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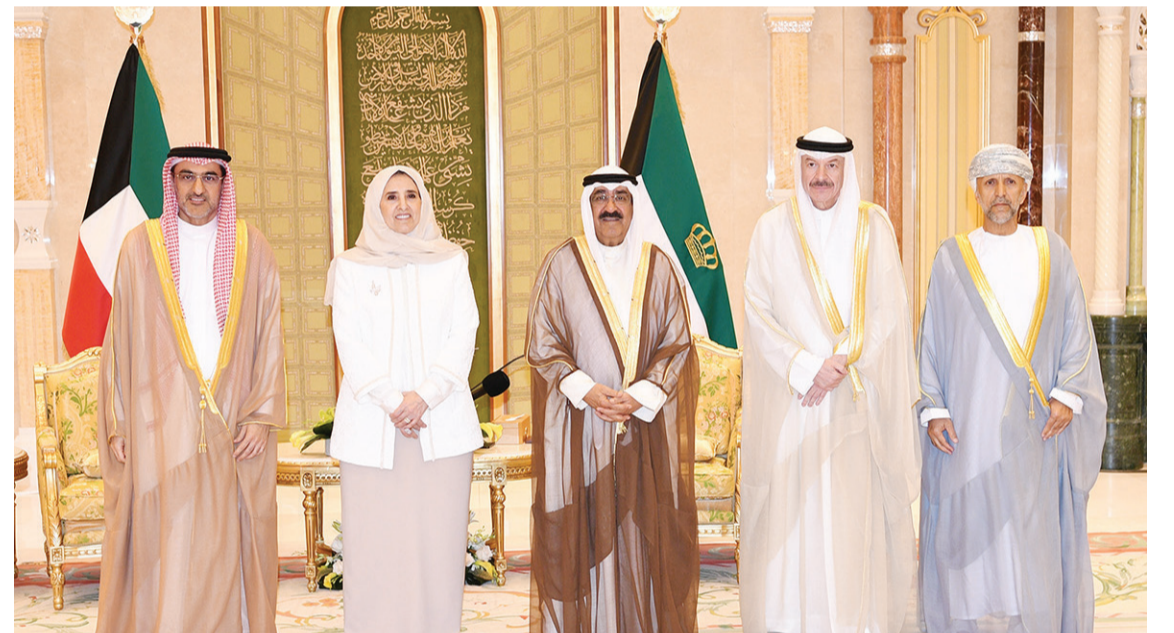


**15** 'Fired-up' Inoue stops Nery to defend titles



## Amir honors Informatics Award winners

Awardees laud contributions to digital domain • Amir heads to Turkey on state visit



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is briefed about the HH Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah Informatics Award and its domains during the awards ceremony at Bayan Palace on May 6, 2024. — KUNA photos (See Page 3)

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Columbia axes grad ceremony

**NEW YORK:** Columbia University, the epicenter of US student protests against the war in Gaza, on Monday cancelled its main graduation ceremony scheduled for May 15, with smaller events planned instead. On Saturday, dozens of pro-Palestinian protesters wearing graduation gowns and keffiyehs briefly interrupted a commencement ceremony at the University of Michigan. At Northeastern University in Boston, a man wearing a shirt splattered with fake blood approached the stage before being detained by police on Sunday. — AFP

#### Iraq hangs 11 'terror' convicts

**NASIRIYAH, Iraq:** Iraqi authorities on Monday executed by hanging 11 people convicted of "terrorism", security and health sources told AFP, the second group put to death since late April. A security official confirmed on condition of anonymity that the executions took place at Al-Hut prison in the southern city of Nasiriyah in Dhi Qar province, where 11 other people likewise convicted of "terrorism" were executed last month. — AFP

#### Former Turkey church opens for salah

**ISTANBUL:** Turkey on Monday reopened a mosque converted from an ancient Orthodox church in Istanbul for Muslim worship, four years after the president ordered its transformation. The Kariye Mosque was formerly a Byzantine church, then a mosque and then a museum. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Monday declared Kariye Mosque reopened for worship remotely during a ceremony at the presidential palace in Ankara. Images from the mosque revealed two mosaics carved into the walls of the ancient church on the right and left sides of the prayer room were covered with curtains. Most of the mosaics and frescos however remained visible to visitors. — AFP (See Page 6)

**KUWAIT:** HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah patronized and attended on Monday the 23rd edition of the HH Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah Informatics Award ceremony at Bayan Palace. HH the Amir was received by the Head of the Award's Board of Trustees Sheikha Ayda Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah and other members of the supreme organizing committee. During the ceremony, HH the Amir launched the new edition of the digital index.

Addressing the event, Sheikha Ayda said the Informatics Award takes the responsibility of bridging the technical gap and protecting privacy due to the tremendous breakthrough that digital technology has created. She voiced much appreciation and gratitude to the country's leaders for their foresightedness, wisdom and fervent efforts for the sake of national development and modernization.

Also speaking during the ceremony on the occasion

of winning the prize, Governor of the Central Bank of Bahrain Khaled Humaidan congratulated HH the Amir on assuming office, wishing him success and further development and prosperity for Kuwait. He said the HH Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah Informatics Award is a recognition of the efforts made in the field of digital transformation and that it is an incentive to continue the bank's journey and adds to its achievements.

Continued on Page 6

#### Bader Al-Kharafi: Zain maximizing shareholder value

**KUWAIT:** The Zain Group Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held at the Zain Group's headquarters in Kuwait, attended with a quorum of 77 percent of shareholders, whereby they were presented with the Zain Group's 2023 annual report entitled "40 years of pioneering innovation and sustainable growth", which highlights the financial statements, governance and auditors' reports and the major achievements of Zain Group and its operations and subsidiaries across Middle East and Africa for the year ended Dec 31, 2023. Addi-

tionally, Zain Group released its 2023 Sustainability Report.

Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi said: "2023 witnessed the ongoing implementation of our future-proof 4Sight strategy during our 40th year of pioneering innovation, which turned out to be a defining one for Zain, delivering strong performance, significant milestones, sustainable growth, and value to our customers and stakeholders."

Zain's Board of Directors and executive management teams have worked effortlessly to overcome socioeconomic regional challenges in our markets, where we maximized value creation by investing heavily in our networks, technologies and people. This resulted in us extending our market leadership in many highly competitive and evolving markets." (See Page 8)



From the annual general meeting.

#### Hamas accepts truce as Zionists plot Rafah carnage

**GAZA:** Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh on Monday informed mediators Qatar and Egypt that his Palestinian group had accepted their proposal for a ceasefire in Gaza after nearly seven months of war. "Ismail Haniyeh, head of the political bureau of Hamas movement, conducted a telephone call with the prime minister of Qatar, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, and with the Egyptian intelligence minister, Mr Abbas Kamel, and informed them of Hamas' approval of their proposal regarding a ceasefire agreement," the group said in a statement published on its official website.

A senior Hamas official said Monday the Zionist entity must decide whether it accepts or "obstructs" a truce in Gaza. "After Hamas agreed to the mediators' proposal for a ceasefire, the ball is now in the court of (Zionist) occupation, whether it will agree to the ceasefire agreement

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GAZA: A woman mourns as she carries the shrouded body of a child killed following overnight Zionist strikes on Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on May 6, 2024. — AFP



# Mute: An art of resistance

Award-winning play receives international awards



By Ghadeer Ghloum

**KUWAIT:** Sulayman Al-Bassam, a distinguished writer and director from Kuwait, created the award-winning play "Mute" in December 2023. The play made its world premiere at the Tunis JTC festival, where it received the "Golden Tanit Award" for best production, the "Best Actress Award" for Hala Omran, and the "Best Text Award" for Al-Bassam himself. Inspired by the concept of rejecting verbal expression, and choosing silence as a form of utmost power, "MUTE" earns its name, reflecting alternative forms of resistance.

"Tonight's performance is part of its ongoing tour, with shows scheduled for tonight and tomorrow night in Kuwait before heading to Beirut next month. "Mute" delves into the aftermath of the Bei-

rut port explosion, offering a poignant and politically charged narrative accompanied by live music and a performing actress, Hala Omran, winner of Best Actress Award," Al-Bassam told Kuwait Times.

Al-Bassam's "Mute" explores themes of resilience in the face of escalating violence and media manipulation by realistically portraying a range of emotions performed by the leading performer Hala Omran, and live music composers, Abed Kobeissi and Ali Hout. The play symbolizes the choice of silence in the midst of political upheaval in the Arab world. The play aligns with Al-Bassam's work with SABAB, which aims to address issues of identity, history, language, and culture, bridging national and cultural boundaries by incorporating various literary, historical, and geopolitical elements to create new dialogues within the Arab world and on a global scale.



In my view

## Kuwait a country of freedoms



By Azzah Al-Ghamdi

**K**uwait is considered one of the first countries to guarantee freedom to all residents, whether citizens or expatriates. This is explicitly stated in the Kuwaiti constitution in articles 35 and 36, which guarantee freedom of expression, belief and practice of religious rituals for expatriates residing in the country. The constitution explicitly stipulates individual freedoms while regulating them by laws. The penal laws that regulate these freedoms were launched accordingly.

Kuwait is often seen as a country without prisoners of conscience or political prisoners. However, this is due to a misunderstanding of the laws. While the constitution guarantees freedom of opinion in article 36, it also specifies that it be regulated by law. The state security law delineates certain opinions as state security crimes, which are distinct from freedom of opinion. These laws are public and everyone can familiarize themselves with them to avoid confusion.

Criticism of government officials and performance is permitted under Article 54 of the constitution, but criticism of the ruler is not allowed. Opposing the Amir is punishable by imprisonment. Therefore, most detained politicians are not prisoners of conscience but perpetrators of state security crimes.

Calling for a change in the system of government or attacking the ruling family are also punishable under state security crimes. These laws are transparent, and the procedures for arrests are well-established. There are no enforced disappearances, as the whereabouts of the accused are known throughout the process. It's essential for everyone to respect the state's constitution and laws. Social media must be regulated to prevent the spread of misinformation and accusations. News channels on social media should be accountable and ensure that their statements do not distort the country's reputation. Misleading and falsifying facts undermine the country's image as a bastion of freedom.

## Kuwait, EU discuss climate change, renewable energy

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) discussed on Monday with the EU Cooperation Team ways of enhancing cooperation in the fields of renewable energy and climate change, in addition to international environmental challenges. In a statement, KISR Acting Director General Mashaan Al-Otaibi, after his meeting with the EU Cooperation Team Leader, Spyros Kouvelis, affirmed the importance of the private sector's role in achieving the goals of international treaties—to double the production and efficiency of renewable energy—and the vision of enhancing the business environment through the green transition project as a means to achieve these goals.

The initiative is considered essential to enabling renewable energy solutions and enhancing regional cooperation, and it represents a step towards



Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research discusses with the EU Cooperation team on ways to enhance cooperation in the fields of renewable energy and climate change. — KUNA

achieving a sustainable future and resisting the effects of climate change, he said. On his part, the EU official reiterated the importance of enhancing cooperation between the UN and the GCC countries through the green transition project and its vision

as a turning point to achieve a sustainable future. During the meeting, both sides discussed the green transition project, which aims to increase the usage of renewable energy sources in addition to boosting economic growth and diversity. — KUNA



Kuwaiti researcher Issa Dashti releases never-before-seen pictures of Britain's King Charles during a visit to Kuwait more than three decades ago, on a day marking the first anniversary of his coronation.

## Kuwaiti researcher unveils rare photos of UK's King Charles

**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti researcher Issa Dashti on Monday released never-before-seen pictures of Britain's King Charles during a visit to Kuwait more than three decades ago, on a day marking the first anniversary of his coronation. Some 30 photographs of King Charles' visit to Kuwait back in 1993 were put on display amid an exhibition organized by a local culture and arts body to mark 125 years since diplomatic relations between Kuwait and Britain began in earnest.

In one of the pictures, Kuwait's late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah was shown bestowing a prestigious state order upon the British monarch, who then served as the Prince of Wales, an event the researcher said epitomized the amity between



the two nations. Sheikha Hala Al-Sabah, the exhibition's sponsor, said that Kuwait and London have long shared "exceptional" relations, citing the expo as among national initiatives that help shed light on these ties, which have seen meteoric growth over the years. Britain's Ambassador to Kuwait, Belinda Lewis, expressed her gratification over attending the expo, saying the photos on display send a poignant message of solidarity and camaraderie between Kuwait and Britain. — KUNA



# Amir patronizes Informatics Award



His Highness the Amir and chairperson of board of Trustees of the Award Sheikhha Ayda Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah. — KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir honors founder of Venera Limited from State of Palestine Mohammad Al-Kilani.



His Highness the Amir honors Governor of the Central Bank of Bahrain Khaled Humaidan.



His Highness the Amir honors Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Chairman of the Board of Directors Hamad Al-Marzouq.



Chairperson of board of Trustees of the Award Sheikhha Ayda Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir, accompanied by chairperson of board of Trustees of the Award Sheikhha Ayda Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, greets participants during the award ceremony.



His Highness the Amir honors CEO of the National Center for Statistics and Information in the Sultanate of Oman, Dr. Khalifa Al-Barwani.



His Highness the Amir honors Founder of Myfatorah Company, Abdullah Al-Dabbous.

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah patronized and attended on Monday the 23rd edition of His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah Informatics Award ceremony at Bayan Palace. His Highness the Amir was received by the Head of the Award Board of Trustees Sheikhha Ayda Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah and other members of the supreme organizing committee. During the ceremony, HH the Amir launched the new edition of the digital index. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. — KUNA photos



Late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and former Turkish President Abdullah Gul.



Late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

## Kuwait, Turkey strong relations bolstered by mutual visions

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, commences, on Tuesday, an official visit to Turkey. The visit encompasses summit talks with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to bolster bilateral ties and coordinate cooperation on regional and international issues of common interest. The notable and continuous development of relations between the two countries is stimulated by mutual visions and the keenness of political leadership.

Kuwaiti-Turkish relations, marked with respect, mutual interest, and coordination, date back to 1969, when the two inked a diplomatic relations agreement. Over the past six decades, bilateral relations have experienced exponential growth as Turkey has proven itself a true partner in times of need. During the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Turkey took a firm stance against the aggression and stood in solidarity with Kuwait and its call for sovereignty and independence.

Following the liberation of Kuwait, the two continued exchanging visits on a multitude of levels and for various prospects. Kuwait showcased its



Late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

solidarity with Turkey after the failed coup attempt in 2016, affirming its support for the Turkish people and their democratically elected government. The two friendly nations share a firm position on the Palestinian issue and the Palestinian people's right to an independent state, condemning the aggression



Kuwaiti Ambassador to Turkey Wael Al-Enezi

## Amir's historic visit to Turkey will boost strategic relations

**ANKARA:** The upcoming visit by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Turkey on Tuesday will add to the strong historic ties linking the two countries and would boost the strategic cooperation, said Kuwaiti Ambassador to Turkey Wael Al-Enezi on Tuesday. This is the first visit by His Highness the Amir outside of the frame of GCC and Arab countries, which reflected the importance of Turkey in the Kuwaiti discourse, Ambassador Al-Enezi told KUNA.

He predicted that the visit would focus on boosting ties on all possible levels especially with it coinciding with the 60th anniversary of diplomatic ties. The strength of the bilateral ties had been exemplified in the signing of 62 agreements, Memorandums of Understanding (MoU), and cooperation protocols in inception of relations, he affirmed, adding that Kuwait would always remain grateful for Turkey especially with its just stance

during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

He also mentioned Kuwait's humanitarian support to Turkey on various occasions including the 2023 February devastating earthquake that hit southern Turkey. The Ambassador also touched on Kuwait's assistance with Turkey in handling the situation of the Syrian refugees who fled their country since the crisis began in Syria back in 2011.

Touching on the major files to be discussed during the visit, the diplomat affirmed that the leaderships of the two countries would surely touch on the most important issue in the region and that is the Palestinian cause with a special focus on the latest developments in the Gaza Strip. Additionally, scores of other important issues such as bolstering ties on all levels would be on the agenda, he said. — KUNA

## Kuwaiti-Turkish relations 'highly optimal'

**KUWAIT:** Ties between Kuwait and Turkey are highly optimal and are based on pursuing mutual interest and benefit in line with the leadership's and people's aspirations, said Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait Tuba Nur Sonmez on Monday. In an interview with KUNA, Sonmez touched on the upcoming visit by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Turkey on Tuesday, saying that it would be another milestone in the relations linking the two countries.

As the two countries celebrate their 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations, there is a keen interest on the part of the leaderships of Kuwait and Turkey to further boost relations on all possible levels, affirmed the diplomat, who noted that this was the first visit of its kind on the level of leadership since 2020. She indicated that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal's choice of Turkey as his first destination post-his Arab countries' visit reflected great keenness in boosting bilateral relations and also exemplified the strong status of Turkey in the eyes of Kuwaitis.

His Highness the Amir's visit to Turkey comes at a tumultuous time in the region, Sonmez said, adding that the visit would touch on the issues pertaining to the genocide that was occurring in the Gaza Strip and elsewhere in Palestine. She took the chance to commend the role of Kuwait in the region, pointing out that Kuwait was always keen on bolstering peace and security. Ambassador Sonmez revealed that there was an increased opportunity for Kuwaitis to invest in Turkey and affirmed that her country was keen on displaying that to local investors in Kuwait.

She noted that the volume of commercial exchange reached \$700 million in 2023 and expressed a desire to further boost the number in the future. On direct Kuwaiti investments in Turkey, the Ambassador pointed out that they reached around \$2 billion in 2023, adding that Turkish contracting projects in Kuwait amounted to \$9.2 billion. The diplomat also revealed that her country had embarked on a number of measures recently to help bring in more investors, taking a chance to invest Kuwaitis to take advantage of such policies.

Sonmez said that Kuwait took steps to diversify its economy, lessening dependency on oil revenues, in line with its development vision of 2035, expressing that Turkey was interested in supporting Kuwait in this regard. Touching on tourism in Turkey, the Turkish diplomat said that the sector was thriving due to the keen interest of tourists, including Kuwaitis, in visiting her country. Kuwaitis are among the increasing number of tourists who have experienced Turkey, revealed the ambassador, who commended Kuwaitis for their keen interest in exploring her country. — KUNA



Tuba Nur Sonmez

## Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Lightning strikes over Kuwait City during a thunder storm early on May 6, 2024. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Fighting corruption 'main issue' in Arab forum's agenda

**CAIRO:** The Arab League affirmed on Monday that combating corruption is a major case on the Arab Forum's agenda. This came during the Arab League's speech at the Special Arab Forum, held on the sidelines of the fifth session of the States Parties to the Arab Anti-Corruption Convention, which was delivered by Director of the Legal Affairs Department at the Arab League, Maha Bakhit. Bakhit stated that the Arab League places the issue of combating corruption at the top of its priorities, as it is a direct threat to the security and stability of countries and the rule of law.

She added that the Arab Convention against Corruption has been ratified by 15 Arab countries so far, noting that the Arab League, represented by the Council of Ministers of Justice and Interior, is urging the rest of the countries to ratify the agreement. She continued that the convention aims at strengthening efforts in preventing, combating, and exposing corruption and building integrity, transparency, accountability, and the rule of law, as well as strengthening Arab cooperation in recovering assets.

On his part, Head of the Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commission Minister Raed Radwan stressed that combating corruption is a common concern among various societies. He added that it is no secret that Palestinians have been exposed to corruption for more than seven months, which has been reflected in their overall Palestinian lives, whether economically, politically, or within official institutions. He added that these circumstances constituted a major challenge to the success of this forum to combat corruption through exchanging experiences and knowledge about the most important anticorruption mechanisms.

Regional Representative for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in the Middle East and North Africa Cristina Albertin stated that there is a strong tie between the UN and the Arab League in combating corruption. She affirmed the importance of a consultative process between Arab countries to strengthen the legal aspect and understanding of combating corruption in the private and public sectors. Kuwait participated in the special Arab Forum with a delegation from the Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha), headed by its Vice President Nawaf Al-Mehmal. — KUNA

# The agony of losing a loved one

By Zainab Al-Mashoor

**KUWAIT:** Living through the loss of a loved one and coping with it differs from personality and their attachments following the stages of grieving. In conversations with the Kuwait Times, individuals share their experience of their loved one's loss and how they coped with it.

Faten lost her grandma, leaving a wound that refuses to heal even after fifteen years. Hoping it was an April fools' prank from her brother, Faten lived in denial for a year, trying to reach her grandma through calls and texts, expecting her weekend's visit yet not having the courage to visit her grave till date. "My grandma was my mentor and everything to me. Teaching me valuable lessons and satisfaction, she built the person I am today. Being an introvert, she pushed me out of my shell and into the socializing world, encouraging me to talk to foreigners and learn about different cultures and aspects. I spent most of my childhood with her," Faten added.

Zainab lost her aunt a month ago, finding it difficult to move on. "To me and my siblings, she was a wonder woman, a pillar of strength, an icon of a single mother, a good daughter, a great sister, and a joyous existence in people's lives. I remember how I waited the whole day expecting this news to be a joke and how my body turned numb, regretting not spending more time together or calling her often as they were a country apart,

and it hurts even more thinking how my mom will be able to cope losing her only best friend," Zainab added.

Firoz lost his best friend three years ago. "Zoheb's sudden illness and passing came as a shock and it took him some time to accept it when he realized that he couldn't change fate and that all he could do was pray for him. "Zoheb taught me and the people around him happiness. He was one of the kindest, most loving, and most supportive people. He taught me that goals will be achieved with hard work, but to never forget to enjoy the process or any step involved in life," Firoz said.

Elham lost both her parents months apart, making it so hard for her to cope. She was unable to express her feelings to reflect strength on her younger brother. Remembering that the last happy event they shared was her wedding and now having a little girl they couldn't get to meet. "My parents meant the world. Everything was easier in their presence. A smile on their faces guaranteed a peaceful world with no concerns. I miss their presence every passing day. They taught me kindness and helpfulness - to focus on building oneself and not get involved in other people's business. To always practice my religion and do whatever I want, but in the righteous form," Elham added.

Hassan lost his uncle, who was also his best friend, two years ago. Being of the same age, they spent most of their childhood together. "Losing him was an indescribable feeling, like everything around me just



turned dark. Delving into the memories hurts very much, as fate can't be changed, but his passing as a martyr in Syria made me stronger. He told me that it's okay to take a risk and taught me not to rush into decisions or actions. To follow and continue my path even if I was alone," he said.

Khaled lost his grandfather when he was young. He remembers how blank he was that day. Unable to speak or react, he observed the reactions of the visitors. Khaled is reminded of him whenever he listens to a podcast, as his grandfather enjoyed listening to the radio, wishing he could show him its accessibility today in a modern way. "He taught me how to pray and be a righteous person, and he taught me to be more understanding of people's reactions at certain times as they might be going through something," Khaled recalled.

## OIC's Banjul summit calls for immediate Gaza ceasefire

**JEDDAH:** Leaders of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) called for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire in the Gaza Strip at the conclusion of their 15th summit in the Gambian capital Banjul on Sunday. In their Banjul declaration, the leaders stressed the need for cessation of the all-out aggression against the Palestinian people in Gaza, as well as for providing humanitarian, medical, and relief aid.

They called for providing water and electricity and opening humanitarian corridors to deliver urgent aid to the Gaza Strip in an unhindered and adequate manner. They warned of the danger of continuing the crime of genocide and ethnic cleansing, including starvation, deprivation of water, and preventing the entry of fuel, which led to a genuine disaster for all health and humanitarian sectors.

The OIC leaders also affirmed categorical rejection and confrontation, by all means, with any attempt at forcibly displacing, expelling, or transferring the Palestinian people from their land. "We reaffirm the need to enable the Palestinian people to realize their legitimate national rights, as recognized by the international community, including through its recognition of the fully sovereign state of Palestine within the 1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharief as its capital," reads the declaration.

They vowed to take all measures to safeguard the Islamic identity of Al-Quds Al-Sharief from the illegal measures and policies, as well as the Judaization attempts of the occupier and the violations against the sanctity and status of Al-Haram Al-Sharif. "We confirm the full solidarity of Member States with the Palestinian People in their struggle to free themselves from foreign occupation and colonization, condemn all illegal actions aimed at denying them their legitimate rights, commend the role of UNRWA in serving the Palestinian refugees, and invite all States and the international community to continue supporting it to execute its historic mandate and responsibility," they said.

The OIC leaders also emphasized the urgent

need to resolve the longstanding disputes, including those involving Palestine and Jammu and Kashmir, as per the United Nations' relevant resolutions and the wishes of their people to avoid a continuous threat to the peace and security of the Middle East and South Asia. They thanked the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and other Member States for leading efforts at the UN General Assembly for the adoption of the Resolutions designating March 15 as "International Day to Combat Islamophobia" in 2022 and "Measures to Combat Islamophobia" on March 15, 2024.

They urged the UN Secretary General to appoint a United Nations Special Envoy to combat Islamophobia and implement other relevant measures contained in these resolutions. They called upon Member States and other countries to take all measures, including legislative and policy measures, to combat religious intolerance, negative stereotyping, hatred, incitement to violence, and violence against persons on the ground of their religion or belief.

"We condemn in the strongest terms the repeated incidents of burning copies of the Holy Quran in a number of European countries and call again on the concerned countries and the international community to take comprehensive and necessary actions to prevent the recurrence of such acts and to counter the alarming surge of Islamophobia," they stated. The conferees strongly condemned all forms of intolerance, terrorism, violence, extremism leading to violence, racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, and discrimination of any kind based on ethnicity, tribe, color, and religion. "We underline the importance of fostering tolerance, dialogue, and cooperation among civilizations, religions, cultures, and peoples as the most effective way to address the scourges of racism, discrimination, religious hatred, and Islamophobia," they asserted.

They expressed condolences with Kuwait over the demise of the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on his assumption of power. The 15th OIC summit kicked off in Banjul on Saturday, May 4, with the participation of many leaders, premiers, and ministers of the 57 member states. Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Al-Yahya, represented Kuwait at the summit. — KUNA



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In Italian city, no place to pray for Muslim workers

## Philippines, US fire at 'invasion' force in South China Sea war games

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RAFAH: Displaced Palestinians in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip carry their belongings as they leave following an evacuation order by the Zionist army on May 6, 2024.—AFP

## 'Where can we go?' ask Rafah residents

### Palestinian civilians in southern Gaza city voice despair

RAFAH: Palestinian civilians in the southern Gaza city of Rafah voiced despair on Monday as Zionist entity dropped fliers urging them to evacuate for their own "safety" ahead of a "limited" military operation. Zionist entity's army said it was instructing Palestinian families in eastern Rafah to flee in preparation for an expected ground assault on the city which abuts Gaza's border with Egypt. Residents of Rafah described emerging outside after a terrifying night in which around a dozen air strikes were carried out on Rafah, to find fliers falling from the sky telling them to "evacuate immediately". "The army is working with intensive power against the terrorist forces near you," read a flier circulated in eastern Rafah.

"For your safety, the IDF (Zionist military) tells you to evacuate immediately towards the expanded humanitarian zone of al-Mawasi," it said, with a map indicating the location to the north of Rafah. Osama Al-Kahlout, of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society in Gaza, told AFP that the areas designated for evacuation currently shelter some 250,000 people, many of whom have already been displaced from other areas in the Gaza Strip. "The evacuation process has begun on the

ground, but in a limited manner," he said. A Zionist entity military spokesman, when asked how many people should move, said: "The estimate is around 100,000 people." About 1.2 million people are currently sheltering in Rafah, according to the World Health Organization, most having fled there during the seven-month war between Zionist entity and Hamas Palestinian militants.

Amid pouring rain, some of those sheltering in Rafah said they had begun packing up their things from the densely packed tents and preparing to leave even before Zionist entity's directive arrived. "Whatever happens, my tent is ready," a resident told AFP.

But others said the area they were being told to flee to was already overcrowded, and they did not trust that it would be safe. Abdul Rahman Abu Jazar, 36, said he and 12 family members were in the designated evacuation area. Jazar and his family did not know what to do, he said, because the "humanitarian zone" they were told to head for "does not have enough room for us to make tents because they are (already) full of displaced people".

"Where can we go? We do not know," he said. "There are also no hospitals and it is far from any

services many need," he said, adding that one of his family members relied on dialysis at the Al-Najar hospital, in the area of Rafah instructed to evacuate. "How will we deal with her after that? Should we watch her die without being able to do anything?"

A Zionist entity military spokesman told reporters that the evacuation "is part of our plans to dismantle Hamas ... we had a violent reminder of their presence and their operational abilities in Rafah yesterday". On Sunday, four Zionist entity soldiers were killed and others wounded, the army said, when a barrage of rockets was fired towards the Kerem Shalom border crossing between Zionist entity and Gaza. The army said the rockets were fired from an area adjacent to Rafah.

International aid organizations have voiced alarm at the expected invasion of Rafah. "From the humanitarian perspective, no credible humanitarian plan for an attack on Rafah exists," said Bushra Khalidi, advocacy director for Oxfam in the Palestinian territories. She said she could "not fathom that Rafah will happen", asking where displaced Palestinians will go "when most of their surroundings have been reduced to death and rubble?" — AFP

## King Charles III marks first anniversary of coronation

LONDON: Britain's King Charles III on Monday marked the first anniversary of his coronation following a difficult year that has seen a cancer diagnosis and continuing tensions with his estranged son Prince Harry.

Gun salutes were due to be fired in central London and at other locations across the UK to mark the occasion. No official events, however, were planned with the milestone coming less than a week after King Charles resumed public duties since his diagnosis.

He visited fellow cancer patients at a London hospital on Tuesday after doctors said they were "very encouraged" by his progress. The 75-year-old monarch, who has not disclosed the type of cancer he has, was also reportedly keen to mark the day with minimal "fuss" given the link between his accession and the death of his mother Queen Elizabeth II.

The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby who crowned King Charles a year ago at Westminster Abbey praised his "sense of duty". "The past year has presented the king with some great personal challenges. But I have been struck by his continued sense of duty, having recently returned to royal engagements following treatment," he said.

"His openness in sharing his condition has been characteristic of his willingness to help and support others," he added. The anniversary comes as an Ipsos poll for the Daily Mail saw King Charles's personal popularity rating rise slightly to 56 percent.

His son and heir Prince William and his wife Catherine, the Princess of Wales, were the most popular members of the royal family on 69 percent each, up 8-10 percent since last April.

Catherine, 42, also known as Kate, announced her own shock cancer diagnosis in late March following abdominal surgery which had already forced her to withdraw from public life. The double blow of both King Charles and Catherine's ill health has left the royal family with a shortage of frontline royals with William also stepping back for a while to help care for his wife and family. Queen Camilla, 76, stepped in to take over many of her husband's engagements while King Charles's sister Princess Anne and his youngest brother Prince Edward have also taken on more prominent roles. But King Charles and Catherine's absence was felt even more keenly as the king's younger son Harry is no longer a working royal. — AFP

## Macron presses Xi to halt Ukraine war, agree fair trade

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron and EU Commission president Ursula von der Leyen pressed Xi Jinping at a summit in Paris on Monday to use Beijing's influence to halt the Russian war against Ukraine, also telling the Chinese leader to accept fair global trade rules. Xi's two-day state visit to France is his first visit to Europe since 2019 on a trip that will also see him hold talks in Serbia and Hungary. He has said he wants to find peace in Ukraine even if analysts do not expect any major breakthrough.

Opening an initial trilateral meeting attended by von der Leyen, Macron said coordination with Beijing on "major crises" including Ukraine was "absolutely decisive" and urged "fair rules for all" in Europe-China trade. "The future of our continent will very clearly depend on our ability to continue to develop relations with China in a balanced manner," Macron said.

Xi said China and the EU should

"remain partners" and "carry out strategic coordination" and thus "make new contributions to world peace and development".

Europe is concerned that while officially neutral in the Ukraine conflict, China is essentially backing Russia which is already using Chinese machine tools in arms production. "More effort is needed to curtail delivery of dual use goods to Russia that find their way to the battlefield," von der Leyen said after talks, adding that "this does affect EU-China relations".

She added that France and the EU also "count on China to use all its influence on Russia to end Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine," saying both Europe and China "have a shared interest in peace and security". Von der Leyen also said she was "confident" Xi Jinping would continue to play an "important role" in de-escalating tensions over nuclear threats made by Russia, hours after President Vladimir Putin ordered



PARIS: France's President Emmanuel Macron (second left) and his wife Brigitte Macron (left) greet Chinese President Xi Jinping (second right) and his wife Peng Liyuan (right) prior to a bilateral meeting during the Chinese leader's state visit, at The Elysee Presidential Palace in Paris on May 6, 2024. -- AFP

nuclear weapons drills involving troops based near Ukraine.

Both Macron and von der Leyen have indicated that trade was a priority in the talks, underscoring that Europe must defend its "strategic interests" in its economic relations with China.

"Europe will not waver from mak-

ing tough decisions needed to protect its economy and its security," she said. Von der Leyen said there were "imbalances that remain significant" and "a matter of great concern", singling out Chinese subsidies for electric cars and steel that were "flooding the European market". — AFP

## Putin orders nuclear drills, Russia captures Ukrainian villages

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin has ordered nuclear weapons drills near Ukraine, Moscow said Monday, in response to "threats" from Western officials to deploy NATO troops to Ukraine. The announcement came as Russian forces said they captured two villages in the war-battered regions of Donetsk and Kharkiv in eastern Ukraine, where outgunned and outmanned Ukrainian troops have struggled to hold the line.

Russian officials in the border region of Belgorod meanwhile announced that Ukrainian attack drones had killed six people and wounded over 30, including several children.

Putin has upped his nuclear rhetoric since ordering his army into Ukraine in 2022, warning in February there was a "real" risk of nuclear war. The defense ministry gave no date for the drills, but said

they would involve the air force, navy and troops stationed near Ukraine.

It said they were aimed at ensuring Russian territorial integrity in the face of Western "threats."

The Kremlin specified that the exercises were a response to statements by French President Emmanuel Macron and British officials. Russia has in recent days hit out at Macron for telling The Economist magazine he was "not ruling anything out" in the West's response to the conflict in Ukraine, including sending troops to the country. It has also blasted UK Foreign Secretary David Cameron for saying Kyiv has the right to strike targets inside Russia.

"They are talking about the readiness and even the intention of sending armed contingents to Ukraine—that is, in fact, to put NATO soldiers in front of the Russian military," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. "This is a completely new round of escalating tensions. It is unprecedented and requires special measures," he added.

Peskov singled out "dangerous rhetoric" issued by Macron, who said the question of sending troops to Ukraine would "legitimately" arise if Russia broke through Ukrainian front lines and Kyiv made such a request. Macron made similar statements in February.

Ukrainian forces have been dependent on Western military aid to battle Russia but NATO has said it will not send troops into Ukraine. Russia's defense ministry said troops from the Southern Military District, which borders Ukraine and includes the occupied Ukrainian territories will take part in the drills. "During the exercise, a set of measures will be taken to practice the preparation and use of non-strategic nuclear weapons," it said in a statement. Non-strategic nuclear weapons, also known as tactical nuclear weapons, are designed for use on the battlefield and can be delivered via missiles.

In Russia's frontier Belgorod region—under attack for months—governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said two moving vans and a passenger car "came under attack by Ukrainian kamikaze-drones."

"Unfortunately, six people died at the scene from their wounds as a result of the explosion," he said, adding that 35 others were wounded in the attack near the village of Berezyovka—some 30 kilometers (18 miles) from the Ukraine border. Local authorities said the vehicles belonged to a meat production facility. Gladkov said two children were among the wounded and that one man was in "serious condition" and undergoing surgery. — AFP



LONDON: Members of the Honorable Artillery Company fire a 62 Gun Royal Salute, to mark the first anniversary of the Coronation of Britain's King Charles III and Britain's Queen Camilla from Tower Wharf, by Tower Bridge in central London, May 6, 2024. — AFP

## International

# In Italian city, no place to pray for Muslim workers

## Muslims banned from praying inside their two cultural centers

**MONFALCONE, Italy:** It's Friday prayers in the northeastern Italian city of Monfalcone, and hundreds of men are on their knees in a concrete parking lot, their heads bowed to the ground. They are just a fraction of the city's Muslims who since November have been banned from praying inside their two cultural centers by Monfalcone's far-right mayor.

Instead, they assemble in this privately owned construction site as they await a court decision later this month to settle a zoning issue they say has barred their constitutional right to prayer.

Among them is Rejaul Haq, the property's owner, who expresses frustration over what he and many other Muslims see as harassment by the city they call home. "Tell me where I should go? Why do I have to go outside of Monfalcone? I live here, I pay taxes here!" lamented Haq, a naturalized Italian citizen who arrived from Bangladesh in 2006.

"Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, Jehovah's, if they all have their church - why can't we have one?"

Immigrants make up a third of this city of 30,000 inhabitants outside Trieste, most of them Bangladeshi Muslims who began arriving in the late 1990s to build cruise-liners for ship builder Fincantieri, whose Monfalcone shipyard is Italy's largest. Their presence is immediately visible, whether the Bangladeshi men on bicycles peddling to and from work or the ethnic grocery stores on street corners.

For Mayor Anna Cisint, the restriction on prayer is about zoning, not discrimination. Urban planning regulations tightly limit the establishment of places of worship, and as a mayor in a secular state, she says it is not her job to provide them. "As a mayor, I'm not against anybody, I wouldn't even waste my time being against anybody, you see, but I'm also here to enforce the law," Cisint told AFP. Still, she argues the number of Muslim immigrants, boosted by family reunifications and new births, has become "too many for Monfalcone." "There are too many... you have to tell it like it is," she said.

Her warnings about the "social unsustainability" of Monfalcone's Muslim population have propelled

Cisint to national headlines in recent months. They have also assured her a spot in upcoming European Parliament elections for Matteo Salvini's anti-immigrant League party, part of Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's coalition government. The League for decades has obstructed mosque openings in its stronghold of northern Italy. But the problem is nationwide in Catholic-majority Italy.

Islam is not among the 13 religions that have official status under Italian law, which complicates efforts to build places of worship.

There are currently fewer than 10 officially recognized mosques, said Yahya Zanolò of the Italian Islamic Religious Community (COREIS), one of the country's main Muslim associations. That means that out of Italy's estimated more than two million Muslims, most are relegated to thousands of makeshift places of worship that "feed prejudice and fear in the non-Muslim population", said Zanolò.

Cisint, who has been under police protection since receiving online death threats in December, complains about a resistance to integration by what she called a "very closed" community.

She asks why Arabic and not Italian is taught in the community centers and calls "intolerable" wives walking behind husbands or schoolgirls in veils.

In the run-up to European elections, the League has once again seized on illegal immigration to Italy—where nearly 160,000 migrants arrived by boat last year, mostly from Muslim countries—as a vote-winner. Salvini has called the June vote "a referendum on the future of Europe," to decide "whether Europe will still exist or whether it will be a Sino-Islamic colony".

But Monfalcone's Muslims don't fit the stereotypes exploited by the League, armed as they are with work permits or passports. "It's not like we came here to see the beautiful city of Monfalcone," jokes Haq. "It's because there's work here." Many Muslims told AFP they feel a palpable sense of distrust, if not outright hatred, from some of the long-time residents.



MONFALCONE, Italy: Muslims gather on the private parking lot of a construction site for the half-day prayer in Monfalcone, on April 26, 2024. — AFP

Ahmed Raju, 38, who works at Fincantieri installing panels, has mostly prayed at home since the cultural centers have been off-limits. Such is the reach of the mayor's rhetoric that "even I get scared" about Muslims, Raju said. Of the prejudice the community faces, Raju added: "You feel like you're in front of a big wall, that you can't break down."

"We're foreigners. We can't change the situation." Outside a classroom where volunteers teach Italian to recently immigrated women, Sharmin Islam, 32, said the animosity is acutely felt by her young son who was born in Italy. "He comes back from school and asks, 'Mum, are we Muslims bad?'"

An administrative court in Trieste will rule on May

23 whether to uphold or strike down the mayor's ban on prayer within the cultural centers. Haq says Monfalcone's Muslims have "no Plan B" if they lose, but worries even if they win the scars from the standoff will remain. Meanwhile, Cisint has been actively promoting her book, "Enough Already: Immigration, Islamisation, Submission", warning Monfalcone's situation could be duplicated elsewhere. On a recent public holiday, Bangladeshis filled the city's main square, from little girls with unicorn balloons to groups of young men enjoying a day off. Looking on was barman Gennaro Pomatico, 24. "The locals won't ever accept them," said Pomatico. "But ultimately they don't bother anyone." — AFP

## Fake US school audio stokes AI alarm

**WASHINGTON:** A fabricated audio clip of a US high school principal prompted a torrent of outrage, leaving him battling allegations of racism and anti-Semitism in a case that has sparked new alarm about AI manipulation. Police charged a disgruntled staff member at the Maryland school with manufacturing the recording that surfaced in January - purportedly of principal Eric Eiswert ranting against Jews and "ungrateful Black kids" - using artificial intelligence.

The clip, which left administrators of Pikesville High School fielding a flood of angry calls and threats, underscores the ease with which widely available AI and editing tools can be misused to impersonate celebrities and everyday citizens alike. In a year of major elections globally, including in the United States, the episode also demonstrates the perils of realistic deepfakes as the law plays catch-up.

"You need one image to put a person into a video, you need 30 seconds of audio to clone somebody's voice," Hany Farid, a digital forensics expert at the University of

California, Berkeley, told AFP. "There's almost nothing you can do unless you hide under a rock. The threat vector has gone from the Joe Bidens and the Taylor Swifts of the world to high school principals, 15-year-olds, reporters, lawyers, bosses, grandmothers. Everybody is now vulnerable."

After the official probe, the school's athletic director, Dazhon Darien, 31, was arrested late last month over the clip.

Charging documents say staffers at Pikesville High School felt unsafe after the audio emerged. Teachers worried the campus was bugged with recording devices while abusive messages lit up Eiswert's social media. The "world would be a better place if you were on the other side of the dirt," one X user wrote to Eiswert. Eiswert, who did not respond to AFP's request for comment, was placed on leave by the school and needed security at his home.

When the recording hit social media in January, boosted by a popular Instagram account whose posts drew thousands of comments, the crisis thrust the school into the national spotlight. The audio was amplified by activist DeRay McKesson, who demanded Eiswert's firing to his nearly one million followers on X. When the charges surfaced, he conceded he had been fooled. "I continue to be concerned about the damage these actions have caused," said Billy Burke, executive director of the union

representing Eiswert, referring to the recording. The manipulation comes as multiple US schools have struggled to contain AI-enabled deepfake pornography, leading to harassment of students amid a lack of federal legislation.

Scott Shellenberger, the Baltimore County state's attorney, said in a press conference the Pikesville incident highlights the need to "bring the law up to date with the technology."

His office is prosecuting Darien on four charges, including disturbing school activities. Investigators tied the audio to the athletic director in part by connecting him to the email address that initially distributed it. Police say the alleged smear-job came in retaliation for a probe Eiswert opened in December into whether Darien authorized an illegitimate payment to a coach who was also his roommate. Darien made searches for AI tools via the school's network before the audio came out, and he had been using "large language models," according to the charging documents.

A University of Colorado professor who analyzed the audio for police concluded it "contained traces of AI-generated content with human editing after the fact."

Investigators also consulted Farid, writing that the California expert found it was "manipulated, and multiple recordings were spliced together using unknown soft-



WASHINGTON: This photo illustration created in Washington, DC, on November 16, 2023 shows an AI girl generator in front of an image of school buses. — AFP

ware." AI-generated content - and particularly audio, which experts say is particularly difficult to spot - sparked national alarm in January when a fake robocall posing as Biden urged New Hampshire residents not to vote in the state's primary. "It impacts everything from entire economies, to democracies, to the high school principal," Farid said of the technology's misuse.

Eiswert's case has been a wake-up

call in Pikesville, revealing how disinformation can roil even "a very tight-knit community," said Parker Bratton, the school's golf coach. "There's one president. There's a million principals. People are like: 'What does this mean for me? What are the potential consequences for me when someone just decides they want to end my career?'" "We're never going to be able to escape this story." — AFP

## Erdogan opens former church to Muslim faithful

**ISTANBUL:** Turkey on Monday reopened a mosque converted from an ancient Orthodox church in Istanbul for Muslim worship, four years after the president ordered its transformation. The Kariye Mosque was formerly a Byzantine church, then a mosque and then a museum. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan ordered the building to be reconverted into a Muslim place of worship in 2020.

His order came followed a similarly controversial ruling on the UNESCO-protected Hagia Sophia — a cathedral in Istanbul that was converted into a mosque and then a museum, before becoming a mosque again. The changes were seen as part of Erdogan's efforts to galvanize his more conservative and nationalist supporters. But they have also added to tensions with prelates in both the Orthodox and Catholic churches.

Erdogan on Monday declared Kariye Mosque

reopened for worship remotely during a ceremony at the presidential palace in the capital, Ankara. An AFP picture from the mosque showed one worshipper wave a Turkish flag before the congregation who performed their prayers on a brick-red colour carpet on Monday afternoon. Images also revealed that two mosaics carved into the walls of the ancient church on the right and left sides of the prayer room were covered with curtains.

Most of the mosaics and frescos however remained visible to visitors. "I had the opportunity to visit the place before and I was initially a little afraid of the work that could have been carried out," said Michel, a French tourist, who would not give his full name. "But ultimately we must recognize that it's well done, that the frescos are accessible to everybody," the 31-year-old researcher said.

The decision in 2020 to convert the building drew an angry response from neighboring Greece, which called the move "yet another provocation against religious persons everywhere". The Holy Saviour in Chora was a Byzantine church decorated with 14th-century frescoes of the Last Judgement that are still treasured by Christians. The church was converted into Kariye Mosque half a century after the 1453 conquest of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks. — AFP

it motivates them to accomplish more achievements in the field of artificial intelligence and robotics.

Founder of Venera Limited Mohammad Al-Kilani, from Palestine, told KUNA Kuwait is a pioneer in the field of digital transformation and informatics in the Arab world and expressed pride in receiving the award from HH the Amir. Founder of Myfatorah Abdullah Al-Dabbous said he is honored to be with the winners today and noted the company was established in Kuwait, expanding in the region, and ranked among the top 10 companies in financial technology in the Middle East by Forbes magazine. HH the Amir then handed the awards to the winners and was given a commemorative memento on this occasion. HH the Amir Sheikh Mishal and an accompanying delegation will depart Kuwait on Tuesday for Turkey on a state visit. — KUNA

## Amir honors Informatics...

Continued from Page 1

Other award winners also commended the event's contributions to the digital domain. CEO of the National Center for Statistics and Information in Oman Dr Khalifa Al-Barwani expressed to KUNA his gratitude for the honor of receiving the award from HH the Amir. Kuwait Finance House Chairman Hamad Al-Marzouq also expressed his sincere gratitude to HH the Amir for sponsoring this event. He said it was an honor to receive from him the award for digital transformation and financial solutions in the field, as

## Hamas accepts truce as Zionists...

Continued from Page 1

or obstruct it," the official told AFP on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly about the negotiations. Crowds cheered and fired in the air in the streets of the southern Gaza city of Rafah after Hamas said it approved the ceasefire proposal. People were crying tears of happiness, chanting "Allahu Akbar" ("God is greatest") and shooting in the air in celebration of the news, an AFP correspondent said.

The Zionist entity earlier ordered Palestinians to leave eastern Rafah Monday ahead of a ground invasion of the city, amid increasing global alarm about the consequences of such a move. The evacuation call followed a rocket attack claimed by Hamas' armed wing that killed four Zionist soldiers on Sunday. Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to send ground troops into Rafah regardless of any truce, defying international concerns.

US President Joe Biden on Monday "reiterated his clear position" to Netanyahu against an invasion of Rafah, the White House said. The two leaders spoke as Biden mounted a diplomatic offensive to get ceasefire talks between the Zionist entity and Hamas back on track, with Jordan's King Abdullah II due at the White House for lunch. Biden did not respond to shouted questions and walked straight to the Oval Office from his helicopter, Marine One, after returning to the White House from a weekend at his family home in Wilmington, Delaware.

Earlier, a spokesman for the US National Security Council announced the Biden-Netanyahu call, saying "we have made our views clear on a major ground invasion of Rafah to the (Zionist) government". "We continue to believe that a hostage deal is the best way to preserve the lives of the hostages, and avoid an invasion of Rafah, where more than a million peo-

ple are sheltering," the spokesman told AFP.

Hamas said the Zionist entity was planning a large-scale offensive "without regard for the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe" in the besieged Gaza Strip or for the fate of captives held there. A Palestinian presidency statement called on Washington to prevent a "massacre" in Rafah. Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi posted on X: "Another massacre of the Palestinians is in the making... All must act now to prevent it."

UNICEF warned that around 600,000 children packed into Rafah face "further catastrophe". Gazan civil defense and aid officials said Zionist jets had struck areas of Rafah including Al-Shuka and Al-Salam, both of which had been told to evacuate. The Palestinian Red Crescent said "thousands" of Gazans were on the move, leaving eastern Rafah.

In a statement, the Zionist military ordered residents of eastern Rafah to head for the "expanded humanitarian area" at Al-Mawasi on the coast. But aid groups said the Zionist-designated safe zone was not ready for an influx of people. "The area is already overstretched and devoid of vital services", said Norwegian Refugee Council director Jan Egeland.

The main aid group in Gaza, UNRWA, said "a (Zionist) offensive in Rafah would mean more civilian suffering and deaths". The UN agency "is not evacuating", it added. Asked how many people should move, a Zionist military spokesman said: "The estimate is around 100,000 people." The Red Crescent said the designated evacuation zone hosts around 250,000 people, many of them already uprooted from elsewhere.

Abdul Rahman Abu Jazar, 36, said the area his family was told to seek refuge in "does not have enough room for us to make tents" because it is already full. "Where we can go?" he asked. On Monday EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell called the evacuation orders "unacceptable" and urged the Zionist entity to "renounce" a ground offensive. The French foreign ministry said it "strongly opposed" an offensive on Rafah. — AFP

## International

# Philippines and US fire at 'invasion' force in South China Sea war games

## Marcos says Manila won't use water cannon on Chinese ships

**LAOAG, Philippines:** US and Filipino troops fired missiles and artillery at an imaginary "invasion" force during war games on the Philippines' northern coast Monday, days after their governments objected to China's "dangerous" actions in regional waters.

Thousands of troops are conducting land, sea and air maneuvers against a backdrop of increased confrontations between Chinese and Filipino vessels around shoals in the South China Sea claimed by Manila, as well as stepped-up Chinese air and naval activity around nearby self-ruled Taiwan.

US troops massed at a strip of sand dunes on Luzon island's northwest coast - around 400 kilometers (249 miles) south of Taiwan - let loose more than 50 live 155mm howitzer rounds at floating targets about five kilometers off the coast, AFP journalists saw. Filipino troops followed up by firing rockets aimed at wearing down the attackers, before the two forces finished the job with machine guns, Javelin missiles and more artillery rounds.

Meanwhile, President Ferdinand Marcos said Monday the Philippines would not respond in kind to China's deployment of water cannon against its vessels, ruling out the use of "offensive" equipment as Manila asserts its sovereignty in the disputed South China Sea. Beijing has dispatched hundreds of coast guard and other vessels to press its claims over most of the waterway despite an international tribunal ruling that its assertion has no legal basis.

In the latest confrontation on April 30, Manila said the China Coast Guard damaged a Philippine Coast Guard ship and another government vessel with high-pressure water cannon as the boats were bringing fuel, food and water to Filipino fishermen at Scarborough Shoal.

"We will not follow the Chinese coast guard

and the Chinese vessels down that road," Marcos said Monday when asked if Manila would start using the water cannons on its own coast guard vessels to retaliate.

"It's not the mission of our navy, our coast guard to start or to increase tensions... We have no intention of attacking anyone with water cannons or any other such offensive (equipment)," Marcos added that "the last thing" the Philippines wanted was "to raise the tensions" in the disputed waters.

Asked about Marcos' comments at a regular briefing on Monday, a spokesperson for Beijing's foreign ministry urged Manila to "stop spreading false information that misleads the international community" and "stop forming cliques and showing off military force".

A Philippine Coast Guard spokesman said Wednesday that Manila's strategy was to expose and seek international condemnation of Beijing's behavior in the South China Sea to encourage united efforts to ensure freedom of navigation in the strategic waterway. Marcos said Monday that the Philippines would continue responding to South China Sea incidents through diplomatic means.

Last week, Manila summoned a senior Chinese envoy to protest "the harassment, ramming, swarming, shadowing and blocking, dangerous maneuvers, (and) use of water cannons" by China Coast Guard vessels against Philippine boats off the disputed Scarborough Shoal.

Manila and Washington have a mutual defense treaty, and the recent confrontations between Philippine and Chinese vessels have fuelled speculation as to what might force the United States to intervene.

Marcos said last month that US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin had given assurances that the



**LAOAG, Philippines:** US and Philippine Marines fire M198 155mm Howitzer artillery during a live fire exercise against an imaginary "invasion" force as part of the joint US-Philippines annual military Balikatan drills on a strip of sand dunes in Laoag on Luzon island's northwest coast on May 6, 2024. - AFP

treaty would be invoked if another "foreign power" killed a Filipino soldier.

Lieutenant General Michael Cederholm, commander of the US First Marine Expeditionary Force, said the exercise was "to prepare for the worst" by "securing key maritime terrain".

"It's designed to repel an invasion," Cederholm told reporters at the exercise site. "Our northwest side is more exposed," Major General Marvin Licudine, exercise director for the Filipinos, told AFP ahead of the live firing at the La Paz sand dunes near Laoag city. "Because of the regional problems that we have... we have to already prac-

tice and orient ourselves in our own land in these parts," he added. Beijing claims almost the entire South China Sea despite an international ruling that its assertion has no legal basis. It deploys hundreds of coast guard, navy and other vessels to patrol and militarize the waters. Asked about Monday's drills, China's foreign ministry warned that "any military exercise should not be targeted at or harm the interests of third parties".

"Countries in the region can all see clearly who is currently provoking military confrontation and escalating tensions in the region," spokesman Lin Jian told a regular briefing. — AFP

## Myanmar armed group 'captured' hundreds of junta personnel

**BANGKOK, Thailand:** A Myanmar ethnic armed group said on Monday it had captured a military command and prisoned hundreds of junta personnel in western Rakhine state, the latest blow to the military.

Clashes have rocked Rakhine since the Arakan Army (AA) attacked security forces in November, ending a ceasefire that had largely held since the junta's 2021 coup. The military still holds the state capital Sittwe but AA fighters have seized territory in surrounding districts, including bases on the border with India and Bangladesh. A video released by the AA's media channel said the group had captured "Military Operations Command 15" near the town of Buthidaung, around 90 kilometers (55 miles) north of Sittwe.

The video did not say when its fighters had captured the site but local media have reported regular clashes around Buthidaung in recent days. "The video record of the deputy commander of MOC 15 after a certain period of siege," read a message published in Burmese, Chinese and English. After a "final assault" the junta troops had "faced total defeat and surrendered," it said.

Images showed a long line of men, some wearing what appeared to be military uniforms, walking single file through a field. Some were in shorts and T-shirts and sandals while others were not wearing any footwear. Some shots showed women and children accompanying the men. — AFP



**The Border Guard Bangladesh detains Myanmar's Border Guard Police personnel who have illegally crossed the border in Teknaf on Feb. 7, 2024. — AFP**

## Vietnam welcomes French veterans to 'hell' of Dien Bien Phu

**DIÊN BIÊN PHU, Vietnam:** Ninety-year-old French veteran William Schilardi surveys the landscape from the hill where he once fought after a steep climb up a muddy path through heavy rain in Vietnam's Dien Bien Phu. "Look at the beautiful view... But there are corpses here," he said, look-



**This picture taken on April 29, 2024 shows air conditioning units on an apartment building in Hong Kong. — AFP**

## Heatwave swells Asia's appetite for air-conditioning

**HONG KONG:** A record-breaking heatwave is broiling parts of Asia, helping drive surging demand for cooling options, including air-conditioning.

AC exhaust units are a common feature of urban landscapes in many parts of Asia, clinging like limpets to towering apartment blocks in Hong Kong or tucked in a cross formation between the windows of a building in Cambodia. They offer relief from temperatures that have topped records in recent weeks, with many countries in the region hitting 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) or higher.

Scientists have long warned that human-induced climate change will produce more frequent, longer and more intense heatwaves. Only 15 percent of homes in Southeast Asia have air-conditioning, according to a 2019 report by the International Energy Agency (IEA).

But that figure obscures vast variations: ranging from around 80 percent installation in Singapore and Malaysia, to less than 10 percent in Indonesia and Vietnam, the IEA said.

Forecasts suggest that higher temperatures and better wages could see the number of air-conditioning

units in Southeast Asia jump from 40 million in 2017 to 300 million by 2040.

That would stretch local electricity capacity, which is already struggling under current conditions.

Myanmar is producing only about half the electricity it needs each day, with the junta blaming weak hydropower because of scant rains, low natural gas yields and attacks by its opponents on infrastructure. Thailand has seen record power demand in recent weeks, as people retreat indoors to cooled homes or businesses. Air-conditioning is already responsible for the emission of approximately one billion metric tons of carbon dioxide per year, according to the IEA, out of a total of 37 billion emitted worldwide. Still, cooling options like air-conditioning are a key way to protect human health, especially for those who are most vulnerable to the effects of extreme heat: children, the elderly and those with certain disabilities.

With demand surging, dozens of countries last year signed up to the United Nations' Global Cooling Pledge, a commitment to improve the efficiency of air conditioners and reduce emissions from all forms of cooling. Some countries have been trying to reduce the impact of cooling for years.

Since 2005, Japan has encouraged office workers to ditch ties and jackets so air conditioners can be kept at 28 degrees Celsius. The annual "Cool Biz" program took on new significance during power shortages in 2011 following the shutdown of nuclear plants after the Fukushima disaster. — AFP

ories for Schilardi, Jean-Yves Guinard and Andre Mayer. "We've remained very attached to this country," 92-year-old Guinard told AFP. "Because it's a country where the people are clever, brave and hard-working."

"This does not mean we forget. I come in the name of my fallen comrades." The former colonel insisted on walking to the top of Him Lam hill - known as Beatrice Hill by the French - on Monday despite the downpour that turned the path slippery. Schilardi recalled the knife and bayonet fights in the trenches dug across the hill, stretching almost from top to bottom. The walk up the hill had brought back memories and intense flashbacks, he said. — AFP



**DIÊN BIÊN PHU, Vietnam:** French Defence Minister Sebastien Lecornu (center) visits the command bunker of France's General Christian de Castries during the Dien Bien Phu battle, in Dien Bien Phu city on May 6, 2024.



**Vietnamese women wearing traditional dress take a photo at A1 hill historical battle site in Dien Bien Phu city on May 6, 2024. — AFP photos**

### News in Brief

#### Cannes Festival workers call for strike

**PARIS:** Workers at the Cannes Film Festival called for a strike over pay and conditions on Monday, just a week before the event was due to start. Members of a collective called *Sous les Ecrans la Deche* ("Poverty Behind the Screens") said they did not intend to cause significant disruption but wanted to draw attention to long-running demands. "The strike will not put the opening of the festival at risk but there could be disruptions as it goes on," a spokesperson told AFP. The group said it represented around 100 workers, including projectionists, programmers, press agents and ticket sellers. — AFP

#### Germany recalls Russia envoy

**BERLIN:** Germany has temporarily recalled its Russian ambassador after members of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's party were targeted in what Berlin said was a state-sponsored Russian cyberattack, the foreign ministry said Monday. A newly-concluded government investigation found the cyberattack targeting members of Scholz's Social Democratic Party had been carried out by a group known as APT28, Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said last week. The group was controlled by Russia's military intelligence, meaning it was "a state-sponsored Russian cyberattack on Germany," Baerbock added. Russia rejected the allegations as "unsubstantiated and groundless". — AFP

#### Togo oppn looks for political overhaul

**LOME:** Togo's opposition says it needs to "reinvent" itself after winning just five seats in legislative elections it has dismissed as an "electoral masquerade". Opposition parties hoped for a strong showing in the April 29 ballot after a contested constitutional reform, which they say will allow President Faure Gnassingbe to extend his already nearly two-decade rule. Gnassingbe's ruling Union for the Republic or UNIR party won 108 of the 113 parliament seats in the small West African State sitting between Ghana and Benin. Under the new constitution, it means Togo's leader can now assume a new role as president of the council of ministers, a kind of prime minister position which critics say will allow him to skirt term limits. — AFP

#### 3 more suspects in German attack

**FRANKFURT:** Three further suspects have been identified in relation to an attack in Germany on a European parliament lawmaker (MEP), authorities said on Monday, after a teenager turned himself in over the assault. Matthias Ecke, 41, from Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats (SPD), was set upon by four attackers as he put up European election posters in the eastern city of Dresden on Friday night, according to police. He needed an operation for injuries sustained in the attack, which was denounced by Scholz as a threat to democracy. — AFP

#### EU to drop proceedings against Poland

**BRUSSELS:** The EU said Monday it will drop action started against Poland six years ago over rule-of-law concerns that could have led Warsaw to lose its vote in the bloc's affairs. The European Commission said it intends to withdraw the procedure launched in December 2017 under Article 7 of the Treaty on European Union after Warsaw's new centrist government took steps to remedy the issues. Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen hailed the "new chapter for Poland" in a posting on X, formerly Twitter. "After more than six years, we believe that the Article 7 procedure can be closed. I congratulate (Polish) PM Donald Tusk and his government on this important breakthrough," she said. — AFP

TUESDAY, MAY 7, 2024

# Zain Group holds AGM with a quorum of 77%, approves H2 2023 dividend of 25 fils

## Cash dividends to be distributed to eligible shareholders on May 29, 2024



Osamah Al-Furaih, Bader Al-Kharafi and Ossama Matta.



From the annual general meeting.

### Zain Group Chairman Osamah Al-Furaih:

- Our commitment to providing shareholders a healthy dividend reflects the strength of our financial solvency
- Zain publishes 2023 Annual Report and 2023 Sustainability Report available in digital-only format

### Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi:

- A defining 40th year of pioneering innovation, sustainable growth, customer service, and maximizing shareholder value
- Zain brand value grew from \$2.2 billion to \$3 billion over past three years

**KUWAIT:** The Zain Group Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held at the Zain Group's headquarters in Kuwait, attended with a quorum of 77 percent of shareholders whereby they were presented with the Zain Group's 2023 annual report entitled "40 years of pioneering innovation and sustainable growth" which highlights the financial statements, Governance and Auditors reports and the major achievements of Zain Group and its operations and subsidiaries across Middle East and Africa, for the year ended Dec 31, 2023. Additionally, Zain Group released its 2023 Sustainability Report.

The shareholders approved all items on the AGM agenda, including the recommended cash dividend of 25 percent (25 fils per share) to the shareholders already registered in the company's record date of Thursday, May 23, 2024. Cash dividends will be paid to shareholders commencing Wednesday, May 29, 2024.

#### Attractive dividends for shareholders

This 25 fils dividend for H2 2023 follows the semi-annual dividend of 10 fils distributed earlier in 2023, totaling 35 fils per share for the year and reflecting a 70 percent payout ratio, one of the highest in the region. In 2023, Zain adopted a minimum cash dividend policy of 35 fils per share for three years.

#### 2023 financial performance

During the AGM, Zain Group presented its financial results for the full-year 2023, whereby the company served 50.6 million customers. For the full-year 2023, Zain Group generated consolidated revenue of KD 1.9 billion (\$6.2 billion), a y-o-y increase of 10 percent. Consolidated EBITDA for the period increased by 5 percent y-o-y, to reach KD 705 million (\$2.3 billion), reflecting an EBITDA margin of 37 percent. Consolidated net income reached KD 215 million (\$701 million), up 10 percent y-o-y and reflecting earnings per share of 50 fils (\$0.16).

#### Excerpts from Board of Directors statement at AGM

The Board of Directors welcomes all shareholders and affiliated parties to the Annual General Assembly of Zain Group. Zain operates in a highly regulated, competitive, and rapidly evolving environment. Despite the difficult circumstances represented by geopolitical instability in the region, and the challenges associated with economic and social conditions in several markets, the progress of the company's 4Sight strategy resulted in developing new value-accretive entities and driving operational efficiency, as the Group's operations recorded strong growth in 2023. Our commitment to providing shareholders with a healthy dividend of 35 fils for 2023 reflects the strength of our financial solvency.

Digital transformation initiatives have changed the way governments and businesses are organized and managed, with 5G applications, cloud services, big data, AI, data analytics, machine learning, Internet of Things, blockchain, managed services, and cybersecurity becoming the main change drivers for the foreseeable future.

In addition to heavy investment in networks and technologies, Zain Group has entered multiple strategic partnerships with global and regional institutions to ensure that its transformational initiatives closely respond to market needs. These alliances have helped increase the value of Zain's core business, and support the focus on new lucrative growth opportunities in the digital sector and beyond, providing customers a better telecommunications experience.

During 2023, the Group's strategic investments in 4G networks, expansion of 5G infrastructure, development of fiber technology to the home, and digital platforms repre-

sented 16 percent of revenues, contributing to the improvement of customer retention and attracting new customer segments. Zain now operates the largest 5G network in the region, provided in four markets - Kuwait, Saudi Arabia (KSA), Bahrain, and Jordan.

Zain Group is committed to implementing a sound framework model for corporate governance, and demonstrating a strong commitment to environmental, social and economic development, as it has integrated its ESG indicators at a time when the challenges of climate change are increasing. As such, the Group continues to work towards achieving its ambition to achieve net zero emissions, having maintained the classification in the category Leadership at level A- in the CDP report.

On behalf of all members of the Board of Directors, executive management, and employees of Zain, we express our sincere appreciation for the confidence shown in us by our valued customers and shareholders, as well as by all the government ministries, and regulatory authorities across our markets.

#### Excerpts from Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi's AGM statement

2023 witnessed the ongoing implementation of our future-proof 4Sight strategy during our 40th year of pioneering innovation, which turned out to be a defining one for Zain, delivering strong performance, significant milestones, sustainable growth, and value to our customers and stakeholders.

Zain's Board of Directors and executive management teams have worked effortlessly to overcome socio-economic regional challenges in our markets, where we maximized value creation by investing heavily in our networks, technologies, and people. This resulted in us extending our market leadership in many highly competitive and evolving markets. The multiple digital transformational initiatives and expansion of new business verticals has driven business growth and positioned Zain firmly as a leading provider of innovative technologies and digital lifestyle communications, delivering meaningful connectivity that empowers societies.

#### Zain brand valuation soars 11% to \$3 billion

Our focus on catering to the evolving requirements of our individual, enterprise, and government customers has seen our sustainability-conscious mindset develop and proactively act with a sense of urgency, innovating to enhance the digital experiences and introduce appealing, demanded services.

As a result of our efforts, apart from reporting strong operational and financial results for 2023, we were awarded numerous accolades, and saw our brand valuation increase 11 percent from \$2.7 billion to \$3 billion by Brand Finance in its 2024 global valuation report, up a remarkable 37 percent on its \$2.2 billion valuation in 2021.

This impressive growth in valuation some 16 years after the initial Zain brand launch is testament to the investment the company has placed in establishing its name and identity, and the successful media campaigns, corporate sustainability, diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives it has instituted over the years. This well-regarded brand is also a reflection of our ongoing innovation and investment in network upgrades that result in quality mobile and data services and exceptional customer experience at every touch point, making Zain one of the most inspirational and recognized corporate brands in the region and beyond.

#### Network investments driving digital revenues

Significant investment in network and technology totally nearly \$1 billion during

2023 ensured meaningful connectivity to the communities we serve in a reliable and high-speed manner. It also creates value by driving significant growth in data revenues, which grew 8 percent and reached \$2.4 billion in 2023, representing 39 percent of Zain Group's consolidated revenues for the year.

The impressive 9 percent growth of our Group-wide digital services revenue reflects the many data monetization initiatives maximizing our networks.

Our digital MVNO operators, Zain Saudi Arabia's 'Yaqoot' and Zain Iraq's 'oodi', continue to deliver healthy customer and revenue growth, offering a simple, all-digital mobile experience that frees customers from the traditional retail buying experience. Of note, Zain Jordan launched 5G commercially in December 2023, becoming the fourth Zain operation to offer this exclusive high-speed and reliable service.

prehensive ICT services, ZainTECH is paving the way to becoming the digital transformation partner of choice for governments and enterprises across our markets, the UAE, and beyond.

#### Sale of passive tower networks creating shareholder value

The tower sale and leaseback strategy across Kuwait, KSA, Iraq and Jordan to date has already unlocked over 17,000 towers with a total value of \$1.3 billion and yielded a net gain of \$415 million over the years. In December 2023, Zain solidified its position as the regional leader in the tower arena with a pioneering agreement with Qatar's Ooredoo Group and TASC Towers, which aims to incorporate nearly 30,000 towers across six countries, combining the service providers' respective passive infrastructure portfolios. The tower deals enhance operational effi-

#### Our business has Sustainability and DEI at its core

Across our footprint, Zain is guided by the four pillars of our five-year corporate sustainability strategy, centered on Climate Change, Social Business, Inclusion, and Generation Youth. We are very proud of the ground breaking partnership between Zain KSA and Red Sea Global that unveiled the world's first zero-carbon 5G network. Our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) program continues to be a positive force within, boosting the company's productivity and overall morale. It's rewarding to see this initiative recognized through various external awards.

#### Conclusion

As we look back at our 40 remarkable years of creating value for our shareholders, serving our customers with absolute pride, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those that have contributed to the Zain ecosystem over these years. Our focus for 2024 and beyond remains on the further execution of our corporate strategy, transforming our core telecom business to be more efficient and profitable, while fostering the growth of new business verticals that involve ICT, digital infrastructure, fintech and digital services. Please feel free to download the online version of 2023 Zain Group Annual Report entitled '40 years of pioneering innovation and sustainable growth' and the 2023 Sustainability Report, entitled 'A Pathway to Value Creation'.

#### Several key matters were discussed during the AGM:

• Zain Sudan operations show signs of improvement after restoring the network

Regarding a question about the latest developments in Sudan given the social unrest in the country, Bader Al-Kharafi stated that Zain Sudan's operation is gradually overcoming the network closure problem that saw the network completely shut down for several months from Feb 7, 2024. Due to the continuous efforts of the Sudan team, the company succeeded in building a new disaster recovery center in Port Sudan at the beginning of March, with 1,064 sites out of 3,000 sites currently in operation. After restoring services, revenues are trending for the better, and the company expects further improvement, noting that Zain Sudan is the only operator whose network was not closed for a long period, and everyone is effortlessly working under very difficult conditions.

#### Growth of operations and new opportunities

In a question about the growth expectations of the group's operations, especially after eliminating the one-off gain of the tower deals, Bader Al-Kharafi said, "The group continues to achieve growth in its operations, and if the impact of the tower deals was excluded, consolidated profits would have nevertheless increased by 4 percent. The group has diversified and made extensive investments in new growth areas, notably Zain Omantel International, which is revolutionizing and growing its carrier wholesale operations. Also in ZainTECH, which provides comprehensive ICT solutions, is becoming the preferred digital partner for governments and enterprises across the region. The group's operations' various Fintech platforms are witnessing healthy growth, and we are fostering this lucrative part of the business."

#### Digital bank license in Kuwait

In a question about the developments in Zain's desire to obtain a license to establish a digital bank, Al-Kharafi said that Zain is having ongoing discussions with the Central Bank of Kuwait pointing out that Zain's recent acquisition of Bookeey will help the company implement its plans in this space.

## Zain publishes annual sustainability report: 'A Pathway to Value Creation'

- The Report highlights company's efforts to provide Meaningful Connectivity leading to equitable systemic change and empowering communities through the Sustainable Development Goals
- Zain's focus includes climate change, enhancing access to connectivity, reducing digital literacy gap, supply chain management, supporting the displaced, inclusion, and employee well-being

Zain announced the publication of its 13th annual sustainability report, entitled "A Pathway to Value Creation," which reflects the company's progress and efforts to address deficits and challenges across its footprint while providing meaningful connectivity that leads to equitable systemic change through the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Consistently publishing the sustainability report on how the company addresses its social, economic, environmental, and human rights related impacts demonstrates how the company continues to execute on its five-year, 2025 corporate sustainability strategy aiming to deliver meaningful and sustainable value across Zain's operating companies and beyond. "The Pathway to Value Creation" is accessible in a digital-only format available on <https://zain.com/SR2023/>

#### Fintech innovation and expansion

During 2023, Group-wide fintech customers grew 40 percent, with revenue up 195 percent, and total transaction volume tripling to \$11 billion. The impressive and profitable growth of TAMAM in Saudi Arabia, and ZainCash in Iraq and Jordan has firmly established these fintech entities as market leaders for the unbanked and underbanked in their respective markets. In Kuwait, we acquired Bookeey to drive the development of cutting-edge financial solutions and provide advanced, creative offerings through strategic partnerships with banks and Zain Kuwait. We will continue to foster their growth through innovation while driving financial inclusion and contributing to the evolution of the region's digital ecosystem.

#### Aiming to be the partner of choice for governments and enterprises

It was a momentous year for ZainTECH, Zain's ICT solutions powerhouse, which has grown significantly organically and through acquisitions since its launch in October 2021. The 20 percent annual growth in B2B revenues across our footprint reflects the synergistic business model between ZainTECH and our local operations' B2B teams.

Following the closing of the strategic acquisition of leading managed cloud service provider BIOS Middle East, ZainTECH made two other strategic acquisitions during 2023: Adfolks and Specialized Technical Services Company (STS). In addition to Cloud services, growth areas that ZainTECH is driving include Cybersecurity, IoT, AI, Big Data, Smart Cities, Drones, Robotics, and other emerging technologies. By providing com-

panies and enable a laser focus on service provision, thus providing customers a better mobile and data experience as well as reducing our carbon footprint.

#### Zain Omantel International revolutionizing the wholesale telecommunications sector

Zain Omantel International (ZOI) is an unprecedented joint venture that will revolutionize the international wholesale carrier sector. ZOI is creating synergies by optimizing the existing wholesale businesses of both companies by reducing operating costs and increasing competitiveness through access to state-of-the-art, low-latency and high-capacity services over its extended footprint.

#### Imperative focus on regulatory initiatives and corporate governance compliance

The regulatory landscape in which Zain Group operates has changed significantly over the last 12 months, impacting all operations as they are subject to cross-sector, sector-specific, extraterritorial legislation, regulations, and national licenses. As a leading listed entity on the Premier Market in Kuwait, with other local listings in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Iraq, Zain Group is proactively exceeding the regulations issued by all governmental financial and regulatory bodies across these markets. Our Investor Relations, Corporate Governance, Regulatory and Sustainability teams' high ethical standards, transparent reporting, and professionalism towards all our stakeholders, is promoting investor and market confidence in Zain.





NEOM welcomes global banking leaders.

# NBK commends NEOM GIGA project progress, sees opportunity for growth

## NEOM emerging as a nucleus for innovation: Al-Sager

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), renowned as one of the region's leading financial institutions, has received an exclusive invitation, alongside a select group of international banks, to witness firsthand the progress of NEOM project. As a leading bank with a steadfast dedication to monitoring development initiatives throughout the GCC, particularly in the vibrant Saudi market, this invitation underscores NBK's esteemed reputation and its pivotal role in shaping the economic landscape of the region.

NEOM, a monumental \$500 billion GIGA Project supported by the Public Investment Fund (PIF), stands as a cornerstone of Saudi Arabia's transformative trajectory, marking a pivotal moment in the nation's quest to broaden its economic horizons and cultivate sustainable development. The tour, which comprised representatives from 52 global, regional, and local financial institutions, highlighted the advancements made in key projects such as THE LINE, Oxagon, Trojena, and Sindalah. An integral component of the itinerary involved a site visit to THE LINE, affording participants the opportunity to witness the rapid progress of phase one construction and gain a comprehensive insight into the project's innovative design, in addition to an aerial view of Sindalah, a luxury island destination set to open soon.

Among the global banks invited to NEOM, NBK made a lasting impression by showcasing its keen interest in the ongoing projects and investment prospects within the region. This gathering served as a valuable platform for financial institutions to seek potential partnerships and align investment strategies with NEOM's vision of sustainable growth and development. NEOM's commitment to fostering collaboration with international partners highlights its pivotal role in driving economic transformation and innovation on a global scale.

Leading the NBK-Saudi team at the event was Zaid I Al-Sager, General Manager - Deputy Head of International Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait. Reflecting on this exceptional occasion, Al-Sager remarked, "It was a privilege for us to be among the exclusive group of banks directly invited to observe the continuous advancements in this pivotal project and assess investment possibilities. This invitation not only highlights NBK's prominence and significance in the region but also underscores our dedication to supporting Saudi Arabia's growth and progress."

"I am delighted to convey our profound admiration for the NEOM Project in Saudi Arabia—an extraordinary initiative that seamlessly aligns with the ambitious objectives outlined in "Saudi Vision 2030". Serving as a pioneering model for sustainable living, working, and thriving, NEOM emerges as a nucleus for innovation, drawing the brightest minds from across the globe to shape the future landscape," Al-Sager remarked.

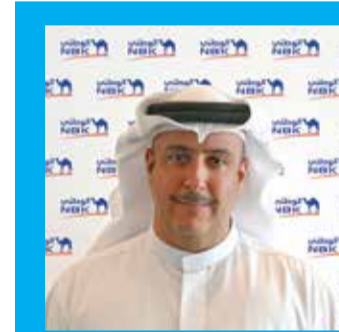
"As we observe the culmination and commencement of several NEOM initiatives and stages by the year's end, NBK reaffirms its steadfast commitment to supporting economic prosperity and sustainability in Saudi Arabia and beyond. With a distinguished track record of excellence in banking and financial services, NBK offers an extensive portfolio of products and solutions tailored to meet the diverse needs of its corporate and individual clients. Committed to fostering sustainable development, NBK continues to play an active role in supporting the advancement of the communities it serves," added Al-Sager.

"At NBK, we are committed to offering more than just financial support; we strive to instill new values and opportunities into all our projects. Through our extensive array of services, which includes project

finance, NBK mortgage, and Corporate Real Estate Services (CRES), we aim to empower both businesses and individuals to achieve their goals and play a part in fostering the sustainability of the Saudi economy," he further stated.

Al-Sager also highlighted that NEOM's sustainable objectives resonate harmoniously with NBK's strategic vision, as both parties are committed to

has remained committed to expanding its footprint and leveraging its expertise to tap into the dynamic Saudi market. The bank's strategic endeavors in this regard underline its dedication to capitalizing on the numerous projects and investment prospects emerging across the GCC, positioning itself as a key player in driving economic development and prosperity in the region.



Zaid Al-Sager

- We are highly impressed by the advancements and intricate design elements evident in the diverse phases of NEOM
- NEOM is a creative environment where sustainability and creativity meet to bring about growth and exciting opportunities
- NBK is eager to continue playing a major role in promoting developmental projects across the region

fostering economic growth while prioritizing environmental sustainability and social responsibility. He further stated that NEOM's ambitious sustainability goals, encompassing renewable energy, conservation efforts, and eco-friendly infrastructure, align seamlessly with NBK's overarching strategies aimed at promoting sustainable development and responsible banking practices.

NBK has continuously strived to bolster its presence in the GCC, with a particular focus on the lucrative Saudi market and the burgeoning projects sector. Recognizing the immense potential and growth opportunities within the region, the bank

In parallel, NBK's International Banking Group (IBG) continues to spearhead the bank's efforts in expanding its international footprint and fostering strategic alliances with global partners. Leveraging its expertise and network, IBG plays a pivotal role in facilitating cross-border transactions, providing a comprehensive array of services, and unlocking new business opportunities in key markets worldwide. As NEOM emerges as a focal point for international investment and innovation, NBK remains poised to capitalize on these opportunities, further solidifying NBK's position as a leading financial institution in the region and beyond.

## Struggling tech group Atos weighs financial lifelines

PARIS: Struggling French tech group Atos, an Olympics partner and key French defense contractor, said Monday it would make a decision on financial restructuring offers by May 31.

Atos—which runs supercomputers for France's nuclear deterrent, holds contracts with the French army and is the IT partner for the Paris Olympics—is sagging under almost five billion euros (\$5.4 billion) of debt. The group said last week it now needs 1.1 billion euros in cash to stay afloat in the 2024-2025, up from a previous estimate of 600 million euros. It is also seeking to slash its debt by 3.2 billion euros.

Atos said in a statement on Monday that its board had received four financial restructuring offers on Sunday. The proposals were made by US investment firm Bain Capital, Czech billionaire Daniel Kretinsky's Equity Investment, top shareholder Onepoint, and a group of bondholders and banks.

Atos said it had rejected Bain Capital's offer but would work with its creditors to choose one of the other proposals by May 31, with the aim of reaching a final restructuring agreement by July.

The Olympics begin on July 26 but Atos has insisted that its financial woes would not disrupt its operations during the Games, for which it will provide real-time results and manage more than 300,000 accreditations. "We will now work with our financial creditors to find a solution by May 31 that will be acceptable to them and consistent with the parameters we have shared," Atos chief executive Paul Saleh said.

"I am confident that a final agreement can be reached by the July target that would assure the continuity of operations to our clients and be in the best interest of Atos' employees, clients, suppliers, creditors, shareholders and other stakeholders," he added. The group warned that any agreement "will likely entail radical changes in the capital structure of the company" and the issuance of new shares that will greatly reduce the stakes held by existing shareholders.

Atos also said it was in talks with the French state over its plans to acquire strategically-important company activities, including advanced computing, "mission-critical systems" and cybersecurity products. —AFP



## Kalyan Jewellers celebrates Akshaya Tritiya with mega-bonanza offers

KUWAIT: Kalyan Jewellers, one of the largest and most-trusted jewelry brands has recently announced mega-bonanza giveaways as part of its Akshaya Tritiya celebrations. Following a customer-centric approach, the jewelry brand has been offering exciting offers to ensure patrons gain maximum benefits on their jewelry purchases.

The jewelry brand is offering a 2-gram gold coin on purchase of diamond or polki jewelry worth KD 550 and a 1-gram gold coin free on purchase of platinum, precious stones and uncut jewelry worth KD 550 or diamond or polki jewelry worth between KD 350 – KD 549. Moreover, the jewelry brand is also offering a ½ gm gold coin free on gold jewelry purchases worth KD 550 or platinum, precious stones and uncut jewelry worth between KD 350 – KD 549. Also a ¼ gm free gold coin on purchase of gold jewelry between KD 350 and KD 549. Apart from these offers, the brand has also launched an exciting array of new festive collections for their patrons.

Speaking on this occasion, Ramesh Kalyanaram, executive director, Kalyan Jewellers said, "Akshaya Tritiya is a special time for new beginnings and cherished traditions like family gift exchanges. At Kalyan Jewellers, we understand the deep emotional



connection our customers have with jewelry and festivals. Through this exciting giveaway offers, we aim to enhance their celebrations by offering exceptional jewelry and enabling them to maximize benefits on their purchases."

To streamline the Akshaya Tritiya shopping experience, Kalyan Jewellers introduced an attractive pre-booking program so customers can conveniently select and place their jewelry orders in advance, ensuring a hassle-free pickup on or near the auspicious day. This initiative aims to alleviate the rush and long waits traditionally associated with the festival, offering their patrons a seamless and stress-free shopping experience. The pre-booking option also helps customers to stay protected against price hikes within that time period.

All Kalyan Jewellers showrooms stock Muhurat – their bridal jewelry line curated from across India. They also have exclusive sections featuring Kalyan's popular house brands such as tejasvi (polki jewelry), mudhra (handcrafted antique jewelry), nimah (temple jewellery), glo (dancing diamonds), Ziah (solitaire-like diamond jewelry), anokhi (uncut diamonds), heras (daily wear diamonds), rang (precious stones jewelry), and the recently launched lila (colored stones and diamond jewelry).

## Singapore Airlines buys sustainable jet fuel from Neste

SINGAPORE: Singapore Airlines said on Monday it will buy 1,000 tonnes of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) from Neste, the first purchase of the low-carbon jet fuel from the Finnish firm's refinery in the city-state.

The leading Asian carrier signed an agreement with Neste to purchase the SAF to blend with conventional fuel for use by the airline and its budget arm Scoot, according to a joint statement issued by the three companies. The Neste refinery's expansion at Changi was completed last year and it now has a production capacity of a million tons of sustainable aviation fuel a year, making it the largest such facility in the world.

Neste will start delivering SAF to Changi Airport's fuel hydrant system in the second quarter and then in the fourth quarter, the statement said. SAFs are made from 100 percent renewable waste and residue raw materials and cut greenhouse gas emissions by up to 80 percent over the fuel's life cycle, it said.

"This supply of locally produced SAF to Changi Airport is a milestone in our journey of supporting the aviation industry and governments in the region to achieve their emissions reduction goals," said Alexander Kueper, vice president for renewable aviation at Neste.

He hoped it would encourage the "wider adoption of SAF across the broader Asia-Pacific region".

Singapore said in February it would require airlines departing from the country to gradually use low-carbon jet fuel from 2026 as part of industry plans to cut emissions. Airlines will be required to use a jet fuel mix that is 1.0 percent SAF in 2026, gradually increasing to between 3.0 and 5.0 percent by 2030. SAFs can comprise up to 50 percent of jet fuel mixes. However, SAFs are between three to five times more expensive than conventional jet fuel and authorities will introduce a levy on tickets to help cushion costs.

Aviation is responsible for between two and three percent of global CO2 emissions but is one of the most difficult industries to decarbonize. SAFs are seen as the main tool for decarbonizing the aviation sector but, apart from the expense, the technology is also still in its infancy. The International Civil Aviation Organization has set a goal for the industry to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. — AFP

## Business

# Arab-DAC Dialogue in Kuwait to promote global solidarity for development financing

## Two-day conference features 20 prominent international figures



KUWAIT: Prominent international figures attending the two-day "Arab-DAC Dialogue 2024 on Development" pose for a group photo on Monday.

KUWAIT: The "2024 Arab-DAC Dialogue on Development" commenced on Monday in Kuwait. Organized by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and featuring over 20 prominent international figures representing major international institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, OPEC, and the G20 Development Working Group, the dialogue is designed to promote global solidarity and multilateral cooperation by enhancing the scale and quality of development financing and achieving more effective collaborative outcomes. The conference is scheduled to run from May 6-7, 2024.

The conference features notable participation from the Arab Coordination Group institutions, which include four Gulf national development funds: the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, the Saudi Development Fund, the Abu Dhabi Development Fund, and the Qatar Development Fund. Additionally, six regional institutions are involved: the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the Islamic Development Bank, the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID), the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa, the Arab Gulf Programme for Development (AGFUND), and the Arab Monetary Fund.

The conference also sees participation from the European Union, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the International Finance Corporation, the United Nations Development Programme, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the African Development Bank Group, the Middle East Council

on Global Affairs, the Camoes Institute for Cooperation and Language, Earthna: Center for a Sustainable Future (a Qatar Foundation initiative for education, science, and community development), and the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD).

In his opening remarks, Bader Al-Saad, Director General/Chairman of the Board of Directors, Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (Head of Arab Coordination Group), said: "This meeting takes place at a time when the global financial landscape is changing dramatically because of protracted global crises, rapid technology innovation, and geopolitical developments. These shifts have significant consequences for international and regional financial institutions as they work to achieve their mandates for sustainable development."

Al-Saad added: "The MENA region faces additional challenges because of escalating geopolitical instabilities, most notably in Gaza, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. The slow progress in achieving SDGs in this region has caused substantial gaps in technology, climate resilience, water and food security, and institutional development. More importantly, the region faces a major obstacle to private sector-led growth, which has resulted in limited job creation."

In his remarks Carsten Staur, Chair of the OECD Development Assistance Committee emphasized that: "DAC members greatly value the cooperation with our Arab partners, and this Dialogue is key to an open exchange of views and to learn from each other not least in areas of blended finance and development effectiveness." Staur added: "This Dialogue is



A session on the first day of the Arab-DAC Dialogue on Development on Monday.

taking place at a time when development cooperation is put to the test with high pressures on concessional finance, and I look forward to the important discussions ahead of us in the next two days."

This year's dialogue is crucial as it precedes several major international conferences, such as the Future Summit, COP-29 Climate Summit, and the Financing for Development Conference (FFD-4). It provides a platform for aligning priorities and coordinating efforts. This is critically important amid a global atmosphere of uncertainty marked by ongoing crises, including the escalating impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, economic volatility, financial imbalances, and increasing violence—all of which threaten progress toward achieving sustainable development goals, including the UN 2030 Agenda.

The focus of the "2024 Arab-DAC Dialogue on Development" is on broadening the scope and improving the quality

of development finance and cooperation by addressing two main topics: financing sustainable development in a changing context, and collaborating for better results and partnerships. As influential actors in international development, Arab providers and DAC members aim to contribute to a renewed spirit of global solidarity and multilateralism. They aim to enhance the scale and quality of development financing and achieve better collaborative outcomes amid increasing demands and human and livelihood needs, thereby ensuring desired stability on both economic and social levels.

Since its establishment in 1975, the Arab Coordination Group has provided developmental aid, covering all economic and social sectors and contributing to debt issues resolution. Many countries across the world have benefited from this aid, with a cumulative total reaching approximately \$286 billion by the end of 2023. This aid has supported 22 Arab



Chair of the OECD Development Assistance Committee Carsten Staur.

countries, 44 African countries, 34 Asian countries, 30 Latin American countries, and 37 other countries, in addition to numerous regional institutions and organizations.

Since 2011, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) has collaborated with the Arab providers, and the institutions of the Arab Coordination Group, which includes Gulf national development funds and regional organizations. This partnership focuses on discussing development issues and exchanging expertise to effectively implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Countries such as Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates participate in DAC meetings and actively engage in its various activities. Recently, many institutions from the Arab Coordination Group, notably the Islamic Development Bank and the OPEC Fund for International Development, have increased their involvement in the DAC.

## Gulf Bank distributes KD 100,000 prize to 100 winners in one day

KUWAIT: Continuing its dedication to rewarding customers and fulfilling their requirements, Gulf Bank has unveiled plans to distribute a total of KD 100,000 as the prize for the upcoming draw, scheduled for Oct 17, 2024. Rather than one winner taking it all, 100 lucky individuals will each walk away with KD 1,000.

Last year, Gulf Bank increased the grand prize amount from KD 1.5 million to KD 2 million, establishing a Guinness World Record for the largest cash prize associated with a bank account worldwide. Now in its 26th consecutive year, the Al-Danah Millionaire account draw schedule, established in 1998, has been updated to include two significant annual draws. The yearly grand prize has been set at KD 2 million, and the semi-annual prize at KD 1 million.

In addition to these major prizes, there are monthly draws that reward ten winners with KD 1,000 each. A draw for KD 100,000, previously announced on April 18, is part of the schedule. The year's second draw will similarly divide KD 100,000 among 100 winners, awarding each KD 1,000.

On this occasion, Mohammad Al-Qattan, Gulf Bank's General Manager of Consumer Banking, said: "At Gulf Bank, it's our tradition to prioritize rewarding all our customers and especially Al-Danah account holders. This change is designed to expand the number of winners and beneficiaries of the Al-Danah Millionaire account, highlighting our commitment to encouraging and inspiring our customers to save."

He added that the bank consistently engages with customers to understand their needs and requirements, and promptly responds to them. "The Al-Danah Millionaire account is among the best savings accounts in Kuwait, offering valuable prize draws and numerous benefits to account holders."

It is also one of the oldest and most prestigious savings accounts in Kuwait, designed to instill a culture of saving within the community and reward regular sav-

ers for their commitment. We urge everyone to open an Al-Danah account, save consistently, and enjoy the array of benefits it offers to customers.

Al-Qattan emphasized a unique feature of the Al-Danah Millionaire account: it is the only account in Kuwait that rolls over customers' chances of winning from one year to the next. This is part of a loyalty program designed to reward customers for their ongoing commitment to Gulf Bank.

He also mentioned that the Al-Danah Millionaire account is accessible to both Kuwaiti citizens and expatriates. To open the account, customers need to maintain a minimum balance of KD 200, ensuring they retain the same amount to qualify automatically for the upcoming Al-Danah Millionaire draws. If the balance falls below KD 200 at any point, KD 2 will be deducted monthly until the minimum balance is reinstated. Customers who open a new Al-Danah Millionaire account or add more funds, will be automatically entered into the Al-Danah draws.

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.

The jump was mainly down to three additional working days compared with April 2023. Adjusted for calendar swings, the increase shrinks to just three percent, said EY analyst Constantin Gall.

While sales of petrol, diesel and plug-in hybrids all rose last month, the slump in demand for battery-powered electric vehicles (BEVs) persisted. With just under 30,000 units sold, registrations for BEVs were down 0.2 percent year-on-year as the sector reels from the government's decision late last year to scrap purchase incentives. Despite the arrival of new models and manufacturer discounts, the market share for BEVs fell to 12.2 percent in April, said EY's Gill, compared with nearly 15 percent a year earlier. — AFP



Mohammad Al-Qattan

## Burgan Bank welcomes private banking clients at Al-Shaheed branch

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced that its Private Banking and Wealth Management services and products are now available at Al-Shaheed branch, enabling all high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs) to access the exclusive suite of tailored solutions at more locations with ease and convenience across Kuwait. This comes as part of the Bank's expansive strategy and ongoing efforts to elevate its overall banking journey for clients.

"Convenience and limitless accessibility are the hallmarks of an elevated banking experience," Meshari Abduljalil Shehab, General Manager – Private Banking and Wealth Management at Burgan Bank stated, commenting on the latest expansion of the Private Banking network. "That is why we are working on continuously expanding our Private Banking and Wealth Management services, online and offline banking touchpoints, and our network of branches that specifically cater to the sophisticated needs of our high-net-worth clients. Our ability to provide exclusivity to clients has expanded tremendously in the past few months, and we are on track to continue offering them even better accessibility, increased exclusivity, and a constantly elevated private banking experience. To this end, our Private Banking and Wealth Management services will soon be available at more branches across the Burgan Bank network."

On another note, Shehab clarified that HNWIs can contact Burgan's Relationship Managers

## Europe's auto suppliers reach end of the road

GIFHORN, Germany: Emrullah Karaca has made brakes for the past 20 years, but he is now learning to assemble heat pumps instead, as the Continental factory where he works in northern Germany is slated to close.

Production of the car component at the town of Gifhorn will end in 2027 and move to Croatia, the Czech Republic and Wales to keep the costs "competitive", according to Continental, which will cut about 7,000 jobs worldwide. The relocation means a new career for 49-year-old Karaca, one of a rising number of workers in companies supplying Germany's vital automotive sector who are being hit by a tsunami of redundancies.

Facing up to the double shock of the end of com-



through direct channels and online banking. This year alone, Burgan Bank succeeded in acquiring several licenses from the Capital Markets Authority (CMA) to add more services to its Private Banking and Wealth Management platform, including licenses for custodians, investment advisory, portfolio management, and unregistered securities brokers. In addition, the bank expanded its team of CMA-registered investment advisors and Relationship Managers who are dedicated to advise and plan investment strategies that suit clients' risk appetite and liquidity requirements.

Burgan Bank's Private Banking remains a top-tier, full-service wealth management offering in Kuwait, serving high-net-worth customers; offering them a next-level of private banking service and advising them on their wealth management planning.

bustion engines and rising competition from China, European suppliers like Bosch, ZF and Webasto have all announced cuts—which have piled up to the point where the issue has cast a shadow on the forthcoming EU elections.

Brussels has promised to do more to boost the domestic car industry and tackle unfair competition from cheaper Asian rivals. But EU plans to outlaw the sale of new fossil fuel-powered cars from 2035, meaning some jobs will inevitably become redundant.

The upcoming closure to the Continental plant in Gifhorn has been the catalyst for Karaca and the other 800 employees working there to start retraining in another area. A local heating systems company, Stiebel Eltron, has proposed to take over the site and retain some employees for future production. "Brakes or heat pumps, it's all the same to me," said Karaca, whose two parents both worked for Continental at the factory. Making exhausts, headlights, gear boxes or brakes has long been a steady job with suppliers in Germany alone employing some 270,000 people. — AFP

## German car sales rise in April but electric lag persists

FRANKFURT: Additional working days boosted new-car sales in Germany in April, but demand for electric vehicles cooled further in the wake of the phaseout of government subsidies. A total of 243,102 new cars were registered in Europe's largest economy last month, the KBA federal transport authority said, up nearly 20 percent on a year earlier.

TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 2024



The tombstone of the famous German composer Ludwig van Beethoven is seen at the Vienna Central cemetery in Vienna, Austria. — AFP photos



Various manuscripts are on display at the Beethovenhaus museum, where German composer Ludwig van Beethoven spent some of his summers and composed sections of his Ninth Symphony.

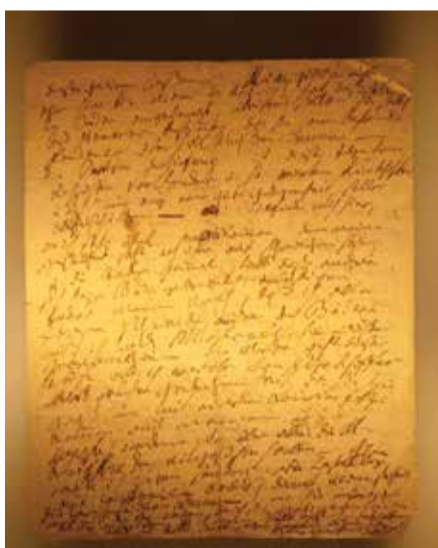


A manuscript from the Symphony No. 9 in D minor, op. 125 by German composer Ludwig van Beethoven is seen on display at The-atermuseum in Vienna, Austria as the museum is presenting "particularly significant parts from Beethoven's autograph".



A figurine of German composer Ludwig van Beethoven is seen in the souvenir shop of the Beethovenhaus museum, where Beethoven spent some of his summers and composed sections of his Ninth Symphony.

## ODE TO JOY: HOW AUSTRIA SHAPED BEETHOVEN'S NINTH



A letter (on temporary loan from the Beethoven house in Bonn, western Germany) on display at the Beethovenhaus museum.



A piano used by German composer Ludwig van Beethoven is seen on display at the Beethovenhaus museum, where Beethoven spent some of his summers and composed sections of his Ninth Symphony.

The night Ludwig van Beethoven's monumental Ninth Symphony rang out in a Vienna concert hall for the first time almost exactly two centuries ago, the great German composer was anxious for all to go well. He needn't have worried. The audience erupted in spontaneous applause during the performance, but Beethoven was already so hard of hearing that he had to be turned around by a musician to notice it. While he was born in Bonn in 1770, Beethoven spent most of his life in Vienna after moving to the Austrian capital as a 22-year-old.

Despite receiving repeated offers to relocate, the legendary composer never left Vienna, where he had found his home from home, surrounded by supportive fans and generous patrons. "It was the society, the culture that characterized the city that appealed to him so much," said Ulrike Scholda, director of the Beethoven House in nearby Baden. The picturesque spa town just outside Vienna deeply shaped Beethoven's life -- and the last symphony he would complete, she said.

### Under pressure

"In the 1820s, Baden was certainly the place to be", with the imperial family, the aristocracy and a Who's Who of cultural life spending their summers there, Scholda said. Beyond his hearing loss, Beethoven suffered from various health problems ranging from abdominal pains to jaundice, and regularly went to Baden to recuperate. En-

joying long walks in the countryside and bathing in Baden's medicinal springs helped him recover, while simultaneously inspiring his compositions.

In the summers leading up to the first public performance of his Ninth Symphony in 1824, Beethoven stayed at what is now known as Baden's Beethoven House, which now serves as a museum. It was there that he also composed important parts of his final symphony. A letter Beethoven sent from Baden in September 1823 details the pressure he felt to finalize the symphony to please the Philharmonic Society in London which had commissioned the work, Scholda said.

### 'Less war, more Beethoven'

Upon completing the symphony in Vienna, weeks of intense preparations followed, including an army of copyists duplicating Beethoven's manuscripts and last-minute rehearsals that culminated in the premiere on May 7, 1824. The night before, Beethoven rushed from door to door by carriage to "personally invite important people to come to his concert", said historical musicologist Birgit Lodes. He also managed to "squeeze in a haircut", Lodes added.

At almost double the length of comparable works, Beethoven's Ninth broke the norms of what until then was a "solely orchestral" genre by "integrating the human voice and thus text", musicologist Beate Angelika Kraus told AFP. His revolutionary idea to incorporate parts of Friedrich von Schiller's



The Beethovenhaus museum, where German composer Ludwig van Beethoven spent some of his summers and composed sections of his Ninth Symphony, is pictured on April 30, 2024 in Baden bei Wien, Austria.

lyrical verse "Ode to Joy" paradoxically made his symphony more susceptible to misuse, including by the Nazis and the Communists. The verses "convey a feeling of togetherness, but are relatively open in terms of ideological (interpretation)," Kraus said.

Since 1985, Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" from the fourth movement has served as the European Union's official anthem. Outside the Beethoven House in Baden, which is marking the anniversary with a special exhibition, visitor

Jochen Hallof said that encountering the Ninth Symphony as a child had led him down a "path of humanism". "We should listen to Beethoven more instead of waging war," Hallof said. And on Tuesday night that certainly will be the case, with Beethoven's masterpiece reverberating throughout Europe with anniversary concerts in major venues in Paris, Milan and Vienna. —AFP

### Hollywood star Ferrell invests in Championship club Leeds

Hollywood star Will Ferrell has become the latest celebrity to invest in Championship club Leeds, according to reports on Sunday. Ferrell has reportedly bought a "large" stake in the US-based 49ers Enterprises group that owns the Elland Road side. The 56-year-old joins fellow actor Russell Crowe, Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps and golfers Jordan Spieth and Justin Thomas as an investor in Leeds.

Three-time major winner Spieth confirmed he and fellow American Thomas bought minority shares in the former English champions last year. Ferrell is co-owner of Major League Soccer side Los Angeles FC and revealed he was a big fan of English football during a trip to watch Manchester City beat Aston Villa 3-1 last season. He also saw Wrexham defeat Wealdstone and QPR's home game against Sunderland on the same trip.

Welsh club Wrexham, recently promoted to the third tier, are owned by fellow actors Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney, who started a recent trend of celebrities investing in British teams. Black Panther actor Michael B



Hollywood star Ferrell

Jordan was announced as a part-owner of Premier League side Bournemouth in 2022, while former NFL quarterback Tom Brady is an investor in Birmingham, who were relegated to the third tier on Saturday.

Ferrell, who has an estimated worth of over £100 million (\$125 million), starred on comedy sketch show Saturday Night Live and is famous for his roles in hit movies including Elf and Anchorman. Leeds missed out on automatic promotion to the Premier League on the final day of the Championship season after Ipswich's 2-0 win against Huddersfield on Saturday. Daniel Farke's side, beaten 2-1 by Southampton on Saturday, will bid to bounce back to the top-flight via the play-offs. They face Norwich in the first leg of their semi-final at Carrow Road next Sunday. —AFP

### North America moviegoers fall for Gosling, Blunt in 'The Fall Guy'

Universal's new action film "The Fall Guy" opened atop the North American box office this weekend, taking in an estimated \$28.5 million at a time moviegoing has hit a slump, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported Sunday. Based on a 1980s TV series, the film from stuntman-turned-director David Leitch features stunning action sequences, including one already Guinness-certified record stunt. It also benefits from the star power of recent Oscar nominees Ryan Gosling and Emily Blunt.

Analysts called the film's opening disappointing given its \$130 million production cost, but David A. Gross of Franchise Entertainment Research said he viewed it as "the potential start of an action-comedy series." In second was Disney and Lucasfilm's "Star Wars: The Phantom Menace," scoring \$8.1 million, a surprising amount for the re-release of a 25-year-old film, one available for viewing at home and which was hardly the most popular in the "Star Wars" franchise. Liam Neeson, Ewan McGregor and Natalie Portman star.

Last weekend's list-topper, MGM's tennis-based romance "Challengers," slipped to third at \$7.6 million for the Friday-through-Sunday period. Singer/actor Zendaya plays a tennis star who

retires after an injury, then later helps her husband (Mike Faist) prepare for a key match against her former lover and his erstwhile friend (Josh O'Connor).

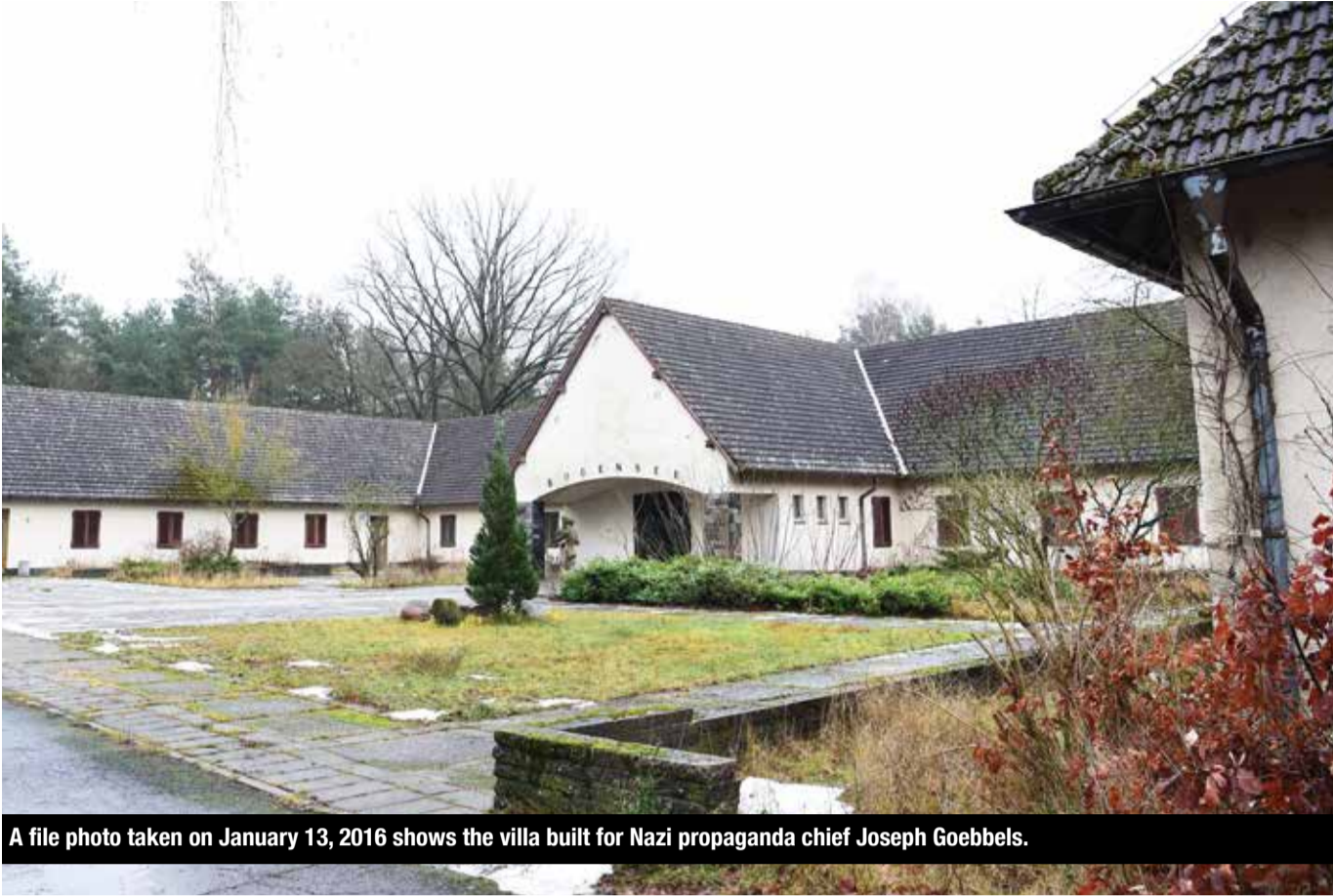
Fourth place went to a new horror film, "Tarot" from Sony and Screen Gems, at \$6.5 million. While critics' reviews have been poor—the film "leaves no horror cliché unturned," Variety said—the film cost just \$8 million to make, so producers shouldn't be having nightmares. And in fifth was Warner Bros.' "Godzilla x Kong: A New Empire," at \$4.5 million in its sixth weekend out. The battling monsters have so far grossed \$188 million domestically and an additional \$337 million globally.

Looking back, April was a "rough" month for Hollywood, with the domestic box office down 48 percent from the three pre-pandemic Aprils, Gross said. "There's no way to make this pretty," he said, adding that the industry is still suffering the aftereffects of last year's strikes. Rounding out the top 10 were:

- "Civil War" (\$3.6 million)
- "Unsung Hero" (\$3 million)
- "Kung Fu Panda 4" (\$2.4 million)
- "Abigail" (\$2.3 million)
- "Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire" (\$1.8 million) —AFP



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 on April 30, 2024. — AFP



A file photo taken on January 13, 2016 shows the villa built for Nazi propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels.



View of the entrance to the villa.



View of the main living room in the villa.

View of the library, which has remained intact, in the villa. — AFP photos



# Berlin offers up Goebbels villa for free

**A** lakeside villa built for Nazi propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels is being offered up for free to anyone willing to take on the daunting task of being responsible for its upkeep. The Villa Bogensee, which stands on a 17-hectare plot of land just outside Berlin, was conceived as a country bolthole for Goebbels in 1936. The Nazi PR chief is said to have used the house for his illicit liaisons with actresses right up until April 1945, just days before he and his wife committed suicide in a Berlin bunker.

The villa has been unused since 2000 and has fallen into disrepair, with the city-state of Berlin struggling to find a new owner to take it over. Stefan Evers, Berlin's finance minister, told a local government meeting the building was threatened with demolition. "I am offering anyone who would like to take over the site to take it over as a gift from the state of Berlin," Evers said.

The property is located in the Brandenburg but neither the state surrounding Berlin nor the federal government are interested in such a "generous gift," he said. Germany has long struggled with the question of what to do with former Nazi sites as many are too complex to demolish, but leaving them intact risks them becoming magnets for a new wave of far-right extremists. After the end of World War II, the Goebbels villa was briefly used as a military hospital before being handed over to a youth organization which ran an academy there.

The sprawling villa still has charming original features such as wood paneling, parquet flooring and chandeliers, but the cost of renovating it would likely run into millions of euros. Evers said he was still hoping for a new proposal from the state of Brandenburg to take over the villa. "However, should this once again come to nothing, as in previous decades, then the state of Berlin will have no other option than to carry out the demolition," he said. — AFP



A file photo taken on January 13, 2016 shows a sculpture outside the villa built for Nazi propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels between 1936-39, near the Bogensee lake north of Berlin.



View of a bathtub, one of the few original fittings still remaining in the villa.



A caretaker opens the main gate of the villa.



View of the villa built for Nazi propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels between 1936-39.



View of a corridor in the villa.



# SENEGAL TAPESTRY PRODUCTION FINDS NEW LEASE OF LIFE

**A**fter cutting away the loose woollen threads from his loom, 28-year-old Senegalese weaver Seydina Oumar Cisse turns the roll to watch the tapestry gradually take shape before his eyes. Everything from the colors to the design is identical to the original work created by Senegalese artist Cheikh Diouf. "It's very satisfying," Cisse said, seeing the result of six months' work for the first time. Cisse is a weaver at the Senegalese manufacturers of decorative arts in the central city of Thies, a leading producer of high-quality artistic goods on the African continent.

tracting renewed interest, driven locally by galleries with international stature and a resurgence of interest in textiles and tapestries" on the art market, said Coline Desportes, a researcher at the national institute of art history (INHA).

### 'Symbiosis of techniques'

Senghor established national tapestry production in Thies in 1966, six years after Senegal gained independence from France, with the goal of "creating a new art for a new nation". While weaving techniques had previously proved popular in African clothing designs, the art of wall tapestries was little known in Senegal. Two years before production got underway, four craftsmen headed to France for specialized training, with the new art form representing "the symbiosis of techniques imported from France and traditional culture," according to Senghor.

Over the years the former president's legacy has been kept alive, but not without difficulty. The state reduced support after Senghor's departure and tapestries went out of fashion, leading production in Thies to almost disappear before orders picked up again in the 2000s. In the weaving workshops, situated within the white and green walls of former army barracks, the weavers have no room for error. Each meticulously follows the cardboard lines on their looms, using wool from Europe and cotton from Thies to trace their designs.

### 'Cultural powerhouse'

Not far away, a group of about 30 American school students listen to a talk given by the head of the cardboard workshop, where the models which guide the weaving process are produced. The establishment now welcomes tourists and film crews onto the premises, evidencing its commitment to diversifying operations. Fourteen rooms will soon be available for visitors, as



Tourists gather around a table to listen to how the famous wall tapestry art is made.



Cotton used to create the tapestries are pictured on an unfinished tapestry at the Manufacture Senegalese des Arts in Thies.

The establishment's creations adorn the walls of organizations the world over, from the UN headquarters in New York to the African Union in Addis Ababa, as well as the palaces of numerous heads of state. Tapestry production in Thies was a flagship cultural policy of Senegal's first president, poet Leopold Sedar Senghor, with production now revitalized thanks to a broadening of operations and new partnerships, including with fashion giant Chanel. The creations are "at-



An artist weaves a new wall tapestry piece.



An artist weaves a prayer mat.



Threads of cotton with their color references at the Manufacture Senegalese des Arts in Thies.

well as an artists' residence, managing director Aloyse Diouf said. "We want to turn the manufacturers into a cultural powerhouse, a link between art and tourism," he added, although government commissions remain essential to keeping production afloat.

"Tapestry is not necessarily

linked to our history and has remained mainly elitist - it is mainly the authorities who buy tapestries to contribute to Senegal's artistic influence," Diouf said. "The ownership of this art form by the Senegalese is a long-term project that we are developing by inviting schools to visit the factories". The estab-

lishment now also produces prayer rugs, batik and ceramics, which are slightly more affordable for the Senegalese than the wall tapestries, which cost 1.5 million CFA francs (\$2,400) per square meter. — AFP



Artists inspect a finished wall tapestry piece.



An artist weaves a new wall tapestry piece.



An artist weaves a prayer mat.



An artist weaves a prayer mat at the Manufacture Senegalese des Arts in Thies.



An artist weaves a wall tapestry piece at the Manufacture Senegalese des Arts in Thies.



A man walks through the colonial buildings at the Manufacture Senegalese des Arts in Thies.

## Sports

# Mitchell rallies Cavaliers for series-clinching game seven win

## Strus hits back-to-back three-pointers

LOS ANGELES: Donovan Mitchell and the Cleveland Cavaliers silenced the young guns of Orlando, beating the Magic 106-94 in game seven of their NBA playoffs first-round series Sunday to book a meeting with Eastern Conference top seeds Boston.

It was another magisterial performance from Mitchell, who scored 39 points two days after pouring in 50 in the Cavs' game six defeat.

This time he had plenty of scoring support from teammates as the Cavs erased an 18-point second-quarter deficit to clinch a series in which the home team won every game.

Caris LeVert scored 15 points off the bench and Max Strus scored 11 of his 13 points in the third quarter, when the Cavs out-scored the Magic 33-15 to take charge.

Evan Mobley scored 11 points with 16 rebounds and five blocked shots and Darius Garland chipped in 12 points to help Cleveland withstand a 38-point performance from Paolo Banchero.

The Cavs, with starting center Jarrett Allen sidelined a third straight game with bruised ribs, moved on to the second round a year after a stinging first-round loss to the New York Knicks.

"I didn't want to go home," Mitchell said of the mindset that saw him score 17 points in the third quarter as he virtually willed Cleveland to the lead.

The Magic delivered a strong first punch, Banchero scoring 10 points in the first period as Orlando grabbed a 24-18.

In the face of Orlando's suffocating defense the Cavs connected on just six of 22 shots in the first quarter and didn't make a three-pointer until Sam Merrill drilled one midway through the second quarter.

The Magic pushed their lead to as many as 18 points in the second quarter before the Cavs clawed back to cut the lead to single digits.

Banchero's layup in the closing seconds of the first half saw Orlando take a 10-point lead into the break, but momentum was on Cleveland's side and they overwhelmed the Magic in the third.

"I didn't feel our confidence waver much, even when we had 18 points in the first quarter," Mitchell said. "They came out and jumped on us," he added, saying the key was for the Cavs "to respond the way we did, keep plugging, just keep chipping away."

Mitchell, again relentless in the paint, tied it at 64-64 with a floater and LeVert drained a pair of free throws to give the Cavs their first lead since the first quarter.

Strus hit back-to-back three-pointers as Cleveland built a 76-68 lead going into the final period.

The Cavs pushed their advantage to 14 points in the final frame, fans chanting "We want Boston" as the final minutes ticked off.

### One goal accomplished

The Celtics will host game one of their Eastern Conference semi-final series on Tuesday, and Mitchell vowed the Cavaliers will be ready for the team that posted the best record in the regular season.

"We didn't make the group we made just to win the first round," he said. "We accomplished one goal. Now we have to do it again."

It was a crushing end to a strong season for the Magic, collectively the second-youngest team in the playoffs behind the Oklahoma City Thunder.

Wendell Carter Jr. scored 13 points and Jalen



CLEVELAND: Paolo Banchero #5 of the Orlando Magic handles the ball against Isaac Okoro #35 of the Cleveland Cavaliers during the fourth quarter in Game Seven of the Eastern Conference First Round Playoffs at Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse in Cleveland, Ohio. — AFP

Suggs added 10 for the Magic, but Franz Wagner was held to just six as Orlando remained in search of a first playoff series victory since 2010.

Mitchell heaped praise 21-year-old Banchero, the

top pick in the 2022 draft.

Banchero himself said the Magic's fight back from 0-2 down in the series to force game seven "just shows where we're headed." — AFP



KUWAIT: Nour Al-Ruzaihan returns with her coach and an official.

## Gymnastics Federation praises Al-Ruzaihan's performance

KUWAIT: Kuwait Gymnastics Federation commended the latest achievement and outstanding performance of gymnast Nour Al-Ruzaihan during the 20th Asian Rhythmic Gymnastics Championship that concluded Monday in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

The federation said the young gymnast ended in 8th place in the hoop event in which gymnasts from well established countries in the game including Indonesia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, China and Singapore.

It said Al-Ruzaihan proved herself among the strongest gymnasts in the continent as she reached the finals, and considered the participation a success.

The 8th place finish by Al-Ruzaihan in an official Asian Championship marks the best result by Kuwait gymnastics participation in the history of its continental participations for both girls or boys. The federation added that Nour is a promising champion and deserves all attention and support, and lauded the role of the Public Authority for Sport, as well as the Kuwait Olympic Committee in backing the game.

## S Lanka, Scotland qualify for women's T20 World Cup

ABU DHABI: Sri Lanka survived a scare against the United Arab Emirates on Sunday to secure the last place at this year's women's T20 World Cup, after Scotland also booked a spot at the tournament. In the second semi-final of the global qualifying event in Abu Dhabi, Sri Lanka posted 149-6 batting first, with Vishmi Gunaratne top-scoring with 45. Sri Lanka, seventh in the world T20I rankings, were in trouble for much of the UAE's chase, but the hosts fell away after the dismissal of captain Esha Oza for a 44-ball 66, finishing on 134-7 to lose by 15 runs.

Chamari Athapaththu's side will head into the World Cup, to be held in Bangladesh in October, with hopes of getting out of the group stage for the first time after a historic T20 series win over former world champions England last year. Earlier, 14th-ranked Scotland qualified for a maiden women's World Cup by cruising to an eight-wicket win over Ireland. Captain Kathryn Bryce took 4-8 from four overs as Ireland were restricted to just 110-9 batting first.

"It's unbelievable, I feel like we've worked so hard for this for so long, and had our share of disappointments," Sarah Bryce, who was at the crease with sister Kathryn when her team secured victory, told Cricket Scotland. — AFP

## Narine powers clinical Kolkata to top of IPL

LUCKNOW: Red-hot Sunil Narine smashed 81 off 39 balls to help Kolkata Knight Riders thrash Lucknow Super Giants by 98 runs and take top spot in IPL table on Sunday. Narine's blitz, laced with six fours and seven sixes, guided Kolkata to 235-6 after they were invited to bat first in Lucknow's final home game.

Two-time champions Kolkata bowled out Lucknow for 137 in 16.1 overs for their eighth win in 11 matches and almost guaranteed a play-off berth. Second-placed Rajasthan Royals have played one match fewer. In the first game of the day, all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja starred with bat and ball to help holders Chennai Super Kings climb to third with a 28-run win over Punjab Kings.

The top four teams will make the play-offs with the final on May 26 in Chennai. Narine, who has impressed after being promoted to open by Kolkata this season, led their batting charge in a 61-run first-wicket stand with Phil Salt. "He was splendid," Kolkata skipper Shreyas Iyer said of his team's player of the match Narine, who has amassed 461 runs at a strike-rate of 183.66.

"The start from openers has been great. Pure bliss. We just want to keep continuing the momentum so that we get to the great total and be optimistic." Lucknow's Naveen-ul-Haq took three wickets

## Norris wins Miami Grand Prix for maiden F1 win

MIAMI GARDENS: McLaren's Lando Norris won the first Formula One race of his career with a shock victory over world champion Max Verstappen in the Miami Grand Prix on Sunday. Breathing life into an F1 season that risked becoming a one-man story again, Norris, in his 110th race for McLaren, beat Verstappen by over seven seconds with Ferrari's Charles Leclerc finishing third.

Verstappen, who began on pole, had won four of the opening five races of the season and leads the world championship standings. It looked like business as usual with the Dutchman, who had won the previous two Miami races, leading until lap 24 when he pitted and Norris's McLaren team-mate Oscar Piastri took over the lead.

Australian Piastri himself went into the pits four laps later, allowing Norris to grab the lead and the British driver never looked back. Crucially, Norris was able to pit during a safety car on lap 30, earning him a valuable time advantage which he never relinquished.

The safety car came after Kevin Magnussen clipped Logan Sargeant, sending the American Williams driver into the wall, bringing a yellow flag. Norris, who had 15 podiums before his first win, took full advantage of the safety car and with Verstappen struggling to catch up, he secured his maiden victory.

It was the first time Verstappen has been beaten on track, when he finished the race, since Ferrari's Carlos Sainz won in Singapore in September last year. Norris was hoisted in the air by the McLaren mechanics as his long wait for a victory in the sport came to an end. "About time huh?" said Norris. "I knew on Friday that we had the pace... today we managed to put it together. We had the perfect strategy, it all paid off," he added.

### 'He deserves it'

"I guess a lot of people doubted me along the way. I've made a lot of mistakes over the last five

years, my short career, but today we pulled it all together, so this is all for the team. "I stuck with McLaren because I could believe in them and I did believe in them and today proved exactly that," he added.

The nearest Norris had come previously to winning a Grand Prix was in Sochi, Russia in 2021 when he led in the latter stages before failing to make a tyre change early in rain, costing him dearly. Verstappen, who had complained about lack of grip in qualification and during Sunday's race, said his Red Bull had been unable to keep up with Norris once the McLaren driver switched to hard tyres.

"They just had more pace. Lando was flying. It was incredibly difficult for us, but on the bad days P2, I'll take it right?" "I'm very happy for Lando, it's been a long time coming and it's not going to be his last one. He definitely deserves it," said the Dutchman. Leclerc echoed those sentiments.

"Very often he ran very close it but for one

to hurt KKR but Iyer, who made 23, and Raman-deep Singh, who hit a six-ball 25 not out, helped the team finish on a high.

Ramandeep returned to make an impact in the field as he took a stunning catch to dismiss Arshin Kulkarni when he ran back 21 metres to dive and pouch the ball off the bowling of Mitchell Starc. Marcus Stoinis hit 36 but the rest of the batting fell flat as spinner Varun Chakravarthy and fast bowler Harshit Rana took three wickets each. Andre Russell took two wickets and Narine returned figures of 1-22.

### Pathirana blow for Chennai

Lucknow are fifth on the table and stay in the hunt for a play-off spot. "Once we go back to dressing room, we move on from this game and see where we went wrong," said skipper KL Rahul. "Last home game, we are on the road for the next few games, we need to be little bit more fearless."

In the earlier match, Jadeja top-scored with 43 off 26 balls to guide Chennai to 167-9 batting first in Punjab's adopted home ground of Dharamsala. Jadeja then returned figures of 3-20 from his four overs of left-arm spin to help restrict Punjab to 139-9 for Chennai's sixth win in 11 matches.

The performance from the veteran Jadeja comes as a welcome sign for India ahead of the T20 World Cup in June in the West Indies and the United States. Chennai suffered an early blow with Sri Lanka pace bowler Matheesha Pathirana set to return home due to a hamstring injury.

Pathirana was Chennai's standout bowler and took 13 wickets in six matches. But medium-pace bowler Tushar Deshpande took on the responsibility in the



LUCKNOW: Kolkata Knight Riders' Sunil Narine plays a shot during the Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Lucknow Super Giants and Kolkata Knight Riders at the Ekana Cricket Stadium in Lucknow. — AFP

absence of Pathirana and injured Deepak Chahar as he struck twice in his first over and Punjab's second in the chase. Deshpande sent Jonny Bairstow, bowled for seven, and then Rilee Rossouw, bowled for a duck, trudging back to the pavilion in the space of four balls and the chase could never take off. — AFP



MIAMI GARDENS: (L-R) Second place, Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen; first place, McLaren's British driver Lando Norris; and third place, Ferrari's Monegasque driver Charles Leclerc, stand on the podium after the 2024 Miami Formula One Grand Prix at Miami International Autodrome in Miami Gardens, Florida. — AFP

reason or another he didn't make it. But today he did an incredible job and the whole weekend he has been on it," said the Ferrari driver. Sainz finished fourth with Verstappen's Red Bull team-mate Sergio Perez in fifth place but the pair swapped places after stewards imposed a post-race penalty of five seconds on the Spaniard for his collision with Piastri.

Mercedes pair Lewis Hamilton and George Russell finished sixth and eighth with RB's Japanese driver Yuki Tsunoda ending seventh. As in the first two years of the Miami Grand Prix, held around Hard Rock Stadium, the home of the NFL's Miami Dolphins, the race attracted plenty of celebrities.

Former France international footballer and coach Zinedine Zidane, singer Ed Sheeran, Super Bowl winning quarterback Patrick Mahomes and former US President Donald Trump were among those spotted at the race. Trump visited the McLaren garage before the race. — AFP

Sports

# Inoue knocks out Nery to defend his super-bantamweight titles

## Takei beats Moloney in Tokyo to win bantamweight world title

**TOKYO:** Japan's undisputed super-bantamweight world champion Naoya Inoue survived an early scare to stop Mexico's Luis Nery in the sixth round at the Tokyo Dome Monday and defend his titles. Fans at the famous venue, which seats more than 45,000, were left stunned when Nery floored the unbeaten "Monster" in the first round with a huge left hand.

But Inoue got up and knocked his Mexican opponent down in the following round and sent him to the canvas again in the fifth before finishing him off with a right hook in the sixth. It was the first boxing event to be held at the Tokyo Dome since 42-1 underdog James "Buster" Douglas knocked out unbeaten heavyweight champion Mike Tyson in February 1990 in one of the sport's biggest upsets.

Inoue took his record to 27-0 with 24 wins by knockout. It was his first fight since becoming the undisputed super-bantamweight world champion in December. He is just the second man to become undisputed world champion at two different weights since the four-belt era began in 2004. American Terence Crawford was the first.

Fans at the Tokyo Dome gave the 31-year-old a rapturous welcome as he entered the cavernous venue with all four world championship belts up for grabs. A huge upset looked like it could be on the cards when Nery sent the champion sprawling with a massive left hand. But it seemed to energize Inoue and he came flying out of his corner to send Nery down in the second round.

Inoue continued to land ferocious blows and sent his opponent to the canvas again with a left hook in the fifth round. The referee stopped the fight after Inoue downed Nery for a third time in the sixth round.

Nery, a former two-division world champion, was fighting in Japan for the first time since he was stripped of his bantamweight world title in 2018 after failing to make weight for a bout there. He was subsequently banned from fighting in Japan but the country's boxing commission gave him the green light to compete against Inoue.

Nery was booed when he was introduced to the Tokyo Dome crowd. The 29-year-old's record fell to 35-2, with 27 KOs. Inoue was fighting at super-bantamweight for only the third time, after beating American Stephen Fulton and Marlon Tapales of the Philippines last year for a clean sweep of the titles.

He moved up in weight class after becoming the first undisputed bantamweight world champion since Panama's Enrique Pinder in 1972.

Earlier, Japan's Yoshiki Takei beat Australian defending champion Jason Moloney by unanimous decision on Monday to win the WBO bantamweight world title at the Tokyo Dome. Fighting on the undercard of undisputed super-bantamweight world champion Naoya "Monster" Inoue's title fight against Mexico's Luis Nery, Takei started strongly before Moloney came back into the bout in his second title defence.

But the Japanese fighter, a former kickboxer who had won all eight of his previous boxing matches by knockout, took the title in front of a raucous crowd at the 45,000-plus seater venue. "The 12th round was a real struggle," said the 27-year-old Takei.

"I wanted to win by knock-out but Moloney was really tough. I knew he was strong before the fight and I trained really hard because of that - it's thanks to Moloney that I was able to toughen up," he added.

Moloney, who won the vacant title in May last year, saw his record drop to 29-3, with 27 wins by



**TOKYO:** Japan's Naoya Inoue (C) fights against Mexico's Luis Nery (R) during their IBF-WBA-WBC-WBO super-bantamweight title boxing match at the Tokyo Dome in Tokyo on May 6, 2024. — AFP

KO. Earlier on the undercard, Inoue's younger brother Takuma Inoue defended his WBA bantamweight title with a unanimous decision win over fellow Japanese Sho Ishida.

Ishida floored Inoue in the first round with a left jab but the champion recovered to dominate the fight. Japan's Seigo Yuri Akui defended his WBA

flyweight title with a unanimous decision win over countryman Taku Kuwahara.

Boxing was returning to the Tokyo Dome for the first time since 42-1 underdog James "Buster" Douglas knocked out unbeaten heavyweight champion Mike Tyson in February 1990 in one of the sport's biggest upsets. — AFP

## Rublev wins ATP Madrid Open title

**MADRID:** Andrey Rublev won the Madrid Open with a hard-fought 4-6, 7-5, 7-5 victory over Felix Auger-Aliassime on Sunday to secure his second title of the year, despite battling with illness.

The Russian world number eight said he was "almost dead every day" and could barely sleep this week after securing a career second Masters 1000 victory. Rublev had lost four consecutive matches before arriving in the Spanish capital but came from a set down to beat his Canadian opponent.

The 26-year-old triumphed at the Hong Kong Open in January but struggled since before turning around his form in Madrid, dropping just one set on the way to what proved a tense final.

"I think it was an incredible match, Felix deserved (in) the same way as me to win today and we showed a great battle together, I think the most important thing was that the people enjoyed it," said Rublev on court. "Our sport is like this, we cannot have both winners."

Rublev, who takes the Madrid crown from double champion Carlos Alcaraz whom he beat in the quarter-finals, said he had played despite feeling ill at times this week and hailed his doctors for helping him through.

"If you knew what I had been through in the past nine days you would not imagine that I would be able to win a title," he added. "I was almost dead every day, I was not sleeping at night - the last three, four days I didn't sleep."

Auger-Aliassime reached the final after his opponent Jiri Lehecka retired hurt in the semi-finals and quarter-final opponent Jannik Sinner withdrew with a hip injury, with the ATP draw at the clay-court tournament struck by misfortune. However the 23-year-old Canadian, ranked 35th in the world,



**MADRID:** Russia's Andrey Rublev (R) holds his winner's trophy beside runner-up Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime after the 2024 ATP Tour Madrid Open tournament singles final tennis match at Caja Magica in Madrid. — AFP

gave everything he had in his first Masters 1000 final appearance.

### Tense battle

Auger-Aliassime started superbly by breaking to love in the first game and then again in the fifth game for a 4-1 lead. Rublev recovered a break when Auger-Aliassime went long, and consolidated for a 4-3 deficit.

The Russian saved a set point to hold for 5-4 down but Auger-Aliassime clinched it at the second opportunity with a forehand down the line. In the second set the Canadian held for 3-3 with a brilliant drop shot after Rublev spurned a break point.

They stayed on serve until the 12th game when

Rublev brought up two set points, converting the second to take it to a deciding third set. Rublev raced through his service games and put heavy pressure on his opponent's serve, forcing a break point in the second game and two more in the fourth, none of which he could take.

Auger-Aliassime produced huge serves to fight his way out of tough spots, racking up 14 aces in the match to Rublev's seven. However Rublev dropped just three points on his serve in the third set, while Auger-Aliassime trailed in all of his service games but always battled back, until the decisive 12th game. Auger-Aliassime double-faulted to hand Rublev the title, with the Russian falling to the floor in delight. — AFP

## Mbappe and PSG aim to seize moment in CL semis return

**PARIS:** Paris Saint-Germain are bidding to overturn a 1-0 first-leg deficit and beat Borussia Dortmund in their Champions League semi-final return match on Tuesday, with the aim of bringing the curtain down on the Kylian Mbappe era at the club in the final at Wembley.

The only time PSG have previously appeared in the biggest match in club football turned out to be a

depressingly flat occasion, with the French side losing 1-0 to Bayern Munich behind closed doors in Lisbon in 2020, at the height of the pandemic.

Reaching the June 1 showpiece in London, and playing before a crowd of 90,000 against either Real Madrid or Bayern again, would be a different occasion entirely. Getting there would give Mbappe the chance to end his seven-year stay with the Qatar-owned outfit in the best possible way, as they look to win the Champions League for the first time in their history, and just the second time for a French club after Marseille in 1993.

Mbappe informed PSG in February of his intention to depart the Parc des Princes when his contract expires at the end of the season, ending a prolific association with his hometown team which began when he signed from Monaco in 2017.

Now 25 and the captain of France, Mbappe has become the Parisians' all-time top scorer with 255 goals in 305 appearances so far, including 43 this season alone. He has 48 in the Champions League - a tally which includes six with Monaco in his breakthrough 2016/17 campaign - and Tuesday's second leg against Dortmund would be the ideal time for him to bring up the half-century.

Luis Enrique's team did not produce their best performance in losing 1-0 in Germany last week, and the pressure is on them as favorites to turn the tie around at home. However, a repeat of what happened when they hosted Dortmund in the group stage last September will suffice - on that occasion they won 2-0, with Mbappe netting the first goal from the penalty spot. — AFP

## Argentina coach Cesar Menotti dies at 85

**Buenos Aires:** Cesar Luis Menotti, who famously coached Argentina to their first World Cup triumph in 1978, an achievement described as one of the "country's greatest joys", has died at the age of 85, the country's football federation (AFA) announced Sunday.

"The Argentine Football Association regrets to report with great sadness the death of Cesar Luis Menotti, former world champion coach of Argentina," the AFA said in a statement.

The chain-smoking Menotti managed 11 clubs, some more than once, and two national teams - Argentina and Mexico - in a coaching career that lasted 37 years.

But he will be best remembered for leading Argentina to the 1978 World Cup played on home soil at a time when the country was ruled by a repressive junta.

In the final, Argentina defeated the Netherlands 3-1 after extra-time with flamboyant man of the tournament Mario Kempes scoring twice against a Dutch side shorn of Johan Cruyff, who had refused to play in the World Cup.

Menotti opted not to pick 17-year-old phenomenon Diego Maradona, who had made his international debut the year before. Reacting to Menotti's death, Argentina President Javier Milei expressed on X his "deep pain at the departure of the leader of a team that has given one of the greatest joys to the country".

Menotti was also fondly remembered in Mexico where he took charge of the national team between 1991 and 1992 before spells with club sides Puebla and Tecos between 2006 and 2007 - his last jobs as a coach. — AFP



Cesar Luis Menotti

# 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. (#5603 - 05/05/2024)

## Leverkusen extend unbeaten run to 48 games with win at Frankfurt

Bochum win 4-3 at Union Berlin, Mainz draw at Heidenheim



FRANKFURT: Bayer Leverkusen's English midfielder #19 Nathan Tella (L) vies for the ball with Frankfurt's French defender #29 Niels Nkounkou (C) during the German first division Bundesliga football match between Eintracht Frankfurt and Bayer 04 Leverkusen in Frankfurt am Main. — AFP

**BERLIN:** Bundesliga champions Bayer Leverkusen extended their season-long unbeaten run to 48 games with a 5-1 win at Eintracht Frankfurt on Sunday. With Xabi Alonso forced to watch from the stands due to a yellow card suspension, Leverkusen turned on the style, winning with goals from Granit Xhaka, Patrik Schick, Jeremie Frimpong and penalties from Exequiel Palacios and Victor Boniface. "We had control of the game," Xhaka told DAZN.

"We wanted to stay undefeated, we did that again - and we are really close to achieving something very special." Alonso left midfield lynchpin Florian Wirtz, who turned 21 on Friday, out of the squad with Thursday's second Champions League semi-final against Roma in mind, but Leverkusen had no problems in attack.

Xhaka opened the scoring with a long-range effort, before Frankfurt equalised through Hugo Ekitike, who scored for the third game in succession.

Schick headed Leverkusen back in front just before half-time and World Cup winner Palacios scored a third from the penalty spot on the 58-minute mark. The floodgates opened in the final stages, with Frimpong scoring just five minutes after coming on and then won a penalty with three minutes remaining.

Boniface converted the spot kick for Leverkusen's first win in Frankfurt for six years. Leverkusen, who are unbeaten in 48 across all competitions, need to avoid defeat in two remaining league matches to become the first team to go unbeaten through a Bundesliga season. "That's our challenge," Alonso said after the match. "A big challenge. Just two games to go and if we make that, it will be almost perfect. We'll try it."

Alonso's side have a 2-0 advantage ahead of Thursday's Europa League semi-final second leg at home and are through to the final of the German Cup, keeping their dreams of an incredible unbeaten treble alive. Earlier on Sunday, Bochum won 4-3 at Union Berlin, pushing the hosts closer to the drop just months after they were playing in the Champions League. Mainz's 1-1 draw at Heidenheim later on Sunday netted them a point and means Union are now just one point clear of the relegation play-off spot with two games remaining.

### Union on the edge

In the top division since a first-ever promotion in 2019, Union Berlin finished fourth last season and were playing Champions League football against

Real Madrid as recently as December.

Having built their success on home form, a lethargic Union were 3-0 down by half-time thanks to a Maximilian Wittek brace and a goal from former Berliner Keven Schlotterbeck.

Coach Nenad Bjelica made three changes at the break and they had their desired impact immediately. Yorbe Vertessen and Chris Bedia, both of whom came off the bench, scored in a three-minute period to cut the deficit to one.

With Union on the march and looking for an equaliser, Bochum scored again, Philipp Hofmann heading in from close range. The home side gave their fans hope again just four minutes later, Benedict Hollerbach again cutting the deficit to just a goal. Union fought hard but could not find the equaliser.

Leeds loanee Brenden Aaronson, one of three Union players to be subbed on at half-time, criticised his team's first-half performance. "It was one of those days when we didn't show up and that's all there is to it."

"We need to band together and fight like we did in the second-half. That's what we need to take away from this game." Bochum are four clear of the drop with two games remaining this season. — AFP

## Lyles, Thomas star as US dominate World Athletics Relays

**NASSAU:** Noah Lyles anchored the US 4x100m men to World Athletics Relays glory and Gabby Thomas bagged a quickfire double as the American team won four of the five golds on offer in Nassau on Sunday.

Lyles took the baton from Kyree King and accelerated through the line in 37.40 seconds after slick early handovers by Courtney Lindsey and Kenneth Bednarek. "Business is easy!" beamed Lyles, who won treble gold at last year's world championships in Budapest. "It smells like Paris!" Canada took silver in 37.89sec thanks to a late charge by Olympic 200m champion Andre de Grasse. Reigning Olympic 100m gold medallist Marcell Jacobs ran the second leg for the Italians, the defending world relay and Olympic champions, but was powerless after a devastating first leg by Lindsey gave the Americans a huge gap.

Italy were initially credited with bronze, but were later disqualified, third place instead going to France. Olympic 200m bronze medallist Thomas then claimed two golds in 20 heady minutes, first as part of the women's 4x100m relay-winning team including Tamari Davis, Celera Barnes and Melissa Jefferson.

They scorched home in a championship record of 41.85sec, with France taking silver in 42.75 and Britain claiming bronze in 42.80. Thomas was almost immediately back on track, helping a US quartet also comprising Quanera Hayes, Bailey Lear and Alexis Holmes to victory in the women's 4x400m relay in 3:21.70. Poland and Canada rounded out the podium.

"It's been a great preparation," said Thomas. "At the end of the day I knew the girls would have it regardless because they have a great 4x400m relay squad. It's a testament to how we came to World Relays, we came prepared with the mentality to get the job done and we were committed to that."

Not to be outdone, the US team of Matthew Boling, Lynna Irby-Jackson, Willington Wright and Kendall Ellis also set a championship record when winning the mixed 4x400m relay in 3:10.73. Netherlands' Femke Bol, the recently crowned world indoor 400m champion and reigning world 400m hurdles gold medallist, ran a superb last lap of 49.63sec, but the deficit proved just too much and the Dutch had to settle for silver in 3:11.45. Ireland took bronze. — AFP

## Trouble for Milan as Juve inch towards Champions League

**MILAN:** AC Milan were given the silent treatment by thousands of frustrated supporters during Sunday's thrilling 3-3 home draw with Genoa as their disappointing Serie A season crawls to its conclusion. Fans unfurled banners demanding improvements to the team, while the hardcore ultras stayed silent in protest throughout a match which ended all square after Malick Thiaw's 87th-minute own goal handed mid-table Genoa a point.

The entire Curva Sud section of the San Siro, which is where the ultras stand and holds thousands of supporters, missed Thiaw's unfortunate error as it emptied shortly after Olivier Giroud fired Milan 3-2 ahead in the 75th minute. Left behind was a banner which simply read "the sound of silence".

The protest dampened the atmosphere for what was effectively a dead rubber, with second-placed Milan already guaranteed Champions League football and promoted Genoa safe from relegation. Fan discontent stems from the 18 points which separate Milan from champions and local rivals

Inter Milan, who secured their 20th league title by winning their local derby a fortnight ago.

That, and being dumped out of the Europa League by fellow Italians Roma, angered supporters and means Stefano Pioli, the man who guided Milan to the 2022 Serie A title, will be dismissed at the end of the season after nearly five years at the helm. "The fans chose that form of protest, you have to respect it," said Pioli to DAZN.

"Our fans have always been of huge value over these years, they'll have their reasons for the way they protested." Pioli's Genoa counterpart Alberto Gilardino is secure in his position after guiding his team to a happy return to the top flight.

Gilardino, who won the 2006 World Cup with Italy as a player, said on Saturday that he had come to a verbal agreement with Genoa to extend his contract beyond the end of this season.

Italy's oldest football club and nine-time Italian champions, Genoa are 12th in Serie A and have performed above expectations this season. "I want to continue at a club that has given me



ROME: Roma's Argentinian midfielder #16 Leandro Daniel Paredes (2R) shoots the ball towards the goal during the Italian Serie A football match between Roma and Juventus at the Olympic stadium, in Rome. — AFP

the chance to coach and do a good job," said Gilardino to DAZN.

### 'Football's a crazy sport'

Below Milan, the battle for Champions League football continued as third-placed Juventus drew 1-1 in a hugely entertaining clash with Roma in which each team created a host of chances and struck the woodwork. Juve stay five points behind Milan and inched towards a spot in Europe's top club competition after Gleison

Bremer's 31st-minute header levelled an early opener from Romelu Lukaku.

Despite only winning twice in 14 league matches, Massimiliano Allegri's side are nine points ahead of sixth-placed Atalanta, who are at relegated Salernitana on Monday and also have another game in hand. "Football is a crazy sport because one moment things go your way and the other everything goes against you," said Allegri. "We could have done better this season but it wasn't to be." — AFP