling it proof of confidence in the "investor-friendliness and political stability" of the country.

"These investments... will be a major backbone to the government's focus on developing AI capacity in the country," he wrote on his Facebook page. The announcement comes after tech chief Nadella unveiled a \$1.7 bn investment in Indonesia, as well as Thailand's first data centre region this week to boost cloud and AI infrastructure.

Research by global consulting firm Kearney showed AI was poised to contribute \$1 trillion to Southeast Asia's gross domestic product by 2030, with Malaysia predicted to see more than a tenth of that, the statement said.

Microsoft began its operations in Malaysia in 1992, according to its official website, and now employs more than 200 employees across its offices in Kuala Lumpur and in northern Penang state. The company has been hugely rewarded by investors since it aggressively pushed into rolling out generative AI, starting with its \$13 billion partnership with OpenAI, the creator of ChatGPT, in 2023.

Nadella said last week sales in January-March rose 17 percent on-year to \$61.9 billion, with net profit up 20 percent to \$21.9 billion. The 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. — AFP



KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia: Participants check a Microsoft booth before CEO Satya Nadella's speech during an event named Microsoft Build AI Day in Kuala Lumpur on May 2, 2024. — AFP

Morocco's farming revolution: Defying drought with science

MARCHOUCH: In the heart of sun-soaked Morocco, scientists are cultivating a future where tough crops defy a relentless drought, now in its sixth year.

"Look at these beautiful ears of wheat," said Wuletaw Tadesse Degu, the head of wheat breeding at the International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA). "The difference in quality between our field and others is striking," he said, pointing towards a lush expanse in Marchouch, south of Rabat, that stood in stark contrast with the barren lands elsewhere.

By 2040, Morocco is poised to face "extremely high" water stress, a dire prediction from the World Resources Institute, a non-profit research organization. Figures from the North African country's central bank paint a grim picture. Cultivated areas across the kingdom are expected to shrink to 2.5 million hectares in 2024 compared with 3.7 million last year, with cereal yields more than halving to 25 million quintals (2.5 million tons) over the same period.

"It has become essential to use resilient seeds and to employ them as quickly as possible," said Tadesse, whose centre recently inaugurated a plant gene bank.

Tadesse's mission is to develop genotypes that not only withstand drought and heat but also yield abundantly. Last year, while the nation struggled, Marchouch achieved a yield of four tons per hectare with just 200 millimeters of rainfall.

Controlled irrigation and strategic sowing techniques are behind this agricultural revolution.

Looking to maximize production, farmers are experimenting with planting times and judicious irrigation. Even a scant 10 millimeters of water, carefully applied, transformed barren soil into thriving fields.



MARCHOUCH, Morocco: A researcher from the International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA) walks in a cultivated field in the Marchouch region of northwestern Morocco. — AFP

Barley, too, has seen a resurgence, with yields jumping from 1.5 to two tons per hectare last year, thanks to climate-smart genotypes, said Miguel Sanchez Garcia, a barley specialist at ICARDA.

The centre, which operates in 17 countries in Africa and Asia, says it has developed 30 "elite lines" of grain. Most of them are produced in Morocco by breeding genotypes of wild wheat with different ancestors, said ICARDA genetics researcher Ahmed Amri.

Moroccan agricultural authorities approved six new wheat and barley varieties last year, but bureaucratic hurdles loom large. Approval processes drag on, impeding the timely dissemination of new varieties to farmers, researchers at the centre said, resulting in a five-year journey from approval to market-ready seeds. "The certification system takes

too long and should be revised quickly," said Moha Ferrahi, head of genetic resources conservation and improvement at the National Institute of Agricultural Research. Ferrahi also pointed to the lack of engagement from private companies and farmers who opt for "foreign seeds to have a quicker return on investment while these seeds are not adapted to the climate of Morocco".

Yet many see room for improvement, even in a drought-hit country where the average citizen consumes about 200 kilograms of wheat per year — significantly above the world's average, according to official figures. "Unlike countries like Egypt or Ethiopia, Morocco has chosen to liberalize its market," said researcher Amri, meaning that authorities have no control over what varieties farmers select. — AFP

US Fed keeps interest rates at 23-year high

WASHINGTON: The US Federal Reserve on Wednesday held interest rates steady for a sixth straight meeting, keeping the level at a 23-year high to fight stubborn price increases. After a two-day gathering, the central bank decided unanimously to keep the benchmark lending rate unchanged at 5.25-5.50 percent, citing a "lack of further progress" towards its two percent inflation target.

"The economic outlook is uncertain, and the Committee remains highly attentive to inflation risks," the Fed said in a statement. For months, the US central bank has held its benchmark lending rate at a high level to cool demand and rein in price increases - with a slowdown in inflation last year fueling optimism that the first cuts were on the horizon.

But inflation has accelerated, throwing cold water on hopes of an early rate reduction.

The Fed said it does not expect to lower rates until it has "greater confidence" that inflation is moving sustainably towards its target. Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell told a press conference: "It is likely that gaining such greater confidence will take longer than previously expected." While the central bank is prepared to hold rates steady for as long as appro-



WASHINGTON: US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell holds a press conference at the end of Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting in Washington, DC, on May 1, 2024. — AFP

iate, Powell added that it is "unlikely that the next policy rate move will be a hike."

The Fed's statement does not significantly change the general outlook that a first rate cut will likely occur in September, said economist Ryan Sweet of Oxford Economics. This is contingent upon inflation slowing, he added. While markets see a September cut "as a coin flip," a few good inflation reports could change the narrative, Sweet said.

Wednesday's statement also "contains no hawkish pivot in tone," noted Pantheon Macroeconomics chief economist Ian Shepherdson. Policymakers instead "provided reassurance" by saying that risks to achieving the Fed's employment and inflation goals have "moved toward better balance," he said.

Analysts believe this means the door remains open to rate cuts in 2024.

The Fed previously penciled in three cuts this year but hotter-than-anticipated inflation has made things less certain. Shepherdson said, however, that "we see nothing in the statement that will prevent the Fed from pivoting to reducing interest rates multiple times this year" if conditions allow.

Powell also said the Fed is prepared to respond to an "unexpected weakening" in the labor market. If that market starts to flag, "the Fed could cut rates even with inflation above its two percent goal to keep the jobs expansion going," said Navy Federal Credit Union corporate economist Robert Frick. As hope dwindles for rate cuts in the first half of 2024, the Fed faces a growing possibility that eventual reductions will coincide with the run-up to November's presidential election. This could give the economy a boost while Democrats and Republicans vie to win over voters. But the converging timeline may prove uncomfortable because the Fed, as the independent US central bank, seeks to avoid any appearance of politicization. Powell pushed back strongly when asked if the election affects interest rate decisions. — AFP

Philip Morris reports Q1 results, updates full year guidance

DUBAI: Philip Morris International Inc (PMI) (NYSE: PM) announced its 2024 first-quarter results. "The strength of our first-quarter results with excellent top-line growth and significant margin expansion gives us the confidence to raise our 2024 currency-neutral guidance," said Jacek Oleczak, Chief Executive Officer. "Strong smoke-free momentum continues with rapid underlying volume progression and accelerating organic net revenue and gross profit growth, fueled by the operating leverage of IQOS and the best-in-class economics of ZYN."

"We are executing efficiently and effectively in a dynamic operating environment of geopolitical and economic tensions that accentuate currency volatility. We are doing our utmost to mitigate these challenges and deliver robust growth and value creation."

Highlights:

- Smoke-free business (SFB): The smoke-free business accounted for 39% of our total net revenues. The path to achieving our ambition of becoming a smoke-free company is shown by the EA, AU & PMI DF region, where SFB accounted for almost two-thirds of revenue, led by Japan and Korea.

- Our SFB continues to deliver superior top-line growth, with net revenues increasing by 21.1 percent (24.8 percent organically) as well as a 31.8 percent (37.5 percent organic) increase in gross profit.

- Inhalable smoke-free products (SFP): IQOS continues to strengthen its position as the second largest nicotine 'brand' in markets where present, including the #1 position in 11 markets. HTU adjusted in-market sales (IMS) volume, which excludes the net impact of estimated distributor and wholesaler inventory movements, was up by an estimated 12.5 percent.

- In Europe, IQOS HTU market share exceeded 10 percent for the first time with adjusted IMS growth



Jacek Oleczak

of 9.4 percent, which was influenced, as expected, by the impact from the EU characterizing flavor ban.

- In Japan, IQOS HTU market share increased by more than 3 percentage points to over 29 percent, with adjusted IMS growth of 13.3 percent. Notably, the heat-not-burn category surpassed combustible cigarettes in Tokyo, a demonstration of the vast potential of IQOS around the world. To celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the IQOS launch in Japan, we introduced IQOS ILUMA i, our most innovative offering to-date, with very positive initial consumer feedback.

- Oral SFP: Shipment volume increased by 40.0 percent in cans (35.8 percent in pouches or pouch equivalents), fueled by ZYN nicotine pouch growth in the US, where shipment volume reached 131.6 million cans, representing growth of 79.7 percent versus prior year. Our share of the category in the US increased for the fourth consecutive quarter to over 74 percent, up 1.3 percentage points sequentially.

- Combustibles: Net revenues grew by 3.5 percent (organically by 3.7 percent), fueled by another quarter of strong pricing across markets. Our category share increased by 0.3 percentage points with Marlboro gaining 0.4 percentage points.

- Dividend: Declared regular quarterly dividend of \$1.30 per share, or an annualized rate of \$5.20 per share.

Maersk's net profit sinks amid Red Sea attacks

COPENHAGEN: Danish shipping giant Maersk posted a huge drop in net profit for the first quarter on Thursday as Yemeni rebel attacks force it to avoid the vital Red Sea route. Maersk reported a net profit of \$177 million in the first three months of the year, a 13-fold drop from the same period last year.

Turnover fell 13 percent to \$12.4 billion, slightly lower than forecast by analysts surveyed by financial data firm FactSet. The company raised, however, its outlook for the full year, citing higher demand and increased rates. It now expects an underlying core profit ranging between \$4 billion and \$6 billion, up from \$1 billion-\$6 billion previously.

"We had a positive start to the year with a first quarter developing precisely as we expected," Maersk chief executive Vincent Clerc said in a statement. "Demand is trending towards the higher end of our market growth guidance and conditions in the Red Sea remain entrenched," he said.

"This not only supported a recovery in the first quarter compared to the previous quarter, but also provides an improved outlook for the coming quarters, as we now expect these conditions to stay with us for most of the year." The Maersk share price was nonetheless down by almost five percent on the Copenhagen stock exchange around two hours after the earnings report was released, on a largely flat market. Iran-backed Houthi rebels, who control the Yemeni capital Sanaa and much of the country's Red Sea coast, have launched dozens of attacks on ships since November, claiming solidarity with Palestinians caught up in the Zionist entity-Hamas war.

The United States in December announced a maritime security initiative to protect Red Sea shipping from the attacks, which have forced commercial vessels to divert from the route that normally carries 12 percent of global trade. — AFP Maersk and other shipping groups have instead chosen to send their fleets around the Cape of Good Hope, which takes about two weeks longer, incurring additional costs. — AFP

Weekender

FRIDAY, MAY 3, 2024



Interplay of light and shadow



By Faten Omar

In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, Kuwaiti photographer Mohammed Sami Jery embarked on a captivating journey of discovery, venturing into the enchanting realms of light. Armed with his camera, Jery set out to explore the world, beginning with the familiar landscapes of Kuwait and extending his lens to encompass the diverse cultures and landscapes of other places.

Jery has traversed through various professional fields, from the airline industry as a quality control specialist to the automotive sector as an operation manager, but he found himself immersed in the realm of agriculture landscaping and light art photography. In 2021, Jery found his true calling, taking pictures with a film camera like in the "good old days". He embarked on a mission to capture the world through his lens while embracing the digital age of social media to showcase his work to engage with fellow photography enthusiasts.

"I started my journey as a light art photographer when I struggled to find the right light for my pictures," he told Kuwait Times, adding: "I got the inspiration to be a light art photographer when I saw the

sunset and low light exposure in some locations. As it gets challenging to find the light you need to create an image and my old camera did not help much, so the flash, torch or even a lighter came to the rescue sometimes." Using his lighting tools, Jery created pictures of another dimension.

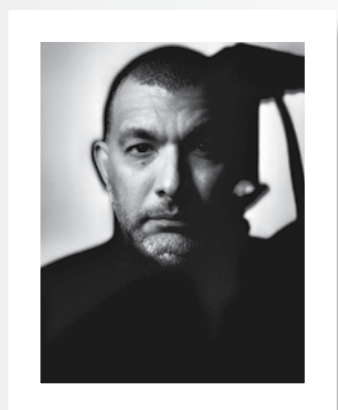
For Jery, photography is not merely about capturing images, but about seeking out the interplay of light and shadow in every scene he encounters. He prefers the simplicity and clarity of black and white imagery, with photographers like Barbara Kasten,



Aaron Siskind and Hiroshi Sugimoto a big influence on his work. He hopes to be at their level one day. "Life in black and white is clearer and tells an interesting story," he explained.

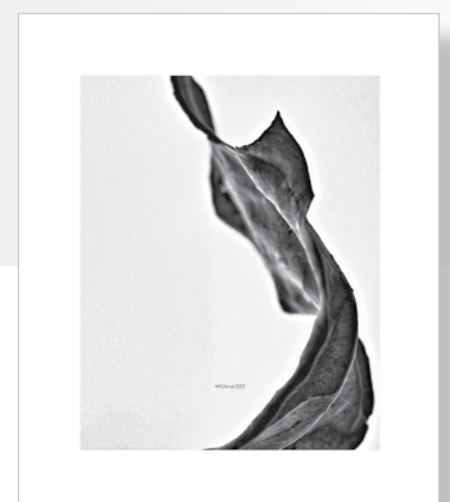
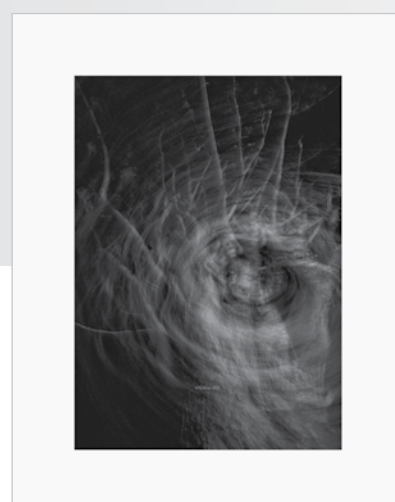
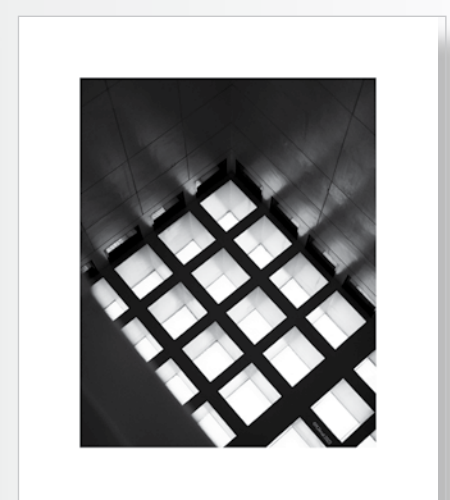
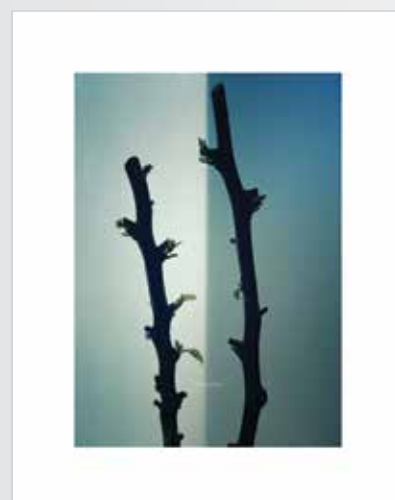
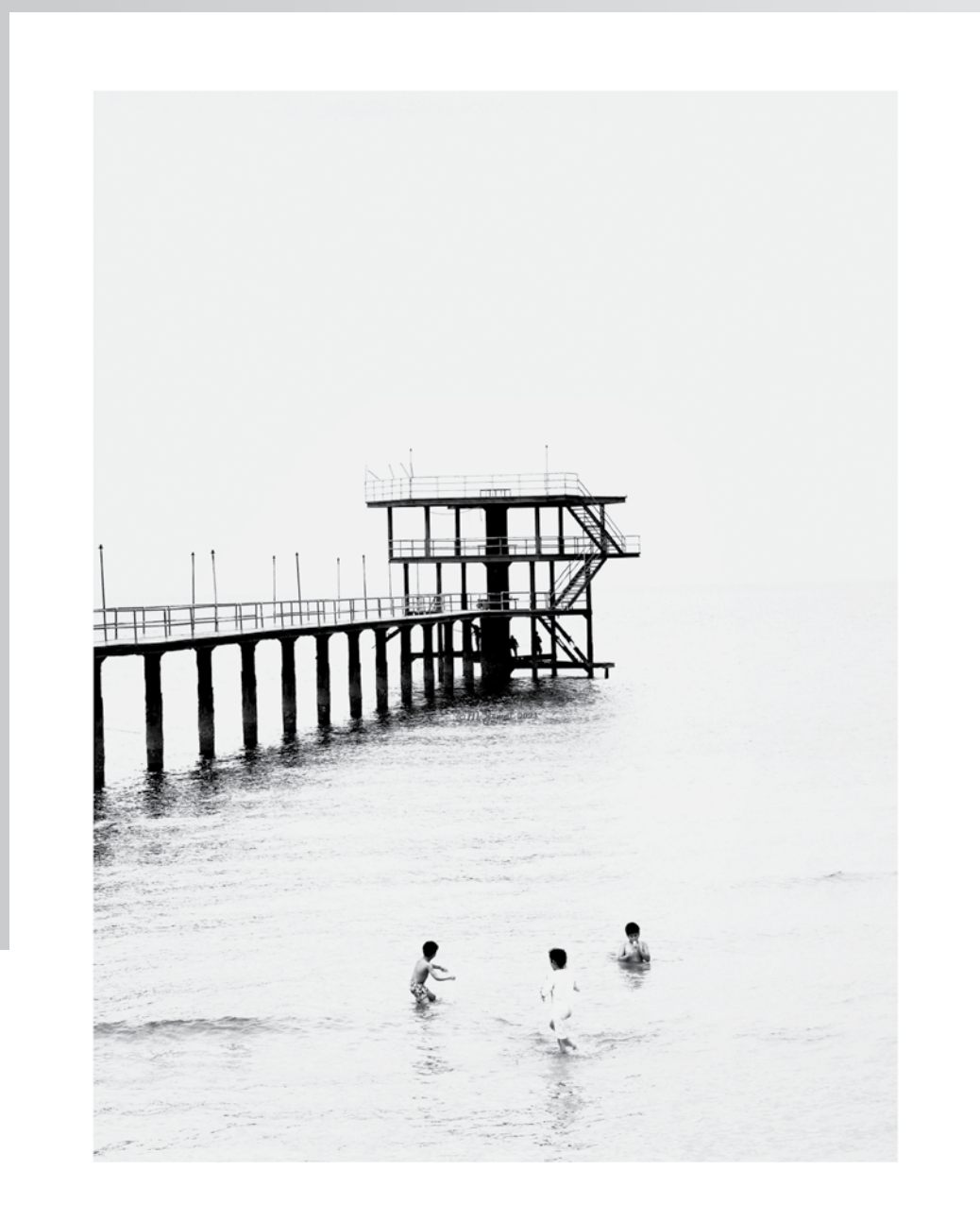
Photography is also not just a hobby or profession for Jery; it

is a lifelong pursuit of capturing the essence of life with each click of his shutter, inviting people to see the world in a new light. On his next steps, Jery revealed he will explore the world of analog photography. "I'm enthralled by the charm and character of vintage cameras, and I see an opportunity to embark on a unique project titled 'Upside Down' that will capture the world from a fresh perspective. Hopefully, I will showcase my work and publish it soon," he promised.



Kuwaiti photographer Mohammed Sami Jery

Kuwaiti photographer Mohammed Sami Jery invites people to see the world in a new light





Al-Saadoun shows his collection of old maps of the Gulf.



Adel Al-Saadoun shows Kuwait Times the books he uses as resources. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



ADEL AL-SAADOUN

among the stars

Adel Al-Saadoun



By Ghadeer Ghloom

Away from Earth, Kuwait Times met Adel Al-Saadoun, a Kuwaiti scientist passionate about astronomy and space, to find out more about his enthusiasm for all things celestial. Saadoun said since his childhood, he had numerous aspirations that eventually transformed into reality. He also spoke about the initial spark that ignited his passion for space during an interview at his home, a treasure trove of astronomical devices, books, objects and maps.



Saadoun shows Kuwait Times a map he is working on.

"During my youth, I witnessed a Briton in Kuwait piloting an airplane using a remote control, a thing that could only be done by the British community back then. This encounter with remote-controlled aircraft sparked my interest and curiosity, igniting a passion within me," Saadoun recalled. During his school years, he would often find himself lost in daydreams about the skies, crafting various objects instead of focusing on his studies, leading to a setback that required him to repeat a year.

Unlike his peers, Saadoun preferred the company of elders over his contemporaries during gatherings, seeking their wisdom. "When I was young, I created a measuring instrument from scratch, a creation that I still cherish to this day. This device facilitated measuring the height of stars above the horizon. Despite its simplicity, I consider it a remarkable achievement due to the absence of external references or guidance. I did it all by myself!" he exclaimed.

Eager to expand his knowledge, he burrowed into books and engaged with the astronomy department at university, alongside participating in the science club at the Al-Ujairi observatory. Although his interactions with university professors provided valuable insights, he pursued personal studies in his private library to learn more. "In 1989, I developed a very accurate star map, which is recognized as one of the



Saadoun stands at the entrance of his house.

most precise among Arab cartographers, dedicating a year for its completion," Saadoun said.

Relying heavily on self-education through books and personal efforts, he found university teachings insufficient in depth. In addition to the measuring instrument and star map, he authored books, made calendars and gave lectures, showcasing his passion for astronomy and knowledge-sharing.

Financial constraints halted his

calendar production, although he continues to work on diverse projects, including an upcoming book on stars. Being recognized by Britain's Royal Astronomical Society, US' NASA and other esteemed agencies, Saadoun's dedication to astronomy and self-driven pursuit of knowledge have earned him recognition and a good reputation at an international level.



Saadoun uses his star measuring device.



Saadoun with his telescope.



Mini version of a Kuwaiti village in the past, handmade by Adel Al-Saadoun.



An old map of the Gulf region.



A star map drawn by Saadoun in 1989, the most accurate star map created by an Arab, according to him.

Weekender



Performers create a beautiful flower of harmony.



Dancers from South Korea's "The Little Angels" troupe pose with South Korean Ambassador to Kuwait Chung Byung-ha after performing at the Abdulhusain Abdulredha Theatre on May 1, 2024. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



New Year Morning dance



Fan dance



The troupe performs the hourglass drum dance.

MUSICAL CELEBRATES KOREA-KUWAIT TIES

By Passant Hisham

In a celebration marking the 45th anniversary of diplomatic relations and the 60th anniversary of energy cooperation between South Korea and Kuwait, a vibrant musical folkloric event was held on May 1 featuring the popular Korean troupe "The Little Angels".

South Korean Ambassador to Kuwait

Chung Byung-ha articulated his vision for the future relationship between the two nations. Beyond the traditional realms of energy cooperation, he envisaged collaborations in constructing smart city projects, forging agreements in nuclear power and enhancing cooperation in vital sectors such as healthcare and defense. "Our relationship cannot be defined in one word, but I can say that we have

enjoyed unwavering friendship and deep mutual trust," he said.

Chung underscored the significance of the event, highlighting its role in promoting mutual understanding through the exchange of art and culture. He urged attendees to immerse themselves in the performance by "The Little Angels", a troupe renowned for its captivating dance routines and cultural significance. The

ambassador elucidated the troupe's underlying message of "peace and friendship", echoing the sentiments they sought to convey since their establishment in 1962, in the aftermath of the Korean War.

Against the backdrop of global conflicts, Chung emphasized the timeless relevance of these messages, asserting that peace and friendship were indispensable for a shared and prosperous fu-

ture. While acknowledging South Korea's global recognition for its entertainment industry, including dramas, films and pop music, Chung stressed the event's deeper significance. He highlighted Korea's rich cultural heritage, cultivated over thousands of years, as the cornerstone of its current cultural prowess.



Exhibition highlights shared Kuwaiti-Cypriot experiences

By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

Contemporary Art Platform (CAP) is hosting a monthlong binational group exhibition, initiated by the Cyprus embassy in Kuwait, featuring works by Kuwaiti and Cypriot artists as part of the Europe Month celebrations in Kuwait and commemorating the 20th anniversary of Cyprus' ascension to the European Union.

During the opening of the exhibition on April 30, Ambassador of Cyprus to Kuwait Michalis Mavros highlighted the historical parallels between the two islands (Cyprus and Failaka), tracing back to the time of Alexander the Great's conquests in the 4th century BCE, which led to the region becoming part of the Hellenistic world. He also drew attention to the shared experience of upheaval, such as the 1990 invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent depopulation of Failaka island, likening it to the division of Cyprus by the buffer zone in Nicosia.

Mavros emphasized the environmental challenges faced by both countries due to human activities and climate change, underlining the importance of preserving cultural heritage and encouraging economic development for their future. "Cyprus tremendously values relations with countries of Middle East and the Gulf, dictated by its location and common history. We take pride in taking part as a connecting bridge be-



Art Director Ofelia Vardanyan and Ambassador of Cyprus to Kuwait Michalis Mavros

tween Europe and the Middle East, and promoting peaceful coexistence and mutual respect of nations, religions and cultures," he said.

Ofelia Vardanyan, introducing the exhibition, described it as a thrilling collaboration offering insight into the worlds of Cypriot and Kuwaiti culture. She highlighted the historical ties and cultural exchanges between the two islands, emphasizing their shared influences and complexities. "As a result of their advantageous geographical positions, the two islands have been settled and governed by multiple civilizations, each of which has exerted a substantial influence on the environment," she added.

The exhibition, titled "Icelandic Parallels: Transformed Landscapes

From One Island To Another" showcases contemporary artworks exploring themes of memory, identity and politics. Vardanyan noted that this collaboration marked the first time artists from both countries came together to address these issues.

The exhibited artworks draw parallels between Kuwait and Cyprus, particularly focusing on Failaka Island. The participating artists explore historical, cultural and environmental connections. "Both Islands display remarkable points of connection dating back to the Hellenistic period, as well as in the modern era, as a result of conflicts and war that have left scars on the body of the land and the soul of their inhabitants," Vardanyan noted.

The projects presented in the exhibition offer new perspectives on social justice and the environment, demonstrating resilience and optimism for the future. Participating artists included Rania Abulhasan, Mohammed Alkhouh, Klitsa Antoniou, Constantinos Constantinou, Melita Couta, Panayiotis Doukanaris, Nicos Philippou, Mohammad Sharaf, Letteris Tapas, Maria Trillidou and Mareline Zackheos. The exhibition is a reflection on the interconnectedness of cultures and landscapes. It continues until May 30 at CAP.



Visitors attend the opening of the "Icelandic Parallels" exhibition at Contemporary Art Platform (CAP) on April 30, 2024. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Event: Zain Horse Jumping Show
Location: Kuwait Riding Center
Date: May 3- 4, 2024

Event: Sip and Shop Market
Location: Art Studio KWT
Date: May 4, 2024

Event: NY Run 2024
Location: Murouj
Date: May 3, 2024

Event: Space Crew Kids Adventure Camp
Location: The Scientific Center
Date: May 4, 2024

Event: Paint a Pot
Location: Sama Mall
Date: May 3-4, 2024

Event: How to Write a Novel
Location: Takween
Date: May 4, 2024

Sports

Bairstow, Rossouw help Punjab Kings beat Chennai in own den

'Any team that can get momentum at the back-end is dangerous'

CHENNAI: Key knocks by Jonny Bairstow and Rilee Rossouw helped Punjab Kings to a comfortable seven-wicket victory over defending champions Chennai Super Kings in the IPL on Wednesday.

Chasing 163 for victory, Punjab depended on Bairstow's 46 and 43 by Rossouw to achieve victory with 13 balls to spare at Chennai's M. Chidambaram Stadium.

England's Bairstow kept up his form from the previous match when he hit an unbeaten 108 as Punjab chased down a record IPL target of 262 against Kolkata Knight Riders at Eden Gardens.

Bairstow and Rossouw, a left-handed South African batsman, put on 64 runs for the second wicket to set up the chase. Shivam Dube had Bairstow caught behind and Shardul Thakur bowled Rossouw to have Punjab in trouble at 113-3 in 12 overs.

Shashank Singh, who made 25, and skipper Sam Curran, who hit 26, then put on an unbeaten stand of 50 to steer the team home for just their fourth win and keep their slim play-off hopes alive.

"Any team that can get momentum at the back-end is dangerous," said Curran, who is stand-in skipper after regular captain Shikhar Dhawan was injured last month.

"We are quietly confident that we are coming up against them (Chennai) in a couple of days' time." Punjab are the second team to defeat Chennai in five successive IPL matches. Mumbai Indians won five in

a row against Chennai between 2018 and 2019.

Five-time winners Chennai have won five and lost five and stay fourth in the 10-team table led by Rajasthan Royals.

The pitch in Chennai was not run-friendly as the hosts posted 162-7 riding on skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad's 62 and late evening dew added to the home team's misery. Bowlers set up victory with spinners Harpreet Brar, who was named man of the match for his figures of 2-17, and Rahul Chahar taking two wickets each in their miserly spells.

Gaikwad put on an opening stand of 64 with Ajinkya Rahane and despite losing wickets the other end kept calm to push the total forward.

Gaikwad with five half-centuries this season surpassed Royal Challengers Bengaluru star Virat Kohli (500) as the leading batsman in the T20 tournament with 509 runs in 10 innings.

Gaikwad built key partnerships in the middle-order with Sameer Rizvi, who hit 21, and Moeen Ali, who made 15, before being bowled by left-arm quick Arshdeep Singh.

"Fifty-60 runs short to be honest," Gaikwad said. "When we were batting first, the pitch wasn't great, plus the dew was well."

Veteran M.S. Dhoni came out to a rousing reception from the home crowd in what is likely his last IPL as player and he hit 14 off 11 balls before being run out on the final ball. — AFP



CHENNAI: Punjab Kings' Jonny Bairstow (R) plays a shot as Chennai Super Kings' wicketkeeper MS Dhoni fields the ball during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Chennai Super Kings and Punjab Kings at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai. — AFP

Juniors gymnastics team in Poland

KUWAIT: The Juniors Rhythmic Gymnastics team left for Warsaw, Poland to compete in Poland's International Championship that started on Thursday.

Kuwait's team includes Sara Al-Bannai, Layan Behbehani, Amina Al-Kandary, Talya Behbehani, Nabila Al-Kharafi, Raya Al-Qassar and Aljazi Al-Haroun.

The delegation is headed by member of the women's committee at Kuwait Gymnastics Federation Suad Al-Kandary, official Lujain Al-Asfour and coaches Irina Kovalchuk and Victoria Vsyuk.

The team's participation is within the federation's plan to improve the players' level through competing with various advanced countries in rhythmic gymnastics with the hopes of being among the top winners to add to the players' confidence.



Juniors gymnastics team with their coaches.



LAHORE: Selectors for Pakistan's cricket team Wahab Riaz (R) and Mohammad Yousuf announce the squad for the upcoming Twenty20 international series in Ireland and England later this month during a press conference in Lahore on May 2, 2024. — AFP

Pakistan recall Rauf, Hasan for England and Ireland T20s

LAHORE: Pakistan on Thursday recalled fast bowler Haris Rauf and medium-pacer Hasan Ali for Twenty20 internationals in Ireland and England later this month, their final warm-ups for the World Cup.

Wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan, Azam Khan and Muhammad Irfan Khan, who all suffered injuries last month against New Zealand, were also included in an 18-man squad. Pakistan's selectors have not yet named their final 15-man squad for June's T20 World Cup in the United States and West Indies. "We are having fitness issues with a few players but we hope that during the England tour we will be able to finalize the World Cup squad," selector Wahab Riaz told a news conference in Lahore. All 20 World Cup teams had to submit preliminary 15-player squads to the International Cricket Council by May 1 deadline, but they can make changes until May 25.

Rauf, 30, has not played since injuring his shoulder during the Pakistan Super League in February. "Rauf has started bowling and by the time we will be playing England he will be match fit," said Riaz.

"As a back-up we have included Hasan Ali in the squad." Hasan has not played a Twenty20 international for Pakistan since September 2022. Spinning all-rounder Agha Salman, who has played Tests and one-day internationals, is line for his T20 debut after being included. Pakistan play Ireland in Dublin on May 10, 12 and 14. Four matches follow against England at Headingley in Leeds on May 22, Edgbaston in Birmingham (May 25), Sophia Gardens in Cardiff (May 28) and the Oval in London (May 30).

Pakistan T20 squad for matches in Ireland and England: Babar Azam (captain), Abrar Ahmed, Azam Khan, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Hasan Ali, Iftikhar Ahmed, Imad Wasim, Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Amir, Mohammad Rizwan, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Naseem Shah, Saim Ayub, Agha Salman, Shadab Khan, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Usman Khan. — AFP

Master-blaster Airee in Nepal T20 World Cup squad

KATHMANDU: Nepal on Wednesday named their squad for the T20 World Cup in June with Rohit Paudel as captain and boasting the power-hitting Dipendra Singh Airee. Airee recently became just the third international batsman to hit six sixes in an over in an international T20 game.

The 21-year-old Paudel has been among the runs in an ongoing unofficial T20 series against the West Indies A as he led the team in the opening win with a 54-ball 112. Nepal, who will be making their second appearance in the T20 World Cup after their debut in 2014, lost the next two matches to trail the five-match series 2-1.

Aarif Sheikh, Bibek Yadav and Aakash Chand miss out on the 15-man World Cup squad. The country's most high profile star Sandeep Lamichhane is currently serving a jail sentence for rape. Nepal play their World Cup opener against the Netherlands in Dallas on June 4. They will also play group games against South Africa, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. — AFP

World Cup cricket 'square' arrives in NY from Florida

MIAMI: Ten cricket pitches have completed their journey up the East Coast of the United States from Florida to New York state and are being installed in a new stadium built for next month's T20 World Cup. The "drop in pitches" have been prepared in Florida since December and were recently transported by 20 trailer trucks up the I-95 highway to the venue in Long Island.

The surfaces, which will soon be used for games including the highly-anticipated clash between cricket giants India and Pakistan, were developed by Australian Damian Hough, curator of the Adelaide Oval. Winter conditions in New York meant that the grass needed to be grown in the warmer climate of Florida before being transported and installed.

Hough said the journey from the base in Boynton Beach, Florida, to Nassau County in New York state, took over 24 hours, with regular stops for checks and hydration of the grass. "From a turf perspective, we made sure that there was no weather or elements getting on them with regards to wind or rain. They've come through, the ones we've received so far, we couldn't be happier, they've come through in flying colors," Hough said.

Boxing back at Tyson-Douglas Tokyo upset venue

TOKYO: When 42-1 underdog James 'Buster' Douglas shocked 'Iron' Mike Tyson 34 years ago at the Tokyo Dome, the result reverberated around the world. Spectators at the 45,000-plus seater venue witnessed one of boxing's biggest upsets as unbeaten heavyweight champion Tyson was knocked out in the 10th round by the unheralded Douglas in February 1990.

Boxing returns to the famous venue on Monday for the first time since that unforgettable encounter when Japan's undisputed super-bantamweight world champion Naoya 'Monster' Inoue puts his belts on the line against Mexican Luis Nery.

The 31-year-old Inoue (26-0, 23 KOs) is a huge star in Japan and is just the second man to become undisputed world champion at two different weights since the four-belt era began in 2004. American Terence Crawford was the first.

But Inoue faces a stern test against the 29-year-old Nery, a former two-division world champion. Inoue will be wary of suffering the same fate as Tyson, who arrived in Tokyo more

than three decades ago with an aura of invincibility. "Tyson's status at that time was of being this godlike, completely unbeatable heavyweight," James Sterngold, who reported on the fight for the New York Times, told AFP. "He was really one of a kind - he was up on a pedestal that only a small number of athletes can occupy." Tyson was expected to win so easily that Sterngold, a news reporter based in Tokyo, was asked to cover the fight because the New York Times did not want to send a specialist boxing writer "halfway around the world for 90 seconds".

Chris Tetley, head of events for the International Cricket Council - organizers of the World Cup that will be co-hosted by the United States and several Caribbean nations - said the pitch production had been a huge logistical challenge for the companies involved.

"It's been an impressive piece of logistics that has gone into moving 10 pitches, on 20 trucks, plus backup trucks, with the route planning, the timing through, I can't remember how many different states," Tetley said. "The permissions to take out agricultural materials through different states, traffic considerations, timing over bridges and we wanted to make sure the trays are out of the ground for as short a time as possible - extremely, extremely impressive," he added.

The temporary 34,000 capacity stadium at Eisenhower Park has already been built with stands and hospitality areas already in place and the outfield has been put in place. Hough said the surface is likely to be a typical of the kind used for T20 matches, where fans expect to see big shots from the batsmen.

"Our ambition is to produce pitches along the lines where they're good quality pitches, minimal spin, minimal seam and ball coming onto the bat and let the players play the shot," he said. The first World Cup game at the venue will feature Sri Lanka v South Af-

rica on June 3 but organizers are planning some test events before then.

World class facilities

Much of the material for the stands has been taken from Formula One motor racing and will be dismantled after the end of the World Cup. But the international standard playing surface will remain in place with the possibility of it being used for local cricket.

"The physical structures we have installed will go away, the park will be returned to grassland, but with the legacy of a world class cricket field," said Tetley. "There is also the training facility that we have developed so the cricket community is going to end up with some world class facilities to utilize."

"As to what happens to the space in the future, that really depends on the local cricket community, Nassau County and USA Cricket as to what they want to do with it. It is there, it is available," he said. Cricket remains a fringe sport in the United States but is avidly followed by immigrant communities, particularly from the Indian subcontinent and the Caribbean.

Last year, a new T20 tournament was launched, Major League Cricket, which was held near Dallas, Texas, at a converted minor-league baseball park. The Grand Prairie venue will also host World Cup games, as will the country's first international standard venue in Lauderhill, South Florida. Major League Cricket has attracted a number of international players, with former Australia captain Steve Smith recently signing up to play for Washington Freedom in this year's edition which starts in July. — AFP



TOKYO: This photo taken on April 30, 2024 shows a night view of the Tokyo Dome stadium in central Tokyo. — AFP

Tokyo Dome was "surprisingly quiet", with fans anticipating another Tyson demolition job. But Douglas began to control the fight, and although he was knocked down in the eighth, he got up and sent Tyson sprawling to the canvas two rounds later.

The world heavyweight champion failed to beat the count, with those watching trying to make sense of what they had just seen. "I was sitting in the press seats closest to the ring, and Tyson went down right in front of me," said Tsue.

"My heart was thumping. I wondered if it was possible that something like this could even happen?" — AFP

Tyson 'didn't really care'
Veteran Japanese boxing writer Shoji Tsue, who has covered the sport for 50 years, was also expecting a quick win for Tyson, even after seeing the American knocked down by sparring partner Greg Page in training.

"Everyone thought that because Tyson was Tyson, there was no way he would lose, no matter what happened," said Tsue. Tyson's autobiography said he had been too busy partying to prepare properly for Douglas, who had an unspectacular win-loss-draw record of 29-4-1 (19 KOs).

Sterngold interviewed Tyson in his hotel room days before the fight and found him wrapped in a bedsheet watching martial arts movies. "He seemed like he didn't really care," said Sterngold. "He clearly wasn't in a revved-up frame of mind."

The fight began at lunchtime and Tsue said the

Sports

France among Euro 'favourites' but in 'tough group': Deschamps

Euros are very competitive, with eight of top ten teams in the FIFA rankings

MONACO: France national team coach Didier Deschamps told AFP in an exclusive interview that even if France are amongst the pre-tournament favorites for Euro 2024 in Germany, his team must first concentrate on getting through a "tough group".

"I'm going to go against what has been said here and there. We're in a tough group. People have been talking about it (France's Euro 2024 group) being a walk in a park," Deschamps said to AFP in Monaco.

The 2018 World Cup winners are in Group D where they will start their campaign against Austria on June 17, before taking on the Netherlands four days later and then ending their group-stage ties against Poland on June 25.

If some in France think Deschamps' side making it through to the knock-out rounds is a given, the 55-year-old is taking nothing for granted. "The Netherlands are still a great footballing nation. When we beat them 4-0 in March 2023, they were a depleted team, without several key players. Poland are strong collectively and rely on individuals like Robert Lewandowski," said Deschamps.

"Austria are a very solid team, they recently beat the Germans. "You have to take each stage at

a time. The first is to get through the first round," added the World Cup winning coach and captain. "Like other nations, we have the potential to go all the way, but we shouldn't be thinking about a semi-final or a possible final just yet. The Euros are very competitive, with eight of the top ten teams in the FIFA rankings taking part."

After leading France to World Cup glory in Russia in 2018, the European Championship still eludes Deschamps' grasp as a coach.

After losing the final on home soil in 2016 and a surprise last-16 exit four years later to Switzerland, the Euro 2000 winning captain will be hoping it is third time lucky as he looks to complete a remarkable quartet of World Cup and Euro titles as a coach and player.

However, Deschamps is not heading to Germany with a desire for revenge for past disappointments. "I'd say they were under-performances (the past tournaments). It's true, I haven't won the Euro as coach, but a lot of coaches haven't won it," he said.

"If the standards are so high, it's because the team has made a lot of progress... After the World Cup, there's nothing bigger than the Euros. We're going to



MONACO: France's national football team head coach Didier Deschamps poses during a photo session in the Principality of Monaco. — AFP

approach the next one with ambition, but also with a clear head.

"It's logical that we should be among the favorites, like other teams. But we shouldn't be thinking about the finish, we should be thinking about the three group matches," added Deschamps.

Selection headaches

But before those three matches, Deschamps still faces the usual selection headaches that dominates the build-up to all major international tournaments. And this time round, he must also await final UEFA validation on whether squad sizes for Euro 2024 will be set at a maximum of 23 or 26 players.

"If I take 26 players, it's because I think it's useful for the French team. Adaptation is my watchword. So I'm going to adapt to the decisions taken and to other parameters," he said. Amongst those in contention is Bradley Barcola of Paris Saint-Germain. The 21-year-old has hit form at the business end of PSG's season and has forced himself into contention for a place in the squad, despite having just one international cap to his name.

"Just because I'm not in the habit of calling up players for the finals who I haven't selected before doesn't mean I'm going to do without them. I don't operate by that kind of rule," said Deschamps. "I'm not conservative and I don't make choices worrying about what people will think of them. If I feel I have to do something different in the interests of the French team, I do it differently. Every situation has its answers." — AFP

Kuwait equestrian league a success

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Board of Kuwait Equestrian Federation Masoud Jouhar Hayat said the current equestrian league proved successful at many levels and competition was very strong between riders of both genders at various heights due to the excellent technical level of riders, that in addition to the major role of fans during the season in support of the riders.

He said the closing of the third season of the league will be outstanding, as he thanked the sponsors both from the government and the private sector. The eighth and final round of league competition will start Friday at Kuwait Riding Center with riders from local clubs competing at the heights of 90, 110, 120, 130 and 140 centimeters, then on Saturday competitions will be for the 115, 135 cm and the grand prize will be at the height of 145 cm.



KUWAIT: (From left) KEF Chairman Masoud Hayat, Ali Al-Kharafi, Ghazi Al-Jraiwi and Al-Fuzaie.

Canelo, De La Hoya clash ahead of Munguia showdown

LOS ANGELES: Undisputed super middleweight king Saul "Canelo" Alvarez unleashed an expletive-laden tirade against promoter Oscar De La Hoya on Wednesday ahead of this weekend's showdown with undefeated Jaime Munguia in Las Vegas.

At a pre-fight press conference in Sin City, Alvarez ripped into De La Hoya after the US boxing legend issued his own stinging attack against the Mexican star. Golden Boy Promotions boss De La Hoya - who used to handle Alvarez before an acrimonious 2020 split - triggered the war of words after accusing his former boxer of "disrespecting" his name.

"There were times my work wasn't my priority based on my mental health which I neglected for so long but that doesn't change the fact that Golden Boy built Canelo Alvarez, period," De La Hoya told a press conference.

"The company you fought under for decades has always had one name and it's mine so put some ...respect on it," De La Hoya said, with Alvarez sitting just a few feet away on a dais. De La Hoya, who now promotes Alvarez's opponent this weekend, Munguia, then went on to bring up the Mexican star's record of failing doping tests in 2018 ahead of his fight with Gennady Golovkin.

"Jaime has always dared to be great. This is full circle for him. When he was 21 he volunteered to step in against GGG and Canelo failed two drugs test. Jaime wasn't allowed to fulfil his dream in 2018, and Saturday he will do that and be world champion." De La Hoya said. — AFP

Is Brazil still the land of football?

SAO PAULO: With its famed "jogo bonito", iconic stars and record five World Cup titles, Brazil has long been known as the "land of football". But is it still?

The country of Pele, Garrincha and Ronaldinho, which once wowed the world with its 'samba' style, has not won the World Cup since 2002. Nor has it produced a Ballon d'Or winner since Kaka in 2007. With the "Selecao" currently struggling to book its place at the 2026 World Cup, many in Brazil and beyond wonder why.

"We're at a low point. We used to have more top-quality athletes," the late Pele's eldest son, Edinho, told AFP recently. Even President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has joined the national soul-searching, admitting Brazil "doesn't play the greatest football in the world anymore". So what happened?

Disappearing pitches

One answer could be the decline of street football, where some of Brazil's all-time greats started out, such as Rivellino, Zico and Romario. "Nobody plays in the street anymore. You don't hear stories about that kick that broke somebody's window," says amateur footballer Lauro Nascimento, his jersey stained with orange mud after playing on one of the few dirt pitches left on Sao Paulo's north side.

Nascimento, a 52-year-old finance professional who plays for local side Aurora, broke several toes playing football barefoot as a boy. Today, the district of Vila Aurora, is covered in concrete sprawl. Two buildings stand on what was once open pasture used as a football pitch. "Any open space used to be enough for kids to get their start in football. Now, they're seen as prime development real estate," says sports historian Aira Bonfim. Nascimento and his friends pay \$160 a month to rent the battered scrap of land where they play matches but that kind of money is a barrier for working class families.

To access a pitch today, poor kids in Brazil often depend on school, social programs or a football academy. Just one in five such academies is free, according to a 2021 study. And many of those pitches are synthetic, a surface some say develops players' technique less than the rough, rocky fields of yesterday.

'Mechanical' style

The decline in time spent playing the sport has had "a giant impact on our football", says researcher Euler Victor. "We have a huge number of Brazilians playing in Europe but very few stars." Brazil's latest great hope, Neymar, shone at Barcelona, but struggled to lead the national team to championships in a career



SAO PAULO: Locals rest while playing football in a dirt field in Sao Paulo, Brazil, on February 17, 2024. With its famed "jogo bonito," iconic stars, and record five World Cup titles, Brazil is known worldwide as the "land of football." But is it still? — AFP

bogged down by controversy and injury.

Brazilians now have their hopes pinned on 23-year-old Vinicius Junior and young phenomenon Endrick, who is set to join Vinicius at Real Madrid when he turns 18 in July. Brazil is still the world's top exporter of footballers but they are bringing in less money.

According to FIFA figures, clubs paid \$935.3 million in transfer fees for 2,375 Brazilian players last year, down nearly 20 percent from 2018, when the number of players was smaller - 1,753. Part of the drop is because teams are paying less to hire free agents and younger players. But there is also a shortage of stand-out stars. "Our technique has suffered," says Victor Hugo da Silva, a coach at Flamengo's youth academy in Sao Goncalo, outside Rio de Janeiro. "The playing style changed and that ended up taking away some of our creativity. Our football used to be so joyful. Now it's become more mechanical."

On a synthetic pitch, he trains seven to 10-year-olds dreaming of following in the footsteps of Vinicius, the academy's most famous graduate. The next generation still has football in its veins, but has "difficulties" with training, a problem Da Silva attributes to their sedentary lifestyles and "addiction" to screens. Brazil, population 203 million, has more cell phones than people. More than one-third of children aged five to 19 are overweight or obese, according to the World Obesity Atlas. Robson Zimmerman, a talent scout for Sao Paulo club Corinthians, says emerging footballers today face tougher conditions, including the ability to play multiple positions and outsize expectations from family and the media.

"Before, they just had to worry about playing football," he says. But Leila Pereira, president of cross-town rivals Palmeiras, the reigning league champions, insists Brazil will never stop being the country of football. Brazilian teams have claimed the past five Copa Libertadores titles with Palmeiras claiming two of those. The club is the cradle of Endrick - whose sale to Real Madrid brought in a reported \$65 million with bonuses - as well as rising prospects Estevao and Luis Guilherme. "I disagree with those who think (Brazilian players) have lost quality. Look at the astronomical sums they bring in," says Pereira.

Favela party

For many people, Pereira, one of Brazil's wealthiest people, is the face of a new brand of Brazilian football - more like Europe's, with lavish salaries, by South American standards, and expensive ticket prices.

"With the absurd salaries they pay the players, clubs have to raise ticket prices, which excludes fans like me," says Flamengo supporter David Santos. In 2019, he founded a fan club for Flamengo die-hards like himself from the impoverished favelas. From atop the hillside slum that overlooks the trendy beach neighborhoods of Copacabana and Ipanema, they recreate the ambiance of the Maracana on match days, decorating an old pitch with flags, grilling barbecue and belting out chants as the match plays on a giant screen. "The 'country of football' thing - we're losing that," says one attendee, 38-year-old Vasco fan Pablo Igor. "Football is what you see here. It's a game of the people. But street kids like I was don't have access to it anymore." — AFP

English teen Kris Kim ready for PGA debut

LOS ANGELES: English teenager Kris Kim is taking a break from his high school studies this week to realize a dream: making his debut on the US PGA Tour at the Byron Nelson tournament in Texas. "It's been a dream of mine since I started golf, and to finally be able to play on this platform is incredible for me," the 16-year-old from Surrey said Wednesday at TPC Craig Ranch in suburban Dallas. "Hopefully I can just play good golf and make it to the weekend."

Kim boasts an impressive resume, including victories in the R&A Boys' Amateur Championship, the European Boys Individual Championship and the McGregor Trophy last year. He went undefeated at the Junior Ryder Cup, but said the "crazy" call from sponsor CJ Group with the tournament invitation left him "over the moon for the rest of the day."

Kim said his "whole family" was on hand in Texas, led by his mother Suh Ji-hyun, a former LPGA tour player who has been his only swing coach. "She's been really great," Kim said of his mother's influence. "Don't think I would be as good without her." Kim, who said he "got a taste for" playing in front of big crowds at the Junior Ryder Cup, wasn't worried about nerves when he tees it up in the first two rounds alongside Americans Max Greyserman and Norman Xiong. — AFP



Kris Kim

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, having permanent address in Telangana, India, Pin: 505001 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) Munwar and (surname) Khan. (# 02/05/2024)

Emergency call 112



DORTMUND: Dortmund's German forward #14 Niclas Fuellkrug (L) makes an attempt on goal during the UEFA Champions League semi-final first leg football match between Borussia Dortmund and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) in Dortmund, western Germany. — AFP

Fuellkrug outshines Mbappe to hand Dortmund CL advantage over PSG

PSG confident of overturning deficit at home next week

DORTMUND: Niclas Fuellkrug gave Borussia Dortmund a 1-0 win over Paris Saint-Germain in their Champions League semi-final first leg on Wednesday as the journeyman striker outshone superstar Kylian Mbappe on the night. Seeking a return to the final for the first time since 2013, the 1997 winners were dogged and determined, outmuscling their heavily favored opponents in front of more than 80,000 fans.

Fuellkrug, playing in his first Champions League season at the age of 31, collected a lofted pass from centre-back Nico Schlotterbeck in the 36th minute and blasted a low shot into the left corner of the net. PSG, led by Kylian Mbappe, hit the post twice in quick succession early in the second-half but could not break through.

"I think we today showed a classic

team performance. Each helped the other to win the game. We needed a bit of luck a couple of times, but we can be very satisfied with our performance," said long-serving centre-back Mats Hummels.

"It was a very satisfying, very grown-up performance from us." Dortmund, who had already lost and drawn against PSG this season in the group stage, can continue to dream of a return to Wembley 11 years after their last Champions League final.

Despite the setback, however, PSG will remain confident of overturning the deficit at home next week against a side they thoroughly outclassed at their home venue in September. "The Parc (PSG's stadium) and our supporters are giving us hope for the second leg, and we know we can do much better," PSG captain Mar-

quinhos told Canal+.

Dortmund manager Edin Terzic said pre-match PSG were "built to win the Champions League" since the Qatari takeover a decade ago. Nowhere was the contrast between the two clubs greater than PSG's global superstar Mbappe, playing in his last season for his hometown club, and journeyman Dortmund striker Fuellkrug, who was playing second-division football this time two years ago.

PSG hit post twice

Spurred on by a passionate home crowd who booed and whistled every Mbappe touch, Dortmund had the best of the opening stages, Jadon Sancho shining down the right flank. Marcel Sabitzer had Dortmund's best chance of an opener after 14 minutes, blasting straight at Gi-

anluigi Donnarumma from a tight angle.

The opener came after 36 minutes thanks to some superb old-school forward play from Fuellkrug. Centre-back Schlotterbeck had the ball well in his own half and thought about a safe pass back to the 'keeper but instead punted it forward, with only Fuellkrug aware of the idea.

The striker controlled the ball with one touch and drilled a low shot past a helpless Donnarumma. Fresh from wrapping up the Ligue 1 title at the weekend, PSG had few chances despite their attacking riches in the opening half, registering zero shots on target.

The visitors however sprung to life after half-time, Mbappe rattling the inside of one post seconds before former Dortmund wing-back Achraf Hakimi

rattled the inside of the other.

PSG should have equalized after 56 minutes, Marquinhos curled a beautiful pass through a crowded Dortmund box but Fabian Ruiz's diving header went wide. Another former Dortmund player Ousmane Dembele blasted over right in front of goal with 10 minutes remaining.

The impressive Sancho laid on an excellent pass for Julian Brandt with moments left but Dortmund's hopes of a second were snuffed out by some desperate PSG defending. The victory, along with Tuesday's 2-2 draw between Bayern Munich and Real Madrid in the other semi-final, guarantees Germany rather than England or France an extra Champions League place for next season. That has already secured Dortmund's place in the competition next season. — AFP

Celtics incinerate Miami Heat to clinch series

LOS ANGELES: The Boston Celtics crushed the Miami Heat 118-84 to complete an emphatic 4-1 series victory Wednesday and book their place in the second round of the NBA playoffs. The postseason top seeds, who were upset by Miami in last year's Eastern Conference finals, avenged that loss in spectacular fashion with a one-sided wire-to-wire rout at the TD Garden. Jaylen Brown and Derrick White scored 25 points apiece to lead Boston, who barely noticed the absence of the injured Kristaps Porzingis. The Celtics threw down the gauntlet in the first quarter, racking up a whopping 41 points to open up a commanding 18-point advantage.

They extended that lead to 22 points by half-time, and kept up the pressure in the third quarter to lead 98-66 heading into the final frame. Boston head coach Joe Mazzulla could afford to rest his frontline players for the fourth with the game effectively won against an injury-hit Miami team missing Jimmy Butler and Jaime Jaquez Jr.

Mazzulla said the Celtics had not been thinking about last year's series loss to Miami. "I don't really worry about what happened last year," Mazzulla said. "At the end of the day I liked how we approached the series, regardless of who they were playing."

"It had an intentionality to it, had attention to detail, and had a consistent physicality," he added. "And that's the most important thing, regardless of who we're playing. We wake up tomorrow and we've got to do it all



BOSTON: Jayson Tatum #0 of the Boston Celtics takes a shot past Patty Mills #88 of the Miami Heat during game five of the Eastern Conference First Round Playoffs at TD Garden in Boston, Massachusetts. — AFP

over again versus another team."

Boston will now face either the fourth-seeded Cleveland Cavaliers or fifth seeds Orlando in the Eastern Conference semi-finals. Cleveland lead that series 3-2. The Celtics advance brimming with confidence after ruthlessly taking care of eighth-seeded Miami in five games. — AFP

Alcaraz crashes, Sinner hobbles out of Madrid

MADRID: Second-seeded Carlos Alcaraz saw his title defence and 14-match winning streak in Madrid come to an end at the hands of Andrey Rublev in the quarter-finals on Wednesday while top-seeded Jannik Sinner withdrew from the tournament citing a right hip injury.

Rublev upset home favorite Alcaraz 4-6, 6-3, 6-2 to reach the semi-finals. The seventh-seeded Rublev had lost his last five matches against top-three opposition and was 0-1 head-to-head against Alcaraz coming into the contest. He was also on a four-match losing streak heading into the Madrid Open.

All that seemed like a distant memory in the quarter-finals against Alcaraz as Rublev maximized on his powerful brand of tennis to shock the Spanish world number three and reach the semi-finals at a seventh different Masters 1000 tournament, from a full set of nine. Alcaraz missed the clay-court tournaments in Monte Carlo and Barcelona last month due to a forearm injury and needed a third-set tiebreak to squeeze past last year's finalist Jan-Lennard Struff in the fourth round on Tuesday.

He couldn't hold off an inspired Rublev though, his quest to become the first man to win three consecutive titles in Madrid coming to a crashing halt. "I think the key was that I think it was one of my first matches that I was completely calm all the match, I

didn't say one word, even if I was losing," said Rublev, who now owns at least one victory against each of the current world's top 10.

Alcaraz played a convincing first set, breaking serve in the fifth game en route to a 41-minute lead. But Rublev brought his A-game to take the next two sets and finished the match in just under two hours, firing 30 winners along the way. He will face Taylor Fritz in the semi-finals after the American clinched a 6-1, 3-6, 6-3 win over Francisco Cerundolo. Alcaraz says it has been a positive week in Madrid overall but admits he is still thinking about his forearm, whether it is painful or not.

'Close to 100%'

"Today probably I felt more in the forearm than yesterday's match. Playing three hours yesterday, I knew that I'm going to feel something or I'm going to think about it even more."

The two-time Grand Slam champion acknowledged he has to be patient with regards to his recovery, adding: "I'm going to go to Rome. I'm going to work these days to be close to 100 percent or in a good way to play Rome, but I'm going to decide these days." Sinner was due to face Felix Auger-Aliassime in the quarter-finals on Thursday but revealed he has been battling through a hip issue this week in the Spanish capital.

"My hip has been bothering me this week and has slowly been getting more painful. Taking the advice from the doctors we decided it's best to not play further and make it worse," wrote Sinner in a statement on social media.

The Italian has won 28 of 30 matches played so far this season, which has yielded him three titles at the Australian Open, Rotterdam and Miami. — AFP