

RIDESAFE
RIDE SAFE

BOOK YOUR RIDE NOW

DOWNLOAD THE APP NOW

4 NBK sponsors KALD's Persevering Student Award 2023/24 ceremony



8 NIC approves distribution of 15% cash dividends at AGM



9 Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait delivers strong performance in Q1 2024



16 Arsenal sink Bournemouth to move 4 pts clear in title race



Gaza campus protests go global

British-Palestinian doctor refused entry into France • Top Gaza surgeon killed in custody



LONDON: British-Palestinian plastic surgeon specializing in conflict injuries Ghassan Abu-Sittah speaks to the press during a demonstration in support of Palestinians at University College London's main entrance on May 3, 2024, as a pro-Palestinian camp has been set up on the campus. — AFP

DUBLIN: A global student movement to occupy university campuses has been gaining momentum and expanding rapidly in recent days, after dramatic scenes that unfolded between pro-Palestinian protesters and police at US colleges. The protests have rocked US campuses for weeks and have spread to countries including Australia, France, Ireland, Britain, Mexico and Canada. The US actions appeared to ease Friday after clashes with police, mass arrests and a stern White House directive to restore order.

Students at Ireland's prestigious Trinity College Dublin university manned an on-campus protest on Saturday against the Zionist entity's actions in Gaza, blocking the entrance to a library housing a world-famous medieval manuscript. Student activists described the protest, which began Friday, as a "solidarity encampment with Palestine", echoing similar protests on US campuses, as some also joined a Saturday march through the city center.

Dozens of students pitched tents on one of the main squares at the university, a Dublin tourist attraction, and piled benches in front of a library that houses the renowned ninth-century gospel manuscript the Book of Kells. Laszlo Molnarfi, president of the institution's student union, told Irish public broadcaster RTE that the students demand the university sever any relationships it has with the Zionist entity, and the protests would continue until the demands are met.

"The Book of Kells is now closed" for an indefinite period, Molnarfi posted on X, formerly Twitter. "No business as usual during a genocide," he added, demanding Trinity "cut ties" with the Zionist entity. The message was echoed at the protest march, with social media footage showing hundreds of attendees massed by the university chanting slogans and waving Palestinian flags. "Trinity students have joined the global campus uprising!" the Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign organizers said on X.

Police on Friday entered the elite Sciences Po university in Paris to remove dozens of students staging a pro-Gaza sit-in in the entrance hall, as protests fired political debate about the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. Demonstrations have struck education institutions in several French cities in recent weeks, echoing the mass Gaza protests that have led to clashes in US universities.

After the evacuation, around 300 people demonstrated on Pantheon Square around 1.5 km from the university in response to a call from student unions. "I'm very moved by what's going on in Palestine," said Mathis, 18, a music student at the nearby Sorbonne university who asked not to give his surname. Eric Coquerel, a senior lawmaker for the hard-left France Unbowed (LFI) party, said the "the government must accept young people mobilizing". "Instead, they often criminalize, caricature or slander them," he said.

Continued on Page 6

NEWS IN BRIEF

Condolences on Prince Badr's demise

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent cables of condolences to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud and Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammad bin Salman on the demise of Prince Badr bin Abdulmohsen bin Abdulaziz. Caretaker Prime Minister HH Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah also sent cables of solace to the Saudi King and Crown Prince. — KUNA

Condolences on Sheikh Tahnoun's demise

KUWAIT: Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah arrived in Abu Dhabi on Saturday and offered condolences on the demise of Sheikh Tahnoun bin Mohammad Al-Nahyan, the Representative of the Ruler in Al-Ain, at Al-Mishref Palace in the UAE capital. — KUNA

Canada arrests 3 over killing

VANCOUVER: Canadian police on Friday arrested three men over the killing last year in Vancouver of Sikh separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, whose death has been linked to the Indian government. Three Indian nationals, two aged 22 and one aged 28, were arrested Friday and charged with first degree murder and conspiracy charges. — AFP (See Page 7)

Iraq rainstorm flooding kills hikers

SULAIMANIYAH, Iraq: Floods caused by torrential rainstorms killed four hikers in the Sulaimaniyah region of northern Iraq on Friday, local officials told AFP. "Four members of a hiking team drowned because of heavy rains and flooding in Awaspil village" in Qaradah district, local official Rouf Kamal said. Civil defense spokesperson Aram Ali said eight other hikers survived the incident south of Sulaimaniyah, the autonomous Kurdistan region's second city. — AFP

Guns and sheep: Zionists seizing West Bank land

DEIR JARIR: Palestinians in the Zionist-occupied West Bank say armed Zionist settlers are increasingly seizing their lands by bringing livestock to so-called shepherding outposts and refusing to leave. One settler arrived recently near sunset on a hilltop near the village of Deir Jarir, wearing a black shirt and a green headscarf, like many Palestinian farmers, they said.

"The settlers imitate us in every way," said Abdullah Abu Rahme, a member of a Palestinian anti-settler group, who said the hardliners also em-

ploy violence and "throw stones at us and block roads". One local man, Haidar Abu Makho, 50, looked sadly across to a hill where settlers' sheep were now grazing, in the rural area near Ramallah.

The land, where settlers' bungalows and cars could be seen ringed by a wire fence, he said, "rightfully belongs to my grandfather and father and is meant to be passed down through the generations". But now, he said, "this shepherd, who is a settler... has obstructed my access to my land".

The Zionist entity has occupied the West Bank, home to three million Palestinians, since 1967. Around 490,000 Zionist settlers live there in communities considered illegal under international law. Violence has often flared, but the bloodshed has intensified since the October 7 attack by Gaza's rulers

Continued on Page 6



DEIR JARIR: A Zionist settler wearing the traditional garb of Palestinian farmers accompanies a flock of sheep on a hilltop near this Palestinian village east of Ramallah on April 25, 2024. — AFP

Sadiq Khan wins record third term as London mayor

LONDON: London's Labour mayor Sadiq Khan on Saturday secured a record third term, dealing the Conservatives another damaging defeat in their worst local election results in recent memory months before an expected general election. Khan, 53, easily beat Tory challenger Susan Hall to scupper largely

forlorn Tory hopes that they could prise the UK capital away from Labour for the first time since 2016.

The first Muslim mayor of a Western capital when first elected then, he had been widely expected to win as Labour surge nationally and the Conservatives suffer in the polls. In the end, he saw his margin of victory increase compared to the last contest in 2021. Victory continues a remarkable journey for the Pakistani immigrant bus driver's son and adds to a dismal set of results for Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, as his Tories finished a humiliating third in local council tallies after losing nearly 500 seats in voting Thursday across England.

Continued on Page 6



Sadiq Khan

Turkey suspends all trade with Zionists to force Gaza truce

ISTANBUL: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday said Turkey's move to halt trade with the Zionist entity was designed to force the country to a ceasefire in Gaza. The decision, announced on Thursday, is the latest indication of deteriorating relations between the two countries. "We have taken some measures to force (the Zionist entity) to agree to a ceasefire and increase the amount of humanitarian aid to enter" Gaza, Erdogan told a group of

businessmen in Istanbul. "We will oversee the consequences of this step we have taken in coordination and consultation with our business world."

Already in April Turkey, one of the few Muslim-majority nations to recognize the Zionist entity, announced it was restricting exports to the Zionist entity, covering 54 products from iron and steel to jet fuel. "We do not run after hostility or conflict in our region," Erdogan said Friday. "We do not want to see conflict, blood or tears in our geography. We know now that we did the right thing."

The Gaza Strip is suffering a humanitarian crisis caused by the Zionist entity's war against Hamas that has been raging since Oct 7, with the United Nations and aid agencies warning of impending famine. The Zionist entity's offensive against Hamas has killed more than 34,654 people in Gaza, mostly women and chil-

dren, according to the territory's health ministry.

An outspoken advocate of the Palestinian cause, Erdogan has become one of the most strident critics in the Muslim world of the Zionist entity's offensive in Gaza. He has accused the government of "state terrorism", branding Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu the "butcher of Gaza". But Turkey's trade action against the Zionist entity came after criticism inside the country against Erdogan's government for having failed to act sooner. His party suffered a historic defeat in the March 31 local elections, losing control of many cities, especially to the Islam-based Yeniden Refah (New Welfare) Party, which had called for harsher steps against the Zionist entity. Turkish-Zionist trade volume amounted to \$9.5 billion, Erdogan told journalists after Friday prayers in Istanbul. "We closed that door." — AFP



Local

Academy X host its graduation ceremony at Kuwait University

CODED aims to bridge the gender gap in technology, coding, AI



Photos show Academy X students. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: With media sponsorship from Kuwait Times and Kuwait News, along with the sponsorship of Zain, Academy X hosted its graduation ceremony at Kuwait University for the inaugural group of participants. This graduation marks the completion of the program for the first cohort, with more groups set to follow in joining Academy X. The program specifically focuses on empowering girls in the realm of technology and artificial intelligence, teach-

ing them how to kickstart their own businesses. During the event, the registered girls showcased their final projects, which they worked on throughout the duration of the program.

Upon completion, the girls will receive certificates acknowledging their proficiency in utilizing technology for entrepreneurial endeavors, along with trophies awarded to the top-performing projects. CODED, the organization behind Academy X, aims to bridge the noticeable gender gap in technology, coding, and artificial intelligence

fields. Rahaf Al-Enezi, the initiative's lead at CODED, told Kuwait Times: "Today, we gather to inspire and encourage girls, letting them know that they have the capability to excel in this domain and become integral members of the tech community."

Each participating group has a dedicated booth where they presented and elucidated their projects, articulating their purpose and potential for profitability. At these booths, attendees have the opportunity to engage with the girls, gaining insight into the projects'

intricacies and how they addressed specific needs or challenges."

Moreover, the girls discussed the monetization strategies associated with their projects, demonstrating a keen understanding of how their technological innovations could translate into viable business ventures. Through these interactions, attendees gained a comprehensive understanding of the girls' entrepreneurial endeavors and the economic opportunities inherent in the intersection of technology and business.



Rahaf Al-Enezi



Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UNESCO Ambassador Dr Adam Al-Mulla participates in the event. — KUNA

Kuwait urges protecting cultural heritage from climate change impacts

PARIS: Kuwait has called for rapid intervention and suitable measures to protect global cultural heritage from climate change impacts. Delivering Kuwait's speech before the sixth World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue in Azerbaijan's capital, Baku, Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UNESCO Ambassador Dr. Adam Al-Mulla referred to famous heritage sites that face imminent risks due to the rising water level. Al-Mulla said that without rapid intervention and proper action, these invaluable cultural assets are subject to damage and loss that cannot be fixed.

The connection between preserving heritage, climate change, and cultural dialogue is robust evidence of a relationship between humans and the environment, he said. This is shown by enhancing

dialogue to have a link among views and varied traditions and values, as well as daily practical experiments, he stated.

He made a presentation on UNESCO action in this matter that led, in light of the efforts of state parties, experts, and international organizations, to developing and updating a political document on integrating climate change into practices to preserve heritage. The updated document on preserving global heritage was approved in 2023 after in-depth discussions. Combating climate change requires multidimensional action and multilateral cooperation, with the active participation of UNSECO and international stakeholders, Al-Mulla noted.

Al-Mulla also called for actual and deep cooperation with UNESCO sectors through good programs and practices. He hoped that this dialogue could be a start to enhance action internationally in order to preserve heritage in the face of climate change. This forum is a unique platform for international organizations and conferences as well as prominent leaders to partake in discourse on urgent global issues. — KUNA

Gambia hails Kuwait's goodwill initiatives

KUWAIT: Gambian President Adama Barrow on Saturday received the Representative of HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya, on the sidelines of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's 15th session, currently held in the Gambian capital Banjul.

The Kuwait Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement that the minister conveyed greetings from His Highness the Amir, the Kuwaiti Government and people, and His Highness the Amir's success wishes for the OIC summit, due May 4-5, for the sake of bolstering cooperation and solidarity among Muslim nations, as well as his good wishes for Gambia and its friendly people so they may witness lasting prosperity and progress.

For his part, the Gambian President expressed gratitude and appreciation for the State of Kuwait, its leadership, government, and people, for their abundant contributions and goodwill initiatives, their responses to international events, their pioneering role in boosting stability, and their continuous support for diplomatic efforts to settle strife in the region with peaceful means and attain security and stability throughout the globe.

The ministry statement added that the two sides, during the meeting, reviewed close bilateral relations, means of boosting these bonds in various spheres, and discussed issues of common concern that serve mutual interests. The talks touched on current developments in the regional and international arenas, namely the tragic events in the Gaza Strip and proposed solutions to resolve the humanitarian crises, in addition to topics on the agenda of the OIC Summit.

Earlier, Gambian President Adama Barrow received Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Hussein Brahim Taha on the eve of the 15th Islamic Summit Conference. They reviewed the final preparations for the OIC Leaders' Summit, due in Banjul, the capital of Gambia, on May 4-5, according to a statement from the secretariat of the organization. The Summit, themed "Enhancing Unity and Solidarity through Dialogue for Sustainable Development," will also address key regional and international issues of importance to the OIC Member States.

The OIC Secretary-General congratulated Gambia on the excellent preparations and facilities put in place for the summit, commending the active role of Gambia within the organization as it assumes the presidency of the 15th Islamic Summit. On his part, President Barrow

reaffirmed his commitment to advancing the organization's agenda and fostering greater unity and solidarity among its member states during and after his tenure. The meeting also reviewed ways for strengthening cooperation between Gambia and the OIC, the statement added.

Recognition of Palestine

In another development, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has welcomed the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago's decision to recognize Palestine as a critical step consistent with international law and relevant UN resolutions. In a press statement, the OIC said



KUWAIT: The Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya arrived in Banjul, capital of Gambia, on Friday, leading Kuwait's delegation at the 15th Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. He was welcomed at the airport by Gambian Minister of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology Prof. Pierre Gomez and Kuwait Ambassador to Senegal and non-resident Ambassador to Gambia Adel Al-Amir. — KUNA

that it would also contribute to enabling the Palestinian people to exercise their legitimate rights, including their right to return, self-determination, and an independent state on the borders of 1967, with Jerusalem as its capital. The OIC renewed its call on all countries around the world that have not yet recognized Palestine to announce their recognition as soon as possible in support of international efforts aimed at ending the occupation. It stressed that this would achieve peace and stability in the region based on the vision of the two-state solution and relevant international legitimacy resolutions. — KUNA

Kuwait doctors conduct 40 surgeries in Gaza Strip

GAZA: The medical team of the Kuwait Society for Relief conducted 40 surgeries on the first day of work in the Gaza Strip at the European Gaza Hospital in Khan Yunis and the Kuwait specialized hospital in Rafah City, south of the Gaza Strip. Speaking to KUNA in a press statement, head of medical delegation Omar Al-Thuwaibi said the team would carry out more surgeries in Gaza in the coming days, adding that a relief convoy carrying about five tons of food supplies and needs for children was sent to northern Gaza.

Meanwhile, head of relief projects at the society, Mahmoud Al-Mesbah, said the second Kuwaiti team is offering aid to displaced people, adding that this team distributed clothes to children. It is a unique act in its kind, as a charitable event is organized to help families choose what they like, he stated. Water and hygiene bags will be handed out to refugees, who are suffering badly from the lack of potable water, in addition to giving hot meals and food parcels to people, he told KUNA in remarks.

Kuwait's team is present all the time to offer aid to Gazans in cooperation with partners, he noted. Kuwait's relief team arrived in Gaza via Rafah Border Crossing on Tuesday to support the Palestinian people's steadfastness and health sector by conducting



Photo shows medical team of the Kuwait Society for Relief. — KUNA photos

surgeries for patients and those injured.

Medical aid

In another development, Palestinian and Syrian refugees residing in Jordan were the recipients of healthcare aid through a relief program launched by the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), the charity's chief, Maha Al-Barjas, said. The program entails conducting critical surgeries on some 90 patients suffering from an array of ailments, she told the press after launching the endeavor undertaken by a team of healthcare professionals led by Kuwaiti physicians.

The venerable Kuwaiti charity is no stranger to such

initiatives, having launched similar programs in the past in conjunction with its counterparts in the region, she added, saying these endeavors date back to more than a decade. On the purpose of the program, Kuwaiti otolaryngologist Dr. Khaled Al-Sabeeh said it is tantamount to a message of support for the world's most hapless people, in addition to an effort to mitigate the misery they are living in.

Journalists slam Zionists

The Federation of Arab Journalists strongly condemned the murder and kidnapping of journalists by occupying forces in Gaza and the West Bank on Friday,

demanding global accountability for these crimes. On World Press Day (May 3) and Arab Press Day (May 6), the federation reiterated in a statement that occupying crimes constitute violations of freedom, democracy, and international law, including the four Geneva Conventions. The federation additionally urged the recognition of murder, kidnapping, and forced disappearances of journalists as crimes against humanity, calling for the perpetrators to be prosecuted at the International Criminal Court. Zionist occupation forces have been launching brutal aggressions on the Gaza Strip, killing at least 34,622 Palestinians and injuring nearly 77,867 others. — KUNA



GAZA: A Palestinian woman pushes a wheelchair packed with food items as she walks past a rubbish dump in Gaza City.

Local

Zain, SACGC proud of KU team's win at VEX Robotics World Championship in US

Team brought home 'Build Award' after qualifying from National Robotics Competition

KUWAIT: Zain and Sabah Al Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC) – a center of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), have expressed their pride in the win achieved by the team from the Computer Science Department, College of Science, Kuwait University, who brought home the Build Award from the VEX Robotics World Championship 2024 held recently in the United States.

The champions were welcomed at Kuwait International Airport by Acting Dean of the College of Science and Assistant Dean for Student Affairs at Kuwait University Dr Mohammed Hussain bin Sabt, Zain Kuwait Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti, and Sabah Al Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity General Manager Neda Al Dehani.

The Kuwait University team - Abdullah Al Jaber, Abdulwahab Al Obaid, Abdulrahman Al Dughaim, and Osama Hassan, under the supervision of Dr. Noura Al Jeri – is the first university-level team from the Middle East to claim an award at the VEX Robotics World Championship 2024 (out of 15 awards). The team was among 120 university-level teams participating in the competition from around the world.

The team won the Build Award after meticulously designing a robot with high attention to detail so that was competently capable of competing in the World Championship. Criteria for this award included durability, strength, reliability, and safety. In addition, team members had to show teamwork, effective communication, professionalism, and thorough understanding of the build process. The team's participation in the World Championship came after they qualified from the Kuwait National Robotics Competition (KNRC) held early this year. It was organized by the Computer Science Department, College of Science, Kuwait University in partnership with Zain and Sabah Al Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity, and in collaboration with the Ministry of Education.

Zain, SACGC, and Kuwait University are proud of all six teams qualified from KNRC who represented Kuwait in the World Championship, including middle school, high school, and university levels. Reaching this international arena is a testament to Kuwaiti young people's talent and creativity, and affirms the fact that they are more than capable to compete with their peers from around the globe. This international experience has also contributed to growing the students' passion for technology, and will encourage them to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), skills that are prioritized by today's job markets.

In addition, this step was a direct out-



Dr Mohammed Hussain bin Sabt, Waleed Al Khashti and Neda Al Dehani welcome the champions at Kuwait International Airport.

come of the fruitful partnership between the local public and private sectors to empower the next generation of innovators in Kuwait. The Kuwait National Robotics Competition (KNRC) featured 32 teams, with 170 students from 11 high schools, 13 middle schools, and 6 universities across private and public academic institutions. Over 40 volunteers helped organize the competition, along with a panel of 8 judges from Kuwait University, the Kuwait Technical College (KTECH), and private sector experts.

This partnership came under the umbrella of Innovation Nation, the initiative under which all of Zain's innovation and entrepreneurship programs fall, with a focus on STEM areas. The initiative mainly targets young people and entrepreneurs and aims to foster a digitally capable generation. This announcement adds to the long list of programs and initiatives presented and supported by Zain and SACGC under their strategic partnership. The collaboration focuses on a number of strategic pillars and sustainable goals like supporting tech innovation, empowering entrepreneurs and startups, encouraging creativity, investing in the digital skills of young people, and more.



Abdullah Al Jaber, Abdulwahab Al Obaid, Abdulrahman Al Dughaim, and Osama Hassan after winning in Dallas, Texas.



KUWAIT: Photos show Kuwait's streets. There are numerous reasons why people may choose to reside in a particular location. These reasons can be influenced by personal preferences, lifestyle choices, opportunities, family considerations, and more. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Why expats, Kuwaitis live in certain areas

By Chidi Emmanuel and Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: There are numerous reasons why people may choose to reside in a particular location. These reasons can be influenced by personal preferences, lifestyle choices, opportunities, family considerations and more. Among other factors, proximity to the workplace, family, friends and a support network have become crucial factors for many people when deciding where to live.

"Proximity to the workplace and friends is a significant factor for many foreigners when choosing where to live. People often choose residential areas that are closer to their workplaces, while others want a place where they can easily communicate with people of the same nationality. Other factors include affordable rent, safety and recreational opportunities. I chose Sabah Al-Salem because it is near my workplace and is quite affordable," Lisa Matt Tendai, a Zimbabwean expat, told Kuwait Times.

As for Gabriel Alain, a Filipino expat, Salmiya remains the best. "Many Filipinos prefer to stay in Salmiya because of the vibrant Filipino expat community here. There are lots of Filipino restaurants and shops in this area, which is why we call it 'Little

Manila' (referring to the area near the old Salmiya souq). Others might prioritize quieter neighborhoods like Mangaf or Jabriya for family-friendly environments or lower costs. It often depends on individual preferences and priorities," he explained.

Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and its environs are home to a large number of people from the Asian Subcontinent. "We feel at home here. Rents are cheaper in Jleeb compared to Salmiya and other parts of Kuwait. Also, we can easily buy our local foodstuff here," Rohan Singh, an Indian expat, told Kuwait Times.

For Kuwaitis, the choice might appear to be more straightforward, with the government providing land and a housing loan for married Kuwaitis in designated residential areas. However, many choose to reject the allocated land, opting to wait, sometimes for years, for the government to distribute land in an area they prefer. Despite the different circumstances, Kuwaitis' choice of area is influenced by the same factors as expats: Proximity to workplaces and support networks.

The influx of individuals seeking employment opportunities has led to a concentration of residents in specific regions. Sociological and psychological factors are also at play. Kuwait Times spoke to locals to further understand why they prefer residing in certain areas despite the provision of government houses in alternative, less crowded locations.

Mohammad Hasan, a middle-aged Kuwaiti citizen, said the psychological factor forms the largest barrier hindering acceptance and encouragement to move to another residential area and change the place of residence. "Due to adapting to the surrounding people, and the sense of belonging to the



KUWAIT: In this file photo, people sunbathe and swim at the Marina Crescent beach resort in Salmiya, some 20 kilometers east of the Kuwaiti capital.

community one grew up with, including school friends, neighbors and other community members, in addition to the local services and social relationships, one develops a significant and fundamental psychological barrier that instills fear of transitioning to a different area," he said.

"People from the same community share a common culture, social norms, interactions and behaviors, making it easier to understand their duties, etiquette and social tastes," Hasan said. The different cultural norms may pose challenges or lead

to awkwardness in understanding and adapting to the new environment, he elaborated. "Having family members and relatives living in the same residential area or nearby areas can facilitate communication and visits easily," he added.

Reem Fares, a Kuwaiti citizen, said workplace location and its proximity to the place of residence is an important factor when choosing where to live. Living close to where you work helps with saving time by facilitating quick access to work and returning home after work, she explained.

Local

Kuwait Times
Established 1961THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher

YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief

ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24833199 Extn. 359
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 220
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125
P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
Website: www.kuwaittimes.com

In my view

'Mask Off'

By Nermin Al-Houti

Local@kuwaittimes.com

Writing for children, whether literary or theatrical, is a formidable task, particularly when targeting the late childhood stage of ages 12 to 16. Today, we'll delve into the journey of Ahmad Al-Awadhi, the visionary writer who defied the odds by writing the play "Mask Off" specifically for this age group, and also helmed its direction. Rather than probing the storyline or the exceptional acting performances, our focus lies on the myriad elements of the theatrical performance, encompassing the values embedded within "Mask Off" and how they are presented - a crucial aspect for shaping the minds of our youth and society at large.

Foremost among these values is the portrayal of the Palestinian cause, exemplified by the poignant song titled "Sourah" (Image). This song encapsulates a rich historical narrative, emphasizing the significance of imagery and its enduring impact. Through poignant visuals depicting Palestinian children and the struggles endured since the inception of the cause, "Sourah" imparts valuable lessons on history and resilience, paying homage to martyrs and cultural icons who have left an indelible mark on the Arab world.

The meticulously crafted songs in "Mask Off" serve as vehicles for delivering educational and moral messages. They address societal values that may have waned in certain communities, such as patriotism, integrity, empowerment, truthfulness and the role of media. By instilling these virtues in our children, we lay the groundwork for a society built on sound principles, poised to shape its future with confidence. The production design of "Mask Off" seamlessly integrates various artistic disciplines, creating an immersive experience akin to an "artistic theatrical box". From set design to costumes and lighting, every element contributes to the cohesive artistic vision, enriching it with diversity and depth.

The performances by the cast are nothing short of exceptional, transcending age barriers to embody a world-class standard of acting. What sets "Mask Off" apart is the ensemble's remarkable talent, physical prowess and synchronized movements, forming a harmonious artistic nucleus that spans generations and resonates within the theater space. "Mask Off" stands as a testament to the transformative power of theater. It reminds us that through the medium of drama, we can cultivate a more enlightened and cultured society. Gratitude is extended to all who contributed to this remarkable production, for in giving us theater, they have enriched us with the essence of civilization.

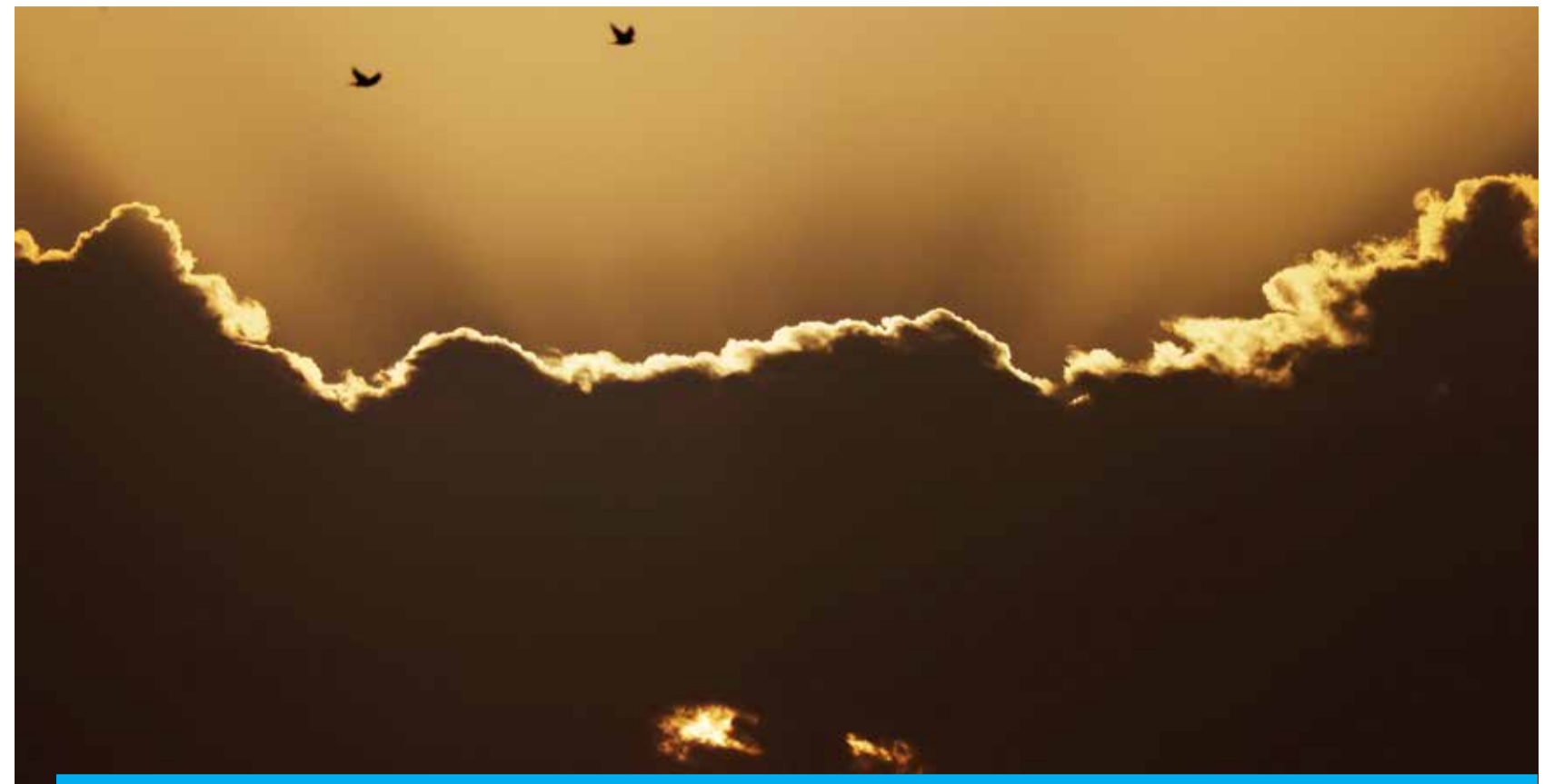


Anti-smoking campaign targets youths and kids

KUWAIT: The National Program for Combating Smoking is organizing up to 30 activities throughout May in a campaign themed "Protecting Children from the Intervention of the Tobacco Industry." Dr. Ahmad Al-Shatti, the deputy chairperson of the program, said in remarks to KUNA that the activities are organized at shopping malls, schools, social development centers, and the primary health care center. Youth who use e-cigarettes are prone to switch to conventional cigarettes by three times' chances, and adolescents aged between 13 and 15 use the electronic cigarettes at higher proportions as compared to the grown-ups, he said.

The e-cigarettes have proven ineffective for quitting smoking, Dr. Al-Shatti said. Moreover, there have been "worrying proofs about their negative health impact." Producers promote "false pieces of evidence," claiming that they cause harm. Dr. Al-Shatti said, warning that the producers have continued to sell millions of these cigarettes. The campaign kicked off on Thursday in coordination with the Ministry of Health and other public departments and institutions. — KUNA

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Birds fly past clouds as the sun rises above Kuwait City on May 3, 2024. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

NBK sponsors KALD's Persevering Student Award ceremony

Honoring outstanding students with learning difficulties

Shaikha Al-Bahar:

- We have built strategic partnerships with associations whose goals resonate our social mission in supporting different segments of society
- KALD's activities provide massive opportunities for our youth and children, motivating them to unleash their capabilities and talents

Amaal Al-Sayer:

- NBK is an economic edifice that has always shown commitment to serving the country and its people since its founding
- The award is based on evaluating students according to tenacity and perseverance, and not only on achievement

KUWAIT: As an official sponsor of the youth activities of the Kuwait Association for Learning Differences (KALD) and a key supporter of many of its events, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has sponsored KALD's Persevering Student Award for school year 2023/2024. The awarding ceremony was hosted by NBK at its HQ in the presence of Shaikha Al-Bahar, Deputy Group CEO of NBK, and Amaal Al-Sayer, Founder and Chair of KALD, along with a number of executives from NBK and KALD. During the event, the accolades were presented to the winners of the 3rd edition of the Persevering Student Award from the students with specific learning difficulties or ADHD.

Huge potentials

In her speech during the ceremony, Al-Bahar stated, "We, at NBK, are pleased to celebrate a new group of persevering students who won the KALD's Award for the school year 2023-2024. Our sponsorship of KALD's activities emanates from our belief in the massive opportunities they provide for children and youth with learning difficulties, by motivating them to unleash their abilities and talents and develop their social skills." "Throughout the past years, NBK built strategic partnerships with institutions, and associations whose goals resonate with our social mission, seeking to provide support to different segments of society."

Over decades, NBK has created a rich record in supporting and sponsoring social and cultural activities in Kuwait in line with its unwavering commitment to fulfill its responsibilities towards society, especially when it comes to providing the required academic and social support to students. In this context comes our strategic partnership with KALD, which provides care for a group that deserves all our support and encouragement from our children and youth with learning difficulties. Our sponsorship of KALD's activities aligns with our sustainability strategy, which integrates education as a key factor," she noted.

"NBK shows unwavering commitment to supporting charities and childcare institutions, and will always stand out among the private sector institutions in terms of sponsoring purposeful social programs in the fields of healthcare, childcare, social, environmental, sports and awareness development. It is also a pioneer in introducing large-scale programs and initiatives in many areas, most notably education, healthcare, employment, training, and support of national talent, reflecting its leading role at the forefront of socially responsible institutions in Kuwait."

Integrated educational program

On her part, Amaal Al-Sayer, the Founder and Chair of KALD, praised NBK's continuous contributions over the years to supporting KALD's activities, stressing that this support had a substantial impact in achieving the desired goals of these activities. "The ceremony marking the 3rd edition of KALD's Award is a memorable occasion as it gives us the opportunity to extend deepest appreciation to NBK for its support and sponsorship of different activities of KALD's Integrated Educational Program, which was well-received by schools, teachers as well as parents, with highly engaging activities for students," she mentioned.



"National Bank of Kuwait is a well-fitting name for such an economic edifice, which, since its founding 72 years ago, has always shown commitment to serving the country and its people," she emphasized. "KALD's Persevering Student Award comes as part of the social support under the Integrated Educational Program launched by KALD, which consists of 3 parts including academic, psychological and social support," Al-Sayer explained. "We launched this award to encourage students with learning difficulties to persevere and work hard in their studies and promote a culture of excellence among students by honoring the outstanding among them. In addition, it aims to develop positive attitudes towards learning, as teachers who evaluate stu-

dents focus on tenacity and perseverance, not only on achievement, which aligns with our endeavors to create a motivating and encouraging environment for KALD's members," she added.

The Kuwaiti Association for Learning Differences (KALD) is a non-profit organization that collaboratively works towards helping all individuals, especially students in private schools and special education in Kuwait, who have ADHD and Learning Difficulties. The Association aims to identify and develop the capabilities of these students and to provide them with academic, psychological and social support, through setting up awareness programs, training courses, and recreational activities for the students and their families.





Canada arrests three Indians over killing of Sikh activist

Death toll in Brazil flood rises to 56

Page 6

Page 7



GAZA: Palestinian children ride their bicycles along a street devastated by Zionist bombardment in Gaza City on May 3, 2024. — AFP

Gaza truce talks resume in Egypt

WHO chief warns Rafah assault 'could lead to a bloodbath'

GAZA: Talks resumed in Egypt Saturday aimed at halting months of war in Gaza between Hamas and the Zionist entity that have triggered protests around the world. Mediators from Qatar, Egypt and the United States sat down with a Hamas delegation to hear the militant group's response to a proposal that would halt fighting for 40 days and exchange hostages for Palestinian prisoners, according to details released by Britain.

The Zionist entity has yet to send a delegation to Cairo, with a top official telling AFP that it would do so only if there was "positive movement" on the proposed framework. "Tough and long negotiations are expected for an actual deal," the Zionist official cautioned. Previous negotiations stalled in part on Hamas' demand for a lasting ceasefire and Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's repeated vows to crush the group's remaining fighters in the southern city of Rafah, which is flooded with displaced civilians. The prospect of an assault on Rafah has sparked deepening international concern.

More deaths

The Zionist entity's offensive against Hamas has killed at least 34,654 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the territory's health ministry. Gaza's civil defense agency and hospitals reported more deaths from Zionist strikes in Rafah as well as areas farther north. The United Nations says more than 70 percent of Gaza's residential buildings have been completely or partly destroyed, and rebuilding will require an effort un-

seen since the aftermath of World War II. Accepting a ceasefire deal with the Zionist entity should be a "no-brainer" for Hamas, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said late Friday. "The reality in this moment is the only thing standing between the people of Gaza and a ceasefire is Hamas," Blinken said. The World Health Organization says 1.2 million people, half of the Gaza Strip's population, have sought refuge in Rafah.

WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned of possible dire implications for the 1.2 million people sheltering in Rafah. "WHO is deeply concerned that a full-scale military operation in Rafah, Gaza, could lead to a bloodbath, and further weaken an already broken health system," Tedros said on X, formerly Twitter. In a statement, the WHO announced contingency efforts, but warned "the broken health system would not be able to cope with a surge in casualties and deaths that a Rafah incursion would cause".

"This contingency plan is Band-Aids," Rik Peepkorn, the WHO representative in the Palestinian territories, told reporters in Geneva. "It will absolutely not prevent the expected substantial additional mortality and morbidity caused by a military operation." According to the WHO, most of the besieged territory's health facilities have been damaged or destroyed amid heavy Zionist bombardment. Only 12 of Gaza's 36 hospitals and 22 of its 88 primary health facilities are "partially functional", the UN health agency said.

"As part of contingency efforts, WHO and partners are urgently working to restore and resuscitate health services," the statement said. It added that Rafah's

three currently operational hospitals would become unreachable "when hostilities intensify in their vicinity". Instead, the WHO is working to restore south Gaza's largest hospital, the Nasser Medical Complex in nearby Khan Yunis, and establish additional medical sites. "The ailing health system will not be able to withstand the potential scale of devastation that the incursion will cause," Peepkorn said.

A military operation in Rafah could spark a new wave of displacement, leading to more overcrowding, limited access to food, water and sanitation and more outbreaks of disease, he added. In its statement, the WHO called "for an immediate and lasting ceasefire and the removal of the obstacles to the delivery of urgent humanitarian assistance into and across Gaza, at the scale that is required".

Jens Laerke, spokesman for the UN humanitarian agency OCHA, said that a military operation in Rafah "could lead to a slaughter". "For agencies already struggling to provide humanitarian aid in Gaza, a ground invasion would strike a disastrous blow," he told reporters. "Any ground operation would mean more suffering and death." Egypt's Al-Qahera News, which is linked to the intelligence services, quoted an unidentified high-ranking source as saying "there is significant progress in the negotiations" and that the mediators have "reached an agreed-upon formula on most points of contention". A senior Hamas official told AFP before the talks resumed that the movement "looks with an open mind to changes in the occupation's (the Zionist entity's) position and the American position, but there are issues that must be addressed". — AFP

Cyclone bears down on flood-hit Kenya, Tanzania

NAIROBI: Beaches were deserted and many shops closed on Saturday as heavy rains and winds from a tropical cyclone buffeted coastal areas of Tanzania and Kenya. Both countries have gone on alert for Tropical Cyclone Hidaya, after weeks of torrential rains and floods that have wreaked havoc in many parts of East Africa and claimed more than 400 lives.

But there were no reports of casualties or damage as of Saturday afternoon as the cyclone rolled in from the Indian Ocean and made landfall in Tanzania. "It's so strange today to see only few people at the beach. We are used to seeing crowds, especially during the weekend," said Yusuf Hassan, a resident of Tanzania's main city Dar es Salaam. "But I am sure people are afraid of the cyclone."

The Kenya Meteorological Department said the cyclone was already being felt offshore, with strong winds exceeding 40 knots and waves of over two meters. It forecast heavy rainfall along the coast from Sunday, intensifying over the following two days, but said Kenya would only feel the effects of the cyclone from the "fringes" because of its location on the equator. Interior Minister Kithure Kindiki announced a ban on all beach activities, swimming and fishing.

'Maximum precautions'

The Tanzanian Meteorological Authority said there had been strong winds and heavy downpours along the coast overnight. In the Mtwara area, it said over 90 mm of rain had been reported in 24 hours, nearly twice the average May rainfall of 54 mm. The agency advised people living in risk-prone areas and those involved in marine activities to take "maximum precautions".

In the Zanzibar archipelago, all marine transport has been suspended. "We believe it's not safe to travel under such weather conditions caused by the cyclone," Zanzibar Maritime Authority director general Sheikh Ahmed Mohamed told AFP. Cyclone season in the southwest Indian Ocean normally lasts from November to April and there are around a dozen storms each year.

'No corner spared'

Kenyan President William Ruto on Friday described the weather picture as "dire" and postponed the reopening of schools indefinitely, with the approach of what he said was the nation's first-ever cyclone. Around 210 people have died in Kenya from flood-related incidents and nearly 100 are missing. A further 165,000 have been forced to flee their homes, according to government data.

"No corner of our country has been spared from this havoc," Ruto said in a televised address, blaming the devastating cycle of drought and floods on a failure to protect the environment. "Sadly, we have not seen the last of this perilous period." On Thursday, the interior ministry ordered anyone living near major rivers or dams to leave the area within 24 hours or face "mandatory evacuation for their safety". — AFP

ICC warns against unspecified threats and intimidation

THE HAGUE: The International Criminal Court prosecutor warned on Friday against unspecified threats and intimidation, amid reports that Zionist entity is concerned the tribunal could issue arrest warrants over the war in Gaza. The Hague-based ICC did not say if the comment related to its investigation into possible war crimes by Zionist or Palestinian groups in Gaza and the West Bank. The office of ICC chief prosecutor Karim Khan said on X, formerly Twitter, that it was aware of "significant public interest" in its activities and said it sought to "engage constructively with all stakeholders."

But it added that the court's "independence and impartiality are undermined, however, when individuals threaten to retaliate against the court or against court personnel." Such threats, even not acted upon, may constitute an offence against the ICC's "administration of justice", it warned, calling for an end to such activity.

Khan's office declined to say where the threats had come from and which investigation was concerned, when questioned by AFP. US and Zionist media reports have suggested the ICC prosecutor could issue warrants against both Zionist politicians - including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu - and Hamas leaders. Ne-

tanyahu said Wednesday on X that the ICC was "contemplating issuing arrest warrants against senior Zionist government and military officials as war criminals".

"This would be an outrage of historic proportions," he said, alleging that the ICC was "trying to put Zionists in the dock". The Axios news outlet has reported that Zionists warned Washington it would take retaliatory steps against the Palestinian Authority that could lead to its collapse if the ICC issues arrest warrants. US members of Congress had also warned of retaliation by Washington, Axios reported. The United States says it also opposes the ICC probe into conduct in Gaza, arguing it has no jurisdiction.

'Oppose any threats'

Neither the United States nor Zionists are members of the court. The White House reiterated that position on Friday, while condemning any threats against the ICC. "We obviously oppose any threats or intimidation to public officials, including ICC officials," White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told a briefing.

She said she would not comment on "what could be next and if we would weigh in if they were to move forward" with charges. In 2020 the administra-



BOGOTA: Colombian Minister of Justice Nestor Osuna (left) and International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor Karim Khan attend a press conference at the San Carlos Palace in Bogota, on April 25, 2024. — AFP

tion of then-president Donald Trump targeted the ICC with sanctions over its investigation into Afghanistan. The Biden administration lifted them. One legal expert said the statement by the ICC's office of the prosecutor (OTP) was likely related to the "ongoing investigation in Palestine" given recent Zionist government statements about "threats to the Palestinian Authority in response to the potential issuance of arrest warrants".

Zionist entity's reported retaliatory steps were aimed at the Palestinian authorities, "not at the ICC or the OTP", said Gabriele Chlevickaite,

a researcher at the Hague-based Asser Institute for international law. However, "some statements by Zionist officials could be interpreted as threatening the OTP officials indirectly and, or, interfering with the investigation," she told AFP. This would not only be an offence under the court's founding Rome Statute "but a blatant disregard of the rule of law," Chlevickaite added.

The ICC opened a probe in 2021, as well as Hamas and other armed Palestinian groups, over possible war crimes in the occupied Palestinian territories. — AFP

International

Death toll in Brazil flood rises to 56

Rising water levels straining dams, threatening metropolis of Porto Alegre

PORTO ALEGRE, Brazil: The death toll from floods and mudslides triggered by torrential storms in southern Brazil has climbed to 56 people, with another 67 missing, the country's civil defense agency said Saturday. Rising water levels in the state of Rio Grande do Sul were straining dams and threatening the metropolis of Porto Alegre, where authorities were scrambling to evacuate some neighborhoods that had been submerged.

Rescuers faced a colossal task, with entire towns made inaccessible by floodwaters. Residential areas found themselves underwater as far as the eye can see, with roads destroyed and bridges swept away by the powerful currents. At least 265 municipalities have suffered storm damage in Rio Grande do Sul since Monday, according to local officials, injuring dozens of people and displacing more than 24,000 -- a third of whom have been brought to shelters. President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva visited the region Thursday, vowing "there will be no lack of human or material resources" in responding to the disaster, which he blamed on climate change. Climatologist Francisco Eliseu Aquino told AFP on Friday that the devastating storms were the result of a "disastrous cocktail" of global warming and the El Nino weather phenomenon.

South America's largest country has recently experienced a string of extreme weather events, including a cyclone in September that claimed at least 31 lives. Aquino said the region's

particular geography meant it was often confronted by the effects of tropical and polar air masses colliding—but these events have "intensified due to climate change."

As the rain kept beating down, rescuers in boats and planes searched for scores of people reported missing among the ruins of collapsed homes, bridges and roads. Rising water levels in the state of Rio Grande do Sul were straining dams and threatening the metropolis of Porto Alegre with "unprecedented" flooding, authorities warned.

"Forget everything you've seen, it's going to be much worse in the metropolitan region," Governor Eduardo Leite said Friday as the streets of the state capital, with a population of some 1.5 million, started flooding after days of heavy downpours in the region. The state's civil defense department said at least 265 municipalities had suffered storm damage in Rio Grande do Sul since Monday, injuring 74 people and displacing more than 24,000 -- a third of whom have been brought to shelters.

At least 68 people were missing, and more than 350,000 have experienced some form of property damage, according to the latest data. And there was no end in sight, with officials reporting an "emergency situation, presenting a risk of collapse" at four dams in the state.

The level of the state's main Guaiaba river, meanwhile, was estimated to have risen 4.2-4.6 meters (about 13.7-15 feet), but could not be measured as the gauges have washed away, the mayor of



Grab from a handout video released by the Sao Paulo Civil Defense showing the flooded Taquari river bridge, which is part of the BR-396 highway that connects the cities of Lageado and Estrela, in the region of Vale do Taquari, Rio Grande do Sul state, Brazil on

Porto Alegre said. As it kept rising, officials raced to reinforced flood protection. Porto Alegre's worst recorded flood was in 1941, when the river reached a level of 4.71 meters.

Elsewhere in the state, several cities and towns have been completely cut off from the world in what Governor Leite described

as "the worst disaster in the history" of Rio Grande do Sul. Many communities have been left without access to drinking water, telephone or internet services.

Tens of thousands have no electricity. President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva visited the region Thursday, vowing "there will be no lack

of human or material resources" in responding to the disaster, which he blamed on climate change. The central government has sent aircraft, boats and more than 600 soldiers to help clear roads, distribute food, water and mattresses, and set up shelters. School classes have been suspended state-wide. —AFP

Biden bashes Trump, honors Democrats at medal ceremony

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden took pointed digs at election rival Donald Trump Friday as he awarded the country's top civilian honor to Democratic allies including former House speaker Nancy Pelosi and vice president Al Gore.

Biden said the veteran Pelosi had "defended democracy" during the January 6, 2021 assault on the US Capitol by a mob of Trump supporters enraged by the Republican's election loss a few weeks earlier.

Gore meanwhile was "amazing" for accepting his own disputed election loss to George W. Bush in 2000 for the sake of the country, Biden said, drawing a clear contrast to Trump's refusal to accept defeat. The comments came as 81-year-old Biden present-

ed them with the Presidential Medal of Freedom in a ceremony at the White House, whose political overtones were clear as the next US presidential election looms just six months away.

But the 19 winners also covered the fields of culture, activism and sport, including Oscar-winning Malaysian actress Michelle Yeoh, Olympic swimming champion Katie Ledecky and, posthumously, a Black civil rights leader who was murdered in 1963.

Other prominent Democrats honored included former secretary of state John Kerry, 80, and former New York mayor and billionaire businessman Michael Bloomberg, 82. Before placing the award around the neck of Pelosi, 84, Biden said that "history will remember Nancy as the greatest speaker of the House of Representatives."

"On January 6, Nancy stood in the breach and defended democracy," said Biden, who has repeatedly bashed Trump for what he says is the former president's fueling of the Capitol assault.

Pelosi also led efforts to impeach Trump over the assault. Biden then praised Gore, 76, who served as vice president to Bill Clinton and narrowly lost the 2000

election after a Supreme Court decision, before going on to be a climate campaigner. "After winning the popular vote, he accepted the outcome of a disputed presidential election for the sake of unity and trust in our institutions," Biden said.

"That to me was amazing what you did Al—but I won't go into that," Biden said to laughter. He often uses a similar phrase to indicate that he is referring to Trump without naming him directly.

There was also a medal for Black Democratic congressman Jim Clyburn, whose endorsement in 2020 saved Biden's flailing campaign by securing him the support of Black voters in the South Carolina primary.

The list wasn't all political. Yeoh, 61, who in 2023 became the first Asian woman to win the best actress Oscar for her performance in "Everything Everywhere All at Once," "continues to shatter stereotypes and enrich American culture," the White House said.

The medal was awarded posthumously to civil rights activist Medgar Evers, whose notorious murder six decades ago shaped the US struggle for racial equality. Evers, 37, was gunned down in the driveway of his home in Jackson, Mississippi in 1963. A member of the



WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden presents the Presidential Medal of Freedom to US retired teacher and activist Opal Lee in the East Room of the White House in Washington, DC, on May 3, 2024. — AFP

Ku Klux Klan, Byron De La Beckwith, was convicted of his murder in 1994. Evers' widow Myrlie "continued the fight to seek justice and equality in his name" long after his death, the White House said. —AFP

Gaza campus protests go global...

Continued from Page 1

Sciences Po sites in the French cities of Le Havre, Dijon, Reims and Poitiers have all seen disruption, blockades or occupations. Police also removed students from the Institute for Political Studies (IEP) in Lyon. Around 100 students had occupied a lecture hall at Science Po's branch in the southeastern city late on Thursday. Law enforcement on Friday removed a dozen students who were blocking the entrance to a university site in nearby Saint-Etienne. And in the northeastern city of Lille, police broke up a student blockade of the ESJ journalism school and deployed outside the nearby Sciences Po building, allowing exams to go ahead.

Hundreds of supporters of the Zionist and Gaza faced off at a Sydney university Friday, bringing echoes of US college protests and Middle East tumult to a campus and continent on the other side of the world. Rival demonstrators came eye-to-eye shouting slogans and waving flags. Still, except for a few heated exchanges, the protest and counterprotest passed off peacefully.

Pro-Palestinian demonstrators have been camped for 10 days on a green lawn in front of the University of Sydney's sprawling Gothic sandstone edifice — a bastion of Australian academia. Deaglan Godwin, a 24-year-old arts and science student and one of the camp's organizers, said US protests were both an inspiration and a warning. New York's Columbia University, the scene of police crackdowns and mass arrests, inspired "us to set up our own camp", Godwin said. He said Columbia is "also now a warning, a warning that the government is willing to use quite lethal, brutal force in order to put down Palestinian protesters".

British-Palestinian doctor and Glasgow university rector Ghassan Abu-Sittah said Saturday he was denied access to France where he was to report on the medical situation in Gaza. Abu-Sittah said on X, formerly Twitter, that he had been invited to give an account to French senators of his experience as a doctor in Gaza since the Zionist offensive there, but had been blocked at Paris' Roissy Charles-de-Gaulle airport.

He had already been stopped from entering Germany last month where he had hoped to attend a "Palestinian Congress" along with former Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis, who was also denied access. "I am at Charles De Gaulle airport. They are preventing me from entering France," Abu-Sittah said on X. "I am supposed to speak at the French Senate today. They say the Germans put a 1 year ban on my entry to Europe."

In another X post on Saturday, Abu-Sittah said that "the French authorities are denying me access to an earlier flight and insisting on sending me on the last flight back" to London, calling the measure "an act of utter vindictiveness". He said "fortress Eu-

rope" was "silencing the witnesses to the genocide while (the Zionist entity) kills them in prison". Kuwait-born Abu-Sittah spent 43 days in Gaza, notably at the territory's largest hospital Al-Shifa.

Palestinian advocacy groups said Thursday that the head of orthopedics at Gaza's largest hospital Al-Shifa has died in Zionist custody, saying he had been tortured during his detention. Doctor Adnan Ahmed Atiya Al-Barsh died at the Zionist Ofer prison in the occupied West Bank last month, the Palestinian Prisoners Affairs Committee and the Palestinian Prisoners Club said in a joint statement.

Barsh, 50, had been arrested with a group of other doctors last December at Al-Awda Hospital near the Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza. He died on April 19, the prisoners groups said, citing Palestinian authorities. "His body is still being held," they added. The groups said they had also learnt that another prisoner from Gaza, Ismail Abdel Bari Rajab Khadir, 33, had died in Zionist custody.

The groups said evidence suggested the two men had died "as a result of torture". They said Barsh's death was "part of a systematic targeting of doctors and the health system in Gaza". The health ministry in Gaza said the surgeon's death amounted to "murder", adding that it brought to 492 the number of health workers killed in Gaza since the war erupted nearly seven months ago.

In the US, police in Manhattan cleared an encampment at New York University after sunrise, with video posted to social media by an official showing protesters exiting their tents and dispersing when ordered to do so. At the University of Chicago, the school's president said talks with protesters on a compromise had failed and indicated that the university might intervene in an encampment there as a result.

The news came the same day that dozens of American flag-wielding counter-protesters showed up and confronted the school's pro-Palestinian group, but police separated the two sides, local media reported. The University of California, Los Angeles, announced that Friday's classes would be held remotely after police cleared a protest camp there and arrested more than 200 people. More than 2,000 arrests have been made in the past two weeks across the United States, some during violent confrontations with police, giving rise to accusations of use of excessive force.

An encampment has grown at Canada's prestigious McGill University, where administrators on Wednesday demanded it be taken down "without delay". However, police had yet to take action against the site. Dozens of pro-Palestinian students from Mexico's largest university camped out Thursday in solidarity with similar protests that have swept colleges in the United States. Mounting flags and chanting "Long live free Palestine", the protesters set up tents in front of the National Autonomous University of Mexico's (UNAM) head office in Mexico City. The students called on the Mexican government to break diplomatic and commercial ties with the Zionist entity. — Agencies

Guns and sheep: Zionists seizing...

Continued from Page 1

Hamas sparked the devastating war in the Palestinian coastal territory. Human rights groups have blamed the hardline religious-nationalist settler movement for an upsurge in attacks and land grabs since the start of the Gaza war. Among the most radical are the so-called "hilltop youth", often teenage school dropouts who dream of settling all of the biblical land of the Zionist entity, and who sometimes also clash with Zionist security forces.

Zionist analyst Elhanan Miller said the hilltop shepherds are "far-right extremists who settle Palestinian land illegally", mostly in the southern West Bank and Jordan Valley. Miller told AFP that many of them are "marginalized" youths who left school early and use shepherding of sheep and goats as a cover to seize land and natural resources. Rights groups say settlers in shepherding outposts carry guns and have used attack dogs to threaten and attack Palestinians, sometimes killing their livestock and destroying their property.

The groups have been especially active around Deir Jarir, a village of about 5,000 people, said the local man, Abu Makho. "The settlers have effectively blocked access to vast stretches of land around Deir Jarir, preventing both agricultural use and grazing for the people across tens of kilometers," he said. "By situating a shepherd with a flock

of sheep atop a hill, a substantial portion of land is seized... denying Palestinians access to it." He said settlers had "aggressively confiscated" local houses and tractors as well as horses and donkeys, all "symbols of the Palestinian traditional farming life".

Rights group B'Tselem said in a report in March that attacks had surged, including incidents where settlers in vehicles were "speeding erratically directly into Palestinian flocks and herds". B'Tselem also charged that settler groups have enjoyed backing by Zionist security forces. "Through cooperation and collaboration among the military, police, settlers... (the Zionist entity) has reduced grazing areas available to Palestinians, blocked regular water supply and took measures to isolate the Jordan Valley from the rest of the West Bank," it said.

Zionist settlement watchdog group Peace Now said that so far this year, as world attention has focused on Gaza, the Zionist entity has seized more than 1,000 hectares of West Bank land. In March, Zionist authorities declared as state land 800 hectares next to a farmer's home near the Jordan Valley village of Jiftlik, a move that often leads to restrictions on Palestinians' access.

In areas near Deir Jarir, other residents also said they had been impacted, at great cost to their livelihoods. Suleiman Khouriyeh, the mayor of the nearby village of Taybeh, population 1,800, said the "entire eastern region has been encroached upon by numerous hilltop shepherds". "We are unable to access the olive groves that we rightfully own" during harvest season, he said, adding that the community's losses amounted to thousands of dollars. Khouriyeh said that locals don't have "the power or strength to confront the heavily armed" settlers. "We are defenseless against them and their weapons." — AFP

Sadiq Khan wins record third term...

Continued from Page 1

With Labour making huge gains, the beleaguered leader's Conservatives lost crunch mayoral races in Manchester, Liverpool, Yorkshire as well as the capital and elsewhere. In the West Midlands, where Tory incumbent Andy Street is bidding for his own third term, votes were reportedly being recounted and too close to call. An unexpected Tory defeat there could leave Sunak with only one notable success: Its mayor winning a third term in Tees Valley, northeast England — albeit with a vastly reduced majority.

Writing in Saturday's Daily Telegraph, Sunak conceded "voters are frustrated" but insisted "Labour is not winning in places they admit they need for a majority". "We Conservatives have everything to fight for," Sunak argued. Labour, out of power since 2010 and trounced by Boris Johnson's Conservatives at the last general election in 2019, also emphatically snatched a parliamentary seat from the Conservatives.

It seized on winning the Blackpool South constituency and other successes to demand a national vote. "Let's turn the page on decline and usher in national renewal with Labour," party leader Keir Starmer told supporters Saturday in the East Midlands, where the party won the mayoral race. Sunak must order a general election be

held by Jan 28 next year at the latest, and has said he is planning on a poll in the second half of 2024.

Labour has enjoyed double-digit poll leads for all of Sunak's 18 months in charge, as previous Tory scandals, a cost-of-living crisis and various other issues dent the ruling party's standing. On Thursday, they were defending nearly 1,000 council seats, many secured in 2021 when they led nationwide polls before the implosion of Johnson's premiership and his successor Liz Truss's disastrous 49-day tenure. With almost all those results in by Saturday afternoon, they had lost close to half and finished third behind the smaller centrist opposition Liberal Democrats.

If replicated in a nationwide contest, the tallies suggested Labour would win 34 percent of the vote, with the Tories trailing by nine points, according to the BBC. Sky News' projection for a general election using the results predicted Labour will be the largest party but short of an overall majority. Its by-election scalp in Blackpool — on a mammoth 26-percent swing — was the Conservatives' 11th such loss in this parliament, the most by any government since the late 1960s.

Speculation has been rife in Westminster that restive Tory lawmakers could use the dire local election results to try to replace him. But that prospect seems to have failed to materialize. However, it was not all good news for Labour. The party lost control of one local authority, and suffered some councilor losses to independents elsewhere, due to what analysts said was its stance on the Zionist-Hamas war.

International

Canada arrests three Indians over killing of Sikh activist

Murder of Nijjar plunged Canada and India into a serious diplomatic crisis

VANCOUVER, Canada: Canadian police on Friday arrested three men over the killing last year in Vancouver of a Sikh separatist, whose death has been linked to the Indian government. The murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar plunged Canada and India into a serious diplomatic crisis last fall after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau suggested Indian government involvement in the homicide.

India dismissed the allegations as "absurd" and responded furiously, briefly curbing visas for Canadians and forcing Ottawa to withdraw diplomats. Three Indian nationals, two aged 22 and one aged 28, were arrested Friday and charged with first degree murder and conspiracy charges. They are accused of being the shooter, driver and lookout on the day Nijjar was killed.

They were arrested by police in Edmonton, in the neighboring province of Alberta, where they reside, and are being held pending further proceedings. All had been in Canada for between three and five years, police said at a news conference. "This investigation does not end here. We are aware that others may have played a role in this homicide," said Mandeep Mooker of the Royal Ca-

nadian Mounted Police's homicide investigations team.

Nijjar—who immigrated to Canada in 1997 and became a citizen in 2015 -- advocated for a separate Sikh state, known as Khalistan, carved out of India. He was wanted by Indian authorities for alleged terrorism and conspiracy to commit murder. On June 18, 2023, he was shot dead by masked assailants in the parking lot of the Sikh temple he led in suburban Vancouver. Trudeau announced several months later that Canada had "credible allegations" linking Indian intelligence to the killing and expelled an Indian official, spurring the diplomatic tit-for-tat with New Delhi.

Mooker said Canadian police are still investigating the ties of the suspects, "if any, to the Indian government." "It is a bit of a sigh of relief that the investigation is moving forward," Moninder Singh, a close friend of Nijjar, told AFP. "It is ultimately India who is responsible and hiring individuals to assassinate Sikh leaders in foreign countries," said Singh, spokesperson for the British Columbia Council of Gurdwaras. In November, the US Justice Department charged an



VANCOUVER: This combination of handout pictures show (from left) Karanpreet Singh, Kamalpreet Singh and Karan Brar, who are charged in relation to the homicide of Hardeep Singh Nijjar. — AFP

Indian citizen living in the Czech Republic with allegedly plotting a similar assassination attempt on American soil.

Prosecutors said in unsealed court documents that an Indian government official was also involved in the planning. The shock allegations came after US President Joe Biden hosted Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a rare state visit, as Washington seeks clos-

er ties with India against China's growing influence. US intelligence agencies have assessed that the plot on American soil was approved by India's top spy official at the time, Samant Goel. The Washington Post reported this week. Canada is home to some 770,000 Sikhs, who make up about two percent of the country's population, with a vocal minority calling for an independent state of Khalistan. — AFP

India, Japan slam Biden's 'xenophobic' comment

NEW DELHI/TOKYO: India is not xenophobic, the country's foreign minister has insisted, after comments by US President Joe Biden suggesting the South Asian nation and fellow ally Japan were struggling economically because they rejected immigrants. Biden, who is seeking reelection against Republican rival Donald Trump in November, made the remarks at a campaign fundraising event in Washington this week.

Foreign minister S Jaishankar told a media roundtable Friday that Biden's comments did not match India's reality. Japan also hit back Saturday at US President Joe Biden's comments about the Asian ally being "xenophobic" like China and Russia, calling

the characterization "unfortunate" and misguided. Biden lumped together allies Japan and India with rivals China and Russia at a recent campaign event, arguing the four economic powers were struggling because of their unwillingness to accept immigrants.

"First of all, our economy is not faltering," Jaishankar said, according to a report of the discussion published Saturday by the Economic Times newspaper. "India has been a very unique country," he added. "I would say actually, in the history of the world, that it's been a society which has been very open... different people of different societies come to India."

India is one of the world's fastest-growing economies with annualized GDP growth of 8.4 percent in the December quarter, according to official data in February. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu-nationalist government has been accused by critics of discriminating against Muslims, including through recently enacted reforms to India's citizenship law. The amended law sparked huge protests when it was first passed by parliament in 2019 and

finally enacted in March, with Amnesty International warning that it still risked being used as a tool, alongside a mooted National Register of Citizens, to deprive some Muslims of citizenship.

"There are people who publicly said on record that... a million Muslims will lose their citizenship in this country," Jaishankar said. "Why are they not being held to account? Because nobody has lost citizenship."

Biden had clubbed allies India and Japan in with rivals China and Russia in remarks intended as a defence of US immigration policy. "Why is China stalling so badly economically? Why is Japan in trouble? Why is Russia in trouble? And India? Because they're xenophobic. They don't want immigrants," Biden had said at the Wednesday fundraiser. Tokyo responded Saturday by saying it was "unfortunate that comments not based on an accurate understanding of Japan's policy were made". Since taking office in 2021, Biden has strengthened ties with US allies in Asia, in particular India and Japan. — AFP

India oppn social media chief held over doctored video

NEW DELHI: Indian police said Saturday they had arrested the social media chief of the country's main opposition party over accusations he doctored a widely shared video during an ongoing national election. The Congress party's Arun Reddy was detained late Friday in connection with the edited footage, which falsely shows India's powerful interior minister Amit Shah vowing in a campaign speech to end affirmative action policies for millions of poor and low-caste Indians.

Shah is often referred to as the second-most powerful man in India after Hindu-nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and the pair have been close political allies for decades. Reddy "was arrested yesterday on investigation about... a doctored video of the home minister", deputy commissioner of Delhi police Hemant Tiwari told AFP.

"We produced him in the court and he is in police custody," Congress spokesperson Shama Mohamed confirmed Reddy's arrest to AFP but denied he was responsible for creating or publishing the clip. "He is not involved in any doctored video. We are supporting him," she said.

Authorities seized Reddy's electronic devices for forensic verification, the Indian Express newspaper reported Saturday, quoting an unnamed police officer who accused Reddy of having "cropped and edited" the video. Shah has been campaigning on behalf of Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which is widely expected to win a third term when India's six-week election concludes next month.

Analysts have long expected Modi to triumph against a fractious alliance of Congress and more



MUMBAI: Supporters of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) take part in a rally before the filing of nomination papers for their north central Mumbai constituency candidate Varsha Gaikwad, in Mumbai. — AFP

than two dozen parties that have yet to name a candidate for prime minister. His prospects have been further bolstered by several criminal investigations into his opponents and a tax investigation this year that froze Congress's bank accounts. Opposition figures and human rights organizations have accused Modi's government of orchestrating the probes to weaken rivals.

Modi's government remains widely popular a decade after coming to power, in large part due to its positioning of the nation's majority Hindu faith at the centre of its politics despite India's officially secular constitution. That in turn has left India's 220

million-strong Muslim community feeling threatened by the rise of Hindu nationalist fervor. Since voting began last month, both Modi and Shah have stepped up campaign rhetoric on India's principal religious divide in an effort to rally voters. In the original campaign speech at the centre of the police investigation against Reddy, Shah vows to end affirmative action measures for Muslims established in the southern state of Telangana. Modi last month used a campaign rally to refer to Muslims as "infiltrators" and "those who have more children", prompting condemnation and an official complaint to election authorities by Congress. — AFP

Pakhtunkhwa, where 84 people died, including 38 children, and more than 3,500 homes were damaged.

The UN children's agency UNICEF called last month for urgent action to save children on the frontlines of climate change. "Children in Pakistan are at 'extremely high risk' of the impacts of the climate crisis," it said in a statement.

"Despite significant aid efforts, 9.6 million children were still in need of humanitarian assistance in flood affected areas by December 2023," it said. In some areas of Punjab, the most populous province and the breadbasket of a country facing an economic crisis, heavy rains and hailstorms caused damage to the wheat harvest, a staple food source. "The flash floods also caused extensive damage to vast area of crops, particularly the wheat crop, which was ready for harvest," the UN humanitarian agency OCHA said in a recent report. "This has resulted in significant economic losses for local farmers and communities, compounding the losses from the rain-related incidents," it said. — AFP

Pakistan records 'wettest April' in more than 60 years

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan experienced its "wettest April since 1961", receiving more than twice as much rain as usual for the month, the country's weather agency said in a report. April rainfall was recorded at 59.3 millimeters, "excessively above" the normal average of 22.5 millimeters, Pakistan's metrology department said late Friday in its monthly climate report. There were at least 144 deaths in thunderstorms and house collapses due to heavy rains in what the report said was the "wettest April since 1961".

Pakistan is increasingly vulnerable to unpredictable weather, as well as often destructive monsoon rains that usually arrive in July. A third of Pakistan

News in Brief

15 dead in Indonesia floods

JAKARTA: At least 15 people have died after landslides and flooding in central Indonesia swept away dozens of houses and damaged roads, the country's disaster agency said Saturday. Indonesia is prone to landslides during the rainy season, with the problem aggravated in some places by deforestation, with prolonged torrential rain causing flooding in some areas of the archipelago nation. The landslides struck Luwu regency in South Sulawesi on Friday just after 1 am local time, said Abdul Muhari, spokesperson of Indonesia's disaster mitigation agency (BNPB), in a statement. — AFP

Vietnam temperature hit records

HANOI: More than 100 temperature records fell across Vietnam in April, according to official data, as a deadly heatwave scorches South and Southeast Asia. Extreme heat has blasted Asia from India to the Philippines in recent weeks, triggering heatstroke deaths, school closures and desperate prayers for cooling rain. Scientists have long warned that human-induced climate change will produce more frequent, longer and intense heatwaves. Vietnam saw three waves of high temperatures in April, according to data published Friday by the National Centre for Hydro-Meteorological Forecasting, with the mercury peaking at 44 degrees Celsius (111.2 Fahrenheit) in two towns earlier this week. — AFP

Manila bishops seek divine relief

MANILA: Catholic bishops in the Philippines are pitching in to seek divine relief from the extreme heatwave scorching the country, instructing their flock to recite special prayers for rain and lower temperatures. Rising temperatures have forced the government to shut down tens of thousands of schools over the past week, while increased demand has stressed the country's already strained power supply. A widespread El Nino drought that began early this year is compounding the problem, ruining 5.9 billion pesos (\$103 million) worth of farm produce so far according to the Department of Agriculture. — AFP

Nigeria gunmen kill 25 in raids

KANO: Gunmen from criminal gangs killed 25 people when they raided four villages in northwestern Nigeria in reprisals over military offensives on their hideouts, a local security official said Friday. The attacks on Thursday took place in Katsina State, one of the regions in northwest Nigeria hit by armed gangs known locally as bandits who carry out mass kidnappings for ransom and looting raids on villages. Bandit militias stormed the villages of Unguwar Sarki, Gangara, Tafi and Kore in Sabuwa district late on Thursday, opening fire on residents, said Nasiru Babangida, Katsina state internal security commissioner. "Twenty-five people were killed in the attacks on the four communities, 19 of them in Unguwar Sarki village alone," Babangida told local radio. — AFP

Georgians protest disputed bill

TBILISI: Thousands of Georgians protested on Friday in fresh rallies against a controversial "foreign influence" bill backed by the government but criticized for mirroring repressive Russian legislation, an AFP journalist saw. Massive rallies have gripped the Caucasus country for almost a month after the ruling Georgian Dream party reintroduced the bill, although numbers were down on Friday compared to previous demonstrations that gathered tens of thousands of people. Police have at times resorted to force to disperse gatherings, using tear gas and rubber bullets on Wednesday. The interior ministry said police arrested one person on Friday and 23 others the previous day. — AFP

US congressman indicted

WASHINGTON: Federal prosecutors indicted a US congressman Friday on bribery and money laundering charges connected to a bank in Mexico and an energy company owned by Azerbaijan. Henry Cuellar, a Democrat from Texas, accepted around \$600,000 in exchange for advancing the interests of the bank and the former Soviet Republic over seven years through at least November 2021, according to the indictment. "In exchange for the bribes paid by the Azerbaijani oil and gas company, Congressman Cuellar allegedly agreed to use his office to influence US foreign policy in favor of Azerbaijan" the Department of Justice (DOJ) said in a statement. — AFP

Sudan army chief's son dies

ISTANBUL: A son of Sudan's army chief and de-facto leader Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, who was seriously injured in a road accident in Turkey, died in hospital, local media reported on Friday. Mohammed Fattah al-Burhan Rahmane was riding his motorbike in Turkey's capital, Ankara, in March when he collided with a utility vehicle and was thrown several meters off his bike. He was transferred to a hospital where he was admitted to intensive care. He died in hospital, the private DHA news agency reported on Friday. — AFP



KUWAIT: Khaled Al-Falah chairs the General Assembly of the National Investments Company.

NIC's AGM approves distribution of 15% cash dividends of capital



شركة الاستثمار الوطنية
NATIONAL INVESTMENTS COMPANY

Al-Falah: NIC maintains sustainable growth backed by solid strategic plan

KUWAIT: The National Investments Company held its AGM on Thursday, 2/5/2024, at its headquarters in Al-Khaleejia Complex. 77.230 percent of the shareholders attended in person and electronically.

During the AGM, NIC Chairman Khaled Waleed Al-Falah highlighted the successes and achievements generated, backed by a solid strategic plan, ongoing support of the Board of Directors, the passion and dedication of employees, while maintaining sustainable growth in a way that reflects the strength of the company's financial position and the flexibility of its business model.

Following the Board of Directors' approval of the proposed agenda at the AGM, Al-Falah announced that NIC achieved KD 4.1 million in profits in 2023. As a result, the Board recommended the distribution of cash dividends of 15 percent of the capital, ie, 15 fils per share (after deducting treasury shares), for the financial year ended Dec 31, 2023. These dividends, a testament to our commitment to shareholder value, will be distributed according to the applicable record dates and rules.

Al-Falah thanked all shareholders for their confidence in the board, which formed real basis for the company's strategy. NIC achieved positive indicators at all levels despite the local and global chal-



NIC Chairman Khaled Waleed Al-Falah

- NIC maintained its solid financial position with a solid strategic approach
- The flexibility of the company's strategies will drive NIC towards a stronger performance in 2024



NIC CEO and Board Member Fahad Al-Mukhaizim

- We have started the year with solid investment operations, including several successful deals worth exceeding half a billion USD until the end of 2023
- More than 22 percent growth in new portfolio clients, including local and international individuals and firms

lenges that impacted the performance of the local, regional, and international financial markets.

Al-Mukhaizim stressed that the company's investment funds achieved positive returns during 2023 thanks to the dynamic strategic approach. NIC achieved the optimal long-term returns for clients by reducing the risks involved in the stock markets and the success of the financial instruments team during the same year of signing a market maker service agreement with three companies listed on Boursa Kuwait, including companies that NIC maintained their survival within the Premier Market level, increasing the number of companies that our company offers it the role of the Market Maker on its shares to twelve. This makes the National Investments Company one of the largest investment companies that provide Market Maker services in Boursa, Kuwait.

"The company's success was based on its wise strategy in attracting investments and advisory services," said Al-Mukhaizim, who explained that it started 2023 with a wide set of investment operations that included many mergers, acquisitions, and capital increases for several companies.

NIC also succeeded in managing many private placements and qualitative advisory services on Boursa Kuwait. The value of deals until the end of 2023 amounted to approximately exceeding half a billion USD, which was represented in a pioneering sale of the largest and most successful deals in the education sector in Kuwait, in addition to the company's implementation of the second partial purchase in Kuwait on behalf of one of our clients, and also the completion of the acquisition of a major foods company through a cash capital increase.

The company also succeeded in subscribing to the capital increase of a major media company and obtaining a non-binding letter of intent from a strategic investor for one of our clients within the oil and gas sector, deals that reinforce our role as trusted financial consultants in Kuwait.

Praising the success of the Alternative Investment Management team in adopting strategic investments within the real estate sector, Al-Mukhaizim said: "This was achieved through partnerships with several local and foreign real estate professionals while investing in the development and leasing of various projects, including a residential real estate project in the United States of America, the renovation, leasing and sale of three Class I warehouses in France, in addition to renting real estate to one of the pioneers of the food sector in Europe.

The team also worked with subsidiaries and associates to improve financial performance and create added value for these companies through asset restructuring and providing exit deals. In addition, the National Investments Company also had a dominant market share for advisory and investment services, making it a pioneer and distinguished company in this field. This strategy has increased liquidity for

are launching innovative investment products that meet the market's needs and customers' aspirations. The establishment of the "NFP" platform, a digital platform that connects sectors digitally to implement customer requests faster and more accurately, and the development of the electronic real estate system contributed to facilitating collection services and improving the customer experience in all their matters.

Wise governance system

On the other hand, Al-Mukhaizim stated that NIC is committed to modernizing the governance system in line with the requirements of the Capital Markets Authority and the governance procedures related to the investment sector, in addition to managing risks effectively and efficiently by adopting mechanisms through which the international standards on risk management are applied by prestigious financial institutions, which is a vital part of the requirements of corporate governance and prudent management of the company's assets and the assets of its clients.

Sustainability efforts

Corporate Social Responsibility forms an essential part of NIC's strategy; the company is committed to this role and is working to raise awareness of its importance as part of its annual program. Given the local and global interest in sustainability and social, environmental, and corporate governance (ESG), NIC has supported national sustainability as it became a critical driver to enhance opportunities to consolidate a sustainable approach by adopting a proactive responsibility in several areas; also NIC is planning to issue a dedicated sustainability report during this year.

Training initiatives and activities

At the AGM, the National Investments Company highlighted its role in corporate social responsibility, which includes supporting, sponsoring, and implementing initiatives, activities, and events on various grounds. As a strategic supporter, NIC has contributed to Creative Confidence's "Shift" program, designed specifically for newly graduated Kuwaiti women, by qualifying them to enter the investment labor market in the local markets and the region.

Corporate social responsibility

In support of sports activities aimed at spreading health and sports culture among the community and raising and developing the name of Kuwaiti sports, NIC participated as a platinum sponsor of the Open Padel Championship. To contribute to humanitarian, social, and charitable work, NIC has provided Eid Al-Fitr clothing for families in need in cooperation with the Kuwait Food and Relief Bank. The company also supported many educational and academic activities and events at the local level. NIC has supported the Marketing Management Club at Kuwait University by providing specialized investment workshops, developing its expertise in investment and financial work, and supporting its academic and professional goals.

Words of appreciation

Toward the end of the meeting, Khaled Al-Falah expressed his appreciation to The Board of Directors, the executive management team, and all NIC employees for their endless efforts to maintain a high level of performance for the company and achieve positive results that align with its strategy.

Al-Falah also expressed his gratitude to the Capital Markets Authority, Boursa Kuwait, the Central Bank of Kuwait, and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry for their ongoing support and efforts in advancing development. "May God bless our beloved Kuwait and keep it safe," he concluded.

Khaled Waleed Al-Falah:

- We continue to provide exceptional services to our customers and maximize the rights of the company's shareholders

Fahad Abdulrahman Al-Mukhaizim:

- Despite the daunting global economic challenges, NIC has maintained its revenues and improved its resources, a testament to our resilience and commitment to our shareholders

lenges that impacted the performance of the local, regional, and international financial markets.

Positive Indicators

Al-Falah stated that 2023 was a constructive year for NIC, as the company continued to adopt a sustainable approach, which helped in achieving annual profits, noting that favorable rates were achieved concerning profitability indicators and return on both average assets and average shareholders' equity, improving asset quality indicators and success in maintaining reasonable cost and revenue ratios at the same time, which reflected the flexibility of our strategies and demonstrated a steady pace towards providing better customer service and maximizing shareholder rights.

He also highlighted the most prominent financial indicators of the National Investments Company during the past year, saying that the company's total assets reached KD 249.3 million by the end of 2023. The total shareholders' equity of the parent company reached KD 173.3 million, and revenues reached KD 13.8 million.

Prestigious award

Achievements generated in 2023 resulted in NIC receiving 'Best Wealth Management Company in Kuwait 2023' for the Best for Ultra category (High Net Worth Individuals in Kuwait) by Euromoney International during the Private Banking Awards in London. The company received one of the most critical regional awards in the financial sector, a prestigious and pioneering achievement that enhanced the company's position, product quality, and leadership in Kuwait.

A year full of achievements

Fahad Al-Mukhaizim, Chief Executive Officer and Board Member of NIC said that the financial results achieved by the company in 2023 confirm its commitment to innovation, sustainability, and operational excellence, which is reflected in enhancing the efficiency and solidity of its financial position, improving and maintaining the assets managed by attracting investments in multiple investment portfolios and the company's diversified investment opportunities with distinctive value and stimulating figures during the year 2023 through its new customers.

The company achieved additional demand for investment in funds managed by the company, by attracting investors in various portfolios and offering them an additional percentage of more than twenty-two percent on the number of investment portfolios for new individuals, local companies, and foreign investors. In addition, we provided several distinguished services to our clients in various



A view of the audience attending the AGM.

Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait delivers strong performance in Q1 2024

Bank reports a net profit of KD 14.52 million in Q1, an increase of 35%

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) proudly announced its robust financial results for Q1 2024, once again affirming its position as a leading financial institution.

Financial performance

ABK reported a net profit of KD 14.52 million, representing a 35 percent increase and an increase in Earnings per Share (EPS) of 50 percent from 4 fils to 6 fils. Operating profit also witnessed an increase of 25 percent, reaching KD 27.80 million while operating income also increased by 21 percent to KD 51.86 million, reflecting the bank's strong profitability and shareholder value creation.

Total assets of the bank reached KD 6.51 billion while maintaining steady growth in loans and advances amounting to KD 4.27 billion, with customer deposits at KD 3.91 billion, affirming the group's reputation as a trusted financial partner. Moreover, the bank's non-performing loan (NPL) ratio stood at 1.34 percent, with NPL coverage at 462 percent, capital adequacy ratio (CAR) at 16.27 percent, and Shareholders' equity at KD 593.52 million, further underscoring ABK's financial stability, healthy financial position, and robust balance sheet.

Economic overview

Commenting on the strong performance, Talal Behbehani, Chairman of ABK, said, "Kuwait's resilient economic environment in 2024, characterized by efforts to diversify and strengthen the economy, has played a significant role in supporting ABK's recent strong financial results."

He continued, "ABK's strategic alignment with the evolving economic landscape, coupled with our focus on innovation, customer-centric services, and operational excellence, has enabled the bank to capitalize on these opportunities, drive sustainable growth, and deliver value to stakeholders amidst a promising economic backdrop."

Furthermore, Behbehani recapped on the recent upgrade of the group's shares from the main market to the premier market of Boursa Kuwait during Q1. This achievement is a reflection of the group's success in meeting the criteria required for the upgrade that also signifies shareholders' confidence in ABK's stock, as evidenced by the trading rates aligning with stipulated requirements. Behbehani also high-

lighted the potential for increased trading in ABK's stock by international institutions and funds following the stock's inclusion in Boursa Kuwait's Premier Market index as a result of this development.

Credit ratings

ABK is pleased to announce that it maintains its strong credit ratings of A from Fitch and A2 from Moody's, Behbehani said, "This

UAE continue to significantly contribute to the group's profits. Behbehani stated that ABK continues to take precautions and develop prudent plans to address the economic challenges in Egypt. In addition, the group persists in its efforts through its Dubai International Financial Center (DIFC) branch to gain the trust of global investors, secure loan deals, and enhance financial performance.

Engineering and Construction Company. This partnership, in collaboration with Commercial Bank of Kuwait and Burgan Bank, underscores the strong relationships and trust the group has cultivated with global institutions across different sectors, thanks to its unique solutions, professional approach, and ability to meet diverse needs.

He stated that Q1 also witnessed the re-opening of the Jabriya branch after under-

standing growth and fulfilment," said Al-Sumait.

Recognizing that employees are the driving force behind its success, he claimed that ABK actively acknowledges and rewards performance and contributions, both within and outside the workplace. Recently, the bank organized a series of events and initiatives aimed at celebrating and rewarding employees for their dedication, innovation, and commitment to excellence, such as the Ramadan



Talal Behbehani

ABK's focus on innovation, customer-centric services, and operational excellence, has enabled us to capitalize on several opportunities

ABK Chairman



Abdulla Al-Sumait

ABK started off Q1 strong with a series of noteworthy achievements and initiatives

ABK's Acting Group CEO

essentially reflects our financial stability, creditworthiness, and risk management capabilities. It also signifies that our bank continues to be perceived as a reliable partner with increased investor confidence."

Environmental, social, and governance (ESG)

ABK's steadfast commitment to ESG principles underscores its dedication to responsible and sustainable banking practices. Behbehani affirmed, "The bank recognizes the importance of incorporating ESG considerations into operations to create long-term value for all stakeholders while positively impacting the environment and society."

In alignment with this commitment, ABK has embarked on developing a comprehensive five-year group strategy and framework that will further enhance its ESG efforts and enable it to persevere in the future. Behbehani continued, "This strategic initiative aims to integrate ESG criteria into decision-making processes, enhance transparency, promote ethical standards, and drive positive social and environmental outcomes."

Egypt and the United Arab Emirates
International operations in Egypt and the

Digital advancement

ABK persists in its relentless pursuit of digital advancements, exemplified by the recent launch of its new state-of-the-art website, underscoring the bank's commitment to innovation and enhancing customer experience. Describing the new platform, Abdulla Al-Sumait, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer at ABK, said, "Our new website embodies cutting-edge technology, intuitive design, and user-friendly features that cater to the evolving needs and preferences of digital-savvy customers." The layout, user interfaces, and tools offer customers a convenient and engaging platform to access ABK's banking services, information, and support anytime, anywhere.

This integration of technology with customer-centric principles both elevates the bank's digital presence and also reinforces its reputation as a forward-thinking financial institution that prioritizes customer satisfaction, engagement, and convenience in an increasingly digital-driven world.

An active start

Al-Sumait mentioned that in Q1 of 2024, the group signed a \$250 million credit facility agreement with South Korea's Daewoo

going a complete renovation, complemented by the latest technologies in the banking industry. This achievement occurred within a period of three months, demonstrating ABK's commitment to innovation and excellence in customer service. Al-Sumait stressed that the upcoming period will witness the continuation of the plan across the bank's branches in various governorates with the aim of improving its competitive position. Furthermore, the bank launched a series of new and uplifted products and services, of which included its new cashback credit card proposition. This is in addition to ABK's continuous endeavors to launch several offers and promotional campaigns as part of its strive to attract new customers to its constantly growing family.

Employee empowerment

ABK's unwavering dedication to employee empowerment and recognition plays a pivotal role in fostering a culture of excellence, engagement, and motivation within the organization. "We are committed to recognizing and valuing employees as integral partners in the bank's growth journey. We place a strong emphasis on empowering them through training, development opportunities, and a supportive work environment that nurtures their profes-

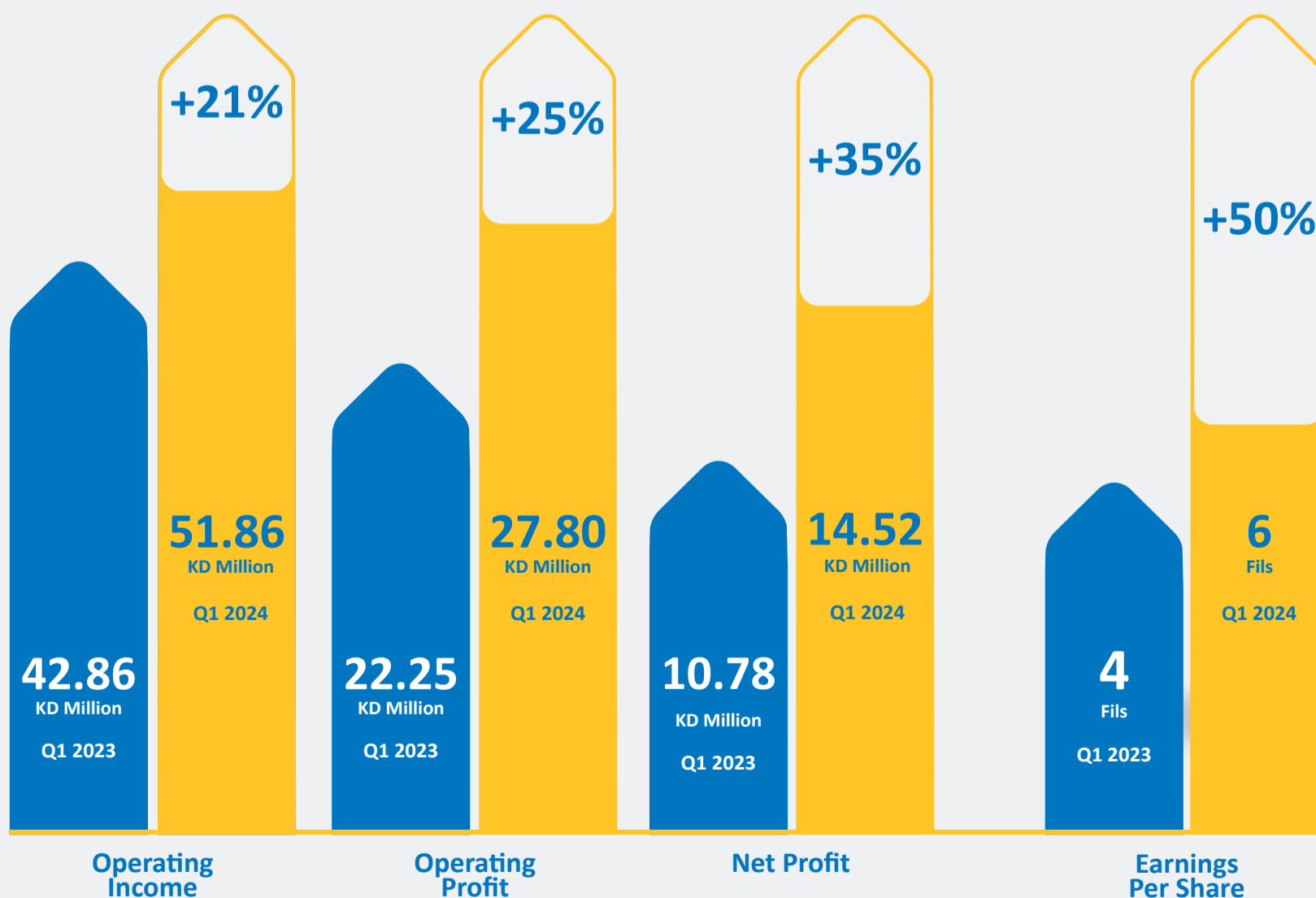
sional growth and fulfillment," said Al-Sumait. "We strive to cultivate a positive and inclusive work culture and reinforce the connection between individual efforts, organizational achievements, and collective success," Al-Sumait emphasized.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR)

Employees at ABK actively engaged in a series of CSR sponsorships, exemplifying the institution's commitment to social responsibility and community welfare. The most recent of which were during the holy month of Ramadan, where employees participated in iftar distributions to individuals in need and collaborated with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society to distribute care packages, providing essential support and assistance to vulnerable populations during the holy month.

Al-Sumait also affirmed that ABK continues to support the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Banking Association's 'Let's Be Aware' banking awareness campaign. As part of this commitment, he pointed out that the bank launched a Ramadan TVC focusing on educating customers about ways to confront banking fraud and protect customer information, which exceeded 10 million views during the holy month.

2024 Q1 RESULTS



Gulf Bank continues to enhance, develop customer experience

Bank preparing to launch second phase of core banking services system

Mohammad Al-Qattan:

- Gulf Bank's mobile app users increased by 78 percent last year
- A 236 percent increase in financial transfers through the app over the last three years
- The bank features a robust technological infrastructure, ranking among the most advanced and top in the banking sector

- The digital transformation journey included electronic services, branches, ATMs, and the Call Center
- Gulf Bank is Committed to enhancing and developing services and implementing the latest and best technological applications
- Investing in comprehensive technological solutions is a fundamental pillar of Gulf Bank's strategy

KUWAIT: In its ongoing efforts to establish itself as the bank of the future, Gulf Bank is preparing to launch the second phase of its core banking services system. This marks a transformative step in the bank's digital transformation journey, aimed at enhancing operational efficiency and easing banking transactions for customers.

In a press statement, Mohammad Al-Qattan, Gulf Bank's General Manager of Consumer Banking, confirmed that Gulf Bank now has a robust technological infrastructure that is among the most advanced and best in the banking sector. This makes it exceptionally well-prepared to meet banking needs and offer outstanding digital services. He pointed out that the bank's digital transformation is rapidly progressing towards leadership, fulfilling customers' demands for advanced banking

services. He also emphasized that investing in comprehensive technological solutions is a fundamental pillar of Gulf Bank's strategy.

Al-Qattan mentioned that last year's total revamp of the Gulf Bank mobile app marked a significant milestone in the bank's transformation journey. This update has impacted a range of services and banking transactions, enhancing accessibility, simplifying processes, and ensuring availability to everyone, anywhere, at any time, through an interface that is easy to use, fast, and secure.

He further stated that the app offers Gulf Bank customers numerous outstanding banking services, some of which are exclusive to them, with continuous efforts to innovate and expand these services. Additionally, he noted that the digital transformation extends to improving electronic services,

branches, ATMs, and the Call Center, aiming to position Gulf Bank's services as some of the most convenient, quickest, and top-rated in the banking industry, leveraging technology that exceeds customer expectations. He further highlighted that these developments have effectively increased the number of app users by more than 78 percent last year, with mobile banking transfers rising by 236 percent over the last three years. Al-Qattan concluded his statements by saying, "Gulf Bank is committed to providing advanced products and services to its customers by studying their banking needs and requirements. The bank consistently works to enhance and expand its services, incorporating the most recent and effective technological solutions in the field of financial banking services."

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading

Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience.

Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining robust developments in sustainability at environmental, social and governance levels through diverse sustainability initiatives, strategically selected to benefit the Bank both internally and externally. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.



Mohammad Al-Qattan reviewing the quality services on the mobile app.



Apple profit ebbs as iPhone sales under pressure

SAN FRANCISCO: Apple on Thursday said its quarterly profit ebbed but topped market forecasts as it announced an unprecedented \$110 billion share buyback.

The iPhone maker reported a profit of \$23.6 billion on \$90.8 billion in revenue in the first three months of this year. "Given our confidence in Apple's future and the value we see in our stock, our Board has authorized an additional \$110 billion for share repurchases," chief financial officer Luca Maestri said in the earnings release.

Shares were up nearly 6 percent to \$183.20 in after-market trading, buoyed by the epic buyback program. Apple took in a record high amount from digital goods and services sold to fans of the iPhone-maker's gadgets, chief executive Tim Cook said in an earnings release.

As expected, iPhone sales dropped with pressure growing from China and increased competition from Huawei. The Silicon Valley giant reported \$45.7 billion in revenue from iPhone sales, its main money maker, versus \$51.3 billion in the same period a year earlier, a ten percent drop.

In the key Greater China market, sales of iPhones shrank to \$16.4 billion from \$17.8 billion in a year-over-year comparison, earnings figures showed.

"It's been a tough year for Apple, no longer the world's most valuable company nor the top smartphone provider," e-marketer analyst Jacob Bourne said in a note to investors. "Waning iPhone demand in China has notably dented revenues." Tech giant Huawei recently reported that its first-quarter profits surged over fivefold year-on-year, as the US-sanctioned firm continues to bite into competitor Apple's sales.

"Apple's sales were subdued during the quarter as Huawei's comeback has directly impacted Apple in the premium segment," Counterpoint senior research analyst Ivan Lam said.

In another setback for the iPhone, Samsung regained its position as the top smartphone seller worldwide in the first quarter of this year, according to industry tracker International Data Corporation. Cook said he remains very optimistic about the China market, noting iPhones were top sellers in urban areas and his recent visit to open an Apple store in Shanghai was "fantastic."

"I maintain a great view of China in the long term," Cook said.

Apple's sales decline in China was less than feared, and the company appears to be holding up better than expected there, according to CFRA senior equity analyst Angelo Zino.

As competitive pressure mounts on the iPhone, the Silicon Valley tech giant continues a push to ramp up revenue from services and digital content sold to fans of its devices. But that move faces a threat from regulators and app makers who accuse Apple of essentially having a monopoly due to its tight control of the App Store and gadget operating software. The US Department of Justice is suing Apple, accusing the company of illegally maintaining a monopoly for its iPhone by stifling competition and imposing exorbitant costs on consumers.

Apple said the suit was "wrong on the facts and the law, and we will vigorously defend against it."

The EU is, meanwhile, is probing whether the App Store is allowing developers to show consumers offers, free of charge, outside of those app marketplaces. Apple is also under pressure not to be left behind when it comes to incorporating artificial intelligence into its offerings. — AFP

Boeing's Starliner finally ready for first crewed mission

CAPE CANAVERAL, United States: Launch day is finally here: Boeing's Starliner capsule blasts off Monday to the International Space Station on its first crewed mission—several years after SpaceX first achieved the same milestone.

The flight, a final test before Starliner takes up regular service for NASA, is critical for the US aerospace giant, whose reputation has suffered of late due to safety issues with some of its passenger jets.

Starliner, which was first ordered a decade ago by the US space agency, has had a bumpy ride to the finish line, with surprise setbacks and multiple delays—a saga Boeing is eager to complete.

Astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams are set to leave Cape Canaveral at 10:34 pm Monday (0234 GMT Tuesday) aboard the capsule. Starliner will be propelled into orbit by an Atlas V rocket made by United Launch Alliance, a Boeing-Lockheed Martin joint venture.

Wilmore and Williams, Navy-trained space program veterans, have each been to the ISS twice, traveling once on a shuttle and then aboard a Russian Soyuz vessel.

"It's going to be like going back home," Williams said. As for the Boeing spacecraft, Wilmore said: "Everything is new. Everything's unique." "I don't think either one of us ever dreamed that we'd be associated with the first flight of a brand new spacecraft."

For NASA, the stakes are also high: Having a second option for human space flight in addition to SpaceX's Dragon vehicles is "really important," said Dana Weigel, manager of the agency's International Space Station program. Weigel said the flexibility could help NASA manage emergency situations, such as problems with a particular space vehicle.

Starliner is scheduled to arrive at the ISS at about 0500 GMT Wednesday, and remain there for a little over a week. Tests will be performed to check it is working properly, and then Williams and Wilmore will reboard the capsule to return home. A successful

US hiring slows in April sign of cooler market

WASHINGTON: US job growth was markedly below analyst expectations in April while unemployment crept up, government data showed Friday, signaling that the labor market is cooling. But with the world's biggest economy adding 175,000 jobs last month according to the Department of Labor, hiring appears still resilient despite the lower reading than 315,000 in March.

Analysts had expected growth of 250,000 jobs, according to Briefing.com.

The jobless rate edged slightly higher from 3.8 percent in March to 3.9 percent last month.

"The great American comeback continues," said US President Joe Biden. He noted that unemployment has been under four percent for 27 months in a row. But "there's more work to do," he said, adding that he wants to lower the costs of rent and homeownership, and make healthcare more affordable.

While hiring has decelerated, the number of jobs added in April remains well above 100,000 — the average level that some economists say is needed to keep the unemployment rate steady.

The latest figures could prove encouraging for policymakers looking to cool the economy gradually. Apart from an easing in hiring figures, officials are also looking to a slowdown in pay gains as they seek to bring inflation lower in the long run. In April, wage growth came in at 0.2 percent on a monthly basis from 0.3 percent in March, Labor Department data showed.

From a year ago, average hourly earnings were 3.9 percent higher in April—slipping below 4.0 percent for the first time since 2021.

The latest figures confirm that "a broad cooldown



CAPE CANAVERAL: NASA astronauts Butch Wilmore (right) and Suni Williams speak to the media at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida. — AFP

mission would help dispel the bitter taste left by the numerous setbacks in the Starliner program.

In 2019, during a first uncrewed test flight, the capsule was not placed on the right trajectory and returned without reaching the ISS. Then in 2021, with the rocket on the launchpad for a new flight, blocked valves forced another postponement.

The empty vessel finally reached the ISS in May 2022. Since then, Boeing has been working on the crewed test flight so the capsule can be certified for NASA's use on regular ISS missions. It had hoped to carry out that flight in 2022, but problems kept cropping up, notably in the parachute system used to slow the craft when it returns to Earth's atmosphere. "There are a number of things that were surprises along the way that we had to overcome," said Boeing executive Mark Nappi.

"It certainly made the team very strong, and very proud of how they have overcome every single issue that we've encountered," he added. "It's pretty typical that a human spaceflight vehicle from design to flying humans is about a 10-year period." NASA associate administrator Jim Free

predicted the mission would not be hiccup-free. "We certainly have some unknowns in this mission, things we expect to learn, being a test mission. We may encounter things we don't expect," Free said, noting that Starliner is just the sixth US-built class of vessel for NASA astronauts.

SpaceX's Dragon capsule joined that exclusive club in 2020, following the Mercury, Gemini, Apollo and space shuttle programs. Once Starliner is fully operational, NASA hopes to alternate between SpaceX and Boeing vessels to ferry astronauts to the ISS.

In 2014, the agency awarded fixed-price contracts of \$4.2 billion to Boeing and \$2.6 billion to SpaceX to develop these capsules. "Everybody thought Boeing was going to get there first," Erik Seedhouse, an associate professor at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, told AFP.

"And so that SpaceX got there way ahead of Starliner was very embarrassing for Boeing." Even though the ISS is due to be mothballed in 2030, both Starliner and Dragon could be used in the future to taxi humans to future private space stations, which several companies are planning to build. — AFP

US judge grills both sides in Google antitrust trial

WASHINGTON: A US judge on Thursday pushed against the central pleas of both US government and Google lawyers as he heard their closing arguments at a landmark antitrust trial in Washington. Federal Judge Amit Mehta, whose decision is not expected until later in the year, raised his questions during two days of hearings that come six months after the conclusion of testimony.

The case is the first of five major lawsuits by the US government to reach trial, with Meta, Amazon, Apple and a separate case against Google also heading for federal court. The trial is the first time the US Department of Justice (DOJ) has faced a big tech company in court since Microsoft was targeted more than two decades ago over the dominance of its Windows operating system.

The decision in the search engine case will be made by Judge Mehta, who presided over several months of testimony that saw Google CEO Sundar Pichai and other top executives take the stand.

At the heart of the government's case is the massive payments made by Google to Apple and other companies to keep its world-leading search engine as the default on iPhones, web browsers and other products. The trial revealed payments reaching tens of billions of dollars every year for Google to keep its prime real estate on Apple hardware or the Safari and Mozilla browsers.

In 2022, Google paid Apple \$20 billion for the default status, trial documents unsealed this week showed. DOJ lawyers allege that Google achieved and perpetuated its dominance—and strangled rivals—through these default deals that also expanded to Samsung and other device makers. — AFP



WASHINGTON: US job growth was markedly below analyst expectations in April while unemployment crept up, government data showed Friday, signaling that the labor market is cooling.

in labor market conditions is underway," said EY senior economist Lydia Boussour. "We foresee softer labor market conditions with cooler hiring, localized layoffs, and a continued moderation in wage growth," she said.

Analysts noted that government hiring looked to be slowing while a similar trend in the private sector is spread across both goods and services. "Businesses—especially small firms—are responding to the lagged effect of the huge increase in interest rates and the tightening in lending standards," said Pantheon Macroeconomics chief economist Ian Shepherdson in a note. These have made working capital much more expensive and harder to obtain.

A solid labor market has helped to prop up consumption and economic growth despite higher interest rates, which typically makes borrowing pricier for households and businesses.

The situation has allowed Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell to push back this week against talk of stagflation—a scenario involving slow growth, high unemployment and elevated inflation. At a Wednesday press conference, he told reporters: "I don't see the 'stag,' or the 'flation.'" — AFP

Business

stc's revenue KD 87.4 million for first three months of 2024

Net profit increased by 7% to reach KD 8.8 million

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc), a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers and enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced its financial results for the three months period ended March 31, 2024, highlighting the most significant achievements, financial and operational performance in addition to the social initiatives made by the company during 2024.

In this regard, Eng Muataz Abdullah Aldharrab, the company's CEO, stated: "The first quarter of 2024 witnessed many financial and operational achievements for Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc) due to the continuous and increasing demand for ICT and digital solutions for both the individual and the enterprise sectors. The company has been keen on seizing available opportunities to support its business through expanding its business model and efficiently managing its internal operations. Additionally, the expansion of stc services has had a significant impact on enhancing the company's position as a leader in the telecommunications industry, alongside its ability to increase its market share in a highly competitive market, by achieving new revenue streams."

Commenting on the key achievements of stc during the first three months of 2024, Eng Muataz Aldharrab, the Company's CEO, stated: "Based on the fundamental pillars of its corporate strategy 'LEAD' for 2023 to 2025, stc consistently strives to drive its business into new areas of sustainable growth by focusing on developing its infrastructure and offering the latest solutions specially designed to meet the changing needs of its individual and enterprise customers. Thus, stc has achieved numerous technical and strategic milestones, including the implementation of a series of innovative initiatives related to the 5G network, in addition to taking new steps in this field, represented by signing a MoU with Huawei to build an intelligent wireless 5.5G service network and provide new services aimed at supporting stc in leading digital innovation. The first quarter of this year also witnessed stc implementing a number of partnerships to attract the youth and enhance the individual sector by providing the highest quality of services and products in line with market requirement.

The strategic transformation in the company's



stc headquarters

operations, pursued by stc in previous years, has reflected its ability to keep pace with the latest global developments by providing fixed telecommunications services and information technology (ICT services), in addition to providing comprehensive innovative solutions, technical solutions, fixed and broadband services, integration systems, cloud services, 5G services, IoT, and data analysis for individual clients and enterprise sectors. stc has managed to excel through leveraging its most advanced network and benefiting from the expertise of its specialized subsidiaries in providing fixed ICT services, and to provide the enterprise sector with comprehensive, integrated, and innovative digital solutions of high quality."

- Revenue increased by 0.9 percent to reach KD 87.4 million
- EBITDA increased by 1.1 percent to reach KD 21.8 million
- Net profit increased by 7 percent to reach KD 8.8 million
- stc's customer base reached 2.3 million customers

Commenting on the announcement of the financial results as of March 31, 2024, Aldharrab stated that: "stc has achieved good financial results during the first quarter of 2024, with total revenues reaching KD 87.4 million by the end of March 2024 with a growth

The financial results for three months period March 31, 2024	
Revenues	KD 87.4m
EBITDA	KD 21.8m
Net Profit	KD 8.8m
Earnings per share	9 Kuwaiti fils
Assets	KD 467.1m
Shareholders' equity	KD 217.8m
Book value per share	218.0 fils per share
Customer base	2.3m customers

rate of 0.9 percent compared to KD 86.6 million during the same period last year. The main reason for this growth is attributed to the increase in customer sector revenues, which constitute 75 percent of total revenues. Meanwhile, business sector revenues accounted for 25 percent of stc's total revenues during the first three months of 2024, as a result of expanding the company's business model, developing digital services, and providing integrated technical solutions to companies in various fields."

Aldharrab added: "These outcomes resulted in a growth of EBITDA by 1.1 percent to reach KD 21.8 million in the first three months of 2024 compared to KD 21.6 million during the same period in 2023 supported by the increase in the company's revenue. As a result, the Company's net profit increased by 7.0 percent to reach KD 8.8 million (EPS 9 fils) in the first three months of 2024 compared with KD 8.2 million (EPS 8 fils) in the same period last year. Whereby, stc's customer base reached approx. 2.3 million customers at the end of March 2024."

Commenting on the announcement of stc's financial results for the three months ended March 31, 2024, Aldharrab noted: "stc's total assets reached KD 467.1 million by the end of March 2024, while the total equity of the company's shareholders amounted to KD 217.8 million. Furthermore, stc has a strong solvency position amongst the telecom companies in the Middle East.

Regarding stc's CSR framework, Eng. Aldharrab indicated that Q1 2024 witnessed a number of community and interactive activities through activating and enhancing initiatives that are the key pillars of stc's CSR integrated and sustainable program in collaboration with various charitable organizations, as well as institutions in the government and private sectors respectively. Whereby, stc's programs and initiatives in Q1 2024 were diverse and sustainable, each targeting specific

community needs and causes that coincided the company's values and beliefs.

As stc envisions a sustainable future in line with the overall corporate strategy, the CSR program focused on activating sustainable development partnerships within a series of various initiatives that were launched in line with stc's 2024 sustainability program titled "small move, Big Impact" which aims to increase awareness and adopting long-term sustainable practices, that will leave a positive impact for future generations. stc will continue to implement community programs aimed at promoting long-term development, focusing on key areas such as education, environmental sustainability, sports and health, youth empowerment, and entrepreneurship."



Aldharrab noted: "Driven by the importance of stc's financial strategy in allocating its resources in a manner that serves the company's interests to remain at the forefront of telecommunications companies, meet customer needs, and provide an added value to shareholders, stc is committed to periodically review and continuously update all the factors that may affect the financial strategy. stc continues to successfully implement numerous strategic projects with the support of digital solutions that align with the company's strategic and financial objectives to enhance operational efficiency and regulatory practices, as well as achieving excellence in treasury management operations."

مبروك للراغبين في حساب كنز
Congratulations to the winners of the Kanz Account
May Monthly Draw
سحب شهر مايو
2,000 دك

- HAMAD MOHAMMED ALSAAD
- SHEIKH MUBARAK FAISAL SAUD ALSABAH
- FERAS MOUIEEDIN ALHADIDI
- MOHAMMAD REZA ZADEH
- AHMAD SAMEEH SBETI
- KHALED FAWAZ ALNEMA
- FOUZ AHMAD ALSHOHOMI
- AHMAD TAREQ ARAB
- ABDULLATEEF AJEEL MOTLAQ
- HANAN ABDULHADI MAJEED ALDHAFERI
- LEENA MOHAMMAD ALNAHHAS
- FAISAL JASSIM ALDEWEESH
- TARIQ IQBAL SHAH
- DANAH HUSSAIN BEHBEHANI
- MUHAMMAD ARIF AHMED
- ZHAYA YASEEN ALSHAMMARI
- GAFAR SADEEQ GANI
- ABDULLAH AHMAD ANBAR
- SAAD SONITAN HUDAIB
- HEBA MOHAMMAD ALARYAN
- ليلى محمد التماس
- فوزيل جاسم الدويش
- طارق اقبال شاه
- دانه حسين بهبهاني
- محمد عارف احمد
- زهيه ياسين الشمير
- خالد صديق جاني
- عبدالله احمد عتير
- سعد صاويقان هدير
- هبة محمد العريان
- محمد سعيد السعد
- الشيخ مبارك فيصل سعود الصباح
- فارس محي الدين الحديدي
- محمد رضا رادا
- احمد سمير سبيتي
- خالد فواز النعجه
- فوز احمد الشومري
- احمد طارق عرب
- عبداللطيف عدجل عطلق
- خنان عبدالهادي محمد الظفيري

#KanzBurgan | 1804080

Burgan Bank announces winners of monthly Kanz Account draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced on Saturday the names of the Kanz account monthly draw winners, who will each take home a KD 2,000 cash-prize. All Kanz customers who maintain a minimum balance of KD 200 for at least one week before the draw date are included in the draw, and their chances of winning increase with higher deposits.

- The 20 lucky winners are:
- Hamad Mohammed Al-Saad
 - Sheikh Mubarak Faisal Saud Al-Sabah
 - Feras Mouieeddin Al-Hadidi
 - Mohammad Reza Zadeh
 - Ahmad Sameeh Sbeiti
 - Khaled Fawaz Alnema
 - Fouz Ahmad Al-Shohomi
 - Ahmad Tareq Arab

- Abdullateef Ajeel Motlaq
- Hanan Abdulhadi Al-Dhafeeri
- Leena Mohammad Al-Nahhas
- Faisal Jassim Al-Deweesh
- Tariq Iqbal Shah
- Danah Hussain Behbehani
- Muhammad Arif Ahmed
- Zhaya Yaseen Al-Shammari
- Gafar Sadeeq Gani
- Abdullah Ahmad Anbar
- Saad Sonitan Hudaib
- Heba Mohammad Al-Aryan

In addition to the monthly draw of Kanz account, Burgan Bank also offers a semi-annual KD 500,000 prize and a mega annual prize of KD 1,500,000. Kanz Account is accessible to any individual and can be opened in Kuwaiti Dinar or in major currencies (USD, EURO, GDP) with a minimum KD 200 requirement for account opening. More information on opening a Kanz account, the draws or any of the Bank's products and services, is available at any of Burgan Bank's branches, through the Call Center at 1804080 and Burgan Bank website www.burgan.com.

number of upside inflation risks," said Federal Reserve Governor Michelle Bowman in prepared remarks.

These factors include spillovers from regional conflicts which could snarl global supply chains and cause prices to rise.

Added fiscal stimulus could also fuel demand, she noted. The Fed has held interest rates at a 23-year high in recent months, citing a lack of further progress in lowering inflation to its two percent target. "In light of these risks, and the general uncertainty regarding the economic outlook, I will continue to watch the data closely as I assess the appropriate path of monetary policy," Bowman said in remarks to a convention in Florida. — AFP

US Fed official sees inflation cooling but possible risks

WASHINGTON: US inflation is likely to cool further while interest rates remain at current levels, a senior central bank official said Friday, though adding that there are potential risks to this expectation. "My baseline outlook continues to be that inflation will decline further with the policy rate held steady, but I still see a

Net Profit

8.8 +7.0%
KD Million

The Board of Directors of **Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc)** is pleased to announce to its shareholders that the company has achieved a net profit of KD 8.8 million (earnings per share 9 fils) for the three months ended 31 March 2024.

- Q1 - 2024 Total Revenue **87.4** +0.9%
KD Million
- 31 March 2024 Subscribers **2.3** -4.8%
Million
- Q1 - 2024 EBITDA **21.8** +1.1%
KD Million
- Q1 - 2024 EPS **9** +7.0%
Kuwaiti fils per share

Lifestyle



The captain of the "Big Branzino", steers the luxe floating sauna.



A picture shows the inside of the "Big Branzino", a luxe floating sauna.



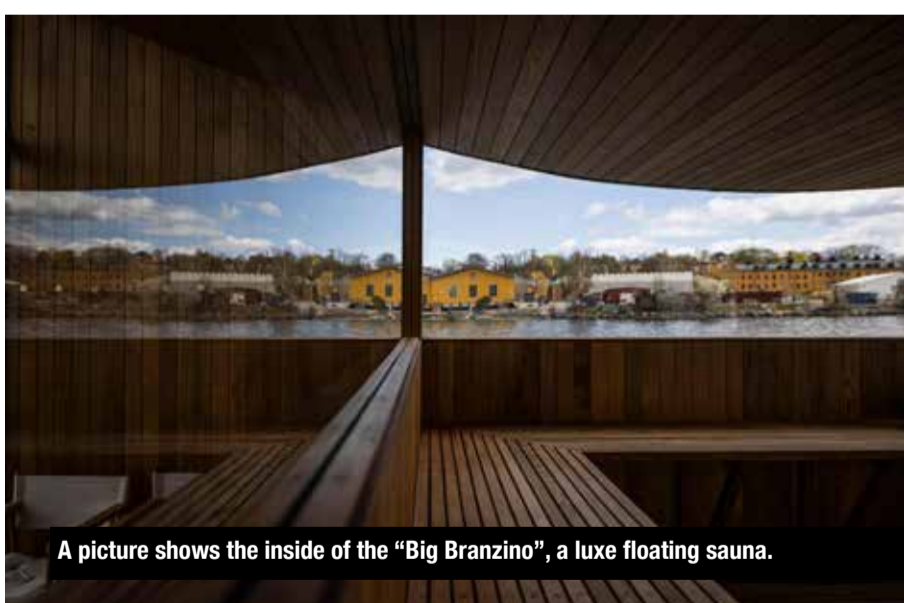
A picture shows the inside of the "Big Branzino", a luxe floating sauna.



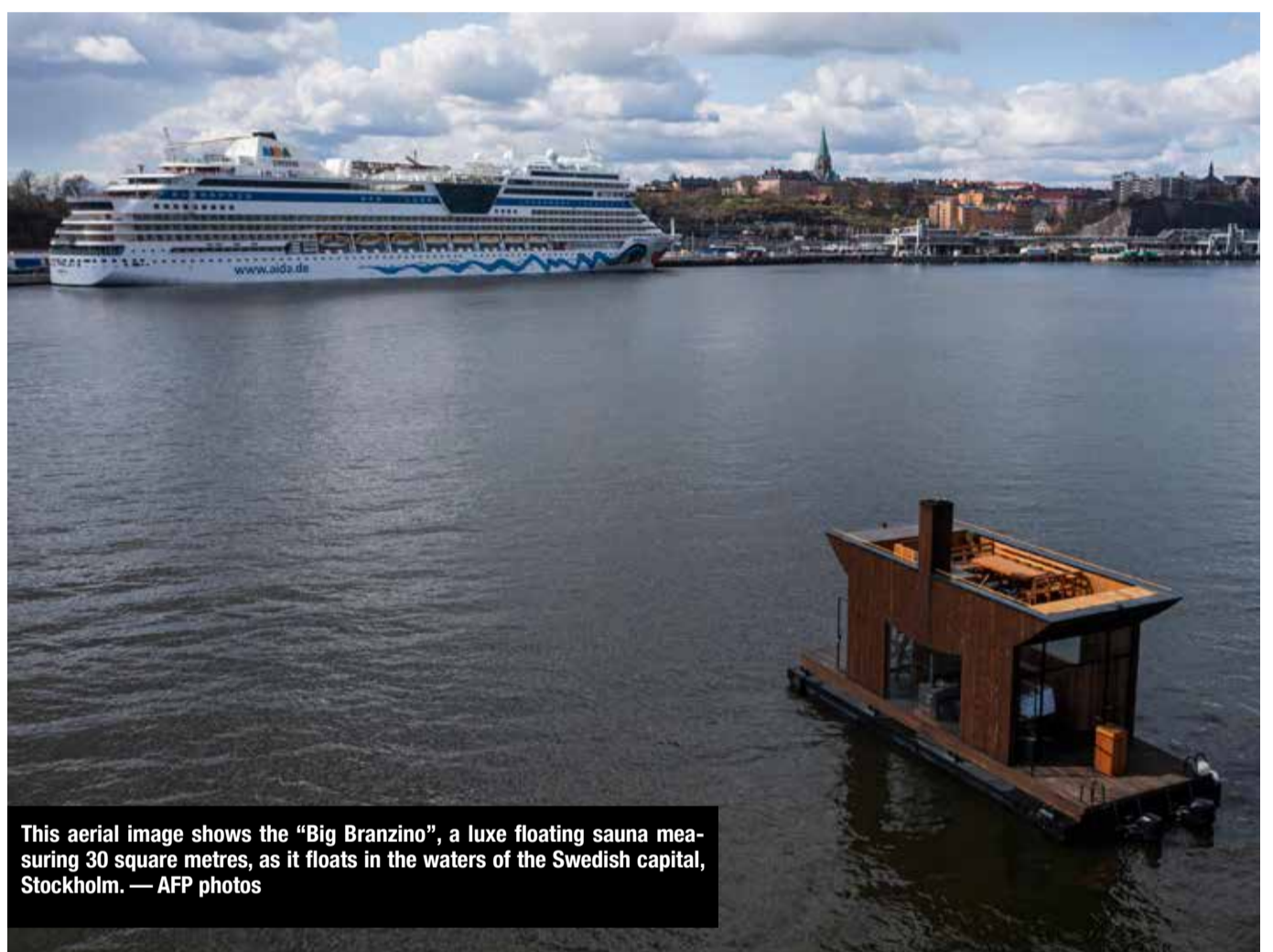
This aerial image shows the "Big Branzino", a luxe floating sauna measuring 30 square metres, as it floats in the waters of the Swedish capital, Stockholm.



A picture shows the inside of the "Big Branzino", a luxe floating sauna.



A picture shows the inside of the "Big Branzino", a luxe floating sauna.



This aerial image shows the "Big Branzino", a luxe floating sauna measuring 30 square metres, as it floats in the waters of the Swedish capital, Stockholm. — AFP photos

Unique venues heat up sauna scene in Sweden and Finland

Deep underground in a disused iron mine and under the bluish glow of a flashlight, a small crowd emerges from a sauna, steam rising off their bodies as they plunge into a crystal clear turquoise lake. In Sweden and Finland, some unusual saunas have been built in recent years, offering truly singular experiences.

Nestled in the snowy forests of Bergslagen in central Sweden, hidden 90 metres (almost 300 feet) below ground in this region known for its mines, lies this very special sauna. The old iron mine in the town of Borlänge closed in 1968 before reopening in 2022, redesigned to welcome visitors looking for a unique - and sweaty - experience, Daniel Karlsson, the head of Adventure Mine, told AFP.

"If you look at saunas today, it's more like a luxury experience," he said. But "down here it's not just a sauna. It's also the experience that you get with nature," he said, clad in a thick red parka to protect from the cold and a helmet with a headlamp. The space offers visitors a moment of respite from the busy, connected world above.

"Because the sauna is down in the mine, there is nothing that disturbs you from enjoying the sauna." "You don't have mobile phones, you don't have the sun, you don't have the wind," he said.

Heat on a high

Saunas are enjoyed around the world as a method of relaxation, claimed by some to provide health benefits. They originated in Finland and Estonia, typically built as small wooden cabins where dry heat up to 100 degrees Celsius (212 F) with very low humidity is produced from a stove or hot rocks. Having a sauna has been a social and hygiene tradition for more than 2,000 years. Now, sauna enthusiasts who want to expand their horizons can reach new heights in Helsinki.

In the Finnish capital, a giant ferris wheel overlooking the city offers a sauna in one of its specially-built pods. The sweat session could easily burn a hole in your wallet though, costing between 240 and 350 euros (\$255 to \$375). "You can get a pretty good steam and heat here if

you really want to," said shift manager Viivi Makelainen.

"Although it's pretty small, you can fit quite a few people in here, four or five. Also the views are more fun when you're in the sauna." Saunas are an integral part of daily life for most Finns. The country of 5.5 million inhabitants is home to 3.3 million saunas. Traditionally considered a sacred space in Finland, 'a church of nature', the Finnish sauna culture was named a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2020.

'Intimacy with the surroundings'

Saunas in the Nordic countries are typically small wooden cabins located near the shore (for a quick dip), deep in the forest (for a quick roll in the snow

or in a home (with a quick shower to refresh).

But one special sauna in the Stockholm archipelago is making waves - sailing on the waters of the capital city.

The "Big Branzino", a luxury floating sauna measuring 30 square metres (322 square feet), was designed and built in 2022 at the request of a private person. The structure resembles a square wooden cabin, featuring floor-to-ceiling glass windows and an open-air wheelhouse on the deck.

Inside, a custom-made wood stove with hot rocks is surrounded by wooden benches and chairs, while outside, a rooftop terrace features a large table and seating area to take in the view.

"A client came to the firm and he

wanted a truly extraordinary sauna that he hadn't seen before," architect Johan Strandlund told AFP. "So we came up with this shape in order to really maximize the intimacy with its surroundings, and we also wanted a truly breathtaking presence on the horizon," he said.

Strandlund said the floating sauna appealed to nature- and sauna-loving Swedes. "I think it's the way that we really like to enjoy the beautiful nature that we have around here in Stockholm." And "even when you're not using the sauna, the fire is a great source of heat, for example for cold summer nights." — AFP

"A client came to the firm and he

TikTok reaches music licensing deal with Universal, ending feud

TikTok and Universal announced a new licensing agreement Thursday, ending a months-long dispute that saw popular music expunged from the social media platform.

The companies released a joint statement that said the new deal included "improved remuneration" for artists and songwriters under the Universal Music Group (UMG), umbrella,

and will also assuage concerns over the growth of AI-generated content on TikTok.

Universal chairman Sir Lucian Grainge said "this new chapter in our relationship" would "drive innovation in fan engagement while advancing social music monetization."

The deal "focuses on the value of music, the primacy of human artistry and the welfare of the creative community," he said.

TikTok's CEO Shou Chew similarly said "we are committed to working together to drive value, discovery and promotion for all of UMG's amazing artists and songwriters, and deepen their ability to grow, connect and engage with the TikTok community."

The deal wraps up closely watched negotiations that saw a breakdown earlier this year, with the companies - two of the most powerful players in



the music and tech industries - publicly criticizing each other as they jockeyed for leverage.

Universal - whose roster of artists

includes Taylor Swift, Drake and Billie Eilish - ordered music from all artists connected to its vast publishing catalog to come down off the app, leaving many concerned over losing the marketing potential TikTok can offer. Millions of videos involving Universal artists became muted on the platform.

But while the stripped music will now return to TikTok, it comes at a moment of uncertainty for the wildly popular video-sharing app, one week after a new US law demands the company divest from its Chinese parent company ByteDance or be shut out of the American market. The app has 170 million users in the United States alone. Neither Universal nor TikTok disclosed any financial terms of the deal.

Several weeks ago, the powerful and popular Swift returned some of her music to the app ahead of the release of her most recent album.

It was unclear exactly how she did it, but Swift does own her own master recordings as well as her songwriting rights, though those too are administered by Universal's publishing arm.

In their joint statement the companies said they were "working expeditiously to return music by artists represented by Universal Music Group and songwriters represented by Universal Music Publishing Group to TikTok in due course." — AFP



Architect Johan Strandlund pours water on a custom-made wood stove with hot rocks inside the "Big Branzino".



A picture shows the inside of the "Big Branzino", a luxe floating sauna.

Lifestyle



Canadian actor Ryan Gosling (left) and US-British actress Emily Blunt attend the premiere of "The Fall Guy" at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California.--AFP photos



US actress Teresa Palmer (left) and motorsport racer Mark Webber attend the premiere of "The Fall Guy".

HOLLYWOOD STUNT PERFORMERS REV UP 'FALL GUY' PREMIERE

Fresh from the high-profile success of "Barbie," Ryan Gosling used the Los Angeles premiere of his next movie "The Fall Guy" to cede the spotlight to Hollywood's unsung heroes—stunt performers. Loosely based on the 1980s TV series of the same name, "The Fall Guy" stars Gosling as a veteran stunt double who must recover from a severe on-set injury to save an old flame (Emily Blunt) from a mysterious real-world threat. The movie's release comes as pressure is mounting in Hollywood for stunt performers to receive more recognition, including an Oscar category of their own.

"He got set on fire eight times for me," said Gosling, pointing to one of his stunt doubles during Tuesday's red carpet event. "How do you thank somebody for that?" In the film, Gosling's hero must draw on all of his impressive stunt tricks and know-how—navigating high-speed chases, and fighting goons with hastily improvised weapons—to save the day and win back the girl. Those techniques were on show alongside the A-list stars at the Los Angeles premiere, as stunt actors roared motorcycles down the red carpet, leapt from a sky-high platform, and brawled through a plate-glass window.

"We just came out and tried to smash some glass and make a fun show for everybody," joked stunt performer Justin Eaton. "The Fall Guy"—out in US theaters Friday—is directed by David Leitch, a former stuntman who took beatings for Matt Damon in "The Bourne Ultimatum" and Brad Pitt in "Fight Club," among others. Leitch made the leap into di-



US actor Lee Majors attends the premiere of "The Fall Guy".

recting with 2014's smash hit "John Wick," and has since helmed blockbuster like "Atomic Blonde," "Deadpool 2" and "Bullet Train." But "The Fall Guy" is Leitch's first movie to specifically highlight and honor his former profession.

And with computer-generated visual effects increasingly used for action sequences in Hollywood movies, Leitch relished the chance to put some of the industry's best to work at the sort of old-school practical stunts that are seldom performed on camera these days. "It was really important—we wanted to lean into practical (stunts), because it was a celebration of that artistry that the stunt communities had," he told AFP. "So we leaned into the classic stunts, and did them for real."

Stunt Oscars?

Gosling's latest role required multiple specialized stuntmen. Logan Holladay, a driving stunts expert, broke a world record during the film, by flipping a fast-moving car into an astonishing eight-and-a-half sideways "cannon rolls." Calls have been growing for a "best stunts" category at the Oscars, with supporters arguing that their input equals that of the sound mixers, makeup artists and visual effects gurus already honored.

"You can get a Best Screenplay Oscar for typing in your shed for a year," said Drew Pearce, the film's writer. "You have to literally risk death every day—and not just like 'metaphorical death' death, but real death—to be a stunt person." Stunt work is already honored at some prestigious movie and TV ceremonies, such as the Screen Actors Guild Awards. "The Fall Guy" stars Gosling and Blunt paid tribute to stunt performers during this year's Academy Awards, presenting a video montage featuring hair-raising sequences from Charlie Chaplin through to Leitch's "John Wick" films.

"They've been such a crucial part of our community since the beginning of cinema," said Gosling, at April's Oscars. Whether that campaign will prevail remains to be seen. But for now, the movie has at least raised awareness of the risks of the job. "(As) people who work in the shadows, we accept that, we signed up for that," said Eaton. "But just having some recognition from our audience is really the biggest thing."—AFP



US singers Blake Shelton (left) and Gwen Stefani attend the premiere of "The Fall Guy" at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California.



A stunt artist performs the premiere of "The Fall Guy".



This handout photo shows Rakus, a male orangutan with a facial wound, at Gunung Leuser National Park in North Sumatra, Indonesia.--AFP photos

Self-care: Orangutan seen apparently treating wound

Scientists have observed an orangutan applying medicinal herbs to a face wound in an apparently successful attempt to heal an injury, the first time such behaviour has been recorded. Primates have previously been seen eating plants or rubbing them on themselves in behaviour scientists theorised was intended to ward off disease or discomfort.

But the apparent treatment seen by researchers in Indonesia in 2022, and reported in the journal Nature Scientific Reports on Thursday, is the first time a wild animal has been seen applying medicinal plants to a wound.

Scientists were tracking a male orangutan nicknamed Rakus at the Gunung Leuser National Park in Indonesia's Aceh province when they noticed an open wound on his face.

Three days later, they spotted him chewing the leaves of a vine called *Fibraurea tinctoria*, which is known for its medicinal properties and has long been used in local traditional medicine.

The orangutan "began chewing the leaves without swallowing them and using his fingers to apply the plant juice from his mouth directly onto his facial wound," said the study by Indonesian and German scientists.

When flies began to land on the site, Rakus "smearing the entire wound with the plant pulp until the red flesh was fully

covered with the green leaf material." The next day, Rakus was seen eating the vine's leaves again, and a week later his wound had closed up, subsequently healing without any sign of infection.

The study describes the behaviour as the "first systematically documented case of active wound treatment with a plant species known to contain biologically active substances by a wild animal." Researchers said it was impossible to be sure the behaviour was intentional, but the fact that the juice and leaves were applied repeatedly and only to the wound suggests Rakus was trying to treat his injury.

They speculate the orangutan could have stumbled across the treatment, perhaps by first chewing the plant and then finding the juice offered pain relief when accidentally touching it to a wound.

Orangutans are known to learn skills from each other through observation, but the scientists said they had no record of similar behaviour in 21 years and 28,000 observation hours in the area. Rakus however had moved to the region from elsewhere, raising the possibility he learned the medical technique from a different community.

The observation adds to a growing body of evidence about the way primates use plants to keep healthy, including swallowing whole leaves that have anti-parasitic properties.

Elsewhere in Indonesia, orangutans have been seen rubbing the chewed leaves of a different plant into their skin, possibly to harness its anti-inflammatory properties. And in 2022, scientists reported on chimpanzees in Gabon that were seen apparently applying insects to wounds.—AFP

Indian, Hong Kong satirists win press cartoon award

Indian cartoonist Rachita Taneja and Hong Kong's Zunzi were awarded the biennial Kofi Annan Courage in Cartooning Award on Friday, which is World Press Freedom Day. Taneja has been under threat of a prison sentence since a member of India's ruling Hindu nationalist party complained about her online webcomic Sanitary Panels, whose stick figures take on subjects like harassment, homophobia, menstruation and authoritarianism.

Zunzi was dismissed by his newspaper in 2023, three years after China adopted national security laws that have reshaped Hong Kong's arts, culture and media. Officials complained his images were "distorting and unethical". India ranks 159th out of 180 countries in the 2024 Reporters Without Borders (RSF) World Press Freedom Index, while Hong Kong ranks 135th.

The ceremony on Friday for the Kofi Annan award was accompanied by an exhibition of press cartoons, which Iranian lawyer and Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi opened on the shores of Lake Geneva, by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights.

"World Press Freedom Day is a chance to stand for truth, protect those bravely working to uncover it, and count-



Syrian-Palestinian cartoonist Hani Abbas poses for a photograph before one of his pieces.

er oppression," UN human rights chief Volker Turk said on X. He said 71 journalists had been killed and 320 imprisoned last year, while suppression, criminalisation and attacks against journalists were being met with impunity. "This cannot become our status quo. In this crucial election year, we must ensure governments protect our right to hold those in power to account," he said.

Women cartoonists highlighted

This year's award and exhibition highlight "the pivotal role of women in the fight for freedom (and)... the challenges faced by female cartoonists globally" said the organisers -- the Freedom Cartoonists Foundation and the city of Geneva.

"We want to highlight the increasing numbers of women press artists. In addition to the pressures they are under due

to their professions, they have to face threats because they are women," said the foundation's head, Swiss cartoonist Patrick Chappatte. Taneja risks six months' imprisonment if India's supreme court upholds a complaint from a member of the student wing of the ruling BJP.

The country's press freedom rankings have declined markedly since Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi took office in 2014, while restrictions on civil society have seen rights groups such as Amnesty International severely curtail their local operations. Zunzi, born in Hong Kong in 1955, began his career as a political caricaturist with Ming Pao in 1983. The paper sacked him last year after months of criticism from officials and attacks on freedom of expression, the foundation said.

The authorities complained his drawings displayed "sanctimonious humour that damages Hong Kong's image". His books and albums are banned from public libraries. The exhibition "Cartooning for Freedom" from Friday to June 2 focuses on three topics -- women's rights; the ongoing wars in the Middle East, Ukraine and Sudan; and artificial intelligence.—AFP



Winners of the Kofi Annan Courage Cartoon Award, Indian cartoonist Rachita Taneja (left) and Hong Kong's cartoonist Zunzi pose for a photograph during the presentation of the exhibition "Dessins pour la liberte" (Cartoons for peace), marking the international press freedom day on the shores of Lake Geneva.--AFP photos



Iranian lawyer and 2003 Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi looks at an art piece by Iranian cartoonist Mana Neyestani during the presentation of the exhibition "Dessins pour la liberte" (Cartoons for peace).

Sports

Reds beat Crusaders to break 25-year Christchurch drought

Another blow to the Crusaders' hopes of defending their title

CHRISTCHURCH: Dynamic winger Tim Ryan scored two tries as the Queensland Reds beat the Canterbury Crusaders 33-28 on Saturday to land their first Super Rugby win in Christchurch for 25 years. In another blow to the Crusaders' hopes of defending their title, the Australian visitors scored five tries to four, including the double to 20-year-old flyer Ryan.

His second propelled the Reds 12 points clear entering the final quarter and the Crusaders couldn't haul them back, despite a late try to winger Sevu Reece.

Ryan, who scored a hat-trick of tries on debut in last week's 41-34 loss to the Blues, was dangerous throughout as the Reds notched a fifth win from 10 matches to climb to fifth in the standings.

Reds captain Liam Wright said his team were full of resolve after a number of narrow defeats this season. "It's massive, the boys really banded together after a season full of close losses," Wright said.

"We did a great job to hold on, there were some big moments there by key players."

The first loss at home to Queensland since 1999 was also the eighth defeat of the season for the Crusaders, who languish in 10th place with four rounds remaining.

They again paid for a high error count and for untimely injuries, with All Blacks loose forward Elhan Blackadder having been ruled out before kickoff and captain Scott Barrett exiting in the early stages.

Outstanding flanker Fraser McReight and Ryan

crossed early for the Reds before Dallas McLeod reduced the scoreline to 14-7 at the interval.

The home side levelled at 21-21 following tries to forwards Corey Kellow and Quinten Strange, but the Reds led again when Harry Wilson charged down a clearance from fly-half David Havili and scored.

Long-serving Wales Test fullback Leigh Halfpenny made a low-key competition debut for the Crusaders and was replaced soon after half-time.

Highlanders best Moana

Earlier in the day, Moana Pasifika couldn't rise to the occasion in the first-ever Super Rugby game played in Tonga, losing 28-17 to the Otago Highlanders in atrocious weather.

Heavy rain and sodden ground conditions dampened the atmosphere in Nuku'alofa, along with the hard-working visitors, who scored three tries to two.

All the tries came in the first half as the Highlanders built a 19-17 lead, and the New Zealand side pulled clear after the interval through three penalty goals to fly-half Cameron Millar.

Moana began strongly, scoring tries through prop Abraham Pole and fullback William Havili, but the Highlanders responded each time, through fullback Jacob Ratumaitavuki-Kneepkens, who crossed twice, and winger Connor Garden-Bachop.

A second straight victory for the Highlanders means they'll stay just inside the top eight, while Moana will be ninth or worse by the end of the round, depending on other results. — AFP



CHRISTCHURCH: Crusaders' Noah Hotham (C) is tackled by Reds' defenders during round 11 Super Rugby Pacific match between the Crusaders and Queensland Reds at Apollo Projects Stadium in Christchurch on May 4, 2024. — AFP

Starc shows class as Kolkata win in Mumbai

MUMBAI: Mitchell Starc picked up four wickets as a disciplined bowling performance helped Kolkata Knight Riders seal a 24-run victory over Mumbai Indians in the Indian Premier League on Friday. Chasing a below-par 170, Mumbai lost wickets at regular intervals to be bowled out for 145 off 18.5 overs at the Wankhede Stadium.

Suryakumar Yadav raised hopes with a 35-ball 56 but his dismissal in the 16th over tilted the scales in favor of Kolkata. This was Kolkata's first win at the Wankhede ground in 12 years and seventh from 10 games this season.

Mumbai slumped to ninth position in the 10-team competition after their eighth loss in 11 games. Kolkata are placed second and well poised to make it to the play-offs. "Obviously we couldn't form partnerships and kept losing wickets," said Mumbai skipper Hardik Pandya. "There are a lot of questions that will take time to answer. But for now, not much to say."

Mumbai were off to a shaky start, with Starc flattening the leg-stump of Ishan Kishan (13) and Varun Chakravarty sending back Naman Dhir (11). The home team got another big jolt when Rohit Sharma, who came in as an impact sub, miscued a shot to be caught off Sunil Narine for 11.

Pandya's poor run of form continued as he was out for one, much to the disappointment of the strong home crowd. Yadav hit his third half-century of the season and Tim David chipped in with 24 but Kolkata did well to rein in the five-time champions.

Verstappen takes sprint pole in Miami

MIAMI GARDENS: World champion Max Verstappen grabbed pole position for Saturday's sprint race at the Miami Grand Prix but was far from happy with the performance of his tyres.

Verstappen finished 0.108 seconds ahead of Ferrari's Charles Leclerc with his Red Bull teammate Sergio Perez third. "To be honest with you, it felt pretty terrible. Maybe that last session, it was just really difficult to get the tyres to work. I didn't improve much on the soft but I'll take it," said the Dutchman, who was also fastest in the earlier practice session.

"It didn't feel enjoyable to drive - practice was really comfortable, I was quite confident we could fight for pole. But qualifying it didn't look like that for me - I don't know what happened to the other cars on that last lap," he said.

All the drivers opted for a single flying lap in SQ3 with Verstappen posting his time of one minute 27.641 seconds. Australian Daniel Ricciardo had an encouraging qualifier finishing fourth fastest in his RB ahead of Ferrari's Carlos Sainz.

Lyles still dreaming of 4 Paris golds

NASSAU: Noah Lyles will "unfortunately" not be racing the 4x400m event at the World Athletics Relays in Nassau this weekend, but the US sprint star insists he still has a four-medal target in mind for the Paris Olympics.

Lyles won treble gold at last year's world outdoor championships in Budapest in the 100, 200 and 4x100m relay, etching his place as the man to beat in the French capital this summer. The 26-year-old also competed in the world indoors in Glasgow in March, returning home with two silvers after teammate Chris-



MUMBAI: Kolkata Knight Riders' Venkatesh Iyer plays a shot as Mumbai Indians' Ishan Kishan (R) watches during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Mumbai Indians and Kolkata Knight Riders at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai. — AFP

Earlier, Kolkata lost five quick wickets including that of the prolific Phil Salt (five) and skipper Shreyas Iyer (six) after being put in to bat. Tottering at 57-5, Venkatesh Iyer (70) and impact sub Manish Pandey (42) steadied Kolkata with an 83-run stand and ensured a respectable total on the board.

Iyer, who hit a century at the same ground last season, hit three sixes and six fours in his fighting 52-ball knock. "It's an extremely good feeling, be-

cause we haven't won at Wankhede for 12 years," said Kolkata's Varun Chakravarty.

"This is a very special win because we were down and out in the first innings. The way Venkatesh and Manish pulled it back was great." Jasprit Bumrah and Sri Lanka's Nuwan Thushara were the pick of the bowlers, taking three wickets each and troubling the batsmen with their line and length on a lively wicket. — AFP

Angola may host world swimming championship

KUWAIT: President of International Swimming Federation Hussein Al-Musallam said it is time for Africa to host the Juniors World Swimming Championship, during a meeting with Angola's Vice President Esperanca da Costa.

The request of Angola to host the Juniors World Swimming Championship in 2027 was discussed in addition to the continuation of the federation's support of swimming in Angola. More than 300,000 children and 150 physical education teachers benefited from the program since 2023.

US rookie Knapp seizes PGA's CJ Cup Byron Nelson lead

LOS ANGELES: PGA Tour rookie Jake Knapp birdied four of his last six holes to grab a one-stroke lead after Friday's second round of the CJ Cup Byron Nelson tournament.

The 29-year-old American fired a seven-under par 64 to stand on 14-under 128 after 36 holes at TPC Craig Ranch in McKinney, Texas.

"For the most part hitting it pretty solid and keeping in the right areas," Knapp said. "Made it relatively easy on myself. Never really felt like I had to scramble or anything like that."

England's Matt Wallace, who led after an opening 63, shared second on 129 with American Troy Merritt, who closed with a 16-foot eagle putt at the par-5 ninth to fire the day's low round of 62.

World number 56 Knapp won his first PGA title at February's Mexico Open and says he is not nervous about being in contention. "I feel comfortable. I've been there before," he said. "Courses like this where scores are going to be low you don't worry too much about what other guys are doing. You try to make a bunch of birdies. If I just keep doing the things I'm doing I'll be in a good spot." Knapp, a back-nine starter, sank an 11-foot birdie putt at 14 and reeled off three birdies in a row with a 30-foot birdie putt at 16, followed by another from just outside 18 feet at the par-3 17th and a two-footer at the par-5 18th.

"Just put a little bit more of a premium the last couple weeks on green reading," Knapp said. "Nice to see a few more going in." After a three-putt bogey on the third, Knapp answered with a 32-foot birdie putt on the par-3 fourth and a two-footer at the par-5 fifth, a 16-foot birdie putt at the par-3 seventh and a tap-in birdie at the par-5 ninth after reaching the green in two.

"Scores are going to be low," Knapp said. "Just got to keep the pedal down and keep trying to make birdies." Two years ago, Knapp was working as a nightclub bouncer before going to a developmental tour in 2023 and earning a PGA Tour berth this year.

"Even when I was doing any of that stuff I always knew this was what I wanted to do," he said. "Just kept working away and sticking at it." — AFP



MIAMI GARDENS: Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen prepares ahead of the practice session for the 2024 Miami Formula One Grand Prix at Miami International Autodrome in Miami Gardens, Florida. — AFP

One races this season, posted a best practice lap time of 1:28.595 despite having some handling issues earlier in the session.

The Dutchman, who has won both the previous Miami races, finished with a time 0.105sec quicker than McLaren's Piastri. Ferrari's Sainz was third fastest followed by George Russell of Mercedes. Leclerc over-steered at turn 16 and spun out, with his stranded vehicle blocking the track and bringing out an early red flag. The sprint race will be held on Saturday ahead of qualifying for Sunday's main race. — AFP

tian Coleman edged him in the 60m and Alexander Doom ensured victory for Belgium over the US quartet at the line in the 4x400m relay.

Lyles' inclusion in that relay team came in for criticism, however, with Fred Kerley, 2022 100m champion and Tokyo Olympic silver medalist, accusing the US track federation of favoritism in drafting in Lyles. "I can't give all the details but there were coaches who coached athletes that were on the 4x400m (relay in Glasgow) that didn't get to run, that did run in the prelims, that were upset about that," Lyles said.

His call-up, Lyles admitted, had caused "a lot of controversy". "Some people got written up, other people were threatened with fines," he said in Nassau ahead of the weekend's world relays in which he will now compete only in the 4x100m.

"Let's just say a lot of people in the US were very, very upset that I ran the 4x400 and to that I would say, 'run faster, push me out!'" Lyles, whose contract

renewal with Adidas this season has been described as the biggest since Usain Bolt's with Puma, added: "At the end of the day, it's the choice of the relay coach to decide who gets on the relay. I told them before we went out to Glasgow that I was going to make myself available for the 4x400 if you wanted to use me. "Afterwards there were coaches who were upset and they complained to higher-ups about the decision."

Florida synergy

Unless there were rule changes, Lyles said he considered himself eligible for selection for the 4x400m relay team in Paris. "Well, the way that the rules are set up now is anybody who's actually on the team can be in the relay," he said. "I will be training specifically for the 100 and 200 and be as strong as possible in the 400. "I am the best in shape I've ever been in my life. And I know I've been saying that for the past two years, but it's very true." — AFP

Sports

Luton in the hunt to avoid relegation, grab 1-1 draw

Adebayo rescues struggling Luton

LUTON: Elijah Adebayo kept Luton in the hunt to avoid relegation from the Premier League as his equalizer rescued a 1-1 draw against Everton on Friday. Rob Edwards' side trailed to Dominic Calvert-Lewin's penalty but Adebayo scored the crucial leveller before half-time at Kenilworth Road. Despite earning just one win in their past 15 league games, third-bottom Luton are still in contention to beat the drop.

They are behind fourth-bottom Nottingham Forest on goal difference, with Nuno Espirito Santo's team facing already-relegated Sheffield United on Saturday. A Forest win at Bramall Lane would move them three points ahead of Luton, who have two games left against West Ham and Fulham to avoid an immediate return to the Championship after last season's fairytale promotion. "We are still in this fight as we speak. I'm proud of the performance but it would have been huge to win tonight. Almost but we've had a lot of them this year," Edwards said.

Luton's survival bid is further complicated by the wait for a verdict on Forest's appeal against their four-point deduction for financial breaches, with a Premier League announcement expected before the end of the season. "There's a long way to go and it's over to them (Forest) tomorrow. There's a situation that's going on that's out of our control that isn't ideal," Edwards said in reference to Forest's appeal. "I don't really understand it. Everyone would just like to know where they stand. I think we'd all like that."

Despite losing eight points as punishment for financial breaches of their own, Everton had already secured their Premier League status with three

games to spare. Winners of their previous three matches, Sean Dyche's side had nothing to play for on their first visit to Kenilworth Road for 17 years but they did enough to frustrate the superstitious Edwards. Edwards revealed this week that he drives the same route to the stadium, uses the same tooth-paste and walks his dog at a certain time of day if Luton are on a winning streak. Beaten in their last three matches, Edwards needed a change of fortune so he said he would switch his underwear for the Everton clash.

Luton dig deep

Unfortunately for Edwards, Luton's luck was out initially as Tahith Chong appealed in vain for an early penalty after stumbling when Everton keeper Jordan Pickford rushed out to challenge the Luton forward. Teden Mengi gifted Everton a 23rd-minute penalty when he needlessly wrestled Jarrad Branthwaite to the ground as the pair jostled at a corner. Calvert-Lewin stepped up to drill the spot-kick down the middle for his fourth goal in his last five games.

But Luton had no intention of surrendering and they were level seven minutes later. Targeting Everton's Ashley Young time and again, Luton's persistence paid off as Adebayo controlled Albert Sambi Lokonga's high pass on his chest, muscled his way past the veteran defender and slammed a fine finish past Pickford from 10 yards.

In his first start since February after a hamstring injury, Adebayo had taken his goal tally for the season to 10. Luton striker Carlton Morris had a tower-



LUTON: Luton Town's English striker #11 Elijah Adebayo (center) vies with Everton's English defender #06 James Tarkowski (left) and Everton's Irish defender #23 Seamus Coleman (right) during the English Premier League football match between Luton Town and Everton on May 3, 2024. — AFP

ing header cleared off the line by Ben Godfrey just before half-time. Jack Harrison almost put Everton in front against the run of play with a deflected effort that was clawed away from under the bar by Thomas

Kaminski. Calvert-Lewin's powerful header forced a brilliant tip over from Kaminski, while Pickford made a fine stop from Luke Berry's header in stoppage-time. — AFP

Guardiola backs England for Euro 2024 glory

LONDON: Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola has backed England to win Euro 2024 if they follow his club's route to continental glory. Guardiola finally guided City to their first Champions League crown last season after a number of near misses earlier in his reign. The Spaniard feels Gareth Southgate can do the same with England following their own painful failures on the brink of silverware.

England were beaten in the European Championship final by Italy on penalties at Wembley in 2021, lost the World Cup semi-final against Croatia in 2018 and were beaten by France in the 2022 World Cup quarter-finals. "They are really good. It's not just the talent of the strikers, it's the whole package, the whole group and Gareth knows perfectly what he has to do," Guardiola told reporters on Friday.

"So I have the feeling, everyone has the feeling, that the England national team, (from) the last events - the World Cup and European Championship - they make steps, they are on the verge, they are really close. They lost a final, got to a semi-final. When you

arrive at these stages every two years, it's going to happen. It's quite similar to us, we were close, and in the end we lifted it." Guardiola believes the English passion for football, which has often weighed heavily on their players at tournaments, will prove a more uplifting factor this time.

"I see the reaction when they play European Cups or World Cups, people go crazy on the streets. They go crazy for the national team," Guardiola said. "That proves how proud they are and, at the end of the day, as a football player, that is the best, your country is proud of what you are doing for your country, and the way you are playing, reaching the last stages. "Just believe it. If they believe it, they can do it. Believe it, believe it, they can do it." City forward Phil Foden could have a key role to play for England after an outstanding season at club level.

The 23-year-old's performances were recognized as he was named the Football Writers' Association men's Player of the Year on Friday. Guardiola believes Foden, who has progressed through the club's youth ranks to become one of their most important players, could go on to become one of City's greatest ever. "This club has a long, long history. You can't forget what happened with the players who played at Maine Road, like everyone knows. I think the club has been built with many, many top-quality players," he said. "But I have the feeling if he continues his career until the end here, and continues that level, he can be one of the best, that's for sure." — AFP



Pep Guardiola

Olympic champion getting stronger in Florida's 'quiet life'

NASSAU: Marcell Jacobs took the radical decision to dump his coach, up sticks and move from Italy to the United States in his bid to arrive in Paris this summer ready to defend his Olympic 100m title. That split from Paolo Camossi saw the 29-year-old Italian team up with Rana Reider, whose Florida training group also includes American Trayvon Bromell, Olympic 200m champion Andre De Grasse and Japanese sprinter Abdul Hakim Sani Brown.

"There's been a lot of change from last year," Jacobs said with no little understatement ahead of competing in this weekend's World Athletics Relays in Nassau. Jacobs, born in the US to an Italian mother and American father but raised by the former since infancy in Italy, stunned the athletics world with two golds in the COVID-delayed Tokyo Olympics. — AFP

Today's matches

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE		
Chelsea v West Ham United		16:00
beIN Sports HD 1		
Brighton v Aston Villa		16:00
beIN Sports HD 2		
Liverpool v Tottenham		18:30
beIN Sports HD 1		
SPANISH LEAGUE		
Osasuna v Real Betis		15:00
beIN Sports HD 3		
Celta de Vigo v Villarreal		17:15
beIN Sports HD 3		
Valencia v Deportivo		19:30
beIN Sports HD 3		
Rayo Vallecano v Almeria		22:00
beIN Sports HD 4		
Sevilla v Granada		22:00
beIN Sports HD 3		
ITALIAN LEAGUE SERIE A		
Cagliari v Lecce		13:30
beIN Sports		
Empoli v Frosinone		16:00
beIN Sports		
Hellas Verona v Fiorentina		16:00
beIN Sports		
AC Milan v Genoa		19:00
beIN Sports		
Roma v Juventus		21:45
beIN Sports		
GERMAN LEAGUE		
Union Berlin v Bochum		16:30
beIN Sports		
Eintracht Frankfurt v Bayer 04		18:30
beIN Sports HD 4		
Heidenheim 1846 v Mainz 05		20:30
beIN Sports		

Bill May or may not make Olympic history in the pool

PARIS: This weekend in the northern suburbs of Paris at the newly-built Olympic Aquatics Centre, Bill May will continue his push to secure a landmark spot in the USA artistic swimming team. The fact that May is 45 and has had more comebacks than Sinatra is neither here nor there: the eye-catching thing about his presence at the World Cup event in Saint Denis, a test event for the Games, is that he is on the verge of becoming the first man ever to compete in the event at the Olympics.

Until this year, artistic swimming - the new name for synchronized swimming - was a female-only domain, leaving May to cheer on from the sidelines. If May makes the final eight when the team is cut down from its current 12 members on June 9, it will fulfil the dream he has been living for 35 years. "To say that I'm going to the Olympic Games, it's something almost unimaginable, because it's something that I thought that I would never be able to do during my career," he told AFP at the team's Olympic training base at Eaubonne, outside Paris.

May, who took up the sport when he was 10 to compete with his sister, was given the big news just before Christmas 2022. "I got a call from a friend and he said: 'Hey, you're the first person to know that they're putting men into the Olympics'.



EAUBONNE: US athletes Anita Alvarez (right) and Bill May pose at the Bussys swimming pool in Eaubonne, near Paris. — AFP

"He said: 'Are you going to do it?' And I said: 'This is my life.'" May was a high achiever during the first part of his career, winning the duet at the US national championships and being named the US Synchronized Swimming Athlete of the Year in 1998 and 1999.

But with no place for men at the swimming world championships or the Olympics, May hung up his competitive noseclip in 2004, going on to perform in the water for the Cirque du Soleil. Then came the news that men would be allowed to compete in the world championships in Kazan in 2015 and May came out of retirement. "Without one thought, I said: 'I'll do it, no matter what. I don't care if I'm dead last. I just want to be there. I want to show the world that men should be accepted into the sport of artistic swimming.'" — AFP

End of an era! Reus to leave Dortmund

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund veteran Marco Reus will leave after 12 years with the side at the end of the season, the club announced on Friday. Both parties agreed Reus' contract would not be extended, although the 34-year-old wants to keep playing and will not retire. "I've dedicated half my life to this club, experienced a lot of ups and downs, but more ups I think," the Dortmund-born Reus said in a video message. "The club and I came to the decision not to extend the contract. It made me incredibly proud. I'm incredibly grateful to have played for this club for so many years."

Reus, who came through Dortmund's junior system before returning to the club after breaking through at neighboring Borussia Moenchengladbach, won two German Cups with the side but never lifted the Bundesliga title. The forward came closest last season, where Dortmund were atop the table heading into the final day but a 2-2 home draw against Mainz saw the title go to Bayern Munich for the 11th straight time. While Bayer Leverkusen's breakthrough Bundesliga title means Reus will not lift the shield with the club, his side are two games away from winning the Champions League.

Reus came off the bench in a 1-0 win over Paris Saint-Germain in Wednesday's first semi-final at home, with the return leg taking place next Tuesday. A win or a draw in Paris will see the side through to the final at Wembley, where Reus played in Dortmund's previous final, a 2-1 loss in 2013 to rivals Bayern. "We want to go to Wembley, we want to bring the trophy to Dortmund. That's why it's simply important that the decision has been made and that the issue is then over. And that we all concentrate on this big goal." — AFP

Classifieds

Clinics & Hospitals

Clinics

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

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

Hospitals

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

Change of Name

I, **Raja Daruru**, holder of Indian Passport No. M5451053 having permanent address Venkatanarayanapalli, Chakrampeta, Penagalur, Annamayya, Andhra Pradesh, 516127, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name Adi Narayana and surname Dharuru. (# 05/05/2024)

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) Munawar and (surname) Khan. (# 02/05/2024)

Arsenal trounce Bournemouth

Ipswich promote to Premier League for first time in 22 years



LONDON: Bournemouth's Ukrainian defender #27 Illia Zabarnyi (right) vies with Arsenal's German midfielder #29 Kai Havertz (center) during the English Premier League football match between Arsenal and Bournemouth on May 4, 2024. — AFP

LONDON: Arsenal moved to the top of the Premier League as Bukayo Saka and Leandro Trossard inspired a 3-0 win against Bournemouth on Saturday. The Gunners' fourth successive victory ensured second placed Manchester City will not be able to knock them out of pole position this weekend even if they beat Wolves in Saturday's late game. Saka's penalty put Mikel Arteta's side ahead on the stroke of half-time at the Emirates Stadium.

Trossard and Declan Rice struck in the closing stages to secure a vital three points. Chasing their first title since 2004, the Gunners will pray for a shock City stumble against Wolves at the Etihad Stadium. Pep Guardiola's team, who have two games in hand on Arsenal, can clinch an unprecedented fourth successive English title if they win their last four matches.

Arsenal's 26th Premier League victory this season equalled the club's top-flight record for a single campaign. Arteta's men gifted the title to City last season after a blowing an eight-point lead in the closing weeks. But the north Londoners have learned from that meltdown, winning 14 of their 16 league games in 2024 to stay firmly in the hunt.

Arsenal travel to Manchester United in their penultimate game next weekend before hosting Everton on May 19. Arteta was a childhood friend of Bournemouth boss Andoni Iraola back home in

Spain, but there was no room for sentimentality with the title on the line. Bournemouth keeper Mark Travers was destined for a busy afternoon and it wasn't long before he made his first save to deny Kai Havertz from a tight angle.

Trossard delivers

Even Arsenal defender William Saliba was willing to rumble forward, cleverly cutting back to find space for a shot that Travers saved at his near post. Travers repelled a stinging strike from Saka, with Takehiro Tomiyasu's effort cleared off the line from the resulting corner. Unmarked 10 yards from goal, Declan Rice lashed narrowly wide from Havertz's knock down, a miss that left anxiety and frustration etched all over Arteta's face.

Arteta could finally relax in the 45th minute when Havertz left his leg dangling to ensure he was tripped by the slightest contact from Travers as the German skipped around him. Saka stepped up to calmly slot the penalty down the middle for his 20th goal in all competitions this season. Saka should have doubled Arsenal's lead soon after half-time, but his scuffed close-range shot from Havertz's pass was straight at Travers. Arsenal couldn't rest on their laurels with a one-goal lead and Dominic Solanke nearly caught them out as the Bournemouth striker forced David Raya to save.

Havertz's low drive was stopped at full stretch by

the over-worked Travers, but Bournemouth's Justin Kluivert went close with a shot that dipped just over. Trossard finally delivered the knockout blow in the 70th minute, running onto Rice's pass and slotting a clinical finish past Travers from 12 yards. Bournemouth's Antoine Semenyo had a goal harshly disallowed for a close challenge by Solanke on Raya. But Rice blasted home from close-range deep into stoppage-time as Arsenal cruised to a victory that kept their title dreams alive.

Meanwhile, Ipswich returned to the Premier League for the first time in 22 years after beating Huddersfield 2-0 to secure promotion from the Championship on Saturday. Goals from Wes Burns and Omari Hutchinson ensured the Tractor Boys became just the fourth side in the Premier League era to go from the third to the top tier via consecutive promotions.

Leeds needed an Ipswich defeat coupled with victory over Southampton to leap into the top two. But Daniel Farke's men lost 2-1 to Saints at Elland Road, meaning he will come up against old club Norwich in the playoff semi-finals.

Ipswich's most famous fan Ed Sheeran, who sponsors the club's shirts, was not in attendance for wild scenes of celebration at Portman Road as fans poured on to the pitch and lit blue flares at full-time. The Suffolk club, which was sold to American investors for just £40 million (\$50 mil-

lion), will now pocket at least £200 million in television revenue in the coming years.

Huddersfield had already been realistically relegated prior to Saturday due to their vastly inferior goal difference compared to their rivals at the bottom. Burns settled any nerves among the home support when he fired low into the bottom corner on 27 minutes.

On-loan Chelsea winger Hutchinson has been one of the stars of Ipswich's season and made sure Kieran McKenna's men could relax by smashing home a second just three minutes into the second half. Ipswich could face a fight just to hold on to the highly-rated McKenna, a former first team coach at Manchester United.

The 37-year-old Northern Irishman has been linked with a move to Brighton should Roberto De Zerbi leave the Seagulls. West Brom beat Preston 3-0 to secure their playoff place and will face Southampton.

There was also drama at the bottom of the table as Birmingham were relegated in their first season with NFL legend Tom Brady as a minority owner of the club. A 1-0 win over Norwich was not enough to save the Blues. Blackburn spoiled Leicester's title party with a 2-0 win at the King Power to survive and deny the Foxes amassing 100 points. Plymouth ended Hull's playoff hopes with a 1-0 win to hold off Birmingham by a point. — AFP

Mavericks hammer Clippers to advance in NBA playoffs

LOS ANGELES: The Dallas Mavericks beat the Los Angeles Clippers 114-101 to advance to the second round of the NBA Playoffs on Friday as Orlando forced a decisive game seven against Cleveland despite 50 points from Cavs star Donovan Mitchell. The Magic dominated late on their home floor in Orlando to overcome a heroic performance from Mitchell, beating the Cavaliers 103-96 to knot their best-of-seven Eastern Conference first-round series at three games apiece. In Dallas, Luka Doncic scored 28 points and Kyrie Irving scored 30 - 28 in the second half - as the Mavericks locked up a 4-2 Western Conference victory over the Clippers, who were again without injured star Kawhi Leonard.

Doncic added seven rebounds and 13 assists to gain a measure of revenge against a Clippers team that ousted his Mavs in the first round in 2020 and 2021. Dallas next face the Oklahoma City Thunder, the surprise Western top seeds who swept New Orleans 4-0. The series will offer a tantalizing matchup between Slovenian star Doncic and Oklahoma City's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, both Most Valuable Player award finalists along with Nikola Jokic - whose reigning champion Denver Nuggets face Minnesota in the second round.

"We stayed together," Doncic said of a Mavs team that led by 13 in the second quarter only for the Clippers to tie it up by halftime at 52-52. Irving's driving layup in the first minute of the third quarter



TEXAS: Paul George #13 of the LA Clippers drives the ball against Derrick Jones Jr. #55 of the Dallas Mavericks during the first quarter in Game Six of the Western Conference First Round Playoffs at American Airlines Center in Dallas, Texas. — AFP

put Dallas ahead for good. It was just the beginning of Irving's dazzling second half display that also featured an off-balance three-pointer as he was fouled, with Irving converting the free-throw to push the Mavs' lead to 24 points.

His performance had former teammate LeBron James tweeting his admiration, which was echoed by Doncic after the game. "He's amazing," Doncic said of Irving, who won a title with James and the Cleveland Cavaliers in 2016 and joined the Mavs last year. "Never count him out - it's amazing just having him on our team." Paul George scored 18 points and grabbed 11 rebounds for the Clippers. James Harden had 16 points and handed out 13 assists. — AFP

Auger-Aliassime into Madrid final as Lehecka quits

MADRID: Felix Auger-Aliassime said "it's crazy times for the elite of our sport" as the Canadian benefitted from yet another retirement to set-up a Madrid Open final clash against Andrey Rublev on Friday. Czech 30th seed Jiri Lehecka became the latest player to withdraw in the Spanish capital through injury, as he sustained a back problem and was forced to retire at 3-3 in the opening set of his semi-final against Auger-Aliassime.

Top seed Jannik Sinner withdrew ahead of his quarter-final with Auger-Aliassime, citing a hip injury, while Jakub Mensik also gave the Canadian free passage when he retired early in the second set of their third round. The Masters 1000 tournament in Madrid has been dealt one blow after another, starting with the pre-event withdrawal of world number one Novak Djokovic. After losing Sinner to injury, the tournament also saw its third seed bow out as Daniil Medvedev retired midway through his quarter-final with Lehecka on Thursday.

Carlos Alcaraz, meanwhile, announced on Friday he was withdrawing from next week's Masters 1000 in Rome due to a forearm injury. "It's crazy. I don't know if it's ever happened to a player before, it's kind of a weird situation to be in on my part," said a stunned Auger-Aliassime, who is through to the first Masters final of his career by playing just three completed matches. Lehecka felt something in his back as he attempted a serve early in the match

and took an eight-minute off-court medical timeout before play resumed at 3-3.

It was all over three points later as Lehecka fell to the ground in pain, bringing the match to an abrupt end. "I couldn't believe what was happening when I saw that his back blocked on him. I feel really bad for him," said Auger-Aliassime. "It's crazy times for the elite of our sport, withdrawing from many events. But obviously for me it's kind of a weird rhythm not having played that much and being in the finals. But I can just focus on the first week of tennis I had."

Rublev reached the fifth Masters final of his career with a 6-4, 6-3 win against American Taylor Fritz. The seventh-seeded Rublev arrived at the tournament carrying a four-match losing streak but rebounded in the Spanish capital, claiming five impressive wins, including one over world number three Alcaraz in the quarter-finals. "For sure mentally I was feeling much better (this week) and I was able to perform, putting emotions in the right direction, for sure that helped me to be in the final," said Rublev. After getting broken in the opening game, Rublev recovered immediately and won the last seven points of the first set to take the lead in 39 minutes.

A break of serve in the sixth game of the second frame was enough for the Russian to complete a 72-minute victory. Rublev leads his head-to-head 4-1 against Auger-Aliassime but four of their five encounters have gone to a deciding set. Auger-Aliassime lost their most recent clash in Rotterdam in February after holding three match points. "We've always had three-set battles, even back in 2018, I was much younger," said the 23-year-old Canadian. "He's always a player that fights hard, that's always present every tournament, as players have highs and lows but he's always there." — AFP